

W.G. Sebald and the modern art of memory

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The reception of Sebald's literary works has been, with few exceptions, rapturous. Internationally, across both the popular and literary press, they have been hailed as melancholic and strange masterpieces, late rejoinders to the high tradition of European literature. This judgement has been sustained academically, well beyond the disciplinary confines of literary studies. The bibliography on him is already lengthy, extended by his sudden death in 2001, which seems to have encouraged a eulogistic tone in mimetic homage to Sebald's own mournful prose.¹ Within two decades it appears that Sebald is in the process of becoming a landmark of contemporary intellectual culture.

The reasons for this reception are multiple. 'Holocaust writing' is a conspicuous and well-established genre of contemporary fiction. It is a crude label for Sebald's work in so far as Nazi atrocities are dealt with only indirectly, through their deferred effects and traces, and as one of a number of historical catastrophes. Sebald is perhaps less a 'holocaust writer' than a writer of destruction, or, to use some of his own words, a writer of the natural history of destruction who takes the whole passage of European history as his subject matter. But it is precisely his awkward relation to 'holocaust writing' that has generated such attention. He writes not only about the suffering of Jews but also about the devastation wrought by the Allied bombing of Germany, interpreting German silence about this not as being due to conservative nationalism, but as an extension of the mechanisms of repression developed during the Nazi culture of war – although this has clearly weakened recently. He also diagnoses the German postwar capitalist work ethic as a direct consequence of this repression. Perhaps less conspicuous to his Anglo-American readers, he directly and intimately identifies with Jewish victims, effacing the received ethical distinction between victim and (German) perpetrator. Sebald is interesting and significant because he deals not merely with what has

been repressed within cultural consciousness, but with what has been repressed by the dominant scenes and institutions of memory, with what the memory of the repressed itself represses. This is controversial but also timely, as the recent commemorations of the bombing of Dresden indicate. It is largely Sebald's criticism of German nationalism and his stitching of this episode into an epochal history of destruction that has saved him from the nationalist sentiments about the 'German holocaust'.

Yet the interest in Sebald's articulation of these arguments derives principally from further peculiarities of the genre of artwork that he has developed. Of particular interest here is less his poetry – such as his first extended poem *After Nature*, or his books of poems and pictures written in collaboration with artists, *For Years Now* with Tess Jaray and *Unrecounted* with Jan Peter Tripp – than his series of pseudo-novelistic works, which have to date had the greatest impact: *Vertigo*, *The Emigrants*, *The Rings of Saturn* and *Austerlitz*.² Here text and images – often, but not exclusively, photographs – are combined in what, besides their marketing as novels, appear to be a curious combination of genres, perhaps most akin to informal biographies. The characters are people haunted by horrific experiences of the past, often in relation to the Second World War, and narrated by a biographer or co-memoirist who sympathetically, painstakingly and self-consciously records their activities and testimony. And yet, despite the description of real people and events and the provision of apparently factual evidence throughout – enforced by the use of photographs – these biographies are often fictionalized, but to an indeterminate degree. This, by turns mundane and hallucinatory, fusion of fact and fiction articulates the persistent theme throughout the works: memory and the attempt to mourn traumatic and repressed experiences. The simple separation of fact and fiction does not grasp the phenomenon or task of

memory. The re-assemblage of traces of the past into a coherent experience cannot be achieved by the mere presentation of facts, and so neither can this experience be written off as fiction. This ambiguity is the medium of memory as well as any artwork that aspires to the self-conscious illusion of truth.

Sebald's art of memory resonates with an intellectual period that has become preoccupied with the literary and visual culture of memory, repression and mourning among the long shadows of the Second World War, darkened by the fading of avant-garde utopianism. Besides the all-too-quaint admiration for Sebald's learnedness, there is the recognition of an oeuvre that articulates many of the fundamental concerns of contemporary cultural theory. Is this not the latest and perhaps greatest post-Benjaminian art of memory? Certainly, it is not despite but because of Sebald's attention to the lost, buried and untimely that his work is seen as so timely. There is a sense of fulfilled anticipation in the reception of Sebald's art, even gratitude.

Sebald has developed a genre formed through the synthesis of a number of minor genres – biography, autobiography, diary, travel writing – and non-artistic forms – the scrapbook, the family or holiday photo-album – that are combined to create a late attempt to mourn the traumatic experience of the First and Second World Wars, and thereby salvage the ruins of the tradition of European literature these wars produced. He has attempted to suppress the kitsch dimension of these genres, forming an innovative, syncretic genre in which the novel – modernism's syncretic genre par excellence – can be rejoined, albeit with the self-consciousness of its historical ruination. The accumulation of his biography-like texts suggests a form of combination beyond the parameters of the published books, as if Sebald were constructing a larger, unfinished, and perhaps unfinishable work; perhaps a melancholic reworking of Balzac's modern epic, the *Comédie Humaine*, a 55-volume set of which appears towards the end of *Austerlitz*.

However, modernism begs to be judged in the light of the latest historical formation of its materials. And in this respect Sebald's work displays an indifference or limitation that demands criticism. The most striking effects of the cultural and political landscape since the Second World War have been repressed in Sebald's art. The collapse of the Soviet Union, the processes of decolonization and recolonization, the resurgent globalization of capitalism, the overdetermination of memories of the Holocaust by its propaganda function in the politics of the Middle East: all these phenomena



are scarcely detectable. The theoretical and practical transformation of the use of image and text – especially in relation to digitalization and the Internet – and the novel genres emerging from these changes, are equally absent in any direct form. It is this that gives his work its sentimental, arty and conservative quality, despite the deep, near-suicidal melancholy that is an almost constant theme. The rather middlebrow appreciation of his learnedness partakes of this conservative pleasure. For anyone sensitive to the cultural and political narcissism of this melancholy, it's not that pleasurable. The uncritical appreciation of Sebald's work as an art of memory intensifies the opposite judgement: that it is an art of forgetting, or perhaps an allegory of forgetting and its ironies.

Art, which relates to truth as much by what it does not say or show as by what it does, promises to avoid repressing what it does not remember. But mere appreciation cannot grasp this. In simply affirming art, it reifies what art says, apologizing for what it does not say. Appreciation is conservative and philistine. Only criticism can avoid this. But what form the criticism of the modern art of memory should take is not self-evident. It requires methodological considerations, even at the risk of giving up an immanent critique of the artwork. The most reflective responses to Sebald's work to date have done little to advance this task. Walter Benjamin's model of criticism is decisive here,

not least because it is clear from Sebald's own literary criticism as well as certain allusions in his artworks that Benjamin is profoundly influential. So a detour into Benjamin's analyses turns out to be less of a departure from the immanent context of Sebald's artworks than it might seem.

