

WALTER BENJAMIN

Constellations of the exile

From June 19th to September 27th, 2015

Museum of Jewish History

Walter Benjamin
Constellations of the exile

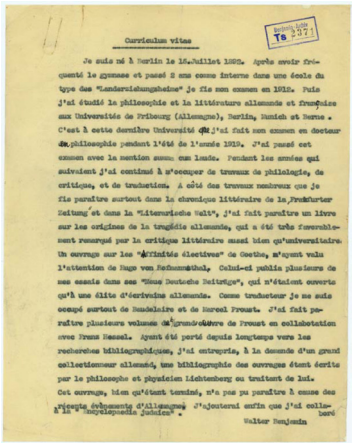
Walter Benjamin was an outstanding intellectual of the 20th century who exercised a worldwide influence on almost all fields of investigation on social sciences. His work "Goethe's elective affinities", *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* as well as his *Arcades* project remain benchmarks of the history of ideas in the 20th century. He set standards as a critic of Literature and as an Essayist. Aesthetics and theory of literature, as well as theory of modernity and the problem of historical memory, play a central role in his thought.

This exhibition is a tribute to Benjamin on the 75th anniversary of his death. He committed suicide in Portbou on the run from National Socialism. As a German intellectual of Jewish origin he was exiled to Paris when Hitler seized the power in 1933. In Paris he kept devoted to with his work under difficult circumstances, until the entrance of German troops forced him to flee to southern France. In September 1940 Benjamin had illegally crossed the border to Spain, despite holding a visa both for Spain and the United States of America, but lacking a visa to quit France. He presented himself to the authorities in Portbou, who wanted to send him back to France. Therefore he saw no alternative to suicide.

Constellation is a fundamental topic in Benjamin's thought, meaning a certain order, that is, a certain disposition of things. The exhibition aims at the reconstruction of Benjamin's life and exile which ended tragically in Portbou, through pieces of evidence provided by documents from closed relations, which, from their part, display a constellation.

Curriculum

Curriculum of Walter Benjamin



Curriculum vitae

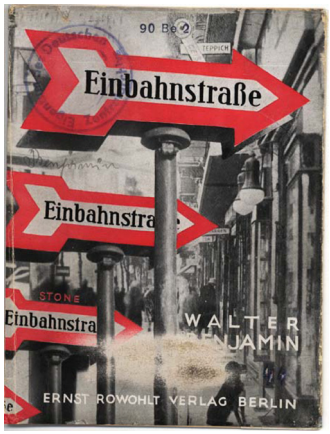
Je suis né à Berlin le 15.Juillet 1892. Après avoir fréquenté le gymnase et passé 2 ans comme interne dans une école du type des "Landerziehungsheime" je fis mon examen en 1912. Puis j'ai étudié la philosophie et la littérature allemande et française aux Universités de Fribourg (Allemagne), Berlin, Munich et Berne. C'est à cette dernière Université que j'ai fait mon examen de docteur de philosophie pendant l'été de l'année 1919. J'ai passé cet examen avec la mention summa cum laude. Pendant les années qui suivaient j'ai continué à m'occuper de travaux de philologie, de critique, et de traduction. A côté des travaux nombreux que je fis paraître surtout dans la chronique littéraire de la Frankfurter Zeitung et dans la "Literarische Welt", j'ai fait paraître un livre sur les origines de la tragédie allemande, qui a été très favorablement remarqué par la critique littéraire aussi bien qu'universitaire. Un ouvrage sur les "Affinités électives" de Goethe, m'ayant valu l'attention de Hugo von Hofmannsthal. Celui-ci publia plusieurs de mes essais dans ses "Neue Deutsche Beiträge", qui m'étaient ouverts qu'à une élite d'écrivains allemands. Comme traducteur je me suis occupé surtout de Baudelaire et de Marcel Proust. J'ai fait paraître plusieurs volumes de l'œuvre de Proust en collaboration avec Franz Hessel. Ayant été perdu depuis longtemps vers les recherches bibliographiques, j'ai entrepris, à la demande d'un grand collectionneur allemand, une bibliographie des ouvrages étant écrits par le philosophe et physicien Lichtenberg ou traitant de lui. Cet ouvrage, bien qu'étant terminé, n'a pas pu paraître à cause des récents événements d'Allemagne. J'ajouterai enfin que j'ai collaboré à la "Encyclopaedia Judaica".

