

STUDIES IN PHILOSOPHY

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WITTGENSTEIN'S NOVELS

Martin Klebes

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Martin Klebes



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“Es ist nicht so ausgefallen”

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Abbreviations

ABBREVIATIONS OF WORKS BY LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN

BBB	The Blue and Brown Books
CV	Culture and Value
LWPP	Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology
PGE	Philosophical Grammar
PI	Philosophical Investigations
PR	Philosophical Remarks
PU	Philosophische Untersuchungen
TLP	Tractatus logico-philosophicus
VL	Vorlesungen
W	Werke
WA	Wiener Ausgabe
WL	Wittgenstein's Lectures
ZE	Zettel (English trans. by G.E.M. Anscombe)

ABBREVIATIONS OF WORKS BY THOMAS BERNHARD

AM	Alte Meister. Eine Komödie
C	Correction
G	Gehen
GE	Gathering Evidence
GS	“Goethe schtirbt”

Ke	Der Keller. Eine Entziehung
Ko	Korrektur
Kw	Das Kalkwerk
LW	The Lime Works
RDV	Ritter, Dene, Voss
W	Walking
WN	Wittgensteins Neffe. Eine Freundschaft
WNE	Wittgenstein's Nephew. A Friendship

ABBREVIATIONS OF WORKS BY W.G. SEBALD

Agw	Die Ausgewanderten
Au	Austerlitz
AuE	Austerlitz (English trans. by Anthea Bell)
BU	Die Beschreibung des Unglücks
DRS	Die Ringe des Saturn
E	The Emigrants
LL	Luftkrieg und Literatur
NHD	On the Natural History of Destruction
NN	Nach der Natur
SG	Schwindel. Gefühle.
TRS	The Rings of Saturn
UH	Unheimliche Heimat. Essays zur österreichischen Literatur
V	Vertigo

ABBREVIATIONS OF WORKS BY JACQUES ROUBAUD

B	La boucle
BW	La bibliothèque de Warburg
GFL	The Great Fire of London
GIL	'Le grand incendie de Londres'
M	Mathématique:

P	Poésie:
QCN	Quelque chose noir
STB	Some Thing Black

ABBREVIATIONS OF WORKS BY ERNST-WILHELM HÄNDLER

CWH	City with Houses
DK	Der Kongress
F	Fall
K	Kongreß
S	Sturm
SMH	Stadt mit Häusern
WWS	Wenn wir sterben

In preparing the English translations of passages in German and French cited throughout this book, I have consulted the existing translations, and have modified them wherever necessary. For ease of reference, corresponding page numbers of works in translation are provided even where the translations have been modified.

Introduction

Über sich schreibt man, so hoch man ist.

—L. Wittgenstein, *Vermischte Bemerkungen*

Ludwig Wittgenstein knew what *The Brothers Karamazov* was about. Or so one would be inclined to believe, given that he apparently read Dostoevsky's novel often enough to know whole passages of it by heart.¹ The question, however, of whether the latter activity indeed implies the former conclusion is less trivial than it might initially appear. In fact, the question goes to the very heart of an understanding of the novelistic genre, of which one of its preeminent theorists, Georg Lukács, had claimed that Dostoevsky's work began to transcend it altogether.² The question, quite simply, concerns the very idea of the 'aboutness' of the novel itself. For all its reputed orientation towards the world and its contents, Nietzsche already observed roughly a decade prior to the composition of Dostoevsky's book that the novel, which Nietzsche dubs a "Socratic art," generally achieved success in the modern world "als die Widerspiegelung einer phantastisch-idealen Wirklichkeit, mit irgend einer metaphysischen Perspektive" [*as the reflection of a phantastic-ideal reality, with some kind of metaphysical perspective*].³ The novel, thus, would have to be about something beyond its own confines—perhaps even beyond its proper competence—as it stands in for a realm more readily associated with the maieutic skills of philosophy. It will be my proposal in this book to read the impact of the novel-reading philosopher Wittgenstein on four contemporary novelists as a challenge to the very notion that the genre in question in fact mirrored a philosophical perspective in a way that corresponded to Nietzsche's reconstruction. The works of these novelists, thus, may be called *Wittgenstein's novels* if only because they stand in the way of a *clearly* reflective relation, called 'aboutness,' between ostensible philosophical content and literary form.

Ever since Hegel's designation of the novel as the dominant modern form of prose, capable of addressing—for better or worse—the external “prosaic conditions” of its own time, the respective discourses shaping the development of philosophy and of the novel from the nineteenth century to the present have found themselves thoroughly intertwined. It was at the hands of philosophy, it could be argued, that the novel was able to ascend to the status of a ‘proper’ literary genre, with its historical roots planted in the coarse soil of ‘mere’ popular entertainment receding ever farther from view. Whether as supposed embodiment of an idealist formative principle (*Bildung*), of a romantic hall of self-reflective mirrors, of a realist inventory of a world of roadside objects, or whatever particular framework one might name, the novel thus appeared to routinely receive its aesthetic justification and general *démarche* from the theoretical realm of philosophy. One could even go so far as to say that the term ‘philosophical novel’ is a mere pleonasm, since an *unphilosophical* novel would have to be one that found its way beyond the very parameters of its genre—with the notion of genre transgression itself fed back, at least since Friedrich Schlegel's poetics, into that set of parameters.⁴

The alliance between these two discourses should by no means be mistaken for a perfectly symmetrical arrangement. Rather, the history of the philosophical theory of the novel from Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics* through Wilhelm Dilthey's poetics to Georg Lukács's *Theory of the Novel* presents attempts to fit the form of the novel into the larger, enveloping form of a philosophical edifice—an enterprise that will prove increasingly difficult after Hegel's death and the resulting disintegration of a ready commitment to philosophical systematicity. However, even though Dilthey—and Lukács after him—overtly divest themselves of any straightforward attempt at system-building, their theoretical reflections on the relationship between philosophy and the novel still betray the hope that such theorizing would assign the novel a particular place within a philosophical economy. Philosophy, that is, would still speak the truth of the novel.

The Hegelian thesis that “philosophy is its time captured in thought,”⁵ joined with the identification of the novel as the primary poetic medium of modernity—a time in which the reality of prose has presumably overtaken the ideality once incarnated in epic poetry of the Homeric kind—implies that it is only *philosophy* that can enunciate the present value of poetry, and of the novel in particular as its pre-eminent modern form. What the novel in its currency cannot hope to achieve, according to Hegel, is to capture a totality in the way in which the ancient epic once could, and which Absolute Spirit at its highest point of self-reflexivity still aspires to do. This claim, however, presumes that Absolute Spirit may successfully separate itself from

the prosaic means of linguistic expression that are required in the process of externalizing systematic philosophical thought beyond the point of Absolute Knowledge supposedly reached at the end of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The acknowledgment of novelistic form in Hegel hence amounts to an attempt at neutralizing its role within the mnemonic economy of the philosophical system in which all contents are to be safely contained and sublated (*aufgehoben*).

Another major attempt—perhaps the last one ever made in this particular vein—at delineating the relationship between philosophy and the novel in modernity is Lukács's *Theory of the Novel*.⁶ The influences of both Hegel and Wilhelm Dilthey are here combined to present the novel as the mnemonic medium particularly suited to preserve and contain the characteristically modern dissonance between subjectivity in a world of facts on the one hand, and a world of ideas on the other. It is this dissonance that qualifies modernity as the age of “transcendental homelessness” (TR, 32; TN, 41), in what is probably Lukács's most famous phrase. Even though Lukács's reflections, like those of Dilthey before him, ostensibly cast systematic ambition of a Hegelian sort to the wind of historical change, their diagnosis of modern life as adequately—that is: brokenly—refracted in the form of the novel is quite clearly still philosophical in nature:

Deshalb ist Philosophie als Lebensform sowohl wie als das Formbestimmende und das Inhaltgebende der Dichtung immer ein Symptom des Risses zwischen Innen und Außen, ein Zeichen der Wesensverschiedenheit von Ich und Welt, der Inkongruenz von Seele und Tat. (TR, 21)

That is why philosophy, as a form of life or as that which determines the form and supplies the content of literary creation, is always a symptom of the rift between ‘inside’ and ‘outside,’ a sign of the essential difference between the self and the world, incongruence of soul and deed. (TN, 29)

At a point in time—the immediate historical backdrop, of course, is World War I—when the former task of philosophy as a sublation of totality has ceased to appear defensible and philosophy is cast as a *form of life* rather than a detached work on concepts—or *of the concept*—it is still credited with the capacity to determine form. Given Lukács's implicit rejection of Dilthey's contention that the task of written expression in general was quite simply the transport of lived experience (*Erlebnis*), and that literature in general—and the novel in particular—constituted a medium better suited to achieve

that objective under present circumstances than any philosophical system,⁷ poetic and philosophical form are not, according to Lukács, formed by 'life' in any immediate sense. Form, rather, is inevitably marked by death—the loss of past life that cannot *as such* be integrated into present expression. Lukács's presentation of philosophy as a historicized form of life that originally emerged prior to the rupture presumably separating 'inner' and 'outer,' individual and world, in the modern age, amounts to a denial that philosophy by itself could ever recapture the pre-modern sense of a totality of experience thus lost. The scope of what it can still aspire to do, by contrast, is presented in Lukács's book itself: it may provide a framework for an analysis of the form of the novel.

According to this analysis, the rupture that will cause any philosophical approach to lose its footing may be located—with the security that attends classifiable phenomena—in the psyche of the hero of the novel: "So objektiviert sich die formbestimmende Grundgesinnung des Romans als Psychologie der Romanhelden: sie sind Suchende" [*Thus the fundamental form-determining intention of the novel is objectivised as the psychology of the novel's heroes: they are seekers*] (TR, 51; TN, 60). Shaping the search of these characters, philosophy assures a continuity for the hero of the novel—"in der Erinnerung aufdämmernde, aber erlebte Einheit von Persönlichkeit und Welt" [*a unity of the personality and the world, dimly sensed through memory, yet a part of lived experience*] (TR, 114; TN, 128)—that no longer seems accessible outside of fiction. Thus, even if, according to Lukács, the novel testifies to a disconnection of the subject from exteriority where Dilthey had posited a "structural connectedness" (*Strukturzusammenhang*), thanks to the mnemonic potential of literature the biography of the fictional hero would remain sufficiently continuous for it to be shaped by a search for meaning, even if that search should never reach its goal. The fictional reconciliation of the hero with his own life thus shaped is at the same time a kind of reconciliation between philosophy and the novel to the extent that Lukács defends the exemplary character of the form of the novel for the modern age on strictly philosophical grounds.⁸

The term *Lebensform* would not appear in Ludwig Wittgenstein's writings until almost two decades after Lukács employed it to designate the situatedness of philosophy, and it would be another two decades before the transition of that belated appearance into print. An at least equally long interval may be observed between the first appearance of each thinker as a more or less recognizable point of reference within the medium of the novel; in the guise of Leo Naphta in Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg* (1929), Lukács has several decades on Wittgenstein in this respect. This delay should not, I

think, be attributed *only* to the history of publication and critical reception of Wittgenstein's writings, though obviously both of these may well be held responsible to a significant degree. Above and beyond these factors, however, the remarkably widespread interest in Wittgenstein among contemporary literary authors has much to tell us, it seems to me, about a re-imagined relationship between the literary genre of the novel on the one hand, and philosophy on the other. This book undertakes to detail some of the implications of this shift.

The challenge posed by the belated appearance of references both to the figure of Wittgenstein and to his written work consists, stated most briefly and perhaps too simply, in a skeptical re-assessment of the notion advanced by Lukács that despite the diagnosis of transcendental drift, philosophy could remain that discourse determining the form of literature without, in turn, being determined by it. The articulation of a reverse determination that can never, of course, seek to simply *exterminate* its complement no longer finds itself securely on the side of theory, separated by an unambiguous possessive from the literary form of expression *of which* it were a theory. Rather, signifiers of theoretical thought find themselves to be part of what they used to survey theoretically from a distance.

And so it is that the novels discussed in this book are *Wittgenstein's novels*: not because someone called 'Wittgenstein' could lay claim to them on the basis of what Foucault described as the author function, but because the inscription of the name 'Wittgenstein' and signifiers associated with it amount to a deliberate attack on any straightforward separation that would keep Wittgenstein as philosophical thinker to one side, and novelists and their writings to the other. These novels are Wittgenstein's as well as those of their authors because *philosophy has here invaded the novel, and vice versa*, and neither side can remain untouched by this thoroughly ambiguous act of mobility, whether it be classified as covert infiltration or outright desertion. Even though the authors discussed here may very well not consider their novels to be contributions to any theoretical discourse on the genre of the novel itself, their persistent references to Wittgenstein and his work nevertheless turn these novels into critical injunctions against a tradition that would seek to establish sturdier boundaries between philosophical and literary writing, to the intended effect of retaining discursive control over a space in which philosophy may articulate what literature is *about*, philosophically.

Incidentally, in all of his writings Wittgenstein has nothing to say *about* the genre of the novel. And the authors investigated here gladly return the favor by having nothing to say *about* Wittgenstein, in a certain sense. They are not in the business, that is, of adding more *content* to the innumerable

volumes in existence detailing Wittgenstein's life and times, his influences and followers, his declines and ascents, in short: the facts surrounding his case. Wittgenstein, in turn, for all his well-documented investment (metaphorically and literally) in the arts, nowhere feels compelled to present a coherent theory of aesthetics; a few scattered remarks on Dostoevsky are no more a theory of the novel than commenting on the sound of "the names 'Beethoven' and 'Mozart'"⁹ constitutes a theory of either the symphony, the sonata, or any other musical form central to Viennese Classicism. It may be this mutual abstinence that provides an insight into why Wittgenstein emerges as a particularly compelling point of reference for a rather diverse set of authors: the very absence of explicit poetological pronouncements on the part of Wittgenstein on the one hand, and the undeniable currency of at least some rudimentary knowledge about Wittgenstein and some of his most well-known aphorisms on the other, provide the basis for the literary infiltration in question. With the question of assuring a supply of theoretical or biographical 'contents' about the novel or about Wittgenstein, respectively, rendered moot, *the very idea of aboutness* rises to prominence as a central point of convergence between Wittgenstein's own writing and its literary offspring.

Chapter One therefore begins the book with a treatment of the relationship between the unique theoretical trajectory of Wittgenstein's philosophy from the *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* to the *Philosophical Investigations* and other later writings and the form in which that philosophy is presented. Rather than being a transparent window affording readers a clear view onto a certain set of philosophical theses or theorems, that form—the form of writing (*Schreibform*, in Wittgenstein's own phrase)—turns out to be part and parcel of the thought presented in it. Given that the project of presenting a philosophy not subject to this linguistic condition—an idea which is at least hypothetically broached in the earlier writings—is eventually seen as strictly impossible, Wittgenstein's pursuit of clarity and perspicuity begins to be directly affected by the form that his thinking needs to take insofar as it issues in characters written or printed on a page. The fragmentary, aphoristic form of these writings, as well as their constant oscillation between philosophical reflections 'proper' and more personal observations, emerges as a feature that cannot simply be subtracted from their contents, the frequency of such attempts within the philosophical literature on Wittgenstein notwithstanding.

A particularly paradigmatic aspect of Wittgenstein's reflections in their reverse determination of (philosophical) content by (literary) form as outlined above concerns the issue of memory and recollection. Whereas for Lukács the

novel was the pre-eminent form in which 'inner' mnemonic continuity could be gathered that would assure the biography of the hero a sense of coherence even in the absence of achieved meaning, the development of Wittgenstein's post-Tractarian thought challenges the intelligibility of the notion of internal memory images on which such continuity—diametrically opposed to the alleged discontinuity *between* 'inner' and 'outer' that forms the basis of Lukács's diagnosis of modernity—would have to rely. After first proposing a view of meaning in the *Tractatus* that steers clear of both time and memory, Wittgenstein eventually comes to regard linguistic expression *in time* as indispensable to the formulation of his philosophy. Soon thereafter, Wittgenstein begins to skeptically investigate and ultimately reject the notion of there being anything specific 'inside of us' that we could point to in an attempt to elevate memory and recollection to a level of certainty beyond that of external signs bound up in semiotic drift, temporarily anchored only by the local specificity of the language game and the form of life. One inevitable result of this diagnosis is Wittgenstein's refusal to regard language as capable of storing the mnemonic weight of tradition and effective history (*Wirkungsgeschichte*), as it were, within itself—a fact routinely ignored by hermeneutically inclined readers of Wittgenstein who would consider the Wittgensteinian form of life a straightforward extension of the hermeneutic situation in which the artwork were lifted into "total presence."¹⁰ The notion of a "spiritual trace" (*Geistesspur*), however, which, as the mnemonic substrate, would be in a position to effect such radical simultaneity of past and present, is utterly alien to Wittgenstein; my consideration of Wittgenstein's brief allusions to the 'philosopher of life' Oswald Spengler serve to underline further that transhistorical continuity of this kind is incompatible with Wittgenstein's own skeptical view of the retention of lived experience beyond the strictures of language.

In point of fact, the specific relevance of the signifier 'Wittgenstein' for the work of each of the authors investigated in this book becomes unintelligible on a hermeneutic reading of Wittgenstein's later work that would attempt to read the novels in question as establishing a more or less seamless dialogue between the past and the present conditions of the genre, or between philosophy and literature as united in their rejection of the 'method' of (hard) science, and hence, by implication, committed to aesthetic 'truth.' As differently as each of the literary projects I will be looking at is geared, all of them do share, at a minimum, the implicit conviction that reference to Wittgenstein—and, by extension, to his views of language games, private language, theoretical and physical architecture, or mental representation—does *not* serve as a kind of universal semantic glue that would assure the reader automatically of a coherent context of question and answer.

As Thomas Bernhard's early invocation of "W." discussed in Chapter Two will thus suggest, it is not so much that Wittgenstein raises challenging philosophical questions which literature sets out to answer. Rather, as Bernhard first formulates programmatically in a letter and then repeatedly 'demonstrates' in his prose works, "W. is a question that cannot be answered"—which makes "W." an unintelligible question by Wittgenstein's own (early) lights. This finding, rather than imposing an imperative of silence on any talk of Wittgenstein, encourages Bernhard, quite to the contrary, to work on—and with—that permanent threat of unintelligibility for the remainder of his career as a writer. If the coherence of "the question" itself is perennially cast in doubt, little in the way of a coherent answer should be expected; this, of course, is the very reason for what commentators have labeled "name-dropping"¹¹ on Bernhard's part—the invocation of 'Wittgenstein' as a signifier without any immediately compelling discursive, theoretical context. In other words, Bernhard does not engage 'Wittgenstein' in a philosophical argument. The challenge that literary prose puts to philosophical discourse is situated elsewhere: it draws out the implications of philosophical tenets—and the names attached to them—being flattened out in the space of writing, detached from any deep structure supposedly guaranteed by traditionally, institutionally sanctioned transmission.

In its attempt to unsettle historiographical narratives that would take the continuity of such transmission across temporal distances for granted, the sustained preoccupation with wandering, home-less characters and narrators across the prose work of W.G. Sebald that is the subject of Chapter Three repeatedly fastens on Wittgensteinian references. Sebald not only picks out certain 'physical' points of contact between his characters and Wittgenstein (his backpack, his temporary residence in Manchester, his voyage to Ithaca, NY, his interest in photography), but more fundamentally links his episodic, de-centralizing narrative operations to Wittgenstein's reflections on family resemblance that would group objects and persons into families without specifying necessary conditions of group membership. The resulting web of elements that recur both within Sebald's individual books as well as across his oeuvre as a whole—including his theoretical work as a critic—thus prevents what one might initially take to be the thrust of that work: preservation of that which has been neglected by the larger narratives of historiography, in an exemplary act of addressing forgetting by insisting on the possibility of recuperative remembering. A considerable portion of the emerging critical and scholarly work on Sebald has adhered to the latter view,¹² one that must face the challenging questions raised by Wittgenstein's view of memory as these are manifestly inscribed in Sebald's text, both in word and image. As

is the case in Bernhard, the necessarily fuzzy outline of the language game also extends to the very membership of Sebald's texts in the genre category of the 'novel' itself; here, too, membership is not to be determined by a set of necessary conditions. Ultimately it is only the genre-transgressive character itself—a notion familiar at least since Early Romanticism—that warrants the pragmatic classification of these texts as 'novels,' not a consistent suspension of disbelief that sustained their fictional coherence, or narrative operations validating the presumption that literature may keep us 'in touch' with the interiority of past experience (that of others, or even our own) which has sometimes been claimed as the main feature of the modern novel.¹³

As in Wittgenstein, the point of Sebald's mnemonic skepticism is not to doubt the very occurrence of recollection, but to question the notion that reading for traces of preserved memories or images will turn up anything in particular. A skeptical interpretation of the Private Language Argument¹⁴ therefore need *not* lead to utter silence (resulting from the alleged 'unintelligibility' of the skeptical position that has routinely been claimed to be what the argument shows), *but may instead result in literature*. A literature, that is, which demonstrates the necessary absence of private objects and thus hovers between the intelligible—claimed by hermeneutic interpreters of Wittgenstein intent on securing the intelligibility of all communication—and the constant threat of unintelligibility. It is this threat—unaccustomed though we may always be to it—which literature, if anything, is 'about.'

The central challenge to the notion of 'aboutness' in Sebald's narratives is posed by the problem of how to address the Shoah without reverting to the category of 'experience.' Memory as the transmission of lived experience is viewed skeptically here because there is no such experience (in the Diltheyan-Lukácsian sense) to be transmitted. The lives of the Jewish characters—constructed by Sebald from partially 'authentic' and partially fictional biographies—that have escaped the Shoah are haunted by death from the beginning, and can thus never hope to gain a 'livelihood' to be preserved by literary memory. The formally most striking aspect of Sebald's narratives, the inclusion of photographs as part of the text, presents these uncaptioned pictures as externalized memory images that emphasize rather than remedy the inaccessibility of interiorities. Hovering in uncertainty on the edge of authenticity, the juxtaposition of images and text stages the disarticulation of what is generally regarded as the uniquely evidential character of the photograph. The telling impact of Sebald's illustrations is thus not to make the text they accompany more easily navigable, but to the contrary only serve to underline a fundamental feeling of disorientation in the world that is no

longer remedied by an internal coherence of the fictional biography that Lukács's hero could still hope for.

The ensuing disorientation in time and space is always also a disorientation in language—a phenomenon succinctly captured by Sebald's reworking of a famous passage from Wittgenstein's *Investigations*:

Wenn man die Sprache ansehen kann als eine alte Stadt, mit einem Gewinkel von Gassen und Plätzen, mit Quartieren, die weit zurückreichen in die Zeit, mit abgerissenen, assanierten und neuerbauten Vierteln und immer weiter ins Vorfeld hinauswachsenden Außenbezirken, so glich ich selbst einem Menschen, der sich, aufgrund einer langen Abwesenheit, in dieser Agglomeration nicht mehr zurechtfindet, der nicht mehr weiß, wozu eine Haltestelle dient, was ein Hinterhof, eine Straßenkreuzung, ein Boulevard oder eine Brücke ist. Das gesamte Gliederwerk der Sprache, die syntaktische Anordnung der einzelnen Teile, die Zeichensetzung, die Konjunktionen und zuletzt sogar die Namen der gewöhnlichen Dinge, alles war eingehüllt in einen undurchdringlichen Nebel. Auch was ich selber in der Vergangenheit geschrieben hatte, ja insbesondere dieses, verstand ich nicht mehr. (Au, 179)¹⁵

If language may be regarded as an old city full of streets and squares, nooks and crannies, with some quarters dating from far back in time while others have been torn down, cleaned up, and rebuilt, and with suburbs reaching further and further into the surrounding country, then I was like a man who had been abroad a long time and cannot find his way through this urban sprawl anymore, no longer knows what a bus stop is for, or what a back yard is, or an intersection, an avenue or a bridge. The entire structure of language, the syntactical arrangement of parts of speech, punctuation, conjunctions, and finally even the nouns denoting ordinary objects were all enveloped in impenetrable fog. I could not even understand what I myself had written in the past—perhaps I could understand that least of all. (AuE, 123–4)

Contrary to the way in which Wittgenstein's corresponding passage has on occasion been made to fit into a hermeneutic layout,¹⁶ Sebald's reference to this reflection on the historicity of language does not suggest that the latter could therefore be easily integrated into experience traumatically marked by that very history.

The ruinous character of language also forms the point of departure for Jacques Roubaud's multi-volume project *'Le grand incendie de Londres'*—an

“imitation of a novel” in prose, according to its narrator—discussed in Chapter Four. Indeed, the city of London that the narrator of this work undertakes to destroy in prose is characterized with the help of exactly the same Wittgensteinian image, quoted by Roubaud in English, the language proper to describe the language-city in question:

Our language can be seen as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses. (GIL, 242 [§94]; GFL, 183)

The London fire of 1666 functions in Roubaud’s text as a marker indicating the limits of attempts to reappropriate the past without residue, without traces of the debris with which Roubaud’s narrator purports to “charcoal-scrrawl the paper” (*charbonner le papier*).¹⁷ The sections—called “moments,” numbered and organized according to particular numerological constraints—of this expansive imitation-novel emerge not as mnemonic carriers of an internal, private language akin to the one against which Wittgenstein argues (according to Roubaud, such a language is the sole domain of lyric poetry), but rather as agents of the destruction of the very notion of such a language in prose. Parallel in ways to Sebald’s externalization of images, the signs of written prose—in some instances with photographs as their object of description—are here cast as signifiers that distance the writing subject from the ‘content’ of private, autobiographical recollection. Like the deceptive authenticity of Sebald’s narrative and pictorial fabrications, the ‘autobiographical’ proximity of Roubaud’s narrator to the author ultimately indicates the impossibility of their identification by way of reported recollections. With repeated reference to Wittgensteinian text—tongue always firmly planted in cheek—the narrative presents its own ‘theoretical’ framework, and thereby undermines the idea that philosophical prose alone, ‘properly’ separated from the prose of the novel, would be authorized to enunciate the truth of the artwork. Wittgenstein’s philosophy—its status as ‘theory’ bound up with the ‘practice’ of its own written expression—is redirected into Roubaud’s novel to challenge the very boundaries between the theory of the novel and what one might call the ‘theory novel.’ Written under explicit constraints that qualify this novel as a work consistent with the principles of the writer’s workshop Oulipo to which Roubaud belongs, the rule-governed prose of *Le grand incendie de Londres* constitutes an extended language game in which ‘theory’ is played, for the novel to test its own, indeterminate boundaries.

Like Roubaud's project, Ernst-Wilhelm Händler's work "The Grammar of Absolute Clarity," discussed in Chapter Five, consists of an as-yet unfinished series of individual books that form an ensemble. In Händler's case, too, the title of that ensemble is programmatic: Wittgenstein's notion of grammar as the recording of the "actual transactions of language" is here put to work in narrative accounts of systematically minded endeavors undertaken within the social systems of philosophy, business, literature, and architecture. Grammar, the "life of the typographical sign,"¹⁸ thus disrupts the lives of narrators and characters clinging to the notion that the mode of representation (*Darstellung*) of their various projects may be excluded from those projects themselves if only objects and actions are arranged with sufficient rigor. Händler describes research projects in theoretical and practical philosophy (in the novel *Kongreß*), instances of corporate power play (*Fall, Wenn wir sterben*), and the development of an architectural master plan (*Sturm*) that all come under pressure once the inevitable backdrop of language use that turns out to be necessary to *work out* these schemes is considered part of the game. The breakdown of aspirations to a well-defined separation of signifier and signified spreads all the way to the fictionalized production of "The Grammar of Absolute Clarity" itself, as staged in *Fall*. The terminal paradox in that novel of an omniscient narrator who can only manifest his omniscience in the permanent juggling of a plurality of ultimately incompatible narrative stances forcefully illustrates the pressure put on literary form in Händler's work: as it narrates the ruin of systematic projects, the novel cannot claim to "grasp itself and its opposite"—in Hegel's phrase—without producing a formal aporia, striking itself out as a medium of omniscient recollection.

The title of the first published installment of Händler's project, *Stadt mit Häusern*, alludes once again to Wittgenstein's analogy of language and city in the *Investigations*, which includes the question: "Und mit wieviel Häusern, oder Straßen, fängt eine Stadt an, Stadt zu sein?" [*And how many houses or streets does it take before a town begins to be a town?*] (PU, §18; PI, 8). This question, of course, does not admit of a straightforward answer. Consequently, in Händler's novels, 'suburban' language use—well-ordered discourses devised to regulate the casual chaos of the linguistic inner cities—runs up against the limit of exactness in the determination of the extension of linguistic concepts.¹⁹ In the face of such limitation, many of Händler's narrators and characters position themselves as harbingers of a new word order, each of them repeating the Wittgensteinian trajectory leading from the *Tractatus* to the *Investigations* in their own sphere and their own way. With the saint-like appearance of a mythologically tinged Wittgenstein, and the aspiration to constructional clarity embodied in Wittgenstein's

Kundmanngasse house and related structures of Vienna Modernism among the explicit points of reference, Händler's texts copy the *form* of Wittgenstein's philosophical thought into themselves. That about which one cannot speak, it turns out in the process, one *can* write, though perhaps not *about*. It is the liminal moment in which philosophy and literature become one, and yet not the same.

The Curse of Wittgenstein's Prose

WHOSE WITTGENSTEIN?

Recent years of scholarship, benefiting from easier accessibility of an increasing amount of material from the *Nachlaß*, have revealed that questions of writing and style are of enormous importance in the assessment of Wittgenstein's philosophy—something that had gone largely unacknowledged by the adepts of so-called ordinary language philosophy and its analytical heirs. One remarkable effect of this renewed 'continental' interest has been to call upon Wittgenstein as a witness in defense of the major tenets of philosophical hermeneutics. Eschewing the psychologistic tendencies of Schleiermacher and Dilthey, the later Wittgenstein is thus regularly presented as an ally of Gadamer, with language games handily transformed into the epitome of the hermeneutic situation.¹ Wittgenstein's insistence on the necessity of shared knowledge for the possibility of understanding suggests to these thinkers that Wittgenstein's later work, cleansed from the positivistic errors of the *Tractatus*, comes in handy as a defense against the objectivism of what is perceived to be a hostile philosophical tradition.² Needless to say, the members of that tradition don't agree.³ Sometimes the pendulum swings back the other way and we are being assured that if framed in Wittgensteinian terms, the "anti-objectivist" threat of deconstruction either self-destructs, or may be safely contained.⁴

These disputes could hardly be settled in passing, and do not need to be, since it is the joint assumption of these diverging views that Wittgenstein's thought in one way or the other may be harnessed to a particular philosophical point of view, including in some cases one that could be subsumed under the category of 'aesthetics.' The following reflections on memory and the form of writing in Wittgenstein do not share this assumption, since it is not in virtue of his explicit aesthetic estimations (which, to be sure, do exist

in places) that Wittgenstein deserves attention in the context of the theory of philosophical and literary prose. Rather, this chapter will focus on a number of Wittgenstein's self-reflective remarks about writing and their import for his (skeptical) views on the epistemological status of memory and the possibility of closure of a philosophical system.

Rather than trying to single out either literary form, or else philosophical form, as the proper mnemonic depository, Wittgenstein's philosophy is intensely concerned with its own internal dynamics and their consequences for philosophical writing. Wittgenstein wrote to Ludwig von Ficker concerning his early *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* that the book was conceived as "representation of a system." The philosophical character of that system, however, takes shape only in literary form: "Die Arbeit ist streng philosophisch und zugleich literarisch, es wird aber doch nicht darin geschweifelt" [*The work is strictly philosophical and at the same time literary: but there's nothing like smoke and mirrors in it*].⁵ Literature is hence neither *Schwafelei*, inconsequential amassing of content, nor *Schwefelei*, playing with explosive rhetorical tricks and smoke screens. To the extent that literary form is a necessary condition for Wittgenstein's *Darstellung*—not mere sheep's clothing draped over philosophical meat, as some would have it,⁶—it is directly affected by the changing status of Wittgenstein's philosophy vis-à-vis the problem of systematicity, from the crystalline structure of the *Tractatus* to the fragmented nature of the later work.

PROSE, PERSPICUITY

Wittgenstein's quest for clarity throughout his work is always and at the same time one for the right form of philosophical inquiry. After the radically reduced literary form of the *Tractatus*, the gradual emergence of description, not explanation, as the main goal of that inquiry in the 'middle period,' Wittgenstein's reflections on the character of his own *Darstellung* increasingly mirror the post-Tractarian finding that such *Darstellung* must somehow take account of the time it takes to carry it (the *Darstellung*) out. We will show below how this recognition of the problem of *time* emerges from the pitfalls of the Tractarian picture, and how it, in turn, will spark Wittgenstein's reflections on memory. Breaking the boundaries of the purely logical realm of the *Tractatus*, however, is not only an outcome of a self-contained critical reevaluation of that work on Wittgenstein's part. The consideration of prosaic *Darstellung* also intersects with several cryptic references to Oswald Spengler during this period, which have puzzled many readers of Wittgenstein. This most literal contact of Wittgenstein's with *Lebensphilosophie* hardly serves to

fashion him into an intellectual heir of Dilthey's, but it throws into relief to what extent Wittgenstein, too, is concerned with the critical status of historical explanations that had sparked the irrationalist tendencies of *Lebensphilosophie*.

In a mode strikingly indebted to both Spengler and Lukács, Wittgenstein comments in the following passage on the possible description of a culture that is marked by the end of the epic:

es wird niemand da sein, der den Fortgang dieser Kultur als Epos empfindet, also beschreiben kann. Oder richtiger, sie ist eben kein Epos mehr, oder doch nur für den, der sie von außen betrachtet, und vielleicht hat dies Beethoven vorschauend getan (wie Spengler einmal andeutet). Man könnte sagen, die Zivilisation muß ihren Epiker voraushaben. Wie man den eigenen Tod nur voraussehen und vorausschauend beschreiben, nicht als Gleichzeitiger von ihm berichten kann. (*Vermischte Bemerkungen* [W VIII], 462)

there will be no one there who experiences and so can describe the development of this culture as an epic. Or more precisely it just is no longer an epic, or is one only for someone who observes it from outside, and perhaps Beethoven did this with prevision (as Spengler hints in one place). It might be said that civilization can only have its epic poet in advance. Just as one can only foresee one's own death and describe it as something lying in the future, not report it as it happens. (CV, 11–12)

Like Lukács, Wittgenstein is torn between declaring the end of epic in modernity on the one hand, and its reconfiguration on the other. The death of *this* culture, he holds, can no longer be captured in the way that Homer supposedly captured the time of pre-classical Greek antiquity. The reason for this impossibility is likewise familiar from Lukács's picture: the emergence of temporal parameters alien to the period of the epic creates a rift between observer and observed, between the one who would engage in description and that which he would attempt to describe, between subject and world. To the extent that the possibility of epic description remains, it does so only under the auspices of that temporal separation. The impossibility of radical simultaneity in a post-epic age raises skeptical problems for the very possibility of the activity of description. Wittgenstein ties that activity directly to having sensations (*empfinden*), indicating an insistence on external criteria, the referential relation of which to the future or to the past will always imply interpretive complications that would be absent in a world of simultaneous

proximity. This implication is not found in Spengler, who—even though he does share Wittgenstein's mistrust of *explanation*—will insist on the experience of “deep” sensations in the precognitive state of awakeness (*Wachsein*) that form the precondition for expression and description but do not necessarily imply them. Animated by such experience, in *The Decline of the West* Spengler thus engages in prophetic speculations about the “facts” (*Tatsachen*) of the future of Western culture, his use of the word “facts” clearly incompatible with Wittgenstein's own. Such directionality towards the future, which Wittgenstein considers the only possible form of a modern epic, would by definition need to disregard the conditions of its own expression, its own *Darstellung*. Spengler makes this explicit in comments on Beethoven, which may be the ones Wittgenstein is referring to in the above passage.⁷ The projection of a future from a historical point of view drowns out the question of *Darstellung* in favor of a “deeper” significance of that which is being indicated. It is not without irony that Spengler's own text remains very much subject to this dilemma even as it criticizes the practices of 19th-century historiography in a quasi-Nietzschean tone.

It is telling that Spengler would apparently take the prophetic “facts” about decline announced in his book to be condemning the momentary character of *Darstellung* to insignificance. The written character of language—the medium of such *Darstellung*—is thus being cast aside. Spengler elsewhere characterizes the development of writing as the first sign of historical consciousness in man (*Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, II:180), which explains his fundamental mistrust of the written word. In contrast to precognitive “awakeness”—in which state we receive impressions as if by interior dictation (*Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, I:221; *The Decline of the West*, I:169)—the written word occasions a disjunction between hearing and understanding that first raises the specter of misunderstanding. In the realm of artistic expression, one symptom of this problematical emergence of the phenomenon of meaning is allegory.⁸ The strictly poetic word, Spengler allows (invoking once more the connection to Beethoven), may escape the otherwise fundamental linguistic predicament—thus distinguishing it categorically from “scientific prose.”⁹ Given Spengler's critical view of science, it is anything but easy to estimate whether he thought of his own prose as “scientific” in a sense that would make it both “meaningful” but also prone to potential misunderstanding.

In Wittgenstein's case, such an estimation is somewhat easier. His determination of the “unpoetic” as that which signifies or names (*bezeichnet*) his philosophy (*Vermischte Bemerkungen* [W VIII], 458; CV, 8) is a concise expression of his struggle with the “curse of prose” (*Bemerkungen über die Grundlagen der Mathematik* [W VI], 407; *Remarks on the Foundations*

of *Mathematics*, 408) after his return to philosophy and the modification of the “literary form” of the *Tractatus*. Wittgenstein’s self-reproach for not being able to live up to what he thinks one should “really” (*eigentlich*) do in philosophy¹⁰ highlights one of many personal faults he finds with himself, but this one is particularly crucial in that it also documents *ex negativo* what Wittgenstein thinks he *can* achieve.

Part of Wittgenstein’s self-proclaimed realm of competence, then, is the activity of *description*, subject to the exigencies not of the poetic word but of prose. Following the necessary deviation from Spengler’s view of the poetic word as pure sound, this prose will need to attend to its own methods of *Darstellung*. The description of facts which it undertakes refrains from the suggestion of historical hypotheses as to the genesis of certain phenomena; in their emphatically anti-empirical thrust, Wittgenstein’s philosophical investigations are therefore clearly *not* scientific, but they do insist on verifiability and criteria, even if they do not propose to deliver the verification themselves. During the middle period Wittgenstein becomes sharply critical of the aspirations of scientific explanation, and it is this criticism which throws into relief his own philosophical method of a synoptical collecting of linguistic phenomena and their comparative assessment in terms of resemblance and difference. An early formulation of the difference between these two approaches is found in Wittgenstein’s remarks from 1931–2 on the book *The Golden Bough* by the British ethnologist James Frazer. Wittgenstein’s attack in these comments on Frazer’s attempts at an historical explanation of customs of a number of primitive peoples provides the occasion for his formulation of his oft-quoted ideal of perspicuous representation (*übersichtliche Darstellung*) that would draw out resemblances between phenomena, possibly by means of invented connectives, the empirical presence of which is considered entirely secondary:

Die historische Erklärung, die Erklärung als eine Hypothese der Entwicklung ist nur eine Art der Zusammenfassung der Daten—ihrer Synopsis. Es ist ebensowohl möglich, die Daten in ihrer Beziehung zu einander zu sehen und in ein allgemeines Bild zusammenzufassen, ohne es in Form einer Hypothese über die zeitliche Entwicklung zu machen.

“Und so deutet das Chor auf ein geheimes Gesetz” möchte man zu der Frazer’schen Tatsachensammlung sagen. Dieses Gesetz, diese Idee, *kann* ich nun durch eine Entwicklungshypothese darstellen oder auch, analog dem Schema einer Pflanze, durch das Schema einer religiösen Zeremonie, oder aber durch die Gruppierung des Tatsachenmaterials allein, in einer “*übersichtlichen*” Darstellung.

Der Begriff der übersichtlichen Darstellung ist für uns von grundlegender Bedeutung. Er bezeichnet unsere Darstellungsform, die Art wie wir die Dinge sehen. (Eine Art der 'Weltanschauung,' wie sie scheinbar für unsere Zeit typisch ist. Spengler.)

Diese übersichtliche Darstellung vermittelt das Verständnis, welches eben darin besteht, daß wir die "Zusammenhänge sehen." Daher die Wichtigkeit des Findens von *Zwischengliedern*.

Ein hypothetisches Zwischenglied aber soll in diesem Falle nichts tun, als die Aufmerksamkeit auf die Ähnlichkeit, den Zusammenhang, der *Tatsachen* lenken. Wie man eine interne Beziehung der Kreisform zur Ellipse dadurch illustrierte, daß man eine Ellipse allmählich in einen Kreis überführt; *aber nicht um zu behaupten, daß eine gewisse Ellipse tatsächlich, historisch, aus einem Kreis entstanden wäre* (Entwicklungshypothese), sondern nur um unser Auge für einen formalen Zusammenhang zu schärfen.¹¹

Historical explanation—an explanation in terms of a developmental hypothesis—is only a sort of summary of data, that is, their synopsis. It is equally possible to consider the data in their relationship to each other and to integrate them into a general picture, without doing so in the form of a hypothesis about temporal development.

"And so, the chorus points to a hidden law," one wants to remark in light of Frazer's collection of facts. The only way to represent this law—this idea—is by way of a developmental hypothesis, or by way of the schema of a religious ceremony analogous to that of a plant, or else by way of nothing but the grouping of the factual material itself, i.e. a "*perspicuous*" representation.

The concept of the perspicuous representation is of fundamental significance for us. It designates our form of representation, the way in which we see things. (A kind of 'world-view' as it seems to be typical for our time. Spengler.)

This perspicuous representation communicates an understanding consisting in just the fact that we "see the connections." Thus the importance of finding *intermediate elements*.

A hypothetical intermediate element is not, however, conceived to achieve anything in this case but focus our attention on the resemblance—the connection—of the *facts*. This is comparable to illustrating

an internal relation between a circle and an ellipsis by gradually transforming the latter into a circle—not to be able to claim that a given ellipsis actually, historically, was created from a circle (developmental hypothesis), but only to sharpen our eye for a formal connection.

The significance of these methodological reflections goes altogether beyond the particular context of Frazer's book, for they contain in a nutshell the *démarche* for Wittgenstein's later work. Since he will rarely return to the question of history, these remarks, including another reference to Spengler, are crucial in the present context. Spengler's comparative "morphological" approach in *The Decline of the West* eschews the developmental hypotheses that Wittgenstein allows as a possibility but rejects as a necessary requirement. In pursuit of his thesis of the organic rise and fall of particular cultures, Spengler ranges freely across historical epochs and geography, attempting to point out parallel developments in various cultures that are "simultaneous" to the extent that they are supposedly structurally parallel. As we indicated, Spengler may thus be rebuffing some historical schemata—such as the triad "Antiquity—Middle Ages—Modernity" that he frequently rails against—but he is, of course, still very much in the business of sketching developments.

Wittgenstein's investigations of grammars and language games that will grow out of the precepts formulated here harbor few if any such historical residues. To try to bring perspicuity to a grammar lacking in it (*Philosophische Bemerkungen* [W II], 52; PU, §142) by discussing examples of actual language use, or to inquire into the problem of ostensive definition in language acquisition without ever contemplating the actual processes of that acquisition in children itself, attests to a pronounced lack of interest in questions of historical linguistics or ontogenetic development. While Wittgenstein may thus be said to partake of a *Weltanschauung* skeptical of historical accounts (which he shares with figures like Spengler), one should be careful to note that the kind of factual material that Wittgenstein and Spengler, respectively, would arrange to form an *übersichtliche Darstellung* could not be more different. Their fundamental disagreement over what would constitute a "fact" and how one would go about ascertaining its validity is sufficient to establish this difference.

The arrangement of observations of various related phenomena into a perspicuous representation is, of course, an ideal. Wittgenstein's self-evaluative comment that he was able to write prose "only up to a certain point, and no further" provides a palpable sense of the boundary that separated him from attaining that ideal, and would force him to settle for a degree of perfection somewhere outside—though perhaps in view—of *Übersichtlichkeit*. One

look at Wittgenstein's later writings is enough to confirm this view of things. Perspicuity, of course, should not be confused with systematicity. If the assembly of cases collected to emphasize their resemblance or difference lacked the form of a more traditional philosophical treatise, that in itself would hardly have given Wittgenstein the grief he expresses in the preface to the *Philosophical Investigations*. The order into which the fragmentary investigations would ideally be brought is not that of a system that would uncover a hidden essence beneath the surface, in the "depth" of a symbolic order such as the one Spengler is seeking.¹² Rather, philosophical *Darstellung* would strive to represent something "was schon offen zutage liegt, und was durch Ordnen *übersichtlich* wird" [*something that already lies open to view and that becomes perspicuous by ordering*] (PU, §92; PI, 43). It is the very heterogeneity of the surface phenomena thus considered which ultimately will not yield to a well-ordered form of representation. In the preface to the *Investigations* Wittgenstein will eventually arrive at the thesis that the lack of "a natural and continuous sequence" is fundamentally tied to the nature of the investigation itself, rather than being a mere accident. It is a surface imperfection only in the sense that this investigation makes every effort to attend to the surface, and will not excuse the imperfection with reference to an intangible depth that is ultimately beyond grasp.

Wo gehobelt wird, fallen Späne. As Wittgenstein orders and reorders his remarks in his quest for perspicuity, some edges *are* smoothed out. One such instance is the disappearance of Spengler's name as some of the above remarks on the *Golden Bough* are compressed for inclusion in the typescript of the *Investigations*, and a declarative sentence becomes a question in the process: "(Eine Art der 'Weltanschauung,' wie sie scheinbar für unsere Zeit typisch ist. Spengler.)" is reduced to "(Ist dies eine 'Weltanschauung?)" (PU, §122). This modification would appear to increase the difference between Wittgenstein and Spengler, or at least that between Wittgenstein and the dubious uses Spengler's work had served in the meantime.¹³ Certainly, the presence of Spengler's name in the original notebook¹⁴ makes the evaluation of Wittgenstein's relation to the post-Hegelian tradition somewhat more *unübersichtlich*, compared to the later, shortened passage from the *Investigations*. On the other hand, the reformulation of the declarative sentence as a question indicates that the primary motivation for Wittgenstein's revisions was not exactly disambiguation.

That which Wittgenstein calls the "curse of prose," its irreducible ambiguity, will ultimately not be lifted by a changed order of the philosophical remarks, by a new word order. The ideal exactness of a mathematical proposition would be the *exact* opposite of that ideal (*Philosophische Bemerkungen* [W

II], 184), but even this ideal is threatened by prose, as Wittgenstein repeatedly emphasizes, criticizing Russell for his prosaic approach to mathematics and logic (*Philosophische Grammatik* [W IV], 369; *Bemerkungen über die Grundlagen der Mathematik* [W VI], 299, 407). Reminiscent of Spengler, Wittgenstein's complaint against prose here focuses on the very necessity of a mediation by understanding (*Verstehen*). In the case of a mathematical proof, Wittgenstein claims, meaning shows itself, and any linguistic "explanation" of such a proof will likely confuse someone attempting to "see" what is supposedly there already. Spengler, on the other hand, would have the interior depth of *feeling* substitute for explicit linguistic understanding, a dimension in which no criteria can apply, and about which one must remain silent if the proper feeling is lacking.¹⁵ Wittgenstein's critique of prose in mathematics, though much closer in spirit to the *Tractatus* than many of the remarks on other areas of linguistic practice, clearly do not support a conclusion of this kind. Ultimately, Wittgenstein's prose is an exercise in enduring its own curse through continued writing and reordering of that writing. That is, enduring it by *not being silent*, despite everything.

PROPOSITION, VERIFICATION, TIME

Wittgenstein's attention to the problem of *Darstellung* arises in the context of his changing views on the question of time. These, in turn, are effected by a new perspective on philosophical semantics, and the role which memory plays in relation to these transformations. As we begin to chronicle these shifts, we will pay particular attention to the emerging skeptical view of memory as internal imagistic representation which decisively undercuts the earlier thesis that a system of propositions, conceived as images, could exhaustively represent a world of facts. It is this skepticism which will underscore the view that the literary character of philosophical prose consists in its refusal to contain recollections in any systematic sense.

The key feature of the semantic view defended in the *Tractatus* is the so-called picture theory of language. According to this theory, the relation of a proposition or sentence (*Satz*) to reality has an image-like character: "Der Satz ist ein Bild der Wirklichkeit" [*The proposition is a model of reality*] (4.01).¹⁶ As an image or model of reality, the proposition presents a possible state of affairs (*Sachlage*) that constitutes its meaning (*Sinn*)—which is clearly distinct from the question of whether or not a particular state of affairs presented by the proposition actually obtains in the world. The proposition has two main features: it is complex (because the state of affairs which it pictures is itself an ordered set of objects [2.01]), and it is bivalent, hence either true or false.

