

## ERRO: L'EXTASE MATERIELLE

Brothers will battle  
and bring each other death;  
cousins will break  
the bonds of kinship.  
Woe is in the world,  
wanton adultery  
axe-age, sword-age,  
severed are shields  
wind-age, wolf age,  
ere the world tumbles;  
nor will any man  
another spare.<sup>1</sup>

*Strid*

*Planescape*, the first *Planescape*, on the walls of Erro's farmhouse; coloured charts and cut-outs of German planes, depicted in profile and from underneath. American soldiers staying at the farm teach the young boy to name and to recognise every type. One day he runs to their room and wakes them. He tells them a Junker is flying overhead. It is shot down.

1946. Erro is fourteen; by a lake men are using dynamite to make a canal for hydroelectric power. Erro is their cook, with time on his hands. He draws and colours *Strid*, (*War*) to pass the time. Iceland is at the upper centre of a small, circular world map in the middle of the picture, a map superimposed upon the silhouette of a torpedo. East and West are equidistant (Iceland was the fuelling stop for American planes on their way to Occupied Germany); the hull of a great ship looms beneath the globe/torpedo which emits lethal rays, filled, like the margins of the image, with skeletons. The skeletons would find their way into Erro's paintings from *Les carcasses* painted in Florence from 1955-7 (*La danse macabre*, *Cérémonie chamanique*, *Le dictateur*), to the *Sur-atom* series, (Iceland, 1956) and the *Transgression* series, painted in Paris in 1958, where the monsters become variously fleshed, more mecanomorphic. (Constantly Erro would seek the skull beneath the skin, flayed flesh, viscera, deathly distortions - see *The Monsters*, 1968) Already, *Strid* demonstrated a *horror vacui*; but unifying the separate elements is, inevitably, a political subtext, another horror. War, death and a grim humour are present in this youthful work - which Erro keeps with him in his Paris studio.

Erro's art is crammed full of different images, forms, colours, spaces; like the abundant booty of the wrecks whose cargos, concealed from officialdom in the sands, were then dug up on the Icelandic shore - the first *Foodscapes* - a memory of wild and exotic feasting. This abundance, this ceaseless output, the seemingly instantaneous reactivity to the events of the day and the use of popular culture, often at its basest and most vulgar, in conjunction with the artist's own silence - these are the defining characters of an *oeuvre* which is a mask.

Il n'y a pas de plus grande extase, de plus indéfinie jouissance que celle du présent. Je vis. Non pas j'existe, car qu'importent les démonstrations! Tandis que vivre: immense, infinie plénitude multipliée et divisée, impalpable, inconnaissable, incommensurable; largesse et hauteur, profondeur, vibration, délectable harmonie de douleur et de douceur, chant au-delà de toute volupté, chant qu'on'écoute pas, chant qu'on chante.<sup>2</sup> J.M.G. Le Clézio's *L'extase matérielle* quoted in Pierre Tilman's remarkable monograph of 1976, is a paean based on the dialectic of abundance and lack: dans ce monde complet, si présent qu'il pouvait être éternel, il n'y avait pas la part de mon néant.<sup>3</sup> While Erro himself remains enigmatic, I intend to recontextualise some of his most important works; to restore the discourses surrounding moments which even the artist's most exaggerated visual rhetoric cannot retrieve. For some do not or cannot remember, some have willed to forget, some were not born. While reflections upon memory have produced *fin-de-siècle* artworks that are chastened and sober<sup>4</sup>, Erro's work paradoxically attempts an art of memory - political memory - based on energy, passion and kitsch.

### *Surréalisme et mécamorphoses*

Erro's artistic education involved the problem of the simultaneity of styles from the start: the gift of a book from the Museum of Modern Art, New York. His early works demonstrate a rapid absorption of various styles, from the juvenilia - glacier landscapes - to academic nudes, cubist still-lives, expressionistic portraits and lino-cuts, geometrical patterns and designs. The exposure both to Nordic painting, particularly Munch and the spectrum of modernist artists he encountered from his early years at the Oslo Academy (particularly the muscular Mexican muralists) were then complemented by his travels.

The extent which Erro kept the mythological and apocalyptic dimensions of Italian painting (and Bosch) after his encounter with Surrealism is significant. The veteran critic Waldemar George (active since the 1920s!) would comment on the spirits of Signorelli, Crivelli and Andrea Orcagna, informing his 1960 exhibition. Erro would retain not only the subject matter of old masters, but a fascination with their perspectival systems which had an importance far outlasting his first contacts with Surrealism. The encounters with Jean-Jacques Lebel in Italy in 1955, then Matta and Alain Jouffroy the following year, were, however, decisive.

Erro was immediately affected by the deep space of Matta's 'psychological morphologies' and later paintings such as *Le vertige d'Eros*, 1944, which after the war became eroticised with an increasingly Sadean perversity. Erro would infuse Matta's gesticulating figures with a Nordic ghoulishness. Obsessive repetition and a clustered infilling of space developed into works suggesting at once more machine-like and more visceral arrangements of

beings. Skulls and systems combine in the *Meca-Make-Up* and the *Masks in Masks* series of 1959-1961. This 'surrealist' painting was articulated both with and against the disjunctures of collage that marked another crucial field of exploration for Erro.

Evidently he was unaware of Edouardo Paolozzi's *Bunk* series, 1940s collages with their American comic element, and Richard Hamilton's famous *Just what is it that makes today's homes so different, so appealing*, displayed in *This is Tomorrow*, 1956, which launched Pop art in Britain. In Paris, Kurt Schwitters had been rediscovered in 1949 and his collages exhibited in 1954 at the Galerie Berggruen. Formal speculation regarding Erro's Dada and surrealist sources is in any case redundant, in view of his friend Jean-Jacques Lebel's surrealist connections, his father, Robert Lebel's extensive personal collection of paintings, documents and the preparation of his celebrated Duchamp monograph during 1958-9. Certain devices in Erro's collage do, however, reveal particular fascinations: Raoul Hausmann's *Tatlin at home*, 1919-20, with the 'méca' apparatus on Tatlin's head is one, the disproportionate and asymmetrical eyes Erro surely derived from - or found corroborated in - the work of Hannah Hoch is another (see his *Experimental*, 1958. And surely Erro had some exposure to Bernard Réquichot's nauseating, visceral *Reliquaires de papiers choisis*, 1961, where repeated sweet and savoury foodscape elements, wine and sauce labels are rhythmised with tigers' whiskers and bird's wings?.

