

REVOLUTIONARY INTOXICATIONS
THEORY OF THE AVANT-GARDE IN THE AESTHETICS OF NIETZSCHE AND BENJAMIN

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Abstract

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This thesis considers the relation between concepts of intoxication and of the avant-garde in some nineteenth and twentieth-century aesthetics. It argues that intoxication serves as a formulation of revolt alternative to those strategies of the avant-garde which result in increasingly rigidified cycles of antagonism and recuperation and the failure to effect social or institutional change. The ultimate interdependency of avant-garde and establishment makes it necessary to formulate alternative assessments of the way in which cultural agency may operate.

The argument takes the origin of the artistic avant-garde in the 1830s as intensifying opposition to bourgeois political conservatism insofar as it considers social progress as determined by scientific rationalism and manifested by the proliferation of commodities. Coinciding with the first socialist appeals to an artistic avant-garde, the claim of art's diminishing significance made by G.W.F. Hegel in his *Aesthetics* is here held to be the symptom of a crisis in a sense of purpose that leads artists and writers towards new formulations of relevance along political lines. The extremes of aesthetic detachment and militant ecstasy in Charles Baudelaire's poetry and the acclamation of differing concepts of intoxication in Friedrich Nietzsche's aesthetics redefine this purpose as subversive thought intended to conclusively uproot delusory humanist prejudices which are stalling radical change in the nineteenth century.

Walter Benjamin's writing on Baudelaire, hashish, Surrealism, and the conditions for culture in the Soviet Union are pivotal in this thesis for discussing intoxication as it functions in cultural revolt, historically considered indispensable for the success of organised revolution. It is argued here that an alternative approach to assessing revolt lies in the subversiveness of ecstatic language and thought whose delicacy and indeterminacy persistently open up possibilities that conventional formulations of progress or revolution occlude.

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Introduction

The subject of this thesis has its origin in the visual arts scene in New York during the early 1990s. It then develops in the context of writing on art and exhibiting in London through the end of that decade. In New York over a period of four years I participated in fortnightly discussions of critical theory, psychoanalysis and philosophy that tentatively questioned what the functions of a contemporary artwork might consist in. This discussion group included writers, musicians and artists who subsisted on the margins of the artworld, making their living through routine jobs and receiving very little public attention for their work. One thing these readings achieved was to lessen our feeling of marginalisation. Through the readings, the theoretical assumptions of much art discourse at that time became more apparent and were sometimes recognised as depending on primary material unfamiliar to the writers themselves.

Without always directly informing studio work, our often faltering introduction to philosophical theory helped to strengthen our convictions in our practice. Answers as to what made art interesting, vital or important became more complicated and elusive. The question of what art could do, of how it achieved what was often claimed on its behalf, became more

challenging. From this arose questions about agency and about the effectiveness of new political work in relation to the marketplace and the institutions by which it was sponsored.

New York in the late 80s and early 90s was replete with activist initiatives and art whose strategies and imagery were politically determined. Avant-gardist aims relating to the immersion of art into social practice or to institutional critique seemed plausible enough but where their recurrence was sponsored by the institutions under attack or celebrated by the marketplace it was worth asking what might be different about these tactics compared to those from eighty years previously; or if nothing was different, then finding out what else was being achieved by such repetition.

In 1991 I anonymously began a poster project to protest the huge casualties of the first Gulf War. Black painted paper cut to poster size was overprinted with an Iraqi name and with dates of birth and death. These were flyposted at night on hoardings in lower Manhattan and would invariably disappear under other notices within the week. Glimpsing one of these posters on the street could hardly have been more different from an encounter with the kind of issue-based work then seen in galleries and museums. Making this choice of site a part of its content linked the Iraqi posters to other street campaigns like the one conducted at the same time by the Guerrilla Girls against the under-representation of women artists in New York institutions. While such campaigns might have related to the historical legacy of political flyposting (which would include the Paris uprising in 1848 and the Situationists in 1968) they conspicuously made an advantage out of their own powerlessness within that art milieu. In spite of its near-invisibility and negligible impact, the Iraqi project was a prolonged reflection on the possibilities of artistic agency in the 1990s and it led me into the theory of the avant-garde in the hope of gaining a better understanding of the conditions for politicised art. Although these questions are here asked more in terms of nineteenth and early twentieth-century art and theory than in relation to contemporary art, this research into the origins of the avant-garde begins in those philosophy discussions provoked by the difficulties of making art in New York. This milieu is revisited in greater detail in the conclusion where I outline my responses to two artist groups, one from New York and the other from London, whose

activities during the 1990s demonstrate how a contemporary avant-garde might be configured.

At times the philosophical readings here have felt entirely disconnected from my activities as a visual artist, as if any other activity whatsoever might have had a closer relationship to the practice of contemporary art than abstract thought and aesthetics. Nevertheless, that alienation of the two disciplines has sometimes provided startling and unexpected perspectives from one to the other. The production of visual art these days remains resolutely artisanal in terms of the mundane material dimension it has always had at its core.

Something has to be made out of material whether it ends up as painting, video, conceptual art or some other idiom. However dominant the ideas, they must still be worked out in the materiality of digital editing, assembled materials, painted surfaces or language. The majority of studio time is spent in this way and the ideas are formed and limited by the often tedious manipulation of materials. Of twentieth-century theorists Adorno has come closest to understanding this banality of production and the de-acceleration of thought as it wades into turgid matter. His is an aesthetic that makes sense in the context of a practitioner's experience. Whether he defines making as a violence that mimics the violence issuing from the material as it resists formation, or imagines formal inconsistencies mirroring social irreconcilables, or talks of aesthetics as the mediation of fact and concept, Adorno never allows the material of the work to disappear.

A great deal of other commentary finds it difficult to contend with the obdurate materiality of art and will instead find it most convenient to treat the work as if it had a dematerialised presence (like projected slides, no more demanding than light on a screen) from which a content can be read off the surface. In such cases the intractable materials are as if transcended. Under that scrutiny the work sheds even the slender materiality of a photograph to remain instead a sheer apparition. Although you might agree with Adorno's insight that in their physicality artworks summon up critical thought as a means of separating themselves from basic matter, the two components of art and aesthetics invariably pass each other by like ships in the night. For all my investment in this materiality I have decided here to use no visual archive. The research is instead directed at the material of ideas and texts and seldom

refers to examples of artwork. In the future it may be taken back into the practice from which it began to test the materiality of artworks once again.

This research has been developed through readings of avant-garde theory and since these sources are only occasionally referred to in the text it may be helpful to compare them here. They include Renato Poggioli's *The Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1968), Peter Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1984), Rosalind Krauss's *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and other Modernist Myths* (1985), Matei Calinescu's *Five Faces of Modernity* (1987), Paul Mann's *The Theory-Death of the Avant-Garde* (1991) and Hal Foster's *The Return of the Real* (1996). The emphasis of the majority of these accounts, supportive and critical alike, concerns the implications of the failure of the avant-garde to achieve the social transformation by which its formal iconoclasm would be justified.

For Poggioli, from the perspective of the legacy of Futurism in Italy, the avant-garde (taken in the sense of an aesthetic antagonism) is the excess that transgresses the constructive boundaries of a defining style, declared beliefs, and the sense of purposeful, higher goals that characterise art movements. The avant-garde's basic antagonism to social forces ends as a superficial attitude without any corresponding formal rigour. Poggioli holds the avant-garde's self-mythologising claims as redundantly overlapping modernity's intentions while accentuating and accelerating them in agonistic and nihilistic gestures. These gestures publicise the avant-garde's position as fulfilling the potential of the present but frequently end in "the form of an intransigent puerility, an extreme infantilism", as Poggioli describes the nihilistic tendencies of Dada (Poggioli, 1968, 62). In this sense the avant-garde is the nightmare reflection of modernity, a kind of return of the repressed, a destructive parody of the pioneering spirit of renewal.

Poggioli identifies the orientation towards a transformed future that gives avant-gardes their motivation but is critical of what he identifies as their obligation to self-sacrifice in the wake of retrenched institutions or, at best, poorly realised revolutions. Trotsky's remark on Russian Futurism's anticipation (through its formal innovations) of all the chaos and convulsions that were to follow is critically noted by Poggioli as indication of a fallacious subscription to the

belief that the avant-garde prefigures political change. Overall he feels that the notion of parallel political and cultural revolutions is mistaken and owes more to avant-garde adventurism, or to sentimental wishful thinking, than to historical reality. Ultimately the end is a hollow achievement: "...avant-garde communism is the fruit of an eschatological state of mind, simultaneously messianic and apocalyptic, a thing compatible, psychologically if not ideologically, with the anarchistic spirit" (Poggioli, 1968, 100).

Calinescu is no more supportive of the prospect of avant-garde achievements than Poggioli although he is convinced of the avant-garde's existence as an aesthetic force. He provides a compelling genealogy of the term, decisively locating its origin in the deployment by revolutionary activists of a military metaphor that binds a cultural utopianism to socialist goals. No distinctive political achievement is really conceded to the avant-garde where Calinescu alternately describes it as a radical or parodic modernity that intensifies the criticism of the past to secure its commitment to a utopian future. Most effectively, he explains the avant-garde as the intensification of a culture of crisis: "The avant-gardist, far from being interested in novelty as such, or in novelty in general, actually tries to discover or invent new forms, aspects, or possibilities of *crisis*...art is supposed to become an experience—deliberately conducted—of failure and crisis" (Calinescu, 1987, 124). Like Poggioli however, Calinescu affirms that Dadaism, along with other avant-gardes, counterproductively rejects intelligibility to indulge in nihilistic gestures and a celebratory self-destructiveness. This only recalls Adorno's far more challenging invitation to understand contemporary art in its very incomprehensibility.

Neither Poggioli nor Calinescu differentiate between avant-gardes in an attempt to determine the effectiveness of any particular one, whereas this is a feature making Bürger's analysis more effectively critical than the others. For Bürger the avant-garde has historical specificity through the overriding objective he ascribes to it of undermining the institution of art and dissolving art into the praxis of life. This is a culmination of the aims of radical aesthetics whose challenges have been stifled through an inability to separate art from the interests and economy of bourgeois society. Bürger defines a moment when this becomes possible.

Aestheticism's emphatic separation of its content from socially productive ends establishes a break between art and the means-ends rationale of bourgeois life. Subsequent avant-gardes then exploit this break to connect art with a different and better life praxis. For Bürger it is Dadaism that comes the closest to accomplishing this reconnection. The ready-made renders the concept of the individualist work untenable thereby challenging the precepts by which the institution of art determines value: "...what is involved in these [Dadaist] manifestations is far more than the liquidation of the category 'work': it is the liquidation of art as an activity that is split off from the praxis of life that is intended" (Bürger, 1984, 56).

This action of liquidation has to be achieved through artistic processes for the institution to be effectively challenged. Bürger explains how this institution makes of art an ideological form which helps to conceal the real operations of bourgeois society. By this institutionalisation a system of ideas comes to be embodied in art, where art represents the truth of the material conditions of that society, albeit in a distorted form. Bürger here sees Adorno's image of an art that mirrors social contradictions as offering the possibility for exposing those conditions. This provides the premise from which the avant-garde takes its cue. The avant-garde must subvert the process of becoming ideology by opposing its own assimilation and remaining somehow separate from the bourgeois society which engenders it.

Bürger's enquiry is propelled by his personal regret at the failure of protests in May 1968 and of the student movements in the 1970s to increase democracy in all spheres of social life. It is his attempt to understand why that effort at a cultural and political revolution failed. Bürger wants to locate the reasons for that failure not in a critique of praxis, as in what the protesting students did wrong, but at a deeper level in the inherent inability of the avant-gardes at any time to effect the changes they claim as justifications for their art. The book then becomes a critique of the assumption that artists would really be able to subsume art into life. Bürger wants to define what the avant-garde and avant-gardist work of art are in order to understand their failure. Where the terms of success involve art's transformative absorption into the praxis of life, this becomes the only qualification of what is avant-garde. Art that we had thought was avant-garde, but which on closer scrutiny doesn't share this

idealism for sublation into a socially effective mode, must be excluded from this category. The neo-avant-garde which repeats the attack on the institution of art without radicalising its method cannot in any way be considered as significant as the original avant-gardes:

“...the neo-avant-garde institutionalizes the *avant-garde as art* and thus negates genuinely avant-gardiste intentions” (Bürger, 1984, 58).

Bürger's account is attractive for providing a clearly defined operational model of what might constitute an avant-garde, yet in conceding the failure of this model to achieve a transformation of art he invites a range of questions. Why in the first place do we look to the avant-garde for a resolution of social and political issues, especially since it seems to be so inadequate to the task? If it fails in this primary objective does it, as Bürger claims, serve like the Surrealist poetry recipes “as an instrument for living one's life as best one can” (Bürger, 1984, 53)? Beyond providing the means for a neo-avant-garde to aestheticise radicalism, is there really no productive relation between neo-avant-gardes and historical avant-gardes? If the historical ones fail then what is so bad about using their oppositional language to forge a new aesthetic—American Minimalists following Russian suprematists, or Robert Rauschenberg following John Heartfield—that might afford new critical positions? Where those earlier artists form their practice within the conditions of their historical present does Bürger fail to see how the avant-gardist repetitions which he criticises reinvent their tactics to address the historical changes by which they find themselves affected?

Some of these questions are addressed by Foster in “Who's Afraid of the Neo-Avant-Garde?”, the first chapter in *The Return of the Real*. This is a specific response to Bürger's occlusion of late twentieth-century artists in respect of their deficiency of avant-garde qualifications. Foster is largely supportive of Bürger's methodology but is impatient with his application of only one theory of the avant-garde to judge the merits of all examples. In this account Bürger's avant-garde is criticised as overly heroic and precipitated suddenly into the milieu which it is to challenge. Such manifestations, Foster insists, develop gradually into their canonical status through the effects of retrospective interpretation and citation, a process in which Bürger is himself implicated, although without acknowledging so. In Foster's

definition are a number of appropriate adjustments to Bürger's clear-cut avant-garde as enacting a confrontational opposition to ensure its sublation into life. By comparison the neo-avant-garde acts on the discourse and institutional framework of art to test their boundaries, often in relation to the changed experience of a broader racial and sexual constituency. In this procedure a form of mimicry develops from Duchamp's own "testing" where, for example, the incorporation of reified forms and objects serves to defend against an imposed social reification or where the use of degraded imagery and materials parodies a degraded world. For Foster the neo-avant-garde works to complete what the historical avant-garde left off in its furious self-immolation: "[Bürger] ignores that, rather than invert the prewar critique of the institution of art, the neo-avant-garde has produced new aesthetic experiences, cognitive connections, and political interventions, and that these openings may make up *another* criterion by which art can claim to be advanced today" (Foster, 1996, 14).

Foster's criticisms are strongest where he feels Bürger unjustly denies any effective critical position to the neo-avant-garde. Yet the examples with which he contests this denial are largely drawn from a field of art—institutional critique as it develops out of appropriation—in whose success Foster has played a role as advocate. One of his less manifest aims is to defend what he has already promoted, strengthening support for a fairly small group of New York artists. While, for example, he is careful enough to distinguish between the motivations developing within different centres of Dadaism, there is not the same discretion brought to an explanation of the equally distinct aims and procedures of artists like Andrea Fraser, Fred Wilson and Hans Haacke. Although the precedent of European artists like Marcel Broodthaers and Daniel Buren is noted, this focus on a selection of local artists as representatives of the completion of the avant-garde project reveals more about the parochial dynamics of regional promotion and investment than about a reinvigoration of avant-garde principles.

Even in New York there are examples from that same period of the late 80s and early 90s which would strengthen such claims for an effective continuation of avant-garde practice. Artist collectives like Colab, Gran Fury or Group Material more effectively take up Bürger's criteria of a de-individualised artwork that seeks new ways of immersing itself in a life praxis.

Even some of the individuals emerging from these groups like Jenny Holzer, Donald Moffett or Felix Gonzales-Torres successfully problematise their practice through incorporation of a wider range of strategies than seen with the artists cited by Foster. Using his own criteria, they test the limits of art and institution in more subversive and provocative ways. In the conclusion I discuss another New York example, the collective Four Walls, in some detail. One of the experiences some of these alternative practices draw into their work is intoxication.

At least Foster is engaged with the political dimension of the avant-garde, something not shared by Krauss, another October editor, whose chapter “The Originality of the Avant-Garde” presents the narrow focus of the “theme of originality” as a primal myth of origin where the avant-gardist emerges (from a car wreck in Marinetti’s case) born into the role. Disappointingly, any opportunity to reflect critically on the political agency to which the avant-garde has vociferously laid claim is passed up by Krauss in favour of considering how an immanent formal reflexivity counters this avant-garde criterion of originality with a succession of copies.

In the later book *The Optical Unconscious*, Krauss still blocks out political components in discussions of Surrealism and Walter Benjamin, for whom no written sentence could be without political implication. It is a perverse reading of Benjamin that takes “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility” as a digression on Freud’s understanding of the unconscious when it is a deeply political reflection on the empowerment of a mass audience through new technologies. Even when Krauss considers Benjamin’s writing on fascism it is only for the possible revelation of the unconscious of mass rallies which requires a camera to record what is beyond registration by the human mind. Krauss seems unconcerned that the political reality of fascism in Benjamin’s time might influence his critique of technology in relation to mass movements.

Mann’s book, like Foster’s, looks at the retention of the avant-garde in recent contemporary art which he considers in relation to the doubts and crises of historical precedents. Mann’s enthusiasm for the avant-garde’s objectives lends complexity to the unrelenting scepticism he feels towards claims of its effective opposition. For him the recurrent death of the avant-

garde, occurring each time it achieves a measure of success, is embedded within its logic of futurity and occurs as its initial force of negation burns out. Unlike Foster and Krauss, he has no obvious investment in the stakes of contemporary art and does not attempt a partisan recovery of certain artists to establish a bridgehead of enduring avant-gardism. For Mann the entire raft of avant-garde claims has from the very beginning been compromised by a thoroughgoing recuperation. It has remained for artists only to determine the form taken by that recuperation, to try to dodge, defer or even accelerate the process in a kind of secondary level discourse with the marketplace. As we will see in the chapter on Baudelaire, here is the perpetuation of the flâneur's aloof observation of commodities as a prelude to selling them in department stores as a sales assistant.

The feature of Mann's arguments that is of most interest to the research of this thesis is his concession of areas in which recuperation becomes less plausible, if only because it is not fought against: "...perhaps it has always been the anti that was most recuperable, not a form of resistance to assimilation but the very medium of assimilation" (Mann, 1991, 80). If the advance of radical culture is utterly predictable in ridding the bourgeoisie of its waste by displacing unwanted old goods with exciting new products then is there any other place from where incomprehensible cries can communicate their difference? Mann sees this possibility in a couple of events, one of which he defines in the context of a discussion of Tzara's manifestos. In Dada's rotating negations, where even the possibility of negation acquiring value is steadily annihilated, appears "an irrepressible negative that the dialectic cannot entirely confine: something that criticism can only catch out of the corner of its eye, for when it turns to face it it is no longer there..." (Mann, 1991, 90). This negation against negation relates to a second non-position where the avant-garde is described as atomising into untraceable activities and discourses which are absolutely indifferent as to whether they are perceived as pro or anti: "Around this postmodernism: an economy frantically struggling to retool discursive technology in order to recuperate it. Beneath it: an unprecedented refusal" (Mann, 1991, 66).

The following chapters are developed with the intention of avoiding presumptions that any

cohesive image of the avant-garde, historical or neo-, can still be reached. They argue that any temptation to sector off an area of historical practice as avant-garde through authentication of a set of features should be resisted. The argument runs in the thesis that there are different, equally valid approaches to configuring avant-gardism and that this dispersal of what has tended to become a homogenising categorisation is productive. Under the discursive scrutiny enacted here, unfamiliar examples of avant-gardism move into focus while the more familiar ones start to reveal unexpected forms of exhilaration or agency that are usually occluded by conformity to a rigorous teleological model.

The discussion opens with a chapter on G.W.F. Hegel whose claims for the decline in art's effectiveness at revealing what is crucial to a given society are used to direct questions about the origin of the avant-garde from an unexpected angle. It is suggested that in the *Aesthetics* a premise is set out, inadvertently perhaps, for the development of newly radical aesthetic positions where the degree of an artwork's formal autonomy may determine its effectiveness at embodying social contradictions. Karl Marx's critique of Hegel serves here to disengage this new kind of art from the assumption that its fealty to the needs of Spirit exhausts its potentiality. In this way, Hegel's intention to define a subservient role for art becomes the means by which art secures its freedom to determine its own terms of engagement. To show how Hegel's understanding of art would at times incorporate a sense of its radical possibilities, his account of the musician's intoxicated performance from Denis Diderot's *Rameau's Nephew* is explored in some detail. Here is a prototype avant-gardism on whose hermetic formalism and extravagant abandon are stamped the alienation and class oppression that prevent effective action.

With the second chapter the subject of intoxication is extensively examined through its changing functions within Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy. Nietzsche's writing shares obvious features with examples of artistic antagonism. His vitriolic attack on social and religious institutions and the precariousness to which his process of critique exposes his own commentary have parallels with avant-garde work. The relation of concepts developed in *The Birth of Tragedy* to processes of avant-garde opposition and recuperation is considered in

conjunction with Nietzsche's determined undermining of historical authority. Amongst his evolving definitions of intoxication is the idea of the expenditure of an unproductive force—antithetical to the nineteenth century's high estimation of progress—which dissolves boundaries between subject and environment in order to enhance our experience of the world. This objective is pointed out as a recurrent aspect of Benjamin's thought where its political importance can be defined in contrast with his proposals for revolutionising artistic agency through radicalising the definition of producer. In this aspect of Nietzsche's thought, especially where it is enacted by Georges Bataille, lies the possibility for an entirely new form of engaged art.

The three following chapters are intended to provide a detailed cross-section of the range of approaches developed by Benjamin in his attempts to extend the boundaries of what might constitute avant-garde initiatives. His essays on Baudelaire highlight the economic and political forces impacting artists and writers whose opposition is increasingly submerged within a milieu of commercial consumption in which they must function as commodities. Baudelaire's poetry provides acute images of the inventive strategies of artists trying to retain some critical means within a society that is extremely successful at suppressing support for revolt. Such poems mutate between explicit calls to revolution, delineations of the vampiric effects of a debilitating consumerism, and intricately subversive mimicry of the seductions of consumption. The extended discussion of Baudelaire also provides the perspective of a nineteenth-century artist on the front line of an emergent cultural avant-garde whose legacy influences the practice of early-twentieth century radical movements. Some of these are discussed in the remaining chapters on Benjamin whose arguments for a new definition of artist-producer signify his interest in the revolutionary organisation of a socially engaged art production. The instrumentalist aesthetics that results from this sympathy with Soviet communist positions is then considered in relation to the criteria for political work that Benjamin develops in his articles on the function of film in contemporary society.

In the chapter on Benjamin's hashish protocols intoxication returns as the enabler of a radically personal immersion in everyday materiality. The benignity of these intimate

accounts is in extreme contrast to Benjamin's interest in organised revolutionary communist aesthetics but is closer to the philosophy of secular illumination elaborated by the Surrealists, whose defense of an autonomous art in the service of politics he was supportive of to the extent of seeking an equivalent in his own work. It is argued here that in the accounts of these hashish trances resides a non-militant, elusive and irrecoverable avant-gardism whose unconventionality provides imaginative opposition to stipulated relationships with the world, whether these are predicated on consumption or on sanctioned aesthetic radicalisms.

The final chapter revisits several of the earlier themes of the thesis in the context of Charles Fourier's utopian ideas and Louis Aragon's updated *flânerie* of *Paris Peasant*. Benjamin's idea of the unrealised revolutionary legacy embedded in nineteenth-century artefacts is traced back through Fourier's liberatory community architecture, supposedly based on the Paris arcades which Aragon inhabits as a realm of potential libidinal and visionary pleasures. The importance of intoxication is discussed at the level of Fourier's organised mass communal encounters, in terms of everyday routine and erotic event. Its role in Aragon's reveries and sexual escapades has a close relation to Benjamin's hashish trances in terms of their attempt to demonstrate the revolutionary content of experiences whose outcome is not conventionally transformative.

Noted earlier in the discussion of Mann's writing on the avant-garde, the refusal to follow patterns of opposition appears from time to time in this thesis. It seems a way out of the predictable cycles of avant-garde discourse that, as Foster inadvertently demonstrates, continue to redeem what are really conventional artistic strategies for spurious canonisation. Something of this refusal remains in Benjamin's hashish trance, in Aragon's wasteful expenditure in the arcade, in Nietzsche's furious intoxications and in Bataille's unconditional surrender to rapture. It is certainly also in Diderot's account of the nephew's improvisation as well as in Fourier's erotic fantasies. This is one of the areas of enquiry in the following chapters as they consider whether or not intoxication can answer both as symptom and achievement of a misrepresented avant-garde.

Chapter 1

Hegel and the avant-garde

Introduction

This first chapter argues that certain propositions of the *Aesthetics* are symptomatic of a breakdown of confidence in artistic agency at the start of the nineteenth century. Hegel's remarks on the decline of art's significance and its consequent role as a utilitarian aesthetic, in service to reason by way of the detachment of its sensuous properties from concrete social conditions, fuel the fire that by 1830 has started to glow beneath the cultural avant-garde. In this sense Hegel's *Aesthetics* is taken as a negative point of origin for the avant-garde. As his definitions disallow the social immersion and formal radicalism of subsequent avant-gardes, they nevertheless formulate how these might come about. It is suggested in this chapter that within these symptoms can be read a preliminary outline of conditions for some critical nineteenth-century art. With this intent, Hegel's remarks on the role of art are discussed in the context of Baudelaire's work and some early twentieth-century avant-gardes. Here the outcomes anticipated by Hegel—critical social engagement and sensuous autonomy—can be seen in stark clarity. The political aspects of this comparison are shown in greater relief by considering Marx's critique of Hegel's idealism in relation to the role prescribed for art in support of spirit. Intoxication is introduced less as an active component of Hegel's thought

than ultimately as a means for countering alienation. Where Hegel recognises such alienation in the intoxicated behaviour of Rameau's nephew in Diderot's narrative, such tendencies evolve in Baudelaire, in Nietzsche or in Dadaism into conscious agents of the opposition to rationality.

One question asked in this chapter is the significance of the cultural avant-garde in the context of its political failures. It enquires about the meaning and the purpose of the avant-garde when the social revolution on which its antagonisms of subversive content and abrasive formal innovations are premised, or the future to which it sacrifices itself, never materialise. What *else* is the avant-garde besides this projection into a future that never arrives? As a question circulating through the entire thesis it is asked here in relation to some pre-eminent ideas on aesthetics and on political and economic change from the time of the origin of the avant-garde. In this instance, these ideas are primarily found in Hegel and in Marx's radical transformation of Hegelian concepts from abstract reconciliations to programmes for concrete action.

Marx's modification of Hegel's theory to substantiate a Communist solution for economic inequalities is taken here as a way of understanding the avant-garde's actions in bringing art into an equivalent social revolution. Where Marx aims towards an effective political critique and reorganisation of radical parties in opposition to current political ideologies, the artistic avant-gardes attempt to transform the content, imagery and language of their work against prevalent institutional determinants. To this end a broad view is taken of what constitutes an artistic avant-garde, it should be said, against the more restrictive categorising of theorists like Poggioli, Bürger and Calinescu.

If the appellation "avant-garde" was initially discredited by politicised artists and not taken up by them as a rallying call until the late nineteenth century, it is nevertheless the case that designates intended by the term "avant-garde" can be recognised in the work and attitude of earlier practitioners. Why not then consider these as an initial stage of the avant-garde? The conditions that lead to the emergence of radicalised artistic practice—alienation and economic hardship as material factors; institutional rejection and the aspirations of socialism

as political factors; and the expansion of the cultural-economic bohemia as a social factor (all of this within the rule of an increasingly powerful bourgeoisie)—exert their impact well before the term “avant-garde” is accepted as defining the most effective forms of cultural protest. This is in part because there is little opportunity for alienated individuals to identify alternative strategies until well after the 1789 revolution—the discussion of pre-revolutionary *Rameau's Nephew* is meant in this context.

The avant-garde is to be taken then as designating any cultural expression of disorder, disintegration, disharmony, revolt, or antagonism from outside the dominant institutional forces of its day. In this sense, Diderot's account of the nephew's performance, Daumier's cartoons and Baudelaire's poetry provide an idea of the avant-garde whose *modus operandi* is adapted, refined or productively corrupted by Dadaists, Russian Futurists and Surrealists to confront their own social realities. In addition, this thesis disagrees with the accusation of puerility that forms a significant justification for Calinescu's and Poggioli's belittling of the avant-garde. That the configuration of adolescent impulses and fantasies as aesthetic material should be categorised *per se* as inferior and ineffectual demonstrates a biased reading of the avant-garde. Any sympathetic experience of contemporary art, indeed of early modernist art, reveals how vital such strategies are for confounding recuperation and moving the language of art forward into meaningful relationship with present conditions. This is by way of further justifying the choice made here of a broad remit for avant-garde work.

From some theorists comes the assumption that a posturing and unreflective antagonism blights the potential of the avant-garde and ensures that it will never issue a decisive challenge to entrenched ideological positions. On the same account the avant-garde is discredited for its inconstancy, for failing to sustain a focused political critique when a series of iconoclastic gestures can easily serve instead. At other times its representatives are seen as compromised by their bourgeois backgrounds or for intermittent dependence on state support like the Salon and government purchases. Equally, in this perspective, Baudelaire's futile hope for an Academy position might serve as evidence against his radicalism. Yet the avant-garde is neither homogenous nor consistent as, with varying degrees of commitment, it participates

in and withdraws from radical political groups and tries to improve on a precarious living based on undependable private income and occasional commissions or journalism. The private income proves essential for any creative work to be realised—Baudelaire and Courbet benefit in this way but never to the extent of alleviating all financial pressures. Until much later in the nineteenth century, when there were alternatives to the Salon's centralisation of patronage, the help from successful bourgeois families in the provinces was a feature of bohemian life and not a disqualification to political radicalism. Nor was revolutionary activism so coherent as to predictably determine the allegiances of young artists and writers. The events in Paris in the spring of 1848 where large sectors of the urban proletariat and peasant class switch allegiance from February to June divide intellectuals who had previously been united. The avant-garde in most historical periods is prepared to shift its position as political circumstances change not in order to become accommodated, but the reverse. If we take the avant-garde's frequently declarative or bombastic aesthetic and political claims at face value, the evidence of their work is bound to disappoint. It is better to recognise the full complexity of the manifesto form as it serves to draw a unifying contour around a group of practitioner friends, to project a goal that is as much a challenge to themselves as to their public and to mark out a territory for aesthetic innovation, in other words, for the ownership of an idea. Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the "refrain" encompasses this kind of range: "...the territorializing factor, must be sought elsewhere: precisely in the becoming-expressive of rhythm or melody, in other words, in the emergence of proper qualities (colour, odour, sound, silhouette...)...Can this becoming, this emergence, be called Art? That would make the territory the result of art...One puts one's signature on something just as one plants one's flag on a piece of land" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1992, 316).

This chapter continues by looking at two principal passages from Hegel's *Aesthetics*, both taken from the introduction. The first of these sets out Hegel's terms for the decline of art's importance while the second concerns new conditions for the responsibilities expected of art. A third part of this chapter deals with Marx's interpretations of Hegel and a fourth looks in more detail at the condition of the avant-garde. This is the historical beginning to the material of this dissertation. Hegel's *Aesthetics* is the last significant attempt by a

philosopher—prior to the eruption of art criticism and artists' manifestos—to determine the scope of art's meaning and purpose. Following Hegel, the most significant statements are made by those working closest to the production of art as it splinters into irreconcilable tendencies. As the nineteenth century closes, the work of defining the scope of art becomes increasingly accelerated and localised with the polarisation of contemporaneous practices. Any attempt to assert stable trans-historical criteria becomes quickly discredited. Hegel's *Aesthetics* immediately predates the first reference to an artistic avant-garde, Henri de St. Simon's and Olinde Rodrigues' summons to artists to work as socialist publicists. As will become clear, there is no doubt Hegel would have shown little tolerance for most of the historically significant art that followed his death, least of all for those avant-garde works whose appearance is in part determined by their political motivation. In the nineteenth century the increasing emphasis by the arts on the quality of an individual's experience of everyday life licensing distortion and fragmentation over verisimilitude, moves in an opposing direction to Hegel's conviction that art's intrinsic nature lies with its independence from subjective determinations and political identifications. This conviction is expressed in the course of Hegel's account of the demise of art and it is this same moment in the text which provides valuable perspective on the kind of art it would seem to exclude.

These claims for the decline of art's significance are the cord around which entwine other issues raised in this chapter. Hegel's concern for the independence of a work's aesthetic qualities reflects his commitment to freedom in all spheres of thought and action and this will be considered in light of the definitions by avant-garde artists of the nature of artistic freedom in relation to social responsibilities. The discussion of freedom is elaborated in those sections of the *Aesthetics* which deal with Romantic art. Although the broad span Hegel intends for this category of late Christian art encompasses anything from Shakespeare to Goethe, some explanation is necessary for Hegel's ambivalent feelings towards the art of his own time, which receives the closest he will come to a lively criticism of contemporary aesthetic positions. In relating Hegel's outline of the aims of art to the wider theme of the dissertation, his references in the *Aesthetics* and the *Phenomenology* to states of bliss, ecstasy and intoxication will be discussed as conceptions of other kinds of aesthetic experience,

particularly with a view to identifying alternative forms of artistic agency than the avant-garde cycle of opposition and recuperation.

Hegel 1: the demise of art

One origin for ideas developed in this chapter is in responses to the provocative discussion of the future for art in the *Aesthetics*. It is at this moment that we have an image of what confronts the avant-garde and of the directions along which its reaction will develop. Presupposing a relation between Hegel's thought and the actions of the avant-garde might seem implausible. On the one hand you have a philosophy of absolutes whose thinking establishes its final eyrie, secure in its completeness from the impact of temporal conditions; on the other hand you have actions consisting of impermanent gestures marked by specificity, temporality and relativism. Furthermore, Hegel makes no address to art that might carry forward to a milieu of competing aesthetic radicalisms and although the alignment between formal autonomy and conceptual purity assumed by some early twentieth-century artists may draw from Hegel's system, the avant-garde makes few overt references to his writing. In retrospect however, Hegel's *Aesthetics* opens up in unexpected ways to readings that work back from the present. In terms of his original intent these may classify as misreadings, productive or unproductive, depending on the limits one wishes to place on the scope of a historical text. Nevertheless, this chapter argues that some of Hegel's ideas about art are loosened from their moorings in his system by questions originating in the aesthetic relativism that follows, particularly in relation to the choices faced by radical artistic movements.

Compiled after his death from lectures given in the 1820s, the *Aesthetics* has an informality about it that Hegel's earlier writings lack. There is less sense of a philosophical system that appears hewn from language and concept fused into a common material. In the *Aesthetics* Hegel is more discursive as if using a form of argument appropriate to what he repeatedly emphasises as a second order of representation, below thinking itself. It is in the first dozen pages of his introduction that Hegel broaches and concludes those central propositions for art's qualities, its scope and its future, that have proved an irresistible challenge to later

interpreters. This is where the premise for the decline of art appears. Before this point however, in the course of refuting assumptions about art's limitations regarding its content and explication, Hegel sets out an extremely generous array of qualities leaving no doubt that he expects a rich and profound range of achievements for art. This seems surprising given the limitations he is soon to impose and we need to make some sense out of this combination of magnanimity and brutal repossession conveyed by first experience of the text. Art, we are told, delights us as a realm of free play well away from sombre introspection, discipline and conformity. There is the promise of total and prolonged envelopment in its engagement with every possible facet of actual and imaginative life. Taking up this point in greater depth later, Hegel then distinguishes a truly *free* art from a lesser one that serves as entertainment or decoration. Potentiality to engage with the fullness of human life lies with the former: "Now, in this its freedom alone is fine art truly art...In works of art the nations have deposited their inner intuitions and ideas, and art is often the key, and in many nations the sole key, to understanding their philosophy and religion" (Hegel, 1975, 7).

There is a kind of exhilaration here, feeding through the charged language to present art as the richest possible experiential field, unlimited in its affirmative revelations. This exhilaration is hardly stemmed by the proviso that art achieves this as an intermediary between the remoteness of free conceptual thinking and the immediate sensuous reality from which thought has withdrawn: "[Spirit] generates out of itself works of fine art as the first reconciling middle term between pure thought and what is merely external, sensuous and transient, between nature and finite reality and the infinite freedom of conceptual thinking" (Hegel, 1975, 8). This is the first indication of what becomes for Hegel an unspoken utilitarian role for art, certainly not the utility of decoration or distraction mentioned earlier, but what would instead be defensible as a higher purpose, a usefulness for spirit. In these preliminaries Hegel's idealism assumes a common interest by all in this remit for art. As spirit is the distillation of all human endeavour, good and bad, reversals as well as advancements, it encompasses all people of politically advanced European countries. This is a universal spirit. Exclusion is illogical and therefore impossible. Furthermore, because this is, historically, a fully achieved spirit where the development of the state is now consonant with

individual freedom, art is only expected to reflect this new condition and no longer to provide the changing image of its present for the better apprehension of its audience.

This last limitation has significant consequences for advanced art, as we will shortly discover. Recent conceptions of culture and history are so estranged from the kind of centrality Hegel gives to this idea of spirit and its progression that it is worth looking in some detail at his meaning. Spirit is the actuality and potentiality of consciousness as manifested in all human endeavour. Although immaterial, spirit only achieves its highest state through the history of its involvement in culture and religion, forming itself through advances and reversals that have provided it with indicators for progression. In this sense the immateriality of spirit is always something that defines itself by working through the most material and mundane preoccupations as well as human interests of supposedly higher value. Spirit is proof of Hegel's optimistic verdict for humanity whose worst excesses, like the Terror following the French Revolution, become significant in forming spirit's advance towards genuine freedom in a dialectical process of negation. The virtue of Hegel's concept might be its inclusiveness where nothing of human history is wasted. There are no dead ends of culture, no incidents that are entirely without relevance, for all contribute towards the development of spirit. Yet it is this logical progression of spirit that ultimately obscures any deviating content of human actions. Because nothing can exist outside of spirit's advance, every initiative is judged according to its contribution to this larger idea which becomes overbearing in its determinations. Dissident culture does not open up potentiality but remains a trivialising detour.

In these first pages of the *Aesthetics* Hegel continues enumerating art's abilities, explaining how it reaches through the chaos of external matter to pull illusory phenomena into representations where their true reality and spirit can be recognised. In this process of uncovering the truth of reality, art is much more effective than thought at getting beneath this obdurate materiality and giving us an accurate idea of what our senses mislead us about. All of these conditions support the idea of the fullest possible role for art in our efforts to grasp the reality of our world. Even if "the sphere of *thinking* is the truest reality" (Hegel, 1975, 9), it is art that brings that reliably truthful form to the table. It is after this surging

optimism, qualified by deference to thought, that the future for art is suddenly reigned in. What might sway interpretation further at this point is the sense of melancholy to this section; the sense of a checked relevance and cautionary valediction for art. The result is that although Hegel never announces the end of art, it certainly feels that way. There is the impression of an inevitable decline heading rapidly towards a wake as we are told that art's greatest calling is consigned to history. This termination is cumulative for being voiced as a chorus—four farewells of around two lines each followed in each case by fifteen to twenty lines of elaboration. It is not surprising that Manfredo Tafuri, as do others, reports this as a death: "Art dies to make room for a higher form of knowledge... What in fact, dies, for Hegel, is art as superindividual institution and as immediate communion with the universe..." (Tafuri, 1980, 29).

Looking more closely at this chorus and verse sequence, let us lay out the contents. After the enthusiastic enumeration of qualities comes the first brake: "...it is on the other hand just as necessary to remember that neither in content nor in form is art the highest and absolute mode of bringing to our minds the true interests of the spirit" (Hegel, 1975, 9). Following this is the first of the limitations—it is on account of its sensuous form (the very thing that we were told earlier gave it unique access to the truth of phenomena) that art is held back from representing what amounts to an newly profound truth in terms of the contemporary condition of the pure spirit of Christian faith, where once it was adequate to embody the idealised physical qualities of the Greek gods. Then the second chorus: "The peculiar nature of artistic productions and of works of art no longer fills our highest need" (Hegel, 1975, 10). The next passage informs us that art has ceased being venerated as an embodiment of religion, where once this was enough to measure its meaning and value. Its relevance to the mass of people has receded leaving only the possibility for individual reflection. In this case religion is no measure of art's value which must be judged by the intellect alone. The third chorus continues: "...it is certainly the case that art no longer affords that satisfaction of spiritual needs which earlier ages and nations found in it..." (Hegel, 1975, 10). Then follows a more comprehensive assessment of this contemporary secular reflection which is so pervasive as to even threaten art's preserve of providing sensuous representations for reason.

Its freedom in this role is countered by the tendency in civil life to regulate all details of day-to-day existence. Moreover, there is no escape from this kind of determinate, secular regulation which subsumes even creative work within its supervision. And then the final chorus: "In all these respects art, considered in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the past" (Hegel, 1975, 11). The concluding verse enacts a definite ending to this entire composition which is formed as a continuous narrative broken by the four chorus elements which essentially repeat the same thought. This process of secularisation and individuation of art's frame of reference ends here with a purely intellectual content that no longer involves our immediate reality. Displacing the pleasure we once took in art is an intellectual judgement of the relation between the form and content of the work. This does not stimulate new art but more likely drains its vitality in order to enable a conceptual understanding: "Art invites us to intellectual consideration, and that not for the purpose of creating art again, but for knowing philosophically what art is" (Hegel, 1975, 11). The realm of free play has been absorbed into regulation.

Hegel writes at a time he proposes as a historical conclusion, when the social and political changes that have brought about an enlightened State will have been accompanied by art that furthered this goal through its representations. Given his prescription of disinvolvement for art he is unlikely to have named such works as the most significant ones of that epoch. Such a use-value of politically informed work would preclude this. Clearly Hegel's conditions detailed above do not disallow the widest array of artwork from being made, nor entirely screen it from view once produced. The earlier appraisal of art's qualities may survive the account of its decline but only insofar as its reception has now become philosophical and its freedom constrained by the bureaucratisation of life. Following these changes we can easily enough imagine some form of an emasculated art remaining for a public that still values a relationship with it.

There are a number of issues arising from these conditions which bear on the circumstances for the emergence of an avant-garde. Hegel recognises a sensuous autonomy for art—
"...what *we* want to consider is art which is *free* alike in its end and its means" (Hegel, 1975,

7)—but he does not work this autonomy back into the matrix of what once held it in its grip in order to convincingly secure its freedom. This would be the procedure in the *Logic* and *Phenomenology* where he develops his definitions through a more rigorous dialectical method. Here this freedom is simply held out as the case, when it needs to be shown how such sensuous qualities maintain their independence in relation to their origin in the world of civic affairs where such things are largely suppressed. Likewise, these sensuous qualities are presented with neither the sense of their history within the value systems of communities that sponsor and produce this artwork, nor with any relation to such qualities across a relevant spectrum of other art.

The avant-garde has shown this relationship to be important for its own disruptions which are fabricated in the context of established and commonly recognised values. In the frequent instances of disobedience to civic regulations (a reaction Hegel does not anticipate in his rule-conditioned society) we would expect the art of revolt to look different from that which is submissive, to have a new set of aesthetic criteria which would partly determine its sensuous qualities. Whatever will happen to art in a time of revolt is not clarified by Hegel's conditions. Nor do they clarify the issue of how art will provide what the future needs, where the avant-garde is permanently turned towards a better coming life for which it sacrifices its own present.

By establishing an immutable present for art, Hegel inadvertently invites artists to connect with numerous "presents", determined by autobiographical and social circumstances. To these ends, insistence on art's sensuous qualities invites their extreme overemphasis. Furthermore, historically appropriate technique inevitably generates the conditions for its inappropriate counterpart to thrive and put an end to a moribund use of materials. If Hegel believes Christian religion ascends beyond the reach of art's powers then this only legitimises the substitution of political, social, or subjective themes which become determined by other artists as the highest need. Nor does Hegel's account of the demise of art (due to its inadequacy for representing the advance in religion) allow for any part artists play in this process. Artists may pull their art away from spirituality into the representation of concrete

worldly issues or alternately surround it with uncooperative intentions, making incomprehensibility its content. What kind of spirit would engage with meaninglessness? From the perspective of avant-garde initiatives, this series of readings of Hegel's narrative propose another set of demands on art which celebrate its powerful recovery from the conditions of its decline. This is clarified by Theodor Adorno's reading of Hegel: "He who was the first to envision the end of art named the most compelling reason for its continuation: the continuation of needs, mute in themselves, that await the expression that artworks fulfil by proxy. However, if the element of spirit is immanent to artworks, this explains that this element is not identical with the spirit that produces them, not even with the collective spirit of the epoch" (Adorno, 1997, 345).

There are two further points that might be made of Hegel's fate for art. These concern changes to the meaning and reception of artworks, some of them avant-garde, during the nineteenth century; in the first instance with the substitution of new gods for old and, in the second, with the way in which critique becomes folded back into the materiality of artworks. The first of these relates to the disconnection Hegel feels has occurred between art and religion and the second to his exclusion of art from the process of reflection.

Hegel bases his account of the demise of art on the assertion that it no longer has the means to correspond to an evolved religious experience. Christianity has changed into a religion graspable by a spiritual intelligence and is beyond the reach of art's sensuous powers. The religious homogeneity of Medieval society (as one of Hegel's examples) and the centralisation of learning in the institution of the church make it more likely that an altarpiece would serve the spiritual needs of a people. Low literacy rates and the monopoly of books by church and secular authorities would cause the poor to place inordinate value in the representations of bible narratives. The story of a spontaneous procession following Duccio's altarpiece, the *Maesta*, through Siena's streets from his workshop to the cathedral where it was to reside, is certainly an indication of the spiritual importance of such paintings but also testifies to the lack of alternative images. The start of the nineteenth century experiences greater literacy, widely available printed texts on diverse subjects, political tracts, circulating newspapers, and

engraved images of paintings, all of which make it unlikely that any one institution, or one collection of knowledge and imagery, will be the focus for a community's needs.

Whatever impact these developments have on actuality and daily life, their importance for Hegel lies in their contribution to the advance of spirit. This advance is not helped by some of the more acclaimed art of his time, whose embodiment of deeper emotional events may be limited by an inclination to irony or whose formal autonomy may be overwhelmed by a surfeit of ideas: "But the ironical lies in the self-destruction of the whole, great and excellent... This then implies that not only is there to be no seriousness about law, morals, and truth, but that there is nothing in what is lofty and best..." (Hegel, 1975, 67). Beyond this point Hegel cannot foresee, but certainly the deification of avant-garde figures and their work would be a social fragmentation counterproductive to spirit.

There is this kind of response to Wagner's music as it intoxicates large audiences in the nineteenth century: "Nietzsche speaks of the mass appeal of such artists as Hugo and Wagner. Modernity speaks of the theatrocracy because 'the theatre is a form of demolatory in matters of taste—*This is precisely what is proved by the case of Wagner*: he won the crowd, he corrupted taste, he spoiled even our taste for opera'" (Calinescu, 1987, 192). That this recants Nietzsche's early enthusiasm for Wagner only confirms the latter's impact. In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche acclaims Wagner's music as a new Dionysian form which would regenerate German culture. His language evokes the self-sacrifice of voluntary religious martyrdom: "...can [they] imagine a man who would perceive the third act of *Tristan und Isolde*...without expiring at the convulsive spreading of their souls' wings? How could such a man...fail to shatter into pieces all of a sudden?" (Nietzsche, 1993, 101). On a different level, the same adulation is felt in this address to Mallarmé by Paul Valéry: "But do you not know, do you not feel, that there is, in every city in France, a youth who would let himself be cut into pieces for your verses and for you?" (Poggioli, 1968, 91). And behind Louis Aragon's perspective on his arcade subjects in *Paris Peasant* is the omniscience of a self-appointed god ruling over this new mythology he is constructing. These local idolatries are the development of that entitlement felt by many conflicting parties at the start of the nineteenth century to

define what constitute fundamental truths where any hope of a homogeneity of beliefs becomes confined to increasingly smaller groups.

As this kind of social heterogeneity increases, Hegel drives art back into the company of universals, where its vitality decreases. Art is now a stimulant to reflective thought, no longer able to transport us ineluctably into a profound immersion in our spiritual culture and forced to concede that it can only indicate the point at which the limits of our sensuous experience must yield to the greater reach of critical dialectical thinking. Hegel describes this process of reflective thinking as having advanced to such an extent that it supersedes and contains all other forms of knowledge. There is no longer a position outside such thinking from which artists can claim an independence for the scope of their work: “the point is that our whole spiritual culture is of such a kind that he himself stands within the world of reflection and its relations and could not by any act of will and decision abstract himself from it...” (Hegel, 1975, 11).

For Hegel “reflection”, as reflective thought, is a progressive achievement of humanity that distinguishes the most advanced political and philosophical systems. Its ascent at the cost of art’s decline characterises an advance for a society that is developing the structures for ensuring its freedom. Societies that cannot integrate reflective thinking will experience decline: “For all its grandeur, therefore, Greek culture was not able to accommodate this new sense of subjective human freedom—the dawn of reflective, critical thought—and remain the splendid political and aesthetic culture that it had been in the fifth century” (Houlgate, 1971, 23-4). This process of reflection entails taking hold of things critically and not accepting the conditions in which they are first given, seemingly as objective data. Though consciousness realises itself as distinct from the concepts or objects on which it reflects, it must recognise itself behind these things, as the force that constitutes objects for our understanding. Consciousness must be able to take responsibility for its conclusions, to hold in comparison conflicting ideas and to reach a reconciliation where the focus on the difference between subject and object no longer holds us in its hypnotic sway. Such integration of thinker and object is quite evident from the introduction to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*: “...it is for the same consciousness to know whether

its knowledge of the object corresponds to the object or not...But, in fact, in the alteration of the knowledge, the object itself alters for it too, for the knowledge that was present was essentially a knowledge of the object: as the knowledge changes, so too does the object, for it essentially belonged to this knowledge” (Hegel, 1977, 54).

In his discussion of Hegel’s *Logic*, Herbert Marcuse gives helpful indication of the forward momentum Hegel intended for reflective thought. Hegel is described as contrasting the inadequacies of mathematical thinking with the progressive achievements of reflection: “The Doctrine of Essence seeks to liberate knowledge from the worship of ‘observable facts’ and from the scientific common sense that imposes this worship...The real field of knowledge is not the given fact about things as they are, but the critical evaluation of them as a prelude to passing beyond their given form” (Marcuse, 2000, 145). One thing that is important to stress here is how Hegel’s limits on the definition of art largely exclude it from sharing in this process of advancement. For Hegel, art does not develop as we might understand it doing within modernity where its evolution is more clearly traced as an equation of formal qualities in critical engagement with ideologies. While Hegel is interested enough in art of his time to speak at some length on the meaning of works by his contemporaries, he sees art’s development, as mentioned before, neither in relation to its formal properties nor to its immediate external circumstances, but to the evolution of spirit, and then only in relation to stable, atemporal, state-sanctioned qualities where “...nations have deposited their richest inner intuitions and ideas...” (Hegel, 1975, 7).

But the nineteenth-century avant-gardes now embed this critical reflection within their work, in a process which later becomes explicit through the radical reappraisal of materials and aesthetic concepts in twentieth-century art. This starts with the growth of a bohemian community, often disaffected and engaged in critical discussion of the function of art in modernity. Making “critical” part of its subtitle, Baudelaire’s review of the 1855 *Exposition Universelle* is one example of such thinking. Eight years after his reckless and disappointed involvement in the Paris uprising, Baudelaire feverishly permeates his writing with critical reflections that sometimes appear contradictory but which are always wholly engaged with establishing ways of immersing oneself fully in the present. Here Baudelaire considers different forms of cultural revolution and inertia

(the latter most obviously embodied by Ingres's painting), although he simultaneously devotes pages attributing the debilitation of the present to the prevalent enthusiasm for progress.

There may still be some disenchantment over the failed idealism of 1848 behind this criticism of misplaced optimism, but it shares a common suspicion with some political and cultural avant-gardes of the bourgeois justification for present-day abuses in the name of progress. Baudelaire speculates on the transformation of enthusiasm in someone who has suddenly arrived in an exotic country where everything challenges familiar experiences. The impact is close to what Baudelaire expects from great art: "several thousands of ideas and sensations will enrich his earthly dictionary, and it is even possible that, going a step too far and transforming justice into revolt, he will...burn what he formerly adored—and adore what he had formerly burnt" (Baudelaire, 1965, 123). This is his way of preparing us for his explanation of Delacroix's importance in bringing to our senses an experience so rich that it matches an opium trance—"veritable feast days of the brain" (Baudelaire, 1965, 143)—a comparison whose criteria of intense bodily reactions sets an unconventional standard. He describes Courbet's exhibition as having "the violence of an armed revolt" (Baudelaire, 1965, 131) and repeats an anecdote about Balzac speculating before a painting of a winter landscape about the lives of the people he imagines living inside the painted cottage: "...what are their sorrows? has it been a good harvest? *No doubt they have bills to pay?*". (Baudelaire, 1965, 125). He continues by affirmatively saying his interest in paintings is often only on account of the ideas and dreams they provoke. In such examples what is striking is the extent Baudelaire relies on what he calls his "feelings" to be able to think critically in the immediate present and without reliance on pre-established frameworks of analysis.

As an example of how he sees critique as immanent to all art of quality in the modern period, Adorno gives the example of Baudelaire's incorporation of ugliness in his poetry. Spleen is what struggles against definition in terms of classification and form. It is beyond containment, beneath what can be encompassed by form (Adorno, 1997, 49). In such instances, whatever might comprise art's "spirit" is what is uncontainable and ugly. As what is rejected by the bourgeoisie, ugliness is taken up and used against society. In the specificity of his motifs and relentlessly focused language, Baudelaire makes this ugliness into a weapon: "It seem to me sometimes my

blood is bubbling out/As fountains do, in rhythmic sobs; I feel it spout..." (Baudelaire, 1936, 61). In locating art's freedom in its emphasis on pure sensuousness in a rejection of utility, Hegel sets out criteria for defining artistic autonomy. The problem of critical work being recuperated and successfully commodified stimulates artists to more strategic opposition. Formal autonomy and the definition of the artwork are to be worked out in confrontation with those forces of recuperation and commerce: "...the autonomy aesthetic, however, contains a definition of the function of art: it is conceived as a social realm that is set apart from the means-end rationality of daily bourgeois existence. Precisely for this reason it can criticise such an existence" (Bürger, 1984, 10). In talking here about Adorno's articulation of social critique, Peter Bürger recognises the extent of the former's regeneration of Hegelian premises. Adorno is defining the unacknowledged utilitarian aspect of Hegel's idea for an independent art that brings material for spirit's scrutiny, a process which will be more fully explained in the next section of this chapter.

