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Original Research Article

Representation of the Urban Memory as Surrealist Photographic Images in *Berlin Childhood around 1900*

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Abstract

Problem statement: Notions of space, place, and city are key concepts in the writings and works of Walter Benjamin, philosopher, and theorist related to Frankfurt School. Especially in his works, Benjamin studies the perceptual experience of facing modern urban spaces. The book *Berlin Childhood around 1900* possesses a prominent status among his writings about European cities. The book originated from the unfinished project *A Berlin Chronicle* and is a memoir of his childhood experiences in Berlin in the late 19th century and the early 20th century. To find a suitable way to represent his childhood memories of the metropolitan experience, Benjamin uses the capacities of modern reproductive technologies such as cinema and photography. The present study draws a comparison between the literary style of the book used for describing the urban spaces of Berlin and the photographic style of Eugène Atget in depicting Paris. Benjamin considered Atget as one of the pioneers of Surrealist photography and believed that Atget's cityscapes were illusory and phantasmic.

Research objective: The present study tries to demonstrate the key role of new technologies, and especially photography, in the literary style and structure of *Berlin Childhood around 1900*. The study is to highlight the social-political implications to which Benjamin had alluded by adopting a photographic-surrealist approach in representing the urban memories of his childhood.

Research method: Data for this study were collected from bibliographic databases, by applying a descriptive-analytic method.

Conclusion: This study shows that these photographic pictures are interpreted not only in relation to the past but also to the present and future. The Surrealist "silent" and "cleared out" images Benjamin recalls from a faraway Berlin, obtain their meaning in contrast to the pompous propaganda of the Nazi Party for constructing a utopia from the heart of the First World War's ruins.

Keywords: *Walter Benjamin, The Metropolitan Memoirs, The photographic images, Eugène Atget, Surrealism, "Berlin Childhood around 1900".*

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Introduction and problem statement

Walter Benjamin, a philosopher, and theorist related to Frankfurt School, is known as one of the most influential modernity theorists in the 20th century. The main part of his writings is dedicated to modern architectural and urban spaces. In his writings, the significance of subjective perception of space in relation to modern metropolises like Naples, Berlin, and Paris, has been emphasized. This issue has also been highlighted in his discussions on interior spaces in modern architecture. The book *Berlin Childhood around 1900* possesses a prominent status among his writings about European cities. The book originated from the unfinished project *A Berlin Chronicl*e and is a memoir of his childhood experiences in Berlin in the late 19th century and the early 20th century. Starting to write some memoirs about his birthplace and childhood city, in a 1932 letter to his friend Gershom Scholem, Benjamin remarks that "the history of my relationship to Berlin" is the thing these days I am obsessed with (Gilloch, 1996, 57). The book is concentrated on urban images and spaces and the process of experiencing them as a child. The present article tries to demonstrate the key role of new technologies, and especially photography, in the literary style and structure of *Berlin Childhood around 1900* by applying a descriptive-analytic method and using bibliographic databases. The article draws a comparison between the literary style of the book in describing the urban spaces of Berlin and the photographic style of Eugène Atget in depicting Paris. Benjamin considered Atget as one of the pioneers of Surrealist photography and believed that Atget's cityscapes were illusory and phantasmic. The article is to highlight the social-political implications to which Benjamin had alluded by adopting a photographic-surrealist approach in representing the urban memories of his childhood.

Literature review

In his book, *Miniature Metropolis: Literature in an Age of Photography and Film*, Andreas Huyssen examines the effects of reproductive technologies like photography and cinema on modern literature, specifically in writings by Franz Kafka, Robert Musil, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno. Huyssen focuses on the importance of subjective experiences and perceptions in Benjamin's writings about urban modernity. He claims that in Benjamin's city-related notes, the process of perception is not merely visual, but the "sensual perception", auditory perception, and tactile perceptions of city are regarded as well (Huyssen, 2015, 183). In the book *Myth and Metropolis: Walter Benjamin and the City*, Graeme Gilloch refers to the close relationship between the concepts of space, city, and memory in Benjamin's writings on the city. Gilloch mentions that Childhood in Berlin is not an investigation in memory, but an exploration of the relationship between memory and metropolis: "Remembrance and metropolis become porous; they interpenetrate" in this book and "Memory shapes, and is in turn shaped by, the urban setting" (Gilloch, 1996, 66-67). In an essay called *Pictures of the past: Benjamin and Barthes on photography and history*, Gilloch and Tim Dant studied the social-cultural implications of photographs for these two thinkers (Dant & Gilloch, 2017). Gilloch and Dant compared the ideas of Benjamin and Barthes and concluded that despite their diverse attitudes toward photography and its relation to history, the two theorists emphasized the key role of photography in establishing a new form of encounter with 'past'. Through a specific lens, Dant and Gilloch assessed Benjamin's sense of history in relation with his sense of photography: "For Benjamin the photograph has a potential to open up history, allowing us to see the past, to see something of what the 'Angelus Novus' is staring at, as he is blown backwards into the future" (ibid., 140).

