The European Avant-Garde

The European Avant-Garde:
Text and Image

Edited by

Selena Daly and Monica Insinga

**CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS**

P U B L I S H I N G

TO OUR FAMILIES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF IMAGES

Editors' Preface

Selena Daly and Monica Insinga

This collection of articles stems from a conference of the same name held at the Humanities Institute of Ireland, University College Dublin (UCD), on 25–26 September 2009. This interdisciplinary, postgraduate conference involved Masters and PhD students, as well as early career researchers from Ireland, the United Kingdom, Italy, Poland and Austria. The papers engaged with both literary and artistic subjects, across geographical, linguistic and disciplinary boundaries, and various aspects of the English, Irish, German, French, Italian, Spanish, and Polish movements were explored. This breadth of approaches is reflected in the selection of articles included in the present volume. The conference was generously funded by the UCD Graduate School of Arts and Celtic Studies, through the Competitive Fund for Graduate Student Conferences 2008–2009. This was a most successful one-and-a-half day event, offering opportunities for stimulating discussion and debate as well as facilitating new research collaborations across disciplinary boundaries.

This volume includes re-worked versions of the contributions presented at the conference, although not all presented papers are featured here. All articles were carefully selected by a panel of established scholars. The volume is greatly enriched by the introductory article written by Prof. John J. White, which probes the concept and theory of the avant-garde and the place of avant-garde studies in the twenty-first century. Prof. White is Emeritus Professor of German and Comparative Literature at King's College London and is one of the foremost experts on the European avant-garde, particularly in the German and Italian context.

Avant-garde studies can be enhanced and developed through dialogue with other disciplines, such as translation, gender, exile and comparative studies. Thus, the volume is divided into four sections: Representations of the Body; Translating the Avant-Garde, Identity and Exile; and finally, Comparative Perspectives and the Legacy of the Avant-Garde. The three articles that comprise the first section all examine aspects of surrealism with relation to questions of the body and gender. Three distinct perspectives on the interaction of translation and avant-garde authors are

offered in the second section. The articles examine the experience of the avant-garde author as translator, in the case of Ezra Pound; the avant-garde author as the object of the translation process, with relation to James Joyce; and the avant-garde author as an active participant in the translation of his own works from one language to another, as is the case for Filippo Tommaso Marinetti. The third section presents two articles which consider the question of exile in the Irish context, while the third explores issues of identity in 1920s Berlin. The first two articles of the volume's fourth and final section probe the interplay and relationship between the verbal and the visual, first in the context of Cubism and Futurism, followed by an examination of Polish avant-garde art and literature. The final two articles consider the legacy of the avant-garde in the fields of poetry and theatre, in Europe and beyond.

There are many people who have assisted us throughout this project and whom we would like to thank. Firstly, we must express our sincere gratitude to Dr. Marc Caball, former Director of the Graduate School of Arts and Celtic Studies at UCD, whose funding of the conference provided the starting point for this endeavour. Thanks are also due to Barbara Gannon, Manager of the Graduate School of Arts and Celtic Studies at UCD and to Valerie Norton, Manager of the UCD Humanities Institute of Ireland, whose support and assistance throughout the organization of the conference proved invaluable. We would also like to thank Prof. John White for giving so generously of his time and expertise in becoming involved with this project. We are truly indebted to him. On both a personal and a professional level, we would like to sincerely thank the staff of the School of Languages and Literatures and the School of English and Drama and Film at UCD, who supported us during our doctoral research in that institution. Acknowledgement is also due to the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences, who funded us both in our PhD studies. Monica would also like to thank Prof. Gerardine Meaney, Director of the Graduate Research and Education Programme in "Gender, Culture and Identity," for her continuous support during the realization of this project. We are very grateful, too, to our panel of peer-reviewers who shared their knowledge and valued judgements with us. Unfortunately, not all articles submitted for inclusion in the volume could be accommodated. We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who submitted an article for consideration.

We hope that the present volume will prove to be a valuable additon to avant-garde studies, by highlighting the cross-fertilization possible between the avant-garde and other disciplines of the humanities, in what we believe to be a reciprocal process of exchange and enlightenment.

