

The Arcades Project Study Guide

The Arcades Project by Walter Benjamin

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Plot Summary

This is classic of the 20th century. The European man is used as the main model for this extensive work. The structure of this work is highly unusual. It is a vast assemblage of quotations made and drawn from diverse sources. The author educates readers in how to interpret his writings and the work. He does this way of example. He shows readers how it is that he has formulated his thinking. The reason is simple. He is a psychological product of his time and place. He includes numerous quotations and citations from a wide range of sources. The vast majority of these speak to the time during which he lived. Through the written media he is able to share with readers a quasi-natural sense for the context of his life. With this understood, interpreting his remarks becomes easier and is more apt to be accurate.

The author's own ideas are provided in a unique font. This makes them easier to distinguish from the over all dialogue. On another level, what is really going on is that author is using quotes to show the sources of much of his thinking. For this reason, readers can see when his own remarks reiterate another's ideas or when his idea makes a real "break from" or stride forward from other ideas. Thanks to the context he has provided people can see how his idea relates to those at are floating around in the cultural discourse of 19th century Paris.

By the end of the work, readers have an entirely new understanding of the psychological terrain of 19th century Europe. The emphasis is on Germany, France and Britain. Even so, other nations of the Western continent are also mentioned when relevant. The work is unusual in that it combines extensive writings by other figures and has been compiled along with his own. This has not been done merely as a research document, because the amount of others' works included is so great. Instead, this is a literary collage. Culture is a mass scale project. The idea of the collective is embodied by the way the manuscript has been brought together. The individual, and the society are shown to be reflections of one another. There is a mutually responsive feedback system. The 20th century has provided an early review of the 19th century. It will be for the future to decide: 500 years from now, will Benjamin's account be viewed as accurate? Surely by then, his biases will show clearly in ways that they are invisible now, as transparent glass to the minds of people now; we don't even see it because we are all affected.

Chapter 1, Introductions

Chapter 1, Introductions Summary and Analysis

This book is rather mammoth. The book begins with introductory materials. The most prominent feature is that the author is one of those people who lived across two centuries: the 19th and the 20th. While this is a somewhat artificial relationship to time, it is real enough because the psychology of those involved were oriented to this very calendar. The book is constructed using a set of fonts. Each of these clarifies the sources used. Not everything is distinguished one from another, but the printers and publishers have facilitated a more natural sense for making distinctions through the use of the fonts. In the beginning, of course, the organization of the work is not entirely clear. However, within the first hundred pages of the text, the method begins to become perceptible within the proverbial madness or chaos. The author is familiarizing readers with the context of the 19th century and the new arcades of Paris.

The author was greatly influenced by the artistic movement of the time known as Surrealism. He is known to have been ambivalent towards this movement. It is reasonable to suspect that this shows in the work. This branch of artwork is known to have been involved with the creation of this project. Apparently, the initial intention had just been to come up with enough material for one solid newspaper article. This mushroomed into a monumental work of nonfiction.

The articulation of the modern world has become a cultural project for Europeans. While there are multiple continental philosophers who are relevant to this project, there is one - who is of the 20th century, who is actually a friend of the author's. This is Theodor Adorno. Walter Benjamin uses a literary construct called the "convolute" that resonates well with another form that his friend Adorno used called the "constellation". A convolute is a group of notes that are all associated with the same topic. The origin of this term is actually German: Konvolute. It may be used spelled in the German or the English variant during this summary.

Chapter 2, Exposes

Chapter 2, Exposes Summary and Analysis

There are a number of features about this book that are unusual. One is its size. Another is the diverse set of fonts mentioned previously. The fonts are used within a given konvolute. After the Introduction comes the face page for Exposes. There are two of these. Both express that Paris, France is viewed internationally as "thee" capital of Europe, culturally, of the 19th century. The author provides an exposes dated 1935 and another dated 1939. He intimates at the time difference by including two short pieces of poetry translated into English. One has an East Asian source whereas the other is French. Expose 1935 has 6 Parts, each headed up by a Roman numeral. The arcades emerged in the late 1830s. They were the result of a few factors. One of these was the boom in the textile industry for France. Another was the availability of luxury goods for the French and economic policies that assured there was a middle class who could afford them along with the wealthy. What happened was that a rather large number of merchants formed a consortium and assembled their wares in a closer space. The areas were sufficiently enclosed to allow for some longer-term storage. This allowed merchants to hold bulk stock of their goods in the one location. These places were the precursors of what is now known as the department store. These places were so popular, and the profits so good, that the Parisian's decided to use night lighting in the arcades. Gaslights found their first use in Paris at the arcades. Now, a romantic stroll along a shopping place, or a confidential business meeting between shop owners could be conducted more safely. The invention of photography took place in 1855 and the world of painting was irrevocably changed.

In Section IV of this Exposes, there is a 3-line opener. It supplies people with a sense of reality and unreality, anxiety and truth. "The criminals in early detective novels are neither gentlemen nor apaches, but private citizens of the middle class," (p. 9). During these first portions, the idea of the class struggle emerges. The second Exposes, that of 1939 has its own order. This one has the first 5 letters of the English alphabet, each of which has two sections. Again, the konvolute is used to assemble diverse, actual information. This includes an ominous anecdote about working women in France. The apartments 4 - 6 of a certain building amongst the arcades housed a woman poisoner and her two assistants. In a gruesome news story, one morning all three were found dead from noxious fumes - apparently a "misadventure" caused by handling their own merchandise the wrong way.

Chapter 3, Hausmannism

Chapter 3, Hausmannism Summary and Analysis

After the Exposes the book begins proper. He introduces the arcades. There were the precursor to the shopping mall and emerged in Paris. He begins to delve into the life of some of the residents of the area. He recounts an anecdote about a woman poisoner who lived in apartments 4 -6 inclusive. She had two assistants. One morning, all three were found dead; they appear to have died from the vapors of the poison they worked with. Human nature, as reformulated by modern society appears: many women prioritize dressing attractively so highly that they suffer from being chilly or downright cold while out at the arcades - warm attire might detract from their beauty.

Benjamin takes the readers on another twist when he explains that at this point, manufacturing has supplanted the old soldier-laborer that the agrarian society depended upon. The bourgeoisie - the middle classes emerged, stratified though they were. Shopping was the main attraction of the arcades themselves. Walter Benjamin writes that the whole situation with international commerce showed up in the arcades. These places were celebrations of the power of the industrialized world and the modern current of international trade.

Modernity is the most important concept that the author puts forth. The modern age was progressive. It was a cultural idea, and a philosophical one. It was intimately connected with technology and changes in it. Readers will recognize the modern age as being after the Renaissance and prior to the Space Age and Information Age ages. The realism of this more abstract, possibly grander topic is accompanied by the predominantly materialistic motive of the shops and the products sold in them. Many are practical; others are decorative. During the 1850s, business increased. In 1852, Au Bon Marche sold 450,000 France, but by 1869 turned 21 Million Francs in business.

On page 50, the author explains that the lithograph - the wood or metal cut and printed image was the only way to include images in published manuscripts. The author includes an assortment of tidbits of information. For example: street galleries were devised, which developed into an entire second story of covered walkways over the streets of Paris at the arcades. Education had improved so much that many of the sales clerks had training in art and put their education to use if only by making the best displays of those goods that were available. "The sign for the locksmiths is a six-foot-high gold-plated key; the giant gates of heaven could require no larger," (p. 60) [A12a]



Chapter 4, The Beginning of Photography

Chapter 4, The Beginning of Photography Summary and Analysis

There are some features of daily life and the world that the author introduces readers to during the next 50 pages. One of these is photography. He mentions this more than once, but not in the same manner. It is a brand new creative media. The affects are not entirely known. The photographer or organization, Nadar is credited with the majority of photos used in the book. Later, on page 108 the author explains that Paris, the city of the street cafe, had only 3 such locations in 1757. Another facet of the 19th century world is Romanticism. This was a literary and cultural style and attitude. One element of Romanticism was the idea of love, and of pure love and of marriages that were not necessarily prearranged by interfering parents. This obviously speaks of the lack of unity between the generations. Romanticism also included a great deal of literature. This literature involved novels and poetry. The Romantic poets have earned numerous books and awards each in his or her own right. Together, they joined technology, politics and other aspects of life and the psychological trends of the people to form the culture. Along with this are concepts such as ennui and boredom. Yes, boredom. "What influence, boredom?...a decisive influence," (p. 109). Boredom, like ennui, is viewed as an attribute of the modern world. Readers might find this mildly incredible if only because it is so apt.

