THE MIRROR AND THE SQUARE

A Study of Ideology within Contemporary Art Systems with special reference to the American Avant-garde in the period 1933-1953

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A b s t r a c t

This dissertation argues that abstract art is not ideologically neutral. In spite of many artist's anti-fascist stance early in their careers, the mantle of neutrality was assumed as a reaction to the protracted struggle between the two major ideologies confronting artists living in Europe and the United States of America in the period 1933-1953, namely capitalism and communism. These ideologies were not peripheral to artists lives, but were actively debated by both artists and intellectuals and resulted in the establishment of powerful cultural organisations.

The ensuing growth in prestige and influence of left-wing artist's organisations was countered by a campaign which included direct suppression of left-wing artists as well as a form of ideological control.

This control was vested in what has been called the specifics of patronage and is reflected in the establishment of the Arts Council in Britain and the private art museums in the United States. Changes in the art market have meant that, together with dealers and critics, these institutions wielded almost complete economic control over artists. The prevailing ideology of liberal

humanism, which glorified individualism and defined democracy as a middle ground between the left and the right, favoured the development of a seemingly apolitical abstract art style.

Analysis of the demise of the Artists International Association and the American Artist's Congress supports the conclusion that the figurative tradition lost prestige as a result of the stigma attached to Socialist Realism and the idealised realism demanded by National Socialism in Germany.

Account is also taken of the attempt by well positioned and influential commentators to identify all forms of realism with totalitarianism. It is not surprising therefore, that it was commonly believed that to paint in an abstract modern style was to strike a blow against fascism. In the same way that realism was identified with the regimentation of Soviet society, the avant-gardes' abstract experiments came to symbolize democracy.

Drawing on the texts of writers, critics, artists and theorists, this dissertaion shows that the force of the identification of progressive realism with totalitarianism, prepared the way for acceptance of the idea that freedom of expression epitomised freedom in general. In this way, anti-Stalinism and the post-war liberal philosophy of individual freedom, coupled with a search for 'essences' and the 'universal', directed artists inward to the medium of art as relevant subject-matter. This dissertation argues that this identification was ideologically motivated in respect to the balance of social and political power in America.

This tendency reached its fullest expression in the American avant-garde. The seemingly apolitical character of this expression meant that it was vigorously promoted by the state and, when that effort was thwarted by right-wing elements, by corporations through their private art museums. The rationale behind the cultural components of the European Recovery Programme and the aggressive promotion of the work of the Abstract Expressionists cannot be explained solely as a desire to promote American culture abroad. The presence in America of many major European artists who had fled Nazi Germany had already assured the ascendancy of American culture abroad. The real reason for the promotion of Abstract Expressionism as a 'world tradition' lay in its potential to enhance America's prestige and to counter the influence and appeal of communist ideology in Europe.

The aesthetic dissidence of Abstract Expressionism was identified with the survival of democratic liberties in the Western world. Thus culture took its place, alongside economic and military aid, in America's 'arsenal of democracy' to keep war-torn European economies within the capitalist sphere.

In memory of
my parents

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Masters of Arts in Fine Arts in the University of Cape Town. It has not been previously submitted for any degree or examination in any other University.

Signed by candidate

James Gavin Forrest Younge

20 day of August, 1987.

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PREFACE

My reasons for undertaking this study stem from my own experience of making art in South Africa. As a student I remember being told that abstract art was metaphysical and that, as such, it transcended political issues. I was also told, then and more recently, that political comment in art was a descent to the level of propaganda. At the time, I almost accepted these two attitudes at face value. More recently, I have been struck by the discovery that this rather simplistic argument has been around for some time and that even today artists are bullied by its neat logic.

On the other hand, I remember the enthusiasm with which we, as students, bathed in the warm glow of its natural seeming logic and avidly followed the unfolding spectacle of Minimalism through the pages of art journals. I also remember the triumph with which we seized upon Robert Motherwell's statement that "the emergence of abstract art is a sign that there are still men of feeling in the world". In a very specific sense, this dissertation is an attempt to come to terms with the force of that statement.

I believe that I have been helped in this endeavour by the weekly seminars organized by the incipient Organisation of South African Artists, and by the masters seminar programme at the Michaelis

School of Art. More importantly, I have benefited from the two study trips I have made to England and the United States when I was able to see, at first hand, the work of the Abstract Expressionists and to meet and hold discussions with present-day members of the avant-garde - Victor Burgin, Ian Burns and Karl Beveridge. I was also able to get access to material and information through the UCLA Berkeley library. More by chance than design, I discovered that a fair amount of work commissioned by the Works Project Administration/ Federal Art Project (WPA/FAP) is still in existence in San Francisco, including Anton Refregier's controversial murals, the Coit Tower frescoes and Diego Rivera's mural at the San Francisco Art Institute.

Some of Jackson Pollock's other major works are in the Australian National Art Museum in Canberra along with major works by Robert Motherwell and Mark Rothko. I was fortunate in being able to make a study of these works as well. I cannot assess Clement Greenberg's statement that the 'feeling' of Jackson Pollock's work 'was radically American' unless I have looked at the actual work he was writing about. Apart from being one-hundredth the size, colour, texture and sensation is either lacking or completely absent in a photograph of the original. To counter this possible weakness I have made a study of the works themselves before correlating this information with statements made by artists, critics and dealers. Monographs are available on most of the first generation Abstract Expressionists; where these were not available, I have relied on interviews and reviews in art journals. Fortunately the University of Cape Town Library has

almost complete sets of the most important of these, dating back to the 1930's.

A number of sociological studies of art have beeen flawed by the fact that the issue of aesthetic value has not been taken into consideration. In giving due weight to these qualities, I hope that this study has benefited from the fact it was undertaken by an artist with some sociological training, rather than by a pure sociologist. In any event I have thought it necessary to include a theoretical section outlining the contributions of three major theorists, Lukács, Gramsci and Althusser, to the study of art and ideology.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Neville Dubow, for his support and for his valuable and material advice in the latter stages of this study.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAA	American Abstract Artists
AAC	American Artist´s Congress
AIA	Artist´s International Association
	(Formerly Artist´s International)
CEMA	Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
HUAC	House Committee on Un-American Activities
ICA	Institute of Contempoary Art
FAPS	Federation of American Painters and Sculptors
ISA	Ideological State Apparatuses
MOMA	Museum of Modern Art
MPPDA	Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America
NSDAP	National Socialist Worker´s Party of Germany
RA	Royal Academy
RCA	Radio City of America
RSA	Repressive State Apparatuses
US	United States of America
USIA	United States Information Agency
WPA/FAP	Works Project Administration/Federal Art Project
	(Formerly Works Progress Administration)

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

> This world and yonder world are incessantly giving birth: every cause is a mother, its effects the child. When the effect is born, it too becomes a cause and gives birth to wondrous effects. These causes are generations on generation, but it needs a very well lighted eye to see the links in their chain. Rumi.[1]

WHAT IS IDEOLOGY?

Put most simply, the theory of ideology states that a person's ideas and beliefs are systematically related to his/her actual and material conditions of existence.[2] This meaning is also entailed in the Shorter Oxford Dictionary definition of ideology as the manner of thought characteristic or a class or individual.

This is a very simple definition, one which avoids outlining how thoughts can be characteristic of a whole social class or what form this relationship takes or how material conditions produce ideas. This formulation does, however, commit itself to the view that thought and consciousness originate in material[3] as opposed to idealist[4] activity, and that we are able to reflect on that activity.

As far as art is concerned, Althusser puts forward the idea that:

> [T]he peculiarity of art is to "make us see", "make us perceive", "make us feel" something which alludes to reality...What art makes us see and therefore gives us in the form of "seeing", "perceiving", "feeling" (which is not the form of knowing), is the ideology in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art, and to which it alludes...when we speak of ideology we should know that ideology slides into all human activity, that it is identical with the lived experience of human existence itself.[5]

A great deal of debate surrounds the nature of the relationship between ideology and material existence and I shall be looking at some of these contributions, however there is agreement that a simple relationship of causality is not involved. If we relate art to the social and economic conditions of a particular period it does not mean that we have reduced art to those factors.

Given the fact that social clases are in competition with one another it is not surprising that all of the concepts of ideology explored in Chapter 3 carry an irreducible critical dimension, that is, that beliefs, or bodies of ideas which are ideological, are in some sense, partial, distorted or inadequate; furthermore, that their claim to adequacy is socially motivated in relation to the alignment of groups and social classes in society. Thus Terry Lovell defines ideology as "the production and dissemination of erroneous beliefs whose inadequacies are socially motivated".[6] This is a convincing

definition because it recognises that not all ideas peculiar to a class are ideological. Some erroneous beliefs are **not** socially motivated, and some beliefs peculiar to a class or individual are in fact valid and thus also not ideological.[7]

Ideology and ideas in general are developed in and through practical activity, therefore to categorise a particular set of ideas as ideological is, at the same time, to say something about their effects. At their inception, ideologies seek to 'mobilise' elements of a traditional class or class fraction. It follows therefore, that the common process of discrediting ideas by referring to their social origin is not what is meant by a critique of ideology. We need to know in what way the inadequacy of a set of ideas, or the inadequacy in the explanatory power of a particular theory is **systematically** related to class interest.

One's point of departure should always be the degree to which a set of ideas can explain events, and not the supposed social origin of those ideas. This was Marx's own method. Lovell cites the example of the evidence given by the bankers in the "Report of the Committee on Bank Acts 1857". [8] Marx assessed this evidence in terms of its internal inconsistencies before going on to show that these views were to be expected from bankers at that time because that was how money and banking **would appear** to people so situated. Similarly, Althusser argues that theories are not true because they explain the real; rather they are **able** to explain the real because they are true. [9]

CONTEMPORARY ART SYSTEMS

No one would doubt that as soon as a work of art leaves the artist's studio, it enters another arena. It is impossible for the public to see the work, or for critics to write about that work, outside of the network of galleries, museums and art magazines which comprise the institutional co-ordinates of the art process. However, it is less commonly accepted that an art work is part of a 'system' even **before** it leaves the studio.

One of the most well-known of the Frankfurt School theorists, Theodor Adorno, thought that 'good' art comprised a system in itself:

> I would say that the work of art is in a certain sense a system, in that it is a self-enclosed unity of a multiplicity. But at the same time, works of art are always the contrary of a system as well: insofar as we live in an antagonistic society, by virtue of its pragmatic presuppositions, no work of art can entirely achieve this unity.[10]

What then is meant by the term 'art systems'? I take this term to mean the conceptual and philosophical background which enables members of a particular social system to appreciate a particular type of art. Although I cannot speak German, I can appreciate German art and architecture: this is because I share the same Western system of thought as it relates to expressive and symbolic form.

Art education is obviously an important institutional co-ordinate of the art process. It would determine, among other things, whether my 'appreciation' for German art developed into an understanding of that art. Art education is also part of the system because, in a practical dimension, it gives the aspirant artist encouragement and assistance, albeit within a set of regulatory patterns. In this century, however, admission to the rank of artist is no longer as strictly controlled as it once was by the guilds and academies.[11] Recent studies by Griff and Strauss[12] show that the recruitment of students in the art world is not as regulated as, for example, in the medical profession, primarily because a Fine Art degree or diploma is not needed to sell a painting or hold an exhibition. Public and institutional acceptance is necessary before the 'qualified' art student becomes a 'practising' artist. Nonetheless, the art programmes offered by art schools and university art departments do have an important influence on the style of art produced in a particular society. Naturally, other social and cultural factors are also influential, although these are generally 'mediated' by the art school through the content of its course structure. We shall look at these mediating elements in greater detail in Chapter 4. At this point it is perhaps important to note that art training is self-regulating and largely independent of the market pressures which become evident later on in the artist's career.

Because the complex of norms and values mediated by art education is seemingly autonomous, and applies primarily to **visual** communication between human subjects, art practice can be charac-

terised as a 'social system'. Since this interchange has been practised over a long period of time, it can also be charaterised as a 'social institution'.[13]

Manufacturers of specialised artists' materials are another part of this system.[14] This is obvious and would be hardly worth mentioning were it not for the fact that it gives credence to the viewpoint that art is a collective activity; not in the sense that it once was, of being produced by 'many hands' in one of the guild workshops, but in the sense that it is dependent upon other aspects of the system. Events in one part of the system have **repercussions** for the system as a whole. When manufacturers produced oil paint in a tube, artists could carry their paint outside their studios and paint directly from the landscape. This affected the development of easel painting as much as the introduction of the camera affected minature portraiture, but with opposite results. Similarly, once light-weight and relatively inexpensive 'porta-packs' came on the market, artists and art students started using video cameras and were thus able to produce 'Video Art'.

In his essay entitled "Art as Collective Action" published in the American Sociological Review,[15] Howard Becker examines the hidden interdependence of art on other agents in society. He concludes that even the most seemingly private and individualistic artistic activities, such as drawing, are predicated on a whole range of intermediary agents, including forestry, pulp mills and paper manufacturers. Marshall McLuhan has written extensively on the

impact of new media on cultural production.[16] His central theme is that the introduction of major new media alters our existing sense perceptions. For instance the introduction of television changed our perception of the world by making it smaller. Within hours of events being filmed in remote parts of the world , geo-stationary satellites can beam actuality programmes into millions of sitting rooms.

But the concept that art is part of a wider institutional system does not mean that it is merely a support system. To say that art is part of a social system is to deny the conventional theory that great art is produced by gifted artists working in isolation from social and political issues.

Arnold Hauser was one of the pioneers of the line of thought which believed that the meaning of art was socially constructed and that the same work of art could mean different things to different people, even in the same society. He stated that the fundamentally new element in the Renaissance was the discovery of the concept of genius:

> [T]hat the work of art is the creation of an autocratic personality, that this personality transcends tradition, theory and rules, even the work itself, is richer and deeper and impossible to express adequately within any objective form.[17]

At the time that Hauser was writing his Social History of Art in

the early 1950's, his was an isolated voice calling for a more thorough examination of art within its social and economic setting. John Berger says, in the introduction to his book Permanent Red, that when he started contributing art reviews to the New Statesman, he had to fight for each article, line by line, adjective by adjective, against constant editorial 'cavilling'. Anti-Marxist hysteria was such that his publishers, Secker & Warburg, withdrew his book, A Painter of our Time, from circulation.

Since that time there has been a growing interest in what could be called the sociology of art, inspired in part by a perceived inadequacy in the theoretical and conceptual limits of the prevailing art history methods.[18] This development has not met with uncritical acclaim from within the ranks; for instance the 'production of culture'[19] approach has been criticised for being overly empirical and for failing to take the features of the art object-in-itself into account.[20] John Berger's view, that in the nineteenth century a 'special relationship' existed between the practice of oil painting and private property, has been challenged, not only by traditional art historians like Professor Lawrence Gowing, who objected strongly to Berger's reading of Gainsborough's Mr and Mrs Andrews,[21] but also by others like Peter Fuller who have taken issue from a materialist position.[22]

I do not intend taking up the 'materialist' debate at this stage, as it is centred on the minutiae of phenomenology and not on a

difference of interpretation. Professor Gowing's objection, however, is symptomatic of an alternative approach to the reading of art and its contents and deserves mention. Basically what is in question is Berger's dispute with Kenneth Clark's statement about the painting. Clark wrote that Gainsborough's "pleasure in what he saw inspired him to put into his pictures backgrounds as sensitively observed as the corn-field in which are seated Mr and Mrs Andrews".[23] Berger disputes this innocent reading and in turn wrote that the depiction of the couples' estate was not a whim on the part of the artist, but integral to the commission. "Among the pleasures their portrait gave to Mr and Mrs Andrews was the pleasure of seeing themselves depicted as landowners" and that "their proprietary attitude towards what surrounds them is visible in their stance and their expressions".[24] Professor Gowing enters the debate with the accusation that Berger is "interposing himself again between us and the visible meaning of a good picture". For Gowing, the couple were doing more with their land than simply owning it, that is, they were engaged in "philosophic enjoyment of the 'great Principle...the genuine Light of uncorrupted and unperverted **Nature**'".[25]

What needs to be given fuller recognition in this exchange is the precise nature of patronage and the commissioned portrait. In the closing decades of the eighteenth century artists did very much what they were told to do. This is evident from the experience of one of Gainsborough's contemporaries and countrymen, George Stubbs. In 1777, he was commissioned by the high sheriff of Nottinghamshire, John Musters, to paint two panels to mark the

occasion of his marriage to Sophia Modyford Heywood. Brian Sewell writes that Colwick Hall, their enormous country house, had just been renovated and that the paintings were to "celebrate marriage and mansion".[26] Some years later, his young and well-connected wife found country life not to her taste and attached herself to the prince regent's court in Brighton. Mr Musters appears to have flown into a rage and thrown her out. The painting now became a problem and Stubbs was summoned by letter to paint out the figure of his wife. Sewell writes:

> Stubbs dutifully complied, painting out the brilliant red and painting in the bay, knitting together the cool cloud behind her, and cobbling the bricks of Colwick Hall.[27]

Naturally the figure of Sophia had to be removed from the other panel as well. The question remains why John Musters did not simply hide the paintings from view. One possible reason is that John Musters could not bear to live without the painted representation of his property, wealth and sporting life-style. If so, this is a vindication of Berger's thesis that there is a special relationship between art and property; that oil paint has the ability to render property "in all its substantiality and [that] this is an observation which needs to be made, precisely because the cultural history we are normally taught pretends that it is an unworthy one".[28]

What is at stake in this debate are the limits of reference to which an art historian or serious viewer can legitimately refer

for a fuller understanding of the work of art in question. I have indicated that there is now a large body of literature[29] supporting the view that art can be **related** to its social base without it being **reduced** to that sphere. This viewpoint is now widely accepted. It is my task in this dissertation to assess that literature, and to evaluate it by a method of critical comparison, both internally and with the published views of artists, critics and other functionaries within the art system, with the aim of identifying ideology as it manifests itself in contemporary art systems and particularly in the American avant-garde. In my conclusion I argue that abstract art has been erroneously portrayed as being above politics, and thus beyond the reach of ideology. By teaching the subconscious what to take for granted in the world, ideology penetrates all human expression.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of this dissertation is confined to ideology within contemporary Western art and its co-ordinates during the third, fourth and fifth decades of this century. Although not intended as a strict cut-off point, I have focussed on the twenty year period, 1933-1953, because it was the period which saw the formation, and collapse, of artists' organisations over ideological issues. Although it is now fashionable to write about art in terms of the handy unit of a decade, I begin the focus of my study in 1933: the year that English and European artists formed an alliance to stem the tide of fascist ideology. Exactly twenty

years later this alliance was in tatters, emasculated by the removal of a political clause in the constitution of the Artist's International Association. By the end of 1953, New York had replaced Paris as the art centre of the Western world, the American avant-garde was deradicalized and the painterly 'experiments' of a decade had found firm acceptance in corporate and metropolitan art museums. In addition, this period occupies a benchmark in the development of contemporary art because it was a period during which Western artists adjusted themselves to the unprecedented political and aesthetic revolutions of the previous two decades. This period also saw the establishment, not only of the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts and, later, the Arts Council of Great Britain, but also the Works Progress Administration/Federal Art Project in the United States.

Ideology is a complex term, more at home in the world of political economy than the world of art and culture. This situation is changing and the term is increasingly being invoked by artists and art critics. Certain critics of 'bourgeois culture' seem to understand the term simply as the Marxist word for error and write off everything which is not 'workerist' in orientation. It must come as a matter of some surprise to them that Lenin thought that socialism was an 'ideology' as well.[30] As often, however, the term has been appropriated by politically conservative commentators who invoke it in an uncritical way to discredit the ideas of an opponent, or to signal their disapproval of the way in which 'pure' art has been dragged through the mud of politics and ideology. Another variant

typifies only left-wing thought as being ideological.[31]

Consequently, I have thought it necessary to define the concept of ideology itself. I have done this in terms of a survey of the historical antecedents of the concept and a presentation of the thought of three major theorists who have addressed themselves to the issue of art and ideology. Althusser is, in my opinion, the most important of these and I apply his theories in my analysis of the struggle between the two tendencies of abstraction and realism. I have also assessed the work of certain theorists associated with the Frankfurt School, particularly in terms of their analysis of the form of mass-culture under monopoly capitalism.

In Chapter 3, I characterise ideology as "an absent determination"; one cannot look for it in a sculpture or painting in the same way in which one can look for style or content. If it exists, one has to look for it in the consciousness of the artist making the work. Its trace is discernible in the almost commonplace patterns of meanings and references evoked by the artwork in relation to society. As Raymond Williams has said: "[Ideology] is lived at such a depth and saturates society to such an extent that it even constitutes the limit if common sense for most people under its sway".[32]

For this reason I have chosen to look at broad trends, or what I call 'contours' (since that word suggests a greater faithfulness to the lie of the land) in the development of contemporary art.

The scope of this study might therefore appear to be too broad to include concrete and specific examples. I do not think so. I have needed to assess the work of individual artists over the span of their careers and in the context of the emphases of the time.

One of the enduring 'contexts' of this period has been the debate between those favouring abstraction and those favouring representation. Indeed, Barbara Rose has writen that, in part, the history of American art criticism can be "reduced" to that battle.[33]

This battle has not yet been settled. In a recent article in Studio International, Su Braden appears to invoke the old prejudice that figuratively inclined painting is boring. Discussing an exhibition of paintings by members of the Artist's Union held at Trades' Union Congress headquarters she writes: "The paintings, although very competent, were dull.. In analysis, the art illustrates a political theme but there is no politics in the art."[34]

I see in this statement the reflection of a discourse which has preoccupied artists and commentators since the first decades of this century. This discourse turns on the ideological nature of cultural politics. The English working classes have forged their own class institutions and have been largely successful in resisting attempts to incorporate their culture into the avant-garde. Su Braden sees no politics in the art because she is looking at working-class art through the lens of the professional art critic writing in a magazine for professional artists.

In Chapters 7 and 8, I try and explain why Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko and Mark Tobey, among other artists, had given up painting in a representational manner by 1948. Even more interesting, from the point of view of a study of ideology, is that they achieved positions of prominence only after this change in style. The reason for the triumph of the American avant-garde cannot be found in a consideration of the work alone. This triumph was not a popular one with the general American public, nor indeed with all Congressional Senators. Tenuous and fragile, the triumph of Abstract Expressionism must be related to the exigencies of the time and the appeal of the ideology of Liberal Humanism. "Fluid at first, ideology and style both solidified quickly. Although their common source was left-wing anti-Stalinism, they succeeded in establishing a 'third way', abstract and expressionist, that was said to avoid extremes both left and right, that was ... both liberated and liberating".[35]

In a crude way Realism, as an art style, came to be associated with the worst aspects of Soviet life and Abstraction came to be synonomous with freedom and democracy. Crude as it may be, this idea has exerted such a strong influence that western critics have found it necessary to label what is patently the **residue** of a realist tradition, New Realism. This nomenclature effectively signals a difference, not only between the realism of today and 'old' realism, but also between that of the West and Realism's sullied counterpart in countries under Soviet influence.[36] The legacy of the Russian Revolution, the Stalin purges and the pressing reality of the nuclear arms race has left the West

mesmerised by the shadow of communism.

One of the characteristics of the art of the American avant-garde was the extent to which it succeeded in calling attention to its terms. Its appeals to 'internationalism' and 'universality' has propelled it into the furthest corners of the Western world and, consequently, I believe this dissertation has relevance for art in South Africa.

In this introduction I argue that if we relate art to the social and economic conditions of a particular period, it does not follow that we have reduced art to those factors.

This raises the question of how we are to give an account of the provenance of the ideas and aesthetic beliefs of artists of this period without falling into the philosphical wilderness of determinism and its cycle of cause and effect?

DETERMINISM AND NON-DETERMINISM

Art history is a scientific methodology and, like all others, it **constructs** its object by preserving the essential and ignoring the inessential. Theorists who give an account of the art process from a functionalist, or determinist, perspective often speak of the artist as fulfilling a **reflective** role.[37] Functionalist interpretations are by no means unique to a study of art, but are borrowed from biology and anthropology. It is this provenance

which has given the functionalist approach the credibility that it has, at times, enjoyed. At the core of all functionalist or determinist accounts is an attempt to explain phenomena on the **basis of their consequences.** According to this viewpoint, art systems or certain developments in art are explained in terms of their consequences. Stinchcombe identifies three key components in functionalist explanations[38]. Applied to art they are:

1 Art, and indeed the whole structure of art, has the consequence of...

2 keeping alive man's creative capacities, which are threatened by...

3 the increasingly mechanistic and technological emphasis of modern life-patterns.

It can be seen that functionalist perspectives emphasize equilibrium. A recurring theme is 'input' and 'output'; where a particular 'input' has a disturbing effect, this disequilibrium is countered by an 'output' which restores the integration of the system. Art as an aesthetic phenomenon is correctly seen as being part of a system. Changes in one part of the system lead to changes in another part. It is at this point that the functionalist account betrays its deterministic outlook. Here, determinism can be defined as the view that all events are caused. Blanshard defines 'cause' as meaning that "the event is so connected with some preceeding event that, unless the latter had occurred, the former would not have occurred".[39]

This is obviously an inadequate account of the process of art, but functionalist perspectives are nonetheless prevalent in the literature on aesthetics. All this literature explains the art impulse in terms of its origins in, and consequences for, other parts of the art process. More broadly, art processes are explained in terms of their effects (benefits) on the individual's personal psyche or on society as a whole.

Herbert Read's theory of integral vision is one example of a deterministic approach. This theory was developed in order to explain contemporary art and, in particular, the so-called distortions found in Matisse's work. Read claims that without compositional balance, or without a unity of vision, our eyes are in a quandary as to what they should focus upon. As a result we suffer from a 'sense of visual discomfort'. Visual comfort is a kind of equilibrium and is explained as being attained in the work of the moderns when "a fixed focus, a single line of sight"[40] is maintained.

Herbert Read believed that the pioneers of the modern movement, Constable, Turner, Cezanne, Matisse, Kandinsky and Klee (his own selection) were singularly devoid of ideological motivation; that they lived "in their vision and their paint" and that their modernity was expressed in terms that are "strictly artistic".[41] However, functionalism is not confined to writers with conservative or liberal political backgrounds.

Hans Haacke has more than once enraged the art establishment.[42]

In 1971 his one-man exhibition at the Guggehheim was cancelled at the last moment after the director of the museum, Thomas Messer, started having doubts about three of Haacke's "Social System" pieces. One comprised a visitor's poll and the other two dealt with New York City real estate holdings. Messer stated his reasons for the cancellation in the following terms:

> To the degree to which an artist deliberately pursues aims that lie beyond his art, his very concentration upon ulterior ends stands in conflict with the intrinsic nature of the work as an end in itself....The tensions within this contradiction in the work itself transferred itself from it onto the museum environment and beyond it into society at large. Eventually the choice was between the acceptance of or rejection of an alien substance that had entered the art museum organism.[43]

Jack Burnham has long been a defender of Haacke [44] and it is interesting to compare his metaphors with those of Messer, whose action he clearly denounces:

> It became also evident that what we nominally regard as the 'art world' with its various adjuncts of gallery, museum and media support, is, in fact, a specific set of systematic relationships with many of the features of a living organism. [45]

The image of art as an "organism" is clearly articulated and

bears comparison with the work of the well-known biologist Bertalanffy and his General Systems Theory. In his book by the same name Bertalanffy argues that every living thing is by nature **an open system** and that it sustains itself by an inflow and outflow of energy. The metabolic exchange between a system and its environment produces stability. Burnham argues[46] that Haacke's political art exhibits the same tragic tension implicit in natural systems which can only progress by passing from wholeness to a differentiation of parts within that whole. "As long as a system is a unitary whole, a disturbance will be followed by the attainment of a new stationary state".[47]

So whilst we can agree with Burnham that the essence of Haacke's work is "to reveal the ideological and economic underpinnings of a given culture or to create conditions in which these reveal themselves",[48] his analysis leaves us at a loss to explain why Haacke's social criticism is simply absorbed by society. I believe the problem lies with the explanation of his work and not with the work itself. I know that Peter Fuller rejects Haacke's work as "pseudo sociological surveys" and "untransformed, petit-bourgeois, bureaucratic and tiresome ballyhoo",[49] but the fact remains that this and more recent work[50] cuts at the ideological underpinnings of art museums and their corporate sponsors.

The fundamental theoretical problem with all functionalist explanations is that they cannot give an account of progressive change. They may well be a major departure from the mechanistic biology and physics of the past fifty years, but they do not give

an adequate account of man's transformational and productive capacities. In other words, they are undialectical.

At this point I wish to give an overview of the non-deterministic paradigm. The first pole of non-determinism is the philosophy of choice, or existentialism. We are familiar with existentionalist accounts of art works, probably without ever being aware of that fact. We have all heard, and perhaps even used the expression, that a particular work of art has a "presence". It stands neutral and apart from the spatio-temporal world; as pure **presence** it stands unique, original and previously unheard of. As Fallico says in his book Art and Existentialism, "the presence is the possibility itself".[51] But the force of indeterminism as it has affected art theorists is contained in the concept of freedom or, put differently, the concept of choice.

For Sartre this "choice" carried with it the most profound responsibility and a certain amount of anguish, for, "In choosing for himself he chooses for all men." [52] A philosophy of choice is thrown into confusion when all argument is seen as persuasion, that is, as antithetical to free choice; but the fact remains, the criteria used in choosing are themselves chosen. Sartre could discern no values which would cause man to act in one way and not in another. "There is no determinism - man is free, man is freedom". [53] Sartre dispensed with the concept of human nature and described man as a "project" who simply "is". He saw the concept of human nature as constituting a "prior essence" which would introduce an element "contradictory to man's

power to transform himself indefinitely". [54] Phenomenologists believe that man is not merely a product of specific factors because he can distance himself by means of his consciousness.

On the basis of dissociation, man encounters the world and his own products objectively. Consciousness denotes self-awareness, the ability to see oneself as an object in a world constituted by the percipient action of consciousness itself. Consciousness is never an ability held in reserve, unused, so to speak. Consciousness is always consciousness of something. To be angry is to be angry **about** something. There is always an intended object; likewise consciousness can never be isolated from the world of things.

The second pole of non-determinism is that of the dialectic. Man's productive capacity is shown in the unceasing flow of human products, the "outpouring of human being". This process is known as **externalisation.** The moment of externalisation is not contingent in a straightforwardly deterministic way. Because the world of human products is perceived as being external to consciousness, man is in turn shaped by the man-made world we call culture. This process is called **objectivation** and parts of this objectivated world are assimiliated, or **internalised** by the individual. In this way the individual re-appropriates parts of his own objectified product. Thus a particular "meaning structure" is internalised and forms part of an individual's consciousness.

This "meaning structure" is ideology and is largely invisible,

although it confronts the individual as if it lay outside his consciousness.

But what exactly is the 'dialectic'? This question will be taken up again in the following chapter. Applied to the socialisation of the artist, the dialectic sees externalisation as a synthesis gained on the basis of internalisation and objectivation. This reflexive dialectic, as proposed by Berger and Luckman in their book, The Social Construction of Reality,[55] conceives of the three moments of the dialectic as simultaneous. Since the individual is both internalising and objectifying at the same time, thesis and anti-thesis are simultaneous.

Every expression of the artist makes a reference to the social reality of the artist (including non-material aspects, such as knowledge itself) and at the same time makes a reference to the artist as subject. This reciprocal constitution has important implications for a study of ideology. The self-referential aspects of any artwork comprise a discernible pattern of meanings from which we can deduce, not only what the artist is intending, but what is un-intended as well.

The preceeding section on determinism and non-determinism shows that the 'content' of art is not simply determined by events in the social and political spheres. On the other hand, there is no such thing as the 'pure' operation of the senses and no such thing as 'pure aesthetics' or aesthetic consciousness. As shown above, the constitution of meaning within any aspect of human

activity is revealed by reference to what is projected and by the manner and purpose of its creation.

In the following Chapter I deal with the historical antecedents of the study of the concept of ideology.

Notes and References to pages 1 - 24

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

What is Ideology?

1. Rumi, quoted in Fromm, E., The Sane Society, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968, Frontispiece.

2. Wolff, J., The Social Production of Art, London: Macmillan Press, 1981, p. 50.

3. Materialism: Philosophical doctrine that nothing exists except matter and its movements and modifications; also that the phenomena of consciousness and will are wholly due to the operation of material agencies. Shorter Oxford English Dictionary. Third Edition, 1975.

4. Idealism: Philosophical doctrine in which the object of external perception is held to consist, either in itself, or as perceived, of ideas. Shorter Oxford English Dictionary. Third Edition, 1975. Berkeley held that nothing exists except minds and ideas. The physical world is reduced to mental phenomena, and matter is non-existent. Kant, on the other hand, put forward a 'transcendental' idealism. He saw reality as non-spatial and non-temporal, and believed that only appearances were knowable, the object-in-itself being unknowable.

5. Althusser, L., Lenin and Philosophy, London: New Left Books, 1971, p. 204.

6. Lovell, T., Pictures of Reality, London: British Film Institute, 1980, p. 51.

7. This formulation is drawn from Lovell, T., Ibid., 1980, pp. 50-52.

8. Marx, K., cited in Lovell, T., 1980, p. 53.

9. Althusser & Balibar, Reading Capital, London: New Left Books, 1977, p. 59.

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10. From a discussion with Lucien Goldmann at the second international colloquium on the sociology of literature at Royaumont, 1973, cited in Goldmann, L., Cultural Creation, Saint Louis: Telos Press, 1976, p. 144.

11. Antal, F., "Social Position of the Artists: Contemporary views on Art", in Albrecht, M. C., ed., The Sociology of Art and Literature: A Reader, London: Duckworth, 1970, p. 287.

12. Griff, M., "The Recruitment and Socialisation of Artists", in Albrecht, M.C., ed., Ibid., 1970, pp. 145-158, and Strauss, A., "The Art School and its Students: A Study and an Interpretation", in Albrecht, M.C., ed., Ibid., 1970, pp. 159-177.

13. Albrecht defines social institutions as "the principal structures through which human activities are organised and established to serve basic human needs. They are usually distinguished from 'associations' by their larger size and greater complexity; their existence is marked not by membership and specific location but by chararacteristic patterns of behaviour in society. These patterns are structured by their specialised personnel, by special types of roles and activities and by particular groupings and organisations, and are regulated by distinct norms, values and beliefs, marked by appropriate symbols, implemented by certain types of physical equipment". See Albrecht, M.C., "Art as an Institution" in Albrecht, M.C., ed., The Sociology of Art & Literature: A Reader, London: Duckworth, 1970, p. 2.

14. A billion dollar industry, see Galbraith's article, "The Market System and the Arts", Studio International, June 1974, pp. 270-272.

15. Cited in Wolff, J., The Social Production of Art, London: Macmillan Press, 1981, p. 32.

16. McLuhan, M., Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964.

17. Hauser, A., The Social History of Art, Vol. 2, (4 Vols.), London: Routledge, 1968, p. 61.

18. For an extreme example of this tendency see Hadjinicolau, N., Art History and Class Struggle, London: Pluto Press, 1978.

