

THE IMAGE OF CULTURE:
A COMMENTARY ON RELATED ASPECTS OF A
DIALECTICAL ICONOGRAPHY IN WALTER BENJAMIN'S
CULTURE THEORY

by

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B.A. (Hons.), Simon Fraser University, 1978

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS
in Special Arrangements

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

March 1984

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THE IMAGE OF CULTURE : A COMMENTARY
ON RELATED ASPECTS OF A DIALECTICAL
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CULTURE THEORY.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses several primary texts of Walter Benjamin. It demonstrates that Walter Benjamin's theoretical works present a total image of cosmopolitan culture in which the future of culture is shown through the configuration of fragments of the past. The events of the past arrive in the present, trailing fragments of the ruins of the past. The transition from the fragments to the aesthetic object to social meaning is understood to occur through a cultural process that changes meaning into fetish relations. Both the inaccessibility of these meanings and their origins in history is a consequence of this process. The thesis shows how Benjamin understands this process and how he reads into the process the fundamental principles of cultural creation in modern times. His attitude toward Weimar Germany and the growth of Fascism is analysed.

This thesis is organized in four parts. Each part is related to the other and forms a commentary on the other, thus showing the dialectical nature of Benjamin's thought. Benjamin's thought is shown to be both evolutionary and interventionist. He shows the continuities and "collective" nature of thought in history, and how specific features of art intervene and change our ways of seeing and receiving art. These features are: the dialectical image, pedagogical intervention in culture through children's theatre, the mechanical reproduction of art, the iconographic presentation of reality, dream vision and constructive improvisation.

The thesis concludes that Benjamin's ideas and his conceptual imagery clarify the convoluted ambiguities of cultural history. His approach to culture treats aesthetic value as truth value by revealing the concrete traces of subjective experience. Thus a dialectic of "recognition and learning" transcends historical localities by allowing the work to become objective and culturally significant.

an arbitrary rule

With practical or vain intent, we plummet through astonishment,
Under asphalt flows of text, and picture, next-next-next
Frisson rapt a figurine or sizzling up a prostrate spleen
those bio-mechs, and nabobs of colonia, and west Sadonia
Cross vistas vast of burly blood, they swim up from the murky mud
and nip at nature's member; yeah doc that's the last thing I remember.

The murmuring mash of goats eating trash that slides down the factional ramp,
tells the tales of a head, a live and a dead, in the twist of an old
cul-de-lampe:

"I hear each time the skull exclaim/Pleading mid groans that rend:
This savage and preposterous game,/When is it going to end?"
Grotesque Grundy grinds the press with terror, tension and duress;
If they cracked your friendly bones would you cry and then confess?
Crushed to cruel micronic means, yet beggars still have kings and queens.

Mind and body, mourn and fall, the thesis that impels us all
in images that dance and stall along the filmic lightening ray:
the trauerspiel twinkles tableaux of decay, hooked on spurs of misery
deep in the tinkling din of dreamy death, a cryptic moment to draw breath
in narratee dancing glyphs laconic id; phantasms of economy,
romantic economy; Ghosts experiment from paratax to policy,
in mottoes of the polis and cottage heroism.

Decorations crouch like epigraphic rule dogs at the iron feet of vertical
industry,
before the altar of the redundant family politic. And above perched authority,
demanding mediocrity with long fingers of Plato Pluto and quiet calm.

Across the seventy seas of Socrates to the furnace of conspiracy,
jumping with Baal's identity, on carpets of class polyphony,
obscured in the mysterious taboo-mabu memory
of craftgenies and factotums:

On the broken back of paradox then, the obstacle of meaning hangs
in the state above parties, telluric pathos tells us.
Negative integration and the irony of social-fascism lie
in the twilight crowd of pragmatic self-consciousness.
Enigma ponders time and space, the crush-out dons aesthetic face.
Hair and nails grow on the monumental corpse.
Knowledge abstracts into the secular folds of a thousand
shadowy secret Blanguis, into the panoramic entente,
into the mass anxiety of a million gnawing antinomies
that blur in the class dichotomy of bureaucratic careers
and the phalantery curse of the old rugged blood.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my indebtedness to Dr. Jerald Zaslove and Professor Jeff Wall for their scholarly cooperation, aesthetic sensibility and shared progressive social commitment to teach as they learn. I wish to acknowledge anonymous others who, in the process of narrative exchange, have added to my comprehension of epistemological beauty. And I recognize my parents, who by their socialist nature taught me that work and love are the ancient sword and shield of the constructive class. And lastly to urban industry which dictates to the surviving subject, the law of the highest productivity with the least expense of precious material being.

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PREFACE

Somewhere there must be primordial figures the bodies of which are only images...

In fragments of ice he makes out efflorescences, imprints of bushes and shells - not knowing if they are the imprints of these things or the things themselves...

Finally he perceives small globular masses, as big as the head of a pin and encircled with lashes...

- (The Temptation of St. Anthony), Flaubert

In danger all that counts is going forward...

- Nietzsche

...the materialist method turns into its opposite if it is not taken as one's guiding principle in historical investigation but as a ready pattern according to which one shapes the facts of history to suit oneself.

- Engels, Letter to Paul Ernst (5 June 1890)

Sancho Panza, a sedate fool and clumsy assistant, sent his rider on ahead...

Whether it is a man or a horse is no longer so important, if only the burden is removed from the back...

- (Franz Kafka: On the Tenth Anniversary of his death), Benjamin

I Benjamin and Weimar: assuming the premise of the social objectivity of the dialectical image as the aesthetic ontology of the experience of the past in the present, or death in life.

...it is precisely the modern which always conjures up prehistory. That happens here through the ambiguity which is peculiar to the social relations and events of this epoch. Ambiguity is the figurative appearance of the dialectic, the law of the dialectic at a standstill. This standstill is Utopia, and the dialectical image therefore a dream image. The commodity clearly provides such an image: as fetish. The arcades which are both house and stars, provide such an image. And such an image is provided by the whore, who is seller and commodity in one. (1)

The damming of the stream of real life, the moment when its flow comes to a standstill, makes itself felt as reflux: this reflux is astonishment. The dialectic at a standstill is its real object...(2)

...interruption is one of the fundamental methods of all form-giving. It reaches far beyond the domain of art. It is, to mention just one of its aspects, the origin of the quotation. Quoting a text implies interrupting its context. (3)

...(...I am planning to do...a subsequent definition of the dialectical image.) I believe it should say that astonishment is an outstanding object of such an insight. The appearance of closed facticity which attaches to a philological investigation and places the investigator under its spell, fades to the extent that the object is construed in an historical perspective. The baselines of this construction converge in our own historical experience. Thus the object constituted itself as a monad. In the monad everything that used to lie in mythical rigidity as a textual finding comes alive...(4)

Writing this thesis from a perspective separated from that of Walter Benjamin by the process of historical transformation, and the specific regression of the modern sensibility active within it which still issues from the same essential material contradiction, then as now, has given rise I believe, to several related apperceptions to which the subjective bearing of this thesis proceeds. This thesis recognizes a relative improvisational potential in culture which critically reflects the mechanical reproduction of history itself, and subsequently, the technical operation and philosophic identity of aesthetic abstraction and representation which reifies negative cultural integrations proceeding with false consciousness and fettered knowledge. The analytic currency of Benjamin's work lies in the various examinations of the dialectical origins of tendentious and affirmative characteristics of culture. The constant epos of the conflict between society and nature arrives in the present on the long rails of the class system.

The interest of the human species still stands conciliatory to the opposed economic psychoses of imperial states.⁽⁵⁾ At every point in history the epos of class conflict and particles of epistemological beauty lie embedded in mass anonymity. The desire to materially restore this knowledge value in narrative philosophy is at the revolutionary heart of Benjamin's redemptive epistemology and anthropological materialism. He may have feared the pragmatic technology which continues to appropriate fear from nature, but industry, it appears, distinguished his theoretical discipline.

The objective manifestations of apparently spontaneous subjective aesthetic sensibility and expression still bear lamentation and witness to the redundant behavioural homogeneity of mass culture. The global culture of the modern epoch, then as now, was constituted by a factionally ambivalent convolution of cosmopolitan levelling forces and pockets of international constructivism. Rule by amnesia, the state of emergency, and the clockwork movement of the tyrant drama today absorb the mass in pragmatic identity as they did in the baroque genesis of modernism. The modern synthesis of baroque and romantic aesthetic realities (a concept which Benjamin evolved directly from Beaudelaire) originates in the urban fusion, mediated by traditional and natural forms of cultural literacy. Simultaneous with this potential exists the latent quality of patterned social regression and an emergent reflux of astonishment at the technically renewed expediency of an original reaction. Like a tightening apparatus, as Benjamin observed, "the perpetual readiness of volitional, discursive memory," encouraged by the technique of mechanical reproduction, reduces the scope for the play of the imagination." (6)

On the other hand, the improvisational plasticity generated by the social condition of responsible experimental freedom framed 'the performance of the subjective identity becoming critically conscious' in a dialectical image of a different context: ... "a 'dialectical image in the sense of Benjamin's usage of this concept. This concept first appears in his work in a connection not yet estranged by Marxism... "The dialectical image is a flashing one...an image flashing in the now of knowability." In it the 'salvation of what has been is accomplished' - and only in it." (7)

The objective transparency of the dialectical image derives in part it seems from an original materialistic conversion of Hegel's aesthetic law of the unity of the relation of situation to identity, general to particular. (8) If pragmatic empathy with exchange value constantly and technically inundates and determines the philogeneric order of the amassing collective unconscious, then the spectacle of aesthetic culture fills with the aura of fetished commodities. The arcades become the mechanical representation of a utopian wish-symbol of amusement free of anxiety, acquiring as it were the jaded residue of a lost nature abundant with morbid delights.

For the sake of demonstration I will digress slightly back to the specific example of the 'whore', initially cited with other of Benjamin's definitions of the dialectical image. By interrupting the context of this unique cultural cypher, gestalt, or anthropomorphic archetype Benjamin revealed a general quality in the expression of the concrete particle. He was sensitive to the aesthetic field of their similarity, and the total object of ruins and fragments. In the anecdotal testimony of Gershom Scholem: "...That the greatest is revealed in the smallest, that - As Aby Warburg used to say - 'The Lord God dwells in the detail': these were fundamental truths to him (Benjamin) in many ways." (9) The historical text flows out of these narrative symbolic moments.

The contextualizing impact of this kind of analytic unity places the subjective identity on the backdrop of objective function. As in the late culture of the Weimar Republic, the brutal yet cunning force necessary for the growth of a 'modern prostitution industry'

further appropriated the means of absolute social control requisite to nationally syndicated mechanization. In this instance the cinema and the press were annexed in secondary production. The ersatz aesthetic culture of pornography served to reify in the urban texts of visual sensations, an attitude that originated with barbarism, sexual slavery and the chauvinistic division of labor.

The mass economic desire of late Weimar Germany teetered between national and international socialism. The Comintern, 'United Front', Constructivism, and even the 'Liberal-Labor Alliance' waned in the reflux of various established columns of fascist culture and power. In the light of this context it seems the pathos of the dialectical image and the cabala were in tentative keeping at least with the critical tradition of the proletarian intelligensia, open to principled compromise. In the following aesthetic opinion Scholem inadvertently alluded to the revolutionary objectivity of Benjamin's method, and original style: "...In his finest works, philosophy in a converted form, transfigured as it were and pellucid, recedes into a wonderfully concentrated language of humanity. In the flow of periods it becomes visible only as an aura."⁽¹⁰⁾ In Benjamin's Weimar one might have placed the 'Knowledge-Aristocrat' beside Kafka's 'Hunger-Artist'.

Benjamin sought to emancipate the epistemological beauty of art from its ritualistic bondage. Ironically, as he watched the emblems of fascism ride by on the instalment plan toward the centre of the mass spectacle, critical subcultural orthodoxies were forced away from the increasingly bureaucratically centralized facility and

means of aesthetic representation, and out to the social margins where disciplined erudition, cryptic intelligence, and the properly fearful conspired for rationality.

In Benjamin's cultural iconography the developing transparency of the historical process of the past in the present arrived as imagery therefore, in laminations of meaning comprised of the abstraction of dialectical forces 'at a standstill'. In these objective moments of subjective force, the elemental configuration of cultural movement could be comprehended. In effect, the idea of the dialectical image constituted an analytic approach which confronted the problematic 'ambiguity' of culture (the phantasmagoric flow of events), not unlike a montage which seeks the essential active residue of the past in the ontological condition of the present, by interrupting it. The knowledge value of an original gesture, whether instructional and/or experimental, generates a wave of historical authenticity out from the material point of origin itself. Like Proust's oceanic Remembrance of Things Past, an encyclopedia of historical intersections with the subjective present converged on Benjamin's dialectical image and "...on the concept of the aura of the work of art - defined by him as 'unique revelation of a distance, however close' - and its loss in the photomechanical process of reproduction." (11)

As was clear from the perspective of Constructivism a dual interest applied to the material redemption of original subjective expression of the meaning of existence. In other words, the potential to both debase and reduce, or augment and appreciate the historical value of

original aesthetic objects exists in the context of modern cultural assimilation. The material redemption of sensuous knowledge by technical means is tantamount to aesthetic science or 'art with a thesis', protagonistically counterposed to 'propaganda with a vision'. Benjamin's theory of aesthetic reception imputed a means of subverting the mechanical process of the redundant atomization of historical experience into mass empathy with exchange value. In tragic retrospect, the dialectical image of the late Weimar period shows us that from the urban abyss of self-interested decay and opportunistically prolonged factional discord, etc., we may anticipate the expedient consolidation of a new order rising qualitatively to power as a thoroughly indoctrinated and imperious national identity.

The epistemological basis of culture mortifies into a grotesque devourer of individual gestures and critical insights. The political culture of the 'national socialist' formation affirmed in Benjamin's iconography the dialectical image of the latency, revival, and dominance of the pragmatic axiom and aspect of baroque aesthetic ontology wherein 'the victim of the state is always guilty', and 'any means to an end.' Drawn to the present by material conditions, the baroque panorama of melancholy and humiliation returns to represent normality. The mechanization of ideal altruistic loyalty to the race was achieved in the sacrificing, robotic community spirit of the 'folk comrades'. Benjamin saw the potential of socialist revolution negated by a fascist coup. At this acute transitional period in history when the possibility of revolutionary construction and horrific regression duelled on the threshold of economic realization, the interior struggle

on the ideological horizon of critical language drew to a close with the expropriation of property. 'Nazi' rules finally dictated from every podium of cultural experience. Pluralism was extinguished.

Apart from Benjamin's humanist lament on the memory of terror, though my initial, fuzzy impression of his theory was one of parataxic fragmentation (considering my limited access), his work now seems to cohere as a rational development of philosophically definable categories. I have found the categories I am exploring more readily suitable to an elaboration, or narrative account of Benjamin's methodology, transcending the somewhat parataxic emergence and convoluted order of his objective dialectical content. That is insofar as specifically biographic or chronological patterns do not essentially determine or explain the semantic quality of his inner theoretical logic, this thesis imputes by commentary the multivalent and plastic, yet ethically consistent originality of his epistemological transformations. No doubt Benjamin's involvement with the intelligentsia of his time, notwithstanding his involvement with intelligence not of his time, shaped his ideas. It should be realized in this regard that the consideration of the full range of even Benjamin's ideological relationships to the immediate is beyond the capacity of this thesis. I have endeavoured to emphasize several largely neglected but iconographically rich areas of Benjamin's textual being and eidetic constellation. I have deciphered his aesthetic models and anthropological technique ⁽¹²⁾ to illuminate the applied iconographic elements comprising his dialectical imagery, and hence the categorical significance of this to historical materialism.

To this end, specific biographical discussion has been abridged to those empirical moments which fulfill a direct interlocutory purpose, in the recognition of theoretical difference or similarity. Insofar as this postulates a philosophy, it is in order to dissipate textual ambiguity by contextualising particular relations of culture in the tension of subjective experience.

Benjamin's theoretical structures for experimental aesthetic representation should be seen as technical armatures of the 'dialectical image', as the image interrupts the representational affirmation of the historical flow of events. Within the encroachment of the absolutist rules immanent in the dominant representational mode (mass media) of aesthetic meaning, in other words where direct political control of the means of historical representation creates the reified ontogenesis of cultural identity in mechanical reproduction, Benjamin perceived that a natural, conscious, intelligent and revolutionary authenticity existed in the critical feature of constructive improvisation.

My experience of Benjamin's thought has not been of an ultimate metaphysical openness or emptiness at the enigmatic edge of his categories. Rather, a 'down to earth' heuristic sense was derived from my study of Benjamin. Vital new material elements were constantly drawn into the orbit of his contemplative outlook, ever bringing new historical tensions into the dialectical image. This method, even in fragments, nonetheless depicts a relentless deepening particularity of historical understanding.

Experimental instruction that 'must teach teachers' (by way of the intellectual aesthetes, or revolutionary intelligensia), meant for Benjamin's work, the execution of social responsibility in the enlightening redemption of the past, by evolving a theoretical means to generate dialectical images (and subsequently critical identities) with epic potential. The generation of dialectical images requires that we recognize the epistemological function implied in the underlying social synthesis of mental and physical labor, which is conditional to the revolutionary integration of literacy and visual texts necessary to negate the merciless onslaught of ignorance germinated in the false consciousness induced by propaganda. Benjamin feared the hidden agenda behind the mass media's subjective idealist representation of domestic culture, and the subsequent historical destiny of this effect.

His aim was to integrate critical subjects (via fragments of experiential knowledge) through the interruption of the context of the representational media itself. This narrative was posed antithetically to the cultural forces which assumed that the technical appropriation of objects constituted a revolution in itself. Notably, the deformed revolution of Nazism froze the class structure in the vertical steel and fanatical entrenchment of global ambition and millennial rule. The radical pragmatic of Nazism offered the aryan sections of society immediate gains through the brutal expropriation of property from their own indigenous and pluralistic culture; head eating tail. In this reactionary character, events harkened back to other moments of monumental

destruction, such as the sadistic, bureaucratic, operational expediency of the Counter-Reformation. Benjamin was prone to recognize traces of this essential attitude in the emergence of modernism. As previously indicated, he isolated subjective particles which in certain compressed (symbolic) moments signified and contextualized the collective development of culture. The aestheticized moment of reactionary political design confronts the democratic reader with an anthropological depth far exceeding the local antagonisms of Weimar: "...diary entry by Baudelaire: A fine conspiracy could be organized for the purpose of exterminating the Jewish race."⁽¹³⁾ Baudelaire provides the modern lesson of the objective reactionary shock of the bourgeois intellectual aesthete cynically alienated from the interests of his own class. Even if this was essentially a psychotic resolution to a reactionary critique of culture, knowledge is still derivable from the involuntary object of the subject as in philological enquiry. Relatably then, as Benjamin recognized in this citation of Kraus: "The more closely you look at a word the more distantly it looks back."⁽¹⁴⁾

Extreme bitter, draconian episodes of the polarization of culture into antagonistic ethnic camps demonstrate the antecedent contradictions into which social life can conceivably decay. The forces of history are revealed (in historical retrospect) in their opposition as determined and conspiratorial extremes. No wonder Benjamin's dialectical imagery inferred the aesthetic horizon of the spiritual potential of capital with the iconic tension of an allegorical hellscape bubbling with the uncanny semblance of antinomous reality. This was based as it were, on his empirical

regard for secular pathos, and the mortal duration of relative cultural arrest. From this alienated yet humanistic perspective, cultural ruin became the physical artifact or hard object of historical memory. The narrative agent of critical intelligence protracts in the poisoned atmosphere of fascist culture.

Pluralistic culture mimetically transforms (collapses in fact) into unconscious unity with fetished inanimate objects, and archetypal exchange value. National identity is then constantly reinforced by sensational illusions which inform the mass of proper appearance, behaviour, and productive regularity.

Benjamin realized that these 'barbaric moments' of history were not random, but followed in decline with parallel historical phenomena. ⁽¹⁵⁾ The process of culturally establishing the conformity (and code) of the fascist ideal revealed a predeliction that anticipated the affirmative, mechanized transformation of property into empathy with exchange value, thus combining culture and the massing imperialist nation. The formalized liquidation of critical intelligence always characterises the cultural interior of despotism and tyranny. It is ironic that Benjamin who was so acutely aware of this pragmatic rule of national aggression, was also its untimely victim.

In Benjamin's Weimar, the disintegration of representational authority into personal rule was abetted by the compliance of subjects who became redundant. Textual recollections of an actual past reality were destroyed if they were not in the pragmatic interests of the state. The truth content of historical memory was dismantled.

Benjamin sought the material origins of technique in the subjective emergence of the aesthetic object. Technique is not understood as a mere formal attribute of craft. It is the idea that the present is in part the reified aspect of some prior aesthetic anticipation (wish-symbol; death-symbol) of the collective unconscious. In Benjamin this gives rise to the anthropological sense of aesthetic text, and production in a social and cultural milieu within which there is a dynamic epistemological tension in the image between objective experience and subjective comprehension. The spectacle of blank fear and resignation to destiny, tantamount to the indoctrination and hypostasis ('robotization') of the cultural subject caught in the national mirror-reflection of the meaning of existence (reified in the immediate experience), meant in Weimar Germany, the arrest and deformation of class consciousness into an atavistic economic barbarism. The installation of a false memory of history sent the 'SS' on its cosmopolitan mission to rescue the aryan working-class from bolshevism. The radical revitalization of the fundamental property relation in the reactionary mass, ignited the avaricious vision of an apotheosis of superior ownership. The technical intelligence which created (in part) and manipulated the mass identity of the German nation into a socially obedient whole, recognized that critical intellectual awareness had to be eradicated from the aesthetic symbolism of iconic literacy as well as the structures of economic foundation.

The masses, says Hitler in *Mein Kampf*, are simple, uneducated, inferior, and lazy. 'Their receptivity is limited, their intelligence is small, but their power of forgetting is enormous...

To convince them, one needs propaganda; and this must be addressed to their level (intellectuals will be repelled by it). Propaganda does not 'deal' with a question; it only touches on it. It should be simple, easily accessible, addressed to emotion, not intellect, and adjusted to 'the most limited intelligence;. The greater the mass, the lower its intellectual level will be. Propaganda is not scientific: 'its task is not to make an objective study of the truth (insofar as it favours the enemy) and then set it before the masses with academic fairness; its task is to serve our own right, always and unflinchingly.' Propaganda, like advertising, is to confine itself to a few points, repeated again and again: 'only after the simplest ideas are repeated thousands of times will the masses finally remember them'...

There exists, however, another means of propaganda as powerful as the mass meeting; the cinema. 'Here a man needs to use his brains even less...He will accept pictorial representation more readily than a newspaper article...a picture brings enlightenment much more quickly - I might almost say, at one stroke...

...'recreation' actually takes place in artificial time and space; it is 'manufactured' history. Before our very eyes, says Kracauer...life becomes an apparition; reality is absorbed into an artificial event... (16)

Benjamin's immanent fear of the monolithic mechanical apparatus of syndicated culture fostered a theory of knowledge which studied history for the involuntary memory of aestheticized destruction. Benjamin experimentally considered the aesthetic negation of this political condition. The historical plummet downward into the modern urban centre (spectacle and abyss) carries with it the ideological residue of prior social relationships. Benjamin contemplated the mechanical transformation of cultural identity in the idea that "Experience is indeed a matter of tradition, in collective existence as well as private life. It is less the product of facts firmly anchored in memory than of a convergence in memory of accumulated and frequently unconscious data." (17)

The modern metropolis, like the earlier civic polis, retains the basic political ontology of plutocracy, the architectural concretization of the class structure. The modern urban mass like the anonymous slaves and serfs of old, appears as the cypher of one levelled mental stream of cosmopolitan scale, which is suspended in the image of the 'dialectic at a standstill', an impending giant of unconscious uniformity in the twilight of civil order.

The chauvinistic headhunters of the Third Reich turned Europe into a 'museum without walls', the cultural 'topography of which was comprised of its chthonic elements'. Nazism took the 'natural' product of urban decay and marched it against the world. Benjamin's redemptive aesthetic philosophy, on the other hand, sought the links of humanity which united the highest aspirations of erudite intellection with the interests of the most deprived elements of the street.

It is possible, I think, to situate Benjamin's aesthetic in Simmel's epistemological threshold of cultural realization, at the intersection of Kafka's 'lessons of fear' and Ernst Bloch's 'utopian dialectic of hope', but this does not account for the instrumental theoretical provisions handed forward by Walter Benjamin in the form of practical applications of knowledge values. His intellectual experiments were essentially unique and can be placed in the humanist constellations of radical pedagogy and dialectical iconography. These are his most incisive applications of method to knowledge and

value. How to discern the dialectical image of history, and what to do with it, were not alien to Benjamin's analytic commentary, and certainly not his programmatic documents. It was for his time (as for ours) imperative that epistemological beauty break through the fetish relations of culture.

