

Chapter 1 : Walter Benjamin - Wikipedia

Benjamin, who committed suicide at age forty-eight, has no marked grave, and in one sense Walter Benjamin's Passages is a tombeau, a poem honoring a writer's achievement that in calmer times was written for the dedication of a physical monument but now must stand in place of the absent monument.

He owned a number of investments in Berlin, including ice skating rinks. Through his mother, his great-uncle was the classical archaeologist Gustav Hirschfeld. Walter Benjamin was a boy of fragile health and so in the family sent him to Hermann-Lietz-Schule Haubinda, a boarding school in the Thuringian countryside, for two years; in , having returned to Berlin, he resumed his schooling at the Kaiser Friedrich School. Here Benjamin had his first exposure to the ideas of Zionism , which had not been part of his liberal upbringing. This exposure gave him occasion to formulate his own ideas about the meaning of Judaism. Benjamin distanced himself from political and nationalist Zionism, instead developing in his own thinking what he called a kind of "cultural Zionism"â€”an attitude which recognized and promoted Judaism and Jewish values. Benjamin expressed "My life experience led me to this insight: For Judaism is to me in no sense an end in itself, but the most distinguished bearer and representative of the spiritual. In , at the outbreak of the First World War â€” , Benjamin began faithfully translating the works of the 19th-century French poet Charles Baudelaire â€” The next year, , he moved to Munich, and continued his schooling at the University of Munich , where he met Rainer Maria Rilke and Gershom Scholem ; the latter became a friend. They had a son, Stefan Rafael â€” In Benjamin earned his Ph. Later, unable to support himself and family, he returned to Berlin and resided with his parents. At this time Benjamin first became socially acquainted with Leo Strauss , and Benjamin would remain an admirer of Strauss and of his work throughout his life. At the end of his best friend Gershom Scholem immigrated to Palestine, a country under the British Mandate of Palestine ; despite repeated invitations, he failed to persuade Benjamin and family to leave the Continent for the Middle East. Later that year Benjamin and Ernst Bloch resided on the Italian island of Capri ; Benjamin wrote *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* , as a habilitation dissertation meant to qualify him as a tenured university professor in Germany. A year later, in , Benjamin withdrew *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* as his possible qualification for the habilitation teaching credential at the University of Frankfurt at Frankfurt am Main, fearing its possible rejection; [13] he was not to be an academic instructor. The same year, he saw Gershom Scholem in Berlin, for the last time, and considered emigrating from Continental Europe Germany to Palestine. In that time, he also briefly embarked upon an academic career, as an instructor at the University of Heidelberg. As he ran out of money, Benjamin collaborated with Max Horkheimer , and received funds from the Institute for Social Research, later going permanently into exile. It was a critique of the authenticity of mass-produced art; he wrote that a mechanically produced copy of an artwork can be taken somewhere where the original could never have gone, arguing that the presence of the original is "prerequisite to the concept of authenticity". In he paid a last visit to Bertolt Brecht, who was exiled to Denmark. While the Wehrmacht was pushing back the French Army , on 13 June Benjamin and his sister fled Paris to the town of Lourdes , just a day before the Germans entered the capital with orders to arrest him at his flat. In eluding the Gestapo , Benjamin planned to travel to the US from neutral Portugal, which he expected to reach via Francoist Spain , then ostensibly a neutral country. The Franco government had cancelled all transit visas and ordered the Spanish police to return such persons to France, including the Jewish refugee group Benjamin had joined. Expecting repatriation to Nazi hands, Walter Benjamin killed himself with an overdose of morphine tablets that night, while staying in the Hotel de Francia; the official Portbou register records 26 September as the official date of death. Despite his suicide, Benjamin was buried in the consecrated section of a Roman Catholic cemetery. Hannah Arendt , who crossed the French-Spanish border at Portbou a few months later, passed the manuscript of *Theses* to Adorno. Another completed manuscript, which Benjamin had carried in his suitcase, disappeared after his death and has not been recovered. In the "Concept of History" Benjamin also turned to Jewish mysticism for a model of praxis in dark times, inspired by the kabbalistic precept that the work of the holy man is an activity known as *tikkun*. *Tikkun* was the

