

**new
german
critique**



NUMBER 17

SPRING 1979

SPECIAL WALTER BENJAMIN ISSUE

Anson Rabinbach

CRITIQUE AND COMMENTARY / ALCHEMY AND CHEMISTRY

Philip Brewster and Carl Howard Buchner

LANGUAGE AND CRITIQUE:
JURGEN HABERMAS ON WALTER BENJAMIN

Jürgen Habermas

CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING OR REDEMPTIVE CRITICISM

Anson Rabinbach

INTRODUCTION TO BENJAMIN'S "DOCTRINE OF THE SIMILAR"

Walter Benjamin

DOCTRINE OF THE SIMILAR

Irving Wohlfarth

WALTER BENJAMIN'S IMAGE OF INTERPRETATION

Ansgar Hillach

THE AESTHETICS OF POLITICS:

Walter Benjamin

THEORIES OF GERMAN FASCISM

Elzbieta Ettinger

ROSA LUXEMBURG'S LETTERS TO LEO JOGICHES

REPORT

R. G. Davis

BENJAMIN, STORYTELLING AND BRECHT IN THE USA

REVIEW ESSAYS

Henry Schmidt

RECEPTION THEORY AND ITS APPLICATIONS

Peter Uwe Hohendahl

LITERARY SOCIOLOGY IN WEST GERMANY

Barry Kätz

NEW SOURCES OF MARCUSE'S AESTHETICS

Gary Smith

WALTER BENJAMIN: A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SECONDARY LITERATURE

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF GERMAN STUDIES

new german critique

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF GERMAN STUDIES

Editors: David Bathrick (Madison), Helen Fehervary (Columbus), Andreas Huyssen (Milwaukee), Anson G. Rabinbach (New York), Jack Zipes (Milwaukee)

Managing Editor: Johanna Moore

Contributing Editors: Wolfgang Emmerich (Bremen), Ferenc Feher (Melbourne), Renny Harrigan (Milwaukee), Michael Hays (New York), Agnes Heller (Melbourne), Peter U. Hohendahl (Ithaca), Douglas Kellner (Austin), Eberhard Knödler-Bunte (Berlin), Sara Lennox (Amherst), Rainer Nägele (Baltimore), Oskar Negt (Hannover), Paul Piccone (St. Louis), Henry Schmidt (Columbus), Dale Tomich (Binghamton), Nancy Vedder-Shults (Madison)

Editorial Staff for this Issue: Jamie O. Daniel (Milwaukee), Ingrid Jörgenson (Milwaukee), Bidy Martin (Madison), Marsha Meyer (Madison), Wolfgang Müller (Madison), Pat Russian (Madison), Tim Salawater (Madison), Jim Steakley (Madison), Karl Stenger (Columbus), Beth Weckmueller (Madison)

Project Assistants: Dorothy Braun (Milwaukee)

Published three times a year at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, *New German Critique* No. 17 corresponds to Vol. 6, No. 2. Copyright *New German Critique*, Inc., 1979. All rights reserved. Third class postage paid at Milwaukee, Wisconsin and additional mailing offices. *New German Critique* is a non-profit, educational organization.

All correspondence should be addressed to: NEW GERMAN CRITIQUE, German Department, Box 413, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53201.

The annual subscription rate is \$8.00 individuals; \$16.00 institutions. All foreign subscriptions \$1.00 extra. Back issues are available: issues 1–15, \$2.50 each; issues 16 ff. \$3.00 each.

Distributor in Europe: Ästhetik und Kommunikation, Fuggerstr. 18, 1 Berlin 30, West Germany. Annual subscription rate DM 21 individuals: DM 36 institutions. Single copies cost 9.50 DM. Payments to Ästhetik und Kommunikation, Post-scheckkonto Berlin West 3731-109 Berliner Bank Kto. — Nr. 52557 64200, West Germany.

Distributor in England: Compendium Bookstore, 240 Camden High Street, London NW 1.

Note to Contributors: Manuscripts should be prepared in accordance with the Modern Language Association Style Sheet. An original and two copies are requested.

Copies of Cement may be ordered from the Milwaukee office.

new german critique

Number 17

Table of Contents

Spring 1979

ARTICLES:

Critique and Commentary / Alchemy and Chemistry	
Some Remarks on Walter Benjamin and this Issue	3
<i>Anson Rabinbach</i>	
Language and Critique: Jürgen Habermas on Walter Benjamin	15
<i>Philip Brewster and Carl Howard Buchner</i>	
Consciousness-Raising or Redemptive Criticism	
The Contemporaneity of Walter Benjamin	30
<i>Jürgen Habermas</i>	
Introduction to Walter Benjamin's "Doctrine of the Similar"	60
<i>Anson Rabinbach</i>	
Doctrine of the Similar	65
<i>Walter Benjamin</i>	
Walter Benjamin's Image of Interpretation	70
<i>Irving Wohlfarth</i>	
The Aesthetics of Politics:	
Walter Benjamin's "Theories of German Fascism"	99
<i>Ansgar Hillach</i>	
Theories of German Fascism	120
<i>Walter Benjamin</i>	
Comrade and Lover: Rosa Luxemburg's Letters to Leo Jogiches . . .	129
<i>Elzbieta Ettinger</i>	
REPORT	
Benjamin, Storytelling and Brecht in the USA	143
<i>R. G. Davis</i>	
REVIEW ESSAYS	
Reception Theory and its Applications	157
<i>Henry Schmidt</i>	
Literary Sociology in West Germany: <i>Internationales Archiv für</i>	
<i>Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur</i>	170
<i>Peter Uwe Hohendahl</i>	
New Sources of Marcuse's Aesthetics	176
<i>Barry Kätz</i>	
Walter Benjamin: A Bibliography of Secondary Literature	189
<i>Gary Smith</i>	

Christa Wolf

Kein Ort • Nirgends

Erzählung

174 Seiten

Leinen 6.60M

Best.-Nr.

612 205 4

Aufbau-Verlag
Berlin
und Weimar

Heinrich von Kleist
und Karoline
von Günderode
begegnen sich im
Frühsommer 1804
in Winkel am
Rhein und verbringen
einen Nachmittag
im Kreis von Freunden
—unter ihnen Savigny,
Bettine
und Clemens Brentano.
In dem Bewusstsein,
dass sie sich ein
einziges Mal
in ihrem Leben sehen,
entwickelt sich aus
Anziehung
und Abstossung eine
Beziehung zwischen
ihnen, die ihrer
beider Lebensproblem
offenlegt:
Sehnsucht nach Selbst-
verwirklichung
in der Kunst und
in der Liebe,
unerfüllbarer
Lebensanspruch.
Zu beziehen durch eine
internationale
Buchhandlung

*Critique and Commentary /
Alchemy and Chemistry:
Some Remarks on Walter Benjamin
and this Special Issue*

by Anson Rabinbach

I

What is it that still draws us to Walter Benjamin, almost 40 years after his tragic death, a quarter of a century after his rediscovery, and now, more than a decade since his work first appeared in English? How can we explain this persistent fascination with the melancholy man Susan Sontag has called “the last intellectual”?¹ His attractiveness surely cannot be attributed to the events of his sad and difficult life. Nor can the answer be found in the major philosophical themes he pursued, if only because these are almost always expressed directly, in images that can only later be discussed philosophically. Certainly it is not only the subject matter of his major works—the Baroque drama or the physiognomy of Baudelaire’s Paris — that is so compelling, fascinating as these are. It is equally fruitless to invoke some kind of special creativity or idiosyncratic flashes of insight to characterize his intellectual power. As Adorno recalled: “The impression he left was not of someone who created truth or who attained it through conceptual power; rather in citing it, he seemed to have transformed himself into a supreme instrument of knowledge on which the latter had left its mark.”²

Walter Benjamin’s prose never seems to lose its initial force, become dated, or diminish in its ability to surprise. There is an aura that surrounds his texts that is, in this case, completely legitimate. His writing forces us to think in correspondences, to proceed through allegorical images rather than through expository prose. In this he is closer to Baudelaire, Mallarmé and Proust, than to his intellectual associates and contemporaries. In an important sense, his essays fulfill what the young Lukács saw as the promise of the form, “a type of art, a unique and radical formation of a unique and complete life.”³ Yet it is not biography that constitutes the truth of Benjamin’s essays — an idea that was absolutely foreign to him — as much as

¹Susan Sontag, “The Last Intellectual,” *New York Review of Books* (October 12, 1978), 75-76.

²Theodor W. Adorno, “A Portrait of Walter Benjamin,” *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber (London, 1967), p. 229.

³Georg Lukács, *Die Seele und die Formen* (Neuwied and Berlin, 1971), p. 31.

it is his image of himself as a writer that holds out the promise of a radically different kind of thought. Benjamin's allure can perhaps be located in his ability to rekindle a way of seeing the world that has almost disappeared, and which, by becoming present in his work, holds out the possibility of return. Benjamin's ideal of redemptive criticism is that of his own image as an interpreter, an image which is perhaps the key to his capacity to hold our attention.

II

"Critique seeks the truth content of a work of art, commentary its subject matter."⁴ Benjamin's characterization of the alternatives open to the interpreter invites us to consider his own position in this light. Traditionally, critique implies judgment. The critic stands above the object and determines its value. It is the critic's task to recover the essential, the hidden and the masked truths, veiled by the world of appearances. The commentator remains on the surface of things. Concerned with the subject matter of experience, the commentator works with the materials and threads that create the whole cloth. The division between the critic and the commentator is symptomatic of a disenchanted world. Neither is fully satisfying. Both the privileged status of the critic and the contemplative persona of the commentator are questionable. The critic can never be free from the moral taint of illegitimate authority—from where does the critic derive the power to judge? The commentator is always imprisoned in the ascetic neutrality of learned discourse. At least since the Enlightenment the idea of critique has never been able to refute the charge that reason presupposes a sovereign concept of knowledge. Even the Marxian critique of fetishism is implicated in an aristocratic concept of knowledge that asserts a privileged standpoint—that of a universal class—against the appearances of the commodity. Any critical epistemology must confront its own moral vulnerability. Does not the claim of access to truth contain the apparatus of tyranny even if it is benevolent in its intention? Certainly the intolerance of critics towards each other has not helped matters. The allegorist who pictured the hell for all judges as one in which they are condemned to sit on seats covered with their own skin, had this in mind. And no more comforting is the position of the commentator whose fate it is to remain solidly on the surface. The fear of asserting a truth, because of its complicity with judgment, abdicates conscience and is resigned to powerlessness. Does concern with the subject matter of experience stop at the door of life?

The distinction between critique and commentary raises another problem of considerable importance. What is the relationship between the ideal of truth and the subject matter of any work or experience? Does not the critic, concerned with truth, run the risk of derogating the concrete

⁴Walter Benjamin, "Goethes Wahlverwandschaften," in Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Die Wahlverwandschaften* (Frankfurt am Main, 1972), p. 255. Hereafter cited as W.

substance of experience? The commentator on the other hand, who is steeped in the physiognomy of life, may tread on the real truth of any phenomena in complete blindness. Truth and subject matter are not so easily disentangled: "The more significant a work the more concealed and intimately tied to its subject matter is its truth" (W, p. 255). History exacerbates the difficulty. The more the actual experience and subject matter disappear from the present day world, the more glaring are these aspects in the eyes of the observer. The interpreter must be aware of the practical problem which Benjamin calls to our attention. "According to our perception, subject matter and truth, united in the early days of a work, are increasingly separated by duration, because the latter always keeps itself hidden, while the former presses to the surface" (W, p. 255). The interpreter, particularly of texts or experiences that are transmitted over time, must be concerned with the distinction between the "conspicuous" and the "strange" as they appear in the subject matter.

Here Benjamin compares the critic with the paleographer confronted with an ancient parchment, whose faded text is obscured by a stronger handwriting, which refers to it. "As the paleographer must begin with the latter, so the critic must begin with the commentary." Only in this way can the most fundamental critical question be asked: "Is the appearance of truth indebted to the subject matter, or is the life of the subject matter indebted to truth?" For Benjamin insofar as these two diverge in the work, "they decide on its immortality" (W, p. 255). Contemporaries, concerned with the truth of a new work, may miss the significant details which are a locus of truth accessible only to the commentator, whose patience with the concrete is unflagging. But, ultimately it is the critic who must rise to the essence of things. Benjamin offers yet another comparison: "The aging work can be seen as a funeral pyre, before which stands the commentator as the chemist, the critic as the alchemist. Whereas for the chemist the wood and ash alone are the objects of his analysis, the alchemist is only concerned with the mystery of the flame: that of life. So the critic asks after the truth, whose living flame continues to burn over the hard ruins of the past and the light ashes of that which was experienced." (W, p. 256).

III

The source of Walter Benjamin's appeal is that as a critic he is closer to the alchemist than the judge, as a commentator closer to the paleographer than the lofty scholar. His work does not derogate the wood and ash of experience, nor does it disavow the mystery of the flame. His image of the interpreter returns to the antediluvian world where critique and commentary had not yet become separated. The alchemist had to go beyond the chemist's knowledge of the properties of the physical universe to discover God's substance hidden in the natural elements. But he cannot dispense with these natural substances. The Kabbalistic and Renaissance alchemists attempted to locate — alone a divine continuum — the correspondences,

numerical or linguistic, that could make the sacred presence manifest. The alchemist is motivated by a conservative ideal of redemption and a utopian image of the future. This Messianic ideal, which is always present in Benjamin's image of interpretation, is characterized by him as "a world of all-sided and integral actuality," and presupposes a universal nature and a universal language that not only contains the secret of the correspondences, but renders them transparent.⁵ In this state the distinction between truth and subject matter, critique and commentary disappears.

In his "Epistemo-Critical Prologue" to *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, Benjamin speaks of a "primordial form of perception in which words possess their own nobility as names, unimpaired by cognitive meaning."⁶ This attempt to restore a "primordial mode of apprehending words," is one in which "ideas are displayed without intentions, in the act of naming, and they have to be renewed in philosophical contemplation" (GTD, p. 37). It is this mode of contemplation that Benjamin attempts to capture in his remark that "Truth is the death of intention" (GTD, p. 36). In this intentionless state, truth is not yet separated from the context of life, the symbolic meaning of words not yet severed from the profane objects to which they refer, to objects of knowledge (the subject matter) not yet determined by the intention inherent in the concept. Like Nietzsche, who also identified intentionality at the root of all evil, Benjamin recognizes that modern culture has reduced truth to a servant of the "spiritual will to power." Yet, unlike Nietzsche he does not adopt the nihilistic consequence that the acceptance of the drive to mastery is a liberating step. As a part of naturalized history absolute sovereignty is mythologized alienation. In Benjamin the complicity of truth with intention, and therefore with power and judgment, is contraposed to a state of affairs that antedates this natural history of the species. His restoration of an image of truth that does not "absorb the empirical work," or elevate the philosopher to a position between the scientist and the artist, implies both a radical and a theological critique of both religion and anti-religious nihilism.

Benjamin's anamnestic image of critique arises from the vision of an Adamistic state of paradise as "a state in which there is as yet no need to struggle with the communicative significance of words" (GTD, p. 37). The pure act of naming is "beyond good and evil" in a utopian sense, as much as it is a redemptive recapturing of the past. This is why Benjamin was convinced that the ancient and Medieval physiognomers "saw things more clearly" with their "small number of morally indifferent basic concepts," than modern physiognomy with the "morally evaluative accent of its

⁵Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, eds. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, I, 3 (Frankfurt am Main, 1974), p. 1235.

⁶Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London, 1977), p. 36. Hereafter cited as GTD.

concepts.”⁷ His own thought is infinitely closer to the former than it is to modern philosophy or science.

IV

Nowhere does Benjamin come closer to defining his own position as a philosopher than in his statement that “the distinguishing power of the intellect is all the more significant in that it brings about two things as a single stroke: the salvation of phenomena and the representation of ideas” (GTD, p. 35). In Benjamin’s historical works, especially *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* and the unfinished “Paris—Capital of the 19th Century,” these elements are present as fundamental motifs. In both of these works the “salvation of phenomena” and the representation of ideas are achieved through Benjamin’s curious historical “method,” the search for origins in the discordant elements of contemporary phenomena: the death of imagery of the Baroque and the ‘shocks’ of modern urban experience. The concept of origin is perhaps the central category of Benjamin’s historical understanding. He notes that the derivation of this concept was the “carrying over Goethe’s fundamental idea from the realm of nature to the realm of history.”⁸ Yet, as a profoundly historical category, origin is not at all identical with ‘beginning’ in a developmental sense: “Origin [*Ursprung*], although an entirely historical category, has nevertheless nothing to do with genesis [*Entstehung*]” (GTD, p. 45). As his own mode of interpretation aims at the restoration of a kind of perception that is at the origin of thought, Benjamin characterizes the attempt to find the authentic— “the hallmark of origin in phenomena” as “an act of discovery,” which is “connected in a unique way with the process of recognition” (GTD, p. 46). The discovery of origin is in this way linked to the mimetic perception which Benjamin elsewhere remarks “is in every case bound to an instantaneous flash. It slips past, can possibly be regained, but really cannot be held fast, unlike other perceptions.”⁹ The historical search for origins is a form of secular redemption: the salvation of phenomena lost to recognition. His approach is aimed at “the revelation of the most singular and eccentric of phenomena” (GTD, p. 46), the disparate and dissonant element that releases the authentic experience.

Benjamin’s historical understanding is not a process of construction and reconstruction. Rather, it opposes to this conventional notion of history a standpoint that takes the word origin literally, as *Ur-Sprung* or primal leap. Against the Hegelian ideal of history as the homogenous unfolding of truth, and in contradistinction to the idea of progress in any form, Benjamin

⁷Walter Benjamin, “Fate and Character,” *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, ed. Peter Demetz (New York, 1978), p. 311.

⁸Walter Benjamin, “Nachträge zum Trauerspielbuch (Ms.),” in Rolf Tiedemann, *Studien zur Philosophie Walter Benjamins* (Frankfurt am Main, 1965), p. 60.

⁹Walter Benjamin, “Lehre vom Ähnlichen,” *Gesammelte Schriften*, II, 1, p. 206. See English translation, this issue.

identifies origin with discontinuity. The historical “process” when conceived of as a totality of becoming is ultimately a continuum of domination, a repressive chain, whose links are different inevitabilities: “The continuum of history is that of the oppressor.”¹⁰ Here, the concept of origin can be understood in terms of the political radicalism and Messianism of Benjamin’s last formulations. He held the notion of origin not only against history as a process, but against the way it is experienced—as myth and second nature. “The term origin is not intended to describe the process of becoming of that which springs forth, but rather to describe that which springs forth from becoming and disappearing” (GTD, p. 45). Benjamin’s historical works derive their critical and political impetus from the fact the “act of discovery” is not only a process of restoration but also an act of “anamnesic solidarity” with the suffering of past generations.¹¹ It is here that his utopianism can be located, not in past or future projections of authentic desire (as in Bloch, or Marx), but in the dissonant moment that interjects itself into historical experience: “Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that even *the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins.”¹²

Ernst Bloch once called this gift Benjamin’s “feel for the peripheral.”¹³ As a historian, Benjamin’s eye for detail, for the discordant or emblematic is unsurpassed. His works are pictorial histories without photographs. He often talked about his interest in “perception as a reading in the configurations of surfaces.” This ideal of reading is that of the physiognomer. His “micrological-philological sensibility” (Bloch) is always trained on the “imperfect and incomplete” (GTD, p. 45) in the conviction that cultural phenomena (visual, spatial, gestural and linguistic) are always loaded with the promise of revealing their origin. In this sense the physiognomer considers the world “as a script to be read.”¹⁴ But, paradoxically, since physiognomy is dependent on an act of recognition that comes about as a result of unfamiliarity with the subject matter, this act demands that the physiognomer remain a stranger to it. As Schopenhauer once remarked, the physiognomer’s mode of perception is fleeting and is “a sensation akin to shock.”¹⁵ This is close to Benjamin’s own image of interpretation which

¹⁰Walter Benjamin, “Probleme der Tradition I,” *Gesammelte Schriften*, 1, 3, p. 1236. Benjamin formulates this idea in a series of “fundamental aporia”: “Tradition as the discontinuum of the past in contrast to history as the continuum of events.” . . . “The history of the oppressed is a discontinuum.” — “Task of history is to claim the tradition of the oppressed.”

¹¹For an excellent discussion of this concept in relation to Benjamin, Marx and the Frankfurt School see Christian Lenhardt, “Anamnesic Solidarity: The Proletariat and Its Manes,” *Telos*, 25 (Fall, 1975), 133-154.

¹²Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York, 1969), p. 255.

¹³Ernst Bloch, “Erinnerungen,” *Über Walter Benjamin* (Frankfurt am Main, 1968), p. 17.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵Arthur Schopenhauer, “Physiognomy,” *The Essays of Arthur Schopenhauer*, trans. T. Bailey Saunders (New York, 1902), p. 63.

attempts to grasp the phenomena before the dissimulation of language enters the picture. Although he sees the world as a “script” this script is not necessarily a text, and by no means is language the ontological pretext for interpretation. Benjamin’s is a mimetic and not a synthetic idea of reading. The physiognomer surveys the bits and pieces of historical experience— the arcades, the flaneur, the gambler, the world exhibition, interior— in search of the element of shock. Since truth is “never revealed in the naked and manifest existence of the factual” (GTD, p. 45), the physiognomer must be absorbed in history and yet remain alien to it. Like the paleographer the physiognomer must respect the concrete, disparate and the discontinuous; like the alchemist he must be motivated by a belief that his work will ultimately bear fruit, that great motifs lie buried in the bones of experience.

V

Benjamin’s theory of origin is by no means identical with the authority claim of tradition, but is completely antithetical to it. For Benjamin the only authentic tradition lies in the “discontinuum of that which has existed.”¹⁶ His interpretations aim at the liquidation rather than the reconstruction of history as natural history. Benjamin’s absorption in history is not submissive, it is “motivated by the urge to re-collect the broken past, to remember the dismembered.”¹⁷ His attitude towards tradition is manifest in his style of presentation, which is reminiscent of the creative commentary in Jewish religious practice. Creative commentary is appropriately disrespectful towards knowledge that claims the authority of tradition. The rule of law and the authority of the written word was characteristically opposed by an idea of knowledge that assumed the illegitimacy of such absolute prerogative in a world still awaiting redemption.

In his recent appreciation of Gershom Scholem, Jürgen Habermas characterized this kind of creative commentary by contrasting it with an authoritarian image of tradition as the continuity and renewal of the truths of the fathers by the sons: “As in the mystical illumination, truth can intervene in tradition and explode the continuity of that which is passed down. Tradition is not rooted in an unambiguously revealed knowledge, but in an idea of knowing, whose Messianic redemption is still pending. It therefore rests on the tension between its conservative and its utopian content. This notion of tradition appropriates revolution no less than restoration; it abolishes the dogmatic character of what we once called tradition.”¹⁸ For Benjamin, Kafka’s work revealed what he called “the sickness of tradition,” the definition of truth as “Haggadic consistency.”¹⁹

¹⁶Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, I, 3, p. 1240.

¹⁷Irving Wohlfarth, “On the Messianic Structure of Walter Benjamin’s Last Reflections,” *Glyph 3* (Baltimore, 1978), 154.

¹⁸Jürgen Habermas, “Die verkleidete Tora: Rede zum 80. Geburtstag von Gershom Scholem,” *Merkur*, 32, 1 (January, 1978), 100, 101.

¹⁹Walter Benjamin, *Briefe*, II, ed. Gershom Scholem and Theodor W. Adorno (Frankfurt am Main, 1966), p. 763.

Kafka's achievement lies in his recognition that "the consistence of truth has been lost."²⁰ Benjamin's anti-canon of discontinuity is too strong, his sense of rupture too great, to permit the paternal triad of Law, constraint and identity to become a binding force. The price for this void, melancholia and estrangement, is well known, and Benjamin's own biography is sufficient testimony. The authority of truth is displaced by "representation as digression" (GTD, p. 28). This is evident in Benjamin's explication of the form of the treatise, which he contrasts to doctrine: "The absence of an uninterrupted purposeful structure is its primary characteristic. Tirelessly the process of thinking makes new beginnings, returning in a roundabout way to its original object" (GTD, p. 28). In the creative commentary truth is present, not as authority, but as the unraveling of the "distinct and the disparate" (GTD, p. 28). The task of the commentator, which as we noted at the outset, is to concern himself with the subject matter, leads to truth "through immersion in the most minute details of the subject matter" (GTD, p. 29).

VI

Walter Benjamin's writing contains a profoundly sensuous quality often missed by critics interested in the major philosophical themes. This sensuous aspect is particularly evident in Benjamin's description of the speech habits of the Neapolitans: "The language of gestures goes further here than anywhere else in Italy. The conversation is impenetrable to anyone from outside. Ears, nose, eyes, breast and shoulders are signaling stations activated by the fingers. These configurations return in their fastidiously specialized eroticism."²¹ The sensuous world is for Benjamin the clue to the phenomena of language as such. The mimetic capacity, which is at the root of Benjamin's theory of language, is originally tied to "the commonplace, sensuous area of similarity."²² In his 1916 fragment, "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man," Benjamin identified the sensuous language of sculpture, painting and poetry as recalling "the material communication of things in their community."²³ Benjamin's image of sensuous expression brings his distaste for doctrine into harmony with his preference for the oral tradition of "The Storyteller." Here he reminds us of the lost art of genuine storytelling which was not simply a function of voice, but needed "that old coordination of the soul, the eye and the hand."²⁴

The world of written and spoken speech is infinitely more impoverished than the world of immediacy and recognition from which it emerged. The mediating function of language which exists only as a sign, which Benjamin

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Walter Benjamin and Asja Lacin, "Naples," *Reflections*, p. 173.

²² Walter Benjamin, "On the Mimetic Faculty," *Reflections*, p. 334.

²³ Walter Benjamin, "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man," *Reflections*, p. 330.

²⁴ Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller," *Illuminations*, p. 108.

identifies with the Fall, “is nothing but a weak remnant of the once powerful compulsion to be and act similarly.”²⁵ The most ancient languages possessed the capacity “to read what was never written.”²⁶ The communicative capacity of language is secondary to its expressive capacity, the semiotic secondary to the onomatopoetic element, which recalls the sensuous as opposed to the non-sensuous character of spoken and written language. For Benjamin the Fall is the condition in which language becomes something “externally communicating,” rather than directly expressive and transparent. Therefore his writing attempts to restore the various dimensions of the sensual through its direct and transparent expression, which constantly evokes a world in which both the sensuous and non-sensuous correspondences are manifest. “The correspondences,” he notes in “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire,” “are the data of remembrance— not historical data but the data of prehistory.”²⁷ They are the invocation of place, smell, taste, color and texture, a restoration of the language of the senses.

The presence of the sensual is also evident in the rudiments of a perceptual anthropology, the outline of which occasionally comes to the surface: “In the perception of colors the vision of fantasy, as opposed to creative imagination, is preserved as an original phenomenon [*Urphänomen*]. All form, in fact all contour that human beings perceive, coincides with themselves through their capacity to bring it about. The body in dance, the hand in drawing, imitate and appropriate it. The horizon of this capacity is the world of color; the human body cannot create color. It does not correspond to it creatively, but receptively; in the glimmer of color in the eye. (Anthropologically speaking, seeing is the watershed of the senses because it comprehends both form and color. And so to the right hand belong the capacities for active correspondences: the perception of form and movement, listening and voice; to the left hand belong the passive capacities: the perception of color belongs to the realm of the senses of smell and taste. . .). In short, pure color is the medium of fantasy, the cloud home of child after play, not the rigid canon of the constructing artist.”²⁸ No interpretive conception that constantly aims at the restoration of an integral relationship to nature and the senses can blindly accept the authority of the written word. Walter Benjamin’s writing is perhaps the most visual and corporeal philosophical prose we possess. He calls forth something we all desire, but can no longer retrieve: the ability to “speak in pictures.”

VII

Walter Benjamin’s acceptance is now assured. He is no longer a secret tip among American intellectuals interested in the most esoteric and unusual

²⁵ Walter Benjamin, “Lehre vom Ähnlichen,” *Gesammelte Schriften*, II, 1, p. 210.

²⁶ Benjamin, “On the Mimetic Faculty,” *Reflections*, p. 336.

²⁷ Walter Benjamin, “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire,” *Illuminations*, p. 182.

²⁸ Walter Benjamin, “Aussicht ins Kinderbuch,” *Gesammelte Schriften*, IV, 2, pp. 613, 614.

currents of European cultural criticism. His emigration to America has, as has been true for European intellectuals in the past, resulted in a sense of freedom at the expense of a firm sense of place. While it may be true that Benjamin's American reception has "domesticated" him, softening his political commitment, it is also true that his recognition in his own right has released him from the stifling constraints of exegetical partisanship.²⁹ To be sure, his complex relations with Brecht, Horkheimer, Adorno and Scholem should not be ignored, nor should the ambiguities and contradictions of his political hopes and disappointments be evaded. Of course there is also a danger that in America Benjamin will simply be absorbed into a melting pot of cultural theory that arrives at these shores. But the schizoid pitting of Benjamin the Marxist against Benjamin the theologian, Benjamin the intellectual against Benjamin the revolutionary has finally diminished considerably. A critical edition, responsibly edited by Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, is nearing completion (without the materials still in the Potsdam Archive of the GDR). Biographies are beginning to appear.³⁰ Aspects of his thought, previously neglected, are receiving attention. Soon there will be a number of substantial English works available.³¹ The climate around Walter Benjamin has improved considerably.

Producing a special issue on Walter Benjamin has meant seeing him through a very different lens than was appropriate a decade ago. The emphasis now is not, as it was in some of our earlier efforts, on placing him solely within the context of critical Marxism—though we still consider his work as part of the renaissance of critical theory. We are not now as concerned with mapping his relations to Brecht, Lukács, Adorno and Marcuse, and we have been less inclined to chart his position within the galaxy of Marxist constellations than might previously have been the case.³² Rather we have chosen to discuss Benjamin from the standpoint of the actuality of his thought within the current intellectual scene, and to focus on his most important and long neglected theoretical contributions, particularly his theories of language and experience. Rather than focus on specific essays at the expense of others, we have been interested in contributions that take into account the whole of his work, or that connect significant moments with a larger philosophical problematic.

²⁹Vera Schwarz discusses the American Benjamin reception from the standpoint of the preference of Kermode and Sontag for Benjamin's temperament over his politics and ideology in "The Domestication of Walter Benjamin: Admirers Flee from History into Melancholia," *Bennington Review*, no. 4 (April 1979), 7-11.

³⁰Werner Fuld, *Walter Benjamin: Zwischen den Stühlen* (Munich, 1979).

³¹Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin and the Frankfurt Institute* (New York, 1977) is the first of these. Irving Wohlfarth's study of Benjamin should appear shortly.

³²For example, Bernd Witte, "Benjamin and Lukács: Historical Notes on their Political and Aesthetic Theories," *New German Critique*, 5 (Spring, 1975), 3-26.

In this respect Jürgen Habermas' "Consciousness-raising or Redemptive Criticism" is of particular significance. One of the few sweeping surveys of Benjamin's entire critical production, Habermas' essay not only surveys the reception of Benjamin's work in the 1960s and 1970s, but provides a critical interpretation of his aesthetics in light of his theory of language as mimesis and his Messianic interpretation of experience. But Habermas' critique of Benjamin, that "an anti-evolutionary conception of history cannot be tacked onto historical materialism as if it were a monk's cowl" is not only indebted to Scholem, whom he acknowledges, but also to Habermas' own recent rehabilitation of the idea of progress. Habermas' judgment that Benjamin's attempt to "enlist the services of the puppet Historical Materialism" was a failure, speaks less for the problems of a Messianic impulse which banks on redemption, than for the revival of secular myth implied by Habermas' own theory of moral evolution. Habermas' reformulation of the classical Marxist theory of historical evolution as the progressive unfolding of normative structures stands in sharp contrast to Benjamin's essentially negative conception of the myth ridden logic of historical progress. As a result, one of the central aspects of Benjamin's entire work, as well as the theme of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the imprisonment of history in nature and myth, is no longer of primary importance for Habermas. Habermas' essay is not only a critical appraisal, but a reflection of his own "reconstruction" of historical materialism. For this reason we include a substantive critical introduction by the translators which provides an extensive clarification of the relationship of Habermas' theory of communication to his study of Benjamin.

It is not surprising that Walter Benjamin's arrival on the American scene would result in a confrontation between his work and the most recent trends in post-structuralist literary criticism, especially that of Derrida. Benjamin's affinity to French thought, particularly Symbolism, which is provocatively explored by Charles Rosen in the *New York Review of Books*, set the stage for his appropriation into the French tradition.³³ Nevertheless, his relationship to the French intellectual scene of the 1930s, particularly to his friends Georges Bataille and Pierre Klossowski, or to Surrealism, remains an important and unwritten chapter of his intellectual biography. Irving Wohlfarth's defense of Benjamin's reading of Proust against Carol Jacobs' 'deconstructive' reading is a warning against the dangers of absorbing Benjamin's esoteric prose too readily into yet another esoteric language. More important, Wohlfarth's essay unlocks the interpretive power of Benjamin's theory of language. Benjamin's redemptive criticism still maintains its "dialectically linked tension between utopian and restorative factors," by insisting on the unity of word and object— while the Derridean critique of universality simply indicts both rationality and identity as a

³³ Charles Rosen, "The Ruins of Walter Benjamin," *New York Review of Books* (October, 1977), 17, 31-40 and 18, 30-38.

repressive logos. While Benjamin too rejects universal history as myth (most explicitly in the "Theses on the Philosophy of History") his criticism attempts to explode the emptiness of historical time in order to salvage what is left of the original identity and unity from which mythical universality is garnished. This image of interpretation, as Wohlfarth points out, "is neither paraphrase nor deconstruction, but saving destruction."

Social History

SPECIAL ISSUE
VOLUME 4 NUMBER 2, MAY 1979

Social History is committed to internationalizing historical debate. We therefore welcome the opportunity of publishing a special West German number. The expanded May 1979 issue brings together some of the best work currently being produced in the Federal Republic, affording non-Germans a rare insight into a specific national historiography. The discipline of social history is at an important stage of its development; this collection will contribute to its current debate both in the Federal Republic and elsewhere.

The contents of this special issue include articles by Alf Lüdtke, Peter Blickle, Bernd Weisbrod and Dieter Groh, discussions by Jochen Martin and Jane Caplan and research and information pieces by Manfred Hildemeier, Martin Scharfe and Arthur E. Imhof, as well as a full review section.

Frequency of publication Three issues per year (January, May and October)
Subscription rates for 1979 Individuals (UK) £10.95, Institutions (UK) £15.00, Individuals (outside UK) £14.00, Institutions (outside UK) £18.50, Airmail £21.50, Single copies £6.50

Subscription correspondence should be addressed to **Periodicals Department, Associated Book Publishers, North Way, Andover, Hampshire SP10 5BE, England**

Social History is published by Methuen & Co. Ltd, 11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE

METHUEN



Language and Critique: Jürgen Habermas on Walter Benjamin

by Philip Brewster and Carl Howard Buchner

The contemporaneity of Walter Benjamin's works has become inseparable from the history of their reception in the last quarter century. Jürgen Habermas' study on "Consciousness-raising or Redemptive Criticism" receives its formative impulse from this history and is at all points inextricably bound to it. The "short, almost eruptive history of impact Benjamin's writings have had in the FRG," which Habermas reviews from the very outset, began with Theodor W. Adorno's publication of the two-volume *Schriften* in 1955, and the first volume of Benjamin's selected writings, *Illuminationen*, in 1961. The second volume of his selected writings, *Angelus Novus*, did not appear until 1966. That year also witnessed the publication of a selective edition of Benjamin's letters (*Briefe*) by Gershom Scholem and Adorno, as well as Rolf Tiedemann's collection of the writings on Brecht (*Versuche über Brecht*) much of which was not previously published. This wealth of new material led many to question why it had not come to light until then, a question directed at the selectivity of Adorno's editorial practice. One cannot help but agree with Habermas that Benjamin's work is from the very beginning constituted in such a way that it is "disposed to a history of disparate effects," but the piecemeal fashion in which it appeared and the aftermath of the 1966 publication of new materials did not help matters. It is indisputably to Adorno's credit to have rescued Benjamin's writings from oblivion, but this achievement did not exempt him from charges that turned against him his own statement that increased interest in Benjamin would give rise to increased misunderstanding. This charge was taken up, for instance, by the FAZ in a review of *Angelus Novus* that Adorno had neglected Benjamin's politically-oriented essays in earlier editions; Helmut Heissenbüttel built upon this theme in a review of the *Briefe*, in which he accused Adorno of a *retouche* of Benjamin's later Marxist writings.

This debate concerning Benjamin's relation to Marxism increased in vehemence with a special Benjamin-issue of *Alternative* in 1967, where it is pointed out that Benjamin's literary remains were not solely in Adorno's private possession, but that much of the unpublished material for his *Arcades* project, among other things, had been preserved in the Potsdam archives in the GDR. This discovery led to a series of philological debates on which versions represented Benjamin's projects most authentically. The sections of the Baudelaire study published by Adorno, it is claimed, were

revised by Benjamin under external pressures, and hence not as valid philologically as the other fragments, which supposedly contained a more explicitly Marxian methodological framework. The editorial changes in essays Benjamin published with the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* were also brought in by the *Alternative* group and believed to be compelling evidence. The charges against Adorno thus amount to the implication that he only published the works of Benjamin that he agreed with and thereby eliminated their theoretical differences *ex post facto*, without considering whether his image of Benjamin corresponded at all to the latter's intended project. Some of these charges are primarily polemical and tied to the politics of the time. Many of the philological questions have begun to be clarified with the emergence of the critical *Gesammelte Schriften* after 1972. Nonetheless, Habermas' essay was written against the background of the discrete selected editions of Benjamin's writings and the polemics surrounding them.

By 1967, the theoretical differences between Adorno and Benjamin that had surfaced in their published correspondence had gained renewed relevance not only for the *Alternative* group, but also for the tactical questions facing the German New Left in their demands for the politicization of art. They were more attracted to Benjamin's relationship to Brecht, and their focus quickly shifted away from Benjamin's ties to Adorno and Scholem. The figure of Brecht came to represent a model of what political art should be. Moreover, his consequent predominance in questions of a reformulation of art's function was accompanied by an appropriation of Herbert Marcuse as a theoretician. Marcuse's combination of a critical theory of society with an antiauthoritarian interpretation of psychoanalysis lent itself to the justifications evolved by the student movement. His more positive appraisal of revolutionary movements and Brecht's politically-oriented artistic praxis were thus assimilated as counterpoints to Adorno's sociological and aesthetic theories, with their more mediated and occasionally esoteric relation to praxis.

In 1965, Marcuse had edited Benjamin's "Critique of Violence" along with some of his other essays on the philosophy of history. In his article "Walter Benjamin — A Theologian of the Revolution," Helmut Salzinger¹ points to the historical and theoretical connections between Marcuse and Benjamin and claims that Marcuse had derived the distinction between the institutionalized power of the status quo and the violence used in opposition to it from Benjamin's essay. Salzinger then indicates some problematic aspects of Marcuse as theoretician of the New Left and feels that Benjamin should serve in this capacity. He maintains that Benjamin's philosophy of history and his radicalized idea of political power and revolutionary violence both prefigure Marcuse's theories on this point and provide more accurate theoretical guidelines for the New Left than does Marcuse. Here, in the

¹Helmut Salzinger, "Walter Benjamin — Theologe der Revolution," *Kürbiskern* (1968), No. 4, 629-47.

grounding of violence as a revolutionary means, Salzinger sees Benjamin's "contemporaneity" and states that Benjamin should be "rescued and redeemed" for this reason as theoretician of the New Left. At a critical juncture in Habermas' essay, he disputes Salzinger on this point (cf. section VI, note 40).

In view of Salzinger's identification of Marcuse and Benjamin as theoreticians of the revolution and his appropriation of Benjamin's essay as a justification of oppositional violence, one may read Habermas' distinctions between Marcuse and Benjamin and his critical discussion of the essay on violence as a repudiation of Salzinger's arguments. There are also broader points of contact, however, which deal with elements brought out by Salzinger that were typical of the New Left's reception of Benjamin. The Marxist Benjamin gains predominance over the theological moments, which are viewed as his way of broadening the basis of historical materialism. According to Salzinger, theology served Benjamin, as it did Ernst Bloch, as a means of expressing the utopian dimension in a Marxian philosophy of history. Salzinger therefore does not see a break in Benjamin's development, but places his work in a forcefield between metaphysics and materialism. Hence, he cannot agree with Scholem's contention that Benjamin deluded himself about his commitment to Marxism. In response to this and similar arguments of the New Left, Habermas arrives at conclusions that agree in part with Scholem's on the relation of Benjamin to Marxism, but he arrives at them from different points of departure. Habermas proceeds by way of immanent criticism and thereby accepts Salzinger's challenge to take Benjamin seriously at his word, i.e. to determine whether his work really is a genuine contribution to Marxism.

If one were to situate Habermas among the "fronts" that have developed in Benjamin reception, he could probably best be designated as a critical defender of Adorno's position. For although he distances himself from Adorno's "strategy of hibernation" and emphasizes methodological differences between Adorno and Benjamin that Adorno did not see, Habermas' historical position is that of heir to the Critical Theory developed by Adorno, Horkheimer, and Marcuse. He is in basic agreement with Adorno's contentions, but this agreement is reached from the perspective of Habermas' own contributions to a critical theory of society. To understand Habermas' essay, we must therefore not only see it in the context of the various 'fronts' in the Benjamin reception, but rather from the perspective of Habermas' own critical project.

Legitimation Crisis, published one year after his Benjamin essay, forms Habermas' most ambitious outline to date of what he considers an extension and immanent critique of Critical Theory. This work attempts to link communication to "the precisely rendered fundamental assumptions of historical materialism"² in order to provide the basis for a truly comprehen-

²Jürgen Habermas, *Theory and Practice*, trans. John Viertel (Boston, 1973), p. 12.

sive critical theory of society and a critical appropriation of cultural tradition. To a certain extent, *Legitimation Crisis* draws on the conclusions presented in the essay on Benjamin. The dissolution of traditional world-views due to the “world-historical rationalization process”, which Weber had analyzed, becomes further developed in Habermas’ theorems of motivation crisis and constitutes a substantive point of contact with the ideas of the earlier essay.³

The critique of tradition plays an essential role in his analyses. It is at this point that one can see the significance of Habermas’ Benjamin essay for his overall program: as its title “Consciousness-raising or Redemptive Criticism” reflects, it wants to differentiate two forms of critique on the basis of their views toward tradition. Historical hermeneutics, especially in its formulation by H.G. Gadamer, offers guidelines for the interpretation of tradition, but not for its critique. Rather, the critique of tradition stems from the Marxist heritage, specifically from the type of historical materialist critique associated with Critical Theory. Habermas’ characterizations of interpretation and critique are prefigured in Benjamin’s definition of interpretation as commentary and of critique as the quest for the substance of truth. In both cases, the two categories are not separated absolutely; they are dependent on each other. For Habermas, both modes are but different moments in his attempt to reformulate the idea of a critique of tradition:

Hermeneutics, as the scholarly interpretation and application of tradition, has the peculiarity of breaking down the nature-like character of tradition as it is handed on and, nevertheless, of retaining it at a reflective level. The critical appropriation of tradition destroys this nature-like character in discourse. Whereby the peculiarity of critique consists in its double function: to dissolve analytically, or in a critique of ideology, validity claims that cannot be discursively redeemed; but, at the same time, to release the semantic potentials of the tradition (LC, 70).

Habermas often makes these analytical distinctions precisely in order to clarify his concepts, whereupon he reunites them with the common impetus behind them. The delineation of the critique of tradition is a necessary segment of Habermas’ reconstruction of the critique of ideology. He hopes to develop it beyond what he sees as the limitations of its original formulation in Marx, limitations which were carried over into Critical Theory.

In Habermas’ view, Marx did not make a sufficient analytical distinction between social interaction and human labor. Therefore, Habermas presents these as separate realms, determined by separate cognitive interests. He identifies social labor as arising from the scientific, technical interest in the control of nature. Interaction, on the other hand, is the concern of both hermeneutic’s practical-ethical interest and Critical Theory’s emancipatory

³cf. Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston, 1975), pp. 79 et passim. Hereafter abbreviated in the text as LC.

one. It is the technical interest that governs the empiricist and positivist method of the natural sciences in general that Habermas locates in Marx's analysis of the labor process and the development of social forces of production. Habermas disagrees with Marx to the extent that he believes Marx generalizes the validity of technical reason and thereby reduces *praxis* to *techné*. Habermas does not want to exclude technical reason, but to relocate it in the cognitive interest specific to it. What he originally formulates as a tripartite model of technical, practical, and emancipatory interests is thus ultimately reformulated as a breakdown of Marx's concept of "sensuous human activity" into a juxtaposition of technology (labor and production) as a form of instrumental action on the one hand, with interaction in the realms of communicative action and discourse on the other.

Habermas redefines ideology as distorted communication and thereby detaches the critique of ideology from its Marxian foundation in the critique of political economy. He has undertaken, particularly since 1970, to ground critical theories concerned with human emancipation in a theory of communication (universal pragmatics).⁴ He develops the idea of language presented by historical hermeneutics — language forms the medium in which the practical-ethical interest is realized. This notion is already contained in his inaugural address of 1965: "The human interest in autonomy and responsibility (*Mündigkeit*) is not mere fancy, for it can be apprehended a priori. What raises us out of nature is the only thing whose nature we can know: *language*. Through its structure, autonomy and responsibility are posited for us. Our first sentence expresses unequivocally the intention of universal and unrestrained consensus."⁵ The structures of domination place particularizing constraints on the processes leading to consensus and thereby distort communication into ideology. The theoretical overcoming of this ideological distortion must be based, according to Habermas, on the model of Freudian psychoanalysis, where language was at the core of a self-reflective learning process. This process is emancipatory because it is directed at the elimination of repression.

In this way, Habermas moves beyond historical hermeneutics, which accepts unquestioned the 'consensus' ruling at a given time and does not perceive the systematic distortions that this veils. As he maintains in the fifth thesis of his inaugural lecture: "the unity of knowledge and interest (in the power of self-reflection) proves itself in a dialectic that takes the historical traces of suppressed dialogue and reconstructs what has been suppressed"

⁴For further discussion of Habermas' theory of communication, see Thomas McCarthy, *The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas* (Cambridge, 1978), Ch. 4, esp. pp. 247-291. Habermas' major essay on universal pragmatics is now available in Jürgen Habermas, *Communication and Social Evolution*, recently published by Beacon Press.

⁵Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston, 1971), p. 314. Hereafter abbreviated in the text as KHI.

(KHI, 315). Historical hermeneutics aims only at an understanding of tradition through the interpretation of texts, not at its critique. Hermeneutics nevertheless gains importance as an action-orienting (ethical-normative) discipline, because the interpreter himself is involved in the process of understanding and applies tradition to his own situation. The Freudian model thus allows Habermas to develop a self-reflective hermeneutics, in which he can ground his call for a “reflected appropriation of active traditions” (*ibid.*, 316). This in turn forms a parameter for his critique of historicism and consequently leads to the importance of Benjamin’s redemptive criticism for Habermas’ project.

The “reflective critique of tradition” and “the redemptive appropriation of semantic potentials” delineated by Habermas in his Benjamin essay are further developed in the book on *Legitimation Crisis*. This book marks Habermas’ most systematic attempt to employ his theory of language and communication as a foundation for a more comprehensive critical theory of society. One could contend that Habermas’ intensified interest in language theory led him to focus on this aspect when considering Benjamin’s thought, and that the analysis of Benjamin’s philosophy of language constitutes the essay’s real center of gravity. In any case, Habermas was one of the first to explore in detail Benjamin’s theory of language and argue forcefully for its centrality in Benjamin’s program. By examining Benjamin’s fragment “On the Mimetic Faculty (*Vermögen*),” he is able to demonstrate the various components of this theory. Benjamin’s fragmentary study is an elaboration on the theme of “nonsensuous similarities,” which, surfacing as *correspondances*, was a theme that had preoccupied both Baudelaire and the Symbolists before him. The value of Habermas’ contribution to this question lies in his penetration through the leitmotiv of this piece, the idea of mimesis, to the point of being able to identify the conceptual armature of Benjamin’s language theory as a dialectic of experience (*Erfahrung*) and expression (*Ausdruck*).

With the concept of *Erfahrung* — concrete experience — Habermas and Benjamin are on common ground. Yet Habermas implies certain historical dimensions he does not explicitly mention: the concept of experience, *Erfahrung*, functions for Benjamin as a critique of the concept of “lived experience,” *Erlebnis*, postulated by historical hermeneutics. It was Wilhelm Dilthey who decisively formulated a notion of *Erlebnis* for the purposes of historical hermeneutics, that is, as the conscious subjective appropriation of cultural tradition.⁶ Here, past human experiences had to be

⁶“Since the end of the last century, philosophy has made a series of attempts to lay hold of the ‘true’ experience as opposed to the kind that manifests itself in the standardized, denatured existence of the civilized masses. It is customary to classify these efforts under the heading of a philosophy of life (*Lebensphilosophie*). Their point of departure, understandably enough, was not man’s existence in society. What they invoked was poetry, preferable nature, and, most recently, the mythical age. Dilthey’s book *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung* represents one of the

“re-experienced,” relived through imagination (KHI, 154). Habermas points out that Benjamin’s mimetic theory of language and experience is aimed specifically against this notion, as can be seen from his comment on a passage from Benjamin’s *Introduction* to Carl Gustav Jochmann: “The redemptive power of retrospective critique must not, of course, be confused with the empathy and identification with the past which historicism adopted from Romanticism . . . (It is) not a recommendation for a hermeneutic interpretation of history as a continuum of historical effects.” (note 17) Rather, Habermas maintains that Benjamin’s mimetic theory of language depends on a theory of experience “acquired through the recovery of a semantics dislodged bit by bit from the core of myth.” Habermas portrays Benjamin’s redemptive critique as attempting to preserve “an endangered semantic potential,” a semantic store of original and unchanging meanings through which “human beings interpret the world in terms of their own needs” and in this way “humanize” the socio-cultural patterns of existence.

In Habermas’ estimation, it is precisely these expressive semantic energies that, as he claims in *Legitimation Crisis*, “guarantee the continuity of a history through which individuals and groups can identify with themselves and with one another (LC, 70). This is in part what leads him to fix upon the expressive function as the essential attribute of Benjamin’s idea of mimesis. He reveals that for Benjamin mimesis is expression — *Ausdruck*. But Habermas’ own theories do not compose the only source for this conclusion; by way of philological exegesis, Habermas seizes upon an element in Benjamin’s concrete theoretical development. It would be hard to believe that Habermas was not thinking of the language philosophy of Wilhelm von Humboldt (though Habermas never mentions the name) when he glosses Benjamin’s *mimetisches Vermögen* as mimetic *potential* instead of mimetic faculty or capacity. Habermas would certainly have good grounds for the appropriateness of such a derivation, for as Benjamin states in the curriculum vitae composed shortly before his death, it was lectures on Humboldt’s “Über den Sprachbau der Völker” that awoke his interest in the philosophy of language. The terminology Habermas uses to describe Benjamin’s theory, semantic potential and semantic energy, are redolent of Humboldt’s linguistic *dynamis* — potential — and linguistic *energeia* — energy. For Humboldt, language was an inexplicable innate potential which, energized through the universal Spirit (*Geist*), becomes a unity of subject and object in dialogue; the concretization of this potential is posited as an intersubjective energy, interaction, and not something produced, i.e., a fixed work or product (*ergon*). In this way, the Spirit moves towards the Idea of perfected language through a process in which language is constantly reenergized in dialogue.

Habermas, however, does not indicate in this exposition whether or in

earliest of these efforts which end with Klages and Jung; both made common cause with Fascism.” W. Benjamin, *Illuminations* (New York, 1969), p. 156.

what fashion Benjamin moved beyond Humboldt. Nor does he clearly represent the distinction between Benjamin's use of the concept of *Ausdruck* (expression) and the use of the same term by the *Lebensphilosophie* (philosophy of life) underlying the rise of historical hermeneutics. This stands in contrast to his explicit use of *Erfahrung* instead of *Erlebnis* in his Benjamin essay and even in the analytic sections of his chapters on Dilthey in *Knowledge and Human Interests*. Comparing the two examinations of the category of expression, one becomes aware that Habermas has introduced a subjective component into Benjamin's concept of *Ausdruck* from a hermeneutic model, even though Habermas' exposition of Dilthey is itself a critique of subjectivism and psychologism. Habermas nevertheless preserves the hermeneutic idea of the direct expression of "meaning": an idea incompatible with Benjamin. From the Benjamin quotation he cites out of Tiedemann's *Studien* (Section VI), Habermas infers that Benjamin's idea of *Ausdruck* has more to do with Klages' *Lebensphilosophie* than *Ideologiekritik*. Yet Benjamin's idea in this quotation forms a double-edged attack on theories of the direct expression of meaning, both in mechanical Marxism and in *Lebensphilosophie*. Habermas does not take cognizance of Benjamin's theory as a theory of the forms of expression, of meaning as an indirect manifestation of expression. A glance at the Benjamin quotation Tiedemann cites directly following the one Habermas quotes throws this into relief: "A work of art, and of literature too, when viewed purely as something made, as something produced, is an index of the praxis it holds within it." Seen as an object of construction, art betrays a method of making or doing; the process of production expresses indirectly the activity and social praxis of the human beings that produce these artifacts and registers concrete social and historical experiences. Benjamin viewed language not as an inter-subjective energy, interaction, but — at least in terms of art — the product of human praxis — as the *ergon* Humboldt posits as the opposite of *energeia*.

On the one hand, Habermas attributes the mimetic expression Benjamin touches upon to a fixed reserve of divine potential comprised of "meanings." On the other, Habermas feels that it is not concerned with the human characteristics of language at all, precisely because Habermas associates this above all with communication. In Benjamin's reference to nature Habermas infers solely the sub-human, primitive strata of nature and the instinctual, animistic function of language. The contrary of both seems to be the case. Non-sensuous correspondences cannot be reduced to a static natural potential; Benjamin moves far beyond Humboldt here. *Erfahrung* — sensuous, empirical, experiential perception — is not an abstract semantic category of Benjamin by the time he writes the *Mimetic Faculty* (1933): it is historically situated human beings who produce and perceive resemblances. The first lines of the "Mimetic Faculty," of which Habermas makes no mention, spell out that, while "nature creates (*erzeugt*) similarities," the crux of the matter is that "the highest capacity for *producing* similarities

belongs however to the human being.”⁷ Benjamin draws a vital distinction between creation, which is an unselfconscious *natural process*, and *production*, the work of a human *act*. He goes on the predicate that, “perhaps there is none of the human being’s higher functions in which his mimetic capacity does not play a decisive role.” This becomes unmistakable in the notes to Benjamin’s reproduction essay, written two years later, which contain an adumbration of the mimetic theory of language, although divested of speculative trappings and recast in expressly social and historical terms.

Emancipated techniques and technologies involve the control of elemental social forces as the precondition for the control of natural forces. (In primitive times the relationship is reversed: the mastery of the forces of nature includes the mastery of certain elemental social forces.) Art is a proposal for improvement posed to nature, a reproduction (*Nachmachen*) whose most hidden and innermost recess is a preproduction, a projection (*Vormachen*). Art is, in other words, a perfecting mimesis.⁸

Mimesis is for Benjamin a *technical* act of human production — human praxis.

Hence one could say that an essential aspect of the dialectic of experience and expression escapes Habermas — the transformative category which for Benjamin mediates between the two poles Habermas identifies: the technical aspect of mimetic representation. Habermas relegates this aspect of representational construction to a position subordinate to expression because it is not a communicative category. His omission of the technical element of Benjamin’s theory has stirred many otherwise unreconcilable Benjamin interpreters to converge in disagreement. A variety of Marxists (many of whom Habermas mentions in his essay as following in Brecht’s footsteps) have at least since 1967 stressed the primacy of an idea of technique and technology (*Technik*) in Benjamin’s later writings, “The Author as Producer” and “The Work of Art in the Age of its Technical Reproducibility” in particular. Lieselotte Wiesenthal, however, whom Habermas also mentions, though as representative of a manifestly academic scholarship, voices a direct response to Habermas’ article and from her studies of the early Benjamin feels she has to concur with the Marxists on this point:

⁷Walter Benjamin, *Reflections* (New York, 1978), p. 333.

⁸Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main, 1972), I, p. 1043. This passage was composed in direct response to Marx’s and Engel’s *German Ideology* and in full cognizance of Hegel’s concept of second nature. The resemblances, intended or unintended, between this passage and a key passage in Marx’s *Capital* are striking: “Labor is, first of all, a process between human being and nature, a process by which the human being, through his own actions, mediates, regulates and controls the metabolism between himself and nature. He confronts the materials of nature as a force of nature. He sets in motion the natural forces which belong to his own body . . . in order to appropriate the materials of nature in a form adapted to his own needs. Through this movement he acts upon external nature and changes it, and in this way he simultaneously changes his own nature. He develops the potentialities slumbering

Habermas' antipathy to technique and technology (*Technik*) may have been the reason why he fails here to perceive this aspect of technics so important for Benjamin's entire philosophy. Here it is not a matter of any sort of expressions of "semantic potentials," but rather of materiality achieved in a technical manner and precisely in the realm which is that of the truth: language. Benjamin does not share Habermas' split between instrumental action and speech on the one hand, and communicative on the other . . . The thoroughly positive attitude toward technics runs all the way through Benjamin's entire work . . . In this we must agree with Marxist-oriented Benjamin-reception: Benjamin saw in technique and technology the possibility of breaking through the phantasmagorical relations of capitalist society. Here is where Habermas' interpretation misses the central point: Habermas did not see the significance of technics for either the theory of experience or for those of language and history . . . Instead, Habermas confronts Benjamin's work with his own theory of "practical discourse" . . .⁹

Such an undifferentiated polemical attack on Habermas' general theoretical position is not altogether fruitful.

Indeed, there are points at which Habermas comes very close to pursuing the constructs she ascribes to Benjamin. This occurs in Habermas' analytical chapter on Dilthey which, as we have already shown, bears the closest affinity to what he is discussing in his Benjamin essay. Here Habermas discards Dilthey's notion of naive reexperience as subjective empathy and replaces it with a concept of experience based on self-reflective reconstruction of the past. He conceives this as a constructional, "productive" process of understanding. It is poetic, *poietic*, inasmuch as it is the production of "meaning" (KHI, 147). Nonetheless the introduction of an idea of "meaning" and "understanding" is radically different from Benjamin's idea of technical, *poietic* construction — and brings about Habermas' introduction of the "semantic potential" of meanings Benjamin nowhere speaks of. But this is simply the side-effect of the same methodological pitfall that plagues Wiesenthal's book in the first place: a result that follows as the inevitable consequence of treating Benjamin as a systematic philosopher and not as a practicing critic.¹⁰ If we turn to one of the most important

within nature, and subjects the play of its forces to his own sovereign power. We are not dealing here with those first instinctive forms of labor which remain on the animal level . . . We presuppose labor in a form in which it is an exclusively human characteristic . . . what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is that he builds the cell in his mind before he constructs it in wax. At the end of every labor process, a result emerges which had already been conceived by the worker at the beginning, hence already existed ideally. He not only effects a change of form in the materials of nature; he also realizes his own purpose in those materials. And this is a purpose he is conscious of, it is a law that determines the mode and manner of his activity . . ." Marx, *Capital*, vol. I (New York, 1977) pp. 283-84.

⁹Lieselotte Wiesenthal, *Zur Wissenschaftstheorie Walter Benjamins* (Frankfurt am Main, 1973), pp. 199-200.