In order to understand the proposition, we need to know neither whether it is either true or false, nor whether it even is bivalent. The truth-conditional semantics of the *Tractatus* detaches the conditions for utterance and understanding of propositions completely from the actual representation relation that the picture stipulates as necessary component of its meaning: “Einen Satz verstehen heißt wissen was der Fall ist, wenn er wahr ist. (Man kann ihn also verstehen, ohne zu wissen, ob er wahr ist)” [*To understand a proposition means to know what is the case if it is true*] (4.024). Thus, when Wittgenstein says that we compare reality with the proposition (4.05), this concerns only the truth value of the proposition. All the comparison is intended to show is whether an existing or non-existing (possible) state of affairs corresponds to the proposition (4.06)—it need not concern itself with the question of whether the proposition has any meaning. According to the *Tractatus*, every proposition already needs to have a meaning in order to be probed for its truth value. Assertion or negation of a proposition can neither provide nor take away this meaning (4.064). The proposition as image—composed of a particular arrangement of elements representing objects, and by necessity provided with corresponding states of affairs as meaning—is what Wittgenstein calls a *fact* (2.141). This fact represents the world independently of its truth value, in virtue only of its logical structure. The picturing relation between language and world is therefore an internal relation (4.014), not itself subject to experiential verification. It must be possible to align the proposition to the world like a measuring rod (2.1512), but the activity of measuring need not actually be carried out for the proposition to be a representation.

One of the key aspects of Wittgenstein's change of mind upon his return to philosophy in 1929 after his years as gardener and schoolteacher is the rejection of the truth-conditional view of semantics as expressed in the *Tractatus*. He no longer regards knowledge of the state of affairs pictured by the proposition, *if* true, as the condition for a justified ascription of meaning. Instead, the knowledge of how to actually go about verifying it is now required. This sea change creates the need for an explanation of something which was readily assumed in the *Tractatus*. Wittgenstein now argues that assertion and negation, contrary to the earlier view, are not the only conceivable responses to the propositions of natural language. In contrast to a strictly bivalent logic, the very option to either assert the proposition, or else to negate it, may itself be negated if the proposition is meaningless or logically indeterminate. The truth-conditional model of the *Tractatus* is not designed to deliver a justification for this type of negation: here a proposition which does not picture either an existing or a non-existing state of affairs does not

picture anything at all, and is hence not considered to be a proposition at all. Hence, the famous Chomskian example "Colorless green ideas sleep furiously" would be analogous to any non-syntactical word sequence such as "is has and:" according to the *Tractatus*, neither word sequence would be a proposition. Wittgenstein's new verificationist approach now seeks to show that a proposition may be meaningless, and yet still be a proposition. Only then can a substantial distinction be made between the rejection of a proposition due to a lack of meaning, and a non-obtaining of the state of affairs which it pictures. This turn in Wittgenstein's view of semantics is in full swing long before the *Investigations*, where Michael Dummett has located the jettisoning of truth-conditional semantics.¹⁷

What exactly does Wittgenstein's brand of verificationism amount to? This question needs to be considered in light of Wittgenstein's ambiguous association with several members of the Vienna Circle, most of whom espoused some kind of verificationism. The most radical interpretation would be the strict phenomenalist view that considers a proposition as verified only in the immediate presence of a corresponding sense-datum. However, if the proposition should ever be more than only punctually meaningful, its integration into a context transcending immediate experience (e.g. that of a scientific theory) would require that it be possible to capture the verifying sense-datum linguistically. If it is to make sense with respect to the framework of empirical science, the strong thesis therefore appears to imply the necessity of a set of sentences with which to express the relevant sensory experience in some unambiguous manner. The elementary propositions, first proposed in the *Tractatus* as the *logical* bedrock of language (4.21ff.), would thus have to be given an *empirical* twist, with the content of a particular experience as their referent and therefore verifiable beyond doubt.¹⁸ The introduction of such elementary or protocol sentences implies a weakening of the strong thesis because propositions can only be considered verified if relevant sense-data *have occurred in the past*, fit to be cast in the language of basic propositions. Even A. J. Ayer, a vocal defender of the strong thesis, admits that it is at least questionable whether there can indeed be elementary propositions in this empirical sense. Most members of the Vienna Circle and other Logical Positivists were drawn to a still weaker version of the verification principle that was formulated as a conditional, demanding that there *would* have to be a method of verification, or that there *could* be a sense-datum whose presence *would* determine whether the proposition in question was true or false. 'Verifiability' would thus come to mean 'verifiable in principle,' rather than 'verifiable here and now,' let alone the "verified here and now" demanded by the full-blown strong thesis.

Wittgenstein never entertained the strong thesis during his middle period in the early 1930s. For Wittgenstein, too, the phenomenon whose presence the strong thesis considers necessary for verification is “nicht Symptom für etwas anderes, was den Satz erst wahr oder falsch macht, sondern ist selbst das, was ihn verifiziert” [*not a symptom of something else, which first makes the proposition true or false, but the thing itself*] (*Philosophische Bemerkungen* [W II], 283; PR, 200). Most relevantly, however, the actual act of verification is not demanded as a necessary condition for the proposition to have meaning. In a Cambridge lecture in 1930, Wittgenstein explicitly says: “Belege liegen immer in der Vergangenheit. Ein allgemeiner Satz wird nicht durch die Resultate gerechtfertigt, sondern durch die Gründe, die wir anführen können” [*Evidence is always in the past. A general proposition is justified by the reasons we can give, not by the results*].¹⁹

Direct experience is hence never available to support the formulation of even a single sentence—a striking reversal of the Tractarian view that had postulated the correspondence of elementary propositions to atomic facts. The reasons to be given point to the necessarily anticipative character of the ascription of meaning according to the ‘weak’ verification principle. It isn’t the fact that the proposition at issue has already been verified at least once, but only the future possibility of a verification—which of course, counterfactually, could have been a possibility in the past—that governs the meaningfulness of the proposition. In fact, this is the *only* way to explain the possibility of how we may ever come to create new meaningful sentences.

The status of experiential sense-data vis-à-vis elementary propositions indicates the way in which questions of memory and time will begin to bear on Wittgenstein’s reflections in 1929. The world of facts presented by the *Tractatus* is a world without time, a crystalline structure of objects ordered into states of affairs, pictured isomorphically by names ordered into propositions. Despite the fact that the concept of protocol sentences developed in the Vienna Circle clearly takes its inspiration from the *Tractatus*, the elementary propositions proposed in the *Tractatus* have nothing to do with empirical scientific verification in the world, an activity *that would take time*. The complete description of the world—“Die Angabe aller wahren Elementarsätze beschreibt die Welt vollständig” [*The world is completely described by giving all elementary propositions*] (4.26)—is merely a logical stipulation. The role of philosophy as it is conceived in the *Tractatus* abstains from any suggestions as to how such a description might be implemented, in the way that the subsequent conceptions by the Logical Positivists of a Unified Science would propose. Because of the truth-conditional semantics, Wittgenstein initially sees no need to worry about the temporal gap between immediate experience and linguistic expression.

The thought experiment of a complete description of life under the assumption of a perfect memory therefore makes good sense on the Tractarian view: one could account for the totality of one's sense-impressions and leave out all reference to what Wittgenstein calls "hypotheses," which is to say, that which goes beyond immediate experience (WA 2, 175). The problem, Wittgenstein now realizes, would be to actually carry out such a description *in time* by means of a *Darstellung*:

Aber wie ist es mit der Zeit, die ich zu dieser Darstellung brauche? Ich nehme an, ich wäre im Stande, diese Sprache so schnell zu 'schreiben'—die Darstellung zu erzeugen—, als meine Erinnerung geht. Nehmen wir aber an, ich läse die Beschreibung dann wieder durch, ist sie jetzt nicht doch hypothetisch? (*Philosophische Bemerkungen* [W II], 97)²⁰

But what about the time I take to make this representation? I'm assuming I'd be able to keep pace with my memory in 'writing' this language—producing this representation. But if we suppose I then read the description through, isn't it now hypothetical after all? (PR, 97)

The use of a description composed of propositions for the purposes of communication—even to *myself*—will involve time, threatening to make it impossible for the proposition to remain committed purely to immediate experience, as Wittgenstein still claims in the Cambridge lectures (VL, 129; WL, 110).

The proposition as image pictures the state of affairs in *logical space* (2.11), and that space is fundamentally detached from the temporal dimension. Contemplation of the world *sub specie aeterni* as the *Tractatus* proposes it (6.45) implies that states of affairs always be described as if frozen in the moment. Language, so to speak, must "photograph" objects and their configurations in order to capture them by means of the *Satzzeichen*, but it can never represent the transition from one configuration to another, effectively making observation of physical phenomena as we know it impossible.²¹ The *Satzzeichen* projects its meaning onto the world (3.12), but it may project only still images, not moving ones.²²

This changes in 1929 when Wittgenstein, cinematophile that he is, adjusts the metaphor of projection to the *time-image* of film. Not surprisingly, the conceptual transformation occurs in the immediate context of the earliest considerations of memory in his notebooks. Wittgenstein here proposes a distinction between two conceptions of time, one as the time of immediate experience, the other as the time of physical events. Aligned with

this distinction is a second one, present throughout the writings of the middle period, between a “first system” as the world of sense-data, and a “second system” as the world of physical phenomena. The long passage detailing the emergence of the concept of memory in connection with this set of distinctions needs to be given in full:

Vielleicht beruht diese ganze Schwierigkeit auf der Übertragung des Zeitbegriffs der physikalischen Zeit auf den Verlauf der unmittelbaren Erlebnisse. Es ist eine Verwechslung der Zeit des Filmstreifens mit der Zeit des projizierten Bildes. Denn “die Zeit” hat eine andere Bedeutung, wenn wir das Gedächtnis als die Quelle der Zeit auffassen, und wenn wir es als aufbewahrtes Bild des vergangenen Ereignisses auffassen. Wenn wir das Gedächtnis als ein Bild auffassen, dann ist es ein Bild eines physikalischen Ereignisses. Das Bild verblaßt, und ich merke sein Verblässen, wenn ich es mit andern Zeugnissen des Vergangenen vergleiche. Hier ist das Gedächtnis nicht die Quelle der Zeit, sondern mehr oder weniger gute Aufbewahrerin dessen, was “wirklich” gewesen ist; und dieses war eben etwas, wovon wir auch andere Kunde haben können, ein physikalisches Ereignis. – Ganz anders ist es, wenn wir nun das Gedächtnis als Quelle der Zeit betrachten. Es ist hier kein Bild, und kann auch nicht verblässen – in dem Sinne, wie ein Bild verblaßt, so daß es seinen Gegenstand immer weniger getreu darstellt. Beide Ausdrucksweisen sind in Ordnung und gleichberechtigt, aber nicht miteinander vermischbar. Es ist ja klar, daß die Ausdrucksweise vom Gedächtnis als einem Bild nur ein Gleichnis ist; genau so wie die Ausdrucksweise, die die Vorstellungen “Bilder der Gegenstände in unserem Geiste” (oder dergleichen) nennt. Was ein Bild ist, das wissen wir, aber die Vorstellungen sind doch gar keine Bilder. Denn sonst kann ich das Bild sehen und den Gegenstand, dessen Bild es ist; aber hier ist es offenbar ganz anders. Wir haben eben ein Gleichnis gebraucht, und nun tyrannisiert uns das Gleichnis. In der Sprache dieses Gleichnisses kann ich mich nicht außerhalb des Gleichnisses bewegen. Es muß zu Unsinn führen, wenn man mit der Sprache dieses Gleichnisses über das Gedächtnis als Quelle unserer Erkenntnis, als Verifikation unserer Sätze, reden will. Man kann von gegenwärtigen, vergangenen und zukünftigen Ereignissen in der physikalischen Welt reden, aber nicht von gegenwärtigen, vergangenen und zukünftigen Vorstellungen, wenn man als Vorstellung nicht doch wieder eine Art physikalischen Gegenstand (etwa jetzt ein physikalisches Bild statt des Körpers) bezeichnet, sondern gerade eben das Gegenwärtige. (*Philosophische Bemerkungen*, 81–2)²³

Perhaps this whole difficulty stems from taking the time concept of physical time and applying it to the course of immediate experience. It's a confusion of the time of the film strip with the time of the picture it projects. For 'time' has one meaning when we regard memory as the source of time, and another when we regard it as a picture preserved from a past event. If we take memory as a picture, then it's a picture of a physical event. The picture fades, and I notice how it has faded when I compare it with other evidence of what happened. In this case, memory is not the source of time, but a more or less reliable custodian of what 'actually' happened; and this is something we can know about in other ways, a physical event.—It's quite different if we now take memory to be the source of time. Here it isn't a picture, and cannot fade either—not in the sense in which a picture fades, becoming an ever less faithful representation of its object. Both ways of talking are in order, and are equally legitimate, but cannot be mixed together. It's clear of course that speaking of memory as a picture is only a metaphor; just as the way of speaking of images as 'pictures of objects in our minds' (or some such phrase) is a metaphor. We know what a picture is, but images are surely no kind of picture at all. For, in the first case I can see the picture and the object of which it is a picture. But in the other, things are obviously quite different. We have just used a metaphor and now the metaphor tyrannizes us. While in the language of the metaphor, I am unable to move outside of the metaphor. It must lead to nonsense if you try to use the language of this metaphor to talk about memory as the source of our knowledge, the verification of our propositions. We can speak of present, past and future events in the physical world, but not of present, past and future images, if what we are calling an image is not to be yet another kind of physical object (say, a physical picture which takes the place of the body), but precisely that which is present. (PR, 81–2)

The need for the verification of meaning of propositions raises pressing issues of time for Wittgenstein. As the static "photograph" is transformed into the moving cinematic image (phenomenologically continuous, though of course ultimately reducible to static images),²⁴ two possibilities of reading time present themselves: either time impacting the possibility of verification is akin to the sequence of images on the screen, or else to those on the roll of film. The picture theory in the *Tractatus* had secured the pictorial representation of reality by letting the meaning of the sentence—the states of affairs pictured—serve as the "method of projection" (3.11). The criterion of meaningfulness was hence implied in casting the proposition as an image. Now

Wittgenstein considers the necessity of external criteria to verify whether a proposition accurately pictures a state of affairs. The images on the roll of film are detached from the images projected onto the screen, simply because the immediate *Erlebnis* and its casting into a *Satzzeichen* are no longer to be associated as a matter of logical necessity. Language, it now becomes apparent, is inherently temporal. Thus, it belongs to the “second system” of physical objects in physical time: “Wir befinden uns mit unserer Sprache sozusagen nicht im Bereich des projizierten Bildes, sondern im Bereich des Films” [*With our language we find ourselves, so to speak, in the domain of the film, not of the projected picture*] (*Philosophische Bemerkungen* [W II], 98; PR, 98).

Retrospectively and without explicitly saying so, Wittgenstein thus characterizes the world of the *Tractatus* as a world in which, according to the “first system,” memory is the source of time. This is consistent with our finding that here time is entirely *frozen* because if memory is the source of time, then all ‘events’ (insofar as that term even applies)—past, present, and future—are condensed into a moment without extension, and without the benefit of a language to express them. Within the framework of the “first system” in which sense-data appear in a timeless realm, the question of how to *talk* about these sense-data presents a genuine puzzle (*Philosophische Bemerkungen* [W II], 80; PR, 80). Propositions may be verified only by the present (W II, 81; PR, 81) in the logical conception of verification known from the *Tractatus*, but the spatio-temporal nature of propositions ultimately entails that such punctual verification cannot be expressed in the “first system” itself. As noted above, language belongs to the “second system:” any notation of ‘present’ sense-data may denote these only within the ‘decompressed’ timeframe which allows for propositions that are actually about the past.

Wittgenstein’s picture theory of language in effect presupposes the primacy of what he will intermittently call “memory time.”²⁵ In memory time, no measuring of time spans is possible: states of affairs can only be identified ostensibly (“now”), rather than by a public identification that would preserve that determination of temporal status over time (“at time *t*”). Hintikka’s view that in the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein adopts a position of temporal solipsism which allows language to have meaning only by saying what is *now* the case²⁶ must be radicalized to the point of saying that even the time to formulate a proposition about the *now* is strictly speaking impossible. In effect, this may explain why not a single example of an elementary proposition is given in Wittgenstein’s text.

By 1929, Wittgenstein realizes that the totality of one’s present memories and expectations as the only reference point will not serve to support linguistic descriptions in time. After a short period of considering the option of “phenomenological languages,”²⁷ he adopts the view that

language is always and only about physical objects: “Die Welt in der wir leben, ist die Welt der Sinnesdaten, doch die Welt, von der wir reden, ist die Welt der physikalischen Gegenstände” [*The world we live in is the world of sense-data; but the world we talk about is the world of physical objects*] (VL, 102; WL, 82). Any talk about the temporal status of thoughts (as “logical images of facts”—see TLP 3) is hence meaningless, because this temporality is always condensed into the *now*. Only by way of language do we have access to the temporally structured world of physical objects. However, this view of language immediately raises problems as to the possibility of verification, now deemed essential for securing linguistic meaning. Physical time first makes reference to the past possible by allowing propositions about the past. Verification therefore depends on memory as mode of access to stored contents. But exactly how is it that memory facilitates verification, given that its veracity is not to be assumed tautologically, and that memory may hence be fallible?

Die Bezugnahme auf vergangene Erfahrung muß Bezugnahme auf Sätze über die Vergangenheit sein.

Wenn man sich nicht richtig erinnert, muß es neben der Erinnerung noch ein weiteres Kriterium geben. Läßt man einen weiteren Test zu, ist die Erinnerung selbst nicht der Test.

Fragt man immer weiter: “Wieso erinnerst du dich, woher weißt du, usw.?” kommt man letzten Endes nicht umhin zu sagen: “Mir scheint es so.” Heißt es, man erinnere sich eben und habe ansonsten kein Kriterium, so kann man darüber nicht hinausgehen. (VL, 103)

Reference to past experience must be reference to propositions about the past.

If you remember wrongly, then there must be some criterion other than your remembering. If you admit another test, then your memory itself is not the test.

If you keep on asking “How do you remember, know etc?” you will ultimately be driven to saying “It seems to me.” If you say you remember and that is your only criterion, then you cannot go beyond it. (WL, 83)

The rejection of memory-time is primarily motivated by the requirement that external, publicly identifiable criteria be available to check whether the proposition accurately pictures a state of affairs. Reference to memory

images without any external criterion to verify *them* would merely reiterate the verification problem. The possibility of fallible memory therefore entails the necessity of external criteria beyond an internal memory image. *A fortiori*, the structure of memory itself with respect to verification throws in doubt the very applicability of talk about “images” that the *Tractatus*, absolving itself of the temporal dimension by confining itself to “logical images,” could readily postulate. Images suggest themselves as physical metaphors in which the semantic relations are spatially mapped out. However, whereas an actual physical image may be compared with the object it depicts, a mental representation as “image” is not open to this kind of comparison. This asymmetry is fundamental for Wittgenstein’s later view of memory. In a remark in *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein will emphasize that to appeal from one memory image to another, e.g. from the memory of the departure time of a train to the visual memory of the relevant page of the timetable, does not supply the necessary justification *if* the first memory is subjected to doubt. To “consult” the memory of the timetable in the same way one would consult the physical timetable itself provides no means of checking:

[“]Haben wir hier nicht den gleichen Fall?“—Nein; denn dieser Vorgang muß nun wirklich die *richtige* Erinnerung hervorrufen. Wäre das Vorstellungsbild des Fahrplans nicht selbst auf seine Richtigkeit zu *prüfen*, wie könnte es die Richtigkeit der ersten Erinnerung bestätigen? (Als kaufte einer mehrere Exemplare der heutigen Morgenzeitung, um sich zu vergewissern, daß sie die Wahrheit schreibt.) (PU, §265)

[“]Isn’t it the same here?“—No; for this process has got to produce a memory which is actually correct. If the mental image of the time-table could not itself be tested for correctness, how could it confirm the correctness of the first memory? (As if someone were to buy several copies of the morning paper to assure himself that what it said was true.) (PI, 93–4)

SPEAKING OF MEMORIES, PRIVATE INVESTIGATIONS

Wittgenstein’s insight that talk of memory—and, in turn, of propositions conveying these memories—as presenting images is *itself* only an image amounts to a clear rejection of the Tractarian view that the proposition as image would provide an immediate bridge to reality, given the right method of projection.²⁸ Cases where this *façon de parler* is taken at face value, demanding of the mental representation to guarantee the truth of another mental

representation and, ultimately, of a proposition supposedly contingent upon such representations, turn out to be confused ways of talking.

It is the identification of this confusion that prepares the ground for Wittgenstein's subsequent transition from the verificationist picture of the middle period to the full-blown conception of language games as the basic linguistic mode of accessing the world. Beginning with his reflections on grammar as a body of implicit rules governing language use, the idea of a comparison of the proposition with reality—the basis for the picture theory—increasingly comes under fire. Wittgenstein now begins to argue against his own former view that the picture is measured against reality (2.1512). Different uses of “picture” in different contexts are based on different grammars, that is: different usage rules. There simply are no inherently correct rules for the use of a given word, hence no singularly correct “method of projection:” “Die Grammatik ist keiner Wirklichkeit Rechenschaft schuldig. Die grammatischen Regeln bestimmen erst die Bedeutung (konstruieren sie) und sind darum keiner Bedeutung verantwortlich und insofern willkürlich” [*Grammar is not accountable to any reality. It is grammatical rules that determine meaning (constitute it) and so they themselves are not answerable to any meaning and to that extent are arbitrary*] (*Philosophische Grammatik* [W IV], 184; PGE, 184; see also WA 3, 282).

Wittgenstein's later philosophy no longer considers the rules according to which linguistic propositions are composed as isomorphic relations between language and reality, or between names and objects, but rather as ways in which language is actually used in a world populated by objects. It is only through language rule-governed in *this* sense that we have access to those objects. Meaning is not given by a state of affairs independent of the grammatical arrangement of the proposition. Even though the shift from ‘grammar’ to ‘language games’ in the later 1930s will soften the arbitrary nature of rules and stress instead the rootedness of language games in particular forms of life, Wittgenstein henceforth remains committed to the idea that ascription of meaning cannot be separated from usage.

The rejection of a comparison between proposition as image and reality and the resulting primacy of language entail the claim that memory is not directly to be measured against the present, as would be the case in the “first system” governed by “memory time” (WA 2, 192). Instead, memory as reference to the past is always already language, that is: physical language. Description of the past is a direct description of memory, not a description of a symbolic representation of memory contents, an image (WA 3, 152; VL, 45). The confusion arising from a lack of separation between the separate grammars of the “first” and “second” system leads us to posit images as “that

which is given," entities that may be used to verify propositions. Wittgenstein comes to reject the understanding of memory as providing a bedrock for such verification. We are tempted to assume such a foundation as long as we fail to realize that memory is itself a language: a way of speaking which is itself in principle open to the demand of verification, and thus in need of criteria that draw on something other than mere representations (*Vorstellungen*): "Denn ich möchte fragen: Wie ist mir denn 'das der Erinnerung/dem Gedächtnis in der Wirklichkeit entsprechende' gegeben? Das Gedächtnis ist eben selbst eine Sprache" [*Because I should want to ask: How exactly is 'that which in reality corresponds to recollection/to memory' given to me? That is to say, memory itself is a language*] (WA 3, 320).

"Images"—the answer to the question that may appear to impose itself—is not necessarily the right one, and most likely it will be the source of confusion rather than of increased clarity. To be sure, Wittgenstein is not suggesting that we require justification for the correspondence of memory to reality in every case. We may very well walk to the train station or to the newspaper stand without being bothered by such questions. Certain cases, however, in which we *do* wonder about justification may suggest to us a wrong philosophical picture of memory, and of linguistic meaning in general. Increasingly, Wittgenstein moves away from the idea that the operation of memory necessarily involves a comparison between a perceived object and a memory image that is somehow retained "in the head." In the majority of cases of recognition in actual situations, we would not be likely to assert that we had indeed carried out such a comparison:

In den meisten Fällen des Wiedererkennens findet kein solcher Vergleich statt. Jemand kommt mir auf der Gasse entgegen, dessen Gesicht meinen Blick auf sich zieht; vielleicht frage ich mich: "wer ist das?"; plötzlich ändert sich der Aspekt des Gesichts in bestimmter Weise, "es wird mir bekannt"; ich lächle, gehe auf ihn zu und begrüße ihm beim Namen; jetzt reden wir von der vergangenen Zeit und dabei schwebt mir vielleicht auch ein Erinnerungsbild von ihm vor, ich sehe ihn in einer bestimmten Situation. Man sagt vielleicht: hätte ich nicht sein Bild in der Erinnerung bewahrt, so könnte ich ihn nicht erkennen. Aber hier gebraucht man eine Metapher, oder man spricht eine Hypothese aus. (*Philosophische Grammatik* [W IV], 167–8)

In most cases of recognition no such process of comparison takes place. Someone meets me in the street and my eyes are drawn to his face; perhaps I ask myself "who is that?"; suddenly the face begins to look

different in a particular way, "it becomes familiar to me;" I smile, go up to him and greet him by name; then we talk of the past and while we do so perhaps a memory image of him comes before my mind, and I see him in a particular situation. Perhaps someone will say: if I hadn't kept his image in my memory, I couldn't have recognized him. But here he is either using a metaphor, or expressing a hypothesis. (PGE, 167–8)

From the logical space in which the possibility of verification determines meaningfulness, Wittgenstein moves to the public space in which meaning is connected to actions actually performed. Such actions (for example, the apparent recognition of a person on the street) may retrospectively allow for the hypothesis that they were conditioned by a particular internal representation, but such hypotheses or metaphors are not logically anterior to the action performed. The mere possibility of this hypothesis may suggest to us that the language game of memory images provides justification, when in fact the very idea of justification is inapplicable in this case. Some language games are built around justificatory procedures, but not all.²⁹

The challenge put to the view of the *Tractatus* and ultimately also to the verificationist view is Wittgenstein's repudiation of a strictly *systematic* body of rules which would mark particular language uses as either meaningful or meaningless independently of context. The security of "speaking properly" is no longer said to derive from the measuring of an assertion against a strictly private object in memory; we cannot be certain of such desired 'propriety' beyond the commensurability of the assertion with a particular language game. Language games always require the participation of more than one speaker. This social dimension of language-use entails the necessity of public criteria, accessible to all speakers, in case of a language game that actually turns on justification. A gap opens up between memory as supposed internal image, and as external manifestation. At the end of the *Brown Book* (1934–5), Wittgenstein asks by which features we might be able to distinguish a memory image, a mental representation of an expectation, and an image produced by a waking dream. Despite our initial conviction that we could easily tell one kind of image from another, when pressed to characterize the knowledge from which that conviction derives we find ourselves at a loss to provide an explanation. The "images" do not appear to have specific features which would single them out as images of recollection, expectation, or dreaming, respectively: "Wenn wir herausgefordert werden: Verstehen wir das Wort: 'erinnern' etc.? Besteht wirklich ein Unterschied zwischen den Fällen, abgesehen von dem verbalen Unterschied?" [*When challenged: do we understand the word "remember," etc.? Is there really a difference between the*

cases besides the mere verbal one?'] (*Das Braune Buch* [W V], 279; BBB, 183). There is a difference, but it is one of different language games being played: we would do and say different things if prompted to explain our experience of a recollection, as opposed to that of an expectation. However, we will be unable to separate what we may be tempted to call a "feeling of pastness" from its verbal expression. In similar fashion, we might well try to draw a distinction between hearing a melody as designating directly a particular *Erlebnis* in the past, or, alternatively, as a gesture designating a "feeling of pastness" which accompanies this melody: "Kann ich etwas, das wesentliche Gefühl der Vergangenheit, entdecken, das übrig bleibt, nachdem wir all jene Erlebnisse abge sondert haben, die wir als Erlebnisse, das Gefühl auszudrücken, bezeichnen können?" [*Can I discover something, the essential feeling of pastness, which remains after abstracting all those experiences which we might call the experiences of expressing the feeling?*] (W V, 281; BBB, 184). Ultimately, that *something* which we might like to try to separate from its expression cannot be isolated in this manner. The assumed distinction beyond the verbal difference cannot itself be made verbally concrete and publicly accessible.

The suspected lack of a *something* which we might appeal to as an epistemic foundation leads Wittgenstein to skeptical conclusions in his later considerations of memory. Memory, first introduced as a possible measuring rod by which to gauge propositions against reality, is now either evoked as a referent in language games beyond justification, or else as dependent on additional verification outside the head. The skepticism at issue is not about the failure of memory in the sense that there is something which I try to remember but fail to do. Rather, it is about whether there really is *something* to be either remembered or forgotten. Wittgenstein's skepticism on this count extends all the way to what we might take as the most evident statements founded on strictly private memories: statements about our own sensations. The most radical and most famous skeptical argument to this effect is the so-called 'Private Language Argument' in the *Investigations*.

The argument in *Investigations* §§256–271 concerns the possibility of designating one's own sensations via a private language devised specifically for this purpose. Suppose that I use the letter 'E'³⁰ to refer to a particular sensation, providing it with its meaning by way of private ostensive definition. Every time the sensation recurs, I note down 'E' in a diary.³¹ Can I be said to have created a private language in the process? The meaning of 'E' within this language is here supposed to be fixed simply by 'concentrating' upon the connection of sign and sensation as its referent. The creation of a mental imprint of the connection (*einprägen*), as it were, is intended to insure that I will remember the connection *correctly* in the future (PU, §258). However,

the reference to the purely internal criterion of having concentrated on the connection is insufficient to supply a justification “that everyone understands” (PU, §261). What’s more, even to myself I could not possibly justify the association, because anything that seems correct to me will count as correct, which obviously makes any talk of correctness redundant. Not only others, even I myself will be without a way to identify with certainty that I am encountering the same sensation as before, justifying my repeated use of ‘E.’

Wittgenstein’s invocation of a diarist is crucial to the example because the externality of written language does nothing to quell the doubt which attaches to the new language I claim to have created. The diary provides no external support because the meaning of the diary entry itself rests on a process internal to the mind of the diarist. I may claim that I remember the connection, but I couldn’t possibly claim to remember *correctly* if pressed on the issue. The Private Language Argument, in contrast to the earlier example of recognizing someone on the street, is a case where justification may arguably be demanded, because understanding of an unfamiliar language—assuming that such an understanding is even possible—surely is not a self-evident matter.³²

It has been pointed out that the Private Language Argument is not, as is widely believed, strictly about whether or not the memory of the diarist is reliable with respect to a correct re-identification of the sensation E.³³ As Kenny and Candlish emphasize, that which is to be remembered correctly is the connection between the sign ‘E’ and the sensation, which is what fixes the meaning of ‘E.’ The mnemonic task is *not* about merely avoiding a mistake in identifying instances of the letter E. Identifying E’s correctly already supposes meaningfulness, which is given only if the possibility of a persisting connection between ‘E’ and the sensation is already established. The employment of the sign ‘E’ is hence crucial to the argument; memory is not challenged to pick out E rather than, say, E₁ among a set of internally represented objects, but to recall the association of the written symbol ‘E’ with the requisite sensation. The usage of an external sign is conceived to circumvent the self-justificatory character of an ascription of meaning: it is a convention supposedly set up in private, but intended to bind the usage of ‘E’ from this point on, thus avoiding Humpty-Dumpty-esque implications of complete semantic arbitrariness (“E is whatever I choose to call ‘E’”). There is supposed to be *something* that will guarantee that I am “going on the same way” as before, ensuring that I am following a rule (PU, §145ff.). However, as Wittgenstein argues, this intention ultimately does not hit its mark. The externalization of the sign ‘E’ only serves to point out the untenability of an internal image as referent: the criterion of identity for repeated application of the sign according to a rule is memory,³⁴ but in the case of a private

language this criterion is not itself open to verification, hence cannot count as a criterion. Using an external sign therefore makes explicit the fact that reference to memory cannot serve as ultimate epistemological bedrock and remains subject to interpretation and challenge.³⁵

“WAS IN DER SCHREIBFORM IN UNS ENTSTEHT”

The discussion of the private language scenario using the example of a diarist resonates directly with Wittgenstein's own struggle for philosophical form in his prose. As the ongoing publication of the complete *Nachlaß*—including a number of notebooks previously suppressed by the Cambridge trustees—demonstrates, the line separating philosophical notes from personal diary entries is less than clear. The “personal” and “philosophical” portions overlap much more frequently than Rush Rhees, Elizabeth Anscombe, Brian McGuinness and others had been willing to acknowledge, and they are frequently situated on one and the same page in Wittgenstein's notebooks. The *Wiener Ausgabe*, edited by Michael Nedo, has begun to make these contexts clearly visible for the first time, and the recent electronic version of the *Nachlaß* edited at the University of Bergen (Norway) does so even more comprehensively. The necessary re-evaluation of Wittgenstein's remarks in the context of their emergence on paper does not suggest that one should lose sight of the fact that Wittgenstein at various points tried to differentiate between the two strands of his writing given that he went so far as to note some of his most intimate personal observations in code, using the inverted alphabet (A corresponding to Z, B to Y, etc.).

Such limited attempts at sectioning off the private from the potentially public, however, are anything but a definitive solution to what Wittgenstein himself perceives to be a fundamental problem of the relation between philosophy and “life.”³⁶ The origin of all of his philosophical writings are fragmented notes which he permanently wrote down in notebooks, (had) typed up to form typescripts, and rearranged later—often cutting and pasting the “finished” typescripts—presumably in constant pursuit of *übersichtliche Darstellung*. The *Tractatus*, one of only two works published during his lifetime, is the only instance in which the retroactive arrangement and reworking of fragments from the diaries (some of which were later published in the 1914–1916 diaries, absent the parts written in code)³⁷ leads to what looks like a consistent ordering, structured by the numbering system. While it may be doubted (as many commentators have done) that the hierarchical structure thus suggested is actually as principled as it looks, it is certain that after 1929 the attempts at ordering are even less rigid. The thematic grouping of

remarks pursued from now on still occasions a drastic selection, revision, and re-ordering of remarks from the notebooks, but the impression of the “finished” manuscript volumes and typescripts is no longer one of an architectonic in which every element has its irrevocable place. As demonstrated above, many of the remarks recur in manuscripts and typescripts from various periods, often in revised form.

The marked difference between Wittgenstein's earlier and later strategies of how to *write up* his philosophy has given rise to a debate about whether the barely contained fragmentation of the later work is directly connected to the philosophical problems with which this work is dealing. Garth Hallett articulates the view that from the post-1929 point of view, “theory lay in the past, in the *Tractatus* which was the *Investigations*' target.”³⁸ The point of the later writings—including, but not limited to, those published as part of the *Investigations*—would thus not be to present a *theory* of the relation between language and world alternative to that of the *Tractatus*, but rather to do away with the very notion that any such theory is to be had. Wittgenstein's style would underscore that transition by an explicit refusal to present a set of descriptive reflections in the guise of a unified explanation. The impact of time on a philosophical body of work would thus guide Wittgenstein's stylistic decision. If the *Investigations* recall the *Tractatus* as its past, as Hallett claims, it does so on the level of form by drawing stylistic conclusions from the rejections of several previously central theses, first and foremost that of the picture theory.

Not everyone agrees with Hallett's take on the stylistic shift, of course. Stephen Hilmy, for one, emphasizes that Wittgenstein himself repeatedly notes the fragmented nature of his writing as a shortcoming. Trying to arrive at an adequate expression of his later philosophical thought, he would therefore seek to transform *diaries* into philosophical text:

His notebooks are in effect diaries recording his insights and chronicling his personal philosophical wanderings and struggles on a day-to-day basis. . . . When Wittgenstein wished to write a book, he turned to these ‘diaries’ and tried to sort out the ‘fine thoughts,’ which he then attempted to order in such a way that they formed a coherent and unified whole.³⁹

Through meticulous consideration of the *Nachlaß*, Hilmy aims to show that Wittgenstein is indeed espousing a philosophical method here, and that the lack of textual coherence is a contingent rather than a necessary byproduct of Wittgenstein's thought. Hilmy rejects the view that the late style is tied to

the content it presents, relying on Wittgenstein's skeptical attitude towards his own work. Wittgenstein remarks that the peculiarities of his thinking as captured in the notebooks properly belong in a diary, as opposed to a book,⁴⁰ and that it wouldn't be his stomach problems but the remedy he found, if any, that would be of interest to anyone. It seems appropriate that Wittgenstein should make reference to a medical remedy as he is considering his own writing: Plato famously called writing a *pharmakon*, poison and cure in one,⁴¹ and it seems likely that problem and remedy in Wittgenstein's case are likewise of a common nature. Thus, even if the publication of the *Nachlaß* does not present diaries pure and simple, what Wittgenstein's readers are left with is a set of remarks that treat the very problem which disunites them: the similarities and dissimilarities of language games, of things we actually say and things we might, or would never, say. Wittgenstein's insistence on being attentive to the particular conditions of language use, his view of grammar as a set of entrenched usage rules rather than abstractly represented linguistic competence, keeps him from casting his reflections into an excessively rigid mold. If the remedy that his therapeutic approach to philosophical problems provides consists in paying close attention to particularities, then it would indeed be odd to find this remedy noted down on one single prescription sheet.

One likely motivation for Wittgenstein to denounce the very practice in which he engages almost compulsively would seem to be his desire for clarity and order, an ideal that he retains even as his considerations of the family resemblance of concepts and of ordinary language develop throughout the 1930s. Neither open to—nor requiring—transcription to a consistent form that would make them amenable to logical analysis, the ways of language use Wittgenstein now investigates suggest that philosophical clarity may consist mainly in pointing out areas in which clarifications are *not* likely to be forthcoming. Even though intended as an antidote to hopeless philosophical tangles, showing the fly the way out of the fly-bottle (PU, §309) is anything but a straightforward project. The resulting lack of organizational clarity in pursuit of perspicuity affects both Wittgenstein's philosophical and biographical notes. Searching for the possibility of a clear expression of "life," he now crosses the boundary erected in the *Tractatus* to section off the expressible from the inexpressible and to denote the outside of an exhaustive response to all possible scientific questions (6.52). Wittgenstein's preoccupation with the possibility of recording "something of himself" indicates that the null-solution to "life problems" previously attempted no longer carries as much conviction in view of his philosophical reorientation:

Etwas in mir spricht dafür, meine Biographie zu schreiben und zwar möchte ich mein Leben einmal klar ausbreiten um es klar vor mir zu haben und auch für andere. Nicht so sehr, um darüber Gericht zu halten als um jedenfalls Klarheit und Wahrheit zu schaffen. (WA 2, 156)

Something in me tells me to write my biography; that is, I would once like to clearly spread my life out to have it clearly in front of me, and so that others would, too. Not so much because I would want to sit in judgment of it but rather to gain clarity and truth in any case.

Only the external spreading out of “life,” a verbal account of it, holds out the promise of clarity, or so it seems to Wittgenstein as he listens to his interior voice. A coherent biographical narrative might provide the kind of clarity which the fragmented diaries do not. But then, that which “speaks” for this possibility might be in error. What is at issue here is not necessarily to actually put “life” on trial to ascertain its cogency—mentioned here as one conceivable, though secondary, motivation for writing a biography—but rather the very possibility of preparing such a document for the perusal of any judge, public or private.

Wittgenstein's ambivalent attitude towards the fragmented form which seems to impose itself by necessity on his philosophy, in stark contrast to a clear narrative of the kind just mentioned, has an ethical dimension. The highly organized *Darstellung* of the *Tractatus* posited as its ethical sense that which it was silent about, that about which no explicit word was written.⁴² Wittgenstein's diaries from the 1930s, by contrast, are filled with self-critical reproaches about what *is* being written down, and about the very activity of writing a diary at all. Most of these remarks are written in code, hidden within the very medium which they skeptically undermine. He dissects what he perceives to be his own vanity in recording “something of myself” in writing, in direct extension of the above observation that something that is not useful to others is generally useless:

Soweit das Tagebuchschreiben nicht selber leben ist, ist es in meinem schlecht. Denn es wird für mich, wie alles was ich mache beinahe sicher zum Anlaß der Eitelkeit und je weniger Zeit ich habe mich auf eitle Weise selbst zu bespiegeln, desto besser. Das Leben zerstreut, verblast am besten diesen Rauch und er ist auch wenn er bloß vorübergehend gedacht wird harmloser. (WA 2, 44)

Insofar as diary writing is not itself living, it is a bad thing in my life. For like everything that I do it will almost certainly become a reason for

vanity, and the less time I have to mirror myself in a vain manner, the better. Life would best scatter and blow away that smoke, which does become less harmful if thought of as merely temporary.

Vanity thus consists in a preference of self-reflection over “life,” taking private reflection to be more important than the collective dimension (as in the previous quote: “für andere”), the *form* in which such reflection may first be articulated.

Ich muß aus meinem Tagebuch, wenn es in Ordnung sein soll quasi *eben* ins Freie—in das Leben—treten und weder wie aus einem Kellerloch ans Licht steigen, noch wie von einem höheren Ort wieder auf die Erde herunterspringen müssen. (WA 2, 44)

If it is to be in order, I have to be able to step outside of my diary as though *casually* stepping into the open—into life—and not have to either climb up into the light as though from a hole in the ground, or be jumping down to earth as though from a higher plane.

A *good* diary would border directly on “life,” separated only by a virtual dividing line to be easily crossed and recrossed. A *good* diary, one that is *in order*, would create order by aligning itself with life.

But there are no good diaries. None are in order. Writing a diary, the second half of Wittgenstein's remark implies, is *not* life: even if the activity of writing a diary was situated on a level with “life,” it would not be “life” itself because a transition from one to the other would still be necessary. As a record of “life,” then, the diary is necessarily insufficient. Wittgenstein concludes with the subsequent laconic remark: “Was sich nicht schreiben läßt, läßt sich nicht schreiben” [*What cannot be written, cannot be written*] (WA 2, 44). This formula condenses the problem of expression into a derivate of *Tractatus* 7 (“Was sich nicht sagen läßt, darüber muß man schweigen”) [*What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence*]. If the diary is to be neither notes from the underground of submerged interiority, nor the overcoming of sentences after having thrown away the ladder that affords the panoramic view from a “higher plane” (see TLP 6.54), what are we left with? Nothing, possibly—if to be is to be in order. The diarist cannot write what cannot be written—he cannot record E by writing ‘E’ if a connection between the two cannot be established.

Wittgenstein's struggles with the form of writing demonstrate the very point around which the skeptical assessment of memory images revolves: in

virtue of which warrant are we justified in assuming that there is *something* which may be remembered, *something* which may be written down? To what extent can these *somethings* said to be independent of the processes of remembering and writing that are supposed to give them ontological fixity?

Man glaubt oft—und ich selber ver falle *oft* in diesen Fehler—daß alles aufgeschrieben werden kann was man denkt. In Wirklichkeit kann man nur das aufschreiben—d.h. ohne etwas blödes und unpassendes zu tun—was in der Schreibform in uns entsteht. Alles andere wirkt komisch & gleichsam wie Dreck. D.h. etwas was weggewischt gehörte.⁴³

One often thinks—and I myself *often* make this mistake—that everything that one thinks can be written down. In reality one can only write down—i.e., without doing something that was stupid or uncalled for—what emerges in us in the form of writing. Everything else appears odd & practically like dirt. I.e. something that should be wiped away.

Writing is impossible if it is cast as a record of thought: the attempt to have writing affirm that which it is not—namely: thought—creates nothing but the tautological formula “what cannot be written cannot be written.” Or, as Wittgenstein reformulates the paradox elsewhere: “Ich denke tatsächlich mit der Feder, denn mein Kopf weiß oft nichts von dem, was meine Hand schreibt” [*I really do think with my pen, for my head often knows nothing of what my hand is writing*] (*Vermischte Bemerkungen* [W VIII], 473; CV, 24). Insofar as writing *is* possible, it yields nothing but dirt—the dirt of signs like ‘E’ which signify nothing, reduced to their pure materiality, ink spots on a page. Causing these droppings and then wiping them away is not quite the same as the chaste silence which TLP 7 advocates in the modality of necessity, or as an imperative. It is in this sense that the hypothetical diary evoked in the Private Language Argument is *possible*, although it does not succeed in conveying what it is supposed to: an interior life, or life *tout court*. If the diary renders not thought but “that which emerges in us in the form of writing,” then writing cannot be considered a suitable medium for the preservation of past mental objects. It simply does not fix the meaning of those thoughts and sensations which could first—and *only*—be testified to by means of writing.

Again, the insufficiency is not one of mere mnemonic incapacity. Even though the notion might suggest itself, the problem of giving written form to thought is not the bare incapacity of remembering what it was that we wanted to say:

Es ist uns—wie gesagt—als ginge es uns mit dem Gedanken so, wie mit einer Landschaft die wir gesehen haben und beschreiben sollen aber wir erinnern uns ihrer nicht genau genug um sie in allen ihren Zusammenhängen beschreiben zu können.

So, glauben wir, können wir das Denken nachträglich nicht beschreiben weil uns alle die vielen schwachen/matten/feinen Vorgänge dann verloren gegangen sind. (WA 3, 180)

It seems to us—as I said—as though to us a thought were like a landscape that we have seen and are supposed to describe, but we don't remember it well enough to be able to describe it in all its complexity.

In the same way, we believe, we cannot characterize thinking after the fact because all the many weak/dim/fine events have been lost by then.

Wittgenstein's reference to "beliefs" routinely indicates a view that is questionable despite its evident plausibility and frequency. Such is also the case here: it is conceivable that thought would elude description because of a richness simply not to be captured by limited mnemonic faculties. "Life" would therefore simply be too complex for words, far removed from the means of the written record instead of directly bordering on the latter. In terms of the Private Language Argument, this view would amount to rejecting the possibility of a private language on the grounds that we couldn't with sufficient clarity distinguish E from E₁ as referent of 'E.' The capturing of sensations and thoughts, respectively, turns out to be problematic for analogous reasons. The above quotation directly follows a discussion of the attribution of pains to others, in which Wittgenstein separates behavioral indicators and phenomenal experience as two different meanings of "being in pain." The specification of the second variant requires the kind of record-keeping which will later reappear in the Private Language Argument, and is rejected on the grounds we have given. The failure of memory observed here is not one of either insufficient "encoding" or "retrieval," as it were, but rather of the ineradicable gap between thought and language as external mnemonic medium.

Quite obviously, the writing of philosophical text is impacted by this gap. The text of Wittgenstein's later work hovers in between the very possibility and impossibility which its author finds in the case of the diary; the text of the notebooks is neither a straightforward diary (as Hilmy appears to suggest), nor a text that would keep its origin firmly in check and under wraps. The same goes for the typescripts and, eventually, the published text

of the *Investigations*, as Wittgenstein's own preface to that work attests. Here he attempts to justify the publication of the remarks that make up the *Investigations* in their present form to himself and others as the best he was able to do:

Meine Absicht war es von Anfang, alles das einmal in einem Buche zusammenzufassen, von dessen Form ich mir zu verschiedenen Zeiten verschiedene Vorstellungen machte. Wesentlich aber schien es mir, daß darin die Gedanken von einem Gegenstand zum anderen in einer natürlichen und lückenlosen Folge fortschreiten sollten.

Nach manchen mißglückten Versuchen, meine Ergebnisse zu einem solchen Ganzen zusammenschweißen, sah ich ein, daß mir dies nie gelingen würde. Daß das beste, was ich schreiben konnte, immer nur philosophische Bemerkungen bleiben würden, daß meine Gedanken bald erlahmten, wenn ich versuchte, sie, gegen ihre natürliche Neigung, in einer Richtung weiterzuzwingen. Und dies hing natürlich mit der Natur der Untersuchung selbst zusammen. Sie nämlich zwingt uns, ein weites Gedankengebiet, kreuz und quer, nach allen Richtungen hin zu durchreisen.—Die philosophischen Bemerkungen dieses Buches sind gleichsam eine Menge von Landschaftsskizzen, die auf diesen langen und verwickelten Fahrten entstanden sind. (PU, Preface; W I, 231)

It was my intention at first to bring all this together in a book whose form I pictured differently at different times. But the essential thing was that the thoughts should proceed from one subject to another in a natural order and without breaks.

After several unsuccessful attempts to weld my results together into such a whole, I realized that I should never succeed. The best that I could write would never be more than philosophical remarks; my thoughts were soon crippled if I tried to force them on in any single direction against their natural inclination.—And this was, of course, connected with the very nature of the investigation. For this compels us to travel over a wide field of thought criss-cross in every direction.—The philosophical remarks in this book are, as it were, a number of sketches of landscapes which were made in the course of these long and involved journeyings. (PI, viii)

Wittgenstein admits to having done what came *naturally*: he resisted the urge to tweak thoughts against what he found to be their inherently dispersive

force. The final conception of the *Investigations* therefore follows a conceptual pattern which had surfaced much earlier in relation to the question of the writing of an autobiography:

In meiner Autobiographie müßte ich trachten mein Leben ganz wahrheitsgetreu darzustellen und zu *verstehen*. So darf meine unheldenhafte *Natur* nicht als ein bedauerliches Accidens erscheinen, sondern eben als eine wesentliche Eigenschaft (nicht eine Tugend). (WA 3, 305)

In my autobiography I would have to try to represent and to *understand* my life completely truthfully. Thus, my unheroic *nature* shall not appear as a lamentable accident but rather as an essential feature (not a virtue).

The nature of Wittgenstein's investigations obviously parallels the diagnosis of his own nature: both are deficient with respect to a heroic ideal of wholeness, *and necessarily so*. The reason that the contemplated autobiography remains as fictional as a fully perspicuous version of the *Investigations* may also be that, ultimately, both projects are about the limits of understanding, *verstehen* in the subjunctive.