Walter Benjamin

1. *Curriculum Vitae*
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives Ts 2371

2. *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 1928
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives 237

3. *One-way Street*, 1928
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives 236



4. *Goethe's Elective Affinities*, Section III, 1925
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives Dr. 719

5. *Jews in German Culture*, 1930
Benjamin wrote on the left edge: "Substantially abridged edition, purified of all essentials / Encyclopaedia Judaica / BdV – in other places the text has not been written or revised yet."
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives 1042/1 (Dr 141)

6. Stays from March 19th, 1933
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives Ts 2373



7. Walter Benjamin's passport, 1928
Facsimile.
Walter Benjamin Archives
Do 2

8. *Selection of my essays on French Literature (in German)*
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives Ts 2374

9. *Parisian Diary*, I, 1930
In: *Die Literarische Welt* (April 17th, 1930, year 6, no. 16/17, p. 3f). Pictures by Marcel Proust
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives Dr. 387

10. *My main translations*
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives Ts 2375

11. Marcel Proust, *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*, 1926
[Translation by Walter Benjamin and Franz Hessel] Berlin, 1926
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives GM 2376 I31.926

12. *My French publications*
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives Ts 2376

13. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", 1936
Offprint from *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, year 5 (1936), no. 1
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives 460 (Dr 698)

14. *The personalities who have supported my demand*
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives Ts 2377

The last days

On the evening of September 25th 1940, Walter Benjamin entered Portbou. He was not alone; the German photographer Henny Gurland, her son Joseph and a number of other people they had met on the mountain were there. The tough journey must have taken around twelve hours. On top of the problems typical of a mountain path, Benjamin was in poor health and there was the fear of knowing that the Gestapo could stop them at any time.

Walter Benjamin had a safe-conduct pass to cross Spain for Lisbon, from where he intended to sail for the United States. The fact that he had managed to escape Nazi persecution and knowing he was free impelled him to present himself to the authorities to legalize his situation. At the police station, Benjamin was told he had been denied an entry permit into Spain, since he also needed authorisation to leave France. Exceptionally, and because of his ill-health, he was allowed to spend the night in Portbou. Benjamin and some companions stayed in Hotel de Francia.

On the afternoon of September 26th, Benjamin died following a long agony. The death certificate, signed by Dr Vila Moreno, attributed the cause to a brain haemorrhage, but suicide by morphine overdose was the probable cause of death. In his farewell letter, as relayed by Henny Gurland, Benjamin said: "In a situation from which there is no escape, I have no option but to finish here, in a small village in the Pyrenees where nobody knows that my life is draining away."

What happened over the few hours of stay in Catalonia is a striking illustration of all of the tragedy of barbarism. Walter Benjamin wrote: "History is not only a story of the victorious, the domineering, the survivors; it is primarily the history of the world's suffering."

1. Report of the Portbou Municipal Court
Including a list of objects found in his hotel room.
Facsimile. City of Portbou

2. Receipt for the burial expenses at the Portbou parish
Facsimile. City of Portbou

3. Registration of the death of Walter Benjamin at the Civil Registry
Facsimile. City of Portbou

4. Letter recognising Walter Benjamin as a collaborator of the Institute for Social Research
Signed by Max Horkheimer, who had thus been trying to facilitate his departure from occupied France.
Facsimile. City of Portbou

