
Walter Benjamin

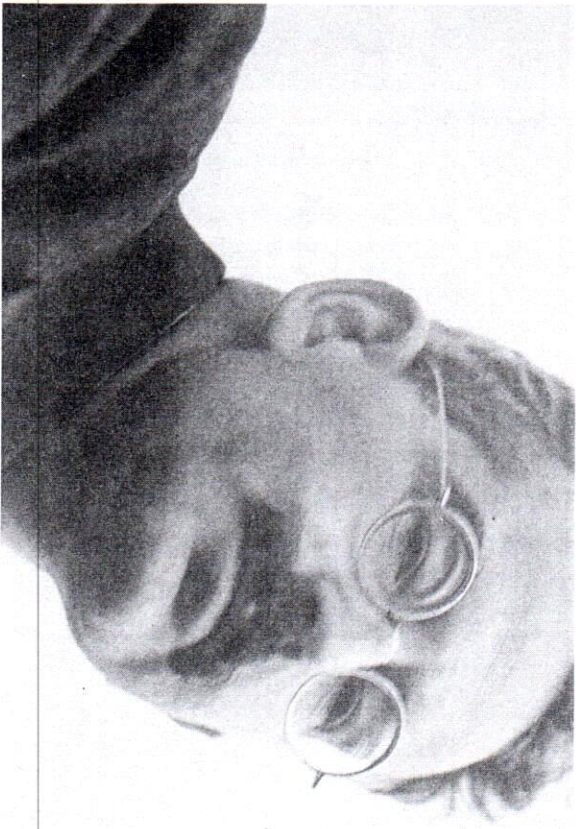
SELECTED WRITINGS

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1935–1938

Translated by Edmund Jephcott,
Howard Eiland, and Others

Edited by Howard Eiland and
Michael W. Jennings



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Contents

PARIS OLD AND NEW, 1935

- Brecht's *Threepenny Novel* 3
Johann Jakob Bachofen 11
Conversation above the Corso: Recollections of Carnival-Time in Nice 25
Paris, the Capital of the **Nineteenth Century** 32
Exchange with Theodor W. Adorno on the Essay "Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century" 50
Problems in the Sociology of Language: An Overview 68
The Formula in Which the Dialectical Structure of Film Finds Expression 94
Rastelli's Story 96

ART IN A TECHNOLOGICAL AGE, 1936

- The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility:
Second Version 101
A Different Utopian Will 134
The Significance of Beautiful Semblance 137
The Signatures of the Age 139
Theory of Distraction 141
The Storyteller: Observations on the Works of Nikolai Leskov 143
German Men and Women: A Sequence of Letters 167

Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century

The waters are blue, the plants pink; the evening is sweet to look on;
One goes for a walk; the *grandes dames* go for a walk; behind them stroll the
petites dames.

—Nguyen Trong Hiep, *Paris, capitale de la France: Recueil de vers* (Hanoi, 1897), poem 25

I. Fourier, or the Arcades

The magic columns of these palaces
Show to the amateur on all sides,
In the objects their porticos display,
That industry is the rival of the arts.

—*Nouveaux Tableaux de Paris* (Paris, 1828), vol. 1, p. 27

Most of the Paris arcades come into being in the decade and a half after 1822. The first condition for their emergence is the boom in the textile trade. *Magasins de nouveautés*, the first establishments to keep large stocks of merchandise on the premises, make their appearance.¹ They are the forerunners of department stores. This was the period of which Balzac wrote: “The great poem of display chants its stanzas of color from the Church of the Madeleine to the Porte Saint-Denis.”² The arcades are a center of commerce in luxury items. In fitting them out, art enters the service of the merchant. Contemporaries never tire of admiring them, and for a long time they remain a drawing point for foreigners. An *Illustrated Guide to Paris* says: “These arcades, a recent invention of industrial luxury, are glass-roofed, marble-paneled corridors extending through whole blocks of buildings, whose owners have joined together for such enterprises. Lining both sides of these corridors, which get their light from above, are the most elegant shops, so that the *passage* is a city, a world in miniature.” The arcades are the scene of the first gas lighting.

The second condition for the emergence of the arcades is the beginning of

iron construction. The Empire saw in this technology a contribution to the revival of architecture in the classical Greek sense. The architectural theorist Boetticher expresses the general view of the matter when he says that, “with regard to the art forms of the new system, the formal principle of the Hellenic mode” must come to prevail.³ Empire is the style of revolutionary terrorism, for which the state is an end in itself. Just as Napoleon failed to understand the functional nature of the state as an instrument of domination by the bourgeois class, so the architects of his time failed to understand the functional nature of iron, with which the constructive principle begins its domination of architecture. These architects design supports resembling Pompeian columns, and factories that imitate residential houses, just as later the first railroad stations will be modeled on chateaus. “Construction plays the role of the subconscious.”⁴ Nevertheless, the concept of engineer, which dates from the revolutionary wars, starts to make headway, and the rivalry begins between builder and decorator; Ecole Polytechnique and Ecole des Beaux-Arts.

For the first time in the history of architecture, an artificial building material appears: iron. It serves as the basis for a development whose tempo accelerates in the course of the century. This development enters a decisive new phase when it becomes apparent that the locomotive—on which experiments had been conducted since the end of the 1820s—is compatible only with iron tracks. The rail becomes the first prefabricated iron component, the precursor of the girder. Iron is avoided in home construction but used in arcades, exhibition halls, train stations—buildings that serve transitory purposes. At the same time, the range of architectural applications for glass expands, although the social prerequisites for its widened application as building material will come to the fore only a hundred years later. In Scheerbart’s *Glasmarchitektur* (1914), it still appears in the context of utopia.⁵

Each epoch dreams the one to follow.