Without much difficulty we may recognize Lukács's analysis of the novelistic hero in the post-epic world here: the novel was able to remedy the loss of external totality by providing for a comprehensive psychological account of the hero. For Lukács, the hero may no longer come upon what he sets out to find, but the interior realm of the hero's psyche retains the continuity that has been lost in the outside world. Wittgenstein's philosophy of psychology suggests that external accounts of such psychic continuity—or "life," as we might choose to call it—are impossible to come by.⁴⁴ This explains the somewhat paradoxical conclusion to be drawn from the notebooks and the preface to the *Investigations* that a true representation of "life" may have to consist exactly in detailing the extent to which this "life" does *not* satisfy the Lukácsian image of the novelistic hero. If his unheroic nature is an essential aspect of Wittgenstein's own character, and if the fragmented form of the remarks is likewise essential to the nature of the investigations this anti-hero undertakes, then we can—in a radically *formal* sense—indeed regard the *Investigations* as an autobiography. It is one, however, that does not satisfy Wittgenstein's subjunctive in the above passage, yearning for that which was also Lukács's ultimate consolation: the notion that "life," in all its futility, could still be *understood*.

This account chronicles the odyssey of trying to find a coherent and clear expression for a set of philosophical problems, yielding a travelogue—or a set of sketches—the point of which is to make clear that the odyssey is ongoing.

The “seas of language” (*Wellen der Sprache*) may be calmed by clarifying particular uses of language (PU, §194), but that project hardly eases the traveling. On the very same notebook page cited above, Wittgenstein also notes the independent remark: “Die Irrfahrten tun gut, wenn man zurückkehrt.” The present tense of the subordinate clause indicates that a conditional rather than a temporal reading of “wenn” is in order here: unlike the hero Odysseus, the anti-hero Wittgenstein never really returns from his “long and tangled travels,” precluding him from feeling good about them (and himself), as the notebooks so clearly attest.⁴⁵ During his only visit to the United States—which was to take him to Ithaca, NY, of all places—Wittgenstein certainly appears to have given off the impression of still being very much on the way, less than two years before his death:

The first time the main body of graduate students saw Wittgenstein was the philosophy-club meeting at Cornell, a most important meeting, attended by practically all the graduate students and most of the Sage School faculty . . . Just before the meeting was to get underway, [Norman] Malcolm appeared approaching down the corridor. On his arm leaned a slight, older man, dressed in windjacket and old army trousers. If it had not been for his face, alight with intelligence, one might have taken him for some vagabond Malcolm had found along the road and decided to bring in out of the cold.⁴⁶

In addition to searching without finding—the condition of “transcendental homelessness” as Lukács specified it, which yet held out some promise of “Heimkehr des Subjekts in sich selbst” [*the subject's return to itself*] (TR, 114; TN, 128)—the Wittgensteinian searcher finds himself rid of a medium in which the totality of a biography might be cast. Lukács conceived of novelistic form as constituting fictional “proof” of the possibility of a life devoted to *mémoire pure*, a replay of life as continuous before the mind, “in sich selbst.” The Private Language Argument forms a rejoinder to this conception, casting doubt on the idea that internal signs of “life” could ever be consigned to paper and be understood by either the diarist-novelist herself, or by others.

This skeptical portion of Wittgenstein's travelogue, though not intended as a direct response to Lukács in any historically meaningful sense, decisively impacts the writing of novels at the end of the 20th century. Wittgenstein does not participate in weighing the literary against the philosophical, to arrive at a valuation that would accord literature a specific place assigned by philosophy, or vice versa.⁴⁷ The literary impulse emanating from Wittgenstein's work to a large number of post-war and contemporary literary

works may be due precisely to his abstaining from mapping out such positions on an aesthetic grid. The literary character of this prose by an avowed “non-poet” consists in its recognition of the form of writing itself as that which gives the remarks both a skeptically corrosive character and manages to “stimulate others to think for themselves” (PU, Preface; W I, 232; PI, ix). To think, of course, always means: to write—*mit der Feder*, or otherwise.

The relation of Wittgenstein's philosophical inquiries to novelistic form is one of family resemblance, predicated upon the structure of both as collections of recollections. “Die Arbeit des Philosophen ist das Zusammentragen von Erinnerungen zu einem bestimmten Zweck” [*The work of the philosopher consists in assembling recollections for a particular purpose*] (PU, §127). What makes for (a) work is not simply the selection of memories, but the attempt to achieve form for the collection as such. It is (a) work which the philosopher and the novelist may never complete, or so the proverbial openness of the artworks to be analyzed in the following suggests. The purpose of engaging in such work may be particular, but it is not determinate, and it turns out to be independent of whether it meets its intended goal—showing the fly the way out of the fly-bottle, perhaps, or arriving at what Wittgenstein would himself have considered a “good book” (PU, Preface; W I, 233; PI, ix). Books taking their departure from Wittgenstein's work are thus doing the philosopher's work not by being *good* books, or diaries that are *in order*, given the philosophical *Vor-Arbeit*. They are much rather bound to rearticulate the problem of what it means to collect recollections without recourse to anything determinate that would hold them together in the end.

Chapter Two

Thomas Bernhard: *Überschriften*

Even the most cursory glance at Thomas Bernhard's prose readily reveals the degree to which its author is committed to the narrative principle of exaggeration. Bernhard's characters display a predilection for verbal brinkmanship and the superlative so routinely that many of Bernhard's most vocal opponents can perhaps be forgiven for mistaking such excess and its effective dismissal of Austria in general and Salzburg in particular, of Stifter as well as Heidegger, of both artists and politicians, of clergymen and hunters, for a description of *reality*. The mistake, easily discerned by a reading of Bernhard's text that attends to more than just the *objects* of his verbal assault, is that of missing the self-undermining character of exaggeration taken to its limits. The methodical destruction of such an object would demand the cessation of attack once the purpose of discrediting whatever is to be verbally annihilated were achieved. Bernhard's narrators, however, never pursue so purposeful a path, choosing instead to exaggerate their claims past the point of peak efficiency so that they are allowed to erode the conceptual distinction upon which the attack was first predicated. In this way, the reality of a justified—or at least justifiable—dismissal gives way to an unreality that attaches itself to both sides of that distinction, and consequently to the narrative voice that presented the distinction as a standard for evaluation in the first place. The comparative opposition that Reger, in his quest, "alle Künstler immer wieder auf die Probe [zu] stellen"¹ [*to put all artists to the test again and again*], draws in *Alte Meister* between Stifter and Heidegger as purveyors of kitsch, each of singular ridiculousness in their respective domains of literature and philosophy, thus collapses upon the revelation that Reger himself is the *tertium comparationis*, since he, "grotesquely," is distantly related to both of them by blood (AM, 95). His own aesthetic stance that would presumably enable one to reliably identify kitsch so as to safely distinguish it from its opposite,

therefore, is to be perennially put to the test just as much as the aesthetic objects that Reger himself presents to the reader for critical inspection.

In instances where the oppositional structure is not directly geared towards the dismissal of its parts, it is no more stable for appearing to be affirmative. Thus, in *Der Keller* the narrator first attempts to delineate the specificity of his experiences during his apprenticeship with the grocer Podlaha by casting his new environment as the superlative of reality incarnate:

Mein Großvater hatte mich im Alleinsein und Fürsichsein geschult, der Podlaha im Zusammensein mit den Menschen, und zwar im Zusammensein mit vielen und mit den verschiedensten Menschen. Bei meinem Großvater war ich, ideal, weil so früh, in die philosophische Schule gegangen, beim Podlaha in der Scherzhauserfeldsiedlung in die größtmögliche und in die absolute Realität.²

My grandfather had taught me how be alone and self-sufficient; Podlaha taught me how to mix with people, with a large number and variety of people. My grandfather had given me an ideal introduction to the school of philosophy—ideal because it came so early—while Podlaha, in the Scherzhauserfeld Project, introduced me into the greatest possible absolute reality. (GE, 170)

That “greatest possible reality” of social interaction, however, is soon revealed as a mere fiction, since the togetherness is in the end not an instance of what Goethe might have termed a ‘full life’ (*volles Menschenleben*) shared with other human beings, but only the fact of being tied to one’s occupation,

denn die Menschen leben in Wahrheit und in Wirklichkeit lebenslanglich nur mit ihrer Arbeit zusammen, sie haben in Wahrheit und in Wirklichkeit nur ihre Beschäftigung, sonst nichts. (Ke, 65)

for the truth of the matter is that the only company people have throughout their lives is their work—they have their occupation and nothing else. (GE, 180)

This deflation of the original distinction leaves no room for a progression from ideality through reality to any more encompassing stance along the path of life—as traditionally mapped out by the notion of *Bildung*, for example. Quite to the contrary: “Das Leben an sich, die Existenz an sich, alles ist ein Gemeinplatz” [*Life as such, existence as such—nothing but commonplaces*]

(Ke, 109; GE, 206). The positing of the “greatest possible reality” collapses into the indistinct linguistic cliché that is “life as such,” leaving the narrative voice no special place of authority to sidestep the “Gemeinplatz” of language opening up within the emphatic attempt to make a case for a structurally meaningful distinction.

This narrative operation as a self-undermining display of a Nietzschean “will to truth” (Ke, 32; GE, 160) is employed across Bernhard’s work in countless variations, a fact that supports Chantal Thomas’s view of Bernhard as “[m]âitre en *l’art de l’exagération*”³ at the very same time that his own narrator denounces Stifter as “master of kitsch.” It is Bernhard’s masterful use of exaggeration, Thomas claims, that establishes his link to figures like Glenn Gould or Ludwig Wittgenstein, “qui n’ont cessé, toute leur vie et en chacun de leur choix, d’exagérer” [*who never once in their lives and in any of their choices stopped exaggerating*] (ibid.). Thomas’s estimation appears appropriate insofar as it is, of course, nothing if not an exaggeration on par with those offered by any of Bernhard’s narrators. To take just one example, Franz-Josef Murau, the narrator of Bernhard’s novel *Auslöschung*, characterizes himself as “the greatest artist of exaggeration,”⁴ before adding rather perceptively: “Aber auch dieser Satz ist natürlich wieder eine Übertreibung, denke ich jetzt, während ich ihn aufschreibe, und Kennzeichen meiner Übertreibungskunst” [*But of course this sentence too is an exaggeration, I come to realize as I write it down—a typical instance of my art of exaggeration*] (A, 611; E, 307). Murau even pushes his diagnostic exaggeration to the point of identifying exaggeration as the “secret” both of “the great artwork” and of “great philosophizing” (A, 612; E, 308). Aesthetic or philosophical greatness of this sort, according to Murau, always amounts to an exaggeration effected in the act of writing down rather than being an inherent quality.

Like Murau, Chantal Thomas understands that an evaluation of the relation that Bernhard’s work entertains to “masters” like Gould or Wittgenstein cannot proceed by measuring any *relative* extent to which their lives were, or were not, exaggerated, because such measured reference would suggest that Bernhard’s aim in referring to these lives were that of their “realistic,” fair description. Evidently, however, passing judgment, as one might feel the urge to do, on the decision to record the Goldberg Variations three times (when one or two might have sufficed), or on the decision to divest oneself completely of an inheritance (when generously circumscribed philanthropy was an option) would not in and of itself bring one any closer to the supposed “reality” of what is being described. A figure like Wittgenstein thus comes into view for Bernhard’s narrators not as a human being with psychological depth, but as the name of an author facing the

same deflationary predicament of the "Gemeinplatz" as the narrators with whom he shares space on the printed page.

The character Ludwig in Bernhard's later play *Ritter, Dene, Voss* (1984) who bears a non-coincidental family resemblance to Wittgenstein despite sharing only his first and not his last name, is at one point derided by his younger sister as "[e]in Mensch der keine Schriften schreibt / sondern Überschriften / lebenslängliche Logik" [*a person who does not write manuscripts / but only superscriptions / lifelong logic*].⁵ It is this exaggerated (*übertriebene*) existence, subject its whole life long to the logic of the *Überschrift* that identifies the character Ludwig Worringer as a relation of another Ludwig W., and not just as an object of narrative description bearing personality traits that were 'really' Wittgenstein's.⁶ Ludwig W. is not just a fictional human subject producing writings to be subsumed under the pseudo-Hegelian headings "Logik I" and "Logik II" that will grace the book covers, *if* these manuscripts should ever be published (RDV, 137). He is also the object of Bernhard's own kind of *Überschrift*: the exaggerated scriptural gesture that *over-writes* the comparative evaluation of two relata to the point of their collapse into indistinction. Writing parts of Wittgenstein's life and work over into those of his characters, Bernhard develops a particular strategy of reference that is removed as far as possible from any purely *conceptual* content of Wittgenstein's own writings. This is not to say, of course, that the way in which this carryover is carried out in writing had nothing to do with Wittgenstein. Indeed, referring to Wittgenstein in the guise of a character who is a "Mensch" only in conjunction with the *Überschriften* ascribed to the latter has *everything* to do with Wittgenstein's thought as manifested in written language.

Ja, wo meine Arbeit untergebracht werden kann, das weiß ich selbst nicht! Wenn ich nur selbst schon wo anders untergebracht wäre als auf dieser beschissenen Welt!

—Wittgenstein to Ludwig v. Ficker, November 22, 1919

"A QUESTION THAT CANNOT BE ANSWERED"

One of the more conspicuous places where Bernhard refers directly to the problem of writing "about" Wittgenstein is his letter to critic and friend Hilde Spiel in which he responds to an earlier request of hers for a contribution on Wittgenstein for her journal *Ver Sacrum*.⁷ This letter, routinely—and not always without creating confusion⁸—cited to support inquiries into what one author calls the "presence of the philosopher [Wittgenstein] in Thomas Bernhard,"⁹ exposes the problem of such *presentation* in what it

says as much as in what it does not say. Bernhard communicates to Spiel his inability to supply “something about Wittgenstein,” as she worded her original request, not by simply stating his unwillingness or recounting a failed attempt to deliver such a piece. Rather, he points out that the very assumption of an unproblematic ‘aboutness’ in this matter is liable to obscure the highly charged issue of identification:

Die Frage ist nicht: schreibe ich über Wittgenstein. Die Frage ist: *bin* ich Wittgenstein *einen* Augenblick ohne ihn (W.) oder mich (B.) zu zerstören. Diese Frage kann ich nicht beantworten und also kann ich nicht über Wittgenstein schreiben. (ibid.)

The question is not: do I write about Wittgenstein. The question is: *am* I Wittgenstein for *one* moment without destroying him (W.) or myself (B.). This question I cannot answer, and therefore I cannot write about Wittgenstein.

The rephrasing of Spiel’s request into a question regarding strict identification of author (or narrator) and object of narration leaves that question unresolved, and that lack of resolution at first glance seems to result in a clear refusal to tackle Wittgenstein as such an object. The existential and temporal emphasis that Bernhard lends to the question positions it in relation to the question of death that is a recognizable structuring motif in his entire work. Thus, the moment of existential identification that may, on the one hand, be thought of as a narrative “Gemeinplatz” in every sense of the word conjures up the possibility—though not the certainty—of mutual destruction, and is thus brought to its logical, if extreme, conclusion. Just as a relative evaluation of the merits of Bernhard’s narrative exaggerations cannot come easily, as argued in the previous section, so any attempt by biographico-philological bean-counters to separate *one* part of a fictionalized Wittgenstein figure as constituting W. from *another*, constituting B., raises at least as many questions as it answers. The potential extinction both of self and of other in this case is not to be taken, as commentators on this passage have suggested,¹⁰ as a straightforward identification for the simple reason that the very basis of such an identification, namely *self*-identity in writing, is marked as an impossibility:

die Schwierigkeit, über Wittgensteins Philosophie und vor allem Poesie, denn meiner Ansicht nach handelt es sich bei Wittgenstein um ein durch und durch poetisches Gehirn (HIRN), um ein philosophisches

HIRN also, nicht um einen Philosophen, zu schreiben, ist die größte. Es ist, als würde ich über mich selbst etwas (Sätze!) schreiben müssen, und das geht nicht.

the difficulty in writing about Wittgenstein's philosophy and in particular his poetry—since in my view Wittgenstein is a thoroughly poetic brain (HIRN), that is, a philosophical HIRN rather than a philosopher—is the greatest one. It is as though I would have to write something (propositions!) about myself, and that is impossible.

The “greatest” difficulty in writing “about” anything as a thematic object is due to the impossibility of positing a subject in writing (in “propositions!”) such that it would not be subject to the self-referential motility of language. Only if reference to the enunciating subject is secured could one hope to likewise guarantee the intentional ‘aboutness’ of sentences taking aim at something, or someone, else. In other words, the very idea of writing “about” Wittgenstein presumes a philosophical paradigm that comes under attack in Wittgenstein's later thought itself—the notion that language does not “mean” before its basis in the interiority of the subject were established. Paradoxically, then, Bernhard's skeptical injunction follows in Wittgenstein's stead at the precise moment that it refuses to be “about” Wittgenstein. Bernhard does not simply mark the principal difficulty at play as a philosophical “problem”—one that, as Wittgenstein famously noted, is characterized in its form by a lack of (linguistic) orientation (PU, §123)—but at the same time as a poetic one. The idiosyncratic catachresis of Wittgenstein's designation as a “poetic brain” (condensed to “HIRN”) with the adjective “philosophical” acknowledges what we found in Chapter One above, namely that Wittgenstein's philosophy is inseparably intertwined with the poetic character of its writing—its inability, that is, to function as the transparent medium of transmission of a point of view by a philosopher. Insofar as “Wittgenstein” appears in writing—including Bernhard's—he will never be simply a philosophical professional, never just a thinker, never solely “a person who does not write manuscripts.”

Bernhard's reference to the brain in conjunction with Wittgenstein's thought is hardly accidental, and it must not be mistaken for a simplistic naturalism. As we will see below, for several of Bernhard's characters a relation is established between the brain and “its” publication, with someone's “appearance in print” likened to a dumping of their brain, or their head, onto the page. Like Konrad in *Das Kalkwerk*, Wittgenstein for Bernhard becomes a character struggling with the transition from thought to writing—and it

is in Wittgenstein's own writings on the philosophy of psychology that the notion is probed that thought (*Denken*) might be reducible to neurophysiological processes. The scientific characterization of such processes, this sort of reductionism contends, would serve to solve the problem of linguistic meaning once and for all. Wittgenstein's objection to this view remains agnostic as to the actual feasibility of providing such explanations, and challenges reductionism largely on the grounds that it suggests the misleading picture of thought being strictly confined to the head:

- §605. Eine der philosophisch gefährlichsten Ideen ist, merkwürdigerweise, daß wir mit dem Kopf, oder im Kopf denken.
- §606. Die Idee vom Denken als einem Vorgang im Kopf, in dem gänzlich abgeschlossenen Raum, gibt ihm etwas Okkultes. (*Zettel* [W VIII], 416)
605. One of the most dangerous of ideas for a philosopher is, oddly enough, that we think with our heads or in our heads.
606. The idea of thinking as a process in the head, in a completely enclosed space, gives it something of the occult. (ZE, 104)

The thoroughly puzzling “Gefühl der Unüberbrückbarkeit der Kluft zwischen Bewußtsein und Gehirnvorgang” [*feeling of an unbridgeable gulf between consciousness and brain-process*] (PU, §412) resulting from this “idea” is a product, Wittgenstein points out, of a representationalist paradigm in philosophy that would regard the relation (functional, supervenient, causal, or otherwise)¹¹ of consciousness and thought to brain function as necessarily prior to any talking or writing about that relation. This philosophical perspective thus issues the hermeneutical imperative to find the meaning of language in the brain, and does so by regarding neurophysiological processes as constituting a code to be observed, computationally modeled, and thus to be deciphered. Wittgenstein remains skeptical towards this beckoning: “Das Gehirn schaut aus wie eine Schrift, die uns auffordert, sie zu lesen, und ist doch keine Schrift” [*The brain looks like a writing, inviting us to read it, and yet it isn't a writing*] (*Letzte Schriften zur Philosophie der Psychologie* I [W VII], 453 (§806); LWPP I, 103). To representationalist philosophers of mind, the biological brain *in the head* may look like occult writing that held the secret to thought and meaning, but the positing of such “like-ness” assumes what the later Wittgenstein never ceases to challenge, namely the notion that there could be an internal, private language that is not subject to varying uses in language games in the way that external, public language is.

If this kind of philosophical, representationalist brain (“Gehirn”) is *not* akin to writing, Wittgenstein as “philosophical HIRN,” by contrast, most certainly is. Bernhard’s distinction between “Gehirn” and the typographically emphasized “HIRN” that comprises Wittgenstein’s “poetry” (*Poesie*) makes clear that the contested notion of an ‘aboutness’ relation that brain states supposedly entertain to a reality unstructured by human interaction concerns the literary conundrum of writing “about” Wittgenstein in an analogous manner. If the figure of Wittgenstein cannot be secured in its meaning by the *representational* character of references to his work or his life, then how to write **about** him? That is the open (“poetic”) question comprised in Wittgenstein’s own reflections on the brain as language. For Bernhard, therefore, the challenge of Wittgenstein as “HIRN” is not that of how to access the interiority of Wittgenstein’s thought, but rather of how to treat external signs of a philosophical mode in which “HIRN” is four letters on a page. A mode according to which it is not human beings—for example, “philosophers”—who may be said to suffer from the gulf separating consciousness and brain state, but according to which, as Bernhard goes on in his letter to Spiel, “Philosophie und Kunst existieren . . . nur im Bewußtsein seiner [Austria’s] Philosophie und Poesie (-Kultur)” [*philosophy and art exist . . . only within the consciousness of its (Austria’s) philosophy and poetry (-culture)*] (Letter to Spiel). Austrian philosophy and poetry, designated by Bernhard as “an absolute mausoleum” (*ibid.*) are thus not buried below the ground, “in a completely enclosed space,” but may continue their un-dead existence in a consciousness (*Bewußtsein*) that is not one of biological individuals—a consciousness not to be found in any brain but only in the “HIRN” put on view by the undertaking of publication. The radical circularity of philosophy and poetry existing only in their own consciousness—“was für den Philosophen und den Dichter ein Vorteil ist, ist ihm dieser Vorteil bewußt” [*which, for the philosopher and the poet, is an advantage, if he is conscious of that advantage*] (*ibid.*)—proceeds on its path to begin to elucidate why the question of how to write “about” Wittgenstein admits of no straightforward answer. The inevitably vertiginous submission to self-referentiality without a secure “self” to match is, much like Bernhard’s four-word summary of Austria’s more recent intellectual history, “erschreckend einerseits, fortschrittlich andererseits” [*frightening on the one hand, progressive on the other hand*] (*ibid.*). The nature of that progress, if such it can be called, exposes Wittgenstein—appallingly—as an open question: “W. ist eine Frage, die nicht beantwortet werden kann – dadurch ist er eins mit jener Stufe, die Antworten (und Antwort) ausschließt” [*W. is a question that cannot be answered—thus he is one with the step that precludes answers (and answering)*] (*ibid.*). If that “step” on which no answer is to be expected formed part

of the Tractarian ladder, it would seem that “W.” would have to be not only a question without an answer, but *because of this fact* an incomprehensible one. Wittgenstein had noted: “Wenn sich eine Frage überhaupt stellen läßt, so kann sie auch beantwortet werden” [*If a question can be framed at all, it is also possible to answer it*] (TLP 6.5). Given the tenuous relationship of potential mutual destruction between W. and B. considered above, we must conclude that the “HIRN” W., like B., necessarily hovers between incomprehensibility and scriptural manifestation, never to be tethered either to the side of the occult nor to that of a transparent legibility.

The very last sentence of Bernhard’s letter to his friend S. that is clearly a *Sprach-Spiel* in its form underlines this double gesture with utmost radicality. Previous commentators, even when characterizing the letter as a whole quite rightly as “beredte[s] Schweigen” [*telling silence*] (Huber, “Roithamer ist nicht Wittgenstein,” 140), have refused to provide an explanation of its remarkable structure:

So schreibe ich nicht über Wittgenstein, *weil ich nicht kann*, sondern weil ich *ihn nicht beantworten kann*, woraus sich alles von selbst erklärt.

Thus I don’t write about Wittgenstein, not *because I cannot*, but because I *cannot answer him*, from which everything explains itself.

The casual reader might take this sentence to simply reaffirm the earlier claim to not be able to write about Wittgenstein, due to W.’s status as a “question” that cannot be answered: a self-evident conclusion, in other words, to a letter apparently designed to function as a well-founded excuse. Upon closer inspection, however, this sentence is self-explanatory in a rather different way, once the absence of one negative adverb (“nicht”) is accounted for. Taken together with the conjunction “sondern” introducing the second dependent clause, the very first “nicht” serves to negate not the element in which it is syntactically embedded (“schreibe ich . . . über Wittgenstein”), but only the first reason considered (“*weil ich nicht kann*”), to contrast it with the affirmation of the second one (“sondern weil ich *ihn nicht beantworten kann*”). The actual activity to be thus ‘explained,’ however, is *not* the fact of Bernhard’s *not writing* about Wittgenstein. If it were, a double “nicht” would be required, for the beginning of the sentence to read: ‘So schreibe ich nicht nicht über Wittgenstein, *weil . . .*, sondern weil . . .’ Absent this negative adverbial doubling, the actual sentence affirms the writing about Wittgenstein under the erasure of a rather deceptive syntactic construction. It thus stands in an ambiguously negative relation to the sentence earlier in the letter that was already quoted

above: "Diese Frage kann ich nicht beantworten und also kann ich nicht über Wittgenstein schreiben" [*This question I cannot answer, and therefore I cannot write about Wittgenstein*] (op. cit.). On a second reading, that sentence does not state a fact of non-writing, but only an incapability ("also kann ich nicht über Wittgenstein schreiben") that is directly contradicted by the last sentence of the letter ("nicht . . . , weil ich nicht kann"). Bernhard's writing ~~about~~ Wittgenstein thus takes place in a paradoxical spot between ability and non-ability, in response to a question that is always approaching the abyss of incomprehensibility as its signs populate the letter paper under the heading (*Überschrift*) GRAND HOTEL IMPERIAL DUBROVNIK.

QUOTING HABIT (*DAS KALKWERK, GEHEN*)

The name "Wittgenstein" had begun to make its frequent appearances in Bernhard's prose works not long before the letter to Spiel was written, providing additional evidence to the effect that to call the possibility of writing about Wittgenstein into question does not amount to falling silent. As the character Oehler in *Gehen* ultimately concludes from the impossibility of answering the question of what his—and the narrator's—friend Karrer was missing by no longer being able to walk to the *Obenaus* restaurant after being committed for what appears to be the final time to the mental institution *Am Steinhof*, we keep asking questions while knowing full well that any attempt to answer will entail extending the original question to an infinite number of related questions, forever postponing a truly satisfactory answer:

Sehen Sie, sagt Oehler, wir können, gleich was für eine Frage, stellen, wir können diese Frage nicht beantworten, wenn wir sie *wirklich* beantworten wollen, insoferne ist überhaupt keine Frage auf der Begriffswelt zu beantworten. (G, 80-1)

Look, says Oehler, we can ask any question we like, we cannot answer the question if we *really* want to answer it, to this extent there is not a single question in the whole conceptual world that can be answered. (W, 160)

The fact of the absence of any *real* answers is set aside, Oehler claims, simply to assure us of something like existential continuity, "damit nicht auf einmal überhaupt nichts mehr ist" [*so that there shall not suddenly be nothing at all*] (G, 81; W, 160). Indeed, the unanswerable nature of what Heidegger termed

the fundamental question of metaphysics¹² may leave little to do but to keep asking *other* questions. To do so, according to Oehler, is to avoid the paralysis that could result from the recognition that every “correct proposition” (*richtiger Satz*) may at the same time be considered false. Oehler argues that things in the world become possible only in virtue of our continually disregarding the disjunction between the “correct” proposition and the actions and objects it purports to represent. It is just such a representational theory of linguistic meaning, of course, that Wittgenstein had proposed in the *Tractatus*, which claims: “Die Wahrheitsmöglichkeiten der Elementarsätze bedeuten die Möglichkeiten eines Bestehens und Nichtbestehens der Sachverhalte” [*Truth-possibilities of elementary propositions mean possibilities of existence and non-existence of states of affairs*] (TLP 4.3). Oehler disagrees with Wittgenstein’s proposal that a categorization of sentences with respect to their possibilities would yield tidy truth tables, since, as he paradoxically formulates, “alle Sätze, die gesprochen werden und die gedacht werden und die es überhaupt gibt, sind gleichzeitig richtig und gleichzeitig falsch, handelt es sich um richtige Sätze” [*every proposition that is uttered and thought and that exists is at the same time correct and at the same time false, if we are talking about correct/proper propositions*] (G, 16-17; W, 119-20). The formal “correctness,” and hence the prevention of what Wittgenstein terms “nonsense” (*Unsinn*), does not eliminate the paradox that keeps the proposition from constituting a “real” (*wirkliche*) answer.

It is this linguistic skepticism, so common among Bernhard’s characters, according to which the proposition remains forever barred from coinciding with the state of affairs at which it purportedly aims that accounts for the central importance of quotation in Bernhard’s prose. With the proposition disconnected from reality, what speakers may refer to are not truth-conditionally unequivocal states of affairs, but only other sentences. The view of the world as a logically simple structure constituted by a totality of facts (TLP 1.1) is portrayed in *Gehen* as a safety net against madness—a madness sparked by the recognition that an assembly of sentences unable to establish such facts must always remain within the realm of naming, and must therefore turn the structure of the whole into a “so-called” one:

Gehen wir nicht von dieser ganz einfachen Struktur des Ganzen aus, haben wir das, was wir als absoluten Stillstand bezeichnen, aber auch *das als Ganzes als Sogenanntes*. Wie könnte ich mich, so Karrer, getrauen, etwas nicht nur als ein Sogenanntes zu bezeichnen, und damit eine Rechnung aufstellen und eine gleich wie große und gleich

wie vernünftige oder unvernünftige Welt entwerfen, wenn ich immer nur sagen (und darin handeln) würde, es handle sich immer nur um ein Sogenanntes, dann immer wieder, ein sogenanntes Sogenanntes und so fort. (G, 76)

If we do not accept this completely simple structure of the whole as our starting point, we have what we call a complete standstill, but also *a whole as a so-called whole*. How could I dare, said Karrer, not to call something only so-called and so draw up an account and design a world, no matter how big and no matter how sensible or how foolish, if I were always only to say to myself (and to act accordingly) that we are dealing with what is so-called and then, over and over again, a so-called so-called something. (W, 157)

Karrer, whose words are reported here by Oehler, is never medically diagnosed in Bernhard's text, and this may be because his breakdown in Rustenschacher's apparel store is ultimately tied to a *linguistic*, not a medical condition: the "paralysis" as deviation from the Tractarian picture, and its active counterpart, the infinitely regressive naming of naming. *Gehen* as a whole is an investigation of the ineffable limit between reason and sanity on the one hand, and that which Oehler claims as a fact(!), namely, "daß jeder Augenblick die Grenzüberschreitung nach Steinhof sein kann" [*every moment can be the one when we cross the border into Steinhof*] (G, 25; W, 125). The text as investigation cannot objectively draw a boundary between itself and what it investigates, and so the potentially fatal regress is not simply marked off as an object of a therapeutic gaze, but rather performed by the text itself. Karrer's question to himself in the subjunctive is actually instantiated in Bernhard's text, with the qualifying adverb "sogenannt" recurring as a stylistic device not only in *Gehen* but across all of his writings. The reflection on "the so-called" exposes the names qualified by it as arbitrarily assigned and unstable in their reference, as characters talk not about things but about sentences about things, and so on. In other words, the vast majority of Bernhard's text is an exercise in quotation, and the fact that Bernhard routinely omits quotation marks only serves to underline the extreme implication Karrer considers in the above passage, namely that in terms of their status the quoted and the quoting sentence find themselves on the same level of reference—pushed to the limit (*Grenze*), the latter is no closer to the real than the former. The poetic implication of this view on quotation, above and beyond the stating of a philosophical thesis, is its direct effect on the level of the text:

Im Grunde ist alles, was gesagt wird, zitiert, ist auch ein Satz von Karrer, der mir in diesem Zusammenhang einfällt und den Oehler sehr oft, wenn es ihm paßt, gebraucht. (G, 22)

Fundamentally, everything that is said is a quotation, is also one of Karrer's statements, which occurs to me in this connection and which Oehler very often uses when it suits him. (W, 123)

The thesis itself is a sentence of Karrer's that Oehler has adopted, a practice that is in turn related to the reader by the first-person narrator of Bernhard's text. In other words (Oehler's 'own,' as told by the narrator): "Oehler sagt: Die Welt des Karrer aber ist in gleichem Maße, wie sie seine Welt ist, die unsrige" [*Oehler says: Karrer's world is his own to the same extent that it is ours*] (G, 28; W, 127). And so it is (for us as readers, too), to the extent that the world is all that is quoted.

It is a world in which reciprocal attempts by Karrer and Oehler at explaining to each other "unclear" sentences by Wittgenstein and Ferdinand Ebner end in "exhaustion" (G, 83; W, 163) and "absolute artificiality" (G, 100; W, 173).¹³ Karrer, Oehler, and the narrator do not arrive at a point of perspicuity regarding these sentences, nor do Oehler and the narrator successfully reconstruct a causal account of Karrer's breakdown, his movement of *walking across the limit*. The point at which the habitual setting-aside of the skeptical spiral regarding the "so-called" is itself set aside is never clearly determined. In Bernhard's text the precarious status of habit is directly linked to clothing, as the narrator first identifies his own and Oehler's clothing as habitual, "weil uns diese Kleidung in Jahrzehnten zur endgültigen Gewohnheit und also zur endgültigen Kleidung geworden ist" [*because this clothing, in the decades during which we have been wearing it, has become a fixed habit and so our final mode of dress*] (G, 10; W, 115). The Latin word *habitus*, of course, may designate both clothing and habitual action, which permits us to read the observation as a tautology: habit becoming (final) habit. Except that the finality is not as assured as the narrator would have us believe here, with Karrer eventually losing the ability to keep to the habit of side-stepping corrosive skepticism among the clothes in Rustenschacher's store. The dispute surrounding the question of whether the pants for sale are *really* "Czechoslovakian reject" (as Karrer claims), or whether "so-called Czechoslovakian reject" may in fact be "most excellent English goods or most excellent goods from another foreign source" (as Rustenschacher maintains), finally pushes Karrer's habitual critique of Rustenschacher's merchandise to its fatal conclusion and past the brink of insanity. Not surprisingly, the facts of the matter about the pants are never established.

Bernhard's earlier novel *Das Kalkwerk* presents a similarly ineffable breakdown in Konrad's killing of his disabled wife. The reader learns about the event of the killing only at several removes and is presented with a number of partially conflicting scenarios,¹⁴ and, much like the uncertainty surrounding the reason for Karrer's "Genzüberschreitung nach Steinhof," a clear chronology of, and motivation for, Konrad's ultimate act of violence is never provided. Indeed, from the very beginning of the novel uncertainty even attaches to the name of the protagonist, which could function equally as a first or a last name; eventually, the reference to his wife as "die Konrad" (Kw, 9), in turn, seems to settle the matter in favor of the latter option, but only by casting her physical dependence on her husband in linguistic form by identifying her *only* in relation to a man with an ambiguous name. Konrad, a "so-called truth fanatic" (Kw, 15; LW, 10), is reported as saying that to him the whole world is an experiment, and consequently all propositions are to be regarded as experimental propositions (Kw, 118; LW, 102). What would at first seem to constitute an affirmation of the interpretation of Wittgensteinian elementary propositions as empiricist protocol sentences,¹⁵ given Konrad's incessant 'scientific' experimentation on his wife regarding the effect of spoken sentences on her sense of hearing, is complicated by the dubious nature of this 'research.' It may indeed be accurate to say that Konrad's (and, by extension, his wife's) world is entirely made up of these sentences, in light of the fact "daß er unaufhörlich experimentiere, daß ihm *alles* Experiment sei" [*that he was experimenting incessantly, that to him everything was an experiment*] (Kw, 117; LW, 100). But this self-enclosed world—the world of the lime works, in other words—is not thereby in any sense a "picture" of external states of affairs, as the picture theory of the *Tractatus* would have it. In his isolation from any such external world, the "truth fanatic" Konrad ultimately faces only one truth: that of his own inability to put sentences on paper. He has devoted decades to keeping his study in his head,

und das sei eine ungeheuerliche Geistesanstrengung, eine solche komplette Studie über Jahrzehnte im Kopf zu haben, ununterbrochen im Kopf behalten zu müssen in der ständigen, sich naturgemäß immer noch mehr verstärkenden Angst, daß sie von einem auf den anderen Augenblick auseinanderfallen und zunichte gemacht werden könne, weil man den Augenblick der Niederschrift immer wieder verpaßt. (Kw, 83)

[and] it took a monstrous mental effort to keep such a complete study in one's head, keep it permanently in one's head in the constant and, naturally, continually increasing anxiety that it would fall apart and

be destroyed from one moment to the next, and all because one was time and again missing the right moment for writing it all down. (LW, 69–70)

The challenge put to Konrad by his physically utterly vulnerable wife is her contention that the “so-called study” is in fact nothing but a phantom (*Hirngespinnst*) (Kw, 186; LW, 164), and that Konrad’s claim to be keeping it in his head in its totality is, of course, absolutely unverifiable. Konrad, exercising extreme domination over his ailing wife in practically all other aspects of their communal existence in the lime works, is himself highly vulnerable to this positively Wittgensteinian charge against occult thinking confined to an individual head. After his arrest, his papers are found, “dieser Haufen Zettel über die sogenannte Studie” [*this batch of notes for the so-called study*], which, according to his acquaintance Fro, could in the end “doch ernst und von größter Bedeutung sein, es komme nur darauf an, in welchen Köpfen, bei welchen Leuten, wann, wo” [*turn out to be of quite serious consequence and of the greatest significance, depending entirely on which heads, which people, when and where*] (Kw, 189; LW, 166). That is to say, it could be argued that Konrad’s fragmentary writings related to what he appears to think of as the *real* “study” are in fact that study, or all there exists of it, insofar as only these exist between his own head and the heads of others. The existence of Konrad’s work in the form of *Zettel*, therefore, must not be considered external to the substance of that work, much as we have argued in the previous chapter regarding Wittgenstein’s writings.

The irony employed by Bernhard’s narrator to introduce the Wittgensteinian caution against thinking “in the head” by way of Konrad’s wife becomes apparent when we consider that Wittgenstein’s name is directly tied to the disconnect and lack of understanding between the two Konrads. Despite the centrality of what Konrad’s wife calls his “Hirngespinnst,” they exchange *words* rather than *thoughts* (Kw, 178; LW, 156), and it is to these words that misunderstanding attaches. Some of those words are proper names: “Sage er Pascal oder Montaigne oder Descartes oder Dostojewskij oder Gregor Mendel oder Wittgenstein oder Francis Bacon, sie verstehe ihn nicht” [*If he said Pascal or Montaigne or Descartes or Dostoevsky or Gregor Mendel or Wittgenstein or Francis Bacon, she did not understand him*] (Kw, 186; LW, 163). Many of the other words are, once again, quotations from other writers, rather than ‘direct’ thoughts of which the non-writer Konrad could claim ownership. While some of this activity of reading and quotation seems reciprocally benevolent and beneficial (she loves Novalis’s *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, he prefers Kropotkin), a particular point of contention is Konrad’s habitual quoting from the *Tractatus*:

es sei das eine von ihm in der letzten Zeit allerdings schon auf das tatsächlich einer Frau Unerträglichste zur Gewohnheit gewordene Zitieren aus dem wittgensteinschen Traktatus, das sie, seine Frau, immer gehaßt habe, gerade dann, wenn er ihr aus dem Wittgenstein zitiere, schicke sie ihn in den Keller um Most . . . (Kw, 196)

it was his quoting from the Wittgensteinian Traktatus—something that more recently had become a habit of his that was in fact intolerable for a woman—that she, his wife, had always hated, and right when he was quoting to her from Wittgenstein, she would send him down to the cellar for some cider . . . (LW, 173)

The rather effective revenge taken by Konrad's wife for being subjected to unsolicited Wittgenstein recitations is the interruption of this habit and his subsequent exposure to a ridiculous activity, since

nichts sei lächerlicher, soll Konrad zu Fro gesagt haben, als ein Mensch, der ständig um Most in den Keller geschickt werde und tatsächlich ständig folgsam mit einem Mostkrug in der Hand in den Keller gehe . . . (Kw, 197)

there is nothing more ridiculous, Konrad is supposed to have said to Fro, than a man being constantly sent to the cellar for some cider and who actually does go to the cellar, submissively, cider jug in hand . . . (LW, 173)

Much as this scene may for comic effect allude to marital bickering, and role playing, of an utterly familiar sort, it also exposes Konrad's fear of the ridiculous as one of the alleged insufficiency of verbal and written expression in relation to thought—a fear which Konrad's wife unmasks elsewhere as well. If “everything that is enunciated is ridiculous” (Kw, 82; LW, 68), and if “the words ruin that which one thinks, the paper turns that which one thinks into something ridiculous” (Kw, 147; LW, 128), then Konrad's failure epitomized by his *legenda interrupta* of the *Tractatus* goes far beyond simply being consigned to the depths with a jug of cider. More broadly, it is the ridiculousness of a pile of *Zettel* held up against the (Tractarian) vision of a work as a unified whole; expressed in architectural terms, it is the ridiculousness of his “misuse” of the lime works (Kw, 49; LW, 38) for the purposes of his study—a building whose design is the result of “a calculation that goes back thousands of years” (Kw, 32; LW, 24) aiming at nothing less than “total deception” (Kw,

33; LW, 25) of the observer in its misleading suggestion that only functionality was responsible for its form. Konrad's long-running failure to achieve a similarly suggestive connection between the content of his study and its written form is the clear sign that his "use" of the Tractarian text only exacerbates the gulf marked by the ridiculous interruption. The most important thing, the final sentence of the novel claims, would have been to set aside the fear of ridicule and to embrace fearlessness:

aber das Wichtigste habe ihm gefehlt: Furchtlosigkeit vor Realisierung, vor Verwirklichung, Furchtlosigkeit einfach davor, seinen Kopf urplötzlich von einem Augenblick auf den anderen auf das rücksichtsloseste um- und also die Studie auf das Papier zu kippen. (Kw, 270)

but he had lacked what was most important: fearlessness in the face of realization, fearlessness, simply, when it came to ruthlessly turning his head over, suddenly, from one moment to the next, and thus dumping the study onto the page. (LW, 241)

Wittgenstein's writing, to wit, does not stand as a shining example of such "dumping" in the sense of presenting the kind of unified work that Konrad envisages.¹⁶ Even though a fictionalized Ludwig Wittgenstein will be credited with exactly this ability in *Wittgenstein's Neffe*, any careful attempt at tracing Wittgenstein's paper trail forces the conclusion that whatever ends up on paper is never that which may earlier have been posited to reside "in the head."

Thus, the scenarios of unachieved totality portrayed in both *Gehen* and *Das Kalkwerk* find themselves displaced by quotation. Karrer's and Oehler's attempts to conceptualize walking and thinking as a single, total activity (*Vorgang*) are interrupted by the mutual non-understanding, and resistance to clarification, of sentences by Wittgenstein and Ebner (G, 84; W, 162); the non-homogeneity of both activities that results from inevitable interruptions of this kind conjures up the specter that is Karrer's demise—the threat of a linguistically rooted *Grenzüberschreitung* of ordinary language games and forms of life that function perfectly well just as long as the question of justification is brought to an end in time. Konrad's failure to achieve the totality of thinking and writing that is traditionally called a "work" manifests itself in the way in which quotation ultimately overwhelms the notion of the possibility of original utterance that related on its own terms to the word in verifiable fashion. The distracting interference of "Fremdbilder" [*alien images*] (Kw, 250-1; LW, 222) destroys any clear vision of the "study," and it will remain for fictional readers to decide whether the shards of Konrad's project admit of

Fro's optimistic assessment as a different kind of work in and of themselves. The reader of both of Bernhard's texts, meanwhile, must content herself with multiple narrative layers in her attempt to come to grips with the substance, if any, that is being related on every single line through the filtered lens of quotation.

“ALTENSAM, AND EVERYTHING CONNECTED TO ALTENSAM, DIFFERENT” (KORREKTUR)

As Martin Huber reports (and reprints) in his article bearing an allusion to the passage, Bernhard noted in a précis of the novel *Korrektur* from the year preceding publication that is found in Bernhard's *Nachlaß*: “Wer ist Roithamer, Mathematiker, Physiker? Die Antwort ist: er ist nicht Wittgenstein, aber er ist Wittgenstein” [*Who is Roithamer, mathematician, physicist? The answer is: he is not Wittgenstein, but he is Wittgenstein*] (Huber, “Roithamer ist nicht Wittgenstein,” 150-1). This paradoxical (non-)identification of the protagonist of the novel is a (non-)answer to the very question lingering over Bernhard's letter to Hilde Spiel, and thus a fitting motto for a novel that is ~~about~~ Wittgenstein in considerably more detail than that letter. Once again, rather than engaging in an enumeration of parallels¹⁷ at once affirmed and struck out in the motto, our objective will be an attempt to understand why, and how, Bernhard's reading of Wittgenstein's philosophy as poetry forces a paradoxical determination of this kind.

Any straightforward substitution of the name “Wittgenstein” for that of “Roithamer” that would serve as ‘key’ to Bernhard's text is made impossible by the bare fact that the narrator himself pulls the comparison between the two figures into his account of dealing with Roithamer's *Nachlaß* after the Austrian part-time expatriate has killed himself following the completion of the Cone and the subsequent death of his sister for whom it was built. Wittgenstein is explicitly mentioned as “ein aufmerksamer Beobachter der roithamerschen Landschaft” [*a keen observer of the Roithamerian landscape*] (Ko, 64; C, 45) who was among the authors Roithamer frequently read “weil er in ihnen sich selbst zu erkennen glaubte” [*because he thought he recognized himself in them*] (ibid.). The substitution of names, of course, would here yield “self-recognition” by reading the observation of ‘one's own’ landscape by somebody else, a tautological notion whose apparent Cartesian self-assurance was already critically challenged by Oehler in *Gehen*: “Wenn wir uns selbst beobachten, beobachten wir ja immer niemals uns selbst, sondern immer einen anderen” [*When we observe ourselves, we are, after all, never observing ourselves but someone else*] (G, 87; W, 165). Second-order observation of the

self is always an observation of something, or someone, distinct from the observer, and this would include the observation of ‘one’s own’ self cast in writing. The “landscape” called on to guarantee what one might take to be the identity of Roithamer and Wittgenstein is, in the end, only the marker of the difference of that paradoxical, differential identity of the two figures, of self and other:

Wir sehen eine Landschaft und sehen einen Menschen in dieser Landschaft und Landschaft und Mensch sind immer anders, in jedem Augenblick, obwohl wir annehmen und in diesem Irrtum uns getrauen, weiterzuexistieren, es sei immer das gleiche, so Roithamer. So sind wir niemals als der (oder die), der oder die wir gerade sind, sondern immer nur anders, wenn wir Glück haben, gerade noch, so Roithamer. (Ko, 359-60)

We see a landscape and we see a man in that landscape and the landscape and the man are always different, at every moment, although we assume that everything always remains the same, and thanks to this false assumption we dare to go on existing, so Roithamer. So we never exist as the person that we are right now, but are always nothing but different, and, if we are lucky, just barely anything, so Roithamer. (C, 268-9)

Bernhard’s implicit reference to Wittgenstein’s remarks on his travels through the “Gedankengebiet” of which the *Philosophical Investigations* are imperfect “landscape sketches,” collectively constituting something other than a “good book” even after many *corrections* (PU, 231-3; PI, ix), is readily evident here. Wittgenstein may indeed have observed the Roithamerian landscape, then, if we understand that landscape as one that is, like Roithamer’s room in Cambridge, “ohne eigentlichen Ausblick” [*without an actual view*] (Ko, 267; C, 199). Any identification of a “Mensch” with the landscape of his or her “Gedankengebiet” will be subject to the recognition that a view *proper* is not to be had. And yet, as Roithamer indicates, identification loses none of its tempting attraction; just as Wittgenstein decided to publish the “sketches” in a form that he himself regarded “improper,” thus launching a published work into existence, so it is only the false assumption of identity between relata that guarantees a continued existence this side of an insanity like Karrer’s or Konrad’s. And so, identifications of strictly non-identical objects and persons abound in *Korrektur*: Höller’s garret is identified as Roithamer’s (Ko, 23) and even as Roithamer *himself*—the narrator’s concession that “der Kopf doch vorsichtig sein muß in solchen Urteilen” [*one’s head should be careful with such judgments*] (Ko, 25; C, 15) does nothing to

prevent him from uttering the identificatory statement. As inhabitant of this chamber, the narrator eventually confesses a self-annihilatory identification with Roithamer's thought (Ko, 37; C, 25-6)—thus realizing the exact opposite of Wittgenstein's exhortation at the end of his preface to the *Investigations*, “wenn es möglich wäre, jemand zu eigenen Gedanken anzuregen” [*if possible, to stimulate someone to thoughts of his own*] (PU, 233; PI, ix).

