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THE THEATRE OF DESTRUCTION:

ANARCHISM, NIHILISM & THE AVANT-GARDE, 1909 – 1945

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Abstract

This thesis argues that theatricalization is an appropriate paradigm to employ in a political reassessment of the historical avant-garde moments of Futurism, Dada and Surrealism. Through an analysis of the performativity and theatricality of the manifestos and manifestations of these successive avant-gardes, it is suggested that each avant-garde moment self-dramatizes a destructive character. An argument is then developed that the destructive character of the avant-garde demonstrates and displays a libertarian-barbarian dialectic which emerges from within the discourses of anarchism and nihilism, in particular from Michael Bakunin's maxim: 'the passion for destruction is a creative passion, too'.

The destructive character of the avant-garde is manifest most clearly in the manifestos which announce and perform a desire for the destruction of the institution of art and the re-integration of art and life, as advanced by Peter Bürger. Identifying a parallel between the discourses of theatricalization and aestheticization in Symbolist drama, I argue that the paradigm of theatricalization necessitates a critical re-assessment of the polarity which Walter Benjamin advances, between the aestheticization of politics and the politicization of art. Further, it is suggested, we must also re-examine the polarity which Bürger asserts between Aestheticism and the avant-garde with respect to the question of autonomy in art. Thus, from Bakunin's initial breakdown of the opposition between destruction / creation we embark upon a re-examination of the polarity between key terms of the avant-garde: libertarian / barbarian; incarnation / integration; aestheticization / politicization; theatricality / performativity.

The theatricalization of the avant-garde manifesto is then articulated in the context of Habermas' study of the structural transformation of the public sphere from feudalism (theatricalization) to capitalism (literalization). Here, I suggest that immanent within the performative and theatrical modality of avant-garde manifestos and manifestations are the origins of a retheatricalization and refeudalization of the public sphere. Finally, I suggest that the repetition of the destructive character of the avant-garde suggests a parallel with Nietzsche's theory of the eternal recurrence and that, consonant with the paradigm of theatricalization which emerges from a political reassessment of the historical avant-garde, the avant-garde manifests a theatricalization of History.

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Prologue

I have before me, as I write, a reproduction of a lithograph: an illustration of the first-night programme for Alfred Jarry's *Ubu roi* which opened at the Théâtre de L'Œuvre, Paris, on 9 December 1896. [Fig. 1] The image shows the aftermath of a scene of destruction, catastrophe, war.

In the background a house is burning. The building is almost totally consumed by fire. Rising above the carnage is a strange balloon-like bird, with an alien head and wings far too small but which nevertheless serve to fan the flames. Tied to one of its protruding stick-legs is a bag of money. This is no phoenix that's for sure: there is no fragment of redemption to be found in this universe. The bird hovers like a toy balloon or atom-bomb dust cloud, taunting us with its inane existence: a cartoon cruelty which knows no bounds.

In the middle-ground, towards 'stage' left are twin supplicants. The two-dimensional figures, resembling woodcuts from the middle-ages, clasp their hands in unison. Perhaps it is their home which is in the process of being consumed by flames. Their faces appear resigned to the fact that their gesture is ignored. Both the balloon bird in the background and the massive figure in the foreground are staring us straight in the eye.

The huge figure on the right fills the foreground. He is the undoubted progenitor of the carnage. His body is large and he stands erect on two stumpy feet like a sideboard. His head, which rises neck-less from the trunk, is in the shape of a cone topped with a single mock-militaristic leaf. Above his crudely drawn features (button-hole mouth, leaf-moustache, 'v' nose which spirals into eyes) the forehead narrows where his brain should be. By contrast his stomach, like the balloon bird's, extends in celebration of his adiposity. His left arm which is grotesquely long, and seems to be made of rubber, hangs in a downward spiral. Clutched at the end, in a hand which resembles a metal-claw, is a large bag of cash, the profits of his destruction. His right hand, held aloft from behind his enormous bulk, carries a torch with a dragon-breath of white flame that zig-zags out across a spread of black ink. This flame arcs above the torched house which continues to perform its endless conflagration in the background.

I say background, middle-ground, foreground, but of course the stage is as flat as the page it is printed on. It is a world devoid of depth or emotion; a folded universe of cut-out lives and cardboard deaths. The destroyer does not contemplate the scene of devastation but instead stares baldly and blankly out towards his audience, mindlessly confronting us with the purposelessness of his outrage: burning building, abandoned victims, barbarian buddha, a bloated bird squawking beneath a black sun.

Introduction

Introduction: The Historical Avant-Garde in Context

I

The years 1909 to 1945 witnessed an escalation in mankind's capacity for destruction unparalleled in any prior period of human history. This era was marked by two world wars, as well as colonial conflicts, civil wars, uprisings, rebellions and revolutions. During the Second World War forces of mass destruction were unleashed not only against soldiers on battlefields, but against civilian populations. This aspect of total warfare is documented by the deliberate aerial bombardment of civilian zones in European cities (Coventry, Dresden, Hamburg, Berlin), the Nazi Holocaust and the US atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Destruction on such an unprecedented scale was made possible only by employing principles from industry and science, namely the increasing rationalization and mechanization of the forces of production and reproduction, facilitated by advances in the understanding of molecular science and the technologies of mass communication. These powerful forces for controlling industrial society were also weilded as weapons in the arsenal of the dominant ideologies of the epoch: capitalism, imperialism, fascism, and communism. This period of unparalleled destruction

is the historical context of this thesis as it formed the social and political backdrop against which the avant-garde performed its iconoclastic gestures.

The fervent radicalism in the field of revolutionary political ideals - witnessed in the violent struggles between ideological extremes (nationalism/ internationalism; capitalism/socialism; fascism/communism) which scarred this epoch - was equalled in the field of revolutionary cultural ideals as evidenced in the aggressive manner in which the historical avant-garde demonstrated and displayed its antipathy for the 'affirmative character' of bourgeois culture. The supreme manifestation of this antipathy was, of course, the manifesto.

The first decades of the twentieth century were prolific in the production of avant-garde manifestos: iconoclastic and polemical documents which pronounced dead the bourgeois culture of the past and announced the birth of vital new directions in art and life. Importantly, and this is what gave the avant-garde its political vitality (if not validity), the key manifestos of the historical avant-garde are not simply demands for new aesthetic formulae, they are calls for experiments in living. By far the most iconoclastic and polemical of the numerous manifestos produced during this turbulent time were those of the historical avant-garde movements of Futurism, Dada and Surrealism. Through manifestos (which appeared in written form and performative manifestations) the Futurists, Dadaists and Surrealists launched frequent attacks upon the cultural status quo. Armed with tracts which denounced the official bourgeois culture of the day, they insulted the work of

previous generations as well as denegrating the misguided efforts of lesser contemporaries who deigned to consider themselves avant-garde. More provocatively, and perhaps more significantly for the present thesis, the historical avant-garde not only mocked the achievements of western 'civilization', they also attacked the institutions in which they were preserved, calling for the destruction of the museums, libraries and architectural landmarks of the grand cities of Europe.

Therefore, it is my claim that the hallmark of the manifestos produced by the Futurists, Dadaists and Surrealists is their destructive character. Characteristically, these manifestos contain proclamations which rail against the complacency of contemporary life and iconoclastic declarations which upbraid the bankruptcy of bourgeois art and culture - a culture which testified to the highest ideals of western civilization in harmony, truth and beauty, as its economic foundations lay in domination, exploitation and oppression. The anti-art manifestos produced by these historical avant-gardes, then, are not only documents of movements predicated upon destruction, but attempts to accelerate what T. W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer refered to as 'the self-destruction of the Enlightenment'.[1] In other words, the destructive character of the historical avant-garde, as demonstrated and displayed in its manifestos, is a negative reaction against the destructive character of its epoch.

In a time of such wholesale destruction, the avant-garde engages in a destruction of its own, employing a discourse of radical negation which embraced both libertarianism and barbarism. Although individual artists in the same movements may differ wildly in their opinions and ideological positions, their pronouncements are commonly laced with principles derived from the political discourses of anarchism and nihilism. In this thesis I argue that these twin philosophies of negation are the bi-focal lens through which one must read the simultaneous libertariansim and barbarism of the avant-garde's dialectic of destruction. In short, it is in the tenets of the anti-authoritarian ideologies of anarchism and nihilism (which have nonetheless complex inter-relationships with the authoritarian ideologies of communism and fascism) which the historical avant-garde finds the lexicon of its revolutionary character.

There would seem to be some political confusion or ideological inconsistency surrounding the usage of the term 'avant-garde' in recent criticism which requires clarification before proceeding. The first distinction to be made is that of the 'revolutionary' avant-garde, an elite group or party which aims at social, economic and political transformation through insurrection and/or revolution. The second distinction to be made is that of a 'cultural' or 'artistic' avant-garde, characterized by an insistence upon cultural transformation or a revolution in culture. Within this latter category of the 'artistic' avant-garde further distinction has to be drawn between the

'political' and 'aesthetic' avant-gardes. The former is characterized by artists concerned with a direct engagement in social struggle and who desired to discover aesthetic forms appropriate to the progress of the revolution (e.g. photomontage), whilst the latter is characterized by artists devoted to a revolution in aesthetics alone regardless of social concerns (e.g. Aestheticism).

It is possible to expand the terms of our analysis of the different aspects of the avant-garde if we introduce the concerns of Walter Benjamin. In particular, I refer to Benjamin's influential essay, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', published in 1936, the year of the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in which the authoritarian and totalitarian dogmas of fascism and communism shared the ideological battleground with anarchism. In the epilogue to this key text, Benjamin asserts a polarity between fascism and communism in the field of art and aesthetics. 'Mankind', Benjamin laments in the face of insurgent fascism and, 'has reached such a degree that it can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order.' It is in response to this social predicament which fostered such extreme manifestations as Marinetti's glorification of war, for example, that Benjamin passes the following judgement: 'This is the situation of politics which Fascism is rendering aesthetic. Communism responds by politicizing art.'[2] The final sentence is not simply an observation on Benjamin's part of the Berlin Dadaist practice of photomontage. It is an artistic manifesto. If we accept Benjamin's cultural

materialism, we can extend his conclusions to suggest that those artists who tied their practice to direct social struggle were engaged in a politicization of art, whereas those who presumed to transform humanity through an unswerving adherence to the principles of art alone were engaged ultimately in an aestheticization of politics. However, I would argue that a problem arises when we attempt to apply such critical distinctions to a reading of the manifestos produced by the Futurists, Dadaists and Surrealists.

It is my claim that the anti-art manifestos of these movements, who sought to realize a general cultural revolution through the disintegration of capitalist cultural insitutions and the integration of art and life, cannot be thought of satisfactorily as examples of either 'political' or 'aesthetic' avant-gardes alone. In contrast, the manifestos produced by these movements enter into a dialectic between aestheticization and politicization. Accordingly, I follow the usage of the term 'historical avant-garde' advanced by Peter Bürger (and discussed below) to mean, narrowly, Futurism, Dada and Surrealism and their desire to overthrow the institution of art and to re-integrate art and life as articulated in the anti-art manifesto.

In the thesis which follows Benjamin's polarity of aesthetics and politics is tested against the pronouncements and manifestos of Futurism, Dada and Surrealism on the grounds that the theatricality and performativity embodied in the manifesto form problematizes and destabilizes any reading of the political sympathies of artistic avant-gardes. It is my thesis that Benjamin's

rigid polarity breaks down at the scene of its application - that is, in relation to the historical avant-garde. I claim that any understanding of the revolutionary politics and aesthetics of the avant-garde, which must be examined in close relation to the central tenets of anarchism and nihilism, cannot be extricated from the concept of theatricalization. This thesis argues, therefore, that the paradigm of theatricalization is essential to any political reassessment of the historical avant-garde, to the extent that we can talk of the anti-art manifestos, iconoclastic manifestations and destructive gestures of the historical avant-garde moments of Futurism, Dada and Surrealism as a 'theatre of destruction'.

According to Jürgen Habermas, the period which witnessed the manifestation of the historical avant-gardes also witnessed an important transformation in the function of the public sphere - which, he argues, shifted from a participatory and democratic space of rational-critical debate to a space of mass consumption. In the face of the impending collapse of the public sphere, the result, on the one hand, of the manipulative publicity of consumer capitalism and, on the other, of the supression of critical dialogue in totalitarian regimes, the twentieth century has overseen, Habermas demonstrates, the retraction of the democratic principle of the critical public sphere of bourgeois society. In this context the avant-garde manifesto plays a significant but problematic role. It could be said that, in a period characterised by the disappearance of the critical public sphere, the avant-

garde manifesto attempts to stem the tide of acquiesence by actively calling a public into being.

However, an avant-garde manifesto is not a document which attempts to engage its audience in rational-critical dialogue. Inasmuch as a Futurist, Dadaist or Surrealist manifesto *demands* an audience, it is only to vilify and abuse them. If a manifesto is an *address* it is also an *attack*. Through the agency of the manifesto, the historical avant-garde sets out to disabuse the bourgeoisie of its long-held cultural assumptions and to shock them out of a passive consumption of capitalist culture. The historical avant-garde's aim, we might assume, is to inaugurate an active culture of critical participation which resists the archaic forces of power and domination. However, the dual role and function of the avant-garde manifesto - simultaneously to 'announce' and 'denounce' - takes on a distinct performative and theatricalized character. In this sense the manifestos of the historical avant-garde exhibit a contradiction. As the Futurists, Dadaists and Surrealists attempt to deny bourgeois authority, the strategy by which they do so shares much with the tactics of 'show' and 'manipulation' which Habermas identifies with the agencies of mass democracies and totalitarian regimes. The term Habermas employs to describe the theatrical mode of power, which he idenitifies in mass welfare-states and views as paradigmatic of the manifestation of the public sphere in late capitalist consumer society, is 'refeudalization'. For example, Habermas suggests:

> In the measure that it is shaped by public relations, the public sphere of civil society again takes on feudal features. The 'suppliers' display a showy pomp before customers ready to follow. Publicity imitates the kind of aura proper to the personal prestige and supernatural authority once bestowed by the kind of publicity involved in representation.[3]

Importantly, Habermas characterizes the process of the refeudalization of the public sphere with recourse to the language of theatre. As his reference to the 'aura' of publicity implies, a clear parallel can be identified between Habermas's reading of the theatricalization/refeudalization of the public sphere in late capitalism and Benjamin's concerns regarding fascism and the aestheticization of politics. However, a return to Benjamin's claim regarding the destruction of the 'aura' of art in the age of mechanical reproduction (as testified in his view by the Dadaists 'relentless destruction of the aura') is prompted by the question of the degree to which the theatrical modality of the manifesto contributes to the production or destruction of 'aura'. Immediately, then, it is possible to see the depths of the problem which the theatricality of the avant-garde holds for any proposed study of its politics.

Yet, a further contradiction remains. As the avant-garde manifesto addresses itself to the public sphere, in its iconoclasm it attacks the civil codes and cultural institutions of bourgeois sociality from which the very notion of 'public sphere' arises. In this sense it can be argued that the avant-garde manifesto plays an ambiguous role in the refeudalization of the public sphere. My reading of the historical avant-garde through its manifestos is one which

attempts to face up to these very contradictions and to explore their consequences for our understanding of the politics of the avant-garde.

II

In returning to the historical avant-gardes of Futurism, Dada and Surrealism, I do not endeavour to produce a text in which 'the same old stew is continually warmed up again and again', as Hegel complained of the philosophical tracts of his day.[4] Rather, I attempt to conduct a political re-assessment of the historical avant-garde in the wake of Habermas' reading of the structural transformation of the public sphere. It is my conviction that the theatricality of the avant-garde manifesto and its ambiguous relation to the bourgeois public sphere - brought about by the relation of its 'destructive character' to the libertarian-barbarian dialectic present in the discourses of anarchism and nihilism - have hitherto been insufficiently recognised and analysed by studies of the avant-garde.

For example, Renato Poggioli in his *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1968) comments upon the proximity of the avant-garde to the ideologies of anarchism and nihilism and illuminates its basic 'agonistic' character. Poggioli also identifies a split within the concept and practice of the avant-garde: on the one hand, he identifies the political avant-garde, solely concerned with

achieving social revolution; and, on the other hand, the cultural avant-garde, concerned primarily with artistic transformation. The importance of Poggioli's clarification has already been addressed. Nevertheless, Poggioli's study of the artistic avant-garde is seriously flawed in that it fails to draw attention to the theatricality of self-dramatization inherent in the 'agonism' and 'alientation' he discerns in his 'psychological and ideological' reading of the avant-garde. Less prone to Poggioli's psychologizing narrative is Matei Calinescu's *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism* (1987). In this work, Calinescu also traces the history of the idea of the avant-garde, but in a broader historical frame. Here Calinescu locates the origins of the term in the Middle Ages, and traces its development as a moment in the broad sweep of the history of modernity. It is from this historicist vantage point that Calinescu refutes Poggioli's assertion of a split between the two avant-gardes, claiming that the relationship between revolutionary politics and revolutionary art is far more complex than Poggioli admits. Like the present thesis, Calinescu points to the clear parallel between anarchist thinkers and the revolutionary ambitions of the avant-garde. Nevertheless, for all its scope and ambition, Calinescu's study is blind to the problematic of the avant-garde's ambiguous relation to the public sphere and to the theatricalization of history to which the avant-garde manifesto ultimately pretends. Further, Calinescu fails to locate the source of the problematic inter-relationship between avant-garde politics and avant-garde

aesthetics in the historical avant-garde's demand for the destruction of the institution of art, as articulated by Peter Bürger.

Peter Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1984) is perhaps the most important publication on the avant-garde in the last twenty years and is a key text for this thesis. But before turning to examine Bürger in more detail, it is important to make mention of the contribution of studies of 'avant-garde theatre' have made to refining my notion of the avant-garde as a 'theatre of destruction', if only to indicate my distance from their approaches.

In this context, Christopher Innes' *Avant Garde Theatre, 1892-1992* (1993) is of interest for its introductory comments which reflect upon the proximity of the ideology of the avant-garde to those of anarchism and nihilism, specifically with respect to the writings of Michael Bakunin. Yet, as Innes neither elaborates upon this initial insight, nor reflects upon the potential problems inherent in a reading of the politics of avant-garde drama without a clear concept of theatricalization, his study is of limited value to the present thesis. The importance of theatricalization for an understanding of the avant-garde is, however, articulated in Frantisek Deak's *Symbolist Theatre: the Formation of an Avant-Garde* (1993). In this important text, Deak documents the origins of the theatricalization of the avant-garde in Aestheticism's incarnation of life into art. The self-dramatization (*Kaloprosopia*) performed by the audiences attending the production of the symbolist theatre, he argues, extends the theatricalization of the auditorium into the theatricalization of the

public sphere. For this reason, Deak's study is an important reference point for the current thesis, not least for its perceptive reading the Dandy as precurser of the avant-garde artist. Nonetheless, the value of Deak's study as a contribution to a theory of the avant-garde is undermined by two serious shortfalls; firstly, by its lack of historical perspective with regard to the transformation of the public sphere, as articulated by Habermas, and its importance to a study of the avant-garde; and secondly, by its unproblematic equation of Aestheticism with the avant-garde, an equation questioned by Bürger a decade earlier.

It is, then, Bürger's study which forms the critical background to the present thesis as it is here that we encounter the manifesto as the key manifestation of the avant-garde. Furthermore, Bürger's study offers a convincing critique of Aestheticism and its ambiguous relation to the concept of the avant-garde and tenders valuable insights into the condition of autonomous art in bourgeois culture, as well as an understanding of the importance of Benjamin's ideas on allegory and pronoucements on Dada's destruction of the 'aura' of art. Nevertheless, and despite his reference to Habermas' reading of the public sphere, Bürger is not fully alert to the *theatricality* of the manifesto and its possible relevance to Habermas's study, or to its implication for his own reading of the avant-garde's desire for the 'integration' of art with the praxis of life.

In contrast to Bürger - whose main focus is upon the non-work character of the manifesto - the principal methodology of my thesis is to read the politics of the historical avant-garde through the *theatricality* of its manifestos. The manifesto, the mode of publicity favoured by revolutionary political parties, is the primary means by which the avant-garde makes itself public, that is to say, the manner in which it 'manifests' itself in the public sphere. But, the theatricalization of politics implied in the avant-garde manifesto - through a self-dramatization of revolt, hyperbole, rhetorical demands and often theatricalized context of presentation - warns against too rigid attribution of idealogical positions or political allegiances to the historical avant-garde. Above all, the ambiguity present in the manifesto form, challenges Walter Benjamin's rigid polarity between the 'aestheticization of politics' and the 'politicization of art', which has become a touchstone for commentaries on the avant-garde ever since.

Despite the assertion contained in its subtitle, even David Weir's *Anarchy and Culture: The Aesthetic Politics of Modernism* (1997), a study of the affinities between anarchist thought and key exponents of Modernist culture, fails to offer convincing grounds for relinquishing Benjamin's polarity. Weir's study posits autonomous art as an example of an aesthetic anarchy if not an anarchist aesthetic. According to this position, socialist-realist artists developed in relative harmony with the revolutionary aims of Marxism, whilst modernists artists 'achieved a separate "revolution" that was not necessarily

political in nature'.[5] In fact, Weir claims, 'modernism is often conceived, with *l'art pour l'art* as its background, as an apolitical avant-garde movement, one that reacted against both conservative and progressive politics'.[6] In a verdict which pretends to offer an exit from the critical aporia that surrounds the debate between the political avant-garde and the aesthetic avant-garde, that is to say between, on the one hand, politically-engaged critical realism and, on the other hand, autonomous art, Weir maintains that most modernist art is 'consistent with the politics of anarchism' a consistency which extends 'into the form of the work itself'.[7] In this respect', Weir goes on to claim, 'modernism appears as the culmination of the further history of the avant-garde, which began to be identified with radical politics around 1845.[8] Weir's attempt to foreclose the debate, however, seems ignorant of the critical distance between his key terms 'modernism' and the 'avant-garde'. For example, Weir fails to address the claims advance by Jochen Schulte-Sasse in 'Theory of Modernism versus Theory of the Avant-Garde' (his foreword to Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde*) where he argues that the equation of the terms 'modernism' (implicating aestheticism) and 'avant-garde' stems from an inability to perceive the radical difference operative in their strategies of negation:

> At first glance, the attempt to develop a theory of the avant-garde that also functions as a theory of modernism seems perfectly acceptable. Evidence such as the surrealist manifestos, in which Breton made a 'modernist' attack against

> the one-dimensionality of conventional forms of thought and language, appear to support the case. The first 'Manifesto of Surrealism,' for example, includes his criticism of Dostoyevsky's mania for realistic description, which is basically a 'modernist' critique of realism's tendency to use conventional language patterns. Although Bürger would concede these similarities, his major argument concerns the *differences* between Aestheticism and the avant-garde. If we focus on the precarious *status* of art in modern societies – the 'institution' of 'art' - we can see the radical difference between the strategies of negation within modernism and within the avant-garde. Modernism may be understandable as an attack on traditional writing techniques, but the avant-garde can only be understood as an attack meant to alter the institutionalized commerce with art. The social roles of the modernist and the avant-garde artist are, thus, radically different.[9]

Schulte-Sasse's asserion, which follows Bürger's thesis, that 'the avant-garde can only be understood as an attack meant to alter the institutionalized commerce with art' is fundamental to catagorising the historical avant-garde. It is along this potential fault-line, therefore, that the success or failure of the historical avant-garde is to be evaluated. However, by focusing upon the problematic of theatricalization in the context of the manifesto, I argue that we are forced to re-evaluate the terms by which we have hitherto evaluated the strategies of the avant-garde.

The agency and theatricality of the manifesto is explored in three studies which have informed the present reading: firstly, Marjorie Perloff's *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant-Guerre, and the Language of Rupture* (1986), offers an excellent and sustained reading of the Futurist manifesto; secondly, Paul Mann's *The Theory-Death of the Avant-Garde* (1991), an intoxicating and provocative text, importantly recongises that the avant-garde manifesto 'is the primary form in which the politicization of aesthetics and

the aestheticization of politics learn to eclipse one another'[10]; thirdly, David Graver's *The Aesthetics of Disturbance: Anti-Art in Avant-Garde Drama*, (1995) offers an insightful reading of the theatricality and ambiguity of the manifesto as an articulation of a politics of destruction. Nonetheless, these studies of the avant-garde also fail to address adequetely the 'destructive character' of the avant-garde with respect to anarchism and nihilism and the transformation of the public sphere. It is my assertion that the failure to address the complexities and ambiguities of the destructive character of the avant-garde has blinded previous studies to the foundational role which performativity and theatricality play in the aesthetics and politics of avant-garde destruction. As a result, the implications for understanding the position of the avant-garde manifesto in the transformation of the public sphere have not been adequately addressed or articulated hitherto. This can only be done, I assert, with reference to Jürgen Habermas's analysis of the transformation of the public sphere in bourgeois society; a study, in my view, crucial to any politcal re-assessment of the historical avant-gardes.

III

In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (1989; first published in German in 1962),

Habermas outlines the emergence of the democratic bourgeois public sphere and its challenge to the authority of the feudal state. In the fuedal realm, Habermas contends, the power of the prince is manifest *before* the people in a theatricalized 'publicity of represention'. In contrast, the bourgeois public sphere is characterized as the movement of a critical 'public opinion' and adherence to the principle of 'publicness' in institutions of civic authority. As Habermas demonstrates, by the mid-eighteenth century the critical function played by 'public opinion' in the formation of the political public sphere of bourgeois democracy was ensured by 'the "addiction" or even the "mania" of the enlightened age for reading'.[11] This mania for reading is feuled, in the private realm, by the emergence of the novel and a growing fashion for diary-keeping and discreet epistolary exchanges and, in the public realm, with the founding of public libraries and the growth of literary coffee-houses, in which debate and criticism of public authority was informed by scholarly journals and openly available political newspapers.[12] Thus, through recourse to the 'public opinion' of an informed reading public, bourgeois democracy employs the principles of publicness and critical publicity. In short, the transition from feudalism to capitalism, which Habermas reads in relation to the changing conditions of a concept of 'public sphere', is best summarized as a paradigm shift from theatricalization to literarization.

In contemporary consumerist democracy, Habermas suggests we witness a return to a theatricalized condition of the public sphere formerly associated

with the practices of feudal authority. He goes on to argue that the principle of democratic publicness and critical publicity has been supplanted by a publicity of private interests which negates 'public opinion'. In contemporary capitalist society power is orchestrated, he concludes, via 'a *staged and manipulative* publicity displayed by organizations over the heads of a mediatized public'.[13] Thus, Habermas claims, the bourgeois public sphere (characterized by literarization) has been supplanted by a refeudalized public sphere (characterized by retheatricalization). It is my argument that such a dialectic between literarization and theatricalization which articulates the transformation of the public sphere is critical to a reading of the ambiguous political role of the avant-garde manifesto.

The manifesto is a critical tool in the discourse of political emancipation, and the artistic manifesto testifies to this legacy. As a written document *publicly addressed,* the manifesto appeals to the critical public sphere, as articulated in Habermas's notion of the literary public sphere in bourgeois culture. Nonetheless, immanent within the manifesto is a theatricality which appeals to the theatricalization of power in the feudal public sphere. Thus, the manifestos of the historical avant-gardes of Futurism, Dada and Surrealism emerge at a pivotal moment in the history of the transformation of the public sphere from bourgeois democracy to the state capitalism of mass welfare-states. What is claimed in this thesis is that the manifesto performs simultaneously the self-dramatization of emancipation (democratization) and

the theatricalization of politics (refeudalization). Thus we cannot hope to read the avant-garde manifesto without recognizing its ambiguous position in the transformation of the public sphere as articulated by Habermas.

Although Andreas Huyssen, in *After The Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (1986), makes mention of Habermas' important thesis he fails to address its claims as a potential key to understanding the ambigious role of the avant-garde manifesto. The key study in this respect remains Andrew Hewitt's *Fascist Modernism, Aesthetics, Politics, and the Avant-Garde* (1993). It is in Hewitt's analysis of Marinetti that we encounter the first study of the avant-garde to examine the dialectic of literarization and theatricalization in reference to the politics of the avant-garde manifesto, which emerges form Hewitt's critique of Habermas. The conclusions Hewitt draws in his complex study ultimately leads him, like Mann, to question the polarity of aestheticization and politicization as posed by Benjamin. As such, Hewitt's study is a crucial touchstone for this thesis. Nevertheless, as his title suggests, the legacy of anarchism and nihilism in Hewitt's reading of the politics of the avant-garde is somewhat overshadowed by its relationship to fascism. Rather, Hewitt's analysis of the avant-garde centres around the shared barbarism of Futurism and fascism, and its relation to the public sphere in, what he terms, 'the politics of the manifest'.[14] As it appears in his study of Marinetti, the logic of the historical avant-garde is tied inexorably to the logic of fascism. But whereas Hewitt's analysis points to fascism, I

attempt to retrieve the avant-garde's politics of destruction, and its libertarian-barbarian dialectic, as a legacy of the anti-authoritarian tendencies of anarchism and nihilism.

A political re-assessment of the avant-garde, which pays attention to the theatricality and performativity of the manifesto, necessitates a re-reading of Benjamin's polarity with reference to Habermas. Only then can we fully understand the 'destructive character' of the avant-garde. This term is, of course, a reference to Walter Benjamin's allegorical fragment, 'The Destructive Character' (1931) and, in effect, this thesis is simultaneously a critique of and return to the thought of Benjamin.

In order to clarify and address fully the destructive character of the avant-garde with respect to its historical emergence, political context and theoretical propositions, I have separated this thesis into two parts. The first part, the 'Theoretical Frame' contains a sustained articulation of key critical terms relevant to the discussion of the manifestos and manifestations of the historical avant-garde; libertarianism, barbarism, aestheticization, theatricalization, refeudalization. Without this preliminary section, it would be impossible to analyse the historical avant-garde with any degree of consistency. This analysis forms the second part of the thesis, the 'Historical Application' and is an examination of the manifestos and manifestations of Italian Futurism, Zürich Dada, and Parisian Surrealism.

IV

In the 'Theoretical Frame', Chapter 1, 'The Destructive Character of the Avant-Garde: Libertarians and Barbarians', is an analysis of the 'libertarian' and 'barbarian' character of avant-garde iconoclasm. In this chapter I examine the proximity of the avant-garde to the political and philosophical discourses of anarchism and nihilism with reference to a shared emphasis upon destruction and individual autonomy. I then suggest that the simultaneous libertarian and barbarian character of the avant-garde is symptomatic of the avant-garde's dialectic of destruction, a dialectic which produces a tension within its key terms; that is to say, between the 'political' and the 'aesthetic' avant-gardes, or, put simply, between revolutionary politics and revolutionary art. This dialectic of destruction is, I suggest, the pre-history of Walter Benjamin's opposition of the aestheticization of politics (fascism) and the politicization of art (communism), a polarity which forms the background to Peter Bürger's distinction between the institution of art (Aestheticism, autonomous art), on the one hand, and the reintegration of art and the praxis of life (avant-garde) on the other. A significant recasting of Benjamin's and Bürger's terms is necessary, I argue, if we examine the avant-garde via the paradigm of theatricalization.

In order to explore the paradigm of theatricalization in more detail, and to explore its significance for a reading of the manifestos and manifestations of

the avant-garde, I turn to Habermas's study of the structural transformation of the public sphere. Here we find that the paradigm of theatricalization is consonant with the aestheticization of power in the historical period of feudalism, where power is 'incarnate' in the sovereign and is displayed *before* an audience. My main argument here is that, in its public manifestations in the newspaper and the theatre, the avant-garde manifesto performs a dialectic between aestheticization and politicization, between theatricalization and literalization. This dialectic is demonstrated in the example of the manifesto as both a manifestation and intensification of the 'publicness' of bourgeois emancipatory democracy and the 'publicity of show and manipulation' which Habermas identifies as characteristic of the refeudalization of the public sphere in contemporary mass democracies and spectacular society. With reference to the ambiguous figure of the Dandy as a precursor of the avant-garde artist, I demonstrate not only an incipient form of the 'libertarian' and 'barbarian' dialectic evident in the destructive character of the avant-garde, but an important moment in understanding the ambivalent aspect of the avant-garde's theatricalized engagement with emancipatory politics and the bourgeois public sphere.

Turning, finally, to Nietzsche as the principal philosopher of nihilism and the 'new barbarism' of modernity, I examine his contention that the notion of 'character' is grounded in 'recurrence' and suggest that the repetition of the self-dramatization of the destructive character of the avant-garde in the

examples of Futurism, Dada and Surrealism amounts to a theatricalization of History in the manner of Nietzsche's nihilistic theory of the eternal recurrence of the same.

V

In the 'Historical Application', I examine the successive avant-garde moments of Italian Futurism, Zürich Dada and Paris Surrealism in order to determine the extent to which the destructive character of their negation of bourgeois culture emerges from the discourses of anarchism and nihilism. In each case I illustrate that, both in form and content, the manifesto embodies a libertarian and barbarian dialectic of the avant-garde. I then demonstrate the instances whereby key manifestos and manifestations of these avant-gardes destabilize Benjamin's polarity through performing a theatricalization of politics. I conclude by suggesting that immanent in the performative and theatrical modality of the avant-garde is the spectre of the retheatricalization and refeudalization of the public sphere.

The title of chapter two 'The New Barbarians: The Destructive Gesture of Italian Futurism', is a reference to Nietzsche's prophetic fragments of 1888, contained in *The Will to Power.* In this chapter I examine the elements of the libertarian discourses of anarchism and nihilism which give rise to the 'new

barbarism' of Italian Futurism and its aesthetic of destruction. Looking at specific examples of performative interventions into the public sphere, and the manner of Italian Futurism's articulation of Italian irredentism, I trace Marinetti's rejection of the theatrical modality of parliamentarism in favour of the performative modality of interventions which enact the 'intensification of participation' in the public sphere, as well as his adherence to the more theatrically-bound *serate* and *sintesi.* Nevertheless, in their intensification of the techniques of Symbolist theatre, these strategies display tendencies of the aestheticization of politics. Although the destructive character of Futurism (its aggressive assault upon the audience, the barbarism of Marinetti's aestheticization of war, its negation of democracy) has many affinities with fascism, I maintain (against Hewitt) that the relationship between Marinetti and fascism cannot be comprehended outwith an understanding of Marinetti's association with anarchism and nihilism.

In Chapter Three, 'The Aura of Destruction: The Manifestations of Zürich Dada', I read the destructive character of Dada in relation to the importance of autonomy in anarchism and nihilism. With reference to the different strategies employed by Hugo Ball and Tristan Tzara for the integration of life and art, I also examine Benjamin's argument that the Dadaists were engaged in the 'relentless destruction of the aura'. The initial argument here is that both Ball and Tzara's desire for aesthetic autonomy (which finds its final form in the integration of art and life) reflects their demand for individual

autonomy in the discourses of anarchism and nihilism. Further, it is noted that the exteriorization and self-dramatization of individual autonomy emerges as a reaction to the complicity of bourgeois 'affirmative culture' in the barbarism of war.

The limitations of Dada 'shock' tactics are discussed with reference to Bürger and the notion that Dada shock - as an attempt to realize the destruction of the aura and institution of art - is finally simply 'consumed' as aesthetic spectacle. With this potential recuperation of shock comes the suggestion that the spectre that Dada conjures may be the capitalist consumer. Such a conclusion raises the possibility that the avant-garde manifesto augurs the destruction of the public sphere.

Whereas in Chapter Two I begin my analysis of the historical avant-garde with an examination of the ambiguous nature of anarchism and fascism in Marinetti's aesthetics of destruction, and in Chapter Three I examine the oppositions within Dada through a reading of the libertarianism and barbarism of Ball and Tzara, in Chapter Four, 'Understudy Revolutionaries: Surrealism and the Politics of Destruction,' I turn to the problematic relation of the avant-garde with the authoritarianism of communism. This relationship is problematic, it is suggested, because of the dispute between communism and anarchism over the meaning and methodologies of 'revolution' played out in the dispute between André Breton and Antonin Artaud over the Surrealist revolution. Finally, in a discussion of Artaud's theatre of cruelty and the

prohetic tone of his later writings, which encompass both revolution and apocalypse, I suggest that the theatre of cruelty enacts not only the refeudalization of the public sphere, but the theatricalization of History.

The conclusion, 'The Theatricalization and Death of the Avant-Garde', summarizes the key arguments of the thesis to conclude that, by reading the avant-garde manifesto through the paradigm of theatricalization, there is no articulation of avant-garde politics free from the process of aestheticization. Subsequently, locating the historical avant-garde at the moment of the refeudalization of the bourgeois public sphere in the emergence of consumer capitalism, I suggest that there is no avant-garde politics which can be retrieved outside the space of consumption. Further, I concede the possibility that the avant-garde attempt to attack a consumer society through the contradictory agency of the manifesto, in order to re-invigorate the 'critical publicity' of a participatory public sphere, is testament to the waning of that public sphere itself. As Habermas puts it, 'the public sphere has to be "made," it is not "there" anymore.'[15] Such a context of refeudalization heralds the destruction of the public sphere and potentially renders obsolete the form of the manifesto and with it the very modality and concept of the avant-garde. This is the spectre which haunts the historical avant-garde at the moment of its manifestation.

[1] T. W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, translated by John Cumming (London: Verso, 1972), p. xiii.
[2] Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* translated by Harry Zohn, (Glasgow: Fontana, 1973), p. 244.
[3] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* Translated by Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), p. 195.
[4] G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right* translated by T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 2.
[5] David Weir, *Anarchy and Culture: The Aesthetic Politics of Modernism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), p. 160.
[6] Ibid., p. 160.
[7] Ibid., p. 160.
[8] Ibid., p. 160.
[9] Jochen Schulte-Sasse in Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p. xv.
[10] Paul Mann, *The Theory-Death of the Avant-Garde* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 108.
[11] Habermas, op. cit., p. 72.
[12] The French sociologist Gabriel Tarde (1843-1904) went so far as to claim that the public, as such, only came into being with 'the true advent of journalism', which he dated from the time of the French Revolution. See Gabriel Tarde, *On Communication and Social Influence*, Selected Papers edited by Terry N. Clark (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1969), p. 280.
[13] Habermas, op. cit., p. 232. On this point Tarde anticipates Habermas by over half a century, writing in 1898: 'Newspapers began by expressing opinion, first the completely local opinon of privileged groups, a court, a parliament, a capital, whose gossip, discussions, or debates they reproduced; they ended up directing opinion almost as they wished, modeling it, and imposing the majority of their daily topics upon conversation.' Tarde, op. cit., p. 304.
[14] Andrew Hewitt, *Fascist Modernism: Aesthetics, Politics, and the Avant-Garde* (Stanford: University of Stanford Press, 1993), pp. 102-32.
[15] Ibid., p. 201.

1. Theoretical Frame

Chapter One

The Destructive Character of the Avant-Garde: Libertarians and Barbarians

Part One: Avant-Garde Libertarians

> The destructive character knows only one watchword: make room; only one activity: clearing away.
>
> (Walter Benjamin, 'The Destructive Character', 1931)[1]

I

'The passion for destruction,' wrote the Russian rebel Michael Bakunin in 1842, 'is a creative passion, too.'[2] A frenetic philosopher and indefatigable political agitator, Bakunin would participate in rebellions and insurrections all across Europe, from his early support of pan-Slavism in the 1840s until his death in 1876. The simultaneity of the radically disparate forces of construction and destruction which cohere in his revolutionary axiom, the closing lines of 'The Reaction in Germany: A Fragment from a Frenchman' which he published in exile under the pseudonym Jules Elysard, play a developmental role in the anti-authoritarian ideologies of anarchism and

nihilism. As revolutionary political ideologies and philosophical propositions, anarchism and nihilism demand the abolition of all authority in their desire to realize a utopian society founded upon the principles of individual autonomy and collective freedom. The dialectic of destruction and creation is foundational to Bakunin's anti-authoritarian principles which sought the transformation of society, not through compromise, negotiation and reform, but though uncompromising negation and revolution. 'Revolution, the overthrow of the State means war', he wrote, 'and that implies the destruction of men and things.'[3]

Adopting Bakunin's dialectic of destruction, anarchist libertarians and nihilists alike promoted immediate violent insurrection and revolutionary acts of barbaric destruction. Following the uprisings of 1848, a little under a decade after Bakunin's revolutionary axiom had first appeared, the French anarchist and socialist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-65), a less incendiary figure than Bakunin and less prone to the Russian's fiery rhetoric, echoed Bakunin's dialectic of creative destruction in his *General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century* (1851). Proudhon states:

> This antithesis, taken from Deuteronomy, is nothing but the formula of the revolutionary law... to wit, that every negation implies an affirmation, and that he only is the real rebuilder who is first a real destroyer.[4]

Although Bakunin's 'passion for destruction' is simultaneously creative and Proudhon's 'revolutionary law' foresees affirmation in negation, the revolutionary zeal of anarchism and nihilism is firmly rooted in destruction, as illustrated in the following passage by Bakunin:

> To save France, the whole country must be turned into a desert. All houses blown up. All cities burnt to the ground. Everything the bourgeois holds dear: property, capital, industry, commerce, in short, the whole land must be turned into one vast cemetery where the Prussian hordes will be buried. Savage, unrelenting war - if necessary to the death![5]

The destruction of the bourgeois state, Bakunin maintains, can only be realized through the agency of violent insurrection. But, where Bakunin venerates violence and lionizes destruction, Proudhon can only lament and grieve: 'Alas, it seems that peaceful revolution is too ideal for man, with his bellicose nature, to accept. Events seldom follow the most natural and least destructive course, although there is ample opportunity for them to do so.'[6] Proudhon, therefore, views violent revolution as man's curse, his fate in a fallen universe. But whether it takes the form of first principle or last resort against the forces of reaction, Bakunin's dialectic of destruction is the dominant character of anarchism and nihilism manifest in countless pamphlets, proclamations and direct actions which demanded or aggressively asserted the total freedom of individuals from the oppressive tutelage of a bourgeois state. Bakunin's desire for liberty, therefore, is inexorably linked to a dialectic of

destruction, which, in turn, gives rise to a politics of destruction and a philosophy of negation, the ultimate ethical horizon of which is freedom. For Bakunin, freedom is only actualized and preserved through the totalizing principle of destruction: 'Philosophers have not understood that against political forces there can be no guarantees but complete destruction.'[7] As Albert Camus comments in *The Rebel*, Bakunin 'wanted total freedom; but he hoped to realize it through total destruction'.[8]

The destructive character of Bakunin's rebellion, it should be noted, is related to the destructive character of the dialectic itself. As Marx would later write:

> In its mystified form, the dialectic became the fashion in Germany, because it seemed to transfigure and glorify what exists. In its rational form it is a scandal and an abomination to the bourgeoisie and its doctrinaire spokesmen, because it includes in its positive understanding of what exists a simultaneous recognition of its negation, its inevitable destruction; because it regards every historically developed form as being in a fluid state, in motion, and therefore grasps its transient aspect as well; and because it does not let itself be impressed by anything, being in its very essence critical and revolutionary.[9]

The destructive character of the dialectic itself positions Bakunin's libertarian, autonomous individual between Hegel and Marx; that is to say, between a philosophy of negation and one of revolution. Between these two highly charged poles - of *negation* and *revolution* - we find the dynamic which energizes both the fundamental principles of anarchism and nihilism and the destructive character of the avant-garde. The present thesis analyses this

revolutionary dialectic of destruction, articulated most energetically by Bakunin, as it constitutes the structural precondition of the 'destructive character' of the historical avant-gardes of Futurism, Dada and Surrealism. According to Arthur Lehning, the dialectic of destruction for Bakunin was the *sine qua non* of historical progress. 'The historically new,' he concludes, 'emerges from the complete destruction of the old.'[10] It is this emphasis upon the emergence of the historically new from the annihilation of the old which leads the avant-garde to self-dramatize its entry into history through the manifesto; a situation which results, in my view, with the theatricalization of History itself. It is this generally theatrical condition of the avant-garde, therefore, which leads me to characterize and consider the cultural iconoclasm of the historical avant-garde as a *theatre of destruction.*

II

The affinities between anarchism, nihilism and the avant-garde are recognised by many commentators. In his seminal psychological and ideological study, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Renato Poggioli advances: '[T]he only omnipresent or recurring political ideology within the avant-garde is the least political or the most antipolitical of all: libertarianism and anarchism.'[11] Similarly, in *Five Faces of Modernity*, Matei Calinescu suggests that

Bakunin's maxim of creative destruction 'is actually applicable to most of the activities of the twentieth-century avant-garde'.[12] This ideology manifests itself, critics have suggested, both at the attitudinal level of an individualistic rejection of social mores and values, and at the aesthetic level of an artistic and stylistic individualism. Andreas Huyssen, in *After The Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism*, remarks:

> The attraction of artists and intellectuals to anarchism [in the nineteenth century] can be attributed to two major factors: artists and anarchists alike rejected bourgeois society and its stagnating cultural conservatism, and both anarchists and left-wing bohemians fought the economic and technological determinism and scientism of Second International Marxism, which they saw as the theoretical and practical mirror image of the bourgeois world.[13]

Huyssen's location of the avant-garde in a socio-political milieu of anarchism is also shared by Shearer West, who recounts the influence of anarchist ideology upon *fin de siècle* avant-gardes: 'Through the concept of anarchy, the political and the artistic intermingled, as artists created new styles and sought new subject matter to express their dissatisfaction with industrial society or their desire for a utopian alternative.'[14] Importantly, however, Poggioli aligns the anarchism displayed by the avant-garde with an aggressive and destructive nihilism, commenting: '[T]he essence of nihilism... lies in destructive, not constructive, labour. No avant-garde movement fails to display, to some degree, this tendency... of nihilistic destruction.'[15] Even where an avant-garde seeks to adhere to totalitarian ideologies, such as Marinetti's fascism or

Breton's and Aragon's communism, Poggioli maintains it is nonetheless the result of an attraction to the destructive and liberatory force of nihilism:

> We must not forget that Italian futurists and French surrealists embraced fascism and communism, respectively, at least partly out of love of adventure, or by attraction to the nihilistic elements contained within those political tendencies. In fact, every avant-garde movement, in one of its phases at least, aspires to realize what the dadaists called 'the demolition job,' an ideal of the *tabula rasa* which spilled over from the individual and artistic level to that of the collective life.[16]

Similarly, Christopher Innes, in his study *Avant-Garde Theatre, 1892-1992*, echoes Poggioli's assertion of a philosophical and political correspondence between anarchism, nihilism and the avant-garde, claiming: 'As a philosophy, the avant-garde corresponds to anarchism, which also has its nihilistic side.'[17]

Innes is among the few commentators to draw attention to the importance of Bakunin's thought for an understanding of the politics of the avant-garde, claiming that, in general terms, the Russian anarchist's ideas remained the ideals of the avant-garde, 'even if their source frequently went unrecognized'.[18] His study acknowledges the consonance of anarchism and nihilism and their battle against 'political hierarchies' to the attack on 'the cultural hegemony of the establishment' perpetrated by the avant-garde. However, his study contains key factual errors and his argument fails to elaborate upon initial claims.[19] Further, Innes fails to draw attention to the fact that Poggioli himself considered 'erroneous' any direct correlation between 'revolutionary' and 'artistic' avant-gardes. Nonetheless, Innes's

comparison between political and artistic libertarianism (laced with cultural nihilism) would seem to be supported, in the short term, by Calinescu's examination of the origins of the term 'avant-garde', which emerges from the terrain of military strategy but which is, in its artistic context, 'directly derived from the language of revolutionary politics'.[20]

According to Calinescu, the term 'avant-garde' was appropriated by artists and poets from common military terminology for an elite unit trained to operate behind enemy lines in order to open up and secure a breach-head enabling remaining troops to advance into this new position. The term first appears in relation to culture in the sixteenth century in a description of a group of poets which the French humanist Etienne Pasquier considered 'the forerunners of other poets'.[21] But it was not until the early part of the nineteenth century, in the wake of the French Revolution, that the cultural phrase developed political import. In 1820 the utopian social reformer Henri Saint-Simon envisioned a society in which 'things should move ahead with the artists in the lead, followed by the scientists, [and] the industrialists'.[22] Artists would thus perform a leading role in the new organisation of Enlightened society. In *De l'organisation sociale* (1825) Saint-Simon would write:

> [T]he men of imagination will open the march: they will take the Golden Age from the past and offer it as a gift to future generations; they will make society pursue passionately the rise of its well-being, and they will do this

> by... making each member of society aware that everyone will soon have a share in enjoyments which up to now have been the privilege of an extremely small class; they will sing the blessings of civilization, and for the attainment of their goal they will use all the means of the arts, eloquence, poetry, painting, music; in a word, they will develop the poetic aspect of the new system.[23]

In this utopian vision aesthetics, scientific knowledge and manufacture conjoin to forge a new vision of society, which appears as a future Golden Age (a romantic appeal to the future as an idyllic vision of the past, in which France conveniently manages to erase the traumatic barbarism of the Terror and the growing inequities of the Industrial Revolution).[24] Saint-Simon's most explicit statement on the role of artists as the 'avant-garde' of society comes in the 1825 dialogue 'L'Artist, le savant et l'industriel'[25]:

> It is we, artists, that will serve as your avant-garde; the power of the arts is indeed the most immediate and the fastest. We have weapons of all sorts: when we want to spread new ideas among people , we carve them in marble or paint them in canvas; we popularize them by means of music and poetry; by turns, we resort to the lyre or the flute the ode or the song, history or the novel; the theatre stage is open to us, and it is mostly from there that our influence exerts itself electrically, victoriously.[26]

To be an avant-garde artist, therefore, was no longer to be simply at the forefront of aesthetic innovation, it was to place this advanced vision at the service of a new society. Importantly, at its inauguration as a critical term, the idea of an artistic avant-garde is associated with the most immediately audience-oriented art form: theatre. The theatre stage, then, was considered the optimum platform from which artists could announce their vision of a

new society. But this positivist theatre of constructive new ideas has yet to become a theatre of destruction. That is to say, despite his continued use of military terminology[27], Saint-Simon's idea of the avant-garde artist has yet to be cast in the role of destructive revolutionary, such as Marx envisioned for the proletarian, a role which will characterize the iconoclastic manifestations of the historical avant-garde. For Saint-Simon and his followers, the future utopian society would no longer be dominated by the former hierarchies of aristocracy, clergy and the military, but emancipated by the liberal and enlightened vision of artists, scientists and industrialist. In other words, in Enlightened society a radical new leadership emerges to challenge the privilege and hegemony of class in the *ancient régime*, but this force arises, not from the ranks of the proletariat, but from an intellectual elite from within the bourgeoisie but hostile to its ideologies. This gives rise to what Poggioli refers to as an 'antinomy between the bourgeois and the artistic spirit' and notes: 'It was Malraux who observed that the origins of modern art coincided with the artist's repudiation of bourgeois culture. In contemporary aesthetic ideology the bourgeoisie, he observed, is in opposition and "it is not to the proletariat or the aristocracy that it is opposed, but to the artist".'[28]

Poggioli's antinomy is a recasting of an opposition articulated by Matthew Arnold. In *Culture and Anarchy* (1868), Arnold distinguishes between the men of anarchy (philistines, Liberals), on the one hand, and the men of

culture (artists), on the other.[29] Poggioli merely reverses the roles of Arnold's antimony. In his drama of the avant-garde conflict with bourgeois society, artists no longer perform the role of preservers and protectors of 'right reason' in the deontic modality of Arnold's concept of culture. Rather, they are cast as revolutionary protagonists who challenge the role of art in perpetuating a culture they detest; a bourgeois culture to which they are nevertheless economically tied, but from which they are politically alienated. This antimony between bourgeois and avant-garde is played out more clearly in Herbert Marcuse's analysis of the 'affirmative character' of bourgeois culture and the avant-garde's 'culture of negation'.

In his 1937 essay, 'The Affirmative Character of Culture', Marcuse criticizes the moral hypocrisy of the affirmations of bourgeois culture. In Marcuse's view, the role of art in bourgeois culture was to facilitate the overcoming of its cultural contradictions: '"That soul is of the essence,"' he wrote, 'makes a good slogan when only power is of the essence.'[30] During the era of imperialist expansion of the bourgeois nation-states, affirmative culture displayed a 'progressive character' by affirming the existence of a realm of human values beyond that of material gain. Nevertheless, once bourgeois rule had begun to contract and stabilize, the redemptive qualities of affirmative culture 'entered increasingly into the service of the suppression of the discontented masses and of mere self-justifying exaltation'.[31] According to Marcuse's analysis, the affirmative character of bourgeois culture serves to

expiate capitalism for the material 'unfreedoms' created as a result of its economic conditions. Rather than reveal and celebrate the potential liberties of free individuals, 'affirmative culture' serves merely to conceal 'the physical and psychic vitiation of the individual'.[32] In effect, the function of affirmative bourgeois culture is the fulfilment of what Jürgen Habermas refers to as 'residual needs':

> Bourgeois art has become the refuge for a satisfaction, even if only virtual, of those needs that have become, as it were, illegal in the material life-process of bourgeois society... In the artistically beautiful, the bourgeoisie once could experience primarily its own ideals and redemption, however fictive, of a promise of happiness that was merely suspended in everyday life.[33]

In contrast, for both Marcuse and Habermas, avant-garde art is antagonistic to the affirmative character of bourgeois cultural production.[34] In its desire for the transformation of reality, the avant-garde must negate both bourgeois culture and its economic foundations. Marcuse writes that avant-garde art 'can only be realized *against* idealist culture, and only against this culture is it propagated as a general demand: the demand for a real transformation of the material conditions of existence, for a new life, for a new form of labour and of enjoyment'.[35] As Marcuse foresees, the avant-garde emerges from the demand for the total destruction of bourgeois social conditions, claiming that the exaggeration of bourgeois affirmative culture 'contains the higher truth that such a world cannot be changed piecemeal, but only through its destruction'.[36]

The corollary of Marcuse's analysis of the avant-garde's opposition to the culture of capitalism is an understanding of the 'destructive character' of the avant-garde. Destruction becomes the necessary pre-condition of any vision of cultural renewal advanced by artists in their self-proclaimed role of 'leading the line of march to the future'[37]. In other words, to be considered avant-garde, rather than simply novel, artists must seek to arrogate a revolutionary ideology to their artistic revolt:

> Although they are confirmed enemies of the current sociopolitical power structure, [avant-garde artists] define themselves in terms of their allegiance to a political cause, which Poggioli and Innes, among others, associate with anarchism and nihilism, and a vision of the future rather than solely in terms of their discontent with the status quo.[38]

To enable avant-garde ideas to be put into practice they must, therefore, be combined with a coherent social programme, often expounded in manifestos. Otherwise, that which considers itself avant-garde is liable to be dismissed as utopian fantasy:

> No matter how radical its effects, an action is not avant-garde without an ideology to characterize it. The Paris Commune became an exemplary avant-garde political event when Karl Marx hailed it as a working model of the future society.[39]

> An avant-garde does not simply emerge 'ready-made' from virgin soil to be attributed à la mode. It is actively formed and fulfils a particular function. It is the product of a self-consciousness on the part of those who identify themselves as, and with, a special social and artistic grouping within the *intelligentsia* at a specific historical conjuncture.[40]

> An avant-garde man is like an enemy inside a city he is bent on destroying, against which he rebels; for like any system of government, an established form of expression is also a form of oppression. The avant-garde man is the opponent of an existing system.[41]

> Avant-garde artists act as an advanced guard for the 'army' of adherents to a particular revolutionary program. They scout the enemy territory (the current sociopolitical milieu) with their vivid analysis of contemporary life and prepare it for invasion by disseminating rousing slogans and sparking hopes for a better future. They are an elite corps manning an exposed position in the fight for a better world.[42]

From these variations on definitions of the avant-garde (Marxist, historicist, anti-historicist) we can see that key to the establishment of the identity of the avant-garde artist remains the act of self-dramatization: that the avant-garde self-consciously 'incarnates' itself as an avant-garde. That is to say that, through the manifesto (which we will examine in more detail later), the avant-garde self-dramatizes its act of self-determination from the affirmative character of bourgeois culture.

In order to understand the theatricalized character of the manifesto more clearly, it is important, first, to articulate the notions of self-creation and self-determination central to the discourses of anarchism and nihilism as they are expressed in the writings of Max Stirner and Friedrich Nietzsche. Second, it is important to analyse the correspondence of these political and philosophical precepts to the theatrical concept of *Kaloprosopia* or self-dramatization in the discourse and practices of Aestheticism and symbolist drama.

III

As William James pointed out in his study on human psychology, John Stuart Mill considered character to be 'a completely fashioned will'.[43] Importantly, for a discussion of the destructive 'character' of the avant-garde, Mill's idea of character is inextricable from a concept of individual autonomy:

> A person whose desires and impulses are his own – are the expression of his own nature, as it has been developed and modified by his own culture – is said to have character. One whose desires and impulses are not his own, has no character, no more than a steam-engine has a character.[44]

Thus Mill establishes a foundational link between the very notion of 'character' and the principle of individual autonomy in political anarchism. Indeed Mill's essay *On Liberty* (first published in 1859) proclaimed 'whatever crushes individuality is despotism'.[45] *On Liberty* was an important touchstone in the development of European anarchism. However, such ideas on individual autonomy and self-creation were already common currency among German Idealist philosophers and, in particular, the Young Hegelian, Max Stirner.

Max Stirner (born Johan Kasper Schmidt, 1806 - 1856), outlines his doctrine of self-creation in *The Ego and His Own: The Case of the Individual Against Authority* (1844). In this work, Stirner anticipates Mill's notion of the autonomous individual or character as a 'completely fashioned will,' but

provides a more nihilistic framework for his egoism. Stirner's entire argument proceeds from his foundation of the 'sovereign' self or ego in a 'creative nothing'. He writes: 'I am the creative nothing, the nothing out of which I myself as creator create everything.'[46] Stirner's brand of egoistic nihilism asserts the primacy of the 'creative nothing' as the basis for the 'unique' ego, a position of radical autonomy which negates the authority of religion or ideology:

> Away, then, with every cause that is not altogether my cause! You think at least the "good cause" must be my cause? Why I myself am my own cause, and I am neither good or bad. Neither has meaning for me. The divine is God's cause, the human, Man's. My cause is neither the divine nor the human, not the good, just, free or any of these, but solely what is mine, and it is not a general one, but is unique, as I am unique. Nothing is more to me than myself![47]

Stirner's 'creative nothing' is a primordial act of self-creation and egotistic negation of all hierarchies or laws which threaten to curtail the boundary and liberty of the unique self. Significantly, as his argument proceeds, Stirner's self-creating ego takes on a profoundly destructive character, to the extent of becoming also a self-destroying ego. In contrast to the German Idealism of Johann Gottlieb Fichte, who formulated the ego as an eternal and fixed being, an 'Absolute I', Stirner considers the ego to be in a constant state of becoming, finite and self-annihilating:

> When Fichte says, 'The ego is all,' this seems to harmonize perfectly with my thesis. But it is not that the ego *is* all, but the ego *destroys* all, and only the self-dissolving ego, the never-being ego, the - *finite* ego is really I. Fichte speaks of the 'absolute' ego, but I speak of me, the transitory ego.[48]

John P. Clark has argued that Stirner's concept of the transitory ego rejects the notion of a fixed or stable identity and presents instead the ego as a continually transforming process: 'Rejecting the concept of the ego as a thing or an idea, Stirner comes upon what he takes to be the antithesis of these - that it is not a thing, but a nothing; not an idea, but a *process*.'[49] The primordial will which creates and directs becoming (being-in-process, or Heidegger's 'being-in-the-world') is simultaneously the will-to-destruction. Emerging from the 'creative nothing', the will-to-destruction, as R. W. K. Paterson has pointed out, is also directed against itself:

> That fluid, finite totality which is simultaneously his 'property' and his extant, concrete identity, his being-in-the-world... is distinctly preserved as a totality-in-the-process-of-disintegration. The egoist's property *is* only insofar as it is a continuous becoming and it is a 'becoming' only insofar as it is continuously becoming *nothing*.[50]

Thus, Stirner's 'transitory ego', which springs self-willed from the ever pregnant creative nothingness, has no progenitor (God) and rejects all higher authorities (Monarch, Aristocracy, State). It is born, acts and dies according to its own volition. The world which surrounds the ego *is* and *is not* by an effect of its 'own will'. It is both destructive ('The *own will* of Me is the

State's *destroyer*')[51] and auto-destructive ('self-dissolving'). There are many obvious parallels here between the destructive and auto-destructive character of Stirner's nihilistic egoism and Nietzsche's theory of nihilism and the *Übermensch.*

Nietzsche's *The Will to Power* (1883-8) contains his most extensive writings on the theme of nihilism, which Nietzsche considers 'the revaluation of the highest values hitherto' in the wake of the death of God. In this work Nietzsche identifies two categories of nihilism, the *passive* and the *active*. On the one hand, Christianity represented a particularly weak form of the spirit which he calls *passive nihilism*: 'the weary nihilism that no longer attacks its most famous form, Buddhism.'[52] On the other hand, *active nihilism* represents the true direction and impact of nihilism, and its essence is destruction; as Nietzsche wrote in Thesis 23: '[nihilism] reaches its maximum of relative strength as a violent force of destruction - as active nihilism'.[53] As a corollary of the death of God, active nihilism is the demolition of the values of the metaphysical tradition. Accordingly, the entirety of being and becoming is located not in the metaphysical, but in the physical, corporeal, all too human body: 'I am body entirely, and nothing beside.'[54] But in Nietzsche the self-determination of the I is incarnated as a self-dramatization of emancipation: 'You say "I" and you are proud of this word. But greater than this - although you will not believe in it - is your body and its great intelligence, which does not say "I" but *performs* "I"'.[55]

Nietzsche's comments here confirm Habermas's later claims regarding the profoundly theatricalized, audience-oriented subjectivity of bourgeois individuals: 'Subjectivity, as the innermost core of the private, was always already oriented to an audience (*Publikum*).'[56] Whereas bourgeois audience-oriented subjectivity (Habermas demonstrates) is disseminated in the literary public sphere of letter exchange, diaries and the novel, it is my argument that for the avant-garde artist such an audience-oriented subjectivity is *intensified* and *radicalized* in the combination of *self-dramatization* and *self-emancipation* in the theatricalized text of the manifesto. This coupling of *self-emancipation* and *self-dramatization* is what constitutes both Stirner's and Nietzsche's idea of *self-creation*.

John Carroll, for example, identifies in Nietzsche's rendering of the *Übermensch* a rehearsal for the self-creative agency of the artist:

> Both Stirner and Nietzsche place primary importance on the individual *creating* himself; both stress notions of process and flux, of realization and becoming; both disdain unimaginative, unplayful, and instrumental action. Their anarchism rejects external authority on the grounds that it inhibits exploration and invention by providing the individual with set patterns of action. In all, both philosophers point towards the central value of creativity: the artist is the most appropriate paradigm for either the egoist or the *Übermensch*. Indeed, Nietzsche's Dionysian-Apollonian dialectic stands as a definition of the creative process.[57]

Carroll's analogy between the creative process of the artist and the agonistic patterns of self-creation in Stirner and Nietzsche may be extended to the *self-creation* or *self-dramatization* of the avant-garde through the agency of the

manifesto. Importantly, in this context Daniel Guérin has suggested that Stirner's egoism is essentially aesthetic and theatrical 'since he destroys all propositions except those which fulfil a purely aesthetic function in the egoist's "overriding purpose of self-enjoyment and self-display".'[58] Thus, the emancipation of the ego from religion, morality, ideology or State performed by the auto-creative agency of the will-to-power, as articulated in the philosophy of Stirner and Nietzsche, stands as a precursor to the dramatization of emancipation in the manifestos of the historical avant-garde. Although Carroll fails to emphasize sufficiently the destructive character of self-creation in either Stirner or Nietzsche, his recognition that 'Nietzsche's Dionysian-Apollonian dialectic stands as a definition of the creative process' alludes to the possibility of the libertarian-barbarian dialectic of the destructive character of the avant-garde's assault on bourgeois society. The destructive character of the avant-garde is one performed, or rather 'produced' in the manifesto. As we shall see, the avant-garde manifesto - primal scene of the self-dramatization of self-determination - enacts a theatricalization of the politics of emancipation.

IV

In the closing chapter of *Symbolist Theatre: The Formation of an Avant-Garde* (1993), Frantisek Deak points to the proliferation of self-dramatization in the symbolist theatre of the late nineteenth century:

> The second half of the nineteenth century is characterized by a great passion for theatre both as an art form and as a style of life. Role-playing, the transformation of oneself as well as one's environment by treating it as a stage set, proliferations of public and private performances, all point to a kind of theatromania or theatocracy, as Nietzsche referred to the hold of theatre over art and life. The theatricalization of everyday life, role-playing, costuming, masking, and self-dramatization do not belong exclusively to the turn of the century, even though they proliferated greatly during this period. The view of the world as a stage and the notion of role-playing in life certainly did not originate in the nineteenth century. Both have a long history, probably as long as the history of theatre. By the time of Cervantes, the view of the world as a stage was so familiar that when Don Quixote explains it to Sancho Panza, he retorts that it is a fine comparison 'although not so new that I haven't heard of it on various occasions before, like the one of the game of chess'.[59]

The theatricalization to which Deak refers, was not so much contained on the symbolist stage, but extended into an aestheticization of the life of the audience, in the auditorium and beyond. Audiences would quite literally perform, he suggests, citing interventions at the productions of Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* during its premier at the *Theatre de L'Œuvre*[60], to men dressing in medieval or romantic costume, to women dressing in styles after characters from Wagner's operas or Maurice Maeterlinck's plays. The immersion in art was such, Deak reports, that people would even emulate figures from the paintings of Puvis de Chavanne and Gustave Moreau.

'Viewed in traditional terms,' Deak suggests, 'the acting, or even in some sense "the theatre," is happening in the auditorium instead of the stage.' He continues: '[T]he stage and the audience of the symbolist theatres suggest a juxtaposition of two kinds of theatricality: the symbolist scenic theatricality, and the gestural theatricality of incarnation practised in life.'[61] It is the latter form of symbolist theatricality, the 'gestural theatricality of incarnation,' which is important here. By dressing and behaving in the mode of actors the audience of symbolist drama, in effect, fictionalized, theatricalized and aestheticized their engagement with reality. At the moment of productions these two constituencies came together in a context where the ritual of high art was transmogrified, as Deak suggests, 'into a ludic celebration of art, a modern carnival'.[62] It is a carnival which is not simply contained in the auditorium of the symbolist theatre, but one which implies the extension of a specular and theatricalized condition into the realms of the bourgeois public sphere:

> Just as the symbolist actor in his role aspired to be a sign, many in the audience, especially those called aesthetes, aspired to be artistic signs as well, in fact, works of art, with the same clarity and purity as the actors on stage. It was not merely by their dress that the aesthetes demonstrated their artfulness, but also by a more fundamental commitment: by the application of art concepts to themselves and to their manners, life-styles, and personalities, thus turning themselves not only into virtual, but also literal, walking works of art. Since their stage was public life, the realization of the same principle led to different results than on the theatrical stage. In order to be a fictional character, outside of any specific novel or drama, they had to carry the entire play and mise-en-scène with them, so to speak – in fact, incarnate the play in their own personality. The context, the stage, where they played or realized themselves as works of art, was the public life of the city, the discourse of

> contemporary art, and theatrical representations that were heightened or, one could say, dramatized moments of both public life and literary discourse.[63]

Deak regards this phenomenon of theatricalization and aestheticization in the art of personality - the 'general theatricality of incarnation' of life into art - as a forerunner of the principle of the avant-garde desire to 'integrate' art and life. Here Deak introduces the notion of *Kaloprosopia*, as advanced by the Symbolist theorist Joséphin Péladan in *L'Art Idéalist et Mystic* (1894). 'Péladan', Deak comments, 'considered the invention and realization of one's character, or the character that one attributes to oneself, as a distinctive art form'.[64] Péladan writes:

> The first of the arts of personality is *Kaloprosopia*, that is to say, the embellishment of human appearance, or, more precisely, the articulation of character through common gestures... Whoever fully realizes the externalization of an idea will fully realize its internal aspect as well, as long as he is consistent; similarly the realization of the internal will lead to a truthful exterior... The law of *Kaloprosopia* is to realize the exteriorization of the character one claims for oneself.[65]

Péladan's *Kaloprosopia* refers, then, to a performative subject 'in which the formal self is replaced by an invented self, or by a multitude of selves' as 'the exteriorization of the character one claims for oneself'.[66] *Kaloprosopia*, then, is directly related to the egoistic self-creation of Stirner and Nietzsche, which Carroll relates to the self-creation of the avant-garde artist and which I claim is embodied in the (per)formative function of the manifesto. In this context, the anti-bourgeois currents of extreme individual autonomy in

anarchism and nihilism seem consonant with the aesthetic theory advanced by aestheticism in the theatrical milieu of the symbolist drama.

Nevertheless, in our earlier definitions of the avant-garde we can already see the relinquishing of the term's associations with formal innovation and aesthetic experimentation alone (autonomous art, aestheticism, art for art's sake), and instead identify a move towards the integration of art with a revolutionary ideology (politicization of art), as implied in the appeal to Marx.

