

The relevance of the *Bewußtseins-Industrie* to the essayistic oeuvre of Hans Magnus Enzensberger

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With an interest in issues relating to the role of literature in the socio-political context, Hans Magnus Enzensberger uses the *Bewußtseins-Industrie* in many of his texts as an analytical construct to describe the way in which society functions. This becomes evident particularly in essays in which he deals directly with social aspects. In both his poetics and his creative work this problematic issue is often present too. The purpose of this essay is to trace succinctly the roots of Enzensberger's *Bewußtseins-Industrie* to some aspects of the *Kulturindustrie* of Theodor W Adorno, and then to describe the key position which this notion occupies in his essayistic oeuvre.

Die belang van die *Bewußtseins-Industrie* vir die essayistiese oeuvre van Hans Magnus Enzensberger

As iemand wat hom bemoei met vroeë rondom die rol van literatuur in die sosio-politieke konteks, maak skrywer Hans Magnus Enzensberger in verskeie tekste gebruik van die *Bewußtseins-Industrie* as analitiese konstruk ten einde die wyse waarop die maatskappy funksioneer, te beskryf. Dit word veral sigbaar in essays waarin maatskaplike aspekte direk aangespreek word, maar ook in sy poëtika en kreatiewe werk is die teenwoordigheid van hierdie problematiek dikwels sigbaar. Die doel van hierdie artikel is om vlugtig die wortels van Enzensberger se *Bewußtseins-Industrie* in aspekte van die *Kulturindustrie* van Theodor W Adorno na te spoor, en vervolgens die sentrale posisie wat dit in sy essayistiese oeuvre inneem, te beskryf.

Ever since his debut as a poet (with *Verteidigung der Wölfe* in 1957) and the publication of his first volume of essays (*Einzelheiten I: Bewußtseins-Industrie* in 1962) Hans Magnus Enzensberger has been an important voice and socio-political commentator on the German literary scene. His interest in issues relating to the functionality of literature in its socio-political context, as well as the role of the writer and the intellectual in society, has led to his work often being typified as *littérature engagée*. Referring to a number of early poems, some critics described Enzensberger as an “angry young man” (cf Andersch 1970: 13) — a popular critical label which has clung to him throughout his career, whether justified or not (cf Lau 1999: 50). But Enzensberger’s *littérature engagée* is not the kind of socio-politically engaged literature Sartre proposed in *Qu’est-ce que la littérature*; rather, he subscribes to an Adornian interpretation of literary engagement.

The Adornian influence on Enzensberger’s work does not end with the former’s notion of *littérature engagée*, but extends to the way in which society subjected to the scrutiny of the socio-political critic is analysed. The term *Bewußtseins-Industrie*, the main theme of Enzensberger’s first volume of essays, refers to the sociological model he uses to analyse and comment on modern culture. It also suggests acknowledgement of the *Kulturindustrie*, a term used by the Neo-Marxist Theodore W Adorno (and, in the early stages, Max Horkheimer) in their analyses of popular culture and mass media in works such as *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (2003). The purpose of this study is to evaluate the important role which the *Bewußtseins-Industrie* plays in the oeuvre of Enzensberger, especially in terms of his evaluation of the function literature fulfils within this social construct, as described in his essayistic work. In order to shed light on the roots of the *Bewußtseins-Industrie*, some aspects of the Adornian *Kulturindustrie* relevant to Enzensberger’s model will first be described.

1. Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno

The continuation and evolution of critical Marxian thought in the twentieth century resulted in different developments within the Marxist tradition. In Germany, among other countries, it resulted in the loose formation of an intellectual front or grouping known as the Frankfurt School, whose members are considered some of the most influential

thinkers of the twentieth century. Under the guidance of the philosopher, sociologist and social psychologist, Max Horkheimer, the Institute of Social Research, established in Frankfurt in 1923, became the centre of Neo-Marxist or Critical Theory — a cornerstone in the formation of the New Left:

‘Critical Theory’ became a key element in the formation and self-understanding of the New Left. Many of those committed to new radical protest movements — to the struggles against imperialism, the private appropriation of scarce resources and the many constraints on personal initiative — found in the works of this ‘school’ an intriguing interpretation of Marxist theory and an emphasis on issues and problems (mass culture, for instance, or the family and sexuality) which had rarely been explored by more orthodox approaches to Marxism (Held 1980: 13).

The philosopher Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno was one of the most prominent members of the Frankfurt School, positioning himself in the Marxian tradition. His work represents a shift in terms of the applicability of analytical ideas of classical Marxist philosophy to modern society and culture. Since the optimistic Marxist ideals of the nineteenth century (the classical evolutionary or revolutionary scheme of historical development) had not been attained in socio-political terms, Adorno and others were doubtful as to whether they would indeed ever come to fruition (cf Schweppenhäuser 1996: 36-7, Bernstein 1991: 3, Kellner 1989: 11-2). Consequently his philosophy represents both a continuation of, and a break with, the ideas of Marx — a break with his revolutionary historical optimism and a continuation of his critical analytical apparatus.