As the narrator takes on the role of his dead friend Roithamer in the Höller household, the identificatory gesture in no way facilitates his project of bringing Roithamer's *Nachlaß* in order. The undertaking is doomed from the beginning, considering its temporality as the narrator announces it on the second page of the novel: the sorting and ordering of the *Nachlaß* will be coterminous with the written account of that sorting and ordering (Ko, 8; C, 3), which will turn the act of writing itself into an act of ordering, or else into a document of the very impossibility of such a project. Indeed, Roithamer's *Zettel*, much like Karrer's and Wittgenstein's, appear to hold out little promise of systematic arrangement, apparently much to Roithamer's own chagrin, who had postulated that “such mere fragments by themselves aren't enough” (Ko, 175; C, 128). Any hope of extracting systematicity from Roithamer's own arrangement of the pieces of paper evaporates when the narrator impulsively empties out the entire collection in a pile on the couch in the garret, with the result that the intended ordering effect to be chronicled in the narrator's account is now irretrievably out of reach.¹⁸

Much as the second part of the novel, “Sifting and Sorting,” suggests an ordered retelling of Roithamer's life from his alienation as a youth in Altensam to his completion of the Cone and the deaths of Roithamer's sister and Roithamer himself in its wake, the trajectory of the narrative is considerably less clear than might be supposed. Bernhard's text neither confirms nor denies the hypothesis that this second part is essentially a paraphrase of the *other* part of Roithamer's *Nachlaß*, the manuscript entitled “Über Altensam und alles, das mit Altensam zusammenhängt, unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Kegels” [*About Altensam, and Everything Connected with Altensam, with Particular Attention to the Cone*] (Ko, 7; C, 3). Certainly, the majority of the *content* of the narrator's account seems to be *about* Roithamer's relation to his hometown and his path towards constructing the Cone. And yet, ‘aboutness’ is once more unsettled when the reader learns as part of this account that the title presents yet another tautology, since “everything is connected to Altensam” (Ko, 199; C, 146)—a statement that the narrator points out is underlined in the manuscript. Dozens of times in the second half of the novel the narrator thus deictically stresses the emphasis Roithamer as writer places on certain elements in his texts by means of notation. What is here

“particularly” stressed in this way is *everything, and more*. The manuscript surveyed by the narrator, we must conclude, is *About Everything and Everything, with Particular Attention to the Cone*. A piece of writing de-differentiated in this manner can hardly hope to convey a specific content, with the particular thematics announced in the second part of the title drowned in a sea of *Überschrift*.

Roithamer’s pursuit of a particular idea, the Cone, is up against his own realization, couched in triple all-quantification, that “gegen jedes Ziel ist immer alles” [*everything is always against every goal*] (Ko, 205; C, 150), and the same is true of the narrator’s goal of extracting a discernible path towards any such idea. The functional perfection of the Cone (Ko, 49; C, 34) does not find its equivalent in the form of either Roithamer’s *Nachlaß* or the narrator’s account of it; even though Roithamer at one point describes the way to the goal that was the Cone as a pseudo-Tractarian ladder, to be discarded upon reaching the final rung (“Aber haben wir unser Ziel erreicht, wissen wir nichts mehr über den Weg zu diesem Ziel . . .” [*But once we have reached our goal, we no longer know anything about the path towards that goal . . .*]) (Ko, 274; C, 203)), we have already found in the preceding chapter that Wittgensteinian language of this kind resists radical dissolution from any point of view that would be the “right” one. The idea of a pure functionality of language or of the art of building—as we will also see in Chapter Five below with reference to Wittgenstein’s Kundmannngasse house to which the building of the Cone obviously alludes—is itself always subject to a particular embodiment or description that cannot leave function untouched. Roithamer pursues the idea of pure function, or purpose, that he sees embodied in Höller’s house that he describes as the aesthetic parallel and model for the Cone. “[N]ichts als die Beobachtungsgabe und das richtige Einsetzen meiner Beobachtungsgabe auf den zu beobachtenden Gegenstand” [*(N)othing but my ability to observe and the proper application of my ability to observe to the object under observation*] (Ko, 276; C, 204), he says, will be required to penetrate the purposive core of Höller’s “Baukunstwerk” and, by extension, his (Roithamer’s) own. At the very moment, however, when he first arrives at the house and realizes the ideal functional conception of the dining room, the context of his interaction with the Höller family silences him into a kind of paralysis and prevents him from announcing the actual purpose (*Zweck*) of his coming (Ko, 277; C, 205). The “rightness” of observation in search of purposiveness, therefore, is contingent upon the interactive context in which that observation takes place; the narrator realizes much the same thing on the evening of his fatal jumbling of Roithamer’s *Zettel* when he engages in what

he apparently believes is a reciprocal staring match between himself in the garret and Höller in his taxidermist workshop behind his house. Even while he professes the pragmatic, empiricist maxim that “[w]ir dürfen nur sehen, was wir sehen und es ist nichts anderes als das, das wir sehen” [(w)e may only see what we do see, and that is nothing else but that which we see] (Ko, 172; C, 125-6), the narrator’s rising paranoia—suggesting to him that he sees Höller seeing him in turn—makes him see exactly that which he does not “really” see, because it turns out not to be the case (Ko, 192; C, 140). The condition of seeing the being seen—termed *double contingency* within the contemporary theory of social systems¹⁹—depends on “the object to be observed” for its adequacy, rather than constituting a secure foundation independently of any particular act of observation. In this sense, the protagonist’s reflection that “[i]ch hätte ohne weiteres sagen können, so Roithamer, das Innere des Höller ist das Innere seines Hauses” [I could have said without hesitation, so Roithamer, Höller’s inside is the inside of his house] (Ko, 285; C, 211) goes to show that the observation of interiors will in both cases be dependent upon external factors, and therefore incompatible with the kind of functionalist claim that would consider “internal,” mental states to be nothing but computational states, radically independent of external, or behavioral, manifestations.²⁰ Seeing the “inside” clearly under such circumstances appears difficult indeed, and so, when the narrator reports the failure of Roithamer’s family to see him “wie er ihnen wirklich gewesen ist” [as he truly was for them] while they believed in their own clarity of vision (Ko, 42-3; C, 29), is only another instance of the “seeing as,” itself *not* subject to perception (PU, 524; PI, 197), that may challenge the notion of unequivocal observation, as Wittgenstein remarks, once more, on the seeing of a landscape:

Ich sehe eine Landschaft; mein Blick schweift, ich sehe allerlei klare und unklare Bewegung; *dies* prägt sich mir ein, *jenes* nur ganz verschwommen. Wie gänzlich zerissen uns doch erscheinen kann, was wir sehen! Und nun schau an, was “Beschreibung des Geschehenen” heißt! – Aber das ist eben, was man eine Beschreibung des Geschehenen nennt. Es gibt nicht *einen eigentlichen*, ordentlichen Fall so einer Beschreibung . . . (PU, 529)

I look at a landscape, my gaze ranges over it, I see all sorts of distinct and indistinct movement; *this* impresses itself sharply on me, *that* is quite hazy. After all, how completely ragged what we see can appear! And now look at all that can be meant by “description of what is seen”. – But this

just is what is called description of what is seen. There is not *one genuine proper* case of such description . . . (PI, 200)

Depending on the observer, the *described* landscape—just like the person—will never be “proper,” and instead “always different.”

Roithamer’s “Lebenskunstwerk,” the Cone, is exposed to this fragile relation between fact and description not just to the extent that Roithamer conceives the plan in secrecy, aware that publication of anything conceived as an image of perfection is equivalent to its destruction (Ko, 344; C, 257). The Cone also becomes subject to a re-description of what will constitute its ultimate completion or perfection (*Vollendung*); first described as the approximate degree of his sister’s happiness (Ko, 223; C, 165), the mark of *Vollendung* is ambiguously pushed farther out upon her being “deadly surprised” by the vision of the built Cone:

das Bauwerk als Kunstwerk ist erst vollendet, indem der Tod eingetreten ist dessen, für den es gebaut und vollendet worden ist, so Roithamer. Wir denken, wir bauen ein Bauwerk, aber es ist ein anderes, das wir gebaut haben. (Ko, 345)

the edifice as a work of art is finished only after the death of the person for whom it was built and finished, so Roithamer. We think we are building an edifice, a work of art, but what we have built is something else. (C, 257-8)

Through the reconceptualization of his sister’s “greatest happiness” not as her living in the Cone but rather as her death (Ko, 346; C, 258), the meaning of “vollendet” is multiplied and thus *struck out*; what Roithamer has built, in retrospect, appears to him to be nothing other than the building of death. If the Cone thus begins to look like a monument or a sepulcher, this is due to the same visually deceptive effect that Massimo Cacciari has described with respect to Wittgenstein’s Kundmannngasse house: subject to description and re-description, the Cone loses its Loosian function as pure artwork—which Roithamer sought to preserve by keeping architects away from it (Ko, 211; C, 155)—and can be considered an *oikos* only at the expense of reference to any particular act of burial.²¹ Bereft of a clear moment of *Vollendung*, it remains open to differential reinscription, subject to *correction*.

The aesthetic aspirations embodied in the Cone that Roithamer conceived as destruction of his hometown Altensam (Ko, 224) find their equivalent in Roithamer’s manuscript *Über Altensam und alles, das mit*

Altensam zusammenhängt, unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Kegels that he “corrects” so radically after his sister’s death that the alterations amount, on Roithamer’s ‘own’ reading, to a destruction of that study, but on another—that of the narrator—constitute a “completely new study” (Ko, 86; C, 62), consisting in its consistently shrinking versions first of more than 800 pages, then 400, then 150, then 80, then less than 20, only to “in letzter Konsequenz überhaupt nichts mehr von dem Ganzen übrig zu lassen” [*be leaving absolutely nothing of the Whole behind*] (Ko, 179-80; C, 131). Roithamer’s merciless “correction” of his own writing that culminates in the “reversal of the study into its *Geistesgegenteil*” (Ko, 86; C, 62) is interpreted by the narrator not as its destruction proper, but rather as the creation of a dialectical whole in which the original study is sublated through its methodical negation: “*alles zusammen ist das Ganze, sagte ich mir*” [everything taken together is the Whole, I told myself] (Ko, 180; C, 131). Roithamer’s suicide, the “*eigentliche, wesentliche Korrektur*” [*proper, essential correction*] (Ko, 326; C, 242), as he notes with reference to the suicides of his cousin and his uncle, would thus figure as the ultimate, final negation that fixed the meaning of Roithamer’s “*Lebenskunstwerk*” as a determinate absence from the world. The restless logic of correction, however, does not, in the end, allow such a tidy solution. As Roithamer notes, the process of a correction of what is recognized as false cannot really come to an end:

Fortwährend korrigieren wir und korrigieren uns selbst und korrigieren uns mit der größten Rücksichtslosigkeit, weil wir in jedem Augenblick erkennen, daß wir alles falsch gemacht (geschrieben, gedacht, getan) haben, falsch gehandelt haben, wir wir falsch gehandelt haben, daß alles bis zu diesem Zeitpunkt eine Fälschung ist, deshalb korrigieren wir diese Fälschung und die Korrektur dieser Fälschung korrigieren wir wieder und das Ergebnis der Korrektur korrigieren wir undsofort, so Roithamer. Aber *die eigentliche Korrektur* zögern wir hinaus . . . (Ko, 325)

We are constantly correcting, and correcting ourselves, most rigorously, because we recognize at every moment that we did (wrote, thought, performed) everything wrong, acted all wrong, how we acted all wrong, that everything up to this point in time is a falsification, so we correct this falsification, and then we again correct the correction of this falsification and we correct the result of this correction andsoforth, so Roithamer. But *the correction proper* is the one we keep delaying . . . (C, 242)

If everything is not only “connected to Altensam,” but is also the result of false action, no amount of correction can right the wrong, because the *Fälschung* itself makes a mockery of that opposition. Suicide as the “proper” means to end the circularity would seem to promise closure, and so Roithamer commits suicide on the clearing (*Lichtung*) between Stocket and Altensam (Ko, 83-4; C, 60). But the end of *individual* corrective activity, it turns out, does nothing to halt the process of writing that continues beyond Roithamer’s death at the hands of the narrator as he works on his friend’s *Nachlaß* by writing about—or rather: around—it. Wittgenstein remarked at the end of his preface to the *Investigations*: “die Zeit ist vorbei, in der [das Buch] von mir verbessert werden könnte” [*the time is past in which I could improve (the book)*] (PU, 232; PI, ix); publication—akin to death in Roithamer’s eyes that are fixed on the notion of pure expression—does not, however, prevent the reinscription of the writing that its author has decided to stop modifying in hope of more accurate results. “Korrektur der Korrektur der Korrektur der Korrektur, so Roithamer” (Ko, 361; C, 270). Roithamer’s words will remain subject to the activity of the continual correction that is called writing, in light of ever recalcitrant *Fälschung*.

The novel thus ends not with the end, it moves beyond the static suspension indicated by its penultimate sentence “Das Ende ist kein Vorgang” [*The end is no process*] to add one more sentence, one crucial word: “Lichtung” [*clearing*] (Ko, 363), the word the narrator had earlier studiously avoided *mentioning* to his host Höller (Ko, 127). Exposed at the end of the text, “Lichtung” opens everything that precedes it back up—not by finally shedding light, let alone by letting Being appear, but rather by forcing another round of interpretive correction on the basis of a single word. In other words: “Altensam und alles, das mit Altensam zusammenhängt, anders” (Ko, 355; C, 265).

WITTGENSTEIN’S UNCLES (*WITTGENSTEINS NEFFE*)

As the only work of Bernhard’s to carry Wittgenstein’s name in its title, *Wittgensteins Neffe* when judged by its cover at first appears to present less of a referential problem than *Korrektur*. Here, finally, is a book that is *about* Wittgenstein—if not Ludwig, then at least about Paul, who is identified from the *incipit* in relation to his more famous uncle with whom he shares his last name.²² A consideration of the subtitle soon casts reasonable doubt on any such initial assumption. It purports to introduce “Eine Freundschaft” [*A Friendship*], while the following epigraph that quotes Paul’s last wish to his friend to eulogize him at his funeral will be contextualized on the last page of

the text to show that the narrator is absent at that anticipated moment, and no regret at thus having been unable to honor *his friend's* wish is expressed. The narrator's account of the time leading up to Paul Wittgenstein's death is as much a document of a friendship as of the *failure* of the same, as becomes evident from the consideration, "daß der Freund zu sterben hatte, um mir mein Leben, oder besser, meine Existenz auf jeden Fall erträglicher, wenn nicht über lange Strecken überhaupt möglich zu machen" [*that this friend had to die in order to make my life more bearable and even, for long periods, possible*] (WN, 162; WNE, 99). Reciprocal oppositions of this kind (life/death) structure this text as they do Bernhard's texts in general, with the narrator repeatedly attempting to pin down Paul Wittgenstein's character, sometimes through the comparison of his own "existence" with his friend's—a comparison yielding numerous grounds for identification (inflated perception of self and world; hyperactivity; regenerative abilities; formation, education, and development within institutions; a "madness" common to both), along with the crucial difference, "daß der Paul sich von seiner Verrücktheit hat *vollkommen* beherrschen lassen, während ich mich von meiner ebenso großen Verrücktheit niemals habe vollkommen beherrschen lassen" [*that Paul allowed himself to be utterly dominated by his madness, whereas I have never let myself be utterly dominated by my equally serious madness*] (WN, 35; WNE, 21). This gesture uniting "friends" separate but equal in their derangements, however, is immediately suspended when the narrator goes on to suggest that Paul Wittgenstein may have only "played" (*gespielt*) his madness and "made use of" (*ausgenützt*) that role, just like the narrator may have only "played" and strategically employed the respiratory disease that first brought him together with Wittgenstein and provided the occasion for a "Freundschaftsvertiefung" [*deepening of a friendship*] (WN, 37; WNE, 22). A friendship, in other words, that may be fundamentally based on theatrical acts of behavior evident only on the surface; the paradoxical conclusion to be drawn hence: "[w]ir waren gleich und doch völlig anders" [*we were alike and yet completely different*] (WN, 40; WNE, 23).

The comparative establishment of identity and difference between Paul and his uncle Ludwig proves to be no easier, with the narrator's attempts in this matter only corroborating his eventual conclusion of the non-sensicality of any such comparison (WN, 103; WNE, 63). Once again, apparent similarities such as a tendency towards socially motivated philanthropy based on their early wealth, or what the narrator describes as strained relations of both to a family characterized by a literally *patronizing* attitude towards art (WN, 84; WNE, 51) do not add up to a clear picture of two persons as *relata*, in this case nephew and uncle:

Mein Onkel Ludwig, das war für den Paul immer die respektvollste Bemerkung, die auszubauen er sich aber niemals getraute und die er, der ebenso Gezeichnete, lieber auf sich beruhen ließ. Sein Verhältnis zu dem in England groß gewordenen Onkel ist mir in Wahrheit nie klar geworden. (WN, 105)

When Paul referred to *my uncle Ludwig* it was in a tone of the greatest respect, but he never chose to elaborate, preferring to content himself with the mere mention of his uncle. I was never clear about his relations with this uncle who achieved greatness in England. (WNE, 64)

Referring to relationships characterized by lack of (Wittgensteinian) clarity, the title of Bernhard's book is thus not so much an indication of its contents but rather that of a problem. The narrator remarks of his relationship to Paul that it was "naturgemäß schwierig, nicht eine Freundschaft, ohne tagtägliche Wiedererringung und Erneuerung" [*naturally difficult, not a friendship, not without daily recapturing and renewal*], and dependent upon *proofs of friendship* (WN, 105), such as Paul's last wish, which we do not know whether the narrator disregarded intentionally or was forced to do so by circumstances. Like the subtitle, the supertitle presents its own vagaries because Paul Wittgenstein is reported to have had not just one uncle, *my uncle Ludwig*, but also another one, Professor Salzer, a celebrated surgeon whose services the narrator deliberately avoids.²³ Salzer's relation to Paul Wittgenstein is introduced so parenthetically and in direct connection with Paul's *other* uncle that he acquires the function of a ghostly double of Ludwig in the first few pages of the text:

Dieser berühmte Professor Salzer, von welchem sich die Klassepatienten operieren ließen, weil sie alles auf seine Berühmtheit setzen (ich selbst hatte mich vom Oberarzt der Station operieren lassen, einem untersetzten Bauernsohn aus dem Waldviertel), war ein Onkel meines Freundes Paul, eines Neffen des Philosophen, dessen *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* heute die ganze wissenschaftliche, mehr noch die pseudowissenschaftliche Welt kennt und gerade als ich auf dem Pavillion Hermann lag, lag mein Freund Paul auf dem Pavillon Ludwig an die zweihundert Meter weiter, welcher aber nicht, wie der Pavillon Hermann, zur Lungenabteilung und also zur sogenannten *Baumgartnerhöhe* gehörte, sondern zur Irrenanstalt *Am Steinhof*. (WN, 8)

This famous Professor Salzer, whom the affluent patients had perform their operations, staking everything on his reputation (while I had

mine performed by the senior ward surgeon, a stocky farmer's son from the Waldviertel), was an uncle of my friend Paul, the nephew of the philosopher whose *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus* is now known to the whole of the scholarly world, to say nothing of the pseudo-scholarly world, and at the very time when I was lying in the Hermann Pavilion, my friend Paul was some two hundred yards away in the Ludwig Pavilion, though this, unlike the Hermann Pavilion, did not belong to the pulmonary department, and hence to the so-called *Baumgartnerhöhe*, but belonged to the mental institution *Am Steinhof*. (WNE, 4)

The immediate textual proximity of Salzer and Ludwig Wittgenstein in relation to their nephew Paul is conceived to ambiguate Paul's subsequent reference to "his uncle" as either a "genius" or a "murderer," as well the narrator's discussion of Salzer's "Weltberühmtheit" [*world authority*] (WN, 10; WNE, 5) shortly after having critically remarked on Ludwig Wittgenstein's comparable notoriety. Bernhard's narrator exploits the fact that Paul is not just *Wittgenstein's nephew* but just as well *Salzer's nephew*—the relation of a man portrayed as caring so little about him that he never once visits him over the period of several months at the institution (WN, 11; WNE, 6)—to the effect both of reiterating and then undermining that which the title announces, namely the focus on the life of Paul Wittgenstein only through the lens of his "world-famous" uncle Ludwig. On the one hand, then, *Wittgensteins Neffe* could be said to be "About the Wittgensteins and everything connected to the Wittgensteins, with special attention to Ludwig;" on the other hand, Paul's abstract and in some sense fully contingent relation of "nephew" to this familial whole is exposed in its arbitrariness by being likened to his relation to his second uncle, a man who remains just as much of a cipher, his "magnificence" appearing "absolutely opaque" to the narrator (WN, 10; WNE, 5).

Paul's ultimately ineffable standing within the familial context is given an even more pointed expression by the narrative decision to rename two of the sixty pavilions, designed by Carlo von Boog, containing the patients at Baumgartnerhöhe and Am Steinhof, in contrast to *Gehen*, where these structures were prosaically numbered (Karrer is said to reside in "Pavilion VII," whereas his acquaintance Scherrer has been committed to "Pavilion VI" [G, 63; W, 127]).²⁴ Thus, Paul's internment in a unit bearing the very name that has come to be the signified of any unqualified use of the family name 'Wittgenstein' appears to provide a meaning for his narration of his institutional confinement by aligning him more closely with the person shrouded in respectful silence in his own non-narrative. Indeed, the spatial

arrangement of Steinhof and its specific place in the theoretical narrative of psychiatric care placed particular emphasis on the containment of patients in decentralized pavilions (or 'villas') to avoid what was increasingly considered anonymous 'warehouse' treatment in older, more conspicuously centralized facilities around the turn of the 20th century (the *Niederösterreichische Landes-Heil- und Pflegeanstalt für Geistes- und Nervenranke 'Am Steinhof' in Wien, XIII* opened in October 1907). Another consciously reformatory aspect of the Steinhof design was the inclusion of paying patients suffering from nervous ailments in the 'Sanatorium' on the same grounds as the facilities for the insane, presaging the immediate proximity of Bernhard's narrator, who is suffering from lung cancer, and Paul Wittgenstein, who is among the 'non-dangerous, curable' mental patients, and thus allowed to move about the institutional grounds freely.²⁵ The notion embodied in the Steinhof layout, according to Leslie Topp's reconstruction, was to provide an ideal community with a "simple, ordered daily regimen"—reflected in the "graphic clarity" of the arrangement of the buildings—that would at the same time remedy the alienation of modern life encountered in a big city that was often considered a partial cause of mental illness. As Topp points out, these two goals are in tension with each other, and that tension is visible in Bernhard's narrative revolving around this ambiguous space. In contrast to Otto Wagner's architectural gesture of resolution that is his domed church in the center of the Steinhof complex, the patient Paul Wittgenstein does not live in an exalted, "monumentalized" separation from Vienna at his "real home" (WN, 164; WNE, 100), as the narrator recalls Paul's own words. Thus, Paul Wittgenstein's life is characterized by an oscillation between Steinhof and the city of Vienna (WN, 57-8; WNE, 34) that all but invalidates the presumption of a curative effect of "clarification" to be gained at the facility he is forced to inhabit with such regularity. Bernhard's enduring fascination with Steinhof as a locus is rooted in his thorough distrust of the utopian notion that the institution could possibly live up to what its founders intended: a humane sort of separation of the insane in an aesthetically conceived world closed in on itself, to facilitate their return to 'normalcy' in due course.²⁶ None of Bernhard's characters—Paul Wittgenstein, Ludwig Worringer (*Ritter, Dene, Voss*), Hedwig Schuster (*Heldenplatz*), or others—ever return from Steinhof to a world that could with any seriousness be considered 'normal.' Much as the narrator of *Wittgensteins Neffe* takes the Wittgensteinian "gegen den Geist und gegen die Kunst gebauten Behausungen" [*houses built as bastions against the mind and art*] (WN, 95; WNE, 58) critically to task, a place like Steinhof, arguably built for both, does not necessarily fare any better as a remedy against unsettled identities, or—as Topp characterizes the idealized

purpose of early 20th-century psychiatric institutions—“both a tool and symbol of cultural regeneration.”²⁷

One of the areas of “culture” that in the eyes of Bernhard’s narrator does not easily admit of being opposed as ‘normal’ to the reality of institutional confinement is that of philosophy.²⁸ Not only “ist auch Nietzsche’s Kopf explodiert” [*did Nietzsche’s head, too, explode*] (WN, 39; WNE, 23), but Ludwig Wittgenstein, as well, might have to be counted among the insane. The designation of one member of the Wittgenstein family as ‘philosopher’ and another as ‘madman’ is negotiated by Bernhard with all the requisite ambiguity we might by now be familiar with, but which for all its repeated occurrence we still can hardly grant as ‘normal:’

aber möglicherweise glauben wir bei dem einen, philosophischen Wittgenstein nur deshalb, daß er der Philosoph sei, weil er seine Philosophie zu Papier gebracht hat und nicht seine Verrücktheit und von dem anderen, dem Paul, er sei ein Verrückter, weil der seine Philosophie unterdrückt und nicht veröffentlicht und nur seine Verrücktheit zur Schau gestellt hat. Beide waren ganz und gar außerordentliche Menschen und ganz und gar außerordentliche Gehirne, der eine hat sein Gehirn publiziert, der andere nicht. (WN, 44-5)

But it may well be that the philosophical Wittgenstein is regarded as a philosopher merely because he set his philosophy down on paper and not his madness, and that Paul is regarded as a madman because he suppressed his philosophy instead of publishing it, and displayed only his madness. Both were altogether extraordinary men and extraordinary brains; the one published his brain, and the other did not. (WNE, 26)

This possible set of beliefs takes up the problem of publication as an externalization of the “HIRN” that we have already considered with respect to Bernhard’s letter to Hilde Spiel and Konrad’s case of writer’s block in *Das Kalkwerk*. Later in the text, the narrator fortifies the “possible” belief in a philosophy without publication to an unqualified claim:

es ist ja nicht gesagt, daß der Philosoph nur dann als ein solcher zu bezeichnen ist, wenn er, wie der Ludwig, seine Philosophie aufschreibt und veröffentlicht, er ist auch der Philosoph, wenn er nichts von dem, das er philosophiert hat, veröffentlicht, also auch, wenn er nichts aufschreibt und nichts veröffentlicht. Die Veröffentlichung macht ja nur deutlich und macht das Aufsehen von dem deutlich Gemachten, das

ohne Veröffentlichung nicht deutlich werden kann und kein Aufsehen macht. Ludwig war der Veröffentlichler (seiner Philosophie), Paul war der Nichtveröffentlichler (seiner Philosophie) und wie Ludwig letzten Endes doch der geborene Veröffentlichler (seiner Philosophie) gewesen ist, war der Paul der geborene Nichtveröffentlichler (seiner Philosophie). (WN, 102-3)

it is far from certain that a philosopher can qualify as such only by writing down and publishing his philosophy, as Ludwig did; he remains a philosopher even if he does not publish his philosophizings, even if he writes nothing and publishes nothing. Publishing merely clarifies and makes the scene with what has been clarified, which cannot be clarified or make a scene unless it is published. Ludwig was the publisher (of his philosophy), Paul was the nonpublisher (of his philosophy), and as Ludwig in the end did turn out to be the born publisher (of his philosophy), Paul was the born nonpublisher (of his philosophy). (WNE, 63)

Not without a generous helping of irony could one go so far as to call Ludwig Wittgenstein, whose *Nachlaß* positively dwarfs the slim *œuvre* published during his lifetime (the *Tractatus*, a few short articles, and the *Wörterbuch für Volksschulen*), “born to publish.” And yet, the narrator’s attempt at introducing ‘publication’ as the defining element of Ludwig’s relationship to the sphere of philosophy, in opposition to Paul’s, is not altogether preposterous, since especially the Private Language Argument and related themes in his later writings do suggest that *public criteria* are an indispensable part of the views on language, meaning, and mind developed here. Whether or not this thought ultimately succeeds in “clarifying” what it attempts to elucidate is a different question altogether. Public recognition (“Aufsehen”) is surely impossible without reaching a (reading or hearsaying) public, but such acclaim may as a matter of fact bear no relation at all to actual clarification of a philosophical problem, or the demonstration that a so-called problem really isn’t one. The publication of the “HIRN,” as we have seen, is above all a proliferation of text, a creation of visible signs that does not thereby fix their meaning.

Paul’s plan for a “thoroughly philosophical autobiography” completely devoid of “*Schwafelei*” [rigmarole] (WN, 96; WNE, 59) never reaches that point of publication—neither during his life, as was the case with the *Tractatus* in which Ludwig Wittgenstein worked to keep “*Schwafelei*” at bay,²⁹ or even posthumously, as in Ludwig’s unpublished remarks that betray his desire for an autobiography of this sort (WA 2, 156)—and it is for this reason that any comparison between the two figures, as the narrator concludes,

remains “nonsensical” (*unsinnig*). That is, Paul Wittgenstein's existence turns out to be fundamentally different from his uncle's at the very least insofar as it is committed to paper exclusively through the narrator's report of his friend's “brain” as “practiced” (WN, 45; WNE, 26), and not as quotation of written words. The publication of the latter in Bernhard's text as a form of re-use, in turn, does not point the reader towards any ‘life’ that were successfully, ‘philosophically’ captured in them. One striking instance in Bernhard's oeuvre where this disjunction is made evident is the slightly modified quote in *Die Ursache* (1975) of a sentence from TLP 6.3611:

Und wenn eine solche Asymmetrie vorhanden ist, so können wir diese als *Ursache* des Eintreffens des einen und Nicht-Eintreffens des anderen auffassen, so Wittgenstein.³⁰

And if such an asymmetry is to be found, we can regard it as the *cause* of the occurrence of the one and the non-occurrence of the other, so Wittgenstein.

This quoted sentence, originally intended as the epigraph to Bernhard's text,³¹ appears in the *Tractatus* in the context of an argument against the availability of an absolute temporal or spatial frame of reference in the description of observed events. Only an asymmetry between two such events makes the description of spatial or temporal events possible, according to Wittgenstein, such that one of the two will legitimately function as cause of the other one, presumably providing an answer to the dystopian question alluded to in *Gehen* about there suddenly being *nothing at all*. That question is also at issue in Bernhard's attempt at a narrative ‘observation’ of his past self in *Die Ursache*, as he searches for causes for his mental and emotional ambivalence with respect to his hometown Salzburg. Wittgenstein's quoted words, intended in their original context to provide a basis for a secure relation between observations and propositions, once more do not clarify the problem for the writing ‘I,’

denn die Empfindung von damals ist eine andere gewesen als mein Denken heute, und die Schwierigkeit ist, in diesen Notizen und Andeutungen die Empfindung von damals und das Denken von heute zu Notizen und Andeutungen zu machen, die den Tatsachen von damals, meiner Erfahrung als Zögling damals entsprechen, wenn auch wahrscheinlich nicht gerecht werden, jedenfalls will ich den Versuch machen. (*Die Ursache*, 96)

for what I felt then is different from what I think now, and the difficulty is to record and to indicate my former feelings and my present thoughts in such a way that they correspond to the facts of my youth, to my experience as a schoolboy, even if they cannot do justice to them, at any rate I intend to try. (GE, 119)

The difficulty in writing his own “philosophical autobiography” subtitled *Eine Andeutung*, then, is exactly that which it is, and no more—a tautology: writing *Andeutungen* that remain removed from facts or ultimate causes outside the purview of a thinking that can never make them present. Thus, it remains difficult to measure to what extent the author Thomas Bernhard, whose narrated double noted the dependence of his “life, or rather, [his] existence” on the “dying (hi)story” (*Sterbensgeschichte*) (WN, 161; WNE, 98) of his “friend,” may be said to succeed where Paul Wittgenstein, like his uncle before him, failed.

“THAT, TOO, IS GOETHE” (“GOETHE SCHRIBT”)

The shifty appearance of ‘Wittgenstein’ as signifier and signified in Bernhard’s text is not subject to chronological restrictions imposed by the historical record. For all their Wittgensteinian allusions, *Heldenplatz* and *Ritter, Dene, Voss*, for example, are clearly set in contemporary 1970s or 1980s Vienna. In what is quite literally a re-write of Goethe’s last days on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of his death in 1882, Bernhard takes this *play* of an untethered name in the opposite temporal direction as he imagines Wittgenstein to be a contemporary of Goethe’s in “Goethe schreibt.” Mistaking Wittgenstein’s actual Cambridge residence for that of Oxford, Goethe as portrayed in Bernhard’s prose piece has within a month of his death taken to studying the *Tractatus*, and come to regard Wittgenstein as “his closest confidant”³² despite never having met him in person. Convinced that Wittgenstein’s thought is closest of all to his own, and even supplanting it, Goethe prevails on his deputies and assistants Johann Peter Eckermann, Friedrich Theodor David Kräuter, and Friedrich Wilhelm Riemer to invite Wittgenstein to Weimar for March 22, 1832 (which will turn out to be the day of Goethe’s death). The suggestion is not without irony, since until his very last days the aging *Dichturfürst* never lacked for prominent visitors who would come to see him on their own initiative without requiring an invitation. In this fictional case, however, the impetus is reported to be Goethe’s own, and it stems from the alleged recognition of Wittgenstein as a kindred spirit; standing corrected about Wittgenstein’s actual whereabouts does nothing to quash Goethe’s enthusiasm:

Als Riemer sagte *In Cambridge*, soll Goethe gesagt haben *Oxford oder Cambridge, es ist der glücklichste Gedanke meines Lebens und dieses Leben war voll von glücklichsten Gedanken*. Von allen diesen Gedanken ist der Gedanke, daß es Wittgenstein gibt, mein glücklichster. (GS, 400-01)

When Riemer said *In Cambridge*, Goethe reportedly said *Be it Oxford or Cambridge, this is the happiest thought of my life, and that life was full of happiest thoughts*. Of all these thoughts, the thought of Wittgenstein's existence is my happiest.

The report of Goethe's hyperbolic profession of happiness is delivered in typical Bernhardian fashion: mediated across two narrative levels (the first-person narrator and Riemer as his informant), and exaggerated to a degree of super-superlativity that cancels itself out; among a lifetime of "happiest" thoughts, no thought can ultimately take precedence, including this latest "happiest" one—which leaves the thought of Wittgenstein's mere existence as a thought among thoughts, signifying happiness in effect only about the fact of there being *anything at all*.

Goethe's sudden euphoria concerning (the) Wittgensteinian thought, and the *Tractatus* in particular, decades after his historically documented ambivalence towards Kantian and Hegelian systematicity, is thus reflected once again through Bernhard's lens of polar opposites posited to destabilize the positing instance. This movement of ultimate self-cancellation challenges Goethean notions of organic wholeness that would comprise opposite parts, not by strictly conceptual Hegelian sublation (*Aufhebung*), but rather by the synthetic capacities of the poetic imagination. Goethe's view of the history of ideas, as alluded to in *Faust II*,³³ as a continuum that *always* allows another synthesis, enabled him to see himself as a true 'survivor' of Romanticism. Bernhard's portrayal of a Goethe anointing Wittgenstein as his quasi-successor and the *Tractatus* as the *ultimate* book unmistakably bear the mark of this totalizing gesture:

Riemer sagte, Goethe habe den *Tractatus über seinen Faust und über alles gestellt, das er geschrieben und gedacht* habe. Auch das ist Goethe, sagte Riemer. Auch ein solcher. (GS, 410)

Riemer said that Goethe had put the *Tractatus above his Faust and above everything he had written and thought*. That, too, is Goethe, said Riemer. One of this kind, too.

In the eyes of his disciple Riemer—“Monent, Korrektor und Revisor” [*critic, proof-reader and editor*] of Goethe’s work³⁴—Goethe’s very act of recognizing Wittgenstein’s alleged ‘superiority’ over himself elevates Goethe, in turn, above the object of that recognition. At the very moment that Goethe would appear to downplay the value of his own work, his summoning of Wittgenstein before him in Weimar as a guest actually assigns Wittgenstein his place—and it therefore doesn’t matter whether the guest would be coming from Cambridge or from Oxford. By simple logic of addition, Goethe thus becomes for Riemer the figure able to comprise even that which appears alien to his own work, turning the additive particle “auch” not only into an element of surprise, but *also* into the marker of one-upmanship. There always needs to be one more side to Goethe, it seems, that hasn’t yet been seen or appreciated. Accordingly, Goethe’s alleged new project or theme occupying him during the last weeks of his life concerns both skeptical doubt *and* its opposite:

Der Genius, so Riemer, soll Kräuter gesagt haben, stand jetzt am Fenster und betrachtete eine vereiste Dahlie im Garten. *Sehen Sie, Kräuter, diese vereiste Dahlie!* soll Goethe ausgerufen haben und seine Stimme soll stark gewesen sein wie eh und je, *Das ist das Zweifelnde und das Nichtzweifelnde!* (GS, 404)

The genius, so Riemer, according to Kräuter, now stood at the window and observed a frosted dahlia in the yard. *Kräuter, take a look at this frosted dahlia!* Goethe reportedly called out, with a voice as strong as ever, *This is that which doubts and that which does not doubt!*

Goethe’s desire to discuss “that which doubts and that which does not doubt” with his guest Wittgenstein is a transformed affirmation of the principle of ideal purposive wholeness that Goethe claimed to see in the *Urpflanze*—that conceptual outgrowth of his Italian Journey so clearly echoed here. The notion of a unity of organic affirmation and frosty skepticism is cast as an immediate visual experience of a rather typical Goethean sort, and although it is certainly true that Wittgenstein’s thought—particularly certain exchanges with the hypothetical interlocutor in the *Investigations* and other passages of the late work—may be described as dealing with skepticism in a way that rarely if ever either dismisses or espouses it across the board, Goethe’s phrase is not of Wittgensteinian origin.³⁵ The claim to this effect at the very end of Bernhard’s text, when Goethe allegedly utters the phrase as his next to last one, is unmasked by the deceptive reporting of the famous words following soon afterwards:

Das Zweifelnde und das Nichtzweifelnde, soll Goethe als Vorletztes gesagt haben. Also einen wittgensteinschen Satz. Und kurz darauf jene zwei Wörter, die seine berühmtesten sind: *Mehr Licht!* Aber tatsächlich hat Goethe als Letztes nicht *Mehr Licht*, sondern *Mehr nicht!* gesagt. Nur Riemer und ich – und Kräuter – waren dabei anwesend. Wir, Riemer, Kräuter, und ich einigten uns darauf, der Welt mitzuteilen, Goethe habe *Mehr Licht* gesagt als Letztes und nicht *Mehr nicht!* (GS, 413)

That which doubts and that which does not doubt, supposedly where Goethe's next to last words. A Wittgensteinian phrase, that is. And soon thereafter those two words that are his most famous: *More light!* But actually Goethe's last words were not *More light*, but rather *That's it!* Only Riemer and I—and Kräuter—were present then. We—Riemer, Kräuter, and myself—agreed to tell the world that Goethe had said *More light* rather than *That's it!*

The highly doubtful status of Goethe's "Wittgensteinian" phrase is underscored by the transformation of the statement arresting the logic of addition in time ('after my death, *no more*') into the famous request for more (literal or metaphorical) clarity. In their pseudo-Wittgensteinian character, both the next to last sentence and the deceptively reported last one mask the ultimately banality of death as the end—the *that's it*—closing off the possibility of further self-reinvention. That reinvention is now inevitably up to others, free to reinterpret that end like Roithamer reinterprets his sister's "happiest moment." Wittgenstein's existence, that "happiest thought" of Goethe's, anachronistically comes to an end eight days before Goethe's own (GS, 411), a fact kept from the latter by his sycophantic assistants. However, since in the image³⁶ Wittgenstein *is* Goethe, too, the pseudo-Wittgensteinian phrases would owe their continued circulation to that supposedly pivotal moment of German intellectual history, Goethe's death.

Except, of course, that it is all a hoax, in more than one sense. After all, *Goethe stirbt nicht, er schtirbt*. Historically speaking, the situation enabling the allegedly plotted misreporting is itself misreported, since "[n]ur Riemer und ich – und Kräuter – waren dabei anwesend" [*only Riemer and I—and Kräuter—were present then*] (GS, 413) appears to underestimate the crowd surrounding Goethe's deathbed by at least a few people.³⁷ With respect to literary historiography involving Goethe, this perpetration of hoaxes certainly seems appropriate insofar as that historiography could well be said to be a hoax itself—an operation on words post facto that is meant to ensure Goethe's monumental presence for all eternity. Bernhard's text lets Goethe himself

anticipate this development as he, apparently approvingly, cites, very near the end of his life, from Hölderlin's "Hälfte des Lebens"—hardly his favorite poet if the historical record is any indication—in support of his observation:

Was ich dichtete, ist das Größte gewesen zweifellos, aber auch das, mit welchem ich die deutsche Literatur für ein paar Jahrhunderte gelähmt habe . . . so habe ich die Deutschen, die dafür wie keine andern geeignet sind, hinters Licht geführt. Aber auf was für einem Niveau! (GS, 406)

My poetic work was doubtless the greatest one, but also that with which I have paralyzed German literature for a few centuries to come . . . thus I have fooled the Germans, susceptible as they are to this like no other people. But at what an exalted level!

The recognition and admission of his own work as a hoax insofar as both contemporaries and subsequent generations will have been using it to establish aesthetic hierarchies is, in the end, nothing but the ultimate gesture of self-elevation, and one which Goethe's assistants in Bernhard's portrayal are more than eager to perpetuate by committing a hoax of their own in Goethe's name. It enables Goethe's self-evaluation of having achieved the "highest level" of literary deception to stand, so that his last words will not actually be exactly that which they are.

It is not lost on Bernhard that Wittgenstein himself has in the eyes of many disciples achieved a similarly sanctified status, and the thoroughly ambiguous observation by the narrator of *Wittgensteins Neffe* that "the name Wittgenstein" was enough to guarantee "a high, even the highest level" (WN, 45; WNE, 26) resorts to the same culturally dignified word (*Niveau*) to drive the point home. Casting the *Tractatus* as a metaphorical *Über-Schrift* the superiority of which Goethe announces to save his own *Niveau*, however, does not—I would contend—turn Wittgenstein into another Goethe "paralyzing" German literature for the foreseeable future. Rather, Bernhard's parasitic inscription of 'Wittgenstein' into the historically charged text of Goethe's biography—as a bookend to his continued probing of the former name in his novels and longer prose pieces—is a call to re-reading the text thus disfigured. Doing so, we discover that the written report by Goethe's doctor of his patient's last moments may have provided the required opening to insert Wittgenstein's name, thus completing an enigmatic, abbreviated gesture:

Als später die Zunge den Gedanken ihren Dienst versagte, malte er [Goethe], wie wohl auch früher, wenn irgend ein Gegenstand seinen

Geist lebhaft beschäftigte, mit dem Zeigefinger der rechten Hand öfters Zeichen in die Luft, erst höher, mit den abnehmenden Kräften immer tiefer, endlich auf die über seinen Schoß gebreitete Decke. Mit Bestimmtheit unterschied ich einigemal den Buchstaben W und Interpunktionszeichen.³⁸

Later, when his tongue failed him, he [Goethe] used the index finger of his right hand, as he apparently used to do when some object occupied his mind vividly, to draw signs into the air, at first high up, then lower as his powers diminished, and finally on the blanket covering his lap. With certainty I was able to recognize several times the letter W and a period.

Goethe's virtual writing, like Bernhard's own, may not have been *about* Wittgenstein, but it points us towards an understanding of literature as a necessary hoax, a *Fälschung* of words, as it crosses the path of a philosophy facing that same predicament beyond its idealized existence as pure thought, or *lebhaftige Geistesbeschäftigung*.

Chapter Three

W.G. Sebald: Family Resemblances and the Blurred Images of History

THIRD MAN

The line separating the contemporary perspective of the narrators and characters populating the work of W.G. Sebald from the past they are mnemonically contemplating is sufficiently thin to have raised suspicions of simple historicist nostalgia—especially for the post-Hegelian century—among critics of Sebald's work. The line in question, however, is also ruptured in a way that precludes any easy identification of the ruminations on history in which Sebald's narrators engage with that of more systematic—or more regressive—historicist projects. Allusions to the biography and work of Ludwig Wittgenstein, whose own reflections on the limitations of strictly historical explanation was discussed above in Chapter One, occupy a prominent place in the dense web of intertextual references that constitutes Sebald's texts. Both in his earlier critical work and the later literary texts, the frequency and character of the Wittgensteinian references are closely intertwined with the sustained investigation of mnemonic phenomena that structures Sebald's literary work as a whole. Wittgensteinian thought here frequently functions as a third element between the critical or narrative voice on the one hand, and the critically evaluated or narrated subject-object on the other. That third voice is not committed to dialectical mediation: Wittgenstein's work, Sebald will find, is hardly fit to legitimize particular critical judgments, or to provide explicit philosophical *grounding* for certain narrative operations. Rather, Sebald invokes Wittgenstein to eventually unsettle the very idea that there could be such mediation between narrator and narrated. In the case of the early critical work that calls upon the *Tractatus* as a critical instrument to delineate *that which may be said* in a novel, this unsettling process is only

beginning. Not altogether unlike Wittgenstein himself, Sebald will in his later work undermine some of his own earlier methodological precepts. As he begins his own literary project, the context of the Wittgensteinian references suggests that it is the *structure* of Wittgenstein's work and the doubts it casts on the possibility of the clarity which the *Tractatus* strove to embody that will inform the Sebaldian text. The diagnosis of clear, "pathological" signs in various authors gives way to a prose that is characterized first and foremost by the complexity of the relations it establishes between phenomena. Like Wittgenstein, who retained the ideal of a "perspicuous representation" (*übersichtliche Darstellung*) as he moved from the isomorphic relationships between propositions and facts to grammatical relationships, Sebald's narrators are also in search of an order that would bind the connections between the phenomena they observe. In both cases, that order is found on the surface, not within a deep structure. The textual and visual surface of Sebald's books challenges the view that personal and collective histories are a matter of chronological order; it presents a rearranged world of facts and fictions that reproduces Wittgenstein's finding—attested to by the preface to the *Investigations*—that the assumption of an internal, organic order is beyond verification, but also that, on the other hand, the viewing (*Ansicht*) of a sufficiently large number of phenomena will not necessarily make for a work that is perspicuous in any conventional sense. Hence the dizzying effect of the interplay between words and images in Sebald, always establishing relations across time and space, but withholding the substance, "life," an internal realm where the meaning of these relations would be constituted and could be grasped, simply by looking *inside*, or proceeding to yet deeper layers of historical sediment.

TELLING BLINDNESS (BROCH)

The modernist novel of the first half of the 20th century receives its methodological *démarche* to a significant degree from idealist theories of the novel in the wake of Hegel. What Joyce, Proust, Gide, Musil, Thomas Mann and others inherit from the 19th-century culture of the novel is the job description of the novelist as the savior of totality.¹ Or so Hermann Broch—typically counted among the major innovators of novelistic form during this time—would have it. Whether or not they may be said to be doing justice to his contemporaries, Broch's extensive theoretical reflections on the theory of the novel² attest to his concerns about the epistemological predicament of both philosophy and the novel in a scientific age. He rejects a separation between the natural sciences and the *Geisteswissenschaften* that has led hermeneuticists like Gadamer to posit that the artwork could only

be judged within the framework of the latter, not the former. Cognition, Broch claims, is unitary: art and science are but two branches of a common root,³ which would leave a positive role for scientific knowledge to play in the delineation of an epoch subject to the predicament of disciplinary differentiation. To be sure, science does not, as Hegel had said of philosophy, cast its time in thought, because its objective is to always favor the future over the past:

Die Wissenschaft kümmert sich nicht um die Erfassung der Zeit, in der sie entsteht, wohl aber wirkt sie, sobald sie von der Theorie in die Praxis übertritt, unmittelbar auf das Leben ein, indem sie vermöge seiner Bedürfnisse neue erweckt und solcherart zum wichtigsten Faktor im Werden einer neuen Epoche, in der Schaffung des "historisch Neuen" wird.⁴

Science does not care to capture the time in which it arises, but as soon as it moves from theory to practical application it does have an immediate effect on life by generating new desires from the ones already existing in life; thus science becomes the most important factor in the emergence of a new era, in the creation of that which is "historically new."

The mnemonic task of philosophical systematicity is not covered by science; "life" is unmistakably influenced by its effects, but it receives no guidance, no historical context for purposes of orientation. Broch believes that only "unitary cognition" could provide such orientation, and he thus sees a role reserved for art alongside science:

[D]en von der Wissenschaft unerreichbaren "Weltrest" ahnen zu lassen, jenen Weltrest, der doch gewußt ist und den zu erfassen die ewige Sehnsucht des Menschen ist—immer ist Dichten solche Ungeduld der Erkenntnis, und jedes Kunstwerk ist ahnendes Symbol der Totalität—.⁵

To provide an intimation of the "remainder of the world" inaccessible to science, the remainder that is still known and the grasping of which is man's eternal desire—poetic activity is always this kind of cognitive restlessness, and every artwork is an intimating symbol of totality—.

The novel would thus supplement science in a way that philosophy has ceased to be able to do. Responding to a basic human desire, it would intimate where research guided by reason fails to deliver results. Even if the novel cannot rival science in the detailed description of the world as 19th-century realists

and naturalists would have had it, it can provide for totality by focusing on that which remains inaccessible to science: alleged “metaphysical needs.” In a letter to Daniel Brody from August 5, 1931, Broch writes:

Sie kennen meine Theorie, daß der Roman und die neue Romanform die Aufgabe übernommen haben, jene Teile der Philosophie zu schlucken, die zwar metaphysischen Bedürfnissen entsprechen, dem derzeitigen Stande der Forschung aber gemäß als “unwissenschaftlich” oder, wie Wittgenstein sagt, als “mystisch” zu gelten haben.⁶

You know my theory that the novel and the new novelistic form have taken on the task of swallowing up those areas of philosophy that answer to metaphysical needs but are to be considered “unscientific” according to the state of the art of research, or, as Wittgenstein says, “mystical.”

