

THEORIES OF THE AVANT-GARDE: PROLEGOMENA TO A NEW AESTHETIC EPISTEME

Abstract: My paper aims to put in a new perspective an epitome of the contemporary art and culture: the avant-garde. The red thread of the present research is the idea that the avant-garde triggered a decisive epistemological break and established a new aesthetic mode. The glosses upon the phenomenon are a pretext to rethink and augment the semantism of some important theoretical concepts.

Key words: Avant-Garde, Surrealism, aesthetic episteme, epistemological break, experiment, objective chance, montage.

Those who have always avoided the labor of the concept say that they are tired of debates about theories, that one should finally get down to the thing itself, to the texts. This kind of talk is the symptom of a scientific crisis marked by the disjuncture of literary theory and the practice of the interpretation. The dilemma of literary scholarship is not least that of this divergence. The abstractness of theory formation is often matched only by the blind concreteness of individual interpretations. And that is the reason that it is not by playing theory off against interpretation, or vice versa, that the crisis can be dealt with. What would be more helpful would be the kind of criticism that attempts to distinguish theory from mere talk, and the reflected appropriation of a work from its paraphrase. But such activity requires criteria, and those only theory can furnish. (Burger 5)

These are the opening lines of Peter Burger's *Theory of the avant-garde*, an iconic exegesis to which this study owes important stimuli. Relaunching a fresh debate on the avant-garde – at a moment when the avant-garde is a classified historical phenomenon - could appear superfluous and redundant. It is true that, after almost a hundred years of existence, the avant-garde is a respected cultural institution, emblazoned with a capital A. The sound and the fury of its first public, the attacks and the slanderous imprecations, the naiveties and errors – they were all left behind. We too often forget that the historical avant-garde was – in its dawn – a negative point of reference, a dead end of art and culture. Today we look up the term in a dictionary (i.e. *Merriam-Webster Multilingual*) and here is what we find:

Avant-garde: Adjective. 1. Radically new or original. 2. Being advanced or progressive. 3. Being liberal. 4. Being inventive. 5. Being intellectual. 6. Being imaginative. 7. Being far-out. 8. Being exotic. 9. Being innovative, original or unconventional.

¹ Ovidius University of Constanța, Romania

Noun. 1. Any creative group active in the innovation and application of new concepts and techniques in a given field (especially in the arts).

The last definition has two important consequences: 1. In less than 30 years, there has occurred a radical change of the aesthetic mentality. 2. The term *avant-garde* suffers a semantic inflation: given the epidemic dissemination and the plethora of manifestations, the avant-garde is now a transhistoric attitude with many avatars². So, a debate on the avant-garde is still an essential entry on the contemporary cultural agenda if we want to illuminate aspects of 20th century artistic identity. And that is for a strong reason: we believe – and this is the point of departure and the argument to be demonstrated in our critical excursus – that the avant-garde is the foundation of a new aesthetic episteme – more precisely, of the current aesthetic episteme. Rethinking and putting the avant-garde into perspective would help us understand the mechanisms of rupture that instituted a new episteme and conceptual apparatus that overarches the art of the 20th century.

Our recourse to Peter Burger's assertion has another justification. It is largely believed – even by some critics – that the literature of revolt, insurgency, subversion, demystification, transgression etc. is incompatible with theorization. That is probably because many creators affiliated to the phenomena generally denominated as avant-garde practised this kind of art like a form of religion. They proselytised anti-art and anti-literature (in an endless series of manifestos), and the result was a new definition of art and literature. Their faith is no reason for us to neglect inspiring and illuminating metatexts that are now one of the most substantial parts of avant-garde work.

We ought to explain the use of a paradoxical phrase: *aesthetical episteme*. The two terms (*aisthesis* and *episteme* as two modes of cognition, emotional and rational) collide, but only at the superficial level. *Episteme* is a term coined by Michel Foucault, that has become intensely visible in the contemporary theoretical discourse. It somehow covers the cognitive unconscious of an epoch (i.e. a set of fundamental assumptions invisible for the ones operating with them). At the beginning of the 20th century, the avant-garde insidiously introduced a cultural and literary counterdiscourse that displaced the norms in use at the moment and gradually became the artistic convention.