Cold war arguments raged in 1950s Paris. Following Communist accusations over F.B.I. financial backing of David Rousset's anti-Communist poster campaign, 'Paix et Liberté'<sup>5</sup> there was no doubt that the lavish 1952 festival held under the aegis of Congress for Cultural Freedom involved vast quantities of American money.<sup>6</sup> While Michel Ragon's *La Peinture actuelle*, a contemporary overview, could still dismiss Jackson Pollock and American competition in a phrase, 'The New American Painting' reached France on the last stage of its European tour in January, 1959, followed by the CIA-sponsored *Antagonismes* in 1960.<sup>7</sup>

Erro's *The School of New-Par-Yorkis*, 1959 is a hilarious comment on the contemporary scene, and uses a characteristic device, the conflation of metonymy with a disconcerting literalism. A monster-artist represents the monstrosity of the Ecole de Paris as a whole; the existentially-driven ethos of 1950s gestural painting and hard-edge geometric abstraction had been fatally compromised through repetition and imitation. This profound ennui is transmogrified into an aggressive image of theatricalised performance: the Herbins, the Hartung, the Pollock 'drippings' are parodied to perfection.

### *The Sixties: USA/USSR*

The impossibility of 'authenticity' within a style, a given of surrealism itself, was now embodied by the sclerosis of Ecole de Paris debates. However the pressure of events required responses beyond painting.

'Tout créateur est, jusqu'au nouvel ordre, un insoumis'. The Algerian war precipitated Jean-Jacques Lebel's first 'Anti-procès' in May, 1960, involving Erro, in a context of increasing tension and state censorship.<sup>8</sup> The *Grand tableau antifasciste collectif*, painted in Milan by Lebel (fleeing conscription, as an anarchist and a Frenchman the most emotionally involved in the project), Erro and the Italians Enrico Baj, Roberto Crippa, Gianni Dova, Antonio Recalcati, took over three months to paint. It became the centrepiece for *Anti-procès 3*, organised in June, 1961, with sixty great international artists at the Galleria Brera, a series of political debates, concerts and poetry readings. With the notorious *Manifeste des 121, Déclaration sur le Droit à l'Insoumission dans la guerre d'Algérie*, pasted onto the surface of a screaming monster, this 'violent collective flagellation', was a comment on the schizophrenic nature of warfare. Like so many cherubim, Erro's toothy, demoniacal horde occupy the top right-hand corner. A *tableau-manifeste*, it was a deliberate provocation, and within a long perspective it was undoubtedly the most important European history painting since André Fougeron's *Civilisation Atlantique* of 1953.<sup>9</sup> Erro's own smaller painting was confiscated along with the *Grand tableau*; the charge - pornography.

Following Algerian independence, Lebel's major happening, *Pour conjurer l'esprit de catastrophe* took place at the Galerie Raymond Cordier, on November 27th 1962. In a context of several simultaneous events, Erro paraded fabulous masks, half-military, half-tribal decorated with a myriad *objets trouvés*, while Lebel as De Gaulle in a rubber mask pushed a pram.<sup>10</sup> Erro as 'sex-priest' dipped a papier-mâché penis into pots of paint held between the thighs of two women. The spectre of America and the Cold War returned yet again with the spectacle of two naked women, wearing Khrushchev and Kennedy masks, their bare flesh stuck with slogans and newsprint, apparently strangling each other in a bath of red liquid... 'This collective spectacle of malignant bodies ... reveals an intense sense of "unclean" disgust. The body is appropriated in the creation of the catastrophe so that its normalising exterior becomes a space for repressive images and concepts.'<sup>11</sup> As Claire Addison has concluded: 'We are constantly reminded that the political "engagement" can only ever be a symbol, an internalised, bathetic proposal that tries to make sense of external political chaos. The impotency of the action is masqueraded on a theoretical and corporal level.'<sup>12</sup> Indeed, Tetsumi Kudo's *Philosophy of Impotence* was part of the performance.

The ambiguity, indeed the bathos of these performances was apparent to Erro. 'There was nothing artistic about it. In a way it was like a protest, in a way it was to shock. But it wasn't really political at all... it was almost too late for us to do something, we had to react afterwards.' Yet he recalls a sense of electric excitement: 'Things had come alive then. There was a new generation, it was easier to travel... there was a fever in the air... when it started, it was like a machine, it was like a whole movement.'<sup>13</sup>

Erro's first trip to New York (just before the November happening in Paris), was surely a

revelation. Sidney Janis was preparing the *International Exhibition of New Realists* with Pierre Restany (Pop *avant-la -lettre*) and Erro met all the great New York Pop artists. After more happenings with Jean-Jacques Lebel in 1963 Erro was back in New York for a Pop Christmas and a stay of a month or two. In February, 1964, there was Rosenquist at the Green Gallery, *Four Environments by Four New Realists* (Dine, Oldenburg, Rosenquist and Segal) at Sidney Janis, Oyvind Fahlstrom, Erro's great friend and guide at Cordier and Ekstrom, Wesselman at the Green Gallery from February to March, and a Jasper Johns opening at the Jewish Museum. Yet surely his experience photographing Carolee Schneeman's performance, *Eye Body*, in private, was far more memorable. It was also an encounter with a free and powerful female sexuality far removed from the humiliated, masked, 'post-catastrophic' creatures of the Paris happening... 'Eye Body' features the artist nude, displaying a keen erotic imagination as she interacts with various studio materials, using her own painting constructions as the tableau's setting. The direct projection of the artist's sexual energy towards the viewer marks it as a turnabout on the voyeuristic angle of Duchamp's *Étant Donnés*, as well as one of a turbulent decade's most significant transgressions in the accepted canons of modern art.<sup>14</sup>

My point is simply that Erro's irony, his aggression, his exasperation with painting, which distinguishes him from the American Pop artists, was surely exacerbated by his active participation in forms of art which declared painting itself superannated. Returning to Paris, his happening *Gold Water*, an anti-Vietnam protest, at Lebel's fabulous Festival de la Libre Expression, focussed on the right-wing republican Barry Goldwater (Erro with a tank of coloured water on his back 'peed' through a metal pipe into various female mouths...)

Scatological, sexual, this was very much in the Lebel line. Yet a previous event in Frankfurt in October, 1963, is far more revelatory. The destruction of the painting *Les Critiques d'Art* (see chronology), knifed and shredded, the wall itself behind the frame attacked with uncontrollable rage, was described retrospectively by Jean-Jacques Lebel not as a happening at all, but as 'une chose atroce'. 'Les amateurs d'art, ces robots, souriaient et applaudissaient... ils se sont donc précipités pour ramasser des morceaux de toile pour demander à Ferro de les signer. Badauds ramassant des membres écrabouillés après un accident ou un sacrifice et demandant au suicidé de les signer! ... Que faire pour qu'ils puissent, ne serait-ce pour une fois VOIR ce qui se passe sous leurs yeux?'<sup>15</sup>

For culture is a grave affair, and despite the celebratory nature of Pop art in the era of sexual liberation, this was also a grave moment. In 1961, Herbert Marcuse, visiting a Paris schizophrenic with the Algerian conflict, wrote a new preface for his *Eros and Civilisation*. Explaining his chief concepts, 'non-repressive sublimation' ('sexual impulses transcend the object and eroticise non and anti-erotic relationships between the individual and the environment'), and conversely 'repressive desublimation' ('the release of sexuality in modes and

forms which reduce and weaken erotic energy'), he declared that: 'the events of the last years refute all optimism... All talk about the abolition of repression, about life against death etc., has to place itself into the natural framework of enslavement and destruction. Within this framework, even the liberties and gratifications of the individual partake of general suppression. Their liberation, instinctual as well as intellectual, is a political matter.'<sup>16</sup>

