

ALEXANDER KLUGE: MONTAGE FILM AS CULTURAL CRITICISM

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By

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ABSTRACT

The films and theoretical writings of Alexander Kluge have been receiving greater attention from the North American German Studies community in the 1980's. This thesis is designed to give the reader a general introduction to the intellectual context of his writing and film-making, as well as provide an analysis of the relationship between the structure and content of one of his more recent films, "Der Angriff der Gegenwart auf die übrige Zeit", and his theories about the structure and content of the individual and collective societal consciousness.

The first part of the thesis deals with Kluge's association with the Institut für Sozialforschung, more commonly known as the Frankfurt School, and their particular brand of marxist social and cultural theory. The work of the Frankfurt School's most noted scholar, Theodor W. Adorno, is used as a reference work with which Alexander Kluge's early theoretical writings are contrasted and compared.

The second part deals with two exemplary cultural producers and critics, Bertolt Brecht and Jean-Luc Godard. The use of montage technique in Brecht's dramas and Godard's films, and the desired effect which was to be

produced, is compared to Kluge's own ideas on the associative technique and its potential as an analytic tool.

The third part of the thesis deals with the work of Walter Benjamin, whose unique fusion of Critical Theory and near-eastern mysticism produced an epistemology which finds its most precise expression in the employment of montage. Benjamin's assertion that the truth content in any situation can only arise out of the juxtaposition of elements in a 'constellation' corresponds very closely to the 'constellation' construction in Kluge's films.

Finally, the analysis of the film "Der Angriff der Gegenwart auf die übrige Zeit" brings together all of these concepts -- the social theory of the Frankfurt School, the production aesthetics of Godard and Brecht, the epistemology of Benjamin -- and combines them with Kluge's own most recent theoretical writings to provide the reader with a possible interpretation of the elements in the film and their relation to the network of ideas which forms the world-view of theorist and film-maker Alexander Kluge.

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**This paper is dedicated to
Tanya Kinsella,
whose love and support helped provide
the momentum needed to complete the task.**

"Unser Jahrhundert geht in 15 Jahren seinem Ende zu.
... Nichts liegt näher, als diese gewaltige
Erfahrungsmasse des 20. Jahrhunderts vor Augen zu
führen. Es fällt auf: im Gefühl, in der Theorie, in der Art
und Weise in der wir unsere Lebenserfahrung sammeln
und sortieren, besitzen wir keine Raster für den Umgang
mit dieser Erfahrungsmasse." "Das Lesen des Textes
wirklicher Verhältnisse"

I. INTRODUCTION

Kluge wrote this in 1985, and his project since that time has been to find a way, sometimes through trial and error, to provide his audience with just that framework, that 'Raster', to begin to come to terms with the history of the 20th century. The accelerated development of industrial society has left our attempts to understand it far behind. The forms of communication which came into the world as by-products of the electronics industry -- radio, film, television and computers -- can only try to give us an idea of what has happened over the last 90 years, and what is happening at this moment in history. Some of these media claim to present a complete picture of all that is important in today's society. What we see, however, is the world as we are allowed to see it, not as it is in any real sense. The challenge is to develop an alternative method for using the media, a project which would synthesize the personal experience of the subject with the historical process, a form of mass media which can analyse the events of this century from a point of view that serves no other master than the truth.

The structures of narrative employed in the media, founded in the judgemental exclusion from the media of certain important areas of experience, have brought about a change in consciousness, a restructuring of our expectations about reality in accordance with its representation in the media. If Alexander Kluge has any one goal, it is to make his viewers aware of this 'industrialisation of consciousness' and hopefully to encourage them to reassess their concept of experience and reality in order to recognize the ever-present possibility for emancipation which exists at the all-but-invisible seams of the historical construct.

This is, of course, a fairly ambitious project, and Kluge has a very concrete motive for wishing to see it realized. It is one which is well in keeping with his Marxist intellectual position, for its goal is the rectification of the injustices of capitalist ideology. This motive appears in his work in various guises, and is expressly stated in his afterword to Hans-Dieter Müller's book Der Kopf in der Schlinge. Entscheidungen im Vorkrieg, to which he gives the title "Das Lesen des Textes wirklicher Verhältnisse". In this essay, Kluge refers to his personal experience of the bombing of his home town, Halberstadt, on April 8th, 1945. He says: "Ich erhielt einen Eindruck davon, wie es mit den Menschen in diesem Jahrhundert gemeint ist. Die zwanzig Minuten Luftschlacht, der anschließende Feuersturm, der die alte Stadt vernichtet, ist sozusagen mein 1918" (200). 1918 -- here Kluge refers back to a quote taken

from Robert Musil about the end of the First World War and the effect of this occurrence on the ideological climate of Europe: "Robert Musil zu 1918: 'Können Utopien plötzlich Wirklichkeit werden? Ja. Siehe den Kriegsschluß. Beinahe wäre eine andere Welt dagewesen. Daß sie ausbleibt, war keine Notwendigkeit' " (ibid;178). In general, he is also referring to the periods of catastrophe in European history, periods which he refers to as "Nahtstellen" (seams), or as joints in the articulated framework of historical events. It is here that Kluge sees the possibility for the restructuring of our concept of reality, one which would return the individual subjective experience of the world, complete with its irrational, emotional and associative elements, to a position of legitimacy from which it could strive to discover the underlying concepts which control society and its members.

The artistic method Kluge uses to reinvolve the individual in the process of historical analysis is montage. Montage is a technique used to introduce discontinuity into representation, and has found applications in prose, poetry and drama, and in pictures both moving and static. Montage has proven to be one of the most powerful tools for signification (or the negation thereof) in the media today. It was through his interest in early Soviet cinema, the epic drama of Bertolt Brecht and the film-making of Jean-Luc Godard that Kluge developed his own practice of montage. But it was ultimately Walter Benjamin

who would open Kluge's eyes to the real potential of discontinuity in the cinema image and the analytic potential of the film medium.

i) Biography and Intellectual Development

Kluge's educational career began in Marburg, where he began his study of law and history, perhaps in an attempt to understand the relationship between human rights and historical process. He continued his studies in Frankfurt while working as a legal assistant to Hellmut Becker. Kluge was introduced to Theodor W. Adorno during this period (1953-1956), an acquaintance whose political views, shaped by the ideas of Karl Marx, would have a great impact on Kluge's cultural production in the years to follow. In 1956 Kluge received his doctorate in law from the Philipps-Universität Marburg with the presentation of his dissertation "Die Universitäts-Selbstverwaltung" and began his career as a practicing lawyer.

The friendship with Adorno continued, with Kluge being accepted as a colleague at the newly reformed Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt. The exchange of ideas provided both Kluge and Adorno with fuel for their respective projects, and eventually led Adorno to change his steadfastly negative opinion on the viability of film as an autonomous cultural product. Heide Schlüpmann, film-maker and editor of the journal "Frauen + Film", said of the Kluge/Adorno relationship: "If Kluge was influenced by Adorno, then in turn

Adorno's later writings on film owed much to his friendship with Kluge without which they might not have been written" (Hansen 1982;194).

Kluge acquired a great deal of critical training during his association with the Frankfurt School, expanding his knowledge of the dynamics which exist between the economic system and the work of art, between the realms of market production and cultural production. It is likely that Kluge's early concepts for a non-traditional cinematic practice, one which questions and challenges the commercial mode of production, arose from a close reading of Adorno and Horkheimer's Dialektik der Aufklärung (cf. Hansen 1981); this will be discussed later in more detail.

Although Kluge may have received theoretical training through his work at the Institute, his approaches to the concrete problem of counter-production in the shadow of the dominant ideology were inspired by a number of critically aware artists. In order to counter the illusionist tendencies of mass culture, Kluge worked at developing an approach to writing and film-making which would differentiate itself from traditional methods. Its emphasis on radical realism (the attempt to represent the individual subjective experience of reality which is oppressed by standard 'objective' realism) and critical analysis of dominant forms of representation are in many ways similar to the approach developed by Bertolt Brecht to counteract the false realism of bourgeois theatre. Kluge quotes Brecht on several occasions to illustrate the subjugation of reality

to the instrumental rationality of the industrial society: "Die Lage wird dadurch so kompliziert, daß weniger denn je eine einfache 'Wiedergabe der Realität' etwas über die Realität aussagt. Eine Photographie der Kruppwerke oder der AEG ergibt beinahe nichts über diese Institute . . . Die Realität ist ins Funktionale gerutscht" (GW 18;161f.). Furthermore, one often hears Brecht's voice in Kluge's enthusiastic approach to the revolutionary, anti-imperialist program. Kluge and Brecht share similar goals -- to present to the members of an oppressed social class proof not only of their oppression, but also of the possibilities for their emancipation. This is, of course, the goal of all Marxist thought of the 20th century, although Kluge and Brecht disagree on the identity of the 'oppressed': whereas Brecht defines them as the classic proletariat, Kluge, acknowledging that society today has fewer class distinctions, has redefined the 'slave of the system' to be the repressed energies of the human psyche and the latent analytic capacities of sensory experience:

So wie sich ideologischer Realismus, Logik, Bedeutungs-dramaturgie, offizieller Bewußtseinsapparat miteinander verbinden, so kann die Gegenbewegung nur in der Allianz eines radikal analytischen Verfahrens mit denjenigen Eigenschaften in der Wahrnehmung des Zuschauers entwickelt werden, die gegenüber dem Erziehungsbewußtsein eine unterdrückte Klasse bilden." (GeS;209)

Although the object of scrutiny may vary between Brecht and Kluge, they still share an intense curiosity and a penetrating analytic gaze which accompanies both of them on their respective searches for a more human "human nature", a

more sociable "social organization", and a broader idea of experience which would link the individual with the rest of the society, and which would not allow itself to be shaped or altered by any external ideological force.

Brecht was one of the first writers outside of the Soviet Union to begin to adapt the concept of montage into his own work. Some of the devices used in his 'epic drama' are drawn from the project of socialist film-makers and playwrights to make art socially relevant, and not just an entertainment for the bored or troubled. Montage developed out of purely technical considerations: in order to make a film of reasonable length, shorter strips of film would have to be spliced together once they had been shot. The resulting discontinuity in time, place or subject had a great impact on the audience, and film-makers around the world began to experiment with it. Soon films were being shot from multiple perspectives -- cinema had begun to conquer the limitations of space. D.W. Griffith, an American film-maker, was responsible for much of the early innovation in montage technique, and with his film 'Intolerance', he took the cinema on a trip through time. Interestingly, his film can be seen as a model for the type of films made by Kluge -- a single theme explored in many variations, a discourse on the timelessness of emotion. Griffiths' films were also admired by Russian film-maker Sergei Eisenstein, whose associative montage style draws as much from the written language of the Chinese as it does from the novels of Charles Dickens. Considered by many the first true

genius of the cinema, Eisenstein's influence on the medium can be felt to this day. Thanks to Eisenstein and his recognition of the dialectic moment in montage, the gateway for its revolutionary implementation was opened.

Kluge admires Eisenstein, but takes issue with what he calls that film-maker's "intentionalist pathos" (Kluge 1989a,49-50), an accusation which will make more sense in the light of Benjamin's theory. Reservations aside, it was the intelligence and innovation of these films, along with those of Jean-Luc Godard, which inspired Kluge to produce his own independent features. Godard's experimentation, contemporary with Kluge's own introduction to the cinema, seems to have had a lasting impact on the latter's thoughts concerning the relationship between film and politics. The *politique des auteurs*, one of the basic tenets of the French New Wave movement, was adopted by Kluge early on in his career, and he still refers to his film production as a combination of 'Autorenfilm' and 'Kooperativfilm'. Kluge has acknowledged Godard as "der erste große Meister, den ich voll akzeptiert habe" and furthermore states: "Ich glaube, daß ich wie ein Nachlaßverwalter immer wieder versuchen werde, Grundannahmen von ihm in Film umzusetzen. Insofern wäre ich ein ausgeprägter Schüler" (Kluge 1980,53). Kluge's adaptation of Godard's methods to meet his own criteria is an important part of his personal film theory, and a comparison of the two film-makers' approaches will define the basic parameters for the production of 'theoretical film'.

