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Notes on Activist Practices Behind the Iron Curtain

Liberation Theologies, Experimental Institutionalism, Expanded Art and Minor Literature

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Conceptualism – Intersectional Readings, International Framings

Situating 'Black Artists
& Modernism' in Europe

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Notes on Activist Practices Behind the Iron Curtain: Liberation Theologies, Experimental Institutionalism, Expanded Art and Minor Literature

Christa-Maria Lerm Hayes

The stakes are getting higher for activist art in many countries today, at a time when the West and Western modernity have been identified as ripe for change. The project FORMER WEST (2008–16) was carried out by BAK – basis voor actuele kunst, Utrecht and the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven and other partners. In the concluding publication, much work was conducted on ways of ‘forming’ the West, especially in terms of postcolonial and decolonial discourse (Hlavajova & Sheikh 2016). My own Central European background led me to contributions by Chto Delat, who provided a Perestroika timeline, Boris Groys and the title image by Július Koller, *Question Mark Cultural Situation (U.F.O.)* (1992). This question mark/infinity sign points to the genealogies of protest and the never-ending, questioning work of activism.¹

Holding the *Former West: Art and the Contemporary After 1989* book in my hands on its release, I had a very specific question, which I think was not so explicitly addressed in the book: How can the West be ‘formed’ through the practices that brought about the peaceful or ‘Velvet’ revolution of 1989?² The West incorporated this region into its markets and systems nearly seamlessly, but not equally. It infantilised its citizens, especially dissidents, by, for example, not asking what it could learn from the East. In the art



context, the beginnings of Manifesta, the European Biennial of Contemporary Art and documenta 12 are exceptions through their inclusion of Eastern European positions. The number of exhibitions recouping Eastern European material has been growing in recent years. Yet I still think that it is time to further study dissident artists from behind the Iron Curtain during the Cold War who contributed to a climate that enabled the peaceful revolution of 1989: their in 1989 ultimately successful practices may be particularly necessary as we find that the formerly 'free' West has turned less democratic.

This is not to say that postcolonial and decolonial work should not be done, or that the FORMER WEST's focus was misguided, but rather that there is more work to be done looking into the colonial mechanisms and connecting them to their aftermath within Europe (Ireland being close to my heart). Questions of comparability between experiences and regions, remain. David Dibosa drew attention to this during the 'Conceptualisms – Intersectional Readings, International Framings' conference: the topic of transcontinental solidarity and shared experience in art and activism is usually absent from discussions that are frequently centred on one region.

As complement to FORMER WEST, I would here like to focus on how artists have experimentally 'instituted otherwise' (to echo both a motto of BAK and Charles Esche's experimental institutionalism). This involved searching for and 'using' an internationally connected institution that was often willing to be experimented with, the church, as well as an interest in the liberating elements of canonical literature (which for the present purposes includes both the Bible and what one can call 'minor literature', mostly avant-garde writing) and expanded concepts of art (Joseph Beuys et al.). A framework for where these elements meet can be found in liberation theologies and cultural practitioners'

investment in them. I cannot, of course, do justice to the many movements and specific contexts that made up and still constitute liberation theologies. They all interpret the life of Jesus Christ as focused on the poor and bind their early, not yet institutionalised Christian impetus with their communities' experience of persecution and struggles for civil and human rights. Liberation theologies originate from the Catholic context of Central and South America,³ while Black Theology or Black Liberation Theology draws inspiration from Dr Martin Luther King, Jr and Malcom X.

One way to convey commonalities and mutual inspiration or solidarity between those who found themselves repressed across the globe, is to consider shared experiences, like the singing of the 1900 gospel song 'We Shall Overcome' in the global civil rights movements since the 1960s. But what artistic, aesthetic approaches can go with this? I am afraid to say that it is not that exemplified by the Washington memorial to Dr Martin Luther King, Jr unveiled in 2011 by President Barack Obama. Victor Margolin has incisively analysed its many faults:

Lei Yixin's experience as a creator of Chairman Mao statues (...) contradicts the narrative of Dr. King's life. (...) Sculpture based on the tenets of Socialist Realism was adopted as well by authoritarian leaders around the world. (...) The point of being 'with' the people rather than 'above' them was missed. (...) The choice of a black artist would have (had) significance in that a major issue of black history is the earlier exclusion of black workers from good jobs as well as the exclusion of black artists from the art world. (...) What makes the (...) Memorial most problematic in the end is the inability of the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial Project Foundation to understand the parameters within which its meaning is and will continue to be determined. (...) The totality of meaning depends on a relation between the work's appearance and the conditions of its production – (...) all the (...) factors



that, in this case, contradict the spirit of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s life and what he fought for (Margolin 2012, pp. 400–8).