INTRODUCTION

JOHN J. WHITE

Almost half a century ago, Renato Poggioli, author of one of the earliest studies of the avant-garde, lamented the lack of scholarly work on the subject: first in *Teoria dell'arte d'avanguardia*[1] and subsequently in *The Theory of the Avant-Garde.*[2] In a prologue to the latter, he reiterated his concerns about academe's general failure to address "one of the most typical and important phenomena of modern culture: so-called avant-garde art."[3] Even the few who have done so, he noted, "have not paid much attention to its essence, let alone its manifestations."[4] Fortunately the situation has changed for the better since these remarks were first published. From the late 1960s onwards, Poggioli's somewhat problematic[5] contribution to what was to become an ever-expanding international Avant-Garde Debate triggered a series of correctives and reinterpretations of the phenomenon. A list of works that have transformed our conception of the avant-garde would now have to include:

> *Ahead of the Game: Four Versions of the Avant-Garde*; *Theorie der Avantgarde*; *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*; *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism*; *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant Guerre, and the Language of Rupture*; *Faces of Modernity: Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch*; *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*; *Theorizing the Avant-Garde: Modernism, Expressionism, and the Problem of Postmodernity* and *The European Avant-Garde.*[6]

The definite article in some of the above titles is, however, potentially misleading. Many early commentators clearly felt a need to invoke such an overarching entity, but there neither is—nor ever has been—a single monolithic macro-movement of the sort which talk of "*the* avant-garde" implies. Nevertheless, even manifesto-writers seemed wedded at the time to the idea that the foundational avant-gardes displayed a unity of purpose and were largely in agreement about their core objectives and literary approaches.[7] In reality, as the contributions to the present volume demonstrate, what is usually referred to as "*the* avant-garde" was merely a convenient umbrella term for a series of heterogeneous experimental

tendencies, mainly the work of a handful of innovative writers belonging to loosely organized groups espousing often short-lived avant-garde causes. Even the Italian Futurists departed from their manifesto programme, although it had been repeatedly identified in addresses written by the movement's theoretician-cum-spokesman, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti.

Avant-Garde Studies and Avant-Gardes

The principal literary avant-gardes of the early twentieth century, the main concern of the contributions to the present volume, ranged from broad protean movements (Italian and Russian Futurism, Expressionism, the *Sturmkreis*, DADA, Surrealism, Vorticism and Constructivism) to small, independent groups like the Cracow Avangarda, Yugoslav Zenitism, and the disparate band of Russian exile writers coming together under the auspices of Georgia's Company 41°. What frequently falls under the heading "*the* avant-garde" in reality embraces far more than the core of European and Slavic avant-gardes of the first three decades of the twentieth century. And when used adjectivally, the term tends to be applied indiscriminately to a wide spectrum of linguistic and typographical innovations, text + image developments, ingeniously contrived new literary genres, various forms of collage and montage, experimental features in many cases harnessed to radically divergent political and social agendas.

While in-depth studies of the iconic avant-gardes of Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and North America have long been available, specialized surveys and anthologies of their Czech, Balkan, Dutch, Hungarian, Polish, Russian and Ukrainian counterparts have recently contributed to our picture of the international scope of avant-gardism. In their turn, Avant-Garde Studies (at one stage focused on the salient works of individual writers, dramatists, painters, sculptors and film-makers) have moved on from analysing the key literary achievements of single avant-gardes to the point where the discipline nowadays interfaces with comparative literature, cultural history, literary semiotics, psychological exegesis, gender-, translation- and reception-studies.[8] Reciprocating such progress on a broad front, new specialist journals devoted to the international avant-garde and detailed histories of neglected satellite movements have expanded the scope of research into the genesis of various avant-gardes, as well as their subsequent migration to, and reception in, other countries. These are, of course, matters guaranteed to resurrect the issue of *priorità*, the old chestnut of which avant-garde first championed specific literary innovations, invariably a question of national

honour when it comes to the self-presentation of the "historical" avant-gardes and the secondary literature the early nationalistic avant-gardes tended to encourage. In contrast to such parochialism, Avant-Garde Studies have by and large reinvented themselves by diversifying their scope while at the same time reaching out to a multiplicity of adjacent disciplines and new methodologies.

Despite the numerous paradigm shifts that have enriched the discipline, certain issues have continued to shape Avant-Garde Studies during the decades after Poggioli published *The Theory of the Avant-Garde.* These include: (i) the concept's history, shifting connotations and socio-political implications; (ii) the early avant-gardes' relationship to modernism and, to a lesser extent, postmodernism;[9] (iii) the question of appropriate methodology, vital in the case of work on uncharted avant-gardes; and (iv) the extent to which canonical avant-gardes need to be interpreted in terms of their historical, political and social contexts. Some of the questions central to these four issues are briefly sketched out in the following sections.

