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RENDEZVOUS IN BERLIN: BENJAMIN AND KIERKEGAARD ON THE ARCHITECTURE OF REPETITION

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It is frequently pointed out that contemporary theory has taken a spatial turn, and that the pathos of temporality which informed the modern has given way to synchronicity and the juxtaposition of geographical and historical referents. Indeed, Walter Benjamin has achieved such preeminent status at least in part because of his effort to re-map modernity in terms of built space. From the rubble of memory he lays out a "history" of the 19th century in architectonic terms, offering readers a tour through its paradigmatic locales, his "dreamhouses of the collective": winter-gardens, arcades, market-halls, panoramas, the ornamental façades of train stations and factories (to be sure, some of these phantasmagorical structures have become so naturalized and ingrained in the idiom of cultural theory that they have by now acquired something of a second mythic life). Regardless of where Benjamin traveled, the Berlin of the outgoing 19th century remained his autobiographical orientation point, "the décor," as he put it, of all his "walks and concerns" (5: 123). In his memoirs and essays he is quick to mention those who served him as guides in figuring the city's locales, chief among them Franz Hessel, Ludwig Rellstab and Julius Rodenberg; and he includes Baudelaire and Proust as well, since what he learned in Paris he applies to his reading of Berlin. One figure, however, given short shrift by Benjamin (and scarcely mentioned by his commentators) is Kierkegaard.[1] Benjamin does make

reference to him on several occasions, most frequently in the notes for Das Passagen-Werk; but although Kierkegaard provides him with the basic unit of an urban physiognomy-the 19th-century bourgeois interior-Benjamin dismisses him as a historical "latecomer" and in effect lets him fall through the cracks of his project (3: 381).

Yet it could be said that Kierkegaard haunts the spaces of Benjamin's Berlin writings to a degree the latter is largely unaware of. Kierkegaard himself was fixated on Berlin. It was, apart from Hamburg, not merely the only foreign city he ever visited, but if we can trust his journals, the only one he ever planned to visit.[2] He made the trip four times between the years 1841-1846, during the period Benjamin characterizes as the moment of "great firsts," as the city was experiencing a wave of radical perceptual change that was set in motion by the material and symbolic forces of industrialization, including train travel, photography, steam power, gas lighting and, eventually, iron-frame architecture. It could be said that Kierkegaard, coming from the provincial Danish capital and experiencing in Berlin the shock of the new at first hand, lapsed into an idiosyncratic kind of tourist-compulsion in which he felt compelled to re-stage an encounter with the city at the same sites and at regular intervals.

Curiously, the only sustained account of his visits to Berlin that he composed is found in the pseudonymously authored "Repetition" (1843) in the form of a fictional travelogue which serves as the text's narrative hinge. My argument is that in this work, Kierkegaard and Benjamin cross paths not only topographically but conceptually, most significantly in that they each take practices of everyday life—theater-going, interior decoration, strolling—and render them disjunctive by using their locales as forms of theoretically "inhabited" space. Adorno briefly alludes to an affinity of technique: "It is no accident," he writes, "that Benjamin's dialectic is one of images rather than continuity. He hit upon it without knowing that Kierkegaard's melancholy had long since conjured it up."[3] Given the tremendous resonance of their work, the web of connections between Benjamin and Kierkegaard demands to be identified and elucidated, particularly in the local context of Berlin flânerie. In doing so, however, it is not the intention of this essay to rearrange points of origin or to find in Kierkegaard one more precursor for Benjamin's project, but rather, to bring the two into a conjuncture with one another in order to highlight habits of historicist thought which linger on to inform Benjamin's work, as well as our own. Although contemporary theory may be tireless in its ability to locate and debunk remnants of historical master-narratives, pursuing instead more multivalent, open sources, it tends not to apply this approach to its own practice.

While Benjamin's spatializing method has been seen as a challenge to linear historicism, it has itself emerged as a postmodern point of origin, with his reading of metropolitan modernity serving as a kind of "master itinerary" retraced again and again as we orient ourselves in our shifting cultural landscape. I would like to suggest that Kierkegaard's Berlin travelogue works against this tendency to re-auraticize space by exposing the principle of perpetual recirculation—what Benjamin's Das Passagen-Werk refers to as the "ever-returning new"—which lies not only behind the formation of the modern, but behind efforts like Benjamin's to see through its paradigmatic structures.