5. Walter Benjamin file
Original. Girona Historical Archives, Govern Civil, 297/11



1892	Birth of Walter Benjamin in Berlin. It is the oldest of the three sons of Emil Benjamin, entrepreneur and collector, and Pauline (single, Schönflies).
1904-1907	Walter Benjamin enters Landerziehungsheim of Haubinda (Thuringia). He knows the educator and reformer Gustav Wyneken and the Youth Movement *(Jugendbewegung)*.
1912-1915	High School *(Abitur)* in Berlin. Later, he studies philosophy in Berlin and Freiburg.
1913	He meets the poet Fritz Heinle. First trip to Paris.
1914	President of the Movement of Free Students *(Freie Studentenschaft)*. Declared unfit for military service.
1915	Benjamin meets Gershom Scholem, Werner Kraft and Felix Noeggerath.
1917	Marriage to Dora Sophie Pollak. The couple moves to Bern.
1918	Birth of Stefan Rafael, son of Dora and Walter Benjamin.
1919	Walter Benjamin defends his thesis, *The Concept of Criticism in German Romanticism*, at the University of Bern. He meets Ernst Bloch.
1921	Benjamin works on the creation of the literary journal *Angelus Novus*, never published.
1923	Matriculated at the University of Frankfurt to prepare his habilitation. He meets Theodor W. Adorno and Siegfried Kracauer. Translation of *Tableaux Parisiens* by Charles Baudelaire.
1924	During a trip to Capri, Benjamin meets Asja Lacis, a native of Riga Latvian Communist, and he falls in love. She will play a decisive role in his life and in his political evolution.
1924-1925	Thanks to F. C. Rank, Hugo von Hofmannsthal publishes his "Goethe's Elective Affinities" in the magazine *Neue Deutsche Beiträge*.
1925	Unsuccessful habilitation. With Franz Hessel, he begins the translation of *In Search of Lost Time*, by Proust.
1926	Stay in Paris for several months. Here he finds Franz Hessel and Ernst Bloch, trying to develop relations in literary circles.
1926-1927	Stay in Moscow for two months. *Moscow Diary.* Back to Berlin, he publishes the essay "Moscow" in the journal of Martin Buber, *Die Kreatur*.
1927	New stay in Paris, passionate about surrealism. The reading of *Paysan de Paris* by Aragon (he translates some excerpts the following year) arouse a project of essay on the arcades. Frequent meetings with Gershom Scholem. Project to move to Palestine.

1928	He meets André Gide in Berlin. Rowohlt Verlag publishes *One-Way Street* and *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*.
1929	Benjamin meets Bertolt Brecht thanks to Asja Lacis. He gets a visa for Palestine, which he will never use.
1930	Stay in Paris, and beginning of his friendship with Adrienne Monnier. The bookseller helps him during his years of exile. Benjamin and Dora divorce. With Bertolt Brecht and Bernard von Brentano, planning the creation of the magazine *Krise und Kritik.*
1932	Three months in Ibiza, where he meets Jean Selz. He starts *Berlin Chronicle* and *Berlin Childhood around 1900*. In Frankfurt, he finds Horkheimer, who heads the Institut für Sozialforschung (Institute for Social Research).
1933	In March, Benjamin goes into exile in Paris.
1934-1935	Regular contributions to *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, journal of the Institute for Social Research in exile. The institute awarded him a monthly allowance. He works tirelessly on *Arcades*. Stay with Brecht in Denmark.
1936	After several changes, *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* publishes a first version of "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in the French translation made with Pierre Klossowski. New stay with Brecht in Denmark. Back in Paris in October.
1938	He finds Hannah Arendt in Paris. Stay at Brecht's home in Denmark. The journal *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* publishes his recension of the thesis of Gisèle Freund on French photography in the nineteenth century.
1939	Benjamin is deprived of German citizenship. The study "On some issues of Baudelaire" is published. At the outbreak of war, he is interned in Camp of "voluntary workers" Clos Saint-Joseph in Nevers. Released in November, thanks to Adrienne Monnier and the diplomat Henri Hoppenot.
1940	Return to Paris. He writes his thesis *On the concept of history.* On the eve of the entrance of German troops in Paris, Benjamin flees to Lourdes with her sister Dora, leaving all his manuscripts in the capital. In August, he arrives in Marseille where he obtains a visa to the United States.
1940	September – With some German refugees, he tries to cross illegally the Pyrenees. On September 25th, he reaches Portbou with the small group led by Lisa Fittko. The Spanish police doesn't allow their border crossing; on September 26th, Benjamin takes his own life by a high dose of morphine.