In Adorno's discussion of mimesis we can recognise the manner in which he defines the position of the avant-garde in relation to Hegel's own dismissal of imitation as a miserable goal for art. Adorno asks why mimesis should continue to be taken seriously when its vacuousness has always been evident. He concludes that its endurance is due to its resemblance to knowledge which takes the domination of nature as its measure. Representation persists as meritorious in capitalist society because it shows a control over objects which are no longer allowed to stand as unknowable, misunderstood or independent. Returning to the idea of the opportunity offered by ugliness, Adorno explains that critical art, the avant-garde, resists mimesis and instead takes its categories of knowledge from what is excluded, in the process undermining and corrupting conventional understanding. This helps in answering the question posed at the start of this chapter as to why the avant-garde repeatedly turns to tactics of aesthetic antagonism to register its discontent when this manifestation is so readily accommodated. Opposition can only be defined in critical engagement with the standards for knowledge and value of that society; in the process languages of resistance come to be developed from what is excluded.

Hegel 2: art reconciles oppositions

The second passage of Hegel's under consideration comes at the end of a section titled "The Aim of Art". Here we find two stipulations for an art whose importance, Hegel has already told us, has ended. These concern art's independence from external demands and its role in providing an image of our present condition. Having lost its ability to illuminate our spiritual needs art has instead become an object of sensuous pleasure and intellectual enquiry. Artists themselves are subsumed within a contemporary analytical world whose pervasiveness allows no objective outside position. Under such circumstances, the principal achievement remaining for art contains an apparent contradiction that bears on claims of avant-garde efficacy. The avant-garde confronts a powerful institutionalisation of its practice. In its jurisdiction the institution validates conventional forms of production, inviting challenges to these conventions which it easily recuperates and establishes as new standards. Avant-gardes have either to enter directly into social activism and forego any claim to autonomy or must withdraw from any engagement, usually by renouncing meaning and utility. Here autonomy is regained at the cost of intelligibility. The difficulty of combining both is demonstrated by the failures of the Surrealists to remain members of the Communist Party and retain aesthetic autonomy, or by the rapid permutations of the avant-garde of the Russian revolutionary period as it debated how formal autonomy would advance applied art.

The contradiction in Hegel's argument derives from the distinctions he contrives around the definition of "utility". Transferring to the artwork the disinterest that Kant stipulates for the experience of beauty, Hegel lists examples of inappropriate usefulness: "For other ends like instruction, purification, bettering, financial gain, struggling for fame and honour, have nothing to do with the work of art as such, and do not determine its nature" (Hegel, 1975, 55). In their place however, Hegel suggests another purpose. For spirit's contemplation, art will represent the oppositions oppressing contemporary life. It will not try to resolve these oppositions but will show, in a disinterested way, how they are parts of one experience. In this relatively passive role however, art has not escaped being useful. This usefulness is more evident when compared with art that cultivates pointless redundancy like Alfred Jarry's *Ubu*

Roi, or a violent amorality like Baudelaire's "Beat Up the Poor", or even the ambiguous morality of Kleist's "Marquise of O". Hegel's utility for artworks is to serve spirit in its hold on freedom and is barely a step away from the more practical outcomes that for him would compromise art. The avant-garde moves spirit into the future, as a still unrealised goal, and makes of the contradiction two polarised objectives. The first is to present these oppositions not in a disinterested manner, but in a critical perspective involving the greatest possible partiality. The second is to follow the directive of intrinsic sensuousness to its ultimate end in the self-referentiality of material and process. Regarding the first of these responses, this redoubled partiality often cultivates ambiguity to undermine the security of familiar ethical positions. In *Paris Spleen* are several pieces of this nature, such as "The Bad Glazier" and "The Eyes of the Poor". Opposing positions are enacted while judgement is withheld. It is as if Baudelaire is complying perfectly with Hegel's instruction to bring oppositions into view without attempting to eliminate either one: "They were in rags...those six eyes stared fixedly at the new café with admiration...Not only was I touched by this family of eyes, but I was even a little ashamed of our glasses and decanters, too big for our thirst. I turned my eyes to look into yours, dear love, to read *my* thoughts in them...you said: 'Those people are insufferable with their great saucer eyes. Can't you tell the proprietor to send them away?'" (Baudelaire, 1970, 52-3)

Out of what concerns does this section of the *Aesthetics* develop? Hegel is looking for a single encompassing aim of art to displace the numerous particular ones that are usually advanced. He dismisses imitation as inferior to nature, a waste of human potential, resulting only in "technical *tricks*, not *works*, of art" (Hegel, 1975, 45). He is unconvinced by the common belief that art should move us through every possible emotion as if it were the agent of the extremes of human experience. This can be as easily had, Hegel says, in external reality as in art, so there is no reason why the latter should be valued for this achievement. The same reservations are expressed for art's educative role, including the alleviation of desire and improvement of morals. For Hegel these aims are too relative to be reliable—the moral lesson depends on the character of each observer for whom images of Mary Magdelene, for example, may be seductive or salutary. Furthermore, the advancement of moral lessons

threatens to break apart the unity of the artwork's form and content. The artwork cannot claim to possess universal truth without this universality informing every aspect of the work.

Against these compromised aims where the art is merely a vehicle for unambitious or ambiguous ends, Hegel wants an irrefutably convincing goal: "As with the Concept of the state, so too with the Concept of art there arises the need (a) for a *common* end for its particular aspects, but (b) also for a higher *substantial* end" (Hegel, 1975, 48). As already indicated, this aim becomes the unveiling of social, ethical or emotional oppositions, raised into view. Hegel describes these as endemic oppositions between universal and particular, as fundamental to human life and exacerbated by modern conditions.

There are a number of points in the discussion of Romantic art where Hegel outlines conditions that relate to the development of modernity and its critical accompaniment the avant-garde, in both its socially engaged and aestheticist modes. These references involve discussion of art freeing itself altogether from received content (where that content is inherited from, and represents, an earlier epoch) in order to regain an authentic link with that same essential content. One example presaging aestheticism is from the end of the section on Romantic art: "... it is the effect and the progress of art itself which, by bringing before our vision as an object its own indwelling material, at every step along the road makes its own contribution to freeing art from the content represented" (Hegel, 1975, 604).

Its "indwelling material" being the essence of spiritual inwardness, this becomes legible over time on the very surface of an artform's appearance as that art becomes more successful at revealing this content. Yet in its success at revealing this content, art has lost touch with it. As Hegel says, we are only interested in things that are partially revealed, and what is transparent and familiar seems to us like something that has come from an earlier time, of little relevance to our own present-day needs. Vital new art rebels against this familiarity and regains contact with its essential content. This movement is what causes the changes in art's appearance and what legitimates its free inventiveness.

There is the sense in Hegel's discussion that the means by which a particular epoch's art has divulged its content eventually become facile and must therefore be supplanted by new

means. In this context, content is meant in the deepest possible sense as spiritual truth rather than as something relating to motivation or subject matter. These three concepts, authentic content, formal renewal, and contemporaneity, are conspicuous determinants of the cultural changes that follow in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The disagreements over what constitutes meritorious content and over what form art must take to illuminate that content, only prove the importance of both to the development of modernity. Once Hegel can establish the relation between essential inner content and untrammelled external artwork as indissoluble there is always a strong justification on hand for revolutionary art. Art must be free to develop and renew itself because that is how its spiritual content will be preserved. In fact, to take this a stage further, art has an obligation to change since the security of its content depends upon it. The license appears to have come about paradoxically: the greatest freedom is based on unchanging content.

Hegel's interest in establishing these conditions of freedom is twofold. He wants to define an originary motive for creativity that will subsume most manifestations of artistic invention, but he also wants to license the diversity and independence of those manifestations. Hegel assumes a common drive underlying all art that nevertheless modifies in response to significant social changes, while at the same time he celebrates the variety of expression and the velocity of its mutation. In this sense Hegel's *Aesthetics* is decisively anthropocentric in contrast to Kant's notion of the artwork as close to nature in its characteristics and effects. In his introduction, Hegel is determined to differentiate art from nature by emphasising the value of the intent behind any created thing: "But we may assert ... that the beauty of art is *higher* than nature. The beauty of art is beauty *born of the spirit and born again*, and the higher the spirit and its productions stand above nature and its phenomena, the higher too is the beauty of art above that of nature" (Hegel, *Aesthetics*, p2). This value derives from the basic will behind generating something. The will to make something, in fact anything, however slight, demonstrates a freedom from the inertia of not making anything at all. It is, in Hegel's eyes, greater than any of nature's spontaneous productions, insofar as we are not compelled, by instinct or outside agency, to make that thing. Hegel's optimistic estimate of the importance of human creativity is underlined by his insistence on the value of any

thought, however slight: "Indeed, considered *formally*, even a useless notion that enters a man's head is higher than any product of nature, because in such a notion spirituality and freedom are always present" (Hegel, 1975, 2). He appears to mean this kind of freedom as constituting art's character. Art should be neither rule-determined nor accessible to rule-bound discourse, although in Hegel's prognosis for the present art is increasingly drawn into the processes of intense regulation that characterise a secular state. At every turn, art attempts to establish the threshold for forms of freedom. There aren't rules which govern its production since artists are free to make what they wish, and the pleasure of the audience would not be pleasure if it were subject to constraints on its range. Nor is art limited by the appearance of the natural world, since art's scope includes what it can generate beyond what already exists.

It is disingenuous to suppose that just because it serves spirit and reason, art evades utility. This is a usefulness like any other, and an especially pernicious one when seen in Marxist terms where the recourse to universals like reason and truth conceals underlying social realities. The fact that spirit is only contemplating these images doesn't lessen the serviceability of art. As aestheticism shows later in the century, the withdrawal of art from society still serves a number of purposes and continues to attract market interest. It is only in comparison to the growing impact of reason and religion on what is by now the abstract movement of spirit that art appears to have lost its former status. The role of affirming reason's grip on reality through its sensuous qualities that Hegel envisages for art invites the objection that these categories may not be one's own. *That* reason, *that* reality, *those* sensuous qualities under modernity have their historical dimension suddenly amplified. In their critique of Feuerbach, phrased so as to emphasise the Hegelian retentions, Marx and Engels are clear about this mutability: "...[Feuerbach] must take refuge in a double perception, a profane one which perceives the 'flatly obvious' and a higher, philosophical one which perceives the 'true essence' of things. He does not see how the sensuous world around him is, not a thing given direct from all eternity, remaining ever the same, but the product of industry and of the state of society; and, indeed, in the sense that it is a historical product...developing its industry and intercourse, modifying its social system according to

the changed needs” (Marx and Engels, 1977, 62).

We can see that art’s significance declines for Hegel because he will not countenance this kind of ongoing metamorphosis as being at the core of its reality. His concept of utility is too firm, too ethical and counter-revolutionary to be an effective category in relation to art. Art has always been of service to society and its sensuous qualities are in intimate correspondence with this role. To expect it to step up on the podium with reason shows an optimistic idealism which art’s physical properties will always betray. One thing that the avant-garde’s plunge into political efficacy indicates is Hegel’s refusal to recognise the use-value of his own goal for art. Of necessity Hegel’s occlusion of the usefulness presupposed by the reconciliation of oppositions promotes a standard of formal disengagement that diminishes the status of other deviating forms of art. From now on, if art is to seek any effect on materiality then this is a purpose that will remove it from the sphere of significance. Hegel’s end of art is the demise of its indispensability leaving it to continue in its lesser role of reconciling, a mode where it must accept its loss of agency. Since the work of art is no longer the conveyor of the highest truth, no longer the embodiment of what a society most values and is instead what promotes reflection rather than experience, it cannot even rearticulate that truth in such a way as to impact on its audience. It is this kind of suspension in impotence which avant-gardes seek to escape, exaggeratedly declaring Hegel’s two forms of art to be dead—both the earlier fully-empowered Greek or Christian artwork and the later emasculated artwork condemned to reconcile what it cannot change. The avant-gardes will target institutions (amongst them philosophical idealism) as hypocritical, revealing their faults and accelerating those institutions’ collapse. The new relation proposed by avant-gardes between audience and artwork is between an unenlightened audience and an art that changes the present by revealing what the future can be.

Hegel 3: revision by Marx

In the years following Hegel's death it becomes obvious that his optimistic and homogenising concept will never embrace the ensuing explosive political and cultural divergences without classifying them as nihilistic in relation to spirit's advance. The understanding of revolutionaries, social reformers, writers and artists that the State will never free itself from compromises with business and military interests, or will remain mired in incompetence, adds to the symbolic importance of revolt when it invariably fails. Early nineteenth-century socialism and communism develop in response to industrialisation's impact on urban and rural communities and involve activists in analysing the specific causes of oppression as a means of working towards their end. The articulation of class struggle as the cause of these repressive conditions and the key to their alleviation is first articulated by utopian socialists like Charles Fourier and Henri de Saint-Simon. Fourier's work is discussed in detail in a later chapter. His lucid analysis of the origins for social disharmony in dire economic and political conditions was admired by Marx and Engels. However, his solution of establishing a new community architecture away from corrupting and degrading urban milieus imagines a cure in a parallel world which only through its exemplariness gradually displaces its rotten counterpart. A more engaged displacement of existing conditions is argued by Saint-Simon and his followers who also redirect the Hegelian conception of spirit into a form of social activism. Describing influences on *The Communist Manifesto*, Gareth Stedman Jones has a fairly negative appraisal of the potentiality of these utopian theories for later nineteenth-century activists: "Communism was political. It represented a revival of the revolutionary republican tradition, an extension of the cause of equality from the destruction of privilege into a generalised assault upon private property. By contrast, socialism—a cluster of doctrines inspired by Saint-Simon and Fourier—was negative about revolution, indifferent to political forms, hostile towards equality and more interested in Church than State" (Stedman Jones, 2002, 31).

Considering the way in which Hegel's philosophy contributed to and was altered by revolutionary ideas, Marcuse offers a more optimistic reading. He identifies the impatience felt by socialists with the hermetic character of Hegel's thought which led them to redirect his dialectic towards

activism: “Human potentialities are no longer the concern of theory apart from practice; the content of theory has been transferred to a plane of rational activity carried on by individuals in direct association with one another” (Marcuse, 2000, 330). At the point where he uncritically embraces industrialisation as the means of realising these potentialities, Saint-Simon reveals his sympathy with bourgeois modernity and the State’s suppression of those radical elements which he feels would overturn a balanced economic equilibrium. August Cieszkowski, an admirer of Fourier and the Saint-Simonians, takes Hegel towards activism in his 1838 book *Prolegomena to Historiosophy*. He argues against what he calls Hegel’s contemplative philosophy, saying that it should instead be made into an engaged thinking that works towards the future: “The coming third period of humanity would be governed by this unity of knowledge and action, which Cieszkowski called ‘praxis’ or ‘the deed’” (Stedman Jones, 2002, 57).

Far more radical in its identification of social problems and its insistence on the means of their transformation is the writing of Saint-Simon’s follower Saint-Amand Bazard, who accepts the former’s optimism for industrial progress only if a rebellion can assume ownership of the means of production. Bazard takes Hegel’s freedom of spirit to a purely functional level and shows the disenchantment of a legalised personal freedom which remains subject to the labour requirements of a wealthy minority. Quoting Bazard, Marcuse shows how Hegel’s notion of freedom came to seem dysfunctional to radicals: “Progressive ideas like the ones with which capitalist society justified its social scheme at the beginning, ideas of general freedom and of the pursuit of happiness within a rational scheme of life, can reach fruition only with a new revolution ‘that will finally do away with the exploitation of man by man in all its insidious forms.’” (Marcuse, 2000, 334). Unattainable freedoms become temporarily realised in revolutionary action or are grasped in representations made of and for a repressed populace. In this context the purpose of such actions is to assert a local freedom over a universal one, or to subvert the course of what Hegel would envisage for spirit; many tangible freedoms become a crucial resistance to the blind logic of one single abstract freedom.

The most definitive turn applied to Hegelian philosophy is made by Marx who challenges the dependency on the conditions of capitalism that he detects in the former’s identification of reason

with historical actuality; a dependency which then demands transformation. Like some of the reformers just discussed, Marx projects a future beyond the present that Hegel envisages as the culmination of history. In terms of Hegel's limit of the verification of universal freedom to philosophy, Marx turns Hegelian thought against itself by revealing how the recourse to universals becomes part of the repressive ideology of capitalist labour conditions. Marx is successful in inverting Hegel's definitions of freedom and spirit (which the latter confines within the detached realm of individual thought) to reveal the actual repression underlying existent political and economic conditions.

Marx's essential disagreement with Hegel concerns how his philosophy's conception of truth buries a more crucial revelation beneath the actual conditions of life. The exclusivity of Hegel's truth as it authenticates reason's deliberations depends on the obscuring cloud it maintains between its own abstractions and a baser truth embedded within class relations. It has previously been shown how, for Hegel, the world in all human aspects is always becoming spirit. Art is part of the development of spirit as are the laws and political organisations that secure essential human freedom: "the task and aim of art is to bring home to our sense, our feeling, and our inspiration everything which has a place in the human spirit" (Hegel, 1975, 46). For Hegel, not only is this process already complete but it also assumes an adequacy between the existing political institutions and the development of spirit. There is nothing more to the State that needs further improvement, for its material reality corresponds to the truth of the freedom of consciousness. For Marx this is clearly only the beginning of the work towards freedom and to initiate action on material conditions he takes apart Hegel's construction of reason and spirit to reveal the forces of interest on which it depends. In the section "Ruling Class and Ruling Ideas" in Part I of *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels outline the stages through which this mystification has been effected. First, the ideas of those in power are separated from their authors and ascribed to the general forces of history; secondly, these newly historicised ideas are ordered in some consequential chain of relations as if they are the result of the development of an autonomous concept (Hegel's self-determining "absolute idea", for example); and thirdly, this abstraction of an embracing concept is given human representation as "the 'thinkers', the 'philosophers', the ideologists, who again are understood as the manufacturers of history, as the 'council of

guardians', as the rulers" (Marx and Engels, 1977, 67). The process which ascribes ideas to those who seem independent and far from the centre of government, veils their actual origins in those holding functional positions of power.

It has been pointed out by Marcuse that Marx displaces Hegel's philosophical concepts with social and economic ones following their initial inversion in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. There the master and slave terms are taken from feudal labour conditions for categories of self-consciousness whose progression results in the slave finding freedom through work: "Through work, however, the bondsman becomes conscious of what he truly is... Through this rediscovery of himself by himself the bondsman realises that it is precisely in his work wherein he seemed to have only an alienated existence that he acquires a mind of his own" (Hegel, 1977, 118-19). This freedom is to be compounded by involvement in community where it is acted out in concrete life to form the final stages of history before the absolute idea secures its freedom in the realm of abstract ideas. Marx would recover that moment of community and hold us to its fulfilment. Hegel's satisfaction with the equivalence of civil oppositions reconciled within the monarchic state and categorical oppositions reconciled in thought is only a beginning for Marx: "We shall, of course, not take the trouble to enlighten our wise philosophers by explaining to them that the 'liberation' of 'man' is not advanced a single step by reducing philosophy, theology, substance and all the trash to 'self-consciousness'... 'Liberation' is an historical and not a mental act, and it is brought about by historical conditions, the development of industry, commerce, agriculture, the conditions of intercourse..." (Marx and Engels, 1977, 61). Interestingly, in that same section is the insistence that these freedoms are attainable only through the same new industrial and agricultural technologies that have helped to form a proletariat. Marx and Engels intend that the control of the means of production is transferred to workers and not dismantled altogether. The return from abstraction to community takes up Hegel's critique of reification to diminish the alienation of a world of commodities from which we feel dissociated. In taking Hegel back into the actual world, Marx calls for the abolition of labour to escape the condition through which one class is able to control another. Work is not so much the condition of the slave's freedom as the exploitation of the only commodity that workers have to bring to market, their labour. In its place is an advanced kind of Fourierist idealism where social organisation is determined by the satisfaction of individual

potentialities and where integration into social systems happens according to individual needs and not to the work that each has to offer. Marx's assertion of happiness as an essential achievement ensures that no single class will again be able to secure their contentment at the expense of the misery of the remainder.

To discuss one final transformation of Hegelian thought we need to consider Marx's critique of universals through his focus on the economic function of the proletariat. In this debate Marcuse recognises two interlinked factors: the reference by rulers to universals to conceal their selfish intentions and the failure of reason in excluding the working class, on whose support its ideology depends. As a means of class rule, each dominant group must hide its interests under universal concepts like reason, freedom, justice, democracy, and so on: "Capitalism developed the productive forces for the totality of a uniform social system. Universal commerce, universal competition, and the universal interdependence of labour were made to prevail and transformed men into "world-historical, empirically universal individuals"(Marcuse, 2000, 287). Evidently Hegel's claim that the conditions of reality and reason now overlap identically is a function of this process of concealment. The proletariat conspicuously does not overlap with reason. Its poverty, unendurable labour conditions, and hazardous existence are all irrational under the assumption of universal and rational freedom. This class has neither property nor culture and has no identity other than through labour value. Because it possesses none of the designates by which reason and freedom gain their definition it remains a universal outside the scope of Hegel's universals: "...society is vicious in its entirety and the proletariat expresses a total negativity: 'universal suffering' and 'universal injustice'. The reality of reason, right and freedom then turns into the reality of falsehood, injustice and bondage" (Marcuse, 2000, 261).

This adequation of reason and reality acclaimed by Hegel compels art into its service, but clearly the existence of such extremes of social inequality disqualify not just the identity of reason with reality but also the demand on art to serve that identity. As a consequence, the oppositions facing society that art is to raise into view then demand to be traced back to their real sources in social inequality. As Hegel sets out these kinds of opposition for contemplation, they force our attention back on to their cause: "For on the one side we see man imprisoned in the common world of

reality...borne down by need and poverty, hard pressed by nature...On the other side, he lifts himself to eternal ideas, to a realm of thought and freedom..." (Hegel, 1975, 54). If the art that Hegel envisages cannot do this then that art must change.

When Hegel's thought is redirected by Marx towards the abolition of classes these philosophical ideas convert to the expression of actual historical conditions. Their use by critical social practice pulls them from an abstract realm into the materiality of today's circumstances. So with aesthetics, when the avant-garde enacts a critical appraisal of this problematic relationship with spirit and freedom it will convert those aesthetic stipulations into an engagement of art with actual social realities. This happens in Honoré Daumier's caricatures, Baudelaire's poems, and Gustave Courbet's early paintings. This art widens its audience beyond the bourgeoisie to engage with the proletariat.

If the proletariat is Marx's example of something beyond reason and therefore the disqualifier of universal freedom, could the presence of incipient artistic avant-gardes, of outsider aesthetics and street vocabularies that want no part in the service of those authorities' version of reason, freedom or truth, be in their turn disqualifiers of that equation of Hegel's vision for art? Effecting an inversion of Hegel's equation, they emphasise a destructive intent, an interest in non-cooperation through sensuous offensiveness and a charged conceptual content. Where radical art emphasises reification and detachment in order to reveal their operation in the contemporary world, it effects a critique of those same qualities which it impersonates. Hegel's criticism of the thinness of ironic strategies is here taken up as a weapon. The capitalist treatment of the proletariat as a labour force that is invisible, other and dependable is cancelled by the avant-garde which takes Hegel's unification of subject with object into a political aesthetic where the life and welfare of all citizens is recognised in the condition of its poor. Through its representations the avant-garde provides images of a new kind of relation between subject and object whose unification is based on an active engagement with social issues.

Hegel 4: a beginning for the avant-garde in *Rameau's Nephew*

With the birth of artistic avant-gardes amidst nineteenth-century political disenchantment, Hegel's decline of art's spiritual relevance is willed into the finality of death, a pronouncement he himself never went so far as to make. Acting on the belief that any coherent aesthetic is compromised by the extent to which society is socially riven, the avant-garde brings the death of art into the centre of its discourse. From this position the death of art now has any number of provocations. Art dies from complicity with repressive social structures, for failing to project an ideal future society, for its moribund academic formulas, for its service to repressive morality and for its capitulation to the market. We can see that the avant-garde welcomes this demise, assigning it to art that is increasingly remote from what reason once constituted as "genuine" spiritual needs.

Hegel's remonstrance that in its essence the work of art has nothing to do with pecuniary, moral or didactic motives becomes a justification for some aestheticist tendencies of nineteenth-century culture which decry the celebration of modernity. Calinescu writes: "In postrevolutionary France... various kinds of antibourgeois political radicalism... underwent a process of aestheticisation, so that we should not be surprised to discover that movements characterised by their extreme aestheticism, such as the loosely defined *l'art pour l'art*, or the later *décadentisme* and *symbolisme*, can best be understood when regarded as intensely polemical reactions against the expanding modernity of the middle class, with its *terre-à-terre* outlook, utilitarian preconceptions, mediocre conformity, and baseness of taste". (Calinescu, 1987, 44-5). To this list we might add the objectification of the artist as "a plaything of its whims" (Hegel, 1977, 315) as Hegel's *Phenomenology* describes the treatment of Rameau's nephew by his bourgeois patrons in Denis Diderot's late eighteenth-century dialogue. This character has been noted by others as the prototype bohemian radical, entirely disenchanting by his prospects, furious both at the hypocrisy that led to his eviction from society as well as his own capacity for self-abasement, brilliantly manipulative and intoxicated with contemporary culture.

Following its introduction, Diderot's book consists of a dialogue between *Moi* and *Lui*. Addressed at the start as *monsieur le philosophe*, this *Moi* is usually taken as Diderot himself. The eponymous nephew, *Lui*, is Jean-Francois Rameau, a musician relative of the celebrated composer Jean-Philippe Rameau. Fascination with the monstrousness of this nephew Rameau's personality increases with historical hindsight. He seems to have all the momentum required to propel his type through the 1789 revolution into the Paris uprisings of 1848 and 1871 and to delineate the difficulties faced by the earliest avant-gardes in defining effectively expressive vocabularies. Putting aside his distaste for irony, Hegel recognises the revolutionary potential in Diderot's delineation of the nephew whose relentless critique of wealthy society finds furious expression through ironic wit. Hegel takes moments in *Rameau's Nephew* as a parallel for his own analysis of self-consciousness's development through its alienation within culture. The breakdown and overcoming of the unequal relationship between wealthy patron and supplicant depends on Hegel pushing Diderot's narrative beyond its end towards the emancipation of the nephew's position. As with the argument over art's responsibilities in the *Aesthetics*, it is not difficult to transfer these stages in spirit's development to a process of actual social liberation and therefore further than the stages of abstract reasoning intended by Hegel. Moreover, the language Hegel uses in these passages is unusually strong and seems to draw force from the nephew's despairing condition. Confronting the spirit of wealth, the deprived self experiences feelings of "profound dejection as well as of extreme rebellion" (Hegel, 1977, 314). From its side wealth doesn't even recognise the "innermost abyss...this bottomless depth" of alienation of its guest who has become an objectified entertainer (Hegel, 1977, 315). Arrogance is the host's counterpart to the guest's revolt: "In this arrogance which fancies it has, by the gift of a meal, acquired the self of another's 'I' and thereby gained for itself the submission of that other's inmost being, it overlooks the inner rebellion of the other..." (Hegel, 1977, 315).

In this section of the *Phenomenology* it is the nephew's type of wit that emerges as the means for liberating self-consciousness from this dependent unproductive condition. The definition of wit appears here as thought in perpetual agitation, springing agilely from one conviction to its contradiction and back again as if the categories that separate and preserve human

behaviour as socially stabilising were being continuously uprooted. For Hegel this process bridges the distance between ideas that in conservative minds are remote from one another where they can arrogantly be treated as appropriately estranged. As the accelerated machinery of an alienated but intelligent consciousness, wit brings these falsely estranged ideas together to show the truth in their relationship. This process of critical reflection is in this way enacted on the society that depends on these divided terms to shore up what Marx later identifies as class oppression but which Hegel leaves as “power and wealth” (Hegel, 1977, 320). In this critical process the protagonist wittily impersonates the positions of power, using flattery to take them on as if they were vital means for survival in contemporary society. In this way it shows them to be nothing more than accoutrements of insecurity: “...this recognition and acceptance is itself vain; and just by taking possession of power and wealth it knows them to be without a self of their own, knows rather that *it* is the power over them, while they are vain things” (Hegel, 1977, 320).

Hegel thus recognises in Diderot’s dialogue a dance on the brink of revolutionary action even though he pulls it back into play with the internal dynamics of the progression of abstract thought. The nephew might be described as a transitional figure between the impotence of the flatterer and the impotence of the defeated June 1848 barricade fighter. He is the ejected hanger-on now downwardly mobile and nurturing incendiary instincts, still resentful of his unshakeable attachment to the bourgeois security of which he once shared a corner. Stephen L. Gardner describes him in this way: “Aggrandisement of art, worship of genius, revolutionary politics, all themes of the dialogue, grow out of a specifically modern form of jealousy, epitomised in the bohemian who lives on the margins of society as a professional failure” (Gardner, 1988, 100). His personality is recalled by Baudelaire’s letters and autobiographical notes where an intelligent yet impoverished individual flails about with accusations and resentment that can never find any immediate target (beyond his own family) that might be bothered enough to respond. T.J. Clark points out how Champfleury sees Rameau’s nephew as a prototype for the Paris bohemians he attempts to describe in 1851 (Clark, 1999, [i], 65). These new outsiders are numerous enough to constitute a hermetic subculture, their behaviour obscure to anyone lacking Diderot’s sensitivity and drawing their

constituency from the “mob of unemployed, criminals and *déclassés* of every sort, the first victims, the first debris of industrialism...” (Clark, 1999, [i], 33). We can see the nephew in the “dogged refusal to abandon the aims of Romanticism, a manic and self-destructive individualism, a ‘cult of multiple sensation’”, those attributes which Clark ascribes to the politically unreliable Paris bohemia of mid-century (Clark, 1999, [i], 34). Without patronage and financially desperate, the nephew’s schemes for survival anticipate the kind of impulsive resourcefulness of such a class. He considers joining a troupe of theatre entertainers or a group of street singers and then of commissioning paintings of scenes from his own life which he could sell in public. In the end though, he resents the servitude of labour as much as that of court jester. In anticipation of Marx’s reading of Fourier he asserts that all he wants is “a good bed, good food, warm clothes in winter, cool in summer, plenty of rest, money, and other things that I would rather owe to kindness than earn by toil” (Diderot, 1956, 87). In other words, he wants to be integrated according to his needs and not his labour value.

All of this is not to say that there is a revolutionary, or avant-garde drive immanent to Hegel’s philosophy of freedom. On the contrary, he is determined to bring his thought back from prescriptive doctrines that might presuppose active social engagement. As a consequence he emphasises the concordance of the truth of reason with existing political freedoms. It is more that Hegel is drawn to examples like *Rameau’s Nephew* that are symptomatic of the problems facing emergent revolutionary movements and aesthetic radicalisms whose energies he then diverts, and in the process calms, to secure this realm of spirit’s (or “mind’s” in Marcuse’s politically secularised translation) socially-disengaged freedom.

Returning to Diderot’s text, there is another important tendency revealed here which needs discussion. One of the sections Hegel chooses to quote at some length describes the moment when the nephew enacts the compelling finale of the series of mimes with which he has liberally illustrated his conversation. Rameau’s nephew wills his own immersion into the bliss of musical performance as he collects innumerable arias from diverse sources into one continuous piece. Hegel recognises this performance as a visionary explosion of madness that breaks apart the stifling deception of the wealthy powers whose stable terms cannot

encompass this irruption into their order. What Hegel describes as the “subversive depths” of this singing is what it takes to jolt spirit into self-recognition.

Diderot places the nephew’s intoxicated performance after the full account of his summary dismissal by his patrons, of the humiliations tolerated in such service and of the hardship he must subsequently endure. As he says, how can you create anything of value when you are constantly worried about finding your next meal. Also preceding it are two comedic accounts of music lessons given to children of wealthy families which reveal their contented ignorance of the idiom, a partial familiarity with which is all that is needed for the enhancement of their social status. In one of these, the musician mostly gossips to the chaperone and manages to deflect blame for his inadequate teaching onto the daughter’s poor commitment to practicing. In his own improvisation he is therefore performing for himself and showing the potential of the power and beauty of music which none around him, including *Moi*, the narrator, seem to appreciate. Here is the passage from which Hegel quotes: “He was getting into a passion and beginning to sing, his voice growing louder as his passion increased...He jumbled together thirty different airs, French, Italian, comic, tragic—in every style. Now in a baritone voice he sank to the pit; then straining in falsetto he tore to shreds the upper notes of some air, imitating the while the stance, walk and gestures of the several characters; being in succession furious, mollified, lordly, sneering...he kept on, in the grip of mental possession, an enthusiasm so close to madness that it seemed doubtful whether he would recover” (Diderot, 1956, 68-9).

The nephew’s singing is a protest at alienation assembled as a crazy collection of dissociated pieces, like a perverse “great opera highlights” recording. The performance inadvertently reproduces this alienation in the jarring ruptures of its montage which contorts the singer into such rapidly changing roles as threaten to pull him apart into irrecoverable madness. What does the nephew make of his own performance, insofar as his ecstasy allows reflection? His verdict begins to take on qualities of revolutionary rhetoric with its summons for an authenticity underlying all actions: “We need exclamations, interjections, suspensions, interruptions, affirmations, and negations. We call out, invoke clamour, groan, weep, and

laugh openly. No more witticisms, epigrams, neat thoughts—they are too unlike nature... We want it more energetic, less mannered, more genuine... The animal cry of a man in a passion will supply the accent” (Diderot, 1956, 71-2).

Returning to the stipulations for art set out by Hegel in the *Aesthetics*, the nephew’s performance reveals the hysteria of inaction that results from holding endemic oppositions in view without being able to work on them. The performance provides an image of immobilised alienation, of the limits of freedom allowed a poor bohemian whose quick intelligence earns him an insecure place amongst the wealthy only as long as his entertainment remains innocuous. Once cast out for a witticism voicing the truth about this power, he can now only give his consummate performance as a street entertainer for an audience who may be moved by the beauty of his singing but yet roars with laughter at the spectacle. The sensuous qualities which Hegel reserves for art only accentuate this frozen image of alienation which will take revolutions and artistic avant-gardes to break apart. The nephew’s own sense of artistic ineffectualness leads him to aesthetic judgements of skilled confidence tricks as if under bourgeois repression and patronage it is only art as crime that has the privilege of agency while conventional media languish in uselessness. In the role of a moralist, the narrator says: “I was beginning to find almost unbearable the presence of a man who could discuss a dreadful deed, an abominable crime, in the way a connoisseur in poetry or painting discusses the fine points of a work of art...” (Diderot, 1956, 63).

The bohemian life, swindling and resourceful, is considered as an aesthetic act in light of the powerlessness of art itself. Gardner makes a related point: “The revolutionary leader is an artist who is a criminal—whose work of art is criminal because its material is society, as if human beings were merely a matter to be shaped into his idea. He is a criminal whose crime is a work of art, the creation of a new order...” (Gardner, 1998, 121). In the nephew’s criticism of reflection and his unrepentant revolt against the bourgeois hypocrisy that imprisons him by its favours and its ostracism, there is anticipation of Bataille’s insistence on experiencing the “dazzling dissolution” (Bataille, 1992, xxxi) as the only basis for grasping Nietzsche’s work. His pantomimes and chaotic orchestral montages are also a revolt against

coherent and objective aesthetic experience. As Diderot's description emphasises the accomplishment and virtuosity of the performances, features of contemporary avant-gardes become discernible. The anti-institutionalism marking Dadaist collages of disintegration, Surrealist appropriation and the total encounter of performance art find a precedent in the intoxicated delivery of these anti-bourgeois pantomimes.

Hegel 5: an end for the avant-garde in Russian Constructivism

This section considers some early modernist texts to follow through on an initial suggestion that Hegel's *Aesthetics* might be illuminated by perspectives drawn from twentieth-century artistic movements. If we take the concept of reconciled oppositions, we can see this becoming hypostasized in sectors of the Russian avant-garde where oppositions are resolved by elision as artists are placed under pressure from political demands. Yet to take an example where this occurred, one of the remarkable features of an emergent Constructivism in the very early 1920s is the determination and resourcefulness with which artists try to reconcile utilitarian aims with formal aesthetic research, until by 1924 only an applied or functional art can safely be defended. It is as if Hegel's oppositions that "...have always preoccupied and troubled the human consciousness" (Hegel, 1975, 54) are given a moment of historical specificity to see what might really occur in practice, and furthermore within a milieu where dialectical analysis is valued.

With the sense of increasing impossibility, this Hegelian doctrine of the reconciliation of contraries echoes through the articulation of a revolutionary Constructivist aesthetics where the challenge is to develop a politically committed, yet experimental form. Nikolai Punin acclaims Vladimir Tatlin's design for the spiral tower that was to be the *Monument to the Third International*, as "uniting in itself a purely creative form with a utilitarian structure" (Harrison and Wood, 1992, 311). To secure the reconciliation, Punin makes an extended analogy between the workforce's muscular power acting through technology and the pure form of the spiral, which is structured by the force of physical labour. Throughout the

changes towards extreme utilitarian practice the Constructivists argue for a tripartite theoretical basis to their work which manages to keep access open to research into non-functional aesthetics. *Tectonic*, *Factura*, and *Construction* are respectively the welding of practice to Communist goals, the manipulation of materials without impeding Communist goals, and the process by which these are combined into a work. In this way the aims of Communism are realised through the physical process of making art. As radical aesthetics contorts to absorb the demands of revolutionary politics, these manifestos rearticulate fabrication, the traditional core component of fine art, as the only means by which political goals can be reached. Inevitably it leads to another “death” of art: “Intellectual-material production sets up working mutual relations and a production basis with science and technique, replacing art which by its very nature cannot be disentangled from religion and philosophy and is not capable of pulling itself out of the closed circle of abstract, speculative activity...” (Harrison and Wood, 1992, 320). This stipulation, adapting Marx’s critique of Hegel, is from Alexei Gan, one of the more rigorous Constructivist theoreticians.

The tendencies identified by Hegel that limit art’s importance, amongst them the way it has become a subject of intellectual assessment and analysis, are endemic to the predicament facing avant-gardes, although the means of arriving at a resolution change with historical circumstances. With relentless political logic, the resolution facing the Russian Constructivists was for an increasingly utilitarian practice in cooperation with industry, with Vladimir Mayakovsky in 1923 urging artists to learn from, not instruct, factory workers and Osip Brik a year later stipulating that art be determined only by the economic needs of a people: “The basic idea of production art, that the external appearance of a thing is determined by its economic purpose and not by abstract, aesthetic considerations, is still insufficiently apprehended by our industrialists...” (Harrison and Wood, 1992, 321-2).

How does the notion of a death of art relate to the various characteristics of avant-gardism? Under the exceptional political circumstances allowing involvement in the reconstruction of society, the Russian avant-garde finds, in utilitarian Constructivist work as the ultimate renunciation of aesthetic autonomy, its resolution of the artist’s estrangement from social

purpose. Most other early twentieth-century avant-gardes had no such option for social integration and remained in a hostile relation to power and institutions. In terms of social reconstruction, Dadaists and Futurists (the latter at least initially) are polarised to the opposite extreme in a play of destruction. In certain ways the Russian experience maps out and then concludes the sublation of art into life that preoccupies avant-gardes at the start of the twentieth century. As the social critique of aesthetic radicalism is routinely accommodated through its classification as fine art, then the task is to undermine that process of designation. Either the object approaches unclassifiability as art and reverts (as a readymade or unrecognisable form) to the indifferent character of all stuff; or it dissolves its ambiguous status as art by entering directly into the economic process, for example as a utilitarian factory product. Here Bürger defines the process of this sublation: “The European avant-garde movements can be defined as an attack on the status of art in bourgeois society. What is negated is not an earlier form of art (a style) but art as an institution that is unassociated with the life praxis of men. When the avant-gardistes demand that art become practical once again, they do not mean that the contents of works of art should be socially significant. The demand is not raised at the level of the contents of individual works. Rather, it directs itself to the way art functions in society...” (Bürger, 1984, 49).

If the avant-garde’s goal is to impact the future by exacerbating the present then its position within that present culture is ambivalent and compromised. Its accountability, as we have noted, is to the future but it is always dependent on the validation of a present culture from which it would set itself apart. That is, in spite of projecting its relevance into the future, it is bound to a present whose self-image is also its own, even if only in negative form, and on whose approbation it is dependent, even if negatively. This dialectical position is an important predicament for the avant-garde since without such entanglements its attempts to sublimate a present through its transgression would not yield the characteristic particular to such artwork which has a physical materiality at odds with, yet recognisably of its time—a materiality from which concepts continue springing into the future.

By avant-gardists like the Dadaists, Hegel's "reconciliation" is inverted into exacerbation of opposites, where his concern for a life led in "two contradictory worlds" is celebrated for its promise of confusion and confrontation: "Freedom: Dada Dada Dada, a roaring of tense colors, and interlacing of opposites and of all contradictions, grotesques, inconsistencies: LIFE" (Harrison and Wood, 1992, 253). Taking Zurich Dada's polemic back to his native Germany, Richard Hülsenbeck accentuates its left-wing politics in an explicitly anti-German programme: "*Instinctively... [the Dadaist] sees his mission in smashing the cultural ideology of the Germans*" (Harrison and Wood, 1992, 259).

The characteristics of this position of exacerbation, of avant-gardism that converts the sense of Baudelaire's feverish immersion in the present into an alertness towards a future that is already within one's grasp and for which one is responsible, induces the avant-garde's assault on its present. As a self-appointed subculture its attacks on values and institutions are an astutely reflexive action that would deny a hold over the future to those authorities.

Hülsenbeck's objective is to deny the German bourgeoisie recourse to culture as a defence of their status, a move that seems informed by Marx's critical analysis of Hegel's concept of spirit through the perspective of class relations: "In this war the Germans... strove to justify themselves at home and abroad with Goethe and Schiller. Culture can be designated solemnly and with complete naivety as the national spirit become form... The Germans are masters of dissembling, they are unquestionably the magicians (in the vaudeville sense) among nations, in every moment of their life they conjure up a culture, a spirit, a superiority which they can hold as a shield in front of their endangered bellies" (Harrison and Wood, 1992, 258). He is also concerned to deny any watered-down inheritance of Dada where it might be used to bring credit to untalented imitators. Into Hegel's idealism of a common spirit is inserted the realism of social inequality as the avant-garde insists on taking into account the truth of present-day conditions.

There is on the part of activists like Hülsenbeck the revelation of interest, of partiality in Hegel's account, especially as revealed by the misuse of German culture by the dominant classes. Avant-gardists will amplify such interest insisting that any reconciliation of opposites

must first apply to social opposites, and that in all probability these will only be reconciled forcibly, whether through aesthetic or political violence.

Conclusion

In answer to the question posed at the start of this chapter about the avant-garde's significance, following the lack of correspondence between artistic and social revolutions, one line of thought might ask for more of each side than the structures of causality, the language of provocation and effect, or the mechanics of antagonism and recuperation. In this chapter certainly the languages of intent have largely been taken at face value as if the rhetoric of antagonistic form and speech really would get behind whatever social changes they claim to anticipate. Some suspicion may be due here since the value of historical artworks in a capitalist market is boosted by that art's role in the script of revolutionary discourse. This valuation may be explained either by the argument of Marcuse's affirmative character of culture where the bourgeoisie values work that has resolved in an ideal sphere that which it finds itself unable out of class interests to act on itself. This fictional improvement may of course be all you get, in which case its value could reside in the compensatory nature of its representations, showing to us what the future could have looked like in the wake of its non-arrival.

Yet psychedelia, which through its visual language of intoxication is the art that most conspicuously effects this compensatory process, is also amongst the least valued commercially. If everything must be calibrated by bourgeois taste then perhaps culture's affirmation of values is most effectively done by disaffirmative or critical work, which psychedelia on the whole is not. Psychedelia owes its visual language more to the accumulative, non-hierarchical imagery of outsider art than to the reflexive vocabularies of modernism. Marking its difference in status to an art like psychedelia, avant-garde work enters into a particular marketplace whose determinants converge from different fields of interest. One such must indeed be the idealising, or affirmative function required by society,

but others will include the wish to be associated with what remains of the nineteenth-century acclaim for progress and an enthusiasm for the vitality and entrepreneurialism (also capitalist in character) recognised in the energy of avant-garde formal iconoclasm. Yet this is no more going to exhaust the significance of such work than Deleuze and Guattari's concept of territory exhausts the signifying functions of the style of radical art. In this excess, beyond what is made of the work through its commerce, is a dynamic to which that commerce importantly draws attention. Here are additional enthusiasms which might, as Adorno would argue, be lodged at a fundamental level in the way the material of artworks has been formed in comparison with the presence of material in ordinary things. This would return us to Baudelaire's trust in his own feeling for an idea of what constitutes an important artwork, such that it has prised open a door to experience, till that moment closed through inattentiveness, expediency, or coercion.

This chapter focuses on a particularly delimited section of Hegel's writing only to rush out precipitously in several directions at once. In the sweep of examples discussed here, Hegel's restrictions on art's potential are seen rupturing into hybrid political and formal experiments under the Russian avant-garde. From those few paragraphs in which Hegel sets out the conditions for the demise of art's significance, paths traced back through the *Phenomenology* consider the uncontainable expression represented in *Rameau's Nephew* as presaging what much later becomes organised as a realm of critical thought. As subsequent chapters discuss, this evolving intoxication becomes increasingly reflective in its assessment of the conditions it must oppose and experiences difficulty in maintaining an effective reactive mode. The Edenic moment of the nephew's improvisation returns in the following chapter as the Dionysian drive and in Bataille's attempt at actualising Nietzschean concepts in personal abandonment. The changing definition of intoxication is traced through Nietzsche's writing as a function of his critique of idealism and his attempt to privilege other forms of knowledge and experience than those he confronts in Hegel.

To end with Hegel and the theme of intoxication that becomes explicit in later chapters, the Preface to the *Phenomenology* conveys the depth of such a response that would be behind the

high value placed on avant-garde works: “The ‘beautiful’, the ‘holy’, the ‘eternal’, ‘religion’ and ‘love’ are the bait required to arouse the desire to bite; not the thing itself, but the ferment of enthusiasm, these are supposed to be what sustains and continually extends the wealth of substance” (Hegel, 1977, 5).

Chapter 2

Nietzsche's intoxications

Introduction

The characteristics of radical art that in the previous chapter are traced to a moment in Hegel's *Aesthetics* are here shown to find a more explicit articulator in Nietzsche. Since Nietzsche shows little concern for actual examples of critical art or literature it is in his arguments against educational practices and the legacy of enlightenment thought where parallels to aesthetic opposition can be found. The alienation that Hegel identifies behind the startling but powerless improvisation of Rameau's nephew now enables the alert dissection of a world acquiescing to the authority of unquestioned assumptions. Against this damaging obedience Nietzsche pitches his intolerance of all accepted values, using as one of his tools an intoxication that he continually redefines. This chapter first considers the definition of *Rausch* by some of Nietzsche's interpreters before looking in detail at the changing meaning of intoxication in texts that cover the full extent of his active career.

This chapter is concerned then with the relation between theories of the avant-garde and Nietzsche's concepts. In particular it considers Nietzsche's evolving use of the term intoxication in the context of his demands for a transformation of the world through life. In this way Nietzsche's intoxications are taken as models for alternative formulations of agency.

Throughout the chapter I relate concepts used by Nietzsche to expressions used by others as they articulate the intentions of the cultural avant-gardes, both at the time of their origin and in subsequent historical accounts. It is not so much that Nietzsche provides the conceptual terminology which enabled the avant-garde to deepen its impact—in a sense his terms have been too archaicized to be serviceable in such a way—but rather that he provides models which make it easier for us to comprehend, as parts of one organism, the collection of forces, contradictory impulses, false moves and chimerical achievements of the historical avant-garde.

Over the course of his writing, Nietzsche's acclamation of intoxication can be seen to develop three distinct arguments, each of which defines a particular form of agency. Whereas in *The Birth of Tragedy*, intoxication is described as an insurgent force, overwhelming whatever stands against it, the very different formulation outlined in *Human all too Human* concerns a state of contemplative immersion which transforms the quality of our encounter with the world. Still later, in *Twilight of the Idols*, intoxication imbues creative motivation where all matter is transformed through artistic agency. Nietzsche's definition of agency is shown here as a response to the violence inflicted on human potential by repressive institutions and conditions like Christianity, modernity, or even the temporally-specific German educational system of the mid-nineteenth century. Ultimately Nietzsche moves away from the suggestion of goal-orientated agency evidenced by "The Future of our Educational Institutions" or "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life" which call for a violent rupture with historical pedagogy in order to guarantee a tolerable future. For Nietzsche, following this early period, such goal-driven activity ceases to provide convincing explanations for motives and outcomes of obscure but powerful drives. Furthermore, he grows suspicious of attempts to credit ourselves with the rational idea of "goals", arguing for the more likely case that such attributions self-servingly disguise an actual powerlessness, or a kind of sullen inertia, in the face of institutional determinations. As Max Weber outlined, "goals" credit the subject with independent volition and capacity for autonomous action over the rest of nature, whereas in fact we are an integral part of what we imagine ourselves to be influencing.

The temporality of goal-driven activity is also problematic where Nietzsche envisages attaining a better life through greater realisation of our immediate experience rather than

sacrificing the present to a deferred pleasure in an imaginary future. Agency for Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy* is a form of collective Dionysian action which impacts on Apollonian order and self-contained consciousness. It can be taken in an aesthetic sense as a formative drive expended in the realisation of a resolved artistic form in which opposites are reconciled. The reconciliation is brief however, as Socratic/Euripidean rationality (described as bourgeois mediocrity) displaces the original achievement. In later texts, Nietzsche's idea of agency only momentarily hints at such productive outcomes. Through a critique of subjectivity, he comes to limit such effects to unmasking the assumption that we have some authority over our lives. In contrast, by equating meaning with immediate experience he reveals how we may yet have control over our present.

One point should be made here about Nietzsche's style. The emphasis on the importance of certain forms of intoxication (although sometimes contradicted by him as an inappropriate means of realisation) functions as another strategy for elusive pursuit of his opponents.

It is helpful to think of Nietzsche's writing itself as an exercise in intoxicated discourse where a transformed consciousness gains insights missed by rational thinkers and where the hyperbolic stylistic devices—deriving from a mix of an elaboration of myth, philosophical speculation, invective and poetic insight—deflect conventional critique. It is as if the reader is required to enter the same state of rapture before being able to grasp the meaning of the text. Furthermore, it serves as a model for the condition of continuous becoming which Nietzsche claims for consciousness and the world.

Rausch

I want to look for a moment at several interpretations of Nietzsche's use of the term *Rausch*. Besides the well-known accounts by Heidegger and Bataille there are a number of significant recent commentaries including Julian Young's *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art* and Paul Gordon's *Tragedy after Nietzsche: Rapturous Superabundance*. Besides determining the particular weight Nietzsche gives to *Rausch*, this overview will offer perspective on the ensuing chronological account of Nietzsche's expectations for intoxication.

Assembling a range of terms, translators propose equivalents for *Rausch*. Developing Heidegger's own inclination, David Farrell Krell somewhat reservedly chooses a religious-sexual emphasis by using *rapture*. One problem here is that although this may be an origin for Nietzsche's application of the term, it invokes an orientation that he rapidly supersedes. Under Krell's rubric *rapture* suggests a loss of self in some external object of attraction—in artwork, someone's body, or in religious faith. It is more the case for Nietzsche that *Rausch* is immersion in one's own potentiality as initiating a creative drive, an experience that is not dependent on an object for stimulus although it may indeed result in an object. In any case, here is Krell's account: "No single English word—rapture, frenzy, ecstasy, transport, intoxication, delirium—can capture all the senses of *Rausch*. Our word 'rush' is related to it: something 'rushes over' us and sweeps us away. In modern German *Rausch* most often refers to drunken frenzy or narcotic intoxication...but Nietzsche's sense for the Dionysian is both more variegated and more subtle than that, and I have chosen the work 'rapture' because of its complex erotic and religious background" (Heidegger, 1979, 93). The passiveness implied by the term *rapture* does not restore the sense of an upsurge of action which Nietzsche's sense of *Rausch* entails.

Gordon uses the same term but wants it to summon up an excess of outflowing intoxication as rapture delivers one into a world that is to be overwhelmed by intoxicated force. Recognising a commingling of ecstasy and pain in some of Nietzsche's remarks, particularly in the Silenus reference in *The Birth of Tragedy* (with which he opens and closes his book), he finds twentieth-century equivalents in less conventional examples, including Yeats's poetry, Freud's account of Thanatos and, with reference to the expression of suffering by the Dionysian chorus, in Delta blues music. In this sense Gordon is drawn to the transfigurative prospect of Dionysian rapture, taking the myth of dismemberment and the emphasis in Greek tragedy on the horror of a spectacularly self-destructive life as the narrative of pain being endured and sublated. In its rapturous overcoming "this excessive overabundance paradoxically represents a greater, more vital force than that of the preservation of static, individual identity to which the tragic hero is almost always opposed" (Gordon, 2001, 95). Here, in a dialectical structure, rapture is always generated through the experience of suffering,

and becomes amplified as a means of surviving that experience. Gordon's discussion of *Rausch* through the frame of tragic experience necessarily precludes a definition which would concern a spontaneous, indeterminate ecstasy as a continuous, productive engagement with the world, the sense, that is, which preoccupies Nietzsche in his later writing.

This later sense is also the one that concerns Heidegger whose interpretation Gordon reappraises at the start of his chapter on *The Birth of Tragedy*. Gordon concurs that Nietzsche intends intoxication as an aesthetic property that enables a fuller participation in life through an enhancement of our experience of the world. In this function it is a life-orientation pervading every facet of our consciousness; an application, in a sense, of the lessons of tragedy to the improvement of our everyday life. Although this is the meaning which Gordon accepts being key to other work under discussion (especially in his subtle analysis of Yeats's "Lapis Lazuli"), in his analysis of *The Birth of Tragedy* however, he holds back from such openness in favour of a dynamic of suffering and transcendence whose archaic aspect he finds more appropriate to the precarious life of the ancient Greeks. More fundamentally than the "gay" outlook of Yeats's musicians as they override gloom, Gordon takes up Nietzsche's concept of "strong pessimism" to explain *Rausch* as a Silenic insurance against the worst that the world can throw at us. Silenus's response to Midas's impertinent query about human goals is to hurl back at him a complete disregard for life. In this narrative Gordon proposes intoxication enabling a commitment to life that helps us overcome the threat of its premature end. In Midas's time when life was most vulnerable, our freedom from fear is to be guaranteed through our intoxication.

In his discussion of *Rausch* Young uses various terms interchangeably: "If dreams stand for the Apollonian, *Rausch* — 'intoxication,' 'rapture,' 'frenzy' — stands for the Dionysian. Dionysian consciousness is a 'high,' a state of literal or metaphorical drunkenness..." (Young, 1992, 33). Young's understanding and tolerance of *Rausch* (confined by his correctively disciplined analysis to its function within Nietzsche's texts rather than broadening out—as it does with Gordon—into more general prescriptions for agency), is inevitably affected by his wish to show *The Birth of Tragedy* as a pessimistic work making limited advance on Schopenhauer's philosophy. His motivation for this rather sober and dampening assessment

of Nietzsche's originality stems from his wish to stifle a tendency within some commentaries to celebrate interpretation over critical analysis. Nietzsche emerges from Young's work as compelled to acclaim a Dionysian resolution to life's restrictions and insecurities where the Apollonian state is one of aloof and playful denial. With these reservations, Young has little enthusiasm for *Rausch*, drawing from late texts of Nietzsche to ascribe it pessimistic aspects of its own (its anaesthetic action being essentially unproductive) or revealing the pessimism of what it protects us from: "The need for intoxication, that is, is to be discovered typically where the realities of life are found to be unacceptable" (Young, 1992, 48).