The uneasiness of the very first critics at the combination of sexuality and kitsch within American Pop art, the problem of a putatively 'subversive collusion with Americana while pleading the cause of loyalty to high art and a new beauty' (Max Kozloff)<sup>17</sup> fits neatly with Marcuse's analysis. A constantly erogenous shine enlivens the still-life elements of Tom Wesselman's nudes and still-lives; an insistent reference to sex and cars - always taken from the most calculatedly slick advertisements - appears in the work of James Rosenquist: the car bumper, woman's profile, spaghetti of *I Love you with my Ford*, 1961, or Coca Cola bottle-top, inverted and ecstatic lips, inverted torso with hands on crotch in *Vestial appendage*, 1962. Wesselman's softly erotic nudes derived from Bonnard and Matisse claim, ironically, a certain reality principle, functioning 'against' his kitsch décors; the disparate, sliced-off elements and cold, clear colours of Rosenquist's paintings comment both acerbically as well as complicitly with their advertising sources... Yet, apart from the black girls with ambivalent bikini marks who participate in Wesselman's *Great American Nude* series, and Rosenquist's huge and magnificent *FIII*, their work can make no convincing counter-argument to the charge of repressive desublimation. Indeed, *FIII*, painted in Technicolor, 'including a blinding Day-Glo pink and vulgar chartreuse', covering all four walls of Leo Castelli's gallery - Rosenquist's protest against the Vietnam war and defence spending - nonetheless celebrates military supremacy and squeaky-clean 'progress'. It was inevitably coopted into the discourse of American imperialism when European readers discovered 'Pop's biggest and most expensive painting', in *Time* magazine for May, 1965, or saw it on European tour during 1965-1966: Stockholm, Amsterdam, Rome, Switzerland, Denmark and West Germany.<sup>18</sup>

Like Erro, Wesselman and Rosenquist based their compositions on collage - indeed all three involved fruit salad in their compositions: Libby's for Rosenquist's *Fruit Salad*, 1960; Del Monte quality fruit cocktail for Wesselman's *Still Life # 14*, 1962, Del Monte, Dorelli and White Rose for Erro's huge *Foodscape*, 1962. The American food is notionally appetising: products are sold 'straight' in the painting: a crate of Coca-Cola bottles juxtaposed with a Matisse reproduction of *La blouse roumaine* in Wesselman's *Great American Nude # 26*, 1962, still symbolises democracy - and energising post-coital refreshment. In Erro's *Foodscape*, however, the *promesse de bonheur* turns to nausea. Erro, literally eating himself sick in New York to acquire his tin-can labels, may be contrasted with Roland Barthes, master of the culinary *essai* in late 1950s Paris. Both were fascinated by the semiotics of *une pure cuisine de la vue... cuisine de rêve*, the abundance of syrup and shine - although the evident American influence on *Elle*

magazine's presentation goes unnoticed in Barthes' *Mythologies* essay, and the tinned and sliced-up food which fascinates Erro is precisely an *anti-cuisine*: pour it out, eat it cold or hot.<sup>19</sup>

Erro's work, then, in both its calculated and *physiological* dimensions is critical. Pop, with its healthy appetite, may also be seen to *reflect* repressive desublimation; Erro *aligns himself with Marcuse's critique*; and here one should signal the French sources that were important both for the argumentation and the climax of Marcuse's *One dimensional man*: Gilbert Simondon's study of psychic and somatic deformation under capitalism, Ionesco's comparison between contemporary 'infernal society' and the camps; Maurice Blanchot's insistence on refusal.<sup>20</sup> The European sense of anguish, politics, personal implication is played off against the magnificent insouciance of 'Americana'.

Erro's *Retour d'USA* shown at the Galerie Schwartz in Milan in 1964, (including *Foodscape*) anticipated future developments. It parodied Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon* and *Guernica* both in New York's Museum of Modern Art. *Guernica* (inscribed 'Please, I aim to make you mine!') and Goya's *Tre Mayo* (juxtaposed here with a contemporary massacre) were icons of political engagement during the years of the deStalinisation of the French and Italian Communist parties.<sup>21</sup> Let us not forget the persistence of these issues, when situating Erro's work of the 'swinging Sixties' within the vibrant art scenes not only of Paris, New York or London, but Stockholm or Reykjavik.<sup>22</sup>

In France in 1966, the repercussions of the Siniavski-Daniel trial and sentence in the USSR were hotly debated.<sup>23</sup> The surrealist brochure *Aragon au défi*, rehearsed the duplicitous history of Louis Aragon's involvement with the promotion of a Zhdanovist socialist realism in the visual arts, concluding with Edgar Morin's words: 'Thorez feuillette un album de Fernand Léger... De quel humour est capable l'histoire: l'antistalinisme volé aux antistalinistes par les staliniens'...<sup>24</sup> The Argenteuil meeting of the PCF central committee that year passed its resolution concerning the 'libre confrontation de toutes les tendances', and Erro's contemporaries within the Figuration Narrative grouping, Edouardo Arroyo and Bertrand Rancillac showed with the socialist realist and abstract brigades of the 1940s and 1950s at the PCF exhibition of 1967.<sup>25</sup> While the genesis of the Figuration Narrative movement has been recently well-rehearsed, the broader European political and artistic canvas needs re-emphasising.<sup>26</sup>

The Italian context in which Erro's *Retour d'USA* and *Forty-seven years* were shown in 1964 and 1967 (both with Schwartz in Milan), was as political and satirical as the French. The CRAS group in Turin appropriated photos and cartoons to make 'assemblages visuels ou la thématique marxiste change et débanalise le sens'; at the XXXIII Venice Biennale in 1966 there were protests at the exclusion of 'figuration contestataire' (*neorealismo* and *nuovo racconto*). In October, 1966, 'Il ritorno all'cosé stesse' ('Retour aux choses mêmes'), showing this work coincided with the exhibition of Rosenquist's *FIII* in Rome: 'Derrière des images inoffensives se

cache l'idéologie de puissance et de domination des Etats-Unis, les formes 'aseptisée' et grossies, écrasent le spectateur de leur pouvoir de suggestion'.<sup>27</sup> Italian Pop art - if it existed as such - was totally implicated in this politicised, Cold War arena; and artists such as Enrico Baj, Valerio Adami or Antonio Recalcati functioning, like Erro, on a Paris-Milan axis were well aware of the relationship between national and supra-national issues.<sup>28</sup>

