

Rebellion and Revolution:
Defiance in German Language, History and Art

Edited by

Melissa Etzler and Priscilla Layne

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CHAPTER EIGHT

RHETORIC OF REVOLT: ON THE DIALECTICAL FUNCTION OF MANIFESTO AND ART PROGRAM IN NATURALISM, EXPRESSIONISM AND DADAISM

CHRISTOPH KLEINSCHMIDT

I.

Ever since rule-based poetics ceased to have an obligatory character, literary history has witnessed aesthetic programs that flank literary writing at a theoretical level and that want to assert their own status in the discourse of literature. Never were such aesthetic movements as radical as in literary modernism. Those very currents that are grouped together under the label of the “simultaneousness of the unsimultaneous” attempt, in a rhetoric of revolt, to distinguish themselves from one another in a radical way and to inaugurate their own literary methods as innovative and revolutionary. This is especially evident in the literary and art movements of Naturalism, Expressionism, and Dadaism, which vehemently try to dissociate themselves from literary tradition in their manifestos but also, above all, try to dissociate themselves from each other.

Upon examining these, one encounters a crucial turning point in art history that is—as is well known—the futurist manifesto of Filippo Tommaso Marinetti from the year 1909, which marks the dividing line between modernism and the avant-garde and therewith differentiates an autonomous art from an art that understood itself as action.¹ However despite this caesura, when one examines the manifestos of these different

¹ Cf., for example, Fähnders, “Projekt Avantgarde—Vorwort,” 6f.; Bürger, *Theorie der Avantgarde*.

movements, several characteristics can be discerned that are, in principle, common to them all. In their status as self-assigned markers, the manifestos are suited to be read as attestations of a *constructed* formation of an epoch, which can be analyzed with regard to their common premises: manifestos are on the one hand founding acts, attempts at drawing boundaries and negotiations of one's own position within literary and art history; but on the other hand they display analogous structures in their revolutionary impetus and are thus all linked to a common rhetorical and argumentative basis. From the first perspective, one would read manifestos for their intentionality; from the second, one would try to resist this. In a critical examination and evaluation of their meaning for literary and art history, it is essential to take both views into consideration.²

Going beyond a discussion of the problematic definition of the genre of the manifesto,³ my interest focuses not on the positive of what each new art formulates in the way of maxims and visionary ideas, but rather on what serves the self-founding act as a negative contrast. This self-constitution *ex negativo* can occur in various ways and parallels other strategies of argumentation. But wherever this takes place, it always shows that a new literary movement establishes itself in an act of demarcation at the expense of others, usually without taking into account that these other aesthetic movements represent the very prerequisite for its own constitution. This strategy of aggressive rejection of what has already been established ultimately gives rise to a thought experiment that—according to Thomas Kuhn—could be described as a structure of literary revolution. The results of a specific analysis of a Naturalist, Expressionist, and Dadaist rhetoric of demarcation can provide a model of explanation which offers a possible view of literary history as a history of revolution.

² This twofold and antithetical perspective shows that the pragmatic factor of intentionality as suggested by van den Berg and Grüttenmeier based on Backes-Haase as a definition for the manifesto can be a necessary, though not sufficient, rationale and must ultimately lead to a distorting image of history because it makes the perception of the contemporaries absolute. In principle, intentionality must be assumed for every cultural-historical artifact, although it is certainly not always as explicitly displayed as it is in the manifesto. The opinion that manifestos resulted from a crisis of intentionality, in which they took over the function of making art that has become incomprehensible comprehensible to an audience, is also not very convincing; it is precisely the Dadaistic manifestos that go to enormous lengths to prize open the coherence function of texts at the “theoretical” level as well. Manifestos have to be understood more as reflections and theoretical assertions of their character, however it is meant. See Berg and Grüttemeier, “Interpretation, Funktionalität, Strategie,” 11-14.

³ Berg, “Das Manifest—*Eine Gattung?*,” 193-225.

II.