The Berlin Kierkegaard knew was developing into what Weimar-era theorists would later decipher as the classic Urlandschaft of modernity. As its dependence on small trade and lingering guild mentality were giving way to the demands of an industrializing economy with an increased circulation of goods and individuals, Berlin's traditional legibility was being undermined. As architect Peter Eisenman notes: "the 18th-century development of the city fabric as a collection of extruded perimeter blocks caused the streets to be seen as figuratively negative, but the 19th-century extension of the main avenues ... [the Friedrichstrasse and Unter den Linden] privileged the space of the street."[4] As central axes emerged to displace the courtyard and square as key spatial reference points, the city was being semantically renegotiated according to sense bombardment and speed—categories productive of new forms of social relations and subjectivity. From Kierkegaard's scattered notes and journal entries it is clear that his habitus in the city was that of a cultural tourist. In fact, he carefully models this by creating a pseudonymous narrator for the account of his second stay in 1843. In the travelogue contained in the first part of "Repetition," Constantin Constantius, whom Kierkegaard characterizes as a Danish rentier, stages a reencounter with Berlin in a psychological dare with himself, and in the process he follows Kierkegaard's tracks through the city, including walks through the Tiergarten, attendance at a performance of Nestroy's "The Talisman," and a passage by steamer to Stralsund. Neither autobiography, nor fiction, Constantin's report plays itself out in an irresolvable tension between the two, with Kierkegaard as a missing point of confessional origin in a long chain of displacements. We should not miss the significance of Kierkegaard's method, for what Constantin's travelogue details is the breakup of the emerging bourgeois-urban subject into a sequence of serial identities both within the text's frame (Constantin retraces his own steps) and outside of it (while Constantin follows Kierkegaard's Berlin itinerary, he himself is framed

when he later turns up in the pseudonymously authored *Stages on Life's Way,* 1845). In a pattern that, at least at first glance, is familiar to us through standard models of the "dispersed self" this repeated bracketing is highlighted as a part of subject formation. Since every attempt at self-recuperation is an act of self-mediation, unitary identity is made unstable simply by being an object of retrospection. When Constantin returns to those sites in Berlin where memory traces have been left, he stages an uncanny encounter with himself as *flâneur* by establishing a chain of dislocating selves whose successive acts of self-estrangement provide the piece with a narrative, and whose compulsion to reduplicate and reiterate suggests less the passive anxiety of Baudelaire or Poe than the more deliberate play of identity and non-identity that Benjamin admired in surrealist nightwalkers like Aragon.

"Repetition" problematizes the category of authenticity on two fronts: on the one hand, it does so in individual terms, by means of the pseudonyms; on the other, it operates in a more broadly discursive context through Constantin's encounter with an emerging tourist industry. In the Berlin of the *Vormärz*, travel was in the process of being regularized and subsumed within a pan-European network of transport and consumption. Binary train routes (e.g., Berlin-Stettin) were expanding into a full-fledged transportation system with dependable schedules, connections to steamers, surface vehicles and station hubs around which a services industry had begun to develop. Although travel firms were still a rarity, and organized group travel a novelty, there was a proliferating market for tourist guides, either in book or brochure form. One contemporary example, Schmidt's *Wegweiser* (1822), indexes the choice and sequence of sights and administers the tourist's impressions through model itineraries, or spatial narratives (it spectacularizes, and therefore defuses, even seemingly non-touristic industrial sites by listing factory and steamworks along with hotels, eateries, bathing establishments and "best views").[5] In a practice that would soon become standard with the Baedecker and Grieben guides of the 1850s, Berlin was delineated through a series of consumable sights into which travelers were initiated as a variant of the reading public. As Rumpf writes in *How to Experience Berlin in the Shortest Possible Time* (1835): "In general, strangers want to take in all notable locales at a particular place with a single glance."[6] The efficiency of the panoramic view and the demands of a developing commodity culture met in the new touristic dream of having "done"a city.

Constantin derides the fact that tourism functions this way as a play of signs. "If one is ... a courier," he writes, "who travels to smell what everybody else has smelled or to write in the names of notable sights in his journals and in return gets his in the great autograph book of travelers, then he engages a day servant and buys *das ganze Berlin* for four Groschen" (153). He defines his project of recuperating the self precisely in opposition to industrialized travel. His account begins with a recollection of "The Talisman," the Nestroy comedy he saw performed the year before at the Königstädter Theater. Recalling his visit, Constantin compares his theater box to an apartment living room, the private space of bourgeois memory and archive of souvenirs: "one sits here at the theater," he writes, "as comfortably as one does at home" (the comparison was not unique to Kierkegaard, since the decorum governing the mid-century theater loge was that of the private salon: unaccompanied women, for example, could only avoid the taint of the "fille publique" if they sat in a private box).[7] As Constantin recollects being seated, he, in effect, takes his place within a fully naturalized bourgeois code of private and public, so that by acquainting the reader with the theater's sightlines, he simultaneously asserts his *bona fides* as tour-guide, memoirist, and viewing subject: "In the first balcony one can be assured of getting a box all to oneself. If not, however, may I recommend to the reader boxes five and six at the left, so that he can still have some useful information from what I write. In a corner at the back there is a single seat where one has his own unsurpassed position" (165).

