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Towards the 'Utopie Film': Aspects of Adorno's Thought
in Alexander Kluge's Antagonistic Concept of Realism

Ger Zielinski

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Communication Studies

Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

February 1996

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ABSTRACT

Towards the 'Utopie Film': Aspects of Adorno's Thought in Alexander Kluge's Antagonistic Concept of Realism

Gerald J. Z. Zielinski

The topic of this thesis centres on the (West) German lawyer-filmmaker-writer Alexander Kluge's antagonistic concept of realism, its relationship to the history of aesthetic realism, and its fragile location between the opposing formulations of Brecht and Adorno. While the vast majority of English-language criticism on Kluge's writings and films compares him positively with Brecht, such accounts ignore the much deeper theoretical resonance that his theories have with particular aspects of Adorno's work.

Kluge's antagonistic concept of realism appears to borrow certain principles and notions not only from the well-known Weimar-period Realism-Expressionism debates between such writers as Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Bertolt Brecht, György Lukács, and Ernst Bloch, but also and from the legacy of the history of aesthetic realism. Kluge has succeeded in

radically reinterpreting certain of Horkheimer and Adorno's texts on the mass media, especially the chapter entitled "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception" in their Dialectic of Enlightenment, and has culled from them a set of propositions which act to undergird his own conception of realism.

While he invokes particular motifs from Brecht's writings on the theatre, the core of his realism remains nearer to Adorno; and this is what the thesis aims to demonstrate.

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I wish to thank the New York City office of the Deutsche Akademische Austauschdienst and its director, Dr. Heidrun Suhr, for providing me with a language scholarship and financial assistance for studies at the University of Leipzig, Germany, during the summer of 1994. Ms. Kaisa Tikkanen, media head at the Montreal Goethe Institut, I thank for having taken the trouble to arrange for me private screenings of Kluge's films.

Grateful thanks I owe to Ms. Sheelah O'Neill, assistant to the M.A. programme director in Communication Studies, whose expert grasp of things bureaucratic led my hopes through the degree-granting process tempered by her warm personality.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

General Introduction	1
A. Introduction to Kluge	
1. Excursus: Biographical Sketch	
2. His Writings	
3. Relationship to the Frankfurt School	
4. Brief Discussion of Antagonistic Realism	
B. The Research Problem	
C. Statement of Purpose	
D. On Specialised Vocabulary and Language	
E. Comments on Methodology	
Chapter I: Literature Review of Works on Kluge	21
A. Critical Writings on Kluge's Artistic Project	
1. General Form of Criticism	
2. Reception of Kluge's Work and the New German Cinema	
3. Particular Criticism	
B. Kluge's Theory of Film, and Aesthetic Realism	
1. Aesthetic Realism	
2. Illustrations of Kluge's Theories in His Films	
C. Assessment of the State of German Film; On Kluge's Socio-theoretical Collaborations with Oskar Negt	
D. Concluding Remarks	
Chapter II: Towards and on Antagonistic Realism	46
A. An Historical Introduction to the Notion of Aesthetic Realism	
1. 1848-1918: France	
2. 1918-1945: Weimar Republic, Soviet Union, Third Reich	
3. 1945-1989: Italy, France, West Germany	
4. Excursus: On the Problem of Aesthetic Realism in West German Cultural Circles	
B. On Kluge's Antagonistic Realism	
1. Antagonistic realism	
C. Concluding Remarks	

Chapter III: Adorno, Kluge, and Antagonistic Realism	99
A. On Kluge's Critical Response to "The Culture Industry" in Adorno and Horkheimer's <u>Dialectic of Enlightenment</u>	
B. On Adorno's Late Essay "Transparencies on Film"	
C. On Adorno's Critique of Brecht and the Problem of Committed versus Autonomous Art	
D. The Status of Kluge's Theoretical Position vis-à-vis Adorno	
 General Conclusion	 132
A. Summary and Discussion of Findings	
1. Review of the Principal Aim of the Thesis	
2. Brief Review of Antagonistic Realism	
3. On Brecht's Influence on Kluge	
4. Review of Adorno's Influence on Kluge	
5. Concluding Remarks	
 Bibliography	 143
A. Selected Works by Alexander Kluge	
B. Selected Works on Alexander Kluge	
C. General Bibliography	
 Appendices	 154
Appendix A: Chronology of Selected Works by Alexander Kluge	
Appendix B: Oberhausen Manifesto	

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

I believe very constantly and with good reason in Utopia; I'd be a traitor to Utopia if I didn't show it in reality. I'm not pessimistic at all. The more I believe in the possibility and the reality of the imagination and Utopia, the more realistic and conservative I must be about Utopia. I agree with Leni Peickert: the longer we wait for Utopia, the better it gets.¹

[Kluge in interview in (Dawson 1974)]

This chapter is intended to provide a basic purview of the state of research in the field surrounding the problems at the heart of the thesis. The chapter below includes five sections: an introduction to Alexander Kluge and his work, the research problem, a statement of purpose, a discussion of language and specialised terms, and comments on the research methods employed herein.

A. INTRODUCTION TO ALEXANDER KLUGE AND HIS WORK

The following four sections introduce various aspects of Kluge, to wit: his career, publications, relationship to the "Frankfurt School", and his notion of antagonistic realism.

¹ Peickert is a character in several of Kluge's literary and filmic works.

1. EXCURSUS: BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

While biographical details are seldom seen in certain disciplines, fields concerning artistic practice have retained such an occasionally gossipy convention.² Thus, in keeping with this convention and for the sake of some potentially practical background knowledge on Kluge, I offer the brief sketch below as an excursus.

Alexander Kluge was born in 1932 in Halberstadt, a town which was heavily bombed³ at the end of World War II and later incorporated into the German Democratic Republic. He was born into a family with recent professional ties to the medical community. Both parents were medical doctors. At the end of the war, he joined his mother in West Berlin, where he spent his youth and went to gymnasium; his father and sister remained in Halberstadt. After 1949 Kluge studied law in Marburg and later Frankfurt, while continuing his interest in religious music as a minor in his degree.

Nach der ersten juristischen Staatsprüfung im Jahre 1953 arbeitete Kluge [...] zeitweise als Referendar in der Praxis des Anwalts Hellmut Becker, eines engagierten Bildungspolitikers, und im Kuratorium der Johann-Wolfgang-Goethe-Universität in Frankfurt. Hier lernte er Theodor W. Adorno kennen, dessen Lehre und Theorie großen Einfluß auf ihn gewannen (After the first state law exams in 1953, Kluge worked [...] at times as an articulated clerk in the practice of the advocate Hellmut Becker, one of

² See especially, in German (Lewandowski 1980a, 7ff.), and in English (Hansen 1986).

³ 82 percent of the town was destroyed (Lewandowski 1980a, 8).

the engaged politicians with a strong interest in education policy, and in the supervisory committee of the Goethe University in Frankfurt. Here he became very well acquainted with Theodor W. Adorno, whose teaching and theory had a great influence on him.) (Lewandowski 1980a, 8).

He graduated from Marburg in 1956 with a dissertation on the development of the structures and principles of self-management of universities, which was later published in 1958.

Kluge's interest in film production was such that he encouraged Adorno to contact film director Fritz Lang, a friend from their years in exile in California, to find him a position on the filming of Lang's first post-war German film, "Das indische Grabmal." Lang accepted him on as a volunteer over the winter of 1958-59. The shoot itself was a disaster on account of the unending disputes between the film's producer and director; for this reason, Kluge safely esconced himself in the cafeteria and wrote his first collection of short stories Lebensläufe, later published in 1962. On this topic and his relationship with Horkheimer and Adorno Kluge himself notes in an interview,

I performed legal services for the Institute for Social Research. At first I was a lawyer and wrote stories. Only afterwards did I concern myself with film. Horkheimer and Adorno did not take me seriously as an author. They said, "He is a first-rate lawyer, we like him and are friendly with him, but he just should not make films, and in no event should he write any stories." After Marcel Proust, one can no longer write stories any more. That was Adorno's opinion. He sent me to Fritz Lang in order to protect me from something worse, so that I wouldn't get the idea to write any books. If I were turned away, then I would ultimately do something more valuable, which was to continue to be legal counsel to

the Institute for Social Research. It was a mixture of friendship and technical activity on their behalf that tied me to them (Liebman 1988b, 36).

In 1960, Kluge collaborated with Peter Schamoni on the short-film project "Brutalität in Stein" (Brutality in Stone), which won one of six top prizes at the Short-Film Days (Kurzfilmtagen) in Oberhausen of the same year. The Oberhausen Manifesto of 1962, for which Kluge acted as the spokesman for the group and a principal writer of the text,⁴ signals the precarious state of the post-war West German cinema in terms of economics and cultural worth, for "Papa's cinema" retained many of the technicians trained under the Nazi regime and continued to produce mediocre films on the conventional themes of home (Heimatfilme), love, and war (Schlagerfilme). The Oberhauseners declared themselves to be of the Young Film Directors (Jungfilmer). Under the rubric "Kuratorium Junger Deutscher Film" (Committee for Young German Cinema), they succeeded by 1965 in securing yearly federal government grants to help them make films outside of the moribund "Papa's film industry" (Lewandowski 1980a, 10).

Another important victory for the Young Cinema was the founding in 1962 of the first film department, headed by Edgar Reitz and Kluge, in the Hochschule für Gestaltung at Ulm. Here the two founders set the curriculum for film production

⁴ See Appendix II for text.

and studies, shot several short-films, and published their scripts and commentaries. Kluge's first film-theoretical article was published in 1964 "Die Utopie Film", followed by the collaborative effort "Wort und Bild" (1965).

Kluge's collection of short stories Lebensläufe (1962) won the Berlin "Kunstpreis-Junge Generation"; while his novel Schlachtbeschreibung (1964) took the 1966 Bavarian State Prize for literature. He also associated, ultimately unsuccessfully, with the post-war literary realists of 'Gruppe 47' at readings in Berlin and Sweden.

His first collaboration with Oskar Negt, a former student of Adorno and professor of sociology at Hannover University, on the socio-theoretical theme of the relationship between the public sphere and shared experience was published in 1972. In 1973, Kluge received an honorary professorship of law at the Goethe University in Frankfurt.

Alexander Kluge continues to make films--even television!--, to write fiction, policy analysis, and collaborative socio-theoretical studies with Negt (see the next section below). From the preamble to an interview with Kluge, the critic Jan Dawson mentions that "[o]n the lighter side, [Kluge] collects old Mack Sennett movies, nursery rhymes and toys, and was pseudonymously responsible for that minor Latin classic,

Winnie ille Pu"⁵ (Dawson 1974, 27).

2. ON KLUGE'S PUBLICATIONS

To be sure, Kluge's writings span several distinct categories.⁶ Not only has he collaborated on several book-length works in social theory, but also he has written many scripts for film; and for each of his films he publishes in general one accompanying book, novels and short stories, and film policy on behalf of members of the New German Cinema.

His work in social theory with Oskar Negt is best evidenced by their two books Public Sphere and Experience: Toward An Organisational Analysis of Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere (1972; in English 1993) and Geschichte und Eigensinn (1981). The first book acts in part as a critique of Jürgen Habermas' published doctoral dissertation and his allegedly naïve acceptance of the traditional bourgeois public sphere as such; instead Negt and Kluge attempt to find a place for a concept of a proletarian public sphere (Gegenöffentlichkeit) and thereby also revive interest in the notion of social experience (Erfahrung).⁷ The second book concerns those

⁵ Is it the Latin translation of Milne's Winnie the Pooh under the assumed name of Alexander Lenard (1960, 1962)?

⁶ See Appendix A below for a select chronology of Kluge's scholarly, literary and filmic work.

⁷ Writers such as Hans-Georg Gadamer have boldly taken up the task of explicating or ruminating on the notions of 'Erfahrung' and 'Erlebnis', cf. his opus Truth and Method.

irreducible characteristics of the individual that escape the commodity-driven late capitalist society, namely the stubborn (Eigensinn) attributes of subjectivity. Along its path the book produces, among other things, sketches of a Marxian theory of war, problems with the abstract categories of labour and labourer, and analyses of the horizon of experience (see Bowie 1985-86, 183 ff.).

With regard to his literary work, Kluge has made a few significant contributions to post-WWII West-German literature. The earliest collection of short stories Lebensläufe (1962) was praised by the critic Marcel Reich-Ranicki,⁸ who was also one of the slim minority championing post-WWII realism in West Germany and advocated a detailed critique in contemporary literature of the Nazi period.

Even though the longer opus Schlachtbeschreibung (1964; Description of a Battle, 1966) was received more cautiously by the more traditionally-minded realist critic, it indeed played a crucial role in the rebirth of aesthetic realism, but moreover as an attempt towards an authentically contemporary art form, not as a mere mimicking of the methods of Balzac or Flaubert established in the last century. This was in part influenced by the fact that the Weimar Expressionism-Realism

⁸ A critic currently referred to as the "Pope" of German literary criticism.

debates between Brecht, Adorno, Lukács, Bloch, Benjamin, et al. were reread and reinterpreted in a new light by a younger generation. These debates will be discussed in some detail below.

While Kluge had flirted with the post-war realists Gruppe 47, he developed instead a radical style based on an extreme form of montage. Factual reports, legal documents, historical accounts and interviews, maps and diagrams pervade his "story-telling". Somewhat plausible, somewhat ostensible remain the clipped excerpts to the reader. The critic Bechtolt takes up this aspect of multimedia in Kluge's novels and short stories. Lewandowski claims that Kluge the writer and Kluge the filmmaker are only artificially separable, and are united by his notion of antagonistic realism. These particular approaches to Kluge's work are discussed further below in the literature review.

3. ON KLUGE'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL

From the biographical sketch above, it is doubtless the case that Kluge began his legal and media careers, and remains, under the influence of certain aspects of the thought found in the work of the so-called Frankfurt writers. Kluge came to know Adorno and Horkheimer first through his work as a lawyer representing them and their interests regarding their copyrighted publications.

Upon the West German republication of Komponisten für den Film (Composing for the Films), a book written in exile and as a collaboration with the composer Hans Eisler,⁹ a very special reference was made by Adorno to Kluge in the newly added afterword:

Auffällig, daß der junge Film, offenbar in allen Ländern, die Verwendung von Musik prinzipiell kaum durchdachte. Ich hoffe, einmal zum Problem gemeinsam mit Alexander Kluge etwas beizutragen (It is conspicuous that the early cinema, apparently in all countries, hardly thought the use of music through in principle. I hope to contribute something sometime to the problem together with Alexander Kluge.) (Adorno 1969, 145).

Notorious for being difficult to work with, Adorno's quotation must signify, to be sure, a very cordial, professional compatibility between the two. The afterword, dated May 1969, was written in the year of Adorno's death; and, unfortunately, to the best of my research, no article or publications came of the proposed collaboration with Kluge.

Kluge's two major and shorter socio-theoretical collaborations with Negt, one of Adorno's former students, demonstrate his commitment to an earlier branch of critical theory, one which remains particularly distinct from the recent work of Jürgen Habermas, who is widely considered--at least by MIT Press--to be heir to the legacy of the Critical Theorists. Kluge appears to be maintaining his socio-theoretical position, so

⁹ The "Western" republication took place after Eisler had republished the book in East Germany under his name alone as its sole author. Needless to say, this miffed Adorno.

it seems likely that he will collaborate further with Negt. While their exact significance in the legacy of Critical Theory remains to be seen, at the moment their theoretical writings constitute a fairly marginal alternative to the much more widely influential work in social theory of Habermas. Until Habermas writes something substantial in the field of aesthetics, we can only speculate as to what direction his work would move there, and are left with writings taken from the so-called margins of Adorno and Horkheimer's legacy.

4. A BRIEF DISCUSSION OF ANTAGONISTIC REALISM

A brief discussion of Kluge's antagonistischer Realismusbegriff, i.e. antagonistic concept of realism or concept of antagonistic realism, should help to orient the reader to the general movement of the thesis project. Needless to say, greater detail will follow in subsequent chapters.

Several aspects characterise Kluge's realism. One important aspect concerns his notion of film montage which he bases on a model of inner speech. Kluge's realism cannot be reduced to a simple prescriptive set of formal requirements, e.g. as in genre films or in György Lukács' own realism. Antagonistic realism has a much more fundamental grasp of film form; for each film a new set of formal decisions must be made according to a the whole situation at hand. Understanding the two primal moments of cinema as manifested in the films of Georges

Méliès, a French magician turned filmmaker at the beginning of the century who sparked the fiction film, and of the Lumière brothers of the same era who specialised in a proto-documentary film form, Kluge sees neither in itself as adequate to the aim of emancipating the senses and imagination of the spectators. To that aim he develops an "analytic-sensual method" which makes use of radical fiction through rarely acknowledged contradictions, radical authentic observation through the act of making the banal appear strange and new, and techniques of montage. Kluge seeks to tap the human desire for better things, an improved situation, and the capacity to realise it, while he calls the bluff on reality's paper-tiger nature. Through this effectively cinéma impur Kluge envisions a broadened experiential horizon, increased social awareness. Through this he claims to reinvigorate the societally suppressed imagination and to draw on the consequences of its suppression, namely in the form of deviance or protest.

B. INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Here I should like to detail the theoretical context to the problem to be studied and briefly situate the research problem in relation to the most pertinent writings in the field.

The thesis explores in detail selected notions and theories which issue from a number of principal, primary authors, viz.

Theodor Adorno, Bertolt Brecht, and Alexander Kluge. No hagiography is hereby intended. My interest in Kluge's writings turns on his concept of antagonistic realism, and how he balances motifs from the aesthetic theories and media writings of Adorno and of Brecht therein.

The theoretical context to the study, and in particular to Kluge's work--as we have noted above--, lies within the tradition of what is known as western Marxism, and particularly within the general parameters of the critical theory (Kritische Theorie) of the Frankfurt School.

The notion of a critical theory stems from the early work of Horkheimer and Adorno at the School of Social Research in pre-WWII Germany, and most notably at the New School for Social Research in New York during the war. In the important essay, "Traditional and Critical Theory," Max Horkheimer sets out his early notion of critical theory by comparing and contrasting it with what he terms 'traditional theory', a type of thought that resembles more logical positivism or analytical philosophy than Kant's or Hegel's thought. While it is important to note the general thought parameters, the thesis does not emphasise the notion of critical theory itself.

Major writers engaged with Kluge's writings and films tend to possess differing academic backgrounds, i.e. mainly cinema and

literary studies, German literature, or political science. In 1988-89, a trans-North American series of screenings, organised by the American film professor Stuart Liebman with the assistance of the Goethe Institute, of Kluge's films took place, for which the journal October (#46, Fall 1988) published a special issue¹⁰ dedicated entirely to the filmmaker's writings, literary, filmic and socio-theoretical, interviews, and critics writing on his work. This "media event" certainly had an crucial impact on the study and reception of Kluge's work in North America.¹¹

One important English-language writer on Kluge, at least since 1981, is Miriam Hansen, University of Chicago. She has been concerned with notions of history, film praxis, narrative, and relationships to the Frankfurt School. In German, there are several important writers working at least in part on Kluge's films or writings, including Rainer Lewandowski, who has published at least two books on Kluge's work.

A curious reticence persists in film and communication studies regarding Kluge's concept of antagonistic realism and the left-oriented debates over realism in the Weimar period in

¹⁰ For other "special issues" dedicated to the criticism of Kluge's work, see New German Critique (49, Winter 1990) and Text und Kritik (85/86, January 1985).

¹¹ For example, Peter Lutze's formidable doctoral dissertation The Last Modernist: The Film and Television Work of Alexander Kluge (1991) arose from this period.

Germany, between such writers as Walter Benjamin, Bertolt Brecht, György Lukács, Theodor W. Adorno, and Ernst Bloch. While many critics seem to be of the opinion that he has sided with Brecht the most, it is also apparent that not only Benjamin, Adorno, and Bloch but also several of Kluge's contemporaries have influenced him to varying degrees. Part of the main concern of the thesis is to establish and evince the strong links that lie between Kluge's theoretical writings on film and Adorno's with greater precision.

The principal texts studied within the thesis are as follows: Kluge's "Toward a Realistic Method" (1980c) from his 1975 cine-book Gelegenheitsarbeit einer Sklavin. Zur realistischen Methode, "Utopie Film" (1964), "Word and Film" (1988b) from the collaborative "Wort und Bild" (1965), and the co-authored Public Sphere and Experience (1991); and, Adorno's Dialectic of Enlightenment (1972), Aesthetic Theory (1984), "Transparencies on Film" (1991), and "Commitment" (1980). The secondary texts chosen are by: Jan Bruck, Miriam Hansen and Rainer Lewandowski on Kluge; Lambert Zuidervaart and Gillian Rose on Adorno; and Eugene Lunn on Brecht.

C. THESIS STATEMENT

The line of approach that I have taken up in order to help substantiate the research problem stated above is as follows.

While the vast majority of English-language¹² critical work on Kluge's writing and films appears to emphasise his ostensible relation to Brechtian aesthetics, Kluge should instead be understood as a strong, but qualified, supporter of Adorno. Through a detailed analysis of Kluge's text on realism and comparison to three main essays by Adorno, I establish Kluge as an important heir to Adorno with certain Brechtian stylistic traits.

D. ON SPECIALISED VOCABULARY AND LANGUAGE

1. Terms and Translation

As a rule, any specialised term will be defined as clearly as possible within the thesis proper upon the occasion of its first appearance. However, we should consider here a few of the most common terms in need of precision: 'West/East-Germany', 'pre-/post-WWII', 'Frankfurt School', and 'realism'.

