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Miriam Bratu Hansen

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KRACAUER (AND BENJAMIN)
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**University of Chicago
Chicago, Ill., U.S.A.**

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Genealogies of Modernity

On the threshold to the twenty-first century, the cinema may well seem to be an invention "without a future," as Louis Lumière had predicted somewhat prematurely in 1896.¹ But it is surely not an invention without a past, or pasts, at least judging from the proliferation of events, publications and broadcasts occasioned by the cinema's centennial. What actually constitutes this past, however, and how it figures in history -- and helps to figure history -- remains very much a matter of debate, if not invention.

For more than a decade now scholars of early cinema have been shifting the image of that past, from one of a prologue or evolutionary stepping-stone to the cinema that followed (that is, classical Hollywood cinema and its international counterparts) to one of a cinema in its own right, a different *kind* of cinema.² This shift has yielded detailed studies of early conventions of representation and address, of paradigmatically distinct modes of production, exhibition and reception. At the same time, it has opened up the focus of investigation from a more narrowly defined institutional approach to a cross-disciplinary inquiry into modernity, aiming to situate the cinema within a larger set of social, economic, political, and cultural transformations.

In the measure in which historians have uncoupled early cinema from the evolutionist and teleological narratives of classical film history, studies of cinema and modernity have gravitated toward the nineteenth century. More specifically, there is a tendency to situate the cinema in the context of "modern life," prototypically observed by Baudelaire in nineteenth-century Paris. In this context, the cinema figures as part of the violent restructuration of human perception and interaction effected by industrial-capitalist modes of production and

exchange; by modern technologies such as trains, photography, electric lighting, telegraph and telephone; and by the large-scale construction of metropolitan streets populated with anonymous crowds, prostitutes, and not-quite-so anonymous *flaneurs*. Likewise, the cinema appears as part of an emerging culture of consumption and spectacular display, ranging from World Expositions and department stores to the more sinister attractions of melodrama, phantasmagoria, wax museums and morgues, a culture marked by an accelerated proliferation -- hence also accelerated ephemerality and obsolescence -- of sensations, fashions and styles.

These contexts give us considerable purchase on understanding the ways in which modernity realized itself in and through the cinema, whether early cinema in particular or the cinematic institution in general. They elucidate, for instance, how the cinema not only epitomized a new stage in the ascendance of the visual as a social and cultural discourse but also responded to an ongoing crisis of vision and visibility.³ They account for the cinema's enormous appeal in terms of a structural "mobilization of the gaze" -- which transmutes the traumatic upheaval of temporal and spatial coordinates, not just into visual pleasure, but into a "*flanerie* through an imaginary elsewhere and an imaginary elsewhere."⁴ They complicate assumptions about the sexual and gender dynamics of the gaze predicated on the model of classical cinema by tracing detours and ambivalences in the development of female consumption. Moreover, once we locate the cinema within a history of sense perception in modernity, in particular the spiral of shock, stimuli protection and ever greater sensations ("reality!"), we can recast the debate on spectatorship in more specific historical and political terms.⁵

But I am interested here in what this genealogy of cinema and modernity tends to leave out: the twentieth century -- the modernity of mass production, mass consumption, and mass annihilation, of rationalization, standardization, and media publics. I wish in no way to contest the legitimacy and value of anchoring the cinema's modernity in the mid- to late-

nineteenth century, but find something symptomatic in the ease with which so many studies seem to speak from one *fin de siècle* to another. What is at issue here is not just the choice of focus on different periods or stages of modernity, but the status of competing or alternative versions of modernism, as the cultural discourses co-articulated with modernity and processes of modernization.⁶ In this competition, the eclipse of the twentieth century is not limited to cinema studies. Marshall Berman, for instance, explicitly endorses a Baudelairean vision of modernity, which he dubs "modernism in the streets," making it part of a cultural-political program for the present. As Berman proclaims: "It may turn out, then, that . . . remembering the modernisms of the nineteenth century can give us the vision and courage to create the modernisms of the twenty-first."⁷

Despite Berman's polemical stance against postmodernism, this is quite a postmodern gesture. Not only because of its patent nostalgia, but also because the very notion that there is more than one modernity, and that modernism can, and should, be used in the plural, only emerged with the passing of the modern as, to use Jameson's term, a "cultural dominant."⁸ It became possible to think that way, among other things, with the decline of Fordist industrialism and the end of the Cold War; with the increased presence of marginalized social groups and cultures in institutions of art, literature, and the academy; with the emergence of a global perspective that highlights modernism and modernity as specifically Western phenomena, tied to a history of imperialism and masculinism. In the wake of these multiple, staggered and interlinked shifts, it became possible to question the hegemony of modernism in the singular -- a modernism that, its own attacks on the Enlightenment legacy notwithstanding, reinscribed the universalist therapies of the latter with the ostensibly unitary and value-free truths of technology and instrumental rationality. The critique of this hegemonic modernism casts a wide net, branching out from the narrowly defined modernism of literature and art into architecture, urban planning, philosophy, economy, sociology and social engineering. It traces the same utopian fallacies in functionalism, neo-positivism and

behaviorism; in LeCorbusier and the Bauhaus; in abstract and constructivist art as well as the monumental murals of Diego Rivera; in Sergei Tretyakov and Bertolt Brecht as well as Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis; in political positions ranging from leftist Fordism to neo-classicist elitism.⁹

Whether motivated by postmodern critique or the search for alternative traditions of modernity, this attack on hegemonic modernism runs the risk of unwittingly reproducing the same epistemic totalitarianism that it seeks to displace. For one thing, it reduces the contradictory and heterogeneous aspects of twentieth-century modernisms to the claims of one dominant paradigm or, rather, the positions of a particular, canonical set of modernist intellectuals. For another, this attack collapses the discourse of modernism with the discourses of modernity, however mediated the two may be. That is, the critical fixation on hegemonic modernism to some extent undercuts the effort to open up the discussion of modernism from the traditional preoccupation with artistic and intellectual movements and to understand the latter as inseparable from the political, economic and social processes of modernity and modernization, including the development of mass and media culture. In other words, the attack on hegemonic modernism tends to occlude the material conditions of everyday modernity that distinguish living in the twentieth century from living in the nineteenth, at least for large populations in Western Europe and the United States.

If we want to make the juncture of cinema and modernity productive for the present debate, we need to grant twentieth-century modernity the same attention toward heterogeneity, non-synchronicity and contradiction that is currently being devoted to earlier phases of modernity. In principle, that is -- since the attempt to reduce and control these dimensions is undeniably a salient feature of hegemonic modernism in so many areas. Still, if we seek to locate the cinema within the transformations of the life-world specific to the twentieth century, in particular the first half, we cannot conflate these transformations with, say, the *tabula rasa* visions imposed upon them in the name of an aesthetics and ideology of

the machine. Modernist architecture and urban planning, for instance, may have had a tremendous, and perhaps detrimental, impact on people's lives, but it would be a mistake simply to equate modernist intention and actual social use.¹⁰ Similarly, classical cinema may have been running on Fordist-Taylorist principles of industrial organization, functionally combined with neo-classicist norms of film style; but the systematic standardization of narrative form and spectatorial response cannot fully account for the *cultural* formation of cinema, for the actual theater experience and locally and historically variable dynamics of reception.¹¹

Yet, conceiving of the relation between hegemonic modernism and modern life-world as an opposition may be as misleading as prematurely casting it in terms of an argument about reception, resistance and reappropriation. We should not underrate the extent to which modernism was also a popular or, more precisely, a mass movement. Whether the promises of modernization turned out to be ideological, unfulfilled, or both, there were enough people who stood to gain from the universal implementation of at least formally guaranteed political rights; from a system of mass production that was coupled with mass consumption (that is, widespread affordability of consumer goods); from a general improvement of living conditions enabled by actual advances in science and technology; and from the erosion of longstanding social, sexual and cultural hierarchies. To be sure, these promises have become staples of Western capitalist mythology, and have in many ways contributed to maintaining relations of subordination in the West and in other parts of the world. But if we want to understand what was radically new and different in twentieth-century modernity, we also need to reconstruct the liberatory appeal of the "modern" for a mass public -- a public that was itself both product and casualty of the modernization process.

From this perspective, the cinema was not just one among a number of perceptual technologies, nor even the culmination of a particular logic of the gaze; it was above all (at least until the rise of television) the single most expansive discursive horizon in which the

effects of modernity were reflected, rejected or denied, transmuted or negotiated. It was both part and prominent symptom of the crisis as which modernity was perceived, and at the same time evolved into a social discourse in which a wide variety of groups sought to come to terms with the traumatic impact of modernization. This reflexive dimension of cinema, its dimension of *publicness*, was recognized by intellectuals early on, whether they celebrated the cinema's emancipatory potential or, in alliance with the forces of censorship and reform, sought to contain and control it, adapting the cinema to the standards of high culture and the restoration of the bourgeois public sphere.¹²

In the following, I will elaborate on the juncture of cinema and modernity through the writings of Siegfried Kracauer and, by way of comparison, Walter Benjamin, both approximately the same age as the emerging cinema and both acutely aware of the key role the new medium was playing in the struggle over the meanings of modernity. Both were writing in Weimar Germany, which itself has become a topos of classical modernity in -- and as -- crisis, as a period that rehearsed the contradictions of modernization in belated and accelerated form.¹³ Kracauer and Benjamin were friends and read and reviewed each others' writings; if their correspondence is relatively slim, it is because more frequently they saw each other and talked, especially during their common exile in Paris and, later, Marseille.¹⁴ Neither of them held an academic position: Kracauer wrote for and (from 1924 on) was an editor of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, a liberal daily that Ernst Bloch once referred to as the "*Ur*-paper of solidity" ("*Urblatt der Gediegenheit*");¹⁵ Benjamin worked on a freelance basis for various literary journals and the radio.

My discussion will focus on Kracauer, whose major writings on cinema, mass culture and everyday life (hundreds of articles and reviews dating from the inter-war period) are less widely known than Benjamin's few canonized texts relating to the topic. If the latter are treated in a more critical tone, this has less to do with the texts themselves than with their reception, in particular the way Benjamin's historico-philosophical construction of Baudelaire's Paris is

used to elide the specifically twentieth-century dimensions of both cinema and modernity. Obviously, one cannot simply align Benjamin with a nineteenth-century genealogy of modernity and Kracauer by contrast with one predicated on the twentieth. Benjamin explicitly derived his construction from an analysis of the crisis of the present (and his *Artwork Essay* as a telescope connecting the two sites),¹⁶ and Kracauer, conversely, also turned to the nineteenth century, notably with his "social biography" of Jacques Offenbach in which he analyzed the genre of the operetta as a prototype of the institution of cinema.¹⁷ Nonetheless, the bulk of Kracauer's Weimar writing is engaged with twentieth-century modernity and thus, on a rather basic level, offers a wealth of observations and reflections on cinema and mass culture that we do not find in Benjamin.¹⁸ On the basis of his persistent reflexive-empirical engagement with contemporary reality, Kracauer represents an early attempt to conceptualize different types of modernity or competing modernities. I will try to delineate these competing modernities in Kracauer's work, referring to them in terms of his own "thought-images" of, respectively, America, Paris, and the Alps.

Discovering "Amerika"

America will disappear only when it completely discovers itself. [Kracauer, "Der Künstler in dieser Zeit" (1925)]

In both retrospective and contemporary accounts of Weimar culture, the cinema's status as a privileged figure of modern life is often associated with the discourse of Americanism, the invocation of "Amerika" as metaphor and model of a disenchanted modernity. This term encompassed everything from Fordist-Taylorist principles of production -- mechanization, standardization, rationalization, efficiency, the assembly line -- and attendant standards of mass consumption; through new forms of social organization, freedom from tradition, social mobility, mass democracy and a "new matriarchy"; to the cultural symbols of the new era -- skyscrapers, jazz ("Negermusik"), boxing, revues, radio, cinema. Whatever its

particular articulation (not to mention its actual relation to the United States), the discourse of Americanism became a catalyst for the debate on modernity and modernization, polarized into cultural conservative battle-cries or jeremiads on the one hand and euphoric hymns to technological progress or resigned acceptance on the other. Among the latter, the political faultlines ran between those who found in the Fordist gospel a solution to the ills of capitalism and a harmonious path to democracy (cf. the contemporary concept of "white socialism") and those who believed that modern technology, and technologically-based modes of production and consumption, furnished the conditions, but only the conditions, for a truly proletarian revolution (cf. "left Fordism").¹⁹

In the first years of the republic, the association of cinema and Americanism was by no means established, at least not until the implementation of the Dawes Plan beginning 1924 and with it a large-scale campaign of industrial rationalization according to Ford and Taylor; around the same time, and for related reasons, Hollywood consolidated its hegemony on the German market. In a report for the *Frankfurter Zeitung* on a conference of the Deutsche Werkbund in July 1924, Kracauer presents this gathering of designers, industrialists, educators and politicians as a site of missed connections. The conference was devoted to two main topics, "the fact of Americanism which seems to advance like a natural force," and the "artistic significance of the fiction film."²⁰ Before going into details, Kracauer observes a major failure to connect in the speaker's basic approach to Americanism: they went all out to explore its "total spiritual disposition" but, true to the Werkbund's professed status as an "apolitical organization," they left the "economic and political pre-conditions upon which rationalization [...] is based substantially untouched." While the proponents and critics of rationalization seemed to articulate their positions with great conviction and ostensible clarity, the second topic remained shrouded in confusion. "Curiously, perhaps due to deep-seated prejudices, the problem of film was dealt with in a much more biased and impressionistic way than the fact of

mechanization, even though both phenomena, Americanism and film composition after all belong to the same sphere of surface life."

In an often quoted passage of his semi-autobiographical novel *Ginster*, Kracauer has the protagonist and his friend Otto debate questions of scientific methodology. While Otto proposes a method that emphasizes "secondary matters" (*Nebensachen*) and "hidden paths" (*Schleichwege*) so as to arrive at "scientifically cogent hypotheses," Ginster does not believe that the point is even to reconstruct an "original reality": "According to his theory, Columbus had to land in India; he discovered America. [...] A hypothesis is valid only under the condition that it misses its intended goal, so as to reach another, unknown goal."²¹ The choice of example is no coincidence. The episode not only illustrates Kracauer's own approach to "reality,"²² but also his peculiar engagement with "Amerika," with capitalist-industrial, mass-mediated modernity.