—Micheler, “Avenir! Avenir!”⁶

Corresponding to the form of the new means of production, which in the beginning is still ruled by the form of the old (Marx), are images in the collective consciousness in which the new is permeated with the old. These images are wish images; in them the collective seeks both to overcome and to transfigure the immaturity of the social product and the inadequacies in the social organization of production. At the same time, what emerges in these wish images is the resolute effort to distance oneself from all that is antiquated—which includes, however, the recent past. These tendencies deflect the imagination (which is given impetus by the new) back upon the primal past. In the dream in which each epoch entertains images of its successor,

the latter appears wedded to elements of primal history [*Urgeschichte*]—that is, to elements of a classless society. And the experiences of such a society—as stored in the unconscious of the collective—engender, through interpenetration with what is new, the utopia that has left its trace in a thousand configurations of life, from enduring edifices to passing fashions.

These relations are discernible in the utopia conceived by Fourier.⁷ Its secret cue is the advent of machines. But this fact is not directly expressed in the Fourierist literature, which takes as its point of departure the amorality of the business world and the false morality enlisted in its service. The phalanstery is designed to restore human beings to relationships in which morality becomes superfluous. The highly complicated organization of the phalanstery appears as machinery. The meshing of the passions, the intricate collaboration of *passions mécanistes* with the *passion cabaliste*, is a primitive contrivance formed—on analogy with the machine—from materials of psychology. This machinery made of men produces the land of milk and honey, the primeval wish symbol that Fourier's utopia has filled with new life.

Fourier saw, in the arcades, the architectural canon of the phalanstery. Their reactionary metamorphosis with him is characteristic: whereas they originally serve commercial ends, they become, for him, places of habitation. The phalanstery becomes a city of arcades. Fourier establishes, in the Empire's austere world of forms, the colorful idyll of Biedermeier. Its brilliance persists, however faded, up through Zola, who takes up Fourier's ideas in his book *Travail*, just as he bids farewell to the arcades in his *Thérèse Raquin*.⁸ Marx came to the defense of Fourier in his critique of Carl Grün, emphasizing the former's "colossal conception of man."⁹ He also directed attention to Fourier's humor. In fact, Jean Paul, in his *Levana*, is as closely allied to Fourier the pedagogue as Scheerbart, in his *Glass Architecture*, is to Fourier the utopian.¹⁰

II. Daguerre, or the Panoramas

Sun, look out for yourself!

—A. J. Wiertz, *Oeuvres littéraires* (Paris, 1870), p. 374

Just as architecture, with the first appearance of iron construction, begins to outgrow art, so does painting, in its turn, with the first appearance of the panoramas.¹¹ The high point in the diffusion of panoramas coincides with the introduction of arcades. One sought tirelessly, through technical devices, to make panoramas the scenes of a perfect imitation of nature. An attempt was made to reproduce the changing daylight in the landscape, the rising of the moon, the rush of waterfalls. David counsels his pupils to draw

from nature as it is shown in panoramas.¹² In their attempt to produce deceptively lifelike changes in represented nature, the panoramas prepare the way not only for photography but for [silent] film and sound film.

Contemporary with the panoramas is a panoramic literature. *Le Livre des cent-et-un* [The Book of a Hundred-and-One], *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes* [The French Painted by Themselves], *Le Diable à Paris* [The Devil in Paris], and *La Grande Ville* [The Big City] belong to this. These books prepare the belletristic collaboration for which Girardin, in the 1830s, will create a home in the feuilleton.¹³ They consist of individual sketches, whose anecdotal form corresponds to the panoramas' plastically arranged foreground, and whose informational base corresponds to their painted background. This literature is also socially panoramic. For the last time, the worker appears, isolated from his class, as part of the setting in an idyll.

Announcing an upheaval in the relation of art to technology, panoramas are at the same time an expression of a new attitude toward life. The city dweller, whose political supremacy over the provinces is attested many times in the course of the century, attempts to bring the countryside into town. In the panoramas, the city opens out, becoming landscape—as it will do later, in subtler fashion, for the flâneurs. Daguerre is a student of the panorama painter Prévost, whose establishment is located in the Passage des Panoramas.¹⁴ Description of the panoramas of Prévost and Daguerre. In 1839 Daguerre's panorama burns down. In the same year, he announces the invention of the daguerreotype.

Arago presents photography in a speech to the National Assembly.¹⁵ He assigns it a place in the history of technology and prophesies its scientific applications. On the other side, artists begin to debate its artistic value. Photography leads to the extinction of the great profession of portrait miniaturist. This happens not just for economic reasons. The early photograph was artistically superior to the miniature portrait. The technical grounds for this advantage lie in the long exposure time, which requires of a subject the highest concentration; the social grounds for it lie in the fact that the first photographers belonged to the avant-garde, from which most of their clientele came. Nadar's superiority to his colleagues is shown by his attempt to take photographs in the Paris sewer system: for the first time, the lens was deemed capable of making discoveries.¹⁶ Its importance becomes still greater as, in view of the new technological and social reality, the subjective strain in pictorial and graphic information is called into question.

The world exhibition of 1855 offers for the first time a special display called "Photography." In the same year, Wiertz publishes his great article on photography, in which he defines its task as the philosophical enlightenment of painting.¹⁷ This "enlightenment" is understood, as his own paintings show, in a political sense. Wiertz can be characterized as the first to de-

mand, if not actually foresee, the use of photographic montage for political agitation. With the increasing scope of communications and transport, the informational value of painting diminishes. In reaction to photography, painting begins to stress the elements of color in the picture. By the time Impressionism yields to Cubism, painting has created for itself a broader domain into which, for the time being, photography cannot follow. For its part, photography greatly extends the sphere of commodity exchange, from mid-century onward, by flooding the market with countless images of figures, landscapes, and events which had previously been available either not at all or only as pictures for individual customers. To increase turnover, it renewed its subject matter through modish variations in camera technique—innovations that will determine the subsequent history of photography.