From the end of the Second World War until 1990, 'Germany' was two very separate countries, each reflecting the socio-political system of its Potsdam/Yalta-defined administrator, i.e. so-called West Germany (Federal Republic of Germany; Bundesrepublik Deutschland) fell under the control of the

¹² Restricting the scope of the research to mainly English-language criticism is a practical restraint due to inadequate access to the German texts. This should not imply that there have been no subsequent articles on or by Kluge in German-language journals, e.g. Text + Kritik often runs relevant articles but no university in Montreal carries it.

United States, France, and Great Britain, while East Germany (German Democratic Republic; Deutsche Demokratische Republik) fell under Soviet control. Especially after the tightening of borders on the part of the GDR and its erection of the Berlin wall in 1961, the two countries and their respective populations had very little contact with one another, save at higher diplomatic levels and through reciprocal espionage. Even though Kluge was born in a region of the country that became a part of the GDR (East Germany), close to no critical writings on Kluge's realism attempt to draw any connections to the state-sponsored Socialist Realism of the Soviet Bloc, except in the case of its pejorative use by conservative critics in the FRG (West Germany). With all this in mind, the following will consider almost exclusively those works made in West Germany, all of which were written or directed--in the case of films--before "reunification". The adjectival term 'pre-WWII' simply designates that period before 1939, while 'post-WWII' that after 1945.

The term 'Frankfurt School' came into being only during the Sixties after the republication of many of the books and articles of Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, et al., which were originally published in exile during WWII in the United States or in the Netherlands just at the end of the war. Regarding the phrase 'Frankfurt School' (Frankfurter Schule), Habermas discusses some of its problems during an

interview:

It was not until the late sixties that the Frankfurt thinkers began to be considered as a school in the eyes of the politicized students and the general public. The fact is that a coherence of views powerful enough to form a school only existed in emigration in New York, when the old members of the Institute for Social Research [...] were working together closely and productively, with Horkheimer as the moving spirit. This phase lasted until 1940. [...] But there is no longer any question of a school, and that is undoubtedly a good thing. (Habermas: 1986, 49)

Should the term arise, it simply refers to the group of writers who usually fall under the rubric, but not to any notion of coherence of concepts or theories which the word 'school' customarily entails. Thus, Albrecht Wellmer and Habermas, for example, are evidently not members of the School but rather heirs to it.

Finally, the substantive term 'realism' will pose a few problems in respect to its tangled usage across several decades, languages and national high cultures. One chapter is dedicated in part to bracketing the term so that it can be employed most meaningfully in the case of Kluge.

An added problem to defining terms regards the act of translating from the German into English. If a long passage is included, as a quotation, in German or French, and no published translation is available, then I shall present both the original passage with my own translation directly following it. This appears to be a widely accepted style in

current academic prose. It is also common to present the original term in brackets following the most equivalent English term; this helps to avoid any unintended misinterpretations, e.g. 'shared, social experience' (Erfahrung) against 'subjective experience' (Erlebnis). I trust that the reader will forgive any 'rough' translations and neologisms, which are almost impossible to avoid in translating from literary German. To be sure, some of the artfulness and play of the original prose is lost in its English version, for I intend to forefront meaning over stylistic bravado.

E. COMMENTS ON METHODOLOGY

Research for this thesis comprises the analysis of original documents written by Kluge, primary texts by other writers, analytico-critical texts on the above writers, and critical texts on Kluge's films and literary works.

Over the past three years I have acquired a sound knowledge of the German language and obtained a certificate from McGill University for German as a foreign language. In 1994 I spent the summer studying the language at the University of Leipzig as part of the German Academic Exchange Service scholarship for foreign graduate students. Needless to say, this support has been extremely valuable to that part of my research in the German language.

The most global aspects of the methodology, regarding the above, require that the chosen texts be obtained. Many sources have been used: interlibrary loans services, e.g. Acuff's translation thesis (Kluge, 1980); UMI thesis bank, e.g. (O'Kane, 1988); cd-rom journal searches; letter-writing to specialists in the field, e.g. Professors Stuart Liebman and Hans-Bernhard Moeller; the four university libraries, and the libraries in the Cinémathèque Québécoise and Goethe Institute all located in Montreal.

Relevant articles and chapters of books were then chosen, copied, and read through. The type of textual analysis of most use here is a combination of conceptual analysis and argumentation analysis. Metaphors are respected as such, and are not taken literally.

An important rift exists between the substance of the following analysis itself and the manner of its expression, which for both Adorno and Kluge would be a profound stylistic concession¹³ with philosophical consequences (see below). This I have sacrificed in view of the level this project and the general conventions of academia in favour of some kind of linguistic semblance of clarity in aim and prose; for figures of style, especially ellipsis, are inevitable but vary

¹³ See, especially, Gillian Rose's introductory and highly literary analysis of Adorno's oeuvre (1978).

according to degree. Hence, the following will contain fewer aphorisms and less radical montage of texts as found in the texts analysed.

CHAPTER I: LITERATURE REVIEW OF WRITINGS ON KLUGE

Kluge est aussi un maître du montage, parce que la réalité ne se présente pas autrement que fragmentée sans sa cohérence. Kluge révolutionne le concept de l'imitation: le montage est un moyen pour briser le faux continuum, et pour imiter ainsi les effets d'une catastrophe: 'A l'instant de la secousse catastrophique, toutes les relations deviennent pour un instant translucides, du fait qu'elles sont inauthentiques--et ne constituent à aucun endroit un rapport humain, ni même seulement un rapport possible.' [From Habermas' speech on the occasion of Kluge winning the Lessing Prize (1991, 43)]¹⁴

The aim of the following chapter is to make evident, in general, the broad purview of research on Kluge's creative (literary, filmic) and socio-theoretical projects and, in particular, to forefront those critical moments in the field of greatest relevance to the problem of resituating Kluge nearer Adorno's own thought on the cinema.

Following Kluge's four main interests in his writing, the literature review comprises three sections: A. Critical Writings on Kluge's Artistic Projects, B. Writings on Kluge's

¹⁴ In English: Kluge is also a master of montage because reality does not present itself other than as fragmented without its coherence. Kluge revolutionises the concept of imitation: montage is a medium for breaking the false continuum and for imitating thus the effects of a catastrophe: "At the moment of the catastrophic shock, all relations become for a moment translucent from the fact that they are inauthentic--and do not constitute a human relation or even a possible relation to any place."

Theory of Film and Realism, C. Policy Studies of the State of German Cinema, and Socio-Theoretical Work with Oskar Negt. While the strict observance of these categories is not always possible, most notably in the case of essays in which the categories overlap one another, such a division should help to sort and thereby make the writings less unwieldy and a little more understandable. Thus, the review attempts to separate literary or film criticism from articles interpreting Kluge's theory of film or of realism, from his sociology of film, and from his socio-theoretical collaborations with Oskar Negt. The review is not exhaustive of all related publications, but considers many of the most important contributions to the study of Kluge's work.

A. CRITICAL WRITINGS ON KLUGE'S ARTISTIC PROJECTS

This section introduces the critical writings, their general form, their reception (mainly outside Germany),¹⁵ and other individual topics considered by each author. What I wish to show here in part is the extent to which critics have attempted to establish Kluge's work as influenced by the writings of Walter Benjamin and Bertolt Brecht, while remaining almost completely reticent with regard to the influence of Theodor Adorno.

¹⁵ To the best of my research, only one sole review in French refers to Kluge, and similarly one from an Italian critic.

1. THE GENERAL FORM OF CRITICISM

In general, most of the criticism in English on Kluge's cinematic or literary works adheres to the following form: a biographical sketch of Kluge, i.e. introducing the reader to a foreigner who is, however, well known in his own country; selected description of his works thitherto in accord with whatever topic the critic has chosen to investigate; analysis of one or more aspects of his work, e.g. his principle of montage and its application; and typically the analysis attempts to relate Kluge's theoretical writings and cinematic praxis to earlier individual writers, e.g. Brecht, Benjamin, or, but most rarely, Adorno; or attempt to relate his socio-theoretical analyses to his artistic work. This general form may in part be accounted for by considering the problem of the reception of Kluge and his works abroad. In German-language criticism, book-length works on Kluge contain a high degree of biographical detail, while articles and essays due to their relative brevity only occasionally do.

2. RECEPTION OF KLUGE'S WORK AND THE NEW GERMAN CINEMA

Research that transgresses linguistic boundaries is always explicitly open to the problems associated with translation and socio-cultural differences along the hermeneutic circle of interpretation and, more particularly, reception. The following points out some of the pitfalls in importing the post-WWII West German cinema into North America.

The strong motif of the introduction to the German filmmaker recurs throughout the critical writings; and this is in part doubtless owing to the fact that his reception in the English-speaking countries, in particular, has been slow in relation to that of other members of the so-called New German Cinema, e.g. Wim Wenders and Werner Herzog. The "foreignness" of his films (for us) doubtless contributes to a wide number of differing critical responses; this foreignness manifests itself in a number of aspects: linguistic, socio-cultural, and aesthetic. In particular, the foreignness of Kluge's films is mainly due to their deliberate socio-historical situatedness in the West German cultural scene, apparently they are not really intended for export purposes--at least that is what Kluge himself has maintained all along--, in contrast to many of the films of his Oberhausen--and post-Oberhausen--colleagues, some of whom share a much larger cult following outside than within Germany. Nevertheless, it is this situatedness and its theoretical undergirding that is precisely what should indicate to the critic that the works ought to be studied at a level other than a mere formalism; and it is this complexity that appeals to the present study, in general.

During the 1980s, criticism on Kluge's works tended towards the strictly text-based, which in itself indicates the high degree of currency that the French structuralist and

poststructuralist methods¹⁶ of textual analysis secured during this period in the field of aesthetic criticism. These methods tend to explicitly exclude the pragmatic dimension of the sign, but this dimension is precisely what is argued for by critics who wish to account for the historical context of a particular artistic work, especially of a political work. Nevertheless, there are a few notable, vociferous exceptions to the above approaches, namely Elsaesser, Hansen and Rentschler in English.

Regarding the reception of the New German Cinema and in particular Kluge's films, at least two articles have been written. The earlier (Hansen, 1983) is more a polemic against the deficiencies in the theory and practice of criticism stemming from the schools based on the works of the French semiotician Christian Metz. The more recent article (Rentschler, 1984a) is more detailed, and challenges the allegedly inherent formalist bias in the North American reception of the films.

Hansen discusses an article by Elsaesser on the problems regarding how the New German Cinema had then entered and been received by cinema studies in North America in general. This

¹⁶ It is useful here to note Martin Jay's insight into the striking resemblance between poststructuralist thought and Adorno's negative dialectics, thus making the former's applicability at least debatable (Jay 1984).

proves to be part of a continuing polemic between those critics who retain the aspect of historical context in their analyses and those who embrace an early semiotic model after Metz.¹⁷ Some of the problems associated with the cinema's problematic entry, Hansen suggests, arise from the audience-specific design of the German films, i.e. many require knowledge of contemporary public figures in Germany and their political stances. While introducing Kluge into her discussion, Hansen argues for the analysis of his films not only as textual systems but also with regard to contextual orientation; thus, the critic wishes to retain a pragmatic, i.e. socio-historical, dimension to such textual analysis. In order to further persuade the reader of her point, Hansen provides a detailed analysis of Kluge's Deutschland im Herbst (1978) (Germany in Autumn), a film which would, indeed, appear absolutely absurd without consideration of its historical context, the theoretical claims of Kluge, and its special discursive practices.

Rentschler (1984a) presents a (very) critical survey of then recent writings on the New German Cinema. Against the rosy picture of the state of German film as certain American critics had painted, Rentschler tries to correct the misunderstanding by describing the film scene in West Germany,

¹⁷ See, especially, his Film Language (Oxford) or his later The Imaginary Signifier (Indiana).

its factions, its economic problems and dilemmas, its conflicts with government interference through censorship, and its biases. He includes findings from a study edited by Kluge on the current, precarious state of the film industry in West Germany, i.e. in the co-authored Bestandsaufnahme: Utopie Film (1983). Also, he notices that German critics tend to be much more "severe" towards the filmmakers, especially of Kluge, than their foreign colleagues, for instance Rentschler says: "Kluge's anthology contains more Eigensinn (mostly his own) than film history" (1984a: 116). Another problem, Rentschler finds, is that often foreign critics avoid any analysis of production, and thereby fetishize the final film itself; context is typically lost in the analysis (1984a: 114f.).

3. PARTICULAR WORKS OF CRITICISM

Several works of critics have been written on Kluge's project; and they range in depth of analysis from "weak" suggestive reactions to "stronger" interpretations.

Among the articles on Kluge's creative projects several make the case for their recognition in relation to earlier influences, the French critic Sauvaget (1984: 24f.) performs precisely this by, for instance, emphasising Kluge's strong resemblance to the early, politicised French-Swiss filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard, one of the founders of the so-called Nouvelle vague française (French New Wave). Sauvaget questions the

curious absence of any writing on Kluge in France, in spite of the fact that Kluge was so instrumental in the conception, writing, and advocating of the Oberhausen Manifesto in 1962, which in essence was intended to found the Young German Cinema (as its members aged, it became known as the New German Cinema).¹⁸ Moreover, Sauvaget notes that in terms of pedagogy, Kluge was most important in regard to the founding of the Institut für Filmgestaltung¹⁹ at Ulm in 1962, which acted as the first advanced school in West Germany that covered all aspects of film production.

The formal elements that Sauvaget cites shared between Godard and Kluge are: collage, montage, narrative technique of distanciation (Verfremdung), voice-over, intertitles, irony, and humour. Many of these stylistic elements derive in part from Bertolt Brecht's writings on his notions of an epic theatre and of a Marxist form and praxis for the theatre. Even with so many similarities, according to Sauvaget, Kluge's films and writing evince their originality through the author's particular wit, pointed humour, borrowings from law and literature, and emphasis on socio-historical problems. The critic declares Occasional Work of a Female Slave (1973) to be Kluge's most important film concerned with the problems

¹⁸ Kluge makes this comment in an interview with Liebman (1988b).

¹⁹ It was originally set up at Ulm in an already-existing, well-established art and design academy.

of realism; Ferdinand the Radical (1976) is the most Brechtian; The Patriot (1979) concerns the problem of German history-writing the most. Sauvaget concludes by stressing the theoretical heritage with which Kluge aligns himself: Brecht, Adorno, Horkheimer, and Walter Benjamin. However, apart from such a speculative claim, little substance is offered as proof, and the essay remains an insightful gloss.

Two early reviews by the German critic Marcel Reich-Ranicki (1963; 1967), who is one of the very few post-WWII literary critics that actively argued for a turn to realism,²⁰ attempts to predict where Kluge's talents might take him. His first (1963) analyses the book of short stories Lebensläufe. The critic discusses favourably the fragmentary form of the stories, but is not so impressed by Kluge's prose: "Es ist meist ein sehr blasses, oft ein verkrampftes und höchst anfechtbares Deutsch" (It is mostly a very colourless, often a tensed-up and highly contestable German.) (1963, 286f.). The critic also praises Kluge's sense of psychology and imagination, and ends the review with some optimism for the beginning writer:

Gleichviel: in einigen Stücken dieses nützlichen und lesenswerten Buches erweist sich Alexander Kluges Methode der um der Wahrheit willen erfundenen Tatsachenberichte und der um der Realität willen fingierten Protokolle als

²⁰ "The only literary critic of any stature who [after WWII] rejected both the old idealist literary tradition and the avant-garde in favour of realism was Marcel Reich-Ranicki" (Bullivant, 32).

sehr ergiebig (Nonetheless: in some pieces of this useful and worth-reading book, Alexander Kluge's method of invented factual reports for the sake of truth and of fabricated proceedings for the sake of reality proves to be productive.) (1963, 287).

Reich-Ranicki's second contribution (1967) is a review of the very complicated opus Schlachtbeschreibung (Battle description) (1964), a "novel" which implicitly poses some of the problems associated with history-writing by exploiting the example of the Battle of Stalingrad. The critic warns of the consequences of giving undue praise to a novice writer. Kluge's work, he claims, depends too much on the "tricks and effects" developed in the earlier stories. Reich-Ranicki says:

Wie man dieses Buch nicht für handgreifliche Zeitgeschichte halten sollte, so sollte man sich auch hüten, die mehr oder weniger geschichten Montagen, Arrangements und Kniffe mit moderner Literatur zu verwechseln (As one should not hold this book as a blatant history of the times, thus one should also beware of mixing up the more or less skillful montages, arrangements and tricks with modern literature) (1964, 62).

The critic challenges Kluge's thesis from the philosophy of history and demands instead a more straightforward, practical form of realism. He continues with a challenge to Kluge:

Nicht um ein Buch geht es hier, sondern um einen Autor, der Nützliches schreiben kann, sich indes auf einem Weg befindet, der ihn der intellektuellen Hochstapelei und der literarischen Scharlatanerie nähert. Es liegt in Kluges Macht, diese Feststellung und Befürchtung zu widerlegen. Mit seinem nächsten Buch (It is not a question here of a book, but rather an author, who can write useful things, who is meanwhile situated on a path which nears him to an intellectual swindle and literary charlantry. It lies in Kluge's power to refute this conclusion and fear. With his next book.) (1967, 63).

Reich-Ranicki is primarily a literary critic; he possesses a strong notion of what constitutes 'realism' in literature and attempts to guide writers towards his notion. Here, the critic provides a few insights into Kluge's early reception, especially regarding the post-WWII West German literary scene.

The Italian critic Mantagna (1991) writes on *New German Video*. He cites Kluge's ambivalence in regard to video art, whose positive values are that it remains the last refuge for technical manipulation after the decline of so-called experimental film of the 1960s, and the "immateriality" of the video image itself. Kluge won sponsorship for the AKS satellite, for which he produced a whole series of programs. This very short piece is more a anecdotal review than an article, and consequently carries little weight here.

The Moeller/Springer article (Moeller, 1977) is principally a review of the film Artists under the Big Top (1967). The critics begin by contrasting a few of the other members of the New German Cinema, viz. Werner Herzog and Rainer Werner Fassbinder. The film being reviewed is interpreted as an allegory on the successes and failures of the Young German Film (1977: 17). The critics suggest that the openness of the narrative requires that the spectator's imagination and perception remain active by filling in certain ellipses and gaps, and thus Kluge's films survive more than the single

viewing. The critics also bring to their analysis Brecht's notion of Verfremdungseffekt, which they define as a technique by means of which the spectator is not encouraged to empathise with the protagonist. They also cite the continuing debate between Straub-Huillet and Kluge in regard to the latter's less orthodox interpretation of Brecht. Not only do the critics compare Kluge's narratives to Brecht's own, but also to the more contemporary theatrical works--in part responses to the tumultuous Sixties--of Peter Weiss and of Günter Grass. In the end, Kluge carries both an element of pessimism and a principle of hope; his work is declared "radically modern, complex film" (1977: 20). This article provides a relatively detailed sketch of Kluge's relation to Brecht.

The prolific American film theoretician and critic Miriam Hansen has contributed several pieces in English on Kluge's work; in one article (Hansen 1986) she analyses in detail his film Abschied von gestern (1966) (Farewell to yesterday; English release title, Yesterday Girl). Hansen's biographical sketch includes Kluge's volunteership with Fritz Lang. Hansen contrasts the initial aims of the Autorenkino, especially in the case of Kluge, with those of the French New Wave's politique des auteurs (perhaps, 'policy of authorship' or, more generally, 'rights of the creator') (1986: 156 f.).

Another detailed work of criticism (Franklin, 1979) compares

and contrasts the three writers: Bertolt Brecht, Kluge, and Heinrich Böll. The major theme considered in the analysis is the depiction of the destruction of female innocence in a relentless, modern society as part of the legacy of Western literature. The social alienation of the female protagonist in each author's work is traced and compared. The critic shows that traditionally the sexually-pure woman symbolises social innocence, whereas today sexual exploitation symbolises social injustice. One common quality shared among the three writers, claims the critic, is the belief in the inherent goodness of human nature. While this article remains of interest by virtue of its quality, it proves to be less relevant to the research problems at hand.

The critic most dedicated to Kluge's work hitherto in Germany remains arguably Rainer Lewandowski, who has published numerous articles (1983) and two books (1980a; 1980b) on Kluge's literary and filmic work. In his 1983 essay "Literatur und Film bei Alexander Kluge", the critic analyses Kluge's literary and filmic methods separately, but he warns that to make such a separation is completely artificial in case of Kluge:

[...] bei Kluge geht es um eine strukturelle Beziehung der Produktions- und Rezeptionsbedingungen beider Medien, um, verkürzt gesagt, eine Literarisierung des Films und eine Filmisierung der Literatur (with Kluge it is a question of a structural relationship of the conditions of production and reception of both media, a question of, shortly put, a literarising of the cinema and a filmising of literature.) (1983, 233)

Another important German critic, Gerhard Bechtold, writes on the multimedia nature (Multimedialität) presented in Kluge's literary and film works, and begins his essay with a quotation by the champion of French surrealism André Breton: "Wer die Grenzen methodisch leugnet, wird etwas von der wirklichen Landschaft erblicken!" ("Whoever methodically denies the borders, will perceive something of the real landscape!") (Bechtold, 1983). The critic poses Kluge's work as a problem for contemporary theories and their methods in literary studies. The critic shows that Kluge is not unique with regard to admitting photographic material and other iconic images into his literary work, but a part of a small but growing trend in the Seventies and Eighties which included the likes of Peter Handke, Jürgen Becker, and Thomas Brasch; however, Kluge's intentions differed widely from those of the other writers. Nevertheless, the critic finds, the time has come to look closely at the new mixed forms (1983: 212). Bechtold then briefly outlines a history of such mixed forms: e.g. the films of Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Lang; the photomontage of John Heartfield; the collage of Grosz, and Dix; the avantgardist André Breton; and, especially, the collaborative book Deutschland, Deutschland über alles (1929) by Kurt Tucholsky and John Heartfield (Bechtold 1983: 214). These roots are followed further back into the nineteenth century: e.g. Zola, Strindberg, Carroll, Heinrich Heine, the latter of whom, the critic claims, was the first to offer a

concept of multimedia montage (1983: 215). The rest of the paper dedicates itself to a semiotic analysis of a sequence from the film Die Patriotin (The Patriot) and a discussion of Kluge's intentions in his notion of montage. Bechtold's article is one of the most detailed and comprehensive of all those discussed here. His comparisons to Tucholsky and Heine, for example, are fresh. This article provides a few insights for the chapter on antagonistic realism.