The main vector that defines the contemporary aesthetic space, non-linear as it may be, is the avant-garde – we state this idea again. As we have already said, it is the intention of this paper to retrace and deconstruct this vector and to understand its initial and present coordinates. Or, in a more comfortable jargon for the study of literature, to inaugurate an *archaeology of the avant-garde* (as Michel Foucault would put it) and analyze the ways its concepts, objects and strategies are configured³.

We have also noted the dynamics of the cultural labels: some (Theodor Adorno, for instance) assign a positive value to the avant-garde and consider it the most advanced stage of art, while others (Gyorgy Lukacs *et alii*) see it as decadence. *Post festum* we see that this is a false cleavage of thinking the phenomenon; moreover, it is an inherent dialectics. Historians of art are committed to both positions; for instance, Matei Călinescu (the reputed critic of Romanian origin) identifies two impulses of the avant-garde: an impulse of negation – as the avant-garde

² For more consistent information, see Dupuis, J.P. *Histoire desinvolte du surrealisme*. Paris: Denoel. 1982.

³ It is important to state that every theoretical perspective on a phenomenon has an ideological drive, providing examples of commitment to specific normative theories, but often accompanied by savage disrecommmendation of alternative theories.

favours the “natural” decline of the traditional artistic forms and intensifies all the existing symptoms of decadence and exhaustion – and one of reconstruction and reinvention⁴. When it is judged, an avant-garde product can be described in negative and / or positive terms (absurd, strange, discontinuous, grotesque vs. original, unconventional, seminal, progressive or ingenious etc.). The strangest thing (or not) is that both faces of the avant-garde and all its attributes should be linked with the same characteristic: its experimental quality. In fact, the aesthetic break operated by the historical avant-garde was intuitively sensed as a large hiatus between the artistic modes of representations and the horizon of expectations of interpretive communities. Of course, there is always an irreducible gap between the speed of the literariness sign moving forward and the reaction of the interpretive communities. When a cultural phenomenon claims newness, the possibility of cognition is deferred, in Derrida’s terms. The collapse of the predicative nature of language and the new logic of the avant-garde provoke, shock and frustrate the reified perception. That is why our main theoretical concern is to dissipate the indeterminacy of another transdisciplinary, oblique concept: *experimentalism*.

Experimentalism: aporetic definitions.

If we are asked to concentrate thousands of pages devoted to the avant-garde phenomena (especially late avant-garde after 1945) and label them with a single theoretical term, that would be *experimentalism*. All the exegetes mention the binomial avant-garde / experimentalism; if one wants to circumscribe the term more rigorously, he may find the same old aporias. Under such an umbrella-concept we find the same schizoid categories that characterize postmodernism: antiform, play, chance, decreation, indeterminance, misreading etc. (all the key-terms of Ihab Hassan’s list apply). The historical avant-garde is, in a way, an aesthetic manifestation (even deliberately parodic) of Modernism, and experimentalism is, in its multiplicity, a standard procedure of Postmodernism. The artistic experiment is not only a characteristic of the new aesthetic episteme, it is a *sine qua non* condition.

Summing up these definitions, the concept of *experimentalism* is far from gaining a final contour. Cultural theorists seem to prefer fuzzy definitions, perhaps assuming that a too rigorous theoretical circumscription would alienate the intrinsic properties of the term under discussion. Perhaps the metalinguistic dictionary should be opened at another page. We should visit the field of science philosophy, where the definitions are more rigorously rendered. In so doing, the concept will gain a multidisciplinary identity for the obvious reason that art can not claim the singularity of the experimental initiative. This intellectual mode is identifiable in each and every human approach. The experiment is a zero degree of existence, the most powerful premise of innovation.

Experimental practices: a counterintuitive definition.

Published more than eighty years ago, *Logik der Forschung* (rewritten in English and republished in 1959 under the title *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*) has always been considered one of the landmarks of contemporary epistemology. Its author, Karl Popper, focuses on the interdependence between theory and experiment: the theory asks a number of questions and the

⁴ See Calinescu, Matei. *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-garde, Decadence, Kitsch Postmodernism*, Durham: Duke University Press. 1987.

answers are given by experiments. Karl Popper insists that the experimental results are always formulated in the light of theories; every experiment is an action subordinated to a theory.