In his study of the genealogy of the avant-garde, Donald D. Egbert identifies two strands of avant-garde culture, each with a different relationship to revolutionary politics. On the one hand, he sees a tradition emerging from Saint-Simon 'which was committed to direct social intervention... [and which] ... proved amenable to directly politicized aesthetics' and had an affinity with Marxism; on the other hand, he suggests, there were those, with affinities to anarchism, 'who wished to restrain the aesthetic from any direct intervention in the political'.[67] Egbert continues:

> The latter in turn, if they had any social interest as all, were likely to be sympathetic to the social utopianism of Saint-Simon's chief socialist rival, Charles Fourier, who in contrast to Saint-Simon stood not for a social movement highly centralized about a controlling élite group, but for decentralizing society and government into small, closely knit, federated communities, or "phalanxes," as more conducive to the personal development of their individual members. Thus, where Saint-Simon was to be in many respects an ancestor of Marxian varieties of communism, Fourier was to be an ancestor of modern communist anarchism, a variety of socialism to which leaders of art for art's sake understandably became more sympathetic.[68]

The central characteristic of anarchism (from the Greek *anarkhos*, literally 'without a ruler'), is autonomy. The authority wielded by church and state, for example, are anathema to anarchist, nihilist and communist alike, with Marx denouncing religion as the opiate of the masses and Bakunin declaiming: 'The abolition of the Church and State must be the first and indispensable condition of the true liberation of society.'[69] But it is only anarchists and nihilists that aver the concept of 'authority' in all its guises:

> There must be no monarchy, no aristocracy, no democracy even, insofar as this implies a government acting in the name of the people and claiming to be the people. No authority, no government, even if it be popular government; this is the Revolution.[70]
>
> Whoever puts his hand on me to govern me is an usurper and a tyrant; I declare him my enemy.[71]
>
> The first duty of the revolution will be to make a bonfire of all existing laws.[72]

From these pronouncements one could assume that anarchism also promoted the autonomy of the artist. And indeed it was the centrality of individual freedom which attracted many *fin de siècle* artists (including many of the Symbolists and neo-Impressionists) to its banner.[73] Yet, despite Egbert's claim of an affiliation between anarchism and aestheticism which appears sensible on the grounds of an 'aesthetic individualism' (Calinescu), when we actually examine the aesthetic theory of both key anarchists and nihilists we find in actuality a rejection of aestheticism and art for art's sake in favour of the

politicization of art and the subordination of aesthetic desire to ideological duty.

V

Poggioli cites a passage from a pamphlet entitled, *De la mission de l'art et du rôle des artistes* by Gabriel-Désiré Laverdant, a follower of the utopian socialist, Charles Fourier. In this tract, published in 1845, Laverdant writes:

> Art, the expression of society, manifests, in its highest soaring, the most advanced social tendencies: it is the forerunner and the revealer. Therefore, to know whether art worthily fulfils its proper mission as initiator, whether the artist is truly of the avant-garde, one must know where Humanity is going, know what the destiny of the human race is... Along with the hymn to happiness, the dolorous and despairing ode... To lay bare with a brutal brush all the brutalities, all the filth, which are at the base of our society.[74]

This passage is referenced by Poggioli, not to illustrate the apparent proximity between the cultural avant-garde and the political avant-garde, but rather to reveal an actual distance. Laverdant's conception of the avant-garde (before the term became the servant of two masters) is defined not in its celebration of the egoistic pursuit of an aesthetic radicalism but in art's ethical subordination to the ideals of political radicalism. Poggioli's reservations regarding the correspondence between avant-garde culture and

radical politics are also borne out if we examine the attempts of key anarchist and nihilist thinkers to construct an aesthetic theory germane to their ideological goals.

In many respects, the 'proper mission' Laverdant envisioned for art is close to the 'social destiny' of avant-garde art (in the form of a critical realism) advanced by the anarchist philosopher, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. The importance of art to Proudhon's political thinking can be seen in an early work *Système des contradiction économique ou Philosophie de la misère* (1846). Although Proudhon places Morality above Aesthetics in this work, he nonetheless envisions a future society where all workers would become artists.[75] But Proudhon's most sustained commentary on the role of art in society does not come until his unfinished treatise, *Du principe de l'Art et de sa destination sociale* (reported to have been completed by the painter Gustave Courbet after Proudhon's death in 1865). In this work, the father of anarchism sets out to 'reconcile art with the just and the useful'.[76] On this account, Proudhon raises an ethical objection to the isolationism of 'art for art's sake'. 'Art for art's sake' he proclaimed, 'is nothing'.[77] Instead, Proudhon favoured an integral relationship of avant-garde art with the collective, as evidenced in the following passages:

> [F]rom now on art will work for the physical and moral improvement of the species, and it will do this, not by means of obscure hieroglyphics, erotic figures, or useless images of spirituality, but by means of vivid, intelligent representations of ourselves. The task of art, I say, is to warn us, to praise

> us, to teach us, to make us blush by confronting us with the mirror of our own conscience.[78]

> Society relegates art to a sphere outside real life; it makes it a means of pleasure or amusement, a pastime, but a pastime it regards as of no consequence, as vain and superfluous, as a debauch, an illusion – anything at all. Art is no longer a faculty or function, a form of life, an integral, constitutive part of existence.[79]

In this context, it is important to note that Proudhon also imputes a destructive function to art: 'Art is the expression of society, and if it does not exist for the purpose of improving society, it exists for its destruction'.[80] In this destructive proposition we witness the full import of Proudhon's subjugation of the aesthetic to art's social destiny, that is to precipitate the revolution. As Max Raphael points out, 'when [Proudhon] set out to refute the principle of "art for art's sake," he was content to subordinate what he called "the aesthetic faculty" to the theoretical reason and the practical reason (science and moral conscience)'.[81]

Proudhon's anarchist aesthetic theory is thus an attack upon aestheticism and autonomous art, whereby art is removed from all considerations of form, to depict the content of conditions of production in capitalist society:

> To paint men in the sincerity of their natures and their habits, on their work, in their civic and domestic functions, with their present day appearance, above all without pose; to surprise them, so to speak, in the dishabille of their consciousness, not simply for the pleasure of jeering, but as the aim of general education and by way of aesthetic information: such would seem to me to be the true point of departure for modern art.[82]

Proudhon's (anti-)aesthetic vision of a socially engaged critical art reduces the artist's task to the provision of 'aesthetic information' for the 'general education' of the masses. The corollary of this type of proscribed avant-gardism, writes David Weir, 'would be any artistic work that merely points out the inequities of the age, so that the political philosopher may then make use of the work as a form of social criticism to suggest an alternative model of society.'[83]

There appears, then, to be a serious contradiction in Proudhon's aesthetic theory where artists must subordinate their freedom to the services of the revolution.[84] (Of course, an artist dedicated to the social revolution may feel that they could only achieve artistic fulfilment in aiding one's fellow man, and thus experience no contradiction.) Such a subordination of aesthetics to the contingencies of society is opposed to the trajectory of Aestheticism and autonomous art, which shared many sympathies with anarchism, not least its commitment to the autonomy of the individual. As Weir concludes:

> [T]here is no question that anarchists and artists alike at the end of the nineteenth century were in open opposition to bourgeois society. But many artist were also implicitly opposed to the anarchists whose political values they appeared to share because they had little in common with the culture of anarchism put forward by the anarchists themselves.[85]

If we now turn to an examination of the aesthetic theory of the nineteenth-century Russian nihilist, N. G. Cherneshevsky, we witness similar divisions

between the autonomy of art and the philosophy of radical individual autonomy. In his essay 'The Aesthetic Relations of Art to Reality' (1855), Cherneshevsky subordinates the interests of art and aesthetics to the unmediated appreciation of Reality and Nature: 'The sea is beautiful; looking at it, we never think of being dissatisfied with it, aesthetically.'[86] Consequently, art, which to Cherneshevsky consists of attempting to reproduce the beautiful, the sublime, or the comic countenance of nature, is ultimately condemned to function as a 'copy' of nature, less grand and less worthy than reality itself. He continues:

> Usually it is said that the content of art is the beautiful; but this restricts the sphere of art too much. Even if we grant that the sublime and the comic are moments of the beautiful, the content of many works of art will not come under the three headings of the beautiful, the sublime and the comic... [...] ... The simplest way to solve this riddle would be to say that the sphere of art is not limited only to beauty and its so-called moments, but embraces everything in reality (in nature and in life) that is of interest to man not as a scholar but as an ordinary human being... The essential purpose of art is to reproduce what is of interest to man in real life.[87]

In other words, under the auspices of expanding the category of legitimate aesthetic experience, Cherneshevsky advances a realist manifesto for the 'essential purpose of art', that is to say, that art should not attempt to compete with nature in reproducing the abstract notions of the beautiful, the comic or the sublime moments of reality. Instead, art's essential purpose was to be found in the reproduction of concrete (social) conditions of reality.

'Reality', Cherneshevsky concludes, 'stands higher than dreams, and essential purpose stands higher than fantastic claims'.[88] Whilst the arguments of realism are far more complex than either Cherneshevsky or Proudhon imply - each fail, for example, to recognize the artificiality of the transparency of realism as an aesthetic mode (and therefore the problematic inherent in Proudhon's appeal to 'aesthetic information'), or the primary aestheticization in representations of reality (which allows Cherneshevsky, for example, to consider the sea 'beautiful') - the prioritization of the 'real' over the 'artificial' here signals the rejection of aestheticism and the autonomy of art by key philosophers of individual autonomy. Thus, contrary to the pattern suggested by Egbert above, key anarchist and nihilist philosophers are antagonistic to aestheticism and the autonomy of art in favour of the subordination of art to revolutionary aims. Thus, Poggioli concludes: 'the hypothesis (really only an analogy or symbol) that aesthetic radicalism and social radicalism, revolutionaries in art and revolutionaries in politics, are allied, which empirically seems valid, is theoretically and historically erroneous.[89] In other words, although the aims of the avant-garde and political revolutionaries may at first appear commensurate in their desire to effect revolution, Poggioli disputes the hypothesis whereby a revolutionary aesthetic automatically arrogates a revolutionary politics. Yet, the rejection of aestheticism by Proudhon and Cherneshevsky seems to foreshadow not only the Marxist-Lenininst renunciation of art for art's sake, but also Lukács

rejection of the autonomy of 'avant-garde' modernist art - an argument commonly framed as the Lukács - Adorno debate.

Although this is not the place to attempt to reproduce the full permutations of this debate, it may prove useful to delineate its central polarity. 'In so far as the principle of praxis is the prescription for changing reality,' wrote the Hungarian Marxist Georg Lukács in the essay, 'Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat', 'it must be tailored to the concrete material substratum of action if it is to impinge upon it to any effect.'[90] On the understanding that 'the broad mass of the people can learn nothing from avant-garde literature,' Lukács called for a return to realism in the service of the proletarian revolution.[91] In this essay, Lukács attempts to forge an aesthetic consonant with revolutionary Marxism, in which the concerns of art are subordinated to the rational principles of historical materialism and tailored to the 'material substratum' of social conditions. In so doing he echoes Proudhon's demand, half a century or so earlier, for a transparent, critical painting in the service of socialist anarchism.

In contrast to Lukács' promotion of a socialist-realist art committed to a notion of revolutionary praxis, Theodor W. Adorno embarks on a defence of autonomous art, in terms of the aesthetic freedom of modernism and the cultural avant-garde. Adorno's most important text in this respect is *Aesthetic Theory* (1962) where the Frankfurt-School philosopher denies the notion of a 'socially useful' art, claiming lapidarily: 'If any social function can be

ascribed to art at all, it is the function to have no function.'[92] For all its distance from society, autonomous art, in Adorno's view, is nonetheless critical of society: 'By congealing into an entity unto itself – rather than obeying existing social norms and thus proving itself to be "socially useful" – art criticizes society just by being there.'[93] In other words, autonomous art, in its very purposelessness, is an *absolute* negation of the means-ends rationality of bourgeois capitalism. Therefore, by Adorno's reckoning, the art which appears the least politicized is, in effect, the most politically effective. If we remember Poggioli's characterization of libertarianism and anarchism as 'the least political or the most antipolitical of all' then we might infer that Adorno is promoting an aesthetic anarchism. The Frankfurt School philosopher, against his will, enters the stage wearing the costume of a libertarian anarchist.

The debate between Lukács and Adorno is significant if only for the reason that both their positions - the adoption of a critical realist tradition or the autonomy of art - are rejected in Bürger's interpretation of the historical avant-garde. Although the rejection of art for art's sake seems to be the locus of both the aesthetic theory of anarchism and nihilism and that of Marxist's such as Lukács, Bürger's articulation of the historical avant-garde's rejection of autonomous art conforms to neither of these ideological positions. On the one hand, the limitation of the critical realism promoted by the likes of Proudhon, Chemeshevsky and Lukács is that, whilst it ostensibly criticizes

bourgeois culture, it leaves the bourgeois category (or 'institution') of art intact. The drawback of the position of autonomous art favoured by Adorno, on the other hand, is that whilst it might pretend to a renunciation of bourgeois culture its autonomous status fails to preserve art from its commodity status under capitalism. In fact, according to Habermas, the autonomous status of art is a prerequisite for its commodity status in bourgeois culture.[94] Instead, in Bürger's view, the critical importance of the historical avant-garde is due to its twofold attack upon the institution of art and its status as a commodity under capitalism which emerges from a sustained desire to 'integrate' art with the praxis of life.

VI

For Bürger, Dada's attack upon the institution of art is a defining characteristic of the 'avant-garde,' which he regards not so much a rejection of previous artistic modes so much as a refusal to accept art as a category separate from everyday life. As Bürger claims: 'Dadaism, the most radical movement within the European avant-garde, no longer criticizes schools that preceded it, but criticizes art as an institution, and the course its development took in bourgeois society.'[95] The concept 'art as an institution' refers to the 'productive and distributive apparatus' which governs the social context of art

as an economic subsystem in bourgeois society, but also to the ideas about art that 'prevail at a given time and that determine the reception of works'. He continues: 'The avant-garde turns against both the distributive apparatus on which the work of art depends, and the status of art in bourgeois society as defined by the concept of autonomy.'[96] Thus the form of art indicative of the status of culture in bourgeois society is Aestheticism. To Bürger, aestheticism represents the moment of the 'full unfolding' of art in bourgeois culture, commenting:

> [T]he full unfolding of the constituent elements of a field is the condition for the possibility of an adequate understanding of that field. In bourgeois society, it is only with aestheticism that the full unfolding of the phenomenon of art became a fact, and it is to aestheticism that the historical avant-garde movements respond.[97]

The moment of the 'full unfolding' of art in aestheticism is the moment when the history of art ceases to be understood as a succession of aesthetic styles. To the notion of the self-contained work of art as an organic totality, which comes to its completion in aestheticism, Bürger opposes, on the one hand, the avant-garde's performative manifestos and 'manifestations' and, on the other hand, its aesthetic of fragmentation and appropriation of past styles and aesthetic modes which have become available as material precisely because of the moment of the full unfolding of art. The latter consideration leads Bürger to suggest that 'there is no such thing as a dadaist or a

surrealist style. What did happen is that these movements liquidated the possibility of a period style when they raised to a principle the availability of the artistic means of past periods.'[98] This situation, in which the category of the work can no longer maintain integrity as a separate aesthetic totality, results in an aesthetic of fragmentation, as evident in collage, montage and photomontage, which Bürger terms the 'simultaneity of the radically disparate':

> Through the avant-garde movements, the historical succession of techniques and styles has been transformed into a simultaneity of the radically disparate. The consequence is that no movement in the arts today can legitimately claim to be historically more advanced *as art* than any other.[99]

Thus, the avant-garde art work does not constitute an 'organic' 'totality' but rather a 'non-organic' series of 'fragments'. Whereas the classicist, Bürger argues, produces the work of art with the intention of giving 'a living picture of the totality,' the avant-garde artist merely combines fragments: 'The work is no longer created as an organic whole but put together from fragments.'[100] As a result, the avant-garde's aesthetic of fragmentation embraces nihilism in a practice which brings about the *realization* and *supression* of meaning, 'where the meaning may well be the message that meaning has ceased to exist'.[101]

The 'simultaneity of the radically disparate', which Bürger identifies as integral to the avant-garde's aesthetic of fragmentation, might also be applied

to the simultaneous existence of the radically divergent practices of the aestheticization of politics and the politicization of art in the avant-garde manifesto. In this respect it is necessary to reflect further upon the concepts of 'incarnation' and 'integration' as they imapct upon our understanding of the theory of the avant-garde and the ambiguous relationship of the manifesto to the bourgeois public sphere.

It is for this reason that we should be careful to preserve a distinction between Deak's 'incarnation' of life into art, and Bürger's 'integration' of art and life as differing characteristics of aestheticism and the avant-garde respectively. In the milieu of symbolist drama, the theatricalization of everyday life is not so much a manifestation of the revolutionary integration of art and life by the dissolution of the institution of art (as Bürger claims is envisioned by the historical avant-gardes). Rather, the Symbolists' theatricalization of everyday life manifests the reification of life into art and the hypostatization of aesthetics into personality. In the theatricalized arena of Aestheticism, the incarnation of life into art does not dismantle the institution of art as a discursive system of value, that is to say, art is not so much vanquished as valorized. Further, in order for such an incarnation of life into art to be construed as an aristocratic or anarchistic negation of bourgeois society at large, there necessarily must exist an *a priori* concept of the social functionlessness of autonomous art.

As we have seen, in Bürger's view the avant-garde turns against the notion of art as the progression of a series of historical styles (a reaction only facilitated by the 'full unfolding' of art in Aestheticism), not in order to finally 'incarnate' life into art, but in order to 'integrate' art with the practice of everyday life. But it is not the function of the avant-garde to attack the socially functionless status of autonomous art in order to create 'critical' art works which serve to instruct society in the pursuit of progress, perfection or revolution - social ends beyond art itself. Rather, as the following passage from Bürger's discussion of Dada demonstrates, the critical function of the avant-garde is to demolish the institutional structure of autonomous art in the pursuit of an art fully integrated with the praxis of life:

> In Aestheticism, the social functionlessness of art becomes manifest. The avant-gardiste artist counters such functionlessness not by an art that would have consequences within the existing society, but rather by the principle of the sublation of art in the praxis of life. But such a conception makes it impossible to define the intended purpose of art. For an art that has been reintegrated into the praxis of life, not even the absence of a social purpose can be indicated, as was still possible in Aestheticism. When art and the praxis of life are one, when the praxis is aesthetic and art is practical, art's purpose can no longer be discovered, because the existence of two distinct spheres (art and the praxis of life) that is constitutive of the concept of purpose or intended use has come to an end.[102]

In other words, the task of the avant-garde is to dissolve the category of art in the revolutionary praxis of life. Art, it would appear, cannot survive its integration with praxis and is obliterated as a separate institution. Although it could be claimed that the disappearance of art is merely an effect of the

victory of socio-political concerns over those of the aesthetic, it is important to remember that, for Bürger, the critical moment of the avant-garde in the disappearance of art as an institution is not to be confused with the disappearance of art as an aesthetic mode of experience. As Bürger states, the avant-garde's integration of art and life is marked by the moment when 'praxis is aesthetic and art is practical'.

Through radical acts of cultural iconoclasm, therefore, the avant-garde embodies the radical simultaneity of the creative-destructive dialectic in its insatiable desire for the *realization* and *suppression* of art, in order to *supersede* the condition of bourgeois art and open up new critical practices within a newly aestheticized everyday life. As Andrew Hewitt comments: 'the avant-garde marks a point at which aesthetic autonomy both realizes and liquidates itself'.[103] Recognising that '[a]rt as an institution neutralizes the political content of the individual work'[104], the dadaist, for example, rejected the modes of autonomous artistic production which dominated in bourgeois society. Hence, Bürger posits that we can no longer talk of avant-garde art 'works' but only avant-gardiste 'manifestations': 'A dadaist manifestation does not have work character but is nonetheless an authentic manifestation of the artistic avant-garde.'[105] He concludes that with the avant-garde's anti-art gestures, 'the act of provocation itself takes the place of the work'.[106] In short, the paradigm shift from aestheticism to the avant-garde not only signals a shift from 'incarnation' to 'integration' (from what we might call the

'theatricality of incarnation' to the 'performativity of integration'), but a shift from the methods of 'evocation' to the mode of 'provocation'. The social function of art was now no longer to evoke emotion in an audience, but to provoke them to action.[107] The scene of this provocation is the avant-garde manifesto.

VII

The inaugural manifesto of the avant-garde emancipatory theatre of destruction is undoubtedly F. T. Marinetti's 'Founding and Manifesto of Futurism', published in *Le Figaro*, 20 February 1909. Famously, the manifesto demands the demolition of 'museums, libraries, academies of every kind'.[108] If Aestheticism was the *decree nisi* in which autonomous art announced the separation of art from the world (of representation) in the pursuit of aesthetic freedom, the Futurist manifesto was the *decree absolute* with which Marinetti announced the divorce of Futurism from the dead culture of the past and the desire for the total destruction of the institution of art.[109] In this respect the Futurist manifesto conforms to Igor Golomstock's adaptation (in a discussion on the Soviet avant-garde) of Marx's famous dictum from the eleventh 'Thesis on Feuerbach': 'In the past artists have only depicted the world by various means, but the real task is to change it.'[110] Through the agency of

the manifesto, then, the historical avant-garde movements of Futurism, Dada and Surrealism maintained an affinity with the political struggles of the revolutionary avant-garde, an affinity through which it gained its revolutionary credentials by proxy. As Poggioli suggests, the manifesto form allowed the historical avant-gardes not only to repudiate the art of the past but to produce an 'arena of agitation and preparation for the announced revolution, if not the revolution itself'.[111]

In the same way that Proudhon ignores the aesthetic principle of realism, Bürger seems to side-step the issue of performativity and theatricality immanent to the manifesto form, the very means by which the historical avant-garde sought to re-integrate art and life. Yet as a direct proclamation the manifesto is not theatrical in the sense of the triadic structure of the dramatic narratives associated with conventional theatre (protagonist-antagonist-spectator), but dyadic in the sense of a political speech (performer-spectator).[112] Or, as Hewitt suggests, the avant-garde is 'characterized as a move into a poetics of utterance and performance'.[113] Thus, it is necessary to preface our argument with an examination of the manifesto as a performative utterance.

Performative utterances were first analysed by the English linguistic philosopher, J. L. Austin, and are important for understanding the modality of the manifesto. Marvin Carlson notes:

> Originally, Austin considered performative statements to be characterized by certain verbs ('performative verbs') spoken in the first person and the present tense, such as 'I promise,' or 'I swear'. Subsequently, however, he suggested that other expressions without this characteristic functioned in the same manner... Some performatives Austin called 'implicit'. This, however, created a new problem, for almost any utterance can be seen as an implicit performative; constatives could be 'performatively' recast to begin with 'I assert' or 'I declare'.[114]

In short, the manifesto is a text in which a dialectic is performed between declamation (constative utterance) and declaration (performative utterance). The direct non-representational modality of the performative offers Maurice Berger a paradigm for the radical intervention of art in the politics of everyday life. As is illustrated in his distinction between the terms 'theatricality' and 'performativity':

> Instead of the removed, preordained, and staged articulations of the theatre,... the 'performative' encompasses the broader range of human enactments and interactions - the performances of our everyday lives, the things we do to survive, to communicate, to thrive, to manipulate, to procreate, to love; it charts the direct and seemingly ordinary interactions between the individual and society and culture at large; it enacts or is shaped by the dynamics of power that determine our everyday actions; it takes a myriad of forms, from the act of getting dressed in the morning to the interpersonal interactions we have with our families, colleagues, and friends; it is central to the formation of our individual identities. Performativity, in short, is the infiltration of performance into the social and cultural sphere, an infiltration that is never less than meaningful, never less than ideological.[115]

It is possible to apply Berger's understanding of 'performativity' to a consideration of the manifesto as the 'politicization of art'. Nevertheless, an ambiguity resides in the use of the manifesto as the principal means whereby

the avant-garde attempts its 'integration' and 'infiltration' into the sphere of everyday life. The very theatricality of the manifesto undermines the apparent 'authenticity' of its desire to conflate art and life. As David Graver (adopting the term 'anti-art avant-garde' to refer simply to the historical avant-garde) writes:

> Part of the problem of taking the notion of 'making art a part of life' seriously is the anti-art avant-garde's relationship to manifestos. Rather than turning artworks into manifestos as Bürger suggests, I think the anti-art avant-garde's is much more likely to turn manifestos into artworks. Indeed, the anti-art avant-garde is at least as suspicious of clear expressions of intent as they are suspicious of conventionally well-wrought artworks. While Bürger would like to see an enlightened critique of the institution of art, the anti-art avant-garde tends in reality to provide a critique fraught with irony, self-parody, and bewilderingly opaque elements. Discursive consistency is often undercut by a playful interest in the immediate sensual pleasure of insincere poses and bald-faced contradictions.[116]

Graver's analysis of the avant-garde's relationship to the performative condition of the manifesto is crucial in that it points towards the 'gestural theatricality' of avant-garde politics *per se*. In other words, the performative condition of the manifesto actualises an 'ambivalent literary structure'.[117] Carlson continues:

> Anyone, says Benveniste, can shout 'I decree a general mobilization' in a public square, but this is not an act, and thus not a performative statement, 'because the requisite authority is lacking. Such an utterance is no more than *words*'.[118]

Without the principle of authority to carry through or legitimize its illocutionary force (from illocutionary intent to perlocutionary effect), Carlson implies, a performative utterance reveals itself as merely a rhetorical, theatrical gesture.[119]

Importantly, Paul Mann refers to this performative modality of the avant-garde manifesto as the will-to-discourse at the core of every avant-garde which manifests both the literalization of politics and, as it is exteriorized as publicity, the theatricalization of participation:

> It is not just that manifestos come to be written artfully but that a literary standard mediates a political one. The manifesto assigns a discursive value to alterity; subversion is played out as publicity. The manifesto foregrounds ideology and then reframes it as art. It is the primary form in which the politicization of aesthetics and the aestheticization of politics learn to eclipse one another. In the manifesto the avant-garde can echo the mass call to arms without having to abandon the confines of the cenacle. The manifesto is an allegory of political organization that dissipates the pressure for organization: that is why it was so easy for Marinetti to impersonate his movement before it existed.[120]

Mann's assertion of the function of the manifesto as essentially 'publicity' will be developed as we examine the avant-garde's engagement with the public sphere. Importantly, Mann is also alert to the performative and theatrical modality of the manifesto form. In this respect, we may take seriously Deak's suggestion that 'the gestural theatricality of incarnation runs through the avant-garde'. But the manifesto is also a performative mode of writing, or, to borrow Deak's phrase, a theatricalization of literary discourse. The theatricalization of literary discourse, therefore, depends upon the

'simultaneity of the radically disparate' paradigms of theatricalization and literalization, of the writer as actor/performer, where 'the text is elaborated as *theatre* and as *reading*'.[121] Such a synthesis is potentially to be found, suggests Deak, in the figure of Mallarmé. Deak considers Mallarmé's intended performances of 'The Book' to be the first proposition of a symbolist theatre, a theatre which would have transcended the separation of the 'two forms of theatricality'; namely, on the one hand, the depersonalization of the actor, and, on the other, the art of personality. 'By being both the writer and his own performer,' Deak argues, 'Mallarmé would have brought together the depersonalized spectacle and gestural theatricality.'[122] He concludes by once again quoting Péladan:

> If I consider what the human being can aestheticize [esthétiser] by the appearance of the body in motion, I would call this lost art, the one that I am striving to recover: theatricalness [la théâtrique]... If there were writers capable of realizing their ideas scenically, or actors capable of creating their own parts... we would then see a performance of incomparable interest.[123]

Deak's reading of Péladan's concept of theatricality as attempting 'a synthesis of writing and performing' where 'the body and text, the self and the role, become one'[124] can be taken up in our reading of the avant-garde manifesto as the theatricalization of discourse at the moment of its 'manifestation'. In this respect, we must ask what implications there may be in using the terms 'incarnation' and 'integration', and 'performativity' and 'theatricality', in a political reassessment of the avant-garde's theatricalization of participation via

manifestos and manifestations in the context of the transformation of the public sphere?

VIII

Habermas describes the concept of the 'public sphere' as primarily the realm of social life wherein 'public opinion' can be formed through rational-critical debate informed by the agency of a transparent political 'publicness' or 'critical publicity'. At its basic level, the public sphere is a publicly *performed* or *produced* entity. According to Habermas, the medium of the liberal 'public sphere' is the collectivity of private individuals engaged in 'public discussion' in order to rationalize the concept of authority - a situation which he regards as 'unique and without historical precedent'.[125] Habermas continues: 'A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body.'[126] In order to produce the public sphere, a collectivity of private individuals must come together and self-consciously 'present' themselves as a 'public'. In a society where 'access is guaranteed to all citizens' - in a small-scale (utopian) community of direct democracy, for example (i.e. without representatives) - the public who produce the public sphere are simultaneously audience and participant. In the context of a literarized public sphere (that is

to say, a body constituted by an informed reading public), we cannot underestimate the function of the political and artistic manifesto as testament to the existence of the public sphere. Nonetheless, the manifesto also performs the function of 'manipulative publicity' of the order utilized by the 'show' and 'manipulation' of a consumer society. As Habermas explains:

> Originally publicity guaranteed the connection between rational-critical public debate and the legislative foundation of domination, including the critical supervision of its exercise. Now it makes possible the peculiar ambivalence of a domination exercised through the domination of nonpublic opinion: it serves the manipulation *of* the public as much as legitimation *before* it. Critical publicity is supplanted by manipulative publicity.[127]

It is only when the institutions of the public sphere become ritualized and aestheticized, then, does the democratic notion of 'critical publicity' or 'publicness' become 'manipulative publicity', that is to say, when society becomes mediatized: 'Today, newspapers and magazines, radio and television are the media of the public sphere'.[128] In order to illustrate the distinction between political public sphere ('public authority', executed by, but not identical to the 'state') and representative public sphere (society), Habermas demonstrates different models of the public sphere in different historical moments: Feudal; Liberal-Bourgeois; Social-Welfare State and Mass Democracy. Of the Feudal public sphere, Habermas writes:

> There is no indication that European society of the high Middle Ages possessed a public sphere as a unique realm distinct from the private sphere. Nevertheless, it was not coincidental that during that period symbols of sovereignty, for instance, the princely seal, were deemed 'public'. At that time there existed a public representation of power. The status of the feudal lord.... made it unnecessary to employ the categories 'public' and 'private'. The holder of the position represented it publicly; he showed himself, presented himself as the embodiment of an ever–present 'higher' power.[129]

In other words, through a theatrical paradigm of show and display, the feudal ruler is the incarnation of a higher authority. He is only a representation of power in the sense that he is its embodiment, he is power made manifest. The feudal political public sphere is theatrical in the sense that it is spectacular, that is to say, that the 'public' (who are not 'citizens' but 'subjects') are not active participants but the passive audience of power.[130]

It is significant to note that in the fourteenth century, co-extensive with the feudal period of political history, two key terms emerge: *manifest* from Latin *mani festusi*, a violent gesture, literally 'to strike with the hand' (from *manu-* hand and *festi* - strike); and *spectacle*, a public display or performance, via Old French from Latin *spectaculum* a show, (from *spectare* to watch and *specere* to look at).[131] Authority lies, as it were, in the physical force wielded by the hand of power: the monarch. Also, it is important to observe that no critical function is ascribed to the role of the 'audience' of the feudal public sphere. This paradigm extends only to those present at court, the common people are the 'excluded onlookers' before whom power is displayed. Thus, this theatrical public sphere of the feudal period is not yet a representative

public sphere in the sense of the bourgeois period. Habermas states: 'Representation in the sense of a bourgeois public sphere has nothing to do with the representative public sphere - a public sphere directly linked to the concrete existence of a ruler'.[132]

In contrast to the politics of the manifest of the political public sphere of feudalism, Habermas relates the rise of the political public sphere of liberal bourgeois society, which comes into being with the emergence of the nation-state and the expansion of capitalism (in imperialism and colonialism). In the bourgeois model, the public sphere performs a critical function in that it stands in opposition to the authority of the state as the medium of self-reflective, critical thinking (through the mode of the private activities of reading and writing) which are published in the aim of mobilizing public opinion through social organs such as the emergent political newspapers, proclamations and written constitutions:

> *The bourgeois public sphere* could be understood as the sphere of private individuals assembled into a public body, which almost immediately laid claim to the officially regulated 'intellectual newspapers' for use against the public authority itself. In those newspapers, and in moralistic and critical journals, they debated that public authority on the general rules of social intercourse in their fundamentally privatized yet publicly relevant sphere of labour and commodity exchange.... In the first modern constitutions, the catalogues of fundamental rights were a perfect image of the liberal model of the public sphere: they guaranteed the society as a sphere of private autonomy and the restriction of public authority to a few functions.[133]

Power, therefore, is not displayed or manifest 'before' an audience, as in the feudal public sphere, rather it is represented (in parliament) 'on behalf of' an audience, in the sense that it is 'representative' of 'public opinion'. The leader of the representative bourgeois public sphere ('prime minister', 'monarchical government', 'president') is not the 'incarnation' of power. Rather, the leader is 'integrated' with the public sphere which produces and criticizes the 'public authority' executed by the state. Saint-Simon characterized such a transition from feudalism to modernity as the substitution of a power based upon 'superstition' and 'barbarity' to one of 'enlightenment' sanctified by 'public opinion'.[134] It is the emergence of 'public opinion' which marks the representative bourgeois public sphere as 'representative' as such. Representation, in this respect, is effected in the notion of the legislature and the reform of parliament, written declarations ('Rights of Man', 'Declaration of Independence', etc.) and constitutions. Crucially, though, the informing, canvassing and production of 'public opinion' in the bourgeois public sphere is conducted primarily through the agency of the newspaper. Habermas continues:

> At the same time, daily newspapers assumed an important role. In the second half of the eighteenth century, literary journalism created serious competition for the earliest news sheets, which were mere compilations of notices, Karl Bücher characterized this great development as follows: 'Newspapers changed from mere institutions for the publication of news into bearers and leaders of public opinion - weapons of party politics. This transformed the newspaper business. A new element emerged between the gathering and publication of news: the editorial staff. But for the newspaper publisher it meant that he

> changed from a vendor of recent news to a dealer in public opinion.' The publishers insured the newspaper a commercial basis, yet without commercializing them, as such. The press remained an institution of the public itself, effective in the manner of a mediator and intensifier of public discussion, no longer a mere organ for the spreading of news but not yet the medium of a consumer culture.[135]

During periods of revolution such as 1789 and 1848, notes Habermas, we witness the proliferation of the newspapers of small political groups and organizations. Between February and May during the uprisings in Paris of 1848, for example, '450 clubs and over 200 journals were established'. What we are witnessing, then, in this transition from feudalism to capitalism and the emergence of the representative bourgeois public sphere, is the shift from the theatricalization of feudal authority to the literalization of the public sphere. With the demise of a theatrical model of the political public sphere, in which power is displayed before an audience, the literalization of the political public sphere suggests the disappearance of a model of the 'public' as 'audience' or 'spectator' at the 'spectacle' of power. Instead, in the literalized representative public sphere, the 'public' are activated as critical participants in the production of power. 'Until the permanent legalization of a politically functional public sphere,' Habermas continues, 'the appearance of a political newspaper meant joining the struggle for freedom and public opinion, and thus for the public sphere as principle. Only with the establishment of the bourgeois constitutional state was the intellectual press relieved of the pressure of its convictions'.[136] As a society governed by private individuals, a

key principle which developed in the organization of bourgeois democracy was that of 'supervision' or 'publicness'. Habermas writes:

> Bourgeois individuals are private individuals. As such, they do not 'rule'. Their claims to power vis-à-vis public authority were thus directed not against the concentration of power, which was to be 'shared'. Instead, their ideas infiltrated the very principle on which existing power is based. To the principle of existing power, the bourgeois public opposed the principle of supervision - that very principle which demands that proceedings be made public [*Publizität*].[137]

The means by which politics became 'publicized', therefore, was through written documentation of the 'social contract', laws, declarations, proclamations, and so forth. Crucially, it is during this period in which we witness the development of the literalized model of the representative bourgeois public sphere, as articulated by Habermas, that we encounter the first usage of the term *manifesto*, derived from *manifestare* to manifest. As a written public document and revolutionary proclamation, the manifesto represents *the* modality of bourgeois participation in the political sphere and marks a significant moment in the structural transformation of the public sphere in the transition from feudalism to capitalism.

The manifesto, then, is instrumental to the revolutionary emancipation of the bourgeoisie from the 'public authority' of a monarchical and feudal state and the assertion of representative democracy. However, as a means of 'presenting' 'public opinion' in a literalized public sphere, the manifesto as

public proclamation is inherently performative ('We declare', 'we swear' 'we promise', and so on). And if we recall the etymology of the term, the act of writing (or adding one's signature to) a manifesto, which is then printed and distributed, becomes a violent public gesture: quite literally a strike with the hand. Further, the very form of a manifesto as public proclamation, constructs the notion of an 'audience' of potential 'participants'. As such, the performative agency of the manifesto risks a return to the display and manipulation of the theatrical modality of feudal authority, a circumstance which leads Andrew Hewitt to claim that the politics of the manifesto is a 'politics of the manifest'. Furthermore, and more significantly perhaps, the performative modality of the manifesto also implies a theatricality at the core of bourgeois 'public authority' and 'representation'.

What is suggested is that born with the manifesto as a means of emancipation is the mechanism for an effective aestheticization and retheatricalization of politics. With an understanding of the performativity and theatricality of the manifesto, most visible perhaps in the manifestos of the historical avant-garde, it becomes possible to question the role of the manifesto in what Habermas has called the 'refeudalization' of the public sphere.

Historically, Habermas locates this 'refeudalization' of the public sphere in the advent of mass democracies and social-welfare states in the postwar period. In contemporary mass democracies, Habermas contends, we witness

the weakening of the critical function of the public sphere. 'The refeudalization of the public sphere is marked by [...] a staged and manipulatory publicity displayed by organizations over the heads of a mediatized public.'[138] Newspapers, for example, are no longer tied to the function of voicing political convictions and 'public opinion', but are free to pursue entirely commercial ends, and to 'manipulate' the political public sphere on behalf of private interests. The principle of 'publicness', is effectively exchanged for a principle of 'publicity'. Publicity, thus, pervades the conditions of contemporary mass democracies. As Habermas writes: 'Even the central relationship of the public, the parties, and the parliament is affected by this change in function.'[139] In this model of the refeudalization of the bourgeois public sphere in contemporary mass democracies, power is displayed without being manifest. Thus the paradigm of refeudalization is a paradigm of the re-theatricalization of politics. Or, put a different way, this situation of refeudalization and retheatricalization is what Guy Debord has termed 'the society of the spectacle'.[140] With the increase of consumer capitalism and social-welfare state democracies, Habermas concludes: 'The public sphere in the world of letters was replaced by the pseudo-public or sham-private world of culture consumption.'[141] In my view we can trace the moment of this refeudalization of politics back to the emergence of the manifesto as a performative modality of participation in the political public sphere. Furthermore, I suggest the possibility that the avant-garde attempt to

attack a consumer society through the contradictory agency of the manifesto testifies to the destruction of the public sphere itself, to the extent that today Habermas considers that the public sphere has been liquidated.[142]

In this light, it is interesting to observe that coincident with the emergence of the manifesto in the seventeenth century we see the emergence of two related terms: *manifestation*, 'the materialization of a disembodied spirit'[143]; and *spectre* (from Latin *spectrum*, from *specere* to look at).[144] For every manifesto, it would appear, there is a spectre. It is not insignificant that such ghostly terms (manifestation, spectre), arise at the moment of the supposed overthrow of a theatrical paradigm of the public sphere to a literary paradigm. The model of literalization outlined by Habermas effects a disappearance of the 'public' as 'audience' and their reincarnation as 'participants' in the process of forging constitutional states. Nonetheless, as those constitutional states solidify into bourgeois parliamentary democracies, those 'participants' are recast as an 'audience' of participants, but whose participation in the political public sphere is heavily mediated (elections).

The notion of a spectre which haunts this re-feudalized model of spectatorship in the bourgeois public sphere is twofold. The first emerges from the realm of the 'excluded onlooker'. If the spectre of the theatricalized model of the feudal state is the 'excluded onlooker', then the *spectre* of the bourgeois public sphere is the 'excluded onlookers' in the historical emergence of the representative bourgeois public sphere: the proletariat. The

second emerges from the field of 'audience' or 'participants' themselves, that is to say, from the terrorism of 'too-much participation' (Baudrillard).[145] Such an intensification of participation, it seems, risks destroying the democratic foundations upon which a notion particpation is grounded. This is the double role of the spectre, to pass between two worlds: to animate its simultaneous exclusion from and participation in the drama of the theatricalization of politics. The former is bodied forth in the 'spectre' of communism, the latter in the 'manifestations' of the avant-garde.

IX

The augural image of the *Communist Manifesto* famously takes a theatrical form: 'A spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of Communism.'[146] What we behold in the *Communist Manifesto* is the theatricalization of politics, and from its very opening lines the stage is set for Marx and Engels to dramatize History as the conflict between classes. The drama of capitalism is played out in the antagonism between Bourgeoisie (antagonist) and Proletariat (protagonist) in a universe governed by destruction and auto-destruction, where the bourgeoisie are 'sorcerers', the forces of production bring about 'destructive crises' and the 'epidemic' of over-production, where 'all that is

solid melts into air'.[147] This chaos can only eventually be defeated by the ghostly image of the 'spectre of communism'.

This is a view shared by Marshall Berman. To Berman, the theatrical dynamic of the *Communist Manifesto* 'expresses some of modernist culture's deepest insights and, at the same time, dramatizes some of its deepest inner contradictions.'[148] In a reading which foregrounds the drama of the historical antagonism between classes, Berman reads Marx's bourgeois 'sorcerers' as the inheritors of *Faust* and *Frankenstein.* Berman continues:

> The central drama for which the *Manifesto* is famous is the development of the modern bourgeoisie and proletariat, and the struggle between them. But we can find a play going on within this play, a struggle inside the author's consciousness over what is really going on and what the larger struggle means.[149]

Berman's reference to a play within a play which testifies to a psychological conflict cannot but remind one of the structure of *Hamlet*, but now, through a dramaturgical metempsychosis, the ghost of Hamlet's father returns to haunt the text of the *Communist Manifesto* as the 'spectre of communism' – a phantasm which haunts not patriarchal feudalism but European capitalism. It is not simply due to the proliferation of commonplace theatrical metaphors in Berman's text, however, that we may consider the *Communist Manifest* as an theatricalization or aestheticization of politics. Rather, it is suggested that the theatricalization-aestheticization of politics is immanent to its very status as a manifesto. Berman, reading Marx through the lens of modernism, regards the

'melting vision' of the *Communist Manifesto* as 'the archetype of a century of modernist manifestos and movements'.[150]

Ironically, it is in the theatricalization of history and class conflict in the *Communist Manifesto* (doubled in the theatrical tropes of Berman's reading) where we first encounter an 'aestheticization of politics': 'the *Manifesto* is remarkable for its imaginative power, its expression and grasp of the luminous and dreadful possibilities that pervade modern life. Along with everything else that it is, it is the first great modernist work of art'.[151] If this is the case, the theatricalization of politics in the manifesto suggests that we can no longer simply polarize, as Benjamin does, 'aestheticization' and 'politicization'. Rather, we must renegotiate the terms of the exclusion of aestheticization and theatricality from the consideration of the politicization of art in the avant-garde. As we shall see in our discussion of Marinetti, Benjamin's conclusion that '[a]ll efforts to render politics aesthetic culminate in one thing: war'[152], suggest that the aestheticization of politics in the avant-garde manifesto leads to a libertarian-barbarian dialectic (a dramatization which conflates left and right) in the destructive character of the avant-garde.

As far as Berman is concerned, the aestheticization of politics latent in the *Communist Manifesto* aligns Marx with the trajectory of Aestheticism and modernism, and the future manifestos of the avant-garde. Yet, paradoxically, it is this very manifesto form, prone to hyperbole and theatricality, which Bürger identifies as the avant-garde's break with Aestheticism and modernism.

Therefore, the distinction between the avant-garde and modernism in the arguments of Schulte-Sasse and Bürger, cannot be made on the grounds of the avant-garde's relinquishing of aestheticization. For, as Schulte-Sasse comments, the avant-garde's attempt to re-integrate art and life is announced in the performative context of the manifesto:

> We should come to see that avant-garde artists were actively attacking the institution of art. Their effort was not to isolate themselves, but to re-integrate themselves and their art into life. It is no accident that the active, even aggressive artistic manifesto – an address to fellow artists and society – became the preferred medium of expression for the avant-garde artist of the twentieth century.[153]

But, as we have suggested with reference to Marx and Engels, the medium of the manifesto is already an aestheticization of politics.

The importance of this aestheticization or theatricalization of politics for a consideration of the avant-garde is borne out in the following comment by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe: 'the alliance of the avant-gardes with the ideology of emancipation is not an accident, but an essential foundation of aesthetics itself. As I see it, the discourse of emancipation was, to a great extent, born *within* the discourse of aesthetics.'[154] Lacoue-Labarthe's comments in relation to the aestheticism of emancipatory politics holds important consequences for a re-assessment of Benjamin's distinction between the aestheticization of politics and the politicization of art. In order to examine the full implications of this conclusion for a political reassessment of the avant-garde we must now turn

towards its aestheticization of politics in the destructive character of barbarism.

Part Two: Avant-Garde Barbarians

> The dilemma that faced us in our work proved to be the first phenomenon for investigation: The Self-Destruction of the Enlightenment. (Adorno and Horkheimer)[155]

> The liberty of the individual is no gift of civilization.
> (Sigmund Freud)[156]

X

The first part of this chapter examined the manner in which the discourse of libertarianism and autonomy formed the background to the destructive character of the avant-garde. It then examined the ambiguity surrounding the role of autonomy in the politics of the avant-garde, with respect to Benjamin's polarity of politicization of art and aestheticization of politics. It was found that this polarity was the groundwork to Bürger's distinction

between Aestheticism (incarnation of life into art) and the avant-garde (integration of art and life). For Bürger, the avant-garde attempts to realize the integration of art and life through 'manifestos' and 'manifestations'. However, the self-dramatization of emancipation displayed in the manifesto form alludes to a theatricalization of political discourse which suggests the persistance of a dialectic within the avant-garde between 'incarnation' and 'integration'. I then explored the manner in which these terms could be mapped onto Habermas's reading of the structural transformation of the public sphere, suggesting that the avant-garde manifesto performs an ambiguous function in bourgeois society. The avant-garde manifesto, I asserted, is simultaneously a mode of 'critical publicity' in the public sphere (an intensification of democratic participation) and a mode of 'manipulative publicity' or advertizing which dominates the public sphere of culture-consuming capitalist states (and which effectively signifies the disappearance of the public sphere).

In the second part of this chapter I extend this reading of the manifesto and the concepts of aestheticization and refeudalization with respect to the avant-garde's theatricalization of History.

I begin with an examination of the avant-garde in relation to the discourse of barbarism and its associations with the dialectic of Enlightenment. 'There is no document of civilization,' wrote Walter Benjamin, 'which is not at the same time a document of barbarism.'[157] By the same token, then, any

libertarian theory of the avant-garde must also be a theory of barbarism. Here I return to the paradigm of theatricalization which recasts the avant-garde artist as both barbarian and dandy. By recourse to the theories of Habermas I go on to demonstrate the means by which the barbarism of the avant-garde is displayed in the manifesto's aestheticization of politics, which evidences an encroaching refeudalization of the public sphere. Finally, by returning to the nihilism of Nietzsche's theory of the eternal recurrence of the same, I suggest that the recurrence of the destructive character of the avant-garde testifies to an immanent theatricalization of History in Futurism, Dada and Surrealism.

XI

In a famous passage from *The Communist Manifesto* Marx describes the expansion of capitalism in terms of the consumption of barbarism and its capitulation to the force of civilization. Marx writes:

> The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian, nations into civilization. The cheap prices of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarians' intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate. It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image.[158]

Thus, Marx argues, do barbarian and semi-barbarian countries enter into economic dependency upon civilization. Yet the relationship between the 'civilization' of bourgeois capitalism and barbarism does not end there. A dialectic emerges from the contradictions of capitalism in which 'the technical means of destruction increase along with the technical means of satisfying needs'.[159] In order to progress and expand, these forces of production must intensify and engage in a periodic process of auto-destruction. As Andrew Hewitt writes:

> Indeed one of the paradoxes of capitalism is the inherence within it of a dialectic of negation and affirmation. Since it establishes and renews itself through a relentless revolutionizing of the means of production, while at the same time presenting itself as the sole guarantor of social order, capitalism is embroiled in a consistent and systematic underestimation of its own destructive powers.[160]

Marx characterized the destructive character of the bourgeoisie as 'barbarians' and the crises of capitalist overproduction as a 'momentary barbarism' - the result of 'too much civilization, too much means of subsistence, too much industry, too much commerce'.[161] As Marshall Berman remarks, *The Communist Manifesto* 'unveils the modern bourgeois as consummate nihilist on a far vaster scale than modern intellectuals can conceive'.[162] It is essentially upon Marx's dialectic of the bourgeois and barbarian that Adorno and Horkheimer build their Dialectic of Enlightenment, a dialectic grounded

upon the simultaneity of the radically disparate forces of reason and despotism.

Fundamental to the Enlightement project, and thus from the transition from feudalism to capitalism, is the indivisibility of individual freedom attained and preserved through the faculty of reason. Following the rationalist tradition of Descartes and Kant, Proudhon considered the exercise of reason as a primary act of emancipation, governing the movement from slavery toward autonomy:

> The more ignorant man is, the more obedient he is, and the more absolute is his confidence in his guide. But, it being a law of man's nature to conform to rule - that is, to discover it by his powers of reflection and reason - man reasons upon the commands of his chiefs. Now such reasoning as that is a protest against authority - a beginning of disobedience. At the moment that man inquires into the motives which govern the will of his sovereign - at that moment man revolts.[163]

For Proudhon, reason is a primary act of rebellion. In his view, rationality is inextricably linked to the notion of individual liberation, political emancipation and historical progress. 'In proportion as society becomes enlightened,' Proudhon states, 'royal authority diminishes.'[164]

Through the free exercise of the faculty of reason, then, the individual would gain mastery over themselves and nature, and emerge from the darkness of a childlike state of immaturity and slavery to the light of adult autonomy, whereupon they would exercise their understanding 'without the guidance of another person'.[165] In establishing such a groundwork of

individual autonomy, Kant inextricably tied the Enlightenment notion of Freedom to the faculty of Reason. As Adorno and Horkheimer conclude 'social freedom is inseparable from Enlightenment thought'.[166] They state clearly: 'the Enlightenment has always aimed at liberating men from fear and establishing their sovereignty'.[167]

As we have seen, Habermas's study of the transformation of the public sphere concentrates on this emancipatory effect of critical reason. To Habermas, 'rational-critical' debate which emerges from within the literary sphere of private persons in the mid-eighteenth century, that is to say 'the critical judgement of a public making use of its reason', performs a constitutative function in the political public sphere.[168] It is through the free excersize of one's reason that civil society manifests itself as a sphere independent from and questioning of state authority:

> [The bourgeois public sphere was] now casting itself loose [from public authority] as a forum in which the private people, come together to form a public, readied themselves to compel public authority to legitimate itself before public opinion. The *publicum* developed into the public, the *subjectum* into the subject, the receiver of regulations from above into the ruling authorities' adversary.[169]

Thus, the critical discourse of private individuals participating in the political public sphere establishes the rule of Law on rationalist foundations. In other words, the existence of the bourgeois public sphere is a necessary prelude to the rationalization of power in democratic society.

However, although they admit that the Enlightenment project had always aimed at 'liberating men from fear and establishing their sovereignty',[170] Adorno and Horkheimer identify a deep contradiction in the Enlightenment notions of Reason and Progress.[171] What lay concealed inside the Enlightenment project, like a Trojan Horse, and which was not discovered until too late, they suggest, was the identification of Reason and Domination. As Foucault also comments, the structural autonomy of the intellectual tradition of the Enlightenment in the West contains within itself the conditions of mass oppression and violence:

> In the history of science in France as in German critical theory what we are to examine essentially is a reason whose autonomy of structures carries within itself the history of dogmatism and despotism - a reason which, consequently, has the effect of emancipation only on the condition that it succeeds in freeing itself of itself.[172]

Enlightenment society, Foucault concludes, was founded upon a series of contradictions which it attempted to conceal; the freedom of the bourgeois individual under capitalism is founded upon the exploitation and oppression of workers in factories; the mastery of man over nature brings about the exploitation and destruction of nature.

Rationality, argue Adorno and Horkheimer, when functioning positively, or in other words when it is used to affirm and justify the rule of law, must necessarily outlaw as 'irrational' all those forces which in the exercise of

their freedom seek to subvert the status quo. Thus, in defending the concept of freedom, reason must suppress the limits of the concept of freedom. It is on these grounds that Adorno and Horkheimer conclude that the Enlightenment project is 'totalitarian'.[173] In other words, that which originally sought the emancipation of man served only to extend his slavery. As only a half-fulfilled project, the Enlightenment sowed the seeds of its own destruction. In response, Adorno and Horkheimer therefore contend, 'the Enlightenment *must examine itself*'.[174]

In this vein Adorno and Horkheimer go on to argue that the Enlightenment's discourse of emancipation is held in a dialectical relation to the discourse of despotism. In accordance with this position, Foucault comments:

> Two centuries later the Enlightenment returns: but not at all as a way for the West to become conscious of its actual possibilities and freedoms to which it can have access, but as a way to question the limits and powers it has abused. Reason - the despotic enlightenment.[175]

According to these critical theorists, the self-destruction of the Enlightenment project is brought about in the field of ethics and science, through an implosion which stems from the realization that Reason - the bedrock of the Enlightenment process - is not only responsible for providing the groundwork for Man's domination over Nature, and thereby providing the means of preserving individual freedom. It is equally guilty of contributing to Man's annihilation, epitomized in the twentieth-century disasters of Auschwitz and

Hiroshima.[176] Adorno and Horkheimer characterize this contradiction as the dialectic of Enlightenment: a dialectic of libertarianism and barbarism. Faced with its inherent tendency towards despotism, Enlightenment rationality must recognise that its project of universal individual freedom has been pre-programmed to self-destruct: 'Not merely the ideal but the practical tendency to self-destruction has always been characteristic of rationalism.'[177]

In the wake of this analysis, it would seem legitimate to suggest that the historical avant-garde's assault on instrumental reason is justified on the grounds that the apparent civilized codes of bourgeois rationality mask a barbaric core of oppression and authoritarianism. Here it is possible to see the grounds for Poggioli's observation that the antinomy of the avant-garde and the bourgeoisie 'implies a relation of interdependence between the contested terms'.[178] To the despotic barbarism of bourgeois reason the avant-garde oppose the emancipatory barbarism of irrationality. However, given Habermas's concerns regarding the loss of rational-critical debate in an encroaching 'refeudalization' of the public sphere, it is perhaps time for a political re-assessment of the avant-garde and the function of the manifesto in terms which take account of its simultaneous libertarianism and barbarism.

The rational legitimation of power is the principle at stake in what Habermas perceives to be the late capitalist refeudalization of the public sphere.[179] More than anything else, the withering of rational-critical debate, for Habermas, signifies the withering of the public sphere itself.[180] In the light of

this argument, it seems wise to re-examine the avant-garde's attack upon the principles of reason and rationality and its adoption of a libertarian-barbarian destructive character in the context of the manifesto in order to ascertain its role in the apparent refeudalization of the public sphere.

XII

Having already explored the libertarian foundations of the destructive character of avant-garde, it is necessary now to expand on our use of the term 'barbarian' in this context. In the classical period, in particular during the Median wars which intensified the distinction between the Greek polis and foreigners, the term 'barbarian' is frequently used to refer to non-Greeks. During the 'barbarian invasion' of Rome (between the third and fifth centuries AD), the term is associated with the Roman word 'barbarus' used to refer to invading Visigoth warriors.[181] As a result, at this time a significant modification of meaning occurs and 'the word no longer refers to a foreign nationality but exclusively to evil, cruelty, and savageness'.[182] During the Renaissance period, particularly around the Mediterranean ports, the two dominant meanings of the term combine as barbarian is used commonly to refer to non-European races encountered by European sailors and merchants: non-white races which are characterized as primitive, backward, uncivilized,

uncultured, savage and cruel. It is likely that the term gained currency as a result of European mercantile expansion and increasing trade routes between Europe and North Africa, which came to be called the Barbary States: Tripolitania, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco. As a term which articulates a threat to the advance of civilization, the term coincides with the threat to the economic expansion of Europe encountered, during this period, in high instances of piracy in the waters around the Barbary coast.

The derivation of the term 'barbarian' comes from the Latin, 'Barbarismus,' meaning 'error of speech' and is probably a reference to the 'imitation of incomprehensible speech' (derived form the Sanskrit, 'Barabara' for 'stammering'). During the fifteenth century we find the Greek, 'Barbarismos,' from 'Barbaros,' as a coded reference to 'non-Greek' or 'non-Aryan' others.[183] From this emerges the popular European usage of barbarian to refer to a savage, non-European other, regarded as foreign, cruel, backward, uncivilized, irrational, and warlike, etc., still operative today. Barbarism, therefore, emerges as a term used to articulate an inability to comprehend the speech of the other but quickly becomes used almost exclusively in reference to an inability to comprehend the violence of the other. In this manner, whether performed by non-Europeans or Europeans, any violent action characterized by the absence of reason, right and justice (i.e. law) is regarded as 'barbaric'.[184]

The origins of the avant-garde's attraction to barbarism as an anti-bourgeois mode are to be found in the widespread appeal of the familiar romantic trope

of the 'noble savage' in the philosophy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In *Discourse on Inequality* (1754) (also known as the *Second Discourse*) Rousseau articulates an idealized vision of primitive man, free from the moral over-encoding of civilized society, and naturally good. In Rousseau's view, it is not nature which is barbaric but civilization:

> The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, bethought himself saying 'This is mine', and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society. From how many crimes, wars, and murders, from how many horrors and misfortunes might not any one have saved mankind, by pulling up the stakes, or filling up the ditch, and crying to his fellows: 'Beware of listening to this impostor; you are undone if you once forget that the fruits of the earth belong to us all, and the earth itself to nobody'.[185]

As a pre-social model for an idealized future harmony between man and nature, the noble savage is, paradoxically, representative of an advanced state of backwardness. In the Romantic period the trope of the noble savage articulated the bourgeois artists' desire for freedom from a restricted society and an aristocratic renunciation of advancing industrialization and the increasingly materialistic values of bourgeois capitalism.

In Rousseau's philosophy, childhood becomes emblematic of the 'noble savage' in that it is a natural state of innocence; before the perversion of culture and book-learning the child is untutored, untamed, natural, good, and free. As a model of a future society, Rousseau's vision is attractive to anarchists in their demand for autonomy, the negation of all laws and

repressive forms of government and the state. Freedom from bourgeois means-ends rationality, therefore, rests in a return to an essentially lawless state of uncivilized pre-social primitivism, an Arcadian utopianism where man exists in a 'harmonious state of nature before the political fall into repressive government'.[186] In its very articulation, libertarianism, which emerges as a term in the eighteenth century and is co-extensive with the primitivizing vision of emancipation advanced by Rousseau, is thus already entered into a dialectic with barbarism.

If we agree with Adorno and Horkheimer that the advancement of civilization ends in barbarism then the notion of a return to an innocent pre-social language of childhood - a 'childhood barbarousness' (Baudelaire) - becomes attractive. In the avant-garde's rehearsal of Rousseau's romanticized, idealized vision, however, what was repressed in Pasquier's vision of a Golden Age returns: the traumatic barbarism of the Terror of the French Revolution, the scene where libertarianism and barbarism are co-extensive terms of Revolution. The destruction of language in Futurist, Dada and Surrealist poetry, plays and manifestos (which emerges from the experiments in the autonomy of language in the poetry of *Le Décadence*), are then seen in the tradition of efforts to barbarize language as an affront to bourgeois instrumental reason. The call to 'demolish libraries' and the rejection of books (which appears in Marinetti, Ball and Artaud), for example, is symptomatic of a Rousseau-esque desire for a return to the uncivilized, pre-

social state of nature articulated in the noble savage. But the avant-garde's negation of Western civilization and bourgeois society is laced with an appeal to a 'barbaric' violence at odds with Rousseaus idealized vision. From Marinetti's celebration of war, Tzara's refusal of pity, to Artaud's 'theatre of cruelty' (which suggests the well-worked theme of 'Oriental despotism') the libertarian trajectory of the avant-garde ends in barbarism.[187] The ambiguous character which most reveals the tension of the libertarian-barbarian dialectic of the avant-garde with respect to the discourse of theatricalization (a dialectic between incarnation and integration, aestheticization and politicization) is the spectral figure of modernity: the Dandy. Focus on the figure of the dandy allows us to see how the ideas of self-determination and self-dramatization, central to an understanding of the politics of the avant-garde, emerge in the context of nihilism and aestheticization.

XIII

In 'The Painter of Modern Life', Charles Baudelaire casts the dandy as a spectre. He writes of him as an 'intense and impartial spirit' who, immersed in the crowd, has the capacity 'to see the world, to be at the very centre of the world, and yet to be unseen of the world'.[188] This double role performed by the spectre makes the dandy a pivotal figure in understanding the

destructive character of the avant-garde. Of central importance here is the question of the politics of the dandy 'as the precursor of the avant-garde's re-integration of art and life'.[189]

Although notably absent from either Poggioli's or Bürger's studies, the ambiguous figure of the dandy plays a developmental role in the theories of the avant-garde advanced by Calinescu, Deak and Hewitt. For Calinescu, the dandy is a figure of decadence and 'aesthetic individualism' which embodies opposition to a bourgeois society founded upon 'nationalism and sheer military might'.[190] Similarly, to Deak the dandy is a 'dissident', whose very 'life-style' is a form of social critique; characterized by 'pre-occupation with the trivialities of life', 'elegant idleness', 'aristocratic disdain', 'disinterestedness' and transgressions against convention and 'good taste', the dandy's entire social demeanour is tantamount to 'a form of social provocation'.[191] In contrast to Calinescu and Deak, Hewitt is more probing in his analysis of the political position of the dandy. Where Calinescu and Deak enlist the dandy in support of a libertarian discourse of emancipation, Hewitt sees in the aestheticism of the dandy, not the libertarianism of aesthetic individualism, but the barbarism of an assault upon the integrity of the unified bourgeois subject.[192] For Hewitt, the dandy represents a politicization of the individual through the aesthetic. In this respect, we encounter the very aestheticization of politics which Benjamin regards as integral to fascism. In

Hewitt's view, the dandy as an anti-bourgeois figure must be read in the context of aestheticisms bond to barbarism, imperialism and war.[193]

In the present context of an examination of the self-determination and self-dramatization of the avant-garde in relation to ideas of 'incarnation' and 'integration', aesthetics and politics, theatricality and performativity in the bourgeois public sphere, it is perhaps relevant to give consideration to the political character of the dandy in relation to the dialectic of libertarianism and barbarism and the discourses of anarchism and nihilism.

It is in this context that we turn to examine barbarism as a central aspect of the aestheticization of politics in nihilism (from the Latin *nihil*, literally 'nothing'), the public baptism of which comes in Turgenev's novel, *Fathers and Sons* (1861). In the following scene from the novel, the nihilist Bazarov, a botanist and representative of Cherneshevsky's species of 'new men' confronts the aristocratic father and uncle of his young disciple Arkady:

> 'We base our conduct on what we recognize as useful,' Bazarov went on. 'In these days the most useful thing we can do is to repudiate - and so we repudiate.'
> 'Everything?'
> 'Everything.'
> 'What? Not only art, poetry... but also... I'm afraid to say it...'
> 'Everything,' Bazarov repeated with indescribable composure.
> Pavel Petrovich stared at him. He had not expected this; while Arkady positively glowed with satisfaction.
> 'However, if I may say so,' began Nikolai Petrovich, 'you repudiate everything, or to put it more precisely, you are destroying everything... But one must construct too, you know.'
> 'That is not our affair... The ground must be cleared first.' [194]

To the old romantic order, the composure of Bazarov in the face of his renunciation of everything including law, hierarchy, logic, art and poetry (and the unstated romantic love) is ultimately barbaric. This is made clear moments later when Arkady remarks: 'We destroy because we are a force' to which Pavel Petrovich's responds:

> Wretched boy!... Can't you realize the kind of thing you are encouraging in Russia with your miserable creed? No, it's enough to try the patience of an angel! A force! You might as well say that the wild Kalmuck and the Mongolian represent a force - but what is that to us? Civilization is what we value, yes, yes, my good sir: its fruits are precious to us. And don't tell me those fruits are of no importance: the meanest penny-a-liner - *un barbouilleur*, a piano-player who makes five farthings an evening - even they are of more use than you, because they stand for civilization and not crude Mongolian force! You fancy yourselves advanced, but your proper home is a Kalmuck tent![195]

The barbarism of the philosophical avant-garde of nihilism ('you consider yourselves advanced') is epitomized in Bazarov's rebuke to the old man's veneration of art: 'Raphael's not worth a brass farthing'.[196] To the older generation of Russian Romantics, the nihilists are aligned with barbarians through references to the 'wild Kalmuck' and 'Mongolian' force.[197] The nihilists, hypostasized in Bazarov, are the new barbarians. Furthermore, Bazarov's cold composure also singles him out as a dandy in the mould of Baudelaire. The nihilist-barbarian, is thus also a dandy. In similar fashion, the nihilist Verkhovensky in Dostoyevsky's *The Devils* announces: 'We shall proclaim destruction - why? why? - well, because the idea is so fascinating!'[198] If the ultimate ethical horizon of anarchism was 'freedom',

then the ultimate ethical horizon of nihilism, as it is presented here in fictionalized form by Turgenev and Dostoyevsky (but which are nonetheless drawn from the writings of Bakunin and Cherneshevsky), is 'ceaseless destruction'. This libertarian and barbarian dialectic evident in the discourse of anarchism and nihilism is formative, I maintain, of the 'destructive character' of the avant-garde.

Walter Benjamin articulates the trenchant negation embodied in the figure of both anarchist and nihilist in his short fragment 'The Destructive Character' (1931):

> The destructive character knows only one watchword: make room; only one activity: clearing away. His need for fresh air and open space is stronger than any hatred.
>
> The destructive character is young and cheerful. For destroying rejuvenates in clearing away the traces of our own age; it cheers because everything cleared away means to the destroyer a complete reduction, indeed eradication, of his own condition. But what contributes most of all to this Apollonian image of the destroyer is the realization of how immensely the world is simplified when tested for its worthiness of destruction...
>
> No vision inspires the destructive character. He has few needs, least of them is to know what will replace what has been destroyed.[199]

These qualities of the destructive character in literary descriptions of nihilists and the philosophy of anarchists such as Bakunin are qualities which we have come to associate with the avant-garde as a 'culture of negation'. It is no accident that the philosophical doctrine of nihilism which asserts a belief in nothing or a commitment to radical negation, closely associated with acts of religious and cultural iconoclasm, emerges as a political ideology which

promotes the theatricalized anti-politics of terrorism. Such a conclusion may help us to understand Hewitt's assertion that the dandy 'represents a rethinking of the possibility of revolutionary action in the age of high capitalism':

> The failure of the proletariat to materialize as a historical subject will have been rectified by the reworking of bourgeois subjectivity in the figure of the dandy. As both creative subject and created object of the aesthetic - as subject and object in one - the figure of the dandy points the way toward an avant-garde aesthetic project on the one hand, and marks the displacement and replication of the political dynamic of the historical dialectic into the realm of the aesthetic on the other... In brief, the aesthetic project of the reunification of art and life appropriates and aestheticizes the political dynamic of history's subjective and objective realization in and through the proletariat.[200]

It is here we encounter the aestheticization of politics in the spectral figure of the dandy-barbarian-nihilist as the aestheticized surrogate of the revolutionary proletariat. If the dandy's aestheticization of politics can be regarded as the pre-history of the avant-garde, then this raises the question of the avant-garde's theatricalization of History. It is in this dialectic between the dandy and the revolutionary proletariat that we encounter the dynamic which propels the apparent eternal recurrence of the avant-garde's destructive character and its theatricalization of History.

XIV

If the manifesto announces an avant-garde's entry into history, it also marks its exit. Or as Paul Mann has written: 'The manifesto not only inaugurates an avant-garde movement, it stands as its epitaph'.[201] Thus, the simultaneity of the radically disparate applies not only to the aesthetic or ideology of the avant-garde, but also to its very attempt to enter into History. Terry Eagleton, for example, characterizes the avant-garde desire for a future society in which the avant-garde has realized its desire to re-integrate art and life praxis as a mytho-poetic return to time 'before the dawning of the whole category of the aesthetic'.[202] This location of the future in the past reminds us of Saint-Simon's utopian vision of a future France, which has finally escaped its barbaric history. Yet, by its own reckoning, the avant-garde has no history: 'Time and Space died Yesterday', proclaims Marinetti in the 'Founding and Manifesto of Futurism', squaring up to paradox.[203] In other words, the negation of history by the avant-garde precipitates the negation of avant-garde History. With no past, there can be no 'en avant'. Hewitt perceives the paradox of an avant-garde 'history' thus:

> The *en avant* of the avant-garde not only liquidates the sequentiality of the past; it liquidates the sequentiality of the future also. Its millenarianism is bodied forth as apocalypse... This would mean that the avant-garde realizes rather than rejects the project of modernity, but that in doing so it necessarily liquidates modernity.[204]

If Bürger's theory implies that Aestheticism marks the moment of the 'full unfolding' of art, after which we reach the end of a teleological principle of the history of art as progress, then, as Hewitt writes: 'As the moment of full unfolding, the avant-garde,... could think itself as both the completion and the liquidation of historical sequentiality.'[205] In other words, the history of the avant-garde is not History as progress, but the obviation of all teleological and totalizing concepts of History. That is to say, the manifesto is both amniotic fluid and death-mask of the avant-garde.

