

In this context, few things seem to me as symptomatic as the repetition in Barcelona of what happened a year ago in Vienna: the fascist conquerors were jubilantly greeted by the same crowds that, just the day before, had been cheering their opponents.)

As to the rest, I'll refrain from going into detail. In the case of the commodity theory, I am, in a sense, an interested party and therefore do not feel properly qualified to make suggestions. All the same, it does not seem to me that the concept of empathy with inorganic matter yields anything decisive. In this area, of course, we at the *Zeitschrift*¹¹ are on particularly demanding ground, for an absolute Marxist pertinence is postulated—and rightly so—of every statement we publish. In cooperation with Max, and after endless toil, I reformulated my own passage on the substitution of exchange value in the light of your more audacious version in your first draft; and if ever there was a case of spatial distance making itself felt as an objectively disruptive factor, it is to be found in your theory of the commodity soul. At this point, I would simply ask you to give this theory your closest attention, and in particular to compare it with Marx's chapter on the fetish in his first volume.¹² Otherwise there is likely to be trouble, especially at the end of the penultimate paragraph and the beginning of the last paragraph on page 31. Regarding the Baudelaire quotation in the text (page 32), I would just like to say that the concept of the *inspiration* is the linchpin of Berlioz's musical aesthetic (which dominates the whole school of Berlioz, particularly Richard Strauss). I do not consider the quotation from Engels such a great *trouville*, and if I were to think of making cuts they might well be applied to this passage first. (Löwenthal has already proposed deleting the first half of the quotation; I, for my part, would prefer to see it sacrificed entirely.)¹³ Regarding the passage on labor power as a commodity (page 33), let me repeat what I said earlier: Caution! I am not entirely comfortable with your characterization of Baudelaire in terms of the petty bourgeois. In general, it seems to me that the paragraph on the crowd has not quite the same density as the preceding material, and that this passage would benefit from the introduction of some treasures from your store. In connection with the last section before Hugo (page 34), I would like to express some slight doubt as to whether the extraordinary stanza by Brecht is really indebted to Shelley.¹⁴ Directness and harshness are not exactly salient traits in Shelley's work. At any rate, comparison with the original is needed.

I am slightly at a loss when it comes to your conclusion (beginning on the bottom of page 34). I hope you will not be angry with me if I say that the whole section on Hugo, though I read it many times with the closest care, did not really become vivid for me or find its proper place in the structure of the whole. I've no doubt that it contains extremely important motifs. But when I mentioned that some motifs would be difficult to develop in the framework of this essay, I was thinking primarily of the section on Hugo. It could be integrated into a text focusing on the image of the masses. But if

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sense put forward as natural species and varieties. I might add that an analogous tendency is likewise found in Poe, in the thesis which gave rise to "The Gold Bug" (which, by the way, was the only major commercial success that Poe had in his life)—namely, that it is possible to decipher any code, no matter how complicated. The code, here, is clearly an image of the masses, and its ciphers would correspond precisely to the "types" of Balzac and Daumier. There's scarcely any need to point out how much this, and the notion of the crowd as a secret code, accords with the allegorical intention in Baudelaire. Moreover, Poe actually kept his promise to decipher every code presented to him. One could hardly imagine the same of Baudelaire, any more than of Balzac, and it might well contribute something to your theory on why there are detective stories by Poe but none by Baudelaire. The concept of human beings as ciphers also plays a role in Kierkegaard; one might well mention his concept of the "spy."

I am delighted with page 22—it is certainly a revealing index to your work that the excerpt from the publisher's brochure, especially the relation, reads as if it were already your interpretation. At this point, the relation between material content and truth content has indeed become quite transparent.—Valéry's compilation of elements from Poe (page 23) sounds slightly abrupt when rendered in German and presented without interpretation. Toward the bottom of page 23, I find the differentiation between Baudelaire and the detective story with reference to the "structure of his drives" not quite compelling. I am sure that an attempt to accomplish this differentiation with objective categories would be extremely fruitful. The sections on the poem "A une passante," and especially on the trace, seem to me particularly successful. The conclusion on page 27, just before the discussion of "The Man of the Crowd," is magnificent.

What I have to say on "The Man of the Crowd" is already contained in my remarks on the type. I would merely like to add, with reference to page 27, that in the nineteenth century there were coffeehouses in Berlin but not in London, and that there are still none there, any more than in America. (Poe himself, of course, never visited London.)

Your interpretation of the uniformity of types might best be introduced on page 29, where you discuss the exaggeration of uniformity; this very exaggeration and its relation to caricature would then become the object of interpretation. Your description of the Senefelder lithograph (page 30) is exceptionally beautiful, but likewise calls for interpretation. Of course, I found the passage on reflex behavior (page 30) particularly appealing; it was entirely unknown to me when I wrote my study of the fetish.¹⁵ Since this is a historical-philosophical and political motif of great importance one might well say at this point that, much as the beginning of a detective story contains the figure of its end, we here find a perspective which proceeds from the ornamental display of fascism into the torture chambers of

earlier, Féval had involved a redskin in the adventures of a metro-polis. This man is named Tovah, and on a ride in a fiacre he manages to scalp his four white companions in such a way that the coachman does not notice anything. At the very beginning, the *Myrtées de Paris* refers to Cooper in promising that the book's heroes from the Parisian underworld 'are no less removed from civilization than the savages who are so splendidly depicted by Cooper'. But Balzac in particular never tired of referring to Cooper as his model. 'The poetry of terror of which the American woods with their hostile tribes on the warpath encountering each other are so full - this poetry which stood Cooper in such good stead attaches in the same way to the smallest details of Parisian life. The pedestrians, the shops, the hired coaches, or a man leaning against a window - all this was of the same burning interest to the members of Peyrade's bodyguard as a tree stump, a beaver's den, a rock, a buffalo skin, an immobile canoe, or a floating leaf was to the reader of a novel by Cooper.'¹⁵ Balzac's intrigue is rich in forms ranging from stories about Indians to detective stories. At an early date there were objections to his 'Mohicans in spencer jackets' and 'Hurons in frock coats'.¹⁶ On the other hand, Hippolyte Babou, who was close to Baudelaire, wrote retrospectively in 1857: 'When Balzac breaks through walls to give free rein to observation, people listen at the doors. . . . In short, they behave, as our English neighbours in their prudery put it, like *police détectives*.'¹⁷

The detective story, whose interest lies in a logical construction that the crime story as such need not have, appeared in France for the first time in the form of translations of Poe's stories 'The Mystery of Marie Roget', 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue', and 'The Purloined Letter'. With his translations of these models, Baudelaire adopted the genre. Poe's work was definitely absorbed in his own, and Baudelaire emphasizes this fact by stating his solidarity with the method in which the individual genres that Poe embraced harmonize. Poe was one of the greatest technicians of modern literature. As Valéry pointed out,¹⁸ he was the first to attempt the

15. cf. André Le Breton, *Balzac*, Paris, 1905, p. 83.