Further developing and refining the basic Marxist division of society into a sub- and superstructure, Adorno and Horkheimer coined the term “Culture Industry” to describe modern society — the term being used for the first time in their work *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (cf Adorno & Horkheimer 2003: 128-76, Held 1980: 77). It perpetuates the meaning previously attributed to “popular” or “mass culture” in general. However, because of the possible misconceptions inherent in the use of the words “popular” or “mass”, the new term was meant to exclude false expectations concerning the “controlled” or “industrialised” nature of the social phenomena being described (cf Held 1980: 90-1, 88, Kellner 1989: 130-1, Bernstein 1991: 3, 4, 9).

According to Critical Theory, the products and cultural artefacts produced within the Culture Industry are not a natural, free expression

of personal or group identity and freedom in society. On the contrary, whatever form they take is artificially initiated in order to uphold and stabilise the power relations of the social structures. The stimulation of wants and needs, and their consequent fulfilment, simulate the industrial process (cf Schweppenhäuser 1996: 149). This point of view is obviously very critical of any and all aspects of “popular” culture, as it interprets this culture as a subliminal device for maintaining control.

Although the need for change and even potential dissidence within the Culture Industry is not denied, it is this very potential which, according to Adorno, is exploited and then distorted into a driving-force of the “industrial” process: by the act of stimulating and therefore pre-empting possible social needs these potentially destructive forces are manipulated and redirected in order to suit the pattern that maintains the *status quo*. The result is a false manifestation of personal freedom — the individual and the social group are embedded in a web of pre-determined possibilities (rather than options!), a situation which by its very nature is not static, but transforms itself continuously in order to accommodate (co-opt and subsume) anything that has the remotest possibility of upsetting the socio-political scheme.

In view of the individual’s enmeshment in the Culture Industry, the question remains as to what extent objective criticism of its inner workings is possible.¹ Critics have pointed out this problem in Adorno’s social theory (cf Jay 1984: 115-9), but he never purported to offer his criticism from the standpoint of absolute truth. He, in turn, refers to Marx’s view of the role of radical criticism — not only to criticise and analyse society and social processes, but also to utilise criticism in order to evaluate its own preconditions. This self-reflectivity of meta-criticism, along with the notion that any criticism should be an ever-developing process, changing as society changes, offers, according to Adorno, the potential to extract oneself from the Culture Industry to such an extent that a meaningful analysis of society can be made (cf Schweppenhäuser 1996: 23).

1 This dilemma is especially relevant for a social commentator such as Enzensberger, who levels criticism from within the context of the Culture Industry/*Bewußtseins-Industrie*.

In conclusion, and since this foray examines elements of the Adornian socio-political model used by Enzensberger, it would be productive to examine the function of art and literature in the Culture Industry. Any cultural product created and functioning in a social context has the potential to facilitate the ideological structuring of society. But the nature of art — the fact that the work of art itself can entail a meta-critical self-reflection on its own structure, and as such is not always the product of the “industrialised” process of the Culture Industry — allows the potential for criticism (however indirect). Adorno does not refer to popular art (which, according to him, is a product of the Culture Industry), but to autonomous (modernist) art, which becomes a means of generating knowledge about society.² It is not surprising that Adorno focuses on artistic form, rather than on the content of the work of art when he mentions its socio-political potential. It is in the destruction of conventional form in the process of constructing new forms of expression that art may have a socio-political influence (cf Adorno 1965: 111-4, 126, 128-9, 2003: 15-6, 159-60, 216ff). In the artistic act of negation, the work of art presupposes the existence of new and better possibilities, which can then be interpreted as the expression of a utopia in negative terms.

2. Hans Magnus Enzensberger

The significance of Hans Magnus Enzensberger’s literary and non-literary work cannot be fully grasped without reference to the role played by the *Bewußtseins-Industrie* in the development of his oeuvre. This model, used to analyse and describe society, is not only a repetitive motif in his analysis of diverse issues,³ but also functions as a touchstone for his

2 “Es geht kritischer Philosophie und authentischer Kunst nach Adorno darum, das Sein der Sachen selbst gewaltlos zu übersetzen in Medien, in denen wir es erkennen und erfahren können. Mit Hegel geht Adorno davon aus, daß Kunst selbst in Erkenntnis übergeht. Auch das ist ein Aspekt der Rede vom Ende der Kunst *als Kunst*. Darin liegt Adorno zufolge das Spezifikum der Kunst der Moderne. Kunst selbst beginnt auf ihr Verhältnis zu ihren Gegenständen und auf ihr eigenes Formgesetz zu reflektieren” (Schweppenhäuser 1996: 134, cf Bernstein 1991: 5-6, Gmünder 1985: 79).