Recalling "the Childhood Images" from city as a self-care strategy

Benjamin started *A Berlin Chronicle* between April and July 1932 when he was at Ibiza Island in Spain. The project was suspended for a while and then restarted in August 1932 by categorizing the handwritten notes. During the 1930s Benjamin randomly worked on the project. From 1932 to 1938 he revised his writings several times and altered the structures; the final text in *Childhood in Berlin* is the product of those alterations. Giorgio Agamben was the first one who found the handwritten version of the book which had an introduction by Benjamin himself in 1981 in the National Library of France, Paris, and was accordingly published in 1989. This edition is often considered as the final edition marked by Benjamin that has been finished after a total revision and omitting a large number of previous manuscripts. However, there are still doubts about whether this edition is the one Benjamin was fully pleased with or not. *Childhood in Berlin* is essentially different in structure and literary style from *A Berlin Chronicle*'s initial text. As Scholem states, just two-fifths of the book *Chronicle* is in direct correspondence with the book *Childhood* (Darby, 2000, 218), and the main parts of it were rewritten by Benjamin with multiple literary and structural modifications. A linear narrative and documentary approach for organizing the childhood memories (though unclearly) is tangible in *Chronicle*, while in *Childhood* no trace of narrative/temporal structure of common autobiographies could be found and also the documentary dimensions of *Chronicle* have been removed thoroughly. Eliminating the texture and background of many parts that were clearly depicted in *Chronicle*, Benjamin builds up numerous gaps, splits, and discontinuities between the parts. Therefore, he tries to connect the structure of his work and the nature of exploring the memory by conscious abandoning of any organizing rule seen in traditional autobiographies. Stated in other words, progressing from *Chronicle* to *Childhood*, a transition from a documentary-like autobiography to an artistic attempt to seize the aura of the past is observable (ibid., 220-221).

Most parts of *Chronicle* were written in the early 1930s just before Hitler's rise. During those years Hitler had been publicly accepted as a powerful political figure by proclaiming racist/nationalist slogans and promising a utopia built upon the ruins of the First World War (Fig. 1). It was a desperate, gloomy, pessimistic time for Benjamin. While staying at Ibiza Island in 1932, he thought of committing suicide and had some abortive attempts too. As the Nazi Party approached to gain power in Germany, it became more unlikely for Benjamin to think about returning to Berlin as a Jewish oppositionist. He was right: after the rising to power of Nazi Party, he never obtained the opportunity to come back to the city where he was born. Under such circumstances, he started to focus on his childhood memories in Berlin. His attempts could be read as "love at last sight" a lover dedicates to its beloved (Gilloch, 1996, 56); a beloved city that was to become the home of foes and enemies armed for destroying it. Later on, speaking of *Childhood*, Adorno wrote that the phantasm of Hitler's dreadful regime had shrouded the whole pages and images of the book (ibid., 56). Recording his memories, Benjamin tried to recover the childhood images and experiences and simultaneously preserve them from the ominous cloud of terminator forces.

In a foreword he later wrote in 1938 for *Childhood*, Benjamin noted that the conscious effort for evoking his "childhood images" was functioning as a vaccine against the homesickness in exile originated by those memories; a vaccine to fight the feeling of nostalgia that was likely to prevail his soul: "In

Fig.1. The Nazi party rises to power in Germany, Nuremberg, 1928. Source: www.nationalww2museum.org.