With *The Birth of Tragedy*, to drive forward a reading of the Dionysian and of intoxication as pessimism obliterates passages of Nietzsche's text which conspicuously show Dionysian *Rausch* as exceeding mere compensation or comfort. If support is to be gained for such a sombre assessment by drawing on late texts (like *The Gay Science*) then it would be equally plausible to reach across those years to *Human all too Human* or *Twilight of the Idols* for validation of optimistic qualities of the condition of *Rausch*. With Nietzsche however, it is advisable to take each book as a discrete order and not draw down support from later texts in order to sustain a critical reading of earlier work.

It is more the case that over the course of his writing the meaning which Nietzsche builds around *Rausch*, modelling the concept like a material, develops in complexity and reference. What seem to be reversals of enthusiasm—in *Beyond Good and Evil* for example—are facets of a thesis on pessimism growing from extreme disappointments with the seemingly limitless extent of modernity's insidious impact, disguised as beneficence. Nietzsche's belief (conspicuous in *The Birth of Tragedy*) that art will be able to revitalise our connection to the world, dies under his realisation that art in fact conspires to sustain the fiction of a knowable world. Intoxication proceeds independently of social institutions as a means to throw ourselves away from subjectivity and into life. In the last writing, art recovers its transformative potential under a mutation of the earlier Apollonian/Dionysian model. Intoxication is shown to pervade both drives. It is as if an intoxicated reason is needed to fight reason itself.

In each of Nietzsche's works a new structure for engagement with the world is being worked out. The conclusions in each work are not functional if applied retrospectively to challenge or support earlier theses. The scope Young grants to *Rausch* is therefore more limited than what we find with the other writers discussed here and is a somewhat conservative appraisal of Nietzsche's own estimation. Young emphasises the symbolically corrective role of Dionysian consciousness which he sees converting intoxication into a benign synthesis with Apollonian dream representations and distancing itself from the destructive forms of *Rausch* represented by encroaching barbarians.

Whatever is accomplished by the formal reconciliation of the two drives, there remains in *The Birth of Tragedy* the prioritising of the Dionysian state as that which does the transforming and without which there would be no intensification of experience. There is however, at least one occasion where Young articulates a sense of *Rausch* that recognises its agency in ways that point toward the uses of intoxication by Aragon, Benjamin and Bataille. Young notes that the Zarathustrian Overman realises an ecstatic engagement with the world that most cannot sustain. This "permanent [and apparently ever-ascending] high", a reference by Young to 60s idealism, (Young, 1992, 114) involves an unconditional love of everything in the world such that we would happily undertake its repetition: "The reason, therefore, that Nietzsche demands the willing of the recurrence of *everything* about the world is that it alone expresses the condition of ecstasy; and *ecstasy is what he regards as the ideal relationship to reality*" (Young, 1992, 114). Young explains this "love" as Nietzsche's need to render nature divine in the wake of the non-existence of God, bringing the definition back towards Krell's religious connotation of *rapture*.

In the book *On Nietzsche* Bataille carries forward his project of revealing the functioning of ecstatic experience as if he were extending Nietzsche's own work. The force of Bataille's writing comes from his taking Nietzsche at his word, that philosophy stands or fails on whether it stimulates a revolt against established beliefs, morals, and prejudices. In this instance, Nietzsche's writing does not serve analysis but provides a tool for building a new kind of life: "*I want to be very clear on this: not a word of Nietzsche's work can be understood without experiencing that dazzling dissolution into totality, without living it*

out..." (Bataille, 1992, xxxi). Furthermore, Bataille argues that his own writing, though likely to remain impotent, should commit to the task of provoking similar transformations and not give itself up to academic scrutiny unless as a Trojan horse undermining academic pretensions from within. The question of what should constitute *transformation* is as much a concern of the text as the characteristics of rapture. Bataille's writing continually queries the ethical assumption that the purpose of action is to change the world, that transformation must be measured by the extent of its external impact. Nietzsche's proclamations, he says, are impossible to follow since they have even less action to them than Christian doctrine. They remain "unfocussed...dazzling radiances...untraceable" (Bataille, 1992, 87).

It would seem that rapture's transformative power will increasingly approach a condition of interior illumination whose quality depends on its freedom from external necessity. As such it might reaffirm the doctrine of the independence from utility of aesthetic encounters as developed by Kant and Hegel and which first realises itself artistically in certain nineteenth-century poetry. However, it seems that Bataille turns to rapture as a way to implement a different kind of freedom. Nietzsche's explanation in *Twilight of the Idols* that the aesthetic encounter entails the greatest possible self-interest, such that we configure the world artistically as a reflection of our own powers, could as well be a cue for Bataille's complete surrender of personal experience—biographical, erotic, and intellectual—to the state of rapture, for which investment he expects to get the highest possible return. If these feelings could be articulated they would appear as a "languorous demented wave of sound and the expression of wild joy—a joy so untamed, however, that listening to it there would be no way of knowing if it came from my laughing or dying" (Bataille, 1992, 88).

Determined by such concerns and written from the French countryside during the closing stages of the Second World War, *On Nietzsche* is a record of Bataille's personal turbulence, his sexual experiences, and his disinterested curiosity in the spectacle of battle as the inextricable conditions of philosophy in life. Through the development of these experiences *rapture* is an indispensable criterion, consisting in an acceleration of the Hegelian identification of subject and object until both are left behind in a welcoming of what Bataille repeatedly calls "the unknown" (p114). Experience of extreme weather is converted into biological functions

which in turn become a release of passion: "As I write I hear rolling thunder, moaning wind: I am watching within me, sensing noise, explosions, storms moving across the land over time...And don't I carry within me a blood rage, a blindness satisfied by the hunger to mete out blows?" (Bataille, 1992, 4). There is not the sense in which one causes the other, rather that they are equal constituents of a rapturous state. For Bataille though, this state is only ever a partial achievement, held back as it is by temporality (it doesn't last) or by material realities that induce the "anguish" that this inner release is obtained by escaping the poverty that others endure (Bataille, 1988, 112).

For all that Bataille's writing pushes Nietzsche's conclusion towards inarticulable experience, towards the dissolution of limits, Heidegger's commentary does the reverse. Heidegger's writing on Nietzsche began as lecture courses given from 1936-46. Although "The Will to Power as Art" as the first of these courses, predates Bataille's text, Heidegger continued with them in the 1950s, finally publishing the series in 1961. As indicated earlier, Bataille's reading of Nietzsche's *Rausch* is as a directive towards states of uprooted unknowing. Seeming to embed itself deep within Nietzsche's sensibility, Bataille's thought sympathetically brings his ideas to a frenetic encounter with mid-twentieth century anxieties. Heidegger's own engagement with Nietzsche's *Rausch* results in a wilful collision of positions that would normally be mutually circumspect. His interpretation is determined from the start by concentration on the posthumous collection of writings assembled as *The Will to Power* which he leads in the direction of an ontology where Being is manifested by an external assertiveness, as if subsuming other entities. Heidegger is careful to explain that the role of *Rausch* in this process does not exclude the feeling of joy or the experience of contemplation, though there is always the sense that such orientations of *Will* are lesser than other more obviously productive ones. For Heidegger, Nietzsche's rapture is to be taken as a project, in the sense of a work from which a useful outcome must ensue (far removed from Bataille's anti-productive aims). Bolting it onto his own ontology Heidegger wants to redeem Nietzsche's aesthetics for a role in the present. He imagines Apollonian and Dionysian conditions as a conserving framework which enables a classical notion of form to contain expressive tendencies. The reconciled conclusion to *The Birth of Tragedy* and the notion of

Apollonian intoxication from *The Twilight of the Idols* are taken as the determining features of an enterprise declared somewhat ambiguously as shaping the "hidden stylistic law of the historical determination of the German people..." (Heidegger, 1979, 104). No matter that Nietzsche was condemnatory of German national identity.

One thing that makes the Heidegger text fascinating is the extent to which it is at odds with Nietzsche's own positions, frequently supplying quotations whose arguments are abruptly contradicted in the lessons drawn from them. It isn't that Heidegger misunderstands Nietzsche, so much that he repeatedly redirects the latter's destabilising and anti-rational concepts towards affirming what in the first place they set out to annul. Nietzsche's prioritising of *becoming* as the meaningful state of things (for example in underlying Dionysian intoxication) gets reversed by Heidegger into something that is grounded in *Being*, rather than that which which has taken on the character of *Being*, thereby supplanting it (Heidegger, 1979, 19). Elsewhere Heidegger takes Nietzsche's radicality not as an end to previously stable criteria for thought but as a conservative force which in restoring truth to philosophy provides it with a new grounding (Heidegger, p28). When, as he later quotes, truth for Nietzsche is "the kind of error without which a certain kind of living being could not live" (Heidegger, 1979, 29) it seems perverse for Heidegger to then assert that this break with obdurate illusions will result in "the actual origin of truth" rather than to leave it simply as an act of illuminated, or intoxicated, demystification.

Perhaps this shouldn't be so surprising in a text contemporaneous with *The Origin of the Work of Art* where art's role in revealing the truth of materials, of form and of human endeavour is taken as ultimately having a reconciling function. In that instance Heidegger has art laying out, and even naturalising, the conditions for relations between humans and the world as in essence unchanging. These relations are shown ontologically to possess historical continuity and environmental harmony. Any moderate reading of Nietzsche would recognise him as claiming the opposite for art (a category including his own writings) which has the role of exposing the myths and lies on which human relations and values are built without offering a replacement epistemology. How then is Heidegger's concept of *Rausch* supposed to be commensurable with Nietzsche's? In fact in the chapter most concerned with

Rausch, "Rapture as Aesthetic State", Heidegger develops a treatment of the concept that is sympathetic to the resistance in Nietzsche's thought to resolution and productivity. He starts from the most extreme of Nietzsche's positions and keeps this in view throughout his discussion. There is no art without rapture; whether attained through sexual arousal, violence or drugs, the intoxication is the same in its infection of the body's entire structure.

There is an implication here that these experiences of intoxication are ranked equally and that the nature of their issue is of lesser importance. Art has no more profound impact than "meteorological influences". Their equivalence revives an earlier understanding of aesthetics as a science of physiological and psychical feeling and carries the implication that if the experience of making or encountering art is the same as other intoxicated experiences then they might also be art. Support for such a claim is found in Nietzsche's sketched aesthetics existing only as a list in *The Will to Power* (and given by Heidegger in full) where it is called "Towards The Physiology of Art". Threading through the seventeen statements are speculations on the plenitude and absence of *Rausch* in relation to states of health and decline. What little articulation there is of the characteristics and qualities of *art* is soon overwhelmed by the discussion of conditions of broader states of rapture. There is the sense that what is crucial to art is less the visible result than the action on people of the forces entailed in its production and reception. In its negative appraisal of non-art conditions lies a clue to what art might be and where it would be located: "11. The inartistic states: objectivity, the mania to mirror everything, neutrality... 12. The inartistic states: abstractness. The impoverished *senses*... 13. The inartistic states: vitiation, impoverishment, depletion—will to nothingness (Christian, Buddhist, nihilist). The impoverished *body*... 14. The inartistic states: the *moral* idiosyncrasy, the fear that characterises the weak, the mediocre, before the senses, power, rapture (instinct of those whom life has defeated)" (Heidegger, 1979, 94). Art has to emerge from states of mind that are opposite to such debilitated conditions but since it is the state of rapture that is beneficial, any such state will do. Although art may have its own sphere it does not matter whether this overlaps with other related intoxicated actions.

This seems to be the direction in which Bataille is moving with the instabilities celebrated in his Nietzsche book. Purely autobiographical sections on the mechanics of his sexual

relationship or on the bliss of losing himself in the night's darkness secularise any lingering religious content attributable to Nietzsche's own idea of *Rausch*. The result, if it can even be called that, is best when issueless. *On Nietzsche* is an account of Bataille attempting to fully actualise what two years earlier is elucidated in *Inner Experience* as "Tale of a Partly-Failed Experience". It is the wish to avoid "the agitating obtrusiveness of discourse" and "projected, or reflected, or realised action" (Bataille, 1988, 113) in generating encounters with the unknown which reveals the limit towards which Bataille wants to take Nietzsche's *Rausch*.

Nietzsche's *Rausch* and the avant-garde

Why should Nietzsche be considered as part of an enquiry into the foundations for avant-garde polemics? *The Birth of Tragedy* was written some thirty years after Henri de Saint-Simon and Olinde Rodrigues initiate the idea of a politically-engaged artistic force by summoning radical artists into the role of a vanguard proselytising socialism through cultural work. Nietzsche never explicitly aligned himself with cultural avant-gardes and was outspokenly dismissive of actual revolutionary achievements such as the French Revolution. By contrast his literary models were drawn from historically remote examples of Greek tragedy and myth and his work had little impact on his contemporaries' thinking during his working lifetime. However, notwithstanding his own dissociation, Nietzsche's writing demonstrates some of the most persuasive philosophical articulations of the need for an avant-garde and in its complexity and contradictoriness often illuminates alternative ways of working around the impasse of uncertain agency and inevitable recuperation that have faced the avant-garde historically. There are many instances in his writing where arguments concerning ontology, epistemology and morality are developed as if part of a programme committed to overthrowing existing intellectual authority. One example is an opening passage from the foreword of *Ecce Homo*, his autobiographical reappraisal of a life's work: "The last thing I would promise would be to 'improve' mankind. I have legs of clay. To overthrow idols (my word for 'ideals') – that rather is my business. Reality has been deprived of its value, its meaning, its veracity to the same degree as an ideal world has been

fabricated...to the point of worshipping the inverse values to those which alone could guarantee it prosperity, future, the exalted right to a future" (Nietzsche, 1989, 34). Here are a number of themes which suggest Nietzsche to be an effective proselytiser for the avant-garde, although there are indications too of challenging contradictions in his thinking. The appeal to those interested in overturning false values, to reestablishing truth, to enabling a tolerable future, are all familiar justifications for aggressive political or cultural actions. There are also the unanswered questions of what kind of future is envisaged, of what kind of authority adjudicates over the new values, and of how one would demolish false ideals and deliver a prosperous future without in some way improving mankind. Yet these are also concerns characterising the historical avant-gardes with whom Nietzsche shares his contradictions.

Referring primarily to *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872; second preface: 1886), "The Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life" (1874), *Human all too Human* (1878), *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) and *Twilight of the Idols* (1888), I trace the changes in Nietzsche's use of the concept of intoxication from one text to the other and relate these changes to the shifts in critical focus revealed by each work. Where there are developments in Nietzsche's reappraisal of metaphysics and epistemology these will also be noted since his use of intoxication as a critical term strengthens his attack on the notion of self-determining individuals whose consciousness is separate from their surroundings. Nietzsche begins by taking intoxication as a dynamic force capable of changing artistic modes and undermining institutions. This early optimism is later abandoned when Nietzsche engages in a relentless, yet methodical, critique of religious and cultural mystifications through which he approaches a classification of good and bad intoxications. In this middle period of Nietzsche's writing, if there is to be a viable ecstatic state it will not be one that suddenly overwhelms us in self-forgetting but which slowly wins us over, as if subconsciously. The deeper pessimism of subsequent texts from the mid-1880s, where the assault on religion intensifies, disallows such a subdued and benign rapture. If there is to be any kind of intoxication at this stage it can only be an entrancement with all kinds of actions, including the most violent and immoral, so tenacious have the Christian deceptions proved. In Nietzsche's last work the earlier optimism returns and intoxication is given a renewed function as the means to dissolve subjectivity into the world of phenomena

and actions. The need to accept all manifestations of benignity and cruelty prevails but there is a new expectation that the world will become bearable once intoxication takes hold.

The following changes occur as Nietzsche progresses towards the later books in the 1880s and will be discussed in the context of each work : 1) Nietzsche's dependence on reactivating a classical model as a scholarly example is later of little use to him in undermining Christianity and morality; 2) The use of mythic prototypes as embodiments of anti-modernist arguments (developed as a critique from within modernity itself) is superseded in later texts where Nietzsche focuses on identifying the features of a decadent modernity underpinned by spurious values; 3) Nietzsche's initial proposal of an aesthetics defining art's relevance according to its transformative impact becomes, in most later texts, a subtly incisive and alternative form of critical reflection on the world; 4) Where agency is initially qualified by a notion of intoxication as self-transformative and only then transformative of an external world, Nietzsche later formulates intoxication as an encompassing state in which self and world grow indistinguishable from each other; 5) The early formulations structured as a system of binary antitheses—Dionysus/Apollo—and resolving into a synthesis and reconciliation, later become revelations of disenchantment where Nietzsche, disinterested in “metaphysical consolations” of reconciliation, illuminates such reassuring teleologies as functions of delusory beliefs.

The Birth of Tragedy

His first text, *The Birth of Tragedy*, delineates the Dionysian as an active force whose abandonment to consuming instinctual action has a destabilising impact on its disciplined and conservative Apollonian counterpart. In this initial form Nietzsche's intoxication approximates familiar formulations of insurgent militant avant-gardes. The aggressively anti-institutional, irrational aesthetic force, flaunting social conventions and means-end rationale, is a nightmarish amplification of the kind of nineteenth-century anxiety about anarchic and self-destructive artists that are alluded to in Honoré de Balzac's “The Unknown Masterpiece” or Emile Zola's *L'Oeuvre*, as well as in illustrations by Cham and Honoré Daumier.

The narrative of incursive force enables Nietzsche to present a coherent model for artistic process aligned directly with social and political change. The Apollonian mode is stable enough to generate representations of the gods which present an image of a controllable environment whose social relations are fixed, or at least predictable. The actions and outcomes of the Dionysian mode are by contrast in constant mutation with destabilising effect on the Apollonian. This dynamic structure of two forces, out of whose antagonisms issues a resolution, relies on clearly prescribed terms: the Apollonian individuality principle and the intoxicated, desubjectivised Dionysian. One is stable and constructive, the other is fluid and destructive; one is virtually entropic, the other dynamic energy. The polarisation of these drives gives this model of intoxication a teleological propulsion towards reconciliation. From the start of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche's conception of the Dionysian consciousness is as an engulfing force in a state of constant transformation. He emphasises that this transformation occurs to the very structure of individuality where the Dionysian state entails a loss of cognitive orientation with a failure to grasp the distinction between subject and environment. The nature of self-awareness fundamentally changes, as an ecstatic intoxication with the world displaces an individual's sense of constituting the source of their own thought and reflection. The individual, such as remains, now relates to themselves as an artistic entity amongst others: "Man is no longer an artist, he has become a work of art" (Nietzsche, 1993, 18). Although this dissolution of subjectivity initiates the sequence of reactions through which, in Nietzsche's account, Greek tragedy emerges, it is only the mutual transformation of Dionysian and Apollonian drives that finally generates the fully developed Attic drama: "[...] we must see Greek tragedy as the Dionysiac chorus, continuously discharging itself in an Apolline world of images" (Nietzsche, 1993, 43).

In its gravitation towards a stable reconciliation of opposing forces, *The Birth of Tragedy* ultimately reveals this same responsibility. However, at its most celebratory of intoxication, *The Birth of Tragedy* stands as the revenge of the classical world on modern scholarship, with Nietzsche intending that the Dionysian force be palpably felt by his contemporaries as something that threatened to engulf modern institutions (in a configuration of avant-gardist momentum) even as he depicted its energies dwindling, historically, during its encounter with an anxiously mobilised Apollonian repudiation. The contemporary world of philology was to

have recoiled from this presage of instability into some kind of authentic and energised engagement with classical culture, if not, as Nietzsche would seem to prefer in these early texts, to have expired altogether.

In this sense, *The Birth of Tragedy* is an aesthetic manifesto that tears into the conventions of classical philology to bring a historical subject up close in terms of its material impact and relevance to the contemporary world. It has two further influences on its polemic. First, it extends Schopenhauer's account of our absorption in the aesthetic encounter where we relinquish our subjectivity as a release from the pain of our unsatisfied willing. At this point Nietzsche retains the qualification of disinterestedness that Schopenhauer derived from Kantian aesthetics although in the later texts this is to convert into an investment of great self-interest as the basis for such experiences. The Dionysian of *The Birth of Tragedy* however, is an extension of this loss of individuality into a mass aesthetic experience as an entire community becomes intoxicated by this surrender of autonomy. Secondly, Nietzsche intends a defence of Wagner (as a contemporary avant-garde composer whose music has synthesised Dionysian and Apollonian modes). The unification of these forces of upheaval and stability, of intoxication and construction—realised in the restructured Apollonian state, or in Wagner's music—is the kind of satisfying outcome that Nietzsche would later criticise as concealing a moral position that serves the philosophical goal of aesthetic redemption as well as his own interests in promoting Wagner. He attests to this distortion in his increasing scepticism towards Wagner's music, a criticism he develops in the 1886 preface, to be discussed in context of the later writings.

Nietzsche's early work and modernity's intoxications

Nietzsche's assertion that art could direct the most powerful attack on values plays a part in the conflict around the constitution of modernity running throughout the nineteenth century. The struggle for power in determining what goals might be appropriate for such an epoch that defined itself against the past through a forced gaze towards the future has its latent content in competing intoxications. Like any repressed underside, these intoxications frequently elude control and erupt into the foreground. Walter Benjamin's archaeology of the repressed political

impulses of the nineteenth-century locates these intoxications in the period's art, architecture and literature as forces working against the grain of a somnolent optimism stimulated by an intoxication with commodities. Although modernity's revolutionary and conservative forces rationally utilise sober and intoxicated states to naturalise their ends, these utilisations cannot avoid incorporating unforeseeable irrational instances of these same states.

Henri Beyle Stendhal's conviction of the relevance of the writer adds a new intensity to literary timeliness, especially when compared to the manner in which contemporaneity was valued during the Enlightenment. Francis Bacon's confidence in the power of his age to determine its destiny through pursuit of knowledge, on contemporary terms alone, serves Adorno and Horkheimer to illustrate the epitome of Enlightenment optimism.

Enlightenment thought imagines itself propelling society into a prosperous future as it simultaneously severs its dependence on the past. The considered deliberation of Bacon's claim becomes exhilaration in Stendhal as he assigns his work the task of conveying pleasures for which his contemporaries are as yet unprepared and undeserving. The fact that "pleasure" rather than knowledge marks an achievement for Stendhal, comes to characterise a strain of artistic resistance to the economic optimism of modernity. A quotation of Bacon's given by Adorno and Horkheimer represents the sentiment opposed by a radical nineteenth-century insistence on pleasure as an objective: "knowledge that tendeth but satisfaction, is but as a courtesan, which is for pleasure, and not for fruit or generation" (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979, 5). This insistence by a tendency within Modernity on the effectiveness of pleasure as alternative to agendas of rationalist utilitarian thinking becomes, in Nietzsche's understanding of *Rausch*, a means to prise apart intransigent present-day institutions.

Stendhal's confident assumption of the writer's importance by virtue of their innovativeness becomes unsustainable. Confronted by the overwhelming penetration of all aspects of modern life by commercial interests in the wake of failed revolutionary efforts, artists become disenchanted. Between 1848 and 1871 this combined grip of commerce and state stifle radical aesthetic and political initiatives which might link freedom and imagination to alternative goals. Théophile Gautier's blissful claim in 1835 that nothing useful can ever be beautiful comes to a brutal halt with Baudelaire who, after embodying extremes of social

engagement and renunciation in art, finds beauty in what commerce and state least value. Radical intoxication goes underground in order to find a position which cannot be assimilated by the market. As we see in the disinterest shown Baudelaire's and Nietzsche's work during their lifetimes, the market is so extensive that it leaves no space for alternatives.

The understanding of modernity by the nineteenth-century European middle class subscribed to the notion of a progressively beneficial technology heralded by the commodities displayed at the increasingly popular world fairs. Terry Eagleton's account of the celebrated passage on the power of the commodity in Marx's *Capital* evokes the image of an obscuring mist which an intoxication with commodities draws across the unacceptable ugliness of their actual production: "As pure exchange-value, the commodity erases from itself every particle of matter; as alluring auratic object, it parades its own unique sensual being in a kind of spurious show of materiality. But this materiality is itself a form of abstraction, serving as it does to occlude the concrete social relations of its own production" (Eagleton, 1990, 208-9).

Artists and theoreticians oppose a modernity whose control depends on the normalisation of a contradiction. The ubiquity of commerce is justified rationally as enabling a scientific advance towards prosperity, yet entirely depends for its economic success on the irrational surrender of control under commodities' allure. This rationale of future prosperity becomes recognised as a lie on realising the extent to which commodities have been designed to entrance. The obscuring mist masking conditions of production is caused by rapture in the face of their illusory utility and beneficence. Bürger attributes the initiation of anti-institutional and revolutionary artforms in the early twentieth-century to Aestheticist precursors: "Aestheticism had made the distance from the praxis of life the content of works. The praxis of life to which Aestheticism refers and which it negates is the means-ends rationality of the bourgeois everyday" (Bürger, 1984, 49). The rejection of the illusion of prosperity is a factor determining nineteenth-century artistic tendencies, whether they address social conditions as realism or stage a withdrawal from any sense of an artwork's utility. Both tendencies develop into the openly antagonistic practices of early twentieth-century avant-garde movements. Liberating intoxications are nurtured to protest the grip of

insidiously repressive intoxications. The “stupendous schemes” fuelled by the ragpicker’s drunkenness in Baudelaire’s poem stand for a shadow victory over dire economic conditions. The poem develops an image of repetitive alcoholic oblivion that is both consoling and nihilist. Successive binges conjure the same unachievable revolutionary plans issuing in the same illusion of a utopian triumphal march where the ragpicker’s junk is converted into banners and bugles. This anticipates Blanqui’s final hallucination (from the melancholy of prison confinement) of the illusory quality of all revolutionary goals, concluding that there is to be no progress whereby revolutionary achievements might resonate beyond their particular world (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 26). Retrenched within one strand of nineteenth-century intoxications is this resignation to disappointment in the face of an overwhelming authority.

In this context, Nietzsche’s concentration in his writings on a developing array of intoxications presents them as forces whose potential for the transformation of life depends on their threat of appearing uncontainable. The attack in his early writings, especially *The Birth of Tragedy*, on the authority of scientific knowledge and the “decadence” of Socratic reason should be understood in the context of this disenchantment with the myths of progress. With Socrates described as “the prototype of theoretical man”, who initiates the conviction that thought “can penetrate to the depths of being, and that it is capable not only of knowing but even of correcting being” (Nietzsche, 1993, 73), originates the belief that in the later writing credits science to the point where it becomes art: “The scientific man is the further evolution of the artistic” (Nietzsche, 1986, 105). Yet this evolution suggests a way beyond the pessimism of Baudelaire and Blanqui by way of an intoxicated Socrates. As Paul Mann explains: “What attracts Nietzsche is, of course, not the possibility of any simple rejection of Socratic, scientific philosophy in favour of art as such; that would be merely resentment, and in fact quite unattainable. Rather, what attracts him is the possibility of a singing Socrates” (Mann, 1999, 86).

Through those sections in *The Birth of Tragedy* discussing the decline in Attic drama caused by Euripides’ writing, Nietzsche develops three quite different accounts of intoxication which relate closely to the condition of the artist confronted by bourgeois modernity. In the first of these, Nietzsche presents a more radical Dionysian event than seen earlier in the book. The classic

tragedies of Sophocles and Aeschylus enact the end of individuation, with Dionysus as the redemptive unconscious of stage characters whose advance towards error and disaster entails their becoming Apollo, in enduring their own individuality. At this point dismemberment enables Dionysus's transformation into the four elements and subsequent rebirth, greeted by "the roaring hymn of joy of the epoptes" (Nietzsche, 1993, 52). The recurrence of this event, an irresistibly powerful intoxication, will stand as knowledge that the fragmentation of individuality can be put right by a more fundamental loss of self.

The second argument conceals a critique of the commodification of culture within an attack on Euripides. It is in Euripides's work that we find "bourgeois mediocrity", the portrayal of "mundane, commonplace, everyday life", the "pleasure of the moment, wit, whimsy and caprice" (Nietzsche, 1993, 56). Euripides's fault lies in making his plays intelligible to as large an audience as possible which could now recognise their own everyday concerns in the development of character and plot. Comprehensible thoughts replace profound contemplation, flaring emotions are substituted for ecstatic abandon. Euripides recognises the difficulty audiences have in grasping the relation of the play they are watching to the history preceding the depicted events and decides to spell out this connection in an explicit prologue. The appealing "realistic counterfeits" of illusory emotions and fears generate an "inartistic naturalism" that reads and answers the needs of the audience much as do commodities in nineteenth-century arcades and department stores. Euripides therefore lulls his audience into insensibility with his transparent and appealing dramatic form. They are reassured by the congruence of dramatic content with their own lives and are not aroused to any higher critical response.

The third argument concerns the attempted intoxication of Socrates. Nietzsche's contrast of Dionysian loss of subjectivity with Socratic sobriety will bring to mind the account in Plato's *Symposium* of Socrates' immunity to alcohol: "Observe, my friends, said Alcibiades, that this ingenious trick of mine will have no effect on Socrates, for he can drink any quantity of wine and not be at all nearer to being drunk" (Plato, 1999). Although Nietzsche presents Socrates as the scourge of instinctive knowledge—incessantly pointing out his contemporaries' unawareness of their own assumptions while all the time professing his own ignorance—

there are several instances where we are reminded of his susceptibility to instinctual approaches and even a reading of Socrates's entire endeavour as a form of intoxicated reason. It is explained how Socrates's *daimonion*—an inspirational voice that would step in when his intellect failed him—always corrects his rational understanding: “in Socrates instinct becomes the critic, consciousness the creator—a monstrosity per defectum!” (Nietzsche, 1993, 66). Nietzsche then calls this drive of reason in Socrates as “amongst the very greatest instinctive forces” (Nietzsche, 1993, 66), in front of which he exists only as a shadow, unable to account for his gift. Socrates frequently dreams of being told to make music which he had always criticised as beneath his achievements as a philosopher. His concession to this summons is to compose a hymn to Apollo and to wonder whether, in the example of art, there might not be some order of intelligence beyond what his reason could recognise. This section of the book closes with the proposition that the scale of science's ambitions, and the illusory aspect of its ends, ultimately make it into art. In the quotation given above, where a ruthless Socratic intelligence imagines it can even correct being, we can now see a kind of transformation of reason through the way it allows itself to be swept up in such illusions. At this point the book concludes with the image of the intoxicated Socrates whose drive for knowledge requires art as the only way to rescue humans from the mayhem that is the inevitable outcome of the “practical—selfish—goals of individuals and nations” (Nietzsche, 1993, 73). For Nietzsche the change will entail an intoxicated “music-making Socrates” whose interventions may rescue the world from being ripped apart by the distractions of present-day existence.

It is possible to consider some of these aspects of Nietzsche's work, resurfacing amongst avant-garde strategies, as formulating the transition from “modern” to “avant-garde”. Rather than innovatory, they exacerbate tendencies already introduced by nineteenth-century artists, tendencies which historical conditions may have prevented artists from an exhaustive working out. These include disavowal of the importance of history, acclamation of violent intervention to contest a hegemonic morality, promotion of antagonistic incursion into a dominant cultural language and self-justification through positing a utopian future as outcome. In these early texts Nietzsche holds back from celebrating the complete

annihilation of historical legacies. We may be distracted from this cautiousness by the vehemence of his more antagonistic pronouncements, but nevertheless it develops as a determining feature of both *The Birth of Tragedy* and “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life”. There is a sustained claim made by Nietzsche in these texts regarding the role of intoxication in transforming devalued components of Greek culture and revitalising Greek scholarship. The problematisation of learning is however, more completely realised in the angry and wide-ranging later text.

“On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life” urges that we reject the imposition of history in order to learn directly from life. Nietzsche is concerned that the potential of contemporary life to affect the future is threatened by this weight of the past. He incites the young to throw off this dependence and move into a position of empowerment. Yet if there is any indication of an intoxicated state to this action it is always going to be one that is stabilised by an inherent responsibility towards institutions. The context for Nietzsche’s arguments in this essay is his perception of a debilitated contemporary life, submissive to history and impotent in determining the future. One target is the expansion of an education system which eclipses the concession to nature as master with reference to an inventory of historical data assimilated through second-hand education. Nietzsche’s argument recapitulates with new emphasis the criticism in *The Birth of Tragedy* of a technology that is in the service of a bourgeoisie, fixated on progress and pleasure in commodities, and demanding an ends-directed education.

It is in the earlier dialogue “The Future of our Educational Institutions” (delivered in 1872 as a lecture series) where Nietzsche first criticises the rigidification of classical scholarship and the stifling of free and imaginative research by universities as the consequence of inappropriate economic objectives, a point amplified in subsequent work. Interestingly those lectures outline several forms of intoxicated learning as Nietzsche constructs his narrative around overlapping anniversaries of young and older scholars celebrating the progression of their knowledge. The point of this crammed and abbreviated education is to prepare a workforce. In “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life” we are told how this manufactured learning is analogous to market forces: “[...] the words ‘factory’, ‘labour market’, ‘supply’, ‘making

profitable', and whatever auxiliary verbs egoism now employs, come unbidden to the lips when one wishes to describe the most recent generation of men of learning" (Nietzsche, 1997, 98-9). Thus, in a kind of economic non-cooperation, a rebellion against the imposition of historical models is a flight "from that paralysing upbringing of the present age which sees its advantage in preventing your growth so as to rule and exploit you to the full while you are still immature" (Nietzsche, 1997, 95). This is not entirely equivalent with the way that the avant-garde articulates its resistance, since Nietzsche emphasises the evolution of one's own intellect and spirit rather than using the rhetoric of freedom through self-sacrifice.

A great part of Nietzsche's goal here is to demonstrate how to acquire more truthful knowledge which will redeem the future for young Germans. A temporary instability will ultimately yield "a happier and fairer culture and humanity" (Nietzsche, 1997, 121) with the institutions of government and learning enlightened but essentially intact. Nietzsche's goal is a more authentic existence where culture is no longer "a decoration of life" (Nietzsche, 1997, 123) but a means for young people to make coherent the whole of practical life, concepts, and drives, in the same way that the Greeks organised the cultural chaos of diverse foreign influences (Nietzsche, 1997, 123). This isn't a structural revolution but is instead a transformation of our relationship with the world, similar to what preoccupies the Surrealists and Benjamin as an essential, but overlooked, component of the Communist revolutionary platform.

Human all too Human

Human all too Human works towards a dissolution of epistemological and ethical polarities in order to thoroughly undermine prejudices of metaphysics without perpetuating the mytho-metaphysical model of Dionysian/Apollonian duality that is developed in *The Birth of Tragedy*. This is part of Nietzsche's interrogation of truth as an idea that has taken for granted polarised positions—truth/untruth, "control over your For and Against" (Nietzsche, 1986, 9). Nietzsche begins an archaeology of ethical assumptions, or rather ferrets out the assumptions that lie behind truth only to find that they are ethical—one truth is felt to be more right than another,

or has been convenient as a truth for history and has thus measured all that it isn't as untrue.

The transformative intoxication of the resurgent Dionysian will, the force behind the aesthetic model of *The Birth of Tragedy*, is ground that has to be scrutinised soberly since it is neither resourceful nor decisive enough to cut through the thicket of "a host of errors and fantasies which have gradually arisen and grown entwined with one another...and are now inherited by us as the accumulated treasure of the entire past..." (Nietzsche, 1986, 20). The metaphysical orientation of *The Birth of Tragedy* staging a contest of wills of different life intensities resulting in a form of equilibrium is antithetical to *Human all too Human* which rules out equilibrium along with the delusion of intoxicated quasi-religious or metaphysical states as "passion, error and self-deception" (Nietzsche, 1986, 15). At this point of *Human all too Human*, art is first a demystifier, a force for rooting out untruth, for confronting us with real events, and not at all the function of a stabilising union of contrary forces. That kind of stabilisation would be an implausible ethical position for *Human all too Human* which resumes a Heraclitian perspective as it speaks of a world in flux, a world so variegated as to constitute our own 'picture' for each one of us. In *Human all too Human* Nietzsche is diminishing the distance between subject and world by presenting the world in all its wildness and appearance of meaning as nothing other than our own creation and thus the creation of ourselves as well. Lessening the distance between subject and world implies a similar responsibility towards our creation as we take towards ourselves. This has some relation to Nietzsche's claim that the world can only acquire meaning as an aesthetic phenomenon although he intends this to diminish the importance of morality as a valid means of interpreting that world. In the 1886 preface to *The Birth of Tragedy* this idea reinforces Nietzsche's displacement of Christian morality whose lifeless and inhibitory world can only be redeemed by an alternative creator who takes the same exhilarating pleasure in making as in destroying. As an epistemological superstructure, a kind of dissembling superego, Christian morality is something more insidious and elusive than what Dionysian energised will or Apollonian dream-like contemplation imagined having to contend with in each other. In the second preface, the solution to the necessary dismantling of this human-created, yet alienated, Christian edifice is a relentless Dionysian creator intoxicated with the process of renewal.

In a reappraisal of these themes from *Human all too Human*, section seven of *Beyond Good and Evil*, (titled Our Virtues) provides a rationale for action by intensifying the speculation that humans are, and have always been, a material to be worked on by themselves. Here the world as aesthetic phenomenon is continuously remade by ourselves. This work must begin with our own life as something we create in the sense of working on it ceaselessly. Only by taking responsibility for the material of our own lives and of the world can we stem the attrition of joy by Christianity as it eviscerates the world's pleasures in its morally-driven investigation of an illusionary underside of things. The reality Nietzsche outlines in *Beyond Good and Evil* is that there is no true or false categorisation with regard to the world of appearances. Instead, the world's existence as a "fiction", with no God-like author, indicates how we can ourselves become the collaborative authors of the world and of our lives, provided our engagement with the world is open to all it offers.

One of Nietzsche's intents in *Human all too Human* is to destroy any pretensions we might have to an ethics built on suppositions of human purpose and responsibility or on a sense of inherent value to life. Rationality is a mistake compounded over time and any rational human being needs the natural state of "his illogical original relationship to things" (Nietzsche, 1986, 28) as a compensatory cure. Also mistaken is the attribution of responsibility to those who commit bad actions. Such ascribing of guilt is only one level in a historical structure of blame which began with blaming the actions themselves, then the motives behind the actions and only then the person. In the end we realise that propensity for these actions is environmentally formed and the individual blameless.

Our faith in the value of existence is itself based on vain self-interest. It is only our own lives that seem valuable. Other lives we lack the imagination to grasp. If we could sufficiently empathise with others we would only be appalled at the purposelessness of their lives. Our realisation that there is no goal for anyone would be the ultimate disenchantment. "If in all he does he has before him the ultimate goallessness of man, his actions acquire in his own eyes the character of useless squandering. But to feel thus squandered, not merely as an individual but as humanity as a whole, in the way we behold the individual fruits of nature

squandered, is a feeling beyond all other feelings" (Nietzsche, 1986, 29). At the end of *Twilight of the Idols* and of the second preface to *The Birth of Tragedy* this becomes a premise for a final resignation to laughter and intoxication as an ultimate relinquishing of illusory goals. This apogee of fulfilment in self-expenditure recalls Benjamin's intoxicated reverie at the close of "Hashish in Marseilles" where with a nihilism whose optimism contrasts with Nietzsche, he resigns with pleasure to the inevitability of a life frequently squandered, as in erotic meetings or while, under a drug trance, seduced by all encountered phenomena. The kind of counterproductive empathy acclaimed by Nietzsche reminds us of Prince Mishkin's ability to identify with all those he encounters in Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*, written ten years before *Human all too Human*. Mishkin's empathy meets only a destructive aimlessness and irrationality from the characters he loves, to the extent that his own life is ultimately squandered in this absorption with the welfare of others.

Clearly from *The Birth of Tragedy* there is an expected future for art being laid out by Nietzsche. The Dionysian drive is essentially an intoxicated aesthetic throwing itself into the world as if to be enjoyed by that world as much as it devours it for its own gratification. This is a non-productive aesthetic involvement but ultimately a positive one. Even the absorption of the Dionysian by Apollonian will is of positive outcome in the form of an evolving Greek tragedy. *The Birth of Tragedy* then is an account of a productive aesthetic which for Nietzsche can still serve as a model for change in the world. This prototype avant-garde aesthetic vanishes by the time of *Human all too Human* where Nietzsche's appraisal of art is imbued with a disenchantment fuelled by his attack on self-aggrandising epistemological assumptions. Nietzsche develops a kind of materialist counter-aesthetic showing the origins of art in similar environmental factors as those to which he attributes the explanations for our actions. We are still enamoured by the idea that we can "almost feel... that a stone suddenly acquired by magic a soul that is now trying to speak out of it" (Nietzsche, 1986, 80), and that we still think we can recognise in art those aspects that are key for our self-esteem whether we are spectators or producers: "the fantastic, mythical, uncertain, extreme, the sense for the symbolical, the over-estimation of the person, the belief in something miraculous in genius [...]" (Nietzsche, 1986, 80). Now what Nietzsche thinks should happen is that the artist traps this vain intellect

by exposing and enhancing false ideas regarding the immediacy of art. Nietzsche is considering the mechanics of how art is made. His interest is fundamental and materialist whereas most aesthetics, including Hegel's, ignore issues of production and concentrate on, for example, image in relation to idea and motivation. Between the two books, the critique of intoxication has shifted from enthusiasm for the positive outcome of Dionysian transformation to halting the inhibiting, emasculating impact of falling under the spell of claims for art's influence: "Even if possessed by art — what influence of any kind does art exercise among us?" (Nietzsche, 1986, 98).

In the second instance, in section 149 of *Human, all too Human*, Nietzsche displaces this omnivorous force with the notion of an intoxicating beauty which permeates us gradually and unnoticeably but which finally "takes total possession of us, filling our eyes with tears and our heart with longing" (Nietzsche, 1986, 81). This involuntary surrender to a contemplative encounter with our surroundings, with its implication of an uprooted subjectivity, is analogous with effects of the hashish trance as elaborated by Walter Benjamin or enraptured Surrealist encounters with a theatricalised urban environment. This sort of encounter runs against Benjamin's and Breton's difficult engagements with the privations and disciplined organisation demanded by Communist ideology. In itself this is an intoxication with ideology to the extent of self-sacrifice. Nietzsche's account of ascetic ideals, so clearly the counter-impulse to Dionysian liveliness, is prescient of twentieth-century radical political intoxications: "The ascetic treats life as a wrong road on which one must finally walk back to the point where it begins, or as a mistake that is put right by deeds—that we ought to put right: for he demands that one go along with him; where he can he compels acceptance of his evaluation of existence. . . . For an ascetic life is a self-contradiction: . . . pleasure is felt and sought in ill-constitutedness, decay, pain, mischance, ugliness, voluntary deprivation, self-mortification, self-flagellation, self-sacrifice" (Nietzsche, 1967, 177-18).

Beyond Good and Evil

The disenchantment in *Human all too Human* that fuels Nietzsche's acerbic observations on aesthetics evolves into the deep pessimism of later work like *Beyond Good and Evil*, sedimenting frequently into misanthropic sentiment. Here the enthusiasm of sections of *Human all too Human* falls far behind as Nietzsche grows convinced of the truth of 'culture' as a growth that disguises its base origin in survival needs. The confidence and humour of earlier aphorisms is gone and the text's energy veers from probing critique to diatribes against women and gloomy reflections on the benefits and inevitability of dictatorial regimes.

Beyond Good and Evil amplifies Nietzsche's criticism of modernity along two principle trajectories. First, there continues that archaeology, initiated in *Human all too Human*, of ethics and values underlying the languorous optimism and beneficence of the modern period. Secondly, there reemerges the proposition seen in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* that the falsely purifying values of the modern period have entirely stifled human potential for full involvement in the fascinations of the world and that a destructive revolutionary change, probably autocratic, will be the consequence of this prolonged repression. As the text oscillates between embellishing the current corrupt barbarism and heralding the imminent apocalypse, Nietzsche generates an hysterical uninhabitable realm where the reader is suspended between two impossible realities, as if he/she is the arrow in a taut bow that will never be released.

For Nietzsche this licenses a limitless plunge into future life-formation, since there is nothing to lose. Once we start, the worst will be behind us. The self-interest we imagine to have transcended through exercising our virtues only remains lurking out of sight behind every 'purified' motive. Only by taking responsibility for our own formation can we move beyond these delusory notions of achievement. The regard for the world as aesthetic phenomenon returns here with ourselves as material to work on: "In man, creature and creator are united: in man there is matter, fragment, excess, clay, mud, madness, chaos; but in man there is also creator, sculptor, the hardness of the hammer, the divine spectator and the seventh day—do you understand this antithesis? And your pity is for the 'creature in man', for that which has to be formed, broken, forged, torn, burned, annealed, refined—do you not grasp whom

our opposite pity is for when it defends itself against your pity as the worst of all pampering and weakening?—Pity against pity, then!” (Nietzsche, 1990, 155). There’s no mistaking the sense in this passage of our own self-formation supplanting the attribution of creativity to God. The Christian conscience which proposes pity for the lives of those affected by radical changes is shown as a guileful ruse to distract from the real responsibility of pitying those whose lives are suppressed by such power-hungry ethics. We imagined cruelty had vanished from contemporary life when in fact it practically constitutes that life. Following spectatorial absorption in others’ suffering we have internalised cruelty as “self-denial in the religious sense...desensualization, decarnalization, contrition, to Puritanical spasms of repentance...” (Nietzsche, 1990, 160). A radical counter-insurgency pervades Nietzsche’s crisis-driven materialist account of spirit. No different from all earthly things, spirit wants only to gain power over its surroundings. It appropriates what is foreign to it, incorporating the new into the old, simplifying complexity and rejecting what is contradictory at the same time that it wilfully excludes much that it can’t be bothered with: “Its intention in all this is the incorporation of new ‘experiences’, the arrangement of new things within old divisions...” (Nietzsche, 1990, 160), the retention of a status quo by its absorption of any threat.

Where there might be some slender benefit gained from art in *Human all too Human*—at least the conviction that life could be pleasurable—eight years later in *Beyond Good and Evil* such prospects have withered completely under the continuing revelation of self-interest as grounding all idealism under modernity. The pursuit of truth is shown to be invariably a vain and self-interested consolation. The ideal aesthetic response of disinterested contemplation only veils the seductions of renunciation. Likewise the ascetic ideal reveals the greatest self-interest. More likely painting’s artificial structure of gradated tonal equivalents for the visible world serves analogously to indicate “grades of apparentness” which would dissolve antitheses of truth and falsehood. For Nietzsche it is irrelevant to expect correspondence between representation and the world to be truthful since the world may as easily be a fiction as not: “And he who then objects: ‘but to the fiction there belongs an author?’—could he not be met with the round retort: why?” (Nietzsche, 1990, 66). As already noted in relation to Christianity, many artists and philosophers actively perpetuate such a fiction in their disenchantment at failing to

penetrate beyond the surface of reality to some imagined metaphysical truth, and instead finding satisfaction in a divinised, false image of the world (Nietzsche, 1990, 85). Nietzsche's critique of religion has to extend to artistic misuse of the given of the world's material. This gift of matter that should be sensually appreciated as a route to knowledge is exactly what both religion and art deny in their pursuit of the fiction of truth. The corruption of our relationship with the world is total. Religion, as an intensification of frustrated artistic powers, has perverted a nature deeply involved in life and has turned it into something cowering and apologetic, reversing "the whole love of the earthly and of dominion over the earth into hatred of the earth and earthly..." (Nietzsche, 1990, 89).

The second preface to *The Birth of Tragedy*, titled "Attempt at a Self-Criticism", was written during this period of disenchantment, in the same year as *Beyond Good and Evil*. It would be worthwhile considering how Nietzsche's reappraisal of this optimistic earlier text colours its arguments with the complexity of the moral critique developed in his later work. Nietzsche also uses the second preface to distance himself from his early enthusiasm for Wagner, by distinguishing between productive and negative intoxications.

Besides this criticism of Wagner, the main purpose of the second preface is to retrospectively credit *The Birth of Tragedy* as a prescient critique of morality; that is, in the manner Nietzsche develops during the intervening years as he dissects the assumptions underlying moral claims. The prevailing understanding which Nietzsche is concerned to overturn is that tragedy was developed by the Greeks in correspondence to their precarious and struggling life, as if their pessimism had summoned up a form by which it could be represented. As their society and culture developed, the Greeks supposedly experienced a more prosperous and less endangered life which as a consequence generated a more optimistic culture in the form of "[...] the death of tragedy: the Socratism of morality, the dialectics, modesty and cheerfulness of theoretical man" (Nietzsche, 1993, 4). Nietzsche states instead that tragedy grew out of an excess of optimism, at a time when life was most productive. The drives behind early Greek tragedy and comedy are "neuroses of health" (Nietzsche, 1993, 7) rather than the outcome of sickness. Tragedy is the correlative to an excess of joy while Socratic logic represents Greek culture in decline.

Nietzsche acknowledges the vitality of his original text while cutting off any possibility of taking its conclusions as offering resolution for a lost god or a diminished prospect for “metaphysical consolations” (Nietzsche, 1993, 12). The tenet of anti-hope coming from the analyses of his later critical work is used to smother any naive optimistic outcome that Nietzsche might have proffered in the enthusiasm of his first publication. In the second preface he criticises the resolved paradigm he generated at the time out of his interest in laying a foundation for the acclamation of a new German tragic form. This criticism of his earlier interest in Wagner’s music extends therefore to the structure he developed in *The Birth of Tragedy* to strengthen the argument for a contemporary rebirth of tragedy. He implicitly rejects what seems in *The Birth of Tragedy* an awkward metamorphosis in the evolution of Greek drama, where he outlines a harmonised Dionysian/Apollonian resolution under the influence of Socrates. Now he recognises that “all was hopeless” (Nietzsche, 1993, 10).

Nietzsche emphasises that the primary need in *The Birth of Tragedy* was to define what constituted the Dionysian. Such a definition is ruthlessly given new facets drawn from his later disenchanted conclusions. The Dionysian is now what has replaced God as investing events with meaning. Christianity’s anger at life expressed in its nullifying moral values is opposed by the Dionysian refusal to qualify what it builds or destroys. This force of “an entirely thoughtless and amoral artist-god” (Nietzsche, 1993, 8), is what counters morality in a new appraisal of life where again Nietzsche asserts that the world can only be understood as an aesthetic phenomenon. In this view morality is only one phenomenon in a material world where it can be classified alongside all the others by which we are deceived, including “interpretation, artifice, art” (Nietzsche, 1993, 8).

Wagner’s music induces the wrong kind of intoxication because, like other Romantic tendencies, it suggests a future outcome may resolve the insufficiencies of the present world. The only possibility says Nietzsche, in the final section of the second preface, reprising *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, is to embrace the present world in laughter. This is an alert intoxication with immediacy that recalls the conditions outlined by Benjamin and Aragon as they summon up the entrancements of their own present. The productive intoxication was what marked the Dionysian ecstasy as it engendered tragedy. This ecstatic state might have been

shared by large groups whose contagious exhilaration led to the origin of the Greek chorus: "Might visions and hallucinations not have been shared by whole communities, by whole cult gatherings? And what if the Greeks, precisely in the abundance of their youth, had the will to tragedy, if they were pessimists? If it was madness itself, to use a phrase of Plato's, that brought the greatest blessings on Greece?" (Nietzsche, 1993, 7).

Despite their divergences, these principal modes of intoxication are functions of Nietzsche's critique of subjectivity. In an early section of *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche makes an attack on Kantian epistemology for allowing the notion of a thinking agent to underlay explanations of how we perceive reality. Instead, Nietzsche says, such claims conceal a great number of unquestioned assumptions: "...when I analyse the event expressed in the sentence 'I think', I acquire a series of rash assertions which are difficult, perhaps impossible, to prove—for example, that it is I who think, that it has to be something at all which thinks, that thinking is an activity and operation on the part of an entity thought of as a cause, that an 'I' exists, finally that what is designated by 'thinking' has already been determined—that I know what thinking is" (Nietzsche, 1990, 46).

As the subject in this paragraph becomes dislocated from its mooring, its qualities approach those of the intoxicated consciousness immersed in a world where it experiences itself unhierarchically as one of a cluster of phenomena. Looking again at the passage from *Beyond Good and Evil*, this kind of knowledge, that for Nietzsche issues from the drives, is outside conventional rational thought. The drives are a kind of sense uncertainty, quasi-utopian representations whose importance lies less in their sustainability (which is shown as impossible, even in the early speculations of *The Birth of Tragedy*) than in their ability to induce transformations in recalcitrant dominant structures. It is important that we keep hold of this understanding that our thoughts are not something proprietary: "It thinks...For even with this 'it thinks' one has already gone too far: this 'it' already contains an interpretation of the event and does not belong to the event itself" (Nietzsche, 1990, 47). Such intrusive reflection, leading to interpretation, would entail stepping out of the dance of intoxication and stalling any productive transformation.

Twilight of the Idols

The disenchantment with art's powers seen in *Beyond Good and Evil*, (which Young associates with all the works from Nietzsche's middle period, especially *The Gay Science*), is replaced in late works like *Twilight of the Idols* with a renewed enthusiasm for the transformative effect of art. Young identifies a return to the belief in art's potency familiar from *The Birth of Tragedy*, whose second preface appears to foretell this shift. In the 1888 text, as with that 1886 preface, there is a sense that Nietzsche is valuing any sign of life for its own sake. In fact in the very last section of *Twilight of the Idols* Nietzsche explicitly acknowledges that he roots himself in the revaluations and unconditional celebration of life that were first set out in *The Birth of Tragedy*. There are instances where Nietzsche invites any manifestation of life's energy, cruel or benign, as an ultimate value. Attempts to condemn life, as with Christian or ascetic programmes, are themselves ultimately only affirmations of life's vigour. This is a reprise of a metaphysical and aesthetic fundamentalism that reaches backwards beyond the cultural critique of passages in *Human All Too Human* (as in the section 148 of "Poets as alleviators of life") and the pessimism of a fictional yet authorless world that marks the outlook of *Beyond Good and Evil*.