3 Ecology, the economy, the Third World, tourism, fashion, etc; cf Enzensberger 1967: 152-76, 1962b: 134-66, 1974f: 130-68, 169-232.

views on the relevance of the writer and intellectual in society. His socio-political commentary and criticism are often expressed with reference to the *Bewußtseins-Industrie*. The writer focuses predominantly on intellectual dissidence and the role of art within its confines — mainly in terms of the possibilities of *littérature engagée*.

An evaluation of Enzensberger's position within the *Bewußtseins-Industrie* dates back to the questions raised by Adorno about the objectivity of criticism. Enzensberger maintains an ambiguous and complex relationship with the *Bewußtseins-Industrie*. Although he is a keen critic of popular or mass culture, his being part of its socio-political construct should be taken into account — he is, after all, also a journalist and a publisher, writing for newspapers and journals (cf Lau 1999: 41).

The position of the insider whose criticism may be influenced by the context within which it is expressed is a hybrid one — he is knowledgeable about the inner workings of society, but this raises issues regarding the objectivity of his criticism. Enzensberger ignores this problem. He exploits (and appeals to others in the same position to exploit) the dual role of “insider” and critic, venturing to bridge the gap between the two by proposing (and exercising) a dialectic unity of theory and praxis (cf Grimm 1984: 149).

2.1 Basic characteristics of the *Bewußtseins-Industrie*: broadening the horizon of the Culture Industry

In 1962 Enzensberger published his essay *Bewußtseins-Industrie*, to be included later as an introductory text in his collection *Einzelarbeiten I: Bewußtseins-Industrie* in which he set out the basic characteristics of his socio-political theory. The remaining essays in this collection, as well as those that followed over a period of more than four decades, analyse the diverse manifestations of the *Bewußtseins-Industrie* in its socio-political context. In the essay, the impetus for the *Bewußtseins-Industrie* (in short, the utilisation of culture, in the widest possible interpretation of the term, in order to stabilise current power relations) is accounted for:

Zwar daß wenige für die meisten dachten, urteilten und entschieden, war mit dem Anfang aller Arbeitsteilung schon gesetzt; solange aber seine Vermittlung für einen jeden durchsichtig geschah, solange der Lehrer deutlich vor den Schüler, der Sprecher vor den Hörer, der Meister vor den Jünger, der Priester vor die Gemeinde hintrat, blieb das vermittelte Bewußtsein, als etwas Selbstverständliches, unsichtbar.

Sichtbar ist nur das Unsichtige: erst wenn sie industrielle Masse annimmt, wird die gesellschaftliche Induktion und Vermittlung von Bewußtsein zum Problem (Enzensberger 1962a: 8).⁴

The mention of the impact of industrialised media on “das vermittelte Bewußtsein”, a fact which refers to its technological advances in relation to the industrialisation process itself, reveals the influence of the Marxian/Neo-Marxian tradition. It is indeed the Marxist division of society into a sub- and superstructure (but also the inherent inter-relatedness of the two) which, via Adorno’s modern version of Marx’s analytical tools in his use of the Culture Industry, provides the roots of Enzensberger’s model (cf Dietschreit 1983: 34).

Enzensberger is the first to acknowledge his indebtedness to Adorno’s analysis of society, while qualifying this influence by restricting himself to a historical interpretation of the Adornian ideas: the continuous advancement of society requires a continuous diversification of the analytical tools required to enable its description and evaluation in the first place. As Adorno’s work represents a development within the Marxian tradition, so Enzensberger acknowledges the impact of further changes in society which have to be taken into account in order to express relevant analysis and criticism. The notion of the Culture Industry as an analytical tool becomes static and effectively impotent if the subject of analysis changes without a concurrent repositioning of the theoretical principles (Dietschreit 1986: 49).

Enzensberger’s main contribution lies in broadening the horizon of the Culture Industry by acknowledging the further diversification of modern society — a diversification which manifests itself on all levels of modern culture and whose scope has become so enlarged that a histo-

4 In a society where communication was largely oral, the dependence of the pupil on the teacher, the disciple on the master, the flock on the priest was taken for granted. That the few thought and judged and decided for the many was a matter of course and not a matter for investigation. Medieval man was probably other-directed to an extent which our sociology would be at a loss to fathom. His mind was, to an enormous degree, fashioned and processed from “without”. But the business of teaching and indoctrination was perfectly straightforward and transparent — so transparent indeed that it became invisible as a problem. Only when the processes which shape our minds became opaque, enigmatic, inscrutable for the common man, only with the advent of industrialisation, did the question of how our minds are shaped arise in earnest (Enzensberger 1974e: 3-4).

rical term such as “culture industry” can no longer describe it. Not that he in any way pretends to be able to do so in terms of his *Bewußtseins-Industrie*: for all practical purposes this is only a general term used to analyse the manifestation of any given *Einzelheiten*, details in the socio-political context:

Während die neuen technischen Instrumente Funk, Film, Fernsehen und Schallplatten-Industrie, die Mächte der Propaganda, der Reklame, der *public relations* eifrig und isoliert diskutiert werden, bleibt also die Bewußtseins-Industrie im Ganzen außer Betracht [...]. Mode und ‘Gestaltung’, religiöse Unterweisung und Tourismus sind als Sparten der Bewußtseins-Industrie noch kaum erkannt und erforscht; auch wie ‘wissenschaftliches’ Bewußtsein industriell induziert wird, wäre am Beispiel der neueren Physik, der Psychoanalyse, der Soziologie, der Demoskopie und anderer Disziplinen erst zu studieren (Enzensberger 1962a: 9-10).⁵

The ultimate goal of the *Bewußtseins-Industrie* is to stabilise the power structures and power relations of society, thus cementing the *status quo*. However, such power relations should not only be interpreted in terms of the capitalist structure of society. Enzensberger does not consider the sale of commercial commodities as the sole impetus for the *Bewußtseins-Industrie*. In fact, current developments in society mean that commercial commodities are not the main interest — the most telling products are not in fact material:

[Ihr] Produkt ist durchaus immateriell. Hergestellt und unter die Leute gebracht werden nicht Güter, sondern Meinungen, Urteile und Vorurteile, Bewußtseinsinhalte aller Art (Enzensberger 1962a: 13).⁶

Referring to the classic Marxist model, this represents a complete shift in focus from the base to the superstructure. Enzensberger has been criti-

5 Thus, while radio, cinema, television, recording, advertising and public relations, new techniques of manipulation and propaganda, are being keenly discussed, each on its own terms, the mind industry, taken as a whole, is disregarded [...] Other, more recent branches of the industry still remain largely unexplored: fashion and industrial design, the propagation of established religions and of esoteric cults, opinion polls, simulation and, last but not least, tourism, which can be considered as a mass medium in its own right (Enzensberger 1974: 6). Enzensberger (1974e: 10-2) notes four conditions for the formation and development of the *Bewußtseins-Industrie*: philosophy, politics, economy and technology.

6 Its product is not material at all. It is not goods that are produced and distributed among the people, but opinions, judgements, prejudices, and contents of consciousness of all kinds (my translation, CvdB).

cised for his mystification of power (cf Gutzat 1977: 10), but one must ask on what terms the *Bewußtseins-Industrie* actually functions, whether there is not such a complex interplay of social and political factors which in itself cannot be reduced to a common denominator, but functions like a motor facilitating its own perpetual development and change. Such an argument would assume both the dominators and the dominated to be role-players in the truest sense of the word — the agents of both being exchangeable.

2.2 Potential for change within the *Bewußtseins-Industrie*

The argument above seriously throws doubt on the potential for actively initiating change — and the possibility of change as an inherent part of the *Bewußtseins-Industrie* represents the focus of Enzensberger's early essays. The only reason why socio-political changes can be initiated, according to Enzensberger, would be because the *Bewußtseins-Industrie* is not a closed system. Possible dissident potential is an ever-present subliminal, hibernating force within society, and the only way to defuse it is to domesticate it, this being one of the ways in which the *Bewußtseins-Industrie* functions. It regulates and defuses the dissident potential by artificially stimulating it in order to steer it in the "right" direction. But, according to Enzensberger, during this delicate and awkward moment of stimulation, the power-relations of the *status quo* can be threatened:

Ausbeuten lassen sich nur Kräfte, die vorhanden sind; um sie, im Dienste der Herrschaft, zu domestizieren, müssen sie erst erweckt werden [...]. Ihre [Bewußtseins-Industrie] eigene Bewegung kann sie nicht sistieren, und es kommen darin notwendige Momente zum Vorschein, die ihrem gegenwärtigen Auftrag, der Stabilisierung der jeweils gegebenen Herrschaftsverhältnisse, zuwiderlaufen. Es hängt mit dieser Bewegung zusammen, daß die Bewußtseins-Industrie nie total kontrollierbar ist. Zum geschlossenem System läßt sie sich nur um den Preis ihres Absterbens machen, das heißt dadurch, daß man sie selber gewaltsam bewußtlos macht und sich ihrer tieferen Wirkungen begibt [...]. Die Zweideutigkeit, die darin liegt, daß die Bewußtseins-Industrie ihren Konsumenten immer erst einräumen muß, was sie ihnen abnehmen will, wiederholt und verschärft sich, wenn man ihre Produzenten, die Intellektuellen, ins Auge faßt (Enzensberger 1962a: 15).⁷

7 For this is the most fundamental of all its contradictions: in order to obtain consent, you have to grant a choice, no matter how marginal and deceptive; in order to harness the faculties of the human mind, you have to develop them, no matter how narrowly and how deformed [...]The mind industry has a dynamic

This then represents the gap for artists and intellectuals to take, and leaves room for socio-politically engaged literature as an appeal for socio-political change.