The existence of such needs does not by necessity imply the possibility of their satisfaction. Broch's reference to the *Tractatus*, however, suggests that the novel—in virtue of its form—does indeed deliver the goods. He thereby clearly bypasses the austere limitation that Wittgenstein himself put on the role of philosophy in the *Tractatus*: to help us speak clearly, that is, in the language of the natural sciences (6.53). Of course, this is only the *positive* side of the Tractarian picture, to be complemented by the negative one: that which cannot be said, the “mystical” (6.522). The “mystical” does not pertain to anything *in* the world of facts, but to the bare existence of a world *as such* (6.44). Since the role of philosophy is to facilitate propositions about facts, it has nothing to contribute to the question of the mystical except for its determination as that realm for which it bears no responsibility. Hence, the part of philosophy which Broch believes to have been swallowed up by the novel has no complement in Wittgenstein. If philosophy may only say that which *can* be said (TLP 7), it can say nothing about the mystical. Neither can any other form of prose.⁷

Broch's Wittgensteinian claim must therefore turn on the distinction between saying and showing; the mystical cannot be said, but it may show itself—in the novel. This is what the earlier reference to intimation (*Abnung*) of a totality of the world apparently alludes to: according to Broch, the novel offers access to a realm of feeling where philosophy, as characterized by Wittgenstein, is limited to a world of facts. For Wittgenstein, the admission of a feeling for the mystical (“Das Gefühl der Welt als begrenztes Ganzes ist das Mystische” [*The feeling of the world as a limited whole—it is this that is mystical*] [6.45]) amounts to a negative delimitation of philosophy; for Broch,

on the other hand, it is a positive characterization of what the novel should strive to represent.

The symbolic representation of totality that Broch has in mind is Platonic in nature, suggesting the recollection of a unity that precedes a world of facts and propositions. The opening passages of Broch's last, unfinished novel *Die Verzauberung* (1935–51)⁸ provide an apt example of the anamnetic function that Broch is aiming for. The narrator, a country doctor in the (fictional) remote Austrian mountain village of Kuppron, is here retrospectively reflecting on his decision to leave the city for the country as he is preparing to write down the story that constitutes the novel. He notes that he was driven by the desire for a knowledge beyond all forgetfulness (Vz, 9, 11; S, 3, 5), consciously casting off the shackles of systematic scientific inquiry (Vz, 10; S, 3–4). This “knowledge” manifests itself in the story in disturbing ways: he recounts a retreat to archaic ritual, a rejection of science and of even basic forms of rationality on the part of the peasants among whom he has chosen to live. Enticed by the vagrant Marius, the inhabitants of Kuppron begin digging for gold, they drive an unpopular family out of town, and end up performing a human sacrifice. The role of the doctor/narrator as the erstwhile agent of rationality remains ambiguous throughout these unsettling proceedings. Even though he resists the collective regression, he is ultimately swept up in it, as an irrational desire overpowers his critical faculties at certain crucial junctures. On the narrative level, the doctor retains a certain amount of skepticism about whether that which he has seen may actually be preserved by being written down, “als könnte ich damit des Wissens und des Vergessens habhaft werden” [*as if by doing so I could hold fast to what is known and what is forgotten*] (Vz, 9; S, 3). Individual transmission of a recovered knowledge beyond scientific rationality is ultimately secondary, it seems, which may explain the changes Broch made across the various versions of the *Bergroman* as to how objective and reliable a narrator the doctor should be.⁹

The question of how objectively this obvious allegory of collective regression during the Third Reich could be rendered by a novelistic narrator goes to the core of what Broch believes to be the function of the novel more generally. Although he later writes in a commentary on the novel that “das Tagebuch ist die einfachste und ehrlichste Form, um ein psychisches Geschehen abzuspiegeln” [*the diary is the easiest and most honest form to reflect mental events*] (Vz, 384), the relation of the doctor's individual psychological states to the collective madness from which he is unable to extract himself seems anything but straightforward. It is the ambiguity surrounding the narrator's striving for a retreat to an original, pre-cognitive knowledge that

haunts this prose because it so closely matches the “metaphysical desires” that Broch identifies in his theoretical writings as the justifying factor for the novel as cognitive tool alongside—but incommensurable with—science. In what sense can the novel be said to represent “Lebens-Sozialtotalität” [*totality of life and the social*]¹⁰ by virtue of its form if on the level of the narrative the goal of seeking totality is at the same time being indicted? Broch’s hope for “erzieherische Wirkung ethischer Dichtung” [*the pedagogical effect of ethical poetic activity*]¹¹ certainly stands in no straightforward relationship to this kind of representation, given the proto-fascist bent of the particular community and its social interactions depicted in the *Bergroman*. The conflict comes down to this: can the novel contain the mutually exclusive elements of the “mystical” and the factual within itself, *showing* the relation between the two by *saying* something about it?

In a critical essay, W.G. Sebald identifies Broch’s attempt at reconciling the expressible and the inexpressible (which Wittgenstein’s early philosophy showed to be incommensurable) as a crippling shortcoming of Broch’s work. Drawing on the *Bergroman* as a case study, he describes how the representation of blindness from a supposedly elevated position of insight works to Broch’s disadvantage and threatens to undermine the ‘good intentions’ that may have led Broch to choose this particular allegorical setting:

Brochs Rechenfehler bestand in der Annahme, daß der den subjektiven Wahrnehmungen übergeordneten Blindheit des Ganzen durch eine höhere Vernunft noch beizukommen sei. . . . Anders als Wittgenstein, der die diskursive Ausdifferenzierung der ethischen Suppositionen unserer Existenz—in welcher Form auch immer—für ein Ding der Unmöglichkeit hielt und der sich deshalb auf die Delineatur der reinen Logik beschränkte, ist Broch anscheinend der Auffassung, daß große Probleme mit großen Konzepten schon zu bewältigen seien. . . . Bei der Arbeit am *Bergroman* gerät Broch, ganz der Wittgensteinschen Prognose entsprechend, bald aus dem Unsagbaren ins Unsägliche.¹²

Broch’s miscalculation consisted in his supposition that the enveloping blindness of the whole beyond subjective perceptions could still be remedied by some higher faculty of reason. . . . In contrast to Wittgenstein, who took the discursive differentiation of the ethical suppositions of our existence—in whatever form—to be an impossible task, and who therefore limited himself to the delineation of pure logic, Broch appears to be of the opinion that big problems may well be solved by means of big concepts. . . . While working on the *Bergroman*, Broch soon comes to

conform to the Wittgensteinian prognosis by tumbling from that which cannot be spoken about into the unspeakable and the dubious.

Sebald's charge against Broch takes issue not only with a long list of evidently questionable stylistic and narrative decisions in the *Bergroman*, but more generally with Broch's claim that the novel would stand in for the positive part of the *Tractatus*, that part which Wittgenstein—as he explained in his undated letter to von Ficker quoted in Chapter One—believed attained its ethical sense *only* by remaining undisclosed. Unlike Wittgenstein's early philosophy in its stance vis-à-vis the negatively outlined surround of logic, ethical poetry as conceived by Broch would *not* remain silent about the mystical, “the feeling of the world as a limited whole” (TLP, 6.45).

Ich sehe an diesem Anlauf gar nichts.

—Günter Netzer

METHODOLOGICAL SOLIPSISM (HANDKE)

The excessive gesture of capturing totality in the modern novel that Sebald criticizes in Broch contrasts with his analyses of authors like Sternheim, Döblin, Schnitzler and others whose works are taken to task for what Sebald ultimately diagnoses as expressions of what he terms their “pathological” condition.¹³ Where the critique of Broch focuses on a problematic notion of the collective dimension of myth, these analyses attempt to tease out the personal dimension of pathology by proposing to read the text as indicative of deeper layers of schizoid neuroses, social aberrations, and other afflictions. These “hypotheses,” as Sebald expressly characterizes his analyses in this vein,¹⁴ may carry rhetorical force against the critical establishment of *Germanistik* bent on preserving its figureheads unblemished, but they ultimately yield to the very classificatory impulse that Sebald will subsequently reject when he shifts his attention to authors whose relation to the pathological he considers worthy of “empathetic description.”

Handke's *Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter*¹⁵ is a case in point: Sebald credits this book with providing an objective insight into the nature of emotional estrangement, one that chooses anamnestic reconstruction over symptomatic categorization. Against any tendency to aesthetically exploit derangements (an inclination for which Sebald faults Döblin, Mann, Broch, Musil, and even Bernhard), Handke is here lauded for successfully avoiding the trap of pathetic identification with his object of description. Handke

achieves this by putting the object of literary “observation” itself into the position of an observer. The former soccer goalie Bloch—the pathological subject in Handke’s book—is cast as an indefatigable observer of both the world around him and of himself. The behavioral manifestations—a great many of them verbal—of what one might take to be psychological states are accessible only as external objects of language: Bloch’s reconstructions of his own recollections orient themselves according to singular propositions, rather than referring to psychological states independently of linguistic form. These propositions do not admit of the kind of immediate certainty that has been claimed for the subject by both empiricist and rationalist thinkers. As Sebald notes, Handke and his protagonist therefore partake of a tradition of linguistic skepticism that includes much of Austrian writing, and Wittgenstein in particular (BU, 121–2). For what rises to the surface of Bloch’s consciousness as he tries to orient himself and remember are *sentences*, not thoughts, and these sentences do not point back to ideas that the speaker ‘had’ at one time and lost access to. Handke’s Wittgensteinian skepticism runs deep enough here to suggest that there may not be any such mental entities, to be recombined as syntactic elements of a language of thought,¹⁶ but only sentences as they were explicitly uttered at one point or another:

Nach einiger Zeit ertappte sich Bloch, obwohl er eigentlich immer noch in der Wirtsstube saß und vor sich aufzählte, was draußen auf der Straße vor sich ging, daß ihm ein Satz bewußt wurde, der lautete: ‘Er war eben zu lange unbeschäftigt gewesen.’ Da Bloch der Satz als ein Abschlusssatz erschien, überlegte er zurück, wie er daraufgekommen war. Was war vorher gewesen? Ja! Vorher, wie ihm jetzt einfiel, hatte er gedacht: ‘Vom Schuß überrascht, hatte er den Ball durch die Beine rollen lassen.’ (ATE, 79)

After a while, although he was still sitting in the dining room listing the things that went on out on the street, Bloch caught himself becoming aware of a sentence, “For he had been idle too long.” Since that sentence looked like a final sentence to Bloch, he thought back to how he had come to it. What had come before it? Oh, yes, earlier he had thought, “Surprised by the shot, he’s let the ball roll right through his legs.” (GAPK, 82–3)

Beyond any given “concluding sentence” another one lurks, which turns Bloch’s past into a sequence of descriptive sentences lacking the kind of internal coherence of ‘life’ that the idealist theory of the novel would expect literary prose to provide. Bloch’s chronicling of a relentless activity

The way in which Handke makes Bloch's associative disorder manifest by typographical means indicates the extent of the loss of internal images by way of the reproduction of external shapes. It highlights the necessary limitations of a narrative 'diagnosis' with respect to causes, but also those of the "empathetic description"—itself a critique of such a diagnosis—that Sebald sees embodied in Handke's text. In his essay on *Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter*, Sebald does not directly refer to Handke's only pictorial passage in that book, but if he did, the only conclusion with respect to the possibility of "empathy" that could emerge would be that the reduction of "feelings" to the level of the sign—letter, and finally mere icon—negates this assumed possibility.

Handke, for one, never explains Bloch's failure, nor does he offer a reconstruction of his 'problem.' The literary text exhausts its potential in the juxtaposition of two different orders of signs—quoted words and icons—that no longer meet each other to guarantee for a psychic economy capable of articulating itself. Bloch's choice of words can therefore not be taken as a basis for the kind of pathography that Sebald had previously attempted in the cases of authors like Sternheim and Döblin. The surface of Handke's text has everything to do with this shift. Both pictograms and mental images are iconic signs, in virtue of the internal features of each that supposedly correspond to a given referent.²⁰ As elements of the present text, however, that referent would itself be Bloch's mental images of things, that is, another layer of iconic signs. Handke suggests that we cannot say with any degree of certainty whether Bloch indeed commands such a layer, given that the words he quotes in non-pictorial mode are in turn disconnected from any meaning to be constituted thus. Throughout the book, the application of words that "come to mind" to particular objects and situations is subject to doubt, causing disorientation while Bloch remains sufficiently capable of reproducing familiar behavioral patterns so that people around him do not become acutely aware of his disorder. The easily generated appearance of continuity suggests, in turn, that Handke's story is not merely about a singular type of pathology but about a disconnection from a world of objects and events extending far beyond this liminal case. As Sebald notes, the distinction between autistic murmuring on the one hand, and the transformation of this kind of alienation into the "metafiction of a literary text" on the other is ultimately impossible to make (BU, 123).²¹ It is the very danger of a loss of language and meaning, not the secure accumulation of the latter, that sustains the literary text and destabilizes it at the same time.

PHOTO-NOVEL

The images reproduced in Handke's text function not merely as substitutes for words but as critical markers of the limits of language, and of a skeptical attitude towards the presence of corresponding images "in the head" that would constitute the common referent of both linguistic and iconic signs. Bloch's insistent desire to "verify" the extent of his linguistically accessible knowledge by surveying the world thus transcends the scope of Handke's "empathetic description." The reverberations of that desire extend all the way to Sebald's own writing. In his literary work, questions of verification and memory will subsequently arise with particular urgency.

His own literary narratives, starting with *Schwindel. Gefühle.* (1990), though still very much taken with an interest in the verifiability of claims (particularly those about the past), arrive at much more skeptical conclusions as to the possible success of actual verification. One reason why this question is of paramount importance here is that addressing the epistemological status of truth claims is intimately bound up with the problem that 'professional' Sebald readers to date have found most vexing, namely to which genre to assign his works. The categories of novel, memoir, (auto-)biography, essay, travel narrative, and historical writing have been invoked to characterize them, and literary critics have used these terms in various overlapping combinations to highlight what has appeared most crucial to each of them.²² The elements that are responsible for this apparent uncertainty among the literary taxonomists are the very ones that suggest the possibility of verification of truth claims in the text against a reality established by—and thus to be traced back to—the historical archive. The real substrate of proper names, dates, and images seems to assert itself in Sebald's texts with particular force, emphatically enough to raise substantial classificatory worries. One might of course claim that such concerns are entirely beside the point. Sebald himself remarked to this effect that the transgression of the boundaries of genre is part and parcel of the very fabric of literature itself.²³ This comment, however, was made in response to the question of whether or not his books were to be considered novels; given the fact that the genre of the novel itself has been conceived as including such genre transgressions at least since Friedrich Schlegel and his notion of *Universalpoesie*, it must be concluded that the taxonomic disorientation indicates a more thorough confusion—one that would hardly be cleared up by merely stating that these days anything and everything can be a "novel." Novels or not (quite), Sebald's prose works are fundamentally concerned with the fragility of biological and historical memory, and the media to be employed

in light of this predicament. The novel, as indicated in the Introduction, was handed the baton as the prime candidate for such a medium by post-Hegelian idealism and hermeneutics. The reluctance on Sebald's part to call his works novels and his skeptical stance vis-à-vis that tradition and its vision of totalizing recollection are of a piece. The dangers of the "melodramatic" or "cheap forms of fictionalization"²⁴ loom where the novel evades its capacity for self-reflective investigation of its traditional realist role as "un miroir de long de la route" [*a mirror by the side of the road*] (Stendhal). But the simple choice of "prose" over "novel" that Sebald has exercised in interviews, while marking a difference between the two categories, will not on its own serve to clarify the relation of his own prose texts—broken mirrors all—to that which surrounds them.

Not only the way in which language is used—or misused—to tell stories comes under scrutiny in Sebald's books, but likewise the way in which an image can say more than a thousand words, not limited by any particular propositional content. The "Bilderroman" (SG, 123; V, 104) that one of Sebald's narrators observes a beautiful young girl reading on the bus from Brescia to Milano while he himself studies a textbook of elementary Italian—well-ordered, "als setze die Welt sich tatsächlich bloß aus Wörtern zusammen" [*as though the world was in fact made up purely of words*] (SG, 124; V, 105)—thus finds itself brokenly mirrored in the form of the surrounding prose. The relation between image and word is not strictly complementary, such that there would be "zu jedem Teil ein Gegenteil" [*to each part a counterpart*] (ibid.), as is the case in the vocabulary lists of the textbook. Insofar as Sebald's books do not conform to the standard of simply being well-ordered prose pieces, the very disruption of the text by images could be said to make them into novels: photo-novels. Rather than resting on the foundation of a continuity of internal images as Lukács suggests, they expose their discontinuity by means of photographic images.

These images may be understood as a radical extension of the iconic images in Handke's book that had marked the breakdown of descriptive language. It is thus hardly an accident that one of Sebald's earliest critical assessments of photography is found in the context of another essay on Handke. Here Sebald still holds to a clear distinction between the mnemonic potential of the (written) literary text, in contrast to the photographic image that furthers forgetting:


Die entscheidende Differenz zwischen der schriftstellerischen Methode und der ebenso erfahrungsgierigen wie erfahrungsscheuen Technik des Photographierens besteht allerdings darin, daß das Beschreiben das

Eingedenken, das Photographieren jedoch das Vergessen befördert. Photographien sind die Mementos einer im Zerstörungsprozeß und im Verschwinden begriffenen Welt, gemalte und geschriebene Bilder hingegen haben ein Leben in die Zukunft hinein und verstehen sich als Dokumente eines Bewußtseins, dem etwas an der Fortführung des Lebens gelegen ist.²⁵

To be sure, the crucial difference between the literary method and the technique—hungry for experience, and leery of it in equal measure—of photography consists in the fact that describing furthers remembrance, while taking photographs furthers forgetting. Photographs are the mementos of a world subject to a process of destruction and to disappearance, while the life of painted and written images extends into the future; these are documents of a consciousness invested in a continuation of life.

As photographs assume an integral role in Sebald's text in the following years, the distinction proposed here becomes decidedly more difficult, and ultimately impossible to make. Photographs of people will thus appear alongside reproductions of paintings and of written or printed pages, and all of these images are integrated into the "written image" of the printed text without being set off by captions.²⁶ The above passage is easy to read as an outright rejection of ephemeral photography in favor of the more lasting impact of verbal description or painting. Like Dilthey and Gadamer, Sebald would thus be rejecting the mechanically reproduced picture (*Abbild*) as unfit to function as a mnemonic medium, and instead prefer the painted or written portrait (*Bild*) for its representational capacity, its recollection of a meaning brought to presence.²⁷ But it is not without irony that if photographs were indeed mnemonically deficient in this way, then Sebald's eventual strategy of incorporating them into the literary text would be undermining the very features of text and image as objects of hermeneutical desire that Dilthey and Gadamer championed. If indeed photographs mark forgetting and death, rather than tending the flame of interior life that supposedly animates the text and its *Wirkungsgeschichte*, then Sebald's move is quite consistent with his critical assessment of photography above. In effect, it means to *consistently* threaten the very foundation of the function of the literary text that Dilthey and Gadamer were intent on establishing.

It may not seem immediately obvious that photographs should further forgetting rather than remembering when, in fact, the vast majority of all photographs are conceivably being taken by amateurs to function as souvenirs. For one thing, this has been a major selling point for cameras to be taken along when traveling since the earliest days of photography (Figure 2).



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Kodaks free at the dealers or by mail.

Figure 2. Print Advertisement “They all remembered the Kodak” (1909). Courtesy of Eastman Kodak Company.

Amateur photographers looked to satisfy the “hunger for experience” that Sebald refers to by taking pictures, in what may count as an extension of the boom of travel writing in the 19th century. The popularity of that genre, Sebald remarks in another context, derived from its suggestion of a possible escape from an everyday environment exceedingly dominated by the quantification of all of its aspects.²⁸ Traveling promised relief by opening up new fields of experience, while the inevitable documentation of these experiences in writing, and eventually in images, would preserve them for later enjoyment, or serve to relate them to others who never had them. This desire to retain an “original” experience by means of external *aides mémoires*, however, is doomed from the beginning, soon culminating in the inverse effect of trips being undertaken for the sake of photography, not the other way around.²⁹ What ends up being remembered is the “Kodak Moment” itself—the moment of having taken the picture—rather than an experience independent of, and prior to, the medium of its transmission. In this way, the photograph is a *memento mori* rather than a document of life. As Susan Sontag observes, taking it means “to participate in another person’s (or thing’s) mortality, vulnerability, mutability. Precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time’s relentless melt.”³⁰

The appearance of photographs in Sebald’s text therefore resurrects the specter of death that Lukács had confronted in the *Theory of the Novel* on the level of form but chased away when it came to characterizing the interiority of the modern hero. His insistence, inspired by Bergson, on a continuity of interior life or of biography even in the face of an absence of achieved meaning stands to be reconsidered in the particular case of Sebald’s narrators and protagonists. Most of them are wanderers of one kind or another, restlessly searching for a place of rest that they cannot find.³¹ Being travelers, they engage in the kind of archival documentation that has come to define and structure travel itself, and some of the material they accumulate is included along with their narratives. Unfolding this material before the reader’s eyes hardly testifies to the kind of nostalgia one might expect from the very idea of assembling a photo album. The way in which the images function in Sebald’s text is much more akin to how Wittgenstein had characterized his theoretical travels on the way to assembling the “album” of the *Philosophical Investigations*. Just like that document of Wittgenstein’s exploration of the winding paths of language and meaning, the lives and projects of Sebald’s narrators and protagonists yield only a fragmentary picture of landscapes and cityscapes traveled across in search of connections between innumerable parts.

It is not altogether surprising, then, to find the protagonist of Sebald's last book *Austerlitz* characterizing the notes towards his unfinished study in European architectural history of the 19th century in terms derived from those occurring in Wittgenstein's preface,³² concluding with the remark

daß es sich bei ihnen größtenteils um Entwürfe handelte, die mir jetzt unbrauchbar, falsch und verzeichnet erschienen. Was einigermaßen standhielt, begann ich neu zuzuschneiden und anzuordnen, um vor meinen eigenen Augen noch einmal, ähnlich wie in einem Album, das Bild der von dem Wanderer durchquerten, beinahe schon in der Vergessenheit versunkenen Landschaft entstehen zu lassen. (Au, 175)

that they consisted largely of sketches which now seemed misguided, distorted and of little use. I began to assemble and recast anything that still passed muster in order to re-create before my own eyes, as if in the pages of an album, the picture of the landscape, now almost immersed in oblivion, through which the wanderer's journey had taken him. (AuE, 121)

Austerlitz goes on to comment that to his mind he did not succeed in recreating that picture. The explicit reference to an attempt at combating forgetting is not found in Wittgenstein's original text; the path chronicled in Chapter One above helps to explain why. Wittgenstein's preface gives reasons for publishing what he considers to be a collection of sketches rather than a complete picture—the necessary consequence in terms of form of the winding path of the inquiry itself. He no longer entertains the hope that the album will provide a picture of an original landscape preserved in memory; the main motivation he cites for publication despite that fact is to provide a complementary context for the *Tractatus* and what he had come to consider its mistaken approach to the relation between language and world. The more initial motivation—being incited by *misunderstandings* that were caused by inaccurate transcriptions of his remarks that had come into circulation (PU, 232; PI, viii)—takes a back seat, his anger having been stifled, though only with “effort.” Eventually, Wittgenstein realizes, the possibility that others will be stimulated to think for themselves along the lines of his inquiry does not depend on whether or not he himself feels misunderstood. Bringing text into circulation—authorized or not—always means to relinquish control over how this text will be read.

The character Austerlitz, though he sees his own project in Wittgensteinian terms, never even reaches the point where the question of publication of his efforts would arise. But at the hands of Sebald's unnamed narrator as

chronicler, Austerlitz's entire story takes on the Wittgensteinian shape of his research project, redrawn in word and image but ultimately not to be rescued from forgetfulness in any kind of totality. The intertextual ties of Austerlitz's story to Wittgenstein's later philosophy of indeterminate resemblances caution the reader against an interpretation guided by a model of intertextuality that would be predicated upon a generalized mnemonic obligation, the notion that concrete contents—those of Austerlitz's life, for example—are inscribed in the text in order to be transmitted to recipients at spatial or temporal remove.³³ The case of Austerlitz as well as those of other Sebaldian characters does not bear out this hermeneutic model of intertextuality. Despite the biographical elements that these characters are reportedly endowed with—and we may even go so far as to conjecture: *because* of them—Sebald's prose is not committed to reanimating psychic “landscapes” in order to rescue them. Much to the contrary, the skeptical view of memory at work here precludes any claim to a diagnostic or explanatory anamnestic work. Sebald works with—and on—the surface of external text and image; like Wittgenstein's “travelogue,” his unique travel narratives transcend the concern with being understood, or misunderstood, by hermeneutically inclined descendants.

Denn wo Gespenster Platz genommen
Ist auch der Philosoph willkommen.

—Goethe, *Faust II*

WITTGENSTEIN'S *DOPPELGÄNGER*

The pages of Sebald's books are filled with ghosts and revenants. Wandering narrators and protagonists, traveling both between places and times, are criss-crossing the European continent and, in some instances, other parts of the world and the temporal matrix of historical events that may be traced in archives and at the geographical locations in question. The almost compulsive dedication to the documentation of these travels is what provides the rationale for presenting the acquired materials as part of the narrative. It is not particularly difficult, and perhaps even compelling, to read this *modus operandi* as a throwback to 19th-century historicism. Appropriately, the narrative imparting (*erzählerische Vermittlung*) by which Austerlitz communicates his project to the narrator is described as “eine Art Metaphysik der Geschichte, in der das Erinnernte noch einmal lebendig wurde” [*a kind of historical metaphysics, bringing remembered events back to life*] (Au, 18–19; AuE, 13). The reanimation of that which is already dead through narration is clearly indebted to Lukács.

Austerlitz's later confession that "[f]ür mich war die Welt mit dem Ausgang des 19. Jahrhunderts zu Ende" [*as far as I was concerned the world ended in the late nineteenth century*] (Au, 201; AuE, 139) can likewise be taken as an accurate portrayal of Lukács's historico-metaphysical vision in the *Theory of the Novel*, and, at least aesthetically, also the one that would endure in his work beyond the time of his early writings. Sebald's inimitable prose style, in which the voice of the narrator time and again morphs almost imperceptibly into those of his interlocutors, or into those of the innumerable writers that form his associative grid, might suggest an identification of the principles of narration at work here with this kind of metaphysics.³⁴ To do so would be to disregard the fact that the very notion of identity upon which an identification of Austerlitz's precepts with those of narrator (and author) would depend is itself a remnant of the very metaphysics it would seek to substantiate. The profound spatiotemporal instability of Sebald's narrative method does not support this kind of identity; the character Austerlitz (bearing the name of a historical catastrophe), who crosses the narrator's path at long intervals and with considerable unpredictability, is by no means identical to the narrator, though often enough described as sufficiently similar to him to unsettle the reader. Like Austerlitz, the narrator is engaged in constant reflections on the nature of memory, and as he follows the path of his acquaintance with Austerlitz, he attains a vertiginous proximity to the person who will become his biographical subject-object. He does not, however, disappear before it as the Diltheyan ideal historiographer would; the very point of emphasizing the numerous correspondences existing between them is to mark at the same time an insurmountable separation that does not allow the narrator to speak *for* Austerlitz, as though he could assume his identity.

The subtle but decisive differentiation between resemblances and identities that results from this separation pervades Sebald's narratives, inserting a gap between lives and experiences that cuts through the surface of Sebald's artfully connective prose. Another one among many striking instances of this insistence on difference is a passage in *Die Ringe des Saturn*, describing the astonishment of the narrator upon visiting the home of poet, translator, and critic Michael Hamburger in Middleton:

Über was für Zeiträume hinweg verlaufen nicht die Wahlverwandtschaften und Korrespondenzen? Wie kommt es, daß man in einem anderen Menschen sich selber und wenn nicht sich selber, so doch seinen Vorgänger sieht? Daß ich dreiunddreißig Jahre nach Michael zu erstmal durch den englischen Zoll gegangen bin, daß ich jetzt daran denke, meinen Lehrberuf aufzugeben, wie er es getan hat, daß er sich

in Suffolk und ich mich in Norfolk mit dem Schreiben plage, daß wir beide den Sinn unserer Arbeit bezweifeln und daß wir beide an einer Alkoholallergie leiden, das ist nicht weiter verwunderlich. Aber warum ich gleich bei meinem ersten Besuch bei Michael den Eindruck gewann, als lebte ich oder hätte ich einmal gelebt in seinem Haus, und zwar in allem geradeso wie er, das kann ich mir nicht erklären. . . . Auch in dem Vorhaus zum Garten schien es mir, als hätte ich oder einer wie ich dort gewirtschaftet seit Jahr und Tag. Die Weidenkörbe mit dem aus kleinsten Zweigen zusammengeschnittenen Feuerreisig, die abgeschliffenen weißen und hellgrauen Steine, Muscheln und sonstigen Fundstücke vom Ufer des Meers in ihrer lautlosen Versammlung auf der Kommode vor der blaßblauen Wand, die in einer Ecke bei der Tür zur Speisekammer aufgestapelten und ihrer Wiederverwendung entgegenharrenden Versandcouverts und Kartonagen wirkten auf mich, als wären es Stilleben, entstanden unter meiner eigenen, am liebsten das Wertlose bewahrenden Hand. . . . Aber so geschwind, wie einem dergleichen Gedanken kommen, so geschwind lösen sie sich in der Regel auch wieder auf. (DRS, 217–20)

Across what distances in time do the elective affinities and correspondences connect? How is it that one perceives oneself in another human being, or, if not oneself, then one's own precursor? The fact that I first passed through British customs thirty-five years after Michael, that I am now thinking of giving up teaching as he did, that I am bent over my writing in Norfolk and he in Suffolk, that we both are distrustful of our work and both suffer from an allergy to alcohol—none of these things are particularly strange. But why it was that on my first visit to Michael's house I instantly felt as if I lived or had once lived there, in every respect precisely as he does, I cannot explain. . . . In the porch that led to the garden, I felt again as if I or someone akin to me had long gone about his business there. The wickers baskets full of small twigs for kindling the fire, the polished white and pale grey stones, shells and other seashore finds mutely foregathered on the chest of drawers against the pale blue wall, the jiffy bags and packages stacked in a corner by the pantry door awaiting reuse, all seemed as if they were still-lives created by my own hand. . . . But thoughts of this kind are usually dispelled as speedily as they appear. (TRS, 182–5)

The obsession with correspondences drives the narrator to put himself in the place of his host, pushing resemblances towards the asymptotic limit

of identity when he imagines that he *or someone like him* went about his business in a house he has never before seen. This perception hardly occurs independently of the fact that the narrator reports extensively from Hamburger's autobiographical writings³⁵ before describing his arrival at the house. Prior reading about Hamburger's life crucially informs the narrator's experience of meeting him in his personal surroundings, and this anteriority of text to "experience" is replicated in the narrative structure of Sebald's text, which presents reflections on Hamburger's life prior to the personal encounter. At the center of what is recounted in these reflections is that which forms the silent center of almost all of Sebald's work: the Shoah and its impact on Jewish emigrants who managed to escape it but are nevertheless haunted by its effects for the rest of their lives. Hamburger, Austerlitz, and the protagonists in *Die Ausgewanderten* all belong to this group. The fate of European Jewry with which Sebald, who is not Jewish, is so insistently concerned marks the absolute limit of a possible identification of a chronicler with people and experiences he sets out to chronicle. Insofar as he will, in a project like this, necessarily run up against experiences that he cannot claim to approximate, the finding of resemblances must always stop short of identification. Even though the struggles that Sebald's Jewish characters fight with memory—most often with their lack thereof, sometimes with the hypertrophic, traumatic inversion of that lack—do significantly resemble those of their non-Jewish narrator, this shared negative predicament is not sufficient for a writing of stories and histories from the assumed perspective of the other. The irreducible difference at the base of the resemblances by which we categorize the world—including the world devastated by the historical events of the 20th century—can never be denied.

The similarity between Austerlitz's self-characterization of his research project and the reconstructive attempts on the part of his narrator—both being skeptical assessments of the possibility of mnemonically resurrecting a past "landscape" of objects and thoughts—may be traced back to the influence of Wittgenstein's theory of family resemblance in the *Investigations*. Austerlitz reports that his studies of the "Familienähnlichkeiten, die zwischen all diesen Gebäuden bestünden" [*family resemblances that existed between all those buildings*] (Au, 48; AuE, 33), first undertaken towards a dissertation on architectural history, end up growing uncontained into a network of references, interconnected much like the nodes of a railroad network (Au, 48–9; AuE, 33). Retelling Austerlitz's story, the narrator will exemplify this notion—though not explicitly—by returning time and again to the structural schema of a star-shaped polygon (Figure 3)

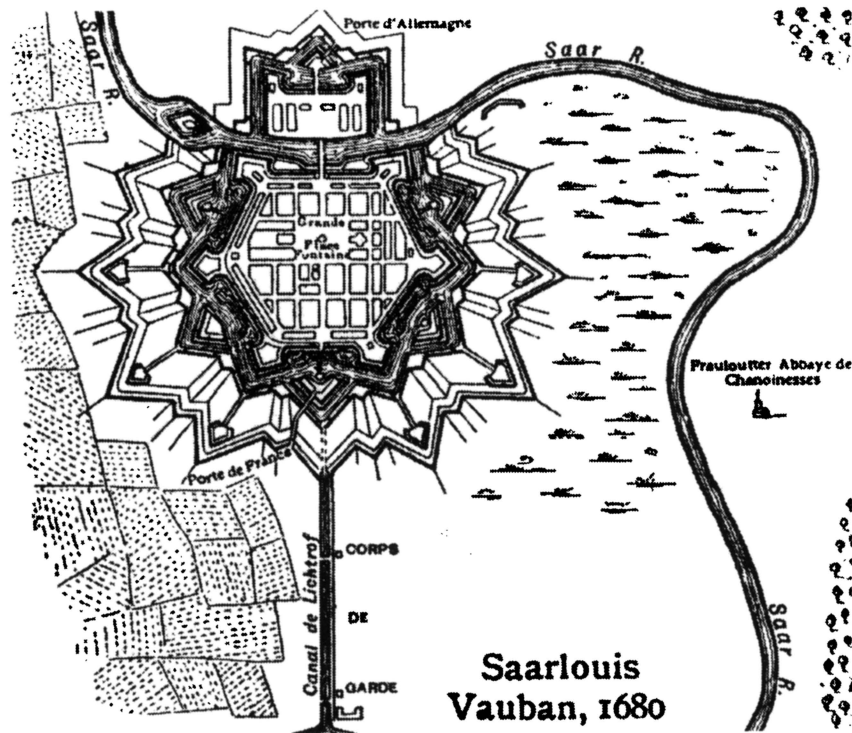


Figure 3. © W.G. Sebald, from *Austerlitz*, 2001, page 22.

that connects a number of architectural sites that form part of Austerlitz's story: among them are the forts at Antwerp, Coevorden, Neuf-Brisach and Saarlouis (Au, 22–3; AuE, 15), a dream image during a nightmare (Au, 200; AuE, 138), the fort at Terezín (Au, 268, 284; AuE, 187, 199), and a summer residence built for Archduke Ferdinand of Tyrolia at Liboc (Au, 356; AuE, 252).³⁶ The history of this architectural blueprint as researched by Austerlitz reveals that although it may have been designed as an emblem of absolute power (Au, 23; AuE, 15–6), the actual circumstances of war in the 18th century and beyond—the contexts of the *use* of this schema—exposed its weaknesses.³⁷ Along with the ever increasing range of cannons and the ever more destructive power of explosives, the adherence to a logic of fortification and siege made it necessary to build ever more monumental forts, and eventually rings of forts ever farther outside the cities, culminating in circumferences that were altogether impossible to defend with the available manpower. Moving the star-shaped forts ever farther to the periphery signifies the deferral of the decision that the

very idea of a central fortification could no longer answer to the fact that movement, rather than stasis, would decide modern wars. The polygonal shape recurring in Austerlitz's studies, descriptions, and dreams thus indicates the continuation of a logic beyond the limit of its rationality. An emblem or allegory—rather than a symbol—of power, it nevertheless retains significance in terms of absolute power, bare of all rationality, beyond the crumbling logic of its original inception. The re-use of Fort Breendonk at Antwerp as an internment camp (Au, 28; AuE, 19), and of the fort at Terezín as part of the Theresienstadt ghetto, will once again set these structures up as models “einer von der Vernunft erschlossenen, bis ins geringste geregelten Welt” [*of a world made by reason and regulated in all conceivable aspects*] (Au, 284; AuE, 199). As a locus of the well-oiled bureaucratic machinery of the Nazi perpetrators, the emblem thus haunts the Jew Austerlitz as he begins to trace his own biography, having been exiled to Wales from Prague through a so-called “children’s transport” by his parents who appear to have perished at the hands of the Nazis, though Austerlitz tries in vain to confirm this. The emblem is the recurring sign of a rationality that covers over its inherent irrationality; the irreconcilable rupture that the exercise of absolute power has created will admit only an ongoing repetition of the emblem, not any kind of achieved recollection of the *disiecta membra* by means of a symbol.

Resemblance emerges as the organizational principle of Sebald's prose and the connections it establishes between even the most disparate phenomena. Not only does the ophthalmological affliction of the narrator that causes blind spots in his field of vision (Au, 50–1; AuE, 35) resemble Austerlitz's battle with the blind spots surrounding his own origins. More poignantly still, the narrator characterizes Austerlitz himself as uncannily similar to that philosopher upon whose *Investigations* his own account of Austerlitz's story appears to rest:

Mehr und mehr dünkt es mich darum jetzt, sobald ich irgendwo auf eine Photographie von Wittgenstein stoße, als blicke mir Austerlitz aus ihr entgegen, oder, wenn ich Austerlitz anschau, als sehe ich in ihm den unglücklichen, in der Klarheit seiner logischen Überlegungen ebenso wie in der Verwirrung seiner Gefühle eingesperrten Denker, dermaßen auffällig sind die Ähnlichkeiten zwischen beiden, in der Statur, in der Art, wie sie einen über eine unsichtbare Grenze hinweg studieren, in ihrem nur provisorisch eingerichteten Leben, in dem Wunsch, mit möglichst wenig auslangen zu können, und in der für Austerlitz nicht anders als

für Wittgenstein bezeichnenden Unfähigkeit, mit irgendwelchen Präliminarien sich aufzuhalten. (Au, 60)

And now, whenever I see a photograph of Wittgenstein somewhere or other, I feel more and more as if Austerlitz were gazing at me out of it, and when I look at Austerlitz it is as if I see in him the disconsolate philosopher, a man locked into the glaring clarity of his logical thinking as inextricably as into his confused emotions, so striking is the likeness between the two of them: in stature, in the way they study one as if across an invisible barrier, in the makeshift organization of their lives, in a wish to manage with as few possessions as possible, and in the inability, typical of Austerlitz as it was of Wittgenstein, to linger over any kind of preliminaries. (AuE, 41)

In conjunction with the similarity between the narrator and Austerlitz that we already mentioned, the connection established here between Austerlitz and Wittgenstein sets up a relation of family resemblance between three figures in which there need be no one feature that all three relate share.³⁸ They stand in a relation without having one particular shared criterion of identity that would mark them as elements of a set. This strategy of non-identification recurs in all of Sebald's books: a narrator will approach the characterization of a person or interlocutor by likening him or her to a third figure. A relation is thus established between all three by connecting parts of their biography, appearance, or reading material to create a thread—*einen roten Faden*—connecting them that does not, however, have one fiber running all the way through.³⁹ In Wittgensteinian terms, recognizing this thread *as a red one* involves not the recognition of an indestructible metaphysical quality of redness in all three instances, but rather a sense for Sebald's use of language and its rhythm as it aligns them into a new word order.⁴⁰

FOUR PAIRS OF EYES, TWICE (BRETON)

One photograph that may be among those which remind the narrator of Austerlitz occurs earlier in the very beginning of the book, though Wittgenstein is not explicitly mentioned in that particular context, nor even shown in full. Moreover, the pictorial fragment is taken to resemble not the protagonist—because the narrator has yet to encounter him for the first time—but rather animals emblematic of inquisitiveness and sagacity (Figure 4).



Figure 4. © W.G. Sebald, from *Austerlitz*, 2001, page 7.

The last pair of eyes⁴¹ is recognizably Wittgenstein's, from a photograph taken in 1947 in Swansea (Figure 5).

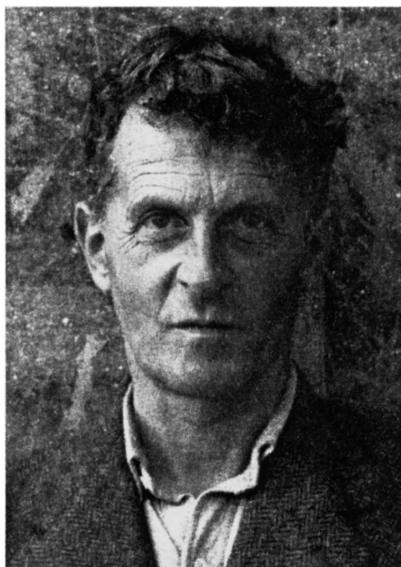


Figure 5. Ludwig Wittgenstein, Swansea, 1947. Photo by Ben Richards. Courtesy of the Wittgenstein Archive Cambridge.

These images are the first instance in *Austerlitz* of “illustrations” by the narrator of memory images supposedly retained from past experience, in this case a visit to the nocturama in the zoo at Antwerp. Right from the start, however, the reader is clued in to the fact that these images are never simply externalizations of something internal, but that they are part of a network of references that pre-structures the experience it is associated with, rather than functioning as its representation. They therefore cannot be expected to secure the stability of memory, and it follows that according to the narrator

[d]ie Bilder aus dem Inneren des Nocturamas sind in meinem Gedächtnis im Laufe der Jahre durcheinandergeraten mit denjenigen, die ich bewahrt habe von der sogenannten *Salle des pas perdue* in der Antwerpener Centraal Station. Versuche ich diesen Wartesaal heute mir vorzustellen, sehe ich sogleich das Nocturama, und denke ich an das Nocturama, dann kommt mir der Wartesaal in den Sinn . . . (Au, 8)

the images of the interior of the Nocturama have become confused in my mind with my memories of the so-called *Salle des pas perdue* in Antwerp Centraal Station. If I try to conjure up a picture of that waiting room today I immediately see the Nocturama, and if I think of the Nocturama the waiting room springs to my mind . . . (AuE, 5)

The images presented in the text can hardly be said to picture mental representations (*Vorstellungen*) if those representations cannot be clearly established in the first place. The ensuing associative “confusion,” in turn, is analogous to the one the narrator perceives between Wittgenstein and Austerlitz: looking at one is like looking at the other. Making this construction of resemblances manifest in the photo image shows that their differential repetition does not indicate a realm of interiority in which memory images would be kept. The “Bilder aus dem Inneren des Nocturamas” are present only as photographs, *Lichtbilder*, that are no more able to penetrate the epistemological darkness than the pairs of eyes pictured in them.⁴² Instead of documenting a fully restored memory, their arrangement on the page calls up a text in which a similar such arrangement still suggested the possibility of memory (Figure 6).

The photograph of Nadja’s eyes in Breton’s novel⁴³ quadruples the pair of eyes, thus identically repeating the only visual trace of the “real Nadja” (N,

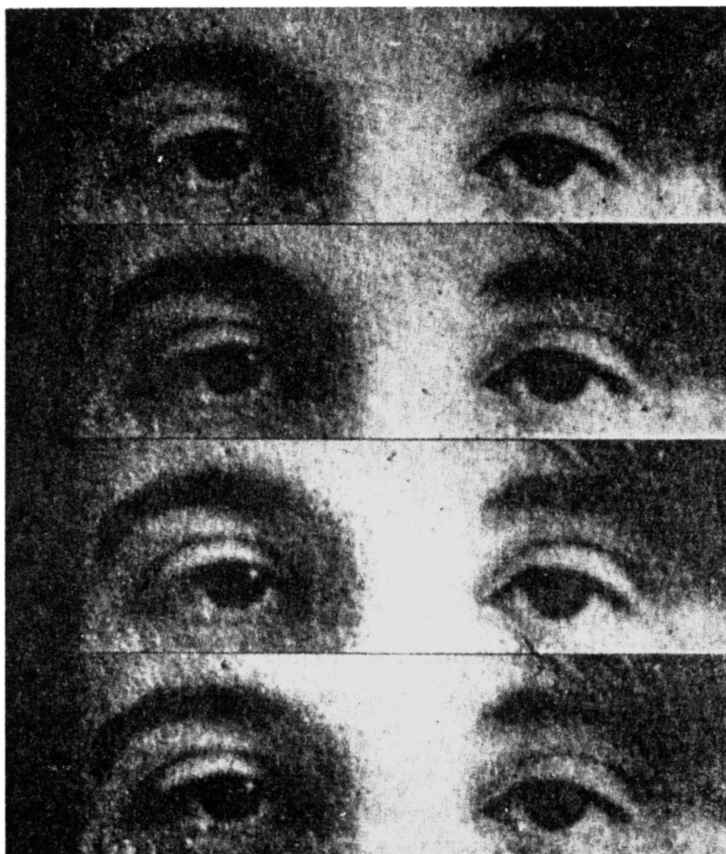


Figure 6. André Breton, from *Nadja*, page 129. Courtesy of Aube Elléoüet Breton.

133; NE, 112). These eyes are shown to resemble only themselves, and—designated as “yeux de fougère” [*eyes of fern*] by the caption—they would seem to be turned into metonymy and metaphor in one, standing in both for the person “Nadja” and for a botanical referent.⁴⁴ Thus, there are depths of meaning to be seen in these eyes, notwithstanding Breton’s claim in another context that photography would radically reduce interpretation to its minimum.⁴⁵ Earlier in *Nadja*, a verbal reference to the eyes identifies them as indicators of an internal conflict, presumably the early stages of the title character’s eventual madness. Nadja’s closing of her eyes in that earlier scene provides temporary closure to the conflict disturbing her,⁴⁶ but the pictorial representation of her opened eyes, in fourfold iteration, powerfully rearticulates her losing battle with sanity, which is, in the end, a battle surrounding the adequacy of symbolic interpretation.

The eyes recollected by Sebald's narrator do not offer the kind of deep insight into a psyche that is drawn from them in Breton, since they are not explicitly ascribed to any particular person, and are related to the character Austerlitz only by the implications of resemblance we have pointed out. It is not surprising, then, to find in the same passage a reference to an earlier book of Breton's, also mentioned in *Nadja* (N, 83, 89; NE, 72, 77), in which he divorces photography from this kind of ascription of meaning.⁴⁷ The waiting room with which the narrator in *Austerlitz* confuses his memories from the nocturama bears the name of Breton's essay collection, and it is thus, once again, the evident influence of a *text* that interferes with the distinct recollection of a memory image.

Sebald's strategy of combining text and image is clearly indebted to the Surrealists, though in contrast to a host of other influences of his, they are nowhere explicitly acknowledged. The only evident recognition is mediated by Benjamin's essay "Der Sürrealismus," to which Sebald refers repeatedly in his theoretical work. In that essay Benjamin remarks on the city photographs in *Nadja* that they milk architecture for its "banal evidence," relating places to the narrative in the fashion of a trash novel.⁴⁸ The captions below the images serve to amplify what Benjamin considers the tautological character of photography in its relation to reality: they assign each image a specific referent in the text. This is also the case with Nadja's eyes, though we are here dealing with a photo portrait, rather than architectural photography. Consistent with the illumination of detail that Benjamin takes to be a main feature of surrealist photography,⁴⁹ only a detail of Nadja's face is presented, and is emphasized through repetition. It is crucial to note, however, that, contrary to Breton's own claim in the preface to the revised edition of 1962 (the first in which this particular photo-montage was included), Breton's photos by no means "eliminate all description" (N, 6). Rather, the description that is the caption establishes determinate reference, foreshadowing the ultimate dominance of caption over image which Benjamin, in another context, projected as the coming fate of photography.⁵⁰ Sebald, in contrast, avoids all captions, and thus leaves open a rupture between text and image that is all the more incisive in that his photographs are not, like Breton's, confined to separate pages. Routinely interrupting the syntactic flow of sentences, they achieve the Benjaminian "shock" not through text that would illuminate them, but through their position in relation to the surrounding text—a relation that does not necessarily amount to a clarification of the latter. The suspense in which they are kept nevertheless does not fall prey to that for which Benjamin criticizes the Romantics in the "Sürrealismus" essay, namely fanatically underlining that which is mysterious about the riddle. Sebald himself had

charged Döblin with doing exactly this, through lack of reflection and metaphorical hypertrophy⁵¹—something which he himself avoids by letting the photographed eyes function as metonymies, not metaphors. The “detachedly (*unverwandt*) inquisitive gaze,” looking to penetrate the surrounding darkness, is merely “copied” onto the page, black on white, prosaically. Behind these eyes there is nothing to see: looking *unverwandt*, they will not allow it. Behind these eyes—only a few of the many pairs whose gaze lines Sebald’s work⁵²—there is the same darkness one faces when hunting owls, which Breton’s narrator had linked *with necessity* to his own act of writing.⁵³ The family resemblances to be discerned in these eyes are on the page, or else nowhere.

Kaum hatte ich die Grenze überschritten, da stürzten sich mir die
Gespenster entgegen.

—Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau, *Nosferatu*

WITTGENSTEIN'S *DOPPELGÄNGER*, AGAIN (AMÉRY)

Austerlitz is not the only Wittgensteinian revenant to be encountered in Sebald’s books. Paul Bereyter, the protagonist of the second part of *Die Ausgewanderten*, is likewise a composite figure bearing crucial features that may be traced back to the philosopher. In this story the narrator reconstructs the life of Bereyter, his elementary school teacher in the town of S. in post-WW II Southern Germany, occasioned by Bereyter’s suicide in 1983. Drawing on his own memories, as well as recollections and documents provided by Bereyter’s partner in his later years, Mme. Lucy Landau, the narrator attempts to approach the life of a man of whom nobody knew “what he was and what went on inside him” (*wie es aussah in ihm*) (Agw, 44; E, 29). From the outset, the narrator qualifies his reconstruction as one that will abstain from trying to fill this apparent internal emptiness. Any attempt to call up images as he undertakes to relate Bereyter’s life bring to mind not markers of a cognitive re-presentation of that life in memory, but to the contrary reminders of an ineradicable difference between narrator and narrated that only the suspect instance of *feeling* could momentarily claim to erase:

Solche Versuche der Vergegenwärtigung brachten mich jedoch, wie ich mir
eingestehen mußte, dem Paul nicht näher, höchstens augenblicksweise,
in gewissen Ausuferungen des Gefühls, wie sie mir unzulässig erscheinen
und zu deren Vermeidung ich jetzt aufgeschrieben habe, was ich von Paul

Bereyter weiß und im Verlauf meiner Erkundungen über ihn in Erfahrung bringen konnte. (Agw, 45)

Such attempts at making present, however, did not, as I had to admit, bring me any closer to Paul, except at best for brief excesses of emotion of the kind that seem presumptuous to me, and which I have sought to avoid by writing down what I know of Paul Bereyter and was able to learn about him in the process of my investigations. (E, 29)

The presence of the other in a memory image is ultimately an illusory sentiment or a sentimental illusion, one that the narrator seeks to avoid by committing *facts* to writing instead. The known facts, however, evidently do not extend to Bereyter's interior, and their record has to remain committed only to the surface of that which could be observed. The ethical imperative posited here against any attempted emotive identification with his teacher above and beyond this kind of reporting is dictated by the fate of the Bereyter family in S. during the Third Reich (the Nazis classified Paul's father as a "Half Jew") that emerges in the course of the reconstruction. Paul Bereyter was suspended from school teaching in 1935 and went to France, but returned to Germany in 1939 and, being a "Three-quarter Aryan," was actually drafted to serve in the German army until the end of the war. His parents, ostracized and dispossessed, stayed in S. and were later deported, most likely to Theresienstadt (Agw, 73; E, 49–50). After the war, Bereyter returned to S. and continued to teach there until the 1970s, despite an obviously (or perhaps not sufficiently obvious) traumatic relationship to his place of origin. Having known Bereyter mainly as the elementary school student that the narrator was in the early 1950s, the narrator is astonished at what Mme. Landau tells him about his former teacher's life. According to Mme. Landau, the fact that growing up in S. the narrator never came across any traces of his teacher's back story is hardly surprising, and fits "the logic of the whole story" (Agw, 75; E, 50)—the logic of denial and silence which Paul Bereyter remained subjected to, and which may or may not be a factor in his eventual decision to kill himself. Insofar as there is any "logic" to the tragedy that is Bereyter's life, it is constituted not by the structure of any *res cogitans*, but rather by the external circumstances that the narrator uncovers and puts in writing—the disturbing particularities about life "in solch einem miserablen Nest, wie S. es damals war und es, allem sogenannten Fortschritt zum Trotz, unverändert ist" [*in a miserable hole such as S. then was, and such as it still is despite all the so-called progress*] (Agw, 74–5; E, 50). It is

the surface of everyday occurrences—where the exclusion and harassment of his parents at the hands of fellow citizens are easily connected to the subsequent indifference of those same citizens after the war—that makes for the “logic,” not an enigmatic deep structure of Bereyter’s personality. This surface is fully traceable as text in archives. It is by way of such archival research that Bereyter eventually learns about shocking details of how Jews were treated in S. while he lived in France. These details, as they filter down to the narrator, mediated through Bereyter’s documents and Mme. Landau’s report, throw in relief that whatever the narrator may find out (*in Erfahrung bringen*) will not, however, bring him closer to Bereyter’s own experience.

“Paul Bereyter” is a story about the inaccessibility of the internal states of others, a circumstance that the narrator chooses to acknowledge rather than lament. While a fascination with that which is necessarily out of reach lingers, the narrator concedes that making such inferences, given the past neglect of much more readily accessible facts about Bereyter, is—strictly speaking—illegitimate (*unzulässig*). It is so not only in an ethical, but also in another sense: it exceeds that about which sensible question may be formed, because it is principally beyond confirmation. To the school boys, a slight speech impediment of their teacher’s occasionally suggested that he might be “ein künstlicher, aus Blech- und anderen Metallteilen zusammengesetzter Mensch” [*a mechanical human made of tin and other metal parts*] (Agw, 52; E, 35). The possibility of this sort of Cartesian skepticism about other minds⁵⁴ persists in the face of Wittgenstein’s own early claim that such skepticism, while not irrefutable, is ultimately senseless (*unsinnig*) (TLP, 6.51). In the *Investigations* (PU, §420), a second possibility of evaluating such a scenario emerges, discussed in the context of the reverse situation in which an adult observes a group of children. The words suggesting the skeptical possibility are now glossed as either empty (*nichtssagend*), or else evoking “a sort of uncanny feeling” (*eine Art unheimliches Gefühl*) in the speaker who is hypothesizing about the machine-like internal nature of another. The reason why the words “Die Kinder dort sind bloße Automaten; alle ihre Lebendigkeit ist bloß automatisch” [*The children over there are mere automata; all their liveliness is mere automatism*] may not “say anything” is no longer taken to be that they don’t point to facts, but that their applicability to a particular situation is simply not recognized. This is why Wittgenstein goes on to draw an analogy between this case and the “seeing as” of a figure as something else, “irgendeine Figur als Grenzfall oder Variation einer anderen zu sehen, z.B. ein Fensterkreuz als Swastika” [*one figure as a limiting case or variant of another; the*

cross-pieces of a window as a swastika, for example] (ibid.). Seeing the figure as an “aspect” in this way implies the seemingly paradoxical consequence that something different is seen, even though nothing about the original object has changed. Wittgenstein analyzes this situation as one that exemplifies two different uses of the word “seeing,” or two categorically distinct “objects” of seeing (PU, 518; PI, 193). Thus, seeing Bereyter as an automaton would pick out an object altogether different from the one usually referred to as a person; seeing this resemblance does not identify objective properties of his, but it still means to see *something*. The “uncanny feeling” produced by that seeing remains *nichtssagend*, without meaning, as far as facts about Bereyter’s interior make-up are concerned. At the same time, something other that is not quite “nothing” *is* seen, no more a “nothing” than the swastika still visible as an ineradicable behavioral imprint on the people of S.

Seeing a figure as the variation of another—Bereyter as automaton, Austerlitz or Bereyter as Wittgenstein, Michael Hamburger as the narrator of *Die Ringe des Saturn*, and on through all of Sebald’s oeuvre—does not unlock an essence in either of the two relata. But according to the view Wittgenstein arrives at in the *Investigations*, this “seeing as” is nevertheless not strictly *impossible* in the sense that the *Tractatus* claims, and the complex struggle with vision and its obstruction that Sebaldian characters like Bereyter or the narrator of Austerlitz literally go through is one way of figuring this receding possibility. In their conflicted referencing of Wittgenstein, Sebald’s writings continually press the question of how to properly address that which is *nichtssagend*, addressing the gap of language, that is, without thereby claiming to intimate the “Weltrest” that Broch was striving for. In literature, and in philosophy, pointing to this gap may be all there is to say, lest we should end up with nothing but a blank page.⁵⁵

The irresolvable conflict between the desire to say something that is *not nothing* about the other, and finding nothing to be adequate, accordingly pervades the narrator’s account of Paul Bereyter’s life. It is an uncertainty that is not simply due—as Cartesian skepticism would have it—to a clear asymmetry between first- and third-person accounts. Knowing facts researched in the archive is no solution to the problem that Bereyter’s life is for himself. His interest in the reconstruction of events fully parallels that of the narrator after his teacher’s death; but just like the narrator, Bereyter does not find consolation or closure through factual knowledge. To the contrary, his vivid interest in the lives of others (Agw, 86; E, 58) after he retires from teaching begins to be focused obsessively on stories of suicide, manifest in the notes he takes from his readings of a list of writers who

either committed or contemplated it (ibid.). Wittgenstein's name is on that list, and the fascination of the school teacher—whose attitude to teaching and accessories so closely resemble Wittgenstein's during his stint as school teacher in Otterthal, Trattenbach, Ternitz, and Kirchberg⁵⁶—with the life of someone he is made to resemble must result in the same melancholy fixation on death that so pervades the accounts of Sebald's narrators.⁵⁷ Reading about these other lives and amassing hundreds of pages of notes (often in shorthand, as if to capture a moment of experience still remaining on the printed page) only serves to confirm the suspicion that reading and living do not go well together, and that just like the narrator cannot claim to arrive at knowledge about Bereyter, so the status of the "evidence" (*Beweislast*) (Agw, 87; E, 59) of Bereyter's notes documents no trials that would be open to observation from without.

Sebald's narration bears the mark of struggling with this "evidence" as it tries to be explicit about having to be silent beyond that which it cannot say.⁵⁸ Bereyter's case exemplifies that silence about that which one is unable to articulate with clarity is not only the nominalist asceticism that it signifies in the *Tractatus*. It is also evidence of a traumatic condition that cannot in any straightforward way be relieved though "speaking out." The immediate connection forged in this story between these two sides of the dilemma is intertextually tied to another resemblance: that between Bereyter and the Austrian writer Jean Améry. Born Hanns Mayer in Lower Austria, Améry was forced to seek exile in a francophone environment (Belgium) because of his Jewish background just like Bereyter; and even though unlike the latter he was a survivor of actual internment in camps (Breendonk, Bergen-Belsen, Auschwitz), Améry retained a very similarly conflicted and ambiguous relationship to the German-speaking countries and the Germans until his death in 1978. That death would be a suicide like Bereyter's, and it also occurs in a town called S. The superimposition of Sonthofen and Salzburg achieved through abbreviation in Sebald's text designates Bereyter's and Améry's places of origin as ciphers. For both, 'S.' names a home to which they can never return, but which remains visible and determining even after having been crossed out forever as potential referents of the notion of *Heimat*. As Sebald remarks in an essay on Améry's relationship to Austria, Améry defines "Heimat" as that which is needed in inverse proportionality to one's actual 'possession' of it.⁵⁹ After a period of staying abroad in France and Belgium, respectively, both Bereyter and Améry return with increasing frequency to Germany and Austria in search of a place called home, or a place of origin

that they know they will never find there, but the promise of which keeps beckoning nonetheless.

In Améry's prose writings—all in German, and all of them situated in an indeterminate space between essay and novel—the conditions of homelessness and exile are reflected through narrators whose traumatic experiences appear connected to his own. That connection, however, is never employed to justify the positing of either a stable subject or an object of such experiences, evident for example in the permanent shifting between first- and third-person viewpoint in *Unmeisterliche Wanderjahre*.⁶⁰ Améry's highly reflective prose in that book refrains from locating the chronic instability of the type of existence under scrutiny in an alienation from something "essentially human" (*dem Eigentlichen des Menschen*) (UW, 16), simply because the very idea of such essentiality has become unfathomable to the narrator in light of the radical disconnection between his childhood past and the present. The separation is radical not only in a physical and geographical sense, but even more crucially in the sense of a reevaluation of intellectual pursuits and commitments that appear utterly misguided—or at the very least highly ambivalent—from his own post-war point of view. The narrator of *Unmeisterliche Wanderjahre* confesses to having focused on a whole array of now forgotten poets and writers—presently to be characterized as reactionary and second-tier, thus in effect justly forgotten—instead of spending time on Kafka, Bloch, or Benjamin. The motivations for his investment in the thought of Wittgenstein and the Logical Positivists, in turn, are denounced as intellectual laziness. His erstwhile interpreting this philosophy as a way of assuring its followers of a tidy ontology begins to look naïve, and the belief in logic and rationality as an "antitoxin of the left" against *völkisch* primitivism fares no better in retrospect (UW, 38). In the post-war Germany of the 1960s, the narrator will to his surprise find the political left inspired not by logical rationality but to the contrary by speculative reason.⁶¹

At the time of writing, the feeling of intellectual superiority that the narrator reportedly felt as a young man—inspired by the rigor of Wittgenstein's and Carnap's thinking—has given way to a profound disorientation. While he still retains the conviction that unreflective use of metaphor, irrationalism and "verbal thunder" have no place in philosophy (UW, 34–5), he also acknowledges that this conviction cannot be squared without contradiction with other beliefs he has found himself adopting since. Carnap's thrashing of Heidegger⁶²—once thoroughly amusing to him (UW, 38–9)—no longer seems quite as funny in the absence of a feeling of absolute certainty, even though *and especially because* this recognition

will never cancel out the obvious tension between Heidegger's thinking of dwelling and earth on the one hand, and his own dislocated position on the other. The skeptical self-assessment undermines any steadfast belief in the significance of philosophy as a form of research (*Forschung*), and it condemns the narrator to an oscillating movement between incommensurable tenets that is dissipative rather than unidirectionally *forsch*:

Du hast alle Forschheit verloren. Die Welt ist alles was der Fall ist, sei's. Sie ist aber *auch* alles, was *nicht* der Fall ist, sonst würdest du nicht versuchen, dich heranzumachen an deinen Tod, der ja als *deiner* niemals der Fall sein kann. Die närrische Antilogik, die das Positive im Negativen aufzufinden meint, fällt dir auf die Nerven. . . . Du verbietest ihr aber auch nicht mehr, keuchend vor Gelächter, den Mund, wie du es ehemals tatest. . . . Das Einfache hat sich erschreckend aufgefächert. Die sichere Einfalt wurde ungewisse Vielfalt. (UW, 35)

You have lost all *Forschheit*. The world is all that is the case, fine. But it is *also* all that is *not* the case, or else you would not be trying to approach your own death, which as *yours* can never be the case. The foolish anti-logic that claims to find the positive in the negative drives you crazy. . . . But then you no longer tell it to shut up as you used to do, breathless with laughter. . . . That which used to be simple has differentiated itself disturbingly. Secure simplicity turned into uncertain plurality.

The multiplicity of viewpoints to be navigated under conditions that force the simultaneous acknowledgment of logic *and* being-unto-death is here marked as discontinuous, and as such it corresponds to the narrator's perception of Germany upon his return. For him, Germany had always been a verbal rather than a physical space ("Deutschland war Wörterland" [*Germany was the land of words*]; UW, 106), and his uncertain stance towards post-war German reality is in large part due to the fact that the poetic words of Heine, Hofmannsthal, Droste-Hülshoff and Hesse apparently lack referents in that realm. Not the reality alone is thus disconcerting to the narrator, but its status in comparison to a verbal memory that destabilizes present experience rather than providing a cognitive bridge.

Considering the circumstances of the diagnosis he offers, it does not surprise that Améry's narrator is hardly inclined towards affirmative playfulness in the face of this phenomenon of "verbalism." Rather, he cites

this very condition critically in his subsequent discussion of contemporary structuralism in France. Wittgenstein, he suspects, might be said to be at the root of that verbalism⁶³—which would once again make the narrator's own prior philosophical orientation into one causal antecedent of the disorientation in his present life. No sublation of these contradictions is forthcoming in his stance of “transdialectical negation” (UW, 100). The negativity at which he arrives will, however, finally give a meaning (non-standard, given the “speculative” tendencies of the time in and about which Améry is writing) to the term ‘alienation:’ a being removed not from essences, but from lived experience, both one's own and that of others: “Entfremdung—nun weiß ich endlich, was das heißt: ein Weltmodell, welches alles qualitativ Gelebte, eigenes und fremdes, verschmährt” [*Alienation—I finally know what that means: a model of the world that rejects all qualitative lived experience, both one's own and that of others*] (UW, 144). Alienation in this sense finds that the “fervent desire” (ibid.) to penetrate the experiences of others and mediate those experiences with one's own cannot and will not find fulfillment. Suicide, Améry remarks elsewhere, may be regarded as a deliberate expression of this negativity, the performative realization of a reconciliation that one knows *one will thereby not live to experience*. Casting it as pure and utmost negativity as well as meaningless message, this justification of suicide ruins both dialectics and logic,⁶⁴ articulating the nothing that Améry cannot conceptually integrate with the remnants of his rational view of the world.

Grafted onto Sebald's character of Bereyter, the deep ambivalence towards Wittgenstein's early project and the constitutive gap in the slot of *Erlebnis* in Améry fleshes out the differential resemblance of the former to Wittgenstein in complex ways. The intertextual references link the skeptical attitude of Sebald's narrator regarding the feasibility of his narrative project to the relentless self-dissection of Améry's narrators, underlining once again that just like the buildings Austerlitz considers under the aspect of their family resemblance, these self-assessments, too, reveal the perpetual criss-crossing of rationality and irrationality. By calling up the Jewish survivor Améry as a *textual* witness, they also powerfully rearticulate the futility of explanation—psychological or otherwise—of Bereyter's ultimate response to what some may want to classify as trauma. As another one of Améry's narrators puts it, the formidable challenge of commemoration is its resistance to any convenient treatment of “working through” by either scientific or literary means based on the presumed identification of causes. The potential malleability of the past remains a problem without a solution.⁶⁵

Wir, die wir im Gefühlsbereich arbeiten, müssen dabei nur extrem darauf achten, daß die Fakten und die Bilder stimmen.

—Patricia Rieckel

MEMORY, IMAGES, HISTORY

Wittgenstein's skepticism about the availability of memory as epistemological bedrock expresses itself most distinctly as an attack on the idea that reference to internal image-like representations would be the ultimate criterion of meaning. Talk of mental images, he emphasizes, falsely suggests an isomorphic correspondence of a physical image to something that goes on in the head. Our confidence in knowing what a drawing, a painting, or a photograph are, falsely leads us to believe that talk of experience in terms of "images" warrants the same kind of confidence. Sebald, as we have seen, transforms Wittgenstein's point into a principle of narrative form by presenting physical reproductions of images as part of his text that undercut rather than support the notion that narration will safeguard memory. That principle is no mere conceptual ploy, but a principle that generates a virtually endless number of specific permutations as the possible relationships between text and image unfold. The potential overlap between external images and supposed memory images cancels out either type of image as a criterion of correctness by means of which the other one might be measured. The visual reading of certain external images themselves is thus impacted by uncertainty, raising questions as to how far they may be said to represent the past.⁶⁶

For the exiled painter Lefeu in Améry's *Lefeu oder der Abbruch*, the inaccessibility of the traumatic event of the deportation of his parents entails the principled futility of representation by both verbal and painterly means. His intermittent belief in the introspective presence of a memory image presenting him with the fact that this event did indeed occur is not communicable, and hence cannot be held to the criteria of verifiability which he himself espoused earlier. Attempted representations are thus aesthetically worthless, and they not only misrepresent the facts but threaten the very claim that talk of facts is warranted here:

Dieses Bild (und nochmals sei darauf beharrt, daß es der Wirklichkeit weitgehend entspricht) ist in und für sich schon unverwendbar: man kann es nicht in sachgerechte Worte bringen, könnte es aber auch nicht malen. In diesem Sinne war schon Picassos Guernica ein Wagnis; erst recht aber müßte ein Gemälde, das die Deportation

einer Stuttgarter jüdischen Familie zum Gegenstand hat, selbst unter Voraussetzung radikaler Stilisierung zur künstlerischen Wertlosigkeit und damit zur Entwertung des Tatbestandes selber verurteilt sein. (LA, 122–3)

This image (and it should be emphasized once again that it by and large corresponds to reality) is in and of itself already unfit for use: it cannot adequately be put into words, but neither can it be painted. In this sense Picasso's *Guernica* was already daring; all the more so, a painting that had as its object the deportation of a Jewish family from Stuttgart would be condemned to artistic worthlessness and a devaluing of the state of affairs itself, even under the condition of being radically stylized.

Incapable of externally justifying the notion on which he insists here, namely that an internal image corresponding to reality *does* exist,⁶⁷ Lefeu will eventually burn the painting on which he has worked—despite himself, as it were—for a long time. In the end, the annihilation of the painting emerges as the only possible affirmation left to Lefeu: the performative affirmation of his own name—“recte Feuermann”—as the linguistic marker of his existence (LA, 123).

Sebald's character Max Aurach in *Die Ausgewanderten* is a painter with strikingly similar tendencies.⁶⁸ A Jewish emigrant living in Manchester, Aurach recounts to the narrator a vision he had during his first return to continental Europe thirty years after his forced emigration to England in 1939. During a hike in the mountains above Geneva where he had vacationed with his parents as a teenager, he encounters at the summit the apparition of a man with a butterfly net, urging him to begin the descent. Any and all details concerning this descent are subsequently wiped from Aurach's memory, and his eventual attempt to artistically approach this mnemonic lacuna prove to be unsuccessful. His portrait of the faceless “Man with a Butterfly Net,” a work in progress for more than a year, is in his own estimation “eines seiner verfehltesten Werke” [*one of his most unsatisfactory works*] (Agw, 260; E, 175) because it presumably fails to capture the utter strangeness of the apparition. Ultimately, the incomplete painting signifies a representational gap just like Lefeu's work, one that is likewise connected to a failed return to a landscape linked to family memories. The figure of the butterfly hunter—a recurring reference to Vladimir Nabokov throughout all four stories in *Die Ausgewanderten*⁶⁹—eludes the capture by painterly means. Aurach's painting technique—applying large quantities of

paint and then scraping it off to create textures—overtaxes the canvases he uses, forcing him to burn the results and redo the painting several times. The narrator gives no indication that the painting was ever finished, nor that it could have been. Only with a delay of 25 years does he learn of Aurach's Jewish background, shortly before the painter's death, but as much as that information recontextualizes Aurach's earlier report of his failure to complete the painting, it does not in any significant sense complete his picture of Aurach's life. Like Austerlitz's and Lefeu's, that life—as far as the narrator is able to suggest—is determined by the deportation of his parents, compounded by the delayed, and to Aurach initially “incredible,” notification of their death. Compelled to further investigate the family history beyond the account written by Aurach's mother that the painter entrusts to him, the narrator takes a trip to their hometown Bad Kissingen, but fails to turn up much of anything regarding Aurach's mother's family (Agw, 338; E, 225–6). Instead, he is confronted with the “peculiar historical consciousness” evident in the local newspaper where the pure contingency of events noted on June 25, 1991 puts the commemoration of Ingeborg Bachmann's and Willy Messerschmidt's birthdays next to the obituary of the local butcher Michael Schultheis who is remembered as a passionate smoker, devoted dog-keeper and member of the army reserve (Agw, 331; E, 220–1). The contexts governing archival memory, he thus finds, cannot be regulated, and chances are that even though documents will unfailingly recall the bare fact of death, they will provide little in the way of a memory that would give substance or meaning to this absence.⁷⁰

Even in cases where Sebald's narrative makes reference to actually existing paintings rather than fictive ones never to be completed, things do not look much brighter for the visual representation of past life. The discussion of Rembrandt's painting *The Anatomy of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp* (1682) in *Die Ringe des Saturn* yields the conclusion that what has traditionally been praised as an utterly realistic presentation of the anatomic dissection of the thief Aris Kindt after his execution is in fact altogether illusory. Sebald's narrator points to a segment of the painting where “das sonst, wenn man so sagen kann, nach dem Leben gemalte Bild genau in seinem Bedeutungszentrum umkippt in die krasseste Fehlkonstruktion” [*this otherwise true-to-life painting (if one may so express it) turns into a crass misrepresentation at the exact center point of its meaning*] (DRS, 27; TRS, 16). The left arm of the corpse is clearly disproportionate and anatomically incorrect, looking like the schematic reproduction of a right arm grafted onto the left side of the body. According to the narrator's speculation, Rembrandt could through this evidently incorrect construction of the image be deliberately denouncing the Cartesian

determination of the doctors—evident in their gaze—to reduce the bodily existence of their object to a purely mechanical schema. Engaged in their pursuit with detached single-mindedness, they would despite themselves be engaging in an archaic ritual of dismembering that proves to be alive and well beneath the rational veneer of scientific inquiry. We need not follow Sebald's narrator in the attribution of intentions to Rembrandt to appreciate that the inconsistency he uncovers does indeed turn upside down the notion that what is pictured is the triumph of the scientific way of life over death. Disfigured by the "misconstruction," the corpse appears as un-living twice over: not just as a life recently expired, but more radically as an alien body that nobody has ever seen as such, and which therefore must be considered invisible, strictly speaking (DRS, 23; TRS, 13). The *Forschheit* of Rembrandt's researchers and their gazes notwithstanding, all that eyes may reveal here is once more darkness, on the other side of Enlightenment.

The narrator's careful consideration of that which is—and is not—visible in Rembrandt's painting is indebted in no small part to Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne* project. In the last years of his life, Warburg created photomontages of a large number of images on over 70 panels that were exhibited at the Warburg Library and were also themselves photographed for publication in what was to be the *Mnemosyne Atlas*. In assembling the images, Warburg tried to illustrate how certain pagan "expressive values" of antiquity were still visible in the works of the Italian Renaissance and beyond, yielding archaic gestures and symbols decidedly at odds with the notion of the 'classical' that would have nothing of such tendencies. The artists of the Renaissance, Warburg writes, found themselves forced to confront a whole inventory of pre-existing "phobic engrams" that would in assimilated form find their way into the visual art of the period. The goal of his project was to document these submerged lines of influence by assembling photographic reproductions of the materials so that they could be surveyed: "Der Atlas zur Mnemosyne will durch seine Bildmaterialien diesen Prozeß illustrieren, den man als Versuch der Einverseelung vorgeprägter Ausdruckswerte bei der Darstellung bewegten Lebens bezeichnen könnte" [*The Mnemosyne Atlas is conceived to represent with its visual material the process that could be called the attempt at 'ensoulment' of preformed expressive values in the representation of animated life*].⁷¹ Warburg's conception of cultural memory as it emerges from the *Mnemosyne* project thus assumes that a psychic continuity exists between different historical periods that documents itself in a gestural language essentially constant over time. Warburg's reading of the resilience of ancient pathos conforms to the interpretation Sebald's narrator gives of the Rembrandt painting, which, adequately enough, also became part of Warburg's pictorial archive, although

it of course does not belong to the Renaissance proper.⁷² The underlying archaic ritual here renders the scientific activity on display less clearly rational and enlightened than one might expect; in their detached contemplation of the body as object, Dr. Tulp and his fellow researchers still recall the collective memory of a more 'barbarian' past.

Warburg's claim, however, that psychic states could simply be read off a painting in this way⁷³ is significantly complicated both by his own presentation of the sources he collected, and Sebald's subsequent referencing of them. Warburg's panels as they were photographed for the Atlas have a considerable narrative element to them: their suggestive and routinely obscure 'titles' may serve as cues for particular readings of each image collection, but Warburg's permanent rearranging of these collections suggests that there was anything but a stable story to be told here.⁷⁴ His way of presenting what he termed "Darstellung bewegten Lebens" is hence a construction, and, as Sebald's narrator points out, so is the Rembrandt painting itself that is a part of this *Darstellung*. The representation of the *vita contemplativa* of the Cartesian anatomists therefore is more akin to a *bewegte Darstellung*, one that complicates the notion that what is seen in the picture is "life." If there is any life in the symbolic orders Warburg means to uncover, it would need to be injected from without. Such mnemonic revivification of corpses, however, will necessarily result in a disfiguration—just like the artificial insertion of the left arm in the painting disfigures Kindt's body—and thus turn the object of memory into something other than a being that once lived.

The view presented of this episode in the history of science sets the tone for the visual representations of history more generally as these appear throughout Sebald's work. According to the narrator of *Die Ringe des Saturn*, historical painters such as Storck, van de Velde and de Louthembourg—their supposed realistic intentions notwithstanding—were ultimately painting nothing but fictions when attempting to represent the gruesome sea battles of the 17th century (DRS, 95; TRS, 76). At sea or on land, the brutality and violence, the narrator claims, are ultimately not amenable to representation; recalling a visit to the battle monument at Waterloo where a panoramic painting 110 by 12 meters in size falsely suggests to the viewer the possibility of an omniscient perspective on this historical event: "Wir, die Überlebenden, sehen alles von oben herunter, sehen alles zugleich, und wissen dennoch nicht, wie es war" [*We, the survivors, see everything from above, see everything at once, and still we do not know how it was*] (DRS, 152; TRS, 125). The only possible conclusion is the statement of a resulting lack of clarity ("Ein deutliches Bild ergab sich nicht"; *ibid.*), accompanied by a photograph that corroborates the statement rather than providing evidence to the contrary (Figure 7).

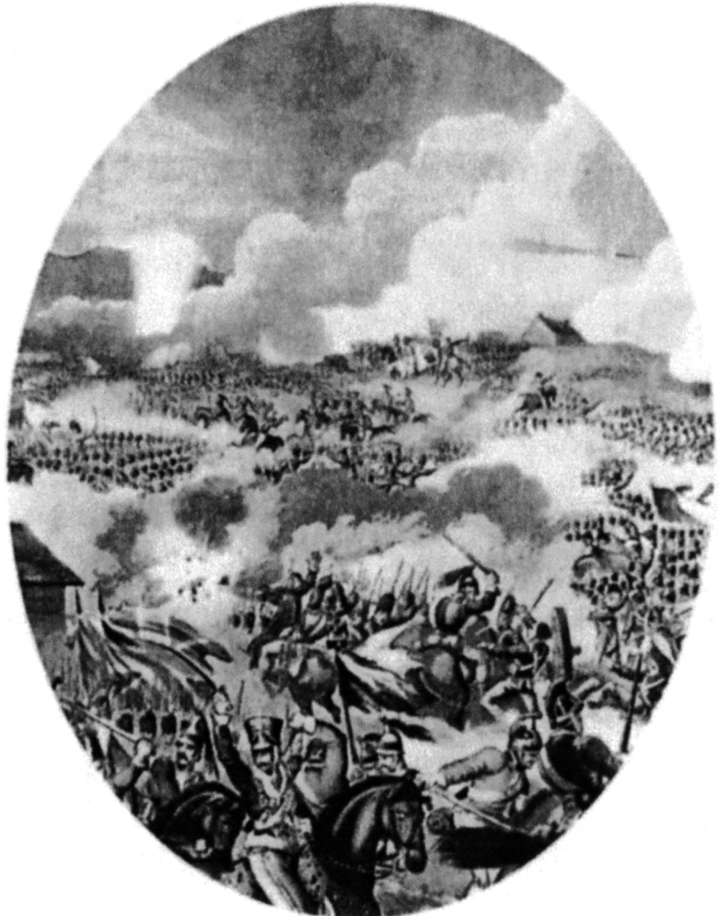


Figure 7. W.G. Sebald, from *The Rings of Saturn*, first published in Germany under the original title *Die Ringe des Saturn* by Eichborn AG, Frankfurt/Main 1995, page 159.

What is visible in pictures like this one are the very same things that Jacques Austerlitz's history teacher André Hilary feels forced to resort to in a gesture of helplessness and desperation over the insufficiency of language, "Versatzstücke[n], die von anderen schon oft genug auf der Bühne herumgeschoben worden sind" [*set pieces which have already been moved around the stage often enough by others*] (Au, 105; AuE, 71). To the extent that these images *do* become internalized, they constitute abstract schemata that entertain no significant relationship to actual events, forcing us to operate "mit immer schon vorgefertigten, in das Innere unserer Köpfe gravierten Bildern" [*with preformed images always already imprinted on the inside of our heads*] (Au, 105; AuE,

72). The images of history thus handed down are not internalizations of an external historical process, but rather engravings of clichés that prevent such mnemonic processes. Stendhal is paraphrased as making the analogous point, recalling Plato, in *Schwindel. Gefühle.*: “Man solle darum, so rät Beyle, keine Gravuren von schönen Aus- und Ansichten kaufen, die man auf Reisen sehe. Denn eine Gravure besetze bald schon den ganzen Platz der Erinnerung, die wir von etwas hätten, ja, man könne sogar sagen, sie zerstöre diese.” [*This being so, Beyle's advice is not to purchase engravings of fine views and prospects seen on one's travels, since before long they will displace our memories completely; indeed, one might say they will destroy them*] (SG, 12; V, 8). The contemplation of history, of course, is anything but a matter of surveying “fine views,” but whether the external image overrides memory or occupies the place of an experience that was never there to begin with, the notion that it represents the past is an empty one in either case.

The visual presence of such destructive ‘engravings’ in Sebald’s text is a constant reminder, as it were, of the lack of historical memory that haunts all those ultimately unable to come to terms with the bare goings-on—and going-on, as Benjamin would have it—of history. The images mark the incommensurability of individual experience and the effects of collective processes—two spheres that earlier theorists of the novel, including Broch, had believed could still be brought into narrative alignment.

Concerning more recent historical disasters, Sebald’s essay on the air attacks on German cities during World War II explicitly names one source for a narrative operation no longer easily compatible with assumptions such as Broch’s. Alexander Kluge’s “pseudo-documentary tricks” in his fictional historical essays, particularly Book 2 of *Unheimlichkeit der Zeit*, “Der Luftangriff auf Halberstadt am 8. April 1945” [*The Air Attack on Halberstadt on April 8, 1945*],⁷⁵ are instrumental in shaping Sebald’s integration of prose and image, and they touch on an area of recent history (*Zeitgeschichte*) in the face of which historiography runs up against fundamental mnemonic incapacities just as soon as in its treatment of the Napoleonic wars.

The mixture of factual material on the methods of British warfare and fictional vignettes of personal “experiences” of the strategically entirely pointless air attack on Kluge’s hometown shortly before the end of the war address precisely that experiential gap which disconnects individuals from the historical events they are supposedly part of. Collecting material for a “fundamental psychological study,” Kluge’s fictionalized American war researcher James N. Eastman—whose name ironically recalls the company responsible for the production of external, photographic evidence that obstructs rather than supports such an investigation of ‘internal’ psychological processes—

comes upon nothing but stereotypical reports concerning the eradication of the town: “er hatte diese gewissermaßen fabrikmäßigen Phrasen, die sich aus den Mündern herausfütterten, schon gehört in Fürth, Darmstadt, Nürnberg, Würzburg, Frankfurt, Wuppertal usf.” [*he had had these practically prefabricated phrases issuing from people’s mouths fed to him in Fürth, Darmstadt, Nürnberg, Würzburg, Frankfurt, Wuppertal, etc.*] (CG II, 80).⁷⁶ Eastman sardonically concludes that the extent of the amnesia is equal in size and shape to the destroyed areas of town,⁷⁷ providing Kluge’s rationale for constructing fictional accounts where no others are to be had. The recurrent stereotypical responses are, as Sebald remarks, “Gesten zur Abwehr der Erinnerung” [*gestures sketched to banish recollection*] (LL, 34; NHD, 25) rather than evidence of actual remembering. In Kluge’s essay, presentation of archival images concerning the bombing cannot with confidence be interpreted as straightforward attempts to combat this forgetting. Rather, a disconcerting disjunction emerges between the photographs of the burning city on the one hand (CG II, 30ff.), and the accounts of people like the entrepreneur whose first concern after the attack is to secure 200 pounds of sausage skins, soon to be very valuable on the black market (CG II, 78–9). Kluge uncovers the detailed facts of the attack in the service of a rational reconstruction of something that thousands of people could only file under the ultimately incomprehensible category of an irrational strike of misfortune. At the same time, the fictional contextualization of those facts suggests little hope for a future in which a rational process of learning would help prevent such misfortune and its attendant compensatory forgetfulness.⁷⁸

Sebald’s central charge in *Luftkrieg und Literatur* to the effect that post-war German literature by and large neglected to concern itself with the suffering caused by the eradication of German cities was bound to engender controversy and misunderstandings. Most crucially, one might suspect a revisionist line of argument here that insisted on the unacknowledged reality of suffering and trauma primarily for purposes of turning the Germans from aggressors into victims. Indeed, many responses Sebald reportedly received after the original series of lectures on which the book is based lauded him on this count. In reflections added to the original text, Sebald therefore had to underline that the repression of these memories at the time of the future-oriented imperatives issued for the benefit of the *Wirtschaftswunder* and the failure to acknowledge the participation in the eradication of German Jewry are merely two sides of the same coin. The myth of a radical new beginning served as the legitimation of a forgetfulness that was as thorough regarding one’s own suffering as that of others.⁷⁹ The fact, however, that the destruction causing the former kind was clearly provoked unambiguously demarcates a

difference that condemns any and all attempts at 'settling scores' to utter vacuity. Whether or not literary recognition of this asymmetry in the decades prior to Kluge's 1977 text would have quieted such attempts—as well as the people who 'approved' of Sebald's investigation for disconcerting reasons—remains an open question. Sebald's own literary writings, for one, suggest that literature is hardly suited to reliably facilitate "Bewahrung des kollektiven Gedächtnisses der Nation" [*the keeping alive of the nation's collective memory*] (LL, 113; NHD, 98). If the thesis of the book on the air war were reduced to a wish list for what should have been done *differently* by Heinrich Böll, Erich Nossack, Alfred Andersch, and other German post-45 writers, one would end up with expectations frustrated as a matter not of contingency but of necessity. The book quite clearly underscores the futility of expecting of literature that which Sebald's own texts undermine every step of the way: "total presence of the past."⁸⁰ Challenging a number of his own theoretical diagnoses, the temporality of Sebald's narratives thus will not allow a continuity to be established between one's own time and the rubble of history, between *Zeit* and *Geschichte*, however far removed or close at hand.⁸¹ The stories told by Sebald's narrators insist on the fundamental difference of anything they cast in word and image to that which will by necessity remain unarticulated. This skeptically bracketed approach to (hi)story and the means of literary narratives to function as mnemonic vehicles goes beyond the notion that only dignified silence could do justice to the horrors and wrongdoings of history. It does not go so far, however, as to suggest that the pictures sketched would ever be sufficiently colorful, focused, or well-ordered, "wenn dieses Undeutliche irgendwie in die Bilder eingeht" [*when this lack of focus somehow becomes part of the images*].⁸² With Wittgenstein, Sebald thus puts the challenging question before us: "Ist das unscharfe [Bild] nicht oft gerade das, was wir brauchen?" [*Isn't the blurred (image) often exactly what we need?*] (PU, §71).

Chapter Four

Jacques Roubaud: Projecting Memory

Mais pourquoi les romanciers qui ont dépassé le roman y persévèrent-ils?

—E.M. Cioran, *La tentation d'exister*

CONSTRAINTS, PLAN

The arts of memory practiced in various forms since their fabled inception by Simonides of Keos recommend different kinds of structures to impose on sets of items to be recalled, conceived to erect internal, mental architectures that would help contain and retain the information intentionally deposited and henceforth 'housed' in them. One popular medium in which such constraints have traditionally been realized is that of poetry. The parameters of rhythm and meter provide a suitably rigid frame for the words they structure, turning poetic form into a highly effective means of memorization. As Jacques Roubaud, himself a poet, remarks with respect to the example of poems committed to memory by Jean Cassou as he was hiding from the Gestapo, and of Albrecht Haushofer as he was imprisoned in Moabit after the failed coup against Hitler in 1944, the form of the sonnet is a poetic form particularly suited for composing poetry in one's head without immediate recourse to writing. Such acts of poetic memory signify utter concentration and reduction—in the case of the examples given by Roubaud, even in the face of death—of the means of poetic expression, a radical version of a constraint that may also be applied allegorically to less radical circumstances. In this spirit, the Oulipo (Ouvroir de la littérature potentielle, the writers' workshop of which Roubaud has been a member since 1966) proposed the limiting rule dubbed "Prisoner's constraint" according to which a text must be maximally compressed to fit on a sheet of paper so that it might be smuggled to the outside, taking up as little space as possible;¹ in texts written

in accordance with this constraint, all letters that extend above or below an imagined line (b, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, p, q, t, y) are to be avoided. Texts resulting from this restriction may be considered extensions or variations of the basic constricting nature of traditional poetic conventions:

Or le prisonnier, s'il s'exprime en poésie, doit de la même manière, faire entrer le plus possible de choses en le moins de mots, puisqu'il doit ensuite s'efforcer de ne pas les oublier. Il doit remplir de la manière la plus serrée possible la page mentale où s'inscrira son poème, avant de la consigner à sa mémoire. Il lui faut pour cela un sérieux effort de concentration. (P, 418 (§157))

In the same way, however, the prisoner expressing himself in poetry needs to fit the greatest possible amount of things into the smallest possible number of words, since he will afterwards have to try not to forget them. He has to fill the mental page on which his poem will be written in the most condensed manner possible before committing it to memory. This requires of him a considerable amount of concentration.

This particular Oulipian rule serves as an apt example for the strategies of writing by means of constraints that has been the main focus of the group since it was founded by Raymond Queneau and François Le Lionnais in 1960, insofar as the concentration created by the arbitrary but motivated imposition of such limitations has been exploited by the group members both for a continued transmission of the poetry of the past and its forms, as well as for the creation of new forms through the invention of new constraints. Making possible new texts governed by explicit rules rather than the chimerical freedom of 'inspiration,' the constraints outline emphatically explicit rules for language games:

Les contraintes oulipiennes étant descriptibles, explicitables, utilisables par tous, donnent les règles d'un jeu de langage (au sens wittgensteinien) dont les 'parties' (les textes composés suivant les règles) sont virtuellement nombreuses, et représentent des combinaisons langagières échafaudées à partir d'un petit nombre d'éléments obligatoirement intriqués. La 'potentialité' de la contrainte est d'abord là. (BW, 224–5 (§35))

Insofar as the Oulipian constraints may be described, explained, and, most importantly, used, they indicate rules of a language game (in the Wittgensteinian sense), the 'parts' of which (i.e., the texts written

according to the rules) are of an indefinite number, representing linguistic combinations built from a small number of elements which thereby become necessarily more complex. First and foremost, this is what the ‘potentiality’ of the constraint consists in.

This likening of constraints to Wittgensteinian language games, first proposed by Le Lionnais himself (BW, 201 [§34]), extends beyond the level of the apparent *playfulness* of many of the resulting texts to the embeddedness of the “Grand Jeu des Contraintes” played by the group in the “form of life” that is the Oulipo,² giving the works of its members a certain “family resemblance” (BW, 229 [§35]). For a work to be Oulipian, the explicit specification of the constraint(s) operative in it needs to be theoretically possible; many of the group members have also written texts that are not strictly governed by such constraints, and are therefore not to be considered Oulipian works. Seeking out new constraints inevitably entails the finding that the number of possible constraints to be proposed is far larger than that of texts to be actually composed according to such constraints, let alone the number of interesting, literarily significant texts thus generated (P, 472 [§177]). As one might say in scientific spirit, such is the nature of research—a process certainly not unfamiliar to the mathematicians who are part of the Oulipo. But even if, as Roubaud readily points out, the Oulipo has not invented a constrained form as durable as that of the sonnet, its works testify to the fact that formal constraints may spark creativity rather than stifle it. This chapter will describe a literary project structured both by internal constraints and intertextual references—parameters that do not keep its author from thinking, but rather inspire further thought and writing, in the phrase of Wittgenstein’s preface to the *Investigations*.

While limitation tends to further concentrated expression, the work of the Oulipo is not limited to poetry. Even though the technical aspect of adhering to the constraint becomes increasingly difficult to master in an expanded work of prose, many examples of Oulipian novels exist, among them Georges Perec’s lipograms in ‘e’ (*La Disparition*) and in ‘a, i, o, u’ (*Les Revenentes*), as well as his masterpiece *La Vie mode d’emploi*.³ All of these books satisfy the structural demand of an Oulipian text that requires it to be, in essence, *about* the very constraint that structures it. While the lipograms are thus concerned with the disappearance and return of *characters* in both senses of the word, the structure of *La Vie mode d’emploi* mirrors the life plan of its central character and his fellow inhabitants in a large Parisian building. The spaces in the building are abstractly modeled as a 10 by 10 chessboard (with one square missing in the lower left-hand corner), on which the knight

moves in accordance with Perec's own solution to the knight's-tour problem (each square is to be 'hit' only once). Furthermore, the 99 chapters are structured by the superimposition of an orthogonal bi-square of order 10 that governs the distribution of 420 elements (objects, quotations, narrative functions) ordered into lists.⁴ The resulting novels (the genre subtitle, deleted from both the German and English translations, is in the plural) present the collective life in the building as a puzzle that the reader must assemble as the narrative—discontinuously but not arbitrarily—winds its way from apartment to apartment. The central character, Percival Bartlebooth—a composite of Melville's *Bartleby* and Larbaud's *Barnabooth*⁵—is a millionaire who decided in his youth to devote his life to the pursuit of a project as arbitrary as any formal constraint: he would study the art of watercolors for ten years with the painter Valène, then travel the world for twenty years to paint 500 sea ports at an interval of two weeks, have the craftsman Gaspard Winckler mount the paintings on wooden boards and cut them into puzzles, and spend the next 20 years solving the puzzles which, upon completion, would be detached from the wooden base and be immersed in a detergent solution at the respective points of their original creation, leaving nothing but a pristine white sheet of paper behind: "Aucune trace, ainsi, ne resterait de cette opération qui aurait, pendant cinquante ans, entièrement mobilisé son auteur" [*Thus no trace would remain of an operation which would have been, throughout a period of fifty years, the sole motivation and unique activity of its author*] (VME, 158; LUM, 119). Bartlebooth's plan, the thread woven through the puzzle game of the multitude of other stories involving past and present inhabitants of the house at 11 Rue Simon-Crubbellier, consists in the endeavor to suspend time and space completely, in order to arrive at the perfect reconstruction of an exceedingly small segment of the world.⁶ However, towards the end of Bartlebooth's execution of his project, external factors such as time lags in the process of sending, assembling, and destroying the puzzles eventually begin to work against this attempted suspension. The art critic Beyssandre, once he learns of Bartlebooth's work at a late stage, tries to prevent the destruction of the paintings, intending to purchase them as the ultimate attraction for the newly founded chain of luxury hotels Marvel Houses International, not stopping short of arson and attacks after Bartlebooth declines all offers. Even Beyssandre's surrender after the bankruptcy of the hotel chain cannot prevent Bartlebooth's failing eyesight that eventually exposes his miscalculation of the time needed for completing all 500 puzzles and therefore marks the biological limit of the rationally conceived plan. All of these external factors, however, pale against the ultimate challenge, internal to the project, that Bartlebooth faces at the very moment of

his death: the puzzle-maker Winckler—also an inhabitant of the house until his death two years before Bartlebooth's own (VME, 21; LUM, 5)—has cut the 439th puzzle, which Bartlebooth will not bring to completion, to produce a manifest paradox. Throughout the years devoted to producing and solving the puzzles, Winckler and Bartlebooth have been locked into a competition, with Winckler constantly devising new strategies to prevent Bartlebooth from developing a method of solving the puzzles. By providing clues and seemingly familiar shapes that would deceive Bartlebooth into thinking of the wrong solution to the puzzle, Winckler keeps the millionaire guessing, and prevents him from approaching the task as he originally intends to: with “Cartesian rigor,” and without preconceptions (VME, 413–4; LUM, 333). Somehow Bartlebooth eventually overcomes all of Winckler's ruses, until the last puzzle presents him with the mind-boggling situation of a puzzle complete except for one piece, shaped like a W, that will not fit the remaining gap, shaped like an X. Winckler, already dead, has thus thwarted the assumption guiding Bartlebooth's reconstructive work, namely that there *is* a consistent whole to be reconstructed here as in all previous cases. As Perec remarks in the “Preamble” of the novel, reassembling a puzzle only *seems* like a solitary game, when in fact it is played against the wits of that other who conceived it—and who may, like Winckler the wet blanket, plant a seed of inconsistency in it that will *spoil the game*.

Bartlebooth's project, of course, is an allegory of reading. Submitting to a plan of his own design, the meaning he derives from his arbitrarily but stringently structured life is to win the interpretive battle with the text of Winckler's puzzles, time and time again. The mnemonic act of reconstructing scenes he painted himself through the distorting lens of Winckler's *puzzling* interventions is the perfect image of a hermeneutic desire to arrive at a fusion of horizons at the end of the reading process. Returned to the splendor of their original integrity as paintings, the puzzles are submitted to the detergent solution after Bartlebooth has managed to read all of the signs that are Winckler's puzzle pieces, leaving behind only a pristine whiteness—devoid of “dirt,” as Wittgenstein characterized the material traces of a purportedly pure interiority—that signifies nothing but perfect memory and understanding. Winckler's subversive move in the 439th puzzle, however, disrupts this view of reading, presenting the now blind puzzler with an irresolvable conflict, thus finishing “la longue vengeance qu'il a si patiemment, si minutieusement ourdie” [*the long and meticulous, patiently laid plot of his revenge*] (VME, 22; LUM, 6) that was announced already in the first chapter of Perec's book. It is the revenge of the subject of hermeneutic desire, resisting to be condemned to oblivion for the sake of affirming the memory of Bartlebooth the reader.

With the 'W' in his hand, caught by the irony "depuis longtemps prévisible" [*which could have been foreseen long ago*] (VME, 600; LUM, 497), the latter expires without finding the right fit for the variable 'X' that remains as a gap in Winckler's work, never to be closed.