Following this, are five pages devoted to Friedrich Nietzsche and his writings. Nietzsche was a German thinker who wrote while living in France. He was famous for criticizing Christianity. He was also very literary in his writing style. The author writes of him, and quotes him just as he does many other prominent literary figures of the 19th century. Due to this, and the growth of his popularity during the 20th century when the book was written explains why he is included along with people such as Baudelaire. For those not versed in the century, these comments serve as a who's who. For those who do there will be many familiar faces. Class warfare and lesser conflict come up again at this stage of the book. Hausmann's urban planning devastated the poor people and ultimately many of them were forced to evacuate Paris as a direct consequence of his public policies. This was part of the cause for the military features of the urban planning layout. There were barricades made and used, but also, some of the streets and normal construction was made in the event of such challenges. The idea was to design a city so that it could be well defended against outside invaders but also designed to protect it from the dissatisfied amongst the city's own populace. Barricades were an important part of this in both cases.



Chapter 5, Street Fighting

Chapter 5, Street Fighting Summary and Analysis

The author introduces street fighting. This is not the random activity of criminals as it is described and discussed by Walter Benjamin. It is actually about the struggle between the economic and social classes. The proletariat - the poor essentially, were continuing to strive for greater economic and social power and better conditions. Many of the members of these classes were workers. Workers unions and political parties based in them stemmed from this type of situation. These people were, in general, the urban form of the peasants of the more agrarian form of the society. While this is just one more small step in a lengthy process, the author's main point here is that most street fighting was done without weaponry or with knives rather than with guns.

The author also notes that the rise of glass and iron during the 19th century was of great importance. Railway usage relied upon the success of the iron train track. Iron girders were also used in construction at the arcades. Walter Benjamin also writes that at first, iron was only used at points where people were normally in transit from one location to another.

One of the book's many features is the way that it has been divided into chapters. Letters are used: all of the capital letters and then a second sequence of some of the lower case letters of the same alphabet. Letter G: Exhibitions, Advertising, Grandville. In 1798 in France, the idea of having a public exhibition of goods made its way through the system into public policy. Included in the book is a lithograph of the Crystal Palace of London. This is an example of the type of location that would be used for a public exhibition. At this point, just as the work leads into the second hundred pages of regular text, the author notes another technological piece that proves to be of great significance. Gas lamps - this new luxurious device was used extensively with the arcade. For the first time, the merchants also united in their efforts to provide the public and merchants with streets safe enough to use at night. This is one of the ways that modernity was created and cultivated in the psyche by the intentional use of technology along with artistic flair and some tendency towards fantasy.



Chapter 6, Baudelaire

Chapter 6, Baudelaire Summary and Analysis

MOOR EEEFFOC comes from page 233. Here, the author is writing about the 1850s. There was a great cafe where the culture was able to spread quite effectively. Within that context, there was a COFFEE ROOM. Walter Benjamin writes that there was an especial quality to MOOR EEEFFOC - which is simply what the same thing read from one side of the door. This man Baudelaire had no children's books during his childhood. He did not feel that this was the source of any kind of problem. He believed very strongly that the future of literature would rely upon having an inclusive attitude towards both science and philosophy. Without that, he claimed, the literature that did emerge would suffer from both homicidal and suicidal tendencies. Along with Baudelaire, the author also mentions a highly unusual match between a 26-year-old woman and a 60-year-old man. Unlikely at best, but not necessarily unheard of, this one is normally the reserve of the idle wistful fantasies of an old man who does not take the fancies seriously himself, and the nightmarish anxieties of the younger woman. On November 6, 1857 Baudelaire writes to the Empress Eugenie.

One element of the Romantic movement was acknowledgment of the illegal or quasi-legal "drug culture". Substances normally preserved and controlled by the medical profession to be applied to treat very specific cases and problems find a second home as a means of intoxication and pure enjoyment. Hashish is mentioned the most during the entire course of the book, but not too often. As today, there are those who are strongly opposed to such things as they cloud the mind and serve no purpose when not meticulously applied by physicians to treat specific problems. Still, there are also those who find that, if nothing else, these serve as some kind of alternative to expensive activities...the alteration of the mind through chemical means more so than the alteration of the mind through externally oriented activities and experiences.

There is one sense in which this type of thing creates affects more akin to those associated with mental fantasies, meditations, and reading. This is when contrasted to full-bodied activities, such as sports or weaving fabrics, or building cars, or making shops. Connected with this is also mysticism. Also, there is a belief perpetuated by William Blake and some of the other thinkers and poets of the Romantics. "Imagination is not fantasy...Imagination is an almost divine faculty which perceives...the intimate and secret relations of things, the correspondences and the analogies," *Nouvelles Histoires extraordinaires*, p. 13 -14. [J31a, 5]. "The primary interest of allegory is not linguistic but optical. 'Images - my great, my primitive passion,'" Note 322, (p.334).



Chapter 7, K,L,M,N,O,P

Chapter 7, K,L,M,N,O,P Summary and Analysis

The chapter based on letter K begins on page 389. L starts on page 405. Amongst the few and special photographs found in this work, there is one of the Parisian sewer. This doesn't look like much in certain ways. It is simply a metal set of tunnels that evidently have some liquid in them. The color contrast is quite good. The photo is in black and white as that was the only kind at the time. There is another image, a quite different one, of an omnibus. This lithograph or otherwise printed drawing shows men wearing suits and top hats sitting atop a bus. At least one has an umbrella. The rain is falling and many of those riding out there on top are getting soaked.

A large portion of the text is made up of quotes from diverse sources. Any given page may be a written equivalent of a collage - made up of two to four quotes with perhaps a sentence or two written by Walter Benjamin. This goes on for hundreds of pages. However, over the course of it, there is a gradual progression. By the time of the image of the omnibus the work has proceeded onto page 433. By this time, the author's own writing often takes up at least half of the page. Each author presented has its own font per page. That means that several other authors may have the same font but not on the same page. This makes it easy for readers to separate the various written "voices" that are being assembled by this book. The main purpose, or effect of this method of presentation is that the author gets to express many of the perceptions of the culture. While at first this makes the work seem choppy and bizarre once readers are three hundred pages into it or so, then it becomes clearer: the reader is assimilating the method.

Walter Benjamin asserts that he is also intentionally presenting the work in a manner analogous to the way the arcades were: shops - windows and doorways...displays and items, bits and pieces of what, once taken together whether mentally or through the wider senses, all convene and establish a new psychological order. This order is modernity. This order is the European perspective. This order is the 19th century. As the chapters progress, the author points out during R: Mirror that the Parisians have an exceptional street life. During chapter S: Wiesendgrund, Adorno and Kierkegaard are all referred to in the same sentence. These were all important philosophers of the 19th or 20th centuries. Walter introduces the reality of the Commune. This is the true European source that led to the development of communist theory. The setting is actually France, after the Revolution. The Commune is a suburb outside of Paris. It is a place to which the poor have fled and assembled. The Commune is their effort to rebuild a life that will work for them as individuals and as a group.