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In predictable fashion, his travelogue that follows opposes the authentic and local to the standardized, reiterated and commercial. But, as Jonathan Culler has pointed out, the common binary authentic traveler/mere tourist is illusory, since the tourist is nothing but a projection of the traveler's bad faith.[8] While managed travel uses the rhetoric of Romantic subjectivity to promote direct, unmediated experience and a recuperation of selfhood far from the work-relations of the market economy, what is forgotten is that the very terms "authentic" and "originary" are always after the fact. As Rosalind Krauss observes: "Although the singular and the formulaic or repetitive may be semantically opposed, they are nonetheless conditions of each other ... the priorness and repetition of pictures is necessary to the singularity of the picturesque ... for the beholder it depends on being recognized as such, a re-cognition made possible only by prior example."[9] This masking of the interdependence of "origin" and "copy" was capitalized upon and made to play an institutional role across all lines of 19th-century cultural production, from connoisseurship to the

extension of copyright. What the tourist industry did was to employ the Romantic travel-ethos by offering its customers spontaneity and recuperation of self in serial form, through souvenirs, group travel and pre-set itineraries.

Benjamin, in his typology of urban strollers, recognizes the family resemblances between *flâneur* and tourist—the *flâneur* is the native tourist, the tourist a foreign *flâneur*—and he lays out a rationale for privileging the former over the latter. The tourist measures space in its own terms, i.e., exotic distance, while for the native *flâneur*, the city opens up as a temporal domain and a repository of past associations, so that its streets hold the promise of mnemonic aid. What Kierkegaard's project does is lend the foreign traveler those prerogatives Benjamin assigns the native. In Berlin, Kierkegaard's Constantin acts the part of local "archaeologist" excavating the city for lost memory traces, only here the time differential is radically foreshortened. Where Baudelaire takes two decades to return to the Place de Carrousel of his childhood in "Le Cygne," Kierkegaard's experiment is undertaken just a little more than a year after his initial visit. Benjamin himself judged the importance of such time differentials in relative terms; as he writes in his notes to *Das Passagen-Werk* (5: 576), the quickened pace of technological change opens wider distances between shorter segments of time, so that the recent past may assume a dense nostalgic or mythic "visual spell." The compression and isolation of variables like time and distance lend Kierkegaard's "experiment" a kind of laboratory purity. If Constantin enacts his trip in theatrical time—time as a series of repeat performances—then he does so with the gestural compactness of farce. On returning to Berlin, he notices a new wedding ring on the finger of his former landlord, while the beggar he used to pass at the Brandenburg gate is now wearing a different colored coat. Back at the theater to see the Nestroy play for a second time, he is forced to sit in a box on the right rather than the left. Temporal disjunction is thus played out in spatial terms. Although the arrangement of furniture in the bourgeois interior usually serves to stabilize identity by establishing a domain of habit (in fact, a Danish expatriate living in Berlin was startled to notice the care with which Kierkegaard had furnished his rooms abroad),[10] when Constantin re-enters his Berlin apartment and sees that a desk and velvet chair have been rearranged, he finds that something has, quite literally, "taken" place.[11]

Yet more than such minuscule alterations, it is the experience of sameness that is most destabilizing to Constantin. Entering his *Stammlokal* as if on automatic pilot, he finds everything—patrons,

witticisms, greetings at the door—untouched by time. "I could count the hair on every head," he writes; and yet he concludes that repetition is beyond him (170). Difference carried by the context of the familiar brings the uncanny home to him in a way nothing else does. This acute perception of non-identity "de-originates," that is, it works retroactively, by calling into question the solidity of the memories which Kierkegaard uses as departure points for Constantin's return trip. The first and second visits unfold not as echo to original, but as echo to echo, so that his Berlin is defined by serial experiences in which the model instance is bracketed out as such. Something significant is being detailed here, for Kierkegaard is making Constantin trace the iterable logic of an emerging culture of mass replication: repetition is seen as foundational, with authenticity as its self-defeating, peripheral effect. From the proliferation of photographs and the mobilization of tourism to the introduction of the rotary press, new 19th-century technologies destabilized the concept-pairing of original and copy. In "Repetition," this instability is experienced, with hypochondriacal acuity, as a flattening out of surface/ depth models like that of bourgeois domestic space, which, coded as a storehouse of memory, ostensibly promises a recuperation of selfhood and authenticity. In this sense, Constantin's return trip acts out a collapse of that bourgeois interiority, or self-encapsulation, which constitutes itself through perceived threats and shocks. As a result, the subject is stranded in the ambiguity between inside and outside, between copy and original, like the trauma victim, except that in Constantin's heightened state of anxiety, self-representation itself is perceived as traumatic occurrence. Kierkegaard and his chain of multiple pseudonyms are consumed by copies because they cannot find a workable distance from them. We might consider this state to be marginally traumatic, since it exacerbates the liminality of deferred experience which informs traditional accounts of trauma. Anxiety turns here on the loss of traumatic origin, a situation similar to that described by Mark Seltzer in his analysis of the crisis of a "wound culture" whose symbolic order is dependent on, but not securely in possession of, interiority: "The traumatic here is something like a return to the scene of the crime, not merely in that the trauma is the product of its representation, but also in that it is the product not of an event itself, but of how the subject repeats or represents it to himself. In order for this return to tak e place, time must be converted to place, act into scene.'"[12] Constantin's version of this self-staging registers this cultural shift through the serializing logic of tourism, whereby authenticity comes after the fact, like picturesque sights which, strangely, always resemble themselves.

