ART
ITS ORIGIN AND SOCIAL FUNCTIONS
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Introduction

Many workers are repelled by the bewildering range of theory and practice that they find in contemporary art, in all its media. Each of these many psychotic trends has its own theory. But they all have one characteristic in common—their distrust and relationship to financial reality; they all derive from a practical activity. "No politics in art" is their slogan. These theories are a reflection of the general crisis dragging humanity companies. They have a two-way harmful effect: They devalues art, by stressing out of it its historic social function of helping man in his struggle for self-assertion; and they also isolate the working people from art, and thus deprive them of a very powerful weapon in their social struggles.

It is the aim of this pamphlet to help detect some of these rotten ideas, and to help find the correct way to use art in the struggle against imperialism and for the building of Socialism.

CHAPTER 1.

The Emergence of Consciousness

Art is essentially a human activity. It is an out of consciousness. As Engels warned us long ago, because we are used to seeing the products of consciousness—science, philosophy, art, etc.—we are disposed to forget reality. We are inclined to lose sight of the real origins of consciousness.

We forget that consciousness is derivative from material things—we keep into idealism and argue that consciousness has in fact created all things. Whereas of course, consciousness is itself a product of matter at a stage of development. Human consciousness emerges only after several stages of development of animal life and it is qualitatively different from animal consciousness. Its emergence is a dialectical leap.

Marx has expressed this:

"The practical production of an objective world, the shaping of inorganic nature is proof of man as a conscious member of the species.

To be sure animals also produce. They build nests, dwellings, etc. like bees, birds, cats and others."
But they only produce for their own or their offspring immediate needs; they produce one-sidedly, while man produces universally; they produce only under the domination of immediate physical needs, while man produces independently of physical needs and really produces only when free of these needs. They produce only them- selves, while man reproduces all nature; their product belongs directly to their own physical body, while man freely forms his product. Animals create according to the measure and need of the species, while man can produce according to the measure of every species, and can everywhere apply the inherent measure of the object.

"Hence, man also creates according to the laws of beauty."

The process giving rise to this human consciousness is brilliantly described by Engels in his "Transition from Ape to Man."

"Many hundreds of thousands of years ago, a specially highly developed race of anthropoid apes lived somewhere in the tropical zone... they were completely covered with hair, they had beards and pointed ears, and they lived in bands in the trees... almost certainly as an immediate result of their mode of life, for in climbing hands fulfill quite a different function from the feet, these apes, when moving on the level ground began to drop the habit of using their hands and to adopt a more and more erect posture in walking."

This was the decisive step in the transition from ape to man.

"For erect gait among our hairy ancestors to have become first the rule and, in time, a necessity, presupposes that in the meantime the hands became more and more devoted to other functions.

"Even among the apes there already prevails a certain separation in the employment of the hands and feet... At first, therefore, the operations for which our ancestors gradually learned to adapt their hands, during the many thousands of years of transition from ape to man, could only have been very simple... before the first flint could be fashioned into a knife by human hands, a period of time must have elapsed in comparison with which the historical period known to us appears instantaneous."

"But the decisive step was taken. The hand became free and could henceforth attain ever greater dexterity and skill, and the greater flexibility thus acquired was inherited and increased from generation to generation."

"Thus, the hand is not only the organ of labor, it is also the product of labor. Only by labor, by adaptation to ever new operations, by the inheritance of the resulting special development of muscles, ligaments, and, ever renewed employment of these inherited improvements in new and more complicated operations, has the human hand attained the high degree of perfection that has enabled it to confine itself to the making of Raphael, the statues of Thorwaldsen, the music of Paganini."

"But the hand did not exist by itself. What benefited the hand, benefited also the whole body served, and this in two ways."

"In the first place the body benefited in consequence of the law of correlation of growth, as Darwin called it... changes in certain forms involve changes in the form of other parts of the body. The gradual perfection of the human hand... has undeniably also reacted on other parts of the organism—including the brain."

(Note—This hypothesis has been confirmed by modern biology—F.M.)

"Much more important is the second way in which the hand affects the rest of the organism.

"The mastery over nature, which begins with the development of the hand with labor, widened man's horizons of every new advance. He was continually discovering new properties of natural objects. On the other hand, the development of labor necessarily helped to bring the members of society closer together by multiplying cases of mutual support, joint activity, and by making clear the advantage of this joint activity to each individual."