process of collecting the scattered fragments in the hopes of once more piecing them together. Benjamin fused tikkun with the Surrealist notion that liberation would come through releasing repressed collective material, to produce his celebrated account of the revolutionary historiographer, who sought to grab hold of elided memories as they sparked to view at moments of present danger. 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 wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. He brings up the interdiction, in some varieties of Judaism, to try to determine the year when the Messiah would come into the world, and points out that this did not make Jews indifferent to the future "for every second of time was the strait gate through which the Messiah might enter. Benjamin presented the work to the University of Frankfurt in as the post-doctoral dissertation meant to earn him the Habilitation qualification to become a university instructor in Germany. The university officials recommended that Benjamin withdraw Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels as a Habilitation dissertation to avoid formal rejection and public embarrassment. The Arcades Project, in its current form, brings together a massive collection of notes which Benjamin filed together over the course of thirteen years, from to Fascinated by notions of reference and constellation, his goal in later works was to use intertexts to reveal aspects of the past that cannot, and should not, be understood within greater, monolithic constructs of historical understanding. He presented his stylistic concerns in "The Task of the Translator", wherein he posits that a literary translation, by definition, produces deformations and misunderstandings of the original text. Moreover, in the deformed text, otherwise hidden aspects of the original, source-language text are elucidated, while previously obvious aspects become unreadable. Such translational modification of the source text is productive; when placed in a specific constellation of works and ideas, newly revealed affinities, between historical objects, appear and are productive of philosophical truth. In , the first Internationale Walter Benjamin Gesellschaft was established by the German thinker, poet and artist Natias Neutert , as a free association of philosophers, writers, artists, media theoreticians and editors. Its members come from 19 countries, both within and beyond Europe and represents an international forum for discourse. Special emphasis had been placed upon strengthening academic ties to Latin America and Eastern and Central Europe.

Chapter 2 : PASSAGES – Walter Benjamin, a suicide, a monument, a film. – David Harding

Walter Bendix Schönflies Benjamin (/ ɛ̃ˈb ɛ̃ˈn j ɛ̃ˈm ɛ̃ˈn /; German: [vɔltɛ̃• ɛ̃ˈbɛ̃njamiɛ̃n]; 15 July - 26 September) was a German Jewish philosopher, cultural critic and essayist.

Additional Information In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content: The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin, – Edited by Gershom Scholem and Theodor W. Translated by Manfred R. Jacobson and Evelyn M. University of Chicago Press, Edited by Rolf Tiedemann. Harvard University Press, Edited by Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Harvard University Press, – Benjamin, Walter, and Theodor W. Adorno, Briefe und Briefwechsel. Edited by Henri Lonitz. Benjamin, Walter, and Gershom Scholem. Edited by Gershom Scholem. Translated by Jody Gladding. Columbia University Press, Colloque international 27 – 29 juin , edited by Heinz Wisman, – A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans. Translated by Patricia Dailey. Stanford University Press, Literary Historiography after Hegel. Johns Hopkins University Press, The Fate of Art: Aesthetic Alienation from Kant to Derrida and Adorno. Law and Legend, or Halakah and Aggada. Translated by Julius T. Bialik, Hayim Nahman, and Yehoshua Ravnitzky, eds. Legends from the Talmud and Midrash. Translated by William G. Edited by Karola Bloch. Viele Kammern im Welthaus. Eine Auswahl aus dem Werk. The Legitimacy of the Modern Age. Translated by Robert M. Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, Jahrhunderts, edited by Norbert W. Bolz and Bernd Witte, – Geburtstag, edited by Uwe Steiner, 11 – Peter Lang Publishing, Bolz, Norbert, and Willem Van Reijen. Translated by Laimdota Mazzarins. The Politics of Loitering. Theses on the Photography of History. Princeton University Press, Trauma, Narrative, and History. The Colour of Experience. You are not currently authenticated. View freely available titles:

Chapter 3 : Arcades Project - Wikipedia

In transposing the Freudian dream work from the individual subject to the collective, Walter Benjamin projected a "macrocosmic journey" of the individual sleeper to "the dreaming collective, which, through the arcades, communes with its own insides."