Benjamin's model

The criticism of the modern art of memory still does well to look to Benjamin's analyses, where we find that all three terms – the modern, art and memory – lose their self-evidence and enter into mutual questioning. Memory is not treated as an ahistorical faculty that applies indifferently to whatever it remembers, but an ability that is culturally constituted by what it faces. Memory forms the subject, it is not merely a mechanism or item for a subject. Correspondingly, it is not merely an object for a cultural theory in general, but forms the theory that grasps it. What is generated is not a universal cultural theory but a cultural theory of modernity that is nonetheless defined by structures of universality. The relation of memory to modernity is crucial for Benjamin, since what is at stake is the crisis of traditional forms of memory in the face of this culture of modernity; the question of how new forms of memory have been or should be developed to negotiate this culture. Art is not immune to these transformations, but defined by them, in so far as its function as a mode of memory is central to it. Thus the question arises of how art is formed or changed, indeed whether art is even possible.

Of central importance in approaching this force-field of concepts of modernity is the phenomenon of newness and what happens when it becomes an overdetermining structure of cultural experience. If the new is no longer subordinate to the past, but becomes the basis for valuing the past, then this institutes a logic of negation that does not stop at overcoming the past. It proceeds to absorb the present as that which is soon-to-be-past. The future condenses this tension most acutely: it appears to be supported by the negative power of the new, but, in so far as it is generated out of the present, it remains subject to its fate. Separation from the present overcomes this, but with the suspicion that it is a mystical creation out of nothing. This temporality of the new dissolves the promise of the new as something different into the always-the-same, transforming history into a linear passage of destruction. Christian messianism, which inaugurates unrepeatable time in the event of Christ's finite appearance and then generates its linear projection in the promise of a second coming, is trans-

formed into a 'history' of destructive indifference by its incomplete secularization, killing off God without giving up the temporality that anticipates his coming. Hence Benjamin's angel of history: its head is turned away from the future since heaven is now present only at the beginning as something lost, transformed into an apocalypse that blows outwards in an irresistible force, and without redemption the passage of time is experienced as perpetual destruction.³ This functions as a theological-archaic correspondence to the abstract labour time of capitalist accumulation; the endless horizon of surplus value unveiled as wreckage unto oblivion.

Memory, at least according to its *prima facie* function as a faculty for retaining the past, faces a crisis within this culture of the new. Modernity destroys memory while making it essential. The new threatens to negate memory, but it is only through retention of the past that the new is recognized as new. The horizon of the new overdetermines everything that has happened, and yet this overdetermination generates a massive intensification and totalization of history, with memory, at least tentatively, as its organ. The overwhelming proliferation of the new and the development of new memory technologies with superhuman powers of storage and recall, renders memory an embattled, personalized faculty, ironically resorting to the active forgetting of the new in order to preserve itself. It is in this context that Sebald's art asserts itself.

1

Among Benjamin's analyses of what, at least retrospectively, we could construe as a modern art of memory, two are particularly interesting in this context. The first is in his essay 'Some Motifs in Baudelaire'. This examines the novelty of Baudelaire's lyric poetry as a response to the transformation of the structure of experience within modernity. Benjamin is preoccupied with the extent to which experience is formed, not only in relation to conscious memory but also to unconscious memory. As he remarks, drawing on Bergson: '[Experience] is less the product of facts firmly anchored in memory than of a convergence in memory of accumulated and frequently unconscious data.'⁴ Although Benjamin does not say so, Bergson hereby exposes the structural modernity of Kant's conception of experience as immediate auto-affection, and enables its criticism in relation to the unconscious or 'traditional' substrate of experience in memory.⁵ This is the secret history of Bergson's philosophy, despite his own hostility to any historical determination of his account. For Benjamin, this responds to the crisis

of experience in modernity, in so far as unconscious memory is traditionally provided by auratic forms that are destroyed in modernity.

Benjamin defines aura as the 'unique manifestation of a distance', that which is essentially 'inapproachable' and can therefore not be retained or grasped completely or immediately. Epistemologically, aura cannot be grasped completely by consciousness, but remains unique, 'lost to the memory that seeks to retain [it]'. It is only through an unconscious memory that we can approach it, as something that resonates with our consciousness without becoming fully conscious. Aura makes objects appear to be subjects, returning our gaze: 'To perceive the aura of an object we look at means to invest it with the ability to look at us in return.'⁶ The mode of attention appropriate to aura is therefore that which recognizes its uniqueness and essential inapproachability: ritual or ceremony. Temporally, auratic objects are not subject to finite history, but stand outside it, as something infinite or eternal that, although approached in and through history, cannot be reduced to its finite appearance.

The decline of aura is due to a number of factors. This is usually understood in relation to reproducibility. Mass reproduction of identical copies destroys the uniqueness of aura and, by implication, its inapproachability; it becomes graspable by the perceiver not just as property, but as something consciously retained. But the temporal decay of aura is key to Benjamin. The abstract quantifiable labour time of industrialization and, more fundamentally, capitalist exploitation is, as Benjamin puts it, a 'homogeneous empty time', in which time is never fulfilled and always incomplete, in debt to past or future value. Destruction rather than completion is the nature of this time. Each unit of new time increases a progressive nexus of debt, in which the shock of the new does not achieve self-presence but the repetition of the same, concealed under the illusion of progress. In terms of the redeemed time of aura, Benjamin describes this as the time of hell. Quoting Joubert, he writes:

'Time ... is found even in eternity; but it is not earthly, worldly time.... That time does not destroy; it merely completes.' It is the antithesis of time in hell, the province of those who are not allowed to complete anything they have started.⁷

In less theological terms, it is what Benjamin calls 'now-time' [*Jetztzeit*], which forms the object of an alternative history:

History is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogenous, empty time, but time filled by the

presence of now-time. Thus, to Robespierre ancient Rome was a past charged with the time of the now which he blasted out of the continuum of history.⁸

The affect of the negative logic of the new, shock, dominates the consciousness of modernity for Benjamin, from the industrialized factory to the metropolitan crowd, to gambling. But this consciousness does not amount to experience: it is something merely lived through (*Erlebnis*) rather than really experienced (*Erfahrung*). This is a historical and epistemological crisis for experience in so far as it is auratic forms that enable the relation to unconscious memory needed for experience to be achieved, while aura is destroyed by this modern culture of shock. Hence the question Benjamin pursues in relation to Baudelaire is 'how [his] lyric poetry can have as its basis an experience for which shock experience has become the norm?'⁹

It is Freud – in particular, his text 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' – that underpins Benjamin's theoretical conception of this modern formation of experience, in so far as Freud describes how traumatic or shocking stimuli bypass consciousness, entering into unconscious memory and acquiring their power over consciousness precisely through remaining unconscious. Far from being a purely receptive faculty, here consciousness is revealed to function defensively, providing protection from external stimuli. Benjamin concludes:

The greater the share of the shock factor in particular impressions, the more constantly consciousness has to be alert as a screen against stimuli; the more efficiently it is so, the less do these impressions enter experience [*Erfahrung*], tending to remain in the sphere of a certain hour in one's life [*Erlebnis*].¹⁰

Thus, like his reading of Bergson, Benjamin diagnoses a historical unconscious to Freud's resolutely ahistorical analyses, rendering him a theorist of modern experience. The subject's consciousness of the shocking culture of modernity is merely lived through as a defensive mechanism, necessarily resistant to the internalization needed for full experience. Instead, if this internalization of shock takes place, it does so unconsciously, and cannot be voluntarily recollected. Experience within modernity requires forms that negotiate this new culture of shock, enabling the convergence of consciousness with unconscious memory, and thereby enabling a new, distinctively modern form of tradition and aura. This task also defines a distinctively modern form of art.