What would have been a more appropriate aesthetics or artistic approach? Has such work been developed elsewhere in line with King's legacy, following his 'I Have a Dream' speech, 1963, or his assassination in 1968? In keeping with my interest to add to the Eastern European focus implied by the FORMER WEST project, I will try to find it behind the Iron Curtain.

The countries behind the Iron Curtain were generally religion-adverse. In the Marxist public sphere, religious belief was considered as the oft-quoted Marx statement goes, the 'opium of the people', and substituted with secular rituals linked to the communist party. The Eastern bloc had abstained from signing the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, but joined the Helsinki Accords in 1975, which enshrined the human rights of freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief. Maintaining a façade of enabling human dignity better than the West, one did not want to flout certain rights too overtly, which one had accepted in Helsinki.

Differences existed, of course, between Eastern/Central European countries: the People's Republic of Poland and the German Democratic Republic are two key examples here. In Poland, the Catholic Church had preserved the Polish language and culture while the country historically did not exist (for over 100 years until 1918) and had thus achieved strong emotional ties among the broad population. This was vastly enhanced by Karol Wojtyła's ascension to the papal throne as John Paul II in 1978, followed by much church-building. With its strong ties to Rome, the Catholic Church in Poland was not overtly critical of the system. Individual priests, such as Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, who expressed views in line with liberation theologies, suffered for it by being imprisoned for his anti-Stalinist

stance and prevented from international travel for support of Solidarność (the Solidarity union). The ascent of Solidarność in the 1980s profited from international models in the fight for democracy (Lichanski 2009, pp. 597–610).

In East Germany, the Protestant – that is, Lutheran – Church dominated. While some decades earlier, it had largely succumbed to the Hitler regime, the post-war church-led resistance against the Communist dictatorship remembered two notable pastors. One was Martin Niemöller, who penned the famous lines beginning 'First they came for the Socialists...', where at the end there was nobody to speak up for him, when they came to arrest him. He spent the last seven years of Nazi rule in concentration camps. The other, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who had conspired to overthrow the Nazi regime, was executed in 1944. The Lutheran Church in East Germany was no monolith, but on the basis of these examples, many wished to respond better to the challenges that the totalitarianism of the Communist regime posed.

In theological circles in the traditionally somewhat rebellious German university town of Jena, Latin American liberation theology was directly, ecumenically inspirational (Dietrich 2017; Neubert 1998, pp. 293–4). Student parishes and youth groups held reading and discussion groups, organised theatre productions, ecological initiatives, advised young people who came into conflict with the regime and even developed strategies for countering the state systematically. Church activists sought to reach a larger public with many activities, which was difficult in a stifling bureaucracy that tried to prevent exactly that.

Across the Eastern bloc, within the churches as relatively free or dissident zones during the Cold War, liberating thought was sustained through many sources, namely, the Bible and its tenets of following Christ's



example, turning the other cheek and practising forgiveness. There was a search for a socialist alternative, and attempt to think a state that would live up to the rhetorical claims of the regimes by which one was repressed. There was a search for contemporary philosophical perspectives in support of this, such as the writing of Hannah Arendt. Information arrived through visiting parish groups from the West including the Netherlands, art networks were maintained through mail art and visits. Richard Demarco in Edinburgh, for instance, had many contacts and mediated the reception of Joseph Beuys's ideas and works in the East (Blume 2007, pp. 304–19). Following news of events in Nicaragua offered an international comparison of socialist states.

Karl Marx with his *Umwertung der Werte* (re-valuation) and Rosa Luxemburg were read against the state-sanctioned grain. In Luxemburg's case, there was a clear anti-colonial element to this, too. Stasi Prison waited for those, however, who chose the 'wrong' quotation for a banner, notably her 'Freedom is the freedom of those who think differently' dissent.