Each text in the book is accompanied by a Paul Klee illustration. Klee was not Jewish and so his Angelus Novus was unlikely to be the visual representation of Talmudic legend. Ten years later, Benjamin cited the painting in his essay on the Austrian writer and satirist Karl Kraus. He wrote in an autobiographical essay called "Agesilaus Santander" that year while in exile on Ibiza. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. The storm is what we call progress. For a Marxist and Benjamin was a Marxist, albeit of an oddball temper, this was heretical stuff. Indeed, these words were part of a reconfiguration of Marxism that had arisen in the aftermath of the failure of the German Revolution to emulate the Russian one of two years earlier. In the era of consumerised monopoly capitalism in which Benjamin and the thinkers of the Frankfurt School he influenced lived, and in the wake of the failure of revolution in Germany and, later, enthusiasm among German workers for the Third Reich, this was a resonant thought: This, to more straitlaced Marxists, reads like unacceptable political quietism, a disgraceful elitism in response to the needs of the sufferings of the poor and needy under capitalism. Both effectively insist, counterintuitively, that the past can be transformed, that injustice can be corrected by looking back on past sufferings. It has been a stimulating thought to many. The critic British critic Terry Eagleton, a sophisticated and politically engaged interpreter of Benjamin, for instance, wrote: It is by turning our gaze to the horrors of the past, in the hope that we will not thereby be turned to stone, that we are impelled to move forward. Can you see in it what Walter Benjamin did, a whole mystical vision of human woe and eternal suffering? Some have struggled with that. Indeed, he made his version of Angelus Novus for an exhibition called Angels in which he painted new versions of historical works, bolting glass with sandblasted words to his painted panels. The latter seems more likely. Perhaps, like Ken Apter, he would have felt mystified by it. Despite being conscripted, Klee spent much of his service away from the front, which allowed him to paint and draw throughout the conflict. The Story of a Friendship. The trick was to simulate a weak heart and it worked – later that day Benjamin presented himself for a medical examination and his call-up was deferred. After dodging the draft, he wrote to Scholem: I am planning to be able to work in peace, at least for a few months, in Munich. As the years wore on, his work would only rarely be printed in German, and then mostly under a pseudonym. Both men died in 1940. Benjamin was fleeing from Paris across the Pyrenees, hoping to reach Lisbon where he could sail to New York and there be installed in an apartment set up for him by his already exiled friends from the Frankfurt School. Instead, one night in a hotel in the Catalan seaside town of Port Bou, fearing capture and falling into the clutches of the Nazis, he took a fatal dose of morphine pills. He roamed vagabond for years, like Benjamin in the 1930s. In his book Benjamin and Brecht: The Story of a Friendship, Erdmut Wizisla writes that he saw Klee – like playwright Bertolt Brecht or architect Adolf Loos – as a modernist artist, a renewer of aesthetic means, perhaps even an ally in the communistic project of politicising art that Benjamin described at the end of his great essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction. In Arrogance, a tightrope walker struggles to keep balance. Benjamin is always such a teetering figure. But back to the Angel. On the glass are some more words from his "Theses on the Philosophy of History": The construction of history is consecrated to the memory of the nameless.

Chapter 4 : Project MUSE - Benjamin's Passages

The Passagenwerk or Arcades Project was an unfinished project of German literary critic Walter Benjamin, written between and An enormous collection of writings on the city life of Paris in the 19th century, it was especially concerned with Paris' iron-and-glass covered "arcades" (known in French as the passages couverts de Paris).

For those interested in such things head off immediately to Port Bou, a small Catalan town on the Mediterranean coast of Spain. Hannah Arendt described the setting as one of the most beautiful she had ever seen. But the town itself is not beautiful. It used to be a customs town from which it derived most of its income legitimate and otherwise. Its vast railway yards, replicated in Cerebere, the French customs town across the border, attest to its former importance. It stopped in both Port Bou and Cerbere for customs inspections, and to change trains since the railway gauge was different in France. But Port Bou is famous, or should that be, infamous, for being the place where the great German Jewish philosopher, Walter Benjamin, committed suicide. In the summer of I was on holiday with friends in Port Vendres in France where Charles Rennie Mackintosh spent the last four years of his life drawing and painting. Like most other cultural tourists we headed into northern Catalonia seeking the Dali experience. I had insisted that I would want to stop in Port Bou on the way back to pay my respects to Benjamin. I had an idea that there was some kind of memorial to him but thought it might just be a plaque. I turned sharp right and up a narrow road hoping that the following car had seen my sudden manoeuvre. The road snaked up to a cliff-top cemetery. About a hundred steps lead you down and as you descend you see ahead rocks lapped by the swirling sea. Large portraits of Benjamin and Karavan, flanked the entrance. Language deficiencies made it difficult for us to get the most from the material displayed. I began to wonder who this archive was for. It was my first feeling that Port Bou was not quite sure about how to handle the death in its midst of one of the great philosophers of the 20th century. My special area of interest is public art and I have photographed many works all over the world. I had met Dani Karavan, visited and photographed a number of his works and included them in my lectures on public art. This memorial had been completed in and I wondered now how I had not come across it in books or magazines. Well, maybe I was not looking hard enough. But it does seem surprising when I now regard it as one of the great public art works of the late 20th century. Months later the archive, and a lack of knowledge about the memorial sculpture, still troubled me so I wrote a letter, translated into Catalan, to the Mayor of Port Bou offering to give my services to improve the archive by, at the very least, getting all the titles translated into several languages. The reply, when it came, was from a Senor Vancells who had responsibility in the Ajuntament town hall for the Benjamin legacy. It may have had something to do with the poor English into which it had been translated, but the gist of it was they were not interested. The story of his untimely end is now well-known. Having moved to Paris in to avoid Nazi persecution, he was again under threat when the German forces were about to take Paris. Like many Jews and others fleeing Nazism he moved south looking for an escape route. With documents ensuring his access to Spain and a visa for the USA he proceeded with two others to the French town of Banyuls, a few miles from the Spanish border. However to cross the border it was necessary to make a long detour, on foot, across the Pyrenees and then proceed to join the railway at the Spanish town of Port Bou. There were problems and were told they would be returned to France, and certain arrest, the following day. Benjamin was an asthmatic with heart problems and he carried a supply of morphine for self-medication. He was not fit and he carried a large briefcase filled with his papers, manuscripts and notes. He was found dead the next morning. After his burial in the cemetery in Port Bou his companions were allowed to continue their journey and eventually reached the USA. It was known as Route Lister, named after the republican general who organised the retreat. Raised in Vienna and Berlin, she had also made it south and was living between Port Vendres and Banyuls. She had learned of the route over the Pyrenees from the socialist mayor of Banyuls and Benjamin came to see her to ask if she would guide him and his two friends over it. Then he continued on at the same constant pace. As he told me, he had thought it all out and calculated it during the night: I stop at regular intervals " I must pause before I am exhausted. When it became impossible to continue she and her husband finally escaped. She lived the rest of her life in the USA dying in