Following the same idea, a physical chemist, Nobel Prize laureate Ilya Prigogine, and a science philosopher, Isabelle Stengers, define the experimental attitude as the hybridization of the theory with the empiric spirit. The experiment is the manipulation of the physical reality in order to give it the maximum proximity to a theoretical model. The experiment isolates and purifies a phenomenon in order to shape it as an ideal situation; every experiment is guided by a theoretical postulate – so the intelligibility of the experimental results is guaranteed, and the interpretation, necessary. If an experimental practice is not subordinated to a theory, its interpretation is not possible⁵.

Avant-garde texts can be affiliated to the experimental spirit because their production is mediated by a set of concepts, values, practices, and procedures playing the role of infratheory. For instance, Surrealism, the most visible avant-garde trend, is a sum of the mental postures (echoing the occult texts, Freud, Jung, Marx, non-Euclidian geometry, quantic physics) derived from a consistent *Weltanschauung* and translated in specific aesthetic expressions. In the same respect, Dadaism is – more or less - a “recipe”, a succession of artistic techniques and strategies that could be performed by anyone. In the era of mechanical / digital reproduction, the artistic *techne* has lost its magic quality of being one of a kind.

Too bad that the experimental dimension turned into a deprecation. In his essay “The work of art in the age of technical reproduction” Walter Benjamin uses the concept *the loss of aura* to describe the decisive changes undergone in the first quarter of the 20th century. Aura is for Benjamin a certain type of relation between work and recipient, which he refers to as aura – the unique phenomenon of distance, however close it may be. Instead of being based on sacralization or ritualization, art is now based on ideology. The avant-garde object no longer emanates an aura, it is no longer validated by a transcendent Truth.

The Dadaists attached much less importance to the sales [exchange] value of their work than to its uselessness for contemplative immersion... Their poems are a ‘word salad’ containing obscenities and every imaginable waste product of language. The same is true of their painting, on which they mounted buttons and tickets. What they intended and achieved was a relentless destruction of the aura of their creation which they branded as reproduction with the very means of production. (Benjamin 237-38)

Far from being a negative, the emancipation of the productive forces is - at a retrospective glance - a historical contribution that changed the face of art. Peter Burger’s comment is relevant: “Given the break between art with and without aura as elaborated by Benjamin, one arrives at the methodologically important insight that periodization in the development of art must be looked for in sphere of art as institution, not in the sphere of the transformation of the content of individual works.” (Burger 31)

A consistent property of an experimental object (a text or other aesthetic artefact) is strangeness, a consequence of its entropic structuration. The experiment captures the reality in

⁵ See Prigogine, Ilya, Stengers, Isabelle. *Noua alianță. Metamorfoza științei*. București: Editura Politică. 1984, especially the chapter “Dialogul experimental”, p.65 (the French edition *La Nouvelle Alliance. Metamorphose de la Science*. Paris: Gallimard. 1979 should also be seen).

non-mimetic, defamiliarized, nebulous representations. That is why we refuse to consider them valid, because, after all, we all prefer order to chaos.

Subsequently, we should revise another couple of terms of paramount importance: order / entropy. For instance, it has been considered, in an exclusive manner, that the symbol of order is the crystal, and that turbulence is an example of entropy. Now we are able to rethink these concepts as we discover, by means of experimental demonstrations, that the turbulent regime is a model of order: the molecular trajectories are always correlated and recurrent. Somehow ironically, the atoms that gravitate around the equilibrium positions of a crystal (our empiric model of order) have chaotic vibrations, so the crystal is, at a non-superficial level of perception, a chaotic system. We may consider further theoretical consequences. The most important thesis crying out for recognition is that we are confronted with many levels of reality, that we cannot judge in terms of the binary logic. Through experimental exercises, different versions of reality become co-present and the intrinsic polymorphism of our world is revealed. The experiment – scientific or artistic – is the most radical re-vision of reality.