Proust is key to Benjamin's account, in so far as Proust's differentiation of *mémoire volontaire* and *mémoire involontaire* makes the crisis of experience

within modernity explicit, codifying the separation of conscious and unconscious memory. The immense, and essentially unguaranteed, work of recollection required for Proust to 'experience' his childhood, is revealed to be a distinctively modern art of memory, which seeks to generate experience through the convergence of voluntary and involuntary memory, without the traditional forms of auratic attention; the modern individual compensating for the loss of collective ceremony with the intensive labour of self-reflection.¹¹ Thus Proust's transformation of the novel is determined by this modern condition of memory. For Benjamin, it recovers storytelling in an age of newspapers. Benjamin understands newspapers to be a form without aura, in which information is presented independently of a narrative relation to tradition. This is due to the montage of items, as well as their mass circulation. The passing on of information is no longer required, and with that goes the embedded layering of experience that each storyteller contributes in their recounting, the narrative producing experience through the combination of tradition and information.

However, the extent to which this crisis of experience is a response to shock is most explicit in Baudelaire. His lyric poetry enables experience of shock through 'correspondences', allegories that pierce modern life with images of prehistory, accessing an unconscious memory that converges with conscious memory to produce experience:

What Baudelaire meant by correspondences may be described as an experience which seeks to establish itself in a crisis-proof form. This is possible only within the realm of the ritual.... The correspondences are the data of remembrance – not historical data, but data of prehistory. What makes festive days great and significant is the encounter with an earlier life.¹²

The correspondences function like acts or forms of repression in which shocking affects of the present are both fended off and absorbed into an unconscious form, a prehistory which becomes the allegorical presentation of what is repressed, enabling a convergence of conscious and unconscious memory. As such, they generate aura out of shock. The correspondences exit the negative temporality of the new, accessing a time outside of history, a completed time. It is in this sense that Baudelaire and Proust re-establish aura in the age of its decline.

2

The second aspect of Benjamin's analyses that is of particular interest in considering a modern art

of memory is his discussion of the emergence of new memory or information technologies, especially photography. Considering his texts dedicated to photography after looking at 'Some Motifs in Baudelaire' is problematic but also productive. This is because the problem of experience that structures this essay does not have the same presence in essays like 'A Small History of Photography' (1931) or 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (1936). More pointedly, the decline of aura does not receive the same treatment. In 'Some Motifs' photography is treated as a non-auratic form, which extends 'the range of the *mémoire volontaire*'¹³ or conscious memory, without enabling a convergence with unconscious memory and therefore experience. In other words, the lack of photography's aura presents a problem here whereas in the other essays on photography this problem is, or at least appears to be, absent. In 'The Work of Art' the decline of aura is embraced as productive of a new mode of attention: distraction. The ceremonial, ritual or cult value of an auratic work is replaced by its 'exhibition value', in which the absorption of the spectator into the work is inverted, with the spectator absorbing the work. Whereas in 'Some Motifs' this immediate consciousness of the work, without relation to unconscious tradition, disabled experience, in 'The Work of Art' this loss is not a problem, but the emergence of a new capacity for the masses to enter into a critical and political use of art. Film does not enable attention to unconscious memory in a culture of shock, but prevents this, making shock its medium:

Reception in a state of distraction, which is increasing noticeably in all fields of art and is symptomatic of profound changes in apperception, finds in film its true means of exercise. Film, with its shock effect, meets this mode of reception halfway. Film makes the cult value recede into the background not only by putting the public in the position of the critic, but also by the fact that at the movies this position requires no attention. The public is an examiner, but an absent minded one.¹⁴

The only unconscious discussed here is photography's 'unconscious optics'.¹⁵ But this should not be confused with the unconscious memory of aura. The optical unconscious is precisely non-auratic in that it enables the conscious exploration of vision: 'Evidently a different nature opens itself to the camera than opens to the naked eye – if only because an unconsciously penetrated space is substituted for a space consciously explored by man.'¹⁶ It is not that photography cannot be auratic. Benjamin discusses how early portraiture participates in a 'cult of remembrance', in which the

faces of loved ones return one's gaze.¹⁷ But the task at hand here is not to re-create aura, but to achieve its decline; something he attributes to Atget's deserted street scenes.¹⁸

There are perhaps two obvious ways of interpreting this divergence in Benjamin's analyses. The first is that they present separate historical tasks: the decline of aura and the attempt to resist this, with Baudelaire and Proust; and the decline of aura and the attempt to affirm this, with Atget and film. Perhaps these are appropriate to two historical moments, although there are clearly crossovers – Proust, for instance. The second answer is to interpret 'Some Motifs' as a response to Adorno's criticisms of 'The Work of Art'.¹⁹ Adorno ultimately saw little else in the decline of aura than the dominance of exchange value, as Benjamin himself seems to admit at one point: 'To pry an object from its shell, to destroy its aura, is the mark of a perception whose "sense of the universal equality of things" has increased to such a degree that it extracts it even from a unique object by means of reproduction.'²⁰ Adorno elaborated Benjamin's conception of the re-establishment of aura in the age of its decline as the structure of modern art's autonomy, making the measure of this whether art withdraws from the universalized heteronomy of a society of exchange value. In this sense we can see Adorno's conception of autonomous art as the self-conscious illusion of utopia, as a form of what Benjamin conceived as completed time or now-time.

Besides these responses, and without replacing them, there is another dimension to Benjamin's reflections. This is indicated in his essay on surrealism. Here photography is understood in relation to a conception of experience that draws on:

the revolutionary energies that appear in the 'outmoded', in the first iron constructions, the first factory buildings, the earliest photos, the objects that have begun to be extinct.... No one before [the surrealists] perceived how destitution – not only social but architectonic ... – can be suddenly transformed into revolutionary nihilism.²¹

Here Benjamin suggests an alternative, distinctively modern art of memory in the perception of the outmoded energies of things. Now, this quality of the outmoded is in many respects akin to the quality of aura. It is something passed over or lost, which derives its power from being lost. This power is therefore akin to unconscious memory. There is a sense in which the 'dialectical image' that is produced here is a convergence between our immediate historical consciousness of the present and its unconscious; liter-

ally that which the present has repressed, concealed in the negative logic of the new and fashionable. The convergence of the outmoded with the desires of the present releases the shock that was repressed in its original occurrence, fuelling what Benjamin describes as 'revolutionary experience, if not action'.²² As such, this is a distinctively modern form of experience and modern form of art, because it emerges from out of the destructive logic of the new.