Enzensberger also thinks in historical terms and, according to the Marxian tradition, the historical development of society manifests itself according to the (pre)conditions of production — the potential of destructive forces increases relative to the exploitation inherent in industrial development. Thus the social discrepancies enhance the explosive force within society. It therefore remains the duty of politically conscious intellectuals and artists to further exploit this possibility — the role of the artist is to be anything but a representation of the outsider and to learn to utilise the opportunities at hand (cf Dietschreit 1986: 52). In practical terms this would mean, among other things, using the media to expose whatever abuses can be identified in a given socio-political context. The remaining essays in *Einzelarbeiten I* analyse just this — the manifestation of the *Bewußtseins-Industrie* in various forms, whether in terms of the way language is used and ideologically tainted in journals such as *Der Spiegel* (*Die Sprache des Spiegel*), or the way modern tourism can be regarded as symptomatic of the all-inclusiveness of the *Bewußtseins-Industrie*.

One of Enzensberger's most positive assessments of the potential for change is the subject of his essay *Baukasten zu einer Theorie der Medien*. As the title indicates, he does not purport to put forward a fully-fledged theory of the media; in fact he develops some of the thoughts expressed in his earlier work. The focus is on the discrepancies within the *Bewußtseins-Industrie*, which allows the dissident potential to manifest itself in order to subsume it, which alternatively can be instrumental in forcing real change. His theory pre-empts some of the technological advances of the information age, in that he focuses on the changes in the structures

of its own which it cannot arrest, and it is not by chance but by necessity that in this movement there are currents which run contrary to its present mission of stabilising the status quo. A corollary of its dialectical progress is that the mind industry, however closely supervised in its individual operations, is never completely controllable as a whole. There are always leaks in it, cracks in the armor; no administration will ever trust it all the way [...] When we turn our attention from the industry's consumers to its producers, the intellectuals, we find this dilemma aggravated and intensified (Enzensberger 1974e: 12-3).

relating to the exchange of information — today (by virtue of the internet) everyone can be both a receiver and a sender of information. The upshot of this is not fully analysed though — the subversive potential which today can so easily find its niche within the public domain can just as easily be relativised because of the weight of information available: the potential seems to diminish relative to the amount of information available. Another issue is that of trust in the integrity of the information, which is often difficult to determine when the anonymity of its sources is taken into account. But Enzensberger remains very optimistic:

Inzwischen läßt sich sein gesellschaftlicher Nutzen noch am ehesten daran messen, wie weit er in der Lage ist, die emanzipatorischen Momente der Medien zu nutzen und zur Reife zu bringen. Die taktischen Widersprüche, in die er [der Autor] sich dabei verwickeln muß, lassen sich weder leugnen noch beliebig überspielen. Strategisch aber ist seine Rolle klar. Der Autor hat als Agent der Massen zu arbeiten. Gänzlich verschwinden kann er erst dann in ihnen, wenn sie selbst zu Autoren, den Autoren der Geschichte geworden sind (Enzensberger 1974a: 129).⁸

In fact, his optimism represents a different point of view from the pessimistic Adornian evaluation of all media (cf Kellner 1989: 144, 159). The difference between the Culture Industry and the *Bewußtseins-Industrie* is obvious: Enzensberger identifies a positive potential in the *Bewußtseins-Industrie* (the way the media can be manipulated in a “good cause”), whereas Adorno seems to deny any positive possibilities.

However, as his oeuvre develops, this optimism is progressively tempered as social and political events mark the relative incompetence of active participation in trying to change society — the underlying structure of power relations, with its driving force of socio-political subsumption, remains the pattern of both institutions and the personal, individual life within society. This does not imply that Enzensberger in his later work adopts a different view of the way in which society

8 Meanwhile, his [the artist's or intellectual's] social usefulness can best be measured by the degree to which he is capable of using the liberating factors in the media and bringing them to fruition. The tactical contradictions in which he must become involved in the process can neither be denied nor covered up in any way. But strategically his role is clear. The author has to work as the agent of the masses. He can lose himself in them only when they themselves become authors, the authors of history (Enzensberger 1974d: 128, translated by Hood).

functions — the analysis and description of his subject remain the same, only his view of the individual's conscious reaction to the *Bewußtseins-Industrie* is more ironic than his earlier belief that deep analysis and criticism can directly effect a change for the better.

2.3 The role of literature within the *Bewußtseins-Industrie*: a changing assessment

Before describing the shift in Enzensberger's point of view, it is worthwhile considering his theoretical work on the constellation of literature and politics, in which the interrelatedness of his poetics and the notion of the *Bewußtseins-Industrie* becomes evident. In this respect four aspects of Enzensbergerian aesthetics should be considered, before focusing on certain essays dealing specifically with the issue of literature and expressing his changing view of the potential of *littérature engagée*. These aspects include art as a process; art as, per definition, non-nihilistic; art as anti-*Bewußtseins-Industrie*, and the importance of literary form in contrast to literary content.

