

*Beyond the War Model – texts for 12/09/10- assembled & annotated by arwulf arwulf*

**Rimbaud:**

When we are strong – who retreats?  
When we're happy – who feels ridiculous?  
When we are cruel – what can be done with us?  
Dress up – Dance – Laugh  
I could never throw love out the window

**Graham Locke explains & quotes Anthony Braxton:**

[Let's discuss] The relationship between creative music  
and the Spectacle Diversion Syndrome  
or what America has rather than culture

[We have] A mainstream culture that is not only racist  
but peculiarly hostile to alternative value systems  
especially those from within its own  
world culture group minority populations

Mainstream culture values spectacle  
What is of interest  
Rather than substance  
What is of use for living  
That is: Entertainment  
Rather than creativity

The Spectacle Diversion Syndrome  
Is an integral part of American culture's vibrational lining

It is the chief means by which alternative or protest movements  
like the beatniks and the hippies  
are turned into fads and so absorbed into mainstream culture

It creates the illusion of change (fashion)  
so as to prevent real, fundamental change from taking place

It represents the constant movement  
of 'nothing to nothing'

**Arnold Schoenberg:**

Culture, today, means: to know a little of everything  
without understanding anything

## Why are we still using the term 'avant garde'?

This military term has been used since about 1890 to designate the most progressive elements in an artistic field

But how else has it come to be used?

How has it been thrown around, particularly since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century?

This term has been used as a brickbat, a bludgeon, a quarantine flag and an epitaph.

Message and meaning are engendered by use of the term: *avant garde*

The signal for the most part is:  
Watch out!

This might not be your cup of tea.

It'll probably be weird  
and it's likely to be unpleasant.

You don't have to listen, or look,  
or subject yourself to it in any way if you don't want to.

It's esoteric. Not for everybody.

Obscure! Which means it's hard to see, hardly surprising if we hide it away

Now I ask you: How can something composed 100 years ago still be avant garde?

Is there an avant garde tradition?

What is tradition?

From the Latin *tradere* – same root as *trade* – meaning something handed along

Convention, on the other hand, means: Get with the goddamn program and conform

Conventionally, avant garde is a seed bed for textures & ideas that help keep pop culture from smothering in its own vapidness.

Conventionally, Webern and Schoenberg are used by Hollywood as triggers for suspense:

*There's a guy with a knife!*

Shostakovich String Quartet No.8 in C minor - *Allegro molto*

Bernard Herrmann for Alfred Hitchcock: Ode to Psycho in a wig at the head of the stairs

“avant garde” implies linear movement  
the vanguard is in advance of the majority  
but I say to you that we are beyond linearity

We have expanded far beyond the boundaries of fundamental postmodernism  
where we learned to defer judgment and simply say “there it is”  
that’s a beautiful stance, we learned it from John Cage

It’s a way of life at WCBN FM, part of our mission

As a people now at our best we are moving in great spiraling currents of post-linearity  
You have the potential to do that every time you’re online  
Listen to 1921. Or 1723. You have that power.

As for ‘avant garde’  
why are we using this term, lifted directly from military theory  
by 19<sup>th</sup> century French literary & theatrical critics who liked to quarrel among themselves?

In 1864 Charles Baudelaire noted the predilection of the French  
for military metaphors, including literature militant, les poetes de combat  
and literature d’avant garde

Baudelaire felt that these expressions represented an attitude of CONFORMISM

I think it was Woodrow Wilson who said that “War Demands Conformity”

War Demands Conformity and the term avant garde is really inseparable from the War Model.

In order to fully comprehend the implications of the War Model

It may be useful to consult the definitive philosophy of land warfare as articulated by

**Karl von Clausewitz:**

War is nothing but a duel on a larger scale

War is an act of force with which we compel our enemy to do our will

Force, to counter opposing force, equips itself with the inventions of art and science

Attached to force are certain self-imposed, imperceptible limitations hardly worth mentioning,  
known as international law and custom, but they scarcely weaken it

Force—that is, physical force, for moral force has no existence save as expressed in the state and the law  
—is thus the means of war; to impose our will upon the enemy is our object.

To secure that object we must render the enemy powerless  
And that, in theory, is the true aim of warfare

That aim takes the place of the object  
discarding it as something not actually part of war itself

War is such a dangerous business that the mistakes which come from kindness are the very worst

War is an act of force  
There is no logical limit  
to the application of that force

Each side  
compels its opponent  
to follow suit

A reciprocal action is started  
which must lead, in theory  
to extremes

The aim of warfare is to disarm the enemy

*[is this the right source for a term to be applied to creativity, improvisation and imagination?]*

War is the collision of two living forces

So long as I have not overthrown my opponent  
I am bound to fear he may overthrow me

*[very progressive, very conducive to mindful cultural collaboration]*

I am not in control

He dictates to me as much as I dictate to him

In the field of abstract thought the inquiring mind can never rest until it reaches the extreme  
For here it is dealing with an extreme: a clash of forces freely operating  
and obedient to no law but their own.

War is never an isolated act  
War does not consist of a single sharp blow  
War is no pastime

It is a serious means to a serious end  
It is the continuation of policy by other means  
all wars can be considered acts of policy

advance guard and outposts  
belong to the category of measures  
where the threads of tactics and strategy are interwoven  
they shape the engagement  
and ensure that the tactical plan is carried out  
they are the links in the chain of strategy

any force that is not completely ready for battle  
needs an advance guard to detect, survey and

evaluate the enemy's approach

troops on the move  
are preceded by a force of varying strength  
as vanguard or advance guard  
which will become the rear guard  
should the line of march be reversed

their effectiveness ranges from simple observation  
to actual resistance

an advanced corps derives its operational value  
more from its presence than from its efforts

**according to Bernard Brodie, Clausewitz was**

...curiously negative about the quality we call 'imagination'.

after stressing the importance of what he calls a sense of terrain and locality, he says

“we attribute this ability to the imagination; but this is about the only service that war can demand from this frivolous goddess, who in most military affairs is liable to do more harm than good.”