Kracauer's writings prior to the mid-1920s by and large participate in the period's culturally pessimistic discourse on modernity.²³ Within a predominantly philosophical and theological framework, modernity appears as the endpoint of a historical process of disintegration, an evacuation of meaning from life, a dissociation of truth and existence which has thrown the atomized individual into a state of "transcendental homelessness" (Lukács). Drawing on contemporary sociology, in particular Simmel, Scheler and Weber, Kracauer sees this process linked to the unfolding of a progressively instrumentalized *ratio*, of abstract, formal reason detached from human contingency, which incarnates itself in capitalist economy and the corresponding ideal of "a thoroughly rationalized civilized society" ("*Gesellschaft*" as opposed to "*Gemeinschaft*").²⁴

It is significant that Kracauer elaborates his early metaphysics of modernity in a treatise on the detective novel, a genre of popular fiction which thrived on serial production and which in Germany occupied a lower rank on the ladder of cultural values than in England

or France.²⁵ Kracauer reads this genre, not from the outside, as a sociological symptom, but as an allegory of contemporary life: "Just as the detective reveals the secret buried between people, the detective novel discloses, in the aesthetic medium, the secret of the de-realized society and its substanceless marionettes." It thus transforms, by virtue of its construction, "incomprehensible life" into a "counter-image" of reality (116-17), a "distorted mirror" in which the world can begin to read its own features. When, around 1924, Kracauer begins to develop a theoretical interest in film, it is motivated in similar terms. Because of its formal capacities of displacement and estrangement, he argues then, film is singularly suited to capture a "disintegrating world without substance"; it therefore fulfils a cognitive, diagnostic function vis-à-vis modern life more truthfully than most works of high art.²⁶ Kracauer's turn to the "surface," to a topography of the ephemeral, culturally despised products of the period, is thus already programmed into his early metaphysics of modernity, the eschatologically tinged project of registering the historical process in all its negativity.²⁷

For Kracauer, following his teacher Simmel, the fascination with the surface phenomena of modern life was simultaneously a rejection of the discipline of philosophy, in particular the tradition of German idealist philosophy: theoretical thinking schooled in that tradition was increasingly incapable of grasping a changed and changing reality, a "reality filled with corporeal things and people."²⁸ Accordingly, Kracauer's despair over the direction of the historical process turns into a despair over the lack of a heuristic discourse, over the fact that "the objectively-curious [*das Objektiv-Neugierige*] lacks a countenance."²⁹ Like many of his generation, Kracauer sought such a heuristic discourse in the writings of Marx and contemporary Marxist theory which he began to read, intensely if idiosyncratically, around 1925/26. But if his own writings began to take a materialist turn during those years, it was also because actual developments in the discourse of modernization were demanding a different approach.

With the introduction of Fordist-Taylorist principles of production in both industry and the service sector and the accompanying spread of cultural forms of mass consumption, the very categories developed to comprehend the logics of modernity -- "rationalization," "demythologization," "alienation," "reification" -- gained a new dimension; the *ratio* assumed a more concrete, and more complex and contradictory, face. To be sure, there had been experiments in and debates on rationalization before the advent of Americanism, in fact before World War I. And while there was a distinct push for Fordist-Taylorist methods in the mid-twenties, they were not implemented everywhere and at the same pace.³⁰ Yet even if thorough rationalization remained largely an aspiration and the discourse on its effects often lapsed into myth, it nonetheless assumed a powerful reality -- in urban planning and architecture, in social engineering, in new cultural practices of living and leisure that Kracauer perceived as insufficiently grasped by prevailing accounts of modernity.

It was not that the critique of Western rationality ignored capitalist modes of production and exchange. But, for Kracauer, this critique itself remained marooned in the abstractions of transcendental philosophy because it posited the *ratio* as a transhistorical, ontological category of which the current phase of capitalism was just a particular, inevitable and unalterable, incarnation. He extended this reproach even to Georg Lukács, whose *History and Class Consciousness* (1923) had persuasively fused Weber's theory of rationalization with Marx's theory of commodity fetishism and thus provided a major impulse for Critical Theory.³¹ Kracauer not only rejected Lukács's notion of the proletariat as both object and subject of a Hegelian dialectics of history; he also balked at the conception of reality as a totality that the theoretical intellect presumed to know from a position outside or above. For Kracauer, the recognition of the historical process required the construction of categories from within the material; bringing Marx up to date demanded a "dissociation [*Dissoziierung*] of Marxism in the direction of the realities."³²

Kracauer's own dissociation into the realities of modern life can be seen, at the most obvious level, in his choice of topics and areas. Beginning around 1925, his articles increasingly revolve around sites and symptoms of change: quotidian objects (the typewriter, inkwells, umbrellas, pianellas); spaces (metropolitan streets, squares and architecture, arcades, bars, department stores, train stations, subways, homeless shelters, unemployment offices); media (photography, illustrated magazines, film), rituals and institutions of a new and changing leisure culture (tourism, dance, sports, cinema, circus, variety shows, amusement parks). As remarkable as the range of topics is the change of tone and differentiation of stance in Kracauer's writing. Although the critique of the capitalist grounding of modernization continues -- and becomes fiercer by the end of the decade -- the metaphysically based pessimistic and normative attitude recedes in favor of an "uncertain, hesitant affirmation of the civilizing process." Such a stance, Kracauer concludes in his essay on "Travel and Dance," "is more real than a radical cult of progress, be it of rational origin or unflinchingly aimed at the Utopian, but also more real than the condemnations of those who romantically flee from the situation assigned to them. It [this stance] defers promises without refraining from statements; it looks at the phenomena that have emancipated themselves from their foundation not just categorically as disfigurements and distorted reflection, but grants them their own, after all positive possibilities."³³

What particular possibilities did Kracauer perceive in the cultural manifestations of Americanism? What in this particular regime of modernization was specifically new and potentially liberatory? While Kracauer still occasionally deplors the "machine-like" quality of modern existence, he begins to be fascinated by new entertainment forms that turn the "fusion of people and things" into a creative principle. He first observes this principle at work in the live musical revues that were sweeping across German vaudeville stages: "The living approximates the mechanical, and the mechanical behaves like the living."³⁴ With an

enthusiasm that sounds unusually close to the discourse of "white socialism," Kracauer reports on the Frankfurt performance of the Tiller Girls (actually a British troupe) whose tour inaugurates the "American age" in Germany:

What they accomplish is an unprecedented labor of precision, a delightful Taylorism of the arms and legs, mechanized charm. They shake the tambourine, they drill to the rhythms of jazz, they come on as the boys in blue: all at once, pure duodeci-unity [*Zwölfeinigkeit*]. Technology whose grace is seductive, grace that is genderless because it rests on joy of precision. A representation of American virtues, a flirt by the stop-watch.³⁵

Kracauer's pleasure in precision does not rest on an aesthetics of technology, but on the social and sexual configurations this aesthetics may yield. In the planned economy of the revue, the pay-off of standardization is a sensual manifestation of collective behavior, a vision -- or mirage -- of equality, cooperation and solidarity. It is also a vision of gender mobility (girls dressed up as sailors), if precariously close to a retreat from sexuality. Still, Kracauer conveys a glimpse of a different organization of social and gender relations -- different at least from the patriarchal order of the Wilhelmine family and standards of sexual difference that clashed with both the reality of working women and Kracauer's own gay sensibility.³⁶

The Taylorist aesthetics of the revue also suggests a different conception of the body. Writing about two "excentric dancers" (*Exzentriktänzer*) performing live in the Ufa theater, Kracauer asserts that the precision and grace of these gentlemen's act "transforms the body-machine into an atmospheric instrument." They defy physical laws of gravity and statics, not by assimilating technology to the fantasma of a complete, masculine body (the armored body of the soldier/hero), but by playing with the fragmentation and dissolution of that body: "when, for instance, they throw one leg around in a wide arc [...] it is really no longer attached to the body, but the body, light as a feather, has become an appendix to the floating leg."³⁷ While

resonating with a desire to overcome the limitations of the 'natural' body, this image is a playful variant of Kracauer's peculiar masochistic imagination which (especially in his novels but also his essays) again and again stages the violation of physical and mental boundaries by extraneous objects and sensations. The jumbling of the hierarchy of center and periphery in the dancer's body, but also its prosthetic expansion, undermines bourgeois notions of an "integrated personality" as well as the proliferating attempts (in sports, in "body culture") to re-ground "the spirit" in an organic, natural unity.³⁸

Since the Fordist-Taylorist regime does not stop with the human body but takes on the realm of nature in its entirety, some of Kracauer's most interesting comments on rationalization can be found in his writings on the circus. While the circus is an Enlightenment invention and belongs to a manufactural mode of production, he notes the pervasiveness of rationalization even in an institution that was rapidly being pushed aside -- and subsumed -- by deterritorialized forms of media culture such as the cinema.³⁹ One of his articles on the "Zirkus Hagenbeck," published a year before his famous essay on the "Mass Ornament," reads like a sketch for that essay. Kracauer introduces the appearance of the giant "menagerie" in Frankfurt as an "International of animals," describing the animals as involuntary delegates from globally-extended regions. They are united under the spell of Americanism:

The fauna moves rhythmically and forms geometrical patterns. There is nothing left of dullness [*Dumpfheit*]. As unorganic matter snaps into crystals, mathematics seizes the limbs of living nature and sounds control the drives. The animal world, too, has fallen for jazz. Under Hackanson Petoletti's pressure of the thigh a thoroughbred stallion dances the Valencia and excels in syncopes, even though he's from Hanover. [...] Every animal participates in the creation of the empire of figures according to its talents. Pious Brahmin zebus, Tibetan black bears [*Kragenbären*] and massifs of elephants: they all arrange themselves according to thoughts they did not think

themselves. [...] The thickest hide is penetrated by the thinnest idea; the power of the spirit proves itself miraculously. At times it seems not only to subdue nature from behind, as it were, but to emanate from nature itself. The sea-lions juggle as if animated by reason. With their pointed snouts they throw into the air and catch whatever their mentor, Captain von Vorstel, throws them: torches, balls, top-hats.

Inbetween they eat fish to strengthen their neck muscles -- downright reasonable.⁴⁰

The regime of heteronomous reason rehearsed on the backs of the animals would be merely pathetic if it weren't for the clowns whose anarchic pranks debunk the imperialist claims of rationalization: "They too want to be elastic and line-like, but it doesn't work, the elephants are more adroit, one has too many inner resistances, some goblin crosses out the elaborate calculation."⁴¹ While their antics have a long tradition, the clowns assume an acute alterity in relation to the ongoing process of modernization; they inhabit the intermediary realm of *improvisation* and *chance* which, for Kracauer, is the redeeming supplement of that process -- which has come into existence only with the loss of "foundations" or a stable order.⁴²

The institution in which the clowns could engage rationalization on, as it were, its own turf was, of course, the cinema. Here the clowns had succeeded in founding their own genre, slapstick comedy, in a medium that assured them an audience way beyond local and live performances. In numerous reviews, Kracauer early on endorsed slapstick comedy (*Groteske*) as a cultural form in which Americanism supplied a popular and public antidote to its own system. Like no other genre, slapstick comedy brought into play the imbrication of the mechanical and the living, subverting the economically imposed regime in well-improvised orgies of destruction, confusion and parody. "One has to hand this to the Americans: with slapstick films they have created a form that offers a counterweight to their reality: if in that reality they subject the world to an often unbearable discipline, the film in turn dismantles this self-imposed order quite forcefully."⁴³

Obviously, Kracauer was only one among a great number of European avantgarde artists and intellectuals (such as the Surrealists) who celebrated slapstick film, and their numbers grew with the particular inflection of that genre by Charlie Chaplin.⁴⁴ Benjamin too ascribed to slapstick comedy an acute political significance, which complemented his, often dutiful and at best sporadic, endorsements of Soviet film. In his defense of *Battleship Potemkin*, for instance, he puts American slapstick film on a par with the Russian revolutionary film, because it relentlessly pursues one particular "tendency": "Its poleemics [*Spitze*] is directed against technology. This kind of film is indeed comic, but the laughter it provokes hovers over an abyss of horror."⁴⁵ When Benjamin later resumes the topic in conjunction with his Artwork Essay, he discusses slapstick comedy's engagement with technology in terms of the concepts of "shock" and "innervation." In this context, Chaplin emerges as an exemplary figure because he pioneers a filmic analysis of assembly-line technology, a "gestic" rendering of perceptual discontinuity: "He chops up the expressive movement of the human body into a sequence of minute innervations," a procedure that "imposes the law of filmic images onto the law of human motorics." By practicing such systematic self-fragmentation, "he interprets himself allegorically."⁴⁶

Kracauer's Chaplin is neither as baroque nor as avantgarde as Benjamin's. Where the latter emphasizes allegorical mortification and "self-alienation," Kracauer locates the appeal of the Chaplin figure in an already missing "self": "The human being that Chaplin embodies or, rather, lets go of, is a *hole*. . . . He has no will, in the place of the drive toward self-preservation or the hunger for power there is nothing inside him but a void which is as blank as the snow fields of Alaska."⁴⁷ Whether lack of identity or inability to distinguish between self and multiplied self-images (as Kracauer observes with reference to the hall-of-mirror scene from *Circus*), Chaplin instantiates a "schizophrenic" vision in which the habitual relations among people and things are shattered and different configurations appear possible; like a

flash of lightning, Chaplin's laughter "welds together madness and happiness."⁴⁸ The absent center of Chaplin's persona allows for a reconstruction of humanity under alienated conditions ("from this hole the purely human radiates discontinuously . . . it is always discontinuous, fragmentary, interspersed into the organism"). A key aspect of this humanity is a form of mimetic behavior that disarms the aggressor, whether person or object, by way of imitation and adaptation and which assures the temporary victory of the weak, marginalized and disadvantaged, of David over Goliath.⁴⁹

For Kracauer, Chaplin is not just a diasporic figure but "the pariah of the fairy tale," a genre that makes happy endings imaginable and at the same time puts them under erasure. The vagabond again and again learns "that the fairy tale does not last, that the world is the world, and that home [*die Heimat*] is not home."⁵⁰ If Chaplin is a Messianic figure for Kracauer (as Inka Mülder rightly argues), it is important to bear in mind that he represents at once the appeal of a utopian humanity and its impossibility, the realization that the world "could be different and still continues to exist."⁵¹ Chaplin exemplifies this humanity under erasure both in his films and by the undeniable scope of his worldwide and ostensibly class-transcendent popularity. While Kracauer is skeptical as to the ideological function of reports of how, for instance, the film *City Lights* managed to move both prisoners in a New York penitentiary to laughter and George Bernhard Shaw to tears, he nonetheless tackles the slippery question of Chaplin's "power" to reach human beings across class, nations and generations⁵² -- the possibility ultimately of a universal language of mimetic behavior that would make mass culture an imaginative and reflexive horizon for people trying to live a life in the war zones of modernization.