First, Enzensberger regards literature and art as always relevant because of the continuous evolution in the reception of works of art. Concurrent with changes in the way art and literature are interpreted (whether because of a different or new theoretical or aesthetical context or simply a different historical reading of the text), the text itself remains an ever-viable vehicle for meaning, thus its possible influence within *Bewußtseins-Industrie* should never be viewed as “dated”:

Poesie ist ein Prozeß. Kein Museum, auch kein imaginäres, kann ihn sistieren. Wer's versucht, verdinglicht die poetische Produktion zum Fetisch. Er sieht das Werk als zeitlos transportabeln Kunstschatz, in dem sich das vermeintlich Unvergängliche als mündelsicherer Wert verkörpert (Enzensberger 1962f: 9).⁹

When the meaning of the text is considered dated, or when the text becomes institutionalised, the *Bewußtseins-Industrie* can subsume any “destructive information” it may include. On the other hand, focusing on

9 Poetry is a process, a process moreover which no museum, not even an imaginary one, can arrest. To try to arrest it is to reify the poetic act into a fetish, with the result that the work is seen as a timeless, transportable art treasure, in which what is allegedly imperishable is embodied as a gilt-edged security (Enzensberger 1974h: 44, translated by Roloff).

the non-static nature of the aesthetic process constitutes the acknowledgment of a core of relevance, independent of time and context.¹⁰

Secondly, by nature art and literature can never be nihilistic — a point of view that relates to ideas expressed by Adorno in his evaluation of art. Art is always a moment of creation — despite the destruction of the traditional norms of art, the result is still a new and unique work. A similarity to the Adornian negative utopia can be identified here. As the utopia can only be described in terms of what it is not (therefore in the “destruction” of the given realities of the *status quo*), so too the work of art has an aura of utopia in its destruction of traditional form and its manifestation of the new and unique. There remains a tension between the way socio-political reality is expressed in the work of art and the way it is set out as being by the *Bewußtseins-Industrie*.

Thirdly, in addition to the above, it is clear that Enzensberger views literature as being by nature anti-*Bewußtseins-Industrie*. By not being nihilistic it represents alternative options, in fact the possibility of an alternative to the *status quo*. And the continuous evolution of artistic form always pre-empts and carries the notion of another possibility still to be realised in its socio-political form.

Das Gedicht ist die Antiware schlechthin: Das war und ist der gesellschaftliche Sinn aller Theorien der poesie pure. Mit dieser Forderung verteidigt sie Dichtung überhaupt und behält recht gegen jedes allzu eilfertige Engagement, das sie ideologisch zu Markte tragen möchte. Übrigens leistet der Gegensatz von Elfenbeinturm und Agitprop der Poesie keine guten Dienste. Dieser Wortwechsel gleicht dem Leerlauf zweier weißer Mäuse, die einander in der Treitmühle eines Käfigs jagen. Antiware, die sich der Manipulation ‘pur’ widersetzt, sind noch die engagiertesten ‘Fertigfabrikate’ Majakowskis. Ebenso ist der freischwebendste Text von Arp oder Eluard bereits dadurch *poesie engagée*, daß er überhaupt Poesie ist: Widerspruch, nicht Zustimmung zum Bestehenden (Enzensberger 1962f: 23-4).¹¹

10 It is important to note that this interpretation of art to a certain extent also allows for its misinterpretation and misuse, which may result in an effect, within the context of the *Bewußtseins-Industrie*, opposite to that hoped for by Enzensberger.

11 The poem is the anticommodity *par excellence*; this was and is the social significance of all the theories about *poésie pure*. In making this challenge modern poetry is defending poetry as a whole, and it maintains its position against every pressure that tries to force it into the ideological market place. In any case, to contrast ivory tower and agit prop renders poetry no useful service; it is a clash of words

Fourthly, in conclusion, Enzensberger focuses on the importance of the artistic medium as such — with language as the medium of poetic expression. Like Adorno, Enzensberger identifies the political nature of literature in the use of language and the exploitation of literary form, rather than in the textual content:

Poesie und Politik sind nicht 'Sachgebiete', sondern historische Prozesse, der eine im Medium der Sprache, der andere im Medium der Macht. Beide sind gleich unmittelbar zur Geschichte. Literaturkritik als Soziologie erkennt, daß es die Sprache ist, die den gesellschaftlichen Charakter der Poesie ausmacht, nicht ihre Verstrickung in den politischen Kampf. Bürgerliche Literaturästhetik erkennt oder verheimlicht, daß Poesie gesellschaftlichen Wesens ist (Enzensberger 1962e: 133).¹²

The inherently social nature of language, the fact that it cannot be reduced to an autonomous sphere but is structurally related to a socio-political context, means that the aesthetic utilisation of language structures has an impact on the (relative) structural order of its context — at least this is the basis on which Enzensberger evaluates the political potential of literature, and especially poetry. The reason is that it is, in the first instance, in the production of poetry that the poet can use language in an innovative and experimental manner. The political relevance of the content is of secondary importance (cf Enzensberger 1962f: 133).