As with all written texts that bear the label of an epoch, the programmatic texts of Naturalism also turn out not to be a homogeneous unit, but rather as a whole form a convolute of personal assessments, group pamphlets, concepts, and postulates that testify equally to a development within the “epochal” window of time and to definitions of often contradicting positions. In comparison to the programmatic of Expressionism, which placed more emphasis on reflection and on the combative writings of the Dadaists, the Naturalists constitute a moderate-to-aggressive defensive position against literary tradition throughout their works. Particularly striking is Karl Bleibtreu’s lampoon *Revolution der Litteratur*, published in 1887, a sharp polemic that both targets the contemporary situation of the book market and rejects literary history in its entirety. Bleibtreu speaks of the “unimportance of previous literary development” and of the necessity of “having to condemn almost all contemporary literature.”⁴ He calls art that does not set itself the task of addressing reality critically “pseudo-literature” and accuses it of the “holy trinity” of “stupidity, hypocrisy, and sluggishness.”⁵ As a special target of his tirades, Bleibtreu takes aim at the art movement *l’art pour l’art*; for him it is an “absurdity” and he dismisses its aesthetic withdrawal as “sweet-talking.”⁶ In contrast, he elevates the novel *Die Verkommenen* by Max Kretzer as the bible of the realistic movement, calling the document “*something never seen before in German literature*”⁷ and concludes with an impassioned prophecy: “The future of literature belongs to realism alone.”⁸

The elements of this polemic reveal a temporal three-step structure of past, present, and future. This is typical of manifestos, in which the traditional is rejected, the literary form that arose in the context of their own literary movement is proclaimed as innovative, and their own intention is projected into the future as absolute. This structure can also be

⁴ “Nichtigkeit bisheriger Literaturentwicklung”...“fast die ganze zeitgenössische Literatur verdammen zu müssen.” Karl Bleibtreu, *Revolution der Litteratur* (1887), in Brauneck and Müller, *Naturalismus*, 43-48, here: 43 (hereafter cited as *Naturalismus*). Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

⁵ “Pseudo-Literatur”...“heilige[n] Dreieinigkeit”...“Dummheit, Heuchelei und Trägheit.” Ibid., 44.

⁶ “Unding”...“Süssholzraspelei.” Ibid.

⁷ “*in der deutschen Literatur noch nicht dagewesen[es]*,” *ibid.*, 46, italics in the original.

⁸ “Dem Realismus allein gehört die Zukunft der Literatur,” *ibid.*

found, less drastically and not always including all the components of this triad, in other programs of Naturalism. In its founding document of 1886, the association of men of letters *Durch!* sees German literature at a “turning point in its development”⁹ and at the beginning of an “important epoch;”¹⁰ the *Freie Bühne für modernes Leben* in Berlin glorifies the new direction of art as “tumultuously new”¹¹ and, as late as 1890, Julius Hart pronounces: “Today we are...in the middle of a literary revolution.”¹² The contemporary state of literature is rejected critically in unison and vitalistic, combative imagery is used to fulminate against romanticizing tendencies as “glorified teenie literature.”¹³ The journal *Die Gesellschaft*, first published in 1885 by Michael Georg Conrad, announces aggressively that its representatives “[will] not shrink from any effort to oppose the prevailing deplorable degeneration and dilution of the literary, artistic, and social spirit with manly achievements in order to combat the demoralizing phoniness, the romantic fibbing, and the nerve-racking fantastic ideas effectively by means of the positive opposite.”¹⁴

⁹ “Wendepunkt ihrer Entwicklung,” [Thesen der freien litterarischen Vereinigung “Durch!”] (1886), in *Naturalismus*, 58-60, here: 58.

¹⁰ “bedeutsame[n] Epoche,” *ibid.*, 59.

¹¹ “das stürmend Neue,” [Redaktion der Zeitschrift “Freie Bühne”], “Zum Beginn” (1890), in *Naturalismus*, 63-65, here: 63.

¹² “Wir stehen heute...inmitten einer litterarischen Revolution.” Julius Hart, “Der Kampf um die Form in der zeitgenössischen Dichtung. Ein Beitrag zugleich zum Verständniß des modernen Realismus” (1890), in *Naturalismus*, 132-40, here: 132f.

¹³ “geheiligte Backfisch-Literatur,” [Redaktion und Verlag der Zeitschrift “Die Gesellschaft”], “Zur Einführung” (1885), in *Naturalismus*, 33-36, here: 33.

