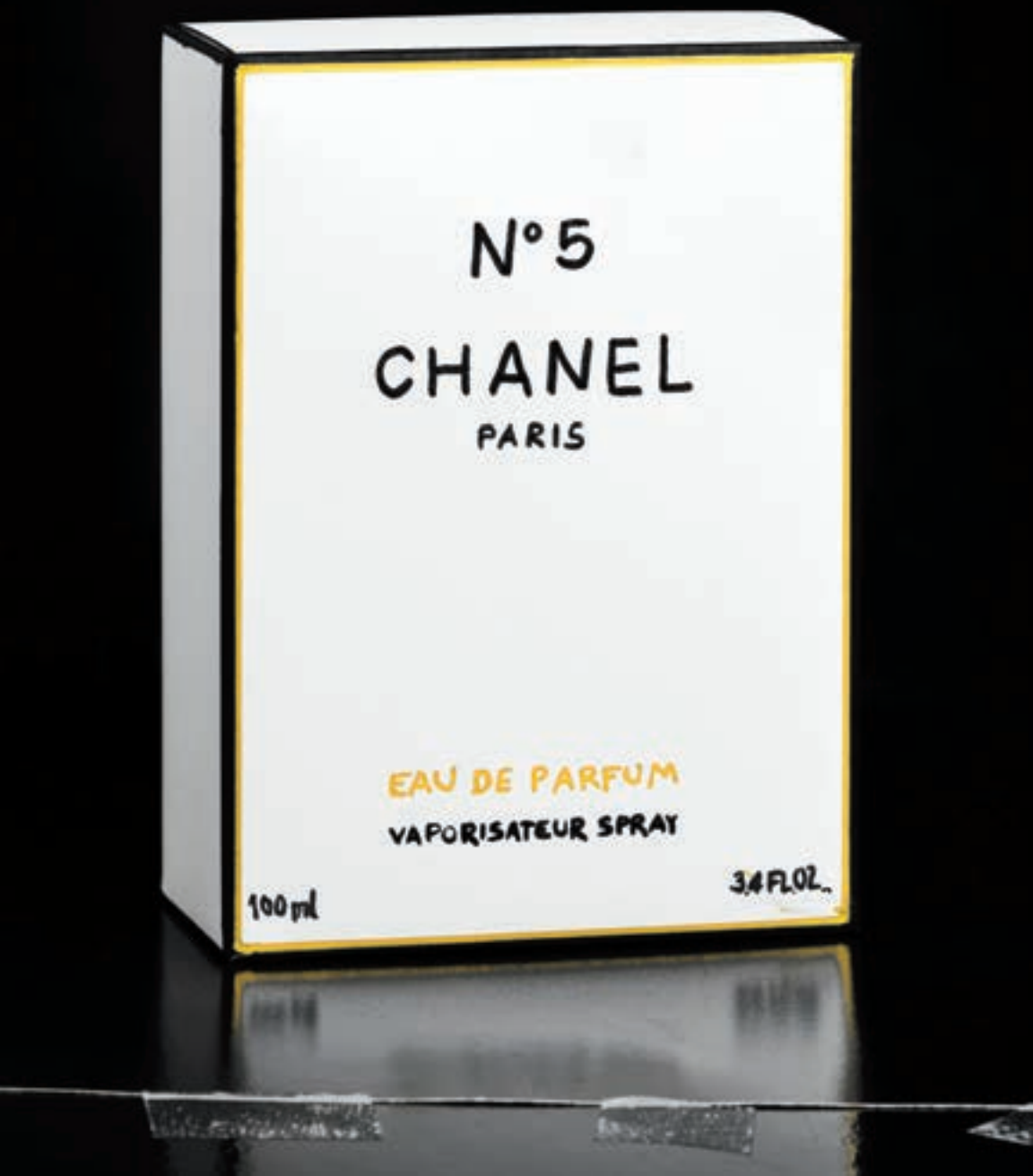
AUTONOMY

The Social Ontology of Art under Capitalism

NICHOLAS BROWN



A U T O N O M Y

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DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS *Durham and London* 2019

Printed in the United States of America on
acid-free paper ∞
Designed by Matthew Tauch
Typeset in Sabon by Westchester Publishing Services

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Brown, Nicholas, [date] author.
Title: Autonomy : the social ontology of art under capitalism / Nicholas Brown.
Description: Durham : Duke University Press, 2019. | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2018037347 (print)
LCCN 2018047133 (ebook)
ISBN 9781478002673 (ebook)
ISBN 9781478001249 (hardcover : alk. paper)
ISBN 9781478001591 (pbk. : alk. paper)
Subjects: LCSH: Art, Modern—21st century—Economic aspects. | Art and business—History—21st century. | Art and society—History—21st century. | Arts—Political aspects—History—21st century.
Classification: LCC N8600 (ebook) | LCC N8600 .B76 2019 (print) | DDC 709.05—dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2018037347

Cover art: Viktoria Binschtok, *Chanel*, 2016. Framed c-print. 109 × 85 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Klemm's Berlin.

For Kevin Floyd.

Contents

Acknowledgments

This book would never have come to be without conversations in person and in my head with Elise Archias, Jennifer Ashton, Sarah Brouillette, Joshua Clover, Iná Camargo Costa, Todd Cronan, Chico d'Alambert, Fabio Durão, Bo Ekelund, Michael Fried, Fredric Jameson, Oren Izenberg, Walter Benn Michaels, Mathias Nilges, Charles Palermo, Roberto Schwarz, Emilio Sauri, Lisa Siraganian, Blake Stimson, Imre Szeman, and others I have surely forgotten to mention. I am particularly grateful to Walter for dropping by my office, then eight floors and two elevators down, to tell me this was my next book, and to Fred, for his encouragement throughout. Also to Mathias for helping me when I got in over my head in German; the mistakes that remain are mine. Also to Anna, for everything. Special thanks must also go to Davis Brecheisen and Bob Ryan for their help in preparing the manuscript. The synthesis attempted here would not have been thinkable for me without two institutions, the Marxist Literary Group and nonsite.org. This book was written with the generous support of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. I must also express my gratitude to the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), for remaining committed in inhospitable times to its

mission as an urban, public research university; and even more to UIC United Faculty Local 6456, without whom the path of least resistance would be to trample that mission underfoot.

Fragments and early drafts of some of the arguments presented here have been published in my work for *nonsite* as well as in the following: parts of the introduction have appeared in "Close Reading and the Market," in *Literary Materialisms*, ed. Mathias Nilges and Emilio Sauri, as well as in "A obra de arte na era da sua subsunção real ao capital," in *Marxismo: Cultura e Educação*, ed. Fabio Akcelrud Durão, Daniela Mussi, and Andréia Maranhão; parts of chapter 3 have appeared in "Musical Affect, Musical Citation, Music-Immanence: Kurt Weill and the White Stripes," in *Postmodern Culture*, as well as in "Brecht eu misturo com Caetano: citação, mercado e forma musical," in *Revista do Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros*; parts of chapter 4 have appeared in "The Plain Viewer Be Damned," in *The Contemporaneity of Modernism*, ed. Michael D'Arcy and Mathias Nilges.

INTRODUCTION

On Art and the Commodity Form

This book seeks to answer a question first asked more than a century ago by György Lukács: "Works of art exist—how are they possible?"[1] Lukács's version of the problem, still relevant to current debates concerning affect, identity, and form, did not have to confront the "wholesale reduction of culture to a commodity."[2] This phenomenon, lamented on the left while the right celebrates "a more favorable attitude towards the commercialization of culture," is nonetheless confidently affirmed by all sides, which "assert in the most ardent terms that art is, always has been, or has recently become, nothing but a commodity."[3] In a society such as ours, claims to exist outside the circulation of commodities are rightly ruled out as hopelessly naïve. We are wise enough to know that the work of art is a commodity like any other. What is less clear is whether we know what we mean when we say it.

A pair of shoes being a capitalist commodity—or a precapitalist, "simple" commodity, or a noncommodity—has, unless we are talking about Heidegger's pair of peasant shoes, no bearing at all on its being as a pair of shoes. The same goes for hammers, road salt, wallpaper. If there is a problem with the commodification of shoes (of the hammer,

the salt, the wallpaper), it has nothing to do with questions about its status as a pair of shoes and everything to do with what goes on in the labor process, "the hidden zone of production, on whose threshold it is posted: 'No admittance except on business.'"[4] While there is no lack of exploitation in the production of culture commodities, such exploitation concerns us in precisely the same way it does in any other industry. Granting the Heideggerian exception, it would be peculiar indeed to lament the "wholesale reduction of shoes to a commodity." Why should the commodification of the work of art be a problem—why would it seem to matter to its very status as a work of art—while the commodity character of a hammer or a shoe does not matter to its being as a hammer or a shoe?

We can find the answer in Marx's detour into the phenomenology of the market. Since "commodities cannot go to market and exchange themselves . . . we must look behind them, to their owners" (*K* 99/*C* 178):

> What chiefly distinguishes the commodity owner from the commodity is the circumstance that the latter treats every other commodity as nothing more than the form of appearance of its own value. Born leveler and cynic, it is therefore always on the jump to exchange not only soul but body with any other commodity, be it plagued by more deformities than Maritornes herself. With his five and more senses, the owner of the commodity makes up for the latter's lack of a feel for the concrete in other commodities. His commodity has for him no unmediated use value. Otherwise he would not bring it to market. It has use value for others. For him its only unmediated use value is to be the bearer of exchange value, and so to be a medium of exchange. That is why he wants to dispose of it in exchange for commodities whose use values appeal to him. All commodities are non-use values for their owners, use values for their nonowners. Consequently, they must all change hands. But this change of hands constitutes their exchange, and their exchange relates them to one another as values and realizes them as values. Commodities must be realized as values before they can be realized as use values. (*K* 100/*C* 179)

This is a knotty passage (and one whose gender politics are mercifully not entirely legible in translation). Its difficulty and, indeed, "literariness" seem all out of proportion to the matter in hand. Should it not be

among the easiest things in the world to distinguish commodity owner from commodity? Is it not rather an odd flourish to stack the deck by personifying the commodity, then to feign perplexity in distinguishing the personification from the person? But the operation is the opposite of this: we were told in the paragraph preceding this one that "the characters who appear on the economic stage are merely personifications of economic relations" (*K* 100/*C* 179). So it is not only that the commodity is personified but, it proving easier to talk of the commodity as a "she" than the owner as an "it," that the owner is. The distinction is therefore between two logical standpoints—something the fact that one of them is occupied by a consciousness tends to obscure—and the distinction is simply this: from the standpoint of the commodity, all commodities are qualitatively indifferent. If you imagine a market without buyers and sellers, you are left with a mass of commodities that are exchangeable in various ratios, but none of which is not exchangeable—that is, none of which possesses any qualities that cannot be expressed as quantity. (The basis of this qualitative indifference, established in Marx's previous chapter, does not concern us here). But from the standpoint of the commodity owner—who, because he owns a commodity and not some other kind of thing, is both buyer and seller—his commodity is qualitatively different from all the others in that his alone has no qualities. To be more precise, his has only one quality that matters, namely its lack of qualities—that is, its qualitative equality with other commodities: its exchangeability.[5]

All other commodities—that is, the commodities he encounters as a buyer rather than a seller—are, for his "five and more senses" full of qualities. Quality, use value, counts for him as a buyer. Otherwise, he would not want to buy. Quality, use value, counts nothing for him as a seller. Otherwise, he would not be willing to sell. Of course, as a seller he knows that the commodities he brings to market must "stand the test as use-values before they can be realized as values" (*K* 100/*C* 179). "But"—and this is a Hegelian "but," the conjunction that changes everything that came before—"only the act of exchange can prove whether or not [the human labor expended in them] is useful for others, whether the product of such labor can therefore satisfy alien needs" (*K* 100–1/*C* 180). We thus find ourselves in a chicken-and-egg loop—exchange value precedes use value precedes exchange value precedes use value—that Marx's imaginary commodity owner wants no

part of: "He wants to realize his commodity as value . . . whether or not his own commodity has any use value for the owner of the other commodity" (*K* 101/*C* 180).

In societies such as ours, which appear as an "enormous collection of commodities" (*K* 49/*C* 125), any use value is immediately exchangeable. Conversely, only through exchange is use value socially ratified. Therefore, it is only exchangeability that matters to the commodity's owner, as frustrated as he might be by the fact that its use value is from one standpoint prior. If he sells you a salad bowl and you use it for a chamber pot, that is strictly your business. As far as the seller is concerned, the use value of "his" commodity makes its appearance only as exchange value: "only the act of exchange can prove whether or not [such labor] is useful for others." The commodity owner wants to realize the exchange value of his commodity by producing something that is a use value for others. But he is not in the business of legislating or even knowing what that use value should be; he does not even know it has a use value until it sells. Indeed, the more potential uses it has—it slices, it dices; it's a typewriter and a shoe store and a status symbol and a peepshow—the less he legislates what its actual use value should be, and the happier he is.

If this were the only possible state of affairs, there would be no reason to demonstrate its peculiarity. So what is the other of "a society of commodity producers" (*K* 93/*C* 172)? We are given several options in Marx's previous chapter: Robinson Crusoe, the medieval corvée, the peasant family, hints of various historical noncapitalist societies, and finally the famous "association of free people, working with the means of production held in common, and, in full self-awareness, expending their many individual labor powers as one social labor power" (*K* 92/*C* 171). These are all others of capitalist commodity production, but its determinate other, the other that the capitalist market produces as its own internal frame, is Hegel's image of collective labor, which Marx's explicitly recalls. This image appears most explicitly in Hegel's idealized evocation of Greek ethical life, an evocation that refers not to the Greek polis as it actually was or as Hegel imagined it actually was, but rather to its own immanent horizon, an ideal that Greek customary life must presuppose but can only realize in an unsatisfactory, contradictory, and unstable way:

> The individual's labor to satisfy his own needs is as much a satisfaction of the needs of others as his own, and the satisfaction of his own needs is achieved only through the labor of others. As the individual in his individual labor already unconsciously accomplishes a common labor, so again he also produces the common as his conscious object; the whole becomes, as whole, his work, for which he sacrifices himself, and precisely thus is himself restored by it.[6]

The problem—the satisfaction of "universal" or social needs through individual labor, through irreducibly particular talents and drives—is the same in Marx and Hegel, though Marx's "full self-awareness" will mark the crucial difference. Marx, however, considers this problem by means of a different social formation—capitalism—in which there is nothing customary about what is produced and nothing individual in who produces it; in which, as we have seen, exchange precedes use. In Marx's version—"only the act of exchange can prove whether or not [such labor] is useful for others, whether the product of such labor can therefore satisfy alien needs"—the two subordinate clauses appear to say the same thing. The function of the second clause is to emphasize the shift from the neutral "other" to "alien" (*fremde*)—that is, to point out the peculiarity of commodity exchange in which "the needs of others," taken for granted in the Hegelian version of customary life, are reduced to a cipher whose index is exchangeability. As Lukács reminded us, the logic of alienation (*Entfremdung*) in Marx is intimately related to that of Hegelian externalization (*Entäußerung*).[7] The other or negative horizon of commodity exchange is what Hegel calls *die Kraft der Entäußerung*, "the power of externalization, the power to make oneself into a thing" (483/§658).[8]

Plenty has been written about the lordship and bondage theme in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and we have no interest in revisiting it here, even if the relation of buyer to seller—logically encompassing the two moments of indifference and petulance—does, in its utter failure to produce anything like subjectivity (it produces instead a market where the parties can safely face each other in the aggregate rather than as antagonists) ironically recall it. What is important here is how we get out of this dialectic. As is well known, this occurs through the labor of the bondsman, who, in forming and shaping the thing, in external-

izing himself in the production of the lifeworld of both himself and his master, comes to find in that world not the master's power but his own: "Thus the form [of the product of labor], set outside himself, is not an other to him, for this form is precisely his own pure being-for-self, which to him becomes the truth. What he rediscovers, precisely through labor that appears to harbor only an alien purpose, is nothing other than his own purpose, arrived at through his own means" (154/§196). This is Hegel's materialism—the exact opposite, it might be said in passing, of causal or vulgar or "object-oriented" materialism—and indeed it represents a kind of ideological core to the *Phenomenology*. But the point to be made here is that the object the bondsman shapes is not just made—Marx's commodity will also be the product of labor—but intended: a purpose arrived at by his own means. "Externalization" is not, then, a psychological projection but a matter of social inscription. The thing is not a cipher whose use is indexed by its exchange but a use whose purpose is legible—that is, normative. The master can, and presumably does, find another purpose in it, but that will now be an occasion for conflict. The owner of commodities, however, does not care what purpose a buyer finds in his commodity, as long as someone will buy it.

