

IN THE FIFTH ZONE: ABSTRACT PAINTING, MODERNISM, AND CULTURAL DISCOURSE  
IN THE WESTERN ZONES OF GERMANY AFTER WORLD WAR II

By

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B.A. Hons., The University of British Columbia, 1983

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
(Department of Fine Arts)

We accept this thesis as conforming  
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

September 1986

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## ABSTRACT

After the defeat of Hitler Germany in 1945, modernist painting in a non-geometric, largely abstract style took hold in the western occupied zones of the country (1945-49), and flourished for all intents and purposes unchallenged as the foremost established style of painting during the early years of the Federal Republic of Germany (1949 through the 1950s). Most art historical scholarship to date posits this phenomenon in one of two modes:

1. Germany, enthralled by barbarism for twelve years, in the west opened its eyes to the modern painting of its European neighbors and of the United States, and via studious application, managed to catch up to those allegedly pre-existent standards; or,
2. Western Germany became a pawn of the United States in its Cold War struggle with the Soviet Union and its art "reflects" this.

In contrast, my thesis shows that these views, while "tidying up" the contradictions of the period, in the final analysis are untenable since:

1. A static standard or "norm" of modernist painting had nowhere in Europe survived intact the upheavals of the earlier portion of the twentieth century--and in particular of the war;
2. The initial postwar period, from c.1945/46 through to 1948/49, cannot be described as a period of cultural "Americanization" because US cultural policy itself was at this time far from univocal;
- and 3. Within Germany, many cultural opponents of Nazism, people who had been proponents of advanced art before the National Socialist period, were actively involved in forging a renewed culture of modernism. Far from being

passive recipients, these artists, writers, and intellectuals were helping to create the new index of postwar modernism.

Creating this new index took place within the context of great political and social insecurity within Germany as well as within Europe generally, and it took place within the context of renewed international--in particular Franco-German--co-operation. These conditions in turn affected the articulation of advanced art. My thesis then also suggests answers to the question of why the particular style of abstraction based on subverting form, rejecting non-objective painting, and employing archaic and primitive motifs, whilst eschewing all forms of didacticism or other direct address to the viewer, should become the preferred style of advanced painting in West Germany. The discussion includes the artists Willi Baumeister, Fritz Winter, E.W.Nay, Theodor Werner, Heinz Trökes, and others. To answer these questions and to prove my conclusions, I employ a method of investigation based on a close reading of the critical texts relating to art and culture produced during this period, in particular as found in art magazines like Das Kunstwerk; a comparative analysis of concurrent developments in France and the US, notably similar questionings of traditional high modernism by French "informel" and "art autre" styles; and a re-examination of political movements and tendencies in postwar Germany which today have been largely forgotten, especially those socialist movements which strived for a unified and non-aligned Europe. The underlying assumption throughout is that the postwar period prior to c.1950/52 in western Germany was one of surprising cultural vitality and ferment which was, however, largely eclipsed by the more familiar image of an economically resurgent, artistically more complacent, and supposedly Americanized West Germany in the 1950s.



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Serge Guilbaut and David Solkin for allowing me to pursue this topic and write the thesis with complete and utter independence while simultaneously maintaining their expectation of exacting standards--no mean feat considering the fact that this thesis was produced "long distance," that is, circa 2,600 miles-as-the-crow-flies-long-distance.

Furthermore, I thank my husband Werner Bahlke for his unwavering support, criticism, harassment, and haranguing--in the end, it doesn't matter who irritates whom, it's the pearl that counts. (Old oyster wisdom.)

And then there are friends who, whether they know it or not, provide needed respites from art history--like holding up a mirror and letting me see some real human comedy. In particular, I thank Gabriela and Christian, Severin and Lioba, who "Meister"--fully coddled me back to life during my stay at their house in Munich, and Marilyn Daniels and Scott Mackenzie for making 2,600 miles feel less like it was on another planet, and Betsy Burke for that and many other things besides--like memory, for instance.

## INTRODUCTION

To the extent that the last works of art still communicate, they denounce the prevailing forms of communication as instruments of destruction, and harmony as a delusion of decay.

--Max Horkheimer, "Art and Mass Culture" (1941)

This statement, made during Max Horkheimer's exile from Nazi Germany in New York,<sup>1</sup> announces what could not be said aloud within the Third Reich, but what would become the keynote intellectual viewpoint after the defeat of fascism in 1945. It anticipates the deep pessimism which resulted from the perceived crisis of occidental culture, a crisis which was felt to be never clearer than in the years following the war. Whereas in the earlier part of the twentieth century the hope for a radical political change in western societies, a change borne by the working class in coalition with progressive culture producers and intellectuals, kept alive the image of a humanity without oppression, the rise of fascism in Europe, the 1939 Hitler-Stalin pact, and World War II derealized the remaining vestiges of this hope in the hearts and minds of many.

The ensuing "nihilism"--a catch-all popular in the postwar press<sup>2</sup>--was such a prevalent theme in Germany that we have to ask in what way it affected and interacted with culture and modernist painting. To do this we can compare a painting made in 1947 by Willi Baumeister to Horkheimer's prescient statement of 1941. Baumeister, along with painters such as Ernst Wilhelm Nay, Theodor Werner, and Fritz Winter, among others, came to represent the modernist abstract painting idiom of the 1950s in West Germany. Willi Baumeister was born in the

late nineteenth century, like Horkheimer, in Stuttgart.<sup>3</sup> He had not emigrated, instead staying in Germany during the twelve years of NS rule, holding out in what was referred to as "inner emigration." Denounced as a degenerate artist, he was forbidden to paint, and like many others, was conscripted into some sort of service to the regime--in Baumeister's case, he worked as an advisor in a paint factory. Whilst the "outer émigrés" were often isolated in their new, sometimes temporary homes,<sup>4</sup> the "inner émigrés" were totally cut off from international developments, isolated by the censorship of the "thousand year realm."

The painting, called Two Eras (fig. 1), shows two crudely marked totemic figures bunched toward the right of the canvas and set on a pale ground. These rough figures partially overlay geometric shapes which look to be free-floating in a kind of utopic, imaginary space. The scene is anchored by a horizon line made of the same crude material as the primitive shapes arising from it--it is their humus, so to speak. This ground and its totemic offspring are the dominant force in the painting: both are drawn in a purplish brown, heavy line, contrasting greatly with the much brighter squares and circles--green, yellow, orange, blue, dark pink--in the background, overcoming geometry's vibrancy through sheer oppressive darkness. Although threateningly dominant, they are not substantial because they are sheer, that is, they exist only in outline and hence thereby increase their ghostliness. What is striking is that the lighter, elegant geometry floating in the void behind the figures came first, while the totems, overlaying their ground, came after. And, adding to the paradox, that this ideal stencil which is the impossible ground of the figures is also connected by fine broken lines to the humus of primitivism. One era is overlaying another, and both are facing the viewer. The older era forms

the ground for the newer, and it is shown as an impossible world where gravity counts for nothing. Yet this utopia has to be an illusion since it, too, is rooted in the ground. The same ground, in fact, as the era which follows it, and which takes the shape of a kind of mute and ghostly primitivism.

A look at Baumeister's prewar work leaves one with the impression that Two Eras is a comment on recent history. Baumeister, who was already a well-known artist during the Weimar period, had been passingly associated with the Bauhaus,<sup>5</sup> and during the 1920s and 1930s he made paintings which depended on geometric regularity, as, for example, his Composition, circa 1930 (fig. 2). This constructed vision gradually gave way during the later 1930s to more disturbingly irregular, amorphic shapes and sometimes surrealist themes, an attention to the subconscious, and to myth. Thus, a painting like Variation of Eidos I, 1938 (fig. 3) has relinquished the geometric faith in reason which in Composition shows a human figure, newly designed, taking pride of place in a series of logically ordered squares, and instead shows the disintegration of the human figure: although not yet headless, the depicted figure's head, located top centre, is separate from the rest of its anatomy which consists of amoebic, only vaguely articulated shapes. During the war years and after, this breakup of rational figuration is increasingly exacerbated, as is clear in the 1944 Perforation (fig. 4), and disintegrates into a world of mute, hermetic, non-communicative informalism.<sup>6</sup> In Two Eras, the harmony between those two worlds of reasoned geometry and subsequent primitivism is a delusion of decay and the communication of this idea shows the destructiveness of the first era, the rawness it has beget.

The question which then arises for culture itself is: given the examples of Horkheimer's pessimistic statement and the seemingly irreconcilable "two

worlds" shown in Baumeister's painting, what were the options open to culture after the Second World War? How could artists and intellectuals, and through them the country, rebuild culture, especially in relation to its failures before and during the war? In dealing with this topic, the researcher is bound to encounter a number of prejudices which must be dismantled. Due to the postwar creation of two rivalling power blocs in Europe, one beholden to the leadership of the United States and the other to the Soviet Union, abstraction, according to a pro-western view, is seen primarily as an expression of "freedom" in contradistinction to the propagandistic art of social realism which, being the Soviet aesthetic, is "dictated."<sup>7</sup> The apologists for "freedom" then rally around abstraction and proclaim the vital superiority of occidental culture:

Hardly had the ideal of modernism risen again to the surface here and there, in the midst of the hunger and misery of a ruined Germany, than it was at once clear that it had not been affected by the war and the horrible political events. Rather it had completely preserved that former continuity of thought which nourished it, and was responding to the same forces which guided the new European generation in painting.<sup>8</sup>

By presenting the "ideal of modernism" as some sort of (ideal) essence which miraculously rises all by itself, Werner Haftmann, the art historian just quoted, makes of all modernism a wholly unhistorical process which then in turn can dismiss history: "not been affected by the war..." Haftmann presents a continuity untouched by historical events by relying on an essentialist view of modernism. Using a different strategy, but arriving at the same destination, are those historians who harp on the concept of the "Zero Hour," that is, that with the defeat of the Third Reich one had the chance of starting over completely, utterly, from "scratch," as it were, again giving the false impression that the past would not intrude.<sup>9</sup> Here again it is appropriate to cite another 1941 essay by Horkheimer: "It is vain to hope that in better times [i.e., when the war is over and Hitler is defeated] men will return to

morality,"<sup>10</sup> a warning, it seems, against "zero hour" naiveté.

Meanwhile, those in the west who are critical of the point of view presented by Haftmann in his 1957 Museum of Modern Art catalog essay tend to denounce all hermetic and non-communicative art as having been instrumental in the failure of the German people to come to terms with their past and, it seems to be implied, with their "German-ness."<sup>11</sup> Here again we face an essentialist outlook. The historically determined tendency of Germans to regard themselves as having a "special" history is here repeated in the assumption that only the Germans among all modern nations have failed to come to terms with their past.<sup>12</sup> In those art histories which point an accusing finger at the west and in particular the United States, but which also maintain the basic assumption that in the course of historical development Germany has taken a "Sonderweg," an essential spirit is supposed to exist a priori. On the one hand this "spirit" is "special," whilst on the other it is continually made the object of others's whims--that is, it is prevented from coming into its own. The resultant Weltschmerz then becomes an affect-filled vehicle designed to run down windmills. Hence, when in the 1970s the grip of American dominated formalism loosened, "neo-expressionism" could be brought on stage as the incorporation of the Zeitgeist (German, of course) and as the supposed coming to terms with past history (special, of course). Typical of this is a 1983 catalog-book, Expressions: New Art from Germany, in which Siegfried Gohr, one of the authors, writes:

[Baselitz's] conception of painting has shown both that it is impossible for modern art to deal naively with nature, and that artists must defend themselves against pressures to conform--a necessity particularly marked in Germany, a society that in the immediate postwar period derived its standards from external sources and, oriented to the West and to America, once again relinquished its own tradition.<sup>13</sup>

In particular the suggestion that Germany "once again relinquished its own



tradition" hearkens back to a pre-modernist, pre-critical concept of nationalism which the Second World War had bankrupted. That this is an ahistorical view clothing itself in History should no longer surprise those who examine the immediate postwar production of culture--including intellectual discourse and painting--and thereby rid themselves of the attitude that German postwar culture was on the one hand "special"--in relation to the rest of bombed and burning Europe--and on the other hand solely "object," that is, strictly at the whim of the Allied occupiers and assorted "bad" Germans.

Hermetic, non-communicative painting could be as critical of the past, of Nazism, and of the failures of occidental culture in general as the most accusative expressionism or realism of the time. There is, for example, no guarantee that, had realism dominated abstraction in the 1950s, a work such as George Grosz's 1948 The Painter of the Hole (fig. 5) would not have generated a formulaic, standardized style. This is a work filled with interesting allusions --note the hole in the painter's head, the same hole repeated on every canvas, the rats crawling from the hole and over the rim of the canvas, the fact that the painter is but a living corpse with a hole where his viscera should be, a rat where his genitals should be, a manacle still round his neck--but even though it speaks of the painter's inability to speak, of his lack of any subject left untouched by the ravages of war which could still be painted, one nonetheless associates the work with preconceived ideas of pain, exigency, and despair. It could thus be argued that since abstract, non-communicative painting was a negative response, a refusal to engage in outworn categories of thinking, it was often more critical than its humanist-inspired counterpart. That this kind of art should in later years help to engender a non-committal relationship with the past, as G nter Grass has maintained in the article

cited above, is an historically determined matter, not one which is essentially of the art. Only by rejecting this essentialist view and making our analysis historical can we understand the conditions of culture's production and in turn understand the product. We will also come closer, I hope, to better understanding the intricate process whereby a critical, negative culture helped to reshape history affirmatively. That is, I am suggesting that abstract painting in postwar Germany was the logical counterpart of a discourse of pessimism, and that in turn the reshaping of the negativity entailed in this culture was crucial to the regrouping and reintegration of western Europe today.

Affirmation--of conformist modernism and "Americanization" on the one side and social realism and "Stalinization" on the other--did not occur immediately upon the division of Germany into four zones and its later consolidation into two states. The complexity of postwar culture was far too unmanageable for anyone to impose an instant conformity on it. In the Soviet-occupied zone, for example, where a similar cultural policy was followed as in the western zones, art exhibitions featuring a broad spectrum of styles were mounted.<sup>14</sup> The first major show in the east zone took place in Dresden in 1946 and included all major styles from realism through to expressionism, surrealism, and abstract art.<sup>15</sup>

Likewise did the west zones show all the art which had been suppressed during the Nazi period. In June 1946 a major exhibition of modern German art was mounted in Konstanz (southern Germany), where again the core of the exhibition was formed by the art suppressed during the Third Reich: it included the expressionism of the "Brücke" group, Nolde, Schmitt-Rottluff, Rohlf, Heckel, Dix, and others, as well as the cool constructivism of Bauhaus artists

such as Oskar Schlemmer, and also abstractionists like Max Ackermann and Willi Baumeister.<sup>16</sup> In this immediate postwar period, an emphasis on pluralism provided the keynote theme to almost every exhibition. The reason for this can be found in a desire to evade the stigma of dictatorship which the Nazis had imposed during their twelve year reign. But what was also at stake for the German organizers of these exhibitions was reaching the generation of twenty- to thirty-year olds who had grown to maturity during the Third Reich and who were wholly unfamiliar with the aims and history of modern art. As one reviewer of the Konstanzer show put it:

What, for example, can a twenty-year old today, one who was not blessed with receiving in his parents's home an artistic stimulus and an awareness of the tradition of artistic development, know of the expressionists, of the strivings of abstractionists or surrealists?<sup>17</sup>

The need to escape from the enforced backwardness of "blood and soil" culture was crucial to regaining a measure of credibility within Europe. This need was perceived by almost everyone--excepting those who still adhered to Nazism--in the German postwar political and cultural spectrum, and the way that it could be exploited and forged into an ideological vehicle is a major concern of this paper.

One of the ways of rectifying the damage wrought by Nazism was through a recourse to humanism. Here again the eastern and the western establishment did not differ. Whilst the western establishment recuperated the critical thrust of a painting like Two Eras into the uninterrupted continuum of modern art, firmly entrenched in a humanist idealism (we need only recall Haftmann, cited above, as one example among many of this), an orthodox marxist view denies the existence of critical content, and instead chides the west for its anti-humanism, its attempt to thwart the humanism of communism:

A coalition of all reactionary, anti-humanist, and anti-national forces

ever brought forth by the dominant culture of German imperialism along with the equally reactionary forces of American imperialist culture was made possible on the basis of Americanization and militarization. The importation of imperialist mass culture brought about a kind of fusion of these imported cultural goods with the ruling imperialist culture of the Federal Republic of Germany at the expense of the humanist cultural tradition and of the progressive national cultural heritage.<sup>18</sup>

Analysis will show that the traditionalists on both sides wanted to claim "humanism" for themselves, whereby each side modified its definition. For the west, humanism is that factor supposedly common to all men and women which binds us to each other, to which we can all relate, and which ameliorates our community. Critics of this ideology have pointed out, however, that the appeal to "our common humanity" is in an exploitative, capitalist society used to whitewash basic structural injustices which have little to do with an abstract concept of humanity or humanism, but which are brought about through man's ruthless and arrogant ambition to dominate other men and women. In a communist ideology, "humanism" is more akin to a radical potential which will be liberated as a result of revolutionary struggle; here, too, it is an abstract principle drawing heavily and largely uncritically on earlier, nineteenth-century conceptions of humanism, only now linked to revolution, a bourgeois *bête noir*. Yet there was another discourse at work during this period which through its pessimism and nihilism called into question the very concept of nineteenth-century humanism, which critiqued it and posed a threat to it, thereby gnawing at the bourgeois roots of the concepts which supported social configuration in the west and in the east. This critique gained momentum due to the abhorrent culmination, at war's end, of twentieth century history: genocide, millions dead, the survivors--natives and "d.p.'s" alike--living in rubble without heat in winter and very little food, a social structure that was in shambles, the guilt of being responsible for this, the fear that war would break out yet

again, this time fought with atomic weapons. As conditions of life changed, however--in the west notably with Marshall Aid from 1947 onward--so did the grounds of the negative response to the original crisis, which in turn changed the way cultural products functioned ideologically in society.

Beyond attempts by traditionalists to re-implement a prewar style attached to a humanist outlook were critics who at a very early stage were demanding a more current, selective, and rigorous painting in the attempt to detoxify German culture of Nazism. One writer in the independent magazine Die Gegenwart specifically called on modern art to help in this task. But a clear caveat was added:

If one tries to upkeep a "Modernity" with works whose masters are today standing at the edge of old age, if one thus tries to reestablish a connection with an artistic style that was valid over thirty and more years ago, one would yet again resuscitate a past as model for the present. That this would be a mistake does not need to be elaborated.<sup>19</sup>

The first voices to call for an art appropriate to the time were making themselves heard. The reference to taking "a past" as a model seems to refer to the NS credo of trying to turn the clocks backward, of rejecting modern culture. They, too, took "a past" as a model, and any attempt to do so after their defeat --even if one takes a "good" past--is doomed from the outset. Embracing the modern and the future was in this sense not simply a flight from the past, but a necessary corrective to it.

The dilemma, then, was one of having to face an immediate past which is tainted forever, of not being able to reconnect with an even more distant past without running the risk of repeating a NS tactic, and also of facing on the one hand an orthodoxy of the left and the right which wants to reinstate "humanism," and on the other hand the presence of dissatisfaction, disillusionment, and "nihilism," which, by rejecting almost everything, is threatening the very

possibility of rebuilding society. In the following chapters, we will examine a series of events, occurring around 1950, which will enable us to understand how a discourse of negativity could be recuperated into affirmation and why only the abstraction of artists like Baumeister and those associated with a brand of "informal" painting succeeded in establishing itself as the emblem of postwar German painting. The first chapter will deal with the intellectual/cultural discourse and its relation to painting. A 1950 symposium on "the image of man in our time," held in Darmstadt, will serve as the introductory event to the issues as well as some of the protagonists. In this chapter I will examine how the concerns of 1950 were rooted in the previous decade and what their international resonance was.

The second chapter leads more immediately into the political issues of the day. By examining an exhibition of Berlin artists held in the Federal Republic's new capital city of Bonn in 1950, I will show why the pluralistic approach of the first postwar exhibitions could by 1950 no longer represent modern and free culture. These inquiries will show in what way modernism--discredited by the Nazi regime--could be restored first in the western zones of Germany, and eventually reach its dominant position in the Federal Republic of Germany.

Unless specifically noted otherwise, all translations into English of the German articles, books, and catalogs quoted in this thesis are my own.

Fig. 1: Willi Baumeister, Two Eras, 1947, oil on canvas.



Fig. 2: Willi Baumeister, Composition, c. 1930, pencil and gouache on cardboard, Cambridge, Busch-Reisinger Museum.

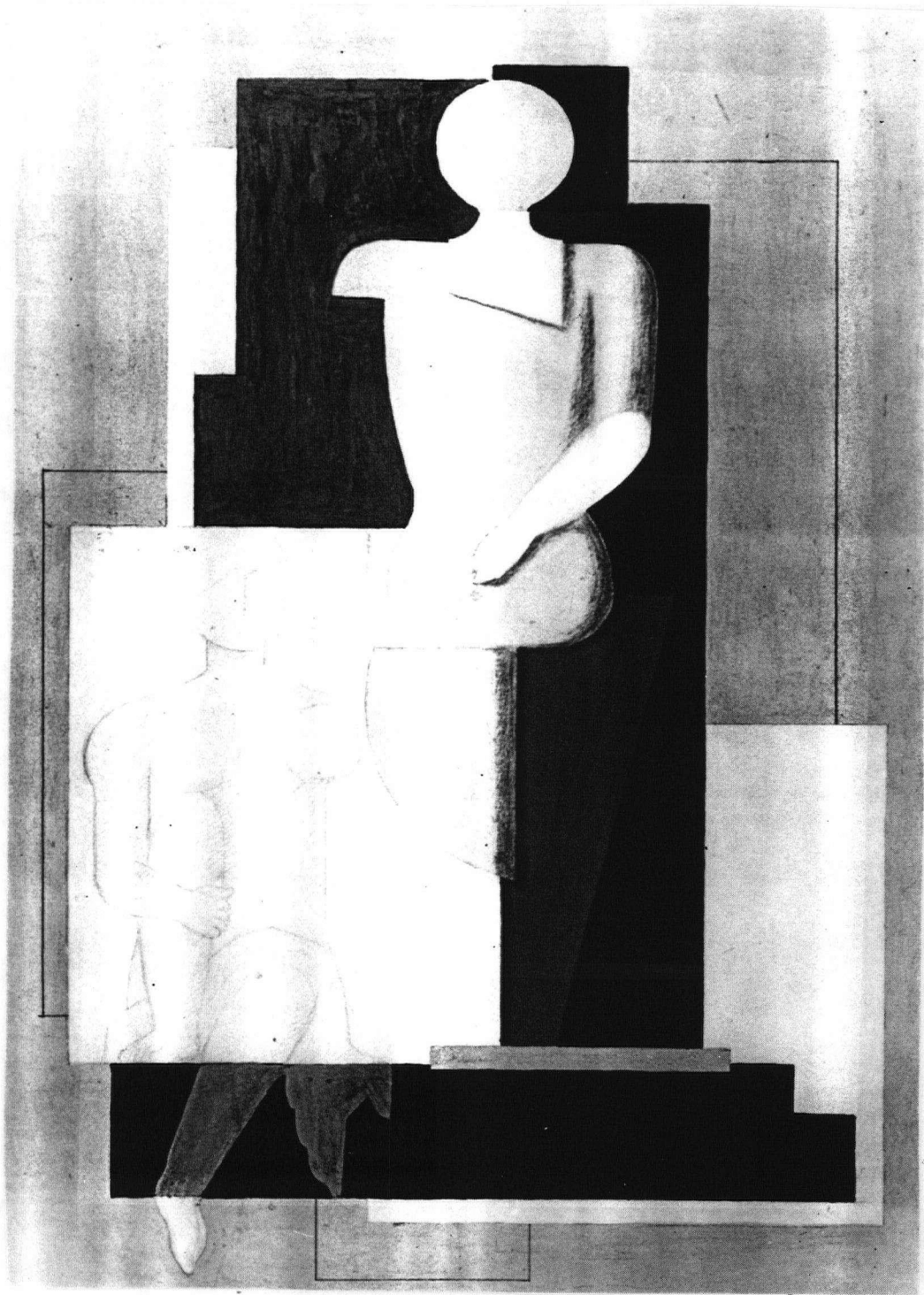




Fig. 3: Willi Baumeister, Variation of Eidos, 1938, oil on canvas, Stuttgart, Staatsgalerie.



Fig. 4: Willi Baumeister, Perforation, 1944, oil on canvas.



Fig. 5: George Grosz, The Painter of the Hole, 1948, aquarelle, Cambridge,  
Courtesy of The Harvard University Art Museums (Busch-Reisinger Museum)  
Purchase-Germanic Museum Association



## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>The quote heading this paper comes from Max Horkheimer, "Art and Mass Culture," Studies in Philosophy and Social Science 9 (1941), p.295.

Horkheimer left Germany for New York City in 1934; the journal Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung, published by the Institut für Sozialforschung and edited by Horkheimer, existed from 1932 (Frankfurt) to 1941 (New York). Until volume 8 nr.3 (1939/40) articles were still published primarily in German, with a few English-language pieces throughout. Thereafter, the journal appeared in English, also changing its name to Studies in Philosophy and Social Science.

<sup>2</sup>A perusal of journals like Frankfurter Hefte and Die Gegenwart confirms this, as do Max Frisch's observations in his postwar journal:

The word with which one can cause the most mischief these days is Nihilism--one only has to leaf through our papers and already another one has been spotted! Sartre is one, Wilder is one, Jünger is one, Brecht is one... A truly binding word! I can literally see them, our second-rate reviewers, dashing about with their germicide spray, and as soon as something living frightens them, they spray with eyes closed:

"Nihilism, nihilism!"

Nihilist in the sense of our press is the doctor who x-rayed me today instead of rouging my cheek: because what shows up when he x-rays won't be pretty....

What they call positive:

The fear of the negative.

-- entry from late Autumn, 1947, in: Max Frisch, Tagebuch 1946-1949 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch, 1985), pp.176-7.

Max Frisch became one of the best-known and most important authors in postwar Europe. Born in 1911 in Zurich, he became an architect and only gradually relinquished this profession in favor of writing. His 1946-49 journal was published in 1950; later journals were published in 1972. He began publishing fiction in 1940; his best-known works include Stiller, 1954, and Homo Faber, 1957. In 1948 he came into contact with Bert Brecht who was in Zurich at this time, passing from exile in America to the east zone of Germany. Brecht was at this time also consolidating his most important postwar play, Die Tage der Commune, about the 1871 Paris Commune. In 1946 Frisch had travelled through Germany, Italy, and France, and in 1948 he travelled to Prague, Berlin, and Warschau.

<sup>3</sup>Willi Baumeister, b.Stuttgart in 1889, died in 1955; Max Horkheimer, b.Stuttgart in 1895, died in 1973.

<sup>4</sup>See Anthony Heilbut, Exiled in Paradise: German Refugee Artists and Intellectuals in America, from the 1930s to the Present (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983).



<sup>5</sup>For biographies and monographs on Baumeister, see Will Grohmann, Willi Baumeister (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1952)--this was the first postwar monograph published on a German artist--and, for a more comprehensive work, Götz Adriani, editor, Baumeister: Dokumente, Texte, Gemälde (Cologne: DuMont, 1971).

<sup>6</sup>"Informalism" is the English translation for "l'art informel." This term was first extensively used by Michel Tapié in his book Un art autre (1952). It is "an extremely broad term" used in the 1950s to describe "a mainly abstract but non-geometric style characterised by such terms as 'shapeless', 'intuitive', 'psychic improvisation'. L'Art Informel included such tendencies as Tachisme, Matter Art, Lyrical Abstraction, and American Action painting (though it refers primarily to European art)." --see John A. Walker, Glossary of Art, Architecture and Design since 1945, 2nd rev. ed. (London: Clive Bingley Ltd., 1977), s.v. "L'Art Informel," pp.41-42.