The last of Kluge's sources of inspiration to be discussed here is Walter Benjamin. An affiliate member of the Institute for Social Research, Benjamin's most recognized work is the essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", an analysis of the effect of technological progress on the traditional forms of artistic expression. In this essay, Benjamin defines the critical moment in modern art as the decay of the 'aura', the psychological distance between the work and the observer. As this distance lessens, the work of art becomes more open to social and political interpretation and can take a critical stance in relation to the environment in which it was produced. Accuracy of representation and reproducibility are the revolutionary characteristics of the two greatest advancements in the science of capturing perception: photography and film. These characteristics, says Benjamin, make these media best suited for the politicization of art, and this position is of utmost importance for understanding the impact of any alternative film-making practice, Kluge's in particular.

Benjamin's understanding of the expressive capabilities of film and photography is only one element of his aesthetic philosophy. The 'Work of Art' essay was written at a time in which an immediate political situation was threatening the freedom of the German populace. Fascism was on the rise, and Benjamin, a committed yet unorthodox Marxist, saw the politicization of art as a vehicle for the communication of an alternative ideology. Yet he was also

aware that any and every ideology necessarily creates a consciousness in the populace, more often than not at the expense of the truth. The goal of his epistemological meditations, most clearly set forth in the "Epistemo-critical Prologue" to his book The Origin of German Tragic Drama, was to develop a method whereby the truth would reveal itself through the juxtaposition of elements, instead of being represented as being in concepts. Benjamin's epistemology is in many ways the precursor of Kluge's montage aesthetic, which emphasizes the nature of truth as something external to the film, which then enters through the gaps between juxtaposed images. The importance of Benjamin's epistemology for Kluge's film theory will become more obvious in the analysis of the relationships between elements in the film "Der Angriff der Gegenwart auf die übrige Zeit".

Kluge's approach to literature, film and television is a highly personal adaptation of all of these varied approaches, bound together by the fervent desire to see society move away from the path of war and destruction upon which it has been travelling at an ever increasing speed over the last century. The economic philosophy of Karl Marx is at the root of all of these approaches, but Kluge, probably more than any of his predecessors, is taking a decidedly non-dogmatic approach to the question of the emancipation of the labour force. His recent work also shows the influence of two other noted German Marxist thinkers, Ernst Bloch and Jürgen Habermas. Although their work will not be

discussed in the context of this paper, it is important to note that Kluge, rather than entrenching himself in a staid mode of thought and producing works with an eye on the past, has kept himself fully within the present stream of Marxist discourse and never ceases to widen and redefine the horizons of his creative project.

I. ii) THESIS STATEMENT

Building on the foundation laid by Benjamin's epistemological treatise, as well as on the work of Adorno, Brecht and Godard, Kluge sets forth to construct a bridge between this body of theory and the world of representation. By applying a rigorous montage practice to all of his modes of production, Kluge attempts to reflect the associational nature of reality, its existence not only as material, but as context. This form of representation allows the spectator to participate in the work through the employment of imagination, creating for him/herself contexts otherwise oppressed by the harmonious structures of bourgeois or 'classic' realist texts. This subverted power, unleashed by the discontinuous representations of the montage form then begin to rise up against the traditionally solid structure of history, created by the dominant ideology as a fortress to protect its position as a ruling force. By taking this approach, Kluge places the 'reality' of all forms of 'real' representation in question, for in his view, "Realität ist wirklich insofern, als sie Menschen real unterdrückt"(GeS,215). The forms of mediated reality with which we are most familiar are those which feign objectivity by masking intention, (ie. TV News, narrative cinema). The main target of Kluge's attack is the supposedly objective construction of history, whose basic structure denies the subject the kind of interaction that is necessary to recreate the link between the private and public spheres of experience, between the individual and the

amassed historical potential for emancipation. Through the montage approach, Kluge hopes to indicate to his audience the chinks in the armour of historical representation, thereby opening it to attack, disarmament, and eventual reorganization in the service of the individual. The semi-documentary form is Kluge's chosen weapon in this battle, a form which blends documentary material from historical political contexts with cultural material from the realm of emotion (a favourite here is the opera) and staged film material depicting exemplary everyday occurrences (Kluge often bases these segments on newspaper articles -- cf. Die Patriotin pp. 261-266). This is at its most effective in the film/video medium. Here, the immediacy of perception is most closely linked to that of real experience, yet is at the same time acknowledged as the product of a critical realistic approach, thereby demanding the intellectual participation of the spectator. At this moment, when the spectator begins to actively create the film that is being shown on the screen by adapting it to the 'film in his/her head', Kluge has begun to achieve his goal. In a recent interview, Kluge summarized his ideal status: "To bring the thoughts of others into the world spontaneously, that is Socrates' method. This is what I like, too" (Kluge 1989;55).

II. KLUGE AND ADORNO

i) The Frankfurt School

One of the first men responsible for helping Kluge bring his own thoughts into the world was Theodor W. Adorno. The association with Adorno began in the late 1950's, while Kluge was working as legal aide to the reformed 'Institut für Sozialforschung' in Frankfurt. The Institut was founded by Felix J. Weil in 1923 as a centre for social research, from the perspective of the economic, social and political theories of Karl Marx. In 1928, Carl Grünberg, a Viennese scholar and editor of a journal devoted to the history of socialism and the labour movement, took over the direction of the Institute, and it was during this period that Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno first came in direct contact with the institute. Horkheimer had just begun his career as a professor of social psychology at Frankfurt in 1930, and Adorno was to arrive on the scene in 1931 as a lecturer in philosophy.

Horkheimer became director of the institute in 1931 and was able to do his research into societal structures until 1934, when the National Socialists forced the Institute into exile. Horkheimer fled to New York, and revived the Institute with the aid of other German and American academics. Adorno arrived in New York in 1938, after having spent four years in exile in Britain, teaching philosophy at Merton College in Oxford. It wasn't until Adorno joined the

Institute of Social Research in New York that he and Horkheimer began close collaboration on the groundwork for Dialektik der Aufklärung. The research Adorno conducted in New York in co-ordination with the "Princeton Radio Research Project" helped Adorno develop a basis for a critique of mass culture, the result of which would be the 'Kulturindustrie' thesis which constitutes the third excursus in Dialektik der Aufklärung.

ii) Dialektik der Aufklärung

In this book, a central work of the Frankfurt School (as the intellectual movement of the Institute was to be known), Adorno and Horkheimer investigate the basic power structure in the industrial society of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in an attempt to uncover possible explanations for the rise of fascism in Europe. Starting from the historical beginnings of abstraction through language, Adorno and Horkheimer follow the development of the authoritarian mentality from man's earliest assertion of dominance over Nature to the subordination of the populace to a totalitarian state.

a) "Begriff der Aufklärung"

The project of Enlightenment has always been to liberate man from domination by Nature: "Das Wesen der Aufklärung ist die Alternative, deren

Unausweichlichkeit die der Herrschaft ist. Die Menschen hatten immer zu wählen zwischen ihrer Unterwerfung unter der Natur oder der Natur unter das Selbst" (DdA, 38). The approach to the natural world exemplified by animism and in mythological representation is the mentality against which Enlightenment rebels. "Das Programm der Aufklärung war die Entzauberung der Welt. Sie wollte die Mythen auflösen und Einbildung durch Wissen stürzen" (ibid., 9). Mythology relies on the projection of subjectivity onto the world of objects, infusing nature with a spirit and a character recognizable to the individual, who feels threatened in its midst. By this method, early man tried to come to terms with phenomena for which he had no rational explanation. The advent of scientific method, the practical tool of Enlightenment, began to change the relationship between man and his world. Enlightenment thinking taught mankind that the world in which we live is indeed a world of objects, objects with which we share nothing save our common context. This view of the world opened an as yet unbridgeable gap between the subject and the object of investigation. The choice between the two possible alternatives, outlined above as the nature of Enlightenment, had been made. Mankind asserted its dominance over Nature (ibid. 12-14).

One of the ways this dominance was demonstrated was in the use of language. Language abstracts the representation of an object from its material existence, allowing the subject to conceptualize the external reality in which it,

the conceptualizing consciousness, exists. This leads to a more ordered understanding of the world, but one which is purchased at the price of the broader context of existence shared by subject and object: "Die mannigfaltigen Affinitäten zwischen Seiendem werden von der einen Beziehung zwischen sinngebendem Subject und sinnlosem Gegenstand, zwischen rationaler Bedeutung und zufälligem Bedeutungsträger verdrängt" (ibid., 16-17).

At this stage of argumentation, the similarities between the analysis of the dialectic of Enlightenment and Alexander Kluge's concept of the role of the media in the emancipation of the subjective experience of reality are most apparent. Kluge repeatedly refers to this form of experience as the "Formenwelt des Zusammenhangs", which he equates with montage (Patriotin, 41), emphasizing, as does Adorno, the multiplicitous contexts of experience rather than the simple formal identification of meaning with its object. "Gegenständlichkeit der Situation setzt radikale Komplexität der Erzählweise voraus. Alle Ausdrucksformen der bürgerlichen Öffentlichkeit zerschneiden aber gerade die Komplexität der Wahrnehmung, die eigentlich Grundform der Sinne ist" (GeS;221-222). What Adorno recognizes in the functioning of language is what Kluge sees in the programmatic forms of expression prevalent in the mass media: the simplification of a complex network of interrelation (reality) through the process of linguistic abstraction. This simplification could be excused if the aim of the expression was to work towards a more adequate

representation of reality, but this is rarely the case. Linguistic abstraction is, more often than not, a tool used by oppressors to produce a false picture of social reality in order to mask the inequalities in that system.

The exploitation of man by other men is simply an extension of the assertion of man's dominance over Nature. The resources of the natural world are extracted from the environment just as physical resources are extracted from the labourer in society. In the world of abstracted objects, abstract values and equivalences can be created, allowing the possibility for exchange. Apples and wood are not materially equal, but they can be assigned values which correspond to their usefulness for man, and can be exchanged on a scale of equivalence. This principle, when extended to humans and their labour, leads to the objectification of the subject. Adorno's analysis of this principle follows that of Marx: "As the principle of exchange, by virtue of its immanent dynamics, extends to the living labours of human beings it changes compulsively into objective inequality, namely that of the social classes" (in Jay, 67). It is within such a system of social inequality that most people on this planet find themselves today. It is a matter of common sense to acknowledge that those in the upper levels of this kind of social organization would like to remain where they are, but this is dependant upon the continued oppression of those in the the lower levels of society. Open oppression is unacceptable in the 'enlightened' world today, so those members of society who have a vested

interest in the stabilization and legitimation of their dominance must turn to other methods. One of the least distasteful alternatives is the creation of an ideology which can fulfil the function of legitimation, and which can easily and convincingly be presented to those who may have reason to doubt the validity of the system. The goal of Critical Theory, represented here by Adorno and Horkheimer as well as by Alexander Kluge, is to actively criticize any ideology which limits the consciousness of the majority of constituents of the society in which it is applied, and to demonstrate to those oppressed by the ideological system that the world-view which they have come to accept as their own is based on false representation of the true situation (Geuss, 76). The production of this false form of consciousness is overseen by those members of the society whose interests are protected by the complacency of the masses, created by a program of deception which in Adorno and Horkheimer's analysis exerts its greatest influence in the form of the Culture Industry.

b) "Kulturindustrie"

The Culture Industry thesis of Adorno and Horkheimer is of great importance for the understanding of Kluge's own cultural production and criticism (see Hansen 1985). The analysis of popular or mass culture reveals several elements which contribute to the production of an ideology which legitimizes and stabilizes the social dominance of the privileged classes.

Adorno and Horkheimer look very closely at the origins of mass media in the industrialized nations of the world and show how the economic structure within which radio, film and television were developed is reflected within those forms of communication themselves. What governs the perpetuation of the media, and by association the economic system as a whole, is the orientation to the 'needs' of the consumer, traditionally the lower and middle classes of the society. The mass media are a market. In order for a market to flourish, it must provide the buyer with goods which are deemed necessary or desirable. Yet the item being purveyed in this instance is culture, a product which in its truest form denies that the satisfaction promised by the Culture Industry is achievable. Art is experienced, not consumed, and it is precisely this experiential nature which makes it a non-commodity.