Criticism

What can be learnt from these analyses of modern art of memory and its criticism? If their focal point is modernity as a mode of experience, memory is considered as a dimension of this experience, both as its relation to the past or tradition and as its condition of possibility. What kind of experience is possible in modernity? What is the modernist mode of tradition? And how does this enable the critique of the empty homogenous experience of the new? How does the task of modern experience transform art, its genres and its very possibility? These are some of the questions Benjamin bequeaths to the criticism of the modern art of memory.

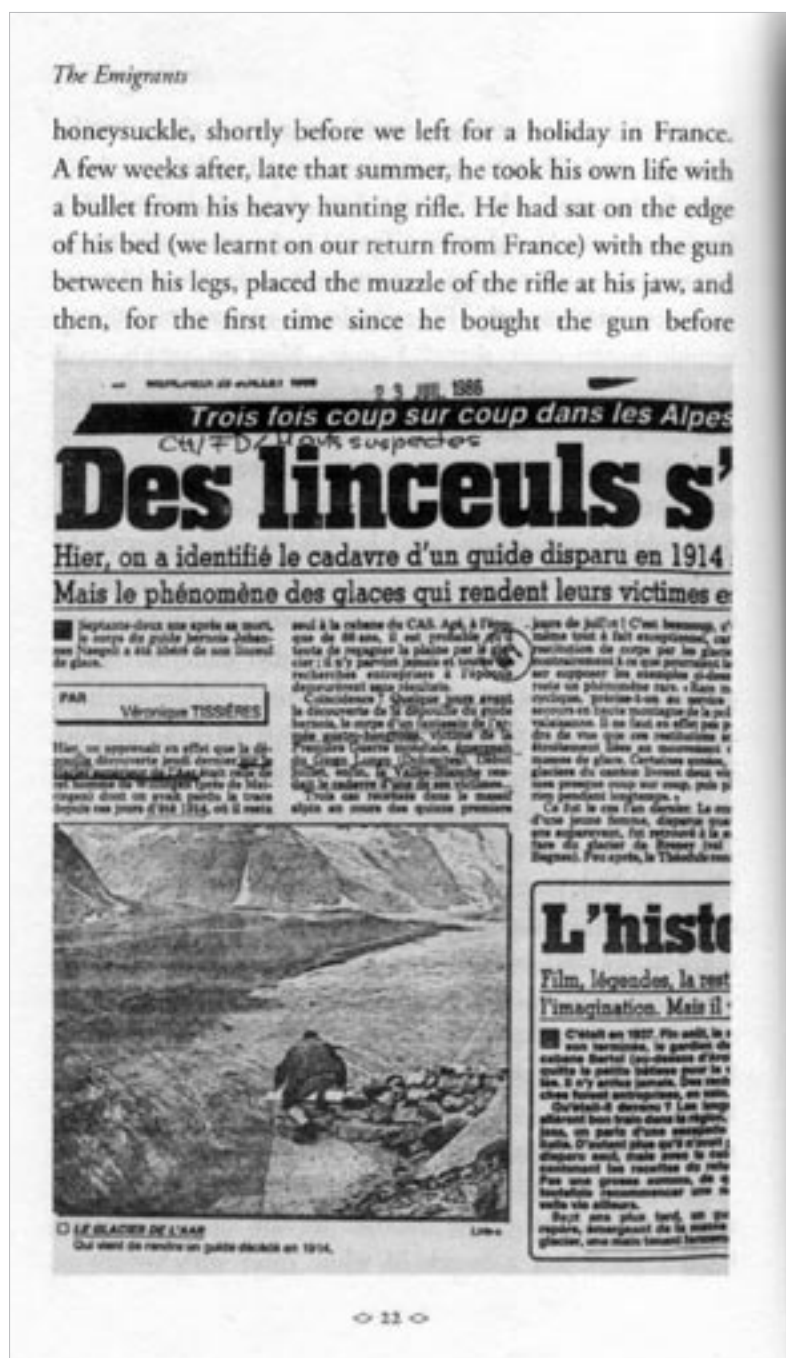
But the precise concept of criticism at stake here is not clear; certainly, it does not seem to be completely consistent with the previous models that Benjamin developed in his early thesis on 'The Concept of Art Criticism in German Romanticism' (1919) or in 'Goethe's Elective Affinities' (written 1919–22, published 1924–5). Benjamin's thesis describes how the Romantics conceived of criticism as both the completion and the destruction of the artwork. This is because they conceived of the authentic artwork as making a claim to present the absolute, which therefore cannot be judged according to some external, pre-established rule. Criticism must be derived internally to the work in the process of reflection that, for the Romantics, is its medium. Criticism, essentially conceived as the surpassing of all restriction, begins affirmatively by drawing out the absolute process of reflection presented by the artwork. But it develops through criticizing the limitation of the artwork's reflection, which is an inevitable consequence of its finite existence. It is in this sense that criticism both completes and destroys the artwork.²³ The model outlined at the beginning of 'Goethe's Elective Affinities' is broadly consistent in proposing a dual task. Here the distinction is between 'commentary' and 'critique'. Commentary examines the 'material content' of the artwork, critique examines its 'truth content'. But here the task is historically constituted in so far as 'the more significant

the work, the more inconspicuously and intimately its truth content is bound up with its material content.’²⁴ Critique therefore benefits from the historical ageing of the work in which its truth content comes loose from its material content.

These models of criticism can be seen at work in Benjamin’s later essays in various ways, but perhaps the key question is how they relate to the unconscious content of modern art and its experience. The implication is that there is a link between examining truth content and examining unconscious content. This is enforced by the extent to which shock is the topic of the later essays, a topic that is entirely absent from the earlier essays. In many respects, Benjamin’s late model of criticism is oriented to a traumatic model of experi-

ence, informed by Freud’s analysis of the unconscious. At least, this is what we can derive here in the attempt to develop a model of criticism for the modern art of memory. Adorno was especially attentive to the precise form of the unconscious at stake in Benjamin’s analyses, since he saw at stake here a dialectical theory of reification as a form of forgetting.²⁵ Benjamin’s account of experience had shown that the modern art of memory was directly dependent on how forgetting had taken place, to such an extent that it must be seen as simultaneously an art of forgetting. The implication is that certain forms of forgetting enabled critique just as they enabled experience. This meant not merely the rejection of reification, but, as Adorno put it, ‘a distinction between good and bad reification’;²⁶ namely, a distinction between forms of reification or forgetting that enabled experience and critique, and forms that did not. This sense of a modern art of forgetting infuses Adorno’s account of autonomous art. It is in these terms that I think we can understand Adorno’s conception that ‘[Artworks] are themselves the unconscious historiography of their epochs.’²⁷ This conception is deeply obscure in Adorno’s work, so what is offered here is not so much explanation as construction. My suggestion is that we should proceed by diagnosing Freud’s model of the interpretation of ‘dream-work’ as homologous to Adorno’s formal-historical criticism of autonomous art.