Nietzsche had also proclaimed the destruction of a teleological conception of History when he wrote: 'there is no longer any goal in and through which all the fires of the historical existence of peoples can cohere and in the direction of which they can develop'.[206] This nihilistic vision of history is a direct result of the death of God. Nietzsche substitutes history as progress with the doctrine of 'eternal recurrence', human existence stripped to its barest essentials 'without meaning or aim, yet recurring inevitably without any finale of nothingness: "*the eternal recurrence*".'[207]

For Nietzsche, the eternal recurrence represents 'the most extreme form of nihilism: the nothing, (the "meaningless") eternally!'[208] This conception of the eternal recurrence supplants Hegel's concept of history as the realization of human freedom with the concept of history as the fulfilment of nihilism. As Heidegger notes, in a manner which evokes Marx's dramatization of

capitalism as a series of 'destructive crises', the fulfilment of nihilism in the eternal recurrence is experienced as 'crisis':

> Nihilism is the propriative event by which the weight in all things melts away - the fact that a centre of gravity is missing. Yet the lack first becomes visible and palpable when it is brought to light in the question concerning a new centre of gravity. Seen from this vantage point, the thinking of the thought of eternal recurrence, as a questioning that perpetually calls for decision, is the fulfilment of nihilism.... The doctrine of eternal return is therefore the 'critical point', the watershed of an epoch become weightless and searching for a new centre of gravity. It is the crisis proper.... 'The doctrine of *eternal return*: as fulfilment of it [i.e., nihilism], as *crisis*'. [209]

The doctrine of the eternal recurrence of the same is a 'crisis' which dislodges the centre of gravity of metaphysics as it shatters the spatio-temporal framework of Western historical consciousness. In his desire to drive the self-destruction of the Enlightenment to its necessary conclusion, Nietzsche, in effect, reduces Western philosophy to ruins.[210] In Nietzsche's hands, philosophy becomes an act of destruction. The task of philosophy is to act 'as a mighty pressure and hammer with which [the philosopher] breaks and removes degenerate and decaying races to make way for a new order of life, or to implant into that which is degenerate and desires to die a longing for the end'.[211] In the last analysis, the crisis of history which ensues in the face of the eternal recurrence of the same, is a crisis of creative destruction - and to Nietzsche, the eternal recurrence of the same is 'the great *cultivating*

idea'.[212] In my view, Nietzsche's idea of the eternal recurrence is vital to an understanding of the destructive character of the avant-garde.

'If a man has character,' wrote Nietzsche, 'he has an experience that constantly recurs.'[213] The destructive character of the avant-garde abounds in numerous iconoclastic manifestos and anti-art gestures which constantly recur in the historical avant-gardes of the early twentieth century. Such an emphasis upon the recurrent destructive character of the avant-garde does not, however, suggest a reading of the avant-garde as a reified or fixed, 'natural' cultural condition. Rather, the destructive character of the successive avant-gardes is one which they fashion anew for themselves - in a synthesis of self-determination and self-dramatization. It is here that we encounter the limitations of Benjamin's distinction between the aestheticization of politics and the politicization of art with regards to our political re-assessment of the theatricalization immanent in the avant-garde:

> If aestheticization can be equated with a form of theatricality and if that theatricality can itself be taken to be implicated within a whole nexus of specular relations extending far beyond the aesthetic, through philosophy, and into the political... [and] ... if thought is itself conceptually framed by the theatrical... [then] ... theory must confront the aestheticization model by attempting not simply to politicize a preexistent aesthetic, but to question the construction of the aesthetic itself.[214]

Hewitt's far reaching speculation on the effect of the equation of aestheticization and theatricality prompts questions regarding the politics and

aesthetics of the avant-garde manifesto. As we shall see in the following chapters, Benjamin's polarity of aestheticization and politicization is challenged by the theatricality immanent to the modality of the manifesto. Nevertheless, we are drawn to Benjamin's apocalyptic vision of history when we address the avant-garde manifesto's concomitant theatricalization of History.

XIV

In his 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', Benjamin describes Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus* (1920). In the brief fragment which follows, the painting (which the writer owned) becomes an allegory of the angel of history:

> A Klee painting named 'Angelus Novus' shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned towards the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.[215]

Klee's 'new angel', recast as Benjamin's 'angel of history', exists in the simultaneity of the radically disparate temporality of Messianic and Materialist Time, a time which 'blasts open the continuum of history' in auto-destructive pursuit of the Apocalypse.[216] The apocalyptic vision here mirrors the avant-garde's annihilation of the past, a cleavage which also constitutes the liquidation of History. In short, the avant-garde's 'angel of history' is an angel of destruction. As the avant-garde manifesto makes its repeated assays upon the stage of History, a dialectic of nihilism is played out between apocalypse and eternal recurrence of the same.

If we follow Foucault's assertion of 'the theatre of thought',[217] the *Theatrum Philosophicum* - as Hewitt surely does when he claims that 'thought is itself conceptually framed by the theatrical' - then we might conclude that theatricalization is the totality of the condition of thinking the avant-garde. If this is the case, we must explain the terms 'theatricality' and 'performativity' with respect to the avant-garde's theatricalization of history. With reference to a discussion on the 'history' of the avant-garde in his study of Marinetti, Hewitt draws the following distinction:

> I will use the word history (with a small 'h') to differentiate the historical process, which grounds the possibility of sequential or developmental narratives, from 'History' (with a capital 'H') which shall stand for both the 'full unfolding' of the former 'history' but also the liquidation of its self-narrating, sequential process.[218]

Following Hewitt's distinction between history (fragment) and History (totality), in the theatricalized reading of the avant-garde, I suggest the term 'performativity' may be applied to the theatrical processes whereby individual manifestations of the avant-garde perform acts of self-determination and self-dramatization in performative fragments (manifestos, performances, actions, gestures, provocations, demonstrations) within the sequential or developmental narrative moments of its historical process. In comparison, 'theatricality' might be extended to refer to the totality of the 'full unfolding' of these performative fragments in the History of the avant-garde. For example, the theatricality of avant-garde History may be read, not only in the recurrence of the self-dramatization of its 'destructive character', but also in the avant-garde's theatricalized *production* and final *destruction* of History in the manifesto - a manifestation upon a stage where History lies in ruins. As Benjamin notes on the *Trauerspiel*: 'In the ruin history has physically merged into the setting.'[219]

The historical avant-garde performs the scenes of its destruction on the ruined stage of History which is simultaneously History in ruins. In the dialectic between the destruction of ruins and the ruins of destruction, a full unfolding and repetition take place which implies an historical arena where there is no progress, only cataclysm and catastrophe: an anarchistic and nihilistic theatre of destruction.

XV

In the chapters of the 'Historical Application' which follows I explore each of the critical terms of this thesis in relation to specific manifestos and manifestations of the historical avant-garde. In determining the selection criteria for choosing which manifestos and manifestations of the avant-garde would form the focus of this study, I have not simply selected those manifestos or manifestations which emphasised the avant-garde's predilection for destruction. The main reason for this is that had such 'quantitative' methodology have been employed, the number of manifestos studied would have been far in excess of that which would enable clear analysis of key ideas. In contrast, I have adopted a more 'qualitative' methodology which draws upon Hewitt's study of Marinetti, Bürger's focus upon Dada, and Benjamin's comments in relation to both Dada and Surrealism. The individual 'case studies' of the 'Historical Application' are necessary, I maintain, as they enable us to demonstrate more clearly the limits of Bürger's reading of the role of the avant-garde manifesto in the light of Habermas's thesis on the structural transformation of the public sphere.

[1] Walter Benjamin, *One Way Street and Other Writings*, translated by Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: Verso, 1979), p. 157.

[2] Michael Bakunin, 'The Reaction in Germany: A Fragment from a Frenchman', *Selected Writings*, edited by Arthur Lehning (London: Jonathan Cape, 1973), p. 58.

[3] Quoted in Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (London; Fontana, 1993), p. 299.

[4] Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century*, translated by John Beverley Robinson, (London: Pluto Press, 1989), p. 239.

[5] Michael Bakunin, *The Knouto-German Empire and the Social Revolution - part I* Sam Dolgoff (ed.), *Bakunin on Anarchism*, translated by Sam Dolgoff (Montréal: Black Rose Books, 1980), p. 412-13.

[6] Stewart Edwards (ed.), *Selected Writings of P.-J. Proudhon* Translated by Elizabeth Fraser (New York: Anchor, 1969), p. 160

[7] Marshall, op. cit., p. 299-300.

[8] Ibid., p. 263.

[9] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume I* translated by Ben Fowkes (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), p.103.

[10] Lehning, p. 11.

[11] Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, translated by Gerald Fitzgerald (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968) p. 97.

[12] Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), p. 117

[13] Andreas Huyssen, *After The Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986) p. 5

[14] Shearer West, *Fin de Siècle: Art and Society in an Age of Uncertainty* (Woodstock, N.Y.: Overlook, 1993), p. 33.

[15] Poggioli, op. cit., p. 62.

[16] Ibid., p. 96.

[17] Christopher Innes, *Avant-Garde Theatre, 1892-1992* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 6.

[18] Ibid., p. 6.

[19] Innes goes on to mention the anarchist journal *L'Avant-Garde* published by Bakunin in Switzerland in 1878. This is an error he inherits from Poggioli. *L'Avant-Garde* was actually established and edited by the Russian anarchists' fellow countryman and author of *Mutual Aid: A Factor in Evolution* (London: William Heinemann, 1902), Prince Peter Kropotkin, Bakunin having died two years earlier. Like Bakunin, Kropotkin was an aristocrat by birth, but became a printer and established *L'Avant-Garde* with the Swiss anarchist sympathiser, Paul Brousse. Furthermore, the anarchist journal *L'Avant-Garde* was not the first to carry this provocative title. In fact in France from the revolutions of 1848 until 1878 *L'Avant-Garde* became the preferred title for journals by both anarchist extremists and loyalists alike, with numerous journals sharing the name over a period of thirty years. See archives in Biblioteque de L'Arsenal, Paris.

[20] Calinescu, op. cit., p. 101.

[21] The source is from the French Humanist lawyer and historian, Etienne Pasquier (1529 – 1615) who writes in his *Recherches de la France*: 'A glorious war was then being waged against ignorance, a war in which, I would say, Scève, Bèze, and Pelletier constituted the avant-garde; or, if you prefer, they were the fore-runners of the other poets. After them, Pierre de Ronsard of Vendôme and Joachim du Bellay of Anjou, both gentlemen of noblest ancestry, joined the ranks. The two of them fought valiantly, and Ronsard in the first place, so that several others entered the battle under their banners.' Etienne Pasquier, *Oeuvres choisies*, ed. Léon Feugère (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1849), vol. 2, p. 21. Cited in Calinescu, op. cit., p. 98. Calinescu continues: 'the actual career of the term avant-garde was

started in the aftermath of the French Revolution, when it acquired undisputed political overtones. The first periodical to bear this specific word in its title was, to be sure, a military one, but it left little doubt as to its revolutionary political stance: I am referring to *L'Avant-garde de l'armée des Pyrenées orientales*, a journal that appeared in 1794 and whose watchword engraved on the blade of an emblematic sword - was: "La liberté ou la morte." This journal was committed to the defence of Jacobin ideas and was intended to reach, beyond military circles, a broader audience of "patriots". We can therefore take the 1790s as a starting point for the subsequent carer of the concept of avant-garde in radical political thought.' Ibid., p. 101.

[22] Ibid., p. 102

[23] Ibid., p. 102-3

[24] Such utopian visions which collapse the future and the remote past, are common in Romantic anarchist thinking and has its origins in Rousseau. See Weir, op. cit., passim.

[25] This dialogue is also attributed to Olinde Rodrigues, a follower of Saint-Simon. As David Graver writes: 'The first use of the "avant-garde" metaphor to define a specific aesthetic stance occurred in 1825 in Olinde Rodrigues's dialogue 'L'Artist, le savant et l'industriel', which is sometimes attributed to Saint-Simon.' David Graver, *The Aesthetics of Disturbance: Anti-Art in Avant-Garde Drama* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1995), p. 3.

[26] Calinescu, op. cit., p. 103. See also Henri Saint-Simon (1760-1825), *Selected Writings on Science, Industry and Social Organisation* translated and edited by Keith Taylor (London: Croom Helm, 1975), p. 281. Calinescu's translation is adopted here as Taylor simply translates Saint-Simon's important use of 'avant-garde' as 'vanguard', to less effect.

[27] Calinescu, op. cit., p. 203-4,

[28] Poggioli, op. cit., p. 119. On this issue, Robert Hughes has written: 'The idea that the *avant-garde* and the bourgeoisie were natural enemies is one of the least useful myths of modernism. "*Hypocrite lecteur, - mon semblable, - mon frère*": Baudelaire's much-quoted line reminds us that the bourgeois, nominal enemy of new art, was its main audience in the 1860s and its only one a century later.' Robert Hughes, *The Shock of the New: Art and the Century of Change*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980, updated and enlarged edition 1991), p. 373. While there is undoubtedly much truth in Hughes's remark regarding the stock from which avant-garde artists and audiences emerged, his comments reveal a looseness of terminology which limits our understanding of the avant-garde. First, he collapses avant-garde and modernism, a feat which has already been rendered problematic with reference to Schulte-Sasse's remarks on the tension which arises between these terms in relation to their different responses to the commodity status of art under capitalism. Second, his mocking tone suggests the inauthenticity of anti-bourgeois avant-gardism without acknowledging the hidden barbarism of bourgeois life itself. Third, his historical frame (which stretches roughly from 1860s to 1960s) is problematic in that it fails to address potential differences between the avant-garde and the neo-avant-garde with respect to audience, or to address the important structural transformations in the public sphere which impact upon the concepts of avant-garde and bourgeois.

[29] Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, edited by John Dover Wilson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).

[30] Herbert Marcuse, *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), p. 114.

[31] Ibid., p. 98.

[32] Ibid., p. 98.

[33] Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, translated by Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975), p. 78-85; cited by Schulte-Sasse in Bürger, op. cit. p. xxxiv-v.

[34] As Habermas continues, 'in radicalized art [the bourgeoisie] soon had to recognize the negation rather than the complement of its social practice'. Habermas, 1975, op. cit., p. 85.

[35] Marcuse, op. cit., p. 100.

[36] Ibid., p. 99.

[37] Donald D. Egbert, 'The Idea of "Avant-Garde" in Art and Politics', *The American Historical Review*, Volume LXXIII, Number 2, December 1967, p. 339.
[38] Graver, op. cit., p. 3.
[39] Harold Rosenberg, 'Collective, Ideological, Combative,' in *Avant-Garde Art*, edited by Thomas B. Hess and John Ashbery (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1968), p. 84. Cited in Graver, op. cit. p. 15. The association of Marxism and the avant-garde stems from a reference in the *Communist Manifesto* which is later made explicit by Lenin: 'The Communists... are , on the one hand, practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working-class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others; on the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march , the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement.' Karl Marx, *The Revolutions of 1848: Political Writings Volume 1*, Edited by David Fernbach (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 79-80. 'Although the tern itself was not employed in Marx and Engels *Communist Manifesto* (1848),' writes Calinescu, 'the concept was clearly implied' Calinescu, op. cit., p. 114. Donald Egbert writes: '... by the 1880s, at least, Marxists were becoming accustomed to using avant-garde as a political term, one result being that during the 1880s numerous provincial French newspapers connected with Marxists of the Parti ouvrier were named L'Avant-garde or bore titles beginning with that word. But it was Lenin who developed the statement in the *Communist Manifesto* into the doctrine that the party constitutes the political 'avant-garde' (his own term).' Donald D. Egbert, *Social Radicalism and the Arts, Western Europe: A Cultural History from the French Revolution to 1968* (New York: Knopf, 1970), p. 123.
[40] Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock, *Avant-Gardes and Partisans Reviewed* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 141.
[41] Eugéne Ionesco *Notes and Counter-Notes* translated by Donald Watson, (London: John Calder, 1964), p. 40-1.
[42] Graver, op. cit. p. 3.
[43] See William James, *The Principles of Psychology* Volume One (New York: Dover, 1950) p. 125.
[44] John Stuart Mill, 'On Liberty of Individuality', *Utilitarianism, On Liberty, Essay on Bentham* Edited by Mary Warnock, (Glasgow: Collins/Fontana, 1962), p. 189.
[45] Ibid., p. 193.
[46] Max Stirner, *The Ego and His Own: The Case of the Individual Against Authority*, translated by Steven T. Byington (New York: Dover, 1973), p. 10.
[47] Cited in H. C. Rutherford, *The Sovereign Self Through Max Stirner* (Surrey: New Atlantis Foundation, 1956), p. 9-10.
[48] Stirner, op. cit., p. 182. Stirner's theory of the auto-creative/auto-destructive 'transitory ego' as ego-in-process is a notable precursor not only to Nietzsche's concept of the Self as 'self-propelling wheel' but also to the radical subjectivity in the writings of Antonin Artaud analysed by poststructuralists, such as Julia Kristeva and Jacques Derrida. For example, Kristeva advances the notion of the 'subject-in-process', explaining. '"Process" in the sense of process but also in the sense of a legal proceeding where the subject is committed to trial, because our identities in life are constantly called into question, brought to trial, over-ruled' See Julia Kristeva, 'A Question of Subjectivity - an interview, *Women's Review*, no 12, reproduced in *Modern Literary Theory: A Reader* edited by Philip Rice and Patricia Waugh (London: Edward Arnold, 1989), p. 128-34. In his discussion of Artaud's paintings and drawings, Derrida advances a similar notion of the 'subjectile'. See Jacques Derrida and Paule Thévenin, *The Secret Art of Antonin Artaud* translated by Mary Ann Caws (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998), passim.
[49] John P. Clark, *Max Stirner's Egoism* (London: Freedom Press, 1976), p. 18-9.
[50] R. W. K. Paterson, *The Nihilistic Egoist: Max Stirner* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 281-83. In its constant mobility, 'becoming' resembles the constant movement of negative particle for, as Bakunin comments, the negative constitutes itself as movement.
[51] Stirner, op. cit. p. 196. Hegel also considered the ego to have emerged from nothing, writing in

1806: 'The first idea, naturally, is the conception *of myself* as a totally free being. Together with the free self-conscious being a whole world emerges from nothing - the sole true and conceivable *creation out of nothing.*' Cited in Ronald Hayman, *Nietzsche: A Critical Life* (London: Quartet, 1981), p. 4-5. However, Stirner goes further than Hegel by positing that the creative nothing is destructive in essence.

[52] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will To Power,* translated by W. Kaufman and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage, 1968), p. 18.

[53] Ibid., p. 18.

[54] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* translated by R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961), p. 61.

[55] Ibid., p. 62.

[56] Habermas, 1989, op. cit., p. 49.

[57] John Carroll, *Break-Out from the Crystal Palace, The Anarcho-Psychological Critique: Stirner, Nietzsche, Dostoevsky* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), p. 94.

[58] Daniel Guérin, *Anarchism: From Theory to Practice* translated by Mary Klopper (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), p. 28-9.

[59] Frantisek Deak, *Symbolist Theatre: The Formation of an Avant-Garde* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 248.

[60] 'The first season of [Théâtre de] L'Œuvre [in 1893]', Jacques Robichez has written, 'coincides with an essential chapter in the history of Anarchy.' Jacques Robichez, *Le Symbolisme au théâtre: Lungé-Poe et les débuts de L'Œuvre* (Paris: L'Arche, 1957), p. 212. According to Robichez, the young anti-bourgeois intellectuals who surrounded the Symbolist L'Œuvre were torn between anarchistic 'revolt against the established social order' and nostalgia for a monarchical religious order. As we shall see, in Jarry exhibits the former tendency towards outright anarchistic revolt. During the 1880s and 1890s Paris had witnessed terrorist bombings by anarchists such as Auguste Valliant, Ravachol and Emile Henry.

[61] Deak, op. cit., p. 250.

[62] Ibid., p. 250

[63] Ibid., p. 251.

[64] Ibid., p. 258.

[65] Ibid., p. 258.

[66] Ibid., p. 258.

[67] Hewitt, op. cit., p. 103.

[68] Egbert, 1967, op. cit., p. 344.

[69] Cited in George Woodcock (ed.), *The Anarchist Reader* (Glasgow: Fontana, 1977), p. 82.

[70] Edwards, op. cit., p. 98-9.

[71] P.-J. Proudhon, *Les Confessions d'un Révolutionnaire,* 1849. Cited in Woodcock, op. cit., p. 166.

[72] Peter Kropotkin, *Law and Authority,* 1886, Paul Berman (ed.), *Quotations from the Anarchists* (New York: Praeger, 1972), p. 54.

[73] See West, op. cit.; Egbert, 1970, op. cit.; Richard D. Sonn, *Anarchism and Cultural Politics in Fin de Siécle France* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989); Henri Dorra (ed.), *Symbolist Art Theories: A Critical Anthology* (Berkeley, LA: University of California, 1994); Deak, op. cit.; Robert and Eugenia Herbert, 'Artists and Anarchism: Unpublished Letters of Pissaro, Signac and Others', *Burlington Magazine,* November/December 1960 and also 'Artists and Anarchism' *Anarchy* 91 (Vol. 8 No 9) September 1968. Weir accounts for the consonance between anarchism and aestheticism with reference to the 'aggregate' quality of anarchism as an ideology and to its 'politics of style', factors to which attributes both anarchism's 'abiding appeal' and its 'perennial failure' as a political philosophy. Anarchism, he suggests, shares certain characteristics with liberalism, conservatism, socialism and utilitarianism. However, it is not a 'synthesis' of these ideologies, but rather, as Weir suggests, an 'aggregate ideology' selecting points from each of these often opposing ideologies. It

was this 'contradictory' and 'aggregate' quality of anarchism as an ideology which Weir suggests was responsible for its attraction as a philosophical legitimation for modernist aestheticism. Further, he suggests, the 'rhetoric' of anarchism lends itself to a reading of its politics as aesthetic to the extent that, in anarchism, 'the language originates the politics'. Weir, op. cit., p. 12. 'Anarchism,' he claims, 'gives special meaning to the "politics of style": anarchism is as much a cultural as a political phenomenon – more rhetoric than reality, less a movement than a myth'. Ibid., p. 12.

[74] Cited in Poggioli, op. cit., p. 9.

[75] Weir, op. cit., p. 37.

[76] Max Raphael, *Proudhon, Marx, Picasso: Three Studies in the Sociology of Art*, translated by Inge Marcuse (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1981), p. 7.

[77] Ch. XIV, Ibid., p.7.

[78] Ch. VIII, Ibid., p. 16.

[79] Ch. XXV, Ibid., p. 19.

[80] Ch. X, Ibid., p. 37.

[81] Ibid., p.5.

[82] Proudhon in Weir, op. cit., p. 38-9.

[83] Ibid., p. 159. It must be remembered that around the same period that Proudhon is working out his ideals in which the freedom of the artist is subordinated to realizing the revolution, Matthew Arnold is working upon a similar subordination of the freedom of the artist to the forces of reaction. In *Culture and Anarchy*, published in 1868, Arnold writes: 'Now if culture which simply means trying to perfect oneself, and one's mind as part of oneself, brings us light, and if light shows us that there is nothing so very blessed in merely doing as one likes, that the worship of the mere freedom to do as one likes is worship of machinery, that the really blessed thing to do is to like what right reason ordains, and to follow her authority, then we have got a practical benefit out of culture. We have got a much wanted principle, a principle of authority, to counteract the tendency to anarchy which seems to be threatening us.' Arnold, op. cit. p. 82. For Arnold, 'authority' implies 'religion' and the 'nation-state' anathema to anarchists, such as Proudhon, and nihilists, such as N. G. Cherneshevsky discussed below.

[84] This position is largely adopted later by Lenin in *What is to be Done?* (1902) and in 'Party Organization and Party Literature' (1905) when he calls for subordination of art to revolution: 'Down with non-partisan literature. Down with literary supermen. Literature must become part of the common cause of the proletariat, "a cog and a screw" of one simple great Social-Democratic mechanism set in motion by the entire politically-conscious avant-garde of the entire working class. Literature must become a component of organized, planned and integrated Social-Democratic Party work.' Cited in Calinescu, op. cit., p., 114.

[85] Weir, op. cit., p. 158.

[86] N. G. Cherneshevsky, 'The Aesthetic Relations of Art to Reality', *Russian Philosophy Volume II: The Nihilists, The Populists, Critics of Religion and Culture*, edited by James M. Edie, James P. Scanlan & Mary-Barbara Zeldin; with the collaboration of George L. Kline (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1965), p.16.

[87] Ibid., p. 20-5.

[88] Ibid., p. 28.

[89] Poggioli, op. cit., p. 95. Calinescu finds Poggioli's divorce between the two avant-gardes unacceptable: '[The historical] avant-garde was more than once politically inspired, and if the movements that represented it never entirely succeeded in joining up with the more or less parallel radical movements in politics, it would be inaccurate to say that the two avant-gardes were separated by an unbridgeable gap. ' Calinescu, op. cit., p. 113.

[90] Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, (London: Merlin, 1971), p. 126.

[91] See Georg Lukács, 'Realism in the Balance', *Aesthetics and Politics* translation editor Ronald Taylor (London: Verso, 1970), p. 57.

[92] Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, translated by C Lenhardt (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul , 1984). p. 322.
[93] Ibid., p. 121.
[94] Cf. Habermas, 1989, op. cit., p. 164-5.
[95] Bürger, op. cit., p. 22.
[96] Ibid., p. 22.
[97] Ibid., p. 17.
[98] Ibid., p. 18.
[99] Ibid., p. 63.
[100] Ibid., p. 70.
[101] Ibid., p. 70. Bürger's concept of the non-organic artwork is perhaps close to Jacques Derrida's reading of *bricoleur* and *bricolage*, advanced by the anthropologist Claude-Lévi Stiauss in *The Savage Mind* (1962). In his essay 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences' Derrida writes: 'The *bricoleur*, says Levi Strauss, is someone who uses 'the means at hand,' that is, the instruments he finds at his disposition around him, those which are already there, which had not been especially conceived with an eye to the operation for which they are to be used and to which one tries by trial and error to adapt them, not hesitating to change them whenever it appears necessary, or to try several of them at once, even if their form and their origin is heterogeneous - and so forth. There is therefore a critique of language in the form of *bricolage*, and it has even been suggested that *bricolage* is critical language itself.' Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* translated by Alan Bass (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 285. Derrida's concept of *bricolage* as 'critical language itself' coheres not only with Bürger's assertion of the critical role of the avant-garde aesthetic of fragmentation and appropriation, but also with his understanding of the critical funtion of avant-garde 'manifestations' (manifestos, provocations, demonstrations of Dada poetry, etc.) in their critique of the commodity status of autonomous 'works' of art. However, in contrast to the critical function which Derrida attributes to *bricolage*, Andrew Hewitt has suggested that the form of *bricolage* is simply a corollary of the process of commodification in capitalism. Hewitt writes: 'History, to the artists of the avant-garde, is available as commodity; and the commodity, in turn, is intrinsically 'historical', second-hand. Perhaps, after all, the avant-garde *does* develop a style, one of *bricolage*, in which the commodification of history and the historicization of the commodity (that is, aestheticization and politicization respectively) converge.' Hewitt, op. cit. p. 85.
[102] Bürger, op. cit., p. 51. The word which both Hegel and Marx use to express such a dialectical synthesis is *Aufhebung* (normally translated in the positive sense of 'to supersede' or 'to transcend' or in the negative sense as 'to annul' or 'to abolish'). But, whereas Hegel's synthesis blends negation and affirmation in order to collapse difference and to unify opposites (in order ultimately to make these oppositions conform and adhere to the ontology of affirmation), Marx relates the concept of *Aufhebung* to the concept of 'critique': 'Marx's concept of "critique" is an instance of this positive-negative movement of supersession.' Karl Marx, *Early Writings* translated by Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton (Harmondswoth: Penguin, 1975), p. 432. For Marx, critique was a means of '"tearing the veil" of mystification that surrounds the "moment of truth" present in every theory.' This 'moment of truth' is ultimately superseded by a 'truer theory'. In other words, *Aufhebung* is the overcoming of contradictions through the simultaneous *realization* and *suppression* of opposites in the act of *supersession.* The radical simultaneity of the 'positive-negative' 'moment of truth' involved in the dialectical process of *Aufhebung*, parallels the critical moment of the avant-garde (in terms of its critique of the institution of art). In fact, the iconoclasm of the avant-garde can be read as a critique of this very separation.
[103] Hewitt, op. cit., p. 77.
[104] Bürger, op. cit., p. 90.
[105] Ibid., p. 50.

[106] Ibid., p. 56. As his discussion of Duchamp's 'ready-mades' illustrates, Bürger acknowledges that the avant-garde did not replace wholesale the production of works of art with the manifestation of ephemeral events but that 'whereas they did not destroy it, the avant-gardistes profoundly modified the category of the work of art'. Ibid., p. 50-1. It is tempting to propose that another way of framing this argument would be to appropriate Roland Barthes' and say that the work produced by the avant-garde is not a *work* in the traditional sense, but a *text*. Although Barthes himself would caution otherwise ('the tendency must be avoided to say the work is classic, the text avant-garde'), it is interesting to read his concept of the text with reference to Bürger's concept of the avant-gardiste manifestation. Barthes writes: 'The difference is this: the work is a fragment of substance, occupying a part of the space of books (in a library for example), the Text as a methodological field.... the work can be held in the hand, the text is held in language, only exists in the movement of a discourse.... The Text is plural. Which is not simply to say that it has several meanings, but that it accomplishes the very plural of meaning: an *irreducible* (and not merely an acceptable) plural. The Text is not a co-existence of meanings but a passage, an overcrossing; thus it answers not to an interpretation, even a liberal one, but to an explosion, a dissemination... The Text... decants the work... from consumption and gathers it up as play, activity, production, practice.' Roland Barthes, 'From Work to Text', *Image-Music-Text* translated by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), p. 156-9.

[107] The notion of a paradigm shift is borrowed from Thomas S. Kuhn, who writes, 'when paradigms change the world itself changes with them. Led by a new paradigm, scientists adopt new instruments and look in new places'. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* Second Edition, Enlarged (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1970), p. 111.

[108] F.T. Marinetti, *Let's Murder the Moonshine: Selected Writings*, edited by R.W. Flint (Los Angeles: Sun and Moon Press, 1991), p. 50.

[109] If the manifesto was both the *decree nisi* and *decree absolute* with which the avant-garde announced its radical separation and divorce from the old world - *antipassatismo* - and the inauguration of the freedom of the new then it also demonstrated a fundamental association and unity in its call to arms. In terms of socio-political organisation, the manifesto acts as a binding contract of a free association of like-minded artists. What Proudhon calls 'the natural group': 'Whenever men get together... and for better or worse impose upon themselves the conditions of solidarity, they form what I call a natural group. This group then takes on the form of a community or some other political organism, affirming in its unity its independence, a life of movement that is appropriate to itself, and affirms its autonomy.' Cited in Weir, op. cit. p. 24. Proudhon's contractual society of 'mutualism,' - a 'régime de mutualité' - is predicated upon a 'bottom up' model of social organisation, as opposed to the 'top-down state apparatus advocated by Marx.' Ibid., p. 25.

[110] Igor Golomstock, *Totalitarian Art in the Soviet Union, the Third Reich, Fascist Italy and the People's Republic of China* translated by Robert Chandler (London: Collins Harvill, 1990), p. 23.

[111] Poggioli, op. cit., p. 69.

[112] 'The dyad is the basic performance relationship, the triad the basic dramatic-theatrical relationship.' Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory*, (London: Routledge, 1988) p. 212. See also Schechner's suggestion of the 'magnitudes of performance' for a scalar distinction between 'performativity', 'theatricality', and 'narrativity'. Ibid., p. 282.

[113] Hewitt, op. cit., p. 39.

[114] Marvin Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 60. See also J. L. Austin, *Philosophical Papers* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 233-52.

[115] Maurice Berger, *Minimal Politics: Performativity and Minimalism in Recent American Art*, (Baltimore: Fine Arts Gallery, University of Maryland, 1997), p. 15.

[116] Graver, op. cit., p. 10.

[117] Julia Kristeva, 'Word, Dialogue and Novel' in Toril Moi (ed.), *The Kristeva Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p. 59.

[118] Carlson, op. cit., p. 62-3.

[119] This is perhaps the source of the 'radical negativity' of the performative identified by Shoshana Felman: 'Radical negativity... commits the "scandal" of rejecting the demands of history and normalizing theory for a negative/positive alternative, for truth or falsity, to seek a position outside of the alternative, which nevertheless and paradoxically is the ground of history.' (Shoshana Felman, *The Literary Speech Act: Don Juan with Austin, or Seduction in Two Languages* translated by Catherine Porter (Ithica, NY.: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 143. Carlson, op. cit., p. 64.
[120] Paul Mann, *The Theory Death of the Avant-Garde*, p. 108. Paul Mann, *The Theory-Death of the Avant-Garde*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991.
[121] Moi, op. cit., p. 56.
[122] Deak, op. cit., p. 263.
[123] Ibid., p. 263.
[124] Ibid., p. 263.
[125] Jürgen Habermas, 'The Public Sphere: An Encyclopaedia Article', *Critical Theory and Society: A Reader*, edited by Stephen Eric Bronner and Douglas MacKay Kellner (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 139.
[126] Ibid., p. 136.
[127] Habermas, 1989, op. cit., p. 177-8.
[128] Bronner and Kellner, op. cit., p. 136.
[129] Ibid., p. 137.
[130] As Foucault notes in his essay 'The Spectacle of the Scaffold', there were in fact moments when the crowd witnessing public executions could be said to 'participate' in the action in a manner which would suggests that they were active agents challenging the administration of justice. However , these instancies of 'participation' (enthusiastic assistance in the administration of violence or outraged opposition to an apparent injustice) arise according to the specific occasion of a particular crime and level of punishment. At no point, therefore, is it suggested that the crowd has the potential to overthow the feudal order *per se* through sustained 'participation' in government. See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* translated by Alan Sheridan (London: Allen Lane, 1977), p. 32-69.
[131] *Collins English Dictionary Second Edition*, (London and Glasgow: Collins, 1979, 2 ed. 1986), p. 936; p. 1466.
[132] Bronner and Kellner, op. cit., p. 137.
[133] Ibid., p. 138-9.
[134] Saint-Simon, op. cit., p. 192.
[135] Bronner and Kellner, op. cit., p. 139-40.
[136] Ibid., p. 140.
[137] Ibid., p. 139.
[138] William Outhwaite (ed.), *The Habermas Reader*, (Cambridge: Polity, 1996) p. 29.
[139] Bronner and Kellner, op. cit., p. 141
[140] See Guy E. Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, (Detroit: Black & Red, 1983).
[141] Habermas, 1989, op. cit., p. 160.
[142] Ibid., p. 201.
[143] Collins, op. cit., p. 936.
[144] Ibid., p. 1466.
[145] In *The Transparency of Evil* Jean Baudrillard asks 'Where exactly does participation pass over into too much participation?' In attempting to answer this question, Baudrillard gives the example of soccer hooligans: 'Soccer hooligans... carry participation to its tragic limit, while at the same time daring the State to respond with violence, to liquidate them. In this respect they are no different from terrorists.' Jean Baudrillard, *The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena*, translated by John Benedict (London: Verso, 1993), p. 79. In a similar fashion but with differing agendas, in 'The Painter of Modern life', Baudelaire uses the following anti-democratic image when writing on the

process of Mnemonic art: 'An artist with a perfect sense of form but particularly accustomed to the exercise of memory and his imagination, ... finds himself assailed as it were, by a riot of details, all of them demanding justice, with the fury of a mob in love with absolute equality. Any form of justice is inevitably infringed; any harmony is destroyed , sacrificed; a multitude of trivialities are magnified; a multitude of things become usurpers of attention. The more the artist pays impartial attention to detail, the greater does anarchy become.' Charles Baudelaire, 'The Painter of Modern Life' *Selected Writings on Art and Artists* translated by P. E. Charvet (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 407. Here, in Baudelaire's aestheticized reading of democracy, the participation of the people in politics is intensified to the level of barbarism. There is an echo here of the Terror of the French revolution. Baudelaire clearly views participatory democracy as too much participation and, therefore, as a kind of barbarism (consequently, we are left to conclude there must be a limit on the franchise).
[146] Marx, 1973, op. cit., p. 67.
[147] Ibid., p. 70.
[148] Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London: Verso, 1983), p. 89.
[149] Ibid., p. 90.
[150] Ibid., p. 89.
[151] Ibid., p. 102.
[152] Benjamin, op. cit., p. 243.
[153] Bürger, op. cit., p. xxxvi
[154] Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, 'On the Sublime', Lisa Appignanesi (ed.) *Postmodernism: ICA Documents* (London: Free Association Books, 1989), p. 12.
[155] Adorno and Horkheimer, op. cit., p. xiii.
[156] Cited in Asher Horowitz and Terry Maley, (ed.), *The Barbarism of Reason: Max Weber and the Twilight of Enlightenment* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), p. 3.
[157] Benjamin, 1973, op. cit., p. 248.
[158] Marx, 1973, op. cit., p. 71.
[159] Habermas, 1989, op. cit., p. 31
[160] Hewitt, op. cit. p. 90.
[161] Marx, 1973, op. cit. p. 73.
[162] Berman, op. cit., p. 100.
[163] Woodcock, op. cit., p. 65.
[164] Ibid., p. 66.
[165] Adorno and Horkheimer, op. cit., p. 81. Habermas continues Kant's use of the term 'adult autonomy' in *Theory and Praxis* translated by John Viertel (London: Heinemann, 1974).
[166] Adorno and Horkheimer, op. cit., p. xiii
[167] Ibid., p. 3.
[168] Habermas, 1989, op.cit., p. 24.
[169] Ibid., p. 25-6.
[170] Adorno and Horkheimer, op. cit., p. 3.
[171] Adorno and Horkheimer are known to have turned down Habermas's book as his *Habilitationsschrift* (postdoctoral thesis) to the Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt on these grounds. Giovanna Borradori writes: 'They both found it insufficiently critical of the potentially destructive forces entailed by Enlightenment thought as well as of its overall illusory character.' See Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 182; note, 21. Habermas book eventually presented as *Habilitationsschrift* at the University of Marburg.
[172] Michel Foucault (introduction), Georges Canguilhem, *The Normal and the Pathological*, translated by Carolyn R. Fawcett in collaboration with Robert S. Cohen (New York: Zone, 1991), p. 12.

[173] Adorno and Horkheimer, op. cit., p. 6. Though it should be noted that Adorno would never entertain anything which smacked of 'irrationality' as a force for revolution.
[174] Ibid., p. xv.
[175] Foucault in Canguilhem, op. cit., p. 12.
[176] As Donald Kuspit has stated: 'Auschwitz demonstrated that rationality could be more insane than irrationality.' See Donald Kuspit, *The Cult of The Avant-Garde Artist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 89.
[177] Adorno and Horkheimer, op. cit., p. xvii.
[178] Poggioli, op. cit., p. 119-20.
[179] Habermas, 1989, op. cit., p. 158.
[180] Ibid., p. 201.
[181] Hans Delbrück comments: 'In this period, the word *barbarus* was the technical term for a soldier; the military budget was apparently called *"fiscus barbaricus."*' Hans Delbrück, *The Barbarian Invasion: History of the Art of War*, translated by Walter J. Renfroe, Jr. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1980), p. 250. It is interesting here to note that the terms 'barbarian' and 'avant-garde' both have their origins in military contexts.
[182] Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, translated by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 50-1.
[183] Collins, op. cit., p. 121.
[184] For a recent deconstruction of civilization/barbarian discourse and its importance for an understanding of contemporary international relations see Mark B. Slater, *Barbarians and Civilization in International Relations*(London: Pluto Press, 2002).
[185] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social–Contract and Discourses* translated by G. D. H. Cole, revised and augmented by J. H. Brumfitt and John C. Hall, (New York: Dutton, 1973), p. 76.
[186] Weir, op. cit., p. 17.
[187] The precursor in this context is evidently Alfred Jarry. Jarry's Bakuninist appeal in the 1890s to 'demolish even the ruins': 'PA UBU. – Hornstrumpot! We shall not have succeeded in demolishing everything unless we demolish the ruins as well. But the only way I can see of doing that is to use them to put up a lot of fine, well-designed buildings.' Alfred Jarry, *The Ubu Plays*, translated by Cyril Connolly and Simon Watson Taylor (London: Methuen, 1968), p. 106. Jarry's libertarian-barbarian destructive character, a Dandyesque 'incarnation' of life into art, and the barbarism of the destructive character of Ubu, had an unquestionable impact upon Marinetti, Ball, Tzara, Breton and Artaud. Breton refers to the 'unshakeable alliance between Jarry and the pistol' and records 'One evening when he was with Guillaume Apollinaire at a performance of the Bostock Circus, he terrorized his neighbours, whom he was trying to convince of his exploits as a lion tamer, by brandishing his revolver. "Jarry," said Apollinaire, "made no secret of the satisfaction he had felt in horrifying the philistines, and he was still clutching his pistol when he climbed onto the upper deck of the bus that was to bring him back to Saint-Germain-des–Prés."' André Breton, *Anthology of Black Humour* translated by Mark Polizzotti, (San Francisco: City Lights, 1997), p. 211. Breton continues: 'Ubu's character... overspills any particular symbolic interpretation. As Jarry took care to point out, "He is not entirely M. Thiers, or the bourgeois , or the boor. Rather he would be the perfect anarchist: the fact that he is a man, whence cowardice, filth, etc."Ibid, p. 213. Importantly, in the present context, Breton goes on to refer to destructive superego and the amoral id '*in which one can see equally both the fascist and the Stalinist.*' Ibid., p. 213; and offers the conclusion that 'Literature, after Jarry, moves hazardously over mine-filled terrain' Ibid., p. 212.
[188] Baudelaire, op. cit. p. 400.
[189] Hewitt, op. cit., p. 85.
[190] Calinescu, op. cit., p. 170.
[191] Deak, op. cit., p. 256.

[192] Calinescu seems to be blind to the libertarian-barbarian dialectic present in his own text. For example, he cites Verlaine writing in *Le Décadent*, January 1 1888: '*Décadisme* is a word of genius, an amusing find which will last in the literary history; this barbarism is a miraculous sign.' Calinescu, op. cit., p. 176. And Baju editor of *Le Décadent* writes: 'The number of contributors, the variety of their learning, their talent were a force which, used for the purposes of destruction, would have mined the base of the social structure. Some would have attacked ownership, religion, the family, other would have ridiculed marriage, and advocated free love.' Ibid., p. 177. Calinescu even states: 'After À Rebours, decadent aestheticism becomes more conscious of its critical-polemical functions and is less prone to take itself as *the* solution to the painful uncertainties and contradictions of modern life. Aestheticism, even in its most offensive forms, is no longer art cut off from the various forms of practical life, and, more than that, can no longer be regarded as incompatible with the possibility of moral, religious, or political commitments by its adherents. This deservcs to be stressed, because the preconception that aestheticism automatically means total disinterest in non aesthetic matters is still widespread. *The evolution of Décadisme toward open advocacy of revolutionary ideas is a good example that aestheticism and the cult of social involvement and even violence can go hand in hand.*' Ibid., p. 175. My italics.

[193] This is borne out by a reading of Baudelaire himself, whose reflections on the dandy come after reflections on the 'Annals of War' and 'The Soldier', texts in which he indulges in an aestheticization of war through a reading of the lithographs of drawings by the Dutch correspondent for the Crimean War, Constantin Guys. Baudelaire writes: 'And here in another drawing is the residence of Omar Pasha at Shumla. Turkish hospitality, pipes and coffee; all the visitors are seated on divans, sucking at pipes as long as blow-pipes with the bowls at their feet. And here, *Kurdes à Scutair* depicts a weird-looking soldiery whose aspect suggests an invasion of barbarian hordes; and no less strange, in another sketch are bashi-bazouks, with their European officers, Hungarian or Polish, veritable dandies in feature these latter, contrasting oddly with the curious oriental character of their men.' Baudelaire, op. cit., p. 410-1. Baudelaire then reflects on the 'Artist-Soldier' (p. 416). It is no accident that these soldiers in their 'military coquetry' and the 'dazzling costumes in which all governments like dressing their troops' (p. 417), newly returned form battle in Italy are to be found 'basking in the enthusiasm of the crowds' on the boulevards of Paris - the very scene of the Dandy. Here we may remember that the origin of the term avant-garde lies in military invasion strategy, and that the concept of the avant-garde is consonant with the language and logic of imperial expansion and militarism. See Hewitt, op. cit., p. 94-5.

[194] Ivan Turgenev, *Fathers and Sons* translated by Rosemary Edmonds (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), p.123-4.

[195] Ibid., p. 127.

[196] Ibid., p. 128. Bazarov's remark is a allusion to Bakunin's reported action on the barricades during the Dresden uprising of March 1849 (in which Wagner participated) Bakunin is reputed to have proposed to hang the Sistine Madonna on the barricades on the grounds that the Prussians 'were too cultured to fire on Raphael.' Cited by Weir, op. cit., p. 40.

[197] Isaiah Berlin notes, Turgenev's friend Annenkon viewed Bazarov as a 'Mongol, a Genghiz Khan, a wild beast symptomatic of the savage condition of Russia'. (Turgenev, p. 34)

[198] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Devils* translated by David Magarshack (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1953), p. 422. In contrast to Bazarov's antipathy towards art, Verkhovensky is a nihilist who loves beauty: 'I love beauty. I am a nihilist, but I love beauty.' Ibid., p. 420.

[199] Benjamin, 1979, op. cit., p. 157.

[200] Hewitt, op. cit., p. 87.

[201] Mann, 1991, op. cit., p. 107.

[202] Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990) , p. 370.

[203] Marinetti, op. cit., p. 49.

[204] Hewitt, op. cit., p. 188.

[205] Ibid., p. 7.
[206] In Heiddeger *Nietzsche*, Vol. 1 p. 157. Quoted in Hubert L. Dreyfus: 'Heidegger on the connection between nihilism, art, technology, and politics.' *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Charles Guignon (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 290-1
[207] Nietzsche, 1968, op. cit., p. 35. For Nietzsche, 'the Will to Power' represented the fundamental life force of the 'Dionysian world of the eternally self-creating, the eternally self-destroying' sovereign individual. It is important not to confuse Nietzsche's sovereign individual with an 'atomised' concept of the ego. Rather, the individual is only a part of an entire process of the life force. However, this does not mean that the will is necessarily subjugated to the will of others; the highest order of rank in Nietzsche's Dionysian world is where 'individuals liberate themselves'. Ibid, p. 412.
[208] Ibid., p. 36.
[209] Martin Heidegger, *Neitzsche Volume Two: The Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, translated by David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984) p. 159.
[210] In his extensive critique of western philosophy *The Destruction of Reason* translated by Peter Palmer (London: Merlin Press, 1980), Georg Lukács considers Nietzsche to be the founder of modern irrationalism which, in Lukács' view, ultimately led to the rise of Hitler and the Nazi State, the primary example of irrationalism in Germany.
[211] Nietzsche, 1968, op. cit., p. 544. It is perhaps here that Nietzsche is misread by the Nazis as promoting the German Race and the destruction of the Jews as a 'degenerate and decaying' race. However, Nietzsche can only be regarded as a proto-Nazi if we chose to forget that he includes the German race in the cultural degeneracy of the Enlightenment in general.
[212] Ibid., p. 544.
[213] Cited in Benjamin, 1979, op. cit., p. 126.
[214] Hewitt, op. cit., p. 182.
[215] Benjamin, 1973, op. cit., p. 259-60.
[216] Ibid., p. 264.
[217] Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, edited by Donald F. Bouchard and translated by Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 190.
[218] Hewitt, op. cit., p. 77-8.
[219] Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* translated by John Osborne (London: Verso, 1977), p. 177-8.

2. Historical Application

Chapter Two

The New Barbarians: The Destructive Gesture of Italian Futurism

> The annihilation of the past is the procreation of the future.
> (Alexander Herzen)[1]

> I point to something new: certainly for such a democratic type there exists the danger of the barbarian, but one has looked for it only in the depths. There exists also another type of barbarian who comes from the heights: a species of conquering and ruling natures in search of material to mold. (Friedrich Nietzsche)[2]

Introduction

'To Act,' wrote P-J. Proudhon in *The Phenomenology of War*, 'is to fight'.[3] This statement by Proudhon, considered by many to be the father of modern anarchism, is one worthy of the founder of Italian Futurism, F. T. Marinetti. There is a strange meeting here, then, between unlikely bedfellows; the libertarian anarchist and the Futurist leader and later fascist. However unlikely, it is a meeting which reveals one of the fundamental propositions that can be made about the historical avant-garde. As we shall see, Proudhon

considered war vital to understanding the history of human society. In other words, at the heart of civilization lies violence and barbarism. Proudhon's comments testify to the fact that we cannot simply account for Marinetti's enthusiasm for war by recourse to a latent fascistic tendency at odds with the emancipatory rhetoric of the avant-garde. Rather, it was the result of a complex interweaving of contradictory ideological principles which raged simultaneously throughout the numerous manifestos and manifestations in which Marinetti conducted his war on cultural passéism. Indeed, the very term avant-garde suggest the artist as warrior on a cultural battlefield. Marinetti's enthusiasm for war, then, is in keeping with the very agonistic spirit of the avant-garde identified by Poggioli.

This chapter, therefore, follows the parallels between Futurism and Anarchism and the ambiguous relationship between the avant-garde and emancipatory politics. In the manifestos and manifestations of Marinetti and his fellow Futurists we find an aesthetic of destruction which embraces libertarianism and anti-authoritarianism as well as nationalism, violence and war. This chapter also confronts the spectre of fascism: a confrontation due, I will demonstrate, to Futurism's dialectic of libertarianism and barbarism.

I

In *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, Slavoj Zizek comments:

> [A]t the turn of the century, it was already part of the *Zeitgeist* that a certain age was coming to an end - the age of peaceful progress, of well-defined and stable class distinctions, and so on: that is the long period from 1850 until the First World War.[4]

In actuality this age of 'peaceful progress' and 'stable class distinctions' - the era of high capitalism - was a period of economic, political and social upheaval. Economically, it was a period marked by rapid industrialization, growing mechanization and expanding urbanization; politically it was a period of the unification of emergent nation-states, imperialist expansion, insurgent revolutionary nationalism, and civil wars; socially, it was a period of civic uprisings, civil insurrections, class antagonisms, punctuated by sporadic acts of individual terrorism by anarchists in Paris and nihilists in St. Petersburg. This epoch of social, economic and political turmoil and ideological instability was poetically forecast in Marx's famous phrase from the *Communist Manifesto*, 'all that is solid melts into air'.[5] Zizek continues: 'New dangers were hanging in the air (labour movements, eruptions of nationalism, anti-Semitism, the danger of war) which would soon tarnish the idyllic image of Western civilization, releasing its "barbaric" potentials.'[6] The most immediate threat to the stability of bourgeois capitalism in this period, with the capacity to release its 'barbaric' potential, was its own mode of

production: industrialization and mechanization. In order to progress and expand, these forces of production must intensify and periodically engage in a process of self-destruction. In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx characterized the destructive character of the bourgeoisie as 'barbarians' and the crises of capitalist overproduction as a 'momentary barbarism' - the result of 'too much civilization, too much means of subsistence, too much industry, too much commerce'.[7] These periodic crises of the intensification of capitalist forces of production in a destructive overproduction, Marx claimed, 'put on trial, each time more threateningly, the existence of the entire bourgeois society'.[8] By the turn of the century, then, the period of which Zizek writes, any apparent stability in the order of the bourgeois political or social public sphere, simply masked an underlying current of barbarity. All that would be needed to pull away the veil of civilization and unleash its barbaric core would be an element of intensification.

In the field of bourgeois culture, Italian Futurism engaged in just this process of destructive intensification. In their actions and manifestos, the Italian Futurists put the entire existence of the bourgeois institution of art and culture on trial (with themselves as sole judge, jury and executioner) and found it wanting. Wilful destruction, coupled with a desire to annihilate the cultural traditions of the past and embrace a mechanized, accelerated vision of the future, are at the core of Italian Futurism. Aggressive and frenetic in its insurgency, Italian Futurism was committed to a programme of radical

cultural iconoclasm which was violently 'anti-conformist, anti-monarchist, anti-democratic, anti-socialist, anti-bourgeois, anti-clerical and anti-feminist'.[9] With the over-heated young poet, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876-1944) at the wheel, promising to waylay everything in his path, the Futurists accelerated the destruction of the past, in order to suppress the ageing bourgeois cultural order and to realize a youthful Futurist society. Futurist destruction takes the form of *antipassatismo* ('Down with the past' or 'Down with Old Age'), that is to say, a full-scale rejection of the bourgeois veneration for intellectual and aesthetic tradition: 'Why should we look back, when what we want is to break down the mysterious doors of the Impossible!'[10] Through the intensified participatory agency of the manifesto, the Futurists announced the destruction of an old and decaying civilization and the arrival of a new anti-bourgeois race. In its emancipatory zeal, Italian Futurism claimed the role which Marx had once reserved for the bourgeoisie. In other words, fulfilling the prophecy of Nietzsche twenty years earlier, at the dawn of the twentieth century, the Italian Futurists were the 'new barbarians'.

II

What elements of the libertarian discourses of anarchism and nihilism give rise to the barbarism of Italian Futurism and its aesthetic of destruction? In

what way is the politicization of art in the manifesto, which articulated and actualized the libertarian desire to destroy the institution of art and reintegrate art with everyday life (which Marinetti considered to be, for the most part, anti-theatrical) entwined with the process of theatricalization and aestheticization? Do the performative and theatrical strategies of Italian Futurism contribute to a refeudalization of the bourgeois public sphere? Was the barbarism of Futurism's glorification of war merely a reflection of the fascism towards which Italian Futurism gravitated after World War I?

In order to answer these questions we must return to the manifesto as a means for the politicization of art in Italian Futurism. Marinetti's 'The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism' is analysised as a destructive gesture which articulates an extension of his early anarcho-syndicalist sympathies for revolutionary violence and 'social war'. This study gives rise to notions of *poetic sabotage* and *poetic terrorism*, which parallel, in the field of cultural politics, the revolutionary strategies of 'direct action' and 'propaganda by the deed'. Looking at specific examples of performative interventions into the public sphere, and the manner of Italian Futurism's articulation of Italian irredentism, we see more clearly Marinetti's rejection of the theatrical modality of parliamentarism in favour of the performative modality of anarchic interventions in the public sphere. The 'intensification of participation' manifest in these interventions can also be seen in Marinetti's adherence to the more theatrically-bound *serate* (evenings) and *sintesi* of the

Futurist Variety Theatre. Nevertheless, in their intensification of the techniques of Symbolist theatre, these strategies display tendencies of aestheticization. For example, Marinetti's assault upon the passivity of the audience is not simply a manifestation of the democratizing spirit of the 'intensification of participation' but reveals a desire to annihilate the audience in the totality of the spectacle. Such an assault upon the rational-critical function of the audience induces, according to Michael Kirby, a 'noncontemplative' mode of spectatorship consonant with the paradigm of theatricalization which Habermas associates with the refeudalization of the public sphere. Here we may see more clearly the relationship emerge between aestheticization, theatricalization and the refeudalization of the public sphere.

In *Fascist Modernism: Aesthetics, Politics and the Avant-Garde* (1993) Andrew Hewitt argues:

> [I]n seeking the origins of Marinetti's aesthetic of destruction, for example, it is not necessary to resort to an anarchic Symbolist youth, but rather to situate him within the destructive and transgressive dynamic of capitalism itself in its imperialist phase. The ambiguities of Marinetti's nationalism account for his collaboration with anarchists, as well as for his political affiliations with fascism. At the same time, his deconstruction of the category 'nation' also offers the clearest evidence why imperialism was a constant point of political rupture for the avant-gardiste Marinetti in his relations with the anarchists, as well as with the fascist regime.[11]

Contrary to Hewitt's assertion, my claim is that if we fail to address the aestheticization and theatricalization embodied in the manifesto form, in which

Marinetti articulates his aesthetic of destruction developed from an 'anarchic Symbolist youth,' we cannot hope to fully understand the Futurists' attempts at the politicization of art. Without such an articulation of the performative modality of the politicization of art and the theatrical modality of the aestheticization of politics, as displayed in the different practices of Italian Futurism, we cannot hope to successfully navigate the treacherous waters of Marinetti's affiliation to, on the one hand, anarchism and nihilism, and, on the other hand, to nationalism, imperialism and fascism. This attempted navigation is made all the more perilous by the ambiguous libertarian-barbarian dialectic immanent in the destructive character of the avant-garde.

III

'The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism', written by Marinetti and which appeared on the front page of *Le Figaro* on 20 February 1909 was literally a strike against society (manifesto = Latin. manu festi; lit. 'to strike with the hand'). [Fig. 2] Written in Italian in 1908 (the year Alfred Jarry died) the manifesto was intended as an incendiary act of intense cultural provocation and, upon its translation and publication in French a year later, was the most radical gesture to 'hit' Paris since the *succèss de scandale* of *Ubu roi* at the Symbolist *Théâtre de L'Œuvre* thirteen years earlier. The 'Founding and

Manifesto' marks the beginning of a series of violent assaults upon the academicization and fossilization of art, in what Marinetti called 'our destructive, antitraditionalist principle'.[12] The manifesto opens with an allegory which serves effectively as a creation myth of Futurism. A group of Milanese poets have stayed up all night furiously writing down their theories for a new aesthetic. In a manner suggestive of the military origins of the term avant-garde, they are dramatized as sentinels in a war against the stars: 'An immense pride was buoying us up, because we felt ourselves alone at that hour, alone, awake, and on our feet, like proud beacons or forward sentries against an army of hostile stars glaring down at us from their celestial encampments.'[13] The apartment is heavily orientalist and decadent in its interior decoration, an echo of the bohemian milieu of *fin-de-siècle* Symbolism and Aestheticism. The world outside is torn between an antique past and an industrial future. The group of poets are alerted to the new, violent, mechanized world by the noise of a passing tram. The passing tram is the first indication of the conflict between the orientalist interior and the urban exterior, a conflict played out in the fabric of the city itself, as the marble of the old city gives way to the steel tracks of a new industrialization. As Reyner Banham points out, the political changes in Italy (only unified as a nation-state in 1870) were matched by rapid economic and social transformation:

> Towns like Turin and Milan suddenly found themselves changed from princely or ducal capitals into subsidiaries of a revived Rome, but they also found themselves transformed into industrial centres.[14]

It is in this context of the political, social, and economic transformation of Italy that the Futurists embarked upon their aesthetic revolution. In the early light of dawn the poets leave the old world of the apartment, climb into three automobiles, and drive at speed, exhilarated and liberated, through the newly industrialized streets of Milan.

The freedom offered (to the wealthy poets) by the automobile is clearly an analogy for the creative freedom and individual autonomy desired by the poets of a new aesthetic. In a later manifesto, the automobile will appear to Marinetti as 'gleaming with progress'.[15] After the advent of the motorcar the experience of nature would never be the same again; as, for example, in order to facilitate the progress of motorised transport fields were given over to road building. In fact, the increasing mechanisation of the natural order is the construction of a world made in the Futurists' image: 'Every pine woods madly in love with the moon has a Futurist road that crosses it from end to end.'[16] What the Futurists loved about the motorcar was its speed and the power of speed to transform the experience of the world. Far from lamenting the erosion of civilization by mechanization, or retreating from the world of industrialization into a fantasy-world of romanticism or medievalism, Futurism, Marinetti would later write, embraced the 'destruction of ruins in the face of

holy speed'.[17] From the new fast-moving perspectives of the car and the aeroplane Marinetti foresees a 'New sense of the world' and an 'earth shrunk by speed'.[18] However, at a turn in the road, Marinetti swerves to avoid two cyclists and his speeding car overturns into a ditch, the outflow from a near-by factory. The result is the primal scene of Futurism:

> O maternal ditch, almost full of muddy water! Fair factory drain! I gulped down your nourishing sludge; and I remembered the blessed black breast of my Sudanese nurse... When I came up - torn, filthy and stinking - from under the capsized car, I felt the white-hot iron of joy deliciously pass through my heart![19]

The new mechanical age demanded a new and dynamic concept of the individual liberated from the medieval, rarefied confines of Symbolism. From the 'amniotic fluid', as Rosalind Krauss put it[20], of the industrial waste into which his car plunges, Marinetti emerges as if born again in the anti-immaculate conception of the First Futurist. In other words, through his absolute will Marinetti wrestles into existence the hybrid machine-man: man in the barbaric process of *becoming-machine*.[21]

The manifesto celebrates the dehumanization and mechanization of the natural world in modernity's expansion of transportation and information systems over the earth's surface; Marinetti must surely have been conscious of the miles of railway lines, tunnels, electricity and telegraph cables, sewage pipelines, running above and below the surface of the modern city. Furthermore, in Futurism life itself becomes metallized: 'Let's shake the gates

of life – test the bolts and hinges.'[22] But as capitalism transforms nature into a machine, Marinetti simultaneously sets about transforming the machine into an animal. Throughout the account of the early morning automobile race, the car repeatedly takes on animal forms ('snorting beasts', 'shark', 'lion', its 'vicious teeth', the car spinning like 'a dog trying to bite its tail'). If, since Descartes at least, Western Enlightenment philosophy contends that animals and machines possess neither 'soul' nor 'reason' (which are the sole preserve of man as 'human'), then the animism of the soulless and irrational *animal-machine*, which Marinetti celebrates in the foundational myth of his liberatory avant-garde movement, suggests Futurism as the incarnation of a modern 'anti-human' barbarism.

The allegorical fragment in which the (mythical) 'founding' of Futurism is dramatized is followed by the 'Manifesto of Futurism' and a further fragment. The 'Manifesto of Futurism' is an eleven point revolutionary catechism which proclaims an iconoclastic industrialized aesthetic, and opens: 'We intend to sing the love of danger, the habit of energy and fearlessness'. Following on from the first fragment, the fourth proclamation sings the praises of the automobile: 'A racing car whose hood is adorned with great pipes, like serpents of explosive breath... is more beautiful than the *Victory of Samothrace*.'[23] In the new Futurist aesthetic, the wings of mythology are replaced by the internal combustion engine of the automobile; that is to say, myth appears to have been supplanted by materialism and the machine.[24]

However, Matei Calinescu has suggested that the scientisim of the machine is only 'cultivated' by the avant-garde because of its anti-artistic and anti-humanistic 'metaphoric potential,' which is both philosophically and aesthetically adapted to a 'strategy of dehumanization'.[25] He concludes: 'what is important for the avant-garde is not science as such, but only its myth'.[26] Two myths, then, seem to be guiding early Italian Futurism. The myth of scientism and the machine, on the one hand, and, on the other, the myth of the general strike.

IV

In Futurism's nascent state, many Italian Futurists were sympathetic towards anarchism. In the 'Founding and Manifesto' Marinetti had celebrated the 'destructive gesture of anarchists'. In 1904 the Futurist painter Carlo Carrà attended the funeral of the anarchist agitator Riccardo Galli, who had been killed in a political demonstration. There, Carrà witnessed a battle between anarchists and police which ensued after police had ordered that the funeral could not take place in the cemetery, but only in the square in front of it. So moved by the anarchists' resistance to the police, Carrà painted a huge canvas, *The Funeral of the Anarchist Galli* (1911), a painting in which he attempted 'to recapture the excitement and emotion of the "revolutionary

proletariat".'[27]

Also, in the 'Futurist Speech to the English,' at the Lyceum Club in London in 1910 (a speech in which Marinetti attacked the 'lymphatic ideology of that deplorable Ruskin' for his 'morbid dream of primitive rustic life... [and]... hatred for the machine, steam and electricity'[28]), Marinetti stated 'we love the potent individualism that doesn't prevent you [the English] from opening your arms to individualists of every land, whether libertarians or anarchists'.[29] This was undoubtedly a clear reference to the well-known Italian anarchist, Errico Malatesta, then living in exile in London, and who would have been known to Marinetti as the editor in Italy of *L'Agitazione* (1897). Importantly for Marinetti, Malatesta's *L'Anarchia* of 1891 counts among the virtues of anarchism 'our numerical strength, our energy, our intelligence and our intransigence'.[30] It was toward the anti-parliamentary intransigence of Malatesta's anarcho-syndicalism and its promotion of revolutionary proletarian violence, that Marinetti and other Italian Futurists were drawn.

Donald D. Egbert makes a similar point when he suggests, in his essay 'Italian Futurism and Anarcho-Syndicalism', that, although there were points of ideological divergence, 'Politically, the sympathies of the futurists lay with revolutionary anarchism.'[31] The key principle of revolutionary anarchism or anarcho-syndicalism with which the Futurists held sympathy was the assertion of individual and group 'autonomy'. As Rudolf Rocker has written:

> The organization of Anarcho-Syndicalism is based on the principles of Federalism, on free combination from below upward, putting the right of self-determination of every member above everything else and recognizing only the organic agreement of all on the basis of like interests and common convictions.[32]

The tenet of autonomy was extended to an organizational principle as the Futurist movement spread internationally outward from Milan to Florence, Paris, Moscow and St. Petersburg. 'All Futurist movements are ... autonomous', Marinetti wrote, 'Every people had, or still has, its passéism to overthrow.'[33] Marinetti's defence of the autonomy of each Futurist manifestation suggests that the organizational structure of Futurism is clearly associated with the methods of organization advanced by anarcho-syndicalism.

Perhaps the most important theorist of anarcho-syndicalism to consider in this context is the French syndicalist Georges Sorel. In his widely known *Reflections on Violence* (published in Paris in 1906, just three years prior to the Marinetti's 'Founding and Manifesto'), Sorel had envisioned the general strike as an 'extreme moment' in the struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie, wherein 'we make an effort to create a new man within ourselves.'[34] Egbert records Sorel (who was an engineer by trade) as attributing 'an aesthetic value to our great means of production - in other words machines.'[35] As we shall see, the aestheticism which Egbert suggests

was present in Sorel's response to mechanization seeps into the anarcho-syndicalist's political philosophy for the machine age.

In his major work, Sorel also outlines a justification for anti-authoritarian violence and articulates the revolutionary function of the myth of the general strike. Initially, he suggests: 'a distinction should be drawn between the *force* that aims at authority,... and the *violence* that would smash that authority'.[36] Proletarian violence is defensible, Sorel claims, to the extent that it constitutes a necessary tactic in resisting the coercive force of the state. Bourgeois parliamentary democracy must be rejected as a deception, as must any compromise with the bourgeois political sphere. '[T]he greatest danger which threatens Syndicalism', Sorel warned, 'would be an attempt to imitate democracy'.[37] Instead of participating in a simulated democracy via the reactionary sham of parliamentarism, the syndicalists propagated the revolutionary myth of the general strike.

According to the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci, the myth of the general strike is 'a political ideology expressed neither in the form of a cold utopia nor as learned theorising, but rather by a creation of concrete phantasy which acts on a dispersed and shattered people to arouse and organise its collective will.'[38] In order for the myth of the general strike to fulfil its revolutionary function, it follows, it must remain at the level of myth. In a logic which resembles the nihilism of Bazarov, any attempt to articulate the practicalities

of the future revolution are, paradoxically, counter-revolutionary. As Sorel states: *'It is the myth in its entirety which is alone important'*. He continues:

> No useful purpose is served, therefore, in arguing about the incidents which may occur in the course of a social war, and about the decisive conflicts which may give victory to the proletariat; even supposing the revolutionaries to have been wholly and entirely deluded in setting up this imaginary picture of the general strike, this picture may yet have been, in the course of the preparation for the Revolution, a great element of strength, if it has embraced all the aspirations of Socialism, and if it has given to the whole body of Revolutionary thought a precision and a rigidity which no other method of thought could have given... we are no longer compelled to argue learnedly about the future; we are not obliged to indulge in lofty reflections about philosophy, history, or economics... the general strike is... the *myth* in which Socialism is wholly comprised, i.e. a body of images capable of evoking instinctively all the sentiments which correspond to the different manifestations of the war undertaken by Socialism against modern society.[39]

The dominant mode of Sorel's thought, then, is an aestheticization of the class struggle, or 'social war', through promotion of the myth of the general strike. Integral to the social war demanded by the myth of the general strike, was the revolutionary demand of anarcho-syndicalism for the 'liquidation' of the institutions of the state. As Rocker explained in the 1930s:

> The idea of a council system for labour was the practical overthrow of the state as a whole; it stands, therefore, in frank antagonism to any form of dictatorship, which must always have in view the highest development of the power of the state. The pioneers of this idea in the First International recognized that economic equality without political and social liberty was unthinkable; for this reason they were firmly convinced that the liquidation of all institutions of political power must be the first task of the social revolution, so as to make any new form of exploitation impossible.[40]

According to Egbert, the brand of revolutionary syndicalism expounded by Sorel, which ultimately demands the destruction of the institutions of the state, 'anticipated' Marinetti. 'Not only did Marinetti mention the "excitement of labour" in his first Manifesto,' Egbert points out, 'but in his book *Le Futurisme* he also highly praised "the right to strike" - undoubtedly under the influence of anarcho-syndicalism.' Egbert continues with the claim that Marinetti's idea of democracy was 'based on society within the mechanised big city in which labour unions are so significant (even though for him the revolutionary mob was still more important)'.[41] The influence of anarcho-syndicalism in general, and Sorel's brand in particular, on Futurism is evident, therefore, in Marinetti's demand for the destruction of the 'institution' of art and his celebration of the revolutionary violence of the general strike with its concomitant appeal to an aestheticization of politics.[42]

In this respect, the myth of the general strike raises the spectre of terrorism. As Anthony Kubiak has suggested, '[t]he performative history of terror was first rehearsed in thought as myth'.[43] Thus, what Egbert fails to address in his focus on Marinetti's lip service to the mobilization of labour, is that fact that the elements of Sorel's thought and the strategies of anarcho-syndicalism which appeal most to Marinetti are precisely those which aestheticize politics in myth, and which ultimately raise the spectre of terrorism.