In part this issues from a reenergised attack on ontological assumptions where Nietzsche recognises art as the sign and generator of a life that is in a volatile state of becoming, rather than representing the stasis of being. This has echoes of the Dionysian/Apollonian distinction and Nietzsche does reappraise that duality in the course of his discussion of different states of intoxication in relation to artistic initiatives. Our error in recognising being as the actual condition of the world derives from enduring epistemological vanities. These are the sort that are enumerated in *Beyond Good and Evil* as part of an attack on the arguments of the cogito. At that stage in *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche points out that our confidence in ourselves as the sole cause of our own thought obscures the likelihood of thinking involving processes and agents beyond our self-awareness. Such a critique is extended by *Twilight of the Idols* as Nietzsche questions the way we project our sense of a fixed subjectivity to stabilise the being of all other entities where "...Being is thought in, foisted in everywhere as cause; only following on from the conception 'I' is the concept

'Being' derived..." (Nietzsche, 1998, 18). This is aligned by Nietzsche with other attempts to reduce life to passionless equilibrium where we might concede to external judgements about our behaviour as if we were overseen by external authorities. Instead "One is necessary, one is a piece of fate...—there is nothing which could judge...our Being, for that would mean judging...the whole..." (Nietzsche, 1998, 32).

Nietzsche's renewed identification with art as transformative leads him to acclaim the widest powers for intoxication. This state is now identified as the force which pervades every expressive action and experience, including idealisation, which far from being a repression of qualities (as we seem to encounter at first in the anti-Socratic sections of *The Birth of Tragedy*) is an exhilarated amplification of the main features of an entity. As a renewed objective in the text, the state of intoxication as an aesthetic function becomes the indispensable antidote to a metaphysics of being (rather than becoming), which once again is the target for Nietzsche's reinvigorated attacks on philosophical assumptions.

Nietzsche outlines the critical genealogy of causality in the section titled "The Four Great Errors" (Nietzsche, 1998, 28-9). We deduce our motives and ego through imagining ourselves as causes of events in the world. This is the origin for our separation and elevation away from our surroundings where we entitle ourselves to impose Being on all things. Only through immersion in aesthetic intoxication can we dissolve this artificial separation into a continuum of Becoming where our strength of involvement converts things until they are "swollen, crammed, strong, supercharged with energy" (Nietzsche, 1998, 47). Nietzsche introduces the idea of an intoxicated, yet alert, Apollonian state whose visionary power develops the detached dream-like consciousness into a more engaged form of agency.

Whatever tolerance Nietzsche feels for revolution rigidifies over time. Early writings including *The Birth of Tragedy* and "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life" suggest that radical change justifies the consequences, whereas in later work Nietzsche moves his critique into an attack on assumed values and morality as if recognising that revolutionary change may leave these intact. Such a conclusion would be close to the disenchantments of later radicals who, working in entirely different milieus, recognise that the deepest cultural and ethical changes are necessary if new political orders are not to mimic the repression of displaced regimes.

Written in his last active year, *Twilight of the Idols* introduces the new idea of the intoxicated Apollonian figure standing for the non-intervening contemplative artist set against the hyper-energised and transforming Dionysian participant, pictured here as a contrasting form of artistic identity. This new figure is a different kind of resolution to that attained between the two forces in *The Birth of Tragedy* and emphasises the removal of the sphere of art, and perhaps of acceptable music, from the ideal Dionysian ecstasy which can no longer be sustained: "Music, as we understand it nowadays,...is merely the remnant of a much fuller world of emotional expression, a mere residuum of Dionysian histrionism" (Nietzsche, 1998, 48). With neither example in this later instance is there any judgement passed by Nietzsche, whereas in *The Birth of Tragedy* there is no doubt that he privileges the Dionysian drive. In this later example then, Nietzsche maintains the formulation of a stabilising dream-like concentration by the Apollonian figure but adds the condition of intoxication as something that "keeps the eye in particular aroused, so that it receives visionary power" (Nietzsche, 1998, 48). The notion of 'arousal' is particularly interesting here for the sense of an alert engagement with one's experience of the world, in this sense a precondition to intoxication as agency. The parallel intoxication of the two drives suggests a collaborative resolve by these components of aesthetic consciousness; a reconsideration of the inebriated, instinctive Socratic intelligence. If Nietzsche does not go so far in this formulation as to indicate a metaphysical resolution to our estrangement from ourselves and our surroundings, he does strongly suggest that the pessimism of *Beyond Good and Evil* has lifted to allow for a physically and emotionally fulfilling condition under artistic actions. Furthermore, his emphasis on the effectiveness of the Dionysian, still the privileged drive, suggests that our reidentification with the world may yet redeem our errors: "...it discharges its every means of expression at one stroke, at the same time forcing out the power to represent, reproduce, transfigure, transform, every kind of mime and play-acting. The essential thing remains the ease of the metamorphosis, the inability not to react.... Dionysian man...adopts every skin, every emotion: he is constantly transforming himself" (Nietzsche, 1998, 48).

This uprooted "I", drifting as a phenomenon for contemplation amongst all others in the world, is now something that looks at itself contemplating that world which it may have neither created

nor mastered. Such a state of contemplation is linked to the concept of the world as an aesthetic phenomenon in which hierarchies dissolve and roles of maker and made interchange. This condition is set against what for Nietzsche constitutes the primary revolutionary example, The French Revolution, whose violence he derides as the revenge of a slave morality, the result of making the unequal equal and being in thrall to the "spectacle" of bloodshed and terror (Nietzsche, 1998, 72-3). Nietzsche's concept of the world as an aesthetic phenomenon, in the sense of taking the world as a subject of non-interventionist contemplation, is a compelling alternative to the activist avant-garde's totalising ambitions which take the world as malleable aesthetic material. The latter intends to transform the world from a position outside; the former occupies the role of an agent observing from within. In this second kind of relationship the process of transformation is continuous, pervasive and without differentiation between art and material. Under Nietzsche's condition of becoming for all things, this fluid metamorphosis ensures a different kind of sublation of art into life. In the conventional scenario, the actively territorializing avant-garde mimics the voice of its stable opponent to further its impact. It intends to take over, supplant and destroy that language once it has used it to establish its own more timely and fundamental agenda. By contrast, intoxication's subversion is an interpenetration of world and subject in mutual adaptation.

What initially seems a variant on the Dionysian formulation of an engulfing force is in fact particularised into an explanation of the drive behind any artistic expression. Nietzsche's intent here is to reveal intoxication as underlying all ecstatic experience irrespective of outcome. The aim of this discursus is as a prelude to a critique of Kantian aesthetics whose partiality Nietzsche intends to expose. Kant's doctrine of aesthetic effect is presaged on the subject discerning no purpose in a beautiful object that nevertheless must have the appearance of being designed for the subject's cognisance. For Nietzsche however, beauty is not at all the result of an apparently innocent concordance of an object's form with the cognitive faculties of the perceiver. Instead he underpins all artistic production and ecstatic behaviour with intoxication to emphasise that behind aesthetic responses, behind enthusiasm for beauty, is not a purposeless concordance but a fundamental self-interest: "Man in this state transforms things until they reflect his power—until they are reflections of his

perfection" (Nietzsche, 1998, 47). There is the sense here of uncontainable Dionysian force returning home to settle down. All signs of life are replete with intoxication, indeed without intoxication they hardly qualify as life. There is nothing inherent to nature that might generate this behaviour in us and instead our intoxication forces itself onto the world to make it exude an apposite response.

Conclusion

In conclusion we might ask what form of relationship with the world is presupposed by recognition of the state of intoxication. That is, to what degree it is a political, perceptual or material relationship and whether Nietzsche's redefinition of intoxication's role makes it possible for it to result in a distinctive engagement with the world. One way Nietzsche empowers ecstasy is through his account of how we make the world in the image of our desires. This emphasises engagement over the definition by Kant of a passive sensory receptive state, contained and detached in relation to that nature which generates our perceptions. Here we might define agency as an interpenetrating world and subject adapting to each other, rather than conventionally envisaging it as human impact on a separate entity. Nietzsche's questioning of Kant's claim to a passive receptive relation to the world is given definition early in *Human all too Human* where he uses the metaphor of a map's interpretation to explain how our relationship to nature has been ill-defined. In terms of the world, metaphysicians imagine an unchanging map against which speculation on the true condition of the world can or cannot be measured. However, this does not allow that the world might be something becoming, always in flux, and thus not suitable for consideration as a fixed model or map. This shifting world is really only our own creation and its map "has gradually become so marvellously variegated, frightful, meaningful, soulful, it has acquired colour—but we have been the colourists: it is the human intellect that has made appearance appear and transported its erroneous basic conceptions into things" (Nietzsche, 1986, 19). There is nothing apart from our own interests in the world and therefore no thing-in-itself. Our engagement with the world, especially under intoxication, makes things become our

own. Nietzsche's idea of spirit is as a force no different from all other living things in that it wants to dominate everything around it: "Its intention in all this is the incorporation of new 'experiences', the arrangement of new things within old divisions—growth, that is to say; more precisely, the feeling of growth, the feeling of increased power" (Nietzsche, 1990, 160).

Though Nietzsche would have us face the truth that our presence within the world shapes it to our requirements, our readiness to do this depends on us accepting responsibility for that world. In this responsibility lies the possibility for us to change our future, to fully realise ourselves as human agents. In the earlier essay "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life" the stifling grip of the map as model is anticipated by Nietzsche's account of the hold which historiography has on nineteenth-century learning. Nietzsche's impatience with Hegel's construction of a history whose ultimate end and resolution is his present-day Europe is part of his condemnation of that resignation to an impotent second-rate status as "epigones" of greater epochs: "What I do not mean therefore, is that we should live as pale and stunted late descendants of strong races coldly prolonging their life as antiquarians and gravediggers" (Nietzsche, 1997, 103-4). The only progress towards self-actualisation is by rejecting this burden of "an excess of history" (Nietzsche, 1997, 115) in order that one should "learn to live and should employ history only in the service of the life he has learned to live" (Nietzsche, 1997, 116). This is to prioritise life as an index for utilising history and not the reverse.

Furthering these objectives, intoxication is lucidity and plenitude, a saturation of perception as boundaries between subject and environment loosen. In contrast, the qualities of a sober state revert to Kantian definitions, implying distance and objectivity in face of the world where a spurious detachment qualifies our interpretations. As agents, intoxicated individuals are absorbed by their surroundings in a partial manner, making a great investment of interest in the world. As exposed, pliant and vulnerable, they see themselves being made by the world, as entities acted on by the world.

For Nietzsche one virtue of intoxication is that it is non-utilitarian in the terms of a nineteenth-century economy. Its engagement with the world is not merely to use it up but also to be used up by it. We find a similar intense expenditure with some of the cultural avant-

gardes, for example in Baudelaire's reckless adventurism on the barricades in June 1848. Even an intoxication with commodities as it becomes a feature of symbolist literature like J.K. Huysmans's *Against Nature*, and much later with Louis Aragon's *Paris Peasant*, is set against social demands regarding utility and consumption and implies a critical position against modernity. Here the entrancement with commodities is a non-productive engagement which interprets them against the grain and uses them to enhance the experience of the present.

After the discussion of concepts underlying artistic agency and the role of intoxication in challenging institutional precedents, this thesis looks more specifically at some of the cultural examples that so far have only been barely delineated. In the first two chapters Hegel's arguments for the decline of art and Nietzsche's elaboration of *Rausch* initiate the development of a framework for understanding the emergence of critical art within modernity. As the grip of consumption develops under capitalism, Hegel and Nietzsche in opposing ways define culture as valuable through its difference from that process. Hegel defines an art that is secure in its sensuous autonomy while Nietzsche sees the validity of art in its immersion in the process of change that evades or undermines an economy of meaning and accountability.

In the following chapters is a more explicit discussion of the political realities facing artists and writers who must secure places, sometimes contradictory, within this economy of consumption. The first three instances are explored through the analysis made by Benjamin of the conditions for production facing nineteenth and early twentieth-century writers. The final chapter bridges this entire historical period by comparing the writing of Fourier and Aragon. The chapter that immediately follows looks more closely at Baudelaire whose work has already been mentioned in relation to the ideas of Hegel and Nietzsche. Here he is taken as exemplifying avant-gardist strategies out of which develop artefacts questioning the limited role assigned to artists and writers and formulating attacks on the conditions of the society by which they are sponsored.

Chapter 3

Benjamin, Baudelaire and Politics

Introduction

In this chapter the thesis moves from discussion of an aesthetics formed under the impact of modernity to a detailed look at one writer whose production is located at the centre of these forces. Where Hegel and Nietzsche's arguments look in from the periphery, Baudelaire's writing registers the effects of modernity at the place where its impact is strongest. It is in Paris at the middle of the nineteenth century that a developing milieu of consumption is confronted by a newly-radicalised cultural opposition within which Baudelaire plays evolving roles including revolutionary, aesthete, critic and poet. In that it documents the physical evidence of this impact, his work becomes a materialist counterpart to the conceptual insights Nietzsche directs against those forces which, identified as 'progress', mask a social and intellectual rigidity. Baudelaire's work also brings into sharp perspective the social and economic conditions that in Marx's critique are claimed to underlay Hegel's conception of spirit.

The impact of modernity on Baudelaire's writing is related here to the possibilities of avant-gardism in the mid-nineteenth century. It looks at this relation through Walter Benjamin's extensive writing on Baudelaire asking why, in consideration of intoxication and politics, Baudelaire is such an important focus for him. The case is made here for seeing intoxication as central to nineteenth-century economic life, with the primary intoxication being the bourgeoisie's surrender to commodities as a function of capital's grip on the organisation of all production and labour in the process of creating a sphere of consumption. Where effective revolt in the nineteenth century is understood to depend on an alliance of proletariat and bourgeoisie, this intoxication within the marketplace becomes an important factor preventing anything that might be seen as a successful outcome.

It is especially through Benjamin's commentaries on the political dimension of Baudelaire's work that we can trace the debilitation of the early cultural avant-garde's confidence in its own agency. Baudelaire's dramatic political and literary reorientations provide a commentary on the loss of potentiality that confronts nineteenth-century activists and of all Benjamin's writing it is the 1938 essay "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire" which most clearly plots this process of decline. Significantly, the three parts of the essay propose types which in chronological sequence frame Baudelaire's biography, even as he devotes his career to writing about them. It would seem appropriate then to assess whether the three historical-temporal categories which that essay establishes for Baudelaire's evolution successfully serve as markers of the nineteenth-century's impact on people's capacity for change. "The *Bohème*" is concerned with the circumstances for violent revolution culminating in the brief period of Baudelaire's involvement in the 1848 barricades. This is the category in which the conventional image of the activist avant-garde is found. "The Flâneur" marks Baudelaire's move from revolutionary intoxication to poet-observer and wanderer, taking a critical position towards the commodity as a decoy impeding genuine change. In Benjamin's interpretation the flâneur prospers as a remote observer of the city's crowd, hardly touched by its stresses. In contrast, the hero as the proponent of the third category, "Modernism", is barely able to survive, enveloped by the crowd and overwhelmed by the impact of the city. "Modernism" defines Baudelaire's attunement towards microcosms of ecstatic experience

with his idea of the contemporary hero as poet, composer or urban poor, who manages to survive and find some pleasure against all odds.

This final category relates to Baudelaire's disenchantment, especially towards the end of his life, with his previous opportunities for engagement. Those themes such as commodity, intoxication and resistance, that are central to understanding nineteenth-century politics and economy, become modified under Benjamin's treatment in each of the three categories. In terms of the entire thesis these are themes which have recurrently confronted any formulation of avant-gardism. The pervasive image of the commodity, for example, swirls around flâneur and impoverished hero intoxicating the former while ignoring the latter. This chapter will discuss these themes at length. Benjamin considers them emblematic of nineteenth-century modernity as it is marked by the formation of an industrial economic underclass alongside a wealthy middle class inhabiting cities undergoing massive architectural and engineering transformation. The access these two classes have to commodities determines the different kinds of future they envisage. For the wealthy an improved future is ensured by the flow of commodities and the scientific innovation they represent. The only access the impoverished industrialised classes have to commodities is during their production: "The world exhibitions were training schools in which the masses, barred from consuming, learned empathy with exchange value. 'Look at everything; touch nothing.'" (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 201).

The texts of primary interest in this context are those of Benjamin's from the 1930s which discuss Baudelaire. The extensive reflections and quotations forming the *The Arcades Project* are underway from 1928 and remain unfinished at Benjamin's death in 1940. Growing from this work are a number of essays and introductory segments such as the Exposé titled "Paris—the Capital of the Nineteenth Century" written in 1935 and revised and enlarged in 1939 as a condensed explanation of the entire project made in the hope of attracting publishers. Benjamin's "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire", which is used here as a schema, draws extensively from *The Arcades Project* material to elaborate the political environment of a radical nineteenth-century poet. A year later, in response to Adorno's comments, Benjamin writes "Some Motifs in Baudelaire" which elicits less salient motivations of the poetry, paying special attention to the function of memory in relation to

the shocks underlying experience in nineteenth-century Paris. In the sense that “Some Motifs in Baudelaire” reflects on the means of survival in the nineteenth century it is a developed reprise of the last of Benjamin’s Baudelairean categories, modernism and the hero.

“Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire” was intended as the central section of a three-part book on the poet based on material from *The Arcades Project*. Since it draws from the same source as the Exposé there is some overlap with their range of contents. Being an extended essay of nearly a hundred pages, “Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire” fills out the often pithy pronouncements of the earlier Exposé versions and develops lines of thought in unanticipated directions. Its division into the three categories already introduced, holds its focus on Baudelaire instead of on any of the other emblematic individuals like Fourier, Daguerre or Haussmann, who in the Exposé constitute the agents of Parisian modernity.

Bohemian

Baudelaire’s assumption of the rôle of revolutionary was swift following his witnessing the bayonetting of protesters by municipal guards at the start of the 1848 uprising in February when he was out with Gustave Courbet. He stayed on the barricades during that initial conflict and returned to resume fighting at a far more dangerous time in June. The language Baudelaire chooses to describe his experience illuminates the extent of his absorption in the campaign. He speaks of his “drunkenness” of 1848 while the accounts of his appearance on the barricades of the Carrefour de Buci (where some of the most intense fighting occurred), immaculately dandified and hunting rifle in hand, suggest someone carried away with exhilaration. At this point he is reported to have shouted for the death of General Aupick, his stepfather and a retired officer. According to Richard D. E. Burton, his feelings can be grasped from the language of the two issues of *Le Salut Public* which he co-founded: “the Republic is airborne, intoxicating the lungs like perfume” (Burton, 1991, 104 [my translation]). His work from May to June 1848 as an editor for *La Tribune Nationale*, a radical daily which supported Proudhon indicates that “Baudelaire was placed firmly on the left of Parisian politics as the confrontation between bourgeois republicans and their radical,

largely working-class, adversaries approached its climax” (Burton, 1991, 114). In the midst of the June insurrection he was met by a colleague who was taken aback by his anxious and troubled demeanour, inviting the National Guard to smell the gunpowder on his fingers, one of the many tests for classifying prisoners as insurgents and in all likelihood condemning them to death. It seems probable that poems like “Cain and Abel” and “The Litanies of Satan” date from that time. Both aggressively acclaim the cause of the dispossessed with the race of Cain understood as the proletariat. As we will see more extensively later, the list of those in Satan’s care hyperbolise those whom Baudelaire feels qualify for the status of contemporary hero, including drunks, prostitutes, thieves, and revolutionaries, those outcast from a society whose prosperity is increasing the gap between wealthy and deprived: “Those who from the scaffold dost give that calm and proud/Demeanour to the felon, which condemns the crowd/Satan have pity upon me in my deep distress!” (Baudelaire, 1936, 117).

For Benjamin, it is only as this rage of Baudelaire’s abates that he becomes more subtle and effective in his opposition. At this stage, we are told, he is no more insightful than those professional conspirators whose only aim is to violently hurl themselves against the government, and who are equally incensed by those who would diligently organise the resistance and inform the proletariat. Of course this position of Benjamin’s is familiar from his earlier work on the conditions for effective radical action, explored more fully in the next chapter. The extent of his support for the Surrealist programme of opposition as a combination of organised rebellion and cultural revolt reappears here under a critique of 1848 naivete as being neither of the two. Benjamin feels he recognises Auguste Blanqui in the “The Litanies of Satan”. Besides Blanqui’s pre-eminent status amongst the revolutionaries in terms of his ability, as Benjamin explains, to catalyse revolutionary action even before conditions are right, this “likeness” may be due as much to the complete abandonment of the poor by any other authority.

The analogy with Blanqui places “The Litanies of Satan” in a key position within the *The Flowers of Evil*. The “flowers” of the title would be his children, the damaged and “fatherless/Whom God from Eden thrust in terror and nakedness” (Baudelaire, 1936, 121), where this God is the capitalism of modernity that has created the underclass to which the

book gives voice and image. On Baudelaire's poetry Benjamin writes here that it "supported the oppressed, though it espoused their illusions as well as their cause. It has an ear for the chants of the revolution and also for the 'higher voice' which spoke for the drumroll of the executions" (Benjamin, 1997, [i], 26). Insofar as there is a potent revolutionary voice in these poems, Benjamin sees its effectiveness in Baudelaire's ability to sustain "duplicity", to hold onto a vestige of loyalty towards that which everything in him rebels against. This inclination is perhaps most visible in Baudelaire's letters as they document his attempts to transfer to his mother and Ancelle, his trustee, some of the unbearable financial pressure and continuous stress from which he suffers. He may rail in fury against them but will retain much tolerance, even love, which can be coaxed back into full bloom at a short notice, even within the same letter. In terms of the poems, something of this "duplicity" is seen in the "The Rebel" with its inversion of meritoriousness from liberator to ingrate. The angel that descends in order to command preparedness for the coming Christ demands from the unfortunate passerby, held by his hair, that he "love, without making a face,/The poor, the deformed, the depraved, the uncivil, the dirty, the dumb" (Baudelaire, 1936, 109). The more insistent the demands, the more the response "I will not!". The angel's request would seem fair enough and within the bounds of Baudelaire's own wishes, yet the poem's subtlety lies in the understanding that this amounts to a bourgeois insistence on Christian philanthropy at the expense of the proletariat. What it allegorises then is the bourgeois unwillingness to participate in revolutionary struggle when it really counts.

This option of an alternative moderate route to social improvement will stymie any attempt by revolutionaries to develop a structure that could viably include the middle class. Benjamin writes that the 1871 Commune finally ended the revolutionary's phantasmagoria that the bourgeoisie would combine forces with the proletariat in restoring the Republic (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 12). For Benjamin, the philanthropic movement provides cover for the bourgeois battle against the proletariat. Baudelaire's "The Rebel" exposes the phantasmagoria long before 1871. Its allegory is compelling because it unmaskes the sophistication of the contest's duplicitousness.

It seems significant that in the section "V [Conspiracies, *Compagnonnage*]" of *The Arcades Project*, there is long quote from Marx and Engels on the bohemian conspirator resenting the

organisation of any uprising: “For them, the only condition for revolution is the adequate preparation of their conspiracy...they have the profoundest contempt for the more theoretical enlightenment of the proletariat about their class interests” (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 606). Marx and Engels, here reviewing a book on conspirators, are the kind of theoretician planners who arouse such distaste and one purpose of this kind of commentary would be to discredit irresponsible elements in favour of systematic revolt. This is a milieu of “professional conspirators” whose insecure livelihood, tavern existence and reckless adventurism in battle is considered in these accounts as an apogee of bohemian life. Although there is no doubt that Communist action would benefit from this kind of commitment and self-sacrifice at the time of insurrection, the tendency over the last part of the nineteenth century would be to move towards organisation and planning and away from “chaotic thinking and blinkered obsessions” (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 606).

If such actions could be classified as one tendency of avant-garde agitation, it would fail to establish more than the powerfully symbolic legacy of two Paris uprisings. In the long term, successful activism would involve the suppression of unpredictable revolt in favour of structured Communism. This repressed returns as intoxication with the Surrealists, and of course Benjamin, who give new propulsion to the legacy of bohemian irresponsibility by claiming unstructured cultural revolt as a vital component of successful Communist revolution. This sudden reversal of the historical determination of Communism may help to explain Benjamin’s great interest in Blanqui who is the subject of many of *The Arcades Project* quotations and remarks. The Blanquist confrères given grudging admiration by Marx and Engels anticipate the Surrealists’ aimless anarchic energy but are testing this in the context of actual struggle: “They leap at inventions which are supposed to work revolutionary miracles: incendiary bombs, destructive devices of magic effect, revolts which are expected to be all the more miraculous and astonishing in effect as their basis is less rational” (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 606).

Benjamin writes of the withdrawal of working class labour during the uprisings of the mid-nineteenth century effecting a reordering of the way the city is used. Besides claiming an imperial grandeur for France modelled on Roman street planning, Haussman’s restructuring of Paris with wide boulevards leading directly through the heart of the city has been seen as

enabling the accelerated march of troops from barracks to point of revolt. Benjamin notes several such examples in convolute “E [Haussmannization, Barricade Fighting]” of *The Arcades Project*. Even at the time there were justifications of the developments from the point of view of their impeding insurrection and Haussmann himself defends the extension of Boulevard de Strasbourg as opening up what had been a rebellious sector (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 121). Such urban planning would also have improved the city’s commerce by speeding the transport of goods and by setting up arterial routes enabling efficient access to more remote quarters. In 1848 and again in 1871, when even Haussmann’s wider boulevards were blocked, the barricades furthered the revolutionaries’ aims by preventing large areas of the city from functioning normally. Benjamin provides evidence that Haussmann did not entirely acknowledge the commercial potential of his reconstruction of Paris. Critical of the commercial exploitation of the city, he complains of the lack of “municipal sentiment” of those using Paris for pleasure, consumption and business instead of treating it as an environment for living in the broadest sense (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 128). Having created the conditions for the wealthy to speculate on profits from compulsory housing purchases, perhaps Haussmann is engaged in rearguard defensiveness here. Lest he be accused of collusion he is pointing to other non-commercial values behind his work.

There are many kinds of “municipal sentiment” and the rebels’ motivation for fighting would include developing the means to live well in *their* city. Benjamin quotes Jean Cassou: “Each man will return to his neighbourhood, his native turf, to the streetcorner where it is good to live and bravely die—the traditional barricade!” (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 792). The barricades impede the movement of troops who aim to restore functionality to the city and reopen the streets for business. In relation to the latent utopian content of nineteenth-century structures the ephemeral barricades seem imbued with a different idealism. As crude blockages to the city’s network they embody the dream of preventing the flow of commodities and the crowds accompanying them and of claiming back the city for cooperative, ideally egalitarian, action as against the passive and exclusionary communal activities of consumerism. This latent content is not just seen in their obstructive role but importantly in the possibility of opening new routes through the city. Amongst accounts concerning the June 1848 uprising is one that

describes an alternative “communicating system between various roads which the rebels have established across houses, gardens and open land in several parts of the city, especially in the faubourg du Temple” with such effectiveness that they could pass from one barricade to another without exposing themselves to enemy fire (Price, 1996, 90). Fuelling the revolt was resentment at the dislocations forced on inhabitants of poor quarters under the boulevard extensions. It was widely understood that beneficiaries of the lavish compensations for sequestration of property included politicians whose ongoing house purchases were informed by early knowledge of Haussmann’s plans. Benjamin also notes accounts of these improvised arcades driven through houses adjacent to the barricades (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 135). They stand as a symbolic antithesis to the commercial arcades whose penetration through existing housing, as a speculation on the demand for sheltered access to high-quality commodities, is effectively inaccessible to the proletariat.

If the bourgeoisie moved slowly through the arcades, the rebels ran through theirs. The events at 12 Rue Transnonain in the 1834 uprising made it clear how important it was to have the possibility of fleeing safely from the barricades. Here royalist troops were able to massacre the inhabitants of a building adjacent to a barricade since they were left without escape routes. Benjamin writes in 1926 of Rue Transnonain in the context of the obsolescence of barricade fighting. The streets are now to be left empty and the adjacent buildings secured: “You tramp into the interiors, piercing through the walls” (Buck-Morss, 1989, 317), while out in the deserted street the landmine accomplishes more effectively what the barricade had once achieved. For those securing it, the public aspect of the barricade was important. Its very exposure afforded a visibility to the resistance that subterfuge would not have achieved. If the consumption of commodities is to take place in full view of those excluded then so would the obstruction of progressive commercialisation in the form of the barricades. At the end of the 1871 Commune, the final act of resistance which sets fire to the city is most explicit in destroying commercial opportunities. An unusual recuperation of this image of passageways knocked through buildings is in Tony Moilin’s 1869 fantasy “Paris en l’an 2000” as cited by Benjamin in the convolute on Fourier. Possibly Moilin is inspired more by the commercial arcades themselves rather than their revolutionary version, yet there is something of that

expedient puncturing through property about his plan for galleries running along all Paris city blocks (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 53). He imagines a future socialist government commandeering second-storey floors in all buildings so as to establish a continuous weatherproof walkway around the city. Perhaps the megalomania of Haussmann's boulevard projects lends probability to such ludicrous schemes which clearly also derive from Fourier's street-galleries and imagine the phalanstery brought back to the city which it had once rejected.

For Benjamin, Blanqui's fate as the quintessential pre-communist revolutionary is the same as all those whom Marx calls "alchemists of the revolution" (Benjamin, 1997, [i], 17); those who presume to convert raw, if justifiable anger into rebellion without comprehending the deeper structure of nineteenth-century economics, which of course would have to include the ineluctable logic of the commodity. Benjamin's reflections on the conclusion of Blanqui's revolutionary career suggest that he felt it necessary for any disenchantment with commodity fetishism to be extended to its apparent opposite, the nineteenth-century aspiration to violent revolutionary action as a means of social transformation. The debate with which Benjamin is engaged in his 1929 essay on Surrealism stresses the need for insurrection to involve both sustained political organisation and cultural transformation. Although there seems to be recognition of Blanqui's position as corresponding to Surrealist antagonisms sixty years later, Benjamin stresses that anarchist's targets and methods were entirely immediate. In a significant note in *The Arcades Project* Benjamin discusses Blanqui's disdain for the future as an emotion coming naturally to one whose class hatred compels him merely to pull humanity back from the brink without troubling about what to do with it afterwards. Blanqui's antagonism to bourgeois rule entails rejection of all their principles, the most cherished of which might be "progress": "The activity of a professional revolutionary such as Blanqui does not presuppose any faith in progress; it presupposes only the determination to do away with present injustice... He always refused to develop plans for what comes later" (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 339). Blanqui's disgust at Haussmann's transformations, "this vast shifting of stones by the hand of absolutism" (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 144), makes unexpected recourse to possible future benefits in order to damn the developments which "have failed the future no less than the present" (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 144). Yet this was before the failure of the 1871 Commune and the pessimism of his prison writings.

The 1939 Exposé adds an introduction and conclusion. The latter is a grim valediction to the revolutionary idealism of Blanqui who ended his life in prison writing a nihilistic appraisal of the possibilities for political progress in *L'Eternité par les astres*. It is as if Benjamin wants to reveal the shortcomings of intoxications which take root only in the present and do not extend their realm to engage with the remote past and the, as yet unimaginable, future. In this sense revolutionary action is disabled by a lack of theory, as Benjamin stresses at the end of Part VI, "Haussmann, or the Barricades". The lack of revolutionary theory that in the 1935 Exposé was called a "misfortune" is in the 1939 version called "fatal". The enthusiasm that was enabled by this lack of theory attracted the best of the bourgeois such as Courbet and Rimbaud, but also caused them to succumb to their own worst violent tendencies. Blanqui is immobilised by his conviction of innumerable parallel and identical universes in each of which he is condemned to struggle to achieve change which, if successful, will only apply to that universe and not to any of the others: "Here, nonetheless, lies a great drawback: there is no progress... What we call 'progress' is confined to each particular world, and vanishes with it" (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 26). In this negative appraisal lies the significance of Benjamin's "wish images" that condense the overlooked or forgotten impulses of earlier generations into artefacts whose potential must be realised in the future, if there are those to awaken them. This is the antidote to commodification, as if the arcades were a Trojan horse within the architecture of capital. Such impulses originate in a passion for community (related perhaps to what Nietzsche imagines as constituting the Dionysian drive), and against that other intoxication, whose cost is subjection to commerce, they oppose the ecstasy of interpersonal engagement and prosperity.

Flâneur

If intoxication is pivotal to nineteenth-century economic life, as the introduction promised to articulate, then it is from the perspective of the flâneur that the drama of resistance and then capitulation can be seen in sharpest detail. The flâneur initially drifts outside the economic and social circles of the bourgeoisie, establishing a semi-independent milieu from where others' consumption can be observed, and then ends up circulating in the marketplace

like every other labourer. The spectacle over which the flâneur watches is the bourgeoisie's immersion in commodities. Their surrender incurs the bourgeoisie neither financial nor political cost since the prevalence of commodities ideologically strengthens their class position. Commodities engage conspiratorially with modernity's concept of progress to make plausible the claim that commerce enables the best that the future has to offer. Without commodities illustrating the notion of beneficent progress, a stable and prosperous future can only seem a remote myth, which accounts for Blanqui's vehement arguments against notions of social development.

This concept of progress has been described by Calinescu as one of two antagonistic strains of modernity. A bourgeois modernity has progress as a doctrine acclaiming the benefits of technology and science while commodifying labour, time and goods. In this scenario the bourgeois modernity is opposed by a cultural version (emerging as what can be called an avant-garde) which promotes an explicitly utopian future in the place of technological progress and opposes bourgeois standards with acutely negative strategies. In the early nineteenth century pejoratives issuing from the avant-garde like 'vulgar' and 'philistine' pertained not to uneducated taste but to the banality and practical interests of bourgeois economic and cultural ambitions. The most explicit manifestation of these aesthetic oppositions would be *l'art pour l'art* standing as a rejection of bourgeois economic interests and utilitarianism. As an example of this, Calinescu quotes Théophile Gautier writing in 1835: "Nothing is really beautiful unless it serves no end; everything useful is ugly" (Calinescu, 1987, 45 [my translation]).

For Bürger, in its developed form as aestheticism *l'art pour l'art* is the bridge to the early twentieth-century avant-garde. Aestheticism's rejection of the means-ends rationality of bourgeois economy, by making a non-utilitarian art, provides a basis for the avant-garde to devise a new praxis for art: "Only an art the contents of whose individual works is wholly distinct from the (bad) praxis of the existing society can be the center that can be the starting point for the organisation of a new life praxis" (Bürger, 1984, 49-50). Baudelaire approaches this degree of an oppositional aesthetic as seen in his essay on Constantine Guys, "The Painter of Modern Life", which appears to celebrate the straightforward documentation of the superficial fashions and pursuits of contemporary Parisians. As with Gautier though there

is a corrective ethical aspect to this commentary where Baudelaire treats some of Guy's work as highly critical of sectors of bourgeois society.

Although ecstatic states uniformly entail suspension of a conventional sense of time, the different political conditions for intoxication reveal various temporalities involving a denial of the present, where the present means actual living conditions. Previously unseen and yet suddenly indispensable, nineteenth-century commodities claim to be the future in the present. Their beguiling demeanour represents the bourgeoisie's intention to be the sole agents for the future. In fact their attempt to rigidify the conditions for the future effects a perpetuated, rather than evolving present. This propaganda of beneficial change is intended to cast other proponents of evolution in a negative light, where the future promised by revolutionaries or by the poor would be seen to guarantee a permanent destabilisation. Additionally, the production of commodities commands a huge workforce whose enjoyment of them will have to be largely deferred. For the workers of Baudelaire's poems like "The Ragpicker's Wine", ecstatic states are a release from an intolerable present, where inebriation springs across and obliterates time: "But stumbling like a poet lost in dreams;/He pours his heart out in stupendous schemes" (Baudelaire, 1963, 136). Not surprisingly, the intoxication of revolutionary action is at an extreme remove from the bourgeois intoxication with commodities. Since the future of that commodified present is unchanging, revolutionaries aim to move beyond the possibility of a return to the present without allowing a concern for the future to predetermine their actions. Their horizon, exposed critically by Marx and Engels, is the destruction of current realities and excludes a vision of the future.

Taking his cue from Baudelaire's writing, in "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire" Benjamin describes the immersion in the life of the city as a communal intoxication. He notes that in Baudelaire's prose poem "Crowds" it is the commodity which is speaking for every participant of the throng: "What we call love is a very small, restricted, feeble thing compared with this ineffable orgy, this divine prostitution of the soul giving itself entire, all its poetry and all its charity, to the unexpected as it comes along, to the stranger as he passes" (Baudelaire, 1970, [i], 20). Benjamin is attracted by that aspect of Baudelaire's work which draws an anatomy of occluded features of nineteenth-century Parisian society as affected by

the forces of modernity. Clearly the same economic pressures lie behind the pervasiveness of the commodity as maintain an urban underclass who can only look on as the commodities pass by. As one of the psychological and physical casualties of these forces, Baudelaire serves as his own subject. Knowing the ubiquity and scale of nineteenth-century consumption invites certain poems in *The Flowers of Evil* to be read as allegories of an overwhelming materialist seduction. “The Fountain of Blood”, “The Vampire” and “Metamorphoses of the Vampire” use imagery of exhausting sexual encounters to speak of a process where the intoxicated engagement between subject and commodity presupposes the body’s condition as expendable material: “As blood runs in the lists, round tumbled armoured bones,/It soaks the city, islanding the paving-stones” (Baudelaire, 1936, p61).

Yet Baudelaire is especially attuned to the condition of his contemporaries who are marginalised by the drive towards prosperity and urban rationalisation. In a sense it is the failure of the avant-garde, of which he is a part, both to effect significant social transformation and to forestall the following wave of repressive reaction that has a physiological impact on Baudelaire. His own career is witness to the avant-garde never having the opportunity to even begin its agenda of social transformation following its naming by Saint-Simon in the 1830s. Baudelaire’s failure on the barricades in 1848 was not just that of the possibility of artists’ militant engagement but the failure of an entire kind of improvisatory insurrectionary response that brought together different social groups under one cause. As we have seen Benjamin emphasising, this form of inspired urban insurrection helped justify longterm forces of reaction such as the obliteration of poor neighbourhoods under the rationalisation of Paris streets by Haussmann. Furthermore, the infrequency of Baudelaire’s more explicit aesthetic opposition, as seen in the wine poems (“The Soul of Wine”, “The Raggicker’s Wine”, “The Murderer’s Wine”, “The Solitary’s Wine”, “Lover’s Wine”) and the poems of revolt (“The Denial of Saint Peter”, “Abel and Cain”, “Litany to Satan”) testifies to his own ambivalence as to its effectiveness within his overall project of critically exposing a subterranean modernity. Illuminating the predicament of artistic opposition, Benjamin focuses attention on the unavoidability of the marketplace for creative producers. Like the flâneur, the poet enters the marketplace looking for patronage since there

is no longer any alternative in a society where each person's labour is as much a commodity as any produce. The unendurable financial pressure resulting from Baudelaire's own unmarketability is an example of the fate of a writer whose approach is not merely *new* (not harmful in itself) but whose newness consists in reflecting back onto the marketplace the evidence of its degradations. If we take this aesthetic position as a function of Baudelaire's inveterate avant-gardism then the short-term failure of *The Flowers of Evil* to galvanise supporters and focus anger would be typical of the fate of artistic opposition. His evolving strategy by the time of *Paris Spleen* of aggressive withdrawal into an aestheticism faceted with barbed political invective testifies further to the tenuousness of oppositional artistic positions. This defensive corner is all that is left to a mid-nineteenth-century opposing figure and it is full of self-loathing, false victories, raw sensitivities, and desperation.

Baudelaire's ability to engage with life in nineteenth-century Paris suffers from his disillusionment over the collapse of the 1848 Commune (in which, by fighting on into June, he proved a far more engaged insurrectionist than most intellectuals) to the point where he relates most profoundly to images of others still more damaged than himself by the city of which they once attempted to wrest control. Benjamin looks at Baudelaire as a crucial recorder of the impact of modernity not just as a bystander but as someone on whom modernity leaves scars indexical of adverse social and economic forces. Baudelaire's psychological precariousness is exacerbated by poverty which exposes him for most of his career to creditors and exploitative publishers. He is particularly vulnerable to these pressures because he cannot close off his sensitive attunement to the degrading fabric of the city. While he works hard to advance the reception of his work (even to the extent in 1861 of counterproductively approaching a horrified Academy for a post), his cultural marginalisation is worsened by his insistence on representing an ennobled Parisian underclass which his bourgeois public would shut out of view. His attraction towards underground forms of resistance as emblems antithetical to the luminous and improved future on which bourgeois prosperity was predicated made Baudelaire's work run deeply against the grain. Unlike the flâneur at ease within the flow of social extremes, Baudelaire does not have much to do with the languorous prosperity of a society enmeshed in the fiction of benevolent commodities.

Instead he is especially attracted by those people whose modernity amounts to heroic survival in the city—the ragpickers, prostitutes, widows and elderly, for example.

The conditions for the ascendancy of the nineteenth-century commodity entail improved industrial production and an increase in wealthy consumers. However, it is as if the commodity is also an indicator of widespread optimism in social transformation through economic progress. The success of world fairs as they parade commodities for scrutiny, the development of the arcades which afford a new arena for shopping and congregation, the success of new technologies of scrutiny (photography, dioramas, early moving images) and of department stores later on in the century, reveal a public entranced by the spectacle of prosperity where the representation of a better future is embodied by the new visionary architecture as part of what Benjamin calls the phantasmagoria of desirable phenomena of the period. It is necessary to consider whether one can distinguish between the impact of the glass and iron architecture in its raw state and the experience of the buildings once full of items to buy or marvel at. Benjamin considers the arcades and other nineteenth-century technological wonders once their commercial potential has waned, that is once they can be returned to functionlessness. Inevitably then, he credits the invention behind their design as the source of these dormant utopian energies he wants released. In the nineteenth century the arcades and exhibition halls would be filled with commodities and kitsch to the extent that any visionary qualities would be supplanted by commercial purpose and quite literally obscured by the goods on show.

In sections of *The Arcades Project* Benjamin quotes frequently from Siegfried Giedion's *Architecture in Germany*. Giedion's particular interests are in the impact on architecture of new technologies and he provides extensive material on the development of iron construction techniques. Benjamin quotes Giedion's rather incomplete observations regarding the motives and impact of the vast nineteenth-century iron and glass exhibition halls: "Apart from indubitably utilitarian motives, the century wanted to generate a vision of the human cosmos, as launched in a new movement." (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 175). To add weight to this idea Giedion cites the publicity for the *Exposition Universelle*, 1897, which uses visionary terminology to explain how a walk around the circular structure is like a trip around a world

exceptionally at peace, “Just as, at the origin of things, the divine spirit was hovering over the orb of the waters, so now it hovers over this orb of iron” (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 176). In his later work *Space, Time and Architecture*, Giedion tries to discern how the glass and iron architecture attains this new goal. He notes the social importance of the exhibitions in terms of bringing people together at a time when leisure was no longer part of daily life.

Notwithstanding their political and economic purpose, they were somehow removed from the demands of everyday life as if they sustained a celebratory holiday atmosphere. To understand an equivalent effect in architectural terms it may help to remember the lingering impact of seaside piers, stretching out to sea as absurdly over-embellished promenades, literally removing visitors from the context of their usual life while bombarding them with visual distractions. Giedion tries to elicit the phenomenon but gets no further than suggesting that behind the exhibitions’ functional interpretation of human needs lay “a new feeling” (Giedion, 1967, 183), a spatial experience triggered by the challenge facing the visitor in determining distance and structure in such an unfamiliar and scintillating interior. This experience intimated some sense of a new social interaction. He quotes a visitor to the Crystal Palace who succeeds in conjuring up the irreality of the experience: “If we let our gaze travel downward it encounters the blue-painted lattice girders. At first these occur only at wide intervals; then they range closer and closer together until they are interrupted by a dazzling band of light—the transept—which dissolves into a distant background where all materiality is blended into the atmosphere...It is sober economy of language if I call the spectacle incomparable and fairylike. It is a Midsummer Night’s Dream seen in the clear light of midday” (Giedion, 1967, 189). Of course this takes place when the space is full of its distractions, suggesting that against all odds it is possible to have an spatially intoxicating experience that may not entirely be to do with commodification.

Giedion makes the surprising remark of the Crystal Palace architect Joseph Paxton that it was his experience as a gardener that affected the construction, bringing together a “curious association of an unmistakable grandeur with a certain gentleness” that remained unique in architecture. Giedion implies that some unprecedented transformative effect persisted through all the mixed motives of the exhibitions and his account touches on the melancholy

of its subsequent disappearance under the weight of functionality. The truncation of this effect would relate to the utopian force which Benjamin sees repressed in these architectural examples. One thing that does repress this outcome is the nineteenth century's affection for ornament, an attachment that is a function of commerce while being opposed to the rationality of industrialisation. Ornamentation stands as the reassertion of nature in the face of its supercession by manufactured goods. The repletion of the Crystal Palace's claustrophobic displays such as the Medieval Court (where entire altars would compete for attention amongst potted plants and display cabinets) or the massed anthropomorphic taxidermy tableaux make a convincing stand against industrialisation. Celeste Olalquiagia writes, "Rather than its reaching for a utopian 'natural' experience through technology, one could say the Crystal Palace's best-kept secret was its justified fear of losing a world that it loved all too well but was slowly sacrificing to scientific and industrial progress" (Olalquiagia, 1999, 42). Commercial trading and its structures in nineteenth-century Paris then become a mirage of desirability where a sector of the visible world is cut off from the rest and elevated into a bewitching realm. It is this realm which Benjamin sees represented best by Grandville's fantasy images of a universe transformed by a viral-like commodification. If this is a fiction, yet with a dimension of socialist utopian aspirations, the real and brutal present is in the streets used by Baudelaire's subjects whose desperate need defers any pleasure they might gain in speculation about the future.

It is the transition from radical to flâneur which is of interest here and Benjamin introduces this change at the end of the first section of "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire" with an economic evaluation of the *feuilleton* writer's work. The journalist lounges on the boulevard exhibiting his leisure as if it were work. If Marx's equation for the evaluation of commodities can be carried forward to all occupations, then the time the writer takes to supply the *feuilleton* gives it the highest value. The furtiveness of the writer's engagement with the market that was noted in the Exposé is here underlined: "Baudelaire knew what the true situation of the man of letters was: he goes to the marketplace as a flâneur, supposedly to take a look at it, but in reality to find a buyer" (Benjamin, 1997, [i], 34).

"The Flâneur" makes this observation its main focus. If the writer is to find a client then the

rules of the commodity's solicitation must apply. The fact that the flâneur's leisurely observation rests uneasily on the edge of productivity ultimately adds value to the goods. The genre of physiognomies involving "botanizing on the asphalt" (Benjamin, 1997, [i], 36) in an exhaustive cataloguing of the widest possible range of Parisian types, presupposes that authors have granted passersby their fair due of idling insightfulness. These physiognomies however, only read off the surface of their subject as if this plenitude of observation might more effectively mask the political realities beneath. Benjamin notes Baudelaire's perception that the limitation of the physiognomies to descriptions of personality is an innocuous distraction in face of the complex motivations affecting the nineteenth-century city resident. To survive in the city, Benjamin continues, you need to be able to think like a commodity, divining a person's interests rather than merely recognising their personality. It is not just that this approach must be used by the flâneur to find a client but that the fortunes of all inhabitants can now be divided according to whether they have skillfully recognised others' interests or not. To a great extent, Baudelaire's ability to reveal this mercenary reality through his poetry accounts for his failure to attract a wide audience in his lifetime. This is not the reality of the city which contemporaries expected to have to confront. It accounts for Benjamin's interest in Baudelaire since the latter was able to picture the process, as it happened, by which the entire structure of social relations was becoming commodified. Those disturbed by Baudelaire's poetry would have recognised his subjects—the poor, old clowns, widows—as those who had failed to discern their colleagues' interests and had become passed over in turn. The market consists of commodities facing off in determinations of each other's interests and those unable to acquire this skill become dropped from circulation.

It is Benjamin's insight regarding Baudelaire's depiction of the city that the behaviour of individuals in the crowd resembles the strategy of the commodity, although the flâneur has yet to realise this. To make this point Benjamin extends Marx's well-known observation regarding the delusion of the commodity that appears to flex its value with a mind all of its own. The arcade and the department store increase the means for commodities to conspire in reaching out to customers and in separating clients from those with no means. For customers, such synthetic environments offer freedom from the threat of traffic, with the

arcade reassuringly turning the street into an interior and the department store making the interior into a street. All of this enables customers to better concentrate on what is offered. Furthermore, it is the flâneur who moves with the crowds so that after years spent observing them circulate the arcades, he now serves them as a salesman in the department stores. In a 1939 letter to Adorno, Benjamin describes this eventual capitulation: "...the flâneur attunes himself to the commodity: he imitates it completely; in the absence of any demand for him, namely a market price, he makes himself at home in venality itself. The flâneur outdoes the whore in this; he, as it were, takes her abstract concept for a walk. Only in the flâneur's final incarnation does he fulfil the concept: namely, as the man with a sandwich board" (Benjamin, 1994, 598).

Benjamin's extension of Marx's witticism also becomes an elaboration of the idea of the intoxicated commodity. For Marx the table as commodity is inebriated with its new found status, "it stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas" (Marx, 1906, 82), while in Benjamin's reading of Baudelaire this delusion seeps into the entire crowd, acting like a drug on all who join it. This is explicit in Edgar Allen Poe's story, "The Man in the Crowd" on which Baudelaire worked during the course of his translation of Poe's entire writing. The stranger, whom the narrator initially observes joining the flow of pedestrians outside the café window, moves from one cluster of people to another in instinctive manoeuvres to sustain the stimulation of being immersed in a crowd. The way that Poe describes the behaviour of this addict carries a sense of imminent threat that is very different to the benignity of Baudelaire's accounts where addiction is still remote: "The solitary and thoughtful stroller finds a singular intoxication in this universal communion" (Baudelaire, 1970, [i], 20). On such a disengaged level, immersion in the crowd appears recreational, before the point at which the experience must be turned into a product. Yet this short piece has its own malignant coda. Baudelaire compares the intensity of the erotic encounter with the crowd to the gratification felt by missionaries and religious leaders who must sell their cause as being in the best interests of those people they wish to convert. Religion then is at the centre of this selfish manipulation exploiting others' interests. Benjamin points out the complicity between commodity and audience where the goods augment their seductiveness by feeding on

the attentiveness of the crowd whose intoxication is transferred across. This is an event that is facilitated by the growing wealth and leisure time of the middle class whose need for stimulation infects the commodities with greater desirability.

Continuing the discussion of commodities this section will look at some components of *The Arcades Project*, the work which forms the research material for Benjamin's later essays on Baudelaire, and the accompanying Exposé which was written as its summary. *The Arcades Project* is a dissection of the cultural, social and political landscape of nineteenth-century Paris seen through the lens of technological and architectural developments. The book becomes increasingly unwieldy as the material extends in unforeseen directions, becoming a self-extrapolating kaleidoscope of densely layered motifs. The result is an assembly of raw material, primarily quotations, anecdotes and accounts of historical events, but including many of Benjamin's own observations, forming an encyclopedia of research information. These include lengthy sections on Baudelaire and on the flâneur. In part Benjamin is marshalling the evidence to support his identification of utopian forms which the commercial aims of nineteenth-century culture cause to be repressed at an incipient stage. Once re-exposed, the revolutionary energy of these forms can be released into action in the present.

In that they propose a form of community and congregation through the revolutionary use of new building materials, the arcades are for Benjamin one such repressed utopian project. Once they fail their commercial function, which acts as a brake on the realisation of any inherent idealist goals, the arcades are more or less abandoned. Arguably there is even a measure of achieved idealist goals in the arcades' commercial activity whereby city inhabitants are brought together off the dangerously traffic-clogged streets to be confronted with commodities in a safe and artificial setting. The gradual abandonment of the arcades by nineteenth-century consumers results in a kind of suspended time as a prelude to the recovery of the aesthetic and social potency which they represent. A couple of accounts which testify to this dormancy appear amongst Benjamin's references. In *Convolut "H The Collector"* he begins a quote from Strindberg with the phrase "Extinct nature: the shell shop in the arcades". Strindberg's narrative of a visit to an arcade eerily deserted by shoppers and shopkeepers alike takes the redundancy of the shell display as a obvious symbol for the fate of

the entire architectural complex (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 205). This kind of obsolescence features extensively in the Aragon account in *Paris Peasant* of the demise of the Passage de l'Opera. As the arcade shelters unfrequented shops, so their windows house unwanted goods. Aragon gazes querulously through the glass panes at the salespeople within as if they were forgotten and unfashionable animals in a zoo. As outlined in other chapters, this book was a crucial text for Benjamin as he worked to articulate a model for cultural and structural revolutionary action.

The instantaneous temporality of the market, which must keep moving its goods to localities where they sell best, is the opposite of the temporality recognised by Benjamin in relation to the revolutionary potential of these abandoned structures. Related to this clash of temporalities is a classic Marxist tenet that the extraordinary achievements of the bourgeoisie have created the means that will lead to their own demise. For Benjamin, the thriving commerce of the mid-nineteenth century which generates the quasi-utopian engineering forms like the arcades also initiates the energies embodied by these structures that over time constitute a revolutionary charge. If the 'progress' justifying the production of ever-newer commodities has the logic of linear time, Benjamin has identified an alternative temporality governing the persistence of tangible utopian achievements. Within the forms of nineteenth-century engineered architecture, and beyond their commercial application, there lies then a conjunction of projected futures and the memory of the achievements of classless communities of pre-history. As a kind of accretion of idealism this imagined goal is a natural component invested in technologically revolutionary nineteenth-century artefacts—railway stations and arcades, dioramas and photography—and its appearance in these forms is what makes them for Benjamin wish images of as yet unrealized utopias. Effectively, these conjoined ideals are as far from the present reality as is possible. They reject the present as already old and reach beyond it in both historical directions in order to make their current activity meaningful.

Titled "Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century" the Exposé distills key features of the Arcades Project into concentrated summations. The result is a form of shorthand conceptualisation whose elliptical form requires disentangling. Benjamin's overall aim is to

reveal the process of seduction in the nineteenth-century whereby commodities enthrall the European public and the consequences this has for political action. Although Benjamin sees this process as having been ineluctable (given the ascendancy of a bourgeoisie who regarded the claim of increased prosperity through 'progress' as adequate justification for the unlimited extension of a culture of capital), he is careful at the same time to define within this movement the much less familiar thesis of a delayed emergence of utopian elements, as exemplified by the arcades architecture.

There are versions of the *Exposé* from 1935 and 1939 as well as a rough copy of the first which contains additional material. Differences between the two main versions can be significant, especially concerning the political emphasis on commodification and the realisation of repressed utopian content. The thought that emerges from Part I of the 1935 *exposé*, "Fourier, or the Arcades", concerns the circumstances for a collective realisation of utopias. Benjamin develops his argument in dialectical form out of the apparent antithesis to utopian aims—commodification. The same arcades that were built to display luxury goods are similar in form to Fourier's phalanstery, the residence of an imaginary non-hierarchical community. Benjamin's point is clarified by the draft version of the 1935 *exposé* which criticises the Marxist formulation for the interrelation of society and culture by noting an inaccuracy in the concept of base and superstructure. Instead of a direct correspondence between the two terms, Benjamin sees new forms of culture (superstructure) disengaging themselves from what is immediately antiquated (base) as they retrieve primordial elements of earlier classless societies to which they can link their vision of the future.