III. Grandville, or the World Exhibitions

Yes, when all the world from Paris to China
Pays heed to your doctrine, O divine Saint-Simon,
The glorious Golden Age will be reborn.
Rivers will flow with chocolate and tea,
Sheep roasted whole will frisk on the plain,
And sautéed pike will swim in the Seine.
Ericseed spinach will grow on the ground,
Garnished with crushed fried crotons;
The trees will bring forth apple compotes,
And farmers will harvest boots and coats.
It will snow wine, it will rain chickens,
And ducks cooked with turnips will fall from the sky.

—Lange and Vanderburch, *Louis-Bronze et le Saint-Simonien*
(Théâtre du Palais-Royal, February 27, 1832)¹⁸

World exhibitions are places of pilgrimage to the commodity fetish. "Europe is off to view the merchandise," says [Hippolyte] Taine in 1855.¹⁹ The world exhibitions are preceded by national exhibitions of industry, the first of which takes place on the Champ de Mars in 1798. It arises from the wish "to entertain the working classes, and it becomes for them a festival of emancipation."²⁰ The worker occupies the foreground, as customer. The framework of the entertainment industry has not yet taken shape; the popular festival provides this. Chaptal's speech on industry opens the 1798 exhibition.²¹—The Saint-Simonians, who envision the industrialization of the earth, take up the idea of world exhibitions. Chevalier, the first authority in the new field, is a student of Enfantin and editor of the Saint-Simonian newspaper *Le Globe*.²² The Saint-Simonians anticipated the development of the global economy, but not the class struggle. Next to their active partici-

pation in industrial and commercial enterprises around the middle of the century stands their helplessness on all questions concerning the proletariat.

World exhibitions glorify the exchange value of the commodity. They create a framework in which its use value recedes into the background. They open a phantasmagoria which a person enters in order to be distracted. The entertainment industry makes this easier by elevating the person to the level of the commodity. He surrenders to its manipulations while enjoying his alienation from himself and others.—The enthronement of the commodity, with its luster of distraction, is the secret theme of Grandville's art.²³ This is consistent with the split between utopian and cynical elements in his work. Its ingenuity in representing inanimate objects corresponds to what Marx calls the "theological niceties" of the commodity.²⁴ They are manifest clearly in the *spécialité*—a category of goods which appears at this time in the luxuries industry. Under Grandville's pencil, the whole of nature is transformed into specialties. He presents them in the same spirit in which the advertisement (the term *réclame* also originates at this point) begins to present its articles. He ends in madness.

Fashion: "Madam Death! Madam Death!"

—Leopardi, "Dialogue between Fashion and Death"²⁵

World exhibitions propagate the universe of commodities. Grandville's fantasies confer a commodity character on the universe. They modernize it. Saturn's ring becomes a cast-iron balcony on which the inhabitants of Saturn take the evening air.²⁶ The literary counterpart of this graphic utopia is found in the books of the Fourierist naturalist Toussendel.²⁷—Fashion prescribes the ritual according to which the commodity fetish demands to be worshipped. Grandville extends the authority of fashion to objects of everyday use, as well as to the cosmos. In taking it to an extreme, he reveals its nature. Fashion stands in opposition to the organic. It couples the living body to the inorganic world. To the living, it defends the rights of the corpse. The fetishism that succumbs to the sex appeal of the inorganic is its vital nerve. The cult of the commodity presses such fetishism into its service.

For the Paris world exhibition of 1867, Victor Hugo issues a manifesto: "To the Peoples of Europe." Earlier, and more unequivocally, their interests had been championed by delegations of French workers, of which the first had been sent to the London world exhibition of 1851 and the second, numbering 750 delegates, to that of 1862. The latter delegation was of indirect importance for Marx's founding of the International Workingmen's Association.²⁸—The phantasmagoria of capitalist culture attains its most radiant unfolding in the world exhibition of 1867. The Second Empire is at the height of its power. Paris is acknowledged as the capital of luxury and fash-

ion. Offenbach sets the rhythm of Parisian life.²⁹ The operetta is the ironic utopia of an enduring reign of capital.

IV. Louis Philippe, or the Interior

The head . . .

On the night table, like a ramunculus,

Rests.

—Baudelaire, "Une Martyre"³⁰

Under Louis Philippe,³¹ the private individual makes his entrance on the stage of history. The expansion of the democratic apparatus through a new electoral law coincides with the parliamentary corruption organized by Guizot.³² Under cover of this corruption, the ruling class makes history; that is, it pursues its affairs. It furthers railway construction in order to improve its stock holdings. It promotes the reign of Louis Philippe as that of the private individual managing his affairs. With the July Revolution, the bourgeoisie realized the goals of 1789 (Marx).

For the private individual, the place of dwelling is for the first time opposed to the place of work. The former constitutes itself as the interior. Its complement is the office. The private individual, who in the office has to deal with reality, needs the domestic interior to sustain him in his illusions. This necessity is all the more pressing since he has no intention of allowing his commercial considerations to impinge on social ones. In the formation of his private environment, both are kept out. From this arise the phantasmas of the interior—which, for the private man, represents the universe. In the interior, he brings together the far away and the long ago. His living room is a box in the theater of the world.

Excursus on Jugendstil.³³ The shattering of the interior occurs via Jugendstil around the turn of the century. Of course, according to its own ideology, the Jugendstil movement seems to bring with it the consummation of the interior. The transfiguration of the solitary soul appears to be its goal. Individualism is its theory. With van de Velde, the house becomes an expression of the personality. Ornament is to this house what the signature is to a painting. But the real meaning of Jugendstil is not expressed in this ideology. It represents the last attempted sortie of an art besieged in its ivory tower by technology. This attempt mobilizes all the reserves of inwardness. They find their expression in the mediumistic language of the line, in the flower as symbol of a naked vegetal nature confronted by the technologically armed world. The new elements of iron construction—girder forms—preoccupy Jugendstil. In ornament, it endeavors to win back these forms for art. Concrete presents it with new possibilities for plastic creation in architecture. Around this time, the real gravitational center of living space shifts

to the office. The irreal center makes its place in the home. The consequences of Jugendstil are depicted in Ibsen's *Master Builder*:³⁴ the attempt by the individual, on the strength of his inwardness, to vie with technology leads to his downfall.

