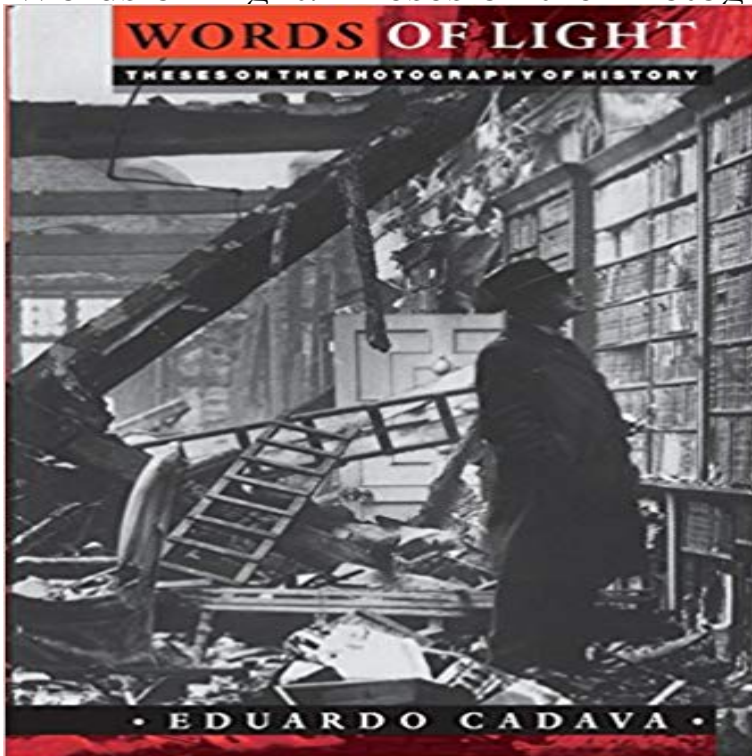


Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History



Here Eduardo Cadava demonstrates that Walter Benjamin articulates his conception of history through the language of photography. Focusing on Benjamin's discussions of the flashes and images of history, he argues that the questions raised by this link between photography and history touch on issues that belong to the entire trajectory of his writings: the historical and political consequences of technology, the relation between reproduction and mimesis, images and history, remembering and forgetting, allegory and mourning, and visual and linguistic representation. The book establishes the photographic constellation of motifs and themes around which Benjamin organizes his texts and thereby becomes a lens through which we can begin to view his analysis of the convergence between the new technological media and a revolutionary concept of historical action and understanding. Written in the form of theses--what Cadava calls snapshots in prose--the book memorializes Benjamin's own method of writing. It enacts a mode of conceiving history that is neither linear nor successive, but rather discontinuous--constructed from what Benjamin calls dialectical images. In this way, it not only suggests the essential rapport between the fragmentary form of Benjamin's writing and his effort to write a history of modernity but it also skillfully clarifies the relation between Benjamin and his contemporaries, the relation between fascism and aesthetic ideology. It gives us the most complete picture to date of Benjamin's reflections on history.

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