The strategy of appropriation and parody, following Duchamp, was indeed ubiquitous. Edouardo Arroyo's exhibition *Miro refait*, an anti-Franco protest, created a scandal at the Biennale de Paris in 1967, for example; but Erro's *Forty-seven years* never exploded on the Parisian scene for the edification of Stalinist *antistaliniens*, Althusserian Marxists or Maoists. Let us not forget that in 1967, not only the fiftieth anniversary of the Russian revolution but the centenary of Marx's *Capital* were widely celebrated. Erro's *Forty-seven years* series provides an outrageous moment of dialectical suspension to the long-playing socialist-realist drama, if not an ending. Its genesis was in the comparison of two Mays: May 1964, marked by an apotheosis of extravagance and souvenir kitsch at the New York World's Fair, and May 1965, the date of Erro's first trip to Moscow with 'France-URSS', where Mayday was celebrated with equal exuberance. In New York, Michaelangelo's *Pietà*, lent by the Pope, graced the Vatican pavilion with a Last Judgement slide-show ceiling; the Parc des Réalisations Soviétiques in Moscow was dominated by Moukhina's earth-bound *L'ouvrier et la kolkhoziennne ...*. All in all, it was a fair contest. Erro celebrated this parity with both a wicked art historical eye and a black humour in the series of twenty seven canvases, painted through 1966. Sources ranged from postage stamps (a USSR astronaut stamp colliding with Rosenquist's New York Worlds Fair mural), Mayakovsky's Rosta posters, *100 years of American Painting*, the Czechoslovakian T. Burian's *Prehistoric Man*, to contemporary works by Soviet and American painters. A distinct American and Soviet register on each canvas - careful copies in oil - were intercut in each case with Burian's imagined scenes of prehistoric activities. Jean-Jacques Lebel's interview with Erro provided a deadpan trilingual preface. A Soviet recruitment poster of 1920 and *The U.S. Marines want you* were mediated by an image of Pithecanthropus; Malevitch's abstract *Black Square*, 1913 and Joseph Albers, *Homage to the Square*, 1961 were divided by Pithecanthropus wielding a primitive stone implement. The classic confrontation of Soviet and American realisms, *S.V. Guerassimov: the Partisan's mother (1943-1950 + John Stewart Curry: Tornado over Kansas (1929)* was intercut with 'Chinese Prehominids... already acquainted with fire', while *Dan Smith: Poste (1929) + Deineka: the Defense of Sebastopol (1942)* figured 'Hunting the cave bear'. Was this a satirical Icelandic perspective or an anticipation of twenty-fifth century history? On the one hand there is Erro's technical eye: 'Ce qui m'a frappé c'est la ressemblance technique entre le Lichtenstein et le Mayakovsky' and the mise-en-abyme of appropriation as he paints Lichtenstein's Picasso's seated woman<sup>29</sup>; on the other the anthropological viewpoint extending beyond image-making to ritual: 'J'ai choisi *Le Culte de*

*l'Ours* car cet rituel de préservation du crâne d'animal totemique (Ursus Spelaeus) me fait penser au Mausolée de Lénine au culte du Chef Mort. Erro refers to the Neanderthal bear cult, used as an intermediary image in *Wayne Thiebaud: Man Reading (1963) + B.S. Ivanov: Lénine (1964)*. Again, Erro thinks visually in parallel with Marcuse's analyses: 'Cut off from its historical base, socialised without socialist reality, art reverts to its ancient prehistorical function: it assumes [a] magical character. Thus, it becomes a decisive element in the pragmatic rationality of behaviourism.'<sup>30</sup>

From a Freudian point of view, Erro's series acknowledges the oneiric dimension of the USA/USSR parallels. Moreover, *The Birth of Hitler*, 1966, reproduced on the catalogue cover introduced nazism as well as Stalinism into the debate. Bestiality and sadism are metonymically represented with hundreds of diseased eyes and mutilated and grimacing human and animal faces. In 1937, Salvador Dali's recognition of the sexual and sadomasochistic components of fascism in *l'Enigme de Hitler* and *La nourrice hitlérienne* challenged André Breton's unconditional promotion of a Freudian unconscious, testing the limits of a 'bienpensant' surrealism and provoking Breton's anxious censorship. Now Erro exposed the potential biological and emotional motors of contemporary 'realism' debates. 'J'avais beau me répéter que mon vertige hitlérien était apolitique...' recalled Dali in 1964; Erro displayed the same insouciance - and critical acumen - two years later.<sup>31</sup>

Erro's 1967 exhibition must be seen within the context of the growing and explicit international discourse on kitsch, resurrected in Germany and Italy rather than in France.<sup>32</sup> A year after Erro's Milan exhibition, Gillo Dorfless' *Il Kitsch, antologia del cattivo gusto*, 1968, accompanied an exhibition which toured Italy.<sup>33</sup> Whisky adverts, Venus de Milo garden ornaments and Italian fascist 'imperial' fancy dress parades illustrated the classic theoretical texts, including Clement Greenberg's 'Avant-garde and kitsch' of 1939, which linked kitsch explicitly with the official art of totalitarian regimes, in Italy, Germany and the Soviet Union.<sup>34</sup> The overlap between Erro and Dorfless is sometimes direct (Pope Jean XXIII-kitsch and comic-strip *Pravda* girls). Although one could argue that the post-Duchampian readymade in conjunction with the virus of kitsch affected Western art internationally in the 60s (Pop, Nouveau Réalisme, Situationnist *détournement*, all the narrative figurations), Erro is nonetheless - like Dali in the 1930s - a limit case, a testing of the system.

1967 was an *annus mirabilis* for Erro. In May, in Cuba he added a ferocious monster inscribed 'René Barrientos' to the great spiral *Mural Cuba colectiva*. Contributing also to the *Salon de Mayo* and the *Pintores y Guerillas* exhibitions, like his contemporaries flown over from Paris, he created works on the spot for the Museum of Modern Art, Havana. The fabulous energy and revolutionary enthusiasm of the project belied the basic cooption of a prestigious cohort of European artists and intellectual for a widely-broadcast, essentially anti-American exercise, the prelude to the vast propaganda coup of the Cultural Congress in Havana, held in

January 1968, for which many artists returned.<sup>35</sup>

Yet 1967 was also the Summer of Love:

1967. San Francisco Eté magique  
 J.M-G. D.-J.A. ANGEL PEACH  
 ORNETTE COLEMAN FREE JAZZ

Et puis, juste à coté: Amsterdam-panique provo. Communes de Berlin et Wilhelm REICH qui valaient mieux qu'un simple détour. Et puis, aussi des femmes qui commençaient à bombarder le fascisme sexuel

TOUT CA TELLEMENT plus important que les mitraillettes.<sup>36</sup>

Many good things came from America: new ideas, cars, foods, fashions, the impetus for Women's Lib, together with the political revolt, the poetry and the music of the Beat Generation: Allen Ginsburg's brought these elements to Paris in his powerful contribution to the USSR/USA number of *Opus International* for December, 1967. And this is not to mention performance art, silkscreen and the Warhol 'look' available at Ileana Sonnabend's gallery in Paris. The friendship of America and France in the 1960s, exemplified in the lives, loves and career patterns of an Arman, an Erro, or a Niki de Saint Phalle, challenged the institutionalisation of antagonisms, including those of the art world.<sup>37</sup> And despite the anti-US political agenda, a 'return of the repressed', the meaning behind that American 'look', is retrospectively visible even in the images made for the *La salle rouge de Vietnam*: Pierre Buraglio's stencilled, spray painted portrait of Nguyen Huu Tho, Arroyo's spray-painted Vietnamese flag,<sup>38</sup> or later, the Warholiana of a painter as aggressively militant as a Bernard Rancillac - see his *Malcom X*, 1968.