¹⁴ “...keine Anstrengung scheuen [werden], der herrschenden jammervollen Verflachung und Verwässerung des litterarischen, künstlerischen und sozialen Geistes starke, mannhafte Leistungen entgegenzusetzen, um die entsittlichende Verlogenheit, die romantische Flunkerei und entnervende Phantasterei durch das positive Gegenteil wirksam zu bekämpfen.” *Ibid.*

Despite also affirming their relationship to literary tradition,¹⁵ a total of three contrastive foils can be discerned which the Naturalists want to turn away from: light fiction, aestheticism, and romanticism. Quality, usefulness, and authenticity function as their criteria for evaluation. By dissociating themselves from the contemporary business of literature, which focused on the mass market, they naturally fulfill the function of portraying their own writing as high quality and thus lasting. L'art pour l'art's self-reference, which is based on non-utility, serves Naturalism par excellence as a point of attack and as a counter image to its own positioning. Romanticism is ultimately rejected for two reasons: the fantastic and the subjectivist. Under the premise of a positivist paradigm, objectivism is considered by the Naturalists to be the only possible form of representation, compared to which a subjectivist perspective of the world in the form of visionary ideas, dreams, and enigmas appears as a distorting evil.

It becomes clear from these rejections that they are diametrically opposed to the Naturalists' own principles. The acrimony with which the Naturalists proceed against certain developments within literature stands, however, in contrast to the necessity of the existence of such developments, because this is the only way that Naturalism can be conjured as innovative.

¹⁵ Especially the brothers Julius and Heinrich Hart grapple more discriminately with literary tradition, thereby manifesting a method of argumentation that can be described as a strategy of participating, whereby the accomplishments of the literary past are emphasized so as to be used as a means of orientation. Thus, in an early essay of 1877, Heinrich Hart sketches out an organic development of the arts that stands in contrast to the imagery of a radical break ("Die Entwicklung der Künste" [1877], in *Naturalismus*, 3-7), and in 1889 Julius Hart even calls it a "delusion" [Wahn] to believe "it is possible to produce a really new art" [eine wirklich neue Kunst hervorbringen zu können], "Phantasie und Wirklichkeit. Eine Betrachtung aufgrund des Voß'schen Romans 'Daniel, der Konvertit'" (1889), in *Naturalismus*, 129-31, here: 131. Again and again, Goethe serves as the fixed point of the brothers' aesthetic expositions; Goethe, whom they stylize as a realist and a pioneer of Naturalism and against whose background the intermediate phase of literature—embodied for example by Uhland, Rückert, Geibel, and the tendentious writers and "party poets" of Junges Deutschland, who were disparaged, (Heinrich Hart, "Neue Welt. Literarischer Essay" [1878], in *Naturalismus*, 7-18, here: 8)—must seem degenerating and Naturalism itself a necessary telos. "I continue to expect from German literature," writes Heinrich Hart, "that it absorbs the new without surrendering the great things that it has already gained" [Weiterhin erwarte ich von der deutschen Literatur, daß sie das Neue aufnimmt, ohne das Große, das sie bereits gewonnen, aufzugeben], "Die realistische Bewegung. Ihr Ursprung, ihr Wesen, ihr Ziel" (1889), in *Naturalismus*, 118-29, here: 128.

And yet, the manifesto does not have to be regarded as a reflection of a poetic consciousness of self, but rather as the first to produce this consciousness. Its rumbling rhetoric includes an entire arsenal of war metaphors, creations of opposition, and hyperbole that wants to purge the arena of literature of a false occupying force and to display the legitimacy of its own ideas. That Naturalism was, however, by no means set up for eternity, but subsisted for only a very short half-life is the ironic, constantly recurring turn of events of each -ism I will discuss.

III.