In the completed 1935 version, the relation between arcade and Fourier phalanstery is further clarified. For all their service of commodities the arcades are an apparition of Fourier's ideal community where the working day is organised around halls evoking the congregating function of the arcades. The arcade structures are engineering innovations incorporating glass and metal. The first part of this section of the 1935 *Exposé* outlines this industrial background explicitly showing how these wish images of the arcades could not have come into being without this commercial initiative. Iron is the first artificial building material and is used in structures such as railway stations and arcades where people are in transit. In that

their form relates to commercial exigency and new manufacturing potentialities, the arcades might be thought the perfect superstructure to a capitalist base. However, Benjamin wants to decouple these terms by showing the arcades as originating in polarised needs: in commerce and primordial socialist impulses, explained previously as an intoxication with the empowerment of community. The early popularity of the arcades would then be dependent on their satisfying both of these demands.

Part II of the 1935 Exposé, titled “Daguerre or the Dioramas”, is a condensed social and technical history of early photography and is excluded from the 1939 version. Benjamin notes that Daguerre moves from painting dioramas to inventing photography as if the challenge to painting formulated by the dioramas’ verisimilitude leads to the subsequent challenges of photography. The dioramas commodify the town by presenting it as purchasable spectacle, similar to how the flâneur treats the city in his remote engagement. Photography first radicalises the commodity of the portrait and then of numerous other genres by presenting them in multiple copies for a mass of customers and then by the continuous renewal of its technical approaches in order to sell still more of the same motifs.

Part III, “Grandville, or the World Exhibitions”, is the most explicit in addressing the nature of commodities. Isidore Grandville’s detailed and psychologically intense satirical illustrations afford Benjamin an image to match the omnivorousness of the commodification of nature and the extent of the public’s rapture before it. Grandville appears to respond in kind to the world exhibitions which apotheosise this period’s celebration of manufacturing, events which Benjamin, in the 1935 Exposé, describes as pilgrimages to the commodity fetish. What particularly devalues this engagement for Benjamin is the passiveness of the audience, not surprisingly since it is exchange-value that is elevated by the exhibitions while use-value, which would inherently demand greater attentiveness, is sidelined. The exhibitions are the historical beginning of the mass surrender to spectacle that has since characterised modernity: “They open a phantasmagoria which a person enters in order to be distracted. The entertainment industry makes this easier by elevating the person to the level of the commodity. He surrenders to its manipulations while enjoying his alienation from himself and others” (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 7). The 1939 version is still more extreme in defining the

totality of this surrender where workers, excluded from the possibility of using commodities, are persuaded by the exhibitions to the point of identifying with exchange-value (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 18). The exhibitions then become a form of propaganda subjugating their audience by stimulating the kind of intense unreflective reaction that leads to dependency.

It is in the second section of “Grandville, or the World Exhibitions”, in both versions, that Benjamin sets out the full extent of this bleak vision. Fashion, in the sense of defining the desire for what is newest and most popular at the time, is the model for Grandville’s vision of the compulsions behind the commodity fetish. Fashion drives forward the compulsion to obeisance before the commodity and Grandville represents all quotidian objects and the cosmos itself as if subject to the rule of fashion. Benjamin explains Grandville’s understanding of fashion as a relentless subjection of the organic, that is humans themselves, to the grip of the inorganic, or commodities. Benjamin wants us to recognise how fashion determines that the human body will forever be on sale to the inorganic world. Such a view requires a shift in our understanding to see commodities as things to which we are sold (or enslaved) rather than the reverse: “The fetishism that succumbs to the sex appeal of the inorganic is its vital nerve. The cult of the commodity presses such fetishism into its service” (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 8). Fetishism entails willing capitulation to the seductions of the inorganic world of objects and it is this capitulation which is at the core of the cult of commodities. Like such entrancements, revolutionary intoxication presupposes an immersion in the present, but only as an active counterpart of the passive subjection to commodities. The unwillingness to design provisions for the future, that was noted in the discussion of Blanqui, can be interpreted as in opposition to the false promises of prosperity that advertise commodities. As a recourse of the dispossessed, revolutionary intoxication keeps alive that feeling of deprivation that a realm of consumption anaesthetises as it separates the petty bourgeoisie from the proletariat with which it once appeared united in revolutionary purpose.

Part IV of the 1935 *Exposé*, “Louis Philippe, or the Interior” considers the impact of subservience to the commodity on the treatment of the domestic interior. The over-decoration of the interior serves as a bulwark against involuntary intoxication to the commodity. Benjamin outlines how the bourgeoisie imagines that subjective intervention in

terms of collecting objects (in fact only an inadequate and impotent freeing of objects from their use-value) or ornamentation (where Jugendstil's promotion of self-expression through linearity is only a rearguard action against technologically derived forms) will deflect the intrusions of the market. As already noted with some of the other sections, the 1939 version amplifies the political drive of the earlier exposé. In an attempt to preserve the evidence of individuality the occupier chooses furniture coverings like velvet that will retain an impression of the body: "His living room is a box in the theater of the world" (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 9). Since the flâneur's observation converts all to inanimate objects, it is a natural step for this scrutiny to be transferred from exterior to interior. Inhabitants gaze on the stuff that has been collected, covered and arranged in their living accommodations, reassured that these assemblages show an independence from the rest of their environment. In fact they are at best a decoy, a replication in miniature of the phantasmagoria of alluring commodities.

Benjamin reengages with this idea in "Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire" in the context of outlining changing perceptions towards the flâneur. In compensation for an insignificant private life in the city, the over-embellished interior restores a sense of individual worth. Following the new interest in detective stories, the impressions left on plush furnishings are potentially important clues to a life that might be consequential (Benjamin, 1997, [i], 46). This is the kind of interior described in Baudelaire's poem "Murdered Woman", although their morbid circumstances amount to a critique of these commodities: "Flasks of expensive scent, embroideries, rich brocades,/Taffeta sofas, satin chairs;/Statues in marble, paintings; fragrance that pervades/The empty, sumptuous gowns; warm airs//And sweet,—yet sultry, damp, unhealthful to inhale:/That sickening green-house atmosphere/Dying bouquets in their glass coffins give—a stale/Voluptuous chamber...Lying here//A corpse without a head..." (Baudelaire, 1936, 203). The decapitated body lies in an erotic pose on the bed while the head sits like an expensive ornament on the bedside table.

The final two sections of the 1935 Exposé, on Baudelaire and Haussmann, are more specifically concerned with the flâneur as the observer on the edge of the phantasmagoria of commodities who is not quite yet committed to the marketplace. The title of this fifth section, "Baudelaire, or the Streets of Paris", clearly indicates the subject as out in the wild

amongst the crowd. The disinvolvement of the flâneur is at the centre of Benjamin's critique of Baudelaire's position as a writer on contemporary Paris. Baudelaire, he says, writes about Paris as an alienated flâneur, not yet given over to the city or to his patrons, the bourgeoisie: "Neither has him in its power yet. In neither is he at home. He seeks refuge in the crowd...the crowd is the veil through which the familiar city beckons to the flâneur as phantasmagoria—now a landscape, now a room" (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 10). A significant shift occurs in the 1939 version where the flâneur is shown assuming the behaviour of the commodity. The ambiguous position in the first version, where the flâneur believes there is a choice of allegiances, is modified into unwitting surrender. Even more than this, the flâneur behaves like the commodity, scouting around the marketplace and assessing passersby on the basis of their appearance. The flâneur compromisingly sustains both sides of the equation, looking for a buyer in the crowd, as Benjamin says, and withdrawing as the snob or dandy who avoids utilitarianism in favour of the new. It is in the 1935 version that Benjamin condemns this last position as surely as we have seen him undermine the convictions of the revolutionary. Resistance to the market takes the form of *l'art pour l'art* and later of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, positions which "both abstract from the social existence of human beings" (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 11) and so mimic the hypostatisation of inorganic commodities against which they are proposing an alternative.

In the third part of the 1939 version of "Baudelaire, or the Streets of Paris", Benjamin tries a different approach for defining how resistance to the market is driven into ever-reduced manoeuvrability. Now that their signification is determined by price alone, the meaning of things is something that critics of capitalism can reject as worthless. Resistance to the market thus develops as an evasion of meaning through the acclamation of newness. The proposition here is that for the marketplace it is not by virtue of being new that something is of value but rather through some improvement to what is already there. To value the newness of things for its own sake is to render any rationale for commodities absurd by abstracting from their utility. The merit of this stance at those moments when it has occurred is to turn the market's values against the marketplace itself. Baudelaire's celebration of the new (especially in "The Painter of Modern Life") relies on the assumption that enthrallment to an

uninterpretable novelty is a position of extreme withdrawal from commodification which yet manages to keep a toe in the marketplace. It is as if at this point the flâneur occupies a minuscule and unstable position for which a momentarily perplexed market can find no use. The acclamation of what at this stage is the non-entity of newness is an entirely unproductive, valueless and disengaged activity which must be constantly moving on to ensure its judgements do not themselves become part of the market's evaluating mechanism.

Yet Baudelaire's later prose poetry from *Paris Spleen* shows contradictory tendencies, at times moving towards an extreme aestheticism, remote from any overt social purpose, and at other times suddenly giving a furious, though ambiguous, commentary on conditions of the poor in Paris. Now and then the two strategies entangle in the structure of a deceptively simple story, as in the two-page piece titled "The Eyes of the Poor". This attack on the myopic social outlook of prosperous Parisians is staged entirely through the narrator's unwitting monologue where his effete fretting at the general impossibility of communication elides his momentary identification with the poor family gazing in at him and his lover through the windows of the fancy new café in which they sit. Through this mélange of misogyny, self-loathing, dandyism, and realism, Baudelaire inexorably piles layers of culpability on the nineteenth-century rich. But it is also a critique of the two choices facing the historical avant-garde, for Baudelaire precedes his Hugoesque account of the poor with an indulgent description of the café interior to mimic aestheticist prose (in the manner of Huysmans). It is as if he is saying that the two polarised approaches, the realist and aesthete, reach the same dead end, a solipsistic inaction: the poor remain poor. Here is an explicit refusal to edify, and likewise to reconcile oppositional tendencies. This piece may be dealing a decisive blow for which observations in "The Painter of Modern Life", Baudelaire's effervescent homage to Constantin Guys, develops the raw material. Looking at one of Guys' sketches, Baudelaire describes a similar couple from the vantage point of the poor family outside the café. The man is "one of those imbeciles whose elegance is created by their tailors". Furthermore, "These two beings do not think. [...] Narcissuses of imbecility, they are gazing on the crowd as on a stream that gives them back their own image" (Baudelaire, 1986, 66). Both works are written with a sense of their audience being close at hand and unsuspecting. *Paris Spleen* first appears as *feuilletons* in newspapers for immediate

consumption while “The Painter of Modern Life”, written in 1859-60 and published in *Le Figaro* in 1863, likewise presumes to catch an audience looking for immediate distraction, some of whom would resemble those being described.

Hero

The reading that Benjamin makes of Baudelaire’s *modernité* builds on his appeal to end what he called the nightmare of the nineteenth century. In *The Arcades Project* he notes that Baudelaire himself locates his fellow citizens in a “prison of hell” in contemporary Paris instead of imagining an otherworldly hell (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 304). Such an image reveals an epoch which places in crisis the livelihood and mental stability of the majority of its people through forcing on them an economic revolution which systematises labour and products as commodities. “Shock” is the term preferred by Benjamin to define the threshold which distinguishes those able to withstand these new pressures from those who succumb to them. Baudelaire’s writing and biography (as seen in his letters) are taken by Benjamin as a record of these shocks as they affect both him and the people whom he observes. The motivation of Benjamin’s to redefine our relation to the external world which we see in some of his other writing (“Hashish in Marseilles” for example) he regards as unavailable to the nineteenth-century writer swept up by the momentum of capitalist market logic. Although his own financial difficulties probably influenced Benjamin’s emphasis on Baudelaire’s vulnerability, the possibilities for independent work had increased by the 1920s with greater sources of private sponsorship offering a partial alternative to the primary marketplace.

Baudelaire defines modernity as the evidence of basic survival in face of these pressures. The options previously discussed of revolutionary action or the disengagement of the flâneur have led to no productive end and Baudelaire is forced back into celebrating the fundamental ability to endure and still find intact a vestige of pleasure, desire or human instinct as if this might be the only compensation remaining. The sentiments that are celebrated here are now extremely modest private ones whose significance is their authenticity, like the glimmer of energy from the elderly in response to the band playing in the park. Writing of Baudelaire’s

“Les Petites Vieilles” and the “quelque heroïsme” that the band elicits in its audience, Benjamin notes that “the heroism that shyly hides its threadbare quality in the word *quelque*... is in this very gesture genuine and the only kind that is still produced by this society” (Benjamin, 1997, [i], 73). In the scale of these emotions Baudelaire regards suicide not as a surrender but as the pinnacle of what his contemporaries are capable. This extreme may well be reformulating the preparedness for self-sacrifice which moved Baudelaire during his time on the barricades. The capability of witnessing such expressions distinguishes Baudelaire from the typical flâneur who is immersed in the pleasure of watching the spectacle of contemporary life. This other kind of observation expresses concern and anxiety for his subjects and is only possible if the poet remains dangerously exposed to whatever the city throws forward.

The crowd watched by the flâneur in the street is closer to the mass of middle-class shoppers in the department store than to the poor wandering in the park. Such a flâneur goes to the street for a new kind of mass encounter determined by desirability, novelty and value and from which the crowd in the park is excluded. “Widows” and “The Old Clown” from *Paris Spleen* show the same deep identification with his subjects. In this case the first may well relate to his unhappiness at his mother’s remarriage (after having her to himself for only two bereaved years), while the second is transparently a self-portrait projected into the future. Like other pieces in *Paris Spleen*, “Widows” is merciless towards the wealthy whose casual pleasures are contrasted with the efforts made by the poor, straining to catch a phrase of the musical concert from outside the arena. Baudelaire is drawn to a widow’s “nobility”, her “odor of proud virtue”, her “thoughtful eye”, in contrast to the vulgarity he sees in the crowd around her and in the boredom of the bourgeois audience: “the idle, tired of having nothing to do, attitudinize and pretend to be indolently relishing the music” (Baudelaire, 1970, [i], 23).

The narrative of the second piece concerns a holiday spent at the fairground booths where an old clown stands to one side, not even bothering to attempt a routine. Describing how he looks over the happy scene around him with a moving expression, Baudelaire concludes “I have just seen the prototype of the old writer who has been the brilliant entertainer of the generation he has outlived...” (Baudelaire, 1970, [i], 27). These are the sort of images that

draw Benjamin's comment: "The hero is the subject of modernism. In other words, it takes a heroic constitution to live modernism" (Benjamin, 1997, [i], 74).

At the start of the section titled "Modernism" of "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire" Benjamin takes some time to establish the terms for distinguishing Baudelaire's particular insightfulness from the strategies of the typical flâneur which he celebrates.

Baudelaire's searing picture of the city comes from neither the position of the flâneur, who stands aloof from the observed spectacle, nor from the badaud, or gaper, who is lost in the intoxication of the city. Elsewhere Benjamin writes that the crucial experience for Baudelaire was that of being jostled by the mass surging past, although its impact was not to endure:

"The lustre of a crowd with a motion and a soul of its own, the glitter that had bedazzled the flâneur, had dimmed for him" (Benjamin, 1997, [i], 154). The great urban representations, as in Dickens for example, have come out of an absentmindedness where the city's impressions, landing obliquely as it were, are worked over as the writer walks on through the streets.

Benjamin delineates this approach as one where the writer's mind is imprinted on these places whose characteristics have been caught in the process. There is the sense in this of an intensified photographic process and it might be that Baudelaire's scepticism towards the new medium should be seen in relation to his attempting more than to act as a passive light-sensitive surface: "From that moment our squalid society rushed, Narcissus to a man, to gaze at its trivial image on a scrap of metal" (Baudelaire, 1965, 152).

Baudelaire's frustration over his contemporaries' infatuation with photography concerns their assumption that its precision is all that is needed of art. He is critical to begin with of such a limited view of art's potential but the inadequacy of photography's answer irritates him further. His tale of the German peasant commissioning a painted portrait gives an idea of what Baudelaire expects of an artwork. The peasant enumerates with great specificity all the biographical details and sentimental allusions he requires of the painting, concluding by telling the painter "you should paint the *air of satisfaction* which I enjoy at this moment of the day". Baudelaire rhetorically asks which of today's painters could hope to meet such wealth of imagination with their own. One might add, "And which photographers?". That there is something of Zhdanov *avant la lettre* about this aspect of Baudelaire's art criticism comes

rather from his frank questioning of the purpose of the mass of indifferent art in the Salon in light of his interest in contemporary heroism. If it doesn't say something to people about their lives today then what is the point, he seems to be asking. Crucially he insists that the point of depicting the life of these peasants should be to reveal their heroic survival against all odds.

Baudelaire's acclamation of Charles Meryon's etchings of Paris gives an indication of what he would expect of a photograph before he could extend it credit. For Baudelaire, Meryon's atmospheric representations are replete with unmistakable evocations of past and present histories whose narratives his sombre buildings seem to contain: "I have rarely seen the natural solemnity of an immense city more poetically reproduced...he forgot not one of the complex elements which go to make up the painful and glorious décor of civilization" (Baudelaire, 1965, 200). The project he envisages of composing poems to accompany Meryon's etchings indicates the affinity he felt existed between this work and his own image of Paris. There cannot be any doubt that Baudelaire saw Meryon as a kind of afflicted contemporary hero whom he should help and defend where possible. In a letter of 1860 to Auguste Poulet-Malassis he writes about a visit paid him by the artist where he notes the numerous signs of mental instability revealed by Meryon's superstitions and errant cabalistic speculations. Baudelaire wonders how he has managed to stay sane himself when he has always been similarly susceptible. He persists in trying to work out some arrangement for an annotative text acceptable to the artist "who doesn't know how to take care of his affairs and who has produced a beautiful work" (a painfully accurate self-assessment of course) but eventually fails. Nevertheless he continues with his efforts by convincing the government to purchase sets of Meryon's prints and by buying some for himself (Baudelaire, 1957, 152-3).

Benjamin cites Baudelaire's criticism in "My Heart Laid Bare" of the French over-reliance on military metaphors as the sign of conformity, of a need for discipline and domesticity (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 300). Baudelaire is irritated that these play a part in contemporary classifications: "In this country every metaphor wears a moustache. 'The militant school of literature'... 'The poets of combat' / 'The vanguard of literature'". Such metaphors historically contribute to the rhetoric of the avant-garde and both writers' concerns here could be seen as a way of formulating a different kind of critique and activism, one whose

more incisive, if less grandiose, achievements might be more closely matched by their language. Nevertheless, perhaps exacerbated by his mental and economic precariousness, Baudelaire never entirely abandoned them himself. In Baudelaire's case however, what alters the implications of such language is his criticism of attempts to guarantee a redemptive end from oppositional actions and his conception of his own antagonism as self-protective in the face of continuous assaults under Modernity. In "Rockets" he ridicules the notion of progress in such a violent milieu: "What are the perils of jungle and prairie compared to the daily shocks and conflicts of civilisation? Whether a man embraces his dupe on the boulevard, or spears his prey in unknown forests, is he not eternal man—that is to say, the most highly perfected beast of prey?" (Baudelaire, 1986, 169).

Though never entailing actual violence, the kind of endurance valued by Baudelaire is frequently represented as equivalent to a fight. Benjamin writes that Baudelaire held wage work to be the contemporary gladiatorial combat. Any new cultural achievement that might be comparable to that of the old masters is for him infinitely better because of the hostile conditions of nineteenth-century life. The essay "Some Motifs in Baudelaire" is largely a reflection on the conditions for living in nineteenth-century Paris and on the means of defence adopted under such extreme pressures. For Benjamin, the duel is a close analogy to creative work and he cites Baudelaire's description of Constantin Guys drawing, as well as his poem "The Sun", where both use the image of the artist/writer stabbing at their work; in the first case with a pen and in the second (where the description is of the poet himself) fencing in the street all by himself, "Duelling with words that dodge in corners and byways;/ Stumbling on rhymes as on crooked setts..." (Baudelaire, 1963, 106).

The poet seems poorly equipped to manage these assaults. Baudelaire casts the poet amongst contemporary heroes in his own verse. In "The Albatross" the analogy is drawn with the soaring bird trapped on the ship by bored sailors who laugh at and mimic its clumsiness. The poet is "Exiled on earth amidst its hooting crowds,/He cannot walk, borne down by giant wings" (Baudelaire, 1963, 10). Elsewhere, as in the cruelly autobiographical "Benediction", the poet is seen as unwanted from birth, misunderstood and punished for his mere existence. The struggle for political change that Baudelaire felt was worthwhile in the

early-nineteenth century has become imperfectly internalised. G.M. Hyde writes of this process as the poet turning inward to make sense of the self from an assembly of cultural fragments in the wake of the overbearing commercialisation of culture and society (Bradbury and McFarlane, 1976, 341). In “Some Motifs in Baudelaire” Benjamin’s notion of this inward orientation is of a more instinctively defensive action and he refers to several writers—Bergson, Proust, Freud—whose work on the functioning of memory in industrialised society might illuminate Baudelaire’s own formulations. Benjamin explains their work, like Baudelaire’s, as trying to determine what distinguishes real or true experience from a homogenous and commonplace mass experience. In that it uses poetry and myth instead of social experience as its means of enquiry it is closer still to Baudelaire’s work.

Freud’s writing on the processes of memory maintains that consciousness protects us from most external stimuli such that our immediate recollections concern only what has no effect on us. Unsuccessful deflection of environmental pressures results in traumatic memory residues, lying in our unconscious like scar tissue, unrecalled and latently harmful.

Benjamin’s argument is that for those nineteenth-century citizens able to screen themselves from the chaos of negative impacts thrown up by the period, there were no scars to contend with. It is not easy to generalise from Baudelaire’s writing whether any social group might be better protected than others from such shocks. However, as much is suggested in Benjamin’s reference to Baudelaire’s 1851 bluntly materialist critique of the cultural production of masterpieces created from the lethal products made by sickly and defenceless factory workers who can be seen in the park recovering after breathing in the poison of cotton fibres, white lead and mercury where they work. “This population is the background against which the outlines of the hero stand out” (Benjamin, 1997, [i], 74). If the more fortunate group includes the mass of the bourgeoisie, there is still the sense that Baudelaire’s own experience shows that this membership is not by itself adequate protection from exceptional pressures.

Likewise amongst the poor are those who successfully ward off blows if only, like the apache or criminal, they do so by avoiding confinement within the law. Others, as previously noted, only manage a temporary deflection of shocks through recourse to intoxication, as evidenced, for example, by the ragpicker’s drunkenness or the flâneur’s immersion in the crowd,

deferments which nevertheless tend to indicate the wider susceptibility of each group to environmental assault.

In section IV of "Some Motifs in Baudelaire" it becomes clear that Benjamin's lengthy discussion of the machinery of memory in relation to provocations is to show Baudelaire's preparedness to make the most of the unavoidability of his exposure to the continuing traumas of city life. He sets himself up as one who takes his chances at parrying the shocks within this circus of traumatic experiences: "Baudelaire has portrayed this condition in a harsh image. He speaks of a duel in which the artist, just before being beaten, screams in fright. This duel is the creative process itself. Thus Baudelaire placed the shock experience at the very centre of his artistic work. . . . Baudelaire made it his business to parry the shocks, no matter where they might come from, with his spiritual and physical self" (Benjamin, 1997, [i], 117). In relation to Freud's theories of the reception of stimuli, in such an instance the impressions are neither rendered harmless by becoming conscious nor lodged irretrievably in the unconscious. Instead through practice they are engaged by consciousness in a struggle where they are forced to constitute a lived experience. In Baudelaire's work the classic example of such an event instanced by Benjamin is the poem "To a Passer-by" where, in a tellingly unreflective Oedipal encounter, a widow in the crowd is swept past the author as the two partake briefly in erotic eye contact. Here the shock is foreseen, indeed planned for, as a typical mid-nineteenth-century experience. Even though it depends entirely on the return of the poet's gaze: "I am suddenly reborn from your swift glance" (Baudelaire, 1963, 118), the careful planning is evidenced by the scale of the sentimental edifice constructed on this tenuous foundation: "We might have loved, and you knew this might be!" (Baudelaire, 1963, 118).

Conclusion

The experience of shock only escalates in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Benjamin's focus in 1939 on this issue as a motif in Baudelaire's work no doubt testifies to his own struggles to deflect all that an increasingly menacing Europe is throwing at him. Considered in a later chapter, Ernst Jünger's accounts of his physical and psychical survival of

the worst of trench fighting reveals the extent to which the experience of shock intensifies under the munitions of heavy industry used by the Great War. Accounts of that intensification of warfare and the mass casualties that result, expose the extremes of mental breakdown and dehumanised adaptation, sometimes alternating in the same person. Regardless whether they are parried through a personification of violence or helplessly absorbed, these shocks frequently inflict psychological damage. From the outset of that war the aesthetic recourse to shock increases and is often justified as corresponding to the technologisation of military and urban life. This proof of the annihilatory potential of industrial invention increases the disenchantment with the concept of progress that had started in the nineteenth century. The indefinite extension of capitalist culture in the name of progress arouses the explicit opposition of Dadaists and other avant-gardes. It is as if the avant-gardes respond to the escalation of trauma by bringing it to the centre of the work's effects: "The refusal to provide meaning is experienced as shock by the recipient. And this is the intention of the avant-gardiste artist, who hopes that such withdrawal of meaning will direct the reader's attention to the fact that the conduct of one's life is questionable and that it is necessary to change it. Shock is aimed for a stimulus to change one's conduct of life; it is the means to break through aesthetic immanence and to usher in (initiate) a change in the recipient's life praxis" (Bürger, 1984, 80).

It is possible to overstate the significance of this shock component in avant-garde work when there are certainly additional motives for its inclusion—it also serves as a designate of stylistic territory, as a means to break with past models, and as a sign of contemporaneity which might help to ensure visibility or secure a place within an artistic community. For Bürger, its effect is also diminished by the speed with which an audience familiarises itself with, and comes to anticipate aesthetic shock, as well as by the difficulty of assessing its impact. Nevertheless, from the start of the twentieth-century some avant-gardes justify a radicalised visual vocabulary by analogy with sudden changes in technology and infrastructure. Their work intends to be timely, as if it were an alarm alerting the unaware of the implications of living in that new world. As part of its marketability this procedure must also provide an affirmative image for patrons who regard themselves as engineering that new world. The

audience for these shocks may well be a bourgeois one that has escaped the traumas to which they have exposed other working people, and there are valid concerns over the difficulty of ascertaining the results of such shocks, much as we see troubling Bürger.

The cohesion of cultural avant-gardes into discernible groups decreases the kind of individual isolation experienced by Baudelaire. Shocks can be absorbed by the collective which negotiates an independence from the market by stating the terms of its own engagement with bourgeois culture. This is one role of the manifesto which is often explicit about returning shock to the opposed culture. Baudelaire's hero as one who suffers economically and politically becomes one who heroically assumes the task of facing modernism with new formal criteria. Up to the middle of the First World War the tone of early-twentieth century manifestos is celebratory in meeting the rapid social and technological changes with fast adapting art. The manifestos acclaim an evolved type of artist whose sensory perception and physical endurance takes its new parameters from the technology of this advanced society. The wariness of early avant-garde artists towards industrial progress, as seen with Baudelaire for example, is superseded by an enthusiasm that projects itself ahead of the present as if preparing the conditions for new technological advances. The autonomy of the avant-garde's social engagement is premised on its perfect correlation with present conditions from where it can anticipate future needs. Its contemporaneity applies Baudelaire's standard of modernity (as a transitory immediacy rejecting materialist interests and faith in progress) to a view where the technological transformation of society is normative and exclusionary of any criteria from the past. Baudelaire's rejection of bourgeois optimism and commercial prosperity is converted into an idealisation of technological advancement attempting to set a barrier between the demands of the present and conservative bourgeois interests which the avant-gardes attribute to past standards.

Where Baudelaire's condition for modernity leads to the predicament of the flâneur absorbed into the market that is opposed, the later intoxication with technology leads to a proto-fascist acclaim for industrialised warfare. Carrying over his enthusiasm for revolutionary visual languages, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska rationalises the killing he witnesses during the First World War by conferring authority on an abstract apotheosis of mechanised destruction: "The war

is a great remedy...it takes away from the masses numbers upon numbers of unimportant units, whose economic activities become noxious as the recent trades crises have shown us” (Harrison and Wood, 1992, 163).

From the mid-point of the war a different avant-garde perspective inverts the exhilaration for technology (till then assuming it constitutes an extreme advance on bourgeois sensibilities) into blaming the bourgeoisie for the conflict’s mindless destruction and loss of values. Hugo Ball’s opposition in 1916 recalls Baudelaire’s late nihilism of *Paris Spleen* and *Fuses* in the way he parodies this decline of order and values with his own extreme display of disrespect for culture and technology. The bourgeois as responsible for this travesty of beneficial progress is alienated by a work that partakes of none of the values claimed by earlier avant-gardes. In June 1916 Ball explains this wholesale rejection of standards: “The bankruptcy of ideas having destroyed the concept of humanity to its very innermost strata, the instincts and hereditary backgrounds are now emerging pathologically. Since no art, politics or religious faith seems adequate to dam this torrent, there remain only the *blague* and the bleeding pose...” (Harrison and Wood, 1992, 247).

For Bürger a key part of this new strategy of resistance is the negation of the value placed on individual production, whether this is achieved through the mass-produced found object, through the Dadaist collective performances or, a little later, through the potential concession of authorship to all dreamers by Surrealist automatic writing. Bürger credits the Dadaists with the most articulate attack on the institution of art (where this is identified as the mechanism through which all oppositional art is recuperated and reduced to the status of a complicit commodity). Some of these stages of avant-garde adaptation to patronage and rapid political changes intensify the engagement of nineteenth-century artists and writers like Baudelaire. Many of the features of the struggle by the avant-garde to sustain a critical position for their work in relation to overwhelming political forces are defined much earlier by Baudelaire’s painful experience as an opposing activist and poet. Elaborated in this chapter, these include an intoxication with the present to negate other values, the notion of the hero developed in opposition to prosperity and the definition of aesthetic value amongst the debris of progress.

In this chapter the commentaries by Benjamin on Baudelaire reveal the condition of the mid-nineteenth-century avant-garde as under continuous threat. Whether abandoned by bourgeois allies, impoverished to the point of an unproductive existence or finding (with all other producers) its opposing art being swept up as a commodity into the marketplace, the revolutionary and cultural avant-garde is overtaken by the intoxications of consumption. Baudelaire's hero is barely a survivor, so rapidly overcome by market forces as to be left with neither the means to organise a community nor the tools to devise strategies of a more effective critique. The next two chapters concern the attempts by writers and artists nearly eighty years later to remedy this condition. The first of these addresses attempts to reinstate the political efficacy of art where cultural products are detached from the sphere of consumption and linked to revolutionary means of production. The second of these chapters then relates productivist aesthetics to Surrealist efforts at securing a synthesis of experimental art and political activism as a context for discussing Benjamin's investigation of narcotic intoxications.

Chapter 4

Benjamin's artist producer: the avant-garde in a proletarian culture

Introduction

Nineteenth-century shifts in the dynamic relationship between artists' production and the processes of consumption that were indicated in the previous chapter are reconsidered here in the context of Benjamin's mid-1930s essays concerning the impact of Communism on cultural work. The writing by Benjamin on Baudelaire spans the same decade and can be seen as an exploration of the root causes for the increasing immobilisation of effective political work as independent artists become enveloped by the forces of commodification. In the conclusion to this thesis the condition of obligatory acquiescence to market structures that invariably determines the role of artists is revisited in relation to initiatives by contemporary collectives in New York and London. What in the twentieth century become possibilities for the self-determination of both artistic production and its audience are in the prior century, under the birth of mass consumption, hardly more than reflex actions as artists and writers struggle to break their work free from the grip of an enforced passivity.

Benjamin's interest in Baudelaire's category of the 'hero' is stimulated by the need to identify what constitutes this reflex action of resistance in the nineteenth century. The esteem felt by Baudelaire for those who keep some embers of intoxicated absorption alive amidst the

assaults of poverty, marginalisation and failure is seen as a method to relocate criteria of value and agency in those that commerce discards. It is a key part of what meaningful production survives the debilitating shocks of nineteenth-century experience and finds its late-twentieth century realisation in Michel De Certeau's location of agency amongst the 'tactics' of individual urban residents in their navigation of the city, as against the 'strategies' of institutional and commercial organisations.

This chapter looks at those essays of Benjamin's from the 1930s that explicitly place art within the process of production rather than conceding to its limits as an object of consumption. By focusing on this period of Benjamin's writing—the two years linking the 1934 essay "The Author as Producer" and the 1936 essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility"—it is also possible to ask what degree of effective agency is shown by a politically integrated avant-garde, when compared to artistically independent avant-gardes like Dadaism and Surrealism. Over this two-year period Benjamin's definition of political agency develops significantly. In 1934 the avant-garde is what changes the production process determining works of art or literature, thereby assigning them agency. By 1936 Benjamin holds that the avant-garde has not existed in any viable form since its inception. Now any efficacy attributed to it is shown to have been eclipsed by deeper materialist determinants. Experience is so altered by technology that agency is only available to what is not art, that is to photography and film which achieve impact through their material properties (and notably not through their human input).

The broader aim of this chapter is to consider Benjamin's proposals for a form of activist art (perhaps at their most explicit in 1934) in relation to the concepts taken as defining the scope of the avant-garde. Among such concepts are notions of displacement and renewal characterising mid-nineteenth-century formulations as they develop from an earlier self-conscious modernity. Discussed in the second chapter, such ideas can be seen as central to Nietzsche's early philosophy in *The Birth of Tragedy* and "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life". In the opening chapter they are explained as acquiring incipient formulation in Hegel's 1820s lectures on aesthetics where he defines the circumstances for the decline of art's contribution to the realisation of freedom. The concepts of shock, of states of distraction

and of uprootedness within the mass, with which Baudelaire provides a materialist updating of Hegel's idealist delineation of the engaged artist, underlay these essays of Benjamin's as they define resistance as the organisation of the means of artistic production. The conditions of Surrealism's simultaneous radical aesthetic and activist positions, and the avant-garde's aims regarding the dissolution of art into life, are reviewed in light of Benjamin's reflections on commitment as set out in his analysis of art's transformation by technology.

Benjamin's maxim, "An author who teaches writers nothing teaches no one", comes towards the close of "The Author as Producer" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 777). The instrumentality demanded in the essay underlines its main issue of consolidating revolutionary advantages, taking the Soviet Union as its primary example. This instrumentality is for Benjamin the condition of relevance for Soviet writers with the understanding that it will inexorably extend to European cultural conditions under capitalism. Benjamin's essay makes clear his intention to expand the group "writers" to include potential as well as experienced authors. Designed as a talk that was never given, the essay has a less reflective and more programmatic tone than is usual with Benjamin. In outlining a way that revolutionary culture might escape assimilation by the forces it criticises, "The Author as Producer" shares objectives with radical aesthetic avant-gardes. However, its answers to this problem of assimilation are closer to Soviet cultural restrictions in the 1930s than to any tendencies of prominent European avant-gardes like Dadaism or Surrealism. Though Benjamin identifies with Dadaist objectives in both "The Author as Producer" and "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility" he clearly believes that Dadaism faces limits on the impact of its iconoclasm. In the later essay, Dadaist work yields to the greater mass-motivation of film. In "The Author as Producer" however, a provocative assertion is made regarding the meaning of Dadaist collages. The materiality of their found objects shocks an audience into questioning authenticity and notions of quality, where components like tickets and cigarette butts are acclaimed for revealing more of life than painting does. Benjamin intends this to be analogous to the emerging content of Soviet literature which has its own revolutionary factuality. For Benjamin this kind of evaluation of facts over theory has influenced the range of his inquiries in numerous essays. His belief that truth is historically enfolded in material

examples is an argument not just for the range of references in *The Arcades Project* but also for the lapidary fragmentation of the early "One-Way Street".

The earlier maxim concerning the instrumentality of writing in teaching authors underscores Benjamin's belief that writers must pass on their skills to the disempowered, yet do so as writers, not as politicians or propagandists. This argument underscores theories that a radical avant-garde aesthetic will reflect the intent to sublimate art into life, an ambition that draws energy from the need to pull art away from the realm of consumption into a location from where it can undermine that realm and its constrictions. In such a process the rationale behind the transformative artwork is that its impact on society is so thoroughgoing as to make its own identity (as radical art opposed to the earlier form of that society) redundant. As Soviet authors change the institution of publishing, the position of writer, and extent of literary content, all become so permeable that the category 'writer' disappears. Broader access to publishing accelerates social changes which dissolve the intellectual elite. Bürger prioritises Dadaism as the authentic twentieth-century attempt at such sublation because of the centrality to its practice of the attack on the institution of art. Bürger explains how, in light of society's easy assimilation of radical work, the early avant-gardes challenged this disempowerment by undermining individualism and producing work without authorship, without value, without historical precedent: "In its most extreme manifestations, the avant-garde's reply to this [individuation] is not the collective as the subject of production but the radical negation of the category of individual creation" (Bürger, 1984, 51). Writing in 1929, Benjamin argues that amongst European artists the Surrealists alone grasp the urgency, and possess the means, of deploying art to energise revolution and that their programme realising the liberatory potential of intoxication is at a point of transforming artefact into effective praxis. Yet he stresses that this might remain only a rehearsal for change if the Surrealists do not take the opportunity to relinquish art for political action where that is required: "In reality, it is far less a matter of making the artist of bourgeois origin into a master of 'proletarian art' than of deploying him, even at the expense of his artistic activity, at important points in this image space. Indeed, mightn't the interruption of this 'artistic career' perhaps be an essential part of his new function?" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 217). Benjamin's

perception of the failure of European avant-gardes to secure political agency compounds over the succeeding years and is addressed in ethical terms in the "Author as Producer" as a failure of accountability. Here Benjamin re-emphasises tendencies in Communist Party policy concerning writers' responsibilities, as if returning to Lenin's 1905 claim that writers must become a functioning component of the Party organisation. The political stringency of Benjamin's thesis reflects his alarm at the inability of German writers and artists to have much impact in countering the rise of Nazism. His unqualified support for Communist cultural programmes indicates disillusionment with avant-garde strategies, which he says have not only failed to change the ruling institutions but may even have strengthened them.

In some of Benjamin's essays from 1934 is a new, explicit disenchantment with European avant-gardes and their anarchistic political affiliations. In "The Present Social Situation of the French Writer" he quotes twice from Emmanuel Berl's 1929 "Death of Bourgeois Thought" on the political inefficacy of artists: "'Imagine', says Berl, 'a reader in the year 2200 who tries to picture to himself the France of our day on the basis of our best novels. He would not even learn about the housing shortage. The financial crises of these years would be barely discernible. And there is no immediate prospect that our writers will begin to concern themselves with money matters.' This conformism turns a blind eye to the world in which it lives" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 752). Benjamin's position against the militant avant-gardes is seen to intensify in his approving reference to Blaise Cendrars' 1926 novel *Moravagine* which imagines a dehumanised anarchist, the terrorist as automaton. One year on, in "The Author as Producer", Benjamin expresses further disenchantment with avant-garde aesthetics by speaking of the debilitation of avant-garde radicalism through its accommodation by a bourgeois public. Here is continuing evidence of the reach of the realm of consumption as it readily commodifies the work that ostensibly opposes it: "For we are faced with the fact ... that the bourgeois apparatus of production and publication can assimilate astonishing quantities of revolutionary themes—indeed, can propagate them without calling its own existence, and the existence of the class that owns it, seriously into question" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 774). An even greater pessimistic shift in Benjamin's outlook on European avant-gardes directs assertions in "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility". This

late essay finds that the revolutionary aesthetic of the fine arts has by classification been a deficient technology all along. The importance of art in arming the public to effectively cope with the assaults of progress is beyond contemplative media like painting, even Dadaist painting, whose achievement is given as stimulating demand for the more disruptive, and thus enabling, technology of film.

The context of the avant-garde towards which Benjamin's essay directs us is that of radical political engagement since the 1917 Russian Revolution. For left-wing French and German writers, Russian Communism, besides being an example of effective insurrection, provides political orientation for artistic practice and disputatious theoretical models for assessing the relation of art to revolutionary change. Benjamin's 1934 writings concentrate on these characteristics as he discusses a range of issues including the social role of contemporary French writers, the difficulty of critical reading in the newspaper era, the possibility of different forms of engagement, and the means of transforming spectators into activists. In terms of cultural solutions to political demands, Benjamin distinguishes between the three localities of these debates: the Soviet Union, France, and what might be called 'Germany in exile', the diaspora of German intellectuals in flight from the Nazis. Rather than imposing a matrix alien to each locality, Benjamin develops his arguments taking into account existing local conditions with the result that directives, taken across different essays, sometimes appear contradictory if these geographical differences are forgotten. For example, the challenging juxtapositions of imagery and the sexual adventurousness which is central to French Surrealism's political radicalism is anathema to Russian Communist Party ideologues for whom didactic and salutary subject matter become paramount by the 1930s. Such is the distinction between positions in "The Present Social Situation of the French Writer" and "The Author as Producer", both from 1934. Inevitably with such differences, the role of 'producer' varies from one locale to another. As these three geographic orientations illuminate the issue of commitment, what initially seems from a distance to be grounds for commonality, is seen close up to reveal significantly divergent arguments for political agency.

Russian Communism

The geographic divergences of commitment manifest continuous tension between rigidified categories of artistic autonomy and social purpose which are there, in the 1830s, at the origin of the artistic avant-garde and which subsequently inform its rapid mutations. Made on behalf of Saint-Simon, Olinde Rodriguez's 1825 call to an aesthetic avant-garde to provide memorable images for their socialist revolution aptly highlights the two poles of this tension. "The Author as Producer" has a tendentiousness to its instrumental arguments that echoes some of the debates on aesthetics in the Soviet Union following the 1917 revolution. For this reason it will be worth looking at examples of these Soviet lectures and writings to identify any motifs shared with Benjamin. In that it also reflects the impact of Berthold Brecht on Benjamin's thinking it becomes important to identify what form this influence takes. In spite of the extreme precariousness of these Soviet political positions—"These group formations are authoritative; they are exclusive and unique"—and his criticism of the predominant literary naturalism for "the heaped up crassness of its subject matter" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 6-7), in his earlier essay "The Political Groupings of Russian Writers", from 1927, Benjamin emerges supportive of VAPP, the 7,000 member All-Union Association of Proletarian Writers, and for the Bolshevik Party's direction towards valuing revolutionary content over form. Essentially this suggests a continuity of position from 1927 to 1934 when "The Author as Producer" was written. Although naturalistic content may not by itself alter conditions, this later essay locates its effectiveness within a combination of changes to the production of writing, where writers must judge their success by asking themselves these questions: "Does he succeed in promoting the socialization of the intellectual means of production? Does he see how he himself can organize intellectual workers in the production process? Does he have proposals for the *Umfunktionierung* of the novel, the drama, the poem?" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 780).

The idea of Communists as a vanguard leadership for the proletariat is evident in the pre-revolutionary writings of Lenin. "Party Organization and Party Literature" acclaims the transformative potential of a new proletarian literature "...bringing about permanent interaction between the experience of the past (scientific socialism, the completion of the development of socialism from its primitive, utopian forms) and the experience of the present

(the present struggle of the worker comrades)". For Lenin, a vanguard literature is one which is integrated with the primary objectives of the proletariat, "a cog and a screw" of one revolutionary political movement. As such it is opposed to any manifestation of bourgeois literature, to "...literary careerism and individualism, 'aristocratic anarchism' and drive for profit..." (Harrison and Wood, 1992, 137-9). It is certainly this initial project of Lenin's to secure control of the left-wing newspapers and convert them to delivering a coherent revolutionary programme that Benjamin recognises and develops in "The Author as Producer" as he writes of the need to make readers into "intellectual workers in the production process" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 780).

In his 1924 book on Lenin's political theory, Georg Lukács reiterates the need for a proletarian vanguard which is always one step, and only one step, ahead of the population so that its thinking remains close to the class whom it serves. Beyond this strictly disciplined avant-garde there is no possibility for alternative radicalism, a policy which extends to cultural matters. Lukács explains that one problem with radical cultural initiatives is that their objectives are obscure to the proletariat and in danger of splitting off into sectarian interests. If their rebellious tendencies can be mobilised in support of Party interests there is then no reason why such radicals cannot be integrated into the Communist programme which has, in any case, changed from a 'War Communism' (when a polemic of revolutionary form, as against revolutionary content, may have been appropriate) to one that is restructuring the economy of the state. There are several indications of this possibility for integrating these disparate tendencies with the Communist programme. For example, Lukács writes: "If the proletariat wants to win this struggle, it must encourage and support every tendency which contributes to the break-up of bourgeois society, and do its utmost to enlist every upsurge—no matter how instinctive or confused—into the revolutionary process as a whole". Lukács cautions that the working class can easily be deflected by these other tendencies if it is not clear about its own goals. Integration and clarity are key: "For the other oppressed sections of society (peasants, petty-bourgeoisie, and intellectuals) naturally do not strive for the same ends as the proletariat" (Lukács, 1971, 29-30). One of Benjamin's positions is that cultural initiatives have to change to accommodate the evolving needs of the

state, and in times of restructuring there is a need for narratives of progress and struggle. Lukács depicts the proletarian vanguard at the moment of civil war in terms familiar to an avant-garde's infiltration and implosion of conservative tendencies: "If the proletariat wants to escape this ultimate onslaught [of imperialist world war], it must therefore itself take up arms against this apparatus, undermine it from within, turn the weapons the bourgeoisie was forced to give to the people against the bourgeoisie itself, and use them to destroy imperialism" (Lukács, 1971, 52-3).

In August 1934, close to when Benjamin was writing these essays, Nikolai Bukharin gave a speech on poetry at the All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers, describing such claims as Hegel's "that art in general and poetry in particular have no relation at all to practice" as "vapid and tedious arguments...". Bukharin here is developing a formal-sociological account of how poetry is always engaged with events in the world through the way it draws on the sedimented historical meaning in language: "...these experiences are in themselves experiences of the social-historical man, and in a class society, of the class man. For even such emotions as have their roots in the fathomless biological depths of man, like emotions of an erotic nature, are modified in the course of the historical process" (Solomon, 1974, 212-13). Hegelian disinterestedness may still characterise the work but will not prevent it from having powerful political or militant impact. Bukharin shared the platform at this Congress with Zhdanov whose attacks on Formalism hastened Bukharin's end. Zhdanovism also sanctioned Socialist Realism and thereby made acceptance of Surrealism by the Communist Party ultimately impossible. Zhdanovist productionist ethics colour the strictures of Benjamin's "The Author as Producer" yet these contemporaneous Soviet arguments reveal the extent of the radical thesis of "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility". Neither the humanist optimism of Bukharin nor the deadening censorship of Zhdanov are anywhere in sight as Benjamin's nihilism subjects all determinism and intention to the logic of technology. By looking away from models of protest and assimilation in the direction of revolutionising the production of art, Benjamin addresses the problem of the avant-garde's continual failure in light of its declared aims. Such failure encompasses the struggle for agency and the efforts to delay assimilation by institutions to which it is opposed. This condition is

compounded by resurgent avant-gardes with similar strategies, in spite of the evidence of earlier disenchantment. Nevertheless, Benjamin's essay "The Author as Producer" is primarily an appraisal of writing conditions in the Soviet Union, that is to say within a supposedly successful revolutionary state. Of the three geographic viewpoints mentioned at the start this is the least European, the one that is furthest from European history and culture.

As considered in the following chapter, in his earlier writing on the Surrealists Benjamin supports André Breton's defensive arguments, explaining a productive path from aestheticism to action, where formal innovativeness is seen to develop political purpose. However, the tendency of Benjamin's subsequent work of the early 1930s, particularly with "The Author as Producer", is to suppress approval for aesthetic innovation in favour of a writing that is pedagogical (in terms of teaching people how to become writers) and dedicated to gaining control of the means of production (in terms of publishing). In this case, Benjamin's judgement really hinges on the extent to which writers make the production of literature more accessible to their public. Writers may still entertain or propagandise, provided they empower their audience to undermine whatever barriers prevent them from writing. If access to writing is not broadened in this way, then the writer perpetuates an institution that entitles a handful of producers to deliver to a mass of readers.

Benjamin's injunction is for the writer's progressive surrender of autonomy as authorship is assumed by the public. The once-professional writers would then merge into the crowd of citizen-writers whom they have enabled. The dissolution of art into life is formulated in "Author as Producer" with the conditions of the Soviet Union paramount. In comparison with conditions in Germany, the Soviet writer has gained access to the most important means of production, in particular the press. The ideological revolution undergone by German writers has found no adequate outlet since control of the means of production has remained inaccessible. Most German writers have fallen back on conventional expressions of political solidarity without extending the means of production to the working class. The cycle of artistic production serving a debilitating consumption remains unaffected. This tendency is manifested in the conservatism of movements like *Neue Sachlichkeit* which "has made the *struggle against poverty* an object of consumption" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 776), and

taken up most conspicuously by the cabaret business as it has assimilated aesthetic radicalism into bourgeois entertainments: "The most advanced and daring products of the avant-garde in all the arts have had only the haute bourgeoisie as their public" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 760). In effect, for Benjamin, this tendency to assimilation was inherent in the nature of the avant-garde as "radical entertainers".

Edmund Jephcott has indicated that although Benjamin's view of the Soviet Press may be naively benign, he looks to the mass media for the potential to turn its consumers into contributors. These new forms of media "...would not be easily absorbed by the capitalist apparatus of production/distribution, but would instead revolutionize the apparatus itself..." (Benjamin, 1978, xxxi). The judicious selectiveness marking Benjamin's assessment of Russian conditions for authors conforms to the Communist Party's expectation that dissension take place away from public scrutiny. Any dissent, public or private, meets with hostility from Communist Party members, as Breton's experience shows: "The French Communist Party has constantly and openly denigrated our attitude, and even the author of a recent pamphlet...has accused us of vacillating between Marxism and anarchy and basically called upon us to choose" (Breton, 1999, 34). As a result, by 1934 Benjamin seems determined to conceal any doubts he may have had about the clear indications of repression in the Party's mandate for writers: "The Soviet state will not, it is true, banish the poet, as Plato did". Instead it will "assign him tasks that do not permit him to display in new masterpieces the long-since-counterfeit wealth of creative personality. To expect a renewal in terms of such personalities and such works is a privilege of fascism ...". (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 777). Of course writers were being banished and killed at the time Benjamin was writing. Amongst them, in the mid-1930s, was Osip Mandelstam. But for the Benjamin of "The Author as Producer" it is likely this would be classed as aberrant corrective zeal, ancillary to (rather than a product of) the main imperatives of Russian Communism. For Benjamin such repression would not disqualify his emphasis on transformative technique as the key to understanding value in Russian writing. To assess the Russian work he expects us to ask not what its relation is to its social context but what *position* it assumes within the conditions under which books are written and disseminated. In this it can be regressive or

advanced, but at its best such writing will reveal aspects of the conditions under which literature is produced and will stimulate readers to understand that they too can place themselves in a position of production.

Although this initiative could in some manner occur in any country, Russia offers the most advanced conditions for a complete assumption of the means of production by writers, in effect proletarian writers. Counter-revolutionary "hack writers", who would supply radical content as entertainment, are effectively without their bourgeois audience, and the newspapers are in the hands of Communists who are commissioning work from writers who would previously have been excluded. One of these is Sergei Tretiakov whose achievements in organising the work of a commune (throwing himself into the collectivisation process, fund-raising for tractor purchases, writing and editing local newspapers, organising radio and film programmes) are recounted by Benjamin to show how expanded the profession of writer has become under Socialism. At this juncture there is to be no transformation of the function of art, or of the audience for art, by its popularisation, its commercialisation. The accommodation of radical impulses by mainstream culture corrupts them absolutely in Benjamin's eyes. Yet the question arises over why, if inverted, this stigma wouldn't undermine his argument since in the Soviet Union the popularity of artforms is enforced by decree or by the artificially created shortage of alternatives.

In 1927, much earlier than "The Author as Producer", Benjamin is less convinced of the tendencies of Russian writing and is certainly less discrete about the weaknesses of its institutions. In the travel essay "Moscow", the enthusiasm Benjamin feels for the exoticism of the city's day-to-day business of survival barely succeeds in glossing over what are obviously conditions for the greater populace of desperate poverty and fear. His approbation for the new state appears to license a frankness, as if believing the inevitably successful outcome will redeem the means and the suffering necessary to arrive there: "Bolshevism has abolished private life. The bureaucracy, political activity, the press are so powerful that no time remains for interests that do not converge with them" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 30). Nor is there any free intellectual exchange since all discussion is public, scrutinised and accountable: "...nothing counts except the function of the producer in collective" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 31).

Dazzled by the efficiency of the regime, by its state of permanent mobilisation, Benjamin reveals the Bolshevik Party's separation from those it governs. The Bolsheviks have ended the link between power and money that exists under capitalism. Instead power is reserved for party members and money for the New Economic Policy administration. Party members receive only 250 rubles a month and can only make more money by writing. "Russia is today not only a class but also a caste state. 'Caste state'—this means that the social status of a citizen is determined not by the visible exterior of his existence—his clothes or living place—but exclusively by his relations to the party. This is also decisive for those who do not directly belong to it. To them, too, employment is open, to the extent that they do not overtly repudiate the regime" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 35). Benjamin notes the ordinary person's fear of the Party's representatives, evident in the silence and mistrust between strangers and the carefully weighed answers to questions. The continuous drive for power is approved because it is nothing to do with the capitalist link of power with money.

For Benjamin there is an inevitability to this ruthless rationalisation of the productivity of thought which, he argues, is only a little way ahead of tendencies in the West where the independence of writers is encroached on by the combative relations between labour and capital: "In Russia the process is complete: the intellectual is above all a functionary, working in the departments of censorship, justice, and finance, and, if he survives, participating in work—which, however, in Russia means power. He is a member of the ruling class... The transfer of the mental means of production into public ownership can be distinguished only fictitiously from that of the material means. To begin with, the proletariat can be trained in the use of both only under the protection of a dictatorship" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 38-9).

In other pieces from 1927 Benjamin alludes to similar difficulties. Reviewing *Cement*, a novel by Fyodor Gladkov, he admires the narrative of determined young functionaries who neglect their own safety to overcome the obstruction of Bolshevik committees and soviets. In the article "The Political Groupings of Russian Writers" Benjamin questions the quality of contemporary writing but concludes that present literacy requirements make a priority of teaching people to read rather than teaching readers to write well. Much of the article is taken up with identifying the divisions within VAPP, whose various tendencies indicate the

depth of political debate that constitutes public criticism in Russia: "The process of grappling with the political slogans and problems of the day can never be intensive enough, to the point where every important decision of the party confronts the writer with the most immediate challenge, and novels and stories in many cases come to acquire a relationship to the state not unlike that which a writer's works used to have to the convictions of his aristocratic patron in former times" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 6). Behind these observations lies a narrative of political transformation: the ease with which art becomes imbricated in legitimising a realm of consumption that furthers class repression ensures its accelerated conversion into propaganda with a dynamic role in the production of social change.