What we have arrived at is the distinction between the exchange formula C-M-C (commodity-money-commodity, or Hegelian *Sittlichkeit*, the satisfaction of individual needs as the universal satisfaction of needs through the social metabolism, as use values are exchanged through the medium of money) and M-C-M (money-commodity-money), the same relation but now understood as the kernel of capitalism itself, where use value is only a vanishing moment in the valorization of capital. What we have arrived at is the distinction between an object whose use (or purpose or meaning) is normatively inscribed in the object itself—a meaning that is universal, in Hegel's terms simply *allgemeine*, available for everyone and not therefore a private matter—and an object whose use is a matter of indifference from one standpoint and a matter of possibly intense but necessarily private concern from another. What we have arrived at is the distinction between an entity that embodies, and must seek to compel, conviction and an entity that seeks to provoke interest in its beholder—or, perhaps, all kinds of different interest from different beholders. What we have arrived at, no doubt by an unusual route, is the distinction between art and objecthood.[9]

The distinction is Michael Fried's, but it has become central to the debate over the dominant strand in contemporary cultural production, or, more likely, the dominant strand in the cultural production of the very recent past, a period for which the term "postmodernism" will do as well as any other. While aspects of Fried's critique are broadly applicable, the distinction was originally developed to critique the minimalist or "literal" artwork's claim to be nothing more than the specific object that it is—a claim that ultimately produces a kind of theater in which the finally salient aspect is not the form of the object but the experience of the spectator. The claim made by a minimalist work to be literally the object that it is—in brief, to produce an object that provokes an experience rather than a form that calls for an interpretation—manifests the structure of the commodity, which calls for private attachments rather than public judgments. Indeed, everything Fried finds objectionable in the pseudo-art "object"—its pandering appeal to the spectator, its refusal of the category of internal coherence, its infinite iterability subject to drift rather than development—is, however, perfectly legitimate for a certain class of objects with which we are already familiar, namely commodities. Or, to put this more strongly, Fried's "formalist" account of the distinction between art and recent nonart is also a historicist one, fully derivable from the Marxian problematic of the "real subsumption of labor under capital."

Let us return, then, to *Capital*. As we just saw, one way to understand Marx's analysis is to say that in commodity exchange, the mode of purpose or intention shifts. If I make a bowl for myself, it is a bowl because I wanted to make a bowl, and I will be concerned about all kinds of concrete attributes the bowl might have. Intention will be inscribed in the thing itself: if it is shallow rather than deep, wood rather than metal, these attributes—its purposiveness—are as they are because I intend them to be that way, and we are in the world of Hegelian externalization. If I make a bowl for the market, I am primarily concerned only with one attribute, its exchangeability—that is, the demand for bowls. That demand, and therefore all of the concrete attributes that factor into that demand, are decided elsewhere—namely, on the market. Intention is realized in exchange but not registered in the object. While I still make decisions about my bowls, those decisions no longer matter as intentions even for me, because they are entirely subordinated to more or less informed guesses about other people's desires.

Our free-market theorists celebrate this phenomenon as "consumer sovereignty."[10]

The Kantian formula for aesthetic judgment, which opens the way to a concept of art that lends coherence to over two centuries of artistic practice, is the perception of "purposiveness without purpose."[11] Aesthetic judgments in Kant are made without reference to external uses, either idiopathic ones (preferences, market-like judgments) or practical ones (ends, state-like judgments). In an aesthetic judgment, we find something "beautiful"—a term of art in Kant, the coordinates of which are not established with reference to ugliness or difficulty but in opposition to idiopathic and conceptual judgments along one axis and the sublime along the other—but we are indifferent as to its existence. The work of art is, in its being as an artwork, exempted from use value. But as an undeniably unmagical thing, it also has a use value, which means it also necessarily bears an exchange value—and in a society whose metabolism is the market, exchange value is logically prior as *Zweck* or purpose. For hammers, this is not a problem. Estwing's purpose (making money by means of making hammers) is accomplished by fulfilling mine (hammering). The problems arise out of sight of the market, in the production process.

But for the artwork, its commodity character does pose a problem. If a work of art is not only a commodity—if a moment of autonomy with regard to the commodity form is analytically available, if there is something in the work that can be said to suspend its commodity character—then it makes entirely good sense to approach it with interpretive tools. Since its form is a matter of intention, it responds to—indeed, demands—interpretation. (In the passage from Hegel cited earlier—"his own purpose, arrived at through his own means"—the multivalent word "Sinn," translated here as "purpose," could also be translated as "meaning." Indeed, the conflict immanent in the normativity of the formed object will, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, devolve in skepticism and stoicism into a mere conflict of interpretation. But that is another story.) But if a work of art is only a commodity, interpretive tools suddenly make no sense at all. Since the only intention embodied in its form is the intention to exchange, the form the object takes is determined elsewhere from where it is made: that is, by (more or less informed guesses about) the market. The point here is not that artistic production, any more than Hegelian externalization, is somehow

precapitalist. This nostalgic-tragic temptation is one of Marxism's less useful inheritances from early romanticism. As we shall see, precisely the opposite is the case: the artwork is not an archaic holdover but the internal, unemphatic other to capitalist society. The aim is, rather, to outline the peculiar character of the commodity and what it would mean if works of art were commodities like any other. If works of art were commodities like any other, desires represented by the market would be subject to analysis and elucidation, but interpretation of the work itself would be a pointless endeavor.

It might seem absurd to say the art commodity is uninterpretable, but think for a moment of James Cameron's science-fiction film *Avatar*, still a kind of high-water mark of culture-industrial spectacle. The memory of critics producing a welter of completely incompatible (but also vaguely plausible) interpretations is an amusing one, and the phenomenon did not go unnoticed by the critics themselves. This empirical profusion is insignificant in itself: all of these interpretations (or all but one) could have been wrong. But it is also possible that since the film is concerned only with producing a set of marketable effects, it cannot at the same time be concerned with producing the minimal internal consistency required to produce a meaning. In fact, Cameron himself is pretty clear that this is the case. When asked why female Na'vi have breasts, he replies: "Right from the beginning I said, 'She's got to have tits,' even though that makes no sense because her race, the Na'vi, aren't placental mammals."[12] Cameron is more precise than he probably means to be when he says that "makes no sense." Pressed in a different interview, Cameron responds that the female Na'vi have breasts "because this is a movie for human people."[13] In other words, people—enough of them anyway—will pay to see breasts, so the breasts go in. But this "makes no sense": there is no point in interpreting it, because the salient fact is not that Cameron wanted them there but that he thought a lot of other people would want them there, and the wildly inconsistent ideology of the film is likewise composed of saleable ideologemes that together make no sense. This is not to say that all art commodities are similarly inconsistent. Some audiences will pay for ideological or narrative or aesthetic consistency, so we have politically engaged documentaries, middlebrow cinema, and independent film. But this consistency does not add up to a meaning, since what looks like meaning is only an appeal to a market niche. It is not that one cannot

consume these with pleasure or understand the messages, consistent or not, that they transmit; it is, rather, that once the determining pressure of market outcomes is recognized—and without the work itself plausibly invoking that pressure as overcome—it is hard to make the ascription of meaning stick.

But this is nothing new. Rather, it is a very old line, essentially Theodor Adorno's critique of the culture industry.[14] The lineaments of that critique are well known; it will be enough for the present to remind ourselves that, in that essay, Adorno has no interest in explicating works, because in commercial culture there are no works to critique and no meanings to be found. The culture industry as it appears in Adorno is simpler than ours, seemingly differentiated only vertically rather than splintered into potentially infinite socio-aesthetico-cultural niches. But the problem is that of the art commodity. "The varying production values in the culture industry have nothing to do with content, nothing to do with the meaning of the product" (*DA* 132/*DE* 124) because the varying production values are aimed at different markets rather than different purposes, and this principle is "the meaningful content of all film, whatever plot the production team may have selected" (*DA* 132/*DE* 124). While one can ask interesting sociological questions about art commodities (Why do some young men like slasher films?), interpretive questions (Why is there a love scene in the middle of *Three Days of the Condor*?) do not have interesting answers.[15]

Under conditions of Hegelian externalization, meaning is equated with intention—as we shall see, a more complicated proposition than that initially appears—while under market conditions, "meaning" is simply what can be said about the appropriation of commodities. Sociological questions have answers without necessarily involving intentions; interpretive questions, if they have answers, require intentions. One does, of course, "interpret" sociological and other data. The word is the same, but the concept is different, since natural signs and intentional signs call forth entirely different interpretive procedures: the pursuit of causes, on one hand, and of meanings, on the other. One may wish to erase the distinction—though in everyday practice this would be a form of madness—but to do so would simply be to erase the first meaning of interpretation in favor of the second. This is not an unthinkable operation. In fact, it is what we have been saying is entailed, in the realm of art, by the claim that the work of art is a commodity like any other.

Meanwhile, there is nothing threatening to Marxist interpretation in the equation of meaning with intention.[16] The strong claim for the identity of intention and meaning already implies the social. The medium of meaning is a universal, which is, in the Hegelian sense, a social machine, a particular signifying network like literature itself or like the late eighteenth-century culture of wit. There is no meaning outside of a signifying network or social machine: to mean something is immediately to involve oneself in a social machine. (Meaning is a socially symbolic act.) While meanings exist sub specie aeternitatis, the media or social machines in which they mean, it should be too obvious to point out, are historical. If one insists on understanding meaning proper as externalization, one must begin with an account of the social machine. (Always historicize.) Since every intentional act can be described in terms that are nowhere to be found in the moment of intention—think of the endless descriptions of jumping over a railing, turning a tap, or boiling water in the "Ithaca" episode of James Joyce's *Ulysses*—nothing in the analysis of meaning to intention prevents us from chasing down what a meaning might entail as a logically necessary consequence (as opposed to an effect) or condition of possibility (as opposed to a cause), even if these are not intended. Indeed, this is Marx's procedure in the chapter we have been discussing. The future capitalist, for now simply an owner of commodities, wants to sell his goods. That is all. "In their confusion, the commodity owners think like Faust: In the beginning was the deed. They have already acted before thinking" (*K* 101/*C* 180). The logical contortions embodied in the act of exchange (the confusion or embarrassment, *Verlegenheit*, of the commodity owners—indeed, their ideology) are nowhere in the mind of the capitalist. Rather, they are the logical preconditions of the act of exchange itself. In this Hegelian-Marxian sense, the unconscious is simply everything entailed or presupposed by an action that is not present to consciousness in that action. Such entailment is often, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, an action's necessary interaction with the universal in which it subsists. Such interactions yield a properly Hegelian mode of irony: think, for example, of the fate of Diderot's sensible man in Hegel's retelling of *Rameau's Nephew* (or think, in our time, of the "outsider" artist) confronting a culture of wit that necessarily turns every attempt at plain truth telling into its opposite. An intention necessarily calls such necessary presuppositions or entailments into

play. (The identity of intention and meaning insists upon a political unconscious.)[17]

Finally, the identity of meaning and intention does not entail any position on the desirability of something like cultural studies, if cultural studies is taken to mean the sociological study of cultural production, distribution, and consumption. What it does entail is the distinction between such study—which will be crucial in what follows, in the form of a sociological understanding of the universal in which contemporary artworks make their way—and interpretation. In the section of the *Phenomenology* on "the matter in hand," the relation between sociological motivation (ambition) and scientific purpose (*die Sache selbst*, the matter in hand) is, as it is in the work of Pierre Bourdieu, undecidable: it is always possible that the private motive that drives a given intervention is its essential content, its ostensible meaning the inessential. But this very undecidability means that nothing definite can be said about the relation of ambition to work. Intention as an event in the mind is inaccessible even to the mind in which it ostensibly occurs. Intention in the current sense, as we shall see in a moment, can be ascribed only by means of close attention to the matter in hand. As regards what is in the work (as opposed to its entailments and its conditions of possibility, which must be conceived both positively as productive and negatively as a limit)—that is, as regards its meaning in the strict sense—nothing can be divined from sociological research.

Kant's "purposiveness without purpose" is shorthand for a longer formulation: "Beauty is the form of purposiveness of an object insofar as it is perceived therein without the idea of a purpose."[18] It is this longer formulation that Hegel quotes, more or less, in his account of the Kantian aesthetic break.[19] But where Kant's formulation is concerned primarily with a mode of perception (a footnote points us in the direction of tulips and stone tools, which we judge beautiful or not beautiful based not on whether they have a purpose, but whether we ascribe a purpose to them as we judge them), Hegel's gloss turns us toward the peculiar character of the work of art itself: "The beautiful should not bear purposiveness as an external form; rather, the purposive correspondence of the inner and outer should be the immanent nature of the beautiful object." This is not a mere change of emphasis; rather, it shifts the meaning of Kant's formulation decisively, for we are talking no longer about a certain kind of perception, but about a

certain kind of purposiveness in the object: "In finite [i.e., plain vanilla, everyday] purposiveness, purpose and means remain external to one another. . . . In this case, the idea of the purpose is clearly distinguished from the object in which it is realized." The purpose of an object is, commonsensically, something other than the object: satisfying my hunger is a purpose external to the quesadilla. "The beautiful, on the other hand, exists as purposive in itself, without means and purpose showing themselves as different, severed sides." The Kantian formulation of "purposiveness without purpose" is then essentially revised to "purposiveness without external purpose." A certain kind of purpose distinguishes Hegel's gloss from Kant's original account—a tulip is not a still life—but it is a purpose that cannot be distinguished from the means of achieving it. In other words, the purpose of a work of art cannot be distinguished from the work itself. Indeed, any separation between ends and means, purpose and work, can only reveal itself as a contradiction within the work itself. The way to the meaning of a work lies not away from the work to its intention understood as an event in the mind of the artist, but into the immanent purposiveness of the work. Meaning, then, is never a settled matter; it is a public ascription of intention. This ensemble of immanent, intended form—purposiveness without external purpose—is, as Stanley Cavell might say, a fact about works of art, not itself an interpretation. It has been a fact about artworks as long as there have been artworks, which is not as long as one might think. If it is not true of artworks, then artworks, as a special class of things deserving a name, do not exist.

As we have seen, however, the commodity form poses a problem for the work of art, which, if it is a commodity like any other, cannot have the structure that Hegel thinks it has. Its purposiveness is subordinated to exchangeability, an external end, which is just another way to say that we make a mistake if we ascribe a meaning to it. Let us return, then, to the art commodity and its other. For Adorno, the art commodity had a plausible other or negative horizon—namely, modernism (even if this is usually referred to collectively in the essay as "bourgeois artworks," and usually in the past tense)—where Hegelian externalization (compensatory, tragic, but an externalization nonetheless) holds. Adorno accounts for this possibility by the residual phenomenon of tributary backwaters within capitalism, spaces left behind by the expansion of capital. The persistence of such spaces "strengthened art in this late phase against

the verdict of supply and demand, and increased its resistance far beyond the actual degree of protection" (*DA* 141/*DE* 133). Despite his lifelong concern with the specificity of the aesthetic, Adorno here takes an essentially sociological view of the autonomy of the work of art. The existence of art in its modern sense is indeed intelligible only within the total logic of capitalist development, but Adorno assumes here that it is possible only under certain sociological conditions—namely, the persistence of uncommodified spaces within a relentless logic of commodification. As we shall see shortly, Adorno's understanding of those conditions is definitively superseded by Bourdieu's; more important still, it would condemn Adorno to an essentially tragic narrative and to an increasingly desperate search for uncommodified conditions. But the point for now is that Adorno's culture industry is the precursor to the self-representation of our own cultural moment, though the contemporary attitude of culture critique toward its object is as likely to be ludic, stoic, cynical, or smugly resigned as tragic. What essentially differentiates Adorno's culture industry from the self-representation of our contemporary moment is that the art-commodity is now supposed to have no other. Fredric Jameson, bringing the problem up to the day before yesterday, simply says, "What has happened is that aesthetic production today has become integrated into commodity production generally."[20] From this, everything follows.