Stylistically, "informalism" bears certain, identifiable hallmarks: it is largely abstract, although some artists associated with it still use figuration, provided that the figurative elements are distorted or otherwise "estranged" from their "natural" appearance; its forms are "informe" in the sense that they fall outside of conventional recognizability or accepted/traditionalist categories of aesthetic beauty; its abstraction is rooted in surrealism, automatism, and even expressionism, but never in geometric styles of abstraction. In a way, it is an assault on form and on almost everything conventional associated with "form." It is a style of painting which burgeoned during the post-WW II period in practically every European country. One of the most codified manifestations of "informalism" occurred in Paris when the art critic Michel Tapié began writing about "art autre"--he published a book by that name in 1952. Philosophically and ideologically, "informalism" goes far beyond the categories of style and becomes very difficult to pin down. In part, this text is an attempt to "pin down" whatever there was of informalism (and why) in the art produced in Germany during the postwar period.

Pitting itself against conventions of "form," informalism was often also a challenge to other conventions, such as those of traditional language and communication. In that sense, it can be called non-communicative. But I have to point out that I am not using the word "non-communicative" because the artists at the time here under discussion thought of their work in this way (at least I have not found any published statements to support this); the designation "non-communicative" stems more from the pejorative statements of informalism's foes--Günter Grass's later statements, discussed in the following pages, are such an attack, for example. While it is my contention that the art under discussion here posed a challenge to conventional modes of communication, it also seems to me that its "non-communicativeness" was something which became dominant and which was exacerbated by this informal type abstraction's success and acceptance in the 1950s. The more it was embraced into the bosom of the art market, the more "non-communicative" it perforce became since communication would have entailed making apparent its differentiated "historical becoming" and its reasons for its "crisis in reception" and its "lack of social compliance"--see my discussion of Adorno's 1950 statements regarding this issue, page 26 of this text. By using the label non-communicative, while simultaneously analyzing in what way this art was engaged in communication or in establishing an alternate language, I hope to push the reader toward seeing the paradox, and possibly realizing that it was a

subsequent development--in which popularity and sales play a dominant role--which made people forget that this painting once had something important to say.

<sup>7</sup>There have been a number of thoroughgoing studies in recent years on the ideological usefulness of American abstract expressionism as a means of furthering American goals and policies. See for example Eva Cockcroft, "Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War," Artforum 12 (June 1974):39-41, John Tagg, "American Power and American Painting: The Development of Vanguard Painting in the United States since 1945," Praxis 1 Nr.2 (Winter 1976):59-78, Jane de Hart Mathews, "Art and Politics in Cold War America," American Historical Review 81 (Oct. 1976):762-787, and Serge Guilbaut, How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

<sup>8</sup>Werner Haftmann, German Art of the Twentieth Century (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1957), p.130. Original English text quoted.

<sup>9</sup>The "not been affected by the war" analysis as well as the "zero hour" analysis are really both just two sides of the same coin. In both cases, there is a stubborn insistence on separating art from history, culture from politics. Culture is at best allowed a spurious relation to politics.

The "zero-hour" analysis is also sometimes used in an "historical-critical" manner, that is, it is assumed that Germans truly could "start over," build a just society, etc., and that they failed to do so even though they--and only they--had this once in a lifetime opportunity. A moderate version of this is Karin Thomas, Zweimal deutsche Kunst nach 1945; 40 Jahre Nähe und Ferne (Cologne: DuMont Buchverlag, 1985). The first chapter is called "The victory of the 'great abstract' over the 'great real'--the search for a reconnection to modernism after 1945" and is subdivided as follows: "1. 1945--'Zero Hour' and new beginning; 2. Reconnection with the 'International Style'; 3. Realism on the sidelines; 4. Sculpture betwixt convention and avant-gardism."

The problem with this seems to me to be one of assuming that a "norm"--in this case "modernism," "international style" (Thomas does not refer to architecture here, but to abstract painting), etc.--exists, prefabricated, so to speak, ready to be "reconnected" to (which then makes those who reconnect either "modern" or "conformist") or "deviated" from, as the case may be. I would prefer to argue that "norms" do not exist pre-given, in a void, but rather are worked out, worked on, and bargained, bartered, and traded upon by all parties concerned. Norms change and are continuously adapted; such a thing as a modernist norm could hardly survive intact the history of the twentieth century and hence, I would argue, did not even exist in a consentaneous, "international" form at war's end. That a new norm was worked out by the early 1950s does not mean that it existed in 1947 or that it spontaneously appeared above the players's heads like an epiphany.

<sup>10</sup>Max Horkheimer, "The End of Reason," Studies in Philosophy and Social Science 9 (1941), p.376. Original English text.

<sup>11</sup>See the criticism launched by Günter Grass, "Geschenkte Freiheit; Versagen, Schuld, vertane Chancen," Die Zeit Nr.20, 17 May 1985, pp.14-15.

<sup>12</sup>For a thoroughly revised look at the thesis of the German "Sonderweg".

see David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1984). Eley's and Blackbourn's book was originally published in German, Mythen deutscher Geschichtsschreibung, by the Ullstein Verlag in 1980.

Although this book deals mainly with the period up to Weimar, it has repercussions on the way post-World War II history has been written. It caused a major furor amongst German historians and was the subject of extensive media debates. The book is pertinent to this paper since much postwar art history, especially in view of the recent resurgence of neo-expressionism, focusses on the idea that Germany has not come to terms with its past, and that Germany is somehow unique in this regard. This, however, would presuppose that, for example, Britain has come to terms with colonialism, France with Algeria, the United States with Vietnam. Since failing to come to terms with the national past is not a purely German trait, as the preceding references indicate, an insistence that only Germany has committed this error seems to me to be another way of evading history. Eley and Blackbourn refer to Hans-Magnus Enzensberger who, in the 1960s cited the words, "qui s'accuse, s'excuse," as an illustration of how the ideology of the "Sonderweg" can function as an opiate and/or excuse. This is in no way intended as a lessening of the enormity of Germany's crime as perpetrator of genocide, racism, and war, but I do suggest that the often shrill insistence on German "uniqueness" strikes me as an almost gloating excuse for what Germany has done. It gloats at having succeeded at evading a real coming to terms with history.

Eley's qualifying remarks in the book's introduction explain his intent and also serve as an example of what I hope to do in this paper:

...the purpose of these remarks and the detailed exposition which follows is not to minimize the differences between Germany and other European societies and to homogenize nineteenth-century and twentieth-century European history in some kind of capitalist developmental stew. My aim is not to argue that before 1914 Germany was merely one capitalist society like any other, separated only by certain "accidents" of previous historical development from Britain or France. I have no desire to demote the importance of specific political differences amongst societies or to explain away the patent authoritarianism of the German political system, diminishing the latter to a pure epiphenomenal significance. Nor (to go to the other extreme) am I advocating the practical historian's familiar nominalism, in which every society is "peculiar" and history's comparative calling completely dissolved. (...) I am really arguing for an experimental shift of perspective. In the following pages it will certainly be argued that Imperial Germany was less "backward" and more "modern"--and therefore more positively comparable to say Edwardian Britain--than most historians have been prepared to admit. But in general my wish is not to question the existence of "authoritarian and anti-democratic structures in state and society" (Bracher). My aim is simply to ask how else they might be understood, with a view to generating some new and interesting questions. [p.50]

<sup>18</sup>Saint Louis, Art Museum, Expressions: New Art from Germany, June-

August 1983 (travelling exhibition), p.32. Siegfried Gohr's catalog essay, pp.27-41, is entitled, "The Difficulties of German Painting with its own Tradition," and recapitulates the German "Sonderweg" thesis in art history.

<sup>14</sup>Jutta Held, Kunst und Kunstpolitik 1945-49; Kulturaufbau nach dem 2. Weltkrieg (Berlin: Verlag für Ausbildung und Studium in der Elefanten Press, 1981), p.15.

<sup>15</sup>This initially flexible cultural policy in the east zone was of course eventually abandoned; by 1947, when the US's policy of Marshall Plan aid made it clear that there could be not uncompromised participation for communism with capitalism in Europe, a Soviet style of social realism began to be more and more officially encouraged as a way for east zone Germany to differentiate itself further from developments in the western zones.

<sup>16</sup>The "Konstanzer Kunstwoche"--Constance Art Week--was held for a month, from the 1st to the 30th of June 1946 and included an exhibition of German contemporary art (239 paintings plus graphic art).

<sup>17</sup>L.E.Reindl, "Moderne Kunst in Konstanz," Das Kunstwerk 1 Nr.2 (1946/47), p.32.

<sup>18</sup>Imperialismus und Kultur, edited by the Institut für Gesellschaftswissenschaften beim ZK der SED, Lehrstuhl für marxistisch-leninistische Kultur- und Kunstwissenschaften (Munich: Damnitz Verlag, 1975), p.151.

<sup>19</sup>Bkd., "Schri.kunst.schri," Die Gegenwart 1 Nr.6/7 (1946), p.18. "Bkd." could be one of the magazine's contributing editors, Ernst Benkard. The title of the article refers to the text beneath a Magdalen altar painted in 1431 by Lucas Moser, "Schri.kunst.schri.und.klag.dich.ser.din.begert.jecz.niemen.mer.so.o.we." Roughly translated this means, "Cry art cry and thineself deplore, for no one wants you anymore. So alas." In the 1950s an avant-garde German art magazine took "schri kunst schri" as its title.



The "Darmstädter Gespräch 1950": Mirror of Cultural Concern

In 1950 the Magistrate of the city of Darmstadt and the Committee "Darmstädter Gespräch" sponsored a symposium on the topic of Das Menschenbild in unserer Zeit--"the image of man in our time"--to which were invited some of West Germany's most significant culture spokesmen: Willi Baumeister, by then the country's leading abstract artist; Theodor Adorno, philosopher and returned émigré; Alexander Mitscherlich, psychoanalyst; and Hans Sedlmayr, the conservative art historian. While the symposium took place from the 15th to the 17th of July, an art exhibition with the same title could also be visited through the period of 15 July to 3 September 1950.<sup>1</sup> This chapter will examine the issue the symposium meant to address as well as this issue's rootedness in the intellectual history and discourse of the postwar period. The participants's contributions as well as a reflection on the title of the symposium will show that the key issue of the talks was the status of "man" in contemporary society; that is, primacy seemed to be no longer accorded as a matter of course to the conception that rational man stood at the centre of thought, society, politics, culture.

The symposium participants approached this issue in varying ways, stressing different aspects of "the image of man in our time." Hans Sedlmayr, whose 1948 book Verlust der Mitte--"loss of the centre"--had garnered a wide response,<sup>2</sup> considered the entire modern European cultural development a decline of man from God. As a conservative he prescribed a medicine which differed from that advocated by other symposium participants, yet there was still a basic

agreement on the diagnosis of the ailment. According to Sedlmayr, the usual hierarchies of top and bottom, of anthropocentricism, were in disarray, and their disintegration had become programmatic:

The criteria for differentiating between the subnatural and the supernatural are also not always easy; in primitive art there is often a fusion of the sacred and the cacodemonic, and thus also an unprecedented blurring of these two spheres of being is occurring today, indeed, it is being consciously strived for by some tendencies, such as the surrealists. The exchanging of top and bottom is the agenda.<sup>3</sup>

Sedlmayr advocated abandoning modern art altogether in favor of what he perceived to be the secure values of older, humanist art which had given to man an unquestioned central place in exchange for the unquestioned place of God at the head of an hierarchy of values. Whilst this prescription placed him in the camp of the reactionary foes of modernism, his perception of the crisis--the deliberate violation of the separation of "lower" and "upper" spheres and its resultant undermining of a rational image of man--belied an understanding of the modern akin to that of its most progressive champions.

The notion that "culture" and "barbarism" should be mutually exclusive had given way to the recognition that instead they were indeed often twinned. This was a new perception in the sense that culture criticism had previously focussed on the notion of degeneracy or decadence, a criticism which left the idea of culture itself intact. Now culture was examined as a theoretical object seen in dialectical relation to its obverse. Seeking a way of coming to terms with this new perception, the psychoanalyst Alexander Mitscherlich, another symposium participant, suggested a therapeutic approach to the problem of the culture-barbarism dialectic. Unlike his conservative colleague, he did not advocate a banishment of the "lower" spheres (inclusive, following Sedlmayr, of most "tainted" modern culture), and instead retained a therapeutic thrust by reminding the audience of the dangers of repression:

The "lower" is maybe not at all "demonic" as long as the "upper" doesn't deny its existence! To be sure, when this occurs, it [the "lower"] avenges itself with a primal power, reaching into the most remote areas of human activity. And let's not forget: it has the power to make of reason a whore!<sup>4</sup>

Mitscherlich warned that repression--which Sedlmayr commended--would not equal security against the "lower" or demonic spheres, as the reference to reason's whorishness--its role in the Nazi regime as servant in crimes against humanity--implies.

Such a therapeutic strategy, implying a confrontation with the unknown and demonic in order to avoid repressing it, also is present in Willi Baumeister's defense of modern art. "I protest," said Baumeister, "against the claim that modern art is a symptom of a broad degeneracy or that it is degeneracy itself."<sup>5</sup> Baumeister tried to defend the symbolic power of art, which, he emphasized, need not be rooted in naturalism and naturalistic depictions of man. Abstract art is able to facilitate a confrontation with the unknown and thereby lead to a positive understanding of man and the unknown, and not, as Sedlmayr would claim, to a furtherance of demonic powers, of decadence and decay in the world. Baumeister, who expressed his philosophy in his book Das Unbekannte in der Kunst<sup>6</sup>--"the unknown in art"--lauded the recent discovery of cave paintings in the Dordogne,<sup>7</sup> primitivism, and "the unknown," thereby crystallizing a rather widespread feeling that a recourse to "beginnings," to primary phenomena can be a means of mastering one's present situation.

This concern for primitivism also signalled a concern for authenticity. That is, with the irrational or primitive so strongly felt, it could be argued that a repression of "the unknown" would also betray a lack of authentic response to the contemporary condition. The recent past, Nazi atrocities, the Second World War, and the physical as well as spiritual destruction of Europe

had taken place, and hence, simply to return to a past model which proposed to advocate a one-sidedly bright, "upper" sphere view of culture which would eliminate the "lower" sphere by decree was seen as inauthentic at best and as caught up in the aesthetics of Kitsch at worst.<sup>8</sup> The interest in Kitsch and its opposite, authentic art, had never been entirely extinguished even during the NS period. In the period from 1933 to 1945, eighty-three articles on the nature and phenomenon of Kitsch were published in Germany, and after the war, Clement Greenberg's "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," originally published in the United States in 1939, was translated and published in Germany in 1949.<sup>9</sup>

That the best modern art is concerned with authenticity was the argument reiterated by Theodor Adorno at the Darmstadt symposium. Besides insisting on the differentiated qualities to be found in "radical painting,"<sup>10</sup>--that is, that abstract art was not a single undifferentiated mass but rather that it showed layers of historical becoming--Adorno also emphasized the power of attraction which the disharmonious elements in the modern arts exert:

A very peculiar relationship which one should want to describe very subtly and very precisely is to be found here, a being-pulled-into, a peculiar attraction which exudes exactly from those non-harmonious elements, a being-enticed-by-adventure, by the not-yet-experienced; simultaneously, the willingness to resist harm by helping it to adopt a sign.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, the abstract painting which contains these non-harmonious elements is in fact offering resistance to suffering by providing it with a sign, by making a differentiated emblem in which a viewer can decipher a truthful--because not harmoniously reconciled--picture of the world.

It is in this way that the dissonance, the break with the traditional aesthetic of harmony and tradition per se, which had usually accorded priority to the image of man, constitutes art's authenticity in the modern period:

If at all there is a preservation of tradition, a rescuing of tradition

--I am here citing Juan Gris verbatim--then it could only have its place where one no longer has anything directly to do with tradition, whereas everywhere in modern art where one does refer to tradition, precisely those moments which are the salient ones to modern art are obscured and levelled to the category of universal beauty which has become so deeply suspect to us all.<sup>12</sup>

A break such as this in turn has social consequences for art since it brings with it a crisis in reception:

That a crisis in reception, in the sense that most of the public is alienated from modern art, exists in today's art is something no reasonable person would deny. (...) This lack of social compliance on the part of modern art is in itself a social expression. If one takes social responsibility as seriously as it should be taken, ...then one has to own up to the fact that modern art was driven to break with consumption, that the breadth of production, insofar as it wants to remain viable on the market--for the sake of its saleability--has intensified the mechanisms of the commodity character of art itself, has intensified everything which makes reality despicable and unbearable to us. In actual fact, the interests of human beings (...) are today represented only by that art which orients itself in no way according to conventions, to cliches, to the spirit of the illustrated press, the radio, and the magazines. Probably the only artist today who represents the interests of society is the one who does not let himself be made the mouthpiece of those who pretend to speak for society when in reality they are concerned only with manipulating society as consumers, their own claim to truth notwithstanding.<sup>13</sup>

Adorno is here attacking both Eastern and Western ideologies since he saw both as trying to manipulate people into "buying" a particular "line" which in turn blocks critical thinking.<sup>14</sup> The artist has to refrain from becoming either side's mouthpiece. While Sedlmayr saw the modern artist in cahoots with modern society in trying to dethrone man--and God--from their centrality as point of reference, Adorno saw modern art as being the authentic resistance to a brutalizing and barbaric history, and even as an authentic attempt to criticize and offer an alternative, whilst in the west the logic of consumer society offered the inauthentic alternative of commodified man.

## Theory of Crisis, Theory in Crisis: The Effect of History on Art and Culture

This then was the state of a particular kind of advanced cultural criticism in Germany in 1950, a criticism that offered a diagnosis of a point of crisis in modern culture which even conservatives like Sedlmayr would agree with, no matter how different the latter's prescription was. What I would like to ask now is what specifically had produced this sense of crisis, where its roots in recent history lay, and how it manifested itself in the painting being produced. Willi Baumeister, for example, often referred in his immediate postwar production to the thematics outlined above. A painting like the 1946 Urzeitgestalten (fig. 6), with its cave-wall like ground of sand-colored, thick impasto and its primitive, shaman type figures does not provide the renaissance spatial perspective indicative of hierarchy which Sedlmayr valued so highly. Instead, man is dethroned, God is absent except perhaps in the form of ritual magic, and the human figures, outlined with coarse black, purple, and reddish lines, are barely recognizable since they are placed on the same level of differentiation as their environment of signs, symbols, and object-shapes. This conglomeration of shapes also lends a certain impenetrability to the painting, underscoring the sense that everything is taking place on the surface, on the wall of this cave, beyond which no world of man-made architecture can be found. Instead, the cave wall--the canvas--is the only ground on which this new-ancient world acts: the rest is lost in oblivion, or perhaps has been deliberately abandoned. But the viewer is neither delivered into total chaos since the figures and their archaic world are still placed centrally on their ground. The Menschenbild--"the image of man"--however encoded, strives to assert itself.

Ernst Wilhelm Nay, another painter who came to represent German postwar

modernism, in his immediate postwar work manifested the same struggle, using different stylistic means. His Autumn Song of 1945 (fig. 7) shows a canvas covered with a jagged patchwork of brushstrokes creating planes or surfaces which obscure and then reveal parts of houses, figures, and landscapes. In the foreground of this field, two figures, elongated or otherwise made to fit the flow of the picture, are discernible. At the bottom left a seated figure holds what could be a flute, while on the right another dances with upraised arms and thrown back head and face. The figures are distorted, they tend to merge with their patterned background, and are perhaps not visible to the cursory glance; they do not stand out in the picture the way one might expect if they belonged to traditional figuration. In some ways the painting looks like it harkens back to a prewar expressionism, but it does not exactly repeat this affective moment: these figures and their ground are modified by an interweaving of surfaces and passages which does not permit the figurative to dominate. The texture of figures and ground are interwoven. This serves somewhat to mute the affective.

This ambivalent "toning down" of affect--ambivalent because it is still allowed to show through in the agitated brushwork and the choice of colors even if the subject matter is now encoded--is also apparent in a 1948 work called Mélisande (fig. 8). Somewhat like in a cubist picture the eye is led along the surfaces of different objects and planes, including those of human figures, and sometimes can discern a roof, a head, body parts, something to suggest that there is subject matter intended behind the play of pattern and color. But the human does not dominate, except perhaps in the crass appeal of the painting's colors to elicit a strong--positive or negative--(human) response in the viewer. Nay seems to be trying to use a form idiom associated with Picasso and

with cubism to metamorphose an essentially expressive, affective intention into something which evades direct association with German prewar expressionism. His fusion of cubist and expressionist elements tends to serve to disintegrate any recognizably human figures, but these are nonetheless present in the paintings, simultaneously asserted and called into question.<sup>15</sup>

This struggle between assertion and calling-into-question must be followed through the 1940s in order to understand its valency in 1950. What must be understood first is the deep mistrust with which European culture-- obviously most especially Germany with its historical self-designation as "a nation of poets and thinkers"--was regarded by many of its former masters and apprentices after the war. As the Swiss architect and writer Max Frisch, travelling throughout Europe after the war, noted during a 1948 stay in Hamburg:

One of the most decisive experiences which our generation, born in this century but reared still in the spirit of the previous one, has been able to make--especially during the second world war--is that people who are full of that [i.e., 19th c.] culture, connoisseurs who can with wit and enthusiasm discuss Bach, Händel, Mozart, Beethoven, Bruckner, can easily act as butchers; both in the same person. Let's call that which distinguishes these people an aesthetic culture. Their special, identifying trait is their non-commitment, the clean separation between culture and politics.... It's a frame of mind which can think the loftiest (for the earthly is tossed overboard so that the hot-air balloon can rise) and which doesn't prevent the basest, a culture which rigorously exempts itself from the demands of the day, which is fully at eternity's service. Culture in the sense of an idol which is satisfied with our artistic or scientific achievements but which licks the blood of our brothers behind our backs--culture as moral schizophrenia is in our century customary. How often, when once again we speak of Germany, someone brings up Goethe, Stifter, Hölderlin, and all the others which Germany has produced, namely in this sense: Genius as alibi.<sup>16</sup>

Culture, usually removed to ethereal spheres in order to serve as the alibi of greatness able to excuse the corruption of politics, was seen to be stripped of its ideological veil by Frisch and many other critical thinkers. The illusion of maintaining two separate spheres--politics and culture--was shattered:

"Whoever doesn't concern himself with politics has already executed the taking



of sides which he wanted to spare himself: he serves the ruling party."<sup>17</sup>

The critique of this breakdown of culture, reason, and individuality which was seen to culminate with fascism began prior to war's end, often in exile from NS Germany, and sometimes within the borders of the NS regime itself as the immediate flourishing of these critiques after Hitler's defeat indicates. In exile, Horkheimer in 1941 wrote an essay entitled "The End of Reason." He noted that:

The destruction of rationalistic dogmatism through the self-criticism of reason, carried out by the ever renewed nominalistic tendencies in philosophy has now been ratified by historical reality. The substance of individuality itself, to which the idea of autonomy was bound, did not survive the process of industrialization. Reason has degenerated because it was the ideological projection of a false universality which now shows the autonomy of the subject to have been an illusion. The collapse of reason and the collapse of individuality are one and the same.<sup>18</sup>

Here the historical groundwork for the struggle between the assertion of the individual and its being questioned is described. It is a process rooted in enlightenment thought based on self-criticism. Unforseen was the rigor with which self-critique and analytical reason would undermine their own ontological bases. Yet the problem is not a "purely" philosophical one, but rather is a process aided by concurrent social and economic developments, as Horkheimer illustrates:

With the disappearance of independent economic subjects, the subject as such disappears. It is no longer a synthetic unit; it has become senseless for it to preserve itself for some distant future or to plan for its heirs. In the present period the individual has opportunities only on short term. Once secure property has vanished as the goal of acquisition, the intrinsic connection between the experiences of the individual disappears. Concern for property under orderly competition and the rule of law has always been constitutive of the ego. Slaves and paupers had no individuality. The "premise of all my acting in the sensuous world, can only be as part of that sensuous world, if I live amongst other free beings. This determined part of the world ...is called...my property."<sup>19</sup>

Horkheimer links the contemporary breakdown of reason and individuality--of

the subject--with the economic anarchy of advanced capitalism and of fascism. It should be clear as well that with the collapse of the NS regime, "order" did not return to Germany. Instead, social and economic anarchy increased in virulence as the remnants of society struggled with disease, hunger, "displaced persons," military occupation, and a lawlessness on the streets which manifested itself in black market dealings, a widespread breakdown in acceptable sexual mores, promiscuity, as well as assorted forms of violence. Pre-Marshall plan social conditions in Europe, particularly Germany, did not manifest a return to planned, orderly society, and hence neither to integrated subjectivity.

Furthermore, Horkheimer makes an intrinsic connection between oppression and language, an emphasis which is also reexamined by other writers in several postwar articles. Horkheimer writes:

[Fascism] strikes down that which is tottering, the individual, by teaching him to fear something worse than death. Fear reaches farther than the identity of his consciousness. The individual must abandon the ego and carry on somehow without it. Under Fascism the objects of organization are being disorganized as subjects. They lose their identical character, and are simultaneously Nazi and anti-Nazi, convinced and sceptical, brave and cowardly, clever and stupid. They have renounced all consistency. This inconsistency into which the ego has been dissolved is the only attitude adequate to a reality which is not defined by so-called plans but by concentration camps. The method of this madness consists in demonstrating to men that they are just as shattered as those in the camps and by this means welding the racial community together. Men have been released from such camps who have taken over the jargon of their jailers and with cold reason and mad consent (the price, as it were, of their survival) tell their story as if it could not have been otherwise than it was, contending that they have not been treated so badly after all. Those who have not yet been jailed behave as if they had already been tortured. They profess everything. The murderers, on the other hand, have adopted the language of the Berlin night club and garment center.<sup>20</sup>

What has seemingly irrevocably occurred is that the identity-building function of language has been lost or corrupted. The very language which people speak under fascism and also under advanced capitalism is incapable of creating identity or community. A 1947 article which dealt with German's drift into argot--and with

the concomitant ineffectuality of "straight" language--analyzed the cause to be Fascism's failure to create a new language despite its attempts to create "the new man" and to have left behind nothing but disintegration:

The fact is that Fascism failed, despite its claim to total transformation of human beings, in achieving a depth effect on language even remotely comparable to the effect on language which the French and Russian revolutions achieved. A new order was anchored, in language as well, through the force of principles. National Socialism and Fascism, which did not believe in principles, could not have a true language, either.<sup>21</sup>

The process begun by capitalism run wild, which culminated in Fascism, had left behind disintegration, loss of identity, and loss of language, according to many of the postwar analyses. Despite the claim of the totalitarian regime to explain every facet of life, its explanations were always disingenuous because they were made on the basis of preconceived answers to preconceived questions: "The speeches were always the same. And every schoolboy knew how to imitate them. (...) That's where the real danger of thinking in the 'total' lay: nothing in the world required a serious examination, a new mental effort; for every question the answer had already been preconceived."<sup>22</sup> Old language has thus become corrupted but new language is not taking form, either. The dilemma--focussed on language and culture but intricately interwoven with society, economics, and politics--was overwhelming, but both Reifenberg and Krauss, the two writers cited above, warned of the dire effects of relying on a merely passive resistance to the lies of fascist language and on a merely quietist fatalism vis-à-vis the lack of a new, vital language. No one, however, as yet proposed a new program for language's renewal.

The pessimistic fatalism which writers warned of could be discerned in the form of radical disinterest on the part of youth in politics, culture, and society. Describing the state of intellectuals in postwar Germany, the magazine

Frankfurter Hefte came to the conclusion that the situation was catastrophic-- although it added that this was not restricted to Germany alone. The situation was especially bad among the young, students in this case, who dared not talk of their war experience without running the risk of being accused of harboring Nazi sentiment--who hence were unable to "work through" those experiences--and who displayed an alarming pessimism which far outstripped the sense of crisis experienced by their elders:

But the knowledge of what they want is for these students less significant than their knowledge of what they do not want. And that is why pessimism so often lies like a dark shadow over their lives. "You asked me what's going to happen now," a student answered me, "I believe nothing will become of us anymore. There's just going to be another war anyway."<sup>28</sup>

And what of political parties and their ability to generate a committed following? The parties were tainted with the same paralysis and decrepitude which had undermined the viability of society. The Christian Democrats, a largely conservative, highly anti-communist party, prescribed a warmed-over traditionalism which the younger generation found difficult to believe in, the Communist Party, a poor cousin to the Social Democrats, seemed incapable-- whether due to being shackled to a Stalinist line or to being traditionally distrusted and eventually hounded out of existence in West Germany--of renewing public imagination. The SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany), which should have been able, given its traditionally strong support in Germany, to do just that, failed, it could be argued, more than any other party in fulfilling its mandate.