Benjamin notes the superseding of Trotsky's position that until society is adequately transformed by the proletariat there are no grounds for identifying a "proletarian literature". In the wake of this revision it would seem that once "proletarian literature" is designated as a new cultural vanguard (displacing the earlier Russian avant-gardes which emphasised revolutionary form) the movement must by definition predate what it promises to bring about. Here is another aspect to the narrative of political conversion: the anticipatory actions of Western European avant-gardes become transformed into a proletariat avant-garde whose role is not, as before, to undermine the institution of art, but to displace it entirely with a new one controlled by Party writers. There is an issue here concerning the plausibility of state-sponsored avant-gardes which resumes debate on the need for art to retain its autonomy if it is to remain critical. We could say that the character of artistic autonomy has always been contingent on its given political context. Most problematically, autonomy is effectively negotiated between artists and the State through aesthetic initiatives. Inevitably this process of negotiation results in a semblance of autonomy forming a vital constituent of the successful commodification of Western art. This condition suggests that artistic agendas of transformation must remain unrealizable projections within capitalist markets whose investment in the perpetuation of avant-gardes ensures their failure. Yet even within this bleak perspective there is the understanding that this autonomy is at times unpredictable and barely containable and that its proximity to the centre of power is exactly what enables criticality.

In the Soviet context for the early Russian essays and for aspects of "The Author as Producer", Benjamin's shift is indicated by his introductory question: what is the writer's position within (rather than in relation to) the production process of writing? If the writer works in relation to something, then autonomy is presupposed. If however, the writer works within an existing system of production, then the presupposition is that they have no independence from that system at all. For Benjamin at this point, autonomy seems to be a dispensable anachronism, a position developed in relation to his thoughts on Brecht. In the 1930 radio talk "Bert Brecht" Benjamin summarises the playwright's declaration thus: "I refuse to exploit my talent 'freely'; I exploit it as educator, politician, and organiser..." (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 366), in other words, from a position within the means of production.

French Communism

Reading "The Present Social Situation of the French Writer", begun in 1933, we can consider Benjamin's view of the conditions in another of these geo-intellectual regions. In this essay, Benjamin is preoccupied with the failures of the literary avant-garde, with those writers who, regardless of political affiliation, are acclaimed for challenging the boundaries of literature's content and style. Here the criticism is not of a failure to empower one's audience but a failure to expose the social pressures shaping people's lives. It is in other words a failure of narrative and communication rather than of production, as would be the case in the Soviet Union. Céline, for example, is criticised for describing terrible social conditions without indicating the class roots to these problems and the means to combat them (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 752). Art is to enable resistance to contemporary impacts in a manner that a few years later, in "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility", will be argued is intrinsic to the material properties of new technological media. Benjamin nevertheless concedes that the extreme politicisation of some writers (on both left and right) has been motivated by this failure: "...the attachment of intellectuals to the political prejudices of classes and nations is for the most part no more than a disastrous, short-sighted attempt to break free of idealistic abstractions and come closer, closer than ever before, to reality" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 749).

Looking at these two essays, "The Present Social Situation of the French Writer" and "The Author as Producer", the development of Benjamin's critique towards a more explicit social praxis for writers is marked by reflection on Plato's fate for poets in his ideal state. The passage from *The Republic* concerning the expulsion of poets is referenced at the start of both of Benjamin's pieces, suggesting that for him it is analogous with the situation facing writers in the 1930s, whether in the Soviet Union or in the West. One of these references is included in a lengthy quote from Guillaume Apollinaire who, writing pseudonymously, mimics the extreme view that poets be eliminated: "All these people have forfeited their right to exist. The prizes that are conferred on them have been purloined from workers, inventors, scholars, philosophers, acrobats, philanthropists, sociologists, and so on '... unless serious steps are taken to deal with literature, it will mean the end of civilization ... The new age begins tomorrow. There will no longer be any poetry ... Writers will be exterminated'" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 744-5). Noting the advantage of hindsight, Benjamin identifies this stance with "the social climate of imperialism" where beleaguered intellectuals are under renewed threat. With our own hindsight we can attribute such "imperialism" to both Soviet communism and European fascism. Based on the same model of antisocial non-productivity, quite different reckonings for writers are drawn. For both left and right, the pointlessness of writers' work is manifested by its remoteness from social matters. Writers are neither interested in lucid communication nor in using their writing to achieve valid political goals. The conclusion for communists is that writers should only work to further the interests of the proletariat, while for nationalists, writers must further the link between a nation's purpose and its historical models. As seen in the previous chapter, the extreme nature of this instrumentalism concedes in the Baudelaire writings to an unpredictably faceted mosaic of reflections on the relation of social base to cultural superstructure.

Benjamin's thinking in these two essays develops the possibilities of an alternative literary activism where "... the intellectual's path to the radical critique of the social order is the longest, just as that of the proletariat is the shortest" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 763). What Benjamin means by the "longest route" is best revealed by his refracted illumination of Surrealist aesthetics. In "The Present Social Situation of the French Writer" he introduces

Surrealism as an initiative springing from disillusionment with anarchist avant-gardism. Blaise Cendrars' *Moravagine* and André Malraux's *The Human Condition* are the novels Benjamin uses as a context for the Surrealist alternative. The acclaim for left-wing avant-gardes is not correlated by any structural influence they have on society. The revolutionary nature of their artwork remains confined to their own milieu, in part due to the limitation of their audience to a bourgeois public. By depicting political revolutionaries as destructive unfeeling automata, "alien projections of ourselves" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 761), Cendrars effectively holds an alienating mirror to the avant-garde. Malraux's equivalent mirror depends on depicting the alienation of middle-class revolutionaries from both their class of origin and the proletariat they serve. They are lonely figures driven primarily by their own suffering: "they act far less from their consciousness of class than from their consciousness of their own isolation" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 762). Out of these lessons, Benjamin explains, the Surrealists devised a radicalism that moved play into political activism: "To enlist 'the forces of intoxication for the revolution'—that was the real program. The dialectical development of the movement, however, was such that the image space which it had so boldly opened up for itself proved more and more to be identical with the image space of political praxis. It was within this space, at any rate, that the members of the group located the home of a classless society" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 760).

Technological revolution

Turning now to Benjamin's account in the "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility", we should note the distinction he makes between ritualistic and exhibition values in relation to the auratic properties of the artwork. These denote the change in art's use from a time when the purpose of its aesthetic properties was to contribute towards sustaining a community's belief system. Throughout the nineteenth century this grip on art by ritual is loosened by several factors including recognition of art's role in sustaining social hierarchies and by the impact of technological reproduction on the concept of uniqueness and on the authority of the original artwork. These processes diminish the aura of the work of art, that

quality which is described variously as the property of an object to appear to return one's gaze, a feeling of the remoteness of objects, or the durability of an object's uniqueness in space and time. Although ritualistic properties are discernible in Hegel's account of the waning of the artwork's affect, these auratic qualities are not so apparent. One reason is that for Benjamin they generally serve as functions—sometimes negative—of the social and political matrix of artworks and tend not to be classed as something immanent to those objects. Yet as qualities that are linked to function they are inextricable from the technical and formal properties of art. Once these properties change, in response to social and technological developments, as we see with film, then a new kind of materialist quality completely displaces the old auratic ones.

The new art is for exhibition purposes, that is to say its function resides in being seen (in this case by the mass) and in the impact it has on its large audience. As noted, Benjamin is reluctant to grant film and photography status as art. He is more interested in considering a field of instrumental aesthetic experience where, in a technologised Hegelian overcoming, we find artworks sublated into oblivion. This kind of *tabula rasa* for culture is reiterated by Benjamin a number of times in this period. Such a radical refrain concerns a commentator like Rainer Rochlitz whose reading of the "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility" finds the losses entailed in the decline of the aura to amount to cultural fundamentalism (Rochlitz, 1996, 164). Rochlitz seems right to infer this as Benjamin's attempt to advance Brecht's critique, yet by isolating these remarks from contemporary commentary he exaggerates their negativity. As he wonders whether it is time for Surrealist artists to leave their profession behind, suggesting in the 1933 essay "Experience and Poverty" that "In its buildings, pictures, and stories, mankind is preparing to outlive culture, if need be" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 735), Benjamin articulates the drive within arguments for the sublation of art familiar enough from other readings of the avant-garde.

Hegel's statement in the *Aesthetics* concerning art's demonstration to spirit of reconciled opposites, depends on the successful articulation of what he terms the intrinsic sensuous qualities of art, free from any demands external to its nature. In the opening chapter this role for art is argued as a problematic formulation. Even if it is supposed to be a purely formal engagement, art's involvement in raising to view the contemporary oppositions in the world

grants it the kind of autonomy formulated by Adorno, where that which they are independent from is negatively stamped on the sensuous properties of art: "The unsolved antagonisms of reality return in artworks as immanent problems of form" (Adorno, 1997, 6).

Benjamin's linking of art to technology may be one way of formulating a resolution of the problem in Hegel's argument. The question facing Benjamin would then be as follows: How is an art form to gain agency and empower an underclass by virtue of its intrinsic qualities? His answer is along these lines: An art form will gain agency if its intrinsic qualities are the consequence of its being embedded in mass social and technological changes. In this case, as a result of its origins, it will already possess the means to demonstrate how to resist these same conditions which brought it into being and which are revolutionising experience. The event of the loss of aura that is narrated in the "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility" is earlier prefigured by Hegel's end of art proclamation. What for Hegel is attributed to a falling apart between religious truths and the truth of art's secularised sensuousness is reconfigured in Benjamin's coldly pessimistic view to be a different, very materialist kind of rupture.

Aesthetic values like contemplation and uniqueness accrue to painting—a pre-industrial medium with ritualistic vestiges—and denote privilege through being affordable and accessible only to a minority. The new media of photography and film (although understandably Benjamin is concerned to keep them from canonisation as art) produced by the new technologies rapidly become the property of the mass public, in the sense of being *for* this class as means of enjoyment and instruction. There are two senses of property intended here. There is the first sense, familiar from Marx, of property being produced or owned by someone for their own financial profit. However, a relevant second meaning is outlined by W.F. Haug in relation to commodity aesthetics, where the consumer takes hold of a commodity and uses it for their own advantage, in ways unintended by the producer. Such appropriation, explains Haug, can rebound critically on the producer who finds the development of their product determined through the uses made of it by consumers, uses which may contravene the gamut of desires towards which it was initially oriented.

In "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility", Benjamin seems to acclaim this second kind of possession as he celebrates the new uses to which film is put by its audience. Film reveals to its audience an optical unconscious consisting of image formulations, like a person's movement or a plant's cellular structure, previously only half-glimpsed or imagined, but never fixed in the mind. These technological art forms are understood by consumers to enable them to do things they previously could not. It reveals new structures of experience to them and entitles them to take pleasure in and to evaluate those experiences. Film is also used to parry the shocks of the newly evolving external reality. Notably these qualities are outwith Hegel's conditions for art's freedom and have frequently since been used to disqualify photography and cinema from being considered as art of their own time, particularly by Adorno. Benjamin's argument is that the technology which marks them off from traditional media also distinguishes a threshold beyond which those older media can no longer embody the experiences that have become crucial to an age suddenly undergoing mass mobilisation within industry, urban environments and war. Just as the new technologies require a new kind of human being in order to run them and sustain their impact, so they presuppose a new ground for art. The need for humans to adapt to the demands of the new technology is a feature of commentary, both positive and negative, on nineteenth-century industrialisation. For example, Isenbard Kingdom Brunel calls at one point for an entirely new kind of manager to run the huge ships he designs: "The man who takes charge of such a machine, in which is embarked so large a capital, must have a mind capable of setting aside...all his previous experience and habits, and must be prepared to commence as an observer of new facts..." (Harvie and Scharf, 1976, 48-9).

This rupture of traditional artforms from life, and the conjoining of a new art with a new kind of life-experience is a class-influenced event for Benjamin and therefore antithetical to Hegel's claims for a universal experiencing subject. Technologies emerge which empower a disenfranchised class. These technologies' characteristics, and the needs of their public cause a rift between them and more traditional media serving another class of people altogether. In "Little History of Photography" from 1931 and the later "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility" Benjamin regularly describes properties of the new media as if

to increase the distance between photography and film and the older image systems like painting. Eugène Atget's separation of the image from aura is described in the earlier essay using analogies with the medical profession: "He was the first to disinfect the stifling atmosphere generated by conventional portrait photography... He cleanses this atmosphere—indeed, he dispels it altogether..." (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 518). This resumes in the "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility" with a passage comparing painting to the remote touch of the faith healer while the penetrating vision of film is favourably compared to an expert surgeon cutting into the body (Benjamin, 1969, 238). Such qualities are in this way made distinct from those of the older media and are thus shown with the potential to facilitate the self-determination of a class.

In the writings on Brecht, Benjamin carries forward this argument for a revolutionary aesthetic in relation to the entirely different context of Epic Theatre. Of the two versions of Benjamin's "What is Epic Theatre" it is the first version, unpublished in his lifetime, which emphasises technology as a standard for aesthetic innovations. The correspondence between Epic Theatre and the new technical media, film and radio, is based on its provision for audience interruption. As film allows its audience entry at anytime and the radio can be switched on and off, so the theatre audience might attend just to catch a particularly colourful episode, or can pick up the plot at any point along the way. At one stage Benjamin explains the exactness of this theatre of gestures as resembling the precision of a typesetter. There is one key reference in the second version where the play is described as proceeding "in fits and starts, in a manner comparable to the images on a film strip" (Benjamin, 1998, 21). This second version is more like a finished manifesto than the working document of the first. It condenses much of the former into more focused and reductive observations. One issue it is careful to elaborate is the exact function of the self-consciously artificial, continuously interrupted and declarative style of Epic Theatre. The distancing effect is, in the later version, named as a process of making strange, of alienating, in order to induce critical reflection. Brecht's own argument is with Aristotelian drama which he believes stultifies response. He has the perception that its emphasis on catharsis results in a passive identification with the hero's predicament. He articulates his own approach as rousing the viewer to feel that the hero's sufferings are "unnecessary" rather than "inescapable".

Benjamin's nihilism in the face of technology seems a heretical materialism to Brecht's humanism. Certainly the relation of social conditions to aesthetic instrumentality in "The Author as Producer" underlies Benjamin's analyses in "What is Epic Theatre?". For Benjamin, Brecht's plays exist primarily to educate a proletarian public excluded from most cultural experiences and unable to gain control over the material conditions of their lives. To do this they uncover these conditions, not as representations but in the form of moments of astonishment that these are events which they recognise. This "astonishment" relates to the shocks undergone by Benjamin's audience experiencing film and photography. However, there is the sense that those shocks will barely equip them to defend against the unexpected traumas of the contemporary world, let alone gain them control of any means of production. Brecht's question as to how "the tortured and heroic... man of this great and ghastly century" (Solomon, 1974, 365), might get a theatre that belongs to him and which will enable his mastery of the world has a far brighter aspect than Benjamin's pessimistic prognoses for art in the "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility".

Conclusion

In this group of Benjamin's essays there is a change in the function of shock. The avant-garde provokes its bourgeois audience in order to confront it with its deep implication in this "ghastly century" only to find that it is furnishing "an object of contemplative enjoyment... a consumer article" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 776). The artist producer instead attempts to bypass this bourgeoisie to induce shock that empowers a proletarian audience. It might be said that the former approach distances its audience from the work of art through an offending alienation whereas the latter reduces the distance between work and consumer by an alienation that draws the audience into the process of production. The artist in such an instance has sufficiently overcome the impact of external shock to be able to take on the method as a tool. The goal of the artist who aims to sublimate art into the praxis of life and the author who is already at work within a revolutionised society may be at different stages of development but are closely related in their wish to democratise production: "What matters, therefore, is the

exemplary character of production, which is able, first, to induce other producers to produce, and, second, to put an improved apparatus at their disposal. And this apparatus is better, the more consumers it is able to turn into producers..." (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 777).

This chapter argues that proposals Benjamin makes in the 1930s for developing art's agency demand the transformation of art from a force enabling its own consumption into one of many forces embedded in the production of social change. This shift is shown to be possible through changes in the technology of art which enable transfer of the means of production to those previously excluded. In "The Author as Producer" the technological changes affecting writing are those which expand authorship to composition of political tracts, newspaper articles and propaganda. Such diversified involvements which seem plausible within socialist economies could also be expected to weaken the status of the literary artefact under capitalism and empower radical alternatives. Certainly the argument Benjamin makes for the acceleration of self-empowerment as the technologies of film and photography reveal to an audience the nature and quality of its own contemporary experiences is applicable to the diversification of literary culture enabled by the internet or the photocopier.

The following chapter returns more explicitly to intoxication through considering Benjamin's essays on hashish. Such pieces also constitute part of a diversified literary production which, inspired perhaps by Surrealism, takes experiences available to anyone as an adequate basis for writing. However, it is argued that the political positions revealed by these intoxicated writings are complex in relation to the productionist essays considered in the present chapter. Emphatically private and intimate they claim a value in independence from the determinism of instrumentalist aesthetics and point to an alternative route past the sphere of consumption as it stifles the prospects for artistic agency.

Chapter 5

Benjamin's Hashish Protocols

Introduction

This chapter brings the prior discussion of Benjamin's articles on the responsibilities of the writer in the production of social change into a comparison with his writings on hashish as standing for a different form of radical engagement. Although the productionist essays of the mid-1930s postdate the hashish protocols whose conclusions they might thereby appear to eclipse, this chapter argues that the earlier writings remain a key part of Benjamin's broadened platform for a transformational aesthetics. Their relevance as examples of a revolutionary approach to writing lies in the experiential depth with which they advance a tradition of drug literature and in the exceptional intimacy they bring to determining a model for an open encounter with the world. Their success at re-engaging the flâneur with a realm of reflection uncolonised by consumption shows Benjamin experimentally revisiting the problematic conditions confronting artists that are detailed in the earlier Baudelaire chapter. It is in these senses that the indeterminacy of the hashish writings offers a corrective to the rigorous conditions for engagement set out in the essays on Soviet and French Communist writing. At times the hashish protocols stand as experimental enactments of principles set out in Benjamin's writings on Surrealism, with which they are contemporaneous.

The chapter on Nietzsche provides initial examples of how the experience of intoxication frequently marks radical thought. Allusion to ecstatic states in such a context represent a wilful fall from equilibrium into uncertainty, as Bataille's real-life enactment of Nietzschean principles shows. References to ecstatic states are found in left and right-wing political texts which address social transformation. Ecstatic images serve Gottfried Benn and Ernst Jünger in reflecting on German National Socialist conditions, while Aragon and Benjamin use hallucinatory imagery as one facet of an ambivalent engagement with Communism. Most conspicuously, Benjamin's writing often uses the narratives of dream states, revelatory experiences, and drug trances as if they might be catalysts for revolutionary experience. This chapter considers the nature of intoxication in relation to some early twentieth-century political radicalisms, with particular scrutiny of Benjamin's writings on hashish experiences.

If it is at all possible to note some outcome from these experiences, some way they can be taken as productive in enabling Benjamin's grasp of the world, this will probably depend on establishing what is different about these intoxications when compared with narratives of ecstasy of opposing ideologies. It is asked if Benjamin's accounts of intoxication reveal an alternative to more familiar definitions of avant-garde action; that is, whether they avoid the plight of an aggressively insurgent avant-garde which is inevitably recuperated by the cultural institutions to which it is opposed. If so, then this inquiry could attempt to define what is effective and non-recuperable about the oppositional character of intoxication. Several concerns immediately come to mind. If the positions taken up in these accounts can be seen as subversive then is this due to the properties of those particular intoxications (heightened sensory responses, insights and reflections) as experiences without conventional issue, or due to the kinds of engagement opened up to an intoxicated person? Heightened sensory experience typifies intoxication but does its evaluation rely on a legacy of earlier accounts of intoxication rather than on new criteria? And finally, how is it possible to quantify the liberatory component of heightened sensory experience when its revolutionary outcome is so indeterminate?

Yet intoxication qualifies much political writing of the time, as if in rapture with the urgency of transformation, and may serve as a kind of counterweight to the disciplinary rigour and focus of political radicalism. Such adjustment will not be the same for all political

tendencies for which the haptic experience of intoxication may serve very different ends. I will ultimately be discussing Benjamin's writings from the late 1920s to early 1930s (at a time when they share interests with Surrealist writing) to consider his definitions of intoxicated 'illumination' as a compensation, and perhaps redemption for revolutionary initiatives that became ineffective or altogether suppressed. I will begin however, with a brief survey of some nineteenth and twentieth-century pharmacological accounts, from which certain motifs reappear in the later narratives. In terms of relating the history of narratives of intoxication to the avant-garde issues under consideration, it will primarily be the nineteenth and early twentieth-century accounts discussed here.

Drug histories

In the historical encyclopedias and pharmacological glossaries, intoxication tends to be described as the unproductive outcome of a non-medical application of hashish. In these early accounts the medical benefits of hashish are acclaimed but its psychomimetic effects are only described as an intriguing aberration, though only rarely with disapproval. The 1856 and 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica entries for hemp provide examples of this tendency. The earlier of the two, with racist perspective, notes the effects of hashish on African bushmen to include "inebriation and delirium of decidedly hilarious character, inducing violent laughter, jumping and dancing". The more considered, later account describes the effects as "highly pleasurable" with "a subjective sensation of mental brilliance...not borne out by the objective results". An early study of intoxicants, James Johnston's *The Chemistry of Common Life*, is conscientious enough to quote at length from those who have had first hand encounters with hashish, even though cumulatively this serves as a list of the symptoms of intoxication rather than a key to any possible impact it may have. William O'Shaughnessy who conducted pioneering clinical experiments with hashish on severely ill patients in India is quoted here on the catalepsy that overcame heavy users and "the great mental cheerfulness" that characterises moderate use. Jacques-Joseph Moreau, an early experimenter is quoted "It is really *happiness* which is produced by the haschisch; and by this I mean an enjoyment

entirely moral, and by no means sensual, as might be supposed...For the haschisch-eater is happy...like him who hears tidings which fill him with joy...'” (Johnston, 1855, 114).

The transformative potential of drug hallucination is more explicitly addressed by nineteenth-century travellers, artists and writers experimenting with hallucinogens and describing the visionary effects in such detail as to begin to constitute an aesthetics of intoxication.

Théophile Gautier's "Club des Hashischins", published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* on February 1, 1846 is written as a kind of Gothic entertainment, with hyperbole as literary style.

The context is a caricature of Edgar Allen Poe's Paris where almost immediately we are told "the night was black" (Gautier, 1996) with a thick fog obscuring whatever might have remained visible. Into this setting is introduced the "somber" venue with ludicrously anachronistic furnishings. Within the structure of this story, organised into chapters, is an architecture of circles of intoxication which run the gamut of sensual experience. The narrative is less reflective than a celebration of a self-gratifying bourgeois recreation (an opinion he held in common with Baudelaire) emphasising the attainment of an extremity of pleasure. It shares some motifs with other classic hashish accounts, in particular with regard to the drag on time where minutes pass in slow increments, and in Gautier's experience of fading into his surroundings: "...I myself melted into the objects I regarded; I became that very object" (Gautier, 1996). Even though from the start Gautier is "lost" in the experience he views this as a lapse from normal life, to which he expects to return at the end, no different from when he started. Though Gautier draws no conclusions from this experience there are references to quasi-religious transports—"This will be deducted from your share in Paradise" (Gautier, 1996)—yet which offer no anticipation of profane aspects that would anticipate the Surrealists.

Another historical account that deserves notice is John Bell's "On the Haschisch or Cannabis Indica", an unusually precise analysis of personal experiences conducted in the course of trying to find an application for hashish in the treatment of mental illness. Bell gives a vivid realisation of the intoxication in terms of the surge of images he can only helplessly register: "The painful attempt to regulate these disturbed states of consciousness, was soon given up, and, half voluntarily, half by a species of moral compulsion, the whole psychical nature

surrendered itself, without further struggle, to the fullest and most complete belief in the actual existence of a thousand hallucinations... The firmest intentions were forgotten in an instant. There seemed to be no difference between the idea and the expression of it in words. A moment was enough to forget whether it had been expressed or not" (Bell, 1857). He notes importantly that he remained entirely aware of what was happening to him and was able to analyse the trance. His memory of the experience was generally unimpaired, though primarily only of the most salient images. The intoxication in these historical accounts usually results in benign rapture with the world. There is not the sense of a relentless consumption of phenomena, of an explicitly sensuous relation to the environment, that marks some nineteenth-century narratives of the city (like Edgar Allen Poe's "The Man in the Crowd") or which might anticipate the Surrealists' voracious assimilation of their surroundings. Much more the case is the narrator at ease within an intoxicated world, a state familiar from most of Benjamin's accounts, although as will be shown, he indicates varying outcomes.

There is one other example of drug intoxication that is of value here even though chronologically it falls long after Benjamin's experiments. Octavio Paz's commentary, accompanying Henri Michaux's own accounts of mescaline experiences undertaken in the late 1950s to early 1960s, provides illuminating definitions of intoxication with traits that correspond to Benjamin's conclusions. In particular Michaux, and subsequently Paz, are interested in developing ways to describe the affirmative experience under intoxication of the loss of subjectivity and of the characteristic sense that time consists of the sustained experience of instantaneity. Subjectivity is lost in the wake of hallucination prising experience free from meaning: "All [Michaux's] efforts have been directed at reaching that zone, by definition indescribable and incommunicable, in which meanings disappear" (Paz, 2000, 258). Rather than enabling Michaux to explore mescaline, Paz wonders whether it isn't more the case of the writer being explored by the drug (Paz, 2000, 259). His face is obliterated and on returning appears utterly vacated. "The poet saw his inner space in outer space. The shift from the inside to the outside—an outside that is interiority itself, the heart of reality. A horrible, ineffable spectacle. Michaux can say: I left my life behind to catch a glimpse of life" (Paz, 2000, 259). The second series of Michaux's experiments induces more devastating

visions of the destruction and splitting apart of the self where the experience is of dazzling lights that penetrate the body and form extravagant fantasy structures: "But we have lost our footing. We have lost consciousness of footholds, of our members and organs, of the regions of our body, which has ceased to matter, fluid in the midst of fluids. We have lost our home. We have become eccentric, decentered from the self" (Michaux, 2000, 254). Though a more extreme hallucination, and impossible to reflect on in the way that hashish allows, these experiences amplify the tendency Benjamin notes as he attempts to acknowledge otherwise indiscernible secular forces in the everyday world. This is closely related to the intoxication of the everyday, intoxication with literature, with leisure, with oneself, which he emphasises in the 1929 essay "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia".

The ecstatic states of mental transport, the loss of subjectivity and subsequent intense identification with the external world, along with the sense of continuous instantaneity in place of duration—these are conditions of extreme intoxication, at least as evidenced by the kind of drug experiences under discussion. Also notable is the condition of benignity, of being at home in the world, brought on by hashish. In the early accounts such qualities tend to have been experienced and appreciated for their own sake, as non-productive ecstatic encounters. It is a different outcome though when such characteristics are amplified through political intentions. An initial discussion of ways in which the Surrealists developed the characteristics of intoxication to inform their left-wing political objectives will continue with Benjamin's experiences and conclude with an account of right-wing intoxications. Both in terms of the drug and in terms of the politics it illuminates, there are distinctions made between intoxications. The passivity of language and engagement marking Benjamin's hashish states is, for example, at an extreme remove from the relentless drives of Benn's temporary embrace of fascist rhetoric and Jünger's militant feudal imagery.

Surrealism

Surrealism serves as a particularly appropriate example here for a number of reasons. It is the twentieth-century avant-garde movement on which Benjamin focuses one of his most

important critical essays where key aspects of avant-garde agency are given extensive treatment. Besides writing on Bertolt Brecht, whose Epic Theatre he took as an irrefutable instance of effective revolutionary praxis, Benjamin did not acclaim the transformative potential of other examples of contemporary art to the extent that he did with Surrealism. Indicating his intentions in the full title of the essay "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia", Benjamin recognises this potential to be ebbing, going on to argue that the Surrealists are in danger of seeing their revolution submerge beneath the "unprincipled, dilettantish optimism" of distracting intoxications (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 216). Under Breton's leadership, the Surrealists' efforts to reconcile anarchic tendencies of revolt with organised insurrection are an enlightened attempt to realise early Russian avant-garde goals which gradually become sacrificed under the Bolsheviks to a repressive revolutionary conformity. By the end of the 1920s the remaining Surrealists are Communist Party members trying to achieve the kind of reconciliation of independent aesthetic research and organised politics that the Party found paradoxical. This struggle is mirrored in Benjamin's own writings if we compare the extremes of the hashish protocols (disengaged from orthodox critique), with those more didactic essays influenced by Brecht, such as "The Author as Producer". This focus is further justified by the close parallels between Benjamin's "Hashish in Marseilles", of 1932, and Aragon's *Paris Peasant*. Even though in "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia" Benjamin cites Aragon as a key source for his enthusiasm and insights, it is not until the later Marseilles essay that he addresses *Paris Peasant* in kind.

Orthodox Communist thinking about political effectiveness sets out strict parameters for appropriate revolutionary behaviour and cultural production. Soviet and French Communist texts which in the 1920s and 1930s sought to determine the relationship between political action and culture were increasingly severe on artists whose work could not immediately be applied to political or economic ends. Breton's intense disappointment with the French Communist Party illustrates such pressures. In 1934, nearing a complete severance of discussions with senior Communists, he publishes a collection of essays titled *Break of Day*. One of these, "In Self-Defense", launches a diatribe at the Party's efforts to circumscribe

politically relevant action. Henri Barbusse becomes a target on account of valuing only a proletarian audience for *L'Humanité*, the Communist Party newspaper he edits. For *L'Humanité* Breton feels nothing but scorn. His hurt comments nevertheless reveal the level of doctrinaire proselytising that the Surrealists found so stultifying: “[*L'Humanité*] puerile, bombastic, needlessly *cretinizing*— is unreadable as a newspaper and completely worthless in its self-appointed role as educator to the masses. Behind those quickly scanned articles, which focus so tightly on current events that they leave no room for the larger picture, which scream at the top of their lungs about specifics, which present Russia's admirable difficulties as so many insane joyrides, which discourage any extrapolitical activities other than sports, which glorify unsatisfying jobs, and which heap abuse on common-law prisoners, it is impossible not to sense an extreme weariness on the part of those who foist them on us, a secret resignation to what exists, as well as a desire to keep the reader in a state of generous illusion—and with the least possible effort to boot” (Breton, 1999, 25). Revolutionary doctrine mandated disciplined political and economic organisation with specific propagandising support from artists and writers. In his early 1930s essays like “The Author as Producer”, Benjamin himself provided such support in formulating the responsibilities of the activist writer and indicating the kind of revolutionary awakening which a work of art might induce. The earlier delicately articulated formulations, indirectly advocating an intense sensory engagement with materiality as a more oblique kind of political subversion, give way to instrumental stipulations for relevant writing. Since this latter tendency of Benjamin's is discussed in the previous chapter it will be provided with just enough of an outline here to give perspective to the hashish protocols.

John McCole explains how Benjamin's interest in Brecht develops from the latter's early espousal of an anarchic delinquent type as prototype anti-bourgeois revolutionary (McCole, 1993, 197-8). Brecht uses the romantic decadent tradition of Rimbaud for revolutionary ends that would establish a clean slate, free of traces of traditional culture and values. At this level such strategies would seem to link Benjamin's interest in Brecht with his support for the Surrealists. Yet in relation to both he develops a different kind of dialectical programme which would enable revolutionary potential. The Surrealists are to galvanise revolutionary action

through the energies of intoxication whose dialectic of a world viewed as intoxicated in its very sobriety brings about the transformation where freedom can be unreservedly enjoyed.

Returning to McCole's account, Benjamin is described as seeing that the "complement to Brecht's liquidationist vision was a constructive practice that aimed, as far as his literary practice could, to help the producers take things over for themselves..." (McCole, 1993, 199).

Epic theatre is primarily to teach the audience how to begin to take control of their circumstances, in particular their work. Brecht's achievement in the theatre parallels Soviet achievements in broadening access to publication through worker participation in newspaper writing. In Benjamin's view, both have changed the technology of their medium to convert it into a revolutionary one. In "The Author as Producer" Benjamin doesn't begin to acknowledge limitations to such revolutionary potential under the clearly repressive conditions of the Soviet Union. However, McCole's account of Brecht's and Benjamin's differences concerning the limitations of a use-value to art helps to explain why Benjamin persistently turned to intoxication for alternatives to Soviet and German authoritarian limitations on experience and action. With evidence all around of the failure of European left-wing initiatives in the 1930s, it was questionable whether the narrow focus of Brecht's "revolutionary use-value" for culture (which dismissed any alternative speculation on agency) was any more than historically idealistic. Yet it is not just the image-realm of the past towards which Benjamin deviates in order to expand the horizon for socially effective work. Hashish is evidently a means of opening up a present-day image-realm to greater intimacy and revelation. Perhaps the solitary nature of the experience recounted in "Hashish in Marseilles" shows how far away from acceptable left-wing practice Benjamin has actually ventured.

In spite of the reverses to Surrealism's momentum caused by its unworkable alliance with the Communist Party, the recourse to languages of intoxication continues among its members and among its breakaway groups right through the 1930s. For all his reservations about the Surrealists' willingness and ability to forgo the seductions of impetuous revolt, Benjamin is himself reluctant to leave behind the allure of his own preferred intoxicants: language, hashish, sense experience and the pleasure he takes in his own rather anti-productionist observations. The estimation Benjamin places on the capability of sensory pleasure to

manifest insurrectionary potential, continues throughout the 1930s even though interrupted by the severe revolutionary logic of essays like "The Author as Producer". In those more politically instrumental essays, Benjamin works towards the kind of knowledge that might produce a revelation stimulating productive action. This is quite different from the hashish essays which record undirected pleasure and sensory acuity as means to revelations of ambiguous outcome. Like the attention he pays to Surrealism's "profane illumination" as operating to subvert religious experience, his own incandescent insights function as a profane correction to Communist instrumentalism and serve as a kind of subversive commentary on the privations of commitment. Benjamin's hashish protocols, the narratives of his drug experiments, also serve here as an assessment of Surrealist accounts like Aragon's *Paris Peasant* and Breton's 1924 *Manifesto of Surrealism* where a state of entrancement stands as an individual revolt anticipating wider revolution.

What is understood here by intoxication? In "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia" Benjamin means it in a broad sense as deriving from an intensification of everyday experiences, such as reading, reflection, and idling, all of them "static", conventionally introspective activities, and not automatically linked to revolutionary action. Benjamin acclaims these as alternative experiences to hashish and reiterates Surrealist claims that revolutionary action must be built on a life whose most ordinary pursuits are also imbued with equivalent fervour. If this kind of everyday intoxication is a protest against counterproductive inactivity it is also a revolt against the demands of those expecting antagonistic action to precipitate radical social change. At the same time it sets out more specific expectations than anything issuing contemporaneously from Benjamin's own indeterminate hashish protocols. These latter are usually unrevised, sporadically uttered accounts of trance experiences which only find an equivalent in some other artist narratives, like those Michaux writes later on about mescaline. In this sense they run against the grain of earlier intoxication narratives which usually organise events into a coherent sequence and often draw improbable ethical conclusions.

Yet in the 1929 essay Benjamin criticises hashish as a less effective intoxicant for failing to provide the "profane illumination" that he makes a cornerstone of the Surrealist political

understanding. Here, profane illumination gives us what religion cannot: a rootedness in materialist experience which, as the obverse of religious restraint, forms a dialectic of ecstatic agency. Only the more lucid states of transport can enable this experience and not the driftings under hashish which for Benjamin only offer glimpses through the curtain of debilitating religious mystification but no secure material grounding from which to dissolve it. Besides its other goals, the 1929 essay is a running critical commentary on hashish enthusiasm, in some sense compensating for Benjamin's discernible bewilderment in the protocols at the unpredictable discontinuities of drug experiments: "And the most passionate investigation of the hashish trance will not teach us half as much about thinking (which is eminently narcotic) as the profane illumination of thinking will teach us about the hashish trance" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 216).

Hashish

Benjamin concludes his cautionary essay on Surrealism with a most startling anti-humanist image, a kind of hallucination in itself. Displacing its face, the Surrealists see only an alarm clock that is permanently ringing its revolutionary bell. This is a dialectical image issuing from the "bad" hallucinations sometimes experienced by Benjamin. There could not be a less soporific, more single-minded outcome of a trance and would seem to be the willed materialist illumination that plays secular advocate to the "satanic knowledge" of an earlier hashish encounter.

This earlier occurrence is related in "Main Features of My Second Impression of Hashish" from 1928 where the staccato nature of the writing and specificity of recalled language suggests that Benjamin is transcribing notes written during his trance. There is a strong sense of oppression in this account with the description of the claustrophobic red room undergoing metamorphosis to match each shift in Benjamin's mood. He imagines that the next room has served as the setting for disconnected historical events. The trance induces a ludic helplessness in the face of the present that anticipates what becomes overwhelming in Benjamin's story of the angel of history from one of the twenty sections of "Theses on the

Philosophy of History" written in 1940. In the first sections of that essay Benjamin states the urgency of the reclamation of history for the present. Insisting that we are to take our own responsibility for the preservation of history, he predicts that without attention by historians to the true account of the past, even the dead will become material for fascist revisionism: "For every image of the past that is not recognised by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably" (Benjamin, 1968, 255).

These anxieties echo a memorable hallucination appearing in the 1928 trance where Benjamin compares the comfortable privacy of the cave-like room with an enveloping web that he has no desire to leave: "it is rather like being wrapped up, enclosed in a dense spider's web in which the events of the world are scattered around, suspended there like the bodies of dead insects sucked dry" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 86). The 1940 essay lends urgency to what in the hashish protocol remains an understated relation between the image of dessicated bodies and the emptiness Benjamin perceives in the hallucinated historical events: "The objects are merely mannequins; even the great moments of world history are merely costumes beneath which they exchange understanding looks with nothingness, the base, and the commonplace" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 85-6).

In the 1940 reflections, his anxiety for history concerns the need to inhibit this kind of evacuation where events have become empty abstractions, open to manipulation by any ideology. He imagines the consequences of the false idyll of recent European history where now "a storm is blowing from Paradise" which has forced the angel's wings open such that he hurtles into the future (Benjamin, 1968, 257). Facing the catastrophic debris of the past, he is unable to pause and put it right but can only remain an incapable witness to disaster. The helplessness of the angel of history, the blank stare and open mouth, normally taken as a sign of horror, has been drawn from that earlier hashish hallucination. Benjamin's "Paradise" evokes Baudelaire's *Paradis Artificiel* and, like its predecessor, is ultimately deceptive. It masks a storm which, under cover of the drug, brings the destruction of history to press up against the intoxicated subject. This angel is intoxicated then, and like an earlier Benjamin transfixed by the cocoons in the web, is riveted on the material being piled up before him. This nihilistic image is analogous to the corrective remarks in "Surrealism: The Last

Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia” about the ultimate shortfall of hashish intoxication to provide necessary illumination. Such trances will only serve as an introduction to the revolutionary experiences that have always been necessary to “make whole what has been smashed” (Benjamin, 1968, 257).

Three times in this 1928 protocol Benjamin refers to the “ambiguous wink from Nirvana”. First, in relation to an intoxicated delusion of history’s shallowness; next, in acknowledging his own surrender to deepest torpor; and finally in recognition of what must be Odilon Redon’s charcoal drawing, titled “Eye-Balloon”, of a floating sphere comprising a large eyeball with eyelashes. Here the image corresponds to his realisation that, unlike dreams, the hashish hallucinations are uncontrollable. If action is the desirable outcome then all experiences of this trance are negative. “The great hope, desire, yearning to reach the new” (an overtly revolutionary expression) is met instead by “a submerged, relaxed, indolent, inert stroll downhill” (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 86). In addition, there is the great disappointment during the trance in what people say, as their words always fall short of what we expect to hear. Worse still, the depressing realisation for Benjamin that the person with whom we are speaking “painfully disappoints us through his failure to focus on the greatest object of our interest: ourselves” (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 88). All the same, there is this need for people to be around “like gently shifting relief-figures on the plinth of your own throne” (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 86).

Benjamin’s emphasis on the magnitude of Proust’s physiological immersion in the task of recollection suggests that he shares the latter’s model of apperception: “Smell—this is the sense of weight experienced by someone who casts his nets into the sea of the *temps perdu*. And his sentences are the entire muscular activity of the intelligible body; they contain the whole enormous effort to raise this catch” (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 247). The encounter with the dream, the walk around a foreign city, the effort to grasp the functions of the hashish trance, all likewise require great exertion from the writer. For Benjamin their function is as an inverse materialism. The further he is from engagement in the logical ordering of reality, the closer he is to people and things. This effect is clear in the hashish writings: from 1928, “Main Features of My Second Impression of Hashish”; from 1930, “Hashish, Beginning of March 1930”; from 1932, “Hashish in Marseilles”. In these pieces Benjamin progresses by

stages from recording an uncomfortable submersion within hallucinations to recounting his competent management and enjoyment of the drug's effects. His ability to manage the experience is matched by his success at generating a narrative form to relate his conviction that a radical freedom is enabled by the sense of proximity to objects that hashish facilitates.

Yet for Benjamin, in the process of formulating a concerted revolutionary purpose for organised insurrection and unstructured hedonistic revolt, it is not easy to accommodate the unpredictability of the trance. The characteristics of any intoxication, whether or not from hashish, do not automatically set events into action. Its nature is anti-productionist and non-linear. Since the intoxicated person him or herself is spent through the experience, intoxication's relation to the world is the reverse of the expenditure of external material. As such it induces a liberation from the entrancement of commodities. Benjamin writes at the close of "Hashish in Marseilles" that it is like "that squandering of our own existence that we know in love" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 678). The possibility of an agency that would intervene in events is undermined by the intoxicated self's subordinate relation to its environment. The realisations achieved through intoxication are alogical and non-dialectical. No reconciliation of contradictory states is achieved in the realisation of a fuller understanding. There is no progression of intoxicated knowledge but rather an aleatory centrifugal identification that spreads out towards the world in all directions simultaneously. This strikingly anti-teleological aspect remains unmodified in the first two protocols while "Hashish in Marseilles", by attempting to make something consequential out of the evening's intoxication, becomes the most composed of the writings, narrating a beginning and end and concluding with a redemptive coda—" [Nature] now throws us, without hoping or expecting anything, in ample handfuls toward existence" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 678)—a sentiment which moves in the opposite direction to the more instrumental writing of 1934.

The "divided, contradictory experience" described in "Hashish, Beginning of March 1930" results in a less structured and reflective piece than the companion essays. Its immediacy gets across the feeling of involuntary envelopment in disorientating sense experience. Writing an account of involuntary automatism in progress, Benjamin is like a distracted drug anthropologist, neither scripting a redemptive ethical pantheism (as he tends towards in the

later essay), nor reading into the experiences to expand on their haptic or poetic significance. It is bare-bones hallucinating in a confined space. These first two essays describe indoor hashish experiences and their interiority is striking in comparison with the outward identifications of the Marseilles experiment where Benjamin moves freely around the port.

In the 1930 account Benjamin imposes the further confinement that he keep his eyes closed to allow his imagination to escape from the tiny room in which he finds himself. He is piecing together a record of the experience from fragmentary evidence. Of his trance companions, a cousin Egon Wissing and his wife Gert, some account of conversations is later relayed from the latter, with whom in any case he has a sensual rapport. Whereas in the Marseilles trance Benjamin is able to refer to notes made at the time, here he has only written about incidents retrospectively. Perhaps, as Benjamin notes, it is because he had his eyes closed that the greater impressions this time are made by visualisations. Colours eclipse Egon's words; Benjamin observes quasi-material qualities of auras, that they enclose objects as if in a case; as his companions take morphine and Benjamin no longer feels understood, he says that his relationship with Gert "seemed to me to be coloured black" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 328); there is a "blizzard-like production of images" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 329) of which he can remember very little. Hashish has freed this rush of images normally retained in the unconscious. Every word from Egon is an insupportable distraction from concentrating on these visions that "are so extraordinary, so fleeting, and so rapidly generated that we can do nothing but gaze at them simply because of their beauty and singularity" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 329). Of such visualisations Benjamin mentions the cryptic ones like those in Surrealist paintings; suits of armour, for example, with flames escaping from the apertures.

These insights into the hashish trance parallel observations made a year earlier in "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia", where at a moment of cultural history the most vital life is to be found within the massing of imagery whose sheer volume blocks out meaning. The loss of meaning is especially marked in the 1930 protocol. There are the odd, inconsequential word-image puzzles, like the one about the cakes: "decline of the *pâtissier's* art" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 329)—images of giant confections so perfect that their sight is enough to satisfy any desire for them. This admission of a plethora of unrecordable stimuli

concludes interestingly with what is really its introduction: "It was strange at the beginning, when I could just sense the approach of the trance and I compared objects to the instruments of an orchestra that was just tuning up before the start of the performance" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 329). Here is the anticipation of imminent spectatorship, the involuntary passivity of the intoxicated onlooker.

In the record of these hashish experiences Benjamin records the involuntary rejuvenation of the link between his senses and his perception, as if this link had become dulled by the barrage of unassimilable sensations of the contemporary world. This relates to his deep interest in the mechanics of what Proust calls *mémoire involontaire*, that instant suffusing of our consciousness and body with the materiality of the past, brought about however, by chance—in his case by the taste of a *madeleine* dipped in tea. It is not so much that Benjamin expects hashish to provide that kind of access to his own past but that the present might in a related way be felt just as profoundly as Proust re-experiences his past. It is as if hashish might compensate for the temporal and physiological restrictions on experiencing our surroundings. Benjamin expresses this concern in the essay "The Image of Proust" written in 1929 at the time of the hashish trances: "[Proust] is filled with the insight that none of us has time to live the true dramas of the life that we are destined for. This is what ages us—this and nothing else. The wrinkles and creases on our faces are the registration of the great passions, vices, insights that called on us; but we, the masters, were not at home" (Benjamin, 1968, 211-12).

Recognising the problem of recording his own hashish experiences, Benjamin writes during the trance and in addition has his companions simultaneously compose their accounts from his intoxicated conversation. From memory he then expands on these records immediately after the event. In no way does this fill all gaps in the recorded event and the more immediate of the accounts shift continually between sharply focused observations and unexplained gaps in continuity. It is as if Benjamin is both watching and acting in a series of films in which he is incessantly moved from one temporarily disconnected scene to another.

"Hashish in Marseilles", as the most worked up of these accounts, may be the closest to the kind of Proustian depth of recollection that Benjamin so admires. Here the gaps in continuity

have been converted into a narrative device where Benjamin moves backwards and forwards in time, reflecting on, or even physically revisiting, earlier encounters to reappraise his physiological condition. The extent of the structural work done on "Hashish in Marseilles" is more noticeable when compared with a fictional version Benjamin made of this experience for publication in the journal *Uhu* in 1930 (Benjamin, 1997, [ii]). The story of the hashish experience is attributed to one Edward Sherlinger, and reads as if hastily adapted to fulfil a commission. Here the subtle observations on food, passersby and street paraphernalia, so memorable in the 1932 version, are sacrificed to a linear narrative about the failure (through taking hashish) to invest in shares whose escalating value would have made Sherlinger rich. The story that follows develops a certain dramatic urgency where the trance motifs are introduced as interferences in the objective of sending a telegram to confirm the share purchase. By contrast, in the autobiographical version the motifs that embellish Benjamin's drift across the city are unobtrusive prosaic objects splendidly transformed. This recalls Proust's own transformations of ordinary incidents into accounts whose intense detailing provoke a delirious and vertiginous response. As indicated by the earlier quotation on Proust, it is the density of these experiences that Benjamin is concerned to feel, and the immersion into hashish intoxications is to draw out this quality from the present with his entire body, as if his nets were drawing the passions and insights to shore. (Benjamin, 1968, 214).

This rejuvenation of perception is also an attempt by Benjamin to become, in entrancement with images in the world, as a child would be when facing an illustrated book for the first time. Hashish allows a new first relationship to things, a rebirth which is neither a consumption nor expiration but which lets both viewer and object live freely. In two early essays on children's books Benjamin writes of the child's immersion in the book's coloured illustrations in a way that anticipates his accounts of absorption by objects during the hashish trance. The introduction of colour in early nineteenth-century children's books allows the imagination to run riot amongst images which immerse the reader in a dream-like state.

There is very little mention of colour in the hashish protocols, although when it does occur it provokes complex reactions. In "Hashish, Beginning of March 1930" Benjamin speculates that it is Gert's black pajamas that provoke the association of that colour with their latent

sensual relationship. In the same trance sounds become colours as Egon's words are "instantly translated into the perception of colored, metallic sequins that coalesced into patterns" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 328). Linking the trance experience to the earlier pieces on children's books, this intoxicated perception of colour reminds Benjamin of knitting patterns he had enjoyed as a child. In the 1924 essay "Old Forgotten Children's Books", the title of the work he is reviewing, he quotes that author's own entrancement with colour: "It seems to me that in that Biedermeier period, there is a preference for carmine, orange, and ultramarine; a brilliant green is also used. When set beside these glittering clothes, this sky-blue azure, the vivid flickering flames of volcanoes and great conflagrations, what is left of the simple black-and-white copper engravings and lithographs which had been good enough...in the past?" (Benjamin, 1996, 409). In the 1926 essay "A Glimpse into the World of Children's Books" Benjamin again takes up this idea of imaginative transport in language that points towards the adult intoxications: "The objects do not come to meet the picturing child from the pages of the book; instead, the gazing child enters into those pages, becoming suffused, like a cloud, with the riotous colours of the world of pictures" (Benjamin, 1996, 435). In the trances then, Benjamin enters the room or city quarter as if it were a book which beckons him in. The innocent amazement at objects and events induced by hashish then brings him close to the memories of his earliest childhood encounters with images.

"Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia" is written between the more sinister 1928 "spider's web" protocol ("Main Features of My Second Impression of Hashish") and the relatively benign trances of 1930 ("Hashish, Beginning of March 1930" and "On the Session of 7/8 June, 1930" [Thompson, 1997]). It postdates the composed and redemptive "Hashish in Marseilles" of 1928, although this was only published (and perhaps revised) long after, in 1932. The inadequacies Benjamin impugned to hashish in the Surrealism essay did not discourage him from further drug experiments (including opium in 1932 and mescaline in 1934). Yet in 1928 in Marseilles there occurs the closest Benjamin gets to an irrefutably revolutionary experience under the sway of hashish.

"Hashish in Marseilles", is a kind of manifesto of the drug, and importantly it supplants the aggressive hectoring typical of manifestos with a submissiveness that develops latent qualities

of Breton's *Manifesto of Surrealism* and Aragon's *Paris Peasant*. Benjamin ascribes this submissiveness to himself as flâneur, finding a level as a discarded being amongst desirable commodities. In this persona, not only does he surrender to his desires but offers himself up to be consumed by the material he haphazardly encounters in his sensuous drifting. This process is central to determining the style and contents of "Hashish in Marseilles" where Benjamin finds a lucidity in structure and language to match a particularly insightful intoxication. Its completion would in any case be required as a finished essay published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. Yet its coherence answers a wish of Benjamin's to form a contemporary address to a nineteenth-century precedent. Benjamin begins his essay with a long quotation from Baudelaire's "The Poem of Hashish" which he takes from a German book called "The Hashish Trance" of 1926. Benjamin quotes these authors, Jöel and Fränkel, thus: "It is curious that hashish poisoning has not yet been experimentally studied. The most admirable description of the hashish trance is by Baudelaire" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 673). By this double citation Benjamin intends his own essay to be the asymmetrical match to Baudelaire's. He is to provide as effective an account, but in place of Baudelaire's negative appraisal of a bourgeois recreation Benjamin will redeem hashish as an experience that, amongst other illuminations, provides a glimpse of class boundaries disappearing.

Benjamin had expressed this intention long before in a letter of September 19, 1919, to Ernst Schoen. There he writes of having just read Baudelaire's *Paradis Artificiel*, which he finds a very restrained attempt to derive philosophical insights from the effects of hashish and opium, adding that it will be important for him to repeat Baudelaire's attempt, albeit by taking a different approach (Benjamin, 1994, 148). Nine years later, a January 30, 1928 letter to Gerhard Scholem repeats this wish as Benjamin elaborates on his experience being a hashish subject for Ernst Joel. He hopes that his future book, which he urges be kept a secret, will be a "very worthwhile supplement" to his philosophical writing (Benjamin, 1994, 323). In contrast to the earlier protocols, "Hashish in Marseilles" develops a more lyrical style and a linear narrative which sustain continuity over lengthy paragraphs and make a totality of what previously had been recorded as less than coherent fragmentary impressions. Like one of his earlier protocols, Benjamin's composition includes sentences written under the effect

of the drug, but this time they are successfully worked into the main narrative. As suggested earlier, the totality of this account takes a more explicit political turn in illuminating a new revolutionary outcome for hashish intoxications.

There are many indicators of this tendency. The set-up for recounting the experience in Marseilles involves a series of fluid transitions from one environment to another as under hashish the city's new permeability answers utopian projections of an urban space that anyone can freely and rapidly traverse. As if the psychic transport induced by the drug must have its material counterpart, Benjamin recounts his own stroll about the port as set within the flow of passersby and various forms of passenger transport: boat, car, taxi, streetcar. The first of his moves is particularly significant since it entails leaving the hermetic hotel interior (the scene, in a sense, of earlier less successful experiments) for the unpredictability of the street. This stepping out from the interior that was also the confine of Baudelaire's bourgeois hashish indulgences, brings the intoxicated Benjamin into contact with a different kind of people. In a bar dangerously close to the roughest quarter he notes "no bourgeois sat there; at the most, besides the true port proletariat, a few petty-bourgeois families from the neighbourhood" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 675). Later on he admires some women soliciting outside a dance hall. For intoxication Baudelaire's class hatred made him celebrate wine over hashish. It was affordable to the working class and, unlike hashish, would get people fighting. This is evidenced by "The Wine Poems" from *The Flowers of Evil* and "Get Drunk" from *Paris Spleen*. Benjamin answers this by noting at one stage how well the wine he was drinking accompanied his drug. Similarly, the notion that he might sit in a port dive intoxicated with hashish and have a drink alongside workers, indicates his attempt to dissolve boundaries between wine and hashish, and between their users.

In 1929 Benjamin publishes a review of Franz Hessel's flâneur account *On Foot in Berlin*. Hessel's plea is for a more lived-in city, one where the streets will serve as a surrogate domicile, although his Berlin wanderings come at the cost of the suspicion of his fellow citizens. By way of appraising the differences between wandering around Paris and Berlin the review provides a comprehensive definition of *flânerie* which might amount to appreciation of an urban fabric as "chronicle, document, and detail" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 263). Benjamin's approval of Hessel's

responsiveness recalls motifs of his own Marseilles hashish wanderings. He is struck by Hessel's remark that in the city we see only what looks at us, as if the acknowledgement of our presence by person or thing is a trigger provoking, or inviting, an unexpectedly incisive perception. In the deeper moments of the trance, "Hashish in Marseilles" contains many such encounters as motifs step forward from their surroundings to trigger an empathic reading from Benjamin. In these instances the incomprehensible wink from Nirvana becomes the readily interpretable flirtations of the material world. Hessel's sympathy for the genius loci of Berlin streets also interests Benjamin. In his review he writes of Hessel as an expert reader of images that inhabit these spaces, as their presence is discerned by the flâneur able to interpret the surface evidence of dwellings. Benjamin recognises that in the depth of Hessel's reflections on Berlin walks the character of the flâneur, effectively himself in Marseilles, who experiences life in the interstices of city architecture rather than within the buildings themselves. This appreciation must pass over the most obvious landmarks for baser attractions: "And he would be happy to trade all his knowledge of artists' quarters, birthplaces, and princely palaces for the scent of a single weathered threshold or the touch of a single tile—that which any old dog carries away" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 263).