The 'dialectic at a standstill' presented a theoretical means of bringing the phantasmagoria of history under the analytic gaze and practical purposes of the proletarian intelligensia. The inversion of the absolute function of aesthetic value from the emblematic herald of the state that was also the egoistic determinant of taste into an organ of rational criticism, meant for Benjamin nothing short of an ideological commitment to the constructive forces of history. He prescribed a dialectical method for the iconographic interpretation of the 'ambiguous' (problematic) object of culture, in the following axiomatic passage:

The task of historical materialism is to set to work an engagement with history original to every new present... Historical materialism conceives historical understanding as an after-life of that which is understood, whose pulse can still be felt in the present...we find a dialectical insight into the significance of a history of reception - an insight that opens the widest horizons...

The historical materialist understands that the abstract mode in which cultural history presents its material is an illusion, established by false consciousness...The concept of culture as the embodiment of entities that are considered independently, if not of the production process in which they arose, then of that in which they continue to survive, is fetishistic. Culture appears reified. Its history is then nothing but the residue of memorable things and events that never broke the surface of human consciousness because they were never truly, that is politically, experienced...The subject matter of history once released from pure facticity, needs no appreciation. For it offers not vague analogies to the present, but constitutes the

precise dialectical problem that the present is called upon to resolve...What is basically new in the intention finds coherent expression principally where the subject meets it halfway. This happens in the interpretation of iconography in the consideration of mass art, and in the study of the technology of reproduction...They are essential elements of any future materialist critique of works of art.

The three topics mentioned have one thing in common: they lead to insights that cannot prove other than destructive to the traditional view of art. Attention to the technology of reproduction reveals, as does scarcely any other line of enquiry, the decisive importance of reception: it thereby allows the correction, within limits, of the process of reification undergone by the work of art. Consideration of mass art leads to a revision of the concept of genius; it is a reminder not to overlook the invoice which alone allows the inspiration involved in the genesis of a work of art to become fruitful. Finally, explication of iconography not only proves indispensable for the study of reception and mass art; above all it guards against the excesses to which any formalism soon beckons. (18)

In comparison to Benjamin's discoveries the structural semiological reduction of class consciousness to information theory, that is the historical subject reduced to the last - or utmost increment of a process, does not in my estimation signify the objective refinement of knowledge. Benjamin's idea that iconographic recognition of the relative historical object implies the creation of a dialectical image of which one's own subject has become an absolute, integral part, leads to the original predication of active social responsibility: 'Angelus Novus'. Stoically the symbolic truth of tragic lament relates that consciousness alone does not mean power or progress. The narrative identity of the revolutionary protagonist has been blown like human nature itself, into the fragmenting phantasmagoria of commodity values, into the market arena of popular mass culture. People now, as in Benjamin's

Weimar culture 'seek the entertainment through which they can enjoy their alienation from their own interests, and like the modern Baudelaire enjoy their alienation from one another as well.'⁽¹⁹⁾ My point here, which reiterates one so vital in Benjamin, is that this process is not perpetual like the permanent revolution of baroque conspiracy, but rather, it ever closes on the mechanical impossibility of original narrative experience based on class insight and personal criticism. The more thoroughly the political force of mechanical retrogression (and not humanistic progression) has become the more critically inundating the dialectical image must be as an antithesis. Reason must penetrate the godly authority of the profit motive.

For example, Benjamin suggested that if the baroque Trauerspiel provided the dialectical image of the ideographic anticipation of machine culture and the magic of exchange value, the symbols of the swastika and the skull reveal an underlying arcane irrationality, expressed in the pragmatic application of unnatural death and terror.⁽²⁰⁾ The involuntary lessons of mortal fear and wretchedness may comprise the cardinal subject of any constructive humanism. The secular code which maintains the political technique of bringing conspiratorial antagonisms artificially to a head, and the typological appearance of the bureaucratically administered mechanical subversion of the revolutionary process (i.e. provocation and sabotage) first arrive on the baroque stage, suggests Benjamin, as the primary object of the spectacle. The simultaneity of the early modern national identity, the original propaganda function of this nascent 'mass media', and this apparently prototypical origin of alienation in

culture suggests that the reception and genesis of the phenomenon of alienation are if not one and the same, then conditional aspects of the same political ontology.

Benjamin's dialectical iconography provided the analytical premise and theoretical instrument for his experimental praxis, or what I call his 'radical pedagogy'. Modern expressional, narrational forms which still exude the aura of originality in authentic critical features, linger on the potential threshold of culture: aesthetic expression as the trace material entelechy of spontaneous sensuous knowledge, and logically a revolutionary resource of truth value. But Benjamin was not seduced into technical formalism and long chronographic or ideographic 'spatial' designs. He researched history for those exact forms and genres that could be revived, and which would create an impact (shock) through the plastic intentionality and ideological functions of the subject matter. The synthesis of appearance and essence at the iconic level of signification was in Benjamin's cultural environment a collage, montage, phantasmagoria, out of which the aesthetic intelligensia researched and improvisationally absorbed old models of representation. A revolutionary potential existed in the technical interruption of the mechanical reproduction of literary and iconic texts:

...revolutionary attitude passed into photomontage. You need only think of the works of John Heartfield, whose technique made the book jacket into a political instrument...what it means to supply a production apparatus without changing it. Changing it would have meant bringing down one of the barriers, surmounting one of the contradictions which inhibit the productive

capacity of the intelligensia. What we must demand from the photographer is the ability to put such a caption beneath his picture as will rescue it from the ravages of modishness and confer upon it a revolutionary use value. And we shall lend greater emphasis to this demand if we, as writers, start taking photographs ourselves. Here again, therefore, technical progress is, for the author as producer, the basis of his political progress. (21)

If today we require proof of this tendency, the 'Mexican muralist movement' for example validated the objectivity of this process in another aspect. Their transformation of the painterly media into epic historical texts presented to the mass a monumental spectacle, a graphic history on an encyclopedic scale. 'Tendency and technique', it is evident here, comprise a distinct (parabolic) materially unified aesthetic meaning not reducible to the positivistic evaluative standards of form and content. Benjamin's intelligence, by nature of its existence, could not conform to the generic dogma of structured formalized ideals. The natural language and oral histories of the proletariat are a narrative source for revolutionary technical encounter; but where to find it? The answer is that reception for Benjamin implied the intersection of truth content with collective (constructive) interest. The approaching sadistic brutality of militant Nazism glared from the other active cultural pole, through the precipitation of the crumbling Weimar democracy. The political pathology of urban decay hit an abrupt point with the end of the market circulation of capital, and the emblematic consolidation of state monopoly inside the war machine of national socialism.

To paraphrase Benjamin, "the aesthetic perspective which only recognizes progress in the mastery of nature, and not the regression of intellectual society, already displays the technocratic features later encountered in Fascism." (22) "The new conception of labor amounts to the exploitation of nature, which with naive complacency is contrasted with the exploitation of the proletariat," he added. (23)

The problem of identifying Benjamin's specific approach to the immanent cultural problems of the late Weimar period intersects with the problem of the development of modern culture as a whole. Benjamin's own observation of "...an old maxim of dialectics: the surmounting of difficulties by their accumulation...", could be used to describe the way I have chosen to display his thought. (24)

Benjamin's early involvement with the 'Youth Movement' not only gave him the insight into the essentially sectarian character of this kind of cultural integration, but it markedly contrasted the epistemological authenticity of the organizational technique he later fielded in the Program for a Proletarian Children's Theatre. (25) The teleological significance of this method is such that the problems of reception, reproduction, technique and identity, all converge in an immediate notion of active responsibility. It also alluded to the dialectical image of the arcane 'Saturnalia'.

The iconic symbol of Saturn refers back past the economic and political ontology of mechanical reproduction to the longest conceivable economic contradiction - a deep narrative text which traces the compounding of cultural contradictions to the primitive division of labor and base chauvinistic rule. Saturn as a dialectical

image is a metaphor of the ontogenesis of the antagonistic property relation and the blunt technical operation of the authority of ownership.

Later Benjamin proposed an art form in which the identity of the spectator was not formed in empathy with the represented object, but rather, improvisationally the object was subjected to the authenticity of oral history in which technique became the gesture of epic recollection of the critical fragments of subjective experience. Obviously, this method intended to subvert latent and overt propaganda with truth content. The procreative dream of a non-sectarian collective totality of classless human culture was proposed through the social redemption of apparently ruined particles of critical consciousness. In Benjamin's 'children's theatre', the involuntary memory of historical destruction was constructively transformed into the narrational knowledge about cultural origin, in fact the performance of self-assumed epistemological responsibility. This accelerated pedagogic means demonstrated the actual potential for the negation of the class structure in Weimar as well as Soviet culture.

In this short-lived episode of constructivism and productivism, there emerged a convalescent form of modern urban culture which retains a theoretical and methodological vitality to this day. The Saturnian (pragmatic) relation to the object of culture stands to be dialectically changed into its procreative opposite. The Saturnine image provides an ancient mythical anticipation of the fascist ideology: "If we cannot win the war, we will drag the rest

of the world down with us!"⁽²⁶⁾ Benjamin's rational, intellectual alternative to this homicidal politic proposed a radical pedagogic and therapeutic application of aesthetic media to the resolution of modern urban cultural problems. That is, there was the hope that averting social crises would be made possible by alleviating identity crises.

The epistemological synthesis of literary and iconic texts in the context of performance, could conceivably produce the situation in which the critical experience of the individual could fuse with the shared interest of the group. A 'pattern of release' would open into the new context of enlightenment. Benjamin's intense mortal desire to redeem his fragmented and pathological culture inspired him to revolutionize the theory of epic theatre into a programmatic and prototypical text which takes the social function of art to the critical threshold of remedial speculation. The radical pedagogic problem of 'creating an audience' out of the rigid false consciousness of syncretic ideals and popular myths requires for material resolution, at least as an initial intention, a committed passage of research through the depths of ideological language. The surmounting of the normative and dogmatic semantic limits (if a consistent materialist analysis is possible only from a proletarian perspective) conceivably finds its original knowledge form in characteristically unique emergent iconic language. The anthropological insight to be gained from the study of aesthetic representation intersects, at every historical level, with the psychological reality (and inner imaginative life) of the historical subject. Artistic culture is the potential antithesis of the positivist decomposition of knowledge into information, and the

taste of sensation which obscures the image of the aesthetic totality of the historical object. Benjamin considered the mass media (such as the feuilleton) to dispense information which ethnocentrically distorted the world view of the mass spectator while further inducing the false consciousness of an homogenous mass interest. The underlying empathy of the reader with exchange value and commodity fetishism obscured the basic property relation of modern culture in its active dichotomy as the contradiction of class:

Taste develops with the definite preponderance of commodity production. As a consequence of the manufacture of products as commodities for the market, people become less and less aware of the conditions of their production--not only of the social conditions in the form of exploitation, but of the technical conditions as well...mass production, which aims at turning out inexpensive commodities, must be bent on disguising bad quality...In the same measure as the expertness of a customer declines, the importance of his taste increases - both for him and for the manufacturer...

In the Eighteenth Brumaire Marx recollects this moment, when 'the extra-parliamentary masses of the bourgeoisie... through the brutal abuse of their own press', called upon Napoleon 'to destroy their speaking and writing segment, their politicians and literati, so that they might confidently pursue their private affairs under the protection of a strong and untrammelled government.' (27)

The idea that the events which occurred in Germany in the first half of this century could have been the mechanical outcome of the propagandistic appropriation of the reproductive means of culture suggests the existence of a political-economic ontology of culture, which exceeds the cultural boundaries of the single nation state. Man the species must subordinate his nature to the mandate of the divine right of ownership.

Benjamin's theory responded with the dialectical search for the ideographic originations of the mechanical apprehension of existence. The endeavour to study the material basis of the objective process of culture meant going (abstractly) beyond the informational vault projected in the mass media. The theoretical transformation of 'cultural ambiguity' into subjectively meaningful, interrelated sequences of technical developments made history transparent from the perspective of historical materialism.

Hitler's radicalized use of traditional victims somewhat explains why Benjamin's philosophy diverges away from pure ontological contemplation. Epistemological responsibility for the present answers the Nazis who did not respect the rights of the opposition. Benjamin's ethnic fear and anthropological vision evolved quite logically in the social climate of Weimar Germany. From his intellectual beginning, it would seem, Benjamin derived traditional knowledge from the moral orthodoxy of Judaic messianic internationalism. This served as an early epistemological premise from which he could observe the cultural performance of inhumanity under the malevolent sign of Saturn - 'the star of the Jews'.⁽²⁸⁾

Consequently, Benjamin's theory was a constant synthesis of the sensibility of historical pathos with the immediate cause of the moment. The removal of democratic ideologies from the epistemological basis of culture and the mechanized destruction of historical truth and memory impelled Benjamin's enquiry toward the

technical origins of the impending order. The dialectical recognition of the origin of contradiction is the emergent sign of its ultimate negation.

The unconscious entelechy of historical destruction appears from the distant past, restored in the pragmatic production of the mechanisms necessary for global enslavement. The means of aesthetically representing the meaning of existence, too, fall into the waste bin of obsolete weapons - their propaganda value spent. The Nazis promised Germany 'the race of masters', national ownership of the world. In this text hopefully, in the custom of Benjamin, the irrational conundrum of fascist culture has been a little further explicated toward aversion of the actual physical horror.

At the extreme opposite ideological pole, Benjamin's 'children's theatre' experiment in 'storytelling' proved that an order based on the collective ownership of social property, at the discretion of improvisational ability in the interest of the whole empirical and imputed (epically configured) human involvement, was possible outside a fetish relation to objects. The ideographic apotheosis of empathy for the mechanical world corresponded to the systematic codification of rule. With the increasing elimination of the domestic means of critically exposing class interests, etc. came the mounting impossibility of entente. Imperial technologies were mechanically destined to antagonistically collide.

In his 'theory of epic theatre' Benjamin was principally concerned with the intelligent polemical interruption of the artificial homogeneity of mass culture. The mechanical reduction of human expression to a uniform utility was organized through the social performance of altruistic duty and a relentlessly imposed censorship of critical intellection. In Weimar Germany knowledge fell victim to the tyranny of the unconscious majority. Truth became heterodox as culture took shape in the mirror image of its propagandistic representation. Under state monopoly, the mass media dictated 'demand follows supply'. The acquiescence of 'taste' was fundamental to the rise of this reactionary culture. The axiomatic viability of Benjamin's 'dialectic at a standstill' (dialectical image) accounts for not only the original location of transformational moments, but also the critical constellation of their historical relationship.

By this means the 'blasting through of the truth' to the semiotic threshold of aesthetic reception might have been possible in the waning pluralism of late Weimar democracy, if applied at the level of social or cultural revolution in which:

...All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life and his relations with his kind...(29)

Marx further writes the caution:

...Society suddenly finds itself put back into a state of momentary barbarism...(30)

and, perhaps most significantly in regard to the late Weimar culture:

...The "dangerous class", the social scum (Lumpenproletariat), that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of old society, may here and there, be swept into the movement by a proletarian revolution; its conditions of life however prepare it far more for the part of a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue...(31)

For Benjamin's view the proletariat is not immune to the mechanical continuity of technocratic modernism. All social transformations are conceivably traceable to an original dialectical point of manifestation of the representational object. Aesthetic representation is the object of the subject. The social function of the mass spectacle is to generate the illusion of collective unity and community spirit. It is though, the ritualised exhibition of abstracted experiential qualities. Aesthetic culture is a process of creation and reception both, and as such comprises a dialectical synthesis of society and nature. The Nazi call for a 'new order' meant the reconstitution of a very old order of relation to nature, which in essence had not altered since the dawn of the myth of Saturn, the antagonistic division of labor, and the violent inauguration of patriarchal rule: the archetypal Fuehrer.

Benjamin envisioned a contrary order:

...technology is not the mastery of nature but of the relation between nature and man. Men as a species completed their development thousands of years ago; but mankind as a species is just beginning his. In technology a physis is being organized through which mankind's contact with the cosmos takes a new and different form from that which it had in nations and families...The paroxysm of genuine cosmic experience is not tied to that tiny fragment of nature that we are accustomed to call "Nature". In the nights of annihilation of the last war the frame of mankind was shaken by a feeling that resembled the bliss of the epileptic. And the revolts that followed it were the first attempt of mankind to bring the new body under its control. The power of the proletariat is the measure of its convalescence. If it is not gripped to the very marrow by the discipline of this power, no pacifist polemics will save it. Living substance conquers the frenzy of destruction only in the ecstasy of procreation. (32)

To rival this dream Nazism expressed Thanatos, or the irrational death wish in full mechanical domination of life. The ultimate desire of the reactionary cultural organism was to destroy all along with itself, as it collapsed back toward the primordial state of inanimate matter. (33) The analogy of Saturn reiterates this essential meaning of the operative machination of barbarism. In his book The Origin of German Tragic Drama, (34) Benjamin indicated that the constant spectacle of unnatural death affirmed the aesthetic truth and cosmic right of the dominant imperial power. Lament recollects the origin of heroic decline.

Chapter I Footnotes

1. Walter Benjamin, Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism (1935), New Left Books, London, 1973, p.171.
2. Benjamin, "What is Epic Theatre?" (First Version approx. 1939), in Understanding Brecht, New Left Books, London, 1973, p.13.
3. Benjamin "What is Epic Theatre?" (Second Version 1939), in Understanding Brecht, New Left Books, London, 1973, p.19.
4. Letter, Benjamin to Adorno, Dec. 9 1938, New Left Review, Vol. 81 (Sept/Oct 1973), p.77.
5. Paraphrasing Wilhelm Reich.
6. Benjamin, Baudelaire, p.146.
7. Gershom Scholem, "Walter Benjamin and His Angel", On Jews and Judaism in Crisis, Schocken Books, New York, 1976, p.235.
8. A similar point was raised by Susan Buck-Morss. See The Origin of Negative Dialectics, pp.146-9.
9. Scholem, "Walter Benjamin", On Jews and Judaism in Crisis, Schocken Books, New York, 1976, p.177.
10. Ibid., p.183.
11. Ibid., p.188.
12. Adorno applies the description 'anthropological materialism' to Benjamin's work.
13. Benjamin, Baudelaire, p.14.
14. Benjamin, "Karl Kraus" , Reflections, Harvest Books, New York and London, 1979, p.267.
15. Paraphrasing Marx's Communist Manifesto.
16. Amos Vogel, Film as a Subversive Art, Random House, New York, 1974, pp.173-6.
17. Benjamin, Baudelaire, p.110.
18. Benjamin, "Eduard Fuchs, Historian and Collector", (written October 1939), One-Way Street and Other Writings, New Left Books, Norfolk, 1979, pp.358-63.
19. A paraphrasing of Benjamin's Baudelaire.

20. See Benjamin's The Origin of German Tragic Drama, New Left Books, London, 1977..
21. Benjamin, "The Author as Producer", Understanding Brecht, pp.94-5.
22. Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire". Illuminations, Schocken Books, New York, 1977, p.159.
23. Ibid., p.160.
24. Benjamin, "Commentaries on Poems by Brecht", Understanding Brecht, p.43.
25. Benjamin, "Building a Children's Theater, 2 Documents: Asja Lacis/Walter Benjamin," Performance, vol.#5, Mar/Apr 1973, pp.22-32.
26. Hitler, Mein Kampf, cited on 'World at War' - film documentary.
27. Benjamin, Baudelaire, pp.105-6.
28. See Eric Zafron, "Saturn and the Jews", Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, Vol. 42, 1979, pp. 16-28.
29. Marx, "Communist Manifesto", Communism, Fascism, and Democracy, Random House, New York, 1967, p.93.
30. Ibid., p.95.
31. Ibid., p.99.
32. Benjamin, "One-Way Street", Reflections, pp. 93-4.
33. A paraphrasing of the concept from Freud's Beyond the Pleasure Principle, pp.66-7.
34. Benjamin, The Origin of German Tragic Drama.

II Ideographic prefiguration, modern ontogenesis and mechanomorphy, and the mechanization of aesthetic culture.

...it is precisely visions of the frenzy of destruction, in which all earthly things collapse into a heap of ruins, which reveal the limit set upon allegorical contemplation, rather than its ideal quality...Ultimately, in the death-signs of the baroque the direction of allegorical reflection is reversed; on the second part of its wide arc it returns, to redeem...hell is secularised in space...the secret, privileged knowledge, the arbitrary rule in the realm of dead objects, the supposed infinity of a world without hope. All this vanishes with this one about-turn, in which the immersion of allegory has to clear away the final phantasmagoria of the objective...the intention does not faithfully rest in the contemplation of bones, but faithlessly leaps forward to the idea of resurrection... The enormous, anti-artistic subjectivity of the baroque converges here with the theological essence of the subjective...Knowledge of good and evil is, then, the opposite of all factual knowledge...This knowledge, the triumph of subjectivity and the onset of an arbitrary rule over things, is the origin of all allegorical contemplation. In the very fall of man the unity of guilt and signifying emerges as an abstraction...In the allegorical image of the world, therefore, the subjective perspective is entirely absorbed in the economy of the whole. (1)

...the communication of things is certainly communal in a way that grasps the world as such as an undivided whole.

For an understanding of artistic forms it is of value to attempt to grasp them all as languages and to seek their connection with natural languages...For language is in every case not only communication of the communicable but also, at the same time, a symbol of the non-communicable...Because she is mute, nature mourns... The enslavement of language in prattle is joined by the enslavement of things in folly almost as its inevitable consequence. In this turning away from things which was

enslavement, the plan for the tower of Babel came into being, and linguistic confusion with it...The immediacy (which, however, is the linguistic root) of the communicability of abstraction resides in judgment... By the relation...of languages as between media of varying densities, the translatability of languages into one another is established...Mediation, which is the immediacy of all mental communication, is the fundamental problem...language cannot be externally limited or measured, and therefore all language contains its own incommensurable, uniquely constituted infinity...because the mental being of man is language itself, he cannot communicate himself by it but only in it...(2)

...danger affects both the context of the tradition and its receivers. The same threat hangs over both; that of becoming a tool of the ruling classes. In every era the attempt must be made anew to wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it...(3)

...The French Revolution viewed itself as Rome reincarnate. It evoked ancient Rome the way fashion evokes costumes of the past. Fashion has a flair for the topical, no matter where it stirs in the thickets of long ago; it is a tiger's leap into the past. This jump, however, takes place in an arena where the ruling class gives the commands. The same leap in the open air of history is the dialectical one...(4)

Benjamin perceived the mimetic faculty to be a condition of both ontogenetic and phylogenetic history; that the performance of the aesthetic subject, its formation and sensibility, are carried along in the entelechy of the species.⁽⁵⁾ 'Unfashionable' traces of the past conceivably relinquish a more totalized (objective) vision of history on the basis of the materialist reception of diverse, particular heterodox perspectives and values. The cohesive element in a culture, resides in the function of the reproduction of its homogenous spirit. The ideological unity, or at least its representation in the performance of mass identity

and mythic origins, maintains the collective unconscious through the phantasmagoric spectacle of the 'meaning of existence', as a behavioural authority, standard, or bureaucratic agenda reflected in the mirror-image of immediate experience. The state of cultural arrest (e.g. Counter Reformation, Third Reich), regardless of the historical relativism of situation, involves the apprehension of the anonymous laboring subject through the symbolic objects which are aspects of the performance of authority, and the aestheticization of the means of power and control. As Benjamin observed:

...The allegory of the seventeenth century is not convention of expression, but expression of convention. At the same time expression of authority, which is secret in accordance with the dignity of its origin, but public in accordance with the extent of its validity...(6)

The bureaucratic work of the Counter Reformation, 'to account for every soul' remains an interiorized subcultural memory for the heretical descendants of still-existing heterodox fragments. Oral histories and storytelling, for example, convey the knowledge of narrative experience both in the logical syntax of traditional rendition - the comprehensive structure of the process of events - and in the structural repetition of involuntary meanings (the field of reception which is conditioned by the quality of intelligence at any given moment of the present).⁽⁷⁾ Logically, then, the inherent value of aesthetic representation is relative to the understanding of history as a whole. The realization of epistemological beauty, hence truth content, means penetrating

the cultural fetish of the object, to the inanimate 'mechanism' of its social function. This aura of authenticity (of the objective subject) immanent in cultural literacy, resonates back along the entelechic path of the signification and reception of iconic language, to the origin of material existence, the semantic field of social being, and the pragmatic moment of the emergence of historical identity and political interest. This theory in effect becomes methodologically operational when the revolutionary intelligensia applies it to the critical production of proletarian consciousness.⁽⁸⁾ The dialectical penetration of the involuntary presentation of inherent semantic cyphers is keyed on the realization that the historical retention of the past is based on forces which not only exceed the solipsistic beliefs of localised cultures, but that aesthetic objects, for example, appreciate in meaning by absorbing or subsuming the experiential relationships of the specific cultural formations through which they pass and transcend. Further, they interrupt the context into which they come, and become a part of. Though they are physically apprehended, they are not necessarily historically comprehended by the normative sensibilities into whose presence they come as objects. They involuntarily bring with them the ritualised meaning of all prior stages of reception. They carry with them the aura of authenticity, but only as the fetished (ritualised) memory of origin surrounding the material (physical) element.