Chapter 8, Urban Myth

Chapter 8, Urban Myth Summary and Analysis

Baudelaire is one of the most quoted figures in the entire book. In this chapter, he writes that the urban life has developed a greater existence. It has the fantasy existence that interpenetrates the facts and the truth. Part of modernity he asserts, is that city life is partially transformed. Myths are created that go along with it. The real and the imaginary float along together. Similarly, the known and the unknown travel as a unit. Literary figures serenely ask readers what they know and what they are discovering here for the very first time. Jugendstil, Baudelaire, Nietzsche - all these are amongst those described as characterizing the 19th century intellectual climate of Europe.

Another of this era's great thinkers was Fourier. His main theoretical contribution was the idea of the human as a "passionate machine". He created a schema using 4 groups to describe 12 main passions found in humans. Group 1: The five ordinary senses, Group 2: love, friendship, family feeling, ambition, Group 3: for intrigue - the cabalist, for mutability - the butterfly, for union - the composite and finally Group 4, unity. Believe it or not, Fourier believed that the drive towards and to preserve unity is the most powerful of the human passions, particularly because it absorbs the other passions. This idea is clarified on page 630 of this massive monumental work of nonfiction.

The author then shares two distinctive ideas at work within Continental Europe's major nations of Germany and France. Nineteenth century France stressed the human collective. The need for a more common understanding of the social order might be said to have come along with the Revolution. During this same century the Germans were focused upon two conceptions - these were presented as a set of opposites. One is individualism the other was idealism. Given this, it makes better sense that Friedrich Nietzsche's individualism emerged from the same culture as Hegel's Idealistic philosophy. In German idealism, the mind and the spirit of mankind are found to be the same. Walter Benjamin also writes, "In 1828, the poles were to become ice free," [W11a, 8]. For 21st century readers alert to the warnings of global warming and climate change, this remark is striking. Limitations are acknowledged. Fourier, Benjamin informs readers, dislikes Jews and Englishmen. Later still, he includes the quote; "The autonomy of art has its origin in the concealment of labor," [X13a].



Chapter 9, Streetfighting in Munich

Chapter 9, Streetfighting in Munich Summary and Analysis

At page 699, there are brief, yet stunningly insightful comments about how urban street fighting is conducted. There are new formulations of it and for its use. Prevention of revolution is one purpose street fighting can serve. City leaders can counter or prevent open rebellion or can counter-revolution by using the right street fighting methods. In this case the author refers to "the armed take over of Munich 1848," (p.699). In this method, the streets are actually left empty. The passageways used for communications and for moving troops are actually located in and through buildings, be they specific homes or residences and businesses or other public buildings.

The class warfare and the conflict management associated with the cities of Europe is part of the modern condition being defined and described through the text. Another relevant point here in the book, is that this era involved a massive drive to increase civil rights for workers. Learning about what happened to European men does not remove the relevance of the women's movements: what it does do, is show that this was not the easiest thing in the world for the men to accomplish either - for one group of the men in a nation to be taken seriously or to gain rights and recognition from other men in the same society. The girl's version of this did have a public image in the story of Jenny the Worker. Class distinctions and attitudes about what work is and who is expected or needed to do any are meaningful.

The next topic takes the situation of workers one step further. Peoples' work is actually important and relevant to the society in which they participate. This truth can be clearly perceived and it can be easily lost in the scrambles for survival that getting and keeping work involve. Class differences continued to both serve and to plague the society. While the organization and leadership given by the higher classes was helpful through to the bottom in certain ways, in other regards it was simply experienced as some kind of serious problem posed by some aggressive people who tended to maraud and bully the others - to oppress, and then to occasionally declare themselves to have some kind of rights to lead control the rest of the people.

The mutual ignorance of the people of the different classes did not improve their ability to relate well to one another. One example is the French situation where the workers' cry Bread & Work was answered with Let Them Eat Cake. That's how much the aristocrat does not understand the situation. The author does assure readers that there is some hope when he describes the first formulations of philanthropy. The middle classes of Switzerland were the first to come up with a workable solution to the realities. This same class antagonism at times caused highly effective solutions to go under appreciated.



Chapter 10, Barricade Fighting & Daumier

Chapter 10, Barricade Fighting & Daumier Summary and Analysis

Readers have now come far into the book. The mind has grown accustomed to perceiving in certain ways. This has been done in a very intentional effort to mimic the method used in the arcades. There a variety of types of shops found closely together. They have generally been artfully arranged. Taken together, they reflect a great deal of the daily realities of France, in terms of which luxury goods are available. Likewise, the many figures who are quoted form an accurate but constantly partial perception of the intellectual themes and ideas that were dominant in the atmosphere of Europe at the time.

One of the questions that emerged was one that has grown common. Relocating for work has become a relatively commonplace phenomenon. It is more prevalent within certain professional fields than in others. This cannot necessarily be done by individuals who are trapped at their location by their poverty. However, it is presented in the book as a rather new idea and as one possible means for at least some of the poor to solve their problem. Residential rioting, such as that found in 19th century Paris, France is one of the unfortunate cultural actions that can be associated with some shortage or error of economic policy on a local level, but that residents are loathe to move away to solve.

During this part of the book, the chapters are labeled with lower case letters. During b: Daumier, a sad story is told. Here, a man named Gavroche began his life as a nobleman and sank through the levels of social hierarchy until he reached the end of his days at the bottom. In contrast, there are some remarks about the artist Alexander Dumas. In this case he is a popular author. At the same time, Walter Benjamin shows how accustomed to certain echelons of society he is. He writes to his target audience: people lumped together under the heading "workers". He tells them how, over 20 years, he has written 400 novels and 35 plays. Thanks to his work, he explains to them, 8,160 people have had gainful employment. This delivers a very concise perspective and a definitive societal perspective.



Chapter 11, Bohemians

Chapter 11, Bohemians Summary and Analysis

Another of the important concepts of modern Europe is the bohemian. Walter Benjamin distinguishes two generations of these. The bohemians are actually intellectuals. The author does not often provide a discussion of the changes in education that came along with other changes in the culture. However, this crops up every now and then during the text. In this case, the bohemians are characterized in part by their level of education. These are educated people. Walter Benjamin has also advised readers to take care to see how the greater access to education is influencing the culture. So far, the presence of it has not been used to explain much of the nation's success. He has addressed lower classes of people, in the main, and corrected possible errors of the higher classes or the naive - as in when he pointed out that many of the sales clerks in the arcades are trained in the arts. Here, education appears as a partial cause for the cultural milieu. The bohemians are not always from the higher classes.

However, one of the main differences between the elder bohemes and the younger ones, are that the younger ones are from the proletariat. Thanks to social progress, they acquired levels of education possibly never previously known to their families. This allowed them to be "shining stars" in their families and to signify a massive change. Not everyone takes to the educational institutions - one of the qualities of the bohemians is that they tended to enjoy the book learning and the thinking and how it permitted them to think about life in the real world with altered perspective and greater depth or scope than those not interested by such things might do.

The author does not delve into the matter of women bohemians but has included the novelist George Sands - who was actually a woman. American readers may be in for shock when Walter Benjamin explains that Karl Marx took huge portions of his development of Communism from the French. One of his most famous works, that seems to have swept under the proverbial rug in America, has the title [transliterated from the German] The Class War in France.

Walter Benjamin has explained that the Commune was a suburb created by poor people who were forced to evacuate cities due to the political policies that made it unaffordable for them to survive within the system. The compassion towards people in the society was characterized by the popularity of the novels of writers such as Victor Hugo. He used the archetype of the beggar as a hero in his writings. This also claims that every human spirit has two works. One of these is the lived work: what the person actually does. There is another - this one is a phantom: this includes a great deal that has been left undone. Some of this unmanifest has been carefully avoided and counts as a success against some destructive potential in the individual. Anyone who has not lived up to his or her full potential is actually leaving some of their greatest work as a part of this phantom.