I believe . . . in my soul: the Thing.

—Léon Deubel, *Oeuvres* (Paris, 1929), p. 193

The interior is the asylum of art. The collector is the true resident of the interior. He makes his concern the transfiguration of things. To him falls the Sisyphean task of divesting things of their commodity character by taking possession of them. But he bestows on them only connoisseur value, rather than use value. The collector dreams his way not only into a distant or bygone world but also into a better one—one in which, to be sure, human beings are no better provided with what they need than in the everyday world, but in which things are freed from the drudgery of being useful.

The interior is not just the universe but also the *étui* of the private individual. To dwell means to leave traces. In the interior, these are accentuated. Coverlets and antimacassars, cases and containers are devised in abundance; in these, the traces of the most ordinary objects of use are imprinted. In just the same way, the traces of the inhabitant are imprinted in the interior. Enter the detective story, which pursues these traces. Poe, in his "Philosophy of Furniture" as well as in his detective fiction, shows himself to be the first physiognomist of the domestic interior. The criminals in early detective novels are neither gentlemen nor apaches,³⁵ but private citizens of the middle class.

V. Baudelaire, or the Streets of Paris

Everything becomes an allegory for me.

—Baudelaire, "Le Cygne"³⁶

Baudelaire's genius, which is nourished on melancholy, is an allegorical genius. For the first time, with Baudelaire, Paris becomes the subject of lyric poetry. This poetry is no hymn to the homeland; rather, the gaze of the allegorist, as it falls on the city, is the gaze of the alienated man. It is the gaze of the *flâneur*, whose way of life still conceals behind a mitigating nimbus the coming desolation of the big-city dweller. The *flâneur* still stands on the threshold—of the metropolis as of the middle class. Neither has him in its power yet. In neither is he at home. He seeks refuge in the crowd. Early contributions to a physiognomics of the crowd are found in Engels and Poe.³⁷

The crowd is the veil through which the familiar city beckons to the flâneur as phantasmagoria—now a landscape, now a room. Both become elements of the department store, which makes use of flânerie itself to sell goods. The department store is the last promenade for the flâneur.

In the flâneur, the intelligentsia sets foot in the marketplace—ostensibly to look around, but in truth to find a buyer. In this intermediate stage, in which it still has patrons but is already beginning to familiarize itself with the market, it appears as the *bohème*. To the uncertainty of its economic position corresponds the uncertainty of its political function. The latter is manifest most clearly in the professional conspirators, who all belong to the *bohème*. Their initial field of activity is the army; later it becomes the petty bourgeoisie, occasionally the proletariat. Nevertheless, this group views the true leaders of the proletariat as its adversary. The *Communist Manifesto* brings their political existence to an end. Baudelaire's poetry draws its strength from the rebellious pathos of this group. He sides with the asocial. He realizes his only sexual communion with a whore.

Easy the way that leads into Avernus.

—Virgil, *The Aeneid*³⁸

It is the unique provision of Baudelaire's poetry that the image of woman and the image of death intermingle in a third: that of Paris. The Paris of his poems is a sunken city, and more submarine than subterranean. The chthonic elements of the city—its topographic formations, the old abandoned bed of the Seine—have evidently found in him a mold. Decisive for Baudelaire in the "death-fraught idyll" of the city, however, is a social, a modern substrate. The modern is a principal accent of his poetry. As spleen, it fractures the ideal ("Spleen et idéal").³⁹ But precisely modernity is always citing primal history. Here, this occurs through the ambiguity peculiar to the social relations and products of this epoch. Ambiguity is the appearance of dialectic in images, the law of dialectics at a standstill. This standstill is utopia and the dialectical image, therefore, dream image. Such an image is afforded by the commodity per se: as fetish. Such an image is presented by the arcades, which are house no less than street. Such an image is the prostitute—seller and sold in one.

I travel in order to get to know my geography.

—Note of a madman, in Marcel Réja, *L'Art chez les fous* (Paris, 1907), p. 131

The last poem of *Les Fleurs du Mal*: "Le Voyage." "Death, old admiral, up anchor now." The last journey of the flâneur: death. Its destination: the

new. "Deep in the Unknown to find the *new*!"⁴⁰ Newness is a quality independent of the use value of the commodity. It is the origin of the semblance that belongs inalienably to images produced by the collective unconscious. It is the quinnessence of that false consciousness whose indefatigable agent is fashion. This semblance of the new is reflected, like one mirror in another, in the semblance of the ever recurrent. The product of this reflection is the phantasmagoria of "cultural history," in which the bourgeoisie enjoys its false consciousness to the full. The art that begins to doubt its task and ceases to be "inseparable from . . . utility" (Baudelaire)⁴¹ must make novelty into its highest value. The *arbitrer novarum rerum* for such an art becomes the snob. He is to art what the dandy is to fashion.—Just as in the seventeenth century it is allegory that becomes the canon of dialectical images, in the nineteenth century it is novelty. Newspapers flourish, along with *magasins de nouveautés*. The press organizes the market in spiritual values, in which at first there is a boom. Nonconformists rebel against consigning art to the marketplace. They rally round the banner of *l'art pour l'art*.⁴² From this watchword derives the conception of the "total work of art"—the *Gesamtkunstwerk*—which would seal art off from the developments of technology. The solemn rite with which it is celebrated is the pendant to the distraction that transfigures the commodity. Both abstract from the social existence of human beings. Baudelaire succumbs to the rage for Wagner.⁴³

VI. Haussmann, or the Barricades

I venerate the Beautiful, the Good, and all things great;
Beautiful nature, on which great art rests—
How it enchants the ear and charms the eye!
I love spring in blossom: women and roses.