The polemical capacity of the performance or representation of aesthetic value is, like the very essence of its signified meaning, a relation to what exactly it represents ('form and content'), and what exactly is affirmed by its ontological function. In other words, the work of art may exist within a matrix of cultural relationships which identify, or rather sense (if not determine) its value, while being unconscious of the circumstances of its material origin. This suggests the involuntary contextualising of every immediate experience throughout the historical process of the work's reception. Every interpretation adds depth to the text of the work. The ambivalent text of the modern mass spectacle is such that every spectator senses his own little subjective piece of recognition while the spectacle as a tendentious object absorbs the aesthetic reception of the spectatorial mass into its multivalent parts. (9)

The similarity of the baroque Traverspiel, as described by Benjamin, to the cinematic process of representation with its mechanical propensity to absorb the qualities of other media, contains within it the immanent pattern of the ascension of authority. The historical essence of the involuntary reification of form as iconic meaning, i.e. in the concrete development of the mass mechanism of aesthetic representation, and therefore the artifact's unconscious record of the actual pragmatic meaning of existence - one might almost say 'spontaneous convention' - is found in the context of the political origin of the apparatus

of mass aesthetic representation itself.⁽¹⁰⁾ Here form and content are the same historical meaning, the same material affirmation of experiential significance. Ironically, the mass spectacle of the apprehension of existence mechanically apprehends the spectator as an involuntary empirical condition of his or her social being and prosaic existence.⁽¹¹⁾

This is more than the vindication or vilification of an ideal; the aestheticization of an absolute politic determines the limit of constructive imagination and the plastic horizon of iconic language, and notably, the intellectual potential of social being. Shock and entry into the subconscious retention of involuntary memory, by the sensational spectacle, is subliminal intervention into the dream state and the elemental orbiting perceptual scope of the imagination. 'Rapid eye movement' and pauses of gaping shock attend the ideographic authority of the spectacle.⁽¹²⁾ Automatic opinions conform to the hidden agenda of 'demand follows supply'.

The historical advance of matter brings to the dialectician an ever renewing synthesis of context with the functional appropriation of media. Subsequently the significance of the apparatus integrates with the intentional meaning of the representational image itself. The empirical connection with the political-economic imperatives emergent at the threshold of the technical level of society mediates the ontological institutionalisation of specific media as symbolic of collective experience, being, and aspiration.

The interior abstract meaning housed in the subconscious language of the spectator is reified or actualised by the concrete illusion of aesthetic representation: 'In the baroque there was no fantasy', because the terrors of hell 'were secularized in space'. Conceivably, the structure of language and the physis of behaviour elemental in the consequent developmental progression or constellation of objects, appears to be the manifestation of a design in the mind of the spectator. Whether or not the meaning of existence contains a fetish quality, conveyed through the articulation of false consciousness of experience, "the bearer is nonetheless, the semiotic element". (13)

The media itself presents the precondition of experience as the centre of mass sensibility and the mechanical determinant of expressive language. The character of the media symbolizes the quality of intelligence to which it is objectively bound; the greater the reification of mass experience, the more popular and prevailing the manner of representation will be. This in part constitutes the nature of the fetish relation to abstract and false ideas, concretized in the illusion of aesthetic objects. For dialectical iconography it seems to follow that the inherent problem of modern aesthetic culture appears in the particular tendentious flow of a somewhat cynical and egoistic reduction of meaning to marketable signature, and the general ostentatious nihilism of aestheticized politics, formally obscured in various notions of 'l'art pour l'art', all having no conscious object,

or at least superfluously no intended social object. As Benjamin suggested for the baroque 'an art which constitutes itself as pure subjectivity' while actually functioning in the 'clearing away of the phantasmagoria of the objective for the arbitrary rule of the subject in the realm of objects' (to the irrational command of subjective idealism in fact), thusly transforms aesthetic representation into a monumental, appendaged instrument of the greater uncriticized or unrecognized political configuration and its pragmatic, economic aim. (14)

Let us now return to the category of involuntary memory and the idea that the unconscious denial of the ideological cause and affirmation of aesthetic representation, seen in historical overview, unfolds as the 'expression of convention'. This allows a normative relativism which cannot be recognized by the society of robotic or cult-like participants.

...memory fragments are 'often most powerful and most enduring when the incident which left them behind was one that never entered consciousness'...only what has not been experienced explicitly and consciously, what has not happened to the subject as an experience, can become a component of the memoire involuntaire. According to Freud, the attribution of 'permanent traces as the basis of memory' to processes of stimulation is reserved for 'other systems', which must be thought of as different from consciousness. In Freud's view, consciousness as such receives no memory traces whatever, but has another important function: protection against stimuli. 'For a living organism, protection against stimuli is an almost more important function than the reception of stimuli; the protective shield is equipped with its own store of energy and must above all strive to preserve the special forms

of conversion of energy operating in it against the effects of the excessive energies at work in the external world, effects which tend towards an equalization of potential and hence towards destruction.' The threat from these energies is one of shocks. The more readily consciousness registers these shocks, the less likely are they to have a traumatic effect. Psychoanalytic theory strives to understand the nature of these traumatic shocks 'on the basis of their breaking through the protective shield against stimuli'. According to this theory, fright has 'significance' in the 'absence of any preparedness for anxiety'...(15)

Benjamin discovered that emergent aesthetic objectifications of experience could be the spontaneous, intuitive, or automatic exercise of an effect that altered and determined the subjective reception of the present through the suggestion or impression of the past. The subconscious apprehension of ontological experience mediated between the two. The prospect of the involuntary retention of knowledge fragments in the material folds of the present, appears as a panoramic resource from the perspective of rational fear and the dialectics of redemption. Here we must notice the presence of the iconographic interpretation of the character of the means of aesthetic reproduction in Benjamin's thought. Iconographic 'images' reveal through contradiction the reification of mythic dogma, and the mediated intervention of this apparatus into the purposes of unique individuals. The instrumental mortification of 'natural' experience creates aesthetic regularities in the mass of the repressed, guilt-numbed productive class. Identity

finds itself anxious within the mass spectacle of the 'spatially secularized phantasmagoria of objective hell', in the terrifying regularity of pandemonium. Each ontogenetic identity is therefore alienated from the historical nature of its interest in the affirmative, bureaucratic absolutisation of cultural wretchedness, insecurity, and pain immanent within the technical advance of mechanically mediated apperception and national control. Benjamin writes:

...the mere inspection of the actual past: whatever he (the 'dialectical materialist' - [my note]) surveys in art and science has a descent that cannot be contemplated without horror. It owes its existence not just to the efforts of the great geniuses' who fashioned it, but also in greater or lesser degree to the anonymous drudgery of their contemporaries. There is no cultural document that is not at the same time a record of barbarism. No history of culture has yet done justice to this fundamental fact, or can well hope to do so.

Yet this is not the crux of the matter. If the concept of culture is a problematical one for historical materialism, the disintegration of culture into commodities to be possessed by mankind is unthinkable for it. Historical materialism does not regard the work of the past as over and done with. It does not see that work, or any part of it, as falling with convenient quiddity into the lap of any epoch...(16)

Dialectically necessary then is the potential

for spontaneous or intuitive forms of original expression.

The automatic or involuntary iconic apprehension of the past not only results from the secular telluric illusion created by the mass reification of false consciousness and its cyclical return; it is also the imprint of ontogenetic experience, which in turn is assimilated vis a vis the epistemological basis of culture and the collective apparatus of representational means in its narrative capacity to generate abstract language and humanistic objectivity.

Benjamin's axiom that the memory of the past is the revolutionary social responsibility of the present, reached an ideological hardness and validity in the following iconographic contrast: "...Historicism presents an eternal image of the past, historical materialism a specific and unique engagement with it. The substitution of the act of construction for the epic dimension, proves to be the condition of this engagement." (19) Interruption becomes the experimental work of the enlightener. From this point of analytic intervention Benjamin viewed the active contradictions of modernism which resonate back through local antinomies to origins deep in the past. The narrative of the oppressed follows in the light of this objectivity. Social ruin and decay are the empirical sign of class order. (18)

To the extent that heroic idealisation does not suit the improvisation necessary to evoke subjective involvement and personal responsibility, it can not represent the imperfection of reality. "The revenge for oppressed ancestors" translates into the constructive revenge of improvisational class justice, and the pedagogic resolution of ancient but lingering antagonistic contradictions. (19) Ideographic cyphers trace the path of negative integration along the 'frenzy of destruction' to the immediate phantasmagoria of socially competitive interests and the divisions of property and labor. Benjamin's 'dialectical imagery' makes the blur of history transparent.

It is clear that the ideographic 'identity' with exchange-value and mass empathy with national wealth predicates the reactionary petty bourgeois aspirations of the German working-class of the late Weimar period. The most ignorant, degenerate, and sadistic declassed social elements came under the tyrannical mechanism and employ of money. This involuntary affinity of class and wealth concluded with the achievement of state monopoly, and the qualitative leap of reactionary national concentration into world conquest and war. Under Nazism, the apparition of the phylogenic cult which radiated from the atavistic aura of father rite, did so through the artificial mechanically reified media spectacle of an aestheticized politic, from which essentially all factional variation had been physically removed and liquidated. Nonetheless, the involuntary residue of this process revealed the overt direction of the deepening systematic mechanization of culture, namely at the expense of the minds and bodies of its productive class. Impelled by this secular horror, Benjamin therefore saw in cultural history the key to recovering the dialectical movement of history:

To represent cultural history on the basis of pragmatic story-telling certainly makes no sense. But the absurdity of a dialectical history of culture as such lies deeper, since the continuum of history, blown apart by dialectics, is nowhere scattered over a wider area than in that part people call culture.

In short, cultural history only seems to represent a deepening of insight; it does not present even the appearance of progress in dialectics. For it lacks the destructive element that guarantees the authenticity of dialectical thought and of the dialectician's experience. It may well increase the burden of the treasures that are piled up on humanity's back. But it does not give mankind the strength to shake them off so as to get its hands on them...(20)

The result of combining cultural history and dialectics is a critique of historicism, and the development of a critique of technology within capitalism:

... technology is obviously not a purely scientific phenomenon. It is also an historical one. As such, it forces us to investigate the positivist and undialectical separation between natural science and the humanities. The questions which mankind asks of nature are determined among other things by its level of production. This is the point where positivism breaks down. In the development of technology it saw only the progress of science, not the retrogression of society. It overlooked the fact that capitalism has decisively conditioned that development...the development of technology made it more and more difficult for the proletariat to take possession of it - an act that was seen to be more and more urgently necessary. They failed to perceive the destructive side of technology because they were alienated from the destructive side of the dialectic.

A prognosis was needed, and it was not forthcoming. This set the seal on a trend that was characteristic of the last century: the defective reception of technology. It consisted in a series of vigorous and repeated attempts to get round the fact that technology serves this society solely for the production of commodities...It is discovering that traffic speeds, like the capacity to duplicate both the spoken and the written word, have outstripped human needs. The energies that technology develops beyond their threshold are destructive. They serve primarily to foster the technology of warfare, and of the means used to prepare public opinion for war. It may be said of this development, which was thoroughly class-determined, that it occurred behind the back of the last century - which was not yet aware of the destructive energies of technology...(21)

Pushing this relationship further, we see the process of the cultural ontology of mechanical reproduction, in which fragments of experience are reduced to commodifiable objects. With the breakup of the aura of authenticity, a return to the political

origin of this economic-aesthetic relationship is the inevitable result of the uninterrupted cycle of the ideographic mechanism of modern culture. In the extremely reactionary transformational period of the Counter Reformation, Benjamin located the dialectical trace, origin, and ontogenetic prototype of this receptive order of the modern spectacle of mechanical reproduction, emergent in the involuntary aesthetic structure of the baroque Trauerspiel.

Significantly then, fragments of experience which transmit an involuntary memory, are elementary traces of historical meaning. They give up knowledge to the dialectical historian. They are the parts fallen, in the historical breakup and transformation of matter. As in the allegorical baroque of Benjamin, they may be conveyed as fetishized significances and hence are objectively undiscerned by the author in his dogged resignation to omnipotent conventions. As the destructive force of history has demonstrated in Benjamin's model: knowledge value goes unrealized by false consciousness. The pathos of manufactured ignorance, the horrors of mortal agony, and the political negation of intelligence line the vertigo canyon of the class system from cævice to crack. Consider Benjamin's internalized terror of the modern retrogression of class consciousness, and the being inchoate of mechanized fascist culture: "Man's inner concerns do not have their issueless private character by nature. They do so only when he is increasingly unable to assimilate data of the world around him by way of experience." (22)

Constructive intelligence interrupts this process critically, with the class awakening of proletarian interest in the technical administration of culture, on the basis of the aforementioned 'dialectician's actual engagement with history.' Literacy becomes an object of control in the struggle of Benjamin's cultural revolution, and a potential means of material redemption. The dialectical possibility that aesthetic texts, for example, may relate meaning to the present which was essentially unintended by the author, connotes the prospect of an iconic resource of involuntary objectivity, that is, of the objective subject. This consideration permits applying the 'dialectical image' to culture to the extent that the aesthetic representations of a past history may reveal or even anticipate qualities and forces making up the phantasmagoria of the present. Cult integration means the loss of individual identity, and with it the recontextualising power to critically interrupt and mediate the course of events. The epistemological role of the individual may be reduced to the uniformity of an obedient cypher, or pushed to the front of history into the vanguard of revolutionary memory. In either case, the actual experience of history is conditioned upon the prior synthesis and relationship of subjective interpretation and objective presence: "Where there is experience in the strict sense of the word, certain contents of the individual past combine with the material of the collective past."⁽²³⁾ Obviously then, history arrives in the present both as a subject and an object. This is an epistemological condition.

In the moment of aesthetic apprehension an aura of material development surrounds the fetished object. This has empirical qualities. Authenticity is immanent, providing to the immediate sense a concrete signification of meaning that refers all the way back to the moment of origin in material reality. Further in Benjamin's theory we find that:

...Experience of the aura thus rests on the transposition of a response common in human relationships to the relationship between the inanimate or natural object in man. The person we look at, or who feels he 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 ability to look at us in return. This experience corresponds to the data of the *memoire involuntaire*. (24)

In terms of aesthetic value then, an original subject invested an object with abstract iconic significance through applied design in a plastic medium. Objects of this nature define the level of aesthetic expression characteristic of certain levels of historical development. These symbolic achievements, deriving from the mimetic nature of erotic and grotesque sensuousness and the semiotic response of epistemological comprehension, are an inherent unity of cultural literacy and aspiration. The potentially unlimited reception of art works infers not only the generative potential of knowledge values, but also the historical longevity yet empirical accessibility of aesthetic meanings. The ontogenesis of the work of art transcends the locally bound physical life of the artist.

Original or authentic art contextualizes a general meaning in the touch of personal gesture. As the particle imputes while empirically expressing the totality, in Benjamin's dialectics, the epistemological beauty of art redefines the totality with the ongoing historical interruption of its immanent truth content; perhaps the truth of some deeply abstracted subjective reality. History adds meaningful significance to the work of art, apart from that intended by its creator. If humanity is the objective subject of the aesthetic process, then art must lie in dialectical relation to human nature as the antithetical subjective object which mediates knowledge, authority, and feeling from the past into the contingent present. Spontaneous art works may demonstrate this most clearly, not being consciously inhibited in their original expression by norms and conventions. Aesthetic value is therefore the physical embodiment of a relative absolute, the authenticity (and epistemological beauty) of which hinges on the organic (and not mechanical), personal relationship established anew with each individual spectator.⁽²⁵⁾ Aesthetic value has both negative and affirmative antithetical social functions. As Benjamin has shown, artistic production as an historical force may form in revolutionary opposition to collective unconsciousness emerging as a marginal cultural literacy, or it may mortify into a 'death's head' providing the forward emblem of chauvinistic culture.

Art exists essentially not as just the informational cypher of cultural experience, but notably, as the original trace and actual material element and residue of the unique subjective experience itself. The quality of this reality is historically conveyed in the aesthetic process. To reiterate, as Benjamin the dialectical materialist put it, 'the bearer is the semiotic element.' This truth of subjective reality involuntarily retained in the concrete gesture, is distorted in the bends and folds of history, but it does not disappear. That is unless it is physically destroyed or totally obscured by the mechanical reification of an ersatz past. (26) This rushes in to fill the political vacuum left by mechanical reproduction as it advances in the breaking up of historical experience into consumable commodities.

Historically, in the modern period an enigma emerges with the mechanical reproduction of aesthetic objects, and their peculiar capacity as commodities. (27) For original artworks, the status symbol of the signature of 'genius' draws the price. They do not depreciate like other commodities, in direct proportion to their social use as exhibition values. The fettered meaning or aura of art objects mediates from the experiential center of cult relationships or rituals, as the false consciousness of objective truth content. (28)

The arcane belief in the mediating power of aesthetic representation between the physical and spiritual realms of experience demonstrates the primitive fetish character of art works in the instrumentation of the collective affirmation of (dream-like) illusionary reality. From the earliest cultures on, art objects have given the 'physically non-existent' a concrete impact with reality. The 'mysterious wisdom' inherent with the ownership and control of the representational apparatus is mediated through the nascent architecture of bureaucratic authority. This is the iconostasis and the abyss: the retention of totemic function in representational media suggesting that very early on in the division of labor, the spectators were watched by the spectacle.

As suggested in Benjamin's analytic theory of the baroque Trauerspiel the involuntary incidence of mechanical design is reciprocated by the cultural ontology in which represented conditions are drawn from the immediate social experience of the meaning of existence as it is actualized both in the violent (cosmic) accumulation of property, and the subjective contemplation of inanimate objects. His subsequent alarmed observation of the absurd, yet profitable system of men appendaged to machines, that is subjected to their 'operational will', relates the narrative of the secular, mechanical physiognomy of the pragmatic instrument of rule. The cultural interior of perpetual political conspiracy reflects the mounting crises of

economic competition. The aesthetic return to mechanomorphic vitalism, spirited on by the national syndication of the mass media, reiterates the (reactionary) romantic future of the protagonistic machine: "...a new beauty... a roaring motorcar, which runs like a machine-gun, is more beautiful than the Winged Victory of Samothrace...We wish to glorify war..."⁽²⁹⁾ Also: "We proclaim...that universal dynamism must be rendered as dynamic sensation; that movement and light destroy the substance of objects."⁽³⁰⁾

Cult objects, initially put into the context of market culture to realize exchange value, had undergone various interpretations under the pluralistic interests of political factions; but now their emblematic function was restored to vindicate the mechanical apparatus of national property. Fragments of experience collected in the 'dialectical setting' of the baroque Trauerspiel centralized as the aesthetic object of historical destruction.⁽³¹⁾ The anticipated pattern of the mechanical expropriation of nature was involuntarily predicated on the aesthetic mimesis of the object of mechanical reproduction. The 'deus ex machina', 'whirrwarr', 'perpetual motion machine', and even the alchemist's dream of converting base elements into currency anticipated the numismatic glint emergent on the aesthetic horizon of the mechanized technical relation to nature and the anarchy of capitalist production. The physical destruction necessary to reify this immane desire, followed as a mindless epiphenomenon from the protagonistic aestheticization

and abstraction of this process ultimately necessary for the mass reproduction of righteous national will. As Benjamin observed that 'the overproduction of technology leads to war', it should be noted that the historical subject requisite for the active infliction of this catastrophic ruination must be ideologically prepared and incubated.

The actual physis of aestheticized ruin, bears the semblance of the historical phantasmagoria of forces which shaped it. The auratic presence of such objects projects the impression of these forces: ideological, mechanical, biological, etc. in the prefiguration of renewal at a higher level of historical contradiction. In the light of Benjamin's historical materialism the narrative of the ruin unfolds as a critical constellation of social regression and debasement: the artifacts of woe. The ruin denotes the physical path of historical destruction. It retains, as I have discussed, the involuntary trace of the collective unconscious.

Benjamin writes:

When, as is the case in the *Traverspiel*, history becomes part of the setting, it does so as script. The word 'history' stands written on the countenance of nature in the characters of transience. The allegorical physiognomy of the nature - history, which is put on stage in the *Traverspiel*, is present in reality in the form of the ruin. In the ruin history has physically merged into the setting. And in this guise history does not assume the form of the process of an eternal life so much as that of irresistible decay. Allegory thereby declares itself to be beyond beauty. Allegories are in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things. (32)

And further in regard to the material anthropological condition of aesthetic value and its reception:

...not then - as the romantics have it - awakening of the consciousness in living works, but the settlement of knowledge in dead ones. Beauty, which endures, is an object of knowledge. And if it is questionable whether the beauty which endures does still deserve the name, it is nevertheless certain that there is nothing of beauty which does not contain something that is worthy of knowledge. Philosophy must not attempt to deny that it reawakens the beauty of works.. without at least an intuitive grasp of the life of the detail in the structure, all love of beauty is no more than empty dreaming. In the last analysis structure and detail are always historically charged. The object of philosophical criticism is to show that the function of artistic form is as follows: to make historical content, such as provides the basis of every important work of art, into a philosophical truth. This transformation of material content into truth content makes the decrease in effectiveness, whereby the attraction of earlier charms diminishes decade by decade, into the basis for a rebirth, in which all ephemeral beauty is completely stripped off, and the work stands as a ruin. In the allegorical construction of the baroque Traverspiel such ruins have always stood out clearly as formal elements of the preserved work of art. (33)

We see how the direct referential semantic field of aggregate empirical cause materializes in the ruin. It can be described as an anthropological trace of the long cycle of cultural developments. As the residue of horror it laments the loss of an original, previously integrated collective nature. However, it contextualises the various plastic corollaries of representational language in their naturalistic mimesis and performance of abstract antinomies. It exists as an historical absolute in the allegorical phantasmagoria which advances as it recedes.

For example, this is seen in the semantic parallel between the once-popular baroque tyrant-drama of 'King Herod, the mad tyrant Jew' (a theme shared by the Counter Reformation), and the more than coincidental myth propagated by the Nazis in the filmic representation of 'Evil Rabbi Loew' the archetypal Jew (a theme shared by monopoly capital). It is ironic that the aesthetic stigma or symbol of the Saturnian force in history was placed on traditional hence opportune victims, as a technique employed by the actual pragmatic Saturnian force in history. As the status of humanity regressed deeper into humiliation and suffering, the means of this oppression took a qualitative leap from naturalistic semblance to photomechanical naturalism.

This 'progression of hell', in its advance through the 'secularization of space', polarizes mental from physical labor in an ever-widening tension. The urban allegory of the 'robot and the vampire' harkens back to the baroque 'ruin and machine'. Considering the aesthetic consequences, then, of this deadening economic compulsion to separate, the Counter-Reformation had attempted the violent return to pre-capital feudalism by the bureaucratically organized elimination of heterodox elements (heretical property owners, users, intelligent peasants, etc.); the Nazis renewed this strategy at a decidedly higher level of historical contradiction.

Mourning though still attends the pleasure of sadism. Adorno expressed, in his 1938 London correspondence with Benjamin, the apprehension that he had heard 'the familiar sadistic laughter in a local cinema'. As previously implied, we find the origin of mechanical representation prefigured in the politically mediated distortion of the mirror-image of reality, characteristic of the baroque spectacle. The involuntary appearance of mechanical order is the epiphenomenon of the aestheticized pragmatic organization of nature via the 'cosmos'. The pragmatic instinct of the baroque period, evolved by its use of the most vulnerable social elements as scapegoats, a clockwork technique which was to be later exploited as a permanent fixture in the Nazi propaganda machine. As Benjamin revealed:

...National Socialism needs anti-semitism. It needs it as parody. The attitude which the rulers artificially provoke vis-a-vis the Jews is precisely the one which would be natural in the oppressed class vis-a-vis the rulers. The Jew-Hitler ordains-shall be treated as the great exploiter ought to have been treated. And just because this treatment of the Jew is not really in earnest, because it is the distorted mirror-image of a genuine revolutionary action, it includes an admixture of sadism. The parody cannot do without sadism. The purpose of this parody is to make a mockery of the historical proposition that the expropriators shall be expropriated. (34)

Representations of mortal cruelty and expedient terror are liturgically installed in the prosaic life of the anxious mass. These appear as emblems on the horizon of the vision of technical progress. As was prefigured in the baroque

Trauerspiel, the urban cinema becomes the mechanical banner of the aestheticized politic essential to fascistic tyranny. The subsequent reification of the image of 'things as they are', connotes the regular destruction of living beings and the corrupt fabrication of false historical memory as content derived from the immediate social condition.