16. Hippolyte Babou, *La vérité sur le cas de M. Champfleury*, Paris, 1857, p. 30.

17. cf. Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du mal*, Paris, 1928; introduction by Paul Valéry.

scientific story, a modern cosmogony, the description of pathological phenomena. These genres he regarded as exact products of a method for which he claimed universal validity. In this very point Baudelaire sided with him, and in Poe's spirit he wrote: 'The time is not distant when it will be understood that a literature which refuses to make its way in brotherly concord with science and philosophy is a murderous and suicidal literature.'¹⁸ The detective story, the most momentous among Poe's technical achievements, was part of a literature that satisfied Baudelaire's postulate. Its analysis constitutes part of the analysis of Baudelaire's own work, despite the fact that Baudelaire wrote no stories of this type. The *Fleurs du mal* have three of its decisive elements as *désjecta membra*: the victim and the scene of the crime ('Une Martyre'), the murderer ('Le Vin de l'assassin'), the masses ('Le Crépuscule du soir'). The fourth element is lacking - the one that permits the intellect to break through this emotion-laden atmosphere. Baudelaire wrote no detective story because, given the structure of his instincts, it was impossible for him to identify with the detective. In him, the calculating, constructive element was on the side of the asocial and had become an integral part of cruelty. Baudelaire was too good a reader of the Marquis de Sade to be able to compete with Poe.¹⁹

The original social content of the detective story was the obliteration of the individual's traces in the big-city crowd. Poe concerns himself with this motif in detail in 'The Mystery of Marie Roget', the most voluminous of his detective stories. At the same time this story is the prototype of the utilization of journalistic information in the solution of crimes. Poe's detective, the Chevalier Dupin, here works not with personal observation but with reports from the daily press. The critical analysis of these reports constitutes the rumour in the story. Among other things, the time of the crime has to be established. One paper, *Le Commercial*, expresses the view that Marie Roget, the murdered woman, has been done away with immediately after she has left her mother's apartment. Poe writes: 'It is impossible that a person so well known to thousands as this

18. II, 424.

19. 'One always has to go back to Sade . . . to explain evil' (I, 694).

Un éclair . . . puis la nuit! — Fugitive beauté
 Dont le regard m'a fait soudainement renaître,
 Ne te verrai-je plus que dans l'éternité?

Allieurs, bien loin d'ici! trop tard! jamais peut-être!
 Car j'ignore où tu fuis, tu ne sais où je vais,
 O toi que j'eusse aimée, ô toi qui le savais!

To a *Passer-by*

Amid the deafening traffic of the town,
 Tall, slender, in deep mourning, with majesty,
 A woman passed, raising, with dignity
 In her poised hand, the flounces of her gown;
 Graceful, noble, with a statue's form.
 And I drank, trembling as a madman thrills,
 From her eyes, ashen sky where brooded storm,
 The softness that fascinates, the pleasure that kills.
 A flash . . . then night! — O lovely fugitive,
 I am suddenly reborn from your swift glance;
 Shall I never see you till eternity?
 Somewhere, far off! too late! never, perchance!
 Neither knows where the other goes or lives;
 We might have loved, and you knew this might be!

translated by C. F. MacIntyre

This sonnet presents the crowd not as the refuge of a criminal but as that of love which eludes the poet. One may say that it deals with the function of the crowd not in the life of the citizen but in the life of the erotic person. At first glance this function appears to be a negative one, but it is not. Far from eluding the erotic in the crowd, the apparition which fascinates him is brought to him by this very crowd. The delight of the city-dweller is not so much love at first sight as love at last sight. The *never* marks the high point of the encounter, when the poet's passion seems to be frustrated but in reality bursts out of him like a flame. He burns in this flame, but Phoenix arises from it. The rebirth in the first tercet reveals a

young woman was, should have passed three blocks without some one having seen her." This is the idea of a man long resident in Paris — a public man — and one whose walks to and fro in the city have been mostly limited to the vicinity of the public offices. . . . He passes to and fro, at regular intervals, within a confined periphery, abounding in individuals who are led to observation of his person through interest in the kindred nature of his occupation with their own. But the walks of Marie may, in general, be supposed discursive. In this particular instance it will be understood as most probable that she proceeded upon a route of more than average diversity from her accustomed ones. The parallel which we imagine to have existed in the mind of *Le Commercial* would only be sustained in the event of the two individuals traversing the whole city. In this case, granting the personal acquaintances to be equal, the chances would be also equal that an equal number of personal *rencontres* would be made. For my own part, I should hold it not only as possible, but as far more than probable, that Marie might have proceeded, at any given period, by any one of the many routes between her own residence and that of her aunt, without meeting a single individual whom she knew, or by whom she was known. In viewing this question in its full and proper light, we must hold steadily in mind the great disproportion between the personal acquaintances of even the most noted individual in Paris, and the entire population of Paris itself. If one disregards the context which gives rise to these reflections in Poe, the detective loses his competence, but the problem does not lose its validity. A variation of it forms the basis of one of the most famous poems in the *Fleurs du mal*, the sonnet entitled 'A une passante':

La rue assourdissante autour de moi hurlait.
 Longue, mince, en grand deuil, douleur majestueuse,
 Une femme passa, d'une main fastueuse
 Soulevant, balançant le feston et l'ourlet;
 Agile et noble, avec sa jambe de statue.
 Moi, je buvais, crispé comme un extravagant,
 Dans son oeil, ciel livide où germe l'ouragan,
 La douceur qui fascine et le plaisir qui tue.

view of the occurrence which in the light of the preceding stanza seems very problematical. What makes his body twitch spasmodically is not the excitement of a man in whom an image has taken possession of every fibre of his being; it partakes more of the shock with which an imperious desire suddenly overcomes a lonely man. The phrase *comme un extravagant* almost expresses this; the poet's emphasis on the fact that the female apparition is in mourning is not designed to conceal it. In reality there is a profound gulf between the quatrains which present the occurrence and the tercets which transfigure it. When Thébaudet says that these verses 'could only have been written in a big city',²¹ he does not penetrate beneath their surface. The inner form of these verses is revealed in the fact that in them love itself is recognized as being stigmatized by the big city.²²

Since the days of Louis-Philippe the bourgeoisie has endeavoured to compensate itself for the inconsequential nature of private life in the big city. It seeks such compensation within its four walls. Even if a bourgeois is unable to give his earthly being permanence, it seems to be a matter of honour with him to preserve the traces of his articles and requisites of daily use in perpetuity. The bourgeoisie cheerfully takes the impression of a host of objects. For slippers and pocket watches, thermometers and egg-cups, cutlery and umbrellas it tries to get covers and cases. It prefers velvet and plush covers which preserve the impression of every touch. For the Makart style, the style of the end of the Second Empire, a dwelling becomes a kind of casing. This style views it as a kind of case for a person and embeds him in it together with all his appurtenances, tending his traces as nature tends dead fauna embedded in granite. One should not fail to recognize that there are two sides to this process. The real or sentimental value of the objects thus preserved