—Baron Haussmann, *Confession d'un lion devenu vieillard*⁴⁴

The flowery realm of decorations,
The charm of landscape, of architecture,
And all the effect of scenery rest
Solely on the law of perspective.

—Franz Böhle, *Theater-Catechismus* (Munich), p. 74

Haussmann's ideal in city planning consisted of long perspectives down broad straight thoroughfares. Such an ideal corresponds to the tendency—common in the nineteenth century—to enable technological necessities through artistic ends. The institutions of the bourgeoisie's worldly and spiritual dominance were to find their apotheosis within the framework of the boulevards. Before their completion, boulevards were draped across with canvas and unveiled like monuments.—Haussmann's activity is linked to

Napoleonic imperialism. Louis Napoleon promotes investment capital, and Paris experiences a rash of speculation.⁴⁵ Trading on the stock exchange displaces the forms of gambling handed down from feudal society. The phantasmagorias of space to which the flâneur devotes himself find a counterpart in the phantasmagorias of time to which the gambler is addicted. Gambling converts time into a narcotic. [Paul] Lafargue explains gambling as an imitation in miniature of the mysteries of economic fluctuation.⁴⁶ The expropriations carried out under Haussmann call forth a wave of fraudulent speculation. The rulings of the Court of Cassation, which are inspired by the bourgeois and Orleanist opposition, increase the financial risks of Haussmannization.⁴⁷

Haussmann tries to shore up his dictatorship by placing Paris under an emergency regime. In 1864, in a speech before the National Assembly, he vents his hatred of the rootless urban population, which keeps increasing as a result of his projects. Rising rents drive the proletariat into the suburbs. The *quarters* of Paris in this way lose their distinctive physiognomy. The “red belt” forms.⁴⁸ Haussmann gave himself the title of “demolition artist,” *artiste demolisseur*. He viewed his work as a calling, and emphasizes this in his memoirs. Meanwhile he estranges the Parisians from their city. They no longer feel at home there, and start to become conscious of the inhuman character of the metropolis. Maxime Du Camp’s monumental work *Paris* owes its inception to this consciousness.⁴⁹ The *Jérémies d’un Haussmannisé* give it the form of a biblical lament.⁵⁰

The true goal of Haussmann’s projects was to secure the city against civil war. He wanted to make the erection of barricades in Paris impossible for all time. With the same end in mind, Louis Philippe had already introduced wooden paving. Nonetheless, barricades played a role in the February Revolution.⁵¹ Engels studies the tactics of barricade fighting.⁵² Haussmann seeks to neutralize these tactics on two fronts. Widening the streets is designed to make the erection of barricades impossible, and new streets are to furnish the shortest route between the barracks and the workers’ districts. Contemporaries christen the operation “strategic embellishment.”

Reveal to these depraved,
O Republic, by foiling their plots,
Your great Medusa face
Ringed by red lightning.

—Workers’ song from about 1850, in Adolf Stahr, *Zwei Monate in Paris*
(Oldenburg, 1851), vol. 2, p. 199⁵³

The barricade is resurrected during the Commune.⁵⁴ It is stronger and better secured than ever. It stretches across the great boulevards, often reaching a

height of two stories, and shields the trenches behind it. Just as the *Communist Manifesto* ends the age of professional conspirators, so the Commune puts an end to the phantasmagoria holding sway over the early years of the proletariat. It dispels the illusion that the task of the proletarian revolution is to complete the work of 1789 hand in hand with the bourgeoisie. This illusion dominates the period 1831–1871, from the Lyons uprising to the Commune. The bourgeoisie never shared in this error. Its battle against the social rights of the proletariat dates back to the great Revolution, and converges with the philanthropic movement that gives it cover and that is in its heyday under Napoleon III. Under his reign, this movement’s monumental work appears: Le Play’s *Ouvriers européens*.⁵⁵ Side by side with the concealed position of philanthropy, the bourgeoisie has always maintained openly the position of class warfare.⁵⁶ As early as 1831, in the *Journal des Débats*, it acknowledges that “every manufacturer lives in his factory like a plantation owner among his slaves.” If it is the misfortune of the workers’ rebellions of old that no theory of revolution directs their course, it is also this absence of theory that, from another perspective, makes possible their spontaneous energy and the enthusiasm with which they set about establishing a new society. This enthusiasm, which reaches its peak in the Commune, wins over to the working class at times the best elements of the bourgeoisie, but leads it in the end to succumb to their worst elements. Rimbaud and Courbet declare their support for the Commune.⁵⁷ The burning of Paris is the worthy conclusion to Haussmann’s work of destruction.⁵⁸

My good father had been in Paris.

—Karl Gutzkow, *Briefe aus Paris* (Leipzig, 1842), vol. 1, p. 58

Balzac was the first to speak of the ruins of the bourgeoisie.⁵⁹ But it was Surrealism that first opened our eyes to them. The development of the forces of production shattered the wish symbols of the previous century, even before the monuments representing them had collapsed. In the nineteenth century this development worked to emancipate the forms of construction from art, just as in the sixteenth century the sciences freed themselves from philosophy. A start is made with architecture as engineered construction. Then comes the reproduction of nature as photography. The creation of fantasy prepares to become practical as commercial art. Literature submits to montage in the feuilleton. All these products are on the point of entering the market as commodities. But they linger on the threshold. From this epoch derive the arcades and *intérieurs*, the exhibition halls and panoramas. They are residues of a dream world. The realization of dream elements, in the course of waking up, is the paradigm of dialectical thinking. Thus, dialectical thinking is the organ of historical awakening. Every epoch, in fact, not

only dreams the one to follow but, in dreaming, precipitates its awakening. It bears its end within itself and unfolds it—as Hegel already noticed—by cunning. With the destabilizing of the market economy, we begin to recognize the monuments of the bourgeoisie as ruins even before they have crumbled.