The logic of this transition is already available in Marx, in a draft chapter for *Capital I* that was not available in the West until the 1960s. What we have is often fragmentary, but the basic distinction in "Results of the Immediate Process of Production" between the "formal subsumption" and the "real subsumption of labor under capital" is clear.[21] Under conditions of formal subsumption, an industry or production process is drawn into a capitalist economy, but "there is no change as yet in the mode of production itself" (*R* 106/*C* 1026). Under conditions of "real subsumption," however, the production process itself is altered so that the producers are no longer selling their surplus product to the capitalist but instead are selling their labor to the capitalist, who eventually will be compelled to reorganize the production process altogether. (Production, as well as exchange, has both a C-M-C, or "customary" in the Hegelian sense, and an M-C-M, or capitalist, form. The latter haunts the former until the phase change to capitalism proper, when the former haunts the latter.) The distance between formal and

real subsumption is vanishingly small (just as C-M-C and M-C-M are the same process, considered from different standpoints); but the status of the product of labor, and eventually the work process itself, is fundamentally different under each. Indeed, as will no doubt already be apparent, "formal subsumption" allows for Hegelian externalization to continue under capitalism, since it is, for example, only accidental surplus that is sold: "Milton produced *Paradise Lost* as a silkworm produces silk, as the manifestation of his own nature. He later sold the product for £5 and thus became a dealer in commodities" (*R* 128/*C* 1044). Under conditions of real subsumption, by contrast, we are already in the world of Marxian separation, where the whole production process is oriented toward exchange. But what this logical proximity means is that directly "capitalist production has a tendency to take over all branches of industry . . . where only formal subsumption obtains" (*R* 118/*C* 1036). For formal subsumption in a given corner of industry to obtain with any permanence, it must be afforded some degree of protection: professional guilds, research-based tenure, Adorno's well-funded state cultural institutions, or, as we shall consider shortly, something like Bourdieu's concept of a field of restricted production.

There are sectors of the culture industry where the logic Marx develops in the *Resultate* fragment is directly operative. A character animator for a video-game company performs directly productive labor, and her work is both exploited in the Marxian sense and subject to deskilling, automation, and all the other degradations of work entailed by capitalist production. But for a great deal of artistic production, "capitalist production is practicable to a very limited extent. Unless a sculptor (for example) engages journeymen or the like, most [artists] work (when not independently) for merchant's capital, for example a bookseller, a relationship that constitutes only a transitional form toward merely formally capitalist production" (*R* 133/*C* 1048). In a nearby passage, Marx tells us that "a singer who sings like a bird is an unproductive worker" (*R* 128–29/*C* 1044), an easily misunderstood term that simply means her work does not valorize capital: she produces beauty but does not take part in a process that yields surplus value. "If she sells her singing for money, she is to that extent a wage laborer or a dealer in commodities" (*R* 129/*C* 1044), depending on whether she is employed by a bandleader, say, or works independently. "But this same singer, engaged by an entrepreneur who has her sing for money, is a productive

worker, since she directly produces capital" (*R* 129/*C* 1044). Only at the last stage has her labor undergone the "the subsumption by capital of a mode of labor developed before the emergence of capitalist relations, which we call the formal subsumption of labor under capital" (*R* 101/*C* 1021). Her employer might extend the working day—make her perform more often for the same pay—but it is hard for Marx to imagine the entrepreneur ploughing a portion of profits back into transforming "the real nature of the labor process and its real conditions" (*R* 117/*C* 1034–5)—automation, deskilling, and so on. "Only when this occurs does the real subsumption of labor under capital take place" (*R* 117/*C* 1035), and only with real subsumption do we enter the permanent revolution of the capitalist production process.

However, the production process for the music commodity—a CD or a download or a subscription—has followed and continues to follow the trajectory, familiar from the rest of the first volume of *Capital*, of saved labor through increased technical composition of the production process. A staggering amount of musical knowledge has been incorporated into machines, and distribution—on Marx's account, the last stage of production rather than the first stage of circulation—proceeds now with a tiny fraction of the labor input it did even a decade ago. That our singer's job is still recognizable—and the advent of Auto-Tune is an easily audible reminder that even this is far from straightforwardly true—is no more important to the status of the commodity that emerges from the production process as a properly capitalist commodity than is the fact that a machinist's job is still recognizable.

These changes in the production process leave their marks, often very deep ones, on the product of musical labor. However, and possibly frustratingly given the time we have just spent on it, none of this is immediately relevant to the issue at hand. As we saw earlier, the specific problem confronting the work of art under capitalism is not the production process—this a problem but not one specific to art—but the market. Markets preexist capitalism, as does the commodity—indeed, Marx's word is not a specialized one at all, just *Ware*, goods—so the specificity of a Marxist critique of the art commodity might seem to pose a problem. But we remember those passages of the *Grundrisse* and *The Communist Manifesto* that describe the necessary expansion, both intensive and extensive, of the market, the correlate and presupposition of the process of real subsumption: "Every limit appears as a

barrier to be overcome: first, to subjugate every aspect of production itself to exchange. . . . Trade appears here no longer as a function between independent productions for the exchange of their excess, but as an essentially all-encompassing precondition and aspect of production itself."[22] It is the tendential universality of the market as the sole organ of social metabolism that represents the originality of the capitalist market. Neoclassicism's ideology of "consumer sovereignty" agrees with Marx that in commodity production, consumer preference is prior to the intention of the producer, which is entirely subordinated to the goal (*Zweck*) of exchange. "The more production becomes the production of commodities, the more each person has to become a dealer in commodities and wants to make money, be it from a product or a service . . . and this money-making appears as the purpose [*Zweck*] of every kind of activity" (*R* 125/*C* 1041). This is the real tendency of which contemporary aesthetic ideology is the dogmatic representation: that once the means of distribution are fully subsumed, whatever is genuinely unassimilable in artistic labor will cease to make any difference; that the artist, when not directly a cultural worker, must conceive of herself as an entrepreneur of herself; that any remaining pockets of autonomy have effectively ceased to exist by lacking access to distribution and, once granted access, will cease to function as meaningfully autonomous.

Adorno has no trouble imagining a still incomplete real subsumption, which is the culture industry, with modernism as the last holdout of merely formal subsumption.[23] For Jameson, finally, the real subsumption of cultural labor under capital is an established fact. When Jameson describes the "dissolution of an autonomous sphere of culture" that is at the same time "a prodigious expansion of culture throughout the social realm," this end of autonomy directly implies the end of modernism.[24] If canonical modernism conceived of itself as autonomous—as producing the "critical distance" that Jameson sees as having been "abolished," along with any "autonomous sphere of culture . . . in the new space of postmodernism"—then today we tend to understand this critical distance as nothing more than modernism's aesthetic ideology. [25] Modernist artworks are and were, after all, commodities like any other.

Nobody could be more skeptical of modernism's self-representation than Bourdieu. Yet in his two-field theory of aesthetic production,

Bourdieu produced an account of the sociological referent of modernism's self-representation in the development of a "field of restricted production," which lies behind the ability of artists to "affirm, both in their practice and their representation of it, the irreducibility of the work of art to the status of a simple commodity."[26] This dual affirmation is key, for the ideological representation of autonomy has its equivalent in the real autonomization of aesthetic practice in the struggle by artists to institute a "field of restricted production," which forcibly substitutes for the "unpredictable verdicts of an anonymous public"—consumer sovereignty, the problem of the seller of commodities—a "public of equals who are also competitors."[27] In other words, the establishment of a field of restricted production forcibly carves a zone of formal subsumption out of the field of large-scale production that is really and entirely subsumed under capital. (A restricted field is not a market in any meaningful sense. Judgments by peers and struggles over the significance of particular interventions are precisely the opposite of purchases on a market, which cannot provoke disagreement because, as we have seen, no agreement is presupposed.) Adorno's more ad hoc version of the two-field hypothesis conceives of its restricted field as a residual rather than an emergent space, but he and Bourdieu share an understanding of the necessity of such a de-commodified zone to the production of meaning.

Following Bourdieu's logic, the establishment of such a field directly implies the tendency of art produced in it to gravitate toward formal concerns, toward the progressive working out of problems specific to individual media. What a restricted public of (for example) painters, critics of painting, and connoisseurs of painting share is nothing other than expertise in painting. "Painting was thus set on the road towards a conscious and explicit implementation or setting-into-work of the most specifically pictorial principles of painting, which already equals a questioning of these principles, and hence a questioning, within painting itself, of painting itself." [28] In other words, modernism: "Especially since the middle of the nineteenth century, art finds the principle of change within itself, as though history were internal to the system and as though the development of forms of representation and expression were nothing more than the product of the logical development of systems of axioms specific to the various arts."[29] But for the characteristic "as though," which marks this as an imaginary relation whose real

referent is the logic of the restricted field, the words could have been written by Clement Greenberg.[30] Indeed, the Bourdieusian restricted field is, on Bourdieu's account, the condition of possibility of modernism as such, the condition of possibility of a Hegelian concern for "the matter in hand" under full-blown capitalism.

With the collapse of the modernist restricted field, with the real subsumption of aesthetic labor under capital, the possibility of something bearing a family resemblance to modernism abruptly disappears. What had been central was a problem to be addressed—a problem in which the general market, because it is a market, has no interest—and all of the old solutions had been ruled out of bounds not because they were not nice to hang on a wall or to read, but because they had been absorbed into the game of producing new ones. But the leapfrogging, dialectical, modernist game—in which every attempt to solve the central problem represented by a medium becomes, for every other producer, a new version of the problem—becomes more hermetic and difficult to play over time. One can immediately see that, on this account, the isolation of an autonomous field appears not only as the necessary condition of possibility (within market society) for the production of any artwork but also as a condition that leads to the increasing difficulty of producing meaning or, more accurately, the increasing formalization of meaning itself. Meanings are made possible by autonomization, but these meanings themselves are increasingly only formally meanings—that is, they are legible as intentions, but the only meanings they convey are specifically painterly, musical, writerly, and so on. The very dynamic that makes modernism possible tends at the same time to restrict its movement to an increasingly narrow ambit. For this reason, what appears as loss from the standpoint of autonomy is at the same time a tremendous liberation of formal energies, made possible precisely because the old forms are no longer required to respond to interpretive questions.

With the real subsumption of art under capital and the end of the modernist game, then, all of the old "solutions," each one of which had been invalidated by subsequent solutions, suddenly become available again for use. A certain historicism—Jamesonian postmodern pastiche—becomes possible. Such a historicism is null as historicism, since what it does not produce is precisely anything like history. But it is practically bursting with excitement at being allowed to apply its galvanic fluid to the great gallery of dead forms, which are suddenly

candidates for resuscitation. Friedian "objecthood" is also liberated at this moment: the reaction of the spectator, or customer, assumes importance in precise correlation to the recession of the formal problem confronted by the artist.

So far, we have done no more than reconstruct the logic undergirding the common sense with which we began. But, as is probably obvious by now, liberation from the strictures of the old modernist games is at the same time subjection to something else—namely, the "anonymous market" from which the autonomous field had wrested a degree of autonomy. If artworks can now make use of all the old styles (or become objects), it is not clear why one would call them artworks at all, since the honest old art commodity, precisely because it was more interested in the appeal to a market (the effect on an audience) than on formal problems, was able to make use of the old styles (or be an object) all along. In other words, there is nothing new in unabashedly borrowing indiscriminately from the great gallery of dead forms, or in appealing theatrically to consumers' desires. These procedures are in fact the norm. The innovation of postmodern pastiche is—by definition—not formal but derives from the collapse of art into what was already the status quo of the culture at large. Postmodernism's innovation is precisely in evacuating the distinction between industrial spectacle—Cameron's ideological mishmash—and the Jamesonian postmodern art object, assembled from its "grab bag or lumber room of disjointed subsystems and raw materials and impulses of all kinds."[31]

Of course, this is the point. Indeed, there is nothing implausible about a scenario in which artworks as such disappear, to be entirely replaced by art commodities, and in which the study of artworks would have to be replaced with the study of the reception and uses of art, of desires legible in the market, and so on. There is a deeply egalitarian promise in such a scenario, precisely because the formal concerns addressed by artworks are in general the province of a few. In the absence of a strong public education system, they are necessarily the province of a few. But a world where the work of art is a commodity like any other is the world the ideologists of contemporary capitalism claim we already live in and have always lived in, a world where everything is (and if it is not, should be) a market. The old vanguardist horizon of equivalence between art and life—which made sense as a progressive impulse only when "life" was understood as something other than the status quo—

reverses meaning and becomes deeply conformist. Against this market conformism, the assertion of aesthetic autonomy—even as its very plausibility now seems in doubt—assumes a new vitality.

But how do we make the claim to autonomy plausible? If works of art exist, how are they possible? Have we not, in outlining the collapse of modernism's restricted fields, done no more than confirm the wisdom that the work of art is a commodity like any other? In fact, it is the claim to universal heteronomy to the market that is implausible. Markets—and this was recognized in some of the precursors to neoliberal discourse, themselves utopian projects in a way that the institution of art is not—depend on a host of nonmarket actors and institutions, even as these institutions are always at the same time under threat from the market itself.[32] To take a more local example, a consequence of Bourdieu's discovery of the restricted field was the demonstration that the field of large-scale cultural production, characterized as it is by *pasticherie*, is dependent on the persistence of the restricted field.[33] (No *Star Trek* theme without Mahler 1 and 7, but the accomplishments of the past are of only limited use as a finite warehouse of ideas and techniques. When the late pop-funk genius Prince blamed the passing of jazz fusion for what he saw as the stagnation of popular music, he was convinced less of the greatness of Weather Report or the Chick Corea Elektric Band than of the importance of a musically proximate idiom that is not directly submitted to market outcomes—a proximity that can be discerned on some of Prince's most market-successful music, as well as on projects that were never intended to be submitted to the pseudo-judgment of the anonymous market.)[34] Most important, if the old modernist autonomy was revealed to be an aesthetic ideology, there is no reason to believe that the new adherence to heteronomy therefore registers the truth. Like the modernist commitment to autonomy, the insistence on aesthetic heteronomy is a productive ideology: it frees artists to do something other than play the old modernist games (it even, as we shall see, opens the way to new modernist games), and it allows them to work in the culture industry without facing the charge of selling out, which now seems like an anachronistic accusation indeed.

As we have seen, art that is a commodity like any other would not be art in any substantial sense. But the commitment to the heteronomy of art does represent, to use the old Althusserian formulation, an imaginary relationship to real conditions of existence. The subsumption of

art under capital is not a universal quality of the artistic field. But it is, as we earlier saw with the example of popular music, a real tendency in some subfields, and the submission it entails of meaning to the spectator is a quality hegemonically or normatively attributed to art in a way that is historically original to the late 1960s and after. But while sociological conditions may, a posteriori, be discovered to condition the emergence of particular works, they can say nothing about their success or failure as artworks. Successful artworks produced in directly heteronomous fields are rare, but they exist. Works that are indistinguishable from commodities in their foreclosure of meaning, by contrast, litter the restricted fields that do exist. What is dispositive, then, is not the immediate relation to commodity production but, rather, the successful (or failed, canceled, or foreclosed) solicitation of close interpretive attention, which now, whether the threat of real subsumption is itself real or a merely ascribed condition of uninterpretability—under the sign of affect, *écriture*, *punktum*, the emancipation of the spectator, the uses of art, relational aesthetics, or even, in most but not all of its acceptations, political art—must confront that threat as an obstacle to be overcome.

In his discussion of the Laocoön, Lessing was exasperated with commentary that imagined it could leap to interpretive conclusions without passing through the moment of medium specificity. It is not necessarily the case that the Greek was, as Winkelmann had it, "even in extremity a great and steadfast soul" in comparison with modern sufferers; it is necessarily the case that the sculptor of the Laocoön had to deal with the problem of the hole that a scream would require.[35] That the work of art is a commodity like any other is, from the standpoint of the market, not false. The commodity character of the work of art is indeed part of its material support. The moment of truth in contemporary aesthetic ideology has been to make this aspect of the support inescapable. After postmodernism, autonomy cannot be assumed, even by works produced for a restricted field. It must instead be asserted. (How much the postmodern period will appear in retrospect to have been shot through with this assertion—how much the postmodern discontinuity will turn out to have been an illusion—is matter for further research.) Since the structure of the commodity excludes the attribute of interpretability, any plausible claim to meaning—to art as opposed to objecthood—will immediately entail the claim not to be a commodity like any other. The originality of the present moment is that the concept

of medium or material support must be expanded to include the commodity character of the work.

Think, for example, of the BBC television show *The Office* and its American remake, which would most obviously seem to operate in the same medium. The second, however, systematically writes out, from the initial episode on, uncomfortable possibilities in the first. Decisions that confront characters in *The Office* tend to demand—de minimis, naturally—a mutually exclusive choice between advancement and self-respect. In the American remake, the damage inflicted by such choices is domesticated to quirkiness, and ultimately every quirk is a point of relatability. In short, the American *Office* is *Cheers*, where everybody knows your name. The temptation, then, is to make cultural comparisons between the United States and the United Kingdom, or between humor and humour. One's materialist instincts might suggest, on the contrary, that the difference between *The Office* and its remake is not the difference between bitter British office workers and quirky but better-adjusted American office workers, or that between aggressive British humor and a milder American variety, but that between a cultural field supported by a national television license tax, which allows at the margins a certain autonomy from the market, and a cultural field whose one unavoidable function is to sell airtime to advertisers.

