

Reflections on Walter Benjamin

The Angel of History collects the detritus
Of our lives at its feet, forever facing past.

Its wings flutter, propelling it into the future
While it sees, as flâneur, endless mirrored spaces.

Your Paris arcades, those enclosed passageways
Multiply velvet surfaces in their reflections.

Shop signs written backwards encode secrets
As light strikes a series of silvered glass angles.

Is it a sea, the flow of those greenhouse panel
Walkways, a world of mer-men surfacing in Paris.

Or a remnant of the earliest bed of the Seine
The silt of its rivers flowing in sunlit streams.

What the Angel can't see is your way out of Spain.
At the border to Portugal its vision blurs.

Your books, your thesis, your writing – they will survive
As a messianic literary essay.

Your collected works, a manifesto, an art
Of theory writing, an ars poetica in prose.

Covered walkways reveal and trail your path of thought
I see you and Gershom Scholem writing letters.

My head fills with your words when I walk the Old City,
The quarters covered over with domed glass ceilings.

I would write a guide to the map of the alleyways
A Talmud of layers about their hairpin turns.