

Walter Benjamin

*Edited and
with an Introduction
by Peter Demetz*

REFLECTIONS

*Essays,
Aphorisms,
Autobiographical
Writings*

Translated by Edmund Jephcott

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Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century

The waters are blue and the vegetation pink;
The evening sweet to behold;
People are out walking. Great ladies promenade;
and behind them walk the small ladies.
—Nguyen-Trong-Hiep: *Paris, Capital of France* (1897)

1. Fourier, or the Arcades

*De ces palais les colonnes magiques
A l'amateur montrent de toutes parts
Dans les objets qu'étaient leurs portiques
Que l'industrie est rivale aux arts.*
—Nouveaux tableaux de Paris (1828)

Most of the Paris arcades are built in the decade and a half after 1822. The first condition for this new fashion is the boom in the textile trade. The *magasins de nouveauté*, the first establishments to keep large stocks of goods on their premises, begin to appear, precursors of the department stores. It is the time of which Balzac wrote, "The great poem of display chants its many-colored strophes from the Madeleine to the Porte-Saint-Denis." The arcades are a center of trade in luxury goods. In their fittings art is brought in to the service of commerce. Contemporaries never tire of admiring them. They long remain a center of attraction for foreigners. An *Illustrated Guide to Paris* said: "These arcades, a recent invention of industrial luxury, are glass-roofed, marble-walled passages cut through whole blocks of houses, whose owners have combined in this speculation. On either side of the passages, which

draw their light from above, run the most elegant shops, so that an arcade of this kind is a city, indeed, a world in miniature." The arcades are the scene of the first gas lighting.

The second condition for the construction of the arcades is the advent of building in iron. The Empire saw in this technique an aid to a renewal of architecture in the ancient Greek manner. The architectural theorist Bötticher expresses a general conviction when he says, "with regard to the artistic form of the new system, the formal principle of the Hellenic style" should be introduced. *Empire* is the style of revolutionary heroism for which the state is an end in itself. Just as Napoleon failed to recognize the functional nature of the state as an instrument of domination by the bourgeois class, neither did the master builders of his time perceive the functional nature of iron, through which the constructive principle began its domination of architecture. These builders model their pillars on Pompeian columns, their factories on houses, as later the first railway stations are to resemble chalets. "Construction fills the role of the unconscious." Nevertheless the idea of the engineer, originating in the revolutionary wars, begins to assert itself, and battle is joined between constructor and decorator, Ecole Polytechnique and Ecole des Beaux-Arts.

In iron, an artificial building material makes its appearance for the first time in the history of architecture. It undergoes a development that accelerates in the course of the century. The decisive breakthrough comes when it emerges that the locomotive, with which experiments had been made since the end of the twenties, could only be used on iron rails. The rail becomes the first prefabricated iron component, the forerunner of the girder. Iron is avoided in residential buildings and used in arcades, exhibition halls, stations—buildings serving transitory purposes. Simultaneously, the architectonic scope for the application of glass expands. The social conditions for its intensified use as a building material do not arrive, however, until a hundred years later. Even in Scheerbart's "glass architecture" (1914) it appears in utopian contexts.

Chaque époque rêve la suivante.
—Michelet, *Avenir! Avenir!*

Corresponding in the collective consciousness to the forms of the new means of production, which at first were still dominated by the old (Marx), are images in which the new is intermingled with the old. These images are wishful fantasies, and in them the collective seeks both to preserve and to transfigure the inchoateness of the social product and the deficiencies in the social system of production. In addition, these wish-fulfilling images manifest an emphatic striving for dissociation with the outmoded—which means, however, with the most recent past. These tendencies direct the visual imagination, which has been activated by the new, back to the primeval past. In the dream in which, before the eyes of each epoch, that which is to follow appears in images, the latter appears wedded to elements from prehistory, that is, of a classless society. Intimations of this, deposited in the unconscious of the collective, mingle with the new to produce the utopia that has left its traces in thousands of configurations of life, from permanent buildings to fleeting fashions.

This state of affairs is discernible in Fourier's utopia. Its chief impetus comes from the advent of machines. But this is not directly expressed in his accounts of it; these have their origin in the morality of trade and the false morality propagated in its service. His phalanstery is supposed to lead men back to conditions in which virtue is superfluous. Its highly complicated organization is like a piece of machinery. The meshing of passions, the intricate interaction of the *passions mécanistes* with the *passion cabaliste*, are primitive analogies to machinery in the material of psychology. This human machinery produces the land of milk and honey, the primeval wish symbol that Fourier's utopia filled with new life.