This party should have taken on the mantle of a critical reexamination of the past--including the mistakes made by anti-fascists like themselves which helped make Nazism possible. But instead the party radically refused to do this and instead upheld a mythology of innocence and blamelessness for the past: the

SPD after the war reasserted its prewar, 1930s rallying cry, Nach Hitler, wir!—"after Hitler, it's our turn!"--meaning that Social Democracy would take over after Hitler's defeat, without ever asking any questions about how this overly confident, naive 1930s view had perhaps contributed to the consolidation of Hitler's power, and how it could possibly survive the war, the genocide perpetrated by the Nazis, intact. Needless to say, the party also failed to examine its role in the Weimar government as possibly having aided the rise of fascism. Instead, Kurt Schumacher, himself a survivor of Hitler's camps, took over the Party's leadership after the war and gave to it the myth of original grace: the Party has never made a mistake.<sup>24</sup> Hence, the SPD, too, operated with the language of "the total," of preconceived answers to all questions. Despite the fact that it had a large following after the war--as it did prior to Hitler's rise to power--it failed to be a source of real renewal, as its willingness to accommodate the occupying powers in their reinstatement of the old capitalist structures demonstrates. Thus the only common denominator which could be said to exist amongst progressive tendencies in Germany after the war was not a political affiliation with any one party; rather only an unstructured anti-fascism had united them during the war and remained the common bond afterwards.

#### Looking for the New Reality: The Intrusion of the Archaic

In art also an anti-fascistic, whether passive or active, stance was the identifying characteristic of progressive postwar art praxis.<sup>25</sup> The most obvious signifier of this stance was the valorization of styles repressed during the NS period. Hence, as mentioned in the introduction, all the occupied zones

showed art that was previously suppressed as "degenerate," and also tried to put on exhibitions which could serve as lessons in modern art history in order to help orient the generation of twenty- to thirty-year olds who, having come to maturity during Hitler's reign, had not been exposed to the art of the early twentieth century. A simultaneous thrust required locating a new, appropriate style or visual language for the time. A survey of what was discussed and published on modern, in particular abstract, art will show that in the art discourse the criticism of old language and a concomitant call for a new one, for a new reality was as insistent as in the literary magazines and the discussions surrounding social issues. The painting produced by artists like Baumeister, Nay, and others was often an attempted expression of this call. The published aesthetic discussions were usually of a non-political character far removed from the concerns of people living amidst rubble; however, since these discussions articulate a socially rooted concern which emanates from substructural disintegration they are of interest in determining how the superstructure, in relation to its base, reconstitutes itself.

One of the landmarks of the discussions was a book published on "the creative forces of abstract painting," in 1947, by Dr. Ottomar Domnick, a 40-year old psychiatrist.<sup>26</sup> It contained contributions by the artists Willi Baumeister, Max Ackermann, H.A.P. Grieshaber, Georg Meistermann, Rudolf Probst, Otto Ritschl, Fritz Winter, and Hans Hildebrandt, the writer Kurt Leonhard who sometimes contributed articles on modern art to Das Kunstwerk and other art magazines, and others. The theme of the book is the necessity and appropriateness of abstract art to twentieth century man. As the necessary opposition to a materialism gone bad, abstraction represents the possibility of a rearticulation of modern man by getting rid of the old, secure, consciously dominating material man and instead

positing his subconscious other.

In his introduction, Domnick describes the reaction, on the part of conservative bourgeois, to anti-naturalistic stylistic developments at the beginning of the century: "One spoke of 'insanity' and hoped for a return to nature. This did not happen. The naturalist style dictated by the Third Reich was an episode in Germany. It only outwardly interrupted the development. Hidden forces allowed the 'other' to grow."<sup>27</sup> This development of the "other" is integral to the time, according to Domnick. Informal-type abstraction, which by revoking the primary position of the conscious one and thereby allowing the other to appear, is not only a style but also the answer to the requirement of the age. Furthermore, the nineteenth century is equated with materialism, and the appropriate style of materialism was naturalism. The unbridled faith in science and technology of the previous century which attempted to dominate nature today meets with scepticism. It is because of this, according to Domnick, that abstraction is not only anti-naturalistic, but anti-materialistic as well since it opposes the legacy of the nineteenth century. It is a twentieth century opposition, it is modern, and it is not necessarily happy in its triumph--pessimism and doubt, it will be recalled, determined the postwar tenor:

No bounds seemed to remain for analytical reason; humanity's fortune, via the harnessing of material, seemed almost made. But at the moment of victory, it became doubtful. Romain Rolland has illustrated this with Michealangelo's Victor who turns away, in a disappointed-resigned manner, from the vanquished. Victory slips away from him. Concurrent with the moment when the domination of the material seemed to take materialism to its peak, Freud developed psychoanalysis which discovered forces operative beneath the surface, forces which subjugate man more than he can subjugate material. This was a shock not easily overcome. New spiritual forces stepped into view. The struggle against materialism, artistically speaking against naturalism, is the distinguishing mark of modern painting.<sup>28</sup>

The simplistic causality stipulated by Domnick in this development has the function of a pacifier in threateningly acausal times: the pessimism of postwar

culture is elevated to an abstract, spiritual realm where materialism is banished. Instead of the sharp analysis of the interaction between culture and (material) society, as Horkheimer, Krauss, and others presented it, Domnick uses the insights of others to arrive at a description of modern painting which runs counter to the possibility of it being a process, a differentiated becoming (Adorno), and instead posits it as static: it is a distinguishing mark, a trademark without materially-rooted history, without a dialectical relationship to materialism. In this sense Domnick's text prefigures the affirmative interpretation of (negative) informal painting in the 1950s by Werner Haftmann and others.

Although Domnick, a therapist in opposition to repression, soothes the public's fear of the other, he does not go into detailed description of how this new, tolerant-of-the-other style should look; the inclusion in his book of Baumeister, Ackermann, Ritschl, Winter, etc., does however indicate that it was to be a non-geometric, informal-type abstraction. It was in the art magazines that one could find more detailed prescriptions of how this abstraction should look. Especially notable was the magazine Das Kunstwerk, appearing in Baden-Baden from 1946 onward. Its publisher was the Woldemar Klein Verlag which also produced monographs on modern artists and which showed an overall dedication to modern, in particular French, art. Through its focus, in several important articles, on primitivism and its import for modern culture, the magazine distinguished itself from other, more nineteenth-century humanist inspired art discourse, and thereby furthered a type of abstraction which paralleled the search for a new reality in the intellectual discourse. Das Kunstwerk typically repeated the rejection of nineteenth century naturalism, but not necessarily by equating this with a humanistic anti-materialism as espoused by Domnick. In an



article written by one of the editors, Leopold Zahn, called "Abkehr von der Natur"--"turning away from nature"--Ortega y Gasset is quoted to suggest that nature and art have an active role in dismissing man: that is, it is not only man who turns away from nature, but rather nature, as a threatening other, expelled man, the conscious one. What this seems to imply of course is that those painters dealing with the "other" are also dealing with nature--the expulsion is not just a turning away from "naturalism" (as Domnick would have it) but an indicium of lack of control over nature. This is in turn linked to the breakdown of humanist culture and the interest in primitivism:

"The expulsion of man from nature and art" (Ortega y Gasset) can be seen as an aspect of a general breakdown of humanist-rational culture. There does still exist a superficially alive art which holds fast to the conventions of Renaissance rationalism, but especially this art shows how sapped and feeble this tradition has become.<sup>29</sup>

There is no point in trying to avoid facing the breakdown since the culture produced by this avoidance is weak and false. What today's artist has to do in order to avoid the enfeeblement associated with traditional art is to "link up with traditions belonging to pre-rational levels of human history," including archaic, primitive art, art of children, and of the "mattres populaires."<sup>30</sup>

Moreover, modern man has been split; he is no longer an integral being. Hence the regress to "the original forces of the subconscious"<sup>31</sup> whose causes lie with this re-structuring of modern man:

Modern man, as bearer of a collective soul, in whom, as with the primitive, the vital, emotional, irrational drives dominate, is a kind of homo magus redivivus, who manifests himself artistically--just like the original homo magus--in abstractions "removed from nature."

The collective man of latter-day post-individualism is however simultaneously a homo technicus (one could say that the occidental homo sapiens has, in the twentieth century, split into the homo magus and the homo technicus). While an emotional, vitalist soul predominates in the homo magus, the homo technicus is under the influence of the intellectual sphere.<sup>32</sup>

The "technician" and the "magician" or "reborn primitive" suffer under the same

threatening, alienating aspect of modernity: what is betrayed or revealed in art today is "the existential fear of modern man who (see Heidegger) feels himself senselessly thrown into a being toward death."<sup>33</sup>

Both the existential fear of feeling senselessly thrown into a being toward death (Heidegger) as well as the helplessness of the disintegrated subject (Horkheimer), while positing different "images of man," express the sense of "homelessness" or loss experienced by the postwar individual standing on the brink of a void. The intrusion of the archaic or primitive in imagery then becomes an attempt to find a mirror for this loss of self. This then also means that post-World War II existential fear is not appropriately expressed through an Angst-ridden expressionism since this style would amount to an impossible assertion of subjecthood. Instead, the intrusion of an impersonal archaic suffices to represent primal fears. Expressionism has anyway been enervated through repetition and thus cannot fulfil the requirements of a postwar modernity:

The numerous paintings of classical expressionism which were on view these last two years could only be interpreted by the ignorant as being in keeping with our new and different situation. The ignorant do not know that romantic-ecstatic expressionism was overrun twenty to twenty-five years ago by a following of hangers-on and imitators and hence suffocated in the chaos and bombast of its own phraseology.<sup>34</sup>

It is instead important to work toward developing a new style "in keeping with our new and different situation." This was, however, something which the functionaries--the official culture bureaucracy--at that time were failing to do since they chose to exhibit a moderate kind of art, neither bad but not really gripping, either.<sup>35</sup> Officially, a pluralism and eclectic exhibition policy was still adhered to. On the one hand policy makers wanted to avoid the appearance of "dictating" any style whatsoever; and neither would an art which looked too "difficult" and which was too critical--however encoded--further the goals of

rebuilding society (or restoring the old system, as some critics said). "Advanced" art, therefore, during this initial period of rebuilding the country, was not univocally championed by official cultural policy. The role of dissemination was thus left to advanced artists themselves and their supporters, that is, critics and private galleries.

What critical artists also struggled against besides the culture bureaucracy's unwillingness to face the new and different was the "inflationist culture-flood"<sup>36</sup> unleashed on the country after Hitler's defeat. This refers to the (indiscriminate) exhibiting of all art suppressed during the Nazi regime. As previously discussed, art repressed during the Third Reich was exhibited in every zone of Germany as a sort of cultural anti-Nazi vaccine. But as Trökes seems to suggest in his article, the indiscriminateness of this policy excluded a critical function for the art shown. These exhibitions can in that sense be seen as a restorative tactic intended to reinstitute a particular kind of function for culture, the function that Frisch described as "alibi":

Almost every town had, in the context of a "culture week," an exhibition of "art of the twentieth century." One did not shrink from once again speaking of the nation of poets and thinkers. In the exhibitions "art of our time," pictures from 1910 through 1925 were shown as if they addressed our current situation.<sup>37</sup>

Clearly, to re-activate the myth of "poets and thinkers"--slightly reminiscent of superman ideology--for some artists could only mean that a reactionary "alibi" function of culture was being restored. What those artists working in an abstract style which incorporated "the other," primitivism, surrealism, and "pre-rational" levels of human history wanted was not a warmed over old reality, but "a new reality."<sup>38</sup> And to find the new reality required the recourse to primitivism, levels of the subconscious usually buried by civilization, and automatist abstraction. All of these qualities can be found, to one degree or

another, in the works of Baumeister, Nay, Winter, and several others.

The dissatisfaction with the past and the concurrent desire to create a new reality also struck Adorno upon his return to Germany from exile. He described his surprise at the spiritual/intellectual climate of the country.<sup>39</sup> Since the outside world had imagined that the barbarism of the Hitler regime could only have left barbarism behind, the outsider is astonished to discover that this is not the case. Things cultural/intellectual/spiritual took on the quality of subversiveness under the "reign of terror" since these were unsubsumable by Nazi totalitarianism.<sup>40</sup> This quality of resistance survived the war, and, Adorno adds, the relationship to cultural matters after the war is even stronger than it was during the period preceding it. The cause for this Adorno locates in the breakdown of the mechanisms of mass culture in postwar Germany: this has allowed an independence of thinking which during Weimar, with its well functioning mass culture, was shackled. That is, the institutions of mass media--rainbow press, radio, etc.--have been razed, freeing spirit from its enslavement to them.

This was one aspect of breakdown which could give hope to many postwar culture producers since they believed that truly new cultural structures could now be put in place. The mass media mechanisms for Verdummung (stupidification) were at least temporarily paralyzed, without, however, culture or the mechanisms for producing culture being equally lamed. Politically, culture was now aimed at a rejection of both American style liberalism--which "appeared to guarantee the power of the stronger and the impotence of the weaker"<sup>41</sup> and Russian style orthodoxy--which was seen to block free inquiry. A new democratic socialism was the overriding hope of a majority of artists, writers, women, and men. The writers associated with the magazine Der Ruf, led by Hans-Werner Richter of the

"Gruppe 47," voiced the utopian desire of many when they called for a unified and socialist Europe. In an article entitled "Germany--Bridge between East and West" of 1 October 1946, Richter describes the course of development in the representative democracies as being toward socialism and the course of development in the USSR as being toward democratization. East and West are currently are facing off in a vacuum--in which live the Germans. The latter are swamped by propaganda: they are to be re-educated, toward democracy in the west, toward socialism in the east. But since they have lost all naive faith, they cannot be satisfied by such simple either/or propositions: what they want is a combination of both democracy and socialism.<sup>42</sup> By positing the development toward socialism in the major democracies and the course toward democratization in the USSR as an historically inevitable process, Richter expressed a hopefulness far beyond fact, yet the desire to achieve a unified and socialist Europe was an unquestionably dominant wish of the majority, leading initially to a common front. The attempts to create a new language, a new reality in art, were not a direct cultural representation of a desire to found politics on new terms. However, the evolving "new reality" in art, while never exactly synchronous with politically motivated will, at this time was spoken and written about in terms very similar to the alternate political discourse, thus indicating a shared context. That context was provided by the breakdown of previous cultural and political structures.

"Europeans After All"--the International Resonance of Breakdown

A new modernism appropriate to the time had to be developed, but the problem of the alienated younger generation continued to exist not only in society generally, but in the field of painting as well. As one critic pointed out in a review of yet another "art of our time" exhibition, out of 130 participants exhibiting, only 15 were younger than forty years of age. "It is not out of the question that a crisis of the younger generation, as it is present in other areas, is here, too, coming into view."<sup>43</sup> Youth had become like a stagnant pool and had to be reconnected at all costs to the vital currents of the time. Those artists over forty years of age who were working toward developing a "new reality," a new kind of modernism, were, however, not helped by critics whose understanding of the new situation was not particularly keen. These critics continued to want an art that would communicate traditionally, an art that would be socially binding at a time when all traditional concepts of communication and binding interaction between artist and consumer were turned inside out.

Writing for the magazine Die Kunst, the critic Fritz Nemitz exemplified this old-fashioned understanding when he reviewed the first postwar "Grosse Münchner Kunstausstellung," a tradition which had been interrupted for thirteen years. He noted that in Munich "tendencies of a different painting are apparent,"<sup>44</sup> but his assessment of these tendencies which are "different" betrays a desire to make them comply with normal expectations of art:

We have to put our hopes into this new painting, not because experience always shows us, as the current exhibition of "The Blue Rider" demonstrates, that the authentic forms will prevail despite all struggle against them and all resistance, but because the building blocks for a binding art can be gotten only from the vital forces of today. This cannot be achieved by the artist alone. To do this he has to be

liberated from his isolation and put in touch with the problems of the times.<sup>45</sup>

Nemitz does not understand that easily understood--"communicating"--art has become an almost impossible proposition. If art communicates readily now, it is not presenting "a new reality." If it fails to represent a new reality, however, it will still be inappropriate for a youth which feels that the past has been thoroughly bankrupted and sullied. Nemitz furthermore does not see the advanced artists in the exhibition as representing the avant-garde, and he also does not differentiate between them. The styles of Trökes, Baumeister, and Nay, for example, are not seen as deriving from different stylistic concerns--Trökes oriented toward surrealism,<sup>46</sup> Nay coming from expressionism but reworking it through an adapted cubism, Baumeister exploiting primitivism and surrealism in order to arrive at a new kind of abstraction, etc. Instead, the critic here sees in postwar modern painting only disparate individuals, some accidental convergences of point of view. By not differentiating the advanced modernist artists from more traditional modernists, he thereby also fails to see the former as a singular tendency--versus the pluralistic "tendencies" he describes.

I believe that it can be argued that one reason for this initial inability to differentiate the new abstraction which eschews ready communication from more traditional modern styles derives from a blocked understanding of the nature of resistance. I have tried to show that the desire for a new language and reality stemmed from a critical recognition of breakdown, a criticality which perforce had opposed the status quo, both the National Socialist and to one degree or another the capitalist. This critical attitude was an aspect of resistance. In Germany the problem of resistance becomes very complex, however. Within the country, actual political resistance to Hitler was, mildly

put, an ambiguous object both during and after the war. The best way to deal with it was to pretend that it had not existed. Every other European country was proud of its resistance to Hitler; within Germany, however, resistance to the regime could only imply--once the war was underway--working for the total defeat of the whole country.<sup>47</sup> The reason for this was that onward from an early stage of the war, the Allies, in particular the US, wanted the unconditional surrender of NS Germany.<sup>48</sup> This absolutely precluded on the part of the Allies negotiating with or recognizing in any form a German resistance to Hitler. Hence, this resistance--never organized into an effective political instrument anyway<sup>49</sup>--worked and wished for the unconditional defeat of Germany, the country it ostensibly wanted to save. But by hoping for its destruction?--this would be how many Germans saw the resistance. It was not a real political force which could negotiate with the Allies and hence could offer nothing to the Germans but defeat, and worse: one only has to recall the Morgenthau Plan. This US plan called for the transformation of Germany--one of the world's most highly industrialized and modern nations--into an agricultural state without any industry whatsoever. Obviously, a resistance whose only option was to make common cause with plans such as these, a resistance without the slightest political clout, would not exactly be the focus of the populace's admiration.

Once the war was ended, the Nazi genocide perpetrated on European Jewry was exposed and rightly provoked the horror and condemnation of Germany by the world's nations. At this time, too, was cemented the thesis of collective guilt, that is, that all Germans, regardless, were guilty and were Nazi. This thesis, knowingly or not, was in a sense so undifferentiating that it succeeded in achieving the opposite of what should have been: it prevented Nazis from being tried and prosecuted by non-Nazi Germans and by diffusing the blame unto



the entire populace prevented a true purge of Nazism in Germany.<sup>50</sup> If all were guilty, how could anyone have been a resister?, and if resisters really did exist, they were guilty, by the above outlined logic, of betraying the "fatherland." Resistance thus became a kind of shameful part, hidden from the naive but possibly prying eyes of the young. The only resistance which did however become part of the popular discourse was the attempt, by a group of conservative army officers, to assassinate Hitler on 20 July 1944. The attempt failed, and Hitler ordered 5000 political prisoners of the regime--including Social Democrats, Communists, and critics out of conscience or religion--to be summarily executed. These latter, however, were not widely discussed after the war ended and Hitler was defeated. Rather, only the conservative army officers --the "20th of July group"--could be upheld as being the incorporation of resistance. But the conservatives of the postwar era were manifestly not interested in rethinking the polarized categories of communism and capitalism, as some of the other opponents of the regime had been; they were on the capitalists's side.<sup>51</sup> A "third way" springing from resistance to the NS regime and to a capitalist status quo was nipped in the bud, as the resolute course of anti-communism and pro-capitalism undertaken by West Germany's first chancellor, the anti-Nazi and very conservative Christian Democrat Konrad Adenauer, makes clear.

Resistance to the status quo--the social as well as the intellectual one which perpetrated set ways of thinking about politics and culture--remained as politically insignificant and diffuse as it had during the war. It had failed to achieve a political identity and role, and this perhaps explains the great resonance which cultural critiques focussed on negativity could eventually generate amongst some of the artists and the public passively or actively

opposed to Nazism. Resistance retreated to the field of culture, coming dangerously close to recapitulating a romanticist hankering for despair. It also exacerbated the gulf between those "in the know"--the ones whom Adorno praised for not being the mouthpieces of social "manipulators"--and the alienated public-at-large, as Nemitz's complaint about the artists's inability to "communicate" indicates.

At the same time, although the German case was unique in some respects, the search for a new language--for an appropriate modernism--and the pessimistic sense of political frustration were not at all restricted to only that country. A glance at Germany's most important neighbor, France, reveals more parallels than divergences. If German postwar youth was generally despondent and pessimistic, it certainly cannot be claimed that French youth delighted in an unbounded optimism. On the contrary, the experience of the war was seen quite clearly to tie into a larger breakdown of European, occidental culture, resulting in a critical view of all traditional values. Les Temps Modernes, the journal founded at war's end by Simone de Beauvoir, Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and others, in 1948 published a long article called "Nés en 1925." It consisted of a series of contributions by different authors whose common characteristic was that they had been born in 1925. They wrote about their perspective on the world in view of recent history. The general tone was one of pessimism and negativism, as the article contributed by Jean-François Lyotard made clear; he wrote, "We were twenty when the Camps vomitted up what they had not had the time or the appetite to digest. These hollowed faces tormented our own reflection: Europe here had assassinated its liberalism, three or four centuries of greco-latin tradition."<sup>52</sup>

This theme was sounded out at length in other articles, and in other

media--as the manifestation of what by 1952 was called "art autre" illustrates. "Autre" art, its name already signalling parallels of concern with what Domnick called the "other" in art, was a style of abstraction exemplified by the artists Wols, Jean Fautrier, Georges Mathieu, and others. It was a term first used extensively by Michel Tapié in his book Un art autre.<sup>53</sup> Except for the Germans Wols and Hans Hartung--who had emigrated to France in the 1930s--Tapié did not include other German abstract artists, although the argument could be made that painters like Baumeister, Nay, and Werner would not have jarred Tapié's overall orchestration of an "other" discourse in painting too greatly.<sup>54</sup> "Autre" art's ancestry, according to the book, includes Nietzsche, Dada, Expressionism, and Surrealism--all of these alternately critical and negative intellectual manifestations are taken to an exponentially higher stage by "autre" art. The power which fueled this art, however, was recent history and the widespread pessimism concerning traditional expectations of the future. Like Lyotard's assessment of the assassinated European tradition, the same impulse powered German critiques of the irrevocable break between the old and the new, and also the frustration over the impossibility of a critique since this critique would presuppose an orientation toward previous or old values.<sup>55</sup> These the young knew to be bankrupt. Widespread disappointment among the younger generation was the new norm; for them, nothing but chaos is left, yet even this is better than the old order.<sup>56</sup>

The Europeans also shared a sense of being caught in the middle between two great powers gearing up for a showdown. Art and culture, far from being beyond the reach of partisan attacks, was often targeted. The Soviet prescription of social realism was early on the object of satire and disdain; the east's assessment of what was wrong with western culture was seen to be

retardataire and a caricature:

Thus spoke the Soviet painter Gerassimov: "Modern French art is sick and decayed. We face an unbelievable decadence of bourgeois art in Europe and America. Armed with the method of social realism, as it was ingeniously determined by comrade Stalin, the Soviet artist creates for the people, serves the interests of the people. Therein lies his strength. He will glorify the great deeds of the patriotic war; as a landscape painter he will depict the greatness and immensity of the Russian fatherland; if he paints man, he shall make visible the benefits for man of agricultural collectivism."

Sick, decayed, decadent...(oh noble members of the PCF--Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse!) ...armed ...ingenious ...interests of the people ...great deeds of war ... greatness of the fatherland..., we've heard all this before, --it wasn't even so long ago, --who was it?<sup>57</sup>

In Germany, the Soviet administered style of social realism was from an early stage onward equated with Hitler's art policies. Americans fared not much better since their culture was seen to be equally suspect. Their values were perceived to consist of a vapid optimism and a singularly crass materialism, or what we would now more aptly call consumerism. When the debate over remilitarization was launched in 1948, the US and those in Germany who were fanatical "west-integrationists" --that is, pro-western/pro-US and anti-neutralist--were attacked and exposed in some articles as not having the best interests of Europe in mind. These anti-communists might call themselves "defenders of the occident," but in reality they were ignorant of occidental culture; all they were actually interested in defending was the importation of "sliced bacon," i.e., Americanism, for many Europeans an irritatingly naive world view.<sup>58</sup> Once again it was Max Frisch who found the perfect literary illustration to express this resentment which Europeans--in particular the French, but also the Germans, at least up to the time of the Berlin blockade<sup>59</sup> in 1948/49--felt toward Americans:

In Thornton Wilder's second play there's a passage which unsurpassedly illustrates the process; Mr. Antrobus, the father, has just invented the wheel, the wheel itself, and barely has the boy played with it for a minute that he makes a suggestion to his father: Dad, one could attach a

seat to this! The father [Europe] invents, the son [New World] will appropriate the invention. Sure, hollers Mr. Antrobus, now any idiot can play with it, but I had the idea first! What's at work here is less an hierarchy, I believe, but rather a phenomenon, a process. Younger nerves, lack of historical experiences, of scepticism, these are of course the prerequisites for appropriating the paternal wheel and for ruling the world. Lack of scepticism, lack of irony: that's what it is, after all, which from the first makes their physiognomy appear strange to us. I've noticed several times in Paris that the Germans, yesterday's oppressors, are here less hated than the Americans, the liberators, which doesn't speak for oppression and against liberation, but rather only expresses, I believe, that feeling of strangeness: the Germans were, despite everything, Europeans.<sup>60</sup>

In terms of actual policies, this aspect of having more in common with each other than with the Americans expressed itself in a surprisingly early and fairly close postwar cultural cooperation between France and Germany, especially in the field of modern culture. Obviously, for the reasons outlined above, the interest in modern art--especially French art, the leader in modernism--was fairly great in Germany since it was seen as a necessary cultural corrective to the Nazi toxin. As early as October 1947, the French sent an exhibition of their twentieth century art to Freiburg; the show was called "The Masters of French Contemporary Painting" and was organized by Maurice Jardot, the French army's cultural representative in Germany. Braque, Chagall, Gris, Léger, Matisse, Picasso, and Rouault were represented by six works each. The show was an enormous popular success and special arrangements were even made with the other western military occupiers so that visitors could pass freely from the English and American zones to Freiburg in the French zone of occupation.<sup>61</sup> Arrangements were even made with Switzerland and the Alsace to facilitate border crossings; to the Iron Curtain, it was said, one opposed the "Rideau de Dentelles."<sup>62</sup>

Cooperation was manifest even earlier than this. The first German postwar cultural conference took place in Überlingen, also in the French zone,

on 20 October 1945; it was initiated by the Germans but the French occupiers readily supported it.<sup>63</sup> Also in the French zone, the "Constance Art Week" took place in June 1946. Some of the contemporary art exhibitions, facilitated by the cultural bureaucracies of both the Germans and the French, were however considered too staid and "old-hat" by some, as I already outlined above, and were criticized in the press for not being quite the appropriate new modernity which postwar reality required. These exhibitions typically recapitulated the strategy of presenting a pluralistic view of modern art in the belief that this was the best antidote to NS Gleichschaltung (co-ordination). The problem was that this strategy was seen by some as being incapable of providing the country with a vital modern culture.