Compared to Benjamin, Kracauer's interest in Chaplin and slapstick comedy -- as in cinema in general -- was not focused as much on the question of technology, nor did he conceive of technology as a productive force in the Marxian sense, let alone as a framing

apparatus. He was concerned with mechanization as a socio-economic regime and cultural discourse that, more systematically than any previous form of modernization, addressed itself to the *masses*, constituted a specifically modern form of collective. The mechanical mediation may place mass culture in the realm of "the inauthentic" (*das Uneigentliche*), but since the road to "the authentic" was blocked anyway, Kracauer increasingly asserts the reality and legitimacy of "*Ersatz*"; the very distinction becomes irrelevant in view of the perspective, however compromised, that the mass media might be the only horizon in which an actual democratization of culture was taking place. This perspective also defines the parameters of critique: not only is the critic himself in tendency always a member of the consuming mass, but the media also offer the conditions for critical self-reflexion on a mass basis.

Configurations of the "Mass"

The locus classicus of Kracauer's analysis of Fordist mass culture is his 1927 essay on the "Mass Ornament." Here the Tiller Girls have evolved into a historico-philosophical allegory which, as is often pointed out, anticipates key arguments of Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947). As a figure of capitalist rationalization, Kracauer argues, the mass ornament is as profoundly ambiguous as the historical process that brought it forth -- a process of demythologization or disenchantment that emancipates humanity from the forces of nature but, by perpetuating socio-economic relations "that do not include the human being," reproduces the natural and reverts into myth; rationality itself has become the dominant myth of modern society. Unlike his fellow Critical Theorists, however, Kracauer does not locate the problem in the concept of enlightenment as such (which for him at any rate is associated less with German idealism than with French empiricism and the utopian reason -- and happiness -- of fairy tales). Rather, he argues that the permeation of nature by reason has actually not advanced far enough: the problem with capitalism is not that "it rationalizes too much," but

that it rationalizes "*too little*." Just as he foregoes investing in the alterity of autonomous art as the last refuge of a socially negated individuality, Kracauer rejects any attempt to resurrect pre-capitalist forms of community as a way out: "The process leads right through the middle of the mass ornament, not back from it."⁵³

The comparison with *Dialectic of Enlightenment* at once obscures and reveals an important distinction. For the essay on the "Mass Ornament" does not just present a critique of instrumental reason and corresponding views of history as technologically-driven progress; nor does it place faith in the critical self-reflexion of the bourgeois male intellect.⁵⁴ The underlying, and in my reading, crucial concern of the essay is the *mass* in "mass ornament." In Kracauer's rhetorical design, the Tiller Girls clearly stand for a larger social and political configuration. This configuration not only includes the abstract patterns of moving bodies in musical revues and sports displays arranged by the invisible hand of Taylorist rationality ("the legs of the Tiller Girls correspond to the hands in the factory"). It also includes the *spectating* mass "which relates to [the ornament] aesthetically and which represents nobody" -- nobody, I would add, other than themselves. While the mass ornament itself remains "mute," without consciousness of itself, it acquires meaning under the "gaze" of the masses, "who have adopted it spontaneously." Against the "despisers among the educated" (likely the majority of the readers of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* where the essay was published), Kracauer maintains that the audience's "aesthetic pleasure in the ornamental mass movements is *legitimate*"; it is superior to the former's anachronistic investment in high-cultural values because at least it acknowledges "the facts" of contemporary reality. Even though the force of the *ratio* that mobilizes the mass is still "too weak to find [in it] the human beings and make its figures transparent to cognition," there is no question for Kracauer that the subject of such critical self-encounter has to be, can only be the masses themselves.⁵⁵

Already in his 1926 essay on the Berlin Picture Palaces, "Cult of Distraction," Kracauer's argument revolved around the possibility that in these metropolitan temples of distraction something like a self-articulation of the masses might be taking place -- the possibility, as he puts it elsewhere, of a "self-representation of the masses subject to the process of mechanization."⁵⁶ Bracketing both cultural disdain and a critique of ideology, he observes in Berlin (different from his native Frankfurt and other provincial cities) that "the more people perceive themselves as a mass, the sooner the masses will also develop creative powers in the spiritual domain which are worth financing." As a result, the so-called educated classes are losing their provincial elite status and cultural monopoly. "This gives rise to the *homogeneous cosmopolitan audience* [*das homogene Weltstadt-Publikum*] in which everyone is of *one* mind, from the bank director to the sales clerk, from the diva to the stenographer."⁵⁷ That they are "of *one* mind" ("*eines* Sinnes") means no more and no less than that they have the same taste for sensual attractions, or rather distractions. They congregate in the medium of distraction or diversion [*Zerstreuung*] which, in the radical twist that Kracauer gives the originally cultural-conservative concept, combines the mirage of social homogeneity with an aesthetics that is profoundly decentering and dis-unifying, at least as long as it does not succumb entirely to gentrification. In "the discontinuous sequence of splendid sense impressions" (which likely refers to an already elevated version of the "variety format"⁵⁸), the audience encounters "its own reality," that is, a social process marked by an increased heterogeneity and instability. Here Kracauer locates the political significance of distraction: "the fact that these shows convey in a precise and undisguised manner to thousands of eyes and ears the *disorder* of society -- this is precisely what would enable them to evoke and keep awake that tension which must precede the inevitable change [*Umschlag*]."⁵⁹

It should be noted that Kracauer does not assume an analogical relation between the industrial standardization of cultural commodities and the behavior and identity of the mass

audience that consumes them (an assumption derived from Lukács's theory of reification which would become axiomatic for Adorno's critique of the culture industry and, with different valorization, for Benjamin's theses on art and industrial re/production). For one thing, Kracauer (like Benjamin) did not object to serial production, standardization and commodification as such, as can be seen in his many reviews of popular fiction, especially detective and adventure novels, as well as his repeated, if sometimes grudging, statements of admiration for Hollywood over Ufa products.⁶⁰ For another, Kracauer would not have presumed that people who see the same thing necessarily think the same way; and if they did pattern their behavior and appearance on the figures and fables of the screen, the problem was the escapist ideology of German film production and the gentrification of exhibition. In other words, Kracauer's critique was aimed less against the lure of cinematic identification in general than against the cultural and political practices responsible for the unrealistic tendency of such identification, the growing denial of the discrepancies of the social process.⁶¹

The cinema is a signature of modernity for Kracauer not simply because it attracts and represents the masses, but because it constitutes the most advanced cultural institution in which the masses, as a relatively heterogeneous, undefined and unknown form of collectivity, can represent themselves as a *public*. As Heide Schlüpmann argues in an important essay, Kracauer sketches a theory of a specifically modern public sphere that resists thinking of the masses and the idea of the public as an opposition (as Habermas still does in his 1962 study, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*). Kracauer "neither asserts the idea of the public against its [actual or putative] disintegration and decline," Schlüpmann points out, "nor does he resort to a concept of an oppositional public sphere" (à la Negt and Kluge). Rather, Kracauer sees in the cinema a blueprint of an *alternative* public that "can realize itself only through the destruction of the dominant public sphere," that is, bourgeois institutions of high art, education and culture that have lost all touch with reality.⁶² Understandably, this

construction has made Kracauer vulnerable to the charge that he naively tries to resurrect the liberal public sphere, once again bracketing capitalist interest and ideology.⁶³ To be sure, he adheres to political principles of general access, equality, justice, and, perhaps more so than his more orthodox Marxist friends, the right to and necessity of self-determination, that is, democratic forms of living and interaction. Yet Kracauer is materialist enough to know that these principles do not miraculously emerge from the rational discourse of communicatively competent, inner-directed subjects, let alone from efforts to restore the authority of a literary public sphere. Rather, cognition has to be grounded in the very sphere of experience in which historical change is most palpable and most destructive -- in a sensual, perceptual, aesthetic discourse that allows for "the self-representation of the masses subject to the process of mechanization."

Such phrases were not uncommon among radical Weimar intellectuals; their critical usefulness ultimately depends upon the underlying concept of the subject in question. The modern mass, as a social formation which, to whatever effect, cut across boundaries of class and status, had entered public awareness in Germany only after World War I. If the revolution of 1919 had briefly mobilized the image of a powerful, active mass, the following years saw the creation of a mass primarily through the stigma of misery, culminating in 1923 with the great inflation that extended the experience of destitution and loss far beyond the industrial working class. During the shortlived phase of economic recovery, the masses began to appear less as a suffering and more as a consuming mass -- the mass came into visibility as a social formation in collective acts of consumption. And since consumer goods that might have helped improve living conditions (for instance, refrigerators) were still a lot less affordable than in the United States,⁶⁴ the main object of consumption were the fantasy productions and environments of the new leisure culture. In them, Kracauer discerned the contours of an

emerging mass subject, a mass that, for better or for worse, was productive in its very need and acts of consumption.

Kracauer's concept of the mass or masses develops from one indebted to the typological constructions of contemporary social theory to a more empirical, sociologically and politically determined approach, although the former remains present in the latter as a regulative idea. This idea begins to take shape in Kracauer's cautious reevaluation of elitist-pessimistic assessments of the mass from LeBon through Spengler, Klages and Freud. Seemingly rehearsing the standard oppositions, he sets off the mass from the organic community of the people or folk (*Volk*); from the higher, "fateful" unity of the nation; and, for that matter, from socialist or communist notions of the collective. While the ideal-type of the community is composed of unique, tradition- and inner-directed individuals ("individuals who *believe* themselves to be inwardly shaped"), the mass is an amorphous body of anonymous, fragmented particles that assume meaning only in other-directed contexts, whether mechanized processes of labor or the abstract compositions of the mass ornament.⁶⁵ The liberatory aspect of the mass ornament rests for Kracauer precisely in this transformation of subjectivity -- in the erosion of bourgeois notions of personality that posit "nature and 'spirit' as harmoniously integrated," in the human figure's "*exodus* from sumptuous organic splendor and individual shape into anonymity. . . ."⁶⁶ The mass ornament's critique of an outdated concept of personality (including Kracauer's own early efforts to rescue it) turns the Medusan sight of the anonymous metropolitan mass into an image of liberating alienation and open-ended possibility, at times even a vision of diasporic solidarity -- that is, he sees possibilities for living where others see only levelling and decline.⁶⁷ For Kracauer, the democratization of social, economic and political life, the possibility of the masses' self-organization, is inseparably linked to the surrender of the self-identical masculine subject and the emergence of a decentered, dis-armor-ed and disarming subjectivity that he found exemplified in Chaplin.

This vision, however, as Kracauer knows, has more to do with the happy endings of fairy tales than with the actual social and political developments. His more empirically oriented approach to mass society focused on a group that at once personified the structural transformation of subjectivity and engaged in a massive effort of denial -- the mushrooming class of white-collar workers or employees to whom he devoted a groundbreaking series of articles, *Die Angestellten* (1929).⁶⁸ Although by the end of the twenties white-collar workers still made up only one fifth of the workforce, Kracauer considered them, more than any other group, the subject of modernization and modern mass culture. Not only did their numbers increase five-fold (to 3.5 million of which 1.2 were women) over a period during which the number of blue-collar workers barely doubled; but their particular class profile was deeply bound up with the impact, actual or perceived, of the rationalization push between 1925 and 1928. The mechanization, fragmentation and hierarchization of the labor process and the threatening effects of dequalification, disposability and unemployment made the working and living conditions of white-collar workers effectively proletarian. Yet, fancying themselves as a "new middle class," they tended to deny any commonality with the working class and instead to recycle the remnants of bourgeois culture. Unlike the industrial proletariat, they were "spiritually homeless," seeking escape from their actual situation in the metropolitan "barracks of pleasure" (entertainment malls like the *Haus Vaterland*, picture palaces, etc.) -- the very cult of distraction to which Kracauer, three years earlier, had still imputed a radical political potential. With the impact of the international economic crisis, the employees' evasion of consciousness, as Kracauer was one of the first to warn, made them vulnerable to national-socialist messages; it was these "stand-up collar proletarians" who were soon to cast a decisive vote for Hitler.⁶⁹

The different conception of the mass is one of the most obvious distinctions between Kracauer's understanding of cinema and modernity and that of Benjamin. Like Kracauer,

Benjamin sees the phenomenon of the mass manifest itself primarily in acts of consumption and reception, mediated by the fetish of the commodity (which Benjamin substantially defines from the perspective of reception rather than, as Marx did, from production and circulation). But where Kracauer's analysis focuses on the present, Benjamin projects the problematics of mass culture, art and technology back into the nineteenth century. In this genealogy, he traces the emergence of the metropolitan masses in the writings of Baudelaire, but also Hugo, Poe, and others. Like Marx, Benjamin contrasts the urban masses depicted by the literati with the "iron mass of the proletariat": "What is at issue is not a particular class, nor any collective however structured. At issue is nothing but the amorphous crowd of passers-by, the street public."⁷⁰ The ingenuity of Benjamin's reading is that he traces the presence of this urban crowd in Baudelaire's poetry as a "hidden figure," the "moving veil" through which the poems stage moments of "shock," as opposed to the literal depictions one finds in the writer's lesser contemporaries. As in Baudelaire, Benjamin sees the epochal turn toward the masses encoded in the architecture, fashions, events, institutions of high-capitalist culture; he does not describe or analyze the masses, but traces their profound impact on just about every area of cultural practice.