In the chapter "Kulturindustrie", Adorno and Horkheimer describe the identifying characteristic of the work of art: "Das Moment am Kunstwerk, durch das es über die Wirklichkeit hinausgeht, ist in der Tat vom Stil nicht abzulösen; doch es besteht nicht in der geleisteten Harmonie, der fragwürdigen Einheit von Form und Inhalt, Innen und Außen, Individuum und Gesellschaft, sondern in jenen Zügen, in denen die Diskrepanz erscheint, im notwendigen Scheitern der leidenschaftlichen Anstrengung zur Identität" (139).

As was pointed out earlier, the basis of industrial capitalism is the concept that there is an equivalence, an essential exchange relationship between marketable

goods which is extended to the individuals in the free market system. Any cultural artefact which reveals the discrepancies in this exchange system is a challenge to the legitimacy of the system. The essence of art is not in its material existence, but rather in its representation of an immaterial quality. It has the character of the individual, a character which may be feigned by the Culture Industry, but which can never truly exist within its parameters. "In der Kulturindustrie ist das Individuum illusionär nicht bloß wegen der Standardisierung ihrer Produktionsweise. Es wird nur so weit geduldet, wie seine rückhaltlose Identität mit dem Allgemeinen außer Frage steht" (163).

The assertions made here by Adorno and Horkheimer make it very clear that the greatest enemy of the Culture Industry is the autonomous individual. So it is understandable that one of the primary tasks of the Culture Industry is to channel the individual into a specific program of consumption, essentially limiting his/her ability to express individuality in any way which could prove harmful to the stability of the system of social inequality which allows the Industry to exist. The first step in this channeling process is identified in Dialektik der Aufklärung as the introduction of radio to the masses. "Der Schritt vom Telephon zum Radio hat die Rollen klar geschieden. Liberal ließ jenes den Teilnehmer noch die des Subjekts spielen. Demokratisch macht dieses alle gleichermaßen zu Hörern, um sie autoritär den unter sich gleichen Programmen der Station auszuliefern" (129-130). The relegation of the consumer to the

status of passive recipient is extended, in Adorno's and Horkheimer's analysis, to the supposedly active exercise of the freedom to choose what one consumes; since the programs are essentially the same ("unter sich gleich"), the freedom of choice is not simply limited, but illusory.

This limitation of human freedom in the arena of cultural consumption and appreciation is seen by the authors as a crime against a very basic tenet of human subjectivity. "An der Einheit der Produktion soll der Freizeitleiter sich ausrichten. Die Leistung, die der kantische Schematismus noch von den Subjekten erwartet hatte, nämlich die sinnliche Mannigfaltigkeit vorweg auf die fundamentalen Begriffe zu beziehen, wird dem Subjekt von der Industrie abgenommen" (132). The reduction of the plurality of sensory experience to the manageable unity of a functionalized humanity is of benefit only to those who manage, not to those who produce. This relationship between management and production should be kept in mind, for it is one of the situations criticized most vehemently by Kluge in his later work (see Section V (iv) in this paper).

iii) Kluge's "Wort und Film"

The essay "Wort und Film", which appeared in 1965, was the first publication to represent the views of the Institut für Filmgestaltung, a branch of the Hochschule für Gestaltung in Ulm. The directors of the Institute -- Kluge,

Edgar Reitz and Wilfried Reinke -- were all members of the Oberhausen Group, a coalition of young German film-makers who had banded together in 1963 at the Oberhausener Kurz-Film Tage to lobby for government support. Their goal was to see a national fund created, from which first-time feature film makers could draw money to help finance their projects. They were successful, and in 1965 the Federal government of Germany set up the 'Kuratorium junger deutscher Film'. From this source, many of Germany's most respected directors -- Fassbinder, Herzog, and Schlöndorff, not to mention Kluge and Reitz -- were able to borrow enough money to finance their first feature length films. From this situation, where the possibilities for alternative film practice seemed unlimited, an answer to the pessimism towards film expressed in Adorno and Horkheimer's work was offered, in the form of "Wort und Film".

The purpose of the essay is summarized as follows: "Es ist zu untersuchen, wie sich die alte Sprache zum alten Film, die heute uns zu Verfügung stehenden neuen Sprachformen zu den neuen Vorstellungen vom Film erhalten, aber auch wie Wort und Film zusammen neue nicht-literarische Sprachformen ergeben" (1016). Reitz, Reinke and Kluge do not claim to have the answers to the questions posed in their essay, but they do make a concentrated effort to define the limits and functions of the technological innovations of film and its relation to traditional forms of communication.

One of the first points discussed in the essay is the importance of montage for the expressive potential of film, and the regression brought about in most areas of film production by the introduction of sound. "Mit der Montage war eine Befreiung aller filmischer Ausdrucksmöglichkeiten verbunden ... Die Einführung des Tonfilms warf den Film dann aber, was den Gebrauchsfilm betrifft, wieder auf sein naturalistisches Anfangsstadium zurück" (ibid.). This occurred not out of necessity, but rather by choice. The more 'realistic' the addition of sound could make a film, the easier it would be for the audience to relate to. The development of a film language, which is essentially what the innovations of the silent film were leading to, was abandoned in favour of a form which was as perfect a representation of reality as possible: a representation, however, which, unlike social reality, does not accommodate discontinuity.

The authors see this tendency as a temporary set-back, and suggest ways in which film could regain the abstraction lost in the wake of the talkie, the abstraction film had begun to establish in the absence of soundtrack. Through close analysis of literary language, they suggest ways in which it would be possible for film to convey similarly complex associations:

Das filmische Verfahren würde mit großem Aufwand versuchen, die dem Film durch zuviel Anschauung anhaftende Oberflächengenauigkeit wieder zu zerstören; die der Sprache anhaftende Allgemeinheit soll durch Massierung von Einzelaspekten wieder erreicht werden; erst auf diesem Untergrund wäre es möglich, Begriffe zu bilden und damit auch Präzision zu erreichen. (1018)

A continued practice of this sort, so the authors contend, would eventually pave the way for "eine filmische Metaphernwelt, die die abgekürzte Erzählweise ebenso ermöglicht, wie die Metaphern- und Begriffswelt der Sprache" (1019).

The sound film makes it possible to combine visual elements of film with all the acoustic forms known to man -- speech, music, noise etc. The combination of the acoustic and the visual leads to a much greater whole: "Das Zusammentreffen von sprachlichen, akustischen und visuellen Formen und ihrer Integration in der Montage, macht den Film zu komplexeren Aussagen fähig, als dies einer dieser Formen allein möglich wäre" (1020). In combinations of these elements, film does indeed begin to imitate the dialectic structure of some of language's more complex expressions. Kluge, Reinke and Reitz quote Kant to back up their argument:

Jeder Ausdruck bewegt sich nach Kant zwischen Begriff und Anschauung: "Anschauung ohne Begriff ist blind, Begriff ohne Anschauung ist leer." Die Sprache hat sich in ihren meisten Metaphern und Ausdrucksformen auf einen Mittelwert zwischen beiden eingependelt; sie ist weder anschaulich noch wirklich abstrakt. Im Film verbinden sich radikale Anschauung im visuellen Teil und Begriffsmöglichkeiten in der Montage zu einer Ausdrucksform, die ebenso wie die Sprache ein dialektisches Verhältnis zwischen Begriff und Anschauung ermöglicht, ohne das dieses Verhältnis wie in der Sprache stabilisiert ist. (ibid.)

For Kluge's own film production, this serves as a justification (or at least an explanation) for his use of montage -- to present images which are neither so abstract that the spectator cannot comprehend them, nor so concrete that they

convey nothing more than what they show. The spectator is always uppermost in the mind of the film-maker Alexander Kluge, but not as a consumer to be entertained. Rather, the spectator is an equal in the film-making process: "Film ist keine ausschließliche Aufgabe der Filmautoren, sondern eine Ausdrucksform, die ebensowohl von der Aufnahmefähigkeit einer Gesellschaft wie von der Phantasie der Autoren abhängig ist" (1019).

The authors include in the essay several examples from post-war European and American cinema to illustrate the viability of new forms of film construction which use the montage of visual, acoustic and linguistic elements in innovative combinations. Of these films, one seems to fulfill almost all of the expectations of Kluge and his collaborators: 'Hiroshima, mon amour', by Alain Resnais. Especially important for Kluge in this case is the participation the film demands from the spectator: "Der Film benutzt hier Emotionswerte, die im Film selbst nicht, sondern nur im gesellschaftlichen Bewußtsein, also im Kopf des Zuschauers vorhanden sind" (1026). Here, as in Kluge's own films, the film-maker leaves much of the work of signification in the hands (or rather heads) of his audience. This kind of impact can only be achieved through the abstraction of the film image through montage and a combination of word and visual presentation which challenges and expands the concept of real representation and perception.

iv) Adorno and New German Cinema

The Institut für Filmgestaltung was the first institutional body in Germany which suggested a theoretical approach to the problem faced by the young independent film-makers in Germany in the 1960s. The alternatives suggested by Kluge, Reitz and Reinke, as well as the protestations of the Oberhausen Group did not go unnoticed by the country's cultural critics. Adorno, who had involved Kluge in film to begin with, must have watched with interest as this young lawyer began suggesting alternatives to a system which the older philosopher had thought nearly all-pervasive. The ideas put forth by Kluge and his like-minded collaborators were addressed and analysed by Adorno in one of his later essays, 'Filmtransparente'. As Miriam Hansen suggests, it is likely that Adorno's reconsideration of the capacity inherent in the film medium for resistance to the Culture Industry was influenced by his personal acquaintance with Kluge, and by Kluge's acquaintance with Critical Theory:

... the paradigm of literary discourse, in particular that of literary modernism, (was) to become a significant aspect of (Kluge's) concept of cinema. It may have been this detour, or rather the appropriation of a traditional art form for an aesthetics of film, in addition to Kluge's grounding in Critical Theory, that caused Adorno to drop his defenses against film as a mass media and consider the possibility of an alternative cinematic practice. (Hansen 1981/82:194)

The possible alternatives Adorno considered centre around one over-riding concept: montage.

Adorno, by the mid-1960s, began to see film as a medium which, in its most aesthetically advanced form, resembles subjective perception more than any other mode of representation, i.e. the drama or the novel. He uses as an example the flow of images which pass before the 'inner eye' in sleep or while day-dreaming. These images appear discontinuous, set against one another, juxtaposed "wie in der Laterna magica der Kindheit. Diesem Innehalten in der Bewegung verdanken die Bilder des inneren Monologs ihre Ähnlichkeit mit der Schrift: nicht anders ist auch diese ein unterm Auge sich bewegendes und zugleich Stillgestelltes ... Kunst wäre der Film als objektivierende Wiederherstellung dieser Weise von Erfahrung" (Adorno 1966;82). The technique which reproduces this form of experience is, of course, the montage. The subjective intention of the film-maker to edit certain elements in juxtaposition with each other remains an important concept for Adorno. His comments on the relation of intention to production, though written in 1966, provide an interesting criticism of Kluge's film production throughout the 70's and 80's, as well as of his television work:

Das rein montierte, ohne Zusatz von Intention in den Details, weigert sich, allein aus dem Prinzip heraus Intentionen anzunehmen. Daß aus dem wiedergegebenen Material als solchem bei Verzicht auf allen Sinn, zumal dem Materialgerechten auf Psychologie, Sinn herausspringe, scheint illusionär. Überholt sein mag die ganze Fragestellung durch die Einsicht, der Verzicht auf Sinngebung, auf subjektive Zutat, sei seinerseits subjektiv veranstaltet und insofern a priori sinngebend.

(ibid.;84-85)

Kluge, when asked about his resistance to the idea of intentionality in film, gave the following response, which in the context of the quote from Adorno can be taken as a formulation of the importance of subjectivity for any mode of communication, a defense of the concept of production in reception, rather than the pure consumption of a prefabricated product: "Subjectivity is greater than someone's intention. The intention is a government, and the complete human being who is the author is richer than those intentions" (Kluge 1989;50). The author, for example Kluge, must find a medium through which he can adequately represent his own subjectively ordered experience, while at the same time framing it in such a way as to make it comprehensible for the recipients of that representation. It is this aspect of Kluge's work which draws the most criticism. His presentations are considered by some to be too disjointed to truly communicate anything. Kluge, however, does not seem to want to communicate *anything*, but rather *many* things -- if any one of these many communications gets through, the medium has proven successful. It is this fine line between successful and failed communication which Kluge walks, and it is a tightrope act of which he is fully conscious. To reach the other side is to develop a form of cinematic representation that can actually come to terms with the complexity of contemporary social reality. For Kluge, it is an act worth performing at all costs.