21. Albert Thébaudet, *Intérieurs*, Paris, 1924, p. 22.

22. The motif of love for a woman passing by occurs in an early poem by Stefan George. The poet has missed the important thing: the stream in which the woman moves past, borne along by the crowd. The result is a self-conscious elegy. The poet's glances – so he must confess to his lady – have 'moved away, moist with longing/before they dared mingle with yours' (*Saucht vor sehnen fortgerogen/et so in deiner rich zu unheimen trauern*) (Stefan George, *Hymnen. Pflügerfeierten. Algalad*, seventh edn, Berlin, 1922, p. 23). Baudelaire leaves no doubt that *he* looked deep into the eyes of the passer-by.

is emphasized. They are removed from the profane eyes of non-owners, and in particular their outlines are blurred in a characteristic way. It is not strange that resistance to controls, something that becomes second nature to asocial persons, returns in the propertied bourgeoisie.

In such customs it is possible to see the dialectical illustration of a text which appeared in many instalments in the *Journal officiel*. As early as 1836 Balzac wrote in *Modeste Mignon*: 'Poor women of France! You would probably like to remain unknown in order to carry on your little romances. But how can you manage to do this in a civilization which registers the departure and the arrival of coaches in public places, counts letters and stamps them when they are posted and again when they are delivered, which provides houses with numbers and will soon have the whole country down to the smallest plot of land in its registers.'²³ Since the French Revolution an extensive network of controls had brought bourgeois life ever more tightly into its meshes. The numbering of houses in the big cities may be used to document the progressive standardization. Napoleon's administration had made it obligatory for Paris in 1805. In proletarian sections, to be sure, this simple police measure had encountered resistance. As late as 1864 it was reported about Saint-Antoine, the carpenters' section, that 'if one asks an inhabitant of this suburb what his address is, he will always give the name of his house and not its cold, official number.'²⁴ In the long run, of course, such resistance was of no avail against the endeavour to compensate by means of a multifarious web of registrations for the fact that the disappearance of people in the masses of the big cities leaves no traces. Baudelaire found this endeavour as much of an encroachment as did any criminal. On his flight from his creditors he went to cafés or reading circles. Sometimes he had two domiciles at the same time – but on days when the rent was due, he often spent the night at a third place with friends. So he roved about in the city which had long since ceased to be home for the *flâneur*. Every bed in which he lay down had become a fit '*karatéux*'²⁵ for

23. Balzac, *Modeste Mignon*, Editions du Siècle, Paris, 1850, p. 99.

24. Sigmund Engländer, *Geschichte der französischen Arbeiter-Assoziationen*, 4 parts, Hamburg, 1865–4, III, p. 126.

25. I, 115.

On Some Motifs in Baudelaire

Readers

Baudelaire envisaged readers to whom the reading of lyric poetry would present difficulties. The introductory poem of *Les Fleurs du mal* is addressed to these readers. Willpower and the ability to concentrate are not their strong points. What they prefer is sensual pleasure; they are familiar with the "spleen" which kills interest and receptiveness. It is strange to come across a lyric poet who addresses himself to such readers—the least rewarding type of audience. There is of course a ready explanation for this. Baudelaire wanted to be understood; he dedicates his book to those who are like him. The poem addressed to the reader ends with the salutation: "Hypocrite lecteur,—mon semblable,—mon frère!"¹ It might be more fruitful to put it another way and say: Baudelaire wrote a book—which from the very beginning had little prospect of becoming an immediate popular success. The kind of reader he envisaged is described in the introductory poem, and this turned out to have been a far-sighted judgment. He would eventually find the reader—his work was intended for. This situation—the fact, in other words, that the conditions for the reception of lyric poetry have become increasingly unfavorable—is borne out by three particular factors, among others. First of all, the lyric poet has ceased to represent the poet per se. He is no longer a "minstrel," as Lamartine still was; he has become the representative of a genre.² (Verlaine is a concrete example of this specialization; Rimbaud must already be regarded as an esoteric figure, a poet who, ex officio, kept a distance between his public and his work.)³ Second, there has been no success on a mass scale in lyric poetry since Baudelaire. (The

him. Crépet has counted fourteen Paris addresses for Baudelaire between 1842 and 1858.

Technical measures had to come to the aid of the administrative control process. In the early days of the process of identification, whose present standard derives from the Bertillon method, 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. The detective story came into being when this most decisive of all conquests of a person's incognito had been accomplished. Since then the end of efforts to capture a man in his speech and actions has not been in sight.

Poe's famous tale 'The Man of the Crowd' is something like the X-ray picture of a detective story. In it, the drapery represented by crime has disappeared. The mere armature has remained: the pursuer, the crowd, and an unknown man who arranges his walk through London in such a way that he always remains in the middle of the crowd. This unknown man is the *Baudelaire*. That is how Baudelaire interpreted him when, in his essay on Guys, he called the *Baudelaire* 'l'homme des foules'. But Poe's description of this figure is devoid of the connivance which Baudelaire had for it. To Poe the *Baudelaire* was, above all, someone who does not feel comfortable in his own company. That is why he seeks out the crowd; the reason why he hides in it is probably close at hand. Poe purposely blurs the difference between the asocial person and the *Baudelaire*. The harder a man is to find, the more suspicious he becomes. Refraining from a prolonged pursuit, the narrator quietly sums up his insight as follows: 'This old man . . . is the type and the genius of deep crime. He refuses to be alone. *He is the man of the crowd*'.

The author does not demand the reader's interest in this man alone; his description of the crowd will claim at least as much interest, for documentary as well as artistic reasons. In both respects the crowd stands out. The first thing that strikes one is the rapt attention with which the narrator follows the spectacle of the crowd. This same spectacle is followed, in a well-known story by E. T. A. Hoffmann, by the 'Cousin at his corner window'. But this man, who

is installed in his household, views the crowd with great constraint, whereas the man who stares through the window-panes of a coffee-house has penetrating eyes. In the difference between the two observation posts lies the difference between Berlin and London. On the one hand there is the man of leisure. He sits in his alcove as in a box in the theatre; when he wants to take a closer look at the marketplace, he has opera glasses at hand. On the other hand there is the anonymous consumer who enters a café and will shortly leave it again, attracted by the magnet of the mass which constantly has him in its range. On the one side there is a multiplicity of little genre pictures which in their totality constitute an album of coloured engravings; on the other side there is a view which would be capable of inspiring a great etcher — an enormous crowd in which no one is either quite transparent or quite opaque to all others. A German petty bourgeois is subject to very narrow limits, and yet Hoffmann by nature belonged to the family of the Poes and the Baudelaire. In the biographical notes to the original edition of his last writings we read: 'Hoffmann was never especially fond of Nature. He valued people — communication with them, observations about them, merely seeing them — more than anything else. If he went for a walk in summer, something that he did every day toward evening in fine weather, there was hardly a wine tavern or a confectioner's shop where he did not stop in to see whether people were there and what people were there.'¹⁶ At a later date, when Dickens went travelling, he repeatedly complained about the lack of street noises which were indispensable to him for his production. 'I cannot express how much I want these [the streets],' he wrote in 1846 from Lausanne while he was working on *Dombey and Son*. 'It seems as if they supplied something to my brain, which it cannot bear, when busy, to lose. For a week or a fortnight I can write prodigiously in a retired place . . . and a day in London sets me up again and starts me. But the toil and labour of writing, day after day, without that magic lantern, is *immense*. . . . My figures seem disposed to stagnate without crowds about them.'¹⁷