Indeed, this distinction is highly relevant a posteriori, but it is not a substitute for interpretation. The former arrangement guarantees nothing—it is not as though every comedy on the BBC was bearable, let alone internally coherent—and is bought at the expense of a relationship both to the state and to a potentially even more stultifying demand for abstract "quality" as an external end in itself. Meanwhile, are we prepared to say a priori that no pop commodity can be art? *The Office* overcomes its commodity character—which is built into the sitcom as a form—not because its conditions of production automatically save its contents from the logic of the commodity, but by means of its formal constitution. *The Office* produces its autonomy from the spectator—without which, whatever its conditions of production, it would turn into a collection of comedic effects—by including her proxy, the camera, in the representation in a way that directly influences what is represented. This is the point of the fiction of the documentary frame, which becomes a formal principle, an internal limit to what can happen and how, thereby introducing an internal criterion. By means of the inclusion

of the camera as a character, *The Office* in effect overcomes the transparency of the televisual eye, introducing a criterion of plausibility and reactivating the "inescapable claim of every work, however negligible, within its limits to reflect the whole" (*DA* 153/*DE* 144).

The American remake, however, immediately turns the roving camera and other techniques into meaningless conventions; the structuring fiction turns into a decorative frame. In both series, for example, characters occasionally reveal their awareness of the apparatus, breaking the fourth wall by looking directly at the camera. In the original series, this tends to happen at moments of high tension, when the camera is invoked by such glances as both a witness and a discomfiting, triggering presence. In the fiction of *The Office*, events are both captured and caused by the camera. In the remake, such moments are subordinated to comic timing, one step shy of the Skipper reacting to whatever kooky thing Gilligan has done this time. By the fourth episode, narrative coherence and even plausible camera placement have been thrown to the wind, and sitcom sentimentality has already begun to take over. It is not that the BBC show is "better" in an abstract sense. The American version was funny, and its identificatory effects were masterfully produced. Nor is it the case that the conditions of production that characterize network television are in principle impossible to overcome by formal means, though in practice they may be nearly so. But the remake makes no attempt to overcome the fact that its end—selling airtime to advertisers—is immediately an external one that is achieved by being more ingratiating than its competitors in that time slot. If it can be said to have a meaning, it has only a sociological one, an ideology by default—that is, the ideology of the sitcom itself: "not, as is maintained, flight from a rotten reality, but from the last remaining thought of resistance" (*DA* 153/*DE* 144). Pointing out the sociological difference does not take the place of interpretation. On the contrary, only close interpretive attention can determine whether and how the otherwise determining instance of the medium has or has not been suspended. Cee-Lo Green and Bruno Mars, both prodigiously talented, occupy the same cultural field and sometimes employ superficially similar procedures. But only one of them, so far, makes music that rewards attention to its immanent purposiveness.

There is a limit to what can be said in advance about the ways in which artworks successfully suspend their commodity character. The only way to demonstrate the autonomy of art from its commodity char-

acter is to catch it in the act—that is, plausibly to ascribe meaning to actual works, an ascription that is itself a claim that the work in question belongs to the institution of art. The only way to make such an ascription compelling is through close interpretive attention. This book is devoted to exploring, by way of close attention to existing works, a few of the ways the commodity character of the artwork is in fact suspended. Two strategies, however, stand out as following directly from the foregoing. The first is what one might call, in search of a better term, "positive historicism," as a necessary logical advance from Jamesonian null historicism or pastiche. As long as an artwork is making a claim to be an artwork—as long as the institution of art persists, even if only as a claim made by or of an artwork that it is interpretable—the very heteronomy proclaimed by historicism can only be the appearance of heteronomy: the disavowal of autonomy and the claim to be art cannot coherently be made of the same object. The "grab bag or lumber room" is then only an apparent grab bag or lumber room; it is, in fact, governed by a principle of selection. If it is an actual grab bag or lumber room, it is the Internet or an archive or a mall or a television channel or simply everyday experience itself, and we do not need artists for those. As a disavowed principle of selection it may be weak or inconsistent or merely personal, but from disavowed principle to conscious principle is but a tiny Hegelian step, and weak or null historicism (Mars) turns into strong or positive historicism (Cee-Lo).[36] In this case the legible element of form, its meaning—the moment of immanent purposiveness—lies not in the formal reduction of an art to the problem of its medium but in a framing procedure, in the selection of a particular formal or thematic problem as central and the rewriting of the history of the medium or genre or even sociocultural aesthetic field as the history of that problem. We return to this possibility in more detail in chapter 3.

A second possibility, which bears a family resemblance to the first but is closer in structure to Fried's version of the problem than Jameson's, is the aestheticization of genre. In a recent discussion, David Simon, the creator of the television show *The Wire*, points to genre fiction as the one place where stories other than the now-standard character-driven family narratives of contemporary high populism can be reliably found.[37] Why should genre fiction be a zone of autonomy? A commercial genre—already marketable or it would not be a genre—is also governed by rules. The very thing that invalidates genre fiction in

relation to modernist autonomy—"formulas," Adorno called them—opens up a zone of autonomy within the heteronomous space of cultural commodities, allowing the commodity character to be addressed as an aspect of the material support. The requirements are rigid enough to pose a problem, which can now be thought of as a formal problem like the problem of the flatness of the canvas or the pull of harmonic resolution. "Subverting the genre" means doing the genre better, just as every modernist painting had to assume the posture of sublating all previous modernisms. Dressing up the genre in fine production values, embellishing it with serious or local content, abandoning it in favor of arty imagery, borrowing its elements for effect, meandering into other genres or into other kinds of narrative—all of these are, on the contrary, mere attractions, excuses for the enjoyment of the genre itself (which needs no excuse), and therefore confirm the product as a commodity like any other. Producing the genre as a problem to which the work represents a solution involves, by contrast, an essentially deductive approach to the given form: the genre appears as a pure given that has to be successfully confronted, such that the support—in this case, the commodity character of the work—can be acknowledged and overcome in the same gesture.

The material support—the canvas as much as the commodity character—cannot, of course, be made to disappear without the work of art itself disappearing. We return to the ways this seeming paradox can be overcome in chapter 4. But Alfredo Volpi's 1958 *Composição* (plate 1) is a different kind of demonstration that the material support can be acknowledged and its determining instance suspended at the same time. The dark tetragonal figure is rigorously deduced from the square shape of the canvas itself, of which it is a torsion. The lower left corner of the tetragonal figure coincides with the lower left corner of the painting. The figure's upper left corner sits directly above its lower right corner; each is placed along an edge of the canvas, and both are placed one-quarter of the width of the canvas from its left edge. The final, as it were unattached, corner of the dark tetragon is placed one quarter of the height of the canvas from its top edge, and centered left to right. This by no means exhausts what one can say about the painting, which bears on color, figure and ground, matter and paint, illusion and abstraction. But the point for now is that while the dark tetragon is deduced from the shape of the canvas, it would make no sense to say

it was caused, produced, or even generated by the shape of the canvas. The shape of the canvas is rather invoked by the tetragonal figure. It is only through the dark tetragon that the square canvas ceases to be the arbitrary, external limit that it in one sense is, and comes rather to make sense, to appear as posited by the shape it contains.

The chapters that follow trace successful attempts to confront the commodity character of the artwork in five media: photography, Hollywood film, the novel, popular music, and television, organized more or less according to the degree to which the medium under discussion appears immediately as a commodity. The ensemble is intended as a rough sketch of what a system of the arts would look like if it were oriented toward the problem that the anonymous market, both as the real and the projected horizon of interpretation, poses for meaning. But since the claim these works make is precisely that medium as a determining instance (including the commodity character as an aspect of medium) is indeed suspended, each chapter begins with a close reading of an artwork whose formal solution bears on the discussion to follow while emerging in another medium altogether. The chapter on photography and movies begins with a novella; the chapter on the novel begins with sculpture; the chapter on music begins with drama; and the chapter on the television police procedural begins with art film. While the whole is thus intended to present a kind of totality, it is meant not to be exhaustive but, rather, to map a space of possibilities. Other possibilities have no doubt already emerged and will continue to emerge. The wager of totality is simply that a new logic could take its place among these, whose constellation it would reconfigure but in relation to which it would not appear alien.

"SOCIAL ONTOLOGY" IS A PARADOXICAL FORMULATION. On one hand, immanent purposiveness is what specifically differentiates the work of art from other kinds of entities. It is a fact about the work of art, a fact in whose light the existence of the artistic and hermeneutic disciplines as we know them makes sense. On the other hand, it is a contingent fact. The claim that artworks in the modern sense are particular kinds of things has nothing to do with the claim that a Greek temple at Paestum obeys the same social logic as a painting by van Gogh. Robustly historicizing the emergence of the work of art as a particular kind of

thing would take us far beyond the scope of this book. Nonetheless, it is worth remembering that Hegel considered the work of deducing the "true concept of the work of art" to have been begun by Kant's *Critique of Judgment* in 1790 and completed by the time of Hegel's lectures on fine art in 1823, and he would have said the same thing in his 1818 lectures on the same topic. Notwithstanding crucial corrections, elaborations, and historical developments, the broad outlines of the concept of the artwork that renders our contemporary practice coherent—the concept of art that explains the fact that we do, even when we imagine ourselves to be arguing for their ordinariness, talk about works of art as things to be interpreted—was developed in a period of less than thirty years, from 1790 to 1818.

The development of actual works of art as self-legislating artifacts is a much more complicated story, progressing in fits and starts, discontinuous across artistic fields and national and cultural histories, sometimes appearing to emerge full-blown in the most diverse circumstances, only to disappear again, apparently without issue. For this reason, the history of art can be pursued all over the globe and to an arbitrarily distant past. Nonetheless, its explicit, self-relating existence, as opposed to its more sporadic, implicit existence in the historical record, dates, almost tautologically, from the same historical moment: Germany in the shadow of the bourgeois revolution. Lukács's writings on Goethe, Schiller, Hölderlin, and the young Hegel are still the most sensitive explorations of the politics of this historical period, characterized above all by the uncomfortable accommodation of revolutionary ideals inspired by the French Revolution to a consolidating bourgeois order.[38] Schiller, with his feverishly ambivalent politics, at once at the vanguard of poetic practice and a crucial though unsystematic theorist of art, is probably the best example.[39] Works of art, born in their unemphatic alterity to the bourgeois order from the ashes of revolutionary desire, are, under capitalism, a peculiar sort of thing: entities that call for judgments that submit neither to inclination nor to adequacy to external concepts. This is as true in Lagos in 1964 as it is in Jena in 1794, but not under any possible circumstances: only in societies where judgments unfold between the state and the market. During genuinely revolutionary moments within modern history—moments when alternatives to the state and to the market were felt to be inchoate in changing social relations and emerging counterinstitutions—culture could flourish without the

conceptual armature of the self-legislating work. We will return to this possibility shortly, but it has little practical significance today.

What does have significance today is the widespread understanding either that the ontological difference of the work of art is at an end or that it was nothing but a mystification in the first place. These are the genus of which the claim that art is or should be a commodity like any other is a species. Such claims, made coherently, are claims about the end of art, and, whether they are coherently made or not, we have seen that they are today thoroughly conformist. The point would not be that such claims have not been made in other periods than our own but that they have become our common sense. But because such claims (made coherently or incoherently, historically or ahistorically) are our common sense, they can be rejected but not ignored.

From the standpoint being elaborated here, Peter Bürger's argument in *Theorie der Avantgarde*, properly historicized, would be largely uncontroversial: "It has been determined that the intention of the historical avant-garde movements was to destroy the institution of art as something withdrawn from practical life. The significance of this intention is not that the institution of art in bourgeois society was indeed shattered, and art thereby made over without mediation into practical life itself. Rather, it is that the weight of the institution of art in determining the real social effect of the individual work was made apparent."[40] Writing "after the events of May 1968 and the failure of the student movement in the early seventies," Bürger analyzes the historical vanguard from the standpoint of its failure, a perspective that produces a powerful framework for understanding both late modernism and the institutional pseudo- or neo-vanguards of the late twentieth century.[41] But we must now consider the vanguardist position from the standpoint of its success.

While the liberatory intention behind the smashing of institutions was not realized, the discrediting of autonomous institutions or universals is a central feature of contemporary social life. The historical relationship between the spirit of 1968 and contemporary market ideology is, like other possible genealogies of the present moment, beyond the scope of this book.[42] But in societies like ours, an anti-institutional impulse without an organized social basis of its own (i.e., without real changing social relations and emerging counterinstitutions) can only tend to clear ground for the existing social basis—namely, capitalist market

relations, a fact that breaches self-consciousness in the affirmations of the commodity character of the artwork with which we began. Only in the soil of an emergent alternative to capitalist society, in other words, does heteronomization hold out any liberatory promise. If that possibility disappears—or was never present in the first place—then the heteronomous intention can result not only in the contradiction-ridden pseudo-heteronomy of the institutionalized vanguard (Bürger), but also in the nonart heteronomy of the art commodity.

Bürger's account of Brecht is illustrative of the difference this new standpoint makes. In Bürger's account, Brecht represents a positive anomaly, since Brecht was intent not on destroying the theater apparatus but, rather, on repurposing it. This much is surely true, but the conclusion Bürger draws from it is not ultimately supportable, for the problem Brecht confronts is not that of an autonomous institution insulated from the practice of life, but of an institution that has become an industry and as such is no longer in any meaningful way insulated from the practice of life. Even escapism, as a commodity, is directly social. While the determining instance of the institution is clearly marked as a concern, the determining instance of the market is, for Brecht confronting the theater as he found it, prior to it. Brecht's contemporary relevance does not derive, then, from the attempt to preserve a zone of institutional autonomy while paradoxically addressing that zone to heteronomous ends (Bürger). Instead, as chapter 3 shows more clearly, it derives from his often successful attempts to produce from within a heteronomous zone of commodity production a universally legible moment of autonomy.

What, after all this, is autonomy? As it is understood in this book, autonomy is not a metaphysical independence from external circumstances, an independence that would be awfully hard to explain. Autonomy—"negativity," in Hegel's idiolect—instead has to do with the fact that precisely those external circumstances are actively taken up by us in ways that are irreducibly normative. A putatively materialist slogan has it that "matter matters." Indeed it does, but mattering is then a matter of relevance—that is, mattering is not itself material but, rather, a question of judgment. As Hegel was fond of pointing out, since "matter" as it is deployed in theoretical disagreements is itself an idea, there is nothing in the name "materialism" that distinguishes it from idealism. Idealism

always seems to sneak back in the end—but, in fact, something was always normatively in play from the beginning.

While interpretation is a spontaneous, everyday activity, the discipline of interpretation is not. To claim that something is a work of art is to claim that it is a self-legislating artifact, that its form is intelligible, but not by reference to any external end. Since it is fundamentally true of artworks that their contingent material substrate is legible as being uncontingently assumed—that is what it means to be self-legislating—works of art are sites at which some of the most controversial claims of the dialectic are thematized as holding sway. The claim that matter is never just matter but is instead always actively taken up in particular ways is not one that will stand without a good deal of discussion; the claim that, in a work of art, matter is never just matter but is instead always taken up in particular ways is uncontroversial. (It would be not the basis of a substantial philosophical disagreement but obviously silly to insist that the cellophane-wrapped candies that constitute Felix Gonzalez-Torres's *Portrait of Ross in L.A.* were nothing more than candies, or that their material qualities—weight, sweetness, consumability—mattered in any other way than the ways in which those qualities are activated by the work itself). Immanent critique does not get you very far in chemistry or Congress. But it is perfectly naïve and perfectly correct to pose the question of a work of art as whether it fulfills the ambitions it sets itself. Trying to figure out whether a work succeeds is inseparable from the process of trying to figure out what it is trying to do. The discipline of interpretation is then the practice of discovering and applying these internal norms. The literary disciplines parochially refer to this practice as "close reading," but "close" is only a metaphor that has more to do with the attempt to approach a work in spirit than necessarily with an attention to fine detail. Since there is no external criterion, the discipline of interpretation is not a search for certainties but, rather, a shared (one might say normative or institutional) commitment to the production of compelling ascriptions of meaning. Such ascriptions are always open to dispute; the evidence is always available to anyone.