In the arcades, Fourier saw the architectonic canon of the phalanstery. His reactionary modification of them is characteristic: whereas they originally serve commercial purposes, he makes them into dwelling places. The phalanstery becomes a

city of arcades. Fourier installs in the austere, formal world of the Empire the colorful idyll of Biedermeier. Its radiance lasts, though paled, till Zola. He takes up Fourier's ideas in *Travail*, as he takes leave of the arcades in *Thérèse Raquin*. Marx defends Fourier to Carl Grün, emphasizing his "colossal vision of man." He also draws attention to Fourier's humor. And in fact Jean Paul in *Levana* is as closely related to Fourier the pedagogue as Scheerbart in his "glass architecture" is to Fourier the utopian.

2. Daguerre, or the Panoramas

Soleil, prends garde à toi!
—A. J. Wiertz, *Oeuvres littéraires*
(Paris 1870)

As architecture begins to outgrow art in the use of iron construction, so does painting in the panoramas. The climax of the preparation of panoramas coincides with the appearance of the arcades. There were tireless exertions of technical skill to make panoramas the scenes of a perfect imitation of nature. The attempt was made to reproduce the changing time of day in the landscape, the rising of the moon, the rushing of waterfalls. David advises his pupils to draw from nature in the panoramas. In striving to produce deceptively lifelike changes in their presentation of nature, the panoramas point ahead, beyond photography, to films and sound films.

Contemporary to the panoramas is a panoramic literature. *Le livre des cent-et-un*, *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes*, *Le diable à Paris*, *La grande ville* are part of it. In these books is being prepared the collective literary work for which, in the thirties, Girardin created an arena in the *feuilleton*. They consist of isolated sketches, the anecdotal form of which corresponds to the plastic foreground of the panorama, and their informational base to its painted background. This literature

is also panoramic in a social sense. For the last time the worker appears, outside his class, as a trimming for an idyll.

The panoramas, which declare a revolution in the relation of art to technology, are at the same time an expression of a new feeling about life. The city dweller, whose political superiority over the country is expressed in many ways in the course of the century, attempts to introduce the countryside into the city. In the panoramas the city dilates to become landscape, as it does in a subtler way for the *flâneur*. Daguerre is a pupil of the panorama painter Prévost, whose establishment is situated in the Passage des Panoramas. Description of the panoramas by Prévost and Daguerre. In 1839 Daguerre's panorama burns down. In the same year he announces the invention of daguerreotype.

Arago introduces photography in an official speech. He indicates its place in the history of technology. He prophesies its scientific application. Artists, on the other hand, begin to debate its artistic value. Photography leads to the annihilation of the great profession of the portrait miniaturist. This happens not only for economic reasons. Artistically, early photographs were superior to portrait miniatures. The technical reason lies in the long exposure time, which demanded utmost concentration by the subject being portrayed. The social reason lies in the circumstance that the first photographers belonged to the avant-garde and drew their clientele for the most part from it. Nadar's advance over his professional colleagues is characterized by his undertaking to take photographs in the sewers of Paris. This is the first time that the lens is given the task of making discoveries. Its importance becomes greater the more questionable, in face of the new technical and social reality, the subjective element in painting and graphic information is felt to be.

The World Exhibition of 1855 presents for the first time a special display of photography. In the same year Wiertz publishes his major article on photography, in which he assigns it the task of philosophically enlightening painting. He under-

stood this enlightenment, as his own paintings show, in a political sense. Wiertz can thus be described as the first to have demanded, if not foreseen, montage as a propagandistic application of photography. With the increasing scope of communications systems, the significance of painting in imparting information is reduced. It begins, in reaction against photography, to stress the color elements in pictures. When impressionism gives way to cubism, painting has created for itself a further domain into which photography cannot, for the time being, follow. Photography for its part has, since the middle of the century, enormously expanded the scope of the commodity trade by putting on the market in unlimited quantities figures, landscapes, events that have either not been salable at all or have been available only as pictures for single customers. To increase turnover, it renewed its objects through fashionable changes in photographic technique that determined the later history of photography.