19. Peterson, R., The Production of Culture, London: Sage, 1976.

20. Wolff, J., The Social Production of Art, London: Macmillan Press, 1981, p. 31.

21. Berger, J., Ways of Seeing, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972, p. 107.

22. Fuller, P., Seeing Berger: A Revaluation of Ways of Seeing, London: Readers and Writers, 1980.

23. Berger, J., Ibid., 1972, p. 106.

24. Berger, J., Ibid., 1972, pp. 107-108.

25. Lawrence Gowing cited in Berger, J., Ibid., 1972, p. 107.

26. Sewell, B., "The Lady Vanishes", in Vanity Fair, February, 1985, p. 56.

27. Sewell, B., Ibid., 1985, p. 57.

28. Berger, J., Ways of Seeing, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972, p. 108.

29. Refer to the Select Bibliography, p. 205.

Scope of the Study

30. Lenin wrote: "Socialism in so far as it is the ideology of struggle of the proletarian class, undergoes the general condition of birth, development and consolidation of an ideology, that is to say , it is founded on all the material of human knowledge." This quotation is cited in Swingewood, A., The Myth of Mass Culture, London: Macmillan, 1977, p. 80.

31. A surprising example of this attitude was expressed by Paul Stopforth in dismissing his previous political art. Interviewed in a South African magazine the artist said: "Now I've paid my dues. Finally there is a point at which the political is not the only issue. No more ideology, No more bullshit." Quoted in Style Magazine, Cape Town: Hortors, September 1986, p. 95.

32. Williams, R., "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory", New Left Review, number 82, 1973, p. 8.

33. Rose, B., Readings in American Art since 1900, New York: Praeger, 1968, p. 25.

34. Braden, S., "Politics in Art", in Studio International, June 1974, p. 273.

35. Guilbaut, S., How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983, p. 2.

36. Timpanero suggests that this process was already evident within the great realist work of the nineteenth century in its struggle against right-wing elements. Timpanero, S., On Materialism, London: New Left Books, 1975, p. 125.

Determinism and Non-Determinism

37. Role can be defined as a set of expectations applied to the occupant of a particular status or social position, and is characterised by certain obligations (or duties) and privileges.

38. Stinchcombe, A., Society Today: Second Edition, Del Mar: C.R.M. Books, 1973, p. 69.

39. This formulation is by Blanshard from Hook, S., Determinism and Freedom, New York: Macmillan, p. 19.

40. Read, H., Art Now, London: Faber & Faber, 1968, p. 56.

41. Read, H., Ibid., 1968, p. 10.

42. Burnham, J., "Steps in the Formulation of Real-time Political Art" in Hans Haacke, Framing and Being Framed, New York: New York University Press, 1975, pp. 133-140.

43. Messer, T., "Guest Editiorial", Arts Magazine, New York, 1971, p. 5.

44. Burnham, J., "Steps in the Formulation of Real-time Political Art" in Hans Haacke, Framing and Being Framed, New York: New York University Press, 1975, p. 133.

45. Burnham, J., Ibid., 1975, p. 133.

46. Burnham, J., Ibid., 1975, p. 132.

47. Burnham, J., Ibid., 1975, p. 132.

48. Burnham, J., Ibid., 1975, p. 132.

49. Fuller, P., Beyond the Crisis in Art, London: Writers and Readers, 1980, pp. 25-26.

50. Hans Haake's recent work also seeks to expose the corporate relations linking art to 'real-world' economic and political interests. His 1983 piece Voici Alcan tries to draw connections between the labour practices of the Alcan Corporation's South African subsidiary and the Corporations promotion of American culture. See Brian Wallis's article "The Art of Big Business", in Art in America, June 1986, pp. 28-33.

51. Fallico, A., Art and Existentialism, Eaglewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1962, p. 21.

52. Sartre,J.P.,Existentialism and Humanism, London: Methuen, 1965, p. 29.

53. Sartre, J.P., Ibid., 1965, p. 34.

54. Sartre, J.P., Ibid., 1965, p. 6.

55. Berger, P.L. and Luckmann, T., The Social Construction of Reality, London: Allen Lane, 1967.

Chapter 2: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Sociological interest in the arts has had a long tradition. Madame de Stael is generally accepted as having been one of the early pioneers of this movement. Her writings sought to chart the effects of both women and religion on art; she also believed that the literature of French society should reflect the prevailing political beliefs of the time.[1]

The term 'ideology', in its modern context[2], is thought to have had its origins in the French Revolution. The group of savants, entrusted by the convention of 1795, with the formation of a centre of revolutionary thought at the Institut de France, were often called **ideologues**. Their aim was to practise what they saw as the promise of the revolution: the freedom of thought and expression. However they were not to achieve their stated goals, for whilst they correctly saw the relation between history (the events of the Revolution) and thought (the ideas which expressed it), they also hoped to express certain universal principles, which they believed were unaffected by history.

Destutt de Tracy took up this theme in his Elements d'Ideologie of 1815,[3] in which he introduced a 'natural history of ideas'. Like his predecessors, he wanted to unmask the historicity of ideas; in so doing, he too hoped to unveil a true and universal knowledge.

Stuart Hall[4] argues that because the concept 'ideology' makes a direct reference to the role of ideas, the study of ideology can drift very easily into idealism. But the study of ideology also holds out the promise of a critique of idealism because the concept entails the proposition that ideas are not self-sufficient and that their roots lie elsewhere. This problem is clearly revealed in one of the major philosophical currents in the study of ideas and ideology - that of Kantianism.

Immanual Kant (1724-1804) believed in the primacy of mind over matter. For Kant, things-in-themselves were unknowable. He believed that physical reality causes only the matter of sensation; that our minds order this matter in time and space whilst supplying the concepts by which we understand reality. His argument, that experience must "conform to cognition"[5], recognised certain a-priori knowledge of which space and time were part. These distinctions modified his idealism into a 'transcendental idealism'.

Kant's main rival, Hegel, sought to heal the Kantian division of the world into 'things-in-themselves' and knowledge <u>of</u> things as produced by our mental categories through application of the triadic movement of the dialectic. Hegel (1770-1831) retained his early interest in mysticism throughout his life and, with it, a belief in the unreality of separateness. This emphasis on the 'whole' is carried through in the dialectic. Every thesis throws up its antithesis because nothing can be understood in isolation from the whole. Each new synthesis remains unsatisfactory and, in

turn, creates a fresh thesis. Each later stage of the dialectic contains all the earlier stages in suspension, and none of these is wholly superceded but assumes its proper place as a moment in the whole, The Absolute.[6]

If the specific relationship between reality and knowledge was the dialectical supercession of one by the other, it had to be 'inverted' before it could be adopted by Hegel's successors, Feuerbach and Marx. Marx regarded Hegel's greatest achievement as the dialectical depiction of human self-realisation by way of alienated objectification and the transcendence of the latter. In discussing Hegel, Marx said:

> It is not the fact that the human **objectifies himself inhumanly,** in opposition to himself, but the fact that he objectifies himself in **distinction** from and in **opposition** to abstract thought that constitutes the posited essence of the alienation to be sublated.[7]

But for Marx, alienation could not be 'sublated'.[8] Alienation could only be reversed through the practical overthrow of capitalism and class-based society.

Karl Marx (1818-1883) twice made plans to write systematically on aesthetics. At the beginning of 1842 he worked with Bruno Bauer on a critique of Hegel's interpretation of art and religion. In 1857 he began work on an article on aesthetics for the New American Cyclopaedia. Neither project was ever completed, but ideas of

artistic freedom, as opposed to alienation, were linked through Marx's and Engel's observations of society to the proliferation of artistic activity in class society and its emergence in the labour process.

Marx did not formulate a systematic aesthetic theory[9] in its own right. This was because he felt he could not isolate his analysis of culture from his analysis of society. The continuity of this analysis can be traced from 1842, through the manuscripts of 1844, to Capital, first published in 1867. Stefan Morawski distinguishes between dominant themes which explicitly elaborate a topic and, those which are fragmentary and thus less clear. The dominant themes of Marx and Engels include the origins of aesthetic sensibility, the alienation of the artist, the problem of realism and the class equivalents of art. The second category of themes, those which are fragmentary, concern themselves with the distinguishing character of art objects and aesthetic experience, the enduring value of art, the comic and the tragic, and with form and style.

Marx's well-known assertion, that it was not consciousness which determined being but rather social being (man's lived relation with the world) which gave rise to ideas and thus to consciousness, is fundamentally important to a study of ideology. Marx's precise formulation is drawn from the preface to his book, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy.

> In the social production of their lives, men enter into

> definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite state of the development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rise a legal and political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.[10]

Marx maintained further that at a certain stage of their development these productive forces come into conflict with the existing relations of production. This ushers in an era of social upheaval which at times transforms the economic base. A distinction must be made between the material transformation of the economic base, which can be determined fairly scientifically, and the legal, political, religious, philosophic and aesthetic, in short, ideological forms in which men become aware of this conflict **and fight it out.**

Despite, at times, sharp disagreement between Marxists, Stefan Morawski believes that there is agreement on one central proposition. This is that "Aesthetic phenomena are studied in a context of socio-historical processes, and in this way are regarded as part of a broad civilisational activity by which the species **homo-sapiens** advances slowly to realise an innate potential. Art objects are not isolated phenomena, but are mutually dependent with other cultural activities of predominantly social, politi-

cal, moral, religious, or scientific character.[11]

What is the nature of this interdependence? Morawski uses the term 'synchronic dynamism' to indicate that the relationship is transacted in and at a given moment within what he calls the 'constituted structure of society'. But it is also a diachronic dynamism incorporating the givens of the past. Because man's attitudes to these 'givens' are delimited by human interests, they are ideological. Ideologies are highly complex and are constantly being challenged by freshly discovered attitudes toward our social and natural situations. Morawski identifies these latter sources of contradiction as 'psychosocial' and 'mythological'.

Max Raphael[12] sees myth as the intermediary between the economic order and ideas about art. He writes that in every epoch material production (gathering food, building houses) gives rise to a specific structure of society which, in turn, gives rise to a specific relation between man and nature . These elements are held to determine the state, (the political and juridical process) before finally influencing man's intellectual conceptions of these institutions. The 'reflections' of these real battles in the minds of the participants do not occur as an automatic effect:

> This is why economic evolution in the state does not appear in the form of a class struggle, but as a struggle for economic principles; and in the juridical field jurists even

imagine that they operate with a priori notions, while in reality the latter are reflections of economics.[13]

Engels[14] wrote that ideology was a conscious process, but that it emanated from the wrong kind of consciousness. He recognised that the real forces propelling the thinker must remain unknown to him, otherwise it would not be an ideological process. Since all action is mediated by thought, the thinker imagines false or illusory motive forces and locates them within pure reason itself. "In short, the influence of material production on the mind which produces ideologies is transformed into an a priori of the appropriate domain of knowledge".[15]

However, the individual ideological domains - for instance law, politics, religion, philosophy, literature and art - all have their own internal laws. "This is because economic life does not produce anything directly of itself. It merely determines the manner in which pre-existing thoughts are transformed and evolve."[16] The economic base is not solely active; all of the ideological domains act on one another and, in turn, act on the economic base.

The propensity of art to embrace these and other human/social pursuits is largely due to the historical nature of art. What has gone before is reconsidered, and has an effect on the present and therefore on the future. The degree to which the 'givens' of the past affect the present is bound up in the attitudes or ideologies we have towards these givens.

Together with Max Horkheimer,[17] we need to establish the connections, within a specific social group and time, between the economic role of this group and the thoughts and institutions that are a product of that society, and that have, as a whole, a formative effect upon the group under consideration. The formulation of this question comes directly from Horkheimer's inaugural lecture as the second director of the Frankfurt School of Social Research,[18] and underlines the importance of the work produced under its auspices for a study of the ideology of contemporary art and culture.

For Adorno and Horkheimer, the central observable fact of capitalist society in the first three decades of the twentieth century was the progressive collapse of the family as a socialising agency. Its function had been taken over by 'the culture industry'. This term was first elaborated in Adorno's and Horkheimer's Dialectic of enlightenment in which they clearly articulate an amorphous, passive and irrational working class, loyally supporting a dominant middle class. Along with C. Wright Mills they saw mass society as "a relatively comfortable, half welfare and half garrison society in which the population grows passive, indifferent and atomised; in which traditional loyalties, ties and associations become lax or dissolve completely... and in which man becomes a consumer, himself mass produced like the products, diversions and values which he absorbs".[19]

Apart from the attention given to the weakness of traditional socialising institutions in the face of technological and econo-

mic change, members of the Frankfurt School analysed the increasing reification of culture. The objects of man's activities were transformed into independent autonomous forces, which were seemingly beyond human control. For Horkheimer, modern society had destroyed the autonomy of individuals in its movement towards a 'totally managed world' where the individual was socialised 'for his role as a member of the masses'. Because the products of mass culture had to appeal to a vast, homogeneous public, there was very little scope for the imagination. A critical and independent **public** collapsed into an apathetic **mass.** The confidence of the Frankfurt theorists in the revolutionary role of the industrial working classes was shattered by what they saw as the 'deradicalisation' of the working class by the 'incorporation' of its political organisations. Horkheimer wrote at a time when the collapse of liberal capitalism seemed imminent under the sustained attack of totalitarian politics (fascism) and the growth of giant monopolies and cartels. As a result, he generalised from the specifics of German fascism to capitalism as a whole; thus the American 'culture industry' was seen to perform the same functions as the fascist state in determining social consciousness and social customs whilst, at the same time, saturating civil society with the values associated with empiricism, utilitarianism and respect for hierarchy.

The Frankurt School's understanding of ideology was informed by the dialectical notion that the truth is the whole. As a result its members distanced themselves from the simple equation that ideology was **lies** and that culture created the **illusion** of a

society worthy of man, whereas no such society existed. Whilst these themes will be returned to in later chapters, it should be noted at this point that Freud's concept of the super-ego was seen to provide the key to the problem of ideology. In his essay "Analytic Social Psychology", Erich Fromm argues that Freudian psychology and Marxian materialism both regarded consciousness as 'the reflection of other, hidden forces'. These had become hidden because, under class society, man's creative forces had become alienated and confronted him as an alien, imposed authority. As Fromm said; "A man's hunger can only be satisfied by food; his desire to be loved, however, can be satisfied by fantasies about a good and loving God".[20]

How did the Frankfurt School theorists view the role of art in society? Herbert Marcuse criticised the notion of affirmative culture in 1937. He stressed that the culture of the modern era was an expression of a dissatisfaction with a world overun by economic determinism. He said that in the end 'culture' was seen as an independent realm of value, superior to 'civilisation' because its "decisive characteristic is the assertion of a universally obligatory, eternally better and more valuable world daily struggle for existence".[21] This 'better' world was realizable by every individual for himself 'from within', without any transformation of the social reality.

> Affirmative culture uses the soul as a protest against reification, only to succumb to it in the end... In the form of existence to which affirmative culture belongs,

'happiness at being alive...is possible only as happiness in illusion'. But this illusion has a real effect, producing satisfaction. The latter's meaning, though, is decisively altered; it enters the service of the status quo.[22]

Thus, for Marcuse, 'affirmative culture' is affirmative in its effect only to laissez-faire capitalism by "keeping alive the best desires of men amidst a bad reality".[23]

ART AS MANIPULATION

The Frankfurt School's critique of cultural manipulation was not only applicable to fascism. Because their concept of totalitarianism was radical, it could not be used for the ideological defence of non-fascist capitalist societies. Central to this critique was the particular form that mass-culture was forced to take under the auspices of monopoly capitalism. They did not mount an attack on mass-culture as such, but rather the way in which the "culture industry" attempted to democratize the absorption of art and culture without democratizing its process of production, or paying sufficient attention to the social conditions of the time which placed great emphasis on education as an entrance qualification.

The application of 'critical theory' to popular culture owes a lot to the work Adorno produced after moving to America in 1938.

Working on the Princeton Radio Research Project, he developed a critique, not only of the positivistic approach adopted by most media research workers, but also of the **production** of popular music. His essay, "Concerning Musical Fetishism and the Regression of Listening", highlighted the fetishistic character of music as a commodity.

> Success and fame...is the mere reflection of what one has paid for the product on the market: the consumer really does worship the money that he has paid for his ticket to the Toscanini concert. He has, quite literally, 'made' that success, which he reifies and accepts as an objective criterion without recognising himself therein.[24]

He begins his critique of the production of popular culture with an account of the process of 'standardisation' which promotes the success of music for which the copyright is held. What occurs, in effect, is a standardisation of listening habits; people tend to behave as if they were bribed.

Adorno does not accept the claim that popular culture takes the particular form that it does because the masses have such poor taste. Rather, enthusiasm for popular music requires willful resolution on the part of the listeners who, after all, must transform the external order into an internal order. Adorno criticised Jazz and the Jitterbug because it traded on an alleged endowment of libido energy. Thus the manipulation of people's taste in music and culture, although inspired primarily by the

desire to maximise profits, was also predicated on the ego. As such, the Frankfurt Schools' concept of "art as manipulation" falls squarely into a discussion of ideology.

In the following chapter I propose looking at three major theories of ideology more closely.

Notes and references to pages 29 - 41

Chapter 2: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

1 Madame de Stael, "Dela literature consideree dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales", Paris, 1800.

2. Hall, S., "The Hinterland of Science: Ideology and the Sociology of Knowledge," from On Ideology, London: Hutchinson, 1978, p. 9.

3. Hall, S., Ibid., 1978, p. 10.

4. Hall, S., Ibid., 1978, p. 11.

5. Kant, I., The Critique of Pure Reason, London: Dent, 1964, p. 12.

6. Russel, B., The History of Western Philosophy, London: Allen & Unwin, 1967, p. 704.

7. Marx, K., Economic and Philosohic Manuscripts of 1844, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1973, p. 175.

8. Sublation is a makeshift translation used by the Frankfurt School in their English publications of the dialectical concept of ´Aufhebung´. Hegel explicates the term in the following manner: "That which is sublated, does not thereby become Nothing; Nothing is unmediated, whereas something that has been sublated is mediated. Sublation has the double meaning, in German, of preserving, i.e., retaining, and causing to cease, i.e., ending... Thus that which has been sublated has also been preserved; it has lost its immediacy, but has not thereby been destroyed."

9. A number of writers have assembled Marxist theories of art. The most respected of these are offered by Max Raphael, Mikhail Lifshitz, Lukacs, Sanchez Vasquez and Janet Wolff.

10. Marx, K. & Engels, F., On Literature and Art, New York: International General, 1973, p. 85.

11. Morawski, S., Introduction to Marx Engels on Literature and Art, New York: International General, 1977, p. 8.

12. Raphael, M., Proudhon, Marx, Picasso, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1980, p. 77.

13. Raphael, M., Ibid., 1980, p. 78.

14. Engels, F., ´Letter to Meiring,´ cited in Marx, K. & Engels, F., On Literature and Art, New York: International General, 1973, p. 99.

15. Raphael, M., Proudhon, Marx, Picasso, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1980, p. 78.

16. Raphael, M., Ibid., 1980, p. 79.

17. Max Horkheimer (1895-1973) was appointed Director of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research in 1930. The Institute is most well known for its work on a 'critical theory of society'.

18. The Frankfurt Institute for Social Research was founded with private funds in 1923, and was officially opened the following year with the stated objective of amassing 'knowledge and understanding of social life in its totality'. Under Horkheimer it came to be known as the 'Frankfurt School'. Despite the role of other figures in the Institute (such as Pollock, Leo Lowenthal, Karl Wittfogel) it is essentially the work of Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, Theodor Adorno and Erich Fromm which constitutes the core of Frankfurt School theory. Walter Benjamin had a strong influence on Adorno and did some work for the Institute, although his exact relationship to the centre cannot be established because of the secrecy surrounding its files. (See Phil Slater: Origin and Significance of the Frankfurt School, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980.)

19. Mills, C. W., The Power Elite, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 301.

20. Fromm, E., 'Analytic Social Psychology', in The Crisis of Psychoanalysis: Essays on Freud, Marx and Social Psychology, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973, p. 153.

21. Marcuse, H., "The Affirmative Character of Culture", in Negations: Essays in Critical Theory, Trans. J. Schapiro, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972, p. 95.

22. Marcuse, H., Ibid., 1972, pp. 108-121.

23. Marcuse, H., Ibid., 1972, pp. 102-103.

Art as Manipulation

24. Adorno, T., quoted in Phil Slater, Origin and Significance of the Frankfurt School, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980, p. 123.

Chapter 3: THEORIES OF IDEOLOGY

IDEOLOGY SATURATES WORLD-VISION

Problems posed by the study of ideologies in Germany in the nineteenth century were transformed into the study of 'Weltanschauungen', a legacy which is particularly evident in the work of Lukács. Gyorgy Lukács was born in Budapest in 1885 of wealthy parents. Whilst an adolescent, Lukács displayed a remarkable gift for criticism. Profoundly interested in literature, he originally accepted the prevailing neo-Kantian doctrine which restricted philosophy to logic and the theory of knowledge, while reserving the systematic investigation of empirical reality for the arts and sciences. He was to forego these beliefs after falling under the influences of George Simmel and Emil Lask in Germany.

Simmel's philosophy, in turn, owed a great deal to Dilthey's conception of culture as an objectification of the human mind. He believed that the individual produced cultural objects in order to extend his life and potentialities, but to do so, he had to use the sum total of human products (objective spirit) and had to re-integrate these products into his own life stream. But as the integration of subject and object was unattainable, the objective spirit (in the shape of finished forms) took on its own dynamic, developing thereafter, not as a means, but as an end. Gareth

Stedman Jones characterised this as the "enslavement of man by his own products".[1]

Lukács' 1923 essay collection, History and Class Consciousness, brought about a reappraisal of the importance of Hegel. Following Hegel, Lukács claimed that the distinction between appearance and reality, which is common to science and everyday practice, was not appropriate to art. With art, man projected 'value' into the work, and this value was not something which was purely subjective either. It reflected an objective realm of contents shared by the artist and mankind as a whole. This accounts for our ability to understand the work of different eras.

Art as the identical subject/object of the aesthetic process articulates human consciousness. In so far as the reality, which art is supposed to 'reflect', is not a fact but a mirror image of an objective world of values, art states a truth about the world. This is what Lukács describes as **objective idealism.**

Lukács recognises only two forms of consciousness in capitalist society: that of the ruling class, and the 'ascribed' or revolutionary consciousness of the proletariat. Any alliances between, for example, the peasantry or small traders and the industrial proletariat would result in 'false consciousness'.[2] This is because of the, at times, considerable distance between the proletariat's 'ascribed' consciousness and that of its 'achieved' consciousness. Thus, ascribed consciousness is a rational reconstruction and not an empirical description.

As Lukács saw ideologies essentially as manifestations of the reification of commodities, it follows that he believes that they are wholly determined by the economic order. The possibility for class struggle exists because pockets of ascribed revolutionary consciousness resist the generally all-pervasive dominant ideology. Lukács gives a surprisingly naive and historisist reason for this - the "inevitability" of capitalist economic crisis.

> The further the crisis of capitalism advances, the more clearly this unity in the economic process becomes comprehensible in practice. It was there, of course, in so-called periods of normality too, and was therefore visible from the class standpoint of the proletariat, but the gap between appearance and reality was too great for that unity to have any practical consequence for proletarian action. [3]

Lukács accepted that each social class necessarily adopted a world view which expressed its own interests. However, whereas Hegel thought that 'ideas' were the dominant historical subject, Lukács believed in the superiority of the proletariat, since he believed that this class was the **universal** subject; that is, both subject and object incarnate. However, the question remains: why does Lukács believe that only 'bourgeois' knowledge is reified and that of the proletariat is not?

The reason can be found in Lukács' hostility to the natural sciences. He reduced scientific knowledge to the 'mere' ideolog-

ical expression of a class. He argued that in capitalist society, the bourgeoisie maintained their positon as the ruling class partly because this class took on the guise of 'bearers' of 'knowledge'. Lukács saw the natural sciences as ideological:

> Science stands in an external relationship to that which it is investigating, parallel to the contemplative attitude of the worker to his own work process. Since science takes its data as given, and as a result cannot account for how either the science or its subject matter is produced, it follows that such fragmented sciences cannot be the basis for an understanding of the nature of the social totality merely by adding them all together.[4]

Thus the inablity of science to grasp reality is not simply due to its "bias" but flows instead from its epistomological nature.

Lukâcs, therefore, did not have any difficulty in labelling **all** science as "bourgeois", even that of dialectical materialism. He can do this because he reduces Marxism to a method - that of the dialectic.[5] Science can only yield "partial" laws whilst the dialectic offers a totalizing whole, based on the "immediate, natural life principle of the proletariat."[6] Lukács believes the proletariat to be a "universal class" capable of developing universal knowledge, because its interests, unlike those of other social classes, is not sectarian and thus does not require the subordination or exploitation of any other class. In freeing itself, Lukâcs thought that the proletariat freed mankind and

thus actualised man's potential. But his theory does not account for the proletariat's actual conditions of production, nor can he account for the empirical absence of an insurgent working class.

The central concept of Lukács' theory is that of **reification**, which is drawn in turn from Marx's concept of commodity fetishism. According to this viewpoint, social relations are said to be reified when they take the form of a relationship between things. Thus the social world is changed and reconstructed throughout history by the collective actions of social classes seeking their own interests. Men and women make history, but they do not make it knowingly or, as Lukács would put it, in full consciousness; instead history is made in alienation. Terry Lovell argues that under capitalism and earlier social formations, men and women were subject to forces which operated with all the force of a law of nature. She describes the movement from capitalism to socialism as a move out of the realm of necessity into full human control over the making of society and history. According to Lovell, social relations under capitalism take on reified forms because these relations **mask** the social reality which they are forms of. Appearance and reality diverge: "It is in the collective class interests of the bourgeoisie to take these appearances at face value, while it is in the interest of the proletariat to penetrate to the essential reality."[7]

In his theory of art, Lukács identified what he took to be the twin errors of bourgeois thought: that is, naturalism and what could be called subjectivism. While naturalist art aimed at the

representation of particulars, subjectivism saw art as the product of the subjective consciousness of the creative artist. In this formulation, artistic form is elevated above mere representation.

Lukács differentiated between art and science by paying attention to the way in which each resolved the contradiction between the general and the particular, between appearance and essence.

> The goal for all great art is to provide a picture of reality in which the contradiction between appearance and reality, the particular and the general, the immediate and the conceptual, etc., is so resolved that the two converge into a spontaneous integrity...The Universal appears as a quality of the individual and the particular reality becomes manifest and can be experienced within appearance.[8]

Realist art achieves the unity of appearance and reality through **typicality.** Thus realist art operates by selecting particulars which have the quality of typicality. It is through these representations that the real forces and currents inherent in social life at any particular time can be displayed. For Lukács the most "typical" is not the statistical average, nor the great hero, but rather the unexceptional individual buffeted by conflicting political forces.

One could take an example from the law of optics which explains why a stick placed in a jar of water looks bent. The theory of

optics helps us to determine the **real** shape of the stick. Lovell shows that similarly, the exchange between capitalist and labourer, in which labour-power is bought and sold, has the appearance of an equal exchange. It is only when a theory with an adequate "explaining power" is applied to that appearance that the relationship is unmasked, the inequality is exposed and an account is given of why the relationship "appeared" equal.

Prior to the French Revolution the bourgeoisie was a progressive class battling against an entrenched aristocracy. After the revolutions of 1848 ushered in new urban and industrial societies, it became necessary for this class to defend its newly won privileges against the rising masses of the proletariat. For Lukacs, this progressive phase heralded great art. Lukacs argued that only writers who were in possession of a genuine ideology could produce great works. However he did not insist that the ideological base from which the artist worked be that of the proletariat. Lukacs saw the great artist as being a partisan for the truth. We have seen that Lukacs viewed the proletariat as the "universal class" and that he thought that active involvement in the struggles of this class was a precondition for truth and realism. By working for truth, the artist, according to Lukacs, was siding with the proletariat.

One of Lukacs' most vehement critics was Bertold Brecht, although he did share Lukacs' prescription that art should show things as they really are. Brecht disagreed, however, with Lukacs' belief in the adequacy of the conventions of realism as they were deve-

loped and manifested in the nineteenth century novel. Brecht believed [9] that the narrative construction developed in the nineteenth century not only interfered with the creation of knowledge of the social reality of the time, but, more importantly, that it prevented the audience from contemplating political action based on residual social knowledge. Where Lukacs advocated an identification on the part of the audience with the events and action portrayed, Brecht advocated precisely the opposite. Brecht's epic theatre was structured to foster a critical detachment on the part of the audience. For Brecht, realism was defined solely in terms of its goal; different **conventions** became necessary in differing social circumstances in order to "show things as they are". Thus for Brecht there were many works which were formalist, even though their conventions were those of realism:

> We are then in a position... to characterise and unmask as formalistic even works which do not elevate literary form over social content and yet do not correspond to reality. We can even discover such works which are realist in form. [10]

Lucien Goldmann (1913-1970) encountered the early pre-Marxist writings of Lukacs whilst studying in Vienna in the 1930's under Max Adler. Lukacs' idea that human science, aesthetic creation, or any other product of human consciousness was relevant to the actual struggles of social subjects, had an important influence on Goldmann's methodology. Goldmann considered Lukacs' concept of ascribed consciousness [11] to be his major contribution to the

human sciences and developed the concept himself under the term 'potential consciousness'.[12] Goldmann cites the example of the Russian peasants in January 1917, the majority of whom were loyal to the Tsar because they did not, and according to Lenin, could not, forsee the possibility of overthrowing him. Their actual (that is, false) class consciousness prevented them from seeing that possibility. Their 'potential' consciousness was only achieved after their actual consciousness was transformed by Lenin's slogan: "Land to the peasants". [13]

IDEOLOGY AS CONCEPTIONS OF LIFE

Antonio Gramsci does not often use the term ideology; instead he refers to philosophies, conceptions of the world, systems of thought and forms of consciousness. His thinking is firmly rooted in Marx's base/superstructure model and it would be as well to give some account of that model here.

The basic assumption underlying this macroscopic model is the idea that major political, social and economic changes in society tend to affect art and culture because these changes are channelled through the social structures which constitute their social matrix. The base is held to be the mode of social organisation, that is, the historically specific forms of class structure and their institutions as they relate to the primary economic, demographic and technological social resources. The superstructure is composed of norms or values and 'rules' of society. Our values

comprise our ideas and expressive symbols. If we apply this model to art, we see that the base is, in fact, the individual artist in society as he or she is conditioned by access to social resources, for instance time and art materials, as well as by the relatively permanent pattern of specialised roles, groups and procedures which comprise the art system. The artist is always part of the wider society and is treated as such by that society in its economic (taxation) and political dimensions. The superstructure comprises primarily aesthetic norms, although religious and political codes could be applied, either directly through censorship, or indirectly through ideology or the artist's view of life. The artist in society is thus said to mediate ideology through the conventionalised meaning structure of art using pictorial values and expressive symbols.

In his Prison Notebooks [14] Gramsci introduced a number of notions that elaborate this basic model. His concept of "civil society" stands between the economic structure and the State; that is, the so-called 'private' sphere, which includes institutions like political parties, the press and the family, which in turn combine economic and ideological functions. Here the ideological component is not judged according to a criterion of truth or falsehood, but rather by the extent to which it succeeds in binding social classes and class splinter groups together. The only criterion for assessing an ideology lies in its power to mobilise society along political divisions.

Gramsci is credited with taking the Marxist understanding of

ideology a step further. In the German Ideology Marx states that: "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas; ie. the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time the ruling ideological force." [15] But Gramsci does not see ideology as a simple reflection of the economic level, nor does he see ideology as the uniform expression of the ruling class.

He argues that in order to rule, the ruling class must be able to claim to speak on behalf of the masses. Appeals to notions of 'nationhood' and protection of the traditional way of life, all tend to systematise the ruling ideology. The fact that some of the themes are drawn, that is to say co-opted, from the subordinate classes, lends the whole process a degree of legitimacy and the illusion of universality. But the subordinate classes have to accept ideas of, for instance, nationhood and the common good **before** these concepts can achieve their consolidating power and thus take their place as part of the ruling group's arsenal for hegemonic control.

Broadly speaking, the process of the appropriation of the ideas generally held within a society is based on the division of labour between intellectual and practical functions within its ranks. 'Equality' demands that the 'stain' of rank and station be washed away. Hall **et al**, [16] argue that this accommodation leaves the basic political and social structure unchanged and even acts to consolidate the ruling bloc. Equally, from the other side, if this process of assimilation is incomplete, the subordinate class

has the option of transforming or rejecting these ideas. This brings us to an important aspect of Gramsci's analysis, his concept of hegemony.

Lenin is acknowledged to be the originator of the concept of hegemony, but his use of the term was restricted to the political level and what he saw as the leadership of the proletariat made possible by an alliance with the peasantry. For Gramsci this was not enough; he felt that the partnership affected every aspect of social life and thought.

Gramsci was acutely aware of the fact that ideology manifested itself as a 'lived relation' (see the next section on Althusser) with the world and he was arguably the first Marxist to seriously examine ideology at its interface with the most oppressed sections of society. For Gramsci, ideology operated in the guise of common sense or popular knowledge.

> (Common sense)...is strangely composite it contains elements from the Stone Age and principles of a more advanced science, prejudices from all past phases of history at the local level and intuitions of a future philosophy which will be that of the human race united the world over. [17]

This taken-for-granted aspect of ideology has been developed by subsequent writers. Raymond Williams states:

> (Ideology)...supposes the existence of something which is

> truly total, which is not merely secondary or superstructural, like the weak sense of ideology, but which is lived at such a depth and which saturates society to such an extent that it even constitutes the limit of common sense for most people under its sway. [18]

This inherent eclectic nature indicates that common sense is not systematic and, as a result, often contains contradictory elements without being aware of that fact. Thus popular notions such as nationhood tend to naturalize the social order, minimizing the possibility of social change.

Language is the most common cultural content of any given social class and offers a form of resistance to the further incorporation and assimilation of ideas emanating from another class. We can see this happening in South Africa where political resistance to rural removal programmes is coded in songs, the meanings of which escape the government officials responsible for implementing these policies. At the same time, the question of dialect can be manipulated by the ruling 'elite to pit fractions of the working class against one another through appeals to ethnicity, thus diffusing the power of any resistance.[19]

Unlike Marx and Lenin, Gramsci drew attention to aspects of class rule which are not coercive, but where power and influence are based on 'consent'. For Gramsci, 'ideas' were not directly expressive of the social class of the bearer of those ideas; instead they comprised an area in which class conflict took a

different form. Intellectuals play a leading role in the battle to gain support for one of the fundamental classes and are said to do so through social institutions like the church, the press, schools, as well as through the state. In this way, elements of civil society and the state are mobilised to keep the masses largely obedient to the interests of the state. If this non-coercive, non-repressive hegemonic influence fails, the state has recourse to the "repressive apparatus" of the army and the police.

Gramsci's presentation of the concept of hegemony is crucial to an understanding of ideology. Since the effectiveness of a particular ideology as a binding agent of a social structure is based on consent, this cohesion is very tenuous because the consent can be withdrawn at any time. By not reducing ideas to the level of the economy, Gramsci avoids a simplistic economism. This alleged 'openness' in the ground of ideology is supported historically by the success of certain revolutionary working-class movements to organise politically before seizing state power, as happened in Russia in 1917.

Ideological hegemony succeeds in its task of social control by removing from the arena of political debate, the belief and value systems which keep the ruling group in power. In modern capitalist societies, indeed in all societies, there is often an alliance of power groups and not a single 'ruling class'. Consequently hegemony has evolved into a highly complex mechanism and constantly needs reshaping in order to retain consent and

consensus. As we have already seen, hegemony can be won and lost.