Chapter 12, Conclusions

Chapter 12, Conclusions Summary and Analysis

By this late into the book, a handful of themes and most prevalent material have made themselves evident. The author has allowed these to emerge rather naturally as the work has unfolded. This is a rather natural method for looking at the 19th century on the whole. The work is quite limited in that the nations of Germany and France are overtly emphasized as having given the greatest shape to the culture on the Continent. Essentially, part of the dynamic of European life is which nations are dominant economically, militarily and politically. For Europeans, this virtually goes without saying, but for Americans it can be a blind spot in their awareness without being taught. As such, one of the benefits of Walter Benjamin's work is that it can educate North Americans about the nature of Europe in addition to providing a basic cultural history.

Religion, which has been a suppressed theme throughout the length of the book comes up, as the work has progressed deeply into the chapters labeled by lower case letters. It comes up in relation to how it has influenced the working life. He writes that Protestantism has been cultivated within the community. The real reason for it is that it has better supported the over all productivity of the locals than Catholicism has. During this phase work conditions were best suited to those contemporary readers would view as designed either for the workaholic.

There is one alternative: it might well have been that the only way the jobs available could result in the workers actually having enough money to support themselves or to get luxury goods was to work incredibly long hours at low wages. As a consequence, the society stretched the workweek all the way out to ten consecutive days. This made it so there would still be a Sabbath, but it was apparently barely able to survive. Walter Benjamin tells readers that this type of obsession with work was normal for people of the 19th century: 1820 - 1895.

For those who had work and loved it, this situation might well have been just fine. Doubtless, there were many who did not like it that way at all. During this century, in Europe, it might be that one motive for women and children to get work - and many of them managed to do it, was so that they could include other members of the family - such as their father or husband, whereas in other cases it was a normative means to self-liberation. Obviously, also for children, one way of expressing loving support to parents can in fact be to work with them or for them - the power to help financially by earning money must have been awesome for some even though for others this was probably the century of the world's worst finger numbing "grind". Readers can imagine the ghosts of these people still reeling from the fact that the overwhelming stream of work just stopped when they died.



Chapter 13, Further Conclusions

Chapter 13, Further Conclusions Summary and Analysis

The one nation Walter Benjamin mentions the most, other than France and Germany is actually Britain. Russia is also mentioned, as is Switzerland. In the case of the latter two, they are treated as important but not as the center. The British, especially the English are viewed as yet another major thread in the conditions of Europe on the whole during the 19th century. During the chapter entitled "r" [Ecole Polytechnique] the author refers, yet again obliquely, to the changes made to the educational system in Europe. While for the higher classes, education has been at times a token of class prestige and privilege but has also paved the way for the progress of humanity in all the realms of the mind. Here, with the rise of industry and the crafts, educational institutions made new methods for how boys mostly, but in some ways also girls, could get training that took them beyond the limits of their parents' knowledge.

The captains of the nation's industry could help themselves by helping the people become prepared to fulfill the types of work they were able to create for the nation. One of the systems for doing this was the creation of the polytechnics. These were higher education institutes for tradesmen. This altered the historical relationship of the Master and Servant on the one hand, and that of the Master and Apprentice on the other. "Characteristic of the Ecole Polytechnique...was the coexistence of purely theoretic studies with a series of vocational courses geared to civil engineering, architecture, fortifications, mining, and even naval constructions," (p. 818).

Another aspect of life is introduced here. This is the whole notion of retirement. As most readers are well aware, retirement means that you stop working, or that instead of working in one field for decades you actually don't, and try different things. While normally reserved for the elders of the populace it is also clearly viewed as being a distinctive lifestyle. The need to prepare for retirement and what it is can be seen as being a background need for people throughout the earlier parts of their lives. The author has continued his system of literary collage throughout the book. The writing style is quite clear. Translations are an integral and necessary part of the whole. French and German are both languages with which the author was adept. This shows in the quotations, although the overall artistic aspects of this truth are lost by the work's being presented exclusively in English. The text runs, in the forms of the chapters to page 821. The small letter "r" is the last of these. The work has culminated with a chapter dedicated to the social movement and to the polytechnique as shown here in the summary.



Chapter 14, First Sketches

Chapter 14, First Sketches Summary and Analysis

Have reached the end of the normal text, this monumental work is loaded with additional materials. The first of these postscripts is First Sketches. These were all written earlier, and have been added to the end. This has mainly been done for those who have been passionately interested. There are times when what one most wants is for a book to not end. First Sketches gives more, rather like the literary equivalent of an encore. There are impressive, brief schematics included here, showing how the author developed his work in an orderly manner.

First Sketches is followed by another large section that has its own heading page. Early Drafts is reads on this one leaf. The next page is headed as Arcades. This is followed by a tidy note from an editor which explains that what follows is precious. They have found the early notes created by the author when the idea was merely to write a newspaper article. This is not meant to be derisive about a newspaper article at all, but simply to observe that a giant book, built up to over 1000 pages is megalithic by comparison to the average 300 page long book. Technology and its affects upon culture and the sense of wealth is addressed. Expectations are greatly influenced by this.

For the first time in this entire compendium, there are photographs of the author himself. They have been taken within the confines of a library. This context serves the purpose. The author is effectively presented as a quiet, bookish fellow. He is sporting a set of spectacles in the photos - which have managed to become almost symbolic of "smart people". This may be because there is something slightly myopic about reading. Prior to the prevalence of reliable home electric lamps, those who read a great deal, especially by candlelight suffered much the same as those who worked with needlepoint after hours - there may have been hundreds of thousands of victims of cumulative eyestrain. Walter Benjamin, as shown in the photograph has neither the great gift of having been a handsome man nor the curse of being an ugly one. Inoffensive and unimpressive in his appearance, Walter Benjamin was surely able to fit right into to public scenes of all kinds, including the library in which he was photographed for posterity.



Chapter 15, Addenda

Chapter 15, Addenda Summary and Analysis

These contain the Expose of 1935, Early Version. Again, these have been added it seems to satiate those who have loved the book so much that they still want more. Thanks to these supplemental materials, there is. In this case, there is the first draft of the manuscript. This is actually rather brief, but for the first time, readers can see what the author has written without the interventions of other people's writings. This is followed closely by a listing of the extensive materials that have been assembled in the creation of this large book. These are neatly organized. Again, for readers interested in seeing how the book was organized, this is handy and insightful. There is still more after that.

The next heading is graced by another photograph. They are black and white images from the first half of the 20th century. While this seems terribly old fashioned to readers of today, the author has candidly reminded us that this was a brand new item of the 19th century and could be viewed as an astounding alternative to the lithograph. That one shown is one small seen at the arcades when they had progressed to their mature state. It is dated 1908. It is a street lined with shops all of which look from the early 21st century very old school. The street is covered by a high glass enclosure. While the bad news is that this makes the location subject to all manner of stuffiness, few things could bring greater joy during rains or other inclement weather.

Included there is one story from real life that could easily pass as a piece of fiction. This was written by a woman named Lisa Fittko. She wrote the piece in 1980 but the story comes from 1940, when the real life drama of Europe was intertwined with the Second World War. She writes of how her husband had such confidence in her and how Benjamin had been sent to meet with her by her husband who had assured him that she could get him safely into Spain. This need was not very hidden, as both refer to the activities of a Mayor as having supplied at least a rough map of an escape route. Walter Benjamin, evidently, was enough of an enemy of the new German Nazi state to need to leave. Once he does, the same man's manuscript is mythologized. This ties in with certain 19th century realities.

