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Four martyr icons of R. B. Kitaj: An analysis of their pictorial narratives

Salus, Olivia Carol, Ph.D.
The Ohio State University, 1989

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FOUR MARTYR ICONS OF R.B. KITAJ: AN ANALYSIS OF THEIR
PICTORIAL NARRATIVES

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

Olivia Carol Salus, M.S., M.A.

*****

The Ohio State University

1989

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1989
To My Parents
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I acknowledge here great indebtedness to Dr. Mathew Herban. His knowledge and helpfulness made possible this study. Perhaps even more, through his efforts he helped me develop publishable research. His influence is felt everywhere in my work. He taught me the importance of a thorough approach to teaching and research. Without him I would not have a professional career.

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Also I would like to thank my parents for their patience and encouragement which gave me peace of mind through all of these years.
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FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: History of Art
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF PLATES</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER I</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Murder of Rosa Luxemburg</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER II</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaac Babel Riding with Budyonny</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER III</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go and Get Killed Comrade—We Need a Byron in the Movement</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER IV</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autumn of Central Paris (After Walter Benjamin)</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**LIST OF PLATES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plate</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. The Murder of Rosa Luxemburg. 1960. L.30, 60 x 60 in., oil and collage on canvas. The Tate Gallery, London. (Source for other than Livingstone monograph will be noted in parentheses.)</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Johannes Schilling, <em>Niederwald Monument</em>. (1877-83). 33' 2&quot; on 84' base, bronze. (Titel, <em>Das Niederwald Denkmal</em>, plate I)</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Johann Heinrich Dannecker, <em>Monument to Frederick the Great and His Generals</em>. late 1700's. no dimensions given, aquatint. Berlin-Dahlem Museum, West Berlin. (Neumeyer, <em>Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes</em> II 1938, fig. d)</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII.  Max Ernst, &quot;Lion of Belfort,&quot; <em>Une Semaine de Bonté</em>. 1934. 8 1/8 x 11 in., collage novel. (Ernst, <em>Une Semaine de Bonté</em>, plate 3)</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX. Murder of Rosa Luxemburg. 1960. detail, Niederwald Monument. The Tate Gallery, London. photograph by the author</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X. Murder of Rosa Luxemburg. 1960. detail, pyramid. The Tate Gallery, London. photograph by the author</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIV. Fantasiya. no date given. no dimensions given. photograph. (Dodge, <em>Riders of Many Lands</em>, n.p.)</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XV. English Rider. no date given. no dimensions given. photograph. (Dodge, Riders of Many Lands, n.p.)</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVI. Country Bumpkin. no date given. no dimensions given. drawing. (Dodge, Riders of Many Lands, n.p.)</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVII. South Africa and the Transvaal War. 1901. 10 3/4 x 8 1/2&quot;, embossed leather book cover</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVIII. &quot;Crane Man.&quot; German Pamphlet, Cologne, 1664. no dimensions given. (Wittkower, Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes V 1942, plate 49f)</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIX. &quot;Crane Man.&quot; from Prodigiorum ac ostentorum chronicon of Lycothenes (pseudonym of Conrad Wolffhart), 1557. (Wittkower, Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes V 1942, plate 49b)</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXI. &quot;Benia Krik - A Film Novel.&quot; no date given. no dimensions given. screenprint. (Kitaj, Kitaj: Paintings, 1965, n.p.)</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXIII. Francis Bacon, <em>Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion</em>. detail, right panel. 1944. each 37 x 29 in., oil and pastel on hardboard. The Tate Gallery, London. *(Russell, <em>Francis Bacon</em>, no. 9) ................................ 297</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXV. Max Ernst, &quot;Oedipus,&quot; <em>Une Semaine de Bonté</em>. 1934. 8 1/8 x 11 in., collage novel. *(Ernst, <em>Une Semaine de Bonté</em>, plate 139) ... 299</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXVII. Théodore Géricault, <em>Charging Chausseur</em>. 1812. 9 ft.6 in. x 6 ft.4 in., oil on canvas. Louvre, Paris. *(Berger, <em>Géricault and His Work</em>, plate 2) ................................. 301</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXIX. Eadweard Muybridge, <em>Beauty with Rider</em>. 1879. 2 1/2 x 1 3/4 in., photograph. *(Muybridge, <em>Animals in Motion</em>, plate 40) ... 303</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Plate Page

XXX. Go and Get Killed Comrade—We Need a Byron in the Movement. 1966. L. fig.4.
32 x 21 7/8 in., screenprint.
Cincinnati Museum of Art, Cincinnati ............... 304

XXXI. Tedeum. 1963. L. 71,
48 x 72 in., oil on canvas.
National Museum of Cardiff, Wales ................. 305

XXXII. Freight Car Caboose with Ladder.

XXXIII. Go and Get Killed Comrade—We Need a Byron in the Movement. L. fig. 4, detail, train.
Cincinnati Museum of Art, Cincinnati ............. 307

XXXIV. Go and Get Killed Comrade—We Need a Byron in the Movement. L. fig. 4, detail, ladder.
Cincinnati Museum of Art, Cincinnati ............. 308

XXXV. Giorgio DeChirico, The Lassitude of the Infinite. 1913. 17 1/4 x 44 in., oil on canvas.
private collection, New York.
(Soby, Early Chirico, plate 7) ...................... 309

7 1/4 x 1 3/4 in., photograph.
(Kitaj, Kitaj: Paintings, 1965, n.p.) .......... 310

XXXVII. Hans and Sophie Scholl. 1942.
3 x 1 3/4 in., photograph.
(Kitaj, Kitaj: Paintings, 1965, n.p.) .......... 311

XXXVIII. Aureolin. 1964. L. 39,
60 x 48 in., oil on canvas
private collection, London ....................... 312
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plate</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
30 1/2 x 23 in., screenprint.  
Boysman-van-Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam.  
(Kitaj, R.B. Kitaj: Pictures, 1970,  
fig. 25c) ........................................... 313 |
| XL. **Nerves, Massage, Defeat, Heart**. 1967.  
33 1/8 x 22 1/2 in., screenprint.  
Boysman-van-Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam.  
(Kitaj, R. B. Kitaj: Pictures, 1970,  
fig. 25n) ........................................... 314 |
| XLI. **Glue Words**. 1967.  
33 x 22 7/8 in., screenprint.  
Boysman-van-Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam.  
(Kitaj, R.B. Kitaj: Pictures, 1970,  
fig. 251) ........................................... 315 |
| XLII. **Let Us Call It Arden and Live in It**. 1966.  
33 1/4 x 23 in., screenprint.  
Boysman-van-Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam.  
(Kitaj, R. B. Kitaj: Pictures, 1970,  
fig. 25h) ........................................... 316 |
| XLIII. **I've Balled Every Waitress in This Club**. 1967.  
23 x 32 1/4 in., screenprint.  
Boysman-van-Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam.  
(Kitaj, R.B. Kitaj: Pictures, 1970,  
fig. 25j) ........................................... 317 |
| XLIV. **Autumn of Central Paris (After Walter Benjamin)**.  
1972-73. L.57, 60 x 60 in., oil on canvas.  
private collection, New York City .......... 318 |
| XLIV. **Walter Benjamin**. 1966.  
10 x 7 1/4 in., lithograph.  
Boysman-van-Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam.  
(Kitaj, R.B. Kitaj: Pictures, 1970, fig.15) 319 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plate</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| XLVI.  | L.46,  
Arcades. 1972-73. 5' square, oil on canvas.  private collection, Toronto  | 320  |
| XLIX.  | August Préault, Silence. 1849. 15 in. diameter, plaster. Bonnat Museum, Bayonne.  (Honour, Romanticism, fig. 86) | 323  |
| L.     | Max Kalish, Road Worker. 1938. 20 in., bronze. present location unknown.  (Kalish, Labor Sculpture, plate 15) | 324  |
| LI.    | Gustave Courbet, The Stonebreakers. 1849. 5' 6" x 8', oil on canvas. formerly, Museum, Dresden.  (Nohlin, Realism, fig. 58) | 325  |
Plate Page

LIII. Marc Chagall, I and the Village. 1911.
4 ft. 5 3/8 in. x 5 ft. 11 in., oil on canvas.
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia.
(Hunter and Jacobus, Modern Art, fig. 279) . 327

2' x 2'6", oil on panel.
City Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham.
(Nochlin, Realism, fig. 78) ................. 328

LV. George S. Kaufman. no date given,
no dimensions given, photograph.
(Anger, Hollywood Babylon, pp. 196-97) ..... 329

LVI. Café Deux Magots. 1885.
photograph by the author .................. 330

LVII. Church of St. Germain-des-Prés. ca. 1000.
3 1/2 x 1 1/2 in., architectural plan.
(Michelin Guide: Paris, p. 93) ............ 331

LVIII. Essay, Autumn of Central Paris (After Walter
no dimensions or media given.
(Kitaj, Art International March, 1979,
pp.19-20) ................................... 332

LIX. Eugène Delacroix, Liberty Leading the People.
1830.
8' 4" x 10' 10", oil on canvas.
Louvre, Paris.
(Trapp, The Attainment of Delacroix,
plate IX) ...................................... 333

LX. Ernst Meissonier, The Barricade, Rue de
Mortellerie. 1848.
1' x 8 1/2", oil on canvas.
Louvre, Paris.
(Nochlin, Realism, fig. 56) ................. 334

xiv
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plate</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LXII. Movie Poster for <em>Johnny Eager</em>. 1941 no dimensions given, no media given. (Morella, Clark and Epstein, <em>Those Great Movie Ads</em>, p. 90)</td>
<td>336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LXIII. Galerie Véro-Dodat. 1826. photograph by the author</td>
<td>337</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

Ronald Brooks Kitaj (1932-), an American ex-patriot who has lived in London since 1958, is a graduate of the Ruskin School of Drawing, Oxford (1959), and the Royal College of Art, London (1962). Kitaj also studied at the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, New York (1950) and at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste, Vienna (1951-54). During the early 1950's his years of study were interspersed with extensive travel to South America and North Africa as a merchant seaman and to sites in Europe where he painted and drew.

R.B. Kitaj's exhibition record at mid-career\(^1\) indicates interest from museums and galleries both in the United States and Europe. With his work found in major collections, Kitaj was hailed in 1987 by the Metropolitan Museum of Art's twentieth century curator, William Lieberman, as "the greatest living American artist"\(^2\) and by Robert Hughes as "the best history painter of our time."\(^3\) In 1982 he was both elected to the American Institute of Arts and Letters and received an honorary doctorate from University College, London. While the scholarly literature mentions that his art draws on history, film, philosophy and social and political
figures and issues, a paucity exists in this same literature concerning his search into his own roots.

His art is an expression of his own identity as a thinking, creative man and reveals, when analyzed, how certain people and historical events both fascinate and haunt him. His works reveal his concern with anti-Semitism a concern indissolubly connected to the fact that he grew up among refugees from Nazi Europe. In his own words,

I think about the Holocaust every day and had done so for many years before my self-education in Jewish identity began, I'm really very glad I didn't have to go through it but I'm not sure it couldn't happen again. Boris Pasternak called the great war in his life a cleansing storm, a vast mutation, a storm as transforming. He said one must think and think about such mutations all one's life, and that is what I find myself doing.4

Furthermore, his involvement with this issue in regard to his art also reflects his own code of morality. He feels that it is an abdication of responsibility, a betrayal of his forebearers for even "a nonpractising Jew not to stand up and be counted with the others."5 He views his own efforts, as he explains, as instructive of:

... an age-old mystery of how a lonely person acting out of much self-interest in a room away from the crowd can hope to serve a greater good but that has been the way of it in religion and socialism and art.6

The Kitaj scholarship consistently alludes, although superficially, to the preponderance of Jewish-related themes in his art and his extensive treatment of them over the past
twenty-five years. Deeply concerned with anti-Semitism and especially the Holocaust, he is trying "to grasp the full implications of what the Nazis did and he is absorbed by this question for art, for painting, where the issue is never mentioned." Thus this study concerns Kitaj's treatment of religious persecution in his compositions featuring specific historical figures in portrait-narratives.

His art, full of learned and personal allusions, is very much a result of his training especially in Oxford where in 1957 he was introduced to a number of currents and preferences of the greatest significance for his subsequent work. Supported by a grant under the G.I. Bill, his entire training at the Ruskin School of Drawing, where he remained for a year and a half, consisted of drawing from the figure "from dawn to dusk," an intense concentration on the human form which Kitaj values very highly as essential to any art "we care about." Already highly aware of the work of Professor Irwin Panofsky (1892-1968), perhaps the most influential art historian of the twentieth century, and of the history of art, he was drawn ever closer to a study of the art of the past at this time through Edgar Wind (1900-1971), Professor of Art History, Oxford University. For him, "Wind was certainly a tremendous encounter in my life."8

Kitaj's meeting with Wind and his independent discovery of the Journals of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes led him to his subsequent concern for the study of subject
matter. Warburg's method of image-tracing as the key to symbolic content in archetypes was to mold Kitaj's multi-evocative imagery. Kitaj read deeply into the study of subject matter at Oxford. He realized, as we will see, that "An image with a long past, even if altered slightly visually, gains in his art a complex richness of meaning through various shifts of context." Kitaj saw the possibility of uniting disparate images on the same surface to create a style rich in meaning and allusion.

Literature occupies another important place in much of Kitaj's art. He seeks to arrange associations between the work and textual material in which painting and text coalesce. Written material has become for him a means for an extension of his ideas beyond the canvas. To clarify a theme, he has pursued various courses: he has designed texts which hung along side some of his paintings, collaged hand written materials onto some of his surfaces and published essays to accompany some of his works. This merger of literature with his art, this extra-pictorial dimension, is an added means of further understanding the pictorial ramifications of his paintings.

The genesis of each picture, it will be demonstrated, cannot be reduced to a simple cross-fertilization of literary and art historical references. His paintings are designed, to use one of Kitaj's phrases "to sit in the unconscious." His tightly composed works are more than a mere conflation of
sources. The references selected by the artist are complex and reveal his awareness of how masterpieces of art are inextricably linked to history, philosophy, religion, politics and literature. Yet he accepts that the narrative aspects of his pictures will fail to reach most people. The following statement indicates his acknowledgement that we continue to appreciate all kinds of pictures from earlier periods in the history of art filled with arcane and incomprehensible references, as he expressed:

We go on being fascinated by all kinds of pictures that contain stories we no longer understand. Just think of all the allegorical pictures of the Renaissance.12

Kitaj's portrait-narratives of historic victims of anti-Semitism are examined as tributes to the life of one or another of Kitaj's heroes, primarily Jewish radicals and other protagonists whose experiences, often relate to the Holocaust, and thus hold great fascination for him. His investigation commemorates their plights as each of these individual studies becomes an "icon," to employ the artist's own term.

Over a span of thirteen years (1960-1973) he recorded a personalized view of anti-Semitism through a very deliberate manner seen in these tributes. He sought to pictorially document moments in early twentieth century history and the victims. They are but a selection from Kitaj's examination of victims of anti-Semitism. This persistence extends from
his student days at the Royal College of Art to the present. Through his art he grasps and personalizes these characters, events and feelings.

This study concentrates on four portraits so that an understanding of how he employs historical figures and their plights, and casts them in a distinctively personalized light is realized. Religious persecution is an issue of great importance and interest to him. The Holocaust, in particular, emerges as a major factor in the formulation of the works of art to be treated. As he stated in an interview,

... a central condition for me has been the murder of the European Jews. Winston Churchill wrote, "This is probably the greatest and most horrible crime ever committed in the whole history of the world."¹³

It is through this series of studies of select political figures who both lived prior to and during the Holocaust that he weaves a multi-layered commemorative exploration to these victims. His tributes are to the radicals Rosa Luxemburg (1871-1919), Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), and Hans (1918-1943) and Sophie Scholl (1921-1943). Kitaj recalls in synopsis form their individual circumstances. As "icons" they evoke the atmosphere of decline and horror in the Europe of the 1930's and 40's. They are, however, and just as much, reflections of an essentially personal odyssey; for they mirror an introspective dimension of the artist. A fourth portrait dedicated to Isaac Babel (1894-1941), although a
figure without ties to the Holocaust as the others, treats the effects of anti-Semitism in Soviet society.

Kitaj's commemorative studies are of those who died for a variety of reasons, reasons that reveal a number of his deepest concerns. First, they give voice to his compassion for victims of twentieth century anti-Semitism. Second, they indicate his reverence for individuals who have lived, worked for and died for their high ideals. And, third, they are almost all devotionals to Jewish heroes, underlining his esteem for them and delineating his identification with their fates as Jews or defenders of Jews.

Kitaj's tributes are dedicated to social and political activitists. All of them are rather obscure revolutionary figures culled from early twentieth century history. Each of these portraits is richly presented with images appropriate to retrospective assessment. These works are courageous, as the artist indicates the atypical nature of his art:

There are many forces not taken to be the province of painting which hold my attention and move me to think that the essence of a reformation is at hand, crucial for an art which would align itself for the first time outside its own processes. Some of these are: historical unhappiness and the profound questions of socialism and freedom, goodness and despair. There is an everlasting instinct to represent people in their concerns, in their plentitude. How to do it well is a great work. Anything less than that is less than that.14

Kitaj's four studies represent people who were a part of, to borrow his term, "historical unhappiness." Their
lives, as we shall see, were challenged, if not ended, by
limitations of freedom, denials of civil rights. This
narrowly defined sample of portraits will critically examine
how Kitaj has "represented people in their concerns, in their
plentitude."

The art of R.B. Kitaj was initially mentioned in the
publications of contemporary critics and art historians.
They remarked upon specific works by the artist, in major
exhibitions and in one-man showings. These writers attempted
to understand and explain his art and place it within the
context of the contemporary art environment.

Kitaj was thus often categorized under the rubric of Pop
Art in all of the major studies. Both American and English
writers frequently attached Kitaj, whose sources draw upon
music, philosophy, politics, cultural history, and
literature, to this movement dedicated to the glorification
of the banal.

In both books and critical reviews, he was often
presented as one of the members of the Pop Art generation,
dubbed as an American ex-patriate whose work was
characterized by cartoon-like figuration. This
categorization has been explained because during the 1960's.
Kitaj's use of found imagery led him to be associated with
the Pop art movement. Some attention was paid by these
writers to the importance of the origins of his sources.
These were correctly recognized as being far removed from the
world of advertising and mass media tastes and trends on which the Pop Artists draw. Examples of this treatment in the critical and scholarly literature are as follows: Jane Harrison, a critic, noted his unique sensibility,

On rare occasions the English preference for everything that is scholarly, sensitive, obscure, ineloquent and literary in painting can be openly declared; such is the case with Ronald Kitaj's exhibition at the New London Gallery, which he has called 'Pictures with Commentary—Pictures without Commentary' and which met with an unqualified and resounding success. He is in many ways a key figure to our particularly insular brand of pop art.16

George Butcher, a critic, in a 1962 review of an exhibition of Pop Art referred to a Kitaj painting as "very far from being contained within in the 'pop' label."17 Kitaj, seeing a clear distinction between himself and Pop Art, defined his position as presented in the catalog, Pop Art in England.

"I may be an unreconstructed Surrealist or a romantic Socialist or any number of other things," wrote Kitaj in a letter on 14-4-75; at any rate according to himself he was not a Pop artist.18

Kitaj has also been often cited in the critical and scholarly literature as a major influence on the younger generation of Pop artists. While a subject of study in itself, his presence at the Royal College of Art had a considerable impact on other students such as David Hockney, Patrick Caulfield, Allen Jones, Peter Phillips and Derek
Boshier all of whom were associated with the Pop Art movement upon leaving the College in 1962.19

The Kitaj literature ranges from a monograph, numerous scholarly articles, the artist's own statements, critical reactions in the press and art journals, to catalogs with limited commentary. Examination of these publications will indicate some of the strengths and weaknesses in the state of scholarship.

The major insightful study is R.B. Kitaj by Marco Livingstone, who is Deputy Director of the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford and author of David Hockney (1981) as well as many catalogs on contemporary artists. This book was written with the cooperation of the artist. He has brought together names, dates, places, events, etc., and organized this tremendous amount of material into a coherent narrative. The information is invaluable for understanding his art. His text identifies Kitaj's selective use of details, his technical processes and provides a chronological development of his pictures. Because of the wide scope of his monograph, Livingstone is unable to present detailed discussion of the textual elements of his art and only can provide cursory mention of his use of metaphors.

Some of the essays accompanying Kitaj's exhibition catalogs are written by his friends, who are either famous poets or other literati. These commentaries are subjective but helpful. Kitaj's compendium of images requires instead,
understanding of his methodological approach to subject matter. His references, sources, statements need to be evaluated and reviewed with more care and objectivity to grasp his ideas.

The illustrated catalogs of Kitaj's oeuvre provide an opportunity to study the whole body of his art. His images can be divided into categories of interest. Within each category there are consistencies of thought in his ideas and methodology, which can be unraveled as exemplified in this text.

His ideals can be recognized with the use of the artist's written statements. His published words as well as personal responses to my letters of inquiry provided a sense of how he viewed his art and also helped in identification of his sources.

The critical and scholarly literature deals generally, with evaluation of his subject matter and its densities as well as with his facility with technical process. A few writers regard the more profound issues of the mental process or social attitudes involved in the creation of the work of art. While, as will be noted, critics recognize his cerebral sensibility, there is little assimilation of this observation with his references, techniques and life experiences. Furthermore, there is not enough evidence of a search for content beyond citation of his specific sources; his images need to be connected to their particular contexts.
The notion of his art as autobiography is found in the literature, yet here, too, problems exist. There are a few in depth examinations of his images in terms of his peripatetic life. While critics have even compared his expatriation and arrival in England to that of T.S. Eliot, a number of primarily cursory investigations into his literary aspirations and means have been published.

This study attempts to address some of these needs. This examination of four portrait-narratives presents an in-depth analysis of his participation in terms of artistic activity in an area of passionate concern. Treatment of the following for each of these four portrait-narratives will be considered: subject matter and style, literature, both scholarly and critical, as well as the artist's published statements. Personal observations and comments summarize these analyses. Hopefully this analysis will extend the significance of these works far beyond this present general state of journalistic and scholarly commentary.
FOOTNOTE REFERENCE

1. His exhibition record is as follows: first solo exhibition held at Marlborough New London Gallery, London (1963); first solo exhibition in U.S. held at Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York (1965); first solo museum exhibition shown at Los Angeles County Museum of Art (1965-66); solo exhibition of drawings and prints shown at Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (1967); organizes The Human Clay, a controversial exhibition of figurative drawings and paintings at the Hayward Gallery, London, having bought many of the works for the Arts Council of Great Britain during the previous year (1967) and exhibition of prints shown at University of California, Berkeley (1967); participant in group exhibition Art and Technology held at Los Angeles County Museum of Art (1969) and exhibition of graphics from 1963-69 held at Galerie Mikro, Berlin (1969); retrospective exhibition held at Kestner-Gesellschaft, Hannover and Boysman-van Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam (1970); joint exhibition with Pop Artist Jim Dine held at Cincinnati Museum of Art (1973); exhibition held at Marlborough Gallery, New York (1974); exhibition held at Marlborough Fine Art, London (1977); first New York exhibition of pastels and drawings shown at Marlborough Gallery (1979); spends a year selecting paintings from the National Gallery, London, for an exhibition there called The Artist's Eye (1980). First British exhibition of pastels and drawings shown at Marlborough Fine Art, London (1980); retrospective exhibition held at Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C., Cleveland Museum of Art and Städtische Kunsthalle, Düsseldorf (1981); exhibition of paintings shown at Marlborough Fine Art, London (1985) and at Marlborough Gallery, New York (1986); exhibition of paintings shown at Marlborough Fine Art, London (1989).


7. Tuten, 65.


11. R.B. Kitaj, "On Associating Texts with Paintings," Cambridge Opinion 37 (January 1964): 52. "Texts may assert themselves in such a way that the conjunction between them and the work which they may have helped give rise to, becomes something splendid."


15. Joachimides, 239.


Chapter I

The Murder of Rosa Luxemburg (1960)

The Murder of Rosa Luxemburg (1960, Plate I) is a eulogy to a woman whose death Kitaj attributes to her Socialist revolutionary activities and to her ethnic religious identity. The later, however, is an issue, important to him, but not to her. He develops this political "remembrance" because of his desire to portray her as a victim of religious discrimination as well. He conveys the ambiance in which she lived and died, as a revolutionary theoretician and agitator, by showing a caricature-like Rosa upright on her deathbed surrounded by symbols of German nationalism. At the left, her crumpled, battered body is held, under her long black skirts, by a young leering thug about to dump her corpse into the canal. Beneath, directional lines indicate her fall into the water.

This political/revolutionary frame of reference is created by Kitaj's carefully selected combination of visual and literary modes. Both function as keys to understanding his meaning, as quotations and transformations of both
traditional artistic means and imagery as well as of text are brought together. Setting Rosa amidst multiple images serves to form the "icon" for this radical with whom Kitaj, as will be demonstrated, established a personal sense of identification.

Rosa Luxemburg (1871-1919) was an economist and activist, who died because of her revolutionary activity. Born in Russian Poland, she studied law and economics at the University of Zürich. She migrated to Germany in 1898 and became a leading figure in the revolutionary left wing of the German Socialist movement. A political orator of Marxist theory, she reached the peak of her influence within the party as the recognized expert on Russian and Polish affairs and as the principal representative for the left wing of the international Socialist movement. Her major theoretical work, The Accumulation of Capital (1913), presents her utopian ideas about the nature of revolution.

Karl Liebknecht (1871-1919), a co-founder with Rosa of the German Communist Party, was active in Berlin at the end of World War I, a time when Germany was in ferment. Together they edited the Communist daily Die Rote Fahne (The Red Flag). Determined to dislodge the Kaiser and establish a national, republican government through no matter how violent the means, they both led the Berlin Spartacists (later the
nucleus) of the German Communist Party) in an unsuccessful revolution. They were arrested in Berlin on January 15, 1919. While they were being taken to the Moabit Prison, they were murdered by right-wing mercenary troops opposed to the revolution.

Kitaj's hand-written report of the precise nature of her death, as described in an eyewitness account, was collaged onto the upper right-hand corner of the canvas. Copied directly from a history book, the inclusion of text functions "like built-in footnotes," for Kitaj saw its incorporation as a means of clearly establishing the subject.²

Rosa Luxemburg was led from the Hotel Eden by Lieutenant Vogel. Before the door a trooper named Runge was waiting with orders from Lieutenant Vogel and Captain Horst von Pflug-Hartung to strike her to the ground with the butt of his carbine. He smashed her skull with two blows and she was then lifted half-dead into a waiting car, and accompanied by Lieutenant Vogel and a number of other officers. One of them struck her on the head with the butt of his revolver, and Lieutenant Vogel killed her with a shot in at point-blank range. The car stopped at the Liechtenstein Bridge over the Landwehr Canal, and her corpse was then flung from the bridge into the water, from which it was not recovered until the following May (from Edward Fitzgerald's translation of Paul Fröhlich's "Rosa Luxemburg" Left Book Club Edition, Victor Gollancz, 1940.) The bust in the car window bears some resemblance to Field-Marshall Count von Moltke/a figure similar to the image at the left of this sheet surmounts the German national monument, Niederweld, commemorating the foundation of the new German Empire/in 871. The journal of the Warburg Institute, vol.II number 2 contains a paper by Alfred Neumeyer called "Monuments to 'Genius' in German Classicism." The monument at/the bottom left
looks like a monument to Frederick the Great and his Generals as seen in an aquatint used in illustration to Neumeyer's paper.

Surrounded by German nationalistic symbols, Rosa, the martyred forty-eight-year-old heroine, is presented as aged, pony-tailed, wearing a long black skirt and black boots. The painted elements, many of them borrowed images, build upon this narrative by virtue of their intrinsic relevance. The circumstances of her murder are characterized by the presence of a military profile framed by the silhouette of the car window.

Various emblems of the eternal German empire surround her slain body, thus forming an ironic contrast. This is enhanced by placing to her right the Niederwald monument (1877-83), a female personification of Germany Victorious (Plate II).

This monument, located on a 1148' high ridge of the Taunus mountains at the bend of the Rhine near Rudesheim, is a 33' 2" tall bronze statue of Germania on a 84' high relief-decorated base. The Niederwald monument, built by Johannes Schilling (1828-1919), commemorates the creation of the German Reich in 1871. The pairing of this ultimate symbol of Germania, which celebrated a new powerful and united Germany, with the revolutionary figure of Rosa Luxemburg, makes emphatic the dimensions of the radical heroine's revolt.
against the existing order, and, also, the human dimension of her death and achievement.

Kitaj explained his amusing caricature of a German officer as one that "bears some resemblance to Field Marshall Count von Moltke," thus attributing responsibility to policymakers as well as functionaries. Helmuth von Moltke (1800-91) ranked second only to Bismarck as a builder of the German Empire. The decisive battle strategies of this Prussian soldier and military genius led to the defeat of the French in the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71). Even though not reactionary, the sinister aspects of Moltke's exploits are equated by Kitaj, with the right wing officers who killed Rosa and threw her body into a waiting car.

Further representations of Germany, impressive examples of imperial architecture, appear on the left side of the canvas. Here, Kitaj has adapted to his specific purpose, monuments to great men of the German past. The pyramid is based on the Monument to Kant (1808; Plate III) designed by Janus Genelli (1761-1813). At the lower left is the Monument to Frederick the Great and his Generals (period of the French Revolution; Plate IV). To honor their memory, Johann Heinrich von Dannecker (1758-1841), the architect, proposed a marble obelisk crowned by an eagle and placed on a cenotaph-like socle with three steps leading to it. Yet neither of
these monuments displaying Germany's nationalistic pride in its heroes and thinkers was constructed. Kitaj's selection reveals again curiously the irony of fame.

Kitaj listed the precise identification of these architectural monuments at the bottom of the text collaged onto the canvas:

The journal of the Warburg Institute, vol.II number 2 contains a paper by Alfred Neumeyer called "Monuments to 'Genius' in German Classicism."

By this means, two texts become accessory to the painting, that is, the historical account containing Rosa's death and the art historical article on "Monuments to Genius." Yet these texts leave somewhat ambiguous any vital correspondences between the depiction of the slain figure and the curious assemblage of images which surround her. Furthermore, there is a problem in the relationship of the written element to the painting. The text lacks essential information. For example, Rosa's political role is not stated in Kitaj's collaged historical account of her murder. Apparently, the artist assumes our familiarity with the radical chic, for without this knowledge the ironic ambiance he develops around her corpse by means of the carefully selected symbols of imperial Germany - the Niederwald monument, the military officer and the grandiose architectural forms is essentially lost for the viewer.
The article "Monuments to 'Genius' in German Classicism" provides a cursory survey of garden and architectural monuments built primarily in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which reflect a new philosophy of sentiment. This philosophy, in suggesting that the honor of a monument should be extended to all men of genius, implied that the purpose of erecting a memorial was not only to commemorate the achievement of an individual man, but also to remind and incite posterity to worship in him the universal powers of Nature. The monuments to "Genius," Neumeyer presented, which range from a Luther monument to the Walhalla Temple to Caspar David Friedrich's drawings for monuments to the heroes of the wars of liberation against Napoleon, show a strong imaginative tendency. These honorific monuments often dominate a garden or are part of the landscape. Neumeyer classifies them as representing the romanticizing tradition, which ends by letting the organized work of art dissolve into the mere expression of mood.

'Nature embellished' became the appropriate backdrop for the memorial to the man of genius, these idealized structures were typically designed to be built in picturesque settings. For example, the first such German monument was the Rousseau monument in the park at Wörlitz. The monument, a stone slab
with an inscription to the social philosopher, was placed amidst a small circular island planted with poplars.

Neumeyer explained the traditional portrait statue was incapable of embodying the idea of honoring genius. Rather, the peculiar achievements of these various figures are better expressed by the use of pure architectural forms. Such generalized forms as the pyramid and the obelisk characterized this new idealized style.

The particular settings for these two chosen monuments are also appropriate to the cult of poetic genius. Kant's monument, a pyramid, the symbol of Eternity, as depicted in a watercolor in Neumeyer's article, was to be placed amidst a large garden setting. The abstracted architectural form of the obelisk expresses again an anonymous power, while the names of the heroes, Frederick the Great and His Generals, were to be inscribed upon it. Like the romantic setting of the pyramid, the obelisk was to be erected on the bank of a lonely river.

Although most of the architectural projects of this type remained only on paper, Kitaj discovered in these extravagant fancies an ideal form in which he could contrast the antithesis of German pride, Rosa Luxemburg. The presence of the pyramid and obelisk sets Rosa in an ironic ambiance. Yet only the viewer familiar with Socialist types would realize
his wry intentions. Without knowledge of Rosa's biography, Kitaj's selection of these two architectural monuments erected in honor of men of genius loses its carefully designed potency.

Three years after the painting's completion, Kitaj offered further notations with the first of his many published catalog entries. His entry for The Murder of Rosa Luxemburg in Pictures with Commentary Pictures without Commentary, his first solo exhibition catalog, is enriched with the following annotations and bibliographic references:

The prophetic murder of the remarkable woman Harold Laski called one of the greatest Socialist thinkers of our time is described in hand-written notes which occur in the upper right-hand corner of the painting.

The profile in the car window bears some resemblance to Field-Marshal Count von Moltke.


Monuments to 'Genius' in German Classicism. A. Neumeyer (Journal of the Warburg Institute II 2 1938)

These statements and textual references when sought out aid comprehension of the imagery. Through them the artist identifies again the military profile framed by the silhouette of the car window. Significantly, Kitaj for the
first time defines Rosa's position in Socialist ranks. The inclusion of these literary elements offers more biographical information for the uninformed and the curious - the esoteric employed to be non-esoteric.

The literary components that form part of the painting clarify many problematic identification issues raised by the artist's arcane imagery. Yet there still exists in spite of this later statement some lack of coordination between the written accounts and the painting itself. The satirical nature of Kitaj's symbolism is only fully appreciated by the reader of the handwritten text collaged on the canvas and the annotations and references listed in the exhibition catalog.

Curiously almost twenty years later the artist presents his own highly personal interpretation of his subject in a short but revealing essay dated 'Paris 1982' sent to the Tate Gallery's compiler for catalog notes. It is by this means we find that his choices of borrowed imagery place the martyred Rosa in the context of anti-Semitism for him. For, by this time, he regarded Rosa as more a Jewish martyr than one to radical socialism. He clarifies his vision for us as follows:

I sought to cast my theme in a representation of thugs doing their thing. Thugs rarely act alone. Thuggery is almost defined (at least in my experience) in an unimaginative dependence between dull fellows which is given in the attached note. Another fellowship, suspected by some, is the
bonding of Fascism and a degenerated Romanticism, of which National Socialism became, as it were, the ass-end. That bond, too, is suggested in the imagery at the bottom left. Ernest Gellner, in a recent comic aside about World War II, called it the war against German Romanticism! The Romantic Ruin is also rooted in the top left pyramid which prefigures certain pyramidal monuments deliberately created in some Jewish cemeteries in Eastern Europe after the war out of fragments of gravestones. Richard Fein calls them Holocaust Art, in situ, and says that such things are ancient ruins half a century old!\footnote{7}

For himself Kitaj mentally transforms these never constructed imperial memorials. In his thinking they bridge German Romanticism and Fascism serving as archetypal examples of the hallowed German past with its military heroes and philosophers. He equates these manifestations of heroic life with the world of fascism.

Kitaj seemed attracted to the pastoral nature of these proposed memorials to genius. Because these German monuments were to be built in picturesque settings, as described in \textit{The Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes}, they apparently had idyllic appeal. The requisite romanticism of the landscapes in which these monuments were to be situated more greatly accentuated the horror of the events Kitaj associated with them.

At the same time, the significance of the brilliant men for whom these structures were intended also is made ironic. They become Romantic contrasts to a land inhabited by
fascists. The pyramid can be considered a reminder of those of Egypt built by Jewish slave labor. With cynicism, these monuments are portrayed as perverted and anti-Semitic.

Thus, Rosa's death becomes intertwined with victims of anti-Semitism in all ages. Even though her death occurred before the rise of Hitler and the erection of the "gravestone facades" in Eastern Europe and although contrary to fact, Kitaj's imaged, collaged and written designations enable him to regard Rosa as a universal victim of anti-Semitism, even a Holocaust victim, an historical event which occurred long after her death.

The distinctly Jewish ambiance Kitaj provided for Rosa Luxemburg in his painting is one filled with his own personal identifications. But again we do not learn of this until his 1982 statements in the Tate Gallery catalog. In Rosa's life, he found a strong attachment for the plight of his own families' histories. He explains the genesis of his portrayal of her as follows:

The picture arose out of a meditation upon two of my grandmothers. It is about an historic murder but it is really about murdering Jews, which is what brought my grandmothers to America. One of them, Rose, left Russia because her Ukrainian neighbors regularly liked to kill Jews around the turn of our century. The other grandmother, Helene, left Vienna, 40 years later because the Austrians were becoming expert at killing Jews, in fact, Helene's two sisters (like Kafka's two sisters) were later murdered at Theresienstadt.
Looking back, it doesn't seem to have been a bad idea at all to have looked around for some case to be put in a picture, some tableau or imaging which could represent the condition of fear or foreboding in which Jews had always lived in the Diaspora before Nazism, and which condition shows little sign of disappearing since the Holocaust.