**Poet Diane Di Prima in her Rant from Pieces of a Song:**

The only war that matters  
Is the war against the imagination  
All other wars are subsumed in it

**Andre Breton in the First Surrealist Manifesto**

*where he suggests*

The perspective of several lives lived at once

*and where he salutes*

Beloved imagination – what I most like in you is your unsparing quality

*he complains that*

We are still living under the reign of logic

*[and how much worse today, when everything is hyper-rationalized!]*

Forbidden is any kind of search for truth which is not in conformance with accepted practices

The imagination is perhaps on the point of reasserting itself, of reclaiming its rights.

**Andre Breton in Prague, 1935**

made a reference to music and

The immediate, pervading uncriticizable communication of feeling

He also said

We must not hesitate to bewilder sensation

### **Arnold Schoenberg 1911**

We seek only to seek further  
Everything depends upon seeking

The world today seeks many things  
Before all else it has found one thing: comfort

This ideal, with all its implications,  
has forced itself even into the world of ideas  
and makes us more complacent than we have ever dared to be

Today more than ever before we know how to make life pleasant  
Problems are solved to eliminate something unpleasant  
But—how are they solved?  
And do we altogether *believe* that they have been solved?

Here is seen the essential weakness of the philosophy of comfortableness:

Its superficiality

It is easy to have a world outlook if one looks only at that which is pleasant,  
counting the rest not worthy of your attentions

Actually, 'the rest' is much more important

Understand that these 'world outlooks' fit their wearers as if made to measure

Comfort as a philosophy of life!

The least possible commotion.

Those who so love comfort will never seek  
except where there is definitely something to find

***Schoenberg encourages searching for searching's sake***

*Bach Cantata Pilgrimage Vol.9:*

**Felix Mendelssohn**

It is not that music is too imprecise for words  
but that it is *too precise*

[John Eliot Gardiner]:

J. S. Bach seems to anticipate and substantiate Mendelssohn's belief that music can unleash the central core of meaning so often obfuscated by words

Words!

language  
so powerful

how carelessly  
we use it

the problem with the term 'avant garde'  
lies in its origins, its application over time  
and in the sloppy way we've come to bandy it about

### **Hunter S. Thompson**

"Freedom is a challenge.  
You decide who you are  
by what you do."

### **Tom Waits**

"I think that nowadays  
there seems to be  
a deficit of wonder."

### **Friedrich Holderlin**

"We all traverse an eccentric orbit  
and there is no other path from childhood  
to the finish that is possible for us"

### **Sabine Menner-Bettscheid [from *The Recalcitrant Art*]**

[on Holderlin]

"Supreme simplicity is sometimes granted by nature  
but sometimes achieved by formation and struggle  
the latter necessitating something like eccentricity

"Eccentricity is not mere oddity but the off-centered,  
the dual-centered, the bipolar ellipse

"For the Greeks an ellipse is a shortfall and a shortcoming;  
For Holderlin [and for us] it is a way of life and poetry

“The eccentric orbit that the human being  
-in general and as an individual-  
traverses from one point (of a more or less pure simplicity)  
to another (of a more or less accomplished formation)  
seems in its essential directions to be always identical

“identity is eccentricity

“Holderlin knew that his part was fire from heaven  
and all the dissonances of the earth”

Dissonance

Cognitive Dissonance

Consonance

Assonance – internal rhyming

There’s room for everything up in here

Although it is strictly relative

Dissonance was regarded with suspicion for generations

Until towards the end of the nineteenth

They began to speak of the Emancipation of the Dissonance

And then the Dissonance made it clear to one and all

That it would emancipate itself thank you very much

And Dissonance has been self-emancipating ever since

It’s a dissonant-assed world

And all of this a perfectly rational response  
to the way things really, really are

Every music is a reflection of its day  
filled with reverberations from what has come before  
and premonitions of that which is yet to come

For something that magical and non-linear  
to be simultaneously reduced to war games  
and superficiality, spelled out on the front page:

## *Arts & Entertainment*

How dare you!

It's like okay here I am  
Get me off  
I'm waiting  
Don't waste my time  
Or my world renowned attention span  
Come on  
Get me off  
Hurry it up  
Rocks off

Not that getting off isn't important

It's just been overemphasized

I'm the last person in the world  
to minimize the importance of getting off  
and finding someone wonderful for getting off with

Transformation is more relevant in the long run  
Transformation and ritual  
You know?

Entertainment – so overdone – is often best  
when the initial object was not to entertain

Ornette Coleman pointing out the parallels of art forms  
the comparative developments in music and her sister arts

Ornette who composed he said  
the way a geodesic dome is put together  
Cecil Taylor: pianist, poet, dancer, architect

If we drop the blanket terminology of “avant garde”  
what's really happening may be better seen and understood as itself  
without the billboard to shove it into the categorical niche

And I see no hear no contradiction  
Between Muhal Richard Abrams  
And Domenico or Alessandro Scarlatti

Centuries and cultures collapse and expand  
In one fleshy kaleidoscope of continuous reality

Yet here we have a culture  
almost completely shaped & controlled

by marketing rather than  
marketing in the service of culture

It's not like this everywhere

The U.S.A. is notorious for it