At least two of the 19th century German philosophers - both Hegel and Nietzsche had to get their work done around wars. Hegel is known to have a manuscript delivery concern - the timing of his literary submission and bombings of the local nature of a war coincided. Nietzsche lived in France, and was the veteran of a war in which he had served as a German man in the 1800s. In this regard, Walter Benjamin shows himself to be a 20th century participant in this same kind of tradition. The intellectual needs to get out of the country, and although the Mayor cannot apparently just do this, he is so sympathetic that he has contributed a map to the effort.



Characters

Walter Benjamin

This is the author of the book. Although his name does not appear to be so, he is apparently a German. Like the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, Benjamin was a German in France for a large portion of his life. Due to this, use of both of these European languages is part of the daily life. There is no explanation given early in the book how it is that the author has a name that looks and sounds a great deal more British or even North American than German. Perhaps this was a side effect of effective cross-pollination amongst European breeds. He conducted his study of the 19th century during the 20th.

The book was published in the 1980s. Benjamin is one of the many who had to leave one nation due to the troubles with Germany during the 1930s and 1940s. Amongst his friends, was the fellow intellectual, the 20th century philosopher Theodor Adorno. There are two photographs of him placed during the endnotes of the book. He was an average looking man, with a slight thickness that could be viewed as bad or as good. His thought is creatively constituted and expressed through the myriad of 19th century resources and technologies.

As a creative 20th century man, Benjamin has used the framework of the artist's collage in order to attune the readers' minds to the endeavor of his research. This is a rather recent development - within the grand scheme of things, to be able to reflect upon the preceding century. This entire practice is in some sense an illusion in that this glorification of the calendar is a sociological not visceral phenomenon. Such works as these, however, that compile a mass scale sense of perception directly related to this way of organizing time is certain psychologically at least as effective as having and using measuring systems of other kinds. How effective the author's work will prove to be for the long-term projections into the future centuries is not clear. His work may be seminal, or it may end up as seeming to be little more than gibberish to a bygone era.

Baudelaire

This famous French author and thinker is often mentioned in the book. There is an entire letter - J, and therefore a chapter devoted to him. A number of his thoughts and ideas appear elsewhere, scattered throughout the work. His name has become a cultural icon of the 19th century, at least in Europe. Extensively quoted, this man is one of the representatives of the Romantics, a literary and cultural movement of the 19th century.

Baudelaire was a flashy figure. He was at ease regarding marketing methods and this greatly helped his career. This translates for the public as perceiving him as charismatic.



He was very much a man of his century. His poetic verse was actually viewed as destructive of illusions to a profound degree.

Baudelaire wrote about diverse presences of the arcades. There were new commodities - the benefits of industrialization. There were prostitutes. Unlike many others, he writes about prostitutes and is less than wholly derogatory in his remarks. Suffice it to say, for women who might have found a paying position as a wife challenging, prostitution offered at least some compromise between celibacy or impersonal work or a sex life without even the respect of the financial support of her lover/s. In the prostitutes' Utopia, this is better than marriage or being a kept woman, as well as being better than being exploited or abused.

Unfortunately, the Utopist vision is often far from the mark of the actual practice and it may have too often been more distressing than 13-hour shifts at low wages in a textile mill with poor ventilation. Part of Baudelaire's appeal was his willingness to write about such matters from the perspective of his own generation. He does not always write considerately of women - it is clear that he writes from terrible ignorance and without the general respect due to anyone. The only solace is that men have quite a hard time exhibiting respect amongst themselves such that, their difficulties respecting women could be viewed as a weakness of their gender from the women's perspective.

Victor Hugo

This is another of those who are quoted and referred to by the author during the course of this book. He is an important author of the 19th century. There is one photograph of him included in the book. The image comes from the middle years of his life. It is not possible to determine whether his hair was blonde or grey at the time the photo was taken. He stands as one of those the author has chosen to represent the intellectual life of Europe during the 19th century.

Victor Hugo did have gargantuan ambitions, but unlike so many other men, was not terribly deluded in having them. He honored and studied many greats and apparently had an avid love for geniuses of multiple types. Others viewed him in his adult life as a genius, as a Romantic, and as a foolish man. He is compared with Charles Dickens in that he wrote in a way that gave form to the hearts of the people of his time and within the community in which he lived. Due to this, he was loved by the others in his community in a very special way.

Victor Hugo did not earn the most money amongst his contemporaries. This is explicitly stated during the chapter dedicated to him, on page 757 of the text.

Friedrich Nietzsche

This is one of the 19th century German philosophers. He intended to be worldly in terms of religion and culture. He wrote in German but spent much of his post-war life residing in France. His name and works are referred to throughout the book. Unlike Baudelaire



there is no chapter named after him. However, one of his ideas: Eternal Return, is featured in the chapter titled D Boredom, Eternal Return.

Nietzsche represents the trend towards individualism in German philosophy, rather than the progressive mode. He is rare amongst the Germans in that he has knowledge of the Hindoos and he uses this in the construction of his philosophy; just a few decades earlier Ralph Waldo Emerson were similarly self-educated regarding the religion of India and had pursued this line of philosophizing over in America.

Nietzsche was a gifted writer as well as a thinker. He was typical of the 19th century in that contending with Christian theology was a major preoccupation. Unlike many others, Nietzsche combined the powers of Germany and France by dwelling in France while writing in German. Nietzsche was popular enough during his lifetime - in the manner of a professor mainly. His works grew in popularity during the 20th century. His writings fell on both sides of the evil spectre of the Nazi regime's policy of genocide, or "ethnic cleansing" - the entrapment and destruction of 6 million Jews. Nietzsche's writings were not the cause of that later tragedy, but the charismatic flair of his writings, and their effective use in conjunction with propaganda oriented to the greatness of the German people tainted his posthumous reputation for a few decades.

Karl Marx

This is another of the classic thinkers of the industrializing world. This man is mentioned in reference to his theories regarding "progress". He focused upon the hopes and challenges represented by the efforts of the lower classes of people to attain rights and bearable working conditions. He was a token of an effort towards political progress where ideas such as "democracy" might have greater success. By the time of his writings, America was one of nations that was showing that democracy with representation could work for cultural units larger than Grecian city-states, and German Hanseatic League "Free Cities".

The French Revolution was another symptom of the same drive. Germany had been toying with the idea of spreading democracy. Within the works of Karl Marx, these things, along with industrialization and the ethical and spiritual ascent of humanity all combine in his theories regarding Communism. His ideas are also interspersed within the book. Communes are mentioned early on as places where the poor fled to when the municipal leaders were ignorant of their needs and undermining their survival. Also, the German philosopher Hegel also nurtured this whole idea of "Progress throughout history" for humanity. He does have a chapter named for him. Chapter X -Marx begins on page 651, and runs to page 670.

Howard Eiland

This gentleman has translated the body of this work from the original German language into easily readable English. Actually, he has only handled the translations of the German part. The rest of the work was conducted in French. This is a respectable 20th



century scholar. Little information about him is given in the work. Only comparison of his English with the original with full understanding would give the most precise ability to gauge the quality of his work as a translator.

Kevin McLaughlin

This is the other man who served together with Howard Eiland, as the translator. This undertaking should not be underrated. Without it, hundreds of millions of people would not be able to access the information. This is the man who handled the French. He is also a 20th century scholar. As with the other translator, only the most devout personnel who read both the original and the translation would be in a position to assess his translations.

Sales-clerks

These people are mentioned during the first 100 pages of the book. The author describes their efforts in the arcades. They are a bit more special than the public might suspect. The reason for this is that a rather high proportion of them are rather well educated. Many have studied the arts. As a direct consequence, they have taken the trouble to apply their knowledge of the arts to matters such as setting up the displays of the products. While this may easily be taken for granted, it may also mean that the beauty of the arcade shops has been more expertly cultivated than the shoppers may realize.