Key characteristics of the art and thinking in these dissident spaces across the Eastern bloc that contributed to the Velvet or peaceful revolution include: 1) dissidents' need for cultural means, a centre in which to not just be defined *ex negativo* through opposition to a violently oppressive regime; 2) practising personal belief, even if not an initial motivation, safeguarding against allegations of agitation and instilling discipline to do not as one was being done to, but instead having the right to be human, fallible (forgive and be forgiven) encouraged to think for oneself; 3) the link brought by churches to (and solidarity with) a global organisation – with liberation theologies as a sub-frame – even if (and especially when) those involved wanted to do nothing more than eschew institutions and hegemony and act in solidarity with international civil rights movements.

The church as institution, not always welcoming and often abandoned very quickly after 1989, provided a refuge, as well as a setting to engage with, following Charles Esche, experimental institutionalism. Why not see art as temporarily transplanted (back) from museums to the churches? Art seems to have briefly and locally, but importantly before 1989, returned to that context, having left the church as institution at the beginning of the modern era. To view cultural practice in this way also implies understanding art as experimentally expanded, in keeping with (and often inspired by) Joseph Beuys (Blume 2007).

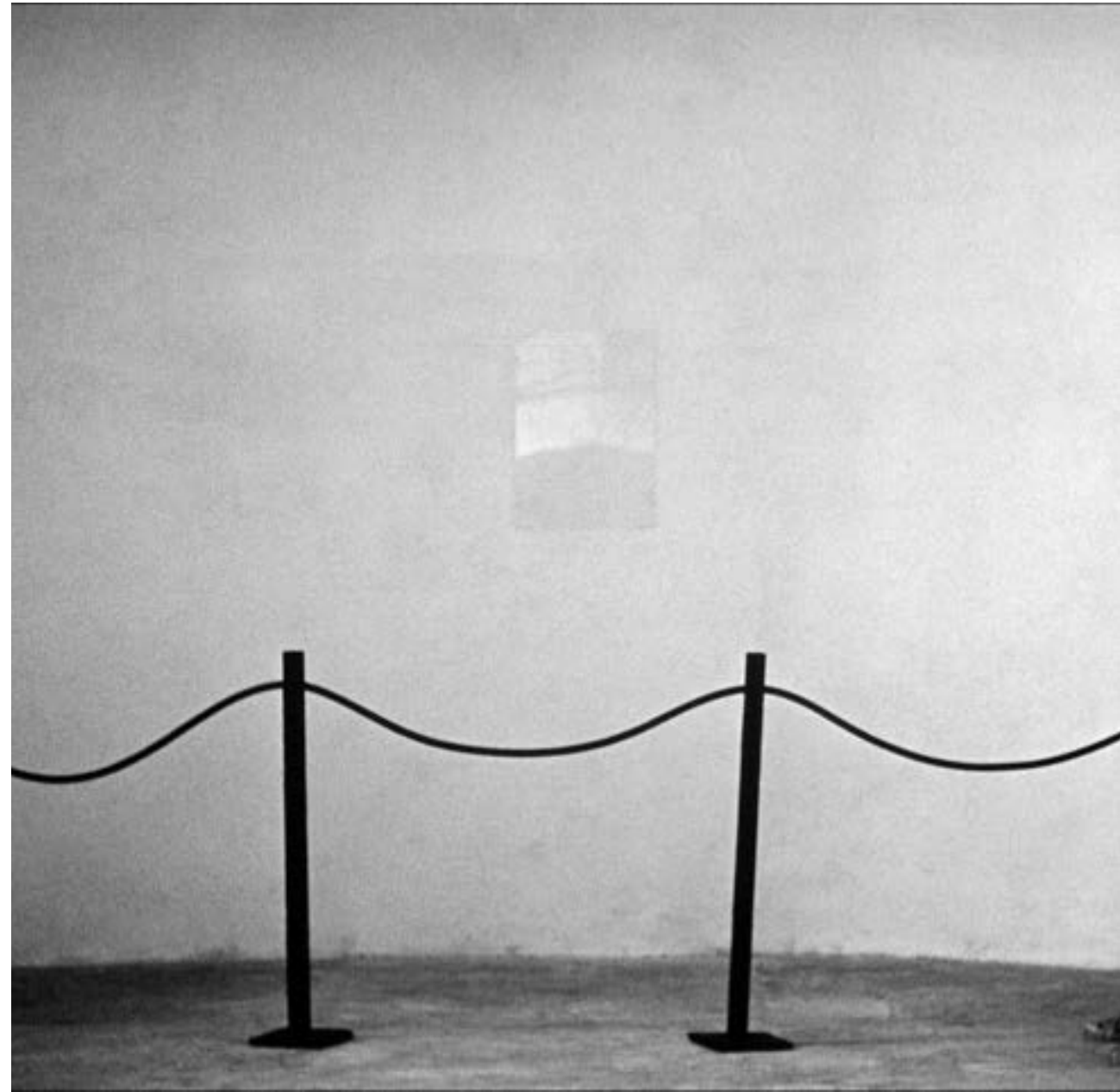
I would like to focus particularly on the third point: the links and networks possible to be made through religious frameworks. Dissident artists in the East during the Cold War showed marked interest in canonical literature: the Bible and classical mythology are reference points, but also Modernist classics. I am encouraged to focus on this in the Conceptual art framework after reading Athena Athanasiou's essay 'Performing the Institution "As If It Were Possible"' in *Former West*. In a sub-chapter 'What about the Book to Come' she shows images of communal reading scenes, including the standing-reading protest, Istanbul, 2013. Communal reading 'creates space for the eventness of non-corporate, non-commodified, sustaining institutions in the face of losing one's (...) livelihood, (...) home, (...) or public education'.⁴