The Conceptual History of the Term "Avant-Garde"

Studies of the avant-garde often pay particular attention to the first attested use of the term. In *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Poggioli points to a passage in *De la mission de l'art et du rôle des artistes*.[10] According to it,

> art, the expression of society, manifests, in its highest soaring, the most advanced social tendencies: it is the forerunner and the revealer. Therefore, to know whether art worthily fulfills its proper mission as initiator, whether the artist is truly of the avant-garde, one must know where Humanity is going.[11]

The passage is both instructive and prophetic, for as Poggioli explains, "it stresses not only […] the interdependence of art and society, but also the doctrine of art as an instrument for social action and reform, a means of revolutionary propaganda and agitation," and shows that "the avant-garde image originally remained subordinate, even within the sphere of art, to the ideals of a radicalism which was not cultural but political."[12]

The original connotations of the "avant-garde" trope situate it somewhere between "the two avant-gardes,"[13] viz. the "aesthetic" and the "political." Poggioli and Peter Bürger each offer detailed chronological accounts of the shifting connotations of the term, from its activist and moralistic beginnings, via the events of 1848 through the nineteenth

century's anarchic phase to the often-totalitarian instrumentalization of literature in the first half of the twentieth century. The political concept of an avant-garde continued to retain a monopoly thanks to the proliferation of broadsheets, manifestos and other propaganda-distributing organs of mass radicalization. With Italian Futurism, the manifesto became the literary avant-gardes' communication medium of first choice. Yet as the substantial body of political manifestos included in the 2006 edition of Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's *Critical Writings* demonstrates, literary manifestos and their political equivalents soon became virtually inseparable due to the parallel propaganda role both of them played during the 1912–1915 period. In the early twentieth century, with "the relationship between the artistic and the political avant-garde […] partially re-established,"[14] the relation between political (reformist and revolutionary) and aesthetic avant-gardism was effectively rebalanced. From then on, the popular image of literary avant-gardes—that of introverted artistic groups preoccupied with their private aesthetic agendas and achievements—arguably calls for a reassessment to take account of the new avant-garde experimental version of an ancillary form of *littérature engagée* bringing its energies to bear on contemporary socio-political and other related agendas. Even during the Irredentist and Interventionist phases of Futurism, political and aesthetic avant-gardes were by no means mutually exclusive; often their activities had, of urgent necessity, to be collaborative. By implication, therefore, the first account of the "terminological ups-and-downs" of the aesthetic and political avant-gardes[15] requires some revisiting; so too does the received wisdom concerning the avant-garde's declared mission to bridge the gap between art and life.[16] The situation in later decades had become more fluid than the available theories suggest.

As the antagonistic/iconoclastic avant-gardes gradually began to rattle their sabres, the concept's military connotations inevitably became more than rhetorical posturing. Futurism's early manifestos are riddled with images of widespread destruction, slaughter, violence and annihilation, activities, which would become self-fulfilling prophecies during the 1914–1919 period. With the exception of their tireless pro-war propaganda, the Futurists reserved their most vitriolic attacks for the anti-*passéisme* campaign. Yet Italian Futurism's constant demonizing of their country's cult of its past cultural grandeur is untypical of most of the avant-gardes of the time. Adopting the pose of literature's vanguard, the movement soon became trapped in rearguard campaigns against the cult of the past. Fortunately, as the material in *Ahead of the Game*[17] demonstrates, iconoclastic aggression was rarely the defining feature of other avant-gardes. Indeed, many of the avant-gardes explored in the present volume

shared the progressive avant-garde's refusal to be continually haunted by the past, preferring instead to use literature as a constructive method of preparing the way via a better present to a utopian future. Nowadays, if there is rivalry between the various avant-gardes competing for public allegiance, it is with like-minded movements with similarly positive agendas, not with those cultural extremists attacking the allegedly debilitating cult of the poetry and painting of bygone ages.

The Avant-Garde and Literary Modernism

There has been a tendency in recent decades to define the historical avant-gardes by comparing and contrasting them with modernist literature. In *Theorizing the Avant-Garde*, his groundbreaking study of German Expressionism, which is usually thought of as the "historical modernist movement par excellence,"[18] Richard Murphy responded to the challenge by replacing the "modernism" label with the provocative term "the expressionist avant-garde."[19]

The extent to which permissively broad categories like "*the* avant-garde" and "modernism" are bandied about persuaded Murphy to "interrogate" Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde* by testing some of its broad-brush assumptions within the context of a larger corpus of avant-garde and modernist features than Bürger's and by presenting hitherto unexplored evidence suggesting the possibility of an amalgam of avant-garde and modernist features within the one movement. Murphy's approach was predicated on the following assumptions:

> The avant-garde is a much more ambiguous and heterogeneous phenomenon than Bürger […] would sometimes have us believe. More typically the avant-garde serves as the political and revolutionary cutting-edge of the broader movement of modernism, from which it frequently appears to be trying with difficulty to free itself. Modernism and the avant-garde often seem to be locked into a dialectical relationship in which the avant-garde questions the blind spots and unreflected presuppositions of modernism, while modernism itself reacts to this critique […] by attempting to take into account [in] its own poetics some of the spectacular failures and successes of the historical avant-garde.[20]