God

God is mentioned, but typically the references are indirect. The Christian religion is brought up repeatedly and it is through these that God is referred to in the work. The tensions between Catholicism and Protestant Christianity, both advocates of God, which claim to be doing their best to serve and to further his works and recommendations for human behavior come under discussion. They are actually brought up primarily will the doctrines of humans in relation to their working lives and how this pertains to the doctrine mandated by God through his son Jesus and through The Bible that people are to observe a Sabbath day and are not permitted to work at such times.

Satan

This entity is named repeatedly in this large book. He comes up most frequently in relation to workers rights and to product offerings. He is not discussed in the manner that might be predicted. Readers may or may not be surprised: there are ways that the Devil is talked about. He is indicated rather vaguely as being powerful, and of not advocating all of the same choices, as God would recommend. Sometimes, he seems to urge unethical behaviors but other times it is implied that he is really no different from the parent who chastises or the employer who demands more hours from workers. As



such, there are ways in which Satan is presented as the terrifying and tricky figure warned of by Scriptures whereas in other ways he is offered up more after the manner of a contemporary Prometheus - as some other force that while not malevolent to mankind at all, does not necessarily give the same advice as that provided by God.



Objects/Places

Arcade

This is a public location in Paris, France. There is more than one. This is a format that is new at the time the book is written. An arcade is an urban place where several merchants of luxury goods have assembled. Their set-ups have been described as the precursor to the department store and the shopping mall. Shopkeepers are able to hold some bulked goods at the selling point. There are enough merchants working at the same time and near enough one another that their joint effort creates an atmosphere that is both special and unique.

The new fangled arcade is the location for the work. It reveals a whole approach to the society. The author is interested in thinking about society and civilization in ways other than the most astute and austere of ideas. This is philosophy and sociology within the daily urban context.

Paris, France

This is the large capital of France. This city has been known to be a cultural as well as a political center for centuries. It has come to be associated with many great thinkers, politicians, warriors and artists throughout the ages. It is the main location for a great deal of the activity found in the book. The arcades are in Paris.

German

In this case, this is a reference to the language. This language was used extensively by the author during the course of much of his life, particularly when he created this book. Although the edition used to create the summary is an English translation, the strong influence of the German culture and language is felt throughout the work. Many of the authors quoted by Walter Benjamin are obviously German.

French

This is the language. This, like German, is one of the dominant languages found in Continental Europe during the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries. This language was used alongside German pervasively throughout the course of the original version of this book. While the book has been translated into an artificial situation in which it is presented in one language, there are numerous names, dates and other items which make it very clear that the language that was used was French and the people quoted or referred to were also French.



Lithograph

This is a type of visual art that was relied upon after the introduction of printing technology but prior to the invention of photography. A lithograph is a carved image that can then be combined with inks and pressed onto another surface in order to create a final image. There are copies of some of these interspersed during the book. Early on, within the first 100 pages, the author points out to readers that painting and the lithograph were "the" ways to transfer images prior to the invention of photography. Photography is a new and growing format in the early portion of the book. This should not be overlooked in terms of cultural relevance.

Displays

These are the areas in shops that are used to display at least some of the goods to potential customers. The author writes of these especially in reference to the sales-clerks. The employees are normally responsible for devising and maintaining these. In the arcades, many of these are actually quite impressive. Displays catch the eye and draw customers in. They attract people. The author's point is that this is no accident. In fact, many of those who have devised the displays have had some education in the arts. They have applied their educations to the work before them. Here they are humble and practical and at the same time - Benjamin is explaining that the magic of the arcades is the result of concerted effort by skilled people.

Prostitutes

These are women who do not yield sexual favors unless explicitly given money or paid cash rather than gifts for doing so. It is because of this that they can be viewed as being like wives, only cheaper, but because they are cheaper are paid per use rather than being kept and paid ala a salary. This is the case irrespective of whether those using their services love them or not, as both kinds of customers exist. They vary in type and to some degree in their mode of operations and conduct. They are mentioned as being amongst the attractive women found at the arcades.

Corps of Engineers

These are mentioned during Chapter K. He is writing about the new developments implementing new construction technologies. These are occurring throughout Paris, and really, the movement is international in scope. This is a special group of these, sanctioned by the government for use in large scale public projects that require extensive engineering in order to be accomplished.



Asphalt

This is a dark, strange substance. It is a combination of stones and gums and oils. It is able to take a great deal of temperature fluctuation and rain. It is cheaper or easier to haul and to set into urban environments. Normally it is used to preserve walkways under tremendous strain. It is mentioned in Chapter M - The Flaneur. It is reported that asphalt was first used as side walks, at least in France.

Gas Lights

These were commissioned by the city of Paris for use in the arcades. This was a major step forward. These were a massive investment by the people of Paris to nurture safe conditions at their new arcades. These were to enable merchants and customers a greater air of safety. This allowed both earlier and later business hours, and for shops to run during the winter. This also added another layer of magical aura around the events of the arcades.

Flaneur

This is an official yet secret observer of the arcades. The flaneur conducts what today's readers know as "secret shoppers" and other forms of hands on "market research". They would be present often times and make their wishes known. There is an entire chapter devoted to the Flaneur.

Photograph

This was a new item during the 19th century. It was created using the latest in technology. They were created and tried repeatedly in order to determine how they would fit into the society. Nadar, who's photographs are replicated in the book, was one of the first to seek the art of photography. Prior to this invention, the lithograph, printed wood cut and paintings were the only way to create and to pass on visual images to others, especially in the printed media.

Dolls

Here, the author means dressing dolls - mannequins and other models created for the purpose of sewing, fitting and displaying attire so that real people will have a good idea of what they're getting. They are described and written of during a chapter devoted to them.



Automatons

These are the real life machines that are able to be run without a high level of constant supervision by human attendants. These betoken the future. They are both fabulous and ominous. This is the power of machines, but with automatons there is the hint that these can do the work of humans. This is what makes the automaton so different from the plough or the sewing machine which are not able to do their work without direct human involvement.

National Assembly

This is a public assembly in France. It is referred to as a location where Victor Hugo presented himself. It is mentioned during the chapter devoted to Victor Hugo.

Sewer of Paris

This is one of the few items that has warranted a photograph in the book. In the black and white image it shows none of the vile odors, and no nightmarish contents have been exposed. They are made of metal pipes, or have the appearance in the photograph that they are. They are necessary and extremely beneficial to the city although their endpoints have repeatedly been the locations of pestilence and other disease causing microscopic entities.

Paving stones

These are mentioned in Chapter M, the Flaneur. They are used to make streets that hold up under enormous amounts of traffic that will hold together even during and after heavy rainfall.

Barricades

These were constructed from more than one material. They are brought up more than once. They come up as part of the descriptions of life in Paris. They were known to be used both to protect the city of Paris from external invaders and to also force situations when rioting or other civil unrest occurred within Paris itself.



Themes

Technology

Technology is one of the themes presented in this work. There has always been a relationship between technology and culture. Walter Benjamin the courtesy of showing readers how the two are connected with respect to French and European society. He does not go into every aspect of technology. This is mainly because he is taking the larger view; details must be carefully chosen to select to use towards the common whole. He attests to the power of manufacturing technologies. The importance of these should not be underrated simply because they have not been presented in detail. The rest of this discussion of themes is dedicated to those details that the author has delved into.