As a student at the Royal College of Art, I came across Rosa Luxemburg's *Letters from Prison*. Prison letters have always fascinated me but in the great Spartacist Rosa, in her life and in her death, I'd found an icon for the dark times I associated with my grandmothers. The body in the picture looks very melodramatic but I grew up on tales and photographs of such battered corpses and so the murder (which is retold in the notes attached to the picture) is personified in a form I had seen the like of. Grandma Rose is given her veiled wraith, upper left, but it is Grandmother Helene who really prefigures Rosa L. (in my life).

Helene and Rosa L. looked alike, dressed alike (the long black dress and boots in the picture were worn by Helene 50 years after her surgeon husband was killed in the Austrian army, during the same Great War which Rosa L. hardly survived), and more to the point, Helene and Rosa L. were both from that highly cultivated middle class of emancipated Central European Jews, which has, in its brilliance and its disaster written its own legend by now, or history has done. Both had been attacked by the murderous force of hatred for Jews, but as I write these words, Helene Kitaj is still alive in Ohio at 102 years! . . .

Rosa then is apparently, for him, an appropriate symbol for the fate of his grandmothers as European Jews, women who escaped, not without suffering. He regarded them as sharing similar social circumstances, even similar dress and appearance. In his devotion to Rosa as a martyr to which he associates his grandmothers, Kitaj chooses not to stress that Rosa was killed by counterrevolutionaries for her political,
not religious, activities. Kitaj regards her as a victim of anti-Semitism and finds in his heroine a suitable metaphor for the discrimination experienced by his grandmothers.

Close examination of Kitaj's reflective essay reveals his primary interest in the development of his analogy. Rosa's whole life style and career were atypical for European women of the early twentieth century, and thus Kitaj's construct indicates a selective perusal of Rosa's biography.

In high school Rosa had begun to read Marx and Engels and became a member of a clandestine revolutionary group. James Joll, Emeritus Professor of International History at the University of London, who appears with his friend, the art historian Dr. John Golding, in Kitaj's double portrait _From London_, defines her prominence as a Marxist revolutionary:

> Rosa has become a political symbol of what is seen rightly or wrongly, as an alternative type of revolution to that of Lenin. The Luxemburg myth has grown in size as people have seen in her the symbol of a Socialist revolutionary whose ideas would, it is thought, not have ended in dictatorship and tyranny.

Kitaj's metaphor is further realized when more aspects of her professional and private life are compared with those of his grandmothers. While Kitaj's grandmothers married, Rosa, upon the suggestion of Leo Jogiches, her lover of seventeen years and close political associate until the end
of her life, contracted a marriage of convenience with a German citizen, in order to obtain the right to live in Germany. In the meantime, Leo, aided in the expected dissolution of the marriage. Rosa assured her family in Poland that she was indeed married to Leo, who was her political and intellectual dominant partner.

Rosa's unconventional marital relationship is not all that differentiates her from the lifestyles of Kitaj's grandmothers. In his retrospective statement he refers to his grandfather's military service in the Austrian army. Rosa was staunchly anti-militarism. Campaigning against militarism and calling for effective socialist action to prevent a European war, she criticized the Kaiser in a speech and was imprisoned for the first time in 1904. While Kitaj's relatives, like most all Europeans, supported imperial power, Rosa, taking an opposite stance, worked to destroy it. She advocated a general strike as among the best means to end imperial rule and the class struggle. Openly critical of Lenin's theory of the centralized disciplined revolutionary party forcing the masses into action, Rosa preached a spontaneous revolution. She wanted the masses to bring government to a standstill by a strike and thus prepare the way for the overthrow of the regime.
Furthermore, in Kitaj's essay in which characteristic female and societal similarities are stressed between Rosa and his grandmothers to create a metaphor, the artist weaves her murder in terms of anti-Semitism. Ironically Rosa did not share the religious identity he finds in her character because of her political viewpoints and actions. Rosa, again unlike her social class, held an ambivalence towards her religious identity.

Although the victim of anti-Semitic slights and innuendos, because of her political beliefs, Rosa was indifferent to her Jewish roots. Her reaction to the mixture of cultures in which she grew up - Yiddish, Polish, Russian (she attended an exclusive Russian-speaking high school) - was to dissociate herself from each of them, in the sense that she became a convinced internationalist, believing in a Socialist future in which all such differences would disappear. This is attributed to her overriding belief that Socialism and national self-determination were conflicting ideas. She was convinced that the working man had no country, so that the Polish worker had more in common with a German or a Russian worker than he did with a member of the Polish bourgeoisie or aristocracy.

She was equally convinced that it was wrong to make a special issue of anti-Semitism. "For the followers of Marx,"
she wrote, "the Jewish question as such does not exist, just as the 'Negro Question' or the 'Yellow Peril' does not exist." Similarly the oppression of women, she felt, like the oppression of Jews, would only come to an end with the advent of true socialism. In her mind once the revolution had been achieved all these injustices could disappear and in the meantime it was wrong to treat any particular case in isolation.

Kitaj's metaphor is effective, his cohesion of textual with pictorial elements is well integrated. It is important to keep in mind, whereas Rosa refused to treat the persecution of the Jews as different from any other persecution, Kitaj regards her as a symbol of the same atrocities his grandmothers endured. These major differences, cited above, between Kitaj's grandmothers and Rosa are understandable, and do not hinder the development of a personally meaningful metaphor. Kitaj's retrospective statement of 1982 incorporates the only clear expression of his personal intentions. The various texts accompanying the painting prior to this essay for the Tate Gallery leave unresolved the meaning he sought for the painting. It is from this essay that his actual thoughts and goals are stated. For example, his inclusion of the term "Holocaust
Art" specifically delineates the relevance of the pyramid as a manifestation of German Fascism.

Rosa functions primarily for Kitaj, as he wrote in his essay, as "an icon for the dark times I associated with my grandmothers." This view appears to be his overriding concern. Curiously Rosa's prison letters from 1904, all written to Socialist friends, which he listed in his bibliographical references for the painting, reflect a multitude of issues from the political to the personal. He does react to her Marxist criticism of imperialism and capitalism by the inclusion of the Monument to Frederick the Great and his Generals and, because of the essentially political nature of his imagery, chooses not to respond to her aesthetic sensibility found in her letters. Kitaj regarded Rosa as a victim of Jewish persecution, an issue which was of no specific concern to her.

Kitaj appears to acknowledge the difficulties in reading the personal sense of identification he found in the character of Rosa; again, he explains this in the 1982 Tate Gallery catalog notes:

This artless painting was, I guess, my first political picture, but I didn't paint Rosa because I identified with her revolution (or its failure) but as I've said, for other, oblique reasons. I didn't do it very well. That kind of vision always feels beyond me, but designing such subjects still seems to me an often despised and Empty quarter,
all but untouched, and still looking for modern forms of art.16

The oblique reasons for Kitaj's interest in Rosa appear to be found not in her politically-motivated murder, but in her Jewish identity. For the artist, she is a target of "fascists," and he projects his own emotional involvement into his work. Kitaj's tribute to the martyrdom of Rosa Luxemburg functions as a commemorative document to the plight of his grandmothers, because his painting and his final accompanying text achieve sound coordination. By publication of the 1982 essay with its distinctively anti-Semitic context, the artist's highly personal intentions for The Murder of Rosa Luxemburg become identifiable. The critical and scholarly literature offers insights with varying degrees of lucidity concerning the nature of his constructs. Israel Shenker, a frequent writer for The New York Times and The New Yorker, observed in regard to his use of metaphors and explanatory statements:

Kitaj is no less devoted to what he calls metaphors, allegories and conjunctions, and these can leave the viewer perplexed. At that point Kitaj rushes to the rescue with words, revealing sources, suggesting thoughts behind the obscurities on a canvas and voicing convictions. From the artist who paints what he sees has emerged an alter ego who sees what he paints and feels obliged to explain, sometimes even to invent explanations.
The artist's textual elements, with all of his personal and political reflections and statements, fortify the meaning of his picture. The many intricate aspects of his thought which are contained within his painting, are often only realized from his use of highly introspective commentaries. The cultural foundations and personal metaphors, in which his visual imagery is steeped, become fully functional with the accompaniment of his explanations.

The Kitaj critical and scholarly literature frequently treats the artist's interest in political subjects and their sources. Kitaj's tribute to Rosa Luxemburg is composed of imagery rich in political content. Suggestions are provided as to the political works which possibly influenced The Murder of Rosa Luxemburg.

Max Beckmann (1884-1950) in his lithograph Martyrdom (1919; Plate V), one of a series of ten lithographs in the portfolio Hell (1919), also focused on Rosa's murder. Martyrdom, with its many narrative details and Christian symbolism, provides a contrast to Kitaj's painting with his designated emblems of fascism. Beckmann visited Berlin in March 1919 and was familiar with several accounts of the Luxemburg murder, not just those that appeared in Spartacist and revolutionary newspapers, but also in the official
proceedings of the murderers' trials, which had taken place that spring.\textsuperscript{18}

The German Expressionist's representation of Rosa is accurate to site. She is shown being murdered by the blows of rifle butts on her head in front of Berlin's Eden Hotel. The precise location, the entrance of the hotel, is included on the right side of the picture. Beckmann further adds authenticity to his scene by the inclusion of a moon and star to indicate the event occurred during the night.\textsuperscript{19}

Kitaj recalls the role of fascists in her murder by the presence of Moltke in his car. Beckmann, on the other hand, elaborates the character types connected with the event. He portrays representatives of the bourgeoisie and the military assembled together as conspirators and perpetrators of the murder. Brutal expressions and actions indicate the men who harass her. One soldier pushes a gun at her, while others tug at her limbs. Another soldier with a helmet hits her in the chest with a club.\textsuperscript{20} With her eyes closed, dress torn, Beckmann stresses Rosa's physical torture.

Other anecdotal elements add to the tension of the scene. A man in a tuxedo, who stands in front of the hotel entrance, and a youngster, who appears in the left front, serve as observers. On the right, the sinister-looking well dressed man in plaid pants tightens Rosa's lower leg with his
arm. He represents the role of the bourgeoisie in her demise. His appearance brings out Beckmann's opinion that Rosa's murder cannot be blamed on soldiers alone, but that it is shared with civilian groups and representatives of the bourgeoisie.21

Beckmann illustrates the widely accepted account of her death, but he elevates his subject, by placing her in the pose of a martyred, crucified victim. In the tradition of scenes of the Descent from the Cross, he elevates Rosa to the status of a martyr. The inclusion of a church and its towers in the background emphasizes Beckmann's vision of the event in a Christian context.22 The appearance of the church functions not only on a purely symbolic level; Beckmann's choice is also based on the proximity of Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church.23

Beckmann and Kitaj, in their treatments of this radical figure's murder in post-World War I Germany, offer striking contrasts. While Beckmann stresses a religious conception for his depiction, and Kitaj develops a more personal and political conception for his characterization, both men express their strong feelings of protest. The two artists in their unsentimental accounts express sharp criticism of humanity as they indicate the brutality of the event.
Curiously, Beckmann's *Martyrdom*, with its political martyrdom fused with the iconographic tradition of the Descent from the Cross, is not cited in the Kitaj literature. Further examination of Kitaj's subject matter will consider his absorption in a variety of politically inspired works. His irony is then developed through quotations and transformations of these sources.

A comparison of the formal and contextual similarities between *The Murder of Rosa Luxemburg* and *Lincoln* (1958; Plate VI) by Robert Rauschenberg (1925-), as suggested by Marco Livingstone, is informative. The critic Kenneth Frampton, in an exhibition review, cited *The Murder of Rosa Luxemburg* as a parody of *Lincoln* but did not develop his observation any further.

Rauschenberg's combine-painting is composed of a centrally placed photograph of the Lincoln Memorial Statue which the artist has placed behind a black veil. This shrouded image of Lincoln has been interpreted as a reminder of his assassination and the nation's dark history during the Civil War. By contrast, Kitaj framed his funeral portrait with references which reinforce Rosa's character and the events relating to her assassination. The works form a parallel in that both relate to historical eras of racial prejudice. Rauschenberg's *Lincoln* is an icon of emancipation
of black slaves after decades of cruelty and murder. The Murder of Rosa Luxemburg is a symbol for the artist of the hatred experienced by his families, in particular his grandmothers.

Kitaj, applying Rauschenberg's principal of multi-focussed imagery, similarly painted a deliberate scattering of details across the surface of the canvas. Kitaj has adopted, Marco Livingstone writes, from Rauschenberg's Lincoln various formal qualities: all-over composition, strong sense of order, use of collaged elements, painterly strokes and a political/revolutionary frame of reference. We learn from Livingstone that Kitaj found in Rauschenberg's tribute a useful model as his combine-painting similarly focuses on the study of subject matter as a key to comprehension.

Another informative source of inspiration for The Murder of Rosa Luxemburg is the first chapter of Max Ernst's Une Semaine de Bonté (1934). Kitaj, who referred to himself as a "grandchild of Surrealism" builds upon approaches he discovered in Ernst's collage novel. After his arrival at the Royal College of Art, Kitaj bought an edition of this novel. Max Ernst (1891-1976) brilliantly brought together on the same plane a combination of otherwise ordinary images from Victorian magazines. Kitaj adapted Ernst's use of
collage for ironic purposes rather than for more purely formal ones as each image is given an alternative reading.

Parallels can be drawn in terms of context and placement on the picture plane with the first chapter "Le Lion de Belfort" of Une Semaine de Bonté. Both artists have satirized commemorative statuary. The Lion of Belfort, designed by Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi (1834-1904), was erected in the town of Belfort in eastern France after the Franco-Prussian War in 1870 and was completed in 1880. The statue commemorates the tenacity of the Alsatian town which had withstood the Prussian siege of 1870. This patriotic monument, with its 38' height and 70' length, carved of large blocks of red sandstone, honors the victims of the siege of Belfort.

In Ernst's scene a lion-headed general, with a lioness jumping up at him, looks up to a full-length blurred portrait of Napoleon, the representative of power, of the state, of authority on the wall (Plate VII). According to Dieter Wyss in Der Surrealismus, the lion-headed man in uniform functioned on several levels. He represented both the external quest for power as well as a psychological conflict between man and his animal nature. He also symbolized power of external authority and an inner power drive in man. The Napoleon portrait in the upper right corner of this collage
referred to the exploitation of that power in government.\textsuperscript{29}

Designed in 1933, the fateful events of that year in Ernst's homeland including the condemnation of his work by the Nazis, Wyss feels is reflected in Ernst's collage novel. Ernst's criticism of the abuse of political power is treated in this episode from "The Lion of Belfort" chapter. As Ernst's central theme deals with power and its exploitations, Kitaj seems to have found a comparable symbol of imperial authority in his choice of the Niederwald monument.

Kitaj's selection of the Niederwald monument emphasizes the cynical nationalism of \textit{The Murder of Rosa Luxemburg}. The allegorical female figure is an extension of a classical tradition, typified by the famous Nike by Paionios of Mende (c. 420 B.C.). This 7'1" marble image was set up on top of a tall pillar in the sanctuary at Olympia to commemorate a victory of the Messenians and the Naupaktians over an adversary, which is unnamed in the dedicatory inscription, but seems to have been the Spartans.\textsuperscript{30} The German female figure is a later manifestation of this celebratory female symbol of military victory. Kitaj's borrowing of this symbol of triumph forthrightly usurps its meaning and establishes Rosa in this context. He represents her as a German icon satirically bearing the mark of German greatness.
Kitaj's use of collage and his incorporation of a national monument, a personification of Germany victorious, appear influenced by Ernst's mockery of nationalistic patriotism and its abuses. Kitaj's inclusion of the Niederwald monument seems informed by Ernst's collage novel.

While some art historians and critics cite specific works they find relevant to Kitaj's Murder of Rosa Luxemburg, Max Kozloff cites the tradition to which he finds it relevant - that of the martyred hero and refers to the painting as "a memorable depiction." More precisely, the appearance of the martyred radical on her death bed stems from the tradition of a secularized pietà. The motif is "a later manifestation of that transformation of religious imagery for the representation of secular events and political heroes which is seen in art as early as Benjamin West's Death of General Wolfe, continued in David's Death of Marat and his other "martyr" canvases of Barat and Lepeletier." Kitaj, like his predecessors, shows a victim who died in the midst of carrying out Revolutionary duties. Another rather humorous adaptation of an art historical source is the profile of a von Moltke type in the car window, who is to be equated with the military officers who murdered Rosa and threw her body into a waiting car. This line drawing recalls in its clear delineation of form and sense of
caricature, the far less merciful portrayal of another execution, *Marie Antoinette Brought to Execution* (1793; Plate VIII) by Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825).

The painting, which gives the impression of an assemblage of separate parts pieced together, is rendered in somber tones. Jet black dominates Kitaj's scheme. Most of the individual shapes in the composition are outlined in black, which is also the color of Rosa's garments and boots, as well as, the tree, the snow-capped mountain and the obelisk in the lower left corner. The hand lettering of the text is applied in black paint. The profile of Count von Moltke, appearing against the silhouette of the black car, is delineated in black and his hair consists of soft rounded brushstrokes of black paint. Rosa's white face looks ghoulish as short jagged strokes of black paint indicate her pronounced teeth and haggard visage.

Paint application varies throughout the canvas. Some sections are solidly painted such as the car and the base of the Niederwald monument which is treated in burnt umber. Also rendered in this manner of painting are the raw umber ginger jar-like shape surrounding the statue, which serves to focus attention on the monument, and the large expanse of background to the left of Rosa is totally filled in with dark Prussian blue.
Other parts of the canvas are distinguished by areas of more diluted paint and more loosely applied brushwork. The folds of Rosa's skirt are accentuated by variations of black and dark gray washes. Also Kitaj has allowed the white color of the canvas to appear in a few spots on her garments. Long feathery strokes of paint are particularly found on her lower leg, where some passages were applied with an almost dry brush. Long large rapidly marked strokes of neutral gray pigment are used to indicate the lighted side of the obelisk and are seen in black on the snow-capped mountain. The same brushwork, found on the Niederwald monument (Plate IX), gives it the appearance of a charcoal drawing.

Beneath Rosa's upright corpse singularly applied thin vertical strokes of various colors decorate the lower right portion of the canvas. These painterly streaks are rendered in viridian and olive greens, crimson, violetish rose and black. A few similar individual, but uniformly curved streaks of paint, in magenta, viridian green and cerulean blue appear above the collaged text. They look, because of their gentle bend, as if they were blades of grass blowing in the wind.

The pyramid (Plate X) to the left of Rosa provides, as do these individual lines of pigment, a burst of color to the predominantly dark character of the canvas. With its olive
green base, the left side of the pyramid is marked with
strokes of gray juxtaposed with those of pale cerulean blue.
These two color patches are strengthened by the inclusion of
thinly applied touches of violet-rose. The right lighted
side of the pyramid is treated in cadmium orange, while its
lower portion is covered with a dark gray and a dark umber
triangle. A Cézannesque-like structure is attached to the
pyramid. The colors of its conglomerate geometric shapes
repeat those found elsewhere in the composition. The cube is
cadmium orange, from which project cantilevered cerulean blue
and gray parallelograms. Beneath these forms a violet-rose
rectangle appears. The primarily dark palette with its
traces of bright color and its variety of brushwork is
appropriate for Kitaj's memorial intentions.

The literary aspects of the painting, an important part
of his art, as seen in this text, are certainly integral to
the meaning of The Murder of Rosa Luxemburg. His use of
bibliographies, notes and texts has been the subject of
criticism. This practice has created mixed reactions as
evidenced in the scholarly literature. Some critics, at
times, have found his literary components disturbing.34

Clive Phillpot, Director of the Library of the Museum of
Modern Art in reviewing the 1981 Kitaj retrospective at the
Hirshhorn Museum, stated the following:
When one also became aware of the non-pictorial attributes of the pictures - principally through their titles, but also from the artist's notes and the bibliographies which he appended to pictures - one witnessed a certain kind of content, which had seemed to be out of the reach of the painting, suddenly streaming in as to a newly punctured vacuum. 

Most importantly, the artist's own thoughts on this practice indicate the intended use of such references and extend the resonance of the painting as he explains:

After the painter has ceased to work on the surface of a painting he may care to arrange associations between the work and the textual material, to devise sequences in which paintings and texts, work-matter partake or coalesce. I would hope that the painter would be able to carry on his dialogue with his work along the lines under discussion after he ceased to be responsible for the keep of the work . . . in fact - by (continuing) to associate peripheral material with a work after the work has left him - he may be said to still be working on the painting . . . this would help to leave the question of "finishing" a painting open. 

Kitaj finds there is much potency attached to his association of paintings with texts. These texts can be regarded as supportive and supplementary to the visual experience. Dialogue, he feels, will continue beyond the canvas through the association of one image with another and the progress of meanings. 

Kitaj's deep involvement with the verbal document, with books, with the development of commentaries for works of art,
has its roots in a number of important sources. First, the idea of an appended text to accompany a painting, an application of Horace's dictum ut pictura poesis, was brought to Kitaj's attention by the British-born professor Lawrence Alloway (1926-), author of American Pop Art (1974), Roy Lichtenstein (1983), Topics in American Art (1975), former curator of The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, associate editor of Artforum, and the critic who coined the term "Pop Art," as he noted in his first exhibition catalog. This catalog is appropriately titled Pictures with Commentary, Pictures without Commentary. Kitaj's formulation of this idea rooted in antiquity may be a special development in its history with its fundamental theory that poetry and painting are sister arts, fulfilling much the same function, and consequently that a painting can illustrate a picture as much as a picture a text.

There is a long tradition of the application of ut pictura poesis in England.

The ramifications of this tradition have been widely felt in English culture, but with a bias, as is natural in a verbally sophisticated but visually under-educated nation, towards the illustration of a literary text - the painter's art thus becoming a mere adjunct to something which is self-explanatory in the first place.

In addition to Kitaj's attachment to the tradition of ut pictura poesis, there is the influence in his education of
the figure of the art historian Edgar Wind, cited in the
Introduction.

Studying at the Ruskin in Oxford, Wind hadenteeced unprecedentedly large audiences with his
displays of learning. Kitaj had listened to the
way Wind wove his literary exegeses of the
paintings of the Renaissance. Wind embedded the
paintings of Mantegna, Botticelli and Michelangelo
into elaborate contexts of mythologic
interpretation. And one feature of these displays
was, inevitably, the use of mere woodcut
illustrations to throw light on the master works.
It seems impossible not to see Kitaj's enterprise
at that time as trying - among its other objectives
to give his own work that embeddedness in the
verbal culture, that allusiveness which, following
Wind, he saw in Renaissance painting. 41

Artists who have painted pictures with texts also seem
to have heightened his awareness of the book and its special
relationship to the image. In an interview Frederic Tuten,
curator of painting at The Los Angeles County Museum of Art,
noted that some of the artists Kitaj most (and still) admires
have made pictures with texts. The artists to which Tuten
referred are William Blake, Nicolas Poussin, and above all
Ambrogio Lorenzetti, after whose great allegorical fresco he
modeled his own major paintings If Not, Not and Land of
Lakes. 42

Kitaj is aware of Proserpine (1873-77; Plate XI) by
Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882) and is certainly familiar
with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood's deep involvement with
literature. In this painting a text is also collaged on the upper right corner of the canvas.

Furthermore, Kitaj's use of text to elaborate his art has precedents also in the work of Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968). Duchamp's many written statements on his art, essays, and published lectures continue his characteristic cerebral irony and constitute a major component of his oeuvre. These have been assembled in a published collection. Duchamp's notes help the viewer in understanding the complexities of his ideas.

Best known of his written accompaniments to his art is The Green Box (1934), a literary adjunct of explanatory notes for The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (1915-23). Rosalind Krauss regarded The Green Box, as forming a huge, extended caption and felt these notes were absolutely necessary for their intelligibility. She pointed out that the very existence of Duchamp's notes - their preservation and publication - bears witness to the altered relationship between sign and meaning within this work. She explained that a meaninglessness surrounds The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even which can only be filled in by the addition of a text.

Many of these same conditions pertain to Kitaj's arcane references in his art which are illuminated by the inclusion
of catalog notes. While Duchamp's published statements contained notes, sketches, detailed studies and even a treatise on a very special-end game problem in chess, his written oeuvre provides another historic link for Kitaj in the use of textual elements as essential to the comprehension of his art.

The use of non or extra-pictorial subject matter will recur in this examination of four portraits of his heroes. Kitaj has placed importance on extra-pictorial subject matter as a way of keeping the painting open-ended and alive according to the manner in which it is viewed. The scholarly literature has repeatedly labeled The Murder of Rosa Luxemburg as an example of Pop Art, that is, more specifically, political Pop Art. This mistaken categorization, often applied to Kitaj, will recur in this text and thus needs to be addressed:

The word pop(ular) implies that a motif will be recognized instantly by the vast majority of people. As phrased by Robert Indiana in 1963: Pop is Instant Art. Its comprehension can be as immediate as a Crucifixion. However, such an image need not be necessarily be neutral, insignificant, or commonplace: it can be a political figure like Warhol's Jackie Kennedy, a Hollywood idol like his Elvis, a national emblem like the flags taken over from Jasper Johns and Frank Stella, a symbol of recurring present-day disasters like Warhol's car wrecks and Lichtenstein's Drowning Girl (1963), a status symbol like Richard Hamilton's and Tom Wesselman's Cars, a sex symbol like Wesselman's and Rosenquist's nudes, a political comment like Robert
We realize from our analysis of the obscure figure of Rosa Luxemburg that Kitaj's *Murder of Rosa Luxemburg* is far removed from the criterion of instant recognition cited above. Rosa is not a character known to the public at large, she is not in any way an article of mass consumption. His image is not a celebrated type which would better qualify it as Pop art. The painting, with its component literary and pictorial motifs which communicate its different areas of meaning, indicates Rosa is to be seen as a figure who relates to his personal concerns and issues.

*The Murder of Rosa Luxemburg* underlines a number of interests which will continue in Kitaj's art. The painting reflects his devotion to the power of the image as a carrier of metaphor. Yet the issue of how to make this image into a metaphor of self evolves further. By using the intrinsic meanings of borrowed imagery, he creates a tribute to a martyred radical in whose life circumstances he finds an autobiographical connection suitable for development. In the character of Rosa, the antithesis of German nationalism, he discovered a heroine he found identifiable with the fate of his grandmothers. Through the building of metaphor, a
bonding is created by Kitaj's selection of a character with whom he shares a personal sense of identity.
FOOTNOTE REFERENCES

1. Spartakusbund was a revolutionary organization which at the end of 1918 was transformed into the Communist Party of Germany. Rosa was a founder along with Franz Mehring and Karl Liebknecht.


3. Lutz Tittel, Das Niederwald Denkmal, 1871-1883 (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1979). For more information on the Niederwald monument see this monograph.

4. Alfred Neumeyer, "Monuments to 'Genius' in German Classicism," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes II (1938): 160. No date can be established for this never completed monument. The author concludes from a hand-colored aquatint in the Hohenzollernmuseum in Berlin, to judge by the costumes of the figures, it dates from the period of the French Revolution.

5. Ibid., 159.

6. Ibid., 161.


9. Tate Gallery, 156.


12. Ibid., 6.

14. Joll, "Red Rosa," 6. She only reluctantly supported the campaign on behalf of Dreyfuss. She wrote, "Only a fundamental transformation of the capitalist system can eliminate the radical attacks on Jewry."

15. Rosa Luxemburg, *Letters from Prison*, trans., Eden and Cedar Paul, (Berlin: International Publishing Co., 1921). He does not refer to her many references to nature or to works of art. She often wrote with care of her observations of nature seen from her walks in the prison garden and from her cell window (217, 219, 225). She describes in rich detail various species of flowers (217), birds (225), colors of leaves (219). Artists are also among her interests in prison. She refers to a field worker as looking "like a Millet character" (224). She reads Gounod, Goethe, and Hugo von Hofmannstahl (236). She likens characters in a Flemish novella she reads in prison to figures in David Teniers the Elder and in Peter Brueghel (255). She comments also that she has received pictures by Rembrandt and Titian (250).


20. Ibid.

21. Ibid., 190.

22. Ibid., 187.

23. Ibid., 190.


26. Livingstone, 19, A-69, Kitaj himself pointed out that Rauschenberg's combine-paintings themselves "came out of Cornell and the whole Surrealist context." In 1976 he discussed Ernst in an interview, "Ernst was certainly the best of the orthodox Surrealists, but most of Ernst doesn't interest me. What did interest we were the great steel engraving collages, the Semaine de Bonté. See also Edward Henning, "R.B. Kitaj: The Garden," Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art LXIX, no.10 (December 1982): 322-3. The Curator of Modern Art noted Kitaj's paintings of the 1960's often juxtapose logically unrelated images in a manner reminiscent of Surrealist collages by Max Ernst.

27. Livingstone, revised 1979 interview, -A51-.


29. Warlick, M.E. Max Ernst's Collage Novel, Une Semaine de Bonté: Feuilleton Sources and Alchemical Interpretations (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maryland, 1984), 15. The author emphasized the political significance of that image in that the year of this novel's construction, 1933, was the year in which Hitler came to power in Germany. The absurdity of war was keenly felt by Ernst who had reluctantly fought for Germany in World War I. At one point, Ernst and Eluard had faced each other on the front lines. Ernst's criticism of the abuse of political power in this chapter was a very personal. Kitaj may have been aware of these circumstances in his appropriate selection of a politically inspired Surrealist work.

30. J.J. Pollitt, Art and Experience in Classical Greece (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 118-19. The Messenians and the Naupaktians fought alongside the Athenians against the Spartans in an engagement at Sphacteria and Pylos in 425 B.C. It seems likely that the Nike was set
up several years after this date, perhaps during the Peace of Nikias.

31. Livingstone, -A71-. Francis Bacon's *Figure in a Landscape* (1945) and *Landscape* (1952) have been cited as influences for the directional lines under Rosa's corpse.


40. Ibid.


45. Livingstone, 28.

CHAPTER II

Isaac Babel Riding with Budyonny (1962)

The critical issues confronted in assessing The Murder of Rosa Luxembourg come to the fore for us as for the critics in Kitaj's tribute to the Russian novelist Isaac Babel (1894-1941). In Isaac Babel Riding with Budyonny (Plate XII; 1962), he is portrayed in a manner that evokes the violent world in which he lived, fought and wrote, Russia before, during and after the Revolution (two revolutions in February and in October, 1917). While Babel himself was a political and social activist, and like Rosa Luxembourg not particularly involved with their Jewishness, these are also years in which official anti-Semitic pogroms were effected. As in his earlier tribute to Rosa, Kitaj employs a rich visual ambiance, one complicated by art historical and literary references. The same issues arise, a choice of images appropriate to content and the role of retrospective assessments.

At the time it was painted, Kitaj was considered one of the key artists of the Tate Gallery's representation of Pop Art.¹ This connection is still apparent in the collage of
brightly colored and sharply delineated shapes. Yet, this "Pop" character is now employed to evoke the jarring atmosphere of events in which Babel lived, and enables Kitaj to associate events both authentic and fictional, events drawn both from the novelist's biography and his writing.

Fragmented horse and riders relate the savage character of the Cossacks. Their wild nature is characterized by brilliant color, balanced curving lines and distorted images. In the upper left corner of the painting, Babel himself, is depicted bodyless. But he is only one of a complex number of figures, for this canvas is divided into sections, visually reading from left to right.

Babel is surrounded by primarily equestrian figures. He and his horse face in opposite directions and, by this disorientation, it is clear that he is not to be understood as an equestrian in the traditional Cossack sense. For his representation is not like the various details of the other equestrians who do recall both Cossack character and convey violence. Overlapping Babel is a sharply contoured silhouette drawing of a Cossack rider on a rearing horse; this presentation is not unlike the silhouetted profile of Count von Moltke in The Murder of Rosa Luxemburg. The figure appears to explode internally in a brilliant burst of light. The Cossack ethos of unbridled action is again caricaturized to the right in a boldly foreshortened equestrian. Two other figures remain. One is a colorful yellow and dark blue
montaged character who confronts Babel directly. Next to him, forming a kind of shadow, another figure appears, a long-beaked bird-like man. This creature has comically exaggerated features. In front of him, a little white house, placed on its side, reads as if it were speared on the tip of a cannon. From the violence indicated in the horse and rider motifs and the savage appearance of the bird-like man, it appears that Isaac Babel Riding with Budyonny concerns stark terror and aggression. All of these elements form the attributes of a portrait of Isaac Babel, a man with whom, as will be demonstrated, Kitaj may have discovered a sense of identity or at least found fascination.

Babel was born in Odessa, Russia, and is renowned chiefly for his two collections of short stories, Odessa Tales (1923-24) and Red Cavalry (1924). Odessa Tales recalls the ghetto of Babel's youth. Red Cavalry, his masterpiece, is an epic chronicle of the Civil War (1918-1920) consisting of thirty-five stories in which each, a vivid impression of a Cossack regiment of the Red Army fighting against Polish troops, is provided. Because of this, it has been termed "the most remarkable work of fiction that has yet come out of revolutionary Russia." The cycle of stories of his childhood, to be discussed below, was the last of the major cycles that Babel was to publish in his lifetime. In the final decade of his life he turned to new projects, to the drama, to attempts to write a novel. Translations of some
of his short stories have appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Commentary*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and *The New Yorker*.¹

A disciple of the French writers Gustave Flaubert (1821-1880) and Guy de Maupassant (1850-1893), Babel wrote his youthful stories in French. The Russian writer Maxim Gorky (1868-1936), who encouraged Babel by publishing some of his early short stories in his journal *Letopis (The Chronicle)*, thought Babel the finest artist to come to maturity in the first sweep of the enthusiasm loosed by the October Revolution - an assessment subsequently confirmed by Soviet and European critics alike.²

In addition to his stories, Babel actually served the new regime in a variety of roles. He worked in the Cheka (Commission for the Suppression of Counter-Revolution) and in the Commissariat of Education, and participated in the expeditions to the countryside in 1918 to collect food for the city. Babel in his autobiography also claimed, in his long list of activities during the Revolution, to have served with the northern Red army in the fight against the White counterrevolutionaries in St. Petersburg.³

In 1919 Babel married in Odessa and took a job as editor with the Ukrainian State Publishing House. But his return to Odessa, family and domesticity was short-lived. He was sent in 1920 by Sergei Ingulov, the Secretary of the Party Committee in Odessa, as correspondent for IUGROSTA, the southern division of the national news service that was the
forerunner of TASS. Traveling under the name Kirik Vassilevich Liutov to conceal his Jewish identity, Babel was assigned to Budyonny's First Cavalry, where he worked for the Division newspaper, The Red Cavalry. Babel's tour of duty with the First Cavalry was the experience he had been seeking. He wrote hack journalism for the propaganda sheet. But his primary interest was the diary in which he hoarded the anecdotes, scenes, sights, and impressions for the work he was going to produce later. Babel went into the Civil War consciously as a writer seeking materials. In the diary he mentions the manuscripts of stories that he carried about with him in the midst of battle and that, not surprisingly, he lost before the campaign was over as he lamented in his diary.  

Babel's literary reputation developed gradually. He returned to Odessa in very poor health after the ordeals of the campaign. In 1921 he became acquainted with the writer Konstantin Paustovski (later his protégé and lifelong friend) who tells us, Babel was already a celebrated figure in Odessa at this time because of his works published in St. Petersburg, his friendship with Maxim Gorky (1868-1936), and his tour of duty with the legendary Budyonny. We learn from his biographer Patricia Carden that the "literary kids" (literaturnye mal'chiki) of Odessa followed him around, hanging on his every word. Older literary lights treated him with deference. To Odessites in these years Babel seemed to
be "the first real Soviet writer," though he was still largely unknown on the national scene.  

Babel moved to a village outside Moscow in the early twenties because this city was the center of the new postrevolutionary literary life. With the publication of a few of his short stories, a reviewer in Pravda wrote in 1924 that Babel was "a rising star in our literature." In the late twenties and early thirties he came to be regarded as one of the most notable talents in Soviet literature. This assessment, however, was by no means the official one, for from the beginning of his career, Babel had been under attack by the literary bureaucracy. In an atmosphere of seeming liberality, Babel was chosen to be one of the speakers for the first Writers' Congress in 1934. However, he incriminated himself in his speech. Among the statements for which he was damned was his reference to himself as now practicing a new literary genre. He was, he said, "the master of the genre of silence." This was viewed as criticism of the government, as his confession of cessation from active publishing was due to the paralyzing effect of the bureaucracy.

His silence was a result of the introduction of the literary orthodoxy represented by the dogma of "socialist realism." He was one of those writers for whom Gorky coined the term "romantic realism," so as to justify such mild heretics who still looked back with nostalgia to the tragic
and epic years of the Civil War, instead of looking forward and celebrating what the regime was now building on the ruins of the past. The changed atmosphere made it too difficult for Babel to write anything important or new.  

At the time of his speech at the 1934 Writer's Congress he was still free to travel abroad and he went for a while to Paris, where he did some writing in French. Upon his return home, he published nothing but an augmented and revised one-volume collection of all of his short stories, which appeared in 1934 and very little else, as will be discussed below. In 1935 Babel was among the Soviet literary delegation, among them Boris Pasternak (1890-1960), who attended in Paris the Congress for the Defense of Culture and Peace, which was to present a united front of intellectuals against Fascism. Babel's signature appeared in print for the last time in 1937.

