

Odradek and the rethinking of political method in the work of art

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Take a picture of a woman descending a stairway; the picture's title locates it precisely: *Odradek, Táboritská 8, Prague, 18 July 1994* (1994). It might be argued that Jeff Wall is here referencing the nod to Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase* made by Gerhard Richter in his painting *Ema [Akt auf einer Treppe] [Ema (Nude on a Staircase), 1966]*; between all three artists the relation between photography and painting goes back and forth.) Notice here the sink – does it not recall Duchamp's readymade urinal, *Fountain* (1917)?¹ The strange thing in the shadows by the stairs must also be an attempt to construct the object or being that Kafka names 'Odradek' in his text of 1919, 'The Cares of a Family Man' ('Die Sorge des Hausvaters'). To try to make Odradek and to represent it in a photograph might be considered a very odd thing to do. Does it not transgress a number of taboos? First of all, providing a referent 'hors texte' for the name in what, if it is a story, is a fiction. Further, as Werner Hamacher has argued in 'The Gesture in the Name: On Benjamin and Kafka', the name for Kafka (whose own name is multiplied, divided, emptied) functions – or rather perhaps dis-functions – within a refusal of presentation which marks a break between the handing on of tradition and the anticipation of a future. To make an image of Odradek is therefore a transgression of the prohibition of images (a transgression, which Hamacher points out, is contained in the very prohibition itself, which can only be fulfilled by being interrupted).² Odradek himself is an interruption: it seems that the text – story or parable (the margin between them is of course in question) is spoken by the *Hausvater* ('father of the household, translated as 'family man'), and he is trying to understand Odradek, to know what he is, to interpret him, a project which Odradek frustrates (according to Hamacher he would be the frustration or impossibility of every project): Odradek is a kind of stumbling block for the Law of the father. Hamacher's claim is that he is this by virtue of his name. A crux is 'autonomasia', 'the transformation of the proper name into a concept', a singularity into a generality, and one could add in relation to Wall, singular traits applying to more than one thing into representable qualities which are always general. Through its dispersal, the name becomes no-name or a non-name, or on the flip side a

concept that is both empty and too full, too specific to even be a concept. Odradek will not accommodate himself to the house father's system: 'the name does not belong to a system of language that communicates something but to the markings in this system whose only function is to secure communicability itself.', Hamacher writes (313). The proper name is precisely an 'expropriation': Odradek's homelessness expropriates the system, including any and every system of meaning or interpretation. To 'fix' Odradek in a picture would therefore be to 'appropriate' him, to decide on what is proper to Odradek, and to fit him into a representation and a system. Is Wall therefore a 'housefather'? But, by making the voice of the housefather that of the reader, isn't Kafka saying we all are, inevitably. In that case, Odradek would be pure disturbance, a position which Benjamin calls a 'cloudy spot' in the parable of Kafka. This spot (which has become a leitmotif in this conference) cannot be occupied – appropriated – by language or interpretation, but maybe Hamacher suggests by gesture, so long as gesture is itself expropriated from systems of meaning. In relation to tradition, the key has been lost, and in relation to the future, it does not yet exist. The time of which gesture is the presentation is that of the loss or ruin of tradition, and of a future that will have been not a continuation of the present but the interruption of that very continuum.

This reading is basically a massive oversimplification of the super-subtle one by Hamacher to which I cannot possibly do justice in its articulation of the nameless name and pure gesture. What I will do instead is make a move which is at once a further simplification and a complication. It seems to me that Hamacher's reading is in the direction of a certain paralysis. Any action would be a lapse into the continuum of the same, with the future as future present. Really, we can only wait. Wait and study the law without ever being able to unlock it, or cut the knot by our own action. Waiting as method? In his discussion of gesture in Benjamin and Kafka, Hamacher barely mentions politics. One could see his approach, like Derrida's, as coming out of the philosophical response to totalitarianism and top-down system communism in the 1960s. Brecht is mentioned (297), but very much as if he agrees with Benjamin over Kafka, and as if they are making the same 'typological assumption'. I would say, rather, that Kafka is the crux of a profound political disagreement between them, precisely over political method, and one that has relevance for us today. Here, I think, is where we can produce a simplification to complicate things, *plumpes Denken* to inject another dynamic. In relation to this, I would suggest that we can use Wall's transgression of the prohibition

of images to consider Odradek in relation to a double move: Wall is not simply referring to the readymade in this picture, he is using Kafka's Odradek to address questions to it. What Wall points to in rendering Odradek visual in addition to linguistic, despite him being concealed in the shadows, is his relation to another economy in which he does not fit, namely that of the commodity.