"In short, men in the making arrived at the point where they had something to say to one another. The need led to the creation of its organ; the undeveloped larynx of the ape was slowly but surely transformed by means of gradually increased motility, and the organs of the mouth gradually learned to pronounce one articulate letter after another..."

"First came labor; after it, side by side with it, articulate speech—these were the two essential stimuli
It is a distortion of the relationship between consciousness and the material environment in which consciousness functions.

As Enroll's shows, man's consciousness evolved and developed in part of the process of mastering nature. The history of consciousness is at the same time the history of human freedom. Freedom varies directly with man's understanding of and control over natural law.

It has been aptly defined by Enroll as "the recognition of necessity."

But the bourgeois theorists stand this on its head—themselves equate ignorance with freedom.

For example, the French art critic, Maurice Royno, praises the work of the French sculptor Leseur, because his aim is to keep instinct and desire intact in the form in which man gave expression to them in the time of the fall appearance on earth."

This theme of unhindered instincts is the quintessence of freedom that fits right through the whole of bourgeois aesthetics and psychology. It serves their need to brutalize man, but it is completely unscientific.

As instinct is an innate tendency to act in a certain way under a given stimulus. A bee instinctively stores honey. Throughout its life history it has been equipped in mental combat with another insect, the Philanthren.

Uncountable millions of bees have been killed by Philanthren, while sipping honey from flowers alongside their enemies.

But the bee is incapable of learning to take even the elementary precaution of flying away.

Another example. The moth, known as the Oak Eggar, seeks out the female of the species under the stimulus of an emanation from the female. But J. H. Fabre records how the male will fly right past the female, in clear sight under a bell jar, to a piece of food that is completely unrelated to the female's olfactory.

This is the "freedom" believed in by the bourgeois disciples.

This is the goal to which they would lead us—back from consciousness to instinct—back from home evolution to the beast and beyond that to the insect.
CHAPTER 2.
Art and the Labor Process

Art is one manifestation of consciousness. Just as consciousness itself emerges and develops in inseparable connection with the labor process, so does art. This is perfectly obvious in all primitive art. Here it is directly part of production. The rock drawings and engravings of the aborigines, for example, play a vital part in their primitive mode of production.

In their hunting dances, the dancers create an image of the movements and habits, say, of an antelope. The dance selects what is typical (what “most fully and vividly expresses its essence”—Moleskow) about the antelope, thereby heightening all that the tribe needs to know in order effectively to hunt it. In doing so, they stimulate the tribe to hunt.

Their rock drawings perform a similar role. Failure to see this leads bourgeois art critics into the most absurd confusion. A few years ago, great interest was aroused by the discovery in Altamira, Spain, of rock drawings dating back to the Palaeolithic era, right in humanity’s infancy.

These drawings are characterised by their most vivid capturing of motion.

Idealist attempts to explain these drawings are grotesque.

English critic, Eric Newton, admits his bewilderment.

“Until the late 19th century,” he writes on page 49 of his European Painting and Sculpture (Panama edition) “when, influenced by the camera arts, artists began to specialize in capturing the swift momentary essence, only a few exceptional draughtsmen had been capable of making this kind of drawing. How Palaeolithic men managed to do it is a mystery.”

His fellow Englishman, Roger Fry, is not so modest. He “explains” the mystery: “It would seem not impossible that the very perfection of vision and presumably of the other senses with which the Bushman and Palaeolithic men were endowed, fitted them so perfectly to their surroundings that there was no necessity to develop the mechanical art of drawing, beyond the elementary instruments of the chase.

“We must assume that Neolithic men, on the other hand, was less perfectly adapted to his surroundings, but that his senses were more than compensated for by an increased intellectual power.” (Vision and Design, Panne 84, Panama edition).

Here we have expressed in its crudest form the theory to which I have already referred. According to Fry, the intellect varies inversely to sensual power. Therefore, if we were deaf, dumb, blind and nervous our intellects would be gigantic.

“Naturally, based on such an absurd proposition, Fry’s ‘explanations’ only raise more mysteries. If Palaeolithic man was fitted ‘to perfectly to his environment’ how did his culture ever become supplanted?

To a Marxist there is no mystery in all of this. The primitive rock drawings are brilliantly realistic because they were part of a labor process based on hunting. Their social function depended on their selection of the typical in the movement of the beast and other game — their skill in draughtsmanship arose from that necessity.

The character of art is clear in its primitive forms. Artistic creations are images of reality, no crystallising reality as in literature and music, but reality as in its changing and ever-changing reality in a required direction.