In areas removed from official culture policies, an intense interest on the part of German artists and critics in what was happening in advanced painting and thought in France was apparent. For example, Willi Baumeister, who published his 1943-written book The Unknown in Art in 1947, wrote an enthusiastic "Open Letter" to André Malraux. It was originally published in Verger--the French Army cultural magazine in Germany--and reprinted in Das Kunstwerk in 1947.<sup>64</sup> Baumeister's letter is a response to an article Malraux wrote called, "Man and artistic culture"; the painter felt compelled to respond because of the parallels he saw between his and Malraux's texts. The latter wrote, "The power of the west lies in the willing recognition of the unknown," and, "Europe has always stressed the idea that the great artist lives by discoveries, and that his discoveries are irrational and largely unforeseeable."<sup>65</sup> Baumeister points out that he pursued the same ideas in his book and that there appear to be many points of congruence in their outlooks. He closes with the wish that this shared point of view be understood in the way it would have been in 1933, that

is, prior to the outbreak of the war. The shared outlook is meant to prove German "Europeanism" and good will.

This concern for Franco-German cooperation on the part of some German artists and intellectuals for the sake of European unity came up also in 1950 when the German government made the mistake of sending to Paris Wilhelm Hausenstein as the first German consul to France since hostilities between the two countries ceased. In the 1920s and 1930s, Hausenstein had been a champion of modern art, but during the interim a change of mind came over him; in 1949 he published this changed opinion in no uncertain terms, advising modern artists to hang up their brushes because they simply would never be able to reach once again the perfection of classical art. Baumeister was appalled that someone of this mind-set should represent Germany in the capital city of modern art, and he began publicly agitating for Hausenstein's replacement. The dispute between Baumeister and Hausenstein eventually included Theodor Heuss, Germany's first president, who made the mistake of telling Baumeister to stay out of the government's affairs. This only fanned the flames since it enraged Baumeister's sense of democracy: Heuss more or less claimed infallibility for the state, and told the artist that he had no right to criticize the state's decisions. Baumeister then went on the offensive, accusing Heuss of an anti-democratic disposition. The dispute became internationalized when Le Matin reported it, noting that according to the cliché, the Germans are usually suspect to their neighbors because they tend to agree amongst themselves, and thereby make a formidable common front. This time, however, Le Matin was pleased to note that there was great disagreement and it was being publicly played out. Le Matin noted that Baumeister has many European friends, including the former British consul general in Munich, John Anthony Thwaites, as well as many French friends,

and that it was encouraging to see these European friends supporting the German in his struggle to assert the primacy of modern art: this was seen as a "symptom of increasing European cooperation."<sup>66</sup>

The platform which "Europe-oriented" artists and critics had at their disposal for the propagation of modern art was the magazine Das Kunstwerk. It consistently articulated a European view versus any one-sided focus on problems particular only to Germany.<sup>67</sup> This magazine included many articles on twentieth century French painting generally, on surrealism, and on cubism. The language used was often reminiscent of the language of "otherness" and of existentialism; for example, Kurt Leonhard, writing about Picasso, states that this artist displays "the freedom to place himself, with unforeseen leaps, into the sometimes utterly Other, beyond the results of his own creations."<sup>68</sup> And:

The belief in a constant, persistent, and closed "I," in a fastness of character, as maintained by classical philosophers, seems to be overturned by Picasso's ability to change, as is the identity [Wesensgleichheit] of the natural object and the mundane meaning of things proven wrong by his ability to transform. As if with the red and green neon signs of flaming metropolitan letters, the word of Nietzsche, prophet of nihilism, is written, enticing and threatening, over his head: "Nothing is true, and everything is permitted." He is the type of the isolated solitary of our times, of whom the French writer Jean-Paul Sartre says: "he is condemned to be free." ...[Picasso speaks] as a person who does not, like Luther, testify: "...I cannot do otherwise, God help me, Amen," but rather as someone who puts the greatest value on always proving, through his deeds, "I can do otherwise, too." That is, he does not want to live in dependence and obedience--not to God, like Luther, and not to nature, like older art--and not even to a proper [eigenen], immutable law of being [Wesensgesetz] like practically all of his contemporaries--but rather free in every aspect, as no one has ever dared to be free--unless it be that spirit of contradiction which created the statement: "Only the one who changes rests kindred to me."<sup>69</sup>

The antenna tuned to pick up on parallel concerns, especially as they occurred in France, regarding the questioning of traditional anthropocentric conceptions was in Das Kunstwerk functioning at maximum capacity. What the skies were scanned for were the signals of a common plight: das Menschenbild was in dire straits,



but resignation had to be ruled out. A new modernity, appropriate to the prevailing flavor of exigency, had to be defiantly finessed from the rubble. And it was to be gotten from the European rubble, not just the German, since the feeling of exigency constituted a new internationalism. One recognized the like-minded by their display of contempt for the positive and the traditional.

#### Breakdown as Breakout: The Restorative Function of Exigency

In Germany, resistance to Hitler never became a political force to be reckoned with. Those who opposed National Socialism were united only by their opposition, not by a party. Thus, Catholics and Communists, Socialists and Conservatives found themselves in a broad coalition of opposition. This was a common front unable to create a political unity, however; especially during the later years of the NS regime, it was for oppositionals a major task even to stay in touch amongst themselves.<sup>70</sup> Baumeister, who was not a "politicized" or engaged artist but who was opposed to the Nazis, worked in isolation: in his case protest was restricted to secretly choosing to think and paint in a way which would have aroused the displeasure of the rulers had they known. Once the war ended, this initial body of opposition perhaps still had a chance of creating an oppositional political discourse, of coalescing into a political force. The country was in shambles, the policies of the occupiers were often contradictory, indicating that they, too, were as yet unsure about what plan of action to follow, and the barriers which would once again create the old differentiations between good and bad, east and west, communist and democrat, although not entirely knocked down were not yet rigidly drawn.

This drawing of lines only came to be acutely felt after the infusion of

Marshall Plan aid to Europe, in particular Germany; receiving sorely needed aid meant accomodating the US in one way or another in its consolidation of overseas markets for its surplus economy, and thus facilitated a rebuilding of the country along capitalist lines, that is, facilitated a restoration of the old, prewar economic system.<sup>71</sup> Whatever could be "new" for politics became marginalized very rapidly in the face of the onslaught of the "old," and, as suggested above, retreated to the field of culture criticism. The restorative bent of politics was criticized throughout the late 1940s by those who continued to hope for a more socialist structured society.

The point can be made that the younger generation was the one to lose the most power through the restoration. By the late 1940s, the generation of thirty-year olds was the one most alienated from politics and culture. Silent and sullen, resentful of the past and the present, they were asked to submit to "re-education" while the politicians left over from the Weimar period picked up in 1945 as though the experience of the interim had not been their affair.<sup>72</sup> And at international meetings of the youth membership of European political parties, such as the one which took place in the British zone of occupation in the summer of 1948, the internationally prescribed medicine for the "German problem" was liberalism, equally advocated by the French (Joseph Rovin) and the Americans (Edward Ladd). The latter even lectured the audience on the detrimental effects of having political parties which are steeped in ideologies: this is something which should be thrown overboard, seemingly much in keeping with America's evolving concept of "the vital center."<sup>73</sup> Resistance, never an organized factor in Germany to begin with, was practically finished as an independent force, although it now became of interest to uphold it as a myth:

When the great dissolution of coalitions began in international politics during this postwar period, resistance, as far as it wanted still to

function as one political factor in our times, could remain of interest to the West only if it consented to being formed by--and to forming--the forces against the dangers and methods of Eastern totalitarianism. If it did not do this, it even became suspect.<sup>74</sup>

It was thus usurped by traditional party politics and was ideologically refunctionalized. By the date of the article quoted here, resistance was being used by each camp to denounce the other side; the East denounced imperialism, which used to mean Hitler but now meant the US, while the West denounced totalitarianism, which used to mean Hitler, but now meant the USSR.

The different conceptions of fascism developed in the East and the West also colored the two sides's conception of resistance. The USSR propounded an economically-rooted analysis of fascism; that is, fascism was analyzed to be the culmination of a process begun by capitalism, it was the logical next step of a capitalism pushed into a corner. In the opinion which gained support in the US, fascism was almost exclusively a psychological problem, something essentially inherent in the German "soul" and in German culture.<sup>75</sup> This allowed the US emphasis to be placed on "re-education" while allowing all the old capitalist structures to remain intact. Similarly, conceptions of resistance diverged: in the East, resistance focussed on eliminating capitalism, while in the West, resistance was increasingly restricted to "values," to a belief in "liberalism" (versus totalitarianism), and to the realm of Geist--Theodor Adorno would on this level find himself in agreement with naked Cold Warriordom, protestations of not wanting to be a "mouthpiece" notwithstanding. The ideology of the impossibility of political praxis and the resultant retreat to the realm of theory was eminently suited to the restoration of capitalism in postwar western Germany.

On all fronts resistance was being blocked out of participating in the political creation of change, and was instead harnessed into a restoration of

the old. Reduced to Geist, to the personal and the individualist, it thereby became more susceptible to ideological manipulation. In 1949 the question, "What can be done to strengthen the vital function of resistance?" was answered with a prescription of strengthened individualism, lest Europe become a mere appendage of "America or Asia."<sup>76</sup> Yet it is precisely this emphasis on individualism which furnishes the illusion of internal freedom that masks the continuation of repression and unfreedom resulting from "American" and "Asian" superpower rivalry.

This chapter began with the 1950 symposium in Darmstadt which asked after the valency of the image of man--das Menschenbild--and proceeded to trace the roots of this concern to the 1940s. We saw the Menschenbild being corroded and questioned, yet simultaneously trying to assert itself, and we saw that history--Nazism, the war, and the breakdown of European culture--had created an exigent physical and mental state. From the beleaguered Berliner dependent on airlifted food to Adorno's "damaged life," all were suffering under this unprecedented state of exigency. Modern art especially could see itself as particularly endangered since it faced enemies on both the right and the left. While the old bourgeois humanist concept of culture from the nineteenth century was discredited by history, the orthodox communist left also presented no viable alternative since it, like the right in this respect, called for a naive kind of humanist communication at odds with the modernists's search for a new reality.

But modernists on the other hand followed in the arena of culture a similar strategy as the SPD in politics: they claimed blamelessness for Nazism. They were innocent victims of Nazism, and now after the war faced enemies on all sides. This seemingly typical "instinct" of culture--its most negative representatives notwithstanding--to try to absent itself from politics

facilitated the affirmative embrace of negativism in art. Modernists, rooted in negativity, call upon the concept of culture in crisis, of exigency and adversity; this fits into the negative discourse of the disintegration of the subject, the death of the individual, and the impossibility of "rational" man. But it also provides the terms for the search for man, that is, the positive discourse of the Menschenbild; in this sense, theory, although critical, aids in reconstituting the image of man:

That the specter of "exigency" was ever again conjured up was in part, to be sure, an honest perception of things, but also in part a trick. One always talks of exigency when it is an immense exigency under which many are suffering, that is, one which is perceived as fateful. The question of possible guilt and responsibility of those thus afflicted can then not even arise. When everyone is in the same boat, rescue seems more important than critical thinking. If many are afflicted by it, then exigency can take on a levelling quality, because if it is generally perceived as breakdown, as downfall, as life threatening, then one can also believe that possibly existing guilt is compensated by it. One "needs" exigency so that the new man can arise therefrom.<sup>77</sup>

The exigency of non-communicative painting, however rooted in criticality, was in this sense fulfilling a positive function since, as the last sentence of the quoted passage indicates, it allows the new man to be born.<sup>78</sup> But unfortunately the new man will almost always be the sum of the structures left over from the old system.

Fig. 6: Willi Baumeister, Urzeitgestalten, 1946, oil on canvas, Stuttgart, Staatsgalerie.



Fig. 7: Ernst Wilhelm Nay, Autumn Song, 1945, paint on cardboard, Berlin, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Nationalgalerie.

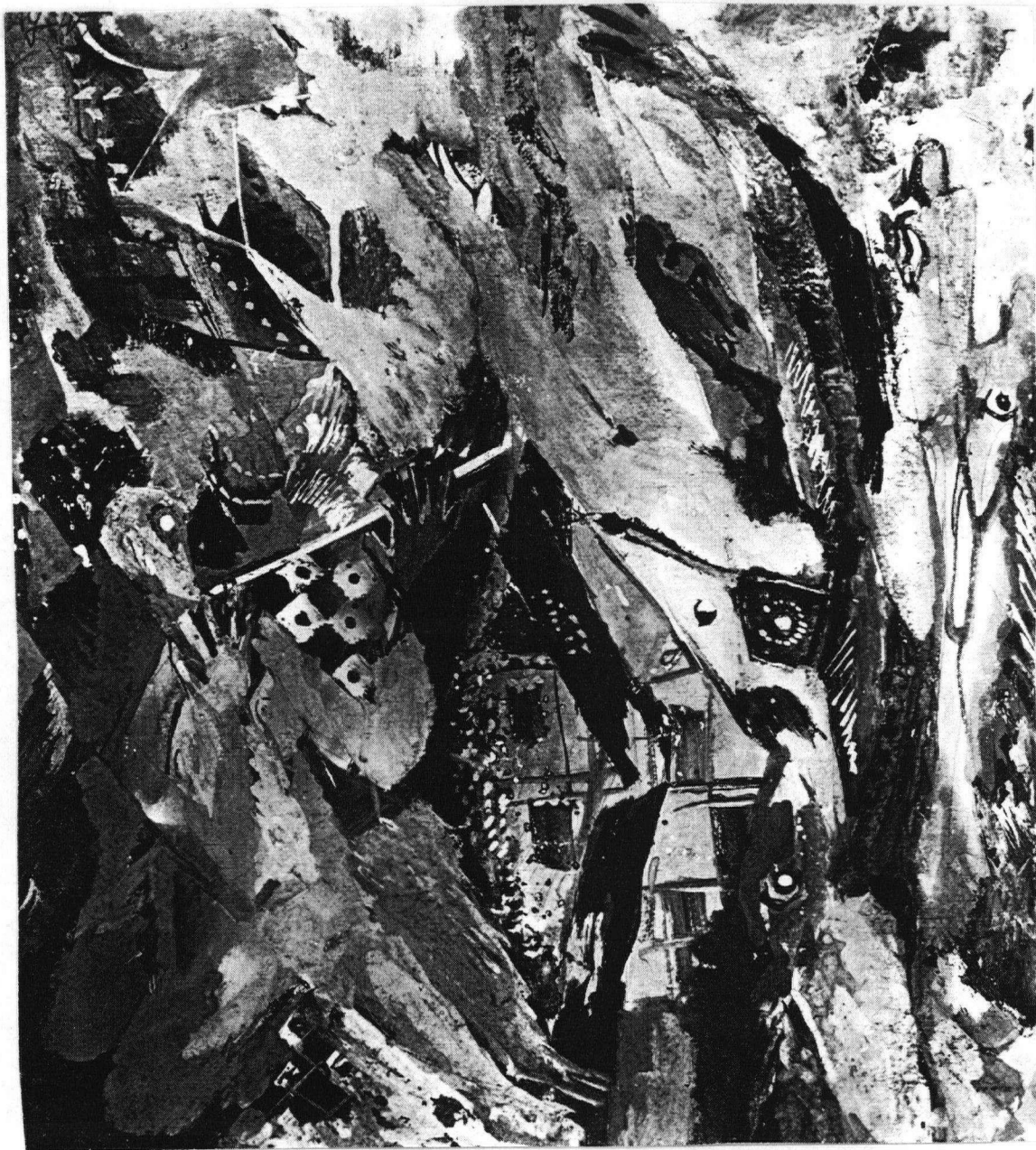
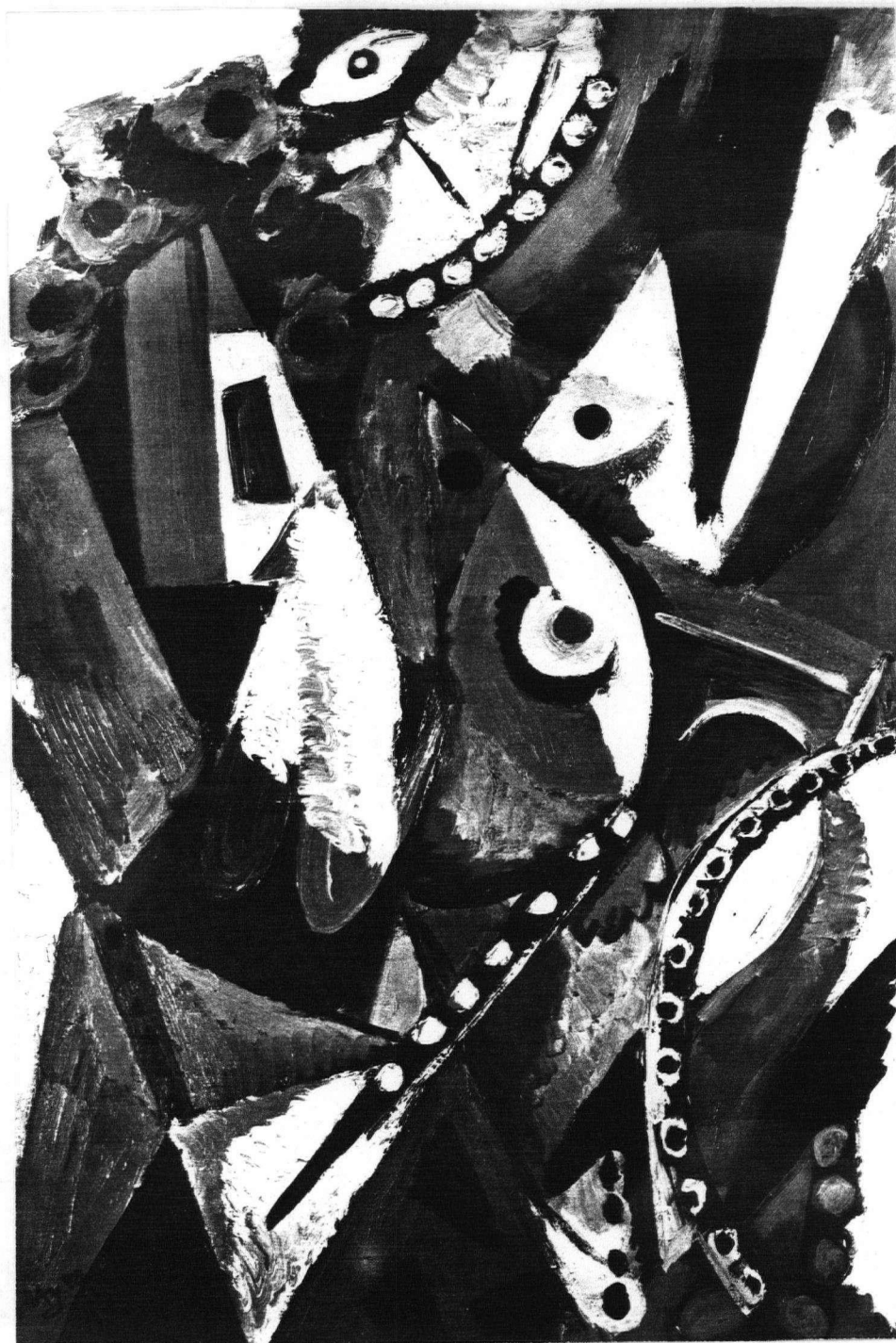




Fig. 8: Ernst Wilhelm Nay, Mélisande, 1948, oil on canvas, Berlin, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Nationalgalerie.





## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>See Hans Gerhard Evers, ed., Erstes Darmstädter Gespräch 1950: "Das Menschenbild in unserer Zeit" (Darmstadt: Neue Darmstädter Verlagsanstalt, [1951]). There were subsequent symposia during the 1950s on the topic of architecture, technology, the individual and the organization, theatre, etc., in Darmstadt.

<sup>2</sup>The response was often scathingly negative; see for example Hermann Voss, "Hans Sedlmayr, Verlust der Mitte. Otto Möller Verlag, Salzburg (1948)," Zeitschrift für Kunst 4 Nr.1 (1950):78-83.

<sup>3</sup>Hans Sedlmayr, "Über die Gefahren der modernen Kunst," talk given by Sedlmayr at Darmstadt; quoted in Götz Adriani, ed., Baumeister; Dokumente, Texte, Gemälde (Cologne: DuMont Schauberg, 1971), p.197.

<sup>4</sup>Alexander Mitscherlich, "Das Menschenbild in unserer Zeit in der Sicht der Medizin," talk given by Mitscherlich at Darmstadt, quoted ibid., p.198.

<sup>5</sup>Willi Baumeister, "Verteidigung der modernen Kunst gegen Sedlmayr und Hausenstein," talk given by Baumeister at Darmstadt, quoted ibid., p.198.

<sup>6</sup>Willi Baumeister, Das Unbekannte in der Kunst (Stuttgart: Schwab, 1947) was written by him in 1943 during a period when he was forbidden to paint and also unable to acquire the materials, with the exception of cheap cardboard, with which to paint in secret.

<sup>7</sup>The prehistoric art of cave paintings was also linked to the condition of contemporary man in art magazine articles like Hermann Weidhaas, "Zur Bildkunst in frühen Gesellschaftsformen," Zeitschrift für Kunst 4 Nr.3 (1950): 228-231. The title alone lets one suspect the adjunct "Zur Bildkunst in späten Gesellschaftsformen."

<sup>8</sup>Articles on kitsch or on art otherwise pandering to banality crop up repeatedly during the 1940s. Some examples are Paul Renner, "Psychoanalyse und moderne Malerei," Zeitschrift für Kunst 1 Nr.4 (1947), pp.68-71 on the theme that since psychoanalysis, reason has had to abdicate its reign; man is not healed and the question is asked whether all optimism is kitsch; also Walter Dirks, "Jazz," Frankfurter Hefte 3 (September 1948), pp.790-791 that jazz is an authentic music for today and that the "Singsang- und Operettenkitsch aus Paris, Berlin und Wien" (p.791) cannot even come close to competing with jazz; it reflects the "Wahrheit, Bewusstheit, dem Reflexionsstand, dem Formgefühl und dem musikalischen Geschmack unserer Welt," it is the music of urbanity and civilization; those who wish to flee these things remain caught in musical kitsch and reject jazz.(p.791) Also, attacks on kitsch monuments in "Beobachtungen und Bemerkungen," Frankfurter Hefte 4 (January 1949), p.15: the "Deutsches Eck" in Koblenz (where the Rhine and the Mosel meet) was to get a new monument in lieu of the old Kaiser Wilhelm statue; the winning design turned out to be "allegorical figures of Father Rhine and Mosella," to which this column noted that "Wir leben im Zeitalter der Restauration," that people today failed

to be able to come up with anything different than in "greatgrandfather's time," and that one develops an irresistible urge to yawn in the face of this banality.

<sup>9</sup>See Hermann Schöling, Zur Geschichte der ästhetischen Wertung: Bibliographie der Abhandlungen über den Kitsch (Giessen: Universitätsbibliothek Giessen, 1971). "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" was published by a magazine called Glanz, Nr.3 (1949).

<sup>10</sup>Theodor Adorno, "Schlussgespräch," talk given by Adorno, quoted in Adriani, p.198.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p.199.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>In The Dialectic of the Enlightenment by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer (first published in Amsterdam in 1947), one reads: "Whether a citizen chooses the communist or the fascist ticket is already determined by whether he lets himself be more impressed by the Red Army or by the laboratories of the West." --quoted in a book review of Dialectic of the Enlightenment, Karl Thieme, "Entzauberte Entzauberung," Frankfurter Hefte 4 (August 1949), p.716.

<sup>15</sup>After 1948 Nay's work becomes increasingly abstract, renouncing any allusions to the figurative, instead exploring form, pattern, color. Prior to this, his work still exhibits this tension between abstraction and encoded figure. It could also be argued, however, that the later work, based on properties belonging to painting only (self-referentiality) but appealing, through what Nay said of his work, to "spiritual" qualities, still addresses the human subject and thereby (ideologically) incorporates him/her in this ostensibly wholly abstract art. It has changed its terms, yet carried the concerns of the late 1940s with it.

<sup>16</sup>Max Frisch, Tagebuch 1946-1949 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1985), p.287. For information on Frisch, see Introduction, note 2.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Max Horkheimer, "The End of Reason," Studies in Philosophy and Social Science 9 (1941), p.376.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p.377; Horkheimer quotes I.G. Fichte, The Science of Ethics, translated by A.E. Kroeger, New York, 1897, p.308.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp.384-385. At the time Horkheimer wrote this, he was likely unaware of the existence of death camps; he refers here to concentration camps for the malcontents, the ones accused of various forms of "mischief," or troublemaking. The reference to night club and garment district jargon is to Yiddish, that is, to the fact that Nazi anti-semites would nonetheless incorporate into their vocabulary words like Koscher, zores, meschugge, etc., while carrying out their racist program.

<sup>21</sup>Werner Krauss, "Über den Zustand unserer Sprache," Die Gegenwart 2 Nr.28/29 (1947), p.29. Krauss was a well-known Romance-language scholar and had been in opposition to Hitler.

In this regard see also Roland Barthes, Part I of Writing Degree Zero, section called "Political Modes of Writing," first published in 1956 and reprinted in the volume A Barthes Reader, edited by Susan Sontag (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982, pp.31-61.

<sup>22</sup>Benno Reifenberg, "Deutschlands Verstummen," Die Gegenwart 1 Nr.4/5 (1946), p.7.

<sup>23</sup>Walter Weymann-Weyhe and Rüdiger Proske, "Die Lage der Intellektuellen in Deutschland," Frankfurter Hefte 3 (June 1948), p.534.

<sup>24</sup>See Theo Pirker, Die SPD nach Hitler; Die Geschichte der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands 1945-1964 (Munich: Rütten & Loenig Verlag GmbH, 1965). Pirker was thrown out of the SPD's council for being too left-wing.

<sup>25</sup>Jutta Held, Kunst und Kunstpolitik 1945-49, p.4.

<sup>26</sup>Ottomar Domnick, Die Schöpferischen Kräfte in der abstrakten Malerei; Ein Zyklus (Bergen: Möller & Kiepenheuer Verlag, 1947).

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p.13.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p.14.

<sup>29</sup>Leopold Zahn, "Abkehr von der Natur," Das Kunstwerk 1 Nr.8/9 (1946-47), p.4.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., pp.4-5.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p.5.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid. Homo technicus: man the technician; homo magus: man the magician (shaman); homo magus redivivus: man reborn as magician, the new magician or shaman.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid. Martin Heidegger in 1947 published his "Letter on Humanism," reprinted in book form in 1949. It was a rebuke of Jean-Paul Sartre's brand of existentialism and attacked and questioned the idea of the centrality of the subject. It was also an attack on conventional humanism. As one book reviewer noted in 1949: "Heidegger interprets our current crisis as deriving from the desperate selfassertion which man seeks to find in totality--all in order to preserve his subjectivity. He calls individualism just as unhistorical as collectivism, since in both instances man, as the animal rationale, circles about himself, disdaining the truth of being and hence being expelled from it." Walter Rest, "Über den Humanismus und Marx," Frankfurter Hefte 4 (September 1949), p.804.

<sup>34</sup>Heinz Trökes, "Moderne Kunst in Deutschland," Das Kunstwerk 1 Nr.8/9

(1946/47), p.75.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p.73.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p.75.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Theodor Adorno, "Auferstehung der Kultur in Deutschland?" Frankfurter Hefte 5 (May 1950), p.469-477.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p.469.

<sup>41</sup>Alfred Grosser, The Western Alliance: European-American Relations Since 1945, trans. Michael Shaw (New York: Vintage Books, 1982), p.53.

<sup>42</sup>Hans-Werner Richter, "Deutschland--Brücke zwischen Ost und West," article in Der Ruf, 1 October 1946, quoted in Klaus-Jörg Ruhl, editor, "Mein Gott, was soll aus Deutschland werden?" Die Adenauer Ära 1949-1963 (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1985), pp.53-56.