Odradek is described as well as named by Kafka. He looks like 'a flat star-shaped spool for thread', and he has 'old, broken-off bits of thread' of various colours wound around him, so he is like something that may have come from an industrial weaving machine. Kafka uses the personal pronoun *er* (he) for Odradek. He has through his centre a crossbar, with a rod at the end, so that he can stand on his own two feet. This device 'lurks in the garret, the stairway, the lobbies, the entrance hall' – in other words, largely in liminal spaces – in a state of displacement, since he can also appear in other apartment buildings. To the question 'Can he possibly die?', the narrator in the story, who may or may not be the father of the household, answers,

'Anything that dies has had some kind of aim in life, some kind of activity, which has worn out; but that does not apply to Odradek. Am I to suppose, then, that he will always be rolling down the stairs, with ends of thread trailing after him, right before the feet of my children, and my children's children? He does no harm to anyone that one can see; but the idea that he is likely to survive me I find almost painful.'³

We can assume that Wall, who included Kafka's story as one of his 'Artist's Choice' texts in the Phaidon 'Contemporary Artists' volume on him,⁴ is aware that the figure of Odradek has been a crux for critical theory and philosophy, notably regarding the status and potential of the fetishism of the commodity as described by Marx in *Capital* when he writes famously of a table that 'as soon as it emerges as a commodity, it changes into a thing which transcends sensuousness. It not only stands with its feet on the ground, but, in relation to all other commodities, it stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas, far more wonderful than if it were to begin dancing of its own free will.'⁵ How are we to relate – critically, politically – to the phantasmagoric appearance of the commodity? Odradek also has a fantastical quality, an uncanny crossing between human and machine, a piece of a production apparatus that has somehow broken off and gained eternal life, but also a toy, a plaything like peg-legged spinning top – familiar but also sinister, disturbing, a kind of vermin or

neighbour who has to hide (no coincidence that he takes the form of a Star of David in a period of anti-Semitism). So, something is added to Marx's characterising of the commodity, that evokes a combination of Expressionist horror-cinema with the racist imaginary.

Walter Benjamin and Theodore Adorno corresponded with each other about Odradek as an allegorical figure of the commodity. Adorno was critical of Benjamin for failing to mediate the phantasmagoric appearance with the social totality: he thought Benjamin treated the capitalist phantasmagoria as a dreamworld that concealed the memory of a reconciled – that is to say, unalienated – state of subject and object, human and nature, set in a mythic past. For Adorno, it was necessary to look in another direction, towards future transformation, which could not be found 'in' the commodity.⁶ Benjamin maintained that rather than mediating the commodity and the totality from a detached position, which would itself suffer from reification, one must enter the phantasmagoria to experience for oneself the dream of capital in order to understand and perhaps even release as 'dialectical image' the potential for reconciliation contained within the commodity. What was at stake, in a situation of burgeoning fascism where it was becoming increasingly difficult to invest revolutionary potential in a collective subject such as a social class, was the relation between critique and redemption.

This has implications for the role of the work of art as a form of appearance. Could the appearance be 'alienated' from itself, so that the work of art might function as critique, including of its own apparent immediacy, through intellectual mediation with the social whole; or should its fetishistic or semblant quality be intensified so that the viewer will discover in it the dream of an object that is beyond exchange, use and surplus value. This is precisely the dilemma in which Wall's early backlit Cibachrome works such as *The Destroyed Room* and *Picture for Women* hover, and we can consider *Odradek, Táboritská 8, Prague, 18 July 1994* as a return to this question in a specific place and at a specific date: the Prague where Kafka lived, but also the city of the Prague Spring, the attempted political liberalisation of 1968, and the Velvet Revolution of the nonviolent transition from communism to capitalism in 1989. However, 1994 would also have been a time when the intellectuals and philosophers around Charter 77, the 'intelligentsia', would have felt marginalised by the incorporation of Czechoslovakia into the neoliberal consumer-oriented global system. This was twenty years after the period of the Cold War when artists, in the framework of New Left politics, were turning to