3. Grandville, or the World Exhibitions

Oui, quand le monde entier, de Paris jusqu'en Chine,
O divin Saint-Simon, sera dans la doctrine,
L'âge d'or doit renaître avec tout son éclat,
Les fleuves rouleront du thé, du chocolat;
Les moutons tous rôtis bondiront dans la plaine,
Et les brochets au bleu nageront dans la Seine;
Les épinards viendront au monde fricassés,
Avec des croûtons frittés tout au tour concassés.
Les arbres produiront des pommes en compotes
Et l'on moissonnera des cerricks et des bottes;
Il neigera du vin, il pleuvra des poulets,
Et du ciel les canards tomberont aux navets.

—Lauglé and Vanderbusch, *Louis et le Saint-Simonien*
(1832)

World exhibitions are the sites of pilgrimages to the commodity fetish. "Europe is on the move to look at merchandise," said Taine in 1855. The world exhibitions are preceded by

national industrial exhibitions, the first of which takes place in 1798 on the Champ-de-Mars. It proceeds from the wish "to entertain the working classes, and becomes for them a festival of emancipation." The workers stand as customers in the foreground. The framework of the entertainment industry has not yet been formed. The popular festival supplies it. Chaptal's speech on industry opens this exhibition. The Saint-Simonists, who plan the industrialization of the earth, take up the idea of world exhibitions. Chevalier, the first authority in the new field, is a pupil of Enfantin and editor of the Saint-Simonist journal, *Globe*. The Saint-Simonists predicted the development of the world economy, but not of the class struggle. Beside their participation in industrial and commercial enterprises about the middle of the century stands their helplessness in questions concerning the proletariat. The world exhibitions glorify the exchange value of commodities. They create a framework in which commodities' intrinsic value is eclipsed. They open up a phantasmagoria that people enter to be amused. The entertainment industry facilitates this by elevating people to the level of commodities. They submit to being manipulated while enjoying their alienation from themselves and others. The enthronement of merchandise, with the aura of amusement surrounding it, is the secret theme of Grandville's art. This is reflected in the discord between its utopian and its cynical elements. Its subtleties in the presentation of inanimate objects correspond to what Marx called the "theological whims" of goods. This is clearly distilled in the term *spécialité*—a commodity description coming into use about this time in the luxury industry; under Grandville's pencil the whole of nature is transformed into *spécialités*. He presents them in the same spirit in which advertising—a word that is also coined at this time—begins to present its articles. He ends in madness.

Fashion: My dear Mr. Death!

—Leopardi, *Dialogue Between Fashion and Death*.

The world exhibitions build up the universe of commodities. Grandville's fantasies extend the character of a commodity to the universe. They modernize it. Saturn's ring becomes a cast-iron balcony on which the inhabitants of the planet take the air in the evening. The literary counterpart of this graphic utopia is presented by the book of the Fourierist natural scientist Toussenat. Fashion prescribes the ritual according to which the commodity fetish wishes to be worshiped; Grandville extends fashion's claims both to the objects of everyday use and to the cosmos. By pursuing it to its extremes he discloses its nature. This resides in its conflict with the organic. It couples the living body to the inorganic world. Against the living it asserts the rights of the corpse. Fetishism, which is subject to the sex appeal of the inorganic, is its vital nerve. The cult of commodities places it in its service.

On the occasion of the 1867 World Exhibition, Victor Hugo issues a manifesto: *To the Peoples of Europe*. Earlier, and more unambiguously, their interests had been represented by the French workers' delegations, the first of which had been sent to the London World Exhibition of 1851, and the second, consisting of seven hundred and fifty representatives, to that of 1862. The latter was of indirect importance for the foundation of the International Workingmen's Association by Marx. The phantasmagoria of capitalist culture reaches its most brilliant display in the World Exhibition of 1867. The Empire is at the height of its power. Paris reaffirms itself as the capital of luxury and fashion: Offenbach sets the rhythm of Parisian life. The operetta is the ironic utopia of the capital's lasting rule.

4. Louis-Philippe, or the Interior

*Une tête, sur la table de nuit, repose
Comme un renoncule.*

—Baudelaire, "Un martyr"

Under Louis-Philippe the private citizen enters the stage of history. The extension of the democratic apparatus through a new franchise coincides with the parliamentary corruption organized by Guihot. Under its protection the ruling class makes history by pursuing its business interests. It promotes railway construction to improve its share holdings. It favors Louis-Philippe as a private citizen at the head of affairs. By the time of the July Revolution, the bourgeoisie has realized the aims of 1789 (Marx).