Unfortunately, Avant-Garde Studies had often been faced with a more fundamental challenge than the narrowness of any illustrative corpus. The challenge came from a familiar general tendency to treat "avant-garde" and "modernism" as virtually synonymous concepts. According to *After the Great Divide*:

> Much confusion could have been avoided if critics had paid closer
> attention to distinctions that need to be made between avantgarde and
> modernism. Both may be understood as representing artistic emanations
> from the sensibility of modernity, but from a European perspective it
> makes little sense [to lump them together]. While there are areas of overlap
> between the tradition of the avantgarde and that of modernism, the overall
> aesthetic and political differences are too pervasive to be ignored.[21]

When made, Huyssen's remarks were timely. As is clear from the sub-
titles of the studies listed at the outset of the present Introduction,
discussions of the avant-garde were often muddied by its confusion with
modernism. For example, the Foreword to Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-
Garde* dismisses Poggioli's study as "at best a theory of modernism."[22]
Yet modernism is arguably as elusive as the term "avant-garde" itself.
Admittedly, most scholars do not nowadays treat "avant-garde" and
"modernism" as if they were synonymous concepts. And, to be a useful
tool, the juxtaposition of *the* avant-garde—*any* avant-garde—and
modernism needs to entail much more than a mechanical listing of the
similarities and differences between the two. Rather than confining itself
to such ex cathedra pronouncements as "[*the* avant-garde is] a later more
radical and more advanced phase of modernism"[23] or modernism "never
conveys that sense of universal and hysterical negation so characteristic of
the avantgarde,"[24] prudent juxtaposition can still offer insights into the
two-way traffic between the two. In addition, as Murphy demonstrates in
the case of German Expressionism, playing the avant-garde off against
modernism can serve as a form of "reciprocal illumination" (Bertolt
Brecht's term), inasmuch as it can help bring out some of the differences
referred to in *After the Great Divide*. But, rather than seeing entire
movements in terms of antithetical relationships, Murphy's trail-blazing
Theorizing the Avant-Garde adopts the innovative approach of probing
Expressionist works *at micro-level* to ascertain whether even a movement
assumed to be quintessentially modernist can share "many of those key
features, in particular the revolutionary, counter-discursive and anti-
institutional functions, by which Bürger defines the historical avant-
garde."[25] Putting aside categorical assumptions about monolithic
movements opens up the way to a more differentiated understanding of
their defining features. As a result, the avant-garde vs. modernism debate
is reconfigured, allowing Avant-Garde Studies to move from generalities
to specifics, specifics which, in the case of often unique avant-garde
literary experiments, are of the essence.
    Two of the principal contrasts posited between the historical avant-
gardes and modernism derive from the following hypotheses: "the

European avant-garde movements can be defined as an attack on the status of art in bourgeois society" and it is "the intent of the avant-garde movements to reintegrate art in the praxis of life."[26] These repeatedly echoed avant-gardist goals stand in stark contrast to modernism's alleged elitism, aestheticism and somewhat ambiguous cult of the autonomy of art. Murphy explains them in the context of the avant-garde vs. modernism debate with the following gloss: "the central goal of the avant-garde […] is […] to lead aesthetic experience out of its isolation—imprisoned by autonomy—in order to drive it back into the real world, where it can play its part in the transformation of everyday life."[27] Although Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde* only mentions Italian Futurism in passing,[28] its emphasis on the attempt to dissolve the borders between art and life has its equivalent in the Futurists' emphasis on "the necessary intervention of artists in public affairs" and their programme of "art-as-action."[29] In the context of Europe's build-up to the First World War, any attempt to dissolve the borders between art and life, no matter how this goal was originally understood, could only be achieved by Futurism entering the public arena in a direct and combative manner. This was evidently further than the German Expressionist writers were prepared to go, or Wilhelmine censorship would permit; and in both cases the goal of bridging the gap was fraught with difficulties. Bürger and Murphy each refer to the *failure* of the avant-garde project in this respect. However, Murphy suggests that there were still some positive outcomes:

> without destroying the institution of art the avant-garde did succeed in raising important questions concerning the validity of 'conventional' artistic norms and criteria, both with respect to the way they are held in place by the institution and the way that the work of art in turn fulfills an affirmative or legitimizing function within the society from which it emerges.[30]

This must be cold comfort to anyone seeking to evaluate the historical avant-gardes' achievements. Most interested parties judge the efficacy of the historical avant-gardes and the newer avant-gardes of recent decades more by Bürger's concepts of "the negation of the autonomy of art by the avant-garde" and "the avant-gardiste protest, whose aim is to reintegrate art into the praxis of life"[31] than in terms of "an avant-garde for social change,"[32] better known for its failures than its successes.