1932, when I was abroad, it began to be clear to me that I would soon have to bid a long, perhaps lasting farewell to the city of my birth ... In this situation … I deliberately called to mind those images which, in exile, are most apt to waken homesickness: images of childhood. My assumption was that the feeling of longing would no more gain mastery over my spirit than a vaccine does over a healthy body" (Benjamin, 2006, 37). In this respect, for Benjamin, remembering and writing the childhood memories serve as ways to secure himself against the army of homesickness and to protect him from drowning in the vortex of nostalgia. It is in fact a means to record the retrospective emotional experiences and memories related to the urban spaces of his favorite childhood city that has now become a fertile land for decay, death, and annihilation.

Autobiography as drawing the life's map and surveying the metropolis

Comparing to usual autobiographies, *Childhood* is distinctive in structure and form. The narrative structure is a fragmented and disintegrated one in which we face an author who is suspending between present and past, between an adult narrator and a child who is experiencing the city. One point of view belongs to a child who sees each space as a ground for new experiences and feeling, and the other standpoint is of a mature narrator as a distanced observer who considers the unobtainable social/cultural echoes and implications of the past (Lathey, 2016, 489; Eiland, 2006, xiii). The book is based on a dynamic interactive relation between these distinct yet interwoven perspectives. The act of remembering with a sense of separation and self-alienation is accentuated through temporal/spatial distance. The process is however marked by arousing a recurrent tendency for what has been missed. The text is imbued with a dreamlike imaginary atmosphere. On one hand, individuals and foregone events and happenings fade in the background, and on the other hand, the spaces and locations of Berlin during childhood come to the foreground and become vivid. In this regard, representing the sensational urban experiences gain priority over the representation of emotional relationships with relatives; insofar as a father, mother and family members turn to ghostly transient figures in Benjamin's text, unlike most conventional autobiographies. In Susan Sontag's words, the book resembles "the metaphysical landscape" replete with surrealist "dreamlike spaces" that throughout its geography people have a spectral, instantaneous, fleeting presence (Sontag, 2019, 354). The structural basis of the text is built upon the city's geography and its spaces which are important and influential parameters. Applying the method of combining autobiography with mapping (Thacker, 2017, 51), Benjamin is after "drawing a diagram of [his] life" on a text map (Benjamin, 1986, 30). Such a method for recording memories could be regarded as an emotional mapping leading to transform the text into the map: "I have long, indeed for years, played with the idea of setting out the sphere of life— bios— graphically on a map. First, I envisaged an ordinary map, but now I -would incline to a general staff's map of a city center, if such a thing existed" (ibid., 5). Expressed in other terms, by using mapping techniques, he makes his memories spatial and does not follow the timelines usually seen in autobiographies. The text is intentionally avoiding linear coherence and narrative continuity. In *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, he questions the patterns of linear progressive-based historiography and presents a distinguished idea of historiography –a non-linear perception of history based on discontinuities and mutations (Benjamin, 2017). Such an idea in approaching the philosophy of history and historical narrative is also central in the literary structure of *Childhood*. Progressing from *Chronicle* to *Childhood*, as time passes by, and in several revisions, he refuses to categorize the project under the title of traditional autobiographies and starts to adopt a diverse spatial pattern for narrating: "For autobiography has to do with time, with sequence and what makes up the continuous flow of life. Here, I am talking of a space, of moments and discontinuities (Benjamin, 1986, 28). Here, the common clichés in autobiographies and pursuing a continuous linear notion of time are ignored in favor of representing the fragmented moments and discrete images a metropolis imprints on a child's mind and soul.