An encyclopedic doctoral thesis (Lutze 1991) takes up the challenge of proving that Kluge is indeed a modernist, however late, rather than postmodernist. Lutze's detailed analyses concern Kluge's narrative strategies of telling, condensing, and interrupting (1991, 136 f.). The critic also cogently makes the case for Kluge's eclectic modernist style through the use of many concrete examples (1991, 228 f.). He sets up a typography of themes from across Kluge's oeuvre and considers the special case of television and Kluge's work for and in it (307 ff.). While this dissertation contains much excellent, practical research and analyses of Kluge's film work, it also contains a not untypical reference to Adorno, "Kluge's work is closely related to the modernist aesthetics of Theodor Adorno and the Frankfurt School, but constitutes a unique instance of that theory as a program rather than simply critique" (1991, 3). Lutze fails to pursue here the relation between Kluge and Adorno or the Frankfurt School, preferring

to establish Kluge the artist as a modernist mainly from analyses of his work.

B. KLUGE'S THEORY OF FILM, AND AESTHETIC REALISM

1. AESTHETIC REALISM

In his introduction to the translation of Kluge's acceptance speech for the literary Fontaine Prize in Berlin, the British critic Andrew Bowie (1985) provides a few insights into the thought of the writer-filmmaker. Apart from biographical and historical details, Bowie provides descriptions of Kluge's literary works and films, while emphasising the diversity of the latter's pursuits. In particular, Bowie points out that aspect of Kluge's principle of montage which emphasises "the disparteness of the material involved to its limits, yet at the same time it retains as its central category the notion of Zusammenhang (context, connection, that which 'hangs together')" (1985: 113). In his introduction, the critic brings to the fore the special influence of Walter Benjamin's thought on Kluge, notably in regard to his theses in the philosophy of history. Kluge does not stress the unifying aspects of German history, but rather those which are most apparently unconnected to one another. From Benjamin's Passagenwerk the important notion of Jetztzeit (now-time) comes, which Benjamin believes essential to any materialist interpretation of historical time. This notion Kluge employs in his principle of montage and theory of reception of film,

i.e. whenever a Jetztzeit becomes possible, it creates the potential for a deep insight. In Kluge as well, technique and bureaucracy are viewed as coming "from above", subsuming their agents and their sense of morality. Bowie also perceives some Brechtian motifs in Kluge (1985: 114f.), especially the Verfremdungseffekt, i.e. the effect of making strange the banal. The critic concludes his brief introduction to Kluge's work by discussing the book Geschichte und Eigensinn (1981), the second book-length collaborative effort between Oskar Negt and Kluge. This book continues the authors's attempt at reformulating Marxism, most notably by broadening Marx's notion of labour in order to be of use in the analysis of war (1985: 116f.). Bowie provides here some useful analysis in regard to the theoretical relationships between Kluge and Benjamin, and Brecht.

From a very different theoretical position, Wolfram Mauser (1981) provides an analysis of an extract from Lebensläufe. Towards the end of his textual analysis, the critic offers the term 'dialektischer Realismus' (dialectical realism) to describe Kluge's work (1981, 104f.):

Eine sachgemäße Wiedergabe der Wirklichkeit, in die wirklichkeitsanaloge Verdichtungen verhängnisvoller Denk- und Bewußtseinsstrukturen eingefügt sind, die sich beim Leser als Protest-Impulse auswirken, kann man als dialektischen Realismus bezeichnen. Es ist dies ein Realismus, der sich aus dem dialektischen Umschlag ergibt, den die dargestellten Realitätselemente selbst auslösen (A proper account of reality, in which real, analogous impressions of disastrous structures of thought and consciousness are constructed which result as a

protest-impulse in the reader, one can describe as dialectical realism. This is a realism that follows from the dialectical change which the represented elements of reality trigger off.) (1981, 104).

However, the critic also brings to the fore the delicate balance between the skillfulness of the author and the ability of the reader, both very essential to the practice of working through the dialectic. Mauser is fastidious in his analysis and presents a few interesting results, but overall his final conclusion regarding the intelligibility of the dialectic in Kluge's prose in general is rather trivial, since any so-called experimental art form, including those of Brecht, is always trivially open to such a concern.

A number of writers have taken up the task of discussing Kluge's concept of antagonistic realism to varying degrees of success. The Australian critic, Jan Bruck (1983a) compares and contrasts Brecht's theory of realism with Kluge's, which also involves a polemic against then contemporary poststructuralist reinterpretations of Brecht. Bruck describes how Brecht has been uneasily resituated within the anti-empiricist theoretical camps such as Anglo-French deconstructivist literary theory, which tends, claims Bruck, towards an anti-realism. Doubtless, problems of inconsistencies arise whenever politically charged texts like Brecht's or Kluge's are brought under the methods of literary deconstruction. Bruck also shows how weak "high" theories of realism are in view of the mass media. Bruck provides a few good sources for

studying Brecht on these points.

In another article, Bruck (1983b) considers Kluge's antagonistic realism. The history of aesthetic realism has been the site of many battles²¹, yet realism in some sense has weathered its way to the end of the twentieth century. While various forms of bourgeois realism have been attacked, the critic notes, several schools of Marxists have attempted to forge their own, Brecht and his materialist realism being one of them, cf. Zhdanov's Socialist Realism in the Soviet Union. Bruck's essay lends a starting point for considering the particular and volatile history of German realism, for which the book by Bullivant (1987) stands as a much more important, longer study.

Cook (1985) discusses a variety of Kluge's ideas. Kluge has always taken a critical view of the bourgeois "auteur" method of production advocated by members of the French New Wave and its personality cult of the director; in its place, Kluge suggests quite a different approach to filmmaking. Kluge promotes collective film productions, an openness of film form that permits the spectator to enter deeply into the process of interpretation and makes use of the spectator's capacity for

²¹ Cf. Aesthetics and Politics which documents the early twentieth century debates between Lukács on one side, Adorno and Bloch on another, Brecht, and Benjamin hovering in between.

fantasy, a particular principle of montage, and distancing techniques, e.g. voice-over and intertitles, in the design of the narrative itself. The point of Kluge's film praxis is to oppose the ideological constraints of the public sphere, and encourage the possibility of a counter-public sphere (Gegenöffentlichkeit) (1985: 287f.). Kluge charges that conventional, sometimes called "reductionist", realism excludes "non-integrated forms of structuring experience" (1985: 293f.), and that realism ought to bring fact and fantasy together as a dialectical process where real and realistic representations would be continuously redefined. Cook then introduces the film The Patriot in order to help illustrate his case. Cook's analysis will be used especially regarding Kluge's methods of production and theory of spectatorship.

2. ILLUSTRATIONS OF KLUGE'S THEORIES IN HIS FILMS

In the fourth section this review turns to consider articles written on how Kluge's theoretical propositions can be illustrated in and by his films. Two articles by Miriam Hansen stand out in particular, (1981a) and (1985). In the earlier article, the writer presents a critical history of the events in the German political and independent film scenes since the Oberhausen Manifesto (1962).²² She then discusses Negt and Kluge's book Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung (1972; in

²² See Appendix II.

English, 1993), and how the authors claim that a certain type of opposition may arise out of the increased socialisation of human qualities and needs, which in turn leads to the formation of the proletarian public sphere. The collaborative film Germany in Autumn (1978) is taken as a case study. In terms of context, real public events motivated the making of the film, namely the Schleyer kidnapping, his eventual murder, and the officially unexplained death of his former captors in a Munich prison. Hansen describes the process of the making of the film, then draws on Kluge's notions in order to demonstrate where they manifest themselves in the film itself. She describes his realism as one of protest. Meaning is created by the spectator, it is not absolutely prescribed by the film itself. The cinematic discourse is similar to the stream of associations in the human mind, which Kluge believes is a moment of resistance against an unbearable reality. The duty of the director is to stimulate curiosity, memory, correlation, and stubbornness; while the strategy includes a transgression of genres, neither strict fiction nor documentary genres are left to themselves, but are in the end broken. The film considered here does just that: individually directed vignettes, some fictive some documentary, are edited together, which leaves the film's status regarding genre in doubt. The film also contrasts with television reportage to the extent that the former breaks with the highly selective constraints and aims of television news (1981a). Germany in

Autumn achieves this by remaining open to contingencies along the production process, contradictions, and inconsistencies; as an attempt at communicative praxis it aims to provide the basis for an alternatively organised public sphere, which also requires the co-existence of other films in the cultural milieu with similar goals. Hansen's later article (1985) includes a review of Yesterday Girl (Abschied von gestern), which is Kluge's first feature film. She notes various Brechtian techniques in his work, e.g. distanciation. Also, the critic demonstrates the influence of Benjamin and Bloch, a mixture of utopian messianism and Marxism, on Kluge.

While Hansen provides good analyses of Kluge's films in relation to his theories, she often appears more an advocate and less a critic of his project. It is this writer's and Bruck's work that the present thesis will most notably complement.

C. ASSESSMENT OF THE STATE OF GERMAN FILM CULTURE; ON KLUGE'S SOCIO-THEORETICAL COLLABORATIONS WITH OSKAR NEGT

Several articles review Kluge and Negt's Geschichte und Eigensinn (history/story and autonomy/stubbornness). Bowie's article (1985) is entirely dedicated to the book and furnishes a good analysis. He investigates how the authors reformulate among many other things Marx's theory of labour, and their notion of a proletarian public sphere. An interesting

insight, notes Bowie, is that the authors effectively invert Foucault's theory of power, i.e. Negt and Kluge maintain that wherever there is oppression, there is always resistance (1985: 185). In a second article, Adelson (1987) compares and contrasts the German writer Sloterdijk's book Kritik der zynischen Vernunft (critique of cynical reason) with Negt and Kluge's book. All three writers were at one point a part of the Neue Subjektivität (New Subjectivity) literary movement and other alternative movements in the Sixties and Seventies. They return the notion of the human body back to critical theory and explore the notion of the subject in relation to contemporary critical consciousness (Subjektivität) (1987: 60f.). For instance, Negt and Kluge see the human tongue as an organ of orientation that mediates between interior and exterior spaces; this orientation in turn depends upon the existence of a public sphere linking together the public with the intimate (1987: 61f.). Thus, the body becomes "the filter for all human experience" (1987: 61). However, subjectivity remains something more than merely the sum of all things private, which entails a potential escape from the structures of domination. The writers develop the recursive proposition: subjectivity is historically determined, while history is subjectively determined (1987: 66). In a short introduction to selected translated excerpts from Negt and Kluge's second book, Roberts (1985: 198) notes how important the power of history figures in their thesis, and how it makes a

significant claim on the present. Bowie's analysis is less important, since I am more concerned with the earlier Kluge/Negt book (1993), in which the author Sloterdijk plays no role.

D. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The aim of this literature review is to survey the current state of the field of research on Kluge and then situate the present thesis itself in relation to it in order to provide a rational motivation for subsequent chapters.

While several critics and authors above emphasise Brecht's theoretical influence over Kluge's project, many also include a disclaimer that acknowledges some influence from Adorno but seldom pursue it systematically. Even though Kluge can be interpreted as borrowing certain stylistic traits from Brecht, merely possessing and utilising them is not in itself adequate to the purposes of explaining Kluge's larger project. To confuse style with deeper theoretical concerns would be a great disservice to all. To make use of selected, stylistic motifs like estrangement (Verfremdungseffekt) and montage does not necessarily qualify one to be a Brechtian but rather perhaps at most influenced by him; for Kluge is very selective in regard to Brecht, he does not admit for example Brecht's important didactic approach into his realism. As we shall see in the next few chapters, Kluge's antagonistic realism proves

to constitute itself very much in reaction to fundamental analyses in Adorno's writings on the cinema and art. I shall argue that it is most likely the case that Kluge takes more from Adorno than from Brecht, with qualifications such as the Adornian problem of the unavoidable photographic image in film. With Adorno's influence in mind the interpretation of Kluge's work becomes in general deeper and more complete, for implicit to the form and subject matter of his films and literary works lie important aspects of Adorno's critique of the mass media.

CHAPTER II: TOWARDS AND ON ANTAGONISTIC REALISM

What you notice as realism [...] is not necessarily or certainly real. The potential and the historical roots and the detours of possibilities also belong to it. The realistic result, the actual result, is only an abstraction that has murdered all the possibilities for the moment. But these possibilities will recur. Which is why I don't believe too much in documentary realism: because it does not describe reality. [Kluge in interview in (Dawson 1974)]

The complexity of the term 'realism' requires some conceptual and historical analysis in order to make Kluge's particular use of it more meaningful. The first section (A) concerns the conceptual aspects and historical moments of the term, viz. its putative origin in 1848 in Courbet's réalisme, the Weimar debates on Realism-Expressionism/Anti-Realism, Soviet Socialist Realism, Italian Neo-Realism in the cinema, the French New Wave's revival of Brechtian motifs, certain West German adaptations of realism, and problems with its reception by German critics. The section is organised chronologically and according to particular movements, thus: 1848-1918, 1918-1945, and 1945-1989. This brief history should also in part establish the radicality of Kluge's reconception of the notion of realism in the arts, which is analysed below in the second section (B). While the aim of this history telling is to bring Kluge's antagonistic realism into relief, it is by no

means the intent to show that all the branches of realism lead to Kluge but rather, as will be shown, that many indeed contrast with his conception. The third section (C) draws some of the relations between the two preceding sections together.

A. AN HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION TO THE NOTION OF AESTHETIC REALISM

1. 1848-1918: FRANCE, "IL FAUT ÊTRE DE SON TEMPS!"²³

The term realism has doubtless inherited a number of prejudices. The semantic confusion central to the term involves both vagueness and ambiguity. Its vagueness is mainly due to its popular usage in a non-specialised manner; whereas its ambiguity has chiefly been caused by inattentive critics who employ the term as a synonym for 'representation' and, occasionally, 'naturalism'.

Another problem for the term arises from the tendency in the field of art history to slot certain artistic phenomena as part of a particular historical movement of a given period; this would be, in the case of realist painting, the period between romanticism and symbolism. This tendency creates a bias that favours the interpretation of realism--as an

²³ Basic details concerning the problems with aesthetic realism, as discussed in this section, can be found in such texts as Encyclopaedia Universalis, 1984 ed., s.v. "Réalisme (Art)," by Gérald Ackermann.

artistic phenomenon--as a strictly past event, a repetition of which could only be seen as a reactionary anachronism. However, what is clearest of discussions of realism is that they nearly always refer to it in terms of its method, i.e. a 'method of realism', which itself intimates the existence of some set of principles by means of which realist works are made. Below we shall see how the term 'method' becomes historically relative in the Weimar debates.

A final general problem with realism remains aesthetic, namely, that people find that it is more an anti-art than an art, since it champions objectivity, the elimination of personal sentiment, and the suspension of intellectual control, whereby the traditional notion of beauty (and ugliness!) becomes problematical. This problem is in part a premodern, traditional reaction against modernism, of which realism can be seen as but one particular branch; and this also hints at the fact that realism and traditional Greek mimesis--often translated as 'imitation'--are strictly-speaking not completely interchangeable concepts.

Thus, three general problems in the study of realism have necessarily come to involve the term's semantic confusion, historical category as a completed, past movement, and particular modernist character.

Standard historical definitions of realism are typically formulated as follows. 'Realism' is founded on the notion that nature as external reality has an objective existence, which submits to physical causality, and in which humans as part of nature also submit to the laws of nature. These laws guide the researcher to the truth, which also often includes the causes of social injustices. The stronger the use of natural laws, the more the work becomes a part of 'naturalism'.

In 1848 the Leftist revolution in France crumbled, while some of its ideals manifested themselves in the rhetoric and work of the champions of that which came to be known as 'realism.' The philosophical roots of aesthetic realism are generally understood to have been in part motivated by the eighteenth-century French philosopher Voltaire's interpretation of John Locke's writings in British Empiricism, chiefly on epistemology and social and political philosophy, and its subsequent development in the writings of the French Sensationalists, but most especially those of Jean Jacques Rousseau. A most pertinent motif in early aesthetic realism concerning the dignity of the average person stems from Rousseau's polemic against Hobbes' more cynical moral theory of the individual. Doubtless, few realist artists choose and develop consistent theories of realism within, say, Rousseau's philosophy, most collect and mix together several sources,

romantic with anti-romantic motifs, etc. (see below).

In general, early nineteenth-century realists were very enthusiastic about modern science and especially its revolutionary impact, and thus chose their own version of the scientific method of observation, i.e. 'direct perception', as--or in place of--a style of organising the novel or painting. For it is precisely this objectifying tendency, gleaned from modern science, that so radically challenged the aristocratic and high bourgeois artistic presuppositions.

The French painter Gustave Courbet represents one of the most vociferous advocates of the realism (réalisme) of direct perception, which was in sharp contrast with the realism of the Académie. While direct perception sought to undo inherited conventions in painting and start anew with subjects from the contemporary French banal, the academicians in their academic realism held a stronger emphasis on objectivism and retained the subjects of anatomy and the ethnography of people of distant lands, and conventions of quattrocento²⁴ perspective.

²⁴ A term borrowed from the Italian, literally meaning 'four hundred', short for 'fourteen hundred', i.e. the approximate beginning of the Italian Renaissance. 'Quattrocento perspective' indicates the kind of geometrical algorithm, in vogue throughout the Renaissance, by which the artist transposed physical, three-dimensional reality onto a two-dimensional surface. It is sometimes called 'scientific perspective'.

Nochlin contributes to the study of realism the traits of the realist practitioner such as self-consciousness and single-mindedness, possessing a desire for verisimilitude, advocating the possibility of seeing the things as they are in the world, and challenging the inherited stylistic conventions (1971, 51f.). The optimism leading to the failed 1848 revolution brought to the fore, for the first time, the notion of a nobility of labour and labourers; the latter became the principal subject of many realist paintings, viz. Courbet (Nochlin 1971, 112).

At select moments, realism and romanticism blend, certain motifs are shared by both. The motif of "being strictly of one's own time" (*il faut être de son temps*) was shared between the romantics and the realists. In order to achieve a greater degree of verisimilitude, the painters took their canvases outside their studios and chose to paint on-site 'en plein air' (Ibid., 143f.). The realist painter often presented himself as naïve of the ways of conventional painting techniques and styles; this was only occasionally in fact the case, since most had to unlearn their techniques so as to achieve a greater alleged authenticity to the object limned.

In an incisive study of literary representation across the history of Europe, the critic Auerbach stresses the sharp split between the 'mimesis' of both the classicists and

neoclassicists and the modern realism²⁵ of nineteenth-century France (Auerbach 1953, 554). The concept of mimesis, i.e. 'imitation', has its origin in the writings of Plato (Republic X), and was in part continued, in part embellished by Aristotle and other subsequent ancient Greek philosophers. What modern realism most markedly relinquished was the mimetic hierarchy of representation, e.g. that "everyday practical reality could find a place in literature only within the frame of a low or intermediate kind of style [...] as either grotesquely comic or pleasant, light, colorful, and elegant entertainment" (Auerbach 1953, 554). In contrast, modern realism radically mixed the so-called low with the high, le grotesque and le quotidien with le sublime.

2. 1918-1945: WEIMAR REPUBLIC, SOVIET UNION, THIRD REICH.

The so-called Weimar debates on realism and anti-realism--or, expressionism--took place in this period in the German language between, among others, György Lukács, on the Soviet side, and Ernst Bloch, Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, and Bertolt Brecht, each from his own particular theoretical standpoint. The debates themselves were revived--since Alfred Kurella's 1934 critique of expressionism--on the occasion of

²⁵ Auerbach also demonstrates the existence of a type of Medieval realism, which he calls 'figural', based on the story of Christ and thus far from the Ancients' hierarchy of literary representation. Certain realisms existed in Europe between the time of Greek mimesis and much later classicist revivals (1953, 555f.).

Hitler's 1937 "Degenerate Art" exhibition in Munich.²⁶ In very general terms, expressionism and other modernist styles were attacked by both the Fascists and the Soviets; each side blamed the artistic movement(s) for, or at least indicative of, the other's rise.

Several of the arguments found therein take up motifs in part resulting from the uniquely German 1879 Sozialistengesetz of Bismarck, i.e. a law against, in general, the right of the free expression of socialist ideas and debates. This law forced activists of socialist beliefs to form a political underground, and in eventual consequence helped to create the situation for the development of an indigenous notion of politicised art. Brecht's mentor, Erwin Piscator, for example, had already developed a theatre form based on such tenets, e.g. theatre should challenge to established views of art, a form of political art should be further developed, and the belief that new technological media can have a socially positive effect. Moreover, at the time of the Russian Revolution and after, there was some cross-pollination particularly in the field of aesthetics and its relation to society at large. (This is discussed in further detail below.)

²⁶ See below in this section for more details on cultural policy in the Third Reich.

While the Expressionist movement is recognised as the first modernist one indigenous to Germany, it has been the victim of multiple interpretations according to the polemics then at hand. The term 'Expressionism' intimates falsely the sense that its meaning was more or less universally accepted by all its various practitioners, but even the most cursory study reveals how internally divided the term's meaning remained, e.g. the Berlin branch conceived itself quite differently to the Bavarian one. Such differences in type and quality figure in some of counter arguments to the outright dismissal of the movement by the Soviet supporters.