If ideology is to be regarded principally as the 'cement' which holds the structure of society together, we need to understand its potential qualities for cohesion. For Gramsci, "mass adhesion" was the psychological validation of an ideology. Stuart Hall **et al.**,[20] see this as betraying historicist tendencies, which they define as the process whereby the complexity of a social totality is artificially reduced to a simple uniform essence. Likewise historicists reduce the validity of theoretical positions to the historical conditions of the period which the ideas are then said to "express". This entails the collapse of disparate levels of society into an "expressive unity" and allows subsequent theorists the opportunity of appropriating Gramsci's analysis to suit their own ends, be they of a culturalist or economistic variety. This historicist shortcoming has been said [21] to have led Lukacs to define history as nothing other than the expressive unity of consciousness and practice and the proletariat as the first class capable of self-realisation because, under communism, it is the only class capable of total **self-consciousness.** This viewpoint has rightly been attacked because it follows from an irrational, albeit, a progressive conception.

Althusser does not level the criticism of "historicism" against Gramsci in the same way in which he levels it against Lukacs and Sartre. Althusser found in Gramsci's work an insistence on histo-

rical specificity, and not historical relativity. This distinction, in the opinion of Stuart Hall et al., shows a concern with specific analysis of ideologies in "their relation to economic class formation".[22] They state that Gramsci was more interested in the social and political role which ideas play than in misguidedly seeking a unity between his philosophical speculation and his contribution to the advancement of the cause of historical materialism. For Gramsci, Marxism was an organic ideology, much in the same way as Calvinism was a "conception of life". We shall see in the following section that Althusser sought to differentiate between science and ideology in the hope that the "theoretical practice" of philosophy might provide the epistomological guarantee of Marxism's scientificity.

IDEOLOGY AS A LIVED RELATION WITH THE WORLD

Unlike most other writers, Louis Althusser did not treat ideology separately from other key concepts, in particular those of "science" and "social formation". At times, he treats ideology as a level which, together with the economic and political levels, comprises a social formation; elsewhere (Reading Capital) he treats the term epistemologically. However, running through all of his work is the view that ideology constitutes the "fabric" of society insofar as it is the medium in which history occurs and the "relay by means of which men live their relation to their real relations of existence". [23]

What then is meant by "the social Formation"? A distinguishing feature of every social formation is the unity between the economic structure and the political superstructure. Althusser thought that the "base" determined the political and ideological superstructure 'in the last instance', but at the same time was 'overdetermined' by each of them. This is the provenance of Althusser's famous "relative autonomy" of art and culture and as such is something we shall return to. Althusser conceived of the relation between base and superstucture as one of reciprocal determination. The superstructure was not a **reflection** or **expression** of the economic base, but rather the **necessary** condition of its existence. Instead of being conceived of as an undifferentiated totality, social formations were seen as complexes maintained in determinate relations of domination and subordination. But whilst the determinant (in the last instant) was always the economic level, this level was not necessarily dominant. In ancient social formations the political level was dominant. However contemporary societies were seen to be differentiated according to their **economic mode of production.**

More needs to be said about the determinancy of the economic level **in the last instance.** In Reading Capital Althusser refers to the economic level as an "absent determination" which does not, and cannot appear in person. In real terms, the hour of the "last instance" never arrives, primarily because the economic level is never the sole determinant and also because the economic level is a "structure" having immanent effects. Althusser asks:

> "With what concept are we to think the determination of either an element or a structure by a structure?.. ´**Darstellung**´, the key epistomological concept of the whole of the Marxist theory of value, the concept whose object is precisely to designate the mode of presence of the structure in its **effects**, and therefore to designate structural causality itself.[24]

Althusser opposes the basic economic reductionism apparent in "vulgar", economistic tendencies within Marxism. For him the various ´levels´ are constituted as **equivalences** and are not mere epiphenomena of the base belonging to the world of appearances. The "last instance" is not in the nature of an afterthought, but implies that there are "other" determining instances as well.

Althusser makes a distinction between particular and general ideologies. Particular ideologies are seen as the ideological instruments of class rule as instanced by the family, school, church and media. He calls these "ideological state apparatuses", a term which owes a certain debt to Gramsci. Like Gramsci, he locates ´particular ideologies´ in common-sense thought, but unlike Gramsci, he sees particular ideologies as the **effective** forms of the more general ideology. The universal form of all ideologies is identifiable in its effects - that of constituting individual human beings as subjects.

The concept of the subject is central to Althusser´s thought. For him the privileged position of the self in classical epistemology

was lost through successive 'sciences', including the work of Marx and Freud. Althusser drew on the work of Lacan who had reinterpreted Freud's Oedipal drama "identifying its processes as conditions for the entry of the human child into language and society ... The self is sexed, but otherwise undifferentiated, and is the subject of consciousness, experience, and practical activity".[25] The child acquires its sense of self through a series of "mirrors". The first is the idealized other which confronts the pre-Oedipal child in the family: powerful, coherent and in command of the world. The child mis-recognizes itself in this idealized other. Other mirrors are offered throughout life, and the self is the combined product of these imaginary reflections. This formulation of the psycho-social identity of the individual is seen as the site of ideological production, generating a **real effect with real social functions.** Althusser does not agree with Lukacs who, we have seen, thought of ideology as **false consciousness**; for Althusser, ideology is not illusory because it has real effects. It is both "material" and "necessary".

> Ideology is indeed a system of representations, but in the majority of cases these representations have nothing to do with "consciousness": they are usually images and occasionally concepts, but it is above all as **structure** that they impose on the vast majority of men.[26]

He sees ideology as "a matter of the **lived** relation between men and their world," maintaining that this relation only appears "conscious" on condition that it is "unconscious" or, put

differently, it is not a simple relation but a relation of the second degree.[27] McLennan et al., explain Althusser's conception of ideology in this way:

> Briefly, ideology is not a representation of the real conditions of existence, (i.e. the existing relations of production and other relations that derive from them) but a representation of an (imaginary) **relationship of individuals to these real conditions of existence.**[28]

Ideology therefore, can be seen as the expression of the relation between man and his world, overdetermined by the unity of the real relation and the imaginary relation. Ideology is a system of representations endowed with a particular function within every social formation. This function is seen as being primarily practical in the social sense rather than being important to the production of knowledge. In this sense, Althusser's concept of ideology is close to Gramsci's theory of hegemony and would thus be found in all social formations. As a system of representations, ideology is,in fact, indispensable to any society; therefore Althusser did not see an end to ideology.

> In a class society ideology is the relay whereby, and the element in which, the relations between men and their conditions of existence is settled to the profit of the ruling class. In a classless society ideology is the relay whereby, and the element in which, the relation between men and their conditions of existence is lived to the profit of

all men.[29]

There is a problem in this formulation, for in every society there are elements who stand to gain from a radical restructuring of that society, and others who, just as surely, stand to lose. It is tempting therefore to see ideological struggle as the reflection of the wider class struggle. If ideology is indeed the site "in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out"[30] surely ideology would persist in this form in classless society, that is, as the site of conflict between those eager to overthrow the new order and those who seek to protect the "classless" social order.

Science is expected to effect an epistomological break with its ideological background. This is achieved through an "open" structure; one which discovers its own weaknesses on the basis of a systematic attention to the validity of its own theoretical problematic. In contradistinction, ideologies depend on the centrality of a fictitious philosophical subject, that of knowledge and ethics. For science there are no such givens. Thus for Althusser, neither Marxism nor any other science can be an organic ideology. It is precisely on this point that Althusser has been criticised. McLennan **et al.**,[31] ask whether Althusser's historical materialism is not simply another theoretical ideology since in Reading Capital he has not adequately tested the epistomological status of his Marxism. They also ask how Althusser's conception of ideology can be elaborated to cope with, and give an account of, various sub-ideologies; those associated with

"everyday common sense".

In his essay on what he called Ideological State Apparatuses, Althusser gives attention to this problem and he rejects his speculative formulation of a difference between science and ideology. In this formulation, ideology appeares to be simply "the Marxist name for error" whereas Marx saw ideology as a scientific concept concerning the existence of the superstructure. (In his 1857 Introduction to the Grundrisse, Marx stated that "if appearances were no different from reality, there would be no need for science".[32]) With the advent of Althusser's essay on Ideological State Apparatusses, philosophy lost the status of a science and was seen simply as the class struggle in the field of theory. McLennan **et al.**, write:

> There is instead the recognition that what is needed is something other than a theory of the difference between science and ideology. What is needed is [1] a **theory of the superstructure**, and [2] a theory of the **conditions** (material, social, ideological and philosophical conditions) of the process of production of knowledges [**sic**].[33]

What then is this theory of the "superstructure"? Althusser makes the disclaimer at the top of his essay that his thoughts are to be seen as a **contribution** to the the analysis of the reproduction of the relations of production, but at the same time, he is very clear about the way in which he formulates this analysis. The nature of the superstructure can only be "thought" on the "basis

of reproduction",[34] to do otherwise, would be to remain abstract and thus distorted. Reproduction entails:

> reproducing the the material, ideological, and political conditions of exploitation. It is carried out **within production** (cuts in the wages intended for the reproduction of labour power, repression, sanctions, redundancies, anti-union struggle, etc.). At the same time it is conducted **outside production.** It is here that the role of the state - of the RSA and of the ISAs (the political system, school, churches, channels of information) - intervenes in order to subject the working class by both repression and ideology.[35]

The cumbrously named Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs) and Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) **impose** and **maintain** the connections of social structure by material force (state) and moral power (ideology). This should not be seen as an automatic process of formal reproduction, but rather as a **process** capable of infinite adjustments, and one which is tolerant of individual deviations as long as the central reproductive process (that of the class struggle) is not tampered with.

Thus for Althusser, ideology is closely linked with state power and class domination. He writes that "no class can hold state power over a long period without at the same time excercising its hegemony over and in the ISAs."[36] The so-called ISAs project the ideology of the class that holds state power, and in this way this becomes the ruling ideology. Thus the effectiveness of

ideology, which in Althusser's view is always an **ideology in general**, resides in the consciousness and attitudes of individual subjects and is guaranteed by its nature as a **lived relation** to the relations of production. In other words, ideology does not refer to distorted "ideas" about reality, but to real "relationships" to reality. One cannot get outside of ones' concepts (ideologies) because one cannot get outside one's "lived relationship" with the balance of social, political and economic power.

Althusser's emphasis on the individual as the subject of ideology is important for a study of art and culture generally. Firstly, we have seen that ideology has a material base in the individual's "lived relation" with the world. In the above discussion relating to pycho-social selves, we saw that this ideological relation is hidden by the subject's "imaginary relationship" to a real condition of existence. Secondly, ideology "interpellates individuals as subjects" and represents individual relationships to reality.

Mclennan **et al** write that individuals recognise themselves as subjects in the material rituals of everyday life. But, they argue, this recognition of what appears to be an obvious and natural fact depends on an "obviousness" which is imposed by ideology.[37]

What should concern us, and what we must now turn to, is an exploration of how individual artists have attempted to "get

outside" ideology by acting beyond the reach of politics, or what Althusser prefers to call the class struggle. The idea that it is possible to create work which is ideologically neutral and thus beyond the stain of politics, is the central mystification of the avant-garde. It is also the reflection, in the realm of culture, of the extent to which the political debate slides into all human activity by calling attention to its terms.

Before looking at developments in England and the United States in the third decade of the twentieth century, I want to look at the role of various mediators in the art process with the aim of distinguishing between ideology and formal stylistic influences.

Notes to pages 44 - 68

Chapter 3: THEORIES OF IDEOLOGY

Ideology Saturates World Vision

1. Stedman Jones, G., "The Marxism of the Early Lukacs", in New Left Review # 70, 1971, p. 40.

2. Lukács, G., History and Class Consciousness, London: Merlin Press, 1971, p. 61.

3. Lukács, G., Ibid., p. 75.

4. Roisin McDonough, "Ideology as false consciousness: Lukács", in On Ideology, London: Hutchinson, 1977, p. 42.

5. At the beginning of History and Class Consciousness he writes: "Let us assume for the sake of argument that recent research had disproved once and for all every one of Marx's individual theses. Even if this were to be proved, every serious "orthodox" Marxist would still be able to accept all such modern findings without reservation and hence dismiss all of Marx's theses **in toto** - without having to renounce his orthodoxy for a single moment... Orthodoxy refers exclusively to **method**."

6. Lukács, G., History and Class Consciousness, London: Merlin Press, 1971, p. 292.

7. Lovell, T., Pictures of Reality, Aesthetics, Politics and Pleasure, London: British Film Institute, 1980, p. 70.

8. Lukács, G., Ibid., 1971, p. 34.

9. Brecht, B., "Against Georg Lukács", New Left Review, No. 84, 1974.

10. Brecht, B., Ibid., 1974, p. 42.

11. Lukács, G., Ibid., 1971, p. 51.

12. Mayrl, W., Intro., Lucien Goldmann, Cultural Creation in Modern Society, Saint Louis: Telos Press, 1976, p. 8.

13. Goldmann, L., Cultural Creation in Modern Society, Saint Louis: Telos Press, 1976, p. 33.

Ideology as Conceptions of Life.

14. Gramsci, A., Selections from the Prison Notebooks, Hoare and Nowell Smith, eds., London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971.

15. Marx, K., The German Ideology, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1970, p. 64.

16. Hall, S., Lumley, B., McLennan, G., "Politics and Ideology: Gramsci", in On Ideology, London: Hutchinson, 1978, p. 48.

17. Gramsci, A., Ibid., 1971, p. 324.

18. Williams, R., "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory", in New Left Review, #82, 1973, p. 8.

19. Harries, P., "A Forgotten corner of the Transvaal". Paper presented at History Workshop, University of Witwatersrand, January 1984, p. 8.

20. Hall, S., Lumley, B., McLennan, G., "Politics and Ideology: Gramsci", in On Ideology, London: Hutchinson, 1978, p. 54.

21. Hall, S., Lumley, B., McLennan, G., Ibid., 1978, p. 54.

22. Hall, S., Lumley, B., McLennan, G., Ibid., 1978, p. 56.

Ideology as a "lived relation" with the world

23. McLennan, Molina, Peters, "Althusser's Theory of Ideology" in On Ideology, London: Hutchinson, 1978, p. 79.

24. Althusser, Balibar, Reading Capital, London: New Left Books, 1970, p. 188.

25. Lovell, T., Pictures of Reality, London: British Film Institute, 1980, p. 40.

26. Althusser, L., For Marx, London: Allen Lane, 1969, p. 233.

27. This is complex formulation; Althusser's exact words were: "So ideology is a matter of the **lived** relation between men and their world. This relation, that only appears as "conscious" on condition that it is **unconscious**, in the same way it only seems to be simple on condition that it is complex, that it is not a simple relation but a relation between relations, a second-degree relation. In ideology men do indeed express their conditions of existence, but **the way** they live the relation between them and their conditions of existence: this pre-supposes both a real relation and an **"imaginary", "lived"** relation." Althusser, L., Ibid., 1969, p. 234.

28. McLennan, Molina, Peters, "Althusser's Theory of Ideology" in On Ideology, London: Hutchinson, 1978, p. 95.

29. Althusser, L., For Marx, London: Allen Lane, 1969, p. 236.

30. Marx, K., preface to Critique of Political Economy, cited in Althusser, L., "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses", p. 264.

31. McLennan, Molina, Peters, Ibid., 1978, p. 89.

32. Marx, K., 1857 Introduction to the Grundrisse", cited in McLennan **et al**, Ibid., 1978, p. 87.

33. McLennan, Molina, Peters, "Althusser's Theory of Ideology" in On Ideology, London: Hutchinson, 1978, p. 91.

34. Althusser, L., Ibid., 1971, p. 131.

35. Althusser, L., "Essays in Self-Criticism", cited in McLennan **et al**, Ibid., 1978, p. 92.

36. Althusser, L., Ibid., 1978, p. 139.

37. McLennan, Molina, Peters, "Althusser's Theory of Ideology" in On Ideology, London: Hutchinson, 1978, p. 96.

Chapter 4: MEDIATORS

There is an established body of thought which accepts that the cultural products of society are influenced, to a greater or lesser degree, by the manner of their production and distribution. This wisdom is possibly more accepted in respect of those forms of cultural expression which rely heavily on collective effort and a large initial capital outlay. Films are one obvious example, but literary production has also been influenced by the form of publication. Novels intended for serialisation in Victorian times, were specially written with cliff-hanging chapter endings which provided natural breaks for each episode. In his Victorian Novelists and Publishers, Sutherland [1] writes that the circulating libraries of the time were able to force writers to conform to the practice of writing three-decker novels because these libraries constituted such an important outlet.

It is not only the form of distribution that wields an influence on what is produced, but also technology. The printing press facilitated the production of books at a price that most people could afford. By increasing the accessibility of new ideas, the book created new trends of thought.[2] Janet Wolff cites the work of Elizabeth Eisenstein which showed that the shift from script to print affected not only the social organisation of scholars and the dissemination of knowledge, but also the content of that knowledge.[3]

This appears self evident, but one must guard against relating intellectual and cultural change to social and economic factors in a superficial manner. We have seen, for instance, that the development of oil paint in a tube allowed artists to paint outside, in the manner of the Impressionists. In their case, prepared canvasses and special brushes, suitable for handling thick paint, had an undoubted stylistic influence, but only in combination with changes in the institutional order. In their important study of institutional change in the French painting world,[4] Harrison and Cynthia White show how gaps in the academic system of patronage were widened by an increase in the number of artists. This led to the academy losing some of its influence and contributed to its final collapse. Entrepreneurial art dealers developed a new type of distribution, one which was more suited to the needs of an enlarged and emboldened middle class. Because dealers could not control all facets of the art market, they developed alliances with other art professionals, in particular, art critics. Thus White and White call the new system the Dealer/Critic system. Their study shows that, just as the guild system fell away, so too, a point was reached when the old academies could no longer cater for the economic needs of the thousands of full-time artists on a regular basis; new means had to be found for putting buyers in front of paintings. They write:

> French economic expansion and the emergence of France as the international cultural centre led to an expanded market for art and hence to a considerable specialisation in this market. It is doubtful, however, that these developments led

> to any fundamantal changes in taste on the part of either the public or the painter. Genre and landscape had always been the favorites of most buyers. The change was that with a much larger production of paintings the average private buyer was the dominant component of the market.[5]

Dealers emerged at a time when the prevailing Academic system was overloaded. From 1765 to 1791, between 300 and 400 works were exhibited annually at the Paris Salon. This jumped to 794 in 1791 when the salon was opened to all artists and not only academicians. Jury selection reappeared in 1798 and the number of paintings exhibited shrank to 573. Available figures[6] show that the number of works submitted during the 1840's climbed steadily from about 4000 in 1842 to 5362 in 1848. This salon operated as the main instrument for review, reward and control of artists. Attempts to organise provincial salons were unsuccessful and met with derision by the Parisian journals. The Academic system regulated the selection of artists considered worthy of state commissions, and even established the prices in the various categories.

This is particularly evident during Napoleon's time when it was laid down that a 3 by 5 metre history painting should fetch 12,000 Francs, whereas a picture of one of the emperor's horses, only 130 Francs. Artists had to have won the Prix de Rome medal at one of the salons before they were considered for a government commission. [7] Clearly this system was unable to cater for the needs of the vastly increased number of artists, nor could it

offer them the degree of security which they had previously enjoyed under the Guilds.

In the fourteenth century when the guild system first became consolidated,[8] artists came from craftsman, shopkeeper or peasant circles. They came from a lower social class than did their patrons and, as a result, did not dare to challenge the system which laid down the conditions of their training, their renumeration, and the style and content of their work. However, membership of a guild did give an artist a degree of copyright protection and assistance when he was in financial difficulty - assistance that was non-existent in the Academic system. This system raised the social position of an artist from artisan to member of the bourgeoisie without ensuring that his income was commensurate with his new position. No wonder Pisarro exclaimed: "It's a wonderful business being a bourgeois - without a cent!"[9]

The new system succeeded because it could command a bigger market than that offered by the Academic system of state patronage. Here it is worth noting that part of the founding statutes of the French Academy forbade any academician to open a shop or "gallery", or even to exhibit his work in the windows of his house.[10] The Salons had operated as an elimination heat in the race for state commissions, but with the increased social status of artists came an unprecedented growth in their number, and the system was no longer feasible. For one thing, successive governments meant that state spending on art was erratic. Secondly, the Academic system concentrated on individual

paintings, not on the whole output of an artist. This prevented the Academy from utilizing the new methods of advertisement since it was not worth focussing a publicity campaign on a single painting. Competition between dealers led to acceptance of the practice of publicizing the **oeuvre** of a favoured artist.

As the emerging dealers were in a position to pick up nuances in market trends, they were encouraged to become speculators as well. Since artists preferred a steady and regular income, even if it was small at first, dealers developed the practice of buying all the work of certain artists at a fixed price. This practice has continued up until the present time and was also evident in the period 1933-1953. As potential buyers developed a faith in the dealer's judgement, the mere fact that the work was acceptable to the dealer meant that the work in question was considered a sound investment. Although Peggy Guggenheim knew little about art and even less about running an art gallery,[11] prior to opening her London gallery, Guggenheim Jeune in 1938, she quickly established herself as one of the more influential dealers by relying on the advice of her consultants - Marcel Duchamp, Herbert Read, Max Ernst (whom she later married) and Alfred H. Barr. In 1945, after her return to New York, she concluded a contract with Jackson Pollock which gave her his total output for the next two years.

Another factor was competition between dealers. As the so-called gallery system had arisen to cope with differences of taste, so a profusion of dealers arose, each with their own coterie of

artists. Younger artists favoured group shows because it gave them publicity. Group shows, with their attendent manifestos, gave critics a chance to explore art in a combative and sometimes controversial way. Dealers colluded in giving the public the illusion of choice, a practice which has continued to the present day.

In his article, "The American Painter as a Blue Chip", Martin Elkoff writes that the dealer, Leo Castelli, advised a friend of his who runs the Green Gallery to schedule its first showing of the work of James Rosenquist to coincide with his own showing of Jasper Johns. He reportedly also advised Andy Warhol to exhibit through the Stable Gallery and Jim Dine to exhibit through the Sydney Janis Gallery because this would create the sense of a movement and thus stimulate the interest of collectors, museums and the press.[12] Once a dealer had taken on a particular artist they were expected to exhibit only through their galleries and in many cases this system was refined to the point where artists signed contracts which prohibited them from selling through another dealer. Of the first generation Abstract Expressionists,[13] Mark Rothko was one of the few artists who refused to join a "stable" and only entered into a contract (with Marlborough Galleries) late in life. Ironically, his worst fears were confirmed after his death by suicide on 25 February 1970.

Rothko was a prolific worker and produced even more paintings after he started using acrylics, " a medium which Rothko chose because he was attracted to their fast drying qualities - he was

able to make one painting a day".[14] This, and the fact that he would only sell a painting if he felt sure that it would be displayed in the most advantageous conditions,[15] meant that he built up a vast collection of his own work. His will left 798 paintings to the non-profit Mark Rothko Foundation. The decision by his executors, who were also his three most trusted companions, to sell these works in two batches to Marlborough Galleries was the subject of a criminal lawsuit which involved nineteen lawyers and 20,000 pages of testimony. The year before his death Rothko had sold a bulk consignment of paintings to Marlborough Galleries in compliance with his contract, this new arrangement gave the gallery a monopoly over his work. A painting which they bought in from his estate for $18000 was immediately resold for $250 000.[16]

In assessing the degree to which **mediators** influence what is painted or made, one must understand the features of the art-object itself. The movement away from the unitary art-object into the field of Environment[17] and Performance Art[18] in the 1970's challenged the Dealer/Critic system by virtue of the fact that the art work was sometimes immovable and thus impossible to exhibit it in a gallery. That this movement was not intended by the artist to be a serious challenge to the hegemony of the galleries is amply demonstrated by the fact that the artists nonetheless documented their work and offered these "documents" to the dealers as residual art. Collectors can now buy, for example, a cardboard box containing copies of the engineering drawings, samples of the plastic sheeting and photographs of the

final effect of Christo's Wrapped Coast.[19]

Art critics function as mediators between art works and the general public in three distinct ways - as theorists, ideologues and publicists. I make this point as a general observation and not as evidence of any conspiarcy to defraud the public. It is a fact of history that the work of the American avant-garde was largely unintelligible to the general public and art critics came forward to explain the work. As I will argue in Chapter 7, critics no longer served as public guarantors of aesthetic standards, but now vied with each other for space in the most prestigious journals. Thus it was Clement Greenberg the theorist who wrote that "as is the case with most post-cubist painting of any real originality, it is the tension inherent in the constructed, re-created flatness of the surface that produces the strength of [Pollock's] art".[20] It was Harold Rosenberg the ideologue who defended the 'new' art by writing that "the apples weren't swept off the table to make room for perfect relations of space and colour. They had to go so that nothing would get in the way of the act of painting".[21] And it was Greenberg the publicist who trumpeted news of America's artistic coming of age and Pollock's stature as the "greatest American painter of the twentieth century."[22]

The mediating role of the critic as publicist is complicated by the fact that even if the critic is hostile to the work in question, in the overcrowded and competitive world of art, any mention at all serves to introduce the artist to the public. An

understanding of how negative criticism can be perceived positively, by both the artist and public alike, can be gained through attention to the myth of the artist as outsider.[23] At the birth of the modern movement in art, White and White noted that:

> Exclusion from the Salon not only made a painter a figure of interest to readers; it became, in articles by favorable critics, a positive reason for the artist's greatness.[24]

This phenomenon is not as perverse as it appears at first. The idea that classical art had a social purpose and that modern art has freed itself from those loosely defined social obligations raises the question of whether the modern artist has the power to raise him or herself above circumstances. The modern artist needs to be noticed, but not in terms of any orthodoxy. Each new movement has attracted its adherents and its detractors, with about 90000 artists in New York City alone, Andy Warhol has said: "To be successful as an artist, you have to have your work shown in a good gallery for the same reason that, say, Dior never sold his originals from a counter in Woolworth's...No matter how good you are, if you're not promoted right you won't be one of those remembered names."[25]

Harold Rosenberg agrees that recognition of an artist's work can be manipulated and he cites dealers like Charles Egan, Samuel Kootz and Betty Parsons who have created international reputations for the work of de Kooning, Pollock, Hoffmann, Gottlieb, Rothko, Guston, Kline, Newman, Motherwell and Tomlin:

> The claims that a work is historically significant is sufficient to clinch a sale, regardless of the poor condition or lack of attractiveness of the work itself, as is a confident forecast of capital gains. Periodic mentions in the press, expensive catalogs and reproductions, dealer-subsidised "critical" biographies, large private and gallery parties influence an artist's standing despite everyone's understanding of how these things are arranged. A mediocre talent suddenly hailed as representing the ultimate phase in the evolution of world art will be accorded new respect not only by dealers, curators and reviewers but even by fellow artists.[26]

The point being made here is that much of the art that is successful achieves this success through a number of external manipulating factors or mediators, and not just because it is **good** art. It may well be a fact that it is 'good' art that sells, but there are just too many definitions of what constitutes 'good' art for it to be of any lasting value as a critical term. If one uses qualitative criteria alone, one is not able to explain why a work will sell for a higher price after the death of the artist. In the two years after Rothko's death in 1970, more of his paintings were sold than during his entire lifetime, and for higher prices. It was the same work, but the supply was now finite.[27]

This suggests that art is simply a commodity, like carrots for instance. The fewer there are to go around, the higher the price.

However, Janet Wolff argues that artists do not produce commodities, but rather, cultural products. Because artworks are located in social processes they are bearers of human knowledge. Artistic practice can be said to mediate certain values through aesthetic codes. Although the artist acts as the locus of this mediation, they are themselves constituted in social and ideological processes. This does not mean that the artist acts like a robot which has been programmed by the economic structure, but rather, as Raymond Williams has said, ideology is lived at such a depth that it even constitutes the limit of common sense for people under its sway[28].

I have argued in this Chapter that the Dealer/Critic system excercizes a powerful leverage, not only on the careers of individual artists, but also on the direction and content of contemporary art. New factors have come into play. Artists must now also have charisma. In her new book, Has Modernism Failed? Suzi Gablik quotes the dealer Leo Castelli: "I cannot make an artist if he doesn't have proper qualities...Mary [Boone] and I, We can make an artist charismatic".[29]

Identifying contemporary art as a two-billion-dollar-a-year market in New York City alone, Gablik quotes a fellow critic, Peter Schjeldahl as saying that the ritual anti-commercialism of much modern art has had "roughly the impact on capitalism of a beanbag hurled against cement."[30] Gablik believes that the current profusion of styles and, the attitude that absolutely anything goes, is simply a reflection of yet another critic's

dictum that the freedom of the modern artist, is a freedom to do anything except act socially.[31]

Although generally pessimistic about the "spiritual crisis" of Modernism and Post-modernism, Gablik lays most of the blame for the failure of Modernism at the door of media management. Discussing Julian Schnabel's overnight success Gablik writes that Schnabel's dealer, Mary Boone, in one year, had been written about in New York magazine, Life, Esquire, Saturday Review, Savvy and People. Her argument does not go further than this unreflexive idea that art is **caused** by other factors. From the start her analysis is vague; "the fact remains that the great art of recent centuries has emerged largely under capitialism, and not under socialism."[32] Neither mode of production has been in existence for that length of time, but I think the important part of her statement consists in the fact that she felt compelled to make it at all. In the world of ideas, the legacy of McCarthyism is not dead.

Against this undialectical approach a growing number of commentators[33] propose a mutual interdependence of structure and agency, rather than the primacy of one or the other. This dissertation attempts to explore the nature of that inter-dependence more fully, especially with regard to the American avant-garde. Before embarking on that exploration I think that it is necessary to look at the relationship between avant-garde culture and its counterpart, mass culture.

Chapter 4: MEDIATORS

1. Sutherland, Victorian Novelists and Publishers cited in Wolff, J., The Social Production of Art, London: Macmillan Press, 1981, p. 45.

2. Fevre and Martin cited in Wolff, J., The Social Production of Art, London: Macmillan Press, 1981, p. 35.

3. Eisenstein cited in Wolff, J., The Social Production of Art. London: Macmillan Press, 1981, p. 36.

4. White, H. & White, C., Canvases and Careers: Institutional Change in the French Painting World, New York: John Wiley, 1965.

5. White, H. & White, C., Ibid., 1965, p. 159.

6. White, H. & White, C., Ibid., 1965, p. 30.

7. White, H. & White, C., Ibid., 1965, p. 65.

8. See Frederick Antal, "Social Position of the Artists: Contemporary Views on Art", in Albrecht, M.C., ed., The Sociology of Art & Literature: A Reader, London: Duckworth, 1970, pp. 288-295. For a discussion of the Guild of St. Luc who esatablished its own "academy" with royal permission see White, H. & White, C., Ibid., 1965, p. 11.

9. Rewald, J., ed., Pissaro, Letters to his son Lucien, New York: Pantheon, 1943, p. 248.

10. This rule further regulated the Academicians from doing "anything to permit the confounding of two such different things as a mercenary profession and the status of Academician. See Vitet, L., L'Academie Royale, cited in White, H. & White, C., Canvases and Careers: Institutional Change in the French Painting World, New York: John Wiley, 1965, p. 13.

11. See Jacqueline Bograd Weld's biography of Peggy Guggenheim. Weld, J.B., Peggy - The Wayward Guggenheim, London: Bodley Head, 1986, pp. 112-114.

12. Elkoff, M., "The American Painter as a Blue Chip", in Albrecht, M.C., ed., The Sociology of Art & Literature: A Reader, London: Duckworth, 1970, p. 321.

13. According to Clair Zamoiski, this term was first used by Alfred H. Barr, Jr., in relation to Kandinsky in his book Cubism and Abstract Art. The next reported usage of this term appeared in The New Yorker , March 30, 1945 in a review of Hofmann's work at the Mortimer Brandt Gallery. Robert M. Coates wrote "...he is certainly one of the most uncompromising representatives of what some people call the spatter-and-daub school of painting and I, more politely, have christened abstract Expres-

sionism." Cited in Waldman, D., Mark Rothko, London: Thames and Hudson, 1986, p. 271. in 1945

14. Waldman, D., "The Farther Shore of Art", in Mark Rothko, London: Thames and Hudson, 1986, p. 68.

15. Mark Rothko committed suicide in his New York studio in the early hours of February 25th 1970. He regarded all of his work as cherished creations and on more than one occasion declined a sale. In the Autumn of 1969 he refused to sell an important painting to a collector after finding out where he intended placing the work. He also refused to deliver 5 murals for the Seagram Building when he learned that they were to be hung in the restaurant and not the foyer. Rosenberg, H., "The Art World - Death and the Artist", The New Yorker , Vol. 51., March 24, 1975, pp. 69-72.

16. Rosenberg, H., "The Art World - Death and the Artist", The New Yorker, Vol. 51., March 24, 1975, p. 69.

17. For example, see the photograph of Robert Smithson's **Asphalt Rundown**, executed near Rome in October 1969. Reprinted by courtesy of the John Weber Gallery, New York and L'Attico, Rome, in Lippard, L., Six Years: The dematerialisation of the art object, New York: Praeger, 1973, p. 88.

18. Performance Art should not be confused with theatrical performances of any kind although a live audience and a pre-determined script is often in evidence. Vito Acconci is a particularly celebrated practioner of this form. He describes one of his works in the following way. Title: **Following Piece.** Choose a person at random, in the street, any location, each day. Follow him wherever he goes, however long or far he travels. The piece ends when he enters a private place - his home, office, etc. See Lippard, L., Ibid., 1973, p. 117.

19. Christo covered one million square feet of the South Australian coastal cliffs with plastic sheeting and wire rope on 28 October 1969. Apart from a film of the event, viewers could purchase a book of photographic documentation (by Shunk-Kender) of the project.

20. Greenberg, C., Nation, February 1, 1947, cited in O'Connor, F. V., Jackson Pollock, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1967, p. 41.

21. Rosenberg, H., The Tradition of the New, London: Paladin, 1970, p. 38.

22. Greenberg, C., Nation, January 24, 1948, cited in O'Connor, F. V., Jackson Pollock, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1967, p. 43.

23. The literature abounds with examples of artists who see themselves on the outside of established or genteel society. Artists have established groups out of their shared anathema towards respectable society. The **Fauves** are one example. For a

study of this attitude amongst artists see Quentin Bell's essay, "Conformity and Nonconformity in the Fine Arts", in Albrecht, M., The Sociology of Art & Literature: A Reader, London: Duckworth, 1970, pp. 687-701.

24. White, H. & White, C., Canvases and Careers: Institutional Change in the French painting World, New York: John Wiley, 1965, p. 123.

25. Andy Warhol cited in Gablik, S., Has Modernism Failed?, London: Thames & Hudson, 1984, p. 63.

26. Rosenberg, H., "The Art Establishment", in Albrecht, M.C., The Sociology of Art & Literature: A Reader, London: Duckworth, 1970, p. 391.