This is precisely the territory in which Benjamin makes his rendezvous with Kierkegaard. In a series of autobiographical writings Benjamin works his way back towards the Berlin of the *Vormärz*. His ambition to "set out [his] *bios* as if on a map," leads him to reconsider those architectural remnants from the mid-nineteenth century which had left their impress on him as a child (6: 466). The result is that across the distance of a century he and Kierkegaard meet at particular autobiographical sites—on the Pfaueninsel, at the Royal Opera House on the Gendarmenmarkt, before the Schinkelfassaden around the Kupfergraben, at the Tiergarten monument to Friedrich Wilhelm which was built shortly before Kierkegaard's first trip, and which serves Benjamin as his point of entrance to the "labyrinthine weave" of the city (6: 465). Benjamin's Berlin memoirs, written over a span of years, are in effect co-extensive with his career as a critic. He incorporated early autobiographical pieces from *Die literarische Welt* into the first version of his memoirs, *Berliner Chronik*, which he revised after his stay on Ibiza in 1932. The unpublished text served as the basis for *Berliner Kindheit um Neunzehnhundert*, selections of which were first sent to the *Frankfurter Zeitung* before being extensively rewritten in exile. Together the memoirs constitute a series of compulsive reworkings (a long "good-bye" to the city is how Adorno characterized them). Although Benjamin's stated project was to lay out his sphere of life topographically, he was doing so on shifting ground. He resists the notion that *Berliner Chronik* or *Berliner Kindheit* offer anything like autobiography in the traditional sense of the term, since they revolve not around continuity and a seamless recuperation of the past, but rather around "space and the disjunctive" (6: 488). Like Constantin, he stands in an uncanny relation to the self he conjures up. In Benjamin's memoirs, the play of identity and non-identity, the search for an elusive moment of originary self-presence, is spatialized through a series of receding interiors extending from the "masked rooms" of his parents' west-side apartment, to his aunt's bay window, to the *Gründerzeit* interior of his grandmother's house in the Steglizterstrasse, and back into architectural structures from what he delineates as his mid-century "horizon of family memory." The autobiographical after-images of these environments are spectral. Benjamin compares them to snapshots, because he sees the process of ghosting the self as integral to the medium of photography with its capacity to serialize and reduplicate. Confronted with photos of himself as a child, he experiences a proximity that estranges. "Moments of sudden exposure are at the same time moments when we are beside ourselves" (6: 516).[13] In one passage, photo and furnished dwelling—the two great apparatuses of bourgeois memory—are fully conflated as he considers a picture of himself as a boy

posed in a photographic studio mock-up of a domestic interior, in which he is positioned as a thing among things in a reified landscape of memory:

> Wherever I looked, I saw myself surrounded by screens, cushions, pedestals which lusted for my image like the shades of Hades for the blood of the sacrificial animal. ... The gaze [that] sinks into me from the child's face in the shadow of the household palm ... it belongs to one of the studios that ... partake of the boudoir and the torture chamber....I am disfigured by my similarity to everything surrounding me here. I dwelt in the nineteenth century as a mollusk dwells in its shell; and the century now lies hollow before me like an empty shell. I hold it to my ear.(4:261)

There is no separating the autobiographical from the collective-historical in Benjamin. His memoirs have to be read as part of that broader matrix of texts through which he patterns his history of the nineteenth century. The seriality he confronts in autobiographical passages like the one above haunts his contemporaries in the form of phantasmagoria, collective dream-images whose compulsion to repeat is masked by the appearance of novelty and its agent, fashion. "The eternal return," he writes, "is a projection onto the cosmos of the punishment of staying after school: humanity is forced to copy out its text in endless repetition" (1: 1234). The naive belief that Weimar culture in its most progressive guises is no longer subject to such anxious compulsions has only consolidated their mythic density (the equivalent of "dreaming that one is awake"). Throughout his work, Benjamin seeks out early industrial-era phantasmagorical forms and styles—panoramas, the embossing of facades—at the moment of their impending obsolescence, reanimating them as images in order to upset perceptual habit. His constellatory pre-history of modernity turns not on the mutual illumination of particular historical moments, but on their re-inscription, so that the past emerges as a recollection of the present. In this sense, Benjamin "excavates" traces of 19th-century Berlin which, although dismissed by official memory as obsolete, still lie on the surface of city.

The Berlin of the *Vormärz*, Kierkegaard's Berlin, is most extensively evoked in Benjamin's 1929-1932 series of radio broadcasts for young people. Radio provided Benjamin with the opportunity to pursue his rarefied dialectic of ruin and repetition through the popular discourse of tourism ("As one leaves the city on the way to Oranienburg and Velten, one cuts through Tegel, where there is a lot to be seen ..."). Through a series of 28 half-hour talks, he leads his listeners on auditory forays into *Alt-Berlin*, its streets, schools, public works, puppet theaters, workers' housing and early sites of industrial production.

