



The Storyteller: Tales out of Loneliness

Walter Benjamin , Sam Dolbear (Editor) , Esther Leslie (Editor) , Sebastian Truskolaski (Editor) , Paul Klee (Illustrator)

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A beautiful collection of the legendary thinker's short stories

The Storyteller gathers for the first time the fiction of the legendary critic and philosopher Walter Benjamin, best known for his groundbreaking studies of culture and literature, including *Illuminations*, *One-Way Street* and *The Arcades Project*. His stories revel in the erotic tensions of city life, cross the threshold between rational and hallucinatory realms, celebrate the importance of games, and delve into the peculiar relationship between gambling and fortune-telling, and explore the themes that defined Benjamin. The novellas, fables, histories, aphorisms, parables and riddles in this collection are brought to life by the playful imagery of the modernist artist and Bauhaus figure Paul Klee.

The Storyteller: Tales out of Loneliness Details

Date : Published May 1st 2016 by Verso

ISBN : 9781784783044

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Format : Paperback 240 pages

Genre : Short Stories, Fiction, Literature, Writing, Essays, Cultural, Germany

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From Reader Review *The Storyteller: Tales out of Loneliness* for online ebook

Colin Cox says

Weaving together a collection of disparate stories, essays, and reviews of a writer or thinker without his or her expressed consent is a tricky operation. If successful, the collection clarifies a set of ideas and concepts relevant to the writer in question that would otherwise remain opaque or invisible. In addition, such collections may open new territories of inquiry about the author in question. Although, if such a project fails, the writer becomes increasingly distant, drifting beyond our comprehension and confirming our worst impulses which the following sentiment approximates: I simply won't get them!

There is, however, another category, and that category represents my reaction to *The Storyteller: Tales of Loneliness* by Walter Benjamin. Here's the thing: I like Benjamin, I have studied Benjamin, but I would not under any circumstances characterize myself as comfortably familiar with the scope of his profoundly mesmerizing body of work. I am a Benjamin tourist, therefore, *The Storyteller: Tales of Loneliness* leaves me befuddled but not discouraged. I concurrently want to read this collection again while also reading more of Benjamin's critical work. I want to understand how his fiction informs and illuminates his nonfiction.

So, to some degree, after reading *The Storyteller: Tales of Loneliness* I don't comprehend more about Benjamin than I did before, but that doesn't mean I'm rolling my eyes. If anything, my eyes are focused, steady, and longing to hover over a copy of *Arcades Project*.

Theediscerning says

Purely for those with a great appreciation for the most minor of small works and narrative fragments, and definitely for the scholar rather than the general reader.

Max Eichelberger says

Much was beautiful and insightful. Even more was filler (white space and fragments).

Joyce says

gets a little barrel scapy by the end but theres some good stuff here, although one can see why benjamin isn't known for it. probably only for those already comfortably convinced of his genius by the work where the real meat is

Mimi says

A hodgepodge of pieces, mainly fiction, from Walter Benjamin's writings, although these seem worlds away from his celebrated critical work there are echoes of themes explored in more theoretical projects: an interest in the Jungian concept of collective unconscious; a fascination with the oral tradition Benjamin believed lost at the start of WW1 along with its value in passing down generational knowledge; the angst-ridden dimensions of city life in Weimar and later Nazi Germany; the cultural significance of childhood play and fantasy realms. Short stories mingle with extracts from dream diaries, particles of thought, reviews. Although the editors have gathered everything together under a series of broad categories – *Dreamworlds, Travel, Play and Pedagogy* – the logic behind their selections is often unclear, or simply tenuous, dependent on a particular reading of Benjamin's theoretical preoccupations. There are flashes of interest, a striking image or a reference that points to the society that framed Benjamin's experiences – the representation of women for example, here most often, when not family, prostitutes or women who provoke desire but are always out of reach. A picture emerges too of Benjamin as a frustrated author, short stories started and abandoned (apparently one burning ambition was to produce a crime novel), novellas so compressed they're little more than fragments or vignettes. Some entries are more successful especially in the later categories: *Palais D... Y* for example a fairy tale centred on disappointed love; the review *Detectives Novels, on Tour* an examination of why people might read crime fiction on journeys, the anxiety of travel displaced by the anxiety conjured by these narratives – also prompted me to search for crime novels by Anna Katherine Green who was clearly a favourite together with Holmes and Gaston Leroux. I think this book will be of most interest to Benjamin completists rather than something to savour in its own right, although the Paul Klee illustrations were unexpectedly beguiling.

Kevin says

weirdo exercises in style that mostly left no impression on me

Dan Hamilton says

This collection is stunning. As Elif Shafak once said of Benjamin, "One doesn't read him to feel better – one reads him to feel." This has never been more true than it is with his fiction, which we are seeing for the first time here. I am eagerly anticipating returning to these stories, fragments, and essays for a long time to come.

Caterina says

This is the first effort to gather the fiction of the legendary philosopher Walter Benjamin, best remembered for his works on modern culture and his affiliation to the School of Frankfurt. The short stories are actually very short, full of dreamy atmosphere and surrealist images. You get the sense that they were not finished, that they needed one last look from the author or maybe it is his own experimental style that leaves that impression.

The translation is very good and you can tell that the three translators really loved this work. Also, there is artwork by Paul Klee, which fits perfectly to the context and I am sure will look great on the printed book. All in all, an interesting collection, not exactly for everyone, but worth discovering.

Many thanks to Verso books for providing this book in exchange for an honest review.

Jack Waters says

Perhaps this assessment is unfair since I am a huge fan of *Illuminations* and *The Arcades Project*, but I was not blown away by these stories of fiction. The novellas, fables, histories, aphorisms, parables, and riddles are interesting but do not hold the same weight as his cultural critiques. Perhaps this is a book reserved for Benjamin completionists or those who've never read him.

annie says

2.5 stars

this essay makes LITERALLY no sense but my lit prof said i "thoroughly understood" it so uh! guess i'm a genius ladies. we love.

Frank Karioris says

This is a magisterial book full of beauty, wit, quips, and humor. While there are certainly some chapters that are not to my liking or less of interest to me, there are a serious number that I will be returning to again.

Sean A. says

What a delight. The king of the situationist derive/city drift. Queer antiquarian. Book fetishist. Strange philosopher.

Tom Timmermans says

Only interesting to those already familiar with Walter Benjamin's output, and despite some interesting bits of writing here and there, it feels like the editors pieced some leftover writings and scribbles together to be able to publish and sell another book. Despite good intentions, the editors seem to have had too few to work on in their effort to really show "a different side" of a man who already has a very diverse body of work as a writer, scholar, philosopher and cultural critic. *Illuminations* and *Reflections* are considered anthologies that provide a clearer idea of who Walter Benjamin was and what he stood for, and might therefore be a better introduction to him and his works, culminating in what is considered his *magnum opus*, *The Arcades Project*, of course.