As is often pointed out, Benjamin's vast project of "a material philosophy of history of the nineteenth century,"⁷¹ his never completed work on the Paris Arcades or *Passagen-Werk*, was methodologically inseparable from his concern with the "current crisis," that is, the rise of fascism, the complicity of liberal capitalism and the congealing of a socialist alternative in Stalinism. For Benjamin, it was this crisis that brought the "fate" of art in the nineteenth-century into the "now of recognition," made it recognizable as it was "never before and never will be again."⁷² Within this historico-philosophical construction the masses appear in a number of key theoretical tropes. One has to do with the linkage of novelty and repetition that fascinated Benjamin in the dynamics of capitalist commodity production, in particular the

phenomenon of fashion. Here the masses enter as the social corollary of mass production, and Benjamin draws a direct line from the figure of the prostitute as human "mass article" to the later revues with their exhibition of strictly uniformed "girls" (English in the original).⁷³ What fascinates him in mass production, however, is a particular dialectic of *temporality*, the return of the "always-again-the-same" in the shock-like acceleration of the new, with which capitalism has created a highly ambivalent, explosive conjuncture of modernity and prehistory (mythical "Golden Age" / "Time of Hell").⁷⁴ Within that logic, the cinema would seem to be an answer to the historical imagination of Blanqui or Nietzsche rather than to the emergence of the masses as an economic, social and cultural subject: "The doctrine of eternal recurrence as a dream of the immense inventions still to come in the field of reproduction technology."⁷⁵

The mass is also figured in Benjamin's notion of the "dreaming collective" and the related image of capitalism as a "dreamsleep" that "came over Europe and with it a reactivation of mythic powers."⁷⁶ The enormous creativity of industrialization and commodity production in the nineteenth century had generated a matrix of collectivity in the phantasmagoria of consumption. That collectivity (which, in the Arcades Project, clearly cuts across class boundaries), however, remains "unconscious." The masses who flock to the World Fairs and other mass spectacles consist of isolated, anonymous individuals whose "self-alienation" is only enhanced by the "distractions" that "raise them to the level of the commodity."⁷⁷ While Benjamin's notions of dreaming and the unconscious were indebted to the Surrealists, his insistence on the moment of "waking up," on breaking the cycle of "aestheticization and anaestheticization" (Susan Buck-Morss), aligns him with Kracauer's efforts toward the masses' coming to (self)consciousness, literally, coming to their senses.⁷⁸ Except that they had somewhat different concepts of political change: if Benjamin fused Messianic theology and Marxism into the desperate hope for a proletarian revolution, Kracauer kept his eschatological yearnings mostly separate from the critical project of getting the

masses to realize themselves as a democratic public.⁷⁹ But they agreed upon what would happen if the masses *didn't* wake up, if they were to continue in their illusory dream state. As the Nazis' mass-mediated spectacles of rallies and parades brought home with terrifying urgency, fascism offered the masses an "imaginary solution" (*Scheinlösung*) to real problems and contradictions that could end only in total oppression and mass annihilation. Echoing Kracauer's argument about the remythicization of the mass ornament, Benjamin, in the epilogue to his Artwork Essay (1935/36), elaborates on the fascist strategy of giving the masses an aesthetic "*expression*," a mirror-like representation, as opposed to giving them their right, that is, acknowledging their claim to changed relations of property.⁸⁰

The third, and in my view most problematic, troping of the mass in Benjamin's writings is in the notion of a "collective innervation" of technology and the role of film in this context. The problem is not with the concept of innervation as such, the technological interpenetration of "body and image space" which Benjamin thought through more radically than any of his contemporaries (with the exception perhaps of Ernst Jünger);⁸¹ rather, it is the attempt to hitch the proletariat to the cart of this process and make the cinema a rehearsal ground for polytechnical education. Like Kracauer, Benjamin is indebted to Béla Balázs' observation of a *structural* affinity between masses and cinema which is grounded in the medium's perceptual, phenomenological specificity -- the insight that film, in Kracauer's words, "by breaking down the distance of the spectator which had hitherto been maintained in all the arts, is an artistic medium turned toward the masses. . . ."⁸² Unlike Kracauer, Benjamin also takes over Balázs' rather more tentative assertion that, with film, capitalist society has generated a means of production which promotes that society's own abolition, and that therefore the masses addressed by the cinema converge with the revolutionary proletariat -- a notion that Kracauer repeatedly criticized as both dogmatic and romantic. More systematically than Balázs, Benjamin establishes the revolutionary potential of film from an argument about the fate of art

in the age of industrial-technological re/production (which does not need to be elaborated here).⁸³ Suffice it to say that Benjamin's concept of the masses, at least in the Artwork Essay, derives primarily from the structural qualities of technical re/production -- sameness, repeatability, closeness, "shock" (vs. uniqueness, distance, "aura"), the analogy of assembly line and cinematic reception -- rather than the social, psychosexual and cultural profile of the moviegoing public.

Benjamin's concept of the masses as the subject of cinema passes over the actual and unprecedented mixture of classes -- and genders and generations -- that had been observed in cinema audiences early on (notably by sociologist Emilie Altenloh in her 1914 study); it also ignores, and no doubt implicitly opposes, the often condemnatory, culturally conservative attitude toward the cinema on the part of the traditional working-class organizations, including the Communist Party (although there were, no doubt, important efforts to create a workers' cinema from the mid-1920s on).⁸⁴ While in the nineteenth-century masses as refracted through the dreamworld of commodities Benjamin can still recognize the contours of a different collective, in his assessment of the twentieth-century masses empirical and utopian intentions seem to fall apart. In the few places where he actually *describes* a contemporary mass formation (as in *One-Way Street*, 1928), he lapses into a pessimistic discourse that emphasizes the instinctual, animal-like yet blindly self-destructive behavior of "the mass."⁸⁵ In a long note to the second version of the Artwork Essay, Benjamin resumes this discourse with explicit reference to LeBon and mass psychology, as he contrasts the "compact mass" of the petit bourgeoisie, defined by "panic-prone" behavior such as militarism, anti-semitism and blind striving for survival, with the "proletarian mass." The latter in fact, Benjamin argues, ceases to be a mass in the LeBonian sense in the measure that it is infused with class-consciousness and solidarity. Ultimately, the proletariat "works toward a society in which both the objective and the subjective conditions for the formation of masses no longer exist."⁸⁶

For Benjamin, the masses that structurally correspond to the cinema coincide not with the actual working class (whether blue-collar or white-collar) but with the proletariat as a category of Marxist philosophy, a category of negation directed against existing conditions in their totality. Hence the "conspiracy of film technique with the milieu," which he discusses in his defense of *Battleship Potemkin*, comes to signal the passing of the bourgeois order: "The proletariat is the hero of those spaces to whose adventures the bourgeois in the movie theater gives himself over with throbbing heart, because he must relish the 'beautiful' even and especially where it speaks to him of the annihilation of his own class."⁸⁷ Whether rejected in LeBonian terms or embraced as the self-sublating empirical prototype of the proletariat, the masses are attributed a degree of homogeneity that not only misses their complex reality, but also ultimately leaves the intellectual in a position outside, at best surrendering himself to their existence as powerful, though still unconscious Other. Where Kracauer self-consciously "constructs" the reality of the white-collar workers through theorizing observation -- quotations, conversations on location, his own situation as an employee⁸⁸ -- Benjamin's image of the masses, whether projected backward into the 19th century or forward into the not-yet of the proletarian revolution, ultimately remains a philosophical, if not aesthetic abstraction.

One could argue that Kracauer's analysis of mass culture as white-collar or employee culture is just as one-sided as Benjamin's linkage of film and proletariat. After all, he himself stresses the specificity of Berlin's leisure culture as *Angestelltenkultur*, "that is, a culture which is produced by employees for employees and which is considered a culture by the majority of employees."⁸⁹ Yet, to say that this particular focus eclipses the rest of society, in particular the working class, would be as misleading as to conceive of mass culture and employee culture as an opposition.⁹⁰ Rather, Kracauer's analysis recognizes a key element by which the culture of the employees, in their self-image as new middle class, was becoming hegemonic -- in its fantasies of class-transcendence, its fixation on visuality, its construction of a social, national,

and specifically modern, imaginary. Responding to similar historical developments as Lacan's lecture on the mirror phase,⁹¹

Kracauer locates the power of this imaginary in processes of identification and fantasy unmoored from class and economic interest, in the proliferation of "role-playing" as a model of social behavior.⁹² The cinema offers a major rehearsal-ground for new forms of social identity because of its mechanisms of perceptual identification in which the boundaries between self and heteronomous images are weakened (or, rather, recognized to be porous in the first place) and which permit the viewer to let him/herself "be polymorphously projected."⁹³ While in the mid-twenties this psycho-perceptual mobility still beckons the writer with pleasures of self-abandonment, emptiness and loss, by the end of the decade it makes him view the cinema as a transcript of contemporary mythology: "The idiotic and unreal film fantasies are the *day dreams of society* in which the true reality comes to the fore and its otherwise repressed wishes take shape."⁹⁴

The psychoanalytic concept of repression -- which Benjamin and Kracauer agreed was needed to complement Marxist concepts of ideology and the notion of "false consciousness"⁹⁵ -- cuts both ways. The film fantasies not only reveal society's repressed wishes; they also participate in the repression of those aspects of reality that would disturb the delusion of imaginary plenitude and mobility: "The flight of the images is the flight from revolution and from death."⁹⁶ With the intensification of the economic and social crisis, Kracauer increasingly stresses the compensatory economy between the everyday drudgery of business and the business of entertainment: "The exact counterblow to the office machine is the colorful wide world. Not the world as it is but as it appears in the popular hits. A world from which a vacuum cleaner has removed down to the tiniest corner the dust of the everyday. The geography of the homeless shelters is born from the popular hit."⁹⁷

The image of the vacuum cleaner is no coincidence. Kracauer remained skeptical throughout of attempts to ground visions of social change in the model of technology, in particular the functionalist school of modern architecture (LeCorbusier, Mies van der Rohe, Gropius and the Bauhaus). The "culture of glass" that Benjamin so desperately welcomed as the death-blow to bourgeois culture (and attendant concepts of "interiority," "trace," "experience," "aura") leaves Kracauer, architect by training, filled with "scurrilous grief" (*skurrile Trauer*) -- grief over the historical-political impasse that prevents the construction of apartments predicated on human needs.⁹⁸ And he responds to the functionalist crusade against the ornament (notably Adolf Loos) by showing how the repressed ornamental returns in the very aesthetics of technology that ordains the mass spectacles of choruslines, sports events and party rallies. In his analysis of Haus Vaterland, finally, he indicts the architectural style of *Neue Sachlichkeit*, which he finds there in exaggerated form, for its secret complicity with the business of distraction: "like the rejection of old age, it too originates in the horror of the confrontation with death."⁹⁹ The reflection on death that functionalism evades and that Kracauer insists upon as a public responsibility is not simply an existential *memento mori*, however, but is aimed at German society's refusal to confront the experience of mass death bound up with the lost war.¹⁰⁰

Competing Modernities, Historical Options

I have so far emphasized that strand of Kracauer's reflections on cinema and mass modernity that shows his "uncertain, hesitant affirmation of the civilizing process" -- his attempt to trace as yet undefined, autonomous developments however compromised, his willingness to grant them "their own, after all positive possibilities." But he was at no point ever uncritical of capitalist-industrial modernization, much as he immersed himself in the attendant new visual culture and with it the chance and challenge of an expanded horizon of

experience. Especially toward the end of the decade, under the impact of the international economic crisis and the sharp rise in unemployment, the surrealist streak in Kracauer's writings on mass culture and modern living recedes in favor of an increasingly severe critique of ideology. If he had earlier shared the playful relief from burdens of tradition and hierarchy, he now stresses the inadequacy and posthumous quality of Americanist entertainment forms, specifically choruslines and jazz.¹⁰¹ In this closing section, I will return to the darker side of Kracauer's assessment of Fordist-Taylorist modernity -- not to end with it as somehow more 'true' or more realistic, but to situate it in relation to both historically available and politically impending alternatives.

Kracauer's critique of modernization was primarily directed against the imperialism with which technological rationality seized all domains of experience and reduced them to coordinates of space and time, to "a depraved omnipresence in all dimensions that are calculable."¹⁰² In particular, he assailed the destruction of memory advanced, in different ways, by architecture, urban planning, magazines, and photography. This critique oscillates between his earlier, culturally pessimistic stance on modernity and a recognition of the ways in which technological rationality itself was used to naturalize the contradictions of modernity, to turn it into a new mythical eternity.