Chicago in at the age of The notes of the doctor who attended the scene and the death certificate are inconclusive. He told me that he had taken large quantities of morphine at 10 the preceding evening and that I should try to present the matter as illness; he gave me a letter addressed to me and Adorno. Then he lost consciousness. I sent for a doctor, who diagnosed a cerebral apoplexy; when I urgently requested that Benjamin be taken to a hospital. His struggles to keep going and to survive ended in Port Bou. Ross Birrell a friend and colleague was that person and we began to plan a visit to Port Bou on the dates of the anniversary. I wrote to Vancells asking if there were any plans to mark the anniversary but received no response. We decided therefore that Ross would do the walk; we would film it and the sculpture and to make our own events to mark the anniversary. It seemed a good enough idea to get something special out of it. The film was shot on a basic digital video camera, hand held and with a tripod. Only the footage that was shot has been used. Only the sounds that were captured have been used. No other material has been cut into it. What you get is what we got. The great spirit of serendipity seemed to be weaving its spell of good fortune on us. How else can one explain that as the day of the re-enactments progressed a storm was brewing. At the very moment of the recitation of the Pessoa poem, itself containing references to storms, the wind blew fiercely, the sky darkened and black clouds scudded across it while, below the cliff, the sea was being whipped up. As Montse Vives delivered the poem with powerful, emotional expressiveness, her long hair was blown across her face and at one point she seemed to stumble and had to regain her footing. And Madeleine Claus, whom we met by chance in a cafe after one of the events, a professor of German at the University of Perpignan, she had met, and interviewed, Lisa Fittko and had been involved in the commissioning of the sculpture. Looking at him he seemed to indicate that if he could have been anywhere else at that moment he would have preferred it. This was in absolute contrast to the address of the Mayor of Banyuls whose stirring address, knowledge of Benjamin and the implications of the events that took place in Port Bou on the night of the 26th of September , left one in no doubt of its profound importance. Before leaving Port Bou I went into the general store to stock up on my supply of postcards of the sculpture. We introduced ourselves to Senor Vancells who was very friendly and helpful. Mysteriously he had not received my last letter. He and his council had put money, and a lot of effort, into preparing the events which were powerful and moving and all of the highest professional standards. Was all this effort only for a local audience? Maybe so and maybe one could argue that this is as it should be. Nevertheless it merited a wider audience. Our film now does that.

Chapter 5 : Walter Benjamin's Passages (Studies in Contemporary German Social - | SlugBooks

Benjamin, who committed suicide at age forty-eight, has no marked grave, and in one sense Walter Benjamin's Passages is a tombeau, a poem honoring a writer's achievement that in calmer times was written for the dedication of a physical monument but now must stand in place of the absent monument. It is a work of sophisticated and imaginative.