Freud’s concept of interpretation, as applied to the dream-work, examines the dream as the result of the ‘work’ done by unconscious impulses or processes on conscious experiences, transforming them into the strange reality of the dream. The grammar of this work can be established according to mechanisms of condensation, displacement, and so on. These mechanisms are not the unconscious itself, but merely the way it takes effect, transforming the ‘manifest content’ of the dream – what the dream is literally about – into the ‘latent content’ of the dream or the ‘dream thoughts’ – namely, what the dream draws on and organizes to produce the dream as it appears.²⁸ This



model of interpretation can be mapped onto formalist criticism's distinction between subject matter, form and content, where content is not conflated with what the artwork represents – this would be subject matter – but what is generated through form, so form involves a transformation or distancing of subject matter and content. There is a homology between these two models, in so far as manifest content corresponds to subject matter, form corresponds to dream-work, and content corresponds to latent content. However, the relation of this model of criticism to the unconscious is not clear here, unless it is reduced to the latent content. But this does not grasp the unrepresentability of the unconscious, and therefore provide a model for the unrepresentability of art's relation to truth. If the truth content of art is (structurally) unconscious, then it is not reducible to latent content, but only indicated by it. The 'latent content' of art is more akin to art's subject matter (as indeed for Freud it was part of the dream's subject matter) or perhaps art's form.

Benjamin's conception of the optical unconscious does not grasp the unrepresentability of Freud's psychic unconscious, despite Benjamin's claim that there is a direct homology between the camera and psychoanalysis. ('The camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses.'²⁹) Benjamin suggests that the optical unconscious is shown directly by photography. This is why it is not auratic. But the unconscious is only shown indirectly by psychoanalysis. This is why it is suggestive for the criticism of aura in its modern form. Adorno was more sensitive to this homology but also more sceptical. He was highly critical of psychoanalytic theories of art in so far as they read artworks as documents of subjects for analysis, thereby combining subjectivism with pre-artistic literalism. But this criticism does not write off the interpretation of 'dream-work' as a structural model for art criticism.³⁰ Adorno follows formalist criticism in differentiating between subject matter, form and content. His principal concern is to reject both the reduction of form to external armatures, and the reduction of content to thematic or depicted ideas. For Adorno, art only becomes art through form, which transforms subject matter from its everyday significance into an autonomous significance. Art succeeds where it transforms the heteronomous determination of subject matter – the logic of exchange value – into its autonomous determination: this is its relation to truth and explains the term 'truth content'. For Adorno, this truth content is both historical and not positively presentable: hence the resonance of his riddle-like conception of art as 'unconscious historiography'. Art relates

to truth by what it says in not saying it, what its muteness communicates. This is a historical relation. Art is autonomous in so far as it transforms its historical materials into something that appears to be independent of history. In this sense art is the result of a form of repression or forgetting. It internalizes experiences that are not registered within historical consciousness, and holds them there, as if they were unconscious. It does not merely conceal this material, but reveals it as something concealed, mute: a self-conscious illusion. Art is therefore a form of societal repression that is capable of revealing that repression; hence the sense in which it is 'unconscious historiography': a modern art of forgetting that enables memory, experience and critique within the conditions of modernity. But as such it demands criticism that confronts art with the historical substance from which it is formed. Adorno referred to this as 'second reflection':

Second reflection must push the complex of facts that work-immanent analysis establishes, and in which it has its limit, beyond itself and penetrate to the truth content by means of emphatic critique. Work-immanent analysis is in itself narrow-minded, and this is surely because it wants to knock the wind out of social reflection on art. That art on the one hand confronts society autonomously, and, on the other, is itself social, defines the law of its experience.³¹

In this passage we can recognize Adorno's inheritance of Benjamin's conception of criticism as the move from commentary to critique, from material content to truth content. As he goes on to make clear, in a passage that draws on Benjamin's analysis of Baudelaire, the point of departure for this criticism is the modern:

Artworks are archaic when they can no longer be experienced. This boundary is not fixed, nor is it simply continuous; rather, it is fragmentary and dynamic and can be liquefied by *correspondence*. The archaic is appropriated as the experience of what is not experiential. The boundary of experientiality, however, requires that the starting point of any such appropriation be the modern.³²

As second reflection, criticism subjects artworks to the historical substance from which they are made, seen from the perspective of the present, not in order to reduce them to official history consciousness, but in order to reveal what their autonomy preserves from this consciousness. Neither does this criticism reduce art to what can be positively known – that is, brought immediately to consciousness. Second reflection exposes art to what it does not say in order to reveal the truth revealed by this silence.

The unconscious historiography of Sebald's art

Clearly, Sebald's art is structured fundamentally by the issues that emerge from Benjamin's analysis of the modern art of memory, none more so than the experience of shock, which, mediated by its repression and unconscious affects, dominates the life of many of Sebald's characters. The general absence of shocking episodes in the works, their lack of drama and their atmosphere of stillness, confirms this negatively. They exude a post-traumatic exhaustion. But whereas Benjamin examines shock as the affect of the advent of modernity, Sebald's works revolve around the Second World War, which emerges as the telos of this history of shock: what Benjamin anticipated with his back turned, like his own angel of history. In this, Sebald's works suggest the post-history of Benjamin's world, its realization and destruction.

The relation of memory to traumatic experience in Sebald's works seems to inherit Benjamin's analysis. The shocking experiences that dominate the lives of his characters are not registered consciously, but persist in a displaced or unconscious form, haunting their life, and generating the, often impulsive, attempts to recollect the events that first caused the trauma. The characters and the narrator – which are frequently so similar as to suggest a relation of alter-ego, both between themselves and Sebald himself, since we cannot just assume that Sebald is the narrator – often attempt to reconstruct childhood experiences contemporary with the Second World War. Through these biographies Sebald's art of memory combines two models of unconscious memory that were only joined theoretically for Benjamin, namely Proust's *mémoire involontaire* and Freud's unconscious memory traces. Sebald and his personae recover a childhood that is not consciously remembered. But, unlike Proust's serene, bourgeois domesticity, Sebald's childhood is the scene of Nazi Germany. Childhood therefore condenses with the shock of the war, and its recollection becomes subject to the repression of this trauma. Except that this is suffered by Sebald's characters, not himself. What structures the narrator's reconstructions is guilt that his childhood was serene, hence his projection onto sufferers. Sebald's suffering is strictly retrospective, a kind of latent shock at his childhood innocence, which is rendered tragic by the impossibility of a more mature reaction. This generates the compulsive memorizing in the works, the disgust at forgetting, but also their narcissism. In exposing personal recollection to the historical events that it was innocent of, Sebald limits the narcissistic tendency of memoirs by the lucky, but his 'tragedy' of innocence

is also compensation for lost love. There is something of a political Oedipal drama here, in which the trauma is having been wrenched from mother country, which qualifies the pathos of his exiled homelessness. But there is also a structural solidarity between Sebald's narrator and his co-memoirists, since both necessarily recollect this past in the light of its subsequent personal and social-historical significance, and as an artefact of its narration. This underpins Sebald's modern art of memory: the narrative art of reconstructing traumatically fragmented memory traces. As such, Sebald's art directly engages with the modern experience of tradition that Benjamin articulates as the convergence of conscious and unconscious memory in the culture of shock.