27. Rosenberg, H., "The Art World - Death and the Artist", The New Yorker , Vol. 51., March 24, 1975, pp. 69-71.

28. William, R., "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory", in New Left Review, # 82, 1973, p. 8.

29. Gablik, S., Has Modernism Failed?, London: Thames & Hudson, 1984, p. 95.

30. Gablik, S., Ibid., 1984, p. 55.

31. Peter Fuller wrote that the freedom of the modern artist was "like the freedom of madmen and the insane; they can do what they like because whatever they do has no effect at all... They have every freedom except the one which matters: the freedom to act socially." Gablik, S., Ibid., 1984, p. 31. Ms Gablik does not give any references, nor does she list Fuller's publications in her bibliography.

32. Gablik, S., Ibid., 1984, p. 31.

33. Berger and Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality, London: Allen Lane, 1967. Giddens, A., New Rules of Sociological Method, London: Hutchinson, 1976. Lukes, S., "Power and Structure" in Social Theory, London: Macmillan, 1977.

Chapter 5 MASS CULTURE

> Both avant-garde art and mass culture bear the stigmata of capitalism, both contain elements of change...Both are torn halves of an integral freedom, to which, however, they do not add up. Theodor Adorno.[1]

Some aspects of the work of early members of the Frankfurt School have already been outlined in Chapter 2. I now propose to look at their analysis of mass culture. Broadly speaking, Adorno, Marcuse and Horkheimer, all offered negative criticism of mass culture, whilst Benjamin, Brecht and Siegfried Kracauer held out more optimistic outlooks based on the possibilities of the collective nature of the capitalist mode of production.[2] Horkheimer and Adorno argued that the mediating function of the family as a socialising agency had passed to what they called the "culture industry".[3] Swingewood suggests that this concept, first elaborated in Horkheimer's and Adorno's Dialectic of Enlightenment, saw the mass media as essentially repressive because they promoted the idea that happiness and human fulfilment were only possible through acquiescence and integration with the existing political order.[4] Previously the virtues of obedience and conformity had been passed on to the individual by a family structure which acted, more or less, as an independent economic unit. During the thirties, crises of production within capitalism, brought women and children into the

productive process, thus threatening "the economic basis of parental authority".[5] Swingewood writes:

> Unlike nineteenth-century capitalism, the most significant socialising agencies now are the state and technologically dominated labour. The result is the virtual elimination of all oppositional thought to the existing social order for, through 'a whole system of extra-familial agents and agencies' (ranging from pre-school gangs to radio and television), the ego is prematurely socialised: 'The experts of the mass media transmit the required values; they offer the dream and romance.' The 'manipulated consciousness' of modern man thus means total ignorance of world affairs: 'The overpowering machine of education and entertainment unites him with all the others in a state of anaesthesia from which all detrimental ideas tend to be excluded.'[6]

Horkheimer is credited with extending these arguments to the realm of culture. He distinguished between 'high culture', which he saw as genuine art, and 'mass art', which he saw as just another set of bebased commodities. For Horkheimer, genuine art possessed a transcendent, critical function:

> ...every new work of art makes the masses draw back in horror. Unlike the Führers, it does not appeal to their psychology, nor, like psychoanalysis, does it contain a promise to guide this psychology towards 'adjustment.' In giving downtrodden humans a shocking awareness of their own

> despair, the work of art professes a freedom which makes them foam at the mouth.[7]

Likewise, Adorno offered a vindication of the élitism of the avant-garde. Since 'negation' stood at the centre of the notion of the avant-garde, Adorno believed that the avant-garde had to remain élite and incomprehensible or perish. Phil Slater sees this thread running through all of Adorno's writings. Art cannot do more than defy and negate the one-dimensional society of which it is part. It can only "escape this complicity by abolishing itself"; if it were to do this, "it would really be aiding and abetting the alien and speechless domination of man, and thus yielding to barbarism".[8] Adorno argued bitterly against popular music because he believed that its libidinal energies could be "manipulated by the ego" which, because they were not deeply immersed in the unconscious, could break out in the masses and dispense with "controlled pleasure".[9]

Walter Benjamin was also interested in the avant-garde, but adopted a much more engaged position and avoided Adorno's passive stance. Benjamin stressed that the avant-garde, as the head of the cultural army, could "march so far ahead that the main body of the army cannot follow it".[10] This is seen in his discussion of Surrealism and the struggle for a classless society. Slater quotes Walter Benjamin's criticism of that movement's revolutionary potential as being confined to, and analogous with, taste. Thus Benjamin is credited with revealing the avant-garde's prodigious appetite for revolutionary themes:

> [T]he bourgeois apparatus of production and publication is capable of assimilating, indeed of propagating, an astonishing amount of revolutionary themes without ever seriously putting into question its own continued existence or that of the class which owns it. [11]

An important aspect of Benjamin´s thought is put forward in his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction".[12] Here he points out that although technological developments have made the reproduction of works of art possible, this has resulted in the work of art losing its ´aura´. This is not seen as a bad thing, on the contrary, this loss of aura has meant the emancipation of art from its "parasitical dependence on ritual".[13] Terry Eagleton believes that Benjamin associates ´aura´ with distance and that this is evident in the commodity form of art which "combines the allure of the mythically untouchable madonna with the instant availability of the mythical whore". The intimacy, or distance, of the mechanically reproduced object is of a different kind. Where the traditional painting keeps its distance from reality, the film camera ´penetrates deeply into its web´, dislocating the perceived natural viewpoint, "by its ability to probe and isolate, freezing, magnifying or disarticlating the fragments of an action in order to reassemble them in multiple forms".[14]

John Berger took up these ideas in his television series, "Ways of Seeing", now published in book form.[15] Berger writes that "When the art of the past ceases to be viewed nostalgically, the

works will cease to be holy relics - although they will never re-become what they were before the age of reproduction."[16] He goes on to argue that, despite the tangible "materiality" of paint "in which one follows the traces of the painters immediate gestures",[17] the art of the past has lost its "authority". By authority, Berger means art's efficacy as a formal device in first achieving and then maintaining, social power. Berger argues that "the experience of art, which at first was the experience of ritual, was set apart from the rest of life - precisely in order to be able to exercise power over it."[18] By entering the palaces of the ruling classes, the authority of art was seen to be inseparable from the real authority wielded by members of those classes.

The authority which art was seen to possess, and finally to lose, was traded off against the gains made possible by a proliferation of quasi owners, that is 'time-sharers' who had the 'use' of the art work in question but did not own the work outright. The gains being spoken of here are, of course, the profits reaped from the sale of reproductions and, as importantly, the satisfaction of seeing one's own cultural preferences spread more widely throughout society. What Berger calls the authority of original works of art is still vested, through complicated copyright laws, in the actual owners of the work in question. The original retained its value at the same time that the illusion was created that the experience of art had been democratised.

Another aspect highlighted by Berger turns on the transformation of the meaning and content of the original. Reproduction separates the meaning of an art work from its material support, and thus allows that meaning and prestige to attach itself to other material supports. He argues that the meaning of paintings is information and as such, like all information, "it is either put to use or ignored."[19] We are now faced with a situation where, for instance, original oil paintings have been used in advertising campaigns in ways which the artist never intended.[20] In this way art entered into the discourse of information, or what Berger calls 'the language of images'. Canvases which were painted under one set of social relations, let us say patronage by the Church, could, by virtue of photographic techniques, be harnessed to the task of selling soap.

Berger states that the practice of art history attempts to spread the cultural hegemony of the upper classes:

> Because works of art are reproducible, they can, theoretically, be used by anybody. Yet mostly - in art books, magazines, films or within gilt frames in living rooms - reproductions are still used to bolster the illusion that nothing has changed, that art, with its unique undiminshed authority, justifies most other forms of authority, that art makes inequality seem noble and hierachies seem thrilling.[21]

Berger's viewpoints have come under fire from some unexpected

quarters. In particular, his belief that aesthetic ideas have no value if they are based on an appreciation for 'beautifully made objects' and the 'unchanging human condition', has been challenged by Peter Fuller.[22]

Whilst acknowledging the force of much of what Berger does say, particularly his view that from the Renaissance up until the nineteenth century there was a 'special relationship' between art and property, Fuller criticises Berger for ignoring the specificities of oil paintings. Among these he numbers the fact that the method and practice of oil painting has demystified the relationship between religious thought and religious paintings. Where Berger sees a contradiction between the obvious materialism of many oil paintings and their subjects, Fuller sees this materialism as having been historically progressive. He sees it as one of the ways in which men and women began to conceive of themselves in their own image and not in some transcendental vision. At the same time it should be held in mind that, unlike John Berger, Fuller thought that "there is no simple or necessary correlation between materialism, oil painting, and bourgeois attitudes towards property." [23]

I indicated in Chapter 1 that 'materialism' is opposed to 'idealism'. From the point of view of materialism, culture cannot transcend the material forces and relations of production. Thus the concept of culture being put forward in this dissertation is not simply a reflection of the economic and political levels, but nor can it be indepedent of those levels. From a

materialist viewpoint, mass culture is structured by the system of significations by which society understands itself and its relations with the world.

In many ways, cinema is the sphere of mass cultural activity within which this system of significations is most apparent and a short digression is called for. In an essay entitled "The Political Economy of Hollywood", Richard Maltby writes that in the 1930's film production was marked off from distribution and exhibition by significant factors. Prime among these factors was the geographic separation of production and distributive bases. Geographical centralisation of production facilities made economic sense, but this concentration of the 'Big Five'[24] corporations also led to competition between them for actors and technicians. At the same time the geographic separation between Wall Street (RKO was owned by Radio Corporation of America which was owned by Chase National Bank which in turn was owned by the Rockefellers) and Hollywood, gave the studio 'moguls' a certain independence. Thus the image of Hollywood was largely the creation of this small group of men. Maltby writes that "Hollywood was in the extraordinary business of selling dreams, and a dream factory was necessarily a fantastic place. Its fabled extravagance became a requirement of the commodity they manufactured."[25]

But the creative autonomy enjoyed by the production studios was held in check by New York management which, with its conservative business background, discouraged producers from experimentation. The need to recoup production expenses through first run box

office returns also led to a standardisation of Hollywood films along previously successful lines. Maltby writes:

> The star system, genres, conventional narrative structures and other formulaic elements aided the predictability of box office returns by standardising the audience's pleasurable experience.[26]

This standardisation was also fostered by the other arm of the film companies, that is the string of theatres which each company owned and exhibited through. A standardised musical or melodramatic genre was easier to market than a succession of disparate films. This standardised formula was forced on smaller production companies because theatre outlets were mainly owned by members of the Big Five. Not only did these companies operate as a cartel in the 1920's, they were the only companies to survive the decade of the Great Depression and thus entered the 1940's in an even stronger position. These companies were committed to superior technical values but did not see films as 'art' but rather as 'entertainment'. Men like Adolf Zukor of Paramount Films pushed the idea of 'family entertainment', an idea which was codified by Will H. Hays who, as president of the Motion Picture Export Agency, was able to get his 'code' accepted as an industry standard. The so-called Hays Production Code encouraged companies to aim their product at the larger and more stable family market, if they refused, their products were blacklisted. The Code's Seal of Approval was a prerequisite for all films exhibited in MPPDA (Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of

America) owned theatres. The effect of this was that all producers who hoped to gain access to the American market had to tailor their films to fit the American dream. What was the American 'dream'?

In his article, "The Mind of the Mob",[27] Phillip Melling discribes how the ascendancy of wish-fulfillment thinking in the 1920's, fed by speculative desires for wealth, exploded during the years of the depression. Those who had lost their jobs or capital were prey to escapist ideology and eagerly bought up pocket-digest magazines which had circulations of up to four million copies a month. He cites Rorty's preface to Where Life is Better: "I encountered in 15,000 miles of travel nothing that disgusted and appalled me so much as this American addiction to make-believe".[28] Melling also notes that the joys and frustrations of self-escape where also magnificently embedded in the spate of gangster films which made their appearance in the early 1930's. "A psychopathic caricature of the Horatio Alger stereotype", the gangster "rose to success through diligence and self-reliance, hurting people and accepting in return that he must be hurt by others."[29]

During this period, the issue of artistic freedom was always interpreted in its narrow technical sense. A Supreme Court ruling in 1915 had defined the legal status of film as "a business pure and simple, originated and conducted for profit."[30] Film was therefore denied the right to free speech as laid down in the Constitution of the United States.

After analysing the plots of films made after 1934, Melling comes to the conclusion that "once the anti-gangster crusade gained momentum Hollywood made the criminal the reason for the Depression and so neatly sidestepped fundamental considerations of politics and economics."[31] The image of the gangster now suffered a reversal and his misdeeds were anticipated by lawmen, priests and vigilantes. The film made by Fritz Lang after his conscription to Hollywood is a case in point. His film **You Only Live Once** portrays a couple forced into crime by society but brought to justice by the sherrif. Melling notes that the audience becomes the sherrif through the cinematic device of filming down the barrel of the rifle.

Erich Pommer, the producer of the majority of German Expressionist films conceeds that Hollywood was the capital of the film world:

> The German film industry made "stylised films" to make money. Let me explain. At the end of World War I the Hollywood industry moved toward world supremacy. The Danes had a film industry. The French had a very active film industry, which suffered an eclipse at the end of the war. Germany was defeated; how could she make films that would compete with the others? It would have been impossible to try and imitate Hollywood or the French. So we tried something new: The expressionist or stylized films.[32]

Huaco, in his book The Sociology of Film Art, develops the point

that the distortion of the sets and psychologism of the characters sufficiently challenged the local demand for Hollywood films. Although there was some consumer resistance to the first fully Expressionist film when it was first screened in 1920, the producer of The Cabinet of Dr Caligari revealed that:

> I forced Caligari through a poster and publicity campaign. We had very effective expressionist posters all over Berlin with the words; "You must see Caligari"...Now the audience had been prepared. It ran for three months.[33]

However, it is more important for a study of the relationship between art and the ruling ideology of the time, to look at what these films articulated on a deeper structural level. Huaco analysed the German government's drift to the right after the German communists and their Sparticist uprisings had been crushed. The Cabinet of Dr Caligari was released three months after the defeat of the May 1919 uprising. It was thus released into a vastly changed political climate; one which necessitated some last minute script changes. Pommer's introduction of the scene in which the insane student tells another inmate of the asylum a fanciful story, at the beginning of the film, converted a revolutionary film into a conformist one.

The stabilisation crisis of the German currency in 1924-1925, after the German Mark was placed on the gold standard, gave Hollywood the opportunity to destroy its rival through 'economic aid'. Early in 1926, the main German film company, UFA, signed

the Par-ufa-met agreement in exchange for 17 million Marks. This agreement gave the American companies, Paramount and Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer (both members of the Big Five), a fifty per cent distribution right for their films in all German theatres. The economic muscle given to Hollywood by this agreement led directly to the collapse of the German film industry. Not only did the greatest director of the time, F.W. Murnau leave for Hoolywood, But Erich Pommer, the production director of **Metropolis**, and scores of technicians and actors left for Hollywood as well. This agreement signalled the ideological link between culture and the interests of big business. The carefully constructed image of the film director as a uniquely gifted individual who is solely responsible for the creative success of his films is also shown up to be a myth.

The ideological nature of this example of cultural imperialism is clearly shown in the statements made by the director of Paramount Films, Barney Baladan:

> We, the industry, recognise the need for informing people in foreign lands about the things that have made America a great country and we think we know how to put across the message of our democracy.[34]

Informing people in foreign lands about the virtues of the American system was an integral part of American Foreign Policy both during and after World War II. Nelson Rockefeller, acting as Co-ordinator of Latin American Affairs, sent Walt Disney as a

"good-will ambassador" to South America and commissioned two films which would help win over the hearts and minds of the people. According to David Kunzle, the one film, **Saludos Amigos** served as a diplomatic mission:

> The live-action travelogue footage of "ambassador" Disney and his artists touring the continent, is interspersed with animated sections on "life" in Brazil, Argentine, Peru and Chile, which define Latin America as the U.S. wishes to see it, as the local peoples are suppossed to see themselves. They are symbolized by comic parrots, merry sambos, luxury beaches and goofy gauchos.[35]

Although Walt Disney is perhaps best known for his comic books, these publications do not warrant a mention in his annual reports. His most profitable enterprises were his films and theme parks. In their famous study of imperialist ideology in the Disney comics, How to Read Donald Duck,[36] Dorfman and Mattelart examine the political and economic values of Disney's publishing ventures. Although the Disney characters appear to exert a happy and blameless influence over their readers, theirs is a world which has been freed of all sexuality (there are no natural mothers in the stories), and all forms of production. Dorfman and Mattelart argue that this representation of the world is a reflection of the fact that Walt Disney never referred to his own mother and that women were never allowed to hold positions of importance in the Disney Empire. The absence of true parents, or the presense of wicked step-mothers may be a constant of folk

literature, but David Kunzle believes that the peculiarity of the Disney stories is that the mother is not only technically missing, "she is simply non-existent as a concept".[37] The simplification of the world into a single complex of the good and the bad alone, is an ideal terrain for imperialist ideology to operate in a hidden manner.

Dorfman and Mattelart's study shows that almost half of the Disney comics sampled in their study showed the heroes of Duckburg travelling to distant continents and confronting ethnic groups. The plots and the images used, conveyed two different stereotypes of these peoples. On the one hand, childlike, noble savages who could be tricked out of their natural wealth by the clever ducks and revolutionary thugs on the other. Dorfman and Mattelart wrote their book in 1971, that is, after Allende's Popular Unity government came to power in Chile. After the military coup on the 11th of September 1973 the book was banned and all available copies were burnt. Although the book has been translated into thirteen languages and 500,000 copies have been sold, the book is not available in the United States owing to successful attempts by Disney Corporation lawyers to prohibit its importation.

Disney exerted an absolute control over his artists and never allowed their own names to appear in the comics. When an individual animator was given an award, it was Walt Disney himself who stepped forward to receive it. His stories were all cast in what Dorfman and Mattelart identify as the tertiary

sector of the economy, that is the service sector. Thus the relationships in the Disney world are compulsively consumerist:

> The magazine is part of this situation. The Disney industrial empire itself arose to service a society demanding entertainment; it is part of an entertainment network whose business it is to feed leisure with more leisure disguised as fantasy. The culture industry is the sole remaining machine which has purged its contents of society's industrial conflicts, and therefore is the only means of escape into a future which otherwise is implacably blocked by reality. It is a playground to which all children (and adults) can come, and which very few can leave.[38]

The role of film as 'entertainment' was challenged during World War II by the need for documentaries and newsreels showing events in Europe. This even led to the making of a number of feature films, such as Hitchcock's **Foreign Correspondent** (1940) and **Mission to Moscow** which was made in 1943 by Warner Brothers. According to James Agee, who wrote regularly in the Nation, this film portrayed the Russians in a positive light. "There is no essential difference, it turns out, between the Soviet Union and the good old USA, except that in Russia everybody effects an accent and the women run locomotives".[39] This tolerance towards the Soviet experiment was unthinkable after the war when anti-communism took hold.

After America's entry into the war at the end of 1941, almost all

films reflected and supported the war effort. This was particularly evident in the way in which Hollywood, and the mass media in general, cooperated to bring women into the work force. This was done by redefining the image of the ideal woman. The traditional role of the women as home builder was now broadened to include such occupations as welder and crane operator. Rosie the Riveter, as featured on the cover of Saturday Evening Post, epitomised the new image of the ideal woman. Willett writes that the quintessential film about the woman left behind was **Since You Went Away.**[40] Here the image of the 'working wife' is contrasted favourably with that of the 'career woman'. After the troops came home at the end of the war and it became apparent that eighty per cent of working women did not want to give up their jobs, the media had to put out an amended ideological message in order to persuade them to return to home economics.

Willett argues that many films presented social problems in such a shallow way that their solution by individual action was almost credible. In William Wyler's **The Best Years of Our Lives** the returning soldiers act out an ideologically prepared scenario which defined political issues of wealth and privilage as issues of personal morality alone. This dishonesty, according to Willett, gave audiences the illusion that America rewarded her returning soldiers, if not with jobs, then at least with opportunity. By giving individuals a purely imaginary, and demonstrably misleading conception of their place and significance in society, these films fulfilled their ideologically function. Similarly, by acting as agents of reassurance and pride, the evasion and escape

offered by the cinema could also be said to serve an ideological purpose.

This reconciliation with the failure of the American system to provide equally for all Americans had already been established in the years of mass unemployment and poverty which followed the stock market crash of 1929. The paralysis of the nations financial structure had called the countries collective identity into question. The government realised that it was not only the lives, habits and ambitions of ordinary Americans which were at stake, but also the future of the economic ideology of capitalism. President Hoover tried to negate the effects of the depression by simply declaring it over. His optimism was mocked by the millions of unemployed men and women who christened their squatter camps on the outskirts of industrial towns 'Hoovervilles'.

Subsequent Presidents attempted to address the problem in a more adequate manner and President Roosevelt's New Deal was introduced in 1933. Although its manifest function was ideologically inspired and sought to restore faith in the virtues of capitalism, the New Deal also addressed its programmes directly to the issue of unemployment. Because Roosevelt believed that the dole was "a narcotic" and a "destroyer of the human spirit"[41] he introduced a huge programme of emergency relief work backed by billions of Dollars. Most of this initial appropriation went into a new agency called the Works Progress Administration (later Works Project Adminstration).

However the WPA's federal projects for writers, artists, actors, dancers and musicians did not meet with uniform approval. The implied socialization of the arts carried connotations of communalism and socialism, connotations which were anathema to many Republican and Southern Congressmen. These opponents to the programmes, if not the tenets of the New Deal, managed to organise themselves into a powerful, albeit peripheral, lobby. Called the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), this committee set about purging the nation of communist infiltration. The formation of this committee in 1938 projected politics and ideology more vigorously into the field of the media and mass culture. The committee's title insured two things; firstly, that it would never run out of things to investigate and, secondly, that no one could safely argue for the committee's abolition since that would immediately be construed as 'un-American'.

The role played by the film industry in boosting war-time morale, coupled with its propaganda value in promoting nationalism, gave the industry an image of social consciousness. By giving Hollywood a set of tasks related to the war effort, Roosevelt's administration had also given the film industry a social and political status. This status was threatening to some members of the fragile alliance of liberals and republicans which made up the American scene. Many Americans responded to the early years of the Depression, with its idle factories and soup kitchens, with numbed stoicism. For others, the totalitarian nightmare was realised in the New Deal itself which brought about a rise of Federal power and a proliferation of Federal agencies.

By 1947, the film industry had managed to shake itself free of the image of pure escapism. Hollywood's involvement in the war effort, and the image of certain directors and screenwriters, all contributed to the image of cinema as a socially responsible form of expression. I have mentioned that films made during the war were seen in a different light in the years of intrigue and European reconstruction which is now known as the Cold War. It is not surprising therefore that the House Committee on Un-American Activities decided to investigate Hollywood. In attacking the industry as a whole, the committee established itself as an agency for interaction between the political and the cultural. To be effective, they structured their attack around the public indictment of individuals whose past associations with left-wing organisations could be proved. The melodramatic nature of the hearings ensured that this indictment would question the moral fitness of other organisations with which those indicted might subsequently be involved.

Mission to Moscow, directed by Michael Curtiz with a script written by Howard Koch, was one of the first films to be accused of pushing communist propaganda. Maltby argues that the repeated allegations that certain films had communist sympathies was not proved on the evidence of the plot alone, membership of the Writer's Guild was suspect in itself. Denouncements of one screenwriter by another were common and one writer who was called to give evidence at the 1947 hearings of the HUAC defined communism as broadly as "something which makes every Senator, every businessman, every employer a crook and which destroys our

beliefs in American free enterprise and free institutions."[42]

Although the HUAC did not succeed in proving that any of these films contained communist propaganda, these first Hollywood hearings indirectly persuaded producers to draw up a blacklist of screenwriters, actors and directors who were tainted by having being investigated by the HUAC. The so-called Hollywood Ten, all prominent actors and writers who had refused to co-operate with the committees hearings were made to reappear in October 1951. At these hearings Parnel Thomas relied on the fact that the script-writer, John Howard Lawson, was an avowed communist and was likely to answer the question as to whether he was a member of the Communist Party in the affirmative, particularly as the Communist Party was not yet banned. Lawson's testimony set the tone for the other nine witnesses. The HUAC succeeded in conjuring up visions of "Moscow-directed intellectuals surreptitiously corrupting American minds in ways so subtle they could hardly be detected".[43]

Thus without managing to prove that Hollywood had financed films which contained communist propaganda, the House Committee on Un-American Activities succeeded in creating a situation where employers acted as their own political police and implemented a blacklist against technicians and writers with suspected left-wing sympathies. The situation where certain captains of the film industry were able to increase their share of the market because they controlled the licensing boards led to an increasing attitudinal homogeneity in American films. This process should

not be seen as a process of de-politicization of film art, but rather as a process of intensified politicization. By filtering out only one variant of the ideological spectrum, that of the left-wing, the internal conservative ideology of the major film companies and their shareholders was strengthened. This tendency was heightened by the HUAC's investigation of Hollywood during the late 1940s and led to the industry purging itself of all suspected socialists before the Communist Party of America was outlawed in 1949.

I believe that these factors are important to a study of the ideology of contemporary art systems because they throw light on the myth of artistic freedom. Whilst the notion of artistic freedom will be taken up more fully in subsequent Chapters, I think it is clear that any reference to artistic freedom in the film industry in the early 1950s should be viewed with extreme circumspection. At the same time, the large companies and the various control boards did not, and indeed could not, exert complete control over artistic production and films dealing with political issues were again made after 1953.

At the beginning of this section I quote Theodor Adorno's statement that mass culture and the avant-garde are halves of an integral freedom to which, however, they do not add up. This formulation recognises, and indeed this dissertaton as a whole recognises the fact that, although bound together, mass culture and avant-garde culture occupy radically distinct spheres. Colour reproductions of 'old masters' or other commercialised objects of

popular or fine art, occupy spheres of activity which are radically distinct from those of the vanguard. However the vanguard shares many socially defined categories with mass culture, not least of which is the fact that they share a market. In Adorno's terminology, they share the scars of capitalism. In many other ways they are separated by elements which have had the contrary effect of bringing them together.

The American Pop Artist[44] Andy Warhol made his reputation as a commercial artist specialising in drawing shoes before going on to secure a place in the avant-garde. James Rosenquist and Roy Lichtenstein, on the other hand, are both vanguard artists whose work reflects images drawn respectively from the world of advertising and popular culture. This symbiosis does not indicate that the categories of applied and fine art have been collapsed into one category, but suggests instead that content is not the sole or most important criterion. In my discussion of the American film industry and its attempts to secure world markets for its products I suggest that the question of 'truth', or correspondence with reality, is far less important as a goal to a producer than the desire to acquire the 'Hays Code's Seal of Approval'.

The idea that film was entertainment, first and foremost, did not stop Elia Kazan making a film about union corruption in the docklands (**On the Waterfront** [1954]) but it did stop other directors who did not have access to independent money and who therefore had to work through the majors. The idea that film

should be responsible, and that it should seek its appeal among American families, was not an act of government. It origins have been located[45] in the attempts by major film companies to secure their interests over other film companies. It was an idea which people like Baladan and Hays were able to promote because of their position within the film industry; the idea gained currency because they controlled the boards which licensed films for public distribution.

For these reasons I have though it necessary to give some consideration to the question of the reflection of ideology in mass culture. In this respect I examine Walter Benjamin's assertion that the work of art loses its 'aura' when it is reproduced. I also look at John Berger's analysis of this phenomenon. Both writers appear to be arguing that the authority of the original art form is in some way synonomous with its efficacy as a formal device in first achieving and then maintaining social power. I intend assessing both these ideas in subsequent Chapters with respect to the avant-garde. To begin with, I propose looking at the struggle against fascist ideology in England and Europe. This anti-fascist tendency is crucial to an understanding of the development of the avant-garde in England and America, not only in so far as it effected artists and their work, but also in the range of institutional responses these concerns elicted. In this way I hope to account for the ascendency of the American avant-garde over that of the British.

Notes to pages 87 - 110

Chapter 5: Mass Culture

1. Adorno, T., Letter to Walter Benjamin, 18 March 1936, cited in Aesthetics and Politics, London: New Left Books, 1977, p. 123.

2. Swingewood, A., The Myth of Mass Culture, London: Macmillan, 1977, p. 12.

3. The Frankfurt School theorists preferred this term to that of mass-culture which carried suggestions of spontaneous origin within the masses.

4. Swingewood, A., The Myth of Mass Culture, London: Macmillan, 1977, p. 13.

5. Marx wrote that the capitalist system promised a 'higher form of the family' because production demanded that women and children work outside of the domestic sphere. This had the effect of attacking the economic basis of parental authority. See Swingewood, A., Ibid., 1977, p. 14.

6. Swingewood, A., Ibid., 1977, p. 15.

7. Horkheimer, M., cited in Slater, P., Origin and Significance of the Frankfurt School, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977, p. 134.

8. Adorno, T., cited in Slater, P., Ibid., 1977, p. 134.

9. Slater, P., Origin and Significance of the Frankfurt School, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977, p. 136.

10. Brecht, B., cited in Slater, P., Ibid., 1977, p. 137.

11. Benjamin, W., cited in Slater, P., Ibid., 1977, p. 137.

12. Cited in Slater, P., Ibid., 1977, p. 138.

13. Benjamin, W., "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", in, Illuminations, trans. by Harry Zohn, London: Fontana, 1973, p. 226.

14. Eagleton, T., Walter Benjamin, London: Verso, 1981, p. 39.

15. Berger, J., Ways of Seeing, London: BBC & Penguin, 1972.

16. Berger, J., Ibid., 1972, p. 30.

17. Berger, J., Ibid., 1972, p. 31.

18. Berger, J., Ibid., 1972, p. 32.

19. Berger, J., Ibid., 1972, p. 24.

20. A famous nineteenth-century example involved the use of Millais's painting Bubbles (1886) as the basis for an advertisement for Pears Soap.

21. Berger, J., Ways of Seeing, London: BBC & Penguin, 1972, p. 29.

22. See Peter Fuller, Seeing Berger: A Revaluation, London: Writers and Readers, 1980, p. 11.

23. Fuller, P., Ibid., 1980, p. 15.

24. The so-called 'Big Five' companies were Warner Brothers, Paramount, RKO, Twentieth Century-Fox and Loew's Incorporated (MGM). See Maltby, R., "The Political Economy of Hollywood: the Studio System", in Davies, P., and Neve, B., eds., Cinema, Politics and Society in America, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985, p. 43.

25. Maltby, R., Ibid., 1985, p. 54.

26. Maltby, R., Ibid., 1985, p. 53.

27. Melling, P., "The Mind of the Mob", in Davies, P., and Neve, B., eds., Cinema, Politics and Society in America, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985, pp. 19-41.

28. Melling, P., Ibid., 1985, p. 27.

29. Melling, P., Ibid., 1985, p. 29.

30. Maltby, R., "Made for Each Other", in Davies, P., and Neve, B., eds., Cinema, Politics and Society in America, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985, p. 76.

31. Melling, P., "The Mind of the Mob", in Davies, P., and Neve, B., eds., Cinema, Politics and Society in America, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985, p. 34.

32. Erich Pommer cited in Huaco, G.A., The Sociology of Film Art, New York: Basic Books, 1955, p. 36.

33. Erich Pommer, op. cit., 1955, p. 34.

34. Pryor, T.M., "Mission of the Movies Abroad", the New York Times, cited in Guilbaut, S., How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983, p. 136.

35. Kunzle, D., Introduction to Dorfman, A., & Mattelart, A., How to Read Donald Duck, New York: International General, 1984, p. 19.

36. Dorfman, A., & Mattelart, A., How to Read Donald Duck, New York: International General, 1984.

37. Kunzle, D., Introduction to Dorfman, A., & Mattelart, A., How to Read Donald Duck, New York: International General, 1984, p. 20.

38. Dorfman, A., & Mattelart, A., How to Read Donald Duck, New York: International General, 1984, 96.

39. Cited in Willett, R., "The Nation in Crisis", in Davies, P., and Neve, B., eds., Cinema, Politics and Society in America, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985, p. 61.

40. Willett, R., "The Nation in Crisis", in Davies, P., and Neve, B., eds., Cinema, Politics and Society in America, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985, p. 64.

41. Willett, R., "Federal Art", in Baskerville, S., & Willet, R., eds., Nothing to Fear: New Perspectives on America in the Thirties, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985, p. 177.

42. Hughes, R., cited in Maltby, R., "Made for Each Other", in Davies, P., and Neve, B., eds., Cinema, Politics and Society in America, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985, p. 90.

43. Maltby, R., "Made for Each Other", in Davies, P., and Neve, B., eds., Cinema, Politics and Society in America, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985, p. 93.

44. The term "Pop Art" is controversial and there is some disagreement as to which artists are included under its rubric. I use the term here to refer to all artists whose work is based on images taken from the mass media. Examples being images taken from the cinema, television, comic books and cartoons as well as photographs or advertisements reproduced in popular magazines. For a fuller discussion of the aims of these artists see José Pierre, Pop Art: An-Illustrated Dictionary, London: Methuen, 1977.

45. Maltby, R., "The Political Economy of Hollywood: The Studio System", in Davies, P., and Neve, B., eds., Cinema, Politics and Society in America, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985, pp. 42-58.

Chapter 6: THE MIRROR AND THE SQUARE

Chapter 4 gives an account of the mediating power of other agents in the art system. However it could be argued that there is nothing sinister about the influence which art dealers exert over artists since they are simply trying to stay economically viable in a highly competitive and over-traded market. This is true. Before we can speak of dealers and other agents exerting an **ideological** influence, we have to look for an alignment of their interests with those of the ruling groups in society. In a broad sense such an alignment exists under both capitalism and communism, although the social agents of that broad alignment are different. For instance, dealers who pursue their own interests of accumulating capital are not acting outside the general ethos of capitalism and can thus be said to be reinforcing capitalist ideology. Similarly, magazines in Russia only printed the work of El Lissitzky, Rodchenko and Stepanova if the Party thought that the work in question chronicled the achievements of the Five Year plans. However in this and subsequent Chapters I would like to be more specific and look at how this broad alignment actually impinged on the artmaking process.

Ideology is a complex mechanism of control, often relying on the consent, or acquiescence, of people under its sway. This consent

to be governed (influenced) can be lost or gained at any time. A feature of totalitarian societies has been the relative readiness of the state to back up its ideological control with more direct measures of control. The rise of the National Socialist German Worker's Party (NSDAP), from one seat in the government in 1929 to complete control in 1933, poses interesting questions for a study of art and ideology for the simple reason that art and culture was actively used as a means of mobilizing popular support for the policies of the NSDAP.

The National Socialist party came to power in Germany in 1933. No time was lost in familiarizing artists with the role they were expected to play in propogating the tenets of the new ideology. A sub-chamber of the Reich Chamber of Culture immediately began a systematic purge of left-wing sympathizers from teaching and other official positions in the art world. Representatives of the "new" order were installed in their places and a vigorous campaign was mounted against "**entartete**", or so-called degenerate art.

Berthold Hinz writes that there appears to have been no consensus, apart from Jewishness and a Bolshevist outlook, on what comprised "degeneracy" Even the work of Emil Nolde was prohibited despite the fact that he was a staunch supporter of National Socialism:

> Instead of eliminating only political opponents in the art sector, the National Socialists rejected and attacked just

about everything that had existed on the scene before 1933, whether it was abstract or representational.[1]

In seeking the logical rationale behind the classification of "degenerate" art, Hinz looks at the art policies of the Minister for the Interior and Education in the coalition government of 1929. Dr Wilhelm Frick, a former head of the political police in Munich, was the first National Socialist to gain a ministry in this government.