In the collection *Mein Gedicht ist mein Messer*, Enzensberger published the essay "Scherenschleifer und Poeten". Both titles suggest that he expresses the importance of language in his optimism about the socio-political potential of the poem:

- as pointless as the exertions of two mice chasing each other in the treadmill of a cage. The anticommodity, which resists manipulation on 'pure' grounds, becomes Mayakovsky's most completely engaged 'finished product'. And the mere fact that it is poetry transforms the trapeze acts of Arp or Éluard into *poésie engagée*: conflict, not agreement, with what exists (Enzensberger 1974h: 57, translated by Roloff).
- 12 [P]oetry and politics are not 'specialised fields' but historic processes, one in the medium of speech, the other in the medium of power. Both are integral parts of history. As sociology, literary criticism cannot see that language constitutes the social character of poetry, and not its entanglement in the political battle. Bourgeois literary esthetics is blind to, or else conceals, the fact that poetry is essentially social (Enzensberger 1974g: 79, translated by Roloff).

Das Material des Gedichteschreibers ist zunächst und zuletzt die Sprache. Aber ist die Sprache wirklich das einzige Material des Gedichts? Und an diesem Punkt erlaube ich mir, einen Begriff in Spiel zu bringen.. den des Gegenstandes. Auch der Gegenstand, jawohl, der vorsintflutliche, längst aus der Mode gekommene Gegenstand, ist ein unentbehrliches Material der Poesie. Ich kann, wenn ich einen Vers mache, nicht reden, ohne von etwas zu reden. Und dieses Etwas, so gut wie die Sprache, die davon spricht, ist mein Material. [...] Was tue ich mit der lauen Sprache, die ich vorfinde, um sie zum sprechen zu bringen? Ich halte sie an meine Gegenstände. Sofort heizt sie sich auf [...]. Sie bildet sofort den Zustand dessen ab, was sie vorfindet (Enzensberger 1982: 82).¹³

Enzensberger's work often contains similar statements regarding the functionality of literature within the bounds of the *Bewußtseins-Industrie* (cf Enzensberger 1962d: 72, 1988: 42-52). His literary work corresponds to his poetic views which are, in many important aspects, inspired by his point of view regarding the structure of the *Bewußtseins-Industrie*. Focusing on artistic form rather than content as the conduit for socio-political engagement, he produced much of his poetry and prose in accordance with this theoretical ideal. In his poetry he often uses Brechtian alienation in his use of language, a technique he calls "Entstellung", and the utilisation of which he regards as one of the most important tools of the modern poet (cf Enzensberger 1961: 28, 30, 78, 139). It entails poetic license in terms of the innovative use of language and words, the exploitation of their meaning in the permutation of words, quotations, metaphors, and so on. Thus he acknowledges the enormous ideological power which the *Bewußtseins-Industrie* has over language as the medium of communication. By the alienating and "destructive" use of language in the production of poetry, language itself to some extent escapes its manipulative force. The scope of the power of the *Bewußtseins-Industrie* is therefore reduced by the innovative use of language (cf Knörrich 1968: 613).

- 13 Language is first and last the material the poet uses. But is language really the only material of the poem? And at this juncture I allow myself to bring a certain concept into contention ... that of the subject. Yes, the unfashionable subject, harking back to before the deluge, is indispensable material to poetry as well. When I create a verse, I cannot talk without talking about something. And this Something, just like the language which tells us about it, is my material [...] What is it I do with the lukewarm language that I find, to bring it to its expression? I hold it against my subjects. Immediately it heats itself up [...]. It immediately depicts the condition of that which it finds (my translation, CvdB).

But the use of “Entstellung” encompasses the exploitation of literary form — creating a disassociation of meaning by contextualising and combining literary, artistic or everyday allusions in new and various ways. The use of collage and montage is an excellent example of this (cf Rodiek 1990: 202). And the resulting disassociation of the conventional meaning normally (and ideologically) attached to the described object (conventional because of its being interpreted as such within the structure of the *Bewußtseins-Industrie*) should, according to Enzensberger, be regarded as an active impulse to effect change. It should generate knowledge unspoilt by the *Bewußtseins-Industrie*.

Events leading up to the student revolts of 1968 in West Germany and Europe marked an important shift in Enzensberger’s evaluation of the actual impact of artistic and intellectual dissidence and criticism within the context of the *Bewußtseins-Industrie*.¹⁴ The domination and the manipulative force of the *Bewußtseins-Industrie* often form the background to the themes of his essays of the time. The nonconformist potential of literature and art is by no means completely denied, at least not theoretically, but he does question the translation of this potential into praxis. The historical situation seems to have diminished Enzensberger’s faith in the extensive practical impact of literature.