His death has been surrounded by unanswered questions and conflicting hypotheses. For many years the exact site where he was buried in the cemetery was not even known. However, a number of questions remain. Benjamin left Paris in May, passed through Lourdes, and in mid-September reached Marseilles, where he had friends. She will help you. The only way to get out of France is to do so clandestinely through the mountains. After many difficulties, in Marseilles Benjamin obtained a visa from the U. He had only one option: This was the route taken by many refugees. With his visa, Benjamin took the train to Port-Vendres with the photographer Henny Gurland who subsequently married Erich Fromm in the United States and her son Joseph, whom he had met when applying for the visa in Marseilles. Benjamin, too tired to go back to Banyuls, decided to stay all night on the mountainside and start the climb again from there in the morning. He spent the night alone in a little stand of pine trees. At dawn on the morning of September 25, Lisa, Henny and Joseph set out on the path to meet up again with Benjamin. The road, fairly flat at first, soon got steeper. Now and then there was a path to be seen, but increasingly it was just a barely recognizable, gravelly track between boulders. Until we came to the steep vineyard, which I can never forget. It was the last vineyard. From there, the road became a clamber over rocks up the shady side of the mountain. Benjamin had calculated that, given his state of health, he would have to stop every ten minutes and rest for one, a resolution he strictly adhered to, concentrating on his watch and his rests. On the last stretch his companions had to help him. After several hours, they got to the top of the ridge. Finally we reached the summit. I had gone on ahead and I stopped to look around. This had been her first crossing by this route on which she was to accompany so many other refugees. The rest of the party followed the path down into Portbou. In Portbou the effects of the Civil War, which had ended 19 months before, were still very much in evidence. The bombing and shelling had been particularly destructive in the little border town. In Portbou, Benjamin and the Gurlands presented themselves to the police in the railway station, where they were told they were being refused entry into Spain. They would be handed over to the French authorities the following day, which meant their subsequent surrender to the Nazi authorities. In room number 3, Walter Benjamin made some telephone calls, and then took a strong dose of morphine he had brought it with him from Marseilles. The next morning "26 September" his dead body was found on top of the bed. He was 48 years old. If they had arrived a day earlier, they would not have been refused entry to Spain: If they had arrived a day later, they would probably have been allowed in. A few days later, Henny and her son Joseph boarded a ship for America. Benjamin left a suitcase with a small amount of money in dollars and francs, which were changed into pesetas to pay for the funeral four days later. The medical certificate gave the cause of death as cerebral haemorrhage. Probably due to some confusion about his identity, Walter Benjamin was buried on 28 September in the Catholic section of Portbou cemetery, in a leased niche, number . In the summer of , his remains were moved to the common burial ground. Horkheimer received a reply noting the death from heart failure of Sr. Walter and that he had some few papers with him. In October of the following year Hannah Arendt visited Portbou with the idea of paying her respects to her dead friend, but found no gravestone in the cemetery with his name and no one who could tell her anything, as she explained in a letter to Gershom Scholem: I have found nothing, his name was nowhere. In Portbou Walter Benjamin put an end to seven years of exile and the possibility of a new future in America. For the local people, the death of the mysterious foreigner became shrouded in legend, but for others it was a freely chosen exit, an authentic rebellion against the Nazi terror by one of the most lucid thinkers of modernity. What is more, his guide across the mountains, Lisa Fittko, who died in , referred on many occasions to the suitcase with a manuscript that Benjamin jealously guarded as a valuable treasure. Did it contain his final manuscript? The suitcase was never found:

Chapter 6 : Benjamin's Passages

*Benjamin's posthumously published tome *The Arcades Project*.*

Chapter 7 : Passages – Homage to Walter Benjamin () – Dani Karavan

Walter Benjamin spent 13 years preparing a "dialectic fairy tale" that would tell the story of the nineteenth century, by definition an impossible piece that redeemed other types of intellectual endeavors. Over the past few years, the work of Walter Benjamin has been enthusiastically rescued in.

Chapter 8 : Das Passagen-Werk : Walter Benjamin :

*It was in Paris in that Georges Bataille introduced Pierre Missac to Walter Benjamin. This meeting launched the young French scholar on a half-century of engagement with Benjamin's work that culminated in the writing of Walter Benjamin's *Passages*.*

Chapter 9 : Walter Benjamin Memorial – Portbou, Spain - Atlas Obscura

*The most complete account of Benjamin's death and the investigation of the various documents can be found in the book by Ingrid and Konrad Scheurmann, *For Walter Benjamin* (3 volumes), in Spanish, English and German (Bonn: AsKI e.v. and Inter Nationes,).*