16. E. T. A. Hoffmann, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, vol. 15: *Leben und Nachlass* by Julius Eduard Hitzig, vol. 3, Stuttgart, 1839, pp. 32ff.

17. Franz Mehring, 'Charles Dickens', in *Die Neue Zeit*, 30 (1911-12),

Among the many things that Baudelaire found to criticize about hated Brussels, one thing filled him with particular rage: 'No shop-windows. Strollings, something that nations with imagination love, is not possible in Brussels. There is nothing to see, and the streets are unusable.'²⁸ Baudelaire loved solitude, but he wanted it in a crowd.

In the course of his story, Poe lets it grow dark. He lingers over the city by gaslight. The appearance of the street as an *intérieur* in which the phantasmagoria of the *flâneur* is concentrated is hard to separate from the gaslight. The first gas-lamps burned in the arcades. The attempt to use them under the open sky was made in Baudelaire's childhood; candelabra were placed on the Place Vendôme. Under Napoleon III the number of gas lanterns in Paris increased rapidly.²⁹ This increased safety in the city made the crowds feel at home in the open streets even at night, and removed the starry sky from the ambience of the big city more reliably than this was done by its tall buildings. 'I draw the curtain behind the sun; now it has been put to bed, as is proper; henceforth I shall see no other light but that of the gas flame.'³⁰ The moon and the stars are no longer worth mentioning.

In the heyday of the Second Empire, the shops in the main streets did not close before ten o'clock at night. It was the great period of *noctambulesme*. In the chapter of his *Heures parisiennes* which is devoted to the second hour after midnight, Delvau wrote: 'A person may take a rest from time to time; he is permitted stops and resting places; but he has no right to sleep.'³¹ On the Lake of Geneva, Dickens nostalgically remembered Genoa where he had two miles of streets by whose light he had been able to roam about at night. Later, when the disappearance of the arcades made stroll-

vol. 1, pp. 62 ff. [*The Letters of Charles Dickens*, edited by Walter Dexter, vol. 1: 1832-1846, London, 1938, p. 782.]

28. II, 710.

29. cf. *La transformation de Paris sous le Second Empire. Exposition de la Bibliothèque et des travaux historiques de la ville de Paris*, edited by Marcel Poëte, E. Clouzot and G. Henriot, Paris, 1910, p. 65.

30. Julien Lemes, *Paris au gaz*, Paris, 1861, p. 10. The same image may be found in 'Crépuscule du soir': the sky slowly closes like a big alcove (cf. I, 108.)

31. Alfred Delvau, *Les heures parisiennes*, Paris, 1866, p. 206.

ing go out of style and gaslight was no longer considered fashionable, it seemed to a last *flâneur* who sadly strolled through the empty Colbert Arcade that the flickering of the gas-lamps indicated only the fear of the flame that it would not be paid at the end of the month.³² That is when Stevenson wrote his plaint about the disappearance of the gas lanterns. He muses particularly on the rhythm with which lamp-lighters go through the streets and light one lantern after another. At first this rhythm contrasted with the uniformity of the dusk, but now the contrast is with a brutal shock caused by the spectacle of entire cities suddenly being illuminated by electric light. 'Such a light as this should shine only on murders and public crime, or along the corridors of lunatic asylums, a horror to heighten horror.'³³ There is some indication that only latterly was such an idyllic view of gaslight taken as Stevenson's, who wrote its obituary. The above-mentioned story by Poe is a good case in point. There can hardly be a weirder description of this light: 'The rays of the gas-lamps, feeble at first in their struggle with the dying day, had now at length gained ascendancy, and threw over every thing a fitful and garish lustre. All was dark yet splendid — as that ebony to which has been likened the style of Tertullian.'³⁴ 'Inside

32. cf. Louis Veuillot, *Les odeurs de Paris*, Paris, 1914, p. 182.

33. Robert Louis Stevenson, 'A Plea for Gas Lamps', in *Virginian Puerile and Other Papers. Works*, Tusitala Edition, vol. 25, London, 1924, p. 132.

34. There is a parallel to this passage in 'Un jour de pluie'. Even though this poem bears another man's name, it may be ascribed to Baudelaire (cf. Charles Baudelaire, *Poésies complètes*, edited by Julius Mouquet, Paris, 1929). The analogy between the last stanza and Poe's mention of Tertullian is all the more remarkable because the poem was written in 1843 at the latest, at a time when Baudelaire did not know Poe.

Chacun, nous couloyant sur le trottoir glissant,

Egoïste et brutal, passe et nous éclabousse,

Où, pour courir plus vite, en s'éloignant nous pousse.

Partout fangs, déluge, obscurité du ciel:

Noir tableau qu'eût rêvé le noir Eschériel

(I, 211.)

(Each one, elbowing us upon the slippery sidewalk, selfish and savage, goes by and splashes us, or to run the faster, gives us a push as he makes off. Mud everywhere, deluge, darkness in the sky. A sombre scene that Eschériel the sombre might have dreamed.)

a house,' wrote Poe elsewhere, 'gas is definitely inadmissible. Its flickering, harsh light offends the eye.'