The long cycle of human cultural development is littered with ruinous objects, left as the sign of the convoluted ascension of the class struggle through its technical incursion into nature. The intuited pathos of the involuntary memory of destruction invokes sorrow at the continuation of the misery of the past: "...Ghosts, like the profoundly significant allegories, are manifestations from the realm of mourning; they have an affinity for mourners, for those who ponder over signs and over the future."⁽³⁵⁾ The past and the future converge in the mournful state of tragic recognition. The prophetic dream of an ideal justice antithetically parallels the murky anthropomorphic memory and widening historical path of monstrous, ancient social transgressions. For those who regret the loss of life and long for the redemption of epic unity, the symbolic fragments of the cultural ruins of the past apprehend the subject of the present in shocked anticipation of the phantasmagorical fate of the future.

The aesthetic ontology of cultural arrest involves the mortification of the experimental epistemological basis of culture into the dogmatic rigidity of 'things as they are'. The political articulation of unnatural death constitutes the emblematic basis of the ruin, and thus its narrative significance in the involuntary memory of history and the dialectical image of the collective unconscious. As an extreme example of the historical potential for the mechanical expression of aesthetic culture in axis with the pure interest of the state, "The baroque approaches realia in practise." (36)

Turning now to a related cultural antecedent of (and active cypher in) the dialectical image of the modern, the grotesque presents in abstracted distortion the trace truth-content of the ruination of human nature in life. The uncanny realistic quality of the grotesque derives, in part, from the involuntary truth content inherent in naturalistic mimesis, in part from the unique, unconscious experience of the creative subject. The truth of a buried past, clouded in mythic memories and fearful forebodings, mediates through to the iconic level of meaning, preparing for cultural renewal, framed in the dialectical image of frozen ambivalences:

...the enigmatically mysterious character of the effect of the grotesque seems to have been associated with its subterraneanly mysterious origin in buried ruins and catacombs. The word is not derived from 'grotta' in the literal sense, but from the "burial" - in the sense of concealment - which the cave or grotto expresses... For this the eighteenth century still had the expression das Verkrochene (that which has crept away). The enigmatic was therefore part of its effect from the very beginning...(37)

As the concrete cypher of historical progression from which invention and aggressive vitality have withdrawn, the ruin historically arrives in the immanent pose of the spent physical element, cryptic and muted. On the other side of the 'dialectical setting' an antithetical quality emerges on the horizon of mechanical prefiguration: "For where nature bears the imprint of history, that is to say where it is a setting, does it not have a numismatic quality?"⁽³⁸⁾ The aesthetic outcropping of the distortion of human nature proceeds into modern empathy with exchange value. The unconscious identity of the modern urban mass condenses around the spectacle of consumption. The numismatic glint of nature shines from the nascent aesthetic aura of the fetished commodity character.⁽³⁹⁾

Unexploited use values latent in nature, linger conspicuously on the threshold of history, empathetic with but still unrealized as exchange-value. The social mechanism had only allegorically devoured these values in the mass spectacle. The required industrial ingredients of commodification were but in the process of accumulation and concentration, though the necessary political design was aesthetically manifest in the mass relationship to inanimate objects, and the mechanically fated outcome of the representational spectacle.⁽⁴⁰⁾

Modern economic reality was prefigured on the horizon of aesthetic expression. From the mortal perspective of the creature, on the localised end of alienated ruin, the pragmatic

streamlining of the species which underpinned the imperious theological delusions of superiority and righteousness, meant the horror of physical debasement and social atomization.

The modern culture based on capitalist production continues the paradox in which technical advance augments the regression of the human condition. Paraphrasing Benjamin, culture arrives at the irrational situation wherein one's own social destruction seems to be a pleasurable, entertaining experience realized in the act of consumption . The urban mass, in its new capacity as variable capital and thus also as an aesthetic variation of the grotesque which in turn provides a new contextualizing iconic element for the objective abstraction of the dialectical image of history, assumes the form of a dualism in which cynical malice and utopian naivete wobble like a phantasm in a distortion mirror. The flaneur wanders the antinomous path carrying with him the culture icons of obedient robots and avaricious vampires grouping in the twilight of pluralism. The epic obligation to rectify the past is undermined by the expedient desire for technical utopia. Needless to say, 'certain modes of behaviour are eliminated' in the process. Through dialectical iconography the image of pragmatic irrationalism becomes an ever-deepening material topography which reaches back to the psychological origins of civilization in the iconic texts of remote mythology.

The pathological genesis of social ruin dawns with the antagonistic division of property, and physical and mental labour, which are already established conventions of production by the time of the early theocracies. The classless harmony of primitive collective aesthetic creation fragments in the onslaught of barbaric customs.

As previously argued, the ruin rises to the level of iconic signification through the collection and mortification of the events of history into the aesthetic setting of the performance. The archetypal symbol of the violent subsumption of objects, living and dead, appears in the dialectical image of Saturn. The grotesque icon of the Saturnian ruination of humanity in the infinite setting of the cosmos, expresses the subject of the archetypal antagonist toward whom all objects are compelled for destruction by the gravity of time. We are informed of the horrendous crime at the decrepit core of the class system: the tyrannical destruction of civilized offspring.

The relentless return of this pathological force is recorded in the dogma of astrological determinism, and the doctrine of the clockwork nation. The reification of Saturnian anthropomorphism in the modern era suggests the image of the archetypal gangster frozen in the execution of the rudimentary fascist gesture, within the setting of tyrannical rule. It has a baleful ambience.

In the baroque, the historical convergence of all of nature towards death was reflected ontogenetically in the fettered, melancholic contemplation downward into the centre of inanimate objects. This is the grotesque distortion of human time, the period of active repression and the 'creeping away' of erotic nature, which permeates the Saturnian ontology of aesthetic culture. The rotation of permanent conspiracy as the spatial reality of culture from the absolutist perspective, placed aesthetic culture in the role of pragmatic monument. The irrational spectacle of unnatural death was a permanent, affirmational function of the regime. The mechanomorphic deification of the technical apparatus which maintained the order, ever further contextualized the political structure of involuntary design. The dream of 'weapons which can think for themselves' has a long legacy; in kindred spirit the baroque Trauerspiel like the Nazi cinema, expediently restored the terror of the patriarchal property rite which referred back to the mob totem of teutonic barbarism.

In this connection, the imperative temperamental condition for war unfolds as a sequence of subjective states all primed for aggression. The altruistic homogeneity of sadistic power hinges on the ideographic penetration of the symbolic apparatus. Form and content cannot be abstracted from meaning. Aesthetic representation refers back to its own emergence, and its origin as the synthetic collective media of the expression of the meaning of existence.

Artistic culture in its natural spontaneity had a reproductive function as the abstraction of experience, and the (pro)creation of language. This potential epistemological beauty, as Benjamin remarked, grew with the deepening historical experience of the sensible human subject. But the Erotic nature of civilization does not explain the modern renewal of the aestheticization of violence and war. Thanatos, or the 'death instinct',⁽⁴²⁾ symbolizes the destructive archetypal unconscious operative in culture and the human disposition, further elaborating the primordial or anthropomorphic trace in the Saturnian icon. The ultimately entropic compulsion of the cultural organism to return to the inanimate state is fulfilled through the frenzy of aggressive acts which restore the quiet of dead objects. The material latency of this 'death instinct' informs the understanding of human debasement as it occurs ontologically locked in the false consciousness of object fetish. The pathological origin of the cultural entity realized in the nation state reveals, through involuntary knowledge, elements of the murderous unconscious of Saturnian authority:

...legend is, by its very nature, free of tendentiousness. Here the streams of tradition, which surge down violently, often from opposite directions, have finally come to rest beneath the epic surface which conceals a divided, many-armed river-bed. The Oedipus-theme shows...the reshaping of the legend is not motivated by the search for tragic situations, but is undertaken with a tendentious purpose which would lose all its significance if the tendency were not expressed in terms of the legend, the primordial history of the nation...(43)

The antinomous flow of the dialectic of history comes into the involuntary memory of the textual 'expression of conventions' as they fall away from the 'dialectical setting' of the spectacular iconic performance. The frames of frenzied destruction flit by and condense into the artifactual hard objects of textual documents. The involuntary memory of the written play records the ruin of performance of which the expressional

...outer form has died away because of its crudity. What has survived is the extraordinary detail of the allegorical references: an object of knowledge which has settled in the consciously constructed ruins. Criticism means the mortification of the works. By their very essence these works confirm this more readily than any others. Mortification of the works: not then - as the romantics have it - awakening of the consciousness in living works, but the settlement of knowledge in dead ones. (44)

This suggests that the atrophy and ruin of ideology carries the involuntary memory of its own cause of decline in the authority of criticism that can decipher the hieroglyphs of surviving form. This potentially deadening effect of criticism is seen in its constant relegation of aesthetic performance to textual objects. The ritual of exhibition here supplies the relative context for the 'arbitrary rule of the subject in the realm of dead objects'. Notably, in its baroque origin, this process was not a cultural counterpart of a democratic epistemology. The revolutionary inversion, and hence social antithesis of this early modern, unconscious, mechanical process of culture is seen

in the pedagogic strategy of the intelligensia to which Benjamin belonged.

This renewed advance from mortified textual theory to living applied performance transformed the technical function of the apparatus of cultural reproduction into its opposite: opening conscious reality. The mechanical reproduction of historical practise into informational data and shocking sensations sustains the cryptic essence of things as they are. These hieroglyphics conceal the truth while rendering the fact. The transformation of dialectical theory into revolutionary practise leads to the experimental transformation of mechanical technique into a theoretical instrument of critical behaviour, not its sanction. At least since the dawn of the nation state antagonistic competition has transmitted an aesthetic ontology of form versus content and mental versus physical labour. The intelligensia which Benjamin epitomized as a corner of the struggle for realizing epistemological beauty against deadly unconsciousness, cultural illiteracy, and political barbarism was overwhelmed by the fulfilled mechanization of the bureaucratic apparatus of production and publication in its ability to assimilate astonishing quantities of revolutionary themes without calling the nature of its own existence into question.

He specifically discusses this problem in "The Author as Producer":

...let us follow the subsequent development of photography. What do we see? It has become more and more subtle, more and more modern, and the result is that it is now incapable of photographing a tenement or a rubbish-heap without transfiguring it. Not to mention a river dam or an electric cable factory: in front of these, photography can now only say, 'How beautiful'. The World is Beautiful - that is the title of the well-known picture book...in which we see the New Objectivity photography at its peak. It has succeeded in turning abject poverty itself, by handling it in a modish, technically perfect way, into an object of entertainment. For if it is an economic function of photography to supply the masses, by modish processing, with matter which previously eluded mass consumption - then one of its political functions is to renovate the world as it is from the inside, i.e. by modish techniques.

Here we have an extreme example of what it means to supply a production apparatus without changing it. Changing it would have meant bringing down one of the barriers, surmounting one of the contradictions which inhibit the productive capacity of the intelligensia. (46)

Benjamin here provides revolutionary witness to the aestheticization of misery and ruin which has become the modern production of novelty. As the baroque Traverspiel aestheticized the apotheosis of technique, which ascended on the accumulation of broken bodies, the uncanny prospect of the modern currency of this dialectical image lies prefigured in the 'memory shock' of recognizing the legacy of the state which does not die because it is already the archetype of death (i.e. obsolete but active). In the affirmative ideographic nature of mechanical reproduction, a blurry prefiguration of the photomechanical process of historical

representation is traceable to an original unconscious homogeneity structured in the dialectical image form of the baroque Trauerspiel. The predictable mechanical fate of pragmatic irrationality, anticipated in the lingering asocial Saturnian element, rises up out of the cryptic image of mimetic ambivalence into the grotesque naturalism whose dominance extends the operation of the political mechanism into the modern production of the mass spectacle. Propaganda descends from dogma as self-interest and becomes aestheticized in the preparation of social capital. The 'gesture' of representation characteristic of the Trauerspiel is reciprocated by a particularly reactionary sensibility of brutal indifference to human suffering.

The aestheticization of this condition is tantamount to the vindication of the political tendencies coterminous with its cause. In the light of the Oedipal parallel, the psychological basis of tyranny seems clear. The filmic hypostatization of such shocking experiential moments (without textual interruption), describes a 'one-way' mimesis within which even the involuntary memories of epistemological beauty are sublated by fetish and subsumed in the mechanized interpretation of experience: "...Tireless efforts had been made to render the dioramas, by means of technical artifice, the locus of a perfect imitation of nature." (47)

In the panorama of modern cinema an epigone of cruelty is revealed where the baroque intriguer is subsumed in the fascist gangster. With the fetish of a pragmatic typology in the syndicated mass representational media comes a political fashion, a fascistic fashion which had previously prescribed:

...the ritual by which the fetish Commodity wished to be worshipped, and Grandville extended the sway of fashion over the objects of daily use as much as over the cosmos. In pursuing it to its extremes, he revealed its nature. It stands in opposition to the organic. It prostitutes the living body to the inorganic world. In relation to the living it represents the rights of the corpse. Fetishism, which succumbs to the sex-appeal of the inorganic, is its vital nerve; and the cult of the commodity recruits this to its service. (48)

The choral parade of fragments performed in the Trauerspiel interlude is continued in the collection of fetished objects which centres itself in the social mechanism of the mass spectacle. The later filmic semblance of this phantasmagoric order of iconic experiences shows the artificial empiricism of the representational hieroglyphics of ruin and emergent technique frozen in a mechanized conventional rigidity of gestural signification. The 'memoire involuntaire' of history is captured in this form, precisely because of the arresting power of convention. Its density foreshadows the mechanical absolutization of empirical representation destined in the forced naturalism of photography:

...With all the power at its disposal the will to allegory makes use of the 'dumb show' to bring back the fading world, in order to make it accessible to the unimaginative visual faculty. The tendency to achieve a balance, so to speak, between the atmosphere of the dramatic character's visionary perception and that of the spectator's profane perception - ...The visionary description of the tableau vivant is one of the triumphs of baroque vigour and baroque antitheticism... the world which becomes perceptible in the chorus is the world of dreams, and of meaning... the radical distinction between action and inter-
 lude also vanishes before the gaze of its chosen spectator. Here and there the connection is revealed in the dramatic action itself. (49)

The montage effect created by this allegorical lamination is unmistakable. The surreal quality of these mirror image psychological snapshots of experience, emanates from the involuntary memory of the collective unconscious, and the uncanny technical organization of its mass sensibility. It is as if the fetished objects are conveyed through iconic 'frames' which flow in mimetic anticipation of a full cinematic panorama - the phantasmagoric precursor of the diorama - in which the perceived and apparent automatism of each instant occurring in mechanical relation to the next narrates the prototypical decline of narrational and authorial authenticity. This narration also presupposes the debasement of the aura of originality and the deterioration of authenticity through the transference of cultural continuity to a debased and mindless power of reproduction. The following citations summarize the essential archetypal feature of mechanical resemblance:

...Hardly ever has there been a literature whose illusionistic virtuosity has more radically eliminated from its works that radiance which has a transcendent effect...Any adequate masking of content is absent from the typical works of the baroque. (50)

...the painting we look at reflects back at us that of which our eyes will never have their fill. What it contains that fulfils the original desire would be the very same stuff on which the desire continuously feeds. What distinguishes photography from painting is therefore clear, and why there can be no encompassing principle of 'creation' applicable to both: to the eyes that will never have their fill of a painting, photography is rather like food for the hungry or drink for the thirsty.

The crisis of artistic reproduction which manifests itself in this way can be seen as an integral part of a crisis in perception itself. What prevents our delight in the beautiful from ever being satisfied is the image of the past... Insofar as art aims at the beautiful and, on however modest a scale, 'reproduces' it, it conjures it up (as Faust does Helen) out of the womb of time...If the distinctive feature of the images that rise from the memoire involuntaire is seen in their aura, then photography is decisively implicated in the phenomenon of the 'decline of the aura'. What was inevitably felt to be inhuman one might even say deadly, in daguerreotypy was the (prolonged) looking into the camera, since the camera records our likeness without returning our gaze. But looking at someone carries the implicit expectation that our look will be returned by the object of our gaze. Where this expectation is met (which, in the case of thought processes, can apply equally to the look of the eye of the mind and to a glance pure and simple), there is an experience of the aura to the fullest extent. (51)

While the fatal stage property inhibited passion, the tableau vivant emulated the pragmatic conformity of nature to history. The temporal passage of these iconic elements modulated the frozen actions in and out of the dream state with paroxysmic shocks; and shock dissolves the aura. A comparable vision of reality appears in the photomechanical semblance of nature, as in the Trauerspiel. Both signify an historical turning point in the aesthetic reification of the experience of the meaning of existence. The performance principle of the baroque Trauerspiel - the violent cohesion of property and state and the local reflection of particular antinomies, finds its ultimate inhuman expression in the conventional separation of mental from physical labor, constituted on the ideological dichotomy actualized in the philosophic and physical separation of mind from body.

The allegorical juxtaposition of the meaningful fragments given off by the historical incursion with nature, namely the ruinous objects of the immediate past, with those numismatic properties (in nature) which foretell the magical transformation of use value (utilities) into exchange-value (commodities), hovers dialectically on the cultural threshold of the mass (ideological) spectacle. This horizon of ideographic anticipation embodied the dream of the ascendance of man on the material basis of technology, but at the expense of humanity.

The ideological function of the mass spectacle is obvious, it affirms the order in the representation of the immediate. This performance of the compulsion of object fetish directly reifies the monolithic inward crush of the national absorption of values. The constant pushing inward of gathering, centralising and internalization preordained the ensuing fragmentation of knowledge in its frustrated application to the world. Allegory itself falls into ruinous texts whose (performance) flittering expressionistic vitality has passed on to the next immediate antinomous moment of being. In this crucial structural precursor to photomechanical representation the potential for a redundancy of the asocial subjective content of culture is revealed as a normal, aggregate and even fashionable condition of the media. The narrative isomorph of this technical chaos touches the detail of barbaric nature in the anecdote of all the greedy little visionary dreams of sadistic malice which make up the vertical monolithic fascist ideal. Here an original art form may arise antithetically as a therapeutic medicine for the sick of mind.

The spleen of the 'imp of the perverse' present in the lyric cynicism of The Flowers of Evil is a truth gone from the urban symbolism of that futurist mountebank Marinetti to whom 'Mussolini is a motorcar of a man' and the 'gangster is a sharp dresser'. The 'sex appeal of the inorganic' which draws all

horrors from the eternal grave and restores them empirically is in the political contract of mechanized, aestheticized propaganda.

To reiterate, the mechanical separation of subject and object characteristic of the function of popular modern cinema is predated by the elemental semblance of the expressionistic 'new objectivity' found in the pragmatic theme of the Trauerspiel, callously indifferent now as it was dogmatically unconscious then, but engaging the anxious interest of the alienated mass:

...All the material, with its far-reaching implications, which it has been possible to uncover by a method which occasionally seemed vague, occasionally reminiscent of cultural history, forms a whole when seen in relation to allegory, comes together in the idea of the Trauerspiel. Our account may, indeed must, linger so insistently over the allegorical structure of this form for the simple reason that the Trauerspiel can assimilate as its content the subjects, which contemporary conditions provide it. (52)

The dialectical image provides us with a transparency that looks toward the phenomenal origin, and which unlocks the "memoire involuntaire" from the aura of experience, releasing up from the basic economic root of experiential reality, the residue of subjective being and epistemological beauty onto the constructive level of critical reception.

Dialectical iconography employs a class analysis in the creation and organization of the historical image representing the 'disintegration of the aura of authenticity.' Relatedly Baudelaire "...indicated the price for which the sensation of the modern age may be had: the disintegration of the aura in the experience. He paid dearly for consenting to this disintegration." (53) As Benjamin observed, with the invention of the modern technique of photography and its power of mechanical reproduction, the original value of art is subverted "...precisely because authenticity is not reproducible." (54)

The montage-like lamination of meanings into the 'dialectical setting' was the result of an extremely reactionary ontological turn of history: "...In the German Traverspiel the characteristic is that of the Counter-Reformation." (55) The altruistic folding of misery into the apparatus of representation conforms to the general mechanical characteristic of this social movement. The compression of the ruined landscape into interior property (as in cinema too) and the shrivelling of the experience of existence into mortified hieroglyphs, cryptic texts, and abstract codes infers the fated journey through the Enclosures and the ultimate breakup of the monarchical feuds and down the road toward the all-consuming abyss of the industrial urban center and the photographic iconography of the mass.

The seemingly universally exploding informational blizzard that blinds us from the memory of a lost nature, harmony, and identity, is the mirror reflection of the disintegration of historical truth content into consumable, reproducible fragments. This social capital is eventually spent. The closing system condenses toward state monopoly, the negation of the negation of 'the final solution', and the vanguard cultural detail of the premonitory revolutionary dream of the material redemption of the 'transcendental homelessness' of 'asphalt literature'.

...in the paintings of the baroque the cloud moves, darkly or radiantly, down towards the earth. (56)

It approaches the convoluted secular makeup of the entelechy of the class system. The phantoms from the labyrinth of the past appear on the phantasmagoria of the silver screen, and flutter by into the astonished expression of the engaged audience. It is absorbed by the false space of technical imitation. 'Without an admixture of sadism' it could not reify the teleology of war and 'the frenzy of destruction' which ontogenetically escalates to the cataclysmic anarchy of capitalist production. Mass reception in this mode is a technical process which undermines and overwhelms the organic process of class consciousness. The theoretical antithesis and revolutionary vitality of the proletariat lies in its improvisational ability to convalesce.

If Benjamin invented the revolutionary and objective analytic technique of the dialectical image, which further gave him the urgent knowledge of the political nature of the collective unconscious amassed by the mechanical reproduction of historical experience generally, then:

...Balzac was the first to speak of the ruins of the bourgeoisie. But it was Surrealism which first allowed its gaze to roam freely over it. The development of the forces of production had turned the wish-symbols of the previous century into rubble, even before the monuments which represented them had crumbled.

...There followed the reproduction of Nature as photography. The fantasy creations prepare themselves to become practical as commercial art. In the feuilleton, poetry submits to the exigencies of montage. All these products are on the point of entering the market as commodities. But they still linger on the threshold. From this epoch spring the arcades and the interiors, the exhibition halls and the dioramas. They are residues of a dream-world. The utilization of dream elements in waking is the textbook example of dialectical thought. Hence dialectical thought is the organ of historical awakening. Every epoch not only dreams the next, but while dreaming impels it toward wakefulness. It bears its end within itself, and reveals it - as Hegel already recognized - by ruse. With the upheaval of the market economy, we begin to recognize the monuments of the bourgeoisie as ruins even before they have crumbled. (59)

Chapter II Footnotes

1. Walter Benjamin, The Origin of German Tragic Drama, New Left Books, London, 1977, pp. 232-3.
2. Benjamin, "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man", ed. Peter Demetz, Reflections, Harvest Books, New York and London, 1979, pp. 325-31.
3. Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History", ed. Hannah Arendt, Illuminations, Schocken Books, New York, 1977, p. 254.
4. Ibid., p. 261.
5. This idea is raised by Benjamin in The Origin of German Tragic Drama p. 133, and again in "Doctrine of the Similar" (1933), New German Critique #17, Spring 1974, p. 65.
6. Benjamin, The Origin of German Tragic Drama, p. 133.
7. In the previously cited volume Charles Baudelaire: Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism, Benjamin related instances of the pragmatic location of this historical potential, p.48: "Technical measures had to come to the aid of the administrative control process. In the early days of the process of identification, ...the identity of a person was established through his signature. The invention of photography was a turning point in the history of this process. It is no less significant for criminology than the invention of the printing press is for literature. Photography made it possible for the first time to preserve permanent and unmistakable traces of a human being."
8. In specific regard to this critical modern aspect of the emergence of revolutionary sensibility, Benjamin added (Baudelaire, p.58): "To be sure, insofar as a person, as labor power, is a commodity, there is no need for him to identify himself as such. The more conscious he becomes of his mode of existence, the mode imposed upon him by the system of production, the more he proletarianizes himself, the more he will be gripped by the chill of the commodity economy and the less he will feel like empathizing with commodities..."

9. The following citations provide the particular comparative substance which places the origin of the photomechanical process in the involuntary ideographic structural semblance of the baroque Trauerspiel: (from the Origin of German Tragic Drama, p.180)...In the latest analysis structure and detail are always historically charged...the endlessly preparatory, circumlocutory, self-indulgently hesitant manners of the baroque process of giving form...

Above all it is the offensive, the provocative quality of the gesture which is baroque. Where man is drawn towards the symbol, allegory emerges, from the depths of being to intercept the citation and to triumph over it. The same tendency is characteristic of baroque lyric. The poems have 'no forward movement, but they swell up from within.' If it is to hold its own against the tendency to absorption, the allegories must constantly unfold in new and surprising ways...the fashionable bustle with which they appeared on each other's heels, from the middle of the century onwards! Allegories become dated, because it is part of their nature to shock...

(from Benjamin's Baudelaire, p.118):...This shock defence is depicted graphically in an attitude of combat...