There are others who have made similar attempts. The development of an alternative practice of theatre was a project undertaken by Bertolt Brecht in the first half of this century, at a time when increased industrialization and expanded media influence had already polarized society in terms of both class and class-consciousness. His epic theatre was an effort to communicate this situation to his audience, and his realization that the new conditions demanded new methods was an important moment in the history of alternative media. Jean-Luc Godard, considered the most innovative of the French New Wave film-makers, approached the question of art, politics and life in a similarly critical fashion, creating a new cinematic form in the process -- the theoretical film. Alexander Kluge has drawn inspiration from both of these sources, as his reformulated realist aesthetic, set down on paper in 1974, will attest to. Different times, different places, different situations, yet the solutions each of these cultural producers found to the problem of realistic representation of modern life draw their strength from the same root -- the critical stance of montage.

III. CULTURAL PRODUCTION AS CULTURAL CRITICISM

i) Kluge's theory of realism

The situation in contemporary society has developed such a great degree of complexity that the traditional modes of representation, even the traditional modes of interpretation, are no longer sufficient to communicate any of the important concepts which would clarify the matter. Brecht, Godard and Kluge have all realized this, and have tried to create new modes of expression, especially in film, to try to capture the essence of the changes occurring in the world today. Brecht was the first in formulating the dilemma:

Die Lage wird dadurch so kompliziert, daß weniger denn je eine einfache 'Wiedergabe der Realität' etwas über die Realität aussagt. Eine Photographie der Kruppwerke oder der AEG sagt beinahe nichts über diese Institute ... Die Verdinglichung der menschlichen Beziehungen, also etwa die Fabrik, gibt die letzteren nicht mehr heraus. Es ist also tatsächlich 'etwas aufzubauen', etwas 'Kunstliches', 'Gestelltes'. Es ist also ebenso tatsächlich Kunst nötig. Aber der alte Begriff von Kunst, vom Erlebnis her, fällt eben aus.

(GW 18, 161-62)

Technology has made it possible to capture a precise image on film, but at the expense of the representation of its reality. Progress in the field of photographic chemistry has led to the invention of film, progress in the field of mechanical engineering has given us the movie camera and the projector, but with all the concentration on production and objectification, an appreciation for the subject has been lost. The experiments of Brecht in the realm of drama

were aimed at reversing the apparently objective harmony created in works of the bourgeois theatre; Godard also tried to rescue some last vestiges of the subject through his critical representations of social misery and political injustice; and Kluge is still in the process of developing his cinematic technique to convey to his audience the essence of those productive social qualities which have been buried under the scrap heaps of industrial and post-industrial society.

Kluge's first attempts to set down a theoretical explanation of his own film-making technique were written in 1974 and appended to the screenplay of 'Gelegenheitsarbeit einer Sklavin' ('Occasional Work of a Female Slave'). Two essays -- "Die realistische Methode und das sog. 'Filmische'" and "Die schärfste Ideologie - daß die Realität sich auf ihren realistischen Charakter beruft" -- form the basis of what could be considered Kluge's aesthetics of realism. As might be expected, considering Kluge's politics, the central concern of the first of the two essays is the adaptation of Marx's definition of the realistic method to the medium of film. A longer passage taken from the "Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy" is presented, a portion of which is cited here:

Finge ich also mit der Bevölkerung an, so wäre das eine chaotische Vorstellung des Ganzen und durch nähere Bestimmung würde ich analytisch immer mehr auf einfachere Begriffe kommen; von dem vorgestellten Konkreten auf immer dünnere Abstrakta, bis ich bei dem einfachsten Bestimmungen angelangt wäre. Von da wäre

nun die Reise wieder rückwärts anzutreten, bis ich endlich wieder bei der Bevölkerung anlangte, diesmal aber nicht als bei einer chaotischen Vorstellung eines Ganzen, sondern als einer reichen Totalität von vielen Bestimmungen und Beziehungen ... Das Konkrete ist konkret, weil es die Zusammenfassung vieler Bestimmungen ist, also Einheit im Mannigfaltigen.

(GeS,207)

This is obviously the realistic method used by Brecht in his criticism of the 'einfache Wiedergabe der Realität'. At first glance, an institution such as AEG or Krupp (or the cinema, for that matter) may seem concrete, but this is an illusion. The network of relationships in which that institution is implicated -- between workers and management, management and government, work and salary -- is what makes it concrete, is responsible for its very existence. The difficulty arises in making this network of human relations clear to someone without presenting an interpretation as the true nature of the institution.

In the medium of film, a medium known for its presentation of concrete images, this project cannot be realized through mere observation. As in the description of the realistic method given above, the film-maker must employ an analytic approach. Kluge outlines this approach as it applies to the creation of cinema:

Film als eine 'reiche Totalität' von vielen Bestimmungen und Beziehungen entsteht nicht durch den Direkt-Zugriff, sondern durch die analytische Methode, die keine Sache des Kopfbewußtseins, sondern Grundform der sinnlichen Erfahrung ist. (ibid.)

A truly realistic film-maker, according to Kluge, must nowadays be an analytical film-maker, and in the medium of film there are a number of ways in which analysis can enter into the process. "Montage, Verarbeitung in Zusammenhänge, Übersetzung der Zuschauerinteressen, die Umformung der Produktionsweise des Mediums, dies sind weitere Anwendungen der analytisch-sinnlichen Methode" (ibid;208). These analytic tools are used by Brecht, Godard and Kluge in different proportions. Montage and the organization of sequences of images into contexts, both variations on the principle of juxtaposition, are two elements common to the work of all three auteurs. Montage was adopted to the drama form by Brecht, and is used in its natural medium by Godard and Kluge. The 'ordering' of phenomena into a common context is an older technique, but was brought into its own in Brecht's plays. The principles of organization seen in Godard's and Kluge's films may not be as temporally determined as the in the dramatic context, but are definitely adaptations of the Brechtian method. In all cases, the demand for an analytic practice came from the nature of the society being represented, a society so complex that no simple naturalistic method could do it justice.

ii) Bertolt Brecht and Epic Theatre

In the 1920s and 30s, Bertolt Brecht began to realize that the representations of reality on the stage did not measure up to the social reality

outside the theatre. Outside, workers were living on paltry wages while their employers were enjoying all of the luxuries industrial society had to offer. In the theatre, this bizarre contradiction was never addressed. The situation was represented as natural, perhaps unfortunate, but not a matter of concern for the cultural world. In the "Small Organon for the Theatre", Brecht observed that "the bourgeois theatre always aims at smoothing over contradictions, at creating false harmony, at idealization. Conditions are reported as if they could not be otherwise ... None of this is like reality, so a realistic theatre must give it up" (in Brück, 58). The purpose of the "Small Organon" was to lay the theoretical groundwork for a theatre movement which would address reality's contradictions without covering over the facts. In it, Brecht presents the formula for such a theatre, which he had developed during the 20s and 30s; it is a chronicle of his experimental results, as well as an observation and criticism of the other forms of theatre he found around him. For Brecht, theatre is a public art form that cannot be separated from the society in which it is conceived. This is why the bourgeois theatre was so distasteful to him, why its misrepresentations were so harmful to the people who needed to be assured of some possible future change in their lot: it presented society as unalterable. "Das Theater, wie wir es vorfinden, zeigt die Struktur der Gesellschaft (abgebildet auf der Bühne) nicht als beeinflussbar durch die Gesellschaft (im Zuschauerraum)" (GW 16;676-77). The first step for Brecht is to bridge that

gap between the stage and the audience, and the main element in building that bridge is what Brecht terms the 'Verfremdungseffekt'.

The V-Effekt employed not just one technique, but several, in order to bring about the desired attitude in the audience. Montage and the construction of the drama out of autonomous parts, linked through context and contradiction, are two techniques used to produce the effect. The first of these is of importance for the film medium, and therefore for Kluge, which makes a closer analysis of its workings in the dramatic context of particular interest.

Brecht adapted the idea of montage to his theatre project from the Soviet cinema. As was mentioned earlier, Sergei Eisenstein was considered by most to be the father and foremost practitioner of montage as a theoretically valuable technique. Montage alone serves no ideological function; its impact rests solely with the director and with the audience. It can be employed to support a particular view of reality or to undermine it. The bourgeois theatre was able to present its false reality as legitimate by not drawing attention to the artificial construction of their dramas. Through the implementation of montage, Brecht was able to boldly expose the structures of his plays, the acting of his players, and the contradictions in society. By not concealing the nature of his art, Brecht could give the audience a chance to participate and be critical rather than sit and passively consume the easily-swallowed confections of classic realist theatre. The application of montage made this possible.

The elements of Brecht's plays were usually divided into separate, almost autonomous units, which were juxtaposed with each other to bring out their inherent contradictions. As Roswitha Mueller describes it,

the fable, which Brecht called the heart of the play, corresponds structurally to his view of social reality; it develops in contradictions. Its parts are first clearly separated from each other, then confronted in such a way that contradictions result, which themselves lead to another set of events. This not only provides the space for the audiences critical comparisons, but reflects at the same time the dialectic between the individual event and its connection to and elucidation by the context of its sociopolitical determinations.

(Mueller 1989;70)

This chain of contradictions is also the driving force in the advancement of the fable, just as the contrived crises and complications in the plots of naturalistic dramas propel them inexorably toward their conclusions.

The fable, the story-telling aspect of Brecht's work for the stage, is one of the elements which prevents him from performing the kinds of experiments which Godard and Kluge list amongst their achievements. The temporal linearity of Brecht's dramas and their emphasis on the gradual development of the fable are principles not shared by the mature Godard or by Kluge. In these instances, the exploration of abstract concepts and their manifestation in concrete situations are more important than story-telling. In reference to the quote from Marx presented earlier: Brecht presents analysis in progress, often placing at the centre of events a character who is slowly introduced to the hidden realities of the world through a process of contradiction and critical observation. As a playwright, he may understand the abstractions

which underlie the concrete instance, but he feels it more productive to introduce his spectators to the method, not just the result. His narrative structure follows the time-line of daily experience; that is, there is a continuity in his representation. Godard and Kluge, on the other hand, present the order of things as they see it, having already analyzed the concrete and recognized the "Einheit im Mannigfaltigen". In their films, the grouping of social phenomena is a test of the accuracy of their perception, the structural principle being the sensuous-associative, non-continuous technique of analysis. If the analysis is correct, it will be recognized by the audience. Kluge relies on analysis of the material and analysis of the individual capacity for comprehension to set the parameters of his montage practice. Although Godard shares no such programmatic explanation of his method, the remarkable similarity between the results of both suggests that the same process is at work.

iii) Jean-Luc Godard and the theoretical film

Godard, of course, started out quite modestly, making films which were technically innovative but not very conceptual. His early films stayed within the boundaries of genre, and only occasionally, as in 'Vivre sa vie'(1962), 'Les carabiniers' (1962/63), and 'Alphaville'(1965), did he adopt a method of film production which resembled the theatrical practice of Brecht. The identifying characteristics of these films include "self-reflexivity, episode structure, refusal

to identify with characters and lack of resolution" (Mueller 1988;104). 'Vivre sa vie' (English title: 'My Life To Live') is considered to be the first of Godard's theoretical or 'essay-films'. James Monaco declares it "the first film in which his own voice is clear and forceful; he has emerged from the shadows of the genres" (Monaco 1976;122). The jump-cuts and daring montage, the hallmarks of Godard's cinema, are passed over in favour of long takes and slow pans, but as compensation for the reduced importance of strictly cinematic technique, the dramatic elements are given top priority. The meticulous division of the film into titled segments, each of which is divided into scenes (ie. 1. A cafe -- Nana feels like giving up -- Paul -- the pinball machine (ibid.;123)), follows the same structural principle as Brecht's epic theatre, producing critical distance from the content of the film through interruption of the narrative flow.