It is surely this problematic element of fascination, together with an unusual simplicity, which accounts for the power of Erro's *Intérieur américain* series. The hygienic, blue-grey bedroom furniture of *Intérieur américain no 4* (compare Claes Oldenburg's 3-D *Bedroom ensemble* shown in 1964 at Sidney Janis), contrasts with the crisp contours, legible expressions, red uniforms of the Vietcong fighters at the window... The relationship between hygiene and terror has been seen as the paradigmatic confrontation within the postwar decolonisation and the 'reordering of French culture', a reordering in which modernisation inevitably meant Americanisation.<sup>39</sup> In *Intérieur américain no 5*, a mother peasant guerilla, wielding a sharpened bamboo, menaces a US soldier, her child at her side, against another bland bedroom background. The fantastic revolutionary utopianism of this propaganda is set against a visual

confirmation of a repellent, standardised but invincible American capitalism. The violation of the *heimlich*, of domestic space, is absurd; but aggression deflects any humour; the juxtaposition forces a critical response. With absolutely no explicit reference to the French situation, this image was nonetheless used to condense all the emotions and anxieties of May '68 on the front of *Art et contestation*, the most considered response to the *événements* in the arts.<sup>40</sup> A mere coincidence?

*The Seventies. Critical positions.*

*Art et Contestation* was available in London and New York by 1970, ready for an eager and radical public. However, the combination of British enthusiasm for America and the anti-European art-market in New York, together with the specificity of the Parisian scene described, meant that much remained opaque in translation. Donald Kuspitt, Erro's contemporary, writing for *Art Journal* in the mid 1970s, challenged Jean Cassou's assertion that a realistic movement in art is always revolutionary. Obviously he was unaware of both Cassou's engagement with Communist-orientated realisms since the 1930s, and most particularly the support Cassou was implicitly offering for contemporary Chinese socialist realism, its Maoist reflections in France and the political activism of the Narrative Figuration movement.<sup>41</sup> 'Cassou's remark is based upon the assumption that the main thrust of modern realism is the unmasking of reality to show its "ugly" truth... Modern realism involves a restless, relentless pursuit of the meaning of appearances...'. Kuspitt's mission here - to revise American Pop art as a 'reactionary realism', follows directly from his reading of Theodore Adorno on popular culture: his testing of the idea of a 'critical realism' stems directly from that of 'critical theory'. Challenging Pop's lack of critical detachment, and the forces of 'psychosocial control' dominating both high art and popular culture, he concluded: 'This is why pop art is reactionary: it celebrates by fetishising American society's self-image in the media.' Following Marx on the fetish, Kuspitt climaxes with Warhol, whose numbing serialisation 'enforces, polices our moronization... and thus shows a peculiarly technological kind of fascism.'<sup>42</sup>

By the time Kuspitt was writing, Pop was old news; America had been humiliated in Vietnam, the world - thanks to the oil crisis - was in recession. In art, the background, the *toile de fond* had changed. Sidney Janis knew: his *Sharp-Focus Realism* show of 1972 challenged Europe as a whole, not with Pop Art but Hyperrealism, visible in France immediately, and the sensation of Kassel's *Documenta V*.<sup>43</sup> It was an art whose emptiness derived from Edward Hopper, whose spaces were non-urban, those of the motorway, shopping mall and desert - Los Angeles rather than New York. Europe embraced the movement, characteristically nationalising a genre which in Italy found its ancestor in Giorgio De Chirico, in Germany the *Neue Sachlichkeit* of a Christian Schaad. In France, Erro's contemporary, Jacques Monory's

pictorial relationship not only with New York but with Hopper and the deserts of Death Valley was exemplary. His long dialogue with Jean-François Lyotard formed a bridge between the Narrative Figuration painters and one of the foremost philosophers of France.<sup>44</sup>

The years of the return to Paris of critical theory, lost with the departure of Walter Benjamin before the second world war, coincided with a period of reassessment.<sup>45</sup> France was exporting not her art but her philosophy to American humanities departments; the visions of a Derrida or a Lyotard would now be modified, back in Paris, by their own positive and negative experiences of New York and California (Marcuse's own presence as a colleague, at the University of California, San Diego, California during this period was crucial, and he visited Vincennes in 1974.) The Marcusean vocabulary on Lyotard's lips of the *désirevolution* of 'affirmative culture' and 'polymorphous perversity' in 1968, soon succumbed to 'seventies melancholia and the more acerbic reflections of Adorno.<sup>46</sup> Adorno's essay, 'The schema of mass culture', with its maelstrom of references to Orson Welles' *Invasion from Mars*, Bacon, Nietzsche, Schiller, Tchaikovsky, Chopin, Debussy, Brecht, Rilke, Apollinaire, T.S. Eliot, 'Lana Turner in sweater', 'Mr Average Customer' and Queen Elizabeth 1st, in its desire to engender a feeling of nausea, to pile on references to the limits of the tolerable, to at once signal, reject and mourn its references, is for all the world like a 1970s Erroscap.<sup>47</sup> Adorno's emphasis on fragmentary writing, 'logically distinct perspectives, each one of which is something of a theoretical caricature' and the 'showing' of historical truth via the fragment, is transposed, in Erro's work, to the visual realm. Distrust of the logic and causality conveyed in conventional syntax is implied through fragmentation - in Erro's terms, collage and juxtaposition.<sup>48</sup> Adorno's bizarre link between ecstasy and the 'culture mask' recalls De Clezio's ecstasy of enumeration and Erro's masks and grimaces from his three dimensional *Mecamasks*, 1959 the *Mecamake-up* series, 1960, *Skinscape* 1967, the *Monsters* series of 1968, and their transformation into film, *Concerto mécanique pour la folie. Mécamophoses* 1963 and *Grimaces*, 1967. The 'speaking-images of film' horrify Adorno: 'Through fixation the mask transforms what is utterly un-thinglike, expression itself, into horror over the fact that a human being can be so arrested, and then transforms the horror into obedience before the mortified face.... Ecstasy is the motor of imitation. It is this rather than the self-expression and individuality which forcibly produces the behaviour of victims which recalls St Vitus's dance or the behaviour of a maimed animal.... The terror for which the people of every land are being prepared glares ever more threateningly from the rigid features of these culture masks; in every peal of laughter we hear the menacing voice of extortion and the comic types are legible signs which represent the contorted bodies of revolutionaries.