His silence was his response to an environment hostile to his art. Babel's silence -- that is, his failure to publish -- was a familiar topic of comment in Soviet literary circles in the 1930's. His silence has usually been interpreted in the West as a result of direct oppression or as a protest in the manner of Pasternak. This interpretation was supported by Ervin Sinkó (a Yugoslav writer of Hungarian nationality), who shared Babel's house in 1936 during a trip to the Soviet Union and who kept a diary of his stay there. Sinkó reports that Babel refused to
publish because he did not want to submit to the kind of "corrections" that would be required by publishers.\textsuperscript{15}

He and many of the most illustrious names of Soviet literature found silence to be the only honorable course through those years of moral confusion and personal danger.\textsuperscript{16} The 1930's brought more tribulation to Soviet writers than any other postrevolutionary period, with the possible exception of the 1946-53 Stalin era. During this time, writers found themselves subjected to unbending political discipline, and the previous diversity in Russian literature gave way to a depressingly predictable uniformity. Ultimately fear became terror as a consequence of these arbitrary purges from which no citizen could feel safe—not even the purgers themselves.\textsuperscript{17}

Babel's daughter described his situation. Because of ferocious Stalinist censorship, Babel had been quite thoroughly "silenced." On the one hand, he was under severe official attack for his lack of "production" (a dozen stories and a few journalistic pieces were all he published in the thirties); on the other hand, what he submitted to editors was more often than not judged "unprintable." The few interviews he gave were heavily altered when published, or not published at all. Babel did not protest, but neither did his style "improve" according to the Leninist-Stalinist theories of literature. Instead, Babel chose silence rather than compromise -- he wrote for himself.\textsuperscript{18} His moral
conviction was such that during one of his trips to Paris in 1933 Babel was contracted to write a scenario of *Red Cavalry* for a French film company, but refused to make the compromises required by the director and so was not paid for it.19

In 1939 when the reactionary elements of Soviet culture achieved ascendancy and the purge trials instituted he was arrested. Apparently all of his unpublished manuscripts were destroyed by the secret police. The nature of his dedication to his art is revealed in the following passages. His daughter described the shelves of his study at the time of his arrest in May 1939 were piled with manuscripts, but he read them to no one. All these manuscripts and his nearly completed book were confiscated when he was arrested; even though the Soviet authorities have been willing to cooperate in the search for them in recent years, they have never been located. Most probably they were reduced to ashes with the rest of the secret police archives in December 1941, during the burning that went on for so many days and nights as the Germans were approaching Moscow.20 Some of his works have been saved as his daughter explained:

One of Babel's idiosyncracies, whether in Moscow, Leningrad, or Kiev, was to establish a secret place to work. He would usually "hide" in the house of a close friend, to whom he would also entrust copies or variants of his work. Because of this habit a few unpublished stories have survived, thanks to the courage and faith of such friends. As the fear of reprisal has lessened in the last few years, these people have released Babel's old manuscripts for publication.2
Babel suffered two additional but secondary circumstances. First, he had relatives living in Western Europe, making him automatically suspect. Second, he was a Jew living under a dictatorship whose anti-Semitic prejudices grew more pronounced with time. In order to survive, he stopped writing for publication.

It is not known for what specific reason he was arrested. One scholar stated that Babel did not undergo a purge, rather that he was arrested for having made a politically indiscrete remark. And, it has also been said that he was suspected of Trotskyism. His arrest has more recently been attributed to a screenplay, written after a decade of near silence, which upon analysis, was a political allegory of Stalin.

No charge against Babel has ever been made public, or apparently told to his family. His life, like the lives of so many Soviet writers, ended, according to Soviet official sources, in a labor camp on March 17, 1941. It is not known whether he was shot or died of typhus. Babel's unfortunate end, whatever it might have been, is surrounded with mystery for Babel was tried in secret and survivors of the prison camps have not been able to provide any digest on the true story.

After his disappearance, his works were proscribed, and his name was condemned to public oblivion. There is good reason to believe that Babel's persecution resulted from
false charges or denunciation. In the period following Stalin's death, Babel, along with many other victims of the purges, was "rehabilitated." The sentence was revoked, he was cleared of criminal charges. In 1954, fifteen years after his arrest, the Military College of the Supreme Court of the USSR issued a document, which reads in part:

The sentence of the Military College dated 26 January 1940 concerning Babel, I.E. is revoked on the basis of newly discovered circumstances and the case against him is terminated in the absence of elements of a crime.

Then in 1956, the Soviet writer Ilya Ehrenburg (1891-1967) visited Paris and told Evgenia Babel that her husband had been posthumously rehabilitated.

Known as a master of the short story, Babel's brevity, a formal quality not lost on Kitaj, became his peculiar hallmark. He excelled in the highly polished short story, often an extended anecdote related by the protagonist in his own words. When the Soviet director Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948) spoke of what it was that literature might teach the cinema, he said that "Isaac Babel will speak of the extreme laconicism of literature's expressive means. Babel, who, perhaps, knows in practice better than anyone else that great secret, 'that there is no iron that can enter the human heart with such stupefying effect, as a period placed at just the right moment.'"

From all of this we learn, however, the depths of Kitaj's interest in a martyred Jewish hero through his
retrospective portrait study. Babel viewed himself as a Jew surrounded by Cossacks, the traditional hated and feared enemies of his race. Again it is the ironic with which Kitaj seems fascinated.

Semyon Budyonny, whose name appears in Kitaj's title, was a Marshall of the Soviet Union. Babel was one of his supply officers and fought with the General in the Polish campaign and in the Civil War. Although Babel made the Red Army immortal in Red Cavalry, Budyonny later denounced him as a slanderer. When some of Babel's Red Cavalry stories appeared in a magazine before their publication in a collected volume, the Marshall saw in them a libel against the troops under his command. He attacked Babel furiously for the cultural corruption and political ignorance, which, he claimed the stories displayed. He did this in two articles (1924 and 1928). Gorky, in defense of his protégé, who seemed not at all worried by this controversy and confessed that Budyonny's outburst made him swell up with glee.29

The literary component of Isaac Babel Riding with Budyonny is complex. Instead of a short handwritten history of the main character collaged onto the surface of the canvas as appeared in The Murder of Rosa Luxemburg and the incorporation of references to the painting in exhibition catalogs, Kitaj relied solely on the later. His 1963 exhibition catalog, at the time of the painting's first
showing, provided the viewer with concise sources. The catalog entry was accompanied by the following annotation and bibliography:

See the Penguin edition of Babel's stories with Lionel Trilling's very interesting introduction.


*Symbols of Transformation*. C.G. Jung. London. The design of the upright rider in the upper centre of the painting (coloured yellow and blue) was based on the design of embossed covers of the six volume *South Africa and the Transvaal War*. L. Creswicke. London 1901.

Reference has also been made to Ralph Mayer's *The Artist's Handbook*. London 1951 and its ingenious List of Pigments.

Kitaj makes many assumptions, with the inclusion of these supplementary footnotes, for all of them require demands on the viewer. Initially the appearance of the variety of active horse and rider forms on the canvas indicates a theme of brutality and ruthless action, beyond this estimation, Kitaj's meaning becomes open-ended. It is unlikely that the viewer will know either the character of Isaac Babel cited in Kitaj's title or his connection to the equestrian imagery.

This inherent esoteric character of his work is well documented in the literature. The critical reaction, indicated in the commentaries below, represent this

I remember being impressed by Kitaj's *Murder of Rosa Luxemburg*, but turning from it in regret at my political ignorance, to look at the easier-on-the-eye freshness of Allen Jones and Peter Phillips.30

Sara Selwood, a columnist, for *The Times Literary Supplement* noted in regard to his literary references in his 1980 exhibition,

Perhaps we should dig out our copies of Benjamin, Kafka and Eliot all over again. As one critic commented a few years ago, Kitaj paints for the Ph.D. crowd.31

These criticisms underline one of the many issues facing analysis of his art, as exemplified in this painting.

Perusal of the arcane nature of his subject matter offers an example of the many cerebral puzzles existing within the painting and its relationship to the cited bibliography in the exhibition catalog. Kitaj provides and directs the viewer with his citations. The artist's references to Babel's *Collected Stories*, Trilling's introduction and the visual source for the upright rider in the upper center of the painting offer stimulating guidelines for the interested viewer. His listing of the various other texts without explanations, pagination or contextual clues forces one to realize the artist's determination not to provide the viewer with every minutiae and to provoke independent
interpretations. Kitaj's goal for the viewer seems to be
twofold. He not only challenges the viewer by his literary
extensions of the contents of the painting, but the artist
also wants him to establish his own dialogue with the subject
matter and its ramifications.

In establishing correspondences between the notes and
the painting, the inquisitive viewer faces various decisions
in terms of the artist's generalized guidelines. Kitaj cites
*Riders of Many Lands*, a primer of different types of horses,
while choosing not to indicate its specific relation to his
painting. Similarly Wittkower's complex article on "Marvels
of the East" is listed, yet Kitaj's borrowing from its
extensive content is in no way illuminated. Even more
challenging is his inclusion of Jung's *Symbols of
Transformation*. The viewer must examine Jung's text and then
wonder to which of the psychoanalyst's literally hundreds of
examples is the artist's particular reference. His
bibliography, at this point, seems to complicate the
intellectual curiosity he seeks.

However, the artist's own statements, his citation of
Trilling's introduction, is most important. Lionel Trilling
(1905-75), professor of English at Columbia University, has
written *Matthew Arnold* (1939), *E.M. Forster* (1944), *The
Liberal Imagination* (1950), *Freud and the Crisis of Our
Culture* (1955) and has edited *The Portable Matthew Arnold*
(1949), *The Selected Letters of John Keats* (1951, 1956), in
addition to other volumes plus essays in scholarly journals and reviews. His thirty-seven page introductory essay to Babel's *Collected Stories* sheds light on several aspects of Kitaj's painting and is the only immediate reliable guide for the interested viewer. Examination of Trilling's text clarifies the type of ambiance suggested by the horse and rider motifs. Also careful study of some of the essayist's descriptions aids in identification of a few of the characters and their roles which Kitaj adapted, but not all.

We realize it is from both Trilling's essay and Babel's text that Kitaj's painting depicts images drawn from the writer's own experiences in Budyonny's First Cavalry during the Civil War and struggle against the Poles in the Ukraine, Lithuania, and outside of Warsaw. Babel, "who recognized the Revolution as a pledge of future happiness," fought for the Communist cause in the ranks of a Red Army Cossack regiment. Ironically, these soldier-fighters in Russian wars and pogroms were recorded by an alien, yet sympathetic writer. The past violence and ultimate cruelty which the writer experienced is also evoked by Kitaj in *Isaac Babel Riding with Budyonny*.

It is through recognition of the conflation of literary sources that we unravel the imagery of the painting. Examination of the characterizations of the *Red Cavalry* and Trilling's commentary partially defines the Cossack temperament represented by Kitaj's horse and rider motifs.
The critic typified the Cossack fighter-warrior as an image of aimless destruction; he was physical, violent, without mind or manners. He was the enemy not only of the Jew — although that specifically — but the enemy also of all men who thought of liberty; he was the natural and appropriate instrument of ruthless oppression. Kitaj builds upon the irony of Babel a Jew joining the Red Army of the Cossacks. Based upon Trilling's in depth focus on the brutal character of the Cossacks, Kitaj conveys this ambiance through his representation of the various wild positions of the equestrian motifs.

Trilling's introductory essay provides the viewer with a biography of Isaac Babel which clearly aided and influenced Kitaj in the development of this painting. As a boy, the American scholar tells us in his review of Babel's autobiographical stories, the writer had been of stunted growth, physically inept, subject to nervous disorders. Trilling refers to him as an intellectual, a writer, clearly attributes which Kitaj, upon reading this text, must have found appealing.

It is from Trilling's statement and from "The Awakening," one of Babel's tales drawn upon the experiences of his childhood in the Collected Stories, that we learn more about the home environment of this author who became devoted to the Revolution. Trilling describes how Babel grew up like a hothouse plant and disliked his restrictive environment.
He summarizes the resentment Babel felt towards the terrible discipline of his Jewish education and his father's desire for him to succeed as a violinist. However it is in Babel's story "The Awakening" that the author describes how musical prodigies brought wealth to their families. Because of paternal ambitions, the father hopes that the son will be a prodigy, as so many other Odessa Jewish children have been and thus bring glory to the family. Babel states significantly a phrase indicating the kind of paternal expectations he faced--

but though my father could have reconciled himself to poverty, fame he must have.34

Trilling explains Babel's ignorance of the natural world of trees and plants as being typical of the Jews of eastern European ghettos.35 Again, we learn in depth of Babel's sheltered childhood in "The Awakening." He writes, "To learn to swim was my dream. In my childhood, I had to lead the life of a sage. When I grew up I started climbing trees."36 It is from Babel's own words that the embarrassment and hostility concerning his lack of knowledge of natural life is elucidated and greatly facilitates comprehension of a wider psychological context of the painting.

Furthermore, Babel's resentment is only fully recognized through his short story in which he relates,

I knew none of the answers. The names of trees and birds, their division into species, where birds fly away to, on which side the sun rises, when the dew
falls thickest - all these things were unknown to me.37

Later he wonders where to find someone who will tell him about how to recognize flowers and stars.38 Babel ends this tale filled with anger towards his upbringing and states his desire to escape, "I was thinking of running away." 39 We realize from the short story Babel's acute sense of the physical reality of the world and recognize the writer as a very young man. We see his growing sensibility and awareness of choices he had to make for personal fulfillment.40 Babel is in conflict with his society, and especially with the desires of his father. Understanding Babel's character is again realized only by reading Trilling's essay and "The Awakening." Both the introductory essay as well as Babel's short story assist in recognition of Kitaj's characterization.

The identification of the bodyless rider with the rimless glasses as Babel is found in these sources. Trilling presents a sensitive portrayal of Babel, as a man "with spectacles on his nose and autumn in his heart," 41 a description literally quoted from Babel's autobiographical short stories. This accurate rendition of the author with his rimless glasses is authenticated by portraits in literary encyclopedias and in photographs (Plate VII). Trilling places emphasis on the role of Babel's spectacles, which Kitaj astutely includes in his portrayal. Trilling significantly indicates, which Kitaj noted, that the spectacles on his nose
were for Babel of the first importance in his conception of himself. He was a man for whom perception of the world came late and had to be apprehended, by strength and speed against the parental or cultural interdiction.42

His eyeglasses become not only a symbol of his life of reading, they also point to a new way of seeing that he experiences away from his rigid home life. Babel, we recognize, felt shut off from a more fulfilling life, because of this overprotectedness. But it is only when we read Babel's own descriptions of his painful childhood and his coming of age in stories such as "The Story of My Dovcct," "My First Love," and "The Awakening" that we realize the full impact of Kitaj's characterization of the writer with spectacles on his nose. Kitaj's inclusion of eyeglasses recalls the society Babel came from in which "his bookishness cut him off from a direct, physical relationship to the world."43

The imagery for the three characters on the top row of the painting is based on a conflation of sources from Babel's Collected Stories. The characterization of Babel, as discussed above, is found in Trilling's introduction and in Babel's autobiographical short stories. Babel faces another figure, composed of blue fragments with yellow outlines. This character is Budyonny or a Cossack officer, yet the encounter is not explicitly treated in Trilling's essay or in the Collected Stories. Kitaj's vignette is a symbol of
the relationship of Babel to the Cossacks, a theme which runs throughout Trilling's essay and the stories in the Red Cavalry and in some of his other short stories in which childhood memories of the Cossacks and their deeds are mentioned.

The colorful characterization of the Cossack seems to be based on the following description found in two sequential short stories, "The Story of My Dovecot" and "My First Love" in which Babel recounts returning home as a nine-year-old boy to find his grandfather murdered in a 1905 pogrom and his father kneeling in the mud at the feet of a Cossack officer imploring him to protect his property. Trilling discusses this traumatic childhood moment of seeing his father on his knees before a Cossack captain and begging him to spare his store from pillage during the pogrom. It is Babel who recalls the looting and smashing up of their store in which boxes filled with nails, machines and other goods were thrown out into the street. Careful reading of the short stories provides the details of the encounter and describes the costume of the Cossack officer.

An officer with stripes on his trousers and a parade belt of silver rode in front of the patrol, a tall peaked cap set stiffly on his head. The officer rode slowly, not looking right or left. He rode as though through a mountain pass, where one can only look ahead.

"Captain," my father mumbled when the Cossacks came abreast of him, "captain," my father said, grasping his heads in his hands and kneeling in the mud.
"Do what I can," the officer answered, still looking straight ahead, and raising his hand in its lemon-colored chamois glove to the peak of his cap. "Look," my father said, still on his knees, "They are destroying everything dear to me. Captain, why is it?" The officer murmured something, and again put the lemon glove to his cap. He touched the reins, but his horse did not move. "At your service," the officer said, tugged at the reins, and rode off, the Cossacks following. 44

The vivid description provided in Babel's text and summarized in Trilling's essay suggests Kitaj transformed this childhood memory into the yellow and dark blue horseman who is a Cossack officer, perhaps General Budyonny, as indicated by the title. This character has been incorrectly identified as an upright version of the kneeling father looking at Babel. 45 The pictorial facts do not correspond to this interpretation.

The Cossack officer who touched his "tall peaked cap with his lemon-colored glove" becomes identifiable by the inclusion of the surrounding yellow shadow and the helmet-like hat with its yellow inscribed inner peak. This figure is a symbol of the Cossack type.

Curiously, we learn from the 1963 exhibition catalog that another painting, Budyonny (1961-62), was shown. This separate entry follows the listing of Isaac Babel Riding with Budyonny but has no literary appendages and unfortunately is not illustrated. Positive identification of the character of Budyonny is thus less certain.
We realize Kitaj in *Isaac Babel Riding with Budyonny* treats the anomaly of Babel, a Jew from a ghetto, riding as a Cossack. He is depicted with his revolutionary comrades with whom he became also an oppressor. This ironic involvement in a hostile world is particularly dramatized in the upper center scene in which Babel and the Cossack officer confront each other. Kitaj's interpretation of Babel's text in this face-to-face vignette defines the writer's relationship to the Cossacks.

Trilling's essay and Babel's text are essential to general comprehension of the imagery and thus point to the importance of the artist's own statements. Without these literary sources, Kitaj's tribute to the Russian writer would be difficult to identify. Kitaj, as will be demonstrated, found poignant issues in Trilling which moved him. The professor's discussion of tests Babel faced relate significantly to the artist's own personal identity, gender, and profession. Recognition of Babel's commitment to the Cossacks in terms of various tests or challenges heightens the intensity of *Isaac Babel Riding with Budyonny*.

Kitaj must have found fascination and perhaps identification with Trilling's treatment of the moment when Babel saw his father at the mercy of a Cossack. The American professor and author labels this incident in which the son experiences the tragic impotence of his father as a key
factor in his submission to the physical and emotional struggle of joining a Cossack regiment.

The conflicts Trilling recognized as manifested in Babel's action clearly interested Kitaj. Trilling attributes them as stemming from Babel's Jewishness and his need to prove his masculinity. Trilling regarded Babel's joining a Cossack regiment as having reference to the boy's relation to his father and his position. He argues that Babel submits himself to this test of life among Cossacks because of his consciousness as a Jew. To support this claim, Trilling underlines the position of Babel's father as a shopkeeper, not well to do, a serious man, a failure. Kitaj undoubtedly absorbed Trilling's following explanation:

"... the sons of such men (in this case Babel) have much to prove, much to test themselves for, and if they are Jewish, their Jewishness is ineluctably involved in the test."

Kitaj, aware of this observation, developed this encounter between Babel and the Cossack. Babel submits himself to the test because of his stifling home environment and his father's high expectations. Trilling also attributes Babel's action in terms of an essential search for masculinity and presents his quest in light of other literary figures. He compared Babel's talent, like that of many modern writers, was rooted in the memory of his boyhood, and Babel's boyhood is more than usually dominated by the idea of the test and the initiation.
Trilling believes Babel joined a Cossack regiment because of a deeply felt sense of initiation, a test of manhood; as he explained, "He was there to be submitted to a test, he was there to be initiated. He was there because of the dreams of his boyhood." This test is not that of courage, he stresses, and finds in it a close affinity for the drama of the boy's initiation into manhood as in the case of Ernest Hemingway and Stephen Crane. Kitaj undoubtedly found in Babel's emotional search for proof of his masculinity an appropriately stirring subject. With his fascination for twentieth century literary figures, Kitaj may have even found it more appealing because Trilling connected this quest as being often present in the boyhood tests faced by other modern writers. He correctly hypothesizes Babel submitting himself to direct and immediate power was a necessity in his psychic life. Curiously, Trilling does not deal in any depth with the issues embedded in Babel's writing, that is, the crucial psychoanalytic stage of the father-son conflict or of the rejection of one's background seen in the life of Babel. This theme of filial conflict, a test of masculinity, must be acknowledged as a part of the meaning of the painting. In this father-son conflict Babel aspires to things other than his father's role as businessman. Dismissing his restrictive Jewish upbringing and the aspirations his father held for him, Isaac devotes his life to goals higher than the making of money or
achieving fame. The son, in his rejection of the Jewish milieu in which he grew up, joins a world that his father would never recognize. The unresolved generational conflict is clearly found in the son's joining the violent Cossacks.

The challenge Isaac finds in his father's impotency psychologically propels him to leave the Jewish fold and the complexity of the relationship with his father. The occurrence of this generational conflict, the fathers and sons theme, is frequent in the literature of Isaac Babel. His life with the Cossacks provides him with challenge as a writer and a life of action under the assumed banner of the Revolution.

The character on the right side of the painting is perhaps the most puzzling element in this work and its accompanying literary appendage. For the viewer seeing this painting in 1963 in the Marlborough Gallery in London or shortly thereafter when it was purchased the same year by the Tate Gallery, this figure is impossible to discern. His identification as Benia Krik is a revelation not made clear until Kitaj's future publications.

Again, the artist's own statements are critical when later in 1963 Kitaj provides more specific information regarding his sources for this painting. These are published in the Tate Gallery catalog notes. The compiler includes the contents of Kitaj's recent letter in this revised text. The
artist's references now are indicated by pagination, plate numbers and more annotation:

Isaac Babel's *Collected Stories* (Penguin Books, 1961); the plates in T.A. Dodge, *Riders of Many Lands*, 1894 which suggested many of the postures in the painting; L. Creswicke, *South Africa and the Transvaal War*, 1901, for the upright rider in the center, based on the embossed covers; Rudolph Wittkower, "Marvels of the East," *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, V, 1942, pl.49f for the elongated neck of the rider in the lower right; C.E. Jung, *Symbols and Transformation*, 1956, p. 91 for the rearing horse on the left. He wrote: "I intended the bodyless head mounted at the upper left to stand for the spirit of Babel. The List of Pigments referred to (in Ralph Mayer's *The Artist's Handbook*, 1951) stimulated the choice of colors and of color contrasts." In a later letter of 1 May 1963 he added "I meant to stock the Babel picture with conventional equestrian postures... None of the imagery reflects anything specific in the Tales."

Semyon Budyonny, Marshal of the Soviet Union, distinguished himself as a Cavalry Commander during the Civil War 1919. Born in 1883, conscripted to the Army in 1903, he fought in the Russo-Japanese War 1904-05, then studied at the St. Petersburg Riding School, fought again in the 1914 war and became Commander in Chief of the South-West Front in 1940; Member of the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet since 1938.

Isaac Babel (1894-c.1939-40) was born in Odessa, was assisted by Maxim Gorki to publish his first stories; fought with the cavalry during the Revolution and Civil War; published *Odessa Tales* in 1924 and *Red Cavalry* in 1926; ceased to write in 1934; was arrested in 1937 and probably died in a concentration camp.

While these Tate Gallery notes offer help to the viewer, their relevance is questioned by critics. Edward Lucie-Smith refers to this listing as a "piece of non-information and finds himself murmuring 'So what?'"
From Kitaj's published statement we learn "None of the imagery reflects anything specific in the Tales," this serves as a guide to interpretation, yet examination of the *Collected Stories* and his sources, reveals some contrary evidence. Careful reading of the *Collected Stories*, provides a number of correspondences between text and image. We also recognize from Kitaj's statement that from the date of this edition (1961) given, it appears the painting was executed shortly after or even while the artist was reading Babel's book.

It will be demonstrated that the contents of *Isaac Babel Riding with Budyonny* pertain to Babel and, importantly, form a bonding to Kitaj. The critical and scholarly reaction to the painting and Kitaj's motivations is often quite superficial. Robert Melville, an art critic, has regarded this work purely as a painter's attempt to portray a literary theme and overlooked its irony. The painting, for example, has been recognized only as a botched correlation to Babel's novel. With its generalized connection to the text in its equestrian imagery, Melville neglected any wider parameters of the work.

His *Isaac Babel Riding with Budyonny* is an example of the attempt to take up a single theme. Babel's account of the Russian Civil war in *Red Cavalry* rises to a tremendous occasion, and it seems to me that Kitaj as a serious reader should have realized that such a book is not well served by a smart jigsaw puzzle of horse and rider images in various styles and sizes. There's a hint in the treatment of the horse-and-rider in the lower right hand
corner that with more tenacity of purpose he might well have risen to the same occasion ... \(^52\)

Kitaj's catalog notes indicate the sophisticated intentions of the painting. Analysis of the artist's sources from which he developed the contents and formal elements to build this painting presents elements of satire and complexities of definition. In comparison with The Murder of Rosa Luxemburg, the source-hunting expedition is more difficult. As in the case of Rosa Luxemburg, he illuminates his hero by means of anachronistic juxtapositions.\(^53\) The significance of his many individual fragments, their origins, in relation to the theme of the painting, suggests again multiple levels of meaning.

The Tate Gallery notes reiterate from his 1963 catalog information that the artist's use of colors is from Mayer's Handbook. We realize that the artist intended to "stock the Babel picture with conventional equestrian postures." We now know that the plates from T.A. Dodge's Riders of Many Lands suggested many of the postures in the painting, but which plates and an indication of their relevance to the painting the artist leaves for us to decipher. Written by a Brevet Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S. Army, T.A. Dodge's book is a general survey of the different types of equestrians found in various cultures. Each short chapter in the text discusses a certain type of rider, his costume and the roles and functions of his horse in his particular culture. For
example, Kitaj may have learned about the Cossacks' relationship to their horses, as Dodge wrote,

All Cossacks consider horses as their proudest possessions. 54

The photographic source for the rearing horse and rider on the left (Plate XIV), taken from a chapter "Horse Tricks," is in Dodge's words an Oriental "fantasiya." The author simplistically defines this term as "horse party in which all the riders of the neighborhood meet to show off their steeds and to let off superfluous steam." 55

Information in Riders of Many Lands is presented in a less than consistent manner, not all of the accompanying illustrations by Frederic Remington and photographs from various sources, are discussed. Kitaj selected as source materials an illustration and several photographs to function as exemplar equestrian types. For example, the Muybridge-like horse and rider (Plate XV) is the source for the equestrian motif in the lower center of the painting and a drawing A Country Bumpkin (Plate XVI) was borrowed for the charging equestrian in the lower right. These selections indicate the artist's extensive search for conventional equestrian postures.

Not all of the horse and rider motifs Kitaj borrowed to stock the Babel picture are from basic texts such as Riders of Many Lands. Kitaj's selection from Jung's Symbols of Transformation is indicative of both his interest in
psychoanalytic issues and his marked interest for the special meaning or suggestivity of images in an unusual context. The choice of the horse from Jung's text tells us more about the wide range of the artist's reading tastes.

Symbols of Transformation provided the artist with a visual source for Isaac Babel Riding with Budyonny. It is important to consider this borrowing in terms of its origin. Jung's extensive text focuses on the development and integration in different cultures of such issues as the origin of the hero, the mother cult, the genealogy of the Sphinx, the concept of the libido, and the notion of sacrifice, among others. His essays, analyses of symbols as images of contents which for the most part transcend consciousness, are filled with references to the Bible, classical myth, and various psychoanalytic theories. Kitaj's adaptation of one of his illustrations need not be related to Jung's line of inquiry, or to the psychoanalyst's concerns for symbols, allegory and their manifestations among different peoples.

There is however significance in some of the artist's other selections of visual source material. We realize his carefully plotted methodology in composing the pieces of his painting as we examine Kitaj's notes. Here he reaffirms that the design of the upright rider in the upper center of the painting was based on the design of embossed covers of the six-volume South Africa and the Transvaal War, published by
L. Creswicke in London in 1901 (Plate XVII). From the scholarly and critical literature, Leen suggests in his dissertation that this decorative motif from Creswicke's cover, which was used for the curious yellow and blue figure is cited because the theme is a struggle for freedom, and he connects this to the Boer uprising (1880-81). 57 Leen ends this statement without any discussion or rationale for his correlation.

The horse and rider motif from the book cover appears to have some affinities with the Boer War (1899-1902). This war, between the British Empire and the two Dutch Boer republics, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, was fought because of racial discrimination, an underlying theme of Kitaj's painting. The Boers, Dutch settlers, had established these South African republics in order to escape British influence. Attracted by the discovery of gold in 1884 in the Transvaal, large numbers of Uitlanders, foreigners, many of them British subjects, came into the region. Under the leadership of their president, the Boers fearing British interference in their government, set up strict measures to keep Uitlanders from having political rights and powers. They were denied by the Boers the franchise and other civil rights. The Uitlanders' peaceful attempts to get their grievances righted were ineffective, and their protests were soon taken up by the British. The
inevitable war, which soon broke out in 1899, in spite of the Boers' marksmanship and horsemanship, ended in their defeat.

The Boers' ill will, their unjust treatment of basic civil rights, can be compared to the denial of freedoms, the official anti-Semitism Babel experienced and discussed in his Collected Stories. With its equestrian war-like imagery on each of the six volumes of this history, Kitaj's choice of Creswicke's text refers to an era of prejudice and adds another calculated dimension of violence to the painting.

Kitaj's conflationary approach is indicated in the character on the upper right hand side of Isaac Babel Riding with Budyonny. This figure appears in the Odessa Tales, a part of the Collected Stories. The two other figures on the upper portion of the canvas originate from the Red Cavalry and selected short stories, both also found in the Collected Stories. However this bird-headed man is the most difficult to identify in terms of his relationship to Kitaj's text.

There is no physical description in Trilling's essay or in any of Babel's short stories which corresponds to this creature. Both Trilling in his introductory essay and Babel in his amusing stories about neighborhood life in the city of Odessa discuss Benia Krik, yet recognition of this character in terms of Kitaj's 1963 publication is difficult. As will be explained, neither this bird-man nor the object he holds is clearly established in Kitaj's citations.
We learn initially of Benia's reputation and types of actions from Trilling's essay. Benia Krik, one of several characters from his short stories discussed, is, we are told, a Jew of Odessa. Trilling refers to him as "the greatest of the gangsters." This King of Criminals, as Babel coined him, earned the respect and fear of his community through living by his wits and never seeming lost for a word or a way out of a tricky situation. The incredible ruthless Benia, this rich, powerful and violent figure, is described as ruling the universe, a man complete with obsessive passions. We discover how Babel shaped his character, "And he got his own way, did Benia Krik, because he was passionate, and passion can rule worlds."^59

Trilling continues to tell us in summary form the nature of Benia's encounters. Benia's sexual prowess with women and his dishonesty are noted. In spite of these anecdotes there is no description which approximates this bird-headed creature with its long nose.

Examination of Babel's text still provides no assistance in identification of Kitaj's portrayal of this mobster. Benia appears in tales of murder, extortion, and trickery in Odessa Tales, "he achieves heroism by descending into criminality."^60 Kitaj's interpretation of Benia in Isaac Babel Riding with Budyonny appears to be based on the central event of Babel's colorful tale "The King." We learn that Benia marries his ugly older sister Deborah to a bridegroom
whom he has bought and that he prevents a police raid on the wedding party by setting fire to the police station.

The excerpt represented is from the evening of the wedding reception of his sister Deborah. After hearing the possibility of a police raid, though worried that the new police chief intends to take advantage of the situation to round up those criminals present, Benia remains unperturbed. He sent his henchmen to set the police station on fire. At the luxurious feast the guests smell burning, which in fact comes from the blazing police station. Benia completes his successful plotting by strolling down to the fire with two friends and offering condolences. We realize Benia's motives that in burning down the police station, he shows up the new police commissioner who had vowed to rid Odessa of the bandits. Yet it is difficult to ascertain that the toppling over of the house, depicted as the cannon portion of the cart just beneath Benia Krik on the canvas, is the subject.

Discrepancies still remain. The depiction of Benia may not relate to this triumphant feat. The building could also be interpreted as appearing in another incident in a different short story. In "How It Was Done in Odessa," one of the Odessa Tales, Benia enters an office with his mob of gangsters, wearing masks and carrying revolvers. One of his men shoots a clerk. Neither a description of the office in this tale nor of the police station in "The King" is
provided. The viewer is given no certainty as to the object involved or the tale which is described.

Kitaj's characterization of Benia in terms of costume is an imaginative one. In "The King" Benia comes to ask his future father-in-law for his daughter's hand. Babel again describes him vividly as wearing, "an orange suit, beneath his cuff gleamed a bracelet set with diamonds." Kitaj does not seem interested in his colorful Mob couture. Benia's dress in "How It was Done in Odessa" indicates again Babel's obvious delight in colors as he describes Benia, "He was wearing a chocolate jacket, cream pants, and raspberry boots." Kitaj, who incorporates the identifying yellow gloves and tall peaked cap for the Cossack in the upper center of the painting, selects his own color scheme for the gangster.

The revised Tate Gallery notes, improves our understanding of the relationship between text and painting. For example, for the citation from the Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, a plate number now appears. Wittkower's article had been cited in the 1963 exhibition catalog by only its volume number and year of publication. The plate number leads us to the elongated neck of the figure in the lower right hand corner. This rider motif was inspired by plate 49f (Plate XVIII), an illustration on a page filled with eight types of crane men, a term designated by Wittkower, from different European manuscripts and popular
pamphlets. Kitaj's figure is adapted from this study which concerned the evolution and migration of monstrous races and animals from India to Europe.

This creature Wittkower identifies is a crane man with a human head from a Cologne pamphlet of 1664. The scholar's in depth discussion of the various amalgamations of these types throughout several centuries enables us to realize how Kitaj established a potent image.

Kitaj chooses not to mention that his large unidentified figure in the upper right, the bird-headed creature, seems to also be based on a crane man found on the same page in Wittkower's study. We recognize how Kitaj likes to fuse complex imagery in this variegated montage-like painting. We furthermore realize, he incorporates within each picture a frame of reference that is as wide as possible. Such references he uses to fortify the painting. He explains his rationale by quoting one of his favorite phrases from Ezra Pound,

'nott source material but relevant' - adding that, the picture always takes over, but you can't help being moved by the great cultural issues peripheral to the picture.65

Kitaj's interest in the use of image as the key to symbolic content is seen in his selection and characterization of the bird-headed man in the upper right of the painting. Kitaj found in Wittkower's forty-page text profuse illustrations of bizarre creatures. Wittkower
detailed how the classical conception of India as the land of fabulous races and marvels kept its hold on Europe for centuries. The Greeks, he explained, regarded them as sublimations of instinctive fears. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries these marvels, having lost their connection with India, were revitalized in teratological treatises, prognostications and popular imagery.

The history of this particular crane man with its enormous neck and long beak is discussed in Wittkower's text. In the tradition associated with the art historian Aby Warburg (1866-1929), the scholar has presented numerous illustrations of this type of creature in chronological order with its distinguishing features as part of an iconographical survey. The eight examples of the crane man are provided with their provenances, so that the migration and popularity of these types is realized.

This monster (Plate XIX), Wittkower explains, is adapted from the Gesta Romanorum, a collection of legends of saints, romances, tales which was often used by preachers for exempla. Compiled in the fourteenth century (ca.1330), this collection of medieval lore with a moral attached to each tale, remained a popular work until well into the sixteenth century. Taken from a 1557 publication, the creature is described in the text as follows:

. . . these designate judges, who ought to have longnecks and beaks, in order that what the heart thinks maybe long before it reaches the mouth.
Wittkower's article supplies a humorous aspect to the depiction of the evil Benia Krik, and the conscientious reader will find this discovery in one of the footnotes. It is necessary to first observe that the monster shares a similar profile with Kitaj's creature in the upper right. Wittkower's descriptions and examples of the survival and transmission of this Greek conception of ethnographic monsters is an idea which seems contextually appropriate for Kitaj's caricature-like gangster. Kitaj's selection of a monster to recall the gangster Benia Krik, who dominates Babel's *Odessa Tales*, is potent in its irony. Kitaj builds upon his narrative by virtue of the intrinsic meaning of his borrowed images. His use of an illustration from "Marvels of the East" by Wittkower can be brought into connection with his interest in the Warburg Institute as manifested in his use of illustrations from its journal for several other paintings during these years.67

Kitaj's meeting with the art historian Edgar Wind coincided with his discovery of the Journals of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, in which Wind had taken part. Kitaj feels the journal would have led him in any case to his subsequent concern for subject matter. Kitaj was fascinated by Warburg's method of image-tracing as keys to symbolic content in archetypes. Warburg's approach confirmed him in the search for meaningful conjunctions of images.68
From the critical and scholarly literature, there are words of high esteem for Kitaj. Werner Haftmann has paid great tribute to Kitaj's use of the symbol, so that meaning emerges from the subtleties of transformation, as manifested in this painting and his understanding of its potency as Haftmann described:

. . . when one compares the work of Max Ernst or Duchamp (or even that of Rauschenberg) with the spare seriousness of Kitaj's, one is touched by something timeless, or outside the stream of time, something 'archaic', as if Kitaj were seeing through primitive passions. These symbols appeared in the human memory when it was thought necessary to fill in such gaps. This was also recognized by Aby Warburg, who for a lifetime hunted such symbols, and proved that they have meaning even today. Kitaj is the only painter I know who understands, as an artist, Warburg's adventurous enterprise. Saxl, Warburg's assistant summarized his teacher's view of the function of the symbol thus: 'A symbol serves to circumscribe a shapeless terror.' Kitaj quotes this sentence occasionally. It is actually a key sentence for his work, which, with its symbols, serves to circumscribe that shapeless terror that surrounds our reality, and thus make its presence felt in the consciousness.