The movie ostensibly deals with prostitution. Nana, underpaid, overworked and unattached, slips into a life on the streets after realizing her hopeless financial situation. The theme could be dealt with dramatically, even luridly, but as Monaco points out, Godard keeps most of the action off-screen, leaving the canvas clear for less-than-exciting depictions of Nana on the job, Nana writing a letter, Nana dancing to the jukebox. His decision to purposefully 'bore' the audience with the banality of Nana's life is, however, somewhat compelling. Like the theatre of Brecht which refuses to hide the contradictions, Godard refuses to hide the tedium of everyday life. This touch of normalcy

adds a familiar element to the very unfamiliar world of prostitution, and as such it is a V-Effekt of special order: the ordinary V-Effekt estranges the trivial, whereas here Godard trivializes the strange.

If 'Vivre sa vie' is Godard at his most Brechtian, 'Une femme mariée' is Godard becoming more Godardian. The structural principle of this film, rather than borrowing directly from a foreign source, is drawn from the analysis of the cinema itself. "Materialism, structuralism, semiology, dialectics are not only tools which we use to discuss Godard's films, not only tools which *he* uses to make them, but also the *subjects* of his films" (ibid.; 128). In 'Une femme mariée', Godard frees himself of the tyranny of the narrative, giving himself over almost fully to the analytic form. The comments made about this film could well apply to any of Kluge's works:

Those abrupt shifts of the level of discourse -- from fiction to essay to poetry to music to portrait and back again -- should no longer trouble us as once they might have, since now, for the first time, we approach the film as an essay rather than a fiction ... We are finally relieved of the burdens of the conventions of fiction in general, of genres in particular, and we can now accept each image, each sound, each juxtaposition for what it is. (ibid;147).

Or, in Godard's own words, "the spectacle of life finally mingles with its analysis ... the cinema plays happily, delighted to be only what it is" (ibid.). The film seemingly exists for itself, and was not created to meet any expectations, only the demands put on the the film-maker by the subject itself -- the discourse

of the media (advertising, television, radio, film) and its effect on the family. The hidden contexts of the situation are probed, stretched, and then teased out from under the veil of illusion by Godard. The 'shimmering network of interferences'(ibid.;146) is not given any conclusive resolution by the author; its significances are left for the spectator to decipher. As Godard's mentor, André Bazin, has said: "The meaning is not in the image, it is in the shadow of the image projected by montage onto the field of consciousness of the spectator" (ibid.;129).

The similarity of Godard's early cinema to Brecht's epic theatre, and his prefiguration of the analytic-associative technique which Kluge was to adopt, makes him an important figure in the development of the production of alternative realistic art in the twentieth century, as well as an important key to understanding Kluge's development as a film-maker. The emphasis on process and learning in Brecht's drama is replaced in the films of Godard and Kluge by the intuitive flash of knowledge, the sudden crystallization of contexts into one instant wherein the essence makes itself known only briefly, the essence being the truth which lies slumbering in the past: "Nur als Bild, das auf Nimmerwiedersehen im Augenblick seiner Erkennbarkeit eben aufblitzt, ist das Gewesene festzuhalten" (I(i), 695). The quote is from Walter Benjamin, and its validity for the work of both Godard and Kluge is what is to be discussed in the pages that follow. Benjamin's approach to history, the appropriation of the past

for the fulfillment of the present, is the theoretical basis for his excursions into the 17th and 19th centuries, in his Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels and the Passagenwerk. Although the latter is often quoted by Kluge, and contains many pertinent passages, the methodology behind its construction is already set down in the prologue to the former. The well-known essay "Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit" is also indispensable for understanding the importance of film and photography in the changing function of art. Kluge actively takes up the task which Benjamin assigns to the cinema, using the philosopher's own methodology in an attempt to realize the full potential of cinema as a revolutionary analytic medium.

IV. WALTER BENJAMIN: Montage, Constellation and the Unintentional Truth

The importance of Walter Benjamin was not fully realized in Germany until Theodor Adorno and his wife Gretel edited and published a two-volume collection of his writings in 1955. Before this volume, the work of their good friend had been scattered throughout countless journals and newspapers in Germany and France, the only independent publication being his rejected *Habilitationsschrift*, Der Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels. Once his writings had been gathered and opened to critical appraisal, however, Benjamin's reputation as one of the century's most original thinkers grew rapidly. Although he was wont to take direction from those around him, especially his friend Bert Brecht, Benjamin always managed to temper the interests of others with his own unique view of a world redeemed by the recognition of the true nature of the past. His approach to the practice of criticism reveals an attitude uncommon amongst authors of theoretical treatises: rather than impose a system or an intention upon his observations, he let them stand as they were, giving much of his writing an aphoristic, almost imagist character. Representative of this attitude is his statement of intention (actually the lack thereof) for the great unfinished Passagenwerk, the book which occupied him during the fifteen years of his life before his suicide in 1940: "Ich habe nichts zu sagen. Nur zu zeigen" (V(i);574).

His adamant refusal, especially in the last decade of his life, to approach the practice of philosophy from a systematic perspective is the characteristic which differentiates him most clearly from his colleagues, Adorno and Brecht. Yet their interests are the same in many respects. Like Brecht, Benjamin was an opponent of the bourgeois realist modes of representation, be they in painting, drama or fiction. He recognized in the epic theatre the moment of protest against the dominant ideology, and saw the same tendency in the technical advances which had changed and were changing the role of art in society. His treatise on this topic, "Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit", identifies the trend as the 'de-aurification' of art, the destruction of the cultic aspect of artistic representation. In this context he names film as the most powerful aura-crusher of all the new technological media of communication, for the conditions of its production denied it any aura of its own. As such, film became for him the champion of a new critical era, one which was to answer the increasing aestheticization of politics with an equally powerful politicization of art.

The moment of montage in film is one of the aspects Benjamin considers most anti-auratic. Its function in film is analogous for him to the function of criticism in the social and political realms. Montage has the effect of breaking up the continuity of the apparatus' mendacious harmonisation of reality, thereby denying it the legitimation one might be tempted to grant it as a

true representation. Just as Brecht has pointed out, and as Marx remarks, there is nothing fundamentally real about representation of the 'objective' sort (see pp. 27-28 of this paper); without analysis of the network of relations to which a phenomenon belongs, it remains one-dimensional.

The primacy of the analytic moment of montage in Benjamin's work is apparent at an early stage of his development. In the Prologue to Origin of the German Tragic Drama, he makes some far-reaching observations on the nature of truth and the philosophical pursuit of knowledge. These observations, which outline a methodology for the construction of philosophical constellations from which truth would arise unbidden, are arguably at the heart of Kluge's cinematic aesthetics. As will be shown, the constellation arrangement follows as the practical next step to the Marxian realist method of analysis: the world of phenomena is deconstructed to display its network of interrelationships, then reconstituted in such a way as to suggest connections between the conceptual foundation of one phenomenon and that of another. In this way, as in the montage process, the juxtaposition of the selected elements will provide the observer with that brief instant of revelation which is inherent in the dialectical image, that instant from the past which suddenly coincides with the spectator's present in a completely unexpected way. The moment is brief, but the results are lasting. It becomes the task of the observer to explore the implications and test the validity of this fleeting revelation, and it is the task of the historian to

present those historical relations to the masses for whom the truth represents the possibility of freedom.

i) The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction

This essay, probably the most well-known of all Benjamin's writings, was originally published in 1936 in the "Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung". Although originally written in German, the paper was translated into French, as it was expected to have a greater impact on the French cultural scene than on the national-socialist German front. The purpose of the essay was to analyse the impact of the new technological modes of representation -- especially photography and film -- on the traditional arts. In Benjamin's analysis, these two directions in the representation of reality are opposed in their very essence: the role of the traditional work of art was always dictated by its identity as a unique manifestation, existing in only one time and place. From ancient times through to the Middle Ages, the unique work of art was an object of veneration representing the image of something removed from the physical realm, such as a deity or a depiction of another world. This unique character is what Benjamin termed the 'aura' of a work of art, "the unique phenomenon of distance, however close (an object) may be" (Illuminations;223-24). This ritualistic tendency continues on through to the Renaissance, where the sacred character of art is secularized into a popular cult of beauty (ibid.). It was not until the

19th century that the work of art encountered serious competition. The technological advancements in chemistry and mechanical engineering made it possible to capture on a photographic plate an image so clear it rivalled perception with the naked eye. This process, first presented to the public at the World's Fair in 1855, heralded the decline of the notion of uniqueness with its capacity for the unlimited reproduction of a single image. The revolutionary aspect of photography was precisely this absence of an 'original': "From a photographic negative, for example, one can make any number of prints; to ask for the 'authentic' print makes no sense" (ibid.;224). What follows is the decline of the cultic, auratic aspect of art. In its place, the 'exhibition value' of the work will take precedence, the aspect of art which places emphasis on reception rather than on sheer being (ibid.).

Nowhere is this decline more noticeable than in the domain of film. As Benjamin points out: "Die technische Reproduzierbarkeit der Filmwerke ist unmittelbar in der Technik ihrer Produktion begründet. Diese ermöglicht nicht nur auf die unmittelbarste Art die massenweise Verbreitung der Filmwerke, sie erzwingt sie vielmehr" (I(ii);481n). Eminently anti-auratic and dependant on a broad social reception, film is the political work of art par excellence. Its ability to approach the objective world from a point of view less hampered by the dictum of totality previously imposed on the traditional work of art makes the film capable of presenting an analysis of reality rather than a simple echo. "Der

Maler beobachtet in seiner Arbeit eine natürliche Distanz zum Gegebenen, der Kameramann dagegen dringt tief ins Gewebe der Gegebenheit ein ... Das (Bild) des Malers ist ein totales, das des Kameramanns ein vielfältig zerstückeltes, dessen Teile sich nach einem neuen Gesetze zusammen finden" (ibid.;496).

This is, in a nutshell, the importance of film as a political art form. Its relationship to traditional forms is that of an enlightened reformer to a narrow-minded government. It recognizes the shackles cultic art has placed on the nature it represents. The plurality of significance in the particular phenomenon, the 'Einheit im Mannigfaltigen', is finally given the opportunity to be appreciated by the public to whom that secret had been denied by the illusionist tendencies of classical realism. And yet in the "Work of Art" essay it is not in montage alone that Benjamin sees this emancipatory potential; the technical apparatus itself, even prior to the editing of the film, is capable of analysis:

Und so wenig es bei der Vergrößerung sich um eine bloße Verdeutlichung dessen handelt, was man 'ohnehin' deutlich sieht, sondern vielmehr neue Struktur-bildungen der Materie zum Vorschein kommen, so wenig bringt die Zeitlupe nur bekannte Bewegungsmotive zum Vorschein, sondern sie entdeckt in diesen bekannten ganz unbekannte" (ibid.;500)

The camera enhances our perception of the material phenomenon, the application of montage technique enhances our concept of it.

ii) Philosophical and Cinematic Constellations

The medium of film is one of the most advanced tools known to man for the analysis of the physical and conceptual nature of the material world. This confers upon cinema a rather heavy responsibility, that which accompanies all advanced modes of perception: the pursuit of truth. For Benjamin, "truth content can only be grasped through the most precise immersion in the details of a material content" (I(i);208), a task for which the film medium is well-suited. The main thrust of the Prologue to the Origin of the German Tragic Drama (aka the 'Trauerspiel' book) and the methodology which he applies in his attempts to define the essence of that art form are in many ways similar to the approach Kluge takes to the themes of his films. In order to better understand the epistemological position of Kluge, these affinities should be examined more closely.

The path which both Kluge and Benjamin feel must be taken in order to uncover the truth is, as previously stated, Marx's realistic method (p. 28). The abstractions which underlie the concrete manifestation must be traced through to their defining elements (Bestimmungen), so that the material content can be understood as a network of relationships between these characteristics. Phenomena which share these essential characteristics are then grouped together. It is obvious that the scenes in Kluge's films, for example, are not simply chosen at random and spliced together. These individual units in his

films are "gegenständliche Situationen", and their inclusion in the work is definitely not arbitrary. The situation

muß produziert werden, konstruktiv, reduktiv, auch wenn es denn Anschein hat, daß man sie nur 'findet'. **Dieses Vorfinden setzt ja bereits analytische und synthetische Arbeit voraus, sonst findet man gar nichts.** (GeS;218)

This observation is followed almost immediately by a statement which finds an exact parallel in Benjamin's Prologue to the 'Trauerspiel' book, namely:

Es geht immer um eine Konstellation. Eine gegenständliche Situation für sich, also die bloße Momentaufnahme, hat in sich nicht das organisierende Element, das sie konkret macht. (ibid.)