Theorizing the Avant-Garde: Developments and Achievements

Although Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde* retains its hold on Avant-Garde Studies, there have been numerous attempts in recent years to supplement currently available methodologies. For example, a cultural history of the European avant-garde argued for "dialectical negotiation between Marxist and Freudian brands of materialism as a model for the theoretical handling of a history of the avant-garde," pointing to Surrealism as "a prime example of how an at once politically and psychoanalytically attuned version of cultural history can work."[33] Going well beyond Surrealism, the individual case-studies in Andrew Webber's *The European Avant-Garde* make a cogent case for psychoanalytical approaches to those avant-garde works demonstrably influenced by psychoanalysis, as well as a number of works not normally treated within this framework. Literary semiotics is another discipline that has been brought to bear on the historical avant-gardes in recent years.[34] However, semiotic interpretations of avant-garde works have occasionally been marred by methodological inconsistency, especially concerning the relative merits of Saussurean (semiological) and Peircean (semiotic) terminology as applied to specific forms of text + image experimentation. While some historical avant-gardes display a proto-semiotic grasp of the advantages of using innovative sign-systems in their "telegraphic" experiments,[35] further attention needs to be paid to the rationale for bringing a specific semiotic theory to bear on a particular form of avant-garde experiment. The problem seems to result from a failure to learn from prior research in the field. Fortunately, this is not a charge that can be brought against Translation Studies, a discipline now often used in the analysis of avant-garde texts. Some of the strategies adopted here are comparable to Murphy's method of playing off avant-garde and modernist features against one another as a form of "reciprocal illumination." As recent conference papers on the avant-garde have shown, when different translations of the same text are juxtaposed in the interests of semantic analysis or a specific translation is compared with the source text originally in another language, the approach generates a mode of linguistic understanding which still has much to tell us about cultural transmission and reception of individual avant-gardes. As the translator's note to Marinetti's *Critical Writings* showed, important issues are invariably at stake. And they also are in the case of the contextualization of any given avant-garde or literary movement.

Avant-Gardes and their Contexts

"Only by setting the avant-garde within the broad context of cultural politics and the consciousness industry […] can we obtain a full understanding of [it]," according to Jochen Schulte-Sasse's Foreword to *Theory of the Avant-Garde*.[36] The two intellectual contexts signalled (cultural politics and the consciousness industry) may not be the ones someone from the twenty-first century—or for that matter anyone interested in the territorial and historical contexts of the foundational avant-gardes—would automatically think of when the issue of contextualization is under consideration. The names Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Brecht, Alfred Döblin, Georg Lukács, and Karl Marx figure repeatedly in both Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde* and Murphy's *Theorizing the Avant-Garde*, but this generally remains in relation to collage, montage, and Bürger's overarching concern with periodization, never with reference to the fact that political and artistic exile are also contexts. The words "exile" and "contextualization" appear in neither work's Index (perhaps because the broader notion of "historicization" had already pre-empted the available conceptual niche). The fact that in the twentieth century exile was a virtually permanent state for members of both literary and political avant-gardes is seldom deemed a matter for consideration. The space devoted in the present volume to writers whose works are the products of various forms of exile is a most welcome feature, although Exile Studies owe Avant-Garde Studies a more lucid typology of exile contexts than that which is currently available. Such an omission is surprising, given that exile was so frequently the lot of the avant-garde writer—either exile from totalitarian countries unwilling to tolerate any radical form of aesthetic avant-gardism or those ready to wage war on all forms of politically avant-garde activity. One brief discussion of "The avant-garde and politics"[37] does, however, bring some relevant perspectives to bear on the matter of exile's importance for, and impact on the behaviour of, the avant-garde in exile.

Exile Studies is, of course, not the only discipline that Avant-Garde Studies still has something to learn from. Imagology, as the present study demonstrates, is able to open up new dimensions to the comparative study of seemingly disparate forms of visual imagery, images with implications for Gender-, Cinema-, Drama- and Visual Arts-Studies. What is more, the history of avant-garde typography has much to tell us about the print-technological aspect of the development of various visual avant-gardes, just as cognitive psychology brings insights into the disturbing images that haunt us from avant-garde paintings, collages and montages. As all this

shows, Avant-Garde Studies is conceivably on the brink of undergoing another paradigm shift, as it further adapts by becoming a flourishing part of a further series of comparative disciplines.