György Lukács set off the debates with his 1934 article "Grösse und Verfall des Expressionismus" (Rise and Decline of Expressionism) in the journal Internationale Literatur²⁷. Critics of Lukács' critique of expressionism as an anti-realism claim that he constructs at the heart of his counter-arguments an expressionist strawman which in turn has no validity in detail. In particular, Lukács categorically states his preferences and dislikes. He is against any anti-realism that falls under the modernist rubric; against any form of extreme or arbitrary subjectivity; against distortion without any point of reference; against the representation of pure essences or allegorically projected abstractions; against

²⁷ The rest of the debate took place among the pages of the Moscow-based German-language journal Das Wort.

any undue degree of emphasis on the phenomenal; and against the incomplete portrayal of the human being (Lukács in Taylor 1977, 60 f.). This critique consequently applies equally to Dadaism, Surrealism, Naturalism, Expressionism, Existentialist literature, and the theatre of the Absurd.²⁸ In particular, Expressionism is faulty in as much as it reflects the mystifying effects of Neo-Kantianism, Machism and Vitalism; it seeks essences through mere stylisation and abstraction; it is rendered a simple subjectivism by its use of words expressively not referentially; moreover it lays the way for an elite take over and is strongly akin to fascism (Taylor, 70 f.). For Lukács, realism ought to envision essence and phenomenon in a dialectical relationship in objective reality, not merely as products of human consciousness. His concept of aesthetic reflection, which he attempts to support with the examples of Zola, Strindberg and Hauptmann, is expressed in his statement that "art reflects the reality that exists independently of our consciousness" (Taylor, 75); thereby he evidently wishes to move art closer to a type of social science, for he also leaves as a blind spot in his approach the real practice of the artist/writer who is also constrained by the practical limits of human consciousness. Brecht takes up this point in his criticism of Lukács below.

²⁸ Even though they do not typically fall smoothly under these categories, Kafka and Joyce also land on Lukács' anti-realist list.

One of the first pointed critiques of Lukács' position was made by Ernst Bloch in his 1938 article in Das Wort.²⁹ He finds fault with Lukács' selection of Expressionist writers, which the former views as a deliberate misrepresentation of the best of the movement's literature and shows that Lukács had only received the names and plot outlines through secondary sources. Bloch emphasises the good intentions of the Expressionists, cites their anti-war cries as partial proof, and notes the revolutionary impulse at the heart of the movement. He argues that while history may be moving towards the revolution, in matters of detail any particular movement may not necessarily be perfect, as he concedes. Nevertheless, the movement sought and attained a much greater degree of authenticity than that endorsed by the Academy or by Socialist Realism; for these reasons, Bloch refutes the charge that Expressionism was the complicit harbinger for the fascists.

Brecht originally entered the Berlin theatre scene in 1925, whereupon he joined with other writers outside of the academy to form the literary Gruppe 1925, whose membership included the likes of Döblin and Tucholsky. After spending several years under his mentor Piscator and once the latter made his Wagnerian turn, Brecht quit Piscator's theatre and worked out his own vision of what a theatre piece should be in his

²⁹ The two had been good friends during their youth; while Lukács had introduced Bloch to Christian mysticism, Bloch had introduced Lukács to Marxism.

Lehrstück (instructional piece or play). With this type of play, Brecht sought to reconceptualise the notion of theatre audience altogether, leaving no distinguishable space between what was formerly called the actor and the spectator; thus there would be greater interaction through discussion and questionnaires. The aim of these plays was to instruct all agents concerned in the process of dialectical thought and to anticipate and prepare for a bright, changed, socialist future. Brecht's concept of epic theatre takes the, albeit ambitious and vague, aim of "creating a picture of reality in the best possible way".

While Brecht only ever accepted a relative artistic autonomy with its non-trivial social effects and infinite mediation, Lukács believed in art's strict autonomy outside practical social intercourse, save at best the refinement of the senses. The latter Brecht labelled in pejorative terms the "culinary attitude". Lukács's conception of what plot ought to be emphasised the contrast between what characters did in action and their self-consciousness; in general he proposed a dialectic between human existence and consciousness. However Brecht criticised Lukács' view of theatre and literature for being radically reductive to the point of a mere narrative formalism, one which posited several strong necessary conditions, only with which could the text be considered realist. At the heart of Lukács' critique lies, Brecht

correctly perceived, an idealised image of a pared-down nineteenth-century realism; against this Brecht argued for an anti-conventionalist realism, one depending more on the particular situation, exposing causal interconnections in society, and one concrete but permitting abstraction. As a man of the theatre, Brecht claims that these broad conditions would make art practicable (praktikabel) and permit an interventionary (eingreifend) aspect to the artwork. While his earlier writing is peppered with the term alienation (Entfremdung)--borrowed from Hegel--, from 1937 on he preferred a term of his own devise, viz. distanciation (Verfremdung), which sets as its prime goal the elimination of the sense of empathy between actors and spectators. Instead of invoking an act of self-forgetfulness when involved in the theatre plot as in traditional bourgeois theatre and its Aristotelean catharsis, Brecht seeks to keep the audience in a self-aware, critical state, one active and participating in the creation of alternative situations. Often Brecht draws analogies to the typical sports audience for his own reconception of the theatre's. Similarly, Brecht argues for the modernist preoccupation with fragmentation and disruption over the traditional interest in continuity and the seamlessly organic or natural form of the artwork.

Brecht's critical reception does play an important role in explaining the reasons for the growth in interest in his own

and Kluge's work on the part of Anglo-American critics. Forced into the nomadic life of an exile in 1933, Brecht passed through several countries, including Sweden, the Soviet Union and the U.S.A., before returning to the promise of his own theatre in (East) Berlin after the Second World War. Touring France in the mid-Fifties, his Berliner Ensemble troupe turned a few crucial heads in Paris, namely the then critics Roland Barthes and B. Dort, whose writings in turn spawned special issues on Brecht's work by the then still nascent film journal "Cahiers du cinéma". Till 1968 the French critics were only interested in the formal concerns of his plays and literature; thereafter Jean-Luc Godard, in particular, began to seriously take up Brecht's work's political aspects. Very important to the rekindling of Anglo-American interest in Brecht is owed to the British film journal "Screen" between 1974 and 1976, when it translated en masse many articles from the German Left, although typically mediated by structuralists and post-structuralists of the French post-1968 Left such as Marxist Louis Althusser, the film critic Jean Baudry and the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. In West Germany from 1962 on--the year of the Oberhausen Manifesto--various filmmakers took critical looks at Brecht's writing and responded to it either in writing, film content, or by film practice. The manifesto itself retains Brecht's, and others's, anti-conventionalism in its rebellion against Papa's moribund cinema of an earlier generation.

Walter Benjamin waded into the Weimar debates through the publication of his much-discussed 1936 essay "L'oeuvre d'art à l'époque de sa reproduction mécanisée" (Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit) in the Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung³⁰ of the Frankfurt School émigrés in New York. This article shows the influence of Brecht, among others, which provoked several well-documented theoretical spats with Adorno. One Brechtian motif appears to be the enthusiastic view that, with the alleged decline and loss of the traditional aura in art by virtue of its reproducibility in the new media, the modern artwork could now lead as a tool to the emancipation of the masses. Art could be at most only relatively autonomous; for photography and film destroyed the appearance of uniqueness and rootedness in cultural tradition.

Benjamin promises that film represents the most radical manifestation of this tendency in mass culture. Against precisely this optimism Adorno inveighed; for he challenged Benjamin for his use of Brecht, surrealism, and his glowing appreciation of the mass media. Adorno argued that the avant-garde autonomous artwork declined due to its internal development of formal rules, i.e. it became technically planned, and thereby lost some of the interest gained by its

³⁰ See Snyder's systematic analysis of Benjamin's famous essay (in Smith 1989, 158 ff.).

former mythical and fetishised qualities, namely "auratic" qualities. Against the Brechtian use-value for art Adorno argues that such a compromise of the autonomy of art would impoverish the realisation of its potential. Finally, against the notion of an aura-less film, i.e. through the process of Entkunstung³¹ or relieving art of its alleged "aura" and thereby turning it into non-art, Adorno argues that film has an extremely high degree of aura, viz. through its irrational, emotive use of music and its glossy seamless mass-produced sheen, for it appears in effect beyond human grasp.

Adorno's thoughts on the cinema and aesthetics are discussed in detail in the following chapter. Of importance to this chapter is Adorno's critique of nineteenth-century realism as a model for authentic twentieth-century literature or art, which pits his approach against Lukács's own. At the root of Adorno's arguments lies his conception of a negative dialectics, which for societal reasons upholds the principle of non-identity between subject and object, word and referent, image and thing represented.

Similar in many respects to the above German-language debates over realism and its relation to contemporary society, in the Twenties many artists and critics in the Soviet Union were trying to determine truly revolutionary forms of art in each

³¹ Literally, "de-artisting".

medium. Many of these groups and factions had been influenced in part by apolitical artistic movements from the inter-war period, such as (Russian) Formalism. Two of importance to the present study are Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948) and Dziga Vertov (né Denis Kaufman, 1896-1954). The first advocates a type of strong dialectical montage that tells stories with professional actors, wherein one shot following another is designed so as to produce an interpretable visual conflict, i.e. a dialectical moment. The second bitterly attacks any use of the "bourgeois theatrical model" in Soviet cinema, for he interpreted historical materialism in a very literal sense, i.e. the film medium must "explore living phenomena" (p.24); whereby Vertov's Kinoks (cameramen) were trained to observe--and film--place, person/thing in motion, and themes which were beyond any particular person or place. In essence, Vertov advocates a type of documentary film. For him montage is the organisation of the visible world (Vertov 25f.). What he also exposed in his films was the materiality of the medium itself, e.g. the editing process in his film Man with Movie Camera (Chelovek s kinoapparatom, 1929), which hints at a common modernist motif; and this reflexivity of film in film and on film was probably one important aspect of his filmmaking practice that led to his later downfall (see below).

One crucial aspect of the anti-realist, especially post-WWII, stance is that it often attempts to link all forms of realism

to that chosen under Stalin--with all his authoritarian associations--in the Soviet Union and subsequently exported to member states of the Iron Curtain after WWII. Doubtless this alleged link, a strategic confusion of the general with the particular, acted most pejoratively in general against all realist artists in the politically-sensitive West Germany of the Cold War period. For the sake of brevity, let us concentrate on two moments in the history of Soviet cultural policy, to wit: the centralisation of artists under the state, and the formal definition of the legitimate Soviet artwork. Until his death in 1924 Lenin argued in favour of retaining the best of European, albeit bourgeois, culture;³² which was occasionally met with dissent from various self-declared "proletarian" movements. However, in 1932, Stalin moved to unify the by-then factious artistic movements under Soviet Writers' Union, and thereby sharply limit any competing--and occasionally dissenting--artistic movements and their respective notions of authentic, revolutionary artistic work (Liehm 37f.).

In 1934, Andrei Zhdanov, with some help from the official state writer Maxim Gorky, made his infamous speech to the Congress of Soviet Writers, in which he lays out the

³² Lenin, with Stalin and Lukács, believed that the most progressive class is the natural heir to all the best of past artworks and literatures. The precise meaning of 'best' remained a point of contention.

definition of Socialist Realism (Zhdanov 410f.). According to Zhdanov, the success of Soviet literature is linked to the success of socialist construction; while actual bourgeois literature is in irreparable decline in capitalist societies, displaying the symptom of the pessimistic writer, while Soviet literature is blossoming out of the former's remains. Following a remark by Stalin, the Soviet writer is an engineer of human souls. The Soviet writer must thereby: depict reality "truthfully, reality in its revolutionary development", in order to "[ideologically remould and educate] the toiling people in the spirit of socialism" (411); develop socialist realism with its materialist base as a revolutionary romanticism, portraying Soviet heroes and a "glimpse of tomorrow"; master the techniques of the writing trade, and use the literary heritage as a store-house of weapons; self-educate oneself in socialist ideology, and work to bring the lagging consciousness of the people up to the level of the revolution (Ibid.). Although the original audience of Zhdanov's speech was literary writers, quickly thereafter its principles were adapted and applied to all other art forms in the Soviet Union. Two important filmmaker-casualties of the reign of Zhdanov and his policies were the avant-gardists Sergei Eisenstein and Dziga Vertov.

Although competing with one another for a position within early revolutionary Russia, Eisenstein and Vertov

independently sought to ground in principle and in practice a genuine Soviet cinema sharply distinct from the conventions of Hollywood. However, the strict tenets of Socialist Realism did not allow for any such "formal" experimentation; and, consequently these, and other artists, were labelled "formalists"--here, by one another--and were implored to mend their ways or otherwise fear imminent persecution. Finally, Eisenstein won some favour with Stalin et alii by generously reconceiving his thoughts on the cinema in terms of the tenets of Socialist Realism; he continued to make films until his death. In contrast, Vertov never succeeded in winning over the authorities and remained closer to his original program; he was forbidden to make films from 1937 on. In particular, these two filmmakers have continued to influence nearly all innovative filmmakers outside of the East Bloc, especially those who are concerned with the problem of adapting elements of socio-political theory to filmmaking practice, viz. Jean-Luc Godard and Alexander Kluge. Nonetheless, the influence of Zhdanov's Socialist Realism lasted at least until 1956 in the East Bloc, but longer in the Soviet Union.

In the Thirties the Scottish documentarist John Grierson³³

³³ Grierson studied for his doctorate at the University of Chicago. While accepting many of Walter Lippmann's insights into the growing mystification of democracy, he rejected his pessimism and envisioned a way out through the popular use of propagandistic documentary film (Barnouw, 85 ff.).

effectively brought the British documentary film--and, a little later, the entire National Film Board of Canada--into being. While Grierson's notion of documentary film as a "creative interpretation of reality" doubtless plays an important role within the wider history of world cinema, in the particular case of Kluge it is of less consequence, since Kluge argues against this type of documentary in his general arguments against "pure documentary" forms.³⁴

In Germany, the Nazi period (1933-1945) brought with it, among many despicable social policies, one of which drastically constrained artistic practice and subject matter. One of the most blatant instances of this change in policy manifested itself in 1937, in the form of the so-called Munich Degenerate Art Exhibition (Entartete Kunst), where Hitler publically, severely ridiculed the proponents of Expressionism, among others, and deemed their work unfit for the German people and thus radically limited the scope of artistic expression in Germany (Hitler 423ff.). In his speech at the inauguration of the exhibition, Hitler interpreted most of the post-WWI artistic movements as symptoms of societal decay, which was furthered by the actions and control of the media by "Judaism," especially in the profession of art criticism (423f.). In place of such allegedly degenerate forms of

³⁴ Recall his quotation at the head of this chapter, and see section B below.

artistic expression, i.e. said to be of the times, the Nazis sought the atemporal, eternal values inherent to a "true German art" based on the people (Volk) and not on mere subjective tendencies of the individual artist.

Many formerly successful German artists were psychologically devastated and humiliated, then immediately banished from their profession in Germany when Hitler declared that

[...] I have come to the final inalterable decision to clean house, just as I have done in the domain of political confusion, and from now on rid the German art life of its phrase-mongering (424-5).

'True German art' came to mean kitsch³⁵ and the petty-bourgeois predilection for such subject matter as mountain landscapes, male athletes, fawning women-mothers, and Teutonic-mythological scenes. Needless to say, Nazi policies in general induced the emigration of some of the most important of German writers, artists, and performers, e.g. Thomas Mann and Bert Brecht; and, consequently, this hollowed out the then-living German culture, the effects of which are seen in the years immediately following WWII, most notably the cultural preoccupation with regaining its inter-war artistic heritage and catching up with the rest of contemporary international culture, viz. the United States.

³⁵ Here, I follow Calinescu's sharp distinction between the products of popular mass culture and kitsch, the latter of which he defines as a cultural product which survives due to its cliché, familiar nature and has pretensions to being recognised as a work of art (1987, 225ff.). Evidently, popular cultural producers almost never make the latter claim.

3. 1945-90: ITALY, FRANCE, WEST GERMANY, GREAT BRITAIN.

The Italian cinema of Neo-Realism (1940-1955) was arguably the strongest realist national cinema in the post-WWII, non-communist countries. Rome, Open City and Germania anno zero (Germany, Year Zero) are particularly pointed films which concern the spoils of the war.

One of the most articulate supporters of the neo-realists was the screenwriter-critic Cesare Zavattini who, in order to illustrate the details of neo-realism, gives the heuristic example of the process of a woman going and buying a pair of shoes (Zavattini 30). Out of such a banal event--in Zavattini's terminology, 'fact'--the writer believes that it "[...] opens us to a vast and complex world rich in importance and values, in its practical, social, economic, psychological motives" (p.30). He continues by employing the metaphor of a mine (of reality) for each 'fact'. As with many strong realists, Zavattini is against the use of imaginary heroes and instead encourages characters who arise out of everyday life (p.30). While appealing to the "responsibility and dignity of every human being [...], we must identify ourselves with what we are" (p.30). Another important motif in Italian neo-realism is the notion of forefronting the process of questioning the realities shown on the part of the members of the audience.

Moreover, director Roberto Rossellini also nuances the movement thus: Neo-realism is also a response to the genuine need to see men for what they are, with humility and without recourse to fabricating the exceptional; it means an awareness that the exceptional is arrived at through the investigation of reality (Rossellini 31). Furthermore, he states, "To me realism is simply the artistic form of truth" (32). The central aim of the film is to pose problems to the spectators and make people think; and this is achieved through a critical investigation of reality.

Whereas much is discussed concerning the depiction and questioning of social reality in the Neo-Realist camp, very little indeed addresses the problem of aesthetic practice, e.g. the choices of lighting, camera angle, and editing styles; in this regard the neo-realists remain naïve, especially in contrast with the early Soviet avant-garde filmmakers.

An important bridge between the Italian neo-realists and post-war French cinema is the French critic and champion of film realism, André Bazin, who was also a co-founder, along with Eric Rohmer, of the celebrated Paris-based film journal Cahiers du Cinéma. He defined film realism in part in terms of how well certain technical aspects specific to the medium could be utilised in depicting the everyday world in a

narrative plot form. His realist ideals typically comprised film with plots from the working-class banal, strong reliance upon empathy in the reception of the films, shots of long duration, and as little intrusive artifice as possible. Bazin inspired a younger generation to take up an interest in the problem of an artistic cinema; by consequence, French cinema was brought into an exciting new era by the so-called French New Wave directors, e.g. François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard.³⁶ Here the latter filmmaker is the most important figure for the purposes of situating and studying Kluge.

The films of Godard's most explicit, intentionally political period (1967-1970) are of most significance to Kluge: La Chinoise, ou plutôt à la chinoise; Loin du Viet-nam; Week-end; Le Gai savoir; Un Film comme les autres; British Sounds (See You at Mao); Pravda; Vent d'Est; Lotte in Italia; Jusqu'à la victoire (Palestine will Win). As the titles appear to indicate, Godard's eclectic interests here lie in Maoism, early Soviet avant-garde--after Vertov's Kinopravda movement-, and analyses of various forms of imperialism, viz. American, British and Israeli. The constellation of Godard's work is truly one tough conceptual knot to unravel; he writes with motifs taken from Surrealism, Brecht, Dziga Vertov, Mao, Marx,

³⁶ According to the November newsletter published by the Goethe Institute, Godard received the 1995 Theodor W. Adorno Prize in Frankfurt, for which, cites the commentary, the two share a strong interest in montage techniques.

Lenin, and Bazin. Godard's influence on Kluge can be briefly summarised: inspired the belief in the possibility of renewing and reorienting a post-war national cinema by issuing manifestos and pressuring the respective government to change its film/cultural policies, and proved that Brechtian stylistic motifs could be adapted to the cinema.

Immediately following WWII, West Germany (FRG) found itself in a complicated cultural crisis, namely the void, left by the Nazi period and its highly restrictive cultural policies, had to be filled; and this led to the wide-spread attempt to "catch up" with the rest of Western art and literature, both that part relinquished by the Nazis of before, e.g. Dadaist and Expressionist works, and during the Nazi period, i.e. New York modernism in particular.

In 1965, recent painting graduates of the Berlin Academy, while still unrecognised in the professional art world, formed a group together under the rubric "Kritischer Realismus"³⁷ (Critical Realism) (Ohff 1980, 10ff.). Critical realism, in part a reaction against the undeclared "official" post-WWII *Taschism* and the "informal style" of the early-Sixties, combined elements of Otto Dix's neo-realist style, the

³⁷ This term is also employed in discussions of the literary work of Thomas Mann, cf. Lukács's scheme for twentieth-century realism wherein 'Critical Realism' falls in between 'bourgeois realism' and 'Socialist Realism'.

photomontage of the Dadaists, and George Grosz's choice of image sources: medical texts on pathology, "gutter-press", tabloids and television. The painter Wolfgang Patrick is typical of this group, especially when he takes up the theme of the alienation of the individual human being in the contemporary sea of technology (Ibid.).

What the critic Michael Schwarz finds most new in Berlin realism is the shift in subject matter from, say, the Expressionists's socially-peripheral figures, e.g. prostitute and criminals, to the Everyman; and this shift, Schwarz claims, owes much to American Pop art and photography (Schwarz 1987, 11ff.). He typifies Berlin realism as concerning most notably: the theme of the human being in the modern city, emphasising the "spontaneous translation of existential situations" whereby artistic techniques are not time-consumptive, making meaningful allusions to past art, and having an ambivalent content in the works which permits a possibility of escape--or, a hint of utopia (Ibid., 91).