This influence of a terroristic anarcho-syndicalism and its 'social war' is combined with the Futurist rhetoric of barbarism, most evident in the ninth and tenth proclamations of the 'First Manifesto,' where Marinetti intensifies the dehumanization he celebrates in mechanization and glories in a general strike against humanity:

> 9. We will glorify war - the world's only hygiene - militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of freedom-bringers [des anarchistes], beautiful ideas worth dying for, and scorn of woman.
> 10. We will destroy the museums, libraries, academies of every kind, will fight moralism, feminism, every opportunistic or utilitarian cowardice.[44]

Above all the Futurist Manifesto is a declaration of war - war against the past, war against the institution of art, war against a bourgeois public. The first wave assault of this war was launched on the strategic site of the front page of a popular Parisian daily newspaper - a form which Marinetti regarded as a 'synthesis of a day in the world's life'.[45] As spaces for representing 'public opinion' and producing the bourgeois public sphere, newspapers performed a political function in that they were responsible for a principle of 'publicness,' which Habermas regards as crucial to the idea of bourgeois democracy. Yet, again following Habermas's reasoning, the political function of newspapers tends to recede as constitutional states stabilize and the public sphere becomes the domain of competing private interests and moves towards 'refeudalization'. Characteristic of this period of refeudalization, Habermas suggests, is the supplanting of the notion of

'publicness' by the notion of 'publicity'. This structural transformation of the public sphere is precipitated by a shift from a paradigm of the 'literalization' of political participation to one of 'theatricalization'. The process of this transformation from a paradigm of literalization to theatricalization, I suggest, is immanent in the modality of the avant-garde manifesto. Published on the front page of *Le Figaro*, Marinetti's 'Founding and Manifesto of Futurism' acts as a mechanism for making his movement 'public,' of intensifying the participation of Futurism in the public sphere and for reintegrating art with everyday life. However, simultaneously, the context of the manifesto's appearance on the front page of a commercial daily newspaper enters the avant-garde into the world of advertizing and 'publicity'.

As a mode of intervention and participation in the democratic, representative, public sphere of bourgeois society, the manifesto marks a violent interruption and intensification of the means of representation and 'public opinion'. In the hands of Marinetti, however, the manifesto is not put to the service of democracy but of 'publicity' - a publicity of the order courted by revolutionaries who resort to acts of terrorism or 'propaganda by the deed'. In the process, the paradigm of literalization is supplanted by the paradigm of theatricalization in the form of terrorism as Marinetti holds an unsuspecting Parisian public hostage to his diatribe, assaulting them in the street, in cafés, on public transport, in the factory.

As was suggested with reference to Sorel's myth of the general strike, the violent demands of the manifesto in its calls for direct action (for the intensification of 'participation') resemble the revolutionary strategies of sabotage and terrorism most commonly associated with anarchism and nihilism. As previously noted, echoing Marx's characterization of the 'momentary barbarism' of capitalism as a destructive overproduction ('too much industry, too much commerce'), Jean Baudrillard regards terrorism as '*too much* participation' in the public sphere.[46] Terrorism, we might conclude, is simply an intensification of the performative mode of participation in the bourgeois public sphere. As I shall go on to argue, the manifestos of Italian Futurism and its performative interventions into the bourgeois public sphere, not only enact the theatricalization of terrorism, a recasting of the principle of participation along the lines of direct action and political violence advocated by anarcho-syndicalists such as Sorel, they also make manifest the potential terrorism of theatricalization latent in bourgeois democracy itself.

Such a claim regarding the manifesto and terrorism, evolves from the primary recognition of an intimate relationship between terrorism and theatre. As Kubiak observes:

> [W]hile terrorism is not theatre, terrorism's affiliation with political coercion as performance is a history whose first impulse is a terror that is theatre's moment, a terror that is so basic to human life that it remains largely invisible *except* as theatre.[47]

It is to this terroristic mode of theatricalization which Marinetti's manifesto pertains: 'It is from Italy that we launch through the world this violently upsetting, incendiary manifesto of ours.'[48] As 'incendiary poets,' the Futurists were entering art into the revolutionary politics, and their poetical terrorism echoed the acts of political terrorism perpetrated upon the Parisian public by anarchists such as Ravachol and Henry little over a decade before. Exploding in the face of the bourgeois and proletarian alike that cold February morning from the pages of *Le Figaro* was an incendiary device aimed at breaking apart the state's cherished cultural institutions and public museums which, Marinetti proclaimed, artificially preserved the corpses and worthless relics of a dead civilization. The third fragment continues in its litany of destruction:

> Museums: cemeteries!... Identical, surely, in the sinister promiscuity of so many bodies unknown to one another. Museums: public dormitories where one lies forever beside hated or unknown beings. Museums: absurd abattoirs of painters and sculptors ferociously slaughtering each other with colour-blows and line-blows, the length of the fought-over walls!... Why poison ourselves? Why rot?
>
> And what is there to see in an old picture except the laborious contortions of an artist throwing himself against the barriers that thwart his desire to express his dream completely?... Admiring an old picture is the same as pouring our sensibility into a funerary urn instead of hurling it far off, in violent spasms of action and creation.
>
> Do you, then, wish to waste all your best powers in this eternal and futile worship of the past, from which you emerge fatally exhausted, shrunken beaten down? ... [...] ... In truth I tell you that daily visits to museums, libraries, and academies (cemeteries of empty exertion, Calvaries of crucified dreams, registries of aborted beginnings!) are, for artists, as damaging as the prolonged supervision by parents of certain young people drunk with their talent and their ambitious wills. When the future is barred to them, the admirable past may be a solace for the ills of the moribund, the sickly, the

> prisoner... But we want no part of it, the past, we the young and strong *Futurists*!
> So let them come, the gay incendiaries with charred fingers! Here they are!... Come on! Set fire to the library shelves! Turn aside the canals to flood the museums!... Oh, the joy of seeing the glorious old canvases bobbing adrift on those waters, discoloured and shredded!... Take up your pickaxes, your axes and hammers and wreck, wreck the venerable cities, pitilessly![49]

The manifesto ardently demands the impossible. Rhetorical, bellicose, hyperbolic speech, clashes with the serious, stentorian tone of deep-seated conviction and heart-felt principle. In short, the manifesto is a text in which a dialectic is performed between declamation (constative utterance) and declaration (performative utterance). What it declaims is freedom, what it declares is war.

Thus, despite the apparent 'monologism' of the manifesto's demands, the Futurist manifesto is 'dialogical' in structure. That is to say, as a text, the Futurist manifesto (and the manifesto form in general) is not autonomous. Rather it is aware of, and is written in response to its sociopolitical and aesthetic context.[50] In other words the manifesto is 'text as social activity'. This is what Julia Kristeva refers to as 'Menippean discourse'. Taking its name from Menippus of Gadara, a third century BC philosopher, Menippean discourse is characterized by Kristeva in the following manner:

> Menippean discourse is both comic and tragic, or rather, it is *serious*, in the same sense as in the carnivalesque; through the status of its words, it is politically and socially disturbing... It includes all genres (short stories, letters, speeches, mixtures of verse and prose) whose structural signification is to denote the writer's distance from his own and other texts. The multi-stylism

> and multi-tonality of this discourse and the dialogical status of its word explain why it has been impossible for classicism, or for any other authoritarian society, to express itself in a novel descended from Menippean discourse... Its discourse exteriorizes political and ideological conflicts of the moment. The dialogism of its words *is* practical philosophy doing battle against idealism and religious metaphysics, against the epic. It constitutes the social and political thought of an era fighting against theology, against law.[51]

The manifesto as a Menippean discourse, therefore, is essentially combative. The destructive gestures of Futurism were a combined assault on culture, a guerrilla warfare on two very different strategic sites: on the one hand, the form and content of individual works (paintings, poems, performances), and on the other hand, the institution of art (museums, gallery system, dealers, critics, schools, ideas about art).[52] Corresponding to these two sites, Marinetti employs two different strategies of negation: against individual art works, Marinetti employs a strategy of *poetic saboage* - destroying works from within; against the institution of art, Marinetti perpetrates acts of *poetic terrorism*, ('We will demolish the museums, libraries, academies of every kind').

In Bürger's terms, *poetic sabotage* refers to the anti-art works which attempted, in a 'system-immanent critique', to explode aesthetic categories from the inside by destroying their creative syntax. In contrast, *poetic terrorism* attacks art as a social subsystem and effects the integration of art and life. The principle form of *poetic terrorism* assaulted the institution of art from the outside, from the everyday world of street newspaper stands. As

suggested above, these twin strategies can be related to the tradition of political violence in acts of sabotage or terrorism perpetrated by revolutionary anarchism and nihilism. In the cultural field they are commensurate with the intransigent anti-parliamentarism and direct action expounded by anarcho-syndicalists. The manifesto, then, is the scene of the avant-garde's politicization of art. Yet, in the self-dramatization of revolt displayed in the manifesto, the avant-garde aestheticizes the moment of its politicization.

This aestheticization extends into and informs Marinetti's nihilism. 'For the moment we are content with blowing up all the traditions, like rotten bridges!'[53] The Futurist as nihilist must be capable, Marinetti stated, of 'thinking freely, without fear and without hope, like a black banner among the shadows'.[54] The nihilism of Futurism not only turns against the culture of the past, they project a future where their nihilism will turn against themselves. 'The oldest of us is thirty...' boasts the final part, intoxicated with youth (Marinetti, born in 1876, was, in fact, in his thirty-third year, a heavily symbolic age as it is reputedly the age of Christ at crucifixion). But he continues, prophesizing Futurism's death: 'When we are forty, other younger and stronger men will probably throw us in the wastebasket like useless manuscripts - we want it to happen!'[55] Thus, as Benjamin will write of fascism, Futurism experiences its own destruction as aesthetic pleasure. In this celebration of its own death, Futurism may speak in the voice of a nascent fascism, but it does so in the name of nihilistic barbarism.

Reyner Banham has suggested that the barbarism of Marinetti's negation of old age in the 'Founding and Manifesto' is a corollary of his equivalence of man and machine which induces a 'sense of transience in which the ageing of human beings is linked to the obsolescence of their technical equipment'.[56] Yet, in this instance, the metaphor is not one of mechanization but one of literalization, of the dispensability of text. The manifesto becomes as expendabile as the very newspaper in which it appears. Appropriately enough, as if embodying the scene of its annunciation in a daily newspaper, the Menippean discourse of the manifesto 'exhausts itself in the act and in the present'.[57] The centrality of such a thoroughgoing destruction to Futurism is recognized by Gramsci. In 'Marinetti the Revolutionary' (1921), he writes:

> What remains to be done? Nothing other than to destroy the present form of civilization. In this field, 'to destroy' does not mean the same as in the economic field. It does not mean to deprive humanity of the material products that it needs to subsist and develop. It means to destroy spiritual hierarchies, prejudices, idols and ossified traditions. It means not to be afraid of innovations and audacities, not to be afraid of monsters, not to believe that the world will collapse if a worker makes grammatical mistakes, if a poem limps, if a picture resembles a hoarding or if young men sneer at academic and feeble-minded senility. The Futurists have carried out this task in the field of bourgeois culture. They have destroyed, destroyed, destroyed, without worrying if the new creations produced by their activity were on the whole superior to those destroyed.[58]

As Gramsci points out, alongside Marinetti's demands for the destruction of the cultural institutions of the modern state, in his endeavour to devalue the foundations of the bourgeois world order, the Futurists sought to 'destroy

spiritual hierarchies, prejudices, idols and ossified traditions.' The publication of the manifesto in a daily newspaper embraced the territory of everyday life. The rationale for the appropriation of the daily newspaper, was that Futurism's programme of destruction did not seek to bring about a revolution in art alone. Rather, as manifestos such as Balla's 'Futurist Manifesto of Men's Clothes' (1913) and 'The Futurist Universe' (1918), and Marinetti's *Futurist Cookbook* (1915) suggest, the Futurists aspired to effect a radical transformation in the totality of everyday life. In 'The Destruction of Syntax' Marinetti wrote:

> Futurism is grounded in the complete renewal of human sensibility brought about by the great discoveries of science. Those people who today make use of the telegraph, the telephone, the phonograph, the train, the bicycle, the motorcycle, the automobile, the ocean liner, the dirigible, the aeroplane, the cinema, the great newspaper (synthesis of a day in the world's life) do not realize that these various means of communication, transportation and information have a decisive influence on their psyches.[59]

Other Futurist manifestos, Boccioni's 'Plastic Dynamism' (1913) and 'The Futurist Universe 1918' for example, proclaim the final disintegration of art as an autonomous sphere of culture separate from life. And Ardengo Soffici prophesized: 'Art's final masterpiece will be its own destruction.'[60] But this renunciation of art, nonetheless reveals a fundamental aestheticization. Ultimately, as we shall see, under Futurism, life itself would be transformed into art. (And, as we shall see, the ultimate aestheticization of life which

Marinetti worshipped above all else was war.) In order to investigate the Futurist desire for the integration of art and life, therefore, it is not to the works of art that we must look, but to the manifestos. The 'Founding and Manifesto' precedes the major Futurist artworks, such as Umberto Boccioni's series of paintings *States of Mind* (1911) and sculpture *Unique Forms in Space* (1913), Giacomo Balla's *Leash in Motion* and *Girl Running on a Balcony* (1912), and Carrà's *Interventionist Demonstration* (1914). Because of the apparent chronological development from manifesto to painting, we could be forgiven for concluding that, in Futurism, theory precedes practice. But this would be to misrecognize the radicality of the manifesto. As Marjorie Perloff has argued, the 'quasi-poetic construct' of the Futurist manifesto implies a new relationship between theory and practice:

> [I]t is not enough to say of this and subsequent Futurist manifestos that theory preceded practice, that, say, Luigi Russolo's *The Art of Noises* (1913) outlined the new sounds of the 'Futurist orchestra' before the machines made to produce these sounds had been invented. For the real point is that the theory, in Russolo's and Marinetti's manifesto, *is* the practice.[61]

In other words, the form of the manifesto embodies the transformed cultural values it expounds. However, as Andrew Hewitt warns, we should only regard the manifesto as a synthesis of theory and practice to the extent that 'the manifesto's synthesis of theory and practice leaves neither party

untouched. Each is refashioned in the image of the other'.[62] As Hewitt continues:

> [T]he emergence of the manifesto as an art form reflects - and manifests - a rethinking of the relationship of theory to practice in the cultural realm. This implication of theory in practice - the instrumentalization of constative theory as polemical performance - would then constitute the specificity of the avant-garde manifesto in relation to its modernist predecessors: suddenly, theory itself begins to act within the field it had previously merely served to delineate.[63]

Nevertheless, despite their respective merits and critical nuances, Perloff's and Hewitt's reading of the theory-as-practice dynamic of the manifesto fail to advance beyond Kropotkin's revolutionary slogan: 'Theory and practice must become one if we are to succeed.'[64]

V

The Italian Futurists' politicization of art is manifest in their intransigence towards the bourgeoisie's passive consumption of culture. Instead of theatrical productions which sought to flatter the self-image of bourgeois audiences with dramas which appealed to their sense of civilized values (love, virtue, justice, etc.), Marinetti and his accomplices assaulted the values and expectations of bourgeois audiences in *serate*, evenings in which were mounted not plays as

such, but 'manifestations': events which Bürger suggests are paradigmatic of the avant-garde. As Michael Kirby relates:

> [E]ach of the early *serate* cannot, as a whole, be considered as a work of art. They were not total aesthetic entities, but a mixture of art, polemics, and quasi-political action. They were also, however, the manifestation of an attitude towards life.[65]

But if the Italian Futurists are engaged in 'manifestation' what is being made 'manifest'? And what 'spectre' did they attempt to conjure? Marinetti's hostility is first and foremost directed towards the 'audience' in an attempt to induce direct participation in the event. His intransigence for the passive consumption of spectacle is articulated in three ways. First , in the performative intervention into the public sphere, such as the public action against Venice; second in the organization of Futurist *serate* and the Futurist Variety Theatre; and third in the *sintesi* (short performances and productions) of the Futurist Synthetic Theatre.

Despite their attack on its bourgeois forms, theatre was central to Futurism as they considered it to be one of the most effective means of propagandizing war - 'Futurism intensified' - and politicizing art:

> WE THINK THAT THE ONLY WAY TO INSPIRE ITALY WITH THE WARLIKE SPIRIT TODAY IS THROUGH THE THEATRE. In fact 90 percent of Italians go to the theatre, whereas only 10 percent read books and reviews.[66]

The Futurist Variety Theatre therefore became an obvious paradigm for the integration of art and life, proclaiming: 'Among all literary forms, the one that can serve Futurism most effectively is certainly the theatre'[67]; and 'EVERYTHING OF ANY VALUE IS THEATRICAL'.[68]

Perhaps the most 'spectacular' manifestation of the performative modality of the Futurist Theatre and its direct intervention into the public sphere, was the launch of Marinetti's manifesto 'Against Past-loving Venice' (dated 27 April 1910). On the afternoon of Sunday, 8 July 1910, whilst sounding a silver trumpet from the loggia of the Clock Tower in the Piazza San Marco in Venice, Marinetti, with Boccioni, Russolo and Carrà, proceeded to hurl 800,000 copies of the *antipassatismo* leaflet onto an unsuspecting crowd of tourists returning from the Lido. According to the manifesto, Venice - popularly considered the most beautiful city in Europe - was little more than a 'putrefying city' and a 'magnificent sore from the past'. The cause of this civic degeneracy of Venice was the undiginified reliance of the once noble merchant city upon the flourishing bourgeois tourist economy. To Marinetti, the primary emblem of the economic subjection of Venice to tourism was the gondola, which he insultingly referred to as 'rocking chairs for cretins' and suggested should all be burned.[69] In contrast to its citizens languishing in a faded, ancient grandeur reaping the easy profits of tourism, the manifesto proposed an 'industrial and military Venice', a city at once patriotic and expansionist which would once again 'dominate the Adriatic sea, that great

Italian lake'.[70] The proto-happening of the Clock Tower launch was followed by an improvised 'Speech to the Venetians' in which, with the aid of a megaphone, Marinetti continued in 'stentorian voice' to insult and incite his audience: 'Your gondoliers, can't you perhaps compare them to gravediggers trying in cadence to dig ditches in a flooded cemetery?'; 'Have you forgotten that first of all you are Italians, and that in the language of history this word means: *builders of the future?*' Unsurprisingly, the whole event ended in a brawl between Futurists and the assembled crowd (in which it was noted that the fists of Armando Mazza, a Futurist poet and athlete, 'left an unforgettable impression'[71]). Through a gestural articulation of the politics of Italian nationalism, the event-structured aspect of the Venice action indicates the relationship of Futurism's performative engagement with the politicization of art through an attempt to provoke an immediate 'participation' in, rather than 'consumption' of, the representative bourgeois public sphere. Nevertheless, although it is possible to regard the Venice action as the politicization of art, the declamatory aspect of the manifesto relates to many aspects of aestheticization of Symbolist drama and its endeavour to realize an autonomous theatre. This emphasis upon the declamatory is the link between the aestheticism of the Symbolist stage and *serate* of the Futurist Variety Theatre.

'Marinetti had begun his career in 1900', notes R. W. Flint, 'as a "declaimer" of French poetry on French and Italian stages, in the broad

forensic style of proper elocution'.[72] In an extension of his earlier career, Marinetti organized 'evenings of dynamic and synoptic declamation' in which he and other Futurists performed readings of their manifestos. [Fig. 3] The manifesto performances during the Futurist evenings (*serate*) were an intensification of this declamatory mode (Marinetti repeatedly refers to Mazza's 'thunderous' voice), a mode which prevailed in Symbolist drama. For example, in Paul Fort's production of Pierre Quillard's *The Girl With The Cut-off Hands* (Théâtre d'Art, March 19-20 1891) lines of verse were 'declaimed in monotone, unexpressive voices by actors behind a gauze scrim'.[73] The declamatory mode of speech was a technique employed in the Symbolist drama to depersonalize the actor in order to subordinate the performer to a unified aesthetic totality (which includes the spectator). This subordination of all aspects of the stage to an integral aesthetic vision accorded with the prominent Symbolist theory of 'correspondences', which, in theatrical terms, implied that all langauges of theatre production (set, lighting, costume, voice, gesture, text, etc.) were interconnected in a non-hierarchical and symbiotic relationship. In his production of Roinard's *Song of Songs* (Théâtre d'Art, 11 December 1891), for example, Fort even sought to integrate the spectators into the performance by spraying perfume into the auditorium, the scent being chosen in accordance with its correspondence to the music and colour of the production.[74]

In terms of acting technique the manifesto readings of the *serate* borrowed and intensified the declamatory style of delivery adopted by the Symbolist experimental stage. Yet, whilst the Symbolists had experimented in relatively sympathetic environments, the Italian Futuristsm embraced the populist arena of the Variety Theatre. Alongside this change in terrain was a change in tone; where Symbolism attempted to depersonalize the actor in order to subordinate all elements of the stage to the mood of a unified aesthetic totality which would embrace the audience, Futurism mechanized the performer and brutalized the audience in a move desinged to provoke violent reaction. As Kirby records:

> [Marinetti] admired the variety theatre because its spectators actively responded during the performance with indications of approval or disdain, rather than waiting passively until the curtain went down to applaud. They yelled comments and sang along with the music. There was an energetic exchange between performers and spectators. The audience helped to create the particular quality of the theatrical experience, rather than pretending that the experience would be the same without them.[75]

The combination of the declamation (constative) and the declaration (performative), in the new futurist aesthetic is at the core of the ambiguity of the politics of the manifesto and of the avant-garde's overcoming of Aestheticism. The intensification of the declamatory mode of Symbolist drama in manifesto readings, in which the speaker was often costumed, essentially theatricalizes the performative modality of the manifesto.[76] Yet, although the

declaimer may perform himself as declaimer, he is not to be confused with the actor. As Hewitt explains:

> [T]he physical presence of the declaimer in the Futurist manifesto is by no means sublated into a moment of plenitude: the persona of the performer, his presence, does not serve to legitimate the manifesto itself. Marinetti is quite clear on this point: the duty of the declaimer is to reduce himself to a signifying machine of the manifesto (gesticulating with all available limbs).[77]

The declaimer therefore, escapes representation (which is founded upon the prioritization of the past, as is the condition of the actor), but produces the present in the process of enunciation. In effect, the declaimer is present on stage as neither author nor actor, but as producer. As Hewitt continues:

> Production becomes a form of theatrical production – that is to say, a production that produces itself. In the performance, as in the avant-garde manifesto, there is no division of representation and production, precisely because mimesis reveals itself as something which is not necessarily fixed within a temporal sequentiality of primary reality and secondary (or parasitical) representation. Re-presentation is possible within the present itself, as the presence of the production (and the production of the representation). [This demonstrates] what I would call Marinetti's 'politics of the manifest' which would be precisely that 'present unveiling of the present'... Indeed, the moment of performance, the moment of physical presence, must be insisted upon as a temporality, as a resistance to presence understood in the metaphysical sense. The fusion of representation and production that I have termed 'the manifest' serves in the performance to mark the temporal act of enunciation itself.[78]

In other words, in the theatricalization of discourse at the moment of the 'production' of the Futurist manifesto, echoes the 'synthesis of writing and

performing' which Frantisek Deak attributes to Mallarmé and finds in Joséphin Péladan's concept of theatricality, where 'the body and text, the self and the role, become one'.[79] Nonetheless, at this point, the Futurist manifesto does not seek to 'incarnate' life into the religion of art in accordance with the principles of Aestheticism. Rather they attempt to 'integrate' art into life; as Marinetti insisted in the 'Manifesto of Futurist Dramatists' of January 1911: 'Everyday we must spit on the Alter of Art.'[80]

Although Marinetti claimed the Variety Theatre would be an autonomous theatre, he is not referring to the creation of a theatre isolated from everyday life. Rather he is referring to the production of a space liberated from bourgeois instrumental rationality, a space where logic is banished and all that remains is simultaneity and 'body-madness'. For Marinetti, then, the Variety Theatre is a site for the negation of bourgeois 'high culture', 'taste' and 'Art': 'The Variety Theatre destroys the Solemn, the Sacred, the Serious, the Sublime in Art with a capital *A*.'[81] The Futurist Variety Theatre would substitute the rarified atmosphere of synaesthesia and the refined synthesis of aesthetic experience with a radical and powerful concoction of politics and culture. Thus, with the Futurist Variety Theatre, Futurism abolished the religious or ritual elements of Symbolist drama and based art on a radically different practice: politics.

VI

One of the key political sympathies of many Italian Futurists was for Irredentism, the nationalist movement to reclaim occupied Italian land, associated with the *Risorgimento* and the unification of Italy in 1870. It was Marinetti's sympathy for Irredentism, for example, which Rayner Banham claims was the foundation of the Futurist leader's enthusiasm for war.[82] '[A]s the cleanser of a society from the adiposities of an unadventurous *borghese* peace,' Banham writes, '[Marinetti's praise of war] remains understandable when it is remembered that with Italian populations around the northern Adriatic still *Irredenti*, the Risorgimento remained a war that was still in progress for many Italian patriots.'[83] He continues in a note:

> [M]any Futurist manifestations had political intentions – or at least acquired them – particularly in Trieste and Venice, where the sense of Italian Irredenta was, understandably still highly inflamed. This strain in Futurist thought, led, logically, to demands for the intervention in the War, and less logically, though understandably given the dynamics of politics, to Futurist participation in Fascist uprisings after 1918.[84]

On 20 September 1914, six weeks after Germany had declared war on France (3 August 1914), the Futurists published their FUTURIST SYNTHESIS OF THE WAR. In this broadside by the 'Milanese Cell' of '8 People-poets against their pedantic critics', Futurism declares war on Passéism. Unsurprisingly, the enemies of Futurism are the historical Irredenti enemies:

Austria and Germany. In the manifesto 'Electrical War', Marinetti also states: 'Our hatred of Austria; our feverish anticipation of war; our desire to strangle pan-Germanism. This is the corollary of our Futurist theorem!'.[85] In the broadside, the spirit of 'Creative Genius' (i.e. Italy) is pitched against 'German Culture'. Among other things, Germany is despised for its 'Sheepishness', 'Philosophical Fumes', 'Archaeology'. Austria is lambasted for its 'Idiocy', 'Police Dimwittedness', 'Papalism', 'Bedbugs', 'Priests'. The allies of Futurism in its crusade are Russia, France, Belgium, Serbia, Italy, Japan, Montenegro and England. Among the allied qualities which the manifesto celebrates are: Power and Impregnability (Russia), Intelligence, Courage, Speed, Spontaneity, Explosiveness (France), Energy, Will, Initiative (Belgium), Practical Spirit, Sense of Duty, Respect for Individuality (England), Agility, Resoluteness (Japan). Italy, of course, is celebrated for displaying 'all the strengths and all the weaknesses of GENIUS'. Only two nations have the shared qualities of Independence, Ambition, and Temerity: Serbia and Montenegro.

It is possible that, beyond allied treatise, reference to these two nations may testify to the continued influence of Michael Bakunin's revolutionary pan-Slavism on the character of Italian Irredentism. In 1848, the year of the barricades, Bakunin wrote his influential 'Appeal to the Slavs':

> Brothers! This is the hour of decision. It is for you to take a stand, openly either for the old world, in ruins, which you would prop up for yet another little while, or for

> the new world whose radiance has reached you and which belongs to the generations and centuries to come. It is up to you, to determine whether the future is to be in your hands or, if you want, once more to sink into impotence, into the night of hopes abandoned, into the inferno of slavery... The social revolution... appears as a necessary corollary of the political revolution.... We need to transform the material and moral conditions of our present-day existence, to overturn, from top to bottom, this decrepit social world which has grown impotent and sterile and incapable of containing or supporting so great a mass of liberty. We must, first, purify our atmosphere and make a complete transformation of our environment, for it corrupts our instincts and our will by constricting our hearts and our minds. The social question thus appears to be first and foremost the question of the complete overturn of society.[86]

Elsewhere in his 'Appeal to the Slavs', Bakunin demands 'liberty for the oppressed, for the Poles, the Italians, for all' as well as calling for 'a free Italy'. Thus Bakunin was conscious that his revolutionary appeal would be heard by the Generals of the *Risorgimento* in their fight against their Prussian and Austrian occupiers.[87] Furthermore, staying with Bakunin for a moment, Woodcock relates how, in 1866, Bakunin found his 'second home' in Italy where he settled in Florence, with letters of recommendation from Garibaldi.[88] It was here that Bakunin outlined his International Brotherhood (a secret society which would agitate for revolution) and wrote its 'Revolutionary Catechism' in 1866. Intriguingly, like Marineti's 'Founding and Manifesto,' Bakunin's 'Revolutionary Catechism' takes the form of an eleven point proclamation, which propounds, among other things, atheism, freedom, federalism, anti-authoritarianism and anti-monarchism, as well as outlining details of social, political and revolutionary policy.[89] Bakunin was also an important influence upon the Italian anarchist, and martyr of the

Risorgimento, Carlo Pisacane (1818-1857). Although Bakunin inspired Pisacane's creation of peasant armies and advocacy of a 'war of national insurrection'[90], more importantly, in this context, he was the model for Pisacane's call for 'propaganda by the deed':

> The propaganda of the idea is a chimera. Ideas result from deeds, not the latter from the former, and the people will not be free when they are educated but will be educated when they are free. The only work a citizen can do for the good of the country is that of cooperating with the material revolution; therefore, conspiracies, plots, attempts, etc., are that series of deeds by which Italy proceeds towards her goal.[91]

Like Bakunin's 'Appeal to the Slavs' and 'Revolutionary Catechism', Pisacane's call for a 'propaganda by the deed' exhibits points of correspondence with the 'futurism' (in Poggioli's terms) of the destructive character of the avant-garde in general and Italian Futurism in particular. And, as manifestations of 'propaganda by the deed' in the field of culture, the Futurist manifesto readings and *serate* theatricalized the discourse of emancipation, in a context in which nationalism was conceived as emancipatory and revolutionary, rather than reactionary. As this brief examination of the political background of Italian nationalism suggests, in the often unstable sociopolitical context in which Futurist manifesto readings and *serate* took place (Italian Irredentism, outbreak of World War I), Futurism effectively politicized art. As Banham concludes:

> [S]imply by being a young man, by being both a cosmopolitan intellectual by training and a provincial patriot by disposition, Marinetti was able to give a widespread feeling of disgust with the old and craving for the new, a positive orientation and a point of attachment in the world of fact; Marinetti ordered his generation into the street with his Manifestos, in order to revolutionize their culture, just as the political manifestos from which he took over the literary form had ordered men into the street to revolutionize their politics.[92]

This link between Marinetti's mutual sympathy for anarchism and Italian Irredentism is perhaps most explicit in his pro-anarchist manifesto, 'Beyond Communism' (1920). By 1918, Futurists were already participating in marches by the Italian fascists (fasci). Nevertheless, although fiercely patriotic and nationalistic in sentiment, 'Beyond Communism' is vehemently anti-authoritarian in spirit: 'We are more inflamed than ever.... We are therefore in no mood to take directions from anyone... '.[93] As a statement of the political principles of an artistic movement, it is unmistakably libertarian and anarchistic in content. Initially, the rejection of Communism is not an interniscene battle with specific Italian Communists *per se* but an address to any would-be followers of the Bolshevik bureaurocracy in Russia after the October Revolution of 1917:

> Communism is the exasperation of the bureaucratic cancer that has always wasted humanity. A German cancer, a product of the characteristic German preparationism. Every pedantic preparation is antihuman and wearies fortune. History, life, and earth belong to the improvisers. We hate military barracks as much as we hate Communist barracks. The anarchist genius derides and bursts the Communist prison... Let's not forget that the Italian people, notably bristling with sharp individualisms, is the most anti-Communist and dreams of individualist anarchy.[94]

Furthermore, in a manner which prefigures Breton in the 1920s and 30s, Marinetti calls for the dismantling of the insitutions of state and police oppression:

> We want to free Italy from the Papacy, the Monarchy, the Senate, marriage, Parliament. We want a technical government without Parliament, vivified by a council or exciter [*eccitatorio*] of very young men. We want to abolish standing armies, courts, police, and prisons, so that our race of gifted men may be able to develop the greatest number of free, strong, hard-working, innovative, swift men.[95]

At one point Marinetti makes a remark which evidences that his political imagination is steeped in the anarchism of Bakunin and the nihilism of Bazarov: 'The life of insects demonstrates that everything comes down to reproduction at any cost and to purposeless destruction.'[96] The defiant anti-authoritarianism of the manifesto is clear. However, Marinetti's confession that Futurists hate military barracks as much they hate as Communist barracks, places his anti-authoritarianism at odds with his earlier support for the war. We are left with the feeling that it was not so much the realities and rigours of organizing and administering the mobilization of mass armies which Marinetti found attractive in war, but the spirit of adventure and the aesthetics of modern mechanized warfare. Nonetheless, a contradictory spirit runs throughout Marinetti's political tract. Indeed, where Marinetti is patriotic, an ideology which appears to contradict his anarchism and nihilism, it is only because, as he puts it: 'The fatherland is the greatest extension of the

individual'.[97] Ultimately, the anarchistic artists - the vast proletariat of gifted men - would seize control of the state and life itself would, finally, become art:

> Thus in my tragicomedy *Re Baldoria* [King Riot], the artistic innovative dynamism of the Poet-Idiot ridiculed by the mob fuses with the insurrectional dynamism of the libertarian Famone [Big Hunger], to propose to humanity the only solution of the universal problem: Art and the artists to power.
> Yes! Power to the artists! The vast proletariat of gifted men will govern...
> The proletariat of gifted men in power will create the theatre free to all and the great Futurist Aero-Theatre. Music will reign over the world.... The intellectual art-alcohol must be extended to everyone. Thus will we multiply the artist-creators. We will have a race almost entirely composed of artists.... We will solve the social problem artistically.... Thanks to us, the time will come when life will no longer be a simple matter of bread and labour, nor a life of idleness either, but *a work of art.*[98]

As the reference to Alfred Jarry's *Ubu roi* in Marinetti's play *King Roit* should make clear, the Symbolist desire to transform life into art is the touchstone here. We have already discussed the extension of the theatricality of the stage in Aesthticism into the aestheticization of everyday life in the artistic individualism of the audience of Symbolist Theatre. The incarnation of life into art is also the motivation behind Marinetti's call for life to become a work of art: 'Every brain should have its palette and its musical instrument for colouring and lyrically accompanying every small act of life, even the humblest.... Every man will live his best possible novel.'[99] As Peter Bürger has pointed out, although the avant-garde rejects the autonomy of art, the

pre-history of the avant-garde's desire for the integration of art and life is in the principles of autonomous art found in Aestheticism:

> Aestheticism had made the distance from the praxis of life the content of works. The praxis of life to which Aestheticism refers and which it negates is the means-ends rationality of the bourgeois everyday. Now, it is not the aim of the avant-gardistes to integrate art into *this* praxis. On the contrary, they assent to the aestheticists' rejection of the world and its means-ends rationality. What distinguishes them from the latter is the attempt to organize a new life praxis from a basis in art. In this respect also, Aestheticism turns out to have been the necessary precondition of the avant-gardiste intent.[100]

Marinetti's affinity with Aestheticism is, therefore, at the root of his desire to achieve the 'integration' of art and life via the 'incarnation' of life into art, each of which strategies imply a contradictory model of the public sphere. One the one hand, the manifesto articulates a desire for emanicipation through art. On the other hand, this freedom is to be realized, not through democratic means of public agreement, but through the imposition of political will. Thus, in Marinetti's desire to integrate art and life, a dialectic emerges between emancipation and domination. In other words, the manifesto plays out what Adorno and Horkheimer identify as the 'dialectic of enlightenment'. Marinetti's desire to intensify and aestheticize everyday life, and his ambiguous attraction simultaneously to libertarian anarchism and heroic nationalism, will lead him towards fascism. And it is to the context of Futurism and its association with Italian fascism which we now turn in order

to navigate the tensions between the avant-garde and fascism and their divergent models of the public sphere.

VII

To Marinetti, the Variety Theatre was a model for the intensification of participation in politics: 'The Variety Theatre is alone in seeking the audience's collaboration. It doesn't remain static like a stupid voyeur, but joins noisily in the action.'[101] In order to effect an instensification, it would be necessary to assault the audience and confront them with the hypocrisy of their passivity and to precipitate, in Kirby's words, a 'direct and noncontemplative involvement of the spectators with the presentation'.[102] Where symbolism sought to evoke sensations in the audience, Futurism sought to provoke action:

> In 'The Variety Theatre Manifesto' [Marinetti] made several suggestions for forcing the spectators to become a part of the performance whether they wanted to or not – the use of itching and sneezing powders, coating some of the auditorium seats with glue, provoking fights and disturbances by selling the same seats to two or more people... Marinetti was not suggesting that the incidents of a story be placed in and around the audience or that actors speak to the spectators 'in character.' The occurrences were to be sufficient in themselves without representing or symbolizing anything.[103]

The provocations of the Futurists even invited antipathy from the audience. In 'The Pleasure of Being Booed' Marinetti wrote: 'Not everything booed is beautiful or new. But everything applauded immediately is certainly no better than the average intelligence and is therefore *something mediocre, dull, regurgitated, or too well digested.*'[104] Consequently, in order to preserve their integrity as anti-artists, authors must learn to '*despise the audience*' and recognise the '*pleasure of being booed*', a stance not dissimilar to Jarry's in the 1890s.[105] In particular, Marinetti calls for Futurists to despise opening night audiences, as examplars of vanity engaged in a pathetic 'rivalry of coiffures and toilettes'. The Futurist Variety Theatre, therefore, vacillates between integrating and insulting the audience.

The performative mode of the manifesto readings and productions of the Futurist Variety Theatre, effectively situates the destructive character of Futurism between the theatricalization of politics and the politicization of art. If the desire to re-integrate art and life through the politicization of art defines Futurism as an avant-garde (in Bürger's terms), paradoxically, the 'noncontemplative' spectator which it produces allies it to fascism and the aestheticization of politics. Hewitt summarizes this apparently contradictory situation as follows:

> In his use of the manifesto form, Marinetti is in many ways symptomatic of a general trend that marks the avant-garde. Whereas the manifesto had emerged at the end of the nineteenth century as a literary form precisely as a result of

> the exigencies of system-immanent criticism as an attempt to carve out the territory of modernism, at the hands of the avant-garde it serves the purposes of a discursive *Selbstkritik* [self-criticism]. That is to say, the avant-garde manifesto seems to question the autonomy and the impermeability of discourses, the separability of, say, aesthetics and politics. In this respect, one might trace back to the avant-garde manifesto tendencies explicative both of fascism's aestheticization of politics and of the avant-garde's own attempted politicization of aesthetics.[106]

What Hewitt's remarks indicate is the proximity of the avant-garde manifesto to the aestheticized strategies of fascism. This proximity can also be identified, for example, in Marinetti's renunciation of parliamentary democracy. Twice Marinetti equates the passéist, conventional theatre to the parliamentary process of democracy. In 'The Pleasure of Being Booed,' he wrote: 'we must abolish the grotesque habit of clapping and whistling, a good enough barometer of parliamentary eloquence but certainly not of artistic worth.'[107] And in 'The Futurist Synthetic Theatre' he disdainfully remarked: 'Each act is as painful as having to wait patiently in an antechamber for the minister (*coup de théâtre*: kiss, pistol shot, verbal revelation, etc.) to receive you.'[108] In the manifesto 'Against *Amore* and Parliamentarism,' women's suffrage and entry to parliament is celebrated by Marinetti only for its destructive potential. He quips: 'Where could we find a dynamite more impatient or more effective?'[109] In this manifesto, Marinetti makes the following important observation: 'the people are always estranged from the government. On the other hand, it is precisely to parliamentarism that the people owe their real existence'.[110] In this remark, Marinetti alludes

to two important reservations regarding parliamentary or representative democracy. Firstly, he alludes to the libertarian critique of the theatrical modality of parliament, in which power is acted by representatives before a relatively passive audience with limited access to participation (electorate). Marinetti's complaint that 'the people are always estranged from the government' echoes the critique of representative government by anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists who favour 'direct action' over 'representative democracy'. (In many respects we may trace the origins of the critique of 'representation' in avant-garde acts of iconoclasm to just this critique). Secondly, he suggests that the people are only brought into being, into their 'real existence,' that is to say, are only recognised as a political entity as such, through their alienated participation in parliamentary democracy. This is the contradiction of bourgeois democracy which the avant-garde attempts to overcome through the 'intensification of participation'. Thus, Marinetti's attack upon the theatre audience, which he justifies with recourse to anti-parliamentarism, points to the fundamental and problematic theatricality of the bourgeois public sphere. It would seem, as Hewitt concludes, 'that the Enlightenment model of the public sphere has depended all along on a certain theatricality'.[111] The following section attempts to unpack these claims with reference to Hewitt's reading of Habermas.

VIII

In *Fascist Modernism*, Andrew Hewitt offers a re-assessment of 'the intrinsic theatricality of bourgeois democracy'[112] and rehearses a reading of parliamentary democracy as theatre from the perspective of a libertarian critique of representative government:

> The degeneration of democracy is thus linked to a form of theatricalization, in which the immediate power of the people is fixed upon a leader and in which parliament is reduced to a mere audience. This critique, oriented around the model of the theatre, contains several important elements... On the most obvious level, the critique might be taken as aimed against the double distantiation of the electorate from power. As the representatives of the power of the people, both leader and parliament are simulacra – at once the real origin of power and yet its mere representation. Within this theatrical model of power the process would be as follows: first, the people surrenders its power to elected "representatives," then those representatives, in turn, fail to represent, and become mere spectators. The disempowering of the people, then, is synonymous with the reduction of their mode of representation to the status of specularity. The political and the mimetic meet in this critique of parliamentary representation.
>
> However, to read the escalation of representation in this way - as a process of distantiation of the people from power – is to misunderstand and underestimate both the participatory imperative of charismatic authority and the historicity of the simulacrum as a model of power. In short, there are two diametrically opposed ways to develop the argumentation in Benjamin's essay. The first would seek to understand aestheticization as the reduction of the real to its mere representation, and the disempowering of the spectator as mere onlooker. The second would examine the loss of critical distance inherent in fascism's *integration* of the spectator as an integral legitimating instance within the political performance itself.[113]

Hewitt thus problematizes the political re-assessment of the avant-garde's desire to unify art and life, as articulated by Bürger, as the collapse of a critical space which Habermas considers foundational to the notion of a

democratic bourgeois public sphere.[114] In the attempt to overcome Aestheticism through the integration of art and life, Hewitt argues, the avant-garde abolishes the space of criticism (which Adorno had reserved for autonomous art). As a result, Hewitt suggests, the avant-garde finds itself understudy to fascist integralism:

> Where these two interpretations meet is in their critique of the absence of any critical space in fascism. For the first set of analysts, the masses are silenced, or their voices left unperceived thanks to the distance placed between them and the instantiation of power; and for the second, the masses are ventriloquized.[115]

In this respect, the anti-democratic negation of the public implied in the avant-garde's inclination to goad the audience or to *épater les bourgeois* (a tactic which the Futurists, Dadaists and Surrealists inherited from Alfred Jarry), shares much with the culture of fascism. As Hewitt notes:

> It is not difficult to appreciate how the avant-garde desire to *épater le* [sic] *bourgeois*, with its ostensible disregard for the audience or *Publikum* as a philistine moment of economic control, might feed into a critique of the very existence of any critical public sphere. The category of *Publikum* – a category inhabiting a realm between the aesthetic and the political, as a model both of consuming audience and of public sphere – offers an important insight into the possible points of convergence of avant-garde and fascism.[116]

Crucially, however, the divergence of fascism and the avant-garde pivots around the different rationale with which they attempt to integrate or assault the audience or public. Hewitt expands:

> Avant-garde opposition to the dictates of the public can be interpreted in many ways: for Brecht, as for Benjamin, it would entail an opposition to a certain subject-position forced upon the audience, the position of passive consumer. For the early avant-garde – Expressionism, against which Brecht himself polemicized, would be typical here – the audience is rejected as a moment of control, as the instantiation of bourgeois philistinism. For the fascist, meanwhile, rejection of the *Publikum* is based upon a lack of respect for the institutions of the democratic public sphere.... [F]ascism and the avant-garde rejoin in their opposition to the audience. The logic behind this opposition differs, of course, in each case. The protofascist opposes the theatrical staging of a potentially intellectualizing critique; the avant-garde opposes the potential for passive receptivity.[117]

Hewitt then performs a reading of Habermas's *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, in which, as we have shown, Habermas identifies a shift from feudal authority, constituted through specularity (theatricality), to the bourgeois democratic tradition, founded upon critique (literalization). Hewitt undertakes this critique in order to demonstrate that Habermas is blind to the existence of a theatricalization latent within his paradigm of the bourgeois public sphere. In Habermas's view, the bourgeois public sphere is founded on the emergent spaces for critical 'public opinion' from the mid-eighteenth century onwards (journals, political newspapers, etc.) which constitute the 'literary public sphere'. As Hewitt summarizes: 'It is in and through the autonomy granted critical thought and exchange within the literary public sphere, argues Habermas, "that the bourgeoisie constitutes itself as a political force".'[118]

Adapting Habermas's polarity of feudalism and capitalism to an analysis of the apparent antinomies of bourgeois public sphere and fascist state, Hewitt contends: 'Read from within this tradition, then, the deformation of the public sphere in fascism - the process of aestheticization - would be understood as a displacement of the paradigm of reading by the paradigm of theatre.'[119] However, Hewitt identifies within Habermas's reading of the 'representative' public sphere of the eighteenth century, the germ of the theatricality of the bourgeois public sphere. The bourgeois public sphere in fact emerges 'as an *audience* from a dialectic encoded within the feudal public sphere'.[120] As Habermas explains, in the feudal public sphere (if we can refer to it as such) power was 'manifest' in the prince's person: 'As long as the prince and the estates of his realm "were" the country and not just its representatives, they could represent it in a specific sense. They represented their lordship not for the people but "before" the people.'[121] 'Tied as it is to the manifestation of its sovereign body - to the spectacular literality of the body politic,' Hewitt maintains, 'the theatricality of feudal power demands an audience'.[122] And although the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere is founded upon the critical participation of private individuals in the legitimation of public authority, the feudal notion of the people as audience in a theatre of power still pertains in the bourgeois public sphere. Not only is this demonstrated in the libertarian critique of representative democracy above, it is present in the very conception of the *Publikum*. As Hewitt writes:

> The Enlightenment understanding of the public sphere as a collection of *private* individuals gathered as a public or audience itself invokes one of the categories of theatricality – the *Publikum* – which is central to fascism's refashioning of the political. Although the bourgeois public sphere is clearly (at least in theory) dialogic and depends upon the exercise of critical reason within a self-emancipatory society, we should still take seriously the ambiguous theatricality of the *Publikum.*[123]

This is a situation which Marinetti appears to understand when he comments 'it is precisely to parliamentarism that the people owe their real existence.'[124] Through his critique of Habermas, then, Hewitt asserts that the bourgeoisie is constituted 'within the confines of the theatre'[125] as an audience in the theatrical totality of the bourgeois public sphere. The theatricality of the fascist spectacle, he therefore concludes, is prefigured in the bourgeois public sphere. For this reason he contends that any notion that theatre and critique, aesthetics and politics, inhabit entirely different planes 'must remain unsatisfactory'.

The conclusion that aestheticization and politicization, theatricality and criticality, do not inhabit separate spheres is crucial for an understanding of the ambiguous character of the avant-garde's assault on the bourgeoisie which comes, predominantly, through the performative and theatrical condition of the manifesto. The manifesto must be understood as a theatricalized writing, a writing which is produced in the dialectic between literalization and theatricalization, between the newspaper and the stage.

IX

In the preceding sections, despite Hewitt's reservations, I hope to have demonstrated the importance of Habermas's argument regarding the refeudalization of the public sphere to an understanding of the avant-garde manifesto as a critical moment in the shift from a paradigm of literalization to a paradigm of theatricalization. This dialectic of literalization and theatricalization is also played out in the Futurist form of the *sintesi*, the fragmentary short performances of the 'Futurist Synthetic Theatre' which aimed to confound the audience's expectations of theatrical structure, form and content and which were more often than not founded upon a principle of negation. The manifesto for 'The Futurist Synthetic Theatre' (January and February, 1915) signed by Marinetti, Emilo Settimelli and Bruno Corra, proclaims: 'THE GREATER NUMBER OF OUR WORKS HAVE BEEN WRITTEN IN THE THEATRE. The theatrical ambience is our inexhaustible reservoir of inspirations.'[126] As the scene of writing becomes the theatre, the stage becomes literalized in the *sintesi*:

> The Futurist theatrical synthesis will not be subject to logic, will pay no attention to photography; it will be *autonomous*, will resemble nothing but itself, although it will take elements from reality and combine them as its whim dictates... no logic, no tradition, no aesthetic, no technique, no opportunity can be imposed on the artist's natural talent.[127]

Like Baudelaire's experience of modernity, and Benjamin's reading of the baroque allegory ('it is common practice in the literature of the baroque to pile up fragments ceaselessly'[128]) the Futurist *sintesi* will be formed from an endless series of fragments:

> It's stupid to want to explain with logical minuteness everything taking place on the stage, when even in life one never grasps an event entirely in all its causes and consequences, because reality throbs around us, bombards us *with squalls of fragments of interconnected events, mortised and tenoned together, confused, mixed up, chaotic...* Since in daily life we nearly always encounter mere *flashes of argument* made *momentary* by our modern experience, in a tram, a café, a railway station, which remain cinematic in our minds like fragmentary dynamic symphonies of gestures, words, lights, and sounds.[129]

In performances such as *Feet* by Marinetti (where the curtain is raised 'to about the height of a man's stomach' enabling the audience to see 'only legs in action'[130]), and *Negative Act* by Bruno Corra and Emilio Settimelli, the Variety Theatre performed a violation and negation of theatrical conventions in an aesthetic of fragmentation:

> *A* MAN *enters, busy, preoccupied. He takes off his overcoat, his hat, and walks furiously.*
>
> MAN: What a fantastic thing! Incredible! *(He turns toward the public, is irritated to see them, then coming to the apron, says categorically.)* I ... I have absolutely nothing to tell you.... Bring down the curtain!
>
> CURTAIN[131]

As a performance of anti-theatre, *sintesi* are dialogical in that they are written with 'an awareness of the way they are articulated within a specific

milieu'.[132] That is to say, as texts they are not autonomous but 'ambivalent literary structures', in a similar fashion to the manifesto. As such, like the manifesto, the text of the *sintesi* could be said to resemble Menippean discourse. As Kristeva writes:

> Menippean discourse is thus structured as ambivalence, as the focus for two tendencies of Western literature: representation through language as staging, and exploration of language as a correlative system of signs. Language in the Menippean tradition is both representation of exterior space and 'an experience that produces its own space'.[133]

In this sense, the radical literalization of the theatre and the theatricalization of discourse is the means for re-integrating art and life, of theatre and reality. Hewitt concludes:

> The shift from the reified dyadic sterility of signifier and signified leads, in the case of Marinetti, to a poetics of the performative, or indeed to performance itself. The futurist 'text' *is* the performance. Such, it seems to me, is the key to a delineation of Futurism as avant-garde: rather than the modernist obsession with text, one finds instead the avant-garde's obsession with the real.[134]

As a theatricalization of the real, in Hewitt's terms, the aesthetics of the avant-garde necessarily extend into the space of the political. Through its resemblance to the *sintesi*, the manifesto can now be more clearly drawn in its correspondence to theatricalization, and to what Hewitt terms the 'politics of the manifest': 'The inextricability of space and time in Marinetti's texts operates beyond the level of textual representation and enters (as in Rimbaud)

the immediately political sphere.'[135] For the same reasons that they were attracted to the Variety Theatre, the Futurists were attracted to the daily newspaper (manifestos appeared not only in *Le Figaro* in Paris but in the *Daily Mail* in Britain). As an ephemeral medium, populist, participatory, expendable, the newspaper contrasts with the static character of the book:

> The book, a wholly passéist means of preserving and communicating thought, has for a long time been fated to disappear like cathedrals, towers, crenelated walls, museums, and the pacifist ideal. The book, static companion of the sedentary, the nostalgic, the neutralist, cannot entertain or exalt the new Futurist generations intoxicated with revolutionary and bellicose dynamism.[136]

Marinetti writes elsewhere: 'War – Futurism intensified – obliges us to march and not to rot [marciare, non mercire] in libraries and reading rooms.'[137] And we cannot forget that among the first cultural institutions to be demolished in the Futurist revolution were libraries, the emergence of which in the mid-eighteenth century (in the wake of the popular success of what Hegel called the 'middle-class' novel), signified, for Habermas, a significant moment in the consolidation of the literary paradigm of the bourgeois public sphere.[138] Opposed to the stale and static world of the book, was not only the dynamism of the Futurist Variety Theatre, but of the daily newspaper. The expendability of writing in the newspaper is celebrated in the literalization of the Futurist movement itself in Marinetti's allegory of the poets as manuscripts eventually to be thrown into the waste-basket by the next

generation of the avant-garde. Further, with the juxtaposition of factual information and advertisement, the newspaper has the quality of a collage of textuality and reality - the simultaneity of the radically disparate.

Marinetti's act of publishing his manifesto in the front page of a newspaper destabilizes the textuality/reality of Futurism. The form which the manifesto most approximates therefore, is not that of news *per se*, but of the specular and literalized space of advertizing. The self-publicity of placing the manifesto in a newspaper context foregrounds the role of the manifesto as an advertisement for the avant-garde. A similar function is performed, argues R. W. Flint, by the very word 'Futurism' itself:

> Whatever its origins... the mere word *Futurism* had an astonishing success. At first printed alone in huge block letters on vermilion posters plastered on the walls of whatever city Marinetti was alerting to a forthcoming demonstration, the word Futurism did for the populace at large what the First Manifesto had done for the intelligentsia of Europe and Russia: it guaranteed attention.[139]

Futurism, it would appear, is its own 'publicity'. What this suggests is that Futurist interventions into the public sphere are not performed for the purposes of producing a critical space for 'public opinion'. Rather they appropriate the public sphere in the interests of manipulating their private interest: 'publicness' becomes 'publicity', in the manner which Habermas refers to as the refeudalization of the public sphere. Ironically, in the last

analysis, the 'spectre' which Futurism conjures is not the revolutionary proletariat, as envisioned by anarcho-syndicalists such as Sorel, but the capitalist consumer.

With the theatricalization of the public sphere immanent in Futurism we may now realize the connections its emancipatory destructive gestures, which attempt an intensification of participation, have to the aestheticized public sphere manifest in fascism. Fascism demonstrably theatricalizes and aestheticizes politics and engulfs the individual in its politics of fascination. Nonetheless, although the avant-garde might share with fascism its cloak of theatricality, it does not appeal to the politics of fascination but to the politics of emancipation.

X

As has been often repeated, George Sorel was also an influence upon Marinetti's close friend and fellow anarchist sympathiser, Benito Mussolini. Until 1914 the future leader of the Fascist Party in Italy had been a left-wing socialist with revolutionary anarcho-syndicalist leanings. As Donald D. Egbert records, whilst in exile in Switzerland in 1903 Mussolini had begun to collaborate with a revolutionary syndicalist weekly of Milan called *Avantguardia socialista*. Mussolini had also translated Kropotkin's writings on

the French Revolution, *La Grande Révolution* (1909), into Italian, and was said to have declared, 'What I am... I owe to Georges Sorel.'[140] It was precisely this destructive aspect of anarchism to which Mussolini and Marinetti had been drawn in their early careers which would re-surface in their later appeal to fascism.[141]

As S. J. Woolf has noted, at this period in Italy the appeal of fascism lay not so much in its ideological coherence as in its political opportunism: 'In fact, fascism succeeded, ultimately, not because it was by nature reactionary, but because its very lack of an ideology, its practical relativism, made it peculiarly malleable to the imprint of the prevailing conditions in the country.'[142] In a similar vein, Hewitt writes: 'Fascism eludes classification. It disorients political analysis in the confusion of left and right, refuses to point the way forward by conflating progress and reaction.'[143] Thus, Italian fascism displays similar anti-political tendencies which Poggioli ascribes to libertarianism and anarchism and which he sees as attractive to the avant-garde.[144] As we will see, the anarchism and fascism exhibited in the destructive character of Futurism is not so clearly separated. Indeed the simultaneous manifestation of Futurism's anarchistic, nihilistic and fascistic tendencies may be a factor of the ambiguous nature of the political affiliations of the avant-garde in general. As Mussolini himself writes:

> Fascism is anti-academic. It refuses political ideals. It has no statutes or rules... It does not tolerate endless speeches... On the issues of workers' demands it is in line with nationalist syndicalism... Fascism is antipus [i.e. anti-PSI - Italian Socialist Party], but because it is productivist it is not and cannot be antiproletarian.[145]

And just as Marinetti desired the auto-destruction of Futurism and aestheticized its death, so Mussolini foresees the auto-destruction of Fascism:

> [Fascism] doesn't presume to exist for ever, or even for long.... Once we decide that the solution to the fundamental problems troubling Italy to-day has been reached, Fascism won't cling to life... but will know how to die a glorious death, without protest or pomp. If Youth from the trenches, and students, flow into the Fasci... it's because there are no mouldering ideas in the Fasci, no venerable greybeards, no conventional scale of values: there is youth, energy and faith.[146]

It is this kind of auto-destructive rhetoric which led Walter Benjamin to one of the most important conclusions regarding the politics of avant-garde culture to date:

> '*Fiat ars - pereat mundis*,' says Fascism, and, as Marinetti admits, expects war to supply the artistic gratification of a sense perception that has been changed by technology. This is evidently the consummation of '*l'art pour l'art*'. Mankind, which in Homer's time was an object of contemplation for the Olympian gods, now is one for itself. Its self-alienation has reached such a degree that it can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order. This is the situation of politics which Fascism is rendering aesthetic. Communism responds by politicizing art.[147]

Art is made - and fades from the world. It is fascism's ability to aestheticize its own death that Benjamin regards as the apotheosis of the aestheticization of politics. It is this aestheticization which Benjamin regards as the denial of

politics: 'Fascism sees its salvation in giving the masses not their right but instead a chance to express themselves.'[148] Fascism, therefore, abuses the aesthetic in order to appeal to the revolutionary spirit of the proletariat without effecting any real change in economic or power relations. It is as a result of the smokescreen of the aestheticization of politics - which Mussolini borrowed from the anarcho-syndicalism of Sorel - which enables critics such as Davies to conclude that, during this period, Italian Fascism is closer to the revolutionary Left than to the nationalist Right. Fascism's proximity to the Left at this time is evidenced, suggests Davies, by the way that in 'its agonism, its heroic irrationalism, its urban elitism, its insistence on youth and energy, it speaks the purist avant-garde idiom'.[149] As we have seen, Hewitt's conflation of fascism and the avant-garde poses important questions for any attempt to maintain Benjamin's polarity which breaks down, I suggest, at the very moment we encounter the theatricality of the avant-garde manifesto.

The ambiguity of the avant-garde in relation to anarchism, nihilism and fascism is embodied in the very form of the manifesto itself. As Hewitt suggests: 'The practice of the manifesto is the practice of the text itself. That is to say, aesthetics does not body itself forth into politics or vice versa; rather, the possibility of each is foreclosed in the moment of performance.'[150] It is this collapse of the autonomous realms of 'aesthetics' and 'politics' which, Hewitt argues, leads the avant-garde into a primary confrontation with and ultimate allegiance to fascism. The ultimate testing ground for the

aestheticization of politics is warfare. As Benjamin unequivocally concludes: 'All efforts to render politics aesthetic culminate in one thing: war.'[151]

XI

In 'The Painter of Modern Life', a spectre haunts Baudelaire's text: 'I promised to pretend he did not exist'.[152] The spectre is, of course, the Dutch artist Constantine Guys (1805-92), a war correspondent for the *Illustrated London News* during the Crimean War. Guys is Baudelaire's model for the aestheticization of everyday life, manifest in the figure of the Dandy. But the study of the Dandy is preceded by a study in the aestheticization of barbarism and war. Baudelaire writes:

> To define once more the kind of subject this artist likes best, let us call it the pomp of life, as it is displayed in the capitals of the civilized world, the pageant of military life, of high life, of loose life. Our eye witness is always punctually at his observation post, whatever flow the deep and impetuous desires, the great rivers of the human heart, war, love, gaming... the artist shows a very marked predilection for military life, for the soldier, and I think that this love of his derives, not only from the virtues and qualities that inevitably flow from the warrior's soul into his bearing and his face, but also from the showy apparel his profession clothes him in.[153]

It is no accident that these soldiers in their 'military coquetry' and the 'dazzling costumes in which all governments like dressing their troops'[154], newly returned form battle in Italy are to be found 'basking in the

enthusiasm of the crowds' on the boulevards of Paris. The boulevard, as the arena of the spectacular relations of consumer capitalism, is the very scene of the dandy. Baudelaire's painter of modern life, soldier-artist-dandy, is perhaps the model for the libertarian and barbarian proto-futurist and the aestheticization of war.

Perhaps the greatest expression of Futurism's organized violence against culture was to be found in the 'Founding and Manifesto', in which Marinetti had glorified war in a slogan which seemed to beckon the outbreak of war in 1914, and which would re-emerge as the title of a tract *War, The World's Only Hygiene* (1911-1915).[155] To Marinetti, war represented the ultimate negation of liberal values, bourgeois society and its institutions; in other words, war alone was the supreme destructive agency which had the power to purify a degenerate society. And as we have seen, it was in this cause that, in manifestos and *serate*, Futurism set about propagandizing for war. 'As we await our much-prayed-for great war,' opens the manifesto for 'The Futurist Synthetic Theatre' of 1915, the year Italy entered the war on the side of Britain and France, 'we Futurists carry out our violent antineutralist action from city square to university and back again, using our art to prepare the Italian sensibility for the great hour of maximum danger.'[156] Yet, when Futurism propagandizes for the war it is propagandizing on its own behalf, for war, as Marinetti immoderately asserts, is simply 'Futurism intensified'.[157]

In war, the 'destructive antitraditionalist principle' of Futurism spread beyond the confines of aesthetic *antipassatismo* into politics and society at large. As its celebration in a manifesto on theatre illustrates, war is the scene in which the Futurists' politicization of art meets the aestheticization of politics. In a manifesto on the Italian colonial war in Abyssinia in 1912, Marinetti wrote:

> For twenty-seven years we Futurists have rebelled against the branding of war as antiaesthetic... Accordingly we state:... War is beautiful because it establishes man's dominion over the subjugated machinery by means of gas masks, terrifying megaphones, flame throwers, and small tanks. War is beautiful because it initiates the dreamt-of metallization of the human body. War is beautiful because it enriches a flowering meadow with the fiery orchids of machine guns. War is beautiful because it combines the gunfire, the cannonades, the cease-fire, the scents, and the stench of putrefaction into a symphony. War is beautiful because it creates new architecture, like that of big tanks, the geometric formation flights, the smoke spirals from burning villages, and many others... Poets and artists of Futurism!... remember these principles of an aesthetics of war so that your struggle for a new literature and a new graphic art... may be illuminated by them![158]

Marinetti aestheticized war to the extent of outlining, in the 'Manifesto for Futurist Dance' (1917), three dances: 'Dance of the Shrapnel', 'Dance of the Machine Gun', 'Dance of the Aviatrix'.[159] The dynamic and aesthetic appeal of war has also been recognised by Erich Fromm in *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*. In this work, Fromm characterizes war as an adventurous escape from the boredom and routine of bourgeois existence and a bringer of unexpected freedoms:

> War is exciting, even if it entails risk for one's life and much physical suffering. Considering that the life of the average person is boring, routinized, and lacking in adventure, the readiness to go to war must be understood as a desire to put an end to the boring routine of daily life - and to throw oneself into an adventure, the only adventure, in fact, the average person may expect to have in his life.[160]

Echoing Nietzsche's formulation of nihilism, Fromm claims: 'War, to some extent, reverses all values.' In this respect it is possible to see the connection between the radical cultural nihilism inherent in Futurism's aesthetic *antipassatismo* and the political nihilism embodied in Marinetti's celebration of war. Marinetti's aggrandizement of war as harbinger of freedom through the negation of liberalism and its institutions not only reminds us of anarcho-syndicalism's demand that 'the liquidation of all institutions of political power must be the first task of the social revolution', it closely parallels the following passage in Nietzsche:

> Liberal institutions immediately cease to be liberal as soon as they are attained: subsequently there is nothing more harmful to freedom than liberal institutions... Liberalism: in plain words, *reduction to the herd animal...* [However] as long as they are still being fought for, these same institutions produce quite different effects; they then in fact promote freedom mightily. Viewed more closely, it is war which produces these effects, war *for* liberal institutions which as war permits the *illiberal* instincts to endure... war is a training in freedom. For what is freedom?... Freedom means that the manly instincts that delight in war and victory have gained mastery over the other instincts... The free man is a *warrior.*[161]

If, as Nietzsche states, war is a 'training in freedom' and that the free man is a 'warrior', then true freedom can only be attained during periods of war,

that is to say, in the process of the destructive actions carried out in the struggle to create a new society. However, once this society has been constructed and is crystallized in the institutions of the state, all hope of individual freedom is lost. The warrior in Nietzsche represents the overcoming of liberal morality and government in the 'will to self-responsibility'. It is in the Nietzschean spirit of aristocratic radicalism in his glorification of war where we confront the political ambiguity of Marinetti and Futurism. Marinetti, Balla, Carrà, Russolo, Boccioni, Saint'Elia and Sironi all experienced the war as a 'learning by fire' when they volunteered to fight in 1915. Russolo was severely wounded, Boccioni killed in an accident, and Saint'Elia killed in battle. Nevertheless, these events did not prevent Marinetti from glorifying the war. In *Futurist Democracy* Marinetti enthused:

> It is the first time in history that it has fallen to the lot of more than four million citizens of a single nation in a mere four years to have undergone a total, intensive education, learning by fire, by heroism and death [...] Marvellous spectacle of a whole army leaving for war practically unaware and returning politicized and worthy to govern.[162]

For Marinetti, the war had transformed Italians into a 'race of geniuses... all of them intelligent and capable of autonomy'[163], symptomatic of what he had called the 'becoming-progress-revolution of the race'.[164] From this, Davies concludes: 'The "heroic citizen" of *Beyond Communism* is in fact none other than the futurist artist.'[165] 'The distinguishing features of the old pre-war

movement reappear', she continues, 'pride in anarchic self-determination, as libertarianism now extended to the abolition of law courts and police, the familiar horror of all levelling influences, with communism replacing socialism as a target.'[166] It is easy to perceive the influence of Nietzsche and the aristocratic radicalism of the *Übermensch* and the will-to-power in Marinetti's glorification of the strong individual: 'We hear all around shouts of "everyone will have enough to eat, everyone will be rich". We shout instead "everyone will be strong: a genius".' Yet, in the light of the horrors of war, such heroism seems gratuitous. As Davies comments: 'When the material base shows its cracks, all that remains is the gratuitous heroism of the avant-garde.'[167]

The idealized vision of war in Futurism performs a similar function to the myth of the general strike in Sorel's anarcho-syndicalism. And certain key pronouncements of Sorel are marked with an eschatological character:

> The revolutionary Syndicalist argue about Socialist action in exactly the same manner as military writers argue about war; they restrict the whole of Socialism to the general strike; they look upon every combination as one that should culminate in this catastrophe; they see in each strike a reduced facsimile, an essay, a preparation for the great final upheaval... [...] ... It is possible, therefore, to conceive Socialism as being perfectly revolutionary, although there may only be a few short conflicts, provided that these have strength enough to evoke the idea of the general strike: all the events of the conflict will then appear under a magnified form, and the idea of catastrophe being maintained, the cleavage will be perfect.[168]

But these meditations on the cataclysm of war are not restricted to the violent strand of anarcho-syndicalism represented by Sorel. They also appear in the anarchism of Proudhon.

In *The Phenomenology of War*, Proudhon goes on to suggest that war 'stems from our consciousness in the same way as religion and justice. Heroes are inspired by the same spontaneous zeal as prophets and lovers of justice. That is why war is divine.... War, we greet you!'[169] He continues:

> War is divine, that is to say it is primordial, essential to life and to the production of men and society. It is deeply seated in human consciousness and its idea embraces all human relationships. When history began mankind revealed and expressed his noblest faculties through war: religion, justice, poetry, the fine arts, economics, politics, government, nobility, bourgeoisie, royalty, property... Let us imagine for a moment that we can get rid of war. Nothing remains of either humanity's past or present existence. We cannot conceive of what society could have been like without it; we cannot guess what it might become. Civilization topples into the void. Its former existence becomes a myth that does not correspond to any reality, and its future development is an unknown quantity that no philosophy could define.[170]

Both Marinetti and Proudhon consider war to be divine, the sublime apotheosis of human experience. Although he accepted antagonism as a 'law of man and of nature'[171], Proudhon, in a dialectical mode which embraced the 'simultaneity of the radically disparate', nonetheless argued that, contained within the law of antagonism, was the condition of universal peace.[172] But where Proudhon sees war as redemptive, Marinetti reproduces capitalism's opportunity for profit.

In the manifesto 'The Birth of Futurist Aesthetic', Marinetti makes reference to the supposed Japanese trade in human bones (sourced from corpses exhumed from Manchurian battlefields), purchased to be ground down to a powder used in the production of 'a new explosive substance, more lethal than any yet known'.[173] Characteristically, Marinetti applauds the trade as an 'absolutely Futurist commerce' and welcomes the profane resurrection of the fallen soldiers: 'Glory to the indomitable ashes of man, that come to life in cannons!'[174] The libertarian poet William Blake offered an organic, regenerative vision of death when he wrote: 'Drive your cart and your plough over the bones of the dead.'[175] In contrast, Marinetti celebrates the commodification of death in a mechanized warfare. Marinetti-as-Futurist incarnates the libertarian-as-barbarian, or, in other words, the anarchist-as-fascist. Next to the 'Founding and Manifesto of Futurism,' 'The Birth of Futurist Aesthetic' is the supreme moment of Marinetti, our primordial destructive character of the avant-garde. As a manifesto celebrating the birth of an aesthetic, it aestheticizes only death.