Kitaj's quotation of this crane man, testifies to his comprehension of the power of images as carriers of meaning. Benia, the bird-headed man, who is monstrous in his actions, is appropriately based upon the Wittkower symbol. The artist's selection of this creature originating from the Far East indicates the brilliance of his multi-evocative imagery.

It appears that minor discrepancies between painting and text arise with the publication of Kitaj's 1965 exhibition catalog. From this publication it is revealed that, another
Babel painting, *Disconsolate Chimeras/Shades of Benia Krik (after Isaac Babel)* (1962; Plate XX) was exhibited in a 1965 exhibition. Although *Isaac Babel Riding with Budyonny* does not appear in this exhibition catalog, we recognize *Disconsolate Chimeras/Shades of Benia Krik (after Isaac Babel)* as an excerpt from *Isaac Babel Riding with Budyonny* which identifies the monstrous character in The Tate Gallery's canvas as Benia. Furthermore, there appears in the catalog on the opposite page from the *Disconsolate Chimeras/Shades of Benia Krik (after Isaac Babel)*, a Kitaj screenprint, based upon a book jacket, displayed in bold-faced type, "Benia Krik" a film-novel by Isaac Babel (Plate XXI). This again verified certain identification of the name of this bird-headed creature. Ironically without this 1965 exhibition catalog or without having seen this particular exhibition, the viewer can never be assured of the precise identity of Benia. While Kitaj states in his 1963 Tate Gallery catalog notes, "None of the imagery reflects anything specific in the *Tales,*" the careful viewer can deduce the Wittkower symbol as a key to a monstrous type character.

Examination of the art historical sources of *Isaac Babel Riding with Budyonny* reveals the artist's conflationary approach. Kitaj's synthesis of elements should be viewed in light of the works of various major nineteenth and twentieth century masters. Formal similarities are found in Kitaj's horse in the lower right and the horses of Edgar Degas (1834-
1917), the most distinguished artist of horse race scenes. The cropped view of this horse stands, for example, within the tradition established by Degas's various foreshortened horses in *At the Race Course* (1869-72; Plate XXII) or from that found in many of his other racetrack pastels and oil paintings.

Parallels exist in terms of the working methods of Degas and Kitaj. Both Kitaj and Degas painted their works in the studio. The balance of each of their elements is carefully worked out and the final effect of their paintings is totally calculated. Conscious and proud of his similar approach to composition, Kitaj likes to quote Degas' "I am the least spontaneous of men."70. In interviews, Kitaj often refers to Degas as one of the major influences in his art. His two pastels *Degas* (1980),71 a portrait of the master on his deathbed, and *Degas* (1987),72 a bust-length portrait, serve as testament of his devotion.

There are obviously many differences between the treatments of the horses and their riders by the two painters. Kitaj's assemblage of conflated equestrian motifs lacks Degas's unified landscape setting. Degas's brilliant color juxtapositions of the jockeys' racing colors and caps is updated by Kitaj into striking contrasts. Unlike Degas's elegant thoroughbreds, Kitaj's horses are rendered appropriately for their war-like role, as one critic noted their breed in the painting:
Turmoils of meandering lines, crops of Cossack horses, reminiscences of the Red Cavalry riding across the Ukrainian Steppes miraculously blend in an inextricable cohesion.\textsuperscript{73}

Other elements differ markedly from Degas. The French master's line typically indicates arrested movement of his horses. Delineated by long curving lines, which attenuate the jockey's form, Kitaj's horse and rider give the impression of speed and action. Degas's passion for strong design, his mastery of painted outline, providing the composition with a decorative character, and his perfectly selected patches of color, create a scene of elegance.

The influence of Francis Bacon (1910-) seems at work in the distortion of form of this equestrian figure,\textsuperscript{74} especially in the distended treatment of the neck. Examination of a detail from Bacon's \textit{Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion} (1944; Plate XXIII) reveals comparable paint handling in Kitaj's figure. Kitaj holds also the highest respect for Bacon, as seen in the following examples. His \textit{Synchrony with F.B.-General of Hot Desire} (1968-9)\textsuperscript{75} is an homage to the painter. In a 1965 interview Kitaj referred to Bacon as "the greatest British painter since Gainsborough."\textsuperscript{76} In his introductory essay for \textit{The Human Clay} (1976), a year-long exhibition he was chosen to curate for the Arts Council of Great Britain, Bacon, in Kitaj's opinion, maintained a singular status in the art world as he wrote, "Bacon is arguably the finest painter alive."\textsuperscript{77} In the critical and scholarly literature, his
stylistic borrowings from Bacon have been noted rather
harshly, as in the observations of Max Kozloff,

From Bacon, Kitaj seems to have derived the taste
for strange prototypes, and the blur or bleed out -
everything in his art which is not exclusively in
focus. And yet, not for a moment is he out of
control.78

It is this taste for the blur or bleeding image which
seems to be absorbed by Kitaj in the equestrian image under
discussion. More importantly, in terms of depth, Kozloff
finds Kitaj lacking the emotional power of Bacon's painting,

When Bacon fails, it is because anxiety garbles his
paint handling; when Kitaj fails, his intellectual
insights have not overriden his affective
muteness, and his effects become absurd without
being ironic.79

Max Ernst, who Kitaj referred to as "certainly the best
of the orthodox Surrealists"80 may again serve as a major
source of inspiration. Ernst's work, as will be
demonstrated, has some stylistic and contextual parallels
with Isaac Babel Riding with Budyonny. Kitaj undoubtedly
attended the Max Ernst exhibition held at the Tate Gallery,
September-October 1961 at which, Oedipus Rex (1922) and
Revolution by Night (1923; Plate XXIV) seem to have been of
particular importance for him. In the Arts Council
exhibition catalog Oedipus Rex is accompanied by the
caption: "After the invention of collage, i.e. the putting
together of images borrowed from any available source, Max
Ernst proceeded to make painting with images assembled in a
similar way." Even more relevant for Kitaj was Revolution by Night described as "Another painting derived from collage methods" where "In spite of the variety of styles with which the images are presented . . . the picture achieves an indisputable unity."\(^81\)

Kitaj in Isaac Babel Riding with Budyonny seems to have absorbed from this Ernst work various formal qualities. These stylistic shifts within the painting have been characterized as the "different modes of representation co-existing within the same picture, but widely divergent degrees of finish as well: compare the modelling of the man in the bowler hat with the flatness of the figure he holds in his arms, and the almost cartoon-like figure in outline drawing on the wall so that he appears to be standing in mid-air."\(^82\) Kitaj may have been influenced by Ernst's stylistic diversity.

The uninflected white silhouette of Benia Krik appears as a bodyless shadow behind the flat colorful figures of the Cossack horseman and Babel. In contrast to their flatness, the rearing equestrian figure on the left appears as if cut from a thicker material and collaged on to the surface. The pronounced modelling of the horse and rider motif in the lower right accentuates the poster-like quality of the other painted elements. Curiously the brick wall pattern on the left side of Ernst's painting could have suggested to Kitaj the use of pattern on the right side of the canvas.
It is perhaps the art of Ernst with which Kitaj would have associated the appearance of the bird-man motif with its Freudian and mythic roots. Ernst's semi-autobiographical creature may have confirmed for Kitaj the idea of a fantasy character for his depiction of Benia Krik. The appearance of the bird-man in Benia Krik can be viewed as a descendant of the witty aviary creature in Une Semaine de Bonté. Oedipus, a bird-headed man, is the subject of the fourth chapter of this large collage novel. In Ernst's vision Oedipus acts out various fantasies in a libidinal realm. Some of Oedipus's actions in the pages of this chapter have specific psychological meanings Ernst adapted from Freud's The Interpretation of Dreams (1900) as he portrayed contemporary Surrealist themes of violence and eroticism with this bird-headed man. Yet the bird-headed figure Ernst associates with Oedipus intimately corresponds to Ernst's feelings about his parents. This persona, the bird-headed man, he identified with the most significant events of his early childhood. Through the inclusion of Oedipus, Ernst responds to the world of his parents, the narrow-minded middle class world of the late nineteenth century. The bird-headed man appears in scenes which portray reinterpretations and distortions of the platitudes and conventions of their morality and inhibitions.

Benia Krik is involved in similar types of antics as Oedipus. In one particular scene from this chapter of Une
Semaine de Bonté, Oedipus abducts a woman (Plate XXV).

Completely covered by a sack or blanket, with only the shoes on her feet dangling in the air, Oedipus flees with a captured female in his arms.

Such a terrifying episode can be paralleled with Babel's tales of Benia Krik. His mobster life style certainly could include abduction of a female as seen here. Babel, described him as a "lion," "tiger," "cat" with women. His labels indicate Benia's prowess, but they do not convey the complexity of the bird-headed man.

Oedipus's violent act with its implied rape is not merely a moment of terror as in the Russian novelist's works describing Benia. The Oedipus scene functions on a more profound level, it contains repressed sexual content. U.M. Schneede describing Max Ernst's facility writes, "... like a scientific observer analyzing his father's generation, and setting out like Freud, to demonstrate the effects of sexual repression in human life." In spite of these differences, Ernst may have offered formal and contextual prototypes.

Another possible source for the bird-headed man is a large gouache drawing by Pablo Picasso (1881-1973). Picasso had been commissioned to design the drop curtain for Romain Rolland's Le 14 Juillet (1936; Plate XXVI). The play was being produced in the spirit of the 'Front Populaire' to celebrate the anniversary of the French Revolution. In this gouache drawing of May 1936, the Minotaur is shown as a
hollow doll, dressed as Harlequin, mortally wounded, and slung over the arm of a bird-man. Penrose describes the scenario,

The subject is a battle between two heroic couples. On the right a hieratic winged demon with the head of a bird carries toward us in his arms the limp figure of the defeated Minotaur gasping for breath. He is challenged as he goes by a young hero mounted on the shoulders of a bearded man. The man has disguised himself in the skin of a horse and prepares to hurl a stone at the demon. It is the figure of the wounded Minotaur; in the foreground that particularly attracts our attention because Picasso has dressed him in the diamond suit of Harlequin. He is double the adopted image of Picasso himself, a circumstance which gives a hint at the uncertainty with which he viewed himself and again provided an example of the diversity and ambiguity of the myths in which he involved himself in order to obtain a more authentic sense of reality. 86

Scholars' opinions have pointed to Picasso's bird-headed figure as a monster. Penrose discussed this image in terms of the times in which Picasso painted it, "an era preoccupied with violence and horror that outweighed the love and enjoyment of life of which he was so acutely appreciative." 87

Evil has consistently been interpreted as a reference found in the bird-headed figure who holds the mortally wounded Minotaur. More precisely, Sidra Stich has convincingly argued for an exact political interpretation celebrating the recent Popular Front victory in France. She saw the "human barricade" of the bearded elder and radiant youth as "a coalition of defiant figures who boldly confront a bestial menace" - the hybrid bird-man signifying Fascism, with the head of a bird of prey, a vulture or the eagle of the Roman
and German empires." The demonic bird-man is clearly an emblem of horror and forms an appropriate context in which to regard Benia.

The rearing horse on the left can be related to a well established equestrian, and particularly Romantic genre, manifested in such works the Charging Chausseur (1812; Plate XXVII) of Théodore Géricault (1791-1824), a portrait of the artist's friend Lieutenant Dieudonne, an Imperial Guard of Napoleon. The painting celebrates the idea of the hero and captures the optimism and excitement of France on the eve of the Russian campaign. With its powerful leap, this image stems from the tradition of the monumental equestrian portrait established by David in his Napoleon at the St. Bernard (1800; Plate XXVIII). The rider and strong dynamic horse create a huge impressive silhouette filling all of the foreground.

Kitaj's white horse and rider form a flat silhouette jigsaw puzzle-like shape defined by a hard edge. Devoid of portraiture, monumentality and dramatic style, unlike these Napoleonic paintings, Kitaj's conveys the notion of attack. There is no dashing character who becomes an embodiment of his people, of their spirit at a particular historical period. The chosen position of Kitaj's horse and rider as viewed within this well established genre conveys wildness, ferocity as the extended rear legs support the horse in its enormous leap. Kitaj's Cossack and horse, set in perfect
unison, add to the turbulent and spirited atmosphere of the painting.

The bright red horse and rider placed in a square frame in the lower center has affinities with the motion study sequences of the famous photographer Eadweard Muybridge (1830-1904), a pioneer in the study of animal and human locomotion in photography. Kitaj's detail resembles the type of stop-action photographs of a horse trotting which appeared in Muybridge's widely published studies. Kitaj's Muybridge-like horse is reminiscent of these first successful photographs (Plate XXIX) which illustrated consecutive positions assumed during a single stride of a mare. These famous photographs had tremendous influence on the way artists have represented action. Frederic Remington, whose illustrations in Dodge's *Riders of Many Lands* provided Kitaj with stock equestrian material, studied the revelations of Muybridge's photographs *Horse in Motion*.

Kitaj's *Isaac Babel Riding with Budyonny* is profoundly different in spirit than the *Murder of Rosa Luxemburg* because of the use of bold colors and the gathering of more active motifs. Kitaj's design still has the appearance of an assemblage of separate parts pieced together. The use of outline surrounding many of the shapes once again enhances a collage-like effect. The stylistic variations seen in the previous work are not as pronounced. While the application of paint is almost uniformly consistent, emphasis here is on
the use of color. Kitaj's selections are dependent upon his sensitivity for each hue, their complement and his interest in creating a unity within the composition by repetition of a particular color. Men and horses appear like pieces of a colorful puzzle in which even the background varies from the use of bright solid color to multi-colored pattern.

Isaac appears bodyless with his large head looking bandaged as Kitaj explained in his notes, "I intended for the bodyless head mounted at the upper left to stand for the spirit of Babel." His facial features are rendered abstractly and with painterly strokes. His foreshortened nose consists of a square frame of olive green wash in which appears another smaller square frame of the same thinned paint consistency and color. Circles, applied with varying degrees of rounded strokes of olive green, represent his eyeglasses. The lower portion of the face is covered with a dark olive large band from which projects on the right a cadmium orange carrot-like stick. A band of flesh tint appears near the top of Isaac's head.

A variety of different background color patches adds to the overall brilliance of the painting. Behind Isaac is a large area of dark olive green, in its right section a smokey tonality appears due to the artist's addition of Payne gray. The brushstrokes covering this large territory behind his head are broad and at times the pigment is left almost translucent.
Two slender cadmium orange curving forms echo the shape of Isaac's head and create a kind of demarcation line for his particular characterization. Joined to the grayish-olive green background patch is the centrally placed figure of the Cossack officer Budyonny. He is dressed in a uniform of indigo blue outlined in chrome yellow.

In the upper left section of the painting are forms suggesting a field in which horses could be found. Walls or hurdles, which may be used for the military training of horses, are designated by a row of three rectangular black forms each capped by a single horizontal stroke of cobalt green. Above these forms appears to be a schematized fence. This is indicated by a chain of alternating pairs of short, horizontal black and cobalt green strokes of paint; the cobalt green pairs of dash-like lines alternate with pairs of slightly thicker jet black lines. The enclosed fence or chained area of green and black parts perhaps delineates a paddock where horses can be trained or exercised.

Beneath the figures of Isaac and Budyonny are horses in different colors and positions. The horse paired with Isaac's head is rendered in burnt sienna which serves as a neutral backdrop for the many colors embellishing it. Colors, we will see, remain bright. This horse's face is outlined in crimson which is also used for the saddle. The horse's bridle is cobalt blue with a chrome yellow buckle, while his mane, falling on his forehead, is cobalt violet.
Under the cadmium orange stirrup which hangs from the saddle is a variety of hues. A manganese blue mixed with gray pigment forms a patch surrounding the stirrup. Under these saddle parts is a flesh colored blanket which is decorated with an inner border of cobalt violet dark and an outer border painted in magenta. A strap under the horse's belly is applied in brown madder.

A background patch of cadmium orange fills the bottom two-thirds of the left hand side of the painting against which are placed horse and rider pairs. In the foreground is a white rearing equestrian. Outlined in jet black, this symbol of the wild spirit of the Cossacks is delineated with very thin almost dry black lines radiating from the center of the motif. Behind the twosome is a profile of an emerald green horse, a color recalled in Isaac's necktie.

In this decorative display of equestrians design is stressed by the repetition of similar curving parts. On the far left a cropped silhouette of a neutral gray horse and rider has a curved outline which almost mirrors that of the adjacent rearing horse and rider motif. A separate element within the design is the Muybridge-like cadmium red horse and rider which gives the appearance of a framed painting. The pair, viewed in the picture frame, is set against a chrome yellow ground above and a leaf green ground below.

The sharply foreshortened jockey, his horse, and their surrounding background colors relate to other color areas in
the composition. The white painted horse has under his forelegs a small area of raw umber. More prominently placed, a patch of cobalt violet dark is painted underneath the horse's belly which adds a striking complementary color contrast to the yellow-orange background on the left side of the canvas. The rear end of the horse is treated with slightly thicker applications of paint than seen elsewhere. Dappled with spots of black to suggest the horse's particular breed, Kitaj has provided the animal with a colorful anatomy. Its head is cadmium red light, while its tail is painted with the same wispy singular strokes of paint discussed earlier. In *The Murder of Rosa Luxemburg* these lines of thinly applied color were found above the collaged text and below Rosa's corpse. For these individual strokes the artist used almost dry, delicate brushstrokes in greens, oranges and blues. Attached to the jockey is a cerulean blue duffle bag which is held together by marigold straps in an X-shape. The jockey is a conglomerate of complementary colors. His shirt is sap green and his pants are crimson, while his skin is pale Naples yellow.

The bird-headed man Benia Krik appears as an all white silhouette. The wheels of the cannon-like form in front of him are painted with very thinly applied jet black paint. The right hand side of the canvas is decorated with a patterned background treated in two different color schemes, which are divided by Benia's body. Consisting of various
linear configurations, the wallpaper-like print is composed of indigo, cadmium orange and rose strokes on the right and indigo and black on the left. The colors, patterns and puzzle-like parts create a lyrical mood for the painting.

The issues of violence and anti-Semitism, concerns of Babel and Kitaj, are common threads which recur in analysis of *Isaac Babel Riding with Budyonny*. As will be demonstrated, these issues connect Kitaj to Babel and thus take on significance in our deepening understanding of the artist. Violence is suggested throughout the imagery of *Isaac Babel Riding with Budyonny* with its pictorial motifs steeped in various, often aggressive in origin, visual and literary sources. Violence is a major concern for Kitaj. His equestrian motifs embody the fierceness of the Cossack horsemen. From Trilling's analysis of Babel's role in recording the brutal episodes of the Red Army's campaign, Kitaj understood that the critic felt it was not violence in itself that fascinated Babel, but what the "violence goes along with, a certain boldness, passionateness."90

The artist's many carefully placed allusions to violence, discussed above, seem to have grasped this untrammeled spirit of the Cossacks which attracted Babel. Kitaj has captured the Cossack ethos with potency through a most esoteric abstract language of forms and words. Kitaj is clearly interested in Babel's relationship to violence. Kitaj personally suggests reading Trilling's description of
violence and its importance for the thinking man, the creative artist:

Trilling catches the complexity of Babel's conundrum. It was the complexity and ambiguity which determined my picture (and its failures). The discussions in Trilling about the place of violence in the life of a thinking man, creative artist and much else is worth your attention. 91

From the critical and scholarly literature we gain insights which lead to a fuller understanding of the significance of the painting for the artist. Kitaj's work, in fact, has been categorized in terms of his "great preoccupation with violence in society throughout the twentieth century." 92 More specifically, Babel's life circumstances deal with the issues of an essentially non-violent artist living in a violent world. Babel may appeal to Kitaj in that he typifies the contradiction of the rational way of life of the intellectual. The attitudes and identification of the Russian short story writer reflect Kitaj's own general concern as a thinking person, a creative person and as a Jew living in a century of violence, as stated by Marco Livingstone, his biographer. It appears that the painting deals with issues of great personal concern to Kitaj as he explains,

The painting has only the most general connection with the Red Cavalry stories in its sense of violence and chaotic movement and in its military and equestrian imagery; it relates more closely to Babel himself and to the Revolutionary circumstances from which he drew his inspiration, and in that sense qualifies more as a portrait or
as an icon of Kitaj's own standpoint as a young leftist and a Jew than as an illustration of a literary text.93

The issue of anti-Semitism is intimately connected to the artist's personal concerns. John Russell has correctly observed Kitaj's interest in anti-Semitism in his treatment of Isaac Babel, as expressed below:

In Kitaj's references to Rosa Luxemburg, Sorel, the Spanish Civil War and the Soviet anti-Semitism of which Babel was a victim, there is an element of straight forward left-wing pamphleteering. But although Kitaj is a polemical painter, and glad to be one, he is not a party-political painter; his aim is rather to turn the earth beneath which certain rare spirits have too long lain buried. He is an understander, not an agitator.94

The writer's awareness of Kitaj's position and sensibility acknowledged the artist's fascination with Babel's plight as a victim of racial discrimination. Russell recognized Kitaj's concern for political issues and radical figures as well as his revelation of rather obscure characters from the revolutionary past. Consideration needs to be given to the reasons for his choices.

Kitaj found in Babel's life and work affinities which, upon clarification, provide for us a clearer portrait of the artist. Babel, the writer, the man who lived through pogroms and the Revolution, appeals to the painter on several levels. First his relation to the Cossacks, Babel appears to represent for Kitaj the significance of violence in the life and expression of a thinking man.95 It can be stated Kitaj
was interested in Babel's direct involvement with violence and appears to have found a sense of identification or fascination with his treatment of the issue in his work.

Also, Babel for Kitaj is a victim of anti-Semitism. The painter, in his study of various figures subject to religious persecution in the twentieth century, chooses not to emphasize that it is as a writer, not as a Jew, that Babel is denounced and killed by his Soviet comrades for his professional indiscretions. Babel's participation in the Civil War and his arrest in the Stalinist purges were events common to the experience of the Soviet intelligentsia, yet Kitaj focuses on events with a Jewish flavor.

Kitaj's tribute to Babel carefully focuses on references other than those relating to his endurance of governmental repression. Babel's moral and professional commitment to his work is evidenced in the following statement provided by his daughter:

When his family left Russia for Europe Babel felt that a writer damaged his work if he lived abroad; as his daughter remarked, "his life centered on writing, and it can be said without exaggeration that he sacrificed everything to his art, including his relationship with his family, his liberty and finally even his life."  

Although Babel died because of his stance as a writer in the Soviet bureaucracy, Kitaj responds to him as a victim of racial hatred. His painting reflects the milieu of discrimination and tension Babel experienced in Russia and described in his tales of the Cossack soldiers as murderers.
often of Jews as well as other people. In addition, Babel seems to be for Kitaj not only a figure involved with the issue of violence and a victim of anti-Semitism, but also a man of mutual interests and background. Kitaj's tribute to Babel embodied his recognition of a kindred artistic spirit. The thorough reader of his painting and its literary parts will fully realize the tremendous potency of the painting, its satire, and its significance for the artist.

Furthermore Babel, like Rosa Luxemburg, serves as a tragic left-wing figure, a character type with whom Kitaj seems to find personal identification. His painting with its setting of Babel amidst multiple images, as in The Murder of Rosa Luxemburg, functions as an icon to a figure of similar political outlook. Babel is, like Rosa, indicative of Kitaj's romantic interest in Socialism and Communism.  

Kitaj in Isaac Babel Riding with Budyonny complicates somewhat his attempt to recreate the ambiance of violence and prejudice in which Babel lived due to his complex synthesis of these elements from his biography and work. More specifically, Kitaj chooses to not identify the key figures in the painting; their conflation from different sets of tales in Babel's Collected Stories leads to a certain intended ambiguity.

The painted montage of horse and rider motifs indicates upon analysis Kitaj's fascination with Babel's dilemma and role in his world of Revolutionary Russia. Unlike his final
catalog notes published for The Murder of Rosa Luxemburg, Kitaj's texts here do not explicitly delineate the anti-Semitic elements he found critical in Babel's works. Still the Tate Gallery visitor, who follows Kitaj's literary appendages, will recognize this painted confrontation between Babel and the Cossack officer appears to be symbolic of his own consciousness. With a degree of passion, there is no reason for the viewer to naively regard this painting as an early example of English Pop Art done by a painter who was more interested in literature than the world of advertising and mass media.

Kitaj's interest in Babel seems to indicate his own attitude towards his religious identity. Catherine Klaus Schear wrote, "Isaac Babel and the anomaly of a Jew as a member of the Cossack regiment provided a manifest connection to certain incidents in Kitaj's life as an ex-patriate Jew." Kitaj, in his personal odyssey into his own roots and roles, may have found in the character of Isaac a figure with a similar ambivalent orientation. Babel's attachment to the Cossacks can perhaps be associated with the painter's own detached religious involvement.

The painting also can be found significant in terms of events the artist may have connected with his own emotional life. As seen earlier, the origins of Kitaj's art are clearly related to the origins and terms of his life.
The artist, raised by his mother and, since he was two years old, by his stepfather who was a research chemist, a refugee who fled from Austria, may psychologically conflate Babel's actions with his own circumstances. The pogroms and humiliations Babel described can be regarded metaphorically as symbolic of his own empathetic reaction to the hatred and violence of his stepfather's and paternal grandmother's experiences during the Holocaust or to that experienced by his maternal grandmother in Russia, all mentioned. Kitaj's tribute to Isaac Babel can also be considered as a study in personal identification. The life of the Russian fellow writer may have provided Kitaj with a means to explore his own roles as a son, grandson, artist, thinker and Jew.

There are also elements in Trilling's discussion concerning Babel's position and literary style that may have appealed to Kitaj. Both men are figures of strong determination unwilling to compromise their beliefs. As discussed above in regard to Babel's professional stature, Babel's name was taboo in the Soviet Union from 1939 until the mid-fifties. His contemporaries feared to mention him and for the new generation he did not exist - he had been banished from the school books and encyclopedias. Subject to Soviet censorship, Babel acted according to his conscience in his withdrawal from publishing. He wrote only what he believed in and followed his own guidelines. His silence, as noted earlier, was his response to a bureaucracy hostile to
his art. Silence for him was the only honorable option through his years in Russia of political repression. Kitaj has pursued a similar course of action in his refusal to bend to the demands of his critics. The Kitaj literature contains, as cited above, a strain of negative reviews, which the artist has publicly addressed. He has transcended this criticism and continued fearlessly to reconstruct heroes of the past with his own bold inventiveness and scholarly trappings. His literary selections, his catalogs, in particular, have contributed greatly to his reputation as a bookish painter. One writer, in treating this issue, alluded appropriately for our purposes, to the use of Dodge's Riders of Many Lands in the notes for Isaac Babel Riding with Budyonny. His words reflect another strain of criticism found in the current scholarship:

. . . the catalogues of his first two exhibitions were themselves books of considerable originality and fascination, unencumbered by the usual critical prose but giving bibliographical references for individual pictures and reproducing unexpected items of related material. Yet it would be nonsense to think that these literary aspects of his work played a dominant part in it, for his pictures still retain the bulk of their power if one ignores all the art historical references, stands too far away to read anything written on them, and is too mean to buy a catalogue. It is just that he is an unusually well-informed painter, who throws into his pictures and into his exhibitions too, which may contain such finds as the advertisement for the sale of Franz von Stuck's Munich villa in 1929, or pages from a manual on horsemanship — a lot that means nothing to the casual viewer (and/or escapes the camera), but carries its own specific weight in making up the
whole. The proof of the pudding is in the painting. If Kitaj had not got the technical and professional equipment to sustain such an elaborate structure of disparate elements his pictures would fall, however interestingly to pieces.  

The brevity which characterizes the strength of Babel's short stories, his compression of detail, has affinities with Kitaj's formal qualities. His terseness of style can be compared to Kitaj' spare drafting technique, in which he flattens his figures as much as possible. His concern for contours indicates the importance he attaches to conciseness in his form:

I'm so careful about the contours of the things I'm making, perhaps more careful about that than about anything, because it's in the contour that all the critical decisions about the form get to be made.

The nature of Kitaj's work methodology has parallels to Babel. Eisenstein, cited earlier, stressed the power of Babel's extreme laconicism of expressive means. Kitaj, a slow worker, is a perfectionist without glibness or instant answers. His approach to his art has even been compared to Eisenstein's:

Kitaj is an artist who works by collage and combination. That is to say he creates or finds — and he is a splendid finder, whether of photographs, documents, papers or of little known works of art - the elements of his picture, having a general idea how they will combine, then makes them into a montage of greater or lesser complexity, cutting and shifting framing and underlining, superimposing and inserting until the balance at every level seems right. This is very much what Eisenstein set out to formulate in the early 1920's with his concept of the "montage of attractions," itself explicity based on Dada
photomontage and the "pictorial storehouse" drawn on by George Grosz, and the brilliant cross-cutting of his subsequent films; and it also resembles Brecht's method of working, which at times involved chopping up his typescript and gumming it together strip by strip, as well as the employment of all the many visual, verbal, musical and dramatic elements of his medium. With Kitaj the cinematic method and a similar breadth of reference are applied with the confines of a single static canvas.108

Beyond the similarity to Kitaj's use of the film-maker's montage psychology, there is a sense in his painting that his selected fragments unfold, piece by piece, according to the viewer's familiarity with the references into a carefully weighted juxtaposition of ambiguity and explicitness. His paintings need their texts and literary titles. He is not afraid to be scholarly. For both of these men, members of the European avant-garde, their art is of ultimate importance.

Art was for Babel the most serious thing in life, the cruel master which he served and to which he sacrificed. Indeed, Babel was one of the modern priests of art for whom art conferred meaning on life.109

These same ideals apply to Kitaj. He wants painting to teach us, to engage us in ideas, to communicate experiences with the utmost seriousness of purpose. Kitaj is challenged by esthetic concerns and he wishes that his work could do more.110 His desire to make an art of substance is echoed in the intentions of Babel.

Isaac Babel Riding with Budyonny is, like The Murder of Rosa Luxemburg, a type of psychic portrait, filled with
sati re. Each image as studied contains both irony and power, thus adding to the many levels of the painting's contents. Perhaps this sophistication is recognized by Frederic Tuten, Curator of Painting, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, when he extols Kitaj's modernity:

First saw a reproduction of a Kitaj painting *Isaac Babel Riding with Budyonny* in an art magazine (circa 1963-64) and felt a radical affinity with it, a sense of the artist's longing for an art of social and aesthetic experience. Not an art in the service of Revolution, but revolution, its heroes and myths, in the service of Art.

Kitaj's painting in view of its multi-layered content develops an art of social and aesthetic experience. The painter undoubtedly found many similarities in Babel's life and art with which he could identify. *Isaac Babel Riding Budyonny* can be regarded as a tribute filled with personal meaning for the artist and should be recognized as such.

*Isaac Babel Riding with Budyonny* seems to serve as a metaphor of Kitaj's own spiritual plight. The contents of his paintings, his esoteric choices of subject matter, Rosa Luxemburg and Isaac Babel, reveal his work as steps toward his search for self-knowledge, self-definition.
FOOTNOTE REFERENCES


7. Ibid., 13.

8. Ibid., 14.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid., 16.


13. Ibid.
After some twenty years of disgrace, Babel or more precisely, his memory was cleared by the Soviet authorities of the false charges which caused his arrest and death. His best known works were reprinted in the 1950's and 1966.


29. Hallett, Isaac Babel, 43. See also Issac Babel: The Lonely Years, 1925-1939, introduction and edited by Nathalie Babel (New York: Farrar, Straus and Co., 1964), 384 for Semyon Budyonny: "Open Letter to Max Gorky." This article first appeared in Krasnaya Gazeta, October 26, 1928. See also 387 for Gorky's answer to Budyonny's "Open Letter" and defense of Babel. This article was published in Pravda, November 27, 1928.


33. Trilling, introduction to *The Collected Stories*, 18.


35. Trilling, introduction to *The Collected Stories*, 34.


37. Ibid., 311.


39. Ibid., 314.


41. Trilling, Introduction to *The Collected Stories*, 20, 32.

42. Ibid., 32.


47. Ibid., p.20.

48. Ibid.


wrote about Kitaj's literary elements. See his chapter "Pop Art," *Concepts of Modern Art*, ed. Nikos Stangos, (London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 1985), 228. Lucie-Smith wrote "R.B. Kitaj, an American painter domiciled in Britain, is famous for the elaboration of his catalog notes. On one occasion these notes referred the spectator to such things as *The Journal of the Warburg Institute*, a learned journal which is not in any respect to be equated with a Batman comic."


55. Ibid., n.p.


57. Ibid.


64. Ibid., 218.


68. Livingstone, "Young Contemporaries" at the Royal College of Art, 17.


71. Marco Livingstone, R.B. Kitaj, plate 118.


75. Livingstone, R.B. Kitaj, plate 47.


79. Ibid.


81. Livingstone, "Young Contemporaries" at the Royal College of Art, A69.

82. Ibid.


84. Ibid., 8.

85. Uwe Schneede, Max Ernst, 137-139.

87. Ibid.


90. Trilling, Introduction to The Collected Stories, p.28.


93. Livingstone, R.B. Kitaj, 17.


95. Livingstone, R.B. Kitaj, 43. See also Trilling, Introduction to The Collected Stories, 30.


100. Livingstone, R.B. Kitaj, 30.

101. N. Babel, You Must Know Everything, viii.


108. Ibid., 28-29.


110. Tarshis, 43.

CHAPTER III

Go and Get Killed Comrade—We Need a Byron in the Movement

New issues come to the fore concerning the nature of Kitaj's goals and interests on examining Go and Get Killed Comrade—We Need a Byron in the Movement (1966; Plate XXX). Like the previous works, this screenprint serves as an icon and is filled with a diversity of images. Consideration of it as part of this Jewish hero series with its accompanying catalog statement further reveals to us how Kitaj regards his own work, as Holocaust related, this being the first to directly refer to Fascist victims.

This screenprint is a tribute to and commemoration of the plights of Hans and Sophie Scholl, a brother-sister team who died for their courageous actions as Resistance leaders in Germany in February 1943. They were members of the anti-Nazi student group known as the White Rose and were executed. Aware of the policies of suffering, anguish and oppression that followed on the heels of Hitler's conquests, the Scholls felt they could not accept the National Socialist government and resisted with the only means open to them. Kitaj's fascination with Hans and Sophie Scholl is attributable to their fate as well as to other sympathetic circumstances.
Hans and Sophie Scholl, whose photos are duplicated at the bottom of the screenprint, prepared six leaflets during 1942 and 1943 in Munich, which they distributed through the mail and by random scattering. The first four leaflets in the series, titled *Leaflets of the White Rose*, were issued before the Allied landings in Morocco and Algeria, November 8, 1942. The series *Leaflets of the Resistance* was begun in 1943, and the Munich group had prepared only two of these before they were apprehended. All six pamphlets called for resistance to the government and the war and for a recognition of human rights. Although the Scholls knew their activities could hardly do any significant damage to the regime, they were prepared to sacrifice themselves.

Kitaj memorialized these victims who staked their lives for this hopeless cause. Hans, who died at age 25, and Sophie, who died at age 22, knew they were but two of millions in Germany who feared the defenselessness of the individual. In a nation where bondage, hatred and falsehood had become the normal mode of existence, where one might be arrested in the street, because of some trivial remark, they dared to act freely.

The history of their resistance underlines their integrity of mind and courage to voice the truth, qualities which captivated Kitaj's social conscience. The demonstrations by the Scholls and their group, which extended to a number of German and Austrian cities, were extinguished
by the Gestapo. To expedite judgment against them, the National Socialist government had flown in expressly from Berlin, the president of the People's Court.

Executed in February 1943, along with one of their co-workers, Christoph Probst, red posters were displayed in Munich, where the Scholls lived and attended the University of Munich, announcing to the populace:

Sentenced to Death for High Treason
Christoph Probst, age 24
Hans Scholl, age 25
Sophie Scholl, age 22
The Sentences Have Already Been Carried Out.

A spare notice of about thirty lines in the *Völkischer Beobachter*, under the headline "Just Punishment for Traitors to the Nation at War" was intended to minimize the affair. Nevertheless, the news about the events in Munich spread like wildfire, reaching even as far as the Russian front. Rumors in Munich had spread that up to a hundred persons had been apprehended and that more death sentences could be expected.