So, we should revise the theoretical models currently in circulation and go beyond the classical definitions. This *tertium datur* logic would be transposed in the critical approaches of art and literature. If it is true that we can find a coherent configuration of textual constituents in every form of semiotic entropy, it is imperative that we make an effort to dig under the superficial, entropic levels of an experimental text, to reveal the profound, infralinguistic coherence. The superficial coating of avant-garde texts (Barthes would call them *scriptible*) disguises a profound order, originating in the theoretical laws that command the experiment. At the deepest levels, successive and different phrases prove to be equivalent, as they are variants of the same ideatic matrix. In the inextricable interpretations of Group μ , these are literary products with allotopies projected by pretextual isotopies (to be found in the manifesto). Exploiting the mechanisms of symbolization, condensation, secondary elaboration etc., the aesthetic experiment is the most radical attempt to block the referential function of art; through eidetic reduction, subject experimentalist is an artefact that does not want to communicate with our common social, cultural, psychological conventions of our world. From a signification perspective, an experimental product radicalizes its autopoietic, self-referential quality.

One consequence is relevant: the signifier prevails over the signified. The artistic contents are obliterated by the constructive strategies and techniques.

The manual of (technical) instructions.

All theories of the avant-garde mention *objective chance* as one of the most important artistic procedures. Surrealists believed that every individual speech extricated an occult symbolic order. We detect here a neo-Platonic reflex, the artist is the receptacle of the divine logos, the avant-garde artists recodify – in the psychoanalytic jargon – the gnostic ideas. *Enthousiasmos*, the transcendental inspiration, becomes a heteronymy of the subject. Our language does not represent the profane world; it is the interpolation of a sacred, essential super-nature. That is why objective chance is not mere coincidence, but a manifestation of necessity.

For Surrealists, chance – the unexpected encounters or superpositions of objects, beings and events - can be produced in a variety of ways. They even tried to systematize chance, distinguishing between its direct and its mediated production. The former – we learn from Peter Burger

is represented by movements (...) as Tachism, action painting (...). Paint is dripped or splashed on the canvas. Reality is no longer copied and interpreted. [...] The subject that

has freed itself of all the constraints and rules of creation finally finds itself thrown back into an empty subjectivity. Because it can no longer work itself out in something that the material, and a specific task, set for it, the result remains accidental in the bad sense of the word, i.e. arbitrary [...] At best, this arbitrariness can afterward be interpreted as individual expression (67)

The mediated production of chance is something different. It is not the result of blind spontaneity in the handling of the material, “but its very opposite, the most painstaking calculation. But the calculation only extends to the means, whereas the result remains largely unpredictable.” (Burger 67)

Let us closely examine the case of Surrealism. The way we decode the ecumenical definitions of Surrealism should be interrogated, as we too often ignore its irreducible multiplicity. For instance, what is Surrealism after at least 40 years of institutional manifestation (if we accept that Surrealism “died” officially in 1966, the year of Breton’s death)? A comprehensive definition of Surrealism cannot be formulated, for obvious reasons. That is why all encyclopaedias equated Surrealism to French Surrealism and this one, in a progressive reduction, to the first two manifestos signed by Andre Breton (*Manifeste du Surrealisme*: 1924; *Second Manifeste du Surrealisme*: 1930). The initial doctrinal principles state that Surrealism is a *modus scribendi*: SURREALISM, *n.* Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express - verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner - the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by the thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern⁶.

Too bad no one can trust, in the era of cognitivism and after a century of psychoanalysis, the presumptuous and inconsistent declarations such as the true functioning of thought or thought expressed in the absence of any control. Our contemporaries should read these prescriptions *literarily*, not *literally*; the manifestos discharged their prospective and regulatory function and became pure literature.

6 Here is the entire recipe of a Surrealist praxis: “After you have settled yourself in a place as favorable as possible to the concentration of your mind upon itself, have writing materials brought to you. Put yourself in as passive, or receptive, a state of mind as you can. Forget about your genius, your talents, and the talents of everyone else. Keep reminding yourself that literature is one of the saddest roads that leads to everything. Write quickly, without any preconceived subject, fast enough so that you will not remember what you’re writing and be tempted to reread what you have written. The first sentence will come spontaneously, so compelling is the truth that with every passing second there is a sentence unknown to our consciousness which is only crying out to be heard. It is somewhat of a problem to form an opinion about the next sentence; it doubtless partakes both of our conscious activity and of the other, if one agrees that the fact of having written the first entails a minimum of perception. This should be of no importance to you, however; to a large extent, this is what is most interesting and intriguing about the Surrealist game. The fact still remains that punctuation no doubt resists the absolute continuity of the flow with which we are concerned, although it may seem as necessary as the arrangement of knots in a vibrating cord. Go on as long as you like.” (Breton 15)

The history of Surrealism would have been shorter if its doctrine had not been reelaborated. In its rational phase Surrealist manifestos displayed more complex metapoetic procedures (the key terms were summarized by Breton himself in 1942): a persistent faith in automatism as a sounding device; a persistent hope in the dialectic for the resolution of antinomies which overwhelm man; recognition of the objective chance (...); a will to the permanent incorporation in the psychic apparatus of black humor which ...alone can play the role of a safety valve; preparation in a practical way for an intervention in mythical life...” Language is an imperfect tool if one wants to represent the libidinal impulses, because every linguistic expression would be a construction *apres coup*.