¹⁰cf. Bernd Witte, *Walter Benjamin — Der Intellektuelle als Kritiker* (Stuttgart, 1976) esp. pp. 145 ff.

influences on both Benjamin's literary criticism and his language philosophy, as has Charles Rosen, we can perhaps avoid these problems and discover a decisive tendency in the formation of Benjamin's language theory — the Symbolist movement.¹¹ Habermas, in his long introductory list of influences on Benjamin's development, accurately typifies the majority of the German Benjamin-reception in his complete exclusion of Symbolism.

Charles Rosen on the other hand, obviously indebted to Habermas' emphasis on Benjamin's philosophy of language, traces the influences on Benjamin ranging from Humboldt to Stéphane Mallarmé, the great French Symbolist poet and critic and progenitor of *l'art pour l'art*. Rosen draws attention to the same curriculum vitae which mentions Benjamin galvanized by an acquaintance with Humboldt, only he shows that here Benjamin acknowledges the major development of his interest in the philosophy of language came with his captivation in 1915 (shortly before his first language study, "On Language") by the theory of language evoked by Mallarmé's *oeuvres* (Rosen, 31). What Rosen's survey throws into relief is the major impact of Benjamin made by the Symbolist assertion of the expressive function of language as representation and its constituent idea of construction. The earmark of this Symbolist impulse rests in its distinction between dialogue (in which language is secondary and evaporates in reaching its goal through communication) and language as a self-contained communication only of itself (in which, as a product or *ergon*, it speaks its construction). Here Symbolism emerges as the immanent critique of Humboldt's theory for Benjamin. That Habermas views language as consensus and communication (i.e., hermeneutic understanding) only interferes with his readiness to assess the Symbolist attempt to transcend the use of language as a tool of direct communication.¹² Or in the words of the Symbolist Paul Valéry, heir in every way to Mallarmé, language does not walk to a goal, it only dances.

In this realm, Benjamin stands in a different tradition than Habermas. Habermas' stance has critically evolved out of the tradition of historical hermeneutics and phenomenology. Although Habermas critiques Dilthey, Husserl, Heidegger and Gadamer, he dialectically preserves the concept of "meaning" that has been continually and critically renewed by this philosophical tradition. Whereas both Marcuse and Adorno owed certain impulses of their thought to this tradition and dialectically overcame them, Benjamin was almost completely untouched by this philosophical current — despite numerous superficial resemblances. Rosen points out clearly that it is the Symbolist stress on construction and representation that distinguishes Benjamin's philosophy of language from Heidegger's. Benjamin, Heidegger's contemporary, had elaborated the dominant strains of his theory before the publication of Heidegger's major works. Indeed Rosen, partial to

¹¹cf. Charles Rosen, "The Origins of Walter Benjamin," *The New York Review of Books*, XXIV, 18 (Nov. 18, 1977), 31-40. Hereafter cited as Rosen.

¹²cf. note 33 of Habermas' text.

Benjamin's theories, complains that "Benjamin unfortunately never wrote his projected demolition of Heidegger, whose work he once characterized as a model of "how not to do it" (Rosen, 31). Hence, it is Mallarmé's idea of representation as the indirect construction of significance through "evocation, allusion, suggestion" that lies behind Benjamin's conviction, as Habermas correctly realizes, that meaning cannot be directly "produced, like value, by labor." However, Habermas claims this is "un-Marxist." Yet there is nothing here which ill accords with Marx. Meaning, like history, is the by-product of the social process of production, an indirect result of the historical praxis of those who make it, although occurring behind their backs, as it were. Or, as Paul Valéry puts it on many occasions, history is a process of "backing into the future."

Rosen demonstrates that even the distinction in Benjamin between esoteric and profane significance, which Habermas stresses throughout his essay, stems most immediately from the Symbolist opposition of poetic and every-day language. Here, Habermas supplies an antidote to Rosen's somewhat uncritical evaluation of Symbolism. Habermas, heir to the constructs of historical materialism, presents this distinction as one that takes the form of a long historical process for Benjamin's theory, i.e. the historical movement from sacred to secular illumination. Still Rosen's observations are very useful. He treats the Symbolist-oriented "Epistemocritical Prologue" to *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* in the way that Benjamin himself considered it, i.e., as a major step in his language theory from his 1916 work to his materialist writings on language in the thirties. The elements of technical construction that are the underpinnings of this theoretical work actually induce Rosen to stipulate that even in this early text Benjamin's philosophy of language offers "by no means the traditional idealist answers — his solutions are indeed in many ways close to materialism" (Rosen, 31). Benjamin's assimilation at this point of the Symbolist principle of technical construction catalyzes and anticipates his steady movement towards materialist criticism. Yet Rosen does not ascertain the form in which these ideas affect Benjamin's later works, as does Habermas, nor does Rosen sufficiently establish how they influenced Benjamin's decisive turn in these later works toward criticism and materialism. Habermas can be seen as somewhat culpable in this as well.

Benjamin's language theory is not just a random combination of Humboldtian-Romantic, Symbolist, theological and Marxist elements. No one as yet has explored the combination of these disparate motifs in the rational, historical and anti-metaphysical work of Valéry, which according to Adorno, was most influential in its impact on Benjamin's materialism.¹³

¹³T.W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main, 1974), XI, p. 184: "In materialism raised to a second power, Valéry converges with Walter Benjamin, who learned more from Valéry than from anyone else." In the previously unpublished notes to the "Mimetic Faculty," Benjamin mentions the names of neither Humboldt nor Mallarmé, but that of Valéry.

The absence of a clear historical and developmental perspective in Habermas' treatment of Benjamin's language theory (and to some extent Habermas reads the "Mimetic Faculty" in the same fashion as the 1916 fragment) should give way to a distinctly differentiated analysis in the further research that must take Habermas as a point of departure. The emphasis in Habermas on theology and nature will have to be counterbalanced by this research with a recognition that here, the symbolic aspect of language and the technical aspect of mimetic representation coalesce in an apotheosis of human composition, construction and fabrication — the features of a human physiognomy that stand in opposition to the unmediated creations of nature. Charles Rosen has with substantial documentation furnished good grounds for his argument that Benjamin found little in theology and messianic mysticism that the Symbolist principle of technical representation did not already impel him to look for.

Future studies based on Rosen's insights about Benjamin's idea of language may thus not find Habermas' concessions to Gershom Scholem necessary. In his concluding comments for the central fifth section of Benjamin's language theory, Habermas presents his main thesis on the relation of theology to historical materialism in Benjamin's thought. He maintains that Benjamin wished to enlist the services of historical materialism for theology. In the first thesis on the philosophy of history, of course, Benjamin maintains that: "The puppet called 'historical materialism' is to win all the time. It can easily be a match for anyone if it enlists the services of theology, which today, as we know, is short and ugly and has to keep out of sight" (*Illuminations*, 253). Habermas believes that theology forms a more integral part of Benjamin's thought and that the premises of historical materialism were a rather late addition to it and hence something external if not foreign to other ideas that Benjamin had developed. Despite Benjamin's repeated assertions that his method was Marxian, Habermas moves behind these expressions of intent to what he sees as the true meaning of Benjamin's fusion of messianic and materialist motifs and to what he sees as the actual reasons for why they cannot be combined. Yet by paraphrasing the first thesis in such a way as to give the impression that Benjamin's *stated* intention was to enlist the services of historical materialism for theology, instead of the other way around, Habermas is not sufficiently clear on this point.

Since he establishes the centrality of Benjamin's theory of language and its foundation in experience, Habermas feels he can view Benjamin with the categories of historical hermeneutics. As Habermas notes, however, the anti-evolutionistic conception of history prohibits a total identification of Benjamin with hermeneutics, which emphasizes precisely the continuum of tradition as a history of effects (note 17). Although Habermas does not

He cites the "contributions to the doctrine of the mimetic faculty" of the dance motif underlying Valery's dialogue "Dance and the Soul." Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, II, p. 957.

discuss it, Benjamin's ideas were in fact grounded in a theory of reception, but not one based on a hermeneutic identification and understanding. According to Benjamin, "collective reception becomes an instrument of political praxis (. . .). It becomes such an instrument due to the technical means of production(. . .)"¹⁴ Benjamin's concept of reception is thus more directly technical and modelled after scientific experiment. The redemptive grip into a past wrenches a moment out of its context in the historical continuum and places it in a construct made in the interpreter's present. The intersubjectivity of the hermeneutic circle thus yields, in Habermas' overall view, to an instrumental mode of appropriation. Since the technical interest is counterposed to language throughout Habermas, Benjamin's theses on the instrumentalization of art for political ends, as a major component of his historical materialism, cannot be reconciled for Habermas with the language philosophy and theory of experience. Habermas' agreement with Scholem and Adorno on the predominance of the "theologian" over the Marxist may therefore be due more to the internal logic of his own theoretical distinction between practical and technical cognitive interests and their mutual irreducibility than to a defense of Adorno's and Scholem's positions in the face of the New Left's attacks.

Since the publication of Habermas' essay, there have been a number of attempts to re-establish the links between Benjamin and Marxism. Perhaps the one that is most relevant here is Peter Bürger's direct reply to Habermas, originally sponsored by Suhrkamp as a continuation of the important discussion that Habermas' article initiated. Bürger has contested Habermas' contention that Benjamin's redemptive criticism was essentially "conservative" and disputes that because Benjamin's critique is not a critique of ideology alone it must be incompatible with a Marxist critique. He locates Benjamin's dialectic elsewhere, i.e., in the relation of material changes in the technical laws of individual artistic production to the changes in the techniques and technologies of reproduction. Bürger cites the *Reproduction* essay as an attempt to dialectically suspend the positive moment within the destructive side of the dialectic itself: in transposing the formalist theorem of the immanent development of art to the sphere of social praxis (which in fact Benjamin had seen concretely in the Surrealist movement), Benjamin is concerned with how the development of technics gives rise to new modes of

¹⁴Peter U. Hohendahl, "Introduction to Reception Aesthetics," *New German Critique* 10 (1977), 58. Jean Hytier, editor of the definitive edition of Valéry's works, observes that the "theory of effects," first adumbrated by Poe and Baudelaire, is brought to full fruition in the works of Paul Valéry, although this original theory has been neglected because of its dissemination in very diverse writings. "Valéry's turn of mind, that of a poet obsessed by a dream of intellectual rigor, led him in search of that central attitude he discussed apropos of Leonardo, an attitude which would govern both the methods of art and those of science. Hence it is not surprising that in reflecting on artistic effects, he should have attempted to discern their laws. This is, in my opinion, the boldest and most suggestive part of his poetics." Jean Hytier, *The Poetics of Paul Valéry*, trans. Richard Howard (New York, 1966), p. 313.

perception and experience. Bürger decides from this consideration that Benjamin's critique *does* accord with the principles of Marx's critique of capitalist society, but that its Marxian source differs from Marcuse's. Whereas Marcuse enlarges upon the type of *Ideologiekritik* found in Marx's younger writings, as for example the *Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy of Right* and *On the Jewish Question*, Benjamin resorts to Marx's theorem that the *forces* of production develop to a point where they burst the fetters imposed on them by the existing *relations* of production — and applies it in the sphere of “artistic forces of production.”

Just as the Marxian theorem of relations of production exploded by the forces of production is nothing other than the discovery of the real forces which can bring about what the critique of ideology has proved as necessary, so the Benjaminian theory is an expression of the hope that there are forces present amidst the development of the forces of artistic production which as such advance necessary emancipation and oppose the utilization of these forces as manipulation.¹⁵

This is a fundamental insight. Bürger's other arguments, however, are not entirely convincing. He fails to address Habermas' important formulation of Benjamin's theory of experiential perception as rooted in the expressive function of language. This theory of experience is essential to the dialectic Bürger outlines in Benjamin's *Reproduction* essay. To some extent, Bürger tries to accommodate Benjamin's works to pre-existing Marxist categories, whereas Habermas proceeds by way of immanent critique. As opposed to Bürger, Habermas takes into account all of Benjamin's works and tries to derive from them systematically the means by which they can be integrated into a progressive critique of society. Whether or not Habermas' conclusions will be borne out by further research is an open question. The usefulness of his conclusions as a basis for further research is unquestionable. What Habermas has done had to be attempted.

¹⁵Peter Bürger, “Walter Benjamin's ‘rettende Kritik’,” *Germanisch-Romanische Monatschrift* B. XXIII, 2 (June 1973), 200.

*Consciousness-Raising or Redemptive Criticism — The Contemporaneity of Walter Benjamin**

by Jürgen Habermas

Even in a trivial sense Benjamin has contemporary relevance: opinions come into conflict today whenever his name comes up. Yet the eruptive impact Benjamin's writings have had in the Federal Republic of Germany during the short time since their publication¹ has resulted in battle lines being drawn which were already prefigured in Benjamin's biography. In the course of Benjamin's life the constellation made up by Gershom Scholem, Theodor W. Adorno and Bertolt Brecht was decisive — so too was his youthful dependence on the school reformer Gustav Wyneken, and later, his relationship with the surrealists. Today, his closest friend and mentor Scholem assumes the role of unpolemical, preeminent, and completely uncompromising advocate of that dimension in Benjamin partial to the traditions of Jewish mysticism.² Adorno — Benjamin's heir, critical partner, and forerunner all in one — not only introduced the first wave of posthumous Benjamin reception, but left an indelible stamp on it.³ Since the

*"Bewusstmachende oder rettende Kritik — Die Aktualität Walter Benjamins," in *Zur Aktualität Walter Benjamins* (Frankfurt am Main, 1972), pp. 175-223; reprinted in *Kultur und Kritik* (Frankfurt am Main, 1973), pp. 302-344. Published by permission of Suhrkamp Verlag and Jürgen Habermas.

¹*Schriften*, ed. T.W. Adorno and Gretel Adorno (Frankfurt am Main, 1955). Existing English translations of Benjamin's works have been used wherever possible and reformulated when necessary. The following abbreviations have been used: Br. — *Briefe*, ed. Gershom Scholem and T.W. Adorno (Frankfurt, 1966); Fuchs — "Eduard Fuchs, Collector and Historian," in *New German Critique*, 5 (Spring 1975), 27-58; G.S. — *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main, 1972-), I-IV; I. — *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (N.Y., 1969); NLR — "Correspondence with Benjamin," in *New Left Review*, 81 (Sept.-Oct. 1972), 55-80; O. — *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (London, 1977); R. — *Reflections*, ed. Peter Demetz (N.Y., 1978). The following translations have also been consulted: *Charles Baudelaire* (London, 1973); *Understanding Brecht* (London, 1973).

²G. Scholem, "Walter Benjamin," "Walter Benjamin and His Angel," "Two Letters to Walter Benjamin," in *Jews and Judaism in Crisis* (N.Y., 1976). By the same author: *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (1971); *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (1961). The latter is dedicated to the memory of Walter Benjamin — trans.

³T.W. Adorno, "A Portrait of Walter Benjamin," in *Prisms* (London, 1967), pp. 229-41. The abbreviation AGS has been used for Adorno's *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main, 1970-), 23 vols.

death of Peter Szondi (who undoubtedly would have stood here today in my place), Adorno's position has been maintained primarily by Benjamin's editors, Tiedemann and Schweppenhäuser.⁴ Brecht must have functioned as a sort of reality principle for Benjamin, for it was under his influence that Benjamin was led to break with the esoteric element of his style and his thought. Following Brecht's lead, Marxist theorist of art such as Hildegard Brenner, Helmut Lethen and Michael Scharang are today able to shift Benjamin's late work decisively into the perspective of class struggle.⁵ Gustav Wyneken was at first a model for Benjamin's activity in the "Free School Community" (*Freie Schulgemeinde*) — and though even while still a student Benjamin repudiated Wyneken as his model (Br., 120), Wyneken's figure signals certain ties and impulses that persisted in Benjamin. This neo-conservative Benjamin has more recently found an intelligent and undaunted apologist in Hannah Arendt, who would like to safeguard Benjamin, the impressionable, vulnerable aesthete, collector and *hommes de lettres*, against the ideological claims of his Marxist and Zionist friends.⁶ And finally, Benjamin's close relationship to surrealism has once again come to light with the second wave of Benjamin reception, a reception whose impetus stems from the student revolts; this relationship has been documented in the works of Bohrer and Bürger among others.⁷

In the no man's land between these fronts has arisen a body of Benjamin criticism that treats its material in scholarly fashion, and respectably gives notice to the imprudent that this is no longer unfamiliar terrain.⁸ If this academic treatment of the matter offers a possible corrective to the dispute between the various parties that has very nearly splintered Benjamin's image, it certainly provides no alternative. Nor are the competing interpretations merely tacked on. I doubt if it was only a predilection for the

⁴P. Szondi, "Nachwort," in Benjamin, *Städtebilder* (Frankfurt am Main, 1963). For Tiedemann and Schweppenhäuser, cf. G.S.; cf. also Tiedemann, *Studien zur Philosophie W. Benjamins* — hereafter cited as *Studien*.

⁵H. Brenner, "Die Lesbarkeit der Bilder. Skizzen zum Passagenentwurf," in *alternative*, 59-60 (1968), 48 ff. H. Lethen, "Zur materialistischen Kunsttheorie Benjamins," in *alternative*, 56-57 (1967), 225-234. M. Scharang, *Zur Emanzipation der Kunst*, (Neuwied, 1971). H.H. Holz, *Vom Kunstwerk zur Ware*, (Neuwied, 1972).

⁶Arendt, "Introduction: Walter Benjamin 1892-1940," in I., pp. 1-55.

⁷P. Bürger, *Der französische Surrealismus* (Frankfurt am Main, 1971). K.H. Bohrer, *Die gefährdete Phantasie oder Surrealismus und Terror* (Munich, 1970). E. Lenk, *Der springende Narziss* (Munich, 1971). G. Steinwachs, *Mythologie des Surrealismus oder die Rückverwandlung von Kultur in Natur* (Neuwied, 1971). Adorno's critique of surrealism can be found in *Noten zur Literatur*, AGS 11, pp. 101-105; following him is: H.M. Enzensberger, "Die Aporien der Avantgarde," in *Einzelheiten*, (Frankfurt am Main, 1962), pp. 290-315. For information concerning the state of secondary literature: W.S. Rubin, "The D-S Expedition," *The New York Review of Books*, XVIII, 9-10 (1972).

⁸Cf. the Benjamin issue of the journal *Text und Kritik* (30-31, 1971) and especially the essays by B. Lindner, P. Krumme, L. Wiesenthal, and an annotated bibliography (pp. 85 ff.) with references to dissertations on Benjamin in progress.

mysterious, as Adorno records, that led Benjamin to keep his friends apart from each other: only as some sort of surrealist scene could one imagine seeing Scholem, Adorno and Brecht gathered together for a peaceful symposium around a table, under which Breton and Aragon are squatting, while Wyneken stands at the door — gathered in order let us say to discuss the *Spirit of Utopia* (*Geist der Utopie*) or indeed the *Spirit as Adversary of the Soul* (*Geist als Widersacher der Seele*).^{*} Benjamin's intellectual existence has taken on so much of a surreal quality that one should not confront it with unreasonable demands of consistency and continuity. Benjamin combined diverging motifs, yet without actually unifying them. And if they were unified, then it would have to be in as many individual unities as there are elements in which the interested gaze of succeeding generations of interpreters attempts to pierce the crust and penetrate to regions where there are veins of live ore. Benjamin belongs to those authors who cannot be summarized and whose work is disposed to a history of disparate effects. We encounter these authors only with the sudden flash of contemporary immediacy in which a thought takes power and holds sway for an historical instant. Benjamin was accustomed to explicate contemporaneity (*Aktualität*) in terms of the Talmudic legend in which, "angels — innumerable host of new ones at every moment — (are) created in order to, once they have sung their hymn in God's presence, cease and disappear into the void" (G.S. II, 246).

I would like to take as my point of departure a sentence Benjamin directed at one time against the methods of cultural history: "Cultural history, to be sure, increases the weight of the treasure which accumulates on the back of humanity. Yet cultural history does not provide the strength to shake off this burden in order to be able to take control of it" (Fuchs, 36). It is precisely here that Benjamin sees the task of criticism. It is not from a historicist standpoint of accumulated culture goods that Benjamin views the documents of culture, which are at the same time those of barbarism, but rather from a critical standpoint of the disintegration of culture "into goods which," as Benjamin adamantly expresses it, can become "objects of possession for mankind" (ibid., 35). Benjamin does not, however, speak of a "dialectical overcoming (*Aufhebung*) of culture."

I

Herbert Marcuse, on the other hand, does speak of an overcoming of culture in his 1937 essay on "The Affirmative Character of Culture."⁹ With

^{*}[Translators' Note] *Geist der Utopie* appeared in 1918 and was written by Ernst Bloch, who was already a good friend of both Benjamin's and Scholem's at that time and who was introduced to Adorno by Benjamin ten years later in Berlin: cf. *Man on His Own* (N.Y., 1972). *Geist als Widersacher der Seele* appeared in 1929 and was written by the German cultural philosopher Ludwig Klages; Benjamin, although aware of Klages' anti-semitism and "common cause with fascism," maintained an avid interest in Klages' work on language, myth, graphology from the time of their personal acquaintance during Benjamin's student days until the end of his life.

⁹Marcuse, *Negations* (Boston, 1968), pp. 88-133.

respect to classical bourgeois art he criticizes the two-fold character of a world of beautiful appearance (*schöner Schein*) that establishes itself as autonomous, i.e., beyond bourgeois competition and social labor. This autonomy is illusory (*scheinhaft*), in that only in the realm of fiction does art allow the fulfillment of an individual claim to happiness, whereas it veils the complete absence of happiness in day-to-day reality. There is at the same time an element of truth in the autonomy of art, since the ideal of the beautiful gives expression to the longing for a happier life, for the humanity, friendliness and solidarity withheld in every existence, and thereby transcends the status quo: "Affirmative culture was the historical form in which were preserved those human wants which surpassed the material reproduction of existence. To that extent, what is true of the form of social reality to which it belonged holds for it as well: right is on its side. Certainly, it exonerated 'external conditions' from responsibility for the 'vocation of the human being,' thus stabilizing their injustice. But is also held up to them as a task the image of a better order" (op. cit., 120). Marcuse confronts this art by enforcing the claim implicit in the critique of ideology: the truth articulated in bourgeois ideals, but reserved for the sphere of beautiful appearance, must be taken literally. This means that art as a sphere severed from reality must be overcome dialectically.

Whereas beautiful appearance is the medium in which civil society at least expresses its own ideals, while at the same time veiling their suspension, the critique of art as ideology leads to the demand for the dialectical abolition (*Aufhebung*) of autonomous art, a demand to reintegrate culture per se into the material process of life. Revolutionizing the relations of life in civil society means the dialectical abolition of culture: "To the extent that culture has transmuted fulfillable, but factually unfulfilled, longings and instincts, it will lose its object . . . Beauty will find a new embodiment when it no longer is represented as real illusion but, instead, expresses reality and joy in reality" (ibid., 130 f.).

Face to face with the fascist mass art of the period, Marcuse could not ignore the possibility of a false abolition of culture. He counterposed to this another instance of politicized art, one which thirty years later seemed, for a moment, to assume concrete form in the flower-strewn barricades of the Paris students. In his *Essay on Liberation*, Marcuse interpreted the surrealist praxis of the youth revolt as the dialectical overcoming of culture through which art passed over into life.¹⁰

A year before Marcuse's essay on the affirmative character of culture, Benjamin's article *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technical Reproducibility* had appeared in the same journal, the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*

¹⁰Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston, 1969), especially Chapter II, pp. 30ff. Marcuse has developed and in part modified this perspective in *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (Boston, 1972), Ch. 2: "Art and Revolution," pp. 79-128. cf. G. Rohrmoser, *Herrschaft und Versöhnung, Ästhetik und die Kulturrevolution des Westens* (Freiburg, 1972).

(I., 217-251).^{*} It almost seems as if Marcuse only recast Benjamin's more subtle observations into the language of the critique of ideology. The theme is once again the dialectical abolition (*Aufhebung*) of autonomous art. The secular cult of beauty was to develop only with the Renaissance and prevailed for three centuries (ibid., 224). As art becomes separated from its basis in cult, the appearance of its autonomy disappears (ibid., 226). Benjamin lends support to his thesis, "that art has left the realm of the 'beautiful appearance'," by pointing to the change in the status of the work of art and the change in the mode of its reception (ibid., 230).

The destruction of aura brings with it a shift in the innermost structure of the work of art; the sphere once removed from and set up in opposition to the material process of life now disintegrates. The work of art withdraws its ambivalent claim to imperious authenticity and inviolability. It relinquishes to the viewer its historical testimony as well as its cultic offering. Benjamin had noted already in 1927: "What we used to call art, only starts two meters away" (G.S. II, 622). The trivialized work of art wins exhibition value at the price of its cult value.¹¹

Corresponding to the changed structure of the work of art, there is a change in the perception and reception of art. When art is autonomous, it is oriented to individual enjoyment; after the loss of its aura, it is oriented to mass reception. Benjamin contrasts contemplation, characteristic of the viewer as an isolated individual, with distraction, which marks a collective sensitized to external stimuli: "In the degeneration of the bourgeoisie, meditation became a school for asocial behavior; it was countered by diversion as a variety of the play of social behavior" (ibid., 238). Moreover, Benjamin sees in this collective reception an enjoyment of art which is both instructive and critical.

I believe I can distill the concept of a mode of reception from these not always consistent statements, a concept which Benjamin elicited from the reactions of a film audience that was relaxed yet possessed of its presence of mind: "Let us compare the screen on which a film unfolds with the canvas of a painting. The painting invites the viewer to contemplation; before it the viewer can abandon him/herself to his/her own flow of associations. Before the movie frame he/she cannot do so . . . In fact, when a person views these constantly changing (film) images his/her stream of associations is immediately

^{*}[Translators' Note] The titles of this work and the one by Adorno mentioned below have been taken from the English summaries that accompanied their original publication in the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*. The title given Benjamin's essay in *Illuminations* is translated from the French version in which the essay first appeared. The text of this English translation, however, corresponds to the German version referred to by Habermas and differs substantially from the French.

¹¹"Certain images of the Madonna remain covered nearly all year round; certain sculptures on medieval cathedrals are not visible to the viewer on ground level. With the emancipation of the various art practices from ritual go increasing opportunities for the exhibition of their products" (I., 225).

disrupted. This constitutes the shock effect of the film, which like all shock effects needs to be parried by a heightened presence of mind. Because of its technical structure, the film has liberated the physical shock effect from the moral cushioning in which Dadaism had, as it were, held it" (ibid., 238). In this discontinuous series of shocks, the work of art divested of its aura releases experiences which formerly had been locked up in its esoteric style. The assimilation of these shocks requires presence of mind. Here Benjamin observes the exoteric dissolution of the cultic spell imposed upon the isolated viewer by the affirmative character of bourgeois culture.

There is a change in the function of art the moment the work of art is emancipated "from its parasitic dependence on ritual." Benjamin conceives this as a politicization of art: "Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice — politics (ibid., 224). In the face of fascist mass art, which claims to be a political one, Benjamin, like Marcuse, certainly sees the danger of a false abolition (*Aufhebung*) of art. The propaganda art of the Nazis accomplishes, it is true, the liquidation of art as an autonomous realm, but beneath the veil of politicization all it really does is serve to aestheticize naked political force (*Gewalt*). It replaces the destroyed cult value of bourgeois art with one that is manipulatively manufactured. The cultic spell is broken only to be synthetically renewed: mass reception become mass suggestion.¹²

It seems that Benjamin's theory of art develops a concept of culture based on the critique of ideology that Marcuse will take up a year later. Nevertheless, the parallels are deceptive. I see four essential differences.

(a) Marcuse proceeds by way of the critique of ideology, in order to raise to consciousness the contradiction between ideal and reality hidden in the exemplary products of bourgeois art. Yet this critique amounts to a dialectical abolition of autonomous art only in the realm of thought. Benjamin, on the other hand, does not make critical demands on a culture which remains substantially unshaken. He describes rather the actual process of the disintegration of that aura upon which bourgeois art had based the appearance of its autonomy. He proceeds descriptively. He observes a change in the function of art that Marcuse anticipates only for the moment at which the relations of life are revolutionized.

(b) Thus it is striking that Marcuse, like idealist aesthetics in general, limits himself to those periods which bourgeois consciousness itself acknowledges as classical. His orientation depends on a concept of aesthetic beauty in which essence appears symbolically. Classical works of art, especially the novel and bourgeois tragic drama (*bürgerliches Trauerspiel*) in literature,

¹²"Fascist art is not only executed *for* masses, but also *by* masses . . . (It) puts a spell on the performers as well as on the recipients and under this spell they must appear to themselves monumental, i.e., incapable of well-considered and independent actions . . . Only with the behavior that this spell imposes on them are the masses able to give expression to themselves at all — or so Fascism teaches" (G.S. III, 488).

become suitable objects for a critique of ideology precisely because of their affirmative character, just like rational natural law in the realm of political philosophy. Benjamin's interest, however, concerns non-affirmative forms of art; while investigating the baroque *Trauerspiel*, he found a counter-concept to the individual totality of the transfiguring artwork in the allegorical.¹³ Allegory expresses an experience of negativity — an experience of suffering, suppression, the unreconciled and the unfortunate — and hence militates against a symbolic art which is disposed positively, promising under false pretenses and projecting in advance happiness, freedom, reconciliation and fulfillment. Whereas the critique of ideology is necessary to decipher and surmount symbolic art, allegory is critique itself — or rather it refers to critique: "What has survived is the extraordinary detail of the allegorical references: an object of knowledge whose haunt lies amidst the consciously constructed ruins. Criticism is the mortification of the works. This is cultivated by the essence of such production more readily than by any other" (O., 182).

(c) In this context it is important to note further that Marcuse omits a consideration of the transformations of bourgeois art by the avant-garde, which evade the direct grasp of a critique of ideology, whereas Benjamin demonstrates the process of autonomous art's dialectical abolition in the history of modernity. Benjamin, who regards the appearance of the urban masses as a "matrix from which all traditional behavior toward works of art emerges rejuvenated" (I., 239), discovers a point of contact with this phenomenon precisely in those works which seem to hermetically seal themselves off from it: "The masses have become so much a part of Baudelaire that one searches in vain for a description of them in his works" (ibid., 167).¹⁴ Benjamin pursues the traces of modernity because they lead to the point where "the realm of poetry is exploded from within" (R., 178). Insight into the necessity of dialectically overcoming autonomous art arises from the reconstruction of what the avant-garde reveals about bourgeois art by transforming it.

(d) Finally, the decisive difference between Marcuse and Benjamin lies in the fact that Benjamin conceives the demise of autonomous art as the result of a revolution in reproduction technics. Benjamin delineates the respective functions of painting and photography in an exemplary way. By means of this comparison he shows the consequences of the new techniques

¹³"Whereas in the symbol destruction is idealized and the transfigured face of nature is fleetingly revealed in the light of redemption, in allegory the observer is confronted with the *facies hippocratica* of history as a petrified, primordial landscape . . . This is the heart of the allegorical way of seeing, of the baroque, secular explanation of history as the Passion of the world; its importance resides solely in the stations of its declines" (O., 166).

¹⁴Therefore Benjamin opposes a superficial understanding of *l'art pour l'art*: "This is the moment to embark on a work that would illuminate as has no other the crisis of the arts that we are witnessing: a history of esoteric poetry . . . On its last page one would have to find the x-ray image of surrealism" (R. 184).

which gained ground in the 19th century and which, vis à vis the traditional reproduction processes operative in casting, printing, woodcutting, engraving and lithography, represent a new stage of development, a stage which is analogous to that ushered in by the invention of the printing press. Benjamin could observe in his own day a development in records, film and radio that has continued with the electronic media at an accelerated pace. The techniques and technologies of reproduction have a radical effect on the inner structure of works of art. The work forfeits its spatial and temporal individuality on the one hand, but gains a documentary authenticity on the other. The fleeting and repeatable form of temporal structure replaces the unique and enduring form of temporal structure typical of the autonomous work and thereby destroys the aura, "the unique appearance of a distance" sharpens a "sense for sameness in the world" (I., 222 f.). Things stripped of their aura draw nearer to the masses because the object is more precisely and realistically represented by the technical medium which intervenes between it and the selective sensory organs. The authenticity of the material indeed calls for a constructive employment of the means of realistic representation, hence, montage and literary interpretation (captions in photography).¹⁵

II

As these distinctions show, Benjamin does not allow himself to be guided by a concept of art based on the critique of ideology. He means something else by the demise of autonomous art than does Marcuse with his demand for the dialectical abolition of culture. Marcuse confronts ideal and reality and raises to consciousness the unconscious content of bourgeois art which both legitimates and unintentionally denounces bourgeois reality; Benjamin's analysis on the other hand dispenses with the form of self-reflection. Marcuse, by undermining objective illusions analytically, would like to prepare for a change in the material conditions of life thus unveiled: he would like to usher in the dialectical abolition of the culture in which these relations are stabilized. Benjamin however cannot view his task as an attack on an art already approaching its end. His critique of art approaches its objects in conservative fashion, whether dealing with the Baroque *Trauerspiel*, Goethe's *Elective Affinities*, Baudelaire's *Fleur du Mal*, or the Soviet film of the early twenties. It aims, it is true, at "the mortification of the works" (O., 182), but critique commits such destruction only in order to transpose what is worth knowing from the medium of the beautiful into that of the truth — and thereby to *rescue and redeem* it.

¹⁵Here, too, Benjamin sees Dadaism as a forerunner of the technical arts, although employing other means: "The revolutionary strength of Dadaism lay in testing art for its authenticity. You made still-lives out of tickets, spools of cotton, cigarette butts, and mixed them with pictorial elements. You put a frame round the whole thing. And in this way you showed the public: look, your picture frame explodes time; the smallest authentic fragment of everyday life says more than painting. Just as a murderer's bloody fingerprint on a page says more than the book's text. Much of this revolutionary content has rescued and redeemed itself by passing into photomontage" (R., 229).

Benjamin's peculiar conception of history explains the impulse to rescue and redeem.¹⁶ A mystical causality reigns in history in such a manner that there exists "a secret agreement between past generations and ours . . . Like every generation that precedes us, we have been endowed with a weak messianic power, a power on which the past has a claim" (Theses on the Philosophy of History, in I., 254). This claim can only be fulfilled by the incessantly renewed exertion of the critical faculties enabling the historical gaze to strain toward a past in need of redemption. This effort is conservative in an eminent sense, "for every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably" (ibid., 255). If the claim is not fulfilled, then danger threatens "both the content of tradition and its receivers" (ibid.).¹⁷

For Benjamin, the continuum of history consists in the permanence of the unbearable; progress is the eternal return of the catastrophe: "The concept of progress should be founded in the idea of catastrophe," Benjamin notes in a draft of his Baudelaire work, "the fact that 'everything just goes on' is the catastrophe" (G.S. I, 583). Therefore redemption must hold on to "the small skip or crack in the continuous catastrophe." The idea of a present in which time draws to a stop and comes to a standstill numbers among Benjamin's oldest insights. In the "Theses on the Philosophy of History," written shortly before his death, stands the central tenet: "History is the object of a construction whose site forms not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled by the 'presence of the now' (*Jetztzeit, nunc stans*). Thus to Robespierre ancient Rome was a past charged with the time of the now which he blasted out of the continuum of history" (I., 261). One of his earliest essays, "The Life of Students," begins in a similar sense: "There is a conception of history which, in its faith in the endlessness of time, distinguishes only between the differences in tempo of human beings and epochs rolling with more or less speed toward the future along the track of progress. The following considerations, on the other hand are concerned with a specific state of affairs in which history rests as if collected in a focal point, as it always has in the utopian images projected by thinkers. The elements of the ultimate state of affairs are not manifest as formless

¹⁶Tiedemann, *Studien*, pp. 103 ff.; H.D. Kittsteiner, "Die Geschichtsphilosophischen Thesen," in *alternative*, 55-66, 243-251.

¹⁷The redemptive power of retrospective critique must not, of course, be confused with the empathy and identification with the past which historicism adopted from Romanticism: "With Romanticism begins the hunt for false wealth, for the annexation of every past. This was not achieved through the progressive emancipation of humanity, a way in which it could look its own history in the eye with increasing presence of mind and always get new tips from it, but rather through the imitation of all the works it managed to dig up out of peoples and world epochs that had died out" (G.S. II, 581). This reference is, on the other hand, not a recommendation for a hermeneutic interpretation of history as a continuum of historical effects nor a recommendation for the reconstruction of history as a formative process (*Bildungsprozess*) for the species. Such is precluded by his deeply antievolutionary conception of history.

tendencies of progress, but rather are embedded in *every* present as the most endangered, discredited and ridiculed creations and thoughts” (G.S. II, 75).

To be sure, there has been a shift in the interpretation of a *redemptive and rescuing intervention into a past* since the doctrine of ideas presented in the book on the Baroque *Trauerspiel*. Earlier, the retrospectively directed gaze was to gather up and enclose the rescued phenomenon into the world of ideas after it had escaped the process of becoming and disappearance. With its entrance into the sphere of the eternal, the original occurrence divests itself of its past and subsequent history, which has become virtual, like natural-historical vestments (O., 45-7). This constellation of natural history and eternity yields later to that of history and *Jetztzeit*: the messianic cessation of events replaces origin.¹⁸ The enemy, however, who endangers the dead as much as the living when redemptive criticism fails to appear and forgetfulness spreads, remains the same: namely the dominance of mythical fate. Myth marks a debased human species, hopelessly deprived of the good and just life for which it was determined — banished to a cursed cycle of merely reproducing itself and surviving.¹⁹ Mythical fate can be brought to a standstill for only an ephemeral moment. The fragments of experience which are wrested from fate in such moments, from the continuum of empty time for the contemporary immediacy of the *Jetztzeit*, form the content of endangered tradition, to which the history of art belongs as well. Tiedemann quotes the passage from the “Paris Arcades” project: “There is a place in every true work of art where, like the breeze of an approaching dawn, a certain cool refreshes whomever removes himself there. It follows from this that art, which was often viewed as refractory to any relation to progress, can serve its *genuine* determination. Progress is not at home in the continuity, but rather in the interferences of the course of time: where something truly new makes itself felt for the first time with all the sobriety of dawn” (Tiedemann, *Studien*, pp. 103 f.).

The pre-history of modernity planned by Benjamin, though completed only in fragments, is also relevant in this context. Baudelaire becomes something of central importance to Benjamin because his poetry brings to light “the new in the repeatedly same, and the repeatedly same in the new” (G.S. I. 673).

In the accelerating process of antiquation, which understands and misunderstands itself as progress, Benjamin’s critique discovers a coincidence with what has existed from time immemorial. This critique identifies the mythical compulsion to repeat that infiltrates capitalism, despite the modernization of the patterns of existence impelled by the forces of production — the repeatedly same in the new. But in doing so, this criticism

¹⁸B. Lindner, “‘Natur-Geschichte’ — eine Geschichtsphilosophie und Welterfahrung in Benjamins Schriften,” in *Text und Kritik*, p. 56.

¹⁹In this sense, enlightened sciences such as systems theory and behaviorist psychology conceive of human beings as “mythical” beings.

aims at the redemption of a past charged with “*Jetztzeit*,” and that distinguishes it from the critique of ideology. It ascertains the moments in which the artistic sensibility puts a stop to fate draped as progress and encodes the utopian experience in a dialectical image — the new in the repeatedly same. The transformation of modernity into prehistory has a double meaning in Benjamin. Both the myth itself and the substance of the images, which alone can be broken out of myth, are prehistoric. These images must be critically renewed in another, almost awaited present and rendered to “readability” (*Lesbarkeit*) in order that they might be preserved as tradition for true progress.²⁰ Benjamin’s anti-evolutionary conception of history, in which *Jetztzeit* and the continuum of natural history stand opposed, does not remain completely blind to progress made in the emancipation of humanity. But Benjamin’s anti-evolutionary conception takes a gravely pessimistic view of the changes for the selective breakthroughs, which undermine the repeatedly same, to unite into a tradition and *not* fall prey to being forgotten.

At the same time, Benjamin without a doubt discerns a continuity which as linear progress breaks through the cycle of natural history, but nonetheless endangers thereby the content of tradition. It is the continuity of disenchantment (*Entzauberung*), whose final stage Benjamin diagnoses as the loss of aura: “In prehistoric times, because of the absolute emphasis on its cult value, the work of art was, first and foremost, an instrument of magic. Only later did it come to be recognized as a work of art. In the same way today, because of the absolute emphasis on its exhibition value, the work of art becomes a structure with entirely new functions, among which the one we are conscious of, the artistic function, later may be recognized as incidental” (I., 225). Benjamin does not explain this process by which art develops away from ritual; one should probably understand it as a part of the world-historical rationalization process — Max Weber also uses the term disenchantment for this process: the surging development of the forces of production revolutionizes the mode of production and causes a rationalization process in social patterns of existence. Autonomous art establishes itself only to the extent that the arts are freed from the context of ritual use. This occurs only when, in the emergence of civil society, the economic and political systems are unleashed from the cultural system and the traditional images of the world are undermined by the ideology that attaches to the economic base — the ideology of just exchange.²¹

²⁰“And indeed, this attainment of ‘readability’ is a well-determined critical point within them (the dialectical images). Every present is determined through those images synchronic with it: every now is the now of well-determined recognizability. In the now, truth is charged with time to the point of exploding” (cited from Tiedemann, *Studien*, p. 310).

²¹“Autonomy” here designates the independence of works of art vis à vis claims laid to them for their employment in contexts external to art: the autonomy of artistic *production* could already start developing earlier, namely within patron forms of alimentation.

It is to its commodity character that art owes its liberation in the first place; it was a liberation for the private enjoyment of the bourgeois reading and theater, exhibition and concert public that came into being in the 17th and 18th centuries.²² The continuation of this same process, to which art owes its autonomy, also leads to the liquidation of art. Already in the 19th century it becomes noticeable that the public composed of bourgeois private persons gives way to urban collectives of the working population. For this reason, Benjamin concentrates on Paris as the urban center par excellence and on the phenomena of mass art, for — as Benjamin concludes his passage on the process by which art develops away from ritual — “this much is certain: today, photography and the film provide the most suitable means to recognize this” (ibid.)

III

On no other point did Adorno oppose Benjamin so vigorously. Adorno considers the mass art emerging with the new techniques and technologies of reproduction as a degeneration of art. The market, which made the autonomy of bourgeois art possible in the first place, permits the emergence of a culture industry that penetrates into the pores of the work of art itself, and together with the commodity character of the work of art, forces the viewer into the attitudinal patterns of a consumer. Adorno developed this critique for the first time in 1939, with jazz as an example, in his essay “The Fetish Character in Music and the Retrogression of Listening” (*Über den Fetischcharakter in der Musik und die Regression des Hörens*, in AGS 14, pp. 14-50). In Adorno’s posthumous *Aesthetic Theory*, the critique, which had been applied to many different objects in the meantime, is generalized and summarized under the title “The Degeneration of Art Deprived of its Character as Art” (*Entkunstung der Kunst*): “There is nothing left of the art work’s autonomy except for its character as a commodity fetish, and the customers of culture are roused to indignation that someone might consider it something more than that The work of art is disqualified as a tabula rasa for subjective projections. The poles of its depravity and deprivation are its character as thing among things and its character as a vehicle for the psychology of the viewer. What reified art works no longer say, the viewer substitutes with that standardized echo of himself/herself which he/she hears in them. The culture industry sets this mechanism in motion and exploits it” (AGS 7, p. 33).

The concrete historical experience which is bound up in this critique of the culture industry is a disappointment not so much with the history of decay in art, religion, and philosophy as with the historical parodies of their transcendence. The constellation of bourgeois culture in the classical age of its development was characterized by, if an oversimplification may be

²² A. Hauser, *The Social History of Art* (London, 1951), 2 vols. J. Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*, 5th ed. (Neuwied, 1971), pp. 46 ff.

permitted, the dissolution of traditional images of the world: First, by the retreat of religion into the regions of private belief; further, by the alliance of an empiricist and rationalist philosophy with a new physics; and finally, by an art which became autonomous and has taken up positions on behalf of the victims of bourgeois rationalization. Art is the refuge for a satisfaction, even if only virtual, of those wants that have become, as it were, illegal in the material process of life in bourgeois society. I refer here to the need for a mimetic relation with nature, external nature as well as that of one's body; the need for solidarity in living with others, indeed for the happiness of a communicative experience, exempt from imperatives of purposive-rationality (*Zweckrationalität*) and giving scope to imagination as well as spontaneity. This constellation of bourgeois culture was by no means stable. Like liberalism itself, it lasted, so to speak, only for a moment and then fell prey to the dialectic of the enlightenment (or rather to capitalism as its ineluctable vehicle).

Art's loss of aura had already been announced by Hegel in his lectures on aesthetics.²³ In conceiving art and religion to be limited forms of absolute knowledge penetrated by philosophy, he sets in motion a dialectic of "*Aufhebung*" (sublation) which soon transcends the boundaries of Hegelian logic. Hegel's students would consummate this dialectic in a secular critique — first of religion and then of philosophy — only in order to ultimately bring the abolition (*Aufhebung*) of philosophy and its realization to issue in the transcendence (*Aufhebung*) of political power: this marks the hour of birth of the Marxian critique of ideology. What was still veiled in Hegel's construction is now thrown into relief: the special status of art amidst the forms of the absolute spirit. Art maintains a special status to the extent that, unlike subjective religion and scientific philosophy, it does not take on tasks in the economic and political systems. Rather, it rounds up residual needs that can find no satisfaction within the "system of needs," precisely within civil society. Thus the sphere of art remained exempt from the critique of ideology — until our century. When at last it too fell prey to the critique of ideology, the ironic abolition (*Aufhebung*) of religion and philosophy was already in sight.

Today, even religion is no longer a private matter; but in the atheism of the masses, the utopian contents of tradition are lost as well. Philosophy has been divested of its metaphysical claim; but in the ruling scientism, the constructions before which a wretched reality had to justify itself, have

²³"Art in its beginnings still leaves over something mysterious, a secret foreboding and a longing . . . But if the perfect content has been perfectly revealed in artistic shapes, then the more far-seeing spirit rejects this objective manifestation and turns back into its inner self. This is the case in our own time. We may well hope that art will always rise higher and come to perfection, but the form of art has ceased to be the supreme need of the spirit. No matter how excellent we find the statues of the Greek gods, no matter how we see God the Father, Christ, and Mary so estimably and perfectly portrayed: it is no help; we bow the knee no longer" (*Aesthetics, Lectures on Fine Art*, G.W.F. Hegel, [Oxford, 1975], vol. I, p. 103).

decayed as well. Meanwhile, even an “*Aufhebung*” of science is at hand. It is true that its appearance of autonomy is destroyed, but not so much for the sake of guiding the system of science by means of discourse as of functionalizing it for fortuitous (*naturwüchsig*) interests.²⁴ Adorno’s critique of a false abolition of art should likewise be seen in this context. True, this “*Aufhebung*” destroys art’s aura, but when it eliminates the organization of domination in the work of art, it simultaneously liquidates the work of art’s claim to truth.

Disillusionment at the *false* abolition of something, be it religion, philosophy or art, can induce a reaction in someone that results in vacillation, if not hesitation, where he prefers to mistrust altogether the process by which absolute spirit become practical, rather than to give his consent to its liquidation. To this is attached an option for the esoteric rescue and redemption of the moments of truth. This distinguishes Adorno from Benjamin, who insists that the true moments of tradition are redeemed for the messianic future either exoterically or not at all. Adorno (atheistic like Benjamin — although not in the same way) opposes the false abolition of religion with a restoration of utopian contents that constitute a ferment for uncompromising critical thought, though this specifically avoids taking the form of a universalized secular illumination. Adorno (antipositivistic like Benjamin) opposes the false abolition of philosophy with a restoration of critique’s transcendent impetus. This critique is in a certain sense autarkic, though it specifically avoids penetrating into the positive sciences and thus becoming universal in the form of scientific self-reflection. Adorno opposes the false abolition of art with the hermetic modernity of Kafka and Schönberg, though specifically avoiding mass art, which makes auratically encapsulized experiences public. After having read the manuscript of the *Work of Art* essay, Adorno objected in a letter, dated 18 March 1936, “that the center of the autonomous work of art does not itself belong on the side of myth . . . Dialectical though your essay may be, it is not so in the case of the autonomous work of art itself; it disregards the elementary experience which becomes more evident to me every day in my own musical experience — that precisely the utmost consistency in the technological law of autonomous art changes this art and instead of rendering it into a taboo or fetish, approximates it to the state of freedom, of something that can consciously be produced and made” (NLR, 65). After the aura disintegrates, only the formalistic work of art, inaccessible to the masses, can withstand the forces assimilating it to the market-determined wants and attitudes of the consumer.

Adorno pursues a strategy of hibernation, whose obvious weakness lies in its defensive character. Interestingly enough, Adorno’s thesis can be proven with examples from literature and music, only as long as they remain

²⁴This thesis is represented by J. Behrman, G. Böhme, W. van den Daele, W. Krohn, *Alternativen in der Wissenschaft* (manuscript).

dependent on reproduction technics that prescribe isolated reading and contemplative listening, i.e., a mode of reception that leads down the royal road to bourgeois individuation. A noticeable development of arts with a collective mode of reception, however, such as architecture, theater and painting, as well as utilitarian popular literature (*Gebrauchsliteratur*) and music with their dependence on the electronic media, points beyond mere culture industry and does not *a fortiori* refute Benjamin's hope for a universalized secular illumination.

Admittedly, art's development away from ritual retains a double meaning for Benjamin as well. It is as if Benjamin feared an elimination of myth without an ensuing liberation; as if myth would have to finally admit defeat, and yet still be able to refrain from transposing its contents into a tradition, so that it might triumph even in defeat. Now that myth has donned the vestments of progress, images which tradition alone can recover from the inner core of myth threaten to come to naught and be lost to redemptive criticism forever. The myth whose haunt is in modernity expresses itself in positivism's belief in progress; it is the enemy against whom Benjamin set the whole pathos of redemption. Far from being a guarantor of liberation, the development away from ritual ominously forebodes a specific loss in experience.

IV

Benjamin's attitude towards the loss of aura was always ambivalent.²⁵ Since the historical experience of a past *Jetztzeit* needs to be recharged, and because this experience is locked within the aura of a work of art, the undialectical disintegration of the aura would mean the loss of this experience. Already at the time when Benjamin, as a student, still believed he could sketch the "Program of Coming Philosophy," the concept of an unmutated experience stood at the center of his considerations. At that time Benjamin directed his polemic against an "experience reduced as it were to degree zero, to the minimum of significance," i.e., against the experience of physical objects underlying the paradigmatic orientation of Kant's attempt to analyze the conditions of possible experience (G.S. II, 159). In opposition to this Benjamin defends the more complex types of experience common to primitive peoples and madmen, seers and artists. He still had hopes of recovering from metaphysics a systematic continuum of experience. Later he imputed this task to the critique of art; *this critique* should transpose the beautiful into the medium of truth, wherein "truth is not an unveiling, which annihilates the mystery, but a revelation and a manifestation that does it justice" (O., 31) The concept of aura ultimately takes the place of beautiful appearance as the necessary veil. By disintegrating, aura reveals the mystery of the complex experience: "Experience of the aura thus rests on the

²⁵ "For the last time the aura emanates from the early photographs in the fleeting expression of a human face. This is what constitutes their melancholy, incomparable beauty" (I., 226).

transposition of a response common in human relationships to the relationship between the inanimate or natural object and the human being. The person we look at, or who feels he/she is being looked at, looks at us in turn. To perceive the aura of an object we look at means to invest it with the capacity to look at us in return" (I., 188).

The appearance (*Erscheinung*) of the aura can occur only in the intersubjective relation of the ego to its counterpart, the alter ego. Whenever nature is thus "invested" so that it looks at us in return, the object is transformed into a counterpart. Universal animism of nature is the sign of magical images of the world; here there is as yet no split between the sphere of the objectivated form, which we control manipulatively, and the intersubjective realm, in which we communicatively encounter one another. Instead, the world is organized according to analogies and parallelism; totemistic classifications provide an example of this. Synesthetic associations are the subjective remainder of the perception of such correspondences.²⁶

From the appearance of the aura Benjamin develops the emphatic concept of an experience which needs to be critically preserved and made relevant if the messianic promise of happiness is ever to be fulfilled; in other instances, however, he treats the loss of aura affirmatively. This double meaning also expresses itself in Benjamin's emphasis on precisely those achievements of autonomous art that likewise distinguish the art work that has developed away from ritual. Surrealist art, whose representatives once again adopted Baudelaire's concept of *correspondances*, is exemplary here. Art which has fully divested itself of cultic elements strives toward the same thing as autonomous art, to experience objects in the net of rediscovered correspondences as a counterpart that brings happiness: "The *correspondances* constitute the court of judgement before which the object of art is found to be one that forms a faithfully reproduced image — which, to be sure, makes it entirely problematic. If one attempted to reproduce even this aporia in the material of language, one would define beauty as the object of experience in the state of resemblance" (I., 199, n. 13). The ambiguity can be solved only if we separate the *cultic* moments in the concept of an appearance of aura from the *universal* moments. Along with the dialectical abolition of autonomous art and the decay of the aura, disappear the esoteric access to the art work and its cultic distance from the viewer. So too does the contemplation that marks the isolated enjoyment of art. The experience released from the ruptured shell of the aura was, however,

²⁶"The essential thing is that the *correspondances* capture a concept of experience which includes cultic elements. Only by appropriating these elements was Baudelaire able to fathom the full meaning of the breakdown which he, a modern man, was witnessing. Only in this way was he able to recognize in it the challenge meant for him alone, a challenge which he incorporated in the *Fleurs du mal*" (I., p. 181). "Baudelaire describes eyes of which one is inclined to say that they have lost their ability to look" (ibid., 189).

already contained in the experience of the aura itself as the transformation of the object into a counterpart. Thereby a whole field of surprising correspondences between animate and inanimate nature is opened up, wherein even *things* encounter us in the structures of frail intersubjectivity. Although the grasp that stretches toward the essence appearing in such structures is no distance away, this essence evades any immediate contact; the closeness of the other refracted in the distance is the mark of possible fulfillment and mutual happiness.²⁷ Benjamin's intention has its goal in a state of affairs in which the esoteric experience of happiness has become public and universal; for only in a context of communication into which nature has been included in a mutual way — as if once again stood up straight — can subjects return one another's gaze.

The development of art away from ritual involves the risk that the art work will surrender the substance of experience along with its aura and be merely banal; only the disintegration of the aura, on the other hand, offers a chance to universalize and stabilize the experience of happiness. Happiness which has become exoteric dispenses with the veil which surrounded it and the aura in which it was refracted. This shows a certain affinity with the experiences of the mystic: When in a state of deep emotion, the mystic is more interested in the proximity and palpable presence of God than in God Himself. Only, the mystic shuts his eyes in his solitude; his experience is as esoteric as its tradition. It is just this moment that separates the religious experience of happiness from the one with which Benjamin's redemptive criticism is concerned. Therefore Benjamin calls this illumination, explicated in terms of the impact of surrealist art, *secular*; these works are no longer art in the autonomous sense, but rather manifestation, slogan, document, bluff and counterfeit. Such works make us conscious that, "we penetrate the mystery only to the degree that we recognize it in the everyday work, by virtue of a dialectical optic that knows the everyday as impenetrable, the impenetrable as everyday" (R., 190). This experience is secular because it is exoteric.²⁸

No interpretation can dismiss Benjamin's break with the esoteric, though Scholem's insistent contribution to the contention for his friend's soul is a fascinating example of this attempt.²⁹ In the face of approaching fascism, Benjamin's political views compelled him to break with the Esoteric of the True for which the young Benjamin had reserved the

²⁷On Adorno's speculations about reconciliation with nature, especially those presented in *Minima Moralia* (London, 1974), cf. my two essays in: *Philosophisch-politische Profile* (Frankfurt am Main, 1971), pp. 176-199.

²⁸This is also the reason why Benjamin does not accept private intoxication of the hashish user as a model for this experience: "The reader, the thinker, the loiterer, the *flâneur*, are types of illumination just as much as the opium eater, the dreamer, the ecstatic. And are more secular ones" (R., 190).

²⁹"Walter Benjamin and His Angel," in *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis*, pp. 198-236.

dogmatic concept Doctrine.³⁰ Benjamin wrote once to Adorno, “that speculation can start its necessarily bold flight with some prospect of success only if, instead of putting on the waxen wings of the esoteric, it seeks its source of strength in construction alone” (NLR, 76). Benjamin directs his attack against the esoteric of fulfillment and happiness just as decisively. He insists (and this sounds like a repudiation of Scholem) upon “the true, creative *overcoming* of religious illumination . . . It resides in a *secular* illumination, a materialist, anthropological inspiration,” to which intoxication in solitude might possibly give an introductory lesson (R., 179).

If we look back at Benjamin’s thesis on the dialectical abolition of art from this vantage point, we can see why it cannot be a thesis based on the critique of ideology: Benjamin’s theory of art is a theory of experience (but **not the experience of reflection**).³¹ In the forms of secular illumination, the experience of the aura burst the auratic shell and became exoteric. This experience is not due to an analysis that brings to light something repressed or that releases something suppressed. Unlike the way reflection would be capable of this, experience is acquired through the recovery of a semantics dislodged bit by bit from the core of myth. This semantics is both messianically preserved in and released from the works of great art, i.e., for the use of emancipation. What remains inexplicable in this conception is surely the peculiar tide which has to be stemmed by redemptive criticism. Without redemptive critique’s permanent effort, or so goes Benjamin’s notion, the testimony of selective points of liberation from myth transmitted by tradition and the semantic contents wrested from it would have to fall into the void; the substance of tradition would fall prey to a forgetfulness and leave no trace. Why? Apparently Benjamin was of the opinion that meaning was not a possession which could be augmented and that experiences of an undisturbed intercourse with nature, with others, and with one’s own self could not be arbitrarily created. More than likely Benjamin was thinking of the semantic potential from which human beings draw and with which they invest the world with meaning, permitting it to be experienced. This semantic potential is deposited in myth to begin with and must be released from it — but it cannot be expanded, just continually transformed. Benjamin fears that during these transformations the semantic energies might escape and become lost to humanity. Benjamin’s philosophy of language, in which the theory of experience is grounded, provides some clues to this perspective of progressive decay.³²

³⁰“And thus one may put into words the demand posed to coming philosophy: To fashion, based on the Kantian system, a cognitive concept that corresponds to a concept of experience for which cognition is Doctrine” (G.S. II, 168).

³¹“One could prove that the theory of experience represents the by no means secret center of all Benjamin’s conceptions.” P. Krumme, “Zur Konzeption der dialektischen Bilder,” in: *Text und Kritik*, p. 80, n. 5.

³²Already in the “Program of Coming Philosophy” there is a reference to this: “A concept of philosophy obtained from reflexion on the linguistic essence of cognition will provide a

V

Benjamin adhered to a mimetic theory of language throughout his lifetime. Even in his later works he returns to the onomatopoeic character of individual words, indeed of language altogether. It was unthinkable to him that the word's relationship to a thing could be incidental. Benjamin conceives words as names. By giving things names, however, the human being can hit or miss their essence: naming is a kind of translation of the nameless into the name, a translation of the language of nature, which is more incomplete, into the language of human beings. What Benjamin considered characteristic of human language was neither its syntactic organization (which did not interest him) nor its representational function (which he considered subordinate to its expressive function.)³³ It is not the specifically *human* attributes of language that interest Benjamin but the function that serves as a link to animal languages: the expressive function. Language, or so he believes, is merely a form of the animal instinct manifest in expressive gestures. Benjamin combines these in turn with the mimetic capacity (*Vermögen*) to perceive and reproduce similarities. Dance is an example of this, for expression and mimesis merge here. He cites a remark of Mallarmé's: "The dancer is not a woman, but a metaphor which can give expression to some elemental aspect of our existential form: sword, cup, flower, etc." (G.S. II, 478). The original mimesis is the reproduction of correspondences in an image: "As is known, the sphere of life that formerly seemed to be governed by the law of similarity was comprehensive; it ruled both microcosm and macrocosm. But these natural correspondences acquire their real importance only if we recognize that they serve without exception to stimulate and awaken the mimetic capacity in the human being that responds to them" (R., 333). What finds expression in linguistic physiognomy, indeed in expressive gestures in general, is not simply a subjective condition, but the as yet uninterrupted connection of the human organism with surrounding nature which finds expression through this condition: expressive movements are systematically linked with the redeeming qualities of the environment.