ANOTHER PROJECT, AND ANOTHER

Jacques Roubaud's reading of Perec's novel, offered as part of the narrative on which this chapter will focus, presents that last puzzle piece as the decisive figure in the larger figurative context of *La Vie mode d'emploi* that he describes as "métaphore de l'Oulipo, de toute écriture sous contrainte" [*a metaphor of the Oulipo, and of all writing subject to constraints*] (GIL, 332 [§143]; GFL, 255). 'W' as the signature of the puzzle-maker Gaspard Winckler thus points back to Perec's earlier book of that title,⁷ in which the story of another character called Gaspard Winckler and his account of a fictional country called W (whose Spartan devotion to an 'olympic ideal' ultimately conjures up torture in Nazi concentration camps, perversely labeled as 'sports') is interspersed with Perec's childhood memories, frequently falsified on purpose. An autobiography that would have to include the deportation of Perec's mother to Auschwitz is thus suspended in the interstices of a story about a fictional country, and therefore organized around the typographical representation of elision "(. . .)" —called *points de suspension* in French—that separates Part I and Part II of the book.⁸ The symbol 'W,' consequently, returns in *La Vie mode d'emploi* not as a marker of an achieved memory but as the final confirmation of the failure of Bartlebooth's reconstructive efforts. Just as Perec's life remains suspended in *W ou le souvenir d'enfance*, Bartlebooth's life cannot find the meaningful closure that the achievement of his project would have provided. As Roubaud points out, the 'W' in his hands relates to the site pictured in the jigsaw puzzle into which it will not fit, "un petit port des Dardanelles près de l'embouchure de ce fleuve que les anciens appelaient Maiandros" [*a little port in the Dardanelles at the mouth of the river which the ancient Greeks called Maiandros*] (GIL, 332; GFL, 256; VME, 596; LUM, 493). The river Meander, reluctantly delaying its inevitable merging with the Ocean according to Greek mythology, returns in form of a puzzle piece that is the mirror image of its initial letter 'M.'

The meandering of Bartlebooth's activities, doomed as they are from the beginning, comes to an end here, but it is not for nothing that Roubaud inscribes that failure within *le grand incendie de Londres*,⁹ the first installment of his own long-winded prosaic enterprise that is, at bottom, a meditation on the failure of a life plan. Roubaud's work—encompassing six volumes, or

“branches,” of which five have so far been published¹⁰—retrospectively traces the outlines of a “Project” (*Projet*) that the narrator envisioned would take up and structure his life, uniting his work in mathematics and in poetry into a whole. In addition, this *Projet* was conceived to be accompanied by a novel, entitled *le Grand Incendie de Londres* (with capitalizations, excepting the definite article), that would have recounted the *Projet* as though it were fictional (GIL, 7; GFL, 1), and acting as an “aesthetic roof” over the project of which it would have been a liminal part. Like Bartlebooth’s plan, the *Projet* would have served no explicit purpose other than to fill up time in a non-random manner, helping to combat the persisting question of “à quoi bon?” [*what for?*] that would condemn all activity to utter vacuity. The origin of the *Projet* follows on the heels of the suicide of the narrator’s youngest brother Jean-René who, according to the narrator’s description, was certain beyond doubt that for him no substantial answer to that question existed. In mourning over his brother’s death, the only motivation that the narrator himself can find to go on with his life is that of an imperative of *having to go on* that is supplied to him by a dream about a novel he would write. In the written version, not consigned to paper until 1980, the dream went like this:

Dans ce rêve, je sortais du métro londonien. J’étais extrêmement pressé, dans la rue grise. Je me préparais à une vie nouvelle, à une liberté joyeuse. Et je devais élucider le mystère, après des longues recherches. Je me souviens d’un autobus à deux étages, et d’une demoiselle (rousse?) sous un parapluie. En m’éveillant, j’ai su que j’écrirais un roman, dont le titre serait *le Grand Incendie de Londres*, et que je conserverais ce rêve, le plus longtemps possible, intact. Je le note ici pour la première fois. C’était il y a dix-neuf ans. (GIL, 150 [§52])

In this dream I was coming out of the London tube. I was in a rush, in the gray street. I was preparing myself for a new life, for joyful liberty. And I had to fathom the dream’s mystery, after long investigations. I remember a double-decker bus, and a young (redheaded?) lady under an umbrella. On awakening I realized that I would write a novel that would be entitled *The Great Fire of London*, and that I would be preserving this dream, for as long as possible, intact. I note it down here for the first time. This was nineteen years ago. (GFL, 112)

The enigmatic announcement made in this dream—retrospectively identified as the starting point of the *Projet*, though not before long “investigations”—promises a new life, a *vita nova*, dedicated to the writing of a novel.

That life, however, is not to begin immediately; it will only come to pass concurrently with the *Projet* of which the novel will be a fictional account. Hence the dream, interpreted as an imperative to combat the melancholic *acedia* of mourning, is taken to imply the decision to embark on the *Projet* and, by extension, the very possibility of the latter: “Si le rêve n’annonçait que le roman, c’est que la décision et le projet lui étaient, si j’ose dire, contemporains. Il étaient coprésents en lui” [*If the dream announced only the novel, the reason was that the decision and the project were, if I may venture to say, contemporaneous with it. They were co-present with it*] (GIL, 166 [§59]; GFL, 124). With the reciprocal implication of novel, decision, and project, the ‘primal scene’ of the enterprise hovers in between fate and deliberate choice, such that the imperative that the dream is perceived to issue is necessarily the result of an interpretation, a stance taken in view of the looming prospect of the pointlessness of all activity:

L’état dans lequel j’étais alors, dans lequel je me souviens que j’étais, était un état d’exaltation féroce, sombre. Il n’y avait qu’une réponse à l’à-quoi-bon, à l’à-quoi-bon généralisé que m’opposait mon frère quand nous parlions, les dernières fois où je l’ai rencontré: **il faut que**. . . . Le choix premier de ce qu’il fallait faire, immédiatement après la décision qu’il y aurait quelque chose à faire, qu’il *fallait*, était celui de la poésie, de l’activité de poésie. . . . Ce que je voyais, c’est que le rêve me disait que je devais, d’abord, avant toute autre approche du **Projet**, m’établir en poésie. (P, 87–8 [§35])

The state in which I found myself at this point in time, which I remember being in, was one of wild, dark exaltation. There was only one answer to the “what for?” to the generalized “what for?” with which my brother confronted me when we talked, the very last times that we saw each other: *one has to*. . . . The first choice to make, right after the decision that there was anything at all worth doing, was to choose poetry, the activity of poetry. . . . What I saw was that which my dream told me to do first of all, namely to approach the **Project**, to establish myself in poetry.

The elaboration of a body of work in lyrical poetry, to be conceptually joined to research concurrently carried out in mathematics, would have constituted steps towards the realization of the *Projet*, to be accompanied by the prose of the novel *le Grand Incendie de Londres*. *Would have*, because from the perspective of ‘*le grand incendie de Londres*’ (in scare quotes, with nouns in lower

case)—the multi-volume work under consideration—both the *Projet* and the novel are available to description only in the past perfect tense. After 17 years of preparation, both were irrevocably abandoned on October 24, 1978—an event referred to throughout the work, and finally recounted in Chapter 7 of Branch 5 (BW, 303–6 [§§49–52]). The prose unfolding in place of that which thus remains unrealized is a treatise on memory¹¹ that takes the form of a novel (GIL, 100 [§32]; GFL, 73), a mere *imitation* of a novel that would itself have narrated the completion of the *Projet*, as a “translation” of the poetry that would have constituted the latter.

Roubaud’s extensive reflections on the relation between the genres of poetry and prose, both within the branches of *‘le grand incendie de Londres’* and elsewhere, are thus rooted in the different nature of each as mnemonic medium. Among the “maxims” of the *Projet* (transformed into “assertions” for the purposes of a deduction of the narrative from the initial announcement made in the dream [GIL, ch. 5]) is the maxim “(M) La poésie est la mémoire de la langue” [*Mathematics is the memory of language*], followed by “(R) La mathématique est le rythme du monde” [*Mathematics is the rhythm of the world*] (GIL, 191 [§71]; GFL, 144). In the most succinct fashion possible, these two maxims present the motivation for conceiving a poetry-mathematics project that would be a mnemonic vehicle by way of its structural properties. Resting on the foundation of poetic traditions that all apply specific rhythmic constraints to language, the *Projet* would have *remembered* these forms of language by reinscribing them within the whole of a meta-form. The mnemonic character of poetry, Roubaud submits, is solely an effect of poetic form (verse, rhyme, meter), not of any of its semantic dimensions.¹² This radicalized preoccupation with form in the conception of the *Projet* has as its necessary complement the fact that it is impossible to specify its content, that is, to say *what exactly* the *Projet* is. Unspecifiable in principle, the *Projet* contains a riddle (*énigme*), and ultimately *is* nothing but the riddle that it contains.

Prose, according to Roubaud, is not subject to this impenetrability. Thus, the *description* of the *Projet* in *le Grand Incendie de Londres* (the aborted novel) would have signified a fall of the riddle into the realm of the mystery (*mystère*) that is the novel. In contrast to the riddle, the mystery has a potential solution, and the principle of suspense in the novel is to withhold that solution until the end. Even though the “imitation” of the originally planned novel that Roubaud presents in *‘le grand incendie de Londres’* is *not* the description originally envisaged, it still partakes of this feature of novelistic prose insofar as throughout the five Branches to date, the definition “Le grand incendie de Londres’ est . . .” (GIL, 211; GFL, 158) that is the

capstone of the “deduction” is left indeterminate; until the very end of the narrative in Branch 6, presumably, this “mystery” will not be revealed. The reader is thus obliged to engage in a Coleridgean “willing suspension of disbelief”—interpreted by Roubaud as a key ingredient of prose, equivalent to the skeptical injunction of a “suspension of judgment” (B, 17 [§2])—regarding the possibility that the predicate in the above definition may simply be empty, hence, that *‘le grand incendie de Londres,’* like the *Projet*, may have no identity, strictly speaking. The narrative object whose identity is thus withheld can be an *autobiography* only in an extremely attenuated sense, since neither its object nor the narrative itself can claim the requisite self-identity:

On pourrait par ailleurs dire que, s’il y a autobiographie, il s’agit d’une (auto)biographie du **Projet** et de son **double, Le Grand Incendie de Londres**, et par conséquent, dans une large mesure, d’une autobiographie de personne. (Il en résulte, en même temps, que les moments les plus strictement, précisément, concrètement biographiques en reçoivent un éclairage qui les tire vers un essai d’autobiographie de tout le monde.) (B, 285 [§86])

One could also say that if it is to be considered an autobiography, it is an (auto)biography of the **Project** and its double, **Le Grand Incendie de Londres**, and therefore essentially an autobiography of no one. (This in turn entails that the most rigorously, most precisely, and most concretely biographical elements are clarified in a way that pulls them in the direction of an attempted autobiography of everyone.)

The recollections at issue in this “memory treatise,” an “imitation of a novel” engaged in constant self-reflection on its classificatory status in terms of genre and thereby eluding any convenient assignment to a particular class of texts, are not those of their author. Subjecting his prose to the “willing suspension of disbelief” of its readers, Roubaud lets this ‘autobiography’ enter the realm of fiction, and is hardly the first to do so.¹³ The *points de suspension* indicating the rupture between autobiography and fiction in Perec’s *W ou le souvenir d’enfance*—typographically marking the silence that forms the center of the book—resurface in Roubaud’s elliptical definition of his narrative as marks of a suspended skepticism regarding the life that would be its subject. The time the narrator spent between 1961 and 1970 in preparation of the *Projet* therefore appears in retrospect strictly as “preparation à vivre: vivre serait le *Projet*” [*preparing to live: to live would be the Project*] (GIL, 163 [§57]; GFL, 122). But since the *Projet* proper never came into existence, life—insofar as it

was to be coextensive with the execution of the *Projet* as a plan of life—never began. The ruin of the *Projet* (and of its double, the novel, in turn) stretches from its announcement in the dream soon after the death of the narrator's brother to its eventual renunciation; the account, however, of that ruinous memory—'le grand incendie de Londres'—is not begun until after another death, that of the narrator's second wife Alix Cléo Roubaud in 1983. Writing in prose about a life to be devoted *whole* to a poetry-mathematics *Projet* means to mark death, and thus to obliterate rather than conserve memories of a life that was . . . not what was initially announced.

PROSE, ABOUT POETRY

The intensely personal experience of the death of a loved one would seem to be an exemplary kind of event to leave behind (auto)biographical traces in a body of literary work. In Roubaud's case, however, these "most strictly, precisely, and concretely biographical" traces, as the above quotation would have it, are submitted to a type of form that eradicates their personal, private character precisely by turning them into traces of writing. It is this transformation that yields what the narrator, tongue planted firmly in cheek, calls the "autobiography of everyone," a genre about as paradoxical as Roubaud's infamous Oulipian proposal of an alexandrine of variable length.¹⁴ The text, at once referring to the life of no one and everyone, is subject to this paradox in virtue of being a prose text, written in what—according to Wittgenstein—is a *public* language, one that is accessible to all and therefore does not admit of private assignment of meanings. Roubaud's reflections on the genre differences of poetry and prose, fastening on another referential dimension of "W," are centered around Wittgenstein's argument against the possibility of a private language in the *Philosophical Investigations*, claiming poetic license in the appropriation of a philosophical thesis for purposes not exactly paralleling those of its proponent. Wittgenstein's argument, Roubaud suggests, holds only for prose—that form of writing with which Wittgenstein struggled critically, as we showed in Chapter One above, but which he at least considered himself to be capable of, in contrast to writing verse. It does not, Roubaud claims, extend to the realm of poetry:

La poésie produit des effets mais aucun effet d'être, ni directement de sens, de vérité ou de pensée; elle produit des effets de mémoire.

Elle est ce qui essentiellement ne peut être réduit à un sens. Elle est en nous le monde qui parle, le monde privé de sens, qui nous parle par et

dans la langue, directement dans la langue. Elle est langue privée; elle échappe à la condamnation wittgensteinienne du 'langage privée.'¹⁵

Poetry produces effects, but these are not effects of being, nor are they direct effects of meaning, of truth, or of thought; poetry produces memory effects.

Poetry is essentially that which cannot be reduced to a particular meaning. It is in us the world that speaks, the world of private meaning that speaks to us through, and in, language, directly in language. It is a private language; it escapes the Wittgensteinian condemnation of "private language."

This idiosyncratic poetological view is echoed throughout *'le grand incendie de Londres,'* providing the most basic rationale for an extensive narrative undertaking that recounts in prose the failure of a poetry project. Prose, and the novel in particular,¹⁶ is posited as antinomical to poetry and its formal exigencies that would guarantee the mnemonic effects particular to poetry—the preservation of images 'in the head.'¹⁷ It is not the object of this chapter to investigate the extent to which this thesis of Roubaud's is philosophically cogent, especially since Roubaud's frequent references to Wittgenstein and several other philosophers (Nelson Goodman and David Lewis, in particular) are not to be taken as textual exegeses in any substantial sense. Rather, they are conscious misappropriations and thus *fictionalizations* of philosophical text, tailored to fit the unique context of the narrator's insistent pursuit of self-explanation and self-justification, both of the abandoned *Projet* and of the prose narrative that is in the process of taking its place. This prose, in virtue of its descriptiveness, does not share the privacy of poetic language in which, according to Roubaud's narrator, all meaning and reference are suspended; to the contrary, it makes memories explicit, and thereby obliterates them. Beginning with the first Branch, subtitled "Destruction," the narrator sets himself the task to destroy his memories by writing them down:

Une fois posé sur le papier, chaque fragment de mémoire, c'est-à-dire une séquence de souvenirs articulés en une leçon, une élucidation pour mon livre (un souvenir moralisé en prose), me devient, de fait, inaccessible. Non sans doute que la trace mémorielle, où qu'elle se situe sous le crâne, dans les neurones, ait disparu, mais tout se passe comme si un transfert s'est effectué, quelque chose comme une translation; et qui fait dès lors les mots composant les lignes noires de ma transcription s'interposent

entre elle (la trace) et moi, finissant par le substituer entièrement à elle.
(GIL, 260 [§101])

Once set down on paper, each fragment of memory (that is, a sequence of recollections put together like a textbook exercise or an elucidation for my book (a moralized prose recollection)) becomes, in fact, inaccessible to me. This probably doesn't mean that the record of memory, located under my skull, in the neurons, has disappeared, but everything happens as if a transference had occurred, something in the nature of translation, with the result that ever since, the words composing the black lines of my transcription interpose themselves between the record of memory and myself, and in the long run completely supplant it. (GFL, 197–8)

That which is thus to be intentionally committed to oblivion by way of writing are internal memory images. Sustained by the private language of poetry (the form of the *Projet*) but threatened by a transcription or translation into prose (the form standing in for the *Projet*), the *images* are thus replaced by what the narrator calls “pictions”—Roubaud's neologism, joining the English terms “picture” and “fiction,” for externalized representations that may take the form both of pictures proper (photographs in particular), or written signs.¹⁸ As the internal representations are repeated in the process of their *description* in prose (B, 18–19 [§2]), they lose their immediate visibility ‘in the head’ by which they convey an incontrovertible knowledge of a personal past, a singular trace of past objects or events that is not to be replaced by another conventional sign. They now become *pictions*, external signs that are inscribed in the language game of a *Bildersprache*, creating contexts in which the exclusive assignment of private meanings can no longer be guaranteed.

The general genre distinction between poetry and prose advanced here is consequently founded on the distinction between *images* and *pictions*, providing the *raison d'être* for a prose work that functions at the same time as a memory treatise, recalling the failure of a complex poetry work that would have endeavored to preserve the images which—transformed into *pictions*—are now actively consigned to the corrosive powers of prosaic language. The distinction between the two types of representations is detailed in *La Boucle*, where the narrator presents a “pseudo-Wittgensteinian deduction” of the two terms; the 37 propositions of this “deduction” are “pseudo-Wittgensteinian” in more than one way: the sequence of the propositions hardly follows any clear path from premises to a conclusion, citations taken from Wittgenstein's work are tweaked,¹⁹ and are furthermore made to support a clear dichotomy that is not present in Wittgenstein. The narrator claims to “borrow” the Wittgensteinian

distinction between “Bild et Abbild en langue allemande; traduite en *image* et *picture* en anglais.” (B, 251 [§70])²⁰ In fact, Wittgenstein uses the term *Abbild* only a handful of times in all of his writing; while in the appropriated passages the invented *piction* consistently substitutes for *Bild*, the Roubaldian *image* is with few exceptions not the translation of *Abbild* but rather of *Vorstellung*. Like the intentional misappropriation of the Private Language Argument that uses the arguments by Wittgenstein's interlocutor to suggest not a *reductio* of the very possibility of such a language but its delimited ‘survival’ within the confines of a particular genre, so the “deduction” turns Wittgenstein's skeptical injunctions against mentalist views of representations into positive determinations of what Roubaud's narrator describes as the images transported by poetry. One example from the list of propositions may illustrate the effect that the re-contextualization of Wittgenstein's text in Roubaud's narrative has; proposition (xiv) of the “deduction” reads as follows:

xiv L'**image** est plus semblable à son objet que n'importe quelle **piction**. Car quel que soit le degré de similitude par la piction, elle peut toujours être piction de quelque chose d'autre. Mais il est essentiel pour l'**image** qu'elle soit image de cela et de rien d'autre. Ce qui fait qu'on pourrait imaginer que l'**image** est une sur-ressemblance. (B, 253 [§70])

The respective passage in the *Investigations*:

“Die Vorstellung muß ihrem Gegenstand ähnlicher sein als jedes Bild: Denn wie ähnlich ich auch das Bild dem mache, was es darstellen soll, es kann immer noch das Bild von etwas anderm sein. Aber die Vorstellung hat es in sich, daß sie die Vorstellung von *diesem*, und von nichts anderem ist.” Man könnte so dahin kommen, die Vorstellung als ein Über-Bildnis anzusehen. (PU, §389)

“The image must be more like its object than any picture. For, however like I make the picture to what it is supposed to represent, it can always be the picture of something else as well. But it is essential to the image that it is the image of *this* and of nothing else.” Thus one might come to regard the image as a super-likeness. (PI, 119)

Roubaud's modifications are crucial: the distinction between Wittgenstein's voice and that of his interlocutor, indicated by quotation marks in the original, is not carried over, resulting in the erasure of a citation within a citation. This makes sense insofar as in the context of this literary work Wittgenstein's

words do not function as those of an authority that would conceptually ground the theses proposed by the narrator. If they did, eliding the fact that Wittgenstein is out to *question* the view that mental representations should be thought of as possessing some unique similarity relation that would bind them to the objects they supposedly represent would be a profound *misunderstanding*. A misunderstanding, moreover, that would call to mind the distinction between *Bild* and *Abbild* proposed by Gadamer, that champion of understanding, who considers the artwork in general (not just poetry, as Roubaud's narrator does) to be an image that elevates its contents into presence in exactly the way that Roubaud's pseudo-Wittgensteinian *image* does.²¹ Applying a genre distinction where Gadamer subsumes all forms of textual *understanding* under this type of imagistic representation (*Darstellung*) (in contrast to pictorialization [*Abbildung*]), Roubaud's narrator, however, subverts the inclusive hermeneutic thesis. By relegating the *image* to the realm of poetry that he describes as governed by a radically private language, he makes clear that memory contents as *images* are not linguistically transferable. "Poésie" in its strict difference from prose would thus be only composed of words 'in the head,' not of printed words on a page that form a poem.²² Poems would simply be tokens, instantiations of the type 'poetry' that remains closed in on itself and designates a private universe of meaning for each speaker of this private language. In this way, the limits of the *Projet*, dedicated to poetry, separate it from the prose narrative (*récit*) that accounts for the ultimate failure of that *Projet*: "les frontières de chaque langue sont les frontières d'un monde: monde du projet, monde du récit" [*the boundaries of each language are the boundaries of the world: world of the project, world of the narrative*] (GIL, 172 [§62]; GFL, 129).²³ The prose of the *récit*, neutral in the sense that it is intended for no one in particular (GIL, 55 [§16]; GFL, 38), can tell the story of the *Projet*—autobiography of no one, or of everyone—by means of a public language.

While we will leave open the substantial and difficult question of whether the idealistic conception of poetry advocated by Roubaud's narrator—with conceptual assistance from a "pseudo-Wittgenstein" of his own creation—is cogent on its own terms, it is crucial for us to observe that, cogent or not, the *Projet* that would presumably have given mathematically inspired *form* to poetry is visible in the public language of prose only as ruin. Not a ruin, to wit, of a memory palace that once stood and would now be defunct, but rather of nothing but a *plan* for such a building. The *Projet*, Roubaud's narrator does not tire of reiterating, never came into existence properly speaking, but instead got bogged down in perpetual preparatory motions. This is not to say—in fact, it signifies the very opposite of saying—

that no poems were written during this time of preparation. It is not even to suggest that no books of poems by the author “Jacques Roubaud” were published between 1961 and 1978, or 1985, when the *récit* was begun. After all, Branches 4 and 5 chronicle the very emergence of some of this poetic work. The *Projet*, however, of which the accompanying novel *le Grand Incendie de Londres* would have been the “translation,” was intended to be more than just an accumulation of poem-tokens. According to the plan, it would have given a unifying, totalizing form to poems, and, in turn, to poems of poems, that is: collections of poems that are themselves structured according to numerical constraints. Roubaud’s book *Trente et un au cube* is an example of such a meta-poetic structure: building on the medieval Japanese form of the *tanka*, the collection assembles 31 poems, each composed of 31 lines with 31 syllables, yielding a total of 31^3 metrical positions.²⁴ This book, already constituting a poem of poems in its extension of the metrical constraint beyond the level of the individual poem, would have been inscribed—along with the considerable number of other works, composed according to other constraints, that Roubaud produced during the 27 years of anticipation—into the enveloping form of the *Projet*. In pursuit of a seamless continuity of form (individual poem → book of poems → *Projet*), poetry and its mathematically grounded constraints would have linked up poems to the totality of poetry, that is, the poetic traditions of different ages and cultures, of which Roubaud has tackled a considerable number (in addition to old Japanese forms such as *tanka*, *haiku*, and *haibun*, this includes Troubadour poetry, the Petrarchian sonnet, the classical French alexandrine, and free verse, among others). The *Projet* would have given form to the memory of these poetic traditions by positioning Roubaud’s work as part of a larger *Wirkungsgeschichte*, and it would have done so with formal inspiration from the Bourbakist mathematical enterprise: the attempt, begun in the 1920s by a clandestine group of French mathematicians, to rewrite all of mathematics, with set-theory as a foundation and the axiomatic method as their tool. While the Bourbaki group served as a model for the creation of the Oulipo—with the latter constituting a homage, imitation, parody, and profanation of the former, according to Roubaud (BW, 221 [§35])—its rigorous methodology also served as an inspiration of the *Projet*. In opposition to the chimerical ‘freedom’ provided by surrealist techniques to which Roubaud’s narrator confesses to having aspired prior to conceiving the *Projet*, Bourbakism initially provided conceptual support for the structural poetic rigor of “forme-poésie,” as well as a stylistic mold.²⁵ What the first generation of Bourbakists did not realize, however, according to the narrator of *le grand incendie de Londres*, is that the concept of the set, assumed as primitive starting with the first volume of

Bourbaki's *Éléments de Mathématique*,²⁶ actually constituted an assumption that made subsequent adjustments to the architectonic of the Bourbakist system practically impossible:

l'architecture du Traité [Bourbaki's work], en effet, reposait sur l'idée d'ensemble; non seulement sur une axiomatique rigoureuse de cette notion, mais belle et bien sur l'idée, qualifiée par Bourbaki de "naïve," de collection d'objets abstraits, simples, et sans autres propriétés intuitives que celles résultant de la relation d'appartenance qui lie entre eux deux types d'objets élémentaires: les éléments et les ensembles. D'où une extrême difficulté à modifier l'architecture du Traité, mais surtout une quasi impossibilité à admettre et peut-être même à concevoir qu'un bouleversement des "fondations" du bâtiment pourrait devenir nécessaire. (J'ai rencontré une impossibilité du même genre dans la poursuite de la chimère de mon **Projet**; et cette impossibilité a résulté en partie de son inspiration "bourbakiste.") (M, 47 [§17])

the architecture of the Treatise in fact rested on the idea of the set; not only on a rigorous axiomatics of that concept, but quite directly on the very idea—which Bourbaki called "naïve"—of a collection of abstract, simple objects that have no other intuitive properties than those derived from the relation of membership that binds two kinds of elementary objects together: elements and sets. Thus the extreme difficulty of modifying the architecture of the Treatise, but most of all the near impossibility of admitting, or even conceiving of, the necessity of shaking the "foundations" of the system. (In pursuit of the chimera that is my **Project** I happened upon a similar impossibility, and that impossibility was in part due to the fact that the **Project** was inspired by Bourbaki.)

The vision of a continuity of form bolstered by an analogy with the pristine character of a set-theoretical axiomatics²⁷ depends, then, on a relation between elements and sets that admits of no further theoretical clarification; the narrator will elsewhere characterize this relation thus: "dans la définition idéale les éléments ne présentent entre eux aucune différence; ils sont la même chose" [*under an ideal definition the elements do not present any difference amongst themselves; they are sameness itself*] (P, 434 [§164]). Relative to the entity of the set, that is, all elements are instantiations of "sameness"—and that is exactly how the *images* are to be imagined in relation to that which they represent: they are beyond all similarity that characterizes *pictions*. Insofar as the *Projet*, being a poetic transcription of such *images*,

drew its initial structural inspiration from Bourbakist notions of set theory, its rigidity, too, appears to entail its ultimate downfall, as chronicled by Roubaud's prose narrator.²⁸

The constraints structuring the prose that narrates this collapse are therefore markedly distinct from any Bourbakist notions of a hierarchy of sets. Rather than constituting an inclusive, continuous totality, the prose of *'le grand incendie de Londres'* is intentionally discontinuous. Beginning with its first Branch, a self-imposed temporal constraint dictates that only the first hours of the morning are to be dedicated to this prose work, and that narrative time be "true" (GIL, 49 [§14]; GFL, 33), that is, the narrative is presented in the same sequence as it was written. The narrator claims to intentionally forego subsequent rewriting, or rearrangement of parts; as a result, it is exactly by way of this sequentiality that the prose mirrors discontinuity, separated into "moments" begun and ended each day. The number of these moments and their distribution over the varying numbers of chapters in each Branch is fixed by prior numerological considerations, but the prose that fills out these forms is not. Or so the narrator would have us believe, knowing full well "qu'en tout cela je ne suis pas certain d'être cru" [*that in all of this I cannot be certain to be credible*] (ibid.). Such reluctance is certainly in order, given that one crucial component of every Oulipian constraint is the *clinamen*—the Empedoclean-Lucretian bending of a rule to enable creation in the first place. And so, exceptions to the numerical rule do exist, though they are—consistent with Oulipian practice²⁹—motivated, and not merely adopted as 'excuses' (P, 236–45 [§§92–5]). Thus, external exigencies surrounding the composition of the "moments" become the self-referential content of the prose itself, including the alleged disappearance of text on a hard drive (as Roubaud's narrator has switched from a notebook and an IBM typewriter used during the composition of Branch 1 to an Apple Macintosh as a writing tool) (B, 296 [§92]), or the rejection of the projected "long version" of Branch 5 by his editor Denis Roche, occasioning the preparation of the present *version mixte* of that Branch for publication instead, with a correspondingly reduced number of prose moments (BW, 268–73 [§43]). Inverting the fate of the *Projet*—the interminable preparation of a work that never sees the light of day—the narrator also posits the constraint of radical non-preparation of his prose (M, 105 [§47]), endeavoring to write without premeditation and with minimal recourse to external memory aids (BW, 128). The eventual introduction of previously written text (see for example the essay "L'Oulipo et l'Art combinatoire," from which we have cited above, that becomes a "moment" in Branch 5; BW, 218–31 [§35]) introduces substantial deviations to the execution of this constraint. Perhaps most importantly, the

constraint of daily writing during a fixed time that suggests—at the outset of Branch 1—a journal-like character of the enterprise, is eventually revealed as applying not to moments and days in the life of a physical character named “Jacques Roubaud,” but rather to wholly abstract slices of time. Thus, the form of the moments on the printed page corresponds not to “lived” time but to narrative time arbitrarily set by a self-imposed rule:

Chaque moment est le résultat du travail d'un jour (dans le jour, le matin). Un jour de prose. Un moment ↔ un jour. Strictement. Chaque moment est la condensation en prose d'un jour (abstrait) de narration. Les blancs entre les moments sont les nuits de la narration. Les nuits sont faites des blancs et des silences. Ce sont des blancs, parce que absence d'écrits. Ce sont des silences, pour la lecture (intérieure ou pas). La vie est continue, la narration discrète. (P, 237 [§92])

Each moment is the result of a day's work (during the day, in the morning). A day of prose. A moment ↔ a day. Strictly. Each moment is the condensation of an (abstract) day of narration into prose. The blanks between the moments are the nights of narration. The nights are made up of blanks and silences. They are blanks because of the absence of writing. They are silences, for reading (internally or not). Life is continuous, narration is discrete.

The days condensed into prose moments, then, are not representations of “life” as presence; that which is designated by the “moments” according to the constraint is not strictly a “now” but always “ce qui aura été un ‘maintenant’” [*that which will have been a ‘now’*] (B, 31 [§5])—a “now” in the future perfect of a narration that will, eventually, issue in printed paragraphs, separated in their blackness both from each other and from the white of the page. The discontinuity of this narration makes that narration into a treatise on memory precisely because it testifies to the unavailability of the “now” for mnemonic transmission; that which is transcribed by prosaic language are the coordinates of its own mechanism(s) of recording. Writing, at every stage of its formal encapsulation, explains only the projection (*Entwurf*) announced in the title of each Branch, and of each moment. The “now” sparking the continual beginning-again of writing—thus preventing the paralysis that haunted the *Projet*—does not make a pure present available for the reconstruction of a originary past, if only because each moment engendered by it *begins with a repetition*, to mark the silence that precedes it: “Le *moment* est donc presque entièrement dirigé

vers sa suite; la répétition initiale *marque* un début, une attaque, l'existence d'un silence antérieur" [*The moment is therefore almost entirely focused on its continuation, the initial repetition marks a start, a thrust, the existence of a prior silence*] (GIL, 281 [§111]; GFL, 214). In this way, the prose lurches forward, each moment explicating the title that is at the same time its own beginning, the moments collected into chapters explicating the title of that chapter, each set of chapters explicating the title of the respective Branch, and the Branches, conceivably, ultimately revealing the mystery contained in the title of the whole, '*le grand incendie de Londres*,' that is also the (supra-)title of the first Branch (P, 154 [§60]). This title, it should be kept in mind, does not sum up that which it titles, which would be to gather it into a whole. As the "deduction" (Branch 1, ch. 5) is meant to demonstrate, the emergence of the title in the dream preceded that which was to become its content; since in the absence of a finished *Projet* it ends up not having any fixed content at all, its transcription into lower case and enclosure within scare quotes permits the redefinition of the referent as something that will be revealed only at the very end of the narration subsumed under this repeated title.

What prevents this nested structure from suffering the very same fate as the *Projet*—ending up as an announced but unrealized whole (*tout*)—is keeping the demon of systematicity ("le démon planificateur et anticipateur") at bay by allowing for the redundancy created by repetition (prosaically creating 'material' that does not quite fit its form), and by adjusting or altering formal precepts along the way. Some of the alterations introduced in the course of writing this multi-volume work concern its arborescent structure. The text is initially separated into the main body of the chapters (the *récit* proper), followed by two sections of different types of "insertions" (*insertions*): the "interpolations" (*incises*) and the "bifurcations" (*bifurcations*). The former function as extended commentary, adding either more detail to the "moments" in the *récit* to which they refer, or presenting other narrative episodes linked to the main body of the text by association. The bifurcations, in turn, constitute detours spanning a number of consecutive "moments" that branch off to form alternatives to the narrative thread pursued in the *récit*. While the three types of "moments" are consistently separated and arranged in the first two Branches, Branch 3 situates the insertions after the respective chapters, while Branch 4 omits the bifurcations and integrates the interpolations into the text of the *récit*, marked by smaller font size. In Branch 5, in turn, the interpolations are no longer part of the progression of "moments," and are included after each chapter with the page number of their referents in the *récit*; also, a hierarchical

typographical arrangement of the interdependent textual parts is proposed which, according to the narrator, was too complex to be realized for actual publication—which is why the published version (subtitled *version mixte*, as opposed to the unpublished *version longue*) suppresses this typography but extensively discusses the unrealized structure at its center (BW, §§11–15). The structural adjustments hence feed back into the composition of the content of Roubaud’s prose, and they do so in response to the eventual predictability of an initially unfamiliar textual structure:

la tension entre l’ordinaire et le moins courant, qui est une des composantes caractéristiques du rapport entre le livre et le lecteur, tend à disparaître. Mais cette tension, dans mon entreprise, est constitutive. Elle fait part de la démarche même. (BW, 58–9 [§12])

the tension between that which is ordinary and that which is less current, which is one of the crucial elements of the relation between book and reader, tends to disappear. But this tension is constitutive for my enterprise. It is part of the approach itself.

The attempt at structurally replicating unpredictability is less driven by an avant-gardist impulse (as the narrator is quick to point out) but rather constitutes an integral component of the text’s avowed character as a memory treatise. The hypertextual structure that connects the “moments” of the *récit* with the insertions creates a “coexistence de présents” (GIL, 48 [§14]; GFL, 32) that intentionally destabilizes the temporal framework of the narrative. Running directly counter to the constraint of sequential writing down of the “moments,” the creation of an intertextual web within each Branch and across Branches continually disrupts what one might consider the sequential logic of an autobiographical narrative. Even though certain parts of the *récits* do follow a certain *narrated* timeline in addition to the permanent contemporaneous reflections on the *narrating* level,³⁰ the insertions only exacerbate the radically discontinuous nature of memory evident already in the temporal jumps within the *récit*. Ultimately, the effect is a consistent emphasis on the discontinuity of prose forced to steer clear of the posited “continuity” of life. Transposed onto a prose work, the ability (or perhaps, curse) of the reader to be “aussitôt n’importe où” [*anywhere immediately*] (ibid.)—a “privilege,” the narrator remarks, usually reserved for readers of poetry—creates a motility that, in its pursuit of the *clarity* provided by an adequately complex layering of text, turns the memory treatise into a site of an irreconcilable contradiction “entre une obligation de clarté et l’inconfort d’une rupture,

que la première parenthèse avait créée dans le déroulement principal du récit; et ainsi de suite (potentiellement à l'infini)" [*between my obligation to be clear and my discomfort over disrupting the continuity, a contradiction already created by the first parenthesis within the developing main story line; and so on and so forth (potentially to infinity)*] (GIL, 33–4 [§10]; GFL, 21). This discomfort is passed on to the reader to the extent that the points of connection between the main body of the text and the insertions are marked only very roughly, by § (i.e., "moment") number in Branches 1–4, and by page number in Branch 5.³¹ Hence, either of the reading techniques proposed by the narrator (skipping back and forth between the *récit* and the respective insertions, or reading strictly sequentially) requires repeated reading of the main body of text, to find the exact point of insertion. The only antidote to continual re-reading would be either the gift of foresight (if skipping forward), or a perfect recollection of the *récit* (if reading sequentially).

Alles Lebendige besitzt—hier kann man sich nur wiederholen—
'Leben.'

—Oswald Spengler

"INFINITE REPETITION"

According to Roubaud's narrator, the initial decision to account for the fall of the *Projet* in form of the present narrative '*le grand incendie de Londres*' is inseparable from the specter of death. Just as the initial appearance of the title of the *Projet* was preceded by the death of his brother, so the beginning of the prose narrative is preceded by the death of his second wife, Alix Cléo Roubaud. As the first chapter of Branch 1 makes particularly clear, the adopted constraints of writing are consequently devised to structure a work of mourning: limiting the narrator to writing during the dark hours before sunrise, and prodding him to take up a routine of regular textual production after an extended period of refusal—or sheer inability—to write anything, the constraints facilitate the filling up of time and space—with text. The particular death that has created a void to be thus filled up with the help of the mechanical procedure of writing also caused the necessary disappearance of an earlier version of '*le grand incendie de Londres*,' altogether different in character, that the narrator conceived of after the renunciation of the *Projet* in 1978, in collaboration with Alix Cléo, whom he married in 1980. That version, according to the narrator, was directly tied to Alix's photographic

work and their shared life, “l’épaisseur même de la narration et de la monstration (papiers, livres, endroits, photographies de famille, lettres)” [*the very thickness of narration and monstration (papers, books, places, family photographs, letters)*] (GIL, 110 [§36]; GFL, 81). Thus, even in this prose, undertaken after the renunciation of the poetry of the *Projet*, something of the original vision of a “biipsism” (as opposed to solipsism)—“l’idée d’une vie qui en serait entièrement saisie” [*the idea of a life that would be totally understandable*] inspired in part by the Troubadourian theory of love and poetry (GIL, 223 [§86]; GFL, 168)—would have remained. Flattened out by the death of a loved one who would have been its unique, privileged reader (B, 250 [§69]), the present narration contains only ruinous traces of this vision. Among the objects left behind by Alix are her photographs and her journal, testifying to “une passion double, celle de dire et montrer: Wittgenstein et la photographie” [*a twofold passion, for telling and showing: Wittgenstein and photography*] (GIL, 404 [§190]; GFL, 315). The journal, posthumously edited by Jacques Roubaud,³² thus contains not only Alix’s observations concerning her depression, substance abuse, and the chronic health problems that would lead to her early death, but also reflections on photography, and short fragments of her ongoing and ultimately unfinished work on a study of Wittgenstein’s theory of the image. Anticipating the distinction between *image* and *piction* that Jacques Roubaud will later propose both in essays and in ‘*le grand incendie de Londres*,’ she distinguishes the photographic image from the print, with the latter being merely the testimony to the absence of the former: “prendre la photographie pour une empreinte c’est oublier que l’image n’est pas cela: c’est l’incarnation d’une similitude” [*taking a photograph to be identical with the print means to forget that the latter is not what the image is: it is the incarnation of a similarity*] (J, 187).³³ Photography according to Alix Roubaud is engaged in a pseudo-Tractarian quest for the delimitation of silences (J, 90) beyond mere similarity, striving to capture a pure moment, a bundle of light (*pinceau lumineux*) (J, 87) that remains forever out of reach in the material incarnation of the print. The print, the result of the mechanical, potentially infinite reproducibility, thus points to the fact—familiar from Benjamin, whose writings are also referenced in the journal—that something is necessarily lost in the reproductive process: “C’est-à-dire, les problèmes d’image (W[ittgenstein]) sont ceux de la reproduction” [*That is to say, the problems surrounding the image (W) are those of reproduction*] (J, 79). Indeed, the production of prints—an everyday activity for a photographer, and thus regularly chronicled in the journal—emerges as an obstruction of internal

images, “comme si le fait de produire matériellement des images de déjà vu obstruait la fabrication intérieure d’images de l’avenir” [*as if the fact of materially reproducing images of something already seen obstructed the internal fabrication of images of the future*] (J, 169). Just as the putting into prose of the internal, ‘poetic’ images of the past obliterates these, so the material development of the photo print obstructs the direction of the imagination towards the future. At the same time, Alix observes that the process of photography amounts to a fragmentation rather than a literal, mimetic repetition of that which was seen in the past (J, 41), and that her photographic self-portraits—much like the “moments en prose” Jacques Roubaud will commit to paper—are situated in a continually interrupted future perfect, always ‘presenting’ the present from the perspective of what will have been, thus casting the future as a looking back onto the sediments of the past. Alix Roubaud’s persistent focus on the premonition of her own impending death throughout the journal relates to these pictures, and her 1982 series “Si quelque chose noir” (J, 146–50)³⁴ does so in particular; the pictures of that series are self-portraits that show her nude body in various positions as it intersects with the play of light and shadow, the only source of light being the sunlight coming in through the window of the room (Figure 8).

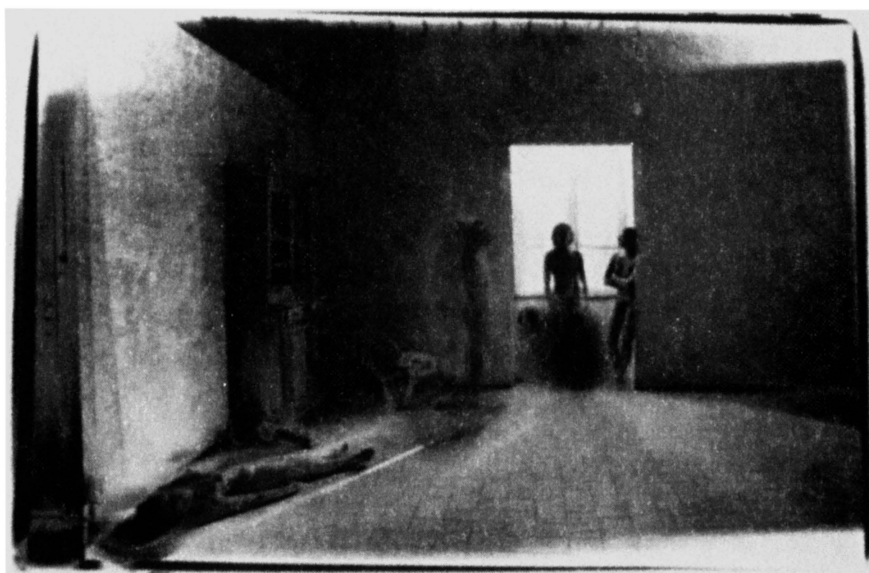


Figure 8. Alix Cléo Roubaud, from “Si quelque chose noir.” Courtesy of Jacques Roubaud.

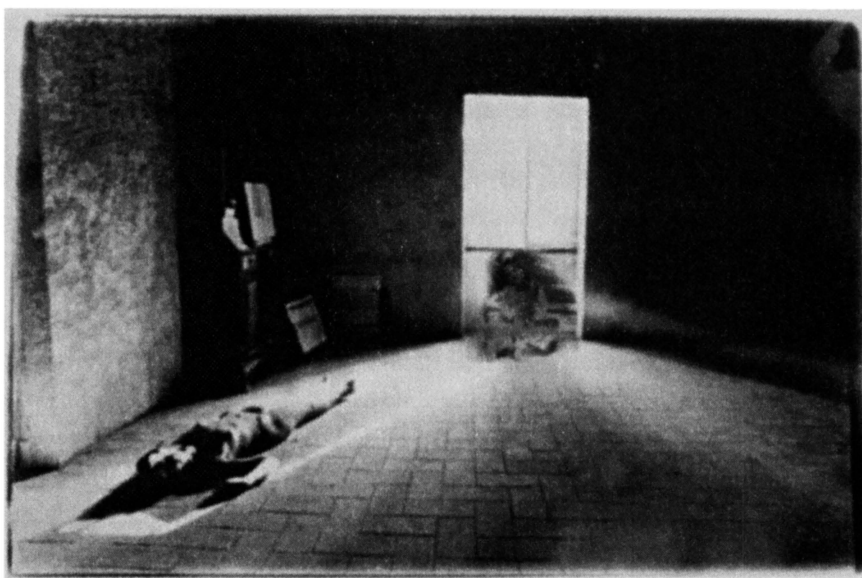


Figure 9. Alix Cléo Roubaud, from “Si quelque chose noir.” Courtesy of Jacques Roubaud.

Due to multiple exposures, the “self” is ‘present’ in several incarnations in each of these shadowy portraits, effectively canceling out the notion that what the photographic moment captures is (proof of) self-identity. The co-presence of different temporal layers in one image exemplifies the differential repetition of the same over time, “*toujours à recommencer*” (J, 34), that fills the pictorial space with multiple selves; time is flattened out here, since the temporal relation between them cannot be determined. In several of the pictures, a childhood photograph is pasted onto the composition, spreading out the temporal fragmentation even more (Figure 9).

With its dispersive force, the picture dissociates the two visually represented temporal layers, showing something that we ourselves, as children, did not see; Jacques Roubaud’s narrator will later quote from Alix’s writings to the effect that this familiar presentation of the invisible makes childhood photographs into models for photographs in general, exposing forgetfulness where the photographic rhetoric of the real would instead have us take the photograph as a ground for a belief in the reality of the past:

Les seules vraies photographies sont des photographies d’enfance. . . . [La photographie de nous enfant] nous montre une scène où nous étions présents; nous voyons que nous y étions; nous nous y reconnaissons; or

nous ne nous souvenons pas de cette scène; nous n'en n'avons rien vu. J'y étais, pas de doute; mais je n'ai rien vu; tout ce que j'en vois, c'est une photographie. J'ai dû pourtant voir, j'avais des yeux; j'en ai des souvenirs, dans le meilleurs des cas; j'ai aussi oublié. La photographie me montre **la première forme de l'invisible: celle de l'oubli.** (B, 251 [§69])

The only true photographs are childhood photographs. . . . [Photographs of ourselves as children] show us a scene in which we were present; we see that we were there; we recognize ourselves; but we don't remember this scene; we haven't seen anything of it. I was there, no doubt; but I didn't see anything; all I see is a photograph. But I must have seen something, I had eyes; I have recollections, in the best of cases; I have also forgotten. The photograph shows me **the first and foremost form of the invisible: that of forgetting.**

The recognition of oneself in a childhood photograph and the absence of doubt of one's past presence in the pictured scene is not the result of the recovery of a memory with the photographic image as memory trigger, but rather of our seeing the photograph—which is *all* that we see—as that which it pictures, ourselves. As Wittgenstein argues, even though this may be what we commonly do, no *necessity* attaches to this way of seeing things:

Wir *betrachten* die Photographie, das Bild an unserer Wand als das Objekt selbst (Mensch, Landschaft, etc.), welches auf ihm dargestellt ist.

Dies müßte nicht sein. Wir könnten uns leicht Menschen vorstellen, die zu solchen Bildern nicht dies Verhältnis hätten. Menschen z. B., die von Photographien abgestoßen würden, weil ihnen ein Gesicht ohne Farbe, ja vielleicht ein Gesicht in verkleinertem Maßstab unmenschlich vorkäme. (PU II, 538)

We *regard* the photograph, the picture on our wall, as the object itself (the man, landscape, and so on) depicted there.