However, Sebald's work is also deeply problematic in what it remembers. *Vertigo* is structured by a relation between two periods: 1913, which is the date the narrator ('Sebald') researches in Italy and his childhood before the Second World War. Thus it recollects a pre-history to the wars, in a way that suggests Benjamin's transformative historiography of past futures: the recollection of a past when a future was possible that was different to what the future became. Sebald's travelogue around Europe's ruins renews the literary genre of the grand tour, but in the self-consciousness of its destruction. But this eulogy is only redemptive if we remain blind to the obsolescence of this European panorama in the transformation of post-1945 international politics. This renders Sebald's melancholy provincial, a conservative Eurocentrism, and turns its charm into ideology. What is out of time about the book is less its recovery of prewar Europe, than the fact that it was written at the moment of the collapse of the Soviet Union but without a trace of how this has transformed its landscape. The fact that this may have been unintentional – *Vertigo* was first published in German in 1990, although the narration indicates it was written in 1987 – may excuse his knowledge, but not the historical significance of the novel.

Yet if Sebald's work suggests the inheritance or post-history of Benjamin's analyses, it also suggests the post-history of capitalism. The shock that Benjamin diagnosed as an affect inherent to the cultural dominance of abstract labour time appears in Sebald to have been absorbed in the world wars, as the apocalyptic realization of capitalism. Contemporary capitalism is overlooked in Sebald. For Austerlitz, the character in whom reflection on the history of capitalism is most explicit in his research on the history of capitalist architecture, the twentieth century is too terrible to contemplate:

As far as I was concerned the world ended in the late nineteenth century. I dared go no further than that, although in fact the whole history of the architecture and civilization of the bourgeois age, the subject of my research, pointed in the direction of the catastrophic events already casting their shadows before me at that time.³³

Sebald's narrator and characters live with their eyes averted from the explicit processes of contemporary capitalist exploitation and commodification. They live in a leisure time, especially that leisure time earned by a whole life of work, retirement. This is the time of a technocratic middle class, of which Sebald's own extracurricular writing while an academic is itself an instance. Contemporary capitalism is not experienced in Sebald's works. It is their environment, from which they turn away or repress. In this they confirm Benjamin's suspicions about whether late modernity can be experienced. But they also appear to give up the task of a modern art of memory, which would consist precisely in trying to enable experience of this late capitalist culture. This is the conservative and resigned effect of the novels, the sense in which their charm derives from their harmlessness. They mourn the world wars as if that was all there is to worry about. The traumas of the post-1945 world disappear.

This conservative effect can only be prevented by a critical or symptomatic reading, which examines them as a form of repression of contemporary capitalism. This means a second reflection on the correspondences that, following Baudelaire, Sebald seems to employ.

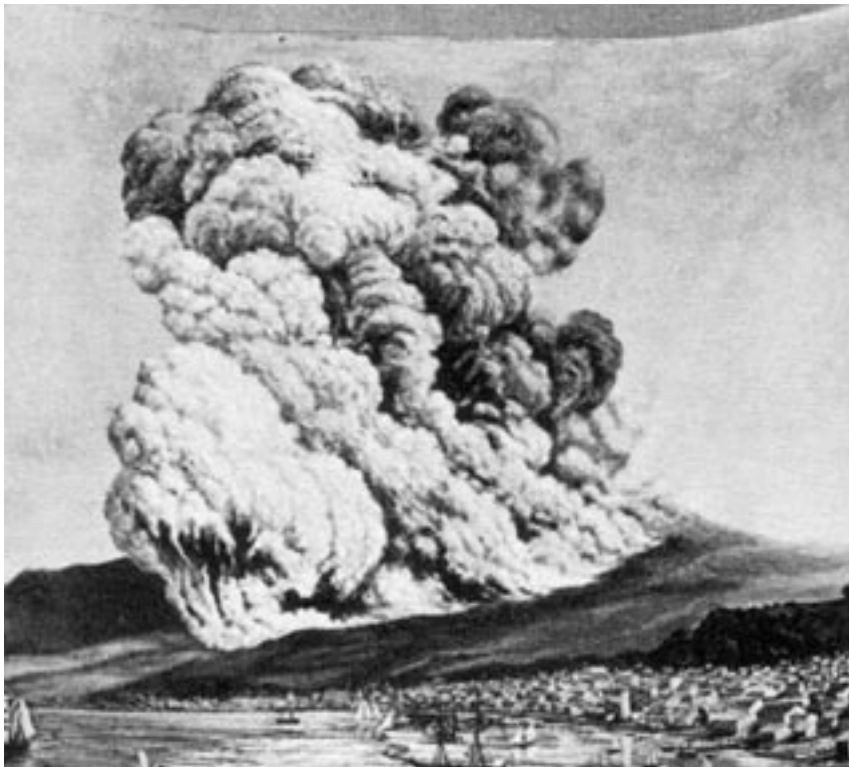
The Rings of Saturn has an epigraph that provides a description of its name:

The rings of Saturn consist of ice crystals and probably meteorite particles describing circular orbits around the planet's equator. In all likelihood these are fragments of a former moon that was too close to the planet and was destroyed by its tidal effect (Roche Limit).³⁴

This suggests a correspondence between the Allied bombing of Germany and the pre-historical destruction at the origins of the cosmos. Saturn – a traditional allegory of sadness – becomes renewed as an allegory of the fragmented universe of the war; it also suggests the formal principle that structures Sebald's narrative collation of memory traces. As in Benjamin's interpretation of Baudelaire, what is evoked here is an allegorical attempt to enable experience of the traumatic, and therefore unexperienced, human apocalypse of the bombing. However, in relation to the lack of explicit recognition of contemporary capitalism, we can see this correspondence as having a further, unconscious significance: that of enabling experience of the traumatically shocking experience of contemporary capitalism through its allegorical relation to the destruction of the war. In this way it provides an allegorical landscape that depicts concealed forms of contemporary destruction as if they were prehistory.

Sebald's works need to be read as forms of repression, both in order to recognize what they do not say, and in order to recognize what they say in not saying

it. This criticism is needed in order to reveal how they are modernist artworks; that is, how they generate the self-conscious illusion of autonomy within a culture in which all autonomy is subjected to commodification, the heteronomous exchange of equivalents. Sebald's works must generate this autonomy if they are to be artworks, but criticism is needed to reveal their truth content and prevent their autonomy decaying into a simple lie. The greater the pressure of complete commodification becomes, the greater is the effort needed to wrest anything from it. The need for art to repress its environment therefore threatens to slip into



wilful ignorance. Criticism is needed to distinguish repression from ignorance. This task is not eased by artworks that avoid ignorance through a more exact imitation of the present, where criticism is needed just in order to discern whether they are in any sense autonomous. But art cannot resolve this exhaustively by internalizing criticism, since its truth content is by nature unconscious or unsayable. And in order to prevent this decaying into mystical appreciation, the friction of art and its critique must be maintained.