As odd as this mimetic theory of language sounds, Benjamin is right in

corresponding concept of experience that will also encompass areas that Kant did not succeed in classifying in a truly systematic way" (G.S. II, 168). Hamann supposedly attempted just that during Kant's lifetime.

³³"The word should communicate *something*. That is really the Fall of the spirit of language. The word as something externally communicating, as it were a parody of the expressly communicable [sic!! — trans.] word" (R., 327).

Translators' note: Here Habermas quotes from "Über die Sprache" incorrectly. While it is possible that this is a typographical error, we have retained the original Habermas version in translation to avoid possible discrepancy between text and note. The correct Benjamin text is "ausdrücklich mittlebar" (G.S. II, 153) and not Habermas' "ausdrücklich mitteilbar" (*Zur Aktualität*, 203; *Kultur und Kritik*, 327). The correct English translation should then read: "That is really the Fall of the spirit of language. The word as something externally

assuming that the oldest semantic stratum is that of expression. The expressive wealth of primate language has been thoroughly researched, and “insofar as language is articulated emotional expression, there exists no fundamental difference in the vocal expressive capacity of non-human primate families.”³⁴

One could speculate that a semantic store of original, subhuman forms of communication has found a place in human language and represents a potential that cannot be augmented. With the meanings that comprise this potential, human beings interpret the world in terms of their own needs and create thereby a net of correspondences. Be this as it may, Benjamin reckons with the species having been endowed with such a mimetic capacity at the threshold of its humanization, that is, before it enters the process of self-creation. It is part of Benjamin’s fundamental (non-Marxist) convictions that meaning cannot be produced like value, by labor, but that perhaps, dependent on the production process, it can be transformed.³⁵ The historically changing interpretation of needs draws from a potential with which the species must economize, for though this potential may be transformed, it cannot be enriched: “It must be borne in mind that neither mimetic powers nor mimetic objects [which, one could add, preserved something of the qualities of the redeemer, compelling and pregnant] remain the same in the course of thousands of years. Rather, we must suppose that the gift of producing similarities — for example, in dances, whose oldest function this was — and therefore also the gift of recognizing them, have changed with historical development. The direction of this change seems to be determined by the increasing decay of the mimetic capacity” (R., 333 f.). This model has an ambivalent significance.

Benjamin sees in the mimetic capacity not just the source of that wealth of meaning poured out of language over the world — a world not humanized but for this process — by needs set free in the socio-cultural patterns of existence. He sees also in the gift of perceiving similarities the rudiments of the once powerful compulsion to *become* similar, i.e., to be forced into adaptation — the legacy, in other words, of the animal. To this extent, the mimetic capacity is the mark of an original dependency on the forces of nature: this expresses itself in magical practices, lives on in the primal fears

communicating, as it were a parody by the expressly mediate word of the expressly immediate, the creative word of God, and the decay of the blissful, Adamite spirit of language that stands between them.” (*Reflections*, 327).

³⁴D. Ploog, “*Kommunikation in Affengesellschaften und deren Bedeutung für die Verständigungsweisen des Menschen*,” in ed H.-G. Gadamer and P. Vogler, *Neue Anthropologie*, (Stuttgart, 1972), vol. 2, pp. 141 f. On Benjamin’s philosophy of language, which has been rather neglected in previous discussion, cf. H.H. Holz, “*Prismatisches Denken*,” in *Über W. Benjamin* (Frankfurt am Main, 1970), pp. 62-110.

³⁵The thesis, “that meaning, significance, etc. can be created — qua Marxism — only through the world-historical labor process of the human species — in which it produces itself — was never adopted by Benjamin” B. Lindner, op. cit., p. 55.

of animistic images of the world, remains preserved in myth. The determining fate of the human species, then, is the liquidation of that dependency without letting the powers of mimesis and the streams of semantic energies run dry; for in that case the poetic faculty to interpret the world in terms of human needs would falter. This is the secular content of the messianic promise. Benjamin conceived the history of art, from the cultic to the postauratic work of art, as a history of attempts to reproduce an image of these non-sensuous similarities or correspondences, yet simultaneously to break the spell which was once upon this mimesis. Divine was how Benjamin described these attempts, since they break myth while nevertheless preserving and liberating its wealth.

If we follow Benjamin to this point, the question arises: what is the source of those divine powers which at the same time preserve and liberate? Even criticism, upon whose conservative-revolutionary power Benjamin relies, must orient itself towards past "*Jetztzeiten*" retrospectively. It lights upon constructions in which the contents retrieved from myth are sedimented, that is, the documents of past acts of liberation. Who produces these documents, who are their authors? Benjamin obviously had no desire to rely, in the idealist manner, on the irreducible illumination of great authors, namely, a source which is in no way secular. Nonetheless, it seems to me he was certainly close enough to the idealist answer to this question, for a theory of experience grounded in a mimetic theory of language permits no other. Benjamin's political views, however, stood opposed to this. Benjamin, who discovered in Bachofen the world of archetypes, who knew Schuler, studied and esteemed Klages, corresponded with Carl Schmitt — this Benjamin, as a Jewish intellectual in the Berlin of the twenties, still could not ignore where his enemies (and ours) stood. Conscious of this, he was compelled toward a materialistic answer.

That is the background for Benjamin's reception of historical materialism. Indeed, he had to bring this together with the messianic interpretation of history he developed on the model of redemptive criticism. This domesticated historical materialism was supposed to provide an answer for the open question concerning the subject of the history of art and culture, an answer which was to be materialist and yet compatible with Benjamin's own theory of experience. To believe this had been successfully accomplished, was an error on Benjamin's part — and the wish of his Marxist friends.

The concept of culture offered by the critique of ideology has the advantage that cultural tradition is established methodologically as part of social evolution and becomes accessible thus to materialist interpretation. Benjamin has fallen behind this concept. A critique that appropriates the history of art with a view to redeeming messianic instants and preserving an endangered semantic potential can but comprehend itself as identification and *repetition* of emphatic experiences and utopian contents — and not as reflection in a formative process. Benjamin conceived the philosophy

of history too as a theory of experience.³⁶ Within this framework, however, a materialist interpretation of the history of art, which, for political reasons, Benjamin does want to relinquish, is not immediately possible. Consequently he attempts to integrate this doctrine with the basic assumptions of historical materialism. He expresses his intentions in the first of his “Theses on the Philosophy of History”: the hunchback dwarf Theology should enlist the services of the puppet Historical Materialism. This attempt must fail, because the materialist theory of social development cannot be simply fitted into the anarchistic conception of *Jetztzeiten* which intermittently come crashing through fate as if from above. An anti-evolutionary conception of history cannot be tacked onto historical materialism as if it were a monk’s cowl — tacked onto a historical materialism, which takes account of progress not only in the dimension of the forces of production, but in that of domination too. My thesis is that Benjamin did not realize his intention to bring together enlightenment and mysticism, because the theologian in him could not accept the idea of making his messianic theory of experience serviceable to historical materialism. This much, I believe, must be conceded to Scholem.

I would like to go into two of the awkward aspects: the curious adaptation of the Marxian critique of ideology and the idea of a politicized art.

VI

In 1935, Benjamin prepared a memorandum (*exposé*) at the request of the Institute for Social Research in which he introduces for the first time some motifs of his “Paris Arcades” project (“Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century”). Looking back over the long period of its genesis in a letter to Adorno, Benjamin speaks of a metamorphic process, “that consolidated the whole mass of thoughts originally motivated by metaphysics into a crystallized state, in which the world of dialectical images is secured against objections provoked by metaphysics” (Br., 664). He refers here to “the incursion of the new sociological perspectives which provide a more secure frame for the tensile span of interpretation” (Ibid., 665). Adorno’s response to this *exposé* and his critique of the first Baudelaire study, which three years later Benjamin submitted to the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, reflect very accurately, I believe, the way Benjamin assimilates Marxian categories for his own purposes. In this regard, what Adorno misunderstands is as important as what he understands.³⁷ Adorno’s

³⁶The 14th thesis on the philosophy of history, as elsewhere, attests to this; the experiential substance of the French Revolution was rather more interesting to Benjamin than the objective changes it led to: “The French Revolution understood itself as Rome returned. It cited ancient Rome precisely the way fashion cites a style of the past.”

³⁷I refer here to the letters from Adorno to Benjamin of 2 August 1935 and 10 November 1938, as well as Benjamin’s answer (NLR, 55-80). As to this complex of ideas, cf. also: J. Taubes, “Kultur und Ideologie,” in *Spätkapitalismus oder Industriegesellschaft?* (Stuttgart,

impression of the “Paris Arcades” project is that Benjamin does violence to himself trying to pay tribute to Marxism in a manner which benefited neither Marxism nor Benjamin himself. He criticizes a procedure that gives “conspicuous individual features from the realm of the superstructure a ‘materialist’ turn by relating them without mediation and perhaps even causally to corresponding features of the base” (NLR, 71). He refers in particular to the merely metaphoric use of the category of commodity fetishism; Benjamin had declared in a letter to Scholem that this category stood at the center of his new project just as the concept of the *Trauerspiel* had formed the core of his book on the Baroque. Adorno pierces through the apparently materialist tendency of relating the “contents of Baudelaire’s work immediately to adjacent features in the social history of his time, and, as much as possible, to those of an economic kind” (ibid., 70). In doing so, Benjamin makes the impression of a swimmer “who, covered with goose pimples, plunges into cold water” (ibid.). This acute judgement, which does not lose any of its aptness even if one takes Adorno’s rivalry with Brecht into account, contrasts peculiarly with the poor judgement he shows in insisting that his friend make good the “omitted theory” and “lacking interpretation” so that the dialectical mediation between cultural qualities and the whole social process would become more visible. Adorno never perceptibly hesitated to attribute to Benjamin precisely the *ideologiekritische* intention which his own work followed — and erred in doing so.

This is shown in an exemplary way by the objections which were supposed to move Benjamin to revise the concept of the dialectical image, so central to the theory of experience, and thus achieve “a clarification of the theory itself” (ibid., 54). Adorno does not see how legitimate it is to wish to carry out the plan for a prehistory of modernity, hoping to decipher a mutilated semantics threatened by forgetfulness with hermeneutic means, i.e., through the interpretation of dialectical images. For Benjamin, image-fantasies (*Bildphantasien*) of the primal past break loose under the impact of the new, which is permeated by the continuity of the perpetually same; these fantasies “intermingle with the new to give birth to utopias” (R., 148). In his *exposé* Benjamin speaks of the collective unconscious as a depository for experiences. Adorno justifiably disapproves of this terminology. Yet he incorrectly maintains that the disenchantment of the dialectical image would of necessity lead back to purely mythical thought. Because the archaic in modernity — which Adorno sees more readily as being Hell than the Golden Age — contains precisely the potentials of experience that point ahead to the utopian state of liberated society. A model for this is the recourse to Roman antiquity during the French Revolution. Here Benjamin employs a compar-

1969), pp. 117-138. [Translators’ Note] On this correspondence and the aesthetic debate it represents cf. “The Presentation of Adorno-Benjamin” (NLR, 46-53); S. Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics* (N.Y., 1977), esp. Ch. 9-11, pp. 122-185; Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination* (Boston, 1973), Ch. 6, esp. pp. 197-212.

ison with the realization of dream elements in waking, an idea developed into technique by surrealism, and which Benjamin, misleadingly enough, calls a textbook case of dialectical thought. Adorno takes this too literally. To transpose the dialectical image into consciousness as a dream appears to him a piece of pure subjectivism. Adorno points out to Benjamin that the fetish character of the commodity is not a fact of consciousness; rather it is dialectical in the eminent sense that it produces consciousness, or in other words, archaic images in the alienated individuals of civil society. But Benjamin has no need to conform to this basic claim of the critique of ideology; Benjamin does not wish to get at the objectivity of a realization process which lies behind the formations of consciousness and through which the commodity fetish gains power over the consciousness of individuals. Benjamin wants and in fact needs only to investigate "the way the fetish character is perceived by the collective unconscious," because the dialectical images *are* phenomena of consciousness, and are not merely transposed into consciousness, as Adorno maintains.

Of course, Benjamin also deluded himself about the difference between his method and that of a Marxian critique of ideology. In the posthumous manuscripts for the "Arcades" project he says at one point: "The question is namely: if the base determines the superstructure to some extent in the material of thought and experience, and if this determination nevertheless is not one of simple mirroring, how is it then — *totally apart from the question of its cause of origin[!]* — to be characterized? As its expression (*Ausdruck*). The superstructure is the expression of the base. The economic conditions under which a society exists come to expression in the superstructure" (cited in Tiedemann, op. cit., 106. Emphasis mine). Expression is a category of Benjamin's theory of experience; it refers to the nonsensuous correspondences between animate and inanimate nature on which the physiognomic gaze of the artist as well as that of the child rests. Expression is a semantic category for Benjamin, and is closer to what Kassner or even Klages intended than to the base-superstructure theorem. The same misunderstanding emerges in his relation to the critique of ideology as practiced by Adorno, when Benjamin remarks about chapters of Adorno's later book on Wagner: "One tendency of this work interested me in particular: to situate the physiognomic directly, almost without psychological mediation, in the social realm" (Br., 741). Indeed, Benjamin did not have psychology in mind, but neither did he intend a critique of necessarily false consciousness. *His* critique concerned the collective image-fantasies settled among the characters of expression in daily existence as well as in literature and art; these images arise from the secret communication between the oldest potential of significantiation of human needs and the conditions of existence created by capitalism.

In the correspondence about the "Arcades" project, Adorno invokes the goal "for the sake of which you sacrifice theology" (NLR, 54). Benjamin made this sacrifice, it is true, by accepting from then on mystical illumination

only as secular, i.e., universalizable, exoteric experience. Yet Adorno, who compared to Benjamin was certainly the better Marxist, did not see that his friend was never prepared to completely surrender the theological heritage: that his mimetic theory of language, his messianic theory of history, and his conservative-revolutionary understanding of critique were permanently immunized against the objections of historical materialism — insofar as this puppet could not simply be taken on under the direction of his own ideas. This emerges also where Benjamin professed to be a committed communist: in his approval of the instrumental politicization of art. I understand this approval, which becomes clearest in his lecture on the “Author as Producer” (R., 220-238), as a dilemma resulting from the fact that an immanent relation to political praxis cannot be obtained at all from *redemptive* critique, as it can from a *consciousness-raising* one.

When it exposes the particular interest of those who rule within what appears the universal interest, the critique of ideology is a political force. To the extent that it unsettles the normative structures which keep the consciousness of the suppressed imprisoned, and terminates in political action, the critique of ideology strives toward the release of the structural force (*Gewalt*) that has been allowed to enter into institutions. It is directed at the participatory abolition of the force thus set free. Structural force can also be reactively or preventatively released from above. Then it takes on the form of the fascist partial mobilization of masses, who do not abolish the force set free, but diffusely “act it out.”

I have shown that there is no place in *this* frame of reference, the critique of ideology, for the type of critique developed by Benjamin. A critique which prepares itself for a leap into past *Jetztzeiten* so that it might rescue and redeem semantic potentials has a very mediated relation to political praxis. Benjamin was not sufficiently clear on this point.

In the early essay “Critique of Violence (*Gewalt*),” he distinguishes between lawmaking and law-preserving violence; the latter is the legitimate force practiced by the organs of the state, whereas the former is the structural force set free in war and civil war and latent in all institutions.³⁸ Lawmaking violence does not have an instrumental character like the law-preserving; rather it “manifests” itself. Indeed, the structural force embodied in interpretations and institutions manifests itself in the sphere which Benjamin, like Hegel, reserved for fate: in the fates of war and the family. Of course, changes in this sphere of natural history do not change anything:

³⁸In this context Benjamin criticizes parliamentarism in a way that has found the admiration of Carl Schmitt: “They (the parliaments) offer the familiar, woeful spectacle because they have not remained conscious of the revolutionary forces to which they owe their existence. Accordingly, in Germany in particular, the last manifestation of such forces bore no fruit for parliaments. They lack the sense that a lawmaking violence is represented by themselves; no wonder that they cannot achieve decrees worthy of this violence, but cultivate in compromise a supposedly nonviolent manner of dealing with political affairs” (R., 288).

“A gaze directed only at what is close at hand can at most perceive a dialectical rising and falling in the lawmaking and law-preserving formations of violence . . . This lasts until either new forces or those suppressed earlier triumph over the hitherto lawmaking violence and thus found a new law, destined in its turn to decay” (R., 300). Once again, we encounter Benjamin’s conception of fate, which alleges a natural-historical continuum of the perpetually same and rules out cumulative changes in the structures of domination.

This is where redemptive critique is set into motion. And there Benjamin forms the concept of revolutionary violence according to this configuration: It is as if the act of interpretation, which extracts the selective breach in the natural-historical continuum from the past art work and makes this relevant for the present, is invested with the insignia of praxis. This, then, is the “pure” violence or “divine” force which strives toward “the breaking of the cycle maintained by mythical forms of law” (ibid.). Benjamin conceptualizes “pure” violence within the framework of his theory of experience and therefore he must divest it of the attributes of goal-oriented (purposive-rational, *zweckrational*) action; revolutionary violence, like mythical violence, manifests itself — it is “the highest manifestation of unalloyed violence by the human being” (ibid.). It follows logically that Benjamin should refer to Sorel’s myth of a general strike and to an anarchistic praxis which is distinguished by its banning of the instrumental character of action from the realm of political praxis and its negation of purposive rationality in favor of a “politics of pure means”: “the violence (of such a praxis) may be assessed no more from its effects than from its goals, but only from the law of its means” (R., 292).

That was in 1920. Nine years later, Benjamin wrote his famous essay on the surrealist movement; during the period between these two dates, Baudelaire’s idea of an intimate union of dream and deed had gained prominence in this movement. In the surrealist provocation, that which Benjamin could see a confirmation of his art theory in surrealism. yet surrealist nonsense-acts, art was transferred into expressive action and the split between poetic and political action was dialectically abolished. Thus Benjamin could see a confirmation of his art theory in surrealism. Yet Benjamin was an ambivalent observer of the illustrations of pure violence given by surrealism. Politics as representation or even poetic politics — when Benjamin saw these realizations he could no longer close his eyes to the differences of principle between political action and manifestation: “this would mean the subordination of the methodical and disciplinary preparation for revolution entirely to a praxis oscillating between training and celebrating its imminent onset” (R., 189). Prompted by the contact with Brecht, Benjamin therefore dissociated himself from his earlier anarchistic inclinations and saw the relation of art and political praxis above all in the organizing and propagandistic realization of art for the class struggle. The resolute politicization of art is a concept that Benjamin found ready at hand.

He may have had good reasons for seizing upon this concept — it did not, however, have a systematic connection to his own theory of art and history. By accepting it without reservation, Benjamin implicitly admits that an immanent relation to political praxis cannot be obtained from his theory of experience. The experience of the shock is not an action, and secular illumination is not a revolutionary deed.³⁹

Benjamin's intent was to "enlist the services" of historical materialism for his theory of experience; yet this had to lead to an identification of intoxication and politics which Benjamin could not have wanted. The liberation of the semantic potentials from cultural tradition, so that they may not become lost for the messianic experience is not the same thing as the liberation of the semantic potentials from cultural tradition, so that they may contemporaneity does not lie in a theology of the revolution.⁴⁰ Rather, his contemporaneity unfolds before us if we attempt vice-versa to "enlist the services" of Benjamin's theory of experience for historical materialism.

VII

A dialectical theory of progress, such as historical materialism claims to be, is on its guard: what presents itself as progress can soon show itself to be the perpetuation of what was presumably overcome. Thus more and more theorems of the counter-enlightenment have been incorporated into the dialectic of the enlightenment, more and more elements from the critique of progress have been assimilated by the theory of progress: all in order to formulate an idea of progress that is subtle and resilient enough not to let itself be blinded by the mere appearance (*Schein*) of emancipation. One thing, of course, it must oppose: namely, the thesis that enlightenment itself mystifies.⁴¹

In the concept of exploitation that determined Marx's critique, poverty and domination were still one. The development of capitalism has in the meantime taught us to distinguish between hunger and oppression. The privations that can be countered by an improvement in the standard of living are different from those which can be remedied by a growth in freedom, and not in social wealth. In *Natural Law and Human Dignity*, Bloch introduced these distinctions into the concept of progress, ones made necessary by the success of the productive forces developed under capitalism.⁴² In developed

³⁹In addition cf. K.H. Bohrer, op. cit., esp. pp. 53 ff. Further: B. Lypp, *Ästhetischer Absolutismus und politische Vernunft* (Frankfurt am Main, 1972).

⁴⁰Cf. H. Salzinger, "W. Benjamin — Theologe der Revolution," in *Kürbiskern* (1969), pp. 629-647.

⁴¹In this perspective, critical theory is seen as "modern sophism"; for example by R. Bubner, "Was ist Kritische Theorie?" in *Hermeneutik und Ideologiekritik* (Frankfurt am Main, 1971).

⁴²E. Bloch, *Naturrecht und menschliche Würde* (Frankfurt am Main, 1961): "Social utopia aims at human happiness; natural law aims at human dignity. Social utopia painted a prophetic picture of relations without weary and burdened people; natural law conceived relations without the humiliated and denigrated" (p. 13). Cf. also my references in *Philosophisch-politische Profile*, pp. 216 ff.

societies there exists the possibility that repressions can become reconciled with a high standard of living, i.e., that demands directed at the economic system may be fulfilled without necessarily realizing genuinely political demands. The more this possibility becomes noticeable, the more the accent shifts here from the elimination of hunger to emancipation.

In the tradition that traces back to Marx, Benjamin was one of the first to throw into relief a *further* aspect of the concepts of exploitation and progress: along with hunger and oppression he emphasized failure, along with living standard and freedom — happiness. Benjamin saw the experience of happiness, which he called secular illumination, as being bound to the redemption of tradition. We need those rescued semantic potentials if we are to interpret the world in terms of our own needs, and only if the source of these potentials does not run dry can the claim to happiness be fulfilled. Cultural goods are the spoils which those who rule carry along in triumphal procession; therefore, the process of tradition must be wrenched from myth. Now it is true that the liberation of culture is not possible without overcoming the repression anchored in institutions. Yet, for a moment, one is beset by suspicion: wouldn't it be just as possible to have an emancipation without happiness and fulfillment as it is to have a relatively high standard of living without the abolition (*Aufhebung*) of repression? This question, posed at the threshold of *posthistoire*, when symbolic structures are spent and threadbare, divested of their imperative function — this is not a safe question, but it is not a totally idle one either.

Benjamin would not have posed such a question. He insisted on both the most spiritual and the most sensuous happiness as a mass experience. Yes, he was almost terrorized by the prospect of a possibly definitive loss of this experience because, his gaze fixed on the messianic, he observed how progress was successively cheated out of its fulfillment by progress itself. Therefore a critique of the Kautskian interpretation of progress forms the political content of the "Theses on the Philosophy of History." Even if one does not contend that progress within each of the three dimensions discussed above (increase in the standard of living, expansion of freedom, and furthering of happiness) cannot really represent any progress, as long as living standard, freedom and happiness have not become universal, one could still make an argument for a hierarchy of these three dimensions: that economic well-being without freedom is not economic well-being, and that freedom without happiness is not freedom. Benjamin was deeply imbued with this idea: we cannot even be sure about partial steps in progress before the Last Judgement. Of course, Benjamin wove this emphatic insight into his conception of fate, according to which historical change does not effect any changes, even if they are reflected in orders of happiness: "The order of the secular should be erected on the idea of happiness" (R., 312). In this totalizing perspective, the cumulative development of the forces of production and the directed change in the structures of interaction become wound back to an indifferentiated reproduction of the perpetually same.

Before Benjamin's manichaeic gaze, which is capable of perceiving progress in the solar prominences of happiness alone, history spreads out like the rotation of a dead star upon which every once in a while lightning flashes down. This compels him to interpret the economic and political systems in concepts that would actually be apt only for the cultural process. Evolutions go under without a trace in the ubiquity of the plexus of guilt; these evolutions, however, for all their questionable shortcomings, occur not only in the dimension of the productive forces and of social wealth, but even in *that* dimension where in view of massive repression, distinctions are very difficult to make: I mean progress, certainly precarious and permanently threatened by relapses, in the products of legality, if not in the structures of morality altogether. By remembering in melancholy what was unsuccessful and invoking moments of happiness that are in the process of being obliterated, the historical sense for secular progress threatens to become stunted. Perhaps this progress generates its regressions, but of course that is where political action begins.

Benjamin's critique of empty progress is directed at a joyless reformism, whose faculties have been blunted to the difference between the improved reproduction of life and a fulfilled life, or perhaps we should say, a life that is not a failure. This critique becomes acute only if it succeeds in making that difference visible in the improvements of life that are not contemptible. These improvements do not produce any new memories, but they dissolve old and fatal ones. It must be conceded that the step by step negation of **poverty and even oppression** has the peculiar result that it leaves no trace: it alleviates without fulfilling, for only alleviation that is remembered could be a preparation for fulfillment. In the face of this circumstance, there are in the meanwhile two overworked positions. The counter-enlightenment, supported by pessimistic anthropology, allegedly knows that the utopian images of fulfillment are functional fictions for the life of a finite creature, who will never be able to transcend mere existence and attain a good life. The dialectical theory of progress on the other hand, is self-assured about the prognosis that successful emancipation also means fulfillment. If it were not the cowl but rather the core of historical materialism, Benjamin's theory of experience could confront the first position with well-founded hope — the other, with prophylactic doubt.

We are talking only about doubt, the doubt suggested by Benjamin's semantic materialism: can we afford to preclude the possibility of a meaningless emancipation? In complex societies, emancipation means a participatory remodelling of administrative decision-making structures. Could an emancipated humanity one day confront itself in the expanded scope of discursive will-formation and nevertheless still be deprived of the terms in which it is able to interpret life as good life? A culture which, for thousands of years, was exploited for the purpose of legitimating domination would take its revenge, just at the moment when age-old repressions could be overcome: not only would it be free of violence, it would no longer

have any content. Without the store of those semantic energies with which Benjamin's redemptive criticism was concerned, there would necessarily be a stagnation of the structures of practical discourse that had finally prevailed.

Benjamin all but wrests away from the counter-enlightenment the indictment of empty reflection, and appropriates it for a theory of progress. Whoever seeks Benjamin's contemporary relevance in this would certainly expose himself to the objection that in the face of an unshaken political reality, emancipatory efforts should not be rashly saddled with additional burdens, be they ever so sublime — "first things first". I believe of course that a differentiated concept of progress furnishes a perspective that does not simply inhibit courage, but rather ensures that political action can hit its mark with greater accuracy. For under historical circumstances which prohibit the thought of revolution and give grounds for expecting a long sustained process of upheaval, the conception of revolution as the process leading to the formation of a new subjectivity must also be transformed. Benjamin's conservative-revolutionary hermeneutics, which deciphers the history of culture with a view to rescuing and redeeming it for the overthrow, may provide a path in this direction.

A theory of linguistic communication that wants to reclaim Benjamin's insights for a materialist theory of social evolution would have to consider together two Benjaminian propositions. I am thinking of the assertion: "that there is a sphere of human agreement that is non-violent to *the* extent that it is wholly inaccessible to violence: the true sphere of 'mutual understanding,' language" (R., 289). And I am thinking of the warning that belongs here: "Pessimism all along the line. Absolutely . . . but above all, mistrust, mistrust and again mistrust in all mutual understanding reached between classes, nations, individuals. And unlimited trust only in I.G. Farben and the peaceful perfection of the *Luftwaffe*" (R., 191).

Translated by Philip Brewster and Carl Howard Buchner

*Doctrine of the Similar (1933)**

by Walter Benjamin

Insight into the areas of the “similar” has a fundamental importance for the illumination of large areas of occult knowledge. Such insight, however, is to be gained less by demonstrating found similarities than by reproducing processes which produce such similarities. Nature produces similarities—one need only think of mimicry. Human beings, however, possess the very highest capability to produce similarities. Indeed, there may not be a single one of the higher human functions which is not decisively co-determined by the mimetic faculty. This faculty, however, has a history, both phylogenetically and ontogenetically. With respect to the latter, it is in many ways formed by play. To begin with, children’s games are everywhere interlaced with mimetic modes of behavior, and their range is not limited at all to what one human being imitates from another. A child not only plays at being a grocer or a teacher, but also at being a windmill or a train. The question which matters, however, is the following: what does a human being actually gain by this training in mimetic attitudes?

The answer presupposes a clear reflection on the phylogenetic importance of mimetic behavior. To determine this, it does not suffice to think, for example, merely of what the concept of similarity means for us today. As we know, the sphere of life which once seemed to be ruled by the law of similarity used to be much larger. It was the microcosm and the macrocosm, to give but one version of the many found by the experience of similarity over the course of history. It can still be maintained today that the cases in which people consciously perceive similarities in everyday life are a minute segment of those countless cases unconsciously determined by similarity. The similarities which one perceives consciously, for instance in faces, are, when compared to the countless similarities perceived unconsciously or not at all, like the enormous underwater mass of an iceberg in comparison to the small tip which one sees projecting above the waves.

These natural correspondences, however, assume their decisive importance only in light of the consideration that they all stimulate and awaken that mimetic faculty which responds to them in human beings. Here one must recall that neither the mimetic forces nor their objects, i.e., the mimetic objects, have remained the same, unchanged over the course of time. In the course of the centuries the mimetic force, and then with it the

*This fragment is taken from Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, eds. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, Vol. II, 1 (Frankfurt am Main, 1977), pp. 204-210 and is published with the permission of Suhrkamp Verlag.

mimetic faculty of perception, has disappeared from certain areas, perhaps in order to pour forth into others. It might not be too bold to presume that on the whole a uniform direction can be perceived in the historical development of this mimetic faculty.

At first glance, the direction might seem to lie in the increasing disappearance of this mimetic faculty. The perceived world (*Merkwelt*) of modern human beings seems to contain infinitely fewer of those magical correspondences than the world of the ancient people or even of primitive peoples. Yet this is the question: is it the case that the mimetic faculty is dying out, or has perhaps a transformation taken place? Some aspects of astrology may indicate, even if indirectly, the direction in which such a transformation might lie. For as inquirers into the old traditions we must take into account the possibility that human beings might have perceived manifest formations, that is, that objects had a mimetic character, where nowadays we would not even be capable of suspecting it. For example, in the constellations of the stars.

To grasp this, the horoscope must be understood as an original totality which astrological interpretation merely analyzed. (The stars formed a characteristic unity, and the character of the individual planets was only recognized by the way they function in relation to the stars.) We must always take account of the fact that celestial processes could be imitated by those who lived earlier, both collectively and individually. Indeed, the possibility of imitation contained the instruction to make use of an already present similarity. This possibility of human imitation, that is, this mimetic faculty which human beings possess, may have to be regarded, for the time being, as the sole basis for astrology's experiential character. If, however, mimetic genius was truly a life-determining force among the ancients, then it is scarcely possible not to attribute complete possession of this gift to the newborn—especially when it is regarded as complete mimetic adaptation to the form of cosmic being.

The moment of birth, which here decides everything, is but an instant. This directs our attention to another peculiarity in the area of similarity. The perception of similarity is in every case bound to an instantaneous flash. It slips past, can possibly be regained, but really cannot be held fast, unlike other perceptions. It offers itself to the eye as fleetingly and transitorily as a constellation of stars. The perception of similarities thus seems to be bound to a time-moment (*Zeitmoment*). It is like the addition of a third element, namely the astrologer, to the conjunction of two stars which must be grasped in an instant. Here the astronomer is cheated out of his reward, despite the sharpness of his observational tools.

The reference to astrology may already suffice to make comprehensible the concept of a non-sensuous similarity. The concept is obviously a relative one: it indicates that in our perception we no longer possess what once made it possible to speak of a similarity which might exist between a constellation of stars and a human being. Nonetheless, we too possess a canon on the basis

of which we can bring towards clarification the obscurity attached to a concept of non-sensuous similarity. And that canon is language.

From time immemorial, a mimetic faculty has been conceded some influence on language. That occurred, however, without foundation and without giving any serious consideration to the meaning, or even the history, of a mimetic faculty. In the main, such considerations remained closely bound to the commonplace, sensuous area of similarity. Mimetic behavior was at least granted a place in the origin of language as the onomatopoetic element. But if, as is obvious to perceptive people, language is not an agreed-upon system of signs, then the attempt to approach language will always have to reach back to a consideration of how these signs are given in their crudest and most primitive form in the onomatopoetic mode of explication. The question is: how can this onomatopoetic mode of explication be elaborated, and how can it be adapted to clearer insights?

In other words: can one establish an underlying meaning for Rudolf Leonhard's assertion in his instructive work, *The Word*: "Every word—and the whole language—is onomatopoetic." The key which in fact finally makes this thesis completely transparent lies concealed in the concept of a non-sensuous similarity. If, from the different languages, one were to arrange words meaning the same thing around what they mean as their center, then it would be necessary to examine how these words, which often have not the slightest similarity to each other, are similar to that meaning in their center. Such an understanding is of course closely linked to mystical and theological theories of language without, however, being alien to empirical philology. But it is common knowledge that mystical theories of language do not content themselves with drawing the spoken word into their considerations. They certainly also deal with the written language in the same way. And here it is worth noting that the written word, perhaps even more than certain combinations of sounds in language, clarifies, in the relationship of the graphic image (*Schriftbild*) of words or letters to that which is meant or which gives the name, the nature of non-sensuous similarity. Thus, for instance, the letter "beth" has the name of a house. It is therefore non-sensuous similarity which not only creates the connection between the spoken word and what is meant; but also the connection between what is written and what is meant, as well as that between the spoken and the written word. And each time in a completely new, original and underivable way.

The most important of these connections may well be the one mentioned last, between the written and the spoken word. For the similarity which reigns here is the comparatively most non-sensuous. At the same time this similarity is the one which takes the longest to reach. An attempt at representing the actual essence of this similarity can scarcely be undertaken without casting a glance into the history of its formation, however impenetrable is the darkness which covers it still today. Recent graphology has taught us to recognize images, or more precisely picture puzzles, in

handwriting, pictures which conceal the writer's unconscious. It can be assumed that the mimetic faculty expressing itself in the activity of the writer was of greatest importance for writing in the ancient times of its origin. Along with language, writing has thus become an archive of non-sensuous similarities or non-sensuous correspondences.

This, if you will, magical side of both language and writing does not, however, merely run parallel, without relation to the others, namely the semiotic side. Rather, everything mimetic in language is an intention with an established basis which can only appear at all in connection with something alien, the semiotic or communicative element of language. Thus the literal text of writing is the sole basis on which the picture puzzle can form itself. Thus the nexus of meaning implicit in the sounds of the sentence is the basis from which something similar can become apparent instantaneously, in a flash. Since this non-sensuous similarity, however, reaches into all areas of reading, this deep level reveals a peculiar ambiguity of the word "reading" in both its profane and magical senses. The pupil reads his ABC book, and the astrologer reads the future in the stars. In the first clause, reading is not separated into its two components. But the second clarifies both levels of the process: the astrologer reads off the position of the stars in the heavens; simultaneously he reads the future and fate from it.

If, in the dawn of humanity, this reading from stars, entrails, and coincidences represented reading *per se*, and further, if there were mediating links to a newer kind of reading, as represented by the runes, then one might well assume that the mimetic faculty, which was earlier the basis for clairvoyance, quite gradually found its way into language and writing in the course of a development over thousands of years, thus creating for itself in language and writing the most perfect archive of non-sensuous similarity. Language is the highest application of the mimetic faculty: a medium into which the earlier perceptive capabilities for recognizing the similar had entered without residue, so that it is now language which represents the medium in which objects meet and enter into relationship with each other, no longer directly, as once in the mind of the augur or priest, but in their essences, in their most volatile and delicate substances, even in their aromata. In other words: it is to writing and language that clairvoyance has, over the course of history, yielded its old powers.

So speed, that swiftness in reading or writing which can scarcely be separated from this process, would then become, as it were, the effort or gift of letting the mind participate in that measure of time in which similarities flash up fleetingly out of the stream of things only in order to become immediately engulfed again. Thus even profane reading, if it is not to forsake understanding altogether, shares this with magical reading: that it is subject to a necessary speed, or rather a critical moment, which the reader must not forget at any cost unless he wishes to go away empty-handed.

Addendum

The gift which we possess of seeing similarity is nothing but a weak rudiment of the formerly powerful compulsion to become similar and also to behave mimetically. And the forgotten faculty of becoming similar extended far beyond the narrow confines of the perceived world in which we are still capable of seeing similarities. What the stars effected millennia ago in the moment of being born into human existence wove itself into human existence on the basis of similarity.

Translated by Knut Tarnowski

edition suhrkamp

Dolf Oehler

Pariser Bilder 1 (1830-1848)

Antibourgeoise Ästhetik bei Baudelaire,
Daumier und Heine
es 725, DM 12,-

Oskar Negt

**Keine Demokratie ohne
Sozialismus**

Über den Zusammenhang von Politik,
Geschichte und Moral
es 812, DM 14,-

Michael Müller

Die Verdrängung des Ornaments

Zum Verhältnis von Architektur und
Lebenspraxis
es 829, DM 10,-

Franz L. Neumann

Wirtschaft, Staat, Demokratie

Aufsätze 1930-1954.
Herausgegeben von Alfons Söllner
es 892, DM 14,-

Ralph-Rainer Wuthenow

Muse, Maske, Meduse

Europäischer Ästhetizismus
es 897, DM 12,-

Silvia Bovenschen

Die imaginierte Weiblichkeit

Exemplarische Untersuchungen zu
kulturgeschichtlichen und
literarischen Präsentationsformen
des Weiblichen
es 921, DM 11,-

**Sozialdemokratische Arbeiter-
bewegung und Weimarer
Republik**

Materialien zur gesellschaftlichen
Entwicklung 1927-1933.
Herausgegeben von Wolfgang Luthardt
2 Bde, es 923/934, je Bd. DM 15,-

In allen Buchhandlungen
Prospekte durch Suhrkamp Verlag
Suhrkamp Haus 6 Frankfurt 1

Walter Benjamin's *Image of Interpretation**

by Irving Wohlfarth

I

The “dissimulating harmony” that Carol Jacobs elicits from her analyses of selected texts by Nietzsche, Rilke, Artaud and Benjamin marks an instructive contrast from the “unmediated vision” that Geoffrey Hartman derived twenty-five years before from his close readings of Wordsworth, Hopkins, Rilke and Valery. Each of these remarkable first works emerges with consistent but antithetical patterns of far from merely formalist patterns of discovery. Reading, both critics know, is not the activity of an innocent eye (“I began,” writes Hartman, “to eat of the tree of knowledge, so that my eyes were multiplied”¹), and there are many forms of critical guilt. Whereas Hartman still acknowledges a debt to such teachers as Erich Auerbach, Jacobs writes under the impact of Paul de Man and Jacques Derrida.

The Unmediated Vision was an appendix to Auerbach’s inner history of Western consciousness, one version among others of the modern artist’s metaphysical dilemma in a post-theological age. Literary modernity, it argued, had done away with the “mediation” of the Judaeo-Christian past, and a “new Perseus” (156), bereft of all mediating mirrors, now confronts the perils of an unmediated world. At least from Descartes on, poets and philosophers break away from the mediation of Christ and the Church, in search of *haecceitas*, “simple presence” (139) and “an unmediated understanding of the world” (148). Whether or not they find it is less clear. On the one hand, a certain immediacy is said to define poetry as such (39): as the immediate identity of subject and object, it is grounded in “Life continuous, Being unimpaired” (45). And the substitution of “pure representation” for the “mediate” eye (140), Hartman argues, characterizes modern poetry in particular. On the other hand, such immediacy “is never more than desire or possibility” (145), “the eternal promise of selfprehension” (152), and the moderns who reject mediation come to know it “only the more strongly” (164). Looking for it “in the very things that caused them to seek,” they then

*This article is based on a critical reading of Carol Jacobs, *The Dissimulating Harmony*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.

¹ *The Unmediated Vision* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1966), ix.

themselves pretend to the role of mediator (172). This uncertain quest for a “hellenic innocence of the senses” (156) curiously parallels the critic’s relation to his own vision. No sooner has he multiplied his eyes than he aspires to a “unified multiple interpretation” (xi) that will “reaffirm the radical unity of human knowledge” beyond the babel of discrete “approaches” (x). Then he will recover the “single *text*” he knew before the fall into “variant, if not discordant interpretations” (ix). And he cannot wait for the fall to be redeemed. “Though nothing is more presumptuous than to believe one’s thought free of assumptions,” he offers his book “as an exercise in that kind of presumptuousness, which does not trust any but complete interpretation” (x).

Today such an exercise represents an obvious target for deconstruction, which liberates beyond recall the proliferation “always already” at work in all unitary immediacy. That “nature, the body and human consciousness” are, for the modern poet, “the only text” (155) would, in this perspective, be a sure sign that they cannot, *as text*, point to anything but the abortive *desire* for presence. The historical shift from mediation to immediacy would merely replace one metaphysical desire for immediacy with another. Far from emerging out of theology, the modernism that Hartman implicitly traces as far back as the nominalist attack on metaphysics would thus merely mark the perpetuation of the Western onto-theology of presence. It would not be the Gorgon that was monstrous, but rather the fact that neither presence, however awful, nor perception, however direct, nor vision, however interior, really and truly exist. *This* monstrosity would be the “experiment” that “has only started” (173).

Deconstruction rests on a transformed conception of close reading. The critic no longer paraphrases a *vouloir-dire*. Instead of (dis)ingenuously conspiring with the meanings the author dreams, “genuinely analytical reading”² accentuates the self-defeating statements his wishful thinking actually makes. Instead of aiming at “complete interpretation,” the analyst fastens on the “marginal or apparently trivial” (*DH*, x) details that “unsettle” the “integrity” of the total scheme. To use an analogy based on the kind of clear, binary distinction that turns out to be no less “undecidable” for being unavoidable, texts could be said, on this theory, to unravel with their left hand what they weave with their right. This would not be a harmoniously balanced “on the one hand/ on the other hand” that could be rhetorically or dialectically juggled. The right hand does not (want to) know what the left hand is (un)doing. If the right hand is “blindness” and the left “insight,” then insight can only occur blindly, underhandedly. The terms are thus reversed. Clear and distinct ideas are the enabling blindness that gives protective cover to a groping, stammering, disabling form of insight, which “is able to move toward the light only because, being already blind, it does

² *The Dissimulating Harmony* (hereafter *DH*), ix-x. Roman numerals refer to Paul de Man’s Foreword.

not have to fear the power of the light.”³ In his Foreword to *The Dissimulating Harmony* Paul de Man stresses that such self-deconstruction, along with its accompanying self-effacement, is inevitably at work in both the critic’s and the writer’s text. There is no suppressing its symptoms. “The more one censors” — thereby abetting the text’s own self-censorship — “the more one reveals what is being effaced” (ix). It is, accordingly, with the contrapuntal anti-plot that the critic now conspires. In construing the repressed, however, he necessarily resorts to the blind and binary language of repression. The passage to deconstructive consciousness goes from left to right. But the right hand is the one that ignores the left, does the construction, etc. The paradox of constructing a deconstructive argument is one of which de Man and Jacobs are painfully aware. The very fluency with which she articulates, say, Nietzsche’s “stammering text,” he observes, threatens to abort what it had just disclosed. Nor is there any way out of the dilemma. It is not as if “really” stammering would help. Yvor Winger’s “fallacy of imitative form” blocks that exit. Neither stammering nor fluency can articulate the stammering that articulates articulation itself, a stammering inaccessible to direct representation or “unmediated vision.” Equally, the will to ambidextrous co-ordination would merely polarize the inevitable hegemony of the right hand and the equally inevitable resistance of the left. Forcing the left-handed to write with their right can provoke the return of the repressed — namely, stammering.

In *affirming* the multiplicity of interpretation, the deconstructive activity I am baldly paraphrasing, and thus misrepresenting, does not settle for the disheartening pluralism of critical approaches that drove Hartman to seek the unified truth. It everywhere unearths coherent structures of unresolvable contradiction and diagnoses other readings, especially those naive enough to want to solve or deny the contradictions, as the dupes of a nostalgia for a home they never had — necessary dupes of a ubiquitous and indispensable blindness, but dupes nonetheless. But if the structure of understanding allows of no control, and all claims to mastery, even deconstructive ones, disqualify themselves as the pride that goes before a fall,⁴ the distinction between (and within) critics who show insight and those who show symptoms is “not so great” (*DH*, xii) after all. Indeed, it follows

³Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 106. (Hereafter *BI*.) Does, then, blindness supply a new version of the “new Perseus” with an apotropaic shield? Cf. Richard Klein’s further deconstruction of de Man’s deconstructive scheme in “The Blindness of Hyperboles. The Ellipses of Insight,” *Diacritics*, 3, No. 2 (1973), 33-44. For Jacobs the distinction between “unintentional self-mystification” (e.g. Lukács: *BI*, 103-04) and an “intended strategy of self-camouflage” (e.g. Rousseau: *BI*, 139) is no longer an issue (*DH*, 110). As in de Man’s essay on Derrida and Rousseau, it is replaced by the notion of a necessary fiction. (In general, Jacobs operates at too rarefied an altitude to allow tensions between (say) de Man and Derrida to come into focus. My eclectic version of “deconstruction” inherits this blur.)

⁴Cf. Jacobs’ deconstructive version of “Rastelli narrates” (*DH*, 113-16).

from the theory that certain blindly symptomatic endeavors should be closer to major insight than other more enlightened performances. Lukács' *Theory of the Novel* is, in de Man's analysis, a case in point (*BI*, 51-59, 104). A new criterion thus emerges: how well an urn lets itself be unwrought.

After *The Dissimulating Harmony*, many assumptions about Nietzsche, Rilke, Artaud and Benjamin will, de Man claims, no longer be so easy to maintain. Readers "will have to decide for themselves by following Jacobs' reading in detail and by testing in very specific ways whether their own assurances and preconceptions are being dislodged by what she brings out" (*DH*, x). Given the ambitions of the general program, the sheer caliber of Jacobs' work, and her mentor's claim that here "for once" criticism is being "really precise" (ix), the challenge cannot go unheeded. At the constant risk of acting out regressive "nostalgis" (x), practicing a "more familiar kind of literary criticism" (viii) in order to put down subversion, and censoriously reconstructing an authorized version by acting as Walter Benjamin's right-hand man, I want to argue that her analysis of his essay on Proust does *not* "resist attempts to find fault with the details of its articulation" (xii); and that, contrary to her self-image as a juggler who is juggled by the text (115), it performs "with an elaborate, self-sufficient virtuosity of its own" (114), submitting to "the teleology of controlled meaning" (x) even as it intends its undoing. Readers will have to decide whether I am afraid of losing my bearings in the labyrinth that textuality proves to be or whether she is lost in labyrinthine "disasters of her own making" (v). Not that Benjamin cannot be usefully "reinscribed." My quarrel is not necessarily with deconstruction. Rather with the subtle misreading to which it has here given rise.

II

"Glorifier le culte des images (ma grande, mon unique, ma primitive passion)."

"Mais le génie n'est que *l'enfance retrouvée* à volonté, l'enfance donnée maintenant, pour s'exprimer, d'organes virils et de l'esprit analytique qui lui permet d'ordonner la somme de matériaux involontairement amassée." (Baudelaire)

No other major twentieth-century critic has grounded his work as unequivocally as Walter Benjamin⁵ in a "metaphysics of present." The eccentric messianism of an outsider who regarded philosophy as the language of pimps turns out to be a restatement of the classic Western dream about the origin and goal of language and history. The conviction haunts his

⁵References to Benjamin's texts will use the following abbreviations: *GS* for *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. R. Tiedemann and H. Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971-); *B* for *Briefe* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1966); *I* for *Illuminations*, ed. H. Arendt (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1968); *UB* for *Understanding Brecht* (London: New Left Books, 1973); *CB* for *Charles Baudelaire. A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism* (London: New Left Books, 1973); *O* for *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (London: New Left Books, 1977); *R* for *Reflections*, ed. P. Demetz (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1978). Translations are, where necessary, emended.

criticism that “every truth has its dwelling, its ancestral palace, in language, that it is erected from the oldest logoi and that to a truth thus founded the insights of the sciences will remain inferior as long as they make do here and there in the realm of language like nomads, laboring under a sign theory of language which impresses [*aufprägt*] irresponsible arbitrariness on their terminology (B, 329).⁶ In the name of theology the language that diagnoses *l'arbitraire du signe* as itself a sign of the Fall, Benjamin regularly denounces this sign theory of language — the basis of Saussurian linguistics and, re-elaborated, of deconstruction — as a “bourgeois” construct. It becomes “the task of the translator” and, by extension, of the critic, collector and revolutionary to work, through teleological displacement and disorder, toward the universal language and history in which the broken parts will regain their proper place. There is little difference in *this* respect between “early” and “late.” The old messianic categories resurface in the final *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, which do not deny the theological dwarf hidden in the materialist automat. The motif of “homesickness” in the Proust essay, which dates from the “middle” period (1929), points likewise to a submerged theology of exile, wandering and return — wandering which, unlike the nomad’s, remembers its origins. Nine years earlier Lukács’ *Theory of the Novel*, which hinges on a notion of “transcendental homelessness,” had dreamt the whole metaphysical utopia out loud.

Can Jacobs nevertheless show that a process of self-deconstruction is underway in Benjamin’s essay on Proust? At several selected points she claims to find openings — cracks in the metaphysical structure that would *not* be due to the kabbalist “breaking of the vessels.” She begins with the following paragraph: “It is known that Proust did not describe a life as it was [*wie es gewesen ist*] in his work, but rather a life the way he who experienced it remembers it. And yet even this is still imprecise and far too clumsily put. For here it is not what he experienced that plays the chief role for the remembering author, but rather the weaving of his memory [*Erinnerung*], the Penelope work of remembrance [*Eingedenken*]. Or shouldn’t one rather speak of a Penelope work of forgetting? Isn’t . . . Proust’s *mémoire involontaire* much closer to forgetting than to what is usually called memory? And isn’t this work of spontaneous remembrance, in which memory is the woof and forgetting the warp, rather an inversion of Penelope’s work than its likeness? For here the day unravels what the night wove. Every morning, upon awakening, we hold in our hands, mostly weakly and loosely, only by a couple of fringes, the tapestry of lived experience, as forgetting wove it in

⁶These lines remind Hannah Arendt of Heidegger (I, 46). But a Heidegger-inspired deconstruction of their intent would point to “phallogocentrism”: the vindication of an originary logoi in the name of sedentary nobility, genealogy, foundation, responsibility and erection defines the nomadic enemy in a telltale metaphor (*aufprägen*) that combines writing, violence and reproduction. Such *errance* it would proceed to transvalue.

us Therefore, in the end, Proust transformed his days to night . . . to allow none of the intricate arabesques to escape him" (I, 202).

Alluding to this passage in *Realism in our Time*, Lukács was to object to the typically modernist slippage of referential objectivity in the substitution of "the weaving of memory" for "life as it was" — a naive realism on the critic's part that Benjamin had meanwhile denounced in the *Theses* as the conformist historicism (Ranke's *wie es eigentlich gewesen*) with which historical materialism had to break (I, 255). At the other extreme Jacobs claims to find here a series of tentative but unmistakable movements from life towards literature and image, whereby the latter gradually slip their referential moorings: the apparent initial priority of life over fictional text is reversed, leaving life voided and the warp of forgetting the victor over the woof of memory (DH, 91-93). She cannot, in other words, resist the temptation to conflate Benjamin's metaphor of the weaving and unweaving of life's text with her guiding model of a two-handed (de)construction of texts. But to have Benjamin void the *horstexte*, she has to misread him. She correctly reports the opposition and interplay between a nocturnal forgetting, which weaves an ornamental text, and a daytime memory, life-bound, goal-oriented and utilitarian, which unravels it. But she then equates life with memory and day, text with forgetting and night, and — since Proust turned day into night in order to write — declares the latter the winner. She overlooks, firstly, that, instead of weaving life into text, Benjamin implicitly distinguishes between two textual dialectics, life's and Proust's; secondly, that, far from being simply opposed to *all* memory, forgetting is here associated with *involuntary* memory (*Eingedenken*) — which is closer to forgetting than what is *usually* called memory (*Erinnerung*). The everyday standpoint of the ego will indeed turn out to be a trap. *Eingedenken* is, conversely, no less remote from what we unthinkingly call forgetting, and will later be associated with "presence of mind." Commonsense equations of conscious memory with presence of mind, involuntary memory with absent-mindedness, are thus discarded. Totally dissociated from one another, voluntary and involuntary memory would in fact respectively amount to a dreamless punctuality that knew only the now, and a stream-of-consciousness that was synonymous with the river Lethe. Their mutual obstruction reduces them to complementary forms of forgetting. Indeed, such compartmentalization is, Benjamin argues, the historical trend — the opposition between night and day being, it will emerge, a historically overdetermined, not a merely natural, one. Only a *liberating* interplay between the two could resist the drift towards general amnesia. Proustian memory, as Benjamin describes it, is such an intervention, an interweaving of weaving and unweaving, voluntary and involuntary memory. Were either set of terms to win out and their positive interplay to cease, the text would come unraveled. Far from making life inextricable from text, a textual interplay occurs *both* in life *and* in letters. But in real life day effaces night, unraveling its text and, thereby, life itself; elsewhere Benjamin associates

“starting all over again” with wage-labor — that is, the worst kind of “goal-bound activity,” a Sisyphean work of forgetting — and the impoverishment of experience (*I*, 179). So Proust, to lose none of life’s threads, turns day to night. This is the paradoxical condition for the (no longer objectivist) recuperation of past experience, a recuperation associated in the second of the *Theses* with redemption and the *promesse de bonheur*. Proust’s “frenzied quest for happiness,” even for the most “banal” kind, should, Benjamin urges, be the “major concern” of his readers (*I*, 203). But in Jacobs’ scheme of things it could function only as a blind desire, a *leurre* (Derrida) — a metaphor to which we will return.

What this and many other passages signal is not some textualization of life but the extra-literary shifts that determine the text *qua* superstructure. Read together with section eight of *The Storyteller* and section two from *On Some Motifs in Baudelaire*, the Proust essay yields the following scheme. The unprecedented dissociation of voluntary and involuntary memory is ultimately attributable to the *social* division of labor. In the golden age of the storyteller — and here, too, there are hints of triadic nostalgia for the age we have lost — a different social and psychic economy prevailed. It was still possible to spin yarns because yarn was still being collectively, rhythmically spun: the steady, public craft of storytelling is in the last instance predicated on the *handicraft* of weaving. Stories can be *handed* down, embroidered and taken in precisely because the dissociation of memory has not yet taken place.⁷ Self-forgetful retentiveness is closer to sleep than to what is usually called attention: “This process of assimilation, which takes place deep down, requires a state of relaxation which is becoming increasingly rare. If sleep is the culmination of physical relaxation, boredom [*Langeweile*] is the culmination of mental relaxation. Boredom is the dream-bird that hatches the egg of experience This is how today [the gift of storytelling] is becoming unraveled at all its ends after being woven thousands of years ago in the ambience of the oldest forms of craftsmanship” (*I*, 91). In the age of high capitalism, the storyteller, like the lyric poet, becomes an improbable figure. A storyteller out of his element, Proust single-handedly resurrects epic memory, not unlike the novelist described in *Theory of the Novel*. His “pointless stories” recreate the “boredom” of epic experience; but the dream-bird that hatches it has become a private dream-world (*I*, 204). The teller of tales is now bereft of a quasi-narrative substructure. No longer sustained by a text(ile)-weaving economy, marooned in a world which reduces memory to punctuality, weaving to an unconscious nocturnal activity, and relaxation — once a function of work-rhythms — to inaction, Proust has to weave night and day in order to tell his life. The storyteller is confined to an unhealthy, unilateral existence. *This* — and not the repeated gesture of pretending to grasp for the real (*DH*, 98-103) — is what Benjamin

⁷Cf., on this dissociation, my “On the Messianic Structure of Walter Benjamin’s Last Reflections” in *Glyph 3* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press), 149-56.

means when he writes: “The image of Proust is the highest physiognomic expression that the incessantly growing discrepancy between poetry and life was able to produce” (*I*, 202).

So rapidly is the gap widening that Proust’s bid “to restore the figure of the storyteller to the present generation” (*I*, 159) promises to be “the last for a long time” (*I*, 201-02). The notion of a “lifework” is already placed in inverted commas. Shortly after this diagnostic celebration of a by now “synthetic” (*I*, 157) attempt to recover lost time, *The Destructive Character* (1931) and *Experience and Poverty* (1933) side with those non-Proustian moderns who start out from “the bad new days” (*UB*, 121); and by transvaluing the opposition between cultic “aura” and its disappearance in mass society, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* will cast political suspicion on any further cult of experience, indeed on “the very notion of art” (*I*, 217). In seven years the discrepancy between art and life has, *in that form*, become a reactionary problematic. Jacobs, on the other hand, freezes it. Whereas Benjamin increasingly focussed on the historical “construction” (*B*, 793-94) of his literary subjects, Jacobs claims to find in his Proust essay the ironical deconstruction of all criticism that wants to discover the world “behind” the text (*DH*, 109). She thus interprets the discrepancy between poetry and life as an initial pointer to the epistemological breakdown of any clear-cut distinction between them. This would in turn undo historical schemes such as the above, which would — to adapt her formulation on Nietzsche (*DH*, 22) — tell the storytelling that is history rather than the history of storytelling. This connection between telling stories and telling history, one of the themes of *The Storyteller*, is not the impediment for Benjamin that it is for Jacobs; it was itself historically woven, now it is being historically unraveled. The history of capitalism cannot, Lukács to the contrary, be narrated because narration is one of its casualties.

Jacobs claims to find the same pattern of internal disparity throughout Benjamin’s essay, and turns next to his account of Proust’s “elegiac” desire for “the eternal once again, the eternal restoration of the original, first happiness” — a quest which leads into a dream-world where relations of *similarity* eclipse waking laws of *identity*. Because “coincidence is absent” *within* that world, she claims, “perfect coincidence” *with* it is also ruled out (*DH*, 94). But memory is never for Benjamin an exact repetition of “life as it was.” Rather it obeys a logic of unconscious association — that is, of similarity — which reworks it into ever-changing constellations (*I*, 180). There is thus no need to deconstruct a notion of temporal self-identity that was never advanced. Nor is it effaced by a *negative* concept of non-identity “devoid of an apparent plenitude” (*DH*, 94) but by a *positive* notion of similarity, which is the very medium — and not the undoing — of the Proustian quest. Jacobs finds confirmation for the alleged movement from the “plenitude” of identity to the “void” of similarity in Benjamin’s analogy between dream-world and stocking. The analogy itself enacts the logic of

similarity. But not as a “relationship . . . of noncorrespondence” (*DH*, 96). Quite the reverse. “Children know an emblem of this world: the stocking that has the structure of the dreamworld when, rolled up in the laundry chest, it is at once a ‘bag’ and a ‘present’. And just as they cannot have enough of instantaneously [*mit einem Griff*] transforming both, bag and contents, into a third thing — namely, the stocking —, so Proust could not get his fill of emptying the dummy [*Attrappe*], the self, at a stroke in order to keep garnering [*einbringen*] that third thing, the image, which stilled his curiosity — indeed, his homesickness” (*I*, 204-05).