Dora Benjamin



Around 1935
Photo: Joël-Heinzelmann Studio

Dora Benjamin (1901–1946), Walter's sister, graduated in Economics and was a researcher in different fields of Social Work in Berlin. She fled to Paris shortly after the Nazis came into power. She worked there in the Assistance Médicale aux Enfants des Réfugiés, founded by Hanna Grunwald-Eisfelder, and hosted children for free in their apartment, where Walter frequently lived before he got himself a private room in 10, Rue Dombasle. She was her brother's conversational partner and often typed his texts from dictation, as for instance, the work *On the concept of History*. In May 1940 she was sent to Gurs internment camp. After her liberation, she went to Lourdes where she met her brother. On December 1942 she managed to flee to Switzerland, and died, seriously ill, on the 1st of June, 1946, in Zurich.

1. Walter, Georg and Dora Benjamin in 1904
Walter's brother, the pediatrician Georg Benjamin, born in 1895, was murdered in 1942 in Mauthausen.
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives BENJAMIN_WALTERGEORGDORA

2. Dora Benjamin to Walter Benjamin, September 25th, 1939
After the outbreak of the war Walter Benjamin together with thousands of refugees was first interned for ten days in Parisian Stade de Colombes, and later for three months in the Volunteer Work Camp Groupe VI, Clos St. Joseph Nevers, in Château de Vernuches.
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives 16/6

3. Dora Benjamin to Walter Benjamin, June 9th, 1940
After the armistice on 22nd of June 1940 Jewish refugees were interned in Gurs, outside the French zone occupied by the Germans, among them were Dora Benjamin and Hannah Arendt. The camp was on those days still under French control: both women, as many other, could leave the camp after a short time.
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives 16/14

4. Pierre Missac to Theodor W. Adorno, March 25th, 1946
Before Benjamin fled from Paris, he handed his notes and materials for the *Arcades* to George Bataille, who hid them in the Bibliothèque National. At the end of the war Bataille handed the papers to Pierre Missac, who at the beginning of 1947 had the chance to have them sent from Paris to New York.
Facsimile. Theodor W. Adorno Archives (Frankfurt am Main)

Gershom Scholem



1941
Jewish National and University
Library, Jerusalem

A determined Zionist from his early youth, Gershom Scholem (1897–1982) moved to Jerusalem in the twenties, where he held a professorship in the Hebrew University for research on Jewish mystic. In 1913 he became first acquainted with Walter Benjamin. Hardly two years later, they had developed a friendship which would last until Benjamin's death. First through frequent meetings, and then through letters they discussed about Jewish culture and Zionism, they argued about Materialism and Metaphysics, they analysed and commented on their works. Since 1925, through letters, they held a lively dialog about Franz Kafka. Together with Theodor W. Adorno, Scholem cared about the publication of the writings and letters by Walter Benjamin after World War Two.

1. Walter Benjamin's Hebrew practice exercises, 1924
Encouraged by Gershom Scholem Benjamin had tried to learn the Hebrew Language since the early twenties.
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives 508/17 (Ms 1859)

2. Gershom Scholem to Walter Benjamin, May 6th, 1938
On his journey back from New York to Jerusalem Gershom Scholem was planning a stay in Paris, as stated in the letter. "In the meantime, my program is getting clearer to the point that I am sure now that 1) I will arrive in Paris on the 31st of July." Benjamin was staying by that time in Denmark with Bertolt Brecht.
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives 108/6

3. *On Kafka's letter to Scholem*, around June 1938
"Kafka is also a dreamed one, the Masses dream him / Kafka's records are to historical experience what the non-euclidian Geometry is to the empirical."
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives 524/36 (252)

4. Gershom Scholem to Walter Benjamin, September 11th, 1939
On the 25th of November Walter Benjamin answered: "Dear Gerard, I have not left Paris last summer, although I had an invitation to Sweden. It mattered to me above anything to finish my 'Baudelaire' or specially that part of the book that can be presented as an essay. I was thus forced, after declaration of war, to enter a concentration camp like other German refugees. I found your letter from 11th of September on my way in. My sister had properly informed me of your concern, but I could not write to you, since the mail out of the camp could not exceed 8 letters a person a month."
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives 108/41