<sup>43</sup>Clemens Münster, "Deutsche Malerei und Plastik der Gegenwart," Frankfurter Hefte 4 (July 1949), p.625.

<sup>44</sup>Fritz Nemitz, "Grosse Münchner Kunstausstellung (Malerei)," Die Kunst 48 (November 1949), p.52.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid. The artists discussed by Nemitz in this connection include E.W.Nay, Georg Meistermann, Heinz Trökes, Max Ackermann, Baumeister, and others.

<sup>46</sup>Trökes wrote an enthusiastic article, "Der Surrealismus," for Das Kunstwerk 1 Nr.8/9 (1946/47):30-36. Surrealism is not anti-logical, it is a-logical; it demasks what is hidden behind façades; things, animals, humans metamorphose into one another, but never in the sense of conventional humanism wherein rational man lords over being and life; most surrealists are marxists although they do not allow economically based analyses to be applied to things of the spirit; and they are internationalists. "There existed and exists still (...) an international and subterranean solidarity of point of view which stretches across the whole world. This is why surrealism is not bound to any one nation." (p.35) In his article, "Moderne Kunst in Deutschland," Trökes does, however, insist that old style surrealism is inadequate for the present, that it cannot be taken over as is.

<sup>47</sup>This problem was discussed after the war in articles like Eugen Kogon, "Nürnberg und die Geschichte," Frankfurter Hefte 1 (April 1946), pp.3-5; and the same, "Gericht und Gewissen," Frankfurter Hefte 1 (April 1946), pp.25-37.

<sup>48</sup>See Friedrich Minssen, "Der Widerstand gegen den Widerstand," Frankfurter Hefte 4 (October 1949), pp.884-888, a review of Hans Rothfels's The

German Opposition to Hitler (1949).

<sup>49</sup>The opposition's political ineptitude was addressed in Alice Platen-Hallermund, "Der deutsche Widerstand," Frankfurter Hefte 3 (March 1948), pp.280-282, a review of Allen Welsh Dulles's Germany's Underground (New York: Macmillan, 1947).

<sup>50</sup>This thesis was criticized by Kogon and Walter Dirks, the latter's in "Der Weg zur Freiheit; Ein Beitrag zur deutschen Selbsterkenntnis," Frankfurter Hefte 1 (July 1946), pp.50-60; also, the critique in the volume Imperialismus und Kultur, cited previously, pp.124-125, where the collective guilt thesis is attacked as a means of cloaking the imperialistic nature of fascism under the guise of psychologism.

<sup>51</sup>There were some very notable exceptions like Gustav Heinemann, a thorough critic of Cold Warriorism. He resigned from the Adenauer cabinet (he was a CDU politician) in 1950 on the issue of German rearmament. He then helped found the GVP--Gesamtdeutsche Volkspartei--in 1952, an anti-fascist, pro-neutralist, anti-Cold War party. This party did not last long, and by 1957 Heinemann was a member of parliament for the SPD. He continued agitating against the Cold War, atomic weapons, etc. In 1969 he became President of the Federal Republic of Germany during the last months of an SPD-CDU coalition government which in the fall of 1969 gave way to the major political change of postwar Germany: the SPD-FDP coalition government of Willi Brandt and later of Helmut Schmidt. He died in 1976.

<sup>52</sup>Jean-François Lyotard, "Nés en 1925," Les Temps Modernes 3 (1948), p.2053.

<sup>53</sup>Michel Tapié, Un art autre; où il s'agit de nouveaux dévidages du réel (Paris: Gabriel-Giraud et Fils, 1952).

<sup>54</sup>By 1949 (July), German artists like Max Ackermann, Willi Baumeister, Hubert Berke, Julius Bissier, Rolf Cavael, Fritz Winter, Ernst Wilhelm Nay, and Theodor Werner were all exhibiting at the Third Salon de Nouvelles Réalités in Paris. Tapié, who was not associated with this gallery, might for this reason, among others, have been reluctant to include any of them in his book.

<sup>55</sup>See for example Rüdiger Proske and Walter Weymann-Weyhe, "Wir aus dem Kriege; der Weg der jüngeren Generation," Frankfurter Hefte 3 (September 1948), p.792-803.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p.798. Also, the sense that the problem of evil was not just a German one is made clear by this account of a newspaper item given by Frisch in his Tagebuch, entry from summer, 1946, p.61-62:

In the paper:

A man, who had already spent two thirds of his existence as an honest and trusted bank teller, woke up in the night because of a need to relieve himself; on his way back, noticing an ax glinting in a corner, he bludgeoned to death his entire family, including grandparents and grandchildren; a reason for his monstrous behaviour, it is said, could not be given by the culprit; it is not a

case of embezzlement....

"Perhaps he drank."

"Perhaps..."

"Or maybe it was an embezzlement which will only later be discovered."

"Let's hope so...."

Our need for a cause: as guarantee that such a disorder, which reveals the insecurity of human being, shall never be able to afflict us....

Why do we talk so much about Germany?

<sup>57</sup>Rudolf Andersch, "Vom Sinn der Malerei," Frankfurter Hefte 3 (February 1948), p.183.

<sup>58</sup>Eugen Kogon, "Der entscheidende Schritt," Frankfurter Hefte 3 (July 1948), p.586.

<sup>59</sup>The Berlin crisis began when the three western zones (British, French, American) unilaterally carried out the currency reform (which incidentally produced the economic collapse of numerous independent journals) on 18 June 1948; five days later, the Soviets carried out a currency reform in the east zone--but this reform was to apply to all of Berlin, which, although in the eastern zone, was supposed to be a four-zone city. Next, the supply of coal and electricity to the city's western sectors was cut off. The western allies then introduced the Westmark as the western sector Berlin's currency; the situation was exacerbated ever more, and routes leading from the western zones of Germany (through the east zone) to western sector Berlin were blockaded. This led to the famous Berlin Air Lift, where the western sector of the city was kept supplied with food and coal until an agreement regarding access to Berlin was finally reached on 5 May 1949. To maintain west sector Berlin as a non-Soviet outpost--to not let the Russians take over all of the former capital city--became an enormous point of prestige for the US and for West Germans. The financing of the airlift was largely American, although not only American planes were involved. As Alfred Grosser notes, p.83, "German-American solidarity established itself during that winter of 1948-49." And, same page: "Any German foreign policy which was not based on gaining the confidence of the Americans so that they might continue extending their protection to Berlin and West Germany seemed unacceptable henceforth." The logic of the Cold War reigned henceforth.

<sup>60</sup>Max Frisch, Tagebuch, entry from July 1948, pp.249-250.

<sup>61</sup>Kurt Martin, Erinnerungen an die französische Kulturpolitik in Freiburg im Breisgau nach dem Krieg (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag KG, 1974), p.[3]. Martin does not specify whether any arrangements were made with the Soviet occupiers to allow people living in that zone to pass the military borders into the French zone.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p.[4].

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>Willi Baumeister, "Offener Brief an André Malraux," Das Kunstwerk 1 Nr.8/9 (1946/47), p.79.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.. Translated from the German translation.

<sup>66</sup>This entire dispute is capsulized and quoted in Götz Adriani, Baumeister, pp.191-192. The Le Matin article is by F. Joubert and appears translated into German from the original French in Adriani; it is called, "The council of contemporary art, or: the professorial dispute" (Hausenstein, Heuss, and Baumeister all held the title of professor; no doubt the Frenchman Joubert had German pedanticism which values titles in mind when deciding what to call his article); it is dated 29 May 1950. Hausenstein's polemic, which accused modern art of "nihilism," was called "What is the meaning of modern art?" and appeared in 1949. Heuss, at an early stage of the dispute, publicly called Baumeister a dumb ox--which, considering the artist's burly physique, must have been too close for comfort. Thinking that Baumeister would be an artist who paints, not speaks, he miscalculated because one of this painter's favorite activities seems to have been writing and speaking, and Baumeister, far from retreating, charged into print as the democratic defender of modern art against the anti-democratic restorative tactics of the government. Adenauer, the Chancellor, was Christian Democrat, Heuss, the President, a Free Liberal Democrat.

<sup>67</sup>I would take issue here with an interpretation of the success of informal type abstraction given by Jost Hermand, "Modernism Restored: West German Painting in the 1950s," New German Critique Nr.32 (Spring/Summer 1984), pp.23-41. Hermand neglects any analysis of the immediate postwar discourse, focusses instead on Wohlstanddeutschland's facile relationship with modernism, and suggests, p.25, that Das Kunstwerk, by having only abstract painting on the agenda (a not entirely true claim), propagated an undifferentiated, uncritical idea of abstract modernist painting. In actual fact, the magazine was one of the most intelligent sources of information on the new abstraction.

<sup>68</sup>Kurt Leonhard, "Picasso," Das Kunstwerk 1 Nr.8/9 (1946/47), p.18.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p.19.

<sup>70</sup>For a first-hand description of the difficulties of maintaining any kind of network--information, cooperation, etc.--between the different groupings of oppositionals, see Peter Weiss, Die Ästhetik des Widerstands, 3 volumes, originally published in 1975, 1978, and 1981; published in one volume in 1983 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1983). It must be added that Weiss, who in exile met and worked with Bert Brecht, would have scorned the unpolitical art of informal type abstraction as well as the discourses of Frankfurt School type intellectuals. Brecht in fact parodied the latter as the Tellekt-Ual-Ins. Neither the Weissian or the Brechtian aesthetic had much chance of flourishing in 1950s West Germany, although both playwrights produced plays which could not be ignored. (Weiss is best known for "Marat-Sade.")

<sup>71</sup>Grosser, p.72, cites a "prayer" which circulated in the Marshall-aided London of 1948, expressing in toto the restorative function and Cold War mechanism set in motion as a prerequisite to receiving aid:

Our Uncle which art in America  
Sam be thy name,

Thy navy come, thy will be done,  
In London as 'tis in Washington.  
Give us this day our Marshall aid,  
And forgive us our un-American activities,  
As we forgive your American activities against us;  
And lead us not into Socialism  
But deliver us from Communism,  
For thine is our Kingdom,  
The Atom power and the Tory,  
For ever and ever: G-men.

One could contrast this quite nicely to the money-poor policy of the Soviets which inspired the east zone Germans to come up around the same time with a parody of the German national anthem:

Deutschland, Deutschland ohne alles,  
Ohne Butter, ohne Speck,  
Und das bisschen Marmelade  
Fressen uns die Russen weg...

--cited in Anthony Mann, Comeback; Germany 1945-1952 (London: Macmillan London Limited, 1980), p.99.

<sup>72</sup>Rüdiger Proske and Walter Weymann-Weyhe, "Wir aus dem Kriege; der Weg der jüngeren Generation," Frankfurter Hefte 3 (September 1948):792-803.

<sup>73</sup>Karl Wilhelm Böttcher, "Die junge Generation und die Parteien; Bericht über ein Gespräch," Frankfurter Hefte 3 (August 1948):756-761.

<sup>74</sup>Eugen Kogon, "Der politische Untergang des europäischen Widerstandes," Frankfurter Hefte 4 (May 1949), p.409.

<sup>75</sup>See Heilbut, cited previously, pp.413-414, for a discussion of the different receptions of Hannah Arendt's and Franz Neumann's books on Nazism and totalitarianism. Arendt condemned all of Germany and claimed that it had offered no resistance to Hitler. Her book The Origins of Totalitarianism received wide attention. This, according to Heilbut, "evidenced the curious and probably unparalleled coalescing of a literary émigré's reading of history with the political demands of American Cold Warriors. As a case in point, consider the far less rapturous reception for Franz Neumann's equally massive study of Nazi Germany, Behemoth (1942). Of course, Neumann's Marxist analysis was less flattering to American readers than Arendt's conviction that totalitarian societies were something new under the sun, and quite unlike any elements in American life. Neumann's study had its flaws, particularly in its underestimation of the virulence of German anti-Semitism and in its programmatic appeals to the Allies to cultivate the German resistance (Neumann was a member of the OSS when he wrote the book). Yet his study has proved to be more prophetic and, for many scholars, more helpful than Arendt's idiosyncratic work.

"Unlike Arendt, Neumann had little use for the abstract model of 'totalitarianism,' recognizing that it blurred the continuities and resemblances between all capitalist societies."



Along the same lines, it is striking that Thomas Mann, another German who adhered to a blanket condemnation of his countrymen--a writer who was conservative, a monarchist, and generally politically apathetic preferring the realm of "geist" instead--received a great deal of attention while his brother Heinrich Mann, a critical, politically left thinker capable of great differentiation in his analyses, did not.

<sup>76</sup>Bernhard Guttman, "Die Funktion des Widerstandes," Die Gegenwart 4 Nr.6 (1949), p.9.

<sup>77</sup>Heinrich Kupffer, Der Faschismus und das Menschenbild in der deutschen Pädagogik (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuchverlag GmbH, 1984), p.129.

<sup>78</sup>A clarification is in order here: I noted earlier (Introduction, note 6) that the label "non-communicative" only becomes truly appropriate at a later stage--around the start of the 1950s when the struggle over the political structures in the two Germanys and in Europe had been largely, though not entirely, settled. In the 1940s, most of the artists concerned would no doubt have been insistent that their art "communicated"--if nothing else, it spoke of the search for a new language. I would argue that as long as the fluctuating political situation existed, the "communication" of advanced art attempting to speak in a new language constituted a kind of praxis. That is, although addressing "exigency," it tried to intervene in this state of affairs. Once the political issues become settled, its context of communication is practically elided--it becomes "non-communicative." It also becomes marginalized to theory, but it does not relinquish its emblematics of exigency. It is at this point, as Kupffer says, that "One 'needs' exigency so that the new man can arise therefrom." I do not believe that in this case this is a process inherent in the art, but rather something dependent on its social context. I also reject the idea that the context "cheapens" the art in any way: it continues to have meaning in itself, in relation to its changed context, in relation to its traditions (painting), and in relation to future art praxis. I do suspect and would criticize the tendency to fall into complacency in the 1950s on the part of many German painters, and the tendency to obliterate from memory the "rubble years" which after all had provided the context for this kind of abstraction's birth--a style which subsequent artists busily copied.

CHAPTER 2: THE INTERACTION OF POLITICS AND CULTURE:  
THE NECESSITY OF FINDING AN APPROPRIATE REPRESENTATION IN ART

Berliner Künstler 1950: An Exhibition with a Purpose

We have seen that in 1950 a symposium was held in Darmstadt at which the main critical concerns of the day--in relation primarily to art ("the image of man")--were articulated, and that these concerns already existed, were fully present, throughout the 1940s, both in the discourse as well as in part of the art produced. The question this now raises is whether these concerns were being translated into exhibition policies, and if not, in what way could they eventually come to be relevant to the official propagation of culture? In order to formulate answers to these questions, we will turn to another event of 1950: Berliner Künstler 1950, an exhibition sponsored by the city of Bonn and organized by a Berlin committee.<sup>1</sup> Domestically, it was shown only in the city of Bonn, the newly created capital of the Federal Republic of Germany, and was thereafter shipped to Paris and to several American cities. Examination of the catalog will show that its intention was to attest the cultural freedom of Berlin, and proceeding from this intention, we will ask two questions: could this exhibition represent Berlin cultural freedom, and if so, could it simultaneously represent European modernism? The theses which I will put forward regarding the success and failure of this show--and what this would signify for exhibition policies--will be proven by once again working backward from the event, examining the political and cultural developments and events of 1947 up to 1950. This uncovering of pre-history will also show the differing strategies at work, strategies which served to nullify the cultural method put forward by Berliner Künstler.

The exhibition numbered thirty-five artists featuring a cross section of styles, from Karl Schmitt-Rottluff and Max Pechstein through to Ernst Schumacher and Theodor Werner, that is, from expressionists through to abstractionists. Falling in the middle ranges were many artists who painted traditional subjects "in the manner of": either school of Paris, adapting elements from Picasso or Matisse, or, referring to an even earlier style, from Lovis Corinth and German impressionism.<sup>2</sup> Most of the art concerned itself with traditional subject matter and figuration expressed in various styles, rather than abstraction. The catalog's introductions by the mayors of the cities of Berlin and Bonn make clear that this exhibition--particularly in its plurality of styles--incorporated a political will. As Ernst Reuter of Berlin stated:

For the first time, a collection of works by Berlin artists is shown, which for many represents a remembrance of this city and a testimonial to the attitude and the life of these artists, who, despite the greatest exigency, did not follow the path of eastern dictatorship but rather have elected western democracy.<sup>3</sup>

The fact that Berlin was still producing a diverse body of contemporary art, despite its existence under unusual circumstances, was meant to be read as a sign of cultural vitality and by extension, cultural freedom: western democracy versus eastern dictatorship. This will to vitality was also seen as the conduit which instantly could connect cut-off Berlin with the other centers of western civilization. Hence, "In regard to foreign art exhibitions held in Germany, one has rightly pointed out that the western world, whether in Paris, London, New York, or Berlin, is following related impulses in art and that therein it is already in agreement."<sup>4</sup> Art was to serve, in other words, as a means of unifying and codifying the common outlook of "the western world"; in fact, since the latter is "already" in agreement in matters of art, art even paves the way for political consolidation.

Because of the wide range of styles of contemporary art shown at this exhibition, one could argue that it succeeded in representing Berlin's cultural freedom. The eclectic mixing of various types of modernisms illustrated the freedom from outside constraint, that is, that unlike art in the Third Reich or art under Stalinism, no direction or tendency was tabooed. Heinz Trökes was represented by surrealist-inspired works, Theodor Werner by abstract work, and Pechstein, Hofer, Schmitt-Rottluff by expressionism. Yet this eclecticism, while intended as a statement in praise of "democracy" and its functioning in Berlin, failed to engage in a vitally interesting way the issue of freedom itself as it was articulated by the discourse described in the previous chapter. The cultural freedom of Berlin, represented by this show, was only one aspect of freedom, namely, lack of dictatorship. But as the deep concern over the state of language and its functioning indicated, many critics found that "freedom" was defined not merely as an absence of dictatorship, and that it was not to be very easily found in the systems of western democracy, either. By presenting a cross section of Berlin's contemporary art the organizers hoped to give a representative view of cultural freedom; they thereby reproduced the freedom equals lack of dictatorship equation. In the more advanced modernism searching for a "new reality," however, this praxis of putting together a contemporary cross section was giving way to presenting the rigorously selective as the index of a critical modern painting.

It will be recalled that critical intellectuals and cultural producers of the post war era perceived a particular, nineteenth century type of humanism to be irrevocably discredited. The overall emphasis on the human and the affective in the Berlin exhibition, intended, as the catalog text flatly tells us, as a signifier of positive human existence, eschewed acknowledging this

bankruptcy, and by implication failed to encode an effective negative resistance to recent history. By placing the work of someone who made tame imitations of styles current in the 1920s or 1930s next to the work of Trökes or Werner who were trying to find a "new reality," the exhibition, although a cross section, discredited the intense search for freedom which preoccupied writers, critics, and artists. For art to be authentically of this time required that it have a close relationship to the critical concerns being articulated, concerns not mirrored in eclecticism or liberalism.

The art historian and critic Will Grohmann, who, along with Werner Haftmann, profiled himself during the postwar period as a spokesperson for abstract art, wrote the catalog essay for Berliner Künstler, a task which he may have considered important given the exhibition's ideological role--showing Berlin as a once again credible art centre to West Germany, to Paris, and to New York and Washington--but one which he was unable to commit himself to fully, as his text indicates:

Berlin's artists have never been able to live from Berlin alone. During the last five years they were forced to, it was not easy; so much greater their joy at having found their way to freedom. Berlin has always demanded much of its people, and was feared for its critiques. This has not changed. For failure there is no excuse, therefore everyone tries hard and gives to the last. More than what is shown by the Bonn exhibition cannot be offered by Berlin. Is it enough?<sup>5</sup>

Interestingly, Grohmann does not answer his own laconically put question, and he in fact is unable to praise any of the painters outright, mentioning by name only the sculptors Uhlmann, Karl Hartung, and Bernhard Heiliger, who were all concerned with developing a new sculptural language. Failing to address the overall discourse of negativity (the famous postwar "nihilism"), this exhibition could thus not represent the European modernism which was in the process of being articulated in the west. Grohmann, himself a Berliner otherwise sensitive

and central to this articulation in the realm of painting especially, here takes a decidedly cautious approach to the writing of the catalog essay for this 1950 exhibition.<sup>6</sup>

In 1948, two years prior to the Berliner Künstler exhibition, Grohmann wrote the preface to another exhibition catalog of Berlin artists: Karl Hartung, Hans Uhlmann, Jeanne Mammen, Mac Zimmermann, Hans Thiemann, and Heinz Trökes briefly joined together for one group exhibition which they called "Zone 5."<sup>7</sup> The two sculptors Hartung and Uhlmann pursued a modernist style far removed from the then also popular Barlach style of expressionism: Hartung's works were smoothed ciphers of figuration most readily comparable to Henry Moore, and Uhlmann's works were completely abstract constructions. The four painters all subscribed to one degree or another to surrealism, with Zimmermann being the most figurative, Mammen, Thiemann, and Trökes tending more to automatism and abstraction. This group of artists pursued not so much a common style but more appropriately a common Weltanschauung which absolutely precluded the eclectic incorporation of a diluted modernism. That is, unwilling to copy styles from the past, they were instead all concerned to develop an art appropriate to "the new reality." For this exhibition we find Grohmann's catalog essay unconditionally endorsing the strategy of "Zone 5." He asks if one should still form groups, and affirms this tactic for the same reason that was given in the Berliner Künstler catalog: that it is something which is common to other countries and centers of art, i.e., the forming of groups is something which is taking place in France, in England, and in America.

However, note that Grohmann, unlike Holzhausen in the 1950 catalog, sees this internationalism being forged on the basis of selective avant-gardism: artists form groups, writes Grohmann, because they desire to make common front

against reaction, against a lazy art, to define themselves against the epigones, and to be truly rigorous and avant garde.<sup>8</sup> Hence, "Zone 5" was formed, "six friends of the generation after Picasso," who share in common the courage to experiment and the desire to "renew the medium of language."<sup>9</sup> The two themes central to the articulation of "the new reality" are here touched upon: the death of the old language, and the knowledge of history, in this case a knowledge of modernism and of the necessity of its renewal ("the generation after Picasso"). That an avant garde art should be at least a counterpoint if not an outright opposition to politics is made clear in the name which the group chose to exhibit under, as Grohmann's closing comment indicates: "The six are indeed a zone in itself, and we wish them luck on their way."<sup>10</sup> Advanced art, the kind that is searching to "renew the medium of language," is a fifth zone in four-zone Berlin;<sup>11</sup> if art and politics are vying for power, the strategy for art is clear: an advanced style, an ironic tone, and a banishment of the old style humanism-cum-eclecticism of "contemporary" art which could only bring it into the orbit of party politics. The "Zone 5" grouping soon disbanded and thus only forms a moment in the history of postwar art, but its self-definition and Grohmann's accompanying text serve as a kind of prototype for a strategy of modernism in post-1945 Germany. Compared to "Zone 5"'s belligerent attitude --forming a group to fight against reaction, laxness, and epigones--and its selective exclusivity, the Berliner Künstler exhibition with its aim to represent most of the city's contemporary artists presents a dangerous weakening of modernism's critical powers.

As the examination of reviews dating from the years 1946 through to the establishment of the two German states in 1949 and beyond will show, a lack of a selective and avant-garde reading weakened art's powers, served to make of art

an object at the whim of politics--whether as representative of Berlin's cultural freedom (in the example of the 1950 exhibition described above), or, as in the reviews of the large postwar Dresdener art exhibitions, as the hope of political unification:

What was at stake was to refute the nonsensical talk of an iron curtain behind which the free unfolding of mental work is supposedly hindered. And also at stake was to show that the unity of Germany, which is being strived for by an intelligent and perspicacious politics, exists in the realm of culture, today an again undeniable fact. Both intentions were fulfilled. In this salon, the levelling which since 1933 determined the appearance of art exhibitions, could not be perceived.<sup>12</sup>

What the (east-zone) Dresdener exhibitions, first held in 1946, in fact strived for was the identical strategy implemented by the (west-zone) Berliner Künstler exhibition: the prevailing of pluralism over and above any sense of levelling (associated with Hitler) or stylistic selectivity. But since this pluralism is harnessed in front of a political vehicle, art is once again not allowed to define the terms of its being read, but instead is read through the terms of an existing political situation. A strategy like "Zone 5"'s, on the other hand, far from denying the existence of politics, posits its own utopic terms of representation--a separate zone. This fierce disengagement/separation from politics, far from being--initially at least--a depoliticization, is a criticism of a status quo from which art wants to exempt itself.

A further weakening of art's powers can be observed in the lack of "direction" produced by "contemporary art" shows. These were seen--openly or obliquely--by many critics as a kind of demise of art, even if the exhibited eclecticism was meant as an illustration of democracy and pluralism. Thus, in another review of the same 1946 Dresdener show and of a 1947 exhibition held in Baden-Baden of contemporary German art, an overall absence of tendency is noted as being the most striking feature of both exhibitions: "...there is no longer



any large, common current, experiment stands beside experiment..."<sup>13</sup> This aimlessness is summed up as a death in the observation that expressionism has finally, definitively died:

The once dominant current of expressionism has split into many streamlets, the singular stormcloud capable of gathering up the entire landscape in its fallow light has passed on: a more neutral light once again allows local coloring to appear.

One no longer saw avid accusations, no fiery dislocations, no ecstatic pathos. Painting in Germany seems to have become calmer, lighter, as it were more southerly. It is as though, having foreseen the horror, it now, having seen it, has turned away from it. And what could chaos, ruin, destruction have said to it that was new? It after all foresaw all this. And since its visions of horror have been overtaken by reality, a painting of the terrible could no longer be called Expressionism, but only "Newest Reality" [Neueste Sachlichkeit]. But even therein lies hardly a possibility. Because while the illustration of the horrible strikes us as cheap when it becomes pathetic, it strikes us as anemic when it tries to be objective.<sup>14</sup>

This passage in its assessment of expressionism uncannily echoes the assessment concurrently made in France about surrealism, namely that reality had overtaken it.<sup>15</sup> In their way, these movements were the locus of radicality for the respective countries. This very locus has been superseded by historical events. Art, then, is in this new situation cast out of itself, into a wandering, "homeless" condition, in search of a subject and a style. It cannot be returned to its lost position through the generous display of pluralism, either; this only contributes to its sense of aimlessness.

Two further reviews illustrate this point and also give an indication of why this pluralistic aimlessness progressively could come to be seen as an handicap in the struggle between east and west. While in 1950 a reviewer could still praise yet another Berlin exhibition with these words: "Prejudices against any particular tendency were not at hand, the separate tendencies were instead set together into a pluralistic panorama...",<sup>16</sup> the reviewer of the Dresdener Second German Art Exhibition in a 1949 critique perhaps inadvertantly gives the

reason for why the west will not win in the cultural arena if it pursues pluralism:

If one surveys the west's contribution to the painting section of the Second German Art Exhibition, the result is that even given the fact that more conservative forces were favored and that the individual was not always able to be represented by his strongest works, the problem of communicating a cross section of the entire German production was solved. But a new persuasion nowhere stepped into view. New paths were not trod.<sup>17</sup>

There is a certain ambivalence at work here; on the one hand this reviewer seems to praise the fact that a "cross section" was achieved despite some restrictions --such as painters not being represented by their best work and by a generally conservative exhibition policy on the part of the west. But in the very next sentence, this cross section approach is devastated: the west has nothing new to offer, no new persuasion or conviction, no vitality--despite plurality. This could only be indicative of cultural failure. The Dresdener exhibitions, it must be remembered, took place in the east zone and invited contributions from all zones of Germany. By 1947-49 this cultural forum had become the arena for east-west rivalry. And this means that the focussed search for "a new reality," born of a genuine despair over the past, will henceforth be steadily propelled into political competition since it will come to serve as the new persuasion, and the effectiveness of the pluralistic approaches exemplified by the exhibitions Berliner Künstler will eventually wither.

