



# Icons of the Left: Benjamin and Eisenstein, Picasso and Kafka after the Fall of Communism

*Otto Karl Werckmeister*

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In his new book, art historian O. K. Werckmeister advances a critique of Marxist culture in capitalist society. Focusing on some of the most celebrated instances of traditional "Western Marxism," Werckmeister shows how such "icons of the Left" have been progressively detached from their political roots in communist activism to the safe distance of utopian or revolutionary speculations. He assesses some recent critiques of "Western Marxism" in popular culture such as Soderbergh's film *Kafka*, pointing out the historic fallacies that underlie such wholesale repudiations. With this analysis, Werckmeister seeks to clear the ground for a coherent cultural policy of the Left that responds to the continuing crisis of society.

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