Brecht, Frankfurt School critical theory and Lacanian psychoanalysis in an attempt to formulate a critical approach to making images; and ten years after the emergence on the scene, during the Thatcherite-Reaganite instauration of neoliberalism and the increased capitalisation of the art market, and of the application to the image of the method of the Duchampian readymade, where the image is appropriated while being left more or less as it is. Wall's Prague picture brings together these moments, and I would argue contains an internal argument about the role of the picture, and about medium and aesthetics as well. As a remnant, both of industrial production and literally in the threads hanging from him, Odradek could also stand as a figure of the photograph as a piece of the past that has been displaced. This parallels Kafka's condensation of different aspects of the commodity in the image of Odradek in his story. Wall juxtaposes this sense of Odradek as a remnant, reflected in the dilapidated stairwell typical of the as-yet un-redeveloped old residential buildings of Prague after the fall of communism, with the girl who has put together what look like recently purchased clothes and shoes, perhaps only recently available, in an attempt to take on the look of street fashion, suggesting the recent incursion of global capital in mass produced cheap clothing (industrial production that has moved elsewhere). Different temporalities are juxtaposed: obsolescence, ruin, eternal return of the new in fashion and the seemingly unsurpassable eternity of the commodity when thought in terms of a continuum, and the possibility of something that cannot be pinned down and interrupts that temporality.

If Odradek is seen as outmoded, as something left behind by the march of progress, as seems to be the case in Wall's picture (made at a time when industrial production had been superseded in the West) if not already in Kafka's story, then it might also be thought of in relation to Benjamin's discussion of the Surrealist object. In his essay, 'Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligensia' (1929), he writes of André Breton that 'he was the first to perceive the revolutionary energies that appear in the "outmoded", in the first iron constructions, the first factory buildings, the earliest photos, the objects that have begun to be extinct, grand pianos, the dresses of five years ago, fashionable restaurants when the vogue has begun to ebb from them'.⁷ The resurfacing of these objects (in a flea market, or in art and literature) interrupts the linear, homogenous time of the very progress that renders them outmoded, as Odradek could be said to interrupt the time of the 'housefather', a term that combines the idea of

work and productivity with a better life for future generations, allied with a gradual, reformist improvement of circumstances without really changing anything. The obsolescent has fallen away from progress, like a piece of rubbish, but this very left-behindness contains the potential of a different future. Odradek is (whenever I write 'is', read 'might be') also a phantasmatic prehistoric remnant, from the 19th century that Benjamin in the *Passagenwerk* renders as both phantasmagoria and prehistory, since the continuum of progress is not yet history, which would be its very interruption.

Therefore, if Odradek cannot die, this may be read in two different ways: as the potential that remains for another future, and as a figure for what Wall describes as 'the eternity of the commodity',⁸ which for him is to be compared with the 'rigid, mimetic eternity of the readymade'?'⁹ (Perhaps the nearest readymade to Odradek would be the *Bottle Rack* of 1914.) Wall writes, 'The celebrated anxiety to which the Readymade gives expression is one generated by the glimpse it gives of a future implied by the eternity of the commodity, the endless rule of the abject object. The Readymade, emblem of the sloganless critique of an utterly detached intelligence, confronts the hidden form of social rule with the image of its own expressive meagerness'.¹⁰ Wall is echoing Adorno, who wrote, in a letter to Benjamin, 'On the one hand, the commodity is the alienated object in which use value withers; on the other hand, it is the surviving object that, having become alien, outlives its immediacy. We have the promise of immortality in commodities and not for people.' In other words, the commodity freezes the future in the form of capital. Adorno goes on to characterise Odradek as commodity: 'It seems to me that this is where the decisive epistemological character of Kafka lies, especially in Odradek, as the commodity that survives to no purpose.' The 'to no purpose' will be crucial here. In an essay 'Notes on Kafka' (1953) that was the first German publication of "Aufzeichnungen zu Kafka", Adorno writes, 'The zone in which it is impossible to die is also the no-man's-land between man and thing: within it meet Odradek'. This follows the claim that 'pure subjectivity, being of necessity estranged from itself as well and having become a thing, assumes the dimensions of objectivity which expresses itself through its own estrangement. The boundary between what is human and the world of things becomes blurred'.¹¹ Adorno also remarks in that essay, 'the moment, the absolutely transient, is the likeness of the eternity of passing away, of damnation. The name of history may not be spoken since what would truly be history, the other, has not yet begun' (p.257). If a figure of the commodity, Odradek would thus indicate the

estrangement of subjectivity in the object rendered eternal in the freezing of any possibility of historical transformation, or of another history.