#### When 4 Equals 2 Because 3 Equals 1: West-Integration and Bloc Polarization

What were the conditions external to art which permitted this shift to occur which would come to see plurality as essentially a lack of cultural representation? It is in the political events of the postwar years that we have

to look for an explanation and an understanding of the dynamic involved. With the unconditional capitulation of the Hitler regime on 8 May 1945, the German Reich was divided into four zones of occupation. In the three western zones, German politicians from the first were able to contribute initiative and responsibility to the process of German democratic renewal, but they were not able to play a part in determining the role of Germany in international affairs. However, in the numerous little magazines which sprang up after war's end, politicians and writers published varying conceptions of how Germany could best pursue her national interests in the context of a rapidly changing political world,<sup>18</sup> conceptions which rivalled each other in trying to obtain dominance. In the west, the main ideas revolved around two poles: neutrality or west-integration.

The Allies during the last years of the war had not developed an overall plan for Europe. Basically, the defeat of Hitler was the primary goal, and under President Roosevelt the Americans thought mainly of maintaining the anti-Hitler coalition so that upon victory, the US, Great Britain, and the USSR could proceed to ensure world peace--the ideal of "one world." In part because of this emphasis on the Allied, primarily Russian-Anglo, opposition to Hitler, the European resistance movements for a united Europe failed to achieve resonance amongst the Allied governments when, for example, they wrote their "Declaration on European Cooperation" in May 1944.<sup>19</sup> This project was put together by "several active partisans of resistance movements in Denmark, France, Italy, Norway, the Netherlands, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia, as well as representatives of a group of active antinational socialists in Germany."<sup>20</sup> In Point I, the solidarity of the peoples of Europe in resistance to Nazism is asserted as well as the right of all the countries whose representatives

formulated this declaration to have a say in "the construction of peace and the reconstruction of Europe in full equality with the other victorious countries."<sup>21</sup> Point II underscores the need for the renunciation of individual states's sovereignty, and the necessity of a federalist organization. Point III asserts that peace in Europe is the key to world peace, and the existence of thirty sovereign European states is given as the cause for the anarchism that allowed two world wars to start there.<sup>22</sup> Economically, the declaration called for the abolition of monopolies and autarchy. Of course this project was never able to attain real political shape and power. The "victorious countries" were hardly willing to allow "full equality" to countries like Poland, Italy, or-- even less likely--Germany in determining the reconstruction of Europe.

Although the hope for an east-west unified Europe was still maintained as late as 1947, this grander scheme, for lack of practical realization, receded into the realm of the utopic. Thus, by 1945/46 most independent left-oriented intellectuals and politicians in Germany were obliged to settle for propagating a German neutrality which would allow a "bridge" to be built between the eastern and western zones of the country, so that eventually Germany could develop into a strong but neutralist country, part, it was still hoped, of a unified Europe from which the two superpowers would leave off. Each political party seemed to have its "leftist" advocates of this strategy, from the generally conservative CDU, where neutrality was advocated by Jakob Kaiser, the CDU leader in Berlin from 1945-47, and Ulrich Noack, who formed the "Nauheimer Kreis" made up of neutralists and former resisters to the Nazi regime, all the way through the political spectrum to the independent, non-aligned intellectuals and writers clustered around magazines like the previously discussed Der Ruf.<sup>23</sup> On the whole, although some "neutralists" could be found within the established

political parties, the majority were outside of the party system; none of the large, established parties advocated it.

The SPD under Kurt Schumacher, for example, never endorsed neutralism; the party leader, a staunch anti-Stalinist and a German nationalist, wanted a strong--even armed--independent but west-oriented and anti-Soviet Germany of the western zones which would force the USSR to give up its hold on the Germany of the eastern zone. The economics of this socialist Europe of the "third force" which Schumacher wanted--and which was rejected by the Americans as well as the CDU-- was theoretically elaborated by the returned emigrant "Paul Sering," a pseudonym for Richard Löwenthal, a Frankfurt Institute member. It was an economic theory critical of capitalism and the Soviet variant of a Communist economy, and unlike the theories of more utopic European neutralism, it precluded the incorporation of eastern Europe into the newly proposed "third force" Europe.<sup>24</sup> For Schumacher, this political and economic concept of Europe rested on the leadership of Great Britain (many Social Democrats had found refuge in Britain during the war, and close ties between them and the Labour party ensued) and the cooperation of the US. But the Americans were most reluctant to work with the bellicose Schumacher, distrusting his nationalism as well as his socialism, and preferred rather to work with more moderate political forces in the west zones, including the SPD's Dr. Carlo Schmid, the party's second in command, as well as the majority of the CDU's politicians, who advocated a western capitalist economy. It soon became clear that within the political parties, the neutralists distinctly were a minority: in politics, the dominant pole was that of west-integration. It seems that the pole of neutralism and opposition to west-integration--which was not the same, however, as opposition to a unified Europe--became ever more limited as an extra-

parliamentary force.

Outside of the established parties, there were those who continued to believe in the possibility of evading an increasingly obvious polarization between the east and west zones. They were the remnants of resistance groups and socialists who wanted a reunification of the country and a unified and socialist Europe, independent of American capitalism and Soviet totalitarianism. Shortly after the war, the "Europa-Union," founded in Switzerland, succeeded in getting the representatives of federalist movements which wanted a unified and planned-economy Europe to meet in Hertenstein from the 14th to the 21st of September 1946. At the end of the meeting this group put forward a twelve-point program for federalism which was henceforth recognized as the basic program of all federalist groups.<sup>25</sup> During the same week, however, the former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill also came to Switzerland, and in Zurich held a talk on the 19th of September 1946 wherein he proposed the union of all "free" European states into a confederacy. This the European federalists in Hertenstein rejected outright since it fed the east-west polarization which they wanted to counter through the unity of all European states.<sup>26</sup> Churchill wanted the union of only the "free"--that is, the western --European states. The Hertensteiner federalists avoided this distinction and instead deliberately included all of the European states, including those under Soviet occupation.

Churchill's talk and the possibilities it opened up caused much debate. The US government and Congress had still been hoping for an "arrangement" with the USSR,<sup>27</sup> but within a few months (from the autumn of 1946 to the spring of 1947) all of this changed. For one thing, the US was consolidating its hold on not only its own, but also on the English and French zones of occupation in

Germany. In the first half of 1946, Britain--greatly in debt at war's end--was to receive a \$3.75 billion loan from the US.<sup>28</sup> This indebtedness in turn obliged Britain to cede administrative control of the British zone to the Americans. Thus "Bizonia"--as the Germans called it--was created. It then only remained to coerce the French to integrate their zone into the administrative structure of Bizonia. This would occur within the following years when the Marshall Plan made European cooperation with the US a prerequisite for receiving aid. By the beginning of 1947, then, the US already had administrative control over two thirds of the western occupied zones of Germany and would soon expand its control over the remaining third. A larger change in US attitude was then signalled by a shift in foreign policy toward a greater commitment on the part of the US to involve itself in a structural reform of the world economy. The opening key event was a speech given by John Foster Dulles in New York City on 17 January 1947. Dulles, too, demanded the economic unity of Europe, but it was obviously a western union he had in mind. In his speech, he immediately attacked the Soviet Union for its "aggressiveness," and proceeded to emphasize that the US would henceforth have to provide more aid to the Europeans--and not only Dollar-aid, but "spiritual" and intellectual "aid" as well in order to ward off this supposed threat by the USSR. By March 1947 the American Congress put out a Resolution wherein it supported plans for western European economic unity. This was of course essential to the American economy which was producing a record surplus in need of an enlarged market. Europe--re-built and financially healthy--would provide this outlet. The beginning of Marshall Plan aid in June 1947 provided the financial prerequisites for rebuilding western Europe and for making it a reliable component of a structural reform intended to facilitate a capitalist economy.

The idea of European unity now became increasingly susceptible to a cold war logic since it was being elaborated on the ground of economic unity between the western European states.<sup>29</sup> By 22 January 1948 the British Prime Minister Bevin--leader of the Labour party--was agreeing to a Westunion of Europe.<sup>30</sup> A further political weakening of a possible European union of east and west occurred when in May 1948 a congress of European movements was held in Den Haag. Attended by 800 delegates, including all the prominent pro-western and even cold warrior politicians: Churchill, Robert Schumann, Paul-Henri Spaak, Alcide de Gasperi, and many others, the congress worked out agreements for western European unity as well as a memorandum which was sent, on 23 November 1948, to all western European governments. But therein the movement for European unity was already degenerating almost to the level of a "club": it neither demanded nor even suggested that a European federal parliamentary body with real legislative powers binding for its member countries be created. This is what had been demanded by the other European federalists (the UEF) who meant to include all of the European states (not just the "free" ones), a demand to curb the sovereignty of European states reiterated at their conferences in Interlaken in September 1948 and in Venice in October 1949,<sup>31</sup> and which was also demanded by the United States of Europe during their Paris Congress at the beginning of 1949. This gradual elimination of a unity of all European states (east and west) into a socialist Europe in favor instead of an economic union of the sovereign states of western Europe (the Western Alliance) would of course also diminish any real possibility of a unification of east and west Germany.

And in fact, the acceptance of partition was considered by some within Germany as early as 1945. In the spring of that year, Wilhelm Röpke, a professor for sociology in Geneva, published an article entitled, "The German



Question," which had a wide resonance in Germany.<sup>32</sup> He suggested that the country should be partitioned along the lines of east-west occupation. Likewise, the writer Ernst Friedlaender expressed the same idea in the newspaper Die Zeit,<sup>33</sup> while in the Rhineland, traditionally west-oriented, a group focussed around the newspaper Rheinischer Merkur argued along the same lines; the CDU politician Konrad Adenauer, who was from Cologne, was close to this last group. Adenauer developed his political conception of a west-integrated Germany early on and never waivered from it. He was convinced of an essential belligerence on the part of the USSR and thought that only the western bloc could offer resistance to Soviet power. All areas of Germany not occupied by the Soviets were to be put into as close as possible an economic relationship not only to each other, but to other western European states as well. Adenauer also professed to believe that a strong western Germany in a strong western alliance would eventually force the Russians to abandon the occupation of east Germany. However, considering his early willingness to accept a partioned country, it is doubtful whether this was anything more than paying lip service to the general wish of the German populace for a unified country. It was after all Prussia that was occupied by the Soviets, a region unloved by Rhinelanders, who in the past had themselves been occupied by their fellow Germans.

Adenauer instead pushed for cooperation between France and Germany.<sup>34</sup> Like de Gaulle, he could admonish his countrymen to remember who they were: west Europeans. As early as 1945, he considered the Soviet occupied part of Germany to be lost, and instead saw that it was important to keep the western occupied parts together, for example by fighting against France's plans to take over and neutralize the Rhine-Ruhr area for its own gain. Any neutralization of this vitally important industrial region would result, Adenauer predicted, in the

drifting away of the other German western zones to the east zone, especially since the Russians occupied the old "heartland" of Germany. The Rhine-Ruhr region had to be maintained as part of west-zone Germany so that it could act as a magnet which would prevent a drift of the west zones to the east. For Adenauer, it was especially important to prevent the possibility of this drift, to weave together west-zone German and other west European economies, so that there would be created common economic interests. This, he insisted, would be the best way to ensure peace between the states. And through this economic interweaving, French and Belgian security interests would also be satisfied.

With such a seemingly watertight logic of political interaction backing him up, it is easier to understand how Adenauer could eventually rally enough support to get elected, to work in harmony with the other western European states, and to achieve such an incredibly supportive relationship with the Americans: here was an anti-fascist who was also an anti-communist, and who used all of his keen intelligence to wean war-weary Germans away from irresponsible notions of neutralism toward the more or less enthusiastic support of "Europe" --the western alliance. While it is possible to marvel at the restoration of West Germany under Adenauer, it must also be recalled that this success meant the failure of another idea, that of a socialist Europe, a failure which was perceived and felt by many. That a different Europe, one not torn in half along the east-west line, was still hoped for by many became clear for perhaps the last time when the issue of German rearmament sparked off emotional debates within the country.

On 25 June 1950 the Korean War started, provoking a panic within West Germany over the possibility of a Soviet attack--the Russians had developed their own atomic bomb in 1949 and Europeans (especially those in Germany) felt

terrorized by the threat of atomic war on their soil.<sup>35</sup> As early as Winter 1949, Adenauer had brought up the issue of German security in an interview.<sup>36</sup> Thus, when on 11 August 1950 Churchill suggested before the European Parliament that there should be a west European coalition army with German participation, Adenauer saw his chance. The Americans, against the wishes of the French, were with Churchill on this issue, and Adenauer, without consulting his own cabinet nor the Bundestag, sent two memoranda to the US High Commission wherein he offered to them a West German defense/army contribution, as well as suggestions for dissolving the occupation statute. At the New York City conference of foreign ministers, dominated by the Korean issue, the US foreign minister urged his colleagues to plan West Germany into the western defence concept. Domestically, Adenauer's offer to the US caused turmoil. The thought of German soldiers shocked many, and an attitude of "ohne mich"-- "without me"--became widespread. This reaction, usually interpreted as apathy, was perhaps also the last possible response to this irreversible process of not just west-integration, but cold war polarization. The final agreements for German rearmament were signed on 26 and 27 May 1952 in Bonn and Paris. Neutralism, by the time of the Marshall Plan and the Korean War, that is, from as early as 1947 through to 1950/52 and beyond, was an issue without any chance of political or practical success whatsoever in West Germany, even though it continued to resurface as a possibility as late as 1952.

#### "One bores us": Propaganda and Optimism, a Soporific Combination?

Yet it would be erroneous to think that the idea of an un-Stalinized and an un-Americanized Europe was easily relinquished. In the west, the main

objection by the Germans to the Americans, despite the fact that their money was welcomed, was that they were naive and optimistic, and not too terribly sophisticated. That this would eventually be a liability in their competition with the Soviets, whose culture- and peace-offensives garnered much goodwill, was clear. Max Frisch, who travelled through the eastern zones of Europe in late 1947, was impressed by the cultured Russians assigned to Germany who not only spoke the language of the country perfectly, but who also knew how to discourse on German literature and philosophy as well as the theatre and its prominent playwrights, the latter point being of particular interest to Frisch, who was both a professional architect and a playwright. Frisch noted that in comparison, the American "theatre officer" in Frankfurt, although to be commended for manifesting prodigious amounts of agreeability and helpfulness, had never heard of Eliot.<sup>37</sup>

The propagandistic efforts by the Americans to stamp out "communism" in west zone Germany were not, however, hampered by a lack of education. By 1947/48, the transregional "Kulturbund," an activist cultural organization with a definite tendency toward the USSR and a belief in art's role in the class struggle, was summarily closed down and declared illegal by the western authorities in what some have described as a "Nacht und Nebel Aktion," that is, a sudden operation taking place under cover of night.<sup>38</sup> Once these overtly leftist organizations were eradicated in western Germany, such crude attempts at curbing leftist influence were met with criticism, however, as this 1949 "observation" in the Frankfurter Hefte makes clear:

"Bert Brecht, currently in Austria," reports the Welt am Sonntag of the fifth of June, "intended to return to Berlin via Munich where he wanted to attend a performance of his 'Threepenny Opera.' The American passport-office has denied him passage through the American zone of Germany due to 'technical difficulties.'"

The individualistic west is proving to be the tractable rather

than the original pupil of the totalitarian east. Here as there the bosses are growing lazy. One no longer tries to lie to us. One no longer claims that we are being lied to. One no longer even tries to make fun of us. One bores us.<sup>39</sup>

This is a clear message for those willing to read it that the west must learn to be a bit more subtle in its propaganda. The overt suppression of leftists --especially prominent ones like Brecht--in the west, particularly as this article suggests by the Americans, was not going to win friends among cultural producers for the cause of "freedom."

If in matters of culture the west simply tried to posit an antithesis to whatever it perceived eastern culture to be exploiting, it would fail. To win, it would have to posit a synthesis, a third factor. Thus, if the American forces saw Germany to be threatened by negativism, pessimism, and--it was feared--by a subsequent susceptibility to communism, they were bound to fail to convince the country of western superiority if they simply relied on importing optimism. This variant of "re-education" would be most likely met with scathing satire, at least in the pages of independent cultural magazines. Thus, when a German-translation version of Reader's Digest was introduced to Germany in 1948, it provoked this response:

The question is, within the bounds of the Marshall Plan, can optimism as a way of life possibly be a necessary German import article. (...) It is probable that the belief in a pessimistic interpretation of history rather than its opposite is more widespread in Germany today than anywhere else in the world. (...) That optimism [which is being imported via Reader's Digest] is not a philosophical view, but rather a collectively suggested individual way of life: one must smile when one would rather wail, fear of death is compensated for with comfortably furnished coffins at reasonable prices. The corpse, in the totalitarian East the result of painless liquidation and not the object of human excitation, in the West wears make-up.<sup>40</sup>

This is an example of the failure, in cultural matters, to counter perceived problems with merely an opposite force. "Optimism" was of course the hallmark of Kitsch, an object of studied concern, and something to be avoided by real and

serious culture. This was made clear in many articles throughout the decade. In "Art and Mass Culture" Max Horkheimer in 1941 linked the development of individual enjoyment of art, which developed at the expense of a public role for art, to the development of capitalist society. In this society, the new "public" art is mass culture, which "the private atomic subject," so elided and impoverished, must try to withstand: "Individuality, the true factor in artistic creation and judgment, consists not in idiosyncracies and crotchets, but in the power to withstand the plastic surgery of the prevailing economic system which carves all men to one pattern."<sup>41</sup> Mass culture and Kitsch are the scalpels used in this plastic surgery, and "Keep smiling" the preferred all-purpose anesthesia.

Horkheimer remains caught, however, in the belief that the highest purpose of art is to allow humanity to recognize itself, thereby reproducing the dangers inherent in conceptions of the "Menschenbild" touched upon in the previous chapter. He agrees with Kant that the cause for art's resonance in the individual is due to the fact that art allows man to recognize his humanity; Horkheimer then links this to the idea of resistance: "An element of resistance is inherent in the most aloof art."<sup>42</sup> That is, modern art, with its unwillingness to communicate, resists the scalpel of mass culture--but it is left with only passive resistance as a means of maintaining the hope in humanity:

These inhospitable works of art, by remaining loyal to the individual as against the infamy of existence, thus retain the true content of previous great works of art and are more closely related to Raphael's madonnas and Mozart's operas than is anything that harps on the same harmonies today, at a time when the happy countenance has assumed the mask of frenzy and only the melancholy faces of the frenzied remain a sign of hope.<sup>43</sup>

When this analysis is linked to the works of "the new reality"--informal

abstraction, primitivism, advanced modernism--it becomes apparent why these works, as represented by Two Eras, Mélisande, or numerous others, would be perceived as offering resistance to a detested status quo, a resistance not be found in positive images nor in any of the old style humanisms of both the left and the right which would "carve all men to one pattern." Yet to posit a recognition of humanity presupposes an agreed upon concept thereof, but this is precisely what has become questionable. A basic unwillingness to probe alternative conceptions to humanity shows itself in the messianic or religious postulate which Horkheimer then attributes to art: "Art, since it became autonomous, has preserved the utopia that evaporated from religion."<sup>44</sup> This leaves "man" with no exit, but it will leave an entrance for ideological manipulation.

Meanwhile, against this continued backdrop of philosophical inquiry into the constitution of Kitsch, optimism, mass culture, resistance, negativism, art, and humanity, the US for its part was attempting to formulate a cultural image in the realm of painting which would gain resonance in Germany. Cultural competition between the US and the USSR and the fact that the US was not winning hands down made this imperative. The US State Department undoubtedly was hampered by the domestic hostility--on the part of US senators and others--toward modern art,<sup>45</sup> and this could be the reason why the first notable exhibitions of modern American art in Germany were sponsored not by the US Government but rather by private agencies. In 1948, for example, an exhibition of "Non-Objective Painting in America," sponsored by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation in New York City, was shown in the Staatliche Kunsthalle in Karlsruhe.<sup>46</sup> The catalog preface was written by Kurt Martin, the same man who had worked closely with the French in bringing contemporary French art to

Germany, and was published by the Woldemar Klein Verlag in Baden-Baden, the parent house of Das Kunstwerk. Here we see one of the first attempts to bring modern US art to Germany, but what was brought was an art relying on precisely the kind of harmonious and rational conception of culture which the war had in Europe discredited, namely, non-objective, geometric abstraction. Martin's catalog essay attempts to paint in as positive a light as possible the achievements of American painting, but it is too clear that the non-objective abstraction discussed has an entirely different philosophical premise and starting point than the kind that was gaining rapid credibility amongst advanced cultural producers--and that in fact had the greatest credibility with the magazine Das Kunstwerk and the people associated with the Woldemar Klein Verlag.

Martin notes that Germans know too little about American art, but that for several decades very exciting things have been happening in the US: one of the key differences to Europe is that the museums play such a large role in educating the public toward an acceptance of modernism.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, unlike Europe, audiences for non-objective painting are not restricted to small, elitist snob groups but rather can be found amongst average Americans.<sup>48</sup> Very clearly an ideal situation is presented to Europeans--Germans, in this case--for their emulation: benevolent museums, impartial and never connected to corporate business or government agencies, propagate the spread of culture and manage to reach and enthuse large masses of the populace who henceforth hold a positive, enlightened attitude toward modern art, toward modern life. To make this credible could indeed only mean that Germans knew little of American art--and the circumstances of its reception. What is intended here is to show not only the superiority of a non-objective painting based on harmony and rational



enjoyment, but also to remind Germans that this kind of painting (so accepted in the US, according to the catalog) originated in Germany: "Non-objective painting, so called in contrast to abstract painting which always proceeds from the object and which 'abstracts' this object more or less, received its decisive impulses from Germany."<sup>49</sup> Martin points to Kandinsky's start in Munich, his association with the Bauhaus and Moholy-Nagy, and immediately proceeds to Berlin's Rudolf Bauer and then to Hilla Rebay, who now happens to be in America and who, along with Solomon Guggenheim helped bring the present show to Europe. From the German seed, this painting spread according to the history presented here: it finally becomes not just German, but European, and in America it reaches its culmination:

The breaking-through to non-objective painting is a European achievement but America has independently and productively joined into this development. For the Americanness which speaks from this painting and which differentiates it from its similar European kind seems to me to rest in an optimistic attitude.<sup>50</sup>

But with this last statement about non-objective painting's "optimism," we can see why the show failed to go anywhere,<sup>51</sup> failed to garner a large resonance.

One critic in 1950 tried to resuscitate it, but he, too, had to note that the original response in the press had not been enthusiastic.<sup>52</sup> He begins by noting that "all around the occidental circle of culture" a crisis in painting has been apparent for several years.<sup>53</sup> But thereupon Schwank tries to bend the Zeitgeist to fit American optimism: after recapitulating the chronology already outlined by Martin, he proceeds to state that only in America can painting breathe free. "This 'free air' America gave; and in this breezy air the still-young plant thrived and quickly unfolded powerfully and greatly..."<sup>54</sup> Schwank then follows up with a dismissal of abstract art in the style of Willi Baumeister as well as of surrealism "as it is vividly alive in

contemporary France."<sup>55</sup> While stressing that non-objective painting is diametrically opposed to "what Jean Paul Sartre teaches," he goes so far as to suggest that perhaps it is an American variant of existentialism--positive, metaphysical existentialism, completely free of all traces of pessimism, negativism, and nihilism.<sup>56</sup> This article is particularly interesting since it praises a positivistic view of America, yet the magazine which published it originated in Leipzig, in what was by 1950 East Germany. What is attacked--rather obliquely but still unmistakably--is surrealism, French existentialism, and abstract (versus non-objective) art in the style of Willi Baumeister. These cultural phenomena would indeed, whether because of their "criticality" or their "decadence," turn out to have a more corrosive impact on the east-west cultural struggle as well as on the humanist conception of culture shared by both establishments than mere western "formalism" in the style of non-objective painting. That is, an article like Schwank's appearing in an East German art magazine should not be interpreted as a cold war text but rather as an attempt by a liberal writing in East Germany to try to mend the fractured vessel of positive, progress-oriented humanism. This was doomed to fail--in the east since a kind of social realism was to take the place of modern art, and in the west because of the need for a new reality.<sup>57</sup>

Although the Guggenheim-sponsored exhibition of non-objective American art was accompanied by a catalog published by the Woldemar Klein Verlag, this publishing house's well-known magazine did not encourage a prewar non-objective abstraction which now looked anachronistically optimistic. It instead furthered the dissemination of an advanced abstract modernism drawn more from surrealism and automatism, as is evident from the numerous articles on the topic. Furthermore, the Kunstwerk kept tabs on the international art world by reporting

on developments abroad if it perceived these to be significant to the reception of advanced modernism. In 1948 the magazine reported that the Boston Institute of Modern Art had changed its name to Institute of Contemporary Art, and immediately situated this name-change in the political context which it had in the US: "The process [i.e., name-change] had the effect of stirring a hornet's nest. The reactionaries scented morning air [i.e., a fresh up-draft], the 'Moderns' protested and declared that the freedom of art was being threatened by a tutelage like that in Russia."<sup>58</sup> Thus, the attempt of the Boston institute to be "contemporary" instead of modern, and therefore to try to reconnect to an art discourse which emphasized pluralism and humanism, was affirmed as a step backward for modern art in its struggle with the forces of reaction. This would be of particular interest to the German magazine which recalled the reactionary cultural legacy of Nazism only too well. To give in even a little bit on this front would be immediately interpretable as a capitulation to the forces which would keep Germany out of the cultural vanguard of European nations and thus help to enforce German isolation.

When we relate these factors back to the Berliner Künstler 1950 show it becomes clear that although "Berlin" was a locus of propaganda and an important symbol of "cultural freedom," it could not be a symbol of a new "Europe" precisely because it was from the 1948 airlift on far too inextricably caught in the obviously visible east-west power struggle: its very location in the midst of eastern territory made it a magnet for the struggle. But "Europe" as envisioned by the alternate discourse in culture and of the extraparliamentary pole instead was an idea which required a certain distance from this power bloc struggle--a utopic place, a "fifth zone," from which could be drawn hope. It was an idea which originally had not wanted to choose between the two

"tickets," which wanted "an element of resistance" to show through even its "most aloof art." Berlin could not afford to be aloof. And as West Germany became part of the Western Alliance--the economic union of sovereign capitalist European states--it also became imperative to have once again a measure of cultural prestige capable of representing re-established bourgeois hegemony. No culture was better suited for this, however, than the avant-garde which had developed out of this "fifth zone" utopia:

...what the avant-garde contests is the bourgeois in art or morals--the shopkeeper, the Philistine, as in the heyday of Romanticism; but as for political contestation, there is none. What the avant-garde does not tolerate about the bourgeoisie is its language, not its status. This does not necessarily mean that it approves of this status; simply, it leaves it aside. Whatever the violence of the provocation, the nature it finally endorses is that of "derelict" man, not alienated man; and derelict man is still Eternal Man.<sup>59</sup>

As Germany once again became a bourgeois state like any other, it needed its avant-garde--and not an anachronistic, pluralist humanism--to provide its cultural image.

#### The French Connection and the "Germany of Tomorrow"

Due to their cultural similarities, their shared "European" traditions, the cooperation with France was initially the most important factor in the cultural rebuilding of Germany and Europe. Paris was still seen as the capital of modernism--the flare-up between Baumeister and Hausenstein over the latter's anti-modernism and his position as German consul in Paris is only one instance among several which illustrates this. Yet it must be pointed out that the interest worked in both ways: while the Germans looked to French art and culture as a model, the French also expected to profit from Germany, if not the "Germany of today," then at least the "Germany of tomorrow." The editor of the

Frankfurter Hefte, Eugen Kogon, was in 1949 invited to the Sorbonne to speak before the "Comité Français pour les Echanges avec l'Allemagne Nouvelle," one of several privately-sponsored groups which sprang up in both countries after the war to aid in reconciliation.<sup>60</sup> In his speech, Kogon notes that what is really at stake in this interest in Germany is not so much the Germany of today, but the one of tomorrow: will it be "good" or "bad"?<sup>61</sup> Kogon proceeds to present a class analysis of the country in order to determine whether or not the new Germany of tomorrow will be good or bad, that is, a good partner or a bad competitor. His discussion covers the middle class, the upper class and the industrialists, the workers, the farmers, the employees, and the students. The key to whether or not there will be Franco-German cooperation, however, rests not with one class alone, but rather with the avant-garde which can be found throughout the class spectrum:

Ladies and gentlemen, this is the picture I have tried to convey to you. It would not be a contour if I did not point out that true avantgardists in the renewal of the European spirit are at work in all the above named layers and groups of the German people of today. They are a minority, in fact without a doubt a fairly small minority. But in which country of the world is the avant-garde not a minority? (...)