Benjamin operates through a public performance (rather than explication) of his constellatory history. He does this by using the new mass medium to reach back to early forms of metropolitan journalism in an attempt to reanimate the panoramic perspective developed in guides like the *Buntes Berlin* and the *Berliner Stadtklatsch* and in E.T.A. Hoffmann's story "Des Vetters Eckfenster" (in which the Romantic picturesque is first translated into the idiom of sensationalism and "local color").

In evoking the practices of the classic mid-century feuilletonist, Benjamin found a contemporary model in the work of Franz Hessel, his close friend and co-translator of Proust. According to Benjamin, Hessel represents a second-coming, or *Wiederkehr*, of the 19th-century *flâneur* who reinvigorates the tradition of urban idling from a perspective at once retrospective and emancipatory. Benjamin's architectural interest is caught by Hessel's depiction of communicating spaces (i.e., bridges, doorways, crossings etc.), because Hessel provides him with what he calls "threshold knowledge" (3: 196). Hessel wrote *Spazieren in Berlin* as a tourbook for natives who were oblivious to the phantasmagorical forces held by the city's streets through entertainment venues, signage, architectural detail and so forth. Hessel treats phantasmagoria as double-edged, in that they embody collective wishes and strivings which although half-expressed or neutralized, are present as a potentially transforming force (as Lefebvre would say, they comprise their own contradictions and are therefore sites of alternative impulses). A structure like the arcade, for example, with its encapsulation of the street, upholds bourgeois interiority at an illusory remove from the exigencies of public life, while at the same time it collapses the terms of this otherwise strict dichotomy. As an instance of "dream-space," the arcade evinces the key to its own dissolution in the form of the transparency embodied in its glass and iron frame, but obscured by *Gründerzeit* pilasters, embossing, pediments and friezes. According to Benjamin, it is only when the structure is read with an eye to this principle of transparency that it shows itself as an *awakening* dream. The post-Baudelairean, post-surrealist *flâneur* creates oppositional space within the dream world of the streets through reiteration, by reconstructing its representative structures as a series of legible images.

In Benjamin's project, Kierkegaard plays a crucial (albeit inconspicuous) part, in that his work furnishes a virtual template for the bourgeois interior, the basic architectonic unit in Benjamin's theoretical construction. For Benjamin, the interior is a concrete expression of 19th-century domestication mania, an illusory sanctum set up to shut out the very conflicts that make up its conditions:

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"The living space constituted itself as interior. The office was its compliment. The private citizen ... required of the interior that it should support him in his illusions" (5: 52). As a locus of phantasmagoria, the interior is charged with mythic compulsion, so that it is endlessly replicated and inflected. Arcades, museums, department stores are versions of interior display space in monumental form, while antimacassars and inlaid boxes are interiors within interiors. "It is scarcely possible, Benjamin notes, "to discover anything for which the 19th century did not invent casings-pocket watches, slippers, egg cups, thermometers, playing cards, and in lieu of casings, then coverlets, carpet runners, linings and slipcovers" (5: 292). According to Benjamin, we can find the architectonic code for these features of interior construction in a citation from Kierkegaard's *Stages on Life's Way*: "homesickness at home."[14] "This," says Benjamin, "is the formula for the interior" (5: 289). The private sphere was compulsively heaped with bric-a-brac, mementos, heirlooms, photographic portraits and various objects of display, and thus was meant to furnish visible, reassuring proof of an integrated and autonomous self. As such, it is an extreme example of "striated" space obsessively parceled and held as territory. Borrowed memories turned up in the form of "fake antiques" which created a boom market in the '40s. In this elaborately outfitted theater of subjectivity, identity was constituted by an assumption of style suggesting less stability than schizophrenic delirium—delirium being, as Deleuze and Guattari remind us, the unseen outer wall or constitutive limit of consumer economies whose inner wall, or relative limit, is a de-socialized "commodity flow."[15] "The Gothic, the Persian, the Renaissance," Benjamin writes, "that meant: that there was a festival hall from Cesare Borgia, that out of the boudoir of the housewife there arose a gothic chapel, and that over the study of the master of the house there was the apartment of a Persian sheik" (5: 282). The succession of styles and accumulation of world-souvenirs allowed the occupants to play tourists at home, traversing distances of time and place as domestic nomads (to this effect, Benjamin cites Kierkegaard's boyhood habit of taking "roomwalks" with his father, apartment length strolls in which imaginary storefronts and pedestrians would unfold panorama-like in front of them.)