Incompatible though the deconstructive operation is with “dialectical movement” (*BI*, 102), Jacobs’ intricate misreading of this passage invites rearrangement as a pseudo-dialectic. The thesis: “Marcel attempts to make a lost self present to him by recapturing past time. The quest for the self can only take place in this futile attempt to render a past self present. Benjamin compares this unsuccessful reappropriation to the emptying of an apparently full sign in the children’s game with the stocking” (*DH*, 96). The stocking analogy would thus be a deconstructive parable of the thwarted desire for the coincidence of the self with itself and its past, a story of blindness and insight in which Proust blindly grasps at the promise of presence held out by the apparently full stocking, only to be left empty-handed — richer, if at all, in insight (into the structure of mirages), and that no longer on a Hegelian model of dialectical development. But since this story of failure is irreconcilable with the text, it is complemented by its antithesis. This time the children know that the “reach into the stocking is a game” and that “the apparent container is empty.” They are “obsessed” not with the contents, the *signifié*, but by the “goalless desire to repeat the game” of emptying the bag, sign, self, etc. (*DH*, 95). This second version at least sticks to the text, which makes it unambiguously clear that no-one is tempted by the Christmas present of a full stocking. The game everyone plays is successful, lucid and happy, and, like all happiness, craves “the eternal once again.” If the self is a trap, then not for the players. But how reconcile thesis and antithesis? The “unsuccessful grasp” at fullness with the successful game of emptying? The desire to reappropriate with the desire to deconstruct? The latter, though, depends on the former for its material. No insight without blindness. Hence the strategic necessity of the false thesis — but for which the emptying of the bag could not function as a metaphor for deconstruction. And, sure enough, the synthesis consists in calling the thesis a “fictional gesture” (*DH*, 97). The blindness was a necessary fiction, the “grasp for the self” a “pretended” one, a “trap” (*Attrappe*) the players merely seemed to fall into. Through this “feigned movement toward coincidence that leads to nonidentity” (96) the image allegedly emerges. This move from the thesis to the antithesis it already was, which recalls the Hegelian trick of generating movement on the basis of an untenable point of departure, will characterize Jacobs’ whole argument. The “fictionality” of the “representational stance” will emerge,

as “image” and “writing,” out of the literal-minded grasp at the promise of life and the resulting empty-handedness. This “necessarily oblique” (110) movement, which Benjamin allegedly traces in Proust, is also said to characterize his own essay. He, too, plays the nostalgic memoirist, but offers both nostalgias as traps “in order to empty them . . . so that the image of his own writing may rise out of the discrepancy marked between life and literature” (97-98). Criticism and fiction thus share the same structure (90), and, like the game with the stocking, the signs of a text “repeatedly . . . deconstruct themselves” (110).

But deconstruction amounts in this instance to “the mimicry of its performance” (ix), the “fictional gesture” of setting up an Aunt Sally “in order to” (97) knock it down. If Jacobs finds in the stocking the emptiness she is looking for, isn’t this because she is led on by the lure of *non*-identity, a new desire — *Enfer ou Ciel, qu’importe* — for crossed-out presence? For Benjamin’s image of how Proust discovers images no more coincides with de Man’s version of how writers arrive at insights than the *Attrappe* does with the Derridean *leurre*. It is the Derridean who is here not respecting differences. “The grasp,” she writes, “that should render the contents of the stocking present only leads to a voiding of the self” (95). Yes, but she then precipitously concludes that all is emptiness. That evacuation, which she mistakes for the “unsuccessful reappropriation” (96) of the past, is the condition under which involuntary memory effectively operates. She equates the Proustian *recherche* with the desire for self-coincidence. But no “quest for the self,” past or present, obtains. Instead there is a quest for the image. This requires, precisely, practice in *undoing* the self. The lightning gesture of giving it the slip isn’t a reach “for” (95) the dummy but *out* of it. For it is this closed, dumb self, the A=A of formal identity, not the quest it obstructs, that is the *Attrappe* — both dummy and trap. If Proust is never had by it, this is because it never holds out the promise of happiness. This lies rather in happily “sacrificing . . . the unity of the person” (I, 204) in pursuit of memory. For the not altogether “goalless game” of emptying the bag discloses a real “third thing,” the image, a full, though fragile sign, not a metaphor for the non-representational metaphoricity of language. “Bringing in” this “catch” (I, 214) actually “stills” Proust’s “homesickness”; the “spiritual exercises” (I, 212) of emptying the bag actually bag something else. And since the catch *is* a different one, it makes an instructive contrast with the *Fort-Da* game Freud describes in *Beyond the Pleasure-Principle*. There the child tries symbolically to control his mother’s comings and goings by repeatedly making a bobbin at the end of a string disappear and reappear. Freud’s child wants to master reality and practice growing up. He is already at work on the adult ego that Proust — “that aged child” who mimicks high society with “servant curiosity” (I, 209, 213) — plays at abandoning. Insofar as such gay abandon presupposes the complementary dialectic of voluntary and involuntary moments that Baudelaire calls genius, it admittedly also aims at recuperation. But not at a “reappropriation” of, by and for the self.

The game that Benjamin describes is thus not a deconstructive fiction. On the contrary, it ends up with a “fragile, precious *reality*: the image” (*I*, 205). Nor is the dream-world a matter of “frivolous” and “empty” signs (*DH*, 95), but rather the “*true* surrealist face of existence.” It is, precisely, the waking world of hollow dummies that is frivolous: “The similarity of one thing to another with which we reckon, which occupies our waking minds, merely plays around [*umspielt*] the deeper similarity of the dreamworld, in which what takes place never surfaces as identical, but rather as similar, impenetrably similar to itself” (*I*, 204). The identical terms on which we count are aberrant, reified forms of similarity. Their superficial play (*umspielt*) barely touches the deep play of similarity. How decide, though, whether what is “similar to itself” can be safely accommodated within the old *analogia entis* or whether the text does indeed in this case deconstruct “itself”? Unlike identity, the similar would “itself” be without self-identity. It wouldn’t be a proper noun, entity or term but rather an endless, insubstantial, metaphorical movement. It would both underlie and undermine identity. But even this would not yet mean that it is to identity (or that involuntary is to voluntary memory) as void is to plenitude. Is it, then, its “reality,” “surrealist” though that may be? Or are truth, reality and depth the terms on which *Benjamin* counts, the blindness that covers a fleeting insight, the metaphysical scheme which that insight unsettles? For the relation of identity to similarity recalls that of the arbitrary, nomadic signs to the “oldest logoi.” Arbitrary signs are the currency of identity; conversely, the “empty triumph of subjectivity” — that is, the “mythology” (*GS*, 2, I, 162) of subject-object relations — coincides with “the onset of an arbitrary rule over things” (*O*, 233). Both are, according to Benjamin’s theology of language, a consequence of the Fall. The nomad has lost his way home to the ancestral dwelling; likewise, the arbitrary ruler turns out, *as* ruler, “not” to be “the master in [his] own house” (Freud). Anamnesis points the way back and out. Hence Proust’s “frenetic” cult of memory, similarity and happiness, his evacuation of the self, his homesickness “for a world distorted [*entstellt*] into the state of similarity” (*I*, 205). The distortion lies in the eye of the beholder *qua* identical subject. So that the “true surrealist face of existence” is — to quote against itself Lukács’ “realist” indictment of modernism — the distortion of distortion.

The metaphor of the self as its own booby-trap is far from random. “In all his phases,” writes Adorno, “Benjamin conceived the downfall of the subject and the salvation of man as inseparable” (*Prisms*. London: Neville Spearman, 1967, 231). The “constitutive subject” of idealist theory and bourgeois practice, which “makes the world in its own image” (Marx), is trapped, like the king in Baudelaire’s third *Spleen* poem, within his own arbitrary and melancholy despotism. True “enlightenment” would be, to twist the Kantain definition, man’s emergence not out of his “self-incurred tutelage” (*selbstverschuldete Unmündigkeit*) but out of his distorted adulthood, solitary confinement and continuing entanglement in mythical fate

(*Schuldzusammenhang des Lebendigen*). The distorted identity of the dummy, identity as distortion, is of a piece with a twisted conception of character as the “embroilment” of guilt and fate, a “knot in the net” (R, 306, 311). To weave one’s text is at once to unravel the skein of fate, to unroll the stocking. Between this dismantling of the self and its *mise en question* in recent French philosophy and psychoanalysis there are crucial differences. While each denounces the imperialist self, German “non-identity” (Adorno) is not synonymous with French “heterogeneity” (Bataille). The demise of the subject is not, for Benjamin or Adorno, the “end of man” but, at least potentially, the beginning of true individuation. Such would be the *utopian* “dialectic of the Enlightenment.” Liquidating its self-incurred guilt, it would finally disentangle itself from myth, and its agent, the subject, from domination. However destructive such liquidation, it is necessarily committed to some form of recuperation, be it Hegelian *Aufhebung* or a Messianic *restitutio in integrum* (R, 313).⁸ Deconstruction diagnoses such dreams as a trap. But this is not to be confused with Benjamin’s *Attrappe*.

If the emptying of the stocking is misrepresented when paraphrased in a terminology of plenitude and emptiness, how *are* we to understand the world of similarity to which it gives access? Here, too, Benjamin’s answer has to be pieced together from several texts. The crucial concept around which they all revolve is *correspondances*. Jacobs never refers to it, only to “noncorrespondence,” but Benjamin names it the “heart of the Proustian world”: “It is the world in a state of similarity, and in it rule the ‘correspondances’; the Romantics were the first to seize on them, and Baudelaire’s grasp of them was the most intimate, but it was left to Proust to exhibit them in our lived life” (I, 320). The two-fold reference in the Proust essay to “the world in the state of similarity” points to an archaic *vie antérieure* which is the object of his homesickness. The world-historical underpinnings of the Proustian metaphor are most fully sketched in the fragment *On the Mimetic Faculty* (R, 333-36) which, like the doctrine of correspondences, harks back to Romantic speculation.⁹ According to an

⁸“Many assumptions,” writes de Man, “about the depth of the nostalgias that allow Benjamin to assert a historical palingenesis beyond the most radical negations” will, after Carol Jacobs, “no longer be so easy to maintain” (*DH*, x). Palingenesis (literally: birth again): “Haeckel’s term for the form of ontogenesis in which ancestral characters are exactly reproduced, without modification” (*OED*). The “ancestral characters” (or “oldest logoi”) are the early Benjamin’s major theme. But already the Proust essay rejects the idea that memories are “exactly reproduced.” As for their “modification,” I have argued elsewhere (in *Diacritics* 8, No. 2, 1978, 62-63) that *The Destructive Character* enacts a *self-effacing* palingenesis: the phoenix rising from its ashes is not, as someone thought, an accurate illustration of the process. It “lives from the old fire” (Nietzsche), but also seeks to consume it. The source disappears (or, like theology, is “dwarfed”) in the process. This does not necessarily mean that theology is on the way to self-deconstruction.

⁹The mimetic faculty is the subjective correlative of the symbolical or analogical version of the universe — a capacity to respond to the “aura,” the *regards familiers* (Baudelaire) of its *correspondances*. “Das ‘air de famille’ nennt man Analogie” (Novalis). But Benjamin also

earlier version, entitled *Doctrine of the Similar*, the world was once — onto- and phylogenetically — perceived in terms not of identity but of an all-encompassing “law of similarity” (*GS*, 2, I, 204-10).¹⁰ The world in the “state” (*Stand*) of similarity corresponded to the “astrological constellation” (*Gestirnstand*) that the new-born child, at the “instant” (*Nu*) of its birth, in some sense imitated. Correlatively, perception was a function of a quite different economy of conscious and unconscious response — *consciously* perceived similarities constituting even today the mere tip of the iceberg. These “natural correspondences” were “stimulants and awakers” of the “mimetic faculty which in man gives them answer”¹¹ — *in*, not *by*, man because it is only when the self-identical subject opens up that the non-identical image arises. And just as the dummy was “instantaneously” turned into a stocking, perception of the image is bound to the “instant.” It is always a function of a fleeting “constellation.”

It is thus not to a “Platonic” or “utopian” eternity that such involuntary correspondences between the present instant and an earlier life grant momentary access. “The eternity of which Proust speaks is convoluted, not boundless, time . . . , time in its most real — that is, space-bound — form,” a “counter-play” between “remembrance within and aging without” (*I*, 211). Jacobs equates this convolution with the earlier account of involuntary memory as the interweaving of remembrance and forgetting, and inevitably compounds her misinterpretation of that passage. A cumulative opposition is, she claims, set up between two series of terms — remembrance-rejuvenation-time-presence *versus* forgetting-age-space-absence. Once again the first series, Benjamin’s official story, is supposedly unsuccessful, leaving the second the winner.¹² Here is the passage in question: “*memoire*

returns to the German Romantics to *wake up* from their dream — itself an aspiration to the synthesis of dreaming and waking states — and not, like Albert Béguin, to continue dreaming it. Cf. his review of *L’Ame Romantique et le Rêve* in *GS*, 3, 557-60.

¹⁰Cf. Adorno/Horkheimer in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 9-18, on the *destructive* historical dialectic of similarity (= myth) and identity (= enlightenment), seen through the eyes of a Benjaminian “angel of history” (*I*, 257). The *positive* sublimation of the mimetic faculty, which was for the early Benjamin the achievement of *language*, is here restricted to *art*.

¹¹Complementarily, the poet endows nature with an answering gaze — that is, with “aura” (*I*, 188). “The gaze of nature, thus awakened, dreams and draws the poet after its dream” (*I*, 200).

¹²Benjamin in fact describes the attempted ascendancy of one series of terms over another in connection with the philosophy which Proust’s novel subjects to an “immanent critique” (*I*, 157). In attributing absolute superiority to inner *durée* over warped spatial notions of time, Bergson leaves no room for death, history (*I*, 185) or “space-crossed” time. The insulated interiority of the *schöne Seele* proves to be the “bad infinity” — Hegel’s *schlechte Unendlichkeit* — “of an ornament” (*I*, 202) even more purely ornamental than Proust’s arabesques or the emblems of *art nouveau* (*R*, 154-55). The repressed returns. For such ornament is merely the “after-image” (*I*, 157) of another bad infinity, the “straight or spiral course” of “progress,” the “homogeneous, empty” spacetime (*I*, 260-61) from which *durée* is to be preserved. *This*, then, is what happens when the “ornaments of forgetting” (*I*, 202) “win out” (*DH*, 93). Dialectically

involontaire, the rejuvenating force which is a match for the inexorable process of aging. When the past is reflected in the dew-fresh 'instant' ['Nu'], a painful shock of rejuvenation pulls it together Proust pulled off the enormous feat of letting the entire world age by an entire lifetime in an instant. But this very concentration in which what otherwise merely fades and dozes consumes itself in a flash is called rejuvenation. *A la recherche du temps perdu* is the unremitting attempt to charge an entire lifetime with the utmost presence of mind. Not reflection — actualization is Proust's procedure. He is imbued with the insight that we all have no time to live the true dramas that we are destined for. That makes us age. Nothing else. The wrinkles and creases on our faces are the signatures of the great passions, the vices and insights that called on us — but we, the masters [*wir, die Herrschaft*], weren't home" (*I*, 211-12).

Aging, Jacobs argues, plays the role allotted in the earlier interplay to forgetting: "like forgetting, aging records the image of lived life, and like forgetting it both gains ascendancy over its opposite and brings forth the ornament or image The gesture that would seem to render one a lifetime younger brings loss of life instead: the concentration of past and present which attempts a reappropriation of life . . . brings about its instantaneous consumption" (*DH*, 98, 99-100). It takes considerable ingenuity to juggle this counter-meeting out of the text. In the earlier passage Jacobs oversimplified the interplay between remembering and forgetting by underestimating the semantic play within each term. Here likewise she can argue the ascendancy of aging only by ignoring or conflating its two distinct, antithetical meanings: on the one hand, the inert passivity that fades and dozes, the "homogeneous, empty time" (*I*, 261) of the *Theses*; on the other hand, its "match," the sudden awakening, the dislocation of chronology, the painful contraction whereby the world ages in an instant. In the consuming flash of involuntary memory, the latter, if anything, wins out over the former. Jacobs can claim a contrary ascendancy of aging over rejuvenation, a failure to counter aging and retrieve the past, only by equating the first meaning ("aging") with the second ("letting age"). Their verbal identity may interrelate them, but it does not reduce them to semantic indistinction. The earlier interplay between memory and forgetting, the warp and woof of remembrance, is indeed coextensive with the dialectic of memory and aging. But thereby forgetting becomes synonymous with aging not merely in the usual sense but also in an unusual, positive one — aging as rejuvenation, forgetting as authentic remembrance. Not that the "counterplay" between "memory within" and "aging without" amounts to a Bergsonian dualism of inner and outer, time as *durée* and time as space. The fact that aging does appear on either side of the opposition is enough to indicate that the painful rejuvenation in question isn't a magic potion of

woven as it is by the criss-crossing of the woof *and* the warp, the inner *and* the outer, Proust's "convoluted" text effectively *crosses* Bergson's "boundless" idealism.

idealist or vitalist provenance. Benjamin's oppositions aren't between time and space but between sets of spatio-temporal metaphors — differing kinds of ornament, the lines of age and the convolutions of memory, the localized, materialist eternity of intersecting, "space-bound" time *versus* the unbounded idealist eternity of (say) Bergsonian *durée* or the historicist panorama. Jacobs needs the simple opposition between time and space to be able to set up her winning series: ornament-image-poetry-forgetting-space. Should we then say that, rightly interpreted, it *is* the winner — the series, that is, of life and involuntary memory, not their deconstruction? No, because that, too, would destroy the counter-play between remembrance and aging. Jacob's emphasis on aging isn't wrong, merely a warped accentuation of the warp. For if Proust's dense, spreading text is animated by the search for happiness (*I*, 202-03), his convoluted syntax also enacts the threat of suffocation and faces death as a "new reality whose reflection on things and men are the traits of aging" (*I*, 214). If "presence of mind" were omnipresent — but that would be as idealist a repression of death as Bergson's (*I*, 185) or Proust's Platonism (*I*, 211) —, there would be no wrinkles and thus not much "physiognomic expression." To this extent "That makes us age. Nothing else" is a brave, though not an empty, gesture. However promptly we respond when opportunity knocks, death will, we can safely assume, always have left its visiting card. Aging takes care of itself. But, contrary to the inverted Bergsonism of Jacobs' reading, it alone does not produce the image. "Fate rolls towards death" (*O*, 131). Where it rolls unchecked, death isn't a new reality but the eternal, mythical repetition of the same.

It is surprising that a deconstructive critic should not have seized on the scriptural metaphor which likens the lines on our faces to entries made in a visitor's book by callers who didn't find us home. These unsightly reminders of our inadvertence, which form our "character," should never have come about. The traits (*Züge*) of aging are the writing on the wall, on our faces, behind our backs — "ornaments of forgetting" akin to the "ornamental letters" of the sentence visited by an "old-fashioned machine" on the victim's back in Kafka's penal colony (*I*, 133). "The eternal return is the projection onto the cosmos of punitive detention: mankind has to copy out its text in countless repetitions" (*GS*, I, 3, 1234). Benjamin's essay on Kafka equates oblivion with guilt and distortion. They are epitomized by the hunchback dwarf in the German nursery rhyme who mislays reality when backs are turned. His "distortion" (*Entstellung* — literally: "misplacement") points up the affinity between creases on our face and our not being home. The upshot is a reified dummy, an oblivious law of identity (*wir*), governed by a distorted logic of domination (*die Herrschaft*). Aging, distortion and guilt are its hallmarks, unredeemed "signs of fate" (*R*, 305). Over against such mythical writing stands holy scripture, and beyond that the Messianic "world of ubiquitous and integral actuality" whose liberated prose has "burst the fetters of the written" (*GS*, I, 3, 1235). Proust's "actualization" of

the past intermittently prefigures that total, consuming resurrection of the dead. "Thus he establishes a conception of the present as the "time of the now" (*Jetztzeit*) which is shot through with chips of Messianic time" (*I*, 263). The "presence of mind" which is alert to the mystical-astrological *Nu* would thus contain as its Messianic telos a metaphysics of presence which finally effaces the traces of the written. Which is perhaps why Jacobs is not at home when Benjamin's insight calls. This is how she paraphrases it: "Proust understood that none of us has time to live the drama of his existence and that it is this incapacity for immediate experience that makes us age. The process of aging dictates the expressions of our physiognomies, etches our image . . . : aging is the process that brings forth the image and marks the direction of the Proustian endeavor we realize the impossibility of learning and experience . . ." (*DH*, 101). "To charge an entire lifetime with the utmost presence of mind" is, on the contrary, to grasp the permanent *possibility* of experience and happiness. Nowhere is Jacobs' collision with the text more frontal than here. The only happiness she allows is the deconstructive game that delivers us from the temptations of metaphysical presence. Benjamin for his part seeks deliverance from *myth*, within which "there is no conceivable path of liberation" (*R*, 307); and he finds it, precisely, in "happiness," which "releases the fortunate man from the embroilment of the Fates and from the net of his own fate" (*R*, 306). Far from opening onto a different future, the deconstruction that needlessly embroils the text would, in this perspective, remain trapped within archaic complication. Each strategy of liberation thus tends to eye the other as the trap.

Emancipation *à la* Benjamin depends for its success on a "presence of mind" that Jacobs disregards. This term is no more synonymous with its usual connotations than were forgetting and aging. It even includes a measure of absent-mindedness — the trait, Benjamin notes, that is missing from Baudelaire's self-portrait as a *flâneur* (*GS*, I, 2, 572). For without a certain forgetfulness we are guided solely by our automatic pilot, the dummy, a contrary absent-mindedness we call the self. Presence of mind doesn't connote empty alertness to outer signals at the expense of inner ones, conscious attention to the present to the exclusion of the unconscious past, but rather a simultaneous receptivity to their actual conjunction. Here, too, a logic of mutual exclusion yields to a saving interplay — this time between sleep and awakening: "And there is no telling what encounters would be in store for us, if we were less willing to yield to sleep. Proust did not yield to sleep. *And yet — or precisely for that reason —* Jean Cocteau was able to say that the cadence of his voice obeyed the laws of night and honey," (*I*, 203, emphasis added). Proust "lay on his bed," but he was wide awake — awake, that is, to the "laws of sleep." His novel begins by capturing for consciousness the moment of its awakening. It conspires with the night the better to emerge with its secrets. Dialectics, said Hegel, "enters the enemy's strength" the better to outwit him. There as here the strategy presupposes a common purpose: "The realization of dream elements in waking is the

textbook example of dialectical thinking. For this reason dialectical thinking is the organ of historical awakening. Each epoch not merely dreams the next but also, in dreaming, strives toward the moment of awakening. It bears its end in itself and unfolds itself — as Hegel already saw — with cunning” (*R*, 162). Likewise, the concluding dialectic of *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* has the allegorist “awaken in God’s world” (*O*, 232); and already in his dissertation Benjamin construes the immanent telos of German Romantic idealism as a movement towards the mystically “sober” (*nüchtern*) light (*GS*, I, I, 119). But if this progression is not to perpetuate the immanence of myth, the interruption of its continuity must be built into its movement. The break-fast that breaks the spell is the precondition of the “realization” — as opposed to the “interpretation” — of dreams. Whoever recounts his dreams “on an empty stomach” (*nüchtern*) risks “talking in his sleep” and thus remaining trapped within its “charmed circle” (*Bannkreis*).¹³ “For only from the far bank, from broad daylight, may the dream be recalled with impunity” (*R*, 62).¹⁴ Such is the dialectic of memory that is a match for forgetting. Night and day interact in either case. But forgetting locks the two in mutual exclusion, abstract negation, repression. “We, the masters” are busy sleeping; we have “no time” for childish things; we have, we *are* our alibi; *as* masters we are never “home,” to attend to our “homesickness.” The presence of mind this calls for involves a very different interplay of blindness and insight than de Man’s. And what the insights disclose are unique opportunities for happiness, not an unvarying ontology of the unhappy consciousness which respects impossibilities more than solutions.

“He is imbued with the insight that we all have no time to live the true dramas of the life we are destined for.” Benjamin is here using Proust to voice his own conviction. In so doing, he implicitly frees Proustian remembrance from the paralyzing *paséisme* which makes a saving virtue out of pastness itself. Under Benjamin’s allegorical gaze “everything about history that, from the very outset, has been untimely, sorrowful, unsuccessful” (*O*, 166) appears as a veritable tradition of missed chances. If they can be retrieved, then only through the revolutionary praxis that simultaneously “realizes” them — praxis actuated by the remembrance of barely retrievable images. “The kind of happiness that could arouse envy in us exists only in the

¹³Complementarily, the “loosening of the self” in “dream” and “intoxication” makes it possible to “step outside the charmed circle of intoxication” — a “dialectic of intoxication” best evidenced in certain forms of “chastity” and “sobriety” (*R*, 179-81).

¹⁴Opposing version of what that daylight is will tend to relegate each other to the dark. If, according to Derrida, we are to awaken from the sleep of reason, we must first spend the night with it, so as to ensure that the awakening is not another of its Hegelian ruses. For the dawn — “Ce matin-là et non un autre” (*L’Ecriture et la Différence* (Paris: Seuil, 1967), 370) — is easily confused with the dusk of the Hegelian owl. To detect in the cunning theodicy of reason the mere illusion of awakening would thus require *deconstructive* presence of mind. Would this make Benjamin’s image of revolution as a “dialectical” act of “historical awakening” a recipe for somnambulism?

air we have breathed, among people we could have talked to, women who could have given themselves to us. In other words, our image of happiness is indissolubly bound up with the image of redemption. The same applies to our view of the past, which is the concern of history . . . Like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a *weak* Messianic power, a power to which the past has a claim" (*I*, 254). The "Messianic idea" with which Benjamin is here re-establishing contact derives from the interplay of two "deeply intertwined" yet "contradictory" tendencies towards an idealized past and an unprecedented future.¹⁵ Benjamin sees it actually at work in history: "Corresponding in the collective consciousness to the forms of the new means of production, which at first were still dominated by the old (Marx), are images in which the new is intermingled with the old . . . In the dream in which, before the eyes of each epoch, the one to follow appears in images it appears wedded to elements from prehistory, that is, of a classless society" (*R*, 148).¹⁶ What Scholem terms a "dialectically linked tension" between "utopian and restorative factors" Benjamin calls in the Proust essay "a dual will to happiness, a dialectics of happiness: a hymnic and an elegiac form. The one is the unheard-of, the unprecedented, the height of bliss; the other, the eternal once again, the eternal restoration of the original, the first happiness. It is this elegiac idea of happiness — it could also be called Eleatic — which for Proust transforms existence into a preserve [*Bannwald*] of memory. To it he sacrificed . . ." (*I*, 204).

Isolated from this dialectic, the elegiac impulse to repeat is surely synonymous with myth *qua* eternal return: Eleatic repetition, sacrifice, *Bann* (spell, curse, ban) all point to the "charmed circle" (*Bannkreis*) of myth. Only a contrary utopian impulse, then, would save the Proustian search from losing itself in the labyrinths of memory, the petrified forest of symbols. A *Bannwald* is a forest preserve that serves as protection against avalanches. Baudelaire memorably renounces such shelter: *Avalanche, veux-tu m'emporter dans ta chute?* The poet is here addressing ("irremediable," "irreparable") Time, which is, according to the second *Spleen* poem, burying him "under the heavy flakes of the snowy years": *J'ai plus de souvenirs que si j'avais mille ans*. Proustian memory, on the other hand, is "the rejuvenating force which is a match for the inexorable process of aging" — that is, for the spleen which "places centuries between the present moment and the one just lived" (*CB*, 157). But it is also a shelter *against* the irremediable present: "By submitting to these laws [of night and honey] he conquered the hopeless sadness within him (what he once called *l'imperfection incurable dans l'essence mem du present*'), and from the honeycombs

¹⁵Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York: Schocken, 1971), 3-4.

¹⁶Thus, contrary to Jacobs' account, the image *does* "present itself directly as the object of experience," and the dream-world *does* "serve as an origin" (*DH*, 96, 103) — so much so that Adorno objected to disturbing parallels with Jung's collective unconscious (*B*, 674).

of memory he built a house for the swarm of his thoughts (*I*, 203). If the present is irremediable, then “the true paradises are those we have lost” (Proust). It is always already too late: the only opportunities for something other than remembrance are those we already missed. Proust knows only “elegiac” happiness, not the “hymnic” celebration of the present — the voice of angels who, “having sung their hymn before God, cease and disappear into nothingness” (*GS*, 2, 1, 246). Only where such “true actuality” is rediscovered can “life” hold in store other “dramas” than the odd rendez-vous with the past, the storm in Proust’s tea-cup. Why, then is it *Proust* who is credited with this “insight”? Because he also suggests the remedy for the incurable present — one which would no longer be a matter of conquest or shelter but of redemption in and through the “now.” Proustian attentiveness has only to be applied to itself to exceed retrospection. The elegiac, frenetically pursued, points beyond itself. It is as if the effort to “charge” a life with presence of mind *contained* within it the potential for “blasting” the quest for happiness out of its solitary confinement; as if such vigilance, in its Proustian guise, were still half-asleep, the better to “dream to [nature’s] heart-beat” (*I*, 213). But “each epoch . . . , in dreaming, strives toward the moment of awakening”; and there is a “strange interplay between reactionary theory and revolutionary practice” (*R*, 247). Proust “died of his ignorance of the world and his inability to change the conditions of his life” (*I*, 213). Yet to translate presence of mind from the cork-lined interior, a barricade against the world, to the historical barricades, Benjamin merely has to draw it out.

Such, then, would be Benjamin’s “image of interpretation” — political philology released from its “mythical rigidity” (*B*, 794). It seizes auratic correspondences and destroys pseudo-auratic contexts. It “blasts a specific era out of the homogeneous course of history, . . . a specific life out of the era or a specific work out of the lifework (*I*, 263), and, by the same token, specific impulses out of the work. Reading is charged with the explosive “power not to preserve but to purify, to tear from context [*Zusammenhang*], to destroy; the only power in which hope still resides that something might survive this age — because it was hewn out of it” (*R*, 271); the power of citation in which “origin and destruction converge” (*R*, 273), which “cites the word by its name” and, wrenching it free from its mythical context (*Schuldzusammenhang*), “precisely thereby calls it back to its origin” (*R*, 269). *Such loaded* reading, which cites metaphysical authority in order to annihilate the authoritarian practice of quotation, is neither paraphrase nor deconstruction but saving destruction. It undoes the context in order to “develop” the text, like a photographic negative (*GS*, I, 3, 1165), towards its full historical “revelation” (*I*, 75). Benjamin’s essay on Proust practises the German Romantic theory of criticism as a raising of the work (which potentially contains its own criticism) to a higher power, its chemical “preparation” (*GS*, I, 1, 109). “Involuntary memory” and “presence of mind” are synonyms for “citation,” which transposes them to other contexts

where they become the portable equipment of writers, critics, collectors, translators, historians and revolutionaries alike. With this tackle Proust catches images, and Benjamin the “image of Proust.” He owes his technique to Proust’s own example: whence the double meaning of his title.¹⁷

The Image of Proust was written in the same year (1929) as *Surrealism. The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia*, one year after *One-Way Street* (originally entitled *A Journey through the German Inflation*). The outbreak of the war that Benjamin had long seen coming precipitated its methodological summation in the *Theses*: “The true image of the past flits by. The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again For every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably” (I, 255). Jacobs quotes a related fragment as her motto, but her intentions prevent her from exploring its relevance: “The dialectical image is one that flashes past. Thus — as an image that flashes in the now of recognizability — the image of the past is . . . to be held fast. The recovery [*Rettung*] accomplished in this manner, and only in this manner, can always be effected only through the perception of an irrecoverably [*unrettbar*] disappearing image” (cit. *DH*, 89).¹⁸ What she selectively disregards is the historical structure of the dialectical image. This emerges from other jottings as, precisely, an extrapolation from central motifs of the Proust essay. Benjamin cites them, and makes them new, in a *correspondingly* different context which, like Proust’s is “at the center of all dangers” (I, 202). For him, too, the touchstone of significant criticism is “the necessity of its occurrence” (*DH*, xi). “To articulate the past historically means to recognize in the past what comes together in the constellation of one and the same moment By contracting into the moment — that is, the dialectical image — it enters the involuntary memory of mankind” (*GS*, I, 3, 1233). “History in the strict sense is thus an image from involuntary memory, an image which suddenly occurs to the subject of history in the moment of danger. The historian’s credentials rest on a sharpened awareness of the crisis that the subject of history has entered at any given moment. This subject is *not* a transcendental one but the embattled, oppressed class at its most exposed” (1243). “Historiography confronts this constellation of dangers. It has to test its presence of mind against it” (1242). “Presence of mind as salvation; presence of mind in grasping fleeting images; presence of mind and standstill” (1244).

¹⁷Contrast *DH*, 90-91ff.

¹⁸“lässt sich immer nur als auf der Wahrnehmung von dem unrettbar sich verlierenden gewinnen.” Jacobs has to mistranslate this sentence slightly (“always lets itself be won as that which irretrievably loses itself in the course of perception”) to be able to transform the most unbearable tension *between Rettung and unrettbar* into a movement *from* fullness to void. The saving image is not *a priori* untenable. Still less is salvation *guaranteed*, not because it deconstructs itself but because it may be overwhelmed by the *fascist* salvation.

The violent grasp of the present that occurs in Proustian remembrance turns out to have contained the makings of revolutionary praxis. “To the image of salvation” — and, synonymously, to the saving image — “belongs the firm, seemingly brutal grasp” (*GS*, I, 2, 677). Memory *interven*es. Under the impact of geopolitical jolts, the spasmodic contraction of time (*rafft ein schmerzlicher Schock der Verjüngung . . . zusammen*) that marks the Proustian epiphany corresponds in the *Theses* to both the inaugural day of the revolutionary calendar, which “serves as a historical time-lapse camera [*Zeitraffer*]” (*I*, 261), and to the “enormous abbreviation” (*I*, 263) of time that occurs at moments of mortal or revolutionary crisis and lets the whole of world history age in an instant (*Nu, Jetztzeit*). Such secular versions of the mystical *nunc stans* bring to a momentary halt the process of aging we euphemistically call chronology or even progress. Proustian rejuvenation becomes in this context the joint, “retroactive” (*I*, 255) liberation of past and present, a “revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past” (*I*, 263), a specific, irrevocable chance granted afresh to every moment (*GS*, I, 3, 1231). **Charging an entire life with the utmost presence of mind** thus emerges retrospectively as a formula for permanent revolution. But if the same categories can be transposed from the frenzied search for individual happiness to a desperate bid for collective survival, this is because urgency has always been the order of the day. All along Benjamin, unlike Proust, also observed clues which pointed to “that invisible stranger, the future, who left them behind” (*R*, 59). Proust had hoped to enable his reader to read himself as through a magnifying glass. Benjamin now re-reads the images of his past as through a time-lapse camera — very differently, that is, than Carol Jacobs. In his last notations he remembers involuntary memory, cites citation itself, quotes himself out of context, but accurately. Only the future he claims, can develop the dialectical images of the past (*GS*, I, 3, 1238); and much of Proust’s greatness will go unrecognized until his class “has revealed its harshest features in the final struggle” (*I*, 210). But in 1940 there is no more future left. Ransacking the past as he lucidly goes under, he instantly redevelops fragments of his “image of Proust.”

III

“The philosophers have merely interpreted the world in various ways;
the point is to change it.” (Marx)

“These are days when no-one can flaunt his ‘competence.’ Strength
lies in improvisation. All the decisive blows are struck left-handedly.”
(*R*, 65)

Madame Ariane — Second Courtyard on the Left

Anyone who asks wise women about the future unwittingly sacrifices an inner intelligence of what is to come that is a thousand times more accurate than anything they may say. He is prompted more by inertia than curiosity, and nothing less resembles the dull acquiescence with which he attends the disclosure of his fate than the dangerous, nimble grasp with which a brave man corners the future. For presence of mind is its quintessence, and precise

awareness of what is happening this instant more crucial than foreknowledge of remote events. Day and night, signs, portents and omens pass through the body in waves. To interpret or to use them, that is the question. The two are irreconcilable. Cowardice and inertia counsel the one, soberness and freedom the other. For before such prophecy or warning has been mediated by word or image, its best strength has already slipped away — the strength to strike home and compel us, we scarce know how, to act accordingly. Should we miss our chance, then, and only then, can it be deciphered. We read it. But now it is too late. Hence, when fire unexpectedly breaks out or one is caught unawares by news of a death, the feeling of guilt that accompanies the first mute shock, the indistinct reproach: Did you really not know of this? Didn't the dead man's name, when last you spoke it, already then sound differently in your mouth? Isn't yesterday evening signalling to you from the flames in a language you only now understand? And if a cherished object is missing, didn't it, hours, days before already have a tell-tale aura of mockery or mourning about it? In the book of life, memory, like ultraviolet rays, shows each of us the prophetic writing that was invisibly annotating the text. We cannot with impunity exchange these intentions, surrendering up unlived life to cards, spirits or stars, only to get it back instantly lived-out, squandered, ravaged. We cannot with impunity cheat the body of its power to match itself against the fates on its own ground and triumph. The moment is the Caudine Yoke under which Fate is to be bowed. To transform forebodings into the fulfilled Now, this the only desirable telepathic miracle is the work of bodily presence of mind. In earliest times such powers belonged to man's daily husbandry; the naked body provided his most reliable instrument of divination. Classical antiquity, too, was still privy to true praxis, and Scipio, stumbling as he set foot on Cathaginian soil, spreads his arms wide as he falls and raises the cry of victory: Teneo te, Terra Africana! What sought to become a portent of disaster he binds physically to the moment, making himself the factotum of his body. It is precisely therein that from time immemorial the ancient ascetic practices of fasting, chastity and vigils celebrated their moments of greatest victory. Each morning the day lies on our bed like a fresh shirt. This incomparable delicate, incomparably intricate texture of unsullied prophecy fits us to perfection. The happiness of the next twenty-four hours hinges on our knowing how to grasp hold of it when we awaken. (*R*, 89-90)

Madame Ariane, too, images Benjamin's image of interpretation. Or rather it militates "against interpretation" (Sontag). "To interpret or to use" equals "to be or not to be." If the owl of Minerva embarks on its flight only at eventide (Hegel), then the philosopher arrives in time only to exhibit "empathy with the victor" (*I*, 256). All that is left to "read" — "But now it is too late" — are cards, stars, lines on the palm or face. Thanks to a Brechtian alienation-effect, reading, like writing, stands revealed as a mythical, ideological activity synonymous with the guilt and distortion of missed opportunities. It is the province of the myth-dealing medium, the "reader." *Madame Ariane* betrays the promise of her name — that of guiding us *out* of the toils (from: *toile*, *textum*) to the sinister labyrinth ("Second Courtyard to the Left"). Thread is not only for weaving texts, or "writing oneself into [their] logic" (*DH*, 90), but also — thanks to a certain left-handed,

de(con?)structive dexterity — for finding the way out;¹⁹ not only for dreaming but for escaping soberly to freedom. Here, too, liberation hinges on a lightening pre-cognitive “grasp” of the moment of awakening — Scipio’s *Teneo te*, lifted from its imperial context.²⁰ Impulses constantly pass through the body. The narrowness of the decisive moment, “strait gate” (*I*, 264) or Caudine Yoke, contrasts significantly with the “infinite” (*I*, 202) expansiveness of Proustian remembrance of Baudelairean *correspondances*. The riches that fail to go through the eye of that needle are non-existent. Here, too, the alternative to freedom is the inert spleen that barter the “unlived” for the “lived-out” moment. The exchange is a mythical sacrifice. It pawns present time to the *Schuldzusammenhang* from which — deconstructors, please note — the “fulfilled Now” redeems it (*R*, 308). In Benjamin’s universe it is *myth* that undermines the integrity of the present.

If Benjamin refers here to the “book of life,” book does not take priority over life. Life itself, the “fresh shirt,” is the text. But the alternative between wearing and reading it need not exclude the “act of reading” (Iser) so long as reading *is* an act. “Incomparably delicate, incomparably intricate” though time’s texture is, it is an object not of disinterested contemplation but of immediate use. Bourgeois aesthetics was originally founded on a provisional suspension of utilitarian activity. But “with the decline of bourgeois society, contemplation became a school for asocial behavior” (*I*, 238). Like Nietzsche and Brecht, Benjamin responds by suspending the decadent taboo on cultural praxis, and seeks the “literarization of the conditions of living” (*R*, 225). Criticism is to exceed merely aesthetic judgement: “Every present partakes of . . . the Last Judgment . . . Every moment is that of judgment over certain preceding ones” (*GS*, I, 3, 1245). Unlike de Man, Benjamin does not divorce, in order to remarry, ethics and understanding (*DH*, x-xi). To survive his indictment of reading, or Marx’s of “critical criticism,” “criticism” has to be “practical” in a sense that is both revolutionary and archaic. With Ariadne’s help myth finds its own way out. Similarly, “close reading” can escape the charmed circle of its mythical immanence only if its original powers are reawakened — reserves of “occult” (*GS*, 2, I, 213)

¹⁹Contrast J. Hillis Miller on “the impossibility of getting outside the maze” in “Ariadne’s Thread,” *Critical Inquiry* (Autumn, 1976), 73. Benjamin’s “destructive character” “always stands at the crossroads” because he sees several ways *out* (*R*, 302-03). Or is the way out (to misquote Benjamin against himself) the “phantasmagoria of the *exterior*”?

²⁰By thinking on and off his feet, Scipio turns stumbling into victory. He has mastered “the art of being able to fall” (*GS*, 3, 278), of “letting go of oneself” (*UB*, 58). Illuminations are (as in Proust and Baudelaire) *stumbled* upon. How incommensurable such practical insights are with the Heideggerian “transformation of the experience of falling into an act of knowledge” (*BI*, 48) to which de Man appeals. *This* fall is a “leap out of historical and everyday time” (45); and the disinterestedly ontological insight it yields is to be kept from relapsing into “the relative safety of direct action” (46). Whereas Benjamin both resists and assumes the *historical* impoverishment of experience, de Man submits the “wealth of lived experience” to *ontological* “reduction.” He locates “failure . . . in the nature of things” (18), conceives the gap between poetry and life, theory and praxis, as ontologically unbridgeable, and defines the “exemplary value” of criticism in Heideggerian opposition to “ontie-ontological confusion” (39-50).

or “true” praxis that date back far beyond Marx. But it will escape that circle only if those powers are quoted out of context. The sacred beginnings need to be illuminated by a profane light which must in turn be informed by their magic. Such is the “dialectical optic” of “profane illumination”: “The most passionate investigation of telepathic phenomena . . . will not teach us half as much about reading (which is an eminently telepathic process) as the profane illumination of reading about telepathic phenomena” (R, 190). Such, too, is the “only worthwhile telepathic miracle” invoked in *Madame Ariane*. It is wrought not by spiritual readers but by “bodily presence of mind” which originates in ancient practices.

Among those, *Doctrine of the Similar* singles out astrology as the oldest form of reading. Quoted out of context within a larger constellation, it becomes a paradoxical antidote to the latter-day horoscope.²¹ A model of punctuality: “The perception of resemblances . . . seems bound to a time-factor. It is like the addition of a third element, the astrologer, to the conjunction of two stars which need to be seized that instant. Otherwise the astronomer will, for all the precision of his optical instruments, be denied his reward” (GS, 2, I, 207). The *astrologer* “is still privy to true praxis.” By the time the contemplative *astronomer* has stopped fiddling with his hi-fi equipment, it will be “too late.” Benjamin’s choice marks the rebirth of “scientific socialism” out of the spirit of astrology. For the *Theses* will “cite” almost verbatim central motifs from *Doctrine of the Similar*. The materialist historian who grasps the image that arises from “the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one” (I, 263) is the profane counterpart of the astrologer who seized the conjunction of the stars. If it was originally *language* that sublimated the archaic mimetic faculty, *history* is now substituted as the decisive medium of elective affinities. In each case the true image “flits by” (I, 255; R, 335). Magical intuitions, which can be interchangeably referred to graphology, astrology, physiognomy or philology, catch fleeting correspondences as they arise in associative, involuntary relation to the “historical continuum” or “semantic context,” opening them up, like the stocking in the Proust essay, to a second, no longer literal reading of that other “prophetic writing” which is “invisibly annotating” them — a writing made legible by the “ultraviolet rays” that constitute “the messianic force in history” (GS, I, 3, 1232, 1238). Reading the “book of life,” an “intricate texture of unsullied prophecy,” is not a matter of “scholarly objectivity” or “historical perspective” but of physical apprehension. It involves remembering the future and predicting the present: “Not for nothing does Turgot define the conception of a present which represents the intentional object of a prophecy as a thoroughly political one. ‘Before we are able to inform ourselves about a given state of affairs, says Turgot, it has

²¹Conversely, Blanqui’s “astronomical hypothesis” *L’Eternité par les Astres*, which reformulates in scientific language the myth of the eternal return, forecloses the possibility of any new constellation. It seals the defeat of his revolutionary efforts. He is reduced to speculating on the revolutions of the *stars*.

already changed several times. Thus we always hear too late of what actually happened. And so politics can be said to be contingent on predicting the present" (*GS*, I, 3, 1237). As a would-be political act interpretation usurps the "insignia of praxis";²² involuntary memory becomes the very criterion of authentic action: "In reality there is not one moment that is not accompanied by *its* revolutionary chance It finds confirmation in the power of the moment to unlock a particular, hitherto locked chamber of the past. Entry into this chamber strictly coincides with political action; and it is through the former that the latter presents itself, however destructively, as messianic" (*GS*, I, 3, 1231). Timing is always the critical factor. The astrological model already points to the crucial relation between criticism and crisis²³ — a relation in which empty-handedness has not yet been transformed into a deconstructive virtue: "Thus even profane reading . . . shares this much with magical reading: it is contingent on a necessary tempo, or rather a critical moment, which the reader may on no account forget if he is not to be left empty-handed" (*GS*, 2, I, 209-10). This motif recurs in the *Theses*, which implicitly cast historicism as the "dummy" or "astronomer" and, like Nietzsche, equate the useless "perspectives" of such grey science with sadness, inertia, cowardice and impotence — in short, with Baudelairean spleen. Even the "good tidings" that the historian announces "may be lost in a void the very moment he opens his mouth" (*I*, 255). The literary critic whose methodology obstructs the "secret rendez-vous" to which a past is con-voking his present can also be counted among the astronomer's cousins. Only if it sheds both its innocence *and* its "armed vision" (Hyman) is philology released from its mythical fixation on a petrified text.

"To read what was never written. Such reading is the most ancient" (*R*, 336). Such reading stays with Benjamin to become a model for the materialist historian (*GS*, I, 3, 1238). Indeed, his controversial theory of the film audience as a "distracted examiner" (*I*, 239-41) may be seen as its putative historical realization on a mass basis. Instead of being downgraded by their cultural betters, the masses turn examiner, get culture off their backs, and shake off a millennial submission to authority. Dialectics subjects "cultural history" to an explosive "scattering" (*Streuung*. *GS*, 2, 2, 477), whereby "distraction" (*Zerstreuung*) is transvalued. Its free-floating (in)attention is freedom itself. According to a by now familiar logic, it is no longer the opposite of presence of mind but its essential precondition. As a Brechtian technique for "using" films, it is to enable a self-organizing public to break the spell of culture and attend to its interests. "Instead of being based on ritual, [art] begins to be based on another practice — politics" (*I*, 224). It is

²²Cf. Jürgen Habermas, "Bewusstmachende oder rettende Kritik — Die Aktualität Walter Benjamins," in *Zur Aktualität Walter Benjamins*, ed. S. Unseld (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1972), 213.

²³Benjamin planned to collaborate with Brecht on a journal entitled *Kritik und Krise*. Contrast de Man's version of "Criticism and Crisis" in *BI*, 3-19.

read against the grain, simultaneously translated, interrupted. But the political reading that releases the world from ritual recalls nothing so much as the ritual practices of the astrologer. For Benjamin had read astrology, out of context, as reading “out of” context.²⁴ Politics and ritual enter into a constellation in which the newest form of reading, the break with the oldest, nevertheless emerges as its “profane illumination.”

This saving interplay — between myth and enlightenment, forgetting and remembering, sleep and awakening — has proved to be a recurrent scheme. At one moment presence of mind will be rooted in “the ancient ascetic practices of fasting, chastity and vigils”; at another it means breaking the fast. Man’s archaic powers may not atrophy “without impunity,” but they also need to be transformed beyond recognition. Emancipation from myth is predicated on a liberating return to it. Such Benjaminian *Aufhebung* perhaps finds its most startling enactment in the final metamorphosis of his little dwarf. Originating as the *bucklicht Männlein* of nursery lore who plays nasty tricks while we aren’t attending, he appears in Benjamin’s memoir as a “grey bailiff” who “levies his share of oblivion” and possesses the “images” we lack of ourselves (*GS*, 4, I, 303-04). A mythical “archetype of distortion,” he will “disappear with the coming of the Messiah” (*I*, 134), who will need to give the world the merest nudge — from *Entstellung* (“distortion”) to *zurechtstellen* (“readjustment”) (*GS*, 2, 2, 432) — and everything will find its “particular place” (*Stelle*, *GS*, I, 3, 1243). The distorting readjustment of a distorted world will restore it to its “true surrealist face,” “the state of similarity.” (But if similarity is a shifting play of dis-placement (*Ent-stellung*), would not such a final resting-place amount to the reinstatement of identity, to death warmed up as utopia?) Perhaps this explains why the gnomic, cryptic Messianism hidden, according to the *Theses*, within historical materialism turns out to be . . . the hunchback dwarf!²⁵ Theology is itself a slight readjustment of the mythical adversary into whose strength it has dialectically entered. The secret agent now of oblivion and now of memory, both robber and retriever of our images, debt-collector and redeemer, the ever-attendant dwarf would, according to a logic of penetrable self-resemblance, function as its own antidote. It is not merely that the monster’s plea for inclusion in our prayers is answered, in typical fairytale fashion, by a magical act of loving attention (*I*, 134). Rather he has himself turned into the *deus in machina*. This would add a further twist to an already cunning parable. If historical materialism

²⁴ Astrology activates the “strange double meaning of the verb ‘to read’ in its profane and magic senses.” The astrologer “reads off [*ablesen*] the constellation from the stars in the sky; he simultaneously reads fate or the future out of it [*herauslesen*]” (*GS*, 2, I, 209).

²⁵ If this theological fiat recalls Plato’s philosophical “decision” to transform the “undecidable” *pharmakon* from myth to logos, from poison into its “dialectical” antidote, where is the evidence of its self-deconstruction? Cf., on the *pharmakos*, Derrida, “La Pharmacie de Platon,” in *la Dissémination* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), pp. 143-44ff.

stands in secret need of a *theological* substructure, theology seems even more quietly to have enlisted the services of myth.

IV

“Pour être juste, c’est-à-dire pour avoir sa raison d’être, la critique doit être partielle, passionnée, politique, c’est-à-dire faite à un point de vue exclusif, mais au point de vue qui ouvre le plus d’horizons.”
(Baudelaire)

Criticism, according to de Man, is *either analysis or paraphrase*. These poles are in turn almost collapsed into one another. Paraphrase is always latently analysis (it is as if the old enfolding claim that would-be atheists were really believers had been reversed), and deconstruction reverts almost instantly to paraphrase (*DH*, xi-xiii). But does such an alternative still leave any room for the “conflict . . . of one mode of integrity or sensibility with another” (x)? If it didn’t deconstruct itself, *The Image of Proust* would, in Jacobs’ view, amount to little more than “literary chit-chat” (89). Her exclusive focus effectively closes off the horizons that Benjamin’s essay — even and precisely at its most anecdotal — opens up. “The more one censors, the more one reveals what is being effaced” (xi). It isn’t clear that deconstruction entails such impoverishment. Surely the *toujours déjà* structure, for example, doesn’t necessarily involve the loss of the pristine critical moment any more than the subversion of the *hors-texte* has to signify “prison house of language” (Jameson), “labyrinth” (Hayden White), or myth (Benjamin)? Cannot a more productive interaction be established? One which would legitimately fault my reconstructions for not freeing comrade Benjamin’s aura from mythical fascination by quoting him too out of context? For a “distracted” reading of Benjamin’s image that took a leaf from his book would have to “explode” its own immanence.

We are nevertheless still left with two or more competing versions of what constitutes “truly critical reading” (xiii), each of which will inevitably tend to redefine the other in its own terms. Messianism crudely translates into metaphysics of presence, dissemination into tower of Babel. If, then, each places the other, can each have its place? If by that we merely mean a modest place in the liberal-historicist sun, a niche in the history or marketplace of ideas — no problem. But if we mean more, we are already *in medias res*, caught in the middle of differences about the middle ground that may not be capable of mediation (*Ver-mitt-lung*). Both sides would diagnose any present synthesis as an all-too-synthetic form of “esperanto” (*GS*, I, 3, 1240). But while Benjamin still aspires to renew the utopian topos of a universal language, Derrida localizes universality itself, the commonplace about the common place, as the imperialism of a logos that terminates in the “final repression” — Hegel’s (non)-violent “reconciliation” — “of difference.” They differ even on how to differ. Should then the pious attempt of the would-be mediator (the Goethean *Mittler*) be gaily abandoned and heterogeneity positively affirmed? But doesn’t the shared need to awaken

from the nightmare of history point symptomatically beyond local quarrels and sectarian cliques to the common interest?

And what of our common *academic* situation, our shared professional (de)formation? Which reduces almost to insignificance the difference between (say) two readings of Walter Benjamin's essay on Proust? It is more or less in the form of collective and reciprocal autism that literary critics today participate in a "common pursuit." "That makes us age. Nothing else." We all inhabit the same well-insulated ghetto, sharing the ambiguous privileges and insidious constraints of the harmless "idler in the garden of knowledge" (*I*, 260), where even flowers of evil luxuriate unchecked. In the boredom and urgency of this dilemma we anti-academic academics — a subculture within a subculture — are particularly prone to bad faith. For "to supply a productive apparatus without — to the utmost extent possible — changing it is still an extremely questionable activity even if the materials provided seem revolutionary in nature" (*R*, 228-29). What is to be done when the medium is the message? And our deviant messages amount merely to reductions in sugar-content? "This is not a model life in every respect, but everything about it is exemplary. The outstanding literary achievement of our time is assigned a place in the heart of the impossible, at the center — and thereby, to be sure, at the point of indifference — of all dangers . . . the last for a long time" (*I*, 201-02). These lines also sketch an image of their author — unaccommodate, anachronistic, idiosyncratic, exemplary. "By the ruin of his career he ensured the permanence of his work."²⁶ Therein lies the lesson that justifies the attempt to summon up his image.²⁷ Whatever normality we can today muster is of course born of *another* "constellation of dangers." And we can no longer be so sure of Benjamin's final word, his messianic politics of containment. "Point of indifference" is an idealist term which originally designated the origin and telos of German Romantic systems — the "creative ground" of all ulterior differentiation and the "sober light" which finally extinguishes it (*GS*, I, I, 102, 109). Some such element also sustains the *flâneur* who posts himself at the exposed, yet protected, intersection of all dangers. "Ether" becomes "electricity." "At the heart of the world," yet "hidden" from it, converting outside and inside, unity and multiplicity, into one another, "electing to reside" in the crowd,

²⁶Charles Rosen, "The Ruins of Walter Benjamin," *New York Review of Books* (October 27, 1977), 33.

²⁷But Susan Sontag's portrait of Benjamin as "The Last Intellectual" (*New York Review of Books*, October 12, 1978, 75-82), a "Saturnine hero of modern culture," with its overtones of the Byronic outcast and Baudelaire's essay on the dandy, is cast in an anachronistic mould. It makes an instructive contrast with Valerio Adami's dislocated pictogram *Ritratto di Walter Benjamin* (reproduced in Derrida, *La Vérité en Peinture* (Paris: Flammarion, 1978), 201), which dissolves the portrait into its embattled context. At all levels Benjamin idiosyncratically sought anonymity. Genius, wrote Baudelaire, consists in finding clichés. Were "the age of mechanical reproduction" to fulfil its political promise, wouldn't the image of Benjamin be "developed" from icon to cliché?

he makes the city his element.²⁸ Strained though it is to breaking-point, Benjamin, too, is grounded by his confidence in an unbroken medium. It enables him to act *as* its medium, the lightning-conductor of its energies, and thereby to dispense with “the problem of mediations” (Sartre, Adorno). The “impossible” limbo in which he comes to take up permanent residence is still organized around a focalizing center. The “constellation” can still “crystallize” into a “monad” in which “the entire course of history” is “preserved” (*aufgehoben*) (*I*, 262-63). To the last the dawn of a future Messianic awakening functions as the inclusive, unitary source of his prismatic illuminations, the rising sun in the “sky of history” to which, “by dint of a secret heliotropism,” criticism as praxis “strives to turn” (*I*, 255). Partial, passionate, political, it derives its sternly partisan justice from the Last Judgment. The *citation à l'ordre du jour* isn't Derridean *solli-citation*, the “pushing of the whole”: it prefigures the Day — the constellation to end all constellations? — when each moment of the past will be “citable in all its moments” (*I*, 254). Is it possible, in a different no-man's-land where the center no longer holds, to “reinscribe” the despairing hope that gave so rigorous an orientation to Benjamin's freedom of association? To liberate his strength from its acknowledged source? To salvage his image of interpretation — itself the salvation of salvation — even as one deconstructs it? (To be continued)

²⁸Cf. Baudelaire, *Oeuvres Complètes* (Gallimard: Bruges, 1968) 243, 1160.

The Aesthetics of Politics: Walter Benjamin's "Theories of German Fascism"

by Ansgar Hillach

"Theories of German Fascism"* is the heading Walter Benjamin gives his review of a collection of essays edited by Ernst Jünger. In this collection, eight authors — including Jünger himself, with his essay "Total Mobilization" — present a picture of World War I and of the "warrior" within the ideological landscape around 1930.¹ With this title, Benjamin captures not merely the theoretical content of the individual contributions but also the fundamental role of the war experience and its subsequent transformation into myth by the German fascist ideology of the 1920s. At the same time, he finds in the essays material for an explanation of the phenomenon of fascism as the "aestheticization of politics" — an explanation worked out more precisely in his later works.

In his foreword Ernst Jünger writes: "The inner connection which lies at the basis of the essays collected in this volume is that of German nationalism. It is characteristic of this nationalism that it has lost its connection to both the idealism of our grandfathers and the rationalism of our fathers. Its stance [*Haltung*] is rather that of an historical realism, and what it wishes to comprehend is that substance, that layer of an absolute reality of which ideas as well as rational deductions are mere expressions. This stance is thus also a symbolic one, in so far as it comprehends every act, every thought and every feeling as the symbol of a unified and unchangeable being which cannot escape its own inherent laws." (*KuK*, p. 5) If this excerpt is read in connection with the first sentences of Jünger's essay, one can begin to recognize in outline form the *principle of expression*² here claiming political validity which will subsequently be used by fascism to dominate the masses: "The heroic spirit is opposed to seeking the idea of war in a stratum which can be determined by human action. Yet the multifarious transformations and disguises endured in changing times and places by the pure form

*Walter Benjamin, "Theorien des deutschen Faschismus," in his *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 3. Subsequent citations, noted in text as TF, refer to the English translation which follows.

¹Ernst Jünger, ed., *Krieg und Krieger* (Berlin, 1930). Subsequent citations, noted in text as *KuK*, refer to this edition.