But, given his hint of obsolescence at the very least, is this an adequate characterisation of Odradek in Kafka's story, let alone of Benjamin's analysis of it? Isn't Odradek also something more or other to the commodity? Even if Odradek was once a part of the machine of capital that produces commodities, he is now out of use – elusive and beyond any possible use value. In that respect, he becomes a stand-in for the work of art, or the artist himself. Werner Hamacher even considers 'Odradek' to be a rebus on Kafka's own name, a Star of David made from Ks and upright A and V forms – K A V K A – with the crossbar as a truncated F for Franz.¹² Could we see Odradek as the author displaced, rendered useless? And what if we were to think of aesthetics and medium in those terms: the medium as not a means to an end but a 'free use', and aesthetic experience as the affect of redemption not beyond but in the image or object as work of art? Heidegger uses the term *Brauch* (usage) to refer to the relation between being and the 'there' of its truth. It is inflected though Hölderlin's notion of 'the free use of the proper', so that 'free use' refers also to the relation to the gift of language.¹³ Heidegger might have had something like this in mind when he formulated his supreme concept of *Ereignis* as neither appropriation nor expropriation, but as appropriation of an expropriation. 'Free use' also has to do with the impotency in potentiality.¹⁴ This is implied in Giorgio Agamben's suggestion of an 'original fetishism' where the fetish is at once the presence of something and the sign of its absence, that involves the impossibility of appropriating that to which one is delivered.¹⁵ The question is how to think that the movement of appropriation and expropriation is one and the same, and Odradek just is that duplicity. In sum we could say that Odradek embodies *both* the redemptive-messianic *and* that which blocks its realization.

In the discussions between Benjamin and Brecht, Odradek became a signifier for a struggle between, on the one hand, a concept of art based in enlightenment and active political struggle, and on the other, one based on enigma and the withdrawal of doctrine, and therefore the 'meta-enigma' of enigma.

In his diary of conversations with Brecht while staying with him in Svendborg, Denmark, in the summer of 1934, Benjamin writes:

24 July. On a beam which supports the ceiling of Brecht's study are painted the words: 'Truth is concrete.' On a windowsill stands a small wooden donkey which nod its head. Brecht has hung a little sign round its neck on which he has written: 'Even I must understand it.'

On the 5th August Benjamin writes about having given Brecht his essay on Kafka.

Benjamin reports that Brecht thinks that the essay

detached the work from all connections, even with its author. In the end every thing I wrote always came down to the question of *essence*. Now what would be the correct way of tackling the problem of Kafka? The correct way would be to ask: what does he do? how does he behave?

Brecht was critical of Kafka's 'mystification', and said that 'Kafka's outlook is that of a man caught under the wheels', adding that 'Odradek is characteristic of this outlook...' Brecht considers the father of the family as personifying the petty bourgeois who 'is bound to get it in the neck.'¹⁶ Without neglecting Kafka's use of detail and extreme precision, Benjamin makes what Brecht calls this 'mystification' into a positive quality of Kafka's stories, which often, like 'The Cares of a Family Man', have the form of parables, but without the law or doctrine that would allow their decipherment: 'his parables are never exhausted by what is explainable; on the contrary, he took all conceivable precautions against the interpretation of his writings'.¹⁷ This both signals a rupture in the continuity of tradition – a break with or ruination of the past as well as a memory or mourning of it – and an anticipation of a future which is not given, and may not be 'for us' anyway. The parables' interruption of the temporal continuum aligns them with the *gestus* that Benjamin used to characterise Brecht's epic theatre, involving the interruption of an action for the sake of reflection provoked by the alienation effect. However, the ends of this framing of gesture are different: while for both Brecht and Kafka (who was, after all, interested in Yiddish theatre) *gestus* in its citability, its sense of being quotation and repetition, separates off a moment of the action as a tableau, for Brecht in particular it enables the audience to consider the conditions that gave rise to that configuration and the various possible outcomes.¹⁸ An obvious difference between parable and theatre is that parable is to be read, whether silently or aloud, possibly as a form of prophesy, while theatre is performed before an audience, the relationship of which with the action is crucial to what the play does, whether we think of this as *catharsis* or of the education of a public capable of collective action. ('Spectacle' would

effectively be the neutralisation of both these possibilities.) For Brecht, clearly, the play becomes a source of education, in the direction of a possibly revolutionary praxis.¹⁹