Expressionism strikes softer tones with respect to the dissociation from preceding currents—this contrasts with the supposition that, of all movements, Expressionism, with its tendency toward the ecstatic, radicalizes the rhetoric of manifestation anew. Expressionism realizes its slogans of rejection more in anti-bourgeois agitations and in its much evoked “O Mensch” pathos rather than aiming with them at past art movements. The early aesthetic programs, in which Expressionism writes itself away from the impressionists and the Naturalists, assume more the form of an involved reflection rather than an emphatic anti-proclamation. This may also be the reason why, for Expressionism, the manifesto genre plays more of a secondary role.¹⁶

The Expressionists naturally also made their self-assertions that they are new and revolutionary. Paul Hatvani pronounces Expressionism a “revolution to the elementary”¹⁷ and Franz Marc speaks of the new art using the metaphor of an “apocalyptic rider.”¹⁸ These formal claims of innovation stand on equal footing opposite strategic declarations that situate Expressionism within art history as a general attitude that has always already been in existence and should thus be granted the aura of the supertemporal. “There were Expressionist literary works, Expressionist paintings before there was Expressionism,”¹⁹ as René Schickele says, for instance; and Kasimir Edschmid is even plainer in his speech to the

¹⁶ Cf. Fähnders, “Die Fahrt in den Straßengraben,” 78.

¹⁷ “Revolution zum Elementaren,” Paul Hatvani, “Versuch über den Expressionismus” (1917), in Anz and Stark, *Expressionismus*, 38-42, here: 39, (hereafter cited as *Expressionismus*).

¹⁸ “apokalyptischen Reiter,” Marc, “Der blaue Reiter [Subskriptionsprospekt],” in *Der blaue Reiter*, 318.

¹⁹ “Es gab expressionistische Dichtungen, expressionistische Gemälde, bevor es einen Expressionismus gab,” René Schickele, “[Expressionismus]” (1916), in *Expressionismus*, 38.

German Society in 1914, which received much attention: “It is a lie that what is called Expressionist—a used-up, disparaging word—is new...Expressionism has manifold forebears in accordance with things great and total that form the basis of its idea, in all the world, in all of time.”²⁰

The goal of Expressionists was to detach their own creative activity from the mechanism of the literary formation of epochs and -isms and to expand it even beyond the boundaries of art. Iwan Goll’s characterization of Expressionism as a form of experience was also paradigmatic for this goal.²¹ With this aspiration, Expressionist writers attempted to escape the predicament of having, on the one hand, to constitute themselves using established conventions and paradigms, and wanting, on the other hand, to overcome these forms because they knew of their ephemeral nature. While the Naturalists used their catchword with self confidence and worked on refining its shape; in the case of the Expressionists, the description of the term itself was already being discussed controversially and even ironized by its own adherents. This is demonstrated, for example, when René Schickele pronounces: “Expressionism is worth just as much and just as little as any catchword.”²²

The relativism of this description, with the simultaneous belief in helping a characteristic trait of human beings achieve an artistic breakthrough, does not remain without consequences for the concrete definition of Expressionism’s relationship to impressionism and Naturalism. Here too, of course, there is a rhetoric of renunciation. Paul Ferdinand Schmidt demands in 1911: “Yes, it is imperative to get away from impressionism...”²³ Definitions of such a relationship that aims to achieve a clear boundary and shaping of characteristics can also be found, for example, in Expressionists like Max Picard and Kurt Hiller.²⁴ Purely with

²⁰ “Es ist eine Lüge, dass das, was mit verbrauchtem Abwort das Expressionistische genannt wird, neu sei...Der Expressionismus hat vielerlei Ahnen gemäß dem Großen und Totalen, das seiner Idee zugrunde liegt, in aller Welt, in aller Zeit,” Kasimir Edschmid, “Expressionismus in der Dichtung” (1918), in *Expressionismus*, 42-54, here: 50.

²¹ See Iwan Goll, “Vorwort zu dem Gedichtband ‘Films’” (1914), in *Expressionismus*, 37.

²² “Der Expressionismus ist ebensoviel und ebenso wenig wert, wie jedes Schlagwort,” René Schickele, “[Expressionismus]” (1916), in *Expressionismus*, 38.

²³ “Ja, es gilt vom Impressionismus loszukommen...” Paul Ferdinand Schmidt, “Über die Expressionisten” (1911), in *Expressionismus*, 23-26, here: 23.