The London crowd seems as gloomy and confused as the light in which it moves. This is true not only of the rabble that crawls 'out of its dens' at night. The employees of higher rank are described by Poe as follows: 'They had all slightly bald heads, from which the right ears, long used to pen-holding, had an odd habit of standing off on end. I observed that they always removed or settled their hats with both hands, and wore watches, with short gold chains of a substantial and ancient pattern.' In his description Poe did not aim at any direct observation. The uniformities to which the petty bourgeoisie are subjected by virtue of being part of the crowd are exaggerated; their appearance is not far from being uniform. Even more astonishing is the description of the way the crowd moves. 'By far the greater number of those who went by had a satisfied business-like demeanour, and seemed to be thinking only of making their way through the press. Their brows were knit, and their eyes rolled quickly; when pushed against by fellow-wayfarers they evinced no symptom of impatience, but adjusted their clothes and hurried on. Others, still a numerous class, were restless in their movements, had flashed faces, and talked and gesticulated to themselves, as if feeling in solitude on account of the very denseness of the company around. When impeded in their progress, these people suddenly ceased muttering, but redoubled their gesticulations, and awaited, with an absent and overdone smile upon the lips, the course of the persons impeding them. If jostled, they bowed profusely to the jostlers, and appeared overwhelmed with confusion.' One might think he was speaking of half-drunken wretches. Actually, they were 'noblemen, merchants, attorneys, tradesmen, stock-jobbers'. Something other than a psychology of the classes is involved here.³⁵

35. The image of America which Marx had seems to be of the same stuff as Poe's description. He emphasizes the 'feverishly youthful pace of material production' in the States and blames this very pace for the fact that there was 'neither time nor opportunity . . . to abolish the old spirit world' (Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte*, op. cit., p. 30). In Poe there is something demonic even about the physiognomy of the businessmen. Baudelaire describes how as darkness descends 'the harmful demons' awaken in the air 'sluggish as a bunch of businessmen' (I, 108). This passage in 'Le Crépuscule du soir' may have been inspired by Poe's text.

There is a lithograph by Senefelder which represents a gambling club. Not one of those depicted is pursuing the game in the customary fashion. Each man is dominated by an emotion: one shows unrestrained joy; another, distrust of his partner; a third, dull despair; a fourth evinces belligerence; another is getting ready to depart from the world. In its extravagance this lithograph is reminiscent of Poe. Poe's subject, to be sure, is greater, and his means are in keeping with this. His masterly stroke in this description is that he does not show the hopeless isolation of men in their private interests through the variety of their behaviour, as does Senefelder, but expresses this isolation in absurd uniformities of dress or conduct. The servility with which those pushed even go on to apologize, shows where the devices which Poe employs here come from. They are from the repertoire of clowns, and Poe uses them in a fashion similar to that later employed by clowns. In the performance of a clown, there is an obvious reference to economy. With his abrupt movements he imitates both the machines which push the material and the economic boom which pushes the merchandise. The segments of the crowd described by Poe effect a similar mimicry of the 'feverish . . . pace of material production' along with the business forms that go with it. What the fun fair, which turned the little man into a clown, later accomplished with its dodgem cars and related amusements is anticipated in Poe's description. The people in his story behave as if they could no longer express themselves through anything but a reflex action. These goings-on seem even more dehumanized because Poe talks only about people. If the crowd is jammed up, it is not because it is being impeded by vehicular traffic — there is no mention of it anywhere — but because it is being blocked by other crowds. In a mass of this nature the art of strolling could not flourish.

In Baudelaire's Paris things had not come to such a pass. Ferries were still crossing the Seine at points where later there would be bridges. In the year of Baudelaire's death it was still possible for an entrepreneur to cater to the comfort of the well-to-do with a fleet of five hundred sedan chairs circulating about the city. Arcades where the *flâneur* would not be exposed to the sight of carriages that did not recognize pedestrians as rivals were enjoying undiminished

popularity. There was the pedestrian who wedged himself into the crowd, but there was also the *flâneur* who demanded elbow room and was unwilling to forego the life of a gentleman of leisure. His leisurely appearance as a personality is his protest against the division of labour which makes people into specialists. It is also his protest against their industriousness. Around 1840 it was briefly fashionable to take turtles for a walk in the arcades. The *flâneurs* liked to have the turtles set the pace for them. If they had had their way, progress would have been obliged to accommodate itself to this pace. But this attitude did not prevail; Taylor, who popularized the watchword 'Down with dawdling!' carried the day.³⁶ Some people sought to anticipate coming developments while there was still time. Baudelaire wrote in 1857 in his utopia, *Paris n'existe plus*: 'The *flâneur* whom we used to encounter on the sidewalks and in front of the shop-windows, this nonentity, this constant rubberneck, this inconsequential type who was always in search of cheap emotions and knew about nothing but cobblestones, fiacres, and gas lanterns . . . has now become a farmer, a vintner, a linen manufacturer, a sugar refiner, and a steel magnate.'³⁷

On his peregrinations the man of the crowd lands at a late hour in a department store where there still are many customers. He moves about like someone who knows his way around the place. Were there multi-storied department stores in Poe's day? No matter; Poe lets the restless man spend an 'hour and a half, or thereabouts' in this bazaar. 'He entered shop after shop, priced nothing, spoke no word, and looked at all objects with a wild and vacant stare.' If the arcade is the classical form of the *intérieurs*, which is how the *flâneur* sees the street, the department store is the form of the *intérieurs*'s decay. The bazaar is the last hangout of the *flâneur*. If in the beginning the street had become an *intérieur* for him, now this *intérieur* turned into a street, and he roamed through the labyrinth of merchandise as he had once roamed through the labyrinth of the city. It is a magnificent touch in Poe's story that it includes along with the earliest description of the *flâneur* the figuration of his end.

Jules Laforgue said about Baudelaire that he was the first to speak

36. cf. Georges Friedmann, *La crise du progrès*, Paris, 1936, p. 76.

37. Paul Ernest de Bantier, *Paris n'existe plus*, Paris, 1857, pp. 74ff.

of Paris 'as someone condemned to live in the capital day after day.'³⁸ He might have said that he was the first to speak also of the opiate that was available to give relief to men so condemned, and only to them. The crowd is not only the newest asylum of outlaws; it is also the latest narcotic for those abandoned. The *flâneur* is someone abandoned in the crowd. In this he shares the situation of the commodity. He is not aware of this special situation, but this does not diminish its effect on him and it permeates him blissfully like a narcotic that can compensate him for many humiliations. The intoxication to which the *flâneur* surrenders is the intoxication of the commodity around which surges the stream of customers.

If the soul of the commodity which Marx occasionally mentions in jest existed,³⁹ it would be the most empathetic ever encountered in the realm of souls, for it would have to see in everyone the buyer in whose hand and house it wants to nestle. Empathy is the nature of the intoxication to which the *flâneur* abandons himself in the crowd. 'The poet enjoys the incomparable privilege of being himself and someone else as he sees fit. Like a roving soul in search of a body, he enters another person whenever he wishes. For him alone, all is open; if certain places seem closed to him, it is because in his view they are not worth inspecting.'⁴⁰ The commodity itself is the speaker here. Yes, the last words give a rather accurate idea of what the commodity whispers to a poor wretch who passes a shop-window containing beautiful and expensive things. These objects are not interested in this person; they do not empathize with him. In the sentences of the significant prose poem 'Les Foules' there speaks, with other words, the fetish itself with which Baudelaire's sensitive nature resonated so powerfully; that empathy with inorganic things which was one of his sources of inspiration.⁴¹

38. Jules Laforgue, *Mélanges posthumes*, Paris, 1903, p. 111.

39. cf. Marx, *Das Kapital*, edited by Karl Korsch, Berlin, 1932, p. 95 [English edition, op. cit., p. 84].