On assuming office, Frick immediately closed down Walter Gropius's Weimar Bauhaus and replaced it with the United Institutes of Art Instruction. Organised along the lines of a medieval artisan's guild, this institute, like other programmes, sought to resurrect German folk-art and crafts. Schlemmer's frescos in the stairwell of the Bauhaus were destroyed and seventy works of modern art were confiscated from the Weimar museum.[2]

These acts did not result in a public outcry, and Frick, who was promoted to Reich Minister of the Interior in 1933, set about organizing the Combat League for German Culture under the auspices of the Führer's Council.[3] A five-point, semi-official, manifesto spelt out the new NSDAP ideology and called for the implementation of one philosophic guideline "drawn from a passionate and state consciousness anchored in the realities of blood and history!"[4]

To this end, touring 'exhibits of infamous art' were organised. Comprising works by Dix, Chagall, Grosz, Munch and Beckmann, among others, these exhibitions were designed to inflame nationalist sentiment in German artists and to "purify" German culture of foreign and modernist ideas. The five-point manifesto referred to above, called for the "suspension" of museum directors who had "sinned against a needy nation...by their shameful waste of public funds".[5] This now became a reality and scores of museum directors and officials were dismissed from their posts.

The illusion of popular backing for these attempts at cultural 'purification' led to the establishment, in November 1933, of the Reich Chamber of Culture under Joseph Goebbels. Membership of various sub-chambers was obligatory for everyone involved, at whatever level, in the different disciplines of art, music or theatre. This, however, did not bestow any rights of self-government.

These chambers legislated on the smallest details of each profession and the "Führer principle" placed overall control in the hands of the Reich Minister for Popular Education and Propaganda - Joseph Goebbels. These Chambers were highly effective means of control. Because disputes between workers and management were resolved by presidential decree passed down through an organisational structure on which both parties were supposedly represented, a high degree of social cohesion was attained.

It is not surprising therefore that these Chambers passed regulations empowering National Socialists to plunder art galleries, museums and stores in a successful campaign to eradicate non-German art. Although no records were kept, Berthold Hinz's calculates that nearly sixteen thousand works of so-called "degenerate art" were confiscated.[6]

What were the reasons for the attack on modern and foreign artists? The early years of Nationalist Socialist rule were tenuous and the NSDAP were continually looking for ways to consolidate their power. Hinz suggests that the attacks on modern art were undertaken in order to defame the image of the Weimar Republic. Because modern art had always been incomprehensible to the majority of German workers, Frick and Goebbels could widen this incomprehension to rejection and even outright hatred. In this way a negative image of a government, which had tolerated progressive art, was built up. Since modern, and socially conscious art, was now defined as anti-German the way was soon clear for the imposition of a Nationalist Socialist aesthetic ideology which would further consolidate their power.

The role of art in securing political power was openly admitted to by Paul Schultze-Naumburg in his book, The Battle for Art, published in 1932:

> A life and death struggle is taking place in art, just as it is in the realm of politics. And the battle for art has to be fought with the same seriousness and determination as the

battle for political power.[7]

Schultze-Naumburg served as the director of the State Academy of Art in Weimar where he used his position to harden attitudes to the Weimar Republic by campaigning against the 'excesses' of art during that period of German history. Schultze-Naumburg is notorious for his lectures comparing examples of modern art with photographs of deformed people.

Other interlocking ideological factors were called upon as well. Since artists were henceforward to be involved in the battle for political power, it followed that they should produce work which not only epitomised 'man' in an ideal society, but also promoted the national good. Thus one ideologue commented in 1929:

> If an illustrator, painter or a sculptor wants to represent the image of a bold, goal determined person, of a noble, superior humman being, man or woman, he will in most cases create an image which more or less approximates the image of the Nordic race.[8]

Seven years later the same exhortations were being made:

> What really matters in the portrayal of the naked human form and the Nordic racial type is the manifestation - the exposure in the true sense - of an animate beauty, the discovery and artistic fashioning of an elemental god-like humanity. Only then does it become an effective means of

> educating our nation in moral strength, folkish greatness, and last but not least, resurrected racial beauty.[9]

How were these interlocking appeals reconcilable with the ideology of National Socialism? In what way were they socially motivated in respect of the balance of political power?

I have answered that the attacks on non-German art had at least some popular appeal and it is conceivable that the net result of the campaigns against "degenerate art" did serve to consolidate the tenuous power of the NSDAP in the first four years after 1933 through an appeal to German nationalism (Volk) and by defaming the previous government.

The drive to 'purify' German art of foreign, degenerate ideas may have reached its fullest expression in a party political campaign, but it was also rooted in the ideology of Aryan racial superiority - an idea which the National Socialists were able to build on and manipulate to their own advantage. They came to power in the first place because their policies found favour with German voters, but they were able to stay in power through force and through a process of delimiting people's consciousness by re-defining culture.

One aspect of this re-definition of culture consisted in replacing the "masters of Western art" with the "masters of German art". Put like that, no one could disagree. This statement, and the events which followed it, had the appearance

of normality because they were masked by the ideology that nationalism was a worthy and natural cause. Thus programmes like the Combat League for German Culture and the 1930 decree Against Negro Culture were predicated on a combination of state power and the German people's real, or imaginary, fears of losing their national identity. The campaigns against art were simply the reflection in the sphere of culture of the campaigns against Jews and people of colour in the social and political sphere.

The imposition of this ideology and the swift implementation of its practical dimensions resulted in the flight of many artists and art administrators. The news of what was happening inside Germany and reaction towards the rise of fascism in countries outside Germany, led many artists to align themselves with organisations sympathetic to the ideas of the Popular Front.[10]

In the next section, I propose looking at these alignments in terms of the policies of one of these organisations; the Artist's International Association (AIA). What began as a movement of artists united against fascism and war, ended as an apolitical artist's club.

The AIA, formed in England in 1933 at the instigation of Misha Black and Cliff Rowe, was more of a social group of like-minded artists than a school. It was ostensibly an anti-fascist peace movement, but nonetheless sought to strengthen its connections with the Communist Party. Cliff Rowe stated that:

> Everyone who took an interest in things knew there was the greatest likelihood of war and that must be put a stop to at all costs. The artists responded very rapidly, so that within a year or two we were up to very nearly 1000 members. It involved writers, architects and musicians, who all formed their separate groups much smaller than the AI... That's how it grew; we had exhibitions, all on the basis of anti-fascism and peace. [11]

Another founding member was James Fitton, who taught at the Central School of Art in London. According to him, the organisation's anti-fascist stance did not have political connotations: "We were supported by everybody, people who normally would have voted High Tory..... Fundamentally what we wanted was peace and liberty so that we could get on with our own work."[12]

Despite the left leanings of the AIA and the fact that their exhibitions were not staged in regular galleries, the Association grew in numbers and drew positive reviews from critics. This measure of success was attributable, in part, to widespread opposition to fascism, and to the fact that the work exhibited was largely figurative and thus in tune with English sentiment at the time.

A study of the work reproduced in copies of the English art journal, The Studio, shows that the Surrealists and Constructivists, for example, did not succeed in attracting much attention

from the art press. Even established 'avant-garde' English artists such as Henry Moore was largely ignored by The Studio during the 1930's.[13] This trend towards realism was strengthened by the belief that realism facilitated communication with a larger public. Another factor was that Britain had a long tradition of socially motivated realism in the novels of Dickens, the work of Sickert, and in the legacy of Hogarth who had introduced the idea of exhibiting work in public places when he hung his paintings in the stairwells of hospitals.

In their catalogue for an exhibition of work by members of the AIA held at the Museum of Modern Art in Oxford in 1983, Lynda Morris and Robert Radford quote Anthony Blunt's review of the 1937 RA Summer Exhibition as evidence of the respectability of realism.

> The only hope for European painting at the present time is the development of a new realism. Abstract art is played out on the continent... The possibility of a useful development occurring from more or less conventional artists makes it again almost profitable to visit the Royal Academy...[14]

This 'new realism' was exemplified by the work of Cliff Rowe, Viscount Hastings and the Jewish emigré, Peter Peri. More concerned with content than technique, their work was explicitly concerned with political and working-class subject matter.[15]

Peter and Linda Murray define realism as an "aesthetic watchword"

which "signifies the search for the squalid and depressing as a means of life enhancement".[16] Representing the total repudiation of Platonic idealism, they see realism as having begun with Courbet. As such, realism in painting and sculpture was opposed both to the idealised naturalism of the Academic style and to the art for art's sake approach of the avant-garde. Less an art style than an approach to life, realism encompasses the concept of critical realism advocated by Lukács and Brecht, namely that art should "show things as they are".[17]

Reactions to World War I and to the social struggles of the postwar period, produced a politically committed and realist style of art that was an alternative to both abstraction and traditionalism. After 1935, a number of Royal Academicians lent their names and paintings to the AIA exhibitions held under the banner of peace and anti-fascism. The work of Laura Knight, Dod Proctor and Charles Cundall, fitted in with the New Realism called for at the Soviet Writers' Congress in August 1934. In turn, some of the AIA artists, amongst them James Fitton, went on to become Royal Academicians.

At that time the slogan of the AIA was "conservative in art and radical in politics". By the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in August 1936, this slogan had drawn many leading artists such as Henry Moore, Ben Nicholson, Augustus John, John Piper and Vannessa Bell and others into the Association. Foreign artists, such as Picasso, Léger and Miró, all contributed work to the AIA exhibitions. In addition there were links with the League of

Artists in New York. George Grosz exhibited his Social Satires at the Mayor Gallery in London as early as 1934 and by 1936, both his and Diego Rivera's work was represented in British Museums.

The tendency towards realism was evident in Europe at the same time. **Neue Sachlichkeit**, or the school of New Objectivty, appeared in Germany in the work of Otto Dix, Käthe Kollwitz and others.[18] Elsewhere, artists such as Léger and Giacometti made increasing use of the figure in their work. Picasso's work also showed a return to the conventions of realism after his early experiments with abstraction. His most abstract work is to be found in the cubist constructions he made between 1914 and 1918.

The forty-five preparatory studies Picasso made for Guernica draw on previous sketches and on eye-witness reports of the bombing published in the French Communist publication **L'Humanite**. In this sense, his mural for the Spanish Pavilion at the Paris Exposition of 1937 is undertaken from a realist position although the final work plays with internal and external space to such a degree that the work cannot be described as realistic. A critic of the time published a review under the banner "Guernica Misses The Masses But Wins The Art Critics"[19] which underlined the unstated assumption that abstraction was coupled with élitism and that realism stood for egalitarianism. Here a distinction must be made between realism as a formal mimetic device, and what was called Social, or New Realism.

The association between realism and Soviet regimentation on the

one hand, and abstraction and freedom on the other, cannot be made on the basis of an objective study of the work itself. These associations were tenuous and were formed over a period of time. In the same way that the ideologues of National Socialism attached the stain of "Bolshevism" to the realist work of certain socially committed artists in Germany, so too this technique was used in England to discredit the work of realists like Cliff Rowe who had lived and worked in Russia during the late 1920's doing paintings for the Red Army.

The authoritarian image of Soviet art was not a wilful invention of the West. In 1934, on the occasion of the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers, Stalin's son-in-law, Andrei Zhdanov, called on writers to reject old-style romanticism and to portray revolutionary values instead. Later the same year, under the guise of responding to the assassination of Sergei Kirov, Stalin began a series of purges of the Russian intelligentsia, which over the next five years, decimated nearly seventy percent of the upper echelons of the party and left nearly three and a half million people incarcerated in labour camps. These purges induced a state of terror among the Russian people who hastened to denounce their friends and bosses as spies or saboteurs. Estimates of the numbers executed in 1937-1938 alone run into several hundred thousands.[20]

Donald Treadgold, in writing about Stalin's cultural policies up until 1945, attributes the slogan "socialist realism" to Stalin himself.[21] Mere realism was suspect because its test was

truthfulness whereas what was demanded of Soviet artists was didacticism, the portrayal of what ought to be. In essence this amounted to little more than the surbordination of creativity to the dictates of the Party. Stalin described artists as "engineers of human minds"[22] and during the currency of the second Five Year Plan (1932-1937) artists were increasingly expected to express the power of the working people. Typical of this sort of monumental, heroic work was the sculpture by Vera Mukhina, **The Worker and the Collective Farm Girl** which was commissioned for the 1937 Paris World Exhibition. The sheer size and dramatic pose of the couple is so overstated that, with hindsight, the sculpture appears to parody rather than praise the strength of the Russian working people. At the same time it can be argued, as David Elliot has suggested, that such an "aggressive", "focussed art was wholly in keeping with the demands of a planned economy". Elliot goes on to argue that:

> Socialist Realism and the values it embodied were not purely the results of the expedient policies of Stalin and his followers but, as we have seen, came out of a long and steady evolution of political, social and aesthetic theory which had developed from the middle of the last century. It was for this reason that Socialist Realism was so widely, and in some cases so enthusiastically accepted - it had grown organically out of the soil of established Russian culture and gave a voice to people who felt that they had remained silent for too long.[23]

Returning to my discussion of anti-fascism and the Artists' International in England, it was not long before this organisation changed its name. In line with growing anti-fascism in England and in line with general Popular Front thinking which sought to include people with different political outlooks in an international front against fascism, the Artists' International changed its name to the Artists International Association in 1935. Thus the AIA's rallying call was: "The AIA stands for Unity of artists against Fascism and War and the suppression of culture."

The following year saw the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War and the formation of the International Brigades. What started as a military rebellion by General Franco against the Republican Government in Madrid soon escalated into an international crisis. Whilst the West stood back, Italy and Germany supported Franco and the Soviet Union supported the legitimate Spanish Government.

The policy of non-intervention, officially adopted by the West, was not in tune with public sentiment. Scores of volunteers joined the Republican forces in defiance of official policy. These International Brigades, as they came to be known, were actively supported by artist members of the AIA. Not only were banners made and funds raised, but many artists joined the brigades in active service. An AIA member, Felicia Browne was the first English woman killed in battle. Christopher Caudwell and Rowley also lost their lives, while Clive Branson went on to command the British Anti-Tank Battery. The British government had

meanwhile made it illegal to volunteer or to even render assistance to other volunteers. This was denounced by the AIA and by the Surrealists who had joined the AIA in 1936:

> END ALL FORMS OF NON-INTERVENTION, INTERVENE IN THE FIELD OF POLITICS, INTERVENE IN THE FIELD OF IMAGINATION. THE REVOLUTION which we can bring about must have as its object the DEVELOPMENT OF CONSCIOUSNESS and the WIDER SATISFACTION OF DESIRE.[24]

Despite the apparent acceptance of one another's beliefs, there was a degree of hostility between the Surrealists and those advocating social realism from the start. The first major exhibition of Surrealist art in Britain was staged at the New Burlington Galleries in June 1936. Lloyd voiced the perception of most left-leaning artists in the Association when he claimed that Surrealism was a "subtle form of fake revolution"[25] Anthony Blunt dismissed the exhibition in its entirety and Herbert Read responded two years later with the comment: "Actually our English Realists are not the tough guys they ought to be but the effete and bastard offspring of the Bloomsbury school of needlework."[26]

A feature of the debate between the realists and the Surrealists, was the often repeated statement that the realists in the Euston Road Group did not have a single painter of the calibre of Picasso amongst their ranks. The interjection of a concern for what was called "quality" contrasted with the approach of William Coldstream and Graham Bell who stressed "honesty". Social Realism

was an attitude towards life, and not an attitude towards art. In this way the work and reputation of Picasso was harnessed to one pole of an argument which has persisted to the present day. The divisions in the left made it possible for the abstractionists to claim Picasso as part of their ranks. Despite Picasso's unequivocal statement that he painted Guernica out of a "deliberate sense of propaganda"[27] and the fact that he joined the Communist Party in 1945, the left were unwilling to take him to their bosom. The 1938 AIA Newsheet proclaimed:

> The bad influence of Expressionism, Surrealism and Abstraction are much in evidence. This applies even to the new etchings by Picasso presented to the show, The Dreams and Lies of General Franco, that are as fantastic and far less comprehensive than Goya's work in denunciation of war.[28]

Anthony Blunt justified this denunciation by saying that Picasso had failed to respond to the human tragedy of the Spanish Civil War in an adequate way. His sense of commitment dictated that an "art" response to war was, in effect, no response at all:

> The etchings cannot reach more than the limited coterie of aesthetes, who have given their lives so wholly to the cult of art that they have forgotten about everything else.[29]

Since Social Realism was primarily an attitude towards life as much as towards art, attempts were made to broaden the appeal of art among members of the proletariat. Although groups of "pit men

painters", such as the Ashington Group, had flourished since 1934, the first attempt to gauge working-class attitudes towards art was made by the anthropologist, Tom Harrison.

Called Mass Observation, the research project relied on teams of voluntary observers to record the opinions and daily behaviour of the residents of the North English town of Bolton. In addition, residents were invited to keep diaries. Soon after its inception Harrison invited artists to become involved and to paint the residents of Bolton. This invitation encouraged the Surrealists, who were interested in popular phobias, and they enthusiastically established their own project in Blackheath. Harrison set out to discover what Bolton residents thought about contemporary painting and asked for responses to photographs of the paintings Bell and Coldstream had made of Bolton. Both artists were criticised for not portraying people in their enthusiasm to record the appalling urban decay and dismal factory pollution. As far as the workers were concerned, the artists were simply obsessed with chimneys.

This kind of criticism was not without its influence. After his release from a Spanish Civil War prison camp, Clive Branson shook off the influence of the professional training he had received at the Slade School of Art and started to paint in the manner of the Ashington Group who were all full-time workers. However, the major thrust of New Realism followed on from Lukac´s dictum that art was an ´aggressive activity´, that the artist was a ´transformer of energy´ who would not be content to ´confine

himself to statements about fruit' and that instead the artist should deal with the central realities of his period.[30]

The 'central reality' for artists at this time was the rise of fascism in Europe. Fascism was not seen as some abstract political phenomenon. English artists were involved in pitched street battles with Oswald Mosley's Blackshirts; in Germany, Hitler was busy destroying "degenerate art" and the AIA News Sheets between 1937 and 1939 often drew attention to Hitler's attacks on art. It was recorded that in 1936, the Cologne Art Museum got rid of Ingres's portraits of Hittorf because it was discovered that this famous German architect had designed the synagogues of Paris and Cologne. The January 1937 News Sheet carried a report on the suppression of art criticism under Dr Goebbels:

> Critics were to be replaced by "art writers" whose function was not to pronounce judgements upon the works...but merely to describe and appreciate them. "It is understood that the prohibition is at the wish of Hitler himself...Artistic creation was distorted by Jews occupying the seat of judgement.[31]

Commenting on the distortion of the human figure in much of the modern work which had been selected for this exhibition by Professor Ziegler, Hitler warned, 'in the name of the German people', that:

> ...it would be the responsibility of the Reich Ministry of the Interior to consider preventative measures that would spare later generations from inheriting such dreadful visual defects.[32]

This warning was the first announcement of the sterilization and euthanasia programmes later to be enacted by the state during the war years and is, once again, testimony to the primacy of art and culture as a legitimizing agent in totalitarian societies. In his comparison of the monumentalizing tendency in National Socialist and certain examples of South African public art, Dubow has argued that totalitarian societies pay their artists "the compliment" of taking them seriously.[33]

As a direct counter measure to the Nazi Exhibition of Degenerate Art held in the old gallery building of Munich's Archaeological Institute in 1937, the AIA organised an exhibition of this work at the Burlington Galleries in London during 1938. Properly hung and free of the framing device of National Socialist ideology and inflammatory labels,[34] the modernism of the work on exhibition was now taken to symbolize freedom.

Hinz states that of all the artists, modernists and progressive realists alike, who fell victim to National Socialist purges, it was only the modern abstractionists who regained favour in Germany after Nazism was defeated.[35] The fact that social realists were honoured by the Third Reich (and the Soviet Union) appears to have given greater credence to the ideological

association of realism with totalitarianism.

Hitler's suppression of art is a particularly blatant example of ideology in practise. His attacks on Jews before the war were similarly direct and vociferous, there was no attempt on his part to conceal the rascist ideology of these attacks because he was secure in the fantasy that had been erected about the superiority of the Aryan race. If racial purity and national pride could be invoked as a call-to-arms in Germany, more subtle forms of the same ideology were sought in England.

In 1943 English artists were called upon to demonstrate their patriotic fervour in an exhibition entitled "For Liberty". The catalogue claimed that:

> Here is a demonstration that artists feel they can contribute more than is at present being asked of them: that the function of art in wartime is not only to record what is happening and to give enjoyment and recreation, but to stimulate and encourage, by vividly representing what we are fighting for.[36] (Emphasis added)

Here the words, "what we are fighting for", refer to nationalistic goals, goals which were similar in many respects to those of the National Socialists. In this way, the ground was prepared for the battle over content which ultimately split the AIA and lead to its disolution.

Although drawn into the war effort, members of the AIA had criticised military preparedness in England since 1936. At that time painted hoardings were erected bearing slogans like: "The Burden of Armaments Crushes Social Progress". However, the realities of war and the Soviet advance into Finland brushed aside quarrels about whether Surrealism was more 'revolutionary' than portraits of Welsh miners. Artists now faced starvation. Seventy-three percent of English artists lost their jobs or had their commissions revoked in the months following the declaration of war.

In response to AIA agitation for full employment for the artist many artists were drafted into service at the camouflage centre at Leamington. Later, the formation of the Arts Council of Great Britain in June 1945 gave hope to those artists who believed it was the duty of the state to promote and support art. This hope was short-lived. The Arts Council had their own objectives and refused to fund AIA exhibitions.

A greater shock lay in store for AIA member Richard Carline who had been invited to be part of the team Julian Huxley brought together to found the international cultural body, later to be known as UNESCO. The first exhibition at the **Musée d'Art Moderne** in 1946 was supposed to be selected by the artists of each country. This proviso was ignored by the Arts Council who simply nominated various artists, likewise, the American State Department sent their own choice, completely ignoring the artists of a realist persuasion who had worked on the Works Project Adminis-

tration/Federal Art Project (WPA/FAP). This programme had increasingly fallen under suspicion because of its communalised character. In 1947 President Truman's influence was felt as far afield as Paris. For example, Richard Carline and other suspects were weeded out of UNESCO by the American Deputy Secretary General because of their affiliations to the AIA, an organisation suspected of having communist leanings. The Cold War had begun.

The coming of the Cold War in Europe was heralded by the attempt by the Communist Party to reopen the Greek Civil War from bases inside Macedonia in the summer of 1946. Although Donald Treadgold believed that the communists had lost their opportunity to create governments in France and Italy, the United States under President Truman believed that communist expansion in Europe could only be halted by American support for countries threatened by "armed minorities or outside pressures".[37] The Truman Doctrine of 1947 gave immediate aid to Greece and Turkey and gave the Yugoslavian leader, Tito, the courage to defy Stalin. Tito closed the border with Greece and the Greek government was able to rout the communist rebels. Thus the cold war earned its name from the fact that the American/Soviet conflict was waged more by treaty than by actual battles.

The Soviet government under Stalin continued to assert itself in the cultural sphere. Modernist tendencies in the work of various Soviet composers were criticised officially, a fact which led to extensive debate in the West. This debate was sharpened by events

in Czechoslovakia in April 1948. The month before, non-communist ministers had resigned from the government over Czechoslovakia's withdrawal from the Marshall Plan. A by-election was not held and the communists gained control of the government. This led to an an outcry in England and the United States. AIA member Stephen Bone wrote in the AIA Newsletter:

> The AIA was formed at a time when democracy in Europe was seriously threatened. With recent events in Czechoslovakia the threat has returned. It seems to me essential that the AIA should reaffirm its belief in democratic methods.[38]

Stephen Bone's letter heralded the split in the AIA and led finally to the decision to remove the "political" clause in the AIA's constitution. But the majority of artists in the organisation disagreed with his viewpoint, believing, with the advisory committee, that democracy had been adhered to in Czechoslovakia because the Communist and Social Democrat coalition held a majority in parliament after the resignation of the twelve other ministers. Many artists saw the increasingly anti-Soviet mood as an attempt to persuade people to accept the renewed prospect of war. In the AIA Newsletter Patrick Carpenter condemned attempts to engender war hysteria:

> Democracy, we are asked to believe, is only democracy when it elects a government subservient to Wall Street.[39]

Events in Czechoslovakia were felt so strongly in England that

Stephen Bone called an Extraordinary General Meeting of the AIA on the 30 October 1948. Although his motion was defeated, the issue was again raised at a second General Meeting the following April. This resulted in a hung vote and the so-called political clause remained in the constitution.

Meanwhile the British Press gave a hostile reception to the Wroclaw Congress Peace Campaign. The idea was put forward that Russia's sole interest in peace came from the fact that she did not possess the atom bomb. Western intellectuals were accused of being "manipulated" into creating peace campaigns in the West. The die was cast and the AIA decided not to send an official delegation to the Second World Peace Conference in Paris in 1949 because it was a follow up to the Wroclaw Congress.

The association's newsletter continued to suppress discussions concerning peace until Victor Pasmore, Josef Herman, Leslie Hurry and John Minton objected in the June/July newsletter of 1950. This objection led to the AIA sending a delegation to the British Peace Committee Conference and, in turn, led to the calling of another Extraordinary General Meeting in October. At this meeting members were asked to vote on two proposals. The first, proposed by Patrick Carpenter was that: "The AIA should support in every way the aims and activities of the British Peace Committee." The second, put forward by Morris Kestelman deplored: "The failure of the British Peace Committee to protest against communist aggression in Korea."[40] The Carpenter proposal was defeated after Beryl Sinclair gave this report from the chair:

> It would be fatal to the AIA's principles to become a political convenience for this body (the British Peace Committee), whose leaders, however well-meaning, based their speeches on the set slogans which can be found regularly in the Daily Worker and on Moscow Radio.[41]

The International Peace Congress held at Sheffield from the 13-20 November 1950 was attacked by the British Prime Minister as a communist front and 215 delegates were refused permission to enter Britain. Picasso, however, was allowed into the country and spoke at the meeting which was held to announce the adjournment of the Conference:

> I have contributed to the utmost of my ability - and with the same ardour that I have given to my art - to fight for the greatest and most just of all causes. I stand with life against death. I stand for peace! I take my stand against war.[42]

Picasso cancelled his visit to the preview of an Arts Council exhibition of his work entitled **Picasso in Provence** in protest at what he called the British Government's repressive actions towards artists. This gave the English newspapers fresh ammunition in their campaign to label Picasso a communist, and anyone who wanted to meet him, a communist sympathizer.

Picasso's speech at the Sheffield Congress inspired some members of the AIA to hold a peace exhibition and to break away from the

AIA to form a new organisation - Artists for Peace. This organisation, of which John Berger was a member, held exhibitions in 1951, 1952 and 1953.

At this point the ideological undercurrents fanning the dispute surfaced in an AIA exhibition called the **Mirror and the Square.** The catalogue for the exhibition, which was held at the New Burlington Galleries in December 1952, set out the rationale in these terms:

> Of the two symbols from which this exhibition takes its name, the mirror, held up to nature, presents the spectator with a literal image of the visible world and thus stands for those artists who are primarily concerned with the representation of natural appearances. The square serves the draughtsman as a precision instrument, but it is also an abstract geometrical concept, and so it serves here as a symbol for those artists whose pictures rely upon the presentation of 'abstract' forms and the delicacy and precision of their relationship.[43]

Morris and Radford see this crude opposition of realism against abstraction as a symbol of the split between East and West: "The split was political not artistic, the AIA divided between those who feared Soviet ambition and those who remained committed socialists."[44] From the catalogue entry quoted above it is clear that the organisors of the exhibition attempted to mask these political differences by presenting them simply as a difference

in style.

This Chapter has looked at the way in which English and European artists formed a powerful alliance to combat the spread of fascist ideology. Their belief in the political role of artists was felt so strongly that the obligation to "take part in political activity"[45] was enshrined in the constitution of their organisation. I show that the AIA, which came into being over ideological issues, finally disintegrated over ideological issues. These issues were of two kinds: Firstly member's support for the Republican government during the Spanish Civil War, and secondly, their support for the Peace Movement. Both these actions brought the AIA into conflict with the British government. The demise of the AIA was not brought about by goverment decree but by a process of defining support for world peace as anti-patriotic and as pro-Soviet. Finally, this accusation and the ideological recriminations which it evoked, led many left-wing artists to leave the AIA. This left the way clear for the constitution to be changed and in 1953 this 'political clause' was voted out of the constitution and the organisation embarked on a new apolitical programme. This, in the opinion of Morris and Radford "coincided with the re-evaluation of the development of Twentieth Century art in an apolitical tradition". [46]

In the next two Chapters I propose assessing parallel issues in the United States and their impact on the development of the American avant-garde and its break with the School of Paris.

Notes to pages 114 - 141

Chapter 6: The Mirror and the Square

1. Hinz, B., Art in the Third Reich, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979, p. 24.

2. Hinz, B., Ibid., 1979, p. 26.

3. The **Führerrat der Vereinigten Deusche Kunst-und Kultur Verbände** was formed in 1930 and the **Kampfbund für Deutsche Kultur** was formed in 1933.

4. This manifesto called for the removal of cosmopolitan and Bolshevist art from public collections and the dismissal of museum officials responsible for buying them. The names of left-wing artists were no longer allowed to appear in print. Modern architects were to be punished for their "insults" against German culture and "offensive" sculptures were to be removed from public places. See Hinz, B., Ibid., 1979, p. 27.

5. Hinz, B., Ibid., 1979, p. 28.

6. Hinz, B., Ibid., 1979, p. 26.

7. Paul Schultze-Naumburg, cited in Hinz, B., Ibid., 1979, p. 45.

8. Gunther, F. K., Kleine Rassenkunde des Deuschen Volkes, cited in Mosse, G. L., Nazi Culture, London: W. H. Allen, 1966, p. 64-65.

9. SS Weekly Das Schwarze Korps, November 1937, cited in Bleuel, H. P., Strength Through Joy: Sex and Society in Nazi Germany, London: Secker & Warburg, 1973, p. 190.

10. At the Seventh Congress of the Komintern, held in Moscow from July 25 to August 20, 1935, Georgy Dimitrov set out a strategy which, it was hoped, would bring about the defeat of fascism the world over. Based on class collaboration and on an alliance of intellectuals and revolutionaries, this strategy was called the Popular Front.

11. Rowe, C., cited in Morris, L. & Radford, R., AIA: The Story of the Artists International Association 1933 - 1953, Museum of Modern Art: Oxford, 1983, p. 9.

12. Fitton, J., in Morris, L. & Radford, R., Ibid., 1983, p. 10.

13. Between 1930 and 1939 only one reproduction of his work was printed. See the relevant volumes of The Studio, London.

14. Morris, L. & Radford, R., AIA: The Story of the Artists International Association 1933 - 1953, Museum of Modern Art: Oxford, 1983, p. 15.

15. Reviewing Peter Peri's exhibition **London Life in Concrete**,

Blunt explained that the vital point about Peri's work was his interest in ordinary people doing ordinary things without the "distortion of his own subjective reactions". Quoted in Morris, L. & Radford, R., AIA: The Story of the Artists International Association 1933 - 1953, Museum of Modern Art: Oxford, 1983, p. 49.
The point that the adjective 'new' refers to subject-matter and not to the style of the painting is also true of the "New Realism" of the 1970's.

16. Murray, P. & L., A Dictionary of Art & Artists, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967, p. 265.

17. See discussion of realism in Chapter 3, pp. 50-51.

18. This tendency had its origin in the 1920's and offered artists an alternative to traditionalism, which was dismissed as being bourgeois and to modernism, which was thought of as being self-indulgent. Berthold Hinz writes that these artists did not indulge in experiments which might have cost them their comprehensibility but that their work was nonetheless innovative. Other artists included in this tendency were; Georg Grosz, John Heartfield, Otto Nagel, Oskar Nerlinger, Rudolf Schlichter, August Dressler, Ernst Fritsch, Otto Griebel, Eugen Hoffmann, Wilhelm Lachnit, Curt Querner, Karl Schwesig and Gert Wollheim. See Hinz, B., Art in the Third Reich, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979, p. 52.

19. Krell, A., "Guernica's Genesis", The Age Monthly Review, November 1984, p. 17.

20. Fitzpatrick, S., The Russian Revolution, New York: Oxford University Press, 1984, p. 157.

21. Treadgold, D.W., Twentieth Century Russia, 5th edition, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981, p. 323.

22. Treadgold, D.W., Ibid., 1981, p. 323.

23. Elliot, D., New Worlds - Russian Art and Society 1900-1937, London: Thames & Hudson, 1986, p. 146.

24. Broadsheet published by the British Surrealist Group, cited in Morris, L. & Radford, R., AIA: The Story of the Artists International Association 1933 - 1953, Museum of Modern Art: Oxford, 1983, p. 42.

25. Lloyd speaking at a debate held at Conway Hall, June 1936, cited in Morris, L. & Radford, R., Ibid., 1983, p. 41.

26. Read, H., Realism-Surrealism Debate, 16 March 1938, cited in Morris, L. & Radford, R., Ibid., 1983, p. 43.

27. Picasso interview with Jerome Sechler, cited in, Krell, A., "Guernica's Genesis", The Age Monthly Review, November 1984, p. 17.

28. AIA Newsletter, Morris, L. & Radford, R., AIA: The Story of the Artists International Association 1933 - 1953, Museum of Modern Art: Oxford, 1983, p. 43.

29. Blunt, A., cited in Morris, L. & Radford, R., Ibid., 1983, p. 43. Anthony Blunt confessed in 1964 that he had passed information to the Soviets during World War II. His confession was kept secret for counter-intelligence reasons and he was allowed to retain his post as Keeper of the King's Pictures until 1979 when a public outcry froced the Queen of England to strip him of his knighthood.

30. Blunt, A., cited in Morris, L. & Radford, R., Ibid., 1983, p. 16.

31. Morris, L. & Radford, R., Ibid., 1983, p. 51.

32. From Hilter's speech dedicating the House of German Art in 1937. Cited in Hinz, B., Art in the Third Reich, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979, p. 42.

33. Dubow, N. E., "Art and Edict", in Leadership South Africa, Volume 3, Number 4, 1985, pp. 112-119.

34. The works confiscated by Professor Ziegler "were crowded together here in the long, narrow rooms that were made even more claustrophobic by partitions. The mode of display was deliberately detrimental to the works, and the lighting was terrible... The paintings were hung helter-skelter, as though fools or children had been in charge... There was no semblance of order, and paintings were stuck in where ever they would fit, peering out between sculptures standing on the floor or on pedestals. The works were provided with inflamatory labels, commentaries and obscene jokes." See the discussion in Hinz, B., Art in the Third Reich, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979, p. 40.

35. Hinz, B., Ibid., 1979, p. 52.

36. Morris, L. & Radford, R., AIA: The Story of the Artists International Association 1933 - 1953, Museum of Modern Art: Oxford, 1983, p. 66.

37. Treadgold, D.W., Twentieth Century Russia, 5th edition, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981, p. 392.

38. Morris, L. & Radford, R., AIA: The Story of the Artists International Association 1933 - 1953, Museum of Modern Art: Oxford, 1983, p. 79.