4. EXCURSUS: ON THE ISSUE OF AESTHETIC REALISM IN WEST GERMAN CULTURAL CIRCLES

The problem of an aesthetic realism is still open to dispute in several countries, most notably in West Germany. The reasons for this find their legitimacy in earlier debates and interpretations of realism in German-language critical

writing. The British literary historian Bullivant introduces the anti-realist motifs in the history of German literature thus:

[...] there is [in Anglo-American literary criticism] a complete absence of the vehemence and the frequently dismissive tone of German debates on the subject over the years. To be confronted with such condemnation of realist writing is a shock to the reader of English and American novels, who is very much aware of a realist novel tradition that extends from the eighteenth century right up to the present, with a general acceptance among novelists, critics and scholars as to the continued viability of realist writing. This is not so in Germany; we can observe in recent times a 'differentness' about the German literary situation, stemming essentially from a resistance to realism rooted in a long-established tradition of anti-realism. (Bullivant 5)

For not only Bullivant, Schopenhauer is considered to have made one of the strongest and lasting definitions of the novel, and while quoting him Bullivant notes:

'[...] Aufgabe des Romanschreibers...besteht darin, daß man mit dem möglichst geringen Aufwand von äußerem Leben das innere in die stärkste Bewegung bringe [The task of the novelists remains that one should bring the inner life, with the most possibly modest expenditure of the outer one, into the greatest movement].' Moreover, Schopenhauer makes it obvious that this sort of idea generated two criteria for the evaluation of a work of literature; for him a novel would 'desto höherer und edlerer Art seyn, je mehr inneres und je weniger äußeres Leben er darstellt [be of a higher and nobler type, the more inner and less outer life it represents].' (Bullivant 9)

Evidently, according to Bullivant there persists a latent perhaps religious or idealist anti-realist tendency in the history of German-language literature. After the Second World War, in West Germany, these criteria for good literature were invoked in many arguments against realist projects, in part fuelled by a denial of the real events of the war, in part

adopted from the anti-communist rhetoric of the Cold-War period. While Kluge is one of the early few to take up the problem of post-war realism, albeit a quite radical strain, it is generally considered that the autodidact novelist³⁸ Günter Grass represents a leading figure for the anti-realist tendency (Bullivant 1987).³⁹

³⁸ This title appears to be commonly used even by Grass himself; it simply indicates that he learned the craft from outside the academic system, i.e. without a literary degree.

³⁹ Recently, the renowned realist critic Marcel Reich-Ranicki vehemently attacked Grass's attempt at a post-reunification novel (Der Spiegel: August, 1995); such disputes are not uncommon between the German literary camps according to Bullivant.

B. ON KLUGE'S ANTAGONISTIC CONCEPT OF REALISM

Kluge's basic text on the concept of realism was first published in his 1975 book Gelegenheitsarbeit einer Sklavin. Zur realistischen Methode (Occasional Work of a Female Slave: Towards the Realistic Method), part of which includes the screenplay with the same name and the final chapter "Kommentare zum antagonistischen Realismusbegriff" (Commentaries on the antagonistic concept of realism). The latter is also Kluge's first attempt at conceiving a theory of realism for film which also forms part of a lively polemic over the ownership of experience; and this contribution proves most revealing, especially with respect to his general theoretical position and to what extent it borrows from other writers of similar ilk. In general, his conception lies within the above post-Weimar reworking of realism. Moreover, not only is there a sense of Brecht's early writings on contemporary realism, but also many deep traces of Adorno's thought on aesthetics and mass media. As we shall see below, and especially in the following chapter, Kluge is indeed in serious dialogue with Adorno's critique of the film medium, which may in the end unduly bias his underlying theory of film.

Kluge's principal text is subdivided into six main parts, each in turn further subdivided. The first part, Sham Tranquility (Scheinfrienden), contains numerous anecdotes and vignettes

which appear to motivate and illustrate the following more explicit discussion of realism. The second part contrasts realist method and the approach of merely choosing that which is "filmic", as two sets of principles for filmmaking. In the third part, on the five senses and their conceptualisation in the filmmaking process, Kluge also limns a five-stage method for his antagonistic concept of realism. The fourth takes as its subject some of the ideological pressures of reality. In the fifth part, and one particularly relevant to the film after which the book is named, Kluge presents part of his continuing polemic on the nature of a women's cinema and the place and characterisation of women in his films.⁴⁰ The final part is dedicated to establishing the importance of some notion of fantasy and imagination (Phantasie), both in the making and design of the film and in its reception. Only those parts most relevant to the present study of realism are discussed in detail below.

For the purpose of this analysis of Kluge's text, I have chosen to work with both the original version (Kluge 1975) and Acuff's unpublished translation (Kluge 1980)⁴¹. Wherever I suspect that a clarification is needed in the translated text, I shall either provide an explanation or the German term, e.g.

⁴⁰ See, for example, the writings of members of the "Frauen-film" and in English (Rich 1983).

⁴¹ All the following references indicate page numbers in the translation, unless otherwise stated.

Acuff chooses to translate 'antagonistischer Realismusbegriff' as 'notion of antagonistic realism,'⁴² whereas I would also choose 'antagonistic concept of realism.' Although this may appear at first a bit unnecessarily fastidious, it rather preserves the richness in meaning of Kluge's text, for the latter alone intimates some of Adorno's concerns on the problem of identity and concept, among other topics, in his 1966 book Negative Dialektik.

1. The Realistic Method and the So-called "Filmic"⁴³

Against the reductive use of deductive method, i.e. the application of general rules and laws to particular problems, by which "the abstract determines the concrete as it destroys it" (Kluge 1980, 18), Kluge claims that film appears to offer the possibility of an alternative. Although a film may occasionally purport to invoke an inductive method, some version of the deductive method typically remains in camouflage. It in fact offers the opportunity of having basic material derived from concrete images, the established value system of the cinema allows no possibility for new ideas, and the medium cannot approach language in precision or universality. As in the sciences, notes Kluge while following

⁴² A back translation here would unfortunately read 'Vorstellung von antagonistischem Realismus'.

⁴³ Acuff chooses 'The Realistic and So-called "Filmic" Methods' for 'Die realistische Methode und das so-called "Filmische"', even though Kluge is here distinguishing 'method' from the vaguer 'approach.'

Lukács' 1922 collection of essays History and Class Consciousness, a "deductive demarcation of boundaries precedes observation"; similarly for Kluge, in both documentary and fiction film, "[t]he most intensive observation or most plausible plot already presupposes the formalism of these genres, which excludes material relationships" (19). For Kluge, the two basic approaches to film are: following the Lumière brothers (1862-1954, 1864-1948) and their observation of reality, and Georges Méliès (1861-1938) the magician turned fiction filmmaker; these together Kluge calls the two primal cells (Urzelle) of the cinema from which two corresponding genres⁴⁴ have developed. However, contemporary mass media, viz. television and the feature film, have reversed the functions of the genres by blending fiction and documentary to such a high degree that, on television, the documentary becomes fictional, while, in features, fiction adopts a documentary appearance, e.g. the Nazi film (19).

While the basic elements of film, e.g. colour, sound and formats⁴⁴, are highly specialised, Kluge claims that certain aspects remain constant, especially the general formation of a film as "thin slices of reality, snapshots, [...] produced and put together to form a coherent entity" (1980, 19). While

⁴⁴ This is Kluge's own term and is not employed in the conventional sense, viz. while the whole cinema of fiction films is not typically conceived of as a genre, the unity of the formal and plot conventions of, say, the Western are arguably considered to constitute one.

this may appear to resonate with Bazin's prescription for realism, i.e. the (realist) film as a 'death mask', the two conceptions sharply contrast in detail. For Bazin⁴⁵ supports a formalist type of conception of realism, viz. through spatial contiguity and temporal continuity--otherwise said, shots of long duration over quickly edited ones or exdiagetic ones--, whereas Kluge refuses to hold any particular formal attributes beyond possible question.

For Kluge, the fundamental interest of the documentary film presupposes the three "cameras" (Kluge's term) employed in the process of its making, i.e. the technical camera itself, the one in the mind of the filmmaker, and the a-priori patterns of the documentary film that are tied to certain genre expectations on the part of the members of the audience: thus, in short, "[o]ne cannot simply say that the documentary film portrays facts" (20). These three "cameras" or schemata guide the filmmaking process and the final regrouping of the photographed isolated facts; this process is very selective, i.e. it omits much more material than it includes. Kluge's conclusion is that the documentary itself is "no more realistic than the fiction film".

Kluge takes the following quotation from the still-

⁴⁵ For more on Bazin's concept of realism, see the section on Italian neo-realist cinema above.

untranslated, polemical book, Handbuch wider das Kino (Handbook against the cinema), by the German film critic Peter Streschek:

Film is something made, composed, artificial--the ominous side of Sternberg's hypothesis that the ideal film would be completely synthetic. In the end, what has to be understood is that the cinematographer's oft-cited 'documentary authenticity' is nothing else than the high stylization of the opera. Social reality does not logically order itself during the filming of a given event. This fact, in view of prevalent misunderstandings, is to be placed in perspective by repeating a remark by Brecht: "The situation is getting so complicated because, less than ever, a simple 'reproduction of reality' does not give any testimony about reality." A photograph of the Krupp Works or AEG (General Electric) tells us next to nothing about these institutions. The actual reality has sideslipped into the functional. The reification of human relationships, the factory for example, is a one-way process. It is indeed a matter of 'building something', something 'artificial', 'staged' (20-1).

Even the so-called critical documentary falls prey to the above; and, according to Kluge, it remains a mixture of scientific, propagandistic, or critical interests. Moreover, nearly any such film that seeks commercial viability is consequently compromised and rendered anything but radical. Here Kluge's sense of 'critical' involves the movement in the application of analytical tools from the general to the specific but without a special method, which ignores the radical, non-critical ability of the camera as an instrument of "perception." In this situation,

[t]he contrast between the social lens of the filmmaker and of the genre on the one hand, and the naturalistic lens of the instrument on the other, reciprocally paralyzes the radicalization of observation (21).

With regard to the intentions of the radical filmmaker, Kluge

observes that he never truly intends his work to be received as part of a fixed genre, instead the filmmaker should seek to ignite the protest possible in the audience. Echoing, but altering, McLuhan Kluge states "[t]he message of the medium (reception of the genre by the audience) is also ambivalent" (ibid.). Kluge's emphasis here on protest is a very modernist motif; in fact, it even stretches back to touch the Mannerists and Goya, but especially the avant-gardists of the early twentieth century, e.g. Surrealists and Dadaists.

Similarly, Kluge interrogates the fundamental interest of the feature film. Here he makes use of a psychological model in his discussion of fiction. He notes that human beings use desire to help assimilate reality, and these desires are as real as events in the external world. The mass media segregates reality from the expression of desires. The overwhelming pressure of reality is recorded as "unaltered real-events", thus diffusing the potential protest in the audience and through a different choice of imagery. Kluge states, "It is precisely the reduction to objectivity and facts that has the negative effect of proving the durable existence of amoral reality" (22). The film- and television-maker can also effectively demoralise the isolated spectator, since individual action is rendered impotent before the screen of the portrayed events. With their sources in early childhood libidinal experiences, Kluge continues, desires also

form the motivation to write fictional plots, in part from the desire to reestablish the early relationships. This utopia, for Kluge, is realistic.

Initially following a Marxian motif, Kluge asserts that although history moves in accord with objective laws and the production of goods, and human activity flows along with history, desires guide the movement of the plot from a human perspective. He comes close to Adorno's own analyses here:

The point: desires are fundamental. Within this transformation of all that is real into an exciting plot lies the schematic nature, which is pre-programmed in the audience, of all feature film genres (23).

Even the "art cinema" fails in this respect, maintains Kluge, for it specialises in the refinement of individual senses, while the brute power of reality overwhelms the delicate fruit of this approach. Furthermore, Kluge perceives that this can lead to honing reality to fit to one's perceptual range.

Kluge begins his discussion of the classical realistic method by invoking an analogy to Marx and Engels when they stressed the necessity in analysis of remaining close to the real, concrete conditions and avoiding any hasty abstractions. Here, Kluge claims, the filmic approach always begins in a similar manner, namely with "the real, concrete ...", e.g. the documentary film frame and the psychologically-motivated scene in the feature. Here begins Kluge's attempt at sublating (Aufhebung) or reconceptualising the two basic moments in

film. In order to capture the fundamental category of sensual experience, Kluge introduces his notion of an 'analytical-sensual method', which presupposes film as a complex of many influences and relations that are inaccessible directly, and has as its raw material radical fiction and radically authentic observation. This method can also be used in the form of montage, the translation of the audience's interests, and the restructuring of the medium's mode of production. This method also opens up social experience; and as a type of "construction work" it does not force a closed system. For, Kluge qualifies his method, thus:

Yet this is not a question of a closed system. It can be visualised in this way: For tens of thousands of years films have been showing in the human mind--free associations, daydreams, practical experiences, sense perception, consciousness. Being a technical innovation, the cinema has merely augmented them with externally reproducible counter-images (27).

Thus, the cinema, according to Kluge, is an "external complement to human minds' associations" (1980, 27).

For Kluge, the elemental mass media is vital human labour, i.e. the non-suppressible relations of production, which carries therein an autonomous, hitherto untapped corrective realism to the errors of realistic fabrications. Kluge admits that this is very difficult to achieve in practice; and, he states the problem as such:

[the] productive power of cinema can only be developed in coordination with the audience's powers of perception: thus it is not just a question of the filmmaker[s]'s effort as to whether they get bogged down en route to the

'unity of the diverse' (27).

By 'radical, authentic observation' Kluge means uncovering the absolutely-strange-result, the never-seen-before, in sharp contrast to everyday realism; by 'radical fiction' he intends the embrace of strong contradictions that are very seldomly touched in popular media, since accrued custom and mental domestication often thwart the realisation of this kind of fiction.

Under the rule of modern consciousness, Kluge contends, the suppressed senses constitute a type of vital human activity. Although left undomesticated and inutile as social labour, there remain desires to express. Here, Kluge points out, an alliance should be forged between the suppressed aspects of the spectator's perception and the radical analytical-sensual method (1980, 29).

2. The Five Senses--the Sensorial Nature of Relationships:⁴⁶
Kluge begins the section with a terse survey of statements by Marx on the topic of sense perception and its relation to knowledge. Here, in brief, the faculty of sense perception involves the faculty of interpretation and is influenced by the structure of society.

⁴⁶ Acuff calls 'Sinnlichkeit des Zusammenhangs' 'the Apperception of Context' (30).

Following Marx' characterisation of scientific knowledge as something based on a complicated form of sense perception, Kluge extends this to the cinema (1980, 30f.). The latter moreover contends that sense perception in the cinema, arts, and practical life derives not only from a form of consciousness of the pre-industrial time, but also on the basis of the capitalist system of industrial production. The so-called superstructure of cerebral sense perception, e.g. the sense of ownership and hunger for meaning, according to Kluge, lies above the labour of the five senses; which ultimately is guided by all pre-history over the senses (ibid.).

3. The Most Penetrating Ideology: That Reality [Realität] Asserts its Own Realistic [realistischen] Character

Here Kluge seeks to show how to "represent reality as the historical fiction it is. It has a paper-tiger nature" (1980, 34), i.e. to uncover this nature that appears to the individual as an unalterable given; instead, reality is "rather a creation of the labour of generations of human beings, who for all time have wanted and still want something entirely different" (34). In an ostensibly paradoxical assertion, Kluge points out the real and unreal aspects of this reality: "collective human desires, the forces of labour, the relations of production, witch hunts, the history of armed conflict, stories of individual lives" (34); each of which,

claims Kluge, has an antagonistic character, viz. "they are an amazingly popular fiction and they strike us as being true" (34). He continues,

Reality is real to the extent that it actually oppresses human beings. It is unreal to the extent that every act of oppression merely displaces human energies. These disappear from the outer world but keep on working underground. The Repressed performs all its work submerged below the terror of reality (34).

To this, Kluge furnishes the example of the love scene in feature films as Real Fiction. The spectators evaluate the scene in relation to the standards of realism inherent to the scene itself; however, according to Kluge, a love scene is realistic only if the impending abortion, and the history of all previous abortions, is edited directly into it. Thus, intrinsic reality becomes the conflict between "tender love" and its less tender consequences; and "[a]ll other perceptions are to be tested against the cutting edge of this conflict" (35). The isolated love scene in itself, on the one hand, becomes ideological; but, on the other, without illusions it is also ideological. For Kluge, the history of entire generations and all possible consequences determines the capacity to love (35f.).

Kluge contends that when all the protest energy of a person is "harmonised", something has worked so as to destroy all the realism in her senses. The motive of realism, according to Kluge, is never the confirmation of reality but protest, which expresses itself through radical imitation, e.g. a clown; the

evasion of the pressure of reality, e.g. dreams, utopia and fiction; and aggression, e.g. aggressive montage (1980, 37f.). The difference between the last two is in general gradual. Typically the first two expressions are suppressed in favour of the so-called rational or balanced attitude; this distorts the protest energies and hence the faculty of discrimination within reality, i.e. the realistic and ideological elements in this process become entangled. Kluge continues in an apparent paradox,

Thus not only objective reality is antagonistic, but every human method of processing this reality as well, and it makes no difference if it exhausts its energy within the contexts of reality or if it ignores it. The realistic factor in all this, the antirealism of the motive (protest, resistance), produces the unrealistic factor (38).

Five STEPS in the Realistic Method:

Here Kluge attempts to describe very indirectly his method of realism in terms of "five steps." The first recognises and utilises the protest impulse at the root of social experience, viz. the realism of the motive. The second expresses a strong theory of subjective perception as determined in part by and determines the social environment.⁴⁷ While the third offers comments on how to reconstruct the objective situation, the fourth sketches how society influences its own cultural products. In the fifth, Kluge posits his notion of an

⁴⁷ Acuff translates this type of perception as 'human apperception.'

'experiential horizon', the construction and maintainance of which remains an important aim for his realist movement.

1st Step: the discrimination of the realism of the motive, protest. This is located in its confrontation with the contents of collective and individual practical experience; these mental processes are real; and in general it presupposes the method of association and the organised faculty of recall.

2nd Step: near the above realism of the motive is "the realism of the working mode of the human perception apparatus" which has its own "laws of motion" resulting from the protest labour of the entire human species; which, in the context of an unreal social context, e.g. alienation, find their expression in opposition, distortion, constraint, exaggeration, illusionary identification, and deduction. Therein, for Kluge, lies their analytical-realistic key, whence he derives the so-called fundamental assumption of realism, viz. the acknowledgement of the realism of protest and the realism of the reactive, reality-shaping human brain.⁴⁸

3rd Step: on the other side of the above subjective aspect, we have the objective situation which claims that today no natural state exists a priori but rather must be constructed.

⁴⁸ Here Kluge quotes Adorno: "True simply refers to whatever does not fit into this world" (39).

Kluge specifies that

[i]ndeed, this encounter already presupposes an analytic and synthetic activity, otherwise we would find nothing. This encounter is active, because it depends upon the act of omitting everything else (39-40).

Here Kluge offers the example of the film freeze-frame in which potentially discontinuous material finds itself in an objective situation.

4th Step: forms of authentic observation help form the production of means of production, which in turn make possible the discovery of objective situations. The production of forms of expression must correspond to the first three steps above; while "[i]n a strict sense, authentic rules of form would [...] have to be developed anew for every film" (40). For Kluge, not the substance of a particular film or of the mind of the individual artist shape the individual script, but rather the formal rules of society, viz. realism of the motive, of human apperception, of objective social conditions, and of filmic means of productions. Here the means of expression are significant, namely the fundamental disharmony between the individual creation and reality. In Kluge's own prose, he elaborates this as follows:

The realisms of motive, of human apperception (distortion), the realism of objective, i.e., social conditions, and the realism of filmic means of production--as a group they are formal rules of social reality and not the substance of individual film or of the mind of the individual artist. Formal rules of society alien to the individual film material shape the individual script. THE MEANS OF EXPRESSION MAKE THE DIFFERENCE, THE FUNDAMENTAL DISHARMONY BETWEEN THE

INDIVIDUAL CREATION AND REALITY, BUT NOT THE EASILY MANUFACTURED HARMONY OF THE INDIVIDUAL MATERIAL WITH ITSELF (40f.).

5th Step: the production of the experiential horizon for mediating practical experience during the production of experience, which gives orientation to the motive, perception, constellations, and standards of authenticity for the means of production; otherwise, Kluge maintains, there can be no collectivity (41). Kluge defines the phrase 'experiential horizon' as the "form of social awareness in which the total cultural labour of experience takes place" (41). The most important objective for the realistic method is the "transproduction of social awareness"; and Kluge notes: "the consequent creation of realistic products in itself provides the means to alter the experiential horizon by penetrating the barriers to social awareness" (1980, 41). For instance, in the cinema the movie horizon is broadened in part by means of films. Reality itself challenges the classical horizons of social awareness, e.g. forms of perception and reality contents, from outside the cinema in society, "the permanent re-programming of society". As a good example of the extent of Adorno's influence on Kluge's analysis of cultural forms Kluge offers the example of the close-up shot as deriving from the nature of labour power in society, the meaning of which can only be grasped by the spectator if she has already taken part in this experience; which mirrors Adorno's own in part

sociological account of changes in artistic form.

Kluge takes up the metaphor of the eternal construction site, intimated in Streschek quotation above, as the imperfect working model; thus no film is complete but merely a tentative manifesto in progress. The auteur film (Autorenfilm) retains the possibility of combining radical methods and early-capitalistic forms of production in practice. Moreover, Kluge adds that

ALL THIS HAS THE CHARACTER OF A CONSTRUCTION SITE. It is in principle imperfect, and for that reason admissible, to trace out a sketch of the realistic method without regard to the fact that neither my own films, nor the history of film, nor the praxis of the contemporary auteur film, nor the films of the proletkult movement, nor the work of political-filmmaker groups will complete it, because after all, we are dealing with a working model (42).