Sebald's works suggest a recognition of this double bind in their almost indiscernible play of fact and fiction generated by the use of quasi-documentary photography, and the theoretical self-reflection of his narrator and characters. The openings of *Vertigo* and *The Emigrants* are brilliant lessons in the theory of memory. However, this cannot be taken as sufficient. Apologies about respecting the artist's views miss the point. Sebald's works only survive their ideological function in so far as criticism demonstrates that this is self-critical; that they provide allegories of the inability to experience the present, the utter melancholy that often seems to be the only sensitive response to the present. This melancholy is repulsed by the beautiful patina that cloaks Sebald's relation to the present. It is not merely generational insensitivity to a dying memory.

Looked at this way, the distracted mode of reading Sebald's works becomes conspicuous; how their auratic quality is generated through this rather than through simple absorption. This is indicated by the extent to which Sebald's language is pervaded by the list of names. At once exotic and meaningless, they accumulate, generating a distance from the subject matter, even when concerned with the most traumatic events. These lists are dragged into narration through the extended sentence, such as *Austerlitz's* recounting of H.G. Adler's book on the Theresienstadt ghetto where he discovers his mother had perished, which is treated in a single sentence covering ten pages.³⁵ Sebald's employment of photography is of particular interest here. The photos in Sebald's books are self-evidently mass-produced. Indeed, this is ingrained in their poor print quality, which is akin to the quality of newsprint or worse, and without the colour that has defined newspaper images for the last decade or so. Certainly, they are an impoverished version of the photographs we assume they reproduce. This makes them conspicuous, as if they were trying to look like old newspapers. They mimic the informational regime of montaged image and article, but without the circumvention of the caption, and set within an extended narrative,

layered by generations. It is as if Sebald has tried to recover the role of the storyteller Benjamin had described, but from within the teeth of the newspaper, with a directness that Proust does not even approach. This is the modernity of Sebald's art. And yet it is not that modern. They echo old newspapers, which now automatically suggest research and missed news. They draw on the outmoded, but the effect is not the release of pent-up energies. Perhaps this would rely on a more complete exposure to the obsolescence of the mnemotechnologies that Sebald is employing – his camera, but also his pens and paper – in relation to the technologies that are on the brink of superseding them. Perhaps we need to wait a while before we are shocked at the fact that Sebald doesn't use the Internet to trace his family history, but the aeroplane and archive.

The fact that the images are black and white, while we readily assume that at least some of the original photos would have been colour, is also conspicuous in the context of the new image technologies that are available to printing now. The images are stripped of the particularity of different generations and variations of photographic prints. Anyone who has looked at a family album or any collection of photos that spans a considerable period of time, such as those that Sebald frequently presents, will be aware of the range of formats and photo-techniques that permeates such a collection – size, borders, shape, colours, and so on – and how this informs our experience of the time recorded. All this is suppressed in their reproduction in Sebald's works. The modernist or constructivist reading of photography that Benjamin heralds in his 'Short History of Photography' emphasized how photography generated a new visual language independent of the painterly qualities of surface and texture. The reproducibility of the negative on multiple surfaces and in multiple forms rendered the surface of the singular print secondary to the ontology of photography. This was crucial to what Benjamin attributed to their loss of aura. However, photos did not cease having a surface, and this remains central to the existence of the photograph, even if it only becomes insistent to those figuring the image as a precious object. This is not the strictly optical surface that Jeff Wall demonstrated through the mirrored gazes of the figures in 'Picture for Women' (1979), but the literal surface. This is the topic of an existential ontology of photography, to which even Barthes's *mathesis singularis* was insensitive.³⁶ Sebald's works suppress this, but so crudely perhaps as to reveal this suppression. The impoverishment of the reproduction forces us to scrutinize the image surface for signs of

the original photograph that remains unrecoverable, unapproachable. In this Sebald's images are auratic, but in a distinctively modern form. A further consequence of this experience of Sebald's images is that it refers us to the printed text along with the image, as if the poor reproduction was like a fog that merged them together, reducing the images to schemas or signs and the words to images. Sebald's books take on the quality of illuminated manuscripts, but in a modern, darkened form.

Metaphysics of destruction

Benjamin's historiography examined history as natural history, in order both to reveal the correspondences to prehistory generated by the secular experience of the new, and to diagnose how this emerges from the melancholic decay of divine experience: 'To his horror the melancholy man sees the earth revert to a mere state of nature.'³⁷ The collapse of divine history into nature is transformed by seeing that this does not lead only to empty homogenous time, but that profane history also enables redemption or utopia, completed time. This transformation of melancholy underpins Benjamin's art of memory. It is not the same as Freud's model of successful mourning, which is dominated by a discipline of assimilation to the reality principle of the status quo. What is suggested is rather that melancholy is overcome by the happiness of completed time, freed from quantifiable, incompletable time, whether of the past or the present. This is also the happiness of the radically new, a time that is not just the future as the soon-to-be-destroyed.

Benjamin's conception of natural history finds an echo in Sebald's use of the phrase 'the natural history of destruction'. Sebald attributes the term to Solly Zuckermann's unrealized report on the ruins of Cologne after the Second World War. It is the title of the translation of his book of literary criticism, *On the Natural History of Destruction*. This was first published in German in 1999 as *Luftkrieg und Literatur* (Air War and Literature),³⁸ but the reference is not an invention of translation. In the course of the book he offers a definition:

Is the destruction not, rather, irrefutable proof that the catastrophes which develop, so to speak, in our hands and seem to break out suddenly are a kind of experiment, anticipating the point at which we shall drop out of what we have thought for so long to be our autonomous history back into the history of nature?³⁹

In this, Sebald indicates his relation to a renewed melancholy as the overdetermining experience of

modernity. An allegorical expression is suggested in *The Emigrants* with Alphonse's theory of the universal fading of colour, which caused him to cover his spectacles with grey silk when he painted in order to make him compensate and use brighter colours, so as to capture the world as it might have appeared originally. The ruins and devastation that litter the landscapes of Sebald's books are like fossilized traces of this natural history, frozen remains of what was life.

The moments of happiness, resolution and beauty in Sebald's novels suggest an exit. But in the light of what they repress they do not seem a successful mourning for those living in the present, so much as an intensified melancholy, for which only the most undialectical dimension of Sebald's art resonates. The decay of progress into universal destruction suggests a metaphysics of destruction: an inverted Platonism that reveals the infinite ideas to be ciphers of catastrophes that form all human affairs. Intellectual intuition is replaced by trauma, and finite appearances are replaced by unconscious memory traces.