In his notes to *Das Passgen-Werk*, Benjamin maintains that Kierkegaard's image-space (*Bilderwelt*) is co-extensive with the bourgeois interior and therefore within the bounds of a phantasmagoric "magic circle" marked out by contemporaries like Poe, Baudelaire, and E.T.A. Hoffman.[16] Yet Kierkegaard resists such facile typologizing. A brief look at Hoffmann, Benjamin's prototypical Berlin *flâneur*, points

up a radical difference in the way street and interior are negotiated. Although Benjamin was unaware of it, Kierkegaard's Berlin apartment off the Gendarmenmarkt was located around the corner from the Charlottenstrasse where Hoffmann had lived fifteen years earlier. A view of the square, in fact, turns up as a central locale both in "Repetition" and in Hoffmann's "Des Vetters Eckfenster," the text Benjamin cites in radio talks and essays as a crucial moment in the genealogy of the Berlin flâneur: "this last story which [Hoffmann] dictated on his deathbed is nothing short of a primer on physiognomical vision" (7: 91). The story revolves around a provincial visitor to the city, who is tutored by his cousin, a Berliner, in the "art of seeing" from the vantage point of a bay window overlooking the square. In a version of the urban picturesque, the Berlin cousin construes a number of Biedermeier *tableaux vivants* out of the crowd of people on the streets. He appropriates them as types, or touristic landmarks in a panoramic display of universalized humanity. The window establishes the visual perspective into which the provincial visitor is initiated, as its picturesque view renders him a bourgeois-urban subject through the act of seeing. The cousin, for his part, is the archetypal journalistic guide who navigates a changeable urban milieu and helps readers (native or foreign) shop for authentic experience by introducing them to local "scenes." He serves to naturalize a perspective at once detached and acquisitive: through the window's frame, the unwieldiness of street life and its potential threats are drawn into the room and domesticated as decor.

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Kierkegaard shares a similar apartment view of the Gendarmen-markt's twin churches, opera house and market-place with the cousin in "Des Vetters Eckfenster." But where the cousin's illustrative gaze extends into the square, Kierkegaard's Constantin, making his way back through Berlin, dissolves the habitus of the *flâneur*. Constantin enters his old flat, a paradigmatic dream-space which is here permeated by the ambiguity-producing glow of gas lighting and which has been filtered through the uncertainty of memory:

Sitting in a chair by the window, one looks out on the great square, sees the shadows of passersby hurrying along the walls; everything is transformed into a stage setting. A dream world glimmers in the background of the soul. One feels the desire to toss on a cape, to steal softly along the wall with a searching gaze, aware of every sound. One does not do this, but merely sees a rejuvenated self doing it (151-52).

If narrative is the unfolding of temporality in space, then disjunctive time—Constanin's "repetition"—plays itself out in a built version of liminal trauma. This memory theater, formed by a series of interlocking rooms, is the architectural equivalent of repetition mania. Constantin recalls subtle, dreamlike displacements which are the more uncanny for being so slight. He steps outside himself, consumed as a stable subject while in agoraphobic retreat. "One climbs the stairs to the first floor," he writes,

> and in the gas illuminated building, opens a little door and stands in the entry. To the left is a glass door leading to a room. Straight ahead is an anteroom. Beyond are two identical rooms, identically furnished, so that one sees the room double in the mirror (151).

The crisis-ridden and therefore (paradoxically) still functioning spatiotemporal unity of classic metropolitan perspective is dissolved; and instead, Constantin's scene of reenactment is folded back on itself in a mise-enabyme, in which street life, windows and the registering interior itself are reduced, through mirroring, to a flat plane of representation suggesting the doubling with a difference which informs Kierkegaard's text as a whole.

To draw the crucial point: the principle on which Constantin's travelogue turns is one of disjunctive similitude. At first glance, his report from Berlin would seem an assertion of bourgeois subjectivity in the manner of Hoffmann or Baudelaire, that is, a subjectivity that, no matter how destabilized, is reconstituted as a refuge in ever deeper interior space. What makes "Repetition" so deceptive is the fact that it revolves not around identity with the figure of *flâneur*, but around uncanny proximity to him. According to Benjamin, Baudelaire suffers the anxiety of "duplicating selves and treading in place which is at the heart of *flânerie*." He registers the discomfort of such duplication, writes Benjamin, but because of Baudelaire's "armature" of the picturesque, he himself cannot read it as such (5: 405). Benjamin's categorization of Kierkegaard as a *flâneur* in the Baudelairean mode overlooks the fact that Kierkegaard deliberately mobilizes this fear of doubles as the very form-giving principle of his travelogue. Far from being the "sanctum" or "refuge" it is assumed to be, this interior is an infernal apparatus set by the author for himself in which the attempt to recuperate the self is mocked, or shadowed, by "catastrophic" failure. Kierkegaard registers his own impress on returning to Berlin. His interior is already a form of dialecticized image, which is read

against itself in Constantin's problematic re-staging of his Berlin *flâneries* where progress is measured by a series of perceptual shocks delivered by the juxtaposition of two discreet moments.