(from Baudelaire, pp. 132-3):...technology has subjected the human sensorium to complex kind of training. There came a day when a new and urgent need for stimuli was met by the film. In a film, perception in the form of shocks was established as a formal principle. That which determines the rhythm of production on a conveyor belt is the basis of the rhythm of reception in the film.

Marx had good reason to stress the great fluidity of the connection between segments in manual labor. The connection appears to the factory worker on an assembly line in an independent reified form. Independently of the worker's volition, the article being worked on comes within his range of action and moves away from him just as arbitrarily. 'Every kind of capitalist production...has this in common,' wrote Marx, 'that is not the workman that employs the instruments of labor, but the instruments of labor that employ the workman. But it is only in the factory system that

this inversion for the first time acquires technical and palpable reality.' In working with machines, workers learn to coordinate their own 'movements to the uniform and unceasing motion of an automaton'...the crowd - uniformities of attire and behaviour, but also a uniformity of facial expression. Those smiles provide food for thought. They are probably the familiar kind, as expressed in the phrase 'keep smiling'; in that context they function as a mimetic shock absorber...

(from Origin of German Tragic Drama, p.179):...when, as is the case in the Trauerspiel, history becomes part of the setting, it does so as script. The word 'history' stands written on the countenance of nature in the character of transience. The allegorical physiognomy of the nature-history, which is put on stage in the Trauerspiel, is present in reality in the form of the ruin; In the ruin history has physically merged into the setting. And in this guise history does not assume the form of the process of an eternal life so much as that of irresistible decay. Allegory thereby declares itself to be beyond beauty. Allegories are in the realm of thoughts while ruins are in the realm of things. This explains the baroque cult of the ruin... 'Fantasy' the creative faculty as conceived by the moderns, was unknown as the criterion of a spiritual hierarchy...The writer must not conceal the fact that his activity is one of arranging, since it was not so much the mere whole as its obviously constructed quality that was the principal impression which was aimed at...In nature they saw eternal transience, and here alone did the Saturnian vision of this generation recognize history...In the process of decay, and in it alone, the events of history shrivel up and become absorbed in the setting...

(from Baudelaire, pp.131-2):...The feeling of being dependent on others, which used to be kept alive by need, is gradually blunted in the smooth functioning of the social mechanism. Any improvement of this mechanism eliminates certain modes of behaviour and emotions. Comfort isolates; on the other hand, it brings those enjoying it closer to mechanization... Of the countless movements of switching, inserting, pressing, and the like, the 'snapping' of the finger now sufficed to fix an event for an unlimited period of time. The camera gave the moment a posthumous shock, as it were...

10. Apart from the fascinating absorptive power characteristic of both media, a note of comparison should be made here as to the authoritative relation of scripted text to iconic representation. Whereas the Traverspiel 'shrivels' history into the setting through the abstraction of script, the cinema achieves the mechanical simulation of space. This development of the aesthetic abstraction of space present in the Traverspiel further achieves in the cinema a panoramic quality previously unique to the painterly aesthetic frame. The abstract space created by cinema though, seemingly has its forerunner in the like of the trauerspielian 'Globe Theatre', and 'theatrum mundi' which provide a 'window to the world', from the heart of urban density. The possibility then, that the function of film provides behaviourist therapy for dense metropolitan pathology, i.e., industrial dream release, supposes for fascist culture, the phantasmagoria of supreme false ontology and subsequently consciousness. The utopian facade of the laissez-faire arcades peels back to reveal the secularization of hell through film. The modern cinematic disposition for violence and cruelty refers to a cultural essence emergent in the mass redundant experience of the Trauerspiel.

In other words, the involuntary yet 'productive' sadistic horror exercised by the automatons subordinate to the Third Reich, finds an actual imperious root in the dogmatic uniformity of behaviour, and aggressive (mass) identity evoked in the 'modern' propagandistic function of the Traverspiel, e.g. religiously justified colonial exploitation and 'righteous' national ownership.

11. In the following citations Benjamin expresses the element of this irony emergent in the baroque, (from Origin of German Tragic Drama, p.127): ...the past...however fleeting its appearance, unleashes causality as the instrument of the irresistibly unfolding fatalities. Fate is the entelechy of events within the field of guilt...

(Ibid., p.132-4):...Fate leads to death...'The subject of fate cannot be determined.' The Trauerspiel therefore has no individual hero, only constellations of heroes...Destiny is not only divided among the characters, it is equally present among the objects.

It is characteristic of the tragedy of fate not only that a curse or guilt is inherited within whole families, but also that this is associated with...a fatal stage property.' For once human life has sunk into the merely creaturely, even the life of apparently dead objects secures power over it. The effectiveness of the object where guilt has been incurred is a sign of the approach of death. The passionate stirrings of creaturely life in man - in a word, passion itself - bring the fatal property into the action...In the drama of fate the nature of man, which is expressed in blind passion, and the nature of things, which is expressed in blind fate, are both equally subject to the law of fate...And the mysterious externality... does not consist so much in the way the stage-property constantly comes to the fore in the twists of the dramas of fate, but in the precision with which the passions themselves take on the nature of stage-properties...

And chance, in the sense of the breaking down of the action into fragmented elements or things, corresponds entirely to the meaning of the stage-property...the world of things, this world towers oppressively over the horizon of the Trauerspiel. The function of the mass of scholarly annotations is to point to the nightmare burden of realia on the action. In the developed form of the tragedy of fate there is no getting away from the stage-property. But alongside it there are dreams, ghostly apparitions, the terrors of the end, and all of these are part of the stock-in-trade of its basic form, the Traverspiel. All of these are more or less closely oriented around the theme of death, and in the baroque they are fully developed, being transcendental phenomena whose dimension is temporal, in contrast to the imminent, predominantly spatial phenomena of the world of things...

12. For a fuller expansion of this idea see Siegfried Kracauer's From Caligari to Hitler: a psychological history of the German film, Princeton University Press, Princeton New Jersey, 1974.
13. A paraphrase of Benjamin, "On the Mimetic Faculty", Reflections, p.335.

14. In the modern period we see the mechanical undermining and absorption of an 'erotic episteme' by an 'advertising sexus'. As a specific example of the cosmopolitan political process of mimetic empathy with metropolitan ideals and the aesthetic impact of the automatic retention of the impression of the past, Benjamin's observation of nineteenth century Paris offers insight (from Baudelaire, pp. 86-7):...At the beginning of the fifties the population of Paris began to accommodate itself to the idea that a great face-cleaning of the city was inevitable. It may be assumed that in its incubation period this clean-up could have at least as great an effect upon a good imagination as the work of urban renewal itself. 'Poets are more inspired by the image than by the actual presence of objects'... said Joubert. The same is true of artists. Anything about which one knows that one soon will not have it around becomes an image. Presumably this is what happened to the streets of Paris at that time...
15. Here Benjamin is paraphrasing Freud's Beyond the Pleasure Principle, in Baudelaire, pp.114-5.
16. Benjamin, "Eduard Fuchs, Collector and Historian", One-Way Street and Other Writings, New Left Books, Thetford Norfolk, 1979, pp.359-60.
17. Ibid., pp.350-1.
18. Similarly Benjamin observed (Origin of German Tragic Drama, p.166):...Everything about history that, from the very beginning, has been untimely, sorrowful, unsuccessful, is expressed in a face - or rather in a death's head. And although such a thing lacks all 'symbolic' freedom of expression, all classical proportion, all humanity - nevertheless, this is the form in which man's subjection to nature is most obvious and it significantly gives rise not only to the enigmatic question of the nature of human existence as such, but also of the biographical historicity of the individual...The greater the significance, the greater the subjection to death, because death digs most deeply the jagged line of demarcation between physical nature and significance... Significance and death both come to fruition in historical development...

19. This is an interpretive paraphrasing of Benjamin's, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," Illuminations, p. 260:...Not man or men but the struggling, oppressed class itself is the depository of historical knowledge. In Marx it appears as the last enslaved class, as the avenger that completes the task of liberation in the name of generations of the downtrodden...Social Democracy thought fit to assign to the working class the role of the redeemer of future generations, in this way cutting the sinews of its greatest strength. This training made the working class forget both its hatred and its spirit of sacrifice, for both are nourished by the image of enslaved ancestors rather than that of liberated grandchildren...
20. Benjamin, "Eduard Fuchs", One-Way Street, p.353.
21. Ibid., pp.360-1.
22. Benjamin, Baudelaire, p.112.
23. Ibid., p.113.
24. Ibid., p.148.
25. In the following citations Benjamin expands this idea, (from Baudelaire, p.140):...an experience which seeks to establish itself in crisis-proof form. This is possible only within the realm of the ritual. If it transcends this realm, it presents itself as the beautiful. In the beautiful the ritual value of art appears...
- (Ibid., p.145):...If we designate as aura the associations which, at home in the memoire involuntaire, tend to cluster around the object of a perception, then its analogue in the case of a utilitarian object is the experience which has left traces of the practised hand. The techniques based on the use of the camera and of subsequent analogous mechanical devices extend the range of the memoire volontaire; by means of these devices they make it possible for an event at any time to be permanently recorded in terms of sound and sight. Thus they represent important achievements of a society in which practise is in decline...

26. There is a comparison to this, in Benjamin's theory of baroque iconic language (from Origin of German Tragic Drama, p.180):...typical works of the baroque...lack any feeling for the intimate, the mysterious. They attempt, extravagantly and vainly, to replace it with the enigmatic and the concealed. In the true work of art pleasure can be fleeting, it can live in the moment, it can vanish, and it can be renewed. The baroque work of art wants to endure, and it clings with all its senses to the eternal...The range of the products, their intentional bulkiness and lack of mystery should be understood as correlative of such an attitude among the public. It was not felt that these products were intended to spread by growth over a period of time, so much as to fill up their allotted place here and now...
27. Benjamin provides insight here in his discussion of the correlation of commodity fetishism to subjective identity (from Baudelaire, p.165):...World exhibitions were places of pilgrimage to the fetish Commodity. 'All Europe has set off to view goods,'...said Taine in 1855. The world exhibitions were preceded by national exhibitions of industry, of which the first took place in 1798 on the Champs de Mars. This was a result of the desire 'to amuse the working class, and becomes for them a festival of emancipation'. The workers were to the fore as customers. The framework of the entertainment industry had not been formed. The public festival provided it...The world exhibitions glorified the exchange-value of commodities. They created a framework in which their use-value receded into the background. They poened (sic) up a phantasmagoria into which people entered in order to be distracted. The entertainment industry made that easier for them by lifting them to the level of the commodity. They yielded to its manipulations while enjoying their alienation from themselves and from others...
28. In this regard Benjamin relates an early modern expression of this process, (from Origin of German Tragic Drama, pp. 170-1):...not...in terms of the teleology of the Enlightenment, for which human happiness was the supreme purpose of nature, but in terms of a quite different, baroque, teleology.

Devoted neither to the earthly nor to the moral happiness of creatures, its exclusive aim is their mysterious instruction. From the point of view of the baroque, nature serves the purpose of expressing its meaning; it is the emblematic representation of its sense, and as an allegorical representation it remains irremediably different from its historical realization. In moral examples and in catastrophes history served only as an aspect of the subject matter of emblematics. The trans-fixed face of signifying nature is victorious, and history must, once and for all, remain contained in the subordinate role of stage-property...

29. Marinetti, from the "General manifesto of Futurism", cited in Art and Artists, ed. Peter and Linda Murray, Penguin Books, Middlesex England, 1977, pp. 170-1.
30. excerpt from the "Manifesto of Futurist Painting", in Art and Artists, p.171.
31. Not unlike the mass spectacle of today, the older Trauerspiel consumed and further reified empirical reactionary potential in the following manner (from Origins of German Tragic Drama, pp. 216-7):...the Trauerspiel can assimilate as its content the subjects which contemporary conditions provide it...The long-overdue interpretation of its content will - this much is obvious - have to get especially seriously to grips with those awkward motifs with which it does not seem possible to do anything except establish their material content. Above all: what is the significance of those scenes of cruelty and anguish in which the baroque drama revels? It is of a piece with the un-self-conscious and unreflective attitude of baroque art-criticism that there is not a torrent of replies...the human body could be no exception to the commandment which ordered the destruction of the organic so that the true meaning, as it is written and ordained, might be picked up from its fragments...If martyrdom thus prepares the body of the living person for emblematic purposes, it is not without significance that physical pain as much as ever present for the dramatist to use as an element in the action...
32. Benjamin, Origin of German Tragic Drama, p. 177-8.
33. Ibid., p.182.
34. Benjamin, "Commentaries on Poems by Brecht," Understanding Brecht, New Left Books, London, 1973, p.62.

35. Benjamin, Origin of German Tragic Drama, p. 193.
36. Ibid., p. 187.
37. Ibid., p.171.
38. Ibid., p. 173.
39. Comparably, the commodifiable attribute of the grotesque reveals aesthetic value captured as the natural trace in the imbricated process toward capital means, and the industrial production of modern novelty which entertains self-consciousness via the involuntary memory of technical astonishments (from Baudelaire, p.172):...Novelty is a quality which does not depend on the use-value of the commodity. It is the source of the illusion which belongs inalienably to the images which the collective unconscious engenders. It is the quintessence of false consciousness, of which fashion is the tireless agent. This illusion of novelty is reflected, like one mirror in another, in the illusion of infinite sameness. The product of this reflection is the phantasmagoria of 'cultural history' in which the bourgeoisie enjoyed its false consciousness to the full. Art, which begins to have doubts about its function...is forced to make novelty its highest value...

Just as in the seventeenth century allegory becomes the canon of dialectical imagery, so in the nineteenth does nouveaute. The press organizes the market of spiritual values, upon which first a boom develops. The non-conformists rebel against the surrender of art to the market. They rally round the banner of l'art pour l'art. From this slogan springs the conception of the total work of art, which attempts to isolate art against the development of technology. The rites with which it is celebrated are the counterpart of the distractions which transfigure the commodity. Both abstract from the social being of man...

40. The aura of original being, experience, or meaning is therefore of paramount importance in the process of the aesthetic reification of collective unconsciousness and the subjective mimesis of, that is false identity with, the hypostatic dualism and frozen contradiction inherently locked in the commodity structure.

Benjamin continues, (Baudelaire, p.56):...The enthronement of the commodity and the glitter of distraction around it was the secret theme of Grandville's art. The correlative to this was the ambivalence between its utopian and its cynical element. Its refinements in the representation of dead objects corresponded to what Marx calls the 'theological capers' of the commodity...

41. For a fuller account of the grotesque meaning of this theme see Benjamin's The Origin of German Tragic Drama pp.151-3; also the Warburg's (ie. Klibansky, Panofsky, Saxl)' Saturn and Melancholy, Basic Books, New York, 1964; and Malraux's Saturn, an essay on Goya, Phaidon Publishers, New York, 1957.
42. This concept pervades Freud's hypothesis in Beyond the Pleasure Principle.
43. Benjamin, Origin of German Tragic Drama, p.106.
44. Ibid., p.182.
45. Benjamin adds (from Origin of German Tragic Drama, p.175): ...the desire to guarantee the sacred character of any script - there will always be a conflict between sacred and profane comprehensibility - leads to complexes, to hieroglyphics...
46. Benjamin, "The Author as Producer", Understanding Brecht, pp.94-5.
47. Benjamin, Baudelaire, p.161.
48. Ibid., p.166.
49. Benjamin, Origin of German Tragic Drama, p.193.
50. Ibid., p.180.
51. Benjamin, Baudelaire, pp.146-7.
52. Benjamin, Origin of German Tragic Drama, p.216.
53. Benjamin, Baudelaire, p.154.
54. Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", Illuminations, p.243.

55. Benjamin, Origin of German Tragic Drama, p.157.
56. Ibid., p.39.
57. Benjamin, Baudelaire, p.176.

III Benjamin's radical pedagogy: narrational interruption, proletarian improvisation, and the problem of the polemical theory of 'epic theatre' in the therapeutic context of 'children's theatre'.

Again and again, in Shakespeare, in Calderon, battles fill the last act, and kings, princes, attendants and followers "enter, fleeing". The moment in which they become visible to spectators brings them to a standstill. The flight of the dramatis personae is arrested by the stage. Their entry into the visual field of non-participating and truly impartial persons allows the harassed to draw breath, bathes them in new air. The appearance on stage of those who enter "fleeing" takes from this its hidden meaning...(1)

Every proletarian movement, once it breaks away from the pattern of parliamentary discussion, sees the power of the new generation, among the many forces which it suddenly faces unprepared, as the strongest, yet also the most dangerous...mere phrases have no power over children. In a year, one can get the children throughout a country to mimic these phrases...Proletarian education must be built...out of class consciousness...Only that which is true can be effective with children...System...means a frame...proletarian education needs a frame, a relevant area within which the child is educated. Not, as with the bourgeoisie, an idea to which he is educated.(2)

...Nothing has corrupted the German working class so much as the notion that it was moving with the current. It regarded technological developments as the fall of the stream with which it thought it was moving. From there it was but a step to the illusion that the factory work which was supposed to tend toward technological progress constituted a political achievement. (3)

Historically, the various modes of communication have competed with one another. The replacement of the older narration by information, of information by sensation, reflects the increasing atrophy of experience. In turn, there is a contrast between all these forms and the story, which is one of the oldest forms of communication. It is not the object of the story to convey a happening per se, which is the purpose of information; rather, it embeds it in the life of the storyteller in order to pass it on as experience to those listening. It thus bears the mark of the storyteller much as the earthen vessel bears the marks of the potter's hand. (4)

...It is as if something that seemed inalienable to us, the securest among our possessions, were taken from us: the ability to exchange experiences.

One reason for this phenomenon is obvious: experience has fallen in value. And it looks as if it is continuing to fall into bottomlessness...Experience which is passed on from mouth to mouth is the source from which all storytellers have drawn. (5)

Benjamin's humanistic terror and apprehension of the aestheticization of technological expediency into an emblematic masque of altruistic sacrifice, parental guidance, and anti-intellectual 'common-sense', seems only natural in an individual from a subculture that was propagandistically earmarked for genocide. To avert this pragmatic but irrational cultural process which was violently displacing the enlightened epistemological basis of culture with the lumpen cohesion of self-righteous sadists and robots, namely the racial community of 'folk comrades', Benjamin undertook his committed research and analysis of the meaning of the past in the present and evolved a practical theory which possessed both immediate and

transcendent applicational validity. It antithetically parallels the antagonistic manifestation of the old and new order of reactionary ideals, mass fanaticism and dogmatic fixation. Benjamin aimed his instrument of epistemological beauty to intervene at the iconic basis of mass integration, particularly where it negated and parted from rational critical identity. In the structure of the 'epic theatre', and more completely in the plastic 'children's theatre', heuristic intentions and convalescent relationships were derived and generated through an improvisational technique which expressed responsibility for the critical alteration of the process of the representation of historical meaning and aesthetic truth. In this new configuration of aesthetic function and value, form and content were indistinguishable aspects of one totalized constructive aspiration to express and resolve.

Like 'a hole in the dyke' this particle of revolutionary culture gave a glimpse of the enormous potential for a topsy turvy 'Saturnalia' of social redemption, with no implicit limits. This would come with the removal of imposed liturgical standards and behavioural codes by the scientific rule which premised itself on the experimental discovery and creation of an improvised, original order of meaning and instruction.

The objective frame of the dialectical image and its semiotic range of iconic signification were theoretically at the instrumental disposal of Benjamin's committed or 'radical' pedagogy. The constructive evolution of his consistent humanism into a radical pedagogic form of expression hinged on the awareness of the need for an historical materialist epistemological basis of culture, which could organizationally brace against the streaming onslaught of mechanized, pathological ignorance .

It seems from the perspective implicit in Benjamin's work that the revolutionary interests of the proletariat could not be totally imputed by a proletarian intelligensia which was not at least in part comprised of organic intellectual proletarian elements. From the notion of instilling critical class consciousness instead of installing national hatred and antagonistic myths, to the revolutionary gestalt of the 'proletarian children's theatre', Benjamin's internationalist vision studied for the emergent particles of a dynamic synthesis of progressive humanity which would fuse in a democratic alliance based on the principle of the primal desire for peaceful harmony and integrated construction. Narrative fragments of a classless kind of collective society floated like dreams through Benjamin's commentary.

At the ethical base of Benjamin's pedagogic art glared a promethean class consciousness which struggled to avenge the suffering of oppressed ancestors. He thought to redeem the involuntary memory of a lost heroic nature and wisdom by drawing it into the technical context of the modern representational apparatus. Furthermore, the potential monumental impact of the epic narrational values inferred by Benjamin's theory imply the cultural opposite of the frenzied entelechy which 'constitutes things as they are', which he had traced to baroque ostentation and the duality of the allegoric perspective which viewed the unfolding of reality as an ever-deepening moribund puzzle.

In a time when the social capital of the film industry had degenerated into a Nazi tool for controlling the masses, it only made sense, from the perspective of historical materialism, that the cultural revolution not only imbricate the political, but also mediate it. The 'asphalt literature' of the intellectual refugees from the Third Reich provides a fragment of the insight necessary to evolve the means for constructively resolving class contradictions. The other way of resolving class contradictions is to drive them all into one monstrous fascist contradiction which augments to the hell on earth of perpetual war and exploitation.

Benjamin's dialectical imagery not only provides a frame for revealing latent technique in artistic culture, but also a method for its restorative progressive assimilation. The theatre accommodated such a frame. The dialectical image of the 'epic theatre' provided the instructional frame in which theoretical experimental discovery could take place. It was a kind of 'aesthetics laboratory'.

Benjamin's interest in redeeming the most deprived social elements seems to have been a natural convention of his class analysis, and the impetus of his critical socialist awareness of actual material conditions. The history of iconic language became his formal resource in the dramatic process of critically interrupting the spectacular gravity of false consciousness. The Nazi propaganda machine produced deformed memories and reactionary desires of raw self-interest on the scale of manufacture. 'The sex-appeal of the inorganic', which Benjamin had described as an expression of commodity fetishism, matured into the fascist 'taste' for war. The jaded urban cynicism of the alienated bourgeois Baudelaire still retained an authentic truth content of original critical experience, whereas in the fascist metaphors of Marinetti truth content had disintegrated into a flat reactionary romanticism of pompous accolades.

The hardfast authoritarian egoism endemic to the heart of the mass spectacle and the revolution of fashion, induced social amnesia and the deadening of class consciousness with dreams of fulfilled self-interest and racial superiority. The iconic field of aesthetic representation temporarily stood between pluralistic culture and fascist consolidation. For Benjamin, a revolutionary art form, for which the 'epic theatre' supplied a prototype, meant the intersection of constructive proletarian interest with the historically precedent iconoclastic tradition of the avant garde. In this way art could function as a textual synthesis which contextualized the present moment in the light of the greater movement of history.

Benjamin's theory of performance emerged at the cultural threshold immediately prior to the 'moment of barbarism' in which the Nazis would make the decisive gesture and seize monolithic control of the state. The idea that at this point in the process of syndication and indoctrination only direct pedagogic interruption could divert the otherwise mechanically inevitable war culture of corporate tyranny is revealed in the surviving documents in which textually embedded involuntary memory still reflects the antagonistic aura in which Benjamin rationally assumed immediate responsibility for a strategic method of class analysis and program: "...all the dialectical moments are subordinated here to the supreme dialectic...namely, the dialectic between recognition and education." (6)

The ominous prospect of the millenium of the Third Reich loomed like 'the dominance of dead objects over the baroque'. Benjamin's direct regard for the society around him became the immediate source of his improvisational theory of the political construction of epic identity, and his philosophy of change which subsequently (theoretically at any rate) would instil revolutionary cultural behaviour. Later, in reflection, alienated from his home, but still confident in the revolutionary potential for emancipation he exclaimed: "...I felt a power being exercised over me which was equal in strength to the power of fascism - I mean a power that sprang from the depths of history no less deep than the power of the fascists." (7)

Turning the historical situation upside-down became a radical necessity and ambition from Benjamin's perspective within the narrowing margin of cultural freedom. The positivistic retrenchment of liturgical cultural authority (in the socialist movement) over the proven configurative cosmopolitan potential intrinsic to the constructivist movement had a fragmenting and liquidating (cosmopolitan) effect, all the way out to the elemental frontier research of Benjamin's theory of performance. The organic cultural liaison of the revolutionary intelligensia was bureaucratically and autocratically eliminated. (8)

Though the ideological circumstances surrounding Benjamin's historical materialist approach to culture are perhaps blurry, they are not without shape altogether. The epic theatre's credo 'to reveal the means'⁽⁹⁾ in the production of critical consciousness, was consistent with what Benjamin discerned to be a traditional polemical potential latent in the performance media: "...the theatre's greatest and most ancient opportunity: the opportunity to expose the present."⁽¹⁰⁾ In apparent keeping with this principle the 'functional transformation' of Benjamin's pedagogic theory of performance, from the essential agitational condition of Brecht's polemical epic theatre, to the conciliatory therapeutic improvisation postulated in the Program for a Proletarian Children's Theatre which he composed in collaboration with the female constructivist Asja Lacis, signalled not only a lop-sided imperative in Brecht's world view, but also an immanent technical correction.⁽¹¹⁾ In another aspect, Benjamin realized that the success of the proletarian revolution in Germany hinged on an international alliance of democratic forces, and subsequently a cultural vanguard comprised of a proletarian intelligensia capable of integrating the values of traditional democratic intelligence:

...On the one hand, I am convinced that the proletarian revolution is necessary and desirable; on the other hand, I believe that the weaker the resistance of the bourgeoisie, the more rapid, the easier, the more successful and the less bloody this revolution will be...The proletariat today needs allies in the bourgeois camp, just as in the eighteenth century the bourgeoisie needed allies in the feudal camp. (12)

The potential urban catharsis presented in the concept of the 'children's theatre' indicates the abstract technique underlying the progressive accomplishment of harmonious integration. What is more, in the materialist analysis of the constructive configuration of culture, "the concept of technique represents the dialectical starting-point from which the sterile dichotomy of form and content can be surmounted."⁽¹³⁾ The full procreative effect of this 'improvisational' approach to the revolutionizing of the epistemological basis of culture has apparently never been explored, to the extent that the viability of this method is significantly realized and operational in the proletarian communities of today.