... Participation in mass culture itself stands under the sign of terror.' Adorno continued.<sup>49</sup> Erro, of all people, was an expert on the ideologies behind totalitarian art: not only the projection of an unreal future but the 'feelgood' factor: grimaces of 'happiness' rather than

pain, signs designed to function in a Pavlovian way; reproducing emotions to the extent that the body of the spectator becomes part of the lie. Erro's *Tableaux chinois* series of 1974 were exhibited in Lucerne, Munich, Aix-la Chapelle, Rotterdam, Paris and New York with a parody *petit livre rouge* as catalogue. Here he reveals - through the simple collage device of reversal: Mao in New York rather than Nixon in Peking - the *incommensurability* of the two world systems, the lie of the unified painted surface, the trap of ecstatic imitation which leads to terror. There is a brutality as well as humour in his use of *dépaysement*. Propaganda images linked with the Red Guard artists' construction of a new pictorial history for the Peoples' Republic were chosen. Erro transposed Liu Chunhua's *Chairman Mao Goes to Anyuan*, 1967, (an official icon of the revolution) to Venice. Tang Xiaohe and Cheng Li's *Follow Closely our Great Leader Chairman Mao, Ride the Wind, Cleave the Waves, Fearlessly forge Ahead*, 1972, became simply *In front of New York*.<sup>50</sup> Paris continued to idolise 'peasant painters' with all its post-Stalinist and post-colonial apparatuses of fantasy.<sup>51</sup> Erro, who used trained Thaiandese poster painters to paint his images (projected from collage) declared: 'I chose the *material*. It was not for him or his ideas. Of course later, much later, we found out how many millions had been knocked out; but then it was new material; fresh material.'<sup>52</sup> Kitsch from a Chinese bookshop in Paris, B-movie posters from Thailand, Chinese posters Erro found in Hong Kong (one critic commented on how chic such posters were in left-wing Scandinavian kitchens at the time). The material was fresh - but not innocent; it was in circulation, and used by other artists within the Figuration Narrative movement, notably Gérard Fromanger (who officially visited China) and Bernard Rancillac, who used Chinese tracts on socialist realism collaged to his superb diptych, *Le détachement féminin rouge*, 1971.<sup>53</sup>

Maoism would collapse after 1976; but the painting of the revolution continued. It is surely ironic that in the wake of the delayed reclamation of Duchamp for France, and the exhibition of the delirious *Background of Pollock*, 1967, in *Paris-New York*, that Paris's new and official culture machine, the Centre Georges Pompidou should house *Guillotines et peinture*, *Topino-Lebrun et ses amis*. After Erro's ecstatic simulated experiences in space-suits and space capsules at Nassar in 1976 and his hilarious juxtaposition of square-jawed astronauts (in acrylics) with sinuous, naked Ingres-ladies (in oils) in his *Space* series -surely politically unflattering for France - a return to the French revolutionary metaphors of a Gérard Fromanger, or the easel-guillotine of a Recalcati was unthinkable. Erro continually pushes himself to the extreme; for this show, the *Krokodil* cartoons used for his *Allende* 'comportent une telle folie et un tel excès que leur composition peut facilement basculer dans un complet désordre'.<sup>54</sup> Just as Dali in, *l'Enigme de Hitler*, painted a huge telephone dripping into a saucer in a Spanish desert, and an umbrella, representing British premier Neville Chamberlain, thus relating very precisely to the motifs of the political caricaturists of the day, Erro similarly uses metonyms: 'à droite, La Moneda, le palais présidentiel, avec le main de Pinochet, dont les doigts termine par cinq avions

qui ont attaqué le palais'.<sup>55</sup> Yet once the legibility of the cartoon element is lost, the political detail forgotten, the risk is one of complete visual and conceptual chaos.

In this period when the masochistic pleasures of the *autocritique* affected France at large, *L'Assommoir's* special number *La France Stalinienne* of March, 1978 promised 'a disgusting litany of horror... the zoological examination of a monstrous fauna'<sup>56</sup>, Erro's *Stalinade* a 'tragédie-bouffe' in Mayakovskian tradition - outrageous collages projected to accompany Jean-Clarence Lambert's text - was again an event which took place under the aegis of Beaubourg. 'Mon projet était clair: affronter l'histoire contemporaine pour faire apparaître les forces irrationnelles qui sont à l'oeuvre' said Lambert, who ended the sensational performance with Beria on Stalin: 'Et qui a souffert puis qu'il na pas souffert?'<sup>57</sup>

### *Looking Awry*

The pleasures and dangers of an *extase materielle* at the expense of critical analysis, for spectator and for the artist in Erro's work are evident. His ability to dominate forms and contents, to use epic formats, to shock us either with memory or what we have forgotten is overpowering; witness the terrifying phrase in Marc Augé's *Erro* of 1994: 'en quelle année, déjà l'opération 'Tempête du désert'?<sup>58</sup>

*Les années 80* as a series displays this facility with five different spaces and types of composition: a conventional Renaissance space for *Pétrole*, the *angle plongeant* for *Brezhnev*; futurist architecture for *Beyrouth*, polyhedra for *Maggy et les Malvinas/Les Malouines*, and an accumulation of cubes for *La Pologne*. And now, in the 1990s, Erro, master of the wire frame (*filet de fer*) and its distorted, projected grids, can take the eye on a dizzying roller-coaster ride through history, art history, the styles and portraits of the dead. (Erro remains remarkably faithful to the genres of landscape, portrait, interior, still-life). Dali was the first to bring anamorphoses back into contemporary art, taking the sex-like skull from Holbein's *Ambassadors* in London, and experimenting with the possibilities not only of a paranoid but a squeezed, specifically phallic type of space. Lacan (after Baltrusaitis) made the simple link between anamorphoses, geometric perspectives, and what he called 'the phallic ghost'. 'Comment ne pas voir ici, immanent à la dimension géométrale - dimension partielle dans le champ du regard, dimension qui n'a rien à faire avec la vision comme telle - quelque chose de symbolique de la fonction du manque - de l'apparition du fantôme phallique?'<sup>59</sup> In Erro's *Reaganscape*, 1980, the death-rider motorcyclist inverted in the top right-hand corner, emitting ejaculatory flares and burn-marks, exemplifies this phallic ghost. He reappears in so many of Erro's distorted perspectives, blasting through *Ghost Rider*, 1991, multiplied ecstatically in the *Saga of the Silver Surfer*, 1995, where the surfboard of the foreground figure, a point of stasis, rises like the original skull/phallus: the ultimate *memento mori*.

