



Walter Benjamin: A Critical Life

Howard Eiland, Michael W. Jennings

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Walter Benjamin is one of the twentieth century's most important intellectuals, and also one of its most elusive. His writings--mosaics incorporating philosophy, literary criticism, Marxist analysis, and a syncretistic theology--defy simple categorization. And his mobile, often improvised existence has proven irresistible to mythologizers. His writing career moved from the brilliant esotericism of his early writings through his emergence as a central voice in Weimar culture and on to the exile years, with its pioneering studies of modern media and the rise of urban commodity capitalism in Paris. That career was played out amid some of the most catastrophic decades of modern European history: the horror of the First World War, the turbulence of the Weimar Republic, and the lengthening shadow of fascism. Now, a major new biography from two of the world's foremost Benjamin scholars reaches beyond the mosaic and the mythical to present this intriguing figure in full.

Howard Eiland and Michael Jennings make available for the first time a rich store of information which augments and corrects the record of an extraordinary life. They offer a comprehensive portrait of Benjamin and his times as well as extensive commentaries on his major works, including "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," the essays on Baudelaire, and the great study of the German *Trauerspiel*. Sure to become the standard reference biography of this seminal thinker, *Walter Benjamin: A Critical Life* will prove a source of inexhaustible interest for Benjamin scholars and novices alike.

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