Behind the Iron Curtain, where permission to travel to the West was rare, books were much used and shared tools and also status symbols: what was giving access to other worlds of escape, a partial substitute for the kind of education that remained inaccessible, and – when canonical – an insurance that one was engaging with larger debates than the narrow geographical frame allowed. For the rare occasions of international contact, canonical literature offered bridges to understanding, even if knowledge of contemporary discourses were





Stjauby Tamás / IPUT, Sit Out – Be Forbidden!, action, 1972.
Photograph by Czene Gábor.



St. Auby Tamás / IPUT, Be forbidden!, action object, 1973.
Photograph by Galántai György.



limited. It should go without saying that the canon was not resorted to in the interest of preserving the status quo. George Orwell's *1984* (1949) held immediate relevance, as did the plays of Samuel Beckett performed in Warsaw, or stories by Franz Kafka on life under stiflingly bureaucratic regimes. James Joyce's attention to the lives of ordinary people, seen through a mythological macrocosmic lens, reliant on the reader's own active participation through an 'open work' or allegorical, obliquely effective strategy was also certainly attractive.⁵ What Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari would call minor literature, these deterritorialised works functioned as communal enunciations and held political immediacy (Deleuze & Guattari 2006).

The most direct reference I could find to liberation theology – and black theology – in Eastern European visual art linked to conceptual practice, is Tamás Szentjóby's performance *Sit Out/Be Forbidden!* (1972). In 1968, cofounder of the Black Panther Party Bobby Seale was jailed for conspiracy and inciting a riot. In 1972 the charges were eventually dropped and Seale freed. Police violence and torture of Black Panther members was reported widely. In Szentjóby's performance, the artist sits bound and gagged on a chair in a public space in Budapest, the police arriving shortly after the action finished. His arrest would have put the regime in a difficult double bind: laud the work as a condemnation of the race-motivated police violence in the United States, or repeat that system's punishment, thereby affirming the regime's hypocrisy while making a martyr of the artist.

The following year, Szentjóby would use the *Be Forbidden!* title also for a work on paper that bore these words (written in very small type) exhibited behind an elaborate rope barrier in a Romanesque church outside Budapest, which a pastor had given a group of artists to use. In this idyllic space for developing alternative ways of living together in the tradition of artist

colonies, Szentjóby was apparently recommending that both church and art audiences reach an early Christian state of affairs, to find their space in illegality, in hiding and persecution – and to practice in the here and now by breaching the rope barrier to read the drawing.