Kitaj pays homage to this team who stood for humanitarian values and human life above the interests of their nation. Hans and Sophie Scholl wanted to once again be citizens in a free Germany. Hans, whose father Robert Scholl was a pacifist and had refused to serve in the military during World War I, had fought for Germany on the eastern front. Returning to Munich as a medical student, he had been drafted into a company of medics and served as half soldier, half student during the war years. In his desire to make the
German people more aware of the need to take decisive action against the Hitler regime, which had silenced them and destroyed their free will, he and his sister daringly attacked the government through their group, the White Rose movement.

Sophie Scholl, a philosophy student, shared her brother's high moral goals to oppose the mania of the regime. She attended with her brother and many other students, lectures of Professor Kurt Huber. This philosophy professor, who would later be executed for his involvement with the White Rose group, spoke of Leibniz and his theodicy. Theodicy, the vindication of the justice of God, he explained to his class, was particularly difficult in time of war. He asked the students to answer the question of how does one trace out the work of God in a world where killing and suffering are raging. He pointed out how this important and complex philosophical inquiry shed light on the present moment, when man was trampling on the divine order and attempting to annihilate God himself.²

As a member of the White Rose group, consisting of many students lead by Hans and Sophie, Professor Huber carried on discussions with them. All the members of the resistance were aware that only the use of force could topple the governing regime with its apparatus of total power. Since force was not available, they chose a path of opposition through disseminating information and enlightenment. In
addition, White Rose members faced tremendous barriers. Their strongest obstacles were the fear of the people in the face of the constant threat of Gestapo intervention and the thoroughness of the surveillance system. In spite of these, the group wanted to encourage passive resistance among wide circles of the population. To increase public consciousness of the real nature and actual situation of National Socialism, they distributed six different pamphlets written by Hans and Sophie.

Working at night in a basement with members of the White Rose, Hans and Sophie printed on their duplicating machine thousands of flyers. These were distributed at various locations by several means. Some were sent to addresses chosen by Hans from the Munich telephone directory: people, most of whom were in academic circles, and restaurant owners who, Hans hoped, would spread and even duplicate the contents of the leaflets. Thousands of leaflets were scattered in the streets at night, and pasted on walls, particularly at the University. Carefully orchestrated by Hans and Sophie, the students carried their dangerous cargo in suitcases on trains risking interdiction run by the Gestapo. Their leaflets were passed out not only throughout the University and the city of Munich, but also in other German cities such as Frankfurt, Augsburg, Stuttgart, Freiburg, Saarbrucken, Mannheim, Karlsruhe and in Austria as well Salzburg, Linz and Vienna. In these cities, the leaflets were posted and also
distributed by means of random scattering and the mails. Expenses for train travel and publication were covered by the group themselves. Students in other cities, spurred on by the courage of the Munich circle, distributed copies of the leaflets and spread the resistance movement further.

The leaflets were filled with stirring themes and ideas. In "A Call to All Germans," Hans and Sophie urged a war of liberation against "National Socialist gangsterism" and demanded the establishment of a liberal democracy. In another leaflet, which was variously addressed to "Fellow Fighters in the Resistance!" and "German Students," the Scholls called for a struggle against the Party. Explaining that the day of reckoning was at hand, the brother-sister team was bold enough to compare their call to battle against the Führer and the National Socialist way of life with the War of Liberation against Napoleon (1813).

The pamphlets predict in general the defeat of Germany and call for passive resistance, in imploring and insistent terms. Throughout the contents of the leaflets there is a strong emphasis on passive resistance as the only means of protest. The terms passive resistance and sabotage appear frequently in their publications in italics. In their pleas for the unconditional defeat of the Nazis, Hans and Sophie Scholl urge their countrymen to employ sabotage in their daily acts as is suggested in this excerpt:

Sabotage in armament plans and war industries, sabotage at all gatherings, rallies, public
ceremonies, and organizations of National Socialism. Obstruction of the smooth functioning of the war machine. Sabotage in all the areas of science and scholarship which further the continuation of the war — whether in universities, technical schools, laboratories, research institutes, or technical bureaus. Sabotage in all publications, all newspapers, that are in the pay of the "government" and that defend its ideology...

To stir opponents of National Socialism with their urgings for sabotage in general, the statements of the White Rose pamphlets are fortified by the use of references to God and ethical standards of behavior. Hans and Sophie write it is a moral duty of all Germans to work towards the elimination of National Socialism. Furthermore their leaflets are enhanced by the incorporation of passages from Biblical, classical and renown German literary sources. Quotations concerning the nature of tyranny and its aftermath from Ecclesiastes 4, to a critique "The Lawgiving of Lycurgus and Solon" by the German writer Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805) to the essay "Politics" by the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) among others, provide critical historical and moral perspectives for the present situation. These sources warn how friend is set against friend in a totalitarian state. In addition, the Biblical text as well as an excerpt from the writings of the German Romantic poet and novelist Novalis (pseudonym of Friedrich von Hardenberg) (1772-1801) stress adherence to religion and its life-affirming aspects. The leaflets, with their literary
quotations regarding evil in government from thinkers of different periods in Western civilization, are steeped in the traditions of humanism.

These pamphlets with their moral content posed great threats to Hans and Sophie Scholl and their circle. Since Hitler's moods were said to be extraordinarily dependent on the sympathy of the masses, a reversal of feeling among the populace would have been a weapon of considerable force against him, one which would threaten his own self-confidence. For these reasons the leaflets of the White Rose group were held by the highest levels of the party to constitute one of the greatest political "crimes" against the Third Reich.

With these powerfully worded pamphlets, under Hans' leadership, Sophie, Professor Huber and reliable students formed a carefully coordinated disciplined resistance movement. Through their leaflets, this group of students and intellectuals hoped other factions of resistance fighters would develop in large cities and from there the spirit of resistance would spread in all directions.

Hans and Sophie were arrested in a university building by the Gestapo and imprisoned. Their co-workers were later arrested and many of them were sentenced to death or received jail sentences of up to five years. Interrogated day and night, Hans and Sophie remained relentlessly committed. Sophie, upon inquiry if she would be executed by a firing
squad, by a guillotine or by public hanged, insisted she receive the same sentence as her brother.\(^5\) Professor Huber and two of his close associates, arrested soon after the sentencing of Hans and Sophie, were also beheaded. Eleven others implicated in the activities of the White Rose, including eight from the Hamburg group, were executed or forced to commit suicide, or died in prisons and concentration camps; many others were arrested and served prison terms.\(^6\)

Their deaths were not totally forgotten. The earliest homage to the Scholl was presented only a few months after their execution. The German novelist Thomas Mann (1875–1955), having received information through the Swiss and Swedish newspapers, on June 27, 1943 in the radio broadcast series "German Listeners," praised the brother-sister team for restoring a new faith in freedom and honor.

The importance of their mission surfaced again in a leaflet issued by the National Committee for a Free Germany (ca.1943-44); this group was composed of German army enlisted men taken as prisoners of war in Russia after their defeat at Stalingrad. Addressed to the German fighting forces on the Eastern front, the text dealt with the Scholls' fate. Complete with citations of the Scholls' quotations and heroic acts, the leaflet held them up as an example of the committee's mutual encouragement of rebellion, resistance and sabotage of the Hitler regime.
Still during the war, in 1943, a mass meeting took place at Hunter College in New York to pay tribute to six heroic victims of the resistance. The Scholls' work was again remembered at this event. Thousands of people, among them the First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt, attended and listened to speakers, extol these fighters for liberty. The deaths of the Scholls were also commemorated in the Address by President Heuss of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Students of Berlin and Munich in a memorial ceremony held for them on February 22, 1953, saying, "Their words, sent fluttering on sheets of paper through the hall of the University of Munich, were and have remained a beacon." In their memory, the area in front of the main building at the University of Munich was renamed "Geschwister-Scholl Platz" (brother and sister Scholl Square.)

Kitaj's screenprint, like these earlier tributes, honors their integrity and courage to speak the truth against force. To poetically symbolize the Scholls' cause and tragic fate Kitaj documents their resistance through the use of various emblems and the title, Go and Get Killed Comrade-We Need a Byron in the Movement. The emblems are a ladder, a man partially covered by a moving train, a white rose and two copies of a news photograph of the brother-sister team and are meant to evoke the austere atmosphere in, and the means by which they worked.
The screenprint, with its capability of reproducing photographic and other materials, lends itself to detailed, factual references. Kitaj's images are astutely selected from the mass media, so that they develop a thought-provoking framework and documentary significance. By means of an informed condensation of imagery, Kitaj establishes a powerful symbolic presence for the Scholls' seemingly feeble actions and their subsequent deaths.

For example, Kitaj's white rose, a photomechanical reproduction, is taken from a seed catalog. It recalls the group's name and more significantly the flower worn by Sophie Scholl in the news photograph duplicated on the bottom of the screenprint.

The running figure placed parallel to the railroad tracks, is derived from Tedeum (1963; Plate XXXI), and the source for this oil painting was partly based on a photograph of a 1946 New York stage production of No Exit by the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980). The inclusion of this man from the artist's oeuvre indicates to us Kitaj's future interest in creating a stock of characters equivalent in visual terms to those found in works of fiction. The recycled image from one picture to another points to the artist's increasing fascination that escalates in the 1970's, in the creation of works which achieve the power of a novel.

A strong element of irony is again found in Kitaj's selection of this running figure for his screenprint.
Sartre's play, written during the Occupation in 1944, relates to a different kind of hell than the circumstances of torture and imprisonment declared by law, which Sophie and Hans Scholl addressed. The hellish conditions created in *No Exit* between an adulteress/murderer, a sadistic lesbian and a wife-beater represent self-perpetuating and self-destructive interpersonal relationships of daily life from which the free choice of escape is not taken. The characters in Sartre's one-act play cannot escape from themselves and are incarcerated together for eternity. Their hell, a chosen one as they move towards an increasingly painful self-knowledge, differs from that created by external circumstances.

Kitaj's decision to provide a new identity for the running image from its initial context suggests it has a new potential for meaning in his screenprint. His reconstruction of this single character in *Go and Get Killed Comrade—We Need a Byron in the Movement*, with its origins relating to the play, perhaps suggests a man who flees or recalls a student affiliated with the White Rose group in an activity near the trains. Like the inclusion of the emblematic flower, the selection of the ladder, which has affinities to those attached to freight cars or passenger train cabooses (Plate XXXII) apparently further indicates the idea of escape or flight.

Kitaj's love of a brilliant palette as seen in *Isaac Babel Riding with Budyonny* is again made manifest in this
screenprint of bold and highly saturated colors. A black and cadmium red frame encompasses the figures on the left side of the screenprint, an olive green frame delineates the elements on the right side. A series of squares each in a different color, emerald green, light pink, leaf green and cobalt blue, decorates the right side of the print. The man with his upraised arm wears a brown sportcoat and casts a shadow in the same shade, while his right knee rests on an emerald green band. The letters of the title of the screenprint are rendered in white.

The train with its horizontal stream of smoke, adapted from a photograph, recalls the activities of the group in sending leaflets and workers to canvas other cities in Germany and Austria (Plate XXXIII). The train is dark gray and emits light pink clouds of smoke which fuse with the similarly colored landscape. The train consists of an engine followed by an undifferentiated series of box cars. The train has no distinguishing characteristics and corresponds, thus, to the deportation trains of the late 1930's and 1940's with their cattle cars filled with passengers transported to concentration camps. A cobalt blue cylinder on the gray ladder (Plate XXXIV) apparently indicates a secret opening in which such pamphlets were transported.

This assemblage of powerful images and their composition also has roots in rich art historical sources. Because of this, Kitaj's screenprint gains further relevance through
knowledge of them. The train seems to refer to the art of Giorgio DeChirico (1888-1978). *Lassitude of the Infinite* (1913; Plate XXXV), one of the artist's many works in which trains with their decorative trails of smoke appear, provides a precedent for Kitaj's image.

The presence of the train, which may have its origins for De Chirico in his childhood memories in Athens where his father was a railroad engineer, creates part of the haunting reality of his painted dream world. The train, as exemplified here, is often one of his enigmatic objects, assembled together, which recur in his silent city squares, piazzas, long corridors and railroad stations. In this painting, one of a group which incorporates the Hellenistic sculpture of a reclining Ariadne, classical facades form a stage-like setting for the train in the background of the empty city square. Parallel to the picture plane, the train presents a modern mode of travel curiously juxtaposed with the architecture and ancient sculpture.

The role of the train is an important one in this shadowed empty setting. Its characteristic appearance, as seen here, without identification of intention or destination, amid a silence, adds to the puzzling nature of the painting. It may be coming from a railway station, thus suggesting the melancholy of departure in the haunting cityscape. Similarly melancholy has been interpreted as the
mood of the deserted mythic Ariadne who mourns her departed
Theseus.11

De Chirico with his trains and other incongruous
elements established mysterious relationships between these
banal objects placed against isolated anonymous backgrounds.
His fusion of disjunctive elements of different historical
periods, coupled with his dramatic use of light and vast
empty space to heighten his subject, creates a powerful
hallucinatory quality.

De Chirico was influenced by the German philosopher
Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), who, among others, described
his sense of "foreboding that underneath this reality in
which we live and have our being, another and altogether
different reality lies concealed."12 The train, amidst the
other portentuous symbolism in De Chirico's oeuvre, helped to
evoke or impart a state which perhaps can be equated with
this type of reality described above—a world marked by a
sensibility of the obscure or unknown. Kitaj's train, which
is also set parallel to the picture plane and placed amidst a
curious gathering of objects, relates to a more contemporary
physical world. This train with its modern streamlined
design and clouds of smoke, can be interpreted as a
remembrance of the anxious journeys of the Scholl group to
distribute resistance movement literature and, as mentioned
above, the deportation rides of many trains to death camps.
Kitaj continues to use a collage based means as a foundation for structuring his multi-focused imagery. While the use of outline still reinforces the puzzle-like appearance of his compositions, the multitude of motifs used in his earlier tributes discussed in this text, has been decreased. Set upon a grid, his contextually logical elements, fragments from primarily popular imagery and photography, form a simpler approach to picture-making and story-telling. In the critical literature this collage based approach to composition led Nikolaus Delacroix and John Willett to find stylistic affinities in this screenprint to the German Dadaist collages of Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948), an artist to whom Kitaj has never made reference.\(^\text{13}\)

The literary component of *Go and Get Killed Comrade-We Need a Byron in the Movement* is complex. Again, text forms an important element in Kitaj's work. While a 1965 catalog statement announces the artist's intentions in *Go and Get Killed Comrade-We Need a Byron in the Movement*, the appearance of inscriptions on the surface of the screenprint helps clarify his purposes in honoring the brother-sister team. Kitaj's choice of title, which appears under the railroad imagery, immediately places the Scholls' plight in a larger historical perspective. Reference to the figure of Byron, the citation of this timeless legend, intensifies the power of the artist's message.
Lord George Gordon Byron (1788-1824), the English poet and satirist and dramatist, was one of the most prominent of all English writers. Among his best known works are Don Juan (1819-24), his satire with pointed references to his own experiences, Childe Harold's Pilgrimage: A Romaunt (1812-18), an autobiographical poem, and the Oriental tales The Giaour (1815) and The Bride of Abydos (1813). Kitaj's title, with its reference to Byron, whose poetry and reputation were known throughout Europe, has multiple meanings.

His selection of Byron's name is an identifiable symbol for political liberalism and altruism. Byron's role and his death in the Greek struggle must be considered. Officially appointed to a commanding position in the field, Commander-in-Chief Lord Byron, never actually participated in the struggle for liberation due to his untimely death. With soldiers under his own charge and pay, he applied tremendous energy to the Greek cause. He became involved in diplomatic missions, such as state visits to victorious Greek towns. Byron also, to his frustration, attempted to unite factions within his troops, and within dissident parties in eastern and western Greece.

Despite danger from bullets and a sudden squall, Byron, who could not desert Missolonghi, rode out miles into the country to attend a conference at Salona. Hot and wet, he galloped to the jetty; cold and wet, he was rowed home. The illness, which Byron contracted from this ride in the bad
weather, was aggravated by the bleeding insisted on by his doctors and ended in his death ten days later.

Kitaj's reference to Byron has its roots in the poet's ultimate commitment to the Greek struggle for freedom. On his deathbed Byron spoke of Greece, "My wealth, my abilities, I devoted to her cause — Well: there is my life to her." His name has been synonymous with a policy of liberation and enthusiasm for the Greek cause. Kitaj addresses this legacy of Byron as a liberator; the poet's heroic role is connected with the eternal fight of oppressed peoples to be free.

Kitaj's reference equates the poet and satirist's famed activism for the Greek cause of independence with that of the Scholls' work. By allusion to Byron's participation and death at Missolonghi in 1824, Kitaj places the Scholl team as descendants of an outspoken political liberal. Through anachronism, he attaches the Scholls' efforts to preserve democracy with the heroism of Byron. In citing an ideal Western hero to emphasize their commitment, Kitaj upholds, if not romanticizes, their martyrdom.

Like the English poet, Hans and Sophie Scholl, moved by a belief in freedom, threw themselves into the struggle for independence of Germany. Unlike Byron whose involvement and death in the war transformed the cause into, as Hugh Honour termed it, a "Romantic cause," the Scholls' death attracted no significant attention.
A common activity of the brother-sister team and Byron concerns the publication of political pamphlets. Their development and dissemination was the focal point of the White Rose movement. Byron worried about the political pamphlets of his colleague Colonel Leicester Stanhope. Byron shared the house, reserved for him upon his arrival in Missolonghi, with Stanhope, an agent of the London Greek Committee; this organization, established in 1823, was formed to help the Greeks. While Byron resided on the second floor, Stanhope lived and worked from his press on the first floor. His involvement with publishing pamphlets and tracts for the Greeks rather than concern for furnishing them with weapons bothered Byron who called Stanhope "the typographical Colonel." One of Byron's biographers expressed the poet's feelings about Stanhope and his pamphlet Hellenica Chronica:

It terrified Byron more than the enemy, though he had donated 50 pounds. In their devotion to rationalism, utilitarianism and republicanism, Stanhope and the committee seemed bent on alienating the European monarchies at a critical moment in the Greek struggle.

Stanhope left Missolonghi with his press for Athens after an insurrection of the Suliots, the bravest of Greek soldiers, descendants of the Spartans. These men, who were under Byron's command and pay, had to be banished from Missolonghi, in order to save the island from massacre. While Byron's colleague, like the Scholls, was active in stimulating popular opinion through pamphlet distribution,
Byron's concern was not for the soldier's printing press, but for arms.

While both Byron and the Scholl team were moved by their beliefs, their means of attainment differed. The demand for passive resistance as expressed by Hans and Sophie Scholl was intended to give a palpable if invisible sense of solidarity to the isolated individuals of the opposition, to strengthen them and increase their numbers. Their belief in the power of their actions is seen in the following excerpt from the second leaflet of the White Rose:

When thus a wave of unrest goes through the land, when 'it is in the air,' when many join the cause, then in a great final effort this system can be shaken off. After all, an end in terror is preferable to terror without end.21

These students viewed passive resistance as the art of the possible, an art which everyone can practice and which at the same time is the most exacting demand that society makes of the citizen.22 Kitaj juxtaposes their idealized form of protest with the far more aggressive stance of Lord Byron. For Byron's humanitarian aim, his protest, involved weapons. Both his words and actions in preparation for the Greek fight for independence indicate his willing support of arms as essential for victory. His discussions reveal primary concern, above all else, for the accumulation of an army and a supply of weapons for the Greek war, to which he contributed financial support as well.
The differing outlooks of the poet and Colonel Stanhope, which illuminate his thoughts, are expressed by Byron's biographer. Stanhope is described as "the soldier paradoxically believing in war by the pen, the poet in war by the sword." Byron's position is further substantiated in the comment he made to William Parry, the fire-master in charge of the engineering corps, "Give Greece arms and independence, and then learning; I am here to serve her, but I will serve her first with my steel, and afterwards with my pen." Also his commitment to weaponry is apparent as we discover that the difficulties Byron's troops had with insufficient artillery made the poet feel "forlorn and forsaken." The fundamental difference in the missions of the Scholl team and Byron is their means of fighting their oppressors. Byron placed emphasis on the importance of the role of arms as seen in his actions and statements. By contrast, the writings of Hans and Sophie Scholl stressed passive resistance as they opposed their own state in their goal of a free society.

Kitaj adapts from the Byron epic the reputation as a hero/liberator in the Greek war for independence. The critical and scholarly literature offers insights into Kitaj's screenprint and his achievements, which, at times, are again treated too superficially. For example, Timothy Hyman, an English critic, recognizes Byron as synonymous with political martyrdom:
Sometimes it seems to me it's suicide of this exemplary kind Kitaj is now recommending to us; or is even performing for us.²⁶

Hyman fails to connect the Byronic legend to any concrete subject matter in the screenprint. His suggestions do not identify the brother-sister team or designate their position, as Kitaj clearly regarded them, in the lineage of Byron.

Furthermore, the typographical elements, which appear under their photos, indicate various dimensions of their characters. The two photos are printed in different colors to assure recognition of both of these references. On the right, with their newsphoto printed in brown, Kitaj's statement identifies his subjects "the leaders of the White Rose movement" and, on the left, with their newsphoto printed in black, Kitaj empathetically writes the caption "curiously unappreciated." Kitaj's icon to the Scholls has various meanings to the artist. His interpretation of their plight leads to a number of issues relevant to him personally and professionally.

We continue to see another dimension of the artist highlighted in this screenprint. Kitaj's deep interest in making an art of social value is indicated in this work. In the characters of the Scholls are many affinities with his own deeply felt social concerns, among them a sense of commitment and justice.
Further examination of Kitaj's biography reveals for us factors which determined and shaped the focus of his art as manifested in this print. The artist's home environment influenced his interest in issues of morality. Having grown up in an atmosphere of "compassionate idealistic socialism" (several of his mother's leftist intellectual friends had fought in the Spanish Civil War), he aspired to create an art that would make an effective moral statement. He is a man for whom the enterprise of making art is not divorced from the enterprise of making a better, more just, more promising world. He has struggled to resist the all too familiar temptations of facility, redundancy, intellectual vacuity of the post-modernist aesthetic. His striving after a moral integrity in art is seen in the following:

If some of us wish to practice art for art's sake alone so be it . . . but good pictures, great pictures will be made to which many modest lives can respond. No one can promise that love of mankind will promote a great art but the need feels saintly and new and somewhat poetic to me and we shall see . . . maybe it will never happen.

There is a high seriousness in his aims. For Kitaj the history of Hans and Sophie Scholl embodies the potency of message he wants to convey. His caption "curiously unappreciated" on the screenprint indicates his respect for their overlooked place in history and raises interest concerning their identity and role. Kitaj again as in the previous icons stimulates the concerned viewer to study his works. His tribute to the Scholls becomes furthermore a
fitting subject for his concept of a great art, that is, a more social art. Kitaj has a distinct vision of what a more social art can be but will not spell it out for fear of losing his grasp of it. More social to him is understanding of and responsive to the passage of major events in our world. His interpretation of the Scholls can be categorized as social art.

Kitaj feels as an artist a need to assume a socially relevant position. He therefore treats some of the bestialities of modern history, a link which is formed by the Scholls. The overriding earnestness of his responses to Rosa Luxemburg, Isaac Babel, as well as his other works on a variety of social/political themes, indicate his role as a sensitive history painter.

The Scholls relate to many interests critical to Kitaj's art and life. They are figures with a parallel interest in high morality and conviction. The Scholls, who wrote and worked with passion on behalf of all victims of National Socialism, share with the artist his concern for victims of anti-Semitism. His art, which confesses his fascination for historical tragedies, focuses in greater depth than discussed in this text, on the Hitler era for which the brother-sister team died in their fight against fascism and its policies. His desire to commemorate such an historic event as part of the role of an artist is expressed in the following:

Types, figures were invented which embodied emotional states saturated with "reality." Artists
can coin examples of social well-being -- Matisse wanted that. If artists can apotheosize persons, principles, practices, they should also have the power to bear witness to unhappiness by coining a remembrance of it.  

Filled with private needs, Kitaj's works, as we have seen, make ethical points. His disturbing subjects reflect his passion in developing a more social art. His faith, like that of the Scholls, enables him to work from powerful conviction.

The Scholls represent other levels of identification to Kitaj. It seems Kitaj finds in their fight for liberty a metaphor for his own personal concerns. As university students involved in issues of great social conscience, the then thirty-three-year-old artist may have regarded the younger Scholls, as exemplars of youthful idealism. Also the active position of the Scholls during the Holocaust can serve as a parallel of his own desire to assume an aggressive stance in his social art. The Scholl's social conviction and their idealism, relate to Kitaj's own life and the terms of his work. As in his tributes to Rosa Luxemburg and Isaac Babel, he honors the memory of two more figures, with whom he shares similarities.

Attached to their plight by social and personal affinities, he regards the Scholls, like Rosa Luxemburg and Isaac Babel, as martyrs or heroes. His exploration into his roles and belief systems is continued in this seemingly enigmatic combination of objects. *Go and Get Killed Comrade*--
We Need a Byron in the Movement, his dedicatory screenprint with its assembled ready-made materials and catalog statement, as will be further demonstrated, seems to be filled with personal reflections and identifications.

Issues concerning the relationship between text and image reappear again in analysis of this screenprint. The written word again accompanies the visual image in the artist's exhibition catalog as well as in a collaborative effort in which the screenprint was part of a portfolio.

The involvement with literature is first seen in Kitaj's 1965 exhibition catalog in which Go and Get Killed Comrade—We Need A Byron in the Movement was announced as part of a project, a series of screenprints to be titled Mahler Becomes Politics: Beisbol to accompany forty poems, dedicated to Mahler, by the American Jonathan Williams (1929-). The poems were based on the music of Gustav Mahler (1860-1911), the composer, conductor, and director of the Vienna Imperial Opera House.

The artist's own written statements take on a new form here as intellectual content remains a major concern in the development of this screenprint. The non-pictorial elements which accompany Go and Get Killed Comrade—We Need a Byron in the Movement are statements of future intentions for the proposed screenprints, rather than densely structured texts specifically designed as supplements to extend the ramifications of the work.
Due to persistent misinterpretation of his motivations, Kitaj ceased this previous practice until the late 1970's. Nevertheless, the incorporation of his projected thoughts on the series of screenprints provides evidence of his continued interest in this dualistic mode of presentation. The inclusion of the literary element gives his art an increased sense of importance and even urgency, in that the artist makes us recognize reading is essential for comprehension of his goals. The literature offers a valuable observation on this practice, one scholar has noted "his use of textual material as a way to prevent at all costs his painting from becoming merely aesthetic." His interest, as we will continue to see, is an overriding one for content, not decorative painting.

We initially learn of Kitaj's screenprint and of his collaborative intentions in his 1965 exhibition catalog. As in the previous instances of the artist's use of text with image, the relationship is complex and highly sophisticated. His statements, now devoid of the bibliographic references and supplementary facts, need to be regarded as announcements of projected works of art. Still we learn more about the artist through analysis of this literary element. Kitaj in the catalog introduces us to the idea of a series of screenprints related to Mahler. A full page with the heading "Mahler: A Celebration and a Crutch" presents his future project coupled with four photographs (Plate XXXVI). Under
each of these Kitaj provides minimal identification: J. Williams, C. Prater, H.R. Fischer and G. Mahler. Kitaj then explains in his own words his intentions:

Jonathan Williams has written 41 poems responding to Mahler's symphonies and I have begun (Fall 1964) to make a run of prints using the music, the poems, the Mahler literature and times and a good deal else as a compound crutch upon which to hang much that cannot be made to splice easily with Mahler. In this light Mahler's own ambiguous, lifelong attitude towards 'The vexed problem of programme music' is worth noting and he reminds us that 'The creative urge for a musical organism certainly springs from an experience of its author, i.e. from a fact, after all, which should be positive enough to be expressible in words . . .' and also that 'my music arrives at a programme as its last clarification, whereas in the case of Richard Strauss the programme already exists as a given task . . .'

Thanks are due to H.R. Fischer for his encouragement of the work at hand which will often spring from music which he knows in ways I never will and to Chris Prater, who is printing the work . . . much of the essence of the thing is in his hands. We hope to bring out the prints one day in an edition of 50 on various papers with the Williams sequence in the place of honour. Here is an initial listing on the occasion of this catalogue . . . Many of the prints are in the works. Some collage originals, fragments and false starts are listed where they bear on the outcome.

This rather short text is filled with significantly selected correspondences. These two paragraphs indicate many of the artist's goals with his projected series of screenprints. They tell us of the inspirations he found in relation to various aspects of Mahler "the music, the poems, the Mahler literature and times and a good deal else as a compound crutch upon which to hang much that cannot be made
to splice easily with Mahler." Furthermore we recognize the significance of the four photographs. The second paragraph indicates the roles of Fischer and Prater, it is with the later London silkscreen printer that he started collaborating in 1963. Kitaj's specific projection for *Go and Get Killed* Comrade-We Need a Byron in the Movement is stated as follows:

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FOR THE WHITE ROSE AND LEAFLETS OF THE WHITE ROSE
Projected prints honouring the memory of Hans and Sophie Scholl among others; to be made to act in the Mahler sequence.
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Next to this entry is a photograph of Hans and Sophie Scholl, with their names and a caption "curiously unappreciated" appearing as part of their identification label (Plate XXXVII). Kitaj reproduces this photograph and label in the final screenprint.

Other entries for the Mahler sequence, as he refers to his developing series of screenprints, are also listed by title in the catalog. Kitaj carefully notes "Some other prints in this series for which originals may or may not occur in this exhibition are and/or will be." The final suite of 15 screenprints differs from some of these earlier catalog entries.

The title of the series deliberately echoes a title such as *Mourning Becomes Electra*, an allusion to the Civil War drama of Eugene O'Neill (1888-1953). The Dada overtones of the title *Mahler Becomes Politics: Beisbol* reiterate the consistent satirical element found in his work. 'Beisbol' is a phonetic rendering of the pronunciation south of the United
States border of 'baseball' and seems to be an amusing reference to the sport the artist has loved and recorded in a few of his paintings. His development of nonsensical titles for his screenprints, which will be represented here, and his frequent thought-provoking conjunctions of recognizable objects reflect his persistent irony and wit.

Each of the completed suite of fifteen screenprints (1964-67), printed in an edition of seventy, was numbered and signed by the artist. The first thirty sets were presented in the above mentioned portfolio. The screenprints were printed by Kelpra Studio on various papers and published by Marlborough Fine Art Limited, London in 1967. Also contained in this portfolio was Mahler, a forty-four page long book of poems by Jonathan Williams, based on Mahler's music, as mentioned. The poems, published for the first time in a limited edition, were numbered and signed by the author. Reproduced on the cover of this book was a drawing of Jonathan Williams by Kitaj. This specially prepared cover is a sinister portrait of the poet, Aureolin (1964; Plate XXXVIII). Williams in his introduction explains this portrait is "in lieu of the screenprints which would cost you about 400 guineas." A photograph of Kitaj and Williams with the title "Americans Abroad" appeared on the frontispiece of the case which contained the book and the prints.
The Mahler suite covers a wide range of unrelated topics. As one critic noted,

Mahler, a Celebration and a Crutch conceived as illustrations to forty-one Mahler-inspired poems by the American Jonathan Williams, bear no perceptible relation to the music or its composer, and seem just a random selection of typical Kitaj prints...39

Some of the screenprints in the Mahler suite appear to reflect Kitaj's interests in the arts. For example, Gay Science (1965; Plate XXXIX) which looks like a series of window panes, is concerned with literary figures. Many of the panes are literally filled with lines of text by famous writers such as Ernest Hemingway and William Carlos Williams. Nerves, Massage, Defeat, Heart (1967; Plate XL) consists of four columns in different colors, one of the each of the words from the title stands at the top of each of these columns. Various grids and patterns are depicted in each column. In the second column labeled "Massage" above a photograph of Gauguin, a sadistic inscription "A bite on the head confirms that Gauguin is dead" appears.

Glue Words (1967; Plate XLI) is a collage of unrelated indecipherable images and seems to literally address Cubist and Surrealist methods of composition. Let Us Call It Arden and Live in It (1966; Plate XLII) is a satirical view of a peaceful site. The central image of the screenprint is a rope set against a plain background. A picturesque fantasy-
like village complete with a white cross flag on the lower border is the only embellished area.

Another screenprint in the Mahler suite, *I've Balled Every Waitress in This Club*, (1967; Plate XLIII) with its erotic title, depicts a free association of simplified geometric shapes, a photograph and loosely composed patterns, while a drawing of a male head appears in the lower left corner. None of the other fourteen screenprints relates in any way to the particular issues raised in *Go and Get Killed Comrade-We Need a Byron in the Movement*.

The screenprints indicate to us the artist's diverse interests and humor as well as the challenging associations he establishes between the visual and the literary. The artist's own statements are again illuminating as years later Kitaj discussed the role of Williams' poems and Mahler's music in the formulation of this series of screenprints:

> The prints are very free collages, assembled in response to the Mahler symphonies, not to Jonathan's poems. Free Verse - like that. Jonathan loved Mahler and wrote his poems to the music. I came to Mahler then for the first time and did my visual poems to the music. They're kind of nutty, but maybe not so bad as "citations" (in Benjamin's practice), aberrant quotations and pickings from the world.  

Examination of the identity of Jonathan Williams and the poems with which Kitaj began "to make a run of prints" enhances analysis of the screenprint under discussion. Jonathan Williams, a disciple of William Carlos Williams, is
one of the major figures in the arts connected with Black
Mountain College along with the painters Willem de Kooning,
Robert Rauschenberg, Jack Tworkov, the architect Buckminster
Fuller, and the choreographer Merce Cunningham. Best known
as a beat poet, his works have been published in numerous
anthologies, and he has given over 950 readings, lectures,
seminars, and slide shows at universities and organizations
throughout the world. His collaboration with Kitaj is one of
many of his joint efforts with other artists.

Williams' poems, written in 1964 and published in 1966,
provide no assistance in analyzing Kitaj's series of
screenprints. It is from his introduction to *Mahler* that
some direction in terms of understanding his motivation is
offered. Williams explains how he has been "more responsive
to Mahler's music than to any other for some fifteen years."
His interest in attempting these poems was "in gauging my
response in compositions of language to the sounds of the
music, not in imitating the sounds, which would be futile and
silly."41

Furthermore, Williams praises the critic Paul Stefan for
his book *Gustav Mahler: A Study of His Personality and Work*
(G. Schirmer, New York, 1913). Stefan's insights, we will
recognize, have helped Williams with his Mahler-inspired
poems. The poet mentions how he has learned from Stefan that
Mahler attached headings and instructions to early
performances of the First Symphony in Hamburg and Weimar.
William, welcoming these details, cites from Stefan's book some of Mahler's notations:

Part I. The Days of Youth. Youth, flowers and thorns. (1) Spring without end. The introduction represents the awakening of nature at early dawn. (2) A chapter of Flowers (Andante). (3) Full Sail (Scherzo), and so on.

Stefan then quotes Bruno Walter (1876-1962), the conductor and Mahler's longtime personal friend and biographer:

Let us be prudent enough to free these titles from an exact meaning, and remember in the kingdom of beauty nothing is to be found except 'Gestaltung, Umgestaltung, des ewigen Sinnes ewige Unterhaltung.' (Formation, Transformation, the Eternal Mind's Eternal Recreation.) . . . We must not think of that 'which the flowers of the meadow tell,' but of everything that touches our hearts and with gentlest beauty and tenderest charm.42

Williams incorporates this body of text in his introduction to clarify his own spontaneous responses to Mahler's symphonies. He discovers in Stefan's book a way to describe and interpret emotions and impressions from Mahler's music into symbols, images. Williams quotes Stefan's point:

In general, the hearer who interprets rather than listens likes nothing better than to investigate what the composer 'meant' by his works. Of course he meant nothing whatever. But by means of a symbol, an image, one may better understand his works.43

Williams then explains the method in which he wrote his Mahler poems. They were written only during the duration of each movement and were reworked once or twice at the most.
The seeming spontaneity of Williams' poetry is also a result of his familiarity with Mahler's music, which involves his "calling upon fifteen years of performances, recordings and readings." He also has defined his poems, each of which refers to a particular symphony, as "exercises in spontaneous composition to the movements of all the Mahler symphonies." He described his approach to listening before writing the poems as follows:

I have used earphones to listen to the recordings in my collection, which serve to blot out extraneous background noise and enhance the concentration. Another useful exercise might be to draw with the eyes shut, using only the technique we employed at Moholy-Nagy's Institute of Design in Chicago to 'liberate response.'

The titles of his poems as seen in such examples as "Symphony No. 1, in D Major," "Symphony No. 2, in C Minor," "Symphony No. 3, in C Minor" reflect a desire for immediate identification with Mahler's works. The poems are filled with a wealth of references to musical terminology, seasons, light, flowers, animals, and other elements of nature, to figures from the classical world, and to the great writers Blake, Stein, Goethe, and Shakespeare. Williams also alludes to Mahler's contemporaries in the musical world such as Anton Bruckner, Anton Webern, and Arnold Schoenberg. Williams' citations to Vienna and its suburbs and to the composer's affectionate terms for his wife Alma show the poet's familiarity with Mahler's personal world.
The collaborative efforts of Kitaj and Williams must be regarded as totally independent works reflecting the responses of two creative figures to Gustav Mahler. The artist apparently felt no need to present the poems as they do not appear in the catalog or in any of Kitaj's later publications or published statements. From Williams' publication it can be ascertained that they also have no ostensible relation to his work. The poems and screenprints only reflect the poet's and the artist's mutual esteem of Mahler.