Notes

[1] Renato Poggioli, *Teoria dell'arte d'avanguardia* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1962).
[2] Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Gerald Fitzgerald (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1968).
[3] Poggioli, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 1.
[4] Poggioli, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 1.
[5] For details, see Jochen Schulte-Sasse, foreword to *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, by Peter Bürger (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), vii–x.
[6] Calvin Tomkins, *Ahead of the Game: Four Versions of the Avant-Garde* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1965); Peter Bürger, *Theorie der Avantgarde.* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1974); Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984); Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985); Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986); Marjorie Perloff, *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant Guerre, and the Language of Rupture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); Matei Calinescu, *Faces of Modernity: Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996); Richard Murphy, *Theorizing the Avant-Garde: Modernism, Expressionism, and the Problem of Postmodernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Andrew J. Webber, *The European Avant-Garde, 1900–1940* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004).
[7] For the case against monolithic conceptions of *the* avant-garde, see Webber, *European Avant-Garde*, 8–9; Murphy, *Theorizing the Avant-Garde*, 5–7; and, on the challenges of classification, Poggioli, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 17–40.
[8] For example: Bogdana Carpenter, *The Poetic Avant-Garde in Poland, 1918–1939* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983); Peter Drews, *Die slawische Avantgarde und der Westen: Die Programme der russischen, polnischen und tschechischen literarischen Avantgarde und ihr europäischer Kontext* (Munich: Fink, 1983); Oleh S. Ilnytzkyj, *Ukrainian Futurism, 1914–1930: A Historical and Critical Study.* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Dietrich Scheunemann, ed., *Avant-Garde/Neo-Avant-Garde* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005); Webber, *European Avant-Garde*, as well as Northwestern University Press's Avant-Garde and Modernism Studies series, Rodopi's Avant Garde Critical Studies, and Edinburgh University's Avant-Garde Project. In the light of all this, the nostalgic call for a return to "the kind of concrete analysis of individual texts that has become rather rare in the discussion [of the avant-garde]" (Murphy, *Theorizing the Avant-Garde*, 4) seems unfair to the authors of the secondary literature on individual avant-garde works, especially the detailed case studies.

[9] On postmodernism's relationship to the early avant-gardes, see Krauss *The Originality of the Avant-Garde*, Huyssen *After the Great Divide*, and Murphy, *Theorizing the Avant-Garde*.

[10] Gabriel-Désiré Laverdant, *De la mission de l'art et du rôle des artistes* (Paris: Bureaux de "la Phalange", 1845).

[11] English translation in Poggioli, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 9.

[12] Poggioli, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 9. An alternative account of the passage's significance is given in Webber, *European Avant-Garde*, 4–5.

[13] Poggioli, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 8.

[14] Poggioli, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 12.

[15] Poggioli, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 5–12.

[16] Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 51.

[17] Tomkins, *Ahead of the Game*.

[18] David Bathrick and Andreas Huyssen, eds., *Modernity and the Text: Revisions of German Modernism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 8.

[19] Murphy, *Theorizing the Avant-Garde*, 4ff.

[20] Murphy, *Theorizing the Avant-Garde*, 3.

[21] Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, 162–63, abbreviated.

[22] Schulte-Sasse, foreword, xiv–xv.

[23] Calinescu, *Faces of Modernity*, 96.

[24] Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, 163.

[25] Murphy, *Theorizing the Avant-Garde*, 3.

[26] Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 49 and 87, respectively.

[27] Murphy, *Theorizing the Avant-Garde*, 11.

[28] In note 4 to his chapter "Theory of the Avant-garde and Critical Literary Science," Bürger states that "the concept of the historical avant-garde movements used here applies primarily to Dadaism and early Surrealism but also and equally to the Russian avant-garde after the October revolution […]. With certain limitations that would have to be determined through concrete analyses, [it is] also true of Italian Futurism and German Expressionism." (*Theory of the Avant-Garde,* 109).

[29] Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *Critical Writings*, ed. Günter Berghaus, trans. Doug Thompson (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006), 63 and 152, respectively.

[30] Murphy, *Theorizing the Avant-Garde*, 11.

[31] Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 47 and 22, respectively.

[32] Murphy, *Theorizing the Avant-Garde*, 35.

[33] Webber, *European Avant-Garde*, 13–14.

[34] Witness Johanna Drucker, *The Visible Word: Experimental Typography and Modern Art, 1909–1923* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994); Helga Finter, *Semiotik des Avantgardetextes: Gesellschaftliche und poetische Erfahrung im italienischen Futurismus* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1980).

[35] John J. White, "Marinetti's Experiments with Acoustic and Visual Poetry: A New Semiotic Approach," *Modernist Cultures* 5, no. 2 (2010).

[36] Schulte-Sasse, foreword, xxx.

[37] Poggioli, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 94–101.