In setting out his difference, Benjamin takes gesture as the hinge between Brecht and Kafka, discussing both in its terms: 'Kafka could understand things only in the form of a *gestus*, and this *gestus* which he did not understand constitutes the cloudy part of the parables. Kafka's writings emanate from it.'²⁰ In Hamacher's reading of Benjamin's reading of Kafka, gesture occupies a 'cloudy spot' of opacity and impossibility: 'The "cloudy spot" in his prose forms the incomprehensible gestures, and his enigmatic figures are to be read as witnesses of this refusal or this impossibility of anticipating what is coming and of subordinating it to past forms of presentation'.²¹ This seems rather different from the more instrumental role of *gestus* in Brechtian epic theatre. However, along with *gestus*, Benjamin characterises both the theatre of Brecht and the parables of Kafka as having to do with 'astonishment' (the latter characterisation is also Brecht's). In Brecht, this is a refunctioning through citational gesture and the tableau of the Aristotelian *peripeteia*, the reversal or turning point in the action of a tragedy (what we could call in relation to history painting and photography the 'pregnant moment') – in Brecht's case not as part of or within the continuity of the action but as its interruption, which we could also relate to the poet Hölderlin's '*caesura*'. In Kafka, according to Benjamin, there is also a 'reversal', which as *Umkehr* is glossed by Samuel Weber as "'inversion," reversal, or also, turnabout'; that this is a movement is appropriate, since, as Samuel Weber writes, 'Benjamin's notion of "interpretation" here involves not reproducing the essence or meaning of the work as it is, but rather setting it into motion.'²² Thus, in a sense, answering Brecht's criticism of Benjamin's mode of reading for 'essence'. If there is an essence, it is a non-essence: the 'interpretation' is in relation to an opacity that can't be contained within given interpretative frameworks, and it is the work itself – if we can call it that – which is set into motion, rather than, as would be the case with the Brechtian stage, an audience or public. To 'work towards' the opening or tear that opacity provide, that the *gestus* in Kafka gestures towards, then, would be to reinstitute precisely the continuum it interrupts. The motion, as movement or gesture of interruption, is by no means linear or teleological. What would be necessary would be an 'unworking', which would be something like the un-naming effect of the name 'Odradek'.

If Odradek is a figure for the work of art, in the chiasmus formed by Benjamin's and Brecht's reading he is the site of a movement between two different conceptions of art at a point where history hangs in the balance. Responsive as Jeff Wall was to the implications for his photographic practice of the *gestus*, we could also be permitted to take *Odradek, Táboritská 8, Prague, 18 July 1994* as a hinge-work in his oeuvre, looking back to the early 'critical' and somewhat Brechtian Cibachrome transparencies, from *Faking Death to Mimic* and *Bad Goods*, and forward to the engagement with photography as a medium dealing with contingency in the black-and-white photographs. Its citation and siting in Central Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall also alludes to a political turning point in the end of Communism and the passage to global capitalism. When we compare the earlier and later moments of the oeuvre, we can see that what we could call the 'theatre' of the work has changed, from 'epic' to something more like Kafka's 'Nature Theatre'. The hallway in Wall's photograph itself has something of the quality of a shabby remnant from the past, which chimes also with Kafka's image-world: Adorno writes, 'Kafka's world of images is sad and dilapidated.'²³ Perhaps it is no coincidence that in the backlit Cibachrome the little model of Odradek almost disappears into the shadows, a condition, perhaps, of his survival. As Christine Conley points out, the model of Odradek that Wall had made for the photograph is in the form of a six-pointed star with its axel, and she quotes him on his trip to Prague in 1994 as saying, 'If Odradek had survived the Holocaust (and I think he is one of those most likely to have done so) he'd be hanging around where he always hangs around. He wouldn't have gone anywhere.'²⁴

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¹ Jeff Wall has not confirmed the reference to Duchamp in this picture: 'If people want to think in those terms, then that's their affair. Depiction just causes things to resemble each other.' Interview with the artist in Craig Burnett, *Jeff Wall*, Tate Publishing, London, 2005, p.77. It is not necessary for my argument that the resemblance be intentional.

² Werner Hamacher, 'The Gesture in the Name: On Benjamin and Kafka', *Premises: Essays on Philosophy and Literature From Kant to Celan*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1996, pp.294-336

³ Franz Kafka, 'The Cares of a Family Man', in Nahum Norbert Glatzer (ed), *The Complete Stories*, Schocken Books, New York, 1971, pp.427-29.

⁴ De Duve et.al., *Jeff Wall, op. cit.*, pp.72-73. (Note added for present volume.)