For the private person, living space becomes, for the first time, antithetical to the place of work. The former is constituted by the interior; the office is its complement. The private person who squares his accounts with reality in his office demands that the interior be maintained in his illusions. This need is all the more pressing since he has no intention of extending his commercial considerations into social ones. In shaping his private environment he represses both. From this spring the phantasmagorias of the interior. For the private individual the private environment represents the universe. In it he gathers remote places and the past. His drawing room is a box in the world theater.

Excursus on *art nouveau*. About the turn of the century, the interior is shaken by *art nouveau*. Admittedly the latter, through its ideology, seems to bring with it the consummation of the interior—the transfiguration of the solitary soul appears its goal. Individualism is its theory. In Vandervelde the house appears as the expression of personality. Ornament is to this house what the signature is to a painting. The real meaning of *art nouveau* is not expressed in this ideology. It represents art's last attempt to escape from its ivory tower, which is besieged

by technology. *Art nouveau* mobilizes all the reserves of inwardness. They find their expression in mediumistic line-language, in the flower as the symbol of naked, vegetal nature confronting a technically armed environment. The new elements of iron building, girder forms, preoccupy *art nouveau*. In ornamentation it strives to win back these forms for art. Concrete offers it the prospect of new plastic possibilities in architecture. About this time the real center of gravity of living space is transferred to the office. The de-realized individual creates a place for himself in the private home. *Art nouveau* is summed up by *The Master Builder*—the attempt by the individual to do battle with technology on the basis of his inwardness leads to his downfall.

Je crois... à mon âme: la Chose.

—Léon Deubel, *Oeuvres* (Paris 1929)

The interior is the retreat of art. The collector is a true inmate of the interior. He makes the transfiguration of things his business. To him falls the Sisyphean task of obliterating the commodity-like character of things through his ownership of them. But he merely confers connoisseur value on them, instead of intrinsic value. The collector dreams that he is not only in a distant or past world but also, at the same time, in a better one, in which, although men are as unprovided with what they need as in the everyday world, things are free of the drudgery of being useful.

The interior is not only the universe but also the etui of the private person. To live means to leave traces. In the interior these are emphasized. An abundance of covers and protectors, liners and cases is devised, on which the traces of objects of everyday use are imprinted. The traces of the occupant also leave their impression on the interior. The detective story that follows these traces comes into being. His "philosophy of furniture," along with his detective novellas, shows Poe to be the

first physiognomist of the interior. The criminals of the first detective novels are neither gentlemen nor apaches, but private members of the bourgeoisie.

5. Baudelaire, or the Streets of Paris

Tout pour moi devient Allégorie.

—Baudelaire, "Le cygne"

Baudelaire's genius, which is fed on melancholy, is an allegorical genius. In Baudelaire Paris becomes for the first time a subject of lyric poetry. This poetry is not regional art; rather, the gaze of the allegorist that falls on the city is estranged. It is the gaze of the *flâneur*, whose mode of life still surrounds the approaching desolation of city life with a propitiatory luster. The *flâneur* is still on the threshold, of the city as of the bourgeois class. Neither has yet engulfed him; in neither is he at home. He seeks refuge in the crowd. Early contributions to a physiognomics of the crowd are to be found in Engels and Poe. The crowd is the veil through which the familiar city lures the *flâneur* like a phantasmagoria. In it the city is now a landscape, now a room. Both, then, constitute the department store that puts even *flânerie* to use for commodity circulation. The department store is the *flâneur's* last practical joke.

In the *flâneur* the intelligentsia pays a visit to the marketplace, ostensibly to look around, yet in reality to find a buyer. In this intermediate phase, in which it still has patrons but is already beginning to familiarize itself with the market, it appears as bohemianism. The uncertainty of its political function corresponds to the uncertainty of its economic position. This is most strikingly expressed in the professional conspirators, who are certainly a part of Bohemia. Their first field of activity is the army; later it becomes the petit bourgeoisie,

occasionally the proletariat. Yet this stratum sees its opponents in the real leaders of the latter. The *Communist Manifesto* puts an end to their political existence. Baudelaire's poetry draws its strength from the rebellious emotionalism of this group. He throws his lot in with the asocial. His only sexual communion is realized with a whore.