Erro's art has always been an art of heros, an art of the saga, an ultimately phallic art where only *Pravda* girls or tumescent *Femmes fatales* figure in a twentieth-century Valhalla. The twentieth century ends with eclipse, earthquake and massacre. In Iceland's oldest poem, again, *Völuspa*, the old world perishes, consumed by fire; the earth seeks rest and renewal in the abyss of the ocean, whence it will rise again more beautiful than before.

Earth sinks in the sea,  
 the sun turns dark,  
 vanish from the sky  
 the shining stars;  
 rages fire,  
 feeder of life,  
 the high flames leap  
 'gainst heaven itself.  
 She sees emerging  
 a second time  
 from the ocean  
 the earth ever-green;  
 o'er falling cascades  
 flies the eagle  
 that in the highlands  
 hunts for fishes.<sup>60</sup>

#### NOTES

1. *Völuspa*, 'The Sybil's prophecy', 'the oldest Eddic poem in the world', now dated circa 1,000 AD, composed during in the Saga Age age of Iceland; the perishing of old gods marked the end of the heathen period. See Sigurdur Nordal: *Icelandic Culture*, Ithaca, Cornell University Library, 1990, pp. 107, 170-179 and note 35, p. 321.
2. J.M.G. le Clézio: *L'extase matérielle*, Aris, Gallimard, 1967, p. 28.
3. *Ibid.*, p.10.
4. Consider artists ranging from Christian Boltanski and Jochen Gerz to Mark Dion or Rachel Whiteread.
5. Philippe Régnier: *La propagande anticommuniste de 'Paix et Liberté'*, Université Libre de Bruxelles, 1986.

6. Administrative costs for the Paris-based Congress of Cultural Freedom in 1951 were approximately \$200,000 (equivalent to £1.5 million today). See Frances Stonor Saunders: *Who Paid the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War*, London, Granta Books, 1999, p. 106.
7. See Michel Ragon: *La Peinture Actuelle*, Paris, Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1959; 'Douze Peintres et Sculpteurs américains, Musée National d'Art Moderne, April-June 1953; 'Dessin contemporain aux États-Unis' October-November, 1954, preceded '50 ans d'art aux États-Unis' sent to eight European cities including Vienna and Belgrade, before the major 1959 show. The C.I.A. involvement with 'Antagonismes' (Musée des arts Décoratifs, January, 1960 is discussed, in Stonor, op. cit., p. 273-4.
8. See Claire Addison: Chapter 2, 'Soulèvement absolu? Performing the Algerian War': *Imagining Identity / Mutilating Identity, Representations of the Algerian War, 1954-1962*, MA, Courtauld Institute of Art, 1998.
9. See Addison, Chapter 3: 'La morale, la mort, la patrie: *Le grand tableau antifasciste collectif*', op. cit., p. 35 and interviews with Lebel and Erro (unpaginated).
10. See Jean-Jacques Lebel and Arnaud Labelle-Rojoux: *Poésie directe*, Paris, Opus International edition, 1994 and Alyce Mahon: 'Outrage aux bonnes mœurs: Jean-Jacques Lebel and the Marquis de Sade' in *Jean-Jacques Lebel*, Vienna, Museum Moderner Kunst, Stiftung Ludwig, 1998, pp. 93-112.
11. Addison: *Imagining Identity*, op. cit., p. 26.
12. Ibid., p. 27.
13. Ibid.
14. Dan Cameron: 'In the Flesh' *Carolee Schneemann. Up to and Including Her Limits*, New York, The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1996, p. 11
15. Jean-Jacques Lebel: 'Entretien avec Ferro', *Ferro*, Milan, Galeria Schwarz, March, 1967, unpaginated.
16. Herbert Marcuse, preface to the Vintage edition of *Eros and Civilization. A philosophical Enquiry into Freud*, (Beacon Press, 1955), New York, Vintage Books, 1961, pp. ix-x. See also *Eros et Civilization*, Paris, Éditions de Minuit, 1963.
17. See Max Kozloff, '"Pop" Culture, Metaphysical Disgust and the New Vulgarities', *Art International*, March 1962, pp. 35-6.
18. See Judith Goldman: *James Rosenquist*, Colorado, Denver Art Museum, 1985, pp. 40-44. *F 111*, sold for \$60,000.
19. See Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1957, pp. 128-130.

20. Gilbert Simondon: *Du Mode d'existence des objets techniques*, Paris, Aubier, 1958; Eugène Ionesco, *Nouvelle Revue Française*, July, 1956; Maurice Blanchot, *Le 14 juillet*, 2, October, 1958; in Marcuse: *One dimensional Man* (Boston, 1964), London, Routledge, 1964, pp. 24 (note p. 103); 80, 255-6. Barthes, Bachelard and Beckett also figure - while Marcuse's preface makes clear the import of contemporary 'popular' theorists in the United States: Vance Packard's *The Hidden Persuaders*, *The Status Seekers*, *The Waste Makers*; William H. White's *The Organisation Man*, Fred. J. Cook's *The Warfare State*, etc.

21. See their role in Hélène Parmelin, *Le Massacre des Innocents, L'Art et la Guerre*, Paris, Éditions Cercle d'Art, 1954 -the most remarkable document of French Cold War art history.

22. See Laufey Helgadóttir: 'Tumultuous Years', in *The Nordic '60s, Upheaval and confrontation, 1960-1972*, Listasafn Islands, Reykjavik, 1990, (bilingual), pp 137-141.

23. For André Siniavski's denunciation of Soviet socialist realism (Paris, 1959), New York, 1960) see Max Hayward: *On Trial*, New York, Harper and Row, 1966.

24. *Aragon au défi*, Les Petits Ecrasons, no 4, Editions Le Terrain Vague, Paris, 1966.

25. *Exposition d'arts plastiques au XVIII congrès du Parti communiste français*, preface signed 'Levallois, 4 janvier 1967' Arroyo: *Les soucis d'Espagne*, Fougeron, *Le cortège du 13 février*, Dewasne: *Fragment d'Empédocle*, Matta: *Les Rosenberg*, Picasso: *Massacre en Corée*, Rancillac: *Le fin tragique d'un apôtre*, etc.

26. See *Figurations Critiques*, ELAC, Lyon, 1992; Gérard Gassio-Talabot: 'De la Figuration narrative à la Figuration critique', *Face à l'Histoire*, Paris, Centre Georges Pompidou, 1996, pp. 358-363

27. A. del Guercio: 'Rosenquist a Roma', *Rinascità*, 42, 27 October, 1966, quoted in Agnès van der Plaesten, *La Politique culturelle et artistique du PCI. Les arts plastiques, 1956-1973*, doctorat de l'institut universitaire européen, Florence, 1992, p. 746.

28. See 'La contestazione el il realismo Il fine degli anni 60' (E. Vedova, S. Sarri, A. Steffoni, F. De Filippi, and G. Spadari) in Rossana Bossaglia, Susanna Zatti, *Il Pop art e L'Italia*, Comune di Pavia / Mazzotta, 1983.