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- ⁵ Karl Marx, *Capital: Critique of Political Economy, Vol 1*, trans Ben Fowkes, Penguin, London, 1990, pp.163–64.
- ⁶ Theodor W. Adorno, ‘Letters to Walter Benjamin’, in Ernst Bloch et al., *Aesthetics and Politics*, London: New Left Books, 1977, pp.110–33; translation first published in *New Left Review*, no.81, September–October 1973.
- ⁷ Benjamin, *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter, London, New Left Books, 1979, p.229.
- ⁸ ‘The celebrated anxiety to which the Readymade gives expression is one generated by the glimpse it gives of a future implied by the eternity of the commodity, the endless rule of the abject object. The Readymade, emblem of the sloganless critique of an utterly detached intelligence, confronts the hidden form of social rule with the image of its own expressive meagerness’. Wall, *Dan Graham’s Kammerspiel*, Art Metropole, Toronto, 1991, p.106. See also my discussion of Wall’s *Odradek, Táboritská 8, Prague, 18 July 1994* in relation to the commodity and the readymade in ‘The True Appearance of Jeff Wall’s Pictures’, in *Jeff Wall*, exhibition catalogue, De Pont Foundation, Tilburg, 1994, pp.29–32.
- ⁹ Wall, *Dan Graham’s Kammerspiel*, *op. cit.*, p.26.
- ¹⁰ Wall, *Dan Graham’s Kammerspiel*, *op.cit.*, p.106. See also my discussion of Wall’s *Odradek, Táboritská 8, Prague, 18 July 1994* in relation to the commodity and the readymade in ‘The True Appearance of Jeff Wall’s Pictures’, in *Jeff Wall*, exhibition catalogue, De Pont Foundation, Tilburg, 1994, pp.29–32.
- ¹¹ Adorno, *Prisms*, trans Samuel and Shierry Weber, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 1981, pp.262–63.
- ¹² Hamacher goes further and considers *Odradek* as a rebus of Kafka’s name in ‘The Gesture in the Name: On Benjamin and Kafka’, p.323.
- ¹³ For the idea of ‘free use’, see Christopher Fynsk, *The Claim of Language: a Case for the Humanities*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2004, pp.33–35.
- ¹⁴ See Agamben, *op.cit.*, pp.116–17.
- ¹⁵ See Agamben, ‘The Passion of Facticity: Heidegger and the Problem of Love’, in Reginald Lilly (ed), *The Ancients and the Moderns*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1996, pp.211–29.
- ¹⁶ Benjamin, *Understanding Brecht*, trans Anna Bostock, New Left Books, London, 1973, pp.110–11.
- ¹⁷ Benjamin, ‘Franz Kafka: On the Tenth Anniversary of His Death’, *Selected Writings, Volume 2, 1927–1934*, ed Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland and Gary Smith, trans Harry Zohn, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1999, p.804.
- ¹⁸ For an excellent discussion of Benjamin’s relation to Brecht’s *gestus*, see Howard Caygill, *Walter Benjamin: The Colour of Experience*, Routledge, London, 1998, pp.72–79.
- ¹⁹ Benjamin’s essays on Brecht, from which my account is synthesised (‘What is Epic Theatre [First version]’, ‘What is Epic Theatre [Second version]’, and ‘Studies for a Theory of Epic Theatre’) were all published in Benjamin, *Understanding Brecht*, *op. cit.*, pp.1–25.
- ²⁰ Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Volume 2*, *op. cit.*, p.808.
- ²¹ Hamacher, ‘The Gesture in the Name: On Benjamin and Kafka’ *op.cit.*, p.306.
- ²² Samuel Weber, *Benjamin’s–Abilities*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2008, p.199.
- ²³ Adorno, *Prisms*, *op. cit.*, p.255.
- ²⁴ Conley, *op. cit.*, p.1012. The Wall quote is from Burnett, *op. cit.*, p.76. For other works with a Jewish reference by Wall, see *The Jewish Cemetery* (1980) and *8056 Beverly Blvd., Los*

Angeles, 9 a.m. 24 September 1996 (1996). The latter is a picture of a synagogue converted from a cinema, and the title of refers to the date of Yom Kippur in 1996, the Day of Atonement; it is in a circular vignette, which suggests the convention for a subjective shot in cinema. Another Kafka-related work is *Burrow* (2004). All these pictures are discussed in my book *Jeff Wall, op. cit.*