The evolution of French orthodox Marxist literary and aesthetic theory from 1886-1966

by

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CHAPTER ONE

Nineteenth Century Socialist and Materialist Theories of Art and Literature

An examination of the view of the arts of nineteenth century French ideologists and philosophers reveals much common ground and continuity of ideals and ideas.

Eighteenth century materialism had done much to influence approaches to the history of literature, literary criticism and theories on the role of the artist in society, to the extent that a form of sociology of literature had begun to emerge by the middle of the nineteenth century, notably in the theory of Taine. On the ideological front, increasing pressure was being brought to bear on artists and writers to enter active political life either on behalf of collectivists or in the name of the bourgeois republic whose men of letters played a vital role in creating the moral identity of the state. It was therefore not by chance alone that a tradition of involvement in politics should have established itself in France during the course of the nineteenth century; Lamartine, Hugo and Zola were as much political as literary figures in their own lifetimes.

So powerful were the political currents of the time, and so much interrelated scientific, philosophical and ideological theories, that it was virtually impossible for the first self-styled literary scientists to maintain the complete objectivity desired. It is proposed therefore in this short description of the socialist and materialist
antecedents of French Marxist literary criticism and theory, to outline the nature and development of the two connected components, ideology and science, of committed literary and artistic theory as they first appeared in France. This will be followed by an outline of the literary and aesthetic theories of the first Marxists.

The early French socialists and artistic theory

The faith of the eighteenth century philosophers in the inevitable forward march of Progress (moral and social), was continued by the nineteenth century positivist thinkers and early theorists of collectivism; in the case of the latter, social progress was held to be dependent on social harmony and collective effort in which the different members and social groups worked towards a social goal always within the framework of interdependence and cooperation. When Saint-Simon¹ (1760-1825) first elaborated his theory of social justice and progress being the fruits of the collaboration of the various "producer" elements in society (e.g. workers, intellectuals, scientists etc.), he made no specific mention of the artist. However towards the end of his life when his philosophy tended to deal with aspects of human existence other than those of the everyday business of production, economic survival etc., Saint Simon included the artist as one of the fundamental components of society, a priest-like figure capable

¹For a more complete account of the early socialists and artistic theory cf., Lossier, Jean-G. Le rôle social de l'art selon Proudhon pp. 72-144. Vrin, Paris 1937.
of capturing the vision of the Saint-Simonian society and communicating it to his fellow mortals. Saint-Simon saw the artist therefore not as someone operating outside, and possibly in revolt against, society, but a positive figure with special powers which could be of benefit to society. The conception of the artist as an intermediary between an ideal and society was taken up but modified by Auguste Comte\(^1\) (1798-1857) himself a former Saint Simonian and now leading theorist of the positivist school. Comte believed that the artist's talent should be at the disposal of society in the same way as the knowledge or skill of any other specialist; consequently, in his system, the artist tended to play less the role of the priest and more that of a pedagogue. The artist's particular skill was in the expression of beauty, a fundamental thing in human life which touched all men's hearts positively; a practical application of this, according to Comte, could be found in education, especially in the early years of a child's development when his mind could be prepared for the reception of knowledge, having passed through an apprenticeship of the appreciation of beauty. Art could also be enlisted in the communication of Truth or reality by depicting the "typical" (a Platonic notion), but a typical which was not mere reproduction or the expression of a prosaic average, but a heightened expression of the essence of the subject portrayed. For Comte therefore

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\(^1\) Lossier, Jean-G. op.cit.
the artist can be seen as playing a less exalted role than
the Saint-Simonian artist although the recognition of the
special nature of art remains.

Pierre Leroux¹ (1797-1871), the ardent republican
and disciple of Saint-Simon went as far as to claim that
artistic progress was a measure of social progress, since
in order for society to advance, men's minds had to be
changed and the most potent agent for this was art. The
theatre was the most suitable art form for this task, an
idea which was to find many an echo as the century pro-
gressed and it became more and more important to reach the
growing industrial urban proletariat whose illiteracy
barred it from other means of communication.

Michel Fourier² (1772-1837), together with his
disciple Victor Considérant (1808-1893), gave Saint-Simon's
argument a different twist by insisting that not only was
good art beneficial to society, but that good art could not
be realised unless integrated into society. The inter-
dependence of art and society meant that since society
produced art, art should belong to society; thus the idea
of the public ownership of art was introduced into French
political thinking, a theme which was embraced by both
Louis Blanc and Proudhon. Fourier also had a utilitarian
view of art in which the artist was called upon to
embellish the urban environment, the work place and the
home; he greatly criticised the utopian English socialist,
Owen for failing to provide aesthetically pleasing and uplifting surroundings for his work people in their model communities. Some of the early socialist thinkers gave some thought to the historical evolution of art within human society; the Saint-Simonians and Comte believed in the existence of "périodes organiques" in which the artist was in total harmony with society, thus the peaks of artistic achievement could be traced to times when the artist was at one with his community e.g. Ancient Greece or in the more stable period of the Middle Ages. This was as far as the Saint-Simonians went in their theory, but Comte's was more elaborate. Shadowing Hegel's theory of the three stages of human expression towards complete spiritual and intellectual fulfillment, primitive religion, art and pure thought, Comte also claimed that three periods could be distinguished. The first period was that in which art was completely integrated into primitive religion where it played a fundamental, magical role; the second "polytheistic" period was entered as soon as the imagination had been liberated from magic and superstition and the way became clear for the establishment of a stable society through the application of objective moral principles; the resulting homogeneous society produced a fertile climate for the arts. The third and ultimate stage was to be reached when the positivist society had been obtained and the artist was fully integrated into the new society free from alienation and strife. This
last feature of forecasting great artistic periods when the social goal had been achieved, was another leitmotive of 19th century theorists. Of all the nineteenth century thinkers, it was Pierre Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865) who produced the most comprehensive socialist theory of the role of the arts in society, and the nature of art as a whole. Perhaps it was the accumulated effect of the preceding debates carried on by the Saint-Simonians and the Fourieristes, or perhaps it was because Proudhon was from a culturally deprived background and self-taught, that he was convinced that the possession of culture was a necessary prerequisite to a full life. He himself ascribes his interest in the significance of art to an article he was asked to write by the painter Courbet. In a letter to a friend he stated how much he was stimulated by the experience:

"Je suis occupé en ce moment d'un petit travail sur l'art. C'est une matière que j'ai toujours laissée de côté; un de mes compatriots, Courbet, peintre m'ayant demandé une notice de quatre pages sur un de ses tableaux, j'ai été conduit à en écrire 160."  

This assignment led to a deepening of his friendship with Courbet, a friendship which was to be of some importance to both men, since if Proudhon discovered a real interest in art, Courbet, on the other hand discovered the meaning of commitment. In a second letter in the same year, Proudhon expressed a deepening interest in the social mission of art:

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"Je parle en juge, je dis ce que je pense à Courbet qui d'ailleurs je ne traiterai point mal! On sera quelque peu étonné, moi qui passe pour ennemi des arts comme des femmes, de me voir poser des principes, assigner la destinée sociale de l'art, juger des écoles etc.,"¹

What he had to say of Courbet was of great interest. Courbet he saw as a realist who, because of his closeness to the people, was able to voice its aspirations, portray its sufferings, and consequently strike a blow in the cause of social justice and human dignity. Not only did Courbet align himself with the people (the only possible role for a true artist), he also attacked the fabric of the society responsible for oppression and injustice. Proudhon repeatedly expressed the hope that Courbet would eventually lead a school of such committed artists; the latter was not insensitive to Proudhon's pleas and indeed regarded himself as a revolutionary painter. His personal involvement in the Paris Commune of 1870, he regarded as his finest hour as a socialist artist.

Proudhon did not agree with the idea of revolutionary art urging the proletariat to take up arms in open revolt, but rather held that since all direct confrontation was against the interests of the people (because of their weakness), socialist art should have as its main function the creation of a class consciousness, an awareness of the proletarian condition. In order to realise its social mission, art had to take care not to be absorbed by bourgeois institutions such as academies, the Church,

private and public patronage etc.

His experience in artistic criticism plus his contact with the Young Marx who explained neo-Hegelian dialectics to him, caused him to look beyond the work itself for a deeper meaning:

"Si l'antique religion, si les systèmes rebattus de la philosophie... si les vieilles formes de communalité et d'association aussi bien que de la littérature et d'art n'ont été que des formules particulières de l'état matériel des sociétés, n'est-il pas évident que, cet état venant à changer en d'autres termes, l'économie politique étant révolutionnaire de fond en comble par le changement du rapport entre les deux grandes forces de la production, le travail et le capital, tout change dans la société, religion, philosophie, politique, littérature et arts."¹

It was this perspective on the determinant role of social and economic revolution which enabled Proudhon, as he put it, to see, "la chose derrière" a work of art or literature. In another comment on the literature of the "siècle des lumières" Proudhon demonstrated the extent to which this kind of ideological criticism had coloured his view; he maintained that not only had this literature been born of its society, it was also engaged in perpetuating it:

"Après s'être formée sur la société comme sur son prototype elle (la littérature) avait donc servi à la conservation de cette même société en l'idéalisant."²

Decidedly the growing social unrest exemplified by the socialist revolts of 1830 and 1848, had caused a new bitterness to appear in socialist theory. The age of the

¹Proudhon, P.-J. In Le Peuple 1st Nov. 1848.
utopian socialists had passed and in its place the grim reality of a heightening class struggle. From this time onwards the role of art in the socialist context was seen as directly connected with the class war. The socialist critic had a duty to expose the invalidity of the bourgeois régime while praising those artists who had thrown in their lot with the proletariat. This was the nature of the life work of the critic novelist and Communard Jules Vallès (1832-1885). Demonstrating his scorn for those artists and writers who sought to defend the bourgeois régime, Vallès lost no opportunity to expose the hypocrisy of these so-called champions of democracy whose sense of public duty had led them into the political arena; thus in reply to a statement to the effect that Lamartine and Hugo were much more valuable members of society for having participated in its political life than a de Musset who sought refuge in drugs, Vallès left no doubt as to his position:

"C'est que justement vous reprochez à Alfred de Musset, me direz-vous de n'avoir pas vécu la vie de son temps, et vous vous servez de Lamartine et d'Hugo pour l'écraser. Moi je me sers d'eux pour le défendre; Vous croyez donc que, plus que Musset, Hugo et Lamartine sont des poètes de liberté. N'allez pas compromettre par une sottise leur gloire légitime! J'admire autant que vous souvent Victor Hugo, mais cet épopiste, ce bibliste, chez qui il n'est question que d'empereurs, de papes et de soldats, de Moïse et de Charles X, de Jéhovah et de Napoléon, je sais qu'il n'est devenu par hasard un homme de liberté. Ne confondons pas s'il vous plaît, l'exilé de Jersey ou de Sainte Hélène! Lamartine est le Belmondet des séraphins, un bondiesard monotone. Mais tous deux sont descendus dans l'arène en 48, et voilà pourquoi vous les
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glorifiez. Que ne sont-ils pas restés chez eux! Ils donneront à la République, l'un des pieds de cygne, l'autre une tête d'aigle, et la menèrent ainsi endormante et saignante à l'abattoir. Ne le savez-vous pas? Ne savez-vous pas que Lamartine avachit le peuple le lendemain de Février, et que Victor Hugo vota pour un Bonaparte président le 10 décembre? Mieux vaut avoir été "inutile" comme Musset que glorieux comme eux. 

This was the kind of hard-hitting literary-political pamphleteering which was to characterise so much of the writings on art and literature of French left-wing intellectuals of this generation.

The practice of selecting those aspects of a writer's life worthy of praise from the socialist point of view (cf. the recognition of Hugo's "gloire légitime" above), could either be to demonstrate the "fairness" of the critic, or in some cases to encourage a living writer to throw in his lot with the socialists. Haranguing writers from the columns of left-wing reviews such as the Cri du Peuple (founded by Vallès in 1883), Le Peuple, Le Mouvement Socialiste, La Petite République etc. became one of the principal activities of left wing critics. Vallès held the Naturalists in great esteem, not unlike the admiration of Proudhon for Courbet, and felt that if he could persuade them to abandon their strictly neutral position to support the oppressed masses which they understood so well, a great victory could be claimed for socialism.

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Robert Caze, a contributor to the *Cri du Peuple* underlined Vallès' confidence in the efficacy of the Naturalist novel in creating an awareness of the proletarian condition among the workers themselves:

"Le populo comprend mieux l'Assomoir que le Capital de Karl Marx."

In contrast to Vallès' exhortations to Zola to proclaim publicly his allegiance to socialism, another contributor to *Le Cri*, Paul Alexis, himself a Naturalist, put forward a strong plea for the condition of "fellow traveller"

"Que font les naturalistes? Sans conclure pré-maturément, avec l'analyse pour outil, ils opèrent certaines "préparations sociales"; ils dégagent quelques "fragments de vérité", matériaux au moyen desquels sera facilité l'organisation d'une société future, plus équitable. . . . rebatie de fond en comble ( . . . . ) que doivent faire les socialistes? Avec la même méthode appliquée à l'action, ils s'efforcent de faire passer dans les moeurs les découvertes de leurs congénères. Par deux voies parallèles, nous allons tous au même but ( . . . . ) les naturalistes sont des socialistes dans les idées, les socialistes sont des naturalistes dans l'ordre des faits, les uns et les autres veulent trouver le ciel et refaire le monde, mais ils le veulent par la science. . . ."

By the turn of the century however there were signs in the socialist camp that the kind of criticism which sought to

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1 Caze, Robert in *Le Cri du Peuple*, 15 Nov. 1883.

2 The problem of the political neutrality of the artist nevertheless favourable to ideological aims was to reappear with some dramatic repercussions in the 1920's and 30's in France and the Soviet Union.

turn every discourse on the arts into a revolutionary
diatribe could prove to be counter productive. L'Humanité

Nouvelle, the internationalist^1 anarchist monthly which
was published in Belgium and France from 1897 to 1901,
affords an interesting insight into the problem of the
nature and function of literary criticism from the
socialist point of view.

In an early article, an anonymous contributor,
writing on Russian literature and criticism, commented on
the rising interest in Russian writing in France labelling
it exoticism. The real drama which lay behind Tsarist
Russian literature was unknown to the majority of French
people:

"Cette ignorance de la littérature russe en général,
est d'une importance d'autant plus grave qu'il s'agit
précisément de la Russie, où, en l'absence de
la tribune libre, de la presse libre, de la science
et l'enseignement libres, la littérature est la seule
force, le seul organe qui forme les générations
venant à la vie et qui s'exprime l'esprit et l'âme
de leurs contemporains et de leurs devanciers
(......) Voilà pourquoi nos plus grands critiques,
les célébres Biéliinsky (mort en 1848) Dobrolioubov
(mort en 1861) Tchernichevsky et aussi leurs élèves
Pissarev (mort en 1868) et Mikhailovsky (qui vit
encore) sont non seulement de grands critiques
littéraires, des publicistes hors ligne, mais aussi
et surtout des créateurs et pour ainsi dire les

^1 The list of honorary patrons from home and abroad is an
impressive one, something which was to become a feature
of socialist publications in the 20's and 30's.
Jules Destrée, Georges Sorel, Fernand Pelloutier
P. Kropotkin, Camille Lemonnier (all with strong anarchist
and syndicalist connections). Amongst the socialist
and literary figures one finds: T. Mann, Pio Baroja,
Havelock Ellis, Emile Verhaeren and Léon Bazalgette.
The Russian critics mentioned above were cited also by P. Boborykine in an article published in 1900. This fact is of some importance when one considers the stress laid on these critics by Russian Marxists such as Plekhanov and Lenin. For them, Dubrolubov, Bielinsky and Tchernichevsky were more clandestine critics of the repressive Tsarist regime than literary critics. From the 1840's these critics educated their public to interpret covert ideological criticism in their literary commentaries, which, coupled with their resolute rejection of most contemporary art as the plaything of the idle aristocracy, created a new function for literary criticism binding it positively to direct political action. There is the impression in the pages of *L'Humanité Nouvelle* of the immanence of a new and great era in socialist art:

Le mouvement qui s'accentue de nos jours de plus en plus, dans les littératures européennes, précisément dans ce sens, montre la littérature prête à rentrer en lice à reprendre sa place d'honneur dans la vie contemporaine. La littérature sociale, comme l'art social sont à la veille d'être proclamés définitivement en Europe.²

Note was taken too, of experiments in this field abroad especially concerning theatre for the people. In the following comment on the efforts of a Berlin group to set

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¹ "E.S. " "La littérature russe, expression de la vie russe" *L'Humanité Nouvelle*, No. 5, October 1887.

² Idem.
up a people's theatre, much stress is placed on the suitability of its repertoire:

"En 1890 fut fondé sur l'initiative de Bruno Wille, le Théâtre populaire libre. Quatre mille personnes adhérèrent à l'idée. On pourrait donc s'attendre à un succès éclatant. Eh bien, non, les espérances des organisateurs furent déçues. Le répertoire du théâtre composé d'œuvres réalistes ne plaisait pas au public populaire qui déserta bientôt la salle qu'on avait ouverte spécialement à son intention. L'Echec de Bruno Wille ne découragea pas les membres de la Société dont nous avons parlé plus haute. L'un d'eux, M. le docteur Lowenfeld imagina un théâtre populaire où serait représentés les œuvres de Schiller, d'Ibsen, de Bjornson, de Lessing, de Molière, d'Hebel et de Shakespeare. Le Schiller Theater était créé. Cette fois l'entreprise réussit à merveille. Le travailleur berlinois pouvait assister à la représentation des chefs d'œuvres dramatiques de tous les pays dans une salle où le prix des places les plus élevées n'excédait pas un franc vingt-cinq, et on pouvait être commodément installé pour 30 centimes. Trente et un mille abonnés s'inscrivirent pendant l'automne de 1894."

Already in 1892, Maurice Pottecher had founded his Théâtre du Peuple at Bussang where the first production le Médecin malgré lui was presented in the Haute-Moselle patois; this experiment was followed by many others both in Paris and in the provinces. The importance of the international character of l'Humanité Nouvelle in the coverage of such a project is undeniable, for thanks to its treatment of developments beyond the frontiers of France (notably of the worker's university of Brussels, and the state of the arts in Russia), French socialist intellectuals were able to take stock of their own situation and to profit from the

1 Wiess-Jensen, A. "Les divertissements du peuple" L'Humanité Nouvelle, 15 Nov. 1898.
experience of others. The anarchists strongly represented in the International and in the syndicalist movement, advocated the formation of a working class, or proletarian culture for the workers, an attitude deeply rooted in the syndicalist theory that the worker's life and culture should spring from his artisan condition. Fernand Pelloutier, founder of the Bourses de Travail which flourished in France towards the end of the century, held that a worker's culture should first of all consist of his trade skill and that it was possible, working from this base, to acquire ultimately a "universal" (non-technical) culture. The problem of proletarian culture was one which was to dog the theorists of the remaining two forces within the International, i.e. the Marxist Guesdistes and the Socialists led by Jaurès. Both groups rejected the idea of proletarian culture as false and misleading. Jaurès strongly opposed any idea of creating proletarian literature, either of the type conceived by the bourgeoisie for proletarian consumption, or that advocated by the anarchists who insisted that according to their basic principle of self help and mutualism, the worker should produce his own culture for the consumption of his fellows. This was much too narrow a view of society for the broad humanist and internationalist vision of Jaurès. He claimed that there was no such thing as "class" art, for if it was possible to assign specific art traditions to the aristocracy and
to the bourgeoisie, it was for the simple reason that these were the groups who possessed the necessary education and erudition to achieve that end. If art had appeared to be the prerogative of certain classes throughout history, it was because there existed sections of society which were culturally deprived. The advent of socialism with equal opportunities for all men in access to culture was the only possible solution under the circumstances:

"C'est nous qui créerons pour la première fois l'art humain; il n'y a eu jusqu'ici que les lambeaux d'art humain, parce qu'il n'y a eu jusqu'ici des lambeaux d'humanité."\(^1\)

The profound injustices of modern society with its inevitable class war was the greatest obstacle to the full development of mankind and the realisation of human potential in every field, including the arts:

"Incohérence, défaillance, impuissance! Impuissance des plus grands, notez-le bien, des plus hauts génies, impuissance constitutionnelle qui tient à ce que l'humanité d'aujourd'hui étant divisée contre elle-même, incohérente, discordante, portant la guerre économique et la guerre intellectuelle dans ses entrailles mêmes, est incapable de produire, même par le plus grand génie, des œuvres d'art pleinement homogènes et pleinement harmonieuses!"\(^2\)

In his literary journalism\(^3\) Jaurès paid a great deal of attention to young writers, singling them out for praise

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2 Jaurès, Jean. op. cit. p. 149, t.11.
and encouraging where he could. He advocated an honest brand of realism dealing with human and social problems exploring the richness of human nature in a materialist sense. His severest criticism was reserved for the formalists and metaphysicians of the literary world whose "art for art's sake" he saw as a capitulation of the artist faced with society and his social responsibilities. Thus the early socialists without exception included the artist in their social systems; some cast them in a more utilitarian role than others, e.g., Comte and Fourier, but even in these cases, the privileged power of the artist to satisfy one of the most basic of human aspirations, access to beauty, was recognised as a powerful influence in the shaping of society and therefore in the promotion of socialist objectives. An important feature of this conception of the artist was the necessity for his complete integration into society. In capitalist society, the artist was seen as being alienated from the community resulting in alienated art, which could either be a retreat into formalism or art for art's sake, or art which attacked society in an expression of revolt for revolt's sake. Once the socialist state had been achieved and the artist had found his rightful place at the

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1 This was also the line taken by Léon Blum when he acted as art critic in *L'Humanité* in the early 1900s. This was Blum's only gesture of a truly socialist nature, the rest of his criticism could be adequately described as "universitaire" and "bourgeois".
heart of society, it was universally assumed by socialist theorists that he would produce truly great art as in past periods of social harmony.

With the sharpening of the class struggle epitomised by the revolts of 1830 and 1848, the optimism of the utopian socialists generated by their belief in progress and the inevitable advent of the type of society illustrated by their model communities, was replaced by a grim awareness of the nature of the political struggle now facing society. Under these conditions the artist was seen more and more as a soldier in the class war and less as priest and mentor as in the past. Proudhon, Vallès and Jaurès all made their special plea to the artist to become militant in the cause of the oppressed. Given this situation, it became possible to designate what art forms and what kind of art were best suited to the new mission. From the early notion of the "typical" designating the "truth" came the notion of realism, and ultimately naturalism, as the artistic expression of socialism. Militancy in art consisted of a portrayal of the sufferings and the qualities of the people on the one hand, and the hypocrisy and degeneracy of the bourgeoisie on the other. The degree to which the naturalists felt able, within the terms of their artistic doctrine, to portray the latter represented a delicate problem in the relationship between socialist militants and artists.

The kind of art which the socialist felt he should oppose
was anything which sought to obscure and mystify e.g., impressionism and symbolism. The most favoured genre for the political education of the people was the theatre which was seen as an audio-visual aide in the emancipation of the proletariat.

All the early French socialists therefore had a place for art and literature in their theory closely linked either with their humanism and materialism as it manifested itself in their philosophy, or in the practice of their revolutionary theory.

**Pre-Marxist materialist theories of literature**

The materialist philosophers of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries contributed much to the sociological understanding of art and literature in France. Given the blurred nature of the dividing line between materialist philosophy and materialist ideology, it is important in the understanding of the development of socialist and especially Marxist aesthetic theory, to consider the contribution of the first French thinkers in this field.

The eighteenth century French philosopher, **Louis de Bonald** (1754-1840), was one of the first to suggest that a nation was reflected in its literature. Montesquieu's comparative studies of national and legal institutions pointed to the existence of determining factors within the nation and also underlined an increasing awareness as to the relativity of societies. The plea made by the
Encyclopédistes that human enquiry should be guided by "la philosophie de la raison", and their own example in implementing this ideal, laid the foundations for the objective study of all natural phenomena including human society and its institutions. The materialist momentum established by the eighteenth century French philosophers provided the basis for renewed researches after the Revolution, although much of the inspiration of the 19th century French philosophers in the field of the social and natural sciences came from England through men like Darwin, Smith and Spencer.

It was Madame de Stael (1766-1817) in her, De la littérature considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales. (1800) who produced the first lengthy study on the matter of a sociological approach to literature. She set herself the task of determining the influence of religion, custom and laws on literature and vice-versa and although she pointed the way for many of her successors in this field, her concrete achievement is generally held to be disappointing. This is mostly due to her dubious premises regarding such tricky categories as "national character", "geographical and climatic influence". Constantly relying on intuition

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1 For these arguments concerning the appreciation of Madame de Stael by present day sociologists, I am indebted to Laurensen, Diana and Swingewood, Alan in The Sociology of Literature, ch. 2. Paladin, London, 1972.
and commonplaces in the absence of more solid sociological instruments, Madame de Stael excelled in imaginative reflections, and at times, effective insight. Thus while on the one hand she was capable of relating the "passionate sadness" of northern writers to their harsh soil, overcast skies and mountainous terrain, (the opposite of course being true for artists of meridional origins), she also pointed out that if the Italians did not write novels it was because they were too licentious and had little respect for women. Her theory, an interesting one, was that the novel form could flourish only in those societies in which women enjoyed considerable status and society expressed a strong interest in private life; a genuine sociological observation. Another interesting observation was that of the importance of a strong middle class for the growth of literature, for liberty and virtue were necessary prerequisites for a flourishing of the arts. This point of view was an essential part of her ideological convictions:

"Madame de Stael absorbed the leading ideas of the Enlightenment on literature, politics, science, and the social order. She turned many of these ideas to her own uses and then bequeathed them to the nineteenth century, which adopted much of the Enlightenment through her works. She had two leading aims, one intellectual and one political, which are almost inseparable in her thought. The first was to explain all literature (both imaginative and analytical) by its relation to social institutions. The second was to guide Europe as it entered the republican era and to help
it maintain its cultural legacy and its liberty, for liberty was essential to progress itself."

It was Hippolyte Taine (1828-1893) who donned the mantle of Madame de Stael; his positivist convictions provided him with a methodological framework and a zeal for objectivity:

"La méthode moderne que je tâche de suivre consiste à considérer les oeuvres humaines en particulier comme des faits et des produits dont il faut marquer les caractères et chercher les causes, rien de plus. Ainsi comprise, la science ne proscrit ni ne pardonne: elle constate et elle explique.... Elle fait comme la botanique qui étudie avec un intérêt égal, tantôt l'oranger et tantôt le sapin, tantôt le laurier et tantôt le bouleau: elle est elle-même une sorte de botanique appliquée, non aux plantes, mais aux oeuvres humaines."2

Taine proceeded to classify writers and genres, placing them in their national context. He had no interest in the individual writer as such e.g. in biographical information, or indeed in the individual beauty of works of art which he considered to be accessory to the real function of the critic; it was not his aim to praise, to apportion blame, or to arrive a meticulous portraits through the heaping up of detail (as with Sainte Beuve), but rather to uncover the driving force, which, originating in the psychology of the nation merely operated through artists who then expressed it under the


influence of their times and situation. Once the "faculté maitresse" had been uncovered, the work could be given a satisfactory explanation. But behind this vaunted objectivity lay a serious flaw:

"Mais comment Taine découvre-t-il cette fameuse "faculté maitresse"? Il est curieux de voir qu'en définitive cet édifice "scientifique" repose sur un fragile impressionnisme. C'est en effet une espèce d'intuition qui fait trouver le premier et le dernier mot. Taine avoue lui-même que le critique, après avoir lu et analysé les œuvres d'un auteur, "verra venir au bout de sa plume une phrase involontaire, singulièrement forte et significative, qui résumerà toute son opération et mettra devant ses yeux...... un certain état psychologique, dominateur et persistant, qui est celui de son auteur" (préface de la troisième édition des Essais......1866). Une telle simplification n'est-elle pas abusivement qualifiée de scientifique? La porte reste grande ouverte non seulement aux préférences du goût, mais aussi aux arrêts d'un dogmatisme moralisateur."

The flaw was not immediately apparent to Taine's contemporaries and indeed did not become fully manifest until his art criticism of 1867 and above all in his Derniers Essais de critique et d'histoire of 1871. After the Paris Commune when Taine became an enemy of the proletariat in socialist eyes, some of the enormous prestige which he had won for himself previously was dissipated and it became easier to fix the development of his prejudice.

Notwithstanding, his example in the scope and ambition of his work remained formidable.

One of his disciples, the young Swiss translator of the Havas agency, Emile Hennequin (1858-1888), recognised

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the importance of Taine's contribution to what was now known as "la critique scientifique", but also recognised his shortcomings. He rejected as unsound Taine's theories of race and milieu which he claimed were unverifiable scientifically and open to subjective interpretation. He pointed out, as had Sainte Beuve before him, that if Taine's determinism were to be taken to its logical conclusion, there would be total uniformity of artistic production at any one time and in any one place. The concept of social milieu was an important one but it was also important to realise that society was made up of many different social groups, that they were in a state of constant change and also that they represented a second and inferior stage in the artistic process, i.e., the public of a work of art was that group which was able to discern a reflection of itself in the work, feel that it was being expressed at a level other than instinct, by the efforts of a man whose original inspiration and sensibility was sufficiently greater than its own to survive organised expression. The work of art is the central pillar of Hennequin's theoretical edifice since it is at one and the same time the "sign" of the artist and his public. Whereas Taine accumulated sociological detail in order to identify the "faculté maîtresse", and finally to transfer this to the work of art itself, Hennequin took the work as his starting point in his approach. The three related disciplines which Hennequin
welded together to constitute his method were aesthetics, sociology and psychology. His "esthopsychologie" as he called it, was intended to form the basis of a new anthropological enquiry which would satisfy one of Hennequin's positivist ambitions i.e. to make a contribution to a complete definition and record of human achievement.

His sociological component was founded on serious instruments of enquiry:

"Il faudra faire pour chaque auteur et artiste une enquête rétrospective auprès des critiques, des journalistes du temps pour connaître sa popularité; il faudra savoir le prix de vente pour les tableaux, le nombre de représentations pour les pièces, le nombre d'éditions pour les livres, les pensions, les droits alloués à l'auteur; il faudra enfin refaire ce travail le long de l'existence de l'œuvre afin de connaître les phases de sa gloire, et en étudier la diffusion dans les pays étrangers.

Employée avec des ménagements et les soins que l'usage enseignera, la méthode exposée plus haut sera d'un discours véritable pour la connaissance du passé; elle permettra pour les époques et les peuples littéraires d'écrire l'histoire intérieure des hommes sous la surface des faits politiques, sociaux et économiques, et d'écrire cette histoire en termes scientifiques précis."¹

The psychological element in Hennequin's theory was of prime importance since he believed that a close study of the work would reveal the mental universe of the writer, the key to his creative source:

"Le raisonnement, par lequel on peut résoudre cette question, conclure d'une particularité esthétique d'une oeuvre à une particularité morale de son auteur, est fort simple. L'emploi d'une forme de

style, l'expression d'une conception particulière quelconque, que cet emploi soit original ou qu'il puisse paraître entaché d'imitation, est un fait ayant pour cause prochaine, comme tout le livre, la toile, la partition dont il s'agit, un acte physique de son auteur, poussé par quelque besoin de gloire, d'argent, par un mobile, instructif, n'importe, de faire une de ces œuvres. Cette détermination prise, l'artiste l'exécute d'une certaine manière. Il s'adonne à un certain art, à un certain genre, à un certain procédé, en un mot, il fait une œuvre se distinguant de celles d'autrui par certains caractères (........) Il écrira, il peindra, il composera, comme lui permettront ses facultés acquises et naturelles, comme le lui commendent ses désirs, son idéal; c'est-à-dire que les caractères particuliers de son œuvre résulteront de certaines propriétés de son esprit. Ces caractères seront à l'égard de ces propriétés dans une relation d'effet à cause, et l'on peut concevoir une science qui remontera des uns aux autres, comme on remonte d'un signe à la chose signifiée, d'une expression à la chose exprimée, d'une manifestation quelconque à son origine."

However, Hennequin's vision of a critical method incorporating a systematised account of cause and effect was not the approach of the Marxist dialectician, but rather the reflection of positivist methodology. The study of the relationship between form and content for Hennequin is not limited to the adequacy of the one with regard to the other, but to the indications that these supply as to the state of mind of the artist.

"Dans un roman, il y a au dehors, le vocabulaire, la syntaxe, la rhétorique, le ton, la composition et il y a, au dedans, les personnages, les lieux, l'intrigue, les passions, le sujet etc., L'examen de ces diverses parties, en remontant de celles

qui sont élémentaires à celles qui sont composites, fournira d'importants renseignements."

Descriptive categories could be established for vocabulary: "familier, rare, coloré, fantastique, magnifique, sonore, rustique, bas" etc. Similar descriptions could be found for syntax: "rigidité- grâce négligée; l'ordre simple de la proposition ou d'inversions violentes; la pensée rendue directement ou indirectement." If the organisation of the work is then examined (the relationship of sentences to paragraphs, paragraphs to chapters, narrative rhythms to rhythm of events etc.) some idea of the emotive powers of the work may be had since emotion is generated by careful orchestration of the component parts.

In the few examples which exist of Hennequin's application of his theory, it becomes obvious that of the three sciences which he enlists, psychology is the one which interests him most; this is reflected in his choice of writers: Poe, Baudelaire, Dostoievsky (among others). It is perhaps for this reason that Hennequin influenced Bourget and the psychoanalytically orientated Baudoin. Another positivist philosopher to be attracted to literary theory was Jean-Marie Guyau (1854-1888), whose posthumous works included a treatise on the sociology of art.

The question which fascinated Guyau in his evaluation

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Guyau, Jean-Marie. L'Art du point de vue sociologique.
Alcan. Paris 1889.
of the sociology of art was that of genius. Sociological methodology excelled in establishing norms the very existence of which seemed to imply the presence of mediocrity. How much more interesting it was to consider the exceptions to the rules and to face up to the challenge offered by them while still maintaining the materialist stance.

"Le propre du talent médiocre, c'est d'être une résultante dont on peut retrouver et reconnaître tous les chiffres en étudiant le milieu et le caractère extérieur d'un auteur, tel qui s'est révélé dans la vie; le propre du génie au contraire, c'est de renfermer comme chiffres essentiels des inconnus irréductibles. Nous ne voulons pas dire que la formation du génie n'obéisse pas au fond à des lois scientifiques parfaitement fixes; il n'y a rien sans doute dans le génie qui ne puisse s'expliquer par la génération, par l'hérité, enfin par l'éducation et le milieu, à moins qu'on n'admette l'hypothèse scientifiquement étrange du libre arbitre dans le génie. Mais le génie est caractérisé par la dérogation apparente de ces lois, c'est-à-dire par des conséquences de ces lois assez complexes et par des influences assez croisées pour amener des semblants de contradictions. Tandis que tous les individus faits sur un commun patron nous présentent un esprit à trame régulière, dont on peut compter les fils, le génie est un écheveau brouillé, et les efforts du critique pour débrouiller cet écheveau n'aboutissent en général qu'à des résultats tout à fait superficiels."

If at present there were no satisfactory scientific explanations of genius except perhaps that of Darwin's "fortuitous accident" when against the greatest odds all the necessary conditions were present to produce the "exception to the rule", one undeniable concrete fact remained; the work itself. One might not be able to

1Guyau, Jean-Marie. Op. cit. p. 31
measure genius, but at least one could observe its effects. Genius is a quality conferred by a group which recognises a superiority, but it is also a phenomenon which as well as reacting on the present, points the way also to the future:

"L'oeuvre la plus forte, d'après nous, doit être la plus sociale, celle qui représente le plus complètement la société même où l'artiste a vécu, la société d'où il est descendu, la société qu'il annonce dans l'avenir et que l'avenir réalisera peut-être. Ainsi, ayant nous-même admis que l'émotion esthétique supérieure est une émotion sociale, nous accorderons volontiers que l'expression supérieure de la société est la caractéristique de l'oeuvre supérieure, mais à la condition qu'il ne s'agisse pas seulement, comme pour M. Taine, de la société de fait, de la société contemporaine d'un auteur. Le génie n'est pas seulement un reflet, il est une production, une invention: c'est donc surtout le degré d'anticipation sur la société à venir, et même sur la société idéale, qui caractérise les grands génies, les chorêges de la pensée et du sentiment."¹

There exists, therefore, an ideological vacuum in Guyau's theory; what exactly was to be the nature of the society of the future, and more particularly of his "société idéale"? Perhaps the reason for this return to ideology as noted in the earlier sociologists, was Guyau's determination to examine the nature of genius, a category of artistic production which required more than a sociological methodology to explain it; for Guyau recourse to the subjective meant recourse to ideology. On the other hand, for Hennequin, the subjective quality of art provided a unique opportunity for psychological

research on both the artist and his public. As for Taine, art was a sociological document to be verified against a mass of corroboratory sociological evidence. In every case, theorists sought to limit the phenomenon of art and literature for their own ends and in every case the specifically aesthetic or subjective quality of art constituted the stumbling block of their scientific objectivity except in the case of Hennequin who was able to incorporate that quality into his enquiry.

What then was the future of materialist criticism at the turn of the century? It could develop in parallel with the social sciences, using art as a document and applying the techniques of research as they were discovered by the social scientists (sociology, psychology, psychiatry, linguistics etc.)

But the danger for criticism as an activity in its own right, was that any one of these sciences could take over the work of art as source material in the furtherance of its own aims. Hennequin had attempted to retain the entirety of the critical act by including several disciplines in his assessment (as had Taine although less advanced), but even in Hennequin's case his interest in psychopathology took precedence. In every instance the specific nature of the work of art, that marriage of the ideological and the philosophical, was being relegated if not ignored in the interests of a positivist view of the advancement of science. Given the dramatic possibilities
offered by the evolution of the social sciences throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, one can understand this tendency. Perhaps what was needed was an approach which paralleled the essence of art itself, i.e. which was both a means to knowledge and a means of action. Only the Marxists appeared to possess the potential philosophically and ideologically for this task.

Early Marxist literary and aesthetic theory

According to the basic principles of Marxism, men must join together in order to survive. Subsistence is assured through production in which men associate in a collective enterprise within which particular groups are formed with distinct, but inter-dependent economic roles. The more advanced the society, the more complex its organisation with regard to production.

Three fundamental concepts dominate Marxist economic and social theory; the means of production, the productive forces and social relations. The means of production are to be found in property (ownership of plant, natural resources etc.) and the productive forces being those forces which govern economic development (labour, availability of natural resources, means of transport etc.) Social relations reflect the relations between the different groups involved in the productive process especially between those of the "ruling" class,
who own the means of production and therefore control the productive forces, and the "oppressed" class, the proletariat who hire their labour.

It is the process of production, or work, which lies at the heart of all human experience. The human consciousness is formed as a result of the productive process since it forms the world view of those involved, thus, as Marx stated:

"It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness."¹

The manner in which men view themselves and their world is reflected and reinforced by their ideology, but although this may appear to be autonomous and absolute, something which has existed time immemorial, it is directly related to their material existence, i.e. to the productive process.

"The production of ideas, conceptions, and consciousness is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life. Representation and thought, the mental intercourse of men, still appear at this stage as the direct emanation of their mental behaviour. The same applies to mental production as it is expressed in the political, legal, moral, religious and metaphysical language of a people. Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas etc. - real, active men, as they are conditioned by a determinate development of their productive forces, and of the intercourse which corresponds to these, up to its most extensive forms. Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life."²


² Idem.
The ideologies thrown up by the different classes are not, as these classes believe, absolute and autonomous, unaffected by the passage of time (e.g. law and religion are often viewed in this way), but merely their enshrined opinions of themselves. In order to establish the true identity of these ideological forms therefore, they must be traced from their real genesis:

"...we do not set out from what men say, imagine, or conceive, not from what has been said, thought, imagined, or conceived of men, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We begin with real, active men, and from their real life-process show the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life process. The phantoms of the human brain are also necessary sublimates of men's material life-process, which can be empirically established and which is bound to material pre-conditions. Morality, religion, metaphysics, and other ideologies, and their corresponding forms of consciousness, no longer retain therefore, their appearance of autonomous existence. They have no history, no development; it is men, who, in developing their material production and their material intercourse, change along with this their real existence, their thinking, and the products of their thinking."¹

Marx and Engels, therefore, conceived of human society as having a socio-economic basis determined by the means of production, the productive forces, and the relations of production contained in them. On this basis a complementary system of institutions is seen as being erected reflecting the consciousness of the dominant class through a series of linked and interacting ideological superstructures (law, politics, religion, philosophy, art etc.). Marx took care to point out

¹Marx, Karl. G1 (1845-6) Mega 1/5, pp. 15-17. in op. cit. p. 90.
that whereas the economic aspects of any given society could be identified using objective scientific criteria, the ideological aspects could not be approached in the same precise manner.

"...a distinction must always be made between the material transformations of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic, and philosophical—in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of the conflict and fight it out."¹

The conflict to which Marx was referring was that of the class struggle arising from the fight for economic dominance within the context of the socio-economic base. This conflict is then transmitted in a dialectical sequence to the superstructures maintaining them in a constant state of interaction. Contained within the superstructures also, is a certain tendency to react against the contradiction in the economic base in an effort to overthrow it completely. The complex nature of the superstructures could not obviously be defined using statistics and other refinements of political economy, but this was not to say that it could not ultimately be established. Neither Marx nor Engels left behind them a full account of how the dialectical method could be used to explore and identify the superstructures although their works abound in practical examples.

¹Marx, Karl. in *A contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859).
In the period 1857-1858, Marx was planning a major theoretical work in which he intended to amplify and complete his materialist conception of the development of society; among the subjects he hoped to deal with was the relationship between material production and artistic production. It was never carried out.

After Marx's death in 1883, Engels found himself called upon more and more to clarify aspects of the theory which he and Marx had worked on together. In the context of the base-superstructure concept, Engels went to some pains to point out that a dangerous tendency to relate ideological superstructures directly with their corresponding basis had appeared in the writings of young Marxists:

"According to the materialist conception of history, the determining element in history is ultimately the production and reproduction in real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. If therefore somebody twists this into the statement that the economic element in the only determining one, he transforms it into a meaningless, abstract and absurd phrase....Marx and I are partly to blame for the fact that younger writers sometimes play more stress on the economic side than is due to it. We had to emphasise this main principle in opposition to our adversaries, who denied it, and we had not always the time, the place or the opportunity to allow the other elements involved in the interaction to come into their rights."¹

Having said this, however, Engels elaborated no further and it has been left to subsequent generations of Marxists to fill the theoretical void.

The occasions on which Marx made specific reference to problems which could be illustrated by literature and the arts, offer some intriguing possibilities for speculation to the Marxist theorist. For example, in order to demonstrate the dangers of drawing direct conclusions of the type mentioned above, he pointed out that there existed an apparent contradiction in the fact that Greek society which was based on an underdeveloped economy, could have produced art of a highly developed nature. The reason which Marx gave for this was that Greek art did not spring from the economic basis of its society, but directly from another ideological superstructure, namely religion. The combination of the physical (art) in the metaphysical (religion) resulted in the myth which was of profound human significance. The human truth contained in the Greek myth had transcended centuries so that in a sense it could be said that Greek art had survived the upheavals of bases and superstructures which had accompanied the great social changes of our history. Marx was careful to point out, however, that this was only an apparent survival since the real reason that modern man was still able to experience pleasure on beholding Greek art was that he was looking back on the infancy of mankind like a father on his child. This explanation has been described as unsatisfactory by modern Marxist theorists who feel that the Marxist study of aesthetics may reveal unknown depths of Marxist theory still to be mapped out.
There was, however one area of literary theory which was referred to on several occasions especially by Engels, and that was the theme of tendentiousness. The commonly held view of the early French socialists regarding the efficacy of art as an instrument capable of furthering the cause of socialism was one to which Marx and Engels readily subscribed. For them, however, the role of the artist lay somewhere between the concept of the luminary and that of the applied artist. In accordance with their materialist beliefs, the artist was no high priest through whom the future could be revealed or the present enlightened in some mystical fashion, but rather a member of the community with a gift for receiving and transmitting ideas at a high level of human awareness. His work could contain a reflection of reality which was more precise than that available to the majority of the ordinary participants in that reality, a reflection which mirrored the social, political, and economic currents of the times.

If the work of art reflected reality, it also reacted upon it causing shifts in awareness and influencing men's consciousness and it was for this reason that the first Marxists were interested in art as a means of propagating their ideology and theory. Their views on the most effective way of doing this constitute the first steps towards the institution of a Marxist aesthetic.

In a letter of 1888 to the minor Victorian novelist Margaret Harkness who had just published a rather
melodramatic work in which she had hoped to champion the cause of the poor and oppressed, Engels made an important statement on the question of tendentiousness in literature:

"Je suis loin de vous reprocher de ne pas avoir écrit un récit purement socialiste, un "roman à tendance", comme nous le disons, nous autres Allemands, où seraient glorifiées les idées politiques et sociales de l'auteur. Ce n'est pas du tout ce que je pense. Plus les opinions politiques de l'auteur demeurent cachées et mieux cela vaut pour l'œuvre d'art. Le réalisme dont je parle se manifeste même tout à fait en dehors des opinions de l'auteur."  

The realism to which Engels was referring was revealed, it would seem, not by the author, but by the (Marxist) critic.

In another letter to the mother of Karl Kautsky again on the subject of a novel (published by her in 1884), Engels stressed the importance of retaining the ellipsis of the successful work of art in which the recipient is called upon to complete the creative process by supplying his solution to the enigma presented. As far as the committed novel was concerned, under the present circumstances of bourgeois capitalist dominance, it would best serve the cause by limiting itself to the undermining of the confidence of the ruling caste:

"Je ne suis aucunement adversaire de la poésie tendancieuse en tant que telle. Le père de la tragédie Eschyle, et le père de la comédie

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1 In "Marx et Engels au sujet de Balzac". La Littérature Internationale. No. 6. 1933. Note. This is the first publication of the text of this letter in France, possibly made available to the International Writers' Union (Soviet based), by the Marx, Lenin Institute in Moscow.
Aristophane, ont été très nettement tous deux des poètes tendancieux, de même que Dante et Cervantes, et ce qu'il y a de mieux dans Cabale et Amour, de Schiller, c'est qu'il est le premier drame politique allemand à tendance. Les Russes et les Norvégiens modernes, qui donnent des romans excellents, sont tous tendancieux. Mais je crois que la tendance doit ressortir de la situation et de l'action mêmes, sans qu'elle soit explicitement formulée, et le poète n'est pas tenu de donner toute faite au lecteur la solution historique future des conflits sociaux qu'il décrit. D'autant plus que, dans les circonstances actuelles, le roman s'adresse surtout aux lecteurs des milieux bourgeois, c'est-à-dire à des milieux qui ne sont pas directement les nôtres, et alors, selon moi, un roman à tendance socialiste remplit parfaitement sa tâche quand, par une peinture fidèle des rapports réels, il détruit les illusions conventionnels sur la nature des rapports, ébranle l'optimisme du monde bourgeois, contraint à douter de l'éternité du monde existant, même si l'auteur n'indique pas directement la solution ou même éventuellement, s'il ne prend pas manifestement parti.¹

Thus, according to Engels, not only should the committed socialist writer deliberately conceal his political objectives, but these same objectives could be achieved by a non-socialist writer unknown to himself providing he produced "une peinture fidèle des rapports réels". Did these writers recognise some unwritten canon of realism which endowed their work with accuracy and veracity, did they possess some inborn talent for description which transcended their class condition? If one adds to the list of great authors indicated by Engels, (the names of Shakespeare, Balzac and Scott are often mentioned by Marx) it can be seen that these particular writers lived during great periods of social, political and economic

¹Art. cit.
change, which was reflected in turn by their work. The award of the title "tendentious" therefore by Marx and Engels, is connected with their view of history and their opinion as to the faithful representation of this view by these authors. In his letter to Margaret Harkness, Engels put forward the theory that realism was not achieved by a simple representation of the facts alone but by an analysis and presentation of those features which typified the reality of the times:

"Si je peux soumettre quelque chose à la critique, c'est simplement le fait que le récit n'est pas suffisamment réaliste. A mon point de vue le réalisme sousentend, outre la vérité des détails, la fidélité des descriptions des caractères typiques dans des circonstances typiques."¹

It was for this reason that Engels preferred the work of Balzac to the naturalist Zola:²

"Balzac que j'estime un artiste réaliste beaucoup plus grand que tous les Zola du passé, du présent et de l'avenir...."³

Tendentiousness in the writers of the past was therefore to be found by the Marxist critic in those writers who first of all, found themselves at the crossroads of history, and secondly adopted the correct artistic approach of portraying the "typical".

¹Art. cit.
²Engels' opinion of Zola was waived by subsequent generations of Communist critics who regarded the latter's intervention in the Dreyfus affair as a triumph of socialism and art.
³Art. cit.
Tendentiousness in contemporary writers was seen as being represented by literature of revolt whose effect was to undermine the confidence of the ruling class, the bourgeoisie.

Marx and Engels named very few contemporary writers whom they considered to be of significance as distinct from the distinguished gallery of the creators of the world's classics referred to in their general writing. They did, however, single out some minor German poets for particular praise; these young men, Hervegh, Freiligrath and Weerth, were extremely active in the late 1840's and 1850's writing overtly political poetry. It is ironic that had they not been mentioned by Marx and Engels they would have been forgotten long since for unlike Cervantes, Shakespeare and Balzac, their work has not stood the test of time.

It has been suggested that the great writers admired by Marx and Engels merely reflected their bourgeois culture and that the contemporary writers who took their fancy, did so for purely political reasons. Perhaps this represents an over-simplification of the problem which continued to affect Marxist criticism long after the deaths of Marx and Engels (Lukács for example, had great difficulty in finding greatness in any writer after Balzac), an over-simplification which ignores the vital factor of the political choice operated in either case by Marx and Engels. The great writers of the past served to illustrate a Marxist view of the evolution of the class
struggle, the writers of the present, socialists or merely rebels, contributed to the heightening of the class war through their work.

Of the second wave of Marxist theorists it was George Plekhanov (1857-1918) who turned his attention most to literary and artistic considerations. The Russian translator of the Communist Manifesto and Lenin's first instructor in Marxist theory applied himself to literary criticism and theory in the true Russian tradition of Dubrolubov and Tchernichevsky during a period of enforced political inactivity; had it not been for his support of the Menshevik cause in the early 1900's, and his subsequent ostracisation by Lenin, Plekhanov might not have undertaken his studies of the ideological superstructures. His major article, Art and Social Life was published in the Russian review Sovremienik in the period 1912-1913 and contained the essence of the theory which he had been developing since the turn of the century. Very much a European scholar in the style of Marx and Engels, Plekhanov was open to the intellectual currents of the

1 The German Marxist Mehring devoted a study to Lessing reckoned to be the first application of Marxist sociology in the field of literary history. Published in Neue Zeit in 1892 and in the following year in bookform in Stuttgart. (The earliest mention of Mehring as a literary historian in France was in the late 20's.)

2 In a footnote to Art and Social Life, Plekhanov explained that this had been given as a lecture, in Russian in Liège and Paris probably around 1911. The work was not available in France until it was published by the Soviet international writers' journal in 1931. Plekhanov, G. "L'Art et la vie sociale". Littérature de la Révolution mondiale No. 3, 1931.
period. In literary criticism he was acquainted with the work of Lanson, Brunetière and Bourget, indeed he tended to see himself as part of an already existing materialist tradition while remaining within the limits of political Marxism. Thus, when referring to Lanson, he respects his materialist approach while regretting that he did not carry his theory further:

"Lanson considère comme les représentants de la bourgeoisie les écrivains qu'il caractérise. En général il relie assez volontiers le développement de la littérature française à celui du régime social de la France. Celui qui lira attentivement ce livre y verra de nombreuses preuves de cette idée que, la littérature étant le reflet de la société, et la société, selon l'expression de Belinski, l'unité des contradictions détermine la marche du développement de la littérature. Il est seulement regrettable que Lanson n'ait point compris toute la portée de cette idée et que, par suite, il n'ait pas su l'appliquer d'une façon conséquente à l'étude de l'histoire de la littérature."  

As for his own theory, he was quite definitive as to the production of literature in the Marxist view of society:

"..... états des forces productives, rapports économiques conditionnés par ces forces, régime social et politique édifié sur cette base économique, psychologie de l'homme social déterminée en partie par l'économie, en partie par le régime social et politique édifié sur elle, idéologiques diverses reflétant cette psychologie."  

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1. Lanson, Pierre. *L'Histoire de la littérature française* (1894)


This confident exposé of the phenomenon of art and literature which Engels hesitated to define with precision, was due partly to the underestimation by Plekhanov of the role of the other ideological superstructures in shaping art and literature, and partly to his belief that the latter could be divided into two aspects, the sociological and the purely aesthetic. As a Marxist, he felt he was concerned only with the analysis of the sociological aspect. As far as Plekhanov was concerned, a great writer owed his greatness to his ability to reflect his era; he therefore rejected Lanson’s theory of individual genius:

"Toute oeuvre littéraire est l’expression d’une époque. Son contenu et sa forme sont déterminés par les goûts, les habitudes et les tendances de cette époque, et plus l’écrivain est grand, plus le caractère de son oeuvre dépend, fortement et clairement, du caractère de son époque, autrement dit, moins on trouve dans ses œuvres cet "apport" qu’on pourrait appeler personnel. La particularité principale, l’"originalité supérieure" (le lecteur se souvient de cette expression de Lanson) d’un grand homme consiste en ce qu’il a su exprimer dans son domaine, avant, ou bien mieux que les autres, les besoins et les désirs sociaux ou spirituels de son époque. Devant cette particularité qui constitue son "individualité historique" s’effacent les autres comme les étoiles disparaissent à la lumière du soleil".₁

In striving to devalue the notion of individual genius which he felt to be the greatest single mystifying force in bourgeois aesthetic theory, Plekhanov was rejecting the realism of Sainte-Beuve only to fall into the determinism of Taine:

₁Plekhanov, G. "Les jugements de Lanson sur Balzac et Corneille".
As if this were not enough, Plekhanov subscribed to Taine's concept of race and its determining influence:

"L'idéal de la beauté d'une société donnée ou d'une classe donnée de la société trouve, d'une part ses racines dans la nature biologique de l'espèce humaine qui crée notamment des particularités des races, et de l'autre dans les conditions historiques de la formation et de l'existence de cette société ou classe." 2

Therefore in Plekhanov's opinion, "beauty" was at least partially outside the influence of the class struggle, something which later Marxist supporters of Plekhanov (particularly in Stalinist Russia) were quick to reject.

The other important, non-Marxist concept which lies behind Plekhanov's theory of the non-sociologically definable aspect of art, was that taste was an absolute in the Kantian sense:

"...... une appréciation de goût suppose toujours chez celui qui la formule, l'absence de considération de l'intérêt personnel." 3

Again, by assigning a human quality to something outside the productive process Plekhanov was exposing himself to the charge of idealism. However, as has been pointed out,

1Plekhanov, G. "L'Art et la vie sociale" (my italics)
3Plekhanov, G. Art. cit.
the aesthetic appeal of art was one thing to Plekhanov, its ability to convey ideas was another. Here there was no suggestion of open-ended idealist theory, but a tight mechanistic linking of art and the ruling class:

"Dans une société divisée en classes, l'art exprime ce qui est considéré comme bon et important par une classe ou une autre et en général il reflète tout ce qui occupe une classe à un moment donné (ses idées, ses goûts et ses illusions, comme s'exprime Marx. Dans la France du XVIIe siècle, cette conscience, et c'est le plus important, n'était pas religieuse (au XVIIIe siècle elle est même antireligieuse). Dans une société divisée en classes, cette conscience est le plus souvent déterminée non pas directement par l'économie, mais par ces rapports et les besoins sociaux qui se développent sur la base des rapports économiques existants. Quand l'art exprime les tendances d'une classe montante, et par conséquent révolutionnaire, il constitue un élément important dans la lutte de cette classe pour son existence un important instrument de progrès (L'école de David jusqu'à la révolution). Quand l'art exprime les tendances d'une classe en déclin, il ne facilite pas la lutte pour l'existence de cette classe; il distraît simplement son oisiveté".1

By way of illustration of his thesis, Plekhanov points to the ascendancy of the bourgeoisie in France in the 18th century and the beginning of the XIXth century, a period marked by great achievements in bourgeois art. On the other hand he pointed out that the period of decline in bourgeois art characterised by romantic escapism, formalism, impressionism etc., began after the first oppressive moves of the bourgeois régime of 1830

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1Plekhanov, G. "La littérature dramatique et la peinture française au XVIIe siècle." Commune Mai 1935. (Published for the first time in Moscow in Russian in 1931, translated by Toscane, J. for Commune.)
and 1848. Plekhanov was not unaware of Marx's observation that in times of social upheaval there is always a part of the ruling class which will break with its origins in order to help the oppressed, but he maintained that to date no bourgeois artists had been able to do this:

"Nous ne trouvons fort peu d'artistes parmi les idéologues bourgeois qui passent au prolétariat. L'explication de ce fait est probablement que seuls les penseurs peuvent s'éléver à l'intelligence théorique du développement historique, alors que les artistes contemporains à la différence des grands maîtres de la Renaissance que fort peu. Mais, quoi qu'il en soit, on peut dire sans crainte de se tromper tout homme de tant soit peu de talent augmentera sensiblement sa force en se pénétrant des grandes idées libératrices de notre temps. Il faut seulement que ces idées pénètrent sa chair et son sang, afin qu'il les exprime précisément en artiste."\(^1\)

Thus, according to Plekhanov, the artist is to be distinguished from the theoretician or pure thinker; pure thought and the thought expressed in art are conceived and emitted in different ways. Whereas the philosopher works from a rational base dealing with his thoughts scientifically, the artist absorbs and transmits at a different and more emotive level of human communication. Plekhanov goes to some pains to demonstrate that he does not mean that art is devoid of ideas, but rather that they must be produced with spontaneity if the artist is to preserve the aesthetic element which makes his work artistic.

\(^1\)Plekhanov, G. "L'Art et la vie sociale".
"L'artiste s'exprime par les images, tandis que le publiciste procède au moyen des arguments logiques. Et si l'écrivain, au lieu d'opérer sur des images, opère sur des déductions logiques, ou s'il invite des images pour démontrer une thèse, ce n'est plus un artiste, c'est un publiciste, même si au lieu d'écrire des articles et des études, il écrit des romans, des nouvelles et des pièces."

Such a point of view has important implications for the question of tendentiousness in art. Plekhanov argued that the artist could not be called upon to illustrate political theories and uphold regimes and still retain his identity as an artist, so therefore it was erroneous to believe that the artist could be called upon to adopt a particular role with regard to society (he quotes Saint-Simon as expecting this of the artist). The artist, he maintained, was under constant pressure to conform to the wishes of some political regime or other and the socialist had by no means the monopoly of this tactic:

"...tout pouvoir politique préfère toujours la conception utilitaire de l'art, pour peu, cela va de soi, que son attention se porte sur ce sujet. Et c'est bien concevable: il est de l'intérêt du pouvoir de mettre toutes les idéologies au service de la cause qu'il sert lui-même. Et, comme le pouvoir politique, quelquefois révolutionnaire, est plus souvent conservateur ou même tout à fait réactionnaire, on voit d'ici qu'il n'y a pas lieu de considérer la conception utilitaire de l'art comme professée principalement par les révolutionnaires ou, de façon générale par les esprits avancés".

The artist and writer could not be told to express particular class ideas and ideals, they had to feel them

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1Plekhanov, G. Art. cit.
2Plekhanov, G. "La littérature dramatique et la peinture française au XVIIIe siècle."
to be true at an instinctive level something which only happened when a class was in the ascendant and had reached a progressive revolutionary phase in its development. By implication, Plekhanov was saying that socialist art which was genuinely socialist and genuinely artistic would only manifest itself when the proletariat had reached the ascendant. He believed that at the time of writing his articles, this phase had not yet been reached. The real revolutionary work to be carried out in the artistic domaine was not by the artists, but by the critics who, by their analysis of the ideas contained in the work of art, were able to demonstrate the presence of the class struggle:

"Montrer l'origine de classe d'un genre artistique donné, cela signifie développer la conscience de classe de cette classe qui, d'après Marx, ne peut pas dévier, ne peut pas bouger sans ébranler tout l'ordre existant. L'immense avantage de notre position, c'est que nous pouvons être entièrement objectifs, c'est-à-dire absolument vrais, vrais comme des naturalistes et en même temps nos paroles doivent nécessairement agir, en éveillant leur conscience, surtout ceux qu'écrase l'ordre existant."

Thus, faithful to the Marxist edict that the duty of the Marxist philosopher was not only to reflect upon the world, but change it, Plekhanov saw the action of the critic as being that of a militant in the class struggle.

If Plekhanov believed that the artist and writer could not be dictated to by a political régime and that the artist had to be free to express that consciousness which came to him via his emotions rather than his
intellect or his political convictions, his erstwhile student, Lenin (1870-1924) thought otherwise. Tendentiousness, for Lenin was not only desirable, it was absolutely necessary. He set out his views on the matter in 1905 in the context of the abortive Russian revolt of that year. Given the failure suffered by the revolutionary forces of the country, the Party needed more than ever to harness all its resources. For Lenin, this meant the cooperation of artists and writers whom he viewed as militants in the class struggle with a key role to play in spreading the revolutionary consciousness among the population:

"La littérature doit devenir une littérature de Parti. En opposition aux moeurs bourgeoises, en opposition à l'arrivisme littéraire et à l'individualisme bourgeois, à l'"anarchisme de grand seigneur" et à la chasse au profit, le prolétariat socialiste doit préconiser le principe d'une littérature de Parti, le développer et l'appliquer sous une forme aussi pleine et aussi entière que possible.

En quoi consiste donc ce principe? Non seulement aux yeux du prolétariat socialiste la littérature ne doit pas constituer une source d'enrichissement pour des personnes et des groupements; mais d'une façon plus générale encore elle ne saurait être une affaire individuelle, indépendante de la cause générale du prolétariat. A bas les littérateurs sans parti: A bas les surhommes de la littérature."

This statement was closely followed by another which, although conciliatory in tone carried ominous forebodings for the future of literature and the arts in post-revolutionary Russia:

"Rassurez-vous messieurs! D'abord il s'agit de la littérature du Parti et de sa soumission au contrôle du Parti. Chacun est libre d'écrire et de dire tout ce qu'il veut sans la moindre restriction. Mais toute association libre (y compris le Parti) est libre aussi de chasser les membres qui à l'abri de l'enseigne du Parti précheraient des idées hostiles à ce dernier."\(^1\)

This pronouncement was used later by Stalin to provide a doctrinal basis to the foundation of the Writers' Union in the early 1930s and as a basic text of socialist realist theory and State art. Lenin's wife and collaborator Krupskaya has been reported as saying that Lenin did not intend this message to be interpreted in the sense of creative literature but of Party literature in the narrow publicist sense; notwithstanding, there exists a basic ambiguity within the text which Lenin no doubt appreciated. Lenin also wrote a series of articles on Tolstoy over a number of years before the October Revolution (1908-1911) in which he demonstrated to what extent the great Russian novelist had depicted the embryo types which were to emerge during the Revolution. These studies were similar to the appreciation of Balzac of Marx and Engels who felt that the latter had mirrored his times and that despite his own ideological convictions had depicted the objective truth thanks to his uncompromising realism. Lenin therefore used Tolstoi to illustrate his political theses adopting the critical role advocated by Plekhanov. Like

\(^1\)Ibid.
Marx, Engels and Plekhanov, his tastes were catholic and reflected his middle class culture and in this sense his view of great culture as being "classless" was similar to that of Jaurès. He opposed vigorously the campaign to destroy all pre-revolutionary art in the Soviet Union following the Revolution maintaining that this was part of the country's (and therefore the People's) heritage. For the same reason he rejected the concept of proletarian art and supported Maxime Gorky against those who felt that the latter represented an essentially bourgeois tradition.

Unfortunately Lenin was unable to contribute to the Marxist study of literature and the arts on the same scale as he had done for economics and the natural sciences, his but/utilitarian concept of the arts and literature survived him to become enshrined in the Stalinist doctrine of socialist realism thanks to which no advances have been made in original Marxist aesthetic theory for the past fifty years within the Soviet Union. It has fallen on foreign Marxists such as Lukács, Fischer, the Prague school, Gramsci etc., to produce original work within their respective communist parties. The fact that aesthetics remains one if not the most important theoretical vacuum still to be filled in Marxist thought has made it vitally important to those who would use it in order to introduce new concepts into the Marxist edifice. There have been bitter battles fought in the name of art
and literature in the communist context which could be said to have had little to do with either.

But what of the state of "Classical" Marxist theory in this sphere at the end of the nineteenth century? Although few if any of the ideas described above had reached France before the 1930s, some perspective on the potential problems facing the establishment of Marxist theory in France may be obtained by assessing the achievements and lacunae of the early thinkers as well as noting the influence of non-Marxist sources.

First of all the great theoretical achievement of the Fathers of Marxism lay in their concept of the total world view in which all human production material and intellectual could be defined in terms of the model of the socio-economic base and its ideological superstructures. Although Marx indicated that a revised form of the Hegelian dialectic could be used to identify and analyse the complex relationships contained in his model, he did not set out his method in detail. It therefore remained for future generations of Marxists to attempt the difficult (and perhaps even impossible) task of tracing the genesis of a work of art from its socio-economic basis, through the various superstructures to its final expression in what Marx and Engels both admitted were the most distant regions of the ideological system.

Neither Marx nor Engels claimed that their theory had been born out of nothing and were always prepared to
acknowledge their sources which, of course they modified brilliantly to be inserted into their scheme. The proximity of Marxist theory to reigning nineteenth century materialism and indeed socialism is often obscured by the partisan assessments of its champions and enemies, however, in the field of literary and aesthetic theory, some of these similarities come to light without prompting. For example, the concept of the "typical" lies very close to the "categories" of the positivists and indeed represented a commonplace of nineteenth century thinking. The historical perspectives of literature expressed by Marx and Engels were also subscribed to by other socialists (Saint-Simon, Comte) who were all able to identify different periods in the development of the arts (perhaps the same Hegelian source could be traced here), while the utilitarian view of literature and the arts was supported to a greater or lesser extent by all socialist theorists. The idea of criticism being an ideological weapon in the class war was expressed by Proudhon and Vallès among others.

Naturally, these similarities presented no dangers to the purity and cohesiveness of the theory of Marx and Engels, indeed much of their strength had come to them via a logical and rigorous criticism of their nearest rivals (Proudhon, Feuerbach etc.), the real danger lay with the second generation of theorists. It is for this reason that Plekhanov's theory is of interest. The greatest single
influence on Plekhanov, apart from Marx or Engels, was undoubtedly Hyppolite Taine. When Taine referred to literary criticism in the following way:

"Elle est elle-même une sorte de botanique appliquée, non aux plantes, mais aux oeuvres humaines"

Plekhanov echoed:

"On peut et on doit étudier la littérature avec le même objet qu'un biologue qui étudie la vie organique"

More serious from the point of view of Marxist orthodoxy was Plekhanov's belief that racial characteristics could determine the nature of works of art, a belief which he shared ostensibly with Taine.

But it is Plekhanov's attitude towards the aesthetic aspect of art, towards "beauty" which is of great interest. Where Marx and Engels remained silent or uttered warnings as to the special nature of art, Plekhanov may have recognised that he did not have the methodology to explore this region of the subjectivity and concentrated on the sociological analysis of the work of art; on the other hand there are grounds to believe that he felt that the matter was unimportant and to do with individual taste. Plekhanov was also impatient with those who promoted the idea of the individual genius and in this respect he followed the course demonstrated by Taine who discounted this approach by declaring that greatness in an artist was the ability to represent his era.
Already therefore, Engels' fears about the young Marxists were being confirmed either by the mechanistic application of Marx's theory (Plekhanov's rigid historical periods are a good example of this) or by eclecticism of the kind exhibited by Plekhanov.

Was Marxist literary theory doomed therefore to become a sociology among others or could it absorb the aesthetic content of art to form a veritable Marxist aesthetic? The history of the evolution of Marxist literary and aesthetic theory in France reflects these issues, but above all it was the Marxist call to action which prevailed in the minds of the first French disciples of Marx and Engels, a call which had been uttered by French revolutionary socialists such as Vallès and Blanqui within a distinctly French socialist tradition.

The First French Marxists

When, towards the end of the nineteenth century, the socialist movement in Europe began to express itself in organised and unified political groupings, the French socialists jealously preserved their differences within a fragmented Left including anarchists, social democrats, syndicalists and Marxists, all exhibiting tendencies of more or less extreme kinds. These groups did come together for a period following the Commune meeting for the first time in 1876; the association formed then was
working class dominated and anti-intellectual reflecting a deeply felt conviction among the workers that the disaster of the Commune was largely due to the interference in their affairs of middle class intellectuals. The Marxist leaders were of middle class origins and this did not improve their standing with the working class movement whose adherence to the doctrines of Proudhon represented an even greater obstacle to Marxist progress within the left.

Jules Guesde (1845-1922), who led the Marxist group finally won recognition for himself and his fellow militants after having served a prison sentence for his role in a strike, but this solidarity did not last for long. Finally, at the Congress of Roanne in 1882, Guesde broke with the other parties of the left to form his own Parti Ouvrier Français, the first political party in France to be inspired directly by the teachings of Marx and Engels.

Immediately it distinguished itself from the other groupings by its centralised administration and party structures making it the first modern political party in France. It also distinguished itself by its intransigence in doctrinal matters refusing to collude in any way with the bourgeois régime. For example it stood aside from the great scandals of the end of the century, the Boulanger and Dreyfus affairs, qualifying them as bourgeois matters and nothing to do with the working class movement.
In its first years of existence it consisted of only a few dozen committed militants who nevertheless made sure their voice was heard in political circles. The centre-piece of their doctrine was that the proletariat would come to power following a general strike, a belief which appealed to the syndicalists and to the working-class grass roots whose memories of the Commune and idealism of the intellectuals involved in it tended to fade as time wore on. More and more the Guesdistes demonstrated that they were capable of mobilising and organising large numbers of workers in demonstrations of a political nature (e.g. the first May day celebrations of 1890 and 1891 were instituted by the Guesdistes); by the beginning of the 1890s it seemed that the Guesdistes were ready for the political breakthrough towards which they had been working since their inception as a party. From 2,000 members in 1889 the Guesdistes increased their membership to 10,000 by 1893; in 1889 they won 25,000 votes in the legislative elections, by 1893 they had increased their share of the vote to 160,000.

As far as their role in the propagation and elaboration of Marxist theory was concerned, opinions vary among historians of French socialism as to effectiveness and ability of this fervent band to carry out its mission; George Lichtheim rates them very low:

"What passed for Marxism in the 1880s, when Jules Guesde, Paul Lafargue, Charles Longuet and Gabriel Deville began to popularise the new doctrine, was
at best an approximation and at worst a caricature. The theoretical level of these writers was considerably below that of the contemporary exponents of social democratic Marxism in Germany.

Lichtheim considers Georges Sorel to have been superior in this domaine to the Guesdistes largely due to his access to the writings of the Italian Marxist Labriola; Claude Willard the French Historian of socialism makes a special plea for at least one of the Guesdistes, Paul Lafargue son-in-law of Marx.

"Lafargue, de son vivant, possédait, au-delà des frontières, la réputation d'être le meilleur-presque le seul-théoricien marxiste français. Or, dans le musée français de l'histoire socialiste, Lafargue est, aujourd'hui, une des personnalités les plus méconnues, les plus injustement décriées. Il ne serait qu'un vulgarisateur grossier ou fantaisiste du marxisme. Un pamphlétaire superficiel, aimant cultiver le paradoxe. Aucune œuvre maîtresse de Lafargue, nuls textes choisis, aucune biographie de Lafargue ne parurent depuis la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Le temps aurait-il ridé plus les traits de Lafargue que ceux d'un Jaurès, d'un Guesde, d'un Vaillant? Faut-il incriminer ici la détraction systématique de Lafargue par les chantres passés et présents de Sorel?"

Apparently this is a controversial area; perhaps an evaluation of Lafargue's literary theory will help to shed some light on his value as a Marxist theorist. But what

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of the attitude of the other Guesdistes to art and literature?

It would seem that the Guesdistes had little time for the application of Marxist theory to anything other than the immediate task of penetrating working class consciousness with their ideas. Their socialism, often referred to in these early days as "German socialism" i.e. opposed to the humanist tradition of indigenous French socialism, based as it was on the science of economics, brought them the reputation of the "bread and butter" party. However, the Guesdistes as a group did not discourage the arts in any way despite the jibes of their opponents. Florien-Parmentier in his *Histoire Contemporaine des Lettres Françaises*, mentions a manifesto concerning socialist support for the arts considered as a basic human right and signed by Lafargue, Vaillant and Guesde among others; no researcher to date has discovered the original document.

The only recorded pronouncement by Guesde on the arts is contained in the reply to a letter sent to him by Anatole Baju, the former décadent turned Marxist, which the latter presented as a preface to his pamphlet *Principes du Socialisme*.¹

"Cher citoyen,
Je crois comme vous, que la société capitaliste est le milieu le plus déprimant qui ait jamais existé pour l'Art et l'Artiste, qui, industrialisés sont tombés à l'état de marchandise........ (le plaisir esthétique, au contraire n'est pas seulement une espérance; il est réel, immédiat.

Il s'agit de le faire goûter aux générations nouvelles. Même provisoirement dans une faible mesure, il est vrai, des fils de paysans et d'ouvriers peuvent le concevoir."

In expressing these sentiments, Guesde was merely echoing the views of his socialist contemporaries (with the exception of the revolutionary syndicalists who rejected bourgeois culture outright). The theme of alienated art in capitalist society together with the incapacity of the downtrodden proletariat and peasants to experience aesthetic pleasure due to their uncultivated, and at times mutilated sensibilities, was common among socialist militants of middle class background and education such as Guesde, indeed as Marx and Engels.

As far as Guesde was concerned the problem of art and culture was one which would be tackled and resolved after the revolution, for only then would the appropriate conditions prevail.

The only other prominent Guesdiste to concern himself with cultural matters apart from Lafargue, was Gabriel Deville who like the other Guesdistes could be regarded as a "second generation" Marxist in the same way as Plekhanov. In 1883, the year of Marx's death, he published a résumé of Das Capital accompanied by an introduction to Marxist socialism. Engels was delighted with Deville's

1 Guesde, Jules. idem.

commentary and proposed that a German translation should be carried out. In the course of his correspondance with Engels, Deville sent him a copy of his study of the theme of love in Balzac.\footnote{Deville, Gabriel. \textit{La Femme et l'amour d'après Honoré de Balzac}. Calman Levy, Paris 1888.} Although at the time of reply, Engels obviously had not read the work, he predictably approved of Deville's choice of author:

"Cher citoyen Deville, 
Merci de votre livre sur Balzac qui me promet bien du plaisir. Après Cervantès, Balzac est, à mes yeux, le plus grand romancier de tous les temps, en même temps que l'historiographe le plus fidèle de la société française de 1815 à 1848. J'aime Balzac sous toutes les formes.\footnote{Quoted by Dommanget, M. \textit{L'Introduction du marxisme en France}, p. 188. \textit{Rencontre}. Laussanne 1969.}

(it would have been even more interesting to have Engels' final assessment of this study since it raises grave doubts as will be seen as to this early Marxist's ability to apply the principles of his philosophy.

The work is divided into two parts; the first being "La Femme" which in turn is divided into the following sub-sections:

(i) Divers natures de femmes.

(ii) La Femme sous ses rapports extérieurs.

(iii) L'Intelligence féminine.

(iv) Les Femmes entre elles.

The second part has the general title "L'Amour" and is divided into thirteen sub-sections:
(v) Amour et passion.
(vi) Caractères d'amour.
(vii) Expression d'amour.
(viii) Les Débuts.
(ix) Présence et absence.
(x) Lettres d'amour.
(xi) Le Monde et les amoureux.
(xii) Les Calculs d'amour.
(xv) Les Femmes et l'amour.
(xvi) Jalousie.
(xvii) Brouilles et ruptures.

Each one of the sub-sections in both parts consists of lists of relevant quotations from Balzac with no accompanying comment. The theoretical part of the work is contained in the introductory essay which is a twelve page discussion on the nature and method of realism in literature.

The introduction is taken up mostly with a sustained criticism of naturalism which neglects the subjective in favour of concrete detail. Naturalism, claims Deville, is incapable of portraying two people in love whereas the realism of Balzac and Stendhal constitutes the triumph of true realism where the objective and subjective are given their rightful expression; there could be no realism without psychology. His other criticism of naturalism, that it depended on the weight of detail presented to create the illusion of reality, turns out to be more of a
plea for a positivist approach than a Marxist one:

"L'inconvénient de ce procédé (le naturalisme) trop en vogue ne peut être surmonté, l'évocation, précise, parfaite, de la réalité ne peut être obtenue que par le classement et la condensation des traits tirés de l'observation directe". ¹

It is this conviction which governs the method adopted by Deville in his work on Balzac, but he seems singularly reluctant to draw any conclusions from his divisions and sub-divisions. If Deville had been moved by Marxist motivations, his "analysis" would not have stopped short at this point, but rather formed the basis for a complete survey of class consciousness in order, to make a series of ideological and theoretical statements instead, Deville would seem to have indulged in "classification for classification's sake" the very criticism which the Marxist levels against the positivist and which places Deville more under the influence of Taine than Marx.

Fortunately the only other Guesdiste to venture into this field of research, Paul Lafargue, has left behind him a much more impressive body of criticism within which there is evidence of a genuine desire to apply Marxist principles.

The literary criticism of Paul Lafargue

Apart from the reasons suggested by Lichtheim and Willard above, Paul Lafargue's relative obscurity in the field of Marxist literary theory is mainly due to the fact that his writings have passed into oblivion with the

notable exception of his pamphlet on Victor Hugo which had a sensational ring to it. Five other articles were largely ignored by the academic establishment for the simple reason, according to Jean Fréville,¹ that their author was not a "professional" critic. Two other articles were published in German, and since the French originals were not available, had to be re-translated into French for the Editions Sociales Internationales edition² of his work of 1936 when, for the first time in France, the collective effect of Lafargue's writings could be evaluated.

Lafargue had the great privilege of hearing Marx's theory from Marx himself:

"Pendant des années j'ai accompagné Marx dans ses promenades à Hampstead Heath. C'est au cours de ces marches à travers les prairies que je fis mon éducation économique. Sans même le remarquer, il développait devant moi tout le contenu du premier volume du Capital au fur et à mesure qu'il l'écrivait. D'ordinaire, à peine rentré, je notais immédiatement ce que je venais d'entendre. Au début, il n'était pas facile de suivre cette pensée profonde et complexe. Malheureusement, j'ai perdu ces précieuses notes; après la Commune, la police s'empara des papiers que je possédais à Paris et à Bordeaux et les brûla. Je regrette surtout la perte des notes que j'avais écrites un soir où Marx m'avait exposé, avec cette richesse de développement qui lui était particulière, sa géniale théorie de l'évolution des sociétés humaines. Ce fut pour moi comme si un voile se déchirait devant mes yeux. Pour la première fois, je compris

¹Fréville, Jean. French communist party literary historian.
clairement la logique de l'histoire mondiale et les causes matérielles des manifestations, si contradictoires en apparence, de développement de la société et de la pensée humaine. J'en fus émerveillé, et je conservai cette impression durant de longues années. ¹

Eager to apply the theory imparted to him by his father-in-law, Lafargue launched himself into research projects, which when seen as a whole, would seem to have had two objectives. The first one being the demonstration of the base superstructure theory (notably in the fields of linguistics and anthropology) and its effectiveness in explaining hitherto unrelated phenomena, and the second a description of post-revolutionary French society through an appreciation of the literary and artistic superstructure.

In a letter to Engels dated 27th March 1887, Lafargue indicated how he would set about a study of pre-1848 socialists:

"In my opinion, the only way of making studies of the pre-1848 socialists interesting and useful is not by analysing their works, with their contradictory and sometimes very bourgeois notions beneath their reformist and revolutionary semblance, notions buried and lost under an indescribable farrago (I pity Bebel if he has plunged headlong into an analysis of Fourier's writings), in my view, one should in the first place study the economic and political conditions created by the revolution, draw attention to the aspirations of those disillusioned by the failure of the revolution and show how that disillusionment was palliated by the conspiracies and abortive attacks of the Republicans and the mystico-socialist propaganda of Fourier, Saint-Simon and their disciples. In short, one should present the whole historical

¹Quoted by Dommanget op. cit., p. 179. The original article appeared in Neue Zeit 1891 ("Souvenirs sur Marx et Engels").
development on the lines you have laid down on this question in your Socialism: Utopian and Scientific.

Conceived in this way, the work should have a completely different character from that which was asked for, and would have required that the same individual should be responsible for the studies on F(ourier) and S(aint)-Simon, who would thus have become no more than personalities shedding light on the intellectual outlook of society at the beginning of the century. And I shall set about this work when I have finished that on which I have been engaged for years concerning the changes brought about in property, philosophy, art etc. by the revolution."