Kitaj and his Mahler suite of screenprints are also mentioned in the introduction to Jonathan Williams' Mahler. Williams begins with a brief acknowledgment of Kitaj's involvement with his poems and then incorporates the artist's statements from his 1965 exhibition catalog:

R.B. Kitaj, the old Chagrin Falls Flash and Tracer of Lost Persons, picked up the poems and ran with them . . . Quoting his "Mahler: A Celebration and a Crutch" (in the exhibition catalogue of the Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York, February, 1965): "Jonathan Williams has written 40 poems responding to Mahler's symphonies and I have begun (Fall 1964) to make a run of prints using the music, the poems, the Mahler literature and times and a good deal else as a compound crutch upon which to hang much that cannot be made to splice easily with Mahler. In this light Mahler's own ambiguous, lifelong attitude towards 'The vexed problem of programme music' is worth noting and he reminds us that 'The creative urge for a musical organism certainly springs from an experience of its author, i.e., from a fact, after all, which should be positive enough to be expressible in words . . .' and also that 'My music arrives at a programme as its last clarification, whereas in the case of Richard Strauss the programme already exists as a given task.'
Thanks are due to H.R. Fischer for his encouragement of the work at hand which will often spring from music which he knows in ways I never will and to Chris Prater, who is printing the work . . . much of the essence of the thing is in his hands. We hope to bring out the prints one day in an edition of 50 on various papers with the Williams sequence in the place of honour . . . .

The issue of program music comes to the fore in Williams' reiteration of Kitaj's catalog statement. It is essential for us to consider program music and its relationship to Kitaj's art. Program music is the musical description of an extra-musical event, that is, it provides musical illustration to a narrative. In its simplest form program music is purely imitative of actual familiar sounds. Kitaj, in admiration of the purity and powerfulness of Mahler's symphonies, incorporates the maestro's descriptions of his own stance in regard to program music. From the critical and scholarly literature Kitaj's concern for program music has been treated by Dore Ashton. She has analyzed the components of this quotation from Kitaj's catalog, cited above, and has indicated affinities in his art to program music:

Program music, which may be likened to art with readable content, is no longer considered acceptable. Painting with a message is equally out of fashion. Yet Kitaj, like Mahler, wants to arrive at a program as the last clarification of his work. Unwilling to lend his skill - and he is extremely skillful - to the mere manipulation of forms and colors, and yet suspicious of the overt literary aspect of illustration, he is caught in a dilemma which I suspect is shared by many artists of his generation.
Kitaj's work can be aligned with the narrative role of program music. Like program music, his work has always been descriptive, illustrative and enriched with documentation, events or people. His work is based on the factual and its potentials for development. From the start of Kitaj's career his interest in narrative for his role as a painter was of importance to him. He chose to study at Oxford because of his deep interest in scholarship.

I was there at Oxford because James and Eliot and Pound had gone there fifty years before. I had promised myself that kind of Oxford life for years, even before I went into the army, and then all during the army I knew that's what I was going to do. I wasn't going to paint in Paris or anywhere else; I was going to go to Oxford and become a kind of scholar-painter. 48

A sensitive artist, an individualist, unconcerned about fashionable trends in painting, Kitaj found in these literary figures the kind of art form filled with scholarly references that he desired for his own painting:

The intense passion for Pound and Joyce and Eliot and the complexity of so much modern poetry, always led me to think you could do the same sort of thing in art. 49

Kitaj seeks a social art, as mentioned above, embedded with potent imagery. Influenced by the complexly layered nature of the writing of Eliot, Pound and Joyce, Kitaj developed, as we have seen, catalogs filled with complex program notes and references to unsung heroes. His very personal system of picture-making is his way of assertion of
intellectual content as the generator of pictorial structure. Kitaj's interest lies in the concept of the work of art as a carrier of meaning far beyond the limited concerns of form alone.

In his selections for the Arts Council exhibition, *The Human Clay*, Kitaj made his position clear. He finds no interest in the sort of art that is about "exalted color, for instance, or boxes, or holes in the ground";\(^50\) for him, it has no significance for the world outside itself. The self-referential canvases of the Abstract Expressionists and those coined by Clement Greenberg as "Post-Painterly Abstractionists" such painters as Stella, Frankenthaler, Noland, Louis, he would appear to regard as barren.\(^51\) He is convinced that art is duty-bound to comment on human nature and, by extension, human society:

Some day when I'm chased limping down a road looking back at a burning city, I want the slight satisfaction of knowing that I couldn't make an art which didn't confess human frailty, fear, mediocrity and the banality of evil.\(^52\)

His idea of a socially concerned art requires the kind of descriptive qualities which parallel those of program music. He champions an art based on the human form, which he feels, if you can draw the human form well enough, the whole world can instinctively respond to it. Thus, he concludes, "art becomes more social."\(^53\) From the early 1960's his themes with their inclusion of the human form reveal his concern with violence, anarchism, philosophy, politics, literature
and history. His intentions and approaches are challenging and didactic. Kitaj's awareness of the power of images, his desire to deal with forbidding and tragic events and his ability to combine these together into successful conjunctions can equate his painting with the nature or style of program music.

In his catalog statement Kitaj also reveals an autobiographical component in the creation of a work of art. It is in his selection of Mahler's quotation that he seems to find confirmation:

'The creative urge for a musical organism certainly springs from an experience of its author, i.e. from a fact, after all, which should be positive enough to be expressible in words . . . '

These words clearly held an importance for Kitaj. Mahler's declaration of the highly personal expression invested in a musical composition lends credence to the personalized types of tributes, as discussed, Kitaj has developed. His citation of Mahler lends validity to the notion of the work of art as an index to character. Mahler's statement gives authenticity to the contributions of personal experience in art. Examples in the works of Kitaj and Mahler illustrate this point. Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder* (Songs of Dead Children) (1905), a cycle of songs which has been attributed as a response to the deaths of his brothers and sisters is often cited in the literature as a foreshadowing of the future death of his elder daughter. Alma viewed with
horror this music which bemoaned the loss of a child for a man whose two children were alive. She felt Mahler was tempting fate (and saw in the death of their daughter, two years later, fate's vengeance). 55

Kitaj's serious and very personal aims with his art are reflected in this screenprint and catalog statement. His own philosophical, aesthetic and familial concerns seem manifested. With imagery culled from mass media and condensed into a documented historical moment, Kitaj reaffirms the social art he desires and attains. From the critics and scholars we learn his efforts towards this end with his highly cerebral approach has received recognition. The poet/art critic John Ashberry compares his socially concerned art with its elements of abstruseness to that of Picasso and Léger:

Kitaj's stance, one foot planted in humanistic theorizing, the other in a practice that seems to contradict it, is again symptomatic of modernism. Picasso and Léger were both members of the French Communist Party, to cite but two obvious instances of radical chic. And it is likely that in the case of their work as well as Kitaj's, the will to produce art for the people - even if it fell short of its goal and produced an art of extreme sophistication - nevertheless inflected, deflected their work and made it something very different, something far better, than if they had ignored social issues and remained willingly in the fold of self-referential art for art's sake. 56

It is through examination and interpretation of the text and image that we recognize the significance of Kitaj's portrayal in Go and Get Killed Comrade-We Need a Byron in the Movement. The Scholls' plight can be considered as a
metaphor for the artist in terms of his beliefs in idealism and in social commitment in one's work. His interest in their lives, in addition, reflects his persistent concern for victims of anti-Semitism.

Kitaj also finds confirmation of his goals and inspirations in Mahler. His inclusion of the discussion of "the vexed problem of programme music" indicates how the musician's words provide him with a thought-provoking and identifiable code of aesthetics. Although the role and form of the literary element have been altered for this screenprint, there is still an interest in the power of words to elicit thought and discussion as well as a concern for content with a theme of social relevance.

In regard to the relationship between text and image, the artist has, as in the previous two icons, successfully provided a foundation with which to stimulate the viewer to study the image for its layers of meaning. Analysis of the screenprint and its accompanying catalog statement indicates how Kitaj's work continues to deal with aspects of his life as a man and as an artist. We realize how deeply his art is composed of personal reflections and identifications. Kitaj deals again with figures, who among their concerns, relate to his interest in anti-Semitism. Repeatedly his work, in its precisely determined parameters, indicates his scholarly tastes and ambitions as well as his social conscience.
FOOTNOTE REFERENCES


2. Ibid., 31.

3. Ibid., 73-93. The leaflets are presented in these pages.

4. Ibid., 83.

5. Ibid., 56.


15. Ibid., 203.

16. Ibid., 204-5.
17. Ibid., 211.


20. Ibid., 200.


22. Ibid.

23. Longford, 198.

24. Ibid., 203.

25. Ibid., 204.


31. Ibid., 24.


35. Ibid.

37. Ibid.


42. Bruno Walter, quoted in *Mahler* by Jonathan Williams, n.p.

43. Williams, n.p.

44. Jonathan Williams, quoted in *The Tate Gallery 1968–70*, 91.


46. Ibid.


49. Ibid., 41.


51. R.B. Kitaj, "Painters Reply...," *Artforum* 14 (September 1975): 8. This letter reveals his feelings on such schools of painting. For further understanding of these particular painters see "Post Painterly Abstraction," introduction by Clement Greenberg, exhibition catalog, 23 April–7 June, 1967, Los Angeles County Museum of Art.


55. Ibid, 288.

CHAPTER IV

The Autumn of Central Paris (After Walter Benjamin)

(1972-73; Plate XLIV) is Kitaj's most complex icon and Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) is a man who most appropriately and adequately embodies many affinities to the artist's own life circumstances and work. Ostensibly, it is a remembrance of Benjamin, the philosopher and literary critic, who committed suicide during Nazi occupation of Paris in the autumn of 1940.

This eulogy is set in Paris where Benjamin lived first as an immigrant, later as an exile. He had been for years an intellectual and personal hero for the artist. Benjamin, was dedicated to abstruse thought and scholarship, an important factor in Kitaj's work and thinking as seen in the dichotomy between his paintings and catalog statements. It is thus in The Autumn of Central Paris that Kitaj directly confronts his abstruseness. Set on a Parisian boulevard, on the terrace of a café, the flâneur/philosopher is shown. Walter Benjamin, is easily identified with his high forehead, eyeglasses and cigarette held between his fingers. He holds court in the
center of a group of colorful figures, some of whom appear prominently in his writings.

Why did Kitaj find kinship with this brilliant writer. Walter Benjamin, who has been called "the preeminent literary critic of our century," also wrote complex philosophic commentaries on ethics, history, literature, art, drama, linguistics, and political and social issues. Benjamin was also important as a translator of French literature, which attracted him deeply. He translated Baudelaire (Tableaux Parisiens, 1923) and several volumes of Proust (1927-30). Among his other publications are such essays as "Surrealism," "Kafka," "Proust," "Brecht and the Task of Epic Theater," and The Origins of German Tragic Drama (1977), one of the most important philosophical interpretations of this field.

Kitaj devoted two other works to this scholar, the lithograph, Walter Benjamin (1966; Plate XLV), and the painting, Arcades (1972-73; Plate XLVI). Arcades, which shows shoppers in an elegant nineteenth century arcade is Kitaj's response to Benjamin's best known work, which the philosopher referred to simply as the Arcades (Passagenarbeit). Inspired by Louis Aragon's Paysan de Paris (1926), Benjamin's book was a thirteen year project, which remained unfinished at the time of his suicide. Now titled Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century, a study of Paris as a major administrative and financial center of nineteenth century capitalism, the text reflects the reasoning for his
increasing commitment to Marxism, to which he gave a highly personal interpretation. The painting with its emblematic arcade and shoppers recalls these glass-roofed, marble-walled passages which exerted such an enormous fascination over Benjamin.²

Kitaj again pays tribute to Benjamin in his parenthetical subtitle *The Autumn of Central Paris* (After Walter Benjamin). We learn from this carefully chosen subtitle of Kitaj's memorial intentions. Benjamin died on September 27, 1940 shortly after fleeing Paris. His suicide, while trying to get into Spain and away from Nazi-occupied France, occurred after the refusal of Spanish guards to let him, a German-Jewish refugee, enter Spain. To reach the border, Benjamin along with five other refugees, crossed through the Pyrenees "an absolutely horrible ordeal over unfamiliar road; some of it which had to be climbed on all fours."

All of them were categorized as *sans nationalité* being told that a few days earlier a decree had been issued that prohibited people "without nationality" from traveling through Spain. They were permitted to spend the night in a border hotel under guard. Benjamin, realizing in the morning, that he, without proper documents, would be sent to a concentration camp, in utter despair, died by taking large doses of morphine.³
Thus Benjamin is Kitaj's first truly Jewish hero, for Benjamin's Judaism is not an ancillary aspect of his life but the direct reason for his death. This homage, a genre scene with its diverse characters, is filled with references significant to both Kitaj and Benjamin. Kitaj's portrayal of the philosopher is developed by a carefully selected combination of text and images, in which both elements take on multiple allusive roles in unraveling the artist's fascination for another radical Jewish figure who perished in an age of overt fascism, anti-Semitism and anti-Communism.

In the center of a painted collage, Benjamin, the metaphysical critic of German and French letters, converses with various types in a café-terrace setting. Kitaj set under an ochre canopy a tumbling cast of characters. Placed in vertically striated layers on the canvas the figures form a kind of pyramid which encircles the philosopher. Among these diverse types is an elegant but rather sad-looking pretty woman with a red hat who stares into the distance. She may be waiting, or looking, for someone, her gaze may indicate she is lost in thought or listens to the conversation of those around Benjamin. Her costume with its padded shoulders and lapels perhaps indicates the period of the late thirties as her mood seems to reflect the deep seated cultural malaise of those years. The glass-shattered ruins behind her profile can be interpreted as underlining
the horrors of the times when Paris was under German occupation from June 1940—August 1944.

At the very top of Kitaj's pyramid of characters is a brightly costumed trio. The artist portrays two men and a woman as a motley crew of underworld-type characters. At the apex a gray-smudged faced man with a hat and beard permeates his gangster-like neighbor who may be a pimp. With his tightly fitting red outfit he looks like a performer or may recall the homosexual cruisers who populate various areas in Paris. It is he who holds a cigarette with his black-gloved hand for the turquoise-faced prostitute with her floppy green hat. Of these three eyeless creatures who are rebels within capitalist society, it is only the prostitute who was an issue of concern to the Marxist Benjamin. He wrote of the exploitative and hypocritical treatment of these women by bourgeois society. The other seedy figures may be characterizations based on actual types Kitaj saw in different areas of Paris.

Benjamin's ideas are recalled in other figures besides the prostitute. Between the café's red tables and chairs and the red bars in the upper left corner, which resemble the shapes of a picture frame, the red worker with his balloon-like hat and pointed axe borders the group. The heavy-handed symbolism of this figure at work perhaps refers to Benjamin's Marxist beliefs as well as to the erosion of society he experienced in Europe of the late thirties. The image of the
proletariat is carefully portrayed by Kitaj under the protective position of Benjamin. However, in view of the realities of Paris in 1940 an irony is implicit in this notion. Prior to this era it was Benjamin, in spite of his appreciation for the splendor of the city of Paris, who understood the worker's life as condemned to poverty.

In addition to this pyramid of diverse characters surrounding Benjamin, other figures enliven the café setting. Some of them, as will be explained, relate to Benjamin's work and biography. To the left of the worker, in a red semicircle, a half nude figure of a young woman looks to the left away from the crowd above her. With her finger at her lips, she appears to be thinking. To the right beyond the ochre canopy three other figures appear. A mother in a black dress stands and holds in her arms her child who wears a red dress. A man with a flaming red hair is shown seated from the back. He looks at a third figure, a man who walks away from the crowd.

One of the complexities of this picture-puzzle, which depicts the site in which Benjamin worked until his death, is the identity of the person who faces the literary critic. This broad-shouldered man, whose profile fuses with Benjamin's chin, is costumed in a gray suit and wears a hearing aid.

Also puzzling is the identity of the mannequin-like character who is held within Benjamin's embracing arm
gesture. He may symbolize Benjamin's disciple Theodor Adorno (1903-1969), a Marxist theoretician, whose books Mahler (1960), Dialectic of Enlightenment (1947), Philosophy of Modern Music (1958), Negative Dialectics (1966) and Minima Moralia, Reflections from Damaged Life (1951) and teaching enjoyed enormous popularity among students who flocked to his lectures in ever-increasing numbers in West Germany.

Benjamin may be with his protégé, a figure whose intellectual influence on the West German student generation, continued to grow during the 1950's and 1960's.6

The diminutive figure, in his blue shirt and black necktie, wears a sport coat which appears to be made of fabric patterned to resemble wood. The treatment of the paint recalls the use of faux bois in many of the Cubist papier collés of Picasso and Braque. The reference to wood may be an allusion to Benjamin's pseudonym, Detlev Holz, the surname being the German word for wood. Among Benjamin's interests, he collected emblem books, and he liked to make up anagrams and played with pseudonyms. From 1933 to 1936 he continued to publish reviews in German magazines under the name of Detlev Holz, the name he used to sign the last book to appear in his lifetime, Deutsche Menschen (German Men) published in Switzerland in 1936.7

Kitaj's imitative wood painting may be a reference to Benjamin's taste for pseudonyms. It is only in 1936 that Benjamin needed to use the pseudonym as a protective measure
to ensure publication of his final volume, which in
dedications to friends, he described as "an ark I built when
the fascist deluge began to rise." The setting of the
painting reflects Benjamin's concerns in Paris. This city
represented to him a major center of capitalism, in its most
sophisticated form of bourgeois culture and merchandising.
Benjamin's focus in his extensive observations of Paris was
the city in the nineteenth century as he described the life
of the boulevards and arcades, Opera glamour, pompier
architecture, academic painting, and world exhibitions. His
passion for Paris is evident in an example of his elliptical
description of the glitter of its nightlife:

The city is reflected in a thousand eyes, a
thousand lenses. The beauty of Parisian women
shines forth from mirrors such as these . . . A
riot of mirrors surrounds the men too, especially
in the cafés . . . the mirrors are the
immaterial element of the city, her emblem, within
which have been enrolled the emblems of all schools
of poetic art. 10

The time period of the painting is not clearly
discernable. It is not a portrayal based on Benjamin's
description of nineteenth century Paris, the city of material
progress and opulence. Kitaj's choices of costumes and
inclusion of Benjamin designates a twentieth century frame of
reference.

This dedication to Walter Benjamin is rooted in
nineteenth century Paris. Kitaj's composition consciously
updates the gatherings in café life associated with the art and literature of the Impressionist era. The painting with its many stage characters of diverse social strata shows Kitaj's hero as a part of the café life, a particular ambiance connected with the flourishing of Paris throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Interpretations of the painting, its elements and the artist's motivations indicate a variety of responses from the critics and scholars. The art historian Michael Podro, who serves as a model in Kitaj's The Jewish Rider (1980), wrote,

There is in the café scene, in the genre as it comes down from Manet and Degas, a sentiment about the café life and its connections with the intellectual/bohemian life of the city. This nostalgia takes on a new intensity in June 1940, because it was the final moment of its history and it was at this moment that Benjamin was trapped. The painting looks backward toward the leisured life, intellectually and erotically embroiling, at the moment when political reality made that life absurd.11

    Kitaj recreates the ambiance of a café life, as the Parisian café is one of the symbols of the artistic and intellectual life of the city. Podro attributes the tragedy of the German occupation and its aftermath with the demise of the Parisian café, yet this gathering site still exists and functions as an integral part of the lives of many of the city's inhabitants. Kitaj appropriately portrays Benjamin in this setting.
The painting gains in depth when considered in terms of its specific art historical sources. It is an adaptation of the café scenes of Édouard Manet (1832-83) and his generation. Manet's *Concert in the Tuileries*, (1862; Plate XLVII) for example, may be regarded as a prototype. Kitaj could have been inspired by Manet's assembly of artists, musicians, writers of his own circle. His response similarly addresses a specifically contemporary scene populated with a variety of types.

Kitaj shares a number of affinities with Manet which emphasize his involvement with the master at the time that he painted *The Autumn of Central Paris*. This was a period when significantly he began to collect Manet's etchings. Like Manet, who portrayed his friend Baudelaire in his *Concert*, Kitaj painted his hero Benjamin. Kitaj has also repeatedly quoted from art historical masterpieces. While some scholars have related Manet's work to Courbet's *Studio*, Kitaj undoubtedly knew that Manet was intentionally referring to a painting in the Louvre, then thought to be by Diego Velázquez (1599-1660). This small painting, which Manet copied, showed Velázquez and Bartoloméo Murillo (1618-1682). Manet would have seen this painting not only as a record of manners of seventeenth century Spain, but a specific depiction of the world of painters he so admired.  

Learning from Velázquez, who dressed his figures in historic dress of his own era, Manet recast his assembly of
artists into a Parisian park in contemporary dress. Kitaj, informed of Manet's references to the past, continues this insistence on modernity by updating a typical Impressionist icon of café life into twentieth century Paris.

Popular imagery provided some source material for the artist. The partially clad woman who appears to look into the distance is based on a figure in a 1970 photograph of British soldiers dressed for street battle who charge stone throwing youths (Plate XLVIII). Kitaj borrowed from the news photo the profile and hand gesture of the woman who appears in the doorway. Significantly an excerpt from a scene of violence found in the British press is adapted for a painting which also deals with an era of violence.

Curiously a similar female profile with the woman's finger gently rested on her lips is found in Silence (1849; Plate XLIX) by Auguste Préault (1809-79). This Romantic headstone, modelled for the Jewish section of Pére Lachaise cemetery, was a site presumably familiar to Kitaj. The conflation of the scene of violence with the symbol of death lends irony to the figure.

The image of the worker with his pickaxe stems from a tradition in both European and American art and is connected to rural, ethnic and urban genres. A bronze sculpture such as Road Worker (1938; Plate L) by Max Kalish (1891-1945) provides a likely immediate source of inspiration. Kalish's laborers, influenced by the Realist style of Mahonri Young,
were on view at the Cleveland Museum of Art, when Kitaj lived in Cleveland and took children's art classes there. The Realist's figures, demonstrating full bodied vigor and force, made Kalish's reputation as a sculptor who showed the dignity of the American laborer. But at the same time, Kitaj adapted an archetypal image of the heroic worker to represent Benjamin's concern for the class struggle.

This figure derives from *The Stonebreakers* (1849; Plate LI) by Gustave Courbet (1819-77). The scene of hard labor in the country, painted on a scale customarily reserved for history painting, presents unidealized peasants at work. This work, one of the paintings which was to make Courbet's name universally recognized, serves as a major precedent for the elevation of the peasant as a serious subject for painting in the nineteenth century. Linda Nochlin in her discussion of the elevated status in the nineteenth century of the working man in art explained:

... the 1848 Revolution raised the dignity of labor to official status and the grandeur of le peuple to an article of faith, that artists turned to a serious and consistent confrontation of the life of the poor and humble: to the depiction of work and its concrete setting as a major subject for art - as a possible subject even for an artistic masterpiece on a monumental scale. 13

Courbet's renown dignified image of rural labor is regarded as a basis for later concrete depictions of toil, whether of the urban or rural worker. While Kitaj's urban
proletariat figure does not repeat Courbet's pose typology of his rural genre scene, the American painter continues the anonymous worker whose age old menial work epitomizes a life of drudgery now updated to twentieth century urban genre.

The lithograph The Demolishers (1896; Plate LII) by Paul Signac (1863-1935), the leading publicist of the Neo-Impressionist movement, is also linked to this tradition. Signac's urban workers have been interpreted as revealing his anarchistic social ideals.Kitaj's urban worker is a descendant of these toilers who recalled the inequities of life.

The laborer also appears in I and the Village, (1911; Plate LIII), an example of ethnic genre by Marc Chagall (1887-1985), who had emigrated to Paris from Russia in 1910. Through the language of Cubism, memories of farm life, with its peasants workers and their animals, are translated into colorful representations. Above the confrontation of the large heads of the fantasy creature and the peasant, a worker with his scythe and his upside-down female companion, approach the fields.

Chagall's dream-like recreation of life in the Jewish quarter from which he came relates to Kitaj's interest in his ethnic roots. The community of the ghetto Chagall recalled is a part of Jewish life in Russia that Kitaj alluded to in his final catalog statement for The Murder of Rosa Luxemburg. Kitaj's worker, whose red color indicates his Marxist roots,
must be considered as it functions within these various conflated levels of meaning.

The mother and daughter motif appears to be a quotation or paraphrase from the sentimental Pretty Baa Lambs (1851-9; Plate LIV) by Ford Madox Brown (1821-93) which Kitaj may have seen during his study in Oxford. From this early study of plein-airism, in which the figures, animals and entire background had been painted outdoors, Kitaj may have made a number of transformations. Kitaj could have substituted Brown's use of eighteenth century dress,\(^\text{15}\) the typically Pre-Raphaelite use of historical costume for the mother and daughter with contemporary clothes, while the pose of the pair is retained. Similarly he may have shifted the use of pastoral landscape, emphasized by the presence of grazing sheep and natural vegetation in an open field, to an urban setting delineated by a café and its customers and vestiges of monumental architecture.

A photograph is the source for Kitaj's portrait Walter Benjamin (1966; Plate XLV). Yet for the characterization of Benjamin in The Autumn of Central Paris, the artist borrowed the hand gesture and head of George S. Kaufman from Kenneth Anger's Hollywood Babylon (Plate LV).\(^\text{16}\) Kitaj's selection of Hollywood Babylon and his use of Kaufman's image appears to indicate to us more of his intended meanings for the painting, in addition to his aesthetic concerns.
Kenneth Anger's choice of title for his book is a witty reference to Babylon, the renowned city of the ancient world. Located on the lower Euphrates and lined by two walls, Babylon was known for its temples, its hanging gardens, and its massive palaces. Among its famous architectural landmarks were the "hanging garden of Babylon," part of one of the palaces built by Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562 B.C.) and the Tower of Babel. Anger's title Hollywood Babylon fuses identification of this ancient city of splendor with the color, glamour and conspicuous consumption of Hollywood.

Kitaj's selection of this source offers various levels of interpretation. The painter may have chosen Anger's book with its reference to Babylon as a reminder of the captivity of the Jews in this Biblical city as well as in other parts of Babylonia.

Anger, (1932 -) an author, as well as a writer, director and producer of films, curiously provides the following information in regard to Babylon on the title page of his book:

1. an ancient Semitic city in the Euphrates Valley, which about 2225 B.C., was the richest and most magnificent of cities.
2. Any center of luxury and wickedness.
3. A place of captivity or exile; - in allusion to the fifty-year captivity of the Jews from 597 B.C. by Nebuchadnezzar.

These definitions may have inspired Kitaj. Anger's text focuses on the Hollywood film industry and is highlighted by
stories of scandals and romances with accompanying photographs. Kitaj's selection of George S. Kaufman from this text, that is dedicated to the film colony, is not a fortuitous choice.

George S. Kaufman (1889-1961) was an American journalist, director, producer and playwright. From 1917 to 1930 he held the position of critic and drama-page editor of The New York Times. Among the films made from Kaufman's screenplays are Once in a Lifetime (1932), You Can't Take it with You (1938), for which he won the Pulitzer Prize, and The Man Who Came to Dinner (1941). Kaufman is mentioned in Hollywood Babylon because of his affair with his future wife, the movie actress, Mary Astor. Kitaj's choice of the photograph of the playwright for The Autumn of Central Paris seems to be based on his close physical resemblance to Walter Benjamin and also reflects the artist's well documented interest in film.

Kitaj's passion for film is, by extension, part of this reference. Various aspects of film have influenced Kitaj's paintings. He has often incorporated film stills as sources for formal changes into his works. Moreover, one of his great hopes is to make paintings as vital as films and photographs. For Kitaj, the film is the great art of our times. His philosophic conception of the potentialities of film, is again noted. Dore Ashton, recognized that Kitaj's art has been tempered by the use of the filmmaker's montage
psychology. On a personal note, Kitaj's son, who lives in Los Angeles, is a filmmaker.

In the *Autumn of Central Paris* the inclusion of the photograph of George S. Kaufman with its roots in *Hollywood Babylon*, reveals, upon analysis, multiple layers of meaning. Furthermore, other references to film, to be discussed, again substantiate the artist's fascination.

The architectural setting of Kitaj's memorial tribute to Walter Benjamin is the Café des Deux Magots. This well known establishment has played an important role in the cultural life of Paris. Set in St. Germain-des-Prés quarter, it has been connected with such leading figures in the arts since its establishment in 1885. This literary café was the meeting place of Mallarmé, Rimbaud and Verlaine. In twentieth century the Surrealists collected at several tables, while nearby sat Derain and Balthus. It was frequented by Jean Giraudoux and was the daily meeting place of Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir. Other famous people associated with it were Le Corbusier, Picasso, Léger, Giacometti, Hemingway, and Gide. Kitaj's selection of Deux Magots is an appropriate site to recall Parisian artistic/intellectual café life. Additionally, the Benjamin literature describes scenes in which the philosopher sat inside this café across from the church of Saint Germain-des-Prés.

Kitaj's interpretation of the site constitutes accuracy to and alterations of the actual elements. The elegant café
(Plate LVI), with its light filled interior, is composed of large full length glass windows. Its terrace, which curves around the corner of the Boulevard Saint Germain and the Rue Saint Bénoit, is precisely represented in the painting. The café's marble topped round small tables are recalled on the canvas by circular forms. Trees dot the area around the sidewalk café, which Kitaj has included. The artist has also incorporated the same type of chairs but has omitted indications of their caning. And he has transformed the green scalloped canopy which surrounds the terrace into an ochre color with a black zigzag border.

His setting appears as a fusion of different examples of architecture in the immediate area. The shattered glass imagery we see above the head of the young woman in the painting possibly represents a conflated view of the east end of the oldest extant church in Paris, Saint Germain-des-Prés. The terrace of the café, which is depicted in the painting, faces the windows of the massive twelfth century bell tower porch of this Romanesque church, which constitutes the most important vestige of what used to be the oldest and the most brilliant abbey in Paris. However, Kitaj's rendition of the church indicates the shattered glass is supported by a curved part of the building; he reveals a view of the apse (Plate LVII) as its distinctive shape is seen on this plan.

The composition of The Autumn of Central Paris (After Walter Benjamin) is based on the collage principle, this
aspect of Cubist and Surrealist methods the artist observed in Ernst's works. As will be seen, Kitaj's deliberate scattering of a number of sources onto a single surface, as seen in his "icons" to Rosa Luxemburg, Isaac Babel, and Hans and Sophie Scholl is gone. While the fragmented painted form collapsed to the canvas is still used to establish facts and contribute ideas, there is pictorially a more integrated use of collage. From the literature we learn that Leen, in his dissertation, correctly observed the conspicuousness of photographic data and noted, "it accentuates even more the montage-like character." Nonetheless, this tribute with its greater coherence still involves the selection of borrowed imagery as well as the application of the power of the image to carry meaning.

The Kitaj criticism and scholarship, as previously indicated, contains various negative assessments concerning the artist's dense and obscure references. The Autumn of Central Paris (After Walter Benjamin) has been reviewed in this same light, leaving the artist with the blame for not being convincing pictorially.

It is a jarring experience to look at a picture with a title heavily suggestive of Meaning - say The Autumn of Central Paris (After Walter Benjamin) - and to study some of the images that presumably advance that Meaning, and then to see them waste away, grow expressively trivial and insubstantial in the midst of all the circus colors and collage effects.
Meaning functions in this integrated work of art on many different levels. Kitaj has brilliantly developed an instructive and thought provoking work of art in which he plays out several different dramas.

We have seen Kitaj's interest in the correspondence of text and painting. Importantly, the use of a text to accompany a visual image is discussed in Benjamin's essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction."

After publication of his 1965 exhibition catalog, the artist did not write about any of his paintings nor reveal the bulk of his literary sources. The first painting to again receive an appended text was The Autumn of Central Paris.27

The significant return to the use of text raises a number of points as to its value and its audience, which the artist has discussed. The use of extensive notes indicates the artist's belief that a painting cannot be judged on visual terms alone.28 Kitaj commented on the importance he attached to knowledge of the extra-pictorial setting as a means of understanding further implications of any great painting. Citing the case of Guernica as an illustration, he felt the political background of Guernica must be known by the viewer to gain full understanding of the work. He also regretted the removal of an explanatory plaque accompanying the painting in the Museum of Modern Art.

When I was young, there was a plaque next to the picture explaining about the German bombing of the little Basque town and what Picasso had on his
mind. Well, that text changed the interest in a difficult modern picture in some way for many, many people. A few years ago, I was shocked to see that the text was no longer shown next to the picture. I can only suppose that the formalist regime there decided that it wasn’t necessary to know anything more than what a person could decipher in the picture. 29

Kitaj’s response to the removal of the explanatory text from Guernica indicates his strong concern for the cultural/social background enriching a work of art. Kitaj realized that the major historical significance of Picasso’s work would be lost to the many who only saw it as an abstraction of figures, animals and buildings.

Also in regard to the text, he felt the viewer’s relationship to be critical. Kitaj stated, "A work can only be evocative in proportion to the intellectual baggage carried by whomever looks at it." The same ideas expressed in his 1964 statement that the texts associated with paintings serve as a way to "carry on his dialogue with his work" and "help to leave the question of 'finishing' a painting open" are again applicable. 30

The artist displayed an essay (Plate LVIII) next to the painting when it was later exhibited at the "Hayward Annual," Hayward Gallery, London in 1977. Again, the artist’s own written statements, these extensive explanatory notes play an important role in the interpretation of the picture. Kitaj’s exposition reveals his assimilation of Benjamin’s history and complex thought, which we, too, must discover. The
fascination Kitaj has had for Benjamin since 1965, when he first discovered the philosopher/critic, becomes apparent in his written statements.

The essay provides some explanatory descriptions of Kitaj's many painted images. In addition, the text lists in capital letters a selected assemblage of specific concepts and terms taken from Benjamin's essays and books, including his unfinished *Arcades* project.

Kitaj's incorporation of the philosopher's ideas and terms which he refers to as "SOME WORKING NOTES" and "SOME BENJAMIN CATEGORIES" raises intellectual dimensions over a wider range of material than the painting can include. The essay extends the contents of the painting in a very positive sense, yet the esoteric nature of Kitaj's choice of terms from Benjamin's works makes it a demanding experience for the viewer.

Importantly, in some respects these footnotes reflect the painting's cohesion, and yet they extend beyond the scope of the canvas. Kitaj is not offering a name or commentary for each figure or subject. The painting is commenting, or perhaps the better term would be reflecting across and refocusing the ideas and facts to which the text alludes. It is futile to read the text as a program or as "the subject" or as the key to symbols, except occasionally, and with care. The detail involved in Kitaj's written accompaniment to the
painting clearly indicates his considerable attachment to the intellect and life style of the philosopher.

The style of Kitaj's text directly confronts Benjamin's aesthetic form. Its denseness, abstruseness, fragmentary nature indicate his stylistic and contextual similarities to the writer. It will become apparent that Kitaj draws upon Benjamin's stylistic qualities as well as his complex terms. The essay is a requisite in that it not only helps explain the historical background of the painting, but we also ultimately see another aspect of Kitaj develop.

It will also become clear that the extensive notes concerning the painting play an important role in the interpretation of the picture. This painting is one of the most reproduced and mentioned of his works. Among the various art historians and critics who discussed the painting, a few recognize the complex similarities in the characters of Benjamin and Kitaj. This detailed analysis will portray Kitaj in regard to his treatment of Benjamin in his text and painting and in his own statements.

Significantly, the use of a text to accompany a visual image, is discussed in Benjamin's essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." Kitaj must have recognized in Benjamin's writing, confirmation of his own previous practice of coordination between text and image. In his discussion of photography in his prophetic essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," an essay
from which André Malraux drew for his philosophy of art,\textsuperscript{32} Benjamin elucidated on the meaninglessness of the image without the word.

At the same time picture magazines begin to put up signposts for the viewer right ones or wrong ones, no matter. For the first time, captions have become obligatory. And it is clear that they have an altogether different character than the title of a painting. The directives which the captions give to those looking at pictures in illustrated magazines soon become even more explicit and more imperative in the film where the meaning of each single picture appears to be prescribed by the sequence of all preceding ones.\textsuperscript{33}

Kitaj's text, like a huge caption in a newspaper, directs one's interpretation of the painting. A meaninglessness surrounds the painting which can only be filled in by the addition of a text. The opening paragraphs of the essay conflate in synopsis form elements of Benjamin's terms, style and ideas with his history.

Walter Benjamin was a German-Jewish writer who raised the work of "criticism" to its highest levels in our time. He used strange and difficult methods of bringing together images from texts and from the world, not uninfluenced by surrealism (his disciple Adorno calls them CITATIONS). His cabalistic addiction to FRAGMENTS and the incomplete nature of his work (the Gestapo at his heels) has left behind an unusual legacy in which some say the parts do not make a whole. Adorno said that the PICTURE-PUZZLE distinguished everything he ever wrote.