Kierkegaard's spatial incognito finds something of an analogy in Benjamin's notion of "tactile nearness," a technique worked up in his later writings which he hoped would allow him to revisit outmoded structures so as to subvert their mythic-compulsive power to repeat. It is precisely this technique that alarmed Adorno when he read the first draft of the Baudelaire piece. Benjamin, he believed, ran the risk of collusion by offering a "wide-eyed presentation of facts at the cross-roads of positivism and magic."[17] Benjamin was himself well aware of the danger of being held captive by what Adorno calls the "Medusan glance" of these images, but as Benjamin saw it, there was no choice, since the idea of safe distance which Adorno advocated shares the illusory structure of bourgeois autonomy Benjamin was examining. He needed a means of breaking the spell of the auratic which would no longer be dependent on the perspective of critical or instrumental mastery, since this perspective supports the visual distance (*Fernsicht*) which constitutes the aura in the first place. He found a potential model in film's ability to open up the human sensorium to new, intimate spatial formations through the idiom of cross-cuts and close-ups. For Benjamin, film reconstitutes the optic field both by bringing things "nearer to home," while at the same time investing them with the kind of perceptual jolt, or "interval" between shots first theorized by Vertov as cinema's formal principle. Film opens up the spaces of everyday life in which phantasmagoria lodge. "In and of themselves," Benjamin observes,

> these offices, furnished rooms, bars, city streets, railway stations, and factories are ugly, incomprehensible, hopelessly sad. Or rather, they were so and seemed so, until film came along. Film came along and exploded this entire dungeon world with the dynamite of the tenth of a second (1: 499).

Benjamin considers architecture's defining feature to be the fact that it ritualizes, or freezes the relationship of space and action. It is a weak medium because it is appropriated by use and perception ("sight and touch") working in tandem under the guidance of habit (1: 504). Ritual passivity is simply the flip-side of auratic distance: both are alibis for disengagement. "Architecture is appropriated by the collectivity in a state of distraction," he writes (1: 504). Yet as he goes on to suggest, the susceptibility of the architectural medium is also the source of its potential strength. If "tactile appropriation" can be mobilized for disjunctive effect,

then proximity gains a redemptive component, if not for architecture *per se*, at least for an architecturally structured theory like his own. While it is certainly the case that some of his formulations on literary montage call to mind the interventionist tactics of the 1920s avant-garde and its pose of revolutionary intrepidity, their rhetorical register does not necessarily mesh with the kind of stealth technique he develops in his later work. Benjamin's notion of "tactile appropriation" is not reliant on extraneous materials, like the parodic references or pictorial commentary found in the montage of Heartfield or Höch. On the contrary, it requires that phantasmagorical structures are preserved intact so as to allow them to release their own inherent contradictions and thus make evident their transformative possibilities: "The method of my work: literary montage. I have nothing to say, only to show" (5: 574). His late work approaches a form of spontaneous critique, whereby the everyday is encountered, made visible, in its own unfamiliar terms. "We penetrate mystery," Benjamin writes, "only to the degree that we recognize it in the everyday realm, by virtue of a dialectical optic that perceives the everyday as impenetrable, the impenetrable as everyday" (5: 90).

viii.

In Kierkegaard and Benjamin, it is not simply that the domestic interior figures as a dominant image, but that they regard the images themselves as interiors, that is, as forms of inhabited and inhabiting space. One has to search out images where they "dwell," Benjamin writes ("wo die Bilder wohnen, wo sie hausen," 3: 196). Since the interior is the prime locus of everyday life, it is the very structural embodiment of the phantasmagorical (the site where social relations are reproduced on a daily basis). For both Kierkegaard and Benjamin, then, "inhabiting" the image of the interior means occupying a space which is governed by habit and repetition. The dream space of the interior is reiterated into "waking space" (*Wachwelt*) from within, which means that its image is predicated not on an anterior wakefulness but on the process, or event, of awakening. This is borne out by Constantin's return trip to Berlin, which turns on a reenactment of a set of mundane practices, rather then recollection. Indeed, when Constantin shows up again in Kierkegaard's *Stages on Life's Way*, he offers an explicit countervoice to William Afham, the pseudonym who furnishes Benjamin with the "formula" for the bourgeois interior ("homesickness at home"). As William speaks at a symposium hosted by Constantin, he outlines a theory of recollection similar to involuntary memory: "to conjure up the past for oneself," he declares, "is not as difficult as forgetting.".[18] Although Constantin supports this attempt to work against the encrustations of habitual memory, he is wary of William's "proficiency in illusion" and warns

that such memory-play will prove an "eleatic ruse"[19] (a reference to the doctrine of Parmenides and the protoidealists which holds that movement is an illusion obscuring the world's eternal stasis). Benjamin, for his part, engages in a similar internal debate in assessing his relationship to Proust. As Benjamin's acknowledged guide, Proust's doctrine of involuntary recollection provides a model to open up the Berlin of Benjamin's childhood by helping him mediate the states of waking and dreaming. Memory traces suspend the illusory duration of time through a process of spatialization in which they take on dimensional form as discreet images ("space-crossed time"). Yet this "experimental re-arrangement of furniture in slumber" is, Benjamin insists, a mere half measure, since space is left as a false eternity. Proust, lying on his back in the middle of his bedroom and conjuring the past through images of elaborately differentiated decor, creates a hermetically closed environment governed by compulsive, or mythic, reiteration from which present time is barred. Benjamin distances himself from Proust, and in doing so he inadvertently echoes Kierkegaard's Constantin: "Proust," Benjamin writes, "traps us in memory's eleatic magic realm" (2: 313).

viii.