Consequently, he appears to acknowledge the manipulative force of the *Bewußtseins-Industrie* as having a firmer hold on the *status quo*. His denunciation of the belief in a certain kind of literature, exercising criticism immanently from within, in “Klare Entscheidungen und Trübe Aussichten” is evident:

Es ist zunächst das Ende einer Literatur, deren Aspiration es seit 1945 gewesen ist, mit ihren geringen Kräften, durch immanente Kritik und durch direkten Eingriff in den Mechanismus der Meinungsbildung und der Parlamentswahlen die Konstruktionsfehler der Bundesrepublik auszubalancieren [...]. Was waren das für Leute? Die Antwort ist: Es waren Spätliberale, brave Sozialdemokraten, Moralisten, Sozialisten ohne klare Begriffe, Antifaschisten ohne Zukunftsentwurf [...]. Wieder einmal scheint es, als ginge Deutschland finsternen Zeiten entgegen. Es wird nicht das Schlimmste an dieser Finsternis sein, daß die deutsche

14 The impetus for this more pessimistic shift included political events such as the formation of the *Große Koalition*, as well as the inability of the New Left to realise its ideals at the time of the student revolts.

Literatur aufhört, ein Narrenparadies für oppositionelle Schriftsteller zu sein (Enzensberger 1970: 229).¹⁵

Although there remains no base from which to launch active dissidence, Enzensberger identifies another niche in society which may represent the only possibility left for challenging existing power relations, despite the fact that it may only be on a mini-structural level. This entails the existence of social outsiders and their organisation into small groups (an idea which exhibits similarities to the work of both Marcuse and Foucault, in their interpretation of socio-political engagement; cf Enzensberger 1974b: 23).

From this point onwards Enzensberger never returns to his early optimism concerning the potential and possibilities of confronting the *Bewußtseins-Industrie* and making a meaningful contribution to practical change. The tone of his later essays is more ironic in the description of social phenomena — ever embedded within the vast net of the *Bewußtseins-Industrie*. He continues to analyse the “Einzelheiten”, leading from or towards the *Bewußtseins-Industrie* as his point of orientation.

The *Bewußtseins-Industrie* remains one of the most important themes in the oeuvre of Hans Magnus Enzensberger, whether he explicitly analyses it in his essays or poetics, and subsequent literary texts are written within the shadow of its presence. To evaluate his work solely in terms of the *Bewußtseins-Industrie* would obviously diminish its meaning considerably, but the underlying presence and importance of this concept to his work as a whole cannot be underestimated.

15 To start with it represents the end of a certain kind of literature, the aspiration of which was (from 1945) to balance out the constructional flaws of the Bundesrepublik. Using its limited powers this was to be done through immanent criticism and direct intervention with regard to the mechanism which shapes public opinion and parliamentary elections [...]. What kind of people were they? The answer is belated liberals, brave social democrats, moralists, socialists without clear ideas, anti-fascists without an outline for the future. It seems as if Germany is again falling on difficult times. It would not be the worst of these times if German literature stopped being a fool's paradise for oppositional writers (my translation, CvdB).

3. Conclusion

The development of new ideas and theories in the latter half of the twentieth century, epitomised in post-modernist and post-structuralist thought, has put the relevance of the Neo-Marxian tradition to the test. Ideas propounded by Derrida and Rorty spilled over to social theory in the work of Lyotard and Baudrillard (cf Kellner 1989: 146-75), with most of them calling for a break with the philosophical tradition. Furthermore, an important aspect of both the *Kulturindustrie* and the *Bewußtseins-Industrie*, the social phenomenon of “power”, was turned on its head by Michel Foucault.

As a social commentator Hans Magnus Enzensberger adopted many ideas from the Neo-Marxian tradition (in particular from the work of Theodor Adorno), adapting and developing such ideas concerning the notion of the *Bewußtseins-Industrie*. Since *littérature engagée* of its very nature activates the interrelatedness of literature and socio-politics, both his poetics and his creative work are likewise to some extent prompted by these ideas. But as a poet and a writer Enzensberger defies the post-modernist criticism of Neo-Marxism (even if the *Bewußtseins-Industrie* still remains a viable tool for the generation of knowledge relating to the socio-political context): he has always been adamant in his belief that the reading and interpretation of a text (and I would venture to say — a life’s work) is a process, something that develops continuously — thereby claiming a certain relevance for the text in whatever context it may be appreciated. As such, the *Bewußtseins-Industrie*, as one of the most important recurring themes in Enzensberger’s oeuvre, may suggest continuous, fruitful ways of interpreting one of the most important literary oeuvres of post-war Germany.

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