Such succumbing to the lure of ordinary things acquires transformative force in "Hashish in Marseilles". The ecstatic impact of the numerous pantheistic identifications recalled by Benjamin function like images of a de-hierarchized future which must first be imagined if it is to be achievable. There is a recurrent emphasis here on the liberatory experience of emasculation, which has always lurked as an unstated condition of the flâneur who as penetrated by and absorbed into the material world, represents an ambiguous potency. Reaffirming this tendency, Benjamin has formed a plangent language as if in compliance not just with the passivity of the hashish trance but also with the proposition that the path taken by a revolution will be determined by the terminology used to foment it. In a future that would conjoin the profane illumination of the Surrealists to a revolutionised classless society, experience is formulated in murmurs. From the start Benjamin articulates the "benevolence" with which the defamiliarised city accommodates him. He is alarmed that a shadow might harm the paper on which he writes. Ashamed to be sitting alone at a large table he moves to

one smaller and is then concerned that his selection from a menu will offend the other items on offer. On seeing the wind blow the fringes of café furniture Benjamin feels “amorous joy”. At the quayside he is deeply moved by the love he feels is conferred on boats by their names. He notes that the trance “shrinks and takes the form of a flower”. Confronted by the sight of the women at the dance hall he experiences no sexual desire yet is sensitised to the sensuality of their clothing. He compares himself to a distracted Theseus, unmasculinely absorbed by the unravelling thread and oblivious to any threat in the maze.

There is a certain tension between Benjamin's hashish writings and those, like the 1929 Surrealism essay, in terms of the evaluation of euphoric states. In the drug protocols, engagement with the exterior world is no more invasive than a passive wonderment at its details, as acute perceptions uncover alternative associations between things. For there to be any impact beyond the duration of the trance, Benjamin's reading of Surrealism requires intoxication to induce a catalytic change in our relationship to the world. Yet why should this ultimately have beneficent results? In what lies the assurance that either the drugged *flânerie* or the explosive release of potentiality will take us to the left rather than the right? There will be some indication from looking at what the trance is directed against. Away from what is it taking the exhilarated person? There is a sense that the trance acts in politically prescribed ways, that you have the hallucinations demanded by your ideology. In this case there are no inherent qualities to an intoxicated state but only to the context which it intensifies. In Benjamin's trance, where he is enamoured with Marseilles, we have an outline for engagement with a world whose intricacies of object/person relations are of primary value. Benjamin suggests that without respect for the interconnectedness of this skein of lives you cannot have a peaceful world.

“Hashish in Marseilles” unites the obvious form of drug intoxication with a less explicit one of immersion in the flow of entities, “that squandering of our own existence” without fear of the consequences, as Benjamin defines it. Entranced by commodities, the nineteenth-century flâneur is the evolved subject of Kant's aesthetic judgement. Kant's static concept of beauty as the result of a disinterested response to form becomes the flâneur's purposeless marvelling at the new beauty of commodities. Benjamin imagines a new life for the flâneur

whose nineteenth-century protest at notions of progress and utility forms itself as a detached intoxication with commodities only to expire under the inescapable economic absorption of the most marginal positions, for example, as the flâneur becomes department store assistant or sandwich board carrier. Discussing plans in 1939 for *The Arcades Project*, in a letter previously cited Benjamin writes to Adorno of his aim to develop the relationship between *flânerie* as a state of intoxication and Baudelaire's experiences with drugs (Benjamin, 1994, 598). Encouraged much earlier by Surrealist writing, Benjamin imagines new opportunities for *flânerie* in reoccupying those nineteenth-century artefacts abandoned by capitalism and inhabiting alternative contemporary interstices of thought and intervention. Such actions might generate new intoxications capable of breaking apart obdurate prejudices. This preparedness to work at revolt, at the displacement of all prior values and enchantments by alternative intoxications, is celebrated in Benjamin's 1929 Surrealism essay in which he reservedly acclaims the Surrealists' embrace of antagonistic cultural strategies. This is a form of revolt, Benjamin explains, which shows the world to be a chained and precarious order which will be overturned by the exhausted images of its cast-off past: "Breton and Nadja are the lovers who convert everything that we have experienced on mournful railway journeys...into revolutionary experience, if not action. They bring the immense forces of 'atmosphere' concealed in these things to the point of explosion. What form do you suppose a life would take that was determined at a decisive moment by the street song last on everyone's lips" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 210). It seems that here is the meaning of Benjamin's Marseille's trance. The street song suggests an entranced encounter with the entire life of the city, which is then transformed by the flâneur's intoxication into the material of a marvellous future.

Right-wing intoxications

But what becomes of the trance when the utopian objectives diverge from such benign outcomes? Jünger's first world war accounts acclaim an entirely different kind of explosive transformation with recourse to similar language and imagery of euphoria. The distinction

Michael Hoffman makes between *Storm of Steel*, of 1920, and *War as Inner Experience*, of 1922, would seem to draw the intoxications of the earlier text closer to the fine-tuned and intimate observations of Benjamin and Aragon. Hoffman notes of Jünger's style the "anonymity and dandyishness, hebetude and exquisite sensitivity; nature and warfare; living in cosy near-domesticity and like animals in a hole in the ground" (Hoffman, 2004, xviii). However, Jünger's characteristic flattening of emotion where the poses of corpses are observed with the same detachment brought to methods of trench construction would dramatically broaden the gap once again. For Hoffmann, in this book "War and time and being are compounded into one great narcotic experience" (Hoffman, 2004, xx) and there remains a sense in which Jünger is here chronicling the experiences from which he will soon be developing a doctrine for a transformed future through the encounter with war.

In the later work there is no doubt that Jünger writes as if war compels the German soldier into metaphysical and biological evolution where, transformed into a reflexive killing machine, he lives in harmony with newly naturalised forces of technologised immolation. In these accounts the battle against enemy soldiers is an abstraction where symbolic forces envelop the troops in a play of sublime energies. Klaus Theweleit quotes Jünger from *War as Inner Experience*: "This was a whole new race, energy incarnate, charged with supreme energy ... These were conquerors, men of steel tuned to the most grisly battle ... Jugglers of death, masters of explosive and flame, glorious predators, they sprang easily through the trenches. In the moment of encounter, they encapsulated the spirit of battle as no other human beings could. Theirs was the keenest assembly of bodies, intelligence, will, and sensation" (Theweleit, 1989, 159).

This struggle continues under the sway of a battle-induced euphoria where "...Ecstasy is an intoxication beyond all intoxications, a release that bursts all bonds. It is a madness without discretion or limits, comparable only to the natural forces...A man in ecstasy becomes a violent storm, a raging sea, roaring thunder. He merges with the cosmos, racing toward death's dark gates like a bullet toward its target" (Theweleit, 1989, 184). Yet the purpose of this death-wish immediacy doesn't exhaust itself in the present of the battleground. As Jeffrey Herf explains, Jünger's retrospective account of the fighting is intended to convert

German defeat and slaughter into a cultural victory where masculine self-realisation is achieved through violence and decisiveness (Herf, 1984, 76). In this way the State can be saved from decadent bourgeois values of pacifism and rationality.

These military intoxications are as exclusionary as the hashish trances are inclusive. They subsist on the destruction of everything alien to their logic of morbid innervation which claims to be restoring life in direct proportion to what it annihilates. Such a figure might be responsible for the piled up disaster at which Benjamin's angel of history is staring. He suggests as much in the 1931 piece "The Destructive Character" whose subject "positions himself at at crossroads. No moment can know what the next will bring. What exists he reduces to rubble, not for the sake of the rubble, but for that of the way leading through it" (Benjamin, 1978, 303).

Theweleit explains how this kind of soldier is not a natural entity but has to be formed by stamping ideologies of purity on his body through exacting punishment and discipline. This kind of regimen forms an addiction to the rule of the machine of the military corps which is organised using the same the rigour with which the individual bodies of the recruits have been bullied into submission: "The only site at which feelings have legitimate existence is the body as a 'bundle of muscles and skin, blood and bones and sinews'" (Theweleit, 1989, 150). At a certain point it is not only bourgeois security that seems irremediable but any indication of family affection or concern now drives the emotionally cauterised soldiers back into the comforts of violence and pain. Drawing on concepts familiar to the Futurist or Expressionist avant-gardes, Jünger describes the aftermath of battle as an ecstatic empowerment: "At such times I feel existence to be vital and intoxicating—hot, wild, insane—a fervent prayer. Expression is imperative...I'm alive. I'm still alive.' And just how does he 'express' himself?...I plunge my glance, quick and penetrating as a gunshot, into the eyes of passing girls." (Theweleit, 1989, 19).

It is striking just how limited this intoxication is in its self-knowledge and engagement with others, once nothing remains of the emotional gamut now considered decadent. The war determines how Jünger grasps his own vitality (he is alive only in the sense of not being dead)

and how he encounters women (as if he were a weapon). Could any intoxication be more different from this than Benjamin's in Marseilles? The multitude of enhanced encounters with phenomena, the passionate sensitivity towards figures passing in the street, the lack of any sense of possessiveness about the experience, all make this as emblematic of peace as Jünger's is oblivious. In "Theories of German Fascism" from 1930, Benjamin expresses this contrast with his furious attack on Jünger's compilation of other writers' essays on the qualities of war. This prescient essay is fully aware of the impending catastrophe should "this mysticism of the death of the world" fail to be permanently dispelled (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 320). It is in the range of references on which Benjamin draws to counter belligerence with pacifism that we glimpse what might qualify as a core purpose of the hashish trances: "However, we will not tolerate anyone who speaks of war, yet knows nothing but war. Radical in our own way, we will ask: Where do you come from? And what do you know of peace? Did you ever encounter peace in a child, a tree, an animal, the way you encountered a sentry in the field? And without waiting for you to answer, we can say No!" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 317).

Where right-wing intoxication is defined as an intensification of the most limited experience, of life at the edge of death, in Benjamin's hashish trances the most is made of a helpless surrender to all surrounding events. If Benjamin finds valuable affirmation in the unravelling of the conventional meaning of objects that follows surrender to the trance, so Jünger redeems his hallucinatory experience of the war by interpreting it as a process of purification, of excision, leading to social revolution. Faced by an inescapable degradation and probable death, Jünger survives by surrendering his reflexive individuality and turning horror into spectacle. Under the hashish trance the surrender enables one to become part of an intoxicated world in a different way to how the entrancement of the conventional flâneur keeps the world at one remove. The flâneur of Marseilles is a new type who sinks deep into what is observed.

Jünger's soldiers are likewise intoxicated observers, in this case on the inside of an ecstatic destruction. This trait endures in a novel Jünger publishes in 1939. *On the Marble Cliffs* recounts the destruction of an idyllic community of warrior monks whose previous military companions provoke a struggle for control of the town and its surroundings. The aristocratic

aloofness of the conventional flâneur is related to the apartness of Jünger's warrior monks for whom the world in almost any condition is a watchable panorama. In Aragon's *Paris Peasant* we find his visits to the Opera Passage described as looking into an aquarium where the green light subsumes all. He stands outside, dissecting all its occupants, not so differently from how Jünger's warrior monks conduct their detached relationship with all those around them (except for the plants they obsessively cultivate). Like them Aragon is a retired militant/avant-gardist (an ex-Dadaist) relaxing into a disengaged relation with the world. What do the militants do when they stop being avant-garde? They place their earlier active life under critique by assuming a leisurely approach to living.

Sometimes taken as an attack on fascism, *On the Marble Cliffs* marks the start of Jünger's shift towards a non-military outlook. However, it is filled with ambiguous images that straddle warlike and benign pursuits. In one of numerous medieval anachronisms, the concluding battle is ultimately decided by killer mastiffs as a thinly disguised embodiment of Jünger's first world war troops unified by machinic violence. Decadence impairs the clarity of Braquemart, one of the military caste who now confuses his fighting origins with different indulgences: "[He] intoxicated himself with perfume of synthetic flowers and the pleasures of mimed sensuality. Creation has died in his heart, and he had reconstructed it like a mechanical toy" (Jünger, 1947, 82-3). Persisting amongst Jünger's themes is his early Freikorps suspicion of any prolonged peaceful activity. The idyllic settlement is doomed because it allows military vigilance to lapse as other intoxications gain ground. Though fierce, the counteroffensive is launched too late to be effective and the sybaritic community is annihilated.

From 1933-34 when Gottfried Benn remained in the Prussian Academy of the Arts in an expression of sympathy with National Socialism, he wrote in outspoken defence of his decision to stay in Germany. In "Answer To The Literary Emigrants" Benn disparages those Germans who have moved into exile. He resorts to a hyperbolic euphoria for crude emphasis, a style impersonating a kind of intoxication, which nevertheless was not entirely out of character with his expressionist work of the 1920s. This essay responds to a pleading open letter from Heinrich Mann explaining his disappointment and incredulity at Benn's decision to align himself with the National Socialists. Benn's public response is written with such

conviction of his decision that it is quoted in Nazi propaganda speeches. This essay casts Benjamin's "Hashish in Marseilles" into the unusual state of being twice decadent since Benn derides the implied comfort of those exiles who have settled on the French coast, in "the little resorts along the Gulf of Lyon", continuing, "But let me ask you in turn: how do you visualise the movement of history? Do you regard it as particularly active at French bathing beaches?" (Benn, 1961, 48). To be an exiled writer in Marseilles, publishing hashish accounts qualifies this as an antithetical kind of intoxication. Benn argues that only those staying close to events in Germany can judge the political conditions, although in his enthusiasm he succumbs to an intoxication with contemporary events, mythologising their implications. These events he says are "the emergence of a new biological type", a "mythical" and profound one, close to creation, and whose nature is of "the eternally primal vision: wakefulness, day life, reality—loosely consolidated rhythms of hidden creative intoxications...the last grand concept of the white race" (Benn, 1961, 49). This most extreme of Benn's essays concludes with recourse to a disturbing military image: this "vision" of Germany that he is propagating will withstand "ten wars".

Wolf Lepenies, speaking on the self-image of German culture during the second world war, describes Benn's distaste at the 1934 executions within the Nazi Party. Hardly moved by the violence of the event, German intellectuals are disappointed in the display of bad taste on the part of the new regime. The support they give the Nazis is due more to the promise of a unified political and cultural State under the evidence of the aestheticisation of politics by the fascists. Benn's response to the 1934 massacres is expressed as disgust at an aesthetic failure: "What a horrible tragedy. The whole thing begins to look to me like a third-rate theater that constantly announces a performance of *Faust* when the cast hardly qualify for a potboiler like [the operetta] *Hussar Fever*. How great seemed the beginning and how dirty it all looks today..." (Lepenies, 1999, 20). Like others, Benn conducts an internal exile, viewing as un-German those like Thomas Mann who moved abroad, and remains blind to the necessity of emigration for those being persecuted by the Nazis. He imagines that his continuing presence in Germany will be of no consequence and that his lack of cooperation with the Nazis constitutes a form of resistance. By the end of 1934 Benn had been disgraced

as Nazi Germany fixed on the “decadence” of his earlier work as a disqualification for office.

It is relevant to this discussion to note the theme of ecstatic involvement in events as a recurrent motif for Benn. This was never more so than in the 1929 essay “Primal Vision” which in its life-philosophy of harmonisation with overwhelming natural forces presages his later surrender to the naturalisation of National Socialist forces. Here Benn notes the “immense urges and intoxications” of life (Benn, 1961, 32), the “Heritage of exaltation and intoxication, astral conflagration, transoceanic decay” (Benn, 1961, 36), and a “monism in rhythms, mass in intoxications...” (Benn, 1961, 37). After his disqualification, the same themes still serve, but are taken to an annihilatory nihilistic conclusion. “The Way of an Intellectualist” from 1934 recalls the character of Dr. Rönne, a self-portrait from earlier fiction. In Ronne’s experience “a primal stratum emerged, intoxicated, image-laden, Panic” (Benn, 1961, 54). The end of history is defined as its beginning where Nietzsche is the prelude to the series of “great, insoluble dooms...of the last nihilistic destructions” (Benn, 1961, 61).

Conclusion

These accounts of Benjamin’s reveal a normalisation of intoxicated states that obliquely and inconspicuously serve political goals. The application of ecstatic experiences to impact on a social or political context converts them into a form of subversive agency that is distinct from other forms of activism. It is a dimension to radical thought that attempts to develop a position outside conventional forms of oppositional action from where its subversiveness can retain some independence against recuperation. In a way, the understated low expectations of Benjamin’s hashish narratives and Aragon’s reveries in the Opera Passage evade rebuttals of their political effectiveness. Who can be bothered with the critical recuperation of such marginalia to the history of subversion? This does distinguish them from the conservative accounts of Jünger whose alarming interpretation of the intoxication of violence as proof of political destiny becomes a monstrous inversion of utopian goals.

By contrast the intimacy of Benjamin’s accounts shows an openness to incidents,

inconsequential and significant alike. At the time, European modernity was finding meaning in a series of contemporaneous intoxications, some benign, others extremely violent. One key to understanding the merit of Benjamin's version of euphoria is to recognise his responsibility to avoid statements implying fixed values or ethics, at a time when much commentary assumed the opposite. In answer to Benn's lethal facetiousness, indeed history also turns out to have been written at French seaside resorts. In the case of "Hashish in Marseilles" it is a history whose marginalised interests are what enabled its survival and its continuing relevance to what has followed.

In Benjamin's hashish writings the subject of intoxication as a subversive alternative to conventional avant-gardism, first traced here in relation to Nietzsche's critical philosophy, forwards a discourse of productive contemplation and unconventional engagement which recognise, and perhaps generate, images of utopian transformation. The following chapter looks at the production of alternative realms of intoxication by two writers who are influential on Benjamin. The location by Fourier and Aragon of these realms in fantastic versions of the nineteenth-century arcade links this discussion to the earlier chapter on Baudelaire by recognising the liberatory potential of an architecture originally directed to commercial ends.

Chapter 6

Fourier and Aragon: under the spell of architecture

Introduction

The theme of intoxication that is introduced in the discussions of Hegel and Nietzsche and traced through accounts of the mid-nineteenth century collision with commodities reaches a particular intensity with the utopian environments of Fourier and Aragon. The highly unconventional visions of sensual fulfilment that each provide are a form of engagement that is the inverse of the rigorous models for cultural production discussed earlier in relation to Benjamin's arguments for new kinds of artist producer. Nevertheless, Fourier's community of industrious producers, where all occupations are in constant rotation, is a socialist premonition of Benjamin's own idealised vision of communist cultural production. In Fourier's case however, the product he envisages is neither literature nor art but erotic tableaux vivants intended to seduce the world to its senses. Perhaps the sobriety and meticulous organisation evidenced by Fourier's bacchanalia are the closest industrial society can get to the transformative Dionysian ecstasy that Nietzsche depicts coming to life only in the pre-historical era. Also in this chapter are links to earlier sections on Hegel where Aragon's inventive redirection of dialectical reasoning in order to destabilise logical thinking returns us to Hegel's *Aesthetics* and its problematic relation between social purpose and artistic autonomy.

In the previous chapter's discussion of the hashish protocols, Benjamin can be seen experimenting with the creation of images, in effect hallucinations, that might provide new models for understanding the inextricability of psychological and political transformation. The idea of intoxication that emerges from these accounts could be considered a temporary realisation of "wish images", Benjamin's concept for unfulfilled communal purpose which becomes displaced into cultural forms. The utopian content of such wish images gently reverberates in Benjamin's hallucinations whose own images, at their most positive, picture a world whose boundaries can readily be crossed perceptually and sensually.

In this chapter, such ideas are traced through the work of two writers whose accounts of utopian communities left a strong impression on Benjamin. Charles Fourier's projection of a utopian community written at the start of the nineteenth century and Louis Aragon's hybrid documentary-fiction, *Paris Peasant*, from 1924 are particularly important for *The Arcades Project*. Benjamin's account of Fourier in the various versions of the Exposé is discussed in an earlier chapter. To briefly recapitulate, Benjamin takes Fourier's vision in relation to the architecture of the arcades as an example of how wish images materialise. When a community's ambition for a better life is suppressed through political and economic hardship, it turns to pre-history to retrieve the example of classless utopian life. This desire inflames new ideas like Fourier's phalanstery project which at the same time attempt to realise the full potential of new technologies like iron and glass construction in the planning of utopian communities: "And the experiences of such a society... engender, through interpenetration with what is new, the utopia that has left its trace in a thousand configurations of life, from enduring edifices to passing fashions" (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 4-5). For Benjamin, the most conspicuous of such traces is found in arcade construction whose rationale is, of course, not a utopian community but a commercial one, based on the same repressive economic principles which caused the wish image to develop in the first place. Where Fourier's project starts to galvanise the latent energy in wish image and unrealised technology, Benjamin recognises the image of revolutionary transformation in the choice of language: "The propagation of the phalanstery takes place through an 'explosion'. Fourier speaks of an 'explosion du phalanstère'" (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 625).

It may seem wilful to call Aragon's version of the *Passage de l'Opera* a utopian project since, after all, the community exists at the time it is being written about and preserves (perhaps even amplifies) all the delinquent aspects of the external world. However, Aragon seems to be creating a utopia in reverse where once the arcade has been bulldozed his account will become an unrealisable blueprint of use only for future speculation. Furthermore Aragon's hallucinations and imaginative riffs around the arcade's inhabitants and their merchandise superimpose an ideal vision over a humble base. As one compelling example of the radical aesthetics of Surrealist writing, Aragon's book on the *Passage de l'Opera* stimulates in Benjamin the recognition of imminent volatility, similar to Fourier's explosion: "No one before these visionaries and augurs perceived how destitution... can be suddenly transformed into revolutionary nihilism" (Benjamin, 1978, 181).

Aragon

Aragon's text is also considered here for its political implications as an avant-garde literary artefact whose form must stand as a critique of established aesthetic and ethical standards. The programme of transformative experience enacted through its narrative, subsequently taken up by "Hashish in Marseilles", is considered in relation to the question of avant-garde agency and recuperation. It is notable that in a similar way to Benjamin's essay on hashish there is little in Aragon's text of the kind of explicit avant-gardist opposition that would be exposed to recuperation. The result is that it delineates alternative aesthetic and social tactics that bypass the familiar routes of the antagonism of the historical avant-garde. The intimacy and indeterminacy of both Benjamin's and Aragon's accounts propose the transformation of experience as possible within existing conditions, even if those conditions remain unaffected. In one sense this is a variation on aesthetics where the world is treated, in Nietzsche's terms, as an artistic phenomenon rather than as a structure to be changed. Their value is then in preserving this right to a devalued, unproductive experience. In characteristically divergent ways both writers turn to Fourier as if to a mirror in which they might calibrate the distortion of their own inventions.

Paris Peasant is introduced as a response to two related summonses. After a period of abstract speculation Aragon is suddenly overwhelmed by its antithesis; his body is brought to life by the onset of spring weather and from now on he can only answer to his senses. As he succumbs to an intoxication with sensuality he sees his dreams intermingling with reality. It is in this state that he imagines aspects of contemporary life as constituting a new mythology whose gods are acquiring form out of the everyday experiences of ordinary people. Aragon develops this notion of a secular pantheon through the description of an arcade which is about to be destroyed by the Boulevard Haussmann extension as it advances eastwards to join the Boulevard Montmartre. There are several reasons for his choice of subject. The arcade's imminent disappearance and the subsequent unverifiability of his descriptions increase the mythologising potential of his account—in effect Aragon is drawing the blueprint of a myth. Its enclosed community seems ruled by archaic codes of behaviour; its gloomy corridors and shops resemble a nave with side chapels; its unfathomable commercial rituals using obscure commodities as props mimic the ecclesiastical practices displaced by what Aragon calls his “modern mythology”.

Paris Peasant sets the arcade as an interactive diorama. Its characters are shown so removed from boulevard life in their habits, their economy and the architecture containing them as to have become a self-sufficient community. Simultaneously estranged and immersed, Aragon describes the arcade as a human aquarium bathed in green light. His unconventional census of the arcade, which at one point he refers to as a glass coffin, is a list of businesses that are about to be displaced. Frequently changing voices and perspectives, Aragon looks ruthlessly in on their specialised professions as poet, autobiographer, agitator, social historian, topographer, voyeur, client, tour guide and tourist. His scope for observation is carefully circumscribed. Scrutinising only what he can see through the shop windows, or occasionally as a customer within, he elaborates on the shopkeepers' professional roles but not their private lives. The confined geometry of the shops with their specific functions and contents serve as a limit against which his imagination can measure the outcome of its experiments. At one point Aragon refers to himself as guide-book author, “And what would these bees say to the Baedeker of the hives” (Aragon, 1980, 98). He visualises a cellular architecture of

rooms off hallways, regulating the routines of its inhabitants, while he is free to penetrate the entire structure.

Fourier

There seems always to have been a particular interest in Fourier's project for the extent to which it promises to actualise utopian goals. The ability of his contemporaries (those offended by his sexual theories) to look beyond the unacceptable or more eccentric parts of his scheme is due to its grounding in unflinching social critique and its relative feasibility. Fourier begins to develop his theories during the revolutionary decade after 1789 but does not publish his first book "Theory of the Four Movements" until 1808. To the extent that he rehearses the conditions for rejection of this debut, Fourier seems to have feared the worst: "Every one must expect to be persecuted in proportion to the magnificence of his discovery...witness the man whom I have cited, Christopher Columbus. He was ridiculed, disgraced, excommunicated for seven years, for having announced a New Continental World. Ought I not, then, to expect the same treatment in announcing a New Social World?" (Fourier, 1972, [i], 23). Fourier's ideas develop by way of understanding the impact of human passions on social equilibrium and harnessing their energy for increasing pleasure and prosperity. He is led to this objective by his disappointment at the appalling waste of contemporary communities where each family competitively duplicates the facilities and responsibilities of all the others. If communities were established to rationalise their resources then huge savings could be made. Reduction of work time then results in increased leisure time for each inhabitant. He attributes to thwarted sensual desires the self-interest that disrupts social stability. If in Fourier's ideal settlement, which he names "Harmony", individual passions could be equilibrated and everyone's sensual needs indiscriminately answered then all would be willing to work towards ensuring the success of their community. A full range of individuals is important since social diversity is the key to stimulation. By establishing a community incorporating a broad spectrum of different types of individuals, it becomes possible to balance these passions and create an attractive and stable social

environment. Fourier's task then is to determine what kind of an environment would ensure the success of such a scheme and what kind of array of passions would guarantee diversion without threatening to destabilise the community with competitive personalities. Fourier's ideal environment is the enclosed settlement he termed a phalanstery, built in wooded countryside within reach of the city and inhabited by the Phalanx, a large collective of dissimilar individuals possessing all economic and skill levels and degrees of motivation. As part of Fourier's drive to form every aspect of his community on principles antithetical to bourgeois morals he is determined to find value in outcasts. He would employ the very laziest (those who spend the day hanging around waiting for some gossip to fall their way) after their propensity, by asking them to circulate within the community and distract the phalansterians from becoming too absorbed in the newspapers.

What is crucial to Fourier's plan is the centrality of pleasure in Harmony. Without attentiveness to their own role in the emotional and sexual well-being of every other community member, no participant's life would be fulfilled and the phalanstery would ultimately fail. This is the elevation of a form of collective intoxication to a community rule. It is the responsibility of each participant to prioritise their own sexual goals but to use the community structure as a means to their realisation. Fourier recognises that he can add nothing to the range of sexual proclivities already present in society except to legitimise them. The hypocrisy and repression that disadvantage the fulfilment of desires also entitle the exploitation of children and adolescents, the criminalisation of unconventional sexual instincts and offer protection to one class while permitting the persecution of another: "Marriage, like all civilizee customs, has led to the opposite of its intended objective. It has produced nothing but secret and general debauchery, and the protection of the laws by those who violate them most audaciously" (Fourier, 1971, [ii], 258). Life in the phalanstery embraces all of this deviance and makes it into a form of public play. Even the appetite for intrigue is formalised in midday meetings where future liaisons are negotiated. The phalanstery is organised with the thoroughness of twentieth-century communist collectives but the ultimate goal of this discipline is to realise the greatest possible pleasure for its individuals. Explaining Aragon's and Breton's interest in Fourier, we can see a forerunner here

of the Surrealist objective of combining cultural and psychical revolt with organised revolution to ensure that political transformations do not repeat the authoritarianism of what they displace. Disillusioned by the French Revolution's failure to effect any change in the way that commerce and family life were conducted, Fourier develops a programme that treats the structural transformation of society as the means to enabling a more penetrating social revolution: "A counter-revolution can change authorities and practices, but it cannot change private morals. [...] The class of civilizees who legislate and direct morals are not able to invent anything; consequently they adopt all the practices that chance introduces as if they were the wishes of nature and the final destiny of man" (Fourier, 1971, [ii], 255-6).

Fourier is never successful in attracting reliable backers to help in realising his plans and he remains unconvinced by attempts of followers to build similar communities. After his death in 1837 various Fourierist communities are attempted, though in spite of some short-lived American establishments no phalanstery ever comes to be successfully built and operated. The closest example might be the evolved model André Jean-Baptiste Godin sets up at Guise later in that century, although its success depends on its profitable plate-enamelling factory rather than on being self-sustaining through market gardening and agriculture. Godin's community shares principles with the philanthropic industrialists of Port Sunlight and Bourneville regarding improvements in the education and living standards of workers and in the end the entire facility is bequeathed to its employees.

Fourier's plans have come to seem plausible enough to stand as an antidote to the abuses of architecture in the service of industry. In the convolute devoted to Fourier in *The Arcades Project* are several quotations and observations of Benjamin's own that delineate this redemptive aspect. For Benjamin the phalanstery is a machine of human beings (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 626) in the sense of an architectural form that enables the regulation of unusually complex social structures. This complexity arises as much from the timetabling of all forms of desire as from Fourier's commitment to incorporating a complete cross-section of social classes in shared prosperity. Fourier looks to design the setting for realising technology's utopian potential, fully aware that this potential is squandered by those of his contemporaries

who excuse the social abuses of industrialisation on account of the capital generated. Where the nineteenth-century factory of machines represents the worst abuses of social organisation, Fourier's factory of humans resolves the waste of labour exploitation. As Friedrich Engels criticises the way Manchester industrialists tolerate an extraordinarily high quotient of human misery as the acceptable consequence of wealth generation, he recognises in Fourier the attempt to actualise a critique, to transform existing architectural and industrial models into the means for genuine economic and social prosperity. In an early draft of the Communist Manifesto Engels wrote of the necessity for phalanstery-style communal buildings to be built on the outskirts of cities as a bridge between urban and rural communities. Ultimately Engels is dismissive of the utopians' preference for communities that would co-exist with the capitalist economy instead of promoting the kind of direct revolutionary action that would effect deeper material change. Fourier always intended his phalansteries to be a staging post on the way to extensive transformations, still many years away and certainly contingent on the systematic application of his ideas. Here paraphrasing Fourier, Engels attributes him with a powerful analysis of social hypocrisy and bourgeois failure, improbably crediting him with as accomplished a use of dialectical method as Hegel in identifying society's inability to resolve its contradictions "which it constantly reproduces without being able to solve them; hence it constantly arrives at the very opposite to that which it wants to attain, or pretends to want to attain, so that, e.g. 'under civilization poverty is born of superabundance itself'" (Richter, 1971, 75).

Architecture of inversion

For very different reasons, what is striking about the conception of architecture in Fourier's and Aragon's accounts is its inward turn, away from those who are not inhabiting it. With neither is there any investment in facade, the front that provocatively turns towards an audience that needs to be impressed, converted, menaced or seduced. Instead the building, or enclave, is turned inside out (of necessity in the case of the arcade) and can be read only from the interior. In the photographs or engravings of arcades seen from the street there is little

visible apart from a dark hole and title plate marking the entryway. In the Passage de l'Opera the now unfashionable merchandise of the introverted and withdrawn establishments offers few obvious enticements. Aragon's writing pulls around the archaism of these businesses into a forced engagement with the present. Concerning the exterior of his phalanstery Fourier is almost silent. His claim that this structure will surpass the greatest palaces seems to depend primarily on its technological innovations—its central heating and weatherproof walkways, for example—and its success at social engineering in which he feels the street-gallery to be his key innovation: "Once a man has seen the street-galleries of a Phalanx, he will look upon the most elegant civilized palace as a place of exile, a residence worthy of fools who, after three thousand years of architectural studies, have not yet learned how to build themselves healthy and comfortable lodgings" (Fourier, 1971, [i], 243). As Anthony Vidler points out however, Fourier's final version of the phalanstery develops from several prototype schemes which begin in proposals for French garden-city type developments that would avoid the monotony of American and German cities (Vidler, 1987, 110). In these early projects Fourier does place some emphasis on designed facades which he suggests should incorporate bas-reliefs and fresco decoration. The direct antecedent to the phalanstery, Fourier's Tourbillon, bases its layout on a mystical plan of the universe, a component that becomes less explicit in the final model but remains embedded in his idea of an architecture that transforms the lives of its users. Preceding the Tourbillon is the Tribustère where Fourier imagines siting communal dwellings within an urban setting where they would be linked to one another by the kind of galleries that become the phalanstery's trademark.

The street-gallery of the phalanstery was to enable weatherproof thoroughfares facilitating communication and intrigue; an architecture of dissolving boundaries designed to diminish hierarchies of rank, function and convention. For Fourier, the phalanstery of interconnected arcades is to be the architectural frame ensuring the effectiveness of the vast theoretical edifice of remedies he designs to counter the malfunctioning of capitalist society. It is envisaged as an architecture of liberation whose design has to facilitate the fulfilment of desires and needs repressed by current social and economic regulation. The site of leisure activities of Parisian nobility and bourgeois becomes the model for an architecture enabling the integration of

classes and the location not just of leisure, but of work. The palace, and possibly the commercial arcades that facilitate social and economic circulation, are taken by Fourier for his system of occupational circulation (a different job every two hours) and for amorous permutations. He sees no reason why people would not be engrossed in their jobs if they were rotated in their occupations and were compensated by the reality of self-empowerment where they can see how they benefit from the profits of their own labour. If this scheme derives from the arcades it intends an improvement by avoiding the unhealthy airlessness described by Céline of his upbringing in the top floor apartments of one Parisian *passage*. However, Fourier is adamant about his originality and though he refers favourably to other architecture of congregation like the Louvre's Grand Galerie, Palais Royale's Galeries du Bois (which he visited in 1789), or the Madrid Escorial, he maintains that "The edifice occupied by a Phalanx does not in any way resemble our constructions, whether of the city or country..." (Fourier, 1972, [ii], 143). Debate over precedents for phalanstery design must take into account the functions imagined by Fourier for his structure. Examples of second-floor weatherproof galleries serving the social interaction of nobility exist in Italian Mannerist architecture—for example at Sabionnetta—but it is really with the Parisian arcades that a quantity of diverse transactions and encounters become possible within the same enclosed space. The combination of leisure and commerce with which a very broad section of the public can participate offers an array of pleasures in proportion to an expanding constituency. Fourier would recognise in the arcades' sensual experiment a route towards healing social ills of the early nineteenth century. It could be argued that his ultimate hyperbolisation of the arcades' potential is realised in the extravagant account of the phalanstery orgy. Aragon's determined surrender to every enticement of the Passage de l'Opera, as if compiling an encyclopedia of new perversions, updates this founding novelty of the arcades to encompass the breadth of twentieth-century intoxications.

In the phalanstery these three-story high galleries run the length of the building and have stairways which afford access to apartments on floors above. Barely sketched out in Fourier's plans are walkways, supported by columns, branching off from the main street-gallery to connect with other buildings. Tunnels lead from the ground-floor service areas to outlying

work areas. More than anything these features complete the sense of a materialisation, a century and a half later, of utopian project as dystopian reality in the housing estate walkways of South London and the covered passageways linking the malls of winterised cities like Minneapolis and Toronto. Along each of the wings of the main building this thoroughfare runs past a double row of public rooms whose interior windows face the street-gallery and whose exterior windows overlook the community's gardens and fields. So rigorous in most details, Fourier is vague about the interior allocation of these public rooms. In spite of one of Fourier's accounts (and Barthes' phalanstery diagram) placing them on the ground floor, it seems plausible however, that the dining and reception rooms would be on this upper level. As much is suggested by the mention of trapdoors in the second-floor dining rooms through which tables can be raised and lowered. In taking his motif from stage design Fourier reveals an implicit conception of the phalanstery as theatre where people act out their "real" fulfilled lives. The theatricality of the Court of Love, discussed later, suggests the same vision.

The phalanstery's inward orientation compounds Fourier's rejection of an external world permeated by deceitful capitalist enterprise and its consequences in peasant or labourer indigence. With Fourierist inversion the phalanstery architecture and management converts these exploitative relationships into a community whose interests are served by the satisfaction of all proclivities. For this reason the phalanstery is designed, as Fourier takes pains to emphasise, for circulation and intrigue where everyone's affairs are exposed to public interest. He intends an architecture of promiscuity where communication, visual engagement and physical contact are accelerated with the flux of people traversing the complex. Street-gallery, elevated corridors, public rooms and apartments interlock as if designed to spill their human contents into one another. The analogy Benjamin makes between the phalanstery and a machine is apt, but it is striking how organic this machine appears with its emphasis on a fluid and commingling populace whose circulation along corridors evokes the structure of arteries in a body.

This metaphor of organic growth would be appropriate for Fourier who criticises the artificially polarised welfare of urban communities: "Relative regression caused by the progress

of luxury which increases the sufferings of the multitude in the same proportion that it creates new means of pleasure for the rich. Deprived of life's necessities, the civilized worker is tormented by a display of increased affluence which the savage does not see" (Fourier, 1971, [i], 147). There is an instance where Benjamin understands this transition to an organic machine as a process of radical change: "Fourier's conception of the propagation of the phalansteries through "explosions" may be compared to two articles of my 'politics': the idea of revolution as an innervation of the technical organs of the collective..." (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 631). In a later convolute, Benjamin draws attention to the same analogy by quoting Marx on the development of the collective, where interestingly the emphasis is on the evolution of the human species once it has freed itself from the grip of private property. Now that they have been liberated, the human senses can evolve, while in addition what Marx calls "social organs" start to develop through association with other people (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 652). Such speculations reveal that the admiration Marx feels for Fourier extends well beyond his social critique. The tone of this last observation is very close to Fourier's own stipulations on the withering away of private property in the phalanstery and the impact on each individual's sense of freedom and instinctual satisfaction of an environment designed to improve association within the community.

Some of Fourier's mytho-mystical statements on nature give further credibility to the idea of the phalanstery as an organism. His social, architectural and economic plans presuppose a reversion to a quasi-Edenic state, in his words closer to that intended by God when the first species were created. It is as if the phalanstery is conceived as part of the same cosmic scheme in which Venus makes the mulberry bush and the earth copulates with Mercury to produce the first strawberry, following which all species experience decline: "It was not Man who reduced the animals and vegetables to the condition in which we now see them, both in their wild and domestic state; it was Social Incoherence, which, by disorganising the Order of the Series, caused the deterioration of all productions, even of Man himself..." (Fourier, 1972, [i], 52). The phalanstery therefore has to be an architecture that enables the return to a socially-coherent prelapsarian community which in relation to Benjamin's notion of wish images would coincidentally represent the desires of an urban and rural proletariat to recover some

mythic conception of community through the effective and socially responsible application of new technologies.

A different kind of return to nature can be ascribed to Aragon's image of the arcade where architectural entropy causes confusion between the manufactured and the organic. He makes much of the shoddiness of many of the business premises and their merchandise whose decrepitude is compounded by the image of a submerged arcade. Aragon's description of some of the residents could be referring to bivalves clinging to the surface of a rock: "For years and years the gatekeeper and his wife have been holed up in this retreat...ineluctably moulded to the shape of this absurd place fringing the arcades, visibly consuming their lives, he smoking it away, she sewing..." (Aragon, 1980, 34). Aragon speaks of his subject like a horticulturist fascinated by a bed of exotic perennials whose predictable recrudescence does nothing to lessen their allure. In most instances people and merchandise are shown collapsing back into a primal condition as if the entropy is no less ongoing with the inhabitants; the blond hair seen through the window of the hairdressers leaves the machinery behind and reverts to a python's coils, to a wasp swarm, to "a drowsy animal lolling in a car" (Aragon, 1980, 53). The play of arcade courtship, whether students on the make, prostitutes' rehearsed approaches or the fierce erotic expeditions of married women has all the instinct of remorseless animal manoeuvres.

Referring to the way that the Modern Movement in architecture addresses the legacy of avant-garde directives for social change, Manfredo Tafuri indicates a split where an irrevocable break with history and an emphasis on formal purity contrast with the conviction to reconsider the meaning of historical forms in the context of present day issues. The first, in the work of De Stijl for example, proposes to invent a new architectural language using logical geometric systems. The resulting buildings disengage from an inattentive public and intend no role for a larger community in their functions. The other, in the form of work by Le Corbusier or Frank Lloyd Wright, uses historical references as part of an architecture that invites critical reflection on the function of the buildings and participation in an open environment. In the first instance the work is shut off from its surroundings, rejecting integration with everyday life, while in the second the building is open to contingent and inventive use. Tafuri regards these

positions as growing out of a five-hundred year debate over the function of history in architecture which comes to a head in the avant-garde's assertion of a *tabula rasa* for its own inventions, as if historical precedents were a brake on the transformative potential of new formal vocabularies.

It is helpful to use this interpretative scheme for understanding what Fourier and Aragon make of the history and appearance of their architectural models. Although neither ends up building anything, both take an existing architecture and subject it to metamorphosis. Comparison with Tafuri's investigation of what is socially revolutionary in architecture seems feasible given Fourier's formation of a community through radical social critique and Aragon's critical reflection on the achievements of earlier avant-gardes.

As we have seen, although Fourier rejects comparisons with the phalanstery, his designs hybridise a number of historical precedents whose original meaning he intends to displace. However, evidence that Fourier acknowledges some value in the function of these precedents lies primarily in his enthusiasm for their socialising role. Over marketplaces and arcades the Louvre's Grand Galerie and the Tuileries Palace are chosen by him as foremost examples of associative architecture. It is significant that Fourier responds strongest to leisure-oriented architecture supporting no commercial activity whatsoever, for his phalanstery takes as its model of contented labour and play a bourgeois beatitude and ease. In this scheme, commerce and the traditional service occupations are relegated to the ground level with recreational activities taking place above. While Fourier obviously does not reject historical content outright, neither does he bring to it a radical modification. The irony of Palace architecture used for communal housing effects a critical inversion but not a revolution in design.

Aragon's use of history is to turn it against the aesthetic radicalism of his immediate contemporaries as well as the Dadaists with whom he was previously active. As the imminent destruction of the Passage de l'Opera by the Paris authorities is always encroaching on the book's narrative so the anti-authoritarianism of Dadaist iconoclasm is met by Aragon's clear support for the architectural fabric and life routines of the arcade. Tafuri attributes the lack of a Dadaist architecture to their violent attack on urban art and architecture where they envisage

a city space for action that is cleared of all things (Tafuri, 1980, 36). This programmatic unwillingness to recognise any value in historical artefacts is what Aragon works against by raising the dying arcade to mythological status. Importantly, this is a history which Aragon writes himself and not one that he receives and then adapts. In this sense there is no precedent in historical method for the kind of assemblage Aragon makes. It is discontinuous and alogical while relishing careful observation and subjective, even intoxicated, speculation. And although Aragon's project is ambiguous in making a historical document out of devalued material he is assertive of the merits of his undertaking and the values it espouses. His architecture accesses a new world of sensory intelligence, offering an immersive environment with which the greatest diversity of people are invited to engage. In a revolutionary manoeuvre this architecture, originally set up for the trade of luxury goods and closed to the idea of non-commercial use, is prised open by Aragon and exposed to intense, yet economically unproductive, participation.

Discussing Rococo designers of landscape environments such as Kew Gardens, Tafuri indicates the radical nature of their architecture where it opens itself up to audience enquiry. This concerns the eighteenth-century turn away from an interiorised reflection on formal architectural elements towards a new kind of dialogue with the spectator as predicating a series of responses: "As didactical instruments they are turned towards man, awakening his senses and injecting into them, immediately afterwards, a critical stimulus" (Tafuri, 1980, 82). These garden buildings, follies as pedagogy, use the landscape to break from an architecture of pure forms to become, Tafuri says, "ambiguous objects". They are connecting with a world beyond themselves and anticipate the flamboyant accretions of Antonio Gaudi as well as the kind of environment imagined by Aragon in the Passage de l'Opera. For Aragon the shops in the arcade have become like the idiosyncratic pavilions of a public garden, each possessing a discrete set of determinants that may have grown iconographically impenetrable but which retain communicability. One difference between the eighteenth-century type and *Paris Peasant* is that the latter is a garden in ruins whose decay only increases the opportunity for participation. Aragon engages with each business as if its defunct state made it involuntarily communicative. The eighteenth-century garden's capacity to stimulate diverse human responses is amplified to satisfy an encyclopedia of fascinations in the arcade. The

ambiguousness of the objects multiplies in this garden of eccentricities. Tafuri's comment could have been written for Aragon: "The observer becomes more and more the user who gives meaning to the object or to the series, and who is more and more caught and absorbed in this ambiguous collection. At once inside and outside the architectural work, he is confronted by the alternative of active or passive participation (but even the latter is a form of participation that changes the meaning of the work)" (Tafuri, 1980, 84).

By contrast, Fourier's garden and building remain an architecture that communicates primarily with its phalansterians and does not readily open up to another public. The clarity of its spatial arrangements and relative unambiguousness of its structure mark it off from the city from which it withdraws, as well as from Aragon's arcade which is part of that same contaminated environment. Fourier's conception, as unbuilt utopia, leaps lightly over the real uncertainties confronting architects who have to work with what is already in the world. In Harmony nature is post-human in the sense of having an uncontentious relationship to the phalansterians. The gardens provide food, colour and diversion, and are not intended as places for speculation or doubt.

We can see Aragon looking for a new way to establish an architecture that reopens engagement between materials and people for uncertainty and potentiality. In spite of its origins in iconoclastic avant-gardes *Paris Peasant* is written as if in support of that branch of Modernist architecture that sought out the possibilities from history for polysemic readings. As Tafuri explains, this kind of building worked to realise "one of the main values of our culture: that of sensing, seeing, building the world, substituting the category of possibility for that of rigid causality. To suddenly free the observer from custom by teaching that there is always the possibility of a jump towards new dimensions, that the present order can and must be upset, that everyone must take part, simply by their daily actions, in this permanent revolution of the order of things: these were the objectives of architectural avant-gardes, the objectives of a bourgeoisie desperately trying to unite *Kultur* and *Civilisation*" (Tafuri, 1980, 91).

Specifically in relation to Piranesi's Prison etchings Franco Borsi lists three qualities that characterise those works as a utopian vision of architecture: the interlinking of spaces, a

poetics of construction (in the form of plans, cross-sections and details) and a “quasi-mythical” invocation of pre-history (Borsi, 1997, 40). Some of these features sound very familiar from Benjamin’s attribution to Fourier of the materialisation of wish images drawing on mythic representations of community life and from Aragon’s *Paris Peasant*, which is of course introduced as the analysis of a location wherein incipient mythological types thrive. Much of Fourier’s phalanstery commentary emphasises the seamlessness of his architecture designed to stimulate movement. The intersecting spaces, with their corridor conduits, explicitly counter those structures of civilisation built to inhibit physical circulation. The issue of circulation is more complex with Aragon (or perhaps oversimplified by Fourier), for movement in the arcade is the right not of residents but of visitors who drift from one unchanging *mise-en-scène* to another, whose functions are maintained by inveterate service workers. The image of the labyrinth returns at this point but the visionary map of the space where flow is unimpeded does not really match the plan of the actual arcade whose main arteries and tributaries ultimately branch off into dead ends: the brothel, the theatre, the bath house. Here the difference between the staccato movement of consumerism in the arcade and the fluidity of department store strolling is particularly evident. Referring to Siegfried Giedion’s commentary, Benjamin highlights this difference as a corruption of architectural practices where the department stores are designed to welcome customers and keep them seduced (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 40).

Of Borsi’s second qualification of utopian representation, the poetics of construction, there is plentiful evidence in both Fourier’s and Aragon’s writing. Fourier’s vagueness in providing tangible qualities of the interior spaces of the phalanstery finds its counterpart in Aragon’s intense inventorying, as if the latter were filling up the emptiness of Harmony’s rooms. However, in listing the functions of these loosely assigned spaces—granaries, library, stables, ball-rooms, carrier pigeon coops etc.—Fourier is most specific with the rooms given over to the stages of erotic encounters of phalansterians and with the meeting rooms he calls Seristeries. Concerning the latter we discover a hallucination of innumerable successive rooms whose functions are to secure the division of the community into its passionnal groups. The three main Seristry halls each have around six adjacent rooms for group meetings and adjoining these are further smaller

rooms for private engagements. For Fourier, harmony is not consistent with uninhibited commingling; it can only be ensured by the scrupulous attention to the timely separation and regrouping of the different types in the phalanstery. This interest in informative images, as if securing utopian intentions through a plethora of instructions, is clarified by Vidler in an article on diagrams in the context of Constant's "New Babylon" project. Here the diagram specifically refers to an outlined idea but it would be appropriate to extend this to a form of diagrammatic description that enumerates without embellishment; what we find in effect with Aragon's "stage directions" and Fourier's narrative of architectural subdivisions. What the drawn diagram particularly shares with these descriptions is the directive to pursue possibilities rather than remain within limits (as a finished plan stipulates). Noting the resemblance to Fourier, Vidler paraphrases Constant's own description: "In these terms New Babylon follows all the logic of diagrams: as he writes in 'New Babylon: Outline of a Culture' from 1960-1965, it is at once a social model (ludic society), a network (freedom for play, adventure, mobility), a topography (of displacement, slow and continuous flux, rapid circulation), a sector (the basic unit), a labyrinth (dynamic), a technology (to alter the ambience), and an intensification of space (lived more intensely—seems to dilate)" (Vidler, 2001, 89).

Vidler writes of architecture achieving its impact through making an impression on all our senses. He explains a belief in utopian architecture as the anticipation, embedded in the form and qualities of buildings, of the social order they aim to transform: "'I am going to prove', wrote Fourier in one of his notebooks, 'that a man of taste could, on his own, perfect a general architecture to metamorphose civilisation'" (Vidler, 1987, 110). As architecture, the phalanstery is not of such radical design that it could claim precedence in terms of transformative aesthetic or material qualities. Radicality lies more in the use to which this derivative structure is put (as communal housing and workplace) than in its appearance. This design of apartments overlooking a gallery walkway beneath which extend the service and work areas, is unusual for enabling such a variety of uses. Here there are to be living quarters, rooms for business meetings, spaces set aside for erotic encounters, others for balls or for dining; there is to be a telegraph office, a theatre, a museum; also planned are stables, workshops and cafés. Fourier's idea is to stimulate the maximum amount of working and

social opportunities while participants remain within the complex which, being centrally heated and ventilated, offers respite from extremes of weather.

The similarity to the range of provisions in the arcades is obvious. Taking the concept of inversion as a motif of social critique (for example of Marx's critique of religion), Paul Ricoeur points out that Fourier's utopia is an inverted image of the civilisation that he so frequently holds up as corrupt and inadequate (Ricoeur, 1986, 303). The same point might be made of the architectural models, the palace and arcade, on which the phalanstery appears to be based and whose features Fourier then inverts to form his invention. Fourier's inversion of palace or arcade architecture into socialised housing symbolically reenacts the radical transformation of royal residence into democratic institution. In part, this plan develops from the scepticism Fourier feels for the French Revolution which he holds up as a model of the catastrophic consequences of revolutionary zeal. The later occupation of the Tuileries Palace by demonstrators during the 1848 uprising, displacing royalty with jubilant workers and the homeless, is the kind of spontaneous redress that Fourier would have regarded as serving little purpose. Such displacements had to be organised and comprehensive in their inclusiveness to succeed. Fourier recognises the utopian potential of these kinds of buildings to stimulate free association amongst their occupants and he plans his phalanstery to structure harmonious, not rivalrous, class relations. To this end Fourier also reformulates the exploitative aspects of arcade life. The arcade's urban location and its emphasis on trade, its function as a site of entertainment and sexual commerce and its accommodation of transient visitors all become transformed through Fourier's discussion of life within the phalanstery into mirrored counterparts for the benefit of the entire Phalanx.

Ricoeur's observation that Fourier works to uncover whatever is "natural" that civilisation has buried explains how the programme of the phalanstery salvages an essence from under the distortions of contemporary life. Fourier would rescue the exhilaration of erotic encounters from their enervation through marriage and brothel just as he would salvage factory labour from Victorian industrialists and optimistically develop it into a voluntary pastime. Fourier imagines that as manufacturers and merchants the phalanstery occupants' responsibility for

their own products will ensure that they escape the profiteering and monopolising of commodities that he witnessed at first hand in society. His aim with this utopian community is to take back power from the merchants against whom he is perceptively vituperative: “An analysis of commerce will show that the mercantile body...is in Civilization but a horde of confederated pirates—a flock of vultures, preying upon agriculture and manufactures, and plundering the social body in every possible way” (Fourier, 1972, [i], 168).

Architecture for sex

Fourier’s goal is a hedonistic community whose potentialities are enabled by their own wealth (which in this instance has neither been accumulated for its own sake nor at the expense of others). His architecture is horizontally organised, enabling flow and circulation, rather than a vertical structure stratifying social relations of inhabitants. For Roland Barthes this feature of lateral movement distinguishes the architecture where “the phalanstery is a retreat in which one moves” (Barthes, 1997, 112). Ultimately the Phalanx’s exhilaration with life is crucial; the enjoyment of maximum pleasure at little cost. The inversion here is of the work-to-pleasure ratio which in factory life is obscenely disproportionate. In the phalanstery the minimum work generates the maximum pleasure. The social spaces relating to love are a series of interconnecting boudoirs stimulating anticipation and preparedness. This is one part of Fourier’s realm where a kind of hierarchy persists, with some inhabitants’ roles consisting of service to others’ pleasures or in supervising proceedings as a series of chance encounters, much as Aragon imagines being facilitated by the labyrinths of the Passage de l’Opera.