Szentjóby, also known as St Auby (he variously uses a 'saintly' form of his name), was made stateless and forced out of Hungary for his film *Centaur* (1973–5), which shows working peoples' lives as the regime prescribed it (and made conditional for the use of state-owned cameras: it was not possible for private individuals to own a film camera). Szentjóby then overdubs his film with a soundtrack of disarmingly irreverent, critical, but utterly dry and normal comments put into the protagonists' mouths: a human head to the animal body. The classical mythological title constitutes a reference to canonical texts. Already since 1966, Szentjóby worked under the banner of the self-styled artwork/union IPUT (International Parallel Union of Telecommunications) pre-empting the *Solidarność* strategy. He/it is still today campaigning for a universal basic income: Szentjóby is still sharing (communing), like Christ's disciples, still seeking to redistribute wealth – in an overtly secular manner.

Identifications of artists with Jesus Christ are a Romantic topos. From behind the Iron Curtain, this topos mostly – maybe apart from Marina Abramović's *Rhythm 5* (1974), which establishes a different, more spectacular or mythical artist persona – took on less heroic dimensions: Jerzy Bereś shows crudely nailed-together wooden altars and crosses as sculptures – and, as a shy individual, his fragile, naked body, acting out ephemeral rituals among audiences from the mid-1970s onwards, often in churches. Dorota Jarecka writes in retrospect: 'What seems as a contestation of the modernist gallery space in the West seemed just a touch imposed in Poland. Those who wanted independence in the 1980s were pretty much limited to a church



or a factory' (2013). But artists did choose churches sooner than that, and, as I show here, engaged in a deliberate and complex manner with the traditions and conventions to be found – and fought – there.

They even brought religious motifs into the art academy: Miroslaw Bałka, in *Remembrance of the First Holy Communion* (1985), his degree show piece, the artist echoes Polish societal values sensitively as a matter of the heart. The work is a document of his own struggle with Catholic orthodoxy, as he told me in a conversation in Warsaw in 1999, understood as an outcome of his reading not so much of the Bible, but of Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). This reading led him to abandon figuration and turn to a broadly conceptual sculptural practice, which is nevertheless anchored in the senses: the protagonist Stephen Dedalus's memory of how wetting the bed felt, first warm then cold. From this, Bałka developed – and, in due course also through his reception of Joseph Beuys's work – sculptures with electrically heated elements, or a 'holy water font' containing whiskey: *250 x 280 x 120 (Sweets of Sin)* (2004) is a sculptural work (with these measurements) referencing Joyce's dual fight with Catholicism and alcohol. Bałka created it for 'Joyce in Art', an exhibition I curated at the Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin, 2004.

For artists, Christian iconography seems, very soon after the historic changes of 1989, (again) to have related to the (mostly Catholic) Church as a hegemonic entity, something to be commented on critically and in a visual language that departs from conceptualisms, where the possibility to align with global liberation theologies seems forgotten and the different legibility of objects – identified as a feature of global conceptualisms – quickly disappeared.

Zbigniew Gostomski is Conceptual in an even narrower sense. The artist, associated with the Foksal Gallery in

Warsaw, made *Pascal's Triangle* in 1973. His conceptual aesthetic is international, but he does something that would come across as atypical in the West (where Conceptual works contained definitions or instructions not literary quotations until Joseph Kosuth introduced them in the 1980s). Gostomski is directly quoting Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922): 'each one who enters imagines himself to be the first to enter whereas he is always the last term of a preceding series (...) each imagining himself to be first, last, only and alone, whereas he is neither the first, nor last nor only or alone.' That book was passed around clandestinely in artistic circles during the Cold War. Gostomski combines the quotation in Polish and English with a photo from 'normal' (and dirty) Eastern bloc industry (the slag heap from mining), as well as numbers arranged in triangles on five out of the seven A4 pages that make up the work: these numbers are added with their neighbours and increase in size. The mathematical equation indicated in the title, the heap of slag or sand and the *Ulysses* quote all insist on connections, whether in the natural, mathematical or human world: a comment aimed at overcoming a specifically Eastern European sense of isolation. Some canonical texts were considered to have a liberating effect in this isolated part of the world, where the regime claimed to be unchanging: be all and end all. The connections insisted upon in the work also seem to ensure a relevance in external cultural discourse. Literature and mathematics function as relatively safe sources, to be understood poetically and politically: indirectly. What interests me about this work by Gostomski is its clear development from a triangle or pyramid, the symbol for hierarchy, a sense of the individual's connectedness. Two years later (!) Deleuze and Guattari were to publish their *Kafka* book, proposing the concept of subversively minor literature. Gostomski here already anticipated what with these Western authors one could call a rhizomatic existence on 1000 plateaus, i.e., an undoing of hierarchies through being differently networked (deterritorialised and