Subsequently, the doctrinal structure of the avant-garde - after 1930 – and those of the neo-avant-garde trends of the sixties was subjected to reelaborations. The late manifestos - those of Andre Breton, Philippe Soupault, Louis Aragon, Salvador Dali, Robert Desnos, Benjamin Peret, Michel Leiris, Rene Char, Sarane Alexandrian, Michel Carrouges⁷ etc. - incorporated ideas of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and Lacanian psychoanalysis. These fortunate encounters gave a superior consistency to the late phases of avant-garde and neo-avant-garde epigones. The manifestos after 1930 shared the most important metaaesthetic definitions of the trinomial thought / language / world. The first of Breton's manifesto did not explicate the relation between the unconscious and language, but the following theoretical texts provided clearer assertions, importing Lacan's theories. We know that the fundamental turn in psychoanalysis was Lacan's most cited statement: the unconscious is structured like a language. What is the significance of this formulation? After Saussure, we say that language is a system of differences that does not apply to the unconscious system. So, is it possible to capture and “store” the unconscious activity in linguistic structures? In a later formulation, Lacan specified: “If I have said that language (*langage*) is what the conscious is structured like, this is because language, to begin with, does not exist.” This is to say that language as such is not embodied within any number of speech acts; for it is not contained within the empirical realm of speech; language is the condition of possibility of all speech-acts. We should not understand that the unconscious is – even in its structure – equivalent to the realm of language. One fundamental difference is that language lends itself too readily to formalization, whereas the unconscious is precisely what poses a problem of formalization. Through slips of the tongue, jokes, baby talk, delirium, poetic language (to the extent that it is full of ambiguity, and therefore full of meaning), dreams, and forms of nonsense, we *glimpse* the unconscious.

Both Jacques Lacan⁸ and the Surrealist artists believed that we are not given access to *pure* unconscious contents, just as we cannot translate a metaphor in the common, tribal language. In *l'Introduction au discours sur le peu de réalité*, André Breton clamoured

Il s'est trouvé quelqu'un d'assez malhonnête pour dresser un jour, dans une notice d'anthologie, la table de quelques-unes des images que nous présente l'œuvre d'un des plus grands poètes vivants ; on y lisait : *Lendemain de chenille en tenue de bal* veut dire papillon. *Mamelles de cristal* veut dire : une carafe, etc. Non, monsieur, ne veut pas dire.

7 Sarane Alexandrian, Michel Carrouges were also reputed exegetes of the Surrealist art, not only members of the French group.

8 Lacan and the Surrealist writers and painters had a strong chemistry, so a critic said that “Lacan lacanized the Surrealism”.

Rentrez votre papillon dans votre carafe. **Ce que Saint-Pol-Roux a voulu dire, soyez certain qu'il l'a dit.** (Breton 276-277)

So we understand that psychic phenomena are framed in their linguistic expression. This is an important lesson of the avant-garde: the experience, whether conscious or unconscious, does not organize its expression, it is the expression that organizes the experience, giving it shape and direction. There is no experience without a material expression.

We have stated that the epitomatic Surrealist procedure is the objective chance. The consequences of their artistic choice are nonetheless decisive: the avant-garde not only negates the category of individual production and the disjunction of art and the praxis of art, but also that of individual reception⁹. Peter Burger explained how the nature and the new status of the artistic object triggered a change in the reception of the phenomenon that is art. He glossed on the idea:

In its most extreme manifestations, the avant-garde's reply to this is not the collective as the subject of production but the radical negation of the category of individual creation. When Duchamp signs mass-produced object (a urinal, a bottle drier) and sends them to art exhibits, he negates the category of individual production. The signature, whose very purpose it is to mark what is individual in the work, that it owes its existence to this particular artist, is inscribed on an arbitrarily chosen mass product, because all claims to individual creativity are to be mocked. Duchamp's provocation not only masks the art market where the signature means more than the quality of the work; it radically questions the very principle of art in bourgeois society according to which the individual is considered the creator of the work of art. (107)