But such disagreements can take place only if there is something normatively in play. The existence or legitimacy of such a normative field—of meaning as what is posited, in the act of interpretation, as

what is at stake in interpretation—was the target of the most self-consciously advanced theoretical work of the last third of the twentieth century, and such skepticism remains hegemonic, if more habitual than provocative, at the beginning of the twenty-first. Taken up as a kind of test, such challenges are entirely a good thing. This book is largely conceived as a response to such testing, as an attempt to show that commitments that are, however contingently, nonetheless in place and that artworks constantly invoke—commitments on the basis of which works of art are possible—make sense only if we accept some version of aesthetic autonomy. This recognition necessarily involves disagreements with, among others, literary sociologists and literary neuroscientists, speculative realists and new materialists, distanced readers and surface readers, Althusserians and other Spinozists, affect theorists and liberal champions of the arts.

While the claims being made here primarily have relevance to the hermeneutic disciplines, they have political implications. The charge of elitism, for example—the class stratification of aesthetic response—accrues to the claim to universal heteronomy rather than to autonomous art. If nothing essential distinguishes between art and nonart, the only distinction left—and some distinction is necessary for the word "art" to have any referent, not to mention to populate the institutions that still exist to preserve, transmit, and consecrate it—is between expensive art and cheap art, or art whose means of appropriation are expensive or cheap to acquire. (Rather than affirm emphatically the status of the work of art as nothing more than the luxury good that it undoubtedly also is, it would be prettier to claim heteronomy as a critique of autonomy. But this would mean affirming a meaning, and as we have seen, this would necessarily entail a claim to autonomy from the market even as that claim is disavowed.) The distinction between art and nonart is therefore not a class distinction. A time-travel narrative can have only one of two endings: either history can be changed or it cannot; *Back to the Future* or *La jetée*. The problem of the time-travel film is how to keep these two, incompatible possibilities in play until the end—and, if possible, even beyond the end, so there can be a sequel. Because of this found, generic logic, James Cameron can produce a solution to the problem of the time-travel film that at the same time produces the time-travel film as the problem to which the solution responds. That is, Cameron can produce a film whose formal qualities can be understood to derive their

coherence from possibilities immanent to the logic of the genre rather than by demands attributed to consumers, and *The Terminator* can be a work of art while *Avatar* is only an art commodity.

Further, under contemporary conditions, the assertion of aesthetic autonomy is in itself a political assertion. (A minimal one, to be sure.) This was not always the case. In the modernist period, for example, the convincing assertion of autonomy produced, as it does now, a peculiar nonmarket space within the capitalist social field. But there is no natural political valence to modernism's distance from the market, since modernism does not make its way under anything like the dominance of market ideology that we experience today. Indeed, autonomy from the state and state-like institutions is often the more pressing concern.[43] (It was also easier to confuse personal with aesthetic autonomy. Today their opposition is clear. Autonomy, which can be asserted only on the terms of an existing normative field—an institution, apparatus, or social machine—has nothing to do with freedom or creativity. Outside of a claim immanent to the work itself, the assertion of autonomy is advertising copy.) Modernism tends to be hostile to the culture market, but all kinds of politics (Heidegger as much as Adorno) are hostile to the market. Indeed, Lisa Siraganian has suggested that underlying the panoply of modernist radicalisms is nothing other than a deeper commitment to classical political liberalism, to a zone of deliberative autonomy.[44] Modernist hostility to the market acquires a definite political valence only after modernism, when the claim of the universality of the market is, as it is today, the primary ideological weapon wielded in the class violence that is the redistribution of wealth upward. The upward redistribution of wealth in the current conjuncture would be unthinkable without this weapon. The entire ideology of our contemporary moment hinges on the assertion that this redistribution is what a competitive market both produces and requires as a precondition.

But capitalism is a mode of production, not an ideology, and it is entirely likely that this upward redistribution and its ideological justification are symptoms of a deeper crisis in the value form itself. It may be, in other words, that capitalism is no longer capable of producing a mass of value sufficient to satisfy the social demands normalized during an earlier stage of development, and that no amount of ideological work will render those demands achievable.[45] That would be no reason to stop making such demands, since capitalism's inability to meet them—as

a historical outcome rather than as a theoretical postulate—would itself be instructive. But the ideological force of the autonomy of the work of art is not that it returns us to these sorts of demands, but that it makes a demand of an entirely different nature. As we have seen, the mode of judgment peculiar to commodities is private, particular, and segmented by its very nature. The mode of judgment peculiar to the work of art, however, is subjective but universal. In other words, the mode of judgment appropriate to artworks is public and structured by disagreement rather than stratified by class or particularized in different bodies and identities. If the response to works of art is, in fact, deeply stratified (as it is for science, as well), this owes nothing to the concept of art and everything to a society that accords the luxury of de-instrumentalized knowledge to only a very few. What the concept of the work of art demands, then, is not only universal access to a good education, a demand often enough made but perhaps not realizable in societies such as ours. Rather, it demands the de-instrumentalization of education itself, a demand that is certainly not realizable in societies such as ours, whose educational systems are geared toward producing workers at the increasingly polarized skill levels that the economy requires. That such a demand is unrealistic is not a critique of the demand but, rather, a rebuke to the conditions that make it so. As long as the pursuit of noninstrumental knowledge is reserved for only a few, the directly humanistic noises we make about it are vicious mockeries of themselves. But the degree to which we no longer make them reveals the degree to which we have stopped pretending our societies are fit for human beings.

The claim that the work of art is or is not a commodity is not an analogical or figural claim: everything is like or unlike anything else in some way. The work of art is not like a commodity; it is one. (Nor are the cognate claims for the submission of meaning to the spectator merely similar to the claim that the work of art is a commodity like any other. They are, rather, members of the same genus.) The question is whether the work of art is a commodity like any other or whether it can, within itself, suspend the logic of the commodity, legibly assert a moment of autonomy from the market. If the claim to autonomy is today a minimal political claim, it is not for all that a trivial one. A plausible claim to autonomy—to actions ascribable to intention rather than to causal conditions—is in fact the precondition for any politics at all other than the politics of acquiescence to the status quo.

How, then, does one account for what appears, paradoxically, as the contemporary will to heteronomy? Any act, no matter how intentional, is conditioned by innumerable processes to which it is heteronomous, and has innumerable effects that are not intended. When one begins to tot up and name these processes, from the laws of physics down to evolutionary biology, political economy, and institutional systems, not to mention the aleatory (which is only a way to say untheorized) confluence of all these, the preponderance is, by a vast margin, on the side of heteronomy. And yet. Hegel's absolutization of autonomy in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*—"the enormous power of the negative, the energy of thought, of the pure I" (36/§32)—hardly takes place in ignorance of this fact. On the contrary, the *Phenomenology* repeatedly thematizes the contradiction between intention, on one hand, and its conditions and effects, on the other. Indeed, nothing can be more banal than this contradiction, which no theory of intentional action can be unaware of. The question is one of standpoint: is a particular action to be understood in terms of its heteronomy to external processes or its autonomy from them?

A dialectical account, as this one is intended to be, encompasses both of these standpoints. In Marx's polemics against idealism, largely written when he was in his mid-twenties and the "Young Hegelians" were achieving notoriety, what he criticizes under that banner is the division of intellectual (*geistige*) labor from material labor, such that the former consequently "appears as something separated from common life, something extra-otherworldly."[46] In place of this, Marx offers the proposition that "people are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, and so on, but they are actual, active people, conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces" and relations of production.[47] The target of Marx's criticism is thus the attempt to understand the ways in which the world is taken up without a consideration of the world that is taken up: a Hegelian point, it must be said, even if Hegel, who was concerned to show that consciousness was an active rather than merely receptive capacity, gave some of his posthumous followers on the left in the 1840s reason to understand otherwise.

But non-Marxist "materialism" only makes the same mistake from the other side. Marx's critique of materialism during this period is, therefore, the same as his critique of idealism: "The chief defect of all materialism until now . . . is that things, actuality, sensuousness, are only taken up in the form of objects or representations, but not as

sensuous human activity, as practice; not subjectively."[48] If Marx's criticism of the Young Hegelians is that they are insufficiently materialist, his criticism of materialism is that it is insufficiently Hegelian. In a letter well known in this context, written to Ludwig Kugelmann in 1870—that is, three years after the publication of *Capital* and at a time that the hegemony of Hegelianism had definitely passed—Marx writes, "Lange is so naïve as to say that I 'move with rare freedom' in empirical matter. He has no idea that this 'free movement in matter' is nothing other than a paraphrase for the *method* of dealing with matter—namely, the *dialectical method*."[49]

Hegel's privileging of autonomy within this dialectic is a political claim; it cannot be understood outside of the possibility raised by the French Revolution (viewed with intense interest but from afar and in relatively backward political and economic circumstances) of a human collectivity consciously making its own history. The point about Hegelian autonomy is not that it underestimates heteronomy but, rather, that conditions, without ceasing to be genuinely determining, are understood to be subsumable under the standpoint of autonomy. It is as though one could choose to take a step in such a way that one at the same moment chose the law of gravity, the mass of the Earth, the articulation of one's limbs. If this is dance, it is also politics. The conditions in which one acts are not of one's choosing. But politics means not wishing for or waiting for or imagining other conditions, tendencies that are abundantly celebrated by today's intellectual left—think of the protagonist of Ben Lerner's *10:04* (to which we turn in a later chapter), an avatar of contemporary left stoicism, who spends the entire novel catching glimpses of a world just like ours but also magically "before or after" capitalism. Politics requires choosing to intervene in the conditions that exist; in effect, choosing that about which one has no choice. *Hic Rhodus*, *hic salta*. In describing Hegel's elevation of autonomy as conditioned by the necessary illusions of German radical democrats at the turn of the nineteenth century, we have already gone beyond it. But we have also identified its moment of truth, which is that no politics can do without an absolutely minimal moment of autonomy: choosing one's heteronomy to the present or, to say precisely the same thing, taking up the present as a field of action. One has never been astonished to find radical critics of autonomy among partisans of the status quo. What is astonishing is to find them—and to find, what is rigorously the same, those "materialists"

who ascribe agency to what is fully determined—imagining themselves to be on the left.

The work of art also chooses its heteronomy. To be a work of art means to intervene in the institution of art, which is in turn the social basis of the artwork: what makes it count. This point bears emphasizing. Autonomy, as has been suggested, has nothing to do with personal freedom; if it were, it would not be worth discussing. The specific autonomy of art from the market and from the state is fundamentally institutional in character; only by invoking the institution of art—a social machine that includes practices experienced as spontaneous, such as interpretation, as much as organized institutions such as museums, learned journals, academic departments—can the work of art assert its autonomy, which, again, holds sway only within its boundaries in the form of immanent purposiveness. The moment a work of art disavows the institution of art—critique is a form of commitment rather than a disavowal—it becomes absolutely heteronomous to those forces that, for the artwork, hold sway only contingently and externally. "Relative autonomy" has meanwhile always been a phrase without a concept. Absolute heteronomy to the institution of art is a condition of the work's absolute autonomy.

The work of art, then, is not itself emancipatory. Unlike unions or political parties, works of art have no political efficacy of their own. The claim to autonomy is neither a politics nor a substitute for politics. But under current conditions, it has a politics. For Schiller, the aesthetic principle was both a utopian social project (art would educate humanity out of the barbarism of contemporary social relations) and, contradictorily, a compensation for the absence of a utopian social project (art would compensate for the barbarism of contemporary social relations).[50] These positions are as untenable now as they were then. The point is not to make extravagant claims for the social impact of art, in either a radical mode or a liberal one. The point is, instead, to establish the specificity of art and to determine whose side it is on.

Apparently paradoxically, art that bears immediate political messages poses a problem—unless these meanings are mediated and relativized by the form of the work as a whole, which is another way to say unless they mean something other than what they immediately say. First, taken immediately, manifest political intentions open up a chasm between form and content. Artistic means and political ends are separate. If we are

judging the political content, the artistic means appear inessential. If we are judging the form, the political ends appear inessential. Of course, one would like to say that both form and content are essential, since they are inseparable in a successful work. But all that means is that the work calls for close interpretive attention, and in that case, immediate political messages are a red herring. Second, a message is an external end. Once again, an external end is a use value; use values, in societies whose metabolism takes place entirely through the exchange of equivalents, are immediately subject to the logic of consumer sovereignty. Immediate political messages do not succeed or fail the way artworks do. Instead, they are popular or unpopular in one market or another, the way shoe logos are. When it means simply what it says it means, political art does not mean anything at all except to the person consuming it.

All this should not be taken to suggest that artworks are restricted to the purely formal politics of the artwork as such that has been outlined in the past few pages. If that were the case, there would be little point in discussing individual works, which would all end up saying the same thing. The point, instead, is that the inseparability of form and content is an internal criterion that saves the politics of individual works from being mere expressions of the opinions of their creators. The moment a meaning, political or otherwise, is seen to emerge from the brain of the artist, it ceases to compel: you find it congenial or you do not, which is a way to say that it might as well have emerged from the invisible hand of the market. While the cynicism of craft sometimes produces something worthwhile, sincerity as an attribute of the artist rather than of the art is indistinguishable from cynicism. As we shall see in the next chapter, the antiracist politics of J. M. Coetzee, the feminist politics of Cindy Sherman, the class politics of Jeff Wall, and the culture-industry critique of Alejandro González Iñárritu are compelling only, and precisely, because they appear to emerge as if unbidden from the material on which these artists work.

In moments of genuine political upheaval, the unemphatic negativity of the work of art will come to seem decadent compared with the project of constructing a world without hunger and without police, and this is how we should understand the impatience of the historical avant-gardes with the institution of art, which they set out to destroy. Think, for example, of Ferreira Gullar, the great theorist of the Rio school of Brazilian Concretism in its high-modernist phase, who in the run-up to

Brazil's failed revolution quite reasonably suggested that the concretists should stage a final exhibition in which they destroyed all their existing works—a position he later, and again quite reasonably, revised.[51] In the light of the political and cultural institutions, alliances, and forces coalescing around him in the early 1960s, Gullar could state, with some historical justification even in hindsight, that the "popular culture" that was to replace the self-overcoming, autonomous field "is, more than anything else, revolutionary consciousness."[52]

To believe the same today is madness. Absent such upheaval, impatience with the unemphatic alterity of the institution of art, as we have already suggested, switches polarity. The neo-avant-gardes of the late 1960s and after, with their period insistence that institutions as such are "ideological state apparatuses," array themselves against the state and the institution of art alike. But in the end, falling prey to a ruse of history, they only expose their contents to (both real and imagined) subsumption under the commodity form. The standpoint of the critique of the commodity form, however, produces an account of the aesthetic that is coherent with its concept. This should come as no surprise, since the aesthetic itself—the institution of art, understood not in a purely sociological sense but also as a set of normative commitments under which artworks are possible—is produced alongside capitalism as its unemphatic other. The point of this book is not that aesthetics has anything to teach Marxism, but that Marxism has something to teach aesthetics.

Notes

Introduction

1 György Lukács, *Werke, Volume 16: Heidelberger Philosophie der Kunst (1912–14)* (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1974), 9.

2 Terry Eagleton, "Structurally Unsound," *Times Literary Supplement*, June 8, 2016.

3 Tyler Cowen, *In Praise of Commercial Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998) 1; Dave Beech, *Art and Value: Art's Economic Exceptionalism in Classical, Neoclassical and Marxist Economics* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 1.

4 Karl Marx, *Das Kapital: Kritik der politischen Ökonomie, Erster Band*, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Marx/Engels: Werke*, vol. 23 (Berlin: Dietz, 2008) 189. The translations are mine, but see Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. 1, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: New Left Review, 1976), 279–80. Hereafter, and throughout the volume, these works are cited in parentheses in the text as *K* and *C*, respectively, followed by page numbers.

5 The logic here is enough to differentiate the Hegelian-Marxian concept of standpoint from the contemporary notion of viewpoint. The denotations of the words in English are more or less indistinguishable, but "standpoint"

in the Hegelian-Marxian tradition means virtually the opposite of what we usually mean by viewpoint. "Standpoint" refers to a logical position within a system of logical positions, where the system of relations is not posited as unknowable a priori. Since standpoints are logical positions, they can be adopted at will, even if they are empirically native to this or that social position. In the master-slave dialectic, the relation between the two standpoints becomes clear only in the shuttling back and forth between them. But one can also adopt the standpoint of nonpeople: the state in Hegel, and the proletariat in Lukács. Viewpoint, however, can apply only to people. Marx's distinction between M-C-M and C-M-C, which will have a role to play in what follows, is also one of standpoint, since both are merely segments in the unsegmented process of exchange. The "small master" may experience exchange as C-M-C, and the capitalist proper may experience exchange as M-C-M, but the distinction is not reducible to their subject positions or viewpoints. The point here is that the commodity has a standpoint as much as the capitalist. The capitalist can, of course, also have a viewpoint. But Marx's point in "personifying" the capitalist is that the viewpoint, to the extent that it diverges from the standpoint, is irrelevant.