39. Morris, L. & Radford, R., Ibid., 1983, p. 79.

40. Morris, L. & Radford, R., Ibid., 1983, p. 84.

41. Sinclair, B., cited in Morris, L. & Radford, R., Ibid., 1983, p. 84.

42. Picasso, P., cited in Morris, L. & Radford, R., Ibid., 1983, p. 85.

43. Catalogue Introduction to exhibition, "The Mirror and the Square", cited in Morris, L. & Radford, R., Ibid., 1983, p. 88.

44. Morris, L. & Radford, R., Ibid., 1983, p. 3.

45. The so-called political clause read: "To take part in political activity, to organise or collaborate in any meeting or demonstration in sympathy with the aims of the Association where action seems desirable or justifiable." See Morris, L. & Radford, R., Ibid., 1983, p. 91.

46. Morris, L. & Radford, R., Ibid., 1983, p. 3.

Chapter 7: THE MAKING OF THE AMERICAN AVANT-GARDE

The prominence achieved by artists associated with the modern movements at the turn of the century gave France the reputation of being the art capital of the world. This was recognised by American artists and in the 1920's many writers and artists went to live in Paris to escape prohibition and American provincialism. American cultural self-esteem was at such a low ebb that the French Governor General was invited to open the 1939 World's Fair in New York. On this occasion he remarked that:

> The United States has invited the other nations of the world to participate in a show whose theme is this: "What will tomorrow's world be like?" In its magnificent past France has experienced periods of storm and stress and yet has arisen again to provide new answers both simple and glorious on so many occasions that we are able to smile at the question put by America and answer quite calmly "Tomorrow's world would be like yesterday's and today's, largely of French inspiration."[1]

It was not even as though the French were unfamiliar with American work. The year before, the exhibition "Three Centuries of American Art" had been held at the Jeu de Paume in Paris. It took the Americans a full year to get over the negative and dismissive reviews which had appeared in the French press. True

painting was thought to flow from the accumulated sensibility of a long cultural tradition; by definition alone, American art was facile. Blinded by this prejudice, the critic, Andre Villeboef, could find nothing positive to say about American art:

> Here is painting justly styled "International", without origin, without taste; marked alone by an originality that accentuates the indecency of its arrogance, the puerility of its conceit out of fashion with us in France. It is distinguished by nothing particularly American.[2]

Paris held all the levers of power. By imitating Cubism, American art had proved itself to be worthless, and by attempting to be international, it had become decadent.

Jewell, the art critic for the New York Times, was so taken aback that he wrote a book entitled Have We an American Art?, in which he offered American artists a strategy: substitute the notion of 'internationalism' with that of 'universalism'. But this was not so easy. Forbes Watson, an artist member of the American Federation of Arts, identified a further problem:

> At every turn (Paris dealers) discouraged their American clientele from buying the work of the native artist. By the time our period began, America had been treated to a quarter of a century of propaganda so astute and untiring that even minor talents if quoted on the Paris picture bourse, could sell perverse and disingenuous work more easily on the

American market than American major talents could sell sincere and able pictures.[3]

The answer appeared to lie in the question of the 'Americanism' of American art, a question which had preoccupied artists since the inception of the First American Artists Congress (AAC) in 1936. Addressing the Congress, Meyer Schapiro asked whether appeals for an 'American' art, by invoking a veil of fictitious unity, did not blind them to the fact that "there can be no art in common between the Americans who own Rockefeller Centre, the Americans in the Legion in Terre Haute, and the Americans in, as a symbol, the Commonwealth College in Arkansas."[4]

According to Lewis Mumford, the congress was convened, not only so that artists could defend themselves against the Depression[5], but also in order to pit the liberating force of artistic creation against fascism. It is difficult to imagine the philosophical tenor of those times. The AAC was aligned with the strategy first propounded by Georgy Dimitrov at the Seventh Congress of the Komintern and known as the Popular Front. Intended to unite anti-fascist groups the world over, it was based on class collaboration and the integration of liberals into the ranks of revolutionaries.

Pre-eminent among these liberals was Clement Greenberg. Although Greenberg clung to a Marxist vocabulary, Serge Guilbaut believes that he was, in fact, laying the groundwork for an "élitist" modernist position. This position was eagerly adopted by some

artists[5] from the American Artists Congress, who attempted to create an artists pressure group by claiming allegiance to modern European art.

At the same time, the influential left-wing magazine, Partisan Review, was going through a Trotskyist phase, during which the pre-eminence of the intellectual was stressed at the expense of the working class. An 'international of intellectuals' was envisaged as being just around the corner. George Morris, art critic and financial backer of Partisan Review, urged artists to 'overlook' the opposition which branded their abstract work as 'escapist'.[7]

Looking around in the late thirties Clement Greenberg found a world of "ideological confusion and violence".[8] The only hope was seen to lie with the avant-garde, which raised art to "the expression of an absolute in which all relativities and contradictions would be either resolved or beside the point".[9] But where did he lay the blame? With the masses of course. The whole point of his early essay, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch", was to alert artists and the public to the fact that there was a demand for kitsch precisely because it was so undemanding. The masses "set up pressure on society to provide them with a kind of culture fit for their own consumption...a new commodity was devised: ersatz culture, Kitsch, destined for those... insensitive to the values of genuine culture".[10]

Greenberg posed as the defender of 'quality' and paved the way

for the renouncement of political struggle (necessary because the major artists were ensconced in the American Artists Congress) by taking Trotsky's line one step further. Trotsky defended critical art that was 'faithful to itself'. Greenberg, quoting Hofmann, applied this criticism inwardly, toward the very medium of art itself. This was seen as the guarantee of quality under capitalism, because capitalism did not favour, indeed could not tolerate quality. "Capitalism in decline finds that whatever of quality that it is still producing becomes invariably a threat to its own existence. Advances in culture, no less than advances in science and industry, corrode the very society under whose aegis they are made possible".[11] Kitsch, on the other hand:

> cultivates this insensibility. It is the source of its profits. Kitsch is mechanical and operates by formulas. Kitsch is vicarious experience and faked sensations. Kitsch changes according to style, but remains always the same. Kitsch is the epitome of all that is spurious in the life of our times. Kitsch pretends to demand nothing of its customers except their money - not even their time.[12]

Serge Guilbaut argues that Greenberg's essay gave artists an intellectual platform. By making kitsch the target and by fighting through art against mass culture, artists enjoyed the illusion of actually fighting against totalitarianism. Rooted in the views of Trotsky, Greenberg's argument broke with the political approach taken during the Depression. During that time artists were engaged in the full-scale production of a democratic

mass culture. The Works Project Administration/Federal Art Project (WPA/FAP) was not just an aesthetic soup kitchen dishing out tins of canned art. Set up as a relief programme, it nonetheless had an an aesthetic policy. The director, Holger Cahill, wrote in 1939 (the same year as Greenberg's essay) "people who lay down their lives in defence of democracy would scarcely raise a finger for democracy in the arts. They say that...you cannot get away from aristocracy in matters of aesthetic selection ... that art is too rare and fine to be shared with the masses".[13] At the same time, since the WPA/FAP was a Federal project, they couldn't take any chances. Jackson Pollock's brother Sanford, also an artist, wrote in 1940: "They are dropping people like flies (from FAP) on the pretence that they are Reds, for having signed a petition about a year ago to have the C.P. (American Communist Party) put on the ballot. We remember signing it so we are nervously awaiting the axe."[14] It is not out of character that Jackson Pollock signed the petition. Whilst still a student he wrote to his family: "If I get back in school I will have to be very careful about my actions. The whole outfit think I am a rotten rebel from Russia".[15]

Artists were interested in the work of the Mexican muralists who had come to the United States, as exiles, after the fall of the Obregon government in 1924. José Clemente Orozco arrived in 1927, Diego Rivera in 1930 and David Alfaro Siqueiros in 1931. All these artists returned to Mexico after 1934 when the progressively minded Lazaro Cardenas became president.[16] As exiles, these artists were favoured with corporate commissions and were drawn

into the teaching programmes of some art schools. I intend taking up this discussion in Chapter 8 although I would like to mention at this point that Rivera taught for a time at the San Francisco Institute of Art and even executed a didactic fresco there on the theme of 'painting a mural'. Siqueiros later established an 'experimental workshop' in New York, where he and Pollock tested the latest synthetic lacquers and Ducos for their suitability to mural paintings and banners for Communist demonstrations.

With a fair degree of hindsight, Greenberg wrote in 1961 that "someday it will be told how anti-Stalinism which started out more or less as Trotskyism turned into art for art's sake, and thereby cleared the way, heroically, for what was to come".[17] He was of course, right. However, before that could happen the position of the avant-garde had to be consolidated and the American public brought in behind it. Somehow seeming to sense this, approximately thirty artists left the Congress in April 1940 behind Stuart Davis (the first to resign) and Meyer Schapiro. The issue was the political independence of the artist.

The Schapiro group immediately formed the Federation of American Painters and Sculptors (FAPS) with the declared aim of "the welfare of free progressive art in America".[18] To this end they immediately began an active search for buyers of their members' work. Letters and 'birth announcements' were sent to prospective buyers and membership of the group was offered to executive members of the Museum of Modern Art, professors of fine art and museum curators.

By 1940, the WPA/FAP's support for artists was no longer assured and FAPS's Cultural Committee, headed by Rothko and Gottlieb, began sending protest letters to the press on every available occasion. This had the desired effect of bringing the plight of the artist to the attention of the establishment.

After 1940, artists orientated themselves towards the élite and no longer sought an allegiance or market within the masses for fear of being labelled 'populist' or 'kitsch' artists. With this went, what Ad Reinhart called, an increasing "fear of anonymity...most painters were reluctant to join a group for fear of being labelled or submerged".[19] Or, as Motherwell wrote: "The more anonymous a work, the less universal, because in some paradoxical way, we understand the universal through the personal".[20]

The State Department was sympathetic to the problems involved in finding a market for the enormous American output in the arts. As part of the New Deal, Buy American Art Weeks were held in 1940 and 1941. In a radio broadcast at the time, Clifton Fadiman in discussion with Eleanor Roosevelt said:

> When the recent election was over, a great cry for unity arose - you, Mrs. Roosevelt, ought to remember that particularly. This business of unity is dandy, but how do you get it?...I think the enjoyment and appreciation of art is one means of insuring the kind of psychological unity we are after, and that is why it is important in national defence.[21]

In the ideologically charged atmosphere of the War years the art museums were also called upon to forego their position on the political side-lines and to make a contribution to 'national defence'. In June 1941, the chairman of the Museum of Modern Art's board of trustees, John Hay Whitney, saw the role of the museum as being "to educate, inspire, and strengthen the hearts and wills of free men in defence of their own freedom".[22] Whitney had spent the war years working for the Office of Strategic Services, (OSS, subsequently called the CIA) and he engaged the museum in a number of war related programmes.

As a minor war contractor, the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) fulfilled thirty-eight contracts for 'cultural materials' costing $1,5 million. Altogether nineteen exhibitions of American painting were shipped around Latin America for Nelson Rockefeller's Inter-American Affairs Office. Porter McCray worked on these projects and after the war served as director of MOMA's International Council. In this way the patterns of aggressive cultural imperialism, which had been developed during the war, were carried over into the period known as the Cold War.[23]

Under his leadership MOMA provided exhibitions of contemporary American art for expositions in Paris, London, Sao Paulo and Tokyo. The Museum of Modern Art took over the function of the State Department in organising these exhibitions because the whole question of art and culture had become ideologically charged. One of the central issues over which conservatives and

liberals fought was the question of whether abstract or figurative art was more "American" in character. The force of the association between figurative work and socialist sympathies was so finally so strong that the work for these exhibitions was drawn largely from the ranks of the de-radicalised avant-garde.[24]

We have already seen how artists left the politically active American Artists Congress. It is important to note, however, that the earlier involvement of artists like Pollock in political activism served to heighten the ideological value of their works, in that they showed the world, and the Soviet bloc in particular, the virtues of a free and open society. It is significant, in this respect, that only two of the fifty-odd realist paintings that Pollock did under the WPA/FAP are still in existence today.

To discover why this style of painting was so suitable, we must return to an examination of how appeals to American 'nationalism' paved the way for 'internationalism', before achieving the cultural pinnacle of 'universality'.

By 1943, Dali, Max Ernst, Matta and Masson had been in America for two years. Members of the Federation of American Painters and Sculptors interpreted their presence as proof that America was recognized "as the centre where art and artists of all the world must meet" and they enthusiastically included the Surrealist's emphasis on the unconscious in their work. When the work of Rothko and Gottlieb was attacked by Jewell and other critics, they responded with a manifesto: "We are for the larger shape

because it has the impact of the unequivocal. We wish to reassert the picture plane. We are for flat forms because they destroy illusion and reveal truth."[25]

Stuart Davis, the acknowleged father of American abstractionism,[26] claimed that the real battle was between the isolationists and the internationalists. He wrote in Harper's that:

> Isolationist culture is reactionary and undemocratic in character in that it seeks to suppress that free exchange of ideas which alone can develop an authentic American art.[27]

Guilbaut sees in this, the Rothko-Gottlieb manifesto and the writings of Motherwell and Newman, a note of new apolitical thinking:

> The American avant-garde painters had no polemical tradition of their own to draw on and so made use of the ideological elements drawn from Trotskyism, surrealism and other movements...What remained of their old leftist ideas was the desire and the need to communicate with the public. But now the public was redefined to encompass all mankind. In this way the artists of the avant-garde hoped to transcend the barriers of language and class. Again the ideology was similar to that expressed by Wendell Wilkie in One World. The archetypal image was seen as the perfect vehicle for the new ideology.[28] [Emphasis added]

Motherwell, as one of the most articulate members of the American school of abstraction, projected an image with which other artists soon identified. The son of a banker, Robert Motherwell, after an initial period of art studies in California, took a degree in philosophy at Stanford University. His thesis on O'Neill's relationship to psychoanalytic theory became a lifelong interest, along with the surrealist theory of 'automatism'. Later he studied art under Meyer Schapiro at Columbia University in New York. By stressing the 'new' and the 'modern', Motherwell gave hope to those artists who felt cut off, not only from their own class, the bourgeoisie, but also from the proletariat:

> The argument of this lecture is that the materialism of the middle class and the inertness of the working class leave the modern artist without any vital connection to society save that of opposition.[29]

Writing in the pages of the avant-garde and acceptably left-wing publication, Partisan Review, Motherwell wrote of Mondrian's recently exhibited Boogie Woogie:

> For the first time a subject is present, not by virtue of its absence, but actually present, though its appearance is torn away, and only the structure bared. The modern city, precise, rectangular, squared, whether seen from above, below, or on the side...Mondrian has left his white paradise, and entered the world.[30]

Increasingly the world was American.[31] The critic and art dealer, Samuel Kootz wrote in the New York Times: "Under present circumstances the probability is that the future of painting lies in America." The presence of Duchamp, Miro, Ernst and the Surrealists in New York in the early forties had softened the attitudes of the Franco-philes and bolstered the confidence of those New York artists who had sought out their company. Peggy Guggenheim brought out her entire collection of the European avant-garde from France to start her gallery-cum-museum, and was therefore important in this regard. She opened Art of this Century in 1942 after surrounding herself with a number of advisors, among them Herbert Read, Marcel Duchamp and the Americans, Barr, Sweeney and Soby from the Museum of Modern Art.

The painter, Lee Krasner has admitted (to Dorothy Seckler[32]) that she was impressed to see her work hanging between a Picasso and a Léger. Ms Guggenheim said that her system of combining a museum with a gallery meant that a collector might come for a Picasso and leave instead with a Motherwell. However, it was not enough for New York to be the avant-garde's new address. For American art and culture to dominate it had to be seen to do so on its own terms so this is what it set out to do. If Motherwell and Greenberg provided the intellectual scaffolding for the American avant-garde, Betty Parsons provided some of the planks on which it was to rest.

In October 1946, Betty Parson's Gallery[33] staged an exhibition of paintings by Northwest-Coast Indians. This was an important step

in that it established a link between the avant-garde and a truly American culture. Artists were going back to their roots. Barnett Newman issued the following statement justifying the status of non-objective work:

> There is an answer in these works to all those who assume that modern abstract art is the esoteric exercise of a snobbish élite, for among these simple peoples, abstract art was the normal, well-understood dominant tradition. Shall we say that modern man has lost the ability to think on so high a level?[34]

The attempt to identify American painting with 'universalism' was the last stage in a spiral which began with nationalism and led to internationalism. As the critic Edward Jewell noted in the New York Times,[35] 'internationalism' carried overtones of a political differentiation between people, whereas 'universalism' appealed to one's common humanity. Universalism was thus a more noble pursuit than nationalism and far more suitable to the purposes of French or American cultural imperialists.

The concern for 'essences' and the use of myth provided the American avant-garde with a way out of the impasse of pure abstraction. In his book on the themes and subject matter of American art, Lawrence Alloway states:

> Thus biomorphic art emerged in New York as the result of a cluster of ideas about nature, automatism, mythology, and

the unconscious. These elements fed one another to make a loop out of which this evocative art developed.[36]

This is born out by Rothko:

> (Myths) are the eternal symbols upon which we must fall back to express basic psychological ideas. They are the symbols of man's primitive fears and motivations, no matter in which land or what time, changing only in detail never in substance.[37]

Those painters who had been involved in the Artist's Congress and thus in the politics of the Popular Front did not simply give up their old ideas because of the level of Federal harrassment, or the fact that they had become unpopular. Instead, Guilbaut suggests that they side-stepped the problem by transforming political and historical issues into personal ones. In support of his argument he invokes Roland Barthes: "By moving from history into nature, myth gets rid of something. It does away with the complexity of human actions and bestows upon them the simplicity of essences."[38]

The effect of the appeal to the 'universal' gave artists the illusion of remaining true to one of their political ideals of the thirties - that is, of communicating with the masses. However the basis of this communication was no longer an alliance of class-interests but rather so-called universal values. The terms of the debate were such that political commitment, at its logical

extension, was taken to mean, no art and no literature. Myth had the effect of giving artists room to manoeuvre. Art could be seen to be action if it served the goal of personal liberation. Suddenly art had regained its lost promise of liberation. At a time when the atomic bomb was a pressing reality for all people, abstraction provided a way out of the incomprehensible realities of modern life and, at the same time, re-established the connection between art and politics without invoking the charge of 'propaganda'.

As Rothko said: "It really is a matter of ending this silence and solitude, of breathing and stretching one's arms again. The familiar identity of things has to be pulverized in order to destroy the finite associations with which our society increasingly enshrouds every aspect of our environment."[39] The ensuing dislocation between artists and society in general led to a situation where alienation, for the first time, was seen in a positive light.

Pierre Dommergues, in analysing the American Novel in the post-war period, discovered that alienation was increasingly seen as a privilege because it was borne of society's hostility towards modern literature and modern art:

> The privilege of alienation is to offer a new mode of communication: alienation is not a kind of isolation but a way of being in the world which engages the individual, the society, and the public...Alienation is a way of

communicating on a symbolic plane. In reality the alienated person is not indifferent to the world; if he isolates himself, the reason is that he is too sensitive to the environment.[40]

The peaceful transition to a desired social order in which poverty was eradicated and natural resources fully socialised, appeared as remote as ever. Artists became impatient for change. In attacking bourgeois culture the avant-garde had abandoned itself to the illusion of revolution and social inversion. Perversely, if this inversion was not, in fact, an illusion but a reality, avant-garde culture would not have survived. It is the recognition of this contradiction which has given alienation its special place in the vocabulary of the modern artist.

The issue of the alienation of the artist from modern society is taken up by Renato Poggioli. In his essay, "The Artist in the Modern World",[41] he makes a special study of the avant-garde's relationship to society. He argues that in a democratic society, public opinion exerts a moral and cultural tyranny. Since this tyranny is incapable of exerting complete control, a certain degree of non-conformity is tolerated. However:

> In the very act of transgressing the norms of society by proclaiming itself to be antidemocratic and antibourgeois, **avant-garde** art does not realize that it pays involuntary homage to democratic middle-class society.[42]

He believes that avant-garde art arose as a psychological reaction to the failure of intellectuals to establish a different social order:

> In other words, they wanted to acquire with their own tools intellectual power, moral prestige and social authority comparable to conquests which were being made with the scepter, the miter, and the sword.[43]

The modern artist is not reconciled to the fact that capitalist society treats him on the one hand as a parasite and on the other, as a producer. Reduced to the level of an industrial worker, the artist, by reason of the market law of supply and demand, is denied any guarantee that the fruits of his labour will be able to fulfil needs which are extensive and regular. As the artist prefers to consider his work as a service and not as a product, he assumes that he is a free professional. However, instead of having 'clients' the artist has to be content with 'customers'.

Alienation in its negative guise is the feeling of futility and isolation which results from being estranged [44] from a dehumanized society. The euphoria of the Romantic attitude, as epitomised by Yeats, "art is solitary man"[45], still held true for de Kooning in 1959 when he held his historic show with Sidney Janis and sold all his paintings on the first day for $150,000. De Kooning later won the Presidential Medal of Freedom, but he is reported as having said that he wished he were back on the WPA

project.[46] Of course he put on his black tie like everyone else and went up to Washington for the occassion. By the 1970's the defiance of artists had become a little pathetic; one has only to look at the Body Art movement and Schwarzkogler's 'art' death for extravagant confirmation of this.[47] Artists move between extremes of self-criticism and self-pity. Since any self-criticism must take the form of self-mockery, the artist is alternately comic victim and tragic victim.

Bourgeois society, in wishing to immunize itself against the artist's rejection of that society (an illusory rejection, but illusory from both sides) typifies the artist's alienation as a neurosis. In the mildest form of this attitude, society sees insanity as the occupational hazard of the artist or, paradoxically, it perceives the artist as being **magnificently** sane.[48] Since the psychological and social isolation of the artist is largely self-induced, the positive aspects of alienation, as epitomised by the American avant-garde, are of a very tenuous kind. The artist is not consoled, particularly by financial success. Mark Rothko hid paintings from his dealer and family before finally committing suicide and Jackson Pollock did his best to drink himself to death.

In the following Chapter I want to look at the ways in which the avant-garde's rejection of the values of contemporary American society were turned around and became the sought after propaganda weapon in America's struggle to improve its cultural image world-wide.

Chapter 7: The Making of the American Avant-garde

1. Editorial, Blaisir de France 1939, Special issue on New York World's Fair, cited in Guilbaut, S., How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983, p. 51.

2. Jewell, E.A., Have We an American Art, New York: Longman, 1939, pp. 41-42.

3. Watson, F., American Painting Today, Washington, D.C.: American Federation of Arts, 1939, p. 15.

4. Schapiro, M., "Race, Nationality and Art" in First American Artists' Congress, pp. 38-41, cited in Guilbaut, S., How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983, p. 21.

5. Tuesday, 29 October 1929 heralded the Great Wall Street crash. The ensuing economic depression lasted until the early 1940's. Many artists, including de Kooning, Davis and the Pollocks took the 'Pauper's Oath' to qualify for relief work on the WPA. Set up in 1935, The Federal Art Project of the Works Progress Adminstration (renamed Works Project Adminstration in 1939) largely replaced other smaller relief agencies like the New York City Emergency Relief Bureau. Holger Cahill, the national director of the WPA/FAP, employed artists as artists at a time when 10 million Americans were out of work. During its eight years the programme spent $35 million on 2,566 murals, 180,099 easel paintings and designs for 2 million posters. Thousands of art galleries were built out of a separate budget. As an example of what was paid to individual artists, Jackson Pollock signed on in 1935 with the easel division at a salary of $103,40 per month.

6. In particular, the group known as "The Ten", that is, Rothko, Gottlieb, Ben Zion, Bolotowsky, Louis Harris, Kufeld, Schanker, Solman, Tsachacbasov and Gatch. Also the AAA group connected with the 'abstraction et creation' movement.

7. Morris, G.L.K., "Some personal letters to some American Artists recently exhibiting in New York", in Partisan Review, March 1938, pp. 36-41.

8. Greenberg, C., "Avant-Garde and Kitsch", in Partisan Review, Autumn 1939, pp. 34-49.

9. Greenberg, C., Ibid., 1939, pp. 34-49.

10. Greenberg, C., Ibid., 1939, pp. 34-49.

11. Greenberg, C., Ibid., 1939, pp. 48-49.

12. Greenberg, C., Ibid., 1939, p. 40.

13. Greenberg, C., Ibid., 1939, pp. 34-49.

14. O'Connor, F.V., Jackson Pollock, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1967, p. 25.

15. O'Connor, F.V., Ibid., 1967, p. 14.

16. See Myers, B. S., Mexican Painting in Our Time, New York: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 59.

17. Greenberg, C., "The Late 1930's in New York", Art and Culture, Boston: Beacon Press, 1961, p. 230.

18. Monroe, G.M., "The American Artist's Congress and the Invasion of Finland", Archives of American Art Journal, #15, 1975, p. 19.

19. Celentano, F., "The Origins and Development of Abstract Art in the United States", Masters thesis, New York University, 1957, p. xi. cited in Guilbaut, S., How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983, p. 47.

20. Letter from Motherwell to Frank O'Hara, cited in Robert Motherwell, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1965, p. 58.

21. Transcript of radio broadcast, NBC, 24 November 1940, cited in Guilbaut, S., How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983, p. 57.

22. Lynes, R., Good Old Modern: An Intimate Portrait of the Museum of Modern Art, New York: Atheneum, 1973, p. 233.

23. The Cold War had its origins in American foreign policy towards the perceived expansion of Soviet influence in Europe immediately after World War II. This 'war' was fought through presidential decrees such as the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and resulted in the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949. In turn the Soviets formed the Warsaw Treaty. See the discussion in Chapter 5, p. 109.

24. Cockcroft, E., "Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War", Art Forum, June 1974, p. 40.

25. Letter sent by Gottlieb and Rothko to the New York Times, 7 June 1943, cited in Guilbaut, S., How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983, p. 76.

26. Henry McBride, cited in Blesh, R., Stuart Davis, New York: Grove Press, 1960, p. 53.

27. Davis, S., "What about Modern Art and Democracy?", Harper's #188, December 1943, p. 37.

28. Guilbaut, S., How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983, p. 77.

29. Motherwell, R., "Painter's Objects", Partisan Review 11, Winter 1944, pp. 93-97.

30. Motherwell, R., Ibid., 1944, p. 96.

31. See Jeremy Tunstall, The Media are American, London: Constable, 1977.

32. Cited in Guilbaut, S., How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983, p. 220n. 64.

33. Peggy Guggenheim closed her gallery at the end of the 1947 season in order to return to Europe. Most of her artists were handed over to Betty Parsons. Pollock's contract with Ms. Guggenheim ran until 1948. Under the terms of this contract, all his work became her property in return for a monthly stipend of $300. He was allowed to keep one painting a year.

34. Newman, B., "Northwest Coast Indian Painting". Cited in Guilbaut, S., How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983, p. 120.

35. Jewell, E.A., "Art American?", New York Times, cited in Guilbaut, S., How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983, p. 121.

36. Alloway, L., Topics in American Art since 1945, New York: Norton, p. 20.

37. Gottlieb and Rothko, "The Portrait of the Modern Artist", radio broadcast, cited in Sandler, I., The Triumph of American Art, New York: Praeger, 1970, pp. 63-64.

38. Barthes, R., Mythologies, Paris: Seuil, 1957, p. 231.

39. Rothko, M., "The Romantics were Prompted", Possibilities 1, New York: George Wittenborn, Winter 1947/1948, p. 84.

40. Dommergues, P., L'alienation, p. 271, cited in Guilbaut, S., How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art, Chicago University of Chicago Press, 1983, p. 159.

41. Poggioli, R., "The Artist in the Modern World", Albrecht, M.C. ed., The Sociology of Art and Literature: A Reader, London: Duckworth, 1970, pp. 669-686.

42. Poggioli, R., Ibid., 1970, p. 669.

43. Poggioli, R., Ibid., 1970, p. 676.

44. The term alienation was first used by Marx, who borrowed it from Hegel and the lexicon of law. Entfremdung was seen as progressive social decay.

45. J. B. Yeats in a letter to his son, cited in Kermode, F., Romantic Image, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971, p. 38.

46. Elkoff, M., "The American Painter as a Blue Chip", Albrecht, M.C. ed., The Sociology of Art and Literature: A Reader, London: Duckworth, 1970, p. 313.

47. The same could be said about Vitto Acconci biting himself as an art action and Chris Burden submitting to being driven over by an automobile. See Max Kozloff's article "Pygmalion Reversed", in Art Forum, Volume XIV, Number 3, November 1975, pp. 30-37.

48. Kermode, F., Romantic Image, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971, p. 14.

Chapter 8: IDEOLOGY AND THE AMERICAN AVANT-GARDE

> What cannot endure the practice of the most human of activities is the enemy. [1]

By 1946 the enemy was no longer fascism but communism and the 'most human of activities' was art or literature. Just as Peggy Guggenheim had argued that merely to engage in modern painting was to defy Nazism,[2] the American writer, Leslie Fiedler, argued that modern artistic expression served to defy communism. The divorce between art and politics was now seen as a kind of action in itself. This is apparent in Fiedler's An End to Innocence[3] where he writes on the Rosenberg trial and McCarthy's connection to the intellectuals. In analysing the couple's prison letters he was struck by their 'vulgarity of mind' and the awkwardness and falsity of their relations to culture and to themselves. Fiedler wrote that they were so crude that there was nothing left for the electric chair to kill "they failed in the end to become martyrs or heroes, or even men. What was there left to die?"[4]

Red-baiting did not begin with Senator McCarthy. After President Truman created his loyalty test for government employees early in 1947, even liberals like Humphrey wooed votes from this platform. According to Morris Dickstein, "when McCarthy made his famous list-waving bedut as a Red-hunter in Wheeling, West Virginia, in February 1950, he was seizing and exploiting - and soon personi-

fying - a situation years in the making."[5]

These witch-hunts led to a situation where an interest in politics **per se** was conflated with an interest in left-wing politics. Thus to transcend politics was seen as a way of defeating the enemy. As far as art and literature was concerned it was hoped to demonstrate to the world, and to the Russians, that a profound art which was above politics was truer to its nature and therefore more capable of achieving quality.

But the separation between art and politics, left politics free to insinuate itself into culture, more or less unobserved and art became a key component of American foreign policy as early as 1945. In launching a major cultural programme, Congressman John Davis Lodge saw art as a means of actively pursuing American foreign policy. But whilst there was general agreement that America's cultural image needed to be improved in the years immediately after the war, there was no agreement as to what that image should be.

The de-politicization of artists was already partially accomplished when Schapiro led the walkout from the the Artists' Congress with its Popular Front connotations. In addition, time only seemed to increase the original disillusionment felt over the Stalin purges. For Clement Greenberg, 'high culture' could only be protected if artists were fiercely anti-communist:

> As a person the writer ought indeed to involve himself in

> the struggle against Stalinism to the "point of commitment". Why should we ask less of him than of any other adult interested in the survival of the common decencies and authentic culture?[6]

Any lingering left-wing sentiments the artist might have had were co-opted and aggrandised as proof of the freedom and tolerance of democratic society. When the artist withdrew from politics, he was in effect, acquiescing in the way in which art and culture were being pressed into service as propaganda weapons against soviet authoritarianism.

On 21 March 1947, President Truman widened his anti-Soviet sentiments to embrace anti-communism abroad and at home. The Employee Loyalty Program sought to keep communists out of federal jobs. Shortly afterwards, the Attorney General drew up a list of allegedly subversive organisations. In his analysis of the Truman Doctrine, Richard Freeland claimed that the list:

> Became a test of employability in state and local governments, defence related industries, and schools, and of eligibility for passports, occupancy of federally financed housing, and tax exemptions...In this sense, the impact of the list's publication was to enroll the whole country in a vast loyalty program.[7]

Virulent attacks were unleashed on artists using political subject matter or those who were suspected of harbouring left-wing

sympathies. Finally, the tenor of these witch-hunts meant that anyone could discredit even the most unlikely elements of American culture. Whilst the Soviets dismissed modern art as Western decadence, one American Senator dismissed it as communistic:

> Modern art is Communistic because it is distorted and ugly, because it does not glorify our beautiful country, our cheerful and smiling people, and our material progress, Art which does not glorify our beautiful country in plain, simple terms that everyone can understand breeds dissatisfaction. It is therefore opposed to our government, and those who create and promote it are our enemies.[8]

The fear of communist infiltration was so great that Dondero's ideas were taken seriously and a number of exhibitions were suppressed. In an attempt to demonstrate to the world that Americans were not a "materialistic, money-mad race, without interest in art and without appreciation of artists and music",[9] the State Department, as a gesture of 'goodwill' to the governments of Latin America and Europe, funded the organisation of the touring exhibition Advancing American Art. In 1946, $49,000 was spent on seventy-nine works by forty-five well-known artists.[10] Immediately after the selection of the work was made public, the press and conservative artist groupings protested against the emphasis on modern work. Even President Truman got involved. Reacting to a painting of a circus scene by KuniYoshi, the President said: "The artist must have stood off from the canvas and thrown paint at it ... if that is art, I'm a Hottentot."[11]

Particularly abusive attacks were published by magazines and newspapers belonging to Randolph Hearst. For him any work which was not absolutely traditional and which did not live up to Senator Dondero's criteria of 'glorifying' their 'beautiful country' was a disguised piece of communist propaganda.

According to Hauptman, Time magazine published Secretary of State George C. Marshall's view that no more tax-payers money should be spent on modern art. The exhibition, entitled Advancing American Art was organised by his department. However there was a public outcry following allegations that many of the contributing artists were communist sympathizers, so he had no alternative but to recall the exhibition in the middle of its tour. This set the pattern for the next few years.

This action and subsequent problems with other exhibitions were fully consistent with the ideology of the Cold War period. We have already seen that the ideas of the Popular Front were no longer tenable in the post-war period. Wallace's Progressive Party had suffered a crushing defeat, largely because the wave of anti-communist sentiment had forced him to distance himself from his constituency which was the radical left. This led to a loose alliance of liberals around what Truman called 'The Fair Deal' and what Schlesinger, in his book of the same name, called the Vital Center. Both initiatives were anti-communist, and were aimed at strengthening Western influence in Europe. The Marshall Plan[12] still formed the basis of American foreign policy. This was now augmented by the North Atlantic Treaty, which shifted the

emphasis away from economic, to military aid. The fourth prong of this new offensive sought to make the benefits of American scientific and industrial progress available to the Third World. It was hoped that by raising living standards throughout the world, "the program would advance freedom and establish America's moral leadership".[13]

This aid was not as benign as it first appeared. France, Germany and Italy were considered to be key countries that had to be kept in the capitalist orbit:

> Providing military support in case of attack is a last resort; a more effective barrier to communism is strong economic support. Trade agreements, loan and technical missions strengthen our ties with friendly nations and are effective demonstrations that capitalism is at least the equal of communism.[14]

An equally important aspect was highlighted by the Blum-Byrnes Accords. These were the first instances of culture being directly related to economic and military issues. These Accords were signed on the 10 January 1946, despite French fears that they would spell doom for the French film industry. These agreements were part of a coherent economic and ideological package which sought not only to rebuild war-torn European economies, but also to counter Soviet influence.