²⁴ Max Picard, “Expressionismus. Ein Vortrag” (1919), in *Expressionismus*, 568-72; Kurt Hiller, “Expressionismus” (1913), in *Expressionismus*, 37.

regard to the genesis of the terms, however, Expressionism is connected inseparably to impressionism. Yet no movement wants simply to be derived from another. This would bring to consciousness that principle described at the beginning: the connection which arises from an *ex negativo* constitution and which claims the repression of the former style now seems to be necessary. This is why Kasimir Edschmid's denial of this connection is completely consistent when he argues that between Expressionism and impressionism there is "no inner contact, not even that of the new that kills the old."²⁵ With Naturalism, the Expressionists dealt in a different way. Overcoming it, which Hermann Bahr already called for in 1890, no longer requires the rattling of sabers, but rather permits a distant and arrogant perspective. As Edschmid claimed: "Naturalism was a battle that made little sense...It hardly lasted the length of a breath."²⁶ Such an evaluation can of course only be made from a position of strength in which the belief in the eternity of one's own creative activity is contrasted with the ephemeral nature of what has gone before. As we know, however, such an eternity was not granted to the Expressionists either; even at its zenith voices were already being raised in opposition to it, rejecting the whole of its emphatic claim with a radicalism that was at least as strong.

IV.

It is commonly agreed in scholarly literature that Dadaism deconstructed the manifesto in the sense that it displayed the impossibility of the manifesto in its nihilistic performance. As "anti-manifestos" or "meta-manifestos,"²⁷ Dadaist texts perform their own contradictoriness by using the central characteristic of postulation in the mode of the involuntary *ad absurdum*. "To launch a manifesto you have to want: A, B, & C, and fulminate against 1, 2 & 3..." writes Tristan Tzara in 1918 in the *Dada Manifesto* and makes clear on the other hand: "I am writing a manifesto and there's nothing I want..."²⁸ This frequently-quoted passage is

²⁵ ... "keinen inneren Kontakt, nicht einmal den des neuen, der den alten erschlägt," Kasimir Edschmid, "Expressionismus in der Dichtung" (1917), in *Expressionismus*, 42-55, here: 45.

²⁶ "Der Naturalismus war eine Schlacht, die wenig Sinn für sich hat...Er dauerte kaum einen Atemzug." Ibid., 43f.

²⁷ Schaub, "Dada avant la lettre," 139.

²⁸ "Um ein Manifest zu lanzieren, muß man das ABC wollen, gegen 1, 2, 3, wettern..."; "Ich schreibe ein Manifest und will nichts..." Tristan Tzara,

paradigmatic for a degree of reflection that allows only form itself as actual content. Should any postulate happen to become established, it is immediately converted into its own opposite. While this game with anti-logic is verifiable in many Dadaist manifestos, the confrontation with Expressionism contrasts with this. The Dadaists negate a positive purpose for themselves, but they proceed in nothing as counter-nihilistically as in the fight against Expressionism. This is only too clear in the *Dada Manifesto* of 1918 composed by the collective of authors around Georg Grosz, Raoul Hausmann, Tristan Tzara and many others:

Has Expressionism fulfilled our expectations of such an art, one which represents our most vital concerns?

No! No! No!

Have the Expressionists fulfilled our expectations of an art that brands the essence of life into our flesh?

No! No! No!²⁹

After Expressionism has been disqualified as complacent, the Dadaist movement proclaims itself as a shift toward “brutal reality” and thus distinguishes itself against the background of its foil: “This is the clearly marked dividing line which separates Dada from all previous artistic directions.”³⁰ Thus Dadaism, too avails itself of a rhetoric of innovation, exclusiveness and demarcation.³¹ This is further underscored by the fact that the *Dada Manifesto* ends with the formula: “If you are against this

“Dadaistisches Manifest 1918,” in Huelsenbeck, *Dada-Almanach*, 121-32, here: 121f (hereafter cited as *Dada-Almanach*).

²⁹ “Hat der Expressionismus unsere Erwartungen auf eine solche Kunst erfüllt, die eine Ballotage unserer vitalsten Angelegenheiten ist? Nein!Nein!Nein! Haben die Expressionisten unsere Erwartungen auf eine Kunst erfüllt, die uns die Essenz des Lebens ins Fleisch brennt? Nein!Nein!Nein!” “Dada Manifesto 1918,” in *Dada-Almanach*, 44-49, here: 45.