6 G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970), 265; G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); §351. Hereafter, the page and paragraph numbers are cited in parentheses in the text. The translations are mine.

7 György Lukács, "'Entäusserung' ('Externalization') as the Central Philosophical Concept of *The Phenomenology of Mind*," in *The Young Hegel: Studies in the Relations between Dialectics and Economics*," trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976). See also Fredric Jameson, *Representing Capital* (London: Verso, 2011), 81.

8 The phrase occurs throughout the *Phenomenology* and elsewhere: see G. W. F. Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe III* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1987), 189.

9 The reference is to Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," in *Art and Objecthood* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 148–72.

10 "Consumer sovereignty" is defined by William Harold Hutt as "the controlling power exercised by free individuals, in choosing [among] ends, over the custodians of the community's resources": William Harold Hutt, "The Concept of Consumers' Sovereignty," *Economic Journal* 50, no. 197 (March 1940): 66.

11 Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), 143.

12 Richard Rushfield, "James Cameron Reveals His Quest to Build More Perfect CGI Boobs," *Gawker*, November 12, 2009, accessed July 22, 2018, http://gawker.com/5403302/james-cameron-reveals-his-quest-to-build-more-perfect-cgi-boobs.

13 James Lipton, "Why the Na'vi Have Breasts! Interview with James Cameron," *U Interview*, February 24, 2010, accessed July 22, 2018, http://uinterview.com/news/james-cameron-why-the-navi-have-breasts-985.

14 Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," in Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1996), 120–67. Hereafter, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is cited in the text as *DE*, followed by page numbers. As elsewhere, the translations are mine and diverge substantially from the cited text. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1969). Hereafter, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* is cited in the text as *DA*, followed by page numbers.

15 The question "Why do slasher films have boyish female protagonists?" is interesting, but despite appearances, it is not an interpretive question: it is not to be answered by a close reading of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, whose "meaning" is entirely subordinate to an audience's demand for a certain set of narrative conventions. Rather, it is answered by, in essence, querying the audience rather than the film, and when we have answered the question, we have learned something about audience rather than about the film: see Carol J. Clover, "Her Body, Himself," in Carol J. Clover, *Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992) 21–64. Even as Clover is valuably clear about the irrelevance of individual films to her object, except at the most distanced, folkloric level, the tools by which one would read audience desire remain ad hoc: a combination of interviews, audience observation, psychoanalytic theory, and speculation.

16 The identity of intention and meaning is forcefully announced by Walter Benn Michaels and Steven Knapp in their crucial essay "Against Theory," *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 4 (Summer 1982): 723–42, and widely anthologized. I did not see the force of their account of "theory" when I first encountered it, because I thought one could remain agnostic about intention without sacrificing any of the insights of what I thought of as "theory," which was not Paul de Man and Stanley Fish but, rather, Lukács, the Frankfurt School, and their descendants, principally Roberto Schwarz and Fredric Jameson. That turned out not to be the case, for reasons that should become clear in this chapter and throughout this book. However, the fundamental compatibility of Knapp and Michaels's account of meaning with the post-Kantian development of aesthetics only holds when it is specified that "intention" does not designate an event in the mind of the artist but is, instead, something realized in the work itself: intention thus specified names immanent purposiveness. This specification has become more strongly thematized in Michaels's recent work, but in fact it was essential from the beginning (that

was, in fact, the point of identifying meaning and intention). The relationship to Jamesonian allegory is similarly complex, and for similar reasons. As long as allegory designates an external intention it is going to pose a problem, because the criteria by which one would judge such an intention are bound to be arbitrary. (I understand "strong rewriting" in Jameson's description of allegorical interpretation to designate compelling ascription; otherwise, this, too, poses a problem.) If allegory can, on the contrary, be described as emerging from a disposition of the material itself, as taking up social material in a way that then constitutes a kind of claim about that social material that can be judged on the basis of its plausibility—that is, on the basis of the coherence of its real entailments rather than on the basis of correspondence to facts—then we are once more on the territory of immanent purposiveness. This is discussed in chapter 1 and throughout this book. Antônio Cândido and Roberto Schwarz mark the most significant developments in the theorization of realism in this expanded, post-Lukácsian sense. Schwarz's influence will be felt throughout this book; Cândido's contribution is discussed in chapter 4.

17 It may be that in Jameson's work, the Freudian positivity of the unconscious is relatively inconsequential and can be rewritten in terms of the negative, Hegelian-Marxian unconscious, but it would take some work to ascertain. When Jameson writes about class-consciousness in Wyndham Lewis, for example, the point is that petty bourgeois class consciousness logically presupposes working-class consciousness and is unnecessary and unthinkable without it, and that Lewis is not aware of that entailment and presumably would have disavowed it. It does not mean that some secret part of Lewis's brain is aware of that entailment. Any Freudian "return of the repressed" would then have to be understood instead as the Hegelian "ruse of reason"—that is, as an example of the fact that logical entailments are real entailments. The claim here is not that Jameson never relies on a positive unconscious but that work that follows his lead would be better off working with a negative one.

18 Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, 155. For the shorthand version, see Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, 143 and 235.

19 G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik I* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), 87. The entire paragraph under discussion is on this page. As is well known, this volume is compiled from Hegel's own lecture notes and transcriptions of students' notes, so there is no point in attending closely to Hegel's precise wording.

20 Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism: Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 4.

21 The English text is in Marx, *Capital*, 948–1084. Hereafter, Karl Marx, *Das Kapital 1.1: Resultate des unmittelbaren Produktionsprozesses* (Berlin:

Karl Dietz, 2009), is cited in parentheses in the text as *R*, followed by page numbers. The distinction occurs elsewhere in *Capital*, notably in *K* 533/*C* 645.

22 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Marx/Engels: Werke*, vol. 42 (Berlin: Dietz, 2008), 321.

23 Marx's notes on formal and real subsumption were not available to Adorno when he and Horkheimer were writing *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, but the logic, operative here and there in the published text of *Capital* (see esp. the section titled "Absolute and Relative Surplus Value" [*K* 531–42/*C* 644–54], two terms that map roughly onto "formal and real subsumption," which also make a brief appearance there) is clearly operative in Adorno's work.

24 Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 48

25 Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 48. It is by no means self-evident that the subsumption of aesthetic labor under capitalism is an effect of capitalism's triumphant march rather than a consequence of its ever more desperate search for profits once the rate of profit native to industrial capital has begun a secular decline: see "The Trajectory of the Profit Rate," in Robert Brenner, *The Economics of Global Turbulence* (London: Verso, 2006), 11–40.

26 Pierre Bourdieu, "Le marché des biens symboliques," *L'Anée Sociologique* 22 (1971): 52–53.

27 Bourdieu, "Le marché des biens symboliques," 54, 58.

28 Bourdieu, "Le marché des biens symboliques," 66.

29 Bourdieu, "Le marché des biens symboliques," 126.

30 "The essence of Modernism lies, as I see it, in the use of characteristic methods of a discipline in order to criticize the discipline itself. . . . [What quickly emerges is] that the unique and proper area of competence of each art coincide[s] with all that [is] unique in the nature of its medium. The task of self-criticism [becomes] to eliminate from the specific effects of each art any and every effect that might conceivably be borrowed from or by the medium of any other art": Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," in *The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 4: Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957–1969* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 85–86.

31 Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 31.

32 Even the most laissez-faire theories of the market require at least one nonmarket institution—for example, money. Foucault's lectures on neoliberalism have become the locus classicus for the understanding of neoliberalism as the recognition that nonintervention in the mechanisms of the market requires strong intervention on the conditions of the market. Foucault's lecture of February 14, 1979 paraphrases Walter Euken, quoted in the footnotes: "Die Wirtschaftpolitische Tätigkeit des Staates sollte auf die Gestaltung der Ordnungsformen der Wirtschaft gerichtet sein, nicht

auf die Lenkung des Wirtschaftprozesses" (Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979*, trans. Graham Burchell [New York: Palgrave, 2008], 138, 154n37). The neoliberal utopia is in fact an upgrade of Hegel's more naïve one in *Philosophy of Right*, which essentially lets capitalists accumulate as much as they like—for Hegel understands that, under capitalism, the wealth of capital is the wealth of nations—as long as they are not allowed to usurp the job of intellectuals, which is to make decisions about the whole. What neither Hegel nor the neoliberal utopians allow for is that wealth is itself a power that can be arrayed against the regulatory apparatus. Some degree of what the economists call "regulatory capture" is implied by the concept of regulation itself.

33 See "Les relations entre champ de production restreinte et champ de grande production," in Bourdieu, "Le marché des biens symboliques" 81–100, esp. 90.

34 See Alexis Petridis, "Prince: 'Transcendence. That's What You Want. When That Happens—Oh, Boy,'" *The Guardian*, November 12, 2015, accessed July 22, 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/music/2015/nov/12/prince-interview-paisley-park-studios-minneapolis.

35 "As I look over the reasons I have cited to explain why the sculptor of the Laocoön is so measured in the expression of bodily pain, I find that they derive without exception from art-specific conditions, from the necessary limits and exigencies imposed by sculpture. I can scarcely imagine applying any of these to poetry": Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laokoon: Oder, Über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2012), 28. Winkelmann is cited in Lessing, *Laokoon*, 10.

36 See Chapter 3, note 78.

37 David Simon, "The Death of Boom Culture? Walter Benn Michaels with David Simon, Susan Straight, and Dale Peck," New York Public Library, April 14, 2009, https://www.nypl.org/audiovideo/death-boom-culture-walter-benn-michaels-david-simon-susan-straight-dale-peck. As I consider in a later chapter, in another interview Simon repeatedly says, in various ways, "Fuck the average reader": Nick Hornby, "Interview with David Simon," *The Believer*, August 2007, accessed July 22, 2018, http://www.believermag.com/issues/200708/?read=interview_simon. Compare that statement with one plausibly attributed to Steve Jobs that "consumers aren't in the business of knowing what they want." There is a certain similarity of attitude, but what they mean is completely different. Jobs's claim is that consumers are not in the business of knowing what they want but that he is precisely in the business of knowing what consumers want or will want. "Fuck the reader" does not say, "Readers don't know what they want, but I do." Instead, it says, "What the reader wants is irrelevant to what I do."

38 See esp. György Lukács, *The Young Hegel*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976); György Lukács, *Goethe and His Age*, trans. Robert Anchor (London: Merlin, 1968).

39 See György Lukács,"Zur Ästhetik Schillers," in *Probleme der Ästhetik* (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1969), 17–106. A translation is forthcoming in *Mediations* 32, no. 2 (Spring 2019).

40 Peter Bürger, *Theorie der Avantgarde* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), 117.

41 Bürger, *Theorie der Avantgarde*, 134.

42 But see Daniel Zamora, ed., *Critiquer Foucault: Les années 1980 et la tentation néolibérale* (Brussels: Aden, 2014).

43 Although we know from his letters that James Joyce was hostile to the publishing market, he imagines himself from the beginning as superior to it, which is what makes his hostility so entertaining. Graver threats to autonomy are church and nation, although it is really the latter that threatens aesthetic, as opposed to personal autonomy. Astonishingly, the same logic holds with the South African writer Es'kia Mphahlele. Mphahlele is disgusted with the South African publishing industry and his position within it, and, in a country where until 1953 all education for black students had been run through mission schools, is frustrated with ever present "South African 'churchianity'": Ezekiel Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue* (New York: Anchor, [1959] 1971), 210. Apartheid South Africa was nothing like a neoliberal state, since it required a massive bureaucracy to administer apartheid and to keep white unemployment low; under apartheid, the market is far from the most obvious threat. The astonishing thing is that, despite the almost unimaginable humiliation of living under apartheid, Mphahlele exiles himself from South Africa not only because of apartheid ("I can't teach [having been banned], and I want to teach"), but because of the threat to aesthetic autonomy represented by a resistance with which he is in full sympathy ("I can't write here and I want to write"). He cannot write not because he has been banned, but because the situation itself, a political urgency that is as much internal as external to Mphahlele himself, represents "a paralyzing spur": Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 199. This is not to endorse Mphahlele's decision over other possible ones but to point out that the Adornian option between engagement and autonomy—the strong version of the heteronomy/autonomy problem, a version in which both sides have a plausible attraction for the left but that presupposes, as this example underscores, something plausibly left to be heteronomous to—is far from a parochial concern and cannot be overcome at will.

44 Lisa Siraganian, *Modernism's Other Work: The Art Object's Political Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

45 Something like this is asserted by, among others, the *Wertkritik* tendency in Germany: see Neil Larsen, Mathias Nilges, Josh Robinson, and Nicholas Brown, eds., *Marxism and the Critique of Value* (Chicago: MCM′, 2014). Ernst Lohoff's chapter, "Off Limits, Out of Control," is particularly relevant: Ernst Lohoff, "Off Limits, Out of Control," in Larsen et al., *Marxism and the Critique of Value*, 151–86.

46 Karl Marx, *Die deutsche Ideologie*, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Marx/Engels: Werke*, vol. 3 (Berlin: Dietz, 1978), 39. The translation is mine, but see Karl Marx, *The German Ideology,* in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Marx/Engels Collected Works*, vol. 5 (New York: International Publishers, 1976), 55.

47 Marx, *Die deutsche Ideologie*, 26; Marx, *The German Ideology*, 36. The better-known formulation of this dialectic comes from the opening passages of *The Eighteenth Brumaire*.

48 Karl Marx, "Thesen über Feuerbach," in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Marx/Engels: Werke*, vol. 3 (Berlin: Dietz, 1978), 5. See Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Marx/Engels Collected Works*, vol. 5 (New York: International Publishers, 1976), 3.

49 Karl Marx, *Briefe an Kugelmann* (Berlin: Dietz, 1952), 111.

50 See Friedrich Schiller, *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*, trans. Matt McLellan (Chicago: MCM′, forthcoming).

51 See Ferreira Gullar, *Cultura posta em questão* e *Vanguarda e subdesenvolvimento* (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 2002).

52 Gullar, *Cultura posta em questão*, 23.

1. Photography as Film and Film as Photography

1 Jeff Wall, "'Marks of Indifference': Aspects of Photography in, or as, Conceptual Art" in *Reconsidering the Object of Art, 1965–1975*, ed. Ann Goldstein and Anne Rorimer (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 266; J. M. Coetzee, *Dusklands* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1974). Hereafter, page numbers from *Dusklands* are cited in parentheses in the text.

2 J. M. Coetzee, *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 204.

3 This, despite the ironic epigraph from *Bouvard and Pécuchet*: "What is important is the philosophy of history" (Coetzee, *Dusklands*, 58). We will briefly revisit the relation between Brecht and Schiller in chapter 3. The dialectic of the heroism and brutality of the figure who is a law unto himself is, after all, a historical one—this was Lukács's understanding of Schiller's treatment of the figure of the criminal—but Coetzee does not make that conspicuous.

4 See Coetzee's apposite notes on Kafka on the relationship between the "time of the narrative" and the "time of the narration" in "Time, Tense, and Aspect in Kafka's 'The Burrow'," in *Doubling the Point*, 210–32.

5 See Alain Badiou, "The Autonomy of the Aesthetic Process" (1965), trans. Bruno Bosteels, *Radical Philosophy* 178 (March–April 2013): 32–39.

6 Needless to say, structures like this precede Coetzee, hardly the first postmodern metafictionalist; indeed, under the term "Romantic irony," they precede modernism and even Romanticism itself. The point is that, after the modernist canon of immanence, they are meant to register as a shock, but the shock is in fact a new way to solve an old problem.

7 Cindy Sherman, *The Complete Untitled Film Stills* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2003), 16. All of the images cited in the text are in this volume.

8 Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," in *Art and Objecthood* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 164.

9 Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 36/§32.

10 Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1951), 107.

11 Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 108.

12 Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 107.

13 Arielle Bier, "Viktoria Binschtok: 'Cluster,'" accessed July 22, 2018, https://viktoriabinschtok.wordpress.com/work-3/cluster-series.

14 Jeff Wall, *Catalogue Raisonné, 1978–2004* (Göttingen, Germany: Steidl, 2005), 275.

15 Julian Stallabrass, "Museum Photography and Museum Prose," *New Left Review* 65 (September–October 2010): 93–105.

16 There are obviously many other workable definitions of allegory available. For the relation between Jamesonian allegory and the figure as it is defined here, see note 16 of the introduction.