Art is an expression of collective sensations and aspirations. It is part of the consciousness whose basis is the relationship men enter into in the course of production and reconstruction of material things.

Art is born as a collective activity... the aboriginal conchologist... the early Greek drama... etc.

But, of course, art is affected by the division of labor, which flows from man’s growing knowledge of nature. Even among the Aborigines, the individual artist is well established. Dancers and story-tellers whose skill wins them invincibility from the neighbouring tribes are noted by many students of the aborigines.

But these individuals are artists only to the extent that they are able to express the collective idea and fulfill the social need.

With the break up of society into classes, the collective excess to be the whole of society and becomes in...

FOOTNOTE—In a footnote, Fry asserts that his hypothesis on palaeolithic man is certainly the curse with Australian aboriginals.” This arrogant and absurd assertion highlights the need for Marxist study of aboriginal culture.
stood the class whose interest lay in art served. In class society, therefore, art is always class art—art is always a weapon serving a particular class in struggle with its rivals.

CHAPTER 3.
Slave Art

From that point art's development proceeds in two stages—the art of the ruling class or classes and the art of the exploited masses. Thus when we speak of Greek Art we usually refer to art that expressed the aspirations of the slaveowners. It was an art which grew rich in technique because its practitioners, maintained by the labor of the slaves, were able to devote their whole time to perfecting the vehicles for their ideas.

So long as their ideas and aspirations were towards historically necessary ends, so long did their art grow and mature.

By the Periclean era in Athens, art had achieved a level which in many respects still has not been surpassed. But the spirit of slavery rapidly expressed itself in art. This is true in a particular as well as in a general sense. The history of Egyptian, Persian, Greek, Roman art is at the same time a history of the rise and fall of these various slave civilizations.

This is very clearly seen in the case of Rome, whose decline marked the end of slavery as a dominant social system. The two or three centuries, which have "the birth of Christ" as their center, are the days of Rome's greatest stories. While prevented by the general crisis of slavery from achieving the heights of the Greek city state, Roman art of this period was rich and fruitful.

Naples, Vienna, and dozens of others testify to the fruits of art lived in this period.

But at the same time the seeds of the final destruction of slavery were being sown. Production forces were reaching the stage where slave labor relations were a letter.

The process expressed itself in most complex class struggles—the panic wars had on the one hand dispossessed a large number of the free peasants who had furnished Rome, and driven them into the cities as propertyless but free labor, and on the other hand enriched a handful of large slaveholding landowners, the Papirians. Civil war was fought between these two classes continuously for 100 years. And at the same time there were the unprecedented efforts of the slaves to free themselves, of which the Spartacus revolt was the most dramatic and the nearest to success.

These class tensions eventually threw up the empire—resting its power precariously on the tense balance between these class forces. Emperors became "absolute" in relation to these classes, but grew ever more dependent on the army which by the first century AD was appointing and deposing them almost at will.

Differentiation occurs among the slaves, a few finding important places in the state apparatus, many being transformed into serfs, and yet others into proletarians. Demobilization spreads among the ruling classes, expressing itself in many new ideologies, most of which are crystallized in Christianity.

Underneath all this was the rapid decay of productive forces. Some areas of land were lost to agriculture, water regulation systems fell into disuse; industry decayed. Continuous foreign and internal wars ate away the soul of Rome.

The result was an almost complete destruction of slave art.

Painting, which had reached high peaks in Athens and Alexander virtually ceased to exist in the west.

Southeast, the story of Perickeon Athens and to a lesser degree of Antiquity Rome, disappears for centuries.

From the habits copied by the dramatists and philosophers of Greece, literature descends to the hills of the Appalachian plateaus—survives for a couple of centuries in the bastard, and then dies.

But the other stream of art, that of the oppressed masses, flows on.

The masses were the owners of art. They preserved music in their folk songs, theatre in their folk dances and literature in their folk tales.

When the feudal mode of production has finally achieved some form of stability in about the 10th century, it is from this healthy stream that the new ruling class art drinks.

The initial and latter, essential features of feudal social life illustrates this point. So do the Anglo-Saxon chronicles of Beowulf and other folk stories to which all modern literature trace their roots.
CHAPTER 4

The Renaissance

This phenomenon presents itself so regularly in the history of art, that it might be called a law. At social points of social development, the new rising class finds much of the folk art with the techniques and forms developed by educated ruling classes to mould an art which will express their own progressive or revolutionary aspirations.