Several important conclusions may be drawn from his text in connection with Lafargue's methodology. In the first instance he rejects the individualistic approach because of the partial view which this would have produced; rather than deal with phenomena in isolation, Lafargue prefers to go to the fundamental forces which shape the consciousness of society and which explain the contradictions contained in that consciousness; in doing so, he refuses to accept the outward manifestations at their face value. One could fairly conclude that the reason this approach would be interesting and useful would be that having arrived at a profile of the social consciousness, it would only be a short step to relate this to the areas he mentions in his last sentence. Thus, in comparison with the positivist approach of Deville, Lafargue demonstrates his understanding of the

1 Frederick Engels, Paul and Laura Lafargue Correspondence. Letter 241. pp. 75-76. Vol. 11. Foreign Languages Publishing House. Moscow 1959. (A French edition with Lafargue's letters in the original has been produced by Moscow.)
Marxist dialectic which rejects the objective neutrality implied by positivist empiricism, in favour of the deductive logic of the committed Marxist. The application of this logic, elaborated from a-priori premises which he can extend with confidence beyond the political struggle to the extra-political ideological superstructures, he feels is both interesting and useful. Interesting as an illustration and means of confirmation of Marxist political theory, and useful as propaganda. This is the Marxist commitment which is missing in Deville who has obviously divorced his intellectual activity from his political work. Lafargue, by the breadth of his interests showed to what extent he possessed the commanding overview of social and political phenomena permitted by the all embracing Marxist perspective. His articles\(^1\) ranged from anthropology, to linguistics to literary criticism, but all exhibited the same approach as outlined above.

\(^{\text{1}}\)"Les chansons et les cérémonies populaires du mariage" (First published in La Nouvelle Revue Nov. 1886, under the pen name "Fergus").


4. "La Légende de Victor Hugo". Completed in 1885 and first published in German in the review Neue Zeit in 1888, and later in French in La Revue Socialiste, 1891, and as a pamphlet in 1902.

5. "Le Darwinisme au théâtre" in Neue Zeit, 1890.


A good example of this is to be found in Lafargue's consideration of themes common to the folk songs of different societies previously remarked upon by bourgeois anthropologists and assigned generally to a common source (the same theory was put forward in connection with European languages). Lafargue showed that the melancholy exhibited in European marriage songs was traceable not to a common Indo-European folk memory, but to the economic conditions which created the matriarchal society and made the entry of the young bride into her mother-in-law's domaine such a daunting experience.

As far as the evolution of language was concerned, Lafargue linked this directly with the evolution of the dominant class; thus in eighteenth century France:

"La transformation du langage se faisait parallèlement à l'évolution de la classe bourgeoise: pour trouver la raison du phénomène linguistique, il est nécessaire de connaître et de comprendre le phénomène social et politique dont il n'est que la résultante."

The Marxist Lafargue was never content to accept literature at its face value so that when the reading public of the beginning of the nineteenth century allowed itself to be intoxicated by the spells woven by the language and literary alchemy of a Chateaubriand, Lafargue saw this as a sign of something more profound and insisted that in so doing, he was elevating traditional criticism to something new and infinitely more interesting:

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"En effet, on ne peut s'expliquer l'enthousiasme qui accueillait les premiers productions romantiques de Chateaubriand qui si l'on revit par la pensée les sentiments et les passions des femmes et des hommes qui les acclamaient et que si l'on reconstitue l'atmosphère sociale dans laquelle ils se mouvaient.

Envisagée ainsi, la critique littéraire n'est plus cet insipide exercice de rhétorique où l'on distribue le blâme et l'éloge, où l'on donne des prix de composition et où l'on paraphrase sur le Bien en soi, cette splendeur du Vrai: mais une étude de critique matérialiste de l'histoire: dans les pages mortes, l'analyste recherche non les beautés de style, mais les émotions des hommes qui les ont écrites et qui les ont lues."

The work of art which won acclaim within society owed its success not to some magic formula known only to the artist, but to the fact that it expressed the community which embraced it. According to Lafargue, the work of art was not the only document which could be used to define social consciousness and that pointers could be found elsewhere. Referring to the immediate post-revolutionary era, Lafargue pointed out that very little exploratory work of this nature had been carried out by historians whose inability to grasp the whole situation severely limited their researches:

".......l'époque a été peu fouillée, bien qu'elle renferme plus de documents sociaux que ne le soupçonnent les historiens; et que leur étude permette de comprendre l'évolution politique, philosophique, religieuse, littéraire et artistique de la société bourgeoise. Dans cet essai de critique, j'ai dû remonter aux sources et lire, la plume à la main, les publications parues de l'an III à l'an XII (romans, poèmes, pièces de théâtre, ouvrages de

philosophie, revues, journaux. Parmi les écrits modernes qui m'ont aidé dans ce travail, je dois citer l'Histoire de la Société française pendant la Révolution et le Directoire, de Éd. et J. Goncourt, si riches en recherches originales, mais si dépourvue de l'esprit critique, et l'Etude sur Chateaubriand et son époque, de Sainte-Beuve, le fin et malicieux critique."

During his study of this material, Lafargue noted themes of recurrent interest. He found for example that violence of a sensational and lurid nature coloured a great many of the novels and plays of the times, a phenomenon which he ascribed to the fact that anyone who had lived through the Terror had had his sensibilities so abused that the spice offered by such themes was now indispensable. He also noted the tendency to seek exotic subject matter and to transpose feelings, desires etc. to distant climes, a fashion which not only arose out of bourgeois escapism and a desire to erect a vision of ideal and idyllic societies of Rousseauesque flavour, but also from the increasing contact being made by merchants of the New World. Thus the bourgeois appetite was tempted by two related ingredients; the development of a false social conscience, which because of the remoteness of its object, did not require to be exercised nearer home, and the prospect of limitless exploitation (which the former served to camouflage). The violence of the literature of the Revolution and the Directoire soon gave way to excesses of sensibility and the exoticism of distant

climes which was translated on to the psychological plane of the sentiment; but the major ingredients of stimulation and exoticism, were somewhat muted:

"Les esprits en se calmant, réclamaient une nourriture intellectuelle moins lourdement poivrée. Les romans psychologiques, qui prenaient pour modèle le puissant et original roman de Godwin, Caleb Williams, qui fut transporté sur la scène, et les romans sentimentaux, mis en vogue par Werther, commencèrent à pulluler."^1

But these were run of the mill works, the daily fodder of the literate public; if one writer could seize the essence of every feature, amplify it and cast it in one or two works, his immediate success would be assured.

The novelist who satisfied all these conditions was Chateaubriand.

"Les deux romans de Chateaubriand, Atala et René, possèdent l'indispensable mérite de renfermer, sous un petit volume et dans une forme littéraire, les principales caractéristiques du moment psychologique, disséminées dans d'innombrables et aujourd'hui illisibles productions, qui naissaient pour mourir le lendemain."^2

The fact that he had been able to find the literary form which was most suited to his material, i.e. the novel provided the second and ultimate seal of his success.

Furthermore the stylistic conventions of pre-revolutionary literature had been broken by the political rhetoric of the revolution which contained a torrent of linguistic and stylistic innovation:


"La versification mécanique du XVIIIe siècle pétrifiait la poésie et la rendait impuissante à exprimer les nouveaux sentiments de l'âme sociale. Mais la Révolution avait renouvelé la langue parlée à la tribune et écrite dans le journal et les romans; des mots, des tournures, des formes de phrases des images, des comparaisons, venus de toutes les provinces et de toutes les couches sociales, avaient envahi la langue châtiee, polie légère et élégante des salons aristocratiques, la langue de Montesquieu et de Voltaire, et l'avait révolutionnée. La prose se poétisait puisque la poésie échouait dans le prosaisme le plus morne et le plus conventionnel. Chateaubriand s'empara de la langue forgée par la Révolution et la mania en virtuose de génie."

By stressing the importance of the novel as the art form best suited to the expression of post-revolutionary society, Lafargue echoed the conviction of Marx and Engels (attributable in the first instance to Hegel), that the novel was the most appropriate literary form for the expression of bourgeois society. Conversely, Lafargue's criticism of the failure of poetry to convey the feelings of the times may be related to the theory that as the vehicle of aristocratic sensibility was singularly ill-equipped to echo the sentiment of the new regime.

Apart from the two relatively short articles on the theatre ("Sapho" and "Le Darwinisme au théâtre"), most of Lafargue's purely literary criticism is devoted to the novel and predominantly to the works of Balzac and Zola.

Lafargue was particularly interested in Balzac's sociological approach to his subjects which he rightly

ascribed to the "milieu" theory then widely held:

"Balzac se réclame de Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, l'élève et le successeur de Lamarck le représentant génial du théorie du milieu, théorie qui met en lumière l'action du monde extérieur sur les êtres qui se développent dans son sein; il est partisan de la loi de corrélation des organes, à laquelle se railliait également Goethe. Chaque changement du monde extérieur trouve pour ainsi dire un écho dans une modification correspondante chez les animaux et les plantes et toute modification survenue dans l'organe d'un animal agit nécessairement sur les autres organes."

One need only substitute "base" for "milieu" and "superstructure" for "organe" to understand the Marxist Lafargue's predilection for such a dynamic theory of cause and effect. It was this theory which enabled Balzac's characters to act and develop out of necessity determined as they were by their environment so carefully established by an author whose "sociological" groundwork resembled so closely that of Lafargue in his criticism. This organic unity which was to be found in Balzac was to be contrasted with the set-pieces of other famous bourgeois writers, which although brilliant in form, were essentially artificial and unnatural.

"Flaubert, Zola, les Goncourt, la plupart des romanciers qui prétendent jouer un rôle important dans la littérature, se plient à des descriptions brillantes qui rappellent les prouesses des virtuoses au piano. Ce sont la plupart du temps des tableaux de genre, travaillés souvent à l'avance et conservés soigneusement dans un tiroir pour un usage éventuel. Ces descriptions sont

introduites dans le roman comme des images ou des vignettes à la fin des chapitres. Elles prouvent le grand art d'exposition de l'auteur, elles ne sont en elles-mêmes qu'un accessoire laborieux et inutile qui nuit à l'intérêt du livre."

The "interest" of a work for Lafargue is the amount of information it imparts; those readers who read only for entertainment's sake will become impatient with Balzac's careful orchestration of his sociological background, whereas those who read seriously for knowledge will appreciate his talent.

"Il (Balzac) n'a pas esquissé l'analyse des "mille causes complexes" qui effraient Zola, et qui pourtant déterminent des actes des hommes et influent sur leurs passions. Bien plus, Balzac les a analysées avec tant de plaisir qu'il semble parfois ennuyeux au lecteur qui cherche dans la lecture du roman une distraction et non un enseignement."^

But, according to Lafargue, the problems of the novel, especially the contemporary novel, were not entirely due to erroneous theories held by individual authors. In the time of Balzac it was possible to deal with the great issues of the time on a broad canvas and to deal with them fully without reducing their complexity. In modern times the struggles which took place formerly between individuals have been replaced by confrontations of large firms, high finance, corporations, unions etc., the world had become a decidedly more complex place to live in and describe. There is therefore more than a

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2 Ibid.
suggestion in Lafargue's theory that no matter what happens by way of individual talent, the social conditions for the realisation of great bourgeois art were no longer in existence by the time Zola was writing:

"De nos jours la lutte pour la vie a pris un autre caractère, plus âpre et plus accusée à mesure que la civilisation capitaliste se développait. La lutte des individus entre eux est remplacée par la lutte des organismes économiques (banques, usines, mines, magasins géants). La force et l'intelligence de l'individu disparaissent devant leur puissance irrésistible, aveugle comme une force de la nature. L'homme est pris dans leur engrenage, projeté, secoué, lancé de tous côtés comme une balle, aujourd'hui au sommet du bonheur, demain au fond de l'abîme, emporté comme un fêtu de paille, sans qu'il puisse offrir la moindre résistance, malgré son intelligence et son énergie. La nécessité économique l'écrase. Les efforts qui permettaient aux hommes du temps de Balzac de parvenir-en grimpant sur les épaules de leurs concurrents et en enjambant leurs cadavres, -ne leur servent qu'à végéter misérablement. L'ancien caractère de la lutte pour la vie a changé, et avec lui s'est modifiée la nature humaine, elle est devenue plus vile, plus mesquine."

Apart from the observation that Zola had succeeded eminently well in his evocation of the Bourse and the workings of high finance, Lafargue hardly suggested that a golden age of literature, revolutionary or not, was near at hand. His views on Balzac and Zola reflect the Guesdiste interpretation of the class struggle for if Balzac had been able to produce great literature it was because the bourgeois regime was still (but only just) in its progressive post-revolution phase and, therefore allowed the artist freedom of perspective and judgement.

On the other hand Zola did not enjoy this liberty precisely because the capitalist regime had entered the phase of decadence and moral bankruptcy which heralded its own destruction causing alienation of the artist and society whose world view was consequently stunted and deformed by reaction.

The Guesdistes believed in the inevitability of the self destruction of capitalism, which would only require the final touch of the general strike to bring about the advent of socialism. This messianic view of the revolutionary process was one which was held against them by subsequent theorists of the Third International who defended the Leninist doctrine of positive revolutionary preparation. Lafargue mirrored this theoretical conviction of his fellow Guesdistes in terms of art and literature when he rejected the possibility of a progressive pre-revolutionary proletarian cultural movement whose aim would be the promotion of the revolution. In his opinion the cultural ascendancy of the bourgeoisie was uniquely a post-revolutionary phenomenon just as the formation of socialist art would come after the socialist revolution. This mechanistic interpretation of the basis and superstructure theory of Marx revealed the economic determinism which Engels found so unacceptable among the younger generation of Marxist theorists. Had not Marx pointed out that in times of social and political decadence, great art could be produced as part
of that reaction of the superstructures preparing to overthrow the obsolete socio-economic basis; in other words artistic production could appear to be out of phase to those who looked for an automatic connection between the foundations of society and its ideological expression. If Lafargue had followed Marx's teaching to the letter he would have found progressive art in the pre-revolutionary period and not exclusively in the post-revolutionary period. Lafargue and the other Guesdistes, as has been suggested, were not alone in entertaining this error for when Plekhanov laid down rigid divisions of literary and artistic eras corresponding to equally categorically defined phases of the class struggle, he too was basing his theory on a mechanistic interpretation of Marx.

Apart from the above reservations, the criticism of Paul Lafargue is undoubtedly Marxist in inspiration. His demonstration of the success of Chateaubriand was nothing other than an illustration of Engels' theory of the "typical". By amassing sociological detail and extracting predominant themes, he was able to go behind the appearances of the work of art (which reflects the social conscience) and reveal the socio-political determinants of artistic production.

Lafargue viewed art in the same way as he viewed his criticism; it is a "moyen de connaissance" enabling the individual to grasp the essence of his social and
ideological existence. As has been pointed out, there is no indication in Lafargue's criticism that art could be used directly to bring about change; perhaps for him, the simple comprehension of the ideological situation would be the first step in such a process.

Lafargue's criticism like that of Plekhanov, is fundamentally sociological; apart from stressing the importance of content over form and remarking on the versatility and talent of various artists, he makes no attempt to describe and define aesthetic phenomena. When he affirmed the committed nature of Marxist criticism there was no doubt that French Marxism had found its first Marxist critic, but it had still to find its first Marxist aesthetician. This was a problem of the whole of Marxist scholarship at that time, aspects of which persist today.

One other feature of Lafargue's work and also of the contributions of the Fathers of Marxism, was that in some respects it was not too distant from some of the theory of non-Marxist nineteenth century materialist critics. Deville for example could be set himself wholly within the positivist tradition and see no contradiction with his political work, while Lafargue's expressed admiration for Taine and Madame de Staël denoted a confidence in the milieu theory which caused him perhaps to take up his sociological position rather than that of the militant Marxist intent on changing the world through the
promotion of revolutionary proletarian art. It is difficult to blame Lafargue for these tendencies since there was so much common ground between the newly formed Marxists and those nineteenth century materialists who shared a common heritage. Hence, Lafargue took care to draw the difference between his own criticism and impressionist, individualistic criticism, and not to attack other forms of materialist criticism. Only with the heightening of the class struggle and the necessity of the Marxist to mark his distance from any form of bourgeois criticism would this state of affairs be rectified. Having said this, the Marxist historical materialism of Lafargue undoubtedly lends his work a breadth of vision and interest lacking in other forms of materialist criticism. It was most unfortunate for the development of Marxist criticism in France that the significance of his work was not revealed until 1936 by which time another source of orthodoxy had been found, i.e. in the Soviet Union.
CHAPTER II
The contribution of Revolutionary Syndicalism to French Marxist Cultural Theory

If, with the exception of Lafargue, the Guesdistes had not sought, nor been able to apply the principles of the Marxist dialectic to the exploration of the ideological superstructures of society, the possibilities offered by such an approach stimulated other intellectuals of the French left. The spread of Marxist ideas outside the Guesdiste P.O.F., was encouraged by the contacts maintained within the IIInd. International and by the general debate which filled the columns of socialist reviews towards the end of the century. Former members of the P.O.F. naturally enjoyed a more intimate experience of Marxism which they tended to take with them on their political itineraries; this was particularly the case of Georges Sorel (1847-1922) and Fernand Pelloutier (1867-1901), both leading members of the revolutionary or anarcho syndicalist movement which represented one of the most powerful and original working class forces in France at the turn of the century. The revolutionary syndicalists shared many of the basic precepts of the Marxists; their rejection of social democratic strategy in the institution of a new regime, their internationalism, their recognition of the need for direct action, the belief that work represented a basic element of the human condition, all ideas which could be ascribed to the
Guesdistes and which reached back beyond both groups to the original theoretical sources of pre-Marxist socialism.

There were nevertheless basic differences of principle and theory which divided the two revolutionary currents. If, for example, one takes the attitude of the anarchists towards the work process, it is seen as an ethic, an existential need in the fulfilment of the individual, whereas with the Marxists it tends to become an element in the productive process and more of an economic entity. The anarcho-syndicalist theory of work is very well illustrated in the cultural theory of the movement which stated that since the essence of humanity is expressed through work, authentic human culture must also have its roots in this experience. The application of this theory by Fernand Pelloutier to his "bourses de travail" resulted in these going beyond their immediate function of labour exchanges to adopting the role of working class places of learning in which master craftsmen handed on their knowledge to workers who were then encouraged to acquire a culture based on trade skills; thus mathematics was taught as an extension of work practice etc.

The spirit of revolt, self help and libertarianism were fundamental to anarcho-syndicalist cultural theory:

1The first Bourse de Travail was founded in Paris in 1886, by 1908 there were 157 throughout France.
"... nous voulons que l'émancipation du peuple soit l'oeuvre du peuple lui-même; l'union corporative le veut encore: de plus, on y sent la nécessité, on y éprouve le besoin de gérer soi-même ses intérêts; le goût de l'indépendance et l'appétit de la révolte y germent; on y rêve des ateliers libres où l'autorité aurait fait place au sentiment personnel du devoir; on y émet sur le rôle des travailleurs dans une société harmonique des indications d'une largeur d'esprit étonnante et fournies par les travailleurs mêmes. Bref, les ouvriers, après s'être crus si longtemps condamnés au rôle d'outils veulent devenir des intelligences pour être en même temps les inventeurs et les créateurs de leurs œuvres. Qu'ils élargissent donc le champ d'étude ouvert ainsi devant eux. Que, comprenant qu'ils ont entre leurs mains toute la vie sociale, ils s'habituent à ne puiser qu'en eux l'obligation du devoir à détester et à briser toute autorité étrangère. C'est leur rôle, c'est le but de l'anarchie."

If worker education and the formation of proletarian culture by the workers themselves represented the constructive aspect of revolutionary syndicalism, the relentless war waged against the institutions of the bourgeoisie at the cultural, political, and industrial levels served to brand this movement in the minds of observers as essentially destructive. The extremist anarchist elements believed that any single outrage could unleash the general movement which would liberate the masses, an attitude which enabled the enemies of anarchism to label it as dangerous and irresponsible, but at the cultural level it was the systematic "undermining of the confidence of the bourgeoisie" as Plekhanov put it,

which provided the long term sustenance of the anarcho-
syndicalist mentality. This work was carried out by
intellectuals such as Sorel and those who followed in his
footsteps by means of a ruthless critique of bourgeois
society and culture using Marxist analytical procedures.

Sorel s critique of the French bourgeoisie was much
more biting and hard-hitting than that of Lafargue whose
work at times presents an appearance of almost bourgeois
objectivity with the class struggle very much in the
background. Sorel wished his criticism to be directly
useful to his cause at all times so that when he took
the Marxist theory of social consciousness, he set out
specifically to discredit the bourgeoisie rather than
to supply an "objective" proof of the scientific validity
of the basis/superstructure theory. He found the
Marxist dialectic well suited to his needs:

"C'est surtout pour les temps démocratiques que l'on
peut dire que l'humanité est gouvernée par le pouvoir
magique des grands mots plutôt que par des formules
plutôt que par des raisons, par des dogmes dont nul
ne songe à rechercher l'origine, plutôt que par

1 As an intellectual Sorel did not enjoy the popularity
and respect of Pelloutier and indeed was not recognised
as the theoretical leader of the movement by his working
class contemporaries; it is only in the fullness of
time that Sorel has been identified in this way by
historians and commentators, how much influence he had
on ordinary militants, is difficult to assess - what
is clear is that he exercised a great deal of influence
on young intellectuals of the left anxious to consolidate
their links with traditional French revolutionary
socialism.
des doctrines fondées sur l'observation.

J'ai pensé qu'il ne serait pas mauvais de soumettre une de ces dogmes charlatanesques à une critique conduite suivant la seule méthode qui puisse nous garantir contre toute duperie, c'est-à-dire à une critique fondée sur une investigation historique des rapports des classes. 1

The subject which Sorel had selected for this study was that of the bourgeois concept of Progress and its accompanying ideological theories of Democracy and Republicanism. The birth of bourgeois ideology was to be found according to him, in the eighteenth century whose culture was as much to do with the middle classes as with the aristocracy; here Sorel opposed Taine's theory that eighteenth century culture with its excesses and at times superficiality, was due to an aristocracy, which in contrast to the socially and politically committed English nobility, had become degenerate, idle and frivolous. Sorel put forward the theory that society was not so much the affair of one class in particular, but was defined rather by the relationship between the classes. Of course the aristocracy supplied the culture but this was reinforced by avid bourgeois interest in it.

The aristocracy required a culture which satisfied its aristocratic tastes and corresponded to a long tradition of patronage stretching from the days of the court jester to the role of the philosophers in the salons.

of "les honnêtes gens". The long standing licence of the jester and court artist to voice opinion in a way which only they enjoyed had not entirely disappeared by the eighteenth century:

"Une tradition ancienne voulait qu'une cour eût des rhéteurs habiles, plaisant par leur conversation brillante, capables de jeter l'illustration sur le prince qui les entretenait; ils faisaient aussi parti du luxe qui doit entourer des riches personnages. Cette tradition n'avait point disparu et chaque grande maison formait une petite cour abondamment pourvue de ses êtres exceptionnels."

But there was another and perhaps more important reason why the nobility felt it wise to cultivate the philosophes, and that was that since the invention of the printing press and power of the pen had increased manyfold; this particular generation of writers led by Voltaire and Diderot were always ready to substitute the pen for the sword.

But the aristocracy was fast losing sight of its mission, its responsibilities and its morality, a fact which was reflected in the excesses of the literature it entertained. Sorel felt that this particular feature was highly significant:

"Nous touchons maintenant le fond de la psychologie des hommes du XVIIIe siècle: cette fanfaronnade de lubricité n'intéresse seulement la morale, mais aussi la production intellectuelle; elle prouve que la réflexion exerçait chez eux un très faible contrôle sur l'imagination. Les historiens perdent

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donc leur temps quand ils veulent pénétrer la pensée des philosophes du XVIIIe siècle; ce sont des causeurs, des marchands de satires ou de louanges et surtout bouffons d'une aristocratie dégénérée.\textsuperscript{1}

The aristocracy was not the only public enjoyed by the philosophes since the bourgeoisie, as yet incapable of erecting its own culture within its subservient role vis à vis the aristocracy, hung on their every word. Because of its lack of perspective on itself and the culture it was embracing, the middle classes cultivated aristocratic manners and values but it was also selective insofar as it took out of that culture those aspects which were of service to their everyday function of administering society for the nobility; thus the middle class laid the foundations of its own future culture:

"Une classe de commis, ne peut pas construire son idéologie sur le même type que celui qu'adoptait une classe de maîtres; car elle ne raisonne point tant sur ses propres affaires que sur celles des autres. Son idéologie tend à prendre le caractère de consultations données par des juristes, des historiens ou des savants sur des problèmes qui leur sont proposés. Pour procéder facilement à ce travail, il faut soumettre toutes choses à des procédés scolaires; c'est ainsi qu'en France se créa l'habitude de faire dépendre toute opinion de formules abstraites, de théories générales, de doctrines philosophiques.\textsuperscript{2}

This double weakness inherent in future bourgeois culture, i.e. the fact that it was a borrowed culture (from a degenerate source) and secondly that it lacked depth and

\textsuperscript{1}Sorel, Georges. Op. cit. p. 133 (author's italics)
authenticity dependent as it was on system making and abstractions, was something from which the proletariat should be protected at all costs:

"La guerre que le prolétariat doit conduire contre ses maîtres est propre, on le sait, à développer en lui des sentiments de sublime qui font aujourd'hui complètement défaut à la bourgeoisie. Celle-ci a emprunté beaucoup à une des aristocraties les plus corrompues qui aient existé; les guides de sa conscience ne sont pas moins cyniques que les gens de lettres qui formaient ce que Rousseau nommait la coterie holbachique. Tous nos efforts devront tendre à empêcher que les idées bourgeoises ne viennent empoisonner la classe qui monte; c'est pourquoi on ne saura jamais assez faire pour briser tout lien entre le peuple et la littérature du XVIIIe siècle."

The end point of Sorel's analysis of the culture of the eighteenth century is reached with this vow to expose and attack bourgeois culture as a source of corruption for the proletariat who, when seeking to form its own culture (whenever that time would come), would be tempted to annex that of the dominant class as the bourgeois had done before it.

That the workers should themselves be the instrument of their own freedom was certainly enshrined in the doctrine of Marx, what still remained to be ascertained was the role of the (bourgeois) intellectual, a question which dogged the early German revisionists i.e. Kautsky and the Bolshevists alike.

In the absence of an orthodoxy, Sorel's attitude

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arose from one interpretation among several of Marx's thought. His method of justifying his opposition to the bourgeois ideological and cultural tradition, by means of an analysis of class relationships, certainly came close in quality to anything ever produced by Lafargue in this field of research except that the notion of the class struggle is replaced by that of class emulation. Sorel did not show the bourgeoisie in conflict with the aristocracy, but rather collaborating until such times as the degeneracy of the nobility on the one hand, and a class consciousness of the bourgeoisie on the other, led to an inevitable takeover of power by the latter.

Like Marx, he believed that an artist while writing within the limitations of his own times, could provide a message for future generations simply by inserting himself into the great social currents of his time.

"Le créateur d'un système opère comme un artiste qui interprète avec une extrême liberté ce qu'il observe autour de lui; si ce système a des points d'attache suffisamment nombreux avec les idées courantes, il peut durer et devenir la doctrine favorite d'une génération ultérieure, qui y trouvera peut-être tout autre chose que ce qui avait plu aux contemporains. C'est sur cette adoption que se constitue le jugement définitif de l'histoire; ce jugement bouleverse très souvent, l'ordre des valeurs que les premiers disciples avaient attribuées aux diverses parties de la doctrine; il peut mettre au premier plan ce que ceux-ci avaient regardé comme secondaire"  

These ideas conditioned Sorel's view of literature. Thus he was able to point out that, Madame de Stael writing her famous essay on literature and social institutions (1800 c.f. above) although ostensibly engaged in a comparative study of national literatures, was actually formulating part of the bourgeois class consciousness which came into being twenty years later when this class "came of age" and had to conduct itself as the ruling class. When she was illustrating the existence of national genius in Germany and England, what she was really advocating was the necessity for a French national (republican) genius. Sorel found her work full of lessons of this type:

"Toutes les thèses nouvelles de ce livre se trouvent avoir été ainsi dominées par des conditions historiques, et c' est un fait intéressant à relever au point de vue marxiste." ¹

Unfortunately Sorel had an idealistic conception of Marxism which involved "un mystère fondamental" of reality and which prevented him from applying the dialectical method universally to all social and natural phenomena. Where Engels warned that the economic factor was not the only determinant force in the shaping of the superstructure and that between the base and superstructure there were many intermediary stages, Sorel went one step further by claiming that the matter was too complex and that to force a theory of cause and effect mechanistically

on to the situation would be to fall into charlatanism:

"Lorsqu'on procède à une investigation un peu approfondie de l'histoire, on perçoit que les choses présentent une complexité inextricable, que l'entendement ne saurait les analyser et les décrire sans y faire apparaître des contradictions insolubles; que la réalité demeure protégée par une obscurité que la philosophie respectera, si elle ne veut pas tomber dans le charlatanisme, le mensonge ou le roman. Un des grands avantages que présente la méthode marxiste (quand on l'entend bien) est de permettre le respect de ce mystère fondamental qu'une science frivole prétend écarter."

By assigning art, religion and philosophy as autonomous intellectual phenomena to a region of "pure and irreductable thought, Sorel was introducing an Hegelian interpretation into the basis/superstructure of Marxist theory.

"... il est manifeste qu'on ne saurait trouver des lois historiques de la production artistique. Si cela était possible on devrait pouvoir relier scientifiquement les actes du génie avec les conditions juridico-économiques d'un peuple; or il y a entre l'art et le droit trop d'intermédiaires et entre les stratifications successives trop de liberté pour qu'un lien rigide (comme serait un vrai) puisse traverser tout cet ensemble."  

Thirteen years later, in 1914, when Sorel had moved further from Marx and nearer to Bergson, he even abandoned the possibility of a Marxist (materialist) interpretation of history, art etc., without in the end inserting a metaphysical (ideological) conclusion:

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2 Sorel, Georges. La valeur sociale de l'art: conférence faite à l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes. Mai 1901, pp. 6-7 (published as a pamphlet).
"Les notions de développement des institutions, d'interdépendance des divers ordres de l'activité humaine (depuis l'économie jusqu'à l'art, à la religion, à la philosophie), de luttes de races ou de classes, qui ont renouvelé la manière de comprendre l'histoire, l'interprétation des documents et même le genre littéraire du récit, appartiennent incontestablement à la métaphysique.\(^1\)

No doubt Sorel was reacting to the economic determinism to which contemporary Marxists were apt to reduce the theory of the great master. He was particularly critical of Enrico Ferri then leader of the Italian socialist party who held that:

"Les conditions économiques-qui sont la résultante des énergies et des aptitudes ethniques agissant dans un milieu tellurique donné-son la base déterminante de toutes les manifestations morales juridiques, politiques de la vie humaine, individuelle et sociale.\(^2\)

That Marxists should claim that their method was capable of unveiling the mysteries of the creative processes of the individual artist was blasphemy to this fervent anarchist. Sorel did not fall back on the doctrine of the "typical" as a means of explaining genius since this would have meant reducing the individual genius to the Procrustean bed of the mediocre. At the same time he did not reject the historical explanation which uncovered the great ideological currents of an era and shed some light on the sociology of a work of art:

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\(^2\) Sorel, Georges. Les Illusions du Progrès, p. 3. (author's italics).
A comparison between Lafargue and Sorel reveals some interesting features of these early attempts to apply Marxist theory before the advent of a Leninist orthodoxy. Both men were working in a theoretical vacuum. Sorel made constant reference to the fact that Marx had given very little guidance as to the application of his dialectical and historical method and that subsequent theorists had done little to consolidate on existing theory; given this fact it is to their credit that individual idiosyncracies did not play too decisive a role in their research. Both men were propagandists for their different movements and as such used the Marxist analytical device as a means of justifying historically their ideological beliefs. Lafargue believed implicitly in the finite nature of his findings whereas Sorel recognised that his Marxism could only take him so far and that there came a point when the metaphysical had to be invoked; a recognition of the final ideological twist in the Marxist tail. Having admitted this, Sorel had no qualms about using Marxist theory in order to carry out a sociological enquiry for propaganda ends; his examination of eighteenth century culture and its links with the

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aristocracy and bourgeoisie is as "Marxist" as Lafargue's treatment of the nineteenth century and romanticism; it also served as a theoretical definition of the bourgeois condition for generations of revolutionary syndicalists.

Sorel refused to allow the individual works of art of individual artists to be reduced to a sociological formula but at the same time he agreed with the Marxist that a great work of art could be measured in terms of its meaningfulness to subsequent generations and its contradictions vis a vis its own times. To this Lafargue added aesthetic ingredients—form and content and the philosophical concept of "typicality"; Sorel made no contribution in this direction believing that aesthetics belonged to a non-materialist realm of human experience.

In conclusion it could be said that although Sorel limited his application of Marxist dialectics to the sociological, his systematic denigration of the bourgeoisie as a class of clerks supporting an essentially derived culture, coloured his work with distinctly more revolutionary tones than that of Lafargue who tended to separate his sociological analysis from his political pamphleteering. For the time being at least, the anarcho-syndicalists had "up-staged" the Marxist orthodoxy.

Culture for the People: Romain Rolland and Jean-Richard Bloch

The two major and complementary tendencies in French anarcho-syndicalist theory, characterised by Sorel and his
war of attrition waged against the bourgeois establishment and Pelloutier with his "bourses de travail" and vision of a working class culture, were absorbed and extended by the rising generation of young socialist revolutionaries at the turn of the century. Edouard Berth, for example followed implicitly the teachings of Sorel to the extent that his Méfaits des Intellectuels and La Fin d'une culture constituted a memorial to Sorel which enabled the latter’s theory to remain a living force in the inter-war period. The young Poitevin teacher, Jean-Richard Bloch, although also influenced by Sorel, was stimulated by the idea of proletarian culture and consequently followed that side of anarcho-syndicalist teaching identified with Pelloutier. Given the fact that there was no established theory by Pelloutier on this question, it was not surprising that Bloch should find inspiration in a writer whose heritage reached back to the theoretical foundations of anarcho-syndicalism i.e. to Proudhon, Michelet and 1848; Romain Rolland recognised the validity of Michelet’s theory that revolutionary culture should be based on the theatre and the people:

"Tous ensemble, mettez-vous simplement à marcher devant le peuple. Donnez-lui l'enseignement souverain, qui fut toute l'éducation des glorieuses cités antiques: un théâtre vraiment du peuple. Et sur ce théâtre, montrez-lui sa propre légende, ses

1 Berth, Edouard. Les Méfaits des Intellectuels, 1913 (cf. above)
The theme of "rénovation nationale" became one of the passwords of the anti-establishment libertarian intellectuals of the turn of the century whose recourse to "la jeune race" of the uncultivated, unspoiled proletariat as a source of regeneration of a lost humanitarian and universal ideal, was as extreme as any other intellectual stance adopted at this time (decadence, pessimism, formalism etc.). Rolland's objective was not to bring the People to power, but to tap the power of the People for a mightier and nobler cause:

"Nous ne mettons pas la gloire de l'esprit humain au service du peuple, nous appelons le peuple, comme nous, au service de cette gloire".

In his discussion of the nature of a possible proletarian theatre Rolland inspects the existing theatrical tradition and considers whether any of this should be retained; his comments on classical, romantic and foreign drama reveal (as in the case of Sorel) the principles of his critical theory. Referring to XVIIth century classical French tragedy, he has no hesitation in relating it to the ruling caste:

"C'est un art politique, fait pour un public d'hommes d'Etat, de patriotes, de théoriciens du

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gouvernement ou de la révolution. Il reflète comme on l'a dit, la génération de grands ambitieux, que matérièrent non sans peine Richelieu et Mazarin, "ces âmes fortes et dures", dont la passion dominante était de gouverner et qui, en pensée, parfois en action, essayant de toutes les formes politiques, et raisonnant sur toutes, contribuèrent à l'élaboration de la puissante machine d'État du XVIIe siècle".

In his discussion on foreign drama, Rolland pointed out that:

"Tout nous sépare de Shakespeare: le temps et la race à la fois".

There are enough similar allusions to the criteria of time race and place to situate the "normalien" Rolland firmly in the positivist tradition of Taine. There is nothing of Marx in his work and only the most tenuous links with Sorel. However he firmly believed in the principle of self help (to which the syndicalists could subscribe) and also in the emancipation of the proletariat prior to the creation of a proletarian culture:

"Vous voulez un art du peuple? Commencez par avoir un peuple, un peuple qui ait l'esprit assez libre pour en jouir, un peuple qui ait des loisirs, que n'écrasent pas la misère, le travail sans répit, un peuple que n'abrutissent pas toutes les superstitions, les fanatismes de droite et de gauche, un peuple maître de soi, et vainqueur du combat qui se livre aujourd'hui. Faust l'a dit: Au commencement, est l'Action."

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This militant attitude plus the realistic way in which Rolland described the practical difficulties of founding a genuinely proletarian theatre found a ready disciple in Jean-Richard Bloch. Bloch’s response to Rolland’s call to action was contained in the founding of a radical literary review, *Effort Libre* in 1910 virtually single handed. From a modest first edition of some twenty-six copies, this little provincial review soon became known throughout France and attracted the attention of such pillars of the periodical establishment as *Le Mercure de France*. The outbreak of war in 1914 put an end to this significant venture into literary criticism as indeed it tolled the knell of the revolutionary syndicalism from which it drew much of its inspiration. By the end of its four years of publication it was able to boast the collaboration of a goodly number of intellectuals who were either already part of the cultural scene or were destined to become so in the inter-war period. Among those contributing were: Romain Rolland, René Arcos, Georges Duhammel, Jules Romains, Valéry Larbaud, P-J. Jouve, Jacques Mesnil, Roger Martin du Gard. Of those who were to become prominent in connection with the post-war proletarian movement or with the communist party, one could mention: Marcel Cohen, Augustin Hamon, Jean-Marc Bernard, G. Chennevière, Luc Durtain, Francis Jourdain and Henri Guilbeaux. It is significant too that in 1913, after becoming what Bloch describes as a "kind of intellectual
co-operative", certain syndicalist names come to the fore, champions of the post-war proletarian literary movement, within the editorial board of the review: Charles Albert, Léon Bazalgette, Marcel Martinet, Louis Nazzi, André Spire, Gaston Thiesson and Charles Vildrac.

To follow the progress of this modest but significant review is to trace the evolution of anarcho-syndicalist cultural theory as it is fed into certain intellectual strata of the revolutionary left in the immediate pre World War I period.

What goals did 1'Effort Libre set itself in 1910?

"L'Effort Libre avait été fondé dans le but de décrire la société actuelle de l'extérieur. Cette revue avait entrepris de convaincre les artistes et les honnêtes gens que le mal dont ils se plaignaient commençait beaucoup plus tôt qu'ils ne supposaient - qu'il commençait, en réalité, avec l'acceptation de la structure sociale. (.........) Nous nous étions donné pour tâche d'analyser cette structure sociale de telle sorte que l'artiste vit clairement qu'elle reposait sur des forces dont l'objet était de nier son propre idéal et de contrarier sa propre impulsion. Car l'idéal de l'artiste est dirigé dans le sens du dépassement héroïque de la personnalité; son impulsion est avant toute chose dynamique, créatrice et désincarnée; l'art est la générosité d'un peuple; il mesure sa force de don, ses richesses inemployées, l'efficacité du refus qu'il oppose à la servitude.

Voilà pourquoi 1'Effort Libre prétendait être une revue de civilisation. Sachant qu'où l'art est menacé la société l'est aussi, où l'art est malade la société est mourante, les rédacteurs de cette revue tentaient de replacer le problème de la critique littéraire sur ses bases véritables, ses bases sociales." ¹

¹Bloch, Jean-Richard. Carnaval est mort. p. 15. Gallimard. Paris 1920. n.d. The above work is composed of articles taken from 1'Effort Libre by the author in an attempt to give an idea of its development and assess its importance.
Later Bloch summed up the results of the analysis undertaken by L'Effort Libre, revealing a sober and realistic appreciation of the effect of the class struggle on society and art:

"Deux classes en lutte: une classe de producteurs, irréligieux, préoccupés de questions professionnelles, travaillés par des idées syndicalistes de guerre sociale; - une classe bourgeoise, fidèle aux formes extérieures du culte, mais fractionnée en une infinité de groupements hostiles, attachés les uns à la restauration de veilles formes politiques, les autres à la poursuite de stipulations pacifiques avec le peuple.

Ajoutez que la culture artistique (qu'il ne faut pas confondre avec le goût, mais qui est indispensable au développement du goût), manque dans le peuple qui en aurait l'emploi, surabonde dans la bourgeoisie qui n'en a que faire.

Aussi bien constatons-nous que celle-ci n'est pas en état d'imposer à cette culture une direction précise. Le chaos moral où elle se débat entraîne l'art à des compromis qui l'anémissent, ou à des exercises de virtuosité qui le ridiculisent."

Thus Bloch reformulates Sorel's conception of eighteenth century culture with the dominant class authors of the dominant culture and the subordinate class unable to constitute a culture which would reflect its own class essence. The chaos to which Bloch refers is the counterpart to his theory of civic and cultural harmony, for where in the first instance class strife and disorder lead to stratification of culture, a united society \(^2\) produces an appropriately homogeneous culture:


\(^2\) Bloch uses Sorel's concept of "myth".
"Mais si nous examinons les conditions du milieu où sont éclorées les grandes œuvres d'art d'un peuple, nous constatons qu'elles sont toujours nées en des périodes d'unité morale. Unité de croyances religieuses, unité de mythes sociaux ou nationaux, comme dans la Grèce homérique, l'Athènes du Ve siècle, le XIIIe siècle français, le XVe siècle italien, l'Angleterre de la renais-
ance, la France de Louis XIV. Unité constituée par tout un peuple confondu dans les mêmes aspirations sentimentales, ou bien unité d'une classe dominante qui établit sa tranquilité politique et son luxe sur l'asservissement économique des autres classes".2

This essentially Hegelian conception of social harmony and its effect on artistic production links Bloch at once with Taine and Marx. The Marxists saw the question in terms of (a) social harmony (e.g. Ancient Greece) or (b) social ascendancy in which a social class may be said to be revolutionary (e.g. the French bourgeoisie from the Revolution until 1848). The conditions described above, in Bloch's opinion, are those most likely to produce a classical art tradition, but if indeed chaos reigns and two classes are engaged in a struggle for supremacy, then before the ideal can be attained (both in its social sense and its artistic expression), one class must emerge the victor.

The artist and his art cannot remain indifferent to this struggle and must take up arms in support of that class which champions freedom, in this case, the people.

Following the old Proudhonian concept, art could only gain:

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1 Bloch uses Sorel's concept of "myth".
"Or nous traversons un de ces hiatus du bonheur humain. Notre équilibre économique et moral (le premier déterminant le second) est rompu. Comme une ombre dans la nuit, la société tatonne et cherche à se ressaisir.

L'art ne doit pas ignorer ce combat. S'il le fait, il risque d'accumuler contre lui toutes les méfiances. Je vais même plus loin: l'ignorant, il dédaigne la source la plus ardente de tragique qui s'offre à lui. Il tourne le dos au principe de sa propre renaissance. Il trahit ceux qui attendent de lui un secours; mais, par un retour vengeur, il se trahit soi-même.

Il n'y a donc pour notre art qu'une ressource: le rendre révolutionnaire. Y décrêter la levée en masse et la conscription des énergies. Une société s'effondre, une Société s'élève; l'art ne peut s'accroupir dans les bas fonds du Marais. Il faut qu'il soit de la Montagne ou de l'Emigration."

An interesting feature of Bloch's theory of the nature of the artist's commitment to the Revolution in the light of his eventual reservations on socialist realism in France in the 1930's, is his statement that the artist cannot be dictated to:

"Nous ne songeons pas à édicter les règles scolastiques d'une esthétique nouvelle; nous ne songeons pas à cantonner l'artiste dans un seul cadre de préoccupations; nous ne songeons pas à rejeter de l'art tout ce qui nous apparaît pas comme social, ni dire au poète: désormais, il faut que tu sois Whitman, - au peintre: peins des ouvriers et des gares.

Que le poète soit selon sa nature, le peintre selon la sienne. Il est même possible que la plus grande oeuvre d'art de ce temps doive être réalisée par un homme ennemi de nos idées."
This idea conforms with "l'esprit objectif" described by Marx in which the artist may illustrate one set of values unconsciously while attempting to illustrate a priori theses; thus Balzac the Royalist and Catholic, objectively contributed towards a revolutionary consciousness through his critique of bourgeois society.

Another feature which links Bloch's theory with that of Marx, is the syndicalist conviction that all social activity is, or should, be linked with the work situation. Following along the lines of Marx's theory that work educates the senses, Bloch discusses the evolution of poetry which he sees as something intimately linked with work, while prose remains more distant:

"De par ses origines historiques, aussi bien que par son existence populaire, le vers est le moyen d'expression le plus immédiate de l'homme. Il est, bien plus que la prose, la forme orale de la pensée humaine. L'humanité a su chanter avant d'avoir appris à parler.

Tout devait faire, de l'expression cadencée, la première née. Besoin mnémotechnique d'abord. La prose est le fait d'un peuple qui sait lire et n'a pas besoin de retenir. Le vers suppléé au livre imprimé pour le moins autant que font la sculpture, la fresque ou le vitrail. Il enferme dans sa cadence un sens concis que la cadence aide à retrouver. (.........) Tout travail manuel se décompose en cadences successives. Et ces cadences permettent de retrouver le fil des opérations nécessités par le travail. Le vers est donc le travail chanté. La prose ne sert qu'à l'injonction ou dans les cas de surprise."

Of course the predilection for an art form based on its proximity to the work situation does not exist in Marx, but the point at which the syndicalist and Marxist theory part company illustrates very well the self-imposed limitations of the former. Writing in 1913, Bloch indicated that he, and his review were passing through a crisis of development at the centre of which was the growing conviction that Sorel's theory was deficient and limiting and that the internal quarrels of French socialism (between the C.G.T. and the Socialist Party) illustrated a chronic unreadiness for any kind of concerted effort towards the goal of revolution:

"On se souvient de ce qui était la base dogmatique de l'Effort à ses débuts: l'admirable perspective d'une reconstruction de la société par ses éléments neufs et encore sains m'avait séduit comme elle en a séduit bien d'autres. Les sophismes de Sorel - les plus féconds de tous les sophismes modernes - n'avaient pas été pour rien dans le mouvement de passion d'où l'Effort était né.

Jeter bas une société pourrie, disperser les idéologies sur lesquelles reposait la morale de la jouissance, lui substituer une civilisation qui aurait pour origine, pour but, pour loi, la morale du producteur, avec ce qu'elle comporte de nécessité, d'ordre, d'équilibre et d'amour, c'avait été mon rêve. Je ne dirais pas qu'il ne le soit resté.

Mais j'accompagnais alors Sorel jusqu'à ses plus extrêmes conclusions. Je n'avais pas apperçu le point où sa logique bifurque et se fourvoie. Je répétais avec lui qu'il y va de l'avenir, de construire autour du peuple des producteurs (le prolétariat organise en syndicats) une sorte de muraille de Chine, de telle façon qu'aucune des idéologies menteuses du monde bourgeois ne vienne souiller la morale en formation du monde prolétarien."^{1}

This awareness of the intransigence and idealism of his youthful ambitions was largely precipitated by a three month stay in Paris in 1911 where he made discoveries of a cultural as well as political nature:

"Ce que je croyais être le premier à dire, d'autres l'avaient dit avant moi, sans plus de fruit.

Là où je croyais la place vide et criaïais au vertige, je trouvais d'obscur et admirables travailleurs. La poésie moderne, que j'estimais morte, était au contraire l'objet d'une poussée pleine de vie.

Je découvris que les cas étaient moins simples qu'ils ne paraissaient, vus de Poitiers.

La prose et le théâtre n'étaient pas bornés aux resucées de Dumas ou de Maupassant.


The policy of l'Effort Libre changed as a consequence of this revelation; Bloch now felt that there were elements among the bourgeois intelligentsia who were able and prepared to work for the kind of society he believed in, i.e. one from which the tension of the class struggle had been removed and all men worked together for the common good. This aim would best be realised by a two pronged assault towards a revolutionary situation, the

first coming from the workers themselves and the second from the progressive elements of the bourgeoisie:

"Tandis que nos camarades ouvriers, dans leurs journaux et dans la vaillante petite Vie Ouvrière, jettent les bases des entreprises prolétariennes futures, l'Effort Libre collaborera à sa façon à la transformation qui vient".

The role of l'Effort Libre was to be that of a rallying point for revolutionary opinion. a role which it maintained until the outbreak of war in 1914.

The breakout from the limitations of Sorelian ideology with its predominately negative complexion paved the way for the re-emergence of Marxist ideas from the body of syndicalist inspired theory. The evolution of Jean-Richard Bloch from syndicalism to communism in the 1930s is not surprising when one considers that the idealism of the front against fascism was presented to the French intellectual as a struggle for the defence of culture and the defence of the revolution to be conducted on an international basis, i.e. "ralliement". But this modification in time and in personalities was a long way off in 1914, in the meantime syndicalism had successfully projected to a large working class and certain intellectual public, a fusion of traditional French socialist and Marxist ideas. Between the turn of the century and the

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outbreak of the First World War, the revolutionary syndicalists, and those intellectuals influenced by their theory, did much to keep alive the idea of revolutionary literature and art; their concept of self-help in all construction of proletarian culture was simply the translation on the cultural level of the political objective of worker control. It was precisely because anarchist cultural theory was an integral part of the anarchist credo and not a gratuitous frill that it was able to take such a strong line against bourgeois forms of popular education, which were viewed as a class device employed by the bourgeoisie to keep the workers within the system. The revolutionary syndicalist concept of culture was anti-bourgeois and pro-revolutionary.

The syndicalist point of view differed from that of the Guesdistes and the democratic socialists who believed that the workers were in no position to form their own culture and ill equipped to absorb the non-proletarian culture which they saw as being universal and above the class struggle, but thanks to the tradition of class critique of which Sorel provided a sterling example, there was no question in the minds of the syndicalists of a universal culture unless that culture was founded in the reality of the universal proletarian condition, i.e. in the work process.

Unfortunately at this time in which literacy was only beginning to establish itself among the masses in France, there were practically no workers writing; this situation did not change until the inter-war period when
a group of novelists and poets who made their working life
the subject of their art were able to proclaim the advent
of proletarian art and literature in France. In the
meantime the industrial proletariat of France sought its
reflection and expression in the naturalist novel,
especially that of Zola while intellectuals from all
classes showed an interest in the potential of the workers
to produce a new art or, as in the case of Rolland, to
lend new life to the old. The revolt of Romain Rolland
which involved the rejection of his class in his search
for new values (Gide's revolt of the same period is not
unrelated), has to be contrasted with the quest of
Jean-Richard Bloch whose willingness to view the problem
from the point of view of the class struggle rather than
that bourgeois dissident experiencing an existential need
to transcend this class. Undoubtedly Bloch owed much to
Rolland whom he admired, but he owed as much again to
Sorel who gave him his Marxist perspective on society. It
was this same Marxist perspective which brought Bloch to
recognise the hopelessness of the anarcho-syndicalist
struggle as a purely working class affair, a point of view
which, by the Russian revolution, had already won
adherents within the C.G.T., notably Monatte and Rosmer.
Thus the Marxist element contained in revolutionary
syndicalism did provide a bridge for Marxist cultural
theory in France between that period when Lafargue ceased
writing on these matters (before 1902) and the Russian
revolution, indeed the first intellectuals to align themselves with the IIIrd International and the French Communist Party based their theory not on that of Lenin or any other international Marxist authority, but on Sorel and the traditional French current of revolutionary socialism which had found its most recent expression in anarcho-syndicalism.

Clarté

The effect of the Great War on the French and international socialist movement was dramatic and far-reaching. All over Europe workers and their leaders rallied to the patriotic cries of the national governments exploding the myth cherished for so long by the syndicalists to the effect that the workers alone could avert the capitalist war.

The French socialist movement was particularly demoralised by the assassination of Jaurès on the eve of hostilities in 1914 which deprived the Left of its most ardent opponent to the impending capitalist war. On the other hand, had Jaurès survived, he may have been tempted to adopt the attitude of Guesde and the other representatives of the Left who argued that national solidarity would mean that the war could be won so much quicker and working class suffering brought to an end in a minimum period of time. The fact that Guesde and other militants entered the war-time cabinet meant that opposition to the war became a minority activity.
The moral victories of the war were won by the small band of French and German syndicalists who attempted to obtain concerted working class action across frontiers to bring hostilities to an end. The "Zimmerwaldiens" who took their name from the Swiss meeting place (arranged by Italian militants) were obliged to conclude that their efforts were in vain but at the same time they were forced into a process of reassessment of the insufficiencies of their pre-war theory and practice. One of the major results of this review of principles was the tendency to draw nearer to the kind of political action advocated by Lenin with whom they came into personal contact prior to the Russian Revolution. This influence had much to do with the alignment of some important syndicalist personalities with the newly formed French communist party of 1920, e.g. Monatte and Rosmer.

Included in the new tendency of the Zimmerwaldiens were two prominent syndicalists who had strong cultural interests, Henri Guilbeaux (who subsequently founded the literary-political review Demain) and Marcel Martinet who was to become literary editor of l'Humanité in the early twenties.

Thus syndicalist thinking on cultural matters, although still fervently faithful to the all out attack on the bourgeoisie as advocated by Sorel, was beginning to consider Marxist-Leninist possibilities by the end of the Great War especially as they manifested themselves in the Soviet Union.
The interest generated in the left as a result of the revolution in Russia and elsewhere in Europe is reflected in the writings of Jean-Richard Bloch. In the following introduction to a series of essays in which he was searching a definition of his times, Bloch comments on the excitement created by the prospect of revolution in the West:

"Cette série d'Essais a été interrompue avant que nous ayons pu leur donner tout le développement que nous avions rêvé. Mais ils ont été suivis d'un certain nombre d'événements qui ne démentent pas nos humbles anticipations. Ces autres essais auxquels je fais allusion sont: la Révolution Russe, la Révolution Hongroise, la Révolution Autrichienne et le début des Révolutions Allemandes.

La dernière guerre elle-même, si on ne la détache pas de ses conséquences acquises et de ses conséquences probables, est déjà tout autre chose qu'une guerre; elle est à sa façon une révolution.

Avec elle et à cause d'elle un grand espoir est né; il ne s'étendra plus. Les peuples ont cru entendre une voix qui s'était tue depuis longtemps celle qui dit: Lazare sortez dehors, et dont un écho a plus tard murmuré: Les hommes naissent libres et égaux. Comme autrefois, une nouvelle a parcouru les airs: elle annonce que Lazare ne doit plus rentrer dans sa tombe, ni des hommes redevenir esclaves d'autres hommes."

Bloch was typical of the pre-war revolutionary socialist who felt the immanence of revolution in Europe in 1919, but there was a completely new generation of militants created by the war who had not known the pre-war situation and who were also keen to align themselves with the forces of change; some of these found their way into the pacifist movements which sprung up at the end of the war notably

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that organised by Henri Barbusse author of the best selling and highly critical anti-war novel, *Le Feu*. Barbusse was anxious to spread the base of his organisation of pacifist war veterans to enable the establishment of the "International of Intellectuals" advocated by Romain Rolland during his exile in Switzerland; this desire was realised when Barbusse founded the Clarté movement in 1919.

Among the younger French intellectuals who rallied to Barbusse, first of all in the context of the war veteran's association and then to the Clarté movement, were Raymond Lefebvre and Paul Vaillant-Couturier, both of whom were to gain distinction in the annals of the French Communist Party. Lefebvre was drowned in 1920 returning from a mission to the Soviet Union, but his ideals and principles were upheld by the small group of ardent young revolutionaries who persuaded Barbusse in 1921 to allow them to found a review to be called Clarté in which they could voice their opinions. Barbusse granted this request, relieved that this vocal, and at times dissident faction of the Clarté movement, would now be able to find its separate identity within a review.

This identity soon established itself as being communist. Vaillant-Couturier, Jean Bernier, Marcel Fourrier,

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1 The movement attracted an impressive list of international personalities willing to have their names associated with the venture: Georges Duhamel, Anatole France, Charles Gide, Blasco-Ibáñez, Jules Romains, Severine, Upton Sinclair, Steinlen, H.G. Wells and Stefan Zweig.
Magdeleine Marx and Georges Michæl, all openly proclaimed their support for the newly constituted French Party and the IIIrd International, but their revolutionary fervour also owed much to the French tradition, especially that of the worker dominated anarcho-syndicalist current.

The review Clarte\(^1\) therefore although not officially linked to the P.C.F., and being a cultural-political venture, offers an excellent opportunity to gauge the penetration of Soviet cultural policy in France and the extent to which French communist intellectuals were capable of producing their own.

One of the first major themes to be broached by the review was that of the nature of culture in a post-revolutionary society and in particular the possibility of creating a proletarian culture which would parallel the political dictatorship of the proletariat as laid down by Marxist revolutionary theory.

Georges Michæl writing a series of articles on this subject felt that with the war, bourgeois culture had

\(^1\)It would be appropriate in the context of the foundation of Clarte to mention the review Europe founded two years later in 1923 under the patronage of Romain Rolland. Jean-Richard Bloch identified himself with this current which tended to reflect the humanist and universalistic aspects of the pre-war socialist tradition (upheld in the review by Léon Bazalgette and Pierre Abraham) and consequently less attracted by the more direct and violent policies of the IIIrd International. This review eventually fell under communist influence as the threat of fascism grew in the West bringing Jean-Richard Bloch once more into the revolutionary camp by the mid 1930s.
received a death blow and that events permitted the examination of the possibility of proletarian culture:

"La culture des sociétés féodales supposait la tradition perpétuée de chaque caste étanche; la culture intellectuelle bourgeoise se fonde sur la vulgarisation scientifique et sur la raison individuelle, partout identique comme sont identiques tous les intérêts capitalistes; la culture prolétarienne de l'avenir se fondera sur l'instinct de classe, essence de la lutte révolutionnaire."¹

Was it then possible for a bourgeois intellectual to participate in the formation of a proletarian culture? It would seem that the answer was in the affirmative providing the intellectual cut all links with his bourgeois milieu and objectively tasted the rigours of the class struggle by sharing the life of the proletariat; the hegemony of the proletariat was one of the fundamental principles of revolutionary conduct recognised by Lenin to find a ready reiteration in the columns of Clarté:

"... il apparaîtra de plus en plus que les intellectuels ne peuvent adhérer sincèrement au parti prolétarien que si leurs conditions matérielles d'existence les retraitent de la bourgeoisie, et s'ils font l'expérience personnelle de la lutte des classes."²

The question of how this principle would affect the production of a revolutionary literary movement was first discussed in the review by Victor Serge, Clarté's cultural correspondent in the Soviet Union. The tenor of his first reports on the effect of the Revolution on the culture of

²Ibid.
the country revealed his disappointment first of all with the minimal contribution of the pre-revolutionary cultural establishment (apart from Gorky) and secondly, on the slow progress being made in the domain of proletarian culture:

"... il me reste à dire deux mots du Proletcult. ¹
Ses poètes ont publié une vingtaine de plaquettes. Plusieurs (Kirilov, Alexandrovsky, Obradovitch) sont probablement appelés à laisser une œuvre digne de mémoire. Dans l'ensemble pourtant, leur essai de création d'une poésie prolétarienne a surtout produit des vers banals, dans lesquels l'usine, la cheminée d'usine, la machine, la serpe et le marteau, l'étoile rouge sont autant de clichés conventionnels. Les poètes du Proletcult² ont-ils trop circonscrit leur horizon? Je suis enclin à l'admettre."³

Serge's reservations as to the narrow remit accorded to the Soviet proletarian writers was tragically prophetic with regard to future cultural policy in the U.S.S.R. Perhaps his anarchist background caused him to react against what at this time of post-revolutionary cultural innovation seemed to represent an unacceptable measure of control and limitation on working class writers. As far as the possibility of encouraging proletarian revolutionary writing in France was concerned, the main stimulus came from abroad. The first lesson in Marxist-Leninist

¹Proletcult. Organisation set up by the commissariat for culture composed of cultural shock troops whose task it was to spread literacy and lay the foundations of a proletarian culture among the workers and peasants. One of its primary tasks was to institute newspapers with worker correspondents (rabcors). The greatest period of its influence was during the years 1921-1929 (i.e. during the first national economic plans.)

²Ibid.

criticism in literature and the first indication that a revolutionary literature could be produced in France related to the French situation came from Leon Trotsky's criticism of Marcel Martinet's play, La Nuit. Trotsky, who contributed several important articles to Clarté on cultural theory, provided on this occasion a set-piece of contemporary Marxist criticism. Trotsky's criticism attempts to underline the illustrative value of the work of this syndicalist whose contacts with the proletariat have sharpened his perception of the class struggle. In adopting this approach, Trotsky shows himself to be in perfect harmony with the Marxist principle of militant criticism which not only seeks to expose the deficiencies of class positions opposed to communism, but the positive attributes of those features which illustrate communism. What then were the characteristics of Martinet's work which he held to be acceptable from the Marxist point of view?

The play is set in the turmoil of the Great War, its plot a pact made by ordinary French and German soldiers to bring the slaughter to an end by mutual agreement. The Germans arrest their Kaiser and surrender him to the French High Command. The Kaiser has little difficulty in convincing the officer commanding the French forces that it would be in the interest of their class to frustrate

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the objective of the rank and file which could only be to institute a dictatorship of the proletariat. The French G.O.C. convinced by the Kaiser's arguments, is assisted in averting the revolt by the social democrats in the government of national unity. The social democratic element among the front line soldiers reveals itself to be naive and is easily persuaded by those socialists in the government to betray its revolutionary comrades.

So much for the tragedy of the French left, but there is at least one ray of hope contained in the play emanating from a working class mother who senses instinctively the significance of the events. Realising that for the time being at least the cause is lost, she nevertheless charges her youngest and only surviving son to carry on the struggle into the next generation.

Trotsky immediately fixes on the "typical" nature of characters and action. Each character embodies a tendency—democrats, pacifists, anarchists, syndicalists, bogus bourgeois revolutionaries, individualists, poets, idealists, all purveying the illusion of revolution to a gullible working class. According to Trotsky Martinet succeeds in demonstrating admirably thanks to a blend of art and reality, the necessity of purging the working class movement of such undesirable elements.

"C'est de cela que nous parle le drame de Martinet, dans sa langue virile qui associe la plus haute vérité de la vie, la vérité de l'histoire, à la vérité de l'art. De par la force impérieuse des images
artistiques le drame exige de l'avant-garde prolétarienne son épuration intérieure, son affermissement dans l'unité de la discipline."

In fact the year 1923 saw the beginning of the process of the "bolchevisation" of the French party; the types of deviationist, revisionist, opportunist etc. portrayed by Martinet and highlighted by Trotsky were exactly those prescribed by the orthodoxy of the International. Martinet himself was deemed by Trotsky to have come from an impeccable source of authentic French socialism, i.e. the syndicalist school, but the insistence of Trotsky on the combination of artistic probity and ideological insight being essential to the production of "good" art is an interesting feature of his criticism since the source of Martinet's aesthetic education is revealed to be none other than Romain Rolland. In the early twenties, a form of deviationism had been identified by the Leninist orthodoxy as having its source in the conciliatory idealism of Romain Rolland; the political aloofness of "rollandisme" which debarred direct intervention in political matters was considered to represent a dangerous bourgeois tendency likely to undermine the revolutionary intent of the working class movement. Romain Rolland's attitude during the Great War was contrasted with that of Martinet and Guilbeaux and the other Zimmerwaldiens, nevertheless there was something positive in Rolland's preparedness to oppose his

1 Trotsky, Léon. "Le Drame du prolétariat français" Clarté. 1st Oct. 1922. (Trotsky's italics.)
bourgeois milieu on certain matters. Perhaps it was for this reason that Trotsky felt that the art of Romain Rolland contained the essence of a revolutionary stance yet to be developed, i.e. a form which hinted at a worthwhile content. In any case, Martinet had married both in his work avoiding the dangers of Rolland's humanism by refining his personal experience and elevating it to an expression of the typical.

"Martinet est un communiste formé à l'école du groupe syndicaliste de la Vie Ouvrière, c'est-à-dire à la bonne école. Comme artiste, Martinet est passé par l'école non moins bonne de Romain Rolland. Par conséquent, on ne saurait attendre ou redouter de sa part des œuvres de pure propagande ou, comme aiment à dire les esthètes, de "vulgaire propagande", dans lesquelles la politique adopterait par simple accident le cadre dramatique ou la forme du vers.

Marcel Martinet est profondément psychologue. Il fait passer tous les problèmes de notre grande époque, en les y chauffant subjectivement, par sa conscience personnelle ou, plus exactement, c'est à travers son moi personnel, subjectif, individuel qu'il trouve la voie vers le général et l'universel. C'est par là qu'il est artiste.

Mais si Martinet a été à l'école de Rolland, il a dépassé moralement, cette école. C'est ce qui lui a permis de devenir communiste."¹

The fact that Martinet's work had attained the expression of the typical, although distilled from a subjective source, rendered it undoubtedly realist in character:

"Ce drame est-il réaliste? Oui, il y a un fond réaliste, dans l'ensemble comme dans chaque

¹Trotsky, Léon. Art. cit.
personnage en particulier. Les personnages vivent, mais à travers leur vie individuelle, à chaque étape du drame, c'est la vie de leur classe, de leur pays, c'est la vie de l'humanité contemporaine qui transparait. Au-dessus d'eux se condensent, invisibles, les forces sociales."¹

Another portentous name to appear in the columns of Clarté, was that of Georg Lukács, writing from Vienna. Criticising the novel Le Bourgeois, by the German working class novelist Léonhard Frank, Lukács follows the same line of class criticism as illustrated by Trotsky in his treatment of La Nuit. Lukács, however, sets out from the negative example illustrating the dangers which can beset the work of the unwary and uncritical revolutionary artist. Writing from Austria, Lukács was only too well placed to know of the insidious infiltration of Freudian ideas into the realms of materialism; his criticism in this instance may be said to have had the immediate goal of exposing this danger.

In this case the author, Léonhard Frank, falls short of the requirements of a truly revolutionary writer and this despite his proletarian background.

Frank had taken for his subject the dilemmas of a young bourgeois dissatisfied with his parasitical existence but lacking in the courage to throw in his lot with the proletariat. Frank chose a first person narrative and in so-doing, attempts to describe the situation from

¹Trotsky, Léon. Art. cit.
the bourgeois point of view using techniques more akin to Freud than Marxist materialism. Another serious shortcoming in Lukács' opinion, was that no proletarian alternative was offered by way of a solution.

"Car non seulement Léonhard Frank pose le problème du point de vue bourgeoise, mais encore il n'a pas su opposer, contraste vivant au naufrage de l'existence bourgeoise la valeur positive du mouvement ouvrier."

This unfortunate tendency in so many revolutionary writers to stress the decline of the bourgeoisie while neglecting to highlight the progress being made by the proletariat was symptomatic of a lack of political development in many intellectuals of the left. Frank was a member of the communist party and although he may have acted politically like a communist, he certainly did not write like one:

"Frank se sépare avec netteté individuellement et politiquement de la plupart des hommes de cette génération; il aperçoit plus clairement qu'eux le But et les Voies, Mais ce n'est qu'en politique qu'il a cette clarté de vues purement abstrait. Quant aux représentations concrètes et partant esthétiques, il n'a pas dépassé les éléments avancés de cette intelligence allemande qui a, dans les dernières années, inauguré le mouvement expressioniste. Et c'est un très curieux signe

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2 The generation referred to was that of those writers whose revolutionary ardour was expressed more in terms of their hatred of the bourgeoisie than on a rational view of the class struggle.

3 Ibid.
The line expressed by both Trotsky and Lukács was in accordance with Leninist principles and reflected to the letter, the policy of the International. Literature and art has an ideological role to play by illustrating and underlining the contradictions introduced into society by the class struggle, contradictions which are also to be seen in the works of communist artists whose communism has not yet taken over their whole being remaining at the stage of abstraction. The truly communist artist (Martinet) possesses a Marxist concept of history which enables him to express a coherent world view and interpret the contradictions of the society he lives in. The personal experience of the effects of these contradictions (notably in the class struggle) provide a subjective base for artistic expression, which although individual in origin, rises above itself to an expression of the typical. Content, therefore depends on a correct analysis of the historical situation which provides the framework of the work of art.

The critique of form contained in the two articles might appear at first sight to be contradictory, in the first instance, Martinet is congratulated by Trotsky for

\[1\] Lukács, George. Art. cit.
having adopted the (bourgeois) artistic style of Rolland and Frank is condemned by Lukács for having adopted the (bourgeois) form of the expressionists. This apparent contradiction reveals another of Lenin's principles that there are elements in the bourgeoisie which can be won to the cause of the proletariat and that the bourgeoisie cannot be viewed as a homogenous bloc as, for example, by Lafargue, who made no difference. The "humanisme égoïste" of Rolland is considered to be much nearer to the communist cause than the aberrations of the Freudian expressionists.

Thus both in dealing with form and content, the ideological factor prevails making for a tight disciplined critical methodology dependent for the most part on current party teaching.

These two articles came, significantly, from the outside and from international Marxists of some standing, to what extent did the young intellectuals of Clarté adopt or adapt these principles in their own work within the review?

Perhaps the best opportunity of assessing the degree of penetration of the principles outlined above is provided by the theoretical work of the young theatre and cinema critic, Léon Moussinac.

Léon Moussinac published a series of articles on scenery and production in the theatre and also copious notes on the establishment of a possible socialist
approach to cinema criticism and production. In 1925 the bulk of his writing on the cinema was published in book form (Naissance du Cinéma).

In an article which surveyed the contribution of artists to stage production, Moussinac came to the conclusion that in general attempts by artists to create an art from this aspect of the theatre had been largely at the expense of the theatre as a whole. From the theories of Pierre Quillard which dispensed with scenery and props (la parole crée le décor comme le reste), to the highest expression of naturalism as contained in the work of Stanislavsky and Meyerhold, whom Moussinac regarded as the greatest innovators in modern theatrical production, to those aberrations of naturalist theory which required literal representation (e.g. real meat in a butcher's shop), it was clear to him that none of these had succeeded in responding fully to the requirements of modern drama.

"De tant d'efforts divers, de tant d'ingéniosité, d'intelligence ou de talent employés, que résulte-t-il? L'expérience prouve que pour avoir fourni à la scène d'incontestables éléments de beauté, l'oeuvre des peintres proprement dits n'a pas réussi à renouveler le Théâtre. Bien des contributions nouvelles ont perfectionnée l'ancienne tradition, en ces années assez confuses, mais aucune n'a apporté à la scène ce par quoi la scène créera son style, un style qui sera le reflet des aspirations de l'âme et de la poésie modernes".1

The reaction of the masses to formalism in theatrical

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production had been simply to abandon the theatre for the music hall where an age old tradition of immediate rapport between performer and public had been maintained.

As in the other arts, the theatre still had to find the formulae which expressed not only modern life, but modern life under capitalism:

"Nous sommes justement amenés, au théâtre comme dans les autres modes d'expression, à découvrir des formules d'art plus hautes où les forces diverses de la civilisation contemporaine trouveront à s'exalter, où notre esprit éperdu du mouvement et de vie satisfera ses exigences. Autrement dit: il ne s'agit plus de se griser de perfection technique, de céder à la réduction du goût en soi, mais bien d'arracher les oeillères de la spéculation systématique et de créer l'âme dans l'ensemble. La technique et le goût ne sont que les serviteurs de l'auteur dramatique et pour être sans cesse présents et parfaits ils n'en doivent pas moins se faire oublier. Quand à l'auteur dramatique, il doit être le traducteur des aspirations et des soucis des foules modernes, corrompues, bornées, ou écrasées par le capitalisme."\(^1\)

Rolland, Bloch and Sorel all felt that the theatre was specially important as a means of reaching the working class public. Rolland, for example, believed that the portrayal of revolutionary events involving huge casts would help to create the spirit of the fête in the minds of the people and impress the importance of the events on their imaginations. Bloch went further along anarchist lines to proscribe all bourgeois influence either in presentation or in subject matter; furthermore, in his opinion revolutionary theatre had to be created by the workers themselves. On the other hand, Sorel felt that

\(^{1}\)Moussinac, Léon. Art. cit.
proletarian theatre would be impossible to create because of the inability of the workers to rise to such a task. For him the theatre should be a place of recreation and relaxation for the tired worker featuring music hall and melodrama.

Already therefore, there were two differing attitudes towards proletarian theatre on the extreme left. Moussinac did not have much to add to the existing debate except to align himself with the line instituted by Rolland and Bloch with regard to worker participation in theatrical production. He also stated the principle that content should take precedence over form, which again placed him with Rolland and Bloch rather than with Sorel.

The theatre, however was not Moussinac's most favoured art form; the newly emerging cinema captured the imagination of this young critic who declared to his readers in Clarté his intention to explore the possibilities of erecting an aesthetic of the cinema.

In the above article on the theatre and its problems, Moussinac noted the capacity of the cinema to supplant theatrical realism, for not only was it capable of reproducing reality, but also of magnifying certain aspects and revealing hidden significances; furthermore the speed at which image followed image corresponded exactly to the rhythm of modern life. The cinema had the property of penetrating the consciousness and imprinting itself on the mind:
"La foule actuelle n'a pas le temps de chercher et de découvrir, n'a point le droit de s'attarder à contempler, mais mieux, le souvenir de la vision prolonge la vision même.... Nous attendons qu'à la rapidité plus grande de notre pensée corresponde, ici ou là, une forme d'art nouvelle et précise."¹

But the cinema had a long way to go before realising its full potential as the modern art form par excellence. Resisting the temptation to apply existing criteria such as compatibility of form and content, primacy of content etc., as in the case of the theatre, Moussinac recognised the problem of the cinema to be an intensely practical one; before any great work of art could be produced in cinematographic form, the medium had to find its techniques. Moussinac firmly believed that the function of the critic at this stage in the development of the cinema was to assist in the creation of technique, i.e. to insist on formal qualities:

"Il ne s'agit pas de séparer le moyen d'expression et la chose exprimée. Mais la chose ne vaut qu'autant que le moyen est plus complet. Il y a une relation logique entre la conception et l'expression réalisée. Pourtant, le jeu des lumières et des ombres, ou des lignes, nous renseigne plus précisément sur la sensibilité d'une époque que le sujet même."²

To suggest that formal techniques could replace the formulation of an explicit content was to sail dangerously near to the heresy in Marxist terms. The fact that

Moussinac was working in the context of a new medium and that he was unaware of the formalism which he was propounding could be raised in his defence, but perhaps it would be more realistic to conclude that his theory in this instance reveals an inability, or even a reluctance to apply Marxist principles to the cinema as such, given that he had recognised them in his references to the theatre. At the same time he is aware of the reaction of the intellectual establishment which has not realised the full import of this new art form and its special circumstances:

"......le sujet n'est pas l'élément essentiel. Comme dans une nature morte de Chardin ou de Cézanne, comme dans un nu de Michel-Ange ou de Rodin, toute la beauté surgit de la façon dont l'oeuvre est conçue, interprétée réalisée, de la puissance de transfiguration et de suggestion dont l'artiste lui a fait don.

Certains cinégraphistes ont peu compris ces choses. Les intellectuels, toujours faute de fréquenter le cinéma, ne les ont pas encore comprises. Ce qu'ils cherchent, comme la foule, dans un film, et avant tout, c'est le sujet. Ils ont raison provisoirement, car la qualité des films actuels n'est point telle qu'on puisse y trouver d'autres motifs d'intérêt et il y aura toujours des genres inférieurs, quoique estimables, dont le sujet sera la seule raison d'être. Mais il faut songer que le plus banal roman d'amour, médiocrement réalisé à l'écran, pourrait servir de thème à un chef-d'oeuvre, s'il était développé cinégraphiquement, rythmé selon les phrases de l'émotion et composé avec ce sens nécessaire des différents éléments photographiques qu'on peut emprunter à toute la nature et extraire quotidiennement des aspects multiples de la vie."¹

Champion of an emergent art form, Moussinac had every right to regard himself as being in the progressive

avant-gard of his times; the very existence of a reactionary body of intellectuals ready to criticise the cinema according to theatrical or even literary criteria is enough to justify Moussinac's presence in this revolutionary review.

As a cognitive art form, the cinema promised much finding its own content by the exercise of its techniques so that given a basic theme the really creative aspect of the work would emerge as the director applied his techniques to produce a new reality. As an aesthetic of the cinema such an approach was undoubtedly the most healthy and progressive of its times, but for a Marxist (and at this point although Moussinac was writing in a self-proclaimed Marxist review there is no reason to believe that he considered himself to be one) the theory fell short of acceptability. Where were the illustrations of the class struggle, the definitions, the ideological affirmations etc.? (it is interesting to note that Moussinac was responsible for the showing of Eisenstein’s Battleship Potemkin in Paris in 1925, for even although Eisenstein emphasised the revolutionary content of his work, he was criticised later in the Soviet Union for over indulging in imagery and the other formal techniques subscribed to by Moussinac).

In a sense, Moussinac could be compared to those socialist critics of the nineteenth century who felt that to apply the principles of positivism to their work was as
worthy a revolutionary gesture as any other.

On the other hand, Moussinac's obvious breadth of vision expressed as it was regularly within the review helped to palliate an ever increasing tendency towards sectarianism of a Sorelian brand.

From the Spring of 1923 until early in 1925, the most powerful influence at work in Clarté was that of Edouard Berth whose militancy injected a surge of revolt into the review which at this time was beginning to reflect some of the disillusionment of its editors and contributors caused by the realisation that the revolution was not at all imminent in the West and least of all in France. The Comintern was obviously turning its attention away from Europe in favour of the revolutionary movements of the Far East. It could be said that a wave of neo-anarchist energy was attempting to fill the revolutionary vacuum left by the communists; this reaction had serious consequences for relations between the review and the Party.

A measure of the growing tension between the review and the communist party (now entering into an electoral pact with the socialists in preparation for the 1924 parliamentary elections) is contained in the opposition of Berth to the Party's eulogy to Anatole France, the first establishment intellectual to proclaim himself in favour of the Russian revolution and the French communist party.

In April 1924, l'Humanité published a particularly
effusive appreciation of France which contrasted sharply with an article published by Clarté.\textsuperscript{1} This was followed by a pamphlet published by Clarté following his death in October 1924. Edouard Berth writing in an editorial following his funeral took advantage yet again of pouring scorn on the revered intellectual of the bourgeois republic:

"Il pouvait séduire un socialisme réformiste, bourgeois et parlementaire, forme extrême, au fond de la démocratie et de la décadence moderne; un socialisme vraiment révolutionnaire, qui doit apporter au monde des valeurs nouvelles, ne peut que l'ignorer et déclarer qu'il n'a rien à faire avec "ce représentant soi-disant hors ligne de l'art capitaliste".\textsuperscript{2}

The France affair was significant for two reasons. First of all it underlined the major rift which existed between the review and the Leninist orthodoxy. For just as Trotsky handled Romain Rolland delicately as a potential ally in the class struggle, the French party considered Anatole France as a considerable conquest and advertisement for its ideals. Secondly, the France incident brought the surrealists nearer to the review. In 1925, Clarté published Aragon's "prolétariat de l'esprit",\textsuperscript{3} in which Aragon pointed out that just as the proletariat

\begin{footnotes}
\item[1] "Le jubilé d'Anatole France. Prenons nos distances" Clarté 1er Mai 1924.
\item[3] Clarté 1st Nov. 1925.
\end{footnotes}
was the victim of capitalism, so too were intellectuals controlled and oppressed by the same machine. It followed that there existed an intellectual proletariat who could find common cause with the workers in the fight for freedom; but there was more than a suggestion that the hegemony of the proletariat held little brief for the surrealists. Aragon's statements merely indicate an equal partnership of worker and intellectual:

"Ainsi, que le prolétariat de l'esprit ne reste pas une simple expression, une image: ceux qui le constituent à tous les étages de la Société devront se reconnaître et s'unir. Ils ne formeront pas un parti nouveau, ils iront à la seule force qu'ils doivent appuyer, et de quoi rien vraiment ne les sépare: le prolétariat mondial révolutionnaire."¹

Breton was more explicit:

"Nous appartenons, corps et âme, à la Révolution et si jusqu'ici nous n'avons jamais accepté de commandements, c'était pour nous garder aux ordres de ceux qui l'animent.

Aussi vrai que cet effacement, dont nous avons toujours su au cours de la première mêlée il pouvait si bien aller jusqu'à l'effacement de notre vie, que cet effacement est le plus librement le plus entièrement consenti qui soit, et cela dès qu'il s'agit de ne pas retarder d'une seconde l'accomplissement pour l'homme de sa plus parfaite volonté, je ne crois pas qu'à l'heure actuelle, il y ait lieu d'opposer la cause de l'esprit pur à celle de la Révolution et d'exiger de nous, de certains d'entre nous, une spécialisation plus grande. Encore moins comprendrais-je qu'à des fins utilitaires on tienne à obtenir de moi le désaveu de l'activité surréaliste, par exemple. Ce serait avant d'en avoir d'autres, jeter des armes qui ne sont plus assez belles."²

¹Aragon, Louis. Art. cit.
This statement by Breton helped to underline the situation of the Clarté intellectuals who had been unable to erect a solid edifice of communist inspired cultural theory, basing their hopes on the immanence of revolution in the West, an illusion which caused them to expend their energies in attacking the existing bourgeois establishment and formulating plans for the post-revolutionary period. The prospect of a long haul before the conditions for revolution could be realised and the attendant necessity for a cultural policy which would be both militant and creative and above all relevant to the present situation, was not revealed to the Clarté group until the mid-twenties when the centre of revolutionary interest shifted to the Far East.