Facilis descensus Averni

—Virgil, *Aeneid*

What is unique in Baudelaire's poetry is that the images of women and death are permeated by a third, that of Paris. The Paris of his poems is a submerged city, more submarine than subterranean. The chthonic elements of the city—its topographical formation, the old deserted bed of the Seine—doubtless left their impression on his work. Yet what is decisive in Baudelaire's "deathly idyll" of the city is a social, modern substratum. Modernity is a main accent in his poetry. He shatters the ideal as spleen (*Spleen et Idéal*). But it is precisely modernity that is always quoting primeval history. This happens here through the ambiguity attending the social relationships and products of this epoch. Ambiguity is the pictorial image of dialectics, the law of dialectics seen at a standstill. This standstill is utopia and the dialectic image therefore a dream image. Such an image is presented by the pure commodity: as fetish. Such an image are the arcades, which are both house and stars. Such an image is the prostitute, who is saleswoman and wares in one.

Le voyage pour découvrir ma géographie

—Note of a madman (Paris 1907)

The last poem of the *Flowers of Evil*, "The Journey": "Oh death, old captain, it is time, let us weigh anchor." The last journey of the *flâneur*: death. Its destination: the new. "To

the depths of the unknown, there to find something new." Novelty is a quality independent of the intrinsic value of the commodity. It is the origin of the illusion inseverable from the images produced by the collective unconscious. It is the quintessence of false consciousness, whose indefatigable agent is fashion. The illusion of novelty is reflected, like one mirror in another, in the illusion of perpetual sameness. The product of this reflection is the phantasmagoria of "cultural history," in which the bourgeoisie savors its false consciousness to the last. The art that begins to doubt its task and ceases to be "inseparable from utility" (Baudelaire) must make novelty its highest value. The snob becomes its *arbiter novarum rerum*. He is to art what the dandy is to fashion. As in the seventeenth century the canon of dialectical imagery came to be allegory, in the nineteenth it is novelty. The *magasins de nouveauté* are joined by the newspapers. The press organizes the market in intellectual values, in which prices at first soar. Nonconformists rebel against the handing over of art to the market. They gather around the banner of "*l'art pour l'art*." This slogan springs from the conception of the total artwork, which attempts to isolate art from the development of technology. The solemnity with which it is celebrated is the corollary to the frivolity that glorifies the commodity. Both abstract from the social existence of man. Baudelaire succumbs to the infatuation of Wagner.

6. Haussmann, or the Barricades

*J'ai le culte du Beau, du Bien, des grandes choses,
De la belle nature inspirant le grand art,
Qu'il enchante l'oreille ou charme le regard;
J'ai l'amour du printemps en fleurs: femmes et roses.*

—Baron Haussmann, *Confession d'un lion devenu vieux*

The blossomy realm of decoration,
Landscape and architecture's charm
And all effects of scenery repose
Upon perspective's law alone.

—Franz Böhle, *Theatrical Catechism*

Haussmann's urban ideal was of long perspectives of streets and thoroughfares. This corresponds to the inclination, noticeable again and again in the nineteenth century, to ennoble technical necessities by artistic aims. The institutions of the secular and clerical dominance of the bourgeoisie were to find their apotheosis in a framework of streets. Streets, before their completion, were draped in canvas and unveiled like monuments. Haussmann's efficiency is integrated with Napoleonic idealism. The latter favors finance capital. Paris experiences a flowering of speculation. Playing the stock exchange displaces the game of chance in the forms that had come down from feudal society. To the phantasmagorias of space to which the *flâneur* abandons himself, correspond the phantasmagorias of time indulged in by the gambler. Gambling converts time into a narcotic. Lafargue declares gaming an imitation in miniature of the mysteries of economic prosperity. The expropriations by Haussmann call into being a fraudulent speculation. The arbitration of the Court of Cassation, inspired by the bourgeois and Orleanist opposition, increases the financial risk of Haussmannization. Haussmann attempts to strengthen his dictatorship and to place Paris under an emergency regime. In 1864 he gives expression in a parliamentary speech to his hatred of the rootless population of big cities. The latter is constantly increased by his enterprises. The rise in rents drives the pro-

letariat into the suburbs. The *quartiers* of Paris thus lose their individual physiognomies. The red belt is formed. Haussmann gave himself the name of "artist in demolition." He felt himself called to his work and stresses this in his memoirs. Meanwhile, he estranges Parisians from their city. They begin to be conscious of its inhuman character. Maxime du Camp's monumental work *Paris* has its origin in this consciousness. The *Jérémiades d'un Haussmannisé* give it the form of a biblical lament.