[1] Cited in Albert Camus, *The Rebel* translated by A. Bower (Harmondsworth; Penguin, 1962), p. 122.
[2] Nietzsche, 1968, op. cit., p. 478-9.
[3] Edwards, op. cit., p. 204.
[4] Slavoj Zizek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), p. 70.
[5] Marx, 1973, op. cit., p. 70.
[6] Zizek, op. cit., p. 70.
[7] Marx, 1973, op. cit., p. 73.
[8] Ibid., p. 73.
[9] Lino Pertile, 'Fascism and Literature', in David Forgacs (ed.), *Rethinking Italian Fascism: Capitalism, Populism and Culture* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1986), p. 165.
[10] Marinetti, op. cit., p. 21-2.
[11] Hewitt, op. cit., p. 98.
[12] Marinetti, op. cit., p. 88.
[13] Ibid., p. 47.
[14] Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, (London: The Architectural Press, 1960), p. 100.
[15] Marinetti, op. cit., p. 24.
[16] Ibid., p. 75.
[17] Ibid., p. 162.
[18] Ibid., p. 97.
[19] Ibid., p. 49. Marinetti's reference to the 'Sudanese nurse' in the creation myth of Futurism should alert us to the orientalism of the avant-garde, and its proximity to the culture of Imperialism, which we have previously discussed in relation to barbarism.
[20] Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1985), p. 175.
[21] In many respects Marinetti's act of 'auto'-creation owes much to the writings of Fichte, Stirner and Nietzsche. Fichte, for example, attributed the constitution of an 'Absolute I' to the radical act of individual will, displayed and celebrated by Marinetti. However, as Michael Allan Gillespie points out 'Fichte... believed that the self-production of the absolute was in large measure limited by its own previous determinations.' Michael Allen Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 252. In contrast to the *determinate* negation of Fichte, Nietzsche proceeds through *absolute* negation. The absolute nihilism of Nietzsche is a closer model for Marinetti's auto-creation. Gillespie comments: 'Change [in the Nietzschean universe] is the result not of determinate negation but of absolute negation. The will levels the ground completely to open a space for the spontaneous generation of a radically new possibility. For Nietzsche, nihilism is such a levelling and it thus heralds a new dawn.' Ibid., p. 252. Marinetti's act of dynamic self-creation in the 'Founding and Manifesto' is a direct embodiment of the Nietzschean figure of the Dionysian will, 'radically free' and 'not bound by its past actions'. In other words, the ego/I is a 'self-propelling wheel' free to create and destroy at will. Ibid., p. 252. In similar fashion, Marinetti is indebted to Stirner who, in *The Ego and His Own*, argued that the foundation of the autonomous creative ego is the 'creative nothing': 'I am nothing in the sense of emptiness, but I am the creative nothing, the nothing out of which I myself as creator create everything.' Nevertheless, the appeal of Futurism is not to an individualized or atomised libertarianism of the sort we recognize in Stirner, but to a collective revolution. As Marjorie Perloff points out, the images of the Founding allegory 'do not point towards the self; they reflect neither inner struggle nor the contours of an individual consciousness. On the contrary Marinetti's selfhood is subordinated to the communal "we" (the first word of the manifesto), addressing the "you" of the crowd, the mass audience he hopes to move as well as to delight.' Marjorie Perloff, *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant-Guerre, and the Language of Rupture* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 87. The Futurist self is therefore

dynamic rather than static, tending towards the plural, collective 'we'. In other words, Futurism, by definition, implies not indicate a fixed *being* but rather an energetic continuous *becoming*.
[22] Marinetti, op. cit., p. 48.
[23] Ibid., p. 49.
[24] The new conditions of mechanization which precipitate a transformation in the conditions of creativity to productivity - the author as producer - prompts Andrew Hewitt to suggest 'Marinetti's texts are not just about machines, they *are* machines.' Hewitt, op. cit., p. 33.
[25] Calinescu, op. cit., p. 131.
[26] Ibid., p. 131.
[27] Caroline Tisdall and Angelo Bozzola, *Futurism* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1977), p. 48.
[28] Marinetti concludes his diatribe against Ruskin suggesting that 'that maniac of antique simplicity is like a man who, after having reached full physical maturity, still wants to sleep in his cradle and feed himself at the breast of his decrepit old nurse in order to recover his thoughtless infancy'. Marinetti, op. cit., p. 72.
[29] Ibid., p. 67.
[30] Errico Malatesta, *Anarchy*, (London: Freedom Press, 1974), P. 54. Malatesta spent thirty-eight years of his life in exile, mainly in London in three periods 1881-1883, 1884-5, 1891-1913.
[31] Egbert, 1970, op. cit., p. 274.
[32] Rudolf Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism: An Introduction* (London: Pluto, 1989) p. 90.
[33] Marinetti, op. cit., p. 161.
[34] Tisdall and Bozzolla, op. cit., p. 18.
[35] Egbert, 1970, op. cit., p. 272.
[36] Ibid., p. 175.
[37] Ibid., p. 178.
[38] Antonio Gramsci, 'The Modern Prince', *Selections from Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), p. 126. Gramsci suggest the precedent of the mythic function of Machiavelli's Prince: 'The utopian character of the Prince lies in the fact that the prince had no real historical existence; he did not present himself immediately and objectively to the Italian people, but was a purer theoretical abstraction – a symbol of the leader and ideal *condottiere*.' Ibid., p. 126. It is tempting to think that Marinetti imagined himself as the incarnation of the mythic modern Prince. As Gramsci argues: 'The modern Prince must be and cannot but be the proclaimer and organiser of an intellectual and moral reform, which also means creating the terrain for a subsequent development of the national-popular collective will towards the realization of a superior, total form of modern civilization.' Ibid., p. 132-3.
[39] Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence* translated by T. E. Hulme (New York: Collier Books, 1961), p. 126-7.
[40] Rocker, op. cit., p. 76.
[41] Egbert, 1970, op. cit., p. 273. What Egbert omits to mention is that also in *Le Futurisme* 'Marinetti proclaims that the Futurists are against Anarchism (this is another aspect of dissociation from the immediate Symbolist past) and against Nietzsche, whose Supermen are dismissed as an antiquarian Grecian dream.' Banham, op. cit., p. 122. In contrast to the Futurist celebration of syndicalist intransigence and the spontaneity of direct action - tactics they emulated, as we shall see, in the manifesto and the *serate* - syndicalists as such had very little enthusiasm for the bourgeois pastime of art. Nevertheless, as Egbert has pointed out, prominent French syndicalists such as Fernand Pelloutier, editor of the Parisian journal *L'Art social* (which he founded in 1896) and associated with neo-Impressionist anarchist sympathisers such as Camille Pissarro, had attempted to offer a revolutionary role to art. He comments: 'To art he [Pelloutier] gave the task of destroying the myths on which contemporary society rested, insisting that only "the awakening of minds to scorn of prejudices and laws" could "lead to social revolution," one that "the awaking art alone can accomplish." Even while regarding art as fundamental, Pelloutier thus implied that it should be solely

propagandistic.' Egbert, 1970, op. cit., p. 271. Like Proudhon before him, the aesthetic theory which Pelloutier advances subordinates art to a propagandistic role in the service of the coming revolution. As such it cannot be viewed as significant to the development of Futurism, for the only revolution early Futurists would propagandize would be their own. Nevertheless, the intransigent antiparliamentarism, the revolutionary proletarian violence and the myth of the general strike and its aestheticization of politics, were the source of the attraction of anarcho-syndicalism to Marinetti and his poetic terrorism in the manifesto and the poetic sabotage of words in freedom.

[42] The aesthetic nature of the myth of the general strike is perhaps recognised by Sorel when he describes it as a collection of revolutionary images to which he ascribes a non-linguistic pedagogic function not dissimilar to that of stained glass: 'the general strike groups [all revolutionary moments] in a co-ordinated picture... it colours with an intense life all the details of the composition presented to consciousness. We thus obtain that intuition of Socialism which language cannot give us with perfect clearness – and we obtain it as a whole, perceived instantaneously.' Sorel, op. cit., p. 127-8. Interestingly, the aestheticization of politics is equally present in the discussion of the antiparliamentarism of anarcho-syndicalism by Rudolf Rocker when he comments in the 1930s: 'In the field of parliamentary politics the worker is like the giant Antæus of the Greek legend, whom Hercules was able to strangle in the air after he had lifted his feet off the earth who was his mother. Only as producer and creator of social wealth does he become aware of his strength; in solidaric union with his fellows he creates in the trade union the invincible phalanx which can withstand any assault, if it is aflame with the spirit of freedom and animated by the ideal of social justice.' Rocker, op. cit., p. 89. The rhetorical flourish of Rocker's comment on the justification of intransigence in the face of parliamentary democracy should alert us to an underlying aestheticization of revolution which is no less absent in the writings of Sorel, as when in a deliberate echo of Marx's theatricality he writes: 'that party will possess the future which can most skilfully manipulate the spectre of revolution' Sorel in Irving Horowitz (ed.), *The Anarchists* (New York: Dell, 1964), p. 526.

[43] Anthony Kubiak, *Stages of Terror: Terrorism, Ideology and Coercion As Theatre History* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 2. In using the term 'coercion' Kubiak does not distinguish, as Sorel does, between bourgeois force and proletarian violence in his notion of political terrorism.

[44] Marinetti, op. cit., p. 50. An Italian version of the 'Founding and Manifesto of Futurism' was in fact published by Marinetti the year before as the preface to a book of his poems, yet it is the French version published in *Le Figaro,* which has come to represent the inaugural moment of Futurism and its break with the past; the French text reads 'Nous voulons glorifier la guerre - seule hygiène du monde - le militarisme, le patriotisme, le geste destructeur des anarchistes... Nous voulons démolir les musées, les bibliothèques'. Reproduced in Tisdall and Bozzolla, op. cit., p. 6. The present translation is an amendment from Tisdall and Bozzolla's where the plural 'anarchistes' is translated into the singular. Furthermore, in the translation which appears in Tisdall and Bozzolla, Ibid., p. 22, and Marinetti, op. cit., p. 50, the English word 'anarchists' is inexplicably substituted by the more general phrase 'freedom bringers'. In the light of the present thesis, such a mistranslation glosses over the political contradictions inherent in Marinetti's Futurism. The word 'destroy' has been replaced by 'demolish' to reflect the French 'démolir'. 'Demolish' is perhaps preferred here as it not only retains the emphasis on Futurist 'destruction' but links Marinetti's text with later neo-avant-garde movements; in particular to the Fluxus artist Henry Flynt's 1960s cultural protest slogan 'Demolish Serious Culture' (itself later appropriated by Stewart Home and Neoism during the mid 1980s). Note that the phrase 'academies of every kind' does not appear in the French but is retained here as its usage has now become academic.

[45] Umbro Apollonio (ed.), *Futurist Manifestos* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973) p. 96.

[46] Baudrillard, op. cit., p. 77.

[47] Kubiak, op. cit., p. 2.

[48] Marinetti, op. cit. p. 50.

[49] Ibid., p. 50-1.
[50] As Marvin Carlson writes: 'Bakhtin uses the term "monologism" to refer to structures or texts that emphasize a singular message, unaffected by context, and "dialogism" to refer to more open texts and to an awareness of the way they are articulated within a specific milieu.' Carlson, op. cit., p. 58-9.
[51] Moi, op. cit., p. 52-4.
[52] The distinction between these two fields of art are outlined by Bürger, op. cit., p. 24.
[53] Marinetti, op. cit., p. 53.
[54] Ibid., p. 72.
[55] Ibid., p. 51.
[56] Banham, op. cit., p. 104.
[57] Moi, op. cit., p. 54.
[58]Antonio Gramsci, 'Marinetti the Revolutionary' (1921), *Selections from Cultural Writings*, ed. D. Forgacs, G. Nowell-Smith, translated by W. Boelhower (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1985), p. 51.
[59] Apollonio, op. cit., p. 96.
[60] Quoted in Mann, 1991, p. 82. Originally cited in Rosa Trillo Clough, *Futurism: The Story of a Modern Art Movement, A New Appraisal* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1961), p. 57-8.
[61] Perloff, op. cit., p. 90.
[62] Hewitt, op. cit., p. 129.
[63] Ibid., p. 128.
[64] Peter Kropotkin, *Words of a Rebel, Volume 7 of the Collected Works of Peter Kropotkin*, translated by George Woodcock (Montréal/New York: Black Rose Books, 1992), p. 204.
[65] Michael Kirby, *Futurist Performance* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1971), p. Kirby, p. 18.
[66] Marinetti, op. cit., p. 131.
[67] Ibid., p. 121.
[68] Ibid., p. 133.
[69] Ibid., p. 63. See also Flint's introduction, Ibid, p. 19.
[70] Ibid., p. 63.
[71] Ibid., p. 64.
[72] Ibid., p. 19.
[73] Deak, op. cit., p 143.
[74] Ibid., p. 154. See also Frantisek Deak, 'Symbolist Staging at the Théâtre d'Art', *The Drama Review* 20, no. 3, T 71 September 1976.
[75] Ibid., p. 23.
[76] The intensification of the declamatory mode was also evident in the *sintesi* (Synthetic drama) of the Futurist Variety Theatre. Francesco Balilla Pratella's *Nocturnal*, subtitled 'Dramatized State of Mind,' one of the earliest *sintesi* produced by Ettore Berti's company in January and February 1915, was 'basically a Symbolist piece'. Ibid., p. 54. 'The "state of mind" concept that appeared so frequently in Futurist performance was directly derived from Symbolism, which attempted to portray not surface reality but the more intangible aspects of life. Mood, atmosphere, and a sense of mystery were important elements of Symbolism; like *Nocturnal*, many *sintesi* took place at night, and the characters performed actions, like counting the stars, that were both realistic and symbolic.' Ibid., p. 54.
[77] Hewitt, op. cit., p. 130
[78] Ibid., p. 127-30.
[79] Deak, op. cit., p. 263.
[80] Tisdall and Bozzola, op. cit., p. 89.
[81] Marinetti, op. cit., p. 127.
[82] Writing on Marinetti's 'Manifesto a Tripoli Italiana' (1911) Hewitt comments: 'Marinetti's nationalism has to be differentiated into two contradictory moments: an aesthetic of unity and

completion and an aesthetic of transgression and incompletion. Consequently, the early collaboration with the anarchists, in which a shared irredentism was not deemed inimical to the anarchist project, feeds into a more traditional aesthetic configuration, whereas the later imperialism enacts on the national scale the demand of the technical manifesto, 'Destroy the "I" in Literature'. In seeking the origins of Marinetti's transgressive and modernist aesthetic within a political ideology, then, it is necessary to rethink his nationalism in terms of the potentialization of the transgressive and self-destructive elements inherent in the expansion of capitalism in its imperialist phase. Quite contrary to the bourgeois individualist structure imposed upon decadence by Calinescu, here, in the decadent and expansionist phase of capital, the impulse seems to be toward the *destruction* both of the state and of the individual.' Hewitt, op. cit., p. 99.

[83] Banham, op. cit., p. 103.

[84] Ibid., p. 103.

[85] Marinetti, op. cit., p. 116.

[86] Dolgoff, op. cit., p. 63-8.

[87] In the same year, a '5 day' insurrection in Milan had driven the Austrians out of the city.

[88] George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962), p. 148ff. Futurism's enemies, Germany and Austria, were also Bakunin's. Bakunin regarded the Germans as the 'conservators of the spirit of reaction' (Ibid., p. 144) and in March 1849 Bakunin was in Bohemia visiting Wagner when the people of Dresden rebelled against the King of Saxony in support of the Frankfurt constitution for a federated democratic Germany. It was during the Dresden uprising that Bakunin was supposed to have proposed hanging Raphael's Sistine Madonna on the barricades. Following the uprising, Bakunin was imprisoned by the Saxons for a year, sentenced to death, and then handed over to the Austrians. The Austrians then imprisoned Bakunin for a further eleven months and kept him 'chained most of the time to a dungeon wall in the fortress of Olmütz' where he was again condemned to death. Ibid., p. 145.

[89] Dolgoff, op. cit., p. 76-97.

[90] Gramsci, 1971, op. cit., p. 62.

[91] Woodcock, op. cit., p. 308.

[92] Banham, op. cit., p. 105.

[93] Marinetti, op. cit., p. 156.

[94] Ibid., p. 156-60.

[95] Ibid., p. 161.

[96] Turgenev, op. cit., p. 158.

[97] Marinetti, op. cit., p. 157.

[98] Ibid., p. 163-5.

[99] Ibid., p. 164-5.

[100] Bürger, op. cit., p. 49-50.

[101] Marinetti, op. cit., p. 126.

[102] Kirby, op. cit., p. 47.

[103] Ibid., p. 23. 'In Symbolism,' Kirby also notes, 'characters became abstractions representing types, categories, or concepts.' And in this context Kirby suggests that Marinetti's drama of objects 'in which inanimate things moved and spoke, could be considered an extension of Symbolism. If "states of mind" such as inhibition/frustration and objective concepts such as death could be personified on stage, it would seem that furniture, too, could take on life.' Ibid., p. 55. Further, Edward Gordon Craig - who had published 'The Variety Theatre' Manifesto under the title 'In Praise of The Variety Theatre' in *The Mask* in January 1914 (Ibid., p. 19-20) – was a noted influence on the scenography of Prompolini, and the Futurist emphasis upon dynamism was, in part, due to Craig's appeal to the 'supreme force... Movement' made in his essay 'The Artists of the Theatre of the Future,' published in 1908 less than a year before the 'Founding and Manifesto of Futurism'. Ibid., p. 75.

[104] Marinetti, op. cit., p. 123.

[105] Ibid., p. 121. It is perhaps relevant in this context to note that Marinetti's first play *Roi Bombance* (1905), which perhaps owes more than a passing debt to Jarry's *Ubu roi*, was given its first performance at the Théâtre de l'Œuvre in 1909. The production provoked a riot due to the 'thunderous sound effects of a priest's digestive system' and was praised by Jarry himself. See Tisdall and Bozzolla, op. cit., p. 90-91. In his assault upon the passivity of the audience and demands for the renewal of the stage, Marinetti's conception of theatre not only echoes the pronouncements of Jarry and presages the writings of Antonin Artaud on the *Theatre of Cruelty*. (It must be remembered that in the 'Founding and Manifesto' Marinetti demanded art embrace 'violence, cruelty, and injustice'.)
[106] Hewitt, op. cit., p. 128.
[107] Marinetti, op. cit., p. 123.
[108] Ibid., p. 132.
[109] Ibid., p. 81.
[110] Ibid., p. 81.
[111] Hewitt, op. cit., p. 181.
[112] Ibid., p. 170.
[113] Ibid., p.170-1.
[114] See Habermas, 1989, op. cit., Chapter III and IV; and passim. Bürger also feared the loss of this 'critical space,' which he sees as the domain of autonomous art, concluding that possibly the sublation of art, in the avant-garde's desire to unify art and life, might not be so desirable in late capitalism. See Bürger, op. cit., p. 54.
[115] Hewitt, op. cit., p. 174.
[116] Ibid., p. 175.
[117] Ibid., p. 175.
[118] Ibid., p. 178.
[119] Ibid., p. 178.
[120] Ibid., p. 179.
[121] Habermas, 1989, op. cit., p. 7-8.
[122] Hewitt, op. cit., p. 179.
[123] Ibid., p. 176.
[124] Marinetti, op. cit., p. 81.
[125] Hewitt, op. cit., p. 179.
[126] Marinetti, op. cit., p. 134.
[127] Ibid., p. 135.
[128] Benjamin, 1977, op. cit., p. 178.
[129] Marinetti, op. cit., p. 134.
[130] Kirby, op. cit., p. 290.
[131] Ibid., p. 290.
[132] Carlson, op. cit., p. 59.
[133] Moi, op. cit., p. 54.
[134] Hewitt, op. cit., p. 36.
[135] Ibid., p. 36.
[136] Marinetti, op. cit., p. 138. It is interesting to note a comparison here between Marinetti's rejection of the book and Kant's critique of book reading as a hindrance to man's intellectual independence and autonomy in 'What is Enlightening?'; See 'Immanuel Kant: Freedom to Reason' in Frank E. Manuel (ed.), *The Enlightenment* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1965), p. 34-41.
[137] Marinetti, op. cit., p. 131.
[138] Habermas, 1989, op. cit., p. 51.
[139] Marinetti, op. cit., p. 19. In his analysis of the allegorical function of the baroque *Trauerspiel*, Walter Benjamin quotes a passage from Schopenhauer which is worth relating in the present context:

'Now if the purpose of all art is the communication of the apprehended Idea...; further, if starting from the concept is objectionable in art, then we shall not be able to approve, when a work of art is intentionally and avowedly chosen to express a concept; this is the case in allegory.... When, therefore, an allegorical picture has also artistic value, this is quite separate from and independent of what it achieves as allegory. Such a work of art serves two purposes simultaneously, namely the expression of a concept and the expression of an Idea. Only the latter can be the aim of art; the other is a foreign aim, namely the trifling amusement of carving a picture to serve at the same time as an inscription, as a hieroglyphic... it is true that an allegorical picture can in just this quality produce a vivid impression on the mind and feelings; but under the same circumstances even an inscription would have the same effect. For instance, if the desire for fame is firmly and permanently rooted in man's mind... and if he now stands before the *Genius of Fame* [by Annibale Carracci] with its laurels and crowns, then his whole mind is thus excited, and his powers are called into activity. But the same thing would also happen if he suddenly saw the word "fame" in large clear letters on the wall.' From *The World as Will and Representation Vol I* p. 237 citied in Benjamin, 1977, op. cit., p. 161-2. This passage from Schopenhauer is cited by Benjamin to illustrate the philosopher's dismissal of allegory from the field of the visual on the account 'that it is not essentially different from writing'. Ibid., p. 162. What Benjamin's study of the *Trauerspiel* reveals, is that the baroque literary mode of the allegory is specularized and theatricalized. Allegory performs, then, as an event, a hieroglyph, as simultaneously literalization of the theatrical and the theatricalization of the literary as suggested in the dual Futurist forms of manifesto and the Futurist *sintesi*. As a result, Futurist writing, as text, performs the theatricalization of discourse, envisioned by Symbolists such as Joséphin Péladan and Stephane Mallarmé, in that theatricality is aligned with textuality in the performance of the manifesto.

[140] Egbert, 1970, op. cit., p. 281. Marinetti and Mussolini may have been further drawn to Sorel on account of the suggested role that the aestheticization of politics played in the success of the Italian republicans: 'In our own times Mazzini pursued what the wiseacres of his time called a mad chimera; but it can no longer be denied that, without Mazzini, Italy would never have become a great power, and that he did more for Italian unity than Cavour and all the politicians of his school.' Sorel, p. 126.

[141] It has been argued that Mussolini's fascism fed off his early attraction to the violent and destructive character of Sorel's anarcho-syndicalism. As Tisdall and Bozzola record: 'In 1910, a year after Marinetti launched the destructive message of Futurism in praise of "the strong arm of the anarchist", Mussolini wrote an article on an encounter between anarchists and police in London, the siege of Sidney Street, in which he described the protagonists as "anarchists in the classical sense of the word. Haters of work, they had all the courage to proclaim it once and for all, because physical work brutalizes and degrades man, haters of property which seals the difference between one individual and another... but above all, haters, negators, destroyers of society".' Tisdall and Bozzola, op. cit., p. 202. When Mussolini turned to fascism, therefore, his ideology took on a decidedly anarcho-syndicalist persuasion. 'A striking feature of the early Fascist movement,' writes Lino Pertile, 'was its lack of a clear and definite programme and its consequent ability to attract and assimilate the most disparate, even contradictory, ideologies.' Forgacs, op. cit., p. 163. As a 'Blacksmith's son' Mussolini had sympathised with Kropotkin's vision of communist anarchism, mutual aid and anarcho-syndicalism and he drew upon much of Kropotkin's work in his exaltation of labour in later political campaigns. Testament to this are the interconnections between early Italian Fascism and anarchist ideology. Like Italian Futurism, Italian Fascism drew much from its anarchist and socialist roots and Lucy Davies has summarised the links between Marinetti's political programme for the Futurist Party (reproduced below) and the manifesto of the Fascist Party and fasci groups (overlapping policies are in italics): '*Universal suffrage* and *proportional representation*; *a technical parliament with strong representation by industry, agriculture, engineering and commerce; abolition of the Senate* (or its replacement by twenty young elected members to serve as eccitatorio or stimulant to government). 'Socialization' of land, with *allocations to veterans, purchase or expropriation of under exploited areas, encouragement to co-operatives*, both *agricultural* and

industrial. Land reclamation, *improved communications, systematic exploitation of natural resources.* Nationalization of waterways, waterworks and mines; modernization and industrialization of towns. *Progressive taxation, wealth tax, confiscation of two-thirds of war profits.* Elimination of conscription in favour of small, professional army. Military skills and sport to be taught at schools; elimination of illiteracy, penal sanctions for non attendance at *lay* elementary *schools.* Legal aid, elected judiciary, freedom to strike, of association, of press. *Eight hour working day, minimum wages,* equal pay for men and women; *worker and veteran pension schemes,* collective wage bargaining, welfare benefits. *Radical reform of bureaucracy and its hierarchical career structure, decentralization. Anticlericalism* and the introduction of divorce.' Judy Davies, 'The Futures market: Marinetti and the Fascists of Milan', in Edward Timms and Peter Collier (eds.), *Visions and Blueprints: Avant-garde culture and radical politics in early twentieth-century Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 93. As Davies states, 'there is no denying the radical and leftist orientation of Fascism at this early stage.' Ibid., p. 93. Continuing 'Distinctions of left and right in fact do little to illuminate the complicated situation that obtained in Italy; and the wisdom of hindsight discerns with ease what the passions of the day made obscure.' Ibid., p. 93.

[142] S.J. Woolf, 'Mussolini as Revolutionary' in Walter Laquer and George L. Mosse (eds), *The Left-Wing Intellectuals Between the Wars 1919-1939, Journal of Contemporary History: 2* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 195. Woolf continues, 'Ottavio Dinale, a revolutionary syndicalist close to Mussolini in the early years, described this process [of Mussolini and Italian fascism's conversion from anarcho-syndicalist ('nationalist-syndicalism') position to 'productivism' and conciliation with the Monarchy and the Vatican] in December 1920 with accuracy: 'Despite the bombastic words of the programmes approved by their congresses, in which all the ingredients of the new or old revolutionary medicines were immersed, because the fasci lack a real and true political content and a doctrinal basis, they are obliged to accept the caprice and circumstances passively, and their vaunted praxis, which should have been the generating fluid of elasticity, becomes a solid cement which binds them together and fixes them in the iron framework of the facts of every day, until it transforms them, at first a little at a time and almost unknowingly, then suddenly and consciously, into a real and true counter-revolutionary organism, the white guard counterplaced against the red guard.' Ibid., p. 196. Woolf points out the dangers in generalising an overview of Italian fascism as this does not account for the relative autonomous development of the agrarian fascist movement, on the whole more right-wing than the urban fasci. It is necessary, Woolf states, to 'differentiate' the history of local fasci, in Emilia, Romagna, the Marches, Tuscany, 'according to their regional or local origins and patterns or conditions of development' as it is only such a differentiated study, Woolf argues, which 'could ultimately explain the weak position of Mussolini [vis-à-vis the rural right] and the success of the revived fascist movement.' Similarly, we must differentiate and distinguishing between the policies and histories of Mussolini and the Italian Fascist Party and the fascism of Hitler and the German Nazi Party. However, such detailed historical differentiation desired by Woolf must not be regarded as an attempt to expend or obscure similarities in the nature of fascism as it emerged in Italy and Germany: the adherence to nationalism, imperialism, militarism, authoritarianism, police violence and anti-semitism.

[143] Hewitt, op. cit., p. 68.

[144] Poggioli, op. cit., p. 97.

[145] Timms and Collier, op. cit., p. 95.

[146] Ibid., p. 96.

[147] Benjamin, 1973, op. cit., p. 244.

[148] Ibid., p. 243.

[149] Timms and Collier, op. cit., p. 96.

[150] Hewitt, op. cit., p. 129.

[151] Benjamin, 1973, op. cit., p. 243.

[152] Baudelaire, op. cit., p. 409.

[153] Ibid., p. 416.
[154] Ibid., p. 417.
[155] Marinetti, op. cit., p. 130. Marinetti's conception of the social function of war is echoed in Artaud's later conception of the plague-like function of the theatre. See Chapter Four of present thesis.
[156] Ibid., p. 130.
[157] Ibid., p. 131.
[158] Cited in Benjamin, 1973, op. cit., p. 234-5.
[159] Marinetti, op. cit., p. 145-9.
[160] Erich Fromm, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 289.
[161] Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, § 38, *Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ*, translated by R.J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), p. 92.
[162] Timms and Collier, op. cit., p. 90. Marinetti is probably influenced here by the eighteenth-century philosopher, Johann Gottfried von Herder. In his *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man (1784-1791)* Herder promoted the notion of the 'tenacity of national genius' manifest in the *Volk*, ideas which appealed to the development of Central and Eastern European nationalism (Manuel, op. cit., p. 162-170). Herder's philosophy would no doubt have appealed to the aestheticized nationalism of Marinetti as it contributed to the aestheticized racial theory of the German Nazi Party under Hitler.
[163] Timms and Collier, op. cit., p. 91.
[164] Marinetti, op. cit., p. 157.
[165] Timms and Collier, op. cit., p. 91.
[166] Ibid., p. 91.
[167] Ibid., p. 91.
[168] Sorel, op. cit., p. 120; p. 186.
[169] Edwards, op. cit., p. 203.
[170] Ibid., p. 202-3.
[171] Ibid., p. 212.
[172] Ibid., p. 213.
[173] Marinetti, op. cit., p. 90.
[174] Ibid., p. 90.
[175] William Blake, 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell', *Complete Writings*, edited by Geoffrey Keynes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 150.

Chapter Three

The Aura of Destruction: the Manifestations of Zürich Dada

> Art is indebted to total scepticism. Consequently, artists, inasmuch as they are sceptics, flow into the stream of the fantastic age; they belong to destruction and are its emissaries and blood relatives. (Hugo Ball)[1]

> That noble, precise, sumptuous force, the only one worthy of interest - destruction. (Tristan Tzara)[2]

> Let me repeat, now that I have reached the end, what I said at the beginning: man would sooner have the void for his purpose than be void of purpose... (Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*)[3]

> Only the theatre is capable of creating the new society. (Hugo Ball)[4]

Introduction

The important critical assertions regarding Dada, which are key to the present thesis, have been made by three German theorists: Walter Benjamin, Peter

Bürger and Peter Sloterdijk. In 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', Benjamin argues that with the advent of mechanical modes of image reproduction (photography, cinema) and their dissemination throughout the bourgeois public sphere (newspapers, photographs, advertizing, film theatres), art no longer inhabits the ritualized domain of the sacral, but instead enters the profane world of politics. Through artists's critical interventions into the mass reproduction of images (photography, magazines, posters, propaganda and film), Benjamin asserts that: 'What [the Dadaists] intended and achieved was the relentless destruction of the aura of their creations.'[5] Benjamin's emphasis upon the destruction of the 'aura' is the foundation upon which Peter Bürger builds for his reading of Dada in *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1974 Germany). In this work, Bürger concludes that Dada represents an attack on the autonomy status of art and the institution of art in bourgeois culture: 'Dadaism, the most radical movement within the European avant-garde, no longer criticizes schools that preceded it, but criticizes art as an institution, and the course its development took in bourgeois society.'[6] In Bürger's understanding, it is not the function of the avant-garde to preserve its autonomous status in which it is free to pursue its own aesthetic ends (a critical negation of contemporary society); nor is it to create 'critical' works of art in order to instruct society in the pursuit of progress, perfection, or revolution - social ends beyond art itself. Rather, as his discussion of Dada demonstrates, the critical function of the avant-garde

is to demolish the institutional structure of art in pursuit of an art reintegrated into the praxis of everyday life.[7]

Thus, by re-integrating art with everyday life, the avant-garde would bring about the final transformation in the history of art. First, bourgeois culture emancipates art from the court and the church and thereby realizes the destruction of the aura. Recognising that the institution of art 'neutralizes the political content of the individual work'[8], the Dadaist sought to reject or modify the modes of artistic production which dominated in bourgeois society. The avant-garde reject, therefore, both the autonomy status and institution of art. The corollary of the negation of the institution of art is, in short, the destruction of Art. Hence, as we have seen in chapter one, Bürger posits that we can no longer talk of avant-garde art 'works' but only 'manifestations'. In other words, Dadaists proved themselves 'incapable of creation' in bourgeois terms. Any act of unchallenged 'creativity' under the prevailing economic and social conditions of capitalism simply endorsed the moral corruption of the bourgeoisie. Without question, the destructive character of Dada was at war with what Herbert Marcuse termed the 'affirmative character' of bourgeois culture. As Heulsenbeck pronounced: 'Dada is forever the enemy of that comfortable Sunday Art which is supposed to uplift man by reminding him of agreeable moments.'[9]

Acknowledging the radical critique of bourgeois art embodied in Dadaist manifestations, the German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk adopts a position

which challenges Bürger's theory. In *Critique of Cynical Reason* (1988), Sloterdijk claims: 'Dada does *not* revolt against bourgeois "institution art." Dada turns against art as a technique of bestowing meaning.'[10] In Sloterdijk's view, Dada is a manifestation of 'semantic cynicisms', a 'militant nihilism' which sabotages the construction of cultural meanings:

> With Dada, the first neokynicism of the twentieth century strides on stage. Its thrust is directed against everything that takes itself 'seriously' – whether it be in the area of culture and the arts, in politics or in public life. Nothing else in our century has so furiously smashed the *esprit de sérieux* as the Dadaist babble. Dada is basically neither an art movement nor an anti-art movement, but a radical 'philosophical action.' It practices the art of militant irony.[11]

Sloterdijk's contribution is to trace the arc of Dada's 'militant nihilism' in its ambigous political relationship to libertarianism and, to a lesser extent, fascism. Nevertheless, his analysis of Dada's critique of meaning fails to admit that any concept of art 'as a technique of bestowing meaning' as such must first rely upon a structure of meaning, a signifying apparatus in which to determine: first, the space for the encounter with art works (museums, galleries); second, the mode of articulation and distribution of those opinions and reflections upon the 'meaning' of art works (magazines, newspapers, academic journals); and third, the supposed enlightened or transformed values to which they give rise (schools, academies). In other words, the meaning of art can only be rejected by the Dadaists if there exists first an 'institution' of art by and through which meaning is generated, disseminted and valued.

Sloterdijk, therefore, fails to provide an adequate account of his rejection of Bürger's position, claiming it to be beyond the scope of his analysis. For this reason we can dispense with his assertion on Dada and its relation to the institution of art. Nevertheless, his fundamental assertion that Dada attacks systems of 'meaning' and displays a 'militant nihilism' is cogent and does not contradict Bürger.

Subsequently we can summarise three fundamental and interlinked assertions on the manifestations of Dada:

- Dada destroys the aura of art (Benjamin)
- Dada destroys the institution of art and its autonomous status (Bürger)
- Dada destroys the techniques of meaning (Sloterdijk)

Although each of these assertions may be taken to apply to the conditions of Dadaism in general, they have been made specifically with reference to the manifestation of Berlin Dada, when it could be claimed that Dada was at its most nakedly political.[12] In 1918, Richard Heuslenbeck claimed that Dada 'is but a single step away from politics.'[13] However, it is not to Berlin Dada in the 1920s and 30s to which the present study turns, but to the early manifestations of Dada in Zürich between February 1916 and July 1918, a period which marks the opening scenes of Dada's theatre of destruction and the entrance of two of its most destructive characters: Hugo Ball and Tristan Tzara.

My purpose in returning to the moment of Zürich Dada is to claim that, although Bürger is correct to foreground the performative aspects of Dada 'manifestations,' his distinction does not satisfactorily allow us to extricate the concept of 'aura' from our understanding of the political impact of Dada. As Bürger goes on to demonstrate in a discussion of Duchamp's 'ready-mades', Dada did not entirely destroy the concept of art in the production of manifestations and ephemeral events: 'whereas they did not destroy it,' he writes, 'the avant-gardistes profoundly modified the category of the work of art.'[14] The effect is that the avant-garde continues to keep the concept of art alive as if in some kind of ghostly afterlife: a spectral existence which can only make its presence felt in 'manifestations'. What is made manifest in the manifestos and manifestations of Zürich Dada, as it were, is not so much the *substance* of art (as this has been destroyed), so much as its *shadow* - that is to say, its 'aura'. This lends new meaning to later Dadaist pronouncements, such as Heulsenbeck's 1936 claim: 'Above everything, our art had to be international, for we believed in an Internationale of the Spirit and not in different national concepts.'[15] This Internationale of the Spirit, demonstrated by the international composition of Zürich Dada, was not founded upon the spectre of communism. Rather it was born of the darkness of militant anarchism and nihilism.

What is at stake in this study, then, is the ambiguous role of the manifesto in the manifestations of Zürich Dada. In the transformation of the public

sphere previously examined, the political manifesto is a significant literary mode in that it disseminates rational-critical public opinion in a manner which challenges the theatrical modality of feudal authority. As a means of rationalizing and democratizing the bourgeois public sphere, the manifesto is inherently antagonistic to the charismatic 'aura' of power manifest in the body of the Prince. Can a similar function be imputed to the manifesto in the avant-garde's attack on the institution of art and the destruction of its 'aura'? On the one hand, the very existence of the avant-garde manifesto testifies to the destruction of art's 'aura', in that it removes art from the domain of ritual and places it, as Benjamin argues, on the entirely diffferent footing of politics. On the other hand, Bürger's understanding of the manifesto as 'manifestation' raises the spectre of theatricalization and the aestheticization of politics, which heralds a return of art's 'aura' (what Hewitt calls the 'politics of the manifest'). Further, the manifesto in Dada maintains an ambiguous relation to the notion of 'public', functioning both as a mode of 'critical publicity' (publicness, public opinion) and 'publicity' (commercial publicity, advertizing).

As a mode of 'critical publicity', the manifesto ostensibly destroys the 'aura' of art in the domain of the 'sacral'; yet, as 'publicity' - that is to say, as *advertizing* for the avant-garde - the manifesto-as-manifestation reconstitutes the 'aura' of art as spectacle, which conjures the scene of the avant-garde selling itself as (charismatic) commodity. Bürger's focus upon the manifesto-

as-manifestation, I claim, raises the spectre of the audience-as-consumer and an immanent return to the commodity status of art under capitalism. Paradoxically, Dada demands and destroys the bourgeois public sphere. As 'a response to the rationalization of the public sphere' (Hewitt), the theatricality of the avant-garde manifesto, and the manifestos of Dada in particular, challenge the functionalism of bourgeois instrumental reason. Yet, in so doing, they risk the collapse of a space for critical public opinion (and therefore raising the spectre of fascism). In other words, what Dada's militant nihilism risks is invoking the refeudalization of the public sphere.

In my focus upon Hugo Ball and Tristan Tzara I begin by developing Hans Richter's suggestion that Ball and Tzara represented 'the two opposing poles of Dada'.[16] Echoing Richter's polarity, David Weir characterizes the distance between Ball and Tzara as an antinomy between the political wing of Dada (represented by Ball) and the aesthetic wing of Dada (represented by Tzara). I refute Weir's claim not only the grounds that Ball and Tzara might in fact occupy the opposite positions in his antimony. I also challenge the stability of such an easy polarization of aesthetics and politics in Dada on the grounds that it fails to address the theatricalization and aestheticization of politics immanent in the manifestations of Ball and Tzara. In other words, what both Dadaists perform is not so much the 'destruction of the aura' but the 'aura of destruction'.

The initial argument here is that both Ball and Tzara are enaged in the libertarian-barbarian dialectic which constitutes the destructive character of the avant-garde. This claim is evidenced by demonstrating that both Ball's and Tzara's desire for aesthetic autonomy (which finds its final form in the integration of art and life) reflects their demand for individual autonomy as conceptualized in the discourses of anarchism and nihilism. Firstly, it is noted that the exteriorization and self-dramatization of individual autonomy emerges as a reaction against the complicity of bourgeois 'affirmative culture' with the barbarism of the First World War. I then suggest that we may regard the different strategies employed by Ball and Tzara as examples of poetic terrorism and poetic sabotage, which reflect the polarity between, respectively, the aestheticization of politics and the politicization of art. From this emerges the contradiction, in the case of Ball, that the theatricalization immanent in the performance of his 'poems-without-words' is perhaps inconsistent with Benjamin's notion of 'the relentless destruction of the aura'. What is suggested is that the ritualized and theatricalized modality of Ball's performances invite us to speculate on the possibility that they may indeed serve to re-awaken the concept of the 'aura'.

In the case of Tzara, I demonstrate the libertarian and barbarian destructive character of his manifestos written in Zürich, 1917-19. I then investigate Tzara's performative destruction of the aura in the example of his 'recipe' for a Dada poem. Here I argue that the 'recipe' is a deconstructive,

performative modality which encourages the active participation of the audience to the extent that the distinction between producer and consumer finally breaks down. Tzara thereby produces a means of negating the commodity status and autonomous condition of art in bourgeois culture, as summarized in Bürger's concept of the 'institution of art'. In effect, Tzara's recipe for a Dadaist poem constitutes a politicization of art. Nonetheless, I suggest that the libertarian tendencies and democratic potential in such a strategy are negated by the self-dramatization of revolt in Tzara, which tends towards a theatrical mode of terroristic 'shock' tactics. Tzara's barbaric pose has clear affinities with the tenets of the terroristic elements of political nihilism, itself immersed in a discourse of aestheticization and barbarism. That is to say, from its inception in the performance-provocations of Ball and Tzara, Zürich Dada is enaged in an ambiguous relationship with the 'aura of destruction'.

In the conclusion to this chapter the limitations of Dada 'shock' tactics are discussed with reference to Bürger and the notion that Dada shock - as simultaneously a strategy to realize the destruction of the institution of art and of manifesting the aura of destruction - is finally simply 'consumed' as aesthetic spectacle. With this potential recuperation of shock comes the suggestion that, as we found with Marinetti and Italian Futurism, the spectre that Dada conjures may be the consumer. This conclusion suggests that the

theatricalized modality of Dada manifestos and manifestations augurs the destruction of the bourgeois public sphere and its immanent refeudalization.

I

By February 1916 on the battlefields of World War I, it must have seemed as if civilization had irretrievably descended into barbarism. The intensification of warfare in the age of mechanical reproduction meant simply the mass production and reproduction of death. In contrast to Marinetti and the Italian Futurists' worship of war, the primary motivation for the convergence of avant-garde artists and intellectuals in Switzerland in 1916 was the refusal to participate in the bloodshed. Whereas Marinetti championed war as 'the world's only hygiene', to the Dadaists war was not so much glorious as grotesque. To Ball and Tzara, the war represented not a heightened state of humanity but a reduction of man to the condition of barbarism. 'This was was not our war;' Tzara reflects, 'to us it was a war of false emotions and feeble justifications'. He continues:

> Dada was born of a moral need, of an implacable will to achieve a moral absolute, of a profound sentiment that man, at the centre of all creations of the spirit, must affirm his primacy over notions emptied of all human substance, over dead objects and ill-gotten gains.[17]

Even before the outbreak of war, in February 1914, Ball condemns the epoch of the early twentieth century as an 'age of destruction, dishonour, and deterioration of values'.[18] And in November that year, just two months after the outbreak of war, laments: 'Everything has been shaken to its very foundations'.[19] Ball's and Tzara's opposition to the inhumanity of warfare distanced Dada from Futurism - although Ball remained drawn to the figure of Marinetti, whose work, alongside that of other Futurists, continued to be presented in Dadaist demonstrations. But, no matter how much he admired Marinetti's 'words-in-freedom', Ball could not bring himself to endorse the Futurist leader's patriotism, enthusiasm for the machine or aestheticization of war.

Other Dadaists shared Ball's disgust. In his brief memoir 'Dadaland', Arp identified the destruction of the 1914-18 war as the primary context for the emergence of Dada: 'Disgusted by the slaughter of the World War in 1914 we devoted ourselves in Zürich to the arts.'[20] This devotion to the arts was, at first, a means of escaping the brutality of war. But as these art forms came to be regarded as inextricable from the bourgeois, nationalist culture associated with the horrors of a war from which they were trying to escape, this devotion to the arts quickly turned into a rejection of all forms of bourgeois culture and society. Tzara would write later:

> Dada was born of a revolt common to youth in all times and places, a revolt demanding complete devolition of the individual to the profound needs of his nature, without concern for history or the prevailing logic of morality. Honour, Country, Morality, Family, Art, Religion, Liberty, Fraternity, etc. - all these notions had once answered to human needs, now nothing remained of them but a skeleton of conventions, they had been divested of their initial content.[21]

Dada's principle tactic in its war against bourgeois culture was the adoption of a simultaneous libertarian and barbarian character. For example, although many of the key Dadaists were antagonistic to the bloodshed, it would be wrong to conclude that Dadaism, therefore, was a manifestation of pacifism. In his 'First Dada Lecture in Germany,' delivered in Berlin, February 1918, while the war was still being prosecuted on all fronts, Richard Huelsenbeck stated:

> All the arts-and-crafts people in Zürich united against us. That was great: now we knew with whom we were dealing. We were against the pacifists, because the war had, after all, given us the opportunity to exist in all our glory. And in those days, the pacifists were even more respectable than now, when every fool with his books railing at the times wants to take advantage of the boom. We were pro-war and Dadaism is still pro-war today. Collisions are necessary: things are still not cruel enough.[22]

The provocative conclusion of Heulsenbeck's statement echoes the barbarism of Marinetti's celebration of war. Its cynicism about the war is a deliberate weapon in the Dada arsenal. It is this deeply nihilistic and cynical element of Heulsenbeck's thought which leads Sloterdijk to consider it a centrepiece of Dada methodology:

> [The Dadaists] gave the artistic right to uninhibited 'free' expression a new twist. Between the mentality of generals, who are respectably for the war, and the mentality of pacifists, who are respectably against it, the Dadaists erected a maliciously clashing third position 'free' of all scruples: to be unrespectably for it.[23]

Despite its declaration of support for the war, it is impossible, I contend, to translate the militant nihilism of Heulsenbeck and Dada into a desire for militarism, nationalism, authoritarianism, or fascism.[24] Rather, the disrespectful support for the war voiced by individual Dadaists arose from the desire not only to *épater les bourgeois*, but to give voice to an active nihilism designed to hasten the demise of bourgeois society, to 'speed up the destruction' in Nietzsche's terms. As Richter would reflect, against the pandemonium, destruction and anarchy of the World War, 'How could Dada have been anything but destructive, aggressive, insolent, on principle and with gusto?'[25] For Tzara, for example, Dada was the revolt of 'individuals contaminated by destruction' and their programme of negation was an effort to reduce the remaining edifices of a decadent civilization to dust. Further, the libertarian and barbaric character of Dadaists destruction is founded upon individual autonomy and collective insubordination in action - philosophical and political principles incompatible with the subordination of the individual to either the socialist state or the authoritarian nationalism of fascist regimes. Nonetheless, it remains necessary to examine Dada's ambiguous relation to 'public opinion' and the bourgeois public sphere, in order to ascertain the extent to

which Dadaist strategies of negation might be commensurate with the aestheticization of politics and refeudalisation of the public sphere.

In contrast to the Irredentists nationalism which permeated the writings of Marinetti and served to politicize Italian Futurism, Hugo Ball and the Zürich Dadaist opposed all forms of nationalism and embraced internationalism. Ball, Emmy Hennings, Huelsenbeck and Richter were German; Tzara, Marcel and Robert Janco, Rumanian; Francis Picabia, who came later, was Spanish; Arthur Cravan, French; Hans Arp was from Alsace (and therefore torn between French and German citizenship). With Switzerland being home to so many exiles, deserters and revolutionaries, the international aspect of Dada was inevitable. If Dada was to be international in its rejection of nationalism and patriotism, what it promoted in its place was an internationalism founded upon a radical individualism as advanced by Bakunin, Stirner and Nietzsche.

Although as a 'movement' Dada is commonly associated with the tactics of insubordination, ridicule and derision, there was one principle, Richter claims, to which the Dadaist held with 'uncompromising seriousness': the autonomy of the self.[26] Like the Futurists before them, the Dadaists considered themselves autonomous individuals free from the ties of society. As Richter comments, the Dadaist's natural habitat was 'unrestricted freedom': 'Committed only to the present, freed from all bonds of history and convention, [the Dadaist] confronted reality face to face and formed it after his own image.'[27] The autonomy of the individual, at the core of both the

philosophical and political manifestations of anarchism and nihilism, was therefore the fundamental premise upon which the Dadaists performed their emancipatory, chaotic and destructive anti-art manifestos and provocations. 'Dada believed in the divine rightness of individual freedom', Richter concludes, 'as the only source of what is new'.[28] Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes, who joined the Dada movement in Paris and who was also a member of the Stirner Society, claimed: 'The activity of Dada was a permanent revolt of the individual against art, against morality, against society.'[29] A statement backed up by Tzara's claim: 'DADA was born out of a need for independence, out of mistrust for the community. People who join us keep their freedom.'[30] It was Dada's fierce individualism, then, and its disgust at bourgeois morality which lead to the movement's disregard for all forms of authority, including 'public opinion', and gave rise to its political ambiguity.[31]

Whereas under Marinetti's leadership, Italian Futurism became increasingly aligned to a fascist political programme, Dada in Zürich disregarded all political programmes in its adherence to the principle of individual liberty, to the extent that 'Dada not only had *no* programme, it was against all programmes. Dada's only programme was to have no programme.'[32] Given the primacy of individual freedom and spontaneity to those involved, it is not difficult to foresee the obstacle this would create in later attempts by Dadaists in Berlin and Paris to forge alliances with more disciplined

revolutionary groups such as the Communist Party (as would also be the case with the libertarian elements of Breton's Surrealism). Therefore, rather than consider the Dadaists as 'neither nihilists nor anarchists' but 'socio-cultural revolutionaries'[33], it is perhaps more accurate to describe the Dadaists as socio-cultural 'insurrectionists', who aimed at creating not a revolution but an insurrection in art: rebellion and revolt - yes; revolution - no. In *The Ego and His Own*, Max Stirner wrote: 'The Revolution aimed at new arrangements; insurrection leads us no longer to *let* ourselves be arranged.'[34] Such a nihilistic slogan could easily have been the anarchic clarion call of Dada.

In their desire for absolute freedom and self-determination, the Dadaists were driven 'to the fragmentation or destruction of all artistic forms, and to rebellion for rebellion's sake; to an anarchistic negation of all values, a self-exploding bubble, a raging *anti, anti, anti*, linked with an equally passionate *pro, pro, pro!*'[35] Nevertheless, as a 'movement' Dada cannot be said to have stood definitively *for* anything. If the *anti, anti, anti*, of Dada, to which Richter refers, can be summarized as *anti*-bourgeois, *ant*i-art, *anti*-everything, then the *pro, pro, pro* of Dada refers, not to statements of positive principle, but to the radical *pro*nouncements, *pro*testations and *pro*vocations of their manifesto readings, disruptive gestures and theatrical events performed in theatres, night clubs and city streets. Furthermore, with Dada, as with Bakunin, the desire for individual liberty and creative autonomy is intimately

linked to an eschatological notion of creative destruction. As André Gide observed: 'Dada is the deluge, after which everything begins anew.'[36]

Gide's apocalyptic statement and his comment that 'Dada is a venture of negation'[37] was a response to the display of militant nihilism which many subsequent critics have considered to be the movement's hallmark. For example, William S. Rubin remarks that although Dada 'varied from centre to centre; its nihilism was held in common.'[38] Poggioli also comments 'dadaist manifestos announce a totally nihilistic attitude, whether the issue is art in general ('the abolition of creation') or the art of the avant-garde itself ('the abolition of the future')'.[39] The absolute nihilism which Poggioli and others associate with Dada is evidenced most succinctly, perhaps, in the following militant demand by Tzara, which appears to be a deliberate echo of the nihilistic proclamations made by Bazarov or Verkhovensky: 'Every man must shout: there is great destructive, negative work to be done. To sweep, to clean.'[40]

Nonetheless, it should be borne in mind that the destructive gestures of Dada contrast with the destruction carried out in the trenches on the Western Front. As Allan C. Greenberg suggests, the destruction of Dada was executed on the symbolic level of cultural iconoclasm in order to effect a radical catharsis in bourgeois society: 'When life is declared absurd and meaningless, and is still treated in a completely serious manner, one is confronted with a dilemma threatening the self with destruction.'[41] To characterize Dada's

destruction as 'symbolic' in the face of absurdity, in the manner proposed by Greenberg, suggests that Dada's destruction is autonomous in itself: an essentially purposive destruction without purpose. This conclusion suggests that theatricality is integral to the destructive character of Dada. It follows that the destructive character of Dada cannot be anchored securely in Bürger's claim that the avant-garde desires the disintegration of art via its integration with the praxis of everyday life. What Dada performs, rather, is not so much a politicization of art, but an aestheticization of its negation.

II

In an attempt to reclaim some of the artistic life he had known as a student and night-club pianist in Münich and Berlin, as soon as Ball settled in Zürich, he immediately began organizing a small, literary cabaret and night-club. With the promise of increased bar profits, Ball was granted permission to host his club at Jan Ephriam's Meierei bar at No. 1 Spieglegasse in the Niederdorf, the red light district of Zürich. Promising an evening of 'artistic entertainment' for international artists residing in the city, the Cabaret Voltaire opened its doors on 5 February 1916. (As is well known, further along the narrow climbing street, at No. 12 Spieglegasse, lived Lenin.) Echoing Marinetti's 'Founding and Manifesto of Futurism' and signifying that

theatricality and performativity were integral to the very notion of the cabaret itself, the Cabaret Voltaire was to be a 'destructive gesture', a '*Candide* against the times'[42]. As Ball wrote:

> Our Cabaret is a gesture. Every word that is spoken and sung here says at least one thing: that this humiliating age has not succeeded in winning our respect. What could be respectable and impressive about it? Its cannons? Our big drum drowns them. Its idealism? That has long been a laughingstock, in its popular and its academic edition. Its grandiose slaughters and cannibalistic exploits? Our spontaneous foolishness and our enthusiasm for illusion will destroy them.[43]

As is clear from his remarks, Ball considered the runnning of the Cabaret Voltaire to be a political act in the sense that Dada politics were playful, ironic and destructive. Despite the often opposing temperaments that made up the group (Ball was as quiet and reserved as Tzara was hot-headed and fiery) and its lack of a ruling ideology, the Dadaists were united around a collective spirit of negation.

Ball's connections with prewar German anarchism are well documented.[44] After a period of study in Heidelberg where he read the Marquis de Sade, Ball took up studies first in Münich and then Berlin. During his time as a student, the writings and actions of the Russian anarchist Bakunin became a sustaining influence, and Ball spent many years researching and editing a book of the anarchist's writings. But if Bakunin played a strong part in Ball's interpretation of anarchism, Nietzsche played an equally important role

in his nihilism; his unsubmitted doctoral theses at Münich was titled 'A Polemical Treatise in Defence of Nietzsche'.[45] As an entry in his diary for 6 April 1916 reveals, Ball was to approach Nietzsche through the lens of Bakunin, viewing the 'process of self-destruction' in Nietzsche as essentially regenerative: 'Where will peace and simplicity come from if the warped basis is not first undermined, demolished, and removed?'[46]

Above all, Ball was drawn to Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* where Greek tragedy is viewed as a Dionysian arena of social catharsis and spiritual renewal, and this spirit permeated Ball's desire for a regenerative destruction of bourgeois culture and society. The Dadaists abandonment of reason and logic may at first seem gratuitous, but Richter reminds us that 'it was something meaningful, necessary and life-giving': 'The official belief in the infallibility of reason, logic and causality seemed to us senseless - as senseless as the destruction of the world and the systematic elimination of every particle of human feeling.'[47] However, despite Richter's insistence on the affirmative nature of Dada's nihilism, Ball, ever sceptical, could not be drawn wholeheartedly into the negativity of nihilism:

> The nihilists base their ideas on reason (their own). But we must break with the system of reason, because a higher reason exists. The word 'nihilist' by the way means less than it says. It means: one cannot rely on anything, one must break with everything. It *appears* to mean: nothing can remain in existence. They want to have schools, machines, a rational economy, and everything that Russia still lacks but that we in the West have much too much of.[48]

Nevertheless, nihilism played a strong part in Ball's psychological make up and he approached anarchism through the lens of nihilism: 'Nihilism in Russia, just as in the West, smoothed the way for anarchism.'[49] Ultimately, Ball understands the philosophy of Nietzsche as an extension of Bakunin's passion for destruction. In a diary entry, for 18 September 1917, he writes: '*Antithéologisme [Antitheologism]* and *Dieu et l'état [God and the State]* by Bakunin anticipate all of Nietzsche.'[50] In the latter pamphlet Bakunin had penned the key slogan of nineteenth-century anarchism and nihilism, 'neither God nor State'. Against these twinned oppressive authorities, which legitimized and governed bourgeois society, Bakunin appeals to individual autonomy and liberty which became the hallmark of Dada's insubordination and rejection of tradition.

With similar *antipassatismo* to Italian Futurism, Ball had written in his Dada diary: 'It is necessary for me to drop all respect for tradition, opinion, and judgement. It is necessary for me to erase the rambling text that others have written.'[51] Echoing Marinetti, Ball went on to insist that 'libraries should be burned, [so that] only the things that everyone knows by heart would survive'.[52] Unlike Futurism, however, Dada's rejection of the past masked a desire to return to a pre-bourgeois, pre-capitalist culture. However, in doing so, unlike Marinetti's fascism or, as we shall see, Breton's communism, Dada did not adopt a unified political position. Nor did individual Dadaists seek to

impose a coherent ideological or interpretative framework upon Dada manifestations. In its nihilism, Dada negates politics and ideology *per se*. In an anarchic negation of anything which so much as smacked of a 'party line', the Dadaists mocked and negated any positive reading of their demands. 'What we call Dada', wrote Ball, 'is a farce of nothingness'.[53]

Dada's politics of negation were, therefore, inherently gestural and theatrical and were performed in a deliberately riotous, chaotic and cacophanous manner. Pretty soon Ball's idea of hosting a small cabaret had been transformed into a reality which had unleashed pandemonium and collective delirium: 'Everyone has been seized by an indefinable intoxication. The little Cabaret is about to come apart at the seems and is getting to be a playground for crazy emotions.'[54] Arp describes a painting by Janco of an evening at the Cabaret Voltaire in the following terms:

> In a packed dive some absolutely crazy characters are to be seen on the stage representing Tzara, Janco, Ball, Huelsenbeck, Emmy Hennings and your humble servant. We are creating an unholy din. The audience are shouting, laughing and clapping their hands above their heads. To which we reply with sighs of love, belches, poems, with the 'moo, moo' and 'miaow, miaow' of medieval Bruitists. Tzara is waggling his bottom like an Eastern dancer's belly, Janco is playing on an invisible violin and bowing to the ground. Frau Hennings with the face of a Madonna is doing the splits. Huelsenbeck is banging the drum non-stop while Ball, as white as a ghost, accompanies him at the piano. We were given the honourable title of Nihilists.[55]

Nightly performances at the cabaret, we are left to conclude, aimed to spread confusion and panic in its audience, as if a bomb had exploded in a public

place. Dada's destructive masque-play, then, can be read as an attempt to emulate, in the field of culture, those terrorist acts by individual anarchists and nihilists which had remained as a spectre to haunt the imagination of power in Europe and America since the 1890s. If it was the goal of the anarchist terrorist to conduct a war against the state, it was the task of the Zürich Dadaist to wage war on culture. As Huelsenbeck wrote:

> In the term Dada we concentrated all the rage, contempt, superiority and human revolutionary protest we were capable of... Dada was the ironic and contemptuous response to a culture which had shown itself worthy of flame-throwers and machine-guns.[56]

The mode in which Dada exhibited its contempt for such a society was not so much in the performance of manifestos, although this was a staple of the nightly diet of diatribes to which Cabaret Voltaire and, later, Galerie Dada audiences were subjected. Rather it took the form of productions which performed *as* manifestos, which Tzara referred to as 'provocation-demonstrations' and which Bürger termed 'manifestations'.

Dada manifestations or provocation-demonstrations were designed to provoke outrage in their audience, to produce a shock-wave through bourgeois complacency in culture and art. This they achieved by mounting a frontal assault on the codes and conventions of artistic production and reception. At Cabaret Voltaire, as elsewhere, the Dadaist set out to destroy the conventional theatrical apparatus. As Annabelle Melzer writes:

> The dada actor is an anti-actor. All craft is ignored. He uses his unskilled body and a spirit capable of spontaneous emanations, allows himself manifestos and poems, some pots and bells, cardboard and paint, a chair or two and perhaps a bed-sheet. Rehearsal and the work of the director are basically ignored. Improvisation takes over: 'all our sketches were of an improvised nature, full of fantasy, freshness and the unexpected. There were few costumes, little direction, and few sets.'[57]

To the affirmative tone of Janco's enthusiasm for the new informality of the Dada sketch, as cited by Melzer, we should add Tzara's more caustic and destructive tone: 'the DADAIST Theatre. Above all, masks, and revolver effects, the effigy of the director. Bravo! And Boom boom!'[58] Tzara's celebration of theatrical destruction aims beyond the confines of the stage to impact physically upon the spectator. As Heulsenbeck insists succinctly: 'Dada hurts.'[59] The violent and visceral capacity which Heulsenbeck ascribes to Dada is best summarised, perhaps, by Benjamin's observation on the aggressive qualities of the movement: 'From an alluring appearance or pervasive structure of sound the work of art of the Dadaists became an instrument of ballistics.'[60]

In Benjamin's view, it was the projectile aspect of Dada, the power to directly affect the spectator, which forever destroyed the aura of art. But where Benjamin sees the destruction of aura, Ball appeals to a mystical aura of destruction on a biblical scale. In accordance with a tradition of anarchistic and nihilistic extremism, Ball introduced a millenarian strand to

Dada's destruction. In his 'Lecture on Kandinsky' (whom he admired for his anarchism of spirit), in Zürich 1917, Ball adopts a decidedly apocalyptic tone in a summation of the auto-destruction of contemporary civilization:

> God is dead. A world disintegrated. I am dynamite. World history splits into two parts. There is an epoch before me and an epoch after me. Religion, science, morality - phenomena that originated in the states of dread known to primitive peoples. An epoch disintegrates. A thousand year old culture disintegrates. There are no columns and supports, no foundations any more - they have all been blown up. Churches have become castles in the clouds. Convictions have become prejudices. They are no more perspectives in the moral world. Above is below, below is above. The transvaluation of values has come to pass. Christianity was struck down. The principles of logic, of centrality, unity, and reason were unmasked as postulates of a power-craving theology. The meaning of the world disappeared. The purpose of the world - its reference to a supreme being who keeps the world together - disappeared. Chaos erupted. Tumult erupted. The world showed itself to be a blind juxtapositioning and opposing of uncontrolled forces. Man lost his divine countenance, became matter, chance, an aggregate, animal, the lunatic product of thoughts quivering abruptly and ineffectually... Man, stripped of the illusions of godliness, became ordinary, no more interesting than a stone, and constructed and ruled by the same laws as a stone; he vanished in nature; one had every reason to avoid giving him too close a look, unless one wanted to lose, in terror and disgust, the last remnant of respect for this desolate reflection of the dead Creator. A revolution against God and his creatures took place. Result: an anarchy of liberated demons and natural forces; the titans rebelled and stormed the heavenly fortresses.[61]

In this conscious echo of Nietzsche and the anarchist or nihlist bomber[62], Ball self-dramatizes himself as harbinger of the apocalypse. He sees and foresees a world erupting into chaos and undergoing a total revaluation of values ('The transvaluation of values has come to pass'), where creation is dead and the world is given over to anarchy and destruction. In response, Dada transformed art into an act of violence upon the imagination and body

of society. The Dadaists, then, aimed not at contributing their voice to the rational-critical debate of an audience in the bourgeois public sphere. Rather they aimed at acts of poetic sabotage and poetic terrorism in the public sphere through an appeal to an apocalyptic logic and an ever escalating level of theatricalized violence and shock. In effect, the destructive gesture of the Cabaret Voltaire, and by extension Dada itself, becomes a rehearsal for the apocalypse.

III

The volatile and inflammatory tone of the pamphlets and manifestos of Bakunin and other anarchist and nihilist revolutionaries, and the potential immediacy of their social impact (often printed in response to the political demands of the day), was an apposite model for an avant-garde movement in the midst of war. As the Futurists had demonstrated, the manifesto was an ideal form in which to cultivate a 'direct approach to the public' and maximise shock tactics. In short, the manifesto was a form of direct action: 'The new artist protests: he no longer paints.'[63] As Richter comments, 'provocation was the hallmark of dada'. He continues:

> To outrage public opinion was a basic principle of Dada. Our exhibitions were not enough. Not everyone in Zürich came to look at our pictures, attended our meetings, read our poems and manifestos. The devising and raising of public hell was an essential function of any Dada movement, whether its goal was pro-art, non-art or anti-art. And when the public (like insects or bacteria) had developed immunity to one kind of poison, we had to think of another.[64]

Equating the audience with the sub-human, as insects or bacteria, is reminiscent of the Nietzschean aristocratic radicalism of Jarry and Marinetti. Following 'a direct attack on the public' with the production of *Ubu Roi* (1896), Jarry had again insulted the public in his 'Theatre Questions': 'It is because the public are a mass - inert, obtuse, and passive - that they need to be shaken up from time to time so that we can tell from their bear-like grunts where they are - and also where they stand.'[65] Jarry's final quip reveals that his attacks upon the audience were actually a closet attempt to rouse a critical-public opinion from its aquiescent slumber in an encroaching culture-consuming society.

A decade or so after Jarry's remarks, Marinetti had expressed similar distaste for the culture-consuming audiences of bourgeois theatre. In *The Pleasure of Being Booed*, he wrote that that which was too easily digested by society contained no critical substance. If it were not for the fact that there persists in Dada similar anti-democratic tendencies to those found in Marinetti and Italian Futurism (and which Hewitt reads in the light of fascism), we could suggest that Dada's assault upon the audience could perhaps be

regarded as a last ditch attempt to activate a critical public opinion before its ultimate demise at the hands of capitalism and consumerism; an interpretation borne out in the Dadaists attempt to engage the audience in direct experience and reintegrate art and life.

However, Ball's desire to 'engulf' the audience in a participatory theatrical environment, however, effectively erases the collective critical space necessary for the formation of public opinion (the free expression of which Habermas considers a key measure in guaging the extent of democracy). Thus there is a significant political ambiguity in the Dadaist attack upon the audience and their desire to outrage public opinion. If this is a feature which marks both Futurism and Dada, it is because both Marinetti and Ball share an influence in Aestheticism and Symbolist drama.

Through his reading of Kandinsky's critique of Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk*[66], Ball developed his vision of a total theatre which would be a synthesis of his art, philosophy and politics, and which resulted in the interdisciplinary programme of manifesto readings, simultaneous verse, performance, music and dance at the Cabaret Voltaire:

> When I was considering the plan of a new theatre in March 1914, this is what I thought: there is a distinct need for a stage for the truly moving passions; a need for an experimental theatre above and beyond the scope of routine daily interests. Europe paints, makes music, and writes in a new way. A fusion of all regenerative ideas, not only of art. Only the theatre is capable of creating the new society. The backgrounds, the colours, words, and sounds

> have only to be taken from the subconscious and animated to engulf everyday routine along with its misery.[67]

The theatre which Ball envisages engulfing society in its totality, then, is one not of *representation* but of direct *experience*, that is to say, a theatre *produced* directly on the stage. He explained: '*Producere* means "to produce," "to bring into existence." It does not have to be books. One can produce artists too.'[68] In essence, Ball's rejection of a 'theatre of representation'[69] is an embrace of what Hewitt has called the 'politics of the manifest'. The scene of Ball's theatricalized politics of the manifest is the performance of his iconoclastic *poetry without words* at the Cabaret Voltaire and the Galerie Dada.

In these 'productions', Ball's approach to simultaneous and concrete poetry drew heavily upon the experiments of Marinetti and the Italian Futurists. Ball had been in correspondence with Marinetti since 1915 and was 'stunned' by Marinetti's typographical annihilation of poetry in *Zang Tang Tumb* and *Words-in-freedom*:

> Marinetti sends me *Parole in Libertà* by himself, Canguillo, Buzzi, and Govoni. They are just letters of the alphabet on a page; you can roll up such a poem like a map. The syntax has come apart. The letters are scattered and assembled again in a rough-and-ready way. There is no language anymore, the literary astrologers and leaders proclaim; it has to be invented all over again. Disintegration right in the innermost process of creation.[70]

A critical extension of the typographical anarchy of Marinetti's *Words-in-freedom*, Ball's *poetry without words* is the creative-destruction of language. He wrote: 'Language as a social organ can be destroyed without the creative process having to suffer. In fact, it seems that the creative powers even benefit from it.'[71] In this conscious echoing of Bakunin, Ball takes a step towards the realization of an anarchist poetics. In a diary entry dated 1 July 1915 he wrote:

> Proudhon, the father of anarchism, seems to have been the first to understand its stylistic consequences.... once it was recognized that the word was the first discipline, this leads to a fluctuating style that avoids substantives and shuns concentration. The separate parts of the sentence, even the individual vocables and sounds, regain their autonomy. Perhaps one day it will be the task of language to demonstrate the absurdity of this doctrine.[72]

As anarchism had sought the autonomy of the individual from the state, so Ball sought the autonomy of the word from meaning. Two years after this comment on the 'absurdity' of aesthetic autonomy, Ball put his theory on the autonomy of individual sounds into practice. The sound poem 'gadji beri bimba' was first performed publicly at the Cabaret Voltaire on 23 June 1916. [Fig. 4] For the inaugural performance of his new *poetry without words* (*Werse ohne Worte*) or 'sound poems' (*Lautgedichte*), Ball wore a specially prepared costume constructed out of cardboard which consisted of a cylindrical body of shiny blue cardboard (which impeded his movement to the extent that he had to be carried onto the stage) and a large collar,

painted in scarlet on the inside and gold on the outside, which fastened at the kneck like a cape 'in such a way that I could give the impression of winglike movements by raising and lowering my elbows'.[73] To complete the costume Ball also wore a tall, blue and white striped 'witch doctor's hat'.[74] After a slow and solemn opening of the sound poem, Ball gradually increased the intensity of the recital. Writing in his diary that evening, Ball recounts the impact of the ritualistic, liturgical and incantatory manner of his performance:

> The stresses became heavier, the emphasis was increased as the sound of the consonants became sharper. Soon I realized that, if I wanted to remain serious (and I wanted to at all costs), my method of expression would not be equal to the pomp of my staging... flapping my wings energetically. The heavy vowel sequences and the plodding rhythm of the elephants [Elephant Caravan] had given me one last crescendo. But how was I to get to the end? Then I noticed that my voice had no choice but to take on the ancient cadence of priestly lamentation, that style of liturgical singing that wails in all the Catholic churches of East and West.
>
> I do not know what gave me the idea of this music, but I began to chant my vowel sequences in a church style like a recitative, and tried not only to look serious but to force myself to be serious. For a moment it seemed as if there were a pale, bewildered face in my cubist mask, that half-frightened, half-curious face of a ten year old boy, trembling and hanging avidly on the priest's words in the requiems and high masses in his home parish. The lights went out, as I had ordered, and bathed in sweat, I was carried down off the stage like a magical bishop.[75]

In his liturgical chant, a singular, religious incantation - the liturgy of the fragmented word - Ball intoned the ultimate dissolution of world language, shattering himself in the process (it was one of Ball's final performances).[76] Further, as David Weir points out, the apparent fragmentations are of African

origin (an echo of the primitivism of Picasso and the orientalism of Marinetti).[77] The sonorous qualities of the performance of *poetry without words*, then, are the aural equivalent of the graphic anarchy of Dada typography (the attempt to annihilate in spatial terms the functional modality of bourgeois communication).