Prior to the signing of the Accords, France had restricted the

importation of American films to a strict quota of five out of thirteen weeks. In return for other economic aid, France was forced to accept nine out of thirteen weeks of American films.[15] Chapter 5 has already examined some of the dynamics of this aid programme. In particular, attention was paid to the statement by the director of one of America's major film companies that "we, the industry, recognise the need for informing people in foreign lands about the things that have made America a great country".[16] This attempt to legitimate the expansion of a private company by claiming that the expansion was for the national good, is a classic example of ideology. Such ideological ligitimation is often found in the representation of sectional interests as universal ones. Those who rule may in fact be serving their own interests and those of their class, but they present their actions as being in the interests of the community as a whole.

One often hears mention of 'cultural exchange' from those entrusted with the administration of cultural matters. What isn't mentioned all that frequently, is that this 'exchange' is generally one-sided. Cultural imperialism is the name given to the considerable volume of one-way traffic of media related technology and values from a few countries to the rest. Just as French culture was transmitted to countries as far off as Malagasy, American culture was transmitted to oil-rich Venezuela. The scale of this diffusion has been that it has placed restraints on the development of indigenous expression and, most importantly, <u>demand</u> for that expression.

We shall return to the question of how demand can be created and counteracted in the context of art. Before embarking on that discussion, it is important to say something about imperialism in its economic and political dimensions.

The concept of cultural imperialism is related to the dynamics of international power relations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It was during this period that mass-media systems were developed and it is therefore not surprising that imbalances in economic power should be reflected in the pattern of cultural preferences. This is clearly apparent in the relations between the old colonies, and their respective European 'mother cultures'. Language, religion and education, to say nothing of the daily administration of the territory, all communicated a pattern of what was considered desirable and what was not. Since the net effect of the scramble for colonial acquisitions was the spread of capitalist influence to previously non-capitalist economies, most commentators agree that 'the pattern of preferences' being spoken of here, referred broadly to Western or, more recently, Soviet leanings.

Theories of imperialist expansion in the nineteenth century, have often been inspired by the large surpluses generated by capitalist economies: Too many goods for not enough people and an excess of investment capital over opportunity. This is Hobson's so-called theory of underconsumption. Marx rejected this theory because it lay the blame on the consumers within the capitalist system instead of with the system itself. Although he died before

the scramble for colonies began, he did forsee that with the advent of machines, fewer workers would be employed and that factory owners would be hard-pressed to retain their rates of profit.[17] Manufacturers were left with two choices, either they had to increase their markets through foreign trade or, they had to reduce wages.

Marx had foreseen the tendency of capital to concentrate, but he had not forseen the expansion in the role of banks in financing industrial growth. This effectively put even more pressure on individual companies to maintain their rate of profit because they were forced to pay a high rate of interest on their development capital.

Returning to the discussion of film art, it is clear that the scramble for new markets abroad was not initiated solely by a desire to spread American influence. It was also undertaken in order to secure the interests of Paramount Studios as against those of, say, Columbia Studios. Paramount Studios could not openly admit to avarice and self-interest, but they could invoke the common good and explain away their company's agreement with UFA[18] simply as a desire to tell "people in foreign lands about the things which have made America great". This recasting of the capitalist imperative in the mould of the national interest is, as I have said, a clear case of ideological ligitimation.

The reader may ask what this has to do with fine art. Whilst one can speak of a film <u>industry</u>, one cannot speak of an art <u>industry</u>

and it is therefore not surprising that fine art did not become the subject of particular trade agreements between America and European nations. However we have seen that the 'demand' for the products of the French avant-garde in the field of fine art hampered the demand for American art, even in America itself. In seeking to overturn these preferences, dealers such as Samuel Kootz and critics like Clement Greenberg developed certain strategies. These were aimed at promoting an acceptably 'American' and yet 'universal' art. 'American' in this case can be best understood in terms of the myth of the individual who is cast off from History and the Old World, but who nonetheless must confront raw Nature. Both the dealers and critics found the answers they were seeking in those individuals who, in time, became known as the Abstract Expressionists.

The Blum-Byrnes Accords were an example of direct political intervention in the cultural arena. However, before these Accords could achieve their intended impact on European culture, Americans had to decide what aspects of their own art and culture would be effective against Soviet influence.

In the following section I propose looking at the way in which the work of the Abstract Expressionists became the symbol of 'freedom of expression' and thus equal to the task of showing up the regimentation of Soviet Realism. The point of this excercize was not, as we shall see, confined to building up the market for American art. Its purpose was ideological; that is it was aimed at combatting the influence of the communist parties in Europe.

Stalin's alliance with Western powers during World War II had produced important Soviet gains in international diplomacy, gains which had given the Communist parties an opportunity to build up their strength and influence in most European nations with the exception of Germany and Spain.[19]

THE TRIUMPH OF THE AMERICAN AVANT-GARDE

At the beginning of Chapter 7 reference is made to the pre-eminent status of French art. During the first decades of the twentieth-century, Paris was the acknowledged centre of the Western art world and there is no doubt that the French gained some comfort from this reputation. Russian, English, American, Dutch, Spanish and Belgium artists all made their pilgrimage to Paris. Twentieth-century art can be characterised as a series of radical breaks with the formal and stylistic conventions of the past and it is only natural that members of the avant-garde, that is, those who are actively forging those breaks with the past, should enjoy the limelight of world attention. France could justifiably lay claim to the rich prize of the avant-garde because the pioneers of the modern movement had all lived and worked in Paris.

Paris's ascendency in the field of painting and sculpture was constantly attested to by the attitude among American artists, even those of the stature of Stuart Davies, that serious artists had to either live in Paris, or at least, to visit as often as

possible. Not only artists, but American critics also wrote extensively in praise of the work of the Parisian avant-garde.

This attitude was also firmly established in the literary world. Ernest Hemingway arrived in Paris in 1921. Malcolm Cowley, E.E. Cummings, Djuna Barnes, Robert McAlmon and Man Ray all left America to join James Joyce and Ezra Pound in a place where the "seamy and the spiritual promised magical opportunity."[20]

Of course, not all American critics supported the modern ideas of the French avant-garde and Barbara Rose writes that:

> The battle of abstract vs. representational art, hard fought throughout the second and third decades of this century, became, in the thirties, identified with the issue of European vs. American art. By this time abstract art had come to be largely identified with European painting, whereas representational painting was properly considered the native mode of expression.[21]

The regionalists were vehemently defended by critics like Charles Buchanan who objected to the 'unintelligibility' of modern work[22] and Royal Cortissoz who denounced modern work as 'Ellis Island Art',[23] thus effectively playing on the public's fear of contamination by the foreign ideas of immigrants. Against this polemic, critics such as Walter Pach and Willard Huntington-Wright argued that just as philosophy had become more abstract, so too must art. Wright argued that modern art was not a passing fad but a

tradition "that has progressed and developed logically for a century".[24]

The issue of the battle between abstract and representational art was not settled within the time period of this study and has continued to rage on until the present day. The fervour of the debate during the 1970s is evident in an influential article published in the mass-circulation magazine Harper's Magazine. In this article, "The Painted Word",[25] Tom Wolfe details the role played by critics, not only in supporting the American avant-garde in the late 1940s, but also in anticipating its aesthetic concerns. His argument, that the content of contemporary painting was often taken from the field of art criticism, is supported by artists of the period he was writing about. A first generation member of the Abstract Expressionists, Willem de Kooning, wrote in 1951:

> The aesthetics of painting were always in a state of development parallel to the development of painting itself. They influenced each other and vice versa. But all of a sudden, in that famous turn of the century, a few people thought they could take the bull by the horns and invent an aesthetic beforehand.[26]

The sophism of Wolfe's argument was taken even further by Robert Motherwell, an abstractionist who was widely believed to be Abstract Expressionism's most scholarly spokesman. He believed that one had to be an artist to understand art:

> One has to have an intimate acquaintance with the language of contemporary painting to be able to see the real beauties of it; to see the ethical background is even more difficult. It is a question of consciousness.[27]

But Wolfe betrays his bias against the earlier representational work of Pollock, Rothko and many of the other first generation Abstract Expressionists. He writes that:

> ... the artists themselves, in Europe and America, suspended the modern movement...they called it off! They suddenly returned to 'literary' realism of the most obvious sort, Social Realism.[28]

Unfortunately for his argument, history shows that artists did nothing of the kind. What Wolfe is at pains to ignore, and perhaps conceal, is that a struggle had been raging in America and Europe between the ideology of the left and that of the right: a struggle between those who believed art should reflect the social issues of the time and those who, equally vehemently, claimed that art should remain aloof and concern itself solely with 'pictorial' issues. As we have seen in previous chapters, that struggle was fought, and is still being fought, in the ideological domain.

Tom Wolfe has entered that domain as a writer. Let us look at his statement: "Social Realism evaporated with the political

atmosphere which created it." He goes on to say: "By 1946 the scene was clear for the art of our day."[29] 'Evaporated' is a curious way of describing the measures taken against what, at the time, was considered to be 'un-American' art. Although extreme right-wingers would finally campaign against abstract art, in the early 1940s, it was the artists who made a connection between their art and social reality who suffered the most censorship.

In 1941, Anton Refregier entered a competition for a mural to depict the history of the State of California on the walls of the Rincon Post Office in San Francisco. The brief from the Federal Section of Fine Arts required that the artist:

> [R]elate to the people in contemporary idiom the history of their own experience, not as pageant, but as the growth of the city, a struggle of men against nature, and later on the development of various inner tensions.[30]

But according to Tom Wolfe, artists were "dutifully cranking out paintings of unemployed negroes, crippled war veterans, and the ubiquitous workers with the open blue work shirts and necks wider than their heads."[31] All of this in response to the "drillmasters" and "shouting dogmatists of the Left".[32]

However, at no time of its existence, could the WPA/FAP be called left-wing. In 1941, the year of Refregier's commission, it was already ferreting out 'communist sympathizers'.[33] What it was interested in, and what it sought to promote through its

projects, was the building up of a strong indigenous American visual culture along democratic lines. The director of the programme, Holger Cahill said in 1939: "People who would lay down their lives for political democracy would scarcely raise a finger for democracy in the arts".[34]

The American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Associated Farmers, the Young Democrats of San Francisco, the Sailor's Union, and the Society of Western Artists, all called for the destruction of Refregier's mural on its completion in 1949. This was after ninety-one official inspections by members of the Public Building Administration, and after the artist had been forced to make a number of changes. For example, the government objected to the way in which President Roosevelt was portrayed as being old and infirm at the time of the formation of the United Nations. This was in line with the protocol which dictated that his physical disability was not shown on television or the news media.

There were also objections, and physical interference, from the American Legion and the Sailor's Union because of a placard commemorating the winning of the eight-hour day. This had to be painted out and figures of Spanish priests had to be 'slenderised'. Richard Nixon, when he was a Congressional representative for California, promised to look into "this type of art in government buildings with the view to obtaining removal of all that is found to be inconsistent with American ideals and principles."[35] By this stage the murals had become the centre of

international attention and after deliberations lasting four years, the Committee on Public Works shelved the decision calling for the destruction of Refreigier's murals.

The work of Diego Rivera did not fare so well. After finishing the Detroit Industry Murals in 1932, Rivera, togther with Picasso and Matisse, was commissioned by John D. Rockerfeller to decorate the foyer of the RCA building at Rockerfeller Centre in New York. Rivera's given theme was: "Man at the Crossroads Looking with Hope and High Vision to the Choosing of a New and Better Future". Before the mural's completion, screens were erected to block it from public view and it was finally destroyed. The reasons are not hard to find. In an interview published in The Studio, Rivera says that the mural depicted socialism as an "organisation of the producers into harmony and friendship" and capitalism, as having "natural concommitants, the differentiation of classes into rich and poor and its inevitable result - war and unemployment."[36]

Joseph McCarthy never centred his attacks on art or artists, it was his colleagues in Congress who identified all seemingly left-wing activities with communism. In his article,"the Suppression of Art during the McCarthy Decade",[37] William Hauptman shows how important public opinion became in determining the acceptability or otherwise of art works. In New York, a large retrospective of contemporary sculpture organized by the Metropolitan Museum of Art - "American Sculpture 1951" - was vehemently attacked by Don le Lue, the head of the conservative National Sculpture

Society. He argued that because the Metropolitan was guilty of "aesthetic leftism" it was therefore guilty of political leftism.[38]

These controversies surfaced again in Los Angeles the following year when a sub-committee of the City Council declared that "in some cases, abstract paintings were actually secret maps of strategic United States fortifications".[39] Although the views of this lunatic fringe were overturned by a 11-3 vote of the full Council who found that there was "no substantial evidence in support of a vast communist plot within the framework of modern art",[40] the sub-committee did succeed in censoring one of the representational painters on the exhibition. Rex Brandt was obliged to take out the insignia of the Island Clipper in his painting of a sailing ship entitled "First Rise of the Sea". It was argued by Councillor Harby that the insignia resembled the hammer and the sickle.

In the light of these examples it is difficult to understand how Wolfe could claim that realism simply 'evaporated'. The clear imposition of political ideology, acted out as it was, in the public eye and fanned by the national newspapers of the time, created a climate in which the only admissable political viewpoint open to the artist was that of the centre. Although there is no clear-cut equation between realism as an art style and left-wing sentiment, these associations were fostered by default.

The ideology of the Cold War period is indicated by the appeal

that Schlesinger's book entitled The Vital Center had for Americans - "Not Left, Not Right, But a Vital Center. The hope of the future lies in the widening and deepening of the democratic middle ground".[41]

The artist, to survive, had to be a man of the centre. The depoliticization of the artist was necessary before the work of artists could be harnessed to the ideologically motivated programme of combatting Soviet authoritarianism. The means to that end, was the search for an ideologically 'neutral' and thoroughly American art, one which could become part of America's "arsenal of democracy".[42] The myth of ideological neutrality is one of the corner-stones of formalist[43] art theory and we have seen, in previous chapters, how Eva Cockcroft argued[44] that Abstract Expressionism constituted the perfect style for this purpose because it contrasted favourably with the image of 'narrow regimentation' which had been foisted on American Social Realism.

The idea that abstract work could also be 'American' gained credibility thanks to the efforts of men like Samuel Kootz who, already in 1943, wrote that:

> Davis's style is one of the most American expressions we have. It has an American intensity, aggression and positiveness that is thoroughly symbolical of the spirit of our most imaginative social, political and economical leaders.[45]

Or as David Sylvester said of the work of Calder shown at the Venice Biennale in 1950:

> Calder does not compose merely in accordance with his private emotional needs, but with the natural laws of gravity and equilibrium, since his constructions, in order to exist, have to function perfectly. He thereby reflects the essential genius of America - its capacity to make things work."[46]

Or again, as Clement Greenberg claimed in an article published in a British magazine in 1949:

> Significantly and peculiarly, the most powerful painter in contemporary America and the only one that promises to be a major one is a Gothic, morbid and extreme disciple of Picasso's Cubism and Miro's post-Cubism, tinctured also with Kandinsky and Surrealist inspiration. His name is Jackson Pollock, and if the aspect of his art is not as originally local as that of Graves' and Tobey's, the feeling it contains is perhaps even more radically American.[47]

Jackson Pollock, on the other hand, did not seem to agree with Greenberg, or indeed any of the other critics who were pushing the so-called 'American' quality of abstract work. He wrote in 1944:

> The idea of an isolated American painting, so popular in

this country in the thirties, seems absurd to me, just as the idea of creating a purely American mathematics or physics would seem absurd.[48]

What he failed to realise was that the idea of 'American painting' had not been laid to rest in the thirties; and as the above quotations suggest, its content had simply been redefined so that it no longer sounded parochial. In any event what the artists thought was of no consequence since it was only the views of art critics which were published in the daily press. What these reviews seem to suggest is that critical concepts like 'flatness' or 'American-ness' were not unique, irreduceable contents of particular works of art. They were articulated by people who had a stake in the welfare or otherwise of the development of American art and their writings have to be seen in that context. In the case of American abstract art during this period, the "specifics of patronage"[49] were bound up, to a large extent, in the way in which Guggenheim's gallery, Art of This Century, promoted the work of younger American abstract artists.

This gallery, now known as the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, was designed by Frederick Kiesler and opened by Peggy Guggenheim in October 1942. The purpose of the gallery was the permanent display of the collection of contemporary painting which Ms Guggenheim had assembled from 1938 under the guidance of Marcel Duchamp and Herbert Read and, later in New York under Alfred H. Barr, Andre Breton, James Johnson Sweeney and her husband Max

Ernst. She also planned to display the work of younger American artists and invited Pollock and Motherwell to submit collages for a show she had organised early in 1943. Later the same year she exhibited Pollock's painting Stenographic Figure. This is what the critics had to say:

> Jean Connoly [Nation, 29 May 1943.]
> This is a show of artists under thirty-five years old. It is a good one, and for once the future holds out a gleam of hope...there is a large painting by Jackson Pollock which, I am told, made the jury starry-eyed.
>
> Robert M. Coates [New Yorker, 29 May 1943.]
> Despite a faint air of the haphazard about the hanging and a certain amount of deadwood in the paintings, the new show at Art of This Century...deserves your attention. A jury affair, it is the first of its sort that I have known to devote itself strictly to those twin branches of advanced modern painting, abtractionism and surrealism, and as such it has attracted a lot of new talent; to most people...at least two-thirds of the thirty-odd artists represented will be totally unknown. A good share of the work is amateurish.. ..But in Jackson Pollock's abstract painting, with its curious reminiscences of both Matisse and Miro, we have a real discovery. [Emphasis added][50]

After these reviews Ms Guggenheim did not waste time; she offered Pollock a years contract, $150 a month and a settlement

at the end of the year if she sold more than $2700 worth of paintings, allowing one third commission to the gallery. If less than that amount was sold, the difference was to be made up in paintings. Two years later, his salary was raised to $300 less a monthly deduction for the $2000 loan she had given him to buy a farmhouse on five acres of land in East Hampton. In return, Pollock was committed to giving Ms Guggenheim his total output for the following two years.

What were the other 'specifics of patronage' in Jackson Pollock's career?

James Johnson Sweeney, one of Peggy Guggenheim's advisers, wrote the catalogue entry for her Spring Salon for Young Artists in which he singled out Pollock and subsequently wrote a story for the mass-circulation magazine Harpers Bazaar entitled "Five American Painters". The only illustration for this essay was Pollock's She Wolf, which was reproduced in colour. The next month this painting was bought by the Museum of Modern Art on the recommendation of Alfred H. Barr, Jr.. Since Barr was also acting for Ms Guggenheim, Guilbaut believes that he conceivably had an interest in seeing the perspicacity of his advice confirmed in the commercial success of the Art of This Century gallery.

The decisive role played by critics in gaining public acceptance for theatrical productions is uncontested. The same mediating power is evident in respect of the fine arts, not only from the art critics as such, but also from gallery owners, museum

curators and editors of art journals. The ability of critics to make or break an artist has been commented on by Cindy Nemser. Ms Nemser asks why Lee Krasner has not been acknowledged as a first generation Abstract Expressionist. Together with Maria and Robert Motherwell, and Ethel and William Baziotes, Lee Krasner and her husband, Jackson Pollock, had engaged in automatist Surrealist games since 1942. Inspired by this experience, her work moved from a representation of the external to the internal world. Although her paintings were much smaller than those of Pollock, Nemser shows that she and Pollock reached the same degree of 'allover flatness' at the same time. Asked why he 'overlooked' the contribution made by Krasner's work, Clement Greenberg replied:

> I never went for her paintings. She immolated herself to Pollock. Lee should have had more independence; but then that is the problem with all female artists.[51]

Although this debate falls outside of the period under discussion, it does reflect on Greenberg's critical judgements at the time. Nemser goes on to say that this directly contradicts Greenberg's earlier stated admiration [52] for Krasner's work and that the lack of recognition is directly attributable to sexist attitudes. She argues that since Krasner was married to Pollock, her status as a painter was secondary to her status as his wife. Nemser writes:

> Robert Motherwell's treatment of Krasner in Art News, 1967,

> in his "homage" to Pollock is an example of of the prejudice against women that pervades the art world. He refers to Krasner three times in his article, once as "Lee" and twice as "wife", but does not acknowledge her existence as an artist by using her full professional name.[53]

Krasner's name has been omitted from every major critical examination of the school of Abstract Expressionism.[54] More recently, Harold Rosenberg refused to even discuss the matter with Cindy Nemser after it became clear that she was researching an article to be published in Art Forum.

The mediating role of the museums is also evident in the way in which her work has been presented to the public. Nemser argues that, by hanging a 1949 Krasner painting next to a 1946 Pollock, the Museum of Modern Art created the impression that Krasner was imitating the style of Pollock. Although Nemser does identify the sexism implicit in the treatment of Krasner's work, she does not extend her argument to a discussion of the period. Clearly, the whole period needs to be reassessed, not only in terms of gender representation, but also with respect to differential access to the means of artistic production and distribution.[55]

Thus far I have discussed the role played by the art critic; how was the battle between representational and abstract art reflected in the news magazines? Francis O'Connor writes that:

> The whole New Deal had a bad press, and no part of it was

> subjected to such constant abuse as the [Federal] Art Project. Most of the newspapers and magazines in America were republican and anti-Roosevelt, and they made what capital they could out of traditional American Philistinism.[56]

Ralph Willett notes that Time magazines coverage of WPA/FAP work was coloured by the right-wing bias of its publisher, Henry Luce who was openly supportive of Mussolini. Coverage of August Henkel's mural for Brooklyn's Floyd Bennett Field concentrated on the artist's alledged communist background and resulted in the banning of three of the four panels because they depicted 'left-wing aviators'.[57] Discussing the 1940 World's Fair exhibition, American Art Today, Time magazine's resistance to documentary realism was evident in their criticism of the paintings depicting "desolate factories, ramshackle houses, dust-bowl farms, human derelicts."[58]

Life magazine ignored WPA/FAP activities during its nine year life span, but reported its demise under the headline: "End of WPA Art - Canvasses which cost government $35,000,000 are sold for junk".[59]

Roosevelt wanted to take the government out of the relief business and considered it degrading, for instance, for a scientist to mend roads. As a result the Works Project Administration sought to employ people in their chosen fields. Along with hundreds of other artists (608 in New York City alone

during 1939),[60] Rothko, Pollock, Kline, Still, Motherwell and de Kooning were all employed on the project as artists. Post Offices and libraries across the country were provided with easel paintings or murals. In keeping with the spirit of the depression, nearly all of this work was figurative,[61] also in keeping with the growing spirit of anti-communism, all forms of social realism were labelled 'un-American' and 'communistic'.[62] Perhaps the fact that the WPA artist felt an inevitable alliance with the surge of trade unionism sweeping the country and members of the Artist's Union (Jackson Pollock included) paraded through the streets of New York and Chicago under the auspices of the Worker's Alliance helped to fuel this perception.

Thus far in this section I have argued that the struggle between those who believed that art should reflect the social issues of the time and those who claimed that art should concern itself solely with pictorial issues, slowly crystallized into a stuggle between those who favoured representation and those who favoured abstraction. I show that this crude opposition had political connotations as well. Why else would Wolfe dismiss American realism as being called for by 'the shouting dogmatists of the left'? Clement Greenberg favoured abstraction and tended to dismiss representational painting although he never went so far as to write it off as a left-wing plot. Instead he either ignored representational work or lamented, as he did in the case of Berman's work, that they were "too well done" to be art.[63] Greenberg campaigned tirelessly for abstract art and even tried to disarm its critics by turning criticism into praise. Thus in

writing about Motherwell's paintings he praised the "constant quality" of their "ungainliness" and their "insecurity of placing and drawing".[64]

From the other side, this crude opposition was supported by communists such as the Italian art critic Dario Maicaahi who criticised Pollock's abstraction for losing "its ties and roots".[65] Marcello Venturoli praised Pollock but wrote that "we still believe that in great part we were right to [polemicize against abstract art]"[66]

I suggest that the negative connotations of Soviet Realism gave representational art as a whole a negative, authoritarian image. In contradistinction, the efforts of dealers like Samuel Kootz to define abstract art as symbolic of democracy and the 'spirit of America's leaders' led to the promotion of abstract art by dealers and major art institutions.

By 1948, American critics were claiming that the nerve centre of the art world had crossed the Atlantic and was now firmly anchored in New York. Naturally regionalism flourished in America, but to be considered part of the avant-garde, artists found that they had to make the pilgrimage to New York. In the period under discussion, New York was the centre of an influential network of dealers, critics, galleries and art museums which collectively, and with Federal assistance, was able to push its own product into the international arena. Of course the New York School could only achieve this prominence if the

work of the Abstract Expressionists was seen to be international in its outlook and universal in its implication for mankind. But what came first, the support system or the work?

This is an important question and it deserves to be answered directly. Although it is clear that dealers and critics, no matter how much they acted in consort, could not assure the success of any movement, or the work of any individual artist, they are in a position to assure the success of those artists they do choose to represent. This formulation leaves room for those (hypothetical) dealers and critics to claim that they chose to represent a particular artist because of the quality of their work and I therefore answer my question by saying that the work comes first. However, the question of aesthetic judgement is complicated by the fact that no one can approach an art work, with the aim of assessing its aesthetic value, free from the framing device of history and art theory. This is recognised by many artists as well. Ad Reinhardt wrote in 1962 that "painting comes from painting", "artists come from artists".[67]

Thus far in this section I have looked at the way in which critics and dealers redefined American art so that it no longer sounded parochial. Through their efforts, abstract art lost its 'foreign' association and came to be seen as "symbolical of the spirit of [America's] most imaginative social, political and economical leaders".[68] By the turn of the century critics not only considered it their role to instruct the public in matters of taste, they now sought to teach the public how to look at

painting as well.

Thus the role of the critic was expanded. No longer simply the public guarantor of 'standards', the American critic now fulfilled the roles of publicist, ideologue and theorist. Reviewing Hans Hoffman's paintings Harold Rosenberg wrote:

> With regard to the tensions it is capable of setting up in our bodies the medium of any art is an extension of the physical world; a strike of pigment, for example, "works" within us in the same way as a bridge across the Hudson... The innovation of Action Painting was to dispense with the representation of the state in favor of enacting it in physical movement.[69]

Rosenberg did not like the label Abstract Expressionism and coined his own:

> Action Painting has extracted the element of decision inherent in all art in that the work is not finished at its beginning [!] but has to be carried forward by an accumulation of 'right' gestures.[70]

Not to be outdone, Greenberg responded by coining his own alternative to Abstract Expressionismm - Painterly Abstraction: "Painterly means, among other things, the blurred, broken, loose definition of color and contour".[71] These squabbles aside, Greenberg had already explained away Pollock's bad taste as "simply

his willingness to be ugly in terms of contemporary taste". If that did not quell viewer's qualms, Greenberg went on to say that "In the course of time this ugliness will become the new standard of beauty".[72]

I do not cite these statements simply to draw attention to the cut and thrust of art criticism, but rather to draw attention to the tendentiousness of much of what was written about the work of those artists associated with the American avant-garde in the early 1950s. Theirs was not a popular success and it had to be maintained and fought for every step of the way. Indeed as Guilbaut says:

> [T]he triumph of the avant-garde was neither a total victory nor a popular one, but rather a typical avant-garde victory, that is to say, fragile and ambiguous, since it was constantly threatened by opposing tendencies in the world of art.[73]

Supporters of the emerging avant-garde were often lumped together with their artists. It is not therefore surprising that critics were often personal friends with the artists whose work they were reviewing. The Rosenbergs attended the Pollock's wedding ceremony at the Marble Collegiate Church in 1945 and Mrs Rosenberg even acted as a witness.

Barbara Rose, herself a critic, has written that American art criticism suffers from a fatal flaw, and that is that critics

allign themselves exclusively with one tendency.[74] If that style of painting becomes unpopular so do those critics. This appears to be especially true of early defenders of American abstraction such as Willard Wright who finally had to give up criticism after failing to prove that aesthetics was an exact science.[75] At the same time it is clear that art dealers had the power to make, or break, an artist. One example concerns the the work of Byron Browne and Carl Holty which, prior to 1948, had been vigorously promoted by Samuel Kootz through his New York gallery. For instance, in the catalogue for an exhibition of Byron Browne's work in 1943, Kootz praised his work for its understanding of Cubism and preempted the value of internationalism:

> America's more important artists are consistently shying away from regionalism and exploring the virtues of internationalism. This is the painting equivalent of our newly found political and social internationalism. Byron Browne is making a personal contribution in this field through energetic inventions, brilliant color dissonances and athletic rightness in space divisions.... In an area not yet familiar to most of the American public, Byron Browne is rapidly succeeding in creating a fine place for himself. His aggressive grasp of our more advanced ideologies pays off in canvases that evidence constant growth.[76]

Byron Browne was already well known as a painter, but Kootz elevated him to a position of leadership. Browne's work was

symptomatic of the optimistic expansionism of the United States. Kootz saw the violence implicit in Browne's work as evidence of his 'Americanism' and the strong influence of Picasso and the School of Paris as evidence of his 'internationalism'. This was seen as the perfect mix and Kootz continued to support the work of the American 'cubists' for the next five years.

After the Christmas recess of 1948 he abruptly changed his mind. American Cubism was no longer fashionable and the two artists were 'dumped' and gallery holdings of their work were auctioned through Gimbel's department store at a 50 percent discount. There is a remarkable co-incidence in the timing of this reversal of opinion. Greenberg had earlier published an article entitled "The decline of Cubism",[77] in which he declared that American art had now taken on vital importance for Western culture and that Paris was no longer the art capital of the world. It followed therefore, that the art of America no longer needed to look like European art. In fact, the less American art resembled that of Europe, the better.

The call for an 'international' style was still in favour, but owing to America's dominant position as an economic power, American dealers and critics were in a position to determine the origin and direction of that style and in so doing, elevate it to 'universal' status.

Pollock was not an instant success. Like other artists of the New York School he turned thirty before his first one-man show,

he battled with alcoholism all his life and left his dealer, Betty Parsons over money. Critics were often savage in their treatment of his work. The New York Times carried Sam Hunter's comments that "Jackson Pollock's show...certainly reflects an advanced stage of the disintegration of the modern painting".[78] Time magazine was always hostile: a mention in the February 1949 issue says: "A Jackson Pollock painting is apt to resemble a child's contour map of the Battle of Gettysberg...Nevertheless he is the darling of a highbrow cult which considers him `the most powerful painter in America'".[79] Seven years later they were still attacking him:

> Jackson Pollock's Scent is a heady specimen of what one worshippercalls his "personalized skywriting." More the product of brushwork than of Pollock's famed drip technique, it nevertheless aims to remind the observer of nothing except other previous Pollocks, and quite succeeds in that modest design. All it says, in effect, is that Jack the Dripper, 44, still stands on his work.[80]

The last comment is an oblique slight on Pollock's ability to articulate himself verbally. The year before, in an interview with B.H. Friedman for Art In America,[81] Pollock declined to be interviewed about his private life saying that he would "stand on his painting". According to Friedman this is the same idea, but less eloquently expressed, that moved Epstein to say "I rest silent in my work". It also reflects the bewilderment of a public who could not get used to the idea that modern artists could

openly admit that they put the canvas on the floor to paint and then "work from the four sides", confessing simultaneously, as Pollock did, that "When I am in my painting, I'm not aware of what I am doing".[82]

By crusading against abstraction and by singling out Pollock as the movements most extreme practitioner, the middle-class magazine, Life, inadvertantly promoted the acceptance of that style of art by wealthy and powerful members of American society who did not want to be identified with anything which was mundane or commonplace. Greenberg believed that 'high culture' was imperiled by the 'increase of the middle-class'. This was the message of his 1939 essay on Avant-Garde and Kitsch, and it was still the message in 1948, when he published The Decline of Cubism.

At the time that Life magazine was attempting to ridicule Pollock, Partisan Review was addressing a different appeal to the intellectuals and liberals. A series of housing advertisements printed on the inside cover of the magazine carried engravings by members of the vanguard, Pollock and Gottlieb among them. Guilbaut suggests that "the Pollock engraving became identified with the social position of the people for whom the homes being advertised were intended"[83] and that this advertisement played on the connection between the avant-garde and social exclusivity.

These connections between the avant-garde and exclusivity are still being made. An advertisement in Time magazine depicts three

BMW motor vehicles which have been painted on by three American artists - Alexander Calder, Frank Stella and Roy Lichtenstein. The accompanying text merely reads "Art and individualism".[84]

The concept of individuality as being a peculiarly American attribute was fostered by an address made by René d'Harnoncourt to the American Federation of Arts in May 1948. His idea that individual freedom of expression was the basis of culture and that it should therefore be promoted and protected from collectivist and authoritarian cultures, was one of the first attempts to reconcile the ideology of the avant-garde with the ideology of postwar liberalism and his address was later published in Art News.

> Freed from the restriction of collective style, the artist discovered he could create a style in the image of his own personality. The art of the twentieth century has no collective style, not because it has divorced itself from contemporary society but because it is part of it...I believe a good name for such a society is democracy, and I also believe that modern art in its infinite variety and ceaseless exploration is its foremost symbol.[85]

Although the Dondero faction was powerful, it was bound to lose finally. The avant-garde had given up its left-wing affiliations by 1948. Marxism had given way to psychiatry, with its emphasis on the individual rather than on society as a whole. Europe was in political disarray and on the point of economic collapse and

the United States of America had emerged from the war intact and unbombed. The propaganda potential for establishing America's cultural credibility was enormous and men like Alfred H. Barr, Jr. and Porter A. McCray saw, in art, a chance to "let it be known especially in Europe that America was not the cultural backwater that the Russians...were trying to demonstrate that it was."[86]

America's beloved notion of individuality was shaped in the aura of radicalism prevalent in the 1930s, and tempered in the fire of public controvesy which surrounded the witch-hunts of the early 1950s. By 1948, Greenberg could declare that America was now the 'centre of gravity', politically, industrially and artistically:

> If artists as great as Picasso, Braque, and Léger have declined so grievously, it can only be because the general social premises that used to guarantee their functioning have disappeared in Europe. And when one sees, on the other hand, how much the level of American art has risen in the past five years, with the emergence of new talents so full of energy and content as Arshile Gorky, Jackson Pollock, David Smith - then the conclusion forces itself, much to my own surprise, that the main premises of Western art have at last migrated to the United States, along with the centre of gravity of industrial production and political power.[87]

Returning to the concept of the 'arsenal of democracy', Guilbaut

argues that America had hitherto lacked the most prestigious cultural weapon, the painted canvas.[88] According to Greenberg this was now at hand. The transition from America as a colonised nation to a coloniser was accomplished in two steps. The first step, following Guilbaut's typology, was to get rid of the idea of national art. This was associated with provincial art and the figurative art of people like Thomas Benton. In a gesture of egalitarianism, America broke down the barriers separating different national schools by assimilating them. Modern art had to be seen as a 'world tradition' and not the property of the nation of its provenance. This was the basis of internationalism.

Robert Motherwell laid the foundations for an acceptance of this concept in the catalogue for the 1946 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art:

> Medical anatomy is irrelevant to the ends of modern art; but there are some things which must be known as well as anatomy has been in the past...One is to know that art is not national, that to be merely an American or a French artist is to be nothing; to fail to overcome one's initial environment is never to reach the human...Thus when we say that one of the ideals of modern art has been internationalism, it is not meant in the sense of a slogan, of a super-chauvinism, but as a natural consequence of dealing with reality on a certain level.[89]

The mere fact that internationalism should be advanced under the

auspices of a major exhibition at America's premier museum under the banner of Fourteen Americans indicates that Americans were already in no doubt as to the future success of American art.