²Benjamin planned a "Note on the Principle of Expression and Its Reactionary Functions" for his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"; see his *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1/3 (Frankfurt am Main, 1974), p. 1050. It was never written.

of war [!] do present the heroic spirit with an engrossing drama.” (*KuK*, p.11)

In order to assess the dimensions and historical stages of the aestheticization of politics (a phenomenon far from new at that time), Benjamin includes in his dialectical image of the warrior mentality what the contributors can only conjure up mythically. For them, the relationship of past and present in the image of war appears as a clouded confusion of the painfully, yet enthusiastically remembered World War and “eternal” (i.e., metaphysical-vitalistic) warfare. Future perspectives are thus narrowed to the heroic “task” of reconciling the previously disjointed nationalistic powers by means of renewed warfare. Its inevitability is guaranteed as a destiny to be affirmed by the “genius of war.” (*KuK*, p. 11) Confronted with the general vagueness of this argumentation, Benjamin points to the “journalistic haste to capitalize from the actual present without grasping the past.” (TF, p.122) What glares out all the more clearly from the image of “warrior” depicted by these nationalistic authors is the face of the fascist class warrior. This warrior derives the future-oriented ideological fog which surrounds his acts of violence from the mythical and abstract billows of smoke rising from that World War which was lost in a double sense.

1. The Origin of the Fascist Class Warrior in the Prolonged Front Experience of the First World War

This war was lost not only on the battlefields but, even more importantly, afterwards as well, in relentlessly idealistic attempts to come to terms with what had happened. Yet these attempts were completely divorced from the concrete experience of the actual battles. It had been, however, the experience of the technical waging of war which led to an upheaval in the national consciousness — a consciousness which, since the founding of the Reich in 1870, had formed its identity in voluntary subjugation to the feudalistic military. The military became the model for civilians, the “school of the nation.”

In the actual battles of the war, the advanced technology used in the service of imperialistic expansion revealed itself in an unexpected way: instead of confirming the idealistic belief in the domination of nature by supporting military virtues, it exposed the weakness of all remaining idealistic ideologies, of all subjective efforts to make sense of events — this despite the belief that decadence had been overcome in and through the war. “If at the beginning of the war supplies of idealism were provided by order of the state, the longer the war lasted, the more the troops had to depend on requisitions. Their heroism turned more and more gloomy, fatal and steel-gray; glory and ideals beckoned from ever more remote and nebulous spheres.” (TF, p. 125) The military virtues and devout patriotism with which this generation had marched off to war were transformed into a specific type of heroism in the later battles — “spectacles which were as grandiose as they were frightful.” (*KuK*, p. 15) This “stance” became an empty formula, devoid of all content.

In the face of the increasing nihilism caused by the “storms of steel,” the uniform worn as a formalized vestige of the military could be spiritualized as an heroic stance. Its notorious representational value under the Kaiser returned in the extreme form of a heightened dialectic of pure inner and outer being. The fight, stripped of any remaining moral motivation, could thus be carried on for its own sake, as the expression and correlate of inner experience. The monstrously senseless battles and their total challenge to the subjective, boundless ability to hold one’s ground could be grasped irrationally as a “volcanic process,” a “well of life.” (*KuK*, pp. 56f.) By mystical submission one could achieve the most painful, yet most heroic experience. Bourgeois subjectivity thus appeared to have arrived at the logical end of its degenerative process — a process which reached its most advanced state in the 19th century with the aestheticist transformation of the arts.

This is what Benjamin means when he writes of the “most rabidly decadent origins” of the anthology’s “new theory of war,” its “uninhibited translation of the principles of *l’art pour l’art* to war itself.” (TF, p. 122) This derivation may at first seem surprising, because these are authors who claim to have cast aside the outmoded “idealism of their grandfathers” in favor of “heroic realism,” to have supplanted bourgeois liberalism with national collectivism. (*KuK*, p. 5) After all, the “elemental eruption” of the World War (for which the authors found abundant volcanic metaphors) had supposedly burned clean the dross of decadence. Yet it should not be overlooked that their cult of war takes part in decadence and *l’art pour l’art* through heroism. For the nihilism of these late bourgeois heroics was declared an inner victory, be it on a spiritual or a mythical basis, over victories of self-imposed forms of absolute beauty in *l’art pour l’art*, the victories of the cult of subtly extreme, often sado-masochistic sensation in the literature and form of life of the *Décadence*. Their social foundations are the privileges of an intelligentsia bound to the haute bourgeoisie.

The aestheticism of Jünger’s war metaphysicians is a worthy successor to this tradition. For the heroism of pure stance is connected with the concept of an elite inherent in the hierarchical structure of the military. This is conservatively opposed to “the inclusion of the masses, of bad blood, of the practical, bourgeois outlook, in short, of the common man,” which could only “destroy the eternally aristocratic elements of the soldier’s trade.” (*KuK*, p. 42) The soldierly ethos was undermined not by the inclusion of masses defined by class (a definition rendered senseless by actual battle conditions in any case) but rather by the advanced application of technology to warfare — a technology which itself first produces a mass. This insight, apparently unknown to the authors of the collected essays, is used by Benjamin to historically situate the First World War within the framework of an historical-philosophical illumination of technology. The powers released are those of productive forces whose dammed-up potential cannot be adequately utilized by society.

Our first observation, then, is the idealism and subjectivism at work in the genesis of fascism and their connection to the crisis symptoms of late bourgeois consciousness — symptoms which now also penetrate into the state fundament of the military. Through the middle of the World War runs the dividing line between soldierly courage and nihilistic heroism, a transition already apparent in another way in the arts and bourgeois lifestyles of the 19th century. The element of power which adhered to that heroism of form and lifestyle, and which despite its privateness took part in the power of the ruling institutions, becomes manifest in the “stance” of the front soldiers in the First World War. Precisely this “stance” prevented the subsequently invoked [pacifistic] “transformation” of people and made possible the continuation, even the glorification, of the World War, which had become an absurd spectacle in the actual battles. And even defeat is now turned into a victory to be retrieved in the mystically experienced ecstasy of a projected apocalypse by those who would have liked to consider the war a national gain. In this form (and soon in a political one as well), the war was continued in the post-war war [*Nachkrieg*].

2. Benjamin grasps even more precisely the confrontation of traditional military morale, which rested upon the intactness of Prussian soldierly virtues, and the destructive power of highly developed technology. Whereas the inventory of vitalistic concepts comes to the fore in the notion of war developed by the theorists of fascism, and war thus defined has nothing to do with “that economy exercised by rationalism” (*KuK*, p. 56), Benjamin traces the motivating forces of war back precisely to economic factors — although not in the unmediated sense of the economic causes of World War I. Benjamin’s explanatory model instead sketches the historical forces that finally erupted in war. He presupposes Rosa Luxemburg’s crisis model of imperialism and develops the relation of mechanical forces of production to “social reality” and “the elemental forces of society” in a way that recalls an historical, dynamic model. The Marxist schema of an increase in productive forces accompanied by socio-economic limitations is taken as a basis: “the perception of an increase in technical artifacts, in power sources, and in tempo generally that the private sector can neither absorb completely nor utilize adequately but that nonetheless demand vindication.” (TF, p. 120) Two different things are expressed in this formulation: the idea of a surplus of forces produced in respect to the materials at hand, and a certain natural determination of technology as concerns its utilization in society. In his essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (1935), Benjamin formulated this even more concisely: “If the natural utilization of productive forces is impeded by the property system, the increase in technical devices, in speed, and in the sources of energy will press for an unnatural utilization, and this is found in war.” “Natural” would be “a harmonious balance” of forces in the sense of a realized “right of co-determination [of technology] in the social order.” (TF, p. 120) Co-determination does not mean the accommodation of society to the concrete

technology in the sense of a cultural achievement, which would mean the “moral illumination” of technology on the way toward its use for social life.

Yet this presupposed, according to Benjamin, that social reality is “mature” enough “to make technology” into an “organ” for its own purposes, and that technology is “strong enough” (i.e., “developed” enough) “to master the elemental forces of society.” (TF, p. 120) Wilhelminian society was mature enough, in respect to its economy but not its structures of consciousness, for an upheaval which would have corresponded to the level of the forces of production and particularly the growth of proletarian masses. Yet because of the forcibly maintained property relations, this society — even its proletarian sector — “was not ready to make technology its own organ.” And on the other hand, technology itself was organized for production in such a way that despite its immense potential, it could not offer the masses sufficient material for the transformation of their needs into social organizing activity. The forces of production nonetheless press to be assimilated into the differentiated channels of social action, or “politics,” but they remain alienated from each other, like a concentrated charge ready to explode.

War is the “solution” to these tensions, in the most energetic sense: it allows the regressive release of energies under conditions that simultaneously provide for their continued repression. Technology’s latent potential for violence is as little intrinsic to this solution as it is to the militarily organized masses, who destructively act out the “elemental forces of society” in war. In both cases this potential for violence is the result of a blockage of these forces by socio-economic limitations. This potential is then unleashed according to plan in a compensatory, supposedly natural sphere, which itself is reduced to hostile matter outside of society. At the same time, the “honor of the nation” functions as an ideologically projected goal. This release takes the form of destructive violence, because the forces produced in a lengthy socio-economic process of abstraction return to nature by the shortest possible route — a route, so to speak, of pleasurable eruptions. The nihilism of this regression arises from the obvious loss of the possibility of ideological interpretation in the face of mechanization and its compensation by a new creation, the even more abstract heroic “stance.” Nihilism thus appears as the ultimate historical consequence of Idealism’s self-declared autonomous spirit, which in its decadent forms is no more than the figure of advanced alienation. The economic correlate of this Idealism lies in debasing nature to abstract matter, the mere object of arbitrarily imposed productive or destructive impulses. “Etching the landscape with flaming banners and trenches, technology wanted to recreate the heroic features of German Idealism. It went astray. What it considered heroic were the features of Hippocrates, the features of death.” (TF, p. 126) Such an

³Both are formally elements of allegory as Benjamin developed it in German Baroque tragic drama.

'idealized' nature together with the idea of the nation — behind which is hidden nothing but the "ruling class," bearing the "Sphinx-like countenance of the producer" — create a "parallelogram of forces" whose "diagonal" is war (TF, p. 127). Produced with the idealism of the control of nature, technology now serves as the instrument which will "mythically and directly" cut through alienation, not by "using and illuminating the secrets of nature via technology mediated for the human scheme of things," but rather by reemerging with nature (TF, p. 126). Nature and technology thus celebrate a mystical union of blood, while the heroic warrior assists fate by acting as a go-between.

The physiognomy of the forces of the World War is thus historically determined and determinable. It is, on the one hand, determined by the syndrome of 'energistic' relationships in society, which culminate in a constellation that can only be resolved by force. On the other hand, it is determined by traditional idealistic and nationalistic ideologies of legitimation, which are deprived of their apparent basis by the experience of practical materialism — as became so destructively apparent in the technology of the World War. Under the expansive control of monopolistic finance capital (according to Benjamin), a technology was refined which was preprogrammed for violent use. It was thus alienated in a specific way from its natural partner, whose "organ" it had the potential to become. Its destructive power could thus only be experienced as a fated fulfillment, as a gigantic and inhuman spectacle surpassing all rational powers of understanding. While technology is being led to its organized release as a spectacle of nature instead of socially useful application, the unaided and undirected⁴ organizational need of the masses finds a substitute satisfaction by being acted out on a symbolic level: war is not social action, nor even a perverted form of social action, but rather the "expression" of the repressed need for it driven back into subjectivity. It is a goal-oriented action which remains metaphoric, since the constructed image of the enemy cannot replace the real goal of self-determined action. Action is removed to a level of representation, it becomes aestheticized.

Ludwig Klages, whom Benjamin had read and, at least for a time, regarded highly,⁵ calls this expressive movement the "metaphor of action."⁶ Action voluntarily tends toward a given goal, which always applies to a

⁴Benjamin does not consider a possible leadership role for the Social Democrats. Cf. his "Eduard Fuchs, Collector and Historian," *New German Critique* 5 (Spring, 1975), 27–58, as well as his "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York, 1969), pp. 253-264.

⁵The relationship of Benjamin's ideas to those of Klages requires further elucidation. Cf. Gerhard Plumpe's comments in "Die Entdeckung der Vorwelt. Erläuterungen zu Benjamins Bachofen Lektüre," in *Text + Kritik* 31/32 (Walter Benjamin), ed. Burkhardt Lindner (Munich, 1971), pp. 19f.

⁶Ludwig Klages, *Ausdrucksbewegung und Gestaltungskraft. Grundlegung der Wissenschaft vom Ausdruck*, ed. Hans Eggert Schröder (Munich, 1968), pp. 72f.

specific instance or object; the metaphor of action tends toward a general characteristic — e.g., opposition — which is sought as an impression or an experience. The objects which elicit this impression are not merely ‘grasped’ as such, they are fundamentally interchangeable. The form of expression of fighting is fulfilled by the breaking of opposition — more precisely, by whatever evokes this impression. It realizes not the type of success which may in fact be achieved (destruction), but rather an impulse (anger). In a vitalistic sense, such an impulse can be understood as a general life force or as the will to destruction, which reaches expression in individual as well as historical movements. Yet this impulse can be overlaid, and its “purity” thereby mitigated, by separatist strivings of the will. In the Jünger anthology under review by Benjamin, the historical World War is repeatedly grasped as the “expression” and “symbol” of a metaphysical life basis, which has allegedly been falsified in its essential form by ethical and humanitarian ideologies of progress. This allows the authors to simultaneously distance themselves from war as a “spectacle” while yielding to the fascination of this “colossal well of life.”

In fact, the experience of war as the regaining of the immediacy of life is a ritual, which makes possible the inner stabilization of societal relationships that have been endangered by the overemphasis on production. It is all-important that the workers employed, so to speak, in war service are denied the political dimension of their activity — i.e., that history is actually moved forward by virtue of the movers becoming caught in the experiential reflection of their own movements instead of ascertaining the goal. It remained for bourgeois intellectuals to give metaphysical sanction retrospectively to what the masses and they themselves were experiencing.

3. The new, heroic nationalism which accompanies the rise of fascism is a European phenomenon. Ernst Jünger indicated in 1960 that it was Maurice Barrès who made him a nationalist.⁷ Whatever one may think of such biographical self-portrayals, the two evince “astonishing” similarities in ideas and in psychology according to one critic.⁸ In his essay “On the Contemporary Social Standpoint of the French Writer” (1934), Benjamin points out (without going into Jünger) the “decisive influence” of Barrès on the intellectuals of that generation whose formative experience of youth and manhood had been the war. “The more deeply one goes into the man’s thought, the closer its relationship appears to be to the tenets which the present is calling forth everywhere. There is the same basic outlook of nihilism, the same idealism of gesture and the same conformism, which results from the combination of nihilism and idealism.”⁹ It is helpful to recall

⁷Klaus-Friedrich Bastian, *Das Politische bei Ernst Jünger. Nonkonformismus und Kompromiss der Innerlichkeit*. Diss. Heidelberg, 1963, p. 280.

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹W. Benjamin, “Zum gegenwärtigen gesellschaftlichen Standort des französischen Schriftstellers,” in *Angelus Novus. Ausgewählte Schriften*, vol. 2 (Frankfurt am Main, 1966), p. 265.

what Ernst Robert Curtius wrote in 1921 in his *Maurice Barrès and the Intellectual Basis of French Nationalism*: “The spiritual world of Barrès reveals its inner logic most clearly in the fact that its political will is ruled by the same law as its relationship to art. In art . . . he does not seek formal beauty, but expression of spiritual values . . . , summaries of emotional turbulence rendered image It is also this need which leads him to politics and determines his political ideology. He accordingly sees the foundation of all political action in a sum of spiritual realities; the task of the politician is to be the intellectual expression of these spiritual givens. This is the ego cult [*Ichkultus*] transferred to politics. Politics is emotional energy, guided by the will to expression.”¹⁰ Barrès also anticipated the content of nihilism’s arsenal of surrogate constructs, which could fend off the spiritual isolation of the front experience with the armor of an heroic world view. These constructs include aestheticistic self-preservation, blood mysticism, the cult of the earth, of the folkish spirit [*Volksggeist*] and of the dead and, finally, a romantic-religious nationalism which manifested an irrationalism of the supposed political deed.

For Jünger, who had been raised as a Prussian and had experienced a crisis in his sense of national consciousness due to the World War and the November Revolution, Barrès became the “example of an unbending nationalism which draws strength from defeat.”¹¹ It is characteristic of Jünger’s work between the wars that the subjectivist presupposition of his heroic thought — the front soldier’s experience of annihilation — is transformed into the objectivist affirmation of a metaphysical-vitalistic strength shaped by fate — a strength which in 1930 is grasped as *total mobilization*. The soldier had withstood the impending collapse by strategies of depersonalization: mystical surrender to the “spirit of war” (or the “will to destruction,” “life”) and heroic distancing of oneself from individuality. In these two forms, objectivity is actually only an impenetrable subjectivity, a subjectivity that is actor, audience and stage at once. For that reason, the corresponding metaphysics of politics can be described as an aesthetic construct. Everything exterior is only the manifestation and expression of the essential interior, of a center of life. Such actual historical forces as fascism, Bolshevism, Americanism, Zionism and third-world movements can thus make up only “a circle of the most artificial dialectics” of progress, which instead should be traced back to its “elemental level” — i.e., the level where it is seen as a form of timeless impulse.¹² “Total mobilization” occurs on both levels: externally, as the negative of an individualistic belief in advancing historical “progress”; internally, as the

¹⁰Ernst Robert Curtius, *Maurice Barrès und die geistigen Grundlagen des französischen Nationalismus* (Bonn, 1921), p. 99.

¹¹K.-F. Bastian, pp. 93f.

¹²Jünger speaks of “that mixture of wild and sublime passions . . . that inhabit man and that make him receptive to martial appeals at any time.” (*KuK*, p. 16.)

necessary movement of life which transforms material into energy by means of an inexhaustible productivity. The Germanic folkish spirit, as yet untouched by the delusion of progress, stands nearer to the center of life and therefore faces the task of undertaking the renewal of the historical world as total mobilization in the metaphysical-political sense. In this manner, the culturally critical motif of the “illusions du progrès” (Sorel) is joined in Jünger’s essay with the legitimation of bellicose violence and a national will to power. The heroic stance adopted under the conditions of war, the self-experience and self-liberation gained by action, can thus be projected into a universal-folkish idea.

According to Benjamin, an aesthetic totalitarianism becoming politically aggressive can be discerned in this stance, which had already been adopted by the 19th century intelligentsia (which still enjoyed superficial privileges) as a result of internalizing the imperialist dialectic of monopolization and expansion. This internalization made “the position of the intellectuals ever more difficult.”¹³ As Europe moved into the imperialist crisis, the retention of idealistic positions by both the ruling and privileged classes became synonymous with violence, which was turned inward by representatives of the ‘spirit’ and took on heroic features. Their aestheticism, however, becomes politically activated at the moment their privileges (which they defend as prerogatives) are put under massive pressure felt by the entire society. This is the hour of the “aestheticization of political life” anticipated by d’Annunzio, Marinetti and Barrès.

The transition from this aestheticism to National Socialist ideology is made by a mythical-metaphysical transformation of the originally compensatory, nihilist-heroic approach to the World War-technology syndrome. The actual historical genesis of this transition goes unrecognized by Jünger, because “economic explanations, no matter how insightful,” treat only “superficial aspects of warfare” and are therefore eliminated from consideration (*KuK*, p. 17). Any explanation for the failure of hopes for action in war and any sufficient motivation for their resumption in the sense of nationalism must, according to Jünger, be made on the level of aestheticized heroism, in terms of recurrent motifs of a late romantic metaphysic: destiny and the folkish spirit, alienated from one another in the World War, are to be reunited in national collectivism.

II. Symbol and Action: The Vitalistic Sublation of Décadence

All this becomes possible in an ‘organic’ image of the world, which ‘sublates’ unresolved antinomies by symbolic mediation favoring a form- and norm-setting power elite. This theme was anticipated by Nietzsche’s antinomy of nihilism and belief in fate and its aestheticistic solution in heroic affirmation, i.e., the precept of the vital necessity of the lie. The theme is further enriched by romantic tropes of the most diverse origins and certain

¹³W. Benjamin, *Angelus Novus*, p. 265.

setpieces of vitalistic philosophy [*Lebensphilosophie*]. What became politically virulent in this philosophy was not so much its Manichean antinomies of death, rigidity, atomization, liberalism etc. versus life, movement, community, war etc., but rather the direct if still undeveloped connection between theories of image and action.¹⁴ This connection (as was to become apparent) contained two aspects: the aestheticization of social action and the legitimization of violence.

This can be shown with Oswald Spengler, who — apart from Barrès — was perhaps the most important figure in Ernst Jünger's political development in the post-war years. Spengler's essay "Prussianism and Socialism" (1919), which he himself later described as a starting point of the post-war "national movement,"¹⁵ influenced Jünger's political program for a central leadership council [*Zentralführerrat*] within a coalition of *Bünde* as well as the conception of Jünger's *The Worker* (1932), already apparent in his "Total Mobilization."¹⁶ On the basis of a rudimentary space-time metaphysics,¹⁷ Spengler had arrived in *The Decline of the West* (1918) at the "idea of an all-encompassing symbolism."¹⁸ Of particular interest for our purposes is Spengler's vitalistic-metaphysical foundation of the morphological distinctiveness of cultural circles. Using both psychological and cultural analogies, Spengler attributes the principle of individuation to a specific, individual-historical form of the experience of space. This form of experience, taken as the "original" symbol of a culture or of an individual, becomes the basis of every kind of experience and structure in the historical life processes. The underlying vitalistic antinomy recurs here, superficially coordinated as a space-time relationship. A metaphysical life basis is revealed by the manner in which individual and cultural manifestations appear, a basis which can only be grasped by means of intuitive vision. Everything that exists, above all man as temporal will and as the subject of spatial conception, is the nomad-like "figure" [*Gestalt*] of a comprehensive movement of life, is its "expression" and "metaphor," in short its "symbol." This relationship is, however, immediately subjectivized by Spengler, for "here there can be no discussion of what a world is, but rather what it signifies. . . . Reality — the world in relation to one soul — is for every individual and every culture . . . an incarnation of inner being and essence, of the own [*das Eigene*] reflected on the alien — it signifies him himself."¹⁹ The meaning of all individual happenings is thereby attributed to the symbolic relationship to the

¹⁴This relationship is best worked out by Georges Sorel and, in connection with his "science of expression," by Ludwig Klages. See below.

¹⁵Oswald Spengler, "Vorwort," *Politische Schriften* (Munich, 1933), p. vii.

¹⁶K.-F. Bastian, p. 94.

¹⁷Manfred Schröter, *Metaphysik des Untergangs. Eine kulturkritische Studie über Oswald Spengler* (Munich, 1949), pp. 171f.

¹⁸O. Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, vol. 1: *Gestalt und Wirklichkeit* (Munich, 1920), p. 223.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 227.

universal understood as life movement. “Life is the realization of interior possibilities.” But “not ‘I’ realize the possible; rather ‘it’ realizes itself through me as an empirical person.”²⁰ The irreversibility of a specifically historical mode of being (which as Western man’s “Faustian culture of the will” manifests itself in the “primal symbol” of infinite space) and its inextricability from the entirety of the metaphysical life process is “destiny.”

Obviously, such an outlook sharply contrasts with the ideology of Western European liberalism. This liberalism was seen as a symptom of decline not only in Spengler’s organic-morphological view of history (which had been expounded in anticipation of a German victory in the World War) but also from the perspective of the war’s defeat, purportedly in the bourgeois hinterland. Jünger — an anti-liberal out of passion and innermost experience — thus connected with Spengler — an encyclopedic metaphysician of decline who came to discover the politician in himself when confronted by the November Revolution and post-war developments. In numerous writings of the 1920s and early 1930s, Spengler drew the logical consequences of the convictions he had reached intuitively and theoretically in regard to national politics. The first of his programmatic writings, “Prussianism and Socialism,” immediately takes a stand on revolution and the endeavors from left and right to create a new form of state molded by socialism. In mass democracy Spengler sees only the liberalist legacy, the individualistic “shopkeeper’s mentality” taken to its civilizational conclusion — as embodied in the opposition of Prussianism to England in particular. Although both forms of life are “Germanic,” they embody “two contrasting moral imperatives which developed from the knightly spirit of the Teutonic Order and the spirit of the Vikings.”²¹ At the present stage of decay, which is “a spritual form of existence without content,”²² socialism is unavoidable — is the “Faustian” form of civilizational decline.²³ Yet because the German soul has scarcely exhausted its strength, a “Prussian” socialism can still form the future. What is now erupting in the masses — the “age-old barbarism, for centuries hidden and shackled by the strict formalism of a high culture, . . . that militant, healthy joy in one’s own strength”²⁴ — this must not be allowed to succumb to a governmental form of “Caesarism,” which would be “completely formless again” and would in this respect resemble the masses. This is the political perspective of *The Decline of the West*. It requires the sense of duty and responsibility of a Prussian elite: “Only the warlike ‘Prussian’ spirit remains as the form-giving

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 226f.

²¹ O. Spengler, “Preussentum und Sozialismus,” in *Politische Schriften* (Munich, 1933), p. 32.

²² O. Spengler, *Untergang*, vol. 1, p. 510.

²³ “The original occidental passion for pressing onward is Faustian; the rest, mechanical ‘progress,’ is socialism.” (*Ibid.*, p. 507.)

²⁴ O. Spengler, *Jahre der Entscheidung*, vol. 1: *Deutschland und die weltgeschichtliche Entwicklung* (Munich, 1933), p. 16.

power — everywhere, not just in Germany.”²⁵ Thus “the decision [shifts] from questions of form” (to which the culture had gone over at the height of its late flowering) “to the question of the presence and will of strong personalities.”²⁶ A “class of socialist master types” must now come forth.²⁷ Particularly well-suited to this end is “the German virtue of training oneself as material for great leaders” to use.²⁸

We have cited Spengler at some length, for the cluster of nationalistic motifs which arose immediately after the war is developed by him with a certain logical consistency. These motifs derive from the perspective of historical decline — the “metamorphosis of history into nature-like forms”²⁹ and their sublation in a symbolic Prussianism. We have also examined Spengler not just because he was so influential, but because he first advanced the aestheticization of politics which was later to appear in the war metaphysicians around Jünger. The perspective of historical decline first politicizes the relationship of symbol and action, developed in vitalistic philosophy from the space-time relationship. According to Spengler, historical decline is characterized by the loss of metaphysical contents, i.e. of *fulfilled* forms, the loss of the self-renewing process of individuation within the space-time transfer, which alone puts history and nature in a productive relationship to each other. In the current stage of civilization, only the abstract idealism of formal demands posed within the ends-means relationship — as manifested in modern technology,³¹ for example — remains on the side of history. On the other side is the substratum of nature, the masses, that “beast of prey, man,” the “strong race.”³² This natural substratum is to be given historical and political direction by means of mythical images and imagined goals precisely within the ends-means relationship, as the historically unavoidable form of the time relationship. This is the task of an elite *embodying* formal demands. The uprooted masses are thus once again placed in the dimension of “destiny.”

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

²⁶ O. Spengler, *Untergang*, vol. 2, p. 523: “To the degree that nations cease to be politically fit, the possibilities of the energetic private individual who wants to be politically creative and who wants power at any price, grow and grow such that the impact of his appearance determines the fate of whole peoples and cultures. There are no longer any formal preconditions that events must follow. In place of secure traditions, which cannot do without the genius because it is itself cosmic energy to the highest power, there is now the coincidence of great men of fact.”

²⁷ O. Spengler, “Preussentum und Sozialismus,” p. 105.

²⁸ O. Spengler, “Politische Pflichten der deutschen Jugend,” in *Politische Schriften*, pp. 155f. The emphasis is Spengler’s.

²⁹ O. Spengler, *Untergang*, vol. 1, p. 507.

³⁰ Prussia, which already plays a similar role in Nietzsche, was in the 19th century not only a military state with a highly efficient government bureaucracy; it was also unequalled as a school for technical leadership. Under the rubric of a sense of duty, it becomes in Spengler a symbol of the authoritarian state of the heroic-aristocratic sort.

³¹ Cf. O. Spengler, *Der Mensch und die Technik. Beitrag zu einer Philosophie des Lebens* (Munich, 1931).

³² O. Spengler, *Jahre der Entscheidung*, p. 161.

The antinomic connection of decadent-barbaric strength and the necessary hardness of commanding and dominating results in the violence of action, which can only become symbolic by having mythical objectives, i.e. by representing totality. The problem confronted by the front generation — loss of meaning in the face of war (that civilizational “event of nature”) and its heroic overcoming through an affirmation of destiny — merges with the general problematic of decadence in the post-war years. A solution can be found in the new nationalism. Mechanistic and soulless (i.e., nature-like) technology, which has forced mankind into its service, can again become “historical” through the idealization of empty operationalism, i.e., mythical-national objectives. In the hands of goal-directed masses, both technology and masses became carriers of the movement of destiny. There is a direct line from this and Spengler’s concept of work³³ to Jünger’s “Total Mobilization” and the “figure” of *The Worker*.

The paradox of sublating “barbaric” nature by strictly reducing it to pliant material for the “hardness” of the will indeed fulfills an idealistic program. (This paradox finds its economic resolution in materializing nature by the exercise of technological force.) The immediate forerunner and model of this paradox lies in Nietzsche’s notion of transcending decadence through the mythos of history. In the master race, nature, as the will to live, turns into a force against itself as an organic substratum; following Darwin, a naturally necessary state of war destroys everything weak and diseased but strengthens and enhances all the basic healthy drives. Projected into history, this instinctually guided struggle for existence (which is to be reinstated in its moral rights as well) results in the demand for natural selection, and its consistent application is to lead to the breeding of supermen [*Uebermenschen*]. But the historical power of Christianity in the Western world, the “herd morality” of liberalism and socialism, have distorted this “telos” into decadent primacies of the intellect; to reestablish it via a mythic goal is what the later Nietzsche strains to do. As a *Décadent* and Naturalist, he takes as his point of departure the manifestations of degeneracy he sees in European national liberalism and budding imperialism as well as in his own fate of illness. To the barbarism breaking out from under the veneer of liberal overbreeding he reacts both with horror and with hope. For as a formless mass phenomenon, it threatens to lead to the annihilation of any and all culture and to the demise of the human race; only when reduced to a mere substratum, under the control of an aristocratic rule of will that fulfills the natural law of the will to power, only then can this barbarism be applied to the immanent law of the species — the development of the superman. Thus the actual historical force of militarism — the “Prussian” leadership principle, “the enmity and difference in rank between states”³⁴ — is utilized

³³O. Spengler, *Untergang*, vol. 1, pp. 508f.

³⁴Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York, 1967), p. 386.

to function as the natural self-help of social organisms in the service of the species. This implies the unhesitating use of lying, since "truth" (in its moral claims) itself is always only a function of the intellect — and a degenerated and detached one at that. With this transvaluation of lying into an active and beneficent historical force for fulfilling the destiny of mankind, Nietzsche's aestheticism, which had begun with the concern for an enduring culture and for its privileged character, comes full circle. What the military and the aestheticist concept of culture have in common in Nietzsche is this: The historically highest and strictest level of form, which is "aristocratic" as an achievement of breeding but condemned to decadence on its own (i.e., when removed from the struggle), is called upon to rule as a force over "barbaric" nature in full affirmation of nihilism in order to generate it to its highest vital power and to bring about the superman. The image of the superman, provisionally seen as a mythos, determines a course of action whose highest expression is war.

2. In Nietzsche's construction, the grounding of culture in the master race and in the stipulation of an exploitable slave race is openly allegorical and presented in a social dimension as well. But in the forefield of fascism, the components of this construction are pre-reconciled in a conservative-revolutionary symbolism and turned into a cultural utopia of an organically restorable totality. Only with this step — and not with Nietzsche — is the way opened to the totality of aesthetic political action. Its one side, the manipulative, is the combination of theories of symbols and of action; the other, which provides the masses with expressive action as compensation for their political inactivity and calls it political action, is contributed by the metaphysical ideologies of expression. These two elements are closely related. Among these ideologies especially Ludwig Klages' concept of expression helps us to explain a form of aestheticizing action which attaches expressive movements to manipulatively instated symbols — though it does this only under the most rigorous rule of the will, not out of the totality of life desired by Klages. This "expressive movement as a metaphor of action" in its one-sidedness (which is not to be understood as postulated) exactly describes the facts of an emotive-symbolic relation to reality. Transposed into the realm of political action, this emotive-symbolic relation to reality leads to a loss of reality for the actors and thereby directly exposes itself to the purposive will to power of demagogues. The assumption of a personal guiding conception or "guiding image," formed by the individually anticipated success of the movement, thereby provides the basis for the principle of self-representation. But it renders itself defenseless, in its purely characterological mode of assertion, against the mechanism of identification with a leader personality. And this, according to Freud, leads to the formation of masses.

As little as Klages wished to see expressive action made absolute as a manifestation of human life, he was blind to the capacity for manipulation of what he imagined as the pure, unalienated life. The weakness of Klages'

position is that he recognized domination and alienation solely as consequences of the allegorical development (as Benjamin would say) towards increasing nationalization and dispositional power, and that he did not recognize the complementary tendency towards regression and towards a false mythos that this development also initiates. Since he did not reflect on its historical position, his own theory also fell prey to this tendency in a ironically deceptive way. Thus his theory of symbols and expression, with which he wanted to put the potential healing forces into words and implant them into the deaf world of his day, could at the same time become a key for the speculations of those demagogues who made use of these dualistic schemata in order to rehearse the final return of the mythos with the masses, posing as their saviors.

According to Benjamin, the “regression from social reality into natural and biological reality” began in art history with *art nouveau* and has “since increasingly been confirmed as a symptom of crisis.”³⁵ It was certainly also a reaction to the new advances in technology and can be viewed as an attempt to master them by a return to the organic. Ludwig Klages’ relation to the Stefan George Circle and to the “Cosmics”^{*} should be distinguished in this regard. His anti-technological attitude has little in common with that of the rest of the “Cosmics,” who closed one eye to technology. Nevertheless, here as in the George Circle, it was the total lack of perception for social appropriation of nature by technology that completed their surrender to the economic-political ruling interests (whom such aestheticizing of technological products and processes more than suited). Though today his chaotic-irrational phase among the “Cosmics” is stressed,³⁶ Klages was quite consistent in his enmity to technology and had enough insight not to share the enthusiasm for war to which almost all George followers — the master himself partially excepted — fell prey. In their cosmic-heroic-national hopes for renewal, the role of technology in the actual war itself — which Jünger at least tried to define — seems altogether screened out; afterwards, however, this role of technology was reckoned as one of the powers of fate which an unfathomably creative and destructive nature expelled from itself. In the minds of his followers, George’s idealistic formal pathos, which he intended differently, seemed to find its first entry into life in the war (insofar as the ideas of the war were supported by the young) because of its supposed “military” (“disciplined”) nature. And it was only consistent for a life gained in this way to be pushed onward to that death in beauty that was the secret leading image of *Décadence*.

This makes clear in what sense Benjamin speaks of George as the “epitome of *Décadence*.” Verlaine did not ascribe the “*art de mourir en*

^{*} Intellectual circle in Munich before the First World War. Among its leading members were Karl Wolfskehl, Alfred Schuler and Ludwig Klages. (Ed.)

³⁵ W. Benjamin, “Rückblick auf Stefan George,” in *Angelus Novus*, p. 476.

³⁶ Cf. Michael Winkler, *George-Kreis* (Stuttgart, 1972).

beauté” directly to his own consciousness of decadence; rather he identified it as the essence of late antiquity to which he, as a late representative of a culture, felt an affinity.³⁷ Dying as art appears historically distanced. For Baudelaire, death was still an obsession that he tried to master in his allegorical intent in the “destruction of the organic”³⁸ and in the aesthetic visualization of the emblems of death. “Machinery,” and as such machinery, the human skeleton becomes the “trace [*Chiffre*] of the destructive forces” for him;³⁹ but at the same time this skeleton has a “place . . . in the erotology of Baudelaire” which Benjamin documents with the following quotation: “L’élégance sans nom de l’humaine armature.”⁴⁰ The allegorical conception of the skeleton thereby becomes a historical index which marks the destruction of the organic as conditioned by modern technology. This is done by singling out elegance as the new quality of technological products, which incorporates them into the universe of commodities, and by relating them back to mortified nature: the “world that has entered *rigor mortis*”⁴¹ legitimates itself in the beauty of the skeleton mechanism which it seemingly imitates. If thereby the only “radical novelty” for man today — the “perennially same: death”⁴² — is thus removed into the aesthetic realm, then at least he still retains the inscribed image of technology in this way. Nonetheless technology’s complete reversion to ornament and applied art (as Benjamin sees *art nouveau*) is already anticipated by Baudelaire.

When Benjamin places George’s work, especially its weaker portions, within *art nouveau*⁴³ (the appropriateness of this cannot be treated here⁴⁴), he apparently means to put him within the context of the “comprehensive and aggressive criticism of technology that lies hidden in *art nouveau*.” *Art nouveau* “is basically concerned with arresting technological development.” George’s relation to technology is most clearly expressed in the fact that he suffuses, as much as possible, the reproduction standards of book production with handicraft practices which aim to produce books as complete works of art. In an arrogant and lordly way this practice, if it does not quite ignore the technologization and industrialization of social reality, certainly tries to represent itself as the way of truth and tries to direct others back to it. It is rather striking that Benjamin does not pursue this; instead, to document George’s proximity to *art nouveau* internally, he establishes an analogy

³⁷Rainer Hess, “Dekadenzdichtung,” in *Literaturwissenschaftliches Wörterbuch für Romanisten*, ed. R. Hess, M. Frauenrath and G. Siebenmann (Frankfurt am Main, 1972), p. 40.

³⁸W. Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire, Ein Lyriker im Zeitalter des Hochkapitalismus*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main, 1974), pp. 165f.

³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 180.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 159.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 178.

⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 164.

⁴³W. Benjamin, “Rückblick auf Stefan George,” p. 476.

⁴⁴For a discussion of this critical concept see Jost Hermand, *Jugendstil. Ein Forschungsbericht 1918–1964* (Stuttgart, 1965).

between technology's reversion to the ornamental there and the "reversion of the social contradictions to those inevitable tragic convulsions and tensions . . . which are characteristic of the life of little conventicles."⁴⁵ But their aestheticist gesture also covers over what comes to light as the political content of aestheticism at the "turn of the times" — the demand of death.⁴⁶ George was the "epitome of *Décadence*" because he consistently and just as unwittingly showed its core, the aestheticizing of death, to be bourgeois culture's demand of life.

With that we return to our point of departure, Benjamin's review of Jünger's *Warrior* book and its working out of the genesis of German fascist ideology. At least in the outlines in which Benjamin presents it, the connection of bourgeois subjectivity, aestheticism, allegorical domination over nature, technological development, and national heritage would seem to be clear. "The pleasure and pain of aesthetic self-reflection," according to Obenauer the speculative potential of German idealism,⁴⁷ can of course be found in all national cultures of the late bourgeois nineteenth century, but the theoretical foundations of a formal art of aesthetic self-reflection were laid in German Romanticism. And even if its transposition into *artistic* practice and aesthetic life forms was carried out much more radically among our neighbors, and if the proclamation of aestheticizing politics and war was not first formulated in Germany, it was nonetheless left to the fascist rulers to let it become *political* reality in the middle of the twentieth century. The reason the forces of resistance were so weak lies, if one pursues Benjamin's Obenauer quotation further in its context, in the tendency to confuse that sort of consciousness with "sharpened understanding" and "lucidity of reason," a confusion from which it is but a step to the "defamation of thinking itself." The example of Max Kommerell that prompts Benjamin to this remark is particularly illuminating here. Not that Kommerell had completely fallen into this confusion; but his indecisive wavering between an aesthetic and a rational position lets him seek "to overcome this doubt in the heroic attitude of mind." Benjamin sees a dialectical impetus precisely in the radicalism of the aesthetic relationship to oneself. But in contrast to the French avant-garde, the George Circle lacks this insofar as it derives the form- and norm-giving principle from the individual's responsibility and transforms it into a personal mythos of general validity, into a leader cult and hero worship.

The transformation of extreme subjectivist egocentrism into an objective existential basis [*Seinsgrund*] is for Benjamin a historical experience which he found verifiable as far as he could see in the present, and he

⁴⁵W. Benjamin, "Rückblick auf Stefan George," p. 477.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 480f.

⁴⁷Quoted from W. Benjamin, "Der eingetunkte Zauberstab. Zu Max Kommerells 'Jean Paul,'" in *Angelus Novus*, p. 497. (From K.J. Obenauer, *Die Problematik des ästhetischen Menschen in der deutschen Literatur* [Munich, 1933].)

depicted this process time and again in the history of bourgeois subjectivity, from the Baroque allegory to Romanticism on down to Surrealism and to fascism. But the direction of this transformation, usually a collectivism, is not always unequivocally indicated in the original subjectivist postulate. This is demonstrated by German Romanticism, which is largely transformed into conservatism and restoration in its historical representatives; but at the same time it also liberated a historical undercurrent of free subjectivist forces that breaks out again in the avant-garde movements and that George partakes of as well. It is the same Romantic undercurrent that makes George into an aesthetic subjectivist and that “rises up against this work today.” For that reason, the origins of that hopelessly undialectical view whose horizon encompasses fascism lie in both the recourse to a Greek heroism contaminated with arch-Teutonic spirit as well as the late bourgeois conception of German Classicism and the Teutonic as “the inheritance of the Greek mission” as such — and not in Romanticism.

III. Aestheticism and Technology

But Benjamin would not be the materialist he already considers himself here if he stopped short at this view. Instead, he now moves the productive force, technology, which the late bourgeoisie provides for its aesthetic self-reflection, and the origins of which are also connected with bourgeois subjectivity, into the center of his diagnosis of fascism. The development of reproduction techniques in the nineteenth century is not only based on the level of technology attained and its logical continuation; it is also based on the specific desires of the bourgeoisie which were translated into the productive trifling of mostly private inventors and utopists. With the development of these reproduction techniques, the bourgeoisie creates for itself expedients that satisfy the increased desire for artistic reflection of the reality created by itself, a reflection understood as an objectification of the bourgeoisie’s inner world. The technical provisions for the surrogate-like rendering of the sensuous surface reality increased the perfection and precision of the reproduction to a degree that had seemed previously inconceivable; at the same time they created and made possible totally novel sensations. But at bottom it is the same technology that can be the means of production in a factory, be an instrument of destruction in war, or can satisfy desires for aesthetic stimulation in private life which is no longer supplied by conventional arts. Thus Futurism defines the sensuous surface effects of modern warfare as ends in themselves and as models for new artistic productions.⁴⁸ Detached from its material relation as a means of production or, in war as a perverted means of consumption (whose experience the bourgeoisie was spared), technology is reduced for the bourgeoisie to its function as a production- and profit-increasing factor in their calculations, as a means of communication or transportation, a practical expedient and

⁴⁸Cf. W. Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” pp. 241, 242.

means of distraction in a wealth of new possibilities. That does not mean that their negative sides are not experienced, but they are felt only as hindrances to privileged leisure. The bourgeoisie, which is not directly planning production, seeks to make technology its organ as a means of expression and a plaything. Bourgeois cultural criticism, which usually erects regressive utopias, simultaneously articulates its shock at the objective development of technology and at the changes encompassing the whole society. In this way the bourgeoisie rehearses the modes of behavior which, under new political constellations and in unison with Germanic-national ideologies (such as the heroic reception of Classicism and the myths of antiquity, arch-Teutons, and Prussia) and with the projected ideal of surmounting decadence and nihilism in the heroic postulate of form, community [*Gemeinschaft*], and leader-following, together paved the way for the fascist solution to the systemic crises of late capitalism and for the disposition of the gigantically increased productive forces (while maintaining the property relations and privilege structure of the society).

What significance does this have for us today, beyond the historical insight and the understanding gained? Other myths, trivial and everyday ones, have taken the place of those transmitted by education. Neither the arch-Teutonic nor the metaphysics of life or the will, neither Greek hero worship nor a German sense of mission, ideologized Classicism or aestheticist self-reflection play a role anymore. The bourgeoisie, which defends its privileges as much as ever, does this under the pretext of other values which come largely out of the arsenal of liberalism and an ethic derived from Christianity (the destruction of which, since Nietzsche, undoubtedly a predominant portion of German intellectuals has participated in one way or another). In confronting the danger of communism or socialism — not much effort is made to distinguish between them — the old basic ideologies of capitalism (which already were combatted by fascism in the twenties and thirties) have been revived today. Meanwhile there is a long way before economic and technological development are well in hand, and organized in such a way that such development is humanized. This is particularly so in regard to the way natural resources are used and the way technology is developed and applied in long-range terms. It is not necessary to recall the spectral development of weapons technology carried on in the name of defending humanity. The word takes on a hollow ring in this very process, when reminded of Benjamin's delineation of the problem of an empty heroism with its fetishized value phrases ("soldierly stance") and its merciless practice. Economic growth is no longer pursued for its own sake. Rather under the pressure of immanent crises, it now produces surpluses that have to be made salable with the aid of contrived commodity aesthetics; such growth also increases the problems of waste and of the environment. It will make domination over nature the last perversion of reason and will finally make our planet an allegory of a *facies hippocratica* of human history. On the one hand the privileged, whose economic interests dictate continuing

this course of history instead of considering a transformation of the complete economic system and positing truly social goals and priorities, could well use this monopoly of power more and more, like the governments and state apparatuses that support them, to uphold the conditions of the industrial growth economy (which dominates not the West alone). On the other hand, organized force from below, which can only legitimate itself in its preconceived postulates and symbols of belief, has fascistically degenerated into a steel-gray heroism and into an apotheosis of an abstract class struggle which has its own aesthetic.

A new aestheticism has taken shape based on the further development, the technology of reproduction and on media that have created their own public. Like the Aestheticism of the nineteenth century, it is not directly transmitted ideologically, but via technology. Not only have the practically world-wide, infinite reproduction capacities of media made the reflection of any kind of political activity possible, but the time between political acts and public presentation of them has shrunk virtually to nil. With the new media technologies it is no longer necessary first to record events by means of film and then to reproduce and distribute them with considerable delay; now it is possible to project the political act directly to the public and thus to determine its course and outcome through the reaction of the media public created in this way. Under state supervision or extortionary pressure, media can be put into direct service.

The new quality of the film as a medium of reproduction was its special affinity to mass movements. On the one hand, such movements could be presented in an alternation between crowd-scenes and individual close-ups; that way the individual's pleasurable sensation of being a component part of a collective, a particle of a mass, or an appendage of a leader figure found its transposition into the aesthetic nature of a reproduction. On the other hand, the mass movements reflected in this way also became accessible to mass reception for the first time. It was this double media quality that made the film suitable for the masses to experience themselves and to enjoy their own mass movements aesthetically. With cameras mounted in front of them, the masses and the politicians alike present themselves, with the difference that the masses can become intoxicated with their subjugation rituals, the politicians with their power. Film reproduction thus becomes a stimulus to political acts that are staged for the sake of their aesthetics. Even the time difference between recording and reproduction, as well as the formal difference between the actual course of events and the edited film presentation enhanced its aesthetic effect by increasing the anticipation.

Radio and sound film represented a powerful acceleration and perfection of reproduction technologies. Today's media have accelerated the process of reproduction in such a way that they have become a part of the political scene itself; they are like spotlights, without which the stage events would not seem existent and the actor would not know how to move, since the light effects alone can produce the appearance of objectivity. Because of

their actual presence the media's intervention changes and shapes the course of events and, necessarily, their planning as well. The realm of public self-presentation is extended into the everyday practice of the politician. Political action is no longer defined primarily by the objective dimension of a competency for decisions or a relation to the community, but by the capacity of the individual charged with action to present himself publicly as an individual charged with political action. This and the organized mass movements seen as expressive actions which are given their aesthetic self-gratification in the media and are thereby dispossessed of their potential power to change the system, these are the distinguishing marks of an aestheticizing of politics which reached their highpoint thus far in fascism. Benjamin has pointed out a relation between ideologies and applied technology here that in different forms appears as a problem again today.

Translated by Jerold Wikoff and Ulf Zimmerman

Socialist Challenge

Socialist Challenge is a 16-page Marxist weekly edited in Britain by Tariq Ali and sponsored by the British section of the Fourth International. Its impact has been considerable during the 18 months it has appeared. This is because its policies have found a real response amongst British militants:

***for revolutionary unity**, against the sectarianism which has affected socialists for too long.

***for a broad, united class-struggle opposition** to lead the fightback against the attacks of British bosses and the betrayals of the reformist leaders.

Socialist Challenge has become known for the high quality of its investigative journalism; in-depth analysis of domestic and international politics; regular, open polemical material; and consistent coverage of a wide range of issues of vital concern to revolutionaries including sexual politics, trade union struggles, cultural questions, racism and fascism, and so on.

Perhaps most appealing to many of our readers is the broad scope of guest writers. Contributors have included Robin Blackburn, Cathy Porter, Fred Halliday, Hilary Wainwright, Tamara Deutscher, Terry Eagleton, Tom Nairn, Dennis Skinner, (MP), Sheila Rowbotham, Alix Holt, Anthony Barnett, Fay Weldon, Ernest Mandel, Eric Heffer, (MP), Gareth Stedman Jones, and many others.

Socialist Challenge has made an important contribution to the socialist cause. We are sure that many people will not agree with all the paper's policies, but nevertheless will want to ensure a paper like Socialist Challenge continues to appear, and indeed, is in a position to expand.

Thousands of British readers have indicated they share this assessment by becoming regular readers — many by buying subscriptions. Why don't you?

RATES: Domestic: £5 for 6 months; £10 per year.

International: £16.50 airmail; £10 surface.

Multi-reader institutions: Double the above rates.

Socialist Challenge, 328 Upper Street, London N1 2XP, England

*Theories of German Fascism:
On the Collection of Essays War and
Warrior, edited by Ernst Jünger**

by Walter Benjamin

Léon Daudet, the son of Alphonse Daudet, who was himself an important writer and a leader of France's Royalist Party, once gave a report in his *Action Française* on the *Salon de l'Automobile* which concluded, in perhaps somewhat different words, with the equation: "L'automobile c'est la guerre." This surprising association of ideas was based on the perception of an increase in technical artifacts, in power sources, and in tempo generally that the private sector can neither absorb completely nor utilize adequately but that nonetheless demand vindication. But vindication can only occur in antithesis to a harmonious balance, in war, and the destructive power of war provides clear evidence that social reality was not ready to make technology its own organ, and that technology was not strong enough to master the elemental forces of society. Without approaching the surface of the significance of the economic causes of war, one may say that the harshest, most disastrous aspects of imperialist war are in part the result of the gaping discrepancy between the gigantic power of technology and the minuscule moral illumination it affords. Indeed, according to its economic nature, bourgeois society cannot help but insulate everything technological as much as possible from the so-called spiritual, and it cannot help but resolutely exclude technology's right of co-determination in the social order. Any future war will also be a slave revolt of technology.

Today factors such as these determine all questions of war and one would hardly expect to have to remind the authors of the present volume of this, nor to remind them that these are questions of imperialist war. After all, they were themselves soldiers in the World War and, dispute what one may, they indisputably proceed from the experience of this war. It is therefore quite astonishing to find, and on the first page at that, the statement that "it is of secondary importance in which century, for which ideas, and with which weapons the fighting is done." What is most astonishing about this statement is that its author, Ernst Jünger, is thus adopting one of the principles of pacifism, and pacifism's clichéd ideal of peace have little to criticize each other for. Even

*This essay was originally published in *Die Gesellschaft* 7 (1930), vol. 2, pp. 32-41. This translation appears with the permission of Suhrkamp Verlag and is taken from Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 3, ed. Hella Tiedemann-Bartels (Frankfurt am Main, 1972), pp. 238-250.

the most questionable and most abstract of all its principles at that. Though for him and his friends it is not so much some doctrinaire schema that lies behind this as it is a deep-rooted and — by all standards of male thought — a really rather depraved mysticism. But Jünger's mysticism of war and pacifism's clichéd ideal of peace have little to criticize each other for. Even the most consumptive pacifism has one thing over its epileptically frothing brother for the moment; a certain contact with reality, at least, some conception of the next war.

The authors like to speak — emphatically — of the “First World War.” Yet how little their experience has come to grips with that war's realities — which they refer to in an alienated exaggeration as the “wordly-real” — is shown by the altogether thoughtless obtuseness with which they view the idea of future wars without any conception of them. These trailblazers of the *Wehrmacht* could almost give one the impression that the uniform represents their highest end, most desired by all their heartstrings, and that the circumstances under which one dons the uniform are of little importance by comparison. This attitude becomes more comprehensible when one realizes, in terms of the current level of European armaments, how anachronistic is their espoused ideology of war. These authors nowhere observe that the new warfare of technology and material [*Materialschlacht*] which appears to some of them as the highest revelation of existence, dispenses with all the wretched emblems of heroism that here and there have survived the World War. Gas warfare, in which the contributors to this book show conspicuously little interest, promises to give the war of the future a face which permanently displaces soldierly qualities by those of sports; all action will lose its military character and war will assume the countenance of record-setting. The most prominent strategic characteristic of such warfare consists in its being waged exclusively and most radically as an offensive war. And we know that there is no adequate defense against gas attacks from the air. Even individual protective devices, gas masks, are of no use against mustard gas and Levisit. Now and then one hears of something “reassuring” such as the invention of a sensitive listening device that registers the whir of propellers at great distances. And a few months later a soundless airplane is invented. Gas warfare will rest upon annihilation records, and will involve an absurd degree of risk. Whether its outbreak will occur within the bounds of international law — after prior declarations of war — is questionable; but its end will no longer be concerned with such limitations. Since gas warfare obviously eliminates the distinction between civilian and military personnel, the most important basis of international law is removed. The last war has already shown that the total disorganization imperialist war entails, and the manner in which it is waged, threaten to make it an endless war.

More than a curiosity, it is symptomatic that something written in 1930 about “war and warriors” overlooks all this. It is symptomatic that the same boyish rapture that leads to a cult, to an apotheosis of war, is here heralded particularly by von Schramm and Günther. The most rabidly decadent

origins of this new theory of war are emblazoned on their foreheads: it is nothing other than an uninhibited translation of the principles of *l'art pour l'art* to war itself. But if, even on its home grounds, this theory tends to become a mockery in the mouths of mediocre adepts, its outlook in this new phase of war is disgraceful. Who could imagine a veteran of the Marne or someone who fought at Verdun reading statements such as these: "We conducted the war on very impure principles Real fighting from man to man, from company to company, became rarer and rarer Certainly the front-line officers often made the war artless For though the inclusion of the masses, the lesser blood, the practical bourgeois mentality, in short the common man, especially in the officers' and non-commissioned officers' corps, the eternally aristocratic elements of the soldier's trade were increasingly destroyed." Falser notes could hardly be sounded, more inept thoughts could not be set down on paper, more tactless words could not be uttered. The authors' absolute failure here is the result — despite all the talk about the eternal and the primeval — of their unrefined, thoroughly journalistic haste to capitalize from the actual present without grasping the past. Yes, there have been cultic elements in war. They were known in theocratically constituted communities. As harebrained as it would be to want to return these submerged elements to the zenith of war, it would be equally embarrassing for these warriors on their intellectual flight to learn how far a Jewish philosopher, Erich Unger,* has gone in the direction they missed. And it would be embarrassing for them to see to what extent his observations — made, if in part with questionable justice, on the basis of concrete data from Jewish history — would cause the bloody schemes conjured up here to evaporate into nothingness. But these authors are not capable of making anything clear, of calling things by their names. War: "eludes the usual economy exercised by the mind; there is something inhuman, boundless, gigantic in its Reason, something reminiscent of a volcanic process, an elemental eruption, . . . a colossal well of life directed by a painfully deep, cogently unified force, led to battlefields already mythic today, used up for tasks far exceeding the range of the currently conceivable." Only an awkward lover is so loquacious. And indeed these authors are awkward in their embrace of thought, too. One has to bring them back to it repeatedly, and that is what we will do here.

And the point is this: War — the "eternal" war that they talk about so much here, as well as the most recent one — is said to be the highest manifestation of the German nation. It should be clear that behind their "eternal" war lies the idea of cultic war, just as behind the most recent war lies that of technological war, and it should also be clear that these authors have had little success in perceiving these relationships. But there is

* Erich Unger (1887–1952), member of the Oskar Goldberg circle of Kabbalistic studies and critic of empiricism from a magical and mystical viewpoint. (Ed.)

something rather special about this last war. It was not only one of material warfare but also a war that was lost. And in that special sense it was the German war. To have waged war out of their innermost existence is something that other peoples could claim to have done. But to have lost a war out of their innermost existence, this they cannot claim. What is special about the present and latest stage in the controversy over the war, which has convulsed Germany since 1919, is the novel assertion that it is precisely this loss of the war that is characteristically German. One can call this the latest stage because these attempts to come to terms with the loss of the war show a clear pattern. These attempts began with an effort to pervert the German defeat into an inner victory by means of confessions of guilt which were hysterically elevated to the universally human. This political position, which supplied the manifestoes for the course of the decline of the West, faithfully reflected the German "revolution" made by the Expressionist avant-garde. Then came the attempt to forget the lost war. The bourgeoisie turned to snore on its other side — and what pillow could have been softer than the novel. The terrors endured in those years became the down filling in which every sleepyhead could easily leave his imprint. What finally distinguishes this latest effort from earlier ones in the process involved here is the tendency to take the loss of the war more seriously than the war itself. What does it mean to win or lose a war? How striking the double meaning is in both words! The first, manifest meaning, certainly refers to the outcome of the war, but the second meaning — which creates that peculiar hollow space, the sounding board in these words — refers to the totality of the war and suggest how the war's outcome also alters the enduring significance it holds for us. This meaning says, so to speak, the winner keeps the war in hand, it leaves the hands of the loser; it says, the winner conquers the war for himself, makes it his own property, the loser no longer possesses it and must live without it. And he must live not only without the war per se but without every one of its slightest ups and downs, every subtlest one of its chess moves, every one of its remotest actions. To win or lose a war reaches so deeply, if we follow the language, into the fabric of our existence that our whole lives become that much richer or poorer in symbols, images and sources. And since we have lost one of the greatest wars in world history, one which involved the whole material and spiritual substance of a people, one can assess the significance of this loss.

Certainly one cannot accuse those around Jünger of not having taken this into account. But how did they approach it, monstrous as it was? They have not stopped the battle yet. They continued to celebrate the cult of war when there was no longer any real enemy. They complied with the desires of the bourgeoisie, which longed for the decline of the West, the way a schoolboy longs for a inkblot in place of his wrong answer. They spread decline, preached decline wherever they went. Not even for a moment were they capable of holding up to view — instead of doggedly holding onto — what had been lost. They were always the first and the bitterest to oppose coming

to one's senses. They ignored the great opportunity of the loser — which the Russians had taken advantage of — to shift the fight to another sphere until the moment had passed and the nations of Europe had sunk to being partners in trade agreements again. “The war is being *administered*, not *led* anymore,” one of the authors complains. This was to be corrected by the German “post-war war” (*Nachkrieg*). This *Nachkrieg* was as much a protest against the war that had preceded it, as it was a protest against its civilian character. Above all, that despised rational element was to be eliminated from war. And to be sure this team bathed in the vapors rising out of the jowls of the Fenriswolf. But these vapors were no match for the [mustard] gases of the yellow-cross grenades. Such humbug about this arch-Germanic fate acquired a moldy luster when set against the stark background of military service in army barracks and impoverished families in civilian barracks. And without subjecting that false luster to materialist analysis, it was possible even then for a free, knowing, and truly dialectical spirit such as Florens Christian Rang* — whose biography better exemplifies the German than whole hordes of these desperate characters — to counter their sort with enduring statements: “The demonic belief in fate, that human virtue is superfluous, — the dark night of defiance which burns up the victory of the forces of light in the universal conflagration of the gods, . . . this apparant glory of the will in this belief in death in battle, without regard for life, flinging it down for an idea — this cloud-impregnated night that has hovered over us for millennia and which, instead of stars, gives us only stupefying and confusing thunderbolts to guide the way, after which the night only envelops us all the more in darkness: this horrible world view of world-death instead of world-life, whose horror is made lighter in the philosophy of German Idealism by the notion that behind the clouds there is after all a starry sky, this fundamental German spiritual tendency in its depth lacks will, does not mean what it says, is a crawling, cowardly, know-nothingness, a desire not to live but also a desire not to die either: . . . For this is the German half-attitude towards life; indeed; to be able to throw it away when it doesn't cost anything, in the moment of intoxication, with those left behind cared for, and with this short-lived sacrifice surrounded by an eternal halo.”