Written May 1935; unpublished in Benjamin's lifetime. *Gesammelte Schriften*, V, 45–59. Translated by Howard Eiland.

Notes

1. The *magasin de nouveautés* offered a complete selection of goods in one or another specialized line of business; it had many rooms and several stories, with a large staff of employees. The first such store, Pygmalion, opened in Paris in 1793. The word *nouveauté* means “newness” or “novelty”; in the plural, it means “fancy goods.” On the *magasins de nouveautés*, see Walter Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk*, vol. 5 of Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1982), pp. 83–109; in English, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 31–61 (Convolute A). Benjamin wrote the essay “Paris, die Hauptstadt des XIX. Jahrhunderts” (Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century) at the suggestion of Friedrich Pollock, codirector of the Institute of Social Research in New York, as an exposé, or synopsis, of the *Passagen-Werk*. Hence its highly concentrated, almost stenographic style. See Benjamin's letter to Theodor W. Adorno dated May 31, 1935, in this volume. The essay appears at the beginning of *The Arcades Project*.
2. Honoré de Balzac, “Histoire et physiologie des boulevards de Paris,” in George Sand, Honoré de Balzac, Eugène Sue, et al., *Le Diable à Paris* (The Devil in Paris), vol. 2 (Paris, 1846), p. 91.
3. Karl Boetticher, “Das Prinzip der Hellenischen und Germanischen Bauweise hinsichtlich der Uebertragung in die Bauweise unserer Tage” (The Principle of Hellenic and Germanic Building Methods in Light of Their Incorporation into the Building Methods of Today; address of March 13, 1846), in *Zamhundertjährigen Geburtstag Karl Böttichers* (Berlin, 1906), p. 46. The address is cited at more length in *The Arcades Project*, p. 150 (Convolute F1,1). Karl Heinrich von Boetticher (1833–1907), author of *Tektonik der Hellenen* (Hellenic Telemics; 1844–1852), was an adviser to the German chancellor Bismarck.
4. Sigfried Giedion, *Bauen in Frankreich* [Architecture in France] (Leipzig, 1928), p. 3.
5. See Paul Scheerhart, *Glass Architecture*, trans. James Palmes (New York: Praeger, 1972). In this work, the German author Paul Scheerhart (1863–1915) announces the advent of a “new glass-culture.” See Benjamin's discussion of Scheerhart in his essay “Experience and Poverty,” in Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, Volume 2: 1927–1934 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 733–734; and the short essay “Zur Scheerhart” (1940), in Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 2 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977), pp. 630–632, English version “On Scheerhart,” in Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, Volume 4: 1938–1940 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, forthcoming).
6. Jules Michelet, “Avenir! Avenir!” (Future! Future!), in *Europe*, 19, no. 73 (January 15, 1929): 6.
7. Charles Fourier (1772–1837), French social theorist and reformer, urged that society be reorganized into self-contained agrarian cooperatives which he called “phalansteries.” Among his works are *Theorie des quatre mouvements* (1808) and *Le Nouveau Monde industriel* (1829–1830). See *The Arcades Project*, pp. 620–650 (Convolute W, “Fourier”).
8. Emile Zola published *Traual* (Labor) in 1901 and *Thérèse Raquin* in 1867. See *The Arcades Project*, pp. 203–204, 627–628. The period style known today as Biedermeier was popular in most of northern Europe between 1815 and 1848. In furniture and interior design, painting and literature, it was characterized by a simplification of neoclassical forms and by motifs drawn from nature. Home furnishings in this style often displayed bold color combinations and lively patterns.
9. See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Die deutsche Ideologie* (The German Ideology), part 2; translated into English by C. P. Magill in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 5 (New York: International Publishers, 1976). The passage in question is on pp. 513–514. Carl Grün (1817–1887) was a German writer and publicist, a member of the Prussian national Diet, and a follower of Feuerbach.
10. *Levana, oder Erziehungslehre* (1807) is a classic work on pedagogy. See Jean Paul, *Levana, oder Doctrinē of Education*, trans. Erika Casey, in *Jean Paul: A Reader* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), pp. 269–274. Jean Paul is the pen name of Jean Paul Friedrich Richter (1763–1825), German prose writer and humorist, whose other works include *Titan* (1800–1803) and *Vorschule der Ästhetik* (Elementary Course in Aesthetics; 1804).
11. Panoramas were large circular tableaux, usually displaying scenes of battles and cities, painted in trompe l'oeil and originally designed to be viewed from the center of a rotunda. They were introduced in France in 1799 by the American engineer Robert Fulton. Subsequent forms included the Diorama (opened by Louis Daguerre and Charles Bouton in 1822 in Paris), in which pictures were painted on cloth transparencies that, by 1831, were being used with various lighting effects; it was this installation that burned down in 1839.
12. That is, Jacques-Louis David (1748–1825), the neoclassical French painter.
13. Emile de Girardin (1806–1881), a member of the Chamber of Deputies, inaugurated the low-priced, mass-circulation newspaper with his editorship of *La Presse* (1836–1856, 1862–1866), at an annual subscription rate of forty francs.
14. Louis Jacques M. N. P. Daguerre (1787–1851), French painter and inventor, helped develop the Diorama in Paris (1822), and collaborated with J. N. Niepce (1829–1833) on work leading to the discovery of the daguerreotype process, communicated to the Academy of Sciences in 1839. Pierre Prevost (1764–1823) was a French painter.
15. François Arago (1786–1853), a scientist who investigated the theory of light and electricity, was director of the Paris Observatory. He presented his expert report in favor of photography in 1838.

