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**Realism and/or the Avant – Garde: Georg Lukács and the Czechoslovak Discussions of Realism after the 20th congress.**

In the years following the 20th Congress of the Communist Party, the practice of literature as well as its theory underwent significant developments. Among the most important changes was a shift in the conceptions of realism and its relation to experimental writing. This paper will examine the dichotomy of modernism and avant – garde to realism in Georg Lukács' *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism* and the debates about the avant – garde and realism in 1960s Czechoslovakia. Lukács' book constitutes a famous reiteration of modern aesthetics of realism – his ideal of *critical realism* is supposed to surpass both socialist realism and modernism. Whereas Lukács tends to conflate the avant – garde with modernism and criticizes it as an elitist and formalist movement, the Czech Marxist literary theorists of the 1960s as Milan Kundera, Květoslav Chvatík, and Růžena Grebeníčková are all in their specific manner weakening the opposition of modernist and avant – garde writing to realism (Kanda, 2021). One significant element of the Czechoslovak contributions is their return to the Czech communist intellectuals and artists of the 1930s (Bedřich Václavek, Jiří Weil, and Vladislav Vančura), firmly connected to the avant – garde movement in the early 20th century. The paper will attempt to determine whether the works of Kundera, Chvatík and Grebeníčková provide fruitful polemical impulses to Lukács' critical binarism, or whether they are to be better understood as strategic attempts to widen the scope of realist (and therefore politically acceptable) art.