Works Cited

Bathrick, David, and Andreas Huyssen, eds. *Modernity and the Text: Revisions of German Modernism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.

Blum, Cinzia Sartini. *The Other Modernism: Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's Futurist Fiction of Power*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.

Bohn, Willard. *The Other Futurism: Futurist Activity in Venice, Padua, and Verona.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004.

Bürger, Peter. *Theorie der Avantgarde.* Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1974.

—. *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. Translated by Michael Shaw. Foreword by Jochen Schulte-Sasse. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984.

Calinescu, Matei. *Faces of Modernity: Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.

Carpenter, Bogdana. *The Poetic Avant-Garde in Poland, 1918–1939*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983.

Deréky, Pál, ed. *Lesebuch der ungarischen Avantgardeliteratur (1915–1930)*. Vienna: Böhlau, 1996.

Drews, Peter. *Die slawische Avantgarde und der Westen: Die Programme der russischen, polnischen und tschechischen literarischen Avantgarde und ihr europäischer Kontext*. Munich: Fink, 1983.

Drucker, Johanna. *The Visible Word: Experimental Typography and Modern Art*, *1909–1923*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994.

Finter, Helga. *Semiotik des Avantgardetextes: Gesellschaftliche und poetische Erfahrung im italienischen Futurismus*. Stuttgart: Metzler, 1980.

Folejewski, Zbigniew, ed. *Futurism and its Place in the Development of Modern Poetry: A Comparative Study and Anthology*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1980.

Foster, Hal. *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996.

Hardt, Manfred, ed. *Literarische Avantgarden*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1989.

Huyssen, Andreas. *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.

Ilnytzkyj, Oleh S. *Ukrainian Futurism, 1914–1930: A Historical and Critical Study*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.

Krauss, Rosalind E. *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985.

Laverdant, Gabriel-Désiré. *De la mission de l'art et du rôle des artistes*. Paris: Bureaux de "la Phalange," 1845.

Lüdke, W. Martin, ed. *"Theorie der Avantgarde": Antworten auf Peter Bürgers Bestimmung von Kunst und bürgerlicher Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1976.

Marinetti, Filippo Tommaso. *Critical Writings*. Edited by Günter Berghaus. Translated by Doug Thompson. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006.

Murphy, Richard. *Theorizing the Avant-Garde: Modernism, Expressionism, and the Problem of Postmodernity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Perloff, Marjorie. *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant Guerre, and the Language of Rupture.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.

Poggioli, Renato. *Teoria dell'arte d'avanguardia.* Bologna: Il Mulino, 1962.

—. *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*. Translated by Gerald Fitzgerald. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968.

Osborne, Peter. *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-Garde.* London: Verso, 1995.

Scheunemann, Dietrich, ed., *Avant-Garde/Neo-Avant-Garde*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005.

Schulte-Sasse, Jochen, foreword to *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, by Peter Bürger, vii–xlvii. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984.

Tomkins, Calvin. *Ahead of the Game: Four Versions of the Avant-Garde*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965.

Weightman, John. *The Concept of the Avant-Garde: Exploration in Modernism*. London: Alcove, 1973.

Webber, Andrew J. *The European Avant-Garde, 1900–1940*. Cambridge: Polity, 2004.

White, John J. "Marinetti's Experiments with Acoustic and Visual Poetry: A New Semiotic Approach." *Modernist Cultures* 5, no. 2 (2010): 195–217.

PART I:

REPRESENTATIONS OF THE BODY

CHAPTER ONE

CORPOREAL CHAOS:
VIOLATED BODIES IN THE WORK
OF SALVADOR DALÍ

FIONA NOBLE

In the work of Salvador Dalí, the body is frequently violated. It is fragmented, decomposed, distorted. Body parts are removed; extra body parts are added. And it is precisely this array of mutilated corporeal images, which has provoked critics to define Dalí's work as misogynistic. Such criticism is indeed viable. However, it constitutes an overly simplistic understanding, which ignores the nuances and complexities surrounding bodily representation in his work. Re-examining the oversights of such criticism, I argue that Dalí's rendering of the body heralds both creative and political potential. By violating the bodies of women, of men, and of those who defy the binary categories of gender, the artist seeks to dismantle the restrictive frameworks of established social order. Though admittedly demonstrating a degree of misogyny towards the female body, Dalí's exercising of violence against the body in all its forms indicates that there is far more at stake in his depiction of corporeal chaos.