Jean Bernier writing at this time pointed out that as Marxists, they only had the basic teachings of Marx to fall back on (no body of theory having been established in the meantime), so that they naturally fell back on the older French tradition represented by the teachings of Proudhon and Sorel:

"Tout ce que, nous acharnant à la suite de Proudhon et de Sorel sur des survivances économiques (moeurs prolétariennes françaises, etc.) nous batissons dogmatiquement avec une audace dont l'oeuvre de Marx, si vague et si prudente, dans sa façon purement principielle d'envisager la futuré société communiste eut du nous démontrer le caractère utopique, tous nos efforts en vue d'introduire dans les choses de la morale et de l'esprit le critère prolétarien: notre dénonciation prolétarienne de la culture capitaliste, nos tentatives pour dégager en France les éléments
d'une morale prolétarienne, d'un art prolétarien etc., etc., tout cela s'effondrait. Comme les tentatives d'évasion subjective de Dada et du surréalisme, notre tentative d'évasion objective (j'emploie ces qualificatifs par simple commodité) s'avérerait illusoire.\textsuperscript{1}

Undoubtedly the Clarté experience served as an ideological education for those like Bernier (e.g. Marcel Fourier, Magdaleine Marx) and in a different way for Aragon; as a stamping ground for young revolutionary socialists it had played a vital role in providing a platform. Léon Moussinac who later developed into one of the Party's most respected authorities on the cinema and theatre may not have been able to find such a conducive climate for the work outside Clarté.\textsuperscript{2} Although it may have reflected an ideological and intellectual problem peculiar to France, its columns were nevertheless open to outside authorities such as Trotsky (before his disgrace), Lukács and Victor Serge whose letters from the U.S.S.R. served to inform the French revolutionary intellectual of the cultural situation in the Soviet Union. From the point of view of Marxist cultural theory, the main contribution came from outside France and notably from Trotsky; what Jean Bernier described as the attempts to lay the foundations of proletarian culture

\textsuperscript{1}Bernier, Jean, "Où nous en sommes." Clarté. Nov. 1925.

\textsuperscript{2}Europe founded in 1923 by Romain Rolland might have been sympathetic especially since one of its regular contributors was J.-R. Bloch.
really related to (a) the systematic denigration of existing bourgeois culture and (b) conjectures as to the shape of culture after the revolution consisting mostly of abstractions. It must be said, however, that the critics of Clarté did not abandon their materialist stance, for although essentially Sorelian in tone certain criteria were not lost to sight, e.g. the class struggle, questions of form and content etc. But there was no attempt to use the dialectical method in analysing present and past artistic production, nor was there any evidence to suppose that the group was ready to follow the line put out by the International on these matters. What Clarté did achieve was the keeping alive and to a certain degree the extension of some of the nineteenth century themes of socialism and the arts.

The ideological vacuum in which it found itself in 1925 was very quickly filled by the surrealists whose work in this context is more relevant to a history of surrealism¹ than to this study. Clarté of 1920 did not survive the surrealist explosion, but at least some of its militants went on to campaign in other theatres.

CHAPTER III
Barbusse, Monde and the Proletcult

Clarté was not an official French communist party review although it enjoyed a special relationship with the Party and indeed shared several contributors with L'Humanité (Parijanine, Fourrier, Martinet etc.). It is not possible, therefore, to equate the literary policy of Clarté with any official line of the Party; but even if there had been a formal link between this Marxist revolutionary review and the French section of the IIIrd International it would still have been impossible to ascertain its relationship with the French Marxist orthodoxy for the simple reason that no orthodoxy existed in this sphere in French communist theory of the early twenties.

During the first four years of the existence of the communist party in France the party daily L'Humanité continued along its pre-communist course as far as literature and the arts were concerned. The articles which appeared were either extremely bourgeois promoting works which their authors considered to be in "good taste", or perpetuating the old socialist predilection for naturalism. Symbolism, unanisme, both found their champions in L'Humanité, indeed had it not been for the militant articles of the syndicalist and playwright, Marcel Martinet, earnestly exploring the possibilities of a genuine proletarian culture in France, the Party's daily would have resembled any other in this particular sphere.
Martinet resigned\(^1\) from *l'Humanité* in 1924, partly for health and partly for political reasons and it was not until the end of 1926 that the Party took definite steps to endow *l'Humanité* with a distinct line on cultural matters when it invited the author of the best-selling *Le Feu*,\(^2\) Henri Barbusse to take over the literary editorship.

But what of the artistic and cultural ferment of post-revolutionary Russia? Did any of the energies released inspire new thinking in France?

The debate which sprang up in the early twenties in the Soviet Union regarding a communist policy on the arts\(^3\) did not have immediate consequences for the situation in France, but by 1927-28 the effects of events in this domain in the U.S.S.R., and within the International through the activities of the International Union\(^4\) of Revolutionary Writers were beginning to be felt in France. A résumé of

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\(^1\) After his resignation from *l'Humanité*, Martinet tended more and more towards a consolidation of his syndicalist beliefs. For a complete statement of his ideas on proletarian culture cf. Martinet, Marcel. *Culture prolétarienne*. Librairie du Travail. Paris 1936.


\(^4\) This organisation (which will be referred to by its French abbreviation-U.I.E.R.), was founded in 1927 promoted by the RAPP, the largest of the Soviet proletarian writers' organisations, with the role of developing revolutionary culture throughout the world.
the issues surrounding the Soviet debate should help to clarify the French situation. As has been seen from the reports of Victor Serge, the immediate post-revolutionary period in the Soviet Union did not see a flourishing of revolutionary art. The artistic population consisted of writers who were either only mildly influenced by the Revolution, had fled the country, or were about to be expelled (especially from university posts). Serge noted too that writers tended to exhibit religious tendencies in their works and that apart from Gorky, the pro-revolutionary novelist had yet to manifest himself. The situation in poetry was somewhat different with distinctly revolutionary work being produced by Mayakovsky, Pasternak, Essenine and other young bourgeois poets fired by the ideals of the revolution; as far as artistic theory and experimentation were concerned, exciting innovations were being attempted by futurists and formalists, but these were less acceptable to the revolutionary establishment because of their stress on form and abstract nature. The other "wing" of literary production in the U.S.S.R. at this time although hardly developed, was growing out of the popular education movement which aimed at spreading literacy throughout the urban proletariat and peasantry. The immediate political motivation behind this campaign was to train workers and peasants to take a leading role in the running of their socialist society; part of the scheme involved a primitive form of journalism
in which workers ("rabcors") contributed letters to their
local or factory newspapers recounting experiences, urging
their comrades to greater efforts etc. It was hoped by
certain left-wing intellectuals engaged in this work that
eventually, proletarian novelists, poets etc., would
emerge. The gradual organisation of groups of these
writers of the proletcult into associations meant that by
1924 they represented a large enough force to be taken
into consideration in debates at a high level on cultural
matters.

The proletcult movement, apart from the promotion of
its own brand of literature, also had the objective of
eliminating bourgeois writers who had lent their moral
support to the Revolution without subscribing to it
completely; the kind of writer directly affected by this
policy would have been of the class of Gorky, Pilniak and
Babel. To erect a purely proletarian cultural establish-
ment to the exclusion of all other currents which might
add something to the richness of socialist art was an
ambition which struck at the heart of Marxist-Leninist
theory and explains why the Party hierarchy, although all
for the bolchevisation of the Party and its institutions,
opposed the manoeuvres of the proletcult to ostracise the
bourgeois fellow travellers.

A meeting in May 1924 between political leaders and
members of the proletcult heard the plea of the critic
Vardine that the Party should be prepared to intervene
directly in cultural matters in favour of the proletcult. All the notable politicians present opposed the principle of Party intervention as being against the interests of art, and constituting a flagrant misunderstanding of the particular problems of artistic production which could not be settled by steam-roller methods.

There was a further and more serious theoretical aspect to the problem. Lenin, Trotsky and the other leading theorists\(^1\) believed that in accordance with the theory of revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat constituted a temporary guardianship of the revolution prior to the institution of socialism and the classless society; it was true, they held, that dominant class groups produced their own culture, but it was also true that they took centuries to do so. It was more than probable that the proletariat would not have the time to erect its own cultural superstructure. Trotsky made this one of the central themes of his writings on revolutionary culture and had already made this point to French communists in Clarté:

"Pendant la dictature, il ne peut pas être question de créer une nouvelle culture, c'est-à-dire d'entreprendre une œuvre de la plus grand ampleur historique. Et la culture entièrement nouvelle qui surgira, quand la nécessité cessera d'imposer au prolétariat l'armature de fer de la dictature, ne sera pas une culture de classe. De ce qui précède, une conclusion générale se dégage: qu'il n'y a pas de

\(^1\)Trotsky, Radek, Bukharin and Lounatcharsky.
Following on the discussion of May 1924, the Central Committee of C.P. U.S.S.R. issued a declaration which stated that the Party would not take sides in the debate over proletarian literature, that in principle no one group should have a monopoly in this sphere and that the artistic heritage of the country be respected. It was also made quite clear that tolerance should be shown towards those artists denoted as "fellow travellers".

The Party therefore hoped to maintain equilibrium between the rival groups but this policy was modified by the decision of the period 1927-28 to launch the first five year economic plan. The Party now required the assistance of artistic "shock troops" to encourage industrial and agricultural production through their art; this role, it seemed, could best be filled by the proletarian writers, now a formidable body under the secret-aryship of the former young communist leader Leopold Averbakh. Immediately the official attitude towards fellow travellers changed to one of hostility and writers like Gorky found themselves ostracised by the cultural establishment.

The factor which influenced the French situation was

1Trotsky, Léon. "Révolution et culture". Clarté. 1st Nov. 1923.
produced when it was decided by the proletcult in 1927 to set up an international organisation within the International to promote proletarian literature and art throughout the world. The U.I.E.R. was to have its own review: La Littérature de la Révolution Mondiale, while in France a weekly newspaper was to be set up to provide a platform for proletarian writers. This publication was to take the name Monde and its director was to be Henri Barbusse, but even before Monde (founded in 1928), Barbusse had stated his opinions on the problems facing the establishment of revolutionary culture in France and especially with regard to the proletarian writers and rabcors.

The Literary Theory of Henri Barbusse

By 1926 there were signs that the French Party also desired a more definite policy on cultural matters although the outward manifestations of this were ostensibly the result of an agreement between Vaillant-Couturier and Barbusse on a personal level. Although Vaillant-Couturier had been one of the original group of young activists in Clarté, he belonged to that tendency which had preferred to maintain close links with the Party; the

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1From the mid-twenties the extreme left wing of the French communist party had been attempting to promote the cause of worker correspondents (rabcors) with regard to Humanité dominated by moderates. Their attempts to bolchevise the Party's daily were unsuccessful not because the moderates were opposed to the worker correspondents as such but because they were viewed as representing a political tactic of the left.
advent of the surrealists and the extremism of Edouard Berth had resulted in his estrangement from the review and in a strengthening of his commitment to the Party. As editor of *L'Humanité*, it was he who put pressure on Barbusse in 1926 to take over responsibility for the literary page. There may have been several reasons for this move; first of all Barbusse and Vaillant had worked together successfully in other endeavours, notably in the foundation of the pacifist veterans' movement in 1917, secondly the appointment of this middle class pacifist and humanist intellectual, may have been a move to counter the influence of extreme left agitation from the prestigious surrealists on the one hand and the promoters of the French raccoors on the other. Whatever the reason Barbusse intended to strike a new note in Party involvement in literature; in his first article as literary editor of *L'Humanité*, significantly entitled "Nouvel Elan", Barbusse set out some of the principles he intended to follow:

"Il faut découvrir des talents neufs; faire comprendre aux intellectuels—et ce n'est pas la partie la plus facile de la tâche—que leur individualisme et la "tour d'ivoire" dans laquelle ils s'enferment les retranchent des sources vives de la vie; faire aussi comprendre aux manuels qu'il ne suffit pas d'être un ouvrier qui écrit pour être un écrivain prolétarien et que le métier d'écrivain est aussi difficile et demande autant

1 The discontent from leftist quarters (for the most part anonymous) concerning the French raccoors may be measured from correspondence in *Les Cahiers du Bolchévisme* (the Party's theoretical journal) of this period (1925-1932).
de soin que celui du constructeur, du forgeron, de l'horloger...."1

Obviously Barbusse was intent on pursuing a policy of reconciliation and unification as he gently reminded the rabcers of the skills involved in creative writing in terms of their own immediate working world, and also as he appealed to that area of the middle class conscience likely to respond to the question of commitment.

Barbusse entertained a view of the social, moral and ideological role of literature and art which reached back to Proudhon and found echoes in the theory of Rolland and Bloch:

"Nous ne considérons pas l'art, la littérature, la science, comme formant une sorte de fief à l'écart de la grande évolution logique de la société.... La création artistique est l'expression et le produit des hommes. Elle doit jouer un rôle militant dans les luttes sociales. La pièce de théâtre, le livre, le film ne sont pas à nos yeux des distractions et des instruments d'illusions, mais des armes et des réalités.

Nous cherchons les bases et les fondements d'un progrès artistique et littéraire dont l'heure est également venue, un art populaire, sain et jeune, fort et clair, qui allume et qui soutienne, en même temps qu'il exprime le grand cri des masses vers l'affranchissement."2

For the moment at least, Barbusse felt that "le grand cri des masses vers l'affranchissement" was best

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1 Barbusse, Henri. "Nouvel Elan". L'Humanité 28.10.26. (n.b. Barbusse's connection with L'Humanité was weakened as he devoted more and more of his energies to the weekly Monde which was launched in 1928. The above article of 28th Oct. 1928 was probably the most significant of his contributions to L'Humanité.

articulated by bourgeois but sympathetic writers. There is no doubting the humanity of Barbusse, but all through his theory there is more than a suggestion of paternalism, a feature which was already present in *Le Feu*¹ in 1916.

Talking to a young poilu, Barbusse assures him that his case will be heard:

"-Dis-donc, toi qui écris, tu écriras plus tard sur les soldats, tu parleras de nous, pas?
-Mais oui fils, je parlerai de toi, des copains et de notre existence.
-Dis-moi donc.....
Il indique de la tête les papiers où j’étais en train de prendre des notes. Le crayon en suspens je l’observe et j’écoute. Il a envie de me poser une question.
-Dis donc, sans t’commander...Y a quequ’chose que je voudrais te demander. Voilà la chose: si tu fais parler les troufions dans ton livre, est-ce que tu les f’ras parler comme ils parlent, ou bien est-ce tu arrangerais ça en lousdoc? C’est rapport aux gros mots qu’on dit. Car enfin, pas, on a beau être camarades et sans qu’on s’engueule pour ça tu n’entendras jamais deux poilus l’ouvrir pendant une minute sans qu’ils disent et qu’ils répètent des choses que les imprimeurs n’aiment pas besef imprimer. Alors quoi? Si tu ne le dis pas, ton portrait ne sera pas r’semblant: c’est comme qui les plus voyantes partout où elle est. Mais pourtant ça s’fait pas.
-Je mettrais les gros mots à leur place, mon petit père, parce que c’est la vérité.
-Mais dis-moi, si tu l’mets, est-ce que des types de ton bord, sans s’occuper de la vérité, ne diront pas que t’es cochon?
-C’est probable, mais je le ferai tout de même sans m’occuper de ces types."²

Perhaps the longest single statement made on the problem

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of revolutionary culture was in the collection of personal
views of the Soviet Union. In *Russie*, he pointed out
that the proletarian literary movement had become a
reality only in the U.S.S.R., and that even there it could
not, in all truth be described as an extensive movement;
furthermore if it existed at all in pre-revolutionary
capitalist countries, it was in an embryonic state all of
which made it difficult to define:

"La littérature prolétarienne, est sans doute, la littérature révolutionnaire; celle qui s'adapte, pour la dépeindre, l'éclairer et l'animer, à la société neuve qui est en organisation active dans l'U.R.S.S. et qui est en formation latente au sein des sociétés capitalistes, et en marge des vieux régimes. Nous disons, si on veut, que la littérature prolétarienne, c'est la forme actuelle et vivante, précise, intensifiée et imposée par l'évolution historique- de ce qu'on appelait la littérature populaire.

Mais dès que nous voulons commenter cette description aux larges contours et ces hautaines généralités, une difficulté se présente. D'ordinaire, un mouvement littéraire est représenté par un cycle d'œuvres. Or il s'agit ici de quelque chose qui est surtout en puissance et dont nous voyons des signes précurseurs plutôt que des réalisations."¹

The situation was somewhat more complicated from the point
of view of those Party militants who would have liked to
have seen Barbusse take up a more positive position with
regard to proletarian literature in France, by the fact
that in France there were two (possibly, three) distinct
schools all claiming to represent the proletariat in

literature. The least probable from the Party's point of view was that of the Populists led by André Thérive and Léon Lemonnier, whose theoretical base it felt was somewhat similar to those nineteenth century bourgeois liberals who believed that (bourgeois) culture and values could be usefully refurbished by rubbing shoulders with the industrial proletariat and allowing a little of the atmosphere of Belleville to infiltrate the drawing rooms of the Parisian bourgeoisie. Barbusse saw these works as anachronisms, appendages of the nineteenth century:

"Dans un tel musée, qui ne nous intéresse que comme but de guerre, les écrivains populistes apportent aujourd'hui le snobisme du peuple, mettent l'ouvrier et le paysan à la dernière mode, et s'imagent qu'on change de sujet comme on change de cravate. Ils sont les amis du peuple comme le sont nos bons démocrates officiels."  

The second of the three, the French rabcors supported by Party left-wingers and the U.I.E.R., had very little in the way of actual works to their credit, and had a great deal of progress to make before they could legitimately claim to represent Party proletarian art, indeed, most of its champions seemed to be more interested in theory than in practice:

"Nos phalanges organisées d'écrivains prolétariens (nous en créerons une incessamment en France), ne sont encore que des assemblées déliberantes et  

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There was however one school of proletarian writing whose figureheads were the former literary editor of *L'Humanité*, Marcel Martinet, and the printer, Henri Poulaille, to which Barbusse was attracted and to whom he gave considerable support despite severe criticisms on his left. Martinet and Poulaille believed in a proletarian culture which was (a) based on the authentic life experience of the worker and (b) the fruits of his own labour. The syndicalist belief of self-help plus a deeply held conviction that proletarian literature could only be produced from first-hand knowledge of the work situation; surprisingly such a definition was broader in class terms as might at first be supposed since Poulaille considered that Edouard Peisson, a ship's officer and Céline, a doctor, could be classed as "proletarian" because their literary work reflected their professional life. Martinet and Poulaille owed much more to Pelloutier than Georges Sorel whose references to "le peuple enfant" they considered as patronising and condescending.

Perhaps it was because Barbusse himself was much more of a nineteenth century socialist than a shock trooper of the IIIrd International that he recognised in the

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declarations of Martinet and Poulaille the authentic heart of a long established tradition of French socialism beating true to itself. Barbusse conducted a campaign of wooing this group over much of the life span of Monde (1928-34), but there was one major difficulty which raised serious obstacles for all concerned - true to their anarcho-syndicalist beliefs, the syndicalist proletarian writers refused absolutely to have anything to do with a movement which could be said to be connected with a political party. It was for this reason that Martinet and Poulaille were slated in the publications of the International as "social fascists".

The outcome of Barbusse's ambiguous attitude towards the Party's proletarian writers and the Poulaille-Martinet group was a confrontation with the U.I.E.R. during its 1930 meeting at Kharkov. In order to appreciate the implications of this incident, some detail must be given on the founding of Monde which appeared in France as a non-Party publication.

In 1927 Barbusse and the art critic and painter Francis Jourdain founded an organisation known as "Les amis de l'Union Soviétique" and it was as the representants of such that both were invited to attend the 1927 international conference of the proletcult (RAPP) in Moscow. The aim of this conference was to launch the international

1 Ibid.
revolutionary writers' organisation, the U.I.E.R. with the aim of promoting Soviet type proletarian writing throughout the world. It was shortly after the visit of Barbusse and Jourdain to Moscow that plans were announced for the foundation of a literary based movement in France to help with the task of establishing a proletarian literary tradition. Curiously, Annette Vidal, Barbusse's secretary and biographer gives no details on the exact origins of Monde:

"Bientôt grâce aux amis qu'il possédait dans tous les pays, Barbusse fut à même d'annoncer la prochaine publication de Monde."¹

Victor Serge, the Russian dissident was less coy as to the financing of Monde:

"...J'ai appris quelques jours plus tard que le Secours Rouge International, dirigé alors par Hélène Stassova consacrait une forte somme à la création d'un hebdomadaire "culturel" sous la direction de Barbusse, ce fut Monde.²

Given the interest, both financial and otherwise, of the International³ in the venture it is surprising to note that Barbusse was the only communist party member in the Comité Directeur of Monde; the group which collaborated with him in producing this weekly with its mixture of

³Later events in connection with Monde were to prove the existence of a very distinct link between Monde and the International.
articles of current and literary interest, was made up of individuals whose main feature in common was that they were all more or less at variance with the Party and the International. Magdaeline Paz, formerly Marx (of Clarté) who reverted to her husband's name as a symbolic gesture of her defiance of the Party which she left in 1924 with many other intellectuals (including Martinet) and could not subscribe to the denigration of Trotsky and the increasingly sectarian "bolchevisation" of the French party. Monde was also prepared to accept foreign dissidents such as A. Rossi, an outcast from the Italian communist Party and equally opposed to the International and Ignazio Silone, another renegade from Italian communism. There were occasional articles from Party stalwarts such as Moussinac, Ilya Ehrenbourg and Vaillant-Couturier, but for the most part, Monde was seen to be outside Party control. It was not surprising that the U.I.E.R. should have as one of the items on its agenda for the Kharkov conference of 1930, a motion of censure on Monde. The purpose of this conference would seem to have been two sided; first of all it was intended to act as a curb on the more extreme Soviet

proletcultists who were beginning to over-reach themselves in their ardour, and secondly to prepare the way for a more centralised organisation of writers and artists.

Barbusse did not attend the meeting giving as his reasons ill health and work commitments; he nevertheless sent a statement which he asked to be read to the congress. The French party did not go unrepresented. Louis Aragon and Georges Sadoul attended as observers.¹

Barbusse repeated his convictions that proletarian literature such as that being promoted in the Soviet Union could not be produced in France where the same revolutionary conditions did not prevail. It was true, he said that the rabcors could provide a solid base of working-class common sense, but their immediate potential as writers was extremely limited both from the point of view of their technique and their subject matter; he then went on to underline the practical difficulties of launching such a movement in a Western society whose cultural output past and present, was so much more impressive than anything which could be produced by the resources he had at his command:

"J'ai fait l'expérience il y a quelques mois, et j'ai adressé aux écrivains dont les idées pouvaient me faire espérer leur acceptation un questionnaire ainsi conçu: "Adhérez-vous, oui ou non, aux buts du prolétariat et êtes-vous disposés à prendre la défense de ces buts en tant qu'écrivains?" Les

¹Aragon and Sadoul were not given the status of official observers and there is reason to believe that their attendance at the Congress was a result of their own initiative.
écrits suivants ont répondu affirmativement. Jolinon, Elian Finbert, André Peisson, Merlay, Charlotte Davy, Léon Moussinac, Marcel Martinet, Jean Tousseul, Reillard, Tristan Rémy, Henri Poulaille, Francis André, Marcel Martinet. Malgré la qualité de ces personnalités, je ne pense pas qu'une section qui ne serait composée que d'elles, dans l'énormable fourmillement de la littérature actuelle, présenterait un intérêt suffisant pour notre grande cause. Je crois toutefois que le moment approche où un tel groupe pourra produire une certaine agitation en s'appuyant sur des éléments jeunes qu'il suscitera. Mais pour le moment, l'absence, pour une raison où pour une autre, de quelques personnalités marquantes ferait que cette liste, malgré son intérêt intrinsèque, causerait une déception générale et soulignerait trop la faiblesse des effectifs du mouvement nouveau en France. De plus il me paraît difficile de réunir la plupart de ces adhérents pour une action commune quelconque.1

Barbusse's honest and essentially realistic and practical assessment of the situation in France contrasted sharply with the view of one whose revolutionary zeal and thirst for commitment of an uncompromising nature caused him to take the floor; Louis Aragon2 left no doubt as to his position regarding proletarian literature in France:

"Il est bien entendu que sa base ne saurait être constituée par un groupement factices de quelques petits bourgeois qui prennent le prolétariat pour

1Barbusse, Henri. "Message au Congrès des Ecrits

2Aragon joined the Party in 1927 with four other surrealists (Breton, Eluard, Peret and Unik). Their relationship with the Party remained problematic despite their adhesion, mostly because of their extremism and the Party's determination to keep them at arm's length. Robert Short has indicated that not only did the surrealists entertain ambitions as to a takeover of Clarté but also to the literary section of l'Humanité; this would certainly help to explain Aragon's desire to compromise Barbusse and to give a practical demonstration of his orthodoxy.
thème de leurs romans et croient en avoir fait ainsi suffisamment pour usurper la qualité des prolétaires. Cette base doit au contraire être purement prolétarienne. Elle doit être sous le contrôle de l’avant-garde du prolétariat, de son meilleur défenseur, du parti communiste. Elle doit se développer tout à fait indépendamment de la littérature bourgeoise, avec laquelle il serait nuisible qu’elle gardât des rapports quels qu’ils fussent.

Comme à l’heure présente le seul travail concret qui, dans les cadres de la lutte des classes en France capitaliste, méritent proprement le nom de littérature prolétarienne est le travail des correspondants ouvriers, inégalement développé, suivant les renseignements de différentes sections du Comintern, la seule base que l’on puisse et doive proposer à une organisation de littérature prolétarienne est le développement systématique du travail des rabçors. ¹

Despite his apparent orthodoxy, Aragon’s outburst was ill-received by a significant part of the assembly who accused him of being a surrealist. It may have been too, that in the general decisions taken beforehand regarding the Congress’s attitude towards Barbusse as an individual, a policy of leniency ² had been decided upon and that Aragon’s intervention was seen as too much of a personal attack. Certainly in the ensuing debate, Barbusse’s sincerity was never challenged, the burden of the attack falling on Monde and its entourage.

Despite his protectors, Barbusse fell under considerable

¹La Littérature de la Révolution Mondiale. Art. cit. (Aragon)

²The same protection was afforded Barbusse by l’Humanité, who did not publish the proceedings of Kharkov until fully twelve months later. (Nov. 1931). Notwithstanding a group was formed within l’Humanité, which included the critic Jean Fréville with the express purpose of discouraging Barbusse’s friendship with the French revolutionary syndicalist inspired proletarian writers of the Poulaille-Martinet tendency.
pressure in the months following Kharkov; this was applied by sectarian leftists under the influence of the Barbé-Celor leadership (eventually ousted by Thorez). Annette Vidal recalls how this opposition to Barbusse's great ambition of a universal "rassemblement" of intellectuals all but succeeded:

"Automne 1931. La vie est très difficile à Aumont. Barbusse, attaqué par les éléments sectaires du parti (il s'agissait du groupe Barbé-Celor et des éléments qui avaient été influencés par lui), souffre terriblement. Monde, dont il avait rêvé de faire une importante tribune, risque à chaque instant de passer dans des mains ennemies par suite d'une usurpation de majorité. Chaque semaine, il faut trouver l'argent nécessaire pour payer l'imprimerie". ¹

Only a month was to elapse however, before the Barbé-Celor group was ousted by Thorez whose breadth of understanding of cultural matters was quite remarkable for his proletarian background, furthermore Barbusse's reputation as a pacifist was crucial to the Party's long term ambitions regarding a front against fascism. In his memoires, Thorez remembers a visit to Barbusse:

"Je me souviens d'une visite que je fis vers cette époque² à Henri Barbusse qui habitait une petite maison non loin de Senlis, la "villa Sylvie", du nom de l'héroïne de Gérard de Nerval qui a décrit

¹ Vidal, Annette. Op. cit. p. 236. (The financial difficulties of Monde suggest that no more funds were forthcoming from the International.)

² Thorez was referring to the period around the end of 1931 and the beginning of 1932.
Barbusse seemed to sense the significance of this change in the leadership and policies of the Party as he intervened more and more in Monde; from July 1931 (the beginning of Thorez's campaign against his enemies), he wrote a series of articles which were designed to lay the foundations of a much broader theoretical base than that of the proletcult, articles which had a distinctly intellectual appeal:

"Pour ceux, qui comme nous, ont reconnu depuis long-temps la force incomparable de la méthode marxiste dans l'analyse des événements, il paraît clair que le capitalisme est maintenant entré dans sa phase de liquidation. Nous avons jugé le moment venu de faire le point, sur l'état des problèmes de la littérature de la Révolution qui nous concernent ici spécialement, ceux qui se trouvent posés dans le domaine de la littérature et de la critique."²

The new literary movement should possess both a materialist and a revolutionary base affirmed Barbusse.


Given the state of chaos of the bourgeoisie (and its culture), the revolutionary writer must turn to the proletariat whose experience of the class struggle he should enshrine in his work as the only guarantee of salvation, but at the same time he should not consider himself as working immediately under a Party directive:

"C'est dire qu'en approfondissant la notion de classe jusqu'à trouver son contenu largement humain, une œuvre ayant pour sujet la vie et les espoirs de la classe ouvrière prend place parmi celles de la littérature qu'on peut appeler, dans ce pays et dans cette époque, prolétarienne. C'est dire encore que nous considérons comme impossible d'assigner à la littérature de la Révolution un but immédiat de propagande politique. La meilleure propagande auprès des masses encore indécises, encore insuffisamment orientées, et qu'il faut nécessairement gagner à la cause révolutionnaire dans la plus grande proportion possible, n'est souvent pas celle de l'agitation politique et des mots d'ordre, mais celle qui va jusqu'aux justifications profondes et universelles de la révolution".¹

The justifications referred to by Barbusse were of course contained (from the communist point of view) in the class struggle, but the perspective which allowed for this overview of social and political events, although expressed in its highest form in Marx, could be traced, according to Barbusse, to legitimate French sources, to a certain stream of French cultural development:

"Pour le roman, par la force des choses, doit se développer dans la littérature prolétarienne une nouvelle forme de réalisme ordonné, tenant compte de tous les facteurs d'explication des existences et des actes individuels; réalisme qui n'est pas celui de la "tranche de vie" où tout est pêle-mêle

¹Barbusse, Henri. Art. cit.
sur le même plan, ou déformé par la manie de l'explication physiologique; réalisme qui ne se sent pas, non plus d'une méthode abstraite, mais qui a compris que Marx, en dénonçant tout ce qu'il y a de déterminations sociales dans la destinée, les actes et les pensées d'un individu, a énoncé sur l'homme une des plus profondes vérités qui soient.

Ce nouveau réalisme, ce "révolutionarisme" prendra la suite logique des écoles et tendances littéraires qui ont, jusqu'ici aujourd'hui approfondi l'humain, le réel, la nature, par des voies positives. Le romantisme se substituant à la règle classique a continué un "retour à la nature" que le réalisme a ensuite précisé.

Le naturalisme a rectifié le réalisme du début du XIXe siècle en s'efforçant d'appliquer à la littérature la méthode positive de la science. Le naturalisme était scientifique par sa base de documentation authentique, sa psychologie physiologique, mais encore fort hésitant sur le plan de la science sociale. C'est l'incorporation de cette grande notion de l'ensemble qui donnera son caractère à la littérature de demain."1

As for the relationship between form and content, Barbusse made a strong plea for the necessity of the primacy of ideas, the work, he insisted would produce its own form. Worker writers he warned should not take this advice too literally since they did not possess the techniques and stylistic resources of the (bourgeois) revolutionary writers. Thus Barbusse called for a literature which was revolutionary (committed), humanist (in the old French socialist tradition of Vallès and Jaurès), materialist (a corrected form of positivism), open to writers of all classes (universal appeal), free from political directives (a gesture to non-conformists

1 Barbusse, Henri. Art. cit.
and anarchists), in other words, a literature with the broadest possible appeal and inserted in an authentic national current.

By way of reinforcement of this outline, Barbusse published articles on Taine and Zola stressing their materialist base:

"Comment Taine avait-il procédé dans sa critique? En appliquant à la critique les méthodes d'investigation de la science expérimentale. Il s'en explique très clairement dans une lettre à J-J Weiss datée de 1859. "Je fais de la physiologie en matière morale, rien de plus.... Je traite des sentiments et des idées comme on a fait des fonctions et des organes--Bien mieux, je crois que les deux ordres de faits ont la même nature, sont soumis à des nécessités égales, et ne sont que l'envers et l'endroit d'un même individu. L'Univers, voilà tout"¹

According to Barbusse, Taine's materialism, although based on erroneous scientific criteria, had nevertheless dealt a blow to idealism and demonstrated the possibility of a materialist based world-view. Anatole France, Barbusse noted, had particularly appreciated the liberating influence of Taine's criticism:

"Ce dont il nous débarassait c'était l'odieux spiritualisme d'école, c'était l'abominable Cousin et son abominable école, c'était l'ange universitaire montrant d'un geste académique le ciel de Platon et de Jésus Christ"²

The fact that Anatole France was the French party's greatest conquest from the world of the arts is not

without its significance in this context for Barbusse saw
the new revolutionary theory of literature as having an
equally potent effect on the contemporary intellectual
world as well as on that of the workers.

Zola incarnated for Barbusse the greatest achievement
of positivism in the arts. Again the materialist stance,
although scientifically erroneous, made Zola's work
immortal despite itself:

"Il apparu que le groupe des romans de Zola, dont
on peut situer la consécration définitive vers 1890,
avant le mouvement de réaction qui se produisit
contre eux, s'étaient imposés non par leur
contribution à l'histoire naturelle ou à la physiologie,
ni par la confirmation qu'ils apportaient aux
thèses sur l'hérédité consignées schématiquement
dans les plans de l'auteur, mais par la puissance
révolutionnaire organique du réel". ¹

Thus Barbusse made a similar case for Zola to that
made by Marx and Engels for Balzac when they pointed out
that Balzac's personal theories and beliefs did not
interfere with the objective nature of his discoveries.
Balzac was a social scientist exploring society armed with
a theory of cause and effect; Zola, according to Barbusse
survived a similar theoretical weakness, to produce his
great art with its objective lessons.

The way was now open for the creation of an even
greater art, for armed with the Marxist view of the world
and society, a great human epic form could be created:

"Comprendre le prolétariat dans son ensemble et dans
la vie c'est adhérer à ses objectifs sociaux et

¹Barbusse, Henri. "La réalité est sociale-Zola 1932". Monde 30.1.32.
politiques, qui sont des lois organiques et historiques. Donc réalisme social, c'est-à-dire, emploi de l'individu au service du collectif, souffle de démolition, marche révolutionnaire. Sur la base de documentation réaliste désormais immuable, avec une formule normalement élargie du livre, avec un style qui doit profiter de toutes les inventions sans cesser d'être saisissable par tous, il peut aider la vie extérieure dans ses spacieuses péripéties et être l'homme des foules. "La nature entière nous appartient, disait déjà l'autre...... Nous rêvons l'arche immense". Le cycle des poèmes épiques Bibles des peuples" disait Hégel, est toujours à recommencer. 

The language of this statement is not the language of the proletcult, neither does it correspond to the violence expressed by Aragon in his poem Front Rouge, published in the August (1931) number of the international organ of the U.I.E.R., La Littérature de la Révolution Mondiale, and which led to his imprisonment on the 16th January 1932 for sedition.

Barbusse's declaration contains all the elements of what was to become the communist party's literary policy in its drive towards the Popular Front; the advocated epic form, the broadest possible appeal, the revolutionary fervour linked with the vision of the romantics on the one hand and the materialism of the naturalists on the other. The term "réalisme social" is a particularly close rendering of the "réalisme socialiste" which was to be institutionalised in 1934.

The year 1932 was indeed a momentous one for Barbusse since in January of that year an association of proletarian

1 Barbusse, Henri. Art. cit.
writers (tendance Poulaille) was formed including Louis Guilloux, Eugène Dabit, Henri Poulaille, Tristan Rémy, Marc Bernard, Edouard Peisson and Georges David.

Barbusse encouraged this association (he appeared on the editorial board of Poulaille's review Nouvel Age which grouped anarchists socialists and communists) and he also made a page of Monde available to the association.

Barbusse was now in flagrant disagreement with the resolutions of Kharkov which had roundly condemned Poulaille and his group as social fascists, but events in the Soviet Union with regard to the proletcult very soon underlined the fact that Barbusse had foreseen the establishment of a new orthodoxy. On the 23rd April 1932 the association of proletarian writers of the Soviet Union was dissolved on the pretext that it had become too sectarian and monopolistic in its comportment; a new Soviet writers' and artists' society was immediately established with the brief of working out a new cultural policy. In December of 1932, a French branch of this organisation (which had taken over the U.I.E.R. in the Soviet Union) was set up following the circulation of an appeal to committed and non-aligned intellectuals alike

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1 As early as Kharkov in 1930, the powerful proletcult organisations, especially the RAPP were viewed with suspicion by government circles in the Soviet Union. From 1930 onwards a campaign of denigration of the proletcult was carried out prior to its definitive replacement in 1932 by the Writers' Union. Barbusse may have sensed that the writing was on the wall as far as the proletcult was concerned and that he did not risk much by not attending the congress at Kharkov.
drawn up by Barbusse, Vaillant-Couturier, Charles Vildrac, Francis Jourdain and Léon Moussinac; this led to the foundation in France of the French section of the Revolutionary Artists' and Writers' Association, (henceforth referred to by French abbreviation A.E.A.R.).

Thus Barbusse who had been in disagreement with the International since his appointment to L'Humanité in 1926, entered the Soviet orthodox fold in 1932. His contribution to Marxist literary theory was more of a political nature than philosophical; communist art could only be realist art and his union of a contemporary social realism with the romantic and naturalist traditions of the nineteenth century was a step which could be subscribed to by traditional socialist intellectuals as well as communists seeking an alliance against fascism. For Barbusse, the proletarian literary question represented a sectarian and divisive tendency which went against everything he had stood for since the end of the Great War; he was prepared to help proletarian writers, but in a paternalistic way, feeling that their efforts would never impress the French literate public and that the best method to awaken national consciousness was to encourage the conversion of prestigious national intellectuals.

It was only after Kharkov that Barbusse wrote extensively in Monde, conscious as he was of a wind of change and the opportunities presented by the new situation, but the years 1928-1932 were not without
interest for Monde. The editorial staff made up of ex-communists and dissidents for the most part, felt uniquely free to explore the possibilities offered by Marxism given the absence of a Party discipline. The fruits of their efforts are in many ways more rewarding for the student of Marxist theory in literature and the arts than those of the orthodox communist Marxists fighting out their differences over proletarian and revolutionary literary tactics.

Literary Theory in Monde 1928-1933

Apart from news items highlighting the activities of socialist and pacifist movements throughout the world and the serialising of works by socialist or fellow-travelling authors, Monde set itself the task of acting as a centre of focus for any literary debate dealing with subjects connected with the socialist and revolutionary view-point.

In an early editorial of Monde, Barbusse set out the objectives of his newspaper:

1. Eclairer, révéler ou démasquer les principales manifestations de la pensée et de l'activité contemporaines.

2. Rapprocher autant que cela est faisable, les travailleurs intellectuels des travailleurs manuels, selon les lois profondes des sociétés et de l'esprit, et par une conception plus précise du rôle social de chacun.

3. Travailler à dégager, et peut-être même à susciter en quelque mesure les premiers efforts, déjà sensibles, quoique encore dispersés et tâtonnants, d’un grand art de masses, aux perspectives collectives et panhumaines. Nous
In the context of its first objective, Monde ran a series of enquiries into selected literary problems (on proletarian literature, and Zola) in which intellectuals were required to answer a questionnaire designed to reveal their degree of commitment if any. A typical example of this well tried, but effective device in eliciting a public declaration from famous intellectuals and writers is contained in the proletarian literature enquiry launched by Monde in August 1928:

1. Croyez-vous que la production artistique et littéraire soit un phénomène purement individuel? Ne pensez-vous pas qu'elle puisse ou doive être le reflet des grands courants qui déterminent l'évolution économique et social de l'humanité?

2. Croyez-vous à l'existence d'une littérature et d'un art exprimant les aspirations de la classe ouvrière? Quels en sont, selon vous, les principaux représentants?

The following replies were published in Monde:

André Breton, Jean Cocteau, Francis André, Waldo Frank, Miguel de Unamuno, Émile Vandervelde, Henri Duvernois, P. Hubermonr and A. Ayguesparse, V.F. Calverton, Paul Reboux, Parijanine, Upton Sinclair, Marc Bernard, Jéhan Rictus, Luis Araquistain, Joseph Billiet, Honnert, Tristan Rémy, Maxime Némo, Maurice Debroka, E. Guillemin, Joseph Jolinson, Han Ryner, Henri Poulaille, St. Georges de Bouhier, Maurice Magne, Marie Bor, Paul Delharme, H. R. Lenormand, Franz Hellens, Benjamin Péret, Lucien Sable, Oscar de Swaif, Elias Finbert, Gaston Riou, Léon Werth, and a number of American and German writers.

The replies varied from the deliberately facetious to

1 Monde. 4.8.28.
carefully worded declarations demonstrating at least a serious consideration of the question. This was particularly the case of André Breton whose reply contained one of the rare attempts to answer the questionnaire in Marxist terms, taking the question fairly and squarely into the domains of Marxist philosophy and in particular into that area which deals with the consciousness:

"Assurément, il en va de la production artistique et littéraire comme de tout phénomène intellectuel en ce sens qu'il ne saurait à son propos se poser d'autre problème que celui de la souveraineté de la pensée. C'est dire qu'il est impossible de répondre à votre première question par l'affirmative ou la négative et que la seule attitude philosophique observable en pareil cas consiste à faire valoir" la contradiction" (qui existe) entre le caractère de la pensée humaine que nous représentions comme absolu et la réalité de cette pensée en une foule d'êtres humains individuels à la pensée limitée; c'est là une contradiction qui ne peut être résolue que dans le progrès infini, dans la série au moins pratiquement infinie des générations humaines successives. En ce sens, la pensée humaine possède de la souveraineté et ne la possède pas; et sa capacité de connaître est aussi illimitée que limitée. Souveraine et illimitée par sa nature, sa vocation en puissance et quand à son but final dans l'histoire; mais sans souveraineté et limitée en chacune de ses réalisations et en l'un quelconque de ses états. (Engels: La Morale et le Droit. Vérités éternelles."\(^1\))

Thus Breton asserted that human thought was made up of two contradictory facets, the first being an awareness that ultimately it will possess absolute knowledge as the cognitive process continues into the (almost infinite) future and the second that it is also limited

\(^1\)Breton, André. Monde 8.9.28.
at any one time to the degree of knowledge achieved at that stage in its development. The first consciousness provides for a certain amount of autonomy of the intellect since it cannot be wholly conditioned by the present. The application of a crude and global determinism was quite unacceptable to Breton under these conditions. Although this theory is not unrelated to Breton's major preoccupation of freedom it also conforms to Marxist philosophical principles concerning the theory of knowledge and the continually changing face of reality. According to Breton the acuteness of this contradiction as experienced by the great philosophers and poets of the past century had resulted in their work being totally taken up with its resolution; under such conditions it was foolish to talk of socio-economic determinant forces:

"Dans ces conditions, dire que cette production peut ou doit être le reflet des grands courants qui déterminent l'évolution économique et sociale serait porter un jugement assez vulgaire, impliquant la reconnaissance purement circonstancielle de la pensée et faisant bon marché de sa nature foncière, tout à la fois inconditionnée et conditionnée, utopique et réaliste, trouvant sa fin en elle-même et n'aspirant qu'à servir etc."¹

As for the second part of the questionnaire relating to the possibility of the creation of proletarian literature, Breton reiterated the reservation of Trotsky to the effect that it would be unrealisable in a pre-revolutionary

¹Breton, André. Art. cit.
society and secondly that the dictatorship of the proletariat would be too short to allow for the establishment of a proletarian tradition. Breton added that ideas on proletarian literature were based on the mechanistic assumption that if the bourgeoisie had produced its artistic tradition, the proletariat would do likewise.

Breton admitted that under special circumstances it might be possible for a writer of non-proletarian origins to place himself in a proletarian perspective, in which case his sensitivity and honesty would be at test, on the other hand there existed a school of bourgeois writers (the populists) who were living off the misery of the people, raking through Zola's filth and equating squalor and misery with "proletarian" art.

Thus Breton's reply to Monde's questionnaire can be said to be a rebuttal of the aims of the enquiry. First of all, he challenged the architects of the enquiry in terms of their own Marxist theory showing them to be at best pedestrian, and certainly in error (in terms of pure Marxist thought as opposed to the current line of the International); secondly the grave doubts expressed as to the possibility of realising a proletarian tradition in France could hardly be said to be encouraging for the

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1Breton quoted Engels, Marx and Trotsky in his letter.
editors\(^1\) of Monde charged with that very mission.

The extent of Breton's impatience with current literary policies may be gauged from this communication, partly due to his low opinion of the theoretical capacities of those nominally charged with directing the Party's literary policies and partly to the fact that together with the other surrealists who joined the Party in 1927 he was deliberately being excluded from all matters in this domaine and required to work his passage as an ordinary militant.\(^2\)

The replies of some of the writers of the Left, open supporters of Monde and Barbusse, were hardly more encouraging as indications of the penetration of Marxist thought in these circles. For example, Luc Durtain, who was to have some of his work serialised in Monde, seemed to have shed little of the idealism of his unaninimist background which he shared with Chennevière, Duhamel and Vildrac:

"L'art phénomène individuel? Dans sa qualité oui, dans sa teneur non pas! Lourde dette de tout écrivain à l'immense modèle aux milles visages qui circule tout autour de lui. Déviation séculaire à laquelle les œuvres servent de points de repère.

......Le plaisir de peindre doit enjamber toute barrière, dépasser les limites de tout parti.

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\(^1\) Unofficially of course these views were close to those of Barbusse.

\(^2\) Eluard was a member of a cell of tramwaymen while Breton was placed in a working class cell in the Gobelins quartier. (cf. Vailland, Roger. Le Surréalisme contre la Révolution p. 39. E.S. Paris 1948.)
Il y a dans l'univers, dans l'âme bien autre chose que la question sociale."¹

Henri Poulaille, deliberately avoiding the first question which would have led him to an acceptance or rejection of Marxist literary theory, chose only to answer the second part of the questionnaire:

"Je ne réponds qu'à la deuxième question de notre enquête. Aussi bien ceux qui nous répondront esquiveront la seconde et pour cause. ... Je crois à l'existence d'une littérature et d'un art exprimant les aspirations de la classe prolétarienne. Presque obligatoirement un art est un moyen d'expression et représentatif d'une classe. Jusqu'à maintenant seule la classe oisive a écrit, du moins nous n'avons pas pu connaître qu'elle dans ce domaine, surtout en France. Trop longtemps, écrire a été un passe-temps et lire un autre."²

Tristan Rémy, Francis André, Hbermont and Ayguesparse all accepted the questions replying in the affirmative and stating their solidarity with any revolutionary movement to be established along these lines; others of the stamp of Luc Durain adopted an essentially neutral stance, Miguel de Unamuno one of the enquiry's most illustrious correspondents rejected the idea of proletarian literature:

"Je ne crois pas qu'il y ait quelque manifestation de l'esprit humain, comme la production artistique et littéraire, qui soit un phénomène purement individuel, ni non plus, purement social. Un individu humain conscient sans société, est aussi

¹Durtain, Luc. Monde 8.9.28.
²Poulaille, Henri. Monde 27.10.28.
impossible qu'une société sans individus.

Je ne crois pas à l'art populaire. Ce que fait le peuple, c'est adopter ou repousser ce qu'un individu lui a donné.

La production littéraire reflète, sans doute, les grands courants qui déterminent l'évolution économique et sociale de l'humanité, mais reflète également, et mieux, les éternels désirs de l'âme individuelle, le désir de vérité, le désir de rêve consolateur, le désir d'amour et le désir d'immortalité.\(^1\)

A similar but more patronising response came from St. Georges de Bouhelier:

"Je n'attends d'eux une grande épopée. Il me suffirait qu'ils me disent une petite chanson.\(^2\)

As the replies were published it became obvious that for many the theories of Taine were more acceptable than those of Marx and Engels. A typical reply of this type came from Paul Souday:

"Nous sommes tous soumis à l'hérité et au milieu, modélés par nos ascendants, notre pays, le climat physique et moral, la société qui nous entoure et toute l'humanité qui nous a précédés....Elle (la production artistique) est certes déterminée d'une part, ainsi que Taine l'a fortement démontré, par la race, le milieu et le moment; mais Taine n'a jamais nié qu'elle le fit de l'autre, par le génie propre de l'artiste ou de l'écrivain.\(^3\)

Breaking a previous resolution not to interfere as replies were published, i.e. not to take aside any individual correspondent and reply to his assertions, Habaru, the

\(^1\) Unamuno, Miguel de. *Monde* 8.9.28.

\(^2\) Bouhelier, St. Georges de. *Monde* 27.10.28.

editor in charge, intervened directly when it became obvious that Taine was being substituted for Marx and Engels as an adequate source of materialist criticism. Stating that Taine's errors were largely due to the low level of development of the social sciences upon which depended much of his theory, Habaru also took the opportunity of expressing his regret that so many contributors had remained at the stage of Taine's theory:

"Depuis lors (l'époque de Taine), l'évolution rapide de la société industrielle moderne a permis à la sociologie de faire de nouveaux progrès. Les travaux historiques et économiques de Marx et Engels notamment ont démontré l'importance du mode de production comme facteur déterminant des modifications de tous les rapports sociaux. La notion du milieu et de moment se voit ainsi, depuis des années, nettement précisée, mais à part Elie Faure aucun des grands représentants de la pensée libérale n'a voulu profiter des découverts de marxisme. Seul Léon Werth entrevoit les dimensions du problème, et seul André Breton ose aborder la dialectique marxiste."

The bourgeois liberals had shown themselves to be equally backward in granting the possibility of proletarian literature, their connection between the workers and literature being limited to a naturalist enquiry into professions and a way of life:

"Considérant la question de l'influence sociale résolue par Taine, les mêmes intellectuels libéraux ne voient évidemment aucun lien entre la première et la deuxième question, où il est parlé de la classe ouvrière. La notion de classe n'existant pas pour eux, ils confirment ce que nous dit Camille Huysmans, "il leur arrive de voir le pauvre,

1 Habaru, A. "Notre enquête, à propos de Taine" Monde 29.9.28.
mais ils passent à côté du prolétaire, créateur
d'un ordre nouveau". Encore c'est M. Paul Souday
qui exprime le mieux leur incompréhension en
disant que "la classe ouvrière peut être matière
de littérature et d'art, tout comme les paysans,
les marins, l'armée, l'université et toutes les
professions". Que le "pauvre" soit matière de
littérature et d'art nul ne songe à contester, et
l'on nous cite Zola. Mais quand à faire dépendre,
non le sujet mais le fond même de l'inspiration des
rapports de classe, c'est là une pensée barbare qui
ne peut venir à l'esprit d'un civilisé. Tout cela,
pour M. Souday, c'est du communisme littéraire."\(^1\)

Habarut's disappointment is obvious; the enquiry may
have served the purpose of exposing the limitations of
the bourgeois liberal, which it undoubtedly set out to
do, but it also underlined the serious theoretical defic-
iency of the more committed intellectuals of the left.
Only a few of the left-wing intellectuals were prepared to
subscribe to the theoretical implications of the questions
posed in the enquiry and some of these had close links
with the Party (Francis André, Tristan Rémy), while
André Breton the most impressive of all the correspondents,
stood outside the communist pale. There were some
notable absences too; there were no replies from
Moussinac Fréville and Sadoule, all orthodox communists.
Could it have been that even at this early stage in the
development of Monde, Barbusse had made enemies in the
communist camp?

The enquiry demonstrated only too well that if Monde
was to influence the middle class intellectuals of the

\(^1\)Habarut, A. Art. cit.
cultural establishment, a great deal more groundwork had to be carried out. Undaunted by the experience of the enquiry into proletarian literature and the base superstructure theory as applied to artistic production, Habaru launched a second enquiry with Emile Zola as its subject. The enquiry had three immediate objectives:

1. To uncover any common ground between Zola's literary theory and that of the populists.
2. To establish whether Zola held any interest for the populists.
3. To find out whether his influence still prevailed among present day realists.

The first published reply was that of the young novelist André Malraux whose novel Les Conquérants won special praise in Monde as not only heralding new techniques in the novel, but producing a penetrating and analysis of the Chinese insurrection. Malraux's response was not at all encouraging for the organisers of the enquiry; he found Zola "médiocre" furthermore he was not so much interested in the subject portrayed by the novel as the transformation the subject is required to undergo in order to be described in novel form. Balzac, he pointed out, had a historical grasp of his times which filled his work with vision, something which Zola lacked. There was a further disadvantage in putting forward as a precursor of revolutionary literature in Malraux's opinion:

"En France une partie des ouvriers se rallie à la bourgeoisie, l'autre constitue le prolétariat,"

1"Emile Zola et la nouvelle génération". Monde 26.10.29.
qui est tout autre chose que le peuple. Et Zola peint Coupeau comme Flaubert peint Charles Bovary: peinture des moeurs animaux curieux. L'Alliance entre le romancier et le prolétariat me paraît reposer toujours sur un malentendu: ce n'est pas le roman qui exprima le prolétariat, ce n'est pas la chanson de geste qui a exprimé la bourgeoisie. In Malraux's eyes therefore, Zola was a doubly inappropriate choice, his naturalism was devoid of vision and it also led him to treat the workers as biological specimens, a bourgeois trait which the Monde group were going to compound by selecting the novel (the bourgeois art form par excellence) as the vehicle for revolutionary proletarian art. André Champson revealed that Zola had been a source of inspiration for him as a young man, but one suspects that he was referring specifically to the moral example set by Zola during the Dreyfus affair:

"Zola n'est ici qu'un prétexte. Il ne s'agit pas, n'est-ce pas d'instituer un débat entre littérateurs sur une question de littérauteur, mais très exactement de se prononcer pour ou contre la révolution." At the same time Guilloux expressed serious reservations on the power of writers to affect history (and the revolution) through their writing:

"La révolution se fait sans nous, et même contre nous. Elle ne tient pas compte de nos livres, de nos problèmes, de nos discours, et elle a raison. La vraie foi révolutionnaire ne bavarde pas, ne cherche à convaincre personne: elle agit et résolue."

The attitude of the proletarian writers was hardly less promising. Marcel Martinet felt that as yet the post-war literary modes had not produced anything superior to

1 Champson, André. Monde. 26.10.29.
Zola while Henri Poulaille claimed that the proletarian writer of today had too much to do without seeking out his literary ancestors:

"Les écrivains de métier ont trop à faire pour assurer leur position, pour songer qu'ils eurent des aînés et combien plus grands qu'eux: ils ne lisent donc pas."

Jean Tousseul, another proletarian writer pointed out that Zola could never be regarded as a popular writer as he had never lived or mixed with the people. However Edouard Peisson believed that Zola did have some influence, but the greatest problem of all was that of assuring the circulation of contemporary proletarian writers who were experiencing difficulties in reaching their public.

One reply was given special treatment by Monde, and that was the reply of Léon Lemonnier, one of the populist leaders. The tone of the introductory remarks by the Monde editor is not at all hostile:

"Sa réponse nous importait, puisqu'avec André Thérive, il est un des promoteurs et des théoriciens du populisme. Ses romans, Amour Interdit, La Femme sans péché, Le Passé des autres, Le sang qu'elle n'est pas versé, tendent à défendre les convictions de cette école. Les héros de ces livres sont évidemment choisis parmi le peuple et vivent dans les quartiers populaires, mais nous n'imagineons pas que le populisme, fut seulement cela. L'artifice ne suffit pas pour créer l'ambiance le rendre l'état d'âme. Nous devons aussi à Léon Lemonnier de remarquables études sur A.E. Poe et Baudelaire."  

Lemonnier expressed his admiration for Zola and his

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1Poulaille, Henri. Monde 2.11.29.

2In Monde 2.11.29.
ability to observe, a quality which he felt should help Zola's work to outlive its erroneous scientific premises. He also claimed Zola as a predecessor of populism but pointed out that he and his fellow writers wished to go further:

"A l'heure qui sonne, nous autres, romanciers populistes, nous voudrions réagir contre la littérature de l'après guerre en écrivant des romans de plus large humanité. Zola est donc aussi notre maître, puisqu'il a écrit sur le peuple, des romans que lit le peuple, et que ne soient pas des naïves histoires artificieuses, mais de grandes œuvres d'art."

It was ironic that the populist should have supplied one of the most favourable replies to this enquiry given the animosity which existed between Barbusse and this particular group. Having said this it would appear that despite previous hostility, a gesture was being made towards the populists and that furthermore it was being reciprocated. The rapprochement was short lived however as both camps soon returned to their previous positions.

On the whole correspondents were reluctant to hail Zola as their predecessor in whatever branch of realism they were engaged with the exception that as a moral symbol of justice, Zola was an inspiring figure. In the summing up of the enquiry, the organisers made claims for it which had certainly not been borne out by the replies published; there were signs too that the enquiry had been

cut short, probably due to its lack of success. On the whole results were disappointing, a fact which was barely concealed in the concluding article:

"L'enquête que nous terminons aujourd'hui, sans pouvoir publier quelques réponses parvenues trop tard, notamment celles de Pierre Paraf, Claire Gol, Céline, Lhôte, Jean Dorsenne, a prouvé que la génération des écrivains d'après guerre ne rejette pas l'œuvre de Zola-Quelles que soient les réserves sur le fond ou sur la forme qui ont été formulées par la plupart de ceux dont nous avons publié l'opinion, c'est cette constatation qui domine. Mais il est vrai aussi que chacun interprète Zola à sa manière et qu'à part quelques exceptions, c'est surtout "le peintre du peuple" que l'on voit en lui. On réduit ainsi singulièrement la portée d'une œuvre qui n'est pas uniquement esthétique mais sociale."

What was the significance of these two enquiries for Monde and Marxist theory? First of all as exercises in reaching a large intellectual public and confronting it with the issues it considered crucial, Monde undoubtedly succeeded, but there remains the reservation that it was only that part of the literary establishment likely to be sympathetic (albeit a reasonably large section) which was affected. As a review whose published aim it was to win support from the intellectual left the results were not quite so encouraging.

It followed from the first enquiry that many intellectuals were not ready to endorse Marxist theory either as to the determining forces behind the arts or

1"Fin de l'enquête" Monde, 23.11.29.
as to the form that militant art should take in the
service of the revolution. Most of the bourgeois
intellectuals who replied were still obviously influenced
by a persistent form of nineteenth century positivist
literary theory incarnated in the person of Taine. The
"Marxist" theory put forward by Monde i.e. that literature
was conditioned by the class struggle, was certainly too
crude for Breton and possibly for other writers too. In
orthodox Marxist terms, proletarian literature if ever
it did get off the ground, would be an extremely short-
lived affair. If the Monde group had expected gestures
of good will and confidence, they were certainly not
forthcoming.

The Zola enquiry was launched in a climate of
intellectual unrest typified by the outbursts of Julien
Benda and Emmanuel Berl whose crises of confidence in the
bourgeois intellectual establishment suggested that the
time was ripe to put forward Zola as the precursor of a
movement of moral and literary regeneration. As has been
seen, this attempt was as ill fated as the first and
possibly more so.

In 1933 during the debate organised by l'Humanité
on proletarian literature, André Breton made a strong
plea for the reinforcement of Marxist literary theory
without which no progress would be made.

"De la même manière que nous avons pensé devoir fixer comme première tâche pratique à la sous-section philosophique créée à l'intérieur de la section
littéraire de notre organisation la rédaction d'un manuel de matérialisme dialectique (.............); de la même manière, dis-je, que notre rôle est de rémédier, ne fut-ce que dans des proportions très modestes, à cet état de choses, il me semble qu'une des tâches qui devraient s'imposer à la section plus particulièrement littéraire de notre Association serait l'élaboration d'un manuel marxiste de littérature générale, tendant à situer clairement, à l'exclusion de tous les autres, les auteurs et les œuvres dont l'importance historique, sous l'angle très large où nous engage à les considérer Engels, apparaît aujourd'hui indéniable.  

Breton was excluded from the Party shortly after this debate. The first manual of dialectical materialism to be produced in France for a French public appeared in 1939; the Party is still engaged today (1975) in editing the literary history advocated by Breton in 1933.

It would be wrong however to dismiss Monde as non-productive theoretically since there were attempts to explore the possibilities offered by Marxism to the literary critic and historian; the fact that several

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1The association referred to was the A.E.A.R. constituted in 1932.


dissident communists had found refuge in Monde was actually in its favour in this instance, since untrammeled by orthodoxy they felt all the more free to innovate. One area of theory which caught the imagination of the Monde group was the possibility of incorporating Freudian theory into a Marxist approach to literature; this was particularly the case of the young intellectual Marc Ickowicz whose work, *La Littérature à la lumière du Matérialisme historique*, represents the longest single statement by a French Marxist on the subject of literature and the arts in the inter-war period.

The Marxist theory of Marc Ickowicz and the Freudo-Marxists

Ickowicz possessed a skill which was indispensable to the French Marxist desirous of increasing his knowledge of his subject, i.e., he had a knowledge of German and English which allowed him to read in these languages. Although very few Marxist works existed in French, the period 1927-1928, saw the appearance of several important commentaries on Marxism,¹ which, judging from the number of references to them, were of considerable help to Ickowicz in his study.

The attitude adopted in this work is, in many respects, reminiscent of that of Emile Hennequin, i.e. Ickowicz regarded the social sciences as possible auxiliaries in a global materialist approach to his subject (the kind of refreshingly open-minded attitude which was shortly to be criticised as "eclectic" by a more and more exigent Soviet orthodoxy). The structure of the work reflects the breadth and scope of the task undertaken by Ickowicz. First of all he considers what might be salvaged from the 19th century positivists and notably from Taine, secondly he assesses the opportunities offered by the Marxist approach and thirdly he traces the development of the different psychoanalytical schools and suggests that they might supplement certain areas of Marxist criticism where the latter have proved to be problematic.

The positivists, he felt were working along the right lines, but due to the insufficiencies of their methods and the incorrectness of certain of their premises, not to mention the relatively backward state of the social sciences, their work had been largely rendered obsolete. For example, Ickowicz argued very convincingly that Taine's criterion of "climate" was totally inadmissible and that equally, the item of race could be disregarded in modern times when improved communications had rendered racial standardisation impossible, if indeed, it had ever existed. On the other hand the concept of milieu as put forward by
Taine had distinct possibilities; this was something akin to what the Marxists were to describe later as the "social life", the praxis.

Turning to the early Marxists, Ickowicz remarked rightly that Marx and Engels gave only the briefest of indications as to the application of the Marxist method of analysis of the superstructure. This was the same conclusion which led Labriola to declare:

"La ligne de méthode est trouvée mais l'exécution particulière n'est pas facile."

The reason that Labriola (and Plekhanov) should have found the application of the theory outlined by Marx in his preface to his Criticism of Political Economy, so problematic, was that he rejected as simplistic and mechanistic any attempt to link artistic and religious phenomena directly with the relations of production contained in the economic base:

"Il s'agit de remonter des choses à la conception. C'est là un problème: et même nous trouvons une multitude de problèmes, tant sont variées, multiples, multiformes et complexes les projections que les hommes ont faites d'eux-mêmes et de leurs conditions économico-sociales, de leurs attentes et de leurs désillusions, dans leurs créations artistiques et religieuses."

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2 On this point, Ickowicz takes exception to a statement by Bukharin to the effect that religion and art could be influenced directly as well as indirectly by the base.

Ickowicz was equally impressed by the same awareness of complexity in Plekhanov's theory, although he felt that it was somewhat exaggerated:

"Plekhanov constate, lui aussi, que l'influence des conditions économiques sur les idéologies est indirecte et médiate, et il aboutit à la formule suivante:1

1. État des forces productives;
2. Rapports économiques, conditionnés par ces forces;
3. Régime social-politique, édifié sur une base économique donnée;
4. Psychologie de l'homme social, déterminée en partie directement par l'économie, en partie par tout le régime social-politique édifié sur elle;
5. Idéologies diverses reflétant cette psychologie.

Voilà une formule large qui, bien qu'étant un peu trop compliquée, pose le problème sur une base solide."2

Ickowicz rightly underlined the predominance given by Plekhanov to the influence of the class struggle on art and literature, but went on to show how if over-interpreted, it could lead to a distortion of the facts as in the case of Upton Sinclair who believed that the successful artists of an era were those who reflected directly the ruling class. Equally Sinclair's assertion that "All art is propaganda" was a dangerously

simplistic concept in which art was either "for" or "against" the ruling regime. The source of Sinclair's error lay in his belief that art is influenced directly from the base.

Having made the case for a recognition of the principles laid down by Labriola and Plekhanov, Ickowicz went on to point out that the sociologically determined elements of a work of art were not its sole ingredients:

"C'est qu'entre le milieu social et une oeuvre d'art intervient le facteur individu, c'est-à-dire le tempérament personnel de l'artiste, son caractère, son talent particulier, ses idées propres, ses aspirations, ses penchants. Oui l'écrivain ne fait que rendre son milieu social, mais la manière dont il le fait importe aussi, et, souvent lorsque nous avons à faire à un grand talent ou à un génie, importe beaucoup."

The problem of individual genius, the Achilles heel of Marxist literary and artistic theory, presented a challenge which Ickowicz felt could be answered by the latest of the social sciences, psychoanalysis. Already there were examples of Freudian techniques applied to literature or literary themes, Freud's study of the casket incident in the Merchant of Venice, his theory as to the amorous dilemmas of Wagner's heroines...Stocker too had given a Freudian explanation of Greuz's Broken Pitcher.

In the course of an extensive description of the theories of Jung, Adler, Freud, De Saussure, Baouduin and their disciples, Ickowicz draws the following conclusions.

1. The subconscious is the source of the individual
genius of artists and writers. They possess genius because, unlike ordinary mortals, they have access to their subconscious and are able to lend it expression through their art.

2. The artist produces his art as a form of sublimation.

3. Sexual instinct is not only expressed through the creation of art, but also in its appreciation. Love is a fact of aesthetic emotion.

4. The subconscious may be explored using the techniques of psychoanalysis. Any objection that to do so is to capitulate to individualism may be countered by the fact that the libidinal drives of the artist are tempered by social norms, which provides the Marxist with the ultimate social determinant.

In an article in Monde, Ickowicz set out the main lines of any investigation combining Marxist and psycho-analytical principles:

"Elle (la méthode) sera divisée en deux grandes parties: la sociologie du génie collectif de la question et elle analysera les conditions économiques et sociales dans lesquelles un grand homme a surgi: elle étudiera l'état de la société, les divisions en classes et la psychologie de ces classes, l'ambiance sociale et familiale, l'instruction, l'éducation etc., cette recherche s'inspirera avant tout de la conception matérialiste de l'histoire qui seule est capable de jeter de vives lumières sur ce côté du problème, laissé le plus souvent dans l'ombre la plus absolue. L'individuologie du génie analysera la chimie psychologique du grand homme; elle étudiera son caractère, son tempérament, son originalité, ses manies et ses anormalités, sa genre de vie et la liaison entre sa vie et ses réalisations. L'individuologie du génie se basera sur différentes méthodes psychologiques d'investigation; elle prendra largement en considération la méthode freudienne mais elle n'ignorera non plus les recherches de Lombroso et les données de la psychologie pathologique." ¹

¹Ickowicz, Marc. "Le génie littéraire et les conditions économiques" Monde 5.1.29 (Also published as appendix to La Littérature À la lumière du Matérialisme historique.)
Unfortunately it has proved impossible to find any evidence that Ickowicz applied his principles to any piece of literary criticism, or indeed that he produced any further work either within or outside Monde.

Notwithstanding, Ickowicz is an important figure with regard to Marxist literary theory in France since he illustrates the fact that at this time it was becoming more possible to form ideas on the potential offered by Marxist philosophy and theory for a consideration of the arts which went beyond the quarrels surrounding the establishment of proletarian literature, the day to day criticism of decadence and formalism in bourgeois art, etc. There were signs too that Ickowicz was not alone and that there was a willingness in Monde to discuss some of the wide issues of literary theory within the materialist context. In other words the main source of inspiration in this field to date in France, the revolutionary syndicalist influence, was being replaced by a more reflective Marxist current which was emerging as the communist movement matured and more basic works were becoming available (especially to those who read German). These ideas were only beginnings and serve more to underline the potential within the Monde team rather than point to definite achievements.

Ickowicz's interest in Freudian theory and its possible relevance to Marxist was shared by other
Marxists at this time a fact which was reflected in Monde.

The Soviet commissar for education Lounatcharsky, wrote in one of the early editions of Monde that although it was possible to define a work of art from the Marxist point of view, the subjective or aesthetic element was extremely difficult to fix:

"Naturellement, là où l'art est une organisation de la pensée, il est très facile de tracer une ligne de l'idéologie jusqu'au groupe social qui l'a produite. Là, au contraire, où il s'agit de l'organisation du sentiment, qui est la fonction la plus caractéristique de l'art, cette tâche est très difficile. Voilà pourquoi l'histoire et la théorie de l'art restent à l'écart du marxisme."

Lounatcharksy then went on to indicate music and architecture as being the most subjective of the arts and therefore most elusive to the Marxist theorist:

"Par ces exemples nous entrons dans le domaine de l'organisation du subconscient"

In Monde, Freudian theory was seen from two differing points of view. The veteran Habaru had no hesitation in ranking Freud with that other arch enemy of socialist thought, Bergson. Both had had a deplorable influence on culture and had helped to hasten the decadence of

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1 In Germany the work of Wilhelm Reich on Freudo-Marxism were beginning to be published e.g. Dialektischer Materialismus und Psychanalyse, in Unter Dem Banner Des Marxismus. German and Russian editions 1929. (Ickowicz did not include this in his bibliography.)

2 Lounatcharksy, Andrei. "Le Marxisme et l'art" Monde 29,12,28.
bourgeois art:

"Aux romanciers et aux poètes de ce temps compliqué, où la guerre a brisé la moule des disciplines sociales pour libérer la meute des instincts individuels, Bergson avait apporté la formule de l'intuition maîtresse. Il n'est pas loin de l'intuition à l'instinct, et de l'instinct au sexe où triomphe les enseignements du maître viennois. Ainsi Freud et Bergson se partagent l'honneur d'inspirer tout un courant littéraire basé sur l'analyse des psychologies les plus compliquées, la chirurgie des tréfonds de l'inconscient, la recherche des correspondances les plus étonnantes, l'arlequinade des images les plus fantaisistes, bref un art absolument étranger aux réalités que nous vivons, un art sans aucune perspective sur les mouvements profonds de la vie sociale."

On the other hand, Marc Ariel, another of Monde's regular contributors deplored the overdependence on sociological analysis to the detriment of the subjective which was all too often characteristic of Marxist criticism. Ariel's comment is almost identical to that of Ickowicz:

"L'artiste, écrit Sinclair est un produit social, sa psychologie et le caractère de son oeuvre sont déterminés par les forces économiques dominantes de son temps - C'est une formule trop vague qui par cela même peut donner lieu à la confusion. Car dire que l'art est déterminé directement par les conditions économiques, c'est admettre qu'on puisse expliquer la IXe Symphonie de Beethoven, la Comédie Humaine de Balzac et les tableaux de Delacroix par le régime capitaliste de la production, ce qui ne tient pas debout. Il faut nécessairement ajouter que les formes économiques ne déterminent l'art qu'indirectement, au second degré, et qu'entre la base économique et la superstructure idéologique, s'interposent différents facteurs comme la psychologie des différentes classes, l'état

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Reactions to Ickowicz's book in *Monde* are interesting. One of *Monde*'s critics, Fritz Rosenfeld, welcomed this enrichment of the Marxist method and the blow struck against the over emphasis on the materialist side of criticism:

"Tous ceux qui assistent à ce combat pour une nouvelle conception de la littérature sont particulièremen heureux de voir Ickowicz s'élever contre l'exagération du principe matérieliste et contre cette superficialité condamnable qui déclare en bloc "réactionnaire" au romantisme et qui le rejette."2

Rosenfeld's assumption that Ickowicz's book represented a plea for the re-evaluation of the "spiritual" via the subjective is an eloquent example of how far-reaching this kind of innovation could be for a Marxist hovering on the brink of idealism. The critic who originally voiced the criticism of Freud and pointed out the danger in *Monde*, Habaru, also commented on Ickowicz's work. Reviewing two books in the same article, Habaru highlighted the nefarious influence of Bergson in *Les Matinées du Hêtre rouge*, by Frédéric Lefebvre, while welcoming Ickowicz's contribution to aesthetic theory:

"Nous croyons au contraire que l'esthétique ne deviendra une science que si nous l'envisageons en liaison avec toutes les formes de l'activité

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1 Ariel, Marc. "Art et propagande". *Monde* 29.9.28.

2 Rosenfeld, Fritz. "Littérature et matérialisme historique" *Monde* 30.3.29.
matérielle et intellectuelle des hommes, c'est-à-dire, si nous l'étudions du point de vue sociologique. Dans son livre La littérature à la lumière du Matérialisme historique, Marc Ickowicz a tenté un premier effort dans cette voie. Si le livre de Frédéric Lefebvre nous charme et, par endroits nous apporte d'utile clarté sur des problèmes de détail, celui d'Ickowicz nous permet de confronter les doctrines esthétiques et dessine une ébauche d'interprétation dialectique des phénomènes artistiques.¹

Several points emerge from this review; first of all having condemned Bergson and Freud together in his previous article, Habaru was presented with a first class opportunity of doing the same on this occasion. Although he did not avail himself of this opportunity it will be noted that Freud is not mentioned in his appreciation of Ickowicz's work and that his opening remarks stress the sociological aspect. Perhaps this was done out of sympathy for the young man who dedicated his first publication to him, or perhaps it was out of deference to a growing interest among Marxists in Monde in the work of Freud and his fellow psychoanalysts. Freud did not feature in the columns of Monde until eighteen months after the article by Ickowicz. On this occasion a lengthy article was devoted to an explanation of Freudian theory and particularly to the application of this to sociology. The writer was at great pains to point out the incompatibility of Freudian and Marxist theory; according to him, some felt that by extending

¹ Habaru, A. "Conceptions esthétiques" Monde, 6.4.29.
Freudian theory to sociology a useful rapprochement to Marxism was being effected:

"Bien au contraire, elle n'a fait que mettre à nu une incompatibilité profonde qui, du moins sur le terrain philosophique, oppose irréductiblement le freudisme et le marxisme. ... Disons seulement pour situer leur opposition que si le marxisme considère que l'individuel est déterminé par le monde extérieur social et le social par l'économique, le freudisme a tendance à ramener tout phénomène, individuel comme social, à des conflits d'essence intérieure psychologique."

If a negative situation of blind opposition of the one to the other were to be avoided, stated Flamm, certain features of Freudian theory had to be understood. At this point Flamm repeated Ickowicz's argument that society has the last word in the control of the individual and concluded his article with the implication that Freudeans could do very well to enlist Marxist theory to help them define the sociological mechanism at work. While these discussions were going on in Monde with the overall blessing of all concerned, there was no dubiety as to the position of Freud as far as the Soviet based U.I.E.R. was concerned. Referring to the Soviet intellectuals (A.M. Reissner and A.B. Zalkind) the U.I.E.R. correspondent attacked their endorsement of Freudian theory:

"Ils sont de l'avis que le matérialisme historique, le marxisme, a reçu en Freud un nouvel et puissant allié. Ils se trompent. La psychologie de Freud est "anti-sociale" par suite de son caractère ultra-individualiste. Le Freudisme n'a rien de commun..."

avec le marxisme et le matérialisme. Il voile et amoindrit la signification de la lutte de classe. Le caractère anti-prolétarien de l'idéologie freudienne se manifeste tant dans le caractère général idéaliste de sa méthode et de son système que dans ses détails. Il se manifeste par la surestimation de l'importance spécifique du "principe du plaisir" et de l'érotisme; il se manifeste par la surestimation des éléments du narcissisme (et de l'individualisme). Il se manifeste par le fatalisme décadent de son "aspiration à la répétition" et de son aspiration à la mort". Il se manifeste par son scepticisme et son pessimisme à l'égard de la science et de la puissance humaines. La vague d'enthousiasme freudien qui a passé sur l'Europe occidentale est une vague de réaction bourgeoise contre le matérialisme, une vague de décadence. Et si elle s'arrête au seuil de l'Union des Soviets, si le freudisme n'a pas eu une grande extension parmi nous, nous en sommes dans une large mesure redevables à notre littérature marxiste conséquente qui a su apprécier à temps, à leur juste valeur, les déviations freudiennes et leur donner la riposte qui s'imposait."

Thus spoke the voice of the International and orthodox Marxist-Leninism. (Lenin regarded the sexual drive as a physical need like any other.) The language of the above with its dogmatic clichés and monolithic condemnations serves very well to underline what the French Marxist desirous of extending the frontiers of his philosophy could expect of the Soviet Union, it also serves to illustrate very well the difference between Monde, the unofficial organ of the U.I.E.R. in France and the mouthpiece of the parent body.

The main theoretical line in Monde after Kharkov was supplied by Barbusse (cf. above) with a double fronted approach favouring France's naturalist heritage (and

1Stoliarov, A. "Le Freudisme et les "freudo-marxistes" La Littérature de la Révolution Mondiale. V. 3 1931.
particularly Zola) and offering open house to the proletarian writers sympathetic to the theory of Henri Poulaille; the latter left Monde in the course of 1932 under ever-increasing pressure from communist sources, partly reflected in Barbusse's reluctance to accept Poulaille's anarchist definition of proletarian literature. Furthermore the increasingly difficult political situation created above all by the fall from grace of Trotsky, produced internal tensions within Monde.

After the departure of the proletarian writers from Monde in 1932, Magdeleine Paz produced a weekly column of general criticism. Her articles reveal a warm but politically uncritical humanism resulting in the broadest possible definition of proletarian literature; any literature which took upon itself the task of describing the working class condition could not help but be revolutionary in her opinion. Furthermore, it was the task of the revolutionary critic to reinforce the work of the revolutionary artist by highlighting the truths contained in this work while seizing the opportunity to attack the bourgeoisie and its institutions with the utmost vigour.

Magdeleine Paz, therefore, remained true to the earlier revolutionary ideals and tendencies exhibited by Clarté.

There were signs at this time in Monde which reflected
the wave of unrest in the communist world of the early thirties. An example of the crises which beset the communist movement was the "cas Serge", i.e. the defence carried out by Magdeleine Paz, Breton and other dissidents in support of the writer Victor Serge (the former Clarté correspondent), who had been imprisoned by the Stalinist regime following his open support for Trotsky. One of Paz's most eloquent pronouncements in favour of Serge is contained in her commentary of his pamphlet "Littérature et Révolution" (a short essay on the controversial subject of proletarian literature). Paz pointed out that Serge had always adopted an attitude of positive support towards the proletarian writers on condition (a) that they be given the necessary instruction and material possibilities to produce their art, and (b) that they do not set themselves up as the sole source of revolutionary art. It was for the second reason that Serge had run foul of the RAPP when it was in power and now that a new orthodoxy was emerging with the same ambitions to control, he remained as opposed as ever to the establishment view of limited artistic freedom in revolutionary art.

Paz noted the existence of crisis as reflected in Serge's work and his predicament:


"Au moment que voici, nous sommes en présence de deux courants nettement opposés. D'une part à peine sortie des limbes, encore à l'état de promesse, on veut faire endosser à cette littérature le cornet de l'orthodoxie et l'on installe son berceau sur une estrade de Congrès: pour veiller à son éclosion, on s'en remet à des rapporteurs, à des tribuns et à des bureaucrates-ni écrivains ni ouvriers-entre elle et le prolétariat vivant, on place un paravent fait de résolutions, de mots d'ordre et d'exclusions et l'on écarte d'elle le souffle fort et bien faisant de la réalité.

En face de cette tendance, une autre s'est formée. Elle n'est pas encore totalement affirmée, mais elle est saine car elle s'inspire du réel."

This important theoretical and ideological statement by Paz at once underlines the difference between her view of proletarian literature and that of the communist International. Her theory corresponded to that of the anarcho-syndicalists i.e. that only workers who have experienced the work situation can produce authentic proletarian literature. Proletarian realism could not be produced on the signing of a decree by bureaucrats ensconced in an oppressive administrative hierarchy.

In 1932 therefore, there were distinct signs of a growing confrontation between those intellectuals who had rallied to Barbusse's call in 1928 reassured that their revolutionary-syndicalist sympathies would be respected, and those who had entered the French communist party through support for the IIIrd International.