This avant-garde cannot decide by itself, it can only contribute to an unusual degree to the decision. (...) The positive or negative result of the current attempt is surely dependent on the decision in the alternative: either an era of American efficiency, with European coloration and--naturally--thereby impaired, in which case it would be almost unavoidable to reach German-American cooperation within Europe within a few years, from which would develop the third and greatest catastrophe for Europe, or an era of lasting cooperation of the European states and peoples, initiated and furthered through American aid, on the level of a federation which will be the result of a liquidation of the supposedly absolutely sovereign nation-states.<sup>62</sup>

The necessity of American aid and the overall primacy of economic motives is taken into account as a reality, but the wish for a federal Europe not based on absolutely sovereign states rings through very clearly, and the groups which represent this interest are described as an avant-garde of renewed European

spirit. To avert the possibility of the undesirable first alternative (Americanization of Europe), Kogon calls upon France and the Benelux countries to play a more important role for Germany.<sup>63</sup>

Obviously, cultural exchange would become a large factor in this cooperation. As one German cabinet minister noted in 1970 in a retrospective look at Franco-German reconciliation: "In this [postwar] situation, the depth and constancy, the unifying power of European culture manifested itself. (...) Culture preceded politics, opening the way."<sup>64</sup> The French had to be interested in cooperation as well; as early as 1945 their Minister of Education asked French parents to consider allowing their children once again to learn German as a second language:

Notre position géographique va certainement jouer, tôt ou tard, en faveur d'une reprise des échanges commerciaux avec l'Allemagne. Une fois la paix de nouveau rétablie, on peut prévoir que les relations entre la France et les pays de langue germanique recevront une impulsion nouvelle et vigoureuse.<sup>65</sup>

If German language instruction as preparation for the resumption of economic relations was one step on the road to reconciliation, reestablishing the prestige of French culture in Germany was another:

Dans l'ensemble des rapport franco-allemands, les relations culturelles constituent un fait isolable. (...) De nombreuses initiatives individuelles ont vu le jour depuis 1945, accueillies en France tantôt avec réserve, tantôt avec bienveillance. Peu à peu, on a compris que le développement des échanges avec les universités allemands était utile, voire nécessaire, au maintien du prestige culturel français outre-Rhin.<sup>66</sup>

To this emphasis on contact and exchange between the countries's universities should be added the equally important exchange in the realm of painting and culture: this becomes clear from the almost immediately held exhibitions of French art in Germany after war's end,<sup>67</sup> and by the rapid proliferation of "Institutes Français" in western Germany.<sup>68</sup>

Yet there were problems, despite the fact that French art was being shown and that thereby French cultural prestige was being reestablished in Germany. The problem that was noted in the press was that the same situation as in German art existed in French art: modern art was being upheld by artists well past middle age. There were no new young artists, no fresh talent, despite the fact that a vital political interest was attached to the subject of art and culture from the start, as this 1946 review makes clear:

For the myopic view of National Socialism, Europe is divided into a senseless mosaic of self-sufficient [autarker] pieces, but to the European sensibility, the national borders transform into an interior design which receives meaning and sense from the encompassing contour. It is not easy to coax the people of today, in particular the German youth with its nationalist-disturbed way of seeing, to grasp this contour. Perhaps art can help, however. In particular in the 130 pictures of the exhibition "French Contemporary Art" we can recognize that the national peculiarity which speaks to us in these artworks is assimilated into a general principle which rules through Europe today.<sup>69</sup>

Although this review by Zahn argued positively for seeing the legacy of European culture as a unifying contour, other reviews of the same exhibition focussed on the problem of youth and vitality: the youngest artist shown was sixty, the eldest, were he in fact not already dead, would have been eighty.<sup>70</sup> This review in the Frankfurter Hefte continued to uphold the importance of Paris as a symbol of the freedom of modernity, however. The reviewer notes that only Picasso and Chagall truly stand out amongst the art shown. Even in their differences from one another they are exemplary and unusual:

Picasso: Spanish and representative of the west, ironic, challenging, objective [gegenständlich], emphasized outlines, geometric forms, strong, often raw colours which are placed side by side without transition, a master of many styles which are all his style. Chagall: Russian Jew and representative of the east, mystical, inward, symbolic, with flowing transitions, organic forms, differentiated even if glowing colours, a master of one style which is more his own than any of Picasso's are his.<sup>71</sup>

The point for this critic, as he continues, is that Paris, that important

symbol, can contain Picasso and Chagall both. This is the aspect which is common to these two representatives of the west and the east: the city wherein they choose to live and work. Symbolically, Paris still functions as the capital of modernism, a modernism which is furthermore able to accommodate both east and west, thus underscoring the city's unflagging symbolic power within Germany as an alembic of civilization.<sup>72</sup>

As for the opposites it could contain, although Chagall's more lyrical approach maintained its mystical appeal for many, Picasso's much more aggressive stance, his unabashed Naturbeherrschung (domination of nature) fascinated critics for whom the whole concept of Herrschaft (domination) had become suspect to the core yet somehow indispensable. This Parisian-by-choice seemed to express no qualms in his art about his right to dominate nature, to change its forms, to violate its order. This proved fascinating as the article on Picasso by Kurt Leonhard, discussed in the previous chapter of this text, indicated. At the same time, we also saw that postwar abstract modernism, even if discussed in the context of "otherness" by Domnick, for example, was often treated as a turning away from nature, as a recognition of the wrongheadedness of a nineteenth century materialist philosophy of domination of nature. This is why in the therapeutics of Domnick, it was suggested that Naturbeherrschung is wrong. The suggestion that this dominance has to be relinquished is directly relatable to the disastrous and guilty history of twentieth century Germany: the path from Naturbeherrschung to the German Nazi Herrenmensch could be seen as a straight and direct line.

Hence, in its favour, non-objective painting always emphasized its affinity to music and its lack of affinity to nature, and by extension, to dominance of nature. Why then did this art not gain a wider audience? I would



suggest that since non-objective painting was presented as having bracketed out the whole problematic of dominance and power in relation to man and nature it could not be considered as an authentic coming to terms with the problem. Dominance implies force, violence, in Germany unavoidably associated with war and Nazism. But since there was no organized resistance to Nazism, there was no counter-force or counter-violence with which positively and in an unguilty manner to identify. To turn away from force completely is, however, disingenuous, since it still continues to exist undisturbed. A bracketing-out of these issues thus was not possible for artists and critics aware of violence, upheaval, and still aware of the precariousness of their own positions during twelve years of Nazi rule. Since there did exist an avantgardist cultural resistance to Nazism, this resistance would see in the Naturbeherrschung exuberantly exercised by Picasso an approval of force, a confirmation--an arena in which to act, to be an agent, active and demanding, to be a sovereign individual, and not just an "object." That is, non-objective painting, for example, which in this way offered no emblem of resistance, seemed to make the individual not an active, sovereign--and aggressive--ego, but merely a passive receptacle for metaphysical sensation, and therefore would not draw to itself the focus of avant-garde discourse.

It is undoubtedly an ideological contradiction for the avant-garde discourse on the one hand to recognize the breakdown of individuality (as linked to capitalism in particular) and on the other hand to search desperately for a way to assert the sovereignty of the ego. Unlike non-objective painting, an abstraction steeped in a discourse of "otherness," which abstracted from nature and thereby simultaneously showed the breakdown of order, of the rational one-to-one relationship of subject and object, but which thereby also

"dominated" nature by violating its forms, could contain this contradiction, it could do both because it symbolized a synthesis: illustration of the breakdown of the individual and assertion of the sovereign ego's right to do as it pleases. Any art, whether non-objective or pluralistically humanist, which did not encode this painful dialectic failed to offer a venue for resistance. About Picasso, Leonhard writes: "In front of some of his works one thinks of the terrible words of the anarchist and atheist mystic Michael Bakunin, a precursor of the Russian Revolution, of whom Picasso is an enthusiastic admirer: 'If God existed one would have to destroy him.'"<sup>78</sup> The violence of this statement, in view of Germany's inability to have provided political resistance to Nazism and of the thesis of German collective guilt, contradicts the philosophy and strategy offered by Americanization. The latter denied the existence of any kind of resistance and offered "re-education," an application intended across the board, without differentiation. For the avantgardists, however, this failed to be able to channel their (cultural) "resistance." Therefore, the French and European tradition, which these writers and artists share, offered resistance and a venue for intellectual force and violence, offered the recognition of a common strategy, while the US, caught up in fighting "communism" and hence "offering" an oppositional stance to Germans ("resist communism!") actually seemed to make Germany culturally an object without resistance. No matter how the individual artist or writer may have felt about the politics of west-integration or communism, as an avantgardist this reduction to objecthood--taking away his ability to resist--would be unacceptable. Hence the intense interest in French modernism, in the articulation of Formzertrümmerung (destruction of forms) by Picasso and eventually by the "informalists," and the two countries's shared cultural legacy.

That this aspect of resistance, of a cultural venue for violence, was necessary to the avant-garde artists involved, and that a dynamic of power could be encoded in the art and culture of modernism is made clear by a statement Willi Baumeister made in 1949. Describing the fact that modern art could once again be shown in Germany, Baumeister said: "The first exhibitions of the re-established equality were held in the Autumn of 1945."<sup>74</sup> What he meant was that the German modern artist, deprived of the freedom openly to resist the Nazi regime, had, upon the defeat of that regime, regained an equal status to his colleagues in the other European nations. Baumeister thus expressed a sentiment which Grohmann and many other champions of modernism in Germany would have shared, namely that they had resisted--culturally--the regime and could thereby lay claim to moral equality with their foreign, and in the case of art, especially French, colleagues. And this was in fact also acknowledged by foreign critics and artists, especially in Baumeister's case.<sup>75</sup>

This cultural exchange between France and Germany did not occur on a one-way street, however, since political developments continued to affect the flow. By 1950 the informal type abstraction of Baumeister, Nay, Werner, Winter, et alia, had succeeded in gaining so much ground that these artists without a doubt could be counted as the foremost artistic representatives of the new Germany, "contemporary" art exhibitions in the style of the Berliner Künstler 1950 show notwithstanding. The Germany of tomorrow had come to define its painting; what could oppose it? Expressionism was dead, killed (temporarily?) by history just like traditional surrealism, non-objective abstraction remained without resonance, and figuration and realism also appeared far too traditional to be able to encode resistance. But Paris, due to the very fact that its twentieth century artists had represented the tradition of modernism--and

Picasso for one was still around to function as a living incorporation of that tradition--resisted the tendency toward informal abstraction, an irrational, sometimes violent abstraction from nature, more tenaciously than Germany, for whom the move to something new could after all in many ways mean the blessing of oblivion. Even though many artists in Paris were making paintings which addressed the same concerns of abstraction, automatism, primitivism, and so forth, these artists faced a more intact, an entrenched and symbolically laden tradition of modernism and hence struggled more rigorously for acceptance. The need for the discourse of "otherness" and all it could possibly connote had, however, become part of the building blocks of the new Europe.

Thus, when in 1950 the Kunstwerk published a series of articles on modern French art in chronological order, from the art of Manet through to the present (mid-century), all the articles sang the praises of the accomplishments of French painting, except the final one. This last article on painting in 1950 sounded an off-note in its discussion of the "reaction" against abstraction:

The reactions against abstract art also are a national symptom. One perceives abstract art, which has gained so much ground in Germany and in America, as being unfrench. Although artists like Hans Arp, Gleizes, Herbin, Kupka, Delaunay, Mondrian, Valmier, Villon formed in 1931 the Association Abstraction-Création, although of late there is a Salon des Réalités Nouvelles formed by abstract painters--to which also belongs the Saxon painter Hans Hartung (b.1904) who emigrated to France --the decisive talents are not to be found in the ranks of the "non-figurative" painters.

To guess the path which French painting will henceforth follow is impossible. Daring and a sense of proportion, those two constants of the French national character, will probably continue to influence. But the breathtaking display which French painting showed to all the world when Matisse, Picasso, and companions began their Argonaut-treks into the "unknown" will probably not be repeated very soon.<sup>76</sup>

To suggest that French nationalism is responsible for the rejection of abstraction and, almost by implication, of the blocking of voyages into the "unknown," is a very serious charge when we recall the distrust which

nationalism met with in the (unfortunately utopic) hope for a unified socialist Europe. The introduction of the American factor--by 1950 the art of Pollock, de Kooning, etc., would be becoming familiar to European critics and artists --also points to the increased complexity and potential for exploitation inherent in this discourse. If the German avantgardists had to worry on the home front about the contemporary potpourri exhibitions supported by official --and in their eyes reactionary--exhibition policy, they now worried about France's entrenched opposition to an abstraction of "otherness." These developments, domestic and foreign, were dangerous to the significance of informal abstraction, to its power to convey resistance--a cultural, fifth-zone kind--and thereby link up to and build an international idea of Europe.

France was encouraged to reconsider in the same issue of Kunstwerk. It was reminded of its surrealist heritage, that locus of radicality, as I have suggested, co-efficient to expressionism in Germany. According to this article, surrealism is an important source for abstraction, and French painting should explore it so that ground may be gained by abstraction.<sup>77</sup> The artists which are discussed here are not, however, those which became well-known around 1952 when Michel Tapié published his book on Un art autre.<sup>78</sup> Again it was Kurt Leonhard in a review of a German language book on surrealism who identified the surrealist movement with two artists who were crucial to the development of the abstraction known as informal, action, or abstract expressionism. Leonhard condemns the book under review because it neglects Matta and Miro, who are "the most significant artists of surrealism."<sup>79</sup> These two painters did turn out to be far more significant to the development of abstraction than did Dali, for example. Thus, a critical eye was kept on publications, events, and exhibitions in order to influence through criticism the German public's perception of modern

art. At the same time, surrealism was often discussed in relation to dadaism, which was considered a primarily German phenomenon, thereby creating a critical circuit of exchange. Although these articles would not be in a position to influence artistic development in France, they do help to consolidate critically the position of German artists like Baumeister, Julius Bissier, Rolf Cavael, Nay, and others, whose abstraction shows a knowledge of surrealist sources or who by abstracting from nature are articulating a Formzertrümmung. They also indicate that the pool of ideas common to both countries could be enlarged upon and shared by both.

#### Changes in the American Approach--the Fluidity of Concepts

What finally needs to be touched upon is the American interaction with this pool of ideas prior to circa 1950/51.<sup>80</sup> It should be kept in mind that in both France and Germany critics and artists would in large measure have been concerned with domestic developments and how these were being shaped. They would have remained either unaware or sketchily informed about the changes taking place on the American scene which would eventually bring about the refunctionalization of American Abstract Expressionism into a weapon of the Cold War. Abstract Expressionism when it made its appearance would instead have been seen as a confirmation from abroad that the non-geometric abstract movement did indeed represent the avantgardists, those on the forefront of new developments. Yet the approach taken by American propaganda was, as late as 1949/50, quite inadequate to the situation in Europe. That is, the discourse of "otherness" was not exploited for Cold War purposes from the start. Instead, attempts were still made to steer the focus away from "otherness" to more familiar concepts,

such as romanticism.

Thus, in 1949 an article by Frederick Wight of the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston was introduced to German readers. Called "American Contemporary Painting," it was a translation of an article which had originally appeared in Atlantic Monthly and which was now reprinted for German consumption in the American-funded newspaper Amerikanische Rundschau.<sup>81</sup> In this article the attempt is made to divert the flow of ideas away from the "modern" instead toward the "contemporary." Wight does this by valorizing romanticism as the authentic continuing factor in the production of contemporary art and by denying any key influence of Surrealism and automatism.<sup>82</sup> While favourably discussing Gottlieb, Baziotes, Stamos, and Byron Browne under the category of non-geometric abstraction, Wight does not mention the name of Jackson Pollock; geometric abstraction is also favourably discussed in the same passage so that both types --geometric as well as non-geometric or organic abstraction--can appear to be the equivalent expressions of "contemporary" painting.<sup>83</sup> In view of the importance attached to surrealism and automatism in the Kunstwerk articles discussed above--an importance relating to an avant-garde conception of Europe --an article like Wight's would typify the wrong approach. His emphasis on romanticism is far too conventional, treacherly almost,<sup>84</sup> to be able to usurp the emphasis given to "otherness" in the European discourse. Furthermore, Wight commits the "sin" of praising the pluralist approach: in a description of the 1947 Chicago Art Institute exhibition, he notes that although abstraction predominated, no single direction or tendency dominated all the others. This, according to Wight, is a good thing,<sup>85</sup> but as we have seen, the lack of tendency was considered a drawback by many in Germany.

What was feared by the humanistically inclined critics in America was

made clear in a later, 1952 article.<sup>86</sup> This article predicted the death of art along with the death of man ("Abolition of Man") if the trend to "a-humanism" and primitivism persisted. Accordingly, primitivism is indicative of a lack of belief in human individuality and personality--an interestingly acute assessment when we recall Horkheimer's analyses in "The End of Reason" and the "intrusion of the archaic" discussed in this text. Gowans writes that: "This longing for primitivism is, of course, connected with a conscious working for the destruction of current society," and goes on to equate this "revolutionary" modernism with "'revolution' in the commoner, political, Communist sense."<sup>87</sup> Modernism of the kind which drew on the sources of primitivism, automatism, surrealism, certain aspects of expressionism, and dadaism was simply feared to be too revolutionary and to be communistic. This art posited a relation of man to often strange and unfamiliar environment/nature without the usual ameliorating--because familiar and not strange--relation of man to man. This abandonment of emphasis on man's relation to man was seen to threaten the fabric of society.

Unless of course the negativism, even violence, of primitivism could be made to represent merely another aspect of aesthetics, and thereby be brought back into the line of relations of man to man. Violence will then become but the mediator between men and thereby become an aspect of humanism once more. The bombed ruins and ideological combat zone of Berlin, for example, become an object of aesthetic interest and a mediator of humanity:

Berlin is today without question one of the most fascinating cities of the world, not only because the effect of total bombing is demonstrated more forcefully in the former German capital than in any other place in the West, but because the worldwide struggle between the two conflicting ideologies can be observed at first hand, since, in Berlin alone, one can move freely between the Eastern and the Western sectors.<sup>88</sup>

While the ruination of war is recuperated into the realm of aesthetic phenomena,



Munsterberg is also careful to privilege Berlin and Munich as the country's most important art centres--two cities which happened to be in the American zone during the period of occupation. He also makes sure to claim that this distance from French influence has benefitted German art, and one wonders if there is not a deliberate wedge being driven between the similar negativism of both countries. For Munsterberg, "the most original and creative artist working in Germany today" is Fritz Winter, of whom he says: "His works are very abstract, like those of the young painters of France, but they are less decorative, being closer to the German tradition."<sup>89</sup> (See fig. 9.)

American art was by this time talked about by its protagonists--notably Clement Greenberg--in the context of vitality, of strength, and was seen to be free of French "decorativeness." The epithet "decorative" came to denote weakness, effeminacy. For Munsterberg to claim that Winter--the most obviously expressionistic abstractionist of the German artists --was not "decorative" like the French painters had a dual effect: on the one hand, it reduced French art to a rather simplistic label, and on the other, it negated the commonality of concern between French and German art at that time and as exemplified by artists like Winter, Baumeister, Nay, and others on the German side and Dubuffet, Mathieu, Fautrier, and others on the French side--not to mention the Germans Wols and Hartung who had become Parisians by choice. Winter could be transposed out of this context into a completely different one, namely, the old nationalist one. Furthermore, his art was now talked about in relation to violence as an aesthetic phenomenon which mediates relations among men:

His heavy black lines and his somber reds and greys seem to reflect the experience of the burning cities and the barbed wire fences of the concentration camps, yet all this is done in terms of a formally beautiful and controlled art which never resorts to mere illustration or sentimentality.<sup>90</sup>

This harkens back to a romanticist conception of art--like a domesticated sublime, the horror has become "formally beautiful and controlled." And to avoid "decorativeness," it also "never resorts to mere illustration..." The visceral response has to be maintained. What this shows is how through the discourse--through the way the art is talked and written about--art can be made to comply with different views.

The difference was often simply a nuance. The establishment of the CIA-funded Congress for Cultural Freedom in 1950 signalled this shift in awareness on the part of the Americans. The first meeting of the Congress was in Berlin and a magazine called Der Monat also was established to act as the Congress's mouthpiece in Germany.<sup>91</sup> Except for some particularly virulent articles attacking the by now East German Kulturbund--the one that had been outlawed in West Germany--and its leading poet and writer Johannes Becher, Der Monat usually did not engage in crude or abusive anti-Communist rhetoric. This would have been far too unsubtle. The magazine instead followed another tack: for example, it reprinted in German translation essays by Albert Camus--but not by Jean Paul Sartre.<sup>92</sup> A Camus essay on the freedom of art which was also reprinted in a Berlin art exhibition catalog argued against the artist's "engagement"--by this time a word very much associated with Sartre--in politics since this would be tantamount to a curtailment of artistic freedom:

In view of the current political structure of society, there is only one consistent position which the artist can take--unless he turns away from art completely: refusal all along the line. Even if he wanted to, he could not become the accomplice of those who use the language and the means of our modern ideologies.

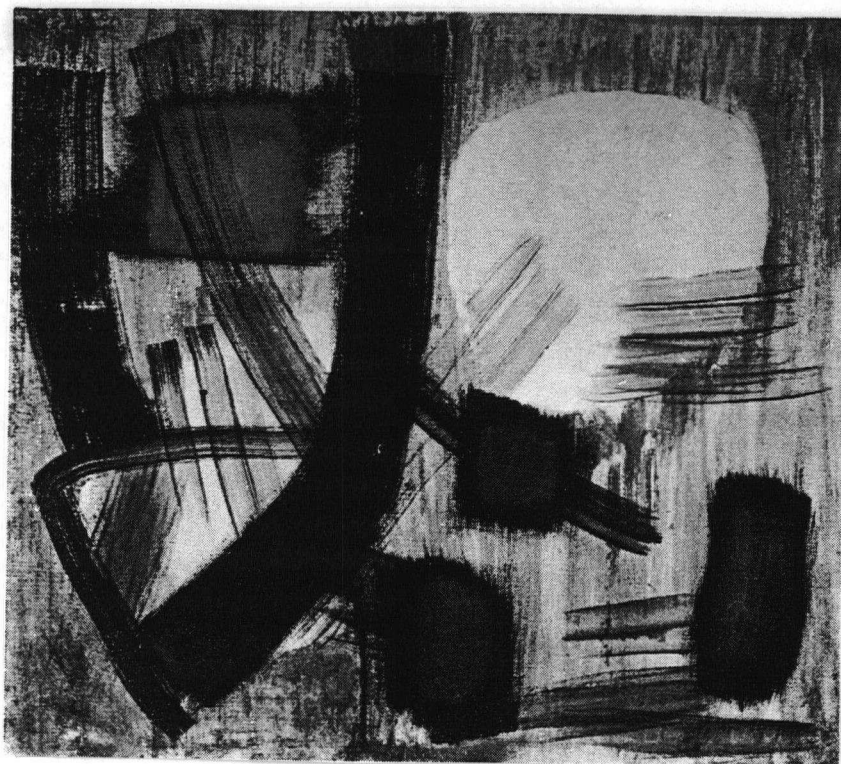
For this reason it is senseless and ridiculous to demand of us a justification, an engagement.<sup>93</sup>

Camus pleads for the artist's freedom to refrain from engagement: in a way, this is like the "fifth zone" demand for the right to disengage. We can therefore

ask what difference there is between the two. Perhaps the answer is one of awareness, that is, everyone knew that Der Monat was an American-backed magazine and hence locked in the Cold War struggle. Yet Camus never protested the fact that his article was made use of in this way by a propaganda magazine--one wonders if this perhaps did not signal approval. In that case, the plea for artistic "freedom" is disingenuous since the author knows that its use as an American propaganda tract is not "dis-engaged." Disengagement in one context at one time--in the case of the "Zone 5" exhibition in 1948--is a political criticism, especially since in this case one could read through it the subtext of an "alternate Europe," one not polarized. In another context, that of a Camus essay arguing against engagement, an essay reprinted in a Berlin exhibition catalog from a German translation which had first appeared in an American-funded anti-Communist propaganda magazine, disengagement becomes political acquiescence to a status quo which is being consolidated.

Only a nuance separates the two, yet their resonance in politics is considerable. Around this time--1950/51--the Americans learned to exploit the nuances. This concept of manipulation and co-optability has become a familiar one, but what has often been overlooked in descriptions of this period in German art history is that something has to be given firstly in order to be "manipulatable." The uncovering of this "given" has been the main concern of this text.

Fig. 9: Fritz Winter, Black-White, 1955, oil on canvas, Berlin,  
Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Nationalgalerie.



## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Bonn, Mönsterschule, Berliner Künstler: Malerei, Grafik, Plastik, 27 July - 27 August, 1950. The catalog introduction was supplied by Ernst Reuter, the chief mayor of Berlin and Peter Stockhausen, chief mayor of Bonn. The preface was written by Dr. Walter Holzhausen. The "Berlin Committee for Exhibitions of Painting and Sculpture" organized the show; members included the artists Bernhard Heiliger, Karl Hofer, Max Kaus, Hans Kuhn, Karl Schmitt-Rottluff; also Walter Holzhausen and Gerhard Beyrodt. The committee's secretary was Mrs. Eline McKnight, who, according to the introduction, provided the initial idea for the exhibition. The main catalog essay was written by Will Grohmann.

<sup>2</sup>Only a handful of names of those exhibiting are today still remembered; the following is a complete list of the artists:  
Alexander Camaro (1901), Paul Dierkes (1907), Else Driessen (1912), Wolfgang Frankenstein (1918), Ernst Fritsch (1892), Alexander Gonda (1905), Karl Hartung (1908), Bernhard Heiliger (1915), Werner Heldt (1904), Egon Holzmann (1917), Karl Hofer (1878), Wolf Hoffmann (1898), Willy Robert Huth (1890), Hans Jaenisch (1907), Max Kaus (1891), Carl-Heinz Kliemann (1924), Juro Kubicek (1906), Rudolf Kuegler (1921), Hans Kuhn (1905), Hans Laabs (1915), Heinrich Graf v. Luckner (1891), Katja Meirowsky (1920), Max Pechstein (1881), Erich Philipp (1927), Richard Scheibe (1879), Karl Schmitt-Rottluff (1884), Ernst Schumacher (1905), Renée Sintenis (1888), Luise Stomps (1900), Paul Strecker (1898), Hans Thiemann (1910), Heinz Troekes (1913), Hans Uhlmann (1900), Heinz Weber (1918), Theodor Werner (1886).

<sup>3</sup>Ernst Reuter, "Introduction," Berliner Künstler, n.p.

<sup>4</sup>Walter Holzhausen, "Preface," ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Will Grohmann, "Berliner Kunst--Heute," ibid. Grohmann was already a champion of abstract art during the interwar years; he wrote many essays and books the subject, treating Kandinsky, expressionism, French art, the Bauhaus, etc. Known and respected at home and abroad, Grohmann would have been the logical choice of the Berlin Committee--interested as it seemed to be with proving the cultural prestige of Berlin--to author the catalog text.

<sup>6</sup>I would suggest that Grohmann steered clear of privileging any of the individual painters here in order to avoid being accused of tendentiousness--something this exhibition made a virtue of avoiding.

<sup>7</sup>Berlin, Galerie Franz, Zone 5, 4 September-20 October 1948.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., [page 1].

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., [pages 1-2].

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>At the time of this exhibition, Berlin was still a 4-zone city, its three western zones dependent, in the fall of 1948, on the airlift for supplies of food and coal.