Kluge makes references to silent films "because it is appropriate to keep the elementary roots of film 'radically' in view, so long as the entire structure of the cinema is only a program" (43). While Kluge does call for a method in filmmaking, he is decidedly anti-professionalistic; he seeks a cinéma impur. Pitting his filmmaking practice against the conventions of the profession forces us to recall the very early realist motif above of the painter Courbet, who sought a more authentic--read less mannered--relationship between the artist, the work itself, and its subject.

With the above Kluge contrasts the method of imitation, i.e.

the investigation of all the avoidance mechanisms of the human being, and provides some useful material:

A few qualifying remarks: The method of violent rectification (rationalistic procedure) described above is excluded. The direct interest in realistic results--a component of that method and in an abstract sense correct--makes each one of the necessary steps impossible. Thus it is not even a matter of blundering, but rather of damaging the means of production, the objective of production, the apparatus of consciousness, and of shredding up the raw material of experience. When it comes to combatting this, there is no such thing as too much resolve (43).

Kluge cites the prime examples of the writers James Joyce and Marcel Proust,⁴⁹ whose work he describes in terms of "the identification of situations is extraordinarily comprehensive and radical construction work", thus "situational objectivity presupposes radical complexity of narrative mode" (1980, 44). Otherwise put, bourgeois conventions disturb the complexity of apperception.

For Kluge, the production of sensuous objectivity, i.e. filmable situations, means: namely "that there exists no such grasp and reiteration of situations in any medium lies the fact that little labour power is being invested in this direction" (44). While reduction and construction are two possible artistic methods, there is also the "realistic forms by means of which history custom-tailors human beings for its real-life novel" (44f.). Furthermore, one comment

⁴⁹ Along with Becket, Kafka, and Schönberg, these were also Adorno's favourite examples.

particularly brings to the fore Kluge's theory of art and the origin of aesthetic form:

All aesthetic laws of form are in this sense gathered from reality and never 'artistic fictions'. They are also always produced in the minds of the audience before occurring to an author. The author merely has the opportunity to apply them correctly or incorrectly (45).

4. The Role of Fantasy⁵⁰

In his discussion of fantasy and imagination, Kluge invokes first Marx's description of its use in preconceptualising a finished product in the artisan method of production, then Kluge introduces Freud's notion of imagination, and finally he closes with the anthropocentric wish for things to be other than they are and better.

In contrast to the earlier artisan mode of production, namely a condition of labour under which mental and manual work cooperate with one another, the two remain identical. Modern manual labour is alienated and divided by individual procedures into mechanical repetition; similarly, mental labour has been partitioned and specialised, but underlying it is the power of imagination. The latter, Kluge describes in terms of Freud, i.e. it is not exclusively determined through libidinal control and control of reality; the brain is aroused

⁵⁰ The German word 'Phantasie' can mean 'fantasy' or 'imagination' in English; throughout Kluge plays with both senses. Also, this section was originally taken from a public question and answer forum.

by the immediate, recalls something from past experience, and from this maps a concrete course of action into the future (69f.). Kluge calls this the basis for a sort of "law of motion", i.e. the power of imagination as the guide to present, past, and future interrelationships; it is not divorced from the past or from context and action. Nevertheless, modern society tends to undermine this power of imagination; the forms that it legitimizes, partly through education, are typically favorable to the capitalist labour process itself--in fact, states Kluge, this process is mirrored in leisure activities. Further hedging his notion of the power of imagination, Kluge attempts to define it as

the free, self-regulated deployment of the type of mental activity that cannot, as a matter of course, be divorced from physical action. In the end it is divorced neither from the past, from that which one is, nor from circumstances and actions (70).

The residues of the imagination become the untrusted "fantasy", which reappears in the art milieu and in the form of the repressed as the sentimental, kitsch, and unreal. Kluge names this aspect of the imagination "the black sheep of sense experience" (70); their suppression permits a different level of organisation, one with little relation to a basis in industrial society and the educational system, while human beings conduct their affairs in this mixed unconscious-conscious form.

For Kluge, that of fantasy and imagination assimilated into the process of domination recurs as fear of showing defiance. Furthermore, Kluge interrogates the history of the abuse of imagination in Germany by showing how the Nazis were the first to make use of it, and succeeded in appropriating it so completely from the Left (1980, 72f.). Indeed, Kluge sees the present as the playing out of the legacy of the Right's appropriation of the imagination in the political and economic spheres, e.g. Axel Springer's publishing empire. Kluge's analysis of this appropriation pits a general concept of materialism against the fascistic opportunistic materialism, by means of which the Right has succeeded in taking certain energies from the Left: fear remains and radicality is never reached or acknowledged. Thus, in contrast, if the Left should decide to mobilise such energies, it could also openly recognise them.

Instead of excluding any notion of fantasy from the conception of rationality, maintains Kluge, fantasy as something not irrational could be included in the mental process of reason and logic. This would avoid the historically established pitfalls of technological rationality. For Kluge, actual, everyday rationality in modern society is hardly rational at all; for the power of imagination possesses rational energies that must be reorganised to liberate modern human beings from myth, false paths, and the impulses of ideology (79f.).

C. CONCLUDING REMARKS

While temporally many concepts of aesthetic realism precede Kluge's formulation, several influence aspects of his in different ways. While Courbet and his generation of writers and artists may have been inspired by Rousseau's proclamations and theories of subjectivity, it is doubtful that Kluge could claim to take such a source as seriously. Nevertheless, Kluge's antagonistic realism borrows and recombines several motifs from past realisms: the early ethic to challenge the world as given, to renew or disband the conventions of one's medium, and to remain outside the Academy or the profession.

The Weimar debates in general contributed the notion of a historically-relative method of realism, i.e. one particular to one's age, which has some resonance with the early imperative to be of one's own time. Brecht extends and radicalises the idea of theatrical performance and play, wherein the audience is taught a new way of engaging the material through such methods as estrangement (Verfremdung). Kluge accepts Brecht's estrangement or distancing as a stylistic tool for creating a possible point of disjunction or shock, following Benjamin. Bloch's utopic impulse pervades all Kluge's writing, including his antagonistic realism. Adorno contributes much, as we shall in the following chapter.

The Soviet agit-prop techniques inspired the notion of on-site

production and contact with particular target groups, e.g. Godard followed their example in the late Sixties by making films for and with factory workers and then showing them to the same workers for discussion. While Kluge may take certain motifs like on-site filmming and Eisenstein's emphasis on montage from the Soviet avant-gardists, his approach has nothing in common with Zhdanov's Socialist Realism or Revolutionary Romanticism.

Kluge argues against "pure documentary" forms, an example of which would be Grierson's enthusiastic propaganda. Kluge's work would doubtless fall under the "degenerate art" category of the Nazis, he may on occasion quote from their kitsch films.

While in name one would expect Italian Neo-Realism to share more with Kluge, little can be found in common between the two approaches. The Italian filmmakers shared among themselves more a humanistic attitude that emphasised in their scripts the banal of the downtrodden in society and their dignity as human beings. Their greatest booster, André Bazin, chose particular formal traits, such as long-duration shots hence spatial contiguity, and was vehemently anti-montage; all of which pitted his conception in opposition to Kluge's, which clearly dispenses with spatial contiguity and is very pro montage. While there are commonalities with Godard, the

French director takes from many sources outside of Kluge's purview, e.g. surrealism and Maoism.

Other West German artistic movements have taken up an interest in realism, such as the Berlin painters who share the utopic element with Kluge, while they are opposed by certain special anti-realist tendencies within German-language culture, motivated by an idealist or religious tradition or war guilt or the Cold War.

CHAPTER III: ADORNO, KLUGE, AND ANTAGONISTIC REALISM

I love to go to the movies, the only thing that bothers me is the image on the screen (Adorno, as often quoted by Kluge).

The central premise of Adorno's critique of cinema is that the film image reproduces reality and affirms the existence of things as they are. The film image thereby congeals the meaning of depicted objects into univocal ciphers for experience. Synchronized sound and calculated doses of 'irrational' musical effects reinforce the notion that the world is given and unchangeable and allows passive consumption to proceed smoothly. Conventionally used, then, film, according to this view, can only serve the larger, destructive cause of instrumental reason [Kluge in interview in (Liebman 1988b)].

Despite the marginal place of film in the discussions associated with the Frankfurt School during the fifties and sixties, Kluge's film theory and practice were decisively influenced by Critical Theory, particularly by Adorno. I would even go one step further and assert that no consideration of Critical Theory and film can afford to neglect Kluge and his work (Hansen 1984, 169).

The aim of the preceding chapters and the three quotations above is to establish in part the important, complicated relationship between the thought of Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno and of Alexander Kluge; what this chapter intends to perform is the detailed unravelling of this relationship with respect to several selected texts by each author. Most importantly this chapter addresses the question of the degree of relevance

of Adorno's thought to Kluge's writings on film realism and the degree of its consistency of application in view of the former's critique of committed art (Adorno's term). In effect I wish to show how Kluge rereads Adorno à rebours--against the grain--, how reticences in Adorno's texts are fruitfully reinterpreted and employed by Kluge in his own theorising on cinema.

In general, Adorno (1903-1969) is understood to write with strong conceptual or stylistic accents borrowed from Nietzsche, Hegel, and Walter Benjamin;⁵¹ the influence of Marx, Kierkegaard, and Heidegger, the last two of which he took as subjects for his graduate work, should not be underestimated in any assessment of his thought. As an early member of the Frankfurt School for Social Research Adorno accepted a version of non-identity philosophy, his version he named 'negative dialectics,' especially in his 1966 book of the same title. Being a composer, critic, and philosopher, Adorno's sense of form is particularly keen and manifests itself in all his writings, notably in his aesthetic theory which analyses changes in style in part according to changes in society. For him art must escape two main tendencies, namely direct political content and empty formal play as in the call "art for art's sake". Even though against the 19th-

⁵¹ See, for instance, (Held 1980, 201 ff.), (Rose 1978), or (Jay 1984).

century wish to capture reality somehow in artistic media, Adorno maintains that art must take some motivation from human reality for it to be authentic. One major purpose of authentic modern art is to criticise that reality indirectly, without falling into a didactic trap.

A. ON KLUGE'S CRITICAL RESPONSE TO "THE CULTURE INDUSTRY" IN ADORNO AND HORKHEIMER'S DIALECTIC OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Published first in 1947 in Amsterdam, the collaborative book effort of Horkheimer and Adorno Dialektik der Aufklärung. Philosophische Fragmente (Dialectic of Enlightenment [: Philosophical Fragments]) takes as its subject the Enlightenment and the process of enlightenment, both of which the book criticises at length; but just as importantly, its second publication took place just after Adorno's death in 1969, a very volatile time period upon which the republication of all the works written in exile by the Frankfurt writers definitely made their mark from then on in West Germany and abroad. The particular section, or collection of fragments, titled "Kulturindustrie. Aufklärung als Massenbetrug" ("The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception") is the particular seven-part study to which Kluge is responding in the above quotation and in his general approach to film and filmmaking, and which constitutes Adorno's most elaborated

critical writing on the problem of cinema as a mass medium.⁵² However, not only does Adorno criticise the mass media in general but also that which he considers to be the other extreme manifestation of the same societal problematic, namely the highly specialised avant-garde movements in the (high) arts.

The section contains several propositions regarding the relationship between high and mass culture, which turn on an analysis of the particular development and entwinement of twentieth-century capitalism and technology that results in contemporary mass media culture and mass society. An important motif common to all Frankfurt writers concerns the rapid spread of technique and technology throughout society and culture, which includes among many other elements the levels of government and private administration and policy writing. According to Adorno the culture industry is in effect levelling the distinctions between high bourgeois art and light art, culture and entertainment into business, thereby compromising both and succeeding to fulfill neither; for mass culture refuses to admit not only Schönberg and Kraus

⁵² The following critique by Adorno and Horkheimer also admits several important reticences that Kluge notes and responds to in his antagonistic realism; Adorno himself spells them out in his later essay "Filmtransparente," considered below in section B.

but also the circus⁵³ and brothel (1972, 135 f.). Adorno claims that the mass media, i.e. film, television,⁵⁴ radio, and magazines, are complicit in only offering uniformity in its products to society regardless of any apparent deviation from the norm, and that mass distribution requires highly specialised technical organisation and planning which has shifted in emphasis from the needs of consumers to their manipulation and the creation of dependency. Such structures in turn result in rigid, predictable forms, i.e. order without coherence, characterised by their emphasis on momentary effects over any consideration of the work as a whole (1972, 124 f.). The place of the art work has altered in the mass culture society; to a much greater extent it has gained a use-value through its capacity for exchange.

In particular, Adorno's severely pessimistic critique of mass cinema is a concretised version of his larger socio-philosophical project of negative dialectics which challenges in particular concepts of naive aesthetic realism. The curse of film according to Adorno is its unavoidable dependence upon the photographic image. This partially explains Adorno's

⁵³ The circus, along with the opera, is an important motif in Kluge's films and novels, esp. the 1967 film Artists under the Big Top: Perplexed.

⁵⁴ Adorno sees the then nascent television as providing the potential of derisively fulfilling Wagner's dream of a Gesamtkunstwerk, i.e. an art form that combines all other known forms into one (1972, 124).

quotation at the head of this chapter, namely "I love to go to the movies, the only thing that bothers me is the image on the screen." The real as such is being for Adorno simply reconfirmed when there is no justification for such action.

The following important passage, to be discussed below, directly addresses the problem of film for Adorno; it also gives a good sense of the stylistic traits specific to his prose and the difficulty of its translation. Horkheimer and Adorno write,

[t]he whole world is made to pass through the filter of the culture industry. The old experience of the movie-goer, who sees the world outside as an extension of the film he has just left (because the latter is intent upon reproducing the world of everyday perceptions),⁵⁵ is now the producer's guideline. The more intensely and flawlessly his techniques duplicate empirical objects, the easier it is today for the illusion to prevail that the outside world is the straightforward continuation of that presented on the screen. This purpose has been furthered by mechanical reproduction since the lightning takeover by the sound film.⁵⁶

Real life is becoming indistinguishable from the movies. The sound film, far surpassing the theater of illusion, leaves no room for imagination or reflection on the part of the audience, who is unable to respond within the structure of the film, yet deviate from its precise detail without losing the thread of the story; hence the film forces its victims to equate it directly with reality. The stunting of the mass-media consumer's

⁵⁵ These are the translator's brackets; for Adorno would never admit them into his prose, cf. "[...] brackets take the parathesis completely out of the sentence, creating enclaves, as it were, whereas nothing in good prose should be unnecessary to the overall structure," in "Punctuation Marks" (Adorno 1991, 95).

⁵⁶ In the German version of this passage there is no break here, these two paragraphs constitute one typically long paragraph, cf. (Adorno 1981, 147).

powers of imagination and spontaneity does not have to be traced back to any psychological mechanisms; he⁵⁷ must ascribe the loss of those attributes to the objective nature of the products themselves, especially to the most characteristic of them, the sound film. They are so designed that quickness, powers of observation, and experience are undeniably needed to apprehend them at all; yet sustained thought is out of the question if the spectator is not to miss the relentless rush of facts. Even though the effort required for his response is semi-automatic, no scope is left for the imagination. Those who are so absorbed by the world of the movie--by its images, gestures, and words--that they are unable to supply what really makes it a world, do not have to dwell on particular points of its mechanics during a screening. All the other films and products of the entertainment industry which they have seen have taught them what to expect; they react automatically. The might of industrial society is lodged in men's minds. The entertainments manufacturers know that their products will be consumed with alertness even when the customer is distraught, for each of them is a model of the huge economic machinery which has always sustained the masses, whether at work or at leisure--which is akin to work. From every sound film and every broadcast program the social effect can be inferred which is exclusive to none but is shared by all alike. The culture industry as a whole has molded men as a type unfailingly reproduced in every product. All the agents of this process, from the producer to the women's clubs, take good care that the simple reproduction of this mental state is not nuanced or extended in any way (Adorno 1972, 126 f.).

From the above text I should like to cull nine points, which are ordered here as they appear above. These points concern in particular Kluge's rather creative responses to Adorno's analysis and its reticences, as any good lawyer should be capable of doing.

⁵⁷ Adorno uses no personal pronoun here, cf. (Adorno 1981, 148); a little closer to the original, I would offer, "According to their objective nature, the products themselves, especially the most characteristic, the sound film, cripple those attributes."

In as much as the cinematographic image re-presents the real world with a high, albeit selective, degree of verisimilitude by virtue of particular techniques and technologies in part borrowed from photography, Adorno sees this as a negative encroachment upon the banal, the object. Adorno's view of the cinematographic image seems rather overstated here, perhaps a kind of Bazinian⁵⁸ nightmare ad absurdum of what cinematic realism is capable of achieving in Adorno's eyes. Here we recall Kluge's comment against the tyranny of the abstract over the particular, through which the object is reduced to some preconceived sameness. A related point is that the cinematographic image qua photographic in origin, i.e. dependent upon the chemico-physical process of light, lenses, silver, etc., with an object in real time and space, borrows too strongly from physical and social realities and thus reconfirms them. A promising escape from this gross dependency on external reality becomes according to later Adorno montage. Kluge also shares this fear of merely accepting reality as given but envisions a way out through montage's potential tapping of the protest impulse.

The reference to mechanical reproduction may in fact be

⁵⁸ Recall French film critic Bazin's advocacy of cinematic realism. Adorno and Bazin respond oppositely to similar insights into the potential of cinema.

intended for Walter Benjamin's spirit to consider,⁵⁹ even though the German text uses the Germanic Vervielfältigung (duplication) and not the Latin-derived cognate Reproduzierbarkeit (reproducibility) as in Benjamin's own essay.⁶⁰ If Adorno is indeed in dialogue with Benjamin here, it is not surprisingly in the form of a critique, since the former takes no notice of any emancipatory potential inherent to the mass cinema, or mechanical reproducibility in general, but rather argues the complete converse. By virtue of its mechanical reproducibility mass culture thrives and levels subjective experiences. This lack of emancipatory status is restricted to the mass cinema with its particular form of production; for later Adorno even posits the possibility of an emancipatory film and Kluge his 'Utopie Film'. The resolution lies in the insight that, by changing the production context fundamentally away from the accepted, professional model, alternatives, potentially "liberated," could be in principle found.

Adorno claims that the greater and more accurate the degree of illusion in film, the less space there is for the spectator to imagine or reflect while watching any film; there a sense of spontaneity is lacking or lost. While in general this may be

⁵⁹ Adorno's essays and articles remained in argument with Benjamin long after the latter's death.

⁶⁰ See (Smith 1989, 158 ff.) for an extended analysis of the multifold genesis of Benjamin's text.

the case in Hollywood-style films, Adorno does not predict here any alternative forms that could escape his rhetorical aporia. One major figure is montage. Related to that point Adorno notes that the form itself of the sound film impedes the development of imagination and spontaneity, while the same form demands an indefatigable alertness to catch the non-stop flow of images and sound, which in turn disallows any attempt at sustained thought. Here again one notices in negative form a proposition for an alternative approach to the cinema, i.e. against the frantic barrage of image and sound. Thus Kluge's emphasis on releasing those suppressed elements of modern subjectivity, such as imagination.

The spectators are according to Adorno conditioned by all products of the culture industry to expect certain ready-made forms. Such expectations are thus learned and engender automatic responses. Kluge acknowledges this in mass media products but seeks to break through these given expectations in his antagonistic realism.

The notion of leisure has been according to Adorno taken over by mass cultural industries and consequently commodified and offered back to the consumer in forms based on the pattern of work. Again Kluge accepts this insight in his own proposal, but he offers a possible way out. He proposes a form modelled on dreams and fantasy, rather than on work and discipline.

A final point rests in Adorno's second last sentence above, which intimates that a particular subjectivity is somehow presupposed in every product of the culture industry. Kluge counters with an alternative model. While Adorno's analysis may be true in general, this need not be true in all cases. Kluge again senses a possible crack in the totality of mass media. Kluge's theory of subjectivity involves a careful inspection of the state of the late modern subject in society in part through Freudian concepts, its alienation, its forms of deviance, its utopic impulse, and its suppressed imagination; from all of which he puts together his antagonistic realism and presents it as one possible approach to counter the effects of the mass media industry.

The extent of the stylistic totality within the culture industry is further nuanced by Adorno's remark on the possibility of variety within or deviance from the rigid modes:

Whenever Orson Welles offends against the tricks of the trade, he is forgiven because his departures from the norm are regarded as calculated mutations which serve all the more strongly to confirm the validity of the system.⁶¹ The constraint of the technically-conditioned idiom which stars and directors have to produce as "nature" so that the people can appropriate it, extends to such fine nuances that they almost attain the subtlety of the devices of an avant-garde work as against those of truth (Adorno 1972, 129).

⁶¹ This reasoning is taken up most recently by members of the British film journal Screen in the Seventies and Eighties in their analyses of the dominance of Hollywood film forms, but primarily from a poststructuralist standpoint.

Adorno's argument may hold in cases of relatively small deviations from the ubiquitous norm, since the Hollywood norm in Welles' case still remains a valid, recognisable comparison; but if Kluge and many other independent filmmakers are correct, other types and approaches can exist. Kluge deviates from Hollywood forms from the ground up in a much more radical manner than Welles' grand stylistic embellishments. It is doubtful that Kluge's concept of film or his films themselves could be said to reconfirm in the same manner as Welles' the Hollywood "paradigm."

On animated cartoons (Trickfilme) Adorno writes of a then recent shift from dream-like films with relatively consistent plots and slapstick endings to those with brisk, violent storylines. It seems that he claims that the recent films both symbolise and condition the spectators in life:

Cartoons were once exponents of fantasy as opposed to rationalism. They ensured that justice was done to the creatures and objects they electrified, by giving the maimed specimens a second life. All they do today is to confirm the victory of technological reason over truth. [...]