We are introduced in the first paragraph to Benjamin's prominent stature and to the unique characteristics of his style. Adorno, Benjamin's friend and only protégé, Kitaj
explained in his appended text, distinguished Benjamin's style of writing, his special form of expression, by the term CITATIONS.

Citations appear to refer to Benjamin's combinations of individual fragments, quotations, references to social and historical experiences, that is, his gathering of concise, often esoteric facts. Benjamin's writings are characterized by abstract concepts developed through the use of such references. Kitaj defines the term "citations" in his own words. The painter, in discussion of his admiration for Benjamin, mentions "the impossible-to-categorize quality of his creative, highly fragmented texts." He alludes to Benjamin's citations in comparison to his screenprints for the Mahler suite:

They're kind of nutty but maybe not so bad as citations (in Benjamin's practice), aberrant quotations and pickings from the world.  

Citations seem to be Benjamin's method of the banding together of many heterogeneous materials in his works as he evolves contrasts and arguments. The philosopher/critic typically provides a vast number of examples of authors, artists, historical events and quotations as substantive material with which to present his often revolutionary thoughts on various traditions and hierarchies. Kitaj in his essay borrows many of Benjamin's citations and even uses the term as a way to categorize specific elements of his text.
Kitaj continues to characterize Benjamin's style of writing with such passages as his "cabalistic addiction to FRAGMENTS" and his reference to the PICTURE-PUZZLE. These descriptions delineate the German critic's typically fragmented style of writing in which he developed ideas by fusion of multiple references. His elliptical text, Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century, is a collage of allusively pieced observations collected in his notebooks and divided in six sections. Because of his assemblage of references, his use of learned quotations, his complex ideas typically take on many levels of meaning as he views the progress of his era through his critical writings.

To further the relevance of Kitaj's borrowing of terms in his text, it is necessary to mention Benjamin speculated about the function of collecting fragments from the traditional, historic past, and introducing them into the changing present. Benjamin once wrote:

Quotations in my works are like robbers by the roadside who make an armed attack and relieve an idler of his convictions.35

Kitaj's application of the term PICTURE-PUZZLE aptly portrays Benjamin's style of writing. Kitaj recognized how Benjamin provided his readers with far reaching and provocative issues through the evolution of dialectical imagery and informs us.
It will be demonstrated how many of these complex methods of writing are paralleled in Kitaj's work. Comparisons can be drawn between the compositional practices of both figures.

Kitaj's treatment of the fragment shows concerns similar to the above. Like the images in the painting, Kitaj's recondite text is loosely arranged and creates no total unity. His written work, which functions like a system of footnotes or a libretto, is composed of many fragments, some of them arcane in meaning. Kitaj employs quotations from a variety of sources -- master compositions, engravings, and from the mass media, such as photographs and even movie stills. The term PICTURE-PUZZLE can also apply to Kitaj who puts together complex images, conflations of familiar motifs, to develop ideas which extend beyond the narrative.

Kitaj's text adds to the weight of the painting as we learn more about Benjamin's death and his major projects, the artist continues:

He killed himself in that very autumn of 1940 which saw the fall of France. Benjamin's great uncompleted work about Paris described that city in its era of emergent capitalism as a version of hell ("in which the inhabitants of Saturn take a breath of air in the evening"). Baudelaire was Benjamin's prominent guide through that hell and my own picture is set in the autumn time before Benjamin's suicide which foresaw a tyranny worse than any Baudelaire had mocked or Blanqui had conspired against . . .
Adapted from the opening paragraph of Kitaj's text, the references are both informative and difficult to decode. Careful analysis is problematic without citation of bibliographic references to specific Benjamin texts. The impact of the German occupation and in particular its victimization of Benjamin, is emphasized by Kitaj's complex choice of allusions. The artist's quotation "in which the inhabitants of Saturn take a breath of air in the evening" is taken from Benjamin's essay "Grandville, or the World Exhibition" in *Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century*. Benjamin's identification with Saturn and the melancholic temperament is replete in the literature to which Kitaj turned for this autobiographical description:

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. 36

Benjamin, we learn, died with *Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century*, an elliptical exposé of his projected book *Arcades*, his magnus opus, left incomplete in his briefcase at his tragic suicide on the Franco-Spanish border in 1940. A regime, Kitaj elaborated, more repressive than the imperial governments Blanqui, the nineteenth century revolutionary, fought against. The time period in which the painting is set, previously difficult to discern, becomes
clear with the appended text. In spite of the information provided by the essay, the artist again assumes his viewers' familiarity with such leading radical figures in French history as Louis-Auguste Blanqui (1805-81), who is considered to be the first Communist.

Compositional influences are then treated by Kitaj. It is here we recognize the intensity and depth with which he has studied Benjamin's forms and ideas and included them into his own language of painting.

As to the general composition of this picture, had in mind not only Benjamin's own MONTAGE methods (which he considered an "agitational usage") but also other models in his parlance...See Benjamin on: THE DIORAMA ("for the last time, in these DIORAMAS, the worker appeared, away from his class, as a STAGE-EXTRA in an IDYLL"); THE REVERIE (café-life as AN AUTUMNAL REVERIE of bourgeois society); NATURE-MORTE.

It is from this second paragraph we learn much about ideas governing the design of the composition. The style of Benjamin's writing, Kitaj tells us, is also characterized by MONTAGE. Benjamin explained his method of "heightened descriptiveness" incorporates montage into history. "The work must develop the art of quoting without quotation marks to the highest point. Its theory is most closely linked to that of montage."37

We recognize Kitaj's adaptation of montage in this painting. Kitaj's biographer, Marco Livingstone, discussed the artist's way of putting together complex images in his
compositions through immersion in reproductions of all kinds. His use of photographic data in Autumn of Central Paris accentuates the montage-like character of his work here and elsewhere.

Kitaj recommends the following in his essay:

See Benjamin on: THE DIORAMA

He continues to use the scholar's citations and also reveals hints about his own composition.

THE DIORAMA ("for the last time in these DIORAMAS, the worker appeared, away from his class, as a STAGE EXTRA in an IDYLL"); THE REVERIE (café-life as AN AUTUMNAL REVERIE of bourgeois society); NATURE-MORTE.

Such references as THE DIORAMA, for example, supplement the picture. The term is from "Daguerre, or the Panoramas," one of the six sections, in Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century. The DIORAMA, Benjamin defined, was a symbol for the revolution in the relationship of art to technology. It represents an encapsulated outmoded view of the world now torn down by industrialization. An illustration of the term DIORAMA, which shows Benjamin's interest in the history of photography follows:

In 1839 Daguerre's diorama was burned down. In the same year he announced the invention of the daguerrotype.

The Diorama was the creation of Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre (1787-1851). It was a huge, special structure with enormous 72-by-46 foot canvases, which was as popular in
Paris as the movies are in our day and met about the same need for entertainment, travel and illusion.\textsuperscript{39} In the Diorama Daguerre painted tremendous canvases so astonishingly realistic that visitors believed they were three-dimensional constructions in the building. For his gigantic canvases created with translucent and opaque paints, he invented shutters and screens to control the natural light that entered through the windows; and he further developed spectacular effects in some scenes by manipulating oil lamps as spots and using gaslight for even more novel illusionary effects. The Paris Diorama was Daguerre's crowning achievement as the creator of imposing spectacles.

Leen in his dissertation proposed that the Diorama theme is an important indication of the thought that dominates the whole painting.\textsuperscript{40} The function of the Diorama with its illusionistic effects can be paralleled to \textit{The Autumn of Central Paris}. Like one of Daguerre's huge canvases we can regard the experience of seeing Kitaj's painting as if looking into a scene. The kind of life-like qualities Daguerre created for his paintings in the Diorama can be tied to Leen's suggestion that the painting does actualize the reality Kitaj seeks to portray.

We realize the extensiveness of Kitaj's goals with his essay, yet the function of the Diorama and the subsequent development of the daguerrotype \textsuperscript{41} are essential for
understanding of Kitaj's arcane references to Benjamin's essay and Leen's idea.

Another guide to the design of the composition is found in the reference "For the last time the worker appears, outside his class, as a stage-extra for an idyll." This quotation from the same section "Daguerre, or the Panoramas" in Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century is identified by Benjamin as panoramic literature. Into this category he placed Le Livre des cent-et-un, Les Francais peints par eux-mêmes, Le Diable à Paris, La Grande Ville. He coined this term as he explained:

They consist of isolated sketches, the anecdotal form of which corresponds to the plastic background of the panorama, and their informational base to its painted background. This literature is also panoramic in a social sense.42

In the pages of these texts, which have influenced the works of major nineteenth century French painters, various figures are sketched in costumes which indicate their particular occupations. Kitaj places his red worker with his pickaxe in the foreground of a contemporary panorama. Based on Benjamin's passage from "Daguerre, or the Panoramas," we realize the position of the worker and his relation to the other characters.

. . . the worker appeared, away from his class, as a STAGE-EXTRA in an IDYLL); THE REVERIE (café life as AN AUTUMNAL REVERIE of bourgeois society); NATURE-MORTE.
As a narrative element of the painting, the red figure frames the scene as he is formally outside. The other actors set inside the space of the diorama are, by contrast, the artist writes in the closing line of this paragraph, part of a REVERIE, that is, café life as AN AUTUMNAL REVERIE of bourgeois society. We learn in this description the different social classes represented in the painting. The reference NATURE-MORTE may allude to the still life-like quality of this gathering.

In the following paragraph of the essay we recognize again Benjamin's ideas and Kitaj's absorption of these influences as further examination is made of the general composition of this picture.

The COLLAGE implication in Benjamin's treatment of THE BARRICADE is a paramount source for this composition. Benjamin cites the barricade metaphors over and over again such as this one from Hugo's "Les Misérables": "broken irregular outlines, profiles of strange constructions."

Kitaj's text helps us recognize the pile up of figures on the left margin of the painting, which has been referred to as a "barricade of human bodies." The artist's application of ready-made fragments, montaged together in what Kitaj has called a "pile-up or barricade" of imagery was designed to correspond to Benjamin's use of the barricade metaphor. The term Barricades has significant levels of meaning for the painting. Kitaj's inclusion has important literary and art historical precedents. Barricades have been
associated with Paris and its revolts as seen in Liberty Leading the People (1830; Plate LIX) by Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863) or the contemporaneous scene of rescue at the barricades in Victor Hugo's Les Misérables (1862). Later recordings of street fighting during the Revolution of 1848 such as in The Barricade, Rue de la Mortellerie (June 1848), (1848; Plate LX) by Ernest Meissonier (1815-1891) and an anonymous lithograph Storming a Barricade, Rue Perdve (1848; Plate LXI) continue this motif. In addition to Benjamin's texts for the Barricade theme, we learn of a popular art form which appears to have inspired Kitaj. His assemblage of characters under the canopy shares a similar pyramidal dispersal as seen in this movie poster (Plate LXII), identified among his sources:

There is another influence behind the PILE-UP (BARRICADE) of figures in this picture: THE MOVIE POSTER which arranged figures in this way through many years. This source is not exactly in Benjamin but it does accord with his interest in DREAMKITSCH arising from "shocklike flashes" which he saw the surrealists derive from obsolete popular imagery.

From the essay we recognize Kitaj's astute use of the barricade motif as metaphor and his desire to consciously emulate Benjamin. His own interest in film, a mutual concern he shared with the philosopher, appears in this paragraph. The reference to pile of images will recur again in the text.

Kitaj elaborates in the essay Benjamin's ideas on the roles of the artist. His selected terms are important to the
understanding of specific elements within the painting.

Benjamin thought that the artist is compelled to assume roles that look subversive but are, in fact, harmless.

POET-BEGGAR-DETECTIVE-FLÂNEUR-POLICE-SPY-SECRET AGENT and above all, BOHEMIAN (he said that the CONSPIRATORS, without exception, belonged to this last group and saw in the real leaders of the proletariat their adversaries.)

Benjamin's opinions on the various roles of the artist undoubtedly interested him. From Kitaj's own statements a multidimensional portrait of the artist emerges in analysis of these citations. The terms DETECTIVE, POLICE SPY and SECRET AGENT indicate Benjamin regarded the artist as a person who was one involved in research and intrigue. While the terms BEGGAR and BOHEMIAN perpetuate the stereotypical image of the poor artist. The role of the artist as POET infers his heightened sensibility. The terms FLÂNEUR and CONSPIRATORS will be lost on many viewers.

The flâneur, discussed in the essay "A Painter of Modern Life" by Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), the famous French poet and critic of the arts, and in Benjamin's writings, is a complex role in Kitaj's portrayal of the philosopher. According to Benjamin, the man of the crowd is no flâneur. In him, composure has given way to manic behavior. The flâneur, Benjamin wrote, becomes deeply involved with the crowd, only to relegate them to oblivion with a single glance...
of contempt; and this ambivalence, for him, is 'the most
dramatic manifestation of the power of knowledge.'

The unique relationship of the flâneur, part of the role
of the artist, adds an element of difficulty to the essay.
The last paragraph of the essay provides insights into the
nature of Benjamin's personality.

Hannah Arendt called Benjamin "the most peculiar
Marxist ever produced by the movement, which God
knows has had its full share of oddities." He was
said to have aroused hatred and horrified rejection
(not from Nazis alone). Like Hugo he saw the
promise of a democratic future in urban turbulence.
In fact, he looked for THE PROMISE OF HAPPINESS in
almost everything.

Kitaj's amusing characterization of Benjamin's
personality is only fully appreciated through familiarity
with the observations of the political philosopher Hannah
Arendt (1906-75), professor at the New School for Social
Research and author of The Human Condition and On Revolution.

Kitaj's comments are substantiated by the scholarly
literature. While Benjamin had a number of close and lasting
friendships with other thinkers of his era, among them
playwright Berthold Brecht, he was primarily devoted to the
life of the solitary writer. Divorced and unhappy when not
in love, the Benjamin biographies are filled with anecdotes
marking his peculiarities. Kitaj's synopsis of the
philosopher's personal traits enriches the contents of his
painting.
Analysis of Kitaj's list of WORKING NOTES and CITATIONS provides a strong narrative element, which we will soon realize, is undeniably present. The contents of these terms itemized following the opening paragraphs range from the concrete to the abstract. Many of the WORKING NOTES and CITATIONS elaborate ideas hinted at in the main body of the text and are thus of assistance. We will better understand details, already discussed, from these. The initial ten WORKING NOTES offer us a number of insights.

SOME WORKING NOTES FOR THIS PICTURE
SOME BENJAMIN CATEGORIES (use in picture):

CITY AS OPEN-AIR INTERIOR (past which the LIFE OF THE CITY moves along)
THE SMOKERS
THE PASSERBY (see Baudelaire's poem of this name)
MEN-ABOUT-TOWN
RUMOUR AND IDLENESS
THE COCOTTE in her DISGUISES
MARX'S "OCCASIONAL CONSPIRATORS"
TYPES (Benjamin on PHYSIOLOGIES)
THE SWIFT GLANCE

We learn from these WORKING NOTES important facts, for example, that Kitaj's site is set in a CITY AS OPEN-AIR INTERIOR (past which the LIFE OF THE CITY moves along). This WORKING NOTE suggests two possible gathering sites typical of the city of Paris. Kitaj's description of the city recalls perhaps the galleries created by the elegant nineteenth century glass arcades, mentioned above, which Benjamin frequented and analyzed in his writings. These covered arcades, which initially appeared in Paris ca. 1800, can be found throughout the city from the Palais Royal to the
Faubourg St. Denis. The still operative Galerie Véro-Dodat, established in 1826, one of the "passages couverts" discussed by Benjamin, is constructed of a metal and glass roof (Plate LXIII). Lined with boutiques and a restaurant, the primarily glass-covered arcade has a patterned black and white tiled floor and wall surfaces delineated by a decorative cornice and stained wooden Corinthian pilasters. The reference to CITY AS OPEN-AIR INTERIOR could also allude to the café. An integral part of the daily routine of many Parisians, it is at the café where people gather to eat their croissants and petit pains with black coffee while reading, writing or watching others. The café or the glass arcade may be here indicated.

Most of the subsequent terms facilitate the development of an urban scene filled with the pace and types associated with the city. Such WORKING NOTES as THE SMOKERS, MEN-ABOUT-TOWN, RUMOR and IDLENESS, THE COCOTTE in her DISGUISES, MARX'S "OCCASIONAL CONSPIRATORS," TYPES (Benjamin on PHYSIOLOGIES) and THE SWIFT GLANCE elaborate Kitaj's thoughts on the characterization of an urban ambiance, whether actualized or not. His interest in the depiction of different types in his café setting is manifested in these notes.

Kitaj incorporated Baudelairian references in his painting and text in a fragmented manner. The correspondence he established between Baudelaire and Benjamin, which will be
explained, requires the viewer's familiarity with the literature of Marxist aesthetics. Kitaj recognized the philosopher's great appreciation for Baudelaire's view of Paris. We learn already in the opening paragraph of the essay the importance Baudelaire held for Benjamin as the Marxist's spiritual guide to Paris. Benjamin appears to have been the first to suggest the deep affinities between Marx and Baudelaire.48

It was Benjamin, in his series of brilliant essays on Baudelaire, who was the first to grasp the great depth and richness of his prose poems. Benjamin identified with Baudelaire's flânerie, his intellectual journeys of exploration. He regarded himself as a flâneur, whose indulgent perambulations enabled him to study the physiognomy of the big city.

The WORKING NOTE that mentions Baudelaire's "THE PASSERBY" adds to the richness of the contents of the painting. The appearance of the blonde haired woman with black dress, who holds a child, as she stands away from the group, seems to be a reference to one of the Symbolist poet's images in "À Une Passante." Kitaj's figure recalls the transitory nature of the woman in the crowd in Baudelaire's sonnet. She does not totally match Baudelaire's physical description in this excerpt as she tempts the poet's fantasy in his Tableaux Parisiens:
The deafening street was screaming all around me. Tall, slender, in deep mourning - majestic grief -
A woman made her way, with fastidious hand
Raising and swaying festoon and hem;
Agile and noble, with her statue's limbs.
And there was I, who drank, contorted like a madman,
Within her eyes - that livid sky where hurricane is born,
Gentleness that fascinates, pleasure that kills.

A lightning flash . . . then night! -
Lovely fugitive whose glance has brought me back to life! But where is life - not this side of eternity? . . .

Far from here! Too late! or maybe, never?
For I know not where you flee, you know not where I go,
O you I would have loved (o you who knew it too!)

This WORKING NOTE requires the viewer's knowledge of the poem in order to see Kitaj's crowd imagery. The mood evoked by Baudelaire in this passage, indicating the woman's fleeting presence, suggests a hopelessness, a missing joy and passion. Glimpsed momentarily, she is also significantly a sign of the flâneur's relationship to the crowd.

Benjamin, clearly fascinated by the poem, discussed the moment of this anonymous encounter. He described the woman in the poem as being "mysteriously borne along by the crowd into the poet's field of vision. She is an apparition in the crowd, dissolved back into it at the very moment of 'exchange' with the poet's eyes; yet that moment is then sealed with a uniqueness." 49 The flâneur/ writer idealizes her as she rapidly passes by. Benjamin described this moment
as 'Love not at first sight, but at last sight.'

Furthermore he characterized this moment as the typical urban experience for the flâneur in his analysis of the poem.

The remaining WORKING NOTES are esoteric terms from Benjamin's essays. They extend our knowledge of the subject of Kitaj's painting and essay as well as reveal to us his familiarity with the Benjamin literature. The following WORKING NOTES as will be explained and defined:

- CROWD AS REFUGE (of the criminal, the agent and of love which eludes the poet)
- CHANGE (as a guide through city life)
- GOSSIP (erotic and political innuendo, shifting argot)
- PROSTITUTION (the life of the erotic person in the crowd)
- FETISHISM (as the "vital nerve of FASHION")
- ALLEGORY ("Everything, for me, becomes ALLEGORY" - Baudelaire)

The WORKING NOTE, CROWD AS REFUGE (of the criminal, the agent and of love which eludes the poet), refers to the ideas of both Baudelaire and Benjamin. Kitaj's source for this term and its parenthetical remarks, to be clarified, is adapted from Benjamin's essay "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire."

The artist cited a text in which Benjamin discussed the pervasiveness of the crowd motif in the work of Baudelaire as well as in other writers and artists. The philosopher analyzed Baudelaire's absorption with the presence of the mass, which he defined is always the crowd of a big city, in Les Fleurs du Mal and its "secret presence" in "Tableaux Parisiens."
Kitaj's parenthetical line "of love which eludes the poet" refers to Baudelaire. Although the crowd is nowhere named in either word or phrase in his sonnet "À Une Passante" the whole happening, the unique kind of sexual shock of falling in love with a woman who happens to be on the street, hinges on it. 52

The viewer can unfortunately not be expected to know Benjamin's insightful nineteenth century study of the crowd which extends the meaning of Kitaj's text. Benjamin covers, for example, Hugo's treatment of the crowd in Les Misérables and Les Travailleurs de la Mer, Poe's "The Man of the Crowd," and Engels' dismay with the crowd. 53

The viewer will not be able to identify Kitaj's parenthetical notation "of the criminal." Benjamin in his essay "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" examined the emotions which the big city crowd aroused in those who first observed it. Horror, fear and revulsion were common reactions as he illustrated with reference to the paintings of James Ensor (1860-1949).

Benjamin cited the criminal element in the crowd found in the inclusion of military groups in Ensor's carnival mobs. The philosopher noted how Ensor confronted the wildness and savagery of the crowd:

The crowd and the military both got along splendidly - as the prototype of totalitarian states, in which the police make common cause with the looters. 54
The WORKING NOTE "CROWD AS REFUGE" (of the criminal, the agent and of love which eludes the poet) extends the meaning of the painting, yet it is impossible for the viewer to know these factors.

Such WORKING NOTES as CHANGE (as a guide through city life) and GOSSIP (erotic and political innuendo, shifting argot) indicate to us ideas Kitaj pondered for his painting which reflect the flavor of the city. His incorporation of PROSTITUTION (the life of the erotic person in the crowd) adds to this ambiance.

The last two WORKING NOTES, FETISHISM and ALLEGORY, are most difficult to decipher because of their esoteric nature. As seen in the earlier discussions of Kitaj's texts from the 1960's, his choices clearly limit his audiences.

The incorporation of FETISHISM (as the "vital nerve of FASHION") presents a term from Benjamin's essay "Grandville, or the World Exhibitions" in Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century. This particular writing focuses on capitalism and its emblem the commodity. This phenomenon of capitalist society was described by Marx in the nineteenth century as characteristic of economic human beings. Fetishism, a state of consciousness in which we do not see the whole for the parts, is often discussed in Benjamin's writings. His theory, which Kitaj must have read, considered fetishism as typical of the ordinary everyday experience of modern human
beings. This fragmented reality of modern society he
suggests estranges human beings from their own experience.55

The "vital nerve of FASHION" Kitaj's parenthetical entry
also extends beyond the perimeters of the painting. Benjamin
felt the ritual of fashion, as Kitaj selected in this WORKING
NOTE, was the final triumph of commodity fetishism in which,
he stated, the living body is prostituted to the inorganic
world and succumbs to it a sex appeal.56 Benjamin was
fascinated by fashion as the epitome of his Grundfrage,
(fundamental question) "the line between reality and
appearance."57 He also believed particularly for women
"fashion prescribes the ritual according to which the
commodity fetish wishes to be worshipped."58 Kitaj's
incorporation of this arcane citation FETISHISM indicates
Benjamin's criticism of the enthronement of merchandise, as
he articulated, in particular, the powers of fantasy fashion
possesses. The final WORKING NOTE will also, because of the
lack of bibliographic reference, challenge the viewer.
ALLEGORY ("Everything, for me, becomes ALLEGORY" -
Baudelaire) is a key to Benjamin's character and writing
style. The WORKING NOTE which delineates ALLEGORY indicates
Kitaj's awareness of Benjamin's selective focus in his work
and thought.

Understanding of the meaning of ALLEGORY enriches the
study of Kitaj's painting. Benjamin defines his use of
allegory with the Baudelairian phrase "Tout pour moi devient
Allégorie," which is the opening quotation and motto of his essay "Baudelaire, or the Streets of Paris" in Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century. Kitaj's adaptation of this phrase, which Benjamin read in Baudelaire's "Le Cygne," reveals the nature of the philosopher's temperament, an element which determined what he chose to write about.

Kitaj's text provides no guidelines as to the importance of allegory for Benjamin. Benjamin transmuted allegory into philosophical argument in his analyses of various writers. "The only pleasure the melancholic permits himself, and it is a powerful one, is allegory," Benjamin wrote in The Origin of German Tragic Drama, his study of seventeenth century baroque dramas. He interpreted German baroque plays as allegories of historical pessimism. The baroque, he described, was a world of things (emblems, ruins) and spatialized ideas (allegories are in the realm of thought, what ruins are in the realm of things). Ruins take on importance for Benjamin, we will later see.

Allegory, the process which extracts meaning from the petrified and insignificant, is for Benjamin the characteristic method of the German baroque drama, of Baudelaire, and of his own major subjects. Allegory, Benjamin asserted, is the way of reading the world typical of melancholics and Kitaj's quotation of Baudelaire's statement: "Everything for me becomes Allegory" bonds Benjamin to the same artistic sensibility. Identifying with the melancholic
Baudelaire, he projected himself, his temperament, through his use of allegory.

In Kitaj's essay the terms labeled as CITATIONS lead us more directly towards identification of the figures in the composition, but here, too, issues of identification arise. Kitaj's CITATIONS provide narrative dimensions to the painting:

PROLETARIAT driven out of CENTRAL PARIS (title)
leading to emergence of a RED BELT (margins of picture)

This CITATION refers to a part of the historical background of Kitaj's setting in Paris, yet a bibliographic notation is needed. Kitaj responds to Anthony Sutcliffe's Autumn of Central Paris. The artist is informed by Sutcliffe's treatment of the recent destruction of the Halles area and the consequent expulsion of the lower classes in his CITATION and in the title of the painting. The exodus of the proletariat from the right bank center of Paris, noted in the CITATION, is examined in detail in The Autumn of Central Paris, a study of the defeat of town planning in Paris from 1850-1970.

Sutcliffe summarized major urban renewal projects during these 120 years. Without reference to Sutcliffe's book, many viewers will remain unaware of the decline of central Paris and its relationship to the working classes, social history which enhances the meaning of Kitaj's painting. We learn from Autumn of Central Paris, which is derived from
Sutcliffe's University of Paris dissertation, that the area of the market halls of Zola's *Ventre de Paris*, was filled with commercial activities and a very poor population, many of whom worked at the Halles. The information he presents facilitates better understanding of Kitaj's setting. He states it was clear that the departure of the Halles would deprive the area of its activities and some of its population, after which it could only degenerate into a total slum. Sutcliffe, predicted the area would decline further and grow poorer. "They will prolong the present ossification of the centre and accentuate the deterioration of its fabric." 62

The uninformed viewer cannot recognize in *The Autumn of Central Paris* Kitaj's opposition to this unsatisfactory state of affairs. It is unlikely the gallery goer will realize that the red bars around the upper left corner of the painting which form a frame-like effect for Kitaj's contemporary diorama refer to precise words from Benjamin's study "Haussmann, or the Barricades," a section of *Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century*. 63

The reference to the appearance of the red belt in central Paris is part of a longer historical account in which Benjamin described some of the circumstances of the proletariat. His explanation of their plight is related to the development of the red belt which seems to be recalled by
the red bars in the painting. The following is an excerpt of his review of precipitating events:

Haussmann attempted to strengthen his dictatorship and to place Paris under an emergency regime. In 1864 he expressed in a parliamentary speech his hatred for the rootless population of the great city in a speech in the Assembly. This population kept increasing as a result of his works. The increase of rents drove the proletariat into the suburbs (Faubourgs). The Paris quartiers thereby lost their characteristic physiognomy. The red belt appeared. Haussmann gave himself the name of "artist in demolition." He felt himself called to his work and stresses this in his memoirs. Meanwhile, as far as the Parisians were concerned, he estranges Parisians from their city. They no longer felt at home in it. They began to become conscious of the inhuman character of the great city.64

The red bars painted on two sides of the composition may be interpreted as delineating the outlying districts of Paris in which the poor now had to live. The painting appears to relate not only to Benjamin's tragic suicide as he fled Paris in Autumn, 1940, but also to these specific issues facing the urban poor. The painting can be regarded as recalling separate historical moments. It refers to the past Paris of Walter Benjamin and the Paris of Kitaj.

The shattered glass ruins behind the pretty woman in the red coat seems to allude to the occupation of Paris in Fall, 1940 and to the modern destruction of the city. The rubble created in the center of Paris is perhaps connected to the activity of the red worker with his axe involved in urban renewal.
The following CITATION indicates the identity of the figure who walks away from the crowd into the distance:

ANGEL OF HISTORY - IDLE STROLLER face turned 'toward the past,' blown backwards into the future by the storm of progress while the pile of ruins before him grows skyward (PILE-UP of images).

It is unlikely that the viewer will know that the terms ANGEL OF HISTORY and PILE-UP of images, a previous reference, are specific to Benjamin and his view of historical progress. The ANGEL OF HISTORY, as will be clarified, is a label of personal significance to Benjamin. The viewer can associate the man walking into the distance as corresponding to IDLE STROLLER, yet the important identity of the stroller will be complex to establish.

The citation is borrowed from Benjamin's discussion of Angelus Novus (1920; Plate LXIV), a watercolor by Paul Klee (1879-1940), in the ninth section of his Marxist "Theses on the Philosophy of History," written in Spring, 1940. The angel in Klee's painting fascinated the philosopher as noted in the following passage. By metaphorical means Benjamin envisioned the angel in Klee's painting as the "angel of history":

A Klee painting named "Angelus Novus" shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling ruin upon ruin 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 what we call progress.65

The viewer will be unaware that Kitaj was inspired by Benjamin's powerful metaphor. The vision of "ruin upon ruin" (PILE-UP of images) seems to be translated into the montage-like character of the painting with its stacked pyramid of separate figures. The image of the ruin was to Benjamin the allegorical emblem par excellence. Kitaj's use of this key term is significant. For Benjamin the works of man are reabsorbed into the landscape; the ruins thus stand for history as an irreversible process of dissolution and decay; a progressive distancing from origin.66

Kitaj adapts imagery from Benjamin's conception of historical life as a vast heap of ruins that grows continuously higher with the passage of time. Benjamin's imagery proposes a storm of progress as blowing from Paradise. He perceives a mysterious relation existing between the pile of debris that represents progress (the storm) and Paradise, though they seem to lie at opposite ends of the continuum of history. The further Klee's angel is blown helplessly along the path of progress, the higher the pile of ruins that accumulates, and the further it seems to travel from the "source" of the storm, from Paradise.67
Kitaj's citation, which reflects Benjamin's theory of history as a process of incessant decay, corresponds to the role of the figure walking away from the group. Scholars who have analyzed this essay, noted, "The angel walks into a future into which he does not look at all and will never look. The angel does not move forward into the future, but has his face turned toward the past." The creature, who is blown by a storm from Paradise, can be interpreted as a manifestation of the flâneur, more easily identifiable as IDLE STROLLER. The similarities of Klee's angel and Benjamin have been recognized:

In this angel, which Benjamin saw in Klee's Angelus Novus, the flâneur experiences his final transfiguration. For just as the flâneur, through the gestus of purposeless strolling, turns his back to the crowd even as he is propelled and swept by it, so the "angel of history," who looks at nothing but the expanse of ruins of the past, is blown backwards into the future by the storm of progress.

Benjamin had personal attachment to his Klee watercolor, Angelus Novus. The philosopher had a secret name "Agesilaus Santander," which was an anagram of The Angel Satan (Der Angelus Satanas). The choice of name turned on the figure in Klee's work. Benjamin bought the Klee painting in 1921 in Munich. When he fled from Paris in June 1940, he stored his papers in two suitcases, along with this picture, which he considered his most important possession and kept them hidden in the Bibliothèque Nationale for protection. Benjamin cut
the picture out of the frame and stuffed it into one of the suitcases.\textsuperscript{71} Clearly such a complex citation would aid the conscientious viewer by the inclusion of a bibliographic reference.

The next CITATION refers to the red worker and has staggered interpretations.

\begin{verbatim}
MAN WITH PICKAXE . . BLANQUI's MEN BENEATH STREETS (use photo of "El Campesino" labouring in France after leaving Russia)
\end{verbatim}

The man with the pickaxe, whose blows may cause the glass to still tremble, is a representative of the proletariat class as denoted by his red costume and occupation. The Spanish term "El Campesino" means a country worker. Kitaj's source, a photo of a laborer whose home is identified "in France after leaving Russia" indicates the worker must be one of the many foreign guest laborers who seeks better wages in western European nations.

To develop an image of class struggle, Kitaj, again assuming his viewer's acquaintance with Blanqui, alludes to his red working class type in conjunction with the nineteenth century revolutionary figure. More precisely, BLANQUI'S MEN BENEATH STREETS indicates the radical character of the laborer with the pickaxe. This worker, according to Blanqui and his followers found his only solution in revolution against the system.
Louis-Auguste Blanqui believed that the equality of the working class was linked to perpetual struggle, which had to be violent. In 1839 he was imprisoned by the Orléanist monarchy, but was released in 1848 by the revolutionary government. During this year he advocated class warfare, Saint-Simonian types of associations, as a way toward Communism. He immediately founded the Central Republican Society to work against the government which freed him. Jailed again, he was deported from France. Granted a pardon by Napoleon III, he returned to France and was arrested and deported a second time in 1869. Again he was allowed to return to France, where he agitated against Leon Gambetta and the government of National Defense. He participated in many plots and was frequently jailed. We realize from this CITATION the dualistic nature of the laborer. Kitaj's red worker, who picks away at the corrupt society in which he lives, becomes an accomplice and follower of Blanqui and his cause.

An autobiographical dimension appears in the following two CITATIONS:

MAN WITH HEARING-AID . . . the POLICE SPY/SECRET AGENT (who would hear better with an aid).

The man in the gray suit with the hearing aid whose profile is fused with that of Benjamin calls to mind the artist's own hearing aid which he was advised to wear in the late 1960's and has been doing so since the mid-1970's.
Kitaj's response concerning the identity of this figure, "He wears a hearing aid, because I wear one." 72

The next CITATION perhaps reinforces the autobiographical nature of this man.

THE DETECTIVE . . . dreams that he is like an ARTIST

Categorized by his investigative nature as the POLICE SPY/SECRET AGENT, Kitaj seems to link his own occupation with the role of the detective who needs to listen carefully to not miss a word, and thus wears a hearing aid. The viewer can connect the man in the gray suit with his hearing aid as an artist by virtue of the associations established in the CITATIONS with POLICE SPY and SECRET AGENT and the closely related DETECTIVE who dreams that he is like an ARTIST.

This CITATION relates also to one of Benjamin's concepts as stated in Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century. The philosopher used the label "secret agent" to describe Baudelaire. Benjamin designated the poet as a "secret agent" in the enemy camp, "an agent of the secret discontent of his class with its own rule." 73 Baudelaire had renounced the aestheticist pretensions of l'art pour l'art in order to give expression to a world-historical process of social transformation, a fact which distinguishes his writing from that of many of his contemporaries. In Benjamin's view Baudelaire's work was of great significance insofar as it represented the first concerted attempt to destroy from
within the affirmative values of bourgeois aestheticism, the first selfconscious effort to incorporate the contingencies of everyday life into the hitherto sacred preserve of autonomous art - an approach which would henceforth become paradigmatic for the entirety of modernism. "Secret Agent" was an expression of Baudelaire's modernity of vision, which Kitaj recognized in Benjamin's text.

Curiously among Kitaj's last CITATIONS is the reference:

THE WHORE (woman in large hat) . . . seller and commodity in one

Kitaj identifies another of his colorful characters. The parenthetical remark is Benjamin's view on the unique position of the prostitute in the market economy. His definition of the complex nature of her role, "The prostitute is saleswoman and wares in one," is mirrored in Kitaj's text. Benjamin, as mentioned above, while stripping and exposing the relics of capitalism, empathized with the treatment of the prostitute. Benjamin, who in spite of his sensitivity for her plight, considered the prostitute as a dialectical image in his analyses.

The artist addresses, in The Autumn of Central Paris, another correspondence between Benjamin and Baudelaire. The last poem of Fleurs du Mal is significantly alluded to in Kitaj's final CITATION:
THE MAN WALKING AWAY . . . Benjamin's SUICIDE?
(the flâneur's last journey: "death . . . to the depths of the unknown to find something new" — from "Flowers of Evil")

We recognize from Kitaj's CITATION that the man moving towards the horizon apparently symbolizes Benjamin's final trip before his death. The Baudelairian passage sufficiently clarifies this identification. The viewer can then associate the ANGEL OF HISTORY - IDLE STROLLER citation as a reference to Benjamin. The gallery goer will not know the significance of the visual metaphor and its relationship to the lives of Benjamin and Baudelaire. The poem held meaning for Benjamin.