Aragon’s arcade is the site for restaging the theatre of possibilities that critics have remarked is one intention of the phalanstery (Di Forti, 1978). In *The New Amorous World*, whose controversial content causes it to remain unpublished until 1967, Fourier projects events surrounding Harmony into a future when a large network of phalansteries will exist across the world. It is in the narrative of erotic encounters from *The New Amorous World* that this sense of a theatre of possibilities is best realised. It is also the point where Fourier elaborates

on the plan of the phalanstery envisaged as an architecture of liberation. Fourier's design of the "court of love" stages the regular orgies which formalise the end of repressive sexual customs. These occur as the company moves through the phalanstery from one induction room to another. As he reinvents this fantasy, Aragon pays homage to it in his long commentary on a visit to the brothel and variety theatre. His meticulous description of dark and sordid rooms and corridors, negotiated to attain gratification, reinforces the idea of the arcade as a compact phalanstery where everything light and open is returned to the darkness from which it imagined itself liberated. Here, in what Fourier criticises as evidence of the hypocrisy of contemporary morals, little is changed. For Aragon though, this is where perversions can recuperate their stimulating marginality from Fourier's normalising accommodation of all forms of desire.

Fourier's description of the Court of Love is established against opposing images of clandestine sex in civilised society. The examples he gives of gropings during an orgy in a pitch black underground cavern or of a basement where the Moscow nobility are gratified by naked Georgian women seem exaggerated antitheses to the luminous and spacious interiors he conjures up for Harmony's erotic meetings. The frenzied gropings still occur, but they are unashamed encounters taking place in brightly illuminated rooms and are supervised by interveners who cut off the action before it goes too far. Fourier's description may derive in part from images like Watteau's *Fête Galante*, eighteenth-century paintings of the flirtation stages of imminent erotic association in indeterminate idyllic landscapes. He describes an interior the experience of which becomes destabilised by sensory assault with the visitors starting their tour by moving "through a cloud of perfume and a rain of flowers" (Fourier, 1971, [i], 387). At the colonnades they are met with bowls of flaming punch while "a hundred nectars spurt from the opened fountains" (Fourier, 1971, [i], 387). From this space they proceed to the throne room for further welcomes, a preparatory wash in the "chamber of ablutions", and light refreshments. All during this phase assignations are being worked out by the organisers while participants are invited to look each other over. They move on to "the office of the High Matron" in whose salon they are entitled to a first "brief Bacchanalia", less than fifteen minutes of intense physical contact which is stopped short before consummation.

After this it is to the “reconnoitering-room” where the protagonists consume each other visually from the vantage point of facing tiered stands. Finally, once the matrons have established the most propitious couplings, the group moves to the “Festival Hall” for the orgy itself. Even at this point they are accompanied by dozens of supervisors and coordinators. Continually throughout the ceremony Fourier emphasises the role sight plays in increasing the pleasure of the engagement. Moreover, all action occurs in full view of others who are free to suggest new partnerships in order to increase the quotient of pleasure.

If we now consider sex in Aragon’s arcade we seem to be returned to the underworld of thwarted vision and interlocking dark spaces that Fourier deplors: “Let him cast a glance on this narrow lane lit faintly by the dirty window...” (Aragon, 1980, 114). As Aragon advances on his own erotic journey he passes along a “Gloomy staircase”, crosses “the minute waiting room, where two is already a crowd” and is “led to the left along a dark corridor” and into “the room” which is dirty and cluttered with old furniture (Aragon, 1980, 115). Here he has a choice of only two women who are completely dressed. The one he chooses returns in her stockings and washes his penis in cold water. After sex he realises he has been spied on from behind the drapery covering a space over the sofa. There is always this occlusion of sight by darkness or veiled spaces. He relishes a similar decrepitude in the Théâtre Moderne where the interior architecture is claustrophobic: “Climbing a narrow stairway that winds around a glass ticket-booth one finds oneself in the lower part of this first floor which, as we have seen, has an exit on to the lane; while at the same level the stairway leads to the manager’s office, to the right of the cloakroom, beyond a sort of lounge which houses at its far end the mean, dirty lavatories. Since using the bar entails ordering a drink, most of the spectators content themselves with staring into it disconsolately from the doorway: the decor is orange... a few steps higher up is the entrance to the auditorium” (Aragon, 1980, 119-20). Here in this succession of dingy containers and passageways is the past’s future seen in the present: “Places that were incomprehensible yesterday, and that tomorrow will never know” (Aragon, 1980, 29). As architecture facilitates sex it does so parsimoniously.

Aragon's grim tableau returns Fourier down to earth but it also grants the earlier vision a greater force by sheer contrast. Aragon may as well be responding directly to Fourier's writing on architecture where the latter complains of the failure of architects to build as tastefully as individuals furnish their apartments: "What is one to think of an elegant salon that requires the visitor, on his way there, first to pass through a courtyard littered with refuse, a stairwell full of rubbish, and an antechamber provided with old and uncouth furnishings?" (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 649). Indeed Aragon's return of the realm of pleasure from "the city of arcades" to its origin in an architecture of dark cavernous spaces realises the ecstatic and erotic experiences that remain a dream in Fourier's plans. Aragon also enacts a negation of Platonic aspiration. Fourier's journey from dark hovel to incandescent community is reversed in *Paris Peasant* with the return to the most lugubrious part of the city. In his preface Aragon makes an implicit analogy between the arcade and Plato's cave, the site of the primal dramatisation of truth and illusion: "there exists a black kingdom which the eyes of man avoid because its landscape fails signally to flatter them". The move into the arcade is then an embrace of "error with its unknown characteristics" (Aragon, 1980, 20), a celebratory reenactment, in a way, of the return to the shadows by the prisoner who was blinded by the light of truth at the mouth of the cave.

Labyrinth and intoxication

Quite possibly what excites Benjamin about *Paris Peasant* is the implication behind Aragon's perverse reversal of cause-and-effect explanations. The way Aragon occupies the arcade, and describes how its architecture functions, resurrects the rural community of the phalanstery in the present-day city. As if complying with the common sense idea that the phalanstery is the offshoot of the arcades, Aragon reverses Fourier's inversion by taking the current inhabitants of the Passage de l'Opera as if descended from Fourier's Harmony. Fourier imagines his settlements succeeding only if they move to the countryside, protecting themselves from the urban locality of abuse and exploitation that might destabilise this kind of retreat. Aragon's response is to take the phalanstery back to the city and present it as a readymade community

of bizarre proclivities. His exhaustive enumeration of the arcade's inhabitants and their businesses uses such detailed description that it is above all their diversity that strikes us. Fourier's guarantee of the phalanstery's success is to fill it with as many different occupations, temperaments, social classes and sexual predilections as possible—"1,500 to 1,600 persons of graduated degrees of fortune, age, character, or theoretical and practical knowledge" (Fourier, 1972, [ii], 139)—such that the promise of unpredictable encounters ("To seek characters regarded as peculiar", [Fourier, 1972, [ii], 142]) would keep the community stimulated. Aragon celebrates a diversity that is only his to enjoy. Through their particularities, the shopkeepers and performers become, for the most part, a feature of the architecture of their cells. The commercial necessity of developing an increasingly specialised merchandise to mark themselves off from their neighbours condemns the arcade's occupants to an isolation which is the opposite of what Fourier imagined. The community has become largely introverted and uncommunicative, a condition from which the architecture offers no relief.

Reaching its nadir in Aragon's account, the decline of the Passage de l'Opera might have felt imminent in the nineteenth century when the Opera House moved further west. Opened in 1823 and running along a north/south axis, the arcade offered visitors to the Opera the convenience of a weatherproof approach from the Boulevard des Italiens. Aragon emphasises its unusual feature as a double arcade linked by two lateral corridors. The easternmost Galerie du Thermomètre, at the southern boulevard end, marks a brisk start to the tour with Aragon pointing out bookshop and café before losing himself in the hotel for transients and one-hour liaisons. Here the darkened interior of long corridors and duplicate staircases first introduces the image of the arcade as labyrinth where willing immersion in an architecture of allurements becomes Aragon's *modus operandi*. In presenting to us each new shop front Aragon is distracted by further seductions and follows detours leading to disconnected anecdotes and hallucinations. At the very close of the narrative, in thrall to the erotic cabaret, he re-presents the image of the labyrinth as enveloping all mental and physical initiatives. The structure of experience dissolves here into the sudden soaring and plunging of deep intoxication: "I am just one moment of an eternal fall. The lost footing never recovers itself" (Aragon, 1980, 123). Theseus' labyrinth as a journey through the arcade is a function of

Aragon's overall theme of locating his "modern mythology" within contemporary life, where a new intelligence can develop, unaffected by the prejudicial categories of truth derived from earlier philosophy. Aragon states that his labyrinth has no Minotaur and therefore no personification of irrational instinct against which reason can measure itself. The arcade as labyrinth stands over against an old intellectual order, what Aragon calls "Humanity's stupid rationalism" (Aragon, 1980, 23). Its intricate network of pathways from which one should never wish to be extricated is to be the sum of all valuable experience. In this complex space "Beautiful, good, right, true, real...so many other abstract words are crumbling into dust at this very moment. And their opposites, once accepted in their turn, soon lose their identity" (Aragon, 1980, 123).

Like so much else in *Paris Peasant* the image of the labyrinth works its way into Walter Benjamin's writing, and not surprisingly into what has been previously argued as a narrative of liberatory intoxication, his essay "Hashish in Marseilles". His metaphor for the drug experience is the unrolling of Ariadne's thread, counterproductive for being without issue, for once again there is neither Theseus nor Minotaur in this labyrinth. Instead the unmasculine act of "the rhythmic bliss of unwinding the thread" is to be its own justification and outcome. Where the Benjamin account appears genderless, Aragon's text is of course the opposite. There may be no Minotaur, but sexual predators roam the corridors in an intensification of repressive gender relations. Aragon's visions and sensual satisfactions take advantage of the women in the arcade and inevitably base his liberties on the naturalisation of female compliance. This tendency is of its time and is exaggerated by Surrealist fascinations with sexual experience. Yet Benjamin's enthusiasm for Surrealism does not extend to this outlook and his appeal to hashish as a model for redefining one's relations with the external world as a cornerstone of a wider revolution involves a desubjectivised and delibidinised sensitivity, where an extreme intimacy towards things serves as a model for a new kind of relationship with entities. We have seen how Benjamin describes his experience of Marseilles as effortless navigation of permeable environments and his opening move from hotel interior to street is the opposite of Aragon's stepping into the dark arcade from the sunlit boulevard.

The less-frequented western tributary of the Passage de l'Opera called the Galerie du Baromètre, houses some of the more obsolescent businesses and affords greater opportunity for lingering and concealment. Here is the champagne shop, milliner, gunsmith, orthopedist, handkerchief seller, old-school barber and brothel. In each Aragon celebrates examples of incongruous and outdated commodities. Where nineteenth-century guidebooks acclaimed the arcades for offering shelter from the rain, Aragon's invention of a drowned enclave is more than a surrealist image. The Passage de l'Opera has become a neglected backwater whose businesses had been founded on merchandise and services popular in the previous century. Under Aragon's gaze, the vendors become living exhibits in a theme park. The champagne shop sells electric bar heaters; in the gunsmith's is the harpoon rifle for whaling; the orthopedist offers a pair of wooden hands in a bidet, and the handkerchief seller stocks unfashionable plum-striped petticoats. Aragon's celebration of this pile of redundant commodities takes issue with the commercial principles on which the Passage de l'Opera was founded and which are fittingly leading to its destruction. The same speculation that demolished existing buildings to make way for the arcades has found new profits in this conclusion to the Haussmanization of Paris. Aragon's allegiance to the fossilised goods of the arcade is a rejection of the intoxications of newer merchandise in the department stores and boulevards. His own intoxication begins with a surrender to the spell of these old objects and spirals rapidly away from possible possession and functionality into ludic or erotic fantasies of no productive outcome.

Paris Peasant enthusiastically takes hold of the nineteenth-century myth of progress in modernity (that served as justification for an entrancement in beneficent commodities) and makes of its failures the least expected utopian finale. The arcades had long hosted idling, vaudeville and sex but by giving these unrestrained and uncritical attention it is Aragon's irreverent intent to show the Passage de l'Opera's diversions as the best that the nineteenth century has to bequeath. His inversion of ideals extends beyond bourgeois delusions to target the radical visions of early revolutionaries. Fourier's vision of the phalanstery as a network of arcades, where people's business and living activities are rigorously timetabled, is retrieved by Aragon. The arcade's self-sufficient community of predictable and regulated interactions now

sustains all of life's requirements as a bohemian enclave of sensual gratifications. In Aragon's self-consciously atavistic project, the setting for an earlier failed utopia is salvaged to stage a new critique of bourgeois pretensions (which by now include the accommodation of avant-gardism). Aragon's subversion is to extend Fourier's idealism through a set of anti-ideals—error, ephemerality, intoxication, irrationality, sensory overload and sexual squalor. In effect, the phalanstery's quality-of-life objective is made obtainable right back at home in the city's bars, restaurants, brothels, and bath houses. Aragon treats the arcade as a hermetic community and emphasises qualities like its subaqueous light and airlessness that distinguish it from the rest of the city. In that half of the book dealing with the Passage de l'Opera he rarely alludes to his life outside the arcade. The boulevard onto which one end of the arcade opens is a cipher marking the entrance to the tunnels. The arcades were constructed so that the shopkeepers could live above their businesses. In considerable detail Aragon describes the unnamed hotel which occupies the upper floors of the entire right-hand side of the eastern passage, the Galerie du Thermomètre. This pastiche of a phalanstery residency—

“Long corridors, like theatre wings, are strung with boxes, I mean rooms, all on the same side overlooking the passage” (Aragon, 1980, 31)—houses the dingy lodging rooms on its top floor and cubicles for sex on its lower level. Nevertheless, the realisation of another kind of utopian goal may still be attainable here where “A half-opened door releases a flash of *négligée*, a trill of song. Then a happiness unravels, fingers unlace, and an overcoat makes its way down towards the anonymous day, towards the country of respectability” (Aragon, 1980, 32).

Advertising in images of light and dark

Both Aragon and Fourier present their discourse through images, the treatment of which shares qualities with the urban resident's complicated relationship with commodities. At times Aragon's tour of the arcade is related as a series of hallucinations; elsewhere he sounds as if he is noting stage directions for props and scenery. The concept of Fourier's new world/Aragon's decaying world being represented as a play draws on familiar features of

nineteenth-century urban life. The flâneur's entire environment is regarded in the detached manner of contemplating a performance with which one is intoxicated while remaining apart from it. The narration of this condition derives from the nineteenth-century physiologies which superficially classify and interpret Parisian types. Aragon provides a physiognomy of the Passage de l'Opera as if its inhabitants are inadvertent actors in a drama determined by his improvised strolling and wilful decisions on whether or not to interact with those he observes. Chronicling its desuetude in great detail, Aragon invents a counter-image to publicity-dependent commodities. Here, every announcement, every sign, every shop window fails to do more than amplify the lurching decline of this enclave. Although Fourier's phalanstery is removed from the city to discourage disruptive intruders, he welcomes the prospect of numerous visitors who would be entertained by the spectacle of life in Harmony. He frequently presents details of Harmony as if he is writing copy for travel brochures and he is quick to contrast his descriptions with images of unfulfilling urban recreation. Here, for example, he classifies market gardening scenarios "as useful as our gatherings in cafes and drawing rooms are sterile":

"If the Series of Cherry-growers, for example, is having a large meeting in its main orchard a quarter of a league from the Phalanstery, it makes arrangements for the following groups to join it during the afternoon session from four to six o'clock: [...]

2. A group of lady florists from the district arrives to plant a two-hundred yard row of hollyhocks and dahlias along a near-by road and around a field of vegetables contiguous to the orchard. [...]

4. A group from the Thousand-flower Series arrives to care for the sect's altar which is situated between the vegetable field and the cherry orchard.

5. A group of Maiden Strawberry-growers arrives at the end of the session. They have been cultivating a strawberry-ringed glade in the neighboring forest.

(Fourier, 1971, [i], 292-3)

On his part, Aragon is dealing with an existing, but condemned, enterprise from which he conjures up images that will survive it in valedictory fashion. His publicity (which is what it

becomes as his book is serialised in *La Revue Européenne*) serves no conventional purpose yet meets Fourier's imaginative writing in some odd middle ground as he develops an overall image of an arcade utopia we are experiencing only after it has been lost. Fourier's utopia is still to come, whereas Aragon's is already over.

The descriptions used by Fourier make of his utopia a commodity every bit as alluring as those of the urban commerce he decries. He is to compete with what he opposes by borrowing and exaggerating its methods. As it bears on the entity of Harmony, much of his account takes on the visual incandescence of the passage just quoted. There can be little doubt that such images are directly opposed to what has come to be written of the city throughout the nineteenth century. The darkness, overcrowding, poverty and lack of sanitation are called to mind in negative form by Fourier's own polychromed fantasies: "The same will hold for the three groups cultivating yellow, grey and green rennet apples. Discord between contiguous groups is a general law of nature: the color scarlet goes very badly with its adjacent shades, cherry, nacarot and capucine; but it goes quite well with its opposites, dark blue, dark green, black, white" (Fourier, 1971, [i], 279). For Benjamin this kind of description sounds like a proposal for illustrations in children's books (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 648), which nicely summarises the kind of innocence frequently distinguishing Fourier's writing, lending it a kind of subversiveness that eludes recuperation. Conjuring up a resplendent new sun that shines generously on the dark city beyond, this language which brings the phalanstery into existence will surely attract new subscribers and intrigued visitors. It is the text of a visual advertisement, taking commodities on at their own game. Where standard advertising takes generous liberties with the truth for the sake of the seller's profit, the fancifulness of Fourier's hallucinatory imagery redeems itself by imagining all will profit. Noting how Balzac would use his novels to surreptitiously advertise his favourite merchants, Benjamin quotes Fourier's biographers, Armand and Maublanc, on this issue: "One may wonder to what extent Fourier himself believed in his fantasies... There may have been at least a modicum of deliberate charlatanism in all this—an attempt to launch his system by means of the tactics of commercial advertising which had begun to develop" (Fourier, 1972, [ii], 57-8). It is these images of light-filled lives, open play and free movement that enact the

seduction of the phalanstery. They are designed to be far more compelling than the images used to convey the ailments that summon up Fourier's remedy. These consist invariably of terse accounts of bleak social conditions and of colourless and deceitful lives.

As the imaginative narrator who outlives his subjects, Aragon's ambiguous relation to these new gods of his contemporary mythology gets defined performatively through his writing. As he reenacts his surrender to the entrancements of the place using Surrealist prose, Aragon's understanding becomes omniscient. As he predicted in the Preface, his knowledge grows in proportion to his sensory attunement and at several points in the text he attributes this development to an intensified intoxication. Early in the book he imagines conducting the kind of penetrating examination of the arcade shopkeepers as if setting them under a microscope: "Following the natural inclination of our heart when we let ourselves be swept away by its delirious interpretation, we almost succeed in picturing you, magnificent bacterial dramas..." (Aragon, 1980, 46). Deeper into the dreamworld of the arcade he pauses to answer criticism from the shopkeepers that his erotic reveries slander their honest occupations and spoil their chances of compensation. Claiming that his information comes direct from heaven, and using imagery of helpless disorientation—a shipwreck and fluctuating compass—he affirms the pointlessness of their concealing anything from him (Aragon, 1980, 99). Finally, at the very end of this section on the arcade, Aragon's imagery leaves its grounding in physical things to describe a state of clairvoyancy and revelation: "Nothing could possibly escape my attention, for I am the transition from darkness to light..." (Aragon, 1980, 123).

Beyond the avant-garde

Aspects of the book invite the view that it strives to be an unaccountable text, something that would have determinants in none of the literary objectives of its time, including Surrealist ones. In a statement that issues decades after the publication of *Paris Peasant* Aragon recounts the criticism he received on reading drafts of it at a gathering of Surrealists.

Their virulence is directed at the novel's descriptive tone and materialist specificity to which Aragon subsequently redoubles his commitment. He feels retrospectively that he sought "to break all the traditional rules governing the writing of fiction" (Aragon, 1980, 13) and above all to "demoralise" his colleagues, with an emphasis on undermining any latent moral assumptions of the Surrealists. In support of this last intent is the sheer mass of topographical detail and window stocktaking that might seem no more than the flâneur's equivalent of an entomologist's disciplined categorising. The avoidance of interpretation in these lists is something a conceptual artist might admire. It interjects an alienating functional process, like the intoning of a city tax collector, to what Aragon has told us in his Preface will be an account of the marvellous, of a new divinity arising in the midst of everyday life. There is something of a parody here of Fourier's relentless cataloguing, of what Roland Barthes describes as a "fury of expansion, of possession, and, in a word, of orgasm, by number, by classification..." (Barthes, 1997, 104). We are introduced to the arcade as if by a dull guide book providing names and orientations when suddenly with no variation in pitch Aragon will slide into prurient allusion: "It is indeed a single edifice, stretching along the entire frontage: a hotel whose rooms possess precisely the atmosphere and lighting appropriate to the laboratory of pleasures which the hotel offers as its sole justification for existence" (Aragon, 1980, 30). As we lose our way in their detail, the lists destabilise the structure of the book's narrative. There are two pages on the furnishings of the Certa café, at least twenty lines of which concern the arrangements of the chairs. This is the language of stage directions: "At the entrance to the recess, a small table and an armchair. Finally, between the recess and the passage door, sheltered from the latter thanks to the wooden screen, one last barrel and its seats. Returning to the recess, we find a wall-sofa upholstered in imitation leather occupying its whole width at the back, three tables set close together in a line against the wall-sofa, a row of chairs along the opposite side of the tables, and in the far right corner a little movable gas radiator that makes itself very welcome in winter" (Aragon, 1980, 88).

The work was first published as a serial in *La Revue Européenne*, a literary journal edited by Philippe Soupault. This sober-looking periodical (little bigger than the Picador translation) with modest olive-green cover and legible serif type set in justified margins on decent cream

stock, seems an improbably muted beginning for Aragon's explosive text. Yet the journal combines provocative with less challenging writing. For example, in April 1924, a couple of months before publication of the first of the *Paris Peasant* episodes, poems of Aragon's dedicated to Duchamp and Breton ("Force" and "The Path of Revolt") are followed by D'Annunzio's poem, "Spring in Fiesole", and the first part of Maxim Gorky's work on Lenin. In later issues we find an essay on Heinrich Mann, poems by Prévost and even an obituary of Joseph Conrad. The inclusion of *Paris Peasant* in a journal of such range allows it the space to develop its experiment in political writing where Aragon effects his Surrealist critique of metaphysics by revealing the layered sensual experiences to be had in the least promising milieu of the arcade. The monthly appearance of his text grants it some immediacy but allows it the kind of considered attention which an instantaneous and roughly-produced manifesto may not receive. There are occasions when the account provides a surrogate manifesto: parts of the Preface, the middle section "Imagination's Discourse On Himself", or the closing section "The Peasant's Dream" have a declarative and proselytising intent. Though self-contained arguments, these serve as fracturing interjections to the continuity of the main narrative. Aragon's book is in process of continuous, often abrupt, recontextualization. His ventriloquism of multiple arguments, as if trying out contradictory positions, is a diversionary strategy like the deployment of widely different prose styles, invented and quoted. In this manner he introduces an example of exactly what it is that he is not doing. Early on he discusses the arcade's own mouthpiece, the fortnightly newsletter *La Chaussée d'Antin* which speaks out for the concerned shopkeepers while berating them for withholding their advertising. Aragon's scepticism at the motives of this publication is clear from his reproduction of its self-congratulatory banner—"Defending the Political and Economic Interests of the Quarter"—and from his comment that the editor is rehearsing moral posturing with an eye on future political office. From his ceaseless probing, Aragon clearly has no intention of rescuing the arcade nor of producing another tract. With typical detail he lists business debts, the extent of leases still to run, and compares the paltry offers of compensation with the profligacy of the development company. At the same time he ridicules the occupants' claims to be missing out on windfalls from the forthcoming Paris Exhibition while his record

of the low attendance and unwanted merchandise of the shops undermines their cause still further. He sees his materialist purpose achieved more realistically as coroner than as saviour, and his exposé of the occupants' motives is one stage in what might be described as an autopsy of the entire arcade. Benjamin describes Aragon's account as a requiem, reserving autopsy for his own *Arcades Project* (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 883). In chronological terms this is correct, as Benjamin is writing after the Passage de l'Opera has disappeared. Yet Aragon is dissecting the living dead and lays out the causes of death with a thoroughness that Benjamin is later obliged to paraphrase and embellish. Benjamin had to put *Paris Peasant* down every few pages to catch his breath and the indelibility of its mark is obvious from the 1927 essay "Arcades", perhaps written with Franz Hessel whose account of *flânerie* in Berlin, *Spazieren in Berlin*, he greatly admired. The inventory of shops and contents in "Arcades" and its vision of obsolescent commerce filling an aquarium are taken entirely from Aragon, while its noun-filled prose of a flâneur's intoxicated drift is only one of the many distinctive styles of *Paris Peasant*.

If the text is at all unaccountable it might also be by way of the plethora of its often contradictory motivations. Aragon tries to avoid any possibility that his book might become serviceable or containable, whether to the arcade's occupants, tourists, Surrealists, or radicals. As part of this strategy, Aragon makes archaisms part of his method. His resurrection of the physiology, mentioned previously, shows his empathy with the nineteenth-century ethos of the arcade. Benjamin discusses these physiologies in his essay "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire" as formative of the distracting spectacle of nineteenth-century urban experience. Again Aragon's untimeliness is key, since his physiology of the arcade as delirious menagerie converts spectacle into unstable hallucination. His close attention to topography and merchandise recalls the guide books to Paris which were starting to be produced in quantity in the early 1800s, with their maps, itineraries and, of course, advice on shopping, although the redundancy of a guide to these particular shops has already been indicated. Aragon treasures anachronisms in signage – the enigmatic panels spelling out obscure functions for second-storey businesses and outdated advertisements in bars. His invitation to study ferns for insight into the colour of the blond hair he sees through the hairdresser's window and his sustained

allusions to an underwater setting both replay Victorian fascinations.

At the end of this first section of the book Aragon slips in a challenge to his contemporaries. Its offhand manner and lowbrow sarcasm are designed to offend. He has arrived at the burlesque cabaret in the Théâtre Moderne showing "...a masterpiece of its kind, *Flower of Sin*, which remains the model of the sort of erotic, spontaneously lyrical drama that might profitably be pondered upon by all our aesthetes labouring painfully to produce something avant-garde" (Aragon, 1980, 120). Here is an historical example of what Paul Mann in *Masocriticism* has called "stupid undergrounds", consisting of tattooists, death-metal bands, porn stars, conspiracy archivists and all those whose asocial productions pass too far below the critical radar for their subversiveness to be profitably recuperated by, in Mann's case, theorists whose expositions of antagonistic culture always neutralise it, accomplishing the commodification of opposition by other means. The progressive institutionalisation of the avant-garde by the rapid accommodation of its wildest gestures has always provoked new antagonisms. The alternatives for the artistic avant-garde are anticipated by Hegel when he outlines a possible future for art in the wake of its diminishing centrality to human affairs. Art should expose the oppositional conditions on which contemporary society has evolved while, as Hegel puts it, revealing "the truth in the form of sensuous artistic configuration" (Hegel, 1975, 55). Historically however, this union splits into a socially engaged art and withdrawal into uncooperative aestheticism.

In his opening section "Preface to a Modern Mythology" and his epilogue "The Peasant's Dream" Aragon is in idiosyncratic engagement with Hegel's elaboration of conceptual thinking in the *Logic*. His critique amplifies Hegel's conviction that concepts embrace all forms of experience. For Aragon, Hegel's philosophy is only a first step towards a fuller understanding of reality. To get further you must "Climb down into your idea, inhabit your idea" (Aragon, 1980, 208), experiencing it erotically to enable an intense grasp of sensory data. The underwater analogy recurs with the image of conceptual understanding defined as the shipwreck of all established boundaries. Knowledge is the loss of oneself in new, suddenly vivid particularities during an encounter with all that is strange and indeterminate. It is in

this spirit that Aragon collapses that stipulation of Hegel's from the *Aesthetics* (that art use its physical properties to hold contradictions in view) into the decadent rationale of the theatre where: "The moral is love, love is the sole preoccupation: social problems are never touched upon unless they provide the pretext for a display of nudity" (Aragon, 1980, 122). Social conditions are revealed through the sensuous representations of the striptease.

A comparison should be made here between Aragon's image of the rich, if degraded, iconography of the burlesque show (the utopia in the gutter perhaps) and the kitsch excesses marking Fourier's orientalist account of the visiting caravan which marks the apotheosis of his utopian vision as it teeters on the edge of farce. Just as Aragon works around ideas of irrecoverability, so Fourier's erotic scenarios press on beyond a point of no return. He is happy to seem ridiculous if he can make a serious observation entertaining. At times he is not so far from the brighter contemporary television comedians: "...I will resort to a gastronomic farce to open a discussion of highly important matters" (Fourier, 1971, [i], 267). This is a feature that interests Barthes who recognises the value of this irreverence in the face of gravitas. Of Fourier's penchant for fantasy he sees "the destructive power it has over cultural models by using them *disrespectfully*...". The orgy takes place "in a Folies-Bergère setting: a carnival-like conjunction of transgression and opera, the sober site of mad acts, where the *subject is swallowed up in its culture*, a decision that simultaneously sweeps away art and sex, denies transgression itself any gravity..." (Barthes, 1997, 115). All the same, it would be wrong to deny Aragon his additional degradations, all the more necessary if he is to throw his work beyond the reach of early twentieth-century recuperations. His cabaret reads like an amateur dramatic society's attempt at pornography, where the pleasure taken in the discovery of its ludicrousness induces the climactic vertigo of complete cultural dislocation.

Even if Fourier's *The New Amorous World* remains suppressed by his followers, a comparison nevertheless shows Aragon's prescience. It is an unusual move he makes in retrieving a discredited and forgotten utopian project from a century before by claiming its presence within the fantastic detritus of an arcade. In this play of overlapping and contradictory voices that is *Paris Peasant* Aragon enacts critique through his irony and irreverence. With other

contemporaries he is laying claim to a new kind of voice whose apparently disengaged reflexivity and take-it-or-leave-it insouciance anticipate the polysemy of some postmodern writers. As established methods of commentary seem tired and redundant, Aragon develops new approaches that destabilise authorial positions in order to retrieve some kind of meaning. One obvious parallel for this approach would be Victor Shklovsky's theoretical texts that constitute *Theory of Prose* and his writing in *A Sentimental Journey* as well as *Zoo: or Letters not about Love*, the latter two from the 1920s. In these works Shklovsky is articulating a critique of contemporary literary devices by analysis and celebration of Lawrence Sterne's method. A further connection between these two writers is Aragon's eventual wife, Elsa Triolet, whose letters rejecting Shklovsky's amorous approaches give the last book its title. To some extent Aragon's tribute lies in his ironic implication that some of Fourier's widely discredited predictions have already come true, if not in the form initially imagined. Whether it is the parade of "captives" for the delectation of their hosts or the various stages of erotic encounter in the "Court of Love"—"A woman who has only a beautiful bosom exhibits only the bosom and leaves the rest of her body covered... Another who wishes to exhibit everything she has appears completely naked. Men do the same" (Fourier, 1971, [i], 391-2)—Fourier's fantasies find their realisation in Aragon's squalid theatre. The play's script, such as it is, seems a bowdlerised and impoverished version of Fourier's own. For example, "...a procession of five or six naked women representing the different parts of the world or the various races of the Ottoman empire" (Aragon, 1980, 121) degrades the "One thousand adventurers and adventuresses...gathered in Hindustan" most of whom will pass through the Festival Room where "No one can say after this session that he has been denied a chance to admire all the physical attractions of the region" (Fourier, 1971, [i], 392). In Aragon's account the crude audience banter and ripostes from the actresses, the lazy delivery of dialogue sometimes read directly from the script, the arguments in the interval between supporters and detractors of the cast, seem a pathetic reprise of the grandiose speeches dreamt up by Fourier for his esteemed entourage: "'No,' replies Ganassa, 'I will be your captive only on one condition: only if you allow me to be yours without reserve. You must allow me to display all of my zeal and to make you admit that in the best

days of your youth you never had a more passionate lover” (Fourier, 1971, [i], 384-5).

Why would Aragon do this then? What is gained by this resemblance besides some fun at Fourier’s expense? It is possible of course that the scripts for the plays of the Théâtre Moderne and for Fourier’s erotic reveries have the same source in early pornography taking its own license from Indian erotica. Nevertheless, I believe there is an affinity of intoxications that Aragon recognises and then celebrates through his social anthropology which regresses, rather than advances, his subjects. For Aragon the goal, such as there is one, of anti-rational intoxication is fully realised at the close of the cabaret. Through this erotic experience the ability to conceptualise is finally lost and no distinction can be made any longer between self and world: “What has become of my poor certainty, that I cherished so, in this great vertigo where consciousness is aware of being nothing more than a stratum of unfathomable depths?” (Aragon, 1980, 122-3). Aragon has to deal with the condition of avant-gardism in his own time when, since Dadaist performances, the ready reception extended to radical aesthetic initiatives has rendered their opposition ineffectual. As already mentioned, Aragon is looking for motifs that would unsettle the complacency of his fellow Surrealists. The retrieval of Fourier gives Aragon a further set of critical frames with which to work. *Paris Peasant* can play with an oscillation between arcade and phalanstery and thus hold out to view the question of unrealised utopian projects. Fourier’s fierce critique of civilised life can then reside behind Aragon’s examination of this petit-bourgeois and proletarian community whose tenaciousness in sustaining now-pointless old customs and economies serves as commentary on the rapaciousness of a new modernity. And then Fourier’s intoxication with *his* future manifested in his absorption in numerical categorising, in subdivisions of social groups, in lists of the slightest of Harmony’s assets, can form a base for Aragon’s palimpsest of wayward inventorying as it spins him into new, absolutely contemporary intoxications.

Conclusion

To enable a different sort of reflection on Fourier's writing, I want to briefly revisit the material of the last chapter in discussing how *Paris Peasant* and *Hashish in Marseilles* negotiate a set of conditions which Peter Bürger has described as affecting the predicament of the avant-garde (Bürger, 1984, 50-1). The first condition concerns what Marcuse has called "the affirmative character of culture", the representation in art of some utopian resolution which absolves that society from action by addressing the issue in an ideal realm rather than in life. Marcuse's formulation is succinct: "By exhibiting the beautiful as present, art pacifies rebellious desire" (Marcuse, 1988, 121). A similar objection can be found much earlier in Nietzsche's *Human all too Human* where poets are blamed for "suspending and discharging in a palliative way the very passion which impels the discontented to action" (Nietzsche, 1986, 148). The second condition concerns society's effortless recuperation of oppositional gestures which are anticipated and neutralised through the commodification of artworks. Both conditions drive artists to promote the dissolution of the institution of art as one way to reintegrate art and life, where the institution is the sum of conditions which determine the limits of what that art can be. Dissolving art into the praxis of life then becomes the explicit aim of an avant-garde always confronted by an institution that stifles challenging artworks by treating them as examples of ethical rectitude or that recuperates them as commodities. I would like to add a third condition which really develops from the response of artists to these first two. Frustrated at its own ineffectualness, the violence implicit in the term "avant-garde" becomes naturalised in aggressive gestures. This violence is close to the manner in which the opposed society was founded; it recognises these gestures as its own and finds them easy to absorb.

Although a programme of transformative experience is developed in *Paris Peasant* and "Hashish in Marseilles", in neither is there any explicit form of opposition that could become a focus for recuperation. Nor is it clear what would be commodifiable about either account, given the elusiveness of their subjects and of their strategies for dissent. I see the value in Benjamin's and Aragon's approaches as alternatives to familiar antagonisms of the traditional

avant-garde. Their representations of utopian resolution are really processes rather than rigidified states. They take place in immediate reality rather than in an ideal realm and demand imaginative approaches to rebellion. Their accounts nurture an openness to unforeseeable experiences, however inconsequential or prosaic they may at first appear, and make a revolution in consciousness out of the least promising material. The intimacy of these encounters and the indeterminacy of their interpretation question existing cultural hierarchies of what is intellectually or experientially significant. They propose the transformation of experience as possible within existing conditions where it might then progress to the alteration of those conditions.

Given that the predicament of recuperation still confronts artists we might look again at other early avant-garde works – as well as commentaries on those works – less as failures than as a key to accessing unrealised objectives. Such works then would function in a similar way to how Benjamin and Aragon seek to awaken the revolutionary potential of nineteenth-century artefacts and the latent subversiveness of projects like Fourier's. Aragon's and Benjamin's versions of euphoria take the responsibility of avoiding statements which would contribute to fixed values or ethics, at a time when much commentary assumed the opposite. Their intoxications enact the "profane illumination" that reveals the revolutionary potential of an engaged surrender to the materiality of everyday life.

Through their recognition of intoxication in the experience of everyday life Benjamin and Aragon realise a part of Fourier's realm of enthusiasms which of course were to be developed within an entirely autonomous community. Fourier may not have understood the concept of recuperation, for his ideas occur too early to be part of a contemporaneous avant-garde. He remained very critical though of half-measures taken towards the realisation of his ideas and would have been distressed by those architectural developments relating most closely to phalanstery concepts—the public spaces like shopping malls, high-end holiday resorts, sex-tourism villages, which intensify the same commercial speculation against which he railed. Barthes writes of such contemporary realisations: "Caravans, crowds, the collective search for fine climate, pleasure trips exist: in a derisory and rather atrocious form, the organised tour,

the planting of a vacation club...is there in some fairy-tale site; in the Fourierist utopia there is a twofold reality, realized as a farce by mass society: *tourism...*" (Barthes, 1997, 80).

In relation to the three conditions listed above, Fourier's work holds some independence. As far as Marcuse's concern goes, the phalanstery is never intended to remain a representation. It is a programme for realisation, and the inversions it seeks in social customs would persuade others to do the same, not serve as an excuse to desist. If its unrealisable state condemns it to become a form of literature, and thus default to a representation of an ideal world, it is not at all certain that its depiction of perfection stifles further action. The fact that representations slip through the field of inoculation to form unpredictable influences on future conditions complicates Marcuse's formula which would temporally limit the opportunity for artworks to have an impact on their society. Nor is the use people make of representations so easy to classify. Michel De Certeau's concept of an individual's "tactics" in resisting institutional determinants must also be applicable to the resourcefulness people bring to images.

The issue of the recuperation of Fourier's images of utopian life is also complicated by their unclassifiability. As visionary images which invert existing corrupt models, they are often so extreme in their flamboyance and playfulness as to enjoy the status of supremely unproductive motifs. Fourier normalises intoxication as the daily routine of an entranced life, in effect a kind of afterlife of easy pleasure. He asks what would be the point of a "new" life if it cannot always be exhilarating in its pleasurable nature. Here is the image of the demise of a means-ends rationale sent so far off the rails as to be irretrievable. In its place is a succession of moments of intense pleasure spreading into hours of well-being whose enjoyment is their only end. It is a profoundly anti-capitalist scheme in acclaiming leisure, fleeting pleasures and sociability as the highest achievement.

Concerning the final condition, the case of antagonism as a response to social repression, Fourier is consistent in finding peaceful means to realise the success of his community. Warfare is commuted to a chess-like game where no injuries occur and hostages are taken only to provide them with opportunities to redeem themselves for yet more diverse sexual pleasures. His image of a defenceless settlement based on consideration shown to the

interests of others is the antithesis of the fortified town. His unusual criticism of the military's brutal treatment of its own soldiers is consistent with this pacifism and at every opportunity he supplants belligerent with benign motifs. Typical of this would be Fourier's story of a ruthless King Clodomir's conversion to "a friend of flowers and of verse, an active partisan of musk roses, of golden plums and fresh pineapples..." (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 632). In a reflection on his own personality perhaps, Benjamin intriguingly speaks of Fourier being someone who represents the emergence of a new kind of person, "one conspicuous for its harmlessness" (Benjamin, 1999, [i], 642).

Fourier has been attributed with one of the first formulations of the dependency of political transformation on emotional and psychological fulfilment, in effect the goal taken up unsuccessfully by Surrealists in the 1930s during their negotiations with the Communist Party. Although his proposal for an independent social and economic community seems a straightforward enough utopian counterpart to early nineteenth-century capitalism, the excesses and marginalia of Fourier's plans reveal other, less conventional ways in which opposition is conceived. This quality of overload, exceeding a merely schematic representation of community life, substantiates Fourier's intention that phalansterians live their entire daily routine in a condition of ecstatic preparedness, filled with moments of pleasure certainly, but oriented primarily towards peaks of social or sexual bliss. This is the closest we have come to a rule of intoxication, where the unsuccessful or uncooperative citizen is not the slacker but the one refusing to succumb to communal pleasure. Within this rule however, Fourier tolerates such a scale of delectations that everyone is likely to discover unimagined perversions as well as sub-groups with whom they can be shared. Intoxication as the purpose of the community ensures its coherence and survival.

In his utopian scheme perhaps Fourier realises another kind of wish image besides the community in which technological advances finally serve a just reorganisation of society. The immersion into bacchanalia that began Nietzsche's discussion of Dionysian force has been a historical occurrence with communities actively celebrating carnival. Representations of communal intoxication like Breughel's *The Land of Cockaigne* or Hogarth's *Gin Lane* depict

an induced loss of responsibility in rural and urban locations respectively. It is important to include such images of loss-of-self as part of that wish image of recovered community noted by Benjamin. In all cases these are temporary experiences whose intensity is licensed in part by the deprivations of normal life. Fourier would make the condition of personal transformation induced by these temporary states into something permanent. In the wake of failed utopian projects, the civic responsibility which Fourier makes of intoxication becomes with Benjamin and Aragon an individual resistance to sanctioned social relations. Illegitimate behaviour remains the foundation of future society.

Conclusion

This thesis's assemblage of texts, concepts and images is intended to complicate rather than simplify definitions of the avant-garde. It shows abrupt redirection as a feature of the avant-garde where strategies are tested and discarded and where momentary exhilarations constitute an achievement within an ostensible objective of revolutionary change. As this objective is thwarted it nevertheless continues as a structure for successive art. An art that is radically innovative persists with this model of revolutionary change as a measure against which it can be defined, even if the results are indefinitely deferred.

The steps in this thesis are discontinuous and sometimes move chronologically in reverse. The question asked at the start as to whether intoxication might be an alternative achievement, a parallel or even underground success, for an otherwise failing avant-garde, has in part determined the order of chapters. The most explicit intoxications end the work with Benjamin's hashish writings and Aragon's hallucinations in the arcade, while Nietzsche's *Rausch*, driving a future for aesthetic engagement, remains in proximity to Hegel's account of the demise of art as historical antitheses. There is also the case of a progression from Hegel's and Nietzsche's critical treatment of concepts to a critical engagement with everyday materiality by Benjamin in Marseilles and Aragon in Paris. These two extremes are bridged

by the commentary on Baudelaire's poems and letters as they record his fierce struggle with a new logic of consumption.

To conclude this research I must return to the introduction and retrieve the narrative of the artist whose move from London to New York and back precipitated and then consolidated philosophical studies. It is still unpleasant to remember the extent to which this New York marketplace gripped art production in a local intensification of capitalist speculation. Not to participate in this market, not to set one's own goods out for evaluation, was not to exist as an artist. The status of a marginal artist in relation to an indifferent marketplace has parallels with the nineteenth-century flâneur's relationship to an earlier realm of consumption.

Marooned on the periphery of the artworld's circles of speculative investment, the marginal artist has no other choice than to remain there as a spectator whose gaze validates the market that perpetuates this condition. To turn one's back on it ends a career and any entitlement to attention. To remain a spectator is to subscribe to this economic logic. The flâneur's initial indifference only precedes an outcome of existence as commodity or indigent.

Following the financial crash in 1987 the protracted collapse of the art market was only completed by 1991. In the ensuing confusing vacuum, where business protocol and career expectations were being redefined, a small space opened up for a discourse around marginalisation itself before this too became fertile ground for renewed speculation as the market was able to develop criteria for evaluating this evolving product. Intermittently flaring up on the fringes of this market vortex were experiences that in this thesis are explored under the name of intoxication. These aesthetic pleasures and intensities that made it easier to endure the city were often provoked by encounters with the remarkable materiality of the street—its architecture, its emptiness, its detritus, its chiaroscuro, its noise and smells. One example of this was the nightly street trading on Second Avenue by homeless scavengers who would set up their blankets of salvaged commodities on the busy sidewalk after midnight. These valuable New York experiences included participation in exhibitions which converted commercial failure into an opportunity for play; or the pleasure, while reading with friends, of collectively disentangling a difficult theoretical argument.

To end this work I want to propose two examples, from New York and London respectively, as recent configurations of an alternative avant-gardism. Four Walls in Brooklyn in the early 1990s and BANK in Shoreditch at the end of that decade are hybrid artist organisations involved in art production, curating and publishing. Respective to each locale, neither practice at the time is commercially successful nor are their relationships to the marketplace easily defined. Both ignore typical criteria of commercial acclaim in order to propose uncharted parameters for 'success'. By adapting Benjamin's rhetorical question from his 1929 essay "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia" (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 210) we can describe the events of both collectives. "What form do you suppose a life would take that was determined at a decisive moment precisely by the idea last on everyone's minds?", suggests something of the *modus operandi* of each organisation. BANK's and Four Walls' projects, as they reappraise the role of artists, elevate unfiltered thoughts plucked from the airwaves of everyday preoccupations or from our own mental static, unruly, unseemly, puerile and irrelevant, in a contemporary automatism that serves as a kind of magnet for all the junk circulating through our culture, and which that culture has either passed over or entombed through numbing classification. Such a bricolage of ideas can be seen in the titles and arguments for their exhibitions. Four Walls' shows include *Taboo* (Women artists, painting and subversion), *The Scandal Show* (including a gossip columnist and a Catholic priest), *Karaoke Night*, *The Death Show*, *The Joke Show* (Comedians telling jokes which were then dissected by a psychoanalyst), *Sleeping with the Enemy* (the persistence of modernist devices in conceptual art). For their part BANK's disparate collection of titles includes: *Zombie Golf*, *Cocaine Orgasm*, *Fuck Off*, *Dog-u-mental*, *God*, *Mask of Gold*, and *Stop Short Changing Us. Popular Culture is for Idiots. We Believe in ART*.

At its most extreme, an initial idea directs the show, whatever might come of it, the point being to see where the idea takes you, or doesn't take you. One thing that interests me about this process is its relationship to avant-gardism as a historical concept. BANK critically revives the concept by direct citation, while Four Walls creates some kind of alternative by deliberately ignoring it. There is in these initiatives an explicit refusal to edify, and likewise to reconcile oppositional tendencies which become components of an important non-position for

both groups. Resistance lies instead in contradictory approaches and the refusal to yield to any single position. The press release for BANK's exhibition *Mask of Gold*, for example, features an aggressive anti-bourgeois, anti-curator rant combined with a convivial premise for the show that extols individualist empathic expressionism.

The avant-garde's projection of an oppositional aesthetic and uncooperative manner is customarily justified as catalysing a better future. Differences dividing artists and political activists, or disagreements between artists themselves, centre on the effectiveness of artistic means and the kind of future that is envisaged. The manner in which resistance to recuperation becomes a defining trope of the avant-garde may, as Mann explains, really be the operation of a series of negations that serves to affirm the value of new artforms. With Four Walls' straightforward premise of setting up a parallel community for artists (parallel to the underperforming yet still omnipresent New York art market of the early 90s) there is no antagonism to an outside commercial mainstream nor any internal consistency to the way this parallel art life is ordered. Conversation and debate are key, but there is no attempt to impose a standard on the kind of shows or discussion that take place. Participants are asked to speak impromptu rather than give papers and the conversation is like a heated version of what might take place in the studio, without much jargon or theory. Nor are successful dealers, critics or artists excluded from panels. On one panel, *Carnival One*, art critics read and discuss their own creative writing. On *Terminal Instructions from the Technocracy*, Peter Halley participates with less well-known artists. The work is only ever up long enough to generate discussion (not sales), and gets taken down right after the debate. The titles and themes aren't confrontational and the exhibitions are inclusive rather than rigorously selective. What could a mainstream possibly recuperate of this benign and accommodating entity?

BANK's position is different, in that they rehearse offensiveness in a formulaic parody of avant-gardism. This has the serious intent of building new models for practice and, like Four Walls, creates a new audience by drawing a community together. The rehearsal is familiar from art history: while Dadaists target the values of an entire social class, including the art that class uses to sustain its self-image, BANK ridicules the values of the British-based art community incorporating artists, curators, academics, and critics (while themselves remaining

integral to that community). Like BANK's avant-garde predecessors whom they frequently evoke in press releases, it's important that the rhetoric accompanies artwork which might offend their target audiences, and which resists whatever values or standards those audiences cherish.

The main objective of Benjamin's "Author as Producer" is to urge new ways of thinking how literature can be produced, of determining who writers are, and of what constitutes literature. In the discourse of class politics and of fascist threats of the 1930s, Benjamin couldn't have explained the mechanism of recuperation any clearer than when he describes the easy assimilation of revolutionary themes by bourgeois means of production (Benjamin, 1999, [ii], 774). Changing the definition of literature and democratising its production constitutes a first threshold in achieving social change. BANK and Four Walls show what becomes necessary in a contemporary context where a stronger market than ever has generated a professional class of educated artists, curators and teachers. With this community of professionals there are predetermined criteria for academic and professional progression whose credibility depends on retaining control over the designates of artist, artwork and radical aesthetic initiatives. Agonistic practices, antagonistic challenges to the institution of art, offensiveness and transgression that invite recuperation, institutional critique that grants the institution the satisfaction of becoming its own subject—these conventional models for avant-garde practices do not lead teleologically to what BANK and Four Walls make of this legacy, with the former obsessively replaying it until it sticks in the throat and the latter blithely ignoring it in a kind of historical irresponsibility. Is it possible that whatever Four Walls and BANK are up to is in fact elsewhere, off the radar of academic and professional scrutiny altogether, and not even complying with issues of resistance and recuperation, with offensiveness or contemporaneity? Through their inconsistencies, their pluralism (whether of intolerance or inclusion), and their willingness to suspend the judgement of appropriateness, this is the non-position BANK and Four Walls have been circling around.

Take Four Walls' strange act of solipsism, the gallery as dolls' house. A scale model of Mike Ballou's Williamsburg garage studio (the site of the real gallery), complete with toilet, bedroom, and bric-a-brac, is constructed by an anonymous team of some twenty people over a number of years. The replica space is then used to create miniature exhibitions. Its current

owners must periodically hire Ballou to install new exhibitions in the model. None of the pieces can be sold individually, but remain integral to the replica. In 1992, *Small Talk*, a show of text-based work, includes Jessica Diamond, Lawrence Weiner and Sue Williams. A later show called *He had good ideas... he just went too far*, includes Louise Lawler, Fred Tomaselli and Andrea Zittel, amongst others. It is hard to locate a canon or lineage to which a project like this can be related. Its humour, its emphasis on craft skills, on community discipline, on exacting verisimilitude, or the way it imposes its logic of miniaturisation on other artists' work, elude critical frameworks. Being out of reach of the criteria that are usually churned up in the analysis of contemporary artworks only increases its interest.

BANK make huge issue not just out of the expectation that art reconcile oppositions but of finding as many contradictory initiatives as possible to throw together in the mix. BANK's role in London is as carnivalesque debunkers, pitching themselves against a self-congratulatory milieu whose so-called radical aesthetic gestures they reveal as, at best innocuous, and at worst, irresponsibly self-serving. This is certainly an ethical role, but the means they use are not ethical at all. Neither will they use a language that resembles the art-writing they criticise. Instead they go to the bottom of the well, dredging up the style of the tabloid press, the pub, and left-wing magazines. BANK's perspective suggests the obvious—that historical avant-gardes might have achieved most in a local milieu and that drawing conclusions from avant-garde aesthetic innovations as if they transcend local or national conditions may be misleading. Asking what an idiom means locally may reveal the most about a movement like Russian Constructivism or Brazilian conceptualism, for example.

To antagonise the contradictions further, BANK use the methods and rhetoric of avant-gardism (long outdated and discredited) for all they are worth. Their intent is to drive the historical wedge of avant-gardism through the complacency of a local art scene. As indicated, they want to debunk pretensions of artists who borrow the ethos of avant-garde radicalism—as if saying “You want the avant-garde? Well here it is in all its unruliness”. We can see them even revisiting some of the Soviet initiatives, playing the role of heroic working class artists, in communal utopia, dressing their self-portrait mannequins in Constructivist costumes and hamming a kind of socialist realism. Yet at the same time they enable local characteristics to be

driven back into the shell of the avant-garde. It is this cross-critique that makes their project interesting and significant, obliging us to rethink accounts of the ineffectiveness of the avant-garde. Amongst numerous aspects particular to London with which BANK confront the formulas of avant-gardism is an affectation of anti-theory, a distrust of political posturing as nothing more than an excuse for inaction, a sceptical view of irony as an overextended critical tool and the use of humour to camouflage serious intentions. Finally, they utilise a local culture of socially-critical hedonism to make an intoxicated carnival of art events.

In a distorted replay of Hegel's criteria for art's role following its diminished importance, BANK set about the ethical task of sustaining oppositions while making an art that seems irrational, puerile, pointless, inconsistent and, in a sense, uncontaminated by purpose. They base their practice on a progression of self-critical positions, while parading all the denotations of worthlessness. In this way their intent is to show the ineffectualness of aesthetic judgements that expect stylistic and conceptual consistency, or which presume ready access to categories of quality. The indeterminacy of their practice can be seen as an attempt to thwart categorisation and debilitation by the institution of art. They realise there is no position outside that institution so make their position inside prominent while unlocatable.

BANK and Four Walls offer a warping perspective onto earlier avant-garde initiatives. Something unruly and entertaining is going on which the schema of artistic transgression and institutional recuperation does not fit. Gone are the perverted ethics of the avant-garde, where credit is due to initiatives whose antagonist iconoclasm is justified on the basis of non-ensuing social changes. Instead, in BANK's case, an entertaining kaleidoscope of antagonisms without need of a particular object; in Four Walls' case (and some of BANK's ventures) we have the curatorial equivalent of B-movies' indiscriminate sifting through unswept corners of the collective unconscious. If redemption is there it is only as something accidental, inconsequential, even perhaps as a mistake, like mishearing the punchline of a joke. "The idea last on everyone's minds" as a determinant of curatorial practice may originate in revolutionary intent but in the end ensures that that is only one of innumerable possible outcomes, no more meritorious than others.

Though never a member of either of the artist groups I describe here, I would sometimes participate in Four Walls exhibitions and debates and publish articles and reviews on BANK. The reasons for my interest in both groups anticipate some of the themes discussed here, for these artists were able to move their participation from work on commodities to extending the nature of production and made exhilaration central to a practice that prioritised ludic strategies. Without claiming to operate outside a marketplace they created new models for survival in that economy. Talking with Peter Halley in 2004 I was surprised to hear him concur with my comment that participation in Four Walls events had saved my life at a particularly bleak time for artists in New York. I felt as strongly about BANK whose extraordinary inventions delivered a raft of possibilities to unmarketable artists. Here is evidence from the recent past of a continuing value in redefining avant-gardism through bringing community and intoxication to tropes of revolt.

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