In identifying the constellation as one of the basic structural elements in his film-making, Kluge associates himself with the method of philosophical representation practiced by Benjamin, for in his work

it falls due to the concepts of knowledge to achieve the rearrangement of phenomenal elements in the constellation, and in this way it participates, in a subordinate manner, in the process whereby ideas become manifest. (Wolin 1982;94)

When Kluge arranges elements in his films, he is creating constellations of philosophically invested phenomena in order to illustrate ideas. This kind of construction is, in Benjamin's view, absolutely necessary, for "ideas are not represented in themselves, but solely and exclusively in an arrangement of concrete elements ... Ideas are to objects what constellations are to stars" (GTD;34). Lest this become too abstract, a quick summary is called for.

Kluge's cinematic practice is one founded on montage, the organization of

disparate elements in the attempt to encourage analysis. Each of these elements is chosen by way of an analytic method, the so-called 'realistic method', which is essentially deductive, working from the particular to the universal, returning to the particular with a greater understanding of its essence as a nexus of abstract relationships. The arrangement of these elements in the film corresponds to the constellation as defined by Benjamin, in which the construction of the constellation allows ideas to manifest themselves in an imminent fashion. Kluge's montage film practice ostensibly creates a cinema of philosophical ideas, or at the very least a cinema which creates a forum for the consideration of such ideas. This practice is critical insofar as the ideas which claim truth content in the films do not always coincide with the spectator's perception of his/her own situation. This is what gives the film its expression: "Ausdrucksmittel ist die Differenz, die grundlegende Disharmonie zwischen Einzelprodukt und Realität, nicht die leicht herstellbare Harmonie des individuellen Materials mit sich selbst" (GeS;219).

A final observation may help the reader to understand Kluge's anti-intentionalist stance. This was first mentioned in reference to his opinion of Eisenstein's montage practice, and it clearly identifies Kluge as a wholly committed film experimenter:

in a test situation you must leave out manipulation. Those who favour the intentionalist way are alchemists. They want to make gold. Sometimes, though the intention is useless, the alchemist invents something else. That is possible. But if he does not care for anything

else but the intention, he will not notice that he has invented something
else in spite of himself. (Kluge 1989;50)

In the Trauerspiel study, Benjamin makes a very similar statement concerning the approach to truth. Unlike the gold of Kluge's analogy, truth appears to be something attainable, but elusive, much like the Grail in Arthurian myth. Truth is "an intentionless state of being. The proper approach to it is not therefore one of intention and knowledge, but rather a total immersion and absorption in it. Truth is the death of intention" (GTD;36).

The approach to the text (or film, in this case) should therefore be one of 'total immersion', whereby the spectator follows the apparent relationships between elements in order to come to an understanding of the concepts therein, the ideas which arise from their constellation, and the ideological constructs which they challenge and eventually dismantle. As Kluge once said in an interview, "the differences narrated in the different forms (within the film) provoke the spectator to work toward the truth" (Kluge 1989;59). Kluge is almost unique amongst film-makers today in asking his audience to work, and yet there is no more basic drive in this species than the search for truth. If we cannot rise to that task, then it is not Kluge we should seek to criticize, but ourselves.

V. Der Angriff der Gegenwart auf die übrige Zeit

i) Introduction

Kluge has taken the project of critical cinema very seriously, and has made few compromises in his development of a cinematic form which corresponds in its complexity to the multi-faceted social reality which it purports to represent. His approach is a hybrid of artistic technique and scientific method. This unique perspective recognizes the indisputable importance of subjective experience for each individual's perception of the nature of their society, while simultaneously emphasizing the existence of objective 'real' structures which oppress the subject. This attempt to balance the subjective and objective poles of perception demands an intensely personal approach to the project of representation, an approach which, in film, is open only to an independent outsider -- to the auteur. Auteur film, the tradition to which Kluge belongs, tries to present the spectator with a perception of the world to which he can relate, from a perspective which demands a critical viewing stance, an acceptance or rejection of the film-maker's subjective biases. It calls for the viewer to consider the director's point of view from his/her own point of view. The auteur film is an experimentally and theoretically tested representation of important segments of reality, a representation which, in its critical approach,

demands that the viewer participate in a form of dialogue with the film, rather than let the director monologize for two hours. The auteur is like a conversational partner, and to each conversation he brings a life-time of lived experience, observation and research. The preceding 40-plus pages of this paper have tried to give the reader some insight into the basis of Alexander Kluge's perception of his world, although of course much more would be necessary to do him justice. The critical theory of Adorno, the cultural practice of Brecht and Godard, Benjamin's epistemology -- all of these have helped to shape Kluge's approach to the problem of representing the complexity of reality on film. The analysis of his 1985 film 'Der Angriff der Gegenwart auf die übrige Zeit' will hopefully bear this out.

Before embarking on an analysis, it may be helpful to approach the film in a figurative way. Most films have a causal structure, a classic narrative form: boy meets girl, boy loses girl etc. Watching films like this can be compared to reading a classic realist novel. The reader/spectator is carried along by the force of the plot, is absorbed in the occurrences on screen or between the pages. As has already been made clear, Kluge's cinematic principle does not follow this model. Rather than travel the high road of a singular narrative, the spectator in Kluge's audience is placed in the middle of a network of many intersecting stories, events, and ideas. Most film-goers rely on the director to guide them through the world created on the screen, like a Vergil

guiding them through the heaven or hell of their imagination. Kluge expects his audience to use their own orientation skills, occasionally leaving clues to indicate possible routes, but seeing to it that even these indicators remain somewhat puzzling. If one were to compare a film to a city, a commercial filmmaker simply takes the viewer on a trip from A to B, stopping occasionally at points of interest to maintain a high interest level and to pass about two hours time. The actual contact with the city, with its people, is avoided. Kluge, on the other hand, lays out the plan of the city before the spectator, indicates the neighbourhoods which truly make up the character of the town, and then lets the visitor do some independent exploration. The network of streets, pedestrian zones, streetcar routes and subway lines is left for the viewer to travel at will -- Kluge may indicate the transfer points between the inter-related systems, but he leaves the destination up to his audience. Once one understands the system of transit in Kluge's film-city, one can travel to any corner, visit any neighbourhood, examine any monument one wishes. Getting a feel for the system takes some time, but once it is accomplished, the city begins to feel like home.

ii) Theme and Form

'Angriff der Gegenwart', like many of Kluge's films, is accompanied by a literary sibling, in this case designated as 'Drehbuch'. Yet this book is less

a screenplay in the proper sense than any of Kluge's previous 'film-books':

Gelegenheitsarbeit einer Sklavin, Die Patriotin, or Die Macht der Gefühle. It is not so much a text-list as a rough outline of the proposed structure of the film.

A comparison of the plan with the completed film reveals the provisory nature of the former. This comes as no surprise to those familiar with Kluge's production techniques, outlined briefly in the literary accompaniment to the film 'Die Patriotin': "Es gibt zweifellos Filme, die wegen ihrer inneren Organisation ein Drehbuch brauchen. ... Filme, die ein Gegenwartsinteresse verfolgen, auf Beobachtung ruhen, werden dagegen durch beide Formen, Drehbuch und Drehplan, unnötig unbeweglich. Sie brauchen eine Strategie" (285). The strategy for the film under analysis here has three major thematic targets:

Das vorliegende Film befaßt sich

a) mit Elementen des Kinos

b) mit der Illusion der Stadt

c) mit handelnden Personen in der Stadt, die in ihrem Kopf mehrerlei bewegen: ihre persönliche Erfahrung, Vorstellungen des Kinos, die Wirklichkeit der Stadt. (AdG, 8)

These concerns are dealt with under a variety of different guises: in the form of documentary sequences, interviews, commentary, narrative sequences, recycled film material and the like. The combination of apparently unrelated images and commentary, which have earned Kluge the reputation of being a 'difficult' film-maker, are much less confusing when viewed in the light of the foreground information provided in the text of this paper. The film begins with a sequence unlike anything the spectator is likely to have seen, a style of film

expression so uniquely Kluge's own. The function of this 'essay-montage', for lack of a better term, is to impart to the viewer, however cryptically, the theory, method, and object of the experiment about to be performed.

The first element in the sequence consists of a combination of visual elements from various sources: stars and constellations, perhaps from an astronomy film; landscapes; a photograph of a field worker. The commentary: "Die Geschichte, die hier erzählt wird, ist älter als die Romane". The novel, it will be remembered, is for Kluge as for Brecht a tradition which represents the ideology of the bourgeois public sphere. This form is exemplary for the approach to real representation which Kluge opposes: "Alle Ausdrucksformen der bürgerlichen Öffentlichkeit ... zerschneiden aber gerade die Komplexität der Wahrnehmung, die eigentlich Grundform der Sinne ist" (GeS, 222). The sentiment is essentially anti-narrative, and is reflected in the visual part of the montage. The constellation on the screen reminds us of the constellation in Benjamin's work, the alternative mode of representation which is to remedy the insufficiencies of traditional historical narrative, providing the historical analyst with a more objective, non-intentional access to the truth that lies buried in the past. This opening scene, then, tells us what the film is not (novel) and what it is (constellation). Thus the theoretical groundwork of the film is communicated to the viewer -- if, that is, the viewer is familiar with the symbolic world which Kluge often uses to enhance his own.

The second element seems to indicate by analogy the method by which Kluge plans to approach his object of investigation. "Ein Saurier-Ei, gefunden in China" -- archaeology is the analogy for the methodological analysis. Combined with the film's motto, "Wie rät ein Untergang den nächsten?", this single moment carries a much greater weight, a message of doom. As we shall see, the film deals with the possible extinction of the classic public sphere represented by the opera, the theatre and the cinema. The scene is left open to interpretation, and is a good example of what Kluge refers to as "Rätselkino" (Kluge 1989, 49). These interpretations, in the context given, may confer some meaning on the dinosaur egg, but it retains enough of its mystery to give another impression under different circumstances. This demonstrates the versatility of Kluge's non-intentionalist montage.

astly in the opening sequence we have Frankfurt at 4 a.m. The night shift. This is what is shown and what the commentary tells us. It is the city as very few people know it, seen from the outside at that time of the morning, made even more alien by the use of time-lapse photography. This is the object of investigation, this dense concentration of individuals, separated by the walls of their apartments and the dividers in their offices. To most, this is just a city. To Kluge, this is a sign of societal decay. "Alle diese Hochbauten, solche Hochhäuser, wie man sie in Frankfurt sieht, sind Abschwörungen des Paradieses"(MdG, 246). The task which Alexander Kluge tries to accomplish in

his films is the reawakening of the belief in societal improvement, in the move toward Paradise -- his is a utopian vision. The analysis in the film of the present situation, along with observations from Kluge's critical texts from Die Patriotin to 1985, should give some indication of the type of change necessary to get western society off the beaten path of industrialization and destruction and back on the road to positive and enlightened development.

iii) "Überflüssig" -- The Principle of Exclusion

Since the 'Foreword' to the film implies a constellation construction à la Benjamin, the next step should be to identify the brightest stars, the film's central themes, and use them to guide our journey. A number of options are available; one could approach the film from the perspective of the history of cinema, or concentrate on Kluge's concept of the power of emotion, or analyse the criticism of the decentralization of society. Regardless of where one starts, there is a central theme which will eventually present itself in each of these contexts. That is the present situation of the cinema and its relationship to society. One term which applies not only to the cinema but to society and the psyche as well is that used to describe Anna Eilers, the unemployed doctor whose story is told in the first lengthy narrative. The designation originates in the enemy camp, so to speak, and Kluge uses it with no small amount of irony: "überflüssig".

"Überflüssig". Anna Eilers is überflüssig: her job has been taken over by a young medical student with an expensive piece of diagnostic equipment. In a later segment, Kluge intones: "Nach dem Gesichtspunkt der neuen Medien ist Vor- und Nachgeschichte überflüssig. Als überflüssig gilt auch das Kino". Scenes of a scrap yard and an interview with its owner address the question of the value of superfluous material, both physical and cultural. Linked with this is the scene with the two pacing businessmen:

Die wandernden Männer überlegen, ob sie eine Partie Schrott in Amsterdam übernehmen oder sich an den neuen Medien beteiligen sollen. Soll man die Kinos abschaffen und die Bilder über Telefon erklären? Manches, was die Überflüssigen im Lande träumen, paßt nicht auf dieses Projekt. Die Eiligen grübeln. Das Zeitalter ist ihnen unheimlich.