This echo is more than slightly ironic, given the ease with which Benjamin classifies Kierkegaard as a historical "late-comer." Yet one could say that it is precisely Kierkegaard's belatedness, his deliberate cultivation of epigonistic after-images, that in many ways makes his memoirs so contemporaneous with Benjamin's own. Kierkegaard does not employ his images in the development of a historiography, let alone one informed by a materialist pedagogy, as Benjamin's is. Nevertheless, Benjamin clearly repeats or "revisits" some of the key structural features of Kierkegaard's dialectic in developing the stealth tactic of the interior-image. It is difficult to say how comfortable Benjamin would have been with this convergence of perspectives. His assumptions about the kind of critical privilege history bestows shift and often overlap. He maintains that images become readable only when juxtaposed according to a specific historical "index" (something not found in "Repetition," with its truncated time-differential between visits), but there are also points in his work when this same index is then doubly privileged by being tied to a modernist teleology and its assumption of heroic innovation and an underlying universal-history. "Dwelling in the old sense is a thing of the past. With Giedion, Mendelsohn, Le Corbusier ... what is coming in the future stands under the sign of transparency," Benjamin writes in reviewing Hessel's *Spazieren in Berlin* (3: 196-97). Siegfried Giedion's historical account of the Bauhaus and its anticipatory moments in the 19th century institutionalized transparency as an architectonic

and theoretical principle unfolding itself through three historically inevitable "space conceptions."[20] According to this modernist narrative, the architectural past only becomes readable in light of a progressive aesthetic of flowing light and imperceptible spatial transitions between rooms. In mining avant-garde architectural theory for his Arcades project, Benjamin clearly draws from Giedion's survey; and yet, as becomes evident while he was finishing his memoirs and compiling notes for "The Theses on the Philosophy of History," Benjamin uses it chiefly as a point of departure for putting the modernist notion of legibility through a drastic transformation: "The concept of the historical progress of mankind cannot be sundered from the concept of its progress through homogeneous empty time. A critique of the concept of such progression must be the basis of any criticism of progress itself" (1: 701). In opposition to the historicism of the Bauhaus, with its premises in bourgeois epistemology, Benjamin came to view history under the sign of perpetual rupture and disjunction (what the angel of history sees before him is "wreckage piled upon wreckage"). This is not to suggest, as J. Hillis Miller and others do, that Benjamin eventually forgoes the eschatological, but rather that in his later writings he effects a radical reinvestment of the utopian moment *within* disjunction itself.[21] "The concept of progress," he writes, "is to be grounded in the catastrophe; that things just go on is the catastrophe. It is not that which is approaching, but that which is" (1: 683). Whereas Mies van der Rohe planned his 40-story glass and steel tower as a formalist rebuke to the architectural vernacular of the Friedrichstrasse, Benjamin's Berlin memoirs are, in effect, "built" out of outmoded structures and common haunts.

Here again Benjamin might be said to cross paths with Kierkegaard, because there is a similar form of secular messianism informing the everyday spaces of "Repetition." One hesitates to group the eschatologies of Benjamin and Kierkegaard together, given the explicit materialhistorical interests of the former, and the expressly theological concerns of the latter. But it may be that they meet here, in their Berlin writings, as they do at no other point. For Kierkegaard's account of his stay takes place entirely within the sphere of the secular, falling as it does under the category of his early, "aesthetic" production. His Berlin, like Benjamin's, is shot through with an explicitly quotidian form of illumination (as opposed to his "ethical" or "religious" stages). It occupies profane space, governed by immediacy and without recourse to the kind of ontology that could possibly guarantee notions of repetition as mimetic return. Rather, what we find in the *flâneries* of both Benjamin and Kierkegaard is history as a perpetual piling up of "debris,"

of ruined forms and unsuccessful reenactments that in their failure carry with them a utopian moment as potential. The dialectical images they develop "on site" in Berlin work against both the stasis of perpetual ruin, and the illusory neutrality of the historicist continuum. Instead, critical distance is renegotiated as inhabited space, indistinguishable from the uncanny shape of what is nearest at hand.

Notes Continued

16 This observation is made explicit in his review of Adorno's study, and it informs his comments on Kierkegaard in the notes to the Arcades Project. See Schriften, 3: 381.

17 Walter Benjamin, **Briefe**, ed. Theodor Adorno and Gershom Scholem, 2 vols. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1966) 2: 620.

18 Kierkegaard, **Stages on Life's Way**, 9-10.

19 Kierkegaard, **Repetition**, 3 09.

20 Siegfried Giedion, **Architecture and the Phenomena of Transition** (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP 1971) 267-68.

21 In his study of Hitchcock, Slavoj Žižek makes a similar point about Benjamin and Kierkegaard when he notes that they each use ruin and return for utopian effect: Slavoj Žižek, **Enjoy Your Symptom!** (London: Routledge, 1992) 80. See J. Hillis Miller, **"Narrative and History," ELH 41**(#3: Fall, 1974): 469-73.