The enjoyment of the violence suffered by the movie character turns into violence against the spectator, and distraction into exertion. [...] To walk from the street into the movie theater is no longer to enter a world of dream; as soon as the very existence of these institutions no longer made it obligatory to use them, there would be no great urge to do so. [...] The idea of "fully exploiting" available technical resources and the facilities for aesthetic mass consumption is part of the economic system which refuses to exploit resources to abolish hunger (Adorno 1972, 138 f.).

The above edited extract touches upon fantasy, cartoons, and

early cinema, all of which figure significantly in Kluge's writings on antagonistic realism and in his films and novels. By no means does Kluge write in favour of this particular type of gratuitous violence either in animated cartoons or in films, but he is indeed for the use of references to other forms of film, which includes the cartoon and early film (Urzelle), in his antagonistic realist approach, as well as restoring the moment of fantasy to the cinema.⁶² He remarks that it is important to keep the history of film in view, by which he occasionally means direct "quotation" of old black and white films in his own.⁶³

B. ON ADORNO'S LATE ESSAY "TRANSPARENCIES ON FILM"

Four years after the declaration of the Oberhausen Manifesto in 1962, Adorno published his essay "Filmtransparente"⁶⁴ (film transparencies), which constitutes in part a response to the highly-charged polemics levelled between the Oberhauseners

⁶² See, esp., Hansen's insightful essay on Kluge's use of images and references to the early cinema in his films (Hansen 1988).

⁶³ On account of the many "quotations" in his films from others copyright challenges arise from time to time, to which Kluge responds by threatening to sue and defends his right as an artist to quote from the work of others.

⁶⁴ I am at odds with the translator's rendering of the title as "Transparencies on film" (Adorno 1991, 154), since film is itself a transparency and no such preposition is employed in the original German text which retains an equivocal character. For more on the title's particularities, see Hansen's introduction to it in (1981b, 193 f.).

and the supporters of the post-WWII West German film industry. Especial to this essay is Adorno's apparently new-found positive, even optimistic, interest in film as a possible artistic medium, which is difficult but not impossible to uncover in his earlier writings on the medium (see section A above). In it Adorno sets out a possible programme for an alternative approach to filmmaking outside of the industry while contrasting this with the industry's own approach. Indeed, Adorno offers what appears to be outright advice to the independent filmmakers who are seeking greater authenticity in their work. While the essay itself is rather short, it contains many important motifs that Kluge himself embraces and defends in his 1974 writing on antagonistic realism.

Adorno commences the essay with evidence of some residue from the then current debates:

Children when teasing each other in their squabbles, follow the rule: no fair copycat. Their wisdom seems to be lost on the all too thoroughly grown-up adults. The Oberhausenerers attacked the nearly sixty-year-old trash production of the film industry with the epithet 'Daddy's Cinema.' [...] In this [young cinema] comparatively awkward and unprofessional cinema, uncertain of its effects, is inscribed the hope that the so-called mass media might eventually become something qualitatively different. While in autonomous art anything lagging behind the already established technical standard does not rate, via-à-vis the culture industry--whose standard excludes everything but the predigested and the already integrated, just as the cosmetic trade eliminates facial wrinkles--works which have not completely mastered their technique, conveying as a result something consolingly uncontrolled and accidental, have a liberating quality. In them the flaws of a pretty girl's complexion become

the corrective to the immaculate face of the professional star (1991, 154).

Adorno makes in the last two sentences an important concession towards the possibility of film of some sort having a "liberating quality;" this we could only have anticipated with a rather large leap of faith from Adorno's analysis in Dialectic of Enlightenment above. The emphasis here on the non-professional quality of the youthful works is also reminiscent of a (romantic) motif as old as the notion of realism itself, cf. Courbet above. As he discusses at length in his essay on realism, Kluge is himself openly anti-professional and forefronts the accidental in the process of filmming, e.g. several episodes in "The Occasional Work of a Domestic Slave" and "The Patriot" were improvised by the actors themselves, Kluge furnished no dialogue only general plot parameters. Adorno sees a greater authentic approach to film in the use of the immediate, while he notes the stilted and therefore inauthentic dialogue in a certain film adaptation of a Musil novel:

Film, therefore, must search for other means of conveying immediacy: improvisation which systematically surrenders itself to unguided chance should rank high among possible alternatives (1991, 155).

Thus, the immediate, accidental, chance, and non-professionalism are what Adorno champions in the cause for the cinema.

In another passage Adorno discusses the problem for the cinema

of differentiating between technique and technology, which in music for example is respectively the sound structure of the work and the means of reproduction, namely its performance. The problem, according to Adorno, is not so straightforward for an aesthetics of cinema:

Irrespective of the technological origins of the cinema, the aesthetics of film will do better to base itself on a subjective mode of experience which film resembles and which constitutes its artistic character (1991, 156).

To detail this further, Adorno draws the comparison of film to the structure of dreams and daydreams,

These images do not merge into one another in a continuous flow, but are rather set off against each other in the course of their appearance, much like the magic lantern slides of our childhood. It is in the discontinuity of that movement that the images of the interior monologue resemble the phenomenon of writing: the latter similarly moving before our eyes while fixed in its discrete signs. Such movement of interior images may be to film what the visible world is to painting or the acoustic world to music. As the objectifying recreation of this type of experience, film may become art. The technological medium par excellence is thus intimately related to the beauty of nature (tief verwandt dem Naturschönen)⁶⁵ (1991, 156).

Here we uncover a most eloquent link to Kluge's conception of film as purveyor and instigator of dreams and fantasy, something crucial to the heart of his emancipatory project.

In Adorno's philosophy of negative dialectics the relation

⁶⁵ Brackets added by the translator.

between subject and object remains a very complicated issue,⁶⁶ which in turn manifests itself here in the problem of photographic representation:

The photographic process of film, primarily representational, places a higher intrinsic significance on the object, as foreign to subjectivity, than aesthetically autonomous techniques; this is the retarding aspect of film in the historical process of art. Even where film dissolves and modifies its objects as much as it can, the disintegration is never complete. Consequently, it does not permit absolute construction: its elements, however abstract, always retain something representational; they are never purely aesthetic values. Due to this difference, society projects into film quite differently--far more directly on account of the objects--than into advanced painting or literature. That which is irreducible about the objects in film is itself a mark of society, prior to the aesthetic realization of an intention. By virtue of this relationship to the object, the aesthetics of film is thus inherently concerned with society. There can be no aesthetics of the cinema, not even a purely technological one, which would not include the sociology of the cinema (1991, 157).

While Kluge is not so concerned with developing a general aesthetics of film, he does touch upon these aspects. Of special note is their shared belief that authentic works of art display in some way traces of the society in which it is produced and that the specific rules of the form provide such evidence (see below).

Citing Benjamin's categories for film, e.g. exhibition and test, Adorno draws attention to their strong ties to commodity character, which Benjamin seeks to avoid:

⁶⁶ See, for example, Habermas' essay on Adorno in his anthology The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity (1987, 106 ff.).

The reactionary nature of any realist aesthetic today is inseparable from this commodity character. Tending to reinforce, affirmatively, the phenomenal surface of society, realism dismisses any attempt to penetrate that surface as a romantic endeavour. [...] Film is faced with the dilemma of finding a procedure which neither lapses into arts-and-crafts nor slips into a mere documentary mode. The obvious answer today, as forty years ago, is that of montage which does not interfere with things but rather arranges them in a constellation akin to that of writing. The viability of a procedure based on the principle of shock, however, raises doubts. Pure montage, without the addition of intentionality in its elements, does not derive intention merely from the principle itself. It seems illusory to claim that through the renunciation of all meaning, especially the cinematically inherent renunciation of psychology, meaning will emerge from the reproduced material itself. It may be, however, that the entire issue is rendered obsolete by the insight that the refusal to interpret, to add subjective ingredients, is in itself a subjective act and as such a priori significant. The individual subject who remains silent speaks not less but more through silence than when speaking aloud. Those filmmakers ostracized for being too intellectual should, by way of revision, absorb this insight into their working methods (1991, 158).

Against naive realist aesthetics Kluge quoted from Streschek's book Handbuch wider das Kino, which makes use of the construction site motif for filmmaking. Adorno here appears to be railing against in particular the conservative realism of Lukács and Soviet Socialist Realism; for Kluge's antagonistic realism in contrast accepts exactly those so-called romantic motifs that the others fail to acknowledge. Recall also Kluge's strong anti-documentary stance, the defence of which challenges the presupposition that documentary truth is more valid than the fiction film. With antagonistic realism realism as such advances beyond the facile reproduction of outer surfaces, as Adorno contends.

Kluge champions a broader theory of montage based on the form of image-flow found in daydreams. Nor is Kluge in favour of montage for montage's sake; the gratuitous collision of disparate images is not his aim when he speaks of a Benjaminian shock or deep insight (Jetztzeit), intentionality is not sacrificed for mere effect.

Regarding the socio-psychological aspect of film, Adorno posits

[t]hat, among its functions, film provides models for collective behaviour is not just an additional imposition of ideology. Such collectivity, rather, inheres in the innermost elements of film. The movements which the film presents are mimetic impulses which, prior to all content and meaning, incite the viewers and listeners to fall into step as if in a parade. [...] The liberated film would have to wrest its a priori collectivity from the mechanisms of unconscious and irrational influence and enlist this collectivity in the service of emancipatory intentions (1991, 158 f.).

With more advice from Adorno on the "liberated film" he singles out a socio-psychological effect in the collective experience of watching films. Adorno's outright pessimism in the face of mass cinema of "The Culture Industry" here transforms into a glimmer of hope for a liberated film through emancipatory intentions. However, the phrase "emancipatory intentions" appears oddly close to Adorno's "commitment;" and this we shall try to resolve in the following section on Adorno's critique of Brecht.

On the question of authentic style in film as art Adorno cites

a few examples of techniques to be avoided which simply derived from film technology and which he dismisses as pure kitsch, e.g. soft-focus shots, superimpositions, and flashbacks:

It is about time to recognize the ludicrousness of such effects and get rid of them because these techniques are not grounded in the necessities of individual works but in mere convention; they inform the viewer as to what is being signified or what needs to be added in order to comprehend whatever escapes basic cinematic realism. [...] In any case, such cinematographic divagations require particular tact on the part of the filmmaker. The lesson to be learned from this phenomenon is dialectical: technology in isolation, which disregards the nature of film as language, may end up in contradiction to its own internal logic. Emancipated film production should no longer depend uncritically upon technology (that is, the mere equipment of its profession) in the manner of a by no means still 'new objectivity' (einer keineswegs mehr neuen Sachlichkeit) (1991, 159).

Adorno here warns of naively accepting film technology as uncritically given. Since these techniques have nonetheless become so entrenched in film history, and Kluge insists on making references to the cinema's past, it seems doubtful that Kluge would exclude them without qualification from his antagonistic realism. Perhaps, in this case, Adorno would concede, since the status of the technique has been removed to the reflective level of quotation or reference.

Finally, Adorno appears to advocate a type of film art that would not necessarily be of the typical art cinema:

How nice it would be if, under the present circumstances, one could claim that the less films appear to be works of art, the more they would be just that. One is especially drawn to this conclusion in reaction to

those snobbish psychological class A pictures which the culture industry forces itself to make for the sake of cultural legitimation. Even so, one must guard against taking such optimism too far: the standardized Westerns and thrillers--to say nothing of the products of German humour and the patriotic tear-jerkers (Heimatschulze)--are even worse than the official hits. In integrated culture one cannot even depend on the dregs (1991, 160).

This comment speaks in part against the general perception of Adorno as a total aesthete. He hesitantly wishes for a liberated cinema that would reach beyond the mere grasp of the cognoscenti to a more differentiated audience; and with this Kluge could not disagree, for he seeks a non-specialised audience, as did Brecht.

C. ON ADORNO'S CRITIQUE OF BRECHT AND THE PROBLEM OF COMMITTED VERSUS AUTONOMOUS ART

In 1965 on the occasion of the appearance of the first German-language translation of Sartre's "What is Literature?" Adorno published his polemical essay entitled "Commitment" in which he takes to task Sartre and Brecht for their notions of committed art as applied mainly in literature and the theatre. Here we discern the meaning of commitment in art and determine whether it applies to Kluge's case. The status of intentions must be distinguished from commitment.

Adorno reenters this debate by interrogating what he calls two 'positions on objectivity':

A work of art that is committed strips the magic from a work of art that is content to be a fetish, an idle pastime for those who would like to sleep through the

deluge that threatens them, in an apoliticism that is in fact deeply political. For the committed, such works are a distraction from the battle of real interests, in which no one is any longer exempt from the conflict between the two great blocs.⁶⁷ The possibility of intellectual life itself depends on this conflict to such an extent that only blind illusion can insist on rights that may be shattered tomorrow. For autonomous works of art, however, such considerations, and the conception of art which underlies them, are themselves the spiritual catastrophe of which the committed keep warning. Once the life of the mind renounces the duty and liberty of its own pure objectification, it has abdicated. Thereafter, works of art merely assimilate themselves to the brute existence against which they protest (the very charge made against autonomous works by committed writers) that from their first day they belong to the seminars in which they inevitably end (Adorno 1980, 177 f.).

This passage alone is inadequate to our purposes of situating Kluge's antagonistic realism in relation to Adorno's bifurcated view of theories of art. Sharpening his definition of committed art, Adorno specifies:

In aesthetic theory, 'commitment' should be distinguished from 'tendency.' Committed art in the proper sense is not intended to generate ameliorative measures, legislative acts or practical institutions--like earlier propagandist plays against syphilis, duels, abortion laws or borstals--but to work at the level of fundamental attitudes. For Sartre its task is to awaken the free choice of the agent which makes authentic existence possible at all, as opposed to the neutrality of the spectator. But [...this] also renders the content to which the artist commits himself inherently ambiguous (1980, 180).

Kluge's theory posits a type of film that operates beyond fundamental attitudes of free choice, its aim is admittedly utopic and emancipatory in scope in its most optimistic moments thus liberating protest and imagination from their

⁶⁷ Here Adorno refers to the Cold War Soviet- and American-led blocs.

conventional societal and mass-media marginalization.

On Sartre's artistic project Adorno expresses his doubts:

The content of [Sartre's] art becomes philosophy, as with no other writer except Schiller.

But however sublime, thoughts can never be much more than one of the materials of art. Sartre's plays are vehicles for the author's ideas, which have been left behind in the race of aesthetic forms. They operate with traditional plots, exalted by an unshaken faith in meanings which can be transferred from art to reality. [...] The combination of solid plot, and equally solid, extractable idea won Sartre great success and made him, without doubt against his honest will, acceptable to the culture industry (1980, 182).

It is clear from Kluge's arguments in his essay on realism that he does not trust meaning in this way as deeply as Sartre does. Similarly, he cannot fall prey to any charge that his films have traditional plots, his approach remains post-traditional and uncompromised in their form and production, which make them highly unlikely to be integrated into mass media forms of distribution--and this has hitherto been indeed the case.

In comparison to Sartre's approach Adorno lends more support to Brecht:

Brecht, in some of his plays, such as the dramatization of Gorky's The Mother or The Measures Taken, bluntly glorifies the Party. But at times, at least according to his theoretical writings, he too wanted to educate spectators to a new attitude that would be distanced, thoughtful, experimental, the reverse of illusory empathy and identification (1980, 182 f.).

Adorno also claims that Brecht wins out over Sartre in the use of abstraction in his plays, especially through the

elimination of the traditional concept of dramatic character. While Kluge advances no defence of any political party in his writings or films, he seeks the utopic emancipation of spectators that is already promised in reality. While he makes use of a technique that is often called Brechtian, namely Verfremdung (distanciation), Kluge seeks radically authentic observation through which the ordinary is made to appear otherwise, for the surface of things cannot be left as given. However, his aim is not to distance the audience merely for the purpose of encouraging cold ironic calculation but rather a liberating release of the imagination.

Later, while criticising Brecht's Saint Joan, Adorno stresses the inadequacy of the medium and choice of means to the thematic aim of exposing the roots of capitalism:

The play is set in a Chicago half-way between the Wild West fables of Mahagonny and economic facts. But the more preoccupied Brecht becomes with information, and the less he looks for images, the more he misses the essence of capitalism which the parable is supposed to present (1980, 183).

Once again Brecht's didacticism is at odds with Kluge's approach. When Kluge quotes in bureaucratese, he is more often than not satirising administrative procedure by making this element of the banal seem strange and demonstrate contradictions. Continuing this theme and the contrast with Sartre's scepticism on the social effects of art Adorno writes on Brecht's practical sense for the theatre:

[...] as an astute and experienced man of the world,

[Brecht] can scarcely have been wholly convinced of them. He once calmly wrote that, to be honest, the theatre was more important to him than any changes in the world it might promote. Yet the artistic principle of simplification not only purged politics of the illusory distinctions projected by subjective reflection into social objectivity, as Brecht intended, but it also falsified the very objectivity which didactic drama laboured to distil. If we take Brecht at his word and make politics the criterion by which to judge his committed theatre, then politics proves his theatre untrue (1980, 185).

While Kluge's project confines itself to literature and film, with some television, there are no signs of world revolution through media change manifest in his writings. His project appears rather modest in its claim, as it inches onwards towards a possibly more open world. In an interview he touches upon this topic:

I don't believe in revolutions from above. That's one of the "infantile disorders" of the Autorenfilm as well. But I cannot begin to revolutionize society on the basis of film. Therefore, I must accept this contradiction. This strategy "from below" will first of all not work for the mass media. Not everybody is a cameraman, or a scriptwriter, or is talented, or has the time, or the airtime. It is nonsense to say that all of the people are the basis of a TV system. Professionalism is not within everyone's reach--not because of a lack of talent but because of a lack of time. In certain small areas of the media, however, the strategy from below does work. For example, a film scene will only be good if the coworkers fill it out. I must, so to speak, establish a framework dictatorially, so that freedom can prevail within this framework, within the "capillaries" (Liebman 1988b, 34).

Elsewhere Adorno criticises the effectiveness of certain stylistic choices of Brecht:

Even Brecht's best work was infected by the deceptions of his commitment. Its language shows how far the underlying poetic subject and its message have moved

apart. In an attempt to bridge the gap, Brecht affected the diction of the oppressed. But the doctrine he advocated needs the language of the intellectual. [...] It is a usurpation and almost a contempt for victims to speak like this, as if the author were one of them. All roles may be played, except that of the worker. The gravest charge against commitment is that even right intentions go wrong when they are noticed, and still more so, when they then try to conceal themselves (Adorno 1980, 187).

Here Kluge diverges from Brecht even more, for his stylistic choices for voice range from the relatively realistic recording of the actors's voices--often character types--to the highly ironic tone of the voice-over which immitates the style common to reciting fairy tales.

In a well-known passage of Adorno's essay on commitment which begins, "I have no wish to soften the saying that to write lyric poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric; it expresses in negative form the impulse which inspires committed literature" (1980, 188), he draws the following conclusion: When genocide becomes part of the cultural heritage in the themes of committed literature, it becomes easier to continue to play along with the culture which gave birth to murder (1980, 189). Needless to say, the Holocaust as a theme has never entered any of Kluge's works explicitly. This reticence is often queried in interviews. His writings on World War II concern his childhood experience of the Allied bombing of Halberstadt and a novel on the blundered battle of Stalingrad. While Kluge certainly does not subscribe to lyrical art forms and praxis, he avoids the temptation to try to explain genocide in

his artistic works.

In the context of retelling the story of Picasso's encounter with a Nazi, who asked the painter while pointing at Guernica, "Did you do that?", to which Picasso replied, "No, you did," Adorno nuances his notion of autonomous art:

Autonomous works of art too, like this painting, firmly negate empirical reality, destroy the destroyer, that which merely exists and, by merely existing, endlessly reiterates guilt. [...] The uncalculating autonomy of works which avoid popularization and adaptation to the market, involuntarily becomes an attack on them. The attack is not abstract, not a fixed attitude of all works of art to the world which will not forgive them for not bending totally to it. The distance these works maintain from empirical reality is in itself partly mediated by that reality. The imagination of the artist is not a creation ex nihilo; only dilettanti and aesthetes believe it to be so. Works of art that react against empirical reality obey the forces of that reality, which reject intellectual creations and throw them back on themselves. There is no material content, no formal category of artistic creation, however mysteriously transmitted and itself unaware of the process, which did not originate in the empirical reality from which it breaks free (1980, 190).

This brings our attention to two important, basic propositions to Adorno's unfinished book Aesthetic Theory, namely that reality mediates in part artworks and that formal elements of the work can in part be linked to empirical reality. Kluge refers affirmatively to these propositions in his essay. Kluge does not bow down to the demands of the market place, for the whole conception of his antagonistic realism employs Adorno's critique of mass culture as a negative blueprint for an alternative, utopic use of media. This above relationship between art and reality Adorno further specifies while citing

Beckett as a prime example:

It is this which constitutes the true relation of art to reality, whose elements are regrouped by its formal laws. Even the avant-garde abstraction which provokes the indignation of philistines, and which has nothing in common with conceptual or logical abstraction, is a reflex response to the abstraction of the law which objectively dominates society (1980, 190).

Here Adorno even finds a possible relation between avant-garde form and society. Taunting Sartre, Adorno asserts, "Kafka and Beckett arouse the fear which existentialism merely talks about" (1980, 191).

Similarly, Adorno argues against mere formal play in art for its own sake through the loss of references to objective representation and meaning:

Such works drift to the brink of indifference, degenerate insensibly into mere hobbies, into idle repetition of formulas now abandoned in other art-forms, into trivial patterns. It is this development which often gives substance to crude calls for commitment. Formal structures which challenge the lying positivism of meaning can easily slide into a different sort of vacuity, positivistic arrangements, empty juggling with elements (1980, 191).