Theodor W. Adorno



1935
Theodor W. Adorno Archives
(Frankfurt am Main)

Theodor W. Adorno (1903–1969), born eleven years later than Benjamin as Theodor Ludwig Wiesengrund, was one of his most important interlocutors in the years of the Exile. They fervently discussed their works, and Adorno wrote to him significant critical letters to the *Arcades* and to Charles Baudelaire. As a colleague at the Institute of Social Research (Institut für Sozialforschung), "Teddie", so was he named, cared for the writings of his friend. "When I got the news about his death in the fall of 1940 in New York" Adorno wrote, "I had really and quite literally the feeling as though through this death, which brought the end of a great work, Philosophy had been risen to the very best it could had ever expected." Benjamin's reception from the 1950s on would not have been possible without Adorno, he was responsible for this reception as an author and as an editor.

1. Immigrant Identification Card for the United States of America, December 13th, 1937
Facsimile. Theodor W. Adorno Archives (Frankfurt am Main)

2. Theodor W. Adorno, Egon Wissing, Liselotte Karplus and Gretel Adorno to Walter Benjamin, April 8th (Easter), 1938
"Dear Walter, is the card louche enough? What do you think about it, that we well soon be having family relationship? Lots of love your not so far Teddie." Liselotte Karplus, the sister of Gretel Adorno, and Egon Wissing, a cousin of Benjamin, announce their marriage.
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives 8/8

3. Walter Benjamin to Theodor W. Adorno, August 2nd, 1940
"The absolute uncertainty about what the next day, the next hours will bring, has ruled my existence for several weeks. I am condemned to read every newspaper (they come up only on one page here), as a special delivery for me and to hear the announcement of misfortune in every radio broadcast."
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives, private collection on permanent loan

4. Last letter from Walter Benjamin, written in Portbou and addressed to Henny Gurland, September 25th, 1940
Reconstruction by Henny Gurland
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives, private collection on permanent loan

5. Walter Benjamin, *Works*
Edited by Th. W. Adorno and Gretel Adorno with collaboration from Friedrich Podszus, Frankfurt am Main, 1955
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives GM 2375.955-1

Gretel Adorno



Around 1930's
Walter Benjamin Archives 215/1

Gretel Adorno (1902–1993) was born in Berlin as Margareta Karplus. She started there studies on Chemistry, Physics and Technology and promoted in 1925. Benjamin became first acquainted with her in the late twenties. He would often call her "Felizitas", a close friendship and one who also supported him financially. She married Theodor W. Adorno with whom she fled to New York on the following year. Since then she kept in touch with Benjamin through intensive correspondence –also about the progress of his works. Benjamin's last letter to Gretel Adorno was written form Lourdes, where he had fled to in June 1940. "It is possible, even probable that we do not have much time left."

1. Gretel Karplus from Rügen, August 1933
Benjamin wrote about the photo: "I thank you so much for the photo from Rügen. It is cheerful and thoughtful, and I believe you do not completely lack such moments in Berlin either."
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives 215/2

2. Gretel Karplus to Walter Benjamin, October 3rd, 1934
By the end of September Gretel Karplus and Benjamin spent together a weekend in Gedser, in Falster island, Denmark.
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives 2/21

3. Gretel Karplus' silouhette at the back of a postcard to Walter Benjamin from the 10th of December 1934
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives 2/28

4. Immigrant Identification Card for the United States of America, December 13th, 1937
Facsimile. Theodor W. Adorno Archives (Frankfurt am Main)

5. Last letter from Walter Benjamin to Gretel Adorno, July 19th, 1940
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives, private collection on permanent loan