17 In fact, Osborne understands the opposition between constructed and documentary images as a continuum, with his *Underground* series falling on the constructed side, and *Aufzug* falling on the documentary side within the series, without, for all that, being a documentary photograph. He writes:

> I was working there for a few weeks with permission of the DB rail authority, which stipulated that I work late in the evening (post-rush hour) since my camera (4 × 5″ view camera) and the low lighting made a tripod necessary. (A very different set up from Walker Evans and his hidden camera [as in his subway series *Many Are Called*].) As a consequence of this bulky/cumbersome setup, nearly all of the pictures were made with the cooperation of the subject. They're not "staged" in the sense of being cast or lit—I generally just asked the subjects to do whatever they were doing before I interrupted them, and to be still for the ½ or ¼ second exposure. These exchanges were usually extremely

brief because within a minute or two a train would show up and the person would take off. The *Aufzug* picture is different from the others in a couple of ways. Its structure is much more perspectival than the others, and related to this, it didn't require the cooperation of the subject. (As a subject's distance from the camera increases, the problem of motion blur diminishes.) Since the guy was fairly far from the camera and confined in a little glass box, I didn't need to ask him to be still. So in terms of a spectrum of constructed/documentary photography, that one is closer to the "documentary" end of things. (Mike Osborne, personal communication with the author, July 25, 2016)

18 The brand name is blurred in a way that looks accidental but, given the compositional process, must be deliberate. This blunts the pointed insistence of the allegory; it would be distractingly obvious if a Samsung television in the apartment corresponded to the Hanjin container ship in the port. However, it would not be a mistake on the beholder's part to assume that by 2004 essentially no television sets were manufactured in North America. Those very few sets that were assembled in North America, much more specialized than the mid-range consumer model pictured in *A View from an Apartment*, relied heavily on parts that, like the Hanjin container ship, would have originated in South Korea.

19 This is not to say, obviously, that paintings are inevitably allegorical and photographs inevitably are not, but only that this particular picture would be allegorical if it were a painting. In Whistler's *Wapping*, the boundary between pictorial interior and exterior space is hard to place precisely. But while the relation between interior and exterior is clearly part of the meaning of the painting, which represents working-class life on the Thames as continuous with working-class life in the inn, nothing strikes the eye as allegorical.

20 This is not the only flagrantly manipulated element of the picture. See, for example, the less thematically weighted reflection of the dining room light fixtures, which does not correspond in shape or number to the fixtures we see; or the reflected light in the coffee cup, which corresponds neither to the lights we see nor to the reflected light in the coffee pot. These pseudo-indices of artifice may be understood as attempts to deflect the allegory of the television as a compositional problem by absorbing it into the broader technical problem of reflected light. The oblique reference, directly invoked by Wall's early *Picture for Women* (1979) is Manet's *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère*. On this reading, what would be "just there" would be not the room and its view but the labor of the artist in composing the picture. However, this does not seem to me to solve the problem of the allegory of the television. The powerfully antitheatrical rhetoric of the two-worlds strategy is not knocked off its axis à la Coetzee by the thematization of reflection, and in relation to that strategy the television continues to pose a problem.

21 Michael Fried, *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 47–62.

22 Martin Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerks," in *Holzwege* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1980), 34: "Die Welt ist die sich öffnende Offenheit der weiten Bahnen der einfachen und wesentlichen Entscheidungen im Geschick eines geschichtlichen Volkes."

23 Wall, "Marks of Indifference," 251.

24 See Stallabrass, "Museum Photography and Museum Prose."

25 The question involves a theory of action, as well as a theory of photography, and is by no means a settled matter. The debate, fruitful in this regard, between Walter Benn Michaels and Dominic McIver Lopes has not achieved final form on either side. However, the point is that, by emphasizing Mason's interest in film photography, Linklater mobilizes the standard account.

26 Henri Bergson, *L'évolution creatrice* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1909), 109.

27 The quote is the continuation of the previous one from Bergson, *L'évolution creatrice*.

28 Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 4: Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957–1969*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 90. I thank Oren Izenberg for pointing out the rabbit hole lurking at the center of this argument and Walter Michaels for showing the (post-Greenbergian) way out.

29 Susanne Kippenberger, "Interview mit Marina Abramovic: Mit 70 muss man den Bullshit reduzieren." *Der Tagesspiegel*, July 25, 2016, accessed July 22, 2018, http://www.tagesspiegel.de/weltspiegel/sonntag/interview-mit-marina-abramovic-ich-kann-keine-gemaelde-schicken-darum-schicke-ich-mich-selbst/13913260-2.html.

2. The Novel and the Ruse of the Work

1 See Charles Ray, *Charles Ray: Sculpture 1997–2014* (Stuttgart: Hatje Cantz, n.d. [2014]), 107.

2 Ray, *Charles Ray*, 106.

3 Walter Benjamin, *Illuminationen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 139; Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken, 1968), 220. The implicit critique of Heidegger (*Dasein*) in the language of Hegel's critique of sense-certainty (*Hier und Jetzt*) is hard to discern in translation, but it is operative in the present argument.

4 The statement is from Wim Wenders, dir., *Salt of the Earth*, Decia Films, 2015. The image is in Sebastião Salgado, *Migrations* (New York: Aperture, 2000), 134–35. One could also mention in this context Warhol's *Death*

and Disaster series, in which car crashes figure prominently. For Warhol, the Benjaminian portability of the image would be part of the point. There is also a substantial history of crashed cars and car parts in sculpture, from César to John Chamberlain and Dirk Skreber. These sculptures tend to make the choice of whether to treat the car as raw material or as content, of whether the sculpture is essentially a form or essentially an experience, rather than thematizing the contradiction between them.

5 Ray, *Charles Ray*, 106.

6 Ray, *Charles Ray*, 106.

7 Benjamin, *Illuminationen*, 144; Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 224.

8 Benjamin, *Illuminationen*, 146; Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 225.

9 Benjamin, *Illuminationen*, 144; Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 224.

10 Ferreira Gullar, *Antologia crítica: Suplemento dominical do Jornal do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Contra Capa, 2015), 170–71.

11 Ben Lerner, *10:04* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux), 109. Hereafter, page numbers from this work are cited in parentheses in the text.

12 "Es gibt bei den Chassidim einen Spruch von der kommenden Welt, der besagt: es wird dort alles eingerichtet sein wie bei uns. Wie unsre Stube jetzt ist, so wird sie auch in der kommenden Welt sein; wo unser Kind jetzt schläft, da wird es auch in der kommenden Welt schlafen. Was wir in dieser Welt am Leibe tragen, das werden wir auch in der kommenden Welt anhaben. Alles wird sein wie hier—nur ein klein wenig anders." As Lerner may not know, since he claims in the acknowledgments to have gotten the quote through Agamben, Benjamin continues, "So hält es die Phantasie. Es ist nur ein Schleier, den sie über die Ferne zieht. Alles mag da stehen, wie es stand, aber der Schleier wallt, und unmerklich verschiebt sich's darunter. Es ist ein Wechseln und Vertauschen; nichts bleibt und nichts verschwindet": Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 4 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972), 419–20.

13 See the nonfiction account of the Salvage Art Institute in Ben Lerner, "Damage Control," *Harper's Magazine*, December 2013, accessed July 22, 2018, https://harpers.org/archive/2013/12/damage-control, and the institute's own manifesto at http://salvageartinstitute.org.

14 See Nicholas Brown, *Utopian Generations: The Political Horizon of Twentieth-Century Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 41.

15 "The many-faceted, self-differentiating expansion, individuation, and complexity of life is the object on which desire and work act. Such manifold doing has now contracted into simple differentiation within the pure movement of thought": G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), 157; G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), §199.

16 Recall the final words of *Molloy*: "Then I went back into the house and wrote, It is midnight. The rain is beating on the windows. It was not midnight. It was not raining" (Samuel Beckett, *Molloy*, *Mallone Dies,* and *The Unnameable* [New York: Grove, 1958], 176).

17 Jennifer Ashton, "Totaling the Damage: Revolutionary Ambition in Recent American Poetry," *nonsite* 18 (October 8, 2015), accessed July 22, 2018, http://nonsite.org/feature/totaling-the-damage.

18 Friedrich Hölderlin, *Hyperion* (Stuttgart: Reclam), 132.

19 Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, pt. 4, preface, in Baruch Spinoza, *Spinoza: Complete Works*, trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002), 321.

20 G. W. F. Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe III* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1987), 189.

21 Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe III*, 190. The second sentence is a marginal gloss on the first.

22 Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe III*, 190.

23 Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe III*, 190–91, marginal note.

24 William Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1935).

25 Cormac McCarthy, *The Road* (New York: Vintage, 2006), 169.

26 Samuel Beckett, *Worstward Ho* (New York: Grove, 1983), 13.

27 Tom McCarthy, *Remainder* (New York: Vintage, 2007), 128. Hereafter, page numbers are cited in parentheses in the text.

28 Heinrich von Kleist, "Über das Marionettentheater," in *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, vol. 3 (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker, 1987), 560–61.

29 Anton Chekhov, quoted in Valentine T. Bill, *Chekhov: The Silent Voice of Freedom* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1987), 79.

30 György Lukács, *The Historical Novel* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 94.

31 Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (London: Penguin [1719] 1985), 66.

32 Benjamin Kunkel, *Indecision* (New York: Random House, 2005), 38.

33 Teju Cole, *Open City* (New York: Random House, 2011), 18. *Open City* is a particularly difficult instance of the ruse of the work. Is the book ultimately a condemnation of the idiocy and complacency of the major contemporary middlebrow intellectual commonplaces—Noravian *lieux de mémoire*, Barthesian *puncta*, super-complicated and yet totally aimless discussions of ethnic or racial identity, and so on—or just an example of them? The rigorous fictionality that the novel form requires guarantees that the former will remain a possibility no matter how closely the author's opinions resemble its protagonist's. But the novel, as closely as one might look, refuses, even in a dramatic revelation near the end, to tip its hand. All I can say for certain is that whichever position I take, my students will tend to take the other.

34 Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (New York: Harcourt, 1981), 32.

35 Reinaldo Moraes, *Pornopopéia* (Rio de Janeiro: Objetiva, 2008), 138.
36 Jennifer Egan, *A Visit from the Goon Squad* (New York: Anchor, 2011), 3, 7–8. Hereafter, page numbers are cited in parentheses in the text.
37 As my student Sylvia Wolak pointed out to me, this chapter is literally manipulative: you have to turn the book sideways to read it.

3. Citation and Affect in Music

Epigraph: Arnold Schönberg, "Neue Musik, veraltete Musik, Stil und Gedanke," in *Stil und Gedanke: Aufsätze zur Musik* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1976), 34.

1 Roberto Schwarz, "Altos e baixos da atualidade de Brecht," in *Seqüências brasileiras: Ensaios* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1999), 113–48. References are to Roberto Schwarz, "The Relevance of Brecht: High Points and Low," trans. Emilio Sauri, *Mediations* 23, no. 1 (Fall 2007): 27–61.
2 Theodor W. Adorno, "Engagement," *Noten zur Literature* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2003), 409–30. As the German title makes clear, the terminology is Sartre's, not Adorno's.
3 Bertolt Brecht, "Das moderne Theater ist das epische Theater," in Bertolt Brecht, *Schriften zum Theater* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1957), 16.
4 Brecht, "Das moderne Theater ist das epische Theater," 14, 16, 26.
5 Brecht, "Das moderne Theater ist das epische Theater," 18.
6 Bertolt Brecht, "Literarisierung des Theaters: Anmerkungen zur *Dreigroschenoper*," in Brecht, *Schriften zum Theater*, 29.
7 Brecht, "Das moderne Theater ist das epische Theater," 28.
8 Brecht, *Schriften zum Theater*, 60–73.
9 G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik I* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), 82.
10 Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik I*, 82; G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik III* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), 269.
11 Adorno, "Engagement," 416.
12 Adorno, "Engagement," 417.
13 Schwarz, "The Relevance of Brecht," 43.
14 Schwarz, "The Relevance of Brecht," 44.
15 Bertolt Brecht, *Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe*, in *Werke: Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe*, vol. 3 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), 211. The observation is from Schwarz, "Altos e baixos da atualidade de Brecht," 59–61fn19, a spectacular close reading that traces "Hyperions Schicksalslied" through *Saint Joan*: see Friedrich Hölderlin, *Hyperion* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1961), 160.

16 Schwarz, "The Relevance of Brecht," 49.
17 Schwarz, "The Relevance of Brecht," 56.
18 Karl Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte*, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Marx/Engels: Werke*, vol. 8 (Berlin: Dietz, 1960), 116.
19 Friedrich Schiller, *Die Räuber* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1969), 105, 33.
20 Bertolt Brecht, *Die Dreigroschenoper*, in Brecht, *Werke*, 2:305. Hereafter, page numbers from this work are cited in parentheses in the text.
21 *Hermann and Dorothea* exemplifies Marx's observation, cited earlier, from the beginning of the *Eighteenth Brumaire*. Hermann's solid and plodding but handsome bourgeois is elevated (not without irony) over Dorothea's first love, a Jacobin and would-be citoyen whose revolutionary charisma is overcome by means of his death (described not without regret), prior to the action of the poem, in Paris.
22 Walter Benjamin, "Was ist das epische Theater?" (first version), in Walter Benjamin, *Versuche über Brecht* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1966), 9.
23 Walter Benjamin, "Was ist das epische Theater?" (second version), in Benjamin, *Versuche über Brecht*, 26–27.
24 Walter Benjamin, "Studien zur Theorie des epischen Theaters," in Benjamin, *Versuche über Brecht*, 31.
25 Brecht, "Über gestische Musik," in Brecht, *Schriften zum Theater*, 253.
26 Kurt Weill, "Über den gestischen Charakter der Musik," in Kurt Weill, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, ed. David Drew (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975), 41.
27 Weill, "Über den gestischen Charakter der Musik," 40.
28 See Brecht, *Schriften zum Theater*, 210–12.
29 There is a robust literature on "tempo entrainment": see, e.g., Sylvie Nozoradan, Isabelle Peretz, and André Mouraux, "Selective Neuronal Entrainment to the Beat and Meter Embedded in a Musical Rhythm," *Journal of Neuroscience* 32 (December 5, 2012): 17572–81. Neuroscientific study of the arts has, of course, not limited itself to the effects of music: see, e.g., Alvin Goldman, "Imagination and Simulation in Audience Response to Fiction," in *The Architecture of the Imagination*, ed. Shaun Nichols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 41–56. But while the neurological effects of literary representation do not include the crucial act of interpretation, and therefore clearly do not account for a key feature of literature, the corporal effects of music, which brain science may eventually be equipped to understand, seem intuitively to constitute the very being of music. It is easy conceptually to subordinate, along with Brecht, "coerced empathy" (an effect whose production in literature it is part of Goldman's project to explain) to literary meaning (which is not part of Goldman's project to explain). With music, it is less obvious what the provoked effects would be subordinated to. Hegel's otherwise scandalous exclusion of instrumental music ("not yet strictly to be called an

art": Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik III*, 149]) from his system of the arts is, despite the absurdity of this judgment in historical perspective (Hegel and Beethoven are exact contemporaries), not capricious.

30 Plato, *Republic*, trans. G. M. A. Grube, rev. ed. (Indianpolis, IN: Hackett, 1992), book III.

31 Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. C. D. C. Reeve (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1998), book 8.

32 Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik III*, 146.

33 See page 81 above. Ferreira Gullar, *Antologia crítica: Suplemento dominical do Jornal do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Contra Capa, 2015), 171. To take just one example among a limitless supply, Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* is thoroughly invested in provoking an affective response: it would not be a purely personal reaction to experience a descending chomatic figure in the oboe in the final movement as heartbreaking. See, e.g., measure 42, which begins around 3:35 in Daniel Barenboim's interpretation (Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Daniel Barenboim, Waltraud Meier, and Siegfried Jerusalem, *Mahler: Das Lied von der Erde*, compact disc, Warner Classics, [1991] 2002). See also Gustav Mahler, *Das Lied von der Erde* (Vienna: Universal, 1912), 109. More than this, however, *Das Lied von der Erde* is also about affect as nothing more than earth responding to earth, and about the suspension of that relationship in reflection. This is true not just in its lyrical content, but also in the very composition. For example, in the fourth movement the alto is required to sing at a tempo that makes enunciation palpably difficult, such that she is unmistakably an animal making a sound—the howling ape from the first movement or the singing bird from the third, neither of which, however, is reflecting on its animal nature. *Das Lied von der Erde* is about the fact that one can experience a broken chromatic line as heartbreaking.

34 Kurt Weill, "Die Oper—wohin?" in Hinton and Schebera, *Kurt Weill*, 68.

35 Kurt Weill, "Verschiebungen in der musikalischen Produktion," in Stephen Hinton and Jürgen Schebera, eds., *Kurt Weill: Musik und Theater: Gesammelte Schriften, mit einer Auswahl von Gesprächen und Interviews* (Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1990), 45.