It was a feature of the renaissance. The precursors of bourgeois literature drew on the vernaculars in which the common people told their tales and on the ideals themselves for such works as the Decameron. The composers found in the folk songs of the minstrels material with which to supplement the Greco-Roman chant; and so on.

And the renaissance is a graphic illustration of the relationship that art as a part of the superior classes bears to the social base.

It commenced in Italy where geographical and other factors had allowed the embryonic capitalists to be the first to achieve class consciousness.

During a period of about three centuries the city states of Italy, situated on all the main trade routes had in alliance with the merchant princes wrested liberties from the Feudal lords.

In this period Dante, Boccaccio, Giotto, Leonardo, Michelangelo, Palma, Titian, The Codex of the Arts and countless other masters in every field of art flourished.

In magnificent artistic images they began to criticise the church, and express a consciousness of nationhood, a new awareness of man and nature and other concepts hostile to feudal ideas.

It should be noted however that the development was not even over the whole three centuries, and that a real leap was taken between 1480 and 1550.

By this time the development of commodity production as well as trade had reached levels to justify Dugale's statement that Italy was the first capitalist nation.

In those 70 years the renaissance reached its full bloom. Of it Engels said: "Italy rose to undreamed of flowering of art which seemed like a reflection of classical antiquity and was never attained again ... It was the greatest progressive revolution that mankind has so far experienced, a time which called for giants and produced giants ... giants in the power of thought, passion and character, in universality and learning."

"The man who founded the modern rule of the hour

seemed to have anything but bourgeois limitations. On the contrary, the adventurous character of the time inspired them to a greater or lesser degree."

"(Dialectics of Nature.)"

"The cutting of the trade routes by the Turkish capture of Constantinople in 1453 raised the need to find new routes. In the search, Columbus, Magellan and others performed wonders of navigation. In the process they weakened the base of the Italian capitalists by diverting trade from their city states. Within a century the glory of Italian renaissance art were no more."

"The centre of capitalist development shifted to Spain, England, the Netherlands — countries occupying key positions on the new trans-oceanic trade routes."

"In all these countries, the Capitalist class becomes conscious of itself art becomes transformed to convey their ideas. (In Spain, the development was cut off by the temporary victory of the Counter-revolution.)"

"The Elizabethan period was a nodal point in this process in England."

"It produced a rich crop of brilliant men, the greatest of whom was Shakespeare."

"His genius created drama people with men and women who typified the class relations and tensions of his epoch."

"He wrote on historical cycle which "labeled" the Tudor claim to the throne ... in his early comedies and comedy drama he proclaims the new ethic of the capitalistic class. But he was at his greatest in his tragedies."

"These were written in the period from 1600 to 1610."

"In 1588, the merchant capitalists had achieved a decisive victory over Feudal Spain's counter revolutionary armada."

"The alliance with the Tudor monarchy, product of the whole 16th century had paid in dividends. The Venetian and German trade rivals, who had hung on in their London depot, the Stockyard, had finally been routed. Merchants organized in such groups as the Association of Merchant Adventurers, of which Good Queen..."
Buss was a shareholder, foreseeing the new world and returning profits of from 600 to 700% per voyage.

Capitalist production was beginning to spread. These developments demanded new adjustments to the alliance with the crown.

Queen Elizabeth, for example, was pleased and voluntarily agreed to forego her right to grant trade monopolies to her favorites. Limitations therefore were inevitable. But they were heightened by the death of Elizabeth and the accession to the throne of James VI of Scotland.

He had no patience with and no understanding of the merchant capitalists.

He received their demands and tried to extract from them an explicit admission of his "divine right" in rule.

Feeling their opposition he sought support from the then new-fleded revolution—Feudal article.

By 1512, the Spanish ambassador was virtual dictator in London.

The class relations, which had inspired Shakespeare, had passed. He wrote no more after about 1611.

In Shakespeare’s tragedy, he fused the class emotions of the young capitalist into individuals to create the noblest gallery of characters in literature.

Yielding to a strong current to protect them from feudal knavesness, greed and ambitious domination arising from the guilights of the monarch on whom they must rely; they hesitated on his depression because now they were not created by history ... and so on. These were the emotions and expressions which fused artistic expression in the tragedies, creations in which humanity and feeling were fused to express the bourgeoisie to the political tasks facing them.

But because at that time, as in Italy earlier, the bourgeoisie were standing at the head of an awakening people, Shakespeare was able to transcend the limitations of the class-base. Rooted to that class, his genius flowered and spread beyond its confines. It belongs to all men.