<sup>12</sup>Wolfgang Balzer, "Die Allgemeine Deutsche Kunstausstellung in Dresden 1946," Zeitschrift für Kunst 1 Nr.1 (1947), p.56.

<sup>13</sup>Lilo Ebel, "Deutsche Kunst der Gegenwart," Frankfurter Hefte 3 (May 1948), p.476.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p.477.

<sup>15</sup>Similar debates were going on in France at this time about the painting legacy and how an advanced modernism could be articulated. On the subject of surrealism's "demise" due to the fact of its having been overtaken by reality, war, atrocities, etc., see Camille Bourniquel, "Magie, surréalisme et liberté," Esprit 15 (November 1947), pp.775-782.

<sup>16</sup>"Ausstellungen; Berlin," Die Kunst 48 (February 1950), p.81.

<sup>17</sup>Fritz Löffler, "Die Zweite Deutsche Kunstausstellung in Dresden und die westdeutsche Malerei," Zeitschrift für Kunst 3 Nr.4 (1949), p.288.

<sup>18</sup>Klaus-Jörg Ruhl, p.39, introduction to the section "Aussenpolitische Konzeptionen in den Besatzungszonen."

<sup>19</sup>"Projekt einer Deklaration über die europäische Zusammenarbeit--ausgearbeitet von Widerstandskämpfern aus verschiedenen europäischen Ländern, Mai 1944," reprinted in Europa--Dokumente zur Frage der europäischen Einigung, edited by the Forschungsinstitut der deutschen Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik (Munich, 1962), pp.103-106; reprinted in Ruhl, pp.13-16.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p.13.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p.14.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p.15.

<sup>23</sup>See "Aus der Rede Jakob Kaisers auf dem Parteitag der ostdeutschen CDU in Berlin über deutsche Einheit, 16.6.1946," and "Hans-Werner Richter: 'Deutschland--Brücke zwischen Ost und West,' 1.10.1946," both reprinted in Ruhl, pp.51-56.

<sup>24</sup>See Paul Sering, Jenseits des Kapitalismus, published in 1947.

<sup>25</sup>"Das Hertensteinter Program, 21.9.1946," first published in Die Friedenswarte (1947), p.68; reprinted in Ruhl, p.21.

<sup>26</sup>See "Politische Resolution von Montreux, August 1947," in Dokumente zur europäischen Einigung, edited by the Auswärtiges Amt (Bonn, 1959),

p.87ff., reprinted in Ruhl, pp.24-25.

<sup>27</sup>See Gabriel Kolko, Main Currents in Modern American History (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984, section "The Perpetual Crisis: American Foreign Policy Since 1946," pp.348-398, esp. p.351.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., pp.352-353.

<sup>29</sup>I have not been able to research this aspect, but it seems not improbable that if the extraparliamentary pole was that of neutralism and a socialist, unified Europe, with the withering of the possibility of the latter, this pole of neutralism would impoverish itself through a grim and dogged, even cranky and eccentric neutralism--one which in turn would provoke the mistrust of Germany's other European neighbours. And in fact, this lack of "Europeanness" and not-to-be-trusted "German" "neutralism" is exactly what only in recent years some non-German critics have complained about. The "Greens" and the "RAF" of today, for example, are not well understood abroad. Even worse, they are often ahistorically put down to irrational Germanness, but I believe their roots should be sought not in any kind of transcendentalism but in postwar history instead.

<sup>30</sup>Ruhl, pp.26-27 where Bevin's speech dated 20 January 1948 is reprinted.

<sup>31</sup>See "Aus dem Memorandum der Europäischen Parlamentarier-Union über die 'Struktur Europas,' 17.10.1949," reprinted in Ruhl, pp.34-35.

<sup>32</sup>Ruhl, pp.42-44.

<sup>33</sup>Ernst Friedlaender, "Neuer Abschnitt," dated 1 January 1948, reprinted in Ruhl, pp.64-66.

<sup>34</sup>If Schumacher and the SPD had close ties to Britain, Adenauer was caught in a relationship of mutual distrust and dislike with the Labour-governed island. He was even arrested and incarcerated several times by the English, and always felt that they were trying to sabotage his career. On the other hand, the French socialist leader Vincent Auriol detested Schumacher, while Adenauer got on quite well with the French. See Alfred Grosser, The Western Alliance, p.107:

"One would hardly believe that Kurt Schumacher had spent the entire Nazi period in a concentration camp and now headed a foreign sister party if one could have heard the Socialist chief of state Vincent Auriol say to a visitor in 1951: 'Schumacher is a Nazi, for between him and Hitler there is no difference except that he isn't cruel.... Schumacher is a madman, the head of that German Social Democracy about which I wonder if it has not already become the successor of National Socialism.'"

Two pages earlier, however, Grosser also wrote: "In France, Vincent Auriol, head of state until January 1954, jotted in his diary: 'The Americans are stupid, naive, and understand nothing.' Reading his personal thoughts on the United States or on German politics, one is tempted to make a similar judgment about him." (p.105)

<sup>35</sup>Adenauer encouraged a hysterical view of the Soviets and the East. He compared the East German "Volkspolizei"---a sort of people's militia called "Vopo" for short---to the North Korean army, claiming that West Germans (presumably like South Koreans) had no guarantee that the Vopos would not try to overrun a defenseless West Germany. See Ruhl, pp.89ff.

<sup>36</sup>An interview in The Cleveland Plain Dealer, discussed by Adenauer in his memoirs, quoted in Ruhl, pp.84-85. Anthony Mann in Comeback notes that since Germany still did not have embassies in foreign countries, Adenauer sometimes used the device of giving an interview to a correspondent of a newspaper of the country he wanted to influence. According to Mann, p.226, "the Chancellor's press advisors were inexperienced, and this policy had backfired badly in Nov 1949, when the Cleveland Plain Dealer published an interview in which Adenauer was reported as supporting German rearmament and the creation of independent German armed forces. This caused a furor, and Adenauer issued several statements that he had been completely misunderstood: this was the exact opposite of what he wanted."

This seems doubtful since Adenauer did indeed want rearmament and the return of state sovereignty (unlike the neutralist-socialist Europeans), and since even though Adenauer's aides may have made errors, the Chancellor himself, known as "der alte Fuchs"---"the old fox"---would hardly have let himself be so badly misinterpreted in an interview.

<sup>37</sup>Frisch, p.190-191, entry from November 1947.

<sup>38</sup>Imperialismus und Kultur, pp.131-132.

<sup>39</sup>"Beobachtungen und Bemerkungen," Frankfurter Hefte 4 (July 1949), p.559.

<sup>40</sup>th., "Optimismus auf der Einfuhrliste," Die Gegenwart 3 Nr.19 (1948), pp.19-20.

<sup>41</sup>Horkheimer, "Art and Mass Culture," p.290. The similarity in thrust of this article and the critique of Reader's Digest in Die Gegenwart by a contributor identified only as "th.," tempts me to suspect that "th." could be Theodor Adorno, Horkheimer's colleague and fellow philosopher. Die Gegenwart was published in Freiburg im Breisgau and its editors were Ernst BenKard, Bernhard Guttman, Robert Haerdter, Albert Oeser, and Benno Reifenberg.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p.291.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p.294. Since this position has today become something to be "harpd upon," it would be interesting to know what conclusions Horkheimer would arrive at today. Extrapolating from his and Adorno's unwillingness to relinquish the "Menschenbild," it would probably not differ from their opinions of the late 1930s and of the 1940s.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p.292.

<sup>45</sup>See for example, Jane de Hart Mathews, cited previously, for an



examination of the domestic forces at work in US cold war culture.

<sup>46</sup>Karlsruhe, Staatliche Kunsthalle, Gegenstandslose Malerei in Amerika, March/April 1948.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., pp.5-6.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p.6.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p.7.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Figuratively speaking, that is. The exhibition in fact had the previous year been shown in Paris and Zurich, and after its German showing was headed for Amsterdam and London before returning to New York.

<sup>52</sup>Friedrich H. Schwank, "Malerei aus dem Geiste der Musik; Zur Gegenwartssituation moderner Malerei in Amerika," Zeitschrift für Kunst 4 Nr.1 (1950), pp.70-75.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p.70.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p.72.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p.73.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>This magazine, very much oriented toward modern art in its first two years of publication, began, around 1949/50, to change its focus: articles on modern art became increasingly rare and eventually disappeared altogether in the last issues. But the magazine did not instead switch to covering social realism, either. It sought to evade the modern problematic by focussing on older art--renaissance, gothic, nineteenth century, etc. As far as I know, it folded in late 1950.

<sup>58</sup>"Aus dem Notizbuch der Redaktion," Das Kunstwerk 2 Nr.4 (1948/49), p.47. The Kunstwerk also made sure to report on favorably interesting developments. Thus, the formation of COBRA was immediately reported.

<sup>59</sup>Roland Barthes, "Myth Today," originally appeared in Mythologies, reprinted in A Barthes Reader (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), pp.127-128. The "derelict" man is the abandoned man, very apropos to "homelessness" and Heideggerian decentering. The "alienated" man is a marxist concept which had grown less serious--people were learning to live with alienation.

<sup>60</sup>Eugen Kogon, "Deutschland von heute," Frankfurter Hefte 4 (July 1949), pp.569-582. Alfred Grosser was a founding member of the "Comité" and translated the speech for Kogon so that he could deliver it in French to his Paris audience.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p.569.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., pp.580-581. Emphasis in the original text.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p.581.

<sup>64</sup>Heinz Köhn, then Minister President of Northrhine Westphalia, introductory essay, La Réalité Quotidienne des Echange Franco-Allemands (Strassbourg: Istra, 1970), p.14.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p.16; Köhn quotes from a circular distributed by the French Ministry of Education in 1945.

<sup>66</sup>Pierre-Paul Sagave, preface to Henri Reynaud, Les Relations Universitaires entre la France et la République Fédérale d'Allemagne de 1945 à 1978 (Reims: Matot-Braine, 1979), p.5.

<sup>67</sup>Exhibitions like the previously mentioned Französische Meister der Gegenwart shown in Freiburg and others, and resonance thereof in the art press, especially in Das Kunstwerk; see, for example, Leopold Zahn, "Französische Malerei--Gestern und Heute; zu den Ausstellungen in Baden-Baden und Berlin," Das Kunstwerk 1 Nr.3 (1946/47), pp.33-40.

<sup>68</sup>The Institutes Français were established in Germany as follows:  
1946: in Tübingen, Freiburg, and Berlin;  
1948: in Mainz;  
1949: in Munich;  
1950: in Bremen, Düsseldorf, and Stuttgart;  
1951: in Hamburg and Cologne;  
1952: in Aachen and Bonn;  
1956, 1958, and 1960: in Hannover, Heidelberg, and Frankfurt, respectively.

<sup>69</sup>Zahn, p.33. In the last sentence quoted, Zahn's original text reads: "Gerade von den 130 Bildern der Ausstellung 'Französische Malerei der Gegenwart' erkennen wir, dass die nationale Eigenart, die uns in diesen Kunstwerken anspricht, sich in eine allgemeine, Europa durchwaltende Gesetzmässigkeit aufhebt." I have translated "sich ...aufhebt" as "assimilated into," a technically not absolutely correct rendering, but aufheben or Aufhebung is not an easy concept to find a one-word correlate for. Aufhebung in the Hegelian sense--which I am certain Zahn is implying here--means that something is simultaneously "overcome" or assimilated but also not replaced or destroyed outright; it is transcended, in a way. This is of course a flattering way of dealing with nationalism since it is saying that "French" art "speaks" to us as "French," but that it also speaks as not-French, as not national, as "European" or universal; that is, one can have one's French art and Europe, too. Ditto for German art, etc.

<sup>70</sup>Christian Mertens, "'Abstrakte Malerei'; Aus Anlass einer Ausstellung," Frankfurter Hefte 3 (February 1948), pp.185-187. The exhibition comprised all the traditional "masters" of French modern art, including Georges Braque, Juan Gris, Georges Rouault, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, and Marc Chagall. The fact that the same exhibition would be discussed in reviews as far

apart as 1946/47 and 1948, as is the case with Zahn and Mertens, was probably due to the technical difficulties involved in crossing zone borders, procuring paper for printing (and hence priority would be given to political articles versus art reviews in Frankfurter Hefte, whereas Das Kunstwerk would of course report on art right away), etc.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., pp.186-187.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p.187; the other factor which Mertens cites as being common to both is a continued reference to nature--no matter how much they abstract from nature, the reference to it (unlike non-objective painting) is ever there.

<sup>73</sup>Leonhard, "Picasso," p.19.

<sup>74</sup>Quoted in Adriani, p.196, taken from a manuscript Baumeister wrote for the Neue Zeitung--an American-backed newspaper in Munich; it is not clear from Adriani whether this text was indeed published by the paper.

<sup>75</sup>Baumeister showed in Paris with the Galerie Jeanne Bucher after the war and was favourably reviewed by Christian Zervos, "Notes sur Willi Baumeister," Cahiers d'Art 24 (1949), pp.342-344. Also, as previously discussed, Le Matin's comment that this artist had many foreign friends, including Herbert Read and Anthony Thwaites.

<sup>76</sup>The Editors, "Französische Malerei Heute," Das Kunstwerk 4 Nr.3 (1950), p.58.

<sup>77</sup>Dr. Lindemann, "Junge französische Malerei in Düsseldorf," Das Kunstwerk 4 Nr.3 (1950), pp.64-66.

<sup>78</sup>Lindemann discusses Bertholle, Bazaine, Manessier, and especially Schneider and Hartung.

<sup>79</sup>Kurt Leonhard, "Dieter Wyss: Der Surrealismus; Verlag: Lampert Schneider, Heidelberg," Das Kunstwerk 4 Nr.5 (1950), p.64. Leonhard praises Wyss, however, for not having been uncritically taken in by Salvador Dali.

<sup>80</sup>Beyond the Korean War (1950) and the death of Stalin (1953), the power of American presence in Western Europe waxes; this paper is concerned with the pre-history of the "fifties" (whose main characteristics in Germany seemed to be conformism, economic miracle, and turning away from recent history) and therefore will not deal with those developments.

<sup>81</sup>Frederick S. Wight, "Amerikanische Malerei der Gegenwart," Amerikanische Rundschau 5 Nr.24 (1949), pp.61-72. I do not know the title of the original version, but "American Contemporary Painting" is a translation of the German-version title. During the war, Wight worked for the OSS, forerunner of the CIA.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., pp.70-72.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., p.71.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., p.72, Wight praises the work of Walter Stuempfig, noting that this artist is the most important one for the future because of his "gripping" depictions of "yearning." He could not have been more wrong in his assessment of the necessity of Stuempfig's humanist depictions of "longing."

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., p.72.

<sup>86</sup>Alan Gowans, "A-Humanism, Primitivism, and the Art of the Future," College Art Journal 11 (Summer 1952), pp.226-239.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., p.235.

<sup>88</sup>Hugo Munsterberg, "Art in Berlin: Summer, 1951," College Art Journal 11 (Winter 1951/52), p.110. The journal states that Munsterberg was originally from Berlin, that he emigrated to the US in 1935, attended Harvard (A.B. in 1938 and Ph.D in 1941), and at the time of writing was teaching at Michigan State College.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid.

<sup>91</sup>For information on the Congress of Cultural Freedom, on Melvin Lasky (the editor of Der Monat), and other persons involved, see Christopher Lasch, "The Cultural Cold War," in The Agony of the American Left (New York: Vintage Books, 1968).

<sup>92</sup>The article was called "The Artist and Freedom" according to the German translation; it was subsequently reprinted as a catalog essay for an exhibition of Berlin artists; see Berlin, Schloss Charlottenburg, Berliner Neue Gruppe 1950, 1950; the same catalog also contained an article by Will Grohmann called "Defense of Art."

<sup>93</sup>Berliner Neue Gruppe 1950, n.p. Grohmann's essay, which follows this one, once again calls for the formation of avant-gardes to fight against the epigones.

## CONCLUSION

Abstract painting as practiced by German artists like Baumeister, Nay, Werner, Winter, and others and by their French counterparts clustered, for example, under Michel Tapié's critical umbrella of "art autre" contributed greatly to the culture of a unified Europe. The idea of Europe underwent, however, major changes during these postwar years. As the wish for unification, it travelled the road from political possibility to utopia and back again to political expedient. While the French understandably were anxious that a unified and re-armed Germany--even within the context of alliance to France--could one day again pose a threat, the USSR, another victim of German aggression, also feared a unified Germany, especially in a unified Europe: a Europe which would perhaps one day side with a renewed German attack on Russia. The Americans, on the other hand, worried about a unified neutralist Germany excluded from a west European alliance; it was thought that this kind of Germany would naturally be pulled into the Soviet orbit since the Russians could offer a market to German industrialists for their products.

As late as 1952, the American State Department's Paul Nitze, Charles Bohlen, Laukhauff, Lewis, and Garland Ferguson debated amongst themselves about a solution to the "German Question," according to a declassified protocol of a 1 April 1952 meeting.<sup>1</sup> There were "very substantial differences of opinion"<sup>2</sup> over whether Germany should be re-unified. Nitze's and Bohlen's ideal was a unified, EDC-member Germany, although both realized that France would never find this acceptable. This solution would also have been the "worst case scenario" for the USSR. On the other hand, Bohlen thought that a unified Germany in a

divided Europe would very soon succeed in again achieving a dangerous dominance on the continent. And he added that Stalin's offer to hold free elections in both Germanys to decide on re-unification was aimed at Adenauer-supporting rightwing industrialists in West Germany, not at the Social Democrats: the Russians wanted to lure industry with their east-bloc market potential stretching "from Eastern Europe to the Pacific (including China)--markets which Germany would in the west be able to win only with great difficulty."<sup>3</sup> Thus, while a neutralist, non-aligned Germany would be advantageous to the Russians --since in this case Germany would not be in a position to instigate an attack against the USSR--it would be disadvantageous to the US which saw the threat of Germany's drift to the east, lured by the USSR's vast market potential. And while the French might have liked to have a disarmed, neutralized Germany as a neighbour, they could not do without Europe--and of this Germany had to be a vital component, not a dead weight. The partition of Germany solved the problem for all sides, especially for the West Germans who now could work at becoming a trusted sovereign partner of the west.

Yet something was gained in an undesirable way, too: art became an ideological pawn. As long as conceptions of unification, neutralism, and/or west-integration remained confused and somehow in flux--as indeed was the case as late as 1952<sup>4</sup>--the "contemporary" art of Berlin shown in a pluralist, non-avant-garde manner at the end of the 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s could stand indefinitely on the threshold of cultural possibility. In the West, however, where west-integration was an increasingly accepted and even strived for reality, conceptions of Europe's unification focussed on Western European unification. In art this implied an amplification of the shared Western European discourse focussed on "otherness," bankruptcy of old values--the work

of art no longer communicates--and the search for a new reality. Not only did the unification of Germany gradually recede into the background in the west, but a re-unified Germany could come increasingly to be perceived as an obstacle to a unified western Europe: the French would not be willing to put up with an armed, unified Germany, practically restored to its prewar capabilities, and neither would the Russians. It would threaten war between east and west. A unified western Europe, although at one remove from the conception of an east-west socialist unified Europe, was by now preferable to the alternative of a patchwork of squabbling states. Western Europe could at least be a third player to be reckoned with in the on-going struggle between the two "non-European" forces of America and Russia.<sup>5</sup>

In Berlin, where the idea of a western alliance was more remote, a pluralistic exhibition policy which avoided avant-garde "tendentiousness" made sense insofar as avant-gardism came to be linked with the west, with France, and even with the US. But Berlin also wanted to claim the right to represent German art abroad--and this created heated opposition on the part of avantgardists who on no account wanted Germany to be represented by works which could be deemed mediocre, by a representation which lacked selectivity and rigour, or which failed to differentiate itself from the past. In 1950 an artists's league called "Deutscher Künstlerbund 1950" was re-established after having been outlawed by the Nazis in 1935. The league's location in the former German capital and its "clean" credentials (it was suppressed by the Nazis) gave it the status of primary organizational representative of German art. It held its first exhibition in 1951 and immediately signalled adherence to a pluralist and eclectic exhibition policy:

We believe that the formation of our directorate and of the jury provides a guarantee that no one-sided tendencies will prevail. We would

like at this opportunity also once again to emphasize resolutely that the German Artists's League 1950 does not favour or represent any tendency within contemporary German art.<sup>6</sup>

This was the sort of approach which critics like Grohmann along with the artists discussed here would have found most harmful to the cause of modern art--and to the image of Germany abroad.

The artists Baumeister, Uhlmann, Werner, and Winter responded with the threat of quitting the league in March 1952,<sup>7</sup> a strategy supposedly instigated, according to a private letter to the artist Meistermann, by Will Grohmann.<sup>8</sup> The four artists accused the league's directorate and "privileged members" of practicing tolerance in order to be tolerated themselves. It called instead for a "real selection": rigorous selectivity was considered by these four artists to be absolutely essential to the vitality and effectiveness of the league.<sup>9</sup> The league, headed by Karl Hofer, responded to the artists's letter with indignation and surprise, but also with obvious incomprehension of the issue.<sup>10</sup> To Baumeister's and the others's accusation that the league represented a "mass organization of artists" in which mediocrity dominated--intended as a denigration of the league's pluralistic eclecticism--Hofer and his colleague Kuhn noted that there were approximately 25,000 artists in Germany and that the league only had 92 members. This ratio, according to Kuhn and Hofer, proved that the epithet "mass organization" was inaccurate. That the numerical facts were not the issue at all seemed not to be grasped by the league's directorate. Likewise, to the dissenting artists's claim that the league's exhibition did not address the needs of today's man, Hofer and Kuhn noted that the show could boast a record of 15,000 visitors; here, too, the league's response proved that it did not share the elitist modernist's opinion that the selective, rigorous, and "difficult" work was more appropriate to modernity than the eclectic policy



capable of drawing large numbers of visitors.

While the league did not have an official government function, it nonetheless often was instrumental in determining which German artists were selected for international exhibitions abroad, including those held in Venice and even in New Delhi.<sup>11</sup> The cultural policies which the German government or organizations like the league followed were out of synch, however, with advanced painting and its discourse. This lack of unity was exemplified in the diverging ideologies articulated by the participants at the "Darmstädter Gespräch" symposium on the one hand and the exhibition of "Berliner Künstler 1950" in Bonn on the other. That this could be the case as late as 1950--and even beyond, as exemplified by the dispute within the "Deutscher Künstlerbund" in 1952--refutes the often prevalent view that the postwar culture of the two Germanys simply corresponded to "Stalinization" and "Americanization," and also takes issue with the notion that a "German" style had been suppressed. The issues after the war were not German ones per se, but rather circled around the problem of Europe. The pluralists as well as the avant-gardists made this the focus of their concerns, albeit in different ways. The former adhered to what the latter perceived to be a too-optimistic humanism which was no longer appropriate to current modernity. The avant-gardists conceived a rigorous, elitist modernism capable of representing the renewed European spirit of unity.

In pointing out these discrepancies and conflicts, I hope that this paper has contributed to breaking down preconceived ideas of postwar German and European history, art, and culture. The "European" thrust of postwar cultural production furthermore strikes this researcher as deserving of attention especially in view of the recent resurgence of "neo-expressionism" which purports to signify a re-found "German" style. That nationalistic signification

should once again be used to grease the wheels of the (art) marketplace would surely have provoked the disdain of those Europeans concerned with unity and modernity. As Walter Dirks, co-editor of the Frankfurter Hefte noted in 1946: "Europe, the poor continent, can only maintain itself and last if it pulls itself together... Our peace is lost since we have become modern: we can only attain a new balance if we become more modern still."<sup>12</sup> The combatative selectivity of the advanced artists was such an attempt to become "more modern still" and thereby attain a new European balance.

This sometimes mercurial, sometimes stolid idea of "Europe" hence underlaid the maneuverings and motions of both the pluralist and the avantgardist artists and critics. In this sense, art was political and expressive. The much berated consolidation into conformism in 1950s West Germany, the scandal of its repression of the past, and the fact that abstract painting could come to function as the collective wallpaper of capitalism could only come about once the new European order was secure, once the search for a new language and a new reality was superfluous, and modernism was restored.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>"Classified Protocol of a Meeting of Ranking Members of the US State Department on the Topic of How to Proceed in the German Question, 1 April 1952," reprinted in Ruhl, pp.140-142.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.140.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.141.

<sup>4</sup>The last joint Four-Powers conference was in June 1949; it was declared that attempts to reconstitute Germany as a political and economic unity would be based on Four-Power efforts. The first initiative to re-unify after the 1949 founding of the two German states came not from Adenauer, but from the Americans. The US-High Commission pressured Adenauer to put forward a proposal for free elections toward re-unification. The East Germans and Soviets did not respond, however. The East's disinterest turned when at the end of 1950 the West began discussing the possibility of West Germany's integration into a western defense concept (the EDC). On 30.11.1950 Otto Grotewohl, head of state of the German Democratic Republic, wrote to the government of the Federal Republic of Germany, offering talks and the setting-up of a committee to prepare free elections. He also suggested that the Germans should take the reunification issue into their own hands and put their proposals to the occupying forces, not vice versa. The Federal Government rejected the proposal, demanding free elections prior to the formation of committees and/or provisional governments. On 15.9.1951 the GDR repeated its offer, but again the FRG rejected it. The GDR meanwhile rejected the FRG's demand that the UN oversee any elections. In the west, talks on the EDC stepped up--ratification of the treaty was drawing near. On 10.3.1952 Stalin sent a "note" to the western powers, offering a peace treaty with Germany, German unity, a pullback of occupation, and the creation of a national army. Again, the western powers answered on 25.3.1952 with a demand for free elections first. They also criticized Stalin's proposed neutral status for Germany. On 9.4.1952 the USSR said it agreed to the west's demand for free elections as a precondition for further negotiation. The western powers hesitated in giving their answer until 12.5.1952: they demanded total freedom of action for the proposed all-German government. The USSR pushed for immediate talks regarding a German treaty on 24.5.1952--on the eve of the signing of the EDC treaty. On 10.6.1952 the west answered, agreeing to a conference to investigate conditions for free elections. Then, on 29.8.1952 the USSR shifted gears and suggested postponing the peace treaty talks. On 23.9.1952 the west again called attention to its offer, but the USSR did not respond. That was the end of the dialog on the subject of re-unification.

For the relevant documents, see Ruhl, pp.122-155.

<sup>5</sup>The prejudice against the "non-European" Russians and Americans cropped up repeatedly. Benno Reifenberg, "Die Dunkle Zone," Die Gegenwart 3 Nr.1/2 (1948), p.7, writes about the vacuum left behind in Germany, a vacuum into which the US and the USSR are making exploratory forays: "The two non-European superpowers are seeking to stake out their areas of influence in this large no-man's terrain of the earth." Theodor Plievier, "Entscheidung für Europa," Die Gegenwart 4 Nr.1 (1949), p.8, admonishes Europeans not to feel forced to choose between "East and West," i.e., Russia or America, but to choose Europe, instead. And Bernhard Guttman, "Die Funktion des Widerstandes," cited

previously, also warns of the dangers of Germany and Europe becoming a mere appendage of "America or Asia." (p.9)

<sup>6</sup>Berlin, Charlottenburg, Deutscher Künstlerbund 1950; Erste Ausstellung, 1951, n.p.

<sup>7</sup>See the copy of the letter by the four artists to the league, dated 22.3.1952, in the Archiv für bildende Künste in Nürnberg; the letter is located in the file on Georg Meistermann.

<sup>8</sup>See the Meistermann file, Archiv für bildende Künste, Nürnberg.

<sup>9</sup>Letter to the league, 22.3.1952.

<sup>10</sup>See letter to Willi Baumeister, copy thereof in Meistermann file.

<sup>11</sup>See letter from the "Deutscher Künstlerbund 1950" to Dr. Frahne in the German Foreign Ministry, 2.2.1953, in the Meistermann file, Archiv für bildende Künste, Nürnberg.

<sup>12</sup>Walter Dirks, "Die zweite Republik; Zum Ziel und zum Weg der deutschen Demokratie," Frankfurter Hefte 1 (April 1946), p.17.

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