From this perspective it is obvious that the telluric impact of the constructivist movement has waned, but alas, not without leaving textual residues which still reveal and determine the potential revolutionary synthesis of mental and physical labor in the collective proletarian intelligensia, which lies in the historical fold of memory at a dormant level of cultural technique.

As an observation I should add that at least in a virtual sense, Benjamin's 'Program for a Proletarian Children's Theatre' has, perhaps, as much currency today as it has had at any other time. On the other hand, it is not surprising that in the inventory of proletarian inheritances, apart from subsistence items, magazines, a radio and a television set appear as the articles of greatest incidence.⁽¹⁴⁾ The instrumental domestication of these cyphric objects of mass cultural ontology condition the receptive subject pre-emptively as ideological appliances that plug into the 'panorama of history'. As Benjamin observed:

...it is no longer intelligence coming from afar, but the information which supplies a handle for what is nearest that gets the readiest hearing. The intelligence that came 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." ⁽¹⁵⁾

It seems that in Benjamin's model of history, the present infers the future from the knowledge of the past. The mass spectacle provides the contemplation of a redundant, reactionary present, which fills the void of the past and the future. Class analysis provides the traces of relationship which mediate the 'object in itself'. The performance principle of 'children's theatre' indicates a redemptive path out of this banal urban

alienation. The involuntary teleological ascendance of its technique and social power gives up a microcosmic dialectical image of an all-engaging peripatetic wave of discovery and instruction, the convalescent power of which was (after the aesthetic negation of class distinction) only halted by the censure of improvisation itself.⁽¹⁶⁾ In his study of the baroque, Benjamin related the prima facie message that in periods of autocratic rule, epistemological beauty mortifies into cryptic knowledge and theological hieroglyphs, which are in turn collected up in an hysterical state of fanaticism, crises and the emblematic assertion of established privilege.

Consequently, the collective human subject is seen as having been relegated by force to the reception of the expression of conventions. The evolution of the collective unconscious can be seen in the affirmation of the pragmatic mechanism of information, in that people need it in order to survive and function in empathy with things as they are, no matter how debased or wretched. At least since Benjamin's time, and prefigured too in the baroque, the mass media spectacle has served as an apparatus of political domination; but now the alienation of experience into separate yet redundant ideological fragments is more complete, as the process of the mechanical reproduction of culture has progressed.

Nonetheless, the improvisational tradition to 'recognize and educate', 'experiment and instruct', has remained a progressive, modern pedagogic responsibility. The history of thought equals the history of language, even in the deepest narrative of iconic abstraction. It is an involuntary condition of the material. This rational alternative present in dialectical reality antithetically parallels the reactionary essence of the modern, which Benjamin observed in: "...the rule of terror which parades before the world as the Third Reich makes all relationships between human beings subject to the law of the lie...because it is the distorted mirror-image of a genuine revolutionary action, it includes an admixture of sadism. The parody cannot do without sadism. The purpose of this parody is to make a mockery of the historical proposition that the expropriators shall be expropriated." (17)

Instead of the performed conditional knowledge represented in the 'epic theatre' as the 'untragic destiny' of the 'wise man', 'children's theatre' offered the stage itself, over to the accelerated intelligence of relatively spontaneous improvisational originality. The polemical pedagogic premise of epic theatre, regardless of its declared 'austerity of apparatus', was nonetheless technically surpassed by the therapeutic involvement of collective expression and unmitigated participatory scope of the spectacle prescribed and anticipated in the theory for a proletarian children's theatre.

The 'organizing function of interruption' could, mediated by particular authority, evoke the integrating constructive pleasure of epic recollection, as well as produce factional 'estrangement'. The performance of improvisation into reality implicated the transformation of epic theatre from a laboratory experiment into a resemblance to carnival celebration. It had potentially (theoretically) accomplished the involvement of the spectators in the spectacle of performance by way of a common interest in constructive play, not ideological criticism. In this process of the dissolving of the aura of false consciousness, 'interruption' had become gesturally synonymous with 'improvisation'.

Notably, the quality of authority had changed with the content of the interruption: a form of peripatetic gesture, instead of dictates of the liturgical rule. Technical control of the stage was relinquished to the constructive will and experimental need of the collective spectacle, in the initial authentic and exemplary gesture in the context of the reality of revolutionary social construction. Pleasure and reality had converged in the performance of this radical pedagogy. (18)

The productivist theatre's intended interruption of the mass produced cult of leadership was antithetically definable as a motive, not so much by the 'cosmopolitan rootlessness of the intelligensia', as by what it signified to be the urban basis of proletarian internationalism, which it represented in its subject.

...the storyteller...his very task to fashion the raw material of experience, his own and that of others, in a solid, useful and unique way. It is a kind of procedure which may perhaps most adequately be exemplified by the proverb if one thinks of it as an ideogram of a story. A proverb, one might say, is a ruin which stands on the site of an old story and in which a moral twines about a happening like ivy around a wall.

Seen in this way, the storyteller joins the ranks of the teachers and sages. He has counsel - not for a few situations, as the proverb does, but for many, like the sage...For it is granted to him to reach back to a whole lifetime...the man who could let the wick of his life be consumed completely by the gentle flame of his story. This is the basis of the incomparable aura about the storyteller...(19)

Oral history is the liaison of truth, from the memory of origin to the authentic gesture of the expression of knowledge as it arcs from the past to the immediate experience of the political moment. The storyteller symbolizes the constructive entelechy of consciousness. He interrupts as the untragic protagonist who relates the pathos of tragic destruction and collective guilt. Perhaps tragic sensibility is received in the interception and iconic citation of the teller's involuntary memory display of pragmatic meaning, physically impressed as it is, in the ruinous history of the collective unconscious.

Knowledge stands like a living ruin in the chthonic metropolitan experience of the subclass of propertyless urban proletarian children: devolved, delinquent and cynical. They evolve an acute, unique, revolutionary awareness of practical need.⁽²⁰⁾ In this regard, the immanently critical narrational wisdom of the 'untragic hero', his pedantic authority, was conditionally superceded by the improvisational proletarian children.

The recognition and improvisational inversion of mass (metropolitan) behaviour and indifference (which was conducive to the hardening class structure), could, at least theoretically, be mediated through not only the epic critical exposure of political interest represented in the epic theatre of Brecht, but also through the automatic (laboratory) classlessness of children's society. We see the decline of the cultural ontology in which "Construction occupies the role of the subconscious", and the conscious epistemological framing of the phenomenon in which "Every epoch dreams its successor". (21)

Benjamin explains the revolutionary key of accessibility to the veritable warehouse of historical experiential values:

To the form of the new means of production, which to begin with is still dominated by the old (Marx), there correspond images in the collective consciousness in which the new and the old are intermingled. These images are ideals, and in them the collective seeks not only to transfigure, but also to transcend, the immaturity of the social product and the deficiencies of the social order of production. In these ideals there also emerges a vigorous aspiration to break what is out-dated - which means, however, with the most recent past. These tendencies turn the fantasy, which gains its initial stimulus from the new, back upon the primal past. In the dream in which every epoch sees in images the epoch which is to succeed it, the latter appears coupled with elements of prehistory - that is to say of a classless society. The experiences of this society, which have their store-place in the collective unconscious, interact with the new to give birth to the utopias which leave their traces in a thousand configurations of life, from permanent buildings to ephemeral fashions. (22)

While the fascist pedagogues were suggesting things like in-class demonstrations of the ethnic contrasts of inferior 'Jew-boys' to superior aryan boys, at the elementary school level,⁽²³⁾ Benjamin composed his theory of constructive aesthetic intervention, from the observations and insights of his iconographic class analysis. The cruel indoctrinating measures enacted as national duty can be understood as the cultural establishment of the social mechanism in which "Empire was the style of revolutionary terrorism, for which the State was an end in itself."⁽²⁴⁾

The reactionary reorganization of culture was underway with the violent institutionalization and operation of barbaric sectarianism. Humanism was being overwhelmed and subsumed in the violent encroachment of the emblematic attitude in the motto: 'might makes right'. Craft unions and the like, capitulated with the re-emphasis of old teutonic exclusionary customs of ethnic restriction. The loyalty of the aryan tradesman was complemented in philosophy with the mortification of rational epistemology into the esoteric mumblings of ontological mysticism.

Ironically, the cultural experiment of the Lacis-Benjamin children's theatre demonstrated the potential of the primal state of constructive improvisational classlessness. This revolutionary form of proletarian collectivity supplied an analytic frame, and material basis for the anticipation of the

society without a state which was emergent on the horizon of culture. The consequent automatic fusion of mental and physical labor in this politicized aesthetic frame of unrestrained ability, generated a spontaneous and authentic model of civil entente. In this respect, Benjamin's programmatic strategy was a direct development of the objective premise of primitive classless society raised in the earlier anthropological speculations of Marx. ⁽²⁵⁾ But, the metropolitan telos of the immediate material process of this proletarian construction revealed a proof of the conciliatory value of this prognostic approach to culture, in the concrete microcosmic moment of the experiment itself, as it redefined the context of its own social being:

...We observed that the children already insisted on having their fantasies and acquired abilities realized in objects. An important stage, for this need has to be satisfied if the child's imagination is not to be led astray. We then moved to improvisations on concrete subjects...The improvising play meant luck and adventure to the children. They understood a great deal, and their interest was aroused. They worked seriously - cut things out, glued, danced, and sang. Texts were learned...When the different sections of the work moved toward a synthesis, we began to discuss the public performance. Then a demand for collective action arose - moral-political education in a socialist sense - and they wanted to present the play to the other children of the city. The public performance became a festival. The children of our studio went to the city's open-air theatre in a kind of mardi-gras parade. They carried animals, masks, theatre props, and parts of decorations through the streets, and sang as well. Big and little spectators joined in...(26)

Obviously this aesthetic representation of the classless state of society invoked a synthesis of performance and reality principles. The childlike depiction of the collective dream, and the performance of the integrative aspiration of humanity, demonstrated the subjective proletarian direction of constructive social ascendance, which is opposite the demagogic monument of the Tower of Babel. The return of the totemic function of the stage, at a higher level of contradiction (urban), accommodated this revolutionary redemption of value, as the spatial and expressional center of the recollection of meaningful experience.

In the theory of Brecht's epic theatre, the object was to critically estrange the anticipation of the spectator from the condition represented. Insofar as the theory of performance which Benjamin shared with Brecht was instrumental in evoking the recognition of divided class interests, it did not (at least as a theoretical conjecture) contain the dialectical anticipation of the classless reintegration which is conceivable in the inversion of the fundamental property relation immanent in the revolutionary gestural transformation emergent within the text of the performed reality of the proletarian children's theatre.

From the polemical function of the ideologically aimed reception defining the semiosis of Brecht's epic theatre, 'proletarian children's theatre' can be seen as an antithetical development in which the totemic element of the stage, as the space traditionally ordained for the abstract 'story' is seized as the collective device. The spectacle of reality does not mimetically conform to the authority of the apparatus, and the stage is used to educate, and consequently change, authority.

The authentic gesture of relinquishing the authority of control over formal content which was essential to proletarian children's theatre, was eventually subdued by the propagandistic mandate of doctrinaire factional interest which came to interrupt the educational priority of a constructive socialist culture. (27)

To what extent the internal events of the Comintern were precipitated in the 1935 Soviet Writers Congress, is hard to determine. This much is apparent: the sectarian arrest of proletarian culture under the liturgical authority and personal dogmatic rule of Socialist Realism generally (expressed more as a politic than an aesthetic), consummated in a redundant formalism which brought the international constructivist configuration of culture essentially to a halt; a movement in which Benjamin was an involved participant. (28):

One can declare that a work which exhibits the right tendency need show no further quality. Or one can decree that a work which exhibits the right tendency must, of necessity, show every other quality as well...it must be inserted into the context of living social relations. (29)

Paradoxically, in a rather dramatic gesture Brecht capitulated to the dogma. The mechanical pragmatism of his positivistic bluntness, and the simplicity of his opportunistic adaptation, astonished Benjamin:

21 July (Brecht)... 'There can't be a socialist economy in one country. Rearmament has inevitably set the Russian proletariat a long way back in history, back to stages of historical development which have long since been overtaken - among others, the monarchic stage. Russia is now under personal rule...

25 July. Yesterday morning Brecht came over to my place to read me his Stalin poem, which is entitled "The Peasant to his Ox." At first I did not get its meaning completely, and when a moment later the thought of Stalin passed through my head, I did not dare entertain it...It was in fact a poem in honour of Stalin, who in his opinion has immense merit...a different more enthusiastic manner of honouring Stalin is not incumbent upon Brecht, who is sitting in exile waiting for the Red Army to march in...there exists a suspicion - a justifiable one - demanding a sceptical appraisal of Russian affairs. Such scepticism is in the spirit of the Marxist classics...(30)

The resumption of feudal cultural mores antithetically to the sublimated empathetic mimesis of the capital mechanization of culture, reveals in Brecht, a personal detail of the conformist idealism necessary to the aesthete engaged in a

reproduction of meaning which is shackled in outmoded yet pragmatically opportune conventions. (31) Motto and picture, like form and content, may as the following citation infers, retain an involuntary dualism in the tension of the total image of meaning. The 'advantage' of altruistic content may constitute an actual regression of technique, and what is more, the restoration of a court relationship of the intelligensia to the autocratic power of bureaucratic rule:

...Commitment is a necessary, but never a sufficient, condition for a writer's work acquiring an organizing function. For this to happen it is also necessary for the writer to have a teacher's attitude. And today this is more than ever an essential demand. A writer who does not teach other writers teaches nobody. The crucial point, therefore, is that a writer's production must have the character of a model: it must be able to instruct other writers in their production and, secondly, it must be able to place an improved apparatus at their disposal. This apparatus will be the better...the more readers or spectators it turns into collaborators...(32)

Unlike the cult of the expert with its positivistic division of labor, the revolutionary intelligensia performed the opposite integrative aesthetic function aimed to "make the audience adopt a critical attitude, to make it think." (33) Simple as this may seem, it still signifies a profound difference with other forms of aesthetic representation which evoke empathy by installing the mythic ideals of propagandistic doctrine at the centre of the mass spectacle.

In the collective consciousness of constructivism, cultural attitudes have evolved beyond the constraints of the narcissistic self-interest of the bourgeois artist, and the retention of the ambivalent fettered relation to the cultural apparatus which is described in the subjective analogy to 'pernicious lover' or 'Saturnian father'. Creative responsibility finds a place in spontaneity, outside the 'expression of conventions'. Brecht's epic theatre does, in the theory of Benjamin, demonstrate the modern synthesis of expressionistic and symbolic ideographic currents. There is an authentic link from the expression of this theory to the indigenous cultural paths of regional satire, progressive naturalism and revolutionary romanticism. (34)

The truth content of class analysis is comprised at its very core, of the knowledge of the technical object of property and control. Considering the density of Benjamin's immanent critique of dogmatic organizational systems (and inauthentic representation), the contrast of the truth content automatic in (and natural to) the 'proletarian children's theatre', stands like an iconic mediation between the reality represented (critically revealed), and an as yet not totally formed moral class entity - the proletarian intelligensia as a collective force. (35)

The 'untragic hero' of Brecht's epic theatre was the emergent synthesis of narrational memory and immediate experience - the material sources of historically outcropping constructive intelligence, hence revolutionary class consciousness. (36)

As suggested in this chapter, Benjamin considered the negation of fascist culture to be possible only through the intervention of the revolutionary proletarian intelligensia, and its pedagogic interruption of the flow of technical events; otherwise the mechanical destiny of weapons would unfold in the political atmosphere devoid of cultural revolutionary activity. The moral righteousness of leadership must, to retain its authenticity, constantly premise itself on improvisational ability. (37)

The intellectual advance of social being was in the 'radical pedagogic' frame, tantamount to the deepening applicational originality of class analysis (which dissolves the mystery of technical authority), and not in the nostalgic retreat into feudal parable, nor emblematic utilitarianism, nor conformity to the taste of the authoritarian personality, which was imposed on the mass by the mechanized aggregate of iconic media, and from within the international constructivist configuration itself, instanced in the opportunistic demagoguery utilized by Brecht.

Benjamin's analysis of the nature of cultural authority is focused and informed by the history of the specific (aesthetic) technique of 'interruption', and the quality of its 'normal' attendant condition of 'alienation', 'estrangement', or 'astonishment': "...The damming of the stream of real life, the moment when its flow comes to a standstill, makes itself felt as reflux: this reflux is astonishment. The dialectic at a standstill is its real object."⁽³⁸⁾ Whether a mimetic parody of, or empathy with the reproductive mechanism of culture, this idea relates more to the photographic suspension of empirical reality, than to the natural integration of an oral history. From the 'secret message of the petite hordes', the dream of the ironic overturning of behavioural conventions (and their underlying economic basis), came to the threshold of culture as a revolutionary redemptive potential in the technique of radical pedagogic 'interruption' as theorized by Walter Benjamin, with the intensity of a provisional epistemological principle: "...The self-complacency of parliamentary stupidity comes straight from the fact that the adults keep to themselves."⁽³⁹⁾ Benjamin sought in his dialectical image of history for the elements of the emancipation of humanity, prefigured in the text of the past and emergent in the social ruins of the material present. Out of this could condense and evolve the sane epistemological basis of culture in which:

The performance is the great creative pause in the educational enterprise. It is in the realm of children what the Carnival was to the ancient cults. Everything is turned upside down, and just as master served slave during the Roman Saturnalia, so during the performance, children stand on stage and teach and educate their attentive educators...For what is truly revolutionary in effect is not the propaganda of ideas that here and there excites actions which cannot be consummated, and which are dismissed at the theatre exit in the first sober moment of reflection. What is truly revolutionary in effect is the secret signal of what will come to be, which speaks from the gesture of children. (40)

This ever renewing iconic gesture of constructive thought reiterates the meaning of the world picture Walter Benjamin revealed. It implores out to the chronological terminus of mass misery, and runs like the space of the street to the doorway of each critical detail:

The dialectic has no need of a far distance shrouded in mists: it is at home within the four walls of praxis, and it stands on the threshold of the moment to speak the closing words of the play: 'And "Never" becomes: "Before the day is out!" ' (41)

CHAPTER III Footnotes

1. Benjamin, "One-Way Street", Reflections, p.91.
2. Benjamin, "Program for a Proletarian Children's Theatre" subtitled in "Building a Children's Theater, 2 documents: Asja Lacis/Walter Benjamin" Performance, Vol.1#5 (Mar/Apr 1973), p.28: see my ft.nts. 11,16,18,20.
3. Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History", Illuminations, p.258.
4. Benjamin, Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism, p.113.
5. Benjamin, "The Storyteller", Illuminations, pp.83-4.
6. Benjamin, "Studies for a Theory of Epic Theatre", Understanding Brecht, p.25.
7. Benjamin, "Conversations with Brecht" (Aug. 3,1938), Understanding Brecht, p.120.
8. In this regard I cite Isaac Deutscher's Stalin, A Political Biography, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth England, 1972, pp.363-4: "...Stalin summoned the professors and lecturers of philosophy to his office and inveighed against their 'rotten liberalism'... Stalin's personal style became, as it were, Russia's national style...An indescribably dull uniformity spread over the Russian Press...It was as if a whole nation had succumbed to a ventriloquist obsession... While he was mercilessly flattening the spiritual life of the intelligensia, he also carried...the basic elements of civilization to a vast mass of uncivilized humanity..." (and further on p.564): "...Stalin appointed Andrei Zhdanov, to keep order in the rank of the ideologues and to chastise stragglers. The brief period of Zhdanovian censorship over the arts and literature...was to be long remembered by the intelligensia as one of the worst visitations they had to endure..."

9. This concept is raised in Understanding Brecht in connection with Tretyakov's constructivism. It seems plausible that the likes of Meyerhold's 'bio-mechanics', and Chaplinism would have been of specific technical interest to the 'epic theatre' and its theory which had direct involvements with its immediate antecedent, the constructivist configuration in artistic culture.
10. Benjamin, Understanding Brecht, p. 5.
11. I will attempt to demonstrate this difference in the following comparisons. Whereas in the following excerpt Benjamin seems to be rationalizing Brecht's empirical criticism (from "Brecht's Threepenny Novel," Understanding Brecht, p.81): "... The most important thing is to learn to think crudely. Crude thinking is the thinking of real men. There are many people to whom a dialectician means a lover of subtleties. In this connection it is particularly useful when Brecht puts his finger on 'crude thinking' which produces dialectics as its opposite, contains it within itself, and has need of it. Crude thoughts belong to the household of dialectical thinking precisely because they represent nothing other than the application of theory to practise: its application to practice, not its dependence on practice...", by early August, 1938 Benjamin has apparently fathomed Brecht's pragmatic opportunism (from "Conversations with Brecht," Understanding Brecht, p.121): "...Early August. 'In Russia there is dictatorship over the proletariat. We should avoid dissociating ourselves from this dictatorship for as long as it still does useful work for the proletariat - i.e., so long as it contributes towards an agreement between the proletariat and the peasantry, with predominant recognition of proletarian interests.' A few days later Brecht spoke of a 'workers' monarchy', and I compared this organism with certain grotesque sports of nature dredged up from the depths of the sea in the form of horned fish or other monsters."

In the following comparison the notion of catharsis rejected by Brecht as a negation of the technique of 'astonishment' or interruption is revived by Benjamin as viable in the process of social involvement which briefly appeared in the gestalt of the 'children's theatre'. Certainly its value is restored in a different context, but notably, apparently a context which Brecht's 'crude thinking' did not comprehend (from Benjamin, "What is Epic Theatre? (Second version)", Understanding Brecht, p.18): "...what Brecht refuses is Aristotelian catharsis, the purging of the emotions through identification with the destiny which rules the hero's life.

The relaxed interest of the audience for which the productions of epic theatre are intended is due, precisely, to the fact that practically no appeal is made to the spectator's capacity for empathy. The art of epic theatre consists in arousing astonishment rather than empathy. To put it as a formula, instead of identifying itself with the hero, the audience is called upon to learn to be astonished at the circumstances within which he has his being..." Benjamin's analysis of the technique develops (from "The Author as Producer", Understanding Brecht, p.100): "...Epic theatre does not reproduce conditions; rather, it discloses, it uncovers them. This uncovering of the conditions is effected by interrupting the dramatic processes; but such interruption does not act as a stimulant; it has an organizing function..." But upon arriving at the theory of 'children's theatre' the mechanical separation of spectacle and audience has gone with the 'exorcism of sensationalism'. The authority of the spectacle which reveals through astonishment the critical interest of the individual, has altered, and now the spectacle becomes the vehicle of a new order of conditions, the theatre is transformed into the condition of integration and shared identity. The textual source of critical recognition is transformed into the actual frame of revolutionary improvisation (from "Program for a Proletarian Children's Theatre", Performance, Vol.1#5, p.31): "...Every child's gesture is a creative impulse which corresponds exactly to the receptive one. The developing of these gestures into various forms of expression, such as the production of theatrical props, paintings, recitation, dance and improvisation, falls into separate sections. In all of these, improvisation is central; for in the final analysis the performance is merely their improvised synthesis. Improvisation rules; it is the condition from which the signals, the signal-giving gestures, arise...All child performances are remedied by the "moment" of the gesture, not by the immortality of the products...the director steps completely into the background, since no pedagogic cleverness can predict how children will combine the movements and skill they have learned with thousands of surprising variants, into a theatrical totality..." A potential for urban catharsis stood to follow.