1 In the course of the changes in the U.I.E.R., the title of the former proletcult dominated international review La littérature de la Révolution Mondiale, was changed to La Littérature Internationale.
The events to which Paz referred were the official dissolution of the RAPP and the constitution in 1932 of a single, state controlled Writers' Union in the U.S.S.R. The International Writers' Union (the U.I.E.R.), was retained having been purged of its proletcult leadership and steps taken to establish new sections abroad supported by national communist parties. In France stress was laid on the participation of fellow travellers in this movement, (in accordance with the directives of the International anxious to oppose the rising fascist menace on as broad a front as possible), indeed, the first inaugural meeting\(^1\) of the new organisation, the Association des Écrivains et des Artistes Révolutionnaires, was chaired by a non-communist, the artist and critic Francis Jourdain. In the course of this meeting Vaillant-Couturier, editor in chief of \(l'Humanité\), was elected general secretary.

A recruiting campaign followed and a circular was sent to likely supporters signed by Vaillant-Couturier and Henri Barbusse in December of 1932.

Paul Nizan soon emerged as a leading figure in the A.E.A.R. and it was he who launched a virulent attack on Monde in October 1932, accusing the Monde group of eclecticism and even worse, treachery, with regard to the International:

"Il y a le groupe Monde; c'est le groupe des traitres, Monde protégé par le nom de Barbusse

\(^{1}\) Held on March 17th 1932.
joue depuis des années un jeu fort précis de trahison révolutionnaire. Les collaborateurs de cette feuille, derrière le paravent fourni naïvement par Barbusse d'une objectivité humaine, ont même les attaques les plus perfides contre les révolutionnaires. Cette équipe est en général composée d'exclus du parti communiste qui s'assigne comme tâche essentiellement révolutionnaire de lutter contre le parti qui les a chassés. Monde est devenu un papier social démocrate et radical socialiste qui joua un rôle de confusion dangereux, qui répandit dans les couches de lecteurs ouvriers un brouillard propre à toutes les conspirations bourgeoises.1

This was the voice of the International anxious to discipline those who had undertaken to run this journal financed, in the first instance, by the International.

The "groupe" was identified the following year on its removal from the editorial board of Monde:
Magdeleine Paz, Gaston Bergery, Augustin Habaru, Bertrand de Jouvenel, Tristan Rémy, Philippe Lamour, Robert-Jean Longuet (Marx's French grandson), A. Minard, Louis Vallon and Marc Bernard. The group consisted of proletarian writers (of anarchist sympathies), radicals, socialists and members of the communist opposition (Trostkyites).

Barbusse found himself under increasing pressure from all sides. For some, the great moral hero of Le Feu had failed miserably to uphold his values by not speaking out against the Stalinist purges of the old

revolutionary leadership and in particular, as far as the French were concerned, against the Serge affair.

For others, Barbusse, although regarded as being immune against personal attack, had to be brought into line with the policies of the International. In the end, Barbusse took action by excluding his collaborators in Monde, some of whom had worked in his various pacifist organisations from 1919. Barbusse claimed in an editorial that an attempt to take over Monde had been thwarted; no evidence of any such venture has ever been discovered to date:

"Ce n’est pas de gaieté de cœur que j’ai accepté leur départ. Ils ont soutenu Monde dans pas mal de moments difficiles. Mais au moment où la situation nationale et internationale exige une ligne d’action plus nette, plus énergique, les différences de vue qui avaient toujours existé au sein du journal et qui pendant un certain temps pouvaient s’y accorder devinrent des divergences profondes. La collaboration s’avéra surtout impossible au moment où il ne s’agissait plus de redresser Monde en face d’une situation mondiale mais de liquider la tentative de main-mise sur notre revue par un groupe qui poursuivait d’autres buts que des nôtres et qui avait déjà gagné une certaine influence sur Monde."

Following the purge of Monde, the A.E.A.R. intellectuals took over. Paul Nizan, for example, contributed to the weekly column of literary criticism formerly assured by Magdeleine Paz, while Jean Fréville

was responsible for a "Page Marxiste" designed to further the dissemination of Marxist theory in France, especially in the context of culture and the arts.

One of the first important policy statements of the newly constituted Monde came in the shape of a declaration to the effect that revolutionary literature and art in France could provide a valuable weapon in the struggle against fascism:

1. Il n'y a pas d'art neutre, pas de littérature neutre, pas plus qu'il n'y a d'état neutre en régime de lutte de classes. La prétendue neutralité est toujours un sacrifice à la classe dominante.

2. Un art et une littérature révolutionnaires existent en France. Ils ont été longtemps réduits à des efforts dispersés, il faut les aider, les organiser pour mener une lutte sérieuse et conséquente contre la littérature et l'art conformistes, contre les tendances fascistes qui utilisent la terminologie révolutionnaire.

3. Une littérature et un art prolétariens sont en train de naître. Il faut les développer et les organiser. Le prolétariat doit poser dès à présent les fondements d'une culture prolétarienne qui ne pourra pas s'épanouir qu'au lendemain de la prise de pouvoir, mais qui dès l'époque actuelle, doit servir à préparer cette victoire.

4. Une interprétation de l'art et de la littérature révolutionnaires et de la littérature et de l'art prolétariens, traduisent le rapprochement des intellectuels

Fréville published the first French translations of Engels' letters to Minna Kautsky and Margaret Harkness in this column in 1935 (Monde. 1er Mars). Cf. above.
spécialisés et des ouvriers s'éveillant à la culture de classe, est destinée à obtenir des résultats rapides, tant au point de vue de la différence des écrivains et artistes professionnels qu'au point de vue du développement de la culture ouvrière.

5. L'art et la littérature révolutionnaires et prolétariens ne doivent pas avoir pour but l'exposé permanent et schématique d'une thèse. Nous voulons simplement "opposer à une littérature dont la liberté n'est qu'hypocrisie et qui, en réalité, est liée à la bourgeoisie, une littérature réellement libre, ouvertement attachée au prolétariat." Nous voulons combattre, nous ne voulons à aucun prix bureaucratiser le combat.

6. La crise, la menace fasciste, les dangers de guerre, l'exemple du développement culturel des masses en U.R.S.S. en face de la regression de la civilisation occidentale, fournissent à l'heure présente, des conditions objectives favorables au développement d'une action littéraire et artistique prolétarienne et révolutionnaire en France.¹

If this statement has been reproduced in extenso, it is because it reveals significant attitudes within the A.E.A.R. of the latter part of 1933 which were not evident in the harangue of Nizan published in 1932. It is distinctly conciliatory in tone attempting to attract as wide a support as possible. Where Nizan had proclaimed that "Toute littérature est une propagande."² Vaillant-Couturier asserted that "L'art et la littérature révolutionnaires et prolétariens ne doivent pas avoir pour but


Obviously the increase in the fascist threat both within and outside France between 1932 and 1933 had been dramatic enough for the Party to pursue a more reconciliatory policy. One group, however could not be admitted into the alliance and that was the now identifiably Trotskyist faction whose origins tended to be syndicalist and Sorelian.

Monde continued to be published until 1935 under A.E.A.R. policy but it was significant that it ceased publication very shortly after Barbusse's death that year. Again, out of respect for Barbusse and his reputation among a large part of the working class and the pacifist Left, the Party had chosen not to interfere in his activity until his death made intervention less dangerous.

Conclusion

The evolution of Monde is closely linked to the personality and comportment of its director Henri Barbusse and with the inter-play of the prevailing political forces of the left faced with the fascist threat. Monde was created in the first instance to provide a platform for French party proletcult writers by the U.I.E.R., then under the control of the Soviet proletcult

\[\text{Vaillant-Couturier, art. cit.}\]
organisations. Barbusse did not comply with this remit choosing rather to expand and implement his own theories as to the development of indigenous French revolutionary art and literature, theories which reflected Barbusse's own nineteenth century middle-class culture.

This was characterised by his conviction that the naturalist realist tradition was the forerunner of revolutionary art in France, and that the proletarian writers would not become effective until they had mastered the techniques and idiom of their educated bourgeois counterparts. Barbusse's paternalism towards the proletarian writers in France was sincere and to some extent effective in that they found a voice in Monde, but from the Moscow point of view (between 1928 and 1930) Barbusse was in flagrant contradiction with the directives of the International; instead of nurturing the art of the Party's rabcors Barbusse was actually helping individuals who made no secret of their opposition to the International. It was for this reason that he was censured at Kharkov in 1930 and it was for the same reason that he was criticised, however indirectly, by the representatives in France of the newly constituted A.E.A.R. in 1932.

Because of Barbusse's ability to survive politically (due to the prestige which accrued to him during the first world war), he was able to pursue a relatively
independent policy within Monde leaving the day to day running of his newspaper to his fellow militants of his pacifist days some of whom had followed him into (and out of) Clarté. The results in terms of literary and artistic theory were not without interest to the observer of the evolution of Marxist theory in this domain in France. Because of the heterogeneous nature of the Monde team, and because they did not require to recognise restrictive ideological directives from Moscow and the proletcult, literary theory and criticism in Monde tended to be varied and reflect the preoccupations of the individual contributors. In one instance at least (Marc Ickowicz), this freedom meant the possibility to explore the possibilities of dialectical and historical materialism in the context of literature. But this was an isolated example, the critical canons of the nineteenth century positivists such as Taine tended to prevail when they were not overlaid with the revolutionary commitment of anarcho-syndicalist criteria of spontaneity and authenticity as well as those current literary questions such as Freudian psychoanalytical applications to criticism.

Nevertheless, Monde was an improvement on Clarté where the incursion of indigenous revolutionary forces had rendered impossible any sustained reflection of Marxist cultural theory. Monde between 1928 and 1932 had known a period of relative calm and had succeeded in providing a
platform for the discussion of some important issues such as the nature of proletarian literature, the significance of Zola etc.

The changing political climate at home and abroad eventually brought about a profound change of direction in the period 1932-33, when the A.E.A.R. took over from the original editorial team. Perhaps it was because Barbusse had been assured that the new Monde would once more serve as a focal point for a collective and very broadly based resistance to fascism, that he did not oppose the sacking of his collaborators. In any case the hard line of the A.E.A.R. in 1932 was softened considerably by 1933 when intellectuals of all convictions were invited to support culture and oppose fascism.

The A.E.A.R. had ambitions of its own with regard to publishing its own review which it realised in 1933. The fact that Monde ceased publication immediately after the death of Barbusse in 1935 indicated that both the man and his newspaper had fulfilled their function.
The 1930s saw an influx of intellectuals into the sphere of influence of the French communist party of an exceptionally high calibre, and in some cases of considerable prestige. When, in 1930, Barbusse pointed out in his message to the Kharkov congress that the small band of revolutionary writers then active in France could not be expected to lead a national awakening of interest and commitment to their art, he would no doubt have been gratified to know that within a few years some of the most brilliant stars of the younger generation of intellectuals, not to mention those already established, would unite under the banner of art and revolution in the kind of national and international organisation that Barbusse had repeatedly attempted to promote since the beginnings of the Clarté movement of 1919.

What were the conditions which had favoured the establishment of the A.E.A.R. in France?¹


In the first instance, the dissolution of the proletarian artists' and writers' organisation in the U.S.S.R. in 1932, cleared the way for a much broader policy in the arts especially with regard to the inclusion of non-communist fellow travellers in Party inspired groups; this meant that artists such as Gorky and Mayakovsky (who committed suicide in 1930 probably due to increasing harassment from the RAPP) were rehabilitated and presented to the public as allies in the mounting struggle against fascism. The International did not hesitate to translate these events into policies affecting the relationship between national communist parties and sympathetic intellectuals of their countries, consequently the U.I.E.R. encouraged the setting up of a broadly based front organisation in France. This was undertaken by Vaillant-Couturier from 1'Huma nité and endorsed not only by Party members such as Barbusse, Jean Fréville and Moussinac, but also by "fellow travellers" such as Francis Jourdain and the novelist Charles Vildrac.

The second factor which favoured the foundation of the A.E.A.R., was the fact that since the mid-twenties two important groups of young intellectuals had been added to those of Clarté as far as a declared interest

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1 Stalin's "canonisation" of the dead Mayakovsky was interpreted as an extremely significant gesture towards the fellow travellers.

2 Symbolically the three currents met in the protest organised by the Clarté group against the Rif war. "Contre la guerre du Maroc - Contre l'impérialisme français". Clarté 15 juillet 1925. There were 52 published protests featuring many prominent intellectuals. The surrealists and philosophies group chose to appear collectively.
in Marxism was concerned. The first of these, the surrealists may have entertained non-orthodox ideas as to the nature of their commitment to communism, but they did consider the Marxist theory of revolution with much more zeal than many of their counterparts within the Party hierarchy whose lack of basic knowledge of Marxism was notorious. Although Breton never ceased to claim the right to continue his surrealist research in conjunction with his work as a Party militant, there is evidence (cf. the Monde incident above) that he had given the matter of Marxism and literature some considerable thought (enough at least to recommend eventually that some kind of basic Marxist theory regarding culture should be worked out by the A.E.A.R. - cf. above). The surrealists were to abandon orthodox communism in 1933 when they were excluded from the Party, but Breton did not finally enter the Trotskyite opposition until 1935; René Crevel sought reintegration into the Party and was accepted, while Eluard also returned to the fold under the pressure of events produced by the war, but it cannot be said that they collectively made a contribution to Marxist literary theory during their period of collaboration. The case of Louis Aragon was quite different and deserves study under a separate head; let it suffice to say that his contribution to Marxist criticism within the A.E.A.R. was considerable.

The second group to show an interest in Marxist theory
was that of the Philosophies group, a coterie of brilliant young intellectuals from the Rue d'Ulm in revolt against the philosophical climate of that august establishment. Bergson and Brunschvicg, the former idealist and architect of an interiorised spiritual world, the latter intellectualist and arid, did not meet the exigences of this post-war group drawn more and more towards Hegel. In 1925 they founded their group which demanded above all a return to the concrete of the here and now, a tendency, which when coupled with their Hegelianism, brought them ultimately to dialectical materialism. They joined the Party shortly after the surrealists around 1928-29 and from this time onwards it became their mission to vulgarise Marxist philosophy and indeed to translate and publish several important Marxist texts hitherto unavailable in French; these appeared in the review, La Revue Marxiste¹ (1929 which for all its short existence (one year only), created quite a stir in academic circles having been banned in the Sorbonne.

Although a small group, it was to have a great influence on Marxist intellectual matters in the thirties, especially in connection with the review Commune. Pierre Morhange, could be said to have been the driving force.

¹In its year of publication, the Revue Marxiste produced translations of Le Communisme et la propriété privée (Marx 1844), Marx's introduction to Engels' Anti-Dühring, under the title of "De la dialectique", and on the subject of Marxist research produced three linked studies on Marxist methodology.
behind the original group having founded it in 1925. Georges Politzer (of Hungarian extraction) who took the agrégation (as did two other members of the group, Henri Lefebvre and Norbert Guterman) could have become one of France's leading psychologists, but aware of the need of the Party for an economist, renounced his career to meet this need. Henri Lefebvre and Norbert Guterman worked together to make basic Marxist texts available to a wider public. On his own account, Lefebvre produced the first full length study of dialectical materialism in France; his study of Nietzsche, although controversial in orthodox circles, was typical of his desire to apply his knowledge of Marxism particularly in the spheres of philosophy and literature. Although each had his speciality, all had some connection with literature, especially Paul Nizan who, together with Aragon, was regarded as the Party's finest novelist of the thirties.


The third factor which favoured a successful attraction of intellectuals to Marxism at this time, and with which the Philosophies group was connected, was the increasing volume of Marxist classics being made available to the French public. As was seen in the previous chapter in connection with the work of the young Marxist scholar Ickowitz, Plekhanov and Bukharin had been published in the late twenties. To these one might add that the first volume of the collected philosophical works of Marx was produced in 1927, while an edition of the complete works of Lenin was commenced the following year. Another extremely important text of Lenin; *Matérialisme et Empiriocriticisme*, was also published in 1928.

Apart from significant parts of Plekhanov's work none of these was specifically to do with literature and the arts although the availability of Marxist philosophical works could only but further research in this field.

The avowed aim, however of the A.E.A.R., was not so much to further Marxist theory but to attract as many leading French intellectuals (especially those who already exhibited encouraging signs of commitment) to a movement created to provide an intellectual bastion against the
mounting fascist threat; its war cry was to be the defence of culture against barbarity, its platform a review which is recognised to have been one of the most lively and creative cultural ventures of the immediate pre-war period - Commune.

Launched in July 1933, Commune, like Monde boasted a non-Party base; Aragon and Nizan were nominated joint editors of the review whose consultative committee consisted of Barbusse, Vaillant-Couturier and André Gide.

Aragon soon emerged as a powerful force in Commune harnessing all his verve and undoubted skills as a writer to promoting his cause. One of his first ventures was

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1 By the beginning of 1933 Vaillant was able to cite an impressive list of members:


(Cf. Vaillant-Couturier, Paul. Pref. to Ceux qui ont choisi, Contre le fascisme en Allemagne. Contre l'impérialisme français. Published by the A.E.A.R. as a pamphlet in 1933.)

2 Gide had evolved rapidly towards the anti-fascist and pro-U.S.S.R. cause ever since his first articles supporting the Soviet Union appeared in the N.R.F. in July-October 1932. Although he never actually joined the A.E.A.R., he supported it publicly on a number of occasions.
the organisation of an enquiry of the type hitherto used by Monde to solicit ideological statements from members of the intellectual establishment. Launched in December 1933, Aragon's enquiry carried only one, but significant question: "Pour qui écrivez-vous"? There was a difference however in approach from Monde, since in each instance, Aragon responded to the reply given identifying the ideological stance of the correspondent and attempting to persuade\(^1\) him to lend his support to the A.E.A.R. A much more militant enquiry therefore than those of Monde, it not only provided an opportunity to situate ideological positions within the establishment, it also clearly defined the position of Commune so that the confusion arising from the eclecticism of Monde was quite absent from the review of the A.E.A.R.

Aragon identified five categories of writers:

1. Right wing fascists (Fabre-Luce and Pierre Dominique)
2. Left wing fascists (Céline and Drieu La Rochelle)
3. A-political writers (the majority)

\(^1\)Later the "prise à partie" became a permanent feature of Commune as selected intellectuals were cajoled into collaborating with the A.E.A.R. - notably Céline and Drieu until they moved so far to the right that they were considered lost causes. (Commune persisted with Céline until 1936 and the publication of his Mort à crédit when all attempts to influence him were abandoned.)
4. Anarcho-syndicalist inspired (Poulaille, Tristan Rémy)

5. Confusionist fellow travellers (René Maublanc and Jean Audard).

A sixth group which comprised of French rabcors and Soviet writers was referred to positively.

A selection of replies was published in Commune between the inception of the enquiry and its conclusion in April 1934; despite the apparent intransigence of the categorisation noted above, it was considered in the conclusion to the enquiry that only the first category should be written off as a lost cause and that the remainder could be won over through time.

As for the politically neutral writers, they were reminded forcefully that there was no such thing as neutral art and that by refusing to join the "progressive forces of the Left", they were actively working against them in favour of the fascist Right. The anarcho-syndicalists were reminded of the dangers of isolationism, their non critical humanism, and the ideological position of non-collaboration with political parties. The fellow travellers were reassured that no formal commitment to Marxism would be required of them while respecting the

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1 An impressive number (58) of authors sent replies to Aragon. Among those published were statements from: René Lalou, Pierre Dominique, Alfred Fabre-Luce, Léon-Pierre Quinet, Gabriel Audisio, Paul Gsell, Joseph Jolinon, Roger Martin du Gard, Luc Durtain, Philippe Soupault, André Ullmann, Tristan Rémy, Clause Cahen, André Billy, Clément Vautel, Denis de Rougemont, Marc Chadourne, Louis Ferdinand Céline, Eli Faure, Andrée Viollis, René Maublanc, Eugène Dabit, Jean-Richard Bloch, Romain Rolland and Jean Audard.
rights of Marxists to express their point of view. As far as committed art was concerned, the problem of the bourgeois fellow-traveller would not be solved by turning native and transforming himself into a self-conscious rabcor, but by endeavouring to adopt the perspective of the proletariat in all matters (i.e. the perspective offered by the class struggle). In other words he would be required to represent a revolutionary point of view but at the same time there was no question of him producing proletcult type art.

It became the task of the Party's intellectuals working within Commune to illustrate by their own work what exactly was meant by "proletarian perspective". In this they were much aided by the publication in June 1934 of the statutes of the newly constituted Soviet Writers' Union, a document which served to put an end to the uneasy compromises which had been reached within the Party on proletarian and revolutionary writing. This document was the first tangible evidence of a distinctly new policy in literature and the arts in the Soviet Union to be given full official backing, the process which Magdeleine Paz viewed with such misgivings in 1933. Henceforth the Soviet writer would be in no doubt as to what was required of him:

1. La participation active des écrivains soviétiques à l'édification socialiste, à la défense des intérêts de la classe ouvrière et au renforcement
de l'Union Soviétique, par la description vérifiée, dans leurs œuvres, de l'histoire de la lutte des classes et de la construction du socialisme dans notre pays, et par l'éducation des larges masses ouvrières dans l'esprit du socialisme.

2. La formation de nouveaux écrivains, issus du milieu ouvrier, kolkhozien et de l'armée rouge, et cela par la propagande de l'œuvre artistique dans les larges couches de la population, en transmettant l'expérience créatrice des écrivains et des critiques qualifiés aux jeunes auteurs et en collaborant avec les syndicats, les organisations des Jeunesses Communistes et les sections politiques de l'armée rouge, au sein des cercles littéraires des ouvriers des kolkhoziens et de l'Armée rouge.

3. L'épanouissement de l'œuvre créatrice parmi les écrivains, aide mutuelle dans le but de contribuer à la croissance des forces artistiques et au développement toujours plus profond et plus large, sur la base du réalisme socialiste, des méthodes, des genres et des sujets, conformément à la forme individuelle du talent de chacun à ses préoccupations créatrices.

4. Le plus grand développement des littératures nationales fraternellement unies, grâce à l'aide mutuelle, à l'échange de l'expérience créatrice des écrivains et des critiques de toutes les républiques soeurs, à la traduction des œuvres littéraires de leurs langues respectives dans celles des autres nationalités.

5. L'éducation internationale des écrivains, par l'étude du sens de la victoire du socialisme unifié, U.R.S.S., par celle du mouvement révolutionnaire international et de la culture mondiale actuelle, par la participation des écrivains au mouvement révolutionnaire international, par les descriptions, dans les œuvres d'art, de la lutte héroïque des travailleurs des pays capitalistes et coloniaux.

6. L'étude théorique des problèmes du réalisme socialiste, et pour cela, la création d'une littérature scientifique spéciale, l'organisation de rapports scientifiques et de discussions, l'étude concrète du travail littéraire des écrivains et la critique de leurs œuvres.
7. Le but principal de l'Union des Ecrivains Soviétiques est la création des œuvres d'une grande portée artistique, remplies de la lutte héroïque du prolétariat international, du pathétique de la victoire du socialisme et dépeignant la grande sagesse et l'héroïsme du Parti communiste. Le but de l'Union des Ecrivains Soviétiques est la création d'œuvres d'art dignes de la grande époque du socialisme.}

This document contains several points of interest.

Firstly it reveals the persistence of the educational problem of the young state in its efforts to bring literacy to the masses and although this problem did not exist in France, it should be noted to what extent the Soviet theorists use it in order to justify the coordination (if not regimentation) of their national resources in the cultural field. In France if this policy was to be adopted, the zeal of the Soviet reformers would require another outlet, for the French communist intellectual this undoubtedly lay in the points brought out in paragraphs 5, 6 and 7 above.

In the article introducing these statutes it is repeatedly stressed that the task of the new literary mode (socialist realism) is to ensure:

"...la peinture véridique et historiquement concrète de la réalité dans son développement révolutionnaire."

Both the "reality" and the "revolutionary development" being in accordance with the current Party (Moscow)

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interpretation. Although Moscow granted the Soviet minorities the right to express themselves in their own language, there was to be no deviation in content. Taken internationally, French intellectuals were free to find a French form for the same universal socialist content; they were soon to be given a first hand opportunity to hear of the new cultural doctrine from the Soviet Writers' Union. An article by the Soviet writers Youdine and Fadeev\(^1\) prefaced the announcement that the first International Congress of the Soviet Writers' Union was to be held in Moscow from the 17th of August to the 1st of September of that year. Invitations were accorded to Aragon, Nizan and Pozner, all Party members, while Jean-Richard Bloch and André Malraux represented the fellow-travellers of the A.E.A.R. They bore with them a message of solidarity from their association recognising the achievement and the international hegemony of the Soviet Writers' Union; at the same time, it was expressed from a French point of view: i.e. in the pre-revolutionary French society, the proletariat and the U.S.S.R. were alone capable of providing leadership in a period of crisis:

"L'A.E.A.R. considère comme son rôle essentiel d'entraîner tous les écrivains et artistes qui ont

\(^{1}\)Youdine, P. Fadeev, A. "Le réalisme socialiste méthode fondamentale de la littérature soviétique" Commune Juin 1934.
foi dans la destinée historique du Proletariat, tous les écrivains et les artistes qui se tournent vers l'Union Soviétique comme vers le Proletariat français, au milieu du désarroi du monde capitaliste, dans la crise économique qui les atteint jusque dans leurs conditions de vie et de création."

Paralleling the task of the worker education of the Soviet writers as expressed in their statutes, the A.E.A.R. also saw as its role the denunciation of decadent bourgeois culture in France. Together with this went a reappraisal of existing French culture:

"L'A.E.A.R. doit montrer aux écrivains et aux artistes la voie par laquelle nous contribuerons à créer la culture de l'avenir, la culture des Soviets en France et du monde entier, en reprenant l'héritage de la culture française, remise sur ses pieds, et ne servant plus désormais à la délactation de quelques uns, et à l'asservissement du grand nombre, mais à la libération et au développement culturel de tous, par la lutte contre les maîtres d'aujourd'hui."

L'A.E.A.R. reprendra cet héritage national pour qu'il serve aux fins communes des travailleurs de toutes nations. L'Héritage du folklore français, qui se meurent dans les musées et les bibliothèques de la bourgeoisie, et auquel la flamme révolutionnaire saura rendre un sens et une vie véritable.

L'Héritage de Rimbaud et de Zola, l'héritage de Cézanne et de Courbet par exemple." 2

It is interesting to place these French statements alongside the Soviet Writers' statute. In place of the education of the masses, the French proletariat is to be


introduced to its rightful heritage until now monopolised by the bourgeoisie; socialist realism in France was to be a French national affair. By citing Courbet and Zola, the A.E.A.R. were inserting themselves into a socialist critical tradition going back to Proudhon and echoing the sentiments of Barbusse regarding Zola. Likewise the evocation of the riches of French folklore was stressed in the preface to the Party's publication of Lafargue's researches into this area as a first, and authentically French, Marxist contribution to the field. Cézanne and Rimbaud\(^1\) were significant additions to this gallery of honour. Regarded as formalists by the nineteenth century socialist critics, the impressionists had always suffered in comparisons with Courbet, but it was now being said that like Rimbaud, Cézanne was a revolutionary in his innovations. It would seem that the French intellectuals were anxious to associate themselves with some of the hitherto uncelebrated source figures of contemporary French culture and not to pin all their standards to the mast of nineteenth century naturalism.

In connection with the Congress, Commune subsequently published the speeches of the three most eminent speakers, i.e. Maxime Gorky, Karl Radek and Nicolas Bukharin

\(^1\)Rimbaud's participation in the Paris Commune was much stressed by Aragon in his article "D'Alfred de Vigny à Adveenko: les écrivains dans les Soviets". Commune, Avril 1935.
accompanied by the two short statements of Jean-Richard Bloch and André Malraux.

The published speeches offered valuable guide-lines to the French Marxists since they not only embodied the basic tenets of socialist realism as far as Soviet literature was concerned, but also formed indications of the line which should be taken on pre-revolutionary foreign bourgeois cultures; much reference was made to France.

Gorky's address consisted of a long theoretical account of the development of literature from primitive man to the present day. Anxious to stress the novelty of the Marxist approach to literary history, Gorky devoted much of his speech to tracing socio-economic determinant factors, and working basically from first principles, attempted to catch the genesis of literary production. Thus he emphasised the attention which should be paid to folklore as an illustration of the basic human urge to create. In the midst of his anthropological comment he suggested that the basic impulse of the new literature should be provided by a synthesis of the myth and the romanticism of the revolution:

"Le mythe est une invention. Inventer, imaginer un mythe, c'est tirer le sens profond d'une somme de données réelles et l'incarner dans une image: c'est ainsi que nous avons obtenu le réalisme. Mais si, au sens de cet extrait de la réalité, l'on ajoute conformément à la logique de l'hypothèse, ce qui est désirable et possible et que l'on complète de la sorte l'image, on obtiendra ce genre de romantisme qui est à l'origine du mythe et qui est hautement..."
utile du fait qu'il contribue à éveiller l'esprit révolutionnaire à l'égard de la réalité, à inspirer une attitude qui, en fait, modifie le monde."

In the same way that the myth was the expression of the hopes and fears of primitive man, so it could be harnessed to provide a spiritual urge to the new revolutionary literature (here was a point of view which was very close to that of Georges Sorel who held the entertainment of myths to be a prime motive force in human society). But this was no ordinary myth since it inspired action which would in turn modify reality, a mixture of propaganda and romantic lyricism. Thus, according to Gorky, the role of socialist realism was to act on society in the same way that the superstructure acts on the basis, i.e. in order to modify it. This implied a militant educative function which went beyond mere representation. The evocation of a revolutionary reality would involve the demonstration of the positive forces and personalities of the revolution at work in the construction of socialism. Types embodying all the ideological strengths and weaknesses of the actors in this great drama (Soviet woman, the peasant, the petit-bourgeois, the factory worker etc.) must be portrayed in such a way as to communicate themselves not as "averages" but as monuments of their kind of more than human stature.

There was nothing new for the Marxist intellectual in Gorky's evocation of the typical which had been the basic principle of Marxist aesthetics since Marx and Engels both made the point. However, it is difficult not to be impressed by the excitement generated by Gorky the great moral figure of the Revolution, as he underlined time and time again the necessity for action and participation. The critics he accused of scholasticism and rhetoric, they were, he claimed, incapable of teaching anything, a remark which reveals that the task of the socialist realist critic was to be as didactic as that of the creative artist.

The task of the critic in denouncing the decadence of the bourgeoisie was also stressed by Radek whose whole speech was given over to a violent attack on Joyce and Proust whose work according to him, demonstrated only too well the present inability of the intellectuals of capitalism to dominate their reality in the way that Balzac had done. Compared with the socio-political relevancy of socialist realism, there was a vacuum of meaning in the work of these two bourgeois novelists:

Deux noms expriment le mieux les méthodes nouvelles, grâce auxquelles les artistes bourgeois tentent de créer des images d'envergure. L'un d'eux est Proust. Il veut peindre la mentalité de ses héros, héros des salons français en découplant leur âme en tranches fines, en scindant les cellules de leur chair, en flairant leur moindre geste. Le bistouri de l'analyse est censé mettre à nu l'âme d'un
homme, indépendant des tendances qui l'animent.  

Joyce, in this respect, was no better

"Sur quoi se fonde Joyce? Sur la conviction que, dans la vie, il n'existe rien de grand, ni grands événements, ni grands hommes, ni grandes idées, et que l'écrivain peut donner une image de l'existence précisément en choisissant "n'importe quel personnage au cours de n'importe quel journée" et en le photographiant avec minutie. Un tas de fumier où s'agitent des vers, fixé à l'aide d'un appareil de prise de vues, à travers un microscope, - voilà Joyce."

Here again was a tone familiar to the young contributors to Clarté and for which good French precedents could be found in the writings of the virulent Vallès. But was the opposition of the Soviet theorists to Proust and Joyce based uniquely on the fact that decadent bourgeois society had to have its decadent bourgeois authors? Perhaps the explanation lay nearer to the fact that Proust and Joyce could be said to represent a Freudian current in literature by making the subconscious the vital power in human nature. Objectively one could say that a case could be made for Joyce and Proust as portraying Dublin and French society through their work, but the socialist realists were obviously not yet ready for the totally negative example; the principle of the positive hero and the positive situation pointing to the ultimate victory of socialism

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2. Ibid.
constituted a sacred article in this recipe for optimism:

"Etre réaliste, veut dire dépeindre non seulement
la décomposition du capitalisme et l'agonie de sa
civilisation, mais également la naissance de la
classes, de la force capable de créer une nouvelle
société et une culture nouvelle. Le réalisme, ce
n'est pas un choix farci de phénomènes révolution-
naires, mais le reflet de la réalité telle qu'elle
est, dans toute sa complexité, dans toutes ses
contradictions, et non seulement de la réalité
capitaliste, mais aussi de l'autre, de la nouvelle
réalité, de celle du socialisme."

If Gorky had introduced the matter with a grandiose "tour
d'horizon" and Radek had demolished the opposition, it
was Bukharin's task to set out some theoretical principles.
His main concern was the relationship between form and
content, the latter stemmed from a philosophical precept
and the former was bound to exhibit traits corresponding
in essence to the content. Taking Zola as a case in
point, he showed how a positivist starting point could
lead to a positivist form:

"Le positivisme de Comte est une méthode et en même
temps un système philosophique scientifique. Le
naturalisme de Zola est une interprétation esthét-
ique, une traduction de la méthodologie philoso-
ifique et scientifique du positivisme en langage de
l'art. Celui-ci y a trouvé une méthode (puisque
cet ensemble d'idées directrices guidait l'artiste
dans le processus de la création même) et un style,
puisque cette méthode, immobilisée, incarnée en
une œuvre littéraire achevée, apparaissait dans
le contenu, dans la forme et dans l'ensemble de
l'œuvre (synthèse du contenu et de la forme) comme
un principe constructif donnant une forme au contenu."

1 Radek, Karl. Art. cit.

2 Bukharin, Nicolas. "Le Réalisme socialiste".
If one applied this principle to art forms based on dialectical materialism, claimed Bukharin, it would be wrong to suppose that the materialist aspect would necessarily require to be interpreted literally:

"Ainsi par exemple, en décrivant la nature, le réalisme socialiste n'est nullement tenu de réduire la réalité sensible, les sons les couleurs etc. aux électrons, aux ondes, etc.; de même qu'en décrivant la société, il ne peut avoir pour tâche d'opérer à l'aide de catégories de valeur, de base, de superstructure, etc. . . . . . . "

Such a mechanistic interpretation of dialectical materialism would inevitably lead to the death of socialist art which above all had to retain the affective qualities which distinguished art from other human activities and rendered it effective as a means of communication. Socialist art, if it did not want to fall into the errors of idealism, mysticism etc. retained its materialist essence by using imagery which although charged with affective significance, related to everyday life:

"Il (l'art socialiste) opère surtout à l'aide des images sensibles, les éléments intellectuels revêtant une forme emotionnelle. Sans cette condition essentielle, l'art en général, et le réalisme socialiste en particulier en tant que méthode est l'ennemi de toute transcendance, de toute mystique, de tout au-delà idéaliste. C'est ce qui constitue sa caractéristique essentielle."

It is the socialist vision which endows socialist realism with its dynamic and its class identity, for every work

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1Ibid.
contains elements which betray its class origins:

"Le réalisme socialiste a ceci de particulier par rapport au réalisme tout court, qu'il place au centre de ses préoccupations les problèmes de l'édification socialiste, de la lutte du prolétariat, de l'homme nouveau, de toutes les "relations et médiations" multiples et complexes du grand processus historique de notre époque. Soulignons à ce propos, une fois de plus, que l'ensemble poétique comprend des éléments intellectuels, sensibles et volontaires réunis en un tout indissoluble. Toute œuvre contient des éléments d'appréciation qui en indiquent la tendance et lui confèrent son caractère de classe."

The last point on the class identity of a work of art constituted yet another pointer for the critical; the class position of every artist could, and should be identified.

The theory produced by the congress was hardly original, much of it had either been expounded by Marxists of the previous generation so that statements on form and content, the typical, ideological identities, art and revolutionary action etc., could be regarded as common-places of Marxist theory even in 1934. Gorky's mammoth trek through the annals of creative art with its pseudo anthropological pretensions rarely rose above the illustration of a thesis to produce original insight into the problem. The three principles of socialist realism which were constantly evoked by the various speakers were naradnost - closeness to the People, parti-nost fidelity to the Party, and ideinost ideological identity.

1Bukharin, Nicolas. Art. cit.
integrity. Each one of these principles must be seen as definable in the last instance by the Party which was consequently free to "authorise" sectarianism or liberalism as it so desired. The element of Party control was one distinctly and ominously new ingredient in socialist art, but this was obscured to a great extent by the sheer lyrical atmosphere of the conference which was a gigantic promotion even in Soviet terms. Delegations came from all over the Soviet Union and preparatory sessions were held well in advance with full press saturation. The new policy was presented as a deliverance from the sectarianism of the proletariat and as the final official stamp of approval on the return of the fellow travellers and with them a large part of the Russian heritage. The particular nature of the A.E.A.R. with its stress on necessity to leave the fellow travellers as much freedom as possible with regard to Marxism, Party policy etc., manifested itself during the congress in a manner which introduced a note of discord into what was otherwise a well orchestrated score. The attitudes of the fellow travellers, Malraux and Jean-Richard Bloch reflected specific reservations over certain of the coercive aspects of the new Soviet cultural policy; these in turn attracted the jibes of Radek who accused Bloch of displaying bourgeois individualism, but the latter replied in the style of A.E.A.R. propaganda to the effect that France had her own, pre-Marxist revolutionary traditions:
"Il y a une ou deux pensées fondamentales qui reparaissent dans toutes les révolutions françaises depuis le haut Moyen-Age.

Elles s'inscrivent dans deux mots d'ordre qui, eux aussi, reparaissent tout le long de notre histoire sociale. Ces deux mots d'ordre sont Liberté et Égalité.

Je sais bien que la bourgeoisie française n'a cessé de détourner ces mots de leur sens; qu'elle les a confisqués; qu'elle les a volés; et qu'avec des termes de libération elle a toujours su faire des termes de servitude. ¹

This did not mean to say that the concept of the individual and his rights did not still survive in present-day France. Although Marxism now constituted the only effective weapon against capitalism, he maintained, it was important for Marxists to remember the basic call of the French revolutionary:

"Nous sommes tous d'accord aujourd'hui pour reconnaître que le mot individu et le mot liberté sont des mots d'ordre insuffisants. L'individu, même entouré du cortège des libertés politiques qu'il s'est conquises par trois siècles de révolutions, ne peut rien contre les forces massives de l'économie capitaliste. Autrement dit l'individu se trouve à la fourche de deux routes. Il a le choix entre deux directions; l'une mène à l'individualisme - c'est-à-dire à l'oppression capitaliste et à l'anéantissement de l'individu; c'est la déviation petite-bourgeoise.

L'autre chemin mène au communisme, c'est-à-dire à une nouvelle image de la dignité humaine. C'est la route où nous nous efforçons d'entraîner notre pays, et c'est parce que nous l'avons adoptée que nous sommes ici aujourd'hui.

Individu oui; individualisme, non.

Nous sommes prêts à toutes les formes d'un art de masse. Mais quand, écrivains de la prochaine révolution française, nous mettons, dans nos paroles, l'accent sur l'individu et sur la liberté, c'est parce que ces images ont conservé dans notre pays une vigueur révolutionnaire prodigieuse, et ce serait une faute grave de la méconnaître.\(^1\)

Bloch's warning that the French revolutionary writers would be obliged to recognise existing French revolutionary tradition and sensibility constituted an appeal for the recognition of the necessity of varying forms of socialist realism according to national conditions. André Malraux reinforced this point of view in stating that Soviet writers were already writing for the proletariat whereas in the West, writers were writing against the bourgeoisie so that both the political and cultural outlook (regarding revolutionary literature) were bleak. In the Soviet Union, magnificent possibilities had been created:

"A l'heure où les Occidentaux ne peuvent plus s'assembler tous que pour rire amèrement d'eux-mêmes devant la figure de Chaplin, à l'heure où tant de nos meilleurs artistes écrivent pour des fantômes ou pour les hommes à naître, vous, semblables et pourtant différents comme les deux mains d'un même corps, vous faites surgir ici la civilisation dont sortent les Shakespeare.\(^2\)

Unfortunately, Malraux pointed out, these Shakespeares would not be forthcoming unless a radical reappraisal of artistic theory took place in the Soviet Union. Art had

\(^1\)Ibid.

its own laws of production, it could not be legislated for, and neither would the creation of quantity be an assurance of greatness, something which had been proved elsewhere:

"Oui, il faut que l'Union soviétique soit exprimée; oui il faut que soit fait cet immense inventaire de sacrifices, d'héroïsme et de tenacité. Mais prenez garde, camarades, l'Amérique nous le montre de reste, qu'à exprimer une puissante civilisation on ne fait pas nécessairement une puissante littérature et qu'il ne suffit pas ici de photographe une grande époque pour que naisse une grande littérature."¹

The superficial presentation of reality was not in itself enough, the genesis of great art lay not in reproduction, but in research and invention:

Nous lisons Tolstoi, mais il n'avait pas lui, de Tolstoi à lire. Ce qu'il nous apporte, il fallut qu'il le découvrit. Si "les écrivains, sont les ingénieurs des âmes", n'oubliez pas que la plus haute fonction d'un ingénieur, c'est d'inventer.

L'art n'est pas une soumission, c'est une conquête.

La conquête de quoi?

Des sentiments et des moyens de les exprimer.

Sur quoi?

Sur l'inconscient, presque toujours; sur la logique, très souvent.

Le marxisme, c'est la conscience du social; la culture c'est la conscience du psychologique."²

In other words to impose sociologically derived premises on art, no matter their Marxist origin, is to deny the origin and function of true art whose genesis is

¹Ibid
²Ibid
in the consciousness. Any system of logic applied to human nature is too rigid and too limited to comprehend the diversity and richness of the contradictions of human nature:

"Il serait trop long de définir ce que fut la conscience pour les romanciers classiques russes. Leur approfondissement de l'homme consista presque toujours à en montrer les éléments contradictoires et imprévisibles. Lorsqu'un héros de Tolstoï qui marche dans la nuit glacée découvre que le froid détruit son amour, lorsque Raskolnikov découvre que le meurtrier dont il attend la puissance lui apporte la solitude, que font les deux romanciers? Ils substituent un fait empirique à un fait logique; et comme il n'y a pas de vraie logique en psychologie mais simplement l'imitation, ils substituent une découverte à une imitation."¹

The secret of the continuing success of the Russian classics according to Malraux was that they contained psychological truths and discoveries which were still of interest to Soviet man, especially when that kind of knowledge was not being produced by his own literature:

"Si vous aimez tant vos classiques, c'est d'abord qu'ils sont admirables; mais n'est-ce pas aussi parce qu'ils vous donnent de la vie psychologique une notion plus riche et plus contradictoire que les roman soviétiques, n'est-ce pas parce que, psychologiquement vous trouvez parfois Léon Tolstoï plus actuel que nombre d'entre vous? Le refus du psychologique en art, mène au plus absurde individualisme. Car tout homme s'efforce de penser sa vie, qu'il le veuille ou non; et le refus du psychologique signifie concrètement que celui qui aura le mieux pensé sa vie, au lieu de transmettre son expérience aux autres, la gardera pour lui."²

¹Malraux, André. Art. cit. (Malraux's italics)
²Ibid.
Malraux warned his audience that the present literature might satisfy the exigences of the newly literate factory worker, but once a second generation was formed seeking new horizons in culture, then unless there were sufficient works of art of the calibre produced by Mayakovsky or Pasternak, the whole edifice of the artistic establishment would crumble.

The fact that Malraux and Bloch both raised the question of the individual and the psychological dimensions of life, and therefore art, demonstrates to what extent they viewed with misgiving the stress placed on social existence in socialist realism. A literature of propaganda no matter how well intentioned could not expect to meet the complex intellectual (if not spiritual) needs of the individuals which made up that society. Socialist realism in the minds of these French fellow travellers was in danger of becoming mono-dimensional and culturally arid. The lyrical resources supplied by the Russian revolution could hardly be expected to feed permanently the spiritual needs of French revolutionaries whose revolution still had to take place, nor indeed could the authorities in the Soviet Union assume that they would always meet the needs of the Soviet people.

Could it be said that Malraux and Bloch were reacting to the treatment meted out to Proust and Joyce in making a plea for a more complex conception of art? Undoubtedly as intellectuals shaken by the fascist riots
in France a few months previously, Malraux and Bloch, like many other bourgeois artists who had rallied to the A.E.A.R. as a direct consequence of events in Germany and France, could be expected to support a policy of rassemblement in the arts, but only where it offered the largest possible grounds for success in each individual country. To impose therefore a Soviet brand of art on countries whose traditions, as Bloch pointed out, were quite different, might have been to threaten the chances of success from the outset. As artists they could only point to the impoverishment of art as a whole when certain basic aspects were amputated for the sake of doctrine. When Malraux mentioned Tolstoi by name and Dostoievsky via one of his characters, he was treading on controversial ground as far as Soviet communists were concerned for although Lenin had done much to restore Tolstoi to the Russian people, Dostoievsky was still considered to be a bourgeois decadent. It says much for the two non-communist representatives of the A.E.A.R. that they were prepared to make these points amidst the euphoria of the congress as a whole. Future critical work by French party men, such as Nizan and Lefebvre, not to mention the socialist realist novels of Aragon, were to show that the point of view expressed by Malraux and Bloch was also that of the Party leadership.

Bloch's anarcho-syndicalist background undoubtedly
contributed to his rejection of this incursion of the state into a domaine which, of all spheres of human activity, required freedom of choice. Malraux's concept of human dignity and the brotherhood of men also had its sources in a non-collectivist and broader philosophy containing humanist and (nascent) existentialist traits. The reservations expressed by these two representatives of indigenous French philosophical and ideological currents help to underline the contrast between the broad conciliatory line of the A.E.A.R. with regard to fellow-travellers and its consequently non-controversial promotion of socialist realist theory with the harsher, disciplinarian doctrines of socialist realism as expressed in the U.S.S.R. A further indication of this difference between the two countries is contained in the fact that neither Commune nor any of the French party journals reported the content of the all important speech delivered by A. Zhdanov, secretary of the Central Committee of the Russian communist party, and Stalin's rising star in the domaine of cultural policy. As far as the French establishment was concerned (only Aragon referred to it and in passing in L'Humanité),\(^1\) the congress could have taken place without this man being present, and yet it was Zhdanov's speech and not those of Gorky and his supporters which determined the future shape

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\(^1\) *L'Humanité*, 27.8.34.
of socialist realism in the Soviet Union, and therefore of orthodoxy within the International. In his speech Zhdanov emphasised the close connection between the workers, their achievement and socialist art as well as pronouncing on the ingredient of optimism which was ultimately to give birth to the positive hero and the "no-conflict" theory in which nothing was allowed to disturb the calm sea of socialist reality. There was no room for the kind of individualism sought after by Bloch and Malraux:

"Notre écrivain soviétique puise les matériaux de sa production artistique, ses sujets, ses images, sa langue et son style dans la vie et l'expérience des hommes du Dnieprostroi et de Magnitogorsk. Notre écrivain puise ses matériaux dans l'épopée héroïque du Tchéliouskine, dans l'expérience de nos kolkhoz, dans l'activité créatrice qui sourd en chaque endroit de notre pays.

Dans notre pays les principaux héros des œuvres littéraires, ce sont les bâtisseurs actifs de la vie nouvelle: ouvriers et ouvrières, kolkhoziens et kolkhoziennes, membres du Parti, administrateurs, ingénieurs, jeunes communistes, pionniers. Les voilà, les types fondamentaux et les héros essentiels de notre littérature soviétique. L'enthousiasme et la passion de l'héroïsme imprègent notre littérature. Elle est optimiste, mais pas du tout par une sorte d'instinct zoologique foncier. Elle est optimiste dans son essence, parce qu'elle est la littérature de la classe ascendant, du prolétariat, la seule classe progressive, d'avant garde. La force de notre littérature soviétique, c'est qu'elle sert la cause nouvelle, la cause de la construction du socialisme.

Le camarade Staline a appelé nos écrivains les "ingénieurs des âmes."

1 Jdanov, Andrei. "Discours au premier congrès des écrivains soviétiques (17 aout 1934, in Action Poétique p. 92. No. 43, 1970) NB. I have been unable to find a contemporary French translation of this speech."
Why was it that this speech was not given the attention it deserved in France? After all, Zhdanov was the only major speaker of any political consequence to speak (Gorky was a figurehead, Bukharin was taken temporarily out of exile to participate and Radek was already a marked man). One can only conclude that it was not deemed advisable either by the French Party or the fellow-travellers that this side of the Congress should be stressed in France for the reason expressed above i.e. that it might have proved prejudicial to the broader aims of the A.E.A.R.

A further opportunity for gauging the feelings of the French delegation was afforded by the special public meeting held in the Mutualité on the 23rd October, in which the delegates were to report back to the parent body. Gide chaired the meeting and lent his voice to that of Bloch and Malraux while assuring the meeting that like his colleagues, his reservations had no bearing on his support for the Russian revolution:

"La littérature n'a pas à se mettre au service de la Révolution. Une littérature asservie est une littérature servile, si noble si légitime que soit la cause qu'elle sert. Mais comme la cause de la vérité se confond dans mon esprit, dans notre esprit, avec celle de la Révolution, l'art en se préoccupant uniquement de la vérité, sert nécessairement la Révolution"¹

Obviously for Gide, when his idea of the Revolution

changed, his association of art, truth and revolution
would also be modified; in the meantime, he expressed
the hope that eventually as the victory of the Revolution
was consolidated, art would escape from the hegemony of
political ends and that committed art of this kind would
only represent a phase in the development of socialist
art.

"Je dirai ma pensée jusqu'au bout: si l'U.R.S.S.
triomphe- et elle doit triompher - son art bientôt
se dégagera de la lutte; je veux dire: s'émanci-
pera."1

Vaillant-Couturier in his preface to the three major
speeches of the Congress (cf. above) touched immediately
on that aspect of the debate relating to the contributions
of Bloch and Malraux:

"Sans sectarisme, avec cette précision scientifique
qui constitue l'essence même du marxisme,
la littérature soviétique de 52 peuples a montré
à tous les écrivains du monde bourgeois à quelle
croisée de chemins ils se trouvaient, où finissait
l'individualité et où commençait l'individualisme,
 où finissait la psychologie et où commençaient le
psychologisme; où finissait leur servitude où leur
inconscience et où commençait leur liberté, leur
choix."2

Vaillant then went on to give a definition of socialist
realism which pointed to a socialist application of the
factors broached by Bloch and Malraux. The problem of
the individual, he maintained, would be solved by taking
the individual as a starting point and relating him to the

1 Gide, André. Art. cit.

collectivity. As for "psychology" and the creative energy of the artist, these would be channelled into the lyricism of the new realism:

"Peindre le monde tel qu'il est. Oui. Mais pas à la façon d'un mauvais collectionneur d'insectes qui se contenterait de piquer les bestioles sur un carton sans chercher à les classer, sans voir les caractères qui les différencient, les traits communs qui permettent d'établir les genres, les familles les espèces et leur évolution.... Être réaliste, oui, mais en se souvenant qu'il faut aller au particulier au général, de l'individu à la collectivité, de l'analyse à la synthèse. Et la synthèse une fois faite, chercher à comprendre ce qui anime le monde non pas en idéaliste, mais en matérialiste, les lois qui le mettent en mouvement, les buts vers lesquels il tend. Alors, l'écrivain s'ouvre l'avenir avec toute la richesse de son imagination et tout le romantisme de son lyrisme".¹

If this was to be the Party's final word on the definition of socialist realism as delivered at the Moscow congress, it was more akin to the beliefs of a nineteenth century positivist than a Stalinist Marxist; the vague reference to the future goals of socialism and the dialectical materialist principle would have required a more explicit exposé if it had to live up to the precision of Zhdanov's specifications. But it was obvious that all that was required of the illustrious fellow-travellers was their support for the Soviet Union, their pacifism, and their anti-fascism. In conclusion Vaillant-Couturier made this very point:

"Nous ne demandons à personne, un billet de confession marxiste. Ce serait absurde. Les hommes sont en marche, ils viennent vers nous, nous allons vers eux. Et n'auraient-ils même qu'une vague sympathie pour

Here, in fact lay the principal motivation of the collaboration of Gide, Malraux and Bloch; all expressed their hope in the humanism of the Soviet State and their genuine excitement at the gigantic challenge which the new society offered the Soviet artist, but none of them accepted the aesthetic of socialist realism uncritically.

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The case of the Party's intellectuals one could expect to be somewhat different, for it surely fell on them to demonstrate what French socialist realism could achieve.

Already in 1934 it could be said that an identifiable core of Party intellectuals had formed within the Party's ranks exhibiting a degree of commitment in cultural matters unprecedented since the isolated efforts of Marcel Martinet to promote his syndicalist version of proletarian culture in the early twenties. Some of the supporters of the French rabcors had moved into the A.E.A.R. (e.g. Loffler, and Fréville) on Party orders, while the influx of the former members of the Philosophies group (Nizan, Lefebvre, Politzer and Guterman) and the presence of the remaining surrealists Aragon and Unik,

meant that the Party had a strong representation within the A.E.A.R. of a highly committed nature.

Given the stature of certain Party intellectuals within the A.E.A.R. and their obvious potential for the production of original Marxist cultural theory, to what extent did the Party’s policy of conciliation towards the fellow travellers mean that the French Marxists were comparatively free to innovate and expand upon existing theory and to what extent did any of them feel compelled to fall into step with the Moscow line?

It is interesting in this context to measure the reaction of a critic such as Fréville writing from *L’Humanité* to one of the first novels to be qualified as socialist realist by Aragon writing in *Commune*; the work in question was Nisan’s *Antoine Bloyé*,¹ published in 1933 and therefore before the Soviet Writers’ congress. The plot is concerned with the son of a worker who, by dint of his own efforts and promotion, gradually abandons and then compromises his proletarian background. This depressing portrayal of a class mutation with all its tragic consequences (defence of bourgeois interests in strike situations etc.), could hardly be said to strike the note of optimism required of the socialist realist. Fréville² implied that in every respect, Nisan’s novel fell

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short of the norms established by Soviet writers. In the first instance, it was pessimistic promoting a negative rather than a positive hero. Secondly as far as the typicality of the situation was concerned, Nizan had made some serious errors. Antoine Bloyé was not a member of the proletariat (which he would have to be if his "betrayal" were to make sense), but a first generation petit-bourgeois. The proletariat which Nizan portrayed, did not satisfy the communist definition of a group of workers with a definite organisational identity and a sense of mission; Nizan had portrayed the workers as an amorphous mass, buffeted this way and that by the course of events and incapable of working out any revolutionary strategy. Such a rendering of the working class was straight out of the naturalist tradition and had nothing to do with the application of Marxist theory to art. The same could be said of the "crime and punishment" theme in which the forces of destiny are seen to transform the "hero's" life into a wreck; in a truly revolutionary perspective there could be no evocation of an indeterminate fate at work, but rather that the instrument of change should be seen to be the workers, i.e. Bloyé should have been punished (or saved) by the intervention of the organised proletariat. Having accomplished his criticism of content of Nizan's novel, Fréville went on to praise the quality of his prose and his undoubted talent as a writer. Ending on a note of
optimism himself, Fréville pointed out that this work nevertheless contained the beginning of something new:

"Son livre est une étape, nous sommes certains que dans ses œuvres prochaines il dira l'immense bouillonnement révolutionnaire de l'époque et que l'écrivain chez lui saura profiter des leçons du militant."  

Fréville's commentary on Antoine Bloyé could almost be described as an example of the socialist realist critic at work; had he not taken each one of the essential ingredients of socialist realism applied them to the novel and then concluded on a positive note?

An interesting divergence arose between Aragon's assessment of this novel and that of Fréville. Speaking from Commune and as if beyond Fréville and l'Humanité to a wider public, Aragon sought to promote Nizan's novel as communist and revolutionary:

"Et bien que nos gens signalent un défaut de l'ouvrage qu'on y sente l'idéologie, ce qui est on le sait un vice rédhibitoire, il faut bien dire que c'est par l'idéologie que va, au delà du style et le dominant, le premier roman de notre camarade Nizan....C'est là ce qui fait de ce livre non pas seulement un ouvrage naturaliste, mais l'expression de ce réalisme socialiste (pour reprendre la terminologie de nos camarades soviétiqemes) où la réalité a son visage de classe, où le réel n'est pas une fin, mais un moyen de transformation révolutionnaire. C'est là un livre où se trouve et s'unissent dans un même but Paul Nizan écrivain et Paul Nizan écrivain communiste."  

1 Fréville, Jean. Art. cit.
2 Note Aragon is referring to the bourgeois public not to communists.
Aragon was deliberately flouting Fréville's ideological evaluation of the work. A situation similar to that of the Fréville-Nizan encounter developed on the publication of Aragon's *Les Cloches de Bâle*. In this instance it was another Party novelist René Garmy, again writing in *l'Humanité* who accused Aragon, the A.E.A.R. writer, of ideological insufficiency. In the process of describing the purposeless world of the Pre-World War I haute bourgeoisie, Aragon had shown how a progressive female member of this entourage had been attracted by anarchist theory. This was enough, in Garmy's mind to prove that Aragon had made a grave theoretical mistake since his heroine should have been made to ally herself with the true (proletarian and Marxist) wing of the working class movement. The watchdog tone of Garmy's comment bears a strong resemblance to that of Fréville:

"Notre camarade a d'ailleurs trop la passion de servir pour ne pas renforcer dans ses prochaines oeuvres l'éclairage idéologique sans lequel il n'est point de littérature vraiment révolutionnaire."  

Unfortunately for Garmy, who no doubt still saw Aragon as the leftist surrealist, *l'Humanité* printed an article three weeks later taken from the Soviet literary review, *Litteratournaya Gazeta*, praising Aragon and in direct

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contradiction to Garmy:

"Aragon est un écrivain communiste chez qui la conception du monde qu'il a comme artiste est toute imprégnée de sa conception politique de l'histoire." ¹

There were no further differences of opinion between l'Humanité and Commune Fréville wrote regularly for Commune which featured his long introductory essay to his edition of the literary criticism of Marx and Engels² (Editions Sociales 1936); he also contributed to the Marxist page instituted by Monde in 1935, under its A.E.A.R. editorship.

What was the significance of this early friction between the intellectuals associated with l'Humanité and the Commune group? Fréville was a member of a small and ephemeral organisation set up momentarily to provide a proletcult base within l'Humanité to oppose Monde's support of the Poulaille group, it was swiftly disbanded in the founding of the A.E.A.R. which was intended to embrace intellectuals of all tendencies on the Left. It could have been therefore that Fréville still entertained some of the old ideas regarding "bourgeois" revolutionary writers whom the rabcors viewed with as much suspicion as the anarchists. On the other hand if Fréville's criticism is inspected closely, it will be seen that he was performing a watchdog function ensuring the hegemony

¹L'Humanité. 22.1.35.
of the proletariat in cultural matters, i.e. following fairly closely the precepts of socialist realism as laid down by Zdanov, and merging on the sectarian. For the meantime, however, it was clear that Moscow wanted the French Party to promote the kind of literature and indulge in the kind of criticism most appropriate to the French situation, i.e. to the rassemblement of prominent intellectuals.

Given Moscow's attitude it is not surprising to discover that the French Marxist intellectuals enjoyed a considerable amount of freedom to exercise their skills and conduct their researches in this pre-war version of French socialist realism.

The freedom accorded to the A.E.A.R. by the Party with regard to conformity with the orthodox Moscow line was extended to intellectuals within the Party itself. Several strata can be defined at this time, i.e. the new generation of the former members of the Philosophies group and the surrealists and the less distinguished Party intellectuals who had joined the ranks in the 1920s; among the latter it is again possible to subdivide, in this instance according to attitudes regarding their contribution to Marxist criticism and theory. On the one hand there were uncompromisingly orthodox militants like Fréville and Garmy who upheld the Moscow line faithfully, and men like Moussinac and Sadoul who were more interested in pursuing their personal bents and tastes.
Moussinac had already exhibited this characteristic in Clarté when his theory of the cinema indicated a surprising lack of Marxist innovation. Georges Sadoul,\(^1\) practised a genre of criticism which depended more on effects of style than on its depth of analysis; less sober than the criticism of Fréville, it nevertheless represents an early example of the kind of criticism which became typical of the communist intellectual in the post-war period. In the following example, Mauriac is considered to be worth saving while other bourgeois writers are written off disdainfully:

"Si l'on compare les romans de Mauriac aux obscènes pitreries d'un Morand, aux laborieuses élucubrations canulardes d'un Romains, aux fadaises des Bordeaux-Bazin-Bourget-Benoit (pour ne citer que quelques-uns de ses collègues en littérature bourgeoise militante) on ne peut manquer de noter la qualité supérieure de ses romans. Peinture minutieuse des bonnes familles de la région de Bordeaux, ses romans rendent un son authentique qui font de Mauriac le meilleur écrivain de la bourgeoisie française."\(^2\)

Having complimented Mauriac on the form and perceptiveness of his work, Sadoul went on to add that by aligning himself with the proletariat he could greatly improve his art (as others had done before him), neither should his progressive public be misled by his religious themes, even in religion a "progressive" stance could be adopted:

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\(^1\)Sadoul became better known for his activities as a critic of the cinema; he became a professor at the Institut de la filmologie de la Sorbonne.

"Mauriac n'est cependant pas un écrivain qui puisse se comparer ou à un Balzac ou à un Zola. Par sa position dans le catholicisme avant-garde, dans cette zone littéraire où les parfums de l'encens se mêlent à ceux du fagot sous la haute protection de l'abbé Mugnier, Mauriac se situe où se situait Huysmans.

Mauriac, fils d'une classe dont les forces intellectuelles se sont beaucoup épuisées depuis 1900, ne savait écrire En Ménage ou Les Soeurs Vatard. Et son œuvre est, aussi, inférieure à celle d'hommes qui, comme Gide ou Martin du Gard, se tournent ou se sont tournés vers le prolétaire révolutionnaire."

Another feature of Sadoul's criticism which was to become standard among Party intellectuals after the war, was his inflated opinion of Aragon. It was Sadoul who first bestowed the title, "socialist realist" on Aragon and it was Sadoul who could be said to have launched the Aragon personality cult in France. It is especially evident in his criticism of Les Beaux Quartiers:

"C'est autour de deux villes que s'ordonne la composition parfaite du dernier roman d'Aragon".2

"Tels sont les décors réels, décrits avec un art plein de minutie, de réalisme et de perfection...."3

Sadoul also initiated another feature which was to become common in communist criticism of Aragon, i.e., that of the logical and inevitable evolution of Aragon the anarchist surrealist to Aragon consummate communist artist.

1 Sadoul, Georges. Art. cit.
3 Ibid.
"Si vous retrouvez dans Anicet le thème des passages que reprennent le Paysan et les Beaux Quartiers, vous retrouverez aussi dans les poèmes de la Grande Gaîté et certains passages du Traité du Style, le magnifique et premier emploi de la langue parlée dans l'écriture qui est l'un des traits les plus réussis du dernier roman d'Aragon. Mais maintenant la voix de l'auteur a pris plus que jamais de l'ampleur et de la force. C'est un monde entier qu'il soulève sur ses épaules, c'est le tableau du Monde réel qu'il a entrepris à peindre, et les deux premiers volumes de cette œuvre immense permettent de croire qu'au cours des années qui viennent sera dressé un ensemble qui pourra se comparer aux Rougon-Macquart et à la Comédie Humaine."

The over-anxiety of the communist critic to promote communist inspired art as something new and of immense importance, led to unjustifiable claims to originality such as, "le premier et magnifique emploi de la langue parlée dans l'écriture". Even in terms of the communist world of art, this assertion is false, after all Barbusse had used the spoken language of the trenches to great effect in Le Feu (cf. especially passage quoted above). In the post-World War II period of the Cold War, this kind of claim setting up a line of preposterous "firsts" and the deification of Party artists became a standard feature of communist criticism as the Party was transformed into a society within a society producing its own norms and values. The first signs of the emergence of this interiorised world may be detected in the features of the criticism of Fréville and Sadoul outlined above. The significant factor here is that in the Cold War

1Sadoul, Georges. Art. cit.
situation, the argument could be put forward that the Party was forced into this position by events, whereas in the mid and late thirties, a period of expansiveness and unification, the stance was deliberately chosen. One can only conclude that this choice was influenced by the growing personality cult (driven home by Zdhanov) and the aura of irrationality that it produced.

If one inspects the criticism produced by Aragon during this period one finds the same symptoms, but elevated to an art form. The energy and lyricism of Aragon's poetic qualities were given over unconditionally to the service of his Party. Taking up the question of his own literary and ideological itinerary, he insisted that the right and duty of men to change if so moved was fundamental to human nature:

"Si j'insiste sur ce mécanisme de la contradiction dans la biographie d'un écrivain, c'est parce que je sais du reste à quel point la peur de se contredire arrête, retient des hommes qui pourtant sentent, comme en dehors d'eux-mêmes, leurs idées changer, se mouvoir, comme des sables, sous la vague de l'histoire" ¹

The terms "contradiction" and "vague de l'histoire" evoke historical and dialectical materialism; thus Aragon sees the artist as swept along by the course of events, pervaded by a sense of dialectical change which manifests itself in himself and in his work. Above all, the artist must respond honestly to this process whatever the cost:

"Mais que de rechutes, que de retours! Je pourrais reprendre toute ma vie d'alors, et ma littérature, et ce serait un roman comme il n'en existe pas, que je n'écris pas, bien plus parce que le temps me fait défaut, que parce que j'en ai honte. Au fait, je n'en ai pas la moindre honte: comme de toutes les contradictions qu'on peut trouver dans ce que j'ai été et dans ce que je suis. Je suis même, si vous voulez savoir, très fier de moi-même, voyant d'où je viens."1

Here is a statement of faith of the complete communist, not just the Party member who is prepared dutifully to accept contradictory dictates following one upon the other, but someone whose whole being is involved in the joyful acceptance of a process which he considers to be fundamental to his state of being. It was Aragon who applied the principles of socialist realism in France with the greatest assiduity; his works are peppered with references to the Soviet Union, its art and achievements and also to a group of French writers now deemed by the Soviet Orthodoxy to be suitable ancestors of the great realist and revolutionary traditions which culminated in socialist realism; to this gallery,2 Aragon added Rimbaud:

"Si Rimbaud est en effet admirable ce n'est pas de s'être tu, mais d'avoir parlé. S'il s'est tu, c'est sans doute faute d'audience véritable. C'est parce que la société dans laquelle il vivait ne pouvait lui offrir cette audience. On doit souvenir de ce fait très simple qu'Arthur Rimbaud en 1871 était venu tout naturellement à Paris s'engager dans

1Ibid.

2Balzac, Zola and Hugo.
l'armée de la Commune. Ses poèmes de cette époque sont des poèmes à la gloire de la Commune. Que serait-il advenu de Rimbaud dans une Commune triomphante? Nous l'ignorons mais nous savons ce qu'il en est advenu la Commune vaincue.

Nous respectons le grand Rimbaud qui se tait, quand il a éprouvé jusqu'au dégoût, jusqu'à l'ivresse du suicide, la bassesse du monde auquel il est condamné. Mais pour cela, et pour cela même, nous autres matérialistes qui entreprenons de transformer le monde, nous n'épuiserons pas dans Rimbaud un exemple négatif. Les temps ont changé, et il y a sur la terre une Commune triomphante.«

In the same way, Hugo was also considered a precursor of socialist realism:

"Les Châtiments, c'est le déni opposé, une bonne fois pour toutes, aux gens qui croient à l'incomptabilité du réalisme et de la poésie. Les Châtiments? Je dirai plus: je dirai quelque chose qui peut choquer certains: c'est la préfiguration dans la poésie, de ce que nos amis soviétiques ont appelé le réalisme socialiste." 2

According to Aragon, Zola et Hugo both exhibited the lyricism typical of socialist realism:

"Réalisme socialiste ou romantisme révolutionnaire: deux noms d'une même chose et ici se rejoignent le Zola de Germinal et Hugo des Châtiments." 3

One of the best examples of Aragon's criticisms of contemporary works is to be found in his commentary of Jean Rogissart's novel, Mervale, which won him the Théophraste-Renaudot prize of 1937. Here the critic and poet combine to produce a perfectly turned piece which

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2 Ibid.

3 Aragon, Louis. idem.
Aragon takes the region of the Ardennes in which Rogissart's novel is set, and launches into a historical-cultural discourse which leans heavily on local legend for its poetic effect. Against the backcloth of a suggested medieval tapestry image (which the critic has created amidst historical evocations of Caesar's battles with the local heroic tribe - the Trévires), Aragon begins the story of Hubert, fils de Bertrand, duc d'Angoulême and descendant of Pharamond, the first king of France. He tells how Hubert eventually becomes the tutor of Charles, later to be known as Charles Martel. Hubert encounters Floribane and falls in love with her. It is at this point (and one must imagine the accumulative effect of the style and vocabulary of legend which Aragon brings into play in a perfect compatibility of form and content) that the critic weaves yet another thread into the tapestry in the form of a comparison between Floribane and one of the characters of Rogissart's novel. The comparison appears naturally and unobtrusively within the flow of the narrative set in motion by Aragon:

"Prompte à coucher avec l'étranger, Floribane ressemble à ces filles de Rubens, dont l'une au village de Mervale, n'a pas résisté aux jours de..."

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la guerre aux charmes de l'envahisseur. Floribane ressemble à Fin, La Josephine Pater que le vannier Firmin Machu a reconnue en tremblant sur une photographie jaunie d'un feldwebel avantageux......

Il en est des thèmes des légendes comme des baisers des hommes: ils ne changent guère avec le temps.  

From this point onwards, Aragon switches freely to and from his historical fresco weaving the novel imperceptibly into his carefully constructed tapestry:

"C'était un seigneur paillard et méchant qu'Hubert, jusqu'au jour que courant le cerf par les fagnes et la forêt, il s'en vint auprès d'une source, et le cerf s'arrêta devant lui avec les yeux plus doux que ceux d'une femme, des yeux d'Ardenne, comme ceux de Mourette, la petite villagioise d'aujourd'hui. Et dans ses cornes apparut un halo de lumière avec la croix véritable à quoi Hubert reconnut Jésus. Avec l'aide de Saint Lambert, évêque de Liège, Hubert devint Saint Hubert, patron des chasseurs et de l'ardenne mystique qu'il convertit au culte galiléen. C'est ainsi que les mirages des païens de la forêt se mêlent à la religion chrétienne, des jours lointains du royaume d'Austrasie à ceux où les héros de Jean Rogissart, Firmin, dans les tranchées et les camps de prisonniers de la grande guerre, fait comme Saint Hubert le voeu mystique de la chasteté, si naturel en ces régions qui furent à travers les âges couvertes de cloîtres, d'abbayes, de couvents où la chaire était châtiée avec une ardeur qui frissait l'hérésie."

This evocation of Flaubert's Tentation de Saint Antoine, and the mingling of the secular and the saintly was entirely in keeping with Thorez's invitation to catholics in 1936 (la main tendue) to defend the Popular

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1 Aragon, Louis. Art. cit.

2 Ibid.
Front against fascism. But, claims Aragon, the historical rapport which he has just described are not his making, but flow organically and spontaneously from the fabric of Rogissart's novel; this is not only realism but "... un réalisme qui sait faire rêver" (Aragon).

Continuing his tactic of evoking reality through legend and history, Aragon links figures from local history with national figures and events. The Trévières are shown to be redoubtable enemies for Caesar; the same people resisted the advent of Christianity into their region, but when they did accept it, it became undoubtedly of the Ardennes with its own saints and legends.

Bertrand d'Angoulême is a descendent of the first king of France, he is also mentor to the future Charles Martel who will take Siegfried, a local prince, with him to fight against the Saracens. From the struggle of Richart de Renaud against Charlemagne to the occupations of 1870-71 and 1914-18, the fate of the Ardennes is shown to be closely linked to that of the whole nation. When Aragon expresses the desire for "national" literatures of this kind to spring up in Brittany, Alsace and Provence, he is evoking the example of the encouragement given by the central authority in the Soviet Union to the different national minorities to advance their own culture.

Can it really be said that throughout all this, that Rogissart's book is being judged objectively? Aragon has set out to show that Rogissart's characters have been
moulded by history and environment and in a sense approaches the theory of Taine, but it is the ideological element in Aragon's commentary which makes his treatment of the subject a Marxist-Leninist propaganda exercise rather than an objective attempt to apply the principles of the Marxist dialectic. It could be argued that Aragon has established his historical criteria prior to emitting his revolutionary message, but he has done so using all the power of suggestion of poetry and persuasion at his command. Aragon's criticism is propaganda, but propaganda as an art form. It is for this reason that to study Aragon's criticism at any given time is to evaluate in the end, Aragon's ideological position of that time. His writing on Hugo, Zola and Rimbaud has little to do with a serious contribution to the study of these artists, but everything to do with harnassing his talent as a poet and writer in the service of his Party.

The contrast between Aragon's critical work and that of Paul Nizan and Henri Lefebvre is quite striking. It is the difference between the normaliens and the surrealist, between the philosophers and the poet. Each found his own style of criticism and applied it as his commitment dictated. As a poet, Aragon seemed to have absorbed Soviet socialist realist theory in a different manner from the other A.E.A.R. militants even those within the Party. His lyrical evocation of the relationship between the nation, history and literature as illustrated above,
reflects so well the euphoric atmosphere generated by the 1934 Moscow congress that the question of whether Soviet socialist realist theory was best applied to set-pieces of this kind and poetry than to any other genre must be raised. In the Soviet Union the enthusiasm of the people for their regime was so great that principles such as naradnost, ideinost and partinost, not to mention the aesthetic of "types", positive heros and "no conflict" plots, seemed only natural; the situation in the pre-revolutionary and more sophisticated west was appreciably different. In the west only those art forms which were best suited to conveying ideology in a lyrical form pointing to an idealised but undefined future could possibly absorb the Moscow line. The fact that Aragon's personality lent itself to the complete political, ideological and artistic commitment required of the socialist realist artist supplied the last and vital ingredients for the production of the kind of propaganda art which one associated with Aragon.

Background and personality, so important in the case of Aragon, also played a decisive role in the intellectual production of Paul Nizan and Henri Lefebvre. The contrast between the criticism of Lefebvre and Nizan although militant tends to concentrate on a finer and more concrete approach suggesting that the propaganda aspect was not the whole raison d'etre of their writing, but that a genuine interest in exploring the possibilities of the dialectical
method in the context of literary and aesthetic criticism lay behind their work. This is not surprising given the intellectual basis of their conversion to Marxism, but it would be wrong to say that their writing (and especially that of Nizan) was ineffective politically or that it played down the ideological in favour of the academic. Here were critics who seemed to strike a good balance between those two considerations. A good example of their ability to marry their objectives is contained in Nizan's treatment of the fascist writers, Drieu La Rochelle and Céline. Avoiding the temptation to denounce the fascist scourge, Nizan sets out to demonstrate the orientation their art; in this instance he refers to Drieu:

Ni la politique, ni l'amour, ni la guerre. Toutes ses démarches aboutissent à la considération d'un univers impérissable. La faillite est d'autant plus grave que Drieu a singulièrement progressé dans le sens de la technique et qu'il est actuellement l'écrivain qui a trouvé le ton le plus adapté à l'ennui. Il n'y a guère de doute que le style de Drieu ne soit parfois le meilleur de l'essai français d'aujourd'hui. Mais le succès de la forme ne dissimule pas la faillite de la pensée.  

The lesser Marxist critic displayed a tendency to concentrate on a direct exposé of the artist's ideological position with only lip-service paid to the study of form; Nizan was not afraid to fight his enemy on his own ground as, for example, in the case of Céline and his Mort à Cédric:

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Le livre est d'une obscénité déjà célèbre, qui ne me paraît point gênante parce qu'elle est esthétique. Et c'est justement là-dessus que doit s'engager le débat."

Nizan argued that Céline quickly tires of conventional argot and invents his own language. In an inverted anarchistic symbolism (where Mallarmé said "azure", Céline retorted "merdre") he nevertheless arrived at the same result, the inevitable result of symbolism, lifelessness:

"Le travail que Céline fait subir à la matière première du langage n'évoque nullement, comme une publicité ingénieuse voudrait nous faire croire, la langue de Rabelais qui n'est au fait, qu'une réussite extrême de la langue naturelle; il évoque beaucoup plus la fabrication volontaire du syntaxe et des mots auxquels se livra Mallarmé. Nous sommes dans le royaume des artifices symboliques. Il n'est pas vrai que l'argot de Céline soit une simple transition de l'argot authentique: il est un argot réinventé sur des rythmes qui ne sont pas ceux du français populaire parlé. Céline écrit, comme les symbolistes, une langue savante, c'est-à-dire morte.

Quand l'auteur du Voyage écrit:

"Elle pouvait pas le voir avec son instruction, ses grands scrupules, ses fureurs de nouille, tout son rataplan d'émmerde", on pense à René Ghil écrivant: "Hieratique, imberbe, tout enveloppé de tissus précieusement blancs, en tête la tiare papale, domiale et également blanche."

By linking Céline with the symbolists, Nizan effected a much more subtle analysis than that of a simple denunciation of his as a fascist. The subtlety lies in the fact that the germ of Céline's ideological position is

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1 Nizan, Paul. "Pour le cinquantenaire du symbolisme, Mort à Credit," par Louis Ferdinand Céline. L'Humanité. 15.7.36.
evident in the formal aspect of his work, which as a Marxist, Nizan links with the content; the militant critic has scored a double point by implying that the earlier symbolists were writing from an ideological base which held inherent dangers. Nizan's criticism is an example of the implementation of Marxist philosophical theory, albeit in a simple form, but how much more effective than a straight denunciation; the end-product is the same, Céline is shown to be a fascist, but the means to the end has proved to be more adequate.

How did Nizan react to the literary production of his own communist writers? Was it still possible to apply the kind of analysis used for example in the case of Céline? His comment on the novels of two A.E.A.R. novelists and Party members, Georgette Guégen Dreyfus and André Philippe, provides an opportunity of evaluating this side of Nizan's criticism. Both were writers from a working class background whose subject was the proletarian condition. In either case, Nizan welcomed the theme and recognised the appropriate simplicity of form and style for the stark message which they contained:

"Vie d'un ouvrier: apprentissage, métier, renvois, chomage, faim, dans un décor de misères, de morts, de maladies, d'amours étouffées, grèves, idées de la révolution. C'est l'histoire des hommes sans nom. Elle est dite dans ce livre avec beaucoup de simplicité, de force et de vérité."

1 Nizan, Paul. "Tu seras ouvrier" par Georgette Guégen Dreyfus. Monde 15.3.35.
André Philippe also owed the success of his work to authenticity of experience:

"Ce qui frappe dans un livre comme celui-ci, c'est la sûreté et la facilité de ce rapport de l'auteur à son peuple. De là, une authenticité qui ne s'immite point, une complète absence de ruses, de coquetteries. C'est un monde qui est écrit par un homme qui lui appartient."

Were these works therefore examples of what one might expect would be the form of socialist realism in France.

For one contemporary, Paul Loffler the first seemed to fulfill the conditions:

"Le meilleur roman prolétarien des écrivains de l'A.E.A.R. fut écrit par une femme qui" a vécu et grandi dans le milieu prolétarien.....C'est parce qu'elle en est issue qu'elle a fait un livre vivant", nous apprenait le "préfère d'insérer": Georgette Guégen-Dreyfus dans Tu seras ouvrier brossa la vie de l'ouvrier français dont la situation déplorable arrivait à son point culminant pendant ces années 1931-1935. Malgré l'époque dure qui est décrite dans ce roman, sa lecture n'est pas oppressante, ne laisse pas en nous un goût de désespoir, tout au contraire ce roman est plein de chaleur et d'espoir en un avenir meilleur."  

Although Loffler does not mention the term socialist realism his approval of the working class content plus the fact that this novel exhibits optimism as one of its striking features, suggests that in his opinion, it conforms with an accepted ideal of the genre. On the other hand his use of the term "prolétarien" indicates

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that a division existed between the writers of working class origins and the bourgeois writers of the A.E.A.R.

It is interesting to note in passing that Nizan's evaluation of the work of these two writers corresponds exactly to the criteria established by Henri Poulaille, i.e. authenticity of experience, simplicity of expression etc.

But there is evidence to suggest that Nizan had no desire to map out areas of subject matter appropriate to the various classes of writers; for example, he held that the working class as subject matter should not be exclusive to working class authors:

"Il s'agit au vrai de produire des œuvres qui soient unies au peuple par un lien de coeur et d'entendement tellement fort qu'il y reconnaisse ses douleurs, ses plaisirs et ses ambitions. La question est de savoir ensuite qui écrit cette littérature populaire n'est vraiment qu'une question subsidiaire. L'essentiel est dans le rapport de l'écrivain au peuple auquel il se sent uni."¹

This is where the real difference between Poulaille and Nizan lay; Poulaille would not have accepted that a bourgeois could write about the working class (although he would have accepted that he could write about his own life experience). Nizan's view of the matter was that of the communist, since the bourgeois intellectual had only to place himself in the class perspective of the proletariat

to achieve the required objectivity.  

The fact remains however that despite the praise of A.E.A.R. intellectuals for the work of writers of the stamp of Guégent-Dreydus and André Philippe, they were never described as "socialist realists" (Garmy and Fréville were included in this category); only Aragon and Nizan were honoured with the title of socialist realists in France.  Given that there were working class artists writing in France within the communist party, who in Soviet terms were worthy of the appellation (however, even so, no Soviet journal qualified any French writer as "socialist realist"), the French left to themselves in the matter pursued a policy which presented their best (bourgeois) writers as their avant-garde, no doubt in order to attract even more middle class intellectuals to the front organisations.