And today, because of its profound humanism, the capitalism in their death throes, are uneasy in its presence. It is to the workers in the Soviet Union and Peoples’ Democratics that Shakespeare now speaks with full significance.

CHAPTER 5.

Action and Interaction

This does not mean, of course, that developments in productive forces are simply paralleled in art.

"The further the particular sphere in which we are investigating is removed from the economic sphere and approaches that of pure abstract ideology, the more shall we find of exhibiting accidents in its development, the more will its curve assume a spurious...

"But if you plot the spurious axis of the curve you will find that the axis of the curve will approach more and more nearly parallel to the axis of the curve of economic development, the longer the period considered and the wider the field dealt with." Groote’s letter to Prince Zambhyz, January 26, 1840, in Mark and Engel’s Art and Literature ..., p. 18, 2nd ed.

The relations between the base and the superstructure are not a positive mechanical connection but a dialectical interaction.

Men make their own history, and in making it they are influenced by contemporary ideas and by ideas from the past.

Early American poetry, for example, is heavily shaped by literary taken bodily from England and tucked on to Australian conditions.

Here is an example from Kendall’s "September to Australia."

"The ways of the feet have been filled of the flowers, While the forest discovers Wild wings with the same of burning hours.

And the music of lover."

"September, the cool with the swift, silver foot! She glides and asks across The valleys of contentment, the slopes of the lead. With her blossoms, garden Sweet mouth, with a mouth that is made of a rose. The lightens and blooms In spots where the breath of the evening grows, Attuned by her lover."

These words hardly meet the requirements of the rugged grandness of Australia—they are attuned to the softness of a different land.
CHAPTER 6

Another Law

Technically, it is true, Australian painters learned
much from the new approach to problems of light and
landscape adopted by the French post-impressionists.

But the French post-impressionists mark a
breakthrough of the discernment of the artist from his fellow men.

The Australian artists, on the contrary, possessed a
deep love of their own country and bled in the men
and women who peopled it. They were the first great
romancers in Australian painting.

This illustrates a law formulated by Fieldenov:

"The influence of the literature of one country on
the literature of another is directly proportional to the
similarity of the social relations of these countries." (In
Defense of Nationalism, Fieldenov, P. 504, Lawrence and
Wishart, 1943)

In 1850, Australian capitalism was still a healthy
organism. It transformed the art anatomy from the
diseased body of French imperialism.

But decaying French bourgeois art deeply influenced
Australian art to-day, and there is no such anamnesis...

because the general critique of capitalism is
now very few advanced in Australia too.

CHAPTER 7

Inhumanity—the Keynote

By its very nature, art, in class society, expresses
the exploitation of a particular class—is a weapon of a
particular class.

But this does not mean that all artists consciously
fulfill such a function. Picasso is a member of the French
Communist Party and has a valiant record of struggle
against the imperialists. Mattisse is an honored member
of the peace movement. But they are rightly regarded
classical bourgeois artists of the day.

To varying degrees, thousands of artists who reject
or oppose the standards and aims of the capitalists
nevertheless continue to express bourgeois ideas. This
is not surprising. As long as capitalism exists it pro-
duces a constant stream of ideas that conform with its
character.
It requires constant and vigorous ideological struggle on the part of the working class to defeat these ideas. So an artist can warrant the description "bourgeois artist" even though he has no intention of helping capitalism.

"What makes them representatives of the petit-bourgeoisie?" Marx wrote of the petit-bourgeois intellectual of 19th-Century France. From the fact that, in their minds, they do not go beyond the limits which the latter do not go beyond to see that they are constantly driven historically into the same path and solutions to which material interest and social position practically drive the latter.

"That is, in general, the relationship of the political and literary representatives of a class to the class they represent." (Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte. P. 14, New York International Publishers.)

And in the same work Marx develops this idea:

"Given the different forms of property, given the social conditions of existence - an entire superstructure of distinct andcharacteristicallyformed sentiments, illusions, modes of thought and views of life. The entire class creates and forms itself out of its material limitations and out of the corresponding social relations.

"The single individual, who derives them through tradition and education and forms them from the real motives and the springing point of his activity... And as in private life one distinguishes between what a man thinks and says of himself and what he really is and does, still more in historical struggles must one distinguish between the classes and leaders of the people from their real concern and their real interest... And the conception of themselves from their reality." (ibid, pp. 48, 413)

"The capitalist to-day moves within very narrow limits. Based on decay, they constantly face economic crisis, to which is the only salvation they can see is war.