aiming at communal enunciation with political immediacy). The Iron Curtain is today variously understood as a 'nylon' one and, indeed, from liberation theology to the specific appreciation of liberating literature, much was exchanged. *Pascal's Triangle* also, however, points to successful, early and independent development of liberating ideas and strategies in the East that are today not as well-quoted as the concept of minor literature, as they could not be formulated directly. The thinking and creation of artists in the global conceptual domain is one place that deserves attention when looking for pathbreaking liberating developments.

Nancy Adajania (2013) has spoken, in the context of FORMER WEST, about tactical quietude, which does not fetishise or instrumentalise politics, but rather displays what she calls an 'ecumene': an attitude, where the world is inhabited as home, where otherness is not erased, but the world is made more inhabitable. During the Cold War years, without any hope of leaving one's home in Eastern Europe, making that context more inhabitable may have made the regime survive longer. (I remember as a child 'helping' people from the parish to make a dangerous bend in the road less dangerous, a challenge to which the regime had not risen.) Humble, often collective actions of resilience also showed up the state apparatus's loudly pronounced claims of incessant success as *hollow* and ridiculous – and the regime itself as less and less necessary: one had learned to help each other.

I prefer the notion of an ecumene to Klara Kemp-Welch's (2017) term 'antipolitics' as a prevailing sentiment among Central European artists: Kemp-Welch seems to use it in the sense of anti-regime. These conceptual uncertainties are arguably to do with a changed understanding of politics today. Jacques Rancière's notion of art being a form of dissensus and the deep, inextricable connectedness between art and politics, however, seem to suit the current essay's context well. And that is not

surprising, as Rancière's understanding owes much to Friedrich Schiller. Not only is the present (Western) concept of art as a whole – and especially Conceptual art – still based on the ideas of Jena Romanticism, as Peter Osborne (2013) has shown, that thinking is also what was available to the multidisciplinary dissidents I have in mind. Schiller and the Jena Romantics belonged to the un-censorable canon, minor literature read with local pride for the many liberating, minor elements to be found there.

If that literature stood at the beginning of the modern, joined in the esteem of artists behind the Iron Curtain by that timeless and often oppressive classic, the Bible, and avant-garde literature, I think we can say that there are elements of the avant-garde that have systematically countered modernity as a chauvinistic, colonising, violently oppressive force. With a view to the Cold War, it would, following Claire Bishop, be ahistorical to consider social practice as something new in the 1990s. Bishop, who has thorough knowledge of Eastern European art (Bishop & Dziewanska 2009), considers a broadening of the concept of art, what one now calls Social Practice, as owing to a Christian, Protestant ethos (Bishop 2012, pp. 39–40). We no longer take such ahistorical shortcuts.

However, we also have not as yet paid attention to the line of solidarity clearly seen behind the Iron Curtain with the struggles of disenfranchised people in other parts of the world, who have also developed liberating theologies. This is understandable to some degree, as much work that defies genre boundaries did not satisfy the then officially prevailing definitions of art (and thus often not seen as such even by the creators, or deliberately eschewed, for example, when created under prohibition to work: in German, *Berufsverbot*). Art, especially overtly critical art, often could not be produced – or chose to inhabit a broadly conceptual realm. I think the term 'stealth' practice expresses



this well. Curator Maria Lind has used it, not for such historical dissident work, but for Dora García's work *The Joycean Society* (2013) on the Zurich reading group of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (1939), where an ideal obliqueness or unfaithfully faithful response to the writer (the canon) is generated in the academic margins (Lind 2014). I agree with Lind that this 'useless' activity of paying attention, to let minor literature work, constitutes a social practice.