Proust, Benjamin, and the search of lost urban spaces

Getting familiar with Marcel Proust and his idea of involuntary memory is central in Benjamin's thoughts over the process of reminding memory and the writing method. Benjamin had published the essay *On the Image of Proust* (1929) a few years before he started to record his memories. It was almost at the same time of writing memories when he was busy translating the first two volumes of Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* with one of his friends Franz Hessel. Adorno remarks that while noting down his Berlin pieces, Benjamin was worried about being excessively impressed by Proust's method (Huyssen, 2015, 197). In a letter, he has mentioned that by the time he is writing the memories, he is not eager to read even one more word of Proust than what seems necessary for translating *In Search of Lost Time*. He insists in the letter that it is vital to him to make the Proust's impression as minimal as possible since it brings "addiction dependency" and suppresses his personal creativity (Szondi, 1978, 492). Like Proust, Benjamin is in search of the "time gone", the "lost time" in *Childhood*. But in his search for the "lost time", Benjamin passes through "a lost future" (ibid., 501). While Proust is searching the temporal layers of memories, Benjamin explores the memories in a labyrinth of modern city's spaces. Therefore and unlike Proust's work, spatial proximities get priority over temporal sequences and the narrative reasoning becomes diminished. According to such a spatial feature, the book *Childhood* could be entitled "A la recherche des espaces perdus" (Sontag, 2019, 353). From Benjamin's standpoint, memory is primarily related to space and then to time (Huyssen, 2015, 185). The priority of space over time is revealed through applying some patterns and concepts like map, diagram, labyrinth, and archeological excavations by Benjamin –spatial concepts not tied to a linear perception of time. He states in his letter to Scholem that: "these childhood memories ... are not narratives in the form of a chronicle but ... individual expeditions into the depths of memory" (Eiland, 2006, xi-xii). He wanders as a flâneur in the layers of his urban memories labyrinth and tries to represent the memories as something "city-like" (Gilloch, 1996, 66-67). He writes in *Chronicle* "Language shows clearly that memory is not an instrument for exploring past but its theater. It is the medium of past experience, as the ground is the medium in which dead cities lie interred. He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging. This confers the tone and bearing of genuine reminiscences… what constitutes the real treasure hidden within the earth: the images, severed from all earlier associations … (Benjamin, 1986, 25-26). What arises from this process of reminiscence as exploring and excavating the in-depth layers of the past is the discrete "street images" detached from their ground and context (ibid., 9). In other words, he does not excavate the memory layers to recover and present a thorough and integrated urban memory buried in temporal layers, but to capture scenes and images that emerge in connection with the present time and then vanish instantaneously. Because as he observes in *On the Concept of History:* "the true picture of the past flits by. The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again (Benjamin, 2017, 158). Benjamin then argues in the piece *On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress* that "It's not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words, image is dialectics at a standstill (ibid., 101). It is an understanding of time that defines the past as a running affair, in relation to present and opens to future. Benjamin seeks the past, but the direction of his search is toward future. He reminds a foregone past that "... is infinite because it is merely a key to everything that happened before it and after" (Benjamin, 2003, 108). While the past time is often considered as something finished and passed away; a mummified thing that could be displayed in a museum showcase. Benjamin refers to the destructive power of past and is hopeful to use his childhood memories "as an arsenal" (Pensky, 1993, 250). He is after a detonation that "shatters the regressive impulse towards recovering a lost unity" (Eagleton, 2018, 81).

Eugène Atget and the surrealist phantasmic quality of the urban images

Childhood possesses a dreamlike characteristic and a cast of disappearance, opacity, and obscureness runs through all shattered and fragmented scenes and images of the book. It is as if the scenes are happening amidst a state of twilight and Benjamin is looking at spaces like a somnambulant suspended between the real world and the imaginary world. Therefore, the book shares many similarities with surrealist works. The point must be studied under the context of Benjamin's interest in Surrealist artists and the impressions he got from them. He remembered the surrealist face of the modern city and praised the Surrealists' project in fading and removing the lines between awakening and sleeping. Benjamin's approach in highlighting spaces and locations and decoloring individuals and events could be traced and analyzed by his fascination with Eugène Atget's images from Paris: "photos Benjamin too much admired" (Leslie, 2019, 93). He regarded Atget as one of the pioneers of Surrealism who had released photography from the studio and brought it to the streets. When Man Ray was trying to publish Atget's works, Atget told Man Ray: "Don't put my name on it. These are simply documents that I make" (Walker, 2002, 90). Despite his words, these simple documents of the city were bearing a surrealist dreamlike quality. Robert Desnos described Atget's pictures as "a dream, and a surprise" from which Paris turned into the "dream capital" (MacFarlane, 2010, 18). His photos of Parisian shops' windows with their frozen models were suggestive of Louis Aragon's "human aquariums" (Fig. 2) (ibid., 8). Atget's subject resembles sleepwalkers moving in-between reality and dream.

