



The Manhattan Project: A Theory of a City

By David Kishik

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This sharp, witty study of a book never written, a sequel to Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project*, is dedicated to New York City, capital of the twentieth century. A *sui generis* work of experimental scholarship or fictional philosophy, it analyzes an imaginary manuscript composed by a ghost.

Part sprawling literary montage, part fragmentary theory of modernity, part implosive manifesto on the urban revolution, *The Manhattan Project* offers readers New York as a landscape built of sheer life. It initiates them into a world of secret affinities between photography and graffiti, pragmatism and minimalism, Andy Warhol and Robert Moses, Hannah Arendt and Jane Jacobs, the flâneur and the homeless person, the collector and the hoarder, the glass-covered arcade and the bare, concrete street. These and many other threads can all be spooled back into one realization: for far too long, we have busied ourselves with thinking about ways to change the city; it is about time we let the city change the way we think.

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Editorial Review

Review

"A curiously effervescent text that is simultaneously a work of imagined philology, an index of urban delirium, and a fascinating evocation of a city that became the *de facto* capital of the 20th century . . . It is therefore much to Kishik's credit that his slim volume, a drop in the vast ocean of literature on the city, packs such a considerable theoretical punch." (Dustin Illingworth *The Brooklyn Rail*)

"An extraordinary new book which I know Edward Soja would have read with the greatest interest. It's David Kishik's *The Manhattan Project*. But it's not about that Manhattan Project at all. Instead, it riffs on Benjamin's Arcades Project in the most astonishing of ways." (Derek Gregory *Geographical Imaginations*)

"Finally. A book about Walter Benjamin that Walter Benjamin might consider reading" and "David Kishik's *The Manhattan Project* dares to playfully and productively demystify one of modernity's greatest demystifiers: Walter Benjamin. In liberating this most challenging and unorthodox thinker from the musty aura and provincial politics of the academy, Kishik's "Theory of a City" is, in fact, nothing less than a radically new form of creative and critical praxis. The result is a beautifully written and deeply self-aware book that enacts and expands upon Benjamin's own critical spirit?at a time when it is needed most." (Eric Jarosinski *NeinQuarterly*)

"Written with rare lightness and wit, this book is without equal, incomparable in the present landscape of literature written on New York." (Yehuda Emmanuel Safran *Columbia University*)

"[T]he portrait *The Manhattan Project* conjures of New York manages to be that rare combination of skeptical but not cynical; a combination often difficult to sustain in modern urban life... [A] feeling of living on borrowed time?a sense that eventually the daily experience of being overwhelmed by crowds and noise will catch up with you, to say nothing of the deeper displacement of migration?runs through Kishik's book, [and] this is its pay-off. " (Stephanie Boland *Los Angeles Review of Books*)

"[A] brilliantly realized thought experiment that's as full of wit and imagination as it is of serious thoughts about Benjamin." (Laurie Greer *Politics and Prose*)

"[P]erhaps the most idiosyncratically ambitious book about Benjamin ever written...Kishik's Benjamin becomes a kind of Metatron, the biblical archangel whose task it is to record all the deeds of Israel." (Benjamin Wurgaft *Los Angeles Review of Books*)

". . . a thoroughly diverting read" (David B. Hobbes *The National Post*)

"Kishik has written an imaginative, thoughtful, and engaging account of the intellectual afterlife, in the US, of German philosopher Walter Benjamin . . . This book will have significant appeal to those interested in critical geography, urban history, and 20th-century philosophy and cultural history more generally . . . Highly recommended." (M. Uebel *CHOICE*)

"Kishik positions himself as 'the ghostwriter of a ghostwriter of a ghostwriter', unpacking a 'book that was never written' by a Lazarus for a city too busy to write its own story. That's a whole mess of postmodern graveyard whimsy and Kishik's rendition of Benjamin's Manhattan remains consistently tantalizing." (Robert Anasi *Times Literary Supplement*)

"*The Manhattan Project* channels Walter Benjamin in a quest to understand twentieth-century New York. Deftly blending history and fiction in order to capture the city's delirious yet weighty reality, David Kishik offers astute observations of phenomena as diverse as photography, the character of the street, Andy Warhol, dance, and the New York Public Library. Turning the pages of this fascinating book is like turning a New York street corner only to find some new and unexpected pleasure." (Todd May *Clemson University*)

"[A] playful and thought-provoking work that experiments with place-based, fictional philosophy in the urban context." (Zoé Hamstead "90 Recommendations for the One Book About Cities That Everyone Should Read, "*The Nature of Cities*)

"*The Manhattan Project* is a work of enchantment that disenchants the city. Kaleidoscopic in its effect, dazzling in its artistry and intensity, it is an astonishing accomplishment, a veritable intellectual and imaginative tour-de-force. Kishik playfully and perceptively allows Benjamin's idiosyncrasies and genius to shine through his book, just as he enables New York's pulses and rhythms to energize it." (Graeme Gilloch *Lancaster University*)

"A beguiling work of literary and social criticism that begins with a subverting counterfactual and moves into a deeply searching inquiry into the nature of an iconic island . . . [F]ans of Arendt, Howe, and Kazin will find Kishik's invention, and his playful seriousness in maintaining it, both a pleasure and a provocation." (*Kirkus Reviews*, Starred Review)

"Kishik's book is certainly no dry exegesis, but a creative and original interpretation of Benjamin's text...[Kishik] reveal[s] Benjamin's work in a very new light, moving it from the warm glow of the gas lanterns of 19th century Paris into the colder, bluer light of 20th century Manhattan. Amidst the large volume of recent writing on Benjamin, this makes an original and distinctive contribution" (Julian Brigstocke *Society + Space*)

About the Author

David Kishik is Assistant Professor at Emerson College and the author of *To Imagine a Form of Life*, a series of paraphilosophical books.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Tony Edwin:

What do you concentrate on book? It is just for students as they are still students or it for all people in the world, the particular best subject for that? Only you can be answered for that query above. Every person has diverse personality and hobby per other. Don't to be compelled someone or something that they don't would like do that. You must know how great and also important the book *The Manhattan Project: A Theory of a City*. All type of book can you see on many methods. You can look for the internet methods or other social media.

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