Kitaj appropriately borrowed an excerpt from the philosopher's book in which he wrote, "The Journey": "The last journey of the flâneur: death." Flânerie was the lifestyle of Benjamin in Paris and that which he identified with Baudelaire. Curiously, the flâneur - that drifting relic of a decaying petty bourgeoisie bulks for Benjamin behind Baudelaire's texts. The mind who was to attach much of the nineteenth's century sensibility to the figure of the flâneur, personified by that superbly self-aware melancholic Baudelaire, spun much of his own sensibility out of his phantasmagorical, shrewd, subtle relation to cities.

Benjamin's life in Paris was that of the flâneur. Benjamin in discussing his flânerie described the role of the city "Paris taught me the art of straying." His solitude has been described as "one of the busyness of the idle
stroller, free to daydream, observe, ponder and cruise the city."  

Kitaj established a correspondence between the life of the flâneur Benjamin and the figure evoked in Baudelaire's final poem. Benjamin is represented in his final exploration of the city's true nature, a revelation which came to him, not in his native Berlin, but in Paris. The critic, who Susan Sontag states was what the French call un triste, is alluded by the figure walking towards the horizon, the border between life and death. Kitaj's reference to Benjamin's suicide and his suicidal tendencies is well documented in the literature. The important connection Kitaj establishes between Benjamin's suicide, the man in his painting and Baudelaire's poem lends cohesiveness to his image and text.

The text indicates the importance Kitaj places on knowing the extra-pictorial setting as a means to understanding a great painting. Kitaj's interest, expressed above, "to carry on a dialogue with the work after the artist ceased to be responsible for the keep of the work" is apparent in his involvement with the essay many years after the completion of the painting.

Because of the obscurity of Walter Benjamin, the function of the text is essential. Furthermore the essay serves as a guide to inform us of the history of the philosopher/critic and explain some of the intellectual and stylistic elements of the painting. Kitaj's selected
assemblage of specific terms and ideas taken from Benjamin's books and essays adds density to his work.

It is important to guard ourselves against a too literal interpretation of the painting and the notes. There is much we can recognize in this work without fully understanding. The minor discrepancies noted in the relationship between painting and text in the previous "icons" are gone. The artist instead seems to be reaching out for a discussion of Benjamin beyond the confines of the canvas. We see how he resolves the question raised earlier of ever "finishing" a painting. Given the understanding that the text enriches and extends to an area larger than the scope of the painting, the terms selected are often too arcane for the curious viewer. It should be considered that the inclusion of this esoterica may be only of meaning or value for the artist.

The essay with its richly embedded intellectual content sheds light on the narrative elements. This appendage, with its prose, its list of WORKING NOTES and CITATIONS, functioning in conjunction with the painting, gives rise to the many issues discussed. Kitaj's variety of textual materials, must be regarded as associative elements which ultimately coalesce with the painted elements. Although many of the complex concepts Kitaj cited may be unknown to the viewer, the artist has successfully given a kind of continuing growth to his work. Kitaj has constructed a thought provoking portrait of Benjamin through his
incorporation of text. The Autumn of Central Paris (After Walter Benjamin) indicates, as we have seen, the artist's fascination for the philosopher/critic.

Further examination of Benjamin unravels a profile which has many parallels with our continuing study of Kitaj. In his personal odyssey in which the painter explored various figures involved with twentieth century anti-Semitism, the life of Walter Benjamin held by far the strongest identification for the artist. Kitaj found in the character of Walter Benjamin a real kinship. The philosopher embodied for him a set of similar values, goals and conditions in life by virtue of his religious identity, his artistic sensibility, his social conscience, his life style and interests. These will be enumerated.

Both men are exiles from their own lands. Born in Berlin, Benjamin started his study of philosophy in Freiburg in 1912. His graduate studies continued in Berlin, in Munich, where he concentrated on the study of language partly under the influence of Martin Buber, and in Bern, where he completed his doctoral dissertation on Romantic art criticism and befriended the Dadaist Hugo Ball. In 1920 he returned to Germany and lived there till 1933. In that year he stayed for several months on Ibiza and then went to Paris, where he had resided frequently throughout the Weimar years, and then lived there as a refugee. Throughout these years he worked as a literary journalist and literary critic. He remained in
Paris until his suicide. The philosopher felt himself an exile from nineteenth century Paris whose culture absorbed him. He thought and wrote in a selfconsciously philosophic German and was estranged even before he became a refugee at hazard in Paris in 1940.85

In 1913, when he first visited France as a very young man, the streets of Paris were "almost more homelike"86 to him after a few days than the familiar streets of Berlin. He may have felt even then, and he certainly felt twenty years later, how much the trip from Berlin to Paris was tantamount to a trip in time - not from one country to another, but from the twentieth century back to the nineteenth. There was the nation par excellence whose culture had determined the Europe of the nineteenth century and for which Haussmann had rebuilt Paris, "capital of the nineteenth century," as Benjamin was to call it.87

Benjamin found a number of personal advantages in France. He felt alienated from German intellectual life and more interested in that of Paris. "In Germany I felt quite isolated in my efforts and interests among those of my generation, while in France there are certain forces - the writers Giraudoux and, especially Aragon; the Surrealist movement - in which I see at work what occupies me too," he wrote in a letter.88 Benjamin, in fact, attempted to get French citizenship through the efforts of André Gide and Jean
Giraudoux. He also felt there was greater acceptance of the essayist as a professional in France than in his homeland.

Kitaj is also an exile from his own land. Since 1958 he has spent most of his life as an American in London. He feels connected to the rich tradition of expatriates in England, as stated, "London is home in the sense that it was for Henry James, Eliot, Whistler and Sargent." Like Benjamin, he has chosen to move away from his native country. His exiled status started after his high school graduation. Kitaj has interspersed travel throughout his education and professional life as cited in more concise form in the Introduction.

In 1950 he worked as a messman on a Norwegian cargo ship traveling to Havanna and Mexican ports. This was to be the first of a series of voyages. After his study at the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, in 1951 he obtained American seaman's papers and worked on tankers to Caribbean and Venezuelan ports. He arrived in Europe for the first time in 1951, in addition to his study in Vienna at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste (registered there until 1954), he wandered around Europe and studied masterpieces in various museums. In 1953 he returned to New York and joined the National Maritime Union. As a merchant seaman he sailed to Venezuela, Colombia, Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina.

He married in 1953 an American he met in Vienna and then travelled in Europe and North Africa. In 1954 he shipped out
of New York as a sailor for the last time. Conscripted into the U.S. Army in 1955 he served as an illustrator in an intelligence section of the Armed Forces Central Europe (Headquarters) at Fontainebleau, working in the chateau there. He lived with his wife in the village Thomery-sur-Seine, near many sites painted by the Impressionists.

After his graduations from the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art and the Royal College of Art, in 1970 he lived for a year in Hollywood while he was a visiting professor at the University of California, Los Angeles. In 1977 he stayed for a few months in Switzerland. In 1978–79 he was back in the United States as an artist-in-residence at Dartmouth College and then spent a year in Greenwich Village. In 1982 he lived in Paris. He also makes yearly trips to his residences in Los Angeles and in Sant Feliu de Guixols, a Catalan port city.

Beyond the similar exiled conditions of both men, Benjamin is a quintessential type for Kitaj. Again, the critical and scholarly literature provides us with incisive insights. Wolf Schön in his article "Ein Ewiger Wanderer" (an eternal wanderer) refers to The Autumn of Central Paris "As if it were a painting of himself, it may indicate Kitaj's lifestyle." Schön's observation is accurate. Both men adhere to the life of wandering, flanerie, discussed above as, the acquired art of straying, a surveying which involves critical thought. Benjamin wrote "To lose one's way in a
city, as one loses one's way in a forest, requires practice. 

. . . I learned this art late in life."93 Schön identifies Benjamin in The Autumn of Central Paris as the "hero who is lost in his thoughts and refers to him as the homeless intellectual who is in exile and worries about force and revolution."94

This same involvement with being lost as a means to discovery or enlightenment is evidenced in Kitaj's thoughts. Kitaj has a similar interest in cities and "considers himself a city watcher - a city witness."95 The artist said, "We lose our way in cities; we get lost in books, lost in thought; we are always looking for meaning in our lives as if we'd know what to do with it once we'd found it."96 His statements reflect the same kind of search for self-definition and learning.

Kitaj and Benjamin had an ambivalent relationship to Judaism. Kitaj's biographer Marco Livingstone wrote that like the artist, Benjamin was remote from Judaism and had an awkward relation to it. He also did not know Hebrew and had grown up with neither its religion nor the extension of that religion in Zionism. Kitaj spoke of his relationship to Judaism, "I had no religious or cultural background."97 He also acknowledged, "In recent years I guess I feel more of a Jew, after an agnostic upbringing."98 Benjamin, for many of these reasons, became a personal symbol, a kind of mythic type hero for Kitaj.
The bonds go deeper in that they share similar personal histories. Kitaj's father, Dr. Walter Kitaj, a research chemist from Vienna, as previously stated, fled Nazi oppression and emigrated to the United States, where he lived until his death. The inclusion of a fictive character with a hearing aid in this painting may reveal Kitaj's strong feelings for Benjamin. Although the artist denied this particular figure with the hearing aid was self-portraiture, his presence may reveal Kitaj's attachment to the philosopher. Timothy Hyman aptly observed it was as a type, a predicament, that Kitaj increasingly found Benjamin interesting. Kitaj identified with him as an exiled wanderer. The English critic described the sympathetic bond Kitaj found in Benjamin, "Benjamin's figure was that of the wandering Jew whose critical intelligence prowled or sauntered at large through a world he was not of. Like Kitaj, he is displaced."^99

The following statements indicate further aesthetic and ethical issues Kitaj discovered in Benjamin. Kitaj's own ambitions and concerns are expressed below through his praise for the philosopher with whom he shared personal and intellectual ties.

In the life and work and death of Benjamin, I found a parable and a real analogue to the very methods and ideas I had pursued in my own painting: a shifting urban complex of film-like fragmentation, an additive free-verse of an art . . . ^100
Furthermore, Kitaj has identified in his own words a similar social outlook, a social conscience he finds in Benjamin, as he stated,

That number we all go through — between art and its freedoms, and the possibility that if you're free, other people can't be that free — exercised him in the most important way. 101

Kitaj's attachment to the intellect, poetic sensitivity, and biography of Benjamin is in addition revealed in his essay for The Human Clay, cited earlier, a 1976 exhibition for which the artist was singularly chosen by the Arts Council of Great Britain to select paintings for a year long traveling installment. Kitaj significantly identified his professional goals with Benjamin's. In his statement he seeks a similar independence of mind and a power to elicit incisive thought in his art as he discovered in Benjamin's words. Kitaj, in one of the major essays of his career as an artist, selects a quotation from Hannah Arendt's introductory essay in Illuminations, a compilation of Benjamin's major essays on literary figures. By citing her metaphor for Benjamin as "the pearl diver," he binds his mission to Benjamin's accomplishments:

In Hannah Arendt's beautiful introduction to Benjamin, she likens that wonderful man to a pearl-diver who wrests what he can from the deep past, not to resuscitate the way it was and to contribute to the renewal of extinct ages, but because the rich and strange things he has found in the deep "suffer a sea change" and survive in new form and shape. That is how I want to take human images to
survive - as Arendt put it, ' . . . as though they are waiting only for the pearl diver who one day will come down to them and bring them up into the world of the living.'

In his personal odyssey Kitaj has discovered in the character of Walter Benjamin a man he elevates for his aesthetics, his courageousness, as well as his Jewish identity. He was for Kitaj a figure worthy of emulation. Kitaj found in the character of Benjamin, not only a man who died as a Jew under the Third Reich, but an independently thinking man. Benjamin's complex dialectical style of writing became a source of inspiration for Kitaj's deeply felt passion in regard to his own art. The philosopher's formulations, descriptions of economic and social phenomena, examples of the historical roles of art, literature and theatre as ways to shed light on the present have encouraged and reinforced Kitaj to reach attainment of his own convictions in his art as expressed in the above statements.

Walter Benjamin serves foremost as a metaphor for Kitaj as an artist and a thinker and as a Jew. We have seen again how the origins of his art are consistently connected to the origins and terms of his own life. The Autumn of Central Paris (After Walter Benjamin) is a dedication to a man Kitaj greatly admires. It also functions as an historical document. It is a remembrance of the Occupation in Fall, 1940 and the subsequent flight of Benjamin from Paris. It recalls the demise of the city in that it depicts the
leisured café life style that essentially passed with the realities of the 1940's. Similarly it records Paris during the destruction of the center section of the city in the late 1960's. It is as a personal document that the painting must be here primarily regarded, that is, we see another dimension of Kitaj.
FOOTNOTE REFERENCES


2. Hannah Arendt, Introduction to Illuminations by Walter Benjamin, edited by Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc. 1968), 20-21. The arcades which connect the great boulevards and offer protection from inclement weather exerted such an enormous fascination over Benjamin that he referred to his projected major work on the nineteenth century and its capital simply as "The Arcades" (Passagenarbeit); and these passageways are indeed like a symbol of Paris, because they clearly are inside and outside at the same time and thus represent its true nature in quintessential form.


17. See Genesis 11:1-9
18. See 2 Kings 24-25, Daniel 1-11, and 2 Chronicles 36:5-22.
Movies, and particularly frame-enlargements, have been in my work what engravings and such were for artists in the distant past, what printed illustrations were for painters like Manet and van Gogh, what photographs were for Degas and Cézanne and later for Sickert and Bacon . . . no more and no less.
23. "Histoire du Café des Deux Magots." This three page history of the famous café provided detailed names of the many who frequented it since its opening. On the cover was a
23. "Histoire du Café des Deux Magots." This three page history of the famous café provided detailed names of the many who frequented it since its opening. On the cover was a drawing with Verlaine, Mallarmé and Rimbaud seated at a café table. This unpublished pamphlet was given to me at the café upon request.


31. Jerome Tarshis, "The 'Fugitive Passions' of R.B. Kitaj," *Art News* 75 (October 1976): 42. This author provides relevant remarks about the relationship of the two men. Similarly Marco Livingstone, *R.B. Kitaj*, 22, 28 provides very valuable information, as his text was written on cooperation with the artist. Michael Podro "Some Notes on R.B. Kitaj", pp.19–21 provides Kitaj's text for the painting and brings out the notion that Benjamin could be a kind of hero for Kitaj. His observations, although brief, are very thoughtful.

The other major treatment of this painting in which the two men are considered is not as detailed. See Joe Shannon "The Allegorist: Kitaj and the Viewer" in *R.B. Kitaj*, exhibition catalog, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institute, Washington D.C., September 17–November 15, 1981, 29–30. This author provides even wrong dates of Benjamin's death and place of death. He writes that Benjamin committed suicide in Paris in October 1940. Benjamin killed himself in Port-Bou on the Franco-Spanish border in September 1940.

32. Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis*, 188.

34. Livingstone, *R.B. Kitaj*, 22, 44.


39. Peter Pollack, *The Picture History of Photography* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. 1969), 44. See 46 for a wood engraving of the Diorama. The Paris Diorama burned to the ground on March 8, 1839. It was the Diorama that had brought Daguerre to experiment with photography. On August 19 Daguerre's startling discovery which changed the history of photography was announced.


44. Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 175.

45. Ibid.


52. Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 170. J.A. Hiddleston in *Baudelaire and Le Spleen de Paris* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 34 writes of this poem "The moment in which the poet catches sight of her seems to stand outside time, and this heightening of reality transforms the widow from a 'chose vue' into an allegorical figure of loneliness and disproportion.


54. Ibid., 176.


59. Ibid., 156.

60. Sontag, *Under the Sign of Saturn*, 120.


64. Ibid., 159-60.


71. Ibid., 198-235 in this chapter "Walter Benjamin and His Angel" describes the significance of this painting in detail. The author explains how George Bataille, connected with Benjamin through the Collège de Sociologie, temporarily kept his belongings hidden in the Bibliothèque Nationale. After the war Benjamin's disciple Adorno brought it to America. Benjamin always considered the picture his most important possession, even though he owned another Klee painting.


73. Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire*, 104n


76. Ibid.

77. Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin or Towards a Revolutionary Criticism*, 25.


83. Sontag, *Under the Sign of Saturn*, 132. Sontag explains Benjamin thought that there was a peculiarly modern temptation to suicide. He wrote: The resistance which modernity offers to the natural productive elan of a person is out of proportion to his strength. It is understandable
if a person grows tired and takes refuge in death. Modernity must be under the sign of suicide, an act which seals a heroic will... It is the achievement of modernity in the realm of passions.

She further details his suicidal proclivity by clarifying: Suicide is understood as a response of the heroic will to the defeat of the will. Furthermore in Reflections, 157. Benjamin quoted Virgil's Aeneid in regard to suicide, "The road to Hell is easy (Facilis descensus Averni.)"

86. Benjamin, Briefe, I, ed. by Gershom Scholem and Theodor Adorno, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1966), 56.
88. Benjamin, Briefe, I, 446.
90. Arendt, Introduction to Illuminations, by Walter Benjamin, 23. The editor explains his professional ambitions were directed at a career he felt simply did not exist in Germany, and she astutely notes he chose the French language for expressing this ambition:

"Le but que je m'avais proposé... c'est d'être considéré comme le premier critique de la littérature allemande. La difficulté c'est que, depuis plus de cinquante ans, la critique littéraire en Allemagne n'est plus considérée comme un genre sérieux. Se faire une situation dans la critique, cela... vent dire: la récréer comme genre"

(The goal I set for myself... is to be regarded as the foremost critic of German literature. The trouble is that for more than fifty years literary criticism in Germany has not been considered a serious genre. To create a place in criticism for oneself means to re-create it as a genre") (Briefe II, 505)

91. Tarshis, "The 'Fugitive Passions' of R.B. Kitaj", 42.

93. Sontag, Under the Sign of Saturn, 112.


101. Tarshis, "The 'Fugitive Passions' of R.B. Kitaj", 42.


103. Livingstone, R.B. Kitaj, 30.
CONCLUSION

In Kitaj's attempt to apotheosize historic unhappiness, one of his major goals as a painter, we have seen how he develops the histories of his heroes in these portrait-narratives. Each is elaborated with a multitude of imagery which, when deciphered, further explains his unique circumstances. While his tributes are primarily dedicated to radical thinkers, not all of their deaths were in actuality due to anti-Semitism. Hans and Sophie Scholl died for their activities against the Third Reich and Walter Benjamin alone was directly a victim of the Nazis. The deaths of Rosa Luxemburg and Isaac Babel were not a result of their ethnic origin. Kitaj reiterates his interest in the Jewish tragedies of the early twentieth century, by placing them within this context through an elaborate weaving together of text and imagery.

Kitaj's use of written statements are essential for interpretation of his constructs; they supplement the visual experience. Kitaj evidently finds the use of the written document as having a kind of transforming power, that it
helps the viewer discover meanings and recognize associations of value. He regards the correspondence between the two parts as one of constant flux.

We have noted how the evolution of his texts has become increasingly sophisticated. He has altered and replaced words and added peripheral material aiming at further clarity. Text and image are designed to form in his works a symbiotic synthesis and give rise to new thoughts. Significantly even when Kitaj ceased to publish his densely structured texts for his works, the incorporation of statements in his exhibition catalog, indicated his continued belief in this dualistic mode of presentation.

The critical and scholarly literature, as we have seen, renders many valuable observations and issues with which to ponder and argue. However, analysis of Kitaj's complex synthesis of elements, his conflationary approach to the formulation of a work of art, must be fully recognized for interpretation of his layers of meaning. It is then that the narrative within the body of each picture; the meanings embedded in the nature of his images and their conjuncts take on significance.

Prominent in some of these works under discussion is the personal element. These reflections, which indicate the artist's thoughts and motivations, are often revealed in the
details provided in his written commentaries. Kitaj seems to have developed metaphors with which to assimilate the plights of his select figures, and these can be, it appears, associated with his own life and biography. We can also recognize a number of the artist's concerns and interests through our comprehension of his powerful use of the image and his selection of borrowed motifs to carry meaning.

With his choice of images appropriate to content and retrospective assessment, we are able to identify in each of his portraits consistent elements critical to his own art and life. In Rosa Luxemburg's biography he found circumstances suitable for development of some of his passions. The predicament of this outspoken leader of the international Socialist circuit became a metaphor for the fate of his grandmothers. While the courageness and youthful idealism of Hans and Sophie Scholl can be regarded as a goal or parallel of his own convictions and social conscience.

The achievements and struggles of Isaac Babel and Walter Benjamin certainly held strong interest for him, and they too can be associated with a variety of Kitaj's personal, social and stylistic characteristics. Babel seems to have fascinated Kitaj because of his involvement with violence in his life and in his work. As a creative figure, a man who acted according to his beliefs and did not compromise his
convictions, the character of the Russian writer embodies diverse issues of great concern to the artist and can be regarded as indicative of Kitaj's interests.

The icon to Walter Benjamin is a remembrance of a man Kitaj greatly admires. The artist's published statements, which reveal his desire to emulate Benjamin, and the care and insight with which he has established facts and contributed ideas in The Autumn of Central Paris attest his regard for the philosopher/literary critic. In the life and work of Benjamin he found a type who possesses, to borrow Kitaj's term, a similar "exilic" condition, as well as personal and intellectual bonds. As a wanderer and a highly creative thinker, Benjamin can be considered as another spiritual metaphor for Kitaj.

We realize from these tributes some of Kitaj's own political and religious concerns. Luxemburg, Babel and Benjamin are indicative of his romantic interest in Socialism and Communism, as noted earlier. Also all three of them share with him an ambivalent involvement with Judaism. Through these perusals we recognize how each icon can be regarded as a step towards self-knowledge, self-definition.

His icons reflect, beyond his fascination for intellectual/ radical thinkers from the early twentieth century, Kitaj's interest in his roots. The issue of anti-
Semitism, which is integral to his depictions in these portrait-narratives, is one he has addressed with increasing frequency in his art to the present. It is their Jewish identity, the social/historical problems he saw them facing as Jews, which particularly held his attention.

His tributes show consistencies in terms of their evolution. They reflect his aspiration to create an art of effective moral statement. In each of these portrait studies he has responded to an historical event. Kitaj communicates the experiences of his select heroes with the utmost seriousness of purpose. He provides us not with a mere narration of history lessons; but with his apparent fascination for the esoteric and the ironic, he joins together complex imagery, creating frames of reference that fortify his works and their didactic intentions.

Another consistent component, evidenced here, is his deep interest in the study of subject matter. He searches for and creates meaningful conjunctions of images. His stylistic borrowings bring about a progression of meanings. As we have seen when the viewer recognizes his specific sources, these associations transform the work into a potent formulation of words and images. The significance of one image builds upon the next such that Kitaj's narrative is charged with the intrinsic meaning of often recast motifs.
Another consistency seen in analysis of these four works is his inclusion of art historical, literary, popular culture and musical references which provide multi-levelled meanings. His many allusions to social and cultural history indicate his desire to attain a passionately endowed portrayal of his heroes. His way to see history, as we realized in these portraits, is through the mass media — books, photos, newspaper clippings, movie posters and even a seed catalog from which he has culled for his art. His snatches from twentieth century culture, enable us to respond to the modernity and relevance of his well informed vision as he places his select characters in appropriate settings. His fusion of elements is successful and always challenging. He intends to enhance aesthetic pleasure through intellectual stimulation.

A constant factor in the evolution of the works discussed in this text, like his study of subject matter, is Kitaj's involvement with literature. His references for these four portrayals, which have their origins in his reading, when unraveled, help to clarify and expand his themes. In his fascination with the book we can recognize even his identification with great writers in various aspects of these tributes. His quotations reveal, as we have seen, his assimilation of his own practices with those of Pound,
Joyce and Eliot. We have learned that this intense interest has lead him to try to develop a similar complexity of form in his art.

Kitaj's development of the relationship between textual materials and pictorial elements is part of his concern for the cultural density of his art. The power of the verbal document is critical to his work. We realized even his choice of titles helps establish an important association between a picture and a word, as for example, in the carefully designated title *Go and Get Killed Comrade-We Need a Byron in the Movement*.

With his great concern for subject matter, didacticism, and textual materials, we recognize Kitaj is a learned painter in the tradition of Poussin, David and Degas. From his selection to study in Oxford to his citation of Baudelairean references, he is not afraid to challenge with his erudition or invite criticism for his academicism. His art is entrenched in cultural history. Painting to him, as we have seen, is a scholarly undertaking, and research is expected on the viewer's part. He seeks to stir intellectual curiosity. For the connoisseur, his combination of literary and pictorial elements can yield many rewards. He has evolved a functional pictorial and written language with which to refer either directly or indirectly to these chosen
figures. His texts, his use of references to painting, literature and history enable him to connect his work to the issues he addresses. The language of painting he has developed is highly ambitious and enables the artist to saturate his tributes with complicated meaning.

Kitaj's studies of individual creative figures, with their allusive dimensions, show elements of his own identification with these people and events as well as his desire to personalize an historic issue. From these portrait-narratives we realize Kitaj takes an active stance as an artist and as a thinker; he is committed to painting as an enterprise filled with the utmost learnings.

The notion of painting as self-exploration seems to be involved throughout these works; Kitaj's own interests are integral to their evolution. His work reflects his emotional concern for the histories of his family members; it is for him a way to empathize with their experiences as victims of anti-Semitism and to understand his own relation to these historical events of our century. Painting seems to become for Kitaj a way to know and define his self. These four tributes, which are connected to the origins of his art and his biography, appear to provide him with a kind of personal odyssey into his roles and roots.
It is problematic to assess the position of Kitaj at this mid-point in his career. It is important for the future for scholars and critics to look at his art from more comprehensive perspectives. With the use of his own published commentaries and their accompanying references, individual works can be analyzed and connections can be established between his ideas and art that have not been previously explored. His use of direct or paraphrased quotations demands analyses to establish or illustrate his intentions. Evaluations should be made of these sources to better understand his ties to masterworks and their makers. The uniqueness of his methodology, the consistent logic of his approach to picture-making and to Warburgian approaches to subject matter need to be considered in examinations of his many themes.

The complexity of Kitaj's work is a manifestation of his personal experience, intellectual insights fused with his imagination as he responds to his own vision of history. The psychological impact of his environment, we have seen, plays a critical role in the character of his pictures and his concerns. I have tried to critically examine his approach and methods of achievement and to investigate the relationship of his subject matter, style and milieu. I have
realized the real quality of his art lies in the great care with which he works in all of these capacities.
POSTSCRIPT

In April 1989 I met Kitaj and want to record my impressions. He is a reserved, private person. He speaks with a great deal of thought and sensitivity. His conversation reflected an obviously deep interest in art, as well as also other concerns.

He lives in Chelsea and indicated to me that his house was in the area in which Whistler and Sickert lived. Also in introducing me to his locale he told me London is the home of a group of painters known as the "School of London," a term he coined twelve years ago. The senior member of the group, the most internationally established artist is Francis Bacon. The others, besides Kitaj, are Frank Auerbach (1931-), Lucian Freud (1922-), Leon Kossoff (1926-) and Michael Andrews (1928-). The basic concern that binds them together is a commitment to figurative painting. (In 1987-88 a touring exhibition "A School of London" was held at the Museo d'Arte Moderna, CaPesaro in Venice, September 5-October 18, and at the Kunstmuseum in Dusseldorf, November 6, 1987-January 10, 1988).

He talked about various art historians and mentioned his great admiration for Edgar Wind. He humbly spoke of his portrait of Sir Ernst Gombrich which is in the collection of the National Portrait Gallery. He told me he has read a
number of Panofsky's major works and has a collection of journals from the Warburg Institute.

He is very interested in politics and books. He reads not only art-related subjects. He spoke of his deep appreciation for Kafka and has read all of his novels. His words on Walter Benjamin confirmed thoughts I have expressed in this text.

My conversation with him was quite exciting for me in that it helped fulfill the impossible wish of most art historians - to be able to talk to the actual source of their research and fascination.
1. Primary Sources

Letters


Interviews and Published Writings


Kitaj, R.B. "Round the Galleries (letter to the editor.)" Listener 69 (February 28, 1963): 383.


Catalogues of Exhibitions


2. Secondary Sources

Books

Master's Theses and Dissertations

Newspapers:

Periodicals Relating to Kitaj:


Related Books:


**Related Dissertations**


**Related Periodicals**


**Unpublished Materials**

*Histoire du Café des Deux Magots.*
PLATES
Plate II. Johannes Schilling, **Niederwald Monument**. 1877-83. 33' 2" on 84' base, bronze. (Titel, **Das Niederwald Denkmal**, plate I)
Plate III. Janus Genelli, Monumemt to Kant. 1808.
no dimensions given, watercolor.
National Gallery, East Berlin.
(Neumeyer, Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes II, 1938, fig. b)
Plate IV. Johann Heinrich Dannecker, Monument to Frederick the Great and His Generals. late 1700's. no dimensions given, aquatint.
Berlin-Dahlem Museum, West Berlin.
(Neumeyer, Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes II 1938, fig. d)
Plate V. Max Beckmann, The Martyrdom. 1919.
11 ft. x 15 ft., lithograph.
Graphisches Kabinett, J.B. Neumann, West Berlin.
(C. Lenz, Journal der Berliner Museen 16, 1974, fig. 1)
17 x 20 7/8 in., oil and collage on canvas.
The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago.
(Stich, *Made in U.S.A.*, fig. 25)
Plate VII. Max Ernst, "Lion of Belfort," *Une Semaine de Bonté*. 1934. 8 1/8 x 11 in., collage novel.
(Ernst, *Une Semaine de Bonté*, plate 3)
Plate VIII. Jacques-Louis David, Marie Antoinette Brought to Execution. 1793. 6 x 4 in., ink. Louvre, Paris. (Valentiner, Jacques-Louis David and the French Revolution, fig. 9)
The Tate Gallery, London. photograph by the author.
49 3/4 x 24 in., oil on canvas.
The Tate Gallery, London.
(M. Henderson, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, p.77)
40 x 60 in., oil on canvas.
The Tate Gallery, London.
(Scheer, *Arts* 59 September, 1984, p.74)
Plate XIII. Isaac Babel. 1928.
no dimensions given., drawing.
(Encyclopedia Judaica, Vol. B, p.19)
Plate XIV. Fantasiya. no date given. no dimensions given. photograph.
(Dodge, Riders of Many Lands, n.p.)
Plate XV. English Rider. no date given, no dimensions given. photograph. (Dodge, Riders of Many Lands, n.p.)
Plate XVI. *Country Bumpkin*. no date given. no dimensions given. drawing. (Dodge, *Riders of Many Lands*, n.p.)
Plate XVII. South Africa and the Transvaal War. 1901.
10 3/4 x 8 1/2", embossed leather book cover.
Plate XVIII. "Crane Man." German Pamphlet, Cologne, 1664. no dimensions given.
(Wittkower, Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes V 1942, plate 49f)
Plate XIX. "Crane Man." from Prodigiorum ac ostentorum chronicon of Lycothenes (pseudonym of Conrad Wolffhart), 1557.
(Wittkower, Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes V 1942, plate 49b)
Plate XXI. "Benia Krik—A Film Novel." no date given.
no dimensions given. screenprint.
(Kitaj, Kitaj: Paintings, 1965, n.p.)

BENIA KRIK

a film-novel

by Isaac

BABEL

Translation by Ivan Marchand

london

COLLETT'S

1965
Plate XXIII. Francis Bacon, Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion, detail, right panel. 1944. each 37 x 29 in., oil and pastel on hardboard. The Tate Gallery, London. (Russell, Francis Bacon, no. 9)
Plate XXIV. Max Ernst, Revolution by Night. 1923.
45 5/8 x 35 in., oil on canvas.
private collection, London.
(Guggenheim Mus. Max Ernst: A Retrospective,
fig. 74)
Plate XXV. Max Ernst, "Oedipus," *Une Semaine de Bonté*. 1934.
8 1/8 x 11 in., collage novel.
(Ernst, *Une Semaine de Bonté*, plate 139)
Plate XXVI. Pablo Picasso, Composition with Minotaur (Curtain for Le 14 Juillet of Romain Rolland). 1936. 17 1/4 x 21 1/2 in., India ink with gouache. Picasso Museum, Paris. (Oppler, Picasso's Guernica, fig. 116)
Plate XXVII. Théodore Géricault, Charging Chausseur.
1812.
9 ft.6 in. x 6 ft.4 in., oil on canvas.
Louvre, Paris. (Berger, Géricault and His Work, plate 2)
Plate XXVIII. Jacques-Louis David, Napoleon Crossing the St. Bernard. 1800. 8' 10 5/8" x 7' 7 1/4".
Oil on canvas.
Versailles, France.
(Brookner, Jacques-Louis David, plate 74)
Plate XXIX. Eadweard Muybridge, *Beauty with Rider*. 1879. 2 1/2 x 1 3/4 in., photograph. (Muybridge, *Animals in Motion*, plate 40)
Plate XXX. Go and Get Killed Comrade—We Need a Byron in the Movement. 1966. L. fig. 4.
32 x 21 7/8 in., screenprint.
Cincinnati Museum of Art, Cincinnati
Plate XXXII. Freight Car Caboose with Ladder.
(Pierce, *The Freight Train Book*, n.p.)
Plate XXXIII. Go and Get Killed Comrade—We Need a Byron in the Movement. L. fig. 4, detail, train. Cincinnati Museum of Art, Cincinnati
Plate XXXIV. Go and Get Killed Comrade—We Need a Byron in the Movement. L. fig. 4, detail, ladder.
Cincinnati Museum of Art, Cincinnati
17 1/4 x 44 in., oil on canvas.
private collection, New York.
(Soby, *Early Chirico*, plate 7)
Plate XXXVI. Mahler: A Celebration and a Crutch. 1965.
7 1/4 x 1 3/4 in., photograph.
(Kitaj, Kitaj: Paintings, 1965, n.p.)
Plate XXXVII. Hans and Sophie Scholl. 1942. 3 x 1 3/4 in., photograph. (Kitaj, Kitaj: Pictures, 1965, n.p.)
Plate XXXVIII. Aureolin. 1964. L.39,
60 x 48 in., oil on canvas.
private collection, London
30 1/2 x 23 in., screenprint.
Boysman-van-Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam.
(Kitaj, R.B. *Kitaj: Pictures*, 1970, fig. 25c)
Plate XLI. *Glue Words*. 1967.
33 x 22 7/8 in., screenprint.
Boysman-van-Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam.
(Kitaj, R. B. Kitaj: *Pictures*, 1970, fig. 251)
Plate XLII. *Let Us Call It Arden and Live in It*. 1966.
33 1/4 x 23 in., screenprint.
Boysman-van-Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam.
(Kitaj, R. B. *Kitaj: Pictures*, 1970, fig. 25h)
Plate XLIII. *I've Balled Every Waitress in This Club.*
1967.
23 x 32 1/4 in., screenprint.
Boysman-van-Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam.
(Kitaj, R.B. Kitaj: Pictures, 1970, fig. 25j)
Plate XLIV. Autumn of Central Paris (After Walter Benjamin).
1972-73. L.57, 60 x 60 in., oil on canvas.
private collection, New York City.
Plate XLV. Walter Benjamin. 1966.
10 x 7 1/4 in., lithograph.
Boysman-van-Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam.
(Kitaj, R.B. Kitaj: Pictures, 1970, fig. 15)
Plate XLVI. **Arcades**. 1972-73. L.46, 5' square, oil on canvas. private collection, Toronto.

no dimensions given, photograph.

(McCullin, *Hearts of Darkness*, plate 111)
15 in. diameter, plaster.
Bonnat Museum, Bayonne.
(Honour, *Romanticism*, fig. 86)
Plate L. Max Kalish, Road Worker. 1938.
20 in., bronze.
present location unknown.
(Kalish, Labor Sculpture, plate 15)
Plate LI. Gustave Courbet, The Stonebreakers. 1849.  
5' 6" x 8', oil on canvas.  
formerly, Museum, Dresden.  
(Nochlin, Realism, fig. 58)
(Weisberg, *Social Concern and the Worker: French Prints from 1830–1910*, cat. no. 65)
4 ft. 5 3/8 in. x 5 ft. 11 in., oil on canvas.
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia.
(Hunter and Jacobus, *Modern Art,* fig. 279)
Plate LV. George S. Kaufman. no date given, no dimensions given, photograph. (Anger, Hollywood Babylon, pp. 196-97)
Plate LVI. Café Deux Magots. 1885. photograph by the author.
Plate LVII. Church of St. Germain-des-Prés. ca. 1000. 3 1/2 x 1 1/2 in., architectural plan. (Michelin Guide: Paris, p. 93)
no dimensions or media given.
(Kitaê, Art International March, 1979, pp.19-20)
Plate LIX. Eugène Delacroix, Liberty Leading the People. 1830.
8' 4" x 10' 10", oil on canvas.
Louvre, Paris.
(Trapp, The Attainment of Delacroix, plate IX)
Plate LX. Ernst Meissonier, *The Barricade, Rue de Mortellerie*. 1848.
1' x 8 1/2", oil on canvas.
Louvre, Paris.
(Nochlin, *Realism*, fig. 56)
Plate LXI. Anonymous, *Storming a Barricade, Rue Perdue*. 1848. no dimensions given, lithograph.
(Nochlin, *Realism*, fig. 55)
Plate LXII. Movie Poster for *Johnny Eager*. 1941
no dimensions given, no media given.
(Morella, Clark and Epstein, *Those Great Movie Ads*, p. 90)
Plate LXIII. Galerie Véro-Dodat. 1826.
photograph by the author.