Hannah Arendt



Paris, 1930
Hannah Arendt Trust

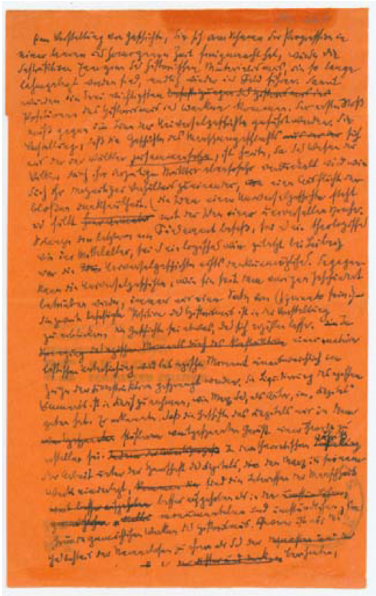
Benjamin knew Hannah Arendt (1906–1975) from Berlin. But it was not until the exile in Paris that she entered his circle of friends, after marrying Benjamin's cousin, Gunther Stern. On February 1939 Benjamin recommended Arendt's book on Rahel Varnhagen to Gershom Scholem. The book had had great impact on him for swimming "with great energy against the stream of the edifying and apologetic Jewish studies." Hannah Arendt advocated for her friend's liberation from the concentration camp. Benjamin sent her an early version of his *On the concept of History*. It was Hannah Arendt who brought the news from their common friend's death, four weeks delayed, to Gershom Scholem: "Jews are dying in Europe and they are treated like beasts" she wrote.

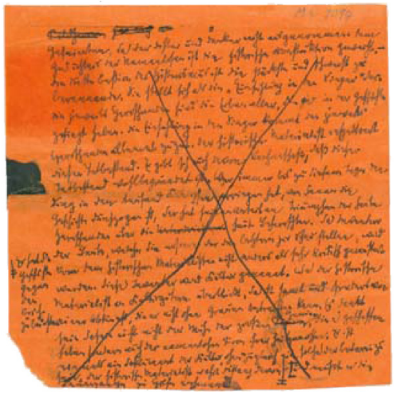
1. Hannah Stern to Walter Benjamin, August 20th, 1936
"[...] an exact portrait of the League of Nations. The Jewish World Congress looked a bit different." Hannah Arendt stayed in Geneve on occasion of the foundation of the Jewish World Congress in August 1936.
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives 9/1

2. Hannah Stern and Heinrich Blücher to Walter Benjamin, 1937
"Dear Benjamin, / God created Adam and Eva on the island of Porquérolles. Map of Paradise: s.[ee] above. Once a year a man should come here to his own benefit. To do so he must do as follows: he goes to Hyères, from there by bus to Giens, from there by boat –20 min = 5 Fr.– to the island. As from here requested warmly by your Hannah Stern."
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives 9/2

3. Hannah Arendt to Walter Benjamin, October 22nd, 1939
"To start with practical matters: do you have any chance to have Valéry intervene for you –with a good certificate of loyalty and a request addressed to the Ministry of Interior. That would help, I think, to succeed. I would not give advice to you, if I saw any chance to act by myself."
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives 9/4

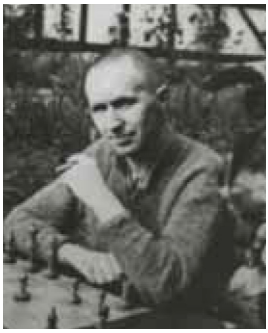
4. Hannah Arendt to Theodor W. Adorno, January 30th, 1967
"My dear Mr. Adorno, / I am thinking of publishing a selection of Benjamin's writings for America. You might well remember that in 1941 I delivered the manuscript 'Theses on the philosophy of history' –which Benjamin handled to me shortly before his death– to the Institut in New York, and that you, i.e. the Institut, gave me the manuscript back after copying or photocopying it. [...] / The manuscript sheets can be dated, since many of them consist of cross tapes in which newspapers were sent, the postmarks of which are still readable."
Facsimile. Theodor W. Adorno Archives (Frankfurt am Main), Br 30/1





5. Notes for *On the concept of History*, 1939–1940
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives 447 and Ms 1094