The site and symbol of presentness, contemporaneity or simultaneity (*Gleichzeitigkeit*) is the city of Berlin, the "frontier" of America in Europe.¹⁰³ "Berlin is the place where one quickly forgets; indeed, it appears as if this city has a magical means of wiping out all memories. It is the present and puts its ambition into being absolutely present. [...] Elsewhere, too, the appearance of squares, company names and stores change; but only in Berlin these transformations tear the past so radically from memory."¹⁰⁴ This tendency is particularly relentless on the city's major boulevard, the Kurfürstendamm, which Kracauer dubs a "street without memory." Its facades, from which "the ornaments have been knocked off," "now stand

without a foothold in time and are a symbol of the ahistorical change which takes place behind them."¹⁰⁵ The spatial correlate of the congealing of time and memory into a seemingly timeless present is the imperialist gesture with which newsreels, illustrated magazines and tourism pretend to bring the whole world into the consumers' reach. The more distances are shrunk into exotic commodities, the more their proliferation occludes the view onto the "exotics" of what is close by, "normal existence in its imperceptible terribleness"; the daily life of Berlin's millions remains "terra incognita."¹⁰⁶

Like Benjamin, Kracauer found a counter-image to contemporary Berlin in the city of Paris. There, the "web" -- "maze," "mesentry" -- of streets allows him to be a real flaneur, to indulge in a veritable "street high" (*Straßenrausch*).¹⁰⁷ There, the crowds are constantly in motion, circulating, bustling, unstable, unpredictable, an "improvised mosaic" that never congeals into "readable patterns." The impression of flux and liquidity in Kracauer's writings on Paris is enhanced, again and again, by textual superimpositions of ocean imagery and evocations of the maritime tradition and milieu. The Paris masses display a process of mixing that does not suppress gradations and heterogeneity; they are themselves so colorful that, as Kracauer somewhat naively asserts, even people of African descent can be at home -- and be themselves -- without being jazzified or otherwise exoticized.¹⁰⁸ There, too, the effects of Americanization seem powerless, or appear transfigured, as in the case of the luminous advertising (*Lichtreklame*) that projects undecipherable hieroglyphs onto the Paris sky: "It darts beyond the economy, and what was intended as advertising, turns into an illumination. This is what happens when the merchants meddle with lighting effects."¹⁰⁹

Paris for Kracauer is also the city of Surrealism and the site of a film production that stages the jinxed relations between people and things in different ways than films responding to the regime of the stopwatch. In the films of René Clair and Jacques Feyder (especially the latter's *Thérèse Raquin*), Kracauer praised a physiognomic capacity that endows inanimate

objects -- buildings, streets, furniture -- with memory and speech, an argument that links Balázs's film aesthetics with Benjamin's notion of an "optical unconscious."¹¹⁰ It is this quality, by the way, which Kracauer also extols in the best Soviet films (cf. his remarkable review of Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*) and which he links to the Surrealist objective to "render strange what is close to us and strip the existing of its familiar mask."¹¹¹ In their dreamlike, physiognomic quality such films rehearse what Benjamin called the interpenetration of "body and image space," and what Kracauer discerned as the cinema's chance of staging shock-like, physiologically experienced encounters with mortality and contingency. Yet he also increasingly took contemporary French films (in particular Clair) to task for their lapses into sentimentality and artsiness, as well as for their romantic opposition to mechanization.¹¹²

As much as it offered the German writer asylum from the reign of simultaneity, speed and dehumanization, Paris was not the alternative to Berlin or, for that matter, "America"; nor did Kracauer, as did Benjamin, attempt a linkage between the nineteenth-century invention of modern life and the crisis of contemporary mass modernity. Just as "Berlin" is already present in the topography of Paris, in the constellation of Faubourgs and center that Kracauer traces in his "Analysis of a City Map," so does Berlin represent the inescapable horizon within which the contradictions of modernity demand to be engaged. France was, after all, "Europe's oasis" as far as the spread of rationalization and mass consumption were concerned, and Clair's "embarrassing" spoof on the assembly line (in *A nous la liberté*) was only further proof of the French inability to understand "how deeply the mechanized process of labor reaches into our daily life."¹¹³ In his first longer essay on the French capital, "Paris Observations" (1927), Kracauer thematizes the perspective "from Berlin," sketching the perceptions of the persona of one who has lost confidence in the virtues of bourgeois life and who "even questions the sublimity of property," who "has lived through the revolution [of 1919] as a democrat or its enemy," and whose "every third word is America." While he does not exactly identify with this

persona, by the end of the essay he clearly rejects the possibility that French culture and civility could become a model for contemporary Germany. "The German cannot move into the well-warmed apartment as which France appears to him today; but perhaps one day, France will be as homeless [*obdachlos*] as Germany."¹¹⁴ The price of Paris life and liveliness is the desolation and despair of the provinces and the banlieus which Kracauer describes in his unusually grim piece on "The Town of Malakoff": describing Malakoff's melancholy quarters, he finds even in the barbaric melange of German industrial working-class towns signs of hope, protest and a will toward change.¹¹⁵ When, finally, Kracauer returns from another trip to Paris in 1931, he is animated by a political discussion on the train, and as the train enters the Berlin station, Bahnhof Zoo, the nightly city appears to him "more threatening and torn, more powerful, more reserved and more promising than ever before."¹¹⁶ In its side-by-side of "harshness, openness, [...] and glamor," Berlin is not only the frontier of modernity, but "the center of struggles in which the human future is at stake."¹¹⁷

Paradoxically, the more relentlessly Kracauer criticizes the products of mass-mediated modernity, the less he subscribes to his earlier utopian thought that, some day, "America will disappear."¹¹⁸ In fact, the more German film production cluttered the cinemas with costume dramas and operettas reviving nationalist and military myths, and the more the industry adjusted to and promoted the political drift to the right, the more it became evident that "America" *must* not disappear, however mediocre, superficial and inadequate its current mass-cultural output.¹¹⁹ The constellation that is vital to Kracauer's understanding of cinema and modernity is therefore not that between Paris and Berlin, but that between a modernity that can reflect upon, revise and regroup itself, albeit at the expense of (a certain kind of) memory, and a modernity that parlays technological synchronicity into the timelessness of a new megamyth: monumental nature, the heroic body, the re-armored mass ornament -- in short, a Nazi modernism exemplified by Leni Riefenstahl.

This constellation is illustrated in the juxtaposition of two vignettes that again project the problems and possibilities of mass-mediated modernity onto an earlier institution of leisure culture, the Berlin Luna park. In an article published on Bastille Day 1928, Kracauer describes a rollercoaster whose facade shows a painted skyline of Manhattan: "The workers, the small people, the employees who spend the week being oppressed by the city, now triumph by air over a super-Berlinian New York." Once they've reached the top, however, the facade gives way to a bare "skeleton":

So this is New York -- a painted surface and behind it nothingness? The small couples are enchanted and disenchanting at the same time. Not that they would dismiss the grandiose city painting as simply humbug; but they see through the illusion and their triumph over the facades no longer means that much to them. They linger at the place where things show their double face, holding the shrunken skyscrapers in their open hand; they have been liberated from a world whose splendor they nevertheless know.¹²⁰

Even in the shrieks of the riders as they plunge into the abyss Kracauer perceives not only fear but ecstasy, the bliss of "traversing a New York whose existence is suspended, which has ceased to be a threat." As I have argued elsewhere, this image evokes a vision of modernity whose spell as progress is broken, whose disintegrating elements become available in a form of collective reception that leaves space for both self-abandonment and critical reflexion.¹²¹

Two years later, in an article of May 1930 entitled "Organized Happiness," Kracauer reports on the reopening of the same amusement park after major reconstruction. Now the attractions have been rationalized, and "an invisible organization sees to it that the amusements push themselves onto the masses in prescribed sequence"¹²² -- a model for Disney World. Contrasting the behavior of these administered masses with the unregulated

whirl of people at the Paris Foires, Kracauer makes the familiar reference to the regime of the assembly line. As in the Sarrasani Circus which he had criticized in similar terms a few months earlier, this regime does not leave "the slightest gap"; there is no more space for improvisation and reflexion.¹²³ When he arrives at the newly refurbished rollercoaster, the scene has changed accordingly. The cars are mostly driven by young girls, "poor young things who are straight out of the many films in which salesgirls end up as millionaire wives." They relish the "illusion" of power and control, and their screams are no longer that liberatory. "[Life] is worth living if one plunges into the depth only to dash upward again as a couple [*zu zweit*]." The seriality of the girl cult is no longer linked to visions of gender mobility and equality, but to the reproduction of private dreams of heterosexual coupledness and the restoration of patriarchal power in fantasies of upward mobility. Nor is this critique of the girl cult available, let alone articulated in the same sphere or medium as the phenomenon itself (as in Hollywood's own deconstruction of the girl cult that Kracauer had celebrated in Iribe and Urson's film *Chicago*¹²⁴); rather, it speaks the language of a critique of ideology in which the male intellectual remains outside and above the public of mass consumption.

The hallmark of stabilized entertainment, however, is that the symbol of the illusion has been replaced. Instead of the Manhattan skyline, the facade is now painted with an "alpine landscape whose peaks defy any depression [*Baisse*]." All over the amusement park in fact, in the design above a boxing ring and that surrounding a roulette table, Kracauer notes the popularity of "alpine panoramas" -- "striking sign of the upper regions which one rarely reaches from the social lowlands." The image of the Alps not only naturalizes and mythifies economic and social inequity; it also asserts a different, or rather identical, timeless Nature, a place beyond history, politics, crisis and contradiction. Against the metaphoric, mass-mediated "urban nature" (*Stadtnatur*) with "its jungle streets, factory massifs and labyrinths of roofs," the alpine panoramas, like the contemporary Mountain films, offer this presumably authentic,

unmediated nature as a solution to modernity's discontents.¹²⁵ The recourse to anti-modern symbols does not make this alternative any less modern: as Kracauer increasingly observes -- and objects to -- the return of the Alps, the Rhine, Old Vienna and Prussia, lieutenants, fraternities, and royalty in German revues and films, he recognizes them as a specific version of technological modernity, an attempt to nationalize and domesticate whatever liberatory, egalitarian effects this modernity might have had.¹²⁶

In his earlier discovery of "America," Kracauer had hoped for a German version of mass-mediated modernity that would be capable of enduring the tensions between a capitalist-industrial economy in permanent crisis and the principles and practices of a democratic society. Crucial to this modernity would have been the ability of cinema and mass culture to function as an intersubjective horizon in which a wide variety of groups, a heterogeneous mass public, could negotiate and reflect upon the contradictions they were experiencing, in which they could confront the violence of difference and mortality rather than repressing or aestheticizing it. Whatever stirrings of such a modernity the Weimar Republic saw, it did not find a more longterm German, let alone European form -- Berlin never became the capital of the twentieth century. Instead, "Berlin" split into irreconcilable halves: an internationalist (American, Jewish, diasporic, politically radical) modernism and a Germanic one that assimilated the most advanced technology to the reinvention of tradition, authority, community, nature, race. When the Nazis perfected this form of modernism into the millennial modernity of total domination and mass annihilation, "America" had to become real, for better or for worse, for Kracauer and others to survive.

NOTES--Hansen

1. The phrase was addressed to Félix Mesguich, the Lumières' cameraman, and is reported in his memoirs, *Tours de manivelle* (Paris: Editions Grasset, 1933); it has been cited apocryphally ever since, notably by Godard in *Le Mépris*. See Georges Sadoul, *Lumière et Méliès*, ed. B. Eisenschitz (Paris: Editions Pierre Lherminier, 1985).

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2. See, for instance, Noël Burch, "Porter, or Ambivalence," *Screen* 19.4 (Winter 1978/79): 91-105, and other essays in part collected in *Life to Those Shadows*, ed. & tr. Ben Brewster (Berkeley, Los Angeles: U of California P, 1990); Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction[s]," *Wide Angle* 8.3-4 (1983): 4-15; Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1906* (New York: Scribners, 1990); Kristin Thompson, Part 3 of David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia UP, 1985); as well as Thomas Elsaesser, ed. (with Adam Barker), *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative* (London: BFI, 1990). Also see Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1991), chs. 1-3.

3. Tom Gunning, "Tracing the Individual Body: Photography, Detectives, Early Cinema and the Body of Modernity," in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, ed. Leo Charney & Vanessa Schwartz, forthcoming, U of California P. Also see Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: MIT, 1990).

4. Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: U of California P, 1993) 2 & passim; also see Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1983); and David Harvey, "Time-Space compression

and the rise of modernism as a cultural force," *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford, Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1989).

5. Susan Buck-Morss, "Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered," *October* 62 (Fall 1992): 3-41. Also see Vanessa Schwartz, "Cinema before the Apparatus: The Public Taste for Reality in *Fin-de-siècle* Paris," in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*.

6. If we take modernism, in the widest sense, to refer to the articulated intellectual, artistic, political responses to modernity and to processes of modernization, then the distinction between the terms can only be a sliding one: Baudelaire, for example, did not simply record the phenomena he perceived as saliently new and different in "modern" life but wrote them into significance -- and, as a new type of literary intellectual, was also part of them. Nonetheless, it seems important not to collapse the two terms if we wish to maintain the heuristic claim that modernity comprises the material conditions of living (regardless of what intellectuals thought about them) as well as the general social horizon of experience, that is, the organization of public life as the matrix in which a wide variety of constituencies related to these living conditions and to each other, did or did not have access to representation and power. The literature on modernity and modernism is too vast to list here; Harvey, ch. 2, offers an original, if often unreliable, summary. For a lucid contribution to the debate see Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986).

7. Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (1982; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988) 36; 171. For another attempt to retrieve an alternative, pre-classical modernism (in *fin-de-siècle* Orientalism, hedonism, androgyny and decorative design), see Peter Wollen, "Out of the Past: Fashion/Orientalism/The Body" (1987), in *Raiding the Icebox: Reflections on Twentieth-century Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1993).

8. Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Capitalism* (Durham: Duke UP, 1991).

9. See, for instance, Berman's attack on the modernism of the "highway," *All That Is Solid* 164ff.; Harvey, *Condition of Postmodernity*, part I; Peter Wollen, "Modern Times: Cinema/Americanism/The Robot" (1988), in *Raiding the Icebox*; also see Miriam Hansen, *Ezra Pounds frühe Poetik und Kulturkritik zwischen Aufklärung und Avantgarde* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1979), part I.
10. See, for instance, recent studies devoted to urban housing estates built in Weimar Germany and their reception, that is, actual living practices developed by their largely working-class inhabitants: Adelheid von Saldern, "Neues Wohnen, Wohnverhältnisse und Wohnverhalten in Großwohnanlagen der 20er Jahre," in: Axel Schildt, Arnold Sywottek, eds., *Massenwohnung und Eigenheim: Wohnungsbau und Wohnen in der Großstadt seit dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (Frankfurt a.M., New York: Campus, 1988) 201-221; von Saldern, "The Workers' Movement and Cultural Patterns on Urban Housing Estates and in Rural Settlements in Germany and Austria During the 1920s," *Social History* 15.3 (1990): 333-54.
11. On classical cinema and Fordist-Taylorist modes of production, see Janet Staiger, part II of Bordwell, Staiger, Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*. On cultural formations of reception, see Hansen, *Babel and Babylon* 87-98; also chs. 3, 11, 12.
12. These attempts were particularly strong in the German case; see Anton Kaes, "Literary Intellectuals and the Cinema: Charting a Controversy," *New German Critique* 40 (Winter 1987): 7-33, and texts collected in Kaes, ed., *Kino-Debatte: Texte zum Verhältnis von Literatur und Film 1909-1929* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1978); Ludwig Greve et al., ed., *Hätte ich das Kino! Schriftsteller und der Stummfilm* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1976); Fritz Güttinger, *Kein Tag ohne Kino: Schriftsteller über den Stummfilm* (Frankfurt: Filmmuseum, 1984); Heinz-B. Heller, *Literarische Intelligenz und Film* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1985).
13. Detlev J. K. Peukert, *Die Weimarer Republik* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1987) 11f.
14. The letters collected in Walter Benjamin, *Briefe an Siegfried Kracauer* (Marbach: Deutsches Literatur-Archiv, 1987), suggest a generous, mutually respecting relationship; the difficulties of that relationship -- rivalry, paranoia, imbalance of power as long as Kracauer was in charge of the review section of the most prestigious daily paper, an increasingly

condescending attitude toward him once he was demoted -- rather emerge from their correspondence with other friends, in particular Theodor W. Adorno, Leo Löwenthal and Gershom Scholem. For some of these personal-intellectual constellations, see Martin Jay, *Permanent Exiles: Essays on the Intellectual Migration from Germany to America* (New York: Columbia UP, 1985); also see Klaus Michael, "Vor dem Café: Walter Benjamin und Siegfried Kracauer in Marseille," in: Michael Opitz & Erdmut Wizisla, eds. *"Aber ein Sturm weht vom Paradise her": Texte zu Walter Benjamin* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1992) 203-221.