12. Benjamin, "The Author as Producer", Understanding Brecht, p.101. Here Benjamin is quoting Aragon on April 27, 1934, supportively.
13. Ibid., pp.87-8.
14. This is not intended to suggest that culture has reached an irreversible culturally absolute and permanently fixed point in the unilateral technocratic, economic functional relation of master to robot. The relation suggested does not expose or recognize the organic pocket of critical intelligence. In the collaboration of interests which determine cultural reception, the expert is prone to the division of mental and physical labor. His role perpetuates the mystery of authority in the judgment of ideological representations. At the other end of the social organism incursion and antagonism never cease at the physical point of industrial production where history crashes into nature at the economic level of technique. In the following excerpt from 'Benjamin - Adorno Correspondence', Adorno infers (falsely I believe) Benjamin's collaboration in a concept which apparently endorses a casted function of intellection, while in his apparent capacity as an 'expert' seemingly denies the possibility of the natural emergence and vanguard significance of proletarian intellection. From New Left Review vol.81(Sept/Oct)1973, Adorno to Benjamin (March 18, 1936) : "...The goal of the revolution is the aboliton of Fear. Therefore we need have no fear of it, nor need we ontologize our fear. It is not bourgeois idealism if, in full knowledge and without mental prohibition, we maintain our solidarity with the proletariat instead of making of our own necessity a virtue of the proletariat, as we are always tempted to do - the proletariat which itself experiences the same necessity and needs us for knowledge as much as we need the proletariat to make the revolution..."
15. Benjamin, "The Storyteller", Illuminations, p.89.
16. In this view, the gestalt of the 'children's theatre' opens to the negation of negation, and the corrected renewal of the "...Aristotelian 'catharsis', the purging of the emotions through identification with the hero's turbulent destiny: a destiny made turbulent by the movement of a wave which sweeps the audience along with it. (The famous peripeteia is the crest of the wave which, breaking, rolls forward to the end.)..." From Benjamin, "The Country Where it is Forbidden to Mention the Proletariat", Understanding Brecht, p.38.

17. Benjamin, "Commentaries on Poems by Brecht", Understanding Brecht, p.62.
18. In this regard I cite Asja Lacis' "Memoire", Performance, vol.1#5 (March/April, 1973), p.27: "...Our method had proven itself. We demonstrated that it was correct for adult leaders to keep themselves entirely in the background. The children believed that they had done everything themselves - and they did it in play. Ideology was not forced upon them, nor was it drilled into them. They appropriated all that corresponded to their experience. We, too, the educators, learned and saw many new things: How easy it is for children to adapt to situations, how inventive they are, and how sensitively they react: Even children, who seemed untalented and limited, demonstrated unexpected abilities and talents. At the performance tensions were surprisingly released, and this made the wild imagination of their inventions visible...".
19. Benjamin, "The Storyteller", Illuminations, pp. 108-9.
20. Asja Lacis, 'A Memoire,' from Performance vol#5, 1973: "...After a while the Besprisorniki leader Vanjka strode into the middle of the group of children who were acting and signalled to his gang. They bragged about murders, arson, robberies and, while doing this, they all sought to outdo one another in horror. Then they stood up and looked at our children with scornful condescension: "That's what real robbers are like!" According to all the rules of children's education I should have interrupted their wild and shameless speeches - but I wanted to gain some influence over them. And I actually won the game -theBesprisorniki returned and became active members of our theatre..." In a related point Benjamin considered the significance of street children in Understanding Brecht, 'Commentaries on Poems by Brecht', p.67: "Perhaps we might call to mind another partisan or defender of unwashed children: Fourier, whose phalanstery was not only a socialist utopia but also a pedagogical one. Fourier divides the children of the phalanstery into two major groups: the petites bandes and the petite hordes. The petites bandes occupy themselves with gardening and other pleasant tasks. The petites hordes have to perform the dirtiest duties...In the children of the petites hordes Fourier saw four great passions at work: arrogance, shamelessness, and insubordination; but the most important of all was the fourth: le gout de la salete, a taste for dirt.

The reader thinks...of the child who would not wash and wonders: perhaps it only rubs its face in ash because society has failed to channel its passion for dirt towards a good and useful purpose? Perhaps it only wants to stand in society's way like a stumbling-block, so as to issue a mysterious warning..."

21. Benjamin, Baudelaire, pp. 158-9.
22. Ibid., p.159.
23. The following excerpt throws a general light on the 'degeneration cum recalcitrance' duality, active in German educational culture in the buildup towards the fascist state (from Universities in Germany 1930-1970, by Gerhard Hess, p.18): "...This respect in which universities are generally held is the more remarkable as in the period of the Weimar Republic the universities did little about their relations with society...apart from one or two isolated exceptions, this was a period of almost complete political apathy which was fostered by ideas of the independence and freedom of a supposed republic of scholars - at least this was true of many, though perhaps not the majority - and was one expression of the dissatisfaction of the more conservative elements with the young democracy and its leaders. On the other hand it also explains why in 1933 German universities either went along with the Nazis without demurring or else enthusiastically hailed them as representatives of a revived national spirit."
24. Benjamin, Baudelaire, p.158.
25. from Karl Marx, "Artistic Talent," The German Ideology (part one), International Publishers, New York, 1970, p.109: "...The exclusive concentration of artistic talent in particular individuals, and its suppression in the broad mass which bound up with this, is a consequence of division of labour. If, even in certain social conditions, everyone was an excellent painter, that would not at all exclude the possibility of each of them being also an original painter, so that here too the difference between 'human' and 'unique' labour amounts to sheer nonsense. In any case, with a communist organization of society, there disappears the subordination of the artist to local and national narrowness, which arises entirely from division of labor, and also the subordination of the artist to some definite art, thanks to which he is exclusively a painter, sculptor, etc., the very name of his professional development and his dependence on division of labor. In a communist society there are no painters but at most people who engage in painting among other activities."

26. Asja Lacis, Ibid., pp.26-7.
27. The following throws light on the international relevance of this matter. Jack Zipes from the introduction to "Building a Children's Theatre," Performance, vol.1#5, pp. 23-4: "...her program - as outlined by Benjamin - was never put into effect: the 1929 depression and the priorities of anti-fascism prevented it. When Lacis returned to the Soviet Union in 1930, the political tide had changed, and conditions weren't favourable for her project there either. Under Stalin, her concept of theatre for and by children was completely rejected in favour of a theatre for children by adults - one that portrayed, in history and fairy-tale plays, accepted forms and models of behaviour. Lacis' theatre, using contemporary experience and the methods of observation and improvisation to develop childrens' critical and creative abilities, was considered too dangerous by an authoritarian government which relied on compulsion for educating children. In 1938, Lacis was sent into ten-year exile in Kazakhstan. After this she moved with her husband to Riga; little is known about her present theatre work. Lacis' experiments are not described in Soviet history books on children's theatre; her name is rarely, if ever, mentioned. The same is true in East Germany.

According to alternative's editors, Benjamin's text was so long suppressed because his literary executors, Theodor W. Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, wanted to play down Benjamin's Marxist position, which had become stronger toward the latter part of his life - the 1928 "Program" was written at a time when Benjamin contemplated joining the Communist Party...Benjamin, after all, assumed that his program would be carried out by Communists in a state or city controlled by Communists, and his ideas about class consciousness and political parties are predicated on the class alignments and political possibilities of Europe, 1928. Further, he makes no distinction between age groups and views adult participation in a negative light."

Inadvertently Lenin verified Benjamin's proletarian suspicion of Stalins' philistinism, for example from Lenin, "Letters to the Congress (1922-23)", Collected Works Volume 36, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1971, p.596:

"...Addition to the Letter of December 24, 1922: Stalin is too rude and the defect, although quite tolerable in our midst and in dealings among us Communists, becomes intolerable in a Secretary-General. That is why I suggest that the comrades think about a way of removing Stalin from that post and appointing another man in his stead who in all other respects differs from Comrade Stalin in having only one advantage, namely, that of being more tolerant, more loyal, more polite and more considerate to the comrades, less capricious, etc. This circumstance may appear to be a negligible detail. But I think that from the standpoint of safeguards against a split and from the standpoint of what I wrote above about the relationship between Stalin and Trotsky, it is not a detail, or it is a detail which can assume decisive importance."

And further, Ibid. vol.45, "File 813/Topsecret Personal/ To Comrade Stalin", p.607-8: "Copy to Comrades Kamenev and Zinoviev/Dear Comrade Stalin: You have been so rude as to summon my wife to the telephone and use bad language. Although she had told you that she was prepared to forget this, the fact nevertheless became known through her to Zinoviev and Kamenev. I have no intention of forgetting so easily what has been done against me, and it goes without saying that what has been done against my wife I consider having been done against me as well. I ask you, therefore, to think it over whether you are prepared to withdraw what you have said and to make your apologies, or whether you prefer that relations between us should be broken off."

Interestingly, Stalin's overt animosity for Krupskaya, Lenin's wife (see Lenin's Collected Works, 1923) may explain the later dismantling of her education program as not only the result of his sexist resentment against women intelligensia, but also as part of his (thermidor) revenge of the personality cult in its destruction of the fettered object comparable to the Luddite destruction of machines, or the Chinese Red Guards' irrationalism of the 60's.

Needless to say, the best need not be the most popular. The implication of Lacis' work in this more general political calumny may be inferred from Zipes (Ibid.): "...In 1926...she had to leave hurriedly for Moscow. There she was supposed to work in the municipal theatre, but seeing so many Besprisorniki (vagabond children) on the streets, she began building a children's theatre in a Moscow summer park. She then pushed through a project to organize cinema for children, supported by Krupskaja, Lenin's wife, a leading theoretician on children's education, whom Lacis frequently saw. Because of her work in cinema, she was delegated to go to Berlin as a cultural attache for educational films and to establish working relations with the League of Proletarian Writers..."

28. To qualify, Benjamin cites Lukacs' Theory of the Novel in regard to his own essay on 'The Storyteller'. Here Lukacs' dialectic of epic integration and problematic culture are valid comparative instruments. Lukacs' later 'significant dynamic structure', and 'significant comprehensive structure' has lost touch with unpredictable ingenuity and atrophies into a structural mysticism not dissimilar to that mentioned prior of Adorno.

The genuine emergence of the proletarian novel on the wave of revolutionary experience and enthusiastic literacy was directly assimilated by constructivist technique, as Meyerhold's staging of Serafonovich's Iron Flood reveals in its procreative incentive to extend epistemological beauty. The Meyerhold-Chaplin influence, and the later incident of the 'Hollywood 10', suggests the fragmented and uneven resumption of the constructivist configuration in modernism. The 'Mexican muralist movement' also bears trace of this revolutionary influence.

29. Benjamin, "The Author as Producer", Understanding Brecht, pp. 87-8.
30. Benjamin, "Conversations with Brecht", Understanding Brecht, p.117. It is obvious that Brecht's demagoguery showed cunning in its choice of a peasant metaphor, as is determined in the following excerpt (from Brecht's Collected Poems), July 25, 1938: The Peasant's Address to his Ox: O ox, our godly puller of the plough/Please humour us by straight, and kindly/Do not get the furrows crossed./Lead the way, o leader, gee-up!...

31. Benjamin, "The Author as Producer" (April 27, 1934), Understanding Brecht, p.102: "...The solidarity of the expert with the proletariat - and therein lies the beginning of this solution - can never be other than mediated."
32. Ibid., p.98.
33. Ibid., p.36.
34. Brecht's epic theatre owed something to the productive liaison it maintained with Tretyakov, Meyerhold and the like. The corollaries of this contextualizing movement suggest elemental emergences as diverse as the avante gardism of Osip Brik and Novilef, or the dialectical objectivism of the Bakhtin school, or Professor Deborin, or the experiment of 'Opojazz'.
35. from 'No-Man's Land': On Walter Benjamin's 'Destructive Character', from Diacritics 8 #2, 1978, by Irving Wohlfart, pp.47-65: "...Brecht felt impelled to protect the interests of socialist praxis. 'Depth doesn't get you ahead', he objected after reading Benjamin's essay on Kafka. Plumbing the depths, Benjamin replied, was his way of 'heading for the antipodes' (U.B., p.110). From the destructive tension between materialism and metaphysics - neither a clear-cut choice (Brecht vs. Scholem) nor their dialectical harmony (Adorno) - the latter was not, in short, the only one that stood to gain...
- His various associates were, despite their differences, all agreed that such a tension of contraries was likely to result in their mutual neutralization. Benjamin for his part looked to their liberating intensification to spark energies which might explode the bastions of the common enemy. The danger he saw lay not in overextending oneself but in an absence of generative tension between potential allies."
36. from the introduction to Gramsci's Prison Notebooks, pp. 3-4: "...The working class, like the bourgeoisie before it, is capable of developing from within its own ranks its own organic intellectuals...It is through this assumption of conscious responsibility, aided by absorption of ideas and personnel from the more advanced bourgeois intellectual strata, that the proletariat can escape from defensive corporatism and economism and advance towards hegemony..."

37. Dave Laing citing Lenin in The Marxist Theory of Art, p.23. : "...In this field greater scope must undoubtedly be allowed for personal initiative, individual inclination, thought and fantasy, form and content. All this is undeniable; but all this simply shows that the literary side of the proletarian party cannot be mechanically identified with its other side." - Notably, later under Stalin, the demise of the "Fellow Travellers" alliance evinced in the nascent contradiction revealed in the prior Lenin citation, deadened awareness of the crucial need for liaison, and progressive tolerance of pluralistic configuration in artistic culture: the politic of Constructivism.
38. Benjamin, "What is Epic Theatre (First version), Understanding Brecht, p.13.
39. Benjamin, "Program for a Proletarian Children's Theatre", Performance, vol. 1#5, 1973, p.31.
40. Ibid., p.32.
41. Benjamin, "A Family Drama in the Epic Theatre", Understanding Brecht, p.36.

IV. Epilogue Dialectical iconography and semiosis
 in narrative philosophy: Benjamin's humanistic
 seriousness and some textual fragments related
 to the archetypal Saturnian conflation of
culture.

...the nature of Saturn...expelled from the threshold of the gods, Saturn exerted his powers on "the opposite end of the world's axis" and ruled the "foundations" of the universe, that is, the lowest part of the heavens...with the result that he also saw the world from the opposite perspective, from an essentially inimical standpoint (1)...the churlish, the petty, the selfish, misers, slanderers and the like came to among "Saturnine" people...(2) On the one hand he was the father of gods and men, on the other hand the devourer of children, eater of raw flesh... the consumer of all, who "swallowed up all the gods", and exacted human sacrifice from the barbarians; he castrated his father Uranus with the very sickle which, in the hand of his son, repaid measure for measure and made the procreator of all things forever infertile - a sickle which, prepared by Gaea, was both an instrument of the most horrible outrage and at the same time of harvesting...(3)

He is bad, masculine, in daytime cold, dry, melancholy, presides over fathers...over old age, and dotage... the worried, the lowborn, the heavy, the dead, magicians, demons, devils, and people of ill fame - all this when his condition is good. But when he is evil, he presides over miserly gains, over old and impossible things, far travels, long absence, great poverty, avarice...He has the faith of Judaism, black clothing; of days Saturday, and the night of Wednesday...To him belong...everything whatsoever that is black, and goats and bullocks...(4)

"... 'Truth lies in extremes... One look at the museums of ethnography will vindicate this proposition... The grotesque is the ne plus ultra of the visual imagination... In this sense grotesque forms are at the same time an expression of the exuberant health of an age... There is of course no question that the driving force behind the grotesque may also be the exact opposite. Decadent times and sick brains, too, tend to produce grotesque forms. In such cases the grotesque is a shocking reflection of the fact that for the times and individuals concerned, the problems of the world and existence appear insoluble... Which of these two tendencies is the creative force behind a grotesque fantasy can be recognized at a glance'..." (5)

Even though chronology places regularity above permanence, it cannot prevent heterogenous, conspicuous fragments from remaining within it... the scattered fragments of genuine historical experience... To his horror, the melancholy man sees the earth revert to a mere state of nature... (6)

The fact, however, that the developing man actually takes form not within the natural sphere but within that of mankind, in the struggle for liberation, and that he is recognized by the posture that the fight with exploitation and poverty stamp upon him, that there is no idealistic but only a materialistic deliverance from myth... (7)

...madmen and the Carnival existed. In painting, the fantastic was in a minor category; had it become frightful or horrible it would have been put in a forbidden one. Goya could not raise this prohibition except by using his art in the attempt to destroy, not the art of reality, but the art of what was then called the ideal... (8)

Goya was not groping towards God, but towards a power older and beyond salvation, the everlasting Saturn... since painting began, what painter but Goya would have been able to realize the depth of the endless corridors around the imagined spot of blood that all the perfumes of Arabia would never wash away?...

Goya wanted to rescue him [('man', my note)] by finding again the forgotten rumbling of the voices that he heard beneath the generations like the everlasting murmur of the beach beneath the endless beating of the waves...He transformed the function of painting; no longer was it to be used to beguile the dilettante or to annex an imaginary world by beautifying it. He proclaimed a new right of the painter...(9)

When he allegorizes his country he spreads over it the wings of time...he repeated it with a figure of slaughter. At last, Saturn...We have, at one and the same time, the other world and our world suddenly grown fertile, our world by night, lit by the gleam of a dead star and carrying, in the implacable orbit of the planets, its throbbing dreams whose beat is as deaf, as old, and as unconquerable as the beating of the heart of man. Goya's genius moved now in a world of correspondences where the thin strains of a living man summoned up the deep orchestra of the immemorial past.(10)

The iconography of Saturn comprises at its erudite core a critical constellation of objective humanism. Benjamin's involvement with this narrative philosophic construction is, at several symbolic hard points of the text, overtly illustrative of the historical verifiability of the Saturnian archetype in culture. Benjamin's dread of the eternal return of reaction was semantically implicit throughout his works. (11) The idea that this kind of intellectual aesthetic sensibility could only exist within the semiotic relations within language, gives rise to the plausibility that Benjamin's insight is part of a filament of comprehension which has always crystallized

in antithesis to the material cause of Saturnian iconography.

The icon of Saturn absorbs all that is pathological in culture into its field of inference. The long cyclical process of the state, that is, its day by day consumption of individuals turning on the lathe of anxiety and variegated social pressures, is in the eye of dialectical iconography the image in which the deep narrative text of cultural antagonism appears involuntarily retained in the swell of the crowd, in the entelechy of the mass. The experience of destruction need not necessarily be related through conscious narrative, but the anticipation of its resolution must be expatiated in theory. The Saturnian iconography of Benjamin, Warburg, Malraux, and related others⁽¹²⁾ provides the perspective on material horror, which, while objectifying the negative extreme of the objective aesthetic subject, demystifies the process of aesthetic representation while implicating the profound epistemological social responsibility of art.

This sensibility perceives the Saturnian temper which lingers in the unrecognized unregulated pathological blind spot of our cultural self-image. This iconography seeks the context of the 'imaginary spot of blood', and the locus of original crime from which the wave of destruction has descended into the present.

The transposition of the human iconic imagination into fragments of the photomechanical spectacle, as discussed by Benjamin, did not consider the increased consumption of experience which characterizes the ultra-modern computerized accumulation of capital. The quintessence of the Saturnian icon, as it is manifest in the history of Western civilization has, as we have seen in the matter of mechanomorphy, influenced a mass empathy which appears as an involuntary grotesque image on the physiognomic surface of culture. The lowest most degraded unconscious levels of human existence are stamped with the features of this aesthetic ontology.

As the 'state of emergency' climbs to unknown levels of automated hysteria, the element of Saturnian culture proceeds from the bottom up, returning to an original dominant contradiction at a higher level of aggravated integration. The urban 'natural selection' of the 'survival of the fittest' devolves in the street. Warring tribes have transcended into rival political factions. The extreme polarity of wealth which characterizes the modern production process alludes to the essential truth represented in the graphic depiction of the Saturnian appetite. In antithesis to this, mediating between the classes, we see epistemological

beauty glowing from the wreckage with ageless lustre. This is the work of art in the era of mechanical reproduction. This is the wisdom which compels one with compassionate fascination to the grotesque essence of the social order signified in the dialectical icon of the mythic Saturnian archetype.

Even old Aeschylus expressed the nightmarish memory of giant, iron-forging cannibals.⁽¹³⁾ Barbaric rituals performed for the ruthless, mindless death gods of primitive accumulation, relate the premising chapter of the Saturnian entelechy, and the narrative of the collective unconscious. This story registers with uncanny objectivity in the imagination of the modern intellectual who comprehends the alienation of his own critical nature from the pragmatic interest of the state. The cinema expresses the mechanical memory of the mass, and like pornography, as was mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis, goes from seeing to doing. The empathy with exchange-value, which Hitler understood as a cultural latency to be prodded on by repetition, resonates back to the original alienation and abstraction of value into currency, and the beginning

of the exploitative historical contradiction, which cascades as the revived sum of all its dormant and mortified ancestral parts, into the Saturnian horror show of now. Who will be the fascist scapegoat next? Benjamin would have known.

In his premonitory role at the dawn of modernism, Goya explored the historical depth of absurdity and horror, self-consciously, at the vertex of his natural, original, aesthetic sensibility with the principle of constructive reason. Benjamin and Goya are comparable. Goya's apprehension at the end of the Counter Reformation runs in isomorphic parallel to Benjamin's dialectical fear of the consequences of overproduction. Goya virtually totalized the polarized essence of western culture in his allegorical sensibility, while Benjamin narrated the historical formation of the aesthetic antecedents to classless culture, and the concrete mechanism of its negation.

They both recognized the ancient emancipatory potential of the Saturnalia, as it lay just beneath the surface of modernity. Goya's liberal fear of monarchic absolutism and imperial empire, was as morally rational as Benjamin's appeal beyond factions and above sectarian pragmatics to the proletarian intelligensia and its

democratic social basis in which the urban theory of natural, critical, class conscious language could emerge to lead. Across the panorama of misery the plausible dystopian horizon appears. It clammers up out of the murk of lumpen subculture, and the bog of social decay. Decrepit fingers clutch possessively to the machines of fate:

The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the "state of emergency" in which we live is not the exception but the rule. We must attain to a conception of history that is in keeping with this insight...One reason why Fascism has a chance is that in the name of progress its opponents treat it as a historical norm. The current amazement that the things we are experiencing are "still" possible in the twentieth century is not philosophical. This amazement is not the beginning of knowledge unless it is the knowledge that the view of history which gives rise to it is untenable. (14)

The experience of reality intrinsic to the division of individual and collective life, which is potentially resolved through aesthetic integration, materially anticipates the consummate synthesis of the sacred and profane, mental and physical labor, and the political and economic realizations of history. The Saturnian force in history pulls them apart. Dialectical iconography seeks the objects of the

meaning of subjective reality in "...anthropological materialism. There is a residue. The collective is a body, too. And the physis that is being organized for it in technology can, through all its political and factual reality, only be produced in that image sphere to which profane illumination initiates": (15)

...the complex many-sidedness of Saturn shrinks to a clear antithesis between extreme intellectual disorder and extreme intellectual ability, emphasizing strongly the significance and vulnerability of the latter...Whosoever passes through Saturn's sphere by the broad but evil path of the many is inclined to devious thinking, to anger, dullness, rage, sadness, and envy, to a deceitful mind, and to cruelty, and at its worst can be overtaken by bestial raving...(16)

Saturn has semblance to the mythic Thanatos whose deep and deathly dragging bottom of the collective unconscious (sleep in waking), touches being to the crisis of the inorganic molecular drift. But Saturn is an anthropomorphic archetype that crops up in the psychophysiological cycle of culture as a temper and a humor. Aristotle's Problem XXX⁽¹⁷⁾ speaks of the bile of the polis; like Baudelaire's spleen of the city, or Benjamin's 'Capital Saturn', the analogy recognizes the internal decay of the institution, and the destruction

of value in waste. For dialectical iconography it seems the Saturnian icon is an indispensable plastic image of the objective subject. This icon is the parataxic nightmare of deep primal history: at the psychophysiological genesis of civilization. This negative wave has opened a chasm so wide in the history of culture, that the greater part of humanity has been swallowed up by the destructive anonymity of oppression and exploitation.

This is the legacy of endless war that 'flowers' in the city streets. The involuntary truth of the Saturnian icon and its statement on the temporal condition, predicates the order of class and the politic of collective unconsciousness. The sex-appeal of the inorganic drew the maritimer to the rocks. The occult fascination of theology draws the desperate into the dream of an impossible future, and the deadening preoccupation with imaginary death.

From the cold sleep of Thanatos to the regal gluttony of Saturn, we come to Benjamin's 'antipode' and the epilagic omega of this thesis. Opposite his 'Angelus Novas' the Sisyphusian redeemer, he pictured the other half of material infinity, by the name of 'Angelus Satander',⁽¹⁸⁾ bracing against progress while facing front into the moment, and shoving backward with all his gravity. He depicts the technical madness of plutocratic hegemony.