Benjamin, as an adult author, is thinking of his childhood experiences in Berlin occurred at the twentieth century's turn. It was the years when Atget was simultaneously busy taking photographs of transforming Paris streets and had collected hundreds of documents related to the urban spaces of Paris. Two years before starting his project of remembering these childhood memories, Benjamin had known Atget through a monograph on his works published in 1930 in Leipzig. Atget's photographic style and mostly his focus on "apparently 'meaningless' details, his fascination with the obscure, his drive to break out of the ordinary frame for looking at things ..." are the points that have

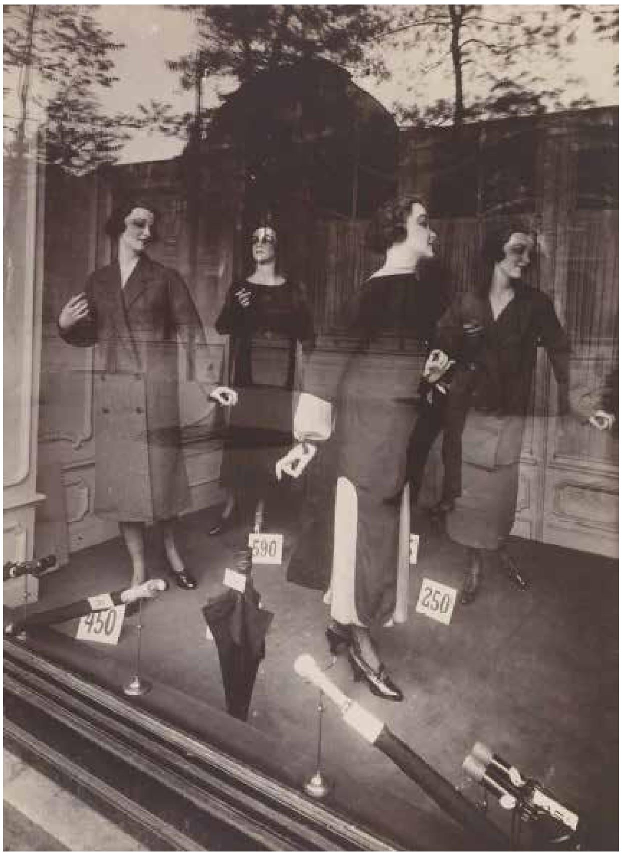

Fig. 2. Sleepwalker subjects in Atget's photos from Paris. Source: MacFarlane, 2010, 26.

noticeably influenced Benjamin's memories (Rugg, 1997, 158). What fascinated Benjamin most in Atget's works was Atget's will to depict cityscapes void of human figures. He remarks in *A Short History of Photography* that urban spaces are quite empty in Atget's pictures: "the city in these pictures looks cleared out, like a lodging that has not yet found a new tenant. It is in these achievements that Surrealist photography sets the scene for a salutary estrangement between man and his surroundings. It gives free play to the politically educated eye ..." (Benjamin, 2019, 168). Paris in these pictures is a city swept from masses crowds and chaos and delirium inherent in metropolises, all by the aid of Atget's photographic witchery. Benjamin believed that, unlike usual photographic cityscapes, Atget's images gave prominence to the rejected, abandoned, forsaken aspects of the modern city (ibid., 164). In the essay, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* Benjamin identifies Atget's abandoned streets of Paris with the crime scene; a crime that has occurred not long ago and the scene is now cleared from crime signs: "... to have pinpointed this new stage constitutes the incomparable significance of Atget, who, around 1900, took photographs of deserted Paris streets. It has quite justly been said of him that he photographed them like scenes of crime. The scene of a crime, too, is deserted; it is photographed for the purpose of establishing evidence. With Atget, photographs become standard evidence for historical occurrences, and acquire a hidden political significance" (Benjamin, 2011, 45-46). Obviously, Benjamin puts emphasis on the documentary aspect of Atget's photographs from "historical occurrences" and through such an approach, confers a "political significance" to these images (Figs. 3 & 4).