³⁰ “Hier ist der scharf markierte Scheideweg, der den Dadaismus von allen bisherigen Kunstrichtungen...trennt.” *Ibid.*, 46.

³¹ Cf. also Wieland Herzfelde: “Dadaism is the reaction to all these attempts at denial of what is real, which were the driving force of the impressionists, expressionists, cubists, and also the futurists.” [Der Dadaismus ist die Reaktion auf alle diese Verleugnungsversuche des Tatsächlichen, die die Triebkraft der Impressionisten, Expressionisten, Kubisten und auch Futuristen gewesen sind.] Wieland Herzfelde, “Zur Einführung in die erste internationale Dada-Messe” (1920), in Riha and Schäfer, *Dada total*, 146-48, here: 146 (hereafter cited as *Dada total*).

manifesto you are a Dadaist!”³² Thus, the manifesto allegedly recants everything that was stated before and turns it into its opposite, but this has to be read more as a structural feature committed to remaining non-committal than as an actual call to revoke the criticism of Expressionism.³³

The Dadaists are familiar not only with aggressive disavowals, but also with forms of caustic polemics. In his *Bulletin D.* of 1919, Johannes Theodor Baargeld disrespectfully compares Expressionism with a medicine that is inserted rectally: “Society has inserted Expressionism into itself. alpha = omega = expr. = abdomen = hemorrhoidal suppository,”³⁴ and in his satirical text *Der deutsche Spießer ärgert sich* Raoul Hausmann emphasizes in capital letters: “THE ABSOLUTE INABILITY to say anything, to grasp a thing, to play with it, THAT IS EXPRESSIONISM...”³⁵ Oskar Kokoschka in particular becomes an object of the Dadaists’ caustic attacks. Under the significant title *Der Kunstlump*, Georg Grosz and John Heartfield polemicize against him as a “creator of ‘psychological’ portraits of narrow-minded bourgeois.”³⁶

The central line of attack of these manifestos is the connection between the bourgeoisie and art. In their proletarian orientation and their invalidation of an emphatic conception of art, the increasing success of the Expressionists in the bourgeois milieu appears to the Dadaists as a betrayal of the Expressionists’ own ideals. Scholarly literature points out repeatedly that the criticism applies solely to later Expressionism; but to be precise, the disappointment that the Dadaists discharge so vehemently applies to

³² “Gegen dieses Manifest sein, heißt, Dadaist sein!” “Dadaistisches Manifest” (1918), in *Dada-Almanach*, 49.

³³ This can also be concluded from the context of other manifestos. Even two years later two of the signers of the *Dadaistisches Manifest*—Raoul Hausmann and Richard Huelsenbeck—declare, together with Jefim Golyscheff, the “most brutal fight” [den brutalsten Kampf] against expressionism and especially have it in for the “circle of people around the magazine *Der Sturm*” [Sturmkreis]. Jefim Golyscheff, Raoul Hausmann, and Richard Huelsenbeck, “Was ist der Dadaismus und was will er in Deutschland?” (1920), in *Dada total*, 138f., here: 138.

³⁴ “Die Gesellschaft hat sich den Expressionismus eingeführt. a = o = expr. = unterleib = hämorrhoidalsuppositorium,” Johannes Theodor Baargeld, “Bulletin D... ‘schlagt das warme Ei aus der Hand!’” (1919), in *Dada total*, 216. Cf. also the persiflage in Raoul Hausmann, “MAIKÄFER FLIEG! Manifest von allem Möglichen,” in Erlhoff, *Raoul Hausmann*, 63-68.

³⁵ “DIE ABSOLUTE UNFÄHIGKEIT, etwas zu sagen, ein Ding zu fassen, mit ihm zu spielen, DAS IST DER EXPRESSIONISMUS...” Raoul Hausmann, “Der deutsche Spießer ärgert sich” (1919), in *Dada total*, 109-12, here: 110.