"For the people they can offer nothing but empty starvation or mass annihilation. Their arts impressed in this dark and aimless hell serve to distinguish, exalt, and glorify that hatred. Nearly 100 years ago, Marx forecasted the present ideological plight of the capitalists when he wrote:

"Society has until now always developed within the confines of some kind of contradiction: in ancient times it was the contradiction between freemen and slaves, in the Middle Ages between the nobility and serfs, and in modern times - between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

"This exploits the one hand, the abysmal, inhuman way in which the oppressed class has to satisfy its needs... and on the other - the restriction within which the development of social communities takes place, and with it, the development of the whole ruling class; this reduction on development consists, thus, not only in the exclusion of the oppressed class from development, but also the intellectual limitation it imposes on the class that does the excluding - so that it, too, the ruling class, is doomed to become inhuman." (Quoted by Kamenev, in Aspects of Two Cultures, Vozd, No. 32, 1947 from Marx-Engels Collected Works, Vol. 4, pp. 418-420, Russian edition.)

"This inhumanity dominates artistic creation and criticism of the capitalist class.

"The American magazine Life, on December 2, 1946, expressed this way: "For the ancient Greeks, man was the centre of the universe; modern men has reduced his significances to the level of an ordinary biological creature."

"This is a creed which conforms perfectly with the imperialist conception that man is merely common fodder.

"The same idea is expressed even more crudely by French critic, Maurice Royall, to whose comments on the sculptor, Lipchitz, I have already referred.

"In the same article, he writes: "... he regards the adaptations stemming from certain vicissitudes of reason as adaptations which must necessarily disappear or be supplanted as doublest truth is represented by homogeneous critical and primitive expression of the nature.

"In short, back to the animal level! Royall's "eternal truth" finds practical expression in the policy of the US war planners.

"It is echoed by General Douglas MacArthur, saying as he stared at the murdered bodies of Korean patriots, "There is a fine sight for my old eyes."

"And by General Teehee gloating "hot dog, hot dog,"
as learned prisoners of war run to escape American bombe throws.

Our minds are constantly impressed by this kind of poison, unleashed by frightened men trying to stop the march of history.

Some artists, who purvey it, do not do so consciously.

But to counteract it we need artists who consciously express the aims and aspirations of the working class—the class destined by history to lead men from such animal reaction into full human consciousness.

We need artists who are willing to fight for truth and against the enemies of truth. This requires artists who are conscious of their class alignment.

CHAPTER 8.

The Artist and the Class

It has always been true that artists who understand their own class position are made greater artists by that knowledge.

As Engels said of the geniuses of the Renaissance:

"What is especially characteristic of them is that they almost all pursue their lives and activities in the midst of the contemporary movement, in the practical struggle; they take sides and join in the fight one by speaking and writing, another with the sword, many with both.

"Hence, the fullness and force of character that makes them complete men.

Men of the study are the exception—either persons of second or third rank or cautious philanthropes who do not want to burn their fingers." (Engels, Dialectics of Nature).

The same is true of Milton, the great epic poet of the English language.

Living in the midst of the Bourgeois revolution, he was so class-conscious, such a militant party man, that for 25 years he wrote no poetry—only pamphlets, because they were needed by his class.

Henry Lawson is another example.

His best work was produced when he was playing an active part in the social struggles of the Labor movement at the end of the 19th Century.

As already mentioned, the 90's marked a nadir in Australian development.

In 1899, the price of wool began to fall. The employers were organized nationally in preparation for the "great clashes between capital and labor," which they foresaw must come.

Capitalism has come of age.

Industrially this expressed itself in the great strikes of the 90's, politically in the Socialism of William Lane and his Parramatta Utopian, the birth of the Labor Party and the attempt to neutralize the state; artistically it brought forth the great democratic national art of Lawson, Collins, Roberts and cory.

It finds its sharpest expression in the poetry of Lawson.

In poems such as Man Who Made Australia, Freedom on the Wobbly, and others, he gave voice to the budding class consciousness of the workers.

The concept of manhood, nourished by the nature of the country and the social conditions since the foundation of Australia, began to take on a new militancy.

The workers became conscious that their union struggle had to be supplemented by political action. This was still not revolutionary consciousness. They still saw something accidental in their class conflicts—they did not understand the historical necessity of class struggle.

They had no vision of themselves as liberators of mankind, leaders of humanity into a classless society.