This part of Nizan's work could be considered as his contribution in literary terms as a militant taking part in the everyday criticism of the literary world, but there is evidence of greater philosophical and aesthetic considerations which lie outside the cut and thrust of daily Party journalism.  His personal literary background tends to colour his more theoretical work, but it remains

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1 The fact that Nizan recognised the existence of categories of revolutionary writers in 1937 underlines the consistency in his theory since the statement made in 1932 (cf. above - La Revue des Vivants), when he also referred to revolutionary writers as those who wrote from the point of view of the working class.
unquestionably materialist and revolutionary in concept. Soviet socialist realism did not go far enough for Nizan and his relationship to orthodoxy in this sphere was similar to his relationship with the faithful Party clerk of the stamp of Fréville or Sadoul. There is no blatant revisionism in Nizan's theory since it appears not in separate articles and essays, but rather in the form of asides within otherwise undeniably orthodox statements; taken collectively however; these remarks do point to the existence of several leitmotives in his thinking which were scarcely compatible with the official Soviet line on literature and the arts.

A good example of this is contained in his fascination for Dostoievsky, a writer who was not viewed with any real enthusiasm by Soviet critics and whom Gorky recommended should be studied in the same way one studies an enemy. Nizan recognised that Dostoievsky was caught in an ideological impasse. Two solutions were possible for him, either he accepted atheism which in turn would force him into a consideration of salvation on earth and therefore ultimately to a revolutionary solution to man's social and spiritual ills, or he embraced a mysticism which ascribed all earthly suffering to the will of God. In the case of the second choice, the existence of suffering becomes evidence of the existence of God, and therefore essential to the existence of God:
"La faillite centrale de Dostoievsky est sans doute dans sa métamorphose des déchéances sociales en une déchéance essentielle, des humiliations et des offences terrestres en un abaissement commandé par un destin permanent. Il n'est rien qui soit plus profondément hostile à Dostoievsky que la révolution parce qu'elle est une certaine négation profonde du malheur, de la déchéance et de l'humiliation."¹

The choice for Nizan was obviously that of atheism and the defeat of "le malheur, la déchéance et l'humiliation". Nizan was therefore preoccupied with the term of his earthly existence and consequently with death; he was also concerned with destiny and with resistance to suffering. These are the themes which are central to Nizan's philosophy and here he finds an artist who has given artistic form to these preoccupations, he praises him for his insight and grasp of the human condition. As far as Nizan was concerned, Dostoievsky was such an artist, for although he may have chosen the mystical solution to his existential problem, there were times when the other possibility of revolt found expression in his writings:

"Ce n'est pas que Dostoievsky n'ait tenté de découvrir, ou d'ouvrir, des issues, par où l'homme put se soustraire au malheur radical de sa condition. La contradiction que Dostoievsky n'a jamais pu lever entre les deux solutions qu'il a entrevues est précisément au centre des Possédés et des Karamazov. Elle éclate dans le personnage de Kirillov, qui est peut-être mieux encore que Stavroguine, l'authentique

Dostoeievsky posed problems which were still contemporary problems and he did this in the only way in which the novelist can hope to deal with contemporary reality, he incarnated the problem in his characters.

"Un grand romancier est celui qui sait commander à l'incarnation des problèmes dans des personnages de chair."2

Social types can only be described when they have had time to crystallise and are identifiable, otherwise personification is the only solution for the portrayal of current problems.

"Les personnages de Dostoievsky sont bien moins des images du réel que des incarnations de problèmes. C'est que dans un monde en transformation, les problèmes apparaissent plus rapidement que les types sociaux achevés. Il est tout à fait spécifique que chez les romanciers les plus importants d'aujourd'hui, les personnages soient justement bien moins des images des types réels que des incarnations des problèmes: c'est le cas des personnages de Kafka en Allemagne, de Faulkner aux Etats-Unis, et en France de Malraux."3

The problem of destiny and its related problems are those which Nizan feels should find expression in the novel:

"Le sujet romanesque est tout entier dans l'abandon ou la résistance du destin, dont je me persuade qu'ils sont les uniques objets dignes d'un très grand art."4

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The struggle against destiny evoked in Nizan the ethic of classical tragedy:

"Toute volonté de subversion suppose l'espoir: on ne penserait guère à changer le monde si on ne croyait point que de meilleurs mondes fussent possibles. C'est là le véritable optimisme, qui n'est pas dans l'acceptation, mais dans un grand pessimisme surmonté.

Cette littérature n'est pas une idylle: il n'est pas facile de transformer le monde, de changer la vie, comme écrivait Rimbaud.

C'est un combat entre les volontés humaines et les résistances que le monde intolérable leur oppose: ce conflit dégage les valeurs de la colère, de la lutte, de l'héroïsme, qui paraissent quand l'homme défie son destin.

La tragédie antique était dominée par un pareil conflit. Le destin qui prenait la figure des Parques, des Furies, écrivait l'homme et le seul espoir était dans la prière adressée à des dieux qu'on ne connaissait pas. Nous sommes dans un temps où l'homme affronte aussi son destin, ses malheurs, mais il ne met rien au compte des dieux"\(^1\)

Nizan hinted that in the Soviet Union, even although they may have had their revolution, sufficient recognition had not been given to this fundamental question of destiny and the existence of a state of flux which could not be portrayed within the structures proposed by socialist realism:

"L'achèvement fut toujours la principale ambition des beaux arts, qui s'accommodent mieux des fins que des commencements, comme on voit par les difficultés de la littérature soviétique."\(^2\)

In a comparison of Tolstoï and Dostoievsky in which

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he indicates that the "bonheur" expressed in parts of Tolstoy's work would be more likely to resemble socialist literature than Dostoievsky's pessimism, he makes the point that "malheur" still persists.

"Tolstoi disait du Prince Muichkine:

Dostoievsky n' a pas eu le courage d'en faire un homme bien portant....On peut méditer beaucoup sur ce que sous-entend ce courage, - et reprendre le célèbre morceau de la Guerre et la Paix qui fait entrevoir, après quelques comédies de Shakespeare, ce que pourrait être un jour une littérature du bonheur. Ce sont les fêtes de Noel 1810 chez les Rostov, les Sviatky d'Otradnoie: les chasses, les courses dans la neige, les masques et les déguisements des jeunes filles, les déclarations nocturnes, les voix qui chantent dans la nuit"Le long de la rue Pavée", composent un monde "enchanteur et tendre", où des jeunes filles soviétiques m'ont dit reconnaître l'image de leur destin, qu'elles ne retrouvent pas dans les malheurs d'Anna Karenine ni dans la vie des filles tragiques de Dostoievsky.

Mais le temps d'abandonner la littérature du malheur n'est pas encore venu...."

Perhaps the most effective plea for the retention and recognition of the "individu problématique" and all that he stood for politically and philosophically in Nizan's mind, is contained in his obvious disapproval of the Soviet attitude towards Dostoievsky:

"Parmi les problèmes que Dostoievsky pose, il y a le problème de l'attitude qu'il faut avoir en face de sa personne et de son oeuvre. En un certain sens, il est l'ennemi, il a la voix de l'ennemi et

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1Nizan, Paul. "L'Homme et L'Humanité" Vendredi 22.11.35. (Nb. Nizan's insistence on "malheur" goes a long way to explain the grey tones of Antoine Bloyé.)
on pourrait adopter par exemple la position récente de Gorki à propos de lui et dire qu'il faut bien connaître ses ennemis. En un autre sens, il n'est pas l'ennemi, et les Carnets des Karamazov qui viennent de paraître donnent des arguments sérieux en faveur de cette thèse. Dans l'un et l'autre cas, il est l'un des plus grands romanciers du monde: ce n'est pas un personnage dont il soit facile de se débarrasser à bon compte.

Il est parfaitement évident que la condamnation de Dostoievsky au nom de certaines valeurs morales qui font dire qu'il est "malsain", manque complètement de sérieux. Il existe une tendance paresseuse à rejeter de notre héritage les penseurs qui posent des questions embarrassantes, en disant qu'ils sont malsains. Il ne faut pas avoir une si pauvre confiance en nos forces."

Thus Nizan's conception of revolutionary literature is much wider than that currently being propounded in the Soviet Union, both from the point of view of extending the range of bourgeois authors recognized as having something to contribute to the new society (the critical realists) and also from the point of view of the philosophical content of revolutionary literature in which pessimism and despair have as much of a role to play as positive heroes and lyrical optimism.

This is exactly the point of view of Henri Lefebvre who shared the intellectual background of Nizan and above all, the misgivings regarding the narrowness of the Moscow line on philosophy and the arts.

Like Nizan, he viewed the novel as the greatest and

1Nizan, Paul. "L'Adolescent" par Dostoievsky.
most appropriate art form for the expression of contemporary philosophical problems but more important, as an exploratory device by which these problems may be fixed and examined. The modern individual, said Lefebvre experienced deep philosophical needs:

"Une seule forme de culture et d'art correspond à ses exigences, et c'est précisément la forme romanesque. Tel semble être le secret de l'intérêt passionné que suscite les personnages du roman. Le romancier éclaire l'individu moderne sur lui-même et lui fournit des modèles de sentiments et de vie. Rousseau a rendu lucide la solution de l'individu et a posé le problème de son accord avec la nature et l'humain. Stendhal a proposé des solutions aux problèmes de l'action et de l'être; et Balzac a voulu expressément donner une représentation de l'ensemble social."¹

But different times produced different needs and different possibilities. For example, when Balzac wrote his novels, society was in an extremely stable condition enabling the artist to name and group his species in the manner of a naturalist cataloguing his finds; the result is a sociological novel concerned primarily with a description of society rather than the predicament of the individual.

Lefebvre believed like Nizan that the novel reached its greatest heights when it dealt with the individual confronted with destiny, a contemporary situation which had had its precedents in the past especially in the Napoleonic era. In his opinion the philosopher Niétszsche,

like Dostoevsky, had absorbed the problems of his times into his own being trying in vain to find a solution; his greatness like that of Stendhal, and Dostoevsky had been in his attempts to surmount the obstacles placed in his path.

"Comme Dostoievsky, Nietzsche a vécu toutes les contradictions spirituelles de son époque, toutes les contradictions de l'individuel; mais en essayant de les surmonter et non pour les exprimer passivement comme les données de la vie.

Ainsi que Rimbaud, il a tenté la purité et vécu une longue saison en enfer; mais au lieu de prendre la poésie comme point de départ et de renoncer ensuite à la poésie et au monde, il a tenté de conquérir la poésie et le monde."1

Rimbaud may have been pre-destined to failure, for just as Stendhal had lived through a period in which the individual had the possibility of becoming a "conquérant", the era of defeat had been heralded by Flaubert. The critical balance between the individual and society which allowed maximum freedom to the individual to transcend himself and spend his cosmic energy in conquering the world no longer existed:

"L'Education sentimentale montrera l'échec de cette tentative de l'individu moderne pour se réussir. Après Flaubert, les meilleurs romans seront les romans d'échec."2

Lefebvre held that the great periods of historical

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2Lefebvre, Henri. "Stendhal et le problème moderne de l'individu" Commune, Mai 1939.
transition when the individual was able to stand apart from his society, although still linked, (in the sense that Julien Sorel was only a partial outsider in the world he wished to conquer). This interim position between complete alienation and total absorption constituted the magic balance which was the condition of individual freedom. Stendhal had achieved this in the novel.

"Il y a juste assez de désaccords entre l'individu stendhalien et son entourage pour qu'il sente une grande liberté de mouvements, une différence; pour qu'il se permette une certaine agressivité qui le confirme envers lui-même. Mais il y a un accord suffisant pour qu'il trouve un contenu, un sens, des possibilités de communication humaine, d'action efficace et de victoires. Ce point merveilleux d'équilibre et de perfection n'a été atteint que dans l'oeuvre de Stendhal."¹

The necessary conditions had been a product of the flux of the Napoleonic era: "... le surhomme serait inconcevable sans le "thème" Napoléon." A similar period of upheaval existed today but it was with wistfulness and longing that contemporary man contemplated the Stendhalian character for he too desired a contemporary portrait of himself illustrating his dilemmas and pre-occupations as a step towards self-definition and liberation from alienation. Referring obliquely to the Soviet Union, Lefebvre pointed out that a beginning had been made in the creation of conditions which would bring alienation to an end and solve the problem of the

individual and society, but like Nizan, he felt that the tragic sense of life still pervaded:

"Nous vivons donc vraiment dans une époque de transition, au milieu des ruines de tout le passé, des reminiscences et des débris de toutes les cultures. Et même si l'on pense que la reconstruction de l'homme et de la culture est déjà commencée, il est impossible d'éviter tout désespoir. Le malheur de la conscience n'a pas encore pris fin."’

Given this state of affairs, the necessity for an art which incarnates and fixes the problems of the individual is all the more evident. The problematic hero should not be discarded in favour of the positive hero, the idea should not be sacrificed for the ideal:

"Les thèmes, les contenus de la forme romanesque ont été d'essence bourgeoise. Mais les problèmes généraux de la littérature romanesque dépassent l'ordre et le désordre bourgeois. Il s'agit, en effet, du problème de l'homme et plus précisément encore du problème de l'individu humain. Or, ce problème est destiné à se poser avec une acuité toujours plus croissante. Le socialisme n'est pas un ordre de choses dans lequel les interrogations humaines disparaissent par miracle. Il est au contraire une époque nouvelle, dans laquelle les problèmes spécifiquement humains de la vie, de l'amour, de la connaissance et de la mort sont enfin directement abordés et résolus dans une expérience vivante et lucide."’

Realism stated Lefebvre could never be the expression or description of a finished state, true realism could only be the expression of movement and development, a reflection of a dialectical process:

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1 Lefebvre, Henri. Nietzsche, p. 108.  
2 Lefebvre, Henri. "Essai sur les rapports de la critique et du roman".
"Le réalisme—il n'est jamais inutile de le répéter—ne peut être défini par la description ou l'expression de l'accompli. Il doit envelopper toute la réalité humaine, avec ses conflits, son mouvement et sa tension. Il est donc très libre et inclut la fantaisie et la poésie. Le réalisme ainsi défini s'oriente vers le socialisme non parce qu'il emprunte des thèmes à une doctrine, mais parce que le socialisme est fondé sur les réalités humaines et qu'il est l'effort pratique vers la solution des problèmes. Ce réalisme devient "dialectique" du dedans, par la conscience des conflits et du mouvement profond de la vie."

Lefebvre is therefore claiming freedom for the novelist to mirror reality as it reveals itself to him and not to have to cast it in moulds already prepared for him by ideologists. It is obvious that both he and Nizan have deep misgivings about current "socialist" theories of art and the rejection of the free play of psychology in Soviet art.

It is interesting that these ideas should have been put forward by André Malraux at the Soviet Writers' Congress of 1934 and that his reservations were echoed by J-R. Bloch and Gide. Nizan and Lefebvre were, in essence, nearer to Malraux than Gorky.

Another of Malraux's ideas which was endorsed by Nizan and Lefebvre was the theory that art is a conquest, a triumph of humanity challenging the enigma of life and arriving at conclusions if only approximations. This desire to achieve a total definition has always found expression in the aspirations of art and artists

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1 Ibid.
"L'art a toujours enveloppé une tension, un effort vers un acte total. Dans la musique un élément partiel de la conscience sensible (le son) tend à devenir co-extensif au contenu de la conscience, rythme, mouvement, passion érotisme ou spiritualité. De même en peinture l'élément visuel. L'art des époques disparues dont la structure n'a plus de signification pratique pour nous- garde une valeur irremplaçable. On peut ainsi trouver dans les poèmes les plus mystiques certains pressentiments de cet acte total qui fut appelé le Divin, ou le Surhumain, et que l'on a toujours projeté hors de l'homme au nom des sentiments cosmiques ardents et obscurs. L'effort vers l'Unique s'est presque toujours manifesté jusqu'ici dans l'aliénation. L'homme espérait trouver une croyance extrême l'unité et la réconciliation avec lui-même, l'apaisement et le salut. L'unité de l'homme avec la communauté était cherchée dans les rites religieux ou les impératifs moraux. L'unité de l'homme avec l'univers semblait atteinte dans certains moments de communion extatique où la conscience sortait de soi et dont l'intensité n'était possible qu'au prix d'une longue ascèse. Ces élans n'apportaient pas une véritable solution. Après le moment de la conversion, ou de la communion, ou de l'extase, l'être humain retrouvait sa malheur, avec son déchirement plus profond, plus désespéré: l'être en dehors de l'humain. De toutes ces tentatives, l'art reste seul qui garde la plus grande valeur pour nous."

Such an important, and indeed sacred activity could not be subject to sterile criticism. For Lefebvre there were two kinds of false criticism, the impressionistic which took a work of art as a pretext for the creation of a second and positical work, and the dogmatic which sought to impoverish art by forcing it into pre-conceived definitions.

"La critique littéraire dans son ensemble oscille entre un impressionisme subjectif (formule d'ailleurs

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1 Lefebvre, Henri. Nietzsche pp. 149-151.
agréable) et un dogmatisme de mauvaise humeur qui juge et tranche au moyen des valeurs toutes faites, morales ou politiques extérieures à la littérature comme telle."¹

Not surprisingly Lefebvre seeks the same freedom for the critic as he did for the novelist. If it was the task of the novelist to capture the problems of his times and render them concrete within his creations, it was the task of the critic to make these even clearer to the reader helping him to a greater understanding of the work and himself. But how should the critic set about his task? In the first instance he must recognise that his judgement cannot be based solely on extra-literary factors (race, milieu, moment) but neither is the solution to be found within the work exclusively. Any work is partially conditioned by the times in which it was engendered, but not automatically so:

"Il faut la considérer comme une réponse donnée par un homme défini, dans des circonstances définies, aux problèmes de son époque. Réponse unique, mais impossible à isoler. Solution plus ou moins consciente, plus ou moins valable, mais toujours fondée sur l'enchâvevêtrement des contradictions et des conflits qui posent les problèmes et stimulent le mouvement de la pensée, de l'activité, de la conscience."²

Once again Lefebvre stresses that a work of art is not the expression of a fixed defined entity but of a living aspiration. Human consciousness is determined

¹ Lefebvre, Henri. "Essai sur les rapports de la critique et du roman".

² Lefebvre, Henri. Art. cit.
by many factors and these have to be defined:

"L'oeuvre d'art n'exprime pas une réalité immobile et donnée, mais une réalité mouvante et problématique: un effort vers l'être et vers la conscience.

Il faut donc réintégrer l'oeuvre littéraire (et l'oeuvre idéologique en général) dans l'ensemble des rapports humains et dans le mouvement accidenté de cet ensemble. Peut-être pourrons-nous alors fonder la pensée critique sur une "phénoménologie" de la conscience, c'est-à-dire sur une étude des conditions dans lesquelles les faits-les contenus sociaux et humains-sont élevés à cette forme supérieure de la conscience qu'est la littérature. La conscience est toujours conditionnée. Elle est "prise de conscience" de quelque chose qui existe déjà: le corps, la vie, le monde, l'action et les rapports humains. Cette phénoménologie matérialiste éclairerait les conditions dans lesquelles ce phénomène de la conscience apparaît et prend une valeur, une efficacité supérieures qui font de lui quelque chose d'essentiel et d'infiniment précieux, un élément de vie plus haute et de culture."

Throughout Lefebvre's theory and practice there is a constant effort to deliver Marxist criticism from crude politically motivated sociology. His reasons for selecting Nietzsche and Stendhal for particular attention are to be found in his desire to extend Marxist theory. Nietzsche had become the whipping boy for communist politicians; the communist critics had been provided with a repulsive political portrait of the "father of fascism" and it was now their duty to accelerate the campaign of hate against him. When Lefebvre refused this political command and pointed out that the contradictions in Nietzsche's work provided as many arguments against fascism as for it, (and this in accordance with the first

1Ibid
duty of the intellectual to remain honest at all costs) he was committing a political misdemeanour of the first order. Stendhal, with all the psychological and philosophical problems posed by his characters, was very much a writer to be avoided. Lefebvre's lack of interest in Balzac should be compared with the orthodox Lukács' inability to see beyond him. (It is significant that Aragon who hardly mentions Stendhal at this time, uses him in 1954 in order to illustrate the "thaw" in Marxist criticism.) By tackling Stendhal and Nietzsche, Lefebvre showed himself to be more interested in exploring the potential of the Marxist critical method with regard to complex authors than supplying hack propaganda criticism on demand. As far as Lefebvre was concerned there was more to be done in Marxist criticism than mere historical and sociological research:

"Le savant peut suivre le développement d'une idée, d'un style ou d'une institution, à partir d'humble origines, à travers des détours si étranges parfois de l'histoire. Mais le résultat d'un tel processus historique peut être jugé en tant que tel. Toute oeuvre d'esprit se détache en un sens de ses conditions et s'en rend indépendante en entrant dans le domaine de la culture. Lorsqu'on explique la tragédie de la Grèce, cela n'enlève rien à l'émotion tragique. Réciproquement, on n'a pas besoin de connaître cette explication pour être ému par la tragédie.

Un style et une culture "expriment" toujours des conditions matérielles et une structure sociale. Cependant, le style et la culture peuvent être grands et libres, ou mesquins et prisonniers de conditions limitées. Il y a hiérarchie, donc comparaison possible entre les œuvres de l'esprit. Une œuvre n'est grande que si les conditions le permettent; mais lorsqu'elle est grande, elle déborde infiniment
ses conditions dans la vie de son auteur et dans son époque."¹

One of the few statements by Marx on a question of a strictly aesthetic nature, he recalled, was made in connection with Homeric poetry. Why should it be, asked Marx, that a work which had been produced by a society so different from our own should continue to give us pleasure today? His solution by its simplicity and limitations has never ceased to preoccupy Marxist aesthetic theorists ever since; the reason declared Marx, was that we took pleasure in contemplating the infancy of our own civilization. Lefebvre claimed that the problem was by no means solved by this observation:

"Lorsque Marx, dans un texte célèbre dit que le problème n'est pas seulement d'expliquer Homère, mais de savoir pourquoi l'épopée homérique nous touche encore, il pose le problème qui a tant préoccupé Nietzsche. Pourquoi de telles œuvres gardent-elles un "charme éternel"? Parce qu'elles reflètent la jeunesse de l'humanité. - Mais pourquoi reconnaissons-nous dans Homère notre jeunesse?

Marx réfute à l'avance la solution nietzschienne (la résurrection des mythes) par ces lignes décisives:

"Chaque mythologie vainc, domine et exprime les forces de la nature dans l'imagination. Elle disparaîtra donc dès que cette domination sera devenue effective."

Le problème n'en subsiste pas moins. Il y a un rapport direct, non subordonné à la connaissance historique, entre les grands œuvres de l'esprit et nous. Ces œuvres ont une "valeur". D'où la possibilité d'évaluer, de juger comparativement."²

¹Lefebvre, Henri. Nietzsche, p. 145.
²Lefebvre, Henri. Nietzsche, p. 146.
Nizan, and especially Lefebvre were intent on taking their literary criticism further than mere ideological pronouncements. No doubt they sensed that in order to attract French intellectuals to their anti-fascist movement they had to do more than point to the achievements of the Soviet Union and expect the intellectual establishment to fall at their feet. Given that their own Philosophies group had been attracted to Marxism for intellectual as well as political reasons, it was not surprising that they should wish to promote Marxist theory by demonstrating that it was a living entity.

Literary and aesthetic theory offered first class opportunities, both for reaching a wide cultured public and also for research for was it not true that so little had been done to solve the major philosophical problems posed in this domaine by Marxists past and present?

The themes they tackled, the individual and art, the problematic here, the durability of art, the individual creator... all required a great deal more elucidation than that carried out by the fathers of Marxism or the second generation of theorists all of whom united to say that more work had still to be done in these areas, that the task would not be easy and that they contained problems which lay central to the problems of Marxist philosophy. Nizan and Lefebvre were well equipped to carry out such research; the two great philosophical influences on them to date had been Hegel and Marx. They had come to
Marxism following the same route as Marx and Engels, i.e. via Hegel and had discovered, like Marx, that Hegel had much to offer in the field of aesthetics providing a careful watch was maintained lest any idealist influence should be transferred.

But these concerns affected only a small group of theorists, the kind of theory which was communicated to the rank and file militants was a great deal less academic and more suited to the everyday needs of Party members. An idea of the kind of theory imported at this level may be obtained from the published lecture notes of Georges Politzer (another member of the Philosophies group and the A.E.A.R.), whose role as a lecturer in the Party's night school (L'Université ouvrière, instituted in 1932) involved him in a course of Marxist philosophy. His handling of this complicated subject matter which had to be rendered intelligible to his students, reveals his undoubted talent as a pedagogue. The following extract was intended to illustrate a possible application of the dialectical method:

"Pour bien appliquer la méthode dialectique, il faut connaître beaucoup de choses, et, si l'on ignore son sujet, il faut l'étudier minutieusement, sans quoi l'on arrive à faire des caricatures de jugement.

Pour procéder à l'analyse dialectique d'un livre ou d'un conte littéraire, nous allons indiquer une méthode que l'on pourra appliquer à d'autres sujets.

(a) Il faut d'abord faire attention au contenu de ce livre ou du conte à analyser."
L'examiner indépendamment de toute question sociale, car tout ne vient pas de la lutte de classes et des conditions économiques.

Il y a des influences littéraires et nous devons en tenir compte. Essayer de voir à quelle "école littéraire" appartient l'oeuvre. Tenir compte du développement interne des idéologies. Pratiquement, il serait bon de faire un résumé du sujet à analyser et noter ce qui a frappé.

(b) Voir ensuite les types sociaux qui sont les héros de l'intrigue. Chercher la classe à laquelle ils appartiennent, examiner l'action des personnages et voir si l'on peut rattacher d'une façon quelconque ce qui se passe dans le roman à un point de vue social.

Si cela n'est pas possible, si l'on ne peut pas raisonnablement faire cela, il vaut mieux abandonner l'analyse plutôt d'inventer. Il ne faut jamais inventer une explication.

(c) Lorsque l'on a trouvé quelle est ou quelles sont les classes en jeu, il faut rechercher l'économique, c'est-à-dire quels sont les moyens de production et la façon de produire au moment où se passe l'action du roman.

Si par exemple, l'action se passe de nos jours, c'est le capitalisme. On voit actuellement de nombreux chefs et romans qui critiquent, combattent le capitalisme. Mais il y a deux façons de combattre le capitalisme: 1. En révolutionnaire qui va en avant. 2. En réactionnaire, en voulant revenir au passé et c'est souvent cette forme que l'on rencontre dans les romans modernes: on y regrette le temps d'autrefois.

(d) Une fois que nous avons obtenu tout cela, nous pouvons alors rechercher l'idéologie, c'est-à-dire voir quelles sont les idées, les sentiments, quelle est la façon de penser de l'auteur.

En recherchant l'idéologie, nous penserons au rôle qu'elle joue, à son influence sur l'esprit des gens qui lisent le livre.
(e) Nous pourrons alors donner la conclusion de notre analyse, dire pourquoi un tel conte ou roman a été écrit à tel moment.

Cette méthode d'analyse ne peut être bonne que si on se souvient, en l'appliquant, de tout ce qui a été dit précédemment. Il faut bien penser que la dialectique, si elle nous apporte une nouvelle façon de concevoir des choses, demande aussi de bien les connaître pour en parler et pour les analyser.\(^1\)

Ironically, this is the most complete statement on the overall theory of Marxist criticism to date by an A.E.A.R. intellectual; Aragon, Nizan and Lefebvre never actually outlined their approach in this way so that one has to elicit it from their work. Sadoul and Fréville could also be said to reveal their theory through their work although Fréville's introductory essay to his edition of the aesthetic and literary theory of Marx and Engels might be considered as a statement of theory save for the fact that it is by definition derivative.

The overall impression one gets from Politzer's guide to literary analysis is that although it is expressed in simple terms, it contains several warnings as to the danger of over-simplistic application:

"Pour bien appliquer la méthode dialectique, il faut connaître beaucoup de choses, et, si l'on ignore son sujet, il faut l'étudier minutieusement, sans quoi l'on arrive à faire des caricatures de jugement"

This is more than the usual mise en garde trotted out for

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\(^1\) Politzer, Georges. *Principes élémentaires de philosophie*. pp. 217-249. Éditions Sociales. Paris 1946. (This work was published posthumously from students' lecture notes.)
the sake of form and convention since it is amplified by remarks such as:

"...tout ne vient pas de la lutte de classes et les conditions économiques"

and,

"...il vaut mieux abandonner l'analyse plutôt d'inventer. Il ne faut jamais inventer une explication."

There is something honest and straightforward about this recipe for dialectical analysis due for the most part to the author's awareness of the dangers of dogmatic application, but having said this, one is bound to note that theoretically it constitutes a very tight approach, which despite the warnings could not but be applied dogmatically. The steps from class to economy to ideology are close and lead to the application of pre-conceived formulae e.g. the neat division of progressive and reactionary artists working within capitalist society.

The end product, "pourquoi un tel conte ou roman a été écrit à tel moment" is also unsatisfactory from the point of view of the development Marxist criticism since it embraces only the sociological aspect of literary creation. This is reinforced by the fact that there is no guidance as to the analysis of form, nor any indication that there is a dialectical relationship between form and content. The dialectical method is shown here to be a singularly limited analytical device with no application to aesthetic problems.

If this method is applied by a critic setting out
with a deliberate bias built in to his objective for propaganda reasons, the outcome must be dogmatic and sectarian. The possibility of restoring Marxist philosophy as a means of defining reality and exploring being and environment is drastically reduced when the political command takes the upper hand.

There were differences therefore in approach to literary and aesthetic theory within the A.E.A.R, even among the members of the Philosophies group. Nizan, while carrying out day to day criticism of a combattant kind, also showed himself to be interested in problems which transcended the remit of the socialist realist critic, i.e. death, psychopathology, individualism and the problematic hero, concepts which escape the all powerful communist conditioning factor of the class struggle.

Lefebvre was anxious to evolve a Marxist theory of the individual and individual creation through a closer link with Hegelian philosophy of the mind; he also shared Nizan's interest in the problematic hero.

It was Politzer who showed himself to be the most willing to adapt his interests to the Party's requirements, an attitude already reflected in his decision to abandon his psychological studies in favour of economics as the most practical way of serving the Party's immediate needs. But even Politzer had his reservations with regard to the critical method stopping short of advocating an a priori propaganda stance to his students. This reservation may
be attributable to Politzer's academic background which still influenced him as far as intellectual objectivity was concerned.

Before leaving the A.E.A.R. and this examination of its contribution to Marxist literary and aesthetic theory, it might be advisable to evaluate the output from Soviet sources available in France, i.e. through *La Littérature Internationale*, the review of the U.I.E.R., especially since the A.E.A.R. had close contacts with the U.I.E.R., and the International in general.

Given the scope of this study the evaluation of the Soviet criticism translated for French consumption must be restricted to main tendencies and individual items of importance.

The review carried out a policy (reflected in *Monde* and *Commune*), of publishing the statements of the fathers of Marxism on cultural matters. Articles appeared presenting the thoughts of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Lafargue and Plekhanov on art and literature; second generation theorists such as Lounatcharsky and Gorky were also published together with appraisals of works by prominent members of the A.E.A.R. in France such as Jean-Richard Bloch, Malraux, Gide, Louis Guilloux etc., Paul Nizan and Aragon played editorial roles within the review, Aragon producing the first edition in 1933; Nizan contributed articles from time to time.

As far as French literature was concerned, the main
intentions seem to have been to claim the naturalists for the revolution, notably Zola; Anatole France, Guy de Maupassant and Henri Barbusse found instant favour while Romain Rolland was given pride of place among the fellow-travellers. This was approximately the policy of Commune so that one could say that in all the above respects there was no real distinction between the Soviet produced review and the French one except for that of tone (the Soviet review being much less resilient and more doctrinaire in its pronouncements) and scope; the Russians did not possess the gallery of fellow-travellers of Commune. The Soviet contributors tended to be of the type, Fréville-Sadoul with the one notable exception of George Lukács, who published several extremely important articles at this time.

The major difficulty of the vocation of Marxist criticism appeared also in the review with the sociological approach on the one hand and the philosophical on the other (represented by Lukács). The main source of inspiration for the sociological approach came from Plekhanov with his insistence on the overall determinism of the class struggle. Lounatcharsky writing on Guy de Maupassant makes the distinction between aesthetic pleasure and sociological significance:

"Guy de Maupassant est un de ces écrivains dont une étude approfondie peut apporter au lecteur non seulement d'immenses joies artistiques, mais peut encore l'aider à comprendre les traits les plus
essentiels de la culture bourgeoise."¹

Citing Plekhanov, Lounatcharsky maintained that Maupassant was a member of that part of the petit bourgeoisie who, in times of social strife, can always be counted upon to align itself with the forces of progress against the philistine bourgeoisie:

"Il serait risible de penser même une minute que Maupassant fut un écrivain bourgeois, c'est-à-dire un représentant de cet ordre capitaliste qu'il abhorrait et qu'il critiquait avec acuité et amertume. Maupassant exprimait l'idéologie et l'état d'esprit de cette couche culturelle et instruite de la petite bourgeoisie qu'il est d'usage d'appeler les intellectuels."²

There then followed a series of examples in which themes of revolt are identified and related to a class position.

The poverty of this type of classification, with its uniform stamp on every writer and artist seen as allies or enemies of the revolution is only equalled by the odd attempt to justify materialistically certain symptoms of the artist's individual disposition:

"Chaque artiste est appelé à sa mission artistique par le déséquilibre de sa système neuro-cérébral, c'est-à-dire avant tout par une sensibilité accrue qui provoque souvent des processus impétueux dans son organisme à la suite d'un simple choc du dehors, d'un choc qui serait passé presque inaperçu dans tout autre organisme normal. C'est pourquoi bien souvent la maladie et le talent vont de pair."³

¹Lounatcharsky, A. "Guy de Maupassant à notre point de vue". La Littérature Internationale. Vol. 9. 1935. (This review carries no dates although issues appeared approximately at monthly intervals.)

²Lounatcharsky, A. Art. cit.

³Plekhanov, G. "L'Art et la Vie Sociale" in La Littérature de la Révolution Mondiale. No. 4. 1931. (Nb. Plekhanov's introduction of the racial element is the feature under censure).
Thus a physiological reason (conditioned of course by social forces) could be found, if sufficient research were carried out, to reveal the secret of artistic creation. In this instance, Lounatcharsky's theory lay close to the current Soviet line on psychology (with its stress on neurology, physiology, conditioned responses etc.), but even Plekhanov could make mistakes in his eagerness to find materialist justifications for art:

"L'idéal de la beauté qui domine une époque ou une classe de la société réside en partie dans les conditions biologiques du développement de l'humanité, créant d'ailleurs des particularités de race, comme il réside également dans les conditions historiques de la naissance et de l'existence de cette société ou de cette classe."\(^1\)

In this case, the orthodox editorial board added its own qualifying note:

"Cependant, Plekhanov n'a pas toujours raison et commet dans cet article de grosses fautes théoriques. Les déductions erronées de Plekhanov sur l'esthétique proviennent indubitablement de son opportunisme politique et philosophique."\(^2\)

Thus even the sociological critic could find himself in trouble if he ventured too far from standard Marxist materialism; admittedly Lounatcharsky was not technically in error, but his observation on the pathological sources of artistic creation, without reference to verification do seem somewhat speculative and opportunist.

The position of the Marxist philosopher/critic,

\(^1\)Ibid.

\(^2\)Art. cit. Note de la rédaction.
Lukács was even more fraught with danger from the point of view of doctrinal heresy. At the time of writing his articles for La Littérature Internationale, Lukács was only barely recovering from a serious fall from grace vis-a-vis the rising Soviet orthodoxy of 1923 in connection with his History and Class Consciousness, in which he explored the problems of alienation and reification leaning heavily on Hegelian dialectics. After a period of considerable personal suffering and deprivation, Lukács turned more and more to literature in an effort to steer clear of overt philosophical activity. But even in this sphere Lukács became a controversial figure as stated by the editorial note which accompanied his article outlining the principles of his latest work on the novel:

"Cet article résume les thèses d'une grande étude sur la théorie du roman. Le travail de Lukács a suscité une discussion animée à l'Institut de philosophie de l'Académie communiste à Moscou".

If Lukács had chosen to make Marx the sole source of his theory, he might not have encountered so much opposition, as it was, he made full and crucial use of Hegel with only corroborative references to Marx:

"Hegel cherche ces causes dans l'opposition de la poésie et de la prose, mais il ne comprend nullement ces termes dans le sens extérieur et formel. Pour lui la période de la poésie épique est celle de

1933 onwards.

l'activité individuelle des "héros". Par l'héroïsme de cette époque Hegel n'entend pas seulement des exploits mais précisément cette unité primitive de la société, la fusion de la personnalité et de la société qui a engendré l'œuvre et les personnages d'Homère. Les poèmes homériques nous dépeignent la lutte menée par une tribu, par une société avec une vitalité intense que l'art n'a plus retrouvée dans la suite parce qu'elle procédait de l'unité primitive de l'homme et de la société. C'était, comme le dit Marx, "l'enfance" de l'humanité, et chez Homère c'était une "enfance" normale."

It will be noted that the real source of reference is Hegel (although Marx agreed with this interpretation). The main burden of the rest of the article also depends on a fundamental premise of Hegelian aesthetic theory, i.e. that modern society had produced alienation, that this in turn had forced the bourgeois artist to realise that the basic unity of the individual and society which existed in earlier societies, no longer supplied the artistic unity of art and society, and that the social basis and sources of artistic production had to be sought in the social basis of society. The results of this quest for an understanding of society could be seen in the great bourgeois realist writing of Balzac; Homeric society had produced the epic as the fusion of individual and society, bourgeois society had produced the novel as the art form which expressed the progressive moment of the bourgeoisie seeking to define itself philosophically and artistically in an appraisal of its being.

If bourgeois society had seen the formation of the novel as its most appropriate art form, the decline of
bourgeois society related to its refusal to recognize the rise of the proletariat as the object of its destruction and a turning away from the originalendeavour of self-definition:

"La période de la décadence idéologique de la bourgeoisie, l'apologétique dans tous les domaines idéologiques. L'apparition indépendante du prolétariat sur la scène historique (combats de juin 1848) ainsi que l'accentuation toujours plus aiguë de l'antagonisme de classes, ne fortifient pas seulement les tendances apologétiques, mais rendent plus difficile aux écrivains distingués et honnêtes la lutte contre ces tendances. Or, plus la lutte de classes entre le prolétariat et la bourgeoisie se place ouvertement au centre de tous les événements et plus elle disparaît des romans bourgeois. Sciemment ou non, les écrivains commencent à éviter les problèmes sociaux fondamentaux de leurs temps."¹

This was the tendency which led to the aberrations of naturalism, impressionism etc. Hegel also foresaw a falling away of the arts as the period of pure thought was entered into as the final stage in the evolution of the human mind.

Lukács went on to point out that the bourgeois form of the novel could never be the representation in art of the proletarian consciousness since thanks to the revolution the possibility at least of social harmony had once more been realised in society. Not that this would be the sameunity as observed in Classical Greece, but a collective unity. The epic form which would result from this state of affairs in the socialist society would not be of the

¹Lukács, Georges. Art. cit.
"heroic" type of Greek poetry (i.e. featuring the individual) but be of a collective nature featuring the exploits of a whole society—hence socialist realism. Lukács concludes on the note that since the dialectical process is essentially one of synthesis, it goes without saying that the new socialist art form could not cut itself off artificially from the past, but must necessarily include the positive and progressive elements of the artistic heritage.

Lukács offers no explanation as to how this might be achieved so that in the purely "socialist realist" part of his discussion, there is no analytical or creative theory, merely the exposition of accepted orthodox beliefs. It is obvious that Lukács is mainly interested in the bourgeois novel as such and that he feels the aesthetic theory of Hegel to be of prime importance in this field.

In another and equally stimulating article¹ in *La Littérature Internationale* Lukács dealt with some of the points raised in the criticism of Nizan and Lefebvre, notably that of the problematic hero.

Turning yet again to the famous enigma of Marx regarding the lasting nature of Greek art (the starting point of all Marxist aesthetic research it would seem), Lukács pointed out that Plato's Symposium was remarkable because of the living quality of its characters. This

had not arisen for formal reasons i.e. in this case the dialogue form, for there had been others since which are in no way so successful, but for a deeper reason which involved perfect harmony of purpose between form and content:

"La force poétique du Symposium est due à ce que Platon révèle les diverses idées et attitudes des personnages par rapport au problème-qu'est-ce que l'amour?-comme des caractéristiques profondément individuelles et vivantes de ces personnages. Les pensées qu'ils expriment à ce propos ne sont pas des résultats abstraits et généraux; dans leurs réflexions, dans leurs tentatives d'expliquer ce problème et de l'épuiser, se concentrent leur personnalité. Cette façon d'agir, ce procédé psychologique permet à Platon de révéler une propriété profondément caractéristique d'un individu dans la façon dont celui-ci aborde ce problème, dans ce qu'il accepte comme axiome, ce qu'il tâche de prouver et comment il prouve dans l'élévation abstraite de ses réflexions, dans la source de ses exemples concrets, dans ce qu'il néglige ou omet, et comment il le fait, etc. Nous voyons des hommes dont les particularités humaines pénètrent et demeurent inoubliables, alors que seule leur physionomie intellectuelle les caractérise séparément, en fait des individus en même temps que les types."¹

For Hegel the typical was a first condition of artistic success; if a character exhibited only traits of an individual kind, he would not succeed in imposing himself, if on the other hand he exhibited only general features he could also be termed a failure in artistic terms. Lukács also stressed this point:

"Les manifestations générales ou typiques, doivent être en même temps les actions particulières, les passions personnelles de certains individus. L'art

¹Lukács, Georges. Art. cit.
iste inventera des situations, trouvera des procédés qui aideront à prouver comment ces passions individuelles peuvent dépasser le cadre d'un monde univement individuel."

The theme of the individual, his relationship to society, the complexity of his own being on the one hand, and his artistic representation as the central vehicle for the portrayal of the concentrated and generalised features of human life on the other, are central to Hegel's aesthetic theory; it is also a theme which recurs time and time again in the writings of Lukács and may be detected without much difficulty in the criticism and theory of Lefebvre and Nizan. Malraux's theory of art being a form of conquest is a straight rendering of Hegel's concept of modern man defeating alienation through art and rediscovering his humanity.

It would be wrong to conclude that Lukács had had a direct influence on the young French intellectuals of the A.E.A.R., although undoubtedly his work must have been a source of encouragement to someone like Lefebvre who found himself at times ploughing a lone furrow with regard to the other Party intellectuals of a more orthodox stamp; the common influence on Lukács and the French critics was simply that of their Hegelian background, which, given that it had been shared by Marx and Engels and used by them in their artistic pronouncements, was itself a form of orthodoxy....but not of a Marxist-Leninist

Lukács, Georges. Art. cit.
kind and certainly not that of socialist realism.

The Hegelian influence was to reappear in the post
cold-war period of the work of communist intellectuals in
France and if any progress was made at this time in
advancing Marxist theory via Hegel, much credit must go to
Nizan and Lefebvre for having blazed the trail and for
having produced theory which has stood the test of time and
is still of interest today.

There was one aspect of the unity of the A.E.A.R.
linked with its opposition to fascism, which in the end
proved vital to its existence, i.e. the implicit support
of the Soviet Union which was promoted from within by
Party members, especially Aragon.

In 1932, when Gide first published his sympathy for
the U.S.S.R. in the Nouvelle Revue Française, his declar-
ations were heralded as a major breakthrough for the
communist party in France with regard to non-aligned
intellectuals and fellow-travellers. The 1934 fascist
demonstrations in Paris also served as an illustration
to many intellectuals of the left that organised moral
opposition had become inevitable. But by 1936,
when Gide published his reflections on his journey to the
Soviet Union that year, reflections which were intended to
serve as a warning to the defenders of culture that all
was not well in their own country as far as human rights
and individual freedom were concerned, it was obvious
that severe strain was being placed on those non-Party
intellectuals who had been asked to publish their moral support for the Soviet Union.

With the outbreak of the Spanish civil war, the obvious failures of the Popular Front and the ominous war-mongering attitudes of Hitler, the A.E.A.R. adopted a more and more politically aggressive role. The issues of Commune from this time until the outbreak of war in 1939 reflected more and more the serious nature of international events. This was not a period of research into cultural questions, it was a period in which all energies were devoted to combating the enemy on every possible front.

The grotesque Germano-soviet pact of August 1939 was the final blow for many of the A.E.A.R. members, including Party members. Malraux quietly drifted away from the organisation, but perhaps the most famous defection was that of Nizan who resigned from the Party embittered by this particular direct result of the German-Soviet event.

Others, however, soldiered on including Aragon, Lefebvre and Jean-Richard Bloch, but not within the A.E.A.R. which disintegrated simultaneously with the fabric of the French society which it had so resolutely defended since 1932.

Part 1 - General Conclusion

Half a century lies between Paul Lafargue's application of the Marxist dialectical method to sociological and artistic phenomena, and the Marxist literary theory of
Nizan, Lefebvre and Aragon. The changing identity of the developing aesthetic and literary theory produced by self-proclaimed French Marxists was governed by a complex of forces, some of which had their source in the cultural, social and political heritage of French socialism, while others, particularly towards the end of the inter-war period, originated in the Soviet Union.

Given the absence of any corpus of basic Marxist texts available in French translation until the late twenties and thirties, the kind of theory produced by intellectuals attracted nominally to Marxism tended to reflect their personal cultural beliefs whether identifiable with an extant tradition or related to individual ideas and ambitions. The matter was further complicated by the fact that for roughly the first ten years of existence, the Party in France made no attempt to produce a definite policy on cultural affairs except to encourage prestigious intellectuals to proclaim their moral support for communism while leaving them free to exercise their talent in which every way they wished; it is for this reason that Romain Rolland and Anatole France, although continually promoted by the Party as loyal supporters of the Party and the Soviet Union, produced no Marxist literary theory throughout their period of association with communism.

Lafargue's theory was remarkable for its time, but unfortunately it had no influence in France party due to
its inaccessibility and also to the fact that given Lafargue's role as propagandist and publicist within the Guesdiste party made him all the less acceptable to the literary establishment as a serious theoretician of literature and the arts. If one adds to the personal prejudice excited by the headstrong and impetuous Lafargue the fact that the common concept of Marxism among intellectuals at this time was one of crude economic determinism and sectarian dogmatism whose main aim was to reduce all human beings and activities to arid formulae and ciphers, then it is not surprising that it made little or no inroads into the minds even of left-wing socialists.

The presence of a much stronger and longer established materialist tradition in literary criticism meant that Marxist analytical techniques still had a long way to go before they could hope to supersede the well established principles of a positivist of the stature of Taine. The case of Gabriel Deville is revealing in this respect for here was a leader of the Guesdiste movement who in his literary criticism relied entirely on positivist methodology making no attempt whatsoever to apply Marxist theory. Socialist intellectuals further to the right of Deville understood commitment in literature and literary criticism as consisting of adopting the positivist stance. This was certainly the case of Georges Renard and Léon Blum. Jaurès also refused to confine himself to the Guesdiste view of literature as yet another manifestation of the
class war, but rather held that culture was a universal birthright which until such times as socialism had not been established would be denied the working class. Jaurès' reformist principle was that only through the reform and democratisation of the educational system would culture take on its fullest significance in society. Although the pre-first world war unified socialist party professed to being Marxist in essence and was a member of the second International, there is no evidence that Marxist philosophical methodology was implemented by socialist intellectuals.

Apart from Lafargue, the only other possibility for the establishment of a Marxist tradition in literary and aesthetic theory, was incorporated in the person of Georges Sorel whose access to the Italian Marxists (whose interest in philosophical matters was so much greater than that of the Guesdistes) gave him a unique advantage in the assimilation and practice of Marxist principles. But although Sorel is recognised to have accomplished a great deal in the spreading of Marxist theory in France and restoring some of the depth sacrificed by the Guesdistes, by the time he considered problems of a cultural nature, he had already swung away from Marxism and was moving further left into the sphere of anarcho-syndicalism. It was Sorel's re-unification with the ideology of Proudhon as expressed in anarcho-syndicalism which supplied the bitter anti-bourgeois, pro-proletarian tone of his theory,
a tone which was to be taken up and amplified by the angry young men of the post World War 1 period.

The first group at this time to become identified with the revolution in the sphere of culture and the arts was the Clarté group, who, when joined by Edouard Berth, Sorel's most devoted disciple, did much to exploit the possibilities opened up by Sorel, e.g. systematic undermining of bourgeois culture and speculation as to the nature of art in a post-revolutionary society. The narrow base of the Clarté group with its insistance on action and refusal to consider the existing cultural heritage with anything other than contempt and hostility was not at first distinguishable from the activity to be witnessed in certain circles in the Soviet Union. In post-revolutionary Russia there was great pressure for the removal of all vestiges of the bourgeois heritage in every sphere, although the fervour of this tendency was eventually cooled by a personal intervention by Lenin, it meant that the French revolutionary intellectual represented a form of orthodoxy if the definition of orthodoxy was that which took place in the Soviet Union. Interestingly the Clarté group did not follow the line of the proletcult which was a logical extension of the anti-bourgeois campaign. One can only assume that the policy put forward by Trotsky and echoed by Victor Serge in the columns of Clarté was taken to heart by the group: both Trotsky and Serge expressing grave doubts as to the possibility of proletarian culture
in the post-revolutionary period.

The advent of the surrealists following the collapse of the hopes for a revolution in the West of the Clarté group brought nothing to the advancement of Marxist criticism in France. The idiosyncratic nature of the surrealist contribution to Clarté only served to discredit the group in the eyes of communists in France and the Soviet Union. Nevertheless Clarté had acted as a meeting point for young intellectuals committed to the revolution and nominally at least, to Marxism; it provided a stamping ground for intellectuals such as Vaillant-Couturier who was to become the editor-in-chief of l'Humanité and an influential voice in cultural matters within the Party, and Léon Moussinac whose critical work on the cinema and theatre within Clarté laid the foundation for a lifetime's activity as the Party's foremost critic in this field. Marcel Martinet, a literary editor of l'Humanité, also took part in Clarté.

The move by Vaillant-Couturier to encourage the involvement of Barbusse in cultural matters at Party level heralded the first move by the Party towards a cultural policy, but even so there were enough of the indigenous currents and influences still prevalent in France to make this experiment a specifically French affair with the personality of Barbusse playing a predominant role. Those intellectuals who contributed to Monde in the 1928-1933 period, were allowed to formulate their own
preferences without regard to orthodoxy. The half-hearted attempts to beat up enthusiasm for proletarian literature, Emile Zola, etc. demonstrated to what extent the preoccupations of the Monde group lay elsewhere. In the first instance Barbusse was working towards the creation of an intellectual's International which meant that he would steer clear of outwardly sectarian policies and concentrate on reconciliation. His editorial team varied in their style of criticism from a call for sincerity and human qualities (reminiscent of the anarchosyndicalist values of Poulaille) to a lingering positivism which owed more to Taine than Marx.

Perhaps it was this very freedom of approach which provided the climate which enabled the young critic Ickowicz to explore the possibilities of applying historical materialism to literature. Although his work was reminiscent of Emile Hennequin insofar as he attempted to harness relevant social sciences in order to arrive at a composite method which in orthodox terms smacked of opportunism, he nevertheless produced the only full-length study on the subject of French origin in the inter-war period. His work also demonstrated to what extent the increasing availability of standard Marxist texts could be favourable to research in this field.

The change of policy in the U.S.S.R. with regard to the arts in 1932 produced immediate ramifications in
France. The eclectic Nonde group having been removed a new generation of French communist intellectuals forming the nucleus of the A.E.A.R. resolved for the first time in the history of the French communist party to devote their talent and energy to the development of Marxist theory. They were singularly well equipped to do so.

The intellectual background of the Philosophies group was second to none but more specifically their itinerary to Marxism via Hegel paralleled that of Marx and enabled them to open a dialogue with basic Marxist theory at a level most likely to produce important results for the formation of a Marxist aesthetic in France. The work of Nizan and Lefebvre within the A.E.A.R. brought Marxist and Hegelian aesthetic theory together in an attempt to lift the latter out of its purely sociological role. Ever since Lafargue (closely followed by Plekhanov) the role of the Marxist in connection with the critical history of the arts and sciences had been to determine the sociological significance in terms of the determinism of the class struggle of works of art and artists. The willingness of this generation of Marxist critics to recognise the complexity of the subjective nature of the aesthetic experience and to leave the matter there, contrasted with the resolve of Nizan and Lefebvre to enter into these rarified domains in an attempt to extend the application of Marxism to artistic and literary theory. The fact that Lukács (from his isolated position on the Soviet Union)
was attempting the same thing must have encouraged these young researchers to pursue their aims. There can be no doubt that they were in the avant-garde of Marxist aesthetic research at this time a fact which marks the advance of French Marxist thought at this time in this field.

As in Lukács' work it is well nigh impossible to detect any great zeal for the doctrine of socialist realism. When one compares the socialist realist concept of the positive hero with the richness of the Hegelian inspired positive hero. That Marxist critics like Lefebvre, Nizan and Lukács should spend so much time and energy on authors such as Stendhal, Dostoevsky and Balzac (at the expense of communist novelists), meant that these intellectuals were more interested in the triumphs of bourgeois literary production than in the cultural fruits of the Revolution. When the Hegelian affirmation that the novel had reached its highest point in the bourgeoisie of which it was the artistic expression par excellence, was put forward by a Marxist critic, did this mean that the novel as an art form in a socialist society was doomed to failure? This kind of question was certainly asked in the Soviet Union while Lefebvre in France was warned against over preoccupation with individuals, artists, characters or otherwise. The Hegelian challenge also contained the element of alienation and its defeat through art lending a humanist dimension to aesthetics absent in the
anthropological-sociological determinism of orthodox Marxist theory.

As far as socialist realism was concerned, the version disseminated in France was much more liberal than that purveyed to the Soviet public by Zhdanov. Socialist realism in the eyes of the committed French militant was a vision, an article of faith in the construction of socialism in one country. For the fellow traveller it carried the guarantee of Gorky and even in some respects corresponded to some of the criteria which men like Bloch and Romain Rolland had established at the turn of the century (i.e. nearness to the people, classical in form and an instrument of emancipation). The spectacle of the harnassing of so much human good will and energy in this backward country did not fail to impress men like Gide and Malraux but always with the provision that the moment the Soviet Union betrayed its humanist mission, they would withdraw their support.

The case of Louis Aragon is a special one. Here was a man who elevated the fidelity of the ordinary Party militant into a poetic mission. Aragon had no truck with research as such everything had to be linked to the immediate political task. His opportunistic concept of the artist as someone who should be open to a dialectical process of change... thesis, antithesis and synthesis, meant that ordinary criteria such as consistency, defence of principles etc. were abandoned being no longer
relevant. Where Nizan could eventually no longer subscribe to the Party line, Aragon undertook joyfully to submit himself to the process. Perhaps the fundamental difference between Aragon, Nizan and Lefebvre was that the latter were Marxists in a nineteenth century sense whereas Aragon was a Marxist/Leninist. There is no other way to view Aragon's criticism save in the light of political and personal contingency, with Nizan and Lefebvre something wider and greater is involved.
PART II
CHAPTER ONE
From the Liberation to the Cold War 1945-53

The Association des Ecrivains Révolutionnaires (the A.E.A.R.) suffered a death blow following the Germano-Soviet pact of August 1939. The crisis which shattered the morale of the Party and led to disorientation and disbelief among the most faithful of members; some, like Paul Nizan, made public their disaffection and resigned from the Party with all the trauma which this divorce brings in its train, others, like the fellow traveller, Malraux, simply drifted away noislessly but nonetheless irrevocably.

It was not until 1942 when the Party's role in the resistance had become firmly established that intellectuals began to seek to identify themselves once again with the aims and methods\(^1\) of the now active resistance to fascism and the occupation.

The younger intellectuals were especially prominent; among those who sought Party membership were Claude Roy, Edgar Morin, Jean Duvignaud, J-F. Rolland, Dionys Mascolo, Robert Antelme, Marguérite Duras and Edith Thomas. But the harvest among the older generation was no less spectacular: Picasso, Wallon, Jourdain, Joliot-Curie, Langevin and Eluard.

\(^1\)The literary production of the resistance writers constitutes a study in its own right (cf. David Caute, op. cit. ch. 5).
Already in 1941, a nucleus of Party intellectuals (Aragon, Triolet, Politzer, Decour, Blech, Moussinac and Eluard) had formed the Front National des Intellectuals. Specialist groups were created according to a "cell" system incorporating doctors, lawyers, university staff etc. One of the most prominent of these groups was the Comité National des Ecrivains (C.N.E.) the veritable wartime successor to the A.E.A.R. It was destined to attract many of the great names of French literature: Sartre, Camus, Aveline, Vercors, Cassou, Vildrac, Paulhan and many more.

A clandestine review was instituted in 1942 run by the communist Jacques Decour who was assisted by fellow-travellers Jean Paulhan, Jacques Debu-Bridel and Charles Vildrac. Decour was soon arrested and Les Lettres Françaises was taken in hand by Claude Morgan who survived the war to produce the first legal edition of the 9th September, 1944.

The enormous losses suffered by the French Communist Party (David Caute reckons 60,000 dead) were reflected in the ranks of the intellectuals. Georges Politzer was captured and executed in 1942; Jacques Decour, Vildrac, Solomon and André Chennevière, former literary editor of L'Humanité lost their lives together with approximately half the staff of the Party's clandestine newspaper.

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Among the survivors however, were many of the personalities of the pre-war period. Aragon emerged from the fray his reputation greatly enhanced as the undisputed leader of the literary and artistic sector. Henri Lefebvre was appointed artistic director of the Toulouse station of Radiodiffusion Française in 1944 and remained in this post until 1949. Léon Moussinac, miraculously delivered from imprisonment after eight months detention by the Germans, continued his work as novelist and theatre critic after the war. Georges Sadoul also survived. Jean-Richard Bloch had sought refuge in Moscow from where he sent regular broadcasts to the French people urging them to resist and generally strengthening their morale; he died much lamented in 1947; his family had been decimated by the Nazis. Romain Rolland, un molested by the Nazis, died of old age in 1944.

But already some new personalities began to appear on the communist cultural scene; these were young men whose resistance record was impeccable, and in the case of Roger Garaudy and Pierre Daix, endorsed with a stay in concentration camps.

The dramatic rise in membership of the immediate post-war period was a source of some concern to the Party which sought to absorb as painlessly and unobtrusively as possible, this large body of largely untried and undisciplined elements.
This problem was not so critical however, as long as the Party pursued the broad policies of national unity and social reform which accompanied its accession to power during the period of tri-partite government which lasted until Ramadier dismissed his five communist ministers in May 1947. The state of siege which was already beginning to make itself felt before the dismissal of the communists from government, required strong dependable troops; but in this first period following the liberation, the necessity had not yet arisen.

The Party set out to prove that it was undeniably French in outlook and that its main concern was the well-being of the nation. It directed much of its energies towards reform and the re-building of French society on equitable lines.

Within this context "culture" was projected as being one of the Party's main concerns. Thus during the 1945 Party congress held in Paris from the 26th to 30th June, Thorez called for a renaissance of French national culture whose influence would be felt the world over, while Georges Cogniot, founder member of the Party monthly intellectual review, La Pensée, demanded a critical reappraisal of an elitist educational system which reduced the national cultural potential by ignoring the vast reservoirs of talent within the working class. The Party's recognition of the importance of the role of education in the shaping of society, the expression of a
socialist belief which reached back to Jaurès, was further underlined by the work carried out by the communist inspired educational reformers, Paul Langevin and Henri Wallon. The Langevin-Wallon plan drawn up during the war was seen as a charter by left-wing educationalists and is now regarded by all educational theorists, regardless of party, as being one of the milestones of French theory in this field.

Roger Garaudy, one of the Party's most promising young philosophers of this immediate post-war period went to great pains to demonstrate the French origins of materialism through his Marxist assessment of the work of the 18th century French philosophers.¹

The atmosphere of the times was captured by the Party supported weekly, Action organised and sustained by young communist journalists and intellectuals. The Party allowed them a certain amount of freedom as they sought to enlist the support of vacillating intellectuals while condemning resolutely former collaborators and other enemies of communism such as Malraux, now completely persona non grata following his alignment with the forces of Gaullism. The Action group was a lively one including

¹Garaudy, Roger. Les origines françaises du socialisme. Édts. Hier et Aujourd'hui, Paris 1948. Garaudy subsequently published this thesis in a work which he was later required to repudiate publicly (in La Nouvelle Critique, April 1949); this episode and its implications will be dealt with later in this study.
in its ranks Roger Vailland, Edgar Morin, Pierre Hervé, Loys Masson and Pierre Courtade while enjoying the collaboration of J-F. Rolland and Jean Duvignaud. Even in the mazycon days of 1946, there were signs that the exuberance of the young intellectuals could go too far. Following an article by Garaudy in Action in which the latter made a plea for freedom in art, Aragon, from the columns of his Lettres françaises, accused him of neglecting his responsibilities as a communist and of opportunist tendencies. Garaudy replied astutely quoting Lenin and pointing out that if orthodoxy was to be the criterion of worthiness in Party art, there was plenty evidence of deviationary existentialist angst in the novels of Elsa Triolet, while the novels of Aragon himself were hardly the epitome of socialist realism. Aragon, however was to have the last word; Pierre Hervé recalls the incident with some bitterness pointing to it as a significant event in the imposition of Zhdanovism by the Party hierarchy of which Aragon now undoubtedly formed a part:

"Dans Action du 22 novembre 1946, j'avais publié un article intitulé "Il n'y a pas d'esthétique communiste", puis le 6 décembre je récidivais avec de "Nouveaux propos sur l'esthétique". Dans le premier article, je donnais le retentissement désirable à un article de Roger Garaudy intitulé "Artistes sans uniforme" et publié par la revue Arts de France dans son numéro 9. Dans cet article, Roger Garaudy écrivait notamment: "Un peintre communiste a le droit de peindre comme Picasso. Et il a le droit de peindre autrement. Et un communiste a le droit d'aimer soit l'œuvre
de l'anti-Picasso. La peinture de Picasso n'est pas l'esthétique du communisme. Celle de Tazlitsky non plus. Ni celle d'aucun autre...."

La réplique ne tarda pas. Dans les Lettres Françaises parut un article d'Aragon intitulé "L'art "zone libre"?" La polémique était publiquement ouverte. Cet incident fut le point de départ d'une entreprise de réorganisation de l'activité parmi les intellectuels, qui coïncide avec la jdanovisation. Quelques semaines plus tard, une réunion se tint en présence du triumvirat Thorez-Duclos-Marty; y assistaient quelques dizaines d'intellectuels devant qui, accusé par Aragon, Roger Garaudy fit une humble autocritique. Pour ma part je m'abstins de tout méa culpa."

This first blast in the Cold War had its origins in an already icy wind blowing through the ranks of the French Party and traceable to the Soviet Union. If Garaudy no longer had the right to declare publicly that art was a "free zone" and that communist man had as much right to enjoy it in its entirety as any other, it was because of a specific current of repression of artistic freedom which had become manifest in the U.S.S.R. following the victory over Germany. Whereas during the war, the Soviet artist had been given the freedom to pursue any artistic line providing it nurtured patriotism (Soviet socialist realist strictures were suspended completely at this time), the immediate post-war period saw the inception of a campaign designed to tighten the grip of the State on the artist.

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and writer. The event which is usually seen as marking the first significant curtailment of artistic freedom was the prosecution of the literary reviews Leningrad and the Star\(^1\) which were accused of deviationism and anti-socialist tendencies. An article justifying the Soviet authorities was published in the Soviet French language review La Vie Soviétique\(^2\) under the authorship of Andrei Zhdanov, Soviet minister of culture.

In August 1947, three months after the dismissal from the tripartite Ramadier government of the communist ministers, French delegates to the Wroclaw "Intellectuals for Peace" international congress heard a long and bitter diatribe delivered by the Soviet writer Fadeyev against all Western art. Andrei Zhdanov also spoke at this conference in those terms which were to make his name and that of the Cold War, synonymous, among intellectuals the world over. Among the French intellectuals present at this conference were Aragon and Laurent Casanova, member of the politbureau whose name was becoming increasingly linked with official cultural policy within the French Party.

The first high level intervention indicating a new and harder line commensurate with the Party's Cold War strategy, was made in the context of the XIth French Party

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\(^2\)5th Oct. 1946
Congress held in Strasbourg from the 25th to the 28th of June 1947.

It was at this time that Laurent Casanova, emerged clearly as the Party's spokesman on cultural affairs and relations with intellectuals. In his statements during the Congress and in the months preceding it, Casanova dealt with the attitudes of communist intellectuals towards their condition as intellectuals, and the role they might play in the battle of ideas which had been unleashed by the Cold War.

In this period of the intensification of the class struggle, all contacts with non-party organisations which sought to draw communist intellectuals into compromising ventures with bourgeois intellectuals, had to be carefully reviewed; furthermore, once the intellectual had withdrawn into the redoubt of the Party, he had to be sure of his reasons for being there. Some, according to Casanova, were only too eager to shed their identity and responsibility as intellectuals:

"Ceci pour constater que les intellectuels qui viennent à la classe ouvrière avec mauvaise conscience, comme s'ils avaient honte d'être des intellectuels, ont tort (Applaudissements).

Il est bien vrai que des intellectuels peuvent venir à la classe ouvrière pour d'autres raisons que des raisons purement intellectuelles.

Ils y viennent souvent par amour de leur pays ou de leur peuple, par dégoût de leur isolement et de leur impuissance.

L'action militante et les résultats pratiques de leur propre effort, solidaire de l'effort de
toute une classe, de tout un peuple, leur apportent l'apaisement qu'ils recherchaient.

Mais ils restent des intellectuels avec leur sensibilité déjà formée et des besoins que leur qualité d'intellectuels a éveillés.

La classe ouvrière a besoin d'eux en tant que tels.¹

Closeness to the People and identification with the "People" were themes to which Casanova returned² time and time again in his addresses to the Party's artists and intellectuals, but he also stressed that these predispositions were not enough, for theoretical insufficiencies could still arise:

"Il y a ceux qui viennent au peuple pour lui révéler les secrets de la culture et lui en ouvrir les accès. Pour lesquels tout se ramène à la découverte intellectuelle.

Leur bonne volonté est évidente et leur bonne foi n'est pas en cause. Mais ils s'engagent dans une voie sans issue, parce qu'ils confondent des choses d'un ordre différent.

Ils confondent la source des valeurs, qui n'est plus en leur pouvoir, et l'effort pour porter ces valeurs plus avant, qui doit dépendre en grande partie et directement d'eux-mêmes.

Ils donnent pour stimulant à l'effort créateur de l'artiste la seule émotion esthétique dont ils font la mesure de toute chose, et le débat postérieur d'idées.


Et ils placent ce débat sur un terrain tel que les masses vont se trouver inévitablement décrétées d'accusation. Bien sûr que l'ouvrier métallurgiste aura de la peine à les suivre et à les comprendre et qu'il ne le voudra pas.\textsuperscript{1}

Therefore, according to Casanova, the problem of the bourgeois intellectual eager to communicate his culture\textsuperscript{2} to the proletariat, was one of incomplete ideological understanding of the nature of his commitment as a communist, and also of the sources and destination of communist art. The source of communist art could only be in the People and not in the values of the bourgeoisie. The example of the kind of error which bourgeois art contains i.e. the appeal of a work of art being reduced to its aesthetic appeal, would seem to be a reference by Casanova to formalism in bourgeois art. He had already enlarged on his view of bourgeois and communist aesthetics two months previously in an article in the Cahiers du Communisme: commenting on the debate which had arisen


\textsuperscript{2}This theme was also reiterated by Aragon in April 1947: "Je veux signaler, sans m'y arrêter autrement, d'autres dangers. On a vu par exemple, dans certaines de nos organisations toujours dans un esprit de culture populaire, des gens que je veux croire bien intentionnés, essayer d'amener le peuple à l'art (comme ils veulent d'autre part, se pencher vers le peuple) et pour cela leur représenter comme absolument indispensable à son education artistique les formes même de l'art que le peuple-on peut le regretter mais on est bien obligé de le constater-ne comprend pas." Aragon, Louis. "La Culture et sa diffusion" in La Culture et les hommes. p. 60. Editions Sociales. Paris 1947.
following the resignations of Jouhandeau, Giono, Paulhan and Petitjean from the communist dominated C.N.E. in which the communist party was accused of dirigisme in the arts. Casanova stated the position of the Party on that affair:

"Tout ceci fut précédé d'une discussion sur la liberté de l'Art et celle de l'artiste très innocente d'apparence si elle était confuse sur le fond.

D'une discussion sur l'esthétique en soi, sur l'importance de la forme comme signe exclusif du talent, comme preuve suffisante de la qualité artistique; d'un débat abstrait sur l'indifférence nécessaire dans laquelle doit se tenir l'homme de goût à l'égard des modes d'expression de l'artiste, sur la fragilité d'un jugement fondé sur la critique des seuls modes d'expression.

Toutes choses enfantines pour qui retient que les mots ont encore un sens. Et que l'esthétique, dans la mesure où elle est ce qu'elle est - l'expression d'un rapport établi entre le contenu idéologique et la forme, doit être le résultat de recherches techniques de l'artiste, de son effort d'invention ou d'adaptation de ses procédés, mais aussi la conséquence d'une détermination consciente sur le contenu de l'œuvre. C'est-à-dire sur la confirmation que l'artiste veut apporter à un public donné, ou la direction dans laquelle il veut pousser ce public. Cette détermination consciente ayant son origine dans l'aptitude qu'a l'artiste de stémouvoir aux mêmes sources que son public."¹

The communist aesthetic did not, therefore, exist in a vacuum; the duty of the communist artist was to "push" his public in a specific direction defined by the ideological mission ascribed to him. Judgement of form in communist art was reduced to the most efficient way of

accomplishing this given the limitations of the artist and the materials at his disposition.

In his Strasbourg speech, Casanova returned to the question of the communist view of aesthetics:

"L'esthétique est l'expression d'un rapport qui va du contenu à la forme. Si l'artiste n'a rien à dire ou à faire - et il en est qui érigent ce néant en doctrine - pourquoi reprocher au peuple de ne pas s'attarder sur ces preuves par l'absurde de la malfaçance d'un système social qui en arrive à suggérer le dérèglement de la pensée et la perversion de la sensibilité populaire, comme moyens de renouvellement dans l'art et la pensée.

Les masses n'ont pas à constater simplement la décrétitude du système. Elles veulent en changer. Et ceci est le plus important.

Les formes déjà élaborées de la sensibilité populaire sont une chose sur laquelle on peut valablement discuter. Mais la capacité actuelle d'émotion des masses en est une autre. Et ceci est seul déterminant, car c'est de là qu'il faut partir."\(^1\)

In a review\(^2\) of Eluard's *Poèmes politiques*\(^3\) which appeared in the *Cahiers du Communiste* two years after the Strasbourg Congress, Eluard is presented as having profited artistically from the principles established there:

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"Le drame humain, ce n'est plus celui que traduit l'esthète de la bourgeoisie décadente, c'est le drame du mineur, celui de l'homme qui combat pour la vraie libération de l'homme.

Les Poèmes Politiques d'Eluard sont une magnifique illustration de ce chemin que va le poète soucieux de rester fidèle à sa mission de poète. Aux esthètes prêts à le désavouer pour cette inspiration nouvelle, il dit dans un poème qui porte le beau titre: "La poésie doit avoir pour but la vérité pratique":

Car vous marchez sans but sans savoir que les hommes
Ont besoin d'être unis, d'espérer, de lutter
Pour expliquer le monde et pour le transformer.
Je suis ici cherchant la vie de tous
Qui me consolera de la vie que je souffre
Ici j'ai l'assurance, ici j'ai le profit
D'espérer d'être au monde pour donner raison
Au jour qui donne à l'homme d'être tous les hommes".1

Thus Eluard appears as the bourgeois artist who has come to the Party and has found the solution to his personal problem, a solution which was both ideological and artistic. The ideological solution, solidarity with the proletariat is conveyed in the content of this poem, while his artistic problem is resolved for him in the principle of primacy of content over form, coupled with the principle of naradnost, simplicity of form, making the work accessible to the proletariat.

The note of optimism contained in this poem as Eluard discovers the joy of solidarity with the proletariat, champion of universal peace and brotherly love conforms to the socialist realist principle of positive art as

opposed to the products of bourgeois pessimistic decadence. In his Strasbourg speech, Laurent Casanova prefaced a selection of letters written by communists from their condemned cells during the occupation, (which he then read aloud to the Congress), with a remark to the effect that Maurice Thorez himself had stressed the need for positive art and literature:

"Maurice Thorez encore a évoqué les vertus exaltantes de la littérature optimiste"¹

This reference to Thorez and his authority in all matters reflected the impact of the personality cult in this sphere.

In a Party declaration of September 1948, the position of communist artists and critics was further clarified. On this occasion it was made clear that the communist critic and literary historian would be required to re-evaluate the national artistic heritage in terms of communist criteria:

"Les valeurs du patrimoine culturel national, pour d'aussi loin en arrière qu'elles tirent leur origine, ne peuvent être que des valeurs vivantes. Certaines en furent rayées par la bourgeoisie. Elles peuvent affleurer aujourd'hui et l'ordre établi s'en trouver modifié pour les raisons qui tiennent à une sensibilité populaire rafraîchie aux données présentes du combat national."²

Literary and artistic history would therefore be national in form and socialist in content since it would be the socialist content of a work of art which would appeal to "la sensibilité populaire" conditioned by the contemporary class struggle. Laurent Casanova left his audience in no doubt in Strasbourg as to the implications of such an approach to criticism:

"Il y a un art qui patauge aussi dans la réalité quotidienne, et même dans celle d'hier.

C'est l'art réactionnaire.

Il y a une politique qui devance son temps parce qu'elle est une politique de principe.

C'est la politique communiste.

Il y a un art réactionnaire comme il y a une politique réactionnaire.

Et les deux se tiennent. Parce qu'ils appliquent tous les deux les règles de l'empirisme bourgeois.

Il y a un art d'avant-garde, comme il y a une politique d'avant-garde."

The communist approach to art was therefore, to be overtly political and militant. 2

Thus all the principles of socialist realism defined by the First Soviet Writers' Congress of 1934 were maintained by the French Party theorists of the Cold War

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2 Interestingly, the Party seemed to be content to allow its prestige artists (e.g. Picasso) some immunity in this matter:

"Le Parti, enfin, ne doit pas se lasser de dire sa reconnaissance aux très grands esprits qui l'ont honoré de leur confiance et qui continuent de porter témoignage pour la France elle-même aux yeux de tous les hommes libres dans le monde" (Casanova, Laurent. Op. cit. p. 17.) (my italics)
period, but there were differences of stress between the
pre-war and post-war versions which were quite pronounced.

These differences arose from the differing political
climates of the times. In the first instance there was
the need for a movement of national unity in the
promotion of the Popular Front, resulting in the broadest
possible interpretation of communist policies in general,
and in the field of art and literature in particular.
Under these conditions the promotion of Soviet socialist
realist theory in France differed from that in the Soviet
Union. In France stress was laid on revolutionary
romanticism and the socialist vision (conscious or
unconscious) transcending all times, a concept which
enabled the communist to discover "allies" throughout
history defined in literary terms as "critical realists";
this was the reflection in literary theory of the
political concept of "fellow-traveller". One of the
purposes of the 1934 Congress was to re-instate the fellow
travellers in the Soviet Union, but here the concept was
confined to contemporary writers and artists (notably
Gorky and Maiakovskiy). On the other hand the 1934
socialist realist theory advanced by Party secretary
Andrei Zhdanov which contained the most dogmatic aspects
of future Soviet socialist realism, partninost, ideinist
and naradnost, was not reported in France in its most
recent form until this post-war period when it was used
to launch and sustain the cultural Cold War.
In the political climate of the Cold War, the pre-war and immediate post-war political movement towards rassemblement was reversed. The Party retreated into isolationism blowing up its cultural bridges behind it; all sources of bourgeois "infiltration" and "contamination" were exposed and attacked regardless of whether in happier times these had been considered progressive or not. Communist intellectuals were discouraged from collaborating with bourgeois inspired bodies (such as the universités populaires), while any bourgeois intellectual coming to the Party was required to subscribe unequivocally to this harshest of Party lines; a somewhat different situation from the tolerance and camaraderie of the A.E.A.R.

In terms of socialist realist theory as laid down by Zhdanov, this volte face was achieved with comparative ease. By merely stressing one of his famous categories, naradnost, closeness to the People, the whole complexion of socialist realist theory was transformed in France to suit the prevailing political climate. For when art was subjected to the criterion of accessibility to the People, this inevitably meant the reduction of form to its simplest expression; content too, as has been shown, was also made to correspond to the basic socialist aspirations of the People. The resulting basic content expressed in basic form (cf. the Eluard poem) is reduced to a statement of an almost aggressive political nature, commensurate with
the combattant attitude struck by the Party at this time. There is no room in such a concept for an aesthetic theory which allows for the inter-play of form and content, but simply the assertion that form must be sufficiently transparent for the basic message to be evident.

A similar impoverishment of communist literary history was evident for example in the line that the national heritage should also be subject to the principle of naradnost, acceptable art in the past being that which activates the proletarian sensibility and echoes its aspirations.

It is interesting to consider whether these principles were adhered to in their entirety by the Party's intellectuals.

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In 1947, one of the most vocal communist intellectuals in France to speak on literature and criticism, was Elsa Triolet. She spoke for the most part, within the context of the C.N.E., where serious ideological differences were splitting the communist and non-communist membership as a direct result of the hardening of attitudes in the Cold War.

As an accomplished novelist and intellectual of some standing both within and outside the Party, it is interesting to consider the extent and nature of the commitment of Elsa Triolet to Zhdanovism; one might expect a more subtle and perhaps creative reaction from the wife of
Louis Aragon and sister-in-law of Mayakovsky. In point of fact, Elsa Triolet went out of her way to avoid the rejection of authoritarian dictates on socialist realism choosing rather to conduct her arguments on ground least likely to lend itself to sectarian squabbles, such as the inadvisability of direct political intervention in the arts at the creative level, and the problem of sincerity in artistic creation. Constantly referring to socialist realism as the "new art" and communist artists as the "avant-garde", she insisted that authentic committed art must spring from the heart, and that on no account must any a-priori theories intervene in the artistic process to modify the natural impulse and its expression:

"Mais, il semble qu'une oeuvre ne peut être engagée que dans la mesure où l'engagement est la chair et le sang de celui qui la crée. On ne peut obtenir une oeuvre engagée, elle vient naturellement ou ne vient pas du tout, ou si elle vient, elle ne vaut rien. Car si l'écrivain, le peintre ne sont pour "l'oeuvre engagée" que parce que leur raison le commande, cela donne de bien tristes résultats."

It was because of this vital pre-condition of creating "naturally", that art could not be produced on political request. Artists were the least likely category to react satisfactorily to such a demand:

"On ne peut évidemment pas les commander, on ne peut que leur montrer le véritable état des choses, et de façon à ce qu'ils voient et sentent. Parce que ne sera valable que l'oeuvre de celui pour qui

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le vin et l'hostie seront devenus chair et sang,
ou toutes les directives resteront lettre morte.
Et il peut facilement arriver qu'un homme politique
devant une œuvre "à côté" croie à la mauvaise
volonté, au désir de rester en dehors, de nuire à
la bonne cause, quand l'auteur n'a simplement pas
encore fait le chemin qui le mène à la vision claire
des choses, et que le chemin de la création n'est
toujours le même que celui de l'intelligence
politique."

It would seem that if the artist could not be re-
quired to produce committed art, at least he could be
helped to cultivate an outlook likely to enhance his
creative work which would then reflect "la vision claire
des choses". Triolet made it clear that the problem
could not be solved directly by political education,
leaving only the suggestion that the enlightenment could
be of a philosophical nature. The reluctance to dwell
on this side of the matter was revealed on another occasion
when she considered the question of the artist being true
to his original creative impulse:

"Ecrire naturellement, cela s'appelle se trouver
soi-même. Cela appelle être libre. Cela s'appelle
parfois: chercher à se réduquer....Mais ceci est
encore une autre histoire que je ne veux pas aborder
ici." 2

As far as an evaluation of the work of art was
concerned, Elsa Triolet was much more explicit. If the
artist produced a work which originated in his own feelings
then he was more likely to provoke emotion in the beholder.


2 Triolet, Elsa. "Prenez exemple sur nos ennemis"
Conférence fait au Comité National des Ecrivains, en mars
To provoke emotion according to Triolet, was the prime function of the work of art, but the source of that feeling had to be in the content and not in some triumph of formal technique:

"Oui, qu'est-ce que c'est que la valeur artistique d'une oeuvre? Supposons un moment que le succès de Sartre ou de Camus, ou de Gide soit légitime pour ce qui est de la valeur artistique de leur oeuvre, ils n'ont, ils n'auront jamais droit qu'à la piété artistique ou officielle et non à l'amour... Les bons sentiments ne font pas de bons livres, je sais ça par cœur, mais les bons sentiments ne font pas forcément des mauvais livres. Et les mauvais sentiments ne sont pas garants de la qualité d'un livre. On disait, on dit le Feu sans valeur artistique, mais en ce cas l'art est une bien pauvre petite chose pour que l'oeuvre passe ainsi par-dessus sa tête. À moins que cette force soit l'art que nos artistes ne reconnaissent pas."