But in another statement in the same context, Rang's language may sound familiar to those around Jünger: “Two hundred officers, prepared to die, would have sufficed to suppress the revolution in Berlin — as in all other places; but not one was to be found. No doubt many of them would actually have liked to come to the rescue, but in reality — not actuality — nobody quite wanted to begin, to put himself forward as the leader, or to proceed individually. They preferred to have their epaulets ripped off in the streets.” Obviously the man who wrote this knows from his very own experience the attitude and tradition of those who have come together here. And

* Florens Christian Rang, a close friend of Walter Benjamin's until his premature death in 1924. Rang incorporated Benjamin's ideal of an authentic and radical German spirit. (Ed.)

perhaps he continued to share their enmity to materialism until the moment that they created the language of material warfare.

If at the beginning of the war supplies of idealism were provided by order of the state, the longer the war lasted the more the troops had to depend on requisitions. Their heroism turned more and more gloomy, fatal and steel-gray; glory and ideals beckoned from ever more remote and nebulous spheres; and those who saw themselves less as the troops of the World War than as the executors of the *Nachkrieg* more and more took up the stance of obstinate rigor. Every third word in their speeches is "stance." Who would deny that the soldier's position is one of stance? But language is the touchstone for each and every position taken, and not just, as is so often assumed, for that of the writer. But those who have conspired here do not pass the test. Jünger may echo the noble dilettantes of the seventeenth century in saying that the German language is a primeval language, but he betrays what he means when he adds that as such it inspires an insurmountable distrust in civilization and in the cultivated world. Yet the world's distrust cannot equal that of his own countrymen when the war is presented to them as a "mighty revisor" that "feels the pulse" of the times, that forbids them "to do away with" "a tried and proven conclusion," and that calls on them to intensify their search for "ruins" "behind gleaming varnish." Far more shameful than these offenses, however, is the smooth style of these purportedly rough-hewn thoughts which could grace any newspaper editorial; and more distressing yet than the smooth style is the mediocre substance. "The dead," we are told, "went in their death from an imperfect reality to a perfect reality, from Germany in its temporal manifestation to the eternal Germany." This Germany "in its temporal manifestation" is of course notorious, but the eternal Germany would really be in a bad way if we had to depend on the testimony of those who so glibly invoke it. How cheaply they purchased their "solid feeling of immortality," their certainty that "the terrors of the last war have been frightfully exaggerated," and their symbolism of "blood boiling inwardly!" At best, they fought the war that they are celebrating here. However, we will not tolerate anyone who speaks of war, yet knows nothing but war. Radical in our own way, we will ask: Where do you come from? And what do you know of peace? Did you ever encounter peace in a child, a tree, an animal, the way you encountered a patrol in the field? And without waiting for you to answer, we can say No! It is not that you would then not be able to celebrate war, more passionately than now; but to celebrate it in the way you do would be impossible. How would Fortinbras have borne witness to war? One can deduce how he would have done it from Shakespeare's technique: Just as he reveals Romeo's love for Juliet in the fiery glow of its passion by presenting Romeo as in love from the outset, in love with Rosalinde, he would have had Fortinbras begin with a passionate eulogy of peace so enchanting and mellifluously sweet that, when at the end he raises his voice all the more passionately in favor of war, everyone would have wondered with a shudder: What are these powerful,

nameless forces that compel this man, wholly filled with the bliss of peace, to commit himself body and soul to war? — But there is nothing of that here. These are professional freebooters speaking. Their horizon is fiery but very narrow.

What do they see in their flames? They see — here we can entrust ourselves to F.G. Jünger — a transformation: “lines of psychic decision cut across the war; transformations undergone by the war are paralleled by transformations undergone by those fighting it. These transformations become visible when one compares the vibrant, buoyant, enthusiastic faces of the soldiers of August 1914 with the fatally exhausted, haggard, implacably tensed faces of the 1918 veterans of machine warfare. Looming behind the all too sharply arched curve of this fight, their image appears, molded and moved by a forceful spiritual convulsion, by station after station along a path of suffering, battle after battle, each the hieroglyphic sign of a strenuously advancing work of destruction. Here we have the new type of soldier schooled in those hard, sober, bloody and incessant campaigns of attrition. This is a soldier characterized by the tenacious hardness of the born fighter, by a manifest sense of solitary responsibility, of psychic abandonment. In this struggle, which proceeded on increasingly deeper levels, he proved his own mettle. The path he pursued was narrow and dangerous, but it was a path leading into the future.” Wherever precise formulations, genuine accents or solid reasoning are encountered in these pages, the reality portrayed is that of Ernst Jünger’s “total mobilization” or Ernst von Salomon’s “landscape of the front.” A liberal journalist who recently tried to get at this new nationalism under the heading of “Herosim out of Boredom” fell, as one can see here, a bit short of the mark. This soldier type is a reality, a surviving witness to the World War, and it was actually this “landscape of the front,” his true home, that was being defended in the *Nachkrieg*. This landscape demands further attention.

It should be said as bitterly as possible: in the face of this “landscape of total mobilization” the German feeling for nature has had an undreamed-of upsurge. The pioneers of peace, those sensuous settlers, were evacuated from these landscapes, and as far as anyone could see over the edge of the trench, the surroundings become a problem, every wire entanglement an antinomy, every barb a definition, every explosion a thesis; and by day the sky was the cosmic interior of the steel helmet and at night the moral law above. Etching the landscape with flaming banners and trenches technology wanted to recreate the heroic features of German Idealism. It went astray. What is considered heroic were the features of Hippocrates, the features of death. Deeply imbued with its own depravity, technology gave shape to the apocalyptic face of nature and reduced nature to silence — even though this technology had the power to give nature its voice. Instead of using and illuminating the secrets of nature via a technology mediated by the human scheme of things, the new nationalists’ metaphysical abstraction of war signifies nothing other than a mystical and unmediated application of

technology to solve the mystery of an idealistically perceived nature. “Fate” and “hero” occupy these authors’ minds like Gog and Magog, yet they devour not only human children but (new ideas) as well. Everything sober, unblemished, naive and humanistic ends up between the worn teeth of these Molochs who react with the belches of 42cm. mortars. Linking heroism with machine warfare is sometimes a bit hard on the authors. But this is by no means true to all of them, and there is nothing more revealing than the whining digressions exposing their disappointment in the “form of the war” and in the “senselessly mechanical machine war” of which these noble fellows “had evidently grown bored.” Yet when one or another of them attempts to look things squarely in the eye, it becomes obvious how very much their concept of the heroic has surreptitiously changed; we can see how much the virtues of hardness, reserve and implacability they celebrate are in fact less those of the soldier than those of the proven class militant. What developed here, first in the guise of the World War volunteer and then in the mercenary of the *Nachkrieg*, is in fact the dependable fascist class warrior. And what these authors mean by nation is a ruling class supported by this caste, a ruling class — accountable to no one, and least of all to itself, enthroned on high — which bears the Sphinx-like countenance of the producer who very soon promises to be the sole consumer of his commodities. Sphinx-like in appearance, the fascists’ nation thus takes its place as a new economic mystery of nature alongside the old. But this old mystery of nature, far from revealing itself to their technology, is exposing its most threatening feature. In the parallelogram of forces formed by these two — nature and nation — war is the diagonal.

It is understandable that the question of “governmental checks on war” arises in the best, most well-reasoned essay in this volume. For in this mystical theory of war, the state naturally plays more than a minor role. These checks should not for a moment be understood in a pacifist sense. Rather, what is demanded of the state is that its structure and its disposition adapt themselves to, and appear worthy of, the magical forces that the state itself must mobilize in the event of war. Otherwise it will not succeed in bending war to its purpose. It was this failure of the powers of state in the face of war that instigated the first independent thinking of the authors gathered here. Those military formations ambivalently hovering between comradely brotherhoods and regular government troops at the end of the war very soon solidified into independent, stateless mercenary hordes. And the captains of finance, the masters of the inflation to whom the state was beginning to seem a dubious guarantor of their property, knew the value of such hordes. They were available for hire at any time, like rice or turnips, by arrangement through private agencies or the *Reichswehr*. Indeed, the present volume retains a resemblance to a slogan-filled recruiting brochure for a new type of mercenary, or rather *condottiere*. One of its authors candidly declares: “The courageous soldier of the Thirty Years’ War sold himself life and limb, and that is still nobler than simply selling one’s politics

or one's talents." Of course, when he adds that the mercenary of Germany's *Nachkrieg* did not sell himself but gave himself away, then this is of a piece with the same author's comment on the comparatively high pay of these troops. This was pay which distinguished these warriors just as clearly as the technical necessities of their trade: as war engineers of the ruling class, they were the perfect complement to the managerial functionaries in their cutaways. God knows their designs on leadership should be taken seriously; their threat is not ludicrous. In the person of the pilot of a single airplane full of gas bombs such leadership embodies all the absolute power which, in peacetime, is distributed among thousands of office managers — power to cut off a citizen's light, air and life. This simple bomber-pilot in his lofty solitude, alone with himself and his God, has power-of-attorney for his seriously stricken superior, the state, and wherever he puts his signature no more grass will grow — and that is the "imperial" leader the authors have in mind.

Until Germany has broken through the entanglement of such Medusa-like beliefs that confront it in these essays, it cannot hope for a future. Perhaps the word loosened would be better than broken through, but this is not to say it should be done with kindly encouragement or with love, both of which are out of place here; nor should the way be smoothed for argumentation, for that wantonly persuasive rhetoric of debate. Instead, all the light that language and reason still afford should be focused upon that "primal experience" from whose barren gloom this mysticism crawls forth on its thousand unsightly conceptual feet. The war that this light exposes is as little the "eternal" one which these new Germans now worship as it is the "final" war that the pacifists carry on about. In reality that war is only this: The one, fearful, last chance to correct the incapacity of peoples to order their relationships to one another in accord with the relationship they possess to nature through their technology. If this corrective effort fails, millions of human bodies will indeed inevitably be chopped to pieces and chewed up by iron and gas. But even the habitues of the chthonic forces of terror, who carry their volumes of Klages in their packs, will not learn one-tenth of what nature promises its less idly curious, but more sober children, who possess in technology not a fetish of doom but a key to happiness. They will demonstrate this sobriety the moment they refuse to acknowledge the next war as an incisive magical turning point, and instead discover in it the image of everyday actuality. And they will demonstrate it when they use this discovery to transform this war into civil war and thereby perform that Marxist trick which alone is a match for this sinister runic humbug.

Translated by Jerolf Wikoff

*Comrade and Lover: Rosa Luxemburg's Letters to Leo Jogiches**

by Elzbieta Ettinger

No couple on earth has the chance we have
We will both work and our life will be perfect
We will be happy, we must.
Rosa Luxemburg to Leo Jogisches, March 6, 1899

Love and work, a union of minds and souls, was what Rosa Luxemburg dreamed of and struggled for during the fifteen years of her tempestuous affair with Leo Jogiches. They belonged together, not because they willed it but because they could not unwill it. Their happy times together were bliss. Their battles were bloody. They parted, loving each other, defeated.

From the beginning the relationship carried within itself the seeds of its own destruction. They were infected with the same fever — independence and individuality — which were the carriers of their ultimate failure. The common cause, socialism, which welded their lives together, failed to sustain Luxemburg's dream of a perfect union because each denied the other the freedom they both desired for humanity. They were drawn to socialism by the urge to remodel the world. Extended to their personal relationship, this urge was fatal. Luxemburg projected her ideal of a perfect international union of workers onto her union with Jogiches, and neither stood the test of life. Blind to the complexities of human nature, she was determined to make both Jogiches and humanity happy, but on her own terms.

Compromise and tolerance she did not know. Nor did Jogiches. Yet neither tired of inducing or seducing a concession from the other, perhaps to prove love, perhaps power. Surrender meant for each different things at different times, as did rebellion. Surrender could be equated with love, as rebellion with its lack, but it could also be a chance to dominate by provoking guilt. Each made claims on the other's independence, though for both its preservation was crucial. They never achieved the delicate balance between granting and restraining freedom. They depended on each other intellectually and emotionally, but unable to regard this dependence as a condition of love, they were resentful of the restrictions it imposed. They struggled constantly within themselves to give to each other the space to breathe, but they meted it out guardedly and jealously.

* Reprinted by permission of MIT Press from *Comrade and Lover: Rosa Luxemburg's Letters to Leo Jogiches*, edited and translated by Elzbieta Ettinger, copyright 1979 by The Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Luxemburg's letters (Jogiches's letters to her have not survived) mirror the various and overlapping stages of the struggle: the master/disciple, adored/adoring, and child/parent relationships, and the reverse of each. The man who considered himself her creator is addressed as "my child," or "Dyodyo" or "Chuchya": the first is a pet name reserved for small boys; the other, for baby girls. If "Dyodyo" misbehaved, she would deny him the endearment. Back in her favor, his anger still seething, he in turn would answer coldly. The letters disclose their weapons: love, seduction, provocation, rewards, and punishments, and their underlying erotic currents. Both partners used the letters as a substitute for an everyday life together and as a means of controlling the other: "My decision to stop writing," Luxemburg informed Jogiches, "is not the act of vengeance you think it is. It is not a boycott either." The letters also served as a workshop in which political strategies were worked out, alliances negotiated, opposition forces gauged, ammunition — articles and speeches — jointly produced. And they show that in politics it is impossible to say where Luxemburg started and Jogiches ended.

Jogiches lived for his political work. He was a man with a mission to which everything, including Luxemburg, was subordinated. Even if she was not his first love, he needed the knowledge that he was her only love. Even if her joy clashed with his gloom, and her exuberance with his reticence, he could come out of his shell to ask her, "Do you love me? Passionately? Do you know there is man named Dyodyo who belongs to you?"

To be the most important person in his life did not satisfy Luxemburg. Herself capable of both love and work, she saw no need to give up one for the sake of the other. She regarded his single-mindedness as a symptom of a disease that she alone could cure by "the might of love." She refused to reconcile herself to the concept of a revolutionary's life that the Russian anarchists Bakunin and Nechaev defined in the *Revolutionary Catechism*: "The revolutionary is a lost man; he has no interests of his own, no cause of his own, no feelings, no habits, no belongings; he does not even have a name. Everything in him is absorbed by a single, exclusive interest, a single thought, a single passion — the revolution All the tender feelings of family life, of friendship, love, gratitude, and even honor must be stifled in him by a single cold passion — the revolutionary cause."¹ Though Jogiches did not follow this dictum to the letter, it still was close to his ideal and to his needs.

Unwilling to accept the primacy of his choice, Luxemburg never stopped competing with her only rival — humanity. "Your letters contain *nothing but nothing* except for *The Workers' Cause*," she reproached him early in their relationship. This remained a recurring complaint. "When I open your letters and see six sheets covered with debates about the Polish Socialist Party," she wrote when their affair was ten years old, "and not a single word about . . . ordinary life, I feel faint."

¹Quoted by Franco Venturi in *Roots of Revolution* (New York, 1966), p. 366.

“Constructive work” and “positive action,” not renunciation of a home, a child, and worldly goods, were her tools for remedying existing ills. She did not seek redemption in thwarting her natural instincts, nor did she try to alleviate the suffering of others by self-inflicted wounds. Not only was asceticism alien to her nature, she also saw it as destructive. Personal happiness, which Jogiches considered an almost sinful waste, she viewed as a natural extension of her fight for the right to happiness and fulfillment for all. “Despite everything you’ve told me,” she wrote him, “. . . I keep harping on the worn-out tune, making claims on personal happiness. Yes, I do have an accursed longing for happiness and am ready to haggle for my daily portion with the stubbornness of a mule.”

It was probably partly their different backgrounds and partly their natural dispositions that bred the conflicting concepts. Jogiches’s rebellion against a “bourgeois” life — home, family, possessions — started when he was in his midteens. Born into a prominent, wealthy, Jewish family, he renounced his milieu. He exchanged his own family for the family of workers, and the gymnasium for a locksmith shop. Terror as a weapon fascinated him, as did cloak-and-dagger operations. Disliked for his despotic and arrogant manner, he was respected as a conspirator of unique skills. By the time he was twenty, he was in the forefront of the revolutionary movement in his native Wilno.

Luxemburg came from a family of modest means. If she did not know poverty, she did see her father struggling to make ends meet. Her childhood was affected by a wrongly diagnosed hip disease that left her with a bad limp. The closely knit family doted on her, the youngest child, and she grew into a self-confident girl. She was educated at a financial sacrifice and, though already deeply involved in the revolutionary movement in her teens, she graduated from the Warsaw gymnasium at the top of her class. She learned early that although knowledge was indispensable to carry on the struggle, life could not be lived fully without love, family, and friends.

Both Luxemburg and Jogiches, faced with prison, had to flee the czarist police. For Jogiches exile was the end of power; for Luxemburg, it was the beginning.

Exile came to Jogiches as a shock from which he never fully recovered. In Wilno, his life had been in constant danger, which set him apart from the detested bourgeoisie. In Switzerland there was no danger to make the revolutionary’s life worth living. Instead there was the tranquility of the university, for which he had as little use as he had formerly had for the gymnasium, and there were the trappings of the middle-class life he now led. He lived on the very family wealth he condemned, and this set him apart from his impecunious fellow exiles. Marxist theorists replaced the company of workers; inactivity, the daredevil deeds. His bent for force and command was little appreciated in theoretical disputes. Soon he found himself isolated. His past exploits had left him convinced of his superior mind, but cut off from his native soil, his work, and from the mother he worshipped,

he, in Luxemburg's words, "vegetated in constant bitterness." Fear of failing beset him and never let him go.

Luxemburg, thrown back on her inner resources in an alien land, did not feel threatened. She remained attached to her family and to her country without the feeling of permanent loss that never left Jogiches. The different cultures, Jewish, Polish, German, and Russian, that she had absorbed in childhood made adaptation easier for her. If anything, she saw a better chance to "run and run after justice" in Switzerland than in the shadow of the Russian gallows. She attended the Zurich University as dutifully as she had previously attended the gymnasium, challenged the Swiss professors with her unconventional Marxist education, and ended her studies with a highly acclaimed doctoral dissertation. But Jogiches left the university after ten years without obtaining a degree.

They met in Zurich in 1890 when Jogiches was twenty-three and Luxemburg was twenty. Though not a beauty, she fascinated men with her womanliness, her strength, and her brilliant mind. If her disproportionately large upper body and short child-like legs, due to the earlier hip disease, marred her looks, self-deprecating irony added to her charm. Lustrous dark eyes beneath masses of rich brown hair and her passionate nature mesmerized men and women alike. She fell in love with Jogiches immediately; his burning inspiration and his aloofness made him seem a Dostoevskian hero. Time never changed that first impression. Throughout her life he remained the only man able to challenge her intellectually and tantalize her sexually. He found in her an intellect and a woman, both hungry; that he could nourish both gave him pleasure and a sense of power.

To say that only the "common cause" held them together would be an understatement. To say that mutual attraction held them together would be inaccurate. It is doubtful they could have been attracted to each other for more than a fleeting moment had they not been attracted to socialism as well. Together, in 1893, they founded the first significant Polish Marxist workers' party, the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland. After evolutions and revolutions, it is still recognized as the forerunner of the ruling party in contemporary Poland.

If the small party into which Luxemburg had drawn Jogiches to entice him out of his growing isolation was a far cry from his own grandiose designs, it started Luxemburg on a career that placed her among the leaders of socialism in Europe. It was Jogiches who fathered her success; he provided the skills and the money. Above all, he recognized in her a genius which could reach its true heights, he felt, only under his tutelage. Indeed, she herself was rather skeptical at first of her possibilities. After meeting the father of Russian Marxism, George V. Plekhanov, she wrote to a friend. "I was in Mornex but won't go there anymore because Plekhanov is too sophisticated or, to be exact, too well-educated for me. What could he possibly gain from a conversation with me? He knows everything better than

I do, and I cannot create 'ideas' — original, genuine ideas."² A year later Jogiches' able, if only, disciple challenged Plekhanov's authority. But she often turned to Jogiches for "ideas" — "just give me a few ideas . . . *writing* is no problem for me." Before long the two had achieved the kind of near-perfect cooperation attainable when two minds become one. Intellectually they breathed in rhythm, a sort of cerebral quick-time. "Help for heaven's sake, help!" she urged. ". . . We started out very well. The pieces I wrote . . . are the dough (half baked) . . . we need. If only I knew *what* to write, the form would take shape then and there. . . ." He helped her tackle theoretical problems in economics and politics, scrutinized her research, suggested topics. Sending him her articles, she would write, "I know you'll pick up the main thread immediately and add the finishing touches." Early on, her desire to reconcile love and work to fulfill his expectations heightened the intensity of their affair. "I feel the way you do," she wrote him on one of her frequent trips to Paris. "I dream about being near you, my only love. I struggle with myself, struggle hard, not to chuck the lectures and all the rest and come speeding to you. But I am ashamed. Besides, I feel, I know, that you will be more pleased with me after I've done all the things I should do."

Inevitably their common work was fraught with conflict. Jogiches could never forgive nor forget that it was through Luxemburg that he had become involved in the Polish movement. More important, his political existence was for years almost exclusively limited to supplying Luxemburg with ideas for her writing. "His brilliance and intelligence notwithstanding, Leo was simply unable to write," she later said. "The mere thought of putting his ideas on paper paralyzes him."³ Actually it was the finality of being imprisoned in print that paralyzed him. Made public, his words could turn against him and prove his fallibility to the world. He operated from behind the scenes, avoiding daylight, avoiding people. He had no need for those he wanted to save. His one and only preoccupation was masterminding the party strategy that Luxemburg was expected to carry out. She resented it. "I'm just getting used to the idea," she wrote him, "that now my only duty is to think about the elections and later about what will happen after the elections. I feel like a forty-year-old woman going through the symptoms of menopause, although the two of us together are only about sixty years old." Or, resigned, she would say, ". . . I shifted to business — your style. It may be that you're right and that in another six months I'll turn at last into your ideal." It was the opposite of hers.

Writing for both of them, she soon found herself in an untenable position. "You think that for me it'll do to scribble articles . . . and follow your 'modest opinions,'" she wrote rebelliously. She agreed to his

²Quoted in *Roza Luksemburg. Listy do Leona Jogichesa-Tyszke*, ed. F. Tych (Warsaw, 1968), vol. I., p. XXVII.

³Ibid., p. XXXIX.

exercising his power through her but not to his arrogating power over her. She may have longed to be his little “Chuchya” in the privacy of their bedroom, but his attempts to control her mind as well as her every move vexed her. “If I’m independent enough to perform single-handed on the political scene, that independence must extend to buying a jacket.” Her performance was rapidly becoming more single-handed than Jogiches could ever have wished.

Berlin was her stage. She descended upon the city like a colorful bird, elegant and brilliant. Although a woman — young, Jewish, and Polish — within three months, in 1898, she was offered the editorship of an important newspaper published by the powerful German Social Democratic Party. Seasoned socialists August Bebel, Karl Kautsky, and Clara Zetkin befriended her. In her the opposition discovered a forceful adversary. Her courage and wit, her fiery oratory, and knife-edged pen captivated and shocked. Jogiches’ share in her career was, as before, not negligible. His letters stimulated her thinking day by day, she readily admitted, “and in your last letter you gave me an entire piece for my article, which stands out like a jewel. . . . I translated [it] from your letter word for word.”

Once she had feared that her success might poison their relationship because of his pride and suspicions. Now, while lavishing assurances on him that the sole aim of her triumphs was to give him moral support, she basked happily in her new-found glory. “The divine,” she was now called, and “the conqueror.” But political success did not compensate for an unfulfilled personal life. The ecstasy she had shared with Jogiches tantalized her. “There are no other hands like yours, delicate hands,” his words kept coming back to her. Each day away from him was a new torment and a new reminder of past bliss. “I will never forget,” she wrote to him in Zurich, how “. . . we held each other on the road in the darkness and looked at the crescent moon over the mountains . . . carried [groceries] upstairs together . . . the oranges, the cheeses . . . had such magnificent dinners . . . on the little table. . . . I still smell that night air.” The memory of happiness contrasting with her unwanted solitude filled her with real and imaginary fears. More than ever she longed for a home with him and a child by him.

But Jogiches refused to join her for two years. From Zurich he kept dispatching orders, advice, reprimands, through her “influencing history” — his ultimate dream. Resentful of the vicariousness of this experience, proud of her success, yet jealous of it, he feared her demands to “live openly as husband and wife.” Only her ultimatum forced him to trudge to Berlin. A commander without troops, relegated to the role of prince consort, he now sat in their apartment reading her reports of her triumphant tours and unequalled popularity.

Nor was Luxemburg happy. “Real” life was still out of her reach. As a little girl she firmly believed that “real” life was hidden somewhere behind tall roofs. “Ever since, I’ve been trying to find it,” she wrote after she had broken with Jogiches, “but it always kept hiding behind one roof or

other.”⁴ Her love was never wholly reciprocated. Jogiches continued to elude her. It was not, she realized, just geographic distance that divided them.

Jealous of his “inner life,” she could not bear the thought that a part of him existed to which she had no access. “I feel an outsider,” she protested and at the same time berated herself for the “torment” she inflicted on him by saying it. That she herself, often unwittingly, injured his pride and made him suffer and withdraw, made her fight for Jogiches’ soul more ferociously and more hopelessly, and it made him increasingly desperate to defend what was left of his being. He felt uneasy when she gave, unhappy when she did not, furious when she let him know that she was giving. He wanted her undivided attention, but he measured and directed it. Any intrusion upon territory he considered off limits, he consistently and strictly forbade. He wanted her dependent, to keep her, and independent, to prove himself a genius-maker. Responsibility for her happiness or unhappiness he did not want, nor did he want to let go of it. When she was unhappy, he felt guilty; when she was happy, cheated.

The passage of time created a chasm between them. Her vision of herself and of Jogiches’ place in it differed when she was thirty and a celebrity from when she was twenty and unknown. Jogiches, in his mid-thirties, fully realized the gap between his youthful aspirations and the disappointments of reality. While her transition from youth to adulthood was marked by achievements and recognition, for him it was a farewell to his dreams of power.

She wanted them to “live like other people,” to have peaceful and orderly lives, although order and serenity were unattainable for either of them. Always, she wanted the impossible. In politics, too, she fought for the revolution yet abhorred violence and bloodshed. It was typical of the contradictions in her nature to want thunder silent and a hurricane calm. She pushed and prodded him toward the unattainable “peaceful life,” aware yet unmindful of his private hell. His constant agonizing, the malaise that was eating away at him, she saw as a “senseless, spiritual suicide.” He was, she claimed, “perishing for no other reason but [his] own madness.” In despair she turned to another man. And Jogiches, like the magician who lost control over the spirit he himself had created, felt he had lost his power and, therefore, lost her.

After their break became final, in 1907, they lived apart, separated but never strangers. All his attempts to win her back failed. There was suffering and rage, but the affinity survived. They continued to work together, their youthful dreams of social revolution untouched.

There were other affairs in her life, meaningless affairs. Perhaps she wanted to prove to Jogiches or to herself that, as she had once written him,

⁴Rosa Luxemburg. *Briefe an Karl und Luise Kautsky*, ed. Luise Kautsky (Berlin, 1923), p. 71.

“I don’t need your love . . . I can live without it.” But then, as later, she never really could. Years before, exasperated by his coldness, she had cried, “I could kill you!” She did not kill him. She went on, living an imitation of life until, in January 1919, she was assassinated. Two months later, hunting down her assassins, Jogiches, too, was murdered.

A woman and a Jew, Luxemburg personified two oppressed classes. She grew up at a time when both were beginning to stir restlessly.

The lot of women in Poland was similar to that in other European Roman Catholic countries. For centuries, reared in the virtues of submissiveness and humility, in dread of sin and punishment, their lives had been circumscribed by the feudal-patriarchal family. Depending upon her social status, a woman served either to combine adjoining estates by a suitable match or to produce offspring to till the soil. In folklore, and perhaps in reality, the first emancipated woman was a widow who, by poisoning her husband, had achieved financial and thereby full independence.

In Poland, as in other European countries, industrialization undermined the established attitudes; power and money changed hands. The feudal elite — the Catholic Church and the hereditary nobility — saw the emergence of a new elite: the bourgeoisie. The impoverished aristocracy could no longer support chivalrous knights and romantic maidens. The man, hitherto privileged by birth and property, tried to compensate for his diminished influence by emphasizing his mental and physical superiority. His equally impecunious female counterpart was often reduced to the role of governess, or, to save the family from bankruptcy, was married off to a *nouveau riche*. The new leisure class, like the earlier one, used women as a means to amass ever bigger fortunes and garnish them with a coveted coat of arms. Among the rising intelligentsia, slowly emerging competition for professional positions intensified the antagonism between the sexes. As members of the growing urban proletariat, women workers were lowest of the low.

This regrouping of social classes included the Jews. Privileges and restrictions going back to the thirteenth century were modified in the 1860s. There was also an increase in migration from small towns and villages to urban centers. There, a few Jews achieved prominence in scholarship, professions, and wealth, many joined the ranks of the proletariat, and some the *lumpenproletariat*. The Luxemburg family, too, left a small town for Warsaw. Like many educated, assimilated Jews, they identified themselves with Poles and gave their children a modern education. Luxemburg’s father was typical of those Jews who were sympathetic to the cause of Polish independence. Many of them supported the 1863 insurrection that brought further changes.

In that insurrection, sometimes called the “Women’s War,” women proved to be skilled conspirators and comrades-in-arms. Russian chroniclers who “attributed the frenzy of the resistance and the long desperate

fight to the dazzling eyes and high spirits of the Polish women,” missed the vital point.⁵ For two decades the vestals had been turning into warriors; they demanded recognition not only of their womanly virtues but also of their ability to think and to work. If their initial behavior — imitating men, condemning marriage, scorning public opinion — provoked disgust, they themselves were sufficiently disgusted with their position as “virgins,” “dolls,” or “angels,” to challenge the Church, tradition, and society. Discarding their tulle and velvet they revealed themselves as a power to be reckoned with.

Paradoxically, economic and political oppression accelerated the process of women’s coming-of-age. For example, one of the first mass strikes in Warsaw erupted after women laborers and prostitutes were ordered by the czarist police to undergo identical hygienic checkups. In spite of class differences, the similarities of their predicaments united women: Polish women, weary of the pressures of the Church, Jewish women, tired of being pariahs, came out of mansions and ghettos to fight for personal independence. The battles were fought, too, on the pages of newspapers and novels. While Madame Bovary was victimized by her romantic notion of life, and Anna Karenina by her tragic passion, Marta (protagonist of a famous novel by Eliza Orzeszkowa, published in 1873) paid with her life for being *useless in the labor market*. As racial prejudice in the case of Jews, aggravated by fear of economic competition, so sexual prejudice, in the case of women, less identifiable but equally insidious in the restrictions it imposed, dimmed hopes for progress. Education appeared — to women as to Jews — the way out of bondage. But education alone was not enough. Revolution — or socialism — seemed to Luxemburg’s generation a panacea for all these ills.

The image of the woman-rebel was an integral part of Luxemburg’s formative years. She was eight years old when Vera Zasulich walked into the office of General Trepov, governor of St. Petersburg, and fired at him at point-blank range. She was eleven when Sofia Perovskaia, the daughter of a Russian general, was executed for her part in the assassination of Czar Alexander II. At the time of Luxemburg’s graduation from the gymnasium, the twenty-one-year-old Maria Bohusz, one of the leaders of the first Polish workers’ party Proletariat, perished in Siberian exile. The same fate met the revolutionary Rosalia Felsenhardt, the daughter of a Jewish medic. Aleksandra Jentys, a woman of great intelligence and beauty and cofounder of Proletariat, was imprisoned with her lover, Ludwik Warynski, founder of the party. She was exiled; he died in a Russian dungeon.

In this rapidly changing society, however, the call to arms lost its appeal for many. Industrialization provided a chance for a different kind of action. The older generation saw that armed struggle bled the nation without weakening the Russian oppressor, cooperation with the Russians rather

⁵Maria Żmigrodzka, *Orzeszkowa* (Warsaw, 1965), p. 54.

than rebellion, economic progress rather than hopeless bloodshed, seemed the realistic solution. But rebellion did not die. Longhaired young men and short-cropped young women, often sons and daughters of factory owners, appeared in the streets of Warsaw, shocking the burghers and infuriating the police. These young people were instrumental in showing the workers ways to assert their rights. The czarist authorities, joined by extreme Polish nationalists, tried to stop the Jews from joining forces with revolutionary Poles but were only partially successful. "Polish rebels" (*buntovshchiki*) were notorious with the czarist police. Conspirators, recklessly courageous, carrying daggers under their faddish cloaks, were incorrigible and dangerous until hanging from the gallows. They started their careers, boys and girls alike, at fourteen. At seventeen they were full-fledged subversives; at nineteen or twenty they cried from the gallows, "Long live Poland!" "Long live socialism!" "Long live revolution!"

The Czarist repression forced women, teachers, and students into the underground. Schools turned into hotbeds of conspiracy where future revolutionaries received their basic training. Whispered messages, secret glances, addresses exchanged in murky school corridors and on street corners, arranged not only a romantic rendezvous but also illegal classes. In the underground another "revolution" occurred in the attitudes of the sexes. Girls, though still chaperoned to balls and teas, were now discovering comrades and friends in their male fellow students. In the clandestine circles studying forbidden Polish literature and history and discussing theories of social progress, young people learned the meaning of comradeship and free love. The emphasis Luxemburg put on friendship in her relationship with Jogiches echoed this spirit.

While in exile, Luxemburg first came to know the organized struggle for women's rights. In Germany socialists like August Bebel and Clara Zetkin put that fight on an equal footing with the fight for workers' rights. Luxemburg's approach was different. The belief that people should not be divided by sex but united against the exploiters shaped her views on women's emancipation. It was, from her point of view, yet another harmful division, comparable to the divisions by class, race, or nationality that split the international proletariat. For the same reason, although other reasons also played a role, she refused to support any separate Jewish movement, even though her social consciousness and her uncompromising rejection of nationalism can be understood only in the light of Jewish emancipation. Once socialism had been won, she believed, women and Jews, like other oppressed people, would have all the rights which the capitalist system had deprived them of. This stand did not prevent her, however, from encouraging her women friends to assert their independence.

On the Jewish question, she remained intransigently consistent. Her own rise to power influenced her feelings: if she, a Jew, could achieve such prominence, anti-Semitism could not be a special social problem but merely one among the many manifestations of oppressions inherent in capitalism.

She disregarded the differences rooted in divergent cultural and social conditions. “To me,” she wrote in 1917, “the poor victims of the rubber plantations in Putumayo, the Negroes in Africa . . . are equally close.”⁶ The Jewish peddler in a small Polish village is the same as a Colombian rubber plantation worker. For Luxemburg, he is no longer a specific, concrete human individual, a member of a historically shaped national and religious entity, but the pure essence of humankind. In brief, she did not feel that there were truly important distinctions in the situation of Jews, Africans, Latin Americans, or other Europeans. Whether and to what extent this stemmed from her rejection of nationalism or from her own need to escape the confines of the “ghetto” into a nationless human community, she typified the illusion shared by some Jews before and after her.

The breach with Jogiches and the outbreak of World War I slightly modified Luxemburg’s attitude toward women. Her unique success, and Jogiches’s unwavering support had spared her the common lot of her female contemporaries. When called the “Red Prima Donna” or the “Jewish Rose,” she could afford nonchalantly to shrug off such slurs. The war, however, made her seek allies among women who were now fighting not their inferior status but its result — the lack of power. Isolated, with no political influence, women were unable to make decisions about themselves, their children, or their country. By this time Luxemburg knew this isolation. In 1915, she decided to participate in an International Women’s Conference in Holland. Men, she realized, controlled the German Social Democratic Party. Under their leadership the party grew increasingly conservative, more interested in the worker’s wages than in his political growth. Men held positions of power in the Socialist International and in their respective governments. Now, allying themselves with those who made wars and profited by them, they voted for war budgets. If in the past she had equated courage with manhood — “there are two men left in the party,” she said back in 1907, “Clara Zetkin and I” — she now saw things differently. She would have smiled ironically at what her biographer intended as a compliment: “There was much that was *manly* about Rosa Luxemburg,” he wrote, “in her keen intellect, in her boundless energy, in her dauntlessness, in her confidence and assertiveness.”⁷

Since the 1920s the term “revolutionary” has undergone a change that Luxemburg and her peers might have seen as a monstrous caricature. Their concept of revolution was democracy and freedom, a social order that would liberate all from the arbitrary use of political and economic power. They differed as much from latter-day revolutionaries as their vision differed from its implementation. Dispersed throughout Europe, they worked toward the same goal — a more human and more humane society.

⁶Rosa Luxemburg, *Briefe an Freunde*, ed. B. Kautsky (Hamburg, 1950), pp. 48-49.

⁷Paul Frölich, *Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work* (first edition, 1939; New York, 1972), p. 187. (My italics.)

A unique group, they had no predecessors and hardly any successors. They were enlightened Europeans, many of them Jews, who appeared in the second half of the nineteenth century only to disappear with the advent of labor camps, concentration camps, purges, and gas ovens. In mind and spirit they were the obverse of those who today falsely claim their intellectual heritage. Selfless, incorruptible, civilized, they did not set out to “save” the world but to make it a better place to live in. They were not free of ambition, pettiness, intolerance; political intrigue was not beyond them, nor were personal squabbles. Personalities clashed, ideological battles were fought, but the foundations stood firm. Once, when the French socialist Jaurés delivered a fiery speech against Luxemburg’s theories and there was no one to interpret for him, she stood up and translated his ardent oration into equally impassioned German. To paraphrase Leonard Woolf, they knew it was the disunity of the civilized, not the unity of the barbarians, that was dangerous to their cause. History has proved them right.

They neither desired nor sought power over the workers. An educated worker, they believed, would develop a sense of solidarity with workers the world over, would comprehend the pervasiveness and limits of capitalism, and, once in power, would put an end to its rule. Like Marx before them, they failed to understand the worker’s lack of pride in his status, his aspirations to achieve a higher social position, if not for himself at least for his children. “Citizens of the world,” multilingual, equally at home in all the capitals of Europe, they projected their lofty ideals onto the mundane reality of the worker. They knew the art of living and dreamed of a social order of which the hitherto oppressed would partake. Not averse to the small luxuries of life, with a taste for music and literature and a deep attachment to Western civilization, they wanted to make that culture a need and a property of the “wretched of the earth.”

Luxemburg’s attitude toward personal happiness, which she saw as a natural human yearning, and that of Jogiches, who considered it antithetical to “the cause,” reflect the difference between the group that lost and the one that won. Bent on making people “happy” according to their recipe, the latter succeeded in having the world equate “revolution” with the denial of a life fulfilled and rich. “[I] hate ‘ascetism’ . . . more than ever,” Luxemburg wrote from prison to Jogiches. “I keep grasping greedily at each spark of life, each glimmer of light . . . [and] promise myself *to live* life to its fullest as soon as I’m free.”

Socialism was, for Luxemburg, a faith to which people should be educated, not forced. Marx considered socialism a historical necessity and asserted that the forces of history are moving toward social revolution, which he regarded as an end morally valid and therefore worth fighting for. After his death the so-called Marxists started to present Marx as a mere historical determinist, a simplistic believer in sociological laws. Luxemburg, in contradiction to this interpretation of Marx’s writings, stressed an ethical dimension: the moral obligation to fight for a more human social system.

The progress of humankind was inevitably connected to moral virtue. *Realpolitik* was immoral and therefore worthless; it was also the parent of cowardice, which she regarded as the greatest of sins.

Marx's words, "moi, je ne suis pas Marxiste," fit well with her interpretation of Marxism. She conceived of it as a humanistic philosophy capable of restoring wholeness to human beings. The "Marxist jargon," which supplied fuel for demagogues and corrupted intellect, she found deceptive and dangerous. Marxism was not a dogma for her but a scientific tool to create new concepts and real changes. "Rosa Luxemburg was the only disciple of Marx," wrote Georg Lukács, "who effectively continued his life work in both economic theory and economic method."⁸

Answering Jogiches' misgivings about an article of hers, she said: "Your fear of my emphasizing our antagonism to Marx seems to me *unfounded*. Nobody will be appalled by it for the entire piece is nothing but a triumphant song of Marxism." Equally opposed to Russian despotism and Prussian barrack drill, she brought to modern revolutionary thought an almost mystical faith in the revolutionary potential of the workers, which no one else was able to shake and few were able to accept.

Luxemburg's assessment of Lenin and the Russian Revolution continues to provoke controversy. She is alternately presented and interpreted as a Marxist heretic and a Marxist orthodox. Best known in the West as a critic of the revolution, she is extolled in the East as its forerunner and supporter. Her analysis of the October Revolution (written in 1918), dismissed as a momentary delusion by some and hailed as prophetic by others, is neither. It is a logical continuation of her philosophy, based on the concept of dynamic rather than static history and on the inevitability of moving toward a more advanced, that is, a more democratic, society. She welcomed the revolution, stating that Lenin's was "the sole party in Russia that grasped the true interest of the revolution in that first period [. . .]" However, she felt Lenin's and Trotsky's remedy, the complete elimination of democracy, was "worse than the disease it was supposed to cure. . . ." She wrote, "Socialism, by its very nature, cannot be dictated, introduced by command. . . . [Lenin] is completely mistaken in the means he employs: decree, the dictatorial power of a factory overseer, draconic penalties, rule by terror — all these are means preventing rebirth. . . . Without general elections, without unrestricted freedom of press and assembly, without a free exchange of opinions, life dies out in every public institution and only bureaucracy remains active. . . . Slowly, public life falls into sleep, and a few dozen party leaders . . . command and rule. . . . In reality the power is executed by a dozen outstanding minds while the elite of the working class are now and then invited to meetings in order to applaud the speeches of the leaders and to approve unanimously proposed resolutions. In fact, it is a

⁸Georg Lukács, *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein* (Berlin, 1923), pp. 5-6.

clique — certainly a dictatorship, not, however, the dictatorship of the proletariat but that of a handful of politicians. . . .” She emphasized that Lenin and his comrades “have contributed to the cause of international socialism whatever could possibly have been contributed under such fiendishly difficult conditions. However, “the danger begins,” she pointed out, “with their making a virtue of necessity. . . .” She stated, “Freedom only for the supporters of the government, only for the members of one party, no matter how numerous, is no freedom. Freedom is always freedom for the one who thinks differently.”⁹

She did not believe that one party could have the monopoly on wisdom. And she rejected the principle of centralization, which she saw as “simply taking the conductor’s baton out of the hands of the bourgeoisie and putting it into the hands of a socialist Central Committee.”¹⁰

Luxemburg’s insistence on linking politics with morality never ceased to embarrass socialists on the right and on the left; it spelled her political downfall. On both sides of the barricade, revolutionaries and conservatives, her political friends and enemies, breathed a sigh of relief at her assassination. But she would not die — *non omnis moriar*. She alone among her contemporaries made a comeback in the 1960s as tanks rolled and shots were fired and people were fighting again for government “with a human face.” For whenever it is time, to use Thoreau’s words, “for honest men to rebel and revolutionize,” Rosa Luxemburg’s ideas return.

⁹Rosa Luxemburg, *Die russische Revolution*, ed. P. Levi (Berlin, 1922), pp. 77-118.

¹⁰Roza Luksemburg, *Wybor Pism* (Warsaw, 1959), vol. I, p. 341.

*Comrade and Lover: Rosa Luxemburg's Letters to Leo Jogiches**

by Elzbieta Ettinger

No couple on earth has the chance we have
We will both work and our life will be perfect
We will be happy, we must.
Rosa Luxemburg to Leo Jogisches, March 6, 1899

Love and work, a union of minds and souls, was what Rosa Luxemburg dreamed of and struggled for during the fifteen years of her tempestuous affair with Leo Jogiches. They belonged together, not because they willed it but because they could not unwill it. Their happy times together were bliss. Their battles were bloody. They parted, loving each other, defeated.

From the beginning the relationship carried within itself the seeds of its own destruction. They were infected with the same fever — independence and individuality — which were the carriers of their ultimate failure. The common cause, socialism, which welded their lives together, failed to sustain Luxemburg's dream of a perfect union because each denied the other the freedom they both desired for humanity. They were drawn to socialism by the urge to remodel the world. Extended to their personal relationship, this urge was fatal. Luxemburg projected her ideal of a perfect international union of workers onto her union with Jogiches, and neither stood the test of life. Blind to the complexities of human nature, she was determined to make both Jogiches and humanity happy, but on her own terms.

Compromise and tolerance she did not know. Nor did Jogiches. Yet neither tired of inducing or seducing a concession from the other, perhaps to prove love, perhaps power. Surrender meant for each different things at different times, as did rebellion. Surrender could be equated with love, as rebellion with its lack, but it could also be a chance to dominate by provoking guilt. Each made claims on the other's independence, though for both its preservation was crucial. They never achieved the delicate balance between granting and restraining freedom. They depended on each other intellectually and emotionally, but unable to regard this dependence as a condition of love, they were resentful of the restrictions it imposed. They struggled constantly within themselves to give to each other the space to breathe, but they meted it out guardedly and jealously.

* Reprinted by permission of MIT Press from *Comrade and Lover: Rosa Luxemburg's Letters to Leo Jogiches*, edited and translated by Elzbieta Ettinger, copyright 1979 by The Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Luxemburg's letters (Jogiches's letters to her have not survived) mirror the various and overlapping stages of the struggle: the master/disciple, adored/adoring, and child/parent relationships, and the reverse of each. The man who considered himself her creator is addressed as "my child," or "Dyodyo" or "Chuchya": the first is a pet name reserved for small boys; the other, for baby girls. If "Dyodyo" misbehaved, she would deny him the endearment. Back in her favor, his anger still seething, he in turn would answer coldly. The letters disclose their weapons: love, seduction, provocation, rewards, and punishments, and their underlying erotic currents. Both partners used the letters as a substitute for an everyday life together and as a means of controlling the other: "My decision to stop writing," Luxemburg informed Jogiches, "is not the act of vengeance you think it is. It is not a boycott either." The letters also served as a workshop in which political strategies were worked out, alliances negotiated, opposition forces gauged, ammunition — articles and speeches — jointly produced. And they show that in politics it is impossible to say where Luxemburg started and Jogiches ended.

Jogiches lived for his political work. He was a man with a mission to which everything, including Luxemburg, was subordinated. Even if she was not his first love, he needed the knowledge that he was her only love. Even if her joy clashed with his gloom, and her exuberance with his reticence, he could come out of his shell to ask her, "Do you love me? Passionately? Do you know there is man named Dyodyo who belongs to you?"

To be the most important person in his life did not satisfy Luxemburg. Herself capable of both love and work, she saw no need to give up one for the sake of the other. She regarded his single-mindedness as a symptom of a disease that she alone could cure by "the might of love." She refused to reconcile herself to the concept of a revolutionary's life that the Russian anarchists Bakunin and Nechaev defined in the *Revolutionary Catechism*: "The revolutionary is a lost man; he has no interests of his own, no cause of his own, no feelings, no habits, no belongings; he does not even have a name. Everything in him is absorbed by a single, exclusive interest, a single thought, a single passion — the revolution All the tender feelings of family life, of friendship, love, gratitude, and even honor must be stifled in him by a single cold passion — the revolutionary cause."¹ Though Jogiches did not follow this dictum to the letter, it still was close to his ideal and to his needs.

Unwilling to accept the primacy of his choice, Luxemburg never stopped competing with her only rival — humanity. "Your letters contain *nothing but nothing* except for *The Workers' Cause*," she reproached him early in their relationship. This remained a recurring complaint. "When I open your letters and see six sheets covered with debates about the Polish Socialist Party," she wrote when their affair was ten years old, "and not a single word about . . . ordinary life, I feel faint."

¹Quoted by Franco Venturi in *Roots of Revolution* (New York, 1966), p. 366.

“Constructive work” and “positive action,” not renunciation of a home, a child, and worldly goods, were her tools for remedying existing ills. She did not seek redemption in thwarting her natural instincts, nor did she try to alleviate the suffering of others by self-inflicted wounds. Not only was asceticism alien to her nature, she also saw it as destructive. Personal happiness, which Jogiches considered an almost sinful waste, she viewed as a natural extension of her fight for the right to happiness and fulfillment for all. “Despite everything you’ve told me,” she wrote him, “. . . I keep harping on the worn-out tune, making claims on personal happiness. Yes, I do have an accursed longing for happiness and am ready to haggle for my daily portion with the stubbornness of a mule.”

It was probably partly their different backgrounds and partly their natural dispositions that bred the conflicting concepts. Jogiches’s rebellion against a “bourgeois” life — home, family, possessions — started when he was in his midteens. Born into a prominent, wealthy, Jewish family, he renounced his milieu. He exchanged his own family for the family of workers, and the gymnasium for a locksmith shop. Terror as a weapon fascinated him, as did cloak-and-dagger operations. Disliked for his despotic and arrogant manner, he was respected as a conspirator of unique skills. By the time he was twenty, he was in the forefront of the revolutionary movement in his native Wilno.

Luxemburg came from a family of modest means. If she did not know poverty, she did see her father struggling to make ends meet. Her childhood was affected by a wrongly diagnosed hip disease that left her with a bad limp. The closely knit family doted on her, the youngest child, and she grew into a self-confident girl. She was educated at a financial sacrifice and, though already deeply involved in the revolutionary movement in her teens, she graduated from the Warsaw gymnasium at the top of her class. She learned early that although knowledge was indispensable to carry on the struggle, life could not be lived fully without love, family, and friends.

Both Luxemburg and Jogiches, faced with prison, had to flee the czarist police. For Jogiches exile was the end of power; for Luxemburg, it was the beginning.

Exile came to Jogiches as a shock from which he never fully recovered. In Wilno, his life had been in constant danger, which set him apart from the detested bourgeoisie. In Switzerland there was no danger to make the revolutionary’s life worth living. Instead there was the tranquility of the university, for which he had as little use as he had formerly had for the gymnasium, and there were the trappings of the middle-class life he now led. He lived on the very family wealth he condemned, and this set him apart from his impecunious fellow exiles. Marxist theorists replaced the company of workers; inactivity, the daredevil deeds. His bent for force and command was little appreciated in theoretical disputes. Soon he found himself isolated. His past exploits had left him convinced of his superior mind, but cut off from his native soil, his work, and from the mother he worshipped,

he, in Luxemburg's words, "vegetated in constant bitterness." Fear of failing beset him and never let him go.

Luxemburg, thrown back on her inner resources in an alien land, did not feel threatened. She remained attached to her family and to her country without the feeling of permanent loss that never left Jogiches. The different cultures, Jewish, Polish, German, and Russian, that she had absorbed in childhood made adaptation easier for her. If anything, she saw a better chance to "run and run after justice" in Switzerland than in the shadow of the Russian gallows. She attended the Zurich University as dutifully as she had previously attended the gymnasium, challenged the Swiss professors with her unconventional Marxist education, and ended her studies with a highly acclaimed doctoral dissertation. But Jogiches left the university after ten years without obtaining a degree.

They met in Zurich in 1890 when Jogiches was twenty-three and Luxemburg was twenty. Though not a beauty, she fascinated men with her womanliness, her strength, and her brilliant mind. If her disproportionately large upper body and short child-like legs, due to the earlier hip disease, marred her looks, self-deprecating irony added to her charm. Lustrous dark eyes beneath masses of rich brown hair and her passionate nature mesmerized men and women alike. She fell in love with Jogiches immediately; his burning inspiration and his aloofness made him seem a Dostoevskian hero. Time never changed that first impression. Throughout her life he remained the only man able to challenge her intellectually and tantalize her sexually. He found in her an intellect and a woman, both hungry; that he could nourish both gave him pleasure and a sense of power.

To say that only the "common cause" held them together would be an understatement. To say that mutual attraction held them together would be inaccurate. It is doubtful they could have been attracted to each other for more than a fleeting moment had they not been attracted to socialism as well. Together, in 1893, they founded the first significant Polish Marxist workers' party, the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland. After evolutions and revolutions, it is still recognized as the forerunner of the ruling party in contemporary Poland.

If the small party into which Luxemburg had drawn Jogiches to entice him out of his growing isolation was a far cry from his own grandiose designs, it started Luxemburg on a career that placed her among the leaders of socialism in Europe. It was Jogiches who fathered her success; he provided the skills and the money. Above all, he recognized in her a genius which could reach its true heights, he felt, only under his tutelage. Indeed, she herself was rather skeptical at first of her possibilities. After meeting the father of Russian Marxism, George V. Plekhanov, she wrote to a friend. "I was in Mornex but won't go there anymore because Plekhanov is too sophisticated or, to be exact, too well-educated for me. What could he possibly gain from a conversation with me? He knows everything better than

I do, and I cannot create 'ideas' — original, genuine ideas."² A year later Jogiches' able, if only, disciple challenged Plekhanov's authority. But she often turned to Jogiches for "ideas" — "just give me a few ideas . . . *writing* is no problem for me." Before long the two had achieved the kind of near-perfect cooperation attainable when two minds become one. Intellectually they breathed in rhythm, a sort of cerebral quick-time. "Help for heaven's sake, help!" she urged. ". . . We started out very well. The pieces I wrote . . . are the dough (half baked) . . . we need. If only I knew *what* to write, the form would take shape then and there. . . ." He helped her tackle theoretical problems in economics and politics, scrutinized her research, suggested topics. Sending him her articles, she would write, "I know you'll pick up the main thread immediately and add the finishing touches." Early on, her desire to reconcile love and work to fulfill his expectations heightened the intensity of their affair. "I feel the way you do," she wrote him on one of her frequent trips to Paris. "I dream about being near you, my only love. I struggle with myself, struggle hard, not to chuck the lectures and all the rest and come speeding to you. But I am ashamed. Besides, I feel, I know, that you will be more pleased with me after I've done all the things I should do."

Inevitably their common work was fraught with conflict. Jogiches could never forgive nor forget that it was through Luxemburg that he had become involved in the Polish movement. More important, his political existence was for years almost exclusively limited to supplying Luxemburg with ideas for her writing. "His brilliance and intelligence notwithstanding, Leo was simply unable to write," she later said. "The mere thought of putting his ideas on paper paralyzes him."³ Actually it was the finality of being imprisoned in print that paralyzed him. Made public, his words could turn against him and prove his fallibility to the world. He operated from behind the scenes, avoiding daylight, avoiding people. He had no need for those he wanted to save. His one and only preoccupation was masterminding the party strategy that Luxemburg was expected to carry out. She resented it. "I'm just getting used to the idea," she wrote him, "that now my only duty is to think about the elections and later about what will happen after the elections. I feel like a forty-year-old woman going through the symptoms of menopause, although the two of us together are only about sixty years old." Or, resigned, she would say, ". . . I shifted to business — your style. It may be that you're right and that in another six months I'll turn at last into your ideal." It was the opposite of hers.

Writing for both of them, she soon found herself in an untenable position. "You think that for me it'll do to scribble articles . . . and follow your 'modest opinions,'" she wrote rebelliously. She agreed to his

²Quoted in *Roza Luksemburg. Listy do Leona Jogichesa-Tyszke*, ed. F. Tych (Warsaw, 1968), vol. I., p. XXVII.

³Ibid., p. XXXIX.

exercising his power through her but not to his arrogating power over her. She may have longed to be his little “Chuchya” in the privacy of their bedroom, but his attempts to control her mind as well as her every move vexed her. “If I’m independent enough to perform single-handed on the political scene, that independence must extend to buying a jacket.” Her performance was rapidly becoming more single-handed than Jogiches could ever have wished.

Berlin was her stage. She descended upon the city like a colorful bird, elegant and brilliant. Although a woman — young, Jewish, and Polish — within three months, in 1898, she was offered the editorship of an important newspaper published by the powerful German Social Democratic Party. Seasoned socialists August Bebel, Karl Kautsky, and Clara Zetkin befriended her. In her the opposition discovered a forceful adversary. Her courage and wit, her fiery oratory, and knife-edged pen captivated and shocked. Jogiches’ share in her career was, as before, not negligible. His letters stimulated her thinking day by day, she readily admitted, “and in your last letter you gave me an entire piece for my article, which stands out like a jewel. . . . I translated [it] from your letter word for word.”

Once she had feared that her success might poison their relationship because of his pride and suspicions. Now, while lavishing assurances on him that the sole aim of her triumphs was to give him moral support, she basked happily in her new-found glory. “The divine,” she was now called, and “the conqueror.” But political success did not compensate for an unfulfilled personal life. The ecstasy she had shared with Jogiches tantalized her. “There are no other hands like yours, delicate hands,” his words kept coming back to her. Each day away from him was a new torment and a new reminder of past bliss. “I will never forget,” she wrote to him in Zurich, how “. . . we held each other on the road in the darkness and looked at the crescent moon over the mountains . . . carried [groceries] upstairs together . . . the oranges, the cheeses . . . had such magnificent dinners . . . on the little table. . . . I still smell that night air.” The memory of happiness contrasting with her unwanted solitude filled her with real and imaginary fears. More than ever she longed for a home with him and a child by him.

But Jogiches refused to join her for two years. From Zurich he kept dispatching orders, advice, reprimands, through her “influencing history” — his ultimate dream. Resentful of the vicariousness of this experience, proud of her success, yet jealous of it, he feared her demands to “live openly as husband and wife.” Only her ultimatum forced him to trudge to Berlin. A commander without troops, relegated to the role of prince consort, he now sat in their apartment reading her reports of her triumphant tours and unequalled popularity.

Nor was Luxemburg happy. “Real” life was still out of her reach. As a little girl she firmly believed that “real” life was hidden somewhere behind tall roofs. “Ever since, I’ve been trying to find it,” she wrote after she had broken with Jogiches, “but it always kept hiding behind one roof or

other.”⁴ Her love was never wholly reciprocated. Jogiches continued to elude her. It was not, she realized, just geographic distance that divided them.

Jealous of his “inner life,” she could not bear the thought that a part of him existed to which she had no access. “I feel an outsider,” she protested and at the same time berated herself for the “torment” she inflicted on him by saying it. That she herself, often unwittingly, injured his pride and made him suffer and withdraw, made her fight for Jogiches’ soul more ferociously and more hopelessly, and it made him increasingly desperate to defend what was left of his being. He felt uneasy when she gave, unhappy when she did not, furious when she let him know that she was giving. He wanted her undivided attention, but he measured and directed it. Any intrusion upon territory he considered off limits, he consistently and strictly forbade. He wanted her dependent, to keep her, and independent, to prove himself a genius-maker. Responsibility for her happiness or unhappiness he did not want, nor did he want to let go of it. When she was unhappy, he felt guilty; when she was happy, cheated.

The passage of time created a chasm between them. Her vision of herself and of Jogiches’ place in it differed when she was thirty and a celebrity from when she was twenty and unknown. Jogiches, in his mid-thirties, fully realized the gap between his youthful aspirations and the disappointments of reality. While her transition from youth to adulthood was marked by achievements and recognition, for him it was a farewell to his dreams of power.