29. 'Mon tableau est donc le resultat non-définitif du travail de cinq artistes: 1- Picasso, 2-Lichtenstein, 3-Burian, 4-Maiakowski, 5- Ferro', *Erro*, in *Ferro*, op. cit., np.

30. Herbert Marcuse: *Le Marxisme soviétique*, Paris, Gallimard, (Idées, Livre de poche), p.

31. Dali's *Journal d'un génie*, Paris, Gallimard, 1964 , pp. 29-30.

32. Hermann Broch's lectures of 1950-51 (in Dorflès, below) appeared in *Dichten und erkennung*, Zurich, 1955. Ludwig Giesz's *Phänomenologie des Kitsches*, Heidelberg, Rothe

Verlag, 1960, preceded *Magnum's* autumn 1961 special number *Kitsch*, (Cologne, 1961), while Umberto Eco's essay on the structure of bad taste was first published in *Apocaliptici e integrali*, in Milan, 1964.

33. Gillo Dorfles: *Il Kitsch, Antologia des cattivo gusto*, Milan, Gabriele Mazzotta Editore, 1968, and *Kirsch*, Municipal Library, Cusano Milanino, Lombardy (touring exhibition).

34. See *Le Kitsch, un catalogue raisonné du mauvais goût*, Paris, Éditions Complexe, 1978, pp. 122-134. See also Jacques Sternberg: *Chefs-d'oeuvres du Kitsch*, Paris, Editions Planète, 1971 etc.

35. The complex artistic, intellectual and political debates are outlined by Dina Scoppetone: *The Salon de Mai of Cuba, 1967*, MA thesis, Courtauld Institute of Art, 1998, for which Erro's help was greatly appreciated.

36. Yves Buin: *Triperie-Papetier Oswald*, Éditions étrangères et Christian Bourgois, illustrations de Erro, p.11, (27 Janvier 1974).

37. See Amy Dempsey: *The Friendship of America and France. a New Internationalism, 1961-1965*, Ph.D., University of London, 1999.

38. *Salle rouge pour la Vietnam*, 17 January to 25 February, 1969, ARC (exhibition postponed due to May 68).

39. Kristin Ross: *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies, Decolonisation and the Reordering of French Culture*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, 1995.

40. Jean Cassou, Michel Ragon, André Fermigier, Gilbert Lascault, Gérard Gassio-Talabot, Raymonde Moulin, Pierre Gaudibert, René Micha, Alain Jouffroy: *Art et Contestation*, Brussels, Éditions de la Connaissance, 1969.

41. Kuspitt cites Cassou in translation, *Art and Confrontation*, Greenwich, Connecticut, p. 18.

42. Donald Kuspitt: 'Pop Art: A reactionary realism', *Art Journal*, 1976, 36, 1, pp.31-38.

43. See *Hyperéalistes américains*, Paris, Galerie Arditti, 1973, Udo Kultermann, *Hypérealisme*, Paris: Chêne, 1972; Linda Chase, *Linda, L'Hypérealisme américain*, Paris, Filipacchi, 1973 (preface, Salvador Dali); Daniel Abadie, *L'Hypérealisme américain*, Paris, Fernand Hazan, 1975; *Art conceptuel et hypérealisme*, *Collection Ludwig*, ARC, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1973, *Hypérealistes américains - Réalistes européens*, Centre National d'Art Contemporain, followed by a Beaubourg touring exhibition 1974-5 etc.

44. See my introduction, 'Romantiques postmodernes' to Jean-François Lyotard:

*L'Assassinat de l'expérience par la peinture - Monory*, London, Black Dog, 1998 (bilingual).

45. See Marc Jimenez. 'Situations. Sur la réception de la théorie critique. Contradictions et incohérence: les années 60-70 en France', *Adorno et la modernité. Vers une esthétique négative*, Paris, (Le Sycomore, 1983), Éditions Klincksieck, 1986, pp. 35-47.

46. In 1970, *Culture et société* republished most of Marcuse's texts from 1934-38, notably 'Reflexions sur le caractère "affirmatif" de la Culture (1937)'. See Marc Jimenez: *Theodor Adorno: art idéologie et théorie de l'art*, Paris, UGE 10/18, 1973. Adorno's *Théorie esthétique*, and *Dialectique de la Raison* were published in 1974, *Dialectique négative* (1966), in 1978.

47. Adorno 'Das Schema der Massenkultur', *Gesammelten Schriften III, Dialektik der Aufklärung*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1981, pp. 299-235. DATE. Compare Orson Welles, El Greco, Proust, Wagner etc, in Erro's *Soi Sip Song Bangkok* series, 1974.

48. J.M. Bernstein on 'The Culture Industry. Enlightenment as Mass Deception', in Bernstein ed., *Theodor W. Adorno: The Culture Industry. Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, London., routledge, 1991, p. 7.

49. Adorno: 'The schema of mass culture' in Bernstein ed., op. cit., p. 82.

50. See Julia F. Andrews: *Painters and Politics in the People's Republic of China, 1949-1979*, Berkeley and London, University of California Press, 1994. pp. 314-342. An estimated 900 million copies of *Chairman Mao goes to Anyuan* were eventually printed.

51. See Françoise Eliet: 'Chine: travail des peintres ouvriers et paysans', *Art press*, 20, September/October, 1975. pp. 10-11.

52. Erro in conversation with Atissah Dorroh, 21 May 1998; see Dorroh: *A Territory for the Imagination: Mao's China in French Painting*, MA thesis, Courtauld Institute of Art, 1998, p. 26.

53. See *La Peinture Photogénique: Deleuze, Foucault, Fromanger*, London, Black Dog Publishing, 1999, introduction by Adrain Rifkin (bilingual).

54. Erro: *Easy is interesting*, Paris, 299, Éditions Jannik, 1993, pp. 16-17.

55. Ibid.

56. *L'Assommoir*, directed by R. Langlais, special number 'La France Stalinienne', Paris, Editions Plasma, March, 1978, p. Symptomatically, Dominique Desanti's *Les Staliniens, une expérience politique, 1944-1956*, (Fayard) was published in 1975.

57. Jean-Clarence Lambert: *Stalinade. Une tragédie-bouffe*, illustré par Erro, Paris, Somogy, 1997, p.7 (Performance: September, 1978; a very hostile local and Soviet

reception).

58. Marc Augé, *Erro*, Paris, Le Lit du vent, 1994, p. 13.

59. The phallic ghost is exemplified by the deformations of a tattoo traced on the flaccid and subsequently erect penis. See Jacques Lacan: *Le quatre concepts fondamentales de la psychanalyse*, texte établi par Jacques-Alain Miller, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1973, p. 82. See also Slavoj Žižek: *Looking Awry. An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture*, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1991, which links Sadean perversion (Lacan's 'Kant with Sade') and the subjective position of Stalinist Communism, pp. 108-9.59.

60. *Völuspa*, in Nordal: *Icelandic Culture*, op. cit., p. 173.