Furthermore, the People had recognised Barbusse by coming in their thousands to his funeral. One of the dominant characteristics of the new art according to Triolet, was the fact that the masses understood it, whereas the specialists the mystifiers and the arch-priests of bourgeois art were unable to comprehend.

"Et si c'est un symptôme de l'art nouveau que de faire crier la réaction, aujourd'hui l'art véritablement nouveau est celui qui s'exprime en langage clair, par opposition au langage chiffré, et pour lequel souvent il n'existe même pas de code, qui est entièrement truqué.

Et si c'est un symptôme d'art nouveau que de ne pas être compris par tous, l'avant-garde d'aujourd'hui est cet art qui s'exprime en langage clair, mais qui est incompréhensible cette fois-ci

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1Triolet, Elsa. Art. cit. p. 77. (Triolet's italics)
non pour la foule, mais pour les spécialistes. Les spécialistes semblent ne pas comprendre qu'on peut appeler pomme une pomme, et créer oeuvre d'art ..... Créer, parce que l'on ne sait pas tout d'une pomme. Parce que ce que les spécialistes ne veulent pas voir, c'est justement le nouvel aspect de la pomme. Et pourtant on a déjà eu des surprises avec Newton et Cézanne."

Accessibility for the People, the ability to move the People, both properties essential to the concept of naradnost. The test of quality in art therefore was to be found in this socialist realist concept which played such a vital part in setting the tone of post-war cultural Stalinism in France. But with Elsa Triolet there is a distinct effort to avoid sectarianism and confrontation. Her refusal to expand on the other theoretical resources of Zhdanovist socialist realism i.e. partinost and ideinost with their partisan identities, contributed substantially to the comparatively fresh tone of this treatment of socialist realism. Furthermore, she deliberately advocated sincerity in art; for her, imitation and reproduction had never engendered authentic art.

"Les vrais surrealistes ont fait des oeuvres qui étaient belles, leurs imitateurs n'ont fait de la camelote"2

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2 Triolet, Elsa. "Prenez exemple sur nos ennemis." Op. cit. p. 85. There is an oblique reference to Aragon and Eluard in this remark, their surrealism being only a stage in their development towards socialist realism. If they had not passed through this phase they would not have reached their highest peak as writers. This point constitutes the basic thesis of Garaudy's biography of Aragon: L'Itinéraire d'Aragon. Gallimard. Paris 1961.
To be sectarian in matters of art in Triollet's opinion and there were faults on both sides, was to misunderstand the essence of artistic creation and the development of the artist:

"En attendant, il y a des gens qui considèrent que tous ceux qui se réclament du réalisme socialiste ne peuvent le faire que sur ordre, ils n'imaginent pas qu'on puisse le faire librement, naturellement. Tandis que d'autres sont persuadés que tous ceux qui font par exemple de l'art abstrait sont des fascistes".1

This was not to say that the communist could adopt a passive stand in criticism hailing "sincere" work when he saw it, and hoping for the ultimate development of the artist along realist lines. It was a known fact that all criticism was political and that the Party had proscribed writers for the very reason that these men were class enemies:

"La critique d'art est toujours politique, c'est inutile de s'en défendre et bien d'autres que moi ne s'en défendent pas. Et c'est pourquoi la "liste noire"; et c'est pourquoi le contenu d'une oeuvre nous intéresse, je veux dire sa qualité, son talent, son dynamisme; c'est pourquoi l'avant-garde de l'art nous intéresse, car, l'art nouveau, c'est celui qui jette une lumière nouvelle d'un point de vue nouveau, sur l'univers, sur l'homme, les moutons sous le lit, chaque brin d'herbe dans les champs, les virus filtrants et les étoiles".2

The communist critic therefore reserved the right to condemn and praise in the light of the new (socialist

1Triollet, Elsa. Art. cit. p. 86.
realist) theory. Content was the primary concern of the communist critic and as has been shown, this was to be judged via the concept of naradnost as described by Laurent Casanova at the Strasbourg Congress. Despite her discussion of freedom in art and sincerity in the artist, theoretically, Triolet's statements were still reducible to this special feature of French cultural Stalinism of the Cold War, but at least they did not appear immediately to be dogmatic.

The sacrifices involving aesthetic and intellectual integrity were nonetheless too real for some Party intellectuals. In 1948, a group of dissidents led by Morin, Antelme, Mascolo and J-F. Rolland, drew up a letter of protest regarding the new dogmatism and the intellectual poverty of the Party's cultural policy which threatened to isolate communist artists and writers from the national intelligentsia; already they had been isolated from ordinary militants within the Party through the formation of specialist groups in place of cell membership:

"Il nous paraît par exemple, que la critique communiste, dans presque tous les domaines culturels, répond mal à ce qu'en attendent les masses d'intellectuels sympathisants, beaucoup d'intellectuels membres du parti, et à ce que devraient craindre nos ennemis."

"... D'autre part, en ce qui concerne la critique des œuvres littéraires ou artistiques, il arrive trop souvent qu'elles soient condamnées à partir de déterminations a-priori qui ne soient pas expliquées clairement, ou au contraire louées pour des raisons accidentales. Nous pourrions à cet égard donner de nombreux exemples en ce qui concerne la production des dernières années."
Il nous semble qu'on oscille entre l'excès de lourdeur et l'excès de légèreté, entre un dogmatisme brutal et un dilettantisme regrettable.

On donne à ceux de nos sympathisants qui attendent de nous des réponses valables le sentiment que nous esquivons les vraies discussions, à nos ennemis l'illusion d'une faiblesse surprenante, et à nous l'impression d'un retard permanent. Les critères des jugements portés sont équivoques; ils oscillent de l'application des valeurs esthétiques ou morales bourgeoises à l'application parfois mécanique et maladroite des principes généraux du marxisme.

Beaucoup de nos publications emploient dans certains de leurs articles un ton qui ne correspond pas à ce qu'en attendent leurs lecteurs.

Le résultat est que très souvent, ainsi que nous avons fait l'expérience, beaucoup d'intellectuels qui sont profondément d'accord avec la politique générale du parti sont retenus cependant d'y adhérer ou y adhèrent avec une restriction qui concerne précisément leur spécialité.\footnote{Quoted in full in Fauvet, Jacques. \textit{Histoire du Parti Communiste Français}. 11. pp. 357-358. Fayard, Paris, 1966.}

The letter, addressed to Casanova was never officially dispatched. Eluard refused to sign and Courtade withdrew his support having signed originally. The incident had its casualties. Marguerite Duras, Clara Malraux and Jean Duvignaud resigned from the Party while Ponge, Atlan and Kast drifted further away. The ringleaders left the Party soon after, while Claude Roy chose to recognise his fault and remain within the Party.

The protest, of course, had a deeper significance. The distinct issue of literary and artistic criticism was in turn related to a profound malaise about the Party's
move into isolation, a situation which was much more deeply felt by intellectuals who had to exist in a bourgeois environment upholding their ideological and philosophical beliefs in the face of hostile bourgeois criticism. This state of affairs was to become particularly unbearable during the Lyssenko affair and the promotion in the U.S.S.R. and in France of "proletarian" mathematics, science, philosophy, art etc. The organisation of intellectuals into the specialist groups mentioned above meant that they could not lead the lives of ordinary militants in normal Party cells, where their services in their specialist areas would not be so readily called upon; on the contrary, continual proof of their devotion to the Party cause was exacted from them via pronouncements of a Zhdanovist nature on their specialities.

The best illustration of Cold War attitudes is to be found in the Party cultural review founded in 1948, *La Nouvelle Critique*. In December 1948 the Party launched this new review which was intended to act as a spearhead for the (socialist realist) avant-garde referred to by Elsa Triolet. The fact that the Party considered a completely new periodical to be necessary is not without
interest. La Pensée\(^1\) (founded 1939) was primarily a philosophical and scientific journal but with a strong literary and artistic content administered and supported for the most part by University men (Langevin, Joliot-Curie, Prenant, Cogniot etc.). The fact that these intellectuals were working professionally within the bourgeois establishment meant that they were more open to contamination than the writers and philosophers formed and even created by the Party (André Stil, Fourgeron, Daix, Garaudy, Kanapa etc.).

Les Lettres Françaises, officially the organ of the Comité National des Ecrivains, although dominated by communists, still contained non communists whose growing opposition to Zhdanovism did nothing to reassure the Party hierarchy. A similar situation existed in the review Europe with fellow travellers publishing side by side with Party intellectuals.

Given the dissidents within the Party and the increasingly hostile attitude of the intellectual establishment, the need was felt for a hard hitting militant review

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\(^1\)During the Lysenko affair (1948-49) strong currents of disapproval of the French Party's support for the Soviet Establishment were obvious within La Pensée. Professor Marcel Prenant vacated his place in the Politbureau (he was replaced by Aragon) as a direct consequence of this Jean Larnac, literary critic of La Pensée was attacked by Pierre Daix in Les Cahiers du Communiste for having produced a bourgeois manual of literary history from which great communist writers like Barbusse had been omitted cf. Daix, Pierre, "La Critique Littéraire arme de la lutte idéologique". C.C.C. Nov. 1948.
capable of broadcasting the Party's position on cultural matters. When the first editorial board was published in December 1948, the impeccably orthodox content (apart from Lefebvre), spoke eloquently of the Party's intentions and ambitions for this review subtitled "la revue du marxisme militant". The editor-in-chief was Jean Kanapa, novelist and right hand man of Laurent Casanova, and a member of the younger generation. He was flanked by such Party stalwarts of pre-war times as Jean Fréville whose considerable experience as a journalist in L'Humanité and as a critic and expert on orthodoxy in Marxist literary theory, made him an obvious choice; he in turn was supported by Léon Moussinac and Georges Sadoul whose work in Commune and other Party reviews of the thirties meant that the review had been endowed with a considerable body of experience. The younger element, Annie Besse, Pierre Daix, Jean Desanti, and Victor Leduc were already publishing in Les Cahiers du Communisme and making a name for themselves as the new "avant-garde" of the Party. To these one must add regular contributors such as Roger Garaudy, André Wursmer, Kriege1-Valrimont. Fourgeron, Dominique Desanti, Guillevic and Hartman, all of the younger generation, many introduced to the Party via the Resistance movement and consequently unaffected by the pre-war Freedom of the Popular Front; they were also unconditional admirers of the Soviet Union given her war record and the enormity of her wartime sacrifice in the
name of socialism. The review appeared essentially to be that of a young avant-garde filled with political ardour and commitment.

Roger Garaudy, himself a contributor, underlined the identity of the influences at work in his article in Les Cahiers du Communisme which marked the first year of publication of the new Party periodical:

"La nouvelle critique a été lancée sur l'initiative personnelle de Maurice Thorez qui attache toujours, en tous ses actes, une exceptionnelle importance aux questions de principes. 

Dans sa tâche, depuis un an La nouvelle critique a été aidée puissamment par les prises du position du Parti Bolchévik dans tous les domaines de la culture, en particulier par les rapports de Jdanov.

En un an, notre jeune revue combattive a conquis sa place dans la bataille des idées. Elle a contribué à définir avec netteté, le front idéologique. Et lorsqu'en chaque étape de la bataille, Laurent Casanova a fixé, sans compromis, la position du Parti dans les problèmes qui se posent aux intellectuels—comme le montrait son discours de Strasbourg......."

Perhaps the most significant event to take place in the Soviet Union during the first year of publication of La Nouvelle Critique, from the point of view of the attitudes adopted by the French intellectuals, was the Lyssenko affair in which the Russian establishment adopted the "proletarian" genetic theory of the eccentric Mitchourine and his disciple Lyssenko. It was

consequently maintained by Zhdanov and the Soviet Academies that proletarian interpretations of all human activity and research could be found. In France intellectuals had to transform the basis of their (bourgeois) sciences almost overnight.

Pierre Daix had no hesitation in adopting these views and asserting that communist reinterpretation of arts and sciences alike was being effected:

"Lorsqu’il s’agit des "Communistes", comme lorsqu’en biologie viennent les théories de Lyssenko, ou au dernier salon d’automne les "Parisienes au marché" d’André Fougeron, le plus difficile à apprécier est la rupture que ces événements intellectuels représentent. Qu’on me comprenne bien, je n’entends par assimiler ces trois événements ni leur donner la même importance. Je les réunis parce qu’ils ont une commune caractéristique: dans des domaines très différents, s’insérant dans des développements historiques très dissemblables, ils traduisent une démarche théorique identique, ils résultent d’une détermination profonde unique: de l’assimilation poussée à ses conséquences pratiques, par des intellectuels, des méthodes de pensée et d’action que la classe ouvrière a forgées dans sa lutte."

But the "communist" reinterpretation of the arts and sciences was predominantly one of political resistance: under these conditions La Nouvelle Critique was seen as a weapon to be wielded in a multitude of circumstances and spheres.

In the opening lines of the first editorial, the review revealed itself to have been born of the Cold War:

1Reference to Aragon’s Les Communistes.

The fall of the Tripartite government and the exclusion of the communist ministers in May 1947, together with the ever increasing influence of America on the political destinies of those countries benefitting from the Marshall Plan, were all constituent elements, in the eyes of the French communists, of a concerted attack on the working class movement (embodied in the Soviet Union) as the bourgeoisie prepared to sell the dignity of the nation to the highest bidder in an effort to maintain its control over the means of production.

The heightening of the class war produced by the growing contradictions in the basis and superstructures of capitalist society, had an immediate impact, according to the communists, on the cultural life of the nation as in every other sphere of the infrastructure of society.

It was the task of the Nouvelle Critique to reveal the nature of these contradictions as they became manifest in the arts. The objectives of the communist critic were clear and unambiguous; bourgeois art was to have its decadence revealed, either through the personality of the

individual artist, (especially those who associated themselves with the socialist left), and through the content, or lack of content of his work.

Artists selected for especially bitter attacks\(^1\) were Malraux, Mauriac, Camus and Sartre. Malraux for his support of the anti-communist Gaullist R.P.F., Mauriac for his pro-American attitudes (which went as far as recommending Sélections):

"Voilà pourquoi il arrive qu'une revue comme Sélection du Reader's Digest Puisset être lue et comprise dans le monde entier, si elle s'adresse à cette part de l'être humain qui, sous les lassitudes, fait de lui une créature d'origine royale, aussi humble arrêté soit-il, et ce n'est pas assez dire: de race divine.\(^2\)

Similar messages were quoted from other sources including Maxence Van Der Meersch, Paul Claudel and Maurice Debroka. The review of "militant Marxism" lost no time in defining its enemies: Paulhan, Mounier, Raymond Aron, Merleau-Ponty, Nadeau, Caillolos, and above all, Sartre. All those intellectuals whom the Party denounced as its class enemies were subject to systematic denigration in the pages of La Nouvelle Critique, but it was undoubtedly Sartre who was most roughly handled as the architect of a philosophy which was the ultimate in bourgeois mystification:


"Et je pense à l'un de mes camarades de déportation, qui revient seul de la guerre croyant inconsciemment qu'il était mort avec le reste de sa famille si bien qu'il ne put recommencer à vivre normalement qu'après un traitement mental sévère et qui me disait parlant des œuvres de Sartre: ce type-là est objectivement un assassin."

Apart from direct observations of this kind of specific individuals, the criticism contained in *La Nouvelle Critique* concentrated on analyses of content and form. As far as literature was concerned, the communist critics tended to stress content, but in the case of the visual arts the critical approach was made via form especially with regard to the cinema.

Georges Sadoul, who had written extensively in *Commune* in the 1930s, was responsible for the film criticism of *La Nouvelle Critique*; in his work he returned often to the theme of bourgeois formalism:

"Qui s'intéresse aujourd'hui à ce qui se dit et s'écrit sur le cinéma sait que cet art a été récemment "révolutionné" par "l'utilisation du champ en profondeur" et aussi par "les films à la première personne du singulier", la "caméra stylo", le "retour en arrière", la nouvelle valorisation des "plans fixes", le déclin du champ-contre-champ" et les perspectives ouvertes par l'emploi des "décors naturels"....

According to Sadoul, the bourgeois critic saw these innovations (and some of them were not altogether new) as constituting a new aesthetic of the cinema which in turn

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was creating a new realism. Sadoul, however viewed these claims with some mistrust and went on to quote the bourgeois critic André Bazin:

"Si Nominalisme et Réalisme ont leur répondant cinématographique, ils ne se définissent certainement pas seulement en fonction d'une technique de prise de vue et de découpage; mais ce n'est certainement pas un hasard si Jean Renoir, André Malraux, Orson Welles, Rossellini et William Wyler....se rencontrent dans l'emploi fréquent de la profondeur de champ.....; pas un hasard si, de 1938 à 1946, leurs noms jalonnent tout ce qui compte réellement dans le réalisme cinématographique. Non de ce réalisme sans intérêt de la matière et du sujet, mais de celui qui procède d'une esthétique de la réalité."  

Pointing out that Bazin meant that the new realism was not to be found in the subject of the film, but in its form, Sadoul went on to denounce this approach as bourgeois formalism typical of a society which sought to obscure the truth. By way of contrast, Sadoul quoted the words of socialist film-makers who had taken Stalingrad as their subject:

"Nous avons pris le parti, ont déclaré les auteurs de l'oeuvre consacrée à la bataille de Stalingrad, de nous abstenir de retracer le déroulement exact des événements. Tout en leur conservant leur sens historique, nous avons porté principalement nos efforts sur l'étude des caractères. Nous nous sommes intéressés, non pas aux épisodes de la bataille en elle-même, mais aux réactions que cette bataille suscitait dans l'esprit et dans le coeur des hommes."  


2 Le Tournant décisif: director Ermler, Frédéric.

To have recounted the battle blow for blow for the sake of doing so, would have been to fall into the error of formalism whereas to portray the battle as it was reflected in the consciousness of those who experienced it was to produce authentic realism which showed history acting on human beings. In order to arrive at the essence of this experience, typical incidents were depicted as affecting typical characters.

"Le vrai réalisme ne décalque pas, il transpose. Il ne prend pas le monde en bloc, il choisit ses épisodes les plus significatifs. Il ne se contente pas de décrire, il analyse. Et selon les sujets ou les tempéraments, il peut user du montage court ou du montage rapide, du studio ou du plein air, de l'acteur, ou de l'homme de la rue. Ceci dépend des buts qui veulent être atteints."  

Thus formal considerations are dictated not by style nor the desire to create a new metaphysic through form, but by the exigences of content.

At least it can be said of Sadoul that his criticism retained the processes of "conventional" criticism in that he arrived at a conclusion via a recognisable logical argument albeit of Marxist inspiration. When Sadoul sets out to demonstrate bourgeois decadence he does so via form, as distinct from a crude denunciation of (political) content; he is also subtle enough in his approach not to dismiss all non-communist art as being unacceptable. For example in his commentaries on early French cinema before

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1Sadoul, Georges. Art. cit.
World War I, he treated the director Zecca in the same way and for the same reasons that Zola had been hailed as a class ally, a critical realist, in communist criticism of the Popular Front. But Sadoul's comparative mildness did not reflect the principal tone of the review.

In music too, the socialist realist belief in the primacy of (political) content was promoted in La Nouvelle Critique. In the case of the only music form that the proletariat had adopted to date, that of the choir, the retention of folk material had to be considered as reactionary by the communist critic.

"Nous en sommes amenés à préciser que les chorales populaires, loin de devoir être de petites académies, des organismes de conservation, doivent, à notre avis, être les agents de transmission, de propagation de la nouvelle chanson politique de masse, des chansons progressistes d'aujourd'hui et de demain et que, dans l'état actuel des choses, c'est là la seule contribution efficace qu'elles peuvent apporter au combat de la classe dont elles sont issues."¹

The composer should be asked to turn to the people for the creative source of his music; according to the principle of naradnost, the sensibility of the people had to be tapped.

"Le compositeur d'aujourd'hui - ce n'est pas un reproche, c'est une constatation - ignore tout de la "capacité actuelle d'émotion des masses". Il est certain qu'il sera étonné de découvrir qu'elle est immense et très supérieure à celle de "l'élite". Sans doute aussi parce qu'elle n'est pas pervertie,

¹Alain, Jean-Marc. "A propos de musique progressiste". La Nouvelle Critique No. 5, Avril 1949.
mais avant tout parce que les masses ont une réserve d'enthousiasme et de générosité incommensurables."

Boris Tazlitsky socialist realist painter and the review's art critic insisted in a similar way on the dominant role of ideology and politics in the pictorial arts:

"Je pense qu'il est notre devoir de nous demander constamment si notre production sert, si elle est utile, si elle appuie et exalte notre peuple dans sa lutte pour l'indépendance nationale et la libération sociale".1

Furthermore, he added, if the French Party theorists were in any doubt as to which line to follow, there was always the shining example of the Soviet Union.

In the field of aesthetics, Georg Lukács' work was hailed by the review as setting the foundation for a Marxist and socialist realist theory in this domaine. It is interesting to note that Lukács was not accepted completely by his French Party audience of 1949.

"Il (Lukács) nous a donné l'armature de base de notre esthétique - peut-être d'ailleurs de façon plutôt didactique. Mais il ne pouvait faire que cela, car l'esthétique du marxisme, ainsi qu'il le dit lui-même, ce sont les artistes de l'avenir, les artistes de la société sans classes qui l'édifieront. Ce sont ceux d'Union Soviétique qui la construisent en même temps que le socialisme".2

1Tazlitsky, Boris. "De la critique d'art et du nouveau réalisme français" La Nouvelle Critique No. 2, Jan. 1949.

Thus Lukács' statements were firmly linked by La Nouvelle Critique to the Soviet Union.

Yet again, in the name of Lukács, marxist aesthetics was reduced to its socialist realist limits:

"C'est pourquoi le combat que nous avons à mener n'est plus du ressort du professeur d'esthétique, L'esthétique du marxisme, c'est dans notre lutte elle-même qu'elle se consolidera. Les bases, Lukács les a délimitées - à partir des indications décisives de Marx et Engels. A nous de construire sur ces fondements."\(^1\)

Statements such as this abound in the first numbers of La Nouvelle Critique and as articles of faith are harmless; it was only when these were put into practice and the principles of Zhdanovist theory were applied to criticism that the real differences between bourgeois aesthetic criteria and socialist realist values emerged.

Guillevic, for example, was prepared to brush aside the infelicities of form of the song writer Henri Bassis, in order to concentrate on the worth of his content.

"Certes, il y a de la maladresse, de la lourdeur, de la gaucherie, de la banalité dans les chansons d'Henri Bassis, et il y en a plus encore dans celles de ses pièces qui tendent à s'éloigner de la chanson pour approcher du poème; mais ce qui importe, pour nous, Français de 1949, c'est la direction de ces essais. C'est un coup de pioche dans le mur. Ce qui importe, c'est que des coups de pioche soient donnés.

Et qu'on ne crie pas qu'ici la pioche soit mal maniée: La preuve:

"Un deux trois
"La terre à l'endroit

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\(^1\) Bottigelli, Emile. "A propos de l'esthétique de Lukács". La Nouvelle Critique.
"Quatre cinq six
"La joie est gratis

"Sept huit neuf
"du pain chaud tout neuf.

Avouons aussi notre gout pour le Slogan des Vingt pour cent:

"Un travailleur ça n'mange pas des briques
"Il ne croit pas'aux oncles d'Amérique
"Il a donné sa sueur et son sang
"Il lui faut vingt pour cent vingt pour cent vingt pour cent

Deux travailleurs ça n'mange pas des briques,

"Il leur faut vingt pour cent vingt pour cent vingt pour cent

(à chanter en défilant, indéfiniment, jusqu'à satisfaction).

Similar praise was found for Paul Eluard situated at the other extreme of the Party's poetic talent;
although the infantile naivety of Henri Bassis is absent in Eluard, one notes the reduction of vocabulary to the same basic level:

......mon coeur est avec eux
Mon coeur est tout entier dans leur coeur innocent
Je le sais, je parle pour eux.

Ils parlent pour moi nos mots sont les mêmes
Notre rue mène à d'autres rues, à d'autres hommes,
À d'autres temps et dans le temps à toi
Paul Vaillant-Couturier qui fut semblable à nous
Et qui jurait par nous et nous jurons par toi"²

¹Guillévic, "La Victoire en chantant" par Henri Bassis. La Nouvelle Critique, No. 5. April, 1949.
Eluard's poem is cited as representative of the spirit of Casanova's Strasbourg speech, i.e. the relationship of the intellectual to the workers within the Party. One notes in passing that it is Vaillant-Couturier who is invoked as intercessor, being of bourgeois origins, and not Maurice Thorez who was, of course "un fils du peuple".

Pierre Daix, commenting on the success of Eluard's and Aragon's poems in this style claimed that condescension had been eliminated from the intellectual's attitude towards the worker and that the art produced by this new relationship should not be judged by bourgeois criteria:

"Il faudrait d'Eluard comme d'Aragon tout dire. Peut-être sera-t-on surpris que je n'ai point écrit: "j'aime mieux ceci ou cela", fait un tri parmi les poèmes, tenté de définir la beauté de tel ou tel poème. Mon propos ici n'était point de juger, mais d'aider à juger; point tant de dire mes raisons d'aimer que de tenter d'aider à mieux comprendre pour mieux aimer. La poésie politique est une poésie nouvelle. Elle exige une critique nouvelle, faite comme elle pour des hommes nouveaux, pour des hommes lucides, aptes à tout comprendre, aptes à tout aimer. C'est une poésie qu'il ne faut pas abaisser pour le "public". Ce nouveau public, ce prolétariat conscient qui prend direction de la nation ne permetra pas qu'il y ait comme en cette fin du 19e siècle des artistes maudits parce qu'incompris, parce que venus trop tôt, parce qu'en rupture avec leur classe, la bourgeoisie déjà décadente mais qui encore à cette époque formait le public. Aujourd'hui les choses sont différentes. La bataille de ces poètes est une bataille nationale, la bataille de la classe ouvrière qui s'érigé ne nation. La critique doit se mettre au même niveau, se transformer."¹

Therefore, for Daix, as for all his colleagues

writing in their different columns of *La Nouvelle Critique*, the first criterion of effectiveness had to be political. Perhaps one of the most striking features of the extent of the commitment of the *Nouvelle Critique* intellectuals was their willingness to subject themselves to the monthly proclamation of faith and humility embodied in the "autocritique" in which they recognised their theoretical impurities and paid tribute to the Party for having pointed them out. Psychiatrists, physicians, philosophers, all passed through the purifying fire of the autocritique. A good example of the tone and content of these is contained in the imaginary dialogue which Roger Garaudy reproduces involving a critic of his attitude of subserviance to the orthodoxy represented by the U.S.S.R. and enshrined in Zhdanov's history of philosophy:

"Ainsi donc, mon pauvre Garaudy, pour la deuxième édition de vos "Sources francaises de socialisme scientifique", vous allez changer quelques thèses centrales du livre parce que les Russes ont décidé à propos d'un autre ouvrage d'histoire de la philosophie que .... enfin bref, c'est bien malheureux pour vous, Jdanov est passé par là....

- Oui Monsieur; Jdanov est passé par là.... Et c'est bien heureux pour moi, et pour mon travail que j'aime....

- Curieux amour! Vous le reniez!

- Point du tout. Cet inventaire des richesses de nos expériences nationales, dans notre France où, disait Engels, "les luttes de classes furent toujours poussées jusqu'au bout", et du mon moins riche héritage de nos matérialistes bourgeois du XVIIe siècle, de tradition cartésienne, et de nos socialistes et communistes du XIXe siècle, me paraît toujours une tâche importante. Mais cet inventaire serait mal
fait, sans esprit critique et historique, dans un esprit non scientifique, s’il ne nous aidait pas à prendre conscience de ce que le socialisme scientifique de Marx et d’Engels, de Lénine et de Staline, constitue de radicalement nouveau”.

This particular example evokes very well the consciousness of the communist intellectual of the attitude of his bourgeois critic and the almost defiant joy of the former in defining the basic article of faith which differentiates him from the latter.

It was this kind of sensationalism which contributed so much to the special nature and reputation of La Nouvelle Critique. Certainly the equally frenetic Reader’s Digest of the period was putting out anti-communist propaganda at just about the same crude level and therefore, together with the other enemies of communism in France, was undoubtedly assisting in perpetuating the situation. But the peculiar character and tone of La Nouvelle Critique also had its origins in the background of the young intellectuals who were responsible for the majority of the articles, i.e. the background of the Resistance, concentration camps and sacrifice. It is significant that some of the first novels to appear by the first generation of post-war communist novelists were on the subject of the

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1 Garaudy, Roger. "Jdanov est passé par là..." Autocritique. La Nouvelle Critique, No. 5. April 1949. The text of Zhdanov’s essay on Philosophy was published by Les Cahiers du Communisme of December, 1947.

camps and war experiences, for it was exactly this experience of self-sacrifice and combat which that the young militants of La Nouvelle Critique reflected in their theoretical struggle as intellectuals. Seen in this light, La Nouvelle Critique becomes a weapon to be wielded in the Cold War considered as merely an extension of the armed struggle of 1939-45.

The Nouvelle Critique was created for reasons of the Cold War, the Party being needful of a mouthpiece of impeccable orthodoxy in the cultural field. If the political climate improved then the Nouvelle Critique could either be transformed or discontinued. In the meantime, the sensationalism of this review did much to colour the atmosphere of the Cold War and underline the Party's isolationism.

It would be wrong, however, to conclude that all the Party's intellectuals reacted in this way to the strictures of Zhdanovism. As has been shown, Elsa Triolet still contrived to appear conciliatory, appealing to the good sense of the bourgeois intellectual although in essence defending the basic tenets of Zhdanovism. Similarly, within La Nouvelle Critique itself, Sadoul and Moussinac tended to work quietly within their special spheres and

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1 It is interesting to note that in the period of the progress from peaceful coexistence of the mid-fifties to détente of the present day, La Nouvelle Critique has been transformed radically to a placid non-controversial journal while the real centre of Marxist thought has become La Pensée.
although coming to the same condemnatory conclusions of the more dogmatic critics like Daix, appeared to do so via reasoned Marxist thought as distinct from politically motivated pre-judgements. The hard core of Daix, Stil, Fourgeron, Tazlitsky, Wurmser, Garaudy, Desanti, Leduc and Guille vic, were indeed only the nucleus of a fairly wide range of intellectuals, but they were extremely vocal and appeared often in Les Cahiers du Communiste as the Party's spokesmen on cultural matters. But again the situation was more complicated than it appeared on the surface, for although intellectuals like Laffitte and Daix constantly referred to the Soviet Union as the undisputed source of orthodoxy, they themselves, in publishing their concentration camp novels were actually in open revolt with internal publishing policy in the U.S.S.R. where no novels dealing with camps of P.O.W.s were allowed to be published because of the current Party line that those Russian soldiers who had allowed themselves to be taken prisoner had betrayed their country. Daix's novels were greeted with silence in the Soviet Union and were never translated unlike those of Aragon and André Stil. This anomaly remained below the surface and in no

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way affected the unconditional support of Zhdanovist
socialist realism of Daix.

In the course of 1950, only a year after the first
published number of *La Nouvelle Critique*, Stalin intervened
personally on the crucial question of cultural theory and
the impoverishment brought about by monopolistic theories
in the sciences. Stalin held that no science could
flourish when the free interplay of ideas had been
suppressed artificially by the removal of opposition. He
was referring to the theories of the Soviet linguist
N. Marr, but the relevance of the point was not lost on
communist intellectuals in every sphere.¹

Roger Garaudy, in his review of *La Nouvelle Critique's*
first year of activity reflected the new concern:

Peut-être aussi, pour le ton général de la revue,
certaines améliorations sont souhaitables. Nos
camarades éprouvent fortement la joie de la certitude
de la fécondité de notre doctrine marxiste.
Cette confiance rayonne à travers la revue et lui
donne sa chaleur. Mais elle tourne parfois à
l'ivresse dogmatique....."²

However, the transformation of Stalinist attitudes
within the French Party was not to take place overnight
on the basis of an article by Stalin which although based
on linguistics appeared to have more to do with the
controversial Lyssenko affair and the failure of the Soviet

¹The full impact and consequences of the linguistics
letters will be dealt with in connection with the work
of Henri Lefebvre.

²Garaudy, Roger. "La Nouvelle Critique a un an". *Les
agricultural policy notably in animal husbandry due to the false doctrine of genetics adopted by the establishment.

The First Thaw. 1950.

Towards the end of June 1950, the letters signed by Stalin began to appear in Pravda; the subject was ostensibly linguistics, but on closer inspection several pronouncements of a general nature seemed to emerge as having greater importance and significance than the original subject matter, and appeared as if they might well be applicable to other social sciences.

Briefly, Stalin was seeking to correct the errors of the Soviet linguist N. Marr and his school who held that language, being part of the superstructure, was as much susceptible to change as any other (e.g. law, religion, ideology etc.). Such a theory implied that class languages could exist corresponding to class supremacy i.e. bourgeois language in a capitalist society and proletarian language in a socialist society. When Marr observed that such radical changes did not in fact accompany upheavals between the base and superstructure, the only explanation which he could offer which retained language in the praxis was that it constituted a means of production, and like the other means of production in the socio-economic base, served capitalist and socialist alike depending on who held sway.

Stalin, however, pointed out that this theory too was
erroneous; language was neither a specific feature of the superstructure, nor a part of the base, but a distinctly national instrument essential to the definition of the nation. Naturally, added Stalin, modifications did take place in language as new words were adopted and others fell out of use, but this process was long and gradual and not at all comparable with the sometimes dramatic changes which are effected in superstructures by revolutionary activity.

But perhaps of special significance to those communist intellectuals awaiting the first signs of a thaw, was the condemnation of Marr's monopolistic tendencies which sought to enforce one theory at the expense of all others; Stalin actually made a case for co-existence and cross-fertilisation of theory:

"Tout le monde reconnaît qu'il n'est point de science qui puisse se développer et prospérer sans une lutte d'opinions, sans la liberté de critique. Mais cette règle universellement reconnue était ignorée et foulée aux pieds sans façons. Il s'est constitué, replié sur lui-même, un groupe de dirigeants infaillible qui, après s'être prémunis contre toute critique éventuelle, ont sombré dans le bon plaisir et l'arbitraire."

Could it be that Stalin was openly criticising cultural Stalinism? Could one read "Lyssenko" for Marr?

Certainly it was Stalin who identified the tendency

exhibited by Marr as approaching that of the Proletcult, an observation which was eagerly seized upon subsequently by commentators such as Jean Kanapa in France, who were able then to denounce the ravages of cultural Stalinism as being due to the reappearance of the proletcult aberration.

But what was the first reaction in France to this change of position? Commenting on the edition of the collected letters produced by the Editions de la Nouvelle Critique (1951), Victor Leduc, writing in the Cahiers du Communisme made much of Stalin's pronouncements:

"L'extraordinaire densité de ces quelques pages, leur exceptionnelle importance théorique, la richesse de la pensée dans la clarté parfaite de l'expression frapperont tout lecteur.

C'est de linguistique qu'il s'agit, mais c'est aussi, et en même temps, du marxisme en tant qu'instrument de recherche scientifique."  

Leduc also thought fit to stress the liberalism of Stalin's thought:

"En réfutant point par point leurs erreurs, Staline nous donne une grande leçon d'antischématisme, d'antidogmatisme; il restitue au marxisme sa fonction véritable comme instrument de recherche scientifique, comme "méthode pénétrant toutes les sciences naturelles et sociales et s'enrichissant des apports de ces sciences au cours de leur développement" (Jdanov).

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En même temps, il nous montre comment le marxisme s’approfondit et s’enrichit dans l’affrontement des problèmes scientifiques, dans la libre discussion entre hommes de science.\footnote{Ibid.}

Stalin had pointed out that if language remains as a constant in the expression of culture, culture itself was subject to change as a superstructure so that socialist culture was socialist in its content and national in its form.

According to Leduc, Stalin had opened up a wide field of enquiry, since other formal resources might now be identified as enjoying a degree of permanency similar to that of language, but prudence was called for:

"Il ne s'agit pas d'appliquer mécaniquement ce que Staline dit de la langue à l'ensemble des moyens d'expression de la culture, mais à la lumière de son analyse des rapports de la langue et de la superstructure, à la lumière de la vue d'ensemble qu'il apporte sur les relations entre les phénomènes sociaux dont il enseigne "qu'ils ont leur particularités spécifiques qui les distinguent l'un de l'autre et qui ont pour la science une importance primordiale", il s'agit de rechercher ce qui, dans telle ou telle branche de la création artistique est directement lié à la superstructure et se transforme à chacun de ses changements, et ce qui étant lié à la langue, et aux divers moyens d'expression n'est pas modifié directement par la superstructure et comporte des particularités et des lois spécifiques de développement."\footnote{Leduc, Victor. Art. cit.}

But perhaps the most significant remark made by Leduc on this subject as far as cultural theory was concerned, was
that Marxist aesthetics might benefit from Stalin's lead:

En partant de la distinction entre la forme nationale de la culture stable pour l'essentiel, à travers plusieurs périodes historiques, et son contenu qui se transforme à chaque nouvelle superstructure, on peut apporter une plus grande clarté dans le débat ouvert sur les rapports entre le fond et la forme de l'œuvre d'art. Les indications stalinistes doivent permettre d'avancer hardiment dans l'élaboration d'une esthétique marxiste.¹

The significance of this remark made by one of the Party's leading orthodox philosophers writing in the Party's theoretical organ cannot be under-estimated; to explore the relationship of form and content is to embark upon a philosophical task of some importance. The fact that the field was limited to aesthetics meant that to a certain extent at least, the thaw could be limited, but the long term implications for Marxist philosophy were also evident to a man like Henri Lefebvre whose unease under the Zhdanovist yoke had been considerable and who had the necessary background in Marxist theory to turn the opportunity to good advantage.

In the post-war period of cultural Stalinism, typified by Zhdanovist socialist realism, it is interesting to consider the writings of the only surviving literary theorist of the pre-war Philosophies group.

Already in the thirties, Henri Lefebvre was recognised within the Party as a leading Marxist

¹Leduc, Victor. Art. cit.
philosopher and his translations of hitherto unavailable basic texts\(^1\) of the founders of Marxism and Hegel (carried out jointly with Norbert Guterman), together with an authoritative work\(^2\) on dialectical materialism, were sufficient to establish his reputation among his fellow communist and non-communist intellectuals alike.

If anything, Lefebvre was too original in his thinking, tending to express views from time to time which were not necessarily those of the Party. This was certainly the case with his pre-war study\(^3\) of Nietzsche whom he set out to rehabilitate when international communism had already denounced him as the theorist of fascism, while his literary theory as published in *Commune* (cf. above) could also be said to be somewhat removed from the main line of communist theory of the times.

Perhaps the principal reason for his independence in these matters was that he had come to Marxism via Hegel

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and in doing so had followed the evolution of the Young Marx whose adoption of Hegelian humanism and adaptation of the Hegelian dialectic constituted the most important development in the evolution of Marxism. Lefebvre, therefore, was eminently well placed to review and re-visit the sources of Marxism as a means of throwing fresh light on partially developed themes (of Marx and Engels), as well as maintaining an independence of later theorists if necessary. He was constantly in danger of being accused of revisionism, a charge which was hardly likely to be brought against Party "philosophers" such as Jean Fréville whose name was appended to material produced for international consumption in the Soviet Union.

Further Party hostility towards Lefebvre emanated from the new generation of Marxists associated with La Nouvelle Critique (Garaudy, Desanti, Leduc, Daix, Kanapa etc.) despite the fact that his name appeared in the editorial board of the review. Pierre Hervé, himself a dissident within the Party, has indicated that Lefebvre was associated with La Nouvelle Critique in name only,¹ and that this was an open secret in the Party; furthermore, claimed Hervé, Lefebvre had deliberately been kept on the sidelines so that when Sartre naively wondered why Lefebvre had not developed his thought, he would have done

better to direct his curiosity elsewhere:

"Mieux vaudrait, par exemple, poser la question: quelles sont les conditions qui font qu'un Garaudy se développe, tandis qu'un Lefebvre est resté toujours en marge? Analysez les caractéristiques des ouvrages de l'un et de l'autre et rappez ces caractéristiques aux conditions particulières des intellectuels communistes français. Henri Lefebvre a du génie, je le dis sans nul lie ironie. Lui - et lui seul, parmi les marxistes - a tenté à faire connaître Hegel en France et le Parti a eu l'immense tort de ne point lui permettre de se développer librement. Relativement seul, il a abattu une énorme besogne. Songez à ses multiples travaux! Mais s'il ne les a pas approfondis, s'il s'est trop souvent dispersé, c'est qu'objectivement l'orientation de sa pensée et de ses travaux était en contradiction avec le marxisme vulgaire dominant."

It would be wrong to suppose that Lefebvre was completely ostracised by the Party, many of the "multiples travaux" referred to by Hervé were published by the Party's press, but they were monographs of classical philosophers of the same type as his pre-war study of Nietzsche, and therefore not directly of a theoretical nature. The same could not be said of his Contribution à l'esthétique, which, published in the wake of Stalin's letters on linguistics, was of a distinctly theoretical nature.


nature. The subject was well chosen from Lefebvre's point of view since the absence of any corpus of established Marxist theory in this field gave him plenty of scope for speculation, especially of a philosophical kind.

The delicate nature of such an enterprise is well illustrated by the many validating quotations from, and references to, Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Zhdanov; the convention was used by Lefebvre in an interesting way however, by quoting in isolation and out of context, he was able to ensure freedom of movement. This point is illustrated in the two quotations\(^1\) (from Marx and Zhdanov) which appear on the title page of the work:

"L'art est la plus haute joie que l'homme se donne à lui-même."

Marx.\(^2\)

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\(^1\) Later, on the occasion of the publication of Lefebvre's bitter mémoires of his period in the Party, a Soviet critic seized the opportunity to turn his stratagem against him:

"La lutte que Lefebvre a menée durant plusieurs années, sans interruption, contre le Parti se reflète dans l'histoire qu'il trace de ses livres. C'est en effet l'histoire du dédoublement, du mensonge et du leurre permanents, du recours constant à des procédés hypocrites. Il rapporte ainsi sans rougir un certain nombre de faits révoltants. Un exemple: dans l'espoir que cela entraînerait l'adhésion des marxistes à son livre sur l'esthétique, il y met en épigraphe une citation de Jdanov qu'il haissait et une citation attribuée à Marx, qui est de sa propre invention! Après quoi ce sont les communistes qui, sans fondement aucun, Lefebvre accuse d'"amoralité politique" et de "machiavelisme"! EFTROV, Svetozar, "De la Révision du marxisme à l'idéologie bourgeoise, à propos de La Somme et le reste d'Henri Lefebvre." La Nouvelle Revue Internationale May 1960 reported in Les Cahiers du Communisme, June 1960.

\(^2\) No source given.
"La musique ne donne du plaisir que lorsque tous ses éléments - la mélodie, le chant, le rythme - se trouvent dans une certaine union harmonieuse. L'attention unilatérale accordée à l'un d'eux aux dépens d'un autre, aboutit à détruire l'interaction correcte des divers éléments." - Jdanov.

The above quotations served the purpose of indicating the areas which Lefebvre had selected as the basis of his enquiry, i.e. art as a man-made product destined to satisfy a higher need, and secondly, the dialectical relationship between the different elements of a work of art, viz. form and content. One notes too, the breadth of Marx's statement (to the point of appearing commonplace) and the absence of the dogmatism usually associated with the pronouncements of Andrei Zhdanov on socialist realism. It would seem that Lefebvre had deliberately set out to assert his freedom. In the Zhdanov quotation there is surprisingly no reference to the primacy of content over form, merely a statement as to the inter-dependence of these elements; admittedly the remark relates to music, an art form which presents particular difficulties with regard to the problem of form and content, but taken as a self-contained pronouncement, there is nothing to distinguish it from idealist aesthetics. The absence of socialist realist tenets (naradnost, partinost and ideinost)

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1 Jdanov, A. Sur la littérature, la philosophie et la musique. p. 86. E.S. Paris, 1950. This did not prevent Zhdanov from censoring Shostakovich for producing music unintelligible to the proletariat.
accords well with Lefebvre's intentions since he obviously had no desire to see his work limited by socialist realist dictates:

"Ce petit livre, destiné à la collection "Problèmes", n'a pas pour but de rendre "problématique" le nouveau réalisme, le réalisme socialiste. Il part au contraire du réalisme socialiste comme d'une conquête, d'un fait acquis."¹

Furthermore, at a later point in his study, Lefebvre is anxious to stress the nature of the relationship between the theory and practice of art:

"Il n'y a pas d'"art marxiste", de recettes marxistes pour créer, esthétiquement. Mais il y a une théorie marxiste de l'art qui—comme toute théorie—exprime une pratique et réagit sur cette pratique en influançant les créateurs."²

Thus Marxist aesthetics would provide a means of defining and understanding a work of art from a dialectical and historical materialist point of view, but the artist would remain free to create according to his inspiration. Such creative freedom would seem explicitly to exclude "enforceable"³ formulae such as the positive hero and the "no conflict" plot.

Whatever his views on socialist realism, Lefebvre makes the point that such a revolutionary innovation in

³Enforceable at least in the U.S.S.R. through membership of the Writers' Union and access to publication.
the arts has its implications with respect to preceding
theory, necessitating a consequent review of basic
principles:

"Il se trouve que le nouveau réalisme oblige à une
réflexion sur les principes. Il modifie les
idées fondamentales sur l'art, en les enrichissant,
en les transformant. Il éclaire rétrospectivement
le passé, et bouleverse les anciens problèmes
d'esthétique et d'histoire d'art.

Une telle réflexion sur un fait nouveau qui se
propose d'en tirer toutes les conséquences, de
remonter aux principes, de voir le passé sous un
nouvel éclairage, de rejeter les idées périmées et
d'assimiler les notions nouvelles, une telle
réflexion se nomme traditionnellement:
philosophique".¹

Lefebvre obviously saw his study as having an important
philosophical dimension, a fact of some relevance to the
subsequent development of the work.

A return to first principles for Lefebvre (or any
other Marxist) is problematic given the absence of any
body of aesthetic theory constituted by the founders of
Marxism, but Lefebvre put forward the case that the only
complete aesthetic theory which was both materialist and
based on a total world view, comprised of inter-acting
parts, to data, was that of Hegel; not that there was any
question of revising Marx:

"D'ailleurs il ne peut être question de fonder une
esthétique sur celle de Hegel, puisque Marx a pris
dans Hegel ce qu'il y avait de vivant et déjà l'a
remis sur ses pieds, l'a transformé et développé

italics).
en une méthode scientifique. Depuis lors, les œuvres des classiques du Marxisme nous ont apporté des exposés du matérialisme philosophique et de la méthode dialectique qui rend inutile le recours à Hegel. Cependant l'Esthétique de Hegel (comme d'ailleurs sa Logique) reste le seul exemple jusqu'à nouvel ordre, dans ces domaines d'un exposé du mouvement d'ensemble (Marx).

Il semble difficile ne pas y trouver encore des suggestions pour la recherche, selon l'indication d'Engels."

In point of fact, Lefebvre was not revising Marx or seeking to impose Hegel, but the parallel with Hegel's theory which runs throughout his work provides an interesting demonstration of the points he makes above.

In the first instance, he claimed, it was Hegel's view of society and art which should be of particular interest to the Marxist:

"Il faut pour comprendre l'art jeter un coup d'œil sur le contenu total de notre conscience... nous y trouvons en premier lieu le vaste système des besoins matériels à la satisfaction desquels travaillent de nombreuses industries, ainsi que le commerce, la navigation les arts techniques, au-dessus se trouvent le monde des lois du droit et de la vie familiale, les classes sociales, tout l'immense domaine de l'Etat.... Nous y trouvons en dernier lieu, l'activité aux ramifications multiples et entrecroisées de la science. A l'intérieur de ces sphères s'exerce également l'activité esthétique."

The similarity between this view of society and the Marxist basis and superstructure theory is a striking one;

even the remoteness of art from the economic basis is indicated by Hegel. It was this concept of the relationship between art and society which caused Hegel to remark on the parallel evolution of art and society, i.e. for each era he claimed it was possible to equate the degree of development of any society with the achievement of its art. The Marxist retains the historical link established here but rejects the affirmation by Hegel (who believed that art was a transitory stage on the way to pure thought) that art will lose its subjective appeal for future generations who will simply look upon it with interest mingled with curiosity if at all. The idealist flaw (from the Marxist point of view) in Hegel's thought resided in the concept of pure thought, a condition which constitutes a kind of philosophical utopia unworthy of a purely materialist system. This point of difference between Hegel and Marx is a fundamental one since it is exactly with reference to Hegel's idealism that Marx made the famous claim of putting Hegel "back on his feet", i.e. by restoring the materialist element as a first principle. For Marx, art was by no means a transitory stage, but a lasting feature of man's affective landscape. It was true that some art fell into oblivion while some remained immortal, a particularly thorny problem for the Marxist who is then faced with the task of showing why some societies with a relatively primitive economic base could have produced art which continues to give pleasure
to societies economically much their superior. In reply to Marx's suggestion that classical Greek art retained its appeal because it reflected part of the infancy of mankind which then took pleasure in contemplating its origins, Lefebvre took Marx's point but wed it to the observation by Hegel that if Greek art had been successful it was for more specific reasons; this point is developed in Hegel's comparison of Greek and Roman art:

"Dans l'art romain se montre déjà le commencement de la dissolution de la sculpture classique. Ici en effet, l'idéal proprement dit n'est plus la base de la conception et de l'exécution tout entiers. La poésie d'inspiration spirituelle, le souffle intérieur et la noblesse d'une représentation parfaite en soi, ces traits caractéristiques de la sculpture grecque disparaissent et font place, de plus en plus, à la prédilection pour un genre plus proche au portrait."¹

Thus, according to Hegel, the success of Greek art was due to the fact that the Greeks lived their "real" and religious lives as one; their gods were recognisably human, with human strengths and weaknesses and their art reflected a totally integrated mind, the first condition of classicism in art.

Lefebvre takes up the point of the immortality of Greek art and suggests that it is the embodiment of the political aspirations of the Greek people in its art which creates the element of continuity:

"Dans l'élaboration de cette mythologie intervinrent la vie des masses paysannes, leurs luttes contre

la classe des propriétaires, contre les princes et les rois; les rapports entre la campagne et la ville, la lutte de la bourgeoisie des villes contre l'aristocratie terrienne; la lutte de la population des cités contre l'aristocratie et la bourgeoisie marchande, etc. D'où les notions de la justice, de la punition, du destin, de héros, présentés de façon vivante dans les mythes d'Hercule, de Prométhée, des Atrides, etc. Ces notions apparues dans un peuple déterminé ont pris par la suite un sens universel, un sens rationnel. Le mythe de Prométhée garde ainsi pour nous un sens, à la fois imagé et rationnel.1

The Marxist twist to Hegel's theory is effected by Lefebvre through his interpretation of the class struggle as contained in the public life of the Greeks.

But the human environment is made up of more than society; man finds himself in a physical context which is partly exterior to and partly an integral part of his condition, namely Nature. In both Hegelian and Marxist philosophy there is a constant process of expropriation of self from Nature; Hegel saw the artist as intimately involved in this quest:

"Le besoin général d'art est donc le besoin rationnel qui pousse l'homme à prendre conscience du monde intérieur et extérieur et à en faire un objet dans lequel il se reconnaîsse lui-même."2

Lefebvre makes a similar point containing a passing shot at the Naturalists who saw themselves strictly as observers and recorders:

"Tout véritable artiste s'est trompé sur lui-même en croyant simplement décrire, observer, s'en tenir à l'immédiat. Il exprimait la réalité essentielle

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en s'exprimant lui-même. Il exprimait la nature à travers l'homme (de telle époque de telle classe) et l'homme à travers la nature (………) Tout grand artiste a plus ou moins confusément proposé une image de l'homme et de la nature."¹

Such a point of view is the basis of the profoundly humanist philosophy of the Marxist writing under the influence of Hegel (this applies specially to the young Marx).

The predicament of man who is unable to grasp the total meaning either of his being or of he being contained in Nature, provides the motor force of his endeavour and there is no more significant expression of the contradiction of alienation/expropriation for Lefebvre than in the work of art:

"L'oeuvre se pose devant la connaissance comme fait à connaître. La pensée s'efforce de saisir, de comprendre, d'expliquer ce fait (pictural, musical, littéraire etc.) elle se trouve devant un "produit" particulièrement riche de l'activité humaine, dans lequel s'unissent un fragment de la nature sensible et un résultat du travail humain. Comme toute réalité, l'oeuvre d'art propose à la connaissance une suite de questions et de problèmes; l'analyse de son contenu est illimitée. Quant à son explication, c'est-à-dire sa connaissance achevée, elle ne signifie qu'une limite impossible à atteindre, comme la connaissance de tout objet réel"²

The infinite quality of this art, maintains Lefebvre, is only present when the work of art contains a universal element of the human condition, i.e. in which other men can recognise themselves:

"Le mot "infini" peut-il s'employer à propos de ce contenu inépuisable? Peut-être, à condition de bien spécifier qu'il ne s'agit pas d'un infini métaphysique. Par son corps, par sa vie, par son sexe, l'être humain participe à quelque chose d'infini: la nature matérielle, la vie. Mais en même temps, quoi de plus "fini" et limité que le corps d'un homme, ses besoins biologiques ou pratiques, son impulsion sexuelle? Or ce qu'il y a de plus infini en lui que se manifeste l'infini puissance créatrice de la nature, par exemple dans la fécondité liée au besoin sexuel. D'une façon analogue, une grande œuvre d'art, à sa manière, est essentiellement finie, accomplie, "parfaite", c'est-à-dire achevée. Peut-elle évoquer, suggérer l'existence illimitée de la nature matérielle, le frémissement immense de la vie? Oui. Mais à travers quelque chose d'humain; par exemple un navire sur la mer, des quais, des digues, un paysage façonné par les hommes. Ainsi l'infini réel n'apparaît qu'à travers et dans le fini (et le plus infini, si l'on peut dire, à travers le plus fini). Il ne peut s'agir dans l'art que d'un infini humain."

Thus a work of art if it is to be termed such, cannot be an objective representation of the exterior reality since this would be impossible to attain, but it must contain the presence of man reflected in its essence. The problem remains, however, that the work of art itself is composed technically of materials, objects taken from nature. Hegel sees the resolution of this problem in the arrangement of these materials calculated to appeal primarily to the senses:

"Il suit de là que le sensible doit être présent dans l'œuvre artistique, mais avec cette restriction qu'il s'agit seulement de l'aspect superficiel, de l'apparence du sensible. L'esprit ne cherche en lui ni la matérialité concrète, la

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consistance intérieure et toute l'envergure d'un objet organique que réclame le désir, ni les concepts universels purement idéaux; ce qu'il veut, c'est la présence sensible, qui doit certes rester sensible, mais qui doit aussi être débarrassée de l'échafaudage de sa matérialité. C'est pourquoi le sensible est élevé dans l'art à l'état pure apparence, par opposition à la réalité immédiate des objets naturels (............) C'est donc à dessein que l'art crée un royaume d'ombres, de formes de tonalités, d'intuitions et il ne saurait être question de taxer d'impuissance et d'insuffisance l'artiste qui appelle une œuvre à l'existence, sous prétexte qu'il ne nous offre qu'un aspect superficiel du sensible, que des sortes de schèmes. Car ces formes et ces tonalités sensibles, l'art les fait pas seulement intervenir pour elles-mêmes et sous leur apparence immédiate, mais encore afin de satisfaire des intérêts spirituels supérieurs, parce qu'ils sont capables de faire naître une résonance dans les profondeurs de la conscience, un écho dans L'esprit. Ainsi dans l'art le sensible est spiritualisé, puisque l'esprit y apparaît sous une forme sensible.\(^1\)

Thus for the Marxist Lefebvre and Hegel, the origins and assignment of art are similar. The origin of art lies in the human condition and the fundamental contradiction between "l'être pensant" and Nature and the need to resolve that contradiction, a need which is experienced both at the level of knowledge (self-knowledge and knowledge of Nature), and an affective subjective level which Hegel terms "spirituel" and Marx "joie". The generation of the affective element is, for both Hegel and Marx, an intensely human achievement which de-alienates individual men but also provides a basis for the sharing

of the consciousness of the human condition. Hegel and
the Marxists stress the fact that all attempts at art are
not necessarily successful and that success would seem to
be linked to the embodiment in art of the vital essence of
the times:

"..... l'art paraît procéder d'un penchant et de
besoins plus élevés; il semble même qu'à certaines
epoques il procure le contentement suprême, le
contentement absolu, lorsqu'il est lié aux
conceptions du monde et aux spéculations religieuses
les plus générales comme ce fut le cas pour certains
peuples dans certaines périodes."

For Hegel this essence is the collective weltanschauung of society; for the Marxists the consciousness
of the characteristics of the praxis expressed essentially
in terms of the class struggle.

The series of contradictions which form the basis
of Hegel's and the Marxist's approach to art (Man-Nature,
Intellect-Emotion, Individual-Society, Universality-
Individuality etc.) is the motive force of all art, but
the constituent parts must be present in appropriate
ratios. For example, Lefebvre takes the case of cubist
art and points out the fact that the intellect has taken
a predominant role at the expense of the affective:

"Le cubisme a-t-il rendu sensible l'espace abstrait
à trois dimensions géométriques, ou rendu abstrait
le sensible, il se rattache à l'esthétique
platonicienne, dans des conditions historiques
(conditions de classe) qui ont amené une sorte
d'hyper-intellectualisme dit "moderne". Mais
peut-être le cubisme doit-il se caractériser par

la coexistence et le conflit de ces deux aspects de ces deux interprétations. Il aurait à la fois, et d’une façon contradictoire intellectualisée le sensible et sensibilisé l’abstrait."

Of course the object rendered in this way remains accessible to the collectivity, but the contradiction expressed has been "intellectualised" whichever way one looks at it. Lefebvre insists on the dominant role of the affective in art if it is to retain its mission:

"L’art fondé sur la sensibilité, l’émotion spontanée et la pratique, atteint plus ou moins profondément l’être total de l’homme à un moment déterminé de son développement; il l’"exprime". La connaissance ne peut dépasser la pensée élaborée (..........); l’art diffère de la connaissance. Il relève d’une autre activité. Crérer ou rendre "esthétiquement" ce n’est pas réfléchir et penser (bien que des réflexions et des pensées puissent intervenir). L’art et l’artiste en ce sens se passent des concepts ou les trouvent sans s’y arrêter."

Lefebvre agreed with Hegel that art constituted an attempt to expropriate Man from Nature and also by extension that it was a cognitive device, but he obviously sought to stress the point that art was a special activity with its own language originating and culminating in the human subjectivity. In terms of the reigning socialist realist orthodoxy in which representativity was considered to be the prime function of art, i.e. in which the pictorial unambiguous representations of ideas were

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1 Lefebvre, Henri. Op. cit. p. 19. (Lefebvre's italics); (note the parallel with the last sentence of the quote from Hegel on p. 372. Here Lefebvre regrets that the 'spirituel' has been replaced by the 'intellectuel'.

displayed in such a way as to illustrate political
theses rather than awaken a consciousness of the human
condition, Lefebvre was advocating something relatively
daring and profoundly humanistic.

The third ingredient in artistic production
mentioned by Lefebvre above, la pratique, is also contained
in Hegelian theory. Both Marx and Hegel agree that man not
only lives in his environment, he seeks to change it; it
is this belief which lends the revolutionary content to
Marxist philosophy which in contrast with those philoso-
phies which set out to merely describe the world, has the
express purpose of changing it.

For Hegel the senses play a primary role in the
experience of the work of art (although some senses he
saw as being essentially animal - smell and taste) and
therefore not involved.

"Le sensible dans l'oeuvre artistique participe de
l'idée, mais à la différence des idées de la pensée
pure, cet élément idéal doit en même temps se
manifester extérieurement comme une chose. Cette
apparence du sensible s'offre de l'extérieur à
l'esprit, à titre de forme, d'aspect, de sonorité,
à condition qu'il laisse les objets exister en toute
liberté, sans cependant essayer de pénétrer leur
essence intime (ce qui les empêcherais d'avoir pour
lui une existence individuelle). C'est pourquoi
le sensible dans l'art ne concerne que ceux de nos
sens qui sont intellectualisés: la vue et l'ouie,
à l'exclusion de l'odorat le goût et le toucher."¹

Marx takes the role and the "education" of the senses one
step further. For him the senses have been formed in
this task as the result of the experience of past

generations. Man in the first instance was conditioned to utilise his senses in an animal way (through hunger, physical comfort etc.) and indeed this conditioning can persist if the individual has no concept of humanity, an exteriorised image which bestows upon him the ability to appreciate beauty intellectually as well as experiencing gratification of a physical sensorial kind:

"L'éducation des cinq sens est le travail de toutes les générations passées. Le sens assujetti aux grossier besoins n'a aussi qu'un sens borné. Pour les hommes mourant de faim n'existe pas la forme humaine des aliments, mais uniquement leur existence abstraite d'aliments; ils pourraient tout aussi bien exister sous la forme la plus grossière, et l'on ne peut dire en quoi cette activité nutritive diffère de celle des animaux. L'homme accablé de soucis, nécessiteux, n'a pas de sens pour le plus beau spectacle; le marchand de minéraux ne voit que la valeur marchande du minéral, mais pas sa beauté dans sa nature particulière; il n'a pas le sens minéralogique; donc, il faut l'objectivation de l'être humain, au point de vue théorique aussi bien que pratique, pour rendre humains les sens de l'homme et aussi pour créer le sens humain correspondant à toute la richesse de l'être humain et naturel."\footnote{Marx, Karl in Economie politique et philosophie (1844). Quoted by Arvon, Henri in L'Esthétique Marxiste. pp. 27-28, PUF. Paris, 1970. (Marx's italics).}
of art, but as far Marx and Hegel, the senses are linked to the spiritual experience at a level above their basic function:

"L'oeuvre picturale ou musicale est ainsi un objet sensible, intense, en même temps que plongeant dans les profondeurs de la vie pour les appeler à la lumière et à la forme. Le sens esthétique, nous l'avons déjà vu, ne s'ajoute pas du dehors au sens sensible. Le moyen de l'organisme devenant fin, une fonction particulière à l'individu et interne en lui devient le support physiologique et social à la fois de l'universel, de l'objectivité la plus haute. Est musicien, ou peintre, celui qui aime naturellement, physiquement, charnellement, les couleurs ou les sons; il y trouve la plénitude de ses perceptions sensorielles, avant d'y trouver l'expression de tous ses sentiments; mais il faut qu'il y cherche, qu'il y trouve cette expression. Une tendance profonde, ayant son fondement dans l'unité de l'organisme et de l'univers, permet le passage de la sensation à l'expression; pour passer de cette possibilité naturelle à un accomplissement, l'éducation, la culture, le travail sont évidemment nécessaires."

Once again the dual nature of man has been evoked; physical man is naturally attracted to primary stimuli, but the human element of art is contained in the conscious arrangement of that stimuli calculated to promote effect within other men. This is the situation from the point of view of the creator, but what of the beholder? Lefebvre finds the physiological explanation particularly appropriate in the analysis of artistic perception, i.e. in the progress from form to content and the dialectical relationship between these two which lends the work of art its self-sufficient dynamic; but there does exist a difference

for Lefebvre between creation and perception:

"Le mouvement interne de l'oeuvre, dans sa création, et aussi dans sa "réception", (bien que différemment) s'analyse donc ainsi: un moment de sensibilité immédiate - une série de méditations, de méditations d'idées - puis l'immediat retrouvé, la pleine présence. La création et la "réception" diffèrent en ce qu'une partie des intermédiaires s'estompent, disparaissent ou ne se retrouvent que par une démarche de la connaissance; de plus les étapes de la recherche et du contenu - dans la mesure où le créateur les laisse subsister - sont seulement évoquées par l'oeuvre accomplie; enfin, elles ne se présentent pas à la "réception" dans le même ordre que pour le créateur; il modifie cet ordre et parfois le renverse, en visant un effet déterminé.

Seule l'analyse distingue ces moments, fondus pour la sensibilité dans une unité complexe: l'oeuvre présentée. Et cependant ils y sont effectivement."

By expanding on the sensory theory of Hegel and Marx (in particular of Marx) Lefebvre takes Marxist aesthetic theory into a domaine in which it has never been particularly successful, i.e. that of the study of form (in its relationship to content). The reluctance of Marxist theorists (especially Plekhanov) to deal with the problem of form and its role in the creation of aesthetic effect, had left a serious gap in this area of Marxist theory. Henri Lefebvre set himself the task of at least suggesting a possible approach. Taking a painting, he traces the dialectical process of perception:

"Si je considère d'abord la surface peinte, la surface à deux dimensions, mon regard se trouve

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Al' objet spatial (tridimensionnel) non présent, mais "représenté"; mon regard se fixe un instant sur la scène, la figure, le solide géométrique, etc. Mais il ne peut s'en tenir là; il se trouve aussitôt renvoyé au fait pictural. L'objet est représenté, non pas présent. Le véritable objet présent devant moi, c'est un rectangle de toile, un ensemble de couleurs ou de lignes sur une surface, selon des rapports et proportions exigés par cette surface. Mais aussitôt que mon regard se fixe sur cet aspect, il se trouve à nouveau renvoyé vers l'autre. Il ne peut s'arrêter; il se trouve donc stimulé. Une contradiction toujours renaisante oblige mon regard à la résoudre perpétuellement, en unissant, en maintenant les deux aspects. L'œuvre s'anime; elle vit; l'émotion naît. Et c'est elle la solution de ce conflit vivant, solution voulue et obtenue par l'artiste.¹

Lefebvre is obviously depending heavily on the psychology of perception, but in doing so has not strayed from the path of materialism since the explanation suggested is not metaphysical in its presuppositions but scientific.

The theory also holds good for the spoken word:

"Toute oeuvre qui emploie des mots (une matière verbale") présente le même mouvement intérieur. Je lis ou bien on me lit un fragment de poème. Je puis écouter la musique des mots, leur suite en tant que sons, leur enchaînement proprement verbal. Je goûte le rythme, le "nombre" ou la fluidité du poème. Cependant ces mots signifient; ils désignent des objets, des êtres, des idées ou des sentiments. Donc ils renvoient à ce qu'ils évoquent, suggèrent ou décrivent. A travers eux transparaît autre chose. La vie poétique de ce poème vient du mouvement par lequel l'auditeur (ou le lecteur) passe incessamment de l'un à l'autre de ces aspects, renvoyé de la musicalité aux significations ou réciproquement et résolvant sans cesse la contradiction."²


If, however, the poet seeks to use his raw material simply to make music or create rhythms, and neglects content, then he will fall into the error of formalism:

"Le poète doit considérer les mots comme des réalités; comme une matière verbale, comme une réalité musicale ou virtuellement musicale sensible à l'oreille. Toute poésie est un chant. Mais dès que le poète isole les mots pour les considérer comme des réalités autonomes, il tend vers le formalisme."1

Lefebvre's concept of formalism provides a useful insight into his aesthetic theory in general. Formalism, in his terms, may be defined as that imbalance in the relationship between form and content which blocks the dialectical movement; such a concept enables Lefebvre to elaborate a more subtle (and more dialectical) definition of form.

"En vérité, le formalisme (comme le naturalisme) se définit par l'unilatéralité. Il ne vit qu'un aspect; et non pas seulement un seul aspect du contenu, mais un seul aspect de la forme (picturale, poétique etc.). Il arrête, il fige le mouvement de la forme elle-même. Il rejette le contenu et mute la forme. L'un va avec l'autre. Le formalisme n'implique donc pas, comme on le croit trop souvent, une exaltation de la forme ou une élaboration excessive. Il procède d'une mauvaise (parce que fausse et unilatérale) notion de la forme elle-même. Il mutile, il tue la forme. Il supprime la notion de la forme elle-même. Il supprime le problème vivant posé par toute œuvre, en le supposant résolu in abstracto."2

The dialectical relationship of form and content as

conceived by Lefebvre prevents the Marxist theorist from falling into the error of bourgeois theorists (la critique universitaire), of considering form and content separately. Where the bourgeois theorist looks upon form and content as pre-existing the finished work of art, a concept which also implies the inter-changeability of forms and contents, the Marxist sees first of all a content which, in the course of its elaboration, finds its appropriate form; for the Marxist form grows out of content. The successful work of art however is that whose form contains the salient characteristics or essence of the content:

"La forme sort d'une "élaboration" du contenu. Ce contenu vit, puisqu'il n'est autre chose que la vie à un moment donné; il présente donc des courants plus ou moins profonds, plus ou moins essentiels: des tendances. Il tend vers la conscience; il prend forme ou "s'informe" et l'élaboration formelle n'est qu'un aspect de cette tendance du contenu à se refléter dans la conscience. La forme esthétique sera toujours la forme de conscience qui aura saisi le plus concrètement les tendances essentielles du contenu, et les aura réalisés en objet."

An art form which undergoes this kind of process must be realist since realism is that which results from the attempts of the artist to seize the universal, the typical, and lend it form. When artists have attempted to make their works the vehicles of their own subjective opinions, it has never furthered their art:

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"Ce qu'il y a de petit-bourgeois dans Dostoievsky limite sa portée et son intérêt. Les déclamations réactionnaires de Balzac, le pathos mystique dans certains de ses romans rendent insupportable plus d'une page. Tolstoï représentant de la paysannerie russe, miroir de ses tendances révolutionnaires profondes (Lénine) ne le sut pas clairement; aussi n'est-il tout à fait grand que là où s'estompe son idéalisme, dans La Guerre et la Paix; quant à ses théories sur l'art elles n'ont plus qu'un intérêt rétrospectif."¹

But even the socialist artist, equipped as he is with dialectical materialism and therefore a great "freedom" with regard to Nature and himself (i.e. no longer the prisoner of subjective or class mystifications of reality), is in danger of producing bad art:

"Du fait que la création esthétique s'accomplit sur un plan de conscience claire, du fait aussi que la théorie intervient consciemment dans la création, résulte une conséquence. Le créateur et le théoricien risqueront de se laisser tenter par la facilité. Ils déduiront des principes admis et des résultats acquis certains schémas. Ils risqueront de rester dans la conscience déjà conquise, au lieu de partir du contenu. Ils risqueront ainsi de partir d'une abstraction, d'un concept, au lieu de partir de la vie pour revenir à la vie (à l'immédiat, au direct). Le principal danger pour les formes nouvelles de l'art se trouve donc dans le schématisme."²

This is the nearest Lefebvre gets to a criticism of current socialist (realist) practice, there is of course no mention of the fact that the socialist realist artist might be constrained politically to perpetuate a schematic

world view, but the implication is therefore those who wish to interpret it in this way.

The humanism, the Hegelian humanism expressed in this implied criticism of socialist realism demonstrates the essence of Lefebvre's beliefs and theory. Throughout his *Contribution à l'esthétique*, there is a constant affirmation of the necessary confrontation of the objective and the subjective, of the spiritual and the concrete, in short of the necessity to allow the dialectical process to generate its creative product.

Lefebvre's study of Diderot provides an excellent example of the application of his theory as outlined above. Taking Diderot's intellectual production as a whole with its philosophical, scientific and aesthetic components, Lefebvre sets out to demonstrate the links between these, their progenitor and the society in which he lived. This is more than a refined extension of the sociological method of Taine since Lefebvre stresses the over-riding importance of the dialectical relationships originating in specific identifiable tensions existing within the Diderot's (individual) personality and the society in which he lived. It is interesting to note the points raised by Lefebvre concerning the relationship between Diderot and his public, i.e. between Diderot's consciousness and that of the collectivity.

When Diderot was engaged in producing the Encyclopédie he was reaching many thousands of subscribers, readers
who represented the most progressive part of society.

At this point one could say that Diderot was well integrated into the avant garde of his society. As the century progressed however, and the material and social advances promoted by Diderot in the Encyclopédie were achieved, Diderot felt that his work in this area was done and that he could now turn his attention to writing of a different kind, of a more philosophical and aesthetically creative nature. It was during this, the latter part of his productive life that Diderot lost his public.

More and more he found himself writing for only a few friends; ultimately he was writing only for himself.

Was it that he was becoming less representative of his times and therefore less in tune with the collective consciousness? Lefebvre suggests that this was indeed the case. The bourgeoisie which had supported Diderot in his earlier endeavour was now incapable of following him further for reasons of self preservation:

"...la bourgeoisie, même ascendant était incapable de créer une doctrine cohérente, et incapable de reconnaître les siens pour les appuyer délibérément Diderot! lui aussi hésitait, fléchissait lorsqu'il devait aborder certains problèmes; sa classe, par une lâcheté intellectuelle annonciatrice d'autres lâchetés, en restait sur le plan aux compromis avec la métaphysique et la théologie surannées; elle pouvait tout au plus "faire marcher" les gens pour elle: les philosophes à l'extrême pointe de l'esprit, les hommes du peuple lorsqu'il s'agissait de descendre dans la rue et de conquérir le pouvoir... sans négliger les autres aspects de la question - la personnalité de Diderot, et aussi les circonstances politiques de la deuxième moitié du XVIIIe siècle - ne serait-ce pas
là un élément explicatif important?".  

Again Lefebvre underlines the complexity of the situation; Diderot shared to a certain extent the hesitations of the bourgeoisie partly due to the limitations placed on his evolution as described above, and partly also because Diderot felt himself to be morally identified with his own class.

Bourgeois society riding on a wave of optimism and economic success and beginning to turn to the positivism and romanticism which characterised the 19th century bourgeoisie, had little or no need of Diderot's self-interrogations, the fruits of his many dilemmas.

At the age of 65 living almost alone in the country Diderot was sadly aware of his situation:

".....je ne compose point, j'intéroge ou je réponds.... Léon ne tardera pas à s'apercevoir que c'est autant mon âme que je peins que celle des différents personnages qui s'offrent à mon récit."  

..... to which Lefebvre adds:

"Autant dire que Diderot finit par où commença ce Montaigne qu'il connaissait aussi bien que Sénèque ou Homère. Il écrit pour lui-même, et pour prendre conscience de lui-même. Il médite "À la campagne presque seul"."

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Nevertheless, Diderot felt that he was at last engaged in the kind of creative writing which the enormous task of the *Encyclopédie* had prevented.

It is at this part of Lefebvre's study of Diderot that all the massive groundwork showing the dialectical links between Diderot's thought and the socio-ideological consciousness of his times, begins to pay dividends. The limitations, the dilemmas, the contradictions, the aspirations etc., all are projected into an analysis of Diderot's creative writing.

Diderot's theatre, short stories and novels are all related to previously established elements in Diderot's development.

Taking Diderot's theatre, Lefebvre shows how the lack of evolution of the bourgeoisie as an ascending class presented as much of an insurmountable obstacle to Diderot the dramatist as to Diderot the scientist. As a scientist, Diderot had found himself isolated through the unwillingness of the bourgeoisie to envisage progress in any light other than that of the idealistic concept of "Raison", a metaphysical alternative to the dramatic consequences of an historical view of evolution; as a dramatist he was hindered by another feature of the lack of development of his class, namely that it had not yet produced its types. Here Lefebvre is referring to the Marxist concept of "type" as being the heightened average and therefore created on the basis of an already well
established body. In Diderot's time the bourgeoisie was producing individuals, but not types; furthermore these individuals appeared in contrast, if not in opposition to the established types of the previous tradition:

"La société du temps de Diderot, n'avait pas encore produit ses types. Elle ébauchait seulement des formes nouvelles. Société en pleine métamorphose, elle lui présentait seulement la dissolution des types anciens, des "caractères" de l'époque classique. Elle lui offrait des individus, définis seulement par leur côté négatif, par la dramatique dissolution des anciens rapports sociaux."¹

Such raw material was well suited to novels and short stories in the picaresque tradition, but not to the kind of theatre that Diderot would like to have established. His ambition was to create a bourgeois theatre in which the bourgeoisie could find the reflection of its identity, its aspirations, values etc. But instead of finding the types capable of embodying his ideas, Diderot found only a prosaic existence hardly worthy of the new genre which he saw as being half way between the classical tragedy and comedy. Once more the barrier had been encountered:

"Elle (la société), lui offrait des rapports sociaux-rapports de famille, de subordination, de propriété-tels qu'ils apparaissaient hors de l'individualité proprement dite, la niant et niés par elle. D'où la dissociation qui se présente à sa pensée entre l'individu (tel ou tel homme) et la condition (les rapports et les relations). Il ne peut arriver à réunir ces termes, donc à définir le contenu social du genre dramatique."²

But, as Lefebvre points out, Diderot may not have succeeded in endowing bourgeois theatre with the moral epic he would have liked, but he did succeed in laying the traditions of a bourgeois theatre which was later to manifest itself in Henri Becque on one level, and in the genre of the melodrama and the théâtre du boulevard on another.

The literary genre par excellence was not destined to be the theatre, but the novel. At the beginning of the century however, it was still a minor art form reflecting its times; i.e. the times of the immobile stable society:

"La réalité sociale, sous l'ancien régime, n'avait rien de romanesque. "L'individu" était toujours pris dans une communauté, ce qui signifie que sa vie se trouvait sévèrement rituelisée. La succession des cérémonies, des fêtes, des rites, des gestes religieux, laissait à son "destin" peu d'imprévu ou d'imprévisible. Sa vie entière était préformée dans le cadre social de sa naissance; lieu, caste ou classe, corporation, communauté. Pourquoi raconter ce que chacun savait, et ce que tous pouvaient prévoir?"

The novel therefore tended to describe subject matter which was situated outside everyday matters. The result was the identification of the novel with exaggeration, extremes of passion, chivalry, the adventures of "outsiders" i.e. actors, adventurers or anyone else who enjoyed that margin of freedom which made them suitable objects of curiosity.

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Fortunately for Diderot, society was evolving in such a way when he was writing that day to day life was of as much interest as any concocted flight of fancy:

"Une sorte de lumière rétrospective éclaire jusqu'aux formations sociales en voie de dépassement. Le brassage de tous les éléments de cette société entraîne donc un résultat curieusement complexe; l'épaisseur opaque de la vie sociale, déchirée, s'ouvre à la clarté et aux regards. La vie quotidienne, même la plus établie, la plus traditionnelle, apparaît au jour et devient intéressante.

Diderot a compris que le romanesque, c'est le quotidien (Plus exactement: à sa source dans le quotidien). L'auberge le long de la route est plus riche de romanesque qu'un château, en ruines ou non, mystérieux ou non, hors de la route."

Realism in the novel had suddenly become possible. The upsurge in interest in the concrete world, in the world of nature caused by the stimulus of scientific discovery and economic development, had turned virtually everything into a source of curiosity and interest.

As a writer Diderot was much helped by his ability to describe, an art indispensable to the scientist, especially to the empirical scientist whose observations are the basis of his approach. Lefebvre takes an excellent example of a piece of description by Diderot which not only illustrates this skill, but also that of his belief of interdependent parts and the whole:

"Avec Diderot, l'instrument verbal se perfectionne; l'écrivain ne se contente plus d'une description

vague, au moyen de quelques qualificatifs; il veut que sa description cerne les contours de l'objet, rende dans leurs rapports réciproques l'ensemble et le détail, les formes et les couleurs. Pour que le langage atteigne ce pouvoir expressif, il fallait un écrivain attentif à la peinture, au dessin, à la technique et aux problèmes de cet art. "Voyez cette femme qui a perdu ses yeux dans sa jeunesse. L'accroissement succesif de l'orbe n'a plus distendu ses paupières; elles sont rentrées dans la cavité que l'absence de l'organe acreusée; elles se sont rapetissées, celles d'en haut ont entraîné les sourcils, celles d'en bas ont fait remonter légèrement les joues, la lèvre supérieure s'est ressenti de ce mouvement, et s'est relevée. L'altération a affecté toutes les parties du visage...."

Voulant donner une leçon de dessin aux peintres, Diderot donne la leçon aux écrivains.¹

Diderot's attention to detail has more than a scientific quality to it according to Lefebvre. Here in a stage direction, Lefebvre detects this additional quality:

"Le paysan se tient debout, le corps penché sur son baton. Mme Papillon, assise dans un fauteuil, s'essuie le visage avec un mouchoir; sa fille de boutique est debout près d'elle avec un petit carton sous le bras..." etc. Quel enfantillage dans cette mise en scène mais aussi quelle attention aux détails de la vie, aux diverses conditions des êtres humains".²

Lefebvre makes much of Diderot's human qualities as indispensable ingredients in his creative writing. For example, faced with the predominantly negative aspect of the romanesque character, how did Diderot manage to avoid pessimism and cynicism?

If Diderot's skills as a scientist served him well as an observer of nature, they also helped him in his observations of human nature. Lefebvre underlines the fact that Diderot's interest in women although obviously carnal, was also activated by the knowledge that he was in contact with another version of the species. He not only studied the physiology of the female body, but also the psychology of women and their place in society. Female characters are always important in Diderot's novels (also in his theatre), a fact to which Lefebvre places no little importance, for in his opinion, Diderot used his novels to describe and present rather than vehicles for his doubts and self questioning. The novel therefore for Diderot corresponded to that side of his intellectual activity which although beset with complications, was

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1For Lefebvre the "ironie destructrice et joyeuse" exhibited by Diderot is a much more commendable attitude than the preceding ones since it is referring indirectly to Diderot as an anarchist in this pre-revolutionary society when anarchism was the most progressive form of revolt possible.

nevertheless capable of producing the case study type of limited enquiry. The greater philosophical doubts Diderot reserved for another genre and one which he apparently kept private making no attempt to publish.