Art historians enthusiastically recognized Marcel Duchamp as the artist who succeeded in effacing the boundary between art and non-art. The socioartistic context favoured Duchamp's disrupted initiatives (L.H.O.O.Q OR Mona Lisa with moustache, Fountain, Bicycle Wheel etc); at present, although the neo-avant-garde or its contemporary avatars proclaim the same goals as the representatives of the historic avant-garde movements to some extent, their revolt cannot be

⁹ *Nota bene* some nuanced observations of Peter Burger: "The avant-garde intends the abolition of autonomous art by which it means that art is to be integrated into the praxis of life. This has not occurred, and presumably cannot occur, in bourgeois society unless it as a false sublation of autonomous art. Pulp fiction and commodity aesthetics prove that such a false sublation exists. A literature whose primary aim it is to impose a kind of consumer behavior on the reader is in fact practical, though not in the sense the avant-gardistes intended. Here, literature ceases to be an instrument of emancipation and becomes one of subjection. Similar comments could be made about commodity aesthetics that treat form as mere enticement, designed to prompt purchasers to buy what they do not need. Here also, art becomes practical, but it is an art that enthralls. This brief allusion will show that the theory of the avant-garde can also serve to make us understand popular literature and commodity aesthetics as forms of a false sublation of art as institution. In late capitalist society, intentions of the historical avant-garde are being realised but the result has been a disvalue. Given the experience of the false sublation of autonomy, one will need to ask whether a sublation of the autonomy status can be desirable at all, whether the distance between art and the praxis of life is nor requisite for that free space within which alternatives to what exists become conceivable." (Burger 54)

taken seriously. Paradoxically or not, the avant-garde protest has turned into its opposite – because

if an artist sends a stove pipe to an exhibit today, he will never attain the intensity of protest of Duchamp's ready-mades. On the contrary, whereas Duchamp's Urinoir is meant to destroy art as an institution (including its specific organizational forms such as museums and exhibits), the finder of the stove pipe asks that his „work” be accepted by the museum. (Burger 109)

Let us consider montage, another aesthetic strategy, common to many avant-garde arts (film, photography, painting etc). It is no accident that montage first appeared in Cubism (in the *papier collé* of Picasso or Braque), destroying the representational system that had prevailed since the Renaissance. Montage is an artistic (!?) way of breaking with the idea of organicity. The organic work of art is constructed according to the syntagmatic pattern; individual parts and the whole form a dialectical unity. An adequate reading is described by the hermeneutic circle: the parts can be understood only through the whole, the whole only through its parts. This means that an anticipation of the whole guides, and is simultaneously corrected by, the comprehension of the parts. The fundamental precondition for this type of reception is the assumption of a necessary congruence between the meaning of the individual parts and the meaning of the whole. This precondition is rejected by the non-organic work, and this fact defines its decisive difference from the organic work of art. The parts 'emancipate' themselves from a superordinate whole; they are no longer its essential elements." (Burger 80) The necessary agreement of the parts is not an axiom of artefactuality, but a derivative of verosimilitude. If one chooses a non-mimetic code of representation, it is natural to commute to an aesthetics of discontinuity.

To conclude, we say again that the aim of the avant-garde work was to shock the recipient by refusing to provide meaning. Here lies their cynical lesson for the consumer: do not take the (artistic) meaning for granted. That is why the avant-garde established a new logic of reception: the recipient's attention turns to the principle of construction. But the postulates of old hermeneutics should not be replaced by formalist procedures or by a materialistic conception of art; rather, we should abandon the mysticist idea of the artistic perception as an auratic state or a metaphysical immersion. Now it is hilarious to believe that this new kind of art inculcates distraction, as Walter Benjamin said. An emancipated consumer of the 20th century would rather say that an avant-garde product imposes a reflexive attitude by raising questions about the status of art and literature.

It is high time for us, theorists, art consumers or mere art kibitzers, to accept the pontification of a new aesthetic mentality, leaving behind the erstwhile dogmas of verosimilitude and continuity.

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