The first section of this article examines Dalí's creative process, the paranoiac critical method, and its product, the double image, in order to demonstrate the creative and critical potential in the ambivalence, which dominates the Catalan artist's work. In the following section, I study the evidence pointing to Dalí's misogyny, exploring the way in which this ambivalence is linked to woman through the image of the praying mantis, and detailing woman's role in the creative process. The third section comprises a detailed analysis of Dalí's representation of the body in his earlier works, and of the fragmented forms, both male and female, which dominate his 1929 paintings, with the intention of exposing the limits of readings which deem his work to be misogynistic. Finally, I argue that Dalí's challenge to traditional body representation constitutes a brutal assault on the social structures through which bodies are divided into one

category or another, demonstrating this with a consideration of the image of the androgynous figure. In so doing, I will show that Dalí's representation of the body is more than a misogynistic attack on woman; rather, it is an attempt to subvert social order, which seeks to liberate the body from the rigid, restrictive structures through which it is suppressed and contained.

Creativity in Contradiction

The bodies depicted by Dalí are infused with ambivalence and contradiction. Both factors have long been regarded as characteristic not only of the Surrealist movement in particular, but also of the avant-garde in general.[1] Avant-garde theorist Peter Bürger considers contradiction in terms of the failed avant-gardiste desire for the emancipation of individual elements from the work of art as a whole.[2] By advocating the expansion of hermeneutics so as to incorporate the contradictory relationships between individual components as constitutive of the whole, Bürger prioritizes the manifestation of ambivalence in the finished artistic product. In the work of Dalí however, ambivalence is of crucial importance throughout the entire process of creative production: from the conception of the artwork, through the creative process, to the final product. Formulated for the most part in his essay, "El burro podrido," Dalí's paranoiac critical method is at once inspired by, and a criticism of, the Surrealist method of automatism. While both depend upon the unconscious for the production of artistic— literary and visual—images, Dalí proclaims that his method, unlike the passive automatism of Surrealism, requires the active mental participation of a paranoid mind. Dalí viewed paranoia as a means of universally validating the individual's obsessions and anxieties, and so his method utilized the external world as illustration and proof of the reality of the mind. It is precisely for this reason that Dalí states his admiration for the paranoiac who is able to ascertain swift and subtle connections, immune to contradiction, rejection, or the application of psychological analysis.[3] Embracing ambivalence and contradiction, these paranoiac connections serve to destabilize the framework of rationality imposed upon the individual by society.

The material manifestations of this method are to be found in the plethora of double and multiple images, which dominate the work of Dalí. The double image consists in the portrayal of an object in such a way that it can be viewed simultaneously as a completely different object, without any variation, deformation or abnormality.[4] Dalí proposes that the desired outcome of this is to systematize confusion in order to discredit the real,

material world.[5] The double image fulfils this desire, in the sense that the viewer is forced to contemplate the conjoining of two or more entirely separate and seemingly unrelated objects. His creative process and its products are thus equally invested in the consecration of ambivalence and contradiction as a new means of perception. This is constituted primarily by the celebration of irrationality and the incongruity of diverse components promoted by these images, which force the spectator to acknowledge the validity of the apparently absurd associations conceived by the paranoiac. An excellent example of the double image can be seen in *The Lugubrious Game* (1929); a snake, a rabbit and a bird are but three of the images contained within the small section at the centre of the painting. The double image is in fact a multiple image, which is only limited by what Dalí terms the individual's paranoiac capability.[6] Dependent on the spectator's ability to perceive these images, the paranoiac critical method is thus a method of production and of reception, employed by the artist as he creates the artwork, and by the spectator as he views it.

This dual function of the artist's creative process, coupled with his fusion of the passive nature of automatism with the active mental capacity required to create paranoid associations, is illustrative of the collapse of extremes desired by the Surrealists. Dalí's disputes both with individual Surrealists, and with the movement and its ideals, have been well documented.[7] However, this sought-after collapse of extremes constitutes a common goal for both the artist and the movement. In his "Second Manifesto of Surrealism", André Breton declares the movement's objective as the location of the

> certain point of the mind at which life and death, the real and the imagined, past and future, the communicable and the incommunicable, high and low, cease to be perceived as contradictions.[8]

This desire for the dissolution of contradiction is complemented by the expression, in the same manifesto, of Surrealism's point of departure as "the 'colossal abortion' of the Hegelian system."[9] Breton urges his fellow Surrealists to abandon the use of dialectical thinking: "at the point where we found it *the dialectical method, in its Hegelian form, was inapplicable for us*."[10] The Surrealists' refusal of the dialectic overlooks a key factor contributing to their artistic production: that the tension and interplay between two extremes is precisely what allows for both creative and critical potential. In addition, Breton's failure to acknowledge the improbability of achieving such an objective is evident in his repeated attempts throughout the manifesto to answer critics who deem the movement to be idealist.[11] This corresponds in turn to the avant-garde