Eastern European artists' engagement with liberating theologies and literatures in conceptual ways is largely absent from current critical discourse. A likely reason is that this focus goes against three very convenient half-truths often assumed in the West: that all religion is necessarily oppressive orthodoxy, that all orthodox institutions today were and will be always that and that oppression can only come from the political right. I realise that there are still obstacles to be removed before an engagement against dogma in different times and places can become a common concern, rather than the specifics of an oppressive regime's claimed political stripes.

The work on which I focused did not take an easily consumed and self-defeating, monumental shape, such as the Martin Luther King, Jr monument discussed earlier. It needed a conceptual, nearly dematerialised form in order to stand in for forbidden speech, while avoiding the creation of incriminating evidence, and to be consistent with its own humble, conceptual, performative ethos. Artists expanded their art practice towards all activities of cultural production that could circumvent arrest or *Berufsverbot*, but socially construct a different future nevertheless. This would include parenting, picture restoration, demonstrating, choir-singing, organising, writing complaint letters to officialdom, helping neighbours and reading liberating canonical/minor literature. Such historically (in 1989) successful work can in my view best be approached

when not only expanding our concepts of art, as Beuys has done,⁶ but also of politics (à la Rancière) – and, in the current context – of theologies to include their liberating, often also ecumenical and 'secular' variants (Martin Luther King, Jr was inspired by Mahatma Gandhi as a politician).

Artistic statements that show a liberating theological sensibility look different today: how well the Bible still works as a nuisance, however, could be seen at documenta 14 – Olu Oguibe chose a (multilingual) Bible quote to be engraved into an obelisk in public space in Kassel: 'I was a stranger and you took me in.' The provocation has been seen and countered: with an AfD lawsuit for the sculpture's removal. Right-wing xenophobes are now fighting against what formally is a colonial marker – and they are closing off for themselves the path of seeking the authority of the Bible. I am reminded of St Auby's tactical work on Bobby Seale. Or such work now takes the shape of Tania Bruguera's *The Francis Effect* (2014): she and anyone in her audience who chooses to use the postcards she distributes are petitioning the Vatican (an EU state and the only one whose *raison d'être* lies in ethical principles) to issue passports to refugees.

Despite gradual differences today, I present this argument so that those fighting against what is still oppressive may no longer cut ourselves off from claiming for our dissidence the success and genealogy of those who made ephemeral, conceptual work of their lives, who identified the institutions with which to engage experimentally and who sustained the networks, courage and humility necessary to bring about a peaceful revolution.



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NOTES

- 1 I was born in Jena, East Germany. For the current essay, I held conversations with my childhood friend, Christian Dietrich, Director of the State Thüringen's organisation for dealing with the SED dictatorship (STASI files, etc.), December 2017, with my relative, Elly Reichel, a Dresden artist, December 2017 and August 2018, and Erfurt artist Gabriele Stötzer, April 2018. Since 2007, I have had regular contact with Pavel Büchler and Tamás Szentjóbý. I thank them all.
- 2 Of course, the 'former East' was not a homogenous zone and the revolution did not occur in the same way in each country. In the following, I am less interested in these differences, which historians of Eastern Europe can better differentiate, than in the responses developed by artists in relation to a pervasive public and political sphere of repression (Dressler 2010).
- 3 In some recent art publications, comparison between Latin America and Eastern Europe has been established, but liberation theologies are so far excluded from consideration such as in exhibitions ('The Other Trans-Atlantic' 2018; 'Transmissions' 2015/16) and texts (Badovinac et al. 2012). By contrast, *Considering Forgiveness* does mention the global civil rights movement and Hannah Arendt's 'strategic alliance with as unexpected a figure as Jesus of Nazareth [giving] forgiveness an unexpected secular salience' (Kuoni & Wagner 2009, p. 49).
- 4 Athena Athanasiou, 'Performing the Institution "As If It Were Possible"'. *Former West*, p. 690.
- 5 Conversations with Reichel and Stötzer (Lerm Hayes 2004).
- 6 Büchler explains the difficulties of offering both unreserved approbation and critique of any art in the 1970s in his native Prague, even in a samizdat context. He adds that, according to him, there were not a large number of praiseworthy artists under totalitarian conditions in the Eastern bloc (Thurston 2017, p. 210). When applying an expanded concept of art to forms of activism, there may be more to be appreciated.