The true purpose of Haussmann's work was to secure the city against civil war. He wanted to make the erection of barricades in Paris impossible for all time. With such intent Louis-Philippe had already introduced wooden paving. Yet the barricades played a part in the February Revolution. Engels studies the technique of barricade fighting. Haussmann seeks to prevent barricades in two ways. The breadth of the streets is intended to make their erection impossible, and new thoroughfares are to open the shortest route between the barracks and the working-class districts. Contemporaries christen the enterprise "strategic embellishment."

*Fais voir, en déjouant la ruse,
O République, à ces pervers
Ta grande face de Méduse
Au milieu de rouges éclairs.*

—Workers' song (about 1850).

The barricade is resurrected in the Commune. It is stronger and better secured than ever. It stretches across the great boulevards, often reaching the height of the first floor, and covers the trenches behind it. Just as the *Communist Manifesto* ends the epoch of the professional conspirator, the Commune puts an end to the phantasmagoria that dominates the freedom of the proletariat. It dispels the illusion that the task of the proletarian revolution is to complete the work of 1789 hand in hand with the bourgeoisie. This illusion prevailed from 1831

to 1871, from the Lyons uprising to the Commune. The bourgeoisie never shared this error. The struggle of the bourgeoisie against the social rights of the proletariat has already begun in the Great Revolution and coincides with the philanthropic movement that conceals it, attaining its fullest development under Napoleon III. Under him is written the monumental work of this political tendency: Le Play's *European Workers*. Besides the covert position of philanthropy, the bourgeoisie was always ready to take up the overt position of class struggle. As early as 1831 it recognizes, in the *Journal des Débats*, "Every industrialist lives in his factory like the plantation owners among their slaves." If, on the one hand, the lack of a guiding theory of revolution was the undoing of the old workers' uprisings, it was also, on the other, the condition for the immediate energy and enthusiasm with which they set about establishing a new society. This enthusiasm, which reached its climax in the Commune, for a time won over to the workers the best elements of the bourgeoisie, but in the end led them to succumb to their worst. Rimbaud and Courbet declare their support for the Commune. The Paris fire is the fitting conclusion to Haussmann's work of destruction.

My good father had been in Paris.

—Karl Gutzkow, *Letters from Paris* (1842)

Balzac was the first to speak of the ruins of the bourgeoisie. But only Surrealism exposed them to view. The development of the forces of production reduced the wish symbols of the previous century to rubble even before the monuments representing them had crumbled. In the nineteenth century this development emancipated constructive forms from art, as the sciences freed themselves from philosophy in the sixteenth. Architecture makes a start as constructional engineering. The reproduction of nature in photography follows. Fantasy creation prepares itself to become practical as commercial art. Literature is subjected to montage in the *feuilleton*. All these

products are on the point of going to market as wares. But they hesitate on the brink. From this epoch stem the arcades and interiors, the exhibitions and panoramas. They are residues of a dream world. The realization of dream elements in waking is the textbook example of dialectical thinking. For this reason dialectical thinking is the organ of historical awakening. Each epoch not only dreams the next, but also, in dreaming, strives toward the moment of waking. It bears its end in itself and unfolds it—as Hegel already saw—with ruse. In the convulsions of the commodity economy we begin to recognize the monuments of the bourgeoisie as ruins even before they have crumbled.

Naples

WALTER BENJAMIN AND ASJA LACIS

Some years ago a priest was drawn on a cart through the streets of Naples for indecent offenses. He was followed by a crowd hurling maledictions. At a corner a wedding procession appeared. The priest stands up and makes the sign of a blessing, and the cart's pursuers fall on their knees. So absolutely, in this city, does Catholicism strive to reassert itself in every situation. Should it disappear from the face of the earth, its last foothold would perhaps be not Rome, but Naples.

Nowhere can this people live out its rich barbarism, which has its source in the heart of the city itself, more securely than in the lap of the Church. It needs Catholicism, for even its excesses are then legalized by a legend, the feast day of a martyr. Here Alfonso de Liguori was born, the saint who made the practice of the Catholic Church supple enough to accommodate the trade of the swindler and the whore, in order to control it with more or less rigorous penances in the confessional, for which he wrote a three-volume compendium. Confession alone, not the police, is a match for the self-administration of the criminal world, the *camorra*.

So it does not occur to an injured party to call the police if he is anxious to seek redress. Through civic or clerical mediators, if not personally, he approaches a *camorrista*. Through him he agrees on a ransom. From Naples to Castellamare, the length of the proletarian suburbs, run the headquarters of the mainland *camorra*. For these criminals avoid quarters in which they would be at the disposal of the police. They are dispersed over the city and the suburbs. That makes them dangerous.