Out of the Saturnian imagery unfolds the astonishing pragmatic reality of the grand moribund spectacle of alienated individuals all sharing the same microcosmic illiteracy and fear, without critical knowledge of the political meaning of the cultural totality. With the social loss of semiotic means, the cultural capacity to abstract objectively mortifies to the point of negligibility as with the epistemological basis of culture. Old orthodoxies bounce down the conveyor to the smelter, where they are separated from their sensational and informational values, then fall spent, into mute heterodox fragments:

"... The world exhibitions erected the universe of commodities. Grandville's fantasies transmitted commodity-character onto the universe. They modernized it. The ring of Saturn became a cast-iron balcony, upon which the inhabitants of Saturn take the air of an evening."⁽¹⁹⁾

From the self-contained atoms of sub-capital narcissism and worship of the inanimate commodity, Benjamin recognized the dialectical physiognomy of a symbolic totality: the ontological temper of the system of life. As Benjamin perceived the apparent terminal collapse of democratic culture, which was 'relatively absolute' in his experience, the explication of its narrative text became ever more urgent. Goya, whose sensibility was premonitory in the dawn of modernism,

is technically comparable to Benjamin in several aspects of narrative philosophy and dialectical imagery. His international or cosmopolitan iconic comprehension of history impended toward the production of epistemological beauty on an epic scale, as much as for Baudelaire's metropolitan odyssey, or Benjamin's theoretical 'apprehension'. For Goya, who was a light in the darkness at the flickering beginnings of liberal democratic pluralism, Benjamin is a complementary 'thesis with an art' glowing with the aura of an untapped resource, at the twilight spasmodic end. Goya's aesthetic ontology had evolved beyond the naive realism of the Renaissance; but it still retained the Hellenistic 'dread' of the Saturnian and the spontaneous constructive desire to explicate it in the enlightening iconic expression of critical subjective meanings, original in historical experience and objectivity. In the following citation Benjamin relates the humanistic source of the iconographic sensibility to the Saturnian aesthetic ontology:

...According to Warburg, in the Renaissance, when the reinterpretation of saturnine melancholy as a theory was carried out with a radicalism unequalled even in the thought of antiquity, 'dread of Saturn... occupied the central position in astrological belief.' (20)

...European antiquity was divided and its obscure after-effects in the middle-ages drew inspiration from its radiant after-image in humanism. Out of deep spiritual kinship Warburg has given a fascinating explanation of how, in the Renaissance 'heavenly manifestations were conceived in human terms, so that their demonic power might be at least visually contained.' (21)

What relates all these sparks in the constellation of dialectical iconography is the epical narrative undertaken to represent subjective experience in a way that humanizes nature. The constructive aesthetic imagination of sympathetic witness reveals in its abstract truth a fragment of revolutionary objectivity. The synthesis of intellect and talent which intersected in Goya's encyclopediac oeuvre constitutes for the modern a virtually automatic 'art with a thesis'. The aura of the ideal dissolved with the conscious knowledge of the profane origin of object fetish, the altruistic resignation to property, and destructive war. This is reflected in the dialectical imagery of secular humanist iconography:

As those who loose their footing turn somersaults in their fall, so would the allegorical intention fall from emblem to emblem down into the dizziness of its bottomless depths, were it not that, even in the most extreme of them, it had so to turn about all its darkness, vainglory, and godlessness seems to be nothing but self-delusion...(22)

The compulsion to 'blow the continuum apart', to turn the horror of reality on end so that all the stories and iconic meanings could tumble out in a great gestalt celebrating the inversion of daily order, found its aesthetic place in the ancient thematic residue of the Saturnalia.⁽²³⁾ It is remarkable that both Benjamin and Goya seized upon this dialectical image to represent the primal redemption of the Spanish crowd, and the German mass alike.⁽²⁴⁾ This instant classless aesthetic ontology sticks out of cultural history like the memory of a dream fragment in waking, wherein the agile infants of

civilization improvisationally spring away, free from the lugubrious grope of the Saturnian devourer.

This concrete trace to the original organic social being of classless culture was as empirically vital to Benjamin's dialectical theory of performance as it was to Goya's painterly revolutionism; for they both sought the redemptive meaning of existence in the very depths of social ruin. It is no wonder that in the prototypical aesthetic philosophies of these two men, the child was prefigured as the radical pedagogue of classless revolutionary culture. Perhaps this isomorph merely signifies the inevitable procreative conclusion of reason, but most assuredly, an iconographic form of reason which proceeds rationally out of a 'materialistic' theory of knowledge and the pathos of class experience. The horror of Saturnian aesthetic time, the regularity of the established system of oppression and the deadly bureaucratic obedience to its daily technical atrocities, is occasionally interrupted by eccentric celebratory outbursts in culture in which class antagonisms are temporarily, empirically resolved. The shocking recognition of iconic formations of classless social functions in collective culture, that is, postulated dreams constituting dialectical microcosms of harmonious civilization, seem at least from the perspective of this thesis, premonitory objects shared by the revolutionary aestheticism of Benjamin and Goya, and thus the original expression of an essentially unified, compatible, and consistent truth content from the methods of distinct

aesthetic medias. Here Benjamin's notion of the abstraction of technique in the dialectical aesthetic theory which transcends on the permanence of its applicational value, is evinced concretely. I should add, that Marx's speculation on the primitive nature of the integrated aesthetic totality of classless society was, like the antecedent perception of Goya, based on the comprehension of the actual cultural particles of this phenomenon as they exist in historical reality.⁽²⁶⁾

The customary practises of libation, potlatch, and the Saturnalia, performed a redemptive cultural function as checks on plutocracy and despotism. These particles, just to exemplify only one aspect of the revolutionary epistemological basis of culture, express the inherent potential and means for their realization at the general historical level of modern internationalism. It is the recognition of the actual negative scale of operation of this peripatetic wave, which fills the revolutionary intelligensia, as characterised by the likes of Goya, Baudelaire and Benjamin, with Saturnian melancholy.

The shocking recognition of the forces of history which appeared in Goya's graphic honesty, had evolved in Benjamin to the point of programatic commitment. The same essential humanistic thesis operates in both. The semantic field of Goya's aesthetic expression imbricates Benjamin's project in the construction of cultural literacy, though the individuals themselves were separated by centuries. They complement one

another like constellations in the universe of sensuous knowledge. It seems from this that the accretion of epistemological beauty as the representation of the objective truth of subjective experience has been a very slow, hampered and rarified process, but the elemental proof of the potential for the revolutionary ascendance of culture appears in the dim glow of collective unconsciousness nonetheless. The mass is not dead, only deadened.

In the context of Benjamin's dialectical iconography, the abstract technique of montage provides for a dialectical image in cultural media generally, which makes the diffuse forces of history transparent in their spiral, and the fantastic or imaginary interior of the objective subject of history visible to the original pulse and crisis of its nature.

This 'modern social realism' is, as has hopefully been demonstrated in this thesis, reiterated in fragments as diverse as the lonely work of Goya, and the collective vitality of the Constructivist movement. Benjamin's theory seems to abstractly consolidate the communicative power of all these progressive tendencies in the convergent synthesis of his desperate programmatic thrust for emancipation. They are the narrative components of modern civilized culture. Perhaps they are redeemable with the ameliorated return of the deficient civic catharsis of old. Perhaps out of this means a truly

integrated modern internationalism can resume its upward climb, taking the most deprived and violated social elements into its ever growing vanguard of constructive intelligence and compassionate sensibility. The dialectical image of the Saturnalia as it appears in Goya and Benjamin provides the primal level of expression elementary to the modern configuration of culture, in the capacity of a medicine. In the natural therapy of aesthetic gestalt, it invokes the involuntary memory of the natural classless state of being, and the spontaneous sensibility which invests class relationships, already prefigured in the practise of artistic production. One is reminded of the enlightenment which ensued after the Hellenistic pantheon was vomited up from the chthonic bowels of the mythic Saturn, as the precursor of radical pedagogic interruption in the setting of modern urban decay.

Goya's humanistic realism expressed a dialectical turning point in civilized culture, through his original philosophic mastery of a physical and intellectual - technical synthesis of (iconic aesthetic textual frames) iconostasis. In what can only be described as epos, the opening or unfolding of his dialectical imagery follows a process of responsibility to represent his own revolutionary truth in order to pedagogically interrupt the destructive or negative flow of events. In the light of Benjamin's anthropological materialist aesthetic theory Goya's art stands out like an honorable ancestor, as a

prototypical secularization of the subjective meaning of existence, and as a revolutionary example of the concrete solution to the grotesque antagonistic division of labor.

This production of epistemological beauty reveals a constructive means in the presence of its own object, regardless of how particularized the author's historical condition may have been. This is the ontogenesis of the modern work of art in the era of mechanical reproduction, which bears the teleological strength of (dialectically objective) truth content.

Seemingly, Benjamin's, like Goya's, consummate talents sprang from a creaturely wisdom of survival and the objective wonder of an astonished child who was naturally terrified of cruelty and violence. In the foreboding distance fascism appeared in the dialectical setting under the totem of the weapon in the role of the fatal stage property: to rule the art of culture by physical enforcement. The romantic passions cluster fatefully, revealing themselves to the groggy Saturn.

The comic interlude of plebian frustrations and middle-class magnanimity shrivels to insignificance in the awesome shadow of pornographic horror; that is, its mirror image proximity to the actual immediate condition. Decadent spectacles of ersatz struggle and Kitsch conformity froth on

the surface of unconscious class incursions, which (as in the antinomous baroque spectacle) identifies the totality of the cosmopolitan malaise. This celestial woe, which stretches from personal anxiety to global catastrophe, is apprehended in the revolutionary sensibility in which pathos and lament, memory and intelligence, are incumbent with the grotesque, cosmopolitan (dialectical) image of the crisis of overproduction, the anarchy of production and housing, the mechanical reproduction of art, and the recreational 'consumption of wretchedness'.

Like the critical intelligence of the 'storyteller', relative to the context of history and language, the constellation of dialectical iconography is empathetic (from its premise) with the creaturely misery that particularizes and decorates social decay. We see through the convoluted ambiguity of history to the Saturnian residence in the arbitrary rule of objects, in manufacture and the perverse authority of machines over people, in the dominance of constant capital over variable, and in the mass of zombie bureaucrats who are paid to maintain the rules.

The negative developmental potential for the pathological involution of society was first recognized in Aristotle's Problem XXX⁽²⁷⁾, as the black bile of the polis; the class distinctions that still appear in the modern urban spectacle signal the concurrent spleen of criminality, and the aesthetic receptivity of radical reaction. The pragmatic affinity of Saturnian tyranny for city builders is historically repeated over and over. Benjamin related the monstrous ironic attitude of the architect of Paris, Baron Von Hausmann, as one typical in that he despised the very wretched propertyless elements, which he himself had created with his urban design.⁽²⁸⁾ Saturn is the old father, the sign of nemesis, 'the imperious builder of cities and progenitor of animal husbandry, coin-minting and greed'. The original aesthetic moment (involuntary representation of contradiction) of the class structuration of the historical entelechy of destruction and unnatural death, was manifest in the iconic lexicon of the baroque 'modern', which consequently informs the present of the pragmatic currency of aestheticized death-signs. The 'Lord of Melancholy' has his earliest abstract root, according to the mythography of the Warburg Institute, in cult barbarism.

World cataclysm is prophesied on the mechanical basis of the inevitability of irrational crises which is the general economic complement of Saturnian political madness and the decline of the tyrant. The barbaric cult of the despotic

patriarch concurs with anthropological materialism, as the (historical) original phase of atavistic reaction in which the treatment of subjects as consumable property (chattel), and object fetish with the rudimentary emergence of exchange value, come with dogmatic obdurateness and obedience to tyrannical codes.

In Benjamin's model of the baroque transition of culture, the doctrine of Saturn was received as an axial antecedent to the early modern and secular manual of rule postulated in the Machiavellian code of political monarchy, The Prince,⁽²⁹⁾ which strategically organized the maintenance of power and wealth, as well as the constant frustration of emancipatory passions on the part of the mass. With the baroque concentration of patriotic, altruistic national sentiment in the mass spectacle came the modern prosaic operation of the oedipal complex. The trickster intrigues of the baroque Trauerspiel make way for the cinematic gangster conspirator and the 'fascist cop'. The desire for property filled the unconscious interior with the wish-symbols which were aesthetically reified in the numismatic glint of nature; mass colonial integrations sprouted from the vision of mercantile sensibility.

The historical worship and dread of the patriarch has demonstrated and revealed the dichotomy of cultural experience and memory to be a contradiction (arrested) relative to the order of social production. Again, according to Warburg, the longest memory of Saturn has him figured in the aggressive gesture, corrupting the productive technique accumulated under the matriarchy, into a weapon of malice. The modern currency of the barbaric totemic of weaponry testifies to the survival of this very old cultural crisis, still expressed in the saturnine social relationships of today. This constitutes a long cycle of cultural process, which in the iconographic comprehension of mythic memory and doctrinal experience, unfolds like a story: the narrative of woe, charter of mortal antagonisms, epos of negation, and apogee of human inclination. It is preceptual to the objective abstraction of the image of culture, and the subject of collective unconsciousness.

The core of Saturnian endeavours inhabits the vortex of the city. The anxious malaise of mass false consciousness emanates from the permanent 'state of emergency', identifying the phantasmagoric incursion of nature and history as a redundant norm and moribund ontological rule. As the debacle of representation intensifies with Kitsch monumentalization and political idolatry, the tension of historical recognition

spans the precipice between immediate emergency and protracted study. The allurements, beguilements, and positive arrests of the self-conscious identity in taste and dogma takes on a grotesque, even horrific aura. Characteristically that 'taste' unconsciously corresponds to a political or national chauvinistic interest. As one final aesthetic axiom for the critique of 'mechanical sensibility', and consequently the work of art subject to the negative principle of the Saturnian social mechanism of commodification and consumption which vitiates authentic experience and class consciousness, I cite the historical materialism of Walter Benjamin:

I have spoken of the way in which certain modish photographers proceed in order to make human misery an object of consumption. Turning to the New Objectivity as a literary movement, I must go a step further and say that it has turned the struggle against misery into an object of consumption. In many cases, indeed, its political significance has been limited to converting revolutionary reflexes, insofar as these occurred within the bourgeoisie, into themes of entertainment and amusement which can be fitted without much difficulty into the cabaret life of a large city. The characteristic feature of this literature is the way it transforms political struggle so that it ceases to be a compelling motive for decision and becomes an object of comfortable contemplation; it ceases to be a means of production and becomes an article of consumption. A perceptive critic* has commented on this phenomenon, using Erich Kastner as an example, in the following terms:

'This left-radical intelligentsia has nothing to do with the working-class movement. It is a phenomenon of bourgeois decadence and as such the counterpart of that mimicry of feudalism which, in the Kaiser's time, was admired in a reserve lieutenant. Left-radical journalists of Kastner's, Tucholsky's or Mehring's type are a mimicry of the proletarian for decadent strata of the bourgeoisie. Their function, viewed politically, is to bring forth not parties but cliques; viewed from the literary angle, not schools but fashions; viewed economically, not producers but agents. Agents or hacks who make a great display of their poverty and turn the gaping void into a feast. One couldn't be more comfortable in an uncomfortable situation.' (30)

For Aristotle the existence of madness symbolised the spiritual imperfection of polis culture. (31) The baroque Trauerspiel represented a philogenetic type of ruler whose physical and intellectual degeneration paralleled catastrophe. That ridicule of the hypocritical parade of ritual, that spontaneous mummery that perhaps rises from the chattel matriarchy of nature herself, which distinguishes brutal indifference in the mass, and malicious hedonism in the crowd, subsequently fears the grotesque, mechanical and inorganic social essence which derives entertainment value from blood spectacles. Without amelioration or release, rational fear becomes callous and insensitive. In the twilight masque of Caliban, technique was traduced by the spleen of primitive passion. In the mechanical twilight of the modern, one wonders to what extent photomechanical memory is involuntary,

and more incisively to what extent does it supply an instrumental dream surrogate in place of the authentic redemption of subjective reality from the ruins of the collective unconscious of the productive class, and its involuntary experiential memory of class origins.

Subjective idealism becomes imperial modernism when injected through the needle of the culture industry. The ironic involution of aesthetic reproduction approaches the mortified contradiction wherein the spectacle of the 'consumption of misery' is presented to the miserable for consumption. Out of the war blast of political-economic struggle comes the entelechy of spiritual being, the epic race from Aryan tribe and Teutonic nation, riding on the apotheosis of the skull and the free reign of horrible death; we envision the raucous prolapse into the video future of robotized inquisition halls.

The modern era, seen in the dialectical frame of a teeming convoluted mass, reveals in each particular moment an antinomous microcosmic unity in which Promethean cries for justice are met with brutal Saturnian indifference. There they brood in the enmity of the blackest cell of deep Tartarus, the perverse Saturn with the Promethean revolutionary, locked into the finite matter of civilization.

The pathos of revenge, the pathology of revenge, the decoration of corrupt institutions, or wild-eyed avarice pure and simple: Which explains the aesthetic function of the mooncalves of the 'post-modern'? Frustration rituals, ego spectacles, fashion conceits, overt (mass) sado-masochistic entertainments, etc. - 'les fleurs du mal' to be sure, blister the dialectical landscape of culture reifying the terrible order of social relationships out of line with the constructive needs and interests of suffering humanity. The dialectical image calls witness to the process of the mimesis activated by the simulated blood spectacle which jumps that final "tiger's leap backward into the political arena"⁽³²⁾ and becomes the actual blood spectacle.

The social entity consummate with this political axis, which involves the propagandistic reduction of artistic culture to a pragmatic mechanism for the aestheticization of a violent politic (paralleling the 'photomechanical consumption of wretchedness'), sucks up and devours its own creation, and objective history as well. Culture arrives at the absurd, paradoxical state in which the police commit the crimes.

The Saturnian conflation of culture seems conclusively described in the folkish, anecdotal mottoes of the SS who 'entered by the back door', and dismantled democratic pluralism 'from the bottom up'.

Chapter IV Footnotes

1. Warburg Institute (Panofsky, Klibansky, Saxl), Saturn and Melancholy, p.141.
2. Ibid., p.145.
3. Ibid., p.135.
4. Eric Zafran, "Saturn and the Jews", Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld, #42, 1979. (portion of unpublished Phd. dissertation: 'The iconography of the Jews').
5. Benjamin, "Eduard Fuchs", One-Way Street, p.365-6.
6. Benjamin, Baudelaire, pp. 144-5.
7. Benjamin, "Karl Kraus", Reflections, p.270.
8. Andre Malraux, Saturn: An Essay on Goya, pp. 74-8.
9. Ibid., pp. 90-2.
10. Ibid., pp. 133-4.
11. See Endnote.
12. See Endnote.
13. Aeschylus, Prometheus Bound, J.S. Blackie trans., in The Lyrical Dramas of Aeschylus, West Strand, London, 1950.
14. Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History", Illuminations, p.257.
15. Benjamin, "Surrealism", Reflections, p.192.
16. Warburg Institute, Saturn and Melancholy, pp. 250-4.
17. Warburg Institute trans., "Aristotle's Problem XXX", in Saturn and Melancholy.
18. discussed in Gershom Scholem's "Walter Benjamin", in On Jews and Judaism in Crisis, i.e. in regard to "Angelus Satander" and Benjamin's dream of a journal.
19. Benjamin, Baudelaire, p.166.

20. Benjamin, The Origins of German Tragic Drama, p.151.
21. Ibid., p.221.
22. Ibid., p.232.
23. See Endnote.
24. See Endnote.
25. See Endnote.
26. This becomes clear in the following citation: Cliff Slaughter in Marxism, Ideology and Literature, p.29 quoting from Max Raphael's Demands of Art: "...Marx was right in now grasping intellectually what, according to Max Raphael Goya had already seen, viz., that the course of history can be changed only by historical means and only if men shape their own history instead of acting as the automatons of an earthly power or an allegedly eternal idea."
27. See Warburg trans. of "Aristotle's Problem XXX", in Saturn and Melancholy, p.150.
28. Benjamin, "Hauseman or the Barricades", Baudelaire, p.173.
29. The point is raised in Benjamin's Origin of German Tragic Drama, pp.95-6.
30. Benjamin, "The Author as Producer", Understanding Brecht, pp. 96-7.
31. from the Warburg Institute's trans. of "Aristotle's Problem XXX", in Saturn and Melancholy, passim.
32. Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History", Illuminations, p.261.

Endnote

The following excerpts are intended to show the filament of empirical and theoretical connection which describes the dialectical advance of the Saturnian theme and awareness, abstracted in this erudite configuration of humanist secular iconography. Though it is not the specific task of this thesis, I conjecture that a subsequent development of the analytic technique of the dialectical image is established in this marginal intellectual tradition, and that the plausibility of this semiotic pattern of narrative philosophy is evinced in the fragmentary traces here assembled. It should be added that Benjamin's esteem for Warburg's iconographic objectivity, and his subsequent assimilation of the intellectual product of this committed scholarship has been confirmed in the expressional context of the prior chapter IV citation. The dialectically spiralled filament of the imbricated texts of the iconographic Saturnian narrative is here, at least, partially illuminated: (Malraux, Saturn: An Essay on Goya, pp. 110-23): "...Bosch introduced men into his infernal world; Goya introduced the infernal into the world of man. With Bosch it is the devils who are cruel. Both these peoples are peoples of victims, but Goya knew that that was not all; they are peoples of men as well, torturers in their turn...between the closed lips of a tortured child and the face, for ages past invisible...An endless procession of misery moves forwards from the depth of the ages towards these figures of horror and accompanies their torments with its subterranean chorus...No artist, not even Baudelaire, has revealed so clearly the power of the irremediable...Goya...turned into discords every one of the essential harmonies on which the ordering of the world was based..."

(George Steiner, Language and Silence, p.315): "...Benjamin clearly preceded Malraux in recognizing the "materiality" of art, the dependence of aesthetic sensibility on changes in the setting and reproduction of painting and sculpture..." (Maynard Solomon, Marxism and Art, p.562): "...Art is not a submission. It is a conquest. - Malraux...Andre Malraux... took the above as his motto in his speech to the 1934 Soviet Writer's Congress...this...revolutionary, art historian, friend of Walter Benjamin during his Paris exile..." (Malraux, Ibid., p.158): "...At a pinch he (Goya) painted that which brings crowds together (patriotism, but also calamity), not that which unites a few individuals. Love also forms part of the sacred, but it is its opposite pole...Such loneliness has its limits, for Goya was not a prophet but a painter. If he had not been a painter his attitude to life would have found its expression only in preaching or suicide. But he was an artist, and that meant his attitude could not be reduced to absurdity..." (Malraux, Ibid., p.114): "...harvests are as

eternal as calamity...for almost all the arts the crop springs up also from the land of the dead...the relationships established by man compelled Goya to choose moments, real or imaginary, when our relationships are overturned..." (Ibid., pp. 113-52):

"...He restored the forgotten dialogue, but with another voice. This dialogue in which the spectator is silent often arises when painting tells him something he would have preferred not to hear; when it compels him to listen...Man does not gaze only on what he prefers; the love that terrifies is called fascination ...Goya introduced the unconscious..." (Benjamin, Baudelaire, p.131): "...Fear, revulsion and horror were the emotions which the big-city crowd aroused in those who first observed it. For Poe it has something barbaric; discipline just barely manages to tame it. Later, James Ensor tirelessly confronted its discipline with its wildness; he liked to put military groups in his carnival..." (Malraux, Ibid., p.133): "...He engraved a world turned upside-down, in other words the Saturnalia...who has touched with equal sureness the blind monsters of age-old depths, the symbols buried for thousands of years beneath our memory?..." (Malraux, Ibid., p.112): "...It was against metaphysical death, beginning with its peremptory manifestation, cruelty, that Goya's reply was aimed...if Goya thought that man has not come onto the earth to be cut in pieces he thought that he must have come there for something. Is it to live in joy and honour? Not only that; it is to come to terms with the world. And the message he never ceased to preach, a message underlined by war, is that man only comes to terms with the world by blinding himself with childishness..." (Malraux, Ibid., p.141): "...The world was nothing but a dictionary from which he chose words simply for the hints their richness gave of times earlier than history. It has been said that he was dreaming; rather he was excavating...He knew now - and he was the first to know it for three hundred years - that his world would never replace the real one except by a new system of relationships between things and beings...Frantic or petrified, his groups stand out against a background which is nearly always abstract..." (from New Left Review, v.81, 1973, Sept./Oct., 'Adorno-Benjamin Correspondence', p.66, Adorno to Benjamin - London, 18 March 1936): "...You have swept art out of the corners of its taboos - but it is as though you feared a consequent inrush of barbarism (who could share your fear more than I?) and protected yourself by raising what you fear to a kind of inverse taboo. The laughter of the audience at a cinema - I discussed this with Max, and he has probably told you about it already - is anything but good and revolutionary; instead it is full of the worst bourgeois sadism...One need only have heard the laughter of the audience at the film to know what is actually happening...the serious question arises as to whether the reproduction of every person really constitutes that a priori of the film which you claim it to be, or whether instead this reproduction precisely belongs to that 'naive realism' whose bourgeois nature we so thoroughly agreed upon in Paris...that modern art, which you counterpose to technical art as aural..."

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