Before performing, Ball read out a short statement on the purpose of his new sound poetry: 'In these phonetic poems we totally renounce the language that journalism has abused and corrupted. We must return to the innermost alchemy of the word.'[78] In his *poetry without words*, Ball returns to the creative destructive image of alchemy which had begun with Rimbaud and the style of decadence. In this sense Ball is fulfilling the trajectory of aesthetic autonomy practiced by Rimbaud and articulated by Paul Bourget in his *Théorie de la décadence* (1881):

> One law governs both the development and the decadence of that other organism which is language. A style of decadence is one in which the unity of the book breaks down to make place for the independence of the page, in which the page breaks down to make place for the independence of the sentence and in which the sentence breaks down to make place for the independence of the word.[79]

As Calinescu notes, Bourget develops a parallel between the escalation of self-determination manifest in the poetic language of decadence and 'the social evolution toward individualism'.[80] With his invention of *poetry without words* Ball performed an intensification of the aesthetic autonomy of

decadence, and with it marked a significant chapter in the avant-garde dialectic of libertarianism and barbarism.

As an attempt to put into practice an anarchist aesthetic theory on the autonomy of poetic language developed from, on the one hand, his reading of anarchist such as Bakunin and Proudhon, and, on the other, his affinity with the poetic practices of Symbolist decadence and Marinetti, this performance of 'gadji beri bimba' unexpectedly returns language to the socially integrated domain of ritual. But it is not through Latin, the language of the bible, which Ball seeks to unite his congregation, but through the incomprehensible language of barbarism. As we have noted earlier, the derivation of the term 'barbarian' comes from the fifteenth century Latin, Barbarismus, meaning 'error of speech' and related to 'incomprehesible speech'. Thus, as incomprehensible speech, Ball's *poetry without words* and the pseudo-Africanisms which they employ to disrupt the language of reason, manifest an anti-bourgeois barbarism and raise the spectre of a dark non-European other which threatens to engulf the rationality and aesthetic values of the audience. Gide would later regard the barbarism of Dada as an aesthetic reflection of the barbarism of war: 'What! While our fields, our villages, our cathedrals suffered so much, our style alone should remain untouched! It is essential that the spirit not lag behind matter; it has a right to ruin. Dada will see to this.'[81] Yet, Gide misrecognizes the extent of Dada's destruction. Rather than an attempt simply to affect a transformation

in style alone, Ball's performance of 'gadji beri bimba' at the Cabaret Voltaire was an attempt to transform the paradigm of art's relation to society. In other words, through the manifestation of his *poetry without words* Ball attempts to overcome the autonomy of art in a redemptive, ritualistic and theatrical experience which aimed to engulf the audience.

The contradiction which Ball faces, however, pivots around the 'aura' of destruction created in the ritualistic performance mode by which he attempts the reintegration of art and life. Through the adoption of an anarchistic aesthetic theory, Ball mounts a system-immanent auto-critique of poetry and the rationality of language. Further, in his attempt to produce directly on stage the conditions of the reintegration of art and everyday life, Ball nonetheless emulates the theatricalization of discourse present in Symbolism and Futurism. In its final collapse into mystical incantation, it is possible to read, as Weir suggests, the performance of 'gadji berri bimba' as an attempt to return to an adamic principle of language, beyond representation. As a result, we can parallel the reintegration of word and thing, with the return of art to the ritual aspects of sacral art and, thereby, the return of the aura. Thus, Ball's attempt to politicize art in its reintegration with everyday life, results in art's further separation into the realms of augury and mysticism.[82] The aura of destruction implied in the return to the domain of sacral art is consonant with a paradigm of retheatricalization and the refeudalization of the public sphere. In a throwaway cardboard cubist-constructivist puppet costume,

Ball appeared - half mummy, half shaman - as a witch-doctor for the machine age: and his gestures augur the destruction of the bourgeois public sphere.

What began two years earlier as an idea to expose the 'absurdity' of anarchist aesthetic theory becomes for Ball, in practice, a self-consuming experience. Exhausted from his performances, Ball departs from both Dada and Zürich for the solace of a series of ascetic retreats in Vira-Magadno and Agnuzzo, near Lugano, and Vietri-Marina in Southern Italy. Ball's retreat into nihilistic, Christian mysticism perhaps echoes Nietzsche's understanding that the escetic ideal was nonetheless a 'rebellion against the principle conditions of living'. This rebellion against life, which is also a retreat from action, can also be found in an early moment of self-reflection:

> The anarchists say that contempt for laws is their main principle. Against laws and lawmakers any methods are permitted and are just. To be an anarchist means then to abolish rules in every connection and case. The prerequisite is the Rousseau-like belief in the natural goodness of man and an immanent order of primitive nature left to its own resources... With such a theory the political-philosophical heaven is shattered. The stars go haywire. God and the devil change roles... I have examined myself carefully. I could never bid chaos welcome, throw bombs, blow up bridges, and do away with ideas. I am not an anarchist.[83]

IV

By the end of 1916 Ball gave way as the principal organizer of Dada at the Cabaret Voltaire to Tzara, who then became the figure-head of Dada's aggressive, nihilistic, anti-art manifestations at the Galarie Dada in the Limmatstrasse. Of the demonstration-provocations mounted at the Galarie Dada, Ball would write in his diary, on 22 March 1917: 'We have surmounted the barbarism of the cabaret.'[84] The barbarism and nihilism of Dada at the Galarie and later when, after the war, the movement transplanted to Paris, was a direct exteriorization of the character of Tzara, which Paul Mann describes in the following manner:

> Against the transcendental and revolutionary projects of a Ball or a Huelsenbeck dada... projects a darker, more repellent figure:... Tzara, who was above all the heir of Marinetti and Jarry-Ubu, who could speak in the same breath of artistic purity and of cashing in, who claimed to be a paragon of anarchy but might well have called out the police on Eluard, Péret and Breton.[85]

With the manifestos and proclamations of Tzara, who exhibited an explicit anti-art character fuelled by a consistent cultural nihilism, the destructive character of Dada reached its zenith.

Tzara's manifestations in Zürich are represented by chaotic poems and manifestos: from his early *Monsieur Antipyrine's Manifesto,* read at the first Dada demonstration Salle Waag, 14 July 1916 (published in *La Première*

aventure céleste de M'Antipyrine, 1916), to his *Unpretentious Proclamation* which was read at the eighth Dada Soirée at Salle zer Kaufleuten on 8 April 1919 (published in *Anthology Dada,* 1919). Each of these manifestos exhibit an extreme cultural nihilism on Tzara's part. But Tzara's destructive character reached the peak of negativity in his *Dada Manifesto 1918,* read at the Salle Meise on 23 March 1918 and which later appeared in *Dada 3* published in December that year.

The manifesto is a sustained essay in negation, a diatribe against humanity. Its nihilism is clear to the extent that, to all intents and purposes, Tzara's manifesto is a manifesto against manifestos:

> To launch a manifesto you have to want: A. B. & C., and to fulminate against 1, 2, & 3,
> work yourself up and sharpen your wings to conquer and circulate lower and upper case As, Bs, & Cs, sign, shout, swear, organise prose into a form that is absolutely and irrefutably obvious, prove its ne plus ultra and maintain that novelty resembles life in the same way that the latest apparition of a harlot proves the essence of God...
> I am writing a manifesto and there's nothing I want, and yet I'm saying certain things, and in principle I am against manifestos, as I am against principles... I'm writing this manifesto to show that you can perform contrary actions at the same time, in one single fresh breath; I am against action; as for continual contradiction, and affirmation too, I am neither for nor against them, and I won't explain myself because I hate common sense...
> DADA DOES NOT MEAN ANYTHING.[86]

In his negation of meaning, Tzara also abrogates the social value of art, articulating a position which is essentially that of an autonomous art. 'Art is a private affair,' he wrote 'the artist does it for himself'.[87] According to

Weir, Tzara's anti-art stance is firmly entrenched in an aestheticized rebellion for rebellion's sake, claiming Tzara 'was constantly engaged in identifying dada as an autonomous and specifically aesthetic, not a political, movement, even though Tzara's aestheticism was always couched in anti-aesthetic terms'.[88] That is to say, to the extent that his nihilism was political, it could be argued that Tzara was thereby engaged in an aestheticization of politics. Mann also suggests that Tzara's rebellion is inauthentic in that he exhibited an 'utter cynicism about negation'.[89] But if Tzara's politics are aesthetic it is a result of his attraction to the aesthetics of a violent and cruel nihilism which runs counter to the regenerative anarchism of Ball.

As the manifesto continues, Tzara's diatribe of nihilism reaches and apocalyptic tone: 'I destroy the drawers of the brain, and those of social organisation: to sow demoralisation everywhere, and throw heaven's hand into hell, hell's eyes into heaven, to reinstate the fertile wheel of a universal circus in the Powers of reality, and the fantasy of every individual.'[90] Halfway into the polemic Tzara defends his commitment to philosophical nihilism by recourse to the question of perspectivism and the relativism of logic:

> A philosophical question: from which angle to start looking at life, god, ideas, or anything else. Everything we look at is false. I don't think the relative result is any more important than the choice of pâtisserie or cherries for dessert... Thought is a fine thing for philosophy but it's relative... There is

> no ultimate truth. Dialectics is an amusing machine that leads us (in banal fashion) to the opinions which we would have held in any case.[91]

He goes on to draw parallel with the nihilism he views to be present in contemporary scientific theories which question the objective certainty of the universe (i.e. Einstein's theory of relativity). Such universal ambition for his totalizing negation is typical of Tzara's megolomia. If anarchy meant to be 'anti-government, anti-rulers, anti-dictators, anti-bosses and drivers'[92], the extent of Tzara's nihilism was to be 'ANTI-EVERYTHING!' Tzara's libertarianism and nihilism is self-evident on a number of occasions: 'I am against systems; the most acceptable system is that of having none on no principle.'[93]: 'What I call the I-don't-give-a-damn attitude to life is when everyone minds his own business, at the same time as he knows how to respect other individualities.'[94] This latter remark is almost a classic articulation of the egoistic nihilism of Max Stirner. But the ghost of Bakunin is still very much present in Tzara. Throughout his manifestos the negative construction of Bakunin's 'neither... nor' is a recurrent grammatical device, and could be considered to be Tzara's favourite strategy of negation. A few examples will suffice as evidence:

> Dada is life with *neither bedroom slippers nor parallels...* ; a severe necessity with *neither discipline nor morals...* Dada is *neither madness, nor wisdom, nor irony,* look at me, dear bourgeois.[95]

> ... as for continual contradiction, and affirmation too, *I am neither for nor against them...* A work of art shouldn't be beauty per se, because it is dead;

> *neither gay nor sad, neither light nor dark...* This world is *neither specified nor defined* in the work, it belongs, in its innumerable variations, to the spectator. For its creator *it has neither cause nor theory...*[96]

> HYPODROME OF IMMORTAL GUARANTEES: *There is no importance there is neither transparence nor appearance...*[97]

Such an accumulation of syntactic negativity suggests that the Russian anarchist's revolutionary logic is the structural precondition of Tzara's relentless litany of negation. As with Ball, it not simply Bakunin's destructive anarchism which is an important touchstone for Tzara, but his openness to extreme political nihilism.

Significantly, in the *Dada Manifesto 1918*, Tzara makes the following declaration: 'The principle: "love thy neighbour" is a hypocrisy. "Know thyself" is utopian but more accessible, for it embraces wickedness. No pity.'[98] Tzara's renunciation, 'no pity,' is significant for two reasons. On the one hand, Tzara's rejection of pity conflicts with the belief in the pre-social goodness of humanity, as articulated by Rousseau. On the other hand, Tzara's renunciation of pity coincides with his call for 'anti-human action' and his rejection of bourgeois humanism.

In *A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (1754), an influential treatise for anarchists from Proudhon to Kropotkin (both of whom are mentioned in Ball's diary), Rousseau states:

> It is therefore certain that pity is a natural sentiment, which, by moderating in every individual the activity of self-love, contributes to the mutual preservation of the whole species. It is this pity which hurries us without restriction to the assistance of those we see in distress; it is this pity which, in a state of nature, takes the place of laws.[99]

For Rousseau, then, pity stands in lieu of Law and testifies to the supposed pre-social harmony of man in a 'state of nature'. To Tzara, however, after the example of the war, any pretence to the nobility of 'humanity' through the evocation of pity is an inexcusable lie: 'After the carnage we are left with the hope of a purified humanity. I always speak about myself because I don't want to convince, I have no right to drag others in my wake, I'm not compelling anyone to follow me, because everyone makes his art in his own way.'[100] In short, as pity is nothing more than an anachronistic, sentimental weakness and a check on the unfettered freedom and autonomy of man, it must be abolished. As demonstrated above, the ultimate objective of Ball's destructivity was the regeneration of man. In contrast, the ultimate ethical horizon of Tzara's destruction appears to be, simply, more destruction. And Tzara's unrelenting negativity ultimately turns on itself:

> Everyone knows that Dada is nothing. I parted from Dada and from myself the moment I realised the full implication of *nothing*.... to become empty and fill your brain cells haphazard. Go on destroying what you have in you. Indiscriminately. You could understand a lot of things, then... Dada works... by destroying more and more, not in extent but in itself'.[101]

In similar fashion, Tzara's renunciation of pity and call for 'anti-human action' marks an intensification of his rejection of bourgeois humanism: 'We spit on humanity.'[102] In this respect, the despotic and caustic tone of Tzara's barbaric pronouncements, in which he proports supreme negativity, resemble the revolutionary invective of Serge Nechaev's *Catechism of a Revolutionary*, which he wrote whilst staying with Bakunin in Geneva in 1869.[103] The *Catechism* is a 'bible' of terrorism and calls upon would-be revolutionaries to renounce their past and links with family or society. All that is required of the neophyte revolutionary is to adopt a 'single cold passion' for the cause. Most importantly, as would Marinetti's 'Founding and Manifesto', the *Catechism* promotes a doctrine of 'pitiless destruction':

> The revolutionary is a doomed man. He has no personal interests, no affairs, no sentiments, attachments, property, not even a name of his own. Everything in him is absorbed by one exclusive interest, one thought, one passion - the revolution.[104]

Tzara's trenchant nihilism and refusal of human sentimental relations positions him, in cultural terms, in the tradition of Nechaev's revolutionary terrorist. Nechaev's dictat, that the revolutionary does not even have a name, is interesting when we recall Tzara's real name, Sami Rosenstock.[105] It should come as no surprise in the avant-garde traditon of self-dramatization that, in order to affect a despotic barbarism, the Romanian Sami Rosenstock is reincarnated as the imperious, autocratic, Tristan *Tzar*-a.[106]

In this light it is perhaps inviting to read the *Dada Manifesto 1918* as Tzara's own catechism:

> Every product of disgust that is capable of becoming a negation of the family is *dada*; protest with the fists of one's whole being in destructive action: DADA; acquaintance with all the means hitherto rejected by the sexual prudishness of easy compromise and good manners: DADA; abolition of logic, dance of those who are incapable of creation: DADA; every hierarchy and social equation established for values by our valets: DADA; every object, all objects, feelings and obscurities, every apparition and the precise shock of parallel lines, are means for the battle of: DADA; the abolition of memory: DADA; the abolition of archaeology: DADA; the abolition of prophets: DADA; the abolition of the future... Liberty: DADA DADA DADA; - the roar of contorted pains, the interweaving of contraries and of all contradictions, freaks and irrelevancies: LIFE.[107]

The final conclusion that the contradictions of Dada simply equal the contradictions of life, confirms Bürger's assertion regading the avant-garde's desire to integrate art and life and suggest a reading of Tzara's manifestos, not as moments of aestheticization, but of politicization. In order to determine the extent to which this claim is borne out in practice and how it effects an understanding of Dada's relation to the public sphere, I turn to a reading of Tzara's further provocation-demonstrations in Dada 'plays' and his notorious 'recipe' for a Dada poem.

V

The climax of the first period of Dada in Zürich was the 'Dada Night' at the Wagg Hall, 14 July 1916. As with previous events at the Cabaret Voltaire, the Bastille Day event promised a cocktail of 'music, the dance, theory, manifestos, poems, pictures, costumes, and masks' and included a barrage of demonstrations by Tzara, Huelsenbeck, and Ball.[108] Also performed was the first production of Tzara's *La Première aventure céleste de M'Antipyrine*, a one-act play which ended with a tirade of abuse in the form of *Monsieur Antipyrine's Manifesto* declaimed by a character called 'Tristan Tzara' and probably performed by Tzara himself. 'The text itself has no stage directions', notes Melzer: 'What we are left with, then, is a text of some 238 lines divided among 10 characters: the first dada play.'[109]

Like Marinetti's 'Founding and Manifesto of Futurism' the first Dada play is also a document of barbarism. Tzara's appropriation of pseudo-Africanisms (an extension of his use of African drum rhythms) deliberately embraces the language of the 'dark continent' in an attempt to threaten the sheltered bourgeois life of Zürich. As Melzer points out, the experience of the Swiss bourgeoisie of African nationals would have been limited to reports which abounded in the context of colonialism and war:

> The handiest reference to a Continental burgher of 1916 had to the men of the dark continent was the image of the towering Senegalese mercenary brought to fight in the front lines of the war. From this he might well conclude that they were savages.[110]

Tzara appropriates Africa, then, as a continent of savage rhythms, barbarism and war; a reading supported in the play by the 'coupling of these exotic-Africanisms with the fantasy images of sex and excrement'.[111] Tzara, therefore, like Marinetti before him, performs the libertarian-barbarian dialectic of the avant-garde. Nonetheless Tzara's 'primitivism' rejects the 'mechanized' anti-humanism of Futurism. The closing manifesto contains the following diatribe against the Futurists: 'We declare that the motor car is a feeling that has cosseted us quite enough in the dilatoriness of its abstractions, as have transatlantic liners, noises and ideas.'[112]

More important, however, is the possibility that an attack on the very scene of Futurism's nativity, the newspaper, could also be contained in Tzara's attack on the notion of originality and genius in the recipe for a dada poem, which involves the cutting up of a newspaper, and which was also performed in the Wagg Hall that evening:

> To make a Dadaist poem
> Take a newspaper.
> Take a pair of scissors.
> Choose an article as long as you are planning to make your poem.
> Cut out the article.
> Then cut out each of the words that make up this article and put them in a bag.
> Shake it gently.

> Then take out the scraps one after the other in the order in which they left the bag.
> Copy conscientiously.
> The poem will be like you.
> And here you are a writer, infinitely original and endowed with a sensibility that is charming though beyond the understanding of the vulgar.[113]

As a work of avant-garde art in an age of mechanical reproduction, Tzara's cut-up poem can be read as simultaneously an attack on four (sometimes contradictory) fronts: first, by choosing a newspaper as target for Dada's invective, Tzara attacks mass consumption in the form of daily newspapers, a negation of the perceived vacuity of mass culture; second, by cutting up the text of the newspaper, the Dadaist poem attacks the logic of rational communication, the result of a nihilistic and aristocratic refusal to integrate the language of avant-garde poetry with the debased and transparent discourse of everyday life; third, the democratization of creativity implied in the 'recipe' form negates specialisation and the cultural division of labour in capitalist society; fourth, the randomness of content is an attack upon the principle of 'authenticity' and the 'cult of sensibility' which resulted in the aristocratic retreatism and mystifications of Aestheticism.

Three weeks before Tzara's performance of the 'recipe', Ball's programme notes for 'gadji beri bimba', which he read out prior to the performance at the Cabaret Voltaire, stated:

> In these phonetic poems we totally renounce the language that journalism has abused and corrupted. We must return to the innermost alchemy of the word, we must even give up the word too, to keep for poetry its last and holiest refuge. We must give up writing secondhand: that is, accepting words (to say nothing of sentences) that are not newly invented for our own use.[114]

This negation of the language of everyday life, which had become debased by the media, situates Ball in proximity not with the integration of art and everyday life but its extreme separation, in line with the aesthetic autonomy of modernist writers such as Joyce and Pound. Ball's attack on the debased language of journalism seems, at first glance, to be reiterated in Tzara's recipe for the cut-up dada poem.

In the recipe, Tzara simultaneously fulfils Ball's development of an anarchist poetics of 'disintegration right in the innermost process of creation', and negates the institution of art as a separate category form life. Further, as a savage satire upon bourgeois self-indulgence and poetic sensibility, the cut-up poem deconstructs the Enlightenment concepts of authorship, originality and genius. Instead of the bourgeois idea of a unique, individual creative subject, the cut-up-technique proposes a model of the free dissemination of the creative act and that each individual recipient becomes the 'producer' of the work of art. Tzara's disgust at bourgeois poetry is evident: 'Mistakes have always been made but the greatest mistakes are the poems that have been written.'[115]

'Neither grammar nor aesthetics', so Arp christened the credo of the sound poetry of Ball and Tzara.[116] As with Ball and Tzara, Arp's formulation of the autonomy of the word from the sentence, the letter from the word, and sound from sense, is a conscious echo of Bakunin's anarchist credo 'neither God nor State'. Such a development of an alternative poetic language, it can be argued, constitutes an assault upon established forms of communication and the political discourse of the state. 'Everything connected with language', wrote Tzara, 'was for Dada a constant problem and preoccupation.'[117] And he described Dada poems as 'part of the general tendency which expressed itself in the form of an organized struggle against logic.... a kind of magic as hard to understand as it is to formulate'.[118]

Bürger suggests that anything which attacks the rational logic of bourgeois culture is adopted as a strategy of negation by the historical avant-garde. Not only do disorder and chaos become the order of the day, they become the organizing principle of everyday life:

> The intention of the avant-gardiste may be defined as the attempt to direct toward the practical the aesthetic experience (which rebels against the praxis of life) that Aestheticism developed. What most strongly conflicts with the means-ends rationality of bourgeois society is to become life's organizing principle.[119]

In other words, the manifestos and manifestations of Dada, and the historical avant-garde in general, were 'a response to the rationalization of the public sphere'.[120] Foremost among the aspects of functional rationality which

governed bourgeois social relations, and which became a central target of Dada's assault, was language. The experimental typography of their manifestos and publications, the performance of simultaneist poetry and, above all, Ball's 'poems without words' and Tzara's 'recipe' for a Dada poetry testify to this. Although it could be argued that such an assault on language - inaugurated by Mallarmé and intensified by Futurism - has much in common with the literary developments of aesthetic modernism (Joyce, Pound, Eliot), what distinguishes the Dada experiment from experimental 'writing' as such, is its public manifestation. In its performative mode, Dada manifestations were simultaneously an attack upon the institution of art and a culture-consuming bourgeois public. In other words, through the manifestos, poetry and provocations performed at the Cabaret Voltaire, Galarie Dada and Salle Waag in Zürich between February 1916 and April 1919, the Dadaists attempted to extend their destruction of the institution of art into an aesthetic rebellion against instrumental reason in an attempt to create civic disorder, thereby to actualise the social conditions from which an irrational insurrection of everyday life might ensue.[121]

In effect, Ball and Tzara assault the codes of social and political language, which Herbert Marcuse refers to as 'the armour of the establishment':

> If the radical opposition develops its own language, it protests spontaneously, subconsciously, against one of the most effective 'secret weapons' of domination and defamation. The language of the prevailing Law and Order,

> validated by the courts and by the police, is not only the voice but also the deed of suppression.[122]

In contrast to the language of suppression, the state's secret weapon, the simultaneous and Bruitist poetry performed at the Cabaret Voltaire by Ball, Hueslenbeck, Tzara and others, was a public weapon in the arsenal of the language of the oppressed. Their derangement and collapse of the order of discourse represented an assault upon all the codes of the established social order.

In its negation of rational communication and its demystification and redistribution of the means of artistic production, Tzara's cut-up poem effectively annihilates the 'distance' between producer and recipient of art works, in the attempt to achieve what Benjamin describes as 'the relentless destruction of the aura of their creations'.[123] As a repudiation of the concept of 'authenticity,' a residue of the aura of sacral art, the status of Tzara's instruction for the cut-up poem has much in common with the photographic negative, a factor which Benjamin argues places art on an altogether different footing from that of sacral art:

> From a photographic negative, for example, one can make any number of prints; to ask for the 'authentic' print makes no sense. But the instant the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice - politics.[124]

The mechanical reproduction on art results, according to Benjamin, not only in the destruction of the aura of aesthetic productions. Art falls irrevocably from the high province of the sacred down to the base world of the profane; that is to say, from religion to politics. If Ball can be said to represent the 'aesthetic' wing of dada, then Tzara - in demystifying and collectivising the means of creative production - is clearly aimed at the 'political' and the reintegration of art in the praxis of daily life. The recipe form proposed by Tzara for Dada poetry, therefore, not only implies but demands the interchangability of the roles of reader and writer, producer and consumer. As Bürger writes

> The avant-garde not only negates the category of individual production [as with Duchamp's ready-mades] but also that of individual reception. The reactions of the public during a dada manifestation where it has been mobilized by provocation, and which can range from shouting to fisticuffs, are certainly collective in nature. Truer, these remain reactions, responses to a preceding provocation. Producer and recipient remain clearly distinct, however active the public may become. Given the avant-gardiste intention to do away with art as a sphere that is separate from the praxis of life, it is logical to eliminate the antithesis between producer and recipient. It is no accident that both Tzara's instructions for making a dada poem and Breton's for the writing of automatic texts have the character of recipes.[125]

To Bürger, such a shift represents not only 'a polemical attack on the individual creativity of the artist' but an equal assault on the passivity of the spectator, in that Tzara's recipe is to be taken literally as an invitation to action on the part of the recipient. In the same way that the separation of the categories of art and everyday life ceases to exist in an integrated poetic

praxis, it follows that the distinction between the producer and recipient no longer applies. In the cultural condition where there are no longer artists, there can be no audience:

> Beyond the coincidence of producer and recipient that this demand implies, there is the fact that these concepts lose their meaning: producers and recipients no longer exist. All that remains is the individual who uses poetry as an instrument for living one's life as best one can.[126]

Overall, the adoption of the 'recipe' perhaps signals a shift in strategy away from 'manifestos,' which 'denounce' existing cultural conditions and 'announce' their radical transformation, towards 'instructions' for individual 'events' which 'enact' it.[127] But ironically, whilst it propagates the notion of an active participating audience as opposed to mass of passive cultural consumers, Tzara's 'recipe' involves the literal destruction of the ostensible critical space of the public sphere: the newspaper. Although journalism is often derided by Ball and Tzara, and its language regarded as commercialised and debased, the press and the newspaper none the less remain constant companions of the avant-garde. The newspaper could even fulfil the revolutionary function of the interchangeablility of reader and author, in the manner which Benjamin suggests was made possible by the Soviet Press. In 'The Author as Producer' he writes:

> [T]he distinction between author and public, which the bourgeois press maintains by artificial means, is beginning to disappear in the Soviet press. The reader is always prepared to become a writer... Authority to write is no longer founded in a specialist training but a polytechnical one, and so becomes common property. In a word, the literarization of living conditions becomes a way of surmounting otherwise insoluble antinomies, and the place where the words [sic] is most debased - that is to say, the newspaper - becomes the very place where a rescue operation can be mounted.[128]

Benjamin's view that the emancipation of the workers through 'literarization' (participation in rational-critical debate in newspapers) follows on from the role played by the literary public sphere (newspapers, letter, and academic journals) in bourgeois society which Habermas considers to be vital in the emancipation of the bourgeois from the shackles of feudalism. But where Benjamin sees the newspaper as a potential site of emancipation, Tzara clearly views it as a site of alienation only worthy to be destroyed. Nevertheless, it is the principle of the interchangeability of writer and reader, actor and spectator, and not the scene of its manifestation in the newspaper, which is at stake in Bürger's reading. It is for this reason that, although he goes on to worry about the loss of critical space in the avant-garde's desire to integrate art and life, Bürger fails to draw the conclusion of which Dada was already too well aware: that their manifestos and manifestations only testified to the ongoing destruction of the public sphere.

VI

Once Dada resurfaced in Paris, Tzara's leadership was once again manifest in the direction of anti-art gestures, as in the notorious provocation which took place at the Salle Gaveau in Paris 26 May 1920, in which vegetables and meat were hailed upon the stage as the Dadaists recited their poems and manifestos. The event is recounted by Richter with reference to Ribemont-Dessaignes *Déjà jadis*:

> It had been advertised that the Dadaists would have their hair cut off on the stage, and for this spectacle the audience was prepared. After all the provocations it had received, it was now prepared to play an active part in the proceedings... Tomatoes and eggs were thrown on the stage. 'In the interval, some [members of the audience] even went to a local butcher's shop and provided themselves with escalopes and beef-steaks... According to their trajectory, these missiles either fell on the stage or, sometimes, went astray...' An appropriate accompaniment to the poems, manifestos and sketches of Paul Dermeé, Éluard, Tzara, Ribemont-Dessaignes and Breton! 'One ripe tomato burst on a pillar of the box where Mme Gaveau [the owner of the hall] was watching the show, not without indignation...'[129]

According to Richter it was 'nevertheless an enormous *succès de scandale*, both with the audience, which immensely enjoyed its active participation, and with the press, which tore Dada to bits and spat out the pieces.'[130] To Breton's dismay, the organizers even 'succeeded in getting a very flattering article about Dada into the *Nouvelle Revue Française*' in which 'Dada was taken seriously!'[131] It seemed that the Dada provocations had not succeeded in demolishing the bourgeois institution of art. Rather they had, in fact,

increased the risk of their being recuperated by bourgeois society. Ribemont-Dessaignes was prompted to exhort: 'At all costs, they must be prevented from accepting a shock as a work of art.'[132] This situation precipitated Dada's entry into a period of self-reflection, self-criticism and self-destruction:

> The eternal repetition of the same antics, month after month, began to embarrass some of the Dadaists; Breton accused Tzara, who, as 'Monsieur Dada', still held the reigns in his own hands, of being responsible for this stagnation.[133]

Both Breton's and Ribemont-Dessaignes' reservations about the revolutionary efficacy of the shock tactics which Tzara employed in the provocations are reiterated by Bürger:

> Nothing loses its effectiveness more quickly than shock; by its very nature, it is a unique experience. As a result of repetition, it changes fundamentally: there is such a things as expected shock. The violent reactions of the public to the mere appearance of the Dadaists are an example: newspaper reports had prepared the public for the shock; it expected it. Such a nearly institutionalized shock probably has a minimal effect on the way the recipients run their lives. The shock is 'consumed'.[134]

The consumption of the intended shock effect of Dada manifestations, such as at the evening at the Salle Gaveau, suggests that rather than achieve the transformation of everyday life through the adoption of radical modes of action and behaviour (the take-over of bourgeois life by Dada), the consumption of shock by the bourgeoisie achieved the recuperation and reification of revolt as a style (the take-over of Dada by bourgeois life). This

would suggest that Dada manifestations had developed a function in bourgeois society, that they could be accommodated to conform to the principles of instrumental reason and the satisfaction of 'residual needs' (Habermas). In short, Dada manifestations had come to function in bourgeois society on a similar level to the distractions of weekend entertainment and sport.

Such a situation indicates not only the failure of the Dadaists attempt to reintegrate radical aesthetics into everyday life, but the reversal of its very trajectory; as Bürger comments, 'one has to ask oneself whether the provocation does not strengthen existing attitudes because it provides them with an occasion to manifest themselves'.[135] Dada 'shock' tactics, therefore, failed to function as a mode for the destruction of the aura and institution of art and as a catalyst for the intensification of participation in the public sphere. On the contrary, Dada manifestations effectively produced the aura of destruction, an auto-destructive event ultimately 'consumed' and 'recuperated' as aesthetic spectacle. This conclusion suggests that immanent within the theatricalized modality of Dada negation is an affirmation of the retheatricalization and refeudalization of the bourgeois public sphere. In other words, as with Futurism before it, the spectre that Dada conjures is the consumer.

Here it is perhaps worth recalling an anecdote which Richter relates of the aftermath of a riot which broke out during Walter Serner's performance at the grand *soirée* in the Saal zur Kaufleuten, Zürich, on 9 April 1919. The

demonstration was to become the climax of Zürich Dada. Yet, by the end of the proceedings order had been restored and, as Richter notes, 'The public was tamed.'[136] But Richter makes a revealing comment regarding the end of the evening and his search for Tzara:

> During the long interval that followed the second part, with the hall still in total uproar, we looked for Tzara, who we thought must have been torn to pieces. Indeed, he was nowhere to be found. It turned out that he had never been there in the first place. We found him at last sitting in the restaurant, peacefully and contentedly counting the takings. I think we had taken 1,200 francs, the biggest sum that Dada had ever seen. Dada had been 'beaten'... but it was still Dada's victory.[137]

In this light we might take more seriously the implications of Greil Marcus's suggestion (with reference to an advertisement for 'Dada Shampoo', Zürich 1913) that the name 'Dada' may derive not simply from the pre-linguistic and pre-social sphere of childhood, but from the mediatized public sphere of newspaper advertisements.[138] [Fig. 5] If we follow this proposal, then it is not so much 'publicness' which is manifest in the Dada manifesto, but 'publicity'. In other words, immanent to the public manifestation of Dada negation is the principle of advertizing. As Peter Sloterdijk has asserted:

> [T]he methods of advertising, political propaganda, activist and neoconservative weltanschauungen, of the hit parade and entertainment industry, etc., have here been laid out like a toolbox, or better, like a grammar before our understanding. For Dada contains a bluff theory in action. Without a theory of bluff, of show, seduction, and deception, modern structures of consciousness cannot be explained at all properly.[139]

Dada therefore becomes entwined with the very logic of capitalism at the moment of its inception, a logic against which it so ardently and publicly protests, and with it in the retheatricalization ('show, seduction, and deception') and refeudalization of the public sphere.

VII

'The anarchy of Dada appealed to [revolutionaries] as being destructive of the established order, but it disappointed them in that they saw no new value arising from the ashes of past values...': so wrote Ribemont-Dessaignes in his 'History of Dada', 1931.[140] What is certain is that there remains a deep philosophical connection between anarchism and nihilism and the spirit of Dada, to the extent that, for some, Dada and anarchism have become interchangeable terms.[141] Rather than providing a coherent theoretical framework for revolutionary political action, Dadaist anarchism and nihilism adopts a derisory attitude towards all forms of seriousness and desires to transform life in a continual joyous festival of integration and transgression.

This ambiguous interplay of humour and seriousness, masking and revelation, art and anti-art, runs throughout Dada's theatre of destruction; from the masks of Marcel Janco used in performances at the Cabaret Voltaire, to the self-revelations in Ball's diary. One entry in this Diary

reveals the dual identity of Dada: 'Dadaism - a game of fancy dress, a laughingstock?'[142] That Ball's question is left unanswered is crucial to the unstable dynamic of Dada. Whilst it seems pointless to enter into any serious discussion of anarchism and nihilism in relation to Dada - given that it was a movement so utterly dedicated to the overthrow of serious culture, with individual Dadaists rejecting any meaning for Dadaism even to the point of rejecting Dada itself - not to do so would be to ignore the central ambiguity in Dada's nihilistic pose. As Tzara states: 'while we put on a show of being facile, we are actually searching for the central essence of things, and are pleased if we can hide it'.[143]

As I have shown, the freedom-virus of Dada was a result of the Dadaists associations with anarchism and nihilism, fiercely defending their radical individual autonomy within fragmentary 'anti-art' strategies. Characterized by anarchism, nihilism and pessimism, the Dadaists tactical insubordination proved problematic in the arena of collectivized political endeavour. Such a disregard for collective revolutionary action led to the auto-destruction of Dada as a 'social revolutionary' movement. However, to suggest that Dada simply 'imploded', that is to say, collapsed in upon itself, in a 'failed revolution' or solipsistic self-immolation, severely underestimates the revolutionary impact of Dada. If, in its explosivity, the fire of Dada was too intense to last, then there remained the threat of its expansion. Through the channels of Dadaist journals and individual nomadism, the virulent nihilism

(to borrow a phrase from Nick Land) and infectious anarchism of Dada spread across Europe and America. If in some cases the initial fervour seemed to recede (as in Ball's ascetic retreat and conversion to Catholicism or in Arp's return to the fold of art), in other cases it seemed as if a powder keg had been ignited (as in Berlin with the revolutionary activism of Huelsenbeck, Hausmann, Baader and Heartfield; in Hanover with the inclusive playful anti-aesthetic of Schwitters; and in New York with Picabia, Duchamp and Man Ray).[144] But it was Paris where the Dada-plague took hold most violently under the 'destructive philosophy' of Tzara. It was the spirit of radical negation, epitomized by the ambiguous dialectic of art and anti-art in both Ball and Tzara (and others, such as Picabia and Duchamp), which characterised the initial transformation of Parisian Dada into Surrealism.

As Renato Poggioli concludes: 'avant-garde nihilism was not exhausted in dadaism. Just as it had at least in part inherited the tendency from futurism, so it passed it on in turn, almost intact to surrealism'.[145] To Poggioli, the metempsychosis of the nihilistic and agonistic spirit through successive avant-garde movements, marks the continual palingenesis of its destructive character. The analogy of nihilism passed down through successive generations of avant-gardes, like a baton in cultural relay race, or Richter's 'gene flow', suggests a contradictory teleological condition of Dada: of both an end point in goal (a future beyond alienation) and the condition of

continual return. The latter analogy of eternal regeneration and renewal suggests that the inheritance of agonism and nihilism serves to keep the avant-garde forever young, almost as if trapped in perpetual adolescence.[146] The analogy of regeneration also permeates Tzara's account of the transition: 'Surrealism rose from the ashes of Dada. With some intermittences, most of the Dadaists took part in it. But that is the beginning of another story.'[147]

These metaphorical accounts of the transition from Dada to Surrealism, of genealogies and genetic codes, repetitions and resurrections, are attempts to *represent* the history of the avant-garde. The reason they are insufficient is that they fail to address the theatricality of the avant-garde's *production* of History as such. Not only do they tend to obscure the *soi-disant* character of the historical avant-garde, they avoid the paradox of the avant-garde's theatricalized entry into History. The final chapter of this thesis addresses the destructive character of the avant-garde with respect to the theatricalization of History. In particular, I focus upon the role of aestheticization and politicization in Breton's and Artaud's attempts to radicalize the stage of History in the guise of Surrealism's dialogue with the spectre of *Revolution*.

[1] Hugo Ball, *Flight Out of Time: A Dada Diary by Hugo Ball*, edited by John Elderfield, translated by Ann Raimes (Berkeley: University of California Press), p. 72-3.
[2] Tristan Tzara, 'Dada Manifesto 1918', *Seven Dada Manifestos and Lampisteries*, translated by Barbara Wright (London: Calder, 1977), p. 97.
[3] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and The Genealogy of Morals* translation by Francis Golffing (New York: Doubleday, 1956), p. 299.
[4] Ball, op. cit., p. 8.
[5] Benjamin, 1973, op. cit., p. 239-40.
[6] Bürger, op. cit., p. 22.
[7] Bürger, p. 51.
[8] Bürger, p. 90.
[9] Robert Motherwell (ed.), *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology* (London: Belknap Harvard, 1951, 1971), p. 281.
[10] Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason*, translated by Michael Eldred (London: Verso, 1988), p. 397.
[11] Ibid., p. 391.
[12] The fact that these claims for Dada have all been made against the background of fascism is important. Benjamin is writing three years after the rise of Hitler to the position of German Chancellor and during the escalation of militarism which will culminate in the Second World War. In this context, Benjamin views Dada (and Berlin Dada and Photomontage in particular) as anti-fascist and anti-capitalist cultural strategies. Both Bürger and Sloterdijk are, of course, writing in the post-war or Cold War era. Nevertheless, they are writing in pivotal moments in German history, a period in which Germany is simultaneously undergoing an intense Americanization (in the West) and facing up to its Nazi past (after a long silence). In this context Dada (and again Berlin Dada in particular) is once more identified as both anti-fascist and anti-capitalist. For Bürger, Dada's destruction of the institution of art is a hallmark of the avant-garde's desire to integrate art with the praxis of everyday life. This is, fundamentally, an anti-capitalist gesture in that it relinquishes art's status as a commodity. Dada's relation to fascism, however, is more ambiguous. Dada can only be deemed fascistic in that the destruction of the autonomy status of art abolishes the critical space necessary to defeat the threat of fascism to 'engulf' the spectator. Bürger leaves the answer to this question open, prompting it only for future speculation. Only Sloterdijk, of a slightly later and more cynical generation than Bürger, allows serious consideration of Dada's ambiguous relationship to fascism and war. The extent of Dada's flirtation with fascism, for Sloterdijk, comes in the form of its'militant nihilism' which he subsumes, without full articulation of his reasons, under the banner of fascism. For Sloterdijk, Dada's anti-fascism lies in its attack on values, seriousness and meaning in general. However, Sloterdijk fails to consider the possible extent of Nazism's own militant irony, as indicated recently by Slavoj Zizek in 'Hitler as Ironist?' *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?: Five Interventions on the (Mis)use of a Notion* (London: Verso, 2001), pp. 61-88.
[13] Richard Huelsenbeck (ed.) *The Dada Almanach*, English edition presented by Malcolm Green, Atlas Arkhive One, (London: Atlas Press, 1993), p. 113.
[14] Bürger, op. cit., p. 51. Further to the Dadaists modification of the 'category of the work of art,' they were also engaged in the modification of categories of thought. In effect, the Dadaists were engaged in the act of 'acategorical' thinking. See Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory Practice*, p. 186.
[15] Motherwell, op. cit., p. 280.
[16] Hans Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art*, translated by David Britt (London: Thames and Hudson, 1965), p. 44.
[17] Motherwell, op. cit., p. 402.

[18] Ball, op. cit., p. 7. In fact, after war broke out, Ball had volunteered to fight but was turned down on health grounds. Not to be dissuaded from serving his country, Ball had 'miraculously' appeared at the Belgian front of his own accord. It was there he witnessed for himself the true horrors of the war, and his original enthusiasm quickly turned to disgust. In a diary entry dated 26 June 1915 he wrote: 'The war is based on a crass error. Men have been mistaken for machines. Machines, not men, should be decimated. At some future date, only when machines march, things will be better. Then everyone will rejoice when they all demolish each other.' Ibid., p. 22.
[19] Ibid., p. 11.
[20] Hans Arp, 'Dadaland', *The Era of German Expressionism*, edited and annotated by Paul Raabe, translated by J. M. Ritchie (London: John Calder, 1974), p. 175. It is important to note that certain avant-garde poets had initially expressed enthusiasm for the war. For instance, the war poems of Guillaume Apollinaire were often patriotic ('I enlisted under a beautiful sky / In seaside Nice named for victory', *At Nimes*; 'We are your necklace France', *Battery of Heavy Guns*), militaristic ('Our invisible army is a lovely constellated night / And each of our men is a marvellous star', *To Italy*) and anti-German ('Hear the Hun ass bray / Let's fight with whiplashes', *To Italy;* 'Goethe's trench I have fired at / I have even fired at the guts of Nietzsche / Decidedly I respect no glory', *Desire*). His poems also, at times, aestheticized the experience of battle ('Fireworks in steel / How delightful is this lightning / An artificer's artifice / Mingling grace with valor', *Festival*; 'The sky is starred by the Boche's shells / The marvellous forest where I live is giving a ball / The machine gun plays a tune in three-fourths time', *April Night 1915*). Apollinaire's early enthusiasm for war is as an adventure and was no doubt influenced by the militarism and nationalism of Italian Futurism - his *To Italy* (1915) is dedicated to Adengo Soffici. However, Apollinaire does not have an unambiguous attitude to the war in the trenches. His enthusiasm quickly turns to despondence ('It's raining my soul it's raining but it's raining dead eyes / Ulysses how many days to get back to Ithaca' *April Night 1915*) and even black humour ('To fight against fumes / glasses that shield the eyes / by means of gas mask... / The mask will simply / be wet with tears / of laughter of laughter', *SP;* 'the man who tosses grenades is no crazier than the one who peels potatoes', *To Italy*). See Guillaume Apollinaire, *Calligrammes: Poems of Peace and War (1913-1916)* translated by Anne Hyde Greet (Berkeley: University of California, 1991).
[21] Motherwell, op. cit., p. 402-3.
[22] Richard Huelsenbeck (ed.) *The Dada Almanach*, English edition presented by Malcolm Green, Atlas Arkhive One, (London: Atlas Press, 1993), p. 111-2.
[23] Sloterdijk, op. cit., p. 392-3.
[24] Nonetheless, as Sloterdijk goes on to suggest, cartain tendencies emergent within (Berlin) Dada adopt the cynical cloak of protofascism: 'Dada also behaves ambiguoulsy towards fascism: With its kynical elements, Dada belongs definitely to antifascism and to the logic and "aesthetic of resistance." With its cynical elements, by contrast, it leans toward the prefascist aesthetic of annihilation that wants to enjoy the intoxication of demolition to the full.' (Ibid., p. 394-5) The purpose of this chapter is not to enter into a discussion of the respective merits of kynicism or cynicism, as delineated by Sloterdijk in relation to Dada methodologies, but rather to focus upon the notion of 'militant nihilism' which he views as consonant with fascism.
[25] Richter, op. cit., p. 65.
[26] Ibid., p. 219.
[27] Ibid., p. 219.
[28] Ibid., p. 192.
[29] Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes, 'History of Dada' (1931), cited in Motherwell, op. cit., p. 102.
[30] Tzara, op. cit., p. 5.
[31] 'Morals have an atrophying effect, like every other pestilential product of the intelligence. Being governed by morals and logic has made it impossible for us to be anything other than passive towards policemen - the cause of slavery - putrid rats with whom the bourgeois are fed up to the teeth, and

who have infected the only corridors of clear and clean glass that remained open to artists.' Ibid., p. 12.

[32] Richter, op. cit., p. 34.

[33] Allan C. Greenberg, *Artists and Revolution, Dada and the Bauhaus, 1917-1925* (Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1979), p. 116.

[34] Stirner, op. cit., p. 316.

[35] Richter, op. cit., p. 35.

[36]André Gide, *Pretexts: Reflections on Literature and Morality*, (London: Secker and Warburg, 1959), p. 290.

[37] Ibid., p. 291.

[38] William S. Rubin, *Dada, Surrealism, and their Heritage* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1968), p. 15.

[39] Poggioli, op. cit., p. 63.

[40] Tzara, op. cit., p. 12.

[41] Greenberg, op. cit., p. 47.

[42] A ccording to Richard Huelsenbeck, who had been a close friend and admirer of Ball in Münich, and who arrived in Zürich on 26 February 1916, Ball named the cabaret after Voltaire because the Dadaist admired the vitriolic wit and irony of the French writer (particularly in his trenchant criticism of the church and state of the *ancien régime*) and because Voltaire was 'obsessed by cultural criticism', Raabe, op. cit., p. 170: '[The name Cabaret Voltaire] was not chosen accidentally, but out of veneration for a man who fought all his life for the liberation of the creative forces from the tutelage of the advocates of power'. Motherwell, op. cit., p. 279. See also Manuel L. Grossman, *Dada: Paradox, Mystification, and Ambiguity in European Literature* (New York: Pegasus, 1971), p. 53. Voltaire, it would seem, was an important precursor for Ball's critique of German nationalist culture, *Critique of the German Intelligentsia* (Columbia 1993; first published in 1919 by Freie Verlag, Bern as *Zur Kritik der deutschen Intelligenz*) an influence upon the Dadaists attacks on the corruption of an imperialist society which threw itself into the atrocities of war.

[43] Ball, op. cit., p. 61.

[44] See Philip Mann, *Hugo Ball: An Intellectual Biography* (London: Institute of Germanic Studies, 1987) passim; Weir, p. 229-38; Richard Sheppard, *Modernism – Dada – Postmodernism* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2000), p. 304-22; and John Elderfield's introduction to Ball, p. xxxvi-xxxix.

[45] Grossman, op. cit., p. 50. Other sources have this title as 'Nietzsche and the Renewal of Germany'. It is important to note also that Ball was influenced by Nietzsche's rejection of German nationalism in relation to culture.

[46] Ball, op. cit., p. 59.

[47] Richter, op. cit., p. 58. After Nietzsche's annihilation of God and the soul, and the positive articulation of the *Übermensch*, the most important aspect of Nietzsche's nihilism, for Ball, was the rejection of Kantian rationality: 'Kant - he is the arch-enemy; he started it all'. Ball, op. cit., p. 11. Ball followed Nietzsche in his objection to Kant's philosophy based upon the unshakeable principle that 'reason must be accepted *a priori*': 'Nietzsche's departure from that is good. It cannot really be said that he too finally accepted reason. On the contrary, he completely *lost* his senses in the darkness in which he was enmeshed. He is not a classical philosopher (he is not classical; he is exaggerated and imprecise). But he was the first one to destroy all reason and to do away with Kantianism.' Ibid., p. 11.

[48] Ibid., p. 11-2.

[49] Ibid., p. 129.

[50] Ibid., p. 136. Further example of Ball's anarchism is his attack on private property and his acceptance of his own personal poverty. Ball's acceptance of poverty, whether chosen or enforced, is related to his renunciation of property, which he undertook on both religious and political grounds.

The diaries (Ibid., p. 21) show his mind grappling with some of the fundamental questions of anarchism, yet it is not Bakunin alone which seems to govern Ball's anarchism but also Proudhon's maxim 'Property is theft'. See Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *What is Property?* (1842) edited by Donald R. Kelley and Bonnie G. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
[51] Ball, op. cit., p. 35.
[52] Ibid., p. 96.
[53] Ibid., p. 65.
[54] Ibid., p. 51-2.
[55] Raabe, op. cit., p. 175-6.
[56] Ibid., p. 170.
[57] Annabelle Henkin Melzer, *Dada and Surrealist Performance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), p. 59-60.
[58] Ibid., p. 75.
[59] Motherwell, op. cit. p. 281.
[60] Benjamin, 1973, op. cit., p. 238.
[61] Ball, op. cit., p. 223-4.
[62] In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche had claimed 'I am not a man, I am dynamite.'Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is* translated by R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), p. 126. It is no accident that Ball, schooled in the principles of anarchist thought should chose the metaphor of dynamite, the weapon of choice of anarchist terrorists. For the anarchist apology for dynamite, see P. Berman, op. cit., p. 114-5.
[63] Tzara, op. cit., p. 7.
[64] Richter, op. cit., p. 66.
[65] Roger Shattuck and Simon Watson Taylor (eds.), *Selected Works of Alfred Jarry* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1965), p. 84.
[66] Melzer, op. cit., p. 17.
[67] Ball, op. cit., p. 8.
[68] Ibid., p. 53.
[69] It could be argued that Ball's theatre is simply a reworking of Rousseau's vision of a free festival recounted in his *Lettre à d'Alembert sur les spectacles* (1758), which Derrida considers a 'theatre without representation' and attack upon the '*theatrical society*' of bourgeois representation. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 302-13; remarks come on p. 306. To a certain extent this is true and is perhaps fertile ground for further research; it is borne out, for example, in Dada's attack upon the audience as passive consumenrs, the theatrical conventions which maintain separations between actor and audience, reader and writer, the emphasis of the avant-garde upon an intensification of participation in the public sphere in general. However, Dada's cynicism and, as we shall see, Tzara's emphasis upon 'masking ' - a artifice alien to Rousseau's conception - prevents full identification of Dada manifestations with Rousseau's utopian vision.
[70] Ball, op. cit., p. 25.
[71] Ibid., p. 76.
[72] Ibid., p. 22.
[73] Ibid., p. 70.
[74] Ibid., p. 70.
[75] Ibid., p. 70-1.
[76] Interestingly, Jacques Derrida in *Of Grammatology* seems to articulate the condition of the Dada actor-preacher as performed by Ball, when he notes: 'There are two sorts of public person, two men of spectacle: on the one hand the orator or preacher, on the other the actor. The former represents himself, in him the representer and the represented are one. But the actor is born out of the rift between the representer and the represented. Like the alphabetic signifier, like the letter, the actor

himself is not inspired or animated by any particular language. He signifies nothing. He hardly lives, he lends his voice. It is a mouthpiece.' Derrida, op. cit., p. 305.
[77] See discussion in Weir, op. cit., p. 235-8.
[78] Ball, op. cit., p. 71.
[79] Cited in Calinescu, op. cit., p. 170.
[80] Ibid., p. 170.
[81] Gide, op. cit., p. 291.
[82] In a little reproduced passage from his diary entry on 20 April 1917, Ball makes the following observations: 'What exactly is a visionary? A reading master in the supernatural picture-book. Do our thinkers crave pictures? It cannot be said they do. What do they teach about graphic thinking and being? Plato was a visionary, Hegel was not, nor was Kant. The prime concern is the fusion of names and things, avoidance as much as possible of words for which there are no pictures. To be a visionary you would have to know the laws of magic. Who still knows them? We are playing with a fire that we cannot understand.' Ball, op. cit., p. 109.
[83] Ball, op. cit., p. 19. For a convincing interpretation of Ball's rejection of the more violent manifestations of anarchism see Weir, op. cit., p. 230-3.
[84] Ball, op. cit., p. 101
[85] Mann, 1991, op. cit., p. 89.
[86] Tzara, op. cit., p. 3-4.
[87] Melzer, op. cit., p. 61.
[88] Weir, op. cit., p. 234.
[89] Mann, 1991, op. cit., p. 89.
[90] Tzara, op. cit., p. 8.
[91] Ibid., p. 8-9.
[92] From a courtroom speech by anarchist terrorist, Albert Parsons, after being sentenced to hang for Haymarket bombing 1886. P. Berman, op. cit., p. 31.
[93] Tzara, op. cit., p. 9.
[94] Ibid, p. 9-10.
[95] 'Monsieur Antipyrine's Manifesto', Ibid., p. 1-2. My italics.
[96] 'Dada Manifesto 1918'. Ibid., p. 4; p. 4-5; p. 7. My italics.
[97] 'Unpretentious Proclamation 1919'. Ibid., p. 15.
[98] Ibid., p. 5.
[99] Cited in Weir, op. cit., p. 18.
[100] Tzara, op. cit., p. 5.
[101] Ibid., p. 107-12.
[102] Ibid., p. 1.
[103] This work is not to be confused with Bakunin's own 'Revolutionary Catechism' of 1866. See Chapter Two.
[104] Marshall, op. cit., p. 283-4. As a point of further coincidence it may be noted that Nechaev was arrested in Zürich, the inaugural scene of Dada.
[105] Egbert writes: 'Tristan Tzara (his real name was Sami Rosenstock) who was then a nihilist.' Egbert, 1970, op. cit., p. 295
[106] The choice of 'Tristan' for first name may be a reference to Wagner's *Tristan* which many regarded as a 'morbid and 'decadent' opera. See Edward J. Dent *Opera* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1940), p. 70.
[107] Tzara, op. cit., p. 13.
[108] Melzer, op. cit., p. 69.
[109] Ibid., p. 70. For a full description of this performance, see Ibid., p. 70-1.
[110] Ibid., p. 70.
[111] Ibid., p. 70.

[112] Tzara, op. cit., p. 1.
[113] Ibid., p. 88.
[114] Ball, op. cit., p. 71.
[115] Tzara, op. cit., p. 87.
[116] Raabe, op. cit., p. 176.
[117] Motherwell, op. cit., p. 404.
[118] Ibid., p. 404.
[119] Bürger, op. cit., p. 34.
[120] Hewitt, op. cit., p. 12.
[121] For excellent comments in this respect see Sheppard, op. cit., p 342-9; and Greenberg, op. cit., p. 117.
[122] Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), p. 76-7.
[123] Benjamin, 1973, op. cit., p. 239-40.
[124] Ibid., p. 226.
[125] Bürger, op. cit., p. 53.
[126] Ibid., p. 53.
[127] Overall, we could schematize the influence of Ball and Tzara upon neo-Dada strategies of Happenings and Fluxus as follows. Ball's desire to engulf the audience in the event is echoed in the move towards environments and Happenings. The 'terroristic' principle is utilised especially by Happenings artists such as Jean-Jacques Lebel. On the other hand Tzara's Dada poem 'recipe' more closely resembles the 'event-scores' commonly adopted in the 1960s by neo-Dada artists associated with Fluxus, as in the event-scores of George Brecht and, of particular interest here, in the 'instructure' works of Yoko Ono. It is interesting to examine here the extent to which the poetic 'instructures' of Yoko Ono follow closely upon Tzara's destruction of the language of everyday life, of ostensible transparent communication. They interrupt the flow of language and oppose the means-end functionalism of instrumental reason. Yet in contrast to Tzara's latent aristocratic radicalism, Fluxus event-scores are democratizing in intent and often are articulated in a performative context and a festive or collective atmosphere. Event-scores share much, in this respect, again with the condition of photography. Just as it makes no sense to speak of an 'original' print form a photographic negative, it makes less sense to talk of an original performance of an 'event-score'. The 'aura' of the original art work which having been destroyed by the process of mechanical reproduction, risked being resurrected in the original and unrepeatable 'event' is once more demystified, and destroyed in the infinitely reproducible 'event-score' or 'instruction'. Where the photographic image is available for endless reproduction, distribution and recirculation of the same, the event-score is open to the endless dissemination of difference. The instruction piece which tests this hypothesis to its limits is Yoko Ono's *Blood Piece.* In this instructure, which most resembles the condition of auto-destructive art, Ono proposes 'BLOOD PIECE : Use your blood to paint Keep painting until you faint (a). Keep painting until you die (b). 1960 spring.' Yoko Ono, *Grapefruit* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), np.
[128] Walter Benjamin, *Understanding Brecht* translated by Anna Bostock (London: Verso, 1977), p. 90. Note that Benjamin is quoting himself.
[129] Richter, op. cit., p. 182-3.
[130] Ibid., p. 182.
[131] Ibid., p. 181.
[132] Cited in Ibid., p. 183.
[133] Ibid., p. 183.
[134] Bürger, op. cit., p. 81.
[135] Ibid., p. 80.
[136] Richter, op. cit., p. 80.
[137] Ibid., p. 80.

[138] Marcus writes: 'Dada history is a writer's dream: choosing among versions, one has to make up the story... imagine [Huelsenbeck] edging into a pharmacy... to buy a packet of contraceptives, only to come face to face with "DADA SHAMPOO," fine product of Bergmann & Co., on sale at Bahnhofstrasse, 51 since 1913. '*Oh shit,*' Huelsenbeck must have said – or, *Of course! Dada shampoo! The universal cleansing agent!*' Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989), p. 208.

[139] Slotedijk, op. cit., p. 401-2.

[140] Motherwell, op. cit., p. 110.

[141] See Paul Feyerabend *Against Method: Outline for an anarchist theory of knowledge* (London: Verso, 1975), p. 12.

[142] Ball, op. cit., p. 117.

[143] Tzara, op. cit., p. 1.

[144] In his energetic renunciation of art, Picabia matched Tzara's exuberant nihilism. He also had Tzara's talent for self-promotion, having previously published the Dada journal *391* in Spain. Despite his explicitly anti-art stance, Picabia nonetheless continued to produce many paintings and collages which exhibited an almost Futurist-Constructivist machine aesthetic.

[145] Poggioli, op. cit., p. 63.

[146] This is perhaps what leads Poggioli to view Dada's nihilism as an example of 'intrasigent puerility' and 'extreme infantilism'. Ibid., p. 62. An accusation the Dadaists would no doubt have relished.

[147] Tzara, op. cit., p. 406.

Chapter Four

Understudy Revolutionaries: Surrealism and the Politics of Destruction

> That man will be revolutionary who can revolutionize himself.
> (Ludwig Wittgenstein)[1]

> The avant-garde believed that to revolutionize art was to revolutionize life. (Matei Calinescu)[2]

> 'The world must be destroyed.' (Antonin Artaud)[3]

Introduction

Manifestos and speeches, provocations and brawls, meetings and agendas, allies and allegiances, defections and denunciations, factions and splits, traitors, show trials and expulsions. Implying a degree of self-dramatization in the revolutionary politics manifest by André Breton and his cast, André Thirion regarded the Surrealists as 'revolutionaries without revolution'.[4] In lieu of the longed-for revolution, Surrealism prepares by reading the script, learning the lines, rehearsing the gestures, blocking the scene, looking the part. In earnest anticipation, Surrealism is ready, prepared and willing, should

the time come, to make its entrance and take the stage. For the moment, though, it remains waiting in the wings of history, permanent understudy to the revolution.

If the revolution constructs a model of the end of history as History, then the self-dramatization of revolutionary politics implies a theatricalization of History. In what ways does the 'destructive impulse' of the revolutionary politics to which Surrealism pretends, manifest what we have identified as the libertarian and barbarian destructive character of the avant-garde? Might the dispute between Breton and Artaud over the Surrealist 'revolution' best be understood as a re-enactment of the split in the International between Marx and Bakunin? Does this re-casting of revolution by the avant-garde signify a theatricalization of History? If so, how is it manifested?

Turning to Artaud to help address this question, we examine his desire to realize an 'integral' revolution through an intensification of participation in the 'theatre of cruelty' - the very title of which evokes barbarism. Expanding upon an examination of the libertarian-barbarian dialectic in Artaud's early manifestos and pronouncements we ask whether the intensification of participation demanded by the theatre of cruelty - a theatre of destruction and a destruction of theatre - conforms to a paradigm of the politicization of art ('integration') or the aestheticization of politics ('incarnation'). I conclude this discussion by questioning whether the theatre of cruelty prefigures the refeudalization of the public sphere as articulated by Habermas.

Finally I suggest that, immanent within the theatre of cruelty is not only the refeudalization of the public sphere. Artaud's theatre of cruelty enacts the theatricalization of History.

I

'Since Bakunin, Europe has lacked a radical concept of freedom', Benjamin wrote, 'The Surrealists have one'.[5] Like the Futurists and Dadaists, the Surrealists aimed to destroy the rationalism of bourgeois society and negate its cultural legitimation in the institution of art. To further concretize its aims, the Bureau of Surrealist Research was opened at 15 rue de Grenelle, Paris, on the afternoon of Friday, October 10, 1924. A journal dedicated to the new movement, *La Révolution Surréaliste*, followed shortly afterward.

On the front cover of the first issue of *La Révolution surréaliste* (1 December 1924) beneath a group photograph of the artists and poets who formed the ranks of the new movement, appeared the proclamation: 'It is necessary to draw up a New Declaration of the Rights of Man.'[6] [Fig. 6] Inside, the reader could find calls for the abolition of the family, the nation, the army, prisons and religion. The issue also included a homage to the anarchist, Germaine Berton, who, the year before, had assassinated the leader of the right-wing nationalist party *Action Française*. In the second issue of

the journal, Breton, in language which vividly recalls Sorelian anarcho-syndicalism, mounted an attack upon the bourgeois penal system, proclaiming, 'Open the prisons, disband the army':

> Social coercion has had its day. Nothing, neither recognition of an accomplished fault nor contribution to the national defence, can force man to give up freedom. The idea of prison and the barracks are commonplace today: these monstrosities no longer shock you. The infamy lies in the calmness of those who have got round the difficulty by various moral and physical abdications... Your freedom? There is no freedom for the enemies of freedom. We will not be the accomplices of gaolers.[7]

According to Peter Collier, the initial 'self-expressive' aesthetics of Surrealism co-existed with an 'urgent political anarchy' and the 'open-ended dream of an anarchist, pacifist, erotic liberation (inherited no doubt from Fourier, Proudhon and Sorel)'.[8] And Breton's slogan, 'there is no freedom for the enemies of freedom,' is, of course, vintage Bakunin. Taking their cue from Sorel, to the coercive *force* of the bourgeois state, the Surrealists opposed a revolutionary poetic *violence* in their 'tenet of total revolt, complete insubordination and sabotage according to rule'.[9] Accordingly, in the 'Second Manifesto of Surrealism' (1930) Breton proclaimed: 'The simplest Surrealist act consists of dashing down into the street, pistol in hand, and firing blindly, as fast as you can pull the trigger, into the crowd.'[10]

The association of Surrealism with spontaneous acts of violence situates the cultural rebellion of Surrealism in proximity to the political rebellion of anarchist and nihilist acts of terrorism; specifically, in the context of Paris,

this would conjure the spirits of the anarchists Ravachol (François Koenigstein) and Emile Henry, perpetrators of anti-bourgeois bombing campaigns in the capital during the 1890s.[11] In this respect, Breton takes up in the realm of the poetic, or the literary public sphere, the Italian anarchist Pisacane's demand for 'propaganda by the deed' in the political public sphere.

According to Mark Polizzotti in his biography of Breton, *Revolution of the Mind* (1995), the future originator and leader of Surrealism had been attracted to anarchism from an early age. In 1912, as a student in Paris, Breton had been exhilarated by accounts of the legendary attacks by Ravachol and Henry (both of whom, Polizzotti records, were still fresh in the 'collective memory') and contemporary newspaper reports of the anarchist bandits, the Bonnot gang. Breton later remarked that political anarchy was 'one of the seeds of Surrealism'.[12]

As a young student who was not overly familiar with the core texts of anarchism, Breton, Polizzotti suggests, responded more to the 'surface' than the 'substance' of anarchist revolt. What seduced Breton in the reports of anarchism, Polizzotti goes on to claim, was 'their patina of infernal grandeur - in other words, their *tone*'.[13] To demonstrate Breton's attraction to the aesthetics rather than the ethics of politics, Polizzotti recounts Breton's memories of two formative experiences of his infatuation with anarchism

which are worth repeating. This first involves one of the infant Breton's first visits to a cemetery. Breton writes:

> I will never forget the sense of release, exaltation, and pride inspired in me when, as a child, I went for one of the very first times into a cemetery and discovered - among so many depressing or ridiculous funeral monuments - a slab of granite engraved with the superb device, in red capitals: NEITHER GOD NOR MASTER.[14]

The second encounter centres around an event several years afterward, on March 16, 1913, when Breton attended an anti-military protest rally in the Pré Saint-Gervais, organised by socialists and anarchists. Later Breton described the impact of the sight of the red and black flags 'unfurled by thousands in the overcast sky': 'In the deepest recesses of my heart, I will always find the swaying of these countless tongues of flame, a few of which stopped to lick a superb carbonized flower.'[15] These examples of Breton's introduction to political anarchism are important not simply as evidence of an explicit encounter with revolutionary politics or as testaments to a lasting affinity with anarchism. They are important because they offer early examples of Breton's aestheticization of politics. As Polizzotti comments:

> Although the promised liberation of anarchism could not help appealing to someone of Breton's stifling background, what is curious about his accounts is that, beneath the traces of genuine emotion, the salient feature seems to be the gravestone's insolent contrast among all the others; or again, the visual thrill of red flags across the leaden sky. Breton in his recollections treats the rally less as a political event than as one large piece of performance art.[16]

Polizzotti concludes that the young Breton 'was already beginning to see that art could be as revolutionary as an anarchist's bomb'.[17] Breton's early seduction by the aesthetic elements of anarchism, it must be said, was a result of the exploitation of the spectacular by revolutionary politics, in terrorist bombing campaigns and large-scale orchestrated political rallies. Nonetheless, Breton's enduring attraction to the aestheticization of politics seems both to demonstrate the vitality of the Surrealists' 'destructive impulse' and to indicate a tension which would frustrate his determination to politicize art by joining, in the late 1920s, the anarchistic and libertarian impulse of Surrealism to the authoritarian discipline of the French Communist Party (PCF).

In 1929 Benjamin had asked 'where are the conditions for revolution?'. His response is crucial to understanding the tension of the relationship between Surrealism and revolutionary politics: 'In the changing of attitudes or of external circumstances? That is the cardinal question that determines the relation of politics to morality and cannot be glossed over.'[18] Five years earlier, Breton had sign-posted Surrealism as a movement dedicated to the emancipation of the individual in an integral revolt against cultural, psychological, political, and sexual repression. However, as the movement progressed, a disparity was beginning to emerge between, on the one hand, Surrealism's commitment to individual liberation and, on the other hand, its dedication to social revolution. Sooner or later Surrealism would have to

decide whether its priority was a political or a poetic revolution, a decision which would split the movement apart.[19]

Like the Futurists and Dadaists before them, the Surrealists, under the leadership of Breton, were opposed to all forms of bourgeois society and morality, which they also held accountable for the horror of the war. A decade after the first Surrealist manifesto, in 'What is Surrealism?' (1934), Breton would reflect:

> Above all, we were preoccupied with a campaign of systematic refusal, exasperated by the conditions under which, in such an age, we were forced to live. But our refusal did not stop there; it was insatiable and knew no bounds. Apart from the incredible stupidity of the arguments which attempted to legitimize our participation in such an enterprise as the war, whose issue left us completely indifferent, this refusal was directed... against the whole series of intellectual, moral and social obligations that continually and from all sides weigh down on man and crush him. Intellectually, it was vulgar rationalism and chop logic that more than anything else caused our horror and our destructive impulse.[20]

In contrast to the autonomous destruction of Dada, then, the destructive character of Surrealism has a clear end in mind: 'The end [of Surrealism],' wrote Breton in the 'Second Manifesto', 'must be the total elimination of the claims of a class to which we belong in spite of ourselves and which we cannot help abolish outside ourselves as long as we have not succeeded in abolishing them within ourselves.'[21] Social revolution, therefore, must emerge simultaneously with individual revolution. If the former must take place as an economic and political transformation, the latter must be cultural and

psychological. It is in this latter revolution or, rather, insurrection of the mind that we can trace the anarchism and nihilism of Surrealism and its politics of destruction.