Notes

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1. A comprehensive bibliography of Sebald's reception can be found in the first monograph on his work: Mark R. McCulloch's *Understanding W.G. Sebald*, University of South Carolina Press, Columbia SC, 2003. See also Rüdiger Görner, ed., *The Anatomist of Melancholy: Essays in Memory of W.G. Sebald*, Iudicium Verlag, Munich, 2003; and 'A Symposium on W.G. Sebald', *The Threepenny Review*, Spring 2002, www.threepennyreview.com/samples/sebaldsympos_sp02.html.
2. W.G. Sebald, *Nach Der Nature: Ein Elementargedicht*, Greno, Nördlingen, 1988, trans. M. Hamburger, *After Nature*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 2002; with Tess Jaray, *For Years Now*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 2001; with Peter Jan Tripp, *Unerzählt*, Carl Hanser Verlag, Munich and Vienna, 2003, trans. M. Hamburger, *Unrecounted*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 2001; *Schwinde: Gefühle*, Eichborn, Frankfurt, 1990, trans. M. Hulse, *Vertigo*, New Directions Books, New York, 2000; *Die Ausgewanderten*, Eichborn, Frankfurt, 1993, trans. M. Hulse, *The Emigrants*, New Directions Books, New York, 1996; *Die Ringe des Saturn: Eine englische Wallfahrt*, Eichborn, Frankfurt, 1995, trans. M. Hulse, *The Rings of Saturn* (1998), Vintage, London, 2002; *Austerlitz*, Carl Hanser Verlag, Munich and Vienna, 2001, trans. A. Bell, *Austerlitz* (2001), Penguin Books, London, 2002.
3. '[The angel of history's] face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage

- and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is called progress.' Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' (1940), in *Illuminations*, trans. H. Zohn, Fontana, London, 1968, p. 249.
4. Benjamin, 'Some Motifs in Baudelaire' (1939), in *Charles Baudelaire*, trans. H. Zohn, Verso, London and New York, 1973, p. 110.
 5. 'The title [of *Matter and Memory*] suggests that it regards the structure of memory as decisive for the philosophical pattern of experience. Experience is indeed a matter of tradition, in collective existence as well as private life. It is less the product of facts firmly anchored in memory than of a convergence in memory of accumulated and frequently unconscious data. It is, however, not at all Bergson's intention to attach any specific historical label to memory. On the contrary, he rejects any historical determination of memory. He thus manages above all to stay clear of that experience from which his own philosophy evolved or, rather, in relation to which it arose. It was the inhospitable, blinding age of big-scale industrialization.' Ibid., pp. 110–11. Benjamin is indebted to Max Horkheimer's essay on Bergson, 'On Bergson's Metaphysics of Time' (1934), translated in *Radical Philosophy* 131, May/June 2005, pp. 9–19.
 6. Ibid., p. 148. Benjamin doesn't quite say it, but a further implication here is that something has aura because it faces us as 'something' with an unconscious.
 7. Ibid., pp. 136–7.
 8. Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', pp. 252–3.
 9. Benjamin, 'Some Motifs in Baudelaire', p. 116.
 10. Ibid., p. 117.
 11. 'In saying that it was a matter of chance whether the problem [of resurrecting his own childhood] could be solved at all, [Proust] gave the full measure of its difficulty. In connection with these reflections he coined the term *mémoire involontaire*. This concept bears the marks of the situation which gave rise to it; it is part of the inventory of the individual who is isolated in many ways. Where there is experience in the strict sense of the word, certain contents of the individual past combine with material of the collective past. The rituals with their ceremonies, their festivals (quite probably nowhere recalled in Proust's work), kept producing the amalgamation of these two elements of memory over and over again. They triggered recollection at certain times and remained handles of memory for a lifetime. In this way, voluntary and involuntary recollection lose their mutual exclusiveness.' Ibid., p. 113.
 12. Ibid., pp. 140–41.
 13. Ibid., p. 145.
 14. Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Illuminations*, pp. 233–4.
 15. Ibid., p. 230.
 16. Ibid.
 17. Ibid., p. 219.
 18. Ibid.
 19. See Theodor Adorno, 'Letters to Walter Benjamin', in R. Taylor, ed., *Aesthetics and Politics*, Verso, London and New York, 1994, pp. 110–33.
 20. Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', p. 217.
 21. Benjamin, 'Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia', in *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. E. Jephcott and K. Shorter, Verso, London and New York, 1979, p. 229.
 22. Ibid.
 23. See 'The Concept of [Art] Criticism in German Romanticism', in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, vol. 1 (1913–1924), Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA and London, 1996, pp. 116–200.
 24. Benjamin, 'Goethe's Elective Affinities', in *ibid.*, p. 297.
 25. 'Is it not the case that the real task here is to bring the entire opposition between sensory experience [*Erlebnis*] and experience proper [*Erfahrung*] into relation with a dialectical theory of forgetting? Or one could say, into relation with a theory of reification. For all reification is a forgetting: Objects become purely thing-like the moment they are retained for us without the continued presence of their other aspects: when something of them has become forgotten. This raised the question of how far this forgetting is one capable of shaping experience, which I would almost call epic forgetting, and how far it is a reflex forgetting.' From Adorno's letter to Benjamin, 29/2/1940, in *Theodor W. Adorno and Walter Benjamin: The Complete Correspondence 1928–1940*, trans. N. Walker, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1999, p. 321.
 26. Ibid.
 27. '[Kunstwerke] sind die ihrer selbst unbewusste Geschichtsschreibung ihrer Epoche...', Adorno, *Aesthetische Theorie*, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 1970, p. 272. Hullot-Kentor translates this as '[Artworks] are the self-unconscious historiography of their epoch...', producing a paradoxical neologism that nonetheless brings out the force of this concept more clearly. See *Aesthetic Theory*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1997, p. 182.
 28. See Sigmund Freud, 'The Dream-Work', in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. J. Strachey, Penguin Books, London, 1991, pp. 381–651.
 29. Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', p. 230.
 30. 'For psychoanalysis, artworks are daydreams; it confuses them with documents and displaces them into the mind of a dreamer, while on the other hand, as compensation for the exclusion of the extramental sphere, it reduces artworks to crude thematic material, falling strangely short of Freud's own theory of the "dream-work".' Adorno, *Aesthetische Theorie*, p. 20; *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 8.
 31. *Aesthetische Theorie*, p. 518; *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 348.
 32. *Aesthetische Theorie*, p. 518; *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 349.
 33. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, p. 197.
 34. See the opening pages of Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn*.
 35. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, pp. 331–41.
 36. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (1980), trans. R. Howard, Vintage, London, 2000, p. 8.
 37. Benjamin, 'Some Motifs in Baudelaire', p. 145.
 38. W.G. Sebald, *On the Natural History of Destruction*, trans. A. Bell, Hamish Hamilton, London, 2003.
 39. Ibid., p. 67.