40. I, 420ff.

41. The second 'Spleen' poem is the most important addition to the documentation for this that was assembled in the first part of this essay. Hardly any poet before Baudelaire wrote a verse that is anything like 'Je suis un vieux bouddoir plein de roses fanées' (I, 86) ('I am an old bouddoir full of faded roses'). The poem is entirely based on empathy with material that is dead in a

speaking of half-drunken wretches. Actually, they were 'noblemen, merchants, attorneys, tradesmen, stock-jobbers'.³⁹

Poe's manner of presentation cannot be called realism. It shows a purposely distorting imagination at work, one that removes the text far from what is commonly advocated as the model of social realism. Barbier, perhaps one of the best examples of this type of realism that come to mind, describes things in a less eccentric way. Moreover, he chose a more transparent subject: the oppressed masses. Poe is not concerned with these; he deals with 'people', pure and simple. For him, as for Engels, there was something menacing in the spectacle they presented. It is precisely this image of big-city crowds that became decisive for Baudelaire. If he succumbed to the force by which he was drawn to them and, as a *flâneur*, was made one of them, he was nevertheless unable to rid himself of a sense of their essentially inhuman make-up. He becomes their accomplice even as he dissociates himself from them. He becomes deeply involved with them, only to relegate them to oblivion with a single glance of contempt. There is something compelling about this ambivalence where he cautiously admits to it. Perhaps the charm of his 'Crépuscule du soir', so difficult to account for, is bound up with this.

VII

Baudelaire saw fit to equate the man of the crowd, whom Poe's narrator follows throughout the length and breadth of nocturnal London, with the *flâneur*.⁴⁰ It is hard to accept this view. The man of the crowd is no *flâneur*. In him, composure has given way to manic behaviour. Hence he exemplifies, rather, what had to become of the *flâneur* once he was deprived of the milieu to which

39. There is something demonic about Poe's businessmen. One is reminded of Marx, who blamed the 'feverishly youthful pace of material production' in the United States for the lack of 'either time or opportunity . . . to abolish the spirit world'. As darkness descends, Baudelaire has 'the harmful demons' awoken in the air 'sluggish as a bunch of businessmen'. This passage in 'Crépuscule du soir' may have been inspired by Poe's text.

40. cf. III, 328-35.

he belonged. If London ever provided it for him, it was certainly not the setting described by Poe. In comparison, Baudelaire's Paris preserved some features that dated back to the happy old days. Ferries were still crossing the Seine at points that would later be spanned by the arch of a bridge. In the year of Baudelaire's death it was still possible for some entrepreneur to cater to the comfort of the well-to-do with a fleet of five hundred sedan chairs circulating about the city. Arcades where the *flâneur* would not be exposed to the sight of carriages that did not recognize pedestrians as rivals were enjoying undiminished popularity.⁴¹ There was the pedestrian who would let himself be jostled by the crowd, but there was also the *flâneur* who demanded elbow room and was unwilling to forego the life of a gentleman of leisure. Let the many attend to their daily affairs; the man of leisure can indulge in the perambulations of the *flâneur* only if as such he is already out of place. He is as much out of place in an atmosphere of complete leisure as in the feverish turmoil of the city. London has its man of the crowd. His counterpart, as it were, is the boy Nante [Ferdinand], of the street corner, a popular figure in Berlin before the March Revolution of 1848; the Parisian *flâneur* might be said to stand midway between them.⁴²

How the man of leisure looks upon the crowd is revealed in a short piece by E. T. A. Hoffmann, the last that he wrote, entitled 'The Cousin's Corner Window'. It antedates Poe's story by fifteen years and is probably one of the earliest attempts to capture the street scene of a large city. The differences between the two pieces are worth noting. Poe's narrator observes from behind the window of a public coffee-house, whereas the cousin is installed at home. Poe's observer succumbs to the fascination of the scene, which finally lures him outside into the whirl of the crowd. Hoffmann's

41. A pedestrian knew how to display his nonchalance provocatively on certain occasions. Around 1840 it was briefly fashionable to take turtles for a walk in the arcades. The *flâneurs* liked to have the turtles set the pace for them. If they had had their way, progress would have been obliged to accommodate itself to this pace. But this attitude did not prevail; Taylor, who popularized the watchword 'Down with dawdling!' carried the day.

42. In Gashammer's character the man of leisure appears as a patry scion of the *étienne*. Nante, Berlin's street-corner boy, has no reason to bestir himself. He makes himself at home on the street, which naturally does not lead him anywhere, and is as comfortable as the philistine is in his four walls.

cousin, looking out from his corner window, is immobilized as a paralytic; he would not be able to follow the crowd even if he were in the midst of it. His attitude towards the crowd is, rather, one of superiority, inspired as it is by his observation post at the window of an apartment building. From this vantage point he scrutinizes the throng; it is market day, and they all feel in their element. His opera glasses enable him to pick out individual genre scenes. The employment of this instrument is thoroughly in keeping with the inner disposition of its user. He would like, as he admits,⁴³ to initiate his visitor into the 'principles of the art of seeing'.⁴⁴ This consists of an ability to enjoy *saboteux vivants* - a favourite pursuit of the Biedermeier period. Edifying sayings provide the interpretation.⁴⁵ One can look upon the narrative as an attempt which was then due to be made. But it is obvious that the conditions under which it was made in Berlin prevented it from being a complete success. If Hoffmann had ever set foot in Paris or London, or if he had been intent upon depicting the masses as such, he would not have focused on a market place; he would not have portrayed the scene as being dominated by women; he would perhaps have seized on the motifs that Poe derives from the swarming crowds under the

43. E. T. A. Hoffmann, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, vol. 14: *Leben und Nachlass* by Julius Eduard Hitzig, vol. 2, Stuttgart, 1839, p. 205.

44. What leads up to this confession is remarkable. The visitor says that the cousin watches the bustle down below only because he enjoys the changing play of the colours; in the long run, he says, this must be tiring. In a similar vein, and probably not much later, Gogol wrote of a fair in the Ukraine: 'So many people were on their way there that it made one's eyes swim.' The daily sight of a lively crowd may once have constituted a spectacle to which one's eyes had to adapt first. On the basis of this supposition, one may assume that once the eyes had mastered this task they welcomed opportunities to test their newly acquired faculties. This would mean that the technique of Impressionist paintings, whereby the picture is garneered in a riot of dabs of colour, would be a reflection of experiences with which the eyes of a big-city dweller have become familiar. A picture like Monet's 'Cathedral of Chartres', which is like an art-heap of stone, would be an illustration of this hypothesis.