It took more than one upheaval to destroy illusions nurtured over 100 years.

The machine had done a little Avery, but a minor adjustment would surely fix it. With those concepts, the Labor Party was founded.

Lawson saw further than the majority of his contemporaries. But inevitably he shared the limitations of his class. So that even in a fine militant poem like Cambanoro Star, we find lines of lofty chauvinism.

In much of Lawson's best work there is confusion and even pessimism.

It is not the purpose of this essay to trace the roots of social weakness in detail, but it is necessary to mention them because it was these roots that grew when the social soil and climate changed.

After the defeats suffered in the great strikes, a mood of pessimism gripped the working class. This was only partly alleviated by the high hopes held in the Labor Party. (The leading Socialists deserted to William Lane's Parramatta Utopia).

By this time, Lawson had become a national figure and much sought after by literary and bourgeois circles.
The mighty achievements of the people, led by the working class and its vanguard, the Communist Party, provide the artist with bottomless springs of inspiration.

And the keen, sharp knifc of Marxist criticism cuts away every cancer that would obscure the artist's vision or hinder him in creating adequate vehicles for society's glorious aspirations.

The rapid development of Soviet society raises special problems for the artist.

He cannot create reality in the beautiful manner of some painters; but he has to be able to capture it with the speed of a news photographer.

Shcherbok wrote Virgo Nulla. Upturned only 20 years ago. It dealing then with a hot contemporary issue. Today it is an historical novel.

This speed of development constantly presents artists with new problems—and criticism and self-criticism are vital here in this or in all other aspects of development.

Nor are Soviet writers and artists deterred by attempts to distort their efforts in this regard.

The recent Soviet Writers' Congress was devoted almost entirely to self-critical examination of the weaknesses of Soviet literature.

The Capitalist press, tried to isolate part of this and hold it up as a proof of the bankruptcy of Soviet art creation.

But the flood of novels, poems, plays, music, painting which flows from all corners of the Soviet Union gives them a lie.

They seek comfort in the absence of a Leo Tolstoy or a Nicolaic Gogol from the Soviet literary scene.

But as Iya Ehrenburg told in one of his critical essays, "The Writer and His Craft."

"Soviet society is now in the early days of its development in history a few decades are but a brief time. Our writers are like scouts.

“That is why we do not yet have a Pushkin or a Tolstoy. But we shall have. Our Zenith is still before us."

The Soviet people are achieving the highest levels of artistic creation in the history of man.

They are creating Socialist Realism, which sets itself tasks such as those outlined by Malankov in his report to the 19th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.
CHAPTER 10

Form and Content

There are two aspects of this masterly analysis by Maksenkov that need stressing.

One is the relationship between form and content in a work of art.

They are a dialectical unity: it is the unity and interpenetration of these opposites that constitutes the inner mechanism of artistic development.

More once said, "My property is in form, it is my spiritual individuality." (See footnote.)

An artist is an individual through whom social aspiration and expression. He seeks to create images of reality, or recreate reality, to reveal its many-sidedness, to facilitate and encourage social action upon it.

But the art is part of that reality—his consciousness is a product of that reality. He cannot entirely separate reality from himself (i.e., achieve absolute objectivity) any more than he can remove himself from reality: sabotage subjectivism.

His artistic creations are therefore a fusion of individual consciousness with objective social reality. Art is a synthesis of the objective and the subjective. It is this synthesis that expresses itself in the dialectical unity of form and content.

Form is "spiritual individuality," but it is socially created. It evolves and develops in response to the demands of changing reality.

Style, nonangment, adopted by individual artists, which do not consist in expressing the social emotion, in clarifying reality, are socially rejected.

FOOTNOTE: Those who assert that Marxism requires form should study this impressionist plea by Marx.

"You admire the delirious variety, the most inexhaustible wealth of colors. You do not demand that a rose should have the same scent as a violet, but the richest of all, the spirit, is to be allowed to exist in ONLY ONE form? I am a humanist, but the laws of art to write seriously. I am bold, but the law orders my style to be modest. Gray and more gray, that is the only permissible color of boredom. Every development in which the sun is reflected, glitters with an inexhaustible display of colors, but the sun of the spirit may break into ever so many different individuals and objects, yet it is permitted to produce only one color, the officidal color." (Marx and Engels, On Literature and Art, CSD edition, page 46, On Style.)
A correct form announcen and develops a content. An incorrect form weakens and retards the content.