The central principle of Surrealism declared: 'mankind's struggle for liberation in its simplest revolutionary form (which, however, is liberation in every respect), remains the only cause worth serving'.[22] The Surrealists would achieve this liberation by the unrestricted exploration of the human subconscious, (the *sur*-real). Following Freud, the Surrealists regarded the irrational, subconscious and subterranean world of dreams to be the portals to a realm of suppressed desire. In the mind of a Surrealist, to dream was a political act. Dreams were considered to manifest a liberated arena, free from the restrictions of bourgeois morality, where desire could be given 'free reign'. Breton's formulation of Surrealism's 'destructive impulse' is closely related to the 'destructive instinct' analysed by Sigmund Freud. In the *Economic Problem of Masochism* (1924) Freud wrote:

> The libido has the task of making the destroying instinct innocuous, and it fulfils the task by diverting that instinct to a great extent outwards... towards objects in the external world. The instinct is then called the destructive instinct, the instinct for mastery, or the will-to-power.[23]

According to Freud, this destructive instinct or impulse, created and regulated by the libido, was aligned to the 'death-drive' and was an uncontrollable urge in man. In 1933, in his *New Introductory Lectures*, Freud adds: 'It really

seems as though it is necessary for us to destroy some other thing or person in order not to destroy ourselves, in order to guard against the impulsion to self-destruction.'[24] Consequently, in order to avoid the self-destruction of Dada, Surrealism directed its destruction against the political and cultural institutions of bourgeois society, the scene of 'moral and physical abdications' of the bourgeoisie. In this early phase of Surrealist activity, dedicated as it was to the ethical and poetical renewal of society, spiritual revolution and artistic iconoclasm were paramount.

To Benjamin, the promotion of an unrestricted economy of desire in Surrealism, represented the latest and most radical stage in a tradition of anarchistic destruction:

> Between 1865 and 1875 a number of great anarchists, without knowing one another, worked on their infernal machines. And the astonishing thing is that independently of one another each set the clock at exactly the same hour, and forty years later in Western Europe the writings of Dostoyevsky, Rimbaud, and Lautréamont exploded at the same time.[25]

Surrealism, however, would go deeper into the realm of destruction than any previous poetic revolt: 'No one before these visionaries and augurs perceived how destitution... can be suddenly transformed into revolutionary nihilism.'[26] The nihilism of the Surrealists can be traced back to their early involvement with Dada and Tristan Tzara. In 1920 Louis Aragon, for example, a key member of the Surrealists and instrumental in the movement's drift towards communism, had written:

> No more painters, no more writers, no more musicians, no more sculptors, no more religions, no more republicans, no more royalists, no more imperialists, no more anarchists, no more socialists, no more Bolsheviks, no more aristocrats, no more armaments, no more police, no more countries, enough of all these imbecilities, no more, no more, no more, no more, no more.[27]

Pessimism and nihilism, then, permeated the minds of the early Surrealists and coloured their attitude toward political engagement. As Maurice Nadeau points out, the Surrealist and Marxist Pierre Naville (whose father bankrolled the Bureau of Surrealist Research) had considered that a common denominator between revolutionary activity in Surrealism and Marxism was 'a notion quite natural after all: pessimism'.[28] In its irrational and trans-historical implications, the 'natural' pessimism and the destructive 'impulse' of Surrealism, a movement rooted in the illumination of the 'marvellous', seem incompatible with the movement's drift towards the scientific and historical 'materialism' of Marxism and communism. As a result, Surrealism attempted to overcome the disparity between ideology and impulse, between politics and desire, between materialism and the marvellous in a revolutionary synthesis of Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche and Freud.

II

In the search for an answer to the question posed by Benjamin in 1929, Breton and Aragon moved towards communism, and the unification of the cultural and the revolutionary avant-gardes. In 1934 Breton would write:

> The *liberation of the mind*, the express aim of Surrealism, demands as a primary condition, in the opinion of the Surrealists, the *liberation of man*, which implies that we must struggle against our fetters with all the energy of despair; that today more than ever the Surrealists rely entirely, for the bringing about of human liberation, on the proletarian revolution.[29]

In the face of such concrete political realities as the French Governmental Colonialist Regime, epitomized in the Rif War in Morocco (1924-5), Breton was unable to sustain the revolutionary credentials of an abstract theoretical revolution of the spirit. The recognition of the political failure of Dada would eventually lead many in the group towards the revolutionary programme of the Communist Party. Different measures, it seemed, were demanded of an avant-garde. At this time, Breton rejected the utopian principle of absolute individual autonomy for a pragmatic compromise. After co-operating with communist militants centred around the *Clarté* group, under the directorship of Jean Bernier, Breton and several members of the Surrealists joined the PCF in 1927.[30] In a humiliating gesture, the Surrealists were forced, publicly, to renounce their utopianism (a tendency within socialism which Lenin regarded as an 'infantile disorder'), and accept Bernier's condemnation,

published in *L'Humanité*, that there was 'no Surrealists theory of revolution'.[31] In accordance with the modified position of Surrealism vis-à-vis the proletarian revolution, the title of the Surrealists' journal was also modified; changing from *La Révolution surréaliste* to *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution.* Joining the PCF, then, marked the subordination of the revolution in art to the revolution in society. In this move, Breton was supported by Aragon, René Crével and Raymond Queneau but was publicly resisted by Antonin Artaud and Philippe Soupault who were immediately ostracized and then expelled from the movement.

The development of Surrealism, away from an anarchistic engagement with radical autonomy towards more solidly defined revolutionary credentials, would test the foundations of the movement and the direction of its destructive impulse. From the perspective of anarchism and nihilism, upon which Surrealism had been founded, the principle of 'freedom', individual and associative, psychic and sexual, runs counter both to the bourgeois subordination of the individual to concepts such as 'duty,' 'nation' and 'religion,' and to the communist subordination of the individual to 'party,' 'state' and, above all, 'social revolution'. Nevertheless, as Robert Short has observed, even after Breton and Aragon and others had joined the PCF, their tracts remained destructive rather than constructive. 'Surrealist pamphleteering was predominantly destructive', writes Short, 'because Surrealist politics remained what they had been from the beginning: the politics of protest.'[32]

The nihilistic spirit which pervades Surrealism persists, then, even as the movement becomes more closely affiliated with communism. For example, 'Experimental Researches On the Irrational Embellishments of a City,' Breton's responses to a series of questions regarding the future of Parisian landmarks, which appeared in the sixth issue of *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution*, evidences the tenacity of the Surrealist's 'destructive impulse':

> *Should one preserve, move, modify, change or suppress:*
>
> *The Arc de Triomphe?*
> Blow it up after burying it in a mountain of manure.
>
> *The Obelisk?*
> Remove it to the entrance of the Abattoir where it will be held by a woman's immense gloved hand.
>
> *The Saint-Jacques Tower?*
> Conserve it as it is, but demolish the surrounding quarter and, for a hundred years, forbid anyone to approach within one kilometre, under penalty of death.
>
> *The Statue of Gambetta?*
> Destroy it.
>
> *The Vendôme Column?*
> Replace it by a factory chimney being climbed by a nude woman.
>
> *The Opéra?*
> Transform it into a fountain of perfumes. Reconstruct the staircase from the bones of prehistoric animals.
>
> *The Palace of Justice?*
> Raze it. Let the site be covered by a magnificent graffiti to be seen from an airplane.
>
> *Notre-Dame?*
> Replace the towers by an enormous glass cruet, one of the bottles filled with blood and the other with sperm. The building will become a sexual school for virgins.

> *The Statue of Alfred de Musset?*
> The woman will put her hand in his mouth; people will be invited to strike him in the abdomen and his eyes will light up.
>
> *The Statue of Henry IV?*
> Paint the horse black. Reconstruct Henry IV in powder-puffs.[33]

The iconoclasm of this imagined destruction and desecration of the bronze, marble and stone testaments to the capital's past glories - similar to the *antipassatismo* of Marinetti's lambaste against Venice - in which Breton's proposed vandalism of historical sites of religious, cultural, state or military power opposes bourgeois monumentality with the ephemeral, gestural and transgressive power of the liberated mind, signal that the destructive impulse of Breton's early Surrealism and its anarchic insubordination remained strong even throughout this period of constructive 'serious' revolutionary effort demanded by the PCF.

In this respect, Breton's attempt to blend aspects of anarchism and communism in the politics of Surrealism, brings him closer to anarchists like Peter Kropotkin, than it does to communists like Lenin. In a pamphlet titled *Anarchist Communism* (1887), Kropotkin outlines the conditions by which he aligns anarchism and communism:

> We are Communists. But our Communism is not that of... the authoritarian school: it is Anarchist Communism, Communism without government, free Communism. It is a synthesis of the two chief aims prosecuted by humanity since the dawn of its history - economical freedom and political freedom.[34]

To Kropotkin's 'economic' and 'political' freedom Breton would add 'artistic' freedom. It was his commitment to artistic freedom, epitomised in the slogan, 'ART WILL NEVER TAKE ORDERS, WHATEVER HAPPENS'[35], which led Breton into conflict with orthodox communism and finally to break relations with the PCF in the late 1930s.[36]

Despite this brief rehearsal of his libertarianism, Breton nonetheless remained an authoritarian figure in Surrealism and was the movement's main spokesman and ideologue. It was this authoritarian and doctrinaire character of Breton which led to Surrealism's association, no matter how tentative, with the PCF. The resulting split in the movement and its polarized factions are best represented, perhaps, by, on the one hand, André Breton, the self styled 'Pope of Surrealism,' and, on the other, by Antonin Artaud, its contradictory anti-christ.

In contrast to Breton's attempt to politicize art by placing Surrealism at the service of the communist revolution, Antonin Artaud - a figure similar to Breton in many other ways - diametrically opposed the attempt to fuse Surrealism and communism. Nevertheless, we cannot simply contrast Breton's desire to politicize art with an attempt, on Artaud's behalf, to aestheticize politics. Firstly, we have seen how Breton's relationship with aesthetics and politics is dialectical in itself. Secondly, Artaud's radical pronouncements on the 'theatre of cruelty' and its demand for the re-integration of art and everyday life, as well as his repeated provocative comments on the necessity

of spontaneous acts of political violence, imply that any suggestion that Artaud is merely engaged in an unproblematic aestheticization of politics would be unfounded.

As stated earlier, Artaud's plan for a 'theatre of cruelty' does not produce art but 'anti-art':

> To produce art, to produce aestheticism, is to aim at amusement, at furtive effect, external transitory effect, but to exteriorize serious feelings, to identify the fundamental attitudes of the mind, to wish to give the audience the impression that they are *running the risk* of something... and to make them responsive to a new concept of *Danger*, I believe that that is not to produce art.[37]

In this respect, we see a similar politicization of Symbolism's quest for an autonomous theatre that we encountered in Marinetti and Ball. Nonetheless, the self-dramatization of artistic revolt, and the theatricalization of discourse in Artaud's œuvre, mark an intensification of the discourse of Aestheticism and techniques of Symbolist drama, and tend, in the last analysis, toward an aestheticization of politics. What follows is an examination of the destructive character of Artaud's brand of Surrealism, to determine the degree to which we can attribute the aestheticization of politics or the politicization of art to the opposing concepts of 'revolution' advance by Breton and Artaud.

As Short has stated, the primary task of the revolutionary artist was to 'preserve his freedom as an artist.' He continued: 'If not he was likely to be lost not only as an artist but as a revolutionary. By the very fact that art

strove to be totally human it was bound to be subversive in a society that was intrinsically inhuman.'[38] Both Artaud and Breton shared this view of the revolutionary artist. They differed only in the means by which they sought to actualize freedom. Artaud's dedication to individual autonomy, his refusal to be ruled, a primary trait of the Dadaists and defining characteristic of anarchism and nihilism, led him to a concept of revolution incompatible with the drift towards doctrinaire Marxism. Under the conditions of a society designed to inhibit and repress the individual on all fronts (social, religious, sexual, political, spiritual), the revolutionary role for artists, Artaud maintained, was to assert their autonomy and preserve their individual freedom at all costs. The same dedication to extreme individualism which had originally led Artaud to join the Surrealists in 1925, led to his resignation three years later. Polizzotti characterizes the split in the following manner:

> Although both men believed in revolt, their concept of it greatly differed. For Breton, any revolution to be waged must first pass through the intellect; despite his opposition to Western logic, his passion was still the passion of reason. For Artaud, on the other hand, revolt was visceral, paroxysmal, and wholly bound up with his own soul; Surrealist activity could be revolutionary only 'in the chaos of the mind'.[39]

In other words, the origin of the split between Breton and Artaud may be said to lie in the difference between their ideas of 'revolution'. In political terms, the fundamental tension which exists in Surrealism, epitomised in the figures of Breton and Artaud, and which led to a split in the movement in

the 1920s then, is of a similar order to the tension between the notions of revolution in Marxism and Anarchism. This tension, which arises from the dispute between authoritarian and libertarian interpretations of revolutionary organisation and action, has been simplified into the quarrel between Marx and Bakunin in the First International in the 1870s. The dispute between these two key figures led to the rift which appeared in the International Workingmen's Association at the London Conference in 1971 and to the eventual split in the International at the Hague Congress the following year.

As the leader of the communist London General Council, Marx advocated an authoritarian revolutionary organization, in which independent revolutionary action must be subordinated to the co-ordinating principles developed from a centralized Party. In contrast, Bakunin, as a leading representative of the Jura Federation, defended decentralized revolutionary movements organized along the federalist principles of the free association of autonomous groups engaged in independent revolutionary action. In short, Marx advocated an orchestrated revolution along the lines of a 'top-down' model of revolution, whereas Bakunin argued for the legitimacy of a 'bottom-up' model of revolt, which he understood as the proliferation of spontaneous insurrections. For Bakunin at least, the spontaneous anarchy of the crowd represented the true spirit of insurrection:

> I detest communism because it is the negation of liberty and I cannot conceive anything human without liberty. I am not a communist because communism concentrates all the powers of society and absorbs them into the State, because it leads inevitably to the centralization of property in the hands of the State, while I want to see the State abolished. I want the complete elimination of the authoritarian principle of State tutelage which has always subjected, oppressed, exploited, and depraved men while claiming to moralize and civilize them. I want society, and collective or social property, to be organised from the bottom up through free association and not from the top down by authority of any kind... In that sense I am a collectivist and not at all a communist.[40]

> The anarchist social revolution... arises spontaneously in the hearts of the people, destroying all that hinders the generous upsurge of the life of the people in order thereafter to create new forms of free social life which will arise from the very depths of the soul of the people.[41]

Half a century later the split in the International caused by two incompatible ideas of revolution, is replayed with a new cast. As with the 'productions' of Futurism and Dada, a degree of self-dramatization is ingrained in the avant-garde's demand for self-determination. In this particular production, Breton performs the role of Marx, whilst Artaud plays the parts, in turn, of Bakunin and Max Stirner.

III

At Breton's invitation, the third issue of *La Révolution surréaliste* was edited and chiefly written by Artaud, who had become director of the Bureau of Surrealist Research on 26 January 1925.[42] Artaud marked his directorship of

the Bureau with 'The Declaration of 27 January 1925', written on behalf of the group and signed by all twenty-six members.[43] The Declaration proclaimed:

> ... 2) *Surrealism* is not a new means of expression, or an easier one, nor even a metaphysic of poetry. It is a means of total liberation of the mind *and of all that resembles it.* 3) We are determined to make a Revolution. 4) We have joined the word *Surrealism* to the word *revolution* solely to show the disinterested, detached, and even entirely desperate character of this revolution. 5) We make no claim to change the *mores* of mankind, but we intend to show the fragility of thought, and on what shifting foundations, what caverns we have built our trembling houses... 8) We are specialists in Revolt... 9) ... Surrealism is not a poetic form. It is a cry of the mind turning back on itself, and it is determined to break apart its fetters, even if it must be by material hammers![44]

Entitled '1925: Fin de l'ère chrétienne', the third issue of *La Révolution surréaliste* contained six manifestos, mainly in the guise of open letters, written by Artaud: 'Dinner is Served', 'Letter to the Chancellors of the European Universities', 'Letter to the Buddhist Schools', 'Address to the Pope', 'Address to the Dalai-Lama,' and 'Letter to the Medical Directors of Lunatic Asylums'. In these letters and manifestos Artaud denounced Western rationalism ('syntactic stratagems and formula-juggling'), disdained and castigated organized religion ('masturbating priests'), and condemned the role of psychiatry in the penal system ('we vigorously protest against the right attributed to certain men... to sanction their investigations into the domain of the mind with sentences of life imprisonment').[45] In order to liberate the mind from a situation where it is 'surrounded by roughneck popes, scribblers,

critics and dogs', Artaud praised Eastern mysticism and appealed to the Dalai Lama to 'grace us with your wisdoms in a language our contaminated European minds can understand'.[46] In the 'Letter to the Buddhist Schools' he wrote: 'Logical Europe endlessly crushes the mind between the jaws of two extremes, opening and closing the mind. But now this strangulation is at its peak.... Like you we reject progress. Come tear down our houses.'[47] As would his later use of the plague and the theatre of cruelty, Artaud's appeal to the Orient as a means of destroying bourgeois society testifies to the orientalism implicit in the libertarian-barbarian dialectic of the avant-garde.

In the fragile politics of the interwar years it should be remembered that any appeal to the Orient arrogated anti-nationalism, pro-Germanism, and Bolshevism. Drawing upon the writings of Edward Said and Perry Anderson, Peter Wollen comments on the Western tradition of constructing the Orient as a 'site of scientific and political fantasy, displaced from the body politic of the West,' and potential 'field of free play for shamelessly paranoid constructions, dreamlike elaborations of a succession of Western traumas.'[48] He continues 'Surrealism was the principal successor to Orientalism as the vehicle for a rejection of instrumental reason from within the avant-garde.'[49] Robert Desnos, for example, had called upon the forces of Oriental barbarism to aid him in revolt against the oppressive West. Louis Aragon had also 'summoned up the Orient' in his 'Fragments of a Lecture' given at Madrid at the Residencia des Estudiantes, (April, 1925):

> Western world, you are condemned to death. We are Europe's defeatists... Let the Orient, your terror, answer our voice at last! We shall awaken everywhere the seeds of confusion and discomfort. We are the mind's agitators. All barricades are valid, all shackles to your happiness demand. Jews, leave your ghettos! Starve the people, so that they will at last know the taste of bread of wrath! Rise, thousand-armed India, great legendary Brahma! It is your turn, Egypt! And let the drug merchants fling themselves upon our terrified nations! Let distant America's white buildings crumble among her ridiculous prohibitions. Rise, O world![50]

In June the same year, following the scandalous provocation at a banquet to celebrate the ageing Symbolist poet, Saint-Pol-Roux, once championed by the Surrealists, during which shouts of 'Long live Germany! Bravo China! Up the Riffs!' were heard, Michel Leiris incited a streetfight by shouting out of a window, 'Down with France'.[51]

In a pamphlet entitled 'The Revolution and The Intellectuals: What Can Surrealists do?' published the following year, Naville, who had become editor of *Clarté*, chastised his fellow Surrealists over their 'abusive use of the Orient myth'. From a Marxist perspective, argued Naville, there was no difference between the material conditions of the East and those of the West:

> Wages are a material necessity by which three quarters of the world's population are bound, independent of the philosophical or moral preoccupations of the so-called Orientals or Westerners. Under the lash of capital both are exploited.[52]

The Surrealists' embrace of Orientalism, in other words, was symptomatic of their refusal to engage with the material conditions of real political struggles.

Surrealism, therefore, must chose between commitment to an anarchic and individualist 'liberation of the mind' and commitment to collective revolutionary struggle against the power of capital in 'the world of facts'. In response to Naville's criticisms, Breton published *Legitimate Defence* in September 1926. Breton writes: 'Of itself [the appeal to the Orient] constitutes an argument which is quite as good as any other, and today's reactionaries know this very well, never missing an opportunity to make an issue out of the Orient.'[53] Referencing the proliferation of bourgeois nationalist attacks on the idea of the East as linked to 'Germanism' and barbarism, Breton argues: 'Why, in these conditions, should we not continue to claim our inspiration from the Orient, even from the "pseudo-Orient" to which Surrealism grants no more than a moment of homage, as they eye hovers over the pearl?'[54] At this time in French culture, not even a decade after the Soviet revolution, Polizzotti reminds us that there was 'a widespread equation of "Orientalism" and "Bolshevism",' lending Orientalism a subversive force upon which Surrealism could draw.[55] As Wollen comments:

> For Breton, the fact that reactionaries consistently warned against the threat to the stability of their own Western culture, simply meant that those who themselves wished to destabilize the dominant culture could and should make use of the myth of the Orient as they might any other potentially subversive force.[56]

Thus orientalism manifests an emancipation from the strictures of bourgeois society and a consummate threat to its values. In other words, orientalism revealed a libertarian-barbarian dialectic operative in the Western unconscious which was unleashed in the provocations of Surrealism. Breton, for example, considered the bourgeois obsession with denouncing the Orient, as a revelation of a 'secret longing': 'the [bourgeois] battle cry of "Orient", ... must correspond to some special anxiety of this period, to its most secret longing, to an unconscious foreboding; it cannot occur with such insistence for no reason'.[57]

Despite its condemnation of the editorship of the communist daily newspaper, *L'Humanité* ('puerile, declamatory, uselessly cretinizing, an unreadable paper, entirely unworthy of the role of proletarian education it claimed to assume'[58]), the text of *Legitimate Defence* contains placatory gestures towards the Communist Party: 'Long live the social Revolution, and it alone!'[59] Nonetheless, although aligning the movement with the political objectives of the Communist Party, Breton steadfastly refuses to subordinate Surrealism's commitment to aesthetic freedom to any party ideology:

> I say that the revolutionary flame burns where it lists, and that it is not up to a small band of men, *in the period of transition we are living through*, to decree that it can burn only here or there... In the realm of facts, on our part no ambiguity is possible: there is not one of us who does not desire the shift in power from the hands of the bourgeoisie to those of the proletariat. Meanwhile, it is no less necessary, as we see it, for the experiments of the

> inner life to continue and this, of course, without an external check, even a Marxist one.[60]

At this point in its political development, then, Surrealism's politics of destruction, even as it approaches communism, remains firmly affiliated to anarchism (with a libertarian-barbarian character). Artaud's anarchist and libertarian values, for example, are most explicit in his condemnatory 'Letter to the Medical Directors of Lunatic Asylums':

> We all know - no, it is not widely enough known - that asylums, far from being *asylums*, are fearful jails, where the inmates provide a source of free and useful manpower and where brutality is the rule, all of which you tolerate. A mental asylum, under cover of science and justice, is comparable to a barracks, a prison or a slave colony...
> All individual acts are anti-social. Madmen, above all, are individual victims of social dictatorship. In the name of individuality which specifically belongs to man, we demand liberation of these people convicted of sensibility. For we tell you no laws are powerful enough to lock up all men who think and act...
> Try and remember *that* tomorrow morning during your rounds, when, without knowing their language, you attempt to converse with these people over whom, you must admit, you have only one advantage, namely force.[61]

In a similar manner to Breton, the terms of Artaud's negation of the repressive organs of the bourgeois state echo Sorel's distinction between oppressive *force* and revolutionary *violence*. In order to effect a change in society, Artaud (as Bakunin, Pisacane, and Sorel before him) did not detract from the necessity of political violence: 'I believe... that our present social state is iniquitous and should be destroyed. If this is a fact for the theatre to be preoccupied with, it is even more a matter for machine guns.'[62] In

desiring to effect a radical and violent change in society, therefore, Artaud affects the language of anarchist insurrection. Also published in this issue was Artaud's, 'The Activity of the Surrealist Research Bureau'. This declaration places the Surrealist revolution firmly in the grip of Nietzschean nihilism. Artaud wrote: 'The fact of a Surrealist revolution in things is applicable to all states of mind, to all types of human activity.... This revolution aspires to a general devaluation of values.'[63]

According to Polizzotti, although Breton had invited Artaud to 'keep watch' of the Bureau 'even if the Surrealist movement should suffer for it,' warning him that under no circumstances was the deputy to 'subordinate the immediate interests of the mind to political or other necessities', he nonetheless found the irascible tone of Artaud's rhetoric worrying and 'distrusted the fever pitch that Artaud was definitely trying to reach.'[64] Breton later revealed that he 'felt it entailed an expenditure of energy that we would not subsequently be able to offset'.[65] In the following issue of the journal, Breton re-imposed his authority with an editorial which announced: 'Why I'm Taking Charge of *La Révolution surréaliste.*'[66] Breton's desire to discipline Surrealism and to impose his authority on the movement would mark its political development to the extent that Hans Magnus Enzensberger would later comment that 'within a few years the surrealist guard spins itself into a cocoon of regulations.'[67]

The moves the following year by Breton and Aragon, and others, towards the PCF, then, were fundamentally incompatible with Artaud's vision of Surrealism and the kind of revolution he sought to realize and inspire. In his 1927 article, 'In Total Darkness, or The Surrealist Bluff' (which he wrote in response to *Au Grand Jour* - a tract signed by Aragon, Breton, Eluard, Péret and Pierre Unik, and which had announced the signatories' adherence to the PCF and the excommunication of Artaud and Philippe Soupault from Surrealism) Artaud insists: 'The whole root, all the exacerbations of our quarrel, turn on the word "Revolution".'[68] In essence, Artaud believed that placing art at the service of the Communist revolution subordinated aesthetic autonomy to ideology. In Artaud's view, Surrealism could not be employed in the service of the revolution without perverting its true revolutionary function. As he stated in relation to the subordination of the theatre to political ends: 'In the theatre only what is theatrical interests me, to use the theatre to launch any revolutionary idea (except in the realm of the spirit) appears to me the most base and repulsive opportunism.'[69]

Artaud's defence of an autonomous theatre is consonant with his desire for individual autonomy in the face of revolutionary ideologies and is mirrored in his rejection of political organizations, which he believed would subordinate the freedom of the individual to the discipline of a party: 'There is no discipline to which I feel forced to submit, however rigorous the reasoning that would persuade me to embrace it.'[70] He states:

> It is for refusing to commit myself beyond myself, for demanding silence around me, and for being faithful in thought and action to what I felt to be my deep and incurable powerlessness, that these gentlemen judged my presence among them to be inconvenient. But what they found most reprehensible and blasphemous was that I refused to assign to anyone but myself the responsibility for determining my limitations, that I insisted on being free and the master of my own actions... For each man to refuse to consider anything beyond his own deepest sensibility, beyond his inmost self, this for me is the point of view of the complete Revolution. No revolution is good unless it benefits me and people like me.[71]

For Artaud the revolution could only take place as an integral revolution. Any abandonment of this cause in order to facilitate a political or ideological struggle, even on behalf of the proletariat, was a betrayal of the fundamental task of Surrealism.[72] Also Artaud rejected point blank the discipline of the militant communist.[73] Paradoxically, an assertion of individual autonomy from the Surrealist movement is, in effect, a Surrealist act. The absolute egoism of Artaud's demand to be 'master of my own actions' in fact follows Breton who, whilst maintaining that Surrealism was above all a moral endeavour which led directly to revolutionary Marxism, still held to the sacred tenet of Surrealism: the right to individual autonomy, to be 'master of ourselves'.[74] Further, Artaud resisted the move towards the PCF not only out of a spirit of anarchism but due to total pessimism and extreme political nihilism witnessed in his sense of the 'profound futility of action':

> I have too much contempt for life to think that any sort of change that might develop in the realm of appearances could in any way

> change my detestable condition. What divides me from the Surrealists is that they love life as much as I despise it... This is the point of view of total pessimism. But a certain form of pessimism carries with it its own kind of lucidity. The lucidity of despair, the lucidity of senses that are exacerbated and as if on the edge of the abyss. And alongside the horrible relativity of any human action, this unconscious spontaneity which drives one, in spite of everything, to action.[75]

In his rejection of Marxism, then, Artaud promotes an extreme individualism and nihilism reminiscent of Stirner who, in *The Ego and His Own,* outlines the position of absolute individual sovereignty and asserts that the satisfaction of the ego as the only justifiable moral principle. The rejection of Christianity in the title of issue three of *La Révolution surrealiste*, follows Stirner's iconoclasm: 'God, conscience, duties, and laws are all errors which have been stuffed into our minds and hearts.'[76] The following description of Stirner as a nihilistic egoist by Peter Marshall could equally have been written for Artaud:

> Max Stirner stands for the most extreme form of individualist anarchism. He denies not only the existence of benevolence but also all abstract entities such as the State, Society, Humanity and God. He rebels against the whole rational tradition of Western philosophy, and in place of philosophical abstraction, he proposes the urgings of immediate personal experience. His work stands as a frontal assault on the fundamental principles of the Enlightenment, with its unbounded confidence in the ultimate triumph of Reason, Progress and Order.[77]

Yet, in his anarchism and nihilism Artaud is caught in the aporia of a double negation; the negation of the status quo and the negation of the faith

in the ability of political action to bring about its demise. Consequently Artaud holds no external standard of action (political, sociological, ideological) outside the immediate realm of his inner convulsive revolution, which fundamentally takes the form of a theatricalized destruction.

IV

Destruction runs throughout Artaud's œuvre, from manifestos and letters, to theoretical writings and theatrical productions, from poems and recordings to notebooks and drawings. The destructive character of Artaud's rebellion is clear from the title for his first theatrical venture, the Alfred Jarry Theatre. Destruction organizes the theatricalized narrative of *Heliogabalus or the Anarchist Crowned*, his biography of the young Roman Emperor, and is embodied in his production of *The Cenci*, where Artaud himself plays the malevolent Count Cenci. Above all, destruction underscores the very concept of the theatre of cruelty.

As its name suggested, productions of the Alfred Jarry Theatre, founded in 1926 and formed by Artaud with the playwright Roger Vitrac (expelled from Surrealism the same year) and the publisher Robert Aron, were to be performed in the iconoclastic spirit of its namesake. Along with Jarry's eccentric lifestyle, the production of *Ubu roi*, which had scandalized Paris

thirty years earlier, had influenced both Marinetti's Variety Theatre and the Dadaists' provocation-demonstrations and was now set to inspire Artaud's theatre of destruction. (Artaud had even planned to stage a production of *Ubu* 'adapted to present-day circumstances', but this never materialised).[78] With no established company, funding or venue, Artaud nonetheless set out to demolish the ruins of bourgeois 'official theatre'. In a letter addressed to the Director of the Comédie-Française, dated 21 February 1925, Artaud lambasted those who performed on the conventional stage, such as Théâtre de l'Odéon or the Comédie-Française, as traitors to the true spirit of theatre: 'You are twats. Your very existence is an insult. No base need, no manifestation, no mass rising of national idiocy have you failed to support.'[79] Put simply, Artaud despised the official theatre of his day, condemning it as well and truly dead: 'We no longer believe there is anything in the world that can be called theatre.'[80]

A statement made by Artaud in 1929 on the principles of the new theatre reads:

> The Alfred Jarry Theatre was founded as a reaction against theatre, as well as to restore to theatre all the freedom that music, poetry or painting have and from which it has been strangely cut off up to now. What we want to do is to make a break with theatre regarded as a separate entity and bring back the old idea which after all was never put into effect, that of *integral theatre*.[81]

Artaud's new 'integral theatre' was an attempt to overcome theatre 'regarded as a separate entity' and to re-integrate art and life in a revolutionary praxis. In all his writings and manifestos at this time Artaud is violently opposed to the dominant 'false theatre' of representation and illusion and the performance of plays in the classical tradition where tragedy had become as moribund as farce: 'We aim beyond tragedy, the cornerstone of your poisonous old shed, and your Molière is a twat.'[82] In contrast, Artaud's theatre would be a theatre of embodiment founded, not upon the principle of representation, but upon the provocative reality of dreams and myth, a 'total theatre' dedicated to the '*principle of actuality*'.[83] Already we can see a contradiction emerging in Artaud's demand that theatre be both politically autonomous *and* integral to society. The extent to which we might regard Artaud's opposing demands as commensurate with the aestheticization of politics, on the one hand, and the politicization of art, on the other, can only be ascertained by examining the principles which informed Artaud's demand for the destruction of theatre.

In order to realize this radical new vision of the theatre, the contemporary theatre as it stood could not simply be reformed, it had to be destroyed in its entirety:

> The Alfred Jarry Theatre... intends to contribute to the downfall of theatre as it exists in France today by specifically theatrical means, dragging all the literary and artistic ideas down with it in this destruction, along with the psychological conventions, all the plastic artificiality, etc., on which this theatre was built, by

> reconciling the idea of theatre, at least provisionally, with whatever is most feverish in life today.[84]

Fundamental to Artaud's rejection of text-based, character-led, naturalistic drama, was a rejection of Western theatre's dependence upon illusion and representation. He writes:

> Present-day theatre represents life, seeks by way of more or less realistic setting to give back to us the ordinary reality of life, or else it cultivates illusion - and then it's worst of all. Nothing is less capable of deluding us than the illusion of the fake prop, of cardboard and painted cloths which the modern stage offers us.[85]

In contrast, the Alfred Jarry Theatre would be a theatre which rejected psychological exposition of character and illusionistic modes of representation:

> We are not creating a theatre so as to present plays but to succeed in uncovering the mind's obscure, hidden and unrevealed aspects, by a sort of real physical projection. We are not aiming to create an illusion of things which do not exist, as was done heretofore, and has been done up to now in the theatre. On the contrary, we aim to make a certain number of scenes - indestructible, irrefutable, images appealing directly to the mind - appear on the stage. The very objects, props and scenery on stage must be understood in an immediate sense, without being transposed. They must not be taken for what they represent, but for what they really are... We do not think life itself can be represented on stage, or that one should risk this.[86]

One of the principle objections Artaud raised with the contemporary theatre was its reliance upon the text. In '*Mise en scène* and Metaphysics' Artaud explains the necessity of rejecting the text-based psychological theatre and its principal form of dialogue. To Artaud, text 'does not belong specifically to

the stage, it belongs to books... I say that the stage is a physical and concrete place which demands to be filled and which must be made to speak its own concrete language'.[87] In contrast to text-based theatre, then, Artaud develops 'the theory of theatre in space which acts simultaneously through gesture, movement and sound,' where the principal agent would be the actor.[88] For Artaud, the true language of theatre consisted of 'everything that can be manifested and expressed materially on a stage and that is addressed first of all to the senses instead of being addressed primarily to the mind as in the language of words'.[89] As a consequence the organizers of the Alfred Jarry Theatre held 'no respect either for authors or texts'[90] and instead attempted to develop what Artaud would later describe as a 'single, integrated theatrical language... [where]... gesture is a language in its own right... [and]... light will constantly be associated with sound in order to produce a total effect'.[91] In other words, Artaud wished neither to *represent* nor to *reproduce* reality in the theatre but to *present* and *produce* a direct manifestation of the theatre *as* reality:

> My aim is to unleash a certain theatrical reality which belongs to the stage, in the physical and organic domain of the stage, exclusively. This reality must be unleashed through the performance, and thus the *mise en scène*, taking this word in its broadest sense, regarding it as the language of everything which can be 'put-on-the-stage', and not as the secondary reality of a text, the more or less active and objective means of expanding a text.[92]

The name Artaud would eventually give to his integral and autonomous theatre - a theatre which paradoxically would achieve integration *through* autonomy - was the 'theatre of cruelty'. But the term cruelty, Artaud infers, is not to be associated with the simple performance of physical violence alone. In words which recall Bakunin's revolutionary axiom he writes in a letter to Jean Paulhan, dated 29 August 1932:

> It is a fact of life... that no performance is ever realized without an element of cruelty. All one needs to know is to what use the performance itself puts this cruelty, and that we are talking about a kind of cosmic cruelty which is closely related to destruction, without which nothing can be created.[93]

The theatre of cruelty, then, is a theatre of creative destruction: 'a theatre which [aimed] at demolishing everything in order to get down to the essence'.[94] Artaud's repudiation of representation and his refusal to accept the authority of the author/text parallels the tradition of religious iconoclasm and the rejection of all authority founded upon God, as expounded in nihilism and Nietzsche.

Following this parallel, Jacques Derrida accords that the theatre of cruelty '*produces* a nontheological space'.[95] He explains: 'The stage is theological for as long as it is dominated by speech, by a will to speech, by the layout of a primary logos which does not belong to the theatrical site and governs it from a distance.'[96] In the hierarchical composition of the theological (naturalistic/psychological) theatre, the stage was subjugated to the

'dictatorship of the text'. In contrast, the nontheological stage of the theatre of cruelty is an autonomous theatre, liberated from representation, and which embraces the spontaneous creation and interplay of gesture, music, light and sound. In its rejection of the dominance of the logocentric authorial voice/text, this non-theological stage is essentially a subversive space, in that it embodies the destruction of a theatrical tradition grounded in Western metaphysics. Thus, Derrida asserts: 'The theatre of cruelty expulses God from the stage.'[97] With the overthrow of God from the stage (the worship of author/text), Artaud effectively undermines the foundations of Western theatre.

Artaud's iconoclasm develops from a radical theatrical atheism (which has to be distinguished from any consideration of Artaud's theatrical 'gnosticism'[98]) into the provocation of savage laughter and wholesale derision. Fully aware of the destructive potential of laughter and derision, Artaud's few productions at the Alfred Jarry Theatre were characterized by farce, satire and the derision of theatrical codes and conventions, not only of Naturalism, but of the theatrical experiments and techniques associated with the Symbolist avant-garde.[99] Like Marinetti and Ball, Artaud confronts the aestheticism of Symbolist drama. If the Symbolists wished to 'unsettle the senses' (Rimbaud), Artaud desired to *assault* them. As Artaud's quest for an chaotic unity of theatrical languages would suggest, he is primarily working in the Symbolist tradition of synaesthesia and the theory of correspondences, theories which

imply that all aspects of the theatre are interchangeable or interconnected in a non-hierarchical relationship.

Paul Fort's symbolist production of Roinard's *Song of Songs* (Théâtre d'Art, 11 December 1891), for example, had sought to integrate the spectators into the performance by spraying perfume into the auditorium.[100] This synaesthetic act was subverted by Artaud during the production of Roger Vitrac's farce, *Victor ou les enfants au pouvoir* (*Victor or Power to the Children,* 1928-9), 24 and 29 December 1929. During this production - the final performances by the Alfred Jarry Theatre - each fart of the female lead character, Ida Mortemart, was marked by a stink bomb thrown across the footlights into the auditorium. This play was performed, according to Artaud, as the embodiment of a violent negation of bourgeois cultural values. As Artaud points out, the subtitle of *Victor* is a demand to overthrow the tyranny of the adult world (viewed as old, hypocritical, militaristic, nationalistic, staid and bourgeois) in order to establish the dictatorship of children (which embodied youth, vigour and rebelliousness).

Yet even this hope in the future of youth is a chimera. In its theatricalization of nihilism, *Victor* addresses the core concerns of political and philosophical nihilism. If we overthrow or demolish all established cultural values, what remains for anyone to believe in? As an act of negation it is total and complete.[101] As Claude Schumacher writes:

> In *Power to the Children*, the pot has reached boiling point. The title alone indicates a basic lack of respect for established values. This play expresses the disintegration of modern thought in scathing and at the same time rigid actions, as well as its replacement by... by what? In any case, roughly speaking, here is the problem the play corresponds to: What do we think with? What's left? There are no longer any common yardsticks or scales of value. What remains?[102]

Schumacher's conclusion indicates the extent of the nihilism which underpinned the productions of the Alfred Jarry Theatre, a corrosive nihilism which would inform Artaud's later idea for a 'theatre of cruelty'.

Famously, Artaud employs the image of the plague as an analogy for the corrosive impact he envisioned for his theatre of cruelty, an image which he derived from Saint Augustine:

> In *The City of God*, Saint Augustine points to the similarity between the plague which kills without destroying any organs and theatre which, without killing, induces the most mysterious changes not only in the minds of individuals but in a whole nation.[103]

The invisible insurrection of the plague is, in Artaud's view, the catalyst for the revolutionary liberation of man's inner 'spiritual freedom' and the destruction of the institutions of the state, causing 'all social forms to disintegrate'. The unpredictable nature of the plague and its 'inflammatory images' echoes Bakunin's theory of anarchist insurrection which would similarly engulf society in a 'spontaneous conflagration'. In their spontaneous nature, both the plague and the anarchist insurrection are equally

uncontainable and uncontrollable. There is no hierarchy or order governing the execution of the insurrection or the contagion of the plague; there is only fire and chaos:

> For if the theatre is like the plague, it is not only because it affects important collectivities and upsets them in an identical way. In the theatre as in the plague there is something both victorious and vengeful: we are aware that the spontaneous conflagration which the plague lights wherever it passes is nothing else than an immense liquidation.[104]

The plague operated to destroy the superstructure, base structure and infrastructure of society. The threat to the stability of the state contained in Artaud's visionary theatre can only reach the level of the plague if theatre again becomes an integral force in society: theatre's role is to unleash desire, to undermine the institutions of the state from the inside, for 'theatre poses a threat, not in itself, but if it were to become once again a fundamental part of society.' By all accounts, Artaud's first attempt to manifest such a threat in the productions of the Alfred Jarry Theatre ended in failure.

The violence of the Alfred Jarry Theatre's attack upon the bourgeois stage suggest that it is possible to regard Artaud's rejection of representation in the theatre (in favour of the direct manifestation of unmediated reality on the stage), as commensurate with the anarcho-nihilist rejection of parliamentarism and 'representative government' (in favour of direct action, sabotage and terrorism). And like Marinetti and Ball before him, Artaud's theatre threatens

to 'engulf' the audience in order to regenerate and revolutionize everyday life in its totality.

David Graver has claimed that, in its radical violence, Artaud's vision of a 'theatre of cruelty' attempted not only to assimilate but to overcome the theatricalized violence of Dada and Surrealism.[105] Graver's astute observation of both Artaud's debt to Dada and his desire to overcome its perceived limitations - through the introduction of 'live ammunition into the gunplay of dada's anarchic theatricality' - points towards Artaud's desire to transform everyday life through the radical transformation of the theatre. However, Graver's understanding of Artaud's efforts to 'build his theatre of cruelty' masks the extent to which this effort is subject to the irrepressible urge to 'destroy' theatre in its entirety. In order to *realize* the theatre of cruelty, the theatre as it is known in the West must first be *suppressed.* Artaud demands such a thoroughgoing destruction of the underlying conditions of Western theatre because he perceives the liberation of the stage, and the concomitant release of theatre's transformative and redemptive power, to be the necessary precondition for the emancipation of modern man from the shackles of his restricted being under the functional rationality of bourgeois capitalism.

The Alfred Jarry Theatre, Artaud's first attempt to realize a theatre of destruction and the destruction of theatre, was a sporadic, haphazard and short-lived affair, managing just four productions from 1926 until its disintegration in 1930. And despite the enthusiasm for destruction which spills

forth from the proclamations of the Alfred Jarry Theatre, Artaud seems to have had foreboding that any practical involvement in the theatre was doomed to failure. In his 'Manifesto for an Abortive Theatre,' written in November 1926, Artaud's mood is shot through with nihilism and despair:

> On... January 1927, the [Abortive] theatre will present its first production. Its founders are very much aware of the kind of despair launching such a theatre implies. And it is not without a kind of remorse that they made up their minds to do it.[106]

Similarly, in the earlier manifesto 'All writing is Garbage' (1925), Artaud echoes Aragon's bitter nihilism of 1920 in a total rejection of creativity: 'And I have already told you: no works, no language, no words, no mind, nothing.'[107] But Artaud's most violent negation of bourgeois culture comes, perhaps, in 'No More Masterpieces', published in *The Theatre and its Double* (1937). In this manifesto Artaud rejects the 'detached art' of the bourgeoisie and its servile dedication to the works of the past:

> One of the reasons for the asphyxiating atmosphere in which we live without possible escape or remedy - and in which we all share, even the most revolutionary among us - is our respect for what has been written, formulated, or painted, what has been given form, as if all expression were not at last exhausted, were not at a point where things must break apart if they are to start anew and begin fresh.[108]

There is more than a hint of the *antipassatismo* of the 'Founding and Manifesto of Futurism' in Artaud's iconoclastic tract. Like Marinetti, Artaud

calls for the destruction of the institution of art, for the annihilation of theatre founded upon illusion and representation. Although Artaud criticizes the 'disinterested idea of the theatre' which he considers to dominate in the 'detached art' of bourgeois culture, this does not mean that he is antagonistic to the idea of an autonomus theatre. The theatre of cruelty is an autonomous theatre in the sense that it rejects the *prescribed* authority of the text. Paradoxically, it is ony by fulfilling its true condition, through the realization of its *autonomous* status, that theatre can once again become an *integral* force in society. As such, the theatre of cruelty is diametrically opposed to any theatrical performance which wishes 'to leave the public intact, without setting off one image that will shake the organism to its foundations and leave an ineffaceable scar'.[109] In short, through the parallel of the plague and the rejection of 'detached art' and creativity itself, the theatre of cruelty performs a theatricalization of nihilism.

In order to theatricalize his nihilism, Artaud proscribes the devaluation of bourgeois worship of the classics: 'We must get rid of our superstitious valuation of texts and *written* poetry. Written poetry is worth reading once, and then should be destroyed.'[110] Like Marinetti and Ball, Artaud calls for the destruction of static writing, immobilised in the book. What he demands instead is a theatricalized writing, consonant with the performative modality of the manifesto. This theatricalization of discourse - paradigmatic of a theatricalized public sphere and central to our political re-assessment of the

avant-garde - continues in Artaud's biography of the anarchic young Roman Emperor Heliogabalus, *Heliogabalus or the Anarchist Crowned* (1934). It is important to discuss *Heliogabalus* as, on the one hand, it confirms the simultaneous libertarian and barbaric character of Artaud's theatre of destruction and, on the other hand, it raises questions regarding the theatricalization of the public sphere.

V

'The entire life of Heliogabalus,' wrote Artaud of the youthful and rebellious Roman Emperor, 'is anarchy in action'.[111] And he concludes: 'Never was a finer example of anarchy given to the world.'[112] In Artaud's narrative, Heliogabalus is 'an undisciplined and fanatical spirit, a real king, a rebel, a frantic individualist' who, during his brief reign, undertook 'a systematic and joyous demoralization of the Latin mind and consciousness'.[113] Artaud's reading of Heliogabalus' systematic 'debasement of values' and the 'monstrous moral disorganization' of the Roman state is informed by the tenets of anarchism and nihilism.[114] As such, *Heliogabalus* can be considered to be an extension of his earlier attempts to establish a radical theatre. Jane Goodall, for example, considers the Emperor to be Artaud's first 'fully fledged protagonist' of the theatre of cruelty.[115] However, had it not been for

a publisher's commission Artaud would never have undertaken the task. Nonetheless, once he had embarked upon a study of the emperor's extreme gestures, Artaud became immersed in his subject to the point of complete identification. At one piont he confessed to Anais Nin: 'I am Heliogabalus, the mad Roman emperor.'[116] Nin recalls:

> [Artaud] stood up in the taxi and, stretching out his arms, pointed to the crowded streets: 'The revolution will come soon. All this will be destroyed. The world must be destroyed. It is corrupt and full of ugliness. It is full of mummies, I tell you. Roman decadence. Death. I wanted a theatre that would be like a shocktreatment, galvanize, shock people into feeling.'[117]

As Nin's journal entry indicates, Artaud's identification with Heliogabalus is an act of self-dramatization. His self-identification with Heliogabalus is taken to such a degree that when he writes of the iconoclastic Roman Emperor, Artaud is essentially writing about himself: 'I see Heliogabalus not as a madman but as a rebel.'[118] However, it is equally the result of his refusal to distinguish between the theatre and its double: 'The life of Heliogabalus is theatrical. But his theatrical way of conceiving existence strives to create a true magic of the real. Indeed, I do not conceive theatre as separate from existence.'[119] The destruction of values which both Artaud and Heliogabalus undertake is profoundly theatrical, in the sense that the theatre of cruelty is the manifestation of the 'true magic of the real'. Artaud *performs* his anarchism by seizing the crown of Heliogabalus. As we shall see with other

protagonists in Artaud's œuvre, Heliogabalus is an 'incarnation' of Artaud. Consequently, when we talk of Heliogabalus we also talk of Artaud.

The oxymoron in the title suggests a double identity of Heliogabalus and reveals the polarity of Artaud's destructive character as libertarian and barbarian, autocrat and tyrant, anarchist and fascist. This 'schizophrenic' aspect to Artaud's incarnations has long been recognized by commentators. For Schumacher, Artaud is simply 'paradox made flesh'.[120] For Deleuze and Guattari, the opposing poles of Artaud are united 'in the formula: Heliogabalus-the-anarchist'.[121] But, as Schumacher's comment implies, Artaud's ideological inconsistency cannot simply be absorbed by an appeal to anarchism alone. As *Heliogabalus* demonstrates, Artaud's approach to anarchism is no less paradoxical than his approach to theatre:

> The anarchist says:
> Neither God nor master, I alone.
> Heliogabalus, once on the throne, accepts no law; and he is the master.
> His own personal law will be the law of all. He imposes his tyranny. Every tyrant is at bottom only an anarchist who has seized the crown and who reduces everyone to obedience.[122]

As proven by the ambiguous politics of Marinetti and Italian Futurism, Artaud's understanding of anarchism reveals that, at the most extreme point of its expression, anarchist individualism has the potential to collapse into fascism (its double). The dual natures of anarchist libertarianism, on the one hand, and tyranny, on the other, are the parameters of Artaud's extreme and

contradictory desires. So what kind of anarchist is Heliogabalus and, by extension, Artaud? If Heliogabalus is a libertarian he is equally an individualist; as Daniel Guérin states, 'one cannot conceive of a libertarian who is not an individualist'.[123] As noted earlier, Artaud's extreme individualism echoes the extreme libertarian pronouncements of Stirner: 'Do not seek in self-renunciation a freedom which denies your very selves, but seek your own selves... Let each of you be an all-powerful I... Neither the State, society, nor humanity can master this devil.'[124] In reference to Stirner's libertarianism, Guérin concludes: 'There is no freedom but that which the individual conquers for himself. Freedom given or conceded is not freedom but "stolen goods".'[125] To Stirner and Nietzsche, the ultimate opponent to the absolute freedom of the autonomous individual is God. In order to enact the libertarian revolt to its ultimate conclusion, the anarchist must equal God and take his place. As Artaud writes: 'There is however another idea of anarchy in Heliogabalus. Believing himself to be God.'[126] The Artaudian anarchist is thus a Nietzschean anti-christ, he overthrows God in a moment of rebellion equalled only by Satan.

In the case of Heliogabalus, this revolutionary body is given over to libidinal excess in an economy without reserve. Heliogabalus, the young Emperor, flaunts his homosexuality and publicly gives over all the orifices of his body to sexual excess. Heliogabalus transforms the Roman World Order and replaces it with his own self-created libertarian vision: 'Everywhere

amplitude, excess, abundance, immoderateness. The purest generosity and pity, which come to counterbalance a spasmodic cruelty.'[127] In essence, Heliogabalus' revolt constitutes an insurrection through intensification of participation. Even the self is not spared (saved) in the revolt against the state: 'His insurrection is systematic and shrewd and he directs it first of all against himself.'[128] As we saw with Marinetti, Artaud-Heliogabalus is engaged in the avant-garde act of self-creation: 'Heliogabalus... is without precursors, a figure whose self-ordained primacy licenses him to dissolve all parameters.'[129]

Although as Emperor, Heliogabalus is not above 'taking personal advantage of this disorder' and satisfying his limitless sexual appetite and as ruler behaves 'like a thug and an irreverent libertarian'[130], his insurrection is first and foremost a carnivalesque celebration: 'Heliogabalus undertook a systematic and joyous demoralization of the Latin mind and consciousness; and he would have carried this subversion of the Latin world to the limit if he had lived long enough to complete it.'[131] Heliogabalus' reign is ultimately an act of irreverent destruction; an active nihilism - the devaluation of the moral and political values of the Roman World Order: 'One cannot doubt the profound contempt of Heliogabalus for the Roman world of his day.'[132]

Heliogabalus' subversion is to replace the materialist laws of the Roman state with a new vision of humanity beyond morality. In this respect, he exhibits Stirner's rejection of public morality. The Emperor's sexual licence and systematic perversion of the young embodies his liberation from the

chains of the moral oppression of the Roman state and is indicative of a wider rebellion. Reminiscent of the anti-authoritarian pronouncements of William Blake, as well as the violent sexual excesses of D. A. F. de Sade and Gilles de Rais, Artaud-Heliogabalus embodies the Nietzschean and anarchistic reversal of society's notions of good and evil. As Stirner claimed: 'The real seducers and corrupters of youth are the priests and parents who "muddy young hearts and stupefy young minds".'[133] And echoing Proudhon's formulation, to Heliogabalus, government is chaos and anarchy order:

> What was anarchic from the Roman point of view was for Heliogabalus fidelity to an order... There was nothing gratuitous in the magnificence of Heliogabalus, or in this marvelous ardour for disorder which was merely the application of a metaphysical and superior idea of order, that is, of unity.[134]

In short, Heliogabalus' taste for disorder, which he attempted to satisfy by any means necessary, was nothing more than a symptom of his quest for 'an order inapplicable to the Latin world'.[135]

As Emperor, Heliogabalus embodies the degeneration of Roman values. He inaugurates the complete reversal of the political priorities of the state, replacing an oligarchic military government by the governance of individual desire; fascism is replaced with libertarianism; purity and the state are overthrown in the satisfaction of desire in acts of transgressive sex. In short, *Heliogabalus* offers a vision of society in a state of permanent immorality. The reign of Heliogabalus constitutes the destruction of Roman civilization in

the realization of a Sadean 'utopia of evil', an image of society thrown 'into a state of perpetual movement, a state of permanent immorality - that is,... society [thrown] ineluctably into its own destruction'.[136] Ultimately, Heliogablaus' destruction of the laws of Roman society amounts to the destruction of himself; his revolt undermines the very political order which ordains Heliogabalus as Emperor with consummate power. In the context of a discussion of the avant-garde's relation to the transformation of the public sphere, what conclusions can be drawn in response to the libertarian and barbarian dialectic present in Artaud's biography of Heliogabalus in relation to the concepts of theatricalization and refeudalization?

As Artaud desired the theatre of cruelty to be a mass theatre, so Heliogabalus' revolt takes place as a mass public spectacle; a carnival where the theatre as separate stage is dissolved and reality itself is transformed into a stage, with Heliogabalus cast as the Lord of Misrule:

> Not content with turning the throne into a stage, with giving the countries through which he travelled an example of flabbiness, disorder, and depravity, he now turned *the very soil of the empire into a stage*, and inspired false kings. Never was a finer example of anarchy given to the world... this life-like performance before a hundred thousand people of the fable of Venus and Paris, with the state of fever it created, with the illusions it aroused, was an example of dangerous anarchy. It was poetry and theatre placed on the level of the most genuine reality.[137]

Heliogablus' transformation of '*the very soil of the empire into a stage*' does not merely imply the well worn notion that revolution is theatrical. It also

suggests *theatricalization* as a precondition of *revolution.* But in what way is theatricalization itself a revolutionary force in Artaud? Theatricalization is revolutionary only if poetry and theatre are placed 'on the level of the most genuine reality'. In other words a simultaneous literalization of the theatrical and theatricalization of the literary must take place which eradicates the stable identity of each. As Julia Kristeva writes:

> The scene of the carnival, where there is no stage, no 'theatre', is thus both stage and life, game and dream, discourse and spectacle. By the same token, it is proffered as the only space in which language escapes linearity (law) to live as drama in three dimensions. At a deeper level, this also signifies the contrary: drama becomes located in language.[138]

This is the allegorical function of *Heliogabalus* for Artaud. The theatricalization of the 'very soil' of the Roman empire in *Heliogabalus* is a rehearsal for the theatricalization of the bourgeois public sphere which, for Artaud, must necessarily precede the Surrealist revolution.

In the case of *Heliogabalus,* Artaud's theatricalization of the public sphere is enacted through the medium of the libertarian body of the Emperor, a body given over to the grotesque material excesses of libidinous desire. As Kristeva's reference to 'carnival' suggests, Artaud's theatricalization of carnal disorder corresponds to Bakhtin's study of the subversive nature of the carnival, the festival and the grotesque. For Bakhtin such events as the carnival or the festival represented a radical break with the normal social

order. As Kristeva contends 'the carnival challenges God, authority and social law; in so far as it is dialogical, it is rebellious'.[139] And as Derrida avers, the festival is 'a political act'.[140] For Bakhtin, the festival or carnival is the site where the people experience 'real being outside all hierarchical norms and values' and, as such, constitutes an expression of 'the people's unofficial truth'.[141] He writes:

> The feast [or carnival] was a temporary suspension of the entire official system with all its prohibitions and hierarchic barriers. For a short time life came out of its usual, legalized and consecrated furrows and entered the sphere of utopian freedom. The very brevity of this freedom increased its fantastic nature and utopian radicalism, born in the festive atmosphere of images.[142]

However, Bakhtin makes it clear that the utopian freedom offered in the carnival has only a temporal form. Similarly, Heliogabalus' licentious reign of negation ultimately creates a reaction in the centre of power and it is these forces which plot to bring about his downfall. Ironically, Heliogabalus dies at the hands of an insurgent crowd (he is literally ripped apart), the very agency of anarchist insurrection (both Proudhon and Bakunin sanctioned the 'personality and autonomy of the masses'). In a Dionysian image, Heliogabalus' revolt is now read as *force* overthrown by the revolutionary *violence* of the crowd.[143] The violent paradox of extreme individualism evident in *Heliogabalus* is further manifest in Artaud's production of *The Cenci*, his most ambitious attempt to exteriorize the theatre of cruelty.

VI

The production of *The Cenci,* an adaptation from Stendhal and Shelley begun in 1934, and performed at the Théâtre des Folies-Wagram in North West Paris, 6 - 22 May 1935, marks Artaud's attempt to synthesize the revolution in politics and the revolution in art: a simultaneous aestheticization of politics and politicization of art. Holding all the ingredients of an Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy, *The Cenci* is every inch the blood tragedy Artaud stated he would include in his unrealized programme of the theatre of cruelty. The plot revolves around the tale of the open rebellion of the murderous Count Cenci, who had killed his sons and raped his daughter Beatrice (who, in return, takes revenge by fatally stabbing Cenci in the eye as he sleeps). Artaud's ambition was for the entire play to comprise 'a whole language of gestures and signs in which the anxieties of the age [would] blend together in a violent manifestation of feeling'.[144] With himself as lead, *The Cenci* was to be Artaud's dress rehearsal for the apocalypse. In the figure of Cenci, the father-destroyer, Artaud performs the ultimate revolt of the anarchist: 'For me, life, death, god, incest, repentance, crime do not exist. I obey my own law.'[145] The precursor here, as it was for Breton, is Sade.

Sade, who had been imprisoned in the Bastille for 'lewd' acts, considered the law to be powerless against the extremities of human desire. Ultimately,

for Sade, the law contributed to the degeneration of the natural freedom of man:

> Let us convince ourselves once and for all that laws are merely useless and dangerous; their only object is to multiply crimes or to allow them to be committed with impunity on account of the secrecy they necessitate. Without laws and religions it is impossible to imagine the degree of glory and grandeur human knowledge would have attained by now; the way these base restraints have retarded progress is unbelievable; and that is the sole service they have rendered to man. People have dared declaim against the passions and enchain them with laws.[146]

Sade's retaliation against the forces responsible for his imprisonment positions him as the great libertarian precursor to the Surrealists' demand to 'Open the prisons - Disband the army'. If *Heliogabalus* owed much to Sade in its celebration of limitless human desire and transgressive sex, then Sade's attack upon the futility of law and the hypocrisy of religion is manifest in Artaud's production of *The Cenci.* Moreover, the anarchism displayed in the revolt of Count Cenci, as in the figure of Heliogabalus, is not only close to the libertarianism of Sade, it also embodies the egoistic individualism of Stirner. Extending beyond the libertarian anarchism of Heliogabalus, the 'root-and-branch' negation of society promised in *The Cenci* stems from a Stirner-like egoistic nihilism. Artaud's 'metaphysical revolt against God' results, as did Stirner's, in 'the absolute affirmation of the individual'. Artaud's revolt is so completely radical that he claims to go beyond even the most extreme libertarian: 'Even those who consider themselves to be ideologically the most

libertarian, the most detached, the most advanced, remain secretly tied to a certain number of notions which in this play I attack in one fell swoop.'[147] In a letter to André Gide, Artaud warns, 'there is nothing which escapes attack among the antiquated notions of Society, Order, Justice, Religion, the Family and Country'.[148]

The primary ideological notion which remains to be destroyed, in Artaud's consideration, is the family: 'There is no libertarian ideologically prepared to cast the idea of the family to the four winds, who does not retain a deep rooted human affection for his father, mother, sisters, brothers, etc. Nothing, however, is spared in this play.' He continues:

> I want everyone to understand that I am attacking the social superstition of the family, without asking them for all that to take up arms against anyone in particular. The same goes for order, and the same for justice. However opposed to the present-day order one may be, an old respect for the idea of order as such prevents people from distinguishing between order and those who represent it, and leads them in effect to respect individuals under the pretext of respecting order as such... as for the ideological stance I have taken, I absolutely cannot brook all these niceties which force me temporarily, in order to speed things up, to attack order as such... I'm hitting hard and fast, but especially to hit conclusively and without recourse... And so I want to be done once and for all with all these inhibitions... to prevent the audience from confusing ideas with men and, what is more, confusing them with forms... that I am destroying the idea, lest the respect for the idea leads one to spare a form which, in turn, favours the continuation of bad ideas.[149]

If the role of *The Cenci* is to destroy all remaining obstacles to absolute individual liberty - epitomised in the liquidation of the family - it is Artaud's role, as the anarchist crowned, to orchestrate the destruction. Artaud casts

himself in the role of Cenci, stating: 'In Cenci, the father is destroyer' - and what the father destroys is the family.[150] Once again, as with the writing of Heliogabalus, Artaud identifies with his subject to the degree that Cenci is incarnated as Artaud's theatricalized double: 'the character who says what he thinks is representing my own thoughts at the same time, but representing them dramatically, that is to say dynamically, dialectically'.[151] In other words, Artaud's incarnation as Cenci is not a role but a manifesto. The degree of Artaud's identification with Cenci indicates the extent of his theatricalization of revolt (the self-dramatization of self-determination) and his debt to Aestheticism. This debt is even apparent in such self-referential lines as 'let anyone try to accuse me of being a mere play actor'.[152] In Elizabethan drama this act of self-referencing interrupts and foregrounds the artificial conventions of theatrical performance. But in Artaud's production of *The Cenci* such a polarity between theatricality and reality cannot be so readily sustained. For example, in Cenci's disquisition upon the difference between a crime committed in the theatre and a crime committed in real life, there exists more than a degree of ambiguity as to the continuing validity of anything known as 'real life':

> The great difference between the villainies committed in real life and the villainies acted out upon the stage is that in real life we do more and say less, while in the theatre we talk endlessly and accomplish very little. Well, I shall restore the balance, and I shall restore it at the expense of real life.[153]

The collapse of any distinctions between 'theatre', on the one hand, and 'real life', on the other, is a corollary, perhaps, of Artaud's determination for the theatre of cruelty to achieve the condition of 'total theatre' begun in the Symbolist stage.

In order to come close to achieving a 'total theatre' experience in his 1936 production of *The Cenci*, over half a decade after the demise of the Alfred Jarry Theatre, Artaud had first to overcome the limitations of presenting the play in a music-hall which had a proscenium arch stage. As noted with reference to the Alfred Jarry Theatre production of *Victor*, Artaud borrowed freely from and subverted the experiments of the Symbolist drama (a production of *The Cenci* had also been performed at Lunge-Poe's the Théâtre de L'Œuvre in the 1890s). In *The Cenci*, Artaud employed Marinetti's tactic of the intensification of participation, whereby he attempted to 'engulf' the audience, similar to the kind of theatrical experience desired by Ball.

In an attempt to dynamize the proscenium theatre, a cubist-constructivist set was designed by the painter Balthus (Balthasar Klossowski), whom Artaud described as being 'at home in the symbolic nature of forms'. He also utilised the 'Musique Concrète' (or surround sound) of the experimental composer, Desormière. Desormière's score, which was not dissimilar to the Futurist sound experiments outlined by Russolo in his 'Art of Noises' (1913), was considered by Artaud to be 'the positive unleashing of the sounds of

nature'. During the performance the audience would find itself 'at the centre of a network of sound vibrations'. The surround sound in *The Cenci*, was matched with a recording of the great bell at Amien Cathedral, which saturated the auditorium in a desire to create a sound so loud that it was not heard with the ears alone but with the spectator's whole body. Artaud's production also echoed Symbolist acting techniques in that dialogue was delivered in monotones, with each speech having a different pitch.[154] Further, the actors' movements were scripted around a rigid floor plan which, at times, surrounded Artaud-Cenci as a centrifugal force which intensified Cenci's mythical and supernatural presence. Artaud's muscular costume suggested the superhuman strength of vast cataclysmic forces, as if Artaud-Cenci were the living embodiment of the Nietzschean *Übermensch*. In overthrowing God from the stage, Artaud replaces him with an 'amoral' being who exists beyond the human social conventions of morality and order, in a similar manner to the Gods who exist beyond good and evil:

> What is certain is that these Gods went straight on their way, oblivious to the petty human distinctions between good and evil, almost as though they equated evil with betraying one's nature and good with remaining faithful to it, whatever the moral consequences. Indeed the Gods never concerned themselves with moral consequences.[155]

On the whole, Artaud casts Cenci as a superhuman being, a Nietzschean *Übermensch* who remains faithful to the natural inclinations of his will

beyond moral judgements, social conventions or laws. But what Artaud is really articulating here, however, is not a mythical meta-ethical condition but 'the instinct for mastery, or the will-to-power' which Freud identified in the 'destructive impulse'. But where Freud analyses this in terms of masochism, Artaud's 'destructive impulse' is embodied in the Sadism of Cenci's will-to-power. The will-to-power which Artaud-Cenci displays is embodied in the instruments of sadistic torture present on stage - which simultaneously perform an allegorical function in that they manifest the limits of societal violence.

The central violent image in *The Cenci* is the anachronistic image of the factory, an allegory for the prison-house of society:

> From the stage's ceiling, a wheel is revolving on its invisible axis. BEATRICE, attached to the wheel by her hair, and urged on by a guard who is gripping her wrists behind her back, follows the direction set by the revolving wheel. Every few steps she takes, screams, accompanied by the sounds of turning winches, grinding wheels or wooden beams being split apart, can be heard coming form different directions around the stage. The prison sounds just like a busy factory.[156]

Artaud's insistence on the crude physical manifestation of the mechanism of societal torture and the organisation of power over the body, illustrates the wider implications of the theatre of cruelty. In a similar manner to the machine in Kafka's 'Penal Colony,' the very connection of Beatrice's hair to the wheel is the inscription of the regime of power on the body. [Fig. 7] As

Deleuze and Guattari state, such an organisation which traces power directly on the body 'constitutes a system of cruelty':

> Cruelty has nothing to do with some ill-defined or natural violence that might be commissioned to explain the history of mankind; cruelty is the movement of culture that is realized in bodies and inscribed on them, belabouring them. That is what cruelty means. This culture is not the movement of ideology: on the contrary, it forcibly injects production into desire, and conversely, it forcibly inserts desire into social production and reproduction. For even death, punishment, and torture are desired, and are instances of production (compare the history of fatalism). It makes men and their organs into the parts and wheels of the social machine.[157]

The wheels of the social machine, for Artaud, are racks for torture. Capitalism exists as a factory of destruction: a war machine aimed at its own population through state apparatuses such as the school and the asylum.[158] The perversion of the desiring-machine into a war-machine, is essential, claims Artaud, to the successful maintenance of the infrastructure of capitalism.[159] For an individual to be able to reverse this trajectory and escape from the mechanisms of State domination would require an extreme, violent and destructive gesture. In other words, the individual must transform themselves into a weapon capable of destroying the State apparatus: they must become a war machine against the state. In effect, to free themselves from the territorializing imperatives of civilization, the revolutionary must deterritorialize, that is to say, they must become barbarian.[160] In *The Cenci*, as in *Heliogabalus*, the libertarian anarchist doctrine of individual autonomy is

mirrored by violence and tyranny. If Artaud-Heliogabalus was the anarchist crowned, then Artaud-Cenci is the anarchist-as-barbarian.

I began this thesis with an examination of Marinetti, the fascist-as-anarchist, I now end with a consideration of Artaud, the anarchist-as-fascist. The possibility to be simultaneously both anarchist and fascist illustrates an apparent resemblance in the foundations of left-wing and right-wing libertarianism attributed to the individual egoism formulated in Stirner (who has been claimed by both left and right) and the extreme libertarianism of Bakunin. However, both Stirner and Bakunin criticise the notion of individualism which exploits the freedom of others to further its own desires. Stirner and Bakunin reject this interpretation of revolutionary individualism as bourgeois. (The only circumstances in which they can accept an act of oppression against another individual is in the protection of one's own liberty if it is being unjustifiably impugned by another, or in the wilful consent of an individual to subordinate their freedom to another and place themselves in voluntary servitude.) Artaud goes beyond both of these positions in his expression of Cenci's absolute freedom. The reason for this is that Cenci is not simply an individual in the bourgeois sense, he is more than a man: he is a force of nature, like a hurricane or a volcano. Though not yet a God, he is beyond the restrictive forces of morality: he is beyond good and evil.