In the dialogue form, Diderot found the most suitable vehicle for his philosophical predicament which had been heightened by his artistic instinct coming into full conflict with his philosophical self:

"L'Homme Diderot est un "homo-duplex", et ne peut être autrement. L'artiste et le philosophe tirent chacun de son côté; l'âme et le corps ne s'entendent pas très bien. Cette dualité caractérise une époque, qui commence avec la fin du moyen âge, et n'est pas terminée, celle de l'homme double qui ne sait né supprimer ni résoudre sa contradiction. La dualité, la contradiction inaperçue et irrésolue, datent notre homme et le limite."

But the dialogue provided the resolution of this conflict albeit in his isolation.

"Il pense, un peu en marge de la vie sociale, lui qui fut sociable et social entre tous. Il reste presque seul. Mais son isolement n'est en un sens qu'une apparence: il porte en lui l'humain qu'il a compris et conçu. Et c'est à ce moment que son génie littéraire se déploie, autant que son génie scientifique et philosophique. Son gain compense et de beaucoup sa perte. Il devient précisément alors ce qu'il était en puissance: l'homme du dialogue. Il intériorise, il éclaire sous la forme du dialogue, les contradictions de son temps: le pour et le contre, les thèses et les antithèses; l'autre et lui-même, ce qu'il fut et ce qu'il ne fut pas. Parlant avec lui-même, il dialogue avec l'homme libre, qu'il porte en lui, qu'il touche en nous, et qui dépasse en un sens son propre temps et le nôtre!"

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1Lefebvre, Henri. p. 232.
Dans le dialogue, par le dialogue (et ses dernières oeuvres sont presque toutes dialoguées) Diderot comprend enfin tout son temps, tous les aspects de son temps. Il ressaisit tout le contenu, l'élevant à une forme parfaite: celle du Neveu de Rameau, de Jacques Le Fataliste, de l'Entretien avec la Maréchale, de l'Entretien avec d'Alembert, etc.

For the Marxist Lefebvre, the means discovered by Diderot through which he was able to express his arguments for and against, to switch from one to the other without upsetting the equilibrium peculiar to the work of art, was nothing other than the embodiment of the dialectic in art form:

"La dialectique oubliée dans le domaine des sciences de la nature, mais inachevée et impuissante à se définir, échouant faute de contenu et de point d'appui dans le domaine de l'humain, réapparaît sous forme de dialogue."

At this point Lefebvre has returned to the major assertion of his aesthetic theory, i.e. that art is born out of contradiction and cannot exist without it. The dynamic created by Diderot's failures conscious or otherwise in philosophy becomes paradoxically, the reason for

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his success in the dialogue. The barriers which opposed the full realisation of his scientific and philosophical thought did not operate in the same way in art; indeed, to have introduced a 'definitive statement' as aimed at in science or philosophy, would have been the death knell of his art.

The Hegelian influence evident in Lefebvre's aesthetic theory would seem to have come to the fore yet again, because if art is dependent on the formulation of a question or the expression of a dilemma, and if the function of art is to contribute towards a definition of Man and Nature, then art remains at the second stage in the progress towards pure thought as described by Hegel in which man, having outgrown religion seeks a more advanced solution to the same problem (of existence). If Lefebvre is to envisage a "third stage" in which socialism has been successful in removing the contradictions from society and therefore indirectly destroying the conditions of creating problematically, then socialism will have destroyed art in turn. Lefebvre, of course does not envisage the removal of art from the human praxis, but he does not state whether this would be prevented by the fact that man will always be seeking a definition of himself in nature because it is in his human condition to do so, or whether even although social contradictions may have been removed from the socio-economic basis, fundamental human contradictions will continue to
exist autonomously.

In 1958, the year of his exclusion from the Party Lefebvre gave an indication that his point of view might correspond to the latter. Speaking of the phenomenon of Zhdanovist socialist realism he deplored the insufficiency of Party theory:

"Dans ces domaines (morale, esthétique), des œuvres à signification et rayonnement universels, apportant à l'humanisme vivant un incontestable enrichissement, auraient beaucoup mieux valu qu'une théorie. Nous n'avons ni l'un ni l'autre. En particulier, dans le domaine littéraire, l'exaltation du "héros positif" et uniquement positif, n'a abouti qu'à un pénible échec de même l'esthétique visant à exprimer le "neuf" - l'uniquement nouveau - et à l'exalter contre l'ancien". Cette esthétique se voulait, se nommait réaliste (socialiste). Or elle n'a donné qu'un formalisme, une "typification" du conventionnel. Comment s'en étonner? On a présenté le héros et le "type" positifs comme dépourvus de contradictions. Donc comme inintéressants, inhumaens, extérieurs à la vie et surtout à notre vie. Ici, nous atteignons le paradoxe. Serait-il vrai que pour le marxisme l'existence humaine vraie soit une existence sans contradictions? Ou bien s'agit-il d'un abandon du marxisme, en fait, sous le couvert d'un pseudo-marxisme devenu pavillon et couverture?"\(^1\)

Thus it would seem that Lefebvre's Marxism is also very definitely a humanism and a humanism of Hegelian origins. His aesthetic and his literary theory were eminently well suited to historical studies such as that on Diderot since he was then dealing with nascent materialist manifestations. But what of contemporary socialist art? Unfortunately for good political reasons of self-preservation, Lefebvre refrained from passing

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judgement on contemporary socialist art. It would have been interesting to see what his reaction would have been.

It is possible that Lefebvre's humanism expressed in such an affirmative manner, was as much a product of the Cold War as Zhdanovism itself and that, to use Lefebvre's terminology, he was writing in a dialectical relationship to cultural Stalinism. The question of Marxist humanism was to be raised again during the sixties and questioned seriously as a new form of idealism in which man is erected into Man, but this is a problem which will be dealt with later in this study.

It still remains that Henri Lefebvre as a lone figure (except perhaps for Lukács who shared similar Hegelian origins) in Marxist theory in France stood out against socialism realism as defined by Zhdanov and managed under difficult circumstances to make a very considerable contribution to Marxist aesthetic theory and literary criticism.

By utilising the undoubtedly materialist psychological theory of perception, (materialist because experimentally verifiable), Lefebvre was able to make an important statement on the relationship between form and content and thereby supply a vital link in the progress of Marxist theory towards a Marxist aesthetic. For too long, Marxist theory of literature and art had been confined, for political reasons, to the limits set by Plekhanov, i.e. to a sociological analysis in support of a political
thesis; even this sociological analysis was not altogether pure since it reached back to pre-Marxist literary theory, i.e. to Taine. By incorporating this aspect of modern psychology which was acceptable to the communist orthodoxy, Lefebvre was able to break out of the nineteenth century impasse which dogged the work of the Russian Plekhanov and was still evident in the thinking of minor French Marxists such as Marc Ickowicz in the 1930s.

It should be stressed however, that the incorporation of the psychology of perception was only one aspect of Lefebvre's theory; his insistence on the importance of the subjectivity of both artist and beholder reveals another influence less likely to be acceptable to the orthodoxy. Lefebvre's humanist theory contained the assertion that the affective language of the arts communicates at the subjective level and therefore could not be made to transmit concrete ideas and concepts, such an assertion which removed a human activity to a sphere which precluded a complete intellectual definition of that medium, could have exposed Lefebvre to the criticism that he had introduced a grave note of idealism into literary and artistic criticism, at least from the point of view of orthodox communists of the immediate post-war period and the early fifties. However such a point of view was not expressed publicly although privately Lefebvre was viewed with growing suspicion by many Party intellectuals.
Perhaps Lefebvre was allowed to elaborate his ideas (which he skillfully backed up by many quotations from impeccable classical Marxist sources), as a gesture towards Stalin's plea for a less rigid attitude towards research as contained in his letters on linguistics.

The "thaw" when it did come to France was promoted by a much more respectable personality within the Party establishment, namely Louis Aragon. But it was Lefebvre who published the first sustained Marxist study of aesthetics in France and a study which did much to influence the subsequent course of Marxist aesthetic and literary theory in France.
CHAPTER TWO

The Post-war socialist realist theory of Louis Aragon

Of all the Party's artists and writers, Louis Aragon can be said to have been the most closely associated with the development of socialist realist theory in France. As one of the French Party's official delegation to the first Soviet Writers' Union congress of 1934, Aragon witnessed the birth of socialist realism and subsequently devoted his energy and skill as a critic and writer to its propagation in France.

As has been shown in the first part of this study, the transposition of Soviet socialist realist theory in France resulted in two differing interpretations which reflected the different political climates of the two countries. In the Soviet Union the formation of the Writers' union and the launching of socialist realism were closely linked with the government's policy of gaining control of artists and intellectuals through a national organisation which simultaneously banned sectarian groups and opened the way to the absorption of fellow-travellers into the system. It was governmental policy to stress those aspects of socialist realist theory which bound the writer to the Party, consequently the principles of naradnost, ideinost and partinost as explained by Zhdanov at the 1934 Congress were stressed at the expense of the wider aspect offered by the revolutionary romanticism put forward by Gorky.
It was the wider interpretation of socialist realism which was adopted in France due to the fact that the French Party was passing through the expansive phase of the Popular Front and was encouraging a broad coalition of the Left. As far as the products of socialist realist theory were concerned, the more liberal French climate led to a greater variety of interpretation of the basic principles. Nizan, Aragon, Sadoul, Fréville and Lefebvre all succeeded in stamping their own personalities on their work with the formation of a more orthodox group around Fréville, Sadoul and Moussinac working within Commune and the A.E.A.R.

The same freedom did not exist in post-war France, as has been shown in connection with La Nouvelle Critique for the obvious reason that the political situation had been reversed; the Party was no longer in a Popular Front phase but was actually withdrawing into isolation after a comparatively brief period of expansiveness between the Liberation and the outbreak of the Cold War in 1947.

The role played by Louis Aragon in connection with socialist realist theory in France in the post-war period was an important but complex one; in the following examination of this role, an attempt will be made to establish its nature and to situate Aragon as a leading Party theorist of an individual but logical doctrine.

Perhaps the first point to note concerning Aragon in the post-war period was that he emerged from the War
with considerable prestige attaching to him. His war poetry had inspired the resistance transcending party and philosophies and now, working with Eluard to promote communist poetry within the new society, he appeared as one of the most progressive voices in French literature.

A hero of communist commitment and French national hero, Aragon acted as the Party's spokesman on a number of occasions following the Liberation, and it was on these occasions that he began to formulate ideas on culture and art which were a direct reflection of the Party's ambition to seek power legally through a coalition with the parties of the Left. Essentially, therefore, for the time being the Party was re-adopting positions similar to that of the Popular Front campaign extending the hand of friendship to all those whom it deemed progressive, while defining the enemy with no less vigour. The rhetoric of the A.E.A.R. movement was resurrected and the same national heroes, such as Zola, Hugo, Balzac etc. evoked; the enemy too remained substantially the same:

"Il n'y a pas trois côtés aux barricades, il n'y a pas d'autre patrie que celui de la France ou celui des bourreaux a peine vaincus qu'ils relèvent la tête. Il n'y a pas d'autre choix devant nous, avec Zola pour la France, ou avec Esterhazy, avec Maurras, avec Pétain contre elle".1

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Here were the same pre-war tactics of the evocation of the defense of the Republic against the traditional enemy of the extreme right accompanied by the promotion of progressive artists of the past such as Zola whose artistic instincts reflected their political convictions:

"Jaurès avait raison; on poursuivait Zola, techniquement pour avoir mis en cause l'État-Major mais on le poursuivait en réalité parce qu'il avait mis en cause une caste, et cela de toute l'autorité d'une œuvre immense, qui est le procès de cette caste. On poursuivait Émile Zola, l'écrivain, et en lui on poursuivait le réalisme. On poursuivait en lui le droit de l'écrivain de juger, de proclamer la vérité, de dire les choses comme elles sont. Et c'est, conscientement ou non, ce droit encore qu'on conteste, qu'on prétend abolir, quand on crie à l'écrivain: pas de politique! quand on veut dégager de son œuvre un Émile Zola de bronze ou de marbre, dont les passions éteintes ne seraient plus que des passions mortes."

But Aragon was also anxious, as in the time of the A.E.A.R., to point out that Zola, the class ally, the critical realist, had his counterpart in contemporary times. In this instance two of the Party's greatest fellow-travellers were evoked and linked with France; i.e. Romain Rolland and J.R. Bloch

"...il (Bloch) devient l'homme des Commentaires qui firent l'intérêt, la vie et le rayonnement de la revue Europe qu'il avait fondée avec Romain Rolland, et qui devait tout naturellement faire de lui le directeur du journal Ce Soir qu'il n'a quitté que pour la mort. De ce journal où, devant les périls de la patrie, nous nous étions joints pour qu'à l'heure décisive se fit entendre malgré

\[1\] Aragon, Louis. op. cit. art. cit. p. 71.
As in the 1930s, Aragon equated patriotism with communism with internationalism with humanism, the latter incorporating that traditional French socialist vision of the universality of human nature so dear to Jaurès. The only enemy had been defeated and while every effort had to be made to obtain justice in the name of the fallen and to prevent the traitors from re-establishing themselves; the time was ripe for the old French republican tradition to reassert itself.

It was in this climate of republican solidarity that Garaudy was preparing his *Les Origines français du socialisme scientifique*, which was to form the foundation of the celebrated autocritique in *La Nouvelle Critique*; it was also in the liberal climate of 1946 that Garaudy wrote the article in *Arts de France* in which he claimed the right of the communist to appreciate art regardless of Party, but it was Aragon who publicly challenged this point of view in his article "L'art, "zone libre"?" It was also Aragon who appeared as prosecuting counsel before the tribunal of Thorez, Duclos and Marty and a large public of Party intellectuals, when this matter was finally concluded at the highest level.

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2 cf. Previous chapter and quotation from Pierre Hervé.
Already, in 1946, Aragon was helping to prepare the positions into which the Party's intellectuals were to retreat on the outbreak of the Cold War in 1947. By preaching the gospel of rassemblement and solidarity on the Left, while tightening Party discipline on communist intellectuals with the full approval of the Party leadership, Aragon demonstrated to what extent he was privy to Party political manoeuvres, and also to what extent he was considered trustworthy by the hierarchy.

Any evaluation of Aragon's critical theory must take these points into consideration for it is obvious that Aragon's work has to do with political tactics as much as with literature itself.

Because of the sensational reputation of La Nouvelle Critique with its sectarian attitudes and its autocritiques, the defense and illustration of Zhdanovism in France is usually associated with the younger philosophers and artists connected with that review, but it was Aragon who played a major role in the launching of Zhdanovism in France. It was Aragon who arranged for the publication in Europe¹ of Zhdanov's particularly sectarian attack on the philosopher Alexandrov made during the Soviet philosophers' congress of June 1947; again it was Aragon who supplied a supporting preface to

the French text of Lyssenko's attack on the Soviet geneticists published in Europe, and it was also Aragon who wrote the preface to a collection of Zhdanov's most important pronouncements on socialist realist theory in philosophy and the arts published by the Editions de la Nouvelle Critique. These events were all milestones in the promotion of Zhdanovism in France and Aragon was associated with each one; Casanova may have been the political personality connected with Zhdanovism, but Aragon must be regarded as the most committed intellectual, and yet he managed always to remain in the background, until he judged the moment right to reappear.

By the time the Nouvelle Critique had got under way, in 1949, there were signs that Aragon was already leaving the Party's minions to carry out the day to day combat of the cold war skirmishes while he prepared for something far in the indeterminable future.

Some evidence of this may be found in the two (only) articles which he published in La Nouvelle Critique.


during its first year of publication; these were strangely out of tune with the general tenor of the review, the first one not surprisingly so, since it was first published in 1938, (in Europe, March 1938). This was the text of a speech given in 1937 in the Théâtre des Champs Elysées in the context of the International exhibition of Paris (1937). The 1949 re-print was preceded by a preface signed by Aragon whose main purpose seems to have been to establish the continuity of his and therefore the Party's cultural theory between 1937 and 1949.

"Ce sont de telles leçons qui, dès 1937, m'amenaient à prendre la position qui résume le texte qu'on va lire; la similitude de ce texte et de plus récentes déclarations n'est pas fortuite, elle exprime, je le répète, sur un plan particulier, la continuité de la politique nationale du Parti Communiste Français. Et la ressemblance de ce texte avec des affirmations récentes, qu'on a pu lire dans la presse soviétique, illustre une affirmation souvent réitéré par Laurent Casanova, suivant laquelle la hauteur même à laquelle est placée en U.R.S.S. le problème de la culture explique comment il est possible que les solutions théoriques qui y sont données à ce problème embrassent en même temps, les différences nationales respectées, les réalités soviétiques et la réalité française."

The second point being made above, i.e., the possibility of a French national expression of Soviet inspired socialist realism, is not without significance since the actual text of the following speech deals in fact with the evolution of realism in France from the Middle Ages to modern times. The stress in this speech

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is undeniably on the French national cultural heritage:

"Pour connaître le monde il faut d'abord connaître son propre pays. C'est là l'objet de ce que j'appelle le réalisme français.

Ici il ne manquera pas de gens pour me dire, et le croire, que j'abandonne la conception du réalisme socialiste, au profit d'une conception "nationaliste". Cette erreur se fait sentir d'ailleurs, pour les mêmes esprits, que dans le domaine du roman.

Car le réalisme socialiste exige de connaître la réalité pour la transformer. Et c'est pourquoi, en France, en 1937, il suppose le réalisme français. Vers le réalisme socialiste, qui ne pousserait pas comme une plante de serre sur une table rose, il n'y a pas d'autre chemin, en France, en 1937, que le réalisme français. Le réalisme français, c'est la victoire à laquelle, à travers les siècles, nos écrivains et nos artistes ont donné le meilleur d'eux-mêmes, c'est le parachèvement de la pensée progressive de la France, et de lui, les écrivains, les artistes qui représentent aujourd'hui pleinement notre pays, qu'ils le veuillent ou non, ne se détourneront pas.

Sans lui, pas de réalisme socialiste."

The patriotic tenor of these remarks dating from the Popular Front is exactly that of Aragon in his statements immediately following the Liberation and the entrance of the Communist ministers in January 1947 into the tripartite government of Ramadier, but it is certainly not that of the Nouvelle Critique during 1949 at the height of the Cold War. The statement of course was made

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2 On the 22nd January, 1947, Thorez was appointed vice-president of the Conseil National; François Billoux became Minister of Defence.
indirectly by having it depend on the 1937 context, but the affirmation that it represented continuity of theory was enough to relate it to 1949. Could it be, therefore, that Aragon was already launching a preparation for a "thaw" as early as 1949? His second article two months later in *La Nouvelle Critique* casts some more interesting light on this conjecture. The article consists of the text of Aragon's reply to points raised during a meeting in which his communist public expressed its reaction to the publication of the first instalment of *Les Communistes*.  

Although Aragon insisted that he had not come to the meeting with a prepared speech, he managed to build into his replies a composite statement of socialist realist theory illustrated from his concept of *les Communistes*.

Replying to a point raised by a member of the audience relative to the Germano-Soviet pact (the actual question/point is not given), Aragon insisted that the articles he wrote on hearing this news had not been dictated by Maurice Thorez or anyone else:

"Je dois vous dire que l'article que j'ai écrit le 23 août au matin quelques minutes après avoir reçu le télégramme de Havas annonçant la première nouvelle du pacte germano-soviétique et trouvé sur ma table à 9 heures du matin, je l'avais écrit sans demander l'avis de personne. Je n'avais sûrement pas pu joindre Maurice Thorez, il n'était...

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1"Le 17 Juin 1949 à la salle de la Grange-au-Belles, sur l'initiative de la "Vie Ouvrière" se tint une réunion où étaient convoqués tous ceux qui désiraient s'entretenir avec Aragon de son livre" les communistes". (pref. to art. cit.)

pas à Paris ce jour-là. J'ai donc tiré cet article de moi tout seul, de ma petite jugeotte. Et cependant, il se trouve qu'il constituait l'explication à peu près exacte du pacte telle que beaucoup d'ouvriers ne l'ont vue d'assez longtemps, comme vous l'avez entendu dire à pas mal de gens qui ont parlé à cette tribune" (...................). Elle (ma clairvoyance) résultait de ce que je participais déjà d'un phénomène assez singulier, encore mal défini, mais enfin bien connu parmi nous, qui s'appelle le sens de classe, et que je possédais déjà ce jour-là le sens de classe de la classe ouvrière".1

It was through "partinost" that Aragon was able to come to the right conclusion over the Pact. In the same way, he argued, his art was an illustration of the world outlook engendered by communism which had guided his creative activity:

"Dans les Cloches de Bâle" je voulais en premier lieu montrer le passage d'une partie de la bourgeoisie dans le camp des travailleurs, ou tout au moins le désir naissant d'y passer, c'est-à-dire comme historiquement du désir paraissait d'abord. J'avais été frappé par une phrase, dans le Manifeste de Marx et Engels, qui dit qu'un moment viendra où la meilleure partie de la bourgeoisie passera aux côtés de la classe ouvrière."2

This constitutes one of many examples of "ideainost" through which Aragon demonstrates the influence of ideological convictions on his creative work, but what is most striking in this article set in its 1949 Nouvelle Critique context, is that the all important ingredient of "naradnost" vital to Zhdanovism was quite absent, indeed there is evidence to suggest that Aragon was expressing

1Aragon, Louis. Art. cit. p. 79.
impatience with this concept.

In reply to a member of the audience who complained that *Les Communistes* could not be read in the Métro easily, Aragon retorted that there were levels of intellectual activity which could not be indulged in in the Métro:

"Certains d'entre vous ont dit que mon livre était difficile à lire dans le métro. Mais il est difficile de répondre à vos critiques "dans le métro" et c'est ce que je dois faire! C'est encore fort cahoté que j'ai à répondre à passablement de choses."1

This exasperation with proletarian naivety and the defence of complexity in the novel may be linked to Aragon's defence of his own culture; inherited though it may have been from a bourgeois background, Aragon claimed that it was as "communist" as any other comrade's due to the fact that he recognised that the working class held the key to the socialist future. It was false, he maintained for someone in his position to affect a working class exterior, it was even worse for him to adopt the condescending attitudes of some intellectuals who claimed to bring culture to the masses:

"Le fait est que je ne suis pas un ouvrier, et je ne prétends pas me donner pour tel: je n'aime pas les mascarades, je n'aime pas non plus les gens qui prétendent aller à la classe ouvrière. Je pense simplement qu'un homme doit comprendre son temps, le monde dans lequel il vit et les autres hommes,

1Aragon, Louis. *Art.* cit. p. 76.
et que, s'il les comprend le moins du monde, il peut de même comprendre qui est le porteur du progrès."

This refusal to adopt working class characteristics also affected his art and means of expression; all the workers could justly ask of him was that he made every effort to understand them; the imperfect subjunctive is taken as a symbol of Aragon's cultural background which he maintains is as valid a vehicle as anyone else's:

"Aussi y avait-il alors déjà pour moi, bien sur, un certain mirage, une certaine envie de saisir de quoi était faite cette classe ouvrière dont je n'étais pas. Et j'ai mis un certain temps à la rejoindre et peut-être comme l'a dit un camarade tout à l'heure, que je ne la connais encore que très mal. Je ne dis pas le contraire. Simplement, j'essaye de la connaître mieux qu'un certain nombre d'autres écrivains.

Je veux toutefois me défendre sur un point précis. Si mal que je connaisse ••••••••••• (pour que vous ne puissiez pas dire que je parle l'argot, vous aurez des impairs du subjonctif tant que vous voudrez!) ••••••••••••

Aragon had a similar reaction to the worker who commented that this latest of his works was more simple:

"J'ai appris à faire certaines choses. Beaucoup de gens me disent: "C'est plus simple". C'est vrai. C'est parce que je connais mieux la complexité de mon métier que ce que j'écris est plus simple voilà tout!

Tout d'abord, j'aurais bien voulu faire simple: et peut-être que si je ne fais pas encore tout à fait assez simple pour tout le monde, c'est que je connais pas encore assez mon métier, que j'ai encore à apprendre."
The accessibility of a work was therefore not the direct result of writing for the workers, but had its source in the perfection of artistic techniques and skills. This point was much stressed by Aragon (n.b. in the above quotation he says it twice in six lines), but it was not made in isolation. If one takes the other points noted above together with this one, a less sectarian view of socialist realism emerges in which "ouvrierisme" is rejected and a degree of acceptability obtained for art which is true to the creator while being true to the ideology of communism; also the beginning of the removal of an intellectual ceiling imposed by the basic principles of Zhdanovism may be detected for the first time since the onset of the Cold War in 1947 in the writings of a leading, if not the leading Party artist.

Some seventeen years later and admittedly in a different political climate, Aragon made a further reference to the meeting at La Grange-aux-Belles in the post face to his revised Livre de Poche edition of Les Communistes. Explaining why he did not take his novel further than June 1940, he claimed that it was paradoxically not the criticism of the class enemy which discouraged him, but the praise of his own Party:

"À chaque livre, les critiques m'ont écrasé sous les louanges pour mes livres antérieures et les regrets dont ils les entortillent. Écrivant toujours contra, cela me gêne peu.

Mais, par un tour assez amer du sort, ce sont aux contraire les éloges qui m'arrêtèrent à juin
1940. On me louait d’avoir écrit autre chose que ce que j’avais voulu écrire. Un autre chose qui n’était pas celui de l’au delà du roman, un autre chose simplement autre chose. Peut-être en était-il ainsi, mais les raisons des louanges ne me paraissaient que trop évidentes, et ce n’était pas cela que j’avais cherché. J’ai souvenir d’une soirée, donnée en mon honneur à la Grange-aux-Belles, où des hommes et des femmes, qui avaient lu les deux premiers volumes du roman, vinrent à tour de rôle—et la plupart d’entre eux étaient de gens de cœur, de bonne foi, parlant simplement, —apporter leur témoignage touchant la vérité des faits, me remercier d’avoir écrit cela. Précisément parce que j’avais pour ces gens-là, presque tous, ce sentiment profond qui était né des dangers communs, des années terribles, de la solidarité d’un combat encore proche, précisément parce que cela venait d’eux, l’erreur, la mièvre, la leur, m’en fut pareille au poignard. Je ne crois pas de ma vie avoir été aussi triste ce soir-là, qui avait eu des airs de triomphe. Mais je le répète, triomphe d’autre chose que ce que j’avais cru écrire, ce que j’avais écrit. Je n’en ai pas dormi jusqu’au matin. Et longtemps après, j’ai l’impression de n’avoir guère plus fait de semblant de dormir.

Pour moi, il n’y avait pas de différence foncière entre Aurélien et Les Communistes. Je le pense encore, mais, alors quand j’entendais certains de mes amis politiques me dire: "Enfin! Tu viens de prouver que nous avions raison de te faire confiance..." j’écouteïs cela sans plaisir, je détournais les yeux. Etait-ce vraiment enfin?

It is interesting to note the different accounts of the reception at La Grange-aux-Belles. The Nouvelle Critique article presents Aragon irritated by the "ouvrierisme" of some of his critics and his replies contain more than a mere assertion of his position, the tone of the article is at times aggressive. In the later account the workers are present as ingenuous souls

filled with good faith and praise for the author of Les Communistes; this is not necessarily false if the criticism of Les Communistes which appeared in the Party’s publication at that time is to be taken as a reflection of the kind of ideas held by ordinary members; the cult of Aragon adulation reached epidemic proportions before the voice of reason was heard. If Aragon’s second account of the meeting is the more accurate of the two, then this would underline the fact that the 1949 article was selective and represented a calculated attempt to put across the concepts identified above.

The Party’s reaction to Les Communistes provides an accurate profile of the tendencies set in motion by Aragon, appropriately, at the reception given in his honour as the author of Les Communistes.

It was almost twelve months before the official voice of the Party was heard pronouncing itself on Les Communistes, but for two years a definite line was established in Les Cahiers du Communiste, the official organ of the Central Committee. In June 1950, Gaston Monmousseau a leading member of the Party hierarchy, set the tone which was to be continued in Les Cahiers until the publication of the last volume (the fifth) of Les Communistes in 1951; Aragon he hailed as a disciple of the policy of "la main tendue":

"Seul Aragon, je le crois, pouvait procéder à une telle analyse de personnage réels, plus nombreux
qu'on ne le pense, auxquels on peut tendre la main sans poser comme condition qu'ils adhèrent au Parti.\footnote{Monmousseau, Gaston. "La vie et les hommes réels dans Les Communistes d'Aragon. Les Cahiers du Communisme. June, 1950.}

In an oblique reference to the Zhdanovist novel which produced stilted illustrations of dogma and theory, Monmousseau remarked also on the breadth of Aragon's concept of the novel:

"Mais voilà, il n'y a pas de formule théorique dans l'ouvrage d'Aragon. Il s'en passe fort bien, car s'il est vrai qu'il y a une théorie grâce à laquelle on comprend la vie, l'origine, l'évolution et la transformation des sociétés humaines, un roman n'est pas un livre de théorie et dans Les Communistes la théorie, invisible pour un lecteur non théoricien, est fondée dans l'explication de la vie."\footnote{Monmousseau, Gaston. Art. cit.}

The political significance of the freedom bestowed on the novel was illustrated by a reference in the same number of Les Cahiers du Communisme to the first Paris meeting\footnote{April 1950.} in the campaign "La Bataille du Livre" organised by the C.N.E. in 1950 to promote the sale of communist literature.

"Le camarade Aragon a eu raison à la Grange-aux-Belles de secouer nos critiques. Il est vrai que..."
trop souvent on présente des livres magnifiques comme autant de thèses ennuyeuses. Quand nous disons d'un livre que c'est "une arme" alors on croit avoir tout dit, Aragon qui défend la cause du roman - non seulement par la qualité de ses écrits mais par le combat pratique qu'il dirige avec Elsa Triolet, la pionnière de la Bataille du Livre-nous a montré qu'il est possible, par le roman de s'adresser à tous ceux qui simplement savent et aiment lire.¹

The novel as projected by Aragon passed beyond the lines of combat of the Cold War artists to reach a much wider and non-party public; only literature of this kind could hope to recruit sympathetic allies in the struggle for peace. In point of fact the Party was looking for wider support for its campaigns against the Indo-Chinese war, the Korean war and the formation of a European Defence Force all of which were distinctly anti-communist.

The need to present communist art "with a human face" was of the utmost importance. The communist too had to be presented as a being with feelings and emotions as distinct from a Party automaton accepting orders and obeying them without question. Again, Aragon's Communistes, provides a helpful illustration of this type of "human" communist:

"Un communiste est donc un homme avec des os, de la viande autour, de la peau sur la viande, un cœur dans la poitrine, des nerfs au long des muscles et une tête sur les épaules, dans laquelle

Aragon had shown also that reality could not be transformed by dogma, given the complexity and variety of the world, the real world, the communist artist could only describe it as such:

"À ceci Aragon avait déjà répondu à peu près dans ces termes: les hommes ne sont pas comme nous voudrions qu'ils soient, ils ne pensent pas tous comme nous, mais ils n'en existent pas moins et c'est avec eux, tels qu'ils sont, qu'il nous faut voir le monde où nous vivons et faire l'histoire et l'écrire."

It is interesting to note that the tradition with which Aragon was contrasted in the above quotation was ostensibly the bourgeois tradition, but the cap fits the schematic Zhdanovist model. Obviously the Party was not yet ready to denounce its own failings in this domaine directly.

The veiled "autocritique" continued with an article by Claude Roy on Les Communistes some six months later.

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Roy's main intention would seem to have been to establish Aragon's reputation of a great connoisseur of the French national literary heritage but he also had something to say of the pitfalls which Aragon had managed to avoid:

"Il n'y a pas ici, d'un côté les bons, et de l'autre les méchants, un univers tranché en deux, avec un fil artificiel à couper le monde, et hors du Parti pas de salut, tous ceux qui, au dernier chapitre ne demanderont pas à adhérer à la cellule voisine seront damnés. Non. Aragon sait montrer et dévoiler la bonté, la générosité partout où elles se trouvent, dans un bon petit bougre de scout, dans un vieil avocat pas tellement courageux jusque-là, dans la foule étonnante de ces silhouettes qui passent dans les pages des Communistes qu'on rencontre dans les maisons populaires, dans les casernes et les cantonnements, et qu'il suffit d'un mot, d'un détail, d'un trait pour rendre présents, fraternels et attendrissants. Jusqu'aux ennemis les plus acharnés du peuple qu'Aragon cherche à comprendre."

Aragon's breadth of vision enabled him to portray a subtle portrait of humanity and to present politically the situation in terms hardly comparable with the black and white renderings of positive heroes and negative (non-Party) villains to which Roy alludes in the above statement. Neither Monmousseau, Plat nor Roy actually stated outright that the Party had been in any way to blame for insufficiencies in literary and artistic policies over the past few years, policies which made Aragon's work the exception rather than the rule.

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This state of affairs was to change somewhat in July 1951 during a study day organised by the Seine Federation for communist students; during this meeting, chaired by Casanova, André Stil, novelist, member of the Central Committee and editor in chief of L'Humanité, made some important statements based on his appreciation of Les Communistes. The fact that such an influential Party delegation¹ was present at this meeting (especially Casanova), emphasises the importance of the occasion and the official nature of the pronouncements made.

This was the first direct admission by an official Party spokesman of theoretical weaknesses evident during the Zhdanovist phase.

"........ il est bon de revenir en arrière pour retrouver comment se posait devant notre parti le problème de la création littéraire au moment où commençait de paraître cette première partie² maintenant achevée. On retrouvera que beaucoup de choses qui nous semblaient maintenant claires et simples nous le paraissaient beaucoup moins alors. Et ce rappel nous aidera à apprécier en ce débat la grandeur incomparable des Communistes et du rôle d'Aragon dans notre combat sur ce front."

The only indication given by Stil in his address of the nature of the problems which beset the communist writer in 1949 is contained in a reference to the

¹Aragon was also present.
²i.e. of les Communistes.
existence of a dual concept of literature:

"Avant les Communistes, qu'on relise beaucoup d'articles d'alors, nous parlions souvent d'une littérature politique, "mais aussi" humaine, comme s'il s'agissait de deux termes opposés, contradictoires, dont la cohabitation dans un roman représente un tour de force pour le romancier. Les Communistes démontre au contraire que c'est dans le plus grand éclairage politique que l'humain se révèle avec le plus d'éclat. C'est sur les sommets de l'histoire que les cordes de l'homme vibrent le plus fort au vent."¹

As has been illustrated above, Aragon's humanity i.e. his appreciation of human nature described as "generous" "understanding" etc., coupled with his non schematic world view supplied by his Marxist philosophy, are presented as the vital factors of his success in Les Communistes. Aragon is presented as having responded to a philosophical dictate rather than an immediate political exigence and in doing so lifting the communist novel (and philosophy) out of the impasse of the predominantly political (propaganda) role assigned to it during the worst years of the Cold War. Through these criticisms of Les Communistes communists and non-communists alike were encouraged to rethink their attitudes and to see communism as a living and intensely human philosophy:

"Et, par dessus tout ce qui donne vie à cette méthode nouvelle, c'est cette capacité de l'écrivain d'exprimer à l'égard de toute chose, politique ou

¹Stil, André. Art. cit.
non, et jusque devant les plus petits faits, des réactions qui ne lui sont pas seulement personnelles, mais qui partent d'une conception scientifique du monde que partagent des millions et des millions d'hommes. Car l'écrivain, ce n'est pas seulement à l'égard des grands faits de l'histoire qu'il a à adopter une position de parti, il y a aussi pour lui une position de parti devant la façon dont un homme regarde une femme, devant l'amour d'un soldat pour un chien, devant cet officier qui voudrait pouvoir se raser avant de mourir, et aussi par exemple pas seulement devant un prêtre, mais aussi devant un prêtre qui fait sauter des ponts. Qu'on n'y réfléchisse un peu, cette rigueur scientifique va loin et ne cesse pas d'être rigueur alors même qu'elle se confond avec le mouvement spontané du cœur.1

There is a note of warning in this statement insofar as the expression "position de parti" is employed in such a way as to indicate that if the Party were to adopt policies which were not those of "rapprochement" with the progressive elements of the bourgeoisie, then one's outlook on one's fellow human beings would change also so that those who were allies today, could become tomorrow's enemies.

The Zhdanovist "partinost" was therefore retained by Stil in no uncertain terms; as for "ideinosit" this is also implicit in Aragon's conditioned view of reality i.e., the Marxist world-view.

Again it is the crucial element of "naradnost" which is omitted from this communist's criticism:

"Contre ces tendances à la schématisation, milite enfin le souci d'Aragon de porter au plus haut point la perfection technique, la qualité, formelle aussi de ce qu'il écrit. Combien de pages encore

1 Ibid.
Therefore, from Stil's point of view, lack of regard for form and technique is linked with the worst of Zhdanovist art (although he does not say so outright). Aragon's own statement in 1949 at La Grange-aux-Belles, when he stressed the importance of technique in attaining "simplicity" (rather than naradnost), may be associated with the point made by Stil. Henceforth the communist artist would enjoy the luxury of tending to his form as well as producing content.

Stil even managed to find a quotation from Zhdanov to support this point, a quotation which no other communist theorist had thought fit to use before:

"On entend parfois dire, à propos surtout de ce cinquième tome, que la lecture des Communistes serait difficile. Puisqu'on en parle, il faut en parler... Certes un livre comme les Communistes, le cinquième tome particulièrement, n'est pas seulement fait pour aider au déclassement du lecteur. L'œil à éviter serait précisément d'exiger de notre littérature qu'elle ne soit que cela. Autant Zhdanov par exemple s'est attaché à recommander une littérature qui soit à la portée de tout le peuple et l'aide à son combat, autant il a tenu à préciser:

"La littérature n'est pas seulement destinée à suivre le niveau des besoins du peuple."

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1 Stil, André. Art. cit.

2 This point of "entertainment, or light reading value" was dealt with by Aragon in the "Métro" incident of his La Grange-aux-Belles speech of 1949 (cf. above).
Bien plus, elle doit développer ses goûts."

The main reason for the difficulty experienced by some readers was not however, in the style used by Aragon but in the density of information supplied as an integral part of his realist method:

"Aragon de toute évidence, a travaillé aussi à la façon d'historien, s'entourant de toutes les garanties scientifiques, étudiant une masse incroyable de documents non dépouillés et encore bruts de ce point de vue. Et c'est encore une grande leçon concernant la méthode du réalisme socialiste en littérature."

What then was the significance of the use of history in this way by Aragon? First of all it helped to supply depth of content to a genre notorious for its transparent political tub-thumping. The impressive accumulation of detail however was not as innocent as it might appear since all Aragon's historical "evidence" tends to illustrate his Marxist view of history. Far from approaching history with an open mind, Aragon marshalls his facts in a massive demonstration of ideinost, but with all the appearance of objectivity. For Stil, of course, Aragon's innovations in the field of socialist realism were resounding triumphs of communism in the arts.

The two ingredients stressed in Les Communistes during this period of extrication from the Zhdanovist impasse were therefore the humanism and breadth of vision

\[1\] Stil, André. Art. cit.
\[2\] Ibid.
of Aragon which characterised his understanding and
tolerance, and secondly his masterful use of historical
data as an agent in the development of socialist
realism. There is no hint in Stil's declaration as to
why Aragon was the only communist writer to be aware of
these inherent qualities of socialist realism and to
have exploited them in the post-war period except for
the remark to the effect that Aragon's long experience
in the Party which spanned the pre-war years had endowed
him with a deeper political understanding of the trend
of events.

"Mais même parmi les romanciers qui se placent sur
les positions de la classe ouvrière, il faut
constater comme un fait qu'Aragon disposait seul
de l'expérience vécue, des connaissances éprouvées
ou acquises au contact des grands événements de
notre temps, de la guerre et de la politique dont
d'elle ne fut que la continuation, qui lui permettent
de brosser ce tableau complet, aussi vrai dans
l'ensemble que dans le détail, de toutes les
classes sociales mêlées dans le creuset du grand
drame national. Ce fait doit être constaté, non
seulement pour rendre à Aragon l'hommage qu'il
mérite, mais surtout parce qu'on peut en tirer
pour le travail de nos écrivains un des enseignements
les plus précieux qui soient. Ce qui a donné à
Aragon ce pouvoir jusqu'ici unique, c'est qu'étant
écrivain, il a vécu profondément cette histoire des
vingt-cinq dernières années, qu'il a vécu surtout
en homme du parti, qu'il l'a embrassée toute d'une
plateforme nationale, en militant responsable de
la classe qui est la moteur de la nation."

1Stil, André. Art. cit.
But even when Stil is highlighting Aragon's "experience", the socialist realist terminology and theory are brought to the fore in the concept of partinost.

The points made implicitly in previous articles on Aragon's Communistes in Les Cahiers du Communiste, that Aragon was providing a great lesson in communist art which would serve as an inspiration to others, are given more focus in Stil's article. It is important to remember that this speech was given to the communist student organisation¹ and therefore to an audience most likely to appreciate any move out of the Cold War situation, especially with regard to the arts. If Stil, Garaudy, Daix etc., were not of Aragon's generation and did not share his richness of experience, the student communists had not necessarily shared the wartime experience of the former and were consequently more reluctant to accept the disciplines and aggressive tactics of the Cold War. It was therefore to a group which was much less tolerant of Cold War attitudes than any other, that Stil was making this first attempt at a direct "autocritique" of Party artists.

However much the Party sought to present Aragon as the honest artist obeying the lofty dictates of his art and responding spontaneously to his ideological

convictions, the fact remains that he deliberately chose to play the role allotted to him and for precise political reasons which had nothing to do with art. It has been pointed out above that Aragon's name was associated with the major theoretical importations with regard to Zhdanovism from the Soviet Union, although not with their application, a situation which allowed Aragon to maintain his prestige as a major figure in the field of the Party's cultural policy without becoming too implicated in the Cold War.

By 1954, the changing political situation with regard to East-West relations and the internal thaw within the U.S.S.R., meant that the XIIIth French Party Congress held at Ivry, took place in an atmosphere of détente.

In the Soviet Union, Beria had been arrested and executed while in Korea a peace formula had been found which allowed China and the United States to extricate themselves with honour from a situation which endangered the whole world. The French Party although still bitterly opposed to the Indo-Chinese campaign, was preparing to move out of its Cold War positions in order to enlist the help of the socialists in its opposition to the re-armament of Germany; such a move towards the democratic left, as always, brought in its train important policy changes in the field of culture and the arts.
The fact that Maurice Thorez had returned from the Soviet Union after two years of treatment necessitated by a heart attack suffered in late 1950, meant that politically Thorez could be shown to be the master returning to the household to find that his servants had failed him during his absence. In this instance the worst aspects of the Party's Cold War policies and failures were attributed to the Party secretary Auguste Lecoeur. It is significant that Casanova and Aragon who had everything to do with the formulation and supervision of the execution of Cold War directives were spared, while Lecoeur who had never, if ever, made any direct statement about literature and art was unhesitatingly made responsible for the disasters of communist Cold War art (among many other things). Lecoeur was removed for political reasons. His "role" in cultural policies was only one of many used to discredit him.

It was Louis Aragon who addressed the Party intellectuals during the congress, whereas in 1947, when the last important pronouncements were made in this field, it was Laurent Casanova who had been given the honour. The 1954 congress marked the emergence of Aragon from his semi covert but powerful position of the last decade. Aragon's address to the 1954 congress embodied a guarded, but nonetheless significant criticism of the excesses committed in communist art and literature in the period before and after the departure of Maurice Thorez for the
Soviet Union in 1950; he laid stress on the latter period as containing the principal burden of error, error which was characterised by the practice of "ouvrierisme" similar to some extent to the proletcult tendencies of the U.S.S.R. in the late twenties and early thirties.

"Dans ce domaine, au cours des années qui séparent le Congrès de Gennevilliers du Congrès d'Ivry, il faut reconnaître qu'une grande confusion a été apportée à des notions pourtant très claires, souvent réaffirmées par les plus hautes autorités du marxisme, de ses fondateurs à Maurice Thorez, en passant par Lénine et Staline. Cette confusion a été grandement facilitée par le malheur qui avait frappé notre Parti en éloignant momentanément de sa direction effective son secrétaire général dont la vigilance idéologique nous a fait cruellement défaut.

L'ouvrierisme allié à l'opportunisme et à l'esprit d'aventure a fait alors gravement sentir ses effets dans les questions de la création artistique dans nos rangs. La prétendue doctrine de la spontanéité des masses, l'exaltation du sens de classe transformé en un instinct incontrôlé, quasi animal, une sorte de flair ouvrier......"¹

In socialist realist terms, Aragon was drawing attention to the dangers of over-stressing the principle of naradnosť which, because of its Cold War interpretation, had become associated with emotional and subjective renderings of, and attitudes towards, the working class.

Aragon was careful to point out, however, that this deviation from Marxist norms was in no way attributable to a weakness in theory, but to the machinations of one

man, Party secretary in the absence of Thorez, Auguste Lecoeur. Here was a man who had perpetrated his dogma at every level of Party activity, including that of the creative arts. According to André Stil, he had even attempted to modify the plot of one of his novels on the grounds that it did not comply with his view of working class comportment:

"Je ne veux pas entrer ici dans le détail des initiatives malencontreuses qu'il faudra bien un jour raconter pour l'éducation même du Parti. Dans une intervention au Comité Central, André Stil a montré comment Lecoeur cherchait à le pousser au populisme, comment il avait décrit les hésitations des dockers devant un mouvement de grève, parce que le prolétariat, disait-il, n'hésite jamais, que ces choses-là, c'est bon pour vous autres intellectuels .........

On reconnaît là là la théorie de "l'absence de conflit" que nos amis soviétiques ont dénoncée dans la dramaturgie, comme artistiquement désastreuse; mais qui, de plus, ici explique parfaitement cette belle conception du prolétariat qui permet de jeter de haut n'importe quel mot d'ordre de grève, puisque de toutes façons il n'hésitera pas, il ne peut pas hésiter."¹

The reference to the rejection of the "no conflict" theory in drama by Soviet artists and intellectuals (one of the direct consequences of the liberalisation of the arts following the publication of Stalin's letters on linguistics), was important not so much for its relevance to Lecoeur's condemnation, but for the fact that the no conflict theory, which was a political theory, had been rejected for artistic reasons. This was no isolated remark for Aragon went on to enlarge on the

¹Aragon, Louis. Art. cit.
distortion which could be wreaked in the arts if made dependent on political slogans and directives:

"... beaucoup de camarades, disais-je, se font de l'art de parti une représentation fausse, grossière, schématique, celle d'un art de pure et simple déclaration, un art d'affiche, un art gesticulatoire, un art diminué."¹

If this was the concept of many within the Party, the effect on outside observers was even worse since it played into the hands of anti-communism:

"Le rappel automatique des buts proprement de classe à chaque fois que se pose une question nationale aboutirait à donner à notre Parti, dans l'art de parti comme ailleurs, une image qui n'est pas là siem', mais celui que l'anticommunisme prétend lui imposer aux yeux de tous."²

The fact that in the period prior to 1950, the Party had sought to give precise orders to its writers and artists with regard to theme and subject matter, meant, according to Aragon, that the basic identity and mission of the artist were being interfered with:

"Et dans la période antérieure à l'automne de 1950, il (le Parti) a tenté de définir une tendance qui devait être caractérisée par des œuvres. Le Parti peut définir la tendance mais il appartient aux créateurs de lui donner corps par des œuvres. Ce sont eux qui, à partir de ce point, portent une responsabilité dont ils ont à répondre devant le Parti, la classe et la nation."³

The principle under discussion in this instance was

¹ Aragon, Louis. Art. cit.
² Ibid.
³ Ibid.
that of "partinost" or "l'esprit de parti"; here Aragon followed the example on the Soviet critics in the case of the "no conflict theory" by rejecting direct political intervention in the creative arts. It is to be noted that he retained a Party dimension through the artist's ultimate responsibility to his Party and also the Party's role in defining the ideological perspective or weighting of the work of art. By defining "partinost" in this way, Aragon was tending towards a merging of this concept with that of "ideinost". Admittedly this was a much broader view of socialist realism than that of the late forties and early fifties entertained by the Nouvelle Critique group, but the Party still had not returned to the accommodating concepts of the Popular Front era although it was certainly heading in that direction.

Aragon's tactics at the Ivry Congress would seem to have been aimed at effecting the greatest possible degree of liberalisation without actually dismantling the structures of socialist realism.

There were indications too that he intended his reform to be an embracing one insofar as he sought to extend it to such spheres as criticism and aesthetic theory. The lack of respect for criticism during the Cold War period was another expression of the lack of respect by the deviationists for intellectuals:

"...... la discussion critique des oeuvres de l'art et de la littérature, souvent passionnée, est fort injustement considérée avec mépris, avec superbe,
par certains camarades qui ne veulent y voir que des
tempêtes dans un errier. Ce mépris est une des
formes de l'ouvriérisme, de la sous estimation du
travail intellectuel, et a pour aboutissant l'abandon
du rôle dirigeant du Parti dans ce domaine, la
fuite devant la discussion et l'avantage laissé à
l'ennemi sans combat.¹

A most important factor in the diminution of
communist art of these times, claimed Aragon was the dog-
matric dismissal of formal considerations as being worthy
only of bourgeois decadents:

"Cela a été l'une des caractéristiques des inter-
ventions d'Auguste Lecoeur dans le domaine de la
culture que l'opposition mécanique de la forme et
du fond dans les oeuvres, que l'affirmation que ce
qui importe, c'est le fond et que la forme n'est
une préoccupation que pour des esthètes minaudiers,
comme il disait. On a beaucoup discuté de la
forme et du fond chez nous, quand Maurice Thorez
n'était pas là. C'était pour les opposer, comme
s'il était possible d'imager une forme sans fond,
un fond sans forme! Par exemple, même une oeuvre
abstraite qui ne représente rien a un contenu de
classe, elle est le refus d'exprimer quoi que ce
soit, elle contient ce refus."²

Apart from yet another oblique reference to the
effects of "naradnost" on communist art of the Cold War
period, and the personality cult allusion to Thorez,
Aragon effected an almost imperceptible move in the
direction of liberalisation in his mention of abstract
art in terms other than those of outright abuse. The
fact that he defined abstract art via a reference to
form was a practical demonstration to the communist
critic that it was possible to expose bourgeois nihilism

¹Aragon, Louis. Art. cit.
²Ibid.
by other means than straight political mud-slinging.

An understanding of the relationship of form to content was essential, claimed Aragon to the understanding and evaluation of the work of art:

"Dans le fait, l'opposition mécanique de la forme et du contenu est un obstacle à la compréhension et au développement de l'art de parti. Il y a interdépendance de la forme et du contenu. Où la forme faiblit, vous pouvez parler qu'il y a toujours une insuffisance de contenu." ¹

In making this statement, Aragon restored the critical act to the communist critic, but without destroying the fundamental tenet of the primacy of content over form. Henceforth it would be possible for the communist critic to approach a work of art via its form without having to pass a-priori ideological judgement. Although the communist critic would be bound to come to his ideological conclusions in the last analysis, his work would at least retain the aspect of objectivity and therefore perhaps be more acceptable to the non-communist.

As far as the formation of a new communist style in art was concerned, Aragon confined himself to references to the phrase used by Maurice Thorez in 1950 to the effect that the Party artists had to formulate "un classicisme nouveau". For Aragon, the sources of the new classicism were to be found in the French national cultural heritage. A systematic re-evaluation from the communist point of view of a poet such as Victor Hugo

¹Aragon, Louis. Art. cit.
and critical realists such as Stendhal, Balzac and Zola, in which the progressive traits of these writers would be identified and related to their artistic methods taken together with the adoption of national forms such as the sonnet in poetry, were the best guarantees of success for communist art which had to be national in form and socialist in content.

By evoking the necessity to forge links with the cultural heritage of France, the French communist party was effectively abandoning the aggressive policies of the Cold War in the cultural sphere, while laying the foundations for a rapprochement with non-communist intellectuals; a move which had much to do with the Party's role in the International Peace Movement and its campaign against the formation of a European defence force and the re-armament of Germany.

But what were the consequences of this manoeuvring for socialist realist theory in France? First of all, it is important to note that Aragon did not attack the basic principles (except perhaps in the case of "naradnost"), his main objective at the Ivry Congress of 1954 was to express explicitly what he had been alluding to on and off since 1949, i.e. the excesses committed in the name of socialist realism. Naradnost (Aragon never uses the Zhdanovist terminology), seems to have been the main tenet of socialist realism to exhibit the mark of "ouvrierisme"; affinity with the workers, remaining faithful to their
aspirations and emotions, comming with the working class condition and sensitivity, all such condescending attitudes were to be condemned. Yet if the new "classicism" with its overtly national sentiment and its clarity of style is compared with the ambitions of naradnost, one merely needs to substitute "patrie" for the proletariat to return to the original concept. Aragon, of course does not indicate any intention of this kind, but it does suggest that such a commitment with its considerations of form and contend defined in consequence is perhaps a feature of socialist realist theory at a fundamental level.

With naradnost transformed into the new classicism, the remaining basic principles, partninost and ideinost, retained in their essence with a distinct move by partinost towards the broader principle of ideinost, it can be seen that Aragon has been able to rehabilitate socialist realism and make it more acceptable to the non-communist intellectual without removing the basic structures.

The life of the communist critic had been very much enriched by the deceptively simple affirmation that a work of art could be assessed via its form; from such a base the communist intellectual would be able to tackle all manifestations of art without having to impose a political judgement in an a-priori fashion to the detriment of the analytical process.

Louis Aragon, by taking the role he did during the
1954 Congress, moved to the centre of the stage with the full consent of the Party. His period in reserve in the wings had come to an end, at least for the time being. But what of the future?

Between the Ivry Congress of 1954 and the XXth Soviet Party Congress of 1956, Aragon published two major works of criticism. The first, *La Lumière de Stendhal*, represented a major contribution to the communist re-evaluation of the French national literary heritage, while the second, *Littératures soviétiques* complimented the first by re-asserting the triumph of Soviet inspired literature, which despite the value of French national literature, would always provide a model for French communist writers.

In *La Lumière de Stendhal*, Aragon argued in favour of extending the domaine of communist criticism. For too long, Party theorists had restricted their attention to the authors mentioned by the fathers of Marxism instead of taking the examples given by them and applying the theory to other artists and writers; Stendhal was a good example of a great writer who tended to be neglected by communist critics:

"On lui en veut de n'être pas de bonne compagnie, on lui reproche de dater et de ne pas être de

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de la classe ouvrière. Je ne sais lequel de ces deux reproches est le plus stupide. Le second est assurément le plus prétentieux. Il y a quelques lignes d'Engels sur Balzac, c'est pourquoi les jeunes qui font dans le marxisme n'oseraient jamais s'attaquer à Rastignac ou à Rubempre. Mais Engels n'avait pas lu Stendhal: toute licence contre Fabrici. Curieux marxisme à vrai dire, qui tient pour démodée une des images les plus saisissantes de la littérature, et qui explique mieux son temps que bien de traités historiques."

The image of Aragon the elder statesman of French Marxist literary theory which had begun to emerge in the Party press (cf. André Stil above) correcting the errors of the younger generation of communist intellectual was much reinforced by statements such as the above. Only Aragon had the prestige (and the authorisation) to make such innovatory pronouncements. On this occasion Aragon was not only returning to the view often expressed by Marx and Engels that Balzac the novelist, was the most accurate social historian of his times, but to another and more significant example of the Marxist turning to literature and extracting implications of an ideological nature, i.e. to Lenin's articles on Tolstoy in which he referred to Tolstoy as the "mirror" of the Russian revolution.

The fact that Aragon uses the same imagery as Lenin when speaking of Stendhal would suggest that it was Lenin whom Aragon wished to promote:

"Oui Le Rouge et le Noir est bien une machine de guerre qui prépare juillet 1830: Stendhal de ce

1 Aragon, Louis. La Lumière de Stendhal, p. 107.
fait apparaît en pleine romantisme, comme un réaliste critique. Puisant dans la réalité (on sait qu'il reprochait parfois son naturalisme, réaliste en cela), ce n'est pas, contrairement à ce qu'il put dire, aime faire croire, à la façon du miroir qu'il la reflète. Il est miroir sélectif, il va chercher en 1818 et en 1827 les personnages et les aventures dont il éclaire 1830. Réaliste critique parce que contrairement à ce qu'il veut faire croire, le reflet de la réalité n'est pour lui une simple délectation de l'artiste, il explique, il critique la réalité, il contribue à sa transformation (non dans le sens du socialisme sans doute, mais dans celui de la démocratie libérale).}

Lenin believed that the realist artist had the power to seize in embryo form currents which, when fully developed, often transcended the life and times of the artists to reveal themselves subsequently as determinant factors in history. The fact that the artist did not share the values implied by these currents (social revolutions in the cases of Tolstoy and Stendhal) was of no importance since it was the artist's attitude towards reality, an attitude which permitted him to express only what he genuinely felt and saw, which formed his art. It was not by chance that Aragon should have included his reference to "la démocratie libérale", since the category of "critical realist" was the expression in terms of art of liberal democracy in politics, i.e. the artist who revealed the truth despite his beliefs was equivalent to the democratic liberal whose professed beliefs might say

one thing, but his actions another. The category of critical realism was therefore essentially a feature of political "rassemblement" as far as the Party was concerned.

But Aragon did more than extend the field of potential subjects for the Marxist critic specialising in the XIXth century, he also took the unprecedented step, since the inception of the Cold War, of praising a non-Party contemporary author, Robert Merle, whose novel Weekend à Zuydcote, had greatly impressed him.

Merle, he felt had written an exemplary novel, not from an aesthetic point of view, but because he had faithfully represented the French experience at Dunkirk when the retreating British forces had physically prevented French units from embarking for England. As far as French history was concerned, Merle had caught the atmosphere of the moment. Louis Aragon, member of the French communist Party supported this interpretation of events and thereby demonstrated his patriotism:

"Et s'il faut savoir lire Robert Merle, comme il faut savoir lire Stendhal. A la lumière nationale, Et j'ajouteraï - tant pis si l'on trouve par là que je fais preuve d'une insuffisance, qui n'est pas celle de la jeunesse! - qu'il faut savoir lire Aragon: lequel n'abandonne aucunement ses points de vue, ses principes, disant ce qui précède. Mais qui entend combattre avec sévérité tout ce qui se donnant pour le point de vue des communistes, en réalité s'oppose à la politique nationale de rassemblement qui est, au temps de Robert Merle, la politique véritable des communistes."

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Aragon's criticism is obviously not to be interpreted as criticism for criticism's sake, but as containing clear indications of a political nature. The fact that Merle's work had been selected for its political content, together with Aragon's invitation to interpret his writing in a political sense would suggest that French communist criticism still had not freed itself from the erroneous application of partinost as condemned in the 1954 Congress in connection with the creative arts.

This point of view is further reinforced by the tone of the literary history of the Soviet Union published by Aragon in 1955. The Soviet Union is the object of much praise a feature which tempers Aragon's French patriotism described above: Stendhal and Robert Merle may be solid French critical realists, but the real lessons in artistic creation were to be learned elsewhere:

"Souvent j'entends dire que nous n'avons pas à chercher hors de chez nous les exemples et les enseignements. Et si l'on veut dire que toute génération de France a sa solution française cela est bien. Mais l'expérience humaine n'a pas de frontières, telle est son ambition. La tentative soviétique en tous domaines, mais d'abord ici pour moi dans la littérature et l'art a seule jusqu'à présent remis en question fondamentalement les problèmes auxquels étaient données, imposées, les solutions de cette société qui meurt. Dans l'exemple des écrivains soviétiques, il y a plus à apprendre aujourd'hui que dans toute la littérature antique ce qui ne nous empêche pas de rêver en lisant Homer."¹

There was no sign in Aragon's writing to this date of any reservations about Stalinist theory; his reference to

¹Aragon, Louis. Littératures Soviétiques. introd.
the "no-conflict" theory in his Ivry address, contained a compliment to the Soviet writers for having identified and cured the disease. Lenin and Stalin appear constantly as the source figures of theory:

"...le mot d'ordre scientifique des écrivains devait être, "Ecrivez la vérité stalinienne"."

The aberrations of Zhdanovism, as has been shown, were simply credited to one man, Lecoeur there being no question of implying weakness in Soviet theory. This relatively small example of French Party loyalty to the U.S.S.R. helps to demonstrate the hegemony of the Soviet Union over the French Party.

The exposures of the XXth Soviet Party congress of 1956 concerning the crimes of Stalin and the condemnation of the personality cult by Kruschev had a traumatising effect on the French Party whose whole being was built on the principle that the Soviet Union (Stalin) could do no wrong. More than ever before, the French Party looked to Thorez for inspiration and leadership in its hour of difficulty. Thorez responded immediately by closing his ranks in order to conceal the dismay and the confusion created by the XXTH Congress.

In his address to the Party during the XIVth French Party Congress at Le Havre of 1956, Thorez turned his attention to the intellectuals among whom the greatest unrest had arisen:

"Certains ont reclamé dans le parti la discussion en permanence de toutes les questions sans exception comme si nous formions un club, une école de controverse et non un détachement d'avant garde de la classe ouvrière."

Such a state of affairs could not be allowed to continue, affirmed Thorez:

"Nous ne reconnaissons pas aux hommes dont les interventions à l'intérieur du parti convergent avec les attaques lancées du dehors par nos ennemis la "liberté" de propager dans nos rangs leurs conceptions destructrices et anti-communistes. Mieux nous prenons la liberté de les mettre hors du parti."

Thorez's threat was carried out in the case of the four communist writers, Claude Roy, Roger Vailland, Claude Morgan and Jean-François Rolland whose signatures had appeared with that of Sartre in a published protest following the Soviet invasion of Hungary in November of that year which appeared in L'Express. At the same time, as these dramas were being enacted, Thorez confirmed the principles governing the arts within the Party as laid down by Aragon at Ivry.

"Il faut assurer à nos écrivains et à nos artistes la possibilité de déployer leurs initiatives personnelles, leur imagination, leurs goûts, sans imposer à tous les mêmes formes."


If the Party's artists and writers were not to be allowed to air their political views, at least they were free to find appropriate forms in their artistic work. Evidently the principle of "partinost" was to be reinforced through the obligation of the artist to pay attention to the teachings of the Party and also to be familiar with Marxist-Leninist theory:

"Le parti comprend et étudie les problèmes et les préoccupations des camarades intellectuels, mais ils ont tous en commun, quelle que soit leur spécialité, l'obligation de connaître le marxisme-léninisme. Le parti stimulera l'épanouissement de leur pensée dans une libre émulation sur la base des principes. Il les aidera à aborder avec plus d'audace et d'indépendance de jugement la discussion des questions pendantes en science, dans les arts, en philosophie, non dans le sens d'un libéralisme anarchique, mais au service du développement de la pensée émancipatrice, de l'effort créateur."

Despite the references to "la pensée émancipatrice, de l'effort créateur", this statement reveals a tightening of the Party's authority on its intellectuals; the reinforcement of partinost is accompanied here by a reinforcement of ideinost in that artists had the obligation to familiarise themselves with Marxist Leninist philosophy.

During the period of crisis which lasted some eighteen months, Aragon moved once again into the wings and it was the editor of _La Nouvelle Critique_, Jean Kanapa who

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1 Thorez, Maurice, Art. cit.
came to the fore. It was Kanapa who delivered the address to the Party's intellectuals at le Havre, reinforcing Thorez's insistence on the direct concern of the Party in art and literature:

"Ce n'est pas facile, c'est vrai pour lui (le créateur) d'harmoniser les exigences personnelles de son expression artistique et les nécessités de la lutte politique. Mais le mouvement ouvrier révolutionnaire, lui, ne peut pas ne pas se soucier de la portée pratique de la signification objective que prend, dans le context des luttes sociales, ce qui est dit comme l'expression d'une pensée subjective."\(^1\)

The Party was obviously sensitive to possible interpretations of communist art from non-communist sources.

Kanapa continued the attack on Lecoeur thereby showing that the Party was as resolved as ever not to assign responsibility to basic theoretical insufficiencies of Stalinist origins; in a work published the following year Kanapa set out to defend Zhdanov, who for all that he had not been mentioned officially, was becoming the object of informal criticism among Party intellectuals:

"Il est en effet devenu de mode, après une mode contraire, de ne plus faire référence à ces textes (de Jdanov), même dans les milieux intellectuels les plus avancés. Avouons donc que nous n'avons pas la même hâte à tenir ces textes pour périmés ou, pour reprendre un mot couramment utilisé, parfaitement "dépassés". Qu'il se trouve là parfois des outrances et même des erreurs de faits une excessive vénéhence dans la manière de

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juger des choses souvent délicates et fragiles, qu'il y ait sans doute plus le souci de trancher que de convaincre, d'administrer que d'entraîner, c'est une chose que des conditions objectives expliquent - qu'on résume généralement dans le terme "culte de la personnalité" et dont on accordera volontiers qu'elles sont effectivement "dépassées". Mais autre chose est le reste! C'est-à-dire le juste rappel des principes lénonistes en matière de culture, et pas seulement de la nécessité de l'esprit de parti, mais bien d'autres composantes de l'attitude lénoniste, tout à fait excellents, qui sont le respect et l'assimilation de l'héritage culturel, la liaison avec le peuple, la beauté des sentiments etc., ce qui demeure, me semble-t-il le plus constamment valide.¹

Although Kanapa's half condemnation, half defence of Zhdanov could have been said to represent a step forward in the direction of a condemnation of post-war Stalinist cultural theory, it was hardly a substantial one. The attempt to link Zhdanov with Lenin, although in accordance with current tactics in this field, was more of a device for rehabilitating Zhdanov than praising Lenin.

Kanapa's reign as leading Party spokesman during the difficult times of the XXth Party Congress of the C.P.S.U. and the invasion of Hungary, was shortly to come to an end as the process of destalinisation was given a healthy prod by the publication of Elsa Triolet's novel Le Monument² which contained a forthright condemnation

¹Ibid.
of Stalinist cultural policies linking Stalin's name with these for the first time in the French political context. The plot was based on the spontaneous rejection of a statue of Stalin which had been imposed on a township by the authorities. The young artist responsible for the work commits suicide overcome with shame when he realises the implications of the townspeople's action and the sham of his Stalinist aesthetic values. The publication of this novel was, to say the least, controversial, since many Party members were not yet ready to accept the lessons of the XXth Party congress.

Aragon accorded his wife's novel great importance and in a series of references to it, he began to constitute a body of views on socialist realism which was in itself the greatest move out of dogmatic socialist realist theory in France ever. These views were incorporated in a collection of essays, articles, speeches etc., entitled J'Abats mon jeu,¹ which although published in 1959 contained articles dating from 1954.

In one of his most recent articles "De la création littéraire", a speech delivered at a reception at Saint-Denis to mark his own highly successful La Semaine Sainte,² Aragon stressed yet again the importance of

Le Monument:

"C'est pourquoi, pour ma part, je tiens ici ce soir à répéter ce que j'ai déjà dit ailleurs, qu'un livre comme Le Monument d'Elsa Triolet, dont le sujet même a pu profondément scandaliser des hommes et des femmes que j'estime, mais qui pour comprendre comment se pose de façon véritable le problème de la création artistique au milieu de notre XXe siècle qu'en particulier il est impossible de parler du réalisme socialiste en France sans tenir compte de ce roman."!

A good measure of Aragon's progress towards the destalinisation of socialist realist theory in France is contained in his statement to the effect that the Soviet Union, in his opinion, did not hold the monopoly of truth in these matters:

"On me dira que tel ou tel trait, caractère, de mon livre2 l'oppose à des choses qui ont été écrites en U.R.S.S. touchant le réalisme socialiste. Encore faudrait-il se reporter aux textes, mais pourtant je veux bien convenir. Sans doute. Qu'est-ce que cela peut bien me faire? Et même si le réalisme socialiste a tout d'abord pris figure là-bas. Aurait-on la simplicité de croire que moi j'ai la simplicité de tenir toute thèse énoncée en U.R.S.S. et pour cette raison, touchant la littérature et l'art, comme la loi et les prophètes? Il n'y a qu'à se reporter à tout ce qui a été écrit là-bas en quarante ans pour y voir quelles contradictions on y rencontre, et parfois quelles sottises ont été dites. Je ne redoute aucunement de me trouver, moi non plus, en contradiction sur les sujets de mon art avec tel ou tel écrivain, critique soviétique, voire personnage politique"3

2 La Semaine Sainte
The move away from the Soviet hegemony by Aragon implied the possibility of a French version of socialist realism which would not require to take the Soviet model into account. From this period (1957-59) onwards, Aragon stressed more and more a distinctive point of view on socialist realism which went beyond a mere evocation of French national form and socialist content. Aragon set himself the task of making the subjectivity an essential part of socialist realist theory in France.

"Et ne croyez pas qu'en vous le (le réalisme socialiste) recommandant, je songe à vous choisir des romans austères, purement politiques. Ce serait mal me connaître. Et si le roman sert à éduquer et à former, c'est souvent parce qu'il contient de belles, de pures histoires d'amour. Oui, c'est l'un des grandes mérites du roman que d'avoir si souvent exalté l'amour qui unit l'homme et la femme, et qui est la haute source de la vie." 1

The key words here are, "éduquer et former". In former socialist realist terminology, these verbs would have been used in the sense of political and ideological education, i.e. to conform to partinost and ideinost; to reduce these latter to "l'amour" represents an enormous modification of the basic principles of socialist realism. This example is not an isolated one; writing in Les Lettres Françaises in November 1958, Aragon made much of the novel just published by Philippe Sollers,

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1 Aragon, Louis. "J'abats mon jeu" p. 75. (discours donné à Stains. 13 déc. 1958.)
Une curieuse solitude, and not for political reasons:

"- Eh bien, il faut que je l'avoue: j'aime Une curieuse solitude, et cela sans l'ombre de justification sociale".1

Political and ideological considerations do not seem to have been of much importance to Aragon at this time. The discovery of the subjectivity and its insertion into communist literature constituted his prime goal:

"Il n'y a ici de place que pour l'émerveillement de l'amour découvert. Rien d'autre. Et peu à peu me voilà envahi par ce parfum, par ce chant, cette histoire transparente, comme une eau froide après une longue marche.

Voyons tout cela est bien subjectif. Ce n'est pas une façon de parler d'un livre. A vrai dire, je n'en parle pas encore. Je rêve autour. Et déjà quelle vertu, quelle force d'incantation dans ces mots parcourus, s'ils ont cet effet de me ramener à mon propre printemps...."2

But there is more than a mere neglect of political and ideological considerations in Aragon's theory at this time; if one takes his statements to the effect that love, as a feeling shared by two human beings and therefore part of the experienced material world, can transcend the finite nature of life, then Aragon may be seen as making a major philosophical point in the context of Marxism:

"Et je sais pour ma part, un peu mieux grâce à Philippe Sollers, que, non nous ne mourons pas tout entiers. Puisque les choses essentielles d'autres après nous vont les sentir, les toucher,

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les voir, en parler. Puisque nous pouvons bien disparaître, l'amour demeure. La vie. Ce mot après quoi on ne peut presque écrire aucun autre.\footnote{Aragon, Louis. \textit{idem.}}

With this evocation of the richness of life, the richness of the subjective, affective life, the surrealist Aragon and the communist Aragon appear to meet; it is difficult to forget, in the context of these statements, that Aragon's "printemps" was spent in the surrealist movement. In point of fact, the line being formulated at that time by Aragon which was later to be accepted by the Party as a fundamental principle, was that the subjective life was as important if not more so than the objective existence the very definition of which could lead to dogmatism. In 1966 André Stil, himself undoubt-edly a product of Zhdanovism, was more than anxious to find surrealist origins for his art:

"Il y a d'abord ceux dans la formation de qui est entrée plus ou moins, et parfois pour beaucoup, disons la tendance de la littérature et de l'art qui aboutit et correspond à Kafka et a débouché au-delà de lui par exemple sur le surréalisme. C'est, en gros, le cas d'Aragon, et aussi de beaucoup plus de créateurs communistes qu'on ne croit, en France et à l'étranger. Par exemple, c'est aussi mon cas, à l'inverse de certaines images qu'on s'en fait."\footnote{Stil, André. "Le parti et la création littéraire et artistique". \textit{Les Cahiers du Communiste}. Mai-juin 1966. \textit{No. spécial.}}

It would be wrong to assume that Aragon "manufactured" his theory of the importance of the subjective life out of nothing; as he so often claims, his work contains themes
which maintained and developed over the years, have lent an appreciable degree of continuity. One could add, however, that certain aspects of these themes were stressed, played down, or even silenced completely as Aragon left the political/cultural scene in its moments of greatest tension.

Ever since the days of the Popular Front and his meeting with Elsa Triolet, Aragon had promoted his love experience as an all-embracing phenomenon in which Party, Art and Elsa merged to form a composite whole. As a poet Aragon is supremely well equipped to weave the web of allusions and parallels which are a feature of his criticism as well as his creative work. His references to *Le Monument* as being extremely significant are statements that Elsa (and therefore his love for Elsa and therefore human love, and therefore his love for his Party which defends the principle of human love), has been instrumental in unmasking the Stalinist error. The best, and in many ways the most fascinating example of this feature of Aragon's affective/political life is to be found in his novel *La Mise à Mort* which is a statement of love and Aragon's "autocritique" with regard to his former belief in Stalinism, but at the same time a perplexing imbroglio of reality and fantasy set off in classical nouveau roman style.

It could be said with some justification, that Aragon used this theme and these devices in order to cover his
tracks. But here again, Aragon can point to earlier pronouncements which spoke of a richness of the subjective life and indeed the richness of life at any level:

"Persuadé que je ne suis pas le seul à penser que la vie dans sa richesse et sa diversité est un objet digne de l'art de parti, même dans le roman."¹

Even at the height of the Cold War in his speech at la Grange-aux-belles, Aragon maintained that precisely because socialist realism did not mean naturalism, it could exhibit intensely lyrical features:

"Et le réalisme socialiste—je m'excuse de dire des choses que vous savez tous, mais il faut revenir à ces idées simples—est justement ce réalisme-là, qui s'inscrit en face et en contradiction d'un naturalisme photographique, parce qu'à l'aspect vrai des choses il ajoute l'esprit qui les anime et très particulièrement l'esprit de progrès que nous appelons socialisme dans notre argot) et qui, saisissant ainsi les choses, ne peut se retenir d'y ajouter un élément qui, de toute évidence, n'est pas photographique: l'émotion, disons même un certaine lyrisme, et qui va parfois jusqu'à une certaine perte des pédales"²

The richness and diversity not only of life, but of the subjective life in particular, made Aragon's view of the nature of socialist realism quite different from that of the Cold War.

"La perte des pédales", which appeared as an aside in 1949, became a fully blown principle by 1959. There can be no doubt that, almost single handed, Aragon had

taken socialist realist theory out of the Cold War enclave (which, it must not be forgotten, he helped to establish) and that judged by the criteria of naradnost, partinost and ideinost, the new realism could be fairly judged as being "sans rivages".
CHAPTER THREE

The aesthetic and literary theory of Roger Garaudy - Hegel re-visited

The term "réalisme sans rivages", coined by Roger Garaudy and the subject of a major theoretical and critical work, was one to which Louis Aragon subscribed with enthusiasm.

"Je tiens ce livre pour un événement. Pour ce qu'il dit et pour l'homme qui le dit. Pour le moment où il paraît et comme gage de l'avenir. Comme aboutissement et comme point de départ. Pour ce qu'il brise et ce qu'il permet. Le refus et l'ouverture."2

At the time of the publication of this work in 1963, Aragon and Garaudy could be said to have been working in close collaboration over a period of years with the aim of destroying the vestiges of Stalinist influence in French communist art and the French communist view of the arts in general. Although as has been shown, Aragon was the first among the authorised French communist theorists to promote a wider view of the arts even prior to the momentous XXth Soviet Party Congress, it was after this date that Garaudy broke dramatically with the unrelenting line which he had followed in La Nouvelle Critique and the Party press as a whole. From the beginning of his

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conversion, Garaudy aligned himself with Aragon, commenting on Aragon's work and supporting his views. The highly charged and sometimes outrageous utterances of Aragon found a ready echo in the equally emotional responses of Garaudy. Thus, in reply to (imaginary?) critics who might reject Aragon's pleas for the right to portray communist man as possessing the whole range of human feelings including melancholy, Garaudy invokes the aid of Christian rhetoric, which as well as being emotive, also helps to underline that potentially at least, Aragon might have allies outwith the Party and enemies within.

"Aragon serait donc pessimiste pour avoir vécu, pour avoir senti plus profondément que d'autres et pour avoir dit ce déchirement de l'homme dans des vers où perlient les gouttes de sang de Golgotha. Ce qui m'étonne, c'est que les chrétiens n'avaient pas repondu à cette insulte faite à l'homme. Pas seulement à l'homme Aragon. À l'homme. Comme s'il n'avait pas le droit, communiste et militant, d'être dououreux, compliqué et grand, comme si notre bataille de communistes et de militants n'était pas livrée aussi au nom de ce droit, pour l'homme, pour tous les hommes, à la complexité et à la grandeur!"

The principle under attack in this instance is, of course, that of the truncated positive hero of socialist realism of the Zhdanovist period, but there is a wider philosophical issue concealed underneath this and similar remarks relating to all theory, bourgeois or Marxist, which sets out to place limits, categorise or establish

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norms of any kind, and that is the exposure and rejection of dogmatism. It is this endeavour which makes D’un réalisme sans rivages a major philosophical statement in which aesthetic theory is presented in a non-dogmatic fashion, i.e. not for itself but as an expression, and example, of Garaudy’s beliefs.

The sources of the "sans rivages" concept ("le refus et l'ouverture" expressed by Aragon above), is to be found philosophically in Garaudy’s rejection of the materialism of the French eighteenth century philosophers in favour of the German idealists, Kant Fichte & Hegel and their ultimate expression in the works of Marx and Lenin.

The attraction of the German idealists for Marx was their theory that the acquisition of knowledge constituted an action involving human participation, as opposed to the mechanistic empiricism of the eighteenth century materialist philosophers which reduced the human element to the role of a recording machine. With the German idealists, the stress was on human participation at every phase of the process of gaining knowledge:

"Marx, dès ses Thèses sur Feuerbach, a discerné le principal défaut de toutes les formes du matérialisme antérieur: n'avoir pas vu le moment actif de la connaissance, l'acte par lequel l'homme pour connaître les choses, va au-devant d'elles en projetant des schémas pour les percevoir, des hypothèses pour les concevoir, et vérifie ensuite par la pratique la justesse de ses schémas, de ses hypothèses, de ses modèles. La connaissance est une construction de "modèles" et le seul critère de la valeur de ces modèles, c'est la pratique.

Marx, Engels, Lénine attribuaient une telle
importance à ce moment actif de la connaissance élaboré par Kant Fichte et Hegel, que ces matérialistes ont toujours proclamé que la source philosophique fondamentale de la philosophie marxiste, c'est précisément l'idéalisme allemand.(..........)
Toutes les interprétations dogmatiques du marxisme commencent par une sousestimation de cet héritage de Kant, de Fichte et de Hegel et par un retour à Feuerbach, à Diderot ou à Spinoza."1

The early materialists laid the foundations of an approach to science which sought to eliminate the human element and to establish objective criteria in scientific method. Positivism, for Garaudy represents the epitome of this illusion that knowledge is there to be recorded and once defined and categorised, remains so for ever. The task of the great Marxist philosophers has been to demonstrate that by following in the path of the German idealists and by associating the acquisition of knowledge with an on-going human activity, that knowledge can never be fixed for all time and that it is in a continuous state of synthesis and progression. Such a conception of knowledge is for Garaudy "sans rivages", the opposite of which is dogmatism

"Le matérialisme marxiste est un rappel à la modestie: en affirmant que le monde existe en dehors de moi et sans moi et qu'il n'a pas besoin de moi pour exister, mais en même temps, en ne confondant jamais ce monde avec le "modèle" plus ou moins complexe que la science en construit à chaque époque de l'histoire, le matérialisme

dialectique a conscience que le réel est inépuisable, irréductible à la connaissance que nous en avons et que toute conception scientifique est toujours une construction provisoire, en attendant des constructions plus riches, plus efficaces, plus vraies."

Now, for the Marxist Garaudy, the production of art is a means of acquiring knowledge, and should therefore be subject to all the reservations expressed by him with regard to science and knowledge as a whole. For him there are dogmatic approaches to art, and there is a satisfactory dialectical approach incorporated in that current of Marxism which still recognises in the teachings of Marx Engels and Lenin, that essential on-going process expressed by their use of the dialectical materialist method. The aberrations of the past in Marxism were due, he insists, to the non-recognition of these truths:

"Toutes les erreurs commises au cours des débats philosophiques sur les sciences, pendant un quart de siècle, découlant de la méconnaissance dogmatique de cette dialectique de la vérité relative et de la vérité absolue, tant en qui concerne la conception du matérialisme que celle de la dialectique ou du matérialisme historique."  

Art, for Garaudy will therefore be a human activity, a means of gaining knowledge and an activity in a constant state of synthesis reflected both in the work and in the artist.