A short while later, we see a family sitting in front of the computer, with the commentary: "Es ist nämlich ein Irrtum, daß die neuen Medien mit Unterhaltung zu tun haben. Sie sind eine neue Industrie. ... Es geht um die Zerlegung der Hirnteile. ... Lippen und Mund werden vom Computer wenig benutzt". Important parts of the human sensory apparatus, those parts which link the mind with the outside world and with other humans, are being made superfluous for the interface with the new media. The broad spectrum of sensations open to the fingertip is limited for long periods of time to the smooth surface of the computer keyboard. The mechanical function of the hand becomes more important than its sensory function. In this sense, Anna Eilers is superfluous for the same reason as the ability of the fingertip to differentiate hot

from cold, smooth from rough: the new technological advancements in society make efficiency more desirable than sensitivity. With the efficiency of high-tech hardware to compete against, more and more human attributes are being made superfluous. Kluge has identified this in his theoretical work as the 'Industrialisation of Consciousness', a concept which has the principle of exclusion, 'Ausgrenzung', as one of its central categories. This principle is applied not only to the senses, but to segments of society as well as to the classic forms of the public sphere: opera, theatre and the cinema.

The victims of this exclusionary trend are clearly identified in Kluge's contributions to the collective study Bestandsaufnahme: Utopie Film. Here he states:

Der technische Fortschritt setzt immer neue Gebrauchsgegenstände außer Kurs. Solche Gebrauchsgegenstände sind nicht nur äußere Dinge oder öffentliche Plätze (wie z.B. das Kino), sondern auch: in Menschen außer Kurs gesetzte Eigenschaften.
(Utopie, 447)

Why this should be so is explained through an analysis of the administrative structure of the public and especially private media, as well as of the inherent nature of these media. The ratio of mediated to immediate experience is also of prime importance for understanding the impact of the principle of exclusion in its many manifestations. Yet it is the technological advancements in the field of communications which are at the heart of the problem, and their relationship to

classic, non-programmatic forms of communication which is Kluge's main concern.

The majority of film and television products try to avoid contradiction and the inner conflict of constituent elements at all costs. They do so with the same fervour as the bourgeois forms of expression throughout the last two centuries. In their attempts to recreate various aspects of life and experience, they succeed only in abstracting their situations from lived experience, thereby cutting away the subjective and specific aspects, while emphasizing the general and objective elements. In the essay "Die Macht der Bewußtseinsindustrie und das Schicksal unserer Öffentlichkeit", Kluge observes:

Formenwelt und Stoffe des wirklichen Lebens, der künstlerischen Traditionen, des Weltzusammenhangs dringen in den Rundfunk nur selektiv ein, und sie werden dort nur selektiv verstärkt, so daß sie die Aufmerksamkeit für das Nichtverstärkte verletzen. (IdB, 86)

This selective emphasis is particularly strong in television, and only marginally less so in commercial cinema. The greatest threat to the consciousness of the viewer is precisely this administrative selection of broadcast material. Since the majority of our mediated information comes from these sources, we have a tendency to accept the importance of the news and views presented to us there. The concentration on situations which have little or nothing to do with us directly, which take place on the other side of the globe, or in upper levels of government, or in the imaginary worlds of comedy and tragedy, can make our

immediate situation seem of little consequence. This disharmony between the world of mediated experience (the world on TV) and that of immediate perception (the world outside my door, between me and others) can lead to a breakdown of the system by which we develop our identity and our self-confidence. Two statements from the above-mentioned essay summarize this nicely: "Die Gestalt des Selbstbewußtseins der Bevölkerung und des Einzelnen hängt von dem Ausdrucksvermögen unserer Öffentlichkeit ab"; "Ich glaube nicht, daß sie (die Massenmedien) Bewußtseinsinhalte verändern können. Aber ob mit einem Bewußtseinsinhalt Selbstvertrauen verbunden ist oder nicht, das können sie von Kindheit an steuern" (IdB, 56;64).

Immediate experience is of unquestionable validity for the development of our individual identity. In order to judge the societal importance of that experience, however, we need to rely on reports from others, on mediated experience. Together, these two sources of information help us to create a working system of norms and values which will allow us to develop our personality without overstepping the bounds of the society within which we live. For the development of identity, it is important "daß es ein Ausdrucksvermögen gibt, das das, was alle angeht, und das, was mich persönlich berührt, füreinander verständlich macht: dies ist das Produkt von Öffentlichkeit" (ibid, 55f.). As long as this kind of exchange between the individual and the social context exists, the identity of both will remain unthreatened.

There is a problem, however. The new forms of electronic communication operate under the principle of exclusion, and many of the immediate experiences which an individual is bound to have will never be dealt with in the mass media. The situations which produce feelings of disappointment and despair, or feelings of love and true happiness are so difficult to reproduce that the media tend to favour clichéd representations of melancholy and romance. Not only does this make it difficult for people to feel that their experience makes them part of the community; it also means that, when certain things are experienced for the first time, the individual has no frame of reference within which to situate that experience. A context must already exist: "Das meiste an unmittelbarem Erleben strukturiert sich nach *symbolischen Sequenzen*, die aus mittelbarer Erfahrung, wie von Märchen, gesteuert werden" (ibid., 98). The 'symbolic sequences' which organize the enormous volume of present-day experience originate, more often than not, in the mass media. The resulting situation is not very encouraging: "Die Reste unmittelbarer Erfahrung, die jetzt immer unvollständiger, ruinenhafter bleibt, regulieren ungeheure Massen an mittelbarer Erfahrung (von Medien nachgefüttert)" (ibid, 100). Because of the importance of mediated experience for the structuring and legitimation of immediate experience, this imbalance will only continue to increase unless measures are taken to restore the excluded experiences to the arena of public discourse.

iv) 'Angrenzung'

It is the principle of exclusion, of 'Ausgrenzung', which is at the core of this development, and it is here that we must direct our efforts if we are to salvage all of those basic human attributes which appear to be on the verge of extinction. Alexander Kluge has not only defined the problem, but has also suggested a possible solution: the tendency toward 'Ausgrenzung' must be countered by the practice of 'Angrenzung', the act of bringing exclusive forces into contact with each other.

Es ist aussichtsreich in einer solchen Situation ...
Berührung künstlich zu erzeugen. Dies ist die Kategorie
des Zusammenhangs, während die universale, verständ-
igungslose Parallelisierung die Wurzel der neuen
Unübersichtlichkeit ist. (IdB, 122)

This juxtaposition of forces which have never been brought into contact before is nothing more than montage applied on a societal level. Ideally, then, this juxtaposition should bring about a synthesizing solution to the conflict between the parallel institutions, just as the montage is supposed to act as a catalyst to create an image in the mind of the spectator. Yet when these conflicts occur in the world of business and communication, the result is more often aggravation, aggression, and assault -- in the greater societal context, this is known as war. The only thing that can prevent this escalation of conflict is the recognition, at the right moment, of the latent opportunity for cooperation:

Werden Institutionen, die einander nicht verstehen
können ..., abrupt miteinander konfrontiert, so entsteht
an der Trennstelle ein intelligenter Funke. Er entsteht

aus der Not, in die die Kommunikation gerät; er entsteht
aber auch, weil in dem je anderen eine aufgestaute
Zuarbeit bereittliegt. (IdB, 122)

In this context, the reader may be reminded of a concept similar to the 'intelligent spark' at the juncture of two autonomous institutions. The "blitzhafte Erkenntnis" which Benjamin claims can be created by juxtaposing Dialectical Images (dialektische Bilder) seems to share at least one important property with the principle of 'Angrenzung' -- both provide the catalyst or conduit necessary for communication to occur between previously exclusive forces. The moment in which this recognition takes place is fleeting; in fact, it is the *kairos* after which Kluge has named his film production company. His dedication to the production, recognition and occupation of that important moment in time could never be expressed more clearly.

Kluge's own cinematic practice has been a consistent application of the 'Angrenzung' principle, from the montage of individual elements, through the constellation of situations in the film, to the juxtaposition of the institution of cinema with the 10,000 year history of human psychic development.

Commercial cinema lives off the wishes and associations of its audience, yet it does not even begin to represent the endless variety of human experience, preferring instead to present the same situations with different actors, different locations, different emphasis. From a limited store of time-tested elements, commercial cinema creates an inventory of pastiche products for mass

consumption. The isolationist tendency of the film industry is countered in practice by Alexander Kluge. His films challenge the channelling of consciousness by an aggressive practice of differentiation. In 'Angriff der Gegenwart', specifically in the last sequence, the principle of 'Angrenzung' is applied in almost every way conceivable, as the following analysis will hopefully show.

v) The Blind Director

In the first half of 'Angriff der Gegenwart', the principle of exclusion is the overriding object of representation. Those whose lives are affected by it, Anna Eilers and the 'Heimarbeiter', suffer different fates. Anna suddenly becomes aware of her other senses, but is in no position to do anything with them. While standing outside the theatre, her mind wanders, and those memories, superfluous to her previous employment, resurface. The Heimarbeiter has no time to develop his more human, sensual side. The 'Zerlegung der Hirnteile' and the selective exclusion of certain sensory abilities from the work at the keyboard serve to illustrate the channelling of human mental functions in order to produce the highest degree of efficiency. Both scenarios have a negative cast to them, representing relatively extreme situations which nonetheless have a firm basis in the real experience of the spectator. Most of us know people who are 'slaves to the computer', or who

have lost their job to a machine -- these images are part and parcel of modern life. It isn't until the second half of the film that Kluge begins to challenge the acceptability of these conditions, and he chooses to do so not by dictating a course of oppositional action, but rather by presenting the viewer with a kind of puzzle. That puzzle unfolds in the final sequence of the film, 'The Blind Director' (Der blinde Regisseur), and the questions raised therein serve as the impetus for the viewer to approach the problem critically and to develop solutions which have personal validity.

One of the challenges in analyzing the final segment is presented by the layering of associations which accompanies each character and each statement. Most of these associations have accumulated during the course of the film; some can also be traced to Kluge's critical work of the same period. Other associations are from the public realm, and the spectators are invited to bring their own experiences to bear on the occurrences presented. Within the film, for example, the Director is associated formally with Anna Eilers, who in turn is a living representative of the superfluous elements of the human sensory apparatus. The Director is also Kluge, and the film he is making could well be composed of scenes Kluge had already considered for his own film. Before examining the specific dynamics in the segment, these associations must be determined and examined, whereby the common element, the underlying idea will, if all goes well, emerge from the network of relations as if by itself. Once

the basic terms are distilled, the otherwise perplexing structure of the film begins to take on a much more coherent character.

Each of the four main players in the final sequence -- the Director, the Reporter, the Assistant and the Producer -- develops their character not only through representation (i.e. acting their part) but through association with other characters and terms in the film. The role of the Director, as was just outlined, is one of the most clearly defined in the entire film. He is explicitly compared to both Anna Eilers and Alexander Kluge, but at no time is he ever equated with either. For the most part, the associations are created by the repetition of a word, idea or incident which has another context in the film. This is the same as the method used in the first half of the film to link the autonomous sequences: the repetition of the words 'überflüssig' and 'eilig', the recurring theme of the new media, and the images of the scrap-yard. In these cases, the links are essentially thematic. But in order to identify the Director in the film with the director of the film, a different strategy must be employed.

During the course of the film, the spectator begins to expect apparently anomalous segments and develops a kind of patience when it comes to the creation of a context for them. Most of these are scenes narrated by Kluge, with little actual plot value in themselves. Their role in the advancement of the idea is not always immediately obvious. This is the case with the scene which opens the final sequence. It follows a short documentary

reel on the development of the first movie projector, invented by the Lumière Brothers. The scene then suddenly changes. An old stone staircase winds up out of sight, and we find ourselves in a room with a female corpse on a stone altar, surrounded by candles and being watched over by a monk. Kluge narrates, and explains that the monk, overcome by passion, rapes the corpse. Afterwards, the dead young woman begins to move -- she has been brought back to life by the monk's attack. After this, we are introduced to the Director, first in the screening room, then on the set. The preceding scene seems, at first, to be linked to events earlier in the film, perhaps with the two young lovers at the beginning (played by the same actors), perhaps somehow with the awakening of dead desires, or the 'spark' of life which arises from the incompatible realms of religion and sexual desire. The spectator is left to speculate, but in all cases, the question remains: What prompted Kluge to film this scene? It is not until the interview between the Reporter and the Director that we discover -- that scene is actually part of the film being shot within this last sequence. In the mind of the viewer, the image of Kluge and the image of the Director are no longer wholly separate. The rape scene acts as a bridge between the two film-makers, and also serves to link some of the earlier, less motivated scenes (those noted on the previous page) with this final sequence.