16. Nadar is the pseudonym of Félix Tournachon (1820–1910), French photographer, journalist, and caricaturist. His photographs of the Paris sewers, in which he employed his patented new process of photography by electric light, were taken in 1864–1865.
17. A. J. Wiertz, "La Photographie," in *Oeuvres littéraires* (Paris, 1870), pp. 309ff. Antoine-Joseph Wiertz (1806–1865) was a Belgian painter of colossal historical scenes, lampooned by Baudelaire. His article on photography is excerpted in *The Arcades Project*, p. 671 (Convolute Y1,11).
18. Ferdinand Langlé and Emile Vanderburch, *Louis-Bronze et le Saint-Simonien: Parodie de Louis XI* (Théâtre du Palais-Royal, February 27, 1832), cited in Théodore Muret, *L'Histoire par le théâtre, 1789–1851* (Paris, 1865), vol. 3, p. 191.
19. Actually, it was the French philologist and historian Ernest Renan (1823–1892), author of *La Vie de Jésus* (The Life of Jesus; 1863) and many other works, who made this statement. See *The Arcades Project*, pp. 180 (Convolute G4,5) and 197 (Convolute G13a,3).
20. Sigmund Engländer, *Geschichte der französischen Arbeiter-Associationen* [History of French Workers' Associations] (Hamburg, 1864), vol. 4, p. 52.
21. Jean-Antoine comte de Chappal (1756–1832), a French physicist and chemist, served as Minister of the Interior (1800–1804). He was the founder of the first Ecole des Arts et des Métiers.
22. The Saint-Simonians were followers of the philosopher and social reformer Henri de Saint-Simon (1760–1825), considered the founder of French socialism. His works include *Du Système industriel* (1820–1823) and *Le Nouveau Christianisme* (1825). After helping to organize the constitutional monarchy of Louis Philippe (1830–1848), Saint-Simonians came to occupy important positions in nineteenth-century French industry and finance. Michel Chevalier (1806–1879), an economist and advocate of free trade, was coeditor of *Le Globe* (1830–1832) and later, under Napoleon III, a councillor of state and professor at the Collège de France. Barthélemy-Prospér Enfantin (1796–1864), a Saint-Simonian leader known as "Père Enfantin," established in 1832, on his estate at Ménilmontant, a model community characterized by fantastic sacro-talism and freedom between the sexes. He later became the first director of the Lyons Railroad Company (1845). See *The Arcades Project*, pp. 571–602 (Convolute U, "Saint-Simon, Railroads").
23. Grandville is the pseudonym of Jean-Ignace-Isidore Gérard (1803–1847), a caricaturist and illustrator whose work appeared in the periodicals *Le Charivari* and *La Caricature*. His drawings, especially as conceived for the volume *Un Autre Monde* (1844), anticipated Surrealism. See *The Arcades Project*, pp. 171–202 (Convolute G, "Exhibitions, Advertising, Grandville").
24. Karl Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1 (1867), in English, *Capital*, vol. 1, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (1887; rpt. New York: International Publishers, 1967), p. 76.
25. Giacomo Leopardi, "Dialogo della moda e della morte" (1827), in English in *Essays and Dialogues*, trans. Giovanni Cecchetti (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), p. 67.
26. Benjamin refers to an illustration in Grandville's *Un Autre Monde*, reproduced in *The Arcades Project*, p. 65. See also *Fantastic Illustrations of Grandville* (New York: Dover, 1974), p. 49; this volume contains illustrations from *Un Autre Monde* and *Les Animaux*.
27. Alphonse Toussenel (1803–1885), a French naturalist and follower of Fourier, was editor of *La Paix* and author of *L'Esprit des bêtes* (Spirit of the Beasts; 1856) and other works in a droll mode.
28. The International Workingmen's Association (the First International), whose General Council had its seat in London, was founded in September 1864.
29. Jacques Offenbach (1819–1880), German-born musician and composer, produced many successful operettas and *opéras bouffes* in Paris, where he managed the Gâté-Lyrique (1872–1876). His famous *Contes d'Hoffmann* (Tales of Hoffmann) was produced after his death.
30. From Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857); in English, "A Martyr," in Baudelaire, *Flowers of Evil*, trans. Wallace Fowlie (1964; rpt. New York: Dover, 1992), p. 85.
31. Louis Philippe (1773–1850), a descendant of the Bourbon-Orléans royal line, was proclaimed "Citizen King" in the July Revolution of July 27–29, 1830, against Charles X, and was soon after elected by the Chamber of Deputies as a constitutional monarch. His reign, which sought to portray itself as middle-of-the-road, was marked by the bourgeoisie's rise to power, especially through its domination of industry and finance. He was overthrown by the February Revolution of 1848.
32. François Guizot (1787–1874), a historian and statesman, was premier of France from 1840 to 1848. He was forced out of office by the 1848 revolution.
33. Jugendstil, in the strict sense, was a style of architectural, figurative, and applied art that flourished in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century, and that was allied to Art Nouveau. In Germany, it was led by the architect and craftsman Henry van de Velde (1863–1957), author of *Vom neuen Stil* (The Modern Style; 1907). After 1896, it was associated with the periodical *Die Jugend* (Youth). Benjamin uses the term more broadly to include literature as well. It signifies not only a crossing of the cultural barrier separating "higher" from "lower" arts, but an educational movement intent on restructuring the human environment.
34. Henrik Ibsen's play *The Master Builder* was produced in 1892. See *The Arcades Project*, pp. 221 (Convolute I4,4) and 551 (Convolute S4,6).
35. On the figure of the Parisian apache, who "abjures virtue and laws" and "terminates the *contrat social* forever," and on the "poetry of apachelom," see "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire," trans. Harry Zohn, in Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Volume 4: 1938–1940* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, forthcoming).
36. Baudelaire, "The Swan," in *Flowers of Evil*, p. 75.
37. See the passages from Engels's *Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England* (The Condition of the Working Class in England) and from Poe's story "The Man of the Crowd" cited in *The Arcades Project*, pp. 427–428 (Convolute M5a,1) and 445 (Convolute M15a,2), respectively.
38. *The Aeneid of Virgil*, trans. Allen Mandelbaum (New York: Bantam, 1971), p. 137 (book 6, line 126). Benjamin quotes the Latin.