Metals technology and mining are one of the primary ones Walter Benjamin mentions. The men of industry are often too busy or not of the disposition to write the kinds of book that Benjamin has created. Perhaps this is unfortunate, seeing as many of the projects they have put through have had such an impact on society. The metal industry is one of the most powerful here. The new technology of the train, Benjamin says, was only so successful due to the secondary powers of iron and of steel. The same industry to create the sword and the cauldron manifests as mandatory to the success of the 19th century transformation of the world. The distribution of goods and the power of people in society that the extensive use of trains has set off were in part done thanks to the aforementioned steel industry. The author also writes about how steel girders were formed and their new application to construction also greatly expanded the market for iron and steel forms of it.

Gas street lamps are another of the most important features of the French 19th century. These were actually used at the arcades. The purpose is mainly that it improves safety. Safer conditions are obtained for both the customers and for the merchants. Any banking or other services related to their goods could be improved. If the merchants wanted to stay open later, the lamps would add to the security of their employees. For many readers, the most appealing feature of the gas lighting is the charm of it. Shoppers can now stay out a bit later; the charming lighting fuels the imaginative faculties right along with those that perceive with precision the truth of the matter. Constables have better odds to be able to intervene successfully in the event of crimes or attempted crimes. This investment into futuristic forms of technology is noteworthy. Readers of today will observe how this type of investment has become utterly normal for huge portions of urban environments. The street lamp is a much-beloved artifact, however subdued the form of affection really is.



Workers & their Rights

The class struggle is a matter of some discussion in the book. The main focus is what has taken place in France during the 19th century. The new democratic form of government was viewed as a major triumph. The feudalism of the Middle Ages had shown how precarious and sometimes erroneous the efforts of a people to govern themselves without their so-called oppressors. As such, observing progress there in France held an especial importance. Could this democratic project succeed this time? Sure enough, this change in government had not made all the troubles of life disappear. Now, what had actually changed was the locus of accountability and responsibility for handling the society's challenges. Doubtless there was a certain amount of shame and embarrassment upon the discovery that removing the upper crust of the nation hadn't made poverty amongst the poor disappear. The reason is that, believe it or not, this was one of the things beheading monarchs was supposed to facilitate.

Hausmannism - urban planning and design and the relationship of this to the class struggle, is one of the book's main examples. This man designed Paris in ways that were excellent for some of the social classes but not for all. The development included barricades. Locations able to take barricades were designed so that urban leaders could protect the city against invaders or insurgents. Hausmann's works included what today might be called a "gentrification" of an area. This means that while the conditions and appearance of the location were directly improved, the same activity forced out the poorer peoples. The place had been upgraded and those who had lived there could no longer afford to. It is easy enough to see why locals would feel resentful because they would have hoped that their circumstances would change along with the building projects so that they could afford to live in these new, nicer places and hence - that they would be uplifted rather than evicted.

There were insurgencies and revolutions that were demands by locals to obtain rights. Workers, they argued, however middle class or poor, needed to have the right to vote - at least locally. This wish to be publicly taken into account is something that most readers will take as an automatic presumption. These efforts coexisted with a women's movement, although it was only at times separate. So much of the workers movement was male run and done that it did not always address the needs of women as workers so much as it addressed the needs of women as wives and mothers. The latter was an indirect but equally significant effect. The role of the educational institutions and access to them was also powerful. This is another meaningful detail often only obliquely acknowledged by the author.

19th Century European Culture

This is actually the prevailing theme of the book. The author has made some effort to assemble and to refine awareness of the main preoccupations and meanings of the 19th century in Europe. As such, this includes observation of the major influences, and events and themes of life that fed into the culture. Europe is known to be the



geographical continent. There grew up, nonetheless, an idea of "European culture". The reality that there are a number of nations differing in their politics, technology and languages contributed to a sense of how these realms were connected.

One main feature was that there were numerous and extensive trade routes between the peoples of Europe. Another is that they had grown accustomed to one another as adversaries during the many wars between them. These conflicts helped them to define themselves as separate nations, principalities, cities or linguistic 'tribes'. Conflicts also led to their unification at various times. Napoleon was so popular as a leader that instead of hating his dominance there were many people internationally in Europe who were genuinely delighted to come under his dominion through his art of conquest. This is a case where the popularity of a leader in Europe was happily international in its extent. Politics, trade and sentiment all being affected, this also shows that the dominance, or effecting wresting away from and prevention of the dominance amongst the nations was part of the defining features of European national boundaries and their identity both singularly as a nation and yet also of Europe on the whole.

Certainly it was different when German tribes were able to take Britain and France than it was when the French were unable to make inroads into England or Germany. Thus, there continues to be as there has been for centuries a qualitative ambiance to each location and period in European history. These nations have history with one another. This history in some ways is merely myth and ghost except that it has led to the current conditions beyond any shadow of a doubt. During the 19th century Germany and France were eminent. This was not always the case, making it all the more relevant.

Class strife was another important feature of European culture. Despite the conflict, the middle classes were able to grow during the century as educational opportunities expanded to the masses. This contributed to many smaller factors, all of which relied upon the extensive international trade as their backdrop. The middle classes changed; new options for upward mobility presented themselves. While not available to nor achieved by everyone they were nevertheless real and the culture was greatly changed when some of the best thinkers and some of the brightest of the lower classes were able to participate in the cultural milieu as never before. What a different thing it is, when, despite the continuing class struggle - a member of the higher classes and that of the lower have the opportunity to at least read about one another's perspectives and in some cases, if they meet they can foster new depths of understanding. This should be viewed as a genuine cultural advance.

Style

Perspective

This is crafted from the perspective of the first half of the 20th century. It is a male, Continental European perspective. This can be perceived as a bias, or simply as a legitimate point-of-view with distinguishable limitations. This is an intentional effort. He was fluent in both German and French and these languages were used extensively in the creation of this gigantic book. Readers should be aware that the influence of this has been greatly mitigated for North American readers by the translations into English. The translations were performed by two individuals, one who handled the French, and one who took care of the German.

The author was coerced to leave the country shortly after he had completed the manuscript for this book. This was a consequence of his unpopularity with the Nazi regime and other ways in which he was disapproved of. He was not without support from both little and greater people within the country and within Europe. This informs readers that he was in good standing with people in general despite the difficulties. His power and authority must have been respected, otherwise it would not have been viewed as any kind of threat.

The author was an educated thinking man. One of his friends was Theodor Adorno. This man was such a prominent 20th century philosopher that he was used as part of the MA Modern European Philosophy courses by Middlesex University during the 1990s. Adorno is essentially Continental European in his outlook. Those familiar with his work will find that he helps Walter Benjamin make sense. Likewise, for those meeting Walter Benjamin first, they will have a clear and necessary advantage when they meet Theodor Adorno. Both have applied unconventional approaches to give the very shape to their literature. This method of showing, through example, how scattered elements are brought together is standard for that kind of thinking that seeks to make sense of the world by synthesizing and surveying facts and conditions.

This is an approach that members of the upper classes have relied upon by necessity for their perception of their own societies. It is a method that can also be used by people of the middle and lower classes to broaden their own horizons whether within their own world. If nothing else, both the advantages and shortcomings of efforts to be worldly, to have a sense what it means to be "a European" - something Friedrich Nietzsche often referred to, are revealed using this technique of displaying not only the goods available at the arcades but the intellectual milieu and most fragrant ideas circulating around Europe at the time when Walter Benjamin wrote this monumental work.



Tone

The tone of the work is vibrant and informative. While it is certainly instructive, it has not been designed to be a classroom textbook. The tone is manifold. In some sense, this is simply a gargantuan coffee table book. Readers can pick it up, read a few quotes and set it down again. In this regard, it is a compendium of intellectual gems...In some ways this book is a treasure chest, with the very best of European literature pre-sifted for readers. At the same time, it is a mental nick-knack book. You can browse through it: a little Baudelaire, Victor Hugo, Nietzsche, as one might enjoy browsing through actual shops or library shelves or a bookstore.