She wanted them to “live like other people,” to have peaceful and orderly lives, although order and serenity were unattainable for either of them. Always, she wanted the impossible. In politics, too, she fought for the revolution yet abhorred violence and bloodshed. It was typical of the contradictions in her nature to want thunder silent and a hurricane calm. She pushed and prodded him toward the unattainable “peaceful life,” aware yet unmindful of his private hell. His constant agonizing, the malaise that was eating away at him, she saw as a “senseless, spiritual suicide.” He was, she claimed, “perishing for no other reason but [his] own madness.” In despair she turned to another man. And Jogiches, like the magician who lost control over the spirit he himself had created, felt he had lost his power and, therefore, lost her.

After their break became final, in 1907, they lived apart, separated but never strangers. All his attempts to win her back failed. There was suffering and rage, but the affinity survived. They continued to work together, their youthful dreams of social revolution untouched.

There were other affairs in her life, meaningless affairs. Perhaps she wanted to prove to Jogiches or to herself that, as she had once written him,

⁴Rosa Luxemburg. *Briefe an Karl und Luise Kautsky*, ed. Luise Kautsky (Berlin, 1923), p. 71.

“I don’t need your love . . . I can live without it.” But then, as later, she never really could. Years before, exasperated by his coldness, she had cried, “I could kill you!” She did not kill him. She went on, living an imitation of life until, in January 1919, she was assassinated. Two months later, hunting down her assassins, Jogiches, too, was murdered.

A woman and a Jew, Luxemburg personified two oppressed classes. She grew up at a time when both were beginning to stir restlessly.

The lot of women in Poland was similar to that in other European Roman Catholic countries. For centuries, reared in the virtues of submissiveness and humility, in dread of sin and punishment, their lives had been circumscribed by the feudal-patriarchal family. Depending upon her social status, a woman served either to combine adjoining estates by a suitable match or to produce offspring to till the soil. In folklore, and perhaps in reality, the first emancipated woman was a widow who, by poisoning her husband, had achieved financial and thereby full independence.

In Poland, as in other European countries, industrialization undermined the established attitudes; power and money changed hands. The feudal elite — the Catholic Church and the hereditary nobility — saw the emergence of a new elite: the bourgeoisie. The impoverished aristocracy could no longer support chivalrous knights and romantic maidens. The man, hitherto privileged by birth and property, tried to compensate for his diminished influence by emphasizing his mental and physical superiority. His equally impecunious female counterpart was often reduced to the role of governess, or, to save the family from bankruptcy, was married off to a *nouveau riche*. The new leisure class, like the earlier one, used women as a means to amass ever bigger fortunes and garnish them with a coveted coat of arms. Among the rising intelligentsia, slowly emerging competition for professional positions intensified the antagonism between the sexes. As members of the growing urban proletariat, women workers were lowest of the low.

This regrouping of social classes included the Jews. Privileges and restrictions going back to the thirteenth century were modified in the 1860s. There was also an increase in migration from small towns and villages to urban centers. There, a few Jews achieved prominence in scholarship, professions, and wealth, many joined the ranks of the proletariat, and some the *lumpenproletariat*. The Luxemburg family, too, left a small town for Warsaw. Like many educated, assimilated Jews, they identified themselves with Poles and gave their children a modern education. Luxemburg’s father was typical of those Jews who were sympathetic to the cause of Polish independence. Many of them supported the 1863 insurrection that brought further changes.

In that insurrection, sometimes called the “Women’s War,” women proved to be skilled conspirators and comrades-in-arms. Russian chroniclers who “attributed the frenzy of the resistance and the long desperate

fight to the dazzling eyes and high spirits of the Polish women,” missed the vital point.⁵ For two decades the vestals had been turning into warriors; they demanded recognition not only of their womanly virtues but also of their ability to think and to work. If their initial behavior — imitating men, condemning marriage, scorning public opinion — provoked disgust, they themselves were sufficiently disgusted with their position as “virgins,” “dolls,” or “angels,” to challenge the Church, tradition, and society. Discarding their tulle and velvet they revealed themselves as a power to be reckoned with.

Paradoxically, economic and political oppression accelerated the process of women’s coming-of-age. For example, one of the first mass strikes in Warsaw erupted after women laborers and prostitutes were ordered by the czarist police to undergo identical hygienic checkups. In spite of class differences, the similarities of their predicaments united women: Polish women, weary of the pressures of the Church, Jewish women, tired of being pariahs, came out of mansions and ghettos to fight for personal independence. The battles were fought, too, on the pages of newspapers and novels. While *Madame Bovary* was victimized by her romantic notion of life, and *Anna Karenina* by her tragic passion, *Marta* (protagonist of a famous novel by Eliza Orzeszkowa, published in 1873) paid with her life for being *useless in the labor market*. As racial prejudice in the case of Jews, aggravated by fear of economic competition, so sexual prejudice, in the case of women, less identifiable but equally insidious in the restrictions it imposed, dimmed hopes for progress. Education appeared — to women as to Jews — the way out of bondage. But education alone was not enough. Revolution — or socialism — seemed to Luxemburg’s generation a panacea for all these ills.

The image of the woman-rebel was an integral part of Luxemburg’s formative years. She was eight years old when Vera Zasulich walked into the office of General Trepov, governor of St. Petersburg, and fired at him at point-blank range. She was eleven when Sofia Perovskaia, the daughter of a Russian general, was executed for her part in the assassination of Czar Alexander II. At the time of Luxemburg’s graduation from the gymnasium, the twenty-one-year-old Maria Bohusz, one of the leaders of the first Polish workers’ party Proletariat, perished in Siberian exile. The same fate met the revolutionary Rosalia Felsenhardt, the daughter of a Jewish medic. Aleksandra Jentys, a woman of great intelligence and beauty and cofounder of Proletariat, was imprisoned with her lover, Ludwik Warynski, founder of the party. She was exiled; he died in a Russian dungeon.

In this rapidly changing society, however, the call to arms lost its appeal for many. Industrialization provided a chance for a different kind of action. The older generation saw that armed struggle bled the nation without weakening the Russian oppressor, cooperation with the Russians rather

⁵Maria Żmigrodzka, *Orzeszkowa* (Warsaw, 1965), p. 54.

than rebellion, economic progress rather than hopeless bloodshed, seemed the realistic solution. But rebellion did not die. Longhaired young men and short-cropped young women, often sons and daughters of factory owners, appeared in the streets of Warsaw, shocking the burghers and infuriating the police. These young people were instrumental in showing the workers ways to assert their rights. The czarist authorities, joined by extreme Polish nationalists, tried to stop the Jews from joining forces with revolutionary Poles but were only partially successful. "Polish rebels" (*buntovshchiki*) were notorious with the czarist police. Conspirators, recklessly courageous, carrying daggers under their faddish cloaks, were incorrigible and dangerous until hanging from the gallows. They started their careers, boys and girls alike, at fourteen. At seventeen they were full-fledged subversives; at nineteen or twenty they cried from the gallows, "Long live Poland!" "Long live socialism!" "Long live revolution!"

The Czarist repression forced women, teachers, and students into the underground. Schools turned into hotbeds of conspiracy where future revolutionaries received their basic training. Whispered messages, secret glances, addresses exchanged in murky school corridors and on street corners, arranged not only a romantic rendezvous but also illegal classes. In the underground another "revolution" occurred in the attitudes of the sexes. Girls, though still chaperoned to balls and teas, were now discovering comrades and friends in their male fellow students. In the clandestine circles studying forbidden Polish literature and history and discussing theories of social progress, young people learned the meaning of comradeship and free love. The emphasis Luxemburg put on friendship in her relationship with Jogiches echoed this spirit.

While in exile, Luxemburg first came to know the organized struggle for women's rights. In Germany socialists like August Bebel and Clara Zetkin put that fight on an equal footing with the fight for workers' rights. Luxemburg's approach was different. The belief that people should not be divided by sex but united against the exploiters shaped her views on women's emancipation. It was, from her point of view, yet another harmful division, comparable to the divisions by class, race, or nationality that split the international proletariat. For the same reason, although other reasons also played a role, she refused to support any separate Jewish movement, even though her social consciousness and her uncompromising rejection of nationalism can be understood only in the light of Jewish emancipation. Once socialism had been won, she believed, women and Jews, like other oppressed people, would have all the rights which the capitalist system had deprived them of. This stand did not prevent her, however, from encouraging her women friends to assert their independence.

On the Jewish question, she remained intransigently consistent. Her own rise to power influenced her feelings: if she, a Jew, could achieve such prominence, anti-Semitism could not be a special social problem but merely one among the many manifestations of oppressions inherent in capitalism.

She disregarded the differences rooted in divergent cultural and social conditions. “To me,” she wrote in 1917, “the poor victims of the rubber plantations in Putumayo, the Negroes in Africa . . . are equally close.”⁶ The Jewish peddler in a small Polish village is the same as a Colombian rubber plantation worker. For Luxemburg, he is no longer a specific, concrete human individual, a member of a historically shaped national and religious entity, but the pure essence of humankind. In brief, she did not feel that there were truly important distinctions in the situation of Jews, Africans, Latin Americans, or other Europeans. Whether and to what extent this stemmed from her rejection of nationalism or from her own need to escape the confines of the “ghetto” into a nationless human community, she typified the illusion shared by some Jews before and after her.

The breach with Jogiches and the outbreak of World War I slightly modified Luxemburg’s attitude toward women. Her unique success, and Jogiches’s unwavering support had spared her the common lot of her female contemporaries. When called the “Red Prima Donna” or the “Jewish Rose,” she could afford nonchalantly to shrug off such slurs. The war, however, made her seek allies among women who were now fighting not their inferior status but its result — the lack of power. Isolated, with no political influence, women were unable to make decisions about themselves, their children, or their country. By this time Luxemburg knew this isolation. In 1915, she decided to participate in an International Women’s Conference in Holland. Men, she realized, controlled the German Social Democratic Party. Under their leadership the party grew increasingly conservative, more interested in the worker’s wages than in his political growth. Men held positions of power in the Socialist International and in their respective governments. Now, allying themselves with those who made wars and profited by them, they voted for war budgets. If in the past she had equated courage with manhood — “there are two men left in the party,” she said back in 1907, “Clara Zetkin and I” — she now saw things differently. She would have smiled ironically at what her biographer intended as a compliment: “There was much that was *manly* about Rosa Luxemburg,” he wrote, “in her keen intellect, in her boundless energy, in her dauntlessness, in her confidence and assertiveness.”⁷

Since the 1920s the term “revolutionary” has undergone a change that Luxemburg and her peers might have seen as a monstrous caricature. Their concept of revolution was democracy and freedom, a social order that would liberate all from the arbitrary use of political and economic power. They differed as much from latter-day revolutionaries as their vision differed from its implementation. Dispersed throughout Europe, they worked toward the same goal — a more human and more humane society.

⁶Rosa Luxemburg, *Briefe an Freunde*, ed. B. Kautsky (Hamburg, 1950), pp. 48-49.

⁷Paul Frölich, *Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work* (first edition, 1939; New York, 1972), p. 187. (My italics.)

A unique group, they had no predecessors and hardly any successors. They were enlightened Europeans, many of them Jews, who appeared in the second half of the nineteenth century only to disappear with the advent of labor camps, concentration camps, purges, and gas ovens. In mind and spirit they were the obverse of those who today falsely claim their intellectual heritage. Selfless, incorruptible, civilized, they did not set out to “save” the world but to make it a better place to live in. They were not free of ambition, pettiness, intolerance; political intrigue was not beyond them, nor were personal squabbles. Personalities clashed, ideological battles were fought, but the foundations stood firm. Once, when the French socialist Jaurés delivered a fiery speech against Luxemburg’s theories and there was no one to interpret for him, she stood up and translated his ardent oration into equally impassioned German. To paraphrase Leonard Woolf, they knew it was the disunity of the civilized, not the unity of the barbarians, that was dangerous to their cause. History has proved them right.

They neither desired nor sought power over the workers. An educated worker, they believed, would develop a sense of solidarity with workers the world over, would comprehend the pervasiveness and limits of capitalism, and, once in power, would put an end to its rule. Like Marx before them, they failed to understand the worker’s lack of pride in his status, his aspirations to achieve a higher social position, if not for himself at least for his children. “Citizens of the world,” multilingual, equally at home in all the capitals of Europe, they projected their lofty ideals onto the mundane reality of the worker. They knew the art of living and dreamed of a social order of which the hitherto oppressed would partake. Not averse to the small luxuries of life, with a taste for music and literature and a deep attachment to Western civilization, they wanted to make that culture a need and a property of the “wretched of the earth.”

Luxemburg’s attitude toward personal happiness, which she saw as a natural human yearning, and that of Jogiches, who considered it antithetical to “the cause,” reflect the difference between the group that lost and the one that won. Bent on making people “happy” according to their recipe, the latter succeeded in having the world equate “revolution” with the denial of a life fulfilled and rich. “[I] hate ‘ascetism’ . . . more than ever,” Luxemburg wrote from prison to Jogiches. “I keep grasping greedily at each spark of life, each glimmer of light . . . [and] promise myself *to live* life to its fullest as soon as I’m free.”

Socialism was, for Luxemburg, a faith to which people should be educated, not forced. Marx considered socialism a historical necessity and asserted that the forces of history are moving toward social revolution, which he regarded as an end morally valid and therefore worth fighting for. After his death the so-called Marxists started to present Marx as a mere historical determinist, a simplistic believer in sociological laws. Luxemburg, in contradiction to this interpretation of Marx’s writings, stressed an ethical dimension: the moral obligation to fight for a more human social system.

The progress of humankind was inevitably connected to moral virtue. *Realpolitik* was immoral and therefore worthless; it was also the parent of cowardice, which she regarded as the greatest of sins.

Marx's words, "moi, je ne suis pas Marxiste," fit well with her interpretation of Marxism. She conceived of it as a humanistic philosophy capable of restoring wholeness to human beings. The "Marxist jargon," which supplied fuel for demagogues and corrupted intellect, she found deceptive and dangerous. Marxism was not a dogma for her but a scientific tool to create new concepts and real changes. "Rosa Luxemburg was the only disciple of Marx," wrote Georg Lukács, "who effectively continued his life work in both economic theory and economic method."⁸

Answering Jogiches' misgivings about an article of hers, she said: "Your fear of my emphasizing our antagonism to Marx seems to me *unfounded*. Nobody will be appalled by it for the entire piece is nothing but a triumphant song of Marxism." Equally opposed to Russian despotism and Prussian barrack drill, she brought to modern revolutionary thought an almost mystical faith in the revolutionary potential of the workers, which no one else was able to shake and few were able to accept.

Luxemburg's assessment of Lenin and the Russian Revolution continues to provoke controversy. She is alternately presented and interpreted as a Marxist heretic and a Marxist orthodox. Best known in the West as a critic of the revolution, she is extolled in the East as its forerunner and supporter. Her analysis of the October Revolution (written in 1918), dismissed as a momentary delusion by some and hailed as prophetic by others, is neither. It is a logical continuation of her philosophy, based on the concept of dynamic rather than static history and on the inevitability of moving toward a more advanced, that is, a more democratic, society. She welcomed the revolution, stating that Lenin's was "the sole party in Russia that grasped the true interest of the revolution in that first period [. . .]" However, she felt Lenin's and Trotsky's remedy, the complete elimination of democracy, was "worse than the disease it was supposed to cure. . . ." She wrote, "Socialism, by its very nature, cannot be dictated, introduced by command. . . . [Lenin] is completely mistaken in the means he employs: decree, the dictatorial power of a factory overseer, draconic penalties, rule by terror — all these are means preventing rebirth. . . . Without general elections, without unrestricted freedom of press and assembly, without a free exchange of opinions, life dies out in every public institution and only bureaucracy remains active. . . . Slowly, public life falls into sleep, and a few dozen party leaders . . . command and rule. . . . In reality the power is executed by a dozen outstanding minds while the elite of the working class are now and then invited to meetings in order to applaud the speeches of the leaders and to approve unanimously proposed resolutions. In fact, it is a

⁸Georg Lukács, *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein* (Berlin, 1923), pp. 5-6.

clique — certainly a dictatorship, not, however, the dictatorship of the proletariat but that of a handful of politicians. . . .” She emphasized that Lenin and his comrades “have contributed to the cause of international socialism whatever could possibly have been contributed under such fiendishly difficult conditions. However, “the danger begins,” she pointed out, “with their making a virtue of necessity. . . .” She stated, “Freedom only for the supporters of the government, only for the members of one party, no matter how numerous, is no freedom. Freedom is always freedom for the one who thinks differently.”⁹

She did not believe that one party could have the monopoly on wisdom. And she rejected the principle of centralization, which she saw as “simply taking the conductor’s baton out of the hands of the bourgeoisie and putting it into the hands of a socialist Central Committee.”¹⁰

Luxemburg’s insistence on linking politics with morality never ceased to embarrass socialists on the right and on the left; it spelled her political downfall. On both sides of the barricade, revolutionaries and conservatives, her political friends and enemies, breathed a sigh of relief at her assassination. But she would not die — *non omnis moriar*. She alone among her contemporaries made a comeback in the 1960s as tanks rolled and shots were fired and people were fighting again for government “with a human face.” For whenever it is time, to use Thoreau’s words, “for honest men to rebel and revolutionize,” Rosa Luxemburg’s ideas return.

⁹Rosa Luxemburg, *Die russische Revolution*, ed. P. Levi (Berlin, 1922), pp. 77-118.

¹⁰Roza Luksemburg, *Wybor Pism* (Warsaw, 1959), vol. I, p. 341.

REPORT

Benjamin, Storytelling and Brecht in the USA

by R.G. Davis

The last Brecht production I directed and acted in with the San Francisco Mime Troupe was the first U.S. production (before the “premiere” in Switzerland) of *Turandot or The Congress of White Washers*. It took a number of months to rehearse before it was launched in the turmoil of the open air theater of the Bay area parks.

The fascinating part of the project was that all we had learned up till then about Brecht’s epic theater and alienation techniques had to be readjusted, if not reversed, for outdoor performance. Whereas you might take advantage of the audience’s attention indoors and “distance” them from the stage, you had to attract their attention outdoors. Where indoors you might dramatically hold a moment before you spoke or before a character moved, the audience outdoors thought you had forgotten your lines or didn’t know the blocking. The outdoor performances were near-disasters, given our limited production facilities, talents and the obstacles of park shows. Later I wrote: “We made a production that was like Bratwurst Chow Yuk.”¹ The excruciating outdoor experience gave us extraordinary courage for the later indoor shows.

Previously I had done a production of *The Exception and the Rule* shaping the play around Kabuki-Noh style in order to break naturalistic acting tendencies, give the production a mimetic lift and focus attention on the social conditions. We tried a similar approach to *Turandot or The Congress of White Washers* by playing it in old Chinese opera style (the setting was pre-1947 China). The advantage of an exotic Chinese or Kabuki-Noh style is that the conventions allow one to introduce so-called Brechtian techniques as “natural” elements: banners, masks, music signs, frozen positions, exaggerated gestures, et al.

I don’t advocate using any handy style in order to create a “new” Brecht production — there have been too many horrendous attempts. But the styles mentioned above have a basis either in the composition or geographical location of the text. *The Congress of White Washers* in Chinese Opera style was a brutal experience for the first few months until we were able, as a group, to get to the essence of the play and gain command of the

¹R.G. Davis, *The San Francisco Mime Troupe: The First Ten Years* (Palo Alto, California; 1975), p. 124.

complexities. It became evident through the costumes, the awkward translation, the too few actors for the large cast of characters, that each figure in the play contributed to moving the entire argument of the play forward, even while each performer held on to his or her character. When it worked, the whole thing was like a single multifaceted storyteller.

In 1973 while teaching in Chicago I met Paul Sills, who at the time had just closed a theater project, an evening of stories based on the Grimm fairy tales. The following year he came to San Francisco and I was hired to perform in the S.F. production of Story Theater with ex-members of the Committee and two people from Los Angeles, Melinda Dillon and Richard Shawl, who were veterans of previous story-theater shows in New York and Canada. Sills proposed that we improvise around stories (well known Grimm tales) and that we bring in some of our own. I brought in two tales by Brecht, from *Tales from the Calendar*, but they were rejected as being “Brecht!” So we went on doing children’s fairy tales for adults. Still the performers demonstrated their inventiveness even while using the Grimm material.

Engaged as I was in the serious study of Brecht and Benjamin, I suspected that something could be done with this idea of storytelling — Indian tales, American folk tales and so on. The rise of Story Theater coincided with oral history activities sweeping the country. Universities had set up departments to collect personal histories that otherwise would have gone unrecorded. Studs Terkel’s book *Working* was a best seller, for example, and was made into a Broadway show.

The idea of Story Theater was wonderful but the show was simplistic. The individual pieces turned into skits and the skits fell flat when they ended. Performers invented to fill the lack of real ideas; cleverness replaced insight. The show failed to demonstrate the usefulness of the tales. Friends said it was like a T.V. show — one needed to get something to eat after the performance.

When I reread Walter Benjamin’s essay on the storyteller, I realized we had something here that was perhaps better than Eric Bentley’s suggestions about fables. I did not know at the time that Brecht had asked his dramaturgs and directors at the Berliner Ensemble to write a short fable of each play before working on it. In any case, the point of view, focus and interpretation of the text in the fable meant little to the performer and even less to the American actor.

Actors in the American theater, where their careers require that they make themselves into commodities, tend to stand between the text and the audience — they come first. They are trained in acting classes to stand out. But if one is to do Brecht, or any other great playwright, the actor has to stand back of the text and allow the text to play between his or her character and the audience. Storytelling as an acting technique represented a breakthrough for Americans; not, however, as Viola Spolin and Sills thought, but rather as Benjamin and Brecht had outlined.

Among the suppositions preying on Brecht's work is the concept that the actor is supposed to distance self from the character and allow the audience to see the actor commenting on the role. I had never actually seen anyone do this effectively. When we brought filmed documents of the Berliner Ensemble to Epic West in 1976 and studied Weigel and Busch, and when I later saw films in Berlin of productions Brecht himself had directed, I never saw this thing we were supposed to see — the actor commenting on the role. What I did see was great characterization and meticulous direction that made each scene reverberate and provoke interest in the arguments.

My experience with *The Congress of White Washers* was verified by my reading of Benjamin and the performances of Sill's Story Theater. The story was propelled by each performer going in and out of the tale, so to speak. As the tale unfolded, the performer in Sill's theater had to act as narrator as well as character and even sometimes as object. This was close to (but not quite the same as) what is called "transformation" in the work of Viola Spolin, Peter Brook and Joe Chaikin of the Open Theater. Transformation is a complete change into another person. In Sill's work, just as in Improvisational Theater (Second City and others), complete characterization might expose the material. The performer, in order to keep the show alive and the performer visible, barely gets into another character. In traditional storytelling we see the speaker imitate another character in the tale, another side of the story, and revert back to the narrator in order to continue the story; we do not see him or her display clever wit or ability to do "transformation."

Isn't this what is meant by "alienation" in acting? Isn't this organic changing of roles? And, instead of pushing the actor away from and outside the character, doesn't this cause the actor to move through and around the story?

I had done a few scenes from *The Fear and Misery of the Third Reich*, way back in 1959 at the S.F. Actors Workshop. The fifteen vignettes in the play are short paradigmatic scenes of family situations under Nazism. In one very important scene, "The Chalk Cross," a character retells a story to a family in a kitchen by playing a number of people in his tale — he acts out the presentation for the other actor/characters. The emotionally moving story was broken up by the necessary change of perspective. What might have been a horror story about Nazis crushing common people was turned into an examination of the conditions under which people existed in Germany 1933–39. Brecht had written it as if a storyteller were speaking it. Sills had caught an idea which appeared unfinished; Benjamin was able to make it clear.

Benjamin's essay, "The Storyteller,"² is concerned with the work of Nikolai Leskov, born in 1831 to a noble mother and a minor civil servant father. Leskov's parents died when he was sixteen. Brought up by an English

²Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller," in: *Illuminations* (New York, 1969), p. 83 ff.

aunt, he was sent to earn his living rather than to the university. Benjamin uses Leskov to trace both the development and the disappearance of storytelling in the modern world. His concern with this passing may appear, as Fredric Jameson states, to be a “backward nostalgic glance.” However, Benjamin believed that the disappearance of storytelling on the scene of human communication is not merely a loss of craftsmanlike aesthetic but rather the destruction of intelligence delivered from a place of wisdom to the body politic. Jameson’s statement implies that any cultural development is progressive. But since our commodity/consumer culture innovates more often than not to the tune of increased chaos and false needs, not every innovation is an improvement.

The storyteller was at one time either a traveller or a native, a person who came from afar to tell a tale or a resident who recounted local history. Brecht places his tales in far lands (Urga, Chicago, England or Italy) and tells us “here is a report of two who are exploited and one who exploits” (*The Exception and the Rule*), or “here is a report” (*The Measures Taken*). In this way he mediates against our tendency to focus on a naturalistic microcosm and captures the distance which is needed for reexamination of ordinary human relations. The attention of the audience is drawn not to the details of so-called reality but rather to human interaction *within* social institutions. It is similar to watching a familiar T.V. commercial in another language: when we see a Coca-Cola ad in Japanese it tends to put those things we take for granted in observable relief.

Paragraph nine of *Short Organum for the Theater*: “And we must always remember that the pleasure given by representations of such different sorts hardly ever depended on the representation’s likeness of the thing portrayed.” Thus at the outset Brecht used the geographical location of the action to help the audience look upon the performance in a different way. He never used a foreign setting in the manner of a travelogue which attempts to convince you that “you are there,” but quite the opposite — “you ain’t there but your problems are.”

One should remember that this particular anti-illusionist dictum arose out of a theatrical milieu in the 1930s and 1940s, when theaters were able to open the grand curtain and, lo and behold, there was your apartment house, your tenement or your cherry orchard. The audience would duly applaud the accomplished illusion, applaud the fakery. Today such illusion (and extravaganza) is applauded only in the commercial theater. For the non-commercial theaters, illusion is economically impossible and has been replaced by the theater in the round, the thrust stage, 3/4-round and so forth — few, if any, conditions allow for scenic illusion. (The new trick is the notion that the actors must jump into your lap to prove that they are there.)

“Experience which is passed on from mouth to mouth is the source from which all storytellers have drawn.”³ Benjamin describes the two ancient

³ *Ibid.*, p. 84. Note the final lines of a Brecht poem from the 30s: “From new transmitters came the old stupidities./Wisdom was passed on from mouth to mouth.”

sources of tales, the “resident tiller of the soil, and the trading seaman.” As the trades developed, farmers and guildsmen often found themselves sitting next to tradesmen, so the repertoire of the storyteller contained some of the local village lore along with tales of faraway places, as each revealed something to the natives of the place.

The “natives” for Brecht’s stories on-stage are the audience, and the material is a tale retold with new interpretation. His interpretation is both a 20th-century view of the past and a methodology for examining practical and social situations. “Every real story . . . contains, openly or covertly, something useful. An orientation toward practical interests is characteristic of many born storytellers In every case the storyteller is a man who has counsel for his readers.”⁴ Through the ordinary, daily interaction of his characters Brecht explains larger issues. The Mother, in the play of that title, is made to understand in scene four the differences between private property used for personal use (her kitchen table) and the private factory of Mr. Kuklinov, which is interdependent with the workers. She can use her table as she wishes, but his factory contains tools for workers without which they cannot work. In scene four of *Galileo* the title figure invites the young Cosmo de Medici to look through his telescope to prove his theories about the stars. Cosmos’ scholastic advisors want to “discuss” the whole project first but finally decline the invitation. The clash of two ideologies — scholasticism and the scientific method (deduction rather than induction) — is set within the context of looking through a telescope. This simple incident contains the confrontation of two world views.

Benjamin believed that the decline in the function of the storyteller as a counselor is linked to our increasing inability to transmit experience: “If today ‘having counsel’ is beginning to have an old-fashioned ring, this is because the communicability of experience is decreasing After all, counsel is less an answer to a question than a proposal concerning the continuation of a story which is just unfolding. To seek this counsel one would first have to tell the story Counsel woven into the fabric of real life is wisdom.”⁵ The idea of giving counsel is premised on a sense of accountability to and for other human beings. As people have become more and more alienated from one another, this concept, whether on stage or in a therapeutic group, has been reduced to “what’s good for me.” The performer of epic theater must neither sell/preach nor denigrate the audience’s intelligence and perception.

Benjamin proposes that the dissolution of story and storytelling within society is caused by the rise of the bourgeois novel and urban media. “The birthplace of the novel is the solitary individual who is no longer able to express himself by giving examples of his most important concerns, is himself uncounseled, and cannot counsel others.”⁶ While the novel is an

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 86-87.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

attempt, albeit an individual one, to grapple with the forces of complex industrial society, the novel neither comes from oral tradition nor reenters it. And the novel itself is later undermined by a new form of communication — “information.”

Benjamin quotes the founder of *Le Figaro*, Villemessant, who characterized the nature of information in a famous formulation: “To my readers . . . an attic fire in the Latin Quarter is more important than a revolution in Madrid.”⁷ And Benjamin continues: “This makes strikingly clear that it is no longer intelligence from afar, but the information which supplies a handle for what is nearest that gets the readiest hearing. The intelligence that comes from afar — whether the spatial kind from foreign countries or the temporal kind of tradition — possessed an authority which gave it validity, even when it was not subject to verification. Information, however, lays claim to prompt verifiability. The prime requirement is that it appear ‘understandable in itself.’”⁸

It is precisely the deluge of information that has corrupted the political theater (again the left) by turning nearly everything into agitational propaganda — telling us the “facts” and following the newscasters who, in their liberal way, want to frighten the listener into consciousness by describing the most immediate details of what is happening in Vietnam, Angola, or more recently South Africa. What we miss of course is the why and wherefore which might aid us in determining fundamental action rather than mere demonstrative activity or bland consciousness.

Yet no playwright worth his or her social relations is without a response to immediate conditions. In Brecht’s earlier plays, particularly the learning plays, “information” was turned to advantage. The *Ocean Flight* and the *Baden Play for Learning* focused on Lindbergh’s historical ocean crossing. Later another development occurs in his plays in which the kernel of a topical social situation is made manifest while the subject is placed at a distance: *Galileo* was produced at the Berliner Ensemble with the Oppenheimer case in mind; its discussion of the role of the scientist and intellectual in the historical development of humanity touched current concern.

Brecht’s insistence, however, that the viewer of the spectacle be able to reflect during the performance (even though complete reflection would not be concluded in the presence of the reporter or storyteller) required that the audience be able to both disengage from the immediate experience and still remember the story to reflect on later. While dramatic theater “implicates the spectator in the stage situation,” his epic theater “turns the spectator into an observer, but arouses his capacity for action.” The stage situation provides a critical view of the characters making choices; the audience can

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 88.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 89.

envison alternatives other than those demonstrated on stage.⁹

The attraction of “information” and its concomitant degradation of the senses is described by Benjamin: “Often it [information] is no more exact than the intelligence of earlier centuries was. But while the latter was inclined to borrow from the miraculous, it is indispensable for information to sound plausible. Because of this, it proves incompatible with the spirit of storytelling. If the art of storytelling has become rare, the dissemination of information has had a decisive share in this state of affairs.”¹⁰

We cannot merely discard information from newspapers and radio news, for we need the stuff to piece together a sensible view of the world. But we must also take note of the difference between the “information” of the 1940s and that of the 1970s. While the 1940s had the same glut of headlines and facts, the same pretense to objectivity that we see in American journalism today, the information media were limited to newspapers and radio. Today the impact of “information” is compounded by the dominance of television news where the data being presented is “verified” by reinforcing images. “Every morning brings us the news of the globe, and yet we are poor in noteworthy stories. This is because no event any longer comes to us without already being shot through with explanation.”¹¹ The so-called objective news purveyor is supposed to avoid explanation when in fact his/her “objectivity” supports the assumptions extant in capitalist society. Instant replacement of one piece of information with another so you never remember any of it. The equalization of every piece of news makes a lost cat equal to an earthquake. Thus both the manner of presentation and

9 DRAMATIC THEATER	EPIC THEATER
Plot	Narrative
Implicates the spectator in a stage situation, wears down his capacity for action	Turns the spectator into an observer, but arouses his capacity for action
Provides him with sensations	Forces him to make decisions
Experience	Picture of the world
The spectator is involved in something	He is made to face something
Suggestion	Argument
Instinctive feelings are preserved	Brought to the point of recognition
The spectator is in the thick of it, shares the experience	The spectator stands outside, studies
The human being is taken for granted	The human being is the object of the inquiry
He is unalterable	He is alterable and able to alter
Eyes on the finish	Eyes on the course
One scene makes another	Each scene for itself
Growth	Montage
Linear development	In curves
Evolutionary determinism	Jumps
Man as a fixed point	Man as a process
Thought determines being	Social being determines thought
Feeling	Reason

¹⁰ Benjamin, p. 89.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

the substance of our news tend to vary the facts on the surface while hardly ever challenging fundamental social conditions.

“Actually,” Benjamin continues, “it is half the art of storytelling to keep a story free from explanation as one reproduces it. Leskov is a master at this.”¹² The actor on the stage, telling a story, must also avoid explanation, but in a different manner than a newscaster. The actor, or better, performer, does not in this instance deny his/her subjectivity, but rather critically admits it. Yet he/she must still allow the story to float out to the audience as a sort of offering. “The most extraordinary things, marvelous things are related with the greatest accuracy, but the psychological connection of the events is not forced on the reader. It is left up to him to interpret things the way he understands them and thus the narrative achieves an amplitude that information lacks.”¹³

The ability to keep free of the “psychological connections” of a story must be evident in the *mise-en-scène*, and in each performance as well, if one is to approach a dialectical process between audience and stage. The avoidance of the psychological keeps the storyteller/performer from emphasizing the personal over the social, by showing that the social situation produces the personal response. All too often liberals who write about Brecht and produce his work emphasize the feelings and emotions of the characters, not as they come out of the situation but rather as motivating forces. This of course disrupts the sense of the play and goes against the author’s premise that “social being determines thought.”

Now on the page this may appear to fit the very reduction of Brecht, from a left point of view, that I claim to be objecting to. The key to the difference is in the actualization of the performance. On stage the storytelling performers naturally inject emotional self or being in their presentation, yet they should not have to leave their heads in the dressing room to do so. The separation of thinking and doing in liberal ideology fails to recognize the passion of reason. The performance of the story is diachronic dialectic; emotional and intellectual, now screaming, now describing, later telling or teaching, thus providing both the action and the commentary on the action.

Data and facts by themselves are difficult to remember, whereas a well-told story may contain some data while offering a methodological device for understanding the conditions of life. Storytelling and story is most useful in that it provides a means by which the audience can take something home to reflect on. The delayed response to a story provides a deeper social purpose. Benjamin: “The value of information does not survive the moment in which it was new. It lives only at the moment; it has to surrender to it completely and explain itself to it without losing any time. A story is different. It does not expend itself. It preserves and concentrates its strength and is capable

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

of releasing it even after a long time.”¹⁴

According to Benjamin, the state of the listener is as important to the story’s taking hold on the memory as is the presentation of the storyteller: “This process of assimilation which takes place in depth requires a state of relaxation which is becoming rarer and rarer. If sleep is the apogee of physical relaxation, boredom is the apogee of mental relaxation.”¹⁵

Boredom is productive! The craftsperson weaving or spinning, doing minor chores while listening to a tale is more receptive: “The more self-forgetful the listener is, the more deeply is what he listens to impressed upon his memory.”¹⁶

Storytelling also requires a minimum of noise interference.¹⁷ We need attentive yet relaxed attitudes in the theater to be able to present a story which may affect people. We know from simple experience that when someone jumps at us we defend ourselves or try to cover our weak spots. Nothing interferes with relaxed attentiveness more than being berated by some guilt-tripper as was the general mode of agit-prop (and political) groups in the 1960s. Guilt-tripping produces spare change for sure, but social change is another matter.

Benjamin tells us that “the storytelling that thrives for a long time in the milieu of work — the rural, the maritime, and the urban — is itself an artisan form of communication. This craftsmanship, storytelling, was actually regarded as a craft by Leskov himself. ‘Writing,’ he says in one of his letters, ‘is to me no liberal art, but a craft!’ It cannot come as a surprise that he felt bonds with craftsmanship, but faced industrial technology as a stranger.”¹⁸

The association with artisan craft labor may appear at first glance to be a regression, but in the face of the barbarism of industrial production which makes ‘modern man no longer’ interested in working on that which ‘cannot be abbreviated,’ this defensiveness may well be progressive. We are headed for trouble, though, when we use *only* the craft of the 18th, 17th or 16th centuries to describe our computerized, transistorized world.

There is a need for old materials where they are usable in the modern situation along with a *careful* (especially in advanced technological societies) assimilation of new materials. Brecht, the better historical materialist, incorporated filmic images, projections, turn tables, the whole machinery of the new age in his work. Even more importantly, he incorporated the ideology of the new age — science. Benjamin, on the other hand, while he authored a seminal essay, “Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,”

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 90.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 91.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷Friends stimulated by SDS Rym II who went to “organize” in the factories could hardly talk to the workers because the noise level was so mind-boggling. Craft labor is periodically noisy whereas industrial labor produces enough noise to do the same thing as a multi-media rock concert.

¹⁸Benjamin, p. 92.

expected a far too extensive critical attitude to develop from the introduction of film, reflecting an awe of the machine and a rather static notion of bourgeois ideology. Since that time others less awestruck by the progressive political structure of film have turned it into an oppressive imperialist weapon.

Brecht seems to have avoided the distance from industrial activity that both Benjamin and Leskov maintained: "When we look about us for an entertainment whose impact is immediate, for a comprehensive and penetrating pleasure such as our theater could give us by representations of men's life together, we have to think of ourselves as children of a scientific age. Our life as human beings in society — i.e., our life — is determined by the sciences to a quite new extent."¹⁹

In his "Short Organum," Brecht gives credit to the crafts as well as the increased production under capitalism. While he credits this to science, he is unwilling to bow before it: "The new sciences may have made possible this vast alteration . . . yet it cannot be said that their spirit determines everything that we do."²⁰

It is at this juncture that Brecht supersedes Benjamin. Brecht includes bits and pieces from older forms and subscribes to the 'bad new' rather than the 'good old,' while Benjamin continues on within a craft ideology to examine the notion of storytelling and the storyteller. However, there is much to learn from Benjamin in order to understand the phenomenal attraction of story. There are many recent theatrical and literary works that make use of storytelling: some, like Studs Terkel, have put down the oral histories of individuals. Certainly oral history is an interesting form, but it is limited by the fact that we find ourselves reading about another person's life without critical or even aesthetic insight. We all can tell stories of our lives, but few of us are able to introduce objective, social or even historical factors in our personal case. So these personal tales, either in print or on the stage, tend to let us in on an open window view of our neighbors in much the same way that naturalism does — but exclude the historical and critical elements that make a story more useful than new chatter.

The attraction of the story then is in part a rejection of the instantaneousness of daily media assault, as well as a reaffirmation of the age-old need to understand something about the meaning of life. Benjamin continues his analysis of Leskov, the Russian storyteller, with a discussion of death: "Death is the sanction of everything that the storyteller can tell. He has borrowed his authority from death. In other words, it is natural history to which his stories refer back."²¹

"Dying was once a public process in the life of the individual and a most

¹⁹Bertolt Brecht, "Short Organum to the Theater," in: *Brecht on Theater*, ed. John Willett (New York, 1964), p. 183.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 184.

²¹Benjamin, p. 94.

exemplary one; think of the medieval pictures in which the deathbed has been turned into a throne In the course of modern times dying has been pushed further and further out of the perceptual world of the living.”²² Benjamin does not refer, nor could he have known, that we would be hosting a dozen different T.V. cops and robber/murder shows each night on American television. One might say that the T.V. series attempts to capture this same significance by killing as many people as possible within a half-hour format (film does it even better: eleven murders in *Marathon Man*). However, this is not the relationship to death that Benjamin describes. A dying relative is a better example, wherein we face ourselves and the dying person faces himself or herself. The summation of our lives at that moment is not generally reflected between the commercials on T.V.

Story, as we are discussing it, provides an opportunity to arrive at some wisdom: the return to natural history is not a regression but rather an inclusion: “The chronicler is the history-teller.” Thus, for our purposes of finding an approach to Brecht’s plays and epic theater, the history-teller-chronicler should not be maintained as of old but rather secularized (Benjamin) and made more scientific (Brecht).

While information is forgettable, stories should not be: “The cardinal point for the unaffected listener is to assure himself of the possibility of reproducing the story.”²³ Because dramatic theater engages one in an intensive empathetic experience, it is cathartic and more readily forgotten. Epic theater, on the other hand, intends to intervene in the social situation by providing a reproducible tale, and thereby influencing daily existence. The dialectic here, for those who are confused about the distance business of epic theater, is the intention of making the theater part of the social fabric of society — neither above it (high art) nor separated from it (avant-garde art). By obtaining less of a cathartic experience inside the theater the audience may take more away with them for use outside the theater.

One might note here that Americans tend to understand the contradictions in things as irony rather than as dialectics, and so have an awful time when confronted with a proper presentation of a Brecht play. His plays ask us to be critical and at certain points to object to the conditions on stage or even to the choices made by characters within those situations — not to object mindlessly, but rather mindfully (and compassionately), with a recognition of the complex elements determining those choices.

Benjamin observes that the “listener’s naive relationship to the storyteller is controlled by his interest in retaining what he is told,” and further made imprintable (and usable) by “memory [which] is the epic faculty par excellence.”²⁴ Brecht knew well as a dramatist that the memory of the audience is helped by various stimuli — the visual as well as the

²² *Ibid.*, p. 93.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

verbal, music as well as literal projections. Thus the notion of gestic acting within the “gestus” of a scene.

Even this notion of Brecht’s has a parallel in the art of storytelling (though the literal use of gesture is by no means a summation of *Gestus* as used by Brecht): “After all, storytelling, in its sensory aspect, is by no means a job for the voice alone. Rather, in genuine storytelling the hand plays a part which supports what is expressed in a hundred ways with its gestures trained by work.”²⁵

To demonstrate the thread of Benjamin’s thought we must return to his exploration of the novel. He quotes George Lukács who sees the novel as “the form of transcendental homelessness”: “Time can become constitutive only when connection with the transcendental home has been lost. Only in the novel are meaning and life, and thus the essential and the temporal, separated; one can almost say that the whole inner action of a novel is nothing else but a struggle against the power of time. And from this . . . arises the genuinely epic experience of time: hope and memory Only in the novel . . . does there occur a creative memory which transfixes the object and transforms it The duality of inwardness and outside world can here be overcome for the subject ‘only’ when he sees the . . . unity of his entire life . . . out of the past life-stream which is compressed in memory The insight which grasps this unity . . . becomes the divinatory-intuitive grasping of the unattained and therefore inexpressible meaning of life.”²⁶

Although the novel focuses on the “meaning of life,” it relies upon a metaphysical inexpressability and is therefore unknowable or, by default wallows in morals (slogans). Benjamin, in this section of his essay devoted to the novel, writes of the rise and *fall* of the novel. His description is more wishful thinking than evidence as we see novels (or whatever you call them) turning into films.

The following comparative table of the story and the novel replicates the table drawn by Brecht for dramatic theater and epic theater.

NOVEL	STORY
focus on the meaning of death, towards realizing a life	death as natural, focus on meaning of life
individual experience tends to moralize	practical wisdom and counsel
entering tradition	derived from collective oral tradition, re-enter tradition
immediacy, process ends	continues passing on experience
alienated labor	sustained effort
art	craft
individual time, solitary experience	listeners in groups (also developed by

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 108.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 99.

psychological	group)
appears to be truth	non-psychological
unique interpretation from a	an obvious interpretation where the
varied perspective	storyteller heard the tale, individual
one hero, one odyssey, one battle	perspective
	many diffuse characters and occur-
	rences
finis	not finished

As the novel absorbs and extracts us from our present environment, so, too, dramatic theater distracts and engages us in the idiosyncratic activities of persons separated or denied their social milieu. The novel intensifies the experience by having its reader gobble it up in solitude. In short, the novel is to dramatic theater (and most commercial film making) what the story is to epic theater (and non-commercial film-making — except the tricky avant-gardists).

Leskov, the practical observer rather than philosopher, is like the other great storyteller Hebel, a causist. These practitioners, in a double sense, tend to view the world within the confines of a morality derived from religious consciousness, thus seeing “utter depravity (which may) turn into saintliness.” *Only* (and this is a dictum here) with the inclusion of historical materialism is the dialectic of storytelling broadened to include a critique of present conditions.

In *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (which appears as *The Augsburg Chalk Circle* in *Tales from the Calendar*), Brecht takes a story and turns it into a socialist lesson in ownership. Grusha, the motherly character, eventually obtains the child because she doesn’t wish to tear it apart. The addition of Azdack opens the circle of one story to include another. Azdack, a displaced character with no family and only a rough past as a beggar/scholar/thief, is given the job of meting out justice. After making a ruling that might not sit well with the wealthy — he does in fact trick them all — he disappears. Should Brecht have merely recounted the old tale — from the Bible (Solomon’s choices) or as in the Chinese Chalk Circle story — without turning it to socialist advantage, we would at best have had a Leskov presentation. Instead he has given us a critical view of society in both personal and social terms.²⁷

Without the application of a methodology that reaches into every corner of one’s practice and makes practice clear, one is not made critically aware of the social system that produces practice. The general conditions of human activity (common sense) by themselves cannot do it. The causists may well focus on the oppositions that make up practical behavior but then still hold on to the old ways, where development was impossible in the microcosm unless we had a macro-revolution. Revolutionary thinking, however, doesn’t spring up *after* the holocaust.

²⁷ *The Good Soldier Schweik in the Second World War* is the most obvious case of storytelling — one might say a string of older tales redone by Brecht, placed in a new setting.

Brecht was no wild-eyed practitioner of agit-prop, advocating for the audience and society solutions contained in revolutionary slogans. Rather, Brecht's self-image, reflected in the anecdotes of Herr Keuner (a burgher-type with sense), is private, politic and progressive, yet hardly "political" as we know it. He would never be taken as a revolutionary. Yet his very avoidance of the abnormal hysterical hero provides a progressive model for all of us who are less heroic. The inclusion of story in his plays is developed by Brecht, expanded, and even disrupted by another tale which may intrude or be a portion of the entire show. The positive legacy of storytelling (not parable, a religious term) provides a clothesline for the details of social relations. It makes easier the memory of the whole tale; thus it can be retold, entering social relations at the kitchen table.

PHOTOGRAPHY/POLITICS: ONE

A critical annual of photography.
Editors: Terry Dennett, David Evans,
Sylvia Gohl, Jo Spence and Lucy Williams.

Published by Photography Workshop.

Subjects covered include:
Marxism, semiology and photography;
the Paris Commune and the camera;
new research on the international Worker
Photographer movement in the inter-war
period; a re-appraisal of John Heartfield;
critical writings on *Picture Post* ;
advertising/history/ideology; aspects of
the postwar revival in political
photography.

Publication: Spring 1979.
Paperback, size 21x27cm.
Price: £4.00 plus 60p post/packing
Distribution by PDC, 27 Clerkenwell
Close, London, E.C.1.

Available direct from Photography
Workshop, 152 Upper Street, London
N1 1RA

Walter Benjamin: A Bibliography of Secondary Literature

by Gary Smith

I. Articles and Radio Programs

- 1921
1. Flaskamp, Chr. "Der Begriff der Kunstkritik in der deutschen Romantik." *Literarischer Handweiser*, 5 (1921), 193-200.
- 1928
2. Kracauer, Siegfried. "Zu den Schriften WBs." *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 15 July 1928, Literaturblatt.
- 1929
3. Bloch, Ernst. "Revueform in der Philosophie: Zu WBs *Einbahnstrasse*." *Vossische Zeitung*, 1929.
- 1932
4. Scholem, Gershom. "WB — Philosoph und Kritiker an der Wende unserer Zeit." *Leo Baeck Institute Archive* (*1791), 9 April 1932.
- 1935
5. Bloch, Ernst. "Revueform in der Philosophie: zu WBs *Einbahnstrasse*." *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*. Zürich: Oprecht und Helbling, 1935. *1929.
 6. Gumpert, Martin. *Hölle im Paradies*. Stockholm, 1939, pp. 52-57.
 7. Jochmann, Carl Gustav. "Die Rückschritte der Poesie." *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science*, 8 (1939/40), 92-114.
- 1940
8. Adorno, Theodor W. "Zu Benjamins Gedächtnis." *Aufbau*, 6, 42 (18 October 1940), 7.
- 1950
9. Adorno, Theodor W. "Charakteristik WBs." *Neue Rundschau*, 61 (1950), 571-584.
 10. Adorno, Theodor W. Epilogue to WB, *Berliner Kindheit um Neunzehnhundert*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1950, pp. 176-180.
 11. Sternberger, Dolf. "WBs Prosa." *Die Gegenwart*, 1 December 1950.
- 1951
12. Bense, Max. "Über WB und seine Literatur." *Merkur*, 5, 2 (1951), 181-184.
- 1952
13. Klossowski, Pierre. "Lettre sur WB." *Mercure de France*, no. 315 (1952), 456-459.
 14. Monnier, Adrienne. "Notes sur WB." *Mercure de France*, no. 315 (1952), 451-457.
 15. Rychner, Max. "WB, Nachgelassene Prosastücke." In *Sphären der Bücherwelt*, Zurich: Manesse, 1952, pp. 226-235.
- 1954
16. Monnier, Adrienne. "Un portrait de WB." *Les Lettres Nouvelles*, 2 (1954), 11-13.

17. Selz, Jean. "WB à Ibiza." *Les Lettres Nouvelles*, 2 (1954), 14.
1955
18. Adorno, Theodor W. "Bs 'Einbahnstrasse'." *Texte und Zeichen*, 1 (1955), 518-522.
19. Adorno, Theodor W. "Charakteristik WBs." In *Prismen: Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft*. Berlin and Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1955, pp. 283-301. *1950.
20. Adorno, Theodor W. Introduction to WB, *Schriften*. Frankfurt am Main; Suhrkamp, 1955, pp. ix-xxvii.
21. Haas, Willy, "Hinweis auf WB." *Sonntagsblatt* no. 41 (1955), 10. Also appeared in *Die Welt*, 9 October 1955.
22. Kudzus, Hans. "Versöhnung des Menschen mit seiner Welt. Zu WBs Gesammelten Schriften." *Deutsche Kommentare* (Berlin), 24 December 1955. Also in *Tagesspiegel*, Berlin, 27 November 1955.
23. Michelsen, Peter. "Zur Bilderwelt WBs." *Eckart*, 25 (1955/56), 352-354.
24. Podszus, Friedrich. "Biographische Notiz." In WB, *Schriften*, vol. 2. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1955, pp. 530-536.
1956
25. August, H.K. "Kritische Ideenbeschwörung." *FAZ*, 31 March 1956.
26. Busch, Günther. "Der Fall WB." *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 7 January 1956.
27. Bloch, Ernst. "Revueform in der Philosophie: Zu WBs 'Einbahnstrasse'." *Sinn und Form*, 8 (1956), 510-513. *1929.
28. Dahlhaus, Carl. "Die Schriften WBs. Motive und Zusammenhänge: Eine fragmentarische Betrachtung." *Deutsche Universitätszeitung*, 11 (1956), 14-15.
29. Dirks, Walter. "Messianischer Materialismus." *Frankfurter Hefte*, 2, 9 (1956), 618-622.
30. Hansen-Loeve, Friedrich A. "Zwischen Gestern und Heute: Zu den Schriften WBs." *Hochland*, 49 (1956/57), 268-273.
31. Haselberg, Peter von. "Zu den Schriften von WB." Hessischer Rundfunk (photocopy), 1 March 1956.
32. Helwig, Werner. "Allegorie und Disziplin. Zu den Schriften WBs." *National-Zeitung*, Basel, 29 January 1956.
33. Hennecke, Hans. "Die Buchbesprechung—WB." Bayerischer Rundfunk (typescript), 14 May 1956, 9 pp.
34. Holz, Hans Heinz. "Prismatisches Denken." *Sinn und Form*, 8 (1956), 514-549.
35. Holz, Hans Heinz. "Kritische Ideenbeschwörung." *FAZ*, 31 August 1956.
36. Horst, K.A. "Literaturkritik von links. Anmerkungen zu WB und Georg (sic) Lukács." *Wort und Wahrheit*, 11(1956), 519-526.
37. Kaiser, Joachim. "Ein Buch und eine Meinung." *Süddeutscher Rundfunk* (typescript), 5 January 1956, 18 pp.
38. Lüthy, Herbert. "Der Theologe unterm Schachbrett." *Der Monat* 8 (June 1956), 67-72.
39. Oliass, Günter. "Ergänzende Buchbesprechung nach dem Gespräch mit Ernst Bloch. WB: *Briefe*." *Süddeutscher Rundfunk*, 24 September 1956.
40. Rüdiger, Horst. "Revueform in der Philosophie. Zu WBs 'Einbahnstrasse'." *Sinn und Form*, 8 (1956), 510-514.
41. Rüdiger, H. "Literatur- und Gesellschaftskritik bei WB." *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 12 May 1956.

42. Rüdiger, H. "WBs Schriften." *Romanische Forschungen*, 67, 314 (1956), 397-401.
43. Schlösser, M. "Der Sokrates des deutschen Geistes? Zu den Schriften WBs." *Agora*, 2, 6 (1956), 88-94.
44. Thomberg, Friedrich. "Hoffnung und Resignation: WB und der Verlust der philosophischen Mitte." *Deutsche Volkszeitung*, 16 June 1956.
45. Vilmar, Fritz. "Messianischer Materialismus." *Frankfurter Hefte*, 11 (1956), 623-632.
46. Zolla, Elémire. "WB." *La spettatore Italiano*, (1956), 24-27.
1957
47. Angelloz, J.-F. "WB." *Mercure de France*, 1 September 1957, 146-148.
48. Fischer, Ernst. "Ein Geisterseher in der Bürgerwelt." *Geist und Zeit*, 2 (1957), 61-76. Also appeared in *Tagebuch* (Wien), March 1957.
49. Holz, Hans H. "WB: Physiognomie eines expressionistischen Philosophen." *Das Panorama*, 1 (July/August 1957), 13.
50. Seidel, Gerhard. "Im Freihafen der Philosophie." *Neue Deutsche Literatur*, 5 (1957), 59-71.
51. Usinger, Fritz. "WBs Schriften." *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 83 (1957), 807-813.
1960
52. Bense, Max. "Exkurs Über WB und Ludwig Wittgenstein." In *Programmierung des Schönen: Allgemeine Texttheorie und Textästhetik. Aesthetica IV*. Baden-Baden/Krefeld: Agis Verlag, 1960, pp. 46-51.
53. Blanchot, Maurice. "WB: Reprises." *La Nouvelle Revue Francaise*, 8 (1960), 475-83.
54. Durgnand, Jean. "La création aujourd'hui." *Critique*, 162 (1960), 915-923.
55. Holz, Hans Heinz. "Philosophische Facetten: Zum 20. Todestag von WB." *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 26 September 1960.
56. McNamee, Donald K. "The Pioneer Ideas of WB." *The Structurist*, 6 (1960), 47-54.
1961
57. (anon). "Philosopher-Artist." *The Times Literary Supplement*, no. 3111 (13 October 1961), 681.
58. Peti, Maria. "Geist, Trauer und Opfer." Rias (Berlin Radio, typescript), 12 September 1961, 24 pp.
59. Reifenberg, Benno. "Geistesglut." *FAZ*, 11 November 1961.
60. Szondi, Peter. "Hoffnung im Vergangenen." *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 8 October 1961, Sonntagsausgabe (Sunday Supplement), 4.
1962
61. Adorno, T.W. Epilogue to *Deutsche Menschen: Eine Folge von Briefen*. Selected and introduced by WB. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1962, pp. 121-128.
62. Belmore, H.W. "WB." *German Life and Letters*, 15 (1962), 309-313.
63. Busch, Günther. "Kassiber der Humanität." *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 19 May 1962.
64. Fest, Joachim. "Literatur als Zeitgeschichte." Rias (Berlin Radio, typescript), 17/18 October 1962, 13 pp.
65. Haselberg, Peter von. "Überzeugen ist unfruchtbar. Ein Versuch über WB." In *Weltbetrachtung 10 Uhr Abends*. Hamburg, 1962.
66. Hohoff, Curt. "Benjamins messianische Spur." *Merkur*, 16 (1962), 880-885.

67. Horst, K.A. "Der Prozess gegen die Nachtigall." *Merkur*, 16 (1962), 885-893.
68. Krolow, Karl. "WB. *Deutsche Menschen: Eine Folge von Briefen*. Suhrkamp Verlag." Deutschlandfunk, 3 July 1962, 10 pp.
69. Pross, Harry. "WB. *Deutsche Menschen*." Hessischer Rundfunk, 24 May 1962, 24 pp.
70. Rosengarten, Walter. "La escuela del pensamiento dialectico." *Humboldt. Zeitschrift für die iberische Welt*, 2 (1962), 90-91.
71. Szondi, Peter. "Die Städtebilder WBs." *Der Monat*, 14 (July 1962), 55-62.
72. Haas, Willy. "Deutsche Bürger in ihrer grossen Zeit: WBs Anthologie." *Die Welt*, 5 April 1962.
73. Schmidt, Alfred. "Briefe aus dem bürgerlichen Jahrhundert." *Diskus*, December 1962.
- 1963
74. Belmore, H.W. "WB." *German Life and Letters*, 15, 3 (1963), 309-313.
75. Kracauer, Siegfried. "Zu den Schriften WBs." In *Das Ornament der Masse*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1963, pp. 249-255.
76. Monnier, M. *Les problèmes théoriques de la traduction*. Paris: Gallimard, 1963.
77. Pianciola, Cesare. "WB, Angelus Novus." *Rivista di Filosofia*, 54 (1963), 492-496.
78. Szondi, Peter. "Hoffnung im Vergangenen: WB und die Suche nach der verlorenen Zeit." In *Zeugnisse: Theodor W. Adorno zum sechzigsten Geburtstag*, edited by Max Horkheimer. Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1963, pp. 241-256. *1961.
- 1964
79. Szondi, Peter. Epilogue to WB, *Städtebilder*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1963, pp. 79-99.
80. Brecht, Bertolt. "An WB, der sich auf der Flucht vor Hitler entleibte." In Bertolt Brecht, *Gedichte*, vol. 6. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1964, p. 49.
81. Neumann, Thomas. "Über Photographie. Gedanken zu WB." *Frankfurter Hefte*, 19 (1964), 261-268.
82. Szondi, Peter. "Hoffnung im Vergangenen. Über Walter Benjamin." In *Satz und Gegensatz*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1964, pp. 79-97. *1961.
- 1965
83. (anon). "WB e il materialismo storico-lettere." *Duemila. Rivista italo-tedesca*, no. 5 (1965), 76-79.
84. Adorno, T.W. Preface to Rolf Tiedemann, *Studien zur Philosophie WBs*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1965, pp. vii-x.
85. Cases, Cesare. "Der Pflaumenbaum." *Studi germanici*, 3, 2 (1965), 211-237.
86. Hebel, Franz. "Sachschrittm im Deutschunterricht der Oberstufe. WB: Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit." *Deutschunterricht*, 17 (1965), 104-116.
87. Marcuse, Herbert. Epilogue to WB, *Zur Kritik der Gewalt und andere Aufsätze*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1965, pp. 99-107.
88. Scholem, Gershom. "WB." *Neue Rundschau* 76, 1 (1965), 1-21.
89. Scholem, Gershom. "WB." *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, no. 8, New York, 1965. (English)
- 1966
90. Adorno, T.W. Preface to WB, *Briefe*, vol. 1. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1966, pp. 14-21.