An artistic creation stimulates action on reality. The starting point in criticism is in which direction does it stimulate action. If it impels mankind to brutality and degradation, it is bad, socially dangerous art. And in this case, the more closely form and content correspond, the more dangerous is the art.

And conversely, if it impels man onwards, the greater the correspondence of the form and content the greater is the impact of the idea expressed—the greater is the art.

Hence today, more than in any previous period, the appraisal of art is a political question.

We live in the epoch of “mass bound” capitalism. The capitalists have no aspirations other than to power, to cling to their money bags. Doomed by history, they know only despair, contempt for humanity and hatred for reason and truth. Their art impels towards brutality, towards the blind and brutish. On the other hand, the working class and the working people toward whom it leads, have a glorious future, in which they can liberate themselves not only from the ruling class that now oppresses them, but also from the forces of nature which now dominate us.

Their art evokes love of humanity, confidence in its future, determination to win such a future. It is the art of peace, socially useful art.

There are as in between today. The struggle that dominates all reality is too sharp to allow of eclecticism.

One is either for peace or for war. For life or death.

CHAPTER 11.

Allies in Art

And that brings us to the second question—narrowness or sectarianism in art.

The working class has the responsibility of leadership in art as in all fields of human endeavor. The working class is the only consistently revolutionary class in society, its relations to the means of production determine that it will be moulded to Socialism.

The working class needs a socialist realistic art,
which will not only expose the evils of modern capitalism, but will at the same time reveal the positive aims of the future.

Capitalism itself has been forced to provide certain objective factors essential for the mass building of such an art. More complicated instruments of production demanded a literate working class, and so a limited education was opened to the working people.

Furthermore, the tremendous development in productive forces achieved by progressive capitalism created conditions in which the working class was able to win more leisure and thus use their education for more than merely improving their profit-making capacity for the boss.

But narrowness or sectarianism will only hinder the building of such a Socialist Realist art.

Appreciation of the need for a specifically working class art does not imply rejection of all non-working class art.

The class relations of today were accurately foretold by Marx: "No class in civil society can play this part unless it puts forth a phase of enthusiasm in its own rank and those of the masses: a phase when it... is identified with society, is its and recognized to be the universal representative of society, and when its own demands and rights are really the demands and rights of society itself, and it is in truth the social head and the social heart..."

"The position of liberator cannot be taken by storm simply through revolutionary energy and intellectual self-confidence.

"If the encapsulation of a particular class is to be identified with the revolution of a people, if one social class is to be treated as the whole social order, then on the other hand, all the deficiencies of society must be concentrated in another class; a definite class must be the universal stumbling block, the embodiment of universal letters." (Marx, Contribution to the Critique of Hegelian Philosophy of Law, quoted by Robbavov in In Defence of Materialism, P. 198, Lawrence & Wishart, 1947)

Today, to monopoly capitalists, who need war and know no future are the "universal stumbling block, the

embodiment of universal letters." And the working class is the head and heart of society.

Consequently, its aspirations are not narrow but embrace the aspirations of all other classes except the universal stumbling block.

Consequently the working class can accept and in turn needs the support of the art of allied classes.

The point was well made by Joseph Rival, a Political Committee member of the Hungarian Communist Party in a discussion there some years ago:

"The struggle for the advantages of literates and for the realization of the principle of Party literature does not exclude the possibility of having fellow travelers and allies on the literary front... We do not close our eyes to the class limitations of our classical realists and to the weaknesses that arise from them, but we also know that their work and importance... cannot be characterized and understood from these class limitations alone...

"As early as 1923, the Bolshevik Party emphasized it is necessary to exercise the greatest tact, the greatest patience, towards these literary circles which can and will go hand in hand with the proletariat."

CHAPTER II.

Conclusion

While it is not the function of this essay to traverse the organizational political tasks facing the working class in the sphere of art, it would be incorrect not to mention at least their main aspects.

Communists have a leading responsibility in the fulfillment of these tasks.

We must create a body of work that adequately expresses the aspirations of the working class and its allies, and that will inspire them in the struggles ahead. Communist Party organizations should assist our artists in the choices of themes and suggest particular projects, without inhibiting of course the artist's freedom of choice in this matter.
We must create conditions for the release of the
mass creative initiative in the working class.

And we must rally all workers around their econo-
mic, political and ideological demands.

The Communist Party must take an even firmer grip
on the lamp of Marxism and direct its rays ahead along
this particular path, so that art can play its proper part
in the struggles now being waged for the fate of human-
ity.