45. In his story E. T. A. Hoffmann describes edifying reflections, for instance, to the blind man who lifts his head towards the sky. In the last line of 'Les Aveugles', Baudelaire, who knew this story, modifies Hoffmann's reflections in such a way as to disprove their edifying quality: 'Que observent-ils au Ciel, tous ces aveugles?' (What are all those blind people looking for in the sky?)

gas lamps. Actually, there would have been no need for these motifs in order to bring out the uncanny elements that other students of the physiognomy of the big city have felt. A thoughtful observation by Heine is relevant here: 'Heine's eyesight,' wrote a correspondent in a letter to Varnhagen in 1838, 'caused him acute trouble in the spring. On the last such occasion I was walking down one of the boulevards with him. The magnificence, the life, of this in its way unique thoroughfare roused me to boundless admiration, something that prompted Heine this time to make a significant point in stressing the horror with which this centre of the world was tinged.'⁴⁶

VIII

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 mobs, and both got along splendidly - as the prototype of totalitarian states, in which the police make common cause with the looters. Valéry, who had a fine eye for the cluster of symptoms called 'civilization', has characterized one of the pertinent facts. 'The inhabitant of the great urban centres,' he writes, 'reverts to a state of savagery - that is, of isolation. 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.'⁴⁷ Comfort isolates; on the other hand, it brings those enjoying it closer to mechanization. The invention of the march around the middle of the nineteenth century brought forth a number of innovations which have one thing in common: one abrupt movement of the hand triggers a process of many steps. This development is taking place in many areas. One case in point is the telephone, where the

46. Heinrich Heine, *Gespräche, Briefe, Tagebücher, Berichte seiner Zeitgenossen*, collected and edited by Hugo Bieber, Berlin, 1926, p. 163.

47. Valéry, *Oeuvres*, op. cit., p. 188.

lifting of a receiver has taken the place of the steady movement that used to be required to crank the older models. Of the countless movements of switching, inserting, pressing, and the like, the 'snapping' of the photographer has had the greatest consequences. A touch 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. Tactile experiences of this kind were joined by optic ones, such as are supplied by the advertising pages of a newspaper or the traffic of a big city. Moving through this traffic involves the individual in a series of shocks and collisions. At dangerous crossings, nervous impulses flow through him in rapid succession, like the energy from a battery. Baudelaire speaks of a man who plunges into the crowd as into a reservoir of electric energy. Circumscribing the experience of the shock, he calls this man 'a *katéscopos* equipped with consciousness'.⁴⁸ Whereas Poe's passers-by cast glances in all directions which still appeared to be aimless, today's pedestrians are obliged to do so in order to keep abreast of traffic signals. Thus technology has subjected the human sensorium to a 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 labour. This 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 it is not the workman that employs the instruments of labour, but the instruments of labour that employ the workman. But it is only in the factory system that this inversion for the first time acquires technical and palpable reality.'⁴⁹ In working with machines, workers learn to coordinate their own movements to the uniform and unceasing motion of an

⁴⁸. II, 333.

⁴⁹. Karl Marx, *Das Kapital*, edited by Karl Korsch, Berlin, 1932, p. 404 [English edition, *Capital*, vol. 1, London, 1967, p. 42].

automaton'.⁵⁰ These words shed a peculiar light on the absurd kind of uniformity with which Poe wants to saddle 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. 'All machine work,' it is said in the above context, 'requires early drilling of the workers.'⁵¹ This drill must be differentiated from practice. Practice, which was the sole determinant in craftsmanship, still had a function in manufacturing. With it as the basis, 'each particular area of production finds its appropriate technical form in experience and slowly perfects it'. To be sure, it quickly crystallizes it, 'as soon as a certain degree of maturity has been attained'.⁵² On the other hand, this same manufacturing produces, 'in every handicraft that it seizes upon, a class of so-called unskilled labourers, a class which handicraft industry strictly excluded. If it develops a one-sided speciality into a perfection, at the expense of the whole of a man's working capacity, it also begins to make a speciality of the absence of all development. Along the side of hierarchic gradation there steps the simple separation of the labourers into skilled and unskilled.'⁵³ The unskilled worker is the one most deeply degraded by the drill of the machines. His work has been sealed off from experience; practice counts for nothing there.⁵⁴ What the fun fair achieves with its dodgem cars and other similar amusements is nothing but a taste of the drill to which the unskilled labourer is subjected in the factory — a sample which at times was for him the entire menu; for the art of being a clown, in which the little man could acquire training in places like the fun fair, flourished concomitantly with unemployment. Poe's text makes us understand the true connection between wildness and discipline. His pedestrians act as if they had adapted themselves to the machines and could express

⁵⁰. Marx, *ibid.*, p. 402 [English edition, p. 421].

⁵¹. Marx, *ibid.*

⁵². Marx, *ibid.*

⁵³. Marx, *ibid.*, pp. 336ff. [English edition, p. 350].

⁵⁴. The shorter the training period of an industrial worker is, the longer that of a military man becomes. It may be part of society's preparation for total war that training is shifting from the practice of production to the practice of destruction.

themselves only automatically. Their behaviour is a reaction to shocks. If jostled, they bowed profusely to the jostlers.'

IX

The shock experience which the passer-by has in the crowd corresponds to what the worker 'experiences' at his machine. This does not entitle us to the assumption that Poe knew anything about industrial work processes. Baudelaire, at any rate, did not have the faintest notion of them. He was, however, captivated by a process whereby the reflecting mechanism which the machine sets off in the workman can be studied closely, as in a mirror, in the idler. If we say that this process is the game of chance, the statement may appear to be paradoxical. Where would one find a more evident contrast than the one between work and gambling? Alain puts it convincingly when he writes: 'It is inherent in the concept of gambling . . . that no game is dependent on the preceding one. Gambling cares about no assured position. . . . Winnings secured earlier are not taken into account, and in this it differs from work. Gambling gives short shrift to the weighty past on which work bases itself.'⁵⁶ The work which Alain has in mind here is the highly specialized kind (which, like intellectual effort, probably retains certain features of handicraft); it is not that of most factory workers, least of all the work of the unskilled. The latter, to be sure, lacks any touch of adventure, of the mirage that lures the gambler. But it certainly does not lack the futility, the emptiness, the inability to complete something which is inherent in the activity of a wage slave in a factory. Gambling even contains the workmen's gesture that is produced by the automatic operation, for there can be no game without the quick movement of the hand by which the stake is put down or a card is picked up. The jolt in the movement of a machine is like the so-called *coup* in a game of chance. The manipulation of the worker at the machine has no connection with the preceding operation for the very reason that it is its exact repetition. Since each operation at the machine is just as screened off from the

56. Alain, *Les idées et les âges*, Paris, 1927, vol. 1, pp. 183ff. ('Le jeu').

preceding operation as a *coup* in a game of chance is from the one that preceded it, the drudgery of the labourer is, in its own way, a counterpart to the drudgery of the gambler. The work of both is equally devoid of substance.