39. "Spleen et idéal" (Spleen and Ideal) is the title of the first section of Baudelaire's collection of poems *Les Fleurs du Mal* (Flowers of Evil), first published in 1857.
40. "The Voyage," in Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, trans. Richard Howard (Boston: David R. Godine, 1982), pp. 156–157.
41. Baudelaire, "Pierre Dupont," in *Baudelaire as a Literary Critic*, trans. Lois B. Hyslop and Francis E. Hyslop, Jr. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1964), p. 53.
42. Applying Kant's idea of the pure and disinterested existence of the work of art, the French philosopher Victor Cousin made use of the phrase *l'art pour l'art* (art for art's sake) in his 1818 lecture "Du Vrai, du beau, et du bien" (On the True, the Beautiful, and the Good). The idea was later given currency by writers like Théophile Gautier, Edgar Allan Poe, and Charles Baudelaire.
43. Baudelaire's enthusiasm for Wagner's music, which he describes as a "revelation" and as specifically "modern," is expressed in a letter of February 17, 1860, to Wagner, after the composer had come to Paris to direct three concerts of his music, and in an essay, "Richard Wagner et Tannhäuser à Paris" (Richard Wagner and Tannhäuser in Paris), published in 1861. See *The Selected Letters of Charles Baudelaire*, trans. Rosemary Lloyd (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 145–146; and Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. Jonathan Mayne (1964; rpt. New York: Da Capo, 1986), pp. 111–114.
44. *Confession d'un lion devenu vieux* [Confession of a Lion Grown Old] (Paris, 1888), 4 pp., was published anonymously, without year or place, by Baron Georges Eugène Haussmann (1809–1891). As Prefect of the Seine (1853–1870) under Napoleon III, Haussmann inaugurated and carried through a large-scale renovation of Paris, which included the modernization of sanitation, public utilities, and transportation facilities, and which necessitated the demolition of many old Parisian neighborhoods and many arcades built in the first half of the century.
45. Charles Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, known as Louis Napoleon (1808–1873), was a nephew of Napoleon I. After being elected president of the Republic at the end of 1848, he made himself dictator by a coup d'état on December 2, 1851; a year later, he proclaimed himself emperor as Napoleon III. His reign, the Second Empire, was marked by economic expansion, militant foreign intervention, and a wavering authoritarian tone. He was deposed by the National Assembly in 1871, following his capture at the Battle of Sedan during the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871).
46. Paul Lafargue (1842–1911) was a French radical socialist and writer who was closely associated with Marx and Engels. For his comparison between the market and the gambling house, see *The Arcades Project*, p. 497 (Convolute O4,1).
47. The Court of Cassation was established in 1790 as the highest court of appeals in the French legal system. During the Second Empire, it tended to serve the interests of the bourgeoisie, which had come to power under Louis Philippe. It thus represented a check on the power of Napoleon III and Baron Haussmann.
48. The "red belt" was a name for the suburbs immediately surrounding Paris proper in the later nineteenth century. These districts were populated by many of the working class who had been displaced by Haussmann's urban renewal.
49. The writer Maxime Du Camp (1822–1894) was a friend of Flaubert and Baudelaire. He is the author of *Paris: Ses organes, ses fonctions et sa vie dans la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle*, a six-volume account of nineteenth-century Paris (1869–1875). See *The Arcades Project*, pp. 90–91 (Convolute C₄), on Du Camp's conception of this work.
50. Anonymous, *Paris désert: Lamentations d'un Jérémie haussmannisé* [Deserted Paris: Jeremiads of a Man Haussmannized] (Paris, 1868).
51. The "February Revolution" refers to the overthrow of Louis Philippe's constitutional monarchy in February 1848.
52. Engels' critique of barricade tactics is excerpted in *The Arcades Project*, p. 123 (Convolute E1a,5).
53. The verse derives from the popular lyric poet and songwriter Pierre Dupont (1821–1870). See *The Arcades Project*, p. 710 (Convolute a7,3).
54. The Commune of Paris was the revolutionary government established in Paris on March 18, 1871, in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War. It was suppressed in bloody street-fighting that ended May 28, 1871, leaving 20,000 Communards dead.
55. Frédéric Le Play, *Les Ouvriers européens: Etudes sur les travaux, la vie domestique et la condition morale des populations ouvrières de l'Europe, précédées d'un exposé de la méthode d'observation* [European Workers: Studies of the Work, Domestic Life, and Moral Condition of the Laboring Populations of Europe. Prefaced by a Statement on Observational Method] (Paris, 1855). Frédéric Le Play (1806–1882) was an engineer and economist who, as senator (1867–1870), represented a paternalistic "social Catholicism."
56. In his second exposé to the *Passagen-Werk*, written in French in 1939, Benjamin apparently corrects this assertion: "Side by side with the overt position of philanthropy, the bourgeoisie has always maintained the covert position of class struggle" (*The Arcades Project*, p. 24).
57. At the age of eighteen, the French poet Rimbaud wrote from his home in northern France, in a letter of May 13, 1871: "I will be a worker. This idea holds me back when mad anger drives me toward the battle of Paris—where so many workers are dying as I write. . . . Work now?—Never, never. I am on strike." Arthur Rimbaud, *Complete Works: Selected Letters*, trans. Wallace Fowlie (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 303. Gustave Courbet (1819–1877), leading French realist painter, presided over the Committee of Fine Arts during the Commune. He was imprisoned six months for helping to destroy the column in the Place Vendôme during the uprising of 1871, and in 1875 was ordered to pay for the restoration of the column.
58. In the course of "Bloody Week" (May 21–28, 1871), the desperate Communards set fire to many public buildings, including the Tuileries Palace and the Hôtel de Ville (City Hall).
59. Balzac's comment, from 1845, is cited in *The Arcades Project*, p. 87 (Convolute C2a,8).