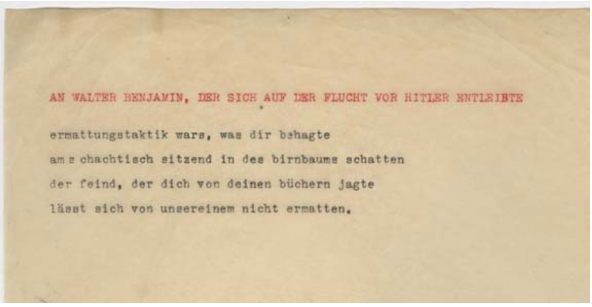
Bertolt Brecht



Skovsbostrand,
(Denmark), summer 1934
Akademie der Künste, Bertolt
Brecht Archives FA 07/29

Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956) and Benjamin's friendship started in Berlin at the end of the twenties. On exile, which started for both in the early 1933, they maintained it. Benjamin and Brecht met frequently in Paris and in Skovsbostrand (Denmark). They played chess, planned to write together a detective story, translated and interpreted Baudelarie, discussed about Kafka, the politics of the exiled and André Gide's attitude towards the Soviet Union. Benjamin reviewed the first performance of *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich*, which took place in 1938 in the Salle d'Iéna (Paris). As an internee Benjamin explained to the French Officers Brecht's *Laotse* poem with the message of the victory of water over stones.

1. Bertolt Brecht, *To Walter Benjamin, who killed himself while fleeing from Hitler*, 1941
"To Walter Benjamin, who killed himself while fleeing from Hitler // Tactics of attrition are what you enjoyed / Sitting at the chess table in the pear tree's shade / An enemy who could drive you from your books / will not be worn down by people like us."
Facsimile. Akademie der Künste, Bertolt Brecht Archives 98/61


AN WALTER BENJAMIN, DER SICH AUF DER FLUCHT VOR HITLER ENTLEIBTE

ermattungstaktik wars, was dir behagte
am schachtisch sitzend in des birnbaums schatten
der feind, der dich von deinen büchern jagte
lässt sich von unsereinem nicht ermatten.

2. Walter Benjamin to Bertolt Brecht, around January 13th, 1934
"Dear Brecht, / find enclosed a model construction, for your training, in the support of which I am, as master, absolutely interested."
Facsimile. Akademie der Künste, Bertolt Brecht Archives 478/19-20

3. Walter Benjamin to Bertolt Brecht, March 5th, 1934
"I am announcing a series of lectures on German avant-garde for circles accessible to me, and some other French circles. A series of five lectures –the tickets must be subscribed for the whole series. I have chosen a character that is representative of the contemporary scene for each different genre. / 1) le roman (Kafka) / 2) l'essai (Bloch) / 3) théatre (Brecht) / 4) journalisme (Kraus). Previous to that is an introductory lecture 'Le public allemand'."
Facsimile. Akademie der Künste, Bertolt Brecht Archives 478/15-16

4. Invitation
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives Do 27

5. Helen e Weigel, the mid-1930s
In the first performance of scenes of Brecht's series *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich*, Weigel performed the role of the Jewish woman.
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives 215/5

6. Heinz Lohmar, *The Jewish woman*
On occasion of the first performance of *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich*, 1938. Dedicated to Brecht
Facsimile. Akademie der Künste, Bertolt Brecht Archives 79/3

Max Horkheimer



Santa Monica, 1942
Photo: Stewart
Theodor W. Adorno Archives
(Frankfurt am Main)

Max Horkheimer (1874–1973) was senior director of the Institute of Social Research (Institut für Sozialforschung), which had been transferred to New York in 1934. He was editor of the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, where Benjamin published his most important papers when he had no chance whatsoever to publish in Germany: among which "The Work of Art in the Age of mechanical reproduction" and "On some motives of Baudelaire." The main work of the *Arcades* was also supported by the institute. A book in which Horkheimer wanted to collect his *Essais matérialistes*, translated to French, was under Benjamin's care of, who was lector for this project, the publication never came out. When Benjamin fled to Southern France in the summer of 1940, efforts were made in America to arrange his immigration. With the help of Horkheimer, who provided an affidavit, he obtained a travel visa for the USA.

1. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", 1936
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives 459 (Dr 79)

2. Max Horkheimer to Walter Benjamin, June 5th, 1940
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives 68/34

3. Telegramm from Max Horkheimer to Walter Benjamin, June 10th, 1940
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives 68/35

4. Max Horkheimer's Affidavit for Walter Benjamin, August 6th, 1940
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives Do 11

Gisèle Freund



1929
Estate Gisèle Freund

Sociologist, journalist and photographer Gisèle Freund (1908–2000) met Benjamin at the Bibliothèque Nationale while she was working on her Thesis *La photographie en France au dixneuvième siècle* (1936). The research involved a first attempt on a sociological questioning of photography from a materialistic point of view. Benjamin discussed with her from both perspectives and took over the topic on some sections in the *Arcades* project. Freund –née Gisela Freund in Berlin– started her studies with Karl Mannheim in Frankfurt am Main, from where she fled in 1933 to the French capital. As a pioneer of colour photography she gained international reputation with portraits of artists from the circles around Rue de l'Odéon.

1. Gisèle Freund to Walter Benjamin, November 3rd, 1938
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives 49/3

2. Gisèle Freund to Walter Benjamin, December 12th, 1938
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives 49/4

3. Gisèle Freund, *Walter Benjamin in the Bibliothèque Nationale*, 1937
Facsimile

4. Notes and materials for the *Arcades*, 1928–1940
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives 318/7-6 (Ms 2689/2690)

5. Gisèle Freund to Walter Benjamin, November 13th, 1939
Gisèle Freund had had photocopied several important papers from Benjamin in the Bibliothèque Nationales and she forwarded them to Helen Hessel and Adrienne Monnier, who endeavoured for his liberation. She wrote: "At the Nationale, the young lady who provided me with the documents knows you well and tells me you are a charming man and that she hopes to see you soon out of this impasse. She has had to go through the papers with a pretty feminine curiosity, but anyway her sympathy for you is grand. Oho. That is how I have learnt about your flirts!"
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives 49/11v

Adrienne Monnier



Paris, 1938
Estate Gisèle Freund

Adrienne Monnier opened in 1915 in the rue de l'Odéon *La Maison des Amis des Livres*, which soon became the meeting point for the literary avant-garde in France. Benjamin was introduced to Monnier by Félix Bertaux in early 1930, and he memorised their acquaintance in *Paris Diaries*. He translated her narration *Vierge Sage (Kluge Jungfrau)* to German, and she became mediator, promoter and editor of his works. With support from Bryher (Winnifred Ellerman), Gisèle Freund, Helen Hessel and Sylvia Beach, who owned and English bookshop in the opposite building, and the help of Henri Hoppenot, a Diplomat acquainted to her. She succeeded to free Benjamin from the concentration camp Nevers where he had been interned at the outbreak of war.

1. A letter from Walter Benjamin on the topic of 'Le regard' from Georges Salles
The review appeared in the last volume of Monnier's Magazine *La Gazette des Amis des Livres*, May 1940.
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives 1001/1 (Ts 1628)

2. *La Gazette des Amis des Livres*, May 1940
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives 1003 (Dr 772)

3. Sylvia Beach to Walter Benjamin, October 20th, 1939
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives 14/1

4. Helen Hessel to Walter Benjamin, November 6th, 1939
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives 55/4

5. Gisèle Blum (Gisèle Freund) to Walter Benjamin, November 17th, 1939
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives 49/12

6. Adrienne Monnier in her bookshop
Benjamin wrote in his *Parisian Diaries* about his first meeting with Adrienne Monnier (1930): "A broad, blond-hairy woman with very clear bluish gray eyes, wearing a nunful crude grey wooll dress. At the front the dress has buttons and inserted work, traditional trimming. It is her. I immediately feel to be in front of such a human being who one can never meet respectfully enough, and who, by all appearances, without counting in the smallest on such respect, will nevertheless reject to minimize it".
Facsimile. Walter Benjamin Archives 320

An exhibition of the Walter Benjamin Archives of the Akademie der Künste, Berlin, in cooperation with the Museum of Jewish History, the Exile Memorial Museum and the Walter Benjamin Chair, Memory and Exile, at the University of Girona

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