There is a lithograph by Senefelder which represents a gambling club. Not one of those depicted is pursuing the game in the customary fashion. Each man is dominated by an emotion: one shows unrestrained joy; another, distrust of his partner; a third, dull despair; a fourth evinces belligerence; another is getting ready to depart from the world. All these modes of conduct share a concealed characteristic: the figures presented show us how the mechanism to which the participants in a game of chance entrust themselves seizes them body and soul, so that even in their private sphere, and no matter how agitated they may be, they are capable only of a reflex action. They behave like the pedestrians in Poe's story. They live their lives as automatons and resemble Bergson's fictitious characters who have completely liquidated their memories.

Baudelaire does not appear to have been a devotee of gambling, although he had words of friendly understanding, even homage, for those addicted to it.⁵⁷ The motif which he treated in his night piece 'Le Jeu' was part of his view of modern times, and he considered it as part of his mission to write this poem. The image of the gambler became in Baudelaire the characteristically modern complement to the archaic image of the fencer; both are heroic figures to him. Ludwig Börne looked at things through Baudelaire's eyes when he wrote: 'If all the energy and passion . . . that are expended every year at Europe's gambling tables . . . were saved, they would suffice to fashion a Roman people and a Roman history from them. But that is just it. Because every man is born a Roman, bourgeois society seeks to de-Romanize him, and that is why there are games of chance and parlour games, novels, Italian operas, and fashionable newspapers.'⁵⁸ Gambling became a stock diversion of the bourgeoisie only in the nineteenth century; in the eighteenth, only the aristocracy gambled. Games of chance were disseminated by the Napoleonic armies, and they now became part of 'fashionable living

56. cf. I, 416 and II, 650.

57. Ludwig Börne, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Hamburg and Frankfurt, 1862, pp. 38ff.

Charles Baudelaire

A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism



WALTER BENJAMIN

Translated by Harry Zohn



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but in an objective way. The conclusion of the passage on the arcades (page 19) again suffers gravely from the risk of the metaphorical: the playful comparison seems not to assist but to oppose the strict identification. I do not quite understand the opening sentence of the next paragraph ("dubious"). Aren't the physiological aspects quite *far* from being dubious? I have already mentioned my misgivings about the subsequent deduction associated with the passage from Simmel.⁵ It again implies that in a particular environment the immediate reactions of human beings—here the fear of what is visible but inaudible—are directly responsible for phenomena which can be understood only as socially mediated. If the explanation of the physiologies in terms of the distracting tendency of these reactions is too general for you (which I can very well understand), it might perhaps be made concrete by the fact that in this phase human beings themselves wear the aspect of commodity-like display articles—the aspect illuminated by the physiologies; perhaps this could be introduced in connection with fashion as the idea of universal viewability. I cannot help thinking that, among the treasures of the Arcades study, there are keener blades than the quotation from Simmel. Regarding the extremely curious quotation from Foucault which follows (page 20),⁶ I will say only that the context in which it appears gives the impression you are merely poking fun at it, whereas I think you would do better to wrest a grain of truth from its very fraudulence—that is, to note rightly the proletarian distaste for "recreation" and for the bourgeois' idea of nature as mere complements of exploitation. Concerning the following paragraph (page 20)—and I'm sure you will agree with me here—I would like to express my idiosyncratic aversion to the concept of "genuine empiricism." I need only recall Kracauer's endorsement of this phrase to be certain that you'll place it on the Index of Proscribed Terms.⁷

Regarding the following section, roughly from the Balzac quotation (page 21) to page 23, I would like to pass on some reflections which have been stimulated by your work, as well as by my reading of Sade and my re-reading of Balzac not long ago. But I would like to say in advance that although the greatest problem arising in connection with the "type" namely, that in the phantasmagoria the people belonging to a particular type are actually *the same*—seems to me to have been touched on in your work, it has by no means been resolved. There is, after all, no compass to tell me that the point at which the essay really communicates with the secret intentions of the Arcades Project is located here (for example, in Poe's description of the lowly employee).—I would like to take as my starting point your critique of the antithesis Lukács establishes between Balzac and Don Quixote.⁸ Balzac is himself a Don Quixote type. His generalizations, in effect, magically convert the alienation of capitalism into "meaning" much the way Don Quixote does with the barber's advertising sign. Balzac's ten-

gency to make unqualified statements has its origin here. It stems from the fear evoked by the sameness of bourgeois dress. When he says, for example, that genius can be recognized at a glance in the street, he is trying—despite the uniformity of people's dress—to assure himself of immediacy in the adventure of guessing. Yet adventure and the Balzacian enchantment of the world of things are profoundly bound up with the act of buying. Just as a shopper appraises the goods displayed in a shopwindow, trying to determine through the glass pane whether they are worth the price, whether they are what they appear to be, so Balzac does this with human beings: he assesses them in terms of their purchase price, while at the same time stripping off the mask that bourgeois standardization has placed on them. Common to both procedures is the speculative impulse. Just as, in an age of financial speculation, there can be price fluctuations that may make the acquisition of the commodity in the shopwindow either an intoxicating gain for the buyer or a fraudulent trap, the same applies to the writer of physiologies. The risk that Balzac's unqualified statements incur is the same one the speculator assumes at the stock exchange. Thus, it's no coincidence that the Balzac-like, unqualified statement I adulate from Sade relates precisely to the financial speculator. A masked ball in Balzac and a rally on the stock exchange of his time must have been very similar. An analysis of the Don Quixote-like elements could probably be mediated via Daumier, whose character-types, as you yourself have remarked in your piece on Fuchs,⁹ resemble Balzacian figures to the same extent that Don Quixote is central to the vocabulary of motifs in Daumier's oil paintings. It seems to me highly probable that Daumier's "types" are closely related to the unqualified statements of Balzac; indeed, I'm inclined to say that they are the same thing. A caricature by Daumier is a speculative adventure very similar to the subtleties of identification which Balzac permits himself. They are an attempt to break through the shell of sameness by physiognomic means. The physiognomic gaze, which extravagantly highlights the distinguishing detail in contrast to featureless uniformity, has no other purpose than to rescue the particular within the general. Daumier must produce caricatures and depict "types" so that he can speculatively present the world of ever-same attire as no less adventurous or fantastic than, in the early days of the emerging bourgeoisie, the world appeared to Don Quixote. In doing so, he assigns a very special status to the concept of the type: in each image of the particular, as rendered in an oversized nose or a set of bony shoulders, an image of the general is to be captured at the same time, much the way Balzac, in describing Nucingen, tends to present his eccentricities as those of the species of the banker in general. Here, it seems to me, one sees the motif that the type is intended not merely to emphasize the individual against the uniform, but to make the masses themselves commensurable with the alien gaze of the speculator, since mass categories, ordered according to types, are in a