15. On Kracauer's position in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, see Thomas Y. Levin, foreword to Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1994), and Andreas Volk, "Siegfried Kracauer in der 'Frankfurter Zeitung': Ein Forschungsbericht," *Soziographie* (Schweizer Gesellschaft für Soziologie), 4 (1991): 43-69. On the political fate of the paper, see Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Intellektuellendämmerung: Zur Lage der Frankfurter Intelligenz in den zwanziger Jahren* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1985) 55-76, and Uwe Pralle, "Eine Titanic bürgerlichen Geistes: Ansichten der 'Frankfurter Zeitung,'" *Frankfurter Rundschau* 20 Jan. 1990, ZB3. On the conception of the *Feuilleton* as a critical, "enlightening" address to the Weimar public, see Almut Todorow, "'Wollten die Eintagsfliegen in den Rang höherer Insekten aufsteigen?': Die Feuilletonkonzeption der *Frankfurter Zeitung* während der Weimarer Republik im redaktionellen Selbstverständnis," *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift* 62.4 (1988): 697-740.

16. See Walter Benjamin, letter to Werner Kraft, 28 October 1935, *Gesammelte Schriften* (=GS), vol. V, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1983): 1151. The entire passage is quoted in translation in: Gertrud Koch, "Cosmos in Film: On the Concept of Space in Walter Benjamin's 'Work of Art' Essay," tr. Nancy Nenno, *Qui Parle* 5.2 (1992): 61-72; 62.

17. Siegfried Kracauer, *Jacques Offenbach und das Paris seiner Zeit* (1937), *Offenbach and the Paris of his Time*, tr. Gwenda David & Eric Mosbacher (London: Constable, 1937).

18. Kracauer himself noted this disjunction of cognitive interests and urged Benjamin, in a review of the latter's *Origin of German Tragic Drama* and *Einbahnstraße*, to apply the "Baroque book's method of dissociating immediately experienced unities" to an analysis of contemporary reality. "Zu den Schriften Walter Benjamins," *FZ* 15 July 1928, *Schriften* 5, ed.

Inka Mülder-Bach (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1990) 2: 119-124; 122f., previously republished in Kracauer's own collection of his Weimar essays, *Das Ornament der Masse* (= *OdM*) (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1963), forthcoming in English, Thomas Y. Levin, ed. & tr., *The Mass Ornament* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994).

19. For a sample of Weimar texts on Americanism, see: Anton Kaes, ed., *Weimar Republik: Manifeste und Dokumente zur deutschen Literatur 1918-1933* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1983) 265-286, partly overlapping with: Kaes, Martin Jay and Edward Dimendberg, eds, *The Weimar Sourcebook* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: U of California P, 1994), chap. 15. For a survey see Frank Trommler, "The Rise and Fall of Americanism in Germany," in: Trommler and Joseph McVeigh, eds. *America and the Germans: An Assessment of a Three-Hundred-Year History* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1985) vol. II: 332-42. Also see Helmut Lethen, *Neue Sachlichkeit 1924-1932: Studien zur Literatur des 'Weißen Sozialismus* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1970); Erhard Schütz, *Romane der Weimarer Republik* (Munich: Fink, 1986) 70ff.; Peukert, *Weimarer Republik 178-190*. On the juncture of cinema and Americanism, see Thomas J. Saunders, *Hollywood in Berlin: American Cinema and Weimar Germany* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: U of California P, 1994). On "left Fordism," see Wollen, "Cinema / Americanism / The Robot." My theoretical approach to Americanism is indebted to Victoria de Grazia, in particular "Americanism for Export," *Wedge* 7-8 (Winter-Spring 1985): 74-81.

20. Kr. [Kracauer], "Die Tagung des Deutschen Werkbunds," *Frankfurter Zeitung* [in the following: *FZ*] 29 July 1924. (Translations, unless otherwise noted, are mine.)

21. [Kracauer,] *Ginster: Von ihm selbst geschrieben* (1928), in: *Schriften* 7, ed. Karsten Witte (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1973) 34.

22. Kracauer's concept of "reality" is often characterized with reference to two programmatic statements from his article series on white collar workers, *Die Angestellten* (1929/30): "Only from its extremes can reality be opened up," and "A hundred reports from a factory do not add up to the reality of this factory, but will always remain that -- a hundred views of a factory. Reality is a construction," *Schriften* 1 (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1978) 207, 216. On Kracauer's "realism," see Heide Schlüppmann, "Phenomenology of Film: On

Siegfried Kracauer's Writings of the 1920s," *New German Critique* 40 (Winter 1987): 97-114; Schlüpmann "The Subject of Survival: On Kracauer's *Theory of Film*," *New German Critique* 54 (Fall 1991): 111-126; and M. Hansen, "'With Skin and Hair': Kracauer's Theory of Film, Marseille 1940," *Critical Inquiry* 19 (Spring 1993): 437-69.

23. On this phase of Kracauer's writing see Inka Mülder's pioneering study, *Siegfried Kracauer -- Grenzgänger zwischen Theorie und Literatur: Seine frühen Schriften 1913-1933* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1985), part I; Michael Schröter, "Weltzerfall und Rekonstruktion: Zur Physiognomik Siegfried Kracauers," *Text + Kritik* 68 (1980): 18-40; also see David Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1986) ch. 3.

24. Kracauer, *Der Detektiv-Roman, Schriften I*: 105. The phrase "transcendental homelessness" comes from Georg Lukács's *Theory of the Novel* (1920) which Kracauer reviewed twice; see the longer version, "Georg von Lukács' Romantheorie," *Neue Blätter für Kunst und Literatur* 4.1 (1921/22), rpt. in *Schriften* 5.1: 117-123. The opposition of "Gemeinschaft" and "Gesellschaft," notably coined by Ferdinand Tönnies in 1886 (corresponding to oppositions of "culture" vs. "civilization" and "unity" vs. "distraction" [*Zerstreuung*]), was still highly popular after World War One and part of the anti-Americanist repertoire. Also see Kracauer's epistemological inquiry, *Soziologie als Wissenschaft* (1922), *Schriften I*, and his important programmatic essay, "Die Wartenden," *FZ* 12 March 1922, *Schriften* 5.1: 160-70 (also *OdM*).

25. This treatise was written between 1922 and 1925 but not published until 1971, in vol. 1 of Kracauer's selected writings (*Schriften*). An excerpt was published under the title "Die Hotelhalle" ("The Hotel Lobby") in *OdM* 157-170. For a summary, see David Frisby, "Zwischen den Sphären: Siegfried Kracauer und der Detektivroman," in: Michael Kessler, Th. Y. Levin, eds., *Siegfried Kracauer: Neue Interpretationen* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg Verlag, 1990) 39-58.

26. See Miriam Hansen, "Decentric Perspectives: Kracauer's Early Writings on Film and Mass Culture," *New German Critique* 54 (Fall 1991): 47-76. The relevant texts are, among others, Kracauer's reviews of *Die Straße* (Karl Grune, 1923), *FZ* 3 & 4 February 1924, and his

discussion of that film in another programmatic essay, "Der Künstler in dieser Zeit," *Der Morgen* 1.1 (April 1925), *Schriften* 5.1: 300-308.

27. Hansen, "Decentric Perspectives" 51ff. The theological, i.e., Jewish-Messianic and Gnostic, underpinnings of Kracauer's writing never quite disappear; among other things, they subtend the concept of "*Rettung*" or redemption in his later *Theory of Film* (1940-1960). For a different reading of Kracauer's turn to the "surface," see Inka Mülder-Bach, "Der Umschlag der Negativität: Zur Verschränkung von Phänomenologie, Geschichtsphilosophie und Filmästhetik in Siegfried Kracauers Metaphorik der 'Oberfläche,'" *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift* 61.2 (1987): 359-373.

28. Kracauer, "Die Wartenden" 169. The rejection of philosophy, which marks Benjamin's development as well, was pervasive among German intellectuals during the post-war years; see, for instance, Margarete Susman, "Exodus aus der Philosophie," *FZ* 17 June 1921. On Kracauer's anti-philosophical turn, see Eckhardt Köhn, *Straßenrausch: Flanerie und kleine Form: Versuch zur Literaturgeschichte des Flaneurs bis 1933* (Berlin: Arsenal, 1989) 225-30.

29. Kracauer, "Künstler in dieser Zeit" 304.

30. See Alf Lüdtke, *Eigen-Sinn: Fabrikalltag, Arbeitererfahrung und Politik vom Kaiserreich bis in den Faschismus* (Hamburg: Ergebnisse-Verlag, 1993) 244-54.

31. Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950* (Boston, Toronto: Little, Brown & Co., 1973) 174 & passim; Eugene Lunn, *Marxism and Modernism: An Historical Study of Lukács, Brecht, Benjamin and Adorno* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1982) 188f., 198f.; Rolf Wiggershaus, *Die Frankfurter Schule: Geschichte, Theoretische Entwicklung, Politische Bedeutung* (Munich: Hanser, 1986) 95-97; Frisby, *Fragments* 123f. On Kracauer's radicalization of Simmel and the anti-idealist pathos of *Lebensphilosophie*, see Rolf Wiggershaus, "Ein abgrundtiefer Realist: Siegfried Kracauer, die Aktualisierung des Marxismus und das Institut für Sozialforschung," in: Kessler/Levin 284-295.

32. Kracauer, letter to Ernst Bloch, 27 May 1926, in: Bloch, *Briefe 1903-1975*, ed. Karola Bloch et al. (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1985) I: 273.
33. Kracauer, "Die Reise und der Tanz," *FZ* 15 March 1925, *Schriften* 5.1: 295 (also *OdM*).
34. rac [Kracauer], "Schumann-Theater," *FZ, Stadt-Blatt* 4 March 1925.
35. raca [Kracauer], "Die Revue im Schumann-Theater," *FZ Stadt-Blatt* 19 May 1925. This review notes approvingly the American influence on German variety stages and by contrast excoriates the retrograde style of the Germanic numbers. Kracauer elaborates on the bad alliance of revue genre and patriotism, militarism, maternal femininity, high culture (the *Tannhäuser* overture with lighting effects) and Viennese *Gemüt* in "Die Revuen," *FZ* 11 December 1925, *Schriften* 5.1: 338-342; here the Tiller Girls too fall prey to Kracauer's scathing critique (340). After the 1929 Crash, Kracauer emphasizes the anachronistic and "spook-like" character of American-style revues, a "simile become flesh" of an illusory economic prosperity: "Girls und Krise" *FZ* 26 May 1931, *Schriften* 5.2: 320-322; "Girls and Crisis," tr. Courtney Federle, *Qui Parle* 5.2 (Spring/Summer 1992): 51-52.
36. On Kracauer's gender politics see Heide Schlüpmann, "Die nebensächliche Frau: Geschlechterdifferenz in Siegfried Kracauers Essayistik der zwanziger Jahre," *Feministische Studien* 11.1 (May 1993): 38-47. For Kracauer's gay inclinations see his two semi-autobiographical novels, *Ginster* and especially *Georg* (completed in exile, 1933/34, first published 1973 in *Schriften*, vol. 7), and his correspondence with Leo Löwenthal 1923/24, Kracauer papers, Deutsches Literatur-Archiv, Marbach a.N. On the Tiller Girls in the context of Weimar androgyny and sexual politics, see Maud Lavin, *Cut with a Kitchen Knife: The Weimar Photomontages of Hannah Höch* (New Haven, London: Yale UP, 1993); Kirsten Beuth, "Die wilde Zeit der schönen Beine: Die inszenierte Frau als Körper-Masse," and other essays in: Katharina Sykora et al., eds. *Die Neue Frau: Herausforderung für die Bildmedien der Zwanziger Jahre* (Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 1993). Helmut Lethen stresses the anti-patriarchal implications of Americanism in his excellent study of modernist "codes of conduct," *Verhaltenslehren der Kälte: Lebensversuche zwischen den Kriegen* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp,

1994); see, for instance, his discussion of Carl Schmitt's rejection of Americanism as "the worst form of cannibalizing the father (*Vaterfraß*)" (233).

37. Raca [Kracauer], "Exzentriktänzer in den Ufa-Lichtspielen," *FZ* 16 October 1928. On the protofascist imagination of the male body as armor, see Klaus Theweleit's by now classic study, *Male Fantasies*, 2 vols. (1977; 1978), tr. Stephen Conway (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 1987; 1989); also see Hal Foster, "Armor Fou," *October* 56 (Spring 1991): 64-97.

38. For Kracauer's polemics against "body culture," see, for example, "Sie sporten," *FZ* 13 January 1927, *Schriften* 5.2: 14-18; also his second review of *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit* (revised version, 1926), *FZ* 5 August 1926, rpt. in: Karsten Witte, ed., *Schriften* 2 (Frankfurt a.M. Suhrkamp, 1984): 398-99; and "Das Ornament der Masse," *FZ* 9 and 10 June 1927, *Schriften* 5.2: 57-67, section 5 (also *OdM*). For examples of an alternative (though always, for Kracauer, problematic) physicality, see "Langeweile," *FZ* 16 November 1924, *Schriften* 5.1: 278-281 (also *OdM*); "Der verbotene Blick," *FZ* 9 April 1925, *Schriften* 5.1: 296-300; "Die Eisenbahn," *FZ* 30 March 1930, *Schriften* 5.2: 175-179; "Abschied von der Lindenpassage," *FZ* 21 December 1930, *Schriften* 5.2: 260-265 (also *OdM*); "Heißer Abend," 15 June 1932, *Schriften* 5.3: 82-83.