In order to situate his own theory of artistic

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production and artistic progression Garaudy first of all identified the forms of dogmatism which have held or still hold sway in the sphere of aesthetic theory and literary criticism. For example, it was quite wrong to attempt to divide Aragon's work and life into compartments, for to do so was to deny the dialectical nature of Aragon's development:

"On ne peut réduire Aragon en un système. Il est tout mouvement. Le "mouvement perpétuel" comme le dit le titre d'un de ses recueils de poèmes de 1925. C'est le sens de ce mouvement qu'il faut dégager, et non pas séparer, sans prétexte de les distinguer, le poète, le romancier, le critique. L'on ne saurait pas davantage découper dans son œuvre des moments: le surréaliste, le communiste, le patriote".

It is difficult to know whether Garaudy was disagreeing with bourgeois or communist criticism, however, later in the sixties, he was much more explicit as to his opposition to certain practices both in bourgeois and Marxist criticism. The application of psychoanalysis to artistic production, was, in his mind but another example of XIXth century positivist dogma in a XXth century guise.

"L'honorable Dr. Jung, auscultant une exposition de Picasso à Zurich, a formulé avec l'assurance solennelle propre à ce genre de diagnostic:

"Expression typique de la schizophrénie."

Premier symptôme: ces lignes dites brisées.... fissures psychiques qui traversent l'image".

Symptôme plus grave: la période bleue, symbole de la "déscente aux enfers". Pire: "La force

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d'attraction démoniaque du laid et du mal."

Pronostic final sur le cas Picasso: Contradictions de sentiments ou même totale absence de sensibilité".

Fermez le ban!

Un savant homme de la même spécialité et du même pays s'illustra naguère en expliquant que Lamartine était devenu un grand orateur et un grand poète parce qu'on l'avait sévéré trop tot!

Nous laisserons ces spécialistes à leurs spéculations pour une raison fondamentale: ce type d'explication n'explique rien, même s'il repose sur des données exactes. Même si Picasso était "schizophrène", chaque schizophrène n'est pas Picasso, pas plus qu'un nourrisson sévéré prématurément ne devient pas nécessairement orateur ou poète lamartiniens."

The psychoanalyst, like every other "scientific" critic before him had merely exposed the limitations of the Brocusteau bed of his "method". It was the neglect of the individual element of the artist's work which had led to this absurdity. This was only one example of the bourgeois genre, there were also examples to be drawn from the mistakes of Marxism:

"A l'autre pôle ce furent les interprétations pseudo-marxistes, voyant en Kafka tantôt un petit bourgeois décadent au pessimisme corrosif, tantôt l'homme de la révolte sinon du socialisme." 

Here again, "categories" and their inevitable reductionism had resulted in an impoverishment and over-simplification of a great artist's work. The same erroneous attitudes lay behind those pontificating remarks which attempted to say what was suitable or comprehensible to the masses:

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"Il n'est pas vrai de dire que de telles œuvres sont inintelligibles pour la masse. Cet art est inaccessible à ceux qui prétendent déchiffrer chaque figure comme un rébus, et font à partir de la mauvaise littérature et plate philosophie. Sans même analyser dans le détail la structure et l'espace du tableau, ni le jeu des valeurs dominé par la gamme subtile de ses gris, l'impression globale et bouffonante de l'œuvre est accessible directement. Ce serait une conception bien étrange de l'art et bien méprisante du peuple que de prétendre que seul le niveau le plus bas et le réalisme le plus plat sont à la portée du goût populaire."

In the above passage, Garaudy not only points to the dangers of a-priori assessment of what is "good and bad" for the people, but also of the inability or reluctance in the minds of such critics to consider the work of art as something other than a decipherable message, i.e., than something which is reducible to their code. To reduce a work of art to an interpretation of this kind is to deny it its "absolute" value and to imprison its message in the "relative" truth of that time and place. Also, to look for the whole meaning of a work of art in its pictorial representation rather than in the inter-play (dialectical movement) of the constituent parts of its form which link it organically to its content so that the two become one and must be considered not consecutively but simultaneously, was yet another example for Garaudy of the impoverishment of the creative act of appreciation in art. Analysis which seeks to define and "fix" definitively is doomed to failure.

But this is not to say that Garaudy had no time for that part of Marxist (and bourgeois) theory which sought to situate a work in a specific sociological or socio-economic context. This kind of information was useful providing its application was not allowed to grow into the kind of dogmatism illustrated above:

"Le milieu et l'époque jouent également un rôle capital dans la genèse d'une genre. Mais ils n'en sont pas les composantes. Ils posent à l'homme des questions. Si'il est un créateur, il leur apportera réponse."¹

This was one of the sociological approaches inspired by Taine, but Garaudy was also opposed to the Marxist sociological method as the sole Marxist means of critical appreciation.

"Pour saisir l'homme total, il ne suffit pas d'explorer dans leurs rapports complexes les contradictions objectives de l'époque et leur reflet esthétique dans le poème, le roman ou la critique littéraire, par lesquels la réalité sociale est à la fois exprimée et contredite. Il faut découvrir aussi la manière, propre à Aragon, de vivre concrètement des rapports sociaux, de les éprouver à travers sa formation, sa culture, sa sensibilité propre. Il faut dégager enfin les moments critiques des ces successives négations: les refus personnels de la réalité, des idées qui en sont le reflet déformé, et, finalement, les refus de soi-même, par lesquels l'homme accomplit son œuvre et sa propre vie."²

Garaudy therefore, while retaining the base superstructure theory with its historical and sociological dimensions as a necessary aspect of his method of enquiry,

¹ Garaudy, Roger. L'Itinéraire d'Aragon. p. 20.
² Ibid.
places great stress on the personality of the individual artist as a vital part of the dialectical definition of that particular creative process. The concept of "l'homme total" which is a leitmotif of Garaudy's theory is therefore one which sees man as both a social and individual animal. Garaudy believes that man has within him a basic aspiration to realise the whole man and that this aspiration comes into conflict with the ambient world, especially the capitalist world. This confrontation provides the first condition of a dialectical process which in the artist, provides a motor force in his creative activity (or defeats him completely and drives him to despair) Garaudy describes Picasso as a young artist struggling to preserve his ideal in the face of the alienating forces of society:

"Il recherche avec angoisse et avec espoir, la révélation de véritables figures humaines en marge de l'humanité. Il a le désir éperdu de vivre d'une autre vie que celle offerte par son époque. Donner à l'homme une autre dimension que celle de l'histoire déjà écrite."

In his quest Picasso found himself in a state of constant rebellion to the extent that revolt became a necessary pre-condition of his artistic creation, a revolt that demanded a re-definition of all the canons:

"Il a reposé le problème de la beauté et mis en cause les conventions et les systèmes.

Il ne l'a pas fait d'un seul coup. Pourtant

1 Garaudy, Roger. D'un réalisme sans rivages. p. 46.
l'on ne peut guère parler d'une évolution de Picasso. Mais plutôt d'une dialectique de la révolte.  

Garaudy recalls a conversation with Picasso in which the latter confirmed his theory:

"Je l'ai entendu dire un jour, vers 1945: "Le contre vient avant le pour." C'est la loi dialectique de son chéminement."  

There is a certain parallel to be established between this critical method as described by Garaudy and that of the orthodox socialist realists based for the most part on Plekhanov. In either case some art is designated more acceptable than other art, and usually quite definitively, so that categories of art and artist are welcomed into the fold and others banned completely. In the case of pre-Garaudy criticism, it is the artist's attitude towards the historical situation as it revealed itself in his art which provides the basis for this judgement to take place.

Marx, Engels and Lenin all pointed to writers who professed one set of ideological ideas but reflected others in their work albeit involuntarily. The problem was that post classical Marxist critics limited by ideological and even political exigences, were unable to extend the accolade of critical realist beyond the meagre list established by the first Marxists. It was Aragon

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2 Ibid.
in France who spoke out strongly in favour of the application of this aspect of Marxist theory to a wider range of authors, even contemporary authors (cf. La Lumièìre de Stendhal). Garaudy endorsed this movement and even took it further through the development of his theme of "l'homme double" the "divided self" concept used to much effect by Aragon in his nouveau roman La Mise à Mort. Modern alienated man, claimed Garaudy is forced into a situation whereby his public life is not only different from his inner life, but is in complete contradiction to it. In the case of the artist, a dialectical force field is set up which could lead to a creative situation. Poetry, because of its specific vocation of evoking the subjective rather than concrete reality, was particularly well suited to the needs of the creative personality alienated by modern society:

"Dès le début du grand développement capitaliste, la poésie a pris vocation de revendiquer l'être contre l'avoir. Contre toutes les aliénations, elle exprime le besoin de nous faire toucher l'être. Le mouvement de la poésie est commandé par le mouvement du siècle: plus l'homme devient parcellaire, plus la poésie exprime l'exigence de relier le moi à la totalité de la vie, vécue comme présence, comme marée montante de l'être. La poésie se détache de plus en plus de la pré-occupation de copier ou d'exprimer ce qui existe pour créer et pour exalter un monde plus réel et plus vrai.

La poésie devient moyen de connaissance et de découverte. L'esthétique devient une éthique, une méthode pour exalter la vie et dépasser l'homme."

In the poetry of Saint-John Perse, Garaudy detects the same aspiration towards l'homme total, noted in the cases of Picasso and Aragon. This poet whose poetry could never reflect his real (official) life and whose official life could never reflect his poetry, nevertheless entertained a basic optimism which stemmed from a vision of man in a constant state of development and re-creation. This belief which Garaudy identifies as central to bourgeois humanism (although unrealisable in bourgeois society), brings the haut bourgeois and high ranking diplomat nearer to the Marxist, although he could never be considered as a Marxist.

"Je ne fais ici nulle annexion d'un homme qui nous est, à nous marxistes, si lointain, et pas seulement comme diplomate du Quai d'Orsay, mais dans son écriture même. Mais il est dans cette symphonie héroïque de la chevauchée humaine que constitue l'œuvre poétique de Saint-John Perse, une passion de l'homme et un optimisme une image de la vie conçue comme ascension et une exaltation de l'homme sans rivage, qui nous sont profondément proches et fraternels, et que notre pensée contient et que notre action a pour tâche de vivre et de dépasser dans une bataille chaque jour."

Therefore, for Garaudy, the appeal of Saint-John Perse is not contained in a reflection of the class struggle likely to confirm Party theory, but in an artistic endeavour which reveals an innate confidence in the forward march of humanity. The feeling of fraternity experienced by Garaudy in this context does not have its origins in political or even ideological affinities, but

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in a philosophical outlook.

Perhaps the most dramatic of Garaudy's declarations of solidarity with the non-communist tradition in the arts, is to be found in his assessment of the work of Kafka, who together with Joyce and Proust, was considered the ultimate in bourgeois decadence by socialist realist theorists ever since the 1934 Congress.

Kafka, according to Garaudy suffered alienation in just about every aspect of his existence. As a German speaking Jew living in Czech society under the domination of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, his alienation was compounded by the fact that he was religiously separated from his own people and also, as the son of a fairly successful merchant, from the working class. His troubled relationship with his father, his problematic love affair and finally his position as a bureaucrat, contributed even more to his estrangement from the world of men around him. Kafka found the resolution, but not the cure, of this problem in art:

"L'expression artistique c'est, pour Kafka, une projection et une objectivation de son monde intérieur. Rendre visible cet univers invisible. Chaque texte, souvenir vécu, rêve ou fiction, est un reflet inverse de la vie réelle de l'auteur se délivrant ainsi des fantômes qui hantent son esprit."

It is true, points out Garaudy, that Kafka was not a revolutionary writer calling for an ideological solution.
to a situation which could be projected beyond his own to the point of being termed general, neither did he seek a religious solution, instead, he took his own alienation and through his growing consciousness of it, worked it into the only possible artistic and philosophical solution, that of the creation of the myth. This age old combination of the subjective and objective world, of the concrete and the transcendent, provided Kafka with the device through which he could express his consciousness of his own alienation, i.e., through metaphor.

Once again, Garaudy is struck by Kafka's courage and his deep yearning to join the world of men, the community of the human spirit. Kafka never loses sight of this goal although he knows that in his case it can never be realised. Nevertheless, the same on-going, forward movement emanates from Kafka's work as it does from Picasso's and that of Saint-John Perse:

"A l'aliénation d'une vie mécanisée Kafka oppose l'irréductible discontinuité d'un monde toujours inachevé, d'événements qui nous laissent toujours en suspens. Il ne cherche ni à copier le monde, ni à l'expliquer, mais à le recréer avec assez de plénitude pour faire éclater son insuffisance et nous inspirer le besoin incoercible d'aller au delà, à la recherche d'une patrie perdue."

On several occasions in this work, Garaudy has occasion to mention the special problem of form and content. Garaudy's treatment of purely aesthetic theory involves a rejection of the values instituted by the

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Renaissance and perpetuated well into modern times as absolute canons. Modern art had sees a process of reassessment develop first of all through the impressionists who re-educated the beholder to accept a new application of colour. In this instance the eye was being called upon to accept a new conception of beauty. With the cubists the new experience was not only visual, it also had underlying philosophical implications:

"...la synthèse mentale des formes que la peinture cubiste exigerà du spectateur, nous contraint à prendre conscience de notre propre activité dans l'ordonnance générale du monde que nous percevons. Nous avions fini par croire, après six siècles, que les conventions codifiées à la Renaissance, incrustées et petrifiées en nous par l'habitude, étaient les formes éternelles et nécessaires de la perception. L'entreprise cubiste de Picasso est un reveil de responsabilité. Cette esthétique est une morale."¹

This new school of painting had released painting from its former purely representational role transforming it into a fully fledged art form which not only communicated but demanded participation. The effort which it required of its beholders, was for Garaudy, the communion of the public and the artist in a common quest of re-discovery of the essence of humanity. This discovery was accomplished by the act of perception leading to an experience of de-alienation and that special human moment which is basic to Garaudy's philosophy of art. It is for this reason that aesthetics have a strong ethical connotation for Garaudy. He does not mean to claim that there is

some inexplicable or mystical process at work, but rather
that in casting aside the centuries of accretions and
mental habits regarding the perception of art, society
is learning to discover some basic facts about the human
condition which were evident in ancient art and still
evident in the arts of underdeveloped societies. These
early confirmations of humanity had existed in primitive
times, not because of attempts to overcome modern
alienation, but because the first form of alienation ever
was in man's relationship towards nature. Picasso
understood this when he sought to emulate primitive art:

"....il (Picasso) devait retrouver dans son
affirmation de l'homme contre les formes modernes
sociales de l'alénoation, les tentatives de
peuples qui avaient affronté les formes anciennes,
naturelles, de l'alénoation: les créateurs
d'idoles d'Océanie, d'Afrique, d'Amérique ou d'Asie.
Il ne s'agissait pas d'imiter ou de recommencer leur
art, mais de répondre à une exigence ressemblant,
par un aspect fondamental, à la leur: l'affirmation
de l'homme contre des forces naturelles ou sociales
qui menacent de l'écraser."¹

What Picasso had discovered was how to involve the
beholder in the realisation of his humanity; the mind
was no longer to be left in a purely passive role but
forced into participation in order to complete the artist's
work.

"Le problème plastique que se pose Picasso est
d'apporter une solution nouvelle, conforme à
l'esprit du XXe siècle, à l'un des problèmes
fondamentaux de la peinture - suggérer sur une toile,
c'est-à-dire sur deux dimensions, non plus une

profondeur illusoire mais les aspects simultanés des formes en mouvement dans l'espace. Ce n'est qu'un aspect technique d'un problème plus profond. En cristallisant en une seule image construite nos multiples perceptions des formes, de la lumière du mouvement, il nous contraint à remettre en cause les routines et les conventions d'une perception visuelle devenue passive, à resaisir et à dépasser toute l'activité implicite de notre perception habituelle."

But there was another important psychological principle which Picasso had grasped and that was the ability of the human mind to reconstitute a whole image from existing parts by selecting indicative fragments, Picasso was able to evoke the whole in the mind of the beholder:

"La Gestaltthéorie nous a familiarisés avec ce phénomène de la persistance d'une qualité de forme" par-delà la transposition de tous les éléments qui constituent une forme. C'est là peut-être, l'essentiel de l'esthétique de Picasso: recrier, avec des éléments proprement internes, non empruntés au modèle naturel, la réalité profonde de sa présence humaine au-delà de ses apparences momentanées, de ses expressions éphémères."

Precisely because the form of the work is instrumental in drawing the beholder into the mental process which will result in its completion the dividing line between form and content disappears, indeed, says Garaudy, form becomes content. This is why it is fruitless to look for allegories and hidden messages to be deciphered in Picasso's work, the "message" being in the mind of the

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beholder.

"Le dessin ou la peinture chez Picasso ne nous renvoient jamais à un concept qui serait caché derrière le tableau ou abstraitement élaboré par un personnage hybride dont la tête serait celle d'un philosophe avec ses concepts, et la main celle d'un peintre déployant le bouquet des lignes et des couleurs pour signifier une idée.

Chez Picasso, la signification se déploie sur le plan de la toile et la pensée ne lui est antérieure ni supérieure: elle ne fait qu'un avec le trait ou la touche.

Le Minotaure ne signifie pas une angoisse, il est cette angoisse."

Returning to the age old question of the immortality of a work of art, Garaudy maintains that it is erroneous to attempt to explain this solely through the theory that art is a cognitive activity. To do so is to focus on content at the expense of form which is just as dogmatic as the consideration of form at the expense of content. The error in both cases is the artificial separation of form and content:

"Sans aucun doute, comme l'ont montré par exemple Marx pour Balzac ou Lénine pour Tolstoï, les grandes oeuvres ont une valeur de connaissance. Mais réduire l'art à cet aspect c'est, une fois encore, méconnaître la spécificité de l'art. Il ne suffit pas de redire après Hegel, que l'art est une forme spécifique de connaissance, car il n'est pas vrai que l'art nous enseigne par images ce que la philosophie ou l'histoire nous enseignent par concepts. Je ne puis "traduire" Don Quichotte ou Hamlet, ou aucun poème, ou aucun tableau, ou aucun morceau de musique, en concepts. Car le propre de l'œuvre d'art c'est précisément d'être iréprenable à la fois par son objet et par son langage.

Par son objet qui est l'homme comme être actif, créateur. Une nature morte de Cézanne nous donne le sentiment d'un équilibre prêt à se rompre et ce monde, réduit à une table, une assiette et trois pommes ne semble retenu au bord de la catastrophe que par l'acte majeur de l'homme, de la composition de l'artiste. Nous avons là l'expression plastique de cette vérité que le réel n'est pas seulement un donné, mais une tâche à accomplir. L'oeuvre est un éveil de responsabilité, un rappel de ce qu'est l'homme: un créateur, un responsable. Cela est vrai d'Antigone comme de Faust.1

The great works of art therefore are great because they confront man with a decision to be made and only when that decision had been made does the work take on its final value; such art conveys not only ideas, it also conveys ideals.

In terms of non-marxist literary and aesthetic theory, Garaudy's work in this post-1956 period could hardly be termed original. His discovery of cubism in painting and Kafka in literature appears as commonplace in the 1960s when already the future seemed to belong to the application of structuralist theory to the arts and literature. Garaudy's avant-garde Marxist theory was twenty, if not thirty years behind the times when Lévi-Strauss had established himself as a leading theorist among non-marxist thinkers.

Garaudy's Marxist humanism had a strong flavour of the nineteenth century about it too, and this is not surprising considering his principal sources of inspiration.

The German idealists had already worked their way into XXth

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century philosophy and literature in Malraux of the thirties, Camus and Sartre all of whom were preoccupied with alienation and varying forms of (human) solutions. In a sense this common heritage established by Garaudy helped him considerably to establish his famous dialogue with the existentialists, notably Sartre, while his humanism allowed him to form a basis for discussion with certain Christian theologians. Undoubtedly, the enthusiasm of Garaudy and his affirmation of an optimism generated by his belief in the ethical mission of art, helped to provoke a sympathetic response among non-Marxists already well disposed towards the Party and relieved to see an attack being mounted against the dogmatism which had characterised so many years of political and cultural activity.

Garaudy and the Marxist Structuralists.

The reaction within the Party to Garaudy's theory was more problematic. Although at first there was no doubt that Garaudy had the full support of the Party hierarchy (his line was the official line of the Party during the late fifties and early sixties), there were signs that a viable opposition was forming against him by the mid-sixties led by the Marxist/structuralist, Louis Althusser.¹

¹Althusser regarded himself as a member of the younger generation of French Marxist philosophers who had been misled, if not betrayed by the older generation whom he felt, should have opposed Stalinism. For a full discussion of this cf. Althusser, Louis. Pour Marx. "Préface" Maspéro, Paris 1972.
In order to assess the importance of this opposition to Garaudy it is necessary to have some idea of the far-reaching implications of Garaudy's work, implications which, when drawn to their logical conclusion, were to lead to Garaudy's expulsion from the Party. As Garaudy's thought evolved throughout the 60s, it became obvious that the freedom of thought which he was fighting for in intellectual or cultural matters, he also wished to see established in political thought. His pronouncements on the changing face of the class struggle and especially the composition of the classes (he maintained that the working class no longer held the key to the revolutionary movement in France and that a new social, salaried group composed of engineers, scientists and other professional and semi-professional workers had come into being) were viewed as heresy by the Party leadership who saw the inviable rule of the dictatorship of the proletariat placed at risk. Garaudy himself was unable to accept that the theory which he had evolved in connection with philosophy and the arts could not be applied to political situations, but he was asking the impossible, he was asking for Marxism to be transformed from a state philosophy with all its implications for control and regulation, into a philosophy "sans rivages", with a human face, a freedom which could not be accorded lightly, if at all, as the invasion of Czechoslovakia was soon to record.
How then did the structuralist opposition manifest itself? Obviously it could not do so under a Stalinist banner, but it did in Garaudy’s opinion represent a new dogmatism. On the other hand, to the structuralists, Garaudy’s theory of art represented a new religion.

"Le plus pur produit de l’humanisme est la religion de l’art: R. Garaudy, dont le but est de rendre à l’homme ses "perspectives", en lançant sur l’"intimérate" qui le ramène à l’espace sans rivages (s’il ne lui manquait que cela!) de lui-même, est aussi l’idéologue absolu de la création artistique. S’inspirant d’un mot imprudent de Gorki (Imprudent parce qu’il n’est qu’un mot, et ne le supporte aucune argumentation, et d’ailleurs totalement aberrant d’un point de vue théorique) "l’esthétique est l’éthique de l’avenir", il propose, pour libérer l’homme, qu’on revienne de la religion à l’art, sans voir que l’art, ainsi sollicité, n’est qu’une religion appauvrie."¹

The above remark, made by the literary theorist and critic, Pierre Macherey of the Althusser school, betrays the feeling which characterised relationships between Garaudy and the structuralists in the Party. Much of this was due to the fact that both schools felt they had an answer to Stalinism and that their solution should be the one which, freed from the controls of the past, should be seen as the foundation of a new era in Marxist thought.

The main argument against Garaudy, who for the time being enjoyed the full official support of the Party, was that his humanist ethic obscured, if not endangered Marxist philosophy as a science.

As far as Althusser was concerned, Garaudy's error stemmed from his recourse to pre-Marxist philosophers such as Hegel, Fichte and Kant maintaining that they were the source of a re-evaluation of Marxist philosophy. In doing this he was working under the assumption that the work of the Young Marx (carried out in the period 1840-1844) which incorporated the humanism of these philosophers, represented a constant in all of Marx's theory and that his task was to restore this vital element obscured by commentators and rendered impotent by political exigences.

Althusser makes the case that there exists a distinct break (une coupure épistémologique) between the works of Marx's youth and his mature works, although pointing out that the change took place over a period of time including several sub-divisions. But from 1845 onwards it can be said that Marx's thought was governed by scientific principles gleaned from political economy:

"A partir de 1845, Marx rompt radicalement avec toute théorie qui fonde l'histoire et la politique sur une essence de l'homme. Cette rupture unique comporte trois aspects théoriques indissociables:

1. Formation d'une théorie de l'histoire et de la politique fondée sur des concepts radicalement nouveaux: concepts de formation sociale, forces productives, rapports de production, super-

structure, idéologies, détermination en dernière instance par l'économie, détermination spécifique des autres niveaux etc.

2. Critique radicale des prétentions théoriques de tout humanisme philosophique.

3. Définition de l'humanisme comme idéologie.

Dans cette nouvelle conception, tout se tient aussi avec rigueur, mais c'est une nouvelle rigueur; l'essence de l'homme critiquée (2) est définie comme idéologie (3), catégorie qui appartient à la nouvelle théorie de la société et de l'histoire.

La rupture avec toute anthropologie ou tout humanisme philosophiques n'est pas un détail secondaire: elle fait un avec la découverte scientifique de Marx.\(^1\)

It was not that Marx had rejected his former humanism, but with him it had ceased to become a basis for theory, henceforth his theory was to be governed by dialectical and historical materialism, a methodology which defined humanism as ideology.

In Althusser's opinion, Garaudy based his theory on Marxist humanism i.e. on what Marx subsequently defined as ideology; Althusser saw it as his task to restore the scientific and logical rigor of the mature Marx to French Marxist philosophy.

Althusser's concept of ideology is basic to his attitude towards literary criticism and aesthetics. First of all, it is important to recognise that "ideology" is not something which is produced in all consciousness, but rather secreted uncritically and unwittingly in the form

of structures.

"En vérité, l'idéologie a fort peu à voir avec la "conscience"; à supposer que ce terme ait un sens équivoque. Elle est profondément inconsciente, même lorsqu'elle se présente (comme dans la "philosophie" pré-marxiste) sous une forme réfléchie. L'idéologie est bien un système de représentations: mais ces représentations n'ont la plupart du temps rien à voir avec la "conscience": elles sont la plupart du temps des images, parfois des concepts, mais c'est avant tout comme structures qu'elles s'imposent à l'immense majorité des hommes, sans passer par leur "conscience". Elles sont des objets culturels perçus-acceptés-subis, et agissent fonctionnellement sur les hommes par un processus qui leur échappe."¹

Furthermore, Althusser states that the definition of humanism as ideology is actually necessary to Marxism for it requires it in order to define other manifestations of ideology which are already in existence, such as religion, art, philosophy, law etc. When this process is carried out, however, the ideological form under review was not to be defined in terms of the Young Marx's humanism of alienation and "l'homme total", but in terms of structures. A structuralist approach is a theoretical approach containing objective criteria of judgement, a humanist approach such as Garaudy's is idealistic and anti-theoretical.

In his theoretical work, Pour Marx, Althusser devotes a chapter to an illustration of the application of his theory to the theatre, seen as a manifestation of ideology.

He takes as the object of his study the production of Bertalozzi's El Nost Milan staged in the Piccolo theatre in Paris in July 1962. This production was badly received by the Parisian press: "Mélodrame épique" .... mauvais théâtre populaire" "miserabilisme contagieux d’Europe Centrale" .... "vielle chaussure éculée" Une goualante pour Piaf .... "mélodrame misérabiliste, surrenchère réaliste", from Parisien-libéré, Combat, Figaro, Libération, Paris Presse, Le Monde.

Althusser felt that this reaction might have been justified had the producer, Strehler, been content to reproduce the original in its XIXth century form, but instead he had reduced the four acts to three and in a highly significant way. In his particular arrangement of the play the producer rendered it "problématique" by inserting into the structure an element of tension experienced at the unspoken "ideological" level as explained above, a device which promised to produce a materialist theatre is developed.

In order to understand Althusser's commentary some idea of the plot and action must be given.

The first act is set in a sad and hopeless working class quarter of Milan: a miscellaneous crowd of workers and their womenfolk are aimlessly wandering around:

"Une bonne trentaine de personnages qui vont et viennent dans cet espace vide, attendant on ne sait quoi, que quelque chose commence sans doute, le spectacle? non, car ils resteront devant les portes, que quelque chose commence, en général, dans leur
The action which was promised by the ending of the first act was not carried over into the second; instead another aimless crowd (the same crowd but different characters) is seated in a soup kitchen. A group of workers from a nearby building site are engaged in a confused and halting political discussion but this is the only sign of life until again near the end of the act, Nina appears suddenly bringing with her the taste of action. The background characters fade away, we learn that the old street performer has died. Le Togasso appears and forces her to embrace him demanding the few pence that she has in her possession. The father erupts on to the scene, refuses food but drinks heavily. Swearing his daughter's revenge, he stabs the villain and flees.

The second act bears a striking resemblance to the first, a period of waiting and inactivity punctuated at the very last by a brief flash of action.

1 Althusser, Louis. "Notes sur un théâtre matérialiste" op. cit. p. 132.
The third act takes place in a lodging house for women; a gentlewoman is preparing to take some of the inmates off to mass while in the background, older women are positioned in such a way as to resemble the arches of the building.

"Nina dormait dans l'asile. Son père vient la voir, une dernière fois avant la prison: qu'elle sache au moins qu'il a tué pour elle, pour son honneur... mais soudain tout se renverse: c'est Nina qui se dresse contre son père, contre les illusions et les mensonges dont il l'a nourrie, contre les mythes dont il va, lui, périr. Car elle, elle se sauvera, et toute seule, puisqu'il le faut. Elle quittera ce monde qui n'est que nuit et misère, et entrera dans l'autre, où règnent le plaisir et l'or. Le Togasso avait raison. Elle paiera le prix qu'il faut, elle se vendra, mais elle sera de l'autre côté, du côté de la liberté et de la vérité. Les sirènes sonnent maintenant. Le père, qui n'est qu'un corps cassé, l'a embrassée puis est parti. Les sirènes sonnent toujours. Nina, droite, sort dans la lumière du jour."1

Thus Nina rejects the code which her father has erected and enters the real world of hard cash and privilege. Althusser admits that the play represents melodrama of a kind but that it contains significances which cause it to go far beyond this old and well worn tradition. Why for example should the focus of the action be on Nina's father and not on Nina herself? Also what was the meaning of the drama enacted towards the end of each act causing a lop-sided effect to pervade the whole play?

These characteristics are sufficient to take his play out of the genre and place it at least slightly apart.

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1 Althusser, Louis. idem, p. 133.
Althusser detects a deeper significance which he traces via the abnormalities indicated above. First of all the deliberate attempt by the producer to create an atmosphere of inactivity linked with the state of inanimate suspension of a whole section of society going nowhere; then there is the crowd itself which appears in each scene constituted by different individuals and taking up the major part of the act. There is a slow and insidious development in the crowd which is quite striking. In the first scene they were moving about albeit aimlessly, in the second they were seated in the soup kitchen and in the third they had almost melted into the landscape representing the gradual but persistent petrifcation of the sub-proletariat.

The two forms of action are worthy of further attention:

"C'est précisément cette opposition, qui donne à la pièce de Bertolazzi sa profondeur. D'une part un temps non-dialectique, où il ne se passe rien, sans nécessité interne provoquant à l'action, au développement; de l'autre un temps dialectique (celui du conflit) poussé par sa contradiction interne à produire son devenir et son résultat."

The non dialectical time-scale of course is represented by the crowd but the other may be further sub-divided in the characters and actions of Nina and her father. The father is exactly the kind of character identified by Marx in his writings on Eugène Sue:

"Le ressort de leur conduite est leur identification aux mythes de la morale bourgeoise; ces misérables vivent leur misère dans les arguments de la conscience morale et religieuse: sous des oripeaux d'emprunt, Ils y déguisent leurs problèmes et leur condition même. Le mélodrame en ce sens, est bien une conscience étrangère plaquée sur une condition réelle. La dialectique de la conscience mélodramatique n'est possible qu'à ce prix: que cette conscience soit empruntée au dehors (au monde des alibis des sublimations et des mensonges de la morale bourgeoise), et soit pourtant vécue comme la conscience même d'une condition (le bas peuple) pourtant radicalement étrangère à cette conscience."

The above account of El Nost Milan, is a simple but effective demonstration of the Marxist structuralist at work. Having identified an imbalance or tension at a formal level, Althusser demonstrated this as having its origin in the underlying content of the play. In so doing he made reference to an existing piece of original literary criticism by Marx himself (in fact the only extensive single study by Marx in this field); but he took Marx's theory further by identifying the nature of melodrama on the one hand and showing the terms of its surpassment on the other. Garaudy, on the other hand, would have pointed to Nina's refusal of her condition and assigned her revolt to the kind of dialectical gesture which he described in Kafka or Picasso; there is a difference between Althusser's carefully constructed passage from form to content and Garaudy's universal claim that man is in a constant state of revolt by reason of his human condition. The pre-Garaudy critic would have traced the meaning of the play from the class struggle

in which case Nina's father would have been in danger of becoming a positive hero and Nina a traitor to her class.

Althusser's principal reason for dealing with this interesting little play is to establish a methodology which he can apply to Brecht a much more complicated writer and one sadly misinterpreted by Marxists in the past.

Brecht practised the same tactic of not allowing his public to become absorbed by his theme through the interposition of a structural imbalance supplied essentially by temporal devices:

"Je suis extrêmement frappé par le fait que la structure latente dissymétrique-critique, la structure de la dialectique à la cantonade que l'on trouve dans la pièce de Bertolazzi est pour l'essentiel également, la structure de pièces comme Mère Courage, et (plus que tout autre) Galilée. Là aussi nous avons à faire à des formes de temporalité qui ne parviennent pas à s'intégrer l'une à l'autre, qui sont sans rapport l'une avec l'autre, qui coexistent, se croisent, mais ne se rencontrent pour ainsi dire jamais; à des événements vécus qui se nouent en dialectique, localisée, à part, et comme en l'air; des œuvres marquées par une dissociation interne, par une altérité sans résolution."

Because this dialectic never becomes conscious of its futility (i.e. "néant"), it turns around itself in a fantasy which provokes a succession of dramatic solutions until it is finally resolved in its own destruction. The chain can never be broken until it becomes conscious of its absurdity. Nina's father is a typical example of a

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character who has become a victim of the first condition, while she, suddenly aware of her condition, resolves to put an end to it and come to grips with reality, the reality of Marx's *Capital*, the world in which money matters and which produces the misery and suffering of which she has become supremely conscious.

To those who would criticise him for having read too much into a piece of mediocre melodrama, Althusser addresses the following apology:

"Là, on voudra peut-être m'arrêter, et m'opposer que ce que je réfléchis de la pièce dépasse l'intention de son auteur, - et que je rends en fait à Bertolazzi ce qui appartient de droit à Strehler. Je dirai pourtant que cette remarque n'a pas de sens, car ce qui est en cause, c'est la structure latente de la pièce et rien d'autre. Peu importe que Bertolazzi ait voulu consciemment ou reproduit inconsciemment cette structure: elle constitue l'essence de son oeuvre, elle permet seule de comprendre et l'interprétation de Strehler et la réaction du public."¹

The public had been affected by a significance which it had been unable to identify because it was hidden; of course they were moved by the outward themes of misery and tragedy, but their reaction betrayed the existence of something which went much deeper than the simple theme of the play. This effect was created by the producer's treatment of the time element which contained two opposing dialectical constituents contradicting each other and giving rise to underlying tension.

"Nulle part cette structure n'est exposée, nulle part elle ne fait l'objet d'un discours, ou d'un échange. Nulle part on ne peut la percevoir directement dans la pièce, comme on percevrait tel personnage visible ou le déroulement de l'action. Elle est là, pourtant, dans le rapport tacite du temps du peuple et du temps du drame, dans leur déséquilibre mutuel, dans leur incessant "renvoi" et finalement dans leur critique vraie et décevante. C'est ce déchirant rapport latent, cette tension apparentemment insignificante et pourtant décisive, que la mise en scène de Strehler donne au public à percevoir sans qu'il puisse traduire directement cette présence en termes de conscience clair. Oui, ce public applaudissait dans la pièce quelque chose qui le dépassait; qui dépassait peut-être son auteur, mais que Strehler lui avait donné: un sens enfoui, plus profond que le destin immédiat des personnages, vivant ce destin sans jamais pouvoir le réfléchir."

Mother Courage may be compared with Nina's father, both characters lived in a world constituted by their own illusions; their world was unreal in essence since they were convinced that their consciousness formed reality and not vice-versa. When the Marxist playwright introduces this type of character into a real situation which he has suggested by any means whatsoever, he has produced a piece of materialist theatre. The richness of such a theatre lies not in its proclamations but in the implications imbedded in all levels of its structure which are forced on the spectator by formal contradictions in the first instance.

"C'est cette confrontation tacite d'une conscience (vivant sur le mode dialectique-dramatique sa propre situation, et croyant le monde entier mu par ses propres ressorts) et d'une réalité, indifférente,

1Althusser, Louis. idem. p. 142.
autre, au regard de cette prétendu dialectique, - 
et apparemment non-dialectique, qui permet la
critique immanente des illusions de la conscience.
Peu importe que les choses soient dites (elles
sont dites chez Brecht sous formes d'apologies ou
de songs) ou pas: ce ne sont pas les mots qui, en
dernier ressort effectuent cette critique, ce sont
les rapports et les non-rapports internes de force
entre les éléments de structure de la pièce. C'est
qu'il n'est de vraie critique qu'immanente, et
d'abord réelle et matérielle avant d'être consciente.
Aussi je me demande si on ne peut tenir cette
structure dissymétrique, décentrée, pour l'essentielle
à toute tentative théâtrale de caractère matéri-

ciste."

The opposite of such a theatre would be typified by the
French classical theatre with its symmetry and central
focus on one character and one theme (counter characters
and counter themes are merely the same concepts expressed
via opposition). French classical theatre contains
themes which are for themselves and are not contradicted
from an exterior point of reference, by any imbalance of
the type noted above. He makes exceptions of Shakespeare
and Molière.

"Et ce n'est sans doute pas un hasard si cette
condition formelle de l'esthétique" classique"
(l'unité centrale d'une conscience dramatique,
commandant les fameuses autres "unités") est en
étroit rapport avec son contenu matériel. Je
voudrais suggérer ici que la matière, ou les thèmes
du théâtre classique (la politique, la morale,
la religion, l'honneur, la " gloire", la "passion",
etc....) sont justement des thèmes idéologiques, et
qu'ils le restent, sans que jamais soit mise en
question, c'est-à-dire critiquée leur nature
d'idéologie (la "passion" elle-même opposée au
"devoir" ou à la " gloire" n'est qu'un contrepot
idéologique, - jamais elle n'est la dissolution

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1 Althusser, Louis. op. cit. p. 144.
effective de l'idéologie. Mais qu'est concrètement cette idéologie non-critiquée sinon tout simplement les mythes "familiers", "bien connus" et transparents dans lesquels se reconnaît (et non pas: se connaît) une société ou un siècle?¹

When Brecht constructed his dramatic theory he made certain that his plays would contain no single character in whom the theme could be seen in its totality (hence the absurdity of looking for positive heroes in Brecht). The imbalance which Brecht creates in his plays through his characters living out their myths or through plots which parody reality, draws the spectator into supplying the link which makes sense of the work:

"Ces remarques permettent peut-être alors de préciser le problème soulevé par la théorie brechtienne de l'effet de distanciation. Par là Brecht voulait créer entre le public et la pièce représentée un nouveau rapport: un rapport critique et actif. Il voulait rompre avec les formes classiques de l'identification, qui suspendaient le public au destin du "héros", et investissait toutes ses forces dans la catharsis théâtrale. Il voulait mettre le spectateur à distance du spectacle, mais dans une situation telle qu'il fut incapable de le fuir, ou d'en simplement jouir. Bref il voulait faire du spectateur l'acteur qui acheverait la pièce inachevée, mais dans la vie réelle."²

In his conclusion, Althusser is not far removed from that of Ernst Fischer who also dealt with Brecht in his Necessity of Art:

"In the alienated world in which we live, social reality must be presented in an arresting way, in a new light, through the "alienation" of the subject and the characters. The work of art must grip the

audience not through passive identification but through an appeal to reason which demands action and decision. The rules according to which human beings live together must be treated in the drama as "temporary and imperfect" so as to make the spectator do something more productive than merely watch, stimulating him to think along with the play and finally to pass judgement: "That's not the way to do it. This is very strange, almost unbelievable." ¹

It is not surprising that Fischer should come to the same conclusion as Althusser, even a non-Marxist critic could conceivably put forward a similar point of view, but what is significant for Althusser is that he has arrived at this conclusion via a different method, i.e. via an internal examination taking form and content as his starting point: his collection of essays in Pour Marx represents, after all, a demonstration of the potential of the structural Marxist theorist.

The further application of his theory has been taken up by Pierre Macherey who, like Althusser is resolutely opposed to Garaudy's humanism:

"Dire que l'écrivain, ou l'artiste, est un créateur, c'est se placer dans la dépendance d'une idéologie humaniste. Délivré de son appartenance à un ordre extérieur, l'homme est rendu par cette idéologie à ses prétendus pouvoirs:² n'étant plus soumis qu'à cette seule puissance, il devient l'inventeur de ses lois, de son ordre. Il crée. Que crée-t-il? L'homme. La pensée humaniste (tout par l'homme, tout pour l'homme) est circulaire, tautologique, tout entier adonné à la répétition d'une image. "L'homme fait l'homme."³

²Author's italics.
As the title of his book, published in the series edited by Althusser would suggest, Pierre Macherey has chosen to expand on Althusser's literary theory in order to lay the foundations of a possible Marxist-structuralist theory of literature. In a series of articles published in 1966 in *La Pensée, La Nouvelle Critique* and even Sartre's *Les Temps Modernes*, Macherey began to outline a theory which added fuel to the lively debate being conducted within the Party on the subject of structuralism and Marxism. His opposition to the Marxist humanism of Garaudy stemmed from the same "anti-humanisme théorique" which Althusser maintained formed the basis of the mature Marx's philosophy, a concept which the Party found distinctly unattractive at this time of political alliances with the non-communist left. Macherey made no attempt to disguise his resolute opposition to Garaudy (cf. above) and to humanism in general which he saw as a fundamental source of error especially in aesthetic or literary theory.
The substitution of ideological "faith" for theory was as unacceptable to Macherey as it was to Althusser and indeed his opposition formed the starting point for his theory of literary production. In his opinion the traditional theories of literature and literary criticism were shot through with ideology whose limiting influence formed the greatest barrier to the appreciation of literature in all its complexity. Ideology manifested itself in this field through a priori attitudes as to how a work should be approached and explained. Macherey lists several "illusions" which characterise traditional theory; one of the most important of these is the empirical approach which is founded on the principle that the work has a "message" which should be registered and described by the critic as impartially as possible:

"Celle-ci (l'illusion empirique), traite l'oeuvre, objet de l'entreprise critique, comme une donnée de fait, immédiatement découpée, et s'offrant spontanément au regard qui l'inspecte. Ainsi, par l'intermédiaire de l'opération critique, l'oeuvre n'aurait qu'à être reçue, décrite, assimilée. Le jugement critique, entièrement placé dans la dépendance de son objet, n'aurait qu'à le reproduire, l'imiter, c'est-à-dire le suivre dans ses lignes nécessairement évidentes, pour faciliter le seul déplacement que l'oeuvre puisse accomplir: celui qui la fait consommer, c'est-à-dire qui la fait passer du livre, qui la retenait provisoirement dans ses liens, jusque dans la conscience plus ou moins claire, attentive et avertie de ses lecteurs possibles; alors le modèle de cette communication est donné par le regard critique."\(^1\)

The view of the work is limited therefore, because in this instance, it represents a mere projection of the

original on a mono-linear plane containing no commentary on genesis, extra-literary significances etc., i.e. there is no attempt to penetrate the work in any way but simply to note and catalogue its existence. The empirical approach is matched only by the normative which sets out to compare the work with a pre-conceived ideal, a perfect model which highlights the deficiencies of the latter and provides a measure for its artistic success:

"L'illusion normative voudrait que l'oeuvre soit autre qu'elle n'est: ceci suppose que l'oeuvre n'a de réalité et de consistance que par son rapport à un modèle auquel elle peut sans cesse être confrontée, et qui fut la condition de son élaboration. L'oeuvre suppose un modèle: ainsi elle peut être corrigée; elle peut être effectivement modifiée, ou faire l'objet d'un procès. L'oeuvre ne dépend donc du jugement que dans la mesure où elle renvoie à un modèle indépendant, qui à la limite pourrait être connu directement, sans que soit besoin du détour par la mise en œuvre. La critique, par son jugement ne fait que rectifier le travail de l'écrivain, et ainsi elle le prolonge, et s'installe dans l'intimité du texte, à laquelle elle participe profondément."

A third error of traditional criticism according to Macherey is to assume that the work contains one underlying truth which orchestrates all its parts, such an interpretation implies an intention on the part of the author which he has then allowed to condition his work in all its aspects (form, content, style etc.). Macherey argues that this approach is yet another example of the impoverishing effect of traditional critical attitudes towards literature, since to reduce a work to

one key concept is to deny it, in his mind, its very essence as a work of literature. For Macherey there is not one truth in a piece of literature but a multiplicity of truths without which there would be no work at all.

The literary work for Macherey is something much more complex both in its formation and its communication than hitherto defined by those whose interpretations were (and are), governed not by a properly constituted theory, but by idealistic pre-suppositions which credit both the work and its author with objectives which confirm and reinforce their own attitudes.

If this situation is to be avoided, maintains Macherey, the work and the author must be regarded as subject to a whole force field of influences working at different levels and over which the author has by no means strict control:

"Une oeuvre littéraire n'est donc jamais absolument préméditée: ou plutôt elle l'est à plusieurs niveaux à la fois, sans que, dans son ensemble, elle puisse relever de l'exercice d'une unique et simple pensée. Il serait donc insuffisant pour en fixer la forme, de dire que l’oeuvre est construite, qu'elle résulte d'un agencement calculé et arrêté. Il ne faut pas s'arrêter au procédé, comme on voulait le faire certains des formalistes russes (Chlovski en particulier), mais derrière lui reconnaître le procès réel sans lequel l'artifice resterait à sa pure facticité. L'oeuvre est le produit d'un travail, et ainsi d'un art. Mais tout art n'est pas artificiel: il est l'oeuvre d'un ouvrier et non d'un illusioniste ou d'un montreur d'ombres. Le pouvoir de cet ouvrier n'est pas le faux miracle de faire surgir, à partir de rien, une forme absolument choisie (c'est pourquoi il ne sert à rien de dire que l'auteur d'une oeuvre est un créateur); et le lieu de son exercice n'est pas la scène d'un
théâtre sur laquelle serait seulement présentée provisoirement, une appari tion décorative. C'est justement la raison pour laquelle il ne produit n'importe quoi, mais des œuvres déterminées, des œuvres réelles. Parler de l'art comme procédé, ce n'est pas savoir ce qu'il est..."1

Macherey therefore opposes "créateur" with "ouvrier" and "création" with "travail", but in doing so, he does not mean to reduce his concept of the work of literature as something which results from the skilful manipulation of raw materials into an edifice which can be easily dismantled by the critic in turn. Macherey's theory is saved from this accusation (as legitimate as any of those he lists), by the theory that the author does not always remain in control of his own material, either for external reasons, or for reasons which relate to the interplay of forces within the work.

All works of art and literature are affected by external influences largely beyond the control of the author and artist:

"On n'étudiera donc pas l'œuvre littéraire comme si elle était une totalité se suffisant à elle-même. Comme on le verra, si elle se suffit à elle-même, ce n'est pas en tant qu'elle serait une totalité: les hypothèses de l'unité et de l'indépendance de l'œuvre littéraire sont arbitraires; elles supposent une profonde méconnaissance de la nature du travail de l'écrivain. En particulier, l'œuvre littéraire est en rapport avec le langage en tant que tel; par lui, elle est en rapport avec les autres usages du langage; usage théorique et usage idéologique, dont elle dépend très directement;

par l'intermédiaire des idéologies, elle est en rapport avec l'histoire des formations sociales; elle l'est aussi par le statut propre de l'écrivain ainsi que par les problèmes que lui pose son existence personnelle: enfin, l'œuvre littéraire particulière n'existe que par sa relation avec une partie au moins de l'histoire de la production littéraire, qui lui transmet les instruments essentiels de son travail.

Thus Macherey does not neglect those categories exterior to the work which are noted in the theories of his fellow Marxists. It is interesting to note that, as in the case of Garaudy, the class struggle and history is not presented as the sole determinant influence as in the socialist realist period. Macherey is not afraid, either to question the insufficiency of at least one theory promoted by the Father of Marxism himself; the case in point is that perennial aesthetic problem for the Marxist of the immortality of Greek art:

"L'oeuvre littéraire n'est pas seulement l'expression d'une situation historique objective, qui l'attribuerait une fois pour toutes, avant même qu'elle soit faite, à un public déterminé; comme on sait, elle déborde une telle détermination. (.........) Les poèmes homériques ne sont pas apparus dans le décor d'une fausse éternité: pourtant ils n'ont pas fini d'être lus. Reconnaissions là l'indice d'un problème essentiel, même si la solution proposée ensuite par Marx (l'homme moderne qui s'abandonne au charme de l'art grec, c'est le père qui en lui-même adore sa propre enfance: en termes que ne refuserait pas Grombrovicz, c'est le mur à la recherche du non-mur, de l'inachevé), présentée seulement par allusion, ne peut pas nous satisfaire. Le caractère idéologique de cette solution est manifeste. L'oeuvre peut être entendue par d'autres que ceux pour

qui elle semble avoir été faite: elle n'est pas enfermée dans les limites que trace autour d'elle une lecture immédiate."

Whereas in the past theorists such as Lefebvre, Garaudy, Plekhanov etc., have all attempted to turn Marx's original pronouncement to their advantage somehow or other, Macherey is content to declare it wanting and even to go so far as to categorise it as "ideology" (no doubt meaning, humanist).

The principal reason why a work of art should retain its appeal over a period of time, as far as Macherey is concerned, is because it contains the forces of its attraction within its own dynamic and multi-dimensional structure as well as those exterior agents mentioned above.

Arguing from a dialectical standpoint, Macherey points out that the dynamic of opposites has a lot to do with the success of a work of art in which absences evoking in turn a compensatory mechanism of completion in the eye of the beholder, are extremely important in the understanding of the success of a work.

"Il ne faut donc pas hésiter à déceler en l'oeuvre incomplétude et informité: à condition de ne pas prendre des mots dans un sens négatif et dépréciatif. Plutôt qu'à cette suffisance que lui donnerait une consistance idéale, il faut s'arrêter à cet inachèvement déterminé qui informe réellement le livre. L'oeuvre doit être en elle-même, incomplète: non hors d'elle-même, car il suffirait de la compléter pour la "réaliser". Il faut comprendre que l'incomplétude que signale en elle

l'affrontement de sens distincts est la vraie raison de son agencement. La ligne mince du discours est l'apparence provisoire derrière laquelle il faut savoir reconnaître la complexité terminée d'un texte: étant bien entendu que cette complexité ne saurait être celle, illusoire et médiâte, d'une "totalité".¹

This theory of "absence" is entirely in line with the treatment of Bertolazzi's play by Althusser in which the significance of the work was deduced from the vacuum which the critic detected in the structure of the production. Macherey endorses this approach unhesitatingly:

"Expliquer l'oeuvre, c'est, au lieu de remonter à un centre caché qui lui donnerait vie (l'illusion interprétative est organiçiste et vitaliste), la voir dans son effectif décemntement: c'est donc refuser le principe d'une analyse intrinsèque (ou d'une critique immanente), qui fermerait artificiellement l'oeuvre sur elle-même, et, du fait qu'elle est entière déduirait l'image d'une "totalité" (car les images aussi se déduisent). La structure de l'oeuvre, qui permet d'en rendre compte, c'est ce décalage interne, ou cette césure, par le moyen duquel elle correspond à une réalité, incomplète elle aussi, qu'elle donne à voir une absence déterminée: c'est elle qu'elle dit si, par force, elle n'en parle guère. Ainsi, ce qu'il fait voir en elle, c'est ce qui lui manque, un défaut sans lequel elle n'existerait pas, sans lequel elle n'aurait rien à dire, ni les moyens de le dire ou de ne pas le dire."²

Such a concept of literary criticism is a long way indeed from the straight deduction of ideological affinities (or their opposite) in literary works for the purpose of

propaganda and yet paradoxically, it is to Lenin the original theorist of the subordination of art to Party requirements, that Macherey turns for a theoretical confirmation of his method. Macherey suggests that the series of articles written by Lenin on Tolstoy holds the key to a possible Marxist approach to literature. Macherey recognises together with every Marxist critic who has commented on these articles, that Lenin was correct to show that Tolstoy had conveyed an accurate picture of the conflict of ideologies of the different classes engaged in the class struggle in Russia which was to culminate in the 1905 revolt, and this despite any attempt on his behalf to set these out deliberately. Thus Lenin, together with Marx and Engels before him, pointed out that a work of art should not be taken at its face value or more accurately, at the value the author or artist would like to have bestowed upon it in concordance with his own ideology. Part of this state of affairs arises from the fact that the artist can only give a partial view of the world around him, but this is no problem, on the contrary in accordance with Macherey's theory of the incomplete work, it is even a necessary condition. The writer has a privileged view of his times which he makes it his task to communicate:

"Il est bien engagé dans le mouvement de son époque, mais engagé de façon telle qu'il ne peut nous en donner une vue complète. Il ne le peut, s'il le faisait, il ne serait plus un écrivain, mais se définirait par un nouveau rapport au savoir et à
l'histoire. L'écrivain n'est pas là pour dégager la structure complète d'une époque; il doit nous en donner une image, un aperçu privilégié, qui en droit, n'est pas remplaçable par un autre. Ce privilège lui vient de sa place dans la société, où il existe sous deux formes, comme individu et comme écrivain. Le rôle de l'écrivain, si l'on peut dire, est de "faire vivre" la structure en la racontant.1

A "good" writer may be distinguished from a "bad" writer via the effectiveness of his representation of the structure. If this were the case, a writer who subscribed to Marxist philosophy would produce better literature than one who did not. Even if one were to reject this in favour of the thesis that a good writer communicated unconsciously, the specifically literary element would be much diminished as a result.

"On dira le grand écrivain est celui qui nous propose de la réalité une "perception" aiguë. Mais cette notion de "perception" pose bien des problèmes: on ne saurait évidemment la confondre avec celle du savoir théorique; ce que l'écrivain sait de la réalité ne se confond pas avec l'explication scientifique que le parti marxiste donnera de cette réalité, précisément parce que l'écrivain use des moyens qui lui sont propres".2

Lenin gave little indication of how this specifically literary aspect of his critical theory should be defined. His own references to the artistic quality of an artist were vague and unhelpful:

"C'est dire que l'analyse d'une oeuvre littéraire ne peut pas se contenter des concepts scientifiques qui

servent à décrire le processus historique, ne de concepts idéologiques. Il lui faut de nouveaux concepts qui permettent de rendre compte de ce qu'il y a de littéraire dans le livre. C'est sur ce point que Lénine semble le plus démuni (mais ne nous inquiétons pas, la critique bourgeoise est encore plus pauvre que lui; jugeant, elle ne dispose que de concepts idéologiques). Quand il veut caractériser ce regard spécifique, impitoyable, que l'écrivain porte sur la réalité historique et sur l'idéologie, Lénine dit: c'est un artiste de grand talent, un peintre incomparable, il a su rendre avec un grand relief...

But in his explanation of Tolstoy as a mirror of the Russian revolution, Lenin gives a demonstration in Macherey's opinion, of the possible shape of a Marxist aesthetic. Macherey enters into a long and complicated discussion of what Lenin meant by the "mirror" symbol. Was it a selective mirror, a broken mirror or a mirror reflecting on several planes simultaneously? In the end Macherey concludes that the mirror device as used by Lenin does in fact represent a concept of the literary work as possessing a multiplicity of images (i.e. truths) operating and interacting at different levels. The work of literature can take an ideology and translate it into a representation which is art:

"Le livre donne de cette idéologie une certaine image: il lui donne des contours qu'elle n'avait pas, il la construit. Et ainsi, il la rencontre implicitement comme un objet, au lieu de la vivre de l'intérieur, comme si c'était dans l'intimité d'une conscience; il l'explore (ainsi que Balzac explore Paris de la Comédie Humaine par exemple), il la met à l'épreuve de la parole écrite, de ce regard aux aguets où toute subjectivité se prend, cristallise dans l'avènement d'une situation objective. L'idéologie spontanée (elle n'est pas

spontanée dans sa production, mais en ce que les hommes croient y accéder spontanément), dans laquelle vivent les hommes n'est pas simplement reflétée par le miroir du livre; par lui elle est brisée retournée, mise à l'envers d'elle-même, dans la mesure où la mise en œuvre lui donne un autre statut que celui de l'état de conscience. Dédaignant par nature le point de vue naïf sur le monde, l'art, ou au moins la littérature, installent le mythe et l'illusion dans leur rôle d'objets visibles.¹

The study of the means of this transformation is essentially part of the domain of aesthetics and not of ideology.

On several occasions, Macherey points out that although his view of literature involves the definition and description of structures, he nevertheless maintains that this system is never completely "knowable":

"Une explication véritable porte toujours sur une réalité composée, où se rencontrent nécessairement plusieurs déterminations; elle ajuste les effets de lois appartenant à des régions différentes de la réalité. C'est pourquoi dans le tissu de l'œuvre on rencontre toujours des trous, des contradictions, sans lesquels il n'existerait pas. Alors il faut dire que le mouvement du texte est systématique, mais que jamais, il ne peut être ramené à l'institution d'un système simple et complet."²

The work of literature therefore does not lend itself to the same kind of analysis as other social phenomena, although its ingredients may be identified within the multi-dimensional structure which goes to make up the veritable work of art. The materials of the productive

²Ibid.
process may be defined, but the final system cannot be fixed as definitive as this would constitute a devaluation of the work and an underestimation of its essence and genesis.

The striking feature of the work of both Althusser and Macherey is that although they are able to point to the ingredients of a work of art, their treatment of the subjective process provoked at the receiving end of the communication, would seem to be lacking. Admittedly their extensive use of dialectical categories such as the implied presence or absence suggests a device rather like Garaudy's use of the Gestaltt theory in which the (absent) whole may be evoked by the presence of a part. Other similarities appear between the two schools. Both, for example, incorporate a notion of infinity in their theories; with Garaudy it is his "réalisme sans rivages", with Macherey it is the work of art which cannot be reduced to one system but to a portrait or model of a complex system which also refuses to be categorised completely. Both schools attack traditional criticism and Garaudy's opposition to positivist tendencies in criticism is readily echoed by Macherey's rejection of empiricism which would seem to be the same thing.

Nevertheless, there are enormous differences between the two schools which are of great theoretical significance, the principal one being that of humanism, Marxist or otherwise. It is Garaudy's humanism which fills his work
with an almost religious atmosphere and an idealism stoutly opposed by the Althusser school whose commitment to theoretical rigour had begun to win it much support among Party philosophers. Garaudy, on the other hand could not relinquish his defence of the subjectivity of man and above all of the importance of the principle of the ability of man to act upon and change his environment:

....."l'antihumanisme théorique" d'Althusser repose sur l'illusion du pouvoir, en s'installant dans le concept, traiter des structures et des rapports sociaux en faisant abstraction des choix humains. Ainsi est éliminé le "côté actif" de la connaissance si fortement souligné par Marx comme le "moment subjectif" (et nullement individualiste) de l'initiative historique, le rôle actif de la conscience qui est au principe même d'un parti révolutionnaire. Dans cette perspective disparaît ce qui est fondamental dans le marxisme: l'unité de l'acte créateur et du conditionnement, le passage de la structure à l'activité humaine qui l'a engendrée, l'unité profonde de la théorie de la pratique."¹

The gulf separating the two schools was a wide one and furthermore it had begun to seriously affect Party unity at this level of its activity. The fact that Roger Garaudy was the director of the Centre de Recherches et d'Etudes Marxistes, founded by the Party in 1961, and also member of the Politbureau meant that the Althusser school was being seen as operating essentially outside the inner ring of "official" Party philosophers.

In March 1966, for the first time since 1936, the Central Committee met to discuss the problems which had

¹Garaudy, Roger. Marxisme du XXe siècle, p. 295.
arisen of late over the question of the Party's official policy in cultural and philosophical matters.

From the beginning it was clear that whatever the Party's philosophers might think, the leadership of the Party saw the question in the light of national politics. The novelist and Politbureau member, André Stil prefaced his speech with a reference to the importance of the alliance of the Left in the Party's campaign in the recent presidential elections:

"Cette session du Comité central avait été jugée souhaitable et depuis déjà longtemps avant l'élection présidentielle, en fonction d'un certain nombre de débats et questions posées, notamment parmi les philosophes et dans les milieux de la littérature et de l'art.

Entre-temps sont venues les élections présidentielles, ce qu'a été cette occasion la démarche du Parti, l'essor des forces d'union qu'elle a permis, et personne ne peut ignorer que les discussions et éventuellement les difficultés en question s'intègrent dans un grand mouvement positif. Cela ne veut pas dire qu'elles disparaissent, mais ce qui nous commande au premier chef, y compris dans leur examen, c'est notre contribution la plus large à ce qui grandit dans notre pays, et y fait apparaître plus concrètes que jamais les possibilités de victoire d'une démocratie réelle et d'un passage au socialisme par la voie pacifique.

Dans ces conditions plus encore, il nous appartient surtout de définir une grande politique culturelle, qui ait visage digne de notre Parti vers lequel les yeux se tournent de plus en plus."¹

Under such conditions the Party let it be known that it did not want to present a disunited front, but more

important still it wanted a policy in literature and the arts which would appear acceptable to the non-communist political parties and groupings of the Left. Both of these considerations played a major role in the ensuing debate at Argenteuil.

Stil's attitude towards Garaudy and Althusser revealed itself to be exactly that of Party, i.e. a bias in favour of Garaudy, but no condemnation of Althusser. In this case diversity and rivalry was seen to be advantageous.

"Et je crois que, d'un côté comme de l'autre où notre résolution apportera les précisions que le Comité Central jugera souhaitables, il serait injuste et non conforme à la réalité que ces précisions portent la moindre ombre sur ce qui est l'essentiel, à savoir la grande qualité générale, dans leur diversité, des contributions des philosophes communistes. L'opinion même très contraire que l'un ou l'autre peut avoir de certains aspects de leurs travaux ne saurait cacher à personne ce qui peut venir de bien à la fois de l'emploi large et inspiré de tout l'outillage philosophique que fait Roger Garaudy par exemple pour ouvrir les "perspectives de l'homme", et par exemple de la constante vérification de cet outillage qui semble occuper plus Louis Althusser, dans son obstination à "éprouver les titres", de toutes les notions en circulation. Que rien ne vienne freiner le meilleur sur le chemin de personne." 1

Thus Althusser is seen not so much as a rival to Garaudy on an equal footing with him but as a zealous clerk testing the latter's theories.

Garaudy's work "D'un réalisme sans rivages" together with Aragon's preface is welcomed as having introduced a

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1 Stil, André. Art. cit. (Stil's italics.)
useful stimulus into an area where it is most beneficial, but Stil's remarks contain a suggestion of reservation with regard to the overall theoretical importance to be attached to this work:

"Je prends cet exemple parce que c'est précisément à propos de ce livre, depuis sa parution, que se sont cristallisées des réactions, dans diverses directions, et à l'étranger comme en France, qui apparaissaient moins quand cette orientation s'exprimait déjà ici ou là de façon moins systématique et sensationnelle.

Je dis "à propos de" ce livre parce que la juste démarche qu'il manifestait pour l'essentiel avec éclat, talent, et par quoi il faisait honneur à notre Parti, a connu aussi des interprétations et développements qui sont pour le moins matière à discussion.

Ce livre qui pourtant ne se proposait pas la réexpression complète de la politique du Parti dans ce domaine, mais de faire apparaître sur trois points particuliers des manques à gagner considérables……."

One doubts whether Garaudy would have accepted this limited interpretation of the significance of his work in which he most certainly promoted a new Marxist concept of realism, as distinct from righting three particular wrongs in respect of the Party's attitude towards three individual artists.

Stil consequently revealed the grounds for his reservation. According to him some enthusiasts, on the strength of Garaudy's theory, were rejecting all realism in favour of the forms contained in the work of the

1Stil, André. Art. cit. (My italics).

2Garaudy's work was bitterly opposed in the Soviet Union.
surrealists, Kafka etc.

"Et ceux qui découvrent tout ce côté ignoré d'eux dans l'esprit du "tout beau tout nouveau", se croient autorisés et invités par une telle démarche à changer de bible comme chemise, poussant à l'extrême et dépassant même le fameux "sans rivages" qui faisait image dans le titre, jusqu'à parfois remplacer un certain réalisme dogmatique d'hier par un nouveau dogmatisme, aux yeux duquel c'est le réalisme cette fois qui serait suspect, considéré comme vieilli, dépassé, forcément coupable de propagande, schématisme, naturalisme, populisme, ouvrierisme, etc."

The other extreme mentioned by Stil was that of a reactionary movement towards the old socialist realism (of which there is no evidence in all the Party's publications of this period). One can assume therefore that the real significance of Stil's reservations was that while the Party was prepared to promote Garaudy as its leading philosopher and theorist in the field of artistic criticism and theory, it reserved the right to caution as part of a well established practice of political strategy, which would make Garaudy, like so many before him dispensable when the time came. Aragon's attitude was exactly that of the Party. In the light of these reservations (however slight), the remark made by Aragon concerning his view of Garaudy's realism, becomes highly significant:

"Le livre de Roger Garaudy est un événement, dans un monde où l'arbitraire essaie de prendre le masque de la science, le dogmatisme le visage de l'art. C'est comme réaliste, et ne vous y trompez pas: comme réaliste socialiste, que je salue sa tranquille

\[^{1}\text{Stil, André. Art. cit.}\]
audace, et que je me plais à penser que des hommes jeunes, que tout tendait, chez nous, à détourner du réalisme comme d'une affaire jugée, condamnée, enterrée, y verront le commencement d'une méditation active où l'art contribue à la transformation du monde."

In his presentation to the Central Committee of the report on the work carried out by the specialist commission charged with the drawing up of the final resolution, Aragon made a further remark which implied the existence of reservations with regard to the theory of Garaudy:

"Ce n'est pas chose ignorée que j'ai suivi avec beaucoup d'intérêt et dans son ensemble approuvé le travail de notre camarade, ce qui ne veut pas dire que le cas échéant je n'aurais pas, sur des points de détail, des remarques à faire au camarade Garaudy, notamment dans le domaine qui est le mien. Mais dans les circonstances présentes, c'est-à-dire en raison du retentissement extérieur que ne manquerait pas de donner à ces remarques des commentateurs intéressés, je préfère m'en abstenir."

But for the moment at least Roger Garaudy's theory, or at least certain aspects of it, was receiving enthusiastic support from the Party. The main feature of Garaudy's work which the Party was only too ready to endorse, was his humanism: for Stil, it was that aspect which allowed for a Marxist approach to the individual artist and to the subjectivity as an area which ought to be explored by the Marxist critic. In this respect, the resolution

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1 Aragon, Louis. Preface to D'un réalisme sans rivages. pp. 18-19.

echoed Garaudy's sentiments:

"Il y a dans toute oeuvre d'art une part irréductible aux données et cette part, c'est l'homme même. Tel écrivain, tel artiste était seul capable de produire l'oeuvre créée. Concevoir et créer c'est ce qui distingue des possibilités de l'homme de celles de l'animal. La culture, c'est le trésor accumulé des créations humaines. Et la création artistique et littéraire est aussi précieuse que la création scientifique, dont elle ouvre parfois des voies. Une humanité débarassée des contraintes et des entraves qu'impose le "calcul égoïste" doit pouvoir trouver ce trésor et s'en saisir dans sa totalité."

If Garaudy's humanism was accepted by the Party, Althusser's theory of "l'anti-humanisme" was rejected. There was indeed such a thing as a Marxist humanism, claimed the resolution, which could be defined in non-bourgeois terms:

"Il y a un humanisme marxiste. A la différence de l'humanisme abstrait par lequel la bourgeoisie masque les rapports sociaux et justifie l'exploitation et l'injustice, il découle de la tâche historique de la classe ouvrière.

L'affirmation d'un tel humanisme ne signifie nullement le rejet d'une conception objective de la réalité au bénéfice d'un vague élan du cœur. Au contraire, le marxisme est l'humanisme de notre temps parce qu'il fonde sa démarche sur une conception rigoureusement scientifique du monde; mais il ne sépare pas son effort de compréhension du réel de sa volonté de le changer pour le bien de tous les hommes."

The Party's opposition to Althusser may well have been related to its view of him as a revisionist potentially more dangerous than Garaudy whose humanism provided a useful ground for dialogue with Christians and the

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non-communist Left in a period of political alliance.

Althusser was tackling the enormous task of re-visiting
the whole body of classical Marxist theory armed with the
formidable weapon of structuralism and an academic rigour
of no mean dimension. Garaudy on the other hand effused
friendship and could be said to embody the spirit of the
common ideological front established in the sixties. In
the end, it was Garaudy who was expelled from the Party
because of his application to political theory of the
principles forged in his philosophy coupled with his
vehement attack on the Party hierarchy for not pressing its
disapproval of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia where
his kind of Marxism with a human face had been brutally
put down.

As for literary theory, it must be said that both
Garaudy and Althusser had achieved much in instituting a
new climate of research and taking French Marxist theory
not only out of the socialist realist impasse, but also
its XIXth century positivist and naturalist heritage. The
increasing use of psychological and structuralist techniques
had themselves saved Marxist literary theory from remaining
a sociology of an increasingly crude and doctrinaire variety
and introduced the real possibility of the establishment of
a Marxist aesthetic through the treatment of the individual
artist and his individual output.
CONCLUSION

The evolution of orthodox Marxist literary and aesthetic theory in France in the twenty years following the Liberation was governed, as in the inter-war period, by political considerations.

The first signs of a softening of attitudes on the communist side in the Cold War appeared at the level of cultural policy initiated by Stalin himself while the political war proceeded unabated; this paralleled exactly the chain of events which led to the formation of the Popular Front in 1936, i.e. the implementation of cultural policies likely to attract intellectual support over a broad front while a fierce political war was waged against all enemies of Left and Right.

In 1946, Louis Aragon delivered one of the first blows in the Cultural Cold War when he censured Garaudy who, in his view, seemed to be unaware that a new phase in communist history was about to begin. From this time onwards Aragon is seen to be intimately concerned with all orthodox pronouncements and movements as far as the Party's policy towards culture and intellectuals was concerned. It was not Aragon, however, who seized the opportunity presented by Stalin's letters on linguistics in order to break new ground in Marxist aesthetic theory, but Henri Lefebvre. While Aragon did not openly associate himself with this innovatory work, the Party did at least publish it demonstrating that it was also aware of the change in climate, but the fact that it was Lefebvre
who published the first major contribution to a non-Zhdanovist theory of aesthetics demonstrated that the Party was not yet sufficiently sure of the permanency of this change of policy; Lefebvre, being a fringe figure in the Party could be easily discredited and dispensed with should the political need arise. Aragon on the other hand was destined to play a much more central role which blended perfectly over a period of at least twenty years, his own personal aspirations and those of his party.

The French Party was ready to follow the Moscow line with regard to cultural policy at least until 1956 but with prudence.

The first conclusive signs to be given by the French Party that it intended to move out of the Cold War positions as far as cultural theory was concerned, was given at the 1954 Congress at Ivry when Louis Aragon moved to the fore in order to make an important statement with regard to socialist realism. This progress was temporarily halted by the 1956 events (i.e. the Soviet XXth Party Congress and the Invasion of Hungary) but Aragon was to continue his efforts supported by Roger Garaudy into the late fifties and early sixties. The political moves by the Party towards a union of the left as reflected in the resolutions voted at the congresses of 1959 and 1961 confirmed the import of the earlier cultural policy modifications.

As has been shown in the part of this study dealing with the inter-war years, the most fruitful periods for the
development of Marxist theory came at times of alliances with the non-communist and the accompanying relaxation of controls over communist intellectuals; it was under these conditions that *Commune* was regarded as one of the most distinguished literary and cultural reviews of the 1930s in France. It could also be concluded that in times of isolation and sectarianism, no literary theory of value would be produced by the Party. This was not in fact the case as the work of Lefebvre and Aragon very well illustrates. In order to understand the reasons for this, it is necessary to analyse the nature of socialist realist theory in France during the Cold War.

As has been shown, the socialist realist theory which was propagated in France following the Soviet 1934 Congress was that of Gorky and not Zhdanov. For reasons of political and moral alliance the elements of socialist realist theory which was stressed in France at that time were the harmless realist tenet of the typical character in the typical situation and the socialist aesthetic principle that socialist art should be national in form and socialist in content. This was the soft outer layer surrounding the hard core established by Zhdanov in his three principles of naradnost, partinost and ideinost; it was the "hard core" which was imported to France in 1947 and formed the basic doctrine of the review *La Nouvelle Critique* founded in 1949.

Socialist realist theory gave an effective demonstration
of its adaptability when it was shown that by simply
stressing the one element, naradnost, the whole doctrine
hardened into dogmatism worthy of the proletcult. At any
given moment the pressures could be released and the outer
layer promoted according to the needs of the moment. It
was for this reason that when Aragon began in 1953 to
promote what seemed to be a new departure in socialist
realism in his work *la Lumière de Stendhal*, it was the
nationalist aspects of the works of the various authors
(including the contemporary novelist Robert Merle) which
were stressed. This was a real and tangible sign that a
new tendency had been instituted, the international peace
movement, the defence of French national values and culture
against alien (American) influences were the political
watchwords which accompanied Aragon's pronouncements at
the political level.

Aragon had never really identified himself consist­
ently and publicly with Zhdanovist socialist realism
although he was quick to chasten Garaudy in 1946 for having
adopted a suspect line. Garaudy was more than justified
in his reply in pointing out that the Party's greatest poet
and novelist had not exactly satisfied the criteria of
Zhdanovist socialist realism in his own work. Thus it
could be said that Aragon remained outside the controversy
surrounding the passionate defence of socialist realism
erected by the young intellectuals of the *Nouvelle Critique*
group. The source of their commitment is not difficult
to ascertain since they believed that the Cold War was merely an ideological extension of the shooting war which they had just come through, and the memories of suffering and sacrifice must have tempered their resolve to defend the principles which they believed they had fought for and also to uphold the Soviet Union whose example in the war (after the German invasion of the U.S.S.R.) had been so magnificent.

This was indeed a very vocal group which was given much prominence in the Party press (notably in the all important \textit{Cahiers du Communisme}), but other work was being carried out especially by Lefebvre whose collected articles of this period constituted the basis of his \textit{Contribution à l'esthétique}; admittedly Lefebvre was a special case, but one must also include Aragon in the category of non-Zhdanovist practitioners. This period although remembered for its extremism did have its less sectarian aspects. The role played by Aragon during the second phase of the thaw, i.e. from 1957 onwards was not quite so obvious but equally important.

The support which he lent to Roger Garaudy's attempts to launch a Marxist/humanist approach to literary and aesthetic theory, were vital to the latter's acceptance by the Party. Aragon's preface to \textit{D'un réalisme sans rivages} illustrated both his support for Garaudy and also his political acumen when he stated that in welcoming Garaudy's achievement, he was doing so as a socialist realist; in this way Aragon kept his options open in the event of a
recourse to Cold War tactics, while Garaudy had irretrievably committed himself to a strongly reformist line.

Garaudy's passionate defence of the Hegelian and German idealist humanism of the Young Marx was not the first example of its kind in the post-war period. Henri Lefebvre, who had been expelled from the Party because of his dissident attitudes towards the invasion of Hungary by the time Garaudy published his major work, had already laid the foundations of a re-evaluation of the Young Marx as a possible source of theoretical innovation in his _Contribution à l'esthétique_, but it was the Austrian Marxist Ernst Fischer whom Garaudy invoked as his source. Notwithstanding it is possible to identify a Marxist humanist current in French Marxist theory in the post-war period as contained in the work of Lefebvre pre-1956 and continued by Garaudy post 1956.

A second current of theory established itself in opposition to Garaudy and the humanists, namely in the structuralist group of French party philosophers led by Louis Althusser. Aragon again had an indirect influence in this quarter since he had done much to promote the writing of Philippe Sollers (in the same way as he had championed Robert Merle) and Sollers himself became a driving force in the Tel Quel group instituted in the early sixties. This group interested itself in a structuralist approach to literary criticism. Just as Aragon's creative work had previously mirrored his socialist realist theory by
taking national themes as subject matter, his support for Sollers was accompanied by a venture into nouveau roman techniques, notably in *La Mise à Mort*.

Louis Aragon therefore remained a powerfully influential figure in the formulation of Marxist aesthetic and literary theory in the post-war era, and always for (ultimately) identifiable political reasons.

The progress made by the current Lefebvre-Garaudy in instituting a recognisably aesthetic theory was remarkable. It is best approached via the aspect of form. In the pre-war era formal questions were not raised except by those who were advocating national forms (e.g. Aragon), during the Zhdanovist period artistic and literary form was reduced to such a transparent level that there was hardly anything to consider. It was Lefebvre with his discussions on the psychology of formal perception and his connection with the act of beholding as an essentially human act, who introduced consideration of form as a serious object of Marxist reflection. By doing this, Henri Lefebvre became the first French Marxist to explore the possibilities of a Marxist aesthetic since there can be no aesthetic theory as such without consideration of problems of form. His enquiry enabled him to tackle the all important question of the application of the dialectical method to matter other than content, and in doing so, made it possible for Marxist theory to make a genuine contribution to non-Marxist thinking in this field.
Garaudy amplified this process and his writings on Aragon, Picasso and Kafka were welcomed not only by his Party supporters but by critics outside the Party. Garaudy (and also Lefebvre) were able to establish contact with the sources of modern consciousness as reflected in the arts. Figures such as Proust, Joyce, Kafka and schools such as the cubists and the surrealists, were brought into the Marxist pale as they were shown to have included in their formal innovations the same rejection of the bourgeois establishment which previous generations of socialist realist critics had detected in the content of certain 19th century writers in order to bestow the accolade of critical realist.

But in the eyes of the structuralist opposition this progress had been bought at a price which French communism could not afford to pay, i.e. at the expense of basic Leninist principles.

On close inspection the aim of the structuralist critic seems to be to identify the final dialectical contradiction as contained in a work of art as being that produced by the class struggle.

The few examples published by Macherey and Althusser are carefully selected in order to illustrate their thesis and one has the impression that despite their impressive rigour and their accumulation of argument that an a-priori position has been justified and that the tool which they have forged for the exploration of formal qualities has been
used in the end to illustrate a point of view which previous socialist realists had been able to accomplish with less refined apparatus. Garaudy has denounced them as neo-stalinist dogmatists and although this must be an exaggeration, it is possible to detect the principles of Leninism which proclaim the utilitarian function of art and criticism and also, of course, the major point of the importance of the determinant nature class struggle and the ensuing dictatorship of the proletariat.

The Hegelian humanism of Lefebvre and Garaudy obviously goes back, not just to the Young Marx (whose theory the structuralists hotly contest), but to the pre-Marxist sources of dialectical materialism; in doing so, it represents a very real threat to the Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy. By stressing alienation and the possibility of its defeat via work (and therefore art which is seen as a form of work), Garaudy and Lefebvre were reaching back into a XIXth century tradition whose real effect in non-Marxist circles had already been digested and transcended in France by the twenties and thirties. This is well illustrated by Garaudy's belated Marxist welcome to the cubists and surrealists on the one hand and his refusal of abstract art on the other. The difficulty of presenting these points of view to a non-communist public in the 1960s as being progressive and avant-garde were insurmountable; there was something distinctly old-fashioned about Garaudy's theory. On the other hand the Marxist structuralists could
profit from the reputation won for their method by the most recent philosophical and most advanced thinking in the social sciences of the time.

The appeal of the Althusser school was and is very real among the younger members of the Party (especially those who had not been old enough to taste the total commitment of the occupation and the Cold War) to the extent that the special meeting of the Central Committee called in 1966 had as its sole purpose the open discussion of the merits and demerits of the two opposing schools which threatened to split the Party's intellectuals in a serious theoretical divide whose philosophical ramifications went much further than the criticism of novels and works of art.

Garaudy's philosophy could be said to have been of the same stamp as that followed by the Czechs prior to the 1968 invasion, i.e. communism with a human face; Althusser would seem to represent a Leninist backlash and an impressive one.

It should not be forgotten that when Garaudy was finally expelled from the Party in 1970 it was because of his revisionist political theory which diminished the revolutionary role of the proletariat in the eyes of the orthodoxy, a theory which had been sharpened by his disappointment over the invasion of Dubcek's humanist socialist republic, and his desire to explore the possibilities of a modern and less compromised Marxist ideology.
What are the long term implications of these issues for the future of literary and aesthetic theory produced by French communist intellectuals?

First of all, as has been shown, it is inevitable that literary and aesthetic theory will continue to be linked to political action for such is the essence of Marxist revolutionary philosophy. When the Central committee decided not to explicitly take sides in the Garaudy/Althusser confrontation, it did so in order to provide the broadest possible theoretical front which would be attractive to non-communist intellectuals likely to subscribe to the current Union of the Left.

If the French Party shares power in a socialist France, this broad policy will continue. Such a situation is the best guarantee for the fruitful expansion of literary and aesthetic theory as experience of the past has shown.

If however Althusser and the structuralists are seen to rise within the Party then it would be only reasonable to conclude that the Party was entering or about to enter another phase of isolation with its accompanying sectarian attitudes and dogmatism.
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