There are a few other elements which link the director with the Director. The film being shot in the segment appears to eschew the narrative form to the same extent as that traditional device is rejected in all of Kluge's work. Kluge's statement, "Der rote Faden drückt Erfahrung aus dem Film heraus" (Patriotin, 41), used in defence of non-narrative forms, is echoed in the interview with the Producer. The Reporter remarks, "ein blinder Regisseur würde aber den roten Faden kaum erkennen können", implying that the Director is actually incapable, and not just unwilling, to make a film with a stable narrative. In Kluge's case, of course, the decision is a very deliberate one, made by a man in full command of his senses.

The association with Kluge is just one of many facets in the character of the Director. He is also compared, by virtue of his situation, to Anna Eilers. This is accomplished in two instances. First of all, his blindness makes him superfluous for the cinema industry, at least for the commercial end of that industry. Yet what once made him a director, his 'vision', has been taken from him, and now his other senses are starting to develop in its absence. This situation is coincident with Anna Eilers' loss of employment. In the Drehbuch, Kluge describes her inner life: "Die um ihre langjährige Arbeitsleistung Betrogene hat erstmals in ihrem Leben die Zeit, Augen, Ohren, Aufmerksamkeit arbeiten zu lassen; langsam kommen die Gefühle wieder in Gang, das innere Kraftwerk" (AdG, 43). It is as though the faculties needed for

her to perform her job were the cork in the bottle which held in all of the 'unnecessary' emotions and senses. For the Director, eyesight was the prerequisite sense for his job -- once that sense relinquished its dominance over the others, they were allowed to develop freely and naturally, reclaiming their natural seat at the analytically functioning centre of the mind. This condition is present in every member of modern society who has let their emotions be used to purely functional ends. Kluge champions these emotions incessantly, wanting to see them perform their rightful service for their human host: "Wenn ich Gefühle zum Antreiben verwende, während sie doch Unterscheidungsvermögen beinhalten, dann werden sie gegen den Strich gekämmt, sie werden als Händler verwendet ..., während sie doch in Wirklichkeit Analytiker sein könnten" (MdG, 184).

It is in the expression of these liberated energies that Anna Eilers and the Director are most explicitly linked. Earlier in the film, Anna visits the cinema, buys a ticket, then stands outside, listening to passersby. This is interrupted by an abstract montage of images from unidentifiable sources, possibly illustrated magazines of the 40s and 50s. The camera shows us what is passing before Anna Eilers inner eye. Once this is finished, the camera returns to Anna outside the movie house, occasionally acknowledging the cashier behind her glass partition. Kluge's voice gives the commentary: "Jetzt stehen sie schon so seit zwei Stunden". This sequence, with a few minor

changes, is repeated at the very end of the film. This time it is the Director who experiences the flow of images in his mind. We see him walking along a catwalk, then stopping, confused. Kluge's voice on the soundtrack informs us: "Es sind 23 m von der Vorführkabine bis zum Atelier. Er wartete zwei Stunden, daß einer der Assistenten vorbeikäme. Er war innerlich voller Bilder". The montage sequence which accompanies this scene is almost identical in composition to that used earlier for Dr. Eilers' stream of images. The length of time spent by both in reverie is also the same: two hours, the length of an average film. The location at which these images assault the mind is of paramount importance, more so than the images themselves. They occur at the interface between fantasy and reality, between the cinema and the city, between the screening room and the set. At the point of intersection of these two exclusive realms, the liberated mind begins to make use of its own store of images, thereby bringing fantasy and reality to bear on each other.

Alexander Kluge, Anna Eilers, the Blind Director -- what do they share? All three have access to the realm of the senses which is the home of the natural analytic ability, considered superfluous to industrial society. This natural ability helps them realize the extent to which experience is edited by the forms of communication employed in the industrial world, and they each rebel in their own way. Anna rejects the cinema, which does not meet her requirements for real experience, in favour of her own wishes and dreams. The Director

changes his style, and tries to make his film-making reflect his new experience of reality; unfortunately, he will never see the result. (It is worth considering the cause of his blindness -- was it over-reliance on his sense of sight, a kind of sensory totalitarianism which incited a revolution of his other senses? Perhaps this is a lesson in perception. As Orpheus discovered, one should trust the non-visual senses more, for it is possible that the object one wants to apprehend will disappear if looked at). Kluge has been rebelling against the industrialisation of consciousness since the beginning of his career, trying in every way possible to create options within the media in order to preserve the independent reason and analytic abilities of each one of us. His films represent exits from the ever-narrowing spaces of narrative and commercial film. In reference to Kant, and to the famous first sentence of the essay "Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?", Kluge puts the following words into the mouth of Leni Peickert, the female patriot of the film "Die Patriotin": "Mündig ist der Mensch, wenn er Ausgang hat" (Patriotin, 300). As long as Kluge makes films, his spectators will always have a way out of the industrial trap.

Returning to the other characters of the Blind Director sequence, it is clear that Kluge continues his project of 'Angrenzung' in each case, pitting the world of natural analysis against the world of ideological bias. The Reporter represents the public opinion, shaped by the mainstream perceptions that result from the project of exclusion. Furthermore, his interest in the Director's

previous films is limited to those which correspond most closely to his own concept of entertainment, which denies film any kind of validity as a tool for critical investigation of reality. He criticizes the Director for making a film which is so difficult to understand, showing that he is uncomfortable with anything that evades his comprehension. In this respect, he is a representative of that segment of society Kluge refers to as the "kauforientierter Zuschauer". Kluge compares this kind of spectator to a department store owner, who becomes nervous when he feels that his inventory is of no interest to the public, that it has no value for the general populace. This kind of spectator will only be interested in items which have some exchange value, ignoring those which may be useful for him personally but not for others. "Ähnlich unternehmerisch tastet der zur Kauf-Mündigkeit erzogene Zuschauer auf Schauwert, Ausstellungswert, vollzähliges Verständnis ab. ... Das vollständige Verstehen von Filmen ist Begriffsimperialismus, kolonialisiert die Gegenstände. ... Wir müssen Filme machen, die im vollen Gegensatz zu dieser Kolonialisierung des Bewußtseins stehen" (Patriotin, 301). Although the Reporter is not explicitly linked with any other figure in the film, his opinions identify him clearly enough as an uncritical conformist to the ideology of industrialisation.

The third important figure in the final sequence is the Assistant. Here, Kluge uses the character to point out another aspect of the apparatus of the cinema: the exclusion of aspects of reality in its transference onto film.

She represents this apparatus in her function as translator, expressing in words what the Director cannot see. The Director uses her as a replacement for his eyes, and demands that she communicate what she sees without personal bias. In the screening room he tells her: "Ich will keine Interpretation! Sagen Sie nur, was Sie sehen!". In this sense, she is expected to be as neutral a medium as a film camera, but that kind of neutrality is an illusion. Whether he likes it or not, the Director is receiving a biased perspective, for the Assistant could not possibly translate all of the minute details captured on film. She must decide what is most important in the picture, what is 'Hauptsache', and exclude everything else from her description. This is the same as the bias of the camera, which can only show that at which it is pointed, and nothing else. Kluge's predilection for montage arises from his dissatisfaction with this bias. The only way it is possible to call forth images in the spectator's head without actually showing them on the screen is through this juxtaposition, which can then produce pictures which could never be translated onto film.

The relatively impossible task facing the Assistant was also put forth as an optional plan for the decentralization of the media. The pacing businessmen wondered: "Soll man die Kinos abschaffen und die Bilder über Telefon erklären?" Obviously, this is not an option for anyone who realizes the power of the image and its relationship to the power of the word. In "Wort und Film", Kluge points out that film is capable of expressions which language is

not, and vice versa. The translation of one of these forms into the other can only occur at the expense of the complexity of the expression. Kluge's recommendation is to forget about replacing one mode of expression with another, and instead work with the two in combination in order to bring both to a new level of development (see pp. 21-22).

The final character to be dealt with here is that of the Producer. He finds himself in an unusual situation. As a businessman, he must take into consideration the commercial viability of the film in production. His absolute confidence in the Director, however, makes him seem more of a patron of the arts than a purely money-oriented investor. His responses to the questions which the Reporter asks convey this dual perspective. He is aware that the success of the film and any future projects with the same director depends almost entirely on whether or not the audience can tell that the Director is blind. Financially, his hands are tied. When asked if the Director's affliction is covered by the production company's insurance carrier, the Producer replies, "Blindheit ist versicherungsrechtlich kein Grund zur Arbeitseinstellung". The Producer can only place his trust in the Director to "feel" his way through to the end of the film, and to do this he must also have some "feeling" himself. He is obviously astute enough to be able to comprehend the idea behind the film, admitting to the Reporter that it is indeed somewhat difficult. And when accused of being cold-hearted, the Producer makes a very telling statement :

"Sind Produzenten denn so kalt?" "Nein, wir sind ja auch nicht gefühllos". More than anything else it is emotion, feeling, the ability to differentiate which makes Kluge's project of alternative film-making possible. The Producer is proof that this ability is not the sole domain of the artist -- it is inherent in all of us.

Each of these four characters is situated at a crossroads, at a 'Nahtstelle'. The Director is caught between his old world of vision and the new world of the liberated senses; the Assistant must mediate between the incompatible realms of the image and the word; the Reporter struggles to incorporate this new film into the framework of his expectations; and the Producer, in order to be able to justify the production of the film, must reconcile the hectic world of administration with the natural rhythm of human emotion. Through the multilayered network of interrelations between these figures, the associations with other elements of the film, and the link with the real world of film-maker Alexander Kluge, the spectator is afforded a glimpse into the complex yet compelling structures of perception and society.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The complexity of Alexander Kluge's films can be understood as a reflection of the complex world they try to represent. Very few members of our society attempt to understand the structures which lie at the base of our social and cultural organization, so it is no wonder that few take a great interest in the work of a film-maker whose goal it is to translate those structures into the cinematic context. Media, society, consciousness -- for Alexander Kluge, these are the three terms of an equation which controls the functioning of the modern world, and all three of these terms are dependent on one another. Each shapes and is shaped by the others, but one is the historical instigator of the other two. The individual consciousness, with its immediate experience, was in existence before either of the other two. Society rose out of the family, the communication media were born from the need to share experience, and yet the situation in which we now find ourselves imparts neither the comfort of the familial environment nor the satisfaction of personal interactive communication. Kluge suggests that the present impersonality of societal organization is not, as some would argue, an unfortunate but necessary aspect of a progressive world community. He sees it rather as a harmful development and a serious impediment to the creation of a *truly* progressive and democratic society.

Many aspects of Kluge's work which reflect this concern could not be dealt with in this paper. He has made many arguments in support of a reorganization of our media institutions which would preserve the forms of public consciousness which have been in existence for the last 400 years, using the physiology of the human nervous system as the model for the structuring of the communications network. He has made numerous studies of family dynamics in order to come to an understanding of the original context of communication and its effects on the psyche of the developing child. Not only Adorno, Benjamin, Brecht and Godard have served as guides for his research - his interests have lead him to psychology (Freud, Jung, Jean Piaget, Wilhelm Reich), sociology (Durkheim, Habermas, Oskar Negt), as well as to other regions in the fields of philosophy, film and literature. Much of his recent theoretical work reads like a cross between Marshall McLuhan and Ernst Bloch, while the expansion of his ideas on city planning, addressing the post-modern decentralization of the urban environment on the one hand, and the "Hausmann-isation" of 19th century Paris (via Benjamin) on the other, finds echoes in the work of the French theorist and city planner Paul Virilio. The number of correlations alone indicates the work left to be done on the topic of Alexander Kluge, and if he is right about the path upon which we are travelling at this point of our development, the need for that work to be done is most urgent.

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