39. Kracauer reflects on the relationship between circus and cinema in his numerous reviews on circus films; see, for instance, his enthusiastic review of Max Reichmann's film, *Die Manege* (1927): Raca, "Ein Zirkusfilm," *FZ* 18 January 1928, *Schriften* 2: 405-407.

40. Raca [Kracauer], "Zirkus Hagenbeck," *FZ* 19 June 1926. In contrast, see his pre-rationalization circus essay, "Im Zirkus," *FZ Stadt-Blatt* 8 June 1923.

41. *Ibid.*; for Kracauer's identification with the clowns, see also his follow-up article, "Geh'n wir mal zu Hagenbeck," *FZ Stadt-Blatt* 20 June 1926; and "Akrobat -- schön," *FZ* 25 October 1932, *Schriften* 5.3: 127-131.

42. On the significance of improvisation and chance in Kracauer see Hansen, "Decentric Perspectives" 70, and "With Skin and Hair" 450ff., 467.

43. Raca [Kracauer], "Artistisches und Amerikanisches," *FZ* 29 January 1926. On the centrality of the slapstick genre in Kracauer's drafts and outlines (1940ff.) toward his later *Theory of Film* (1960), see Hansen, "'With Skin and Hair'" 460f., 467.
44. See, for instance, texts collected in: Wilfried Wiegand, ed., *Über Chaplin* (Zürich: Diogenes, 1978); Klaus Kreimeier, ed., *Zeitgenosse Chaplin* (Berlin: Oberbaumverlag, 1978). Also see Sabine Hake, "Chaplin Reception in Weimar Germany," *New German Critique* 51 (1990): 87-111; Saunders, *Hollywood in Berlin*, ch. 6: "Comic Redemption: The Slapstick Synthesis."
45. Benjamin, "Erwiderung an Oscar A. H. Schmitz," *Literarische Welt*, March 11, 1927, rpt. *Gesammelte Schriften* (=GS), vol. II, ed. R. Tiedemann & H. Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1977): 753. In his *Moscow Diary* he deplors the (self-)restricted range of Soviet film culture which has no room for (imported) slapstick comedy, "since it is based on uninhibited play with technology. Everything technical, however, is sacred here; nothing is taken more seriously than technology." Benjamin, *Moscow Diary*, ed. Gary Smith, tr. Richard Sieburth (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1986) 55 (transl. modified). Also see Benjamin, "Zur Lage der russischen Filmkunst" (1927), GS II: 747-751; 750.
46. Benjamin, draft notes relating to the Artwork Essay, GS I, ed. R. Tiedemann & H. Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1974): 1040, 1047. Also see the draft notes to the Kafka essay in which Benjamin considers Chaplin and Kafka in terms of the concept of "self-alienation" and the historical boundary marked by the demise of silent film; GS II: 1256f.
47. Raca [Kracauer], "Chaplin" (on *The Gold Rush*), 6 November 1926, rpt. in: Karsten Witte, ed., Kracauer, *Kino* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974) 165f.; this collection contains a number of Kracauer's extensive writings on Chaplin. On Kracauer's Chaplin criticism, see Witte, "Nachwort," *Kino* 268-274; Mülder, *Kracauer* 99-100.
48. Kracauer, "Chaplin: Zu seinem Film 'Zirkus,'" *FZ* 15 February 1928, *Kino* 167f.; "Chaplin [*Gold Rush*]" 66; "Chaplins Triumph," *Neue Rundschau* 42.1 (April 1931), *Kino* 179.

49. The David-versus-Goliath theme is first singled out in Kracauer's review of *The Pilgrim*, "Chaplin als Prediger," *FZ* 23 December 1929, *Kino* 170-73; 172. It will become a recurrent motif in Kracauer's later work, in particular *Theory of Film*, where it is linked to cinematic techniques such as the close-up, and the capacity of film to give representation to "the small world of things," as opposed to the grand schemes of narrative and history.
50. "Chaplins Triumph" 179. On Chaplin as a diasporic, Jewish figure also see Hannah Arendt, *The Jew as Pariah: Jewish Identity and Politics in the Modern Age*, ed. & intr. Ron H. Feldman (New York: Grove Press, 1978) 79-81.
51. Mülder, *Kracauer* 100; Kracauer, "Chaplin [*Circus*]" 169.
52. Kracauer, "Chaplins Triumph"; also see Kracauer, "Lichter der Großstadt: Zur deutschen Uraufführung des Chaplinfilms," *FZ* 28 March 1928, *Kino* 173-176.
53. Kracauer, "Ornament " 62, 67.
54. Peter Wollen, for instance, argues that Kracauer's "utopian dream was of a Fordist rationality that would not be dehumanizing," but goes on to fault him for ignoring that "the problem is that of reintegrating reason not only with truth, but with the body" (*Raiding the Icebox* 56). For a different view see Heide Schlüpmann, "The Return of the Repressed: Reflections on a Philosophy of Film History from a Feminist Perspective," *Film History* 6.1 (Spring 1994): 80-93; Schlüpmann, "Die nebensächliche Frau" 46; and Hansen, "With Skin and Hair" 458f., 464; also see above, note 38.
55. "Ornament," *Schriften* 5.2: 67, 60, 59, 65f. Kracauer takes up the gap between mass ornament (as object of surveillance and organization) and mass democracy (as the condition of social and economic justice) in his essay on unemployment agencies, "Über Arbeitsnachweise: Konstruktion eines Raumes," *FZ* 17 June 1930, *Schriften* 5.2: 190-191.
56. S. Kracauer, "Berliner Nebeneinander: Kara-Iki -- Scala-Ball im Savoy -- Menschen im Hotel," *FZ* 17 February 1933.
57. Kracauer, "Kult der Zerstreuung: Über die Berliner Lichtspielhäuser," *FZ* 4 March 1926; "Cult of Distraction," tr. Thomas Y. Levin, *New German Critique* 40 (Winter 1987): 92f.

58. The term "variety format" was coined by Brooks McNamara, "The Scenography of Popular Entertainment," *The Drama Review* 18.1 (March 1974): 16-24; also see Tom Gunning, "Cinema of Attractions" (note 1, above). Kracauer consistently defends the practice of mixed programming (live performances, shorts and features) just as he sees in live music an invaluable source of improvisation and unpredictability; see, for example, "Ufa-Beiprogramm," *FZ* March 11, 1928; "Ein Monstretonfilm," *FZ* 19 October 1929. In a wonderful passage on moviegoing from his novel *Georg*, Kracauer unfolds the anecdote of the piano player who cannot see the screen and thus creates an amazing, epiphantic relation between image and music (428-29).

59. "Cult" 94-95; translation modified.

60. See, for instance, Kracauer's obituary, "Edgar Wallace," *FZ* 13 February 1932; "'Berlin-Alexanderplatz' als Film" (comparison with Sternberg, *An American Tragedy*), *FZ* 13 October 1931, *Schriften* 2: 510; "Der heutige Film und sein Publikum," *FZ* 30 November & 1 December 1928, rpt. as "Film 1928" in *OdM* 295-310; 309f., 296 ("not the standardization [*Typisierung*] of film is objectionable. On the contrary...."). For a similar stance, see Benjamin, "This Space for Rent," *One-Way Street* (1928), selections in *Reflections*, tr. Edmund Jephcott, ed. Peter Demetz (New York, London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979) 85-86.

61. [Anon.,] [series of 8 articles], *FZ* 11-19 March 1927, rpt. as "Die kleinen Ladenmädchen gehen ins Kino," *OdM* 279-294; "Film 1928"; "Not und Zerstreuung: Zur Ufa-Produktion 1931/32," *FZ* 15 July 1931; "Gepflegte Zerstreuung: Eine grundsätzliche Erwägung," *FZ* 3 August 1931, *Schriften* 2: 500-503.

62. Heide Schlüpmann, "Der Gang ins Kino -- ein Ausgang aus selbstverschuldeter Unmündigkeit: Zum Begriff des Publikums in Kracauers Essayistik der Zwanziger Jahre," in: Kessler/Levin, *Siegfried Kracauer* 267-284; 276.

63. See, for instance, Lethen, *Neue Sachlichkeit* 102-104; Lethen has since revised his assessment of Kracauer; see his illuminating essay, "Sichtbarkeit: Kracauers Liebeslehre," in: Kessler/Levin 195-228. A more recent version of this charge can be found in Schütz, *Romane der Weimarer Republik* 32-33.

64. Peukert, *Weimarer Republik* 175ff.
65. "Ornament" *Schriften* 5.2: 58f. (emphasis added). I am deliberately using the terminology of post-WWII American mass sociology, notably David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd* (1950). Riesman describes the emergence of a new, "other-directed" character type with recourse to the "radar" metaphor for which he credits the Marxist economic historian Karl August Wittfogel, a collaborator of the Frankfurt (later New York-based) Institute for Social Research. On this connection, see Lethen, "Radar-Typ," *Verhaltenslehren der Kälte* 235-243.
66. "Ornament," section 5.
67. See, for instance, "Abschied von der Lindenpassage," *FZ* 21 December 1930, *Schriften* 5.2: 260-65; 264 (also *OdM*); "Berg- und Talbahn," *FZ* 14 July 1928, *Schriften* 5.2: 117-19, tr. Thomas Y. Levin, "Roller Coaster," *Qui Parle* 5.2 (1992): 58-60; "Proletarische Schnellbahn," *FZ* 24 April 1930, *Schriften* 5.2: 179-180; "Berliner Nebeneinander."
68. Published as a book in 1930, subtitled *Aus dem neuesten Deutschland* (from the most recent Germany), now *Schriften* 1, ed. Karsten Witte (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1971). For a more detailed account see Frisby, *Fragments* 158-172; and Benjamin's remarkable reviews, "Ein Außenseiter macht sich bemerkbar," *Die Gesellschaft* 7 (1930) I: 473-77, and "S. Kracauer, Die Angestellten [...]," *Die Literarische Welt* 6.20 (16 June 1930): 5, *GS* III: 219-28. In addition to this study, Kracauer wrote a number of reviews and articles focusing on female employees, e.g., "Mädchen im Beruf," *Der Querschnitt* 12.4 (April 1932), *Schriften* 5.3: 60-65.
69. The term "Stehkragen-Proletarier" is used in the German edition of Kracauer's retrospective "psychological history of German film," *From Caligari to Hitler*, *Schriften* 2: 199; the American version (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 1947) 189, simply uses "white-collar workers." In his 1936 "Exposé" on "Mass and Propanda," a proposal for a "study on fascist propaganda" solicited by Adorno for the Institute for Social Research in New York, Kracauer actually differentiates among *three* groups within the "new masses" who, each in their way, responded to fascist ideology: 1. the proletariat; 2. the proletarianized middle class; and 3. the unemployed. Manuscript (9pp.) published in Ingrid Belke & Irina Renz, eds., *Siegfried Kracauer 1889-1966*, = *Marbacher Magazin* 47 (1988) 85-90.

70. Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" (1939/40), *GS* I.2: 619, 618; *Illuminations*, tr. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1969) 166, 165, translation modified.
71. Rolf Tiedemann, editor's introduction to Benjamin, *PW*, *GS* V.1-2: 11. Also see Susan Buck-Morss's excellent study, *Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge MA, London: MIT, 1989).
72. Benjamin, letter to Gretel Karplus [Adorno], 9 October 1935, *GS* V: 1148; partly translated in Buck-Morss, *Dialectics* 392. Also see his letters to Horkheimer, 16 October 1935, *GS* V: 1149, and to Werner Kraft, 28 October 1935, *GS* V: 1151 (see above, note 16).
73. Benjamin, *PW* J56a,10 & J61a,1, *GS* V: 417, 427; similar (though without revue "girls") in "Zentralpark," *GS* I: 668; "Central Park," tr. Lloyd Spencer and Mark Harrington, *New German Critique* 34 (Winter 1935): 40. Also see Buck-Morss, *Dialectics*, ch.6, 190ff. In his notes on the Artwork Essay, Benjamin extends the analogy to the sphere of reproduction: "The mass reproduction of artworks is not only related to the mass production of industrial goods but also to the mass reproduction of human attitudes and activities" (*GS* I: 1042).
74. On the dialectics of capitalist temporality in the *Passagen-Werk*, see Buck-Morss, *Dialectics*, Part II, especially 96-109.
75. Benjamin, "Zentralpark" 680; "Central Park" 48 (transl. modified).
76. Benjamin, *PW* K1a,8, *GS* V: 494; also see Buck-Morss, *Dialectics*, ch. 8.
77. Benjamin, "Paris -- the Capital of the Nineteenth Century" (1935 exposé), *GS* V: 50; in *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, tr. Harry Zohn & Quintin Hoare (London: Verso, 1983) 165.
78. Buck-Morss, "Aesthetics and Anaesthetics" (see note 5, above).
79. See Schlüpmann, "Gang ins Kino" 275.
80. Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations* 242; also see Kracauer, "Masse und Propaganda."
81. The term "innervation" appears in Benjamin's on surrealism, "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia" (1929), *Reflections* 192; *PW* W7,4, *GS* V: 777; the

first version of the Artwork Essay, *GS I*: 445; the second version, *GS VII*: 360, note 4; "Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire," *GS I*: 630 ("On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" 175, translated as "nervous impulses"). Also see Buck-Morss, *Dialectics* 117; Hansen, "Of Mice and Ducks: Benjamin and Adorno on Disney," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 92.1 (Winter 1993): 27-61; 38 & note 24; and Koch, "Cosmos."

82. Kracauer, review of Balázs, *Der Geist des Films*, "Ein neues Filmbuch," *FZ* November 2, 1930; also see Kracauer's review of *Der sichtbare Mensch*, *FZ*, July 10, 1927. On Balázs' (unacknowledged) significance for Benjamin, see Gertrud Koch, "Béla Balázs: The Physiognomy of Things," *New German Critique* 40 (Winter 1987): 167-177.