The second step, from internationalism to universalism, was accomplished on the back of America's military superiority over Europe; American culture had arrived in a postion to assert itself. American art was seen as the logical culmination of the tendency toward abstraction and the private world of 'felt-experience'. Greenberg knew this when he wrote in his "Decline of Cubism" that:

> The main premises of Western art have at last migrated to the United States, along with the center of gravity of industrial production and political power.[90]

Writing in the Museum of Modern Art's bulletin in 1951, Motherwell, who often spoke for the school of abstractionists, said "the emergence of abstract art is a sign that there are still men of feeling in the world."[91] By being identified with the survival of democratic liberties in the Western world, American post-war culture was placed on the same footing as American economic and military strength.

Eva Cockcroft shows that Abstract Expressionism, as America's 'coming of age' was exported abroad almost from its inception. De Kooning's work was shown at the Venice Biennale in 1948, and was joined by the work of Gorky and Pollock in 1950. Thereafter the

work of the abstractionists was well represented at the São Paulo Biennales, and was toured through latin America, Japan, Germany, India, France and England. This was before the scandals, already detailed, halted the United States Information Agency's attempts to proselytize American art. Thereafter, the Museum of Modern Art took on this promotional task.

Eva Cockcroft has detailed the degree of complicity between the director of this museum's international programme, Porter McCray, and the interests of the Rockefeller family. Showing, for instance, that MOMA exported American culture to those areas of the world considered vital to Rockefeller interests: Latin America and, in particular, oil-rich Venezuela during the war, Europe after the war, and in the 1960s, Asia.

Cockcroft argues that these efforts were not undertaken simply to promote American art.[92] She argues that the history of the formation of the museum makes this clear. Founded in 1929 through the efforts of Ms John D. Rockefeller, it was steered through the crucial years of the 1940s and 1950s by Nelson Rockefeller whilst he was Assistant Secretary for State for Latin American Affairs.

The privately endowed American art museums were no longer simply repositories for art of the past, instead they became a dominant force in the art world, fulfilling the twin roles of patron and tastemaker - without having to account to anyone but themselves.

Since these museums have always been governed by self-perpetuating boards of trustees, made up entirely of captains of industry and merchant capital, Cockcroft argues that the museums actively favoured the work of apolitical artists who were not critical of capitalism.[93] It is a fact of history that the work of the Abstract Expressionists met this condition.

Because Abstract Expressionism was fresh and artistically innovative, a number of theorists, among them, Max Kozloff, Eva Cockcroft, Serge Guilbaut and Peter Fuller, believe that it constituted the perfect contrast to the regimentation of Soviet Realism, it was therefore suited to the ideological task of combatting the rise in power of the communist parties in European nations by demonstrating the virtues of 'freedom of expression' in an 'open and free society'.

Thus without the artists' necessarily being aware of these factors, their work was harnessed to a political purpose. The true nature of that relationship was masked by the false but reassuring idea, that the artists' autonomy from the political sphere was complete and that, consequently, their work was ideologically neutral. This idea did not gain immediate acceptance, but it was promoted from the early 1930s by men like Alfred H. Barr, jr., who, as the first director of the Museum of Modern Art and as artistic adviser to Peggy Guggenheim, used his position to give effect to his stated idea that realism and totalitarianism go hand in hand, whereas abstraction symbolised freedom since it was feared and prohibited by Stalin and Hitler.[94]

Other officials of the Museum of Modern Art also seized on the propaganda potential of culture. Thomas Braden was executive secretary of MOMA during 1948 and 1949 before joining the CIA to direct its cultural activities. Defending the CIA funded tour of the Boston Symphony Orchestra to Paris in 1952, he wrote in an article for the Saturday Evening Post that "the Boston Symphony Orchestra won more acclaim for the U.S. in Paris than John Foster Dulles or Dwight D. Eisenhower could have bought with a hundred speeches".[95]

This dissertation has argued that the sanctity of that 'neutrality', although tenuous at first, finally succeeded in removing from the arena of political debate between artists, the belief and value systems which kept the ruling group in America in power. In Chapters 6 and 7 we have seen the extent to which left-wing artists and organisations posed a threat to the existing political order. This dissertation concludes that, although events must be understood in the context of their time and that rigorous studies of subsequent art movements still need to made, there is sufficient evidence to believe that the promotion and production of abstract art in the period 1933-1953 was not ideologically neutral.

Chapter 8: Ideology and the American Avant-Garde

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7. Freeland, R., The Truman Doctrine and the Origins of McCarthyism, New York: Schoken, 1971, p. 214.

8. Hauptman, W., "The Suppression of Art in the McCarthy Decade", Art Forum, October 1973, p. 48.
Senator Dondero's views on modern art make an interesting comparison with those of Joseph Goebbels. However Goebbels was able to act on his ideas and he authorised the removal of all 'degenerate' art from German museums and state buildings. The word 'degenerate' was used to refer to all modern work which was thought of as Bolshevist, Marxist, Jewish or Negroid. In this task Goebbels was guided by Carl Einstein's book, Art of the Twentieth Century. Hinz writes that this book simply excludes artists who were not acceptable to the idealogues of National Socialism. Hinz, B., Art in the Third Reich, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979, p. 24. For a comparison between art in fascist Germany and South Africa see Dubow, N., "Art and Edict", in Leadership South Africa, vol. 3, no. 4, 1985, pp. 113-119.

9. Secretary of State, William Benton, quoted in Hauptman, W., Ibid., p. 48.

10. The artists represented were; John Marin, Marsden Hartley, Georgia O'Keeffe, Phillip Guston, Milton Avery, Loren MacIver, William Gropper, Abraham Rattner, Hugo Weber, Reginald Marsh, Stuart Davis, Jack Levine, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Adolf Gottlieb, and Ben Shahn.

11. Cited in Hauptman, W., "The Suppression of Art in the McCarthy Decade", Art Forum, October 1973, p. 49.

12. The Marshall Plan derives its name from Congressman George C. Marshall's speech delivered at Harvard on 5 June 1947. Basically the plan called upon European Nations to help America rehabilitate the war-torn economies of France, Italy, Greece and

Turkey. The earlier "Truman Doctrine" had attracted hostile criticism from Republican quarters because its measure of economic aid was construed as bolstering the British imperialist presence in Greece. The Marshall Plan, on the other hand, emphasized the role of foreign aid in defence against Soviet aggression on three continents and carefully placed the initiative outside of the United Nations. The appeal of the notion that America was now the number one country in the free world contributed to the popularity of the plan.

13. Schlesinger, A., The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom, Boston: Riverside Press, 1962, p. 355.

14. "American Relations with the Soviet Union: A Report to the President by the Special Council to the President," September 24, 1946, cited in Guilbaut, S., How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983, p. 136.

15. Pryor, T.M., "Mission of the Movies Abroad," the New York Times, March 29, 1946, cited in Guilbaut, Ibid., 1983, p. 136.

16. Pryor, T.M., loc. cit., 1983.

17. We should remember that Marx believed that surplus-value could only be created from labour time. For a full discussion the reader is referred to Capital, Volume 2, London: Dent, 1957, pp. 551-576.

18. For a discussion of this agreement see Chapter 5, pp. 98-99.

19. See Treadgold, D.W., Twentieth Century Russia, 5th edition, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981, pp. 383-401.

20. Weld, J.B., Peggy - The Wayward Guggenheim, London: Bodley Head, 1986, p. 48.

21. Rose, B., Readings in American Art since 1900, New York: Praeger, 1968, p. 30.

22. See Barbara Rose's essay, "The Practice, Theory and Criticism of Art", in Rose, B., Ibid., 1968, pp. 3-34.

23. Rose, B., Ibid., 1968, p. 27.

24. Willard Huntington Wright cited in Rose, B., Ibid., 1968, p. 28.

25. Wolfe, T., "The Painted Word," Harpers, April 1975, pp. 57-92.

26. De Kooning, W., "What Abstract Art Means To Me", MOMA Bulletin XV111, 1951, cited in Rose, B., Readings in American Art since 1900, New York: Praeger, 1968, p. 153.

27. Motherwell, R., Catalogue for New American Painting, cited in O'Hara, F., Robert Motherwell, Museum of Modern Art, New York: Double Day, 1965, p. 53.

28. Wolfe, T., "The Painted Word", Harper's, April 1975, p. 71.

29. Wolfe, T., Ibid., 1975, p. 72.

30. Hauptman, W., "The Suppression of Art in the McCarthy Decade", Art Forum, October 1973, p. 52.

31. Wolfe, T., "The Painted Word", Harpers, April 1975, p. 72.

32. Wolfe, T., Ibid., 1975, p. 72.

33. See O'Connor, F.V., Jackson Pollock, New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1967, pp. 24-25.

34. Holger Cahill, cited in Burgin, V., "Modernism in the Work of Art", New York: John Weber Gallery, February 1977, p 3. For a comphrehensive account of the WPA/FAP programme see Willett, R., "Federal Art", in Nothing Else to Fear: New Perspectives on America in the Thirties, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985, pp. 179-193.

35. Letter dated July 18 1949, to C.E. Plant, a past commissioner of the American Legion, cited in Hauptman, W., "The Suppression of Art in the McCarthy Decade", Art Forum, October 1973, p. 52.

36. Rivera, D., "The Stormy Petrel of American Art Diego Rivera on his Art", interview with the artist, The Studio, London, 1933, Volume 106, p. 25. For a full account of the painting of the RCA mural by one of Rivera's assistants see Bloch, L., "On Location with Diego Rivera", in Art in America, February 1986, pp. 103-123. Diego Rivera was elected head of the Mexican delegation to the tenth anniversary celibration of the Russian Revolution held in Moscow in 1927. He was made a member of the Communist Party, Delegate of the Mexican Peasant League, and General Secretary of the Anti-Imperialist League. He appears to have lost his membership of the party two years later. See Kozloff, "The Rivera Frescoes of Modern Industry at the Detroit Institute of Arts," Art Forum, November 1973, p. 61.

37. Hauptman, W., "The Suppression of Art in the McCarthy Decade", Art Forum, October 1973, p. 50.

38. Hauptman, W., Ibid., 1973, p. 50.

39. Harold Harby cited in Hauptman, W., Ibid., 1973, p. 50.

40. Hauptman, W., Ibid., 1973, p. 50.

41. New York Times Magazine, April 4, 1948, reprinted in Guilbaut, S., How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983, fig. 21. Guilbaut believed that Schlesinger's book espoused the ideology of liberal humanitarianism. Opposed to all totalitarian systems, the book represented the business world as a constructive force in promoting individualism and

thus freedom. Guilbaut, S., Ibid., 1983, p. 191.

42. A concept often hinted at by Guilbaut (Guilbaut, Ibid., 1983, p. 174.) and used by President Ronald Reagan in his State of the Nation Address, relayed on SABC Television, 7 February 1985.

43. Formalist criticism is usually traced to the writings of the English critics Clive Bell and Roger Fry. They sought to put art criticism on an equal footing with literary criticism and introduced concepts borrowed from that discipline. The notion that form was an expression of content, or in Bell's terms, 'significant form', was particularly influential on the American critics, Walter Pach, Willard Huntington Wright and Albert Barnes. These critics went even further in eliminating subjective and historical factors from art criticism in their search for a "pure" art. See Barbara Rose's discussion of the concept in Rose, B., Readings in American Art since 1900, New York: Praeger, 1968, p. 31.

44. Cockcroft, E., "Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War", Art Forum, June 1974, pp. 39 - 41.

45. Kootz, S., New Frontiers in American Painting, New York: Hastings House, 1943, p. 6.

46. Sylvester, D., in Nation, 9 September 1950, cited in O'Connor, F.V., Jackson Pollock, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1967, p. 53.

47. Greenberg, C., cited in O'Connor, F.V., Ibid., 1967, p. 41.

48. Rose, B., Readings in American Art Since 1900, New York: Praeger, 1968, p. 152.

49. This is Eva Cockcroft's concept, but see also Peter Fuller's discussion of Henry Tate in his essay "Fine Art after Modernism", Beyond the Crisis in Art, London: Writers and Readers, 1980, p. 53.

50. Cited in O'Connor, F.V., Jackson Pollock, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1967, p. 29. Pollock himself recognised this. In a letter to his brother, Charles, he wrote "things really broke with the showing of that painting [Stenographic Figure]. I had a pretty good mention in the Nation - I have a year's contract with The Art of This Century and a large painting to do for Peggy Guggenheim's house, 8'11" x 19' 9"." cited in O'Connor, F.V., Jackson Pollock, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1967, p. 28.

51. Nemser, C., "Lee Krasner's Paintings 1946-49", in Art Forum, December 1973, p. 64.

52. Krasner remembers Greenberg commenting on one of her "Little Image" series: "That's hot; it's cooking". Cited in Nemser, C., Ibid., 1973, p. 63.

53. Nemser, C., Ibid., 1973, p. 63.

54. The truth of this statement by Cindy Nemser hinges on the word 'major'. Nemser cites Irving Sandler's The Triumph of American Painting, (New York: Praeger, 1970.) as an example of such a study.

55. Although not specific to the period of this study, John Berger, Linda Nochlin, Griselda Pollock and Elizabeth Cowie have all addressed this imbalance. See Select Bibliography.

56. Willett, R., "Federal Art", in Nothing Else to Fear: New Perspectives on America in the Thirties, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985, p. 181.

57. See the discussion of this mural in Willett, R., "Federal Art", in Nothing Else to Fear: New Perspectives on America in the Thirties, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985, p. 182.

58. Willett, R., Ibid., 1985, p. 182.

59. Time, 35, 2, 10 June 1940, p. 55, cited in Willett, R., Ibid., 1985, p. 182.

60. Willett, R., Ibid., 1985, p. 178.

61. See O'Connor, F.V., The New Deal Art Projects, An Anthology of Memoirs, Washington D.C., 1972.

62. Willett, R., Ibid., 1985, p. 180.

63. Greenberg, C., "Art", in Nation, November 3, 1943, cited in Guilbaut, S., How America Stole the Idea of Modern Art, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983, p. 86.

64. Greenberg, C., "Art", in Nation, November 11, 1943, cited in Guilbaut, S., Ibid., 1983, p. 86.

65. Dario Micacchi reviewing Pollock's work in L'Unita, cited in O'Connor, F.V., Jackson Pollock, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1967, p. 75.

66. Marcello Venturoli reviewing Pollock's work in Paese Sera, cited in O'Connor, F.V., Jackson Pollock, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1967, p. 76.

67. Reinhardt, A., "Art as Art", cited in Rose, B., Readings in American Art Since 1900, New York: Praeger, 1968, p. 161.

68. Kootz, S., New Frontiers in American Painting, New York: Hastings House, 1943, p. 6.

69. Rosenberg, H., "Hans Hoffman: Nature in Action", Art News, May 1957, cited in Rose, B., Readings in American Art Since 1900, New York: Praeger, 1968, p. 18.

70. Rosenberg, H., The Tradition of the New, London: Thames & Hudson, 1962, p. 43.

71. Greenberg, C., "Post Painterly Abstraction", cited in Rose, B., Readings in American Art Since 1900, New York: Praeger, 1968, p. 169.

72. Greenberg, C., Nation, April 13, 1946, cited in O'Connor, F.V., Jackson Pollock, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1967, p. 38.

73. Guilbaut, S., How America Stole the Idea of Modern Art, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983, p. 3. Greenberg also admits this: "the conclusion forces itself, much to our own surprise, that the main premises of Western art have at last migrated to the United States, **along with the centre of gravity of industrial production and political power**". [Emphasis added] Greenberg, C., "The Decline of Cubism", Partisan Review 15, number 3, 1948, p. 369.

74. Rose, B., Readings in American Art Since 1900, New York: Praeger, 1968, p. 20.

75. Wright retired from art criticism and wrote successful detective stories under the name, S.S. Van Dine. Cited in Rose, B., Ibid., 1968, p. 29.

76. Kootz, S., Introduction to catalogue for Byron Browne's exhibition at the Pinacotheca Gallery in New York in 1943. Cited in Guilbaut, S., How America Stole the Idea of Modern Art, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983, pp. 70-71.

77. Greenberg, C., "The Decline of Cubism", Partisan Review 15, no. 3, 1948, pp. 366-369.

78. Sam Hunter, New York Times, January 30, 1949, cited in O'Connor, F.V., Jackson Pollock, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1967, p. 46.

79. Time, 7 February 1949, cited in O'Connor, F.V., Ibid., 1967, p. 46.

80. Time, 20 February 1956, cited in O'Connor, F.V., Ibid., 1967, p. 74.

81. Friedman, B.H., Art in America, December 1955, cited in O'Connor, F.V., Ibid., 1967, p. 73.

82. Pollock, J., "My Painting", cited in O'Connor, F.V., Ibid., 1967, p. 40.

83. Guilbaut, S., How America Stole the Idea of Modern Art, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983, p. 185.

84. For this, and other examples, see John A. Walker's chapter, "Mass Culture uses Art" in Art in the Age of Mass Media, London: Pluto Press, 1983, pp. 50-66.
A similar idea has been used in South Africa by Stellenbosch Farmers Winery. Full colour prints of selected work by prominent South African painters have been carried with

copy which alludes to 'backgrounds', 'assertiveness' and 'renouned collections' under the banner of "The Fine Art of Wine", Cape Style Magazine, February and March 1985, inside cover.

85. Harnoncourt, cited in Guilbaut, S., How America Stole the Idea of Modern Art, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983, p.79.

86. Hauptman, W., "The Suppression of Art in the McCarthy Decade", Art Forum, October 1973, p. 50.

87. Greenberg, C., "The Decline of Cubism", Partisan Review 15, no. 3, 1948, p. 369.

88. Guilbaut, S., How America Stole the Idea of Modern Art, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983, p. 193.

89. Robert Motherwell cited in Frank O'Hara, Robert Motherwell, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1967, p. 36.

90. Greenberg, C., "The Decline of Cubism", Partisan Review 15, no. 3, 1948, p. 369.

91. Robert Motherwell cited in Frank O'Hara, Robert Motherwell, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1967, p. 45.

92. Cockcroft, E., Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War", Art Forum, June 1974, p. 39.

93. Cockcroft, E., Ibid., June 1974, p. 40.

94. Alfred Barr, Jr., New York Times Magazine 1952, cited in Cockcroft, E., Ibid., June 1974, p. 41.

95. Braden, T. W., "I'm Glad the CIA is Immoral", cited in Cockcroft, E., Ibid., June 1974, p. 40.

Chapter 9: CONCLUSION

I argue in my introduction [1] that if we relate art to the social and economic conditions of a particular period it does not follow that we have reduced art to those factors. But I also argue that a study of ideology does not simply entail a listing of the supposed social origins of the ideas expressed by the works in question. We need to know something about the validity of those ideas and we also need to know how these ideas are specifically related to the balance of political power within society.

Questions of validity are, of course, vexatious and open to immediate rebuttal. However I contend that without these questions we would be left with a meaningless concept, a broad sweep of the hand over the issues of politics and power, but with no attempt to be specific. For example, in his influential book, The Triumph of American Painting,[2] Irving Sandler concedes that political events strongly influenced the development of American art in the early 1940s but he does not go on to say how, or, even what, those politics were. By classifying every work as either 'Action Painting' or 'Color Field' his formal analysis over-simplifies what was otherwise an extremely turbulent and complex period. Guilbaut notes that Sandler's inattention to the dates of the endless reviews, interviews and commentaries that he quotes "robs the discussion of all historical significance" and is "false on account of what it leaves out".[3]

But what is ideology? In Chapters 2 and 3, ideology is shown to be a complex term and one which has been deployed in a number of ways. The one which most concerns a materialist criticism traces the connections between cultural signification and social legitimation. This dissertation argues that ideology, as a process of legitimation, works in three inter-related ways. Firstly, ideology masks the relationships which maintain the **status quo**; beliefs and practices which serve the interests of those in power are represented as serving the interests of the community as a whole. Secondly, the existing social order is legitimised, or 'naturalised', through a process which defines history as a natural and lawful progression leading up to and justifying the present. Thirdly, ideology masks dissent and other forms of social contradiction and simultaneously redefines these threats to the existing order as fundamentally evil and containing the reversal of all values held in esteem by that society.

Terry Lovell's definition of ideology accords with this formulation and can be summarised[4] as "the production and dissemination of erroneous beliefs whose inadequacies are socially motivated".[5] Although this definition may appear narrow, it has the distinction of not labelling all erroneous ideas as ideology. Some erroneous beliefs are not socially motivated and thus cannot be said to serve the interests of certain class fractions, likewise, certain valid beliefs are socially motivated but because they are valid, they cannot, in Lovell's terms, be said to be ideological.

With this as a working definition,[5] this dissertation shows that

abstract art is not the ideologically neutral activity that it is sometimes made out to be. Of course, modern abstract art has not always been considered harmless, or neutral. Hitler considered it to be degenerate and ruthlessly suppressed it.[6] Stalin believed that avant-garde art extolled the decadent and élitist values of the West and it was suppressed. Ironically, attempts were made in America, during the McCarthy period, to brand modern art as 'un-American' and 'communistic'.[7] These may seem to be contradictory examples, but they do show that ideology is grounded in the political and economic spheres of society. However as the focus of this study is the American avant-garde I have concentrated on the less obvious ideology of Liberal Humanism as it is found in capitalist societies.

I show that ideology is largely unconscious; that it is 'lived' by the artist at such a depth that it "even constitutes the limit of common sense for people under its sway".[8] I argue, with Althusser, that one cannot get outside of one's concepts (ideologies) because one cannot get outside of one's "lived relationship"[9] with the world. Thus in the case of Germany under Hitler ideology must be sought in the exhortations to study the idealised human form for paradigms of national and racial superiority as well as in the blatant attacks on Jewish and non-German artists.[10] Likewise in America, ideology must be sought in the attempt to define democracy as a middle-ground between the left and the right. Once this idea was accepted by artists, they could allow their art to play a role, along with economic and military aid, in 'defending democratic liberties'.

The formulation, set out above, raises problems for the student of ideology, problems which I do not wish to brush aside. Prime among these is the difficulty of assessing what I have called the 'validity' of socially motivated ideas. Since the production of knowledge and its subsequent validation is the proper task of science and not art, these problems are likely to remain. As Terry Lovell writes: "Art may express true ideas.... But the status of its truths as valid knowledge is determined elsewhere than in art, in the univocal language of science and history rather than the polysemic language of art."[11]

It is to this end that a sociology of art has developed. Not yet a secure 'science'[12] and not all that different from art history, the sociology of art studies art and artists in the context of their social co-ordinates. The weaker examples of this sociology[13] have tried to overcome the problem of aesthetic value by simply collapsing artistic merit into political correctness. Other approaches openly admit to not dealing with it as an issue at all.[14] My own approach has been to give due weight to aesthetic value as it has been identified by artists and critics.[15] My analysis of the rise of abstraction as a 'universal' school of visual representation, rests, almost entirely, on the published statements of artists, critics and dealers.[16]. I have tried to correlate the extent to which "quality" has been identified as a concommitant of "value" in these writings, in order to assess the adequacy of these accounts in the light of events in the social and historical domain.

Another problem relates to the concept of realism. An example of Photo Realism , for instance, may **appear** realistic, but it is 'really' only pigment applied to some kind of support. Nonetheless, epistomological realism tends to view art as a special kind of knowledge. In contradistinction to this approach, at no point in this dissertation do I argue that the goal of art is, or should be, to show things as they 'really' are. I am not therefore putting forward the viewpoint that art is a form of knowledge predicated on a knowable external reality. At the same time I do accept that a degree of knowledge and information is passed through art. Naturally this information may be true or false, adequate or inadequate, ideological or not ideological.

An assessment of the adequacy of a set of ideas mediated by art, must take account of the internal signifying practice (aesthetics) of that art as well as its social co-ordinates.[17] The definition of what constitutes 'good art' cannot depend on its internal signifying practice alone.

In Chapter 8, I show that American abstract art achieved its prominence on the back of America's military and economic superiority in the years after the Second World War. The fact that this prominence was achieved against considerable resistance to the form of that art from other Americans is not a contradiction, but rather further evidence of the fact that extra-aesthetic factors play a large role in determining the fate of art movements.

This dissertation argues that extra-aesthetic events have influenced, not only the course of art movements and individuals, but also, conversely, that art itself has been put to uses which lie completely outside the aesthetic domain. The reader might wish to object at this stage and point out that art itself can hardly be held responsible for this co-option. Perhaps, but as I point out in Chapter 1[18], the limits of reference to which an art historian or serious viewer can legitimately refer, are crucially important for a full understanding of the art process.

It is a fact of history that in 1946 the work of forty-five American artists was sent around Europe and Latin America at the expense of the State Department and in the face of a public outcry. A purely art-historical account of these events, one which failed to give consideration to the 'absent determination' of American Foreign Policy, is likely to give a partial, or distorted view of these events. In Chapter 8[19] I argue that the reason for the tour lay, not in national pride at the achievements of her artists[20], but in the declared aim of "advancing freedom and establishing America's moral leadership"[21] under a programme which saw economic and cultural agreements as "a more effective barrier to communism" than force.[22]

This programme was thwarted at home by people who had discovered that many of the artists on the show had had connections with left-wing artists organisations like the AAC. Consequently, artists had to be de-politicised before they could be used effectively in the campaign to demonstrate to the world that

Americans are not a "materialistic, money-mad race".[23] In Abstract Expressionism, a style of art was found which was "thoroughly symbolic of the spirit of our most imaginative social, political and economic leaders".[24] However, to be effective, this newly found abstract style had to be fully internalized by artists - it had to be Americanized and freed from the popular conception that abstract art was easy or banal. It was not long before Robert Motherwell wrote prophetically that "the emergence of abstract art is a sign that there still are men of feeling in the world".[25]

I argue in Chapter 7[26], that local demand for the products of the emerging American avant-garde was built, not on the objective merits of those artworks but on the back of a campaign which denigrated the products of mass culture as Kitsch. Clement Greenberg's essay, "Avant-garde and Kitsch", gave artists an intellectual platform and a cause. By making kitsch the target and by fighting through art against mass culture, Abstract artists enjoyed the illusion of actually fighting against totalitarianism.

Foreign demand for American Abstract art was finally consolidated through the large touring exhibitions which were backed by private dealers like Samuel Kootz and the Museum of Modern Art. Before this corporate intervention, the American State Department had tried, more or less successfully, to use that most prestigious cultural weapon, the painted canvas, in America's "arsenal of democracy".[27] Since national art had negative

associations with provincialism, a more universal style was sought. Following Eva Cockcroft, I argue that Abstract Expressionism constituted the perfect contrast to the narrow regimentation of Soviet Realism and was ideally suited to the ideological task of combatting the rise in power of the communist parties in Europe.

As the British critic Terry Eagleton has suggested, this Liberal Humanistic concern for democracy is a suburban moral ideology, more concerned with adultery than armaments. "Its view of democracy, for example, is the abstract one of the ballot box, rather than a specific, living and practical democracy which might also concern the operations of the Foreign Office and Standard Oil."[28]

The role of the art museums in promoting and protecting the interests of their corporate sponsors is dealt with in Chapter 7.[29] Not only did the Museum of Modern Art actively engage in the Second World War effort by fulfilling thirty-eight contracts for 'cultural materials' costing $1,5 million, but increasingly, 'national interest' was confused with the Rockefeller's interests. During the war years, Porter McCray, as director of MOMA's International Council, shipped nineteen exhibitions of American art to Latin America under the aegis of Nelson Rockefeller's Inter-American Affairs Office. Brian Wallis writes[30] that the conflict between humanitarian pretenses and the neo-imperialistic expansion of multinational capitalism is concealed by the banal 'blockbuster'[31] type of exhibition most

favoured by corporate sponsors.

Art museums depend on corporate sponsorship and the corporations in turn depend on the art museums. Wallis writes that this trend towards a mutually supportive relationship has grown in recent years. The 1980 touring exhibition of ancient Nigerian art was funded by the Mobil Oil Corporation which has extensive holdings in Nigeria. In this way, Mobil improved its standing with the Nigerian government. Coincidentally, British Petroleum's interests were nationalised shortly after Mobil's sponsorship was announced.[32]

The inauguration of abstraction as the dominant style in America up until the mid 1950s was the result of a long campaign. Events in Europe had left Paris and Moscow as the centre of the avant-garde. By the early 1930s, left-leaning artist's organisations had established themselves in Britain and America, organisations which drew their membership from amongst the most prominent artists of the time. Communism was not yet a dirty word and in England, the Artists International Association (AIA) drew on the ranks of Royal Academicians, despite the fact that many founder members were openly supportive of the Soviets. Likewise the American Artists Congress (AAC) was convened three years later in 1936, as part of the Popular Front against fascism.[33]

The rise and fall of these two organisations is dealt with in some detail in Chapters 6 and 7. Significantly, the AIA broke up over the issue of support for the Peace Movement. Support for

this cause was no longer possible in a country whose Prime Minister, Attlee, denounced the 1950 Sheffield Peace Congress as "The Great Red Peace Lie" and refused 215 delegates entry into Britain.

Two years later the AIA organised an exhibition which had all the qualities of an Olympic title fight. Sententiously called The Mirror and the Square, this exhibition tried to reduce the battle between the forces of abstractionism and those of realism to a difference of style alone. This apolitical stance was typical of the changing character of leadership in the AIA. Hampered by the British governments successful attempts to brand the British Peace Movement as a Soviet initiative, the organisation drifted towards the ideology of Liberal Humanism.[34] In the catalogue, the organisers wrote that "we live in a period when our terms of visual reference are more extensive than ever before" and that "the main object of this exhibition is to make the language of contemporary painting easier to understand".[35]

By removing politics from the terms of aesthetic debate, the organisers precipitated the break-up of one of the most powerful artists' organisations ever to have arisen in England. With the eclipse of this organisation, art with an evident social content suffered a reversal as well. Although the realists immediately broke away to form another organisation, Artists for Peace the moral high ground had been pulled from under their feet with the increasing acceptance of the idea that an art which directed itself inwards, served a higher and more profound purpose through

being "faithful to itself".[36]

As I have argued in Chapter 7,[37] the effect of this appeal gave artists the illusion of remaining true to one of their political ideals of the thirties - that is, of communicating with the masses. However the 'masses' were now redefined. No longer people from across the spectrum of class divisions, the 'masses' were now seen as people living 'all over the world'. Attention to the fact that these people were all drawn from the middle classes was neatly disguised under the ideological mantle of art's 'universal appeal'. Against the charge that avant-garde art was an art of quietude and acceptance, the idea was put forward that art served the goal of personal liberation. Under this guise, art and culture regained their lost promise of social liberation. At a time when the atomic bomb was a pressing reality for all people, abstraction, defined as a search for the absolute, re-established the connnection between art and politics without invoking the charge of propaganda.

Notes to pages 218-228

Chaper 9: Conclusion

1. See Chapter 1, p. 2.

2. Sandler, I., The Triumph of American Painting, New York: Praeger, 1970.

3. Guilbaut, S., How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983, p. 7.

4. See Chapter 1, p. 2.

5. Lovell, T., Pictures of Reality, London: British Film Institute, 1980, p. 51.

6. See Chapter 6, pp. 114-121.

7. For an account of the attack by Senator Dondero see Chapter 8, p. 172. That his was not an isolated viewpoint, see pp. 183-186.

8. See Chapter 4, p. 82.

9. See Chapter 3, p. 67.

10. The Nazi Storm Trooper weekly Das Schwarze Korps states: "What really matters in the portrayal of the naked human form and the Nordic racial type is the manisfestion - the exposure in the true sense - of an animate beauty, the discovery and artistic fashioning of an elemental god-like humanity. Only then does it become an effective means of educating our nation in moral strength, folkish greatness, and last but not least, resurrected racial beauty". Cited in Bleuel, H. P., Strength through Joy - Sex and Society in Nazi Germany, London: Secker & Warburg, 1973, p. 190.

11. Lovell, T., Pictures of Reality, London: British Film Institute, 1980, p. 91.

12. Hadjinicolaou claims that "In a way one could say that the sociology of art does not exist as an independent discipline, ...it does not exist because it has no distinct subject-matter". Cited in Wolff, J., The Social Production of Art, London: Macmillan Press, 1981, p. 5.

13. Hadjinicolaou, N., Art History and Class Struggle, London: Pluto, 1978.

14. Wolff, J., The Social Production of Art, London: Macmillan Press, 1981, p. 7.

15. In this way I hope to have overcome the problem of basing my analysis solely on my own interpretation of their work. Reviews and statements made by artists are a valuable research resource.

16. Elements of the art triad. At a simplistic level, Parsons has characterised art as a process of social interaction between artist, critic and the specialised art public. See Albrecht, M. C., "Art as an Institution", in Albrecht, H. C., ed., The Sociology of Art and Literature, London: Duckworth, 1970, p. 5.

17. See the discussion on mediators in Chapter 4, pp. 72-83.

18. See Chapter 1, p. 10.

19. See Chapter 8, p. 172.

20. President Truman is reported to have been very critical of the work saying "If that's art, I'm a Hottentot." Cited in Hauptman, W., "Suppression of Art in the McCarthy Decade", in Art Forum, October 1973, p. 48.

21. Said in praise of the Marshall Plan. Hamby, A.L., cited in Guilbaut, S., How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983, p. 191.

22. "American Relations with the Soviet Union: A Report to the President by the Special Council to the President", September 1946, cited in Guilbaut, S., How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983, p. 136.

23. Secretary of State William Benton, cited in Hauptman, W., "Suppression of Art in the McCarthy Decade", in Art Forum, October 1973, p. 48.

24. Kootz, S., New Frontiers in American Painting, New York: Praeger, 1943, p. 6.

25. Motherwell quoted in Frank O'Hara, Robert Motherwell, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1967, p. 45.

26. See Chapter 7, pp. 149-150.

27. See Chapter 8, p. 206.

28. Eagleton, T., Literary Theory, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983, p. 207, cited in Wallis, B., "The Art of Big Business", in Art in America, June 1986, p. 28.

29. See Chapter 7, p. 154.

30. Wallis, B., "The Art of Big Business", in Art in America, June 1986, p. 28.

31. Conforti, M., "Museum Blockbusters", in Art in America, June 1986, pp. 19-23.

32. Wallis writes that this was a "coincidence". Wallis, B., "The Art of Big Business", in Art in America, June 1986, p. 28.

33. As a strategy, the Popular Front aimed at involving well-known artists and writers in an alliance against fascism. It was first proposed by Georgy Dimitrov at the Seventh Congress of the Komintern held in Moscow at the end of 1935. A few months prior to this congress, the First American Writers' Congress had attempted to gather together all writers opposed to capitalism. Unlike its Russian counterpart, only known communists were invited to the inaugural meeting. The American Artists Congress was convened on 14 February 1936 in response to the calls for a Popular Front. See Guilbaut, S., How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983, p. 19.

34. Terry Eagleton writes that:
"Liberal Humanism is a suburban moral ideology, limited in practice to largely interpersonal matters. It is stronger on adultery than on armaments, and its valuable concern with freedom, democracy and individual rights is simply not concrete enough. Its view of democracy, for example, is the abstract one of the ballot box, rather than a specific, living and practical democracy which might also concern the operations of the Foreign Office and Standard Oil". Quoted in Wallis, B., "The Art of Big Business", in Art in America, June 1986, p. 28.

35. Morris, L. and Radford, R., The Story of the AIA, Oxford: Museum of Modern Art, 1983, p. 88.

36. See the discussion in Chapter 7, p. 150.

37. See Chapter 7, pp. 160-161.

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