That being said, the work is also one of commentary. The author simply introduces materials the way that one comes across it in real life: you go along and there is simply is stuff. Walter Benjamin has made himself a little accompaniment. There are a number of items and then he comments. This doesn't seem like much at first. However, as he has tied it directly to material he has shared, readers can at least tell that he isn't stark raving mad, babbling incoherently about references the writer has never seen, read or heard of.

The tone is also one of the bohemian. Walter Benjamin does not go out of his way to set himself apart as any kind of extremist. However, his target audience seems to be rather broad ranging. Perhaps the work is best fit for those wanting to have a history of ideas along with a history of Europe. It is a work written for the general people where those folks are educated adults. There is virtually nothing to make it unsuitable for children. However, the same limitation holds for any readers. If all readers want is a coffee table book about Europe in the 19th century with charming tidbits that can set off the trouble they went to in order to become educated people, then they can use the book this way. At the same time, if what is really sought is a deep intellectual exploration about the meaning of modernity and how to best summarize and characterize European life from the intellectual vantage point, then this book offers that.

Structure

This book is immense. Nevertheless, the Table of Contents is not excessively complex. There is one piece of introductory material. Then there are 5 "chapters". Three of them are actually headings for sizable essays. These vary in length. Some are merely 14 pages or so whereas others continue for hundreds of pages at a time. Within this framework there are chapters. Each chapter has a relatively focused topic. That being given, then it is possible to assess the gathering of remarks and quotations within that context.

Many of the chapters are devoted to culturally significant literary figures of the 19th or 20th century. This enables readers to grasp the cultural context from which they have emerged. Also, the nature of the work is such that readers are expected to know certain things. Readers are presumably familiar with the literary figures Walter Benjamin writes about in this megalithic work. There are other internal divisions. One of these is the use



of the English alphabet. Everything has a double usage: one is for the sake of discourse; the other is for the sake of art. In this regard, the author acknowledges a kind of preparatory ground for the art of industrial design and for the efforts associated with marketing. Within these, Walter Benjamin takes readers on a psychic tour of the area and then begins to introduce readers to his own thinking. He somehow intentionally creates what is a literary collage interwoven with the elucidation of numerous ideas.

Another unusual characteristic of this giant volume is that the original version was written mainly in two languages, not one. Much of the work was created in German, with the other sizable quantity supplied in French. This has unfortunately been lost in translation. Subtleties abound. Given that, far more has become comprehensible to outsiders than would have been possible. The fact that the version is English indicates that the readers are going to be outsiders...or the English.

Unlike many books, there is a set of other documents at the tail end. These are written by different people. The first of these is "Dialectics at a Standstill" by Rolf Tiedmann. "The Story of Old Benjamin" by Lisa Fittko is next.

Following those two essays there are more traditional end pieces. These are: Translator's Notes, Guide to Names and Terms, and lastly, an index.



Quotes

"Toward the end of the ancien regime, there were attempts to establish bazaar-like shops and fixed-price stores in Paris. Some large magasins de nouveautes - such as Le Diable Boiteux, Les Deux Magots, Le Petit Matelot, Pygmalion - were founded during the Restoration and during the reign of Louis Philippe; but these were businesses of an inferior sort compared to today's establishments. The era of the department stores dates, in fact, only from the Second Empire. they have undergone a great deal of development since 1870, and they continue to develop." E,mile/ Levasseur, Histoire du commerce de la France, vol. 2 (Paris, 1912), p. 449. [A2, 4] {p. 37}.

"How gratings- as allegories- have their place in hell. In the Passage Vivienne, sculptures over the main entrance representing allegories of commerce, [C1, 1]" (p. 82)
Note to the Editor/s - is this how you want me to handle this type of situation - the [C1,1] in the original text is set off to the right hand side, apart from the words that I have quoted. I just need to know how you want it.

"The result everywhere is the same: the most scandalous alleys...disappear to the accompaniment of lavish self-glorification by the bourgeoisie...,but- they reappear at once somewhere else, often in the immediate neighborhood," 17 (p. 145).

"Two stanzas by Baudelaire...'my lips, well versed in luscious kisses,...priestess of debauch, my sister in lust,'...He was the first to write about himself in a moderate confessional manner, and to leave off the inspired tone," [J10, 9] & [J10a, 1] (p. 246).

"So long as there is semblance in history, it will find in nature its ultimate refuge. The commodity, which is the last burning-glass of historical semblance <Schein>, celebrates its triumph in the fact that nature itself takes on a commodity character," (p. 345).

"Woefully inadequate references to mineral springs in Koch, who writes of the poems dictated by Goethe to Maria Ludovica at Karlsbad," (p. 413).

"What men call love is very small, very restricted, and very weak compared with this ineffable orgy, this holy prostitution of the soul which gives itself entirely, poetry and charity, to the unforeseen that reveals itself, to the unknown that happens along," (p. 437).

"The chapter in Zarathustra entitled 'Unter Töchtern der Wüste' <Among the Daughters of the Desert> is instructive, not only for the fact that the flower maidens - an important Jugendstil motif - make an appearance here in Nietzsche, but also in view of Nietzsche's kinship with Guys. The phrase 'deep but without thoughts' {24} perfectly captures the expression worn by the prostitutes in Guys," (p.559) [S9a, 2].

"They are the true fairies of these arcades (more salable and more worn than the life-sized ones): the formerly world-famous Parisian dolls, which revolved on their musical socle and bore in their arms a doll-sized basket out of which, at the salutation of the



minor chord, a lambkin poked its curious muzzle. When Hacklander made use of this 'newest invention of industrial luxury' for one of his fairy tales, he too placed the marvelous dolls in the dangerous arcade which sister Titchen, at the behest of the fairy Concordia, has to wander in order finally to rescue her poor brothers," (p. 693) [Z1, 2].

"The question of poverty...has, in a few years, passed through extremely varied phases. Toward the end of the Restoration, the debate turns entirely on the extinction of mendicancy, and society tries less to alleviate poverty than to...forget it by relegating it to the shadows. At the time of the July Revolution, the situation is reversed by means of politics. the republican party seizes on pauperism and transforms it into the proletariat....The workers take up the pen....Tailors, shoemakers, and typographers, who at that time constituted the revolutionary trades, march into the extreme avant-garde," (p. 722).

"It is as though Lamartine had made it his mission to implement Plato's teaching on the necessity of banishing poets from the republic, and one cannot help smiling as one reads this author's account of the worker who was part of the large demonstration in front of the Hotel de Ville, and who shouted at the speaker: 'You're nothing but a lyre! Go sing!' Friedrich Szarvady, Paris, 1848 -1852, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1852), (p. 333) [d1a,2] {p.745}

"Truth, for all its multiplicity, is not two-faced," [Ch. B., Oeuvres, vol. 2, p.63 (Salon de 1846: Aux Bourgeois)] (p.315)

"Baudelaire did not feel at home in Paris," (p. 336).

"In 1828, the poles will become ice-free," [W11a, 8] (p. 639).

"...the armed take over of Munich in 1848," (p. 699).

"Fourier was a chauvenist: he hated Englishmen and Jews. He saw the Jews not as civilized people but as barbarians who maintained patriarchal customs," (p. 647).

"The principles of philanthropy receive a classic formulation in Buret...Against the lazy let us always do battle - Great enemies of our society," Antoine Remy (p. 706 - 707).



Topics for Discussion

What is a social or socio-economic class?

What is the proletariat?

What is a Commune?

Why is Paris, France so important for the European view of the workers social rights movement?

What is the role of Russia in the book?

What are the two prominent opposite concepts of 19th century German philosophy?

What is the importance of iron and steel in the book?

How is the textile industry responsible for the success of the Parisian arcades?

When the enclosed walkways were built in Paris above the street level of the arcades, what happened?

Why did women get chilly while walking in the arcades?