83. Buck-Morss, "Aesthetics and Anaesthetics"; Hansen, "Benjamin, Cinema and Experience: 'The Blue Flower in the Land of Technology,'" *New German Critique* 40 (Winter 1987): 179-224; Hansen, "Of Mice and Ducks."

84. Emilie Altenloh, *Zur Soziologie des Kino: Die Kino-Unternehmung und die sozialen Schichten ihrer Besucher*, doctoral dissertation, Heidelberg (Leipzig: Spamersche Buchdruckerei, 1914). On the proletarian film, see Bruce Murray, *Film and the German Left in the Weimar Republic* (Austin: U of Texas P, 1992); also see Adelheid von Saldern, "Massenfreizeitkultur im Visier: Ein Beitrag zu den Deutungs- und Einwirkungsversuchen während der Weimarer Republik," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 33 (1993): 21-58.

85. *Einbahnstraße*, *GS IV*: 95-96; *Reflections* 71.

86. Benjamin, "Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit" (second version), *GS VII*: 370f.

87. Benjamin, "Erwiderung an Oscar A. H. Schmitz," *GS II*: 753. Related to this surrender is Benjamin's plea, in a note on "the political significance of film" in the *Passagen-Werk*, for a "dialectical" acceptance -- and transcendence -- of "Kitsch" in art that wants to reach "the mass"; K3a,1, *GS V*: 499-500.

88. Kracauer's position in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* was, with the exception perhaps of a few years between 1924 and 1929, hardly ever not precarious; yet, barred from an academic

career for a variety of reasons (among them his speech impediment), he preferred being a dependent editor of a paper with a wide circulation, ranging from white-collar workers to the educated bourgeoisie, to the greater freedom he might have enjoyed at a paper like the *Weltbühne* (which repeatedly offered him an affiliation) -- which, however, reached a more limited readership of mostly likeminded artists and literary intellectuals. On Kracauer's employee status see his own account in *Georg*; and Hans G Helms, "Der wunderliche Kracauer," *Neues Forum* 18 (June/July 1971): 28. Also see references in note 15, above.

89. *Die Angestellten* 215. Kracauer elaborates on this culture in the chapter, "Asyl für Obdachlose" (Shelter for the Homeless), which tropes on Lukacs's phrase of "transcendental homelessness." For excerpts of this chapter in translation, see Kaes, Jay & Dimendberg, eds., *Weimar Republic Sourcebook* 189-91.

90. For the latter kind of argument see Henri Band, "Massenkultur versus Angestelltenkultur: Siegfried Kracauers Auseinandersetzung mit Phänomenen der modernen Kultur in der Weimarer Republik," in: Norbert Krenzlin, ed., *Zwischen Angstmetapher und Terminus: Theorien der Massenkultur seit Nietzsche* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1992) 73-101.

91. Lacan first presented his lecture at a meeting of the International Psychoanalytic Association at Marienbad in 1936; during the conference, he travelled to the Berlin Olympics to watch the fascist Imaginary in action -- see Buck-Morss, "Aesthetics" 37; David Macey, *Lacan in Contexts* (London, New York: Verso, 1988) 214. On parallels between Kracauer and Lacan, cf. Thomas Elsaesser, "Cinema -- The Irresponsible Signifier or, 'The Gamble with History,'" *New German Critique* 40 (Winter 1987): 65-89.

92. Kracauer, "Die kleinen Ladenmädchen" 280; on "role-playing" and the emergence of a managerial caste, see Kracauer's remarkable essay on the actor, "Über den Schauspieler," *Die Neue Rundschau* 41.9 (1930): 429-31; *Schriften* 5.2: 231-34.

93. Kracauer, "Langeweile" (Boredom), *FZ* 16 November 1924, *Schriften* 5.1: 279; also *OdM* 322.

94. Kracauer, "Die kleinen Ladenmädchen" 280.

95. Benjamin, "Ein Außenseiter" 223.
96. Kracauer, *Die Angestellten* 289; also see 248. For his indictment of the current film production as "Fluchtversuche" or attempts to escape see, for instance, "Film 1928."
97. Kracauer, *Die Angestellten* 287.
98. See especially Benjamin's programmatic essay of 1933, "Erfahrung und Armut," *GS II*: 213-19; Kr [Kracauer], "Das neue Bauen: Zur Stuttgarter Werkbundausstelung: 'Die Wohnung,'" *FZ* 31 July 1927, *Schriften* 5.2: 68-74; 74.
99. Kracauer, *Die Angestellten* 286-87. Kracauer elaborates on the relation(s) between photography and death in "Die Photographie," *FZ* 28 October 1927, *Schriften* 5.2: 83-98; tr. Thomas Y. Levin, *Critical Inquiry* 19 (Spring 1993): 421-36.
100. Michael Geyer, "The Stigma of Violence in Twentieth-Century Germany: A History of Man-Made Mass Death," book-length study in progress; also see Hansen, "With Skin and Hair" 465f., 468f.
101. See, for instance, Kracauer, "Girls and Crisis," and "Renovierter Jazz," *FZ* 25 October 1931, *Schriften* 5.2: 390-92.
102. "Reise und Tanz" 293.
103. "Reise und Tanz" *OdM* 45. On Kracauer's city images, see Inka Mülder-Bach, "'Mancherlei Fremde': Paris, Berlin und die Extraterritorialität Siegfried Kracaers," *Juni: Magazin für Kultur und Politik* 3.1 (1989): 61-72; Köhn, *Straßenrausch* (note 28, above) 225-48; David Frisby, "Deciphering the Hieroglyphics of Weimar Berlin: Siegfried Kracauer," in: Charles W. Haxthausen & Heidrun Suhr, eds., *Berlin: Culture and Metropolis* (Minneapolis & Oxford: U of Minnesota Press, 1991) 152-165; Anthony Vidler, "Agorophobia: Spatial Estrangement in Simmel and Kracauer," *New German Critique* 54 (Fall 1991): 31-45. On Kracauer in the tradition of Weimar flâneurism, see Karl Prümm, "Die Stadt der Reporter und Kinogänger bei Roth, Brentano und Kracauer," in: Klaus R. Scherpe, ed., *Die Unwirklichkeit der Städte: Großstadtdarstellungen zwischen Moderne und Postmoderne* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1988) 80-105; and Anke Gleber, "Criticism or Consumption of Images? Franz Hessel and the

Flâneur in Weimar Culture," tr. Bill Rollins, *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 13.1 (Winter 1989): 80-93.

104. "Die Wiederholung: Auf der Durchreise in München," *FZ* 29 May 1932, *Schriften* 5.3: 71-72.

105. Kracauer, "Straße ohne Erinnerung," *FZ* 16 December 1932, *Schriften* 5.3: 173.

106. *Die Angestellten* 298. The figure of the inversion of distance and closeness, exotic and familiar, is pervasive in Kracauer's essays and reviews; see, for instance, "Exotische Filme," *FZ* 28 May 1929; "Die Filmprüfstelle gegen einen Russenfilm," *FZ* 23 July 1930, last section ("Menschen im Busch") rpt. *Schriften* 2: 438-39; "Die Filmwochenschau," *Die Neue Rundschau* 42.2 (1931): 573-75, rpt. *Kino* 11-14; "Reisen, nüchtern," *FZ* 10 July 1932, *Schriften* 5.3: 87-90; 87f.

107. The term "Straßenrausch" appears in Kracauer's uncanny essay, "Erinnerung an eine Pariser Straße," *FZ* 9 November 1930, *Schriften* 5.2: 243-48; for a description of a Berlin "street intoxication," see *Georg* 487. His other major articles on Paris are: "Analyse eines Stadtplans: Faubourgs und Zentrum," *FZ*, n.d. (ca. 1926), *Schriften* 5.1: 401-403; "Lichtreklame," *FZ* 15 January 1927, *Schriften* 5.2: 19-21; "Pariser Beobachtungen," *FZ* 13 February 1927, *Schriften* 5.2: 25-36; "Das Straßenvolk in Paris," *FZ* 12 April 1927, *Schriften* 5.2: 39-43; "Negerball in Paris," *FZ* 2 November 1928, *Schriften* 5.2: 127-129; "Die Berührung," *FZ* 18 November 1928, *Schriften* 5.2: 129-36; "Ein paar Tage Paris," *FZ* 5 April 1931, *Schriften* 5.2: 296-301. A number of these articles were collected by Kracauer himself in the collection *Straßen in Berlin und anderswo* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1964). Kracauer's "social biography" of Jacques Offenbach (see above, note 17), written after his occasional sojourns in Paris had turned into the hardships of exile, also belongs to this context. On Kracauer's Paris, see Müllder-Bach, "Mancherlei Fremde"; and Remo Bodei, "L'expérience et les formes: Le Paris de Walter Benjamin et de Siegfried Kracauer," tr. J. Liechtenstein, in: Heinz Wismann, ed., *Walter Benjamin et Paris* (Paris: Editions du CERF, 1986) 33-47.

108. Kracauer, "Negerball in Paris" 128f.

109. Kracauer, "Lichtreklame" 19.
110. Raca., "Therèse Raquin," *FZ* 29 March 1928, *Kino* 136-38; "Neue Tonfilme: Einige grundsätzliche Bemerkungen" (on Clair's *Sous les toits de Paris*), *FZ* 16 August 1930, *Kino* 125-28 ("half-ironic expeditions through the peculiar inbetween-world [*Zwischenwelt*] in which things and people irritate, touch and caress each other" [127]); "Wiedersehen mit alten Filmen: VI. Jean Vigo," *Basler National-Zeitung* 1 February 1940, *Kino* 120-24. On Benjamin's trope of an "optical unconscious" see Hansen, "Benjamin, Cinema and Experience" 207ff., "Of Mice and Ducks" 30f., 42f.; and Koch, "Béla Balázs" 172f.; "Cosmos in Film" 70f.
111. Kracauer refers to Vertov as "surrealist artist who registers the colloquy that the died-away, disintegrated life holds with the wakeful things," stressing the film's affinity with states of dreaming and dying as opposed to the usually emphasized themes of technology and collectivity; "Mann mit dem Kinoapparat," *FZ* 19 May 1929, *Kino* 88-92; 90. The quotation is from an actually fairly negative review of Clair's *Quatorze Juillet*, "Idyll, Volkserhebung und Charakter," *FZ* 24 January 1933, partly in *Kino* 132-135; 135. Kracauer's understanding of surrealism is indebted to Benjamin's essay of 1929 to which he occasionally alludes.
112. Kr [Kracauer], "Neue Filme," section "Montmartre-Singspiel" (on Clair's *Le Million*), *FZ* 18 May 1931, *Kino* 128-30; "Rationalisierung [on Clair's *A nous la liberté*] und Unterwelt," *FZ* 27 January 1932, *Kino* 130-132.
113. Ibid. 131. On the historical context of France's resistance to "mechanization," see Richard F. Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: U of California P, 1993).
114. Kracauer, "Pariser Beobachtungen" 25, 35.
115. Kracauer, "La ville de Malakoff," *FZ* 30 January 1927, *Schriften* 5.2: 22-24.
116. Kracauer, "Ein paar Tage Paris" 301. For a similar turn, see "Die Wiederholung" (The Repetition), a companion piece to "Erinnerung an eine Pariser Straße" which contrasts Berlin's presentist modernity with Munich's dreamlike evocation of the past and culminates in a veritable flight or escape back to Berlin.

117. Kracauer, "Berliner Landschaft," *FZ* 8 November 1931, *Schriften* 5.2: 401; also see "Unfertig in Berlin," *FZ* 13 September 1931, *Schriften* 5.2: 375.
118. Kracauer, "Der Künstler in dieser Zeit," *Der Morgen* 1.1 (April 1925), *Schriften* 5.1: 300-308; 305. Ernst Bloch resumes this formulation in "Die Angst des Ingenieurs" (1929), *Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1977) 9: 347-58; 352.
119. See, for instance, "Film 1928" 296, 309f.
120. Kracauer, "Berg- und Talbahn" 117-18, "Roller Coaster" 59.
121. Hansen, "Decentric Perspectives" 75-76.
122. Kracauer, "Organisiertes Glück," *FZ* 8 May 1930.
123. Raca [Kracauer], "Zirkus Sarrasani," *FZ* 13 November 1929. This piece relates to his earlier articles on the circus, e.g., "Zirkus Hagenbeck" (see above), in a similar way as "Organized Happiness" does to "Roller Coaster." The analogy between circus aesthetics and Fordist-Taylorist methods of production is made more explicitly and single-mindedly than in the earlier article; the symptom of the slippage between playful parody and dead-serious thoroughness is "the elimination [*Ausfall*] of the clowns": "There is no time for the clowns, we have to rationalize too much. Improvisation will soon no longer be granted any place."
124. Raca. [Kracauer], "Girdämmerung," *FZ* 22 June 1928. Much as it betrays the writer's own ambivalence toward (New) women, this review once more demonstrates Kracauer's interest in Fordist mass culture's potential for critical self-reflexion, which was not limited to the genre of comedy but, as in this case, could also occur in social drama. The review concludes with the sentence: "American miracles happen in Hollywood."
125. Kracauer, "Worte von der Straße," *FZ* 7 July 1930, *Schriften* 5.2: 201. On the Mountain film, see Eric Rentschler, "Mountains and Modernity: Relocating the *Bergfilm*," *New German Critique* 51 (Fall 1990): 137-61; for Kracauer's polemic against the Mountain film genre, see *From Caligari to Hitler*, chs. 9 & 21, and, by contrast, his early, rather enthusiastic review of Arnold Fanck's film, *Der Berg des Schicksals*, "Berge, Wolken, Menschen," *FZ Stadt-Blatt* 9

April 1925. For an attempt to rescue the Alps from the discourse of reactionary *kitsch*, see Ernst Bloch, "Alpen ohne Photographie" (1930), *Gesamtausgabe* 9: 488-498.

126. For an instance of such domestication in the genre of the musical, see Karsten Witte, "Visual Pleasure Inhibited: Aspects of the German Revue Film," tr. J.D. Steakley & Gabriele Hoover, *New German Critique* 24-25 (Fall/Winter 1981/82): 238-263.