36 Not that points of social identification are themselves bad things, and not that social identification cannot be pursued by artistic means. But in that case, what are available for judgment are the desirability of the ends and the suitability of the means, not the music itself. If esprit de corps were the aim, there is no reason that the "return to absolute music" should be seen as a positive step since, in politics as well as in the market, what is worth doing is whatever works.

37 Rudyard Kipling, *Barrack-Room Ballads and Other Verses* (Leipzig: Heinemann and Balestier, 1892), 19.

38 Brecht, *Die Dreigroschenoper*, 251–52. The first couplet is borrowed from the translation by Mannheim and Willet (Brecht, *The Threepenny Opera*, trans. Ralph Mannheim and John Willet, in *The Threepenny Opera, Baal, and The Mother* [New York: Arcade, 1993], 85.)

39 Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht, *Die Dreigroschenoper*, score, Universal, Vienna, 2008, 44–55; Die Dreigroschenband [Lewis Ruth-Band], *Die Dreigroschenoper: The Original 1930 Recordings*, Teldec/Warner, 1990.

40 Bertolt Brecht, "Vergnügungstheater oder Lehrtheater?" in Brecht, *Schriften zum Theater*, 66.

41 Brecht, *Werke*, 2:442.

42 Lotte Lenya, "That Was a Time," *Theater Arts*, May 1956, 93.

43 See, e.g., Kurt Weill, "Bekenntnis zur Oper" [Commitment to Opera], in *Ausgewählte Schriften*, ed. David Drew (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1975), 29–31.

44 Janet de Almeida and Haroldo Barbosa, *Pra que discutir com madame?* Continental, 1945:

> Madame diz que a raça não melhora
> Que a vida piora por causa do samba
> Madame diz que o samba tem pecado
> Que o samba coitado devia acabar
>
> Madame diz que o samba tem cachaça
> Mistura de raça, mistura de cor
> Madame diz que o samba democrata
> É música barata sem nenhum valor
>
> Vamos acabar com samba
> Madame não gosta que ninguém sambe
> Vive dizendo que o samba é vexame
> Pra que discutir com Madame
>
> Tchu ru ru
> Tchu ru ru ru
> Tchu ru ru ru
> Tchu ru ru
>
> No carnaval que vem também concorro
> Meu bloco de morro vai cantar ópera
> E na avenida entre mil apertos
> Vocês vão ver gente cantando concerto
>
> Madame tem um parafuso a menos
> Só fala veneno meu Deus que horror
> O samba brasileiro, democrata
> Brasileiro na batata é que tem valor.

The order of the lyrics as presented follows João Gilberto, *João Gilberto Live in Montreux*, Elektra/Musician, 1986. I owe many thanks to Walter Garcia and Marcelo Pretto for digging up the recording from 1945.

45 See the interview with Haroldo Barbosa from *O Pasquim*, vol. 249, 1974, in Jaguar and Sérgio Augusto, eds., *O Pasquim: Antologia 1973–1974*, vol. 3 (Rio de Janeiro: Desiderata, 2009), 336. See also Tania da Costa Garcia, "Madame Existe," *Revista da Faculdade de Comunicação da FAAP*, no. 9 (2001), accessed July 22, 2018, http://www.faap.br/revista_faap/revista_facom/artigos_madame1.htm.

46 Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, *Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-flat Minor*, *Opus 23*, in Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, *Complete Collected Works*, vol. 28, ed. Aleksandr Goldenweiser (Moscow: Muzgiz, 1955).

47 Kurt Weill, "Die Oper—wohin?" in Hinton and Schebera, *Kurt Weill*, 68.

48 Antonio Carlos Jobim, *Jobim*, MCA, 1973.

49 Caetano Veloso and Gal Costa, *Domingo*, Polygram, 1967.

50 For a much more detailed version of this argument, see "Postmodernism as Semiperipheral Symptom," chapter 8 in Nicholas Brown, *Utopian Generations: The Political Horizon of Twentieth Century Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 166–92. There, the ideological element of Trópicalia was seen to be its hypostasization of contradictions, while the utopian element lay in the desires that the songs of Tropicália manage, nonemphatically, to fulfill. I was not satisfied with the second half of that argument at the time; in the terms of the present argument, it cannot be right, since the latter desire is registered in the market simply as demand. Neither of these earlier arguments is, however, precisely wrong. Rather, the line dividing the ideological and utopian aspects of Tropicália runs not between the song and the desire it satisfies but, rather, through them both. Desire, of course, far exceeds the market, which can only channelize a few desires into demand. Meanwhile, the hypostasization of contradictions is indeed ideological. But, as we shall see, even Veloso's ideology, when produced through musical form, has an oppositional aspect that it is the burden of the present argument to bring forward.

51 Roberto Schwarz, "Cultura e política, 1964–1969," in *O pai da família e outros estudos* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1978), 74.

52 Roberto Schwarz, "Verdade tropical: Um percurso de nosso tempo," in *Martinha versus Lucrécia* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2012), 99.

53 Caetano Veloso, *Verdade tropical* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1997), 117.

54 Weill, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, 54.

55 Augusto de Campos, "Conversa com Caetano Veloso," in *Balanço da bossa e outras bossas* (São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1974), 200.

56 Caetano Veloso, "Primeira feira de balanço," [1965] in Caetano Veloso, *O mundo não é chato* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2005), 143. The punning title involves the fact that "balanço" is both a musical term for something like "swing" and an account balance.
57 Veloso, "Primeira feira do balanço," 143.
58 Caetano Veloso, *Caetano Veloso*, Philips, 1969.
59 In order of reference: "Marinheiro só" (traditional); "Cambalache," by Enrique Santos Discépolo; "Chuvas de verão," by Fernando Lobo; "Carolina" by Chico Buarque; "Atrás do trio elétrico," "Os Argonautas," "Lost in the Paradise," and "The Empty Boat" by Caetano Veloso.
60 Brecht, "Das moderne Theater ist das epische Theater," 21.
61 Humberto Werneck, *Chico Buarque: Letra e música* (São Paulo: Companhia da Letras, 1989), 76.
62 Werneck, *Chico Buarque*, 80.
63 Veloso, *Verdade tropical*, 234.
64 Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil, *Tropicália 2*, Elektra, 1994. Caetano and Gil's return to their shared musical project of the late 1960s is, from the standpoint of the current argument, misnamed: it is, practically track for track (though none of the songs are repeated) a sequel not to the original *Tropicália* but rather to Veloso's "white album" of 1969.
65 I take Schwarz's "Verdade tropical" to be the definitive analysis of Veloso's public political positions. The article has been controversial. Some of the commentary has been in bad faith; some simply agrees with Veloso's politics and disagrees with Schwarz's; some feels the need, in defending Veloso's music, to defend his politics. For the present purposes, it is enough to note the gap between Veloso's public political positions and the politics entailed by his musical project.
66 White Stripes, *De Stijl*, Sympathy for the Record Industry, 2000.
67 It has been suggested that the lyrics were inspired by annoyance at the phone company, but that does not mean the lyrics have any meaning.
68 Stating the essential idea in a drum solo is itself a statement about what constitutes musical necessity, as one thing everyone can agree on is that, in most rock, drum solos are definitely not a musical necessity. One of the self-imposed rules governing *White Blood Cells* was not to use guitar solos.
69 The White Stripes' determination to use only analog recording technology, while not directly relevant to the argument at hand, might seem to suggest a primitivist or a nostalgic drive. But the preference for analog technology is purely technical. Analog technology is a victim of what Marx called "moralischer Verschleiss," something like normative wear and tear, what happens when equipment is rendered worthless not by physical wear and tear but by the appearance of equipment that is more efficient (i.e., costs

less per unit of value produced) but not necessarily better in any other way. "It's not trying to sound retro," says Jack White of the White Stripes. "It's just recognizing what was the pinnacle of recording technology": quoted in Chris Norris, "Digging for Fire: Detroit's Candy-Striped Wonder Twins Keep the Sound Stripped and the Tales Lively for *Elephant*," *Spin*, vol. 19, no. 5, May 2003, 78. Another word for "worthless" is, of course, "affordable." The famous department store guitars are also not an aesthetic decision in the immediate sense but, rather, part of the limiting conditions the White Stripes imposed on themselves to forestall the theatricality of live performance. The attraction of the cheap guitars is not the sound, which surely disappears into the pedal board, but that they do not stay in tune very well. The point is not to let them go out of tune but to impose an arbitrary constraint: one has to work constantly to keep them in tune.

70 Theo van Doesburg, *Grundbegriffe der neuen gestaltenden Kunst* (Mainz, Germany: Florian Kupferberg, [1925] 1966), 32.

71 Jennifer Egan, *A Visit from the Goon Squad* (New York: Anchor, 2011), 34.

72 White Stripes, *Hello Operator*, Sympathy for the Record Industry, 2000.

73 Blind Willie McTell, *Complete Recorded Works in Chronological Order*, vol. 1, Document, 1990. McTell's tempo is closer to Weill's foxtrot. Thinking in cut time, a quarter-note pulse is accented on offbeats rather than on backbeats, and the syncopation goes by twice as fast in relation to a quarter-note as in "Hello Operator."

74 "Blind Willie McTell Monologue on Accidents," audio clip, published February 8, 2009, accessed July 22, 2018, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5n8skkVSlzs.

75 White Stripes, *Hello Operator*; White Stripes, *Elephant*, V2, 2003; White Stripes, *Icky Thump*, Warner Brothers, 2007.

76 Robert Johnson, *Stop Breakin' Down Blues*, Vocalion, 1938; White Stripes, *The White Stripes*, Sympathy for the Record Industry, 1999; Rolling Stones, *Exile on Main Street*, Rolling Stones, 1972.

77 Blind Willie McTell, *Complete Recorded Works in Chronological Order*, vol. 2, Document, 1990; White Stripes, *Lord, Send Me an Angel*, Sympathy for the Record Industry, 2000.

78 Jazz, at least from the moment it ceases to be a genre and becomes a self-revolutionizing field, could not be brought within the White Stripes' project, in any case. An album like Oliver Nelson's *The Blues and the Abstract Truth*, which is a self-conscious attempt to explore the constraints of the blues form and rhythm changes (the chord progression underlying George Gershwin's "I Got Rhythm" and, subsequently, a great number of jazz standards), partakes in 1961 of something like the music-immanent component of the White Stripes' project. Of course, by that time a self-revolutionizing music-immanent development in jazz, supported by a paradigmatic Bour-

dieusian restricted field, had been long established. Cee-Lo Green's album *The Lady Killer* (2010) undertakes a version of the historical component of the White Stripes' project on the terrain not of rock but that of the relationship between black popular musical forms and the mass music market. "Bright Lights Bigger City," a pastiche built of elements from "Eye of the Tiger" and "Everybody's Working for the Weekend," with sonic references to Michael Jackson's "Beat It" and assembled on the bones of his "Billie Jean," which itself is built over a bass line lifted from Hall and Oates's "I Can't Go for That," which is in turn a pastiche—in the straightforward, culture industry sense—of 1960s rhythm and blues, packs about half of the pop music field circa 1982 into a single song. Incidentally, 1982 is the year the television show *Cheers*, referenced in the lyric "where everybody knows your name," debuted. The yuppie novel *Bright Lights, Big City* was published two years later. There is no musical reference that I can discern to Jimmy Reed's blues "Bright Lights, Big City," which is itself a statement about pop music circa 1982.

79 Quoted in Norris, "Digging for Fire," 78.

80 Norris, "Digging for Fire," 79.

81 The White Stripes' procedure is, however, different from euphemism. Picking arbitrarily among hundreds of possible examples: if the original lyrics to "Tutti Frutti" began "Tutti frutti, good booty," the bowdlerized recorded version we know both replaces a sexual signifier and suggests its meaning lyrically. "Ball and Biscuit" insists musically without a lyrical signifier.

82 Schumann's "Abends am Strand" (Opus 45, no. 3), a setting of Heine's "Wir saßen am Fischerhause" from *Die Heimkehr*, runs through six distinct moods in six stanzas and returns to the first with a difference in the seventh and last: Heinrich Heine, *Buch der Lieder* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1990), 119–20; Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau and Christoph Eschenbach, *Robert Schumann: Lieder*, disc 3, Deutsche Grammophon, 1994.

83 Lead Belly, *The Titanic: The Library of Congress Recordings*, vol. 4, Rounder, 1994.

4. Modernism on TV

1 Jørgen Leth, *Stopforbud* (1963), in *The Jørgen Leth Collection 30–37: Experimental Films*, DVD, Danish Film Institute, Copenhagen, 2010. The title is an English-Danish pun on a common street sign.

2 Jørgen Leth, "Working Credo," *Film Special Issue: Leth* (2002): 3.

3 Jørgen Leth, *De fem benspænd* [The Five Obstructions] (2003), and *Det perfekte menneske* [The Perfect Human] (1968), both in *The Jørgen Leth Collection 01–05: The Anthropological Films*, DVD, Danish Film Institute, Copenhagen, 2007.

4 Of course, the frame is von Trier's, and we cannot discount the possibility that who concedes is not Lars von Trier but only "Lars von Trier." Certainly, von Trier edits himself—as when he shows his own hand shaky on the vodka bottle while Leth's is steady—in an excruciating light. For our purposes, this makes no difference. As far as his films are concerned, Leth is Leth.

5 "Monsieur Rukov" is no doubt also a reference to the Danish screenwriter Mogens Rukov, who worked with von Trier on *The Element of Crime*. The Brussels *Perfect Human* contains a number of references to von Trier's *Europa* trilogy—itself centrally concerned with genre—an insiders' joke that functions formally, not politically, like the inside joke in the song "Pra que discutir com madame?" in (see chapter 3).

6 Mette Hjort and Ig Bondebjerg, "Interview with Jørgen Leth, in *The Danish Directors: Dialogues on a Contemporary National Cinema*, ed. Mette Hjort and Ig Bondebjerg (Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2003).

7 Eugene Jolas, "Proclamation," *Transition* 16–17 (June 1929): 13.

8 Hjort and Bondebjerg, *The Danish Directors*, 64, 71.

9 See Parliament of Denmark, Danish Film Act of 1997, accessed July 22, 2018, http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/text.jsp?file_id=199849.

10 Nick Hornby, "Interview with David Simon," *The Believer*, August 2007, accessed July 22, 2018, https://believermag.com/an-interview-with-david-simon. "Fuck the average reader" is not, despite appearances, a statement of elitism like Schönberg's in the previous chapter. What is rejected here is the imperative to guess at desires to be satisfied in the anonymous market.

11 Hornby, "Interview with David Simon."

12 David Marc, *Demographic Vistas: Television in American Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 14.

13 Marc, *Demographic Vistas*, 37.

14 Raymond Williams, *Television* (New York: Schocken, 1975), 87.

15 *The Wire* has been since remastered by HBO in high definition, in a 16:9 ratio. This does not change the fact that the original shots were composed for 4:3 and usually work better in 4:3. Also, as a decision made by HBO rather than Simon, it has no bearing on the significance of the original decision to go with a 4:3 ratio.

16 Antônio Cândido, "Dialectic of Malandroism," in *On Literature and Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 79–103. Hereafter, page numbers cited in parentheses in the text. However, the translation may be silently amended to match more closely Antônio Cândido, "Dialéctica da malandragem," *Revista do Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros* 8 (June 1970): 67–89.

17 Hornby, "Interview with David Simon."

18 Hegel, G.W.F. *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik III* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), 558–59.

19 David Simon, "David Simon: 'There are now two Americas. My country is a horror show." *The Guardian*, December 7, 2013, accessed July 22, 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/08/david-simon-capitalism-marx-two-americas-wire.

20 David Simon, "David Simon." Workforce participation declined dramatically after the crash of 2008, prompting mainstream concerns about "secular stagnation." But when the second season of *The Wire* aired in 2003, the unemployment rate was around 6 percent, and even under those relatively benign conditions the "reserve army"—the unemployed, the involuntarily part time, and the "marginally attached"—numbered some fifteen million souls, a figure that does not include people who are not considered part of the workforce because they are not presently looking for work.

Epilogue

1 Franz Kafka, "Die Sorge des Hausvaters," in *Erzählungen* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1965), 171.

2 Roberto Schwarz, "Worries of a Family Man," trans. Nicholas Brown, *Mediations* 23, no. 1 (Fall 2007): 21–25.

3 Schwarz, "Worries of a Family Man," 23.

4 Kafka, "Die Sorge des Hausvaters," 171.

5 Schwarz, "Worries of a Family Man," 24.

6 Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), 143.

7 Kafka, "Die Sorge des Hausvaters," 171.

8 Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, 122–23.

9 Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, 123.

10 Schwarz, "Worries of a Family Man," 23.