

Michael Taussig
Ibiza Poppies

(Excerpt)

".Well, there is William Burroughs. He's an adult, but as far as I know never read a word of Benjamin. In fact it would be hard to imagine two more dissimilar people, the one so cultured and polite, so quintessentially European, the other irascible, sarcastic, hip and quintessentially American bad boy. But then both dressed in suits, had the same initials, W.B., and were massively curious about drugs, mysticism, revolution, film, and cut-outs as a method for producing literature no less than for writing history. And then there was color. There was so much they seem to have agreed upon. Yet it makes you laugh and roll your eyes to think of them having a conversation, perhaps on one of Burroughs' "color walks" starting off from the Beat Hotel in Paris.

Benjamin would have loved that. He always said that the best way to get to know a city is to get lost walking in it. After his meeting with Burroughs, he could add that the walk should be, if possible, a "color walk". He may even have been inspired to write an essay about such walks. "Lost In Color", could have been the title, advancing the idea he clung to that there is an art to walking a city same as the filmmaker's art of montage, like getting lost after several turnings with buildings coming across at odd angles of noise and speed alongside jostling bodies. Burroughs would have encouraged him to throw color into the mix but there would be no need to add that this was an art that played with history no less than with hashish as both Benjamin and Burroughs saw cityscapes through the veil of time as layered entities that the person walking entered into in an almost hallucinatory manner."