Against another popular misperception of Adorno as a radical modernist, read formalist, this extract evinces the necessity of art works to "touch down," as the epistemologists say. In itself gratuitous formal play is inadequate to his notion of authentic art, it must draw some link to the real, lived world. Furthermore, Adorno summarises by arguing that these

two extremes of commitment coupled with philistine moralism⁶⁸ betrays its aim of releasing humanity from its bounds and of art as a law unto itself, which slides into an ideology. "When a work is merely itself and no other thing, as in a pure pseudo-scientific construction, it becomes bad art--literally pre-artistic" (1980, 194). There is no doubt that Kluge's antagonistic realism precludes any such empty formal play.

The American Adorno scholar, Lambert Zuidervaart, distills Adorno's notion of commitment thus:

The essay "Commitment" hinges on the antinomy of committed art versus autonomous art, although Adorno begins with both political and aesthetic reasons for questioning this antinomy. By "committed art" he does not mean tendentious art, which aims at immediate objectives such as the change of labor laws, nor does he mean propaganda, which serves the official goals of a government or political party. In the course of the essay, "committed art" comes to mean art that is intended to change fundamental political attitudes, but often fails. "Autonomous art" comes to mean art that is not intended to change political attitudes, yet often does (Zuidervaart 1991, 35 f.).

The label of committed does not apply to Kluge's project, for he does not seek to alter "fundamental political attitudes," his reconception of film form and praxis under the rubric of antagonistic realism is at most tendentious with its distant emancipatory goal. Not attitudes but rather imagination and

⁶⁸ Some of Adorno's disdain for committed works thus shrouded is made evident here: They are knowledge as non-conceptual objects. This is the source of their nobility. [...] Committed works all too readily credit themselves with every noble value, and then manipulate them at their ease. Under fascism too, no atrocity was perpetrated without a moral veneer (1980, 193).

desires are to be opened up through the "liberated film;" and the above quotation taken from an interview demonstrates his modesty in achieving such a goal.

D. THE STATUS OF KLUGE'S THEORETICAL POSITION VIS-A-VIS ADORNO

From Andreas Huyssen, a New-York-based German literary critic, we have the following perception of Kluge's theoretical debt:

Kluge's writing [...] operated on a level of aesthetic reflection and analytic savvy that had learned its lessons from the experiments of the Weimar avant-garde, especially Brecht and the montage tradition. His project was also deeply influenced by the thought of both Benjamin and Adorno. [...] If one examines Kluge's literary and theoretical positions, one sees how the well-known dichotomies--Brecht vs. Adorno, Adorno vs. Benjamin, or political writing vs. high modernism, mass culture as tool of domination vs. media as agents of emancipation--are taken apart in his writing practice and give way to methods of remixing, constructing, and collaging that set those well-known positions productively back into motion (Huyssen 1988, 122).

While Huyssen's aim in his essay is not to justify this assertion but rather to write criticism on one of Kluge's films, we should take note of his insight into Kluge's artistic project, as critics have also in the past pointed out certain relationships between Kluge and others with little substantiation. This chapter takes as its subject three principal essays by Adorno on the cinema and art and then seeks to show their individual and collective relationship to Kluge's antagonistic concept of realism, his most articulate and developed text to date on the topic. We also see how Kluge reinterprets Adorno's older text, scil. "The Culture Industry," along with his later, less pessimistic one, scil.

"Transparencies on Film." Finally, the status of Kluge's position vis-à-vis commitment is established.

Briefly, Kluge's formulation of his antagonistic realism profits from the reticences found in Horkheimer and Adorno's chapter "Culture Industry" in their book Dialectic of Enlightenment; for they are silent on any alternatives to the mass cinema, nevertheless they never rule their possibility out completely. Kluge in fact shares many of the criticisms in their analysis levelled at the proliferation of technique and technology driven by late capitalism. While the writers find uniformity of mass media product, Kluge chooses an eclectic form that embraces what the culture industry is determined to avoid, e.g. the low-brow circus and the flamboyant opera. Common to all is the respect for the particular, the tyranny of the abstract must be avoided. Kluge finds in montage cinema's rescue from merely reconfirming the banal. Whereas mass film lacks adequate openings for spontaneity and reflection on the part of the audience, Kluge envisions a form that would allow the audience more freedom from excessive detail in sound and image. Kluge seeks to challenge the culture industry's presupposed subject by toying with the spectator's learned genre expectations; moreover, he seeks to develop new rules of form to suit each film, beyond the conventions set by commercial feature film. To retrieve a sense of leisure, Kluge bases his notion of film

form on structures of daydreams, in contrast to leisure based on discipline and work. Against the rigid modes of the culture industry Kluge only makes reference to them in the form of quotations, not as attempts at authentic art.

Adorno's essay "Transparencies on Film" amplifies what Kluge finds in "Culture Industry." Here Adorno emphasises several romantic motifs, such as the immediate, accidental, and anti-professionalism, all of which Kluge incorporates into his antagonistic realism. Again the model of daydreams for film image sequences Kluge accepts in his notion of montage and its potential to shock the spectator into deep insight. Adorno also promotes the idea that a "liberated film" would be possible through some use of emancipatory intention, which lies at the heart of Kluge's project. By avoiding cliché conventions that issue from technological innovation, Adorno maintains that a more authentic film form could be achieved; Kluge would only refer to film history through quotation, which may entail quoting such conventions. Both seek a more differentiated audience.

On commitment Adorno writes against the two extremes of art for art's sake and an art aimed at changing fundamental attitudes. Kluge's emancipatory project is much weaker than Sartre's, as we see above in his interview with Liebman, while he hopes for a modest moment of release for his audience which

could only be sustained under completely changed conditions in the mass media. Finally, Kluge's sense of emancipatory is also confirmed by Adorno's above essay which hypothesises the possibility of the existence of such a type of film.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Liebman: So Adorno was not a fighter?

Kluge: Well, in his area he was. The sending of a message in a bottle, no matter when it returns, is also a kind of praxis. Words and music were his domain, and those are domains in which one can win. One could say that he planted a tree that grows in Frankfurt am Main. To some extent, Adorno was like Cassandra, a prophet and not a fighter. He would laugh about me; he always laughed a little. He tolerated it because he liked me, but he found that I pushed too far, that I invested too much thought in real circumstances. But I don't believe in the existing circumstances; rather, I believe in the porosity of the existing situation, at least when I can make it out.

[Kluge in interview on the topic of Adorno's interest in his film project (Liebman 1988b, 38)]

A. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

1. REVIEW OF THE PRINCIPAL AIM OF THE THESIS

The principal aim of this thesis is to establish a fortiori Kluge's writings on aesthetic realism as deeply and significantly indebted to Adorno's critique of the mass media and to his later elaboration on the possible "liberated film." Such a shift in interpretation is mainly corrective in nature, to an extent at odds with the majority of critical writings on and general, North-American reception of Kluge's films and literary works. Already Lutze's detailed 1991 dissertation concerns at its heart the problem of accepting Kluge's work as postmodernist, an interpretation against which he argues cogently in favour of the rubric 'late modernist.' If we

trust the sincerity of Kluge's interviews, then the following excerpt should eloquently confirm Lutze's claim. Kluge mentions,

[t]here are two positions in the mass media. The first says that if something works, it is correct. The high point of this philosophy is Hitchcock. For him, there is nothing particular in the world. This idea is the enemy of our concept. On the other hand, you have a principle of authenticity. Enlightened narration accepts authenticity. I do not continually try to make general concepts that control the individual; rather I let something retain its own genuineness. Kant says each situation, each human being, has a value. It is inhuman and unnatural if I take life away from objects or other men. The principle of authenticity: that is the basic thought behind my work. There follows from this a number of organizational principles (Liebman 1988b, 53).

Authenticity, Enlightenment, individual, value, and especially Kant are all pejoratives within postmodernist discourse; and consequently it is highly unlikely that Kluge's artistic project could sustain itself coherently from within the theoretical parameters of postmodernism, no matter how selective.

Similarly, there is a tendency to ascribe a strong Brechtian influence to his work. While I have few objections to most of the detailed, scholarly criticism written on sharply-defined aspects of Brecht in Kluge's work, these articles and essays tend to displace the much deeper influence of Adorno's critique and thus present him simply or with some qualification as a follower of Brecht. What the present thesis aims to demonstrate is that, instead of Kluge as a Brechtian with Adornian or other coloration, he remains nearer

to Adorno yet with some Brechtian traits, as we shall review below. This is achieved through careful analyses of three important texts by Adorno and Kluge's treatise on the antagonistic concept of realism. What we discover is the deep dialogue in Kluge's text with Adorno's critique, which lies at a much more fundamental level in Kluge's realism than the Brechtian stylistic motifs.

2. BRIEF REVIEW OF ANTAGONISTIC REALISM

Kluge's antagonistic concept of realism or concept of antagonistic realism can be characterised by the following. While it clearly situates itself in post-Weimar aesthetic realism, it also carries with it motifs from the earliest roots of realism in Voltaire's arguments, the French Enlightenment, and Courbet. In it Kluge warns against the dangers of blindly applying general, abstract rules to particulars, instead he posits a gentler nominalism, a greater respect for the object over abstraction. He claims that there is not one but three cameras presupposed in the production and reception of film works, namely the technical camera, the mind of the filmmaker, and the pressure of genre expectations. Arguing with these three metaphorical cameras in hand, Kluge denies the realist status to the conventional documentary film, which he asserts is no more realist than the fiction film.

Quoting the German critic Streschek, Kluge emphasises the synthetic nature of film, which contrasts heavily to the generally dishevelled ordering of the real; rather Kluge likens film in general closer to the opera. For Kluge, to strategically make films with commercial viability in mind is to compromise them irrecoverably; instead the realist film should ignite the protest impulse latent in the audience and avoid conforming to given genres.

Equally, Kluge finds fault with the conventional feature film. He remains, along with Adorno, wary of the overwhelming capacity of film to simulate objective reality and fact, which, they fear, in turn reconfirms the false belief that the external world is inalterable. Kluge selects the utopic moment of the fiction film, the impulse to realise one's childhood libidinal fantasies in fictional plots, but remains opposed to the schematic manipulation of desires and reality for the sake of sating mass-media-conditioned expectations.

In place of either of these two tendencies in the cinema Kluge seeks a sort of sublation (Aufhebung) of them into his antagonistic realism. In it he envisions a dialectical film form, accompanied by a reconceived method of production, that escapes either of the fundamental tendencies towards documentary or fiction, instead antagonistic realism is a composite form, a cinéma impur after Godard, or in his

metaphor an open-ended construction site. Citing Proust and Joyce as models, Kluge notes that "situational objectivity presupposes radical complexity of narrative mode."⁶⁹

Following the Oberhausen Manifesto, Kluge attempts to break away from the inherited, commodified film forms and praxis of earlier generations, against this he combines the radical fiction of exposed contradictions with the radically authentic observation of finding strangeness in the banal. He also posits an apparently McLuhan-like assertion concerning the development of the cinema, i.e. the cinema as a crude, external complement to the 10,000-year-old cinema in the minds of human beings, in other words the imagination.

One principal aim of antagonistic realist film is the reawakening of the five senses, which society has conditioned over time. This would lead in part to exposing reality's own fictive character, its paper-tiger nature. For Kluge, the motive of realism is protest, an escape from the general oppression of reality, which he categorises in psychological terms as: radical imitation, evasion, and aggression.

Kluge's antagonistic realism takes five steps: the protest impulse, radical perception as reality creating, the

⁶⁹ Note that both these authors are highly prized by Adorno.

construction of the objective situation, authentic observation with new formal rules suited to each film, and the production of an experiential horizon or the transproduction of social awareness.

Other motifs included in antagonistic realism are the references to the roots of cinema through quotation and an anti-professionalism since the whole project began as a critique of the inherited--read professional--national cinema as part of the post-WWII West German culture industry.

3. ON BRECHT'S INFLUENCE ON KLUGE

In the above brief survey of antagonistic realism one notices two stylistic motifs conventionally, although not necessarily exclusively, ascribed to Brecht, viz. the notion of estrangement or distanciation (Verfremdung) and montage. Kluge makes use of the notion of estrangement in the formulation of his principle of radically-authentic observation. Montage lies at the kernel of his principle of radical fiction, whereby utopic moments--also framed in terms of Benjamin's notion of shock (Jetztzeit)--are located in the spaces between shots. While Kluge apparently employs concepts from Brecht's writings on the theatre, he remains highly selective, for he patently ignores Brecht's approach to didactic plays (Lehrstücke) and other important Brechtian principles. Most of the criticism that investigates the

relationship between Kluge's films and Brecht's theatre is written on the principles of estrangement or montage (see Chapter I, the literature review, above).

4. REVIEW OF ADORNO'S INFLUENCE ON KLUGE

Adorno's phrase "I love to go to the movies, the only thing that bothers me is the image on the screen" should forewarn the researcher or filmmaker of possible pitfalls in reworking Adorno's thought into a programme for a radical cinema. Nonetheless, Kluge demonstrates that at least one such programme can, indeed, negatively satisfy the conditions set in Adorno's critique of the mass, commercial cinema. The three principal texts considered in the above analysis are the chapter "Culture Industry", and the two essays "Transparancies on Film" and "Commitment". Even though Dialectic of Enlightenment is a co-authored book, it is very widely accepted that Adorno speaks through it vociferously. Let us survey below some of the commonalities between Adorno and Kluge on the topic of the commercial cinema, an alternative cinema, and art.

Kluge appears to fill in many of the gaps or reticences in Horkheimer and Adorno's critique of the mass cinema, i.e. he seems to use their critique as a negative template for a way out of its elaborated aporia. Kluge stands in accord with their dire analysis of the capital-driven proliferation of

technique and technology throughout invariably all aspects of (late) modern existence. Kluge moves beyond the two traditionally pure tendencies in the cinema: documentary and feature film genres, in his words, whereas the critique emphasises the uniformity of the products of the mass culture. Kluge seeks what the culture industry is too prudish to admit, such as the low-brow circus and the excessive opera. Both parties carry great respect for the particular over the totalitarian tendencies of the abstract. For film to avoid merely reconfirming the status quo of human existence, Kluge employs a fairly strong principle of montage, one which contains Benjamin's anticipation of shock or deep insight (Jetztzeit), which Kluge locates between the shots themselves. While the mass film is overdetermined in sound and image to such an extent that it very rarely permits the spectator moments or gaps for reflection, spontaneity, or imagination, Kluge instead posits a type of film that would offer the spectator exactly what the mass film lacks. The sense of subjectivity presupposed in the products of the culture industry is challenged by Kluge, who actively plays with the spectator's conditioned genre expectations and furthermore develops new aesthetic relationships for each particular film. In contrast to mass culture's effective colonisation of leisure through a model based upon work and discipline, Kluge structures his film forms on the image-flow of daydreams. Through Kluge's principle of quotation he makes short

references to certain of the rigid forms issuing from the typically early culture industry, but always framed as a quotation.

In "Transparencies on Film" Adorno develops what appears to be a set of prescriptive ingredients for and towards the "liberated film." The romantic motifs of the immediate, the accidental, and anti-professionalism play a strategic rôle for Adorno in opening up the possibility of a utopic cinema, all of which Kluge integrates into his own antagonistic realism. Here Adorno champions the model of daydreams for the sequence of images in film, which is included in his principle of montage. For Adorno the "liberated film" requires some emancipatory intentions, with which Kluge concurs. For an authentic film form, Adorno asserts, the filmmaker must consider the source of the technological developments and their relation to technique; when ignored this often leads to a hasty embrace of industry-dominated technology and the blind acceptance of already cliché conventions, such as soft-focus and flash-backs, in story-telling. Kluge also questions the rôle in praxis and in form and source of new technologies. Adorno and Kluge both wish for a more differentiated audience, one not exclusively culled from the cognoscenti.

On the topic of committed art Adorno challenges the two tendencies: art for art's sake and art aimed at changing

fundamental attitudes. While Adorno inveighs against Sartre's strong formulation of political art, Kluge's project carries with it quite different weaker goals, namely modest, momentary emancipatory ones. Adorno himself advocates utopic, emancipatory intentions for the purpose of attaining the "liberated film." For these reasons Kluge should not be considered as falling under the rubric of committed cinema.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The realignment of Kluge with Adorno has important consequences for the reception and study of Kluge's films and literary pursuits. To redraw the interpretative frame is to challenge, say, Jan Bruck's strong Brechtian approach to Kluge's films (1983, 1988). Bruck, for example, may not be as successful in arguing her point against a poststructuralist interpretation of Kluge if his work was viewed from within a stronger Adornian paradigm. While Hansen argues a similar point in several of her articles on Kluge's films, she remains open to Adorno's influence, especially in her introduction to a recent translation of his essay "Transparencies on Film" in which she briefly draws a few insightful relationships between the thought of Adorno and Kluge (Hansen 1981b).

A changed interpretative frame also possibly changes the reception of Kluge's work. As Lutze's writing evinces (1991), Kluge's overall artistic project is fundamentally of late

modernism, but just. A postmodernist interpretation would indeed be possible of his work, however major inconsistencies would remain irresolvable, as the above quotation on authenticity from Kluge's interview intimates. The above reinterpretation of Kluge's project should better serve to orient critical writings on his work. It should also be able to pick up where Brechtian-slanted approaches break down.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Chronology of Selected Works by Alexander Kluge

Appendix II: Oberhausen Manifesto (1962)

APPENDIX I: CHRONOLOGY OF SELECTED WORKS BY ALEXANDER KLUGE

The following lists (1) all the films made by Kluge from his first film in 1960 to 1986, and (2) a selection of his most important writings during the same period.⁷⁰ Essays are indicated by the use of quotation marks, while the titles of books are underlined. English versions are indicated by square brackets.

- 1960 Brutalität in Stein (Co-directed)
 1961 Rennen (Co-directed)
 1962 "Oberhausen Manifesto" (Co-writer)
Lebensläufe [Attendance List for a Funeral, 1966]
 1962/63 Lehrer im Wandel (Co-directed)
 1964 Schlachtbeschreibung [The Battle, 1967]
 Porträt einer Bewährung
 "Die Utopie Film"
 1965/66 Abschied von gestern [Yesterday Girl]
 1967 Frau Blackburn, geb. 5. Jan. 1972, wird gefilmt
 Die Artisten in der Zirkuskuppel: ratlos [Artists
 under the Big Top: Perplexed]
 1967/69 Die unberühmbare Leni Peickert
 1968 Feuerlöscher E.A. Winterstein
 1969/70 Der grosse Verhau
 Ein Arzt aus Halberstadt
 1971 Wir verbauen 3 x 27 Millionen Dollar in einen
 Angriffsschlachter / Der Angriffsschlachter
 Willi Tobler und der Untergang der 6 Flotte
 1972 Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung: Zur
Organisationsanalyse von bürgerlicher und
proletarischer Öffentlichkeit (with Oskar Negt)
[Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an
Organisational Analysis of the Bourgeois and
Proletarian Public Sphere, 1993]
 1973 Filmwirtschaft in der BDR und in Europa
Götterdämmerung in Raten
 Besitzbürgerin, Jahrgang 1908
 Gelegenheitsarbeit einer Sklavin [Part-time Work of
 a Domestic Slave]
 1974 Lebensläufe: Anwesenheitsliste für eine Beerdigung
 In Gefahr und grösster Not bringt der Mittelweg den
 Tod (Co-directed)

⁷⁰ For a more exhaustive chronology of works, see Stuart Liebman's in October 46, Fall, 1988, pp. 197-216.

- 1975 Der starke Ferdinand [Strongman Ferdinand]
Gelegenheitsarbeit einer Skiavin: Zur realistischen Methode [Toward a Realistic Method, 1980]
- 1977 Die Menschen, die das Staufer-Jahr vorbereiten
 Nachrichten von den Staufern
 Zu böser Schlacht schleich' ich heut nacht so bang
 (a new version of Willi Tobler)
- 1977/78 Deutschland im Herbst (Co-directed) [Germany in Autumn]
- 1977/79 Die Patriotin [The Patriot]
- 1979/80 Der Kandidat (Co-directed) [The Candidate]
- 1980 Ulmer Dramaturgien: Reibungsverluste
- 1981 Geschichte und Eigensinn (with Oskar Negt)
- 1982 Biermann-Film (Co-directed)
- 1982/83 Krieg und Frieden (Co-directed)
 Die Macht der Gefühle [Power of Emotions]
- 1983 Bestandsaufnahme: Utopie Film (Co-editor)
 Auf der Suche nach einer praktisch-realistischen Haltung
- 1985 Der Angriff der Gegenwart auf die übrige Zeit
- 1986 Vermischte Nachrichten

APPENDIX II: OBERHAUSEN MANIFESTO (1962)

The following is a translation of the original so-called Oberhausener Manifest of 1962 (Rentschler 1988, 2).

The collapse of the conventional German film finally removes the economic basis for a mode of filmmaking whose attitude and practice we reject. With it the new film has a chance to come to life.

German short films by young authors, directors, and producers have in recent years received a large number of prizes at international festivals and gained the recognition of international critics. These works and these successes show that the future of the German film lies in the hands of those who have proven that they speak a new film language.

Just as in other countries, the short film has become in Germany a school and experimental basis for the feature film.

We declare our intention to create the new German feature film.

This new film needs new freedoms. Freedom from the conventions of the established industry. Freedom from the outside influence of commercial partners. Freedom from the control of special interest groups.

We have concrete intellectual, formal, and economic conceptions about the production of the new German film. We are as a collective prepared to take economic risks.

The old film is dead. We believe in the new one.

Oberhausen, February 28, 1962

[signatures of 26 participants]