Through the attempt to intensify the mode of audience participation in the theatre of cruelty, Artaud attempts to physically shock the audience into

history (they must visit the theatre he states as they might visit a dentist or surgeon). As such, the theatre of cruelty is terroristic, and marks an intensification of the Futurist Variety Theatre and the mode of 'noncontemplative' audience participation. Immanent in Artaud's desire to extend the theatre beyond the confines of the proscenium stage, in his comparison of the theatre and plague and in his simultaneously 'libertarian' and 'barbarian' vision of the theatre of cruelty is a theatricalized intensification of participation consonant with a retheatricalization and refeudalization of the bourgeois public sphere.

> I don't know why man believes that awareness can only be achieved by the institutions of government, public services, the police force, religion, science, and the army. - Or rather I know only too well that it goes back to the last real achievement by theatre which occurred in Greece,... a theatre in which heads were systematically chopped off.[161]

However, to equate Artaud's cruel libertarianism with fascism - or, for example, to read Count Cenci as simply an incarnation of Hitler - would be, I believe, to retreat into a fundamental misrecognition. Artaud's extreme confrontation with politics and culture is complex and contradictory and serves more to shatter the conceptual framework of ideology, through a radical break with language, than to resemble coherent and codifiable ideological positions such as nationalism, militarism or anti-semitism which were essential to the rise of fascism in the 1930s. Nonetheless, this does not

prevent the possibility that the shipwreck of ideology will wash up upon the shores of fascism. In other words, the spectre which haunts the theatre of cruelty is fascism.

VII

In theatrical terms, *The Cenci* failed to embody the direction Artaud demanded of the theatre and he admits that the production 'broke out in part from the framework of the theatre I want to establish'.[162] In a letter to Jean-Louis Barrault, Artaud confessed: 'I have been overwhelmed in the end by the enormity of the task I have set myself.'[163] If this manifestation of the theatre of cruelty was doomed to failure it was not entirely due to the restrictions of a proscenium arch stage, the limited technical resources, or the unsuitability of the actors to fulfil Artaud's impossible demands. The real 'failure' of *The Cenci* went beyond the limitations of any single production. Rather, it resulted from Artaud's paradoxical desire to theatricalize his destruction of theatre.

The paradox of Artaud's attemped destruction of theatre is perhaps most painfully manifest in his appearance at the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier, Paris, on 13 January 1947. The evening (an event organized to raise funds for Artaud following his release from a nine-year incarceration in the asylum.

at Rodez) was titled 'Tête-à-tête avec Antonin Artaud' and took place before an audience of nine hundred made up of directors, playwrights, authors, journalists and former associates, such as Breton and Gide. According to Maurice Saillet, who was also present in the audience, Artaud appeared 'emaciated and haggard' as he took to the stage for his first public appearance following his return to Paris:

> ... when he started to chant his beautiful, but barely audible poems in his hoarse voice choked by sobs and tragic stutterings - we felt ourselves lured into that danger zone, and as if we were reflections of that black sun, caught up in the all-devouring combustion of a body consumed by spiritual fire.[164]

The three-hour long 'performance' ended with a diatribe against the assembled audience of avant-garde artists and critics, in 'a pitiful, revolting, haunting act of exhibitionism'.[165] The spectral 'performance' at Vieux-Colombier marked not only Artaud's farewell to theatre but the final extemporization of his destructive character. In a letter to Breton, 28 February 1947, Artaud articulates his disgust with the audience who perpetuate his condition:

> Ah yes, I appeared on stage, once more, for
> the LAST TIME, at the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier,
> but with the manifest intention of blowing up
> the structure and blowing it up from the inside,
> I don't think that the performance of a man
> bellowing and hurling abuse and throwing up his
> intestines really is a theatrical performance.[166]

As Artaud states, this was not an act of theatre, rather, as Claude Schumacher notes, 'it was the act of a desperate man, someone who had tried and failed to revolutionize theatre and the philosophy of theatre practice'.[167] In a final destructive image Artaud vanquishes the stage in an act of Surrealist poetic terrorism:

> I left because I realized that the only language I could use on an audience was to take bombs out of my pockets and throw them in their faces in a gesture of unmistakable aggression.[168]

Artaud knew, if his attempt to blow up theatre from the inside was successful, he would be killed in the blast. As the conditions for his theatre of cruelty did not yet exist, Artaud was tied to the conditions of a theatre he wished to destroy, and it is his complicity with the very theatre he rejects which contributes to his downfall. As Derrida comments: 'Through this complicity is articulated a necessary dependency of all destructive discourses: they must inhabit the structures they demolish.'[169] The structure which the theatre of cruelty endeavoured to demolish was not the theatre alone, but the society for which it was a metaphor: 'The Theatre of Cruelty was never realized because its very existence presupposes the disappearance of the basis of public life which is called Society.'[170]

Artaud's demand for the destruction of society, the very entity which provides a critical distance between the private sphere and the authority of

the state, is tantamount to a demand for the destruction of the bourgeois public sphere: the preservation of which, Habermas maintains, is central to the existence of democracy. In order for the theatre of cruelty to become a truly 'active culture', society itself must be annihilated and the totality of its relations transformed in an *integral* revolution. The theatre of cruelty, then, it would appear, promotes the refeudalization of the public sphere. It is this which draws it into the orbit of fascism. What preserves Artaud's theatre of destruction from fascist integralism (which merely seeks to bind the masses to its will and thereby deny alternative autonomous action), in the last analysis, is the fact that Artaud despised the authoritarianism of fascism.

VIII

If anarchism was the scene of the split between Breton and Artaud in the 1920s, it was to become the scene of their reconciliation a decade later. The scene of this Surrealist rapprochement - which was not so much a physical meeting as a meeting of minds - took place in Mexico. Both Artaud and Breton had written important manifestos upon separate pilgrimages to Mexico, in which each had attempted to resolve the contradiction between the aestheticization of politics and the politicization of art.

In search of an integral and active culture, Artaud departed for Mexico on 10 January 1936. The account of his experiences as told in *Journey to the Land of the Tarahumaras*, was not published until after his return on 12 November that year. But it is in the short manifesto, 'Art's Social Anarchy,' written during Artaud's stay in Mexico City, that he confronts directly the politicization of art. The manifesto, which concerns the social role of the artist, speaks less of the cultural climate in Mexico than of the heated political atmosphere in Europe which Artaud had left behind. With the Spanish Civil War (which broke out in the summer of 1936), and the growing conflict of extremist ideologies - between fascism and nationalism, on the one hand, and communism and internationalism, on the other - Europe had already begun the gradual descent into World War Two. With the growing tensions in Europe dominating the political horizon, Artaud writes:

> Art has a social duty to voice the anxieties of the epoch. He is not an artist who has not plumbed the depths of his time, the artist who ignores that he is a scapegoat, that his duty is to magnetize, to attract, to invite on his own shoulders the random rages of the time in order to rid it of its psychological bad-being (mal être)... The contempt of intellectual values is at the root of the modern world. In fact, such contempt belies a deep ignorance of the worth of such values. But we cannot waste our strength to make ourselves understood at a time which, among intellectuals and artists, has produced many traitors, and which among the people, has created a mass which refuse to accept that the spirit, i.e. intelligence, must guide the advance of the time.[171]

Artaud's position on the social status of art and the role of the avant-garde artist - to be the critical voice of the epoch and to transform society through

the agency of art - echoes the role of the artist outlined by Proudhon in the 1860s. In *The Principle of Art and its Social Destination,* Proudhon claimed that art must play an integral role in society: 'art must above all preserve the character of the epoch, be national, topical, concrete, express the ideas of the age and speak the language of the country'.[172] Yet, Proudhon continues, art does not have the sole duty to 'preserve'; it also fulfils a 'critical' function. As the expression of society, art cannot simply exist for its own sake, rather art has a moral mission to preserve the quality of social justice in the face of the ravages of capitalism. If capitalist society is corrupt, the artist must reveal the corruption.[173] If society cannot be saved by art it must be destroyed by art: 'Art is the expression of society, and if it does not exist for the purpose of improving society,' he wrote, 'it exists for its destruction'.[174] It is the destructive role of art advocated by Proudhon which dominates Artaud's vision of the politicization of art:

> Modern liberal capitalism has rejected... the values of intelligence, and modern man, faced with a few elementary truths... behaves like an animal or like the bewildered man of primitive ages. To take notice of them, he will wait until these truths become actions, that they manifest themselves through earthquakes, epidemics, hungers, wars, i.e. by the thunder of the gun.[175]

The revolutionary function demanded of art in 'Art's Social Anarchy' is equal to the plague-function attributed to the theatre in *The Theatre and its Double*, and it is the social duty of avant-garde artists to bring about this

destruction: in short, to speed up the auto-destruction of a corrupt civilization.[176] In effect, the social anarchy of art is that it perform, like the theatre of cruelty, as a plague upon society. In other words, Artaud's demand for an 'active culture' precipitated by art's 'social anarchy' promotes a Nietzschean active nihilism which 'reaches its maximum of relative strength as a violent force of destruction'.[177] In the act of radical destruction, Artaud's politicization of art cannot help but erupt into an aestheticization of politics.

Two years later, in the summer of 1938, Breton arrived in Mexico on a lecture tour organized by the French Cultural Office. The Surrealist only accepted the invitation as an opportunity to meet his political hero, the exiled Russian revolutionary, Leon Trotsky. As Helena Lewis suggests, the visit to Mexico was 'virtually a pilgrimage' for Breton.[178] As a young poet in the 1920s, Breton had idolized the legendary leader of the Red Army, and had read Trotsky's biography of Lenin. Almost twenty years later, Breton's admiration for Trotsky was undiminished and his meeting with the Soviet exile (facilitated by the Mexican mural painter, Diego Riviera) was a positive experience, to the extent that it led to a creative collaboration between the two revolutionaries. The two men discussed the revolutionary potential of art, with Trotsky approving of the Surrealist leader's rejection of Socialist Realism.

At Breton's suggestion, they wrote together the manifesto for an 'International Federation for Independent Revolutionary Art' (FIARI). In terms

of political and economic revolution, the manifesto, signed and dated on 25 July 1938, adopts a position similar to the centralized communism which Trotsky had frequently espoused. However, when it comes to revolutionary art, the manifesto promotes the autonomy of art and the absolute freedom of the individual artist, ideas more familiar to anarchism than to communism:

> If, for the better development of the forces of material production, the revolution must build a *socialist* regime with centralized control, to develop intellectual creation, an anarchist regime of individual liberty, should from the first be established. No authority, no dictation, not the least trace of orders from above.[179]

In their resistance to the totalitarianism of Stalinism and Socialist Realism Breton and Trotsky dedicated themselves to the 'complete freedom of art':

> In the realm of artistic creation, the imagination must escape from all constraints... To those who would urge us... to consent that art should submit to a discipline which we hold to be radically incompatible with its nature, we give a flat refusal, and we repeat our deliberate intention of standing by the formula *complete freedom of art.*[180]

Although Trotsky was violently opposed to anarchism in politics (he had ruthlessly suppressed the 1924 anarchist uprising by sailors at Kronstadt on the grounds that it was counter-revolutionary), he embraced anarchism in art.[181] In exile in Mexico, Trotsky could perhaps defy Stalin once more in his collaboration with Breton in the manifesto for FIARI in which, it appeared,

he had reconciled himself to the unified theory of revolution which embraced both Marxism and anarchism alike:

> The aim of this appeal is to find a common ground on which may be united all revolutionary writers and artists.... Marxists can march hand in hand here with anarchists provided both parties uncompromisingly reject the reactionary police patrol spirit represented by Joseph Stalin... Every progressive tendency in art is destroyed by fascism as 'degenerate.' Every free creation is called 'fascist' by the Stalinists. Independent revolutionary art must now gather its forces for the struggle against reactionary persecution.[182]

After his initial dismissal of individualist anarchist thought in the 'Second Manifesto of Surrealism' in 1930, Breton returns to his early attraction to anarchism. And following the assassination of Trotsky by Stalin's henchmen in 1940, Breton maintained his anarchistic vision of artistic revolution. (In the early 1950s he extended this vision into the sphere of political revolution. In particular, through a fifteen-month collaboration with the anarchist periodical *Libertaire*, which included other Surrealists, Benjamin Péret, Jean Schuster, Jean-Louis Bédouin and Ado Kirou; the anarchists were represented by Georges Fontenis, Serge Nin and Paul Zorkine.)[183] Having witnessed the failure of the emancipatory nature of the social and cultural revolution he and Trotsky had envisioned in the brutality of Stalin's regime in the USSR during the 1930s and 1940s, Breton eventually concludes:

> The only remedy... is to go back to the principles... of anarchism - not to the caricature that is made of it, nor the terror - but to... socialism, no

> longer conceived of as the simple resolution of political and social problems, but as the expression of the exploited masses in their desire to create a classless society where all human values and aspirations can be realized.[184]

Central to the realization of this 'classless society' and to the division between the communist and anarchist method of attaining it, is the interpretation of one word: *revolution*. In Benjamin's eyes, Surrealism had 'bound revolt to revolution,' stating that, 'an ecstatic component lives in every revolutionary act. This component is identical with the anarchic'.[185] As Benjamin suggests, it is toward an anarchist theory of revolution and the dedication to absolute freedom at all costs, and not to the discipline of militant communism, that the Surrealist politics of destruction tends. As Adorno has commented: '[Surrealism's] anti-anarchistic political impulses... were incompatible with its substance.'[186] It was Surrealism's 'destructive impulse' which dominated the movement's engagement with revolutionary politics: a destructive impulse philosophically and politically attuned to the libertarian political philosophy of anarchism and nihilism and opposed, in the end, to authoritarian communism. The manifestos written by Artaud and Breton in Mexico are the clearest examples of Surrealism's attempt to articulate the process of *integral* revolution: that is, through adherence to the principle of individual freedom and artistic autonomy, Surrealism desired to transform the totality of social conditions. In short, to revolutionize,

simultaneously, the internal (psychological) and external (sociological) aspects of everyday life.

After Bakunin's critique of Marx and Marxism, the clearest presentation of the anarchist-socialist theory of revolutionary insurrection relevant in this context was made by the Russian anarchist, Emma Goldman. As Goldman understood it, Socialist revolution meant a violent change in social conditions whereby the working class becomes dominant over the capitalist class. However, in Goldman's analysis such a model of revolutionary praxis, promoted by the 'advance guard' of the Communist Party, merely replaced one dictatorship (the bourgeoisie) with another (the proletariat), a condition which she regarded (in a suitably theatrical comparison) as nothing more than 'political scene shifting and institutional rearrangements'.[187] In short, in the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 which she discusses, power changed hands without changing its nature. With a Nietzschean tone, Goldman considered the true revolutionary aims of anarchism to be the '*fundamental transvaluation of values*':

> In my opinion - a thousandfold strengthened by the Russian experience - the great mission of revolution, of the SOCIAL REVOLUTION, is a *fundamental transvaluation of values*. A transvaluation not only of social, but also of human values. The latter are even pre-eminent, for they are the basis of all social values. Our institutions and conditions rest upon deep-seated ideas. To change those conditions and at the same time leave the underlying ideas and values intact means only a superficial transformation, one that cannot be permanent or bring real betterment. It is a change of form only, not of substance, as so tragically proved by Russia.[188]

In other words, the revolutionary ends of liberty should not suppress the revolutionary means of liberty: 'No revolution can ever succeed as a factor of liberation unless the MEANS used to further it be identical in spirit and tendency with the PURPOSES to be achieved.'[189] This equation between revolutionary ends and revolutionary means, adopted by Breton ('there is no freedom for the enemies of freedom'), is a central tenet of anarchist integration of theory and practice. As Benjamin Tucker wrote in 'State Socialism and Anarchism' (1888): 'The Anarchists believe in liberty as both ends and means, and are hostile to anything that antagonizes it.'[190] Goldman continues, 'Revolution... signifies not merely *external* change, but *internal*, basic, fundamental change.'[191] And Bakunin, it must be remembered, had also defended the essential correlation between the internal and external achievement of freedom as a goal and method.

Equally, Goldman's theory of revolution echoes Stirner's analysis of 'insurrection' as distinct from 'revolution'. As indicated earlier, in Stirner's view, the anarchist's duty was not to fall prey to the betrayal of freedom in organised revolutions, but to propagate and participate freely in spontaneous uprisings and insurrections:

> Revolution and insurrection must not be looked upon as synonymous. The former consists of an overturning of conditions, of the established condition or *status*, the State or society, and is accordingly a *political* or *social* act; the

> latter has indeed for its unavoidable consequence a transformation of circumstances, yet does not start from it but from men's discontent with themselves, is not an armed rising, but a rising of individuals, a getting up, without regard to the arrangements that spring from it. The revolution aimed at new *arrangements*; insurrection leads us no longer to *let* ourselves be arranged, but to arrange ourselves, and sets no glittering hopes on 'institutions'.[192]

Goldman's and Stirner's attacks upon the communist concept of revolution (in which individual freedom is suburdinate to revolutionary aims), and their promotion of a liberated revolt or insurrection which would attack religious, political and cultural institutions, is clearly paralleled in Artaud's writings on the theatre of cruelty.[193] The destruction of the theatre (and by extension the institution of art) as an organ in the corrupt body of bourgeois society, was the primordial scene of Artaud's integral revolution; a revolution which, in its destructive character, encompassed the aestheticization of politics and the politicization of art. Paradoxically, the precondition of such an emancipatory revolution was the retheatricalization and refeudalization of the public sphere. Its consummation, however, was in an apocalyptic theatricalization of History.

IX

Artaud's concept of a destructive integral revolution culminates in apocalypse. In writings such as *Life and Death of Satan Fire* (written sometime after

1932 and prior to his departure for Mexico in 1936) and *The New Revelations of Being* (1937), texts which mark an intensification of the theatre of cruelty and the spectacular modality of his theatre of destruction, Artaud relates his visions of a final conflagration. It is in the creative-destructive dialectic of revolution and apocalypse present in these texts, in the recurring image of 'destruction through fire', that we encounter the 'full-unfolding' of the historical avant-garde's theatricalization History.

The image of destruction through fire runs through Artaud's œuvre: it is present in the image of the plague in the *Theatre and its Double*; the impetuous fire of the Sun-God, Heliogabalus; the corrosive heat of the 'alchemical theatre'[194]; the destruction of Cenci[195]; his image of the actor burning at the stake 'signalling through the flames'; his study of Van Gogh[196]; and the cigarette burns through his late drawings and *Sorts* (paper drawings which he sent as magical signs to correspondents). In the 'Peyote Dance' in *Tarahumaras* (1936-7), written upon his return to France in November 1936, Artaud claims: 'I was ready for all the burns, and I awaited the first fruits of the fire in view of a conflagration that would soon be generalized.'[197] Artaud's apocalyptic voice is at its most extreme, however, in *The New Revelations of Being* where he foresees the general conflagration of society and prophesies the ultimate destruction of the world. And the agency of this universal destruction is fire:

> I FORESEE DESTRUCTION BY FIRE... I see this Cane in the midst of Fire and this Cane is provoking destruction by Fire.
> And this destruction will be radical.[198]

The fire is radical in that it consumes all the outmoded agencies of representation which prevent the appearance of the new revolutionary being: '*I no longer wish to be possessed by Illusions*'.[199] He continues: 'burning is a magic act and we must consent to burning, burning in advance and immediately, not one thing, but everything that represents things for us, in order not to expose ourselves to being burnt up whole'.[200]

Written a decade before his final public work, *To Have Done with the Judgement of God*, the *New Revelations of Being* is Artaud's version of *Book of Revelations of St. John of the Apocalypse*[201] - a prophetic book in which he brings down his own terrible judgement upon mankind. At the time of writing *New Revelations of Being* he states:

> [M]y absolute pessimism makes me believe that *everything to day must be renounced* to permit the establishment of a world I can believe in. And so long as I am able to imagine one thing, a single thing that must be saved, I shall destroy it in order to save myself from things, for that which is pure is always elsewhere.[202]

His prophetic voice cries: 'I... preach total destruction, but Conscious and Rebellious Destruction.'[203] In a cataclysm which will witness the end of the historical process - in the eternal recurrence of memory and prophecy - the apocalyptic fire will know no sanctuary, and its destruction will be given free

reign and 'free play' everywhere.[204] Yet for Artaud, this supreme annihilation of the world is auto-destructive:

> Thus on all sides the Destruction everywhere sought has been unconsciously desired by everyone and I claim that it is secretly willed by everyone as the only means of saving us from a world where life can no longer function.
> And this Destruction has begun everywhere.[205]

Nevertheless - if the destruction is universal and has begun everywhere - in Artaud's cosmology the epicentre of the destruction is France, with Paris as Armageddon. In a letter to Anne Manson, 8 September 1937, he writes:

> This future is at hand.
> A large part of Paris will soon go up in flames. Neither earthquake, nor plague, nor rioting, nor shooting in the streets will be spared this city and this country.[206]

As we have seen, the destruction through fire of the *New Revelations of Being* is simultaneously an act of auto-destruction. In the *Life and Death of Satan Fire* Artaud also envisions an auto-destructive fire 'where Fire turns in on itself'[207]:

> An evil fire which rises,
> a perfect projection and symbol of the irate and
> rebellious will, sole image of rebellion,
> fire separates and splits.
> it disunites and burns itself,
> IT PUNISHES ITSELF.[208]

With the dominance of destruction by fire in his prophetic writings we must return to the question of Artaud's nihilism. In *Life and Death of Satan Fire*, Artaud comments: 'Being... is more negation than affirmation / when pressed.'[209] Echoing Nietzsche, he concludes by demanding the 'reclassification of all values'.[210] In its incendiary active nihilism, the destructivity of Artaud's fire is beyond good and evil.

The apocalypse which Artaud envisions is politically ambiguous. If the conflagration is beyond good and evil, it is also beyond left and right. In other words, Artaud's revolutionary and apocalyptic fire performs the simultaneous libertarian-barbarian destructive character of the avant-garde. As a cataclysmic event, this destruction by fire transcends ideologies and political allegiances, obliterating all prior categories of revolutionary political thought and social action.[211] In their spectacular destructive force, the *Life and Death of Satan Fire* and *New Revelations of Being* are prophetic of the escalation of destruction witnessed in the Second World War.

If Artaud's fire is destructive in its 'infernal cycle', it is also, simultaneously, regenerative and essential to the realization of the new life.[212] Influenced by Eastern mysticism, Artaud's fire is both creator and destroyer. The creative-destructive force of fire returns us to the central relation of Artaud to Bakunin and the destructive character of the avant-garde. To continue the paradox of Artaud further, despite its radical theatrical atheism the theatre of cruelty is, ultimately, a *divine* theatre (in the manner that

nihilism to Nietzsche was 'a divine way of thinking'). And for Derrida, the thinking of the theatre of cruelty - a negative, abortive, destructive theatre - is finally 'a thinking of affirmation'. Yet, Artaud attempted to realize the theatre of cruelty not as an arena of thought, but of action.

The theatre of cruelty was not simply a *thinking* but an *acting* of affirmation. The true condition of the theatre of cruelty can only be realized in the realm of praxis: propaganda by the deed. Its stage was not to be Theory but History. What we witness in the theatre of cruelty, perhaps, is the 'convergence of theory and history'.[213] Not so much history performed in the theatre (as in a 'history play'), as the theatricalization of history, as such, in an apocalyptic and revolutionary full-unfolding. As a theatre of destruction, what the theatre of cruelty destroys is History.

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[1] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, translated by Peter Winch in collaboration with Heikki Nyman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 45 e.
[2] Calinescu, op. cit., p. 112.
[3] Cited in Anaîs Nin, *The Journals of Anaîs Nin, Volume I, 1931-34* edited by Gunter Stuhlmann, (London: Peter Owen, 1966), p. 239.
[4] André Thirion, *Revolutionaries Without Revolution* translated by Joachim Neugroschel (London Cassell, 1975).
[5] Benjamin, 1979, op. cit., p. 236.
[6] André Breton, *What is Surrealism?: Selected Writings*, edited by Franklin Rosemont (New York: Pathfinder, 1978), p. 125.
[7] *La Révolution Surréaliste*, No. 2, January 1925, Patrick Waldberg, *Surrealism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1965), p. 49. This anarchist libertarian attack is subtitled: 'There are no common-law crimes'. The obvious precursor to Breton's demand to dismantle the penal system is D. A. F. de Sade. Sade considered the law to be powerless against the extremities of human desire: 'The law, cold in itself, can never be accessible to those passions which can justify the cruel act of murder'. Georges Bataille, *Literature and Evil* (London: Calder & Boyars, 1973), p. 73.
[8] Timms and Collier, op. cit., p. 43-4.
[9] André Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, translated by Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1969), p. 125.
[10] Ibid., p. 125.
[11] François-Claudius Ravachol conducted numerous terrorist acts in and around Paris from 1891 until his arrest and execution in 1892. In retaliation for the execution of Ravachol, Auguste Vaillant threw a bomb from the gallery in the Chambers of Deputies on 9 December 1892. In an act of revenge one week after the anarchist terrorist Vaillant's execution, Emile Henry bombed the Café Terminus at the Gare Saint-Lazare in 1894. Henry was executed in April 1894. For more information on anarchist acts of violence and 'propaganda by the deed' see the relevant chapters in Woodcock, 1962 op. cit., and Marshall, op. cit..
[12] Mark Polizzotti, *Revolution of the Mind: The Life of André Breton* (London: Bloomsbury, 1995), p. 15.
[13] Ibid., p. 16.
[14] Ibid., p. 16.
[15] Ibid., p. 16.
[16] Ibid., p. 16.
[17] Ibid., p. 17.
[18] Benjamin, 1979, op. cit., p. 238.
[19] For a more detailed discussion of political position of Surrealism and Breton in particular, see Breton's 'The Political Position of Surrealism', Breton 1969, op. cit., p. 207-33; Nadeau, passim; and Peter Collier, 'Dreams of Revolutionary Culture', Timms and Collier, op. cit., p. 33-51
[20] Breton, 1978, op. cit., p. 113.
[21] Breton, 1969, op. cit., p. 132.
[22] Cited in Benjamin, 1979, op. cit., p. 236.
[23] Cited in Fromm, op. cit., p. 587.
[24] Ibid., p. 588.
[25] Benjamin, 1979, op. cit., p. 234.
[26] Ibid., p. 229.
[27] Cited in Helena Lewis, *Dada Turns Red: The Politics of Surrealism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), p. 6.

[28] Maurice Nadeau, *The History of Surrealism* translated by Richard Howard, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 153.
[29] Breton, 1978, op. cit., p. 115.
[30] According to Robert Short, the Surrealists' 'alliance' with the Clarté group and the 'Philosophers' (George Politzer, Pierre Morhange, Henri Lefebvre, Norbert Guterman, and Georges Friedmann) was 'a useful half-way house on their road towards commitment [to the PCF] and one which, unlike membership of the PCF, did not deprive them of their independence'. Robert S. Short 'The Politics of Surrealism, 1920-1936', Walter Laqueur & George L. Mosse (eds.), *The Left-Wing Intellectuals Between the Wars 1919-1939, Journal of Contemporary History 2 ed.*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 8.
[31] Timms and Collier, op. cit., p. 44.
[32] Laqueur and Mosse, op. cit., p. 13.
[33] Breton, 1978, op. cit., p. 95-6.
[34] Peter Kropotkin, *Anarchism & Anarchist Communism*, edited by Nocolas Walter (London: Freedom Press, 1987), p. 45.
[35] Breton, 1978, op. cit., p. 270.
[36] However, although it took Breton until the late 1930s to renounce party Communism, since the late 1920s many Surrealists had rejected the move towards Communism by Breton, Crével, Aragon and Queneau. An example of this is Juan Miro's response to a letter dated 12 February 1929 in which Breton, Aragon and Queneau sought responses from seventy-five artists and writers on two questions regarding the position of individual artists to revolutionary action. The letter read: 'Do you support the ideal of a group endeavour, or should we abandon all hope for concerted communal action? 1.Do you believe that you should limit your activity to one of a purely individual nature? 2. a) If so, please explain and define your position. b) If not, please define your conception of concerted communal action.' Cited in *Juan Miro, Selected Writings*, edited by Margit Rowell (New York: Da Capo, 1992), p. 107. In response to the letter, Miro made the following statement: 'There is no doubt that when action is taken, it is always the result of a collective effort. Nevertheless, I am convinced that individuals whose personalities are strong or excessive, unhealthy perhaps, deadly if you like... these people will never be able to give in to the military-like discipline that communal action necessarily demands.' Ibid., p. 108. Miro, who very rarely made explicit political statements upon his work, followed his rejection of communism with the following statement made in 1936: 'Society - whether bourgeois or aristocratic; one must resist all societies, even those that are not yet born, if they aim to impose their demands on us. The word *freedom* also has a meaning for me, and I will defend it at any cost.' Ibid., p. 150. Perhaps the important aspect of Miro's anarchism is that he makes this statement at the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. Following the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in June 1936, some Surrealists such as Benjamin Peret (who had been a member of the PCF all the time he had been a Surrealist) joined the Battalions of the Spanish Communist militia POUM. However, finding himself unable to work with the Communists, Peret later joined the anarchists, condemning his former Communist comrades. Lewis, op. cit., p. 140-2.
[37] Claude Schumacher (ed.), *Artaud on Theatre* (London: Methuen, 1989), p. 63.
[38] Laqueur and Mosse, op. cit., p. 17.
[39] Polizzotti, op. cit., p. 235.
[40] Guérin, op. cit., p. 22.
[41] Ibid., p. 34-5.
[42] Immediately prior to this the journal had been edited by Benjamin Péret and Pierre Naville.
[43] Polizzotti, op. cit., p. 232.
[44] Nadeau, p. 262-3.
[45] Antonin Artaud, *Collected Works, Volume I* translated by Victor Corti (London: Calder and Boyars, 1968), p. 179; p. 180; p. 183.
[46] Ibid., p. 181.

[47] Ibid., p. 182.
[48] Peter Wollen, *Raiding the Icebox: Reflections on Twentieth-Century Culture* (London: Verso, 1993), p. 5.
[49] Ibid., p. 5.
[50] Ibid., p. 24-5.
[51] Polizzotti, op. cit., p. 238-40.
[52] Nadeau, op. cit., p. 141.
[53] Ibid., p. 276.
[54] Ibid., p. 276.
[55] Polizzotti, op. cit., p. 233.
[56] Wollen, op. cit., p. 26.
[57] Ibid., p. 25.
[58] Nadeau, op. cit., p. 265.
[59] Ibid., p. 273.
[60] Ibid., p. 267-75.
[61] Artaud, 1968, op. cit., p. 183-4. Artaud's demand for the release of inmates from the asylums is particularly poignant as he would later spend nine years of his short life incarcerated in asylums across France, between 1937-46.
[62] Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and its Double* translated by Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1958), p. 42.
[63] Antonin Artaud, *Selected Writings*, edited by Susan Sontag, translated by Helen Weaver, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p. 105.
[64] Polizzotti, op. cit., p. 234.
[65] Ibid., p. 234.
[66] Ibid., p. 241.
[67] Hans Magnus Enzensberger, 'The Aporias of the Avant-Garde,' (1962), in *Issues in Contemporary Literary Criticism*, ed. Gregory T. Polletta (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1973), p. 745. Cited in Calinescu, op. cit., p. 111.
[68] Artaud, 1976, op. cit., p. 139.
[69] Schumacher, op. cit., p. 44.
[70] Artaud, 1976, op. cit., p. 144.
[71] Ibid., p. 140.
[72] Artaud writes: 'They [Breton, et al.] believe they can permit themselves to mock me when I speak of a metamorphosis of the soul, as if I understood soul in the disgusting sense in which they understand it, and as if from the view point of the absolute there could be the slightest interest in seeing the social armature of the world change or in seeing power pass from the hands of the bourgeoisie into those of the proletariat.' Ibid., p. 139-40. Rather than an economic transformation, Artaud was more interested in changing the 'angle of reality'. Ibid., p. 140.
[73] Breton himself confessed to Pierre Naville that he also found the discipline of the Communist Party hard to take, stating: 'You know the degree to which we are the slaves of impatience'. Laqueur and Mosse, op. cit., p. 24.
[74] Here both Artaud and Breton reveal a debt to Hegel's dialectic of consciousness in the distinction drawn between 'master' and ' slave' in G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind* translated by J. B. Baillie (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1967), p.228-40.
[75] Artaud, 1976, op. cit., p. 145. Despite his total despair in its efficacy, Artaud reaches the conclusion that action is by its very nature, irrepressible. Similarly, E.M. Cioran - perhaps the most pessimistic philosopher of the twentieth century - also comes to this conclusion. Artaud and Cioran see action in terms of rebellion and revolution, both of which they consider to be fruitless. In an essay titled 'Thinking against oneself', Cioran remarks that 'the sphere of consciousness shrinks in action' and dismisses the 'undue privilege' enjoyed by rebellion: 'what is the use of rebelling only to discover,

afterwards, a universe *intact.*' E. M. Cioran, *The Temptation to Exist*, translated by Richard Howard (London: Quartet, 1987), p. 41. However, like Artaud, Cioran is compelled to admit the existence of an uncontrollable urge to action and rebellion, where action is perhaps only the negation of a negation in an Hegelian formulation, or *active nihilism* in the Nietzschean sense: 'yet the reflex of rebellion triumphs over our doubts; and though we might have made accomplished Stoics, the anarchist keeps watch within us and opposes our resignations.' Ibid., p. 42.

[76] Guérin, op. cit., p. 28-9. It has been argued, however, that Stirner is more of a nihilist in the style of Bazarov, than an anarchist in Kropotkin's sense, 'since he destroys all propositions except those which fulfil a purely aesthetic function in the egoist's "overriding purpose of self-enjoyment and self-display".' According to Marshall, Camus saw Stirner's metaphysical revolt against God leading to 'the absolute affirmation of the individual and a kind of nihilism which "laughs in the impasse"'. Marshall, op. cit., p. 220. In the end, Artaud's anarchism is closer, perhaps, to the destructive essence of nihilism and Bakuninist anarchism than the creative anarchism promoted by Guérin.

[77] Ibid., p. 220.

[78] Schumacher, op. cit., p. 40.

[79] Ibid., p. 16.

[80] Ibid., p. 32. Earlier in 1921, whilst he was acting with Charles Dullin's Le Théâtre de l'Atelier - which he then considered to be the herald of a new direction in theatre - Artaud had written: 'There are those who go to the theatre as they would go to a brothel. Furtive pleasure. For them the theatre is only momentary excitement. It is like the dumping-ground of their need to experience pleasure through all their physical and mental senses. The hypertrophy of the theatre of entertainment has created, alongside and above the classic idea of theatre, a kind of game with easy rules which is now the norm in theatre and masks the idea of theatre itself. So that one can say that two theatres now exist: false theatre that is deceptive, easy, middle-class, a theatre for soldiers, bourgeois, businessmen, wine merchants, water-colour teachers, adventurers, whores and *Prix de Rome*, as put on by Sacha Guitry and the Boulevards and the Comédie-Française. But there is another sort of theatre that plays whenever it can, theatre conceived as the achievement of the purest human desires.' Ibid., p. 6.

[81] Ibid., p. 40.

[82] Ibid., p. 15. Artaud's insults do not end here as he continues to attack the incompetence of the bastion of the French stage: 'But it is not only tragedy. We deny your alimentary organism the right to perform any play, past, future or present.' Ibid., p. 15.

[83] Ibid., p. 40.

[84] Ibid., p. 41.

[85] Ibid., p. 39.

[86] Ibid., p. 32-3.

[87] Artaud, 1976, op. cit., p. 231.

[88] Schumacher, op. cit., p. 143.

[89] Artaud, 1958, op. cit., p. 38. It is important to note that Artaud does not banish words from the stage but rather seeks the expressive possibilities of words functioning at the level of dreams. Following the work of Freud, the nature of dreams and the unconscious were of key importance for Artaud and for the Surrealists in general, such as Breton and Salvador Dali. As Michael Allen Gillespie states, dreaming poses 'real problems for Cartesian science' as 'dreams call into question all composite things'. Gillespie, op. cit. p. 7.

[90] Schumacher, op. cit., p. 36.

[91] Ibid., p. 149.

[92] Ibid., p. 68.

[93] Ibid., p. 73. Although he does not give his new vision of theatre the title of 'the theatre of cruelty' until the 1930s, Artaud's engagement with cruelty begins during the *Alfred Jarry Theatre* and in particular his work on Strindberg's *A Dream Play*. It is in Strindberg's work, and *A Dream Play* in

particular, where we encounter the origins of Artaud's engagement with 'cosmic cruelty' as the underlying human condition.
[94] Ibid., p. 63.
[95] Derrida, 1978, op. cit., p. 235.
[96] Ibid., p. 235.
[97] Ibid., p. 235.
[98] See Jane Goodall, *Artaud and the Gnostic Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 1993.
[99] For a broader discussion of the role of derision in avant-garde theatre, see Emmanuel Jacquart, *Le Théâtre de Dérision: Beckett, Ionesco, Adamov* (Paris: Gallimard, 1974).
[100] Deak, op. cit., p. 154.
[101] It was not just theatrical performances which testified to the radical programme of the Théâtre Alfred Jarry. Alongside their presentation of the third act of Paul Claudel's *Partage di Midi* (Break of Noon) on 14 January 1928, which was performed without the author's permission, the Jarry programme included the screening of Pudovkin's version of Gorki's novel *The Mother*, in defiance of the decision by the French film censor. According to a joint statement by Artaud and Vitrac the decision to screen the film had a decidedly left-wing libertarian flavour: '*Censorship.* We got around this problem by screening Gorki's *The Mother* at a private showing by invitation only. Touch wood there is no theatre censorship yet. But we know the Chief of Police can insist on the show being cut as a result of a series of disturbances, or purely and simply suppress the show, or close the theatre. Unfortunately we have never had a long enough run to provoke such action. Nonetheless, long live freedom. *The police.* As for the police, they always step in with productions of this sort. Everyone knows this, even the right-wing Surrealists. For example, when S. M. Eisenstein delivered his lecture at the Sorbonne, there were a hundred or so policemen scattered throughout the building, not counting the Chief of Police. You can't do anything about that. You have to blame the government.' Schumacher, op. cit., p. 44.
[102] Ibid., p. 36.
[103] Ibid., p. 114.
[104] Artaud, 1958, op. cit., p. 27.
[105] Graver, op. cit., p. 217.
[106] Schumacher, op. cit., p. 32.
[107] Artaud, 1976, op. cit., p. 86.
[108] Artaud, 1958, op. cit., p. 74.
[109] Ibid., p. 76.
[110] Ibid., p. 78.
[111] Antonin Artaud, 'III L'Anarchie', *Héliogabale, ou l'anarchiste couronné* (Paris: Gallimard, 1979), p. 96. 'Toute la vie d'Héliogabale, c'est de l'anarchie en acte.' Heliogabalus was born A.D. 204, and reigned as emperor of Rome from A.D. 218 until his violent death in A.D. 222.
[112] Artaud, 1976, op. cit., p. 318.
[113] Ibid., p. 319.
[114] Ibid., p. 324; p. 332.
[115] Goodall, op. cit., p. 91.
[116] Nin, op. it., p. 239. Nin concludes that Artaud makes this remark 'because he becomes everything he writes about'. Ibid., p. 239.
[117] Ibid., p. 239. The irony of these remarks is that it was Artaud himself who was destined to be subjected to 'shocktreatment' during his war-time incarceration in the asylum at Rodez. Further evidence of the extent to which Artaud identified himself with Heliogabalus is made clear in a letter to Jean Paulhan dated 1 June 1934: 'True or not, the character of Heliogabalus lives, I think, to the depths of his being, whether these depths be those of Heliogabalus the historical figure or those of a character who is myself.' Artaud, 1976, op. cit., p. 337
[118] Ibid., p. 323.

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[119] Ibid., p. 348.
[120] Schumacher, op. cit., p. xxiii.
[121] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (New York: Viking Press, 1977), p. 278. As Artaud writes: 'A strange rhythm punctuates the cruelty of Heliogabalus; this initiate does everything with art and everything in pairs. I mean that he does everything on two levels. Each of his gestures is double-edged: 'Order, Disorder,/ Unity, Anarchy,/ Poetry, Dissonance,/ Rhythm, Discord,/ Grandeur, Childishness,/ Generosity, Cruelty.' Artaud, 1976, op. cit., p. 326-7. Deleuze and Guattari read these states as stratifications of territory and deterritorialisation, the polarity of the molar and the molecular
[122] Ibid., p. 320.
[123] Guérin, op. cit., p. 27.
[124] Cited in Ibid., p. 28.
[125] Ibid., p. 28.
[126] Artaud, 1976, op. cit., p. 320.
[127] Ibid., p. 328.
[128] Ibid., p. 323-4.
[129] Goodall, op. cit., p. 93.
[130] Artaud, 1976, op. cit., p. 323.
[131] Ibid., p. 319.
[132] Ibid., p. 325. Heliogabalus continues his grotesque project of the 'debasement of values, of monstrous moral disorganization', by selecting the ministers of his royal court 'according to the enormity of their members.' In Artaud's view: 'All political structures, all forms of government seek above all to control the young.' Ibid., p. 325. Heliogabalus, too, may seek to control Roman youth, but in contrast to the State's domination through purity and morality, the young Emperor displays his power by 'systematically perverting them'. Ibid., p. 325. According to Artaud's version of events, 'Once he has arrived in Rome, Heliogabalus banishes men form the senate and replaces them with women'. Records reveal that the Emperor Heliogabalus did appoint the first woman to the Roman senate as 'a restoration of balance, a logical return to the law, since it was woman, the first born, the first arrival in the cosmic order, who was responsible for making the first laws.' Ibid., p. 320.
[133] Guérin, op. cit., p. 29.
[134] Artaud, 1976, op. cit., p. 319.
[135] Ibid., p. 327.
[136]Pierre Klossowski, *Sade My Neighbour*, translated by Alphonso Lingis (London: Quartet, 1992), p. 62.
[137] Artaud, 1976, op. cit., p. 318; my italics.
[138] Moi, op. cit., p. 49.
[139] Ibid., p. 49.
[140] Derrida, 1978, op. cit., p. 249.
[141] Michael Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, cited in *Marxism and Art: Essays Classic and Contemporary*, edited by Maynard Solomom (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979), p. 295. Talk of comedy and laughter may seem unusual in relation to the theatre of cruelty. Christopher Innes comments that 'comedy is signally absent' in Artaud. Innes, op. cit., p. 8. But as we have seen, this is not precisely true. Artaud's interest in comedy is for 'Humour as Destruction' and his laughter is a nihilistic cosmic laughter: In many respects, *Heliogabalus* can be perceived as an Artaudian version of the Marx Brothers' comic films, *Monkey Business* and *Duck Soup*.
[142] Solomon, op. cit., p. 296.
[143] It must be recognised that power has another face. The power wielded by Heliogabalus or by the crowd functions on a level below the real execution of power. The monarch can be overthrown or maintained by the sanction of the army, in this case the Praetorian Guard - the emperor's personal troops. Ultimately, the power over Heliogabalus' fate as head of state lies, not in the hands of the

crowd in the street, but in the allegiance of the Army. (It is for this reason that upon his accession to power Hitler had the German army swear allegiance to his name). The army alone, a semi-autonomous mercenary agency, acting on the command of the Prefect, has the power to seize the crown by provoking the violence of the crowd, an insurrection it can later forcibly suppress. The army went over to Heliogabalus principally for mercenary reasons; they regretted having backed Macrinus against Caracalla, as after becoming emperor Macrinus cut the soldier's pay. Artaud, 1976, op. cit., p. 625. Although Heliogabalus was familiar to the Praetorian Guard as a cousin of Caracalla and high priest of the temple of Elagabalus the Sun God, their service under his command was purely pragmatic; consequently the allegiance of the army was subject to change at any given time in order to serve their best interests. For a time, the Roman State appears to be functioning harmoniously (if irreverently) through a series of anarcho-syndicalist associations of mutual aid; the court of Heliogabalus, the Praetorian Guard, the public. Inevitably, as this system starts to breakdown, the latent power structure of force emerges and the army reasserts its control. The spontaneous uprising of the crowd and their violence against Heliogabalus and his mother, serves then in the interests of the army, as an instrument in the restoration of the law. The death of Heliogabalus and his mother at the hands of the crowd is a repetition of the initial overthrow of Macrinus, which in turn is mirrored in the death of Alexander Severus and his mother Julia Mamaea murdered by the army in AD 235. Ibid., p. 625. It is through repetition that Roman law is reinstated. As Zizek states in a discussion of the assassination of Julius Ceasar, this 'repetition announces the advent of the Law, of the Name-of-the-Father in place of the dead, assassinated father: the event which repeats itself receives its law retroactively, through repetition'. Zizek, 1989, op. cit., p. 61-2. It is perhaps for this reason, in order to escape the encroachment of all laws, that Artaud desires to dismiss repetition from his event-structured theatre of cruelty. As an anarchist, Heliogabalus exhibits the auto-destructive qualities of the avant-garde exhibited in the manifestations of Futurism, Dada and Surrealism. We might also suggest that the failure of Artaud-Heliogabalus to defeat the forces of order is the failure endemic to the avant-garde. However, despite the fact that Heliogabalus' revolt was short-lived, the very brevity of his reign and his youthful exuberance concentrated the impact of his insurrection. He did not grow old and mellow, rather he died as he had lived 'in a state of open rebellion'. For its duration, Heliogabalus' rebellion was continual and frantic: 'It is here that there is revealed a kind of superior anarchy in which his profound restlessness catches fire, and he runs from jewel to jewel, from outburst to outburst, from form to form, and from flame to flame, as if he were running from soul to soul in a mysterious odyssey which no one after him ever repeated.' Artaud, 1976, op. cit., p. 329.

[144] Schumacher, op. cit., p. 147.

[145] Antonin Artaud, *The Cenci* translated by Simon Watson-Taylor (London: Calder and Boyars, 1969), p. 17.

[146] Geoffrey Gorer, 'Anarchy 1794?', *The Life and Ideas of the Marquis de Sade* (London: Panther, 1963), p. 123-4. Sade's opinions on the uselessness of laws are expanded upon in the novel *Justine*, the important section of which is quoted Ibid. p. 123-126. There is a parallel between the incarcerations of Sade and Artaud as well as with the imprisonment of Genet which is beyond the scope of the present thesis.

[147] Schumacher, op. cit., p. 147.

[148] Ibid., p. 144. Nevertheless, Artaud is keen to reassure Gide that 'the production of *Les Cenci* must not be a continuous howl of protest', as he is not an *'out and out* anarchist'. Ibid., p. 145.

[149] Ibid., p. 145-6.

[150] Artaud's call for the destruction of the family follows Marx and Engels' critique of the 'latent slavery in the family' produced under the economic conditions of capitalism. See Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works Volume I* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1970), p. 34. In a more philosophical and psychological context, David Cooper has argued: 'It is fatuous to speak of the death of God or the death of Man... until we can fully envisage *the death of the family* - that system which, as its social obligation, obscurely filters out most of our experience and then deprives our acts

of any genuine and generous spontaneity.' David Cooper, *The Death of the Family* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p. 7-8. In this context, Artaud's attack on the repression of the family is on all fronts, political, philosophical and psychoanalytical.

[151] Schumacher, op. cit., p. 146. For further comment on the role of the double see Otto Rank, *The Double: A Psychoanalytic Study* translated and edited by Harry Tucker, Jr. (North Carolina: University of North Carolina, 1971, [1914]) and Freud's 'The "Uncanny"' (1919) in Sigmund Freud, *Art and Literature: Jensen's* Gradiva, *Leonardo De Vinci and Other Works* translated by James Strachey, Penguin Freud Library Volume 14 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), p. 339-76.

[152]Artaud, 1969, op. cit., p. 19.

[153] Ibid., p. 18.

[154] Emmanual Jacquart considered verbal experimentation of this kind as evidence of an avant-garde 'theatre of derision', claiming: 'le Théâtre de Dérision a bouleversé le domaine de l'expression verbale'; 'The theatre of derision shatters the domain of verbal expression'. Jacquart, op. cit. p. 197. My translation.

[155] Artaud, 1969, op. cit., p. 10.

[156] Ibid., p. 55. Stage directions for Beatrice in prison, *Cenci*, Act IV sc iii. Iya Abdy, the actress playing Beatrice, refused in the end to be suspended by her hair and Artaud had to settle for her bondage to the wheel upright on stage. For further references to prison-society or factory-machine (and accompanying fatalism) see Act III sc i p. 41; and throughout Strindberg's pessimistic drama *A Dream Play*.

[157] Deleuze and Guattari, op. cit., p. 145.

[158]In *To have done with the judgement of God*, Artaud denounces the exploitation of the body by the state war-machine, in particular the capitalist war-machine of America which, he claimed, made a practice of taking sperm samples from schoolchildren in order to create soldiers. Artaud, 1976, op. cit., p. 555. Artaud's account of the American public school transformed into a cum-factory of libidinal exploitation and genetic experimentation (similar to the Nazi concentration camps) designed to ensure the superiority of American 'muscle', may appear hysterical and ridiculous, the result of the insane rantings of a madman. Nonetheless, Artaud's vision of the American war-machine proved to be prophetic. It is worth recalling that the period of American history during which Artaud was beginning to be translated and widely read in America (the 60s and 70s) had witnessed the escalation of American involvement in the Vietnam war. The increased drafting of US soldiers, or 'musclepower', to Vietnam after 1964 resulted in the tragic loss of many thousands of American male youth (the average age of soldiers in Vietnam was 19), a stock continually replenished from newly drafted college graduates. To many it seemed America was indeed devouring its sons and the true prophetic significance of Artaud's words was finally revealed. Ultimately, news reports and images of dead and wounded American soldiers, and of the atrocities many had committed in the name of freedom, would contribute to growing support for the anti-war movement, and the gradual evacuation of American troops from Vietnam which marked the end one of the most disastrous wars in US history. Here we may recall the line: 'the youth they have destroyed engulfs them in their own tomb.' (Artaud, 1969, p. 59). Furthermore, in his integral attack on the asylum (and by extension the Oedipal matrix sustained by psychiatrists, psychoanalysis and the state), Artaud draws attention to the punitive functions of psychiatry in its evolution as a mechanism for moral surveillance and an increasingly sophisticated state apparatus, an interpretation prefigured by Stirner's comment that 'the theory of cure runs parallel to the theory of punishment' later expanded upon by Foucault in two books *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* translated by Alan Sheridan (London: Allen lane, 1977) and *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* translated by Richard Howard (London: Tavistock, 1967).

[159]In words echoing the content of Kropotkin's study *Mutual Aid*, Artaud laments the absence of a trans-individual collectivism of effort in the execution of *The Cenci*, of the mutual aid nature of the ensemble, which existed in other countries and other companies and which he considered to be an

integral component of his overall company concept: 'Whatever their determination, their deep-rooted desire to do well, one cannot ask actors who come from all kinds of backgrounds and who, as individuals, have nothing in common, this kind of sacred cohesion, this consciousness of *mutual effort* which belonged in other countries and in other times to companies with a long tradition in collective work.' Schumacher, op. cit., p. 150. My italics.

[160] See Hewitt, 'Decadence and Nationalism', op. cit., p. 68-101.

[161] Artaud, *Œuvres Complete*, vol. xxvi (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), p. 140-1. Unpublished translation by Claude Schumacher.

[162] Schumacher, op. cit., p. 151.

[163] Ibid., p. 151.

[164] Ibid., p. 181. In noting Artaud's 'tragic stutterings' Saillet returns us to the etymology of barbarism in the Sanskrit, 'barabara: to stutter'.

[165] Ibid., p. 180.

[166] Ibid., p. 180. The context of Artaud's letters to Breton was his refusal to participate in the International Surrealist Exhibition which Breton and Duchamp were organizing for the Galarie Maeght in Paris, and which took place form July to September 1947. Artaud condemned the stripping of the potency of Surrealism through its containment in 'art', stating '*exhibited*, the object is *castrated*'. Ibid. p. 183. He concludes: 'Make revolutionary art but make art, don't start a revolution in life or you will be murdered.' Ibid. p. 184. In his refusal of the calcification of art in the object in favour of a simultaneously visceral and dematerialized aesthetic, Artaud anticipates much of the developments and positions in postwar avant-garde, such as Happenings, Fluxus, Conceptual Art and Performance Art.

[167] Ibid., p. 181.

[168] Ibid., p. 181.

[169] Derrida, 1978, op. cit., p. 194.

[170] Artaud, 1994, op. cit., p. 140-1.

[171] Antonin Artaud, 'L'Anarchie sociale de l'art', *Messages Révolutionaires* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), p. 127-9. Unpublished translation by Claude Schumacher. Artaud wrote these manifesto-lectures in French and they were translated and published in Spanish. However, after Artaud lost his manuscripts the manifesto-lectures had to be retranslated back into French. I am indebted to Claude Schumacher for this information.

[172] Raphael, op. cit., p. 10.

[173] Paraphrasing a hypothetical response by Gustave Courbet - the greatest exponent of Proudhon's critical realism - to the anarchist philosopher's criticism of the painter's art, Proudhon writes: 'Do you know who the painter has as his models today? Avarice, gambling, pride, lust, greedy indolence, ruthlessness in using others and prostitution. I can only restore to the public what I am lent. It is not my fault if people recoil at the sight of their own image.' Edwards, op. cit., p. 217.

[174] Raphael, op. cit., p. 37.

[175] Artaud, 1971, op. cit., p. 129. If any artist gave voice to the anguish of the experience of the war, at this time, it was Pablo Picasso in *Guernica* of 1937. The Spanish Civil War, which began in July 1936, witnessed the most effective period of anarchist organisation in its history. However, the guerrilla tactics of the anarchists could not hold out against the heavy artillery of fascism. A former anarchist himself, Picasso's commitment to illustrating the barbarism of the Spanish Civil War makes concrete the abstractions of Artaud's demand that art have a social duty 'to voice the anguish of its epoch'.

[176] It must be remembered, however, that according to Artaud not all artists or epochs are capable of joining the ranks of the avant-garde: 'all artists are not able to reach that kind of magic identification of their own feelings with the collective rage of all men. And all epochs are not able to appreciate the social importance of the artist and the safeguard that he offers for the good of all' (Artaud, 1971, p. 129). To safeguard against such a catastrophe, in *The Theatre and its Double*, Artaud calls - as did

Cherneshevsky, Turgenev's Bazarov, and Nietzsche - for a new race of men to emerge who are strong enough to take on the destructive mantle of the avant-garde, to apply the necessary cruelty to accelerate the moral sclerosis of a corrupt society: 'the question we must now ask is whether, in this slippery world which is committing suicide without noticing it, there can be found a nucleus of men capable of imposing this superior notion of the theatre, men who will restore to all of us the natural and magic equivalent of the dogmas in which we no longer believe.' (Artaud, 1958, p. 32.) The dogmas in which Artaud's new men and women no longer believe are the dogmas of reason, civilisation, culture, literature, art and theatre itself.

[177] Nietzsche, 1968, op. cit., p. 18.

[178] Lewis, op. cit., p. 143.

[179] Ibid., p. 147.

[180] Lewis, p. 146.

[181] Ibid., p. 146-7. Trotsky even vetoed Breton's last line which read, '*except against the revolution*' on the grounds that it was an open invitation to a return to the repression of artistic freedom.

[182] Ibid., p. 147-8.

[183]Pietro Ferrua, *Surréalisme et Anarchisme*, Le Monde Libertaire, Paris, 1982, 5. Breton wrote for *Libertaire* from 1951 to 1953. see J. Pierre ed. *Surréalisme et Anarchie: Les "billets surréalistes" du Libertaire 12 octobre 1951 - 8 janvier 1953* (Paris: Plasma, 1983), passim. It is interesting to note that the Lettrist Maurice Lemaitre also wrote for *Libertîare* during this time. Lemaitre collaborated with Isidore Isou on numerous Lettriste performances and texts, such as Isou's *Antonin Artaud Torturé Par Les Psychiatres (les ignobles erreurs de andr`ee breton, tristan tzara, robert desnos et claude bourdet dans l'affaire de l'internement d'antonin artaud* for which Lemaitre contributed the text 'Qui est le Docteur Ferdière?' (Paris: Centre de Creativite, 1970)

[184] Lewis, op. cit., p. 171. The intention behind Breton's explicit alignment with anarchism in the early fifties was not a return to the early negative phase of Surrealism, argues Lewis, but rather 'to hail the black flag of anarchism in the name of liberty.' Ibid., p. 170.

[185] Benjamin, 1979, op. cit., p. 236.

[186] T.W. Adorno, *Notes on Literature, volume one* translated by Shierry Weber Nicholson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 89.

[187] Woodcock, 1977, op. cit., p. 158.

[188] Ibid., p. 159. Goldman's view of the failure of the Russian Revolution is perhaps best borne out by the slaughter of anarchist sailors by Trotsky's Red Army at Kronstadt in 1924.

[189] Ibid., p. 161.

[190] Ibid., p. 153.

[191] Ibid., p. 161.

[192] Striner, op. cit., p. 316. In the post-war avant-garde this anti-institutional attitude is taken up in Alexander Trocchi's anti-university, a free network of information exchange, which he titled 'Sigma'. See 'Sigma: A Tactical Blueprint' and 'The Invisible Insurrection of a Million Minds' in *The Invisible Insurrection of a Million Minds: A Trocchi Reader*, edited by Andrew Murray Scott (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1991).

[193] They also shed light on Artaud's radical vision of a 'body without organs'. In his study of *Anarcho-Syndicalism* Rudolf Rocker writes 'Every new social structure makes organs for itself in the body of the old organism.' Rocker, op. cit., p. 89. Nevertheless, Anarcho-Syndicalists 'were firmly convinced that the liquidation of all institutions of political power must be the first task of the social revolution, so as to make any new form of exploitation impossible.' Ibid., p. 76. Thus, an anarchist reading of Artaud's 'body without organs' emerges as an image of a radical new society without coercive institutions of the state.

[194] In the alchemical theatre 'the human body [acts] as a kettle or melting-pot'. Jack Hirschman (ed.), *Artaud Anthology*, San Francisco: City Lights, 1968. p. 146.

[195] Near the end of *The Cenci* Beatrice makes a short speech in which she renounces her soul and by

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extension God: '... I renounce a soul bruised by the harsh business of living, and hurl that soul back in the face of the God who made me, as a blazing fire to cure him of creating.' Artaud, 1969, op. cit., p. 56.
[196] In Artaud's eyes, the apocalypse is 'smouldering' in Van Gogh's paintings. Hirschman, op. cit., p. 149.
[197] Artaud, 1985, op. cit., p. 391.
[198] Antonin Artaud, *The Death of Satan & Other Mystical Writings*, translated by Alastair Hamilton and Victor Corti (London: Calder & Boyars, 1974), p. 77.
[199] Ibid., p. 64.
[200] Ibid., p. 89.
[201] As suggested above, Artaud's tone and rhetoric bears many similarities to apocryphal writings, for example; 'It will be war, all this will be the war of the Son against the Holy Ghost and the war of the Christ against the antichrist. With these two primordial forces of Nature entering into conflict, it is not difficult to understand the importance of the conflict and the terrible stake involved, but above all the formidable power of the antichrist supported by the Holy Ghost. But since the force of life is exhausted, the antichrist, who represents life and attachment to the forms of life, will be destroyed, not without destroying himself and causing the destruction of many things and many people.' Artaud, 1985, op. cit., p. 409.
[202] Ibid., p. 402-3.
[203] Artaud, 1974, op. cit., p. 88.
[204] Ibid., p. 81.
[205] Ibid., p. 79.
[206] Artaud, 1985, op. cit., p. 403.
[207] Artaud, 1974, op. cit., p. 81.
[208] Ibid., p. 9.
[209] Ibid., p. 9.
[210] Ibid., p. 71.
[211] For instance Artaud writes, 'the Masses will fall once more under the yoke and it is right they should be under the yoke'. This would apparently ally Artaud to fascism, since he had already dedicated the text to Hitler. In Artaud's reading it is right that the masses should be 'under the yoke' because, echoing Mussolini's fascism, they do not posses the 'will to power', though Artaud does not distinguish under which yoke: fascism or democracy. Yet although at times politically ambiguous, in Artaud's view *The New Revelations of Being* is antagonistic to Fascism. In a letter to Breton, Artaud states: 'If I say in the pamphlet that the left is politically doomed, that does not mean the Right is going to rule, for the Right I have in mind is the Right of Man and not the stupid Reaction. The Right must be swept away *with* the left and *after* having swept away the left, so that the Natural Right... can come into power.' Artaud, 1985, op. cit., p. 401-2. Here we must recollect that *The New Revelations of Being* are dedicated to Hitler. Here Artaud is again doubling himself, and Artaud-Hitler is the ultimate force of mass destruction. This fact is generally dismissed as a delusion, with critics uncomfortable with the fascistic tendencies of Artaud. However this is not to suggest that Artaud is a Fascist sympathiser. On the contrary, Artaud recognises that the evil of Fascism is not an alien invention but a human one. As Deleuze and Guattari attest, the micro-fascism in the individual all too easily changes into macro-fascism of the state unless it is revealed and confronted for what it is through the practice of schizo-analysis.
[212] Artaud, 1974, op. cit., p. 10.
[213] Marvin Carlson, 'The Theory of History', in Sue-Ellen Case and Janette Reinert *The Performance of Power* (Iowa: University o Iowa Press, 1991), p. 278.

Conclusion

Conclusion

The Theatricalization and Death of the Avant-Garde

This thesis begins and ends in the destruction of war. If the destructive character of the avant-garde begins with the destruction of ruins, in the catastrophe of World War I, it ends with the ruins of destruction, in the auto-destruction of the Enlightenment project at Auschwitz and Hiroshima.

'There is no document of civilization,' wrote Walter Benjamin, 'which is not at the same time a document of barbarism'.[1] This dialectic of the Enlightenment is also the dialectic of the avant-garde. Employing the paradigm of theatricalization as an appropriate model for the political re-assessment of the avant-garde moments of Futurism, Dada and Surrealism, I suggested that each avant-garde demonstrates and displays a destructive character. I then argued that this destructive character, which emerges in relation to the anti-authoritarian and anti-bourgeois principles of anarchism and nihilism, manifests a theatricalization of emancipation and an aestheticization of politics at the moment of the self-dramatization of self-determination in the avant-garde manifesto.

I then examined Peter Bürger's claim that the avant-garde attempts to reintegrate art with the praxis of everyday life and thereby assaults the 'institution of art' in bourgeois society and the autonomous status of art in

Aestheticism. Or, as Benjamin would put it, rather than the aestheticization of politics immanent in Aestheticism and fascism, the avant-garde demonstrates the politicization of art. Nevertheless, I demonstrated that the performative and theatrical modality of the manifestos and manifestations of the avant-garde suggest that aestheticization is immanent to the very emergence of the avant-garde. Further, it was found that, although the avant-garde desired the integration of art and life, as Bürger claimed, each avant-garde nonetheless adhered to the principle of individual autonomy and artistic freedom. I concluded, therefore, that the integral revolution of everyday life (politicization) demanded by the avant-garde could only be realized through intensifying the principle of autonomy (aestheticization). Thus, the avant-garde enters into a dialectic of aestheticization and politicization. It was suggested that the extreme articulation of this dialectic of politicization and aestheticization comes in the simultaneous libertarian and barbarian destructive character manifested by the historical avant-garde.

As a result of the proximity of theatricalization and aestheticization, immanent in the destructive character of the avant-garde, this thesis claims that we can no longer maintain Benjamin's polarity between the aestheticization of politics (fascism) and the politicization of art (communism). Rather, we must face the possibility that the libertarian-barbarian dialectic of the avant-garde conflates these terms in the moment of theatricalization. In

this sense, our conclusion parallels Andrew Hewitt's claim that the avant-garde manifesto questions the separability of aesthetics and politics.

In similar fashion, I have argued that the paradigm of theatricalization-aestheticization emergent within the destructive character of the avant-garde requires that we re-examine the terms of Bürger's dialectic between Aestheticism and the avant-garde. Here, with regards to the avant-garde desire for the unification of art and life, attention turned towards the terms of 'incarnation' (Aestheticism) and 'integration' *(avant-garde). Through an* examination of avant-garde manifestos and manifestations (which Bürger suggests are indicative of both the avant-garde's rejection of autonomous art and its desire for the destruction of the institution of art), I argued that the 'integration' of art and life in the 'intensification of participation' demanded by the theatricality and performativity of the avant-garde manifesto and manifestation, has much in common with the 'incarnation' of life into art of Aestheticist discourse. The 'intensification of participation' implied in the manifestos and manifestations of the avant-garde, through the provocation of the 'audience' to action, was articulated with reference both to their origins in the aesthetic experiments of symbolist theatre and to the politics of revolutionary direct action in sabotage and terrorism (themselves subject to an aestheticization of politics). Initially these intensifications come in the form of the 'shock' tactics used to *épater les bourgeois*. But, finally, the

'intensifications' of the avant-garde are aestheticized in the extreme manifestations of war, revolution and apocalypse.

In the context of Habermas' analysis of the structural transformation of the public sphere, it was suggested that, in its theatricality and performativity, the avant-garde manifesto is consonant with the retheatricalization and refeudalization of the public sphere. Refeudalization represents not the 'publicness' of bourgeois representative democracy but the 'publicity' of mass democracy and consumer capitalism. As Baz Kershaw has pointed out, the condition of theatricalization which Habermas associates with the refeudalization of the public sphere has infiltrated every level of contemporary life in mass democratic society:

> [M]odern democracies, including the ones thrown up in the wake of 1989, may be described with some accuracy as *performative democracies* in order to indicate how fully they rely upon various types of performance for the maintenance of their political processes and political structures. Moreover, late-capitalist liberal democracies reinforce this tendency by making the market so central to social organization. Although the 'performance' of companies, firms, shares, employees, institutions, etc., may be measured primarily in mundane material and/or statistical ways, the notion that they are 'players' on an economic or industrial or civil 'stage' is always implied by the usage. Equally, how individuals fare in the competition between life-styles or the struggle for survival depends increasingly on their ability to 'perform'. Hence late-capitalist multi-party democracies produce societies in which performance pervades cultural process: it becomes the *sine qua non* of human exchange in virtually all spheres of the social.[2]

This, it would appear, is the final resting place of Calinescu's 'aesthetic individualism'; that is to say, the corollary of the avant-garde's heroic quest for a revolutionary self is the new barbarism of late-capitalist 'life-style'

consumerism. Thus the avant-garde manifesto, conceived as a mode both of making public and of publicity, of 'self-dramatization' and 'self-publicity,' is complicit with strategies of commodification. The approaches of both Benjamin and Bürger, and the analysis of Calinescu, therefore, fail to recognise the fact that, immanent within the theatricalization of the avant-garde is a retheatricalization and refeudalization of the public sphere, consonant with the theatricality of late-capitalism and mass consumerist democracies.

In other words, the avant-garde manifesto and manifestation produces the very conditions of the consumption of art, which the desire to re-integrate art and life sought to destroy. In the resultant aestheticization of the public sphere, implicit in the discourse of theatricalization, the avant-garde raises the spectre of the 'society of the spectacle', that is to say, of its own recuperation, consumption and death. Calinescu intimates this in a remark upon the much heralded death of the avant-garde: '[The avant-garde] was dying because it was recognized as artistically significant by the same class whose values it so drastically rejected'.[3] What Calinescu articulates, then, is the commonplace lament about the death of the avant-garde at the hands of the bourgeoisie through a recuperation of its anti-art strategies. This is perhaps the condition to which Habermas refers when he considers that: 'What has remained is the avant-garde as an institution.'[4]

However, what the bourgeoisie consume, it is implied, is only the radical *aesthetics* of the avant-garde, and not its radical *politics*. If we could only retrieve the radical politics of the avant-garde, the argument usually runs, we could resist the process of the avant-garde's commodification and death. What I have tried to suggest throughout this thesis, through the paradigm of theatricalization, is that there is no articulation of avant-garde politics which is free from the process of aestheticization. Subsequently, it follows, there is no avant-garde which can be retrieved outside the space of consumption. This is the spectre which haunts the avant-garde at the very moment of its manifestation.

The historical avant-garde, then, attempts to address a consumer society through the contradictory agency of the manifesto in order to re-invigorate the critical publicity of a participatory public sphere and thereby redress its corruption as a bourgeois ideology. Nonetheless, the strategy of theatricalization demonstrated and displayed in the manifestos and manifestations of avant-garde testifies to the very waning of the public sphere itself. As Habermas laments: 'The world fashioned by the mass media is a public sphere in appearance only.'[5]

Implied in any theory of the avant-garde is a reading of its history. In this thesis, the avant-garde is characterized as a theatre of destruction, an approach which addresses the avant-garde's self-conscious theatricalization of History. Drawing upon Nietzsche's theory of the eternal recurrence of the

same, I argued that a theatricalization of History is manifest in the repetition of the self-dramatization of the destructive character of the avant-garde in the examples of Futurism, Dada and Surrealism. Such self-dramatization, I concluded, is immanent to the manifesto form and its self-proclaimed entry into History. With the avant-garde, History is not a process but an *event*. The avant-garde's catastrophic vision of History is claimed and proclaimed anew in each manifesto and bodies forth in the twin images of revolution and apocalypse.

The avant-garde constructs its identity in the wings of History. It takes the stage only in order to destroy it.

[1] Benjamin, 1973, op. cit., p. 248.
[2] Baz Kershaw, *The Radical in Performance: Between Brecht and Baudrillard* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 13.
[3] Calinescu, op. cit., p. 120.
[4] Habermas, 1989, op. cit., p. 175.
[5] Ibid., p. 171.

Epilogue

In a letter to Paule Thévenin, dated 24 February 1948, written following the banning of the radio broadcast of *To Have Done With the Judgement of God* (and a little over a week before he died), Artaud returns to his prophetic vision of the theatre of cruelty:

> I will devote myself from now on
> exclusively
> to the theatre
> as I conceive it,
> a theatre of blood,
> a theatre which at each performance will stir
> something
> in the body
> of the performer as well as the spectator of the play,
> but actually,
> the actor does not perform
> he creates.
> Theatre is in reality the genesis of creation:
> It will come about.[1]

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[1] Schumacher, op. cit., p. 200.

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Illustrations