



The Manhattan Project: A Theory of a City

David Kishik

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In *The Manhattan Project*, David Kishik dares to imagine a Walter Benjamin who did not commit suicide in 1940, but managed instead to escape the Nazis to begin a long, solitary life in New York. During his anonymous, posthumous existence, while he was haunting and haunted by his new city, Benjamin composed a sequel to his Arcades Project. Just as his incomplete masterpiece revolved around Paris, capital of the nineteenth century, this spectral text was dedicated to New York, capital of the twentieth. Kishik's *sui generis* work of experimental scholarship or fictional philosophy is thus presented as a study of a manuscript that was never written.

The fictitious prolongation of Benjamin's life will raise more than one eyebrow, but the wit, breadth, and incisiveness of Kishik's own writing is bound to impress. Kishik reveals a world of secret affinities between New York City and Paris, the flâneur and the homeless person, the collector and the hoarder, the covered arcade and the bare street, but also between photography and graffiti, pragmatism and minimalism, Andy Warhol and Robert Moses, Hannah Arendt and Jane Jacobs. A critical celebration of New York City, *The Manhattan Project* reshapes our perception of urban life, and rethinks our very conception of modernity.

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