³⁶ “Schöpfer ‘psychologischer’ Spießerporträts,” Georg Grosz and John Heartfield, “Der Kunstlump” (1919/1920), in *Dada total*, 140-43, here: 140.

the course that Expressionism traversed from its early to its late phase. The Dadaists are disappointed by a generation that rebelled against the bourgeoisie, but was ultimately absorbed by its structures. In order to prevent this mechanism, Dadaism wants to make the revolutionary character lasting, which is why it casts itself as a permanent anti-movement. In Richard Huelsenbeck's *What did Expressionism Want?* he documents how this permanent counter position was programmatically carried to extremes: "It 'wanted' something...Dada wants nothing."³⁷ But even the most ostentatious denial of a desire is an intention as soon as it is uttered in a public space—otherwise one would simply be silent. While Dadaism may say that it wants nothing itself, its public productions and enormously effective performances that were so popular with audiences stand in blatant contrast to this. If this use of the illogical is to be judged as a consciously forced contradiction, it seems by no means intentional that Dadaism helps Expressionism to (achieve a) positive status even in its sharpest disavowals of it. Peter Bürger's thesis, according to which the Dadaists "realize that negation necessarily remains bound up with that which it negates,"³⁸ may certainly apply to the refusal to define one's own position; on the other hand, in the polemicization against Expressionism, Dadaism shifts itself into a dialectic of negative dependence that represents the most unintended of its paradoxes.

V.

With Dadaism, much within literary history has come to an end. Dadaism broke open the traditional boundaries of art and "reality," dissolved language into its phonetic appearance, and created chance as the originator of artworks, compromising an aesthetics of genius in a manner that can no longer be surpassed. At the same time, however, Dadaism marks a beginning because, with its slogan of self-dissolution, it necessarily represents a position from which subsequent writers and artists must dissociate themselves. Sociologically, this whole oscillating process of movement and countermovement can be understood in Bourdieu's terms as a strategy for the book market; in Foucault's terms as a power struggle for the domination of discourse within the *dispositif* of literature. From a literary studies perspective that inquires about the ways in which

³⁷ "Er [der Expressionismus] 'wollte' etwas...Dada will nichts." Richard Huelsenbeck, *What did Expressionism Want?*, in *Dada-Almanach*, 44.

³⁸ "begreifen, daß die Negation notwendig dem verhaftet bleibt, was sie negiert," Bürger, *Der französische Surrealismus*, 41.

literary processes function, it sheds light on modes of operation that are virulent in every written text beyond theme and style and that, in some measure, themselves write (themselves into) the texts. Literature exists in a various field of references and it must be assumed that everyone who writes is aware of the preceding literary tradition. Each established literary movement thus provides possibilities, which those who follow or who simultaneously compete, draw from by having to position themselves in relation to past and current styles. If this is inherent in literature itself, however, then the question arises as to whether something like a law of structure exists, a kind of inherent necessity of revolution, of rupture, of a rhetoric for the new. I would be going too far to derive prognoses of future developments in literature based on this claim, but these observations do offer a useful pattern for possible attempts at explaining the course of literary history. For literary modernism and the currents dealt with here, it becomes apparent that this structural characteristic expresses itself all the more strongly, the more intensively literary and artistic groupings compete with each other. Naturalism still saw itself in opposition to a strong domination of aesthetic styles and reacted accordingly with harsh rejections and by making its own position radically absolute. Expressionism no longer needed this aggressive tenor in its demarcation from Naturalism because the latter was already considered outdated. Dadaism, on the other hand, polemicized all the more because it still had to emancipate itself from the high phase of Expressionism.

Literature reacts of course not only to literature itself, but exists in the context of the processes of social history, politics, and the history of ideas. These are, however, merely optional entities of influence; only a systemic model provides an adequate paradigm of explanation. Literary history, as it appears to us today in its epochal progression, is consequently the product of a succession of counter-movements that we may be able to differentiate according to orientation, style, and thematics, but that always resemble one another in their revolutionary structure. The question as to what constitutes a specific literary current is decided less by the pinnacle of its activity than where it forms its boundary and how it demarcates itself from others. The examination of these interfaces may well give an impetus to explore literary history as a history of revolution.

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