While Benjamin insists on the significance of Atget's works to the crime scene and the past historical occurrence, the acclaimed theorist in cinema studies, Annette Michelson, draws attention to another issue in Atget's photos. She states that Atget's images signify what is possible to happen in future (contingent future) rather than signifying the past (Walker, 2002, 100). It could be argued that Atget's perspective is more intended to perceive what seems possible to happen in future and not to discover the "past" occurrence. This future is potential to be replete with a sense of death and decay. Therefore, the crime Benjamin talks about its occurrence in Atget's pictures, transforms into a possible crime in future. Atget's works develop a sense of threat, distress, and anxiety in viewers –an anxiety over a contingent and foreseeable catastrophe and devastation. Desnos also mentioned a quality of death and urban mortality in Atget's images that it was as if in his photos "city dies. Its ashes are scattered" (ibid., 98). Atget invites the viewers to see the urban spaces as

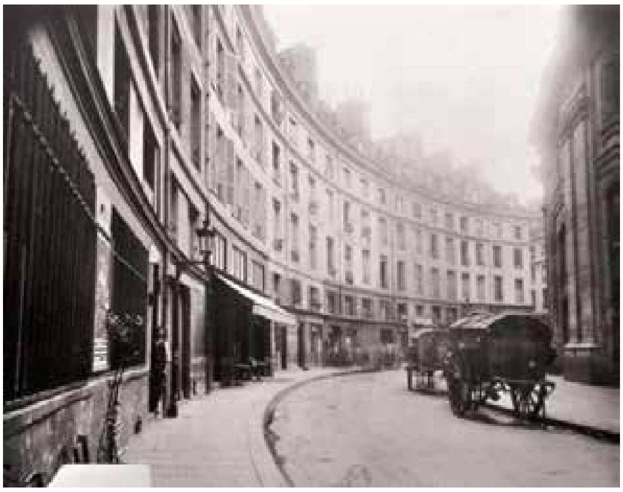

Fig. 3. Atget's photographs of Paris streets and urban spaces. Source: Sramek, 2013, 71.

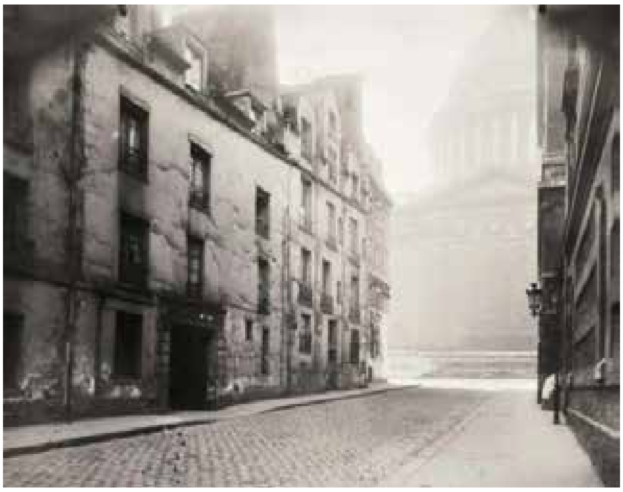

Fig. 4. Atget's photographs of Paris streets and urban spaces. Source: Sramek, 2013, 294.

an "ephemeral ruin" (Lichtenstein, 2011, 65). The pictures display the present, past, and future of the spaces at the same time. In the middle of the urban chaos, Atget seizes the peace and silence of death. It could also be discussed that this aspect of Atget's photos might have unconsciously inspired Benjamin for the structure of *Childhood.* As mentioned before, he started to record his childhood memories when he was thinking of suicide and writing the memories of the birthplace was an alternative for committing suicide (Rugg, 1997, 150). What is prevalent in *Childhood* is the sense of death, decay, and ruin. The sense Adorno marks by the term "a deathly air" that has spread over the scenes of the book and dominated Atget's pictures (Huyssen, 2015, 204). Benjamin writes that "the city of work and the metropolis of business", Berlin "shows itself full of dead" (Benjamin, 1986, 28). Here the relation of photography and death must be regarded carefully, since "All photographs are memento mori. To take a photograph is to participate in another person's (or thing's) mortality, vulnerability, mutability" (Sontag, 2013, 40).

Photographic autobiography and the destructive, allegorical nature of images in Childhood

Benjamin addresses the deficiency of traditional methods in organizing his memories and as a result, adopts a distinct style based on his interest in modern technological media like photography and cinema. He writes in the first pages of Childhood: "I have made an effort to get hold of the images in which the experience of the big city is precipitated in a child of the middle class" (Benjamin, 2006, 38). The organization of images related to the childhood memories in the book shows a remarkable correspondence with the montage of pictures he had used in his others works like *One-way street and Arcades Project* that was inspired by Soviet cinema (and particularly Eisenstein theories). In Benjamin's style for writing his autobiography, there are specific similarities and connections between the process of remembering memories and the photographic process. The text is often compared to a "photographic album" based on the words (Darby, 2000, 215) in which a "photographic style of writing" (Leslie, 2019, 89) is ruling. *A Short History of Photography* had been written in 1931 just before starting the *Chronicle* (1932) and the essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* was completed in 1936 a little while prior to finishing the final version of *Childhood.* The idea of Photography is central in both essays. In a writing about Baudelaire, he had spoken of photography's power in capturing the essence of things in the modern era (Jennings, 2009, 319). In Benjamin's estimation, photography "captures a moment in time" and then "exports it into the future" (Leslie, 2000, 48).