91. Adorno, T.W., Ernst Bloch, Max Rychner, and Gershom Scholem. "Erinnerungen an WB." *Der Monat*, 18 (September 1966), 35-47.
 92. Bloch, Ernst. "Erinnerungen an WB." *Der Monat*, 18, 216 (1966), 38-41.
 93. Dahlhaus, Carl. "Benjamin und der Kommunismus." *FAZ*, 26 November 1966.
 94. Durzak, Manfred. "WB und die Literaturwissenschaft." *Monatshefte für deutschen Unterricht, deutsche Sprache und Literatur*, 58 (1966), 217-232.
 95. Finale, Carlo. "Benjamin sistemato." *Tempo presente*, 11 (1966), 80-82.
 96. Hartung, Rudolf. "WB, Briefe." Westdeutscher Rundfunk (typescript), 13 December 1966, 10 pp.
 97. Missac, Pierre. "L'Eclat et le Secret: WB." *Critique*, 22 (1966), 691-710.
 98. Rychner, Max. "Erinnerungen an WB." *Der Monat*, 18 (September 1966), 41-44.
 99. Sahl, Hans. "WB im Lager." *Der Monat*, 18, 219 (1966), 86-91.
 100. Scholem, Gershom. "Erinnerungen an WB." *Der Monat*, 18 (September 1966), 44-47.
 101. Scholem, Gershom. Preface to WB, *Briefe*, vol. 1. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1966, pp. 7-13.
 102. Usinger, Fritz. "WB." In *Tellurium: Elf Essays*. Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1966, pp. 75-86.
- 1967
103. Adorno, T. W. "A Portrait of WB." In T. W. Adorno, *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber. London: Neville Spearman, 1967, pp. 229-241.
 104. Alff, Wilhelm. "Benjamin: Studien zu seiner Philosophie." *FAZ*, 6 September 1967.
 105. Blöcker, Günter. "Instrument seiner Gedanken." *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, no. 24 (28/29 January 1967).
 106. Böhler, Dietrich. "WB in seinen Briefen." *Neue Rundschau*, 78, 4 (1967), 664-673.
 107. Geyrhofer, Friedrich. "Magischer Materialismus. Zum Werk WBs." *Literatur und Kritik*, 2, 14 (1967), 235-242.
 108. Graf, Hansjörg. "Zeitpassagen mit WB." *Wort und Wahrheit*, 22, 6/7 (June/July 1967), 482-484.
 109. Gruchot, Piet. "Konstruktive Sabotage: WB und der bürgerliche Intellektuelle." *alternative*, 56/57 (October-December 1967), 204-210.
 110. Günther, Joachim. "Vollkommenheit am Rande des Unsichtbaren: Die Briefe WBs." *Tagesspiegel*, 8 January 1967. Also appeared in *Neue Deutsche Hefte*, no. 113 (1967), 167-171.
 111. Hamm, Peter. "Unter den Neueren der Wichtigste." *Frankfurter Hefte*, 22 (1967), 359-364. Same as Peter Hamm. Review of WB, *Briefe*. *Literatur und Kritik*, 14 (1967).
 112. Hartung, Rudolf. "Der Mann, der von vielem absah. Die Briefe WBs." *Die Zeit*, no. 6 (10 February 1967), 24-25.
 113. Heise, Rosemarie. "Der Benjamin-Nachlass in Potsdam." Interview by Hildegard Brenner. *alternative*, 56/57 (October-December 1967).
 114. Heise, Rosemarie. "Vorbemerkung zu einem Vergleich der Baudelaire-Fassungen." *alternative*, 56/57 (1967), 197-202.
 115. Heissenbüttel, Helmut. "Vom Zeugnis des Fortlebens in Briefen." *Merkur*, 21, 3 (1967), 232-244.
 116. Holz, Hans Heinz. "Philosophie als Interpretation." *alternative*, 56/57 (October-December 1967), 235-242.

117. Holz, H.H. "WB in seinen Briefen." *National-Zeitung* (Basel), 26 February 1967.
118. Horst, Karl August. "Kurs halten, Schwerpunkt verlagern: Die Briefe WBs." *Brücke zur Welt*, 4 March 1967. Also in *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, 4 March 1967.
119. Kesting, Marianne. "Revolutionär der Stille." *Der Spiegel*, 15 February 1967.
120. Kittsteiner, Heinz-Dieter. "Die 'Geschichtsphilosophischen Thesen'." *alternative*, 56/57 (October-December 1967), 243-251.
121. Kraft, Werner. "WB hinter seinen Briefen." *Merkur* 21, 3 (1967), 226-232.
122. Laci, Asja. "Brief an Hildegard Brenner." *alternative*, 56/57 (October-December 1967), 211-214.
123. Lethen, Helmut. "Zur materialistischen Kunsttheorie WBs." *alternative*, 56/57 (October-December 1967), 225-234.
124. Mayer, Hans. "Nachwort des Herausgebers." Epilogue to Hans Mayer, ed. *Goethe im XX. Jahrhundert*. Hamburg: Wegner, 1967.
125. Nardis, Luigi de. "En marge d'une étude de WB sur Baudelaire et la ville." Paper read at Baudelaire colloquium, May 25-27, 1967, Nice.
126. Okopenko, Andreas. "WB: Briefe." *Literatur und Kritik*, 2, 14 (1967), 256-263.
127. Rychner, Max. "Die Briefe WBs." *Die Tat*, no. 117 (20 May 1967); no. 123 (27 May 1967); no. 129 (3 June 1967); no. 135 (10 June 1967); no. 141 (17 June 1967); no. 147 (24 June 1967); and no. 153 (1 June 1967).
128. Schütte, Wolfram. "Trümmer, Bausteine und Vorstufen. Das verzweifelte Exil WBs." *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 7 January 1967.
129. Takagi, Hisao. "Der Grundbegriff der Kritik bei WB." *Doitsu Bungaku*, 39 (1939), 79-88. (In Japanese with German summary.)
130. Tiedemann, Rolf. "Zwischen Metaphysik und Marxismus." Review of WB, *Briefe*. Sender Freies Berlin, 13 July 1967, 16 pp.
131. Tiedemann, Rolf. "Vorbemerkung zu WB, Der Flaneur." *Neue Rundschau*, 78, 4 (1967), pp. 549 f.
- 1968
132. Adorno, T.W. "Erinnerungen an WB." In *Über WB*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1968, pp. 9-15. *1966.
133. (anon). "WB: Towards a Philosophy of Language." *Times Literary Supplement*, no. 3469 (22 August 1968), 885-889.
134. Arendt, Hannah. "Reflections: WB." *New Yorker*, 44 (19 October 1968), 65-156. Same as "Introduction: WB 1892-1940." to WB, *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968, pp. 1-55.
135. Arendt, Hannah. "WB." *Merkur*, 22 (1968), 50-65, 209-233, 305-314. (German version of preceding article.)
136. Belmore, H.W. "A New Study of WB: Rolf Tiedemann's *Studien zur Philosophie WBs*." *German Life and Letters*, 21 (July 1968), 345-50.
137. Bloch, Ernst. "Erinnerungen." In *Über WB*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1968, pp. 16-23. *1966.
138. Böhler, Dietrich. "WB in seinen Briefen." *Neue Rundschau*, 78, 4 (1968), 664-673.
139. Brenner, Hildegard. "Die Lesbarkeit der Bilder." *alternative*, 59/60 (1968), 48-61.
140. Brewster, Ben. "WB & the arcades project." *por Perspecto* no. 12 (1969), 161-162. Also in *New Left Review* (March/April 1968), 726.
141. Gallas, Helga. "Wie es zu den Eingriffen in Benjamins Texte kam oder über die

- Herstellbarkeit von Einverständnis." *alternative*, 59/60 (1968), 76-85.
142. Fischer, Ernst. "Ein Geisterseher in der Bürgerwelt." In *Über WB*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1968, pp. 111-131.
143. Gelman, R. "Successful failure." *New Republic*, 159 (14 December 1968), 27-29.
144. Haas, Willy. "Zwiesgespräche, die zu visionären Wortgebilden führen: Mystiker und Marxist—WB in seinen Briefen." *Die Welt* (Hamburg), 18 January 1968.
145. Heckmann, Herbert. *Elemente des barocken Trauerspiels*. Munich: Hanser, 1968.
146. Heise, Rosemarie. "Nachbemerkungen zu einer Polemik oder widerlegbare Behauptungen der Frankfurter Benjamin-Herausgeber." *alternative*, 59/60 (1968), 68-75.
147. Heissenbüttel, Helmut. "Sobre el testimonio de la supervivencia en las cartas." *Humboldt*, 33 (1968), 32-36.
148. Heissenbüttel, H. "Zu WBs Spätwerk." *Merkur*, 22, 1/2 (1968), 179-185.
149. Holz, H.H. "Prismatisches Denken." In *Über WB*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1968, pp. 62-120.*1956.
150. Huch, Kurt Jürgen. "Die Toten wecken." *Frankfurter Hefte*, no. 1 (January 1968), 62-65.
151. Kômura, Fujihiko. "Über den 'Sammler' im Zeitalter der reproduzierbaren Kunst. Zu WBs 'Eduard Fuchs, der Sammler und der Historiker'." (In Japanese) *Lynkens* (Tokyo), 9 (1968), 33-46.
152. Nardis, Luigi de. "Interno al saggio di WB su 'Baudelaire e Parigi'." *Belfagor. Rassegna di varia umanità*, (Firenze), 23, 2 (1968), 156-167.
153. Pasero, N. "L'autore e la dialettica. Note sulle 'Lettere' di WB." *Strumenti critici*, no. 5 (1968), 111-122.
154. Pollock, Friedrich. "Zuschrift." *Merkur*, 22, 6 (1968), 576.
155. Rychner, Max. "Erinnerungen." In *Über WB*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1968. *1966.
156. Salzinger, Helmut. "Walter Benjamin — Theologe der Revolution." *Kürbiskern*, 4 (1968), 629-647.
157. Scholem, Gershom. "Erinnerungen." In *Über WB*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1968, pp. 30-36. *1966.
158. Schütte, Wolfram. "Eingriffe? Es geht um WB." *Frankfurter Rundschau*, no. 16 (19 January 1968).
159. Selz, Jean. "Erinnerungen." In *Über WB*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1968, pp. 37-51.
160. Takagi, Hisao. "Der Grundbegriff der Kritik bei WB." (Japanese with German synopsis). *Doitsu Bungaku* (Tokyo), 39 (1968), 79-88, 142-143.
161. Tiedemann, Rolf. "In Sachen Benjamin. Vorläufige Entgegnung eines Benjamin-Mitherausgebers." *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 7 February 1968, 17.
162. Tiedemann, Rolf. "Nachbemerkung." Concluding Remark to WBs "Die Moderne." *Das Argument*, 46 (1968), 71-73.
163. Tiedemann, Rolf. "Zur 'Beschlagnahme' WBs oder Wie man mit der Philosophie Schlitten fährt." *Das Argument*, 46 (1968), 74-93.
164. Unseld, Siegfried. "Zur Kritik an den Editionen WBs." *Frankfurter Rundschau*, January 1968.

1969

165. Adams, Robert Martin. Review of WB. *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt. *Hudson Review*, 22, 1 (Spring 1969), 165-171.
166. Adorno, T.W. "Fortschritt." In Adorno, *Stichworte. Kritische Modelle 2*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969, pp. 29-50.
167. Alter, Robert. "On WB." *Commentary*, 48 (September 1969), 86-93.
168. Bachmann, Dieter. *Essay und Essayismus*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1969, pp. 97-130.
169. Brenner, Hildegard. "Theodor W. Adorno als Sachwalter des Benjaminischen Werkes." In *Die neue Linke nach Adorno*, edited by Wilfried F. Schoeller. Munich: Kindler, 1969, pp. 176-192.
170. Drews, Jörg. "Zeugnis des Scheiterns im Grossen: Fragmente eines Fragments von WB." *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 4 December 1969.
171. Guilloneao, Jean. "Esquisse d'un portrait." *Critique*, 267/268 (1969), 675-680.
172. Holz, H.H. "Mephistophelische Philosophie." In *Die neue Linke nach Adorno*, ed. by Wilfried F. Schoeller. Munich: Kindler, 1969, pp. 176-192.
173. Jameson, Frederic. "WB, or Nostalgia: The Legacy of the German Refugee Intellectuals." *Salmagundi*, 10/11 (Fall 1969-Winter 1970), 52-68.
174. Kermode, Frank. "The Incomplete WB." *New York Review of Books*, 18 December 1969, 30-33.
175. Laci, Asja. "Städte und Menschen. Erinnerungen." *Sinn und Form*, 21 (1969), 1326-1357.
176. Lange, Victor. "Thinking Poetically." *Atlantic Monthly*, 223, 3 (March 1969), 138-141.
177. Merquior, José Guilherme. *Arte e sociedade em Marcuse, Adorno e Benjamin; ensaio critico sobre a escola neohegeliana de Frankfurt*. Rio de Janeiro: Tempo Brasileiro, 1969.
178. Missac, Pierre. "Du nouveau sur WB?" *Critique*, 267/268 (1969), 681-696.
179. Missac, Pierre. "Stephane Mallarmé et WB." *Revue de littérature comparée*, 43, 2 (1969), 233-47.
180. Peter, Klaus. "Wohldurchdachter Radikalismus. Für eine neue Wissenschaft von der Literatur." In *Der Dichter und seine Zeit—Politik im Spiegel der Literatur*. 3. Amherster Kolloquium zur modernen deutschen Literatur, ed. by Wolfgang Paulsen. Heidelberg: Stiehm, 1970. (Koll. 1969)
181. Weber, Samuel. "Lecture de Benjamin." *Critique*, 267/268 (1969), 699-712.
- 1970
- 182 Adorno, T.W. *Über WB*. Edited with remarks by Rolf Tiedemann. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970.
- "Zu Benjamins Gedächtnis," pp. 9-10. *1940.
- "Charakteristik WBs," pp. 11-29. *1950.
- "Nachwort zur *Berliner Kindheit um Neunzehnhundert*," pp. 30-32. *1950.
- "Einleitung zu Benjamins *Schriften*," pp. 33-51. *1955.
- "Benjamins *Einbahnstrasse*," pp. 52-58. *1955.
- "Nachwort zu *Deutsche Menschen. Eine Folge von Briefen*," pp. 59-66. *1962.
- "Erinnerungen," pp. 67-74. *1966.
- "Vorrede zu Rolf Tiedemanns *Studien zur Philosophie WBs*" pp. 75-80. *1965.
- "Benjamin, der Briefschreiber," pp. 81-90. *1966.
- "Interimsbescheid," pp. 91-95. *1968.

- “A l'écart de tous les courants,” pp. 96-99. *1969.
 “Aus den Briefen an WB,” pp. 103-162.
183. (anon). “Baudelaire as contagious conspirator.” *Times Literary Supplement*, 8 January 1970.
184. Bergom-Larsson, Maria. “Den sällsamme WB.” *Bonniers Litterära Magazin*, 39 (1970), 116-120.
185. Berger, John. “Antiquarian and Revolutionary.” *New Society*, 18 (June 1970), 1066-67.
186. Cases, Cesare. Epilogue to *L'origine del drama tedesco* (Italian translation of *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*.) Turin: Eichard, 1970.
187. Jauss, Hans Robert. “Zu dem Kapitel *Die Moderne* in WBs Baudelaire-Fragmenten.” In *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970, pp. 57-66.
188. Scharang, Michael. “Zur Emanzipation der Kunst. WBs Konzeption einer materialistischen Ästhetik.” *Ästhetik und Kommunikation*, 1 (1970), 67-85.
189. Scholem, Gershom. “Nachwort.” Epilogue to WB, *Berliner Chronik*, edited by Gershom Scholem. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970.
190. Tiedemann, Rolf. “Notiz zu einem Fragment Benjamins.” *Kursbuch*, 20 (1970), 5-9.
191. Wohlfarth, Irving. “Perte d'Auréole: The Emergence of the Dandy.” *Modern Language Notes*, 85, 4 (May 1970), 529-571.
- 1971
192. Adorno, T.W. *Ästhetische Theorie*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971.
193. Arendt, Hannah. *Benjamin, Brecht: Zwei Essays*. Munich: Piper, 1971.
194. Bense, Max. “Über die Literatur WBs.” In *Die Realität der Literatur*. Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1971, pp. 161-166. *1951.
195. Dietrich, Gabriele. “Jüdisch-Prophetischer in der modernen deutschen Philosophie und Soziologie.” *Emuna*, 6 (1971), 375-83.
196. Gallas, Helga. *Marxistische Literaturtheorie*. Neuwied, Berlin: Luchterhand, 1971.
197. Gandillac, Maurice. “Preface.” Preface to WB, *Oeuvres*. Paris: Les Lettres nouvelles, Denöel, 1971.
198. Jacobs, Carol. “WB: Image of Proust.” *Modern Language Notes*, 89 (1971), 910-932.
199. Jameson, Frederic. *Marxism and Form*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971, pp. 60-82.
200. Krumme, Peter. “Zur Konzeption der dialektischen Bilder.” *Text und Kritik*, 31/32 (1971), 72-80.
201. Lacin, Asja. *Revolutionär im Beruf: Berichte über proletarisches Theater, über Meyerhold, Brecht, Benjamin und Piscator*. Munich: Rogner & Bernhard, 1971.
202. Lindner, Burkhardt. “Kommentierende Übersicht zur Lebens- und Wirkungsgeschichte Benjamins.” *Text und Kritik*, 31/32 (1971), 81.
203. Lindner, B. “‘Naturgeschichte’—Geschichtsphilosophie in Benjamins Schriften.” *Text und Kritik*, 31/32 (1971), 41-58.
204. Pasquallotto, Giangiorgio. *Avanguardia e tecnologica. WB, Max Bense e i problemi dell'estetica tecnologica*. Collana di architettura, 4. Rome: Officina, 1971.
205. Plumpe, Gerhard. “Die Entdeckung der Vorwelt. Erläuterungen zu Benjamins Bachofenlektüre.” *Text und Kritik*, 31/32 (1971), 19-27.

206. Schröder, Winfried. Review of *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels und Charles Baudelaire*. *Deutsche Literaturzeitung*, 92, 9 (September 1971), 754-758.
207. Thierkopf, Dietrich. "Nähe und Ferne: Kommentare zu Benjamins Denkverfahren." *Text und Kritik*, 31/32 (1971), 3-18.
208. Wellek, René. "The Early Criticism of WB." *Rice University Studies* 57, iv (1971), 123-131.
209. Wiesenthal, Liselotte. "Die Krise der Kunst im Prozess ihrer Verwissenschaftlichung: Zur Beschreibung von Krisenprozessen bei WB." *Text und Kritik*, 31/32 (1971), 59-71.

1972

210. Ardiles, O. "El Pensamiento Dialectico-Marxiano en Alemania de los anos veinte." *Stromata*, 28 (January/June 1972), 351-370.
211. Baggesen, Søren. "Om Walter Benjamin." *Kritik* (Denmark), 12 (1972), 15-24.
212. Bauer, Roger. "Paris, capitale du XIXe siècle. Reflexions sur quelques textes de WB." *Revue d'Allemagne*, 4 (1972), 622-637.
213. Fietkau, Wolfgang. *Schwanengesang. Studien zu Baudelaire, Marx, und Benjamin*. Munich: Rogner und Bernhard, 1972.
214. Fuld, Werner. "Berühmt und Unbekannt." *Die Zeit*, no. 47 (24 November 1972), Literature section, 6.
215. Günther, Henning. "Die Bedeutung der Theologie für die Philosophie WBs." *Neue Zeitschrift Systematischer Theologie*, 14 (1972), 141-171.
216. Habermas, Jürgen. "Zwischen Kunst und Politik: Eine Auseinandersetzung mit WB." *Merkur*, 26, 9 (1972), 856-869.
217. Habermas, J. "Bewusstmachende oder rettende Kritik—die Aktualität WBs." In S. Unseld, ed. *Zur Aktualität WBs*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972, pp. 173-223. English translation in *New German Critique*, 17 (Spring 1979).
218. Heissenbüttel, Helmut. *Zur Tradition der Moderne: Aufsätze und Anmerkungen 1964–71*. Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1972.
219. Honecker, Martin. "Gesellschaft als totaler Verblendungszusammenhang." *Zeitwende*, no. 1 (1972), 31-53.
220. Kaiser, Gerhard. "WBs 'Geschichtsphilosophische Thesen'. Zur Kontroverse der Benjamin-Interpreten." *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 46, 4 (1972), 577-635.
221. Kesting, Marianne. "WB: Gesammelte Schriften, III, IV/1, IV/2." Hessischer Rundfunk, 15 October 1972, 7 pp.
222. Kraft, Werner. "Über WB." In *Zur Aktualität WBs*, ed. by S. Unseld. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972, pp. 59-69.
223. Lindner, Burkhardt. "Brecht/Benjamin/Adorno—Über Veränderungen der ästhetischen Produktivkräfte im technisch-wissenschaftlichen Zeitalter." *Text und Kritik. Sonderband. Bertolt Brecht I* (1972), 14-36.
225. Lypp, Bernhard. *Ästhetischer Absolutismus und politische Vernunft. Zum Widerstreit von Reflexion und Sittlichkeit im deutschen Idealismus*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972.
226. Madsen, Peter. "Semiotics and dialectics." Translated by John von Daler. *Poetics*, vol. 6 (1972), 29-49.
227. Mayer, Peter. "Die Wahrheit ist konkret: Notizen zu Benjamin und Brecht." *Text und Kritik. Sonderband Bertolt Brecht I*, (1972), 5-13.
228. Monnier, Adrienne. "Ein Porträt WBs." (Translated from the French by Eva Moldenhauer). In *Zur Aktualität WBs*, ed. by S. Unseld. Frankfurt am

- Main: Suhrkamp, 1972, pp. 70-73.
229. Sahl, Hans. "WB im Lager." In *Zur Aktualität WBs*, ed. by S. Unseld. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972, pp. 74-81. *1966.
230. Sander, Volkmar. "WB und die Folgen." In Peters, Schimmelpfennig and Manges, eds. *Wahrheit und Sprache: Festschrift für Bert Nagel zum 65. Geburtstag am 27. August 1972*. Göttingen: Kummerle, 1972, pp. 211-215.
231. Scholem, Gershom. "WB and sein Engel." *Zur Aktualität WBs*, ed. by S. Unseld. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972, pp. 87-138.
232. Schweppenhäuser, Hermann. "Physiognomie eines Physiognomikers." In *Zur Aktualität WBs*, ed. by S. Unseld. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972, pp. 139-171.
233. Szondi, Peter. "Hoffnung im Vergangenen. Über WB." *Deutsche Literaturkritik und Gegenwartsliteratur*, 4, 2 (1972), 115-131. *1961.
234. Tiedemann, Rolf. "Bibliographie der Erstdrucke von Benjamins Schriften." In *Zur Aktualität WBs*, ed. by S. Unseld. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972, pp. 225-279.
235. Unseld, Siegfried. "WB zu ehren." Introduction to *Zur Aktualität WBs*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972, pp. 9-14.
236. Weber, Shierry. "WB: Commodity Fetishism, the Modern, and the Experience of History." In *The Unknown Dimension: European Marxism since Lenin*, ed. by Dick Howard and Karl Klare. New York: Basic Books, 1972, pp. 249-275.
237. Habermas, Jürgen. "Wohin es mit dem Schönen gekommen ist." *FAZ*, no. 161 (15 July 1972).
238. Reich-Ranicki, Marcel. "Auf der Suche nach dem verlorenen Echo." *Die Zeit*, no. 47 (24 November 1972), Literature section, 8.
1973
239. Adorno, T.W. "Letters to WB." Translated by Harry Zohn. *New Left Review*, 81 (September/October 1973), 55-80.
240. (anon.) "Polemical Genius of the Frankfurt School." *Times Literary Supplement*, 14 December 1973, 1539-40. Lichtheim?
241. Bürger, Peter. "Benjamins 'Rettende Kritik'. Vorüberlegungen zum Entwurf einer kritischen Hermeneutik." *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift*, 23, 2 (1973), 198-210.
242. De Maria, Giorgio. "Ipotesi di lavoro su Kafka, dopo una rilettura di WB." *Paragone*, 282 (August 1973), 95-103.
243. Drews, Jörg. "Der Literaturkritiker WB — eine Fiktion." *Merkur*, 27, 12 (1973), 1156-1163.
244. Geissler, Rolf. "Anmerkungen zu WBs Aufsatz 'Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit'." *Diskussion Deutsch*, 4, 13 (1973), 244-253.
245. Greiner, Ulrich. "Benjamin und die Theologie." *FAZ*, 31 January 1973.
246. Günther, Henning. "Maschinerie aus Menschen: WB über 'Die grosse Stadt'." *Zeitwende*, 3 (1973), 178-192.
247. Günther, Henning. "Erziehung und Kindheit bei WB." *Pädagogische Rundschau*, 27, 3 (1973), 153-167.
248. Günther, Henning. "WB und die Theologie." *Stimmen der Zeit*, 98 (1973), 33-46.

249. Habermas, Jürgen. "Bewusstmachende oder rettende Kritik." In *Kultur und Kritik: Verstreute Aufsätze*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973, pp. 302-344.
250. Habermas, J. "Entre arte y politica. Un careo con WB." *Revista de Occidente* (Madrid), no. 129 (1972), 334-51.
251. Hart-Nibbrig, Christian L. "Das déjà vu des ersten Blicks, Zu WBs *Berliner Kindheit um Neunzehnhundert*." *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 47, 4 (1973), 711-729.
252. Hartung, Rudolf. "Sehen vor definitiven Entscheidungen: WBs *Briefe*." In *Kritische Dialoge*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1973, pp. 50-57.
253. Heissenbüttel, Helmut. "WB—Texte von WB." In *Der Friede und die Unruhestifter*, edited by Hans Jürgen Schultz. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973, pp. 181-191.
254. Jay, Martin. *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research. 1923–1950*. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1973.
255. Kaiser, Gerhard. "WBs 'Geschichtsphilosophische Thesen': Zur Kontroverse der Benjamin-Interpreten." In *Antithesen. Zwischenbilanz eines Germanisten 1970–72*. Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1973. *1972.
256. Lange, Hartmut. *Die Revolution als Geistesschiff. Massenemanzipation und Kunst*. Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1973.
257. Mitchell, Stanley. "Introduction to Benjamin and Brecht." *New Left Review*, 77 (January/February 1973), 42-50.
258. Mitchell, S. "Presentation of Adorno-Benjamin." *New Left Review*, 81 (September/October 1973), 46-52.
259. Raddatz, Fritz. "Sackgasse, nicht Einbahnstrasse." *Merkur*, 27, 11 (1973), 1065-1075.
260. Sauerland, Karol. "WB jako teoretyk wóspolczesnej kultury." *Studia filozoficzne* (Warsaw), no. 6 (1973), 23-44.
261. Seidel, Gerhard. "WB: *Gesammelte Schriften*." *Deutsche Literaturzeitung*, 94, 3 (March 1973), 198-202.
262. Steiner, George. "The Marxist and the Mandarin." *Sunday Times* (London), 16 September 1973, 38f.
263. Szondi, Peter. "Benjamins Städtebilder." In *Lektüren und Lektionen*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973, pp. 134-149. *1963.
264. Tiedemann, Rolf. *Studien zur Philosophie WBs*. Introduction by Theodor W. Adorno. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973. *1965.
265. Wellek, René. "WBs Literary Criticism in his Marxist Phase." In Joseph Strelka, ed., *The Personality and the Critic*. University Park: Penn State University Press, 1973, pp. 169-178.
266. Witte, Bernd. "Feststellungen zu WB und Kafka." *Neue Rundschau*, 84 (1973), 480-494.
- 1974
267. Adorno, Theodor W. "Benjamin, der Briefschreiber." In *Noten zur Literatur IV*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974, pp. 126-136.
268. Adorno, Theodor W. "Einleitung zu Benjamins *Schriften*." In *Noten zur Literatur IV*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974, pp. 105-125.
269. Brüggemann, Heinz. "Aspekte einer marxistischen Produktionsästhetik. Versuch über theoretische Beiträge des LEF, Benjamins und Brechts." In

- Heinz Schlaffer, ed. *Literaturwissenschaft und Sozialwissenschaften 4*. Stuttgart: Metzler, 1974, pp. 109-143.
270. Bürger, Peter. *Theorie der Avantgarde*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974.
271. Günther, Henning. "Der Messianismus von Hermann Cohen und WB." *Emuna*, 9 (1974), 352-359.
272. Gutierrez Girardot, Rafael. "Fin del arte y perdida del aura (Hegel y W. Benjamin)." *Insula*, no. 327 (February 1974), 1, 3.
273. Habermas, Jürgen. "Attualità di WB." *Comunita*, 28 (1974), 211-245.
274. Hartung, Günter. "Zur Benjamin-Edition." *Weimarer Beiträge*, 20, 12 (1974), 151-167.
275. Haselberg, Peter von. "WB." Norddeutscher Rundfunk, 17 July 1974, 7 pp.
276. Kaiser, Gerhard. *Benjamin. Adorno. Zwei Studien*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Athenäum, 1974.
277. Kesting, Marianne. "Das Buch der Woche. WB: *Gesammelte Schriften*." Hessischer Rundfunk. 25 August 1974, 6 pp.
278. Konstantinovic, Zoran. Introduction to WB, *Eseji*. Belgrad: Nolit, 1974, pp. 9-23.
279. Lepenies, Wolf. Review of WB, *Gesammelte Schriften*. *FAZ*, no. 243 (19 October 1974), BZ, 5.
280. Lerner, Laurence. "Two Marxists. Fischer and Benjamin." *Encounter*, 43 (September 1974), 71-72, 74-75.
281. Maurer, Karl W. "WB: Collected Writings." *Philosophy and History*, 7, 1 (1974), 6-8.
282. Paetzold, Heinz. *Neomarxistische Aesthetik, Band I. Bloch-Benjamin*. Düsseldorf: Pädagogischer Verlag Schwann, 1974.
283. Pfothenauer, Helmut. "Die Aktualisierung vergangener ästhetischer Erfahrungen als Aufgabe und Problem einer materialistischen Literaturinterpretation: Untersuchung zum Spätwerk WBs." In Heinz Schlaffer, ed. *Literaturwissenschaft und Sozialwissenschaften 4*. Stuttgart: Metzler, 1974, pp. 145-212.
284. Radnoti, Sandor. *Credo and Resignation: An Aesthetic Political Study on WB*. (Unpublished book)
285. Radnoti, Sandor. "WBs Aesthetics II." (In Hungarian). *Magyar Filozof Szemle*, 4, 5 (1974), 550-577.
286. Sahlberg, Oskar. "Die Widersprüche WBs. Ein Vergleich der beiden Baudelaire-Arbeiten." *Neue Rundschau*, 85, 3 (1974), 464-488.
287. Schmidt, A. "Die Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung." *Zur Idee der Kritischen Theorie*. Munich: Hanser, 1974.
288. Schmitz, H.-Günther. "Melancholie als falsches Bewusstsein." *Neue Rundschau*, 85 (1974), 27-43.
289. Steiner, George. "The Uncommon Reader." *TLS*, 25 October 1974, 1198.
290. Stenzel, Hartmut. Review of Kaiser, *Benjamin. Adorno. Zwei Studien*. *Das Argument*, 16, 10-12 (1974), 921-923.
291. Tiedemann, Rolf. "Nachwort." WB, *Charles Baudelaire: Ein Lyriker im Zeitalter des Hochkapitalismus*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974, pp. 187-212. Revised version of the "Nachwort" in the first edition of 1969.
292. Tiedemann, Rolf and Hermann Schweppenhäuser. "Editorischer Bericht über WBs *Gesammelte Schriften*." Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974 (off-print from WB, *Gesammelte Schriften*, I, 2. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp,

- 1974, pp. 749-796).
293. Zima, Pierre V. *L'Ecole de Francfort*. Paris: Editions Universitaires, 1974.
1975
294. Alonso, Francisco and Félix Bolado. "Para W. Benjamin." *Zona abierta* (Madrid), no. 4, 28 October 1975.
295. Belmore, H.W. "Some Recollections of WB." *German Life and Letters*, 28 (January 1975), 119-27.
296. Berger, Willy R. "WB als Übersetzer Baudelaires." In *Teilnahme und Spiegelung. Festschrift für Horst Rüdiger*. Edited by Beda Allemann and Erwin Koppen. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975, pp. 634-663.
297. Buck-Morss, Susan. "La dialéctica de T.W. Adorno." *Teorema*, 5, 3-4 (1975), 487-500.
298. Bulthaupt, Peter. "Parusie." In PB, ed. *Materialien zu Benjamins Thesen*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975, pp. 122-148.
299. Drews, Jörg. "WBs Zweideutigkeiten." *Merkur*, 29, 11 (1975), 1072-1075.
300. Engelhardt, Hartmut. "Der historische Gegenstand als Monade." In Bulthaupt, ed. *Materialien zu Benjamins Thesen*, pp. 292-317.
301. Giubertoni, Anna. "Fotografia E Aura Nella Narrative Di Marcel Proust." *Revista di Letterature moderne comparate*, 28, 1 (March 1975), 12-27.
302. Greffrath, Krista R. "Der historische Materialist als dialektischer Historiker." In Bulthaupt, ed. *Materialien zu Benjamins Thesen*, pp. 193-230.
303. Gröhler, Harald. "Bs 'Aura' Begriff." Unpublished lecture, Cologne.
304. Haselberg, Peter von. "Benjamins Engel." In Bulthaupt, ed. *Materialien zu Benjamins Thesen*, pp. 318-336.
305. Hess, Günter. "Allegorie und Historismus. Zum Bildgedächtnis des späten 19. Jahrhunderts." In *Verbum et signum*, 1 (1975), 555-591.
306. Huysen, Andreas. "Introduction to Adorno." *New German Critique*, 6 (Fall 1975), 3-11.
307. Jauss, Hans Robert. "The Idealist Embarrassment: Observations on Marxist Aesthetics." *New Literary History* 7 (1975), 191-208.
308. *Kritik und Interpretation der kritischen Theorie: Über Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, Benjamin, Habermas*. Giessen: Aschenbach, 1975.
309. Lenhardt, Christian. "Anamnestic Solidarity. The Proletariat and its *Manes*." *Telos*, 25 (Fall 1975), 133-154.
310. Mensching, Günther. "Zeit und Fortschritt in den geschichtsphilosophischen Thesen WBs." In Bulthaupt, ed. *Materialien zu WBs Thesen*, pp. 170-192.
311. Missac, Pierre. "Es sind Thesen. Sind es Thesen?" In Bulthaupt, ed. *Materialien zu WBs Thesen*, pp. 318-336.
312. Oehler, Dolf. "Ein hermetischer Sozialist. Zur Baudelaire-Kontroverse zwischen WB und Bertolt Brecht." *Diskussion Deutsch*, 6, 26 (1975), 569-584.
313. Paetzold, Heinz. "Einige Positionen gegenwärtiger Ästhetik." *Neue Rundschau*, 86, 4 (1975), 605-627.
314. Rohner, Ludwig. "Dreimal Potemkin." *Akzente*, 22 (1975), 354-366.
315. Schröder, Winfried. "WB— zum Funktionswandel der Literatur in der Epoche des Imperialismus." In *Funktion der Literatur. Aspekte-Probleme-Aufgaben*, edited by Dieter Schlenstedt and others. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1975, pp. 178-186; 398-404.
316. Schweppenhäuser, Hermann. "Praesentia praeteritorum." In Bulthaupt, ed. *Materialien zu WBs Thesen*, pp. 7-22.

317. Seiffert, Johannes Ernst. "Deutsche Menschen. Vorläufiges zu WBs Briefanthologie." *Jahrbuch des Instituts für deutsche Geschichte* (Tel-Aviv), 1 (1975), 159-170.
318. Sonnemann, Ulrich. "Geschichte gegen den Strich gebürstet." In Bulthaupt, ed. *Materialien zu WBs Thesen*, pp. 231-253.
319. Tiedemann, Rolf. "Historischer Materialismus oder politischer Messianismus? Politische Gehalte in der Geschichtsphilosophie WBs." In Bulthaupt, ed. *Materialien zu WBs Thesen*, pp. 77-121.
320. Witte, Bernd. "Benjamin and Lukács. Historical notes on the relationship between their political and aesthetic theories." *New German Critique*, 5 (1975), 3-26.
- 1976
321. Eagleton, Terry. *Marxism and Literary Criticism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976.
322. Gebhardt, Grzimek, Harth, Rumpf, Schödlbauer and Witte. *WB—Zeitgenosse der Moderne*. Kronberg/Ts.: Scriptor, 1976. (Hereafter referred to as *WBZdM*.)
323. Gebhardt, Peter. "Über einige Voraussetzungen der Literaturkritik Benjamins." In *WBZdM*, pp. 71-93.
324. Groddeck, Wolfram. "Ästhetischer Kommentar. Anmerkungen zu WBs Hölderlin Lektüre." *Le pauvre Holterling*, no. 1 (1976), 17-21.
325. Harth, Dietrich and Grzimek, Martin. "'Aura' und 'Aktualität' als ästhetische Begriffe." In *WBZdM*, pp. 110-145.
326. Hartung, Harald. "Janusgesichtiger Benjamin: Zu Gershom Scholems Erinnerungen an den Freund." *Neue Rundschau*, 87 (1976), 146-150.
327. Hillach, Ansgar. "Allegorie, Bildraum, Montage: Versuch einen Begriff avantgardistischer Montage aus Benjamins Schriften zu begründen." In W. Martin Lüdke, ed. *Theorie der Avantgarde: Antworten auf Peter Bürgers Bestimmung von Kunst und bürgerlicher Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1976, pp. 105-142.
328. Jones, Michael. "Assessing Neo-Marxist Aesthetics." *New German Critique*, 8 (1976), 180-186.
329. Kaiser, Gerhard. "'Der profane Text eines profanen Autors' oder 'Rückübersetzung des Materialismus in Theologie?'" Rolf Tiedemann zu WBs Thesen 'Über den Begriff der Geschichte'." In *Neue Antithesen eines Germanisten 1974-75*. Kronberg: Scriptor Verlag, 1976, pp. 99-119.
330. Kurz, Gerhard. "Benjamin: Kritischer gelesen." *Philosophische Rundschau*, 23 (1976), 161-190.
331. Michels, Gerd. "Konstruktion und Geschichte." *Diskussion Deutsch*, 7 (1976), 313-333.
332. Michelsen, Peter. "Bilder-Sturm. Zur Bildwelt WBs." In *Zeit und Bindung: Studien zur deutschen Literatur der Moderne*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976, pp. 152-156. *1956.
333. Rumpf, Michael. "Radikale Theologie. Benjamins Beziehung zu Carl Schmitt." *WBZdM*, pp. 37-50.
334. Rumpf, Michael. "Faszination und Distanz. Zu Benjamins George-Rezeption." *WBZdM*, pp. 51-70.
335. Schödlbauer, Ulrich. "Der Text als Material. Zu Benjamins Interpretation von Goethes Wahlverwandtschaften." *WBZdM*, pp. 94-109.

336. Scholem, Gershom. *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis*. New York: Schocken, 1976, pp. 172-243. *1965.
338. Seidel, Gerhard. "WB: Gesammelte Schriften." *Deutsche Literaturzeitung*, 97, 10 (October 1976), 858-863.
339. Szondi, Peter. "Hoffnung im Vergangenen. Über WB." In *Satz und Gegensatz*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1976, pp. 79-97. *1961.
340. Thurn, Hans Peter. *Kritik der marxistischen Kunsttheorie*. Stuttgart: Ferdinand Encke, 1976.
341. Werckmeister, O.K. "WB, Paul Klee und der 'Engel der Geschichte'." *Neue Rundschau*, 87 (1976), 16-40.
342. Weinrich, Harald. *Sprache in Texten*. Stuttgart: Klett, 1976.
343. Witte, Bernd. "Krise und Kritik. Zur Zusammenarbeit Benjamins mit Brecht in den Jahren 1929 bis 1933." *WBZdM*, pp. 9-36.
1977
344. Adorno, T.W. "Letters to WB." In New Left Books, ed., *Aesthetics and Politics*. London: New Left Books, 1977, pp. 110-133.
345. Adorno, T.W. "Charakteristik WBs." In *Gesammelte Schriften*, 10, 1. *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft: Prismen*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1977, pp. 238-253.
346. Arato, Andrew and Gebhardt, eds. *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*. New York: Urizen Books, 1977.
347. Arato, Andrew. "Introduction: The Antinomies of the Neo-Marxian Theory of Culture." *International Journal of Sociology*, 7 (1977), 3-24.
348. Berger, Willy R. "Svendborger Notizen: Baudelaire im Urteil Bert Brechts." *Arcadia*, 12 (1977), 47-64.
349. Buck-Morss, Susan. *The Origin of Negative Dialectics*. New York and London: Free Press, 1977.
350. Jameson, Frederic. "Reflections in Conclusion." In NLB, ed., *Aesthetics and Politics*. London: New Left Books, 1977, pp. 196-213.
351. Lepenies, Wolf. "Ein unzerstörbares Werk errichtet aus den Ruinen seiner Karriere." *FAZ* (13 December 1977). Also appeared in the *Frankfurter Neue Presse*, 4 November 1978.
352. Lindner, Burckhardt. "Herrschaft als Trauma: Adornos Gesellschaftstheorie zwischen Marx und Benjamin." *Text und Kritik. Sonderband Adorno*, (1977), 72-91.
353. Lüdke, W. Martin. "Auf halbem Wege steckengeblieben. Bernd Wittes Untersuchung zu WBs Frühwerk." *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 5 March 1977.
354. Oehler, Dolf. "Charisma des Nicht-Identischen, Ohnmacht des Aparten. Adorno und Benjamin als Literaturkritiker: als Beispiel Proust." *Text und Kritik. Sonderband Adorno* (1977), 150-158.
355. Paetzold, Heinz. "WB's Theory of the End of Art." Translated by Sue Westphal. *International Journal of Sociology*, 7 (1977), 25-75.
356. Puppe, Heinz. "WB on Photography." Read at the MLA convention, 1977.
357. Radnoti, Sandor. "The Early Aesthetics of WB." Translated by Gabor Follinus. *International Journal of Sociology*, 7 (1977), 76-123.
358. Rosen, Charles. "The Ruins of WB." *New York Review of Books*, 24, 17 (1977), 31-40; 24, 18 (1977), 30-38.
359. Rudbeck, Carl R. "WB, Konservativ Revolutionär." *Svenska Dagblatt* (Stockholm), 13 December 1977.

360. Steiner, George. Introduction to WB, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. London: New Left Books, 1977, pp. 7-24.
361. Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford, 1977.
1978
362. Demetz, Peter. "Introduction." In WB, *Reflections*, ed. by Peter Demetz, vii-xliii, New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978.
363. Derrida, Jacques. "Ein Porträt Benjamins." In Burkhardt Lindner, ed. '*Links hatte noch alles sich zu enträtseln . . .*' *WB im Kontext*. Frankfurt am Main: Syndikat, 1978, pp. 171-179. Hereafter BL, *Links*.
364. Eagleton, Terry. "German Aesthetic Duels." *New Left Review*, 107 (January-February 1978), 21-37. Review of NLB, *Aesthetics and Politics*.
365. Engelhardt, Hartmut. "Reproduktion der Reproduktion: Wenn Warhol sich den Benjamin anzieht." In BL, *Links*, pp. 258-277.
366. Fuld, Werner. "Agesilaus Santander oder Benedix Schönflies: Die geheimen Namen WBs." *Neue Rundschau*, 89, 2 (1978), 253-267.
367. Fuld, Werner. "Die Antwort Werner Fulds." *Neue Rundschau*, 89, 4 (1978), 666-667.
368. Hart-Nibbrig, Christian L. "WB (1892-1940)." In *Ästhetik: Materialien zu ihrer Geschichte*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978, pp. 238-254.
369. Hartung, Günter. "Der Stratege im Literaturkampf." In BL, *Links*, pp. 15-29.
370. Haselberg, Peter von. "Was einmal 'Deutsch' bedeutet hat. Gedanken über eine Seite WBs, die wenig beachtet wird." Westdeutscher Rundfunk, 2 April 1978.
371. Haselberg, Peter von. "Der Deutsche WB." *Merkur*, 32, 6 (1978), 592-600.
372. Haselberg, Peter von. "WB: Gesammelte Schriften." Norddeutscher Rundfunk, 31 January 1978. 14 pp.
373. Hillach, Ansgar. "'Ästhetisierung des politischen Lebens.' Benjamins faschismustheoretischer Ansatz — eine Rekonstruktion." In BL, *Links*, pp. 127-170.
374. Jay, Martin. *Dialektische Phantasie*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1978.
375. Kemp, Wolfgan. "Fernbilder. Benjamin und die Kunstwissenschaft." in BL, *Links*, pp. 224-257.
376. Lepenies, Wolf. "WBs unzerstörbares Werk." Sender Freies Berlin, 6 February 1978, 14 pp.
377. Lindner, Burkhardt, ed. and Introduction. '*Links hatte noch alles sich zu enträtseln.*' *WB im Kontext*. Frankfurt am Main: Syndikat, 1978, pp. 7-14.
378. Lindner, Burkhardt. "Technische Reproduzierbarkeit und Kulturindustrie. 'Positives Barbarentum im Kontext.'" In BL, *Links*, pp. 180-223.
379. Müller, Michael. "Architektur für das 'schlechte Neue.' Zu WBs Verarbeitung avantgardistischer Positionen in der Architektur." In BL, *Links*, pp. 278-323.
380. Pfothenhauer, Helmut. "Benjamin und Nietzsche." In BL, *Links*, pp. 100-126.
381. Rosen, Charles. "WB et ses ruines." *Critique*, 370 (March 1978), 253-273.
382. Rumpf, Michael. "WBs Nachleben." *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 52, 1 (1978), 137-166.
383. Schiavoni, Guilio. "Von der Jugend zur Kindheit: Zu Benjamins Fragmenten einer proletarischen Pädagogik." In BL, *Links*, pp. 30-64.
384. Scholem, Gershom. "Die geheimen Namen WBs. Eine Zuschrift Gershom Scholems." *Neue Rundschau*, 89, 4 (1978), 663-666.

385. Seidel, Gerhard. Review of WB, *Gesammelte Schriften Band I/1-3. Deutsche Literaturzeitung*, 97, 10 (October 1978), 858-862.
386. Stollmann, Rainer. "Boris Arvatov und WB." In *Ästhetisierung der Politik*. Stuttgart: Metzler, 1978, pp. 28-32.
387. Tiedemann, Rolf. "Die Kunst, in anderer Leute Köpfe zu denken. Brecht — kommentiert von WB." Nachwort in WB, *Versuche über Brecht*. 5th ed. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978, pp. 173-208.
388. Wohlfarth, Irving. "Der 'Destruktive Charakter.' Benjamin zwischen den Fronten." In BL, *Links*, pp. 65-99.
389. Wohlfarth, Irving. "On the Messianic Structure of Benjamins Last Reflections." *Glyph 3*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1978, pp. 148-212.
1979
390. Bathrick, David. "Reading WB from West to East." In Beicken, Peter and Jay Bodine, eds. "Perspectives on WB" *Colloquia Germanica*, 12, 3 (1979). Forthcoming. Hereafter referred to as *Coll. Germ.*
391. Boehlich, Walter. "Ein Schuss im Nebel." *Der Spiegel*, no. 21 (1979), 212-217.
392. Bronner, Stephen Eric. "The Tapisstry Unravels: Considerations on the Structure of WB's Thought." *Coll. Germ.*
393. Freese, Wolfgang. "Benjamin und Brecht: Aspekte ihres Verhältnisses." *Coll. Germ.*
394. Piper, Reinhard. *Briefwechsel mit Künstlern und Autoren 1902-1953*. Munich: Piper, 1979. Forthcoming.
395. Raddatz, Fritz. "Das Kind von Marx und Heine." *Die Zeit*, no. 15 (6 April 1979), Literature section, 10.
396. Stern, Howard. "Gegenbild." *Text und Kritik*, 31/32. 2nd enlarged edition (1979). *1st chapter of 1978.
397. Witte, Bernd. "Negative Ästhetik: Benjamins Theorie und Praxis der literarischen Kritik." *Coll. Germ.*
398. Zimmermann, Ulf. "Benjamin and Berlin Alexanderplatz: Some Notes Towards a View of Literature and the City." *Coll. Germ.*

II. Complete Books, Dissertations, Special Journal Issues

- 1965
399. Tiedemann, Rolf. *Studien zur Philosophie WBs*. Preface by T.W. Adorno. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1965. Also as a volume (16) of the *Frankfurter Beiträge zur Soziologie*, 1965.
- 1967
400. Brenner, Hildegard, ed. "WB." *alternative*, 56/57 (1967). Contributions by H. Brenner, Piet Gruchot, Rosemarie Heise, Hans Heinz Holz, Heinz-Dieter Kittsteiner, Asja Lacis, and Helmut Lethen.
- 1968
401. Adorno, T.W., Ernst Bloch, Max Rychner, Gershom Scholem, Jean Selz, Hans Heinz Holz, and Ernst Fischer. *Über WB*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1968.
402. Brenner, Hildegard, ed. "WB II." *alternative*, 59/60 (1968). Contributions by H. Brenner, Helga Gallas, and Rosemarie Heise.
- 1970
403. Adorno, T.W. *Über WB*. Edited with remarks by Rolf Tiedemann. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970. Twelve essays.

1971

404. Arnold, Heinz Ludwig, ed. "WB." *Text + Kritik*, 31/32 (1971). Contributions by Burkhardt Lindner, Gerhard Plumpe, Dietrich Thierkopf and Lieselotte Wiesenthal.

1972

405. Rexroth, Tillman. "WB." Philosophical Dissertation, University of Frankfurt am Main, 1972.
406. Unseld, Siegfried, ed. *Zur Aktualität WBs*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972. (Also *WB zu ehren: Sonderausgabe aus Anlass des 80. Geburtstages von WB am 15. Juli 1972*.) Contributions by Jürgen Habermas, Werner Kraft, Adrienne Monnier, Hans Sahl, Gershom Scholem, Hermann Schweppenhäuser, Rolf Tiedemann, and S. Unseld.
407. Salzinger, Helmut. *Swinging Benjamin*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1973.
408. Wawrzyn, Lienhard. *WBs Kunsttheorie: Kritik einer Rezeption*. Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1973.
409. Wiesenthal, Liselotte. *Zur Wissenschaftstheorie WBs*. Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1973.

1974

410. Greffrath, Krista. "Untersuchungen zu einer historisch-dialektischen Theorie der Literaturgeschichtsschreibung vermittelt der analyse von Benjamins Forderung nach der Entfaltung eines historischen Zeitbegriffs." Dissertation, Berlin, Freie Universität, 1974.
411. Günther, Henning. *WB und der humane Marxismus*. Olten: Walter, 1974.

1975

412. Bulthaupt, Peter, ed. *Materialien zu Bs Thesen 'Über denBegriff der Geschichte'*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975. Contributions by P. Bulthaupt, Krista R. Greffrath, Peter von Haselberg, Günther Mensching, Pierre Missac, Hermann Schweppenhäuser, Ulrich Sonnemann, Rolf Tiedemann.
413. Pfothenhauer, Helmut. *Ästhetische Erfahrung und gesellschaftliches System: Untersuchungen zum Spätwerk WBs*. Stuttgart: Metzler, 1975.
414. Scholem, Gershom. *WB — Die Geschichte einer Freundschaft*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975.

1976

415. Gebhardt, Grzimek, Harth, Rumpf, Schödlbauer, and Witte. *WB — Zeitgenosse der Moderne*. Kronberg/Ts.: Scriptor, 1976.
416. Rudbeck, Carl Reinhold. "The Literary Criticism of WB." Dissertation, State University of New York at Binghamton, 1976.
417. Witte, Bernd. *WB — Der Intellektuelle als Kritiker: Untersuchungen zu seinem Frühwerk*. Stuttgart: Metzler, 1976.

1977

418. *International Journal of Sociology*, "WB." *IJS*, 7 (1977). Contributions by Andrew Arato, Heinz Paetzold, and Sandor Radnoti.
419. Stüssi, Anna. *Erinnerung an die Zukunft. WBs 'Berliner Kindheit um Neunzehnhundert.' Versuch eines Traktats*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977. Dissertation, University of Bern, 1975.

1978

420. Gagnebin, Jeanne M. *Zur Geschichtsphilosophie WBs. Die Unabgeschlossenheit des Sinnes*. Erlangen: Palm & Enke, 1978.
421. Kleiner, Barbara. "Die Proust Übersetzungen WBs. Ein Beitrag zu seiner

- Sprach- und Übersetzungstheorie." Dissertation, University of Innsbruck, November 1978.
422. Lindner, Burkhardt, ed. *'Links hatte noch alles sich zu enträteln.'* *WB im Kontext*. Frankfurt am Main: Syndikat, 1978. Contributions by Jacques Derrida, Harmut Engelhardt, Günter Hartung, Ansgar Hillach, Wolfgang Kemp, Burkhardt Lindner, Michael Müller, Helmut Pfothenhauer, Guilio Schiavoni, and Irving Wohlfarth.
 423. Naehrer, Jürgen. *WBs Allegorie-Begriff als Modell*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1978. Dissertation, Frankfurt am Main, 1975.
 424. Stern, Howard. "Gegenbild, Reihenfolge, Sprung: An Essay on Related Figures of Argument in WB." Dissertation, Yale University, 1978.
 425. Unger, Peter. *WB als Rezensent. Die Reflexion eines Intellektuellen auf die zeitgeschichtliche Situation*. Bern and Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1978. Dissertation, Frankfurt am Main, 1978.
- 1979
426. Beicken, Peter and Jay Bodine, ed. "Perspectives on WB." *Colloquia Germanica*, 12, 3 (1979). Contributions by David Bathrick, Stephen Eric Bronner, Wolfgang Freese, Heinz W. Puppe, Bernd Witte and Ulf Zimmermann. Includes selected bibliographical checklist by Peter Beicken and Jay Bodine.
 427. Figal, Günter/Folkers, Horst. *Zur Theorie der Gewalt und Gewaltlosigkeit bei WB. Aufsätze und Diskussionen*. Heidelberg: Forschungsstätte der Evangelischen Studiengemeinschaft, 1979.
 428. Fuld, Werner, *WB: Zwischen den Stühlen*. Munich: Hanser, 1979.
 419. Hering, Christoph. *Der Intellektuelle als Revolutionär. WBs Analyse intellektueller Praxis*. Munich: W. Fink, 1979.
 430. Schobinger, J.P. *Variationen zu WBs Sprachmeditationen*. Basel: Schwabe, 1979.



Reclam

Zum Studium der deutschen Literatur

Texteditionen

Ludwig Anzengruber: Das vierte Gebot. Volksstück in vier Akten. Nachwort von Mechthild Keller. 418

Horst Bienek: Die Zelle. Roman. Mit einem autobiographischen Nachwort. 9930 [2]

Peter Hille: Neue Welten. Gedichte, Prosa, Aphorismen. Auswahl und Nachwort von Friedrich Kienecker. 5101

Ernst Jandl: Sprechblasen. Mit einem Nachwort des Autors: »Autobiographische Ansätze«. 9940

Otto Ludwig: Der Erbförster. Trauerspiel in fünf Aufzügen. Nachwort von Edward McInnes. 3471

Johann Gottfried Schnabel: Insel Felsenburg. Herausgegeben von Volker Meid und Ingeborg Springer-Strand. 8419 [6]

Adalbert Stifter: Kalkstein. Herausgegeben von Karl Pörnbacher. 9932

Ernst Toller: Masse Mensch. Ein Stück aus der sozialen Revolution des 20. Jahrhunderts. Nachwort von Rosemarie Altenhofer. 9944

Christoph Martin Wieland: Geschichte des Agathon. Unter Mitwirkung von Reinhard Döhl herausgegeben von Fritz Martini. 9933 [7]

Gattungsanthologie

Deutsche Sonette. Herausgegeben von Hartmut Kircher. 9934 [6]

Erläuterungen und Dokumente

zu Theodor Fontane: Irrungen, Wirrungen. Herausgegeben von Frederick Betz. 8146 [2]

je Einheit DM 1,70

Darstellungen

Schillers Dramen. Neue Interpretationen. Mit Beiträgen von K. S. Guthke, W. Hinderer, P. Janz, G. Kluge, H. Koopmann, H. Marks, F. Martini, Ch. Pfarrvaerst, G. Sauder, G. Sautermeister, K. R. Scherpe und G. Ueding. Herausgegeben von Walter Hinderer. 390 Seiten. Format 15 × 21,5 cm. Paperback DM 32,80

Marian Szyrocki: Die deutsche Literatur des Barock. Eine Einführung. 9924 [5]



Neuerscheinungen bei Reclam

AVAILABLE BACK ISSUES

NEW GERMAN CRITIQUE NO. 10

- Facts about Wolf Biermann
PETER U. HOHENDAHL: Introduction to Reception Aesthetics
KAREL KOSIK: Historism and Historicism
ARTHUR MITZMAN: Anarchism, Expressionism and Psychoanalysis
SILVIA BOVENSCHEN: Is there a Feminine Aesthetic?
FERENC FEHER: The Last Phase of Romantic Anti-Capitalism

NEW GERMAN CRITIQUE NO. 11

- ANSON RABINBACH: Ernst Bloch's *Heritage of Our Times* and Fascism
ERNST BLOCH: Nonsynchronism and Dialectics
EBERHARD KNÖDLER-BUNTE: Fascism As Depoliticized Mass Movement
TIM MASON: National Socialism And The Working Class
HENNING EICHBERG: The Nazi *Thingspiel*

NEW GERMAN CRITIQUE NO. 12

- OSKAR NEGТ: Terrorism and the German State
JUDITH MAYNE: Fassbinder and spectatorship
JACK ZIPES: The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum
THOMAS BRASCH: Flies in My Face
MICHAEL HAYS: Theater History and Practice

NEW GERMAN CRITIQUE NO. 13

- ULRIKE PROKOP: Production and Women's Daily Life
JESSICA BENJAMIN: Authority and the Family Revisited
HILKE SCHLAEGER: The West German Women's Movement
CITRON, LESAGE, MAYNE, RICH, AND TAYLOR: Women and Film
CHRISTA WOLF: Self-Experiment
BIBLIOGRAPHY, Part 1

NEW GERMAN CRITIQUE NO. 14

- GEORGES HAUPT: Why the History of the Working-Class Movement?
RAINER STOLLMANN: Fascist Politics as a Total Work of Art
OSKAR NEGТ: Mass Media: Tools of Domination or Instruments of Liberation?
SARA LENNOX: Women in Brecht's Works
ATINA GROSSMANN: Abortion and Economic Crisis
BIBLIOGRAPHY, Part 2

NEW GERMAN CRITIQUE NO. 15

- DAVID BATHRICK: Rudolf Bahro and GDR Opposition
AGNES HELLER: The Positivism Dispute
SILVIA BOVENSCHEN: The Contemporary Witch/Historical Witch/Witch Myth
IRMTRAUD MORGNER: Life and Adventures of Trabadora Beatriz
DENNIS CROW: Aesthetics and Ethics in Lukács' *Soul and Forms*
GEORGE MOSSE: Norbert Elias. *The Civilizing Process*

NEW GERMAN CRITIQUE NO. 16

- RAINER NÄGELE: The Provocation of Jacques Lacan
MYRA LOVE: Christa Wolf and Feminism
HEINER MÜLLER: Reflections on Post-Modernism
GEORGES BATAILLE: The Psychological Structure of Fascism
PETER U. HOHENDAHL: Habermas and His Critics