Due to Benjamin's use of photographic techniques in ordering the text, *Childhood* could be considered as a "photographic autobiography" (Rugg, 1997, 133) in which he exhibits his urban memories and experiences as a child in a photo-based context. In other words, autobiography in this book is an attempt to photographically influence the readers. In his ideas about photography, Benjamin was influenced by Siegfried Kracauer and had influenced him as well (Jennings, 2009, 320-322). Inspired by Kracauer's ideas, "the destructive, allegorical nature" of the photographic image comes to the importance for Benjamin (ibid., 327). In one of his writings from 1922, Benjamin mentions the connection between the poetry of Baudelaire and the photography techniques. He relates the photographic process and the function of allegory in this writing. From this point of view, it seems that photography and allegory are two similar processes for Benjamin (Grøtta, 2012, 88-89). In *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* Benjamin emphasizes the interrelation between allegory and ruin and reveals the capacities of allegory as a destructive strategy. In this regard, the photographic images of Benjamin's childhood function as an allegory and emerge as the pieces of a ruin from a distant past that are capable of agitating the fabricated order of the present time. As Sontag argues: "The photographer—and the consumer of photographs—follows in the footsteps of the ragpicker" (Sontag, 2013, 174); by taking photos, we "turn the past into a consumable object" and "we now make a history out of our detritus" (ibid., 154). For Benjamin, the concept of ruin possesses a revealing capacity that questions the fake illusion of progress. These allegoric photographic pictures of childhood memories as the pieces of a ruin recovered by excavating the layers of the past time suggest a diverse perspective and awareness in accepting the dreamy world the Nazi regime promised. It was a dreamy world in which the citizens became some sleepwalkers absorbed in a "collective dream". As in Atget's images, they were experiencing something between reality and dream in a world like a human aquarium Aragon attributes to Atget's works. These "silent" and "cleared out" photographic documents demonstrate a strange contrast to the fervent mass-populated speeches of Hitler in Nazi's meetings. The photos exclaim that this promised utopia of the Nazi Party is not something rather than a flimsy illusion (Fig. 5).

In *One-way Street* Benjamin draws a comparison between the past and "a torso" discovered from the layers of time. He, who used to be "a beautiful statue" today is just "the precious block": "Only he who can view his own past as an abortion sprung from compulsion and need can use it to full advantage in the present. For what one has lived is at best comparable to a beautiful statue which has had all its limbs knocked off in transit, and now yields nothing but the precious block out of which the image of one's future must be hewn" (Benjamin, 2001, 46). We can claim that in his memory excavation, Benjamin is not after recapturing the beautiful statue of the past but trying to use the destroyed past to form the future.

Fig. 5. Collective metamorphosis and collective dream in Nazi Germany. Source: www.reddit.com.

Conclusion

Remembering his childhood memories, Benjamin does not follow a complete and continuous linear narrative to represent the past, but he makes an effort to present and represent the memory and experience of a metropolis in a series of fragmented pictures. There is no temporal or narrative order among childhood pictures and moments, yet a photographic approach has interconnected the scenes and pictures. Therefore, it provides an opportunity for readers to wander across the discrete photographic images of Benjamin's childhood memories in the city. As discussed in the present article, these photographic pictures are interpreted not only in relation to the past but also to the present and future. The Surrealist "silent" and "cleared out" images Benjamin recalls from a faraway Berlin, obtain their meaning in contrast to the pompous propaganda of the Nazi Party for constructing a utopia from the heart of the First World War's ruins. These ghostly-dreamy pictures hold a revealing potential against the Nazi Party's pretentious shows and manifestos. The Surrealist photos disclose the fake face of that promised utopia by the Nazi Party.

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