This need not have been so. We could easily imagine people who did not have this relation to such pictures. Who, for example, would be repelled by photographs, because a face without color and even perhaps a face reduced in scale struck them as inhuman. (PI, 205).³⁵

If the photograph thus makes visible a form of invisibility, it reminds only of the difference between itself and its absent object, or between the print and

the ideal image, likewise absent. Envisioning photography as a new kind of artificial memory—to replace the theaters of memory from antiquity to the renaissance as described by Frances Yates (J, 56–7)—Alix Roubaud considers whether photography might function as representational medium of a purely personal world, “tout ce qui est le cas” [*all that is the case*] (J, 57). But what is the case, according to the photograph, is only what is the case *in* the photograph itself, not necessarily in the object that we may believe the photograph to represent. The isomorphic relation proposed in the *Tractatus* between proposition (as logical image) and world presupposes the very notion of mental representation (*Vorstellung*, or *Bild*) that the photographic image obstructs, obliterates, or otherwise shows to be absent. It is this function that ultimately likens it to the writing down of prose—in a journal, for example: “la vie intérieure est une roue qui tourne à vide dans un journal: elle demeure la même; et n’engendre qu’une infinie répétition. Tout noter” [*the internal life is a wheel turning idly in a journal: it remains the same; and generates nothing but an infinite repetition. To note down everything*] (J, 53). The idleness of wheels, that famous Wittgensteinian metaphor, designates the doubts about the possibility of an idiosyncratic, semantically inconsistent use of the word ‘pain,’ and of adding something of substance to an assertion by insisting on one’s semantic intentions.³⁶ Just as the externality of the mechanically produced photographic image overrides any internal ‘mechanics,’ so the notation of words in the journal leaves the ‘internal life’ to be assumed behind them unmoved. This very parallelism will reemerge later in Jacques Roubaud’s pseudo-Wittgensteinian elaboration of the distinction between *image* and *piction*, with the latter characterized by the very idleness (*oisiveté*) (B, 416 [§148]) that Wittgenstein reserves for the characterization of pictures that are disconnected from the context of a particular use:

Chaque moment de prose est aussi ‘moment’ en cela; il a l’immobilité concentrée et ‘oisive’ (comme dit Wittgenstein) d’une *piction* (ce mot-valise, fait de l’anglais ‘picture’ et de ‘fiction,’ s’oppose à *image*). Il ne bouge pas.” (GIL, 281 [§111])³⁷

Each prose moment is also a “moment” in that respect; it possesses the concentrated and “idleness” (as Wittgenstein says) of a *piction* (this port-manteau word, formed from “picture” and “fiction,” is in contrast to *picture*). It doesn’t move. (GFL, 214)

The immobility of the *piction* (in photography, or in prose) derives from its inefficacy in terms of indicating any continuous livelihood of interior states of

its producer—even if that producer is oneself, the writer of an ‘autobiography,’ or the photographer attempting to assemble a personal memory theater. Characterizing his prose descriptions (*Beschreibungen*) as word pictures (*Wortbilder*) in the very way Wittgenstein himself considers “misleading” (because if viewed as pictures, descriptions become detached from the context of particular forms of life), Jacques Roubaud’s narrator integrates his wife’s observations on photography into his pseudo-Wittgensteinian theory of (his own) prose. Description of memory images—that is, of the *Projet*—amounts to a destruction by means of repetition in words, that is, the substitution of an unverifiable interior image by an external typographical picture, “qui est très semblable à celui d’une photographie” [*which is very similar to that of a photograph*] (B, 19 [§1]).³⁸ To construct a *meandering* narrative by an assembly of such “idle” (*müßig*) “moments” ultimately means to destroy the *Projet*, as Alix Roubaud predicts in her journal, at a time when Jacques Roubaud’s *Projet* has been renounced, but its proper destruction not yet begun: “Raconter un projet l’annule. (recommencer à lire, tout court; Wittgenstein)” [*Narrating a project is to cancel it. (beginning to read again, at all; Wittgenstein)*] (J, 169–70).

According to the genre distinction defended by Roubaud, poetry is opposed to this kind of narrative destruction. Hence, the poetic task Roubaud is carrying out while also setting out to begin the extant version of *le grand incendie de Londres* presents a possible counterpoint to the writing of prose and its constraints. The composition of the poem cycle *Quelque chose noir*, drawing both on Alix’s photographs and her journal entries, follows a different set of constraints, redrawing the boundaries of the genre of elegy by means of the number nine (*neuf*) as one of the structuring principles. As an alternative mode of beginning writing anew (*à neuf*) after being silenced by death, these poems—their typography consistently shot through with the white of blank spaces not just between, but also within single verses—expose a lyrical I haunted by images, and thus opposed to the prosaic I of *le grand incendie de Londres* methodically setting about to obliterate such images. The elegiac poems, each composed of nine ‘verses’ of varying length and structure, are centered around the immediate certainty—beyond all comparison or verification—of images of Alix’s death. The very first poem of the cycle, “Méditation du 12/5/85” introduces this specter of involuntary memory:

Il y avait du sang sous ta peau dans ta main tombé au bout de
doigts je ne le voyais pas humain.

Cette image se présente pour la millièrme fois à neuf avec la même
violence elle ne peut pas ne pas se répéter indéfiniment une nouvelle
génération de mes cellules si temps il y a trouvera cette duplication

onéreuse ces tirages photographiques internes je n'ai pas le choix
maintenant.

Rien ne m'influence dans la noirceur.

Je ne m'exerce à aucune hypothèse je m'enfonce par les ongles.

(QCN, 11)

Heavy blood under your skin in your hand sunk to the fingertips
I couldn't see it as human

This image again for the thousandth time with the same vio-
lence can't help replaying forever my next generation of cells if
there's time will find this duplication tiresome these inner photo
prints I have no choice now.

Nothing can get to me in the dark

I don't try to compare I don't offer hypotheses I hang on by my nails.

(STB, 9)

The violence of the immediacy of “inner photo prints” is taken by the lyrical I as evidence of a certainty beyond the possibility of all doubt, and, *pace* Hume, to be consistent with the Newtonian aspiration to objectivity—bolstered by proper empiricist methodology—that is referenced in the last verse. In the following poem, “Méditation de la certitude,” G.E. Moore’s famous presentation of his own hands as ‘evidence’ of a reality of which one could be absolutely certain³⁹—the position patiently challenged by Wittgenstein in *On Certainty*—is hence invoked against the supposition that what is seen in these “inner photo prints” might be subject to doubt and reinterpretation in the same way that *pictions* are:

L'ayant vue, ayant reconnu la mort, que non seulement il semblait en
être ainsi, mais qu'il en était ainsi certainement, mais qu'il n'y avait
aucun sens à en douter. L'ayant vue, ayant reconnu la mort.

Quelqu'un m'aurait dit: “je ne sais pas si c'est une main.” je n'aurais pu
répondre. “regardes-y de plus près.” aucun jeu de langage ne pouvait
déplacer cette certitude. ta main pendait au bord du lit.

(QCN, 13)⁴⁰

Having seen, having recognized death, that it didn't just seem, but was,
there was, certainly, no sense doubting it.

Having seen, having recognized death.

If somebody had said: "I don't know if this is a hand." I could not have replied. "look closer." No language game could budge this certainty. Your hand hung down from the bed.

(STB, 11)

Beyond all language games, the certainty of a dead hand presumably introduces something that is fundamentally unlike anything else, not part of a web of resemblances:⁴¹ "Tout se suspend au point où surgit un dissemblable. et de là quelque chose, mais quelque chose noir" [*Everything depends on the point when the unlike appears. And thence something, but some thing black*] ("Méditation de l'indistinction, de l'hérésie;" QCN, 75–6; STB, 73). Poetry—to the extent that this cycle of poems partakes of the character of poetry, even though, as discussed above, it *is not* poetry 'itself'—would thus disclose the unlike, that which is suspended from all relations to other things and persons. It is "some thing black," a residue of a reality that may, so Roubaud's poetics would have it, be transmitted in the poem: "Quelque chose noir qui se referme. et se boucle. une déposition pure, inaccomplie" [*Some thing black which closes in, locks shut. Pure, unaccomplished deposition*] ("Méditation de l'indistinction, de l'hérésie;" QCN, 76; STB, 74). Suspended from any consideration of its inscription into a larger whole, the poem may retain the memory of an undefined "some thing black" that acquires shape only by way of closing in on itself in its negativity, being *unlike* anything else. This "some thing black" articulated by the poem would remain "unaccomplished" not because of the pitfalls of systematic organization of poetic work that haunted the *Projet*, but because in its "purity" it would signify the unmitigated certainty of the interruption that is death.

Reinscription of text, by comparison, is impure as a matter of necessity. Roubaud's taking recourse to the writings of Newton, Moore, and Wittgenstein in his attempt to delineate the "some thing black" without defining its radically dissimilar nature itself testifies to this impurity. Conjuring up what "somebody might say," the lyrical I slips into the mode of Wittgensteinian language games at the same time that the applicability of the latter to the situation at hand is being denied. Only by implicitly *establishing a resemblance* between Alix's hand and Moore's hand—by hypothetically *seeing* Alix's dangling hand *as* Moore's rhetorically raised hand—does the poem 'establish' certainty. While the reinscription of a pure "some thing black" in language thus erases its purity by transforming it from *image* into *piction*, it does not erase its blackness (*noirceur*) altogether. In the poem "Ludwig Wittgenstein" that has as its 'object' an external, not an "inner," photograph, the visibility of this blackness both colors that which is seen in

a particular way, and exposes the ‘impure’ perspective that an observer of an *external* image of this type is forced to take:

Tu as mis la photographie de la pierre sur le mur, sur le papier brun, sombre, japonais, du mur: un morceau de tombe est sur l’image, juste le nom et les dates, un peu d’herbe à droite, à gauche, une graminée en travers.

Les bords du négatif visibles, partie de l’image, une ligne de noir, arrondie.

La tombe de la photographie, prélevée de la tombe.

Je la regarde.

(“Ludwig Wittgenstein;” QCN, 45–6)

You put the photo of this stone up on the wall, on the dark, brown, Japanese wallpaper: only part of the grave is in the picture, just the name and dates, on the right, a bit of grass, some sedge across the left.

The edge of the negative visible, part of the image, a line of black, rounded.

The grave in the photograph taken of the grave.

I look at it.

(STB, 43–4)

The photograph of Wittgenstein’s tombstone that the lyrical I is contemplating shows not just the stone marking the death of the person buried there, but also the black border of the negative from which the print has been generated. The blackness of that border testifies to the similarity relation that this print—like any print—entertains to the hypothetical pure photographic image. The separation from smooth identification of both translates to the physical position of the print, “sur le mur” in a manner of speaking, but *more exactly* “sur le papier . . . du mur,” and hence separated from the wall ‘itself,’ black on brown. As a *piction*, the photograph of a grave therefore shows the grave of photography, in both senses of the genitive: it shows an object to be seen as a tombstone, but it also shows the photographic manner of showing itself that entombs any object framed by it.⁴² With its black border, the photograph resembles a tomb simply by virtue of *being* a photograph.

LOOPS, DOTS

As Alix’s photographs become objects of meditation in Jacques Roubaud’s writing, their externality opens up what in *Quelque chose noir* remains closed

in on itself and buckled up (“qui se referme. et se boucle”). The “buckling up” of Roubaud’s prose—most explicitly, of course, in Branch 2, entitled *La Boucle*—conjures up “images pures” (B, 89 [§20]) not to preserve them as pure remainders, but only to integrate them—in boldface type—into a narration that will destroy their alleged purity by means of weaving ever more complex loops (*boucles*) that have as their object the conditions of assertibility of these images. The loop-like structure of the chapters and insertions of Branch 2 (B, 509–10 [§182])⁴³ serves as an example of the emphatically artificial nature of “continuity” effected in the process of externalizing the alleged “inner photo prints” of one’s childhood. What is created in the process of unbuckling (and eventually rebuckling by means of textual structure) is a “lived space” (*espace vécu*) that can never be more than an imitation of itself, a linguistic print of an image that, as such, remains inaccessible to verification (B, 511 [§182]).⁴⁴

The prose unfolded in Roubaud’s account of the failure of the *Projet* is hence modeled, as the very first paragraphs of the expansive work propose, on another photograph, a picture of a picture (Figure 10).

This photograph, one of two similar ones taken in a hotel room in Fez (GIL, 17 [§3]; GFL, 7), is described by Roubaud’s narrator as fundamentally

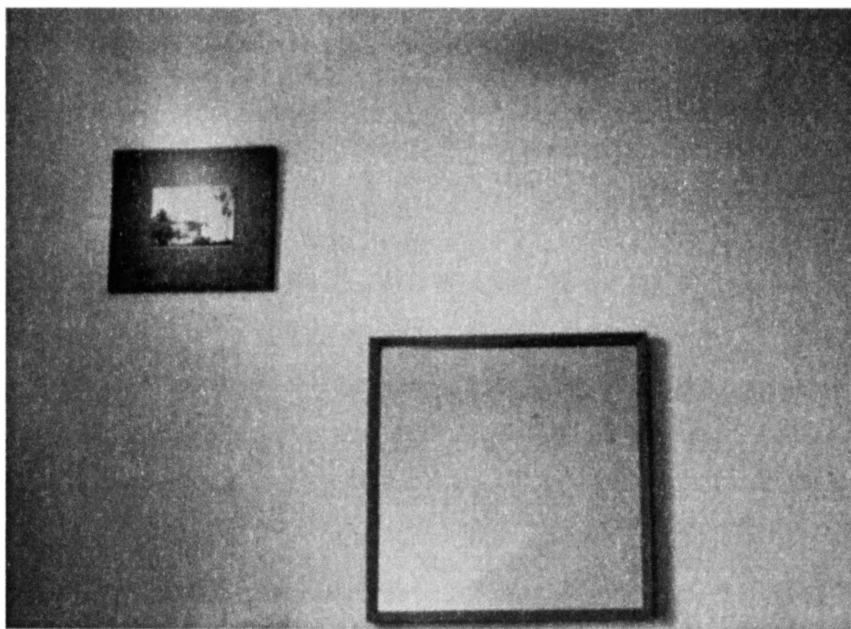


Figure 10. Jacques Roubaud, from *The Great Fire of London*, page 3. Courtesy of the author.

ironic in structure because, even though taken in the Moroccan city, it is not a picture of the city itself, but rather a picture of a picture of the city that is pinned up on the wall of the room, next to a mirror. The irony, combated by Hegel as the spoiling of an uninhibited self-enjoyment of subjectivity, consists here in the de-localization of the pictured space and its (original) viewer. While a picture of Fez would assign the person who took that picture a reasonably delineable position, a picture of a picture of Fez does no such thing—the picture that is pictured could hang on any wall, in any city. The absence of the photographing subject in the mirror—which only shows the opposite wall of the room, barely distinguishable in the black-and-white print from the wall on which the mirror is hanging—only intensifies this dislocation of subjectivity. The shadows surrounding both the pictured photograph and the mirror, cast by the light of the lamp (*la clarté de la lampe*) above the bed that is burning at dawn, indicates their separation from the wall and hence from its ground, just like the photograph of Wittgenstein's tombstone. The light visible in this picture is clearly anything but pure and natural; it is artificially supplied to allow for a particular composition, a deliberate distribution of light and shadow. It is this ironic, constructed nature that makes the photograph into a model for the very prose work that it is made part of by Roubaud's narrator, who in the first Branch takes his seat every morning by the light of a lamp, mechanically continuing his memory work in prose:

Or, une ironie de même nature est indiscutablement en mesure de s'exercer sur cette prose, où je dis de ce que raconte: c'est ainsi, c'est vrai, c'est ainsi que cela est arrivé; ne disant, ne suscitant, en ces lignes noires sagement, continûment poussées les unes derrière les autres, qu'une image intérieure à l'image de mémoire, qui la nomme, qui la titre: *ce fut ainsi*. (GIL, 20 [§4])

However, an irony of a similar nature is unquestionably in a position to affect this prose, where I say about what I am recounting: this is so, this is true, this happened so; and in these black lines composed, continuously pushed after one another, expressing, giving rise to nothing but an image inside the image of memory, which names it, entitles it: *this was so*. (GFL, 10)

The displacement of subjectivity by the (not exactly funny) irony of writing distances it from that of which, on a more irony-free reading of 'autobiography,' it would purport to be a picture. The claim to truth of the memories recounted can never surpass that of the picture picturing a

picture, graphic signs of memory images that become externalized—like the photograph hanging on the wall—simply by being recounted in this form. The written picture authorizes that which is recalled, and at the same time removes it from a specific observational standpoint of a viewer who could claim superior identification of, or with, that which is pictured. Once written, the memories may be read as though they were written by anyone, and do not constitute any kind of private language.

If the written word thus (en)titled (*titre*) the memory images, supporting their claim to truth given the conventionally assumed suspension of disbelief, it becomes conceivable how Roubaud's narrator can describe his prose, in repeated reference to Getrude Stein, as autobiography—not of its author, but *of its title* (*titre*). The concatenation of moments, chapters, and Branches each explicating their respective titles points back to the dream that marked the conception of the *Projet*, which produced not a novel (as anticipated) but only a title. Given the thesis that, ideally, the title of every novel is the image of that novel (GIL, 181 [§66]; GFL, 136), the title 'le grand incendie de Londres' would be an image not of a completed novel (the genesis of which would be its content) but only the image of an image, the *mirror-image* of *another* title, 'Le Grand Incendie de Londres'—which itself, as the only common denominator of all imaginary incarnations of the *Projet* (BW, 51 [§10]), does not point to an author but only to the shell of an unrealized conception, a bare wall. As an attempted answer to the question: why this title? (P, 75 [§30]), each structural category of Roubaud's prose thus undertakes to delineate not the life of its author 'in the image,' but only the life of a title: "un livre est l'autobiographie de son titre et, comme tel, la narration d'une singularité" [*a book is the autobiography of its title, and, as such, the narration of a singularity*] (M, 19 [§4]). Derived from the pseudo-Steinian axiom "Un titre est le nom propre d'un livre" [*A title is the proper name of a book*] (M, 18 [§4]; P, 75 [§30]), this axiom specifies as contents of the multi-volume book '*le grand incendie de Londres*' the *singularity* of particular configurations of textual 'moments,' not the *privacy* of a singular consciousness. The title itself, ironically, writes its own biography to the extent that it is the title of each Branch, chapter, and 'moment' that pushes the prose forward. In this way it prevents the failure indicated by its mirror-image, the title of the *Projet*.

As a proper name, each title in and of Roubaud's prose corresponds not to a state of affairs in the world—a world including, among other things, a biological person named 'Jacques Roubaud'—but rather denotes circumstances of the failure of something that, as it turns out, never was and never will be the case: the *Projet*. With regard to the title of the third Branch, the narrator thus remarks:

Il ne s'agira pas, principalement, de la vie de la mathématique dans la mienne. Il ne s'agira pas, principalement, d'une sous-histoire de mon histoire, de cette partie de l'histoire (au sens large) qui englobe ma découverte d'une certaine idée de la mathématique, ni de l'influence que cette découverte a eue sur les circonstances de ma vie. Mais seulement de ce qui, dans ces circonstances, mérite mention, sous la visée d'une entreprise que je note **Projet**. Il s'agit de ce **Projet**, principalement. (M, 41 [§14])

It will not primarily be about the life of mathematics in mine. It will be not primarily be about a sub-history of my history, about that part of my history (in a wide sense) that included my discovery of a certain idea of mathematics; nor will it be about the influence that this discovery has had on the circumstances of any life. Merely about that which seems worth mentioning under these circumstances, in view of an enterprise I call **Project**. It is primarily about this **Project**.

Two titles, the “Mathématique:” and “Poésie:” of the third and fourth Branch, make their principal refusal to function as general terms—and hence their being conditioned, in turn, by the principal title of the whole narrative—explicit in their typography: in both cases, the addition of a colon to the name in the title signifies a “dragging of the foot” (*boitement*). With the colon dragged into the title, the name ceases to evoke the expectation that its “autobiography”—the text preceded by the name—will deliver a class of items, a list of things that mathematics and poetry “are” in the life of the narrator, or author. For this kind of relation between name and referent, one would expect the colon to be *between* both; as *part* of the title, the colon instead indicates, again, a mere second-degree picture: the narrative will have nothing to say about the significance of general terms—‘mathematics,’ ‘poetry’—and will limit itself to an elucidation of proper names, partial designations of the *Projet* that are fixed in the reconstructed axioms (50) and (51) of Branch 1 (“(50) Le *Projet* était un projet de poésie. . . . (51) Le *Projet* était un projet de mathématique” [GIL, 188, 190 (§70–1)]; GFL, 142–3). The promise of content to follow that is expressed by the colon is pulled into the titles, prefacing a narration that is not ‘about’ such content, but merely about the failure to execute a *Projet* that would have had mathematics and poetry as part of its identity. The autobiography of *Mathématique:* and *Poésie:*, then, recollects lives of names which, given the ultimate failure of the *Projet*, never properly came into existence, which dragged their feet, waiting for a referent. In the end,

the dots of the colon, like Perec's *points de suspension*, indicate nothing but an absence, a zero.

The title of the fifth Branch designates the singularity of its narration in a different manner: it evokes a place that is not just any mnemonic locus but, in a way, *the* mnemonic locus *per se*, the place where Frances Yates wrote her groundbreaking book on the arts of memory that Roubaud's mentor and fellow Oulipian Raymond Queneau would translate into French. It is, of course, also the place where her teacher worked for years on an unfinished project of his own that we have touched on in a previous chapter.⁴⁵ The title "La Bibliothèque de Warburg" and the title of the specific chapter, "Mnemosyne," in which the choice of the title finds its explanation, point back to that project as a model, an "abstract approach" to the *Projet* Roubaud's narrator had set his sights on. From Ernst Gombrich's description of Warburg's *Mnemosyne* project (the presently available edition of Warburg's writings as yet unpublished),⁴⁶ the narrator conceives of a parallel between his own undertaking and Warburg's:

J'en ai fait, tout bêtement, une sorte de transposition qui était destinée à servir de modèle à mon propre **Projet**, alors approchant de sa phase préparatoire finale. Je vis, en une vision intérieure très géométrisée, le projet de 'Mnemosyne' comme un art de mémoire à double entrée: la mise en représentation spatiale de tout le mouvement de la mémoire propre de l'homme Warburg et, dans le même moment, de la mémoire de l'art comme étant (l'art) mémoire de soi-même dans ses rapports au monde. Et c'est pourquoi il y aurait dans mon **Projet** deux traités de mémoire, composant un double, celui de ma mémoire de poésie et celui de la poésie comme mémoire. Et c'est pourquoi il y aurait, aussi, une représentation spirale en images du **Projet**, de son architecture de poésie en poèmes, le **Projet de Poésie**; les poèmes étant organisés combinatoirement, selon les modes résultant de mon **Projet de Mathématique**. (BW, 48–9 [§8])

I quite sheepishly turned it into a kind of transposition that would serve as a model for my own **Project** that was then approaching the final phase of its preparation. In an interior, very geometricized vision I saw the project of 'Mnemosyne' as an *art of memory* with a double entry: the spatial representation of the entire movement of memory of the man Warburg and, at the same time, that of the memory of art as an (art of) memory of itself in its relation to the world. And that was why my **Project** would contain two treatises of memory forming a double, that

of my memory of poetry and that of poetry as memory. And that was why there would be an imagistic representation in the form of a spiral of my **Project**, of its architecture of poetry in poems, the **Project of Poetry**; the poems would be organized according to the combinatorial modes resulting from my **Project of Mathematics**.

Envisioned as a parallel undertaking in the (assumed) final stages of preparation for the execution of the *Projet*, Warburg's constantly fluctuating collage of images spells trouble. The double nature of the model project—linking the externalization of Warburg's encyclopedic, singular *Bildergedächtnis* with the collective retention of “phobic engrams” to be read off these images—proposes a continuity between private memory and its public manifestation that will condemn the *Projet* to failure. As remarked in Chapter Three above, Warburg's notion of a “Darstellung bewegten Lebens” by means of the photomontages to be published in the *Mnemosyne Atlas* is ultimately a construction that must itself animate, or re-animate, that which it presents in ever-changing pictorial configurations—which may be why the Atlas, which would have shown only *one* configuration of each montage, was not ready for publication before Warburg's death. The *Projet* of Roubaud's narrator, envisioned as parallel to Warburg's, likewise would have attempted to mirror the double nature of memory, presenting a large set of poetry works—its elements brought into relation by certain mathematical principles—both as tokens of the singular poetic memory of its proponent, and passing on the collective memory of language sedimented in poetry.⁴⁷ The vision of this parallel, however, survives only as part of a narration that functions, more sheepishly (*bêtement*) yet, as the elucidation of its title, “un des fils de ma tache de prosateur” [*one of the threads of my task as prose writer*] (P, 154 [§60]), limited to the depiction of life as life-in-prose (P, 246–7 [§96]), not continuous, or continuously moving (*bewegt*) in the Warburgian sense.

The inscription of the title of Branch 5 into the larger narrative context denoted by the principal title situates the site that it names in a particular city: London. As the birthplace of a renewed general interest in the arts of memory, the Warburg Library has as its local twin the British Library, characterized in the last chapter of Branch 1 as the narrator's personal memory theater, albeit one facilitating not recall but, ultimately, obliteration and forgetting:

Mais la British Library . . . est une bibliothèque différente de toutes les autres. Elle est mon théâtre de mémoire, où je ne vais pas pour découvrir mais pour être avec ce qui me dirige dans mon programme de destruction. (GIL, 358 [§162])

But the British Library . . . is a library different from all others. It is my theater of memory, where I go not in order to discover but to be with what directs me in my program of destruction. (GFL, 276)

Giving himself over to recollection in London—"ma ville-langue. Ma ville privée" [*my language-city. My private city*] (GIL, 250 [§98]), marked by effects of *Übersetzung* (in both senses)—the narrator sets about destroying in prose in the British Library what had (chronologically) earlier appeared as the promise of a coherent shape of the *Projet* in the mnemonic space designated by the Warburg Library. London: the site seen in the dream that first sparked the *Projet*, and, later, the common place of Jacques and bilingual Alix Roubaud as the site of their biipsist, anti-Tractarian utopia, in constant translation.⁴⁸ This city, now to be signed over not to memory, but to forgetting, in a prose work that shares its overall title with that of its first part that sets it into motion. London: the language-city and private city, whose name now appears—in published form—not in the title of the *Projet*, but atop the narrative of the failure of the latter, chronicled by means of prosaic language, "l'appareil d'observation de la mémoire" [*the apparatus of an observation of memory*] (M, 43 [§15]). Recollection, it appears, needs to have occurred in London for it to be subjected to destruction. Observing that act of memory through the lens of language, however, both narrator and reader are limited to faith—and thus separated from knowledge—when beset by skeptical doubt about the epistemological status of that act: "il y a eu acte de mémoire, et cela est le compte rendu. Je ne doute pas sa vérité (quoique à vrai dire cette certitude repose sur un pur et simple acte de foi . . ." [*an act of memory has occurred that goes to make up this account. I don't doubt its truth (although this certitude actually rests on a pure and simple act of faith . . .*)] (GIL, 261 [§101]; GFL, 198). In witness (*en foi*) of our own memories, we must resort to observation (by way) of language—lacking, as we do, a Tractarian observation language.

Chapter Five

Ernst-Wilhelm Händler: *Klärungswerk* and Textual Pollution

“ABSOLUTE CLARITY”

Wittgenstein’s struggle with the exigencies of prosaic expression and the threat of conceptual confusion that he found such expression to entail is motivated by a pronounced desire to attain clarity. As charted in Chapter One, Wittgenstein’s perception of what makes for clarity *clearly* changes from the *Tractatus* to his later writings. Early on, philosophical language in the proper, logical form is entrusted with clarifying thoughts, and thus with separating sense from non-sense: “Die Philosophie soll die Gedanken, die sonst, gleichsam, trübe und verschwommen sind, klar machen und scharf abgrenzen” [*Without philosophy thoughts are, as it were, cloudy and indistinct; its task is to make them clear and to give them sharp boundaries*] (4.112). The notion of such sharp boundaries that would lend a maximally clear outline to philosophical concepts is subsequently challenged by the focus on language games whose most important feature is to not be determined by necessary and sufficient conditions of class membership. It is only consistent, then, that the clarification undertaken in the later writings would no longer be beholden to the previous ideal of a singular, self-generated precision (PU, §88), but instead proposes similes (*Gleichnisse*) that are inspired by the thought of others: “Ich glaube, ich habe nie eine Gedankenbewegung *erfunden*, sondern sie wurde mir immer von jemand anderem gegeben. Ich habe sie nur sogleich leidenschaftlich zu meinem Klärungswerk aufgegriffen” [*I think there is some truth in my idea that I am really only reproductive in my thinking. I think I have never invented a line of thinking but that it was always provided for me by someone else, and I have done no more than passionately take it up for my work of clarification*] (*Vermischte Bemerkungen* [W VIII], 476; CV, 16). This comment of Wittgenstein’s on the reproductive nature of his own work has

often been read as a self-reproach, especially since it forms part of a reflection on his own Jewishness.¹ Later on in the same remark, Wittgenstein notes, however, that he considers reproductivity not at all a vice; rather, “es ist alles in Ordnung, solange das nur völlig klar bleibt” [*everything is all right as long as what is being done is quite clear*] (*Vermischte Bemerkungen*, 476; CV, 17). The conception of similes and language games, thus, aspires to a different kind of clarity than the *Tractatus*: to be, or become, *utterly clear* about the *impossibility* of being clear *by oneself*. The *Klärungswerk* must work on the language and thought of *others*, and must as a result incorporate the realm of the inexact, and its possible difference and interpretative indeterminacy, that would not arise in the case of a self-sufficient calculus. Establishing similarity relations with explanatory value requires the creation of new contexts, rather than the restitution of a particular logical structure.

This reconception of what “clarity” means is instrumental for the production of new text—by Wittgenstein himself, as well as those who would reinscribe his text into literature,—rather than forcing the imposition of an austere silence in the absence of sufficient conditions for conceptual clarity. The ideal of clarity still ardently defended in the *Tractatus* thus emerges as a discursive constraint that must itself be subjected to Wittgenstein’s observations on “grammar” as the parameters of language use in particular contexts. “Clarity” is itself nothing but a grammatical construct by means of which a particular discourse—that of the philosophical kind, for example—may be delineated, by distinguishing it according to a set of criteria from everything else that does not meet these standards. The ideal of an “absolute clarity” that would legislate context-independent standards reveals itself in the process to be a contradiction in terms: viewed in grammatical terms, “absolute clarity” will never denote an absolute ideal independently of the context in which the user of this term believes to have identified that ideal. Hence, the very perspective of “grammar” undermines the ontological claim that there could be such a thing as “absolute clarity” of expression independently of the context in which this expression itself is being used.

It is this adjusted grammatical perspective that informs Ernst-Wilhelm Händler’s ongoing literary project that has issued in five books to date. The original version of the first installment of this sequence of books, the unpublished proofs of *Der Kongress*,² still identified that book as the first element of a series, entitled *Grammatik der vollkommenen Klarheit I*. The series title was ultimately not explicitly adopted for the subsequently published volumes, but the following investigation of Händler’s creative probing of Wittgensteinian thought will do well to still keep it in view as a guiding motto, as this particular paratext will eventually work its way into the body of the text. As

the project itself is transformed over time, it tests the notion announced in its original title, namely that a literary narrative could be *clear* about that which a doctrinal discourse would seek to cover up: the problem of *Darstellung*. In each of Händler's volumes published so far, one or more social systems are exposed as domains in which particular sets of rules and guidelines are in place that would supposedly guarantee the possibility of rational action. The social interaction of Händler's protagonists in the realms of philosophy, business, literature, and architecture thus routinely emerges as governed by the belief of a means/ends rationality that would insure a maximum gain (of money, power, sexual satisfaction) at a minimal personal cost. This view of the social world mirrors corresponding theoretical (epistemological, economical, aesthetical) convictions according to which the analysis of phenomena in the respective domains can arrive at a level of clarity wholly sufficient for rational self-determination of the subject and equally rational evaluations and predictions of the actions of others. Consistently subtending these ambitions is the assumption that the phenomena to be ordered thus are accessible to a sufficient degree in memory.

Händler's narrative exploration of worlds populated by such goal-oriented characters is predicated on the notion that their theoretical convictions function according to a grammar—not a psychological deep-structure of the Chomskyan sort, but rather a set of explicit practices that must be accessible to external auditors:

Die Grammatik, das sind die Geschäftsbücher der Sprache, aus denen alles zu ersehen sein muß, was nicht begleitende Empfindungen betrifft, sondern die tatsächlichen Transaktionen der Sprache. (*Philosophische Grammatik* [W IV], 87)

Grammar is the accounting books of language. They must show the actual transactions of language, everything that is not a matter of accompanying sensations. (PGE, 87)

The reading material thus to be obtained will be context-dependent enough to warrant skepticism regarding a universal rationality that would ground these practices. Writing this grammar means first and foremost to cast philosophical disputes, power struggles in the business world, or ethical quandaries in urban development as *language games*. Literature in the wake of Wittgenstein's struggle with the curse of *Darstellung* exposes the linguistic nature of the theoretical commitments that the players in these games adopt, and demonstrates to what extent this linguistic component ultimately foils the pursuit of "absolute

clarity” that motivates them. The plurality of admissible perspectives that philosophical *Rechthaberei* (K, 148) or aesthetic rigorism will not recognize asserts itself in Händler’s writing not just as a philosophical argument but as a stylistic effect on the surface of writing, as different modes of linguistic form and presentation appear side by side in their evident incommensurability. The externality of writing—just as much as the externality of behavior (K, 129)—thus proves to be more than a mere superficiality. It is by means of explicit language use that philosophical theories are defended, corporate strategies are hatched, and psychological games in relationships are being played. The narrative documentation of the circumstances of such language use in Händler’s project aims for “clarity” in the Wittgensteinian sense insofar as its own *Darstellung* is clearly marked as the boundary of whatever epistemological contribution the creation of such linguistic worlds might entail. Putting to paper the ambitions of systematic thought by which Händler’s characters aim to order their worlds will in turn not be systematic but will, like Wittgenstein’s later philosophy, attempt perspicuity; a juxtaposition, that is, of linguistic situations that throw into doubt the possibility that all could be rendered as elements of one true theory—independently of being observed, and released from the constraints that the presentation of observations entails. Händler’s choice of the novel form to narrate these presentations frames the struggle for clarity, and thus for a *clearer view of the future*, on the fallible inferential basis provided by personal and institutional memory. Taking over from systematic philosophical accounts, literary prose presents thought constructs forced to face their own conditions of linguistic assertibility.

Freilich dürfen wir uns hier nicht an die Spiele erinnern, die in dem wirklichen Leben im Gange sind und die sich gewöhnlich nur auf sehr materielle Gegenstände richten . . .

—Friedrich Schiller, *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen*

MUNICH SECESSION (*KONGREß*)

The social institution of a major philosophical convention, or congress, is the perfect image of a fundamental incommensurability. On the one hand, each participant holds at least implicitly to the claim to be defending the one true theory, and doing so under the constraints of time. On the other hand, the organizational necessity to be conducting a dozen or more sessions that meet at the same time during the congress condemns this claim to vacuity at least in principle, since any one participant will have to disregard a substantial

number of proposed theories that may all be in direct conflict with his own claim at the time the latter is made. At any given time, then, the claim may already be impossible to uphold, even though the person advancing the claim may be unaware of this. Given the organizational exigencies, each participant has to allow herself a good conscience given her inevitable ignorance of alternative theories she will have no opportunity to directly take into account. She will have to adopt the principle of disregarding the conditions under which she is alone able to formulate her claim to be defending the one true theory in time.

Such is the analysis that the protagonist gives of the philosophical congress at the center of Ernst-Wilhelm Händler's first novel—and second book of his ongoing project—*Kongreß*. The protagonist, identified only as the “Assistant Professor's Friend,” received his Ph.D. in philosophy of science at a university in Southern Germany (recognizably Munich) a few years before and has since kept on researching and publishing articles in specialized journals, but has deliberately not endeavored to find a teaching position. Nevertheless, he stays in touch with an assistant professor at his alma mater (as whose “Friend” he is introduced to the reader), and reads a paper at the *Congress of Logic, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science*.³ It is this experience that will trigger a personal meltdown, a reevaluation of his academic career, and a radical and surprising reorientation of his pursuits in the second part of the novel. The research area of the *Friend* (as we will henceforth refer to him) is philosophy of science, and more specifically the structuralist program of theory reconstruction as developed by Wolfgang Stegmüller and his colleagues and students since the early 1970s.⁴ The structuralist program proposes set-theoretical axiomatizations of existing empirical scientific theories, suggesting that a fully rational account of scientific theory change may be given with the help of a properly developed formal apparatus. To this end, a scientific theory *T* is analyzed as a pair $\langle K, I \rangle$, consisting of a mathematical structure *K* and a set of intended applications *I*. The structure *K* in turn consists of the class of models (the physical systems to which the theory may be applied) and constraints that regulate the connections between overlapping models; *I* is the set of expansions of the theory proper that restrict its application to particular cases. Stegmüller holds that this view of theories has several advantages over the more traditional so-called ‘statement view,’ which conceives of scientific theories as sets of statements or propositions.⁵ The statement view identifies scientific rationality with logical entailment of statements; whereas this may be adequate for meta-mathematical reconstructions that are supposed to be valid in all possible worlds, the reconstruction of empirical theories will also require reference to facts not already contained

in the premises. This restriction on what is to count as 'rational scientific behavior' would render much of what scientists actually do as entirely irrational activity. Another fundamental problem of the statement view, according to the structuralists, is its inability to properly account for the apparent immunity of scientific theories to recalcitrant evidence; according to Popper's extension of the statement view, for example, the falsification of a single observation statement that follows from a given theory would require the rejection of the whole theory. In actual scientific practice, however, theories are never discarded so quickly; they routinely outlast much more significant empirical findings that would refute it, especially if no alternative theory is readily available to replace it.

These objections against the traditional logical-empiricist philosophy of science are not exactly new. Thomas Kuhn raised them in his seminal book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, and suggested a radically different picture of theory change, according to which the stability of research paradigms in the context of 'normal science' is largely due to the social effects of teaching and research. The 'revolutionary science' that may every once in a while upset these patterns is a result of adopting a radically new way of seeing available data and results, rather than a rational process of eliminating hypotheses purely on the basis of observation and/or logical analysis. Stegmüller's structuralist view of theories attempts to preserve some of Kuhn's insights by radically different means; supplementing Kuhn's historical studies with set-theoretical axiomatizations, Stegmüller hopes to show that even though scientific theories do contain more additional assumptions than the statement view allows, a formal reconstruction of these assumptions and the resulting theory change over time is *fully rational*. Thus, the structuralist program emerges as an enterprise to reign in the threat of irrationality that many have taken Kuhn's view to pose.

One of the most crucial elements of Stegmüller's theoretical picture is derived from his reading of Wittgenstein, inspired by J.D. Sneed's comments on paradigmatic description.⁶ The definition of the set of intended applications I of a theory as a set-theoretical predicate is based on the notion of paradigmatic examples.⁷ Stegmüller attempts to clarify Kuhn's notoriously wide conception of 'paradigm' by stipulating a subset of paradigmatic cases I_0 that determine I . The extension of what is to count as an admissible application of a theory is thus determined not by definite list of properties but by a set of paradigmatic examples plus similarities between these examples and new cases that the theory may come to face. Membership in I_0 , Stegmüller claims, is governed by necessary but not by sufficient conditions. The set I of applications of a theory within a given paradigm therefore does not have to be

definitely identified at the time that its mathematical structure is formulated and suitable phenomena identified; it is conceived to retain a degree of inexactness with respect to what may be said to be an extension of the original conception of the theory. The theory may grow and change as I is revised on the basis of I_0 , and only if the theory fails in cases included in I_0 will it have to be given up. Stegmüller therefore believes to have rationally reconstructed Kuhn's notion of paradigm, because the immunity of theories to recalcitrant evidence is insured (these cases are accounted for as improper applications, and are subsequently eliminated from I), and paradigm shift (conflict with I_0 , the set of paradigmatic cases) is accounted for. Stegmüller explicitly derives his exposition of paradigmatic cases from Wittgenstein's remarks on games. The crucial problem with this view, touched on by Feyerabend in his review of Stegmüller's book,⁸ is the interpretation of Wittgenstein's view of necessary and sufficient conditions as formulated in the context of family resemblance. Contrary to Wittgenstein's rejection of both as determining what is to count as 'game,' Stegmüller clearly requires the determination of necessary conditions in the delineation of I_0 .⁹ I_0 can only function as an absolute limit of a paradigm if necessary conditions for membership in I_0 can be established—but this is exactly what Wittgenstein insists we *cannot* do in the case of 'game.' Kuhn's own reference to Wittgenstein, not surprisingly, points out quite correctly that the tacit knowledge involved in much of scientific activity that is developed through shared exemplars does not supply an answer to the question "Similar with respect to what?" that could be rendered as a similarity set.¹⁰ Stegmüller's rational reconstruction of Kuhn evidently attempts to find more rationality in scientific theory change than seems warranted by scientific activity itself.

This short detour into the philosophy of science reveals the philosophical backdrop against which the power struggles in and among the two philosophy departments in Book I of *Kongreß* unfold, involving a fictional double of the very department in which the structuralist view of theories was developed. Stegmüller himself provides the model for the *Professor*, and his former academic environment, the *Philosophisches Seminar II* at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munich, here appears as *Institut Eins*. It should immediately be noted that even though Händler here toys with elements typical of a *Schlüsselroman*, recognition of some of the figures and relations that provide models for the narrative is revelatory not because it would help decode *secrets* told about individuals disguised as fictional characters. What is of interest, rather, is the function of a particular philosophical view and its proponents within the functional web of institutions that challenges the very notion of *human beings* harboring such secrets.¹¹ Several of the members of the two

departments (*Institut Eins*, *Institut Zwei*) are identified by Händler only by their professional positions, reflecting the sociological insight that as members of an academic institution their functions do not depend in any way on facts about them as individuals. The contrast thus opened up between the *Professor* and the *New Professor* casts the latter as a perturbation of the system sustained by the *Professor's* dominant research program and the resulting longstanding feud with *Institut Zwei*, whose members have little respect for this kind of philosophy of science. The *New Professor*, though appointed as a faculty member of *Institut Eins*, does not accept the silent consensus regarding this standoff and skeptically challenges anybody and everybody, including his departmental colleagues (DK, 329). His unsettling role is altogether independent of a 'real' personal identity or any particular philosophical position he would 'stand for.'

The *Friend* is confounded by the *New Professor's* attitude that philosophy should be neither anything more—nor less—than a game, to be played at dinner parties (K, 63), faculty meetings (K, 211), or during the question period after the *Friend* has given his paper at the congress. Even though this attitude entails the sophist point of view that defending a position as part of the game does not require one to believe in its truth, it is by no means harmless or neutral. The corrosive effect of the *New Professor's* arguments on the internal cohesion of *Institut Eins* (K, 217), and on the self-image of the *Friend* in particular, constitutes an irreversible attack on beliefs that previously went unchallenged. Immediately after having been thus confronted at the session at the congress, the *Friend* falls seriously ill and is forced to enter a hospital. It is here that he first comes to reevaluate his research activities undertaken up to this point primarily in the wake of the Stegmüllerian program that had turned him into nothing more than a "user" of a theoretical framework, even if the preface to his dissertation may have claimed otherwise: "Ich war ein Anwender, und ich war nichts als das. Ich leistete, auch wenn ich es in der Einleitung meiner Dissertation anders darstellte, nicht den geringsten Beitrag zur Weiterentwicklung, zum Ausbau dessen, was ich anwendete. Und für meine Anwendungen bestand kein Bedarf" [*I was in the business of applying a theory, and was doing nothing else. Even though I made claims to the contrary in the introduction to my dissertation, I did not remotely contribute anything to the development or to the extension of what I was applying. And there was no demand for my applications*] (K, 142; DK, 201). This is a devastating realization for the *Friend* precisely because his view of philosophy has been so radically different from the one conveyed by the *New Professor*. The decision not to seek a teaching position was motivated by the *Friend's* belief that the philosophical pursuit of context-independent truth was still, and indeed only, possible

outside of existing institutional structures. According to this optimistic view, participation in the latter would be necessary to a certain extent, but could be regarded as no more than a concession to the rules of the game: “Ich sprach zu mir selbst immer von *Mitspielen*” [*I told myself I was just playing along*] (K, 137). *Playing along* would thus have signified for the *Friend* not the general skepticism exhibited by the *New Professor* concerning the possibility of truth in philosophical argument, but only a strategic behavior not adversely affecting his ultimate goal of devising a comprehensive metatheory of the development of scientific theories (K, 143) that would claim for itself *not* to be just another move in a game.

In the aftermath of the congress, the *Friend* is forced to revise this view and to recognize that the institutional embeddedness of philosophical inquiry cannot be subtracted as a gratuitous ornament from the core of what that inquiry is *really* about.¹² As his real goal of formulating “this radically different metatheory” (DK, 202) is unsettled, he discovers that such a core can no more clearly be identified for philosophy as institutionalized *Wissenschaft* than it can be for scientific theories in general, as the structuralist view claims it can. The *New Professor*’s unsparing attack of this paradigm at a faculty meeting (originally devoted to discussing a resolution against administrative plans to merge the two departments into one) insists on this very point: the clean separation of a formally structured core K from the empirically determined intended applications I—indispensable for the axiomatization and its attendant claim that elimination of intended applications does not mean to challenge the core of a given theory—is ultimately exposed as being nothing but a chimera (K, 215). In similar fashion, the idea of a philosophy removed from the empirical realities of departmental power struggles or the concrete manifestations of theoretical disagreement at a congress becomes untenable to the *Friend*.

The radical reevaluation of his prior beliefs is documented in the notes he takes in the hospital while his psychosomatic symptoms are being treated; the illness is here described as the last in a series of attempts to save the possibility of truth, albeit at the expense of his own identity: “Die Krankheit, wobei es so aussieht, als wäre sie keine, ist der verzweifelte, aber folgerichtige Versuch, die eine wahre Theorie für mich selbst um den Preis der Aufgabe meiner selbst zu retten” [*The disease, which looks like it may not actually be one, is the desperate but cogent attempt to save the one true theory for myself, at the expense of giving myself up*] (DK, 253). Insofar as even this last step aims at preserving conceptual room for an absolute judgment, to be rendered by only one person when no one else is left (K, 172; DK, 253–4), it continues the trajectory the *Friend* has followed since the very beginning of his studies. His nausea

concerning any 'external' aspect of university study (fellow students, university buildings, departmental bulletin boards, exams) contrasts with his aesthetic delight at his private library: "Die Welt meiner Bücher ist nach Sachgebieten und alphabetisch geordnet und deshalb überschaubar, sie ist mein, denn ich habe in jedem Buch unterstrichen und Anmerkungen gemacht, und sie ist unberührt. Ich würde niemals ein Buch verleihen" [*The world of my books is ordered topically and alphabetically, and is thus perspicuous; it is mine, because I have underlined passages and added marginalia in every book, and it is untouched. I would never loan a book to anyone*] (K, 132). The private world of personally marked pages is set off from the less well-ordered sphere in which the remarks thus noted might be critically discussed. It is not without irony that the first volume of the original Suhrkamp edition of Wittgenstein's writings should have formed the pinnacle of this order—again, on purely aesthetic grounds:

Der Gott war Wittgenstein. Ich konnte mir lange Zeit kein schöneres Buch vorstellen als den ersten Band der Gesamtausgabe, der den *Tractatus* und die *Logischen Untersuchungen* enthielt. In dunkelrotem, glattem Leineneinband und in verhältnismäßig großem Druck, der genügend Platz für Unterstreichungen und Anmerkungen ließ. Bevor ich den Band aufschlug, legte ich jedesmal den gelblichen Schutzumschlag aus Papier beiseite, um ihn beim Lesen nicht zu beschädigen. Die Gesamtausgabe der Werke Wittgensteins war erst Jahre später vollständig, ich habe jeden Band mit derselben Spannung aufgeschlagen wie den ersten, Beim Lesen der späteren Bände entfernte ich deren Schutzumschläge zwar nicht mehr, ich achtete jedoch nach wie vor sehr darauf, sie nicht zu beschädigen. (K, 131)

Wittgenstein was God. For a long time I could not imagine a book more beautiful than the first volume of the collected works that contained the *Tractatus* and the *Philosophical Investigations*. Bound in dark red, smooth linen, and printed in relatively large type that left enough room for underlining and marginalia. Before opening the volume I always removed the dust cover made of yellowish paper so as not to damage it while reading. Wittgenstein's Collected Works would not be complete until years later; I would open each volume with the same anticipation as the first one. Even though I no longer removed their dust jackets when reading the later volumes, I was still very careful not to damage them.

Quite clearly, only the first part of the volume thus elevated to the status of *scripture* would support the solipsist reading practices that shape the *Friend's*

acquaintance with his God. Only on the detached logical picture of the world offered in the *Tractatus* can the abstraction from all time and context of utterance be defended, and only here does the strictly private relation between subject and word still hold. The vision of an exhaustive description of the world logically secured by elementary propositions is subsequently modified by Wittgenstein, as was outlined above in Chapter One, and this shift is reflected in the *Friend's* eventual recognition: “Man lernt den Gebrauch eines Werkzeugs, indem man es verwendet. Nicht, indem man es beschreibt” [*The use of a tool is learned by using it. Not by describing it*] (DK, 241; see also K, 69–70). Even if it were conceptually feasible, the description of theories—the goal of the projected metatheory—would have nothing to say about the use of theories—that is, about the sphere of philosophical practice as described in *Kongreß*. The Wittgensteinian view that the meaning of terms—philosophical ones included—depends on the context of their use is nicely exemplified by the *New Professor's* defense of the strong verificationist thesis¹³ during one of his ‘games,’ a staged defense of realism played during a cocktail party at his house. Considering a proposition to be either true or false is only justified, the *New Professor* claims here, “wenn wir uns innerhalb eines endlichen Zeitraums in eine Lage versetzen können, in der wir ihn unmittelbar als wahr oder falsch erkennen” [*if we can put ourselves in the position of being able to determine it immediately as true or false within a finite period of time*] (K, 71). The implication of this view, critically articulated by the *Assistant Professor*, that the majority of propositions cannot be assigned the value ‘true’—including propositions about the past—does not count as a *reductio* for the *New Professor*. He accepts the counterintuitive implications of the verificationist thesis, if only to show that the *Assistant Professor's* arguments in favor of Putnamian ‘enlightened realism’ will not stand, but does not thereby defend the verificationist thesis as true. Such ‘use’ of the verificationist point of view, not necessarily compatible with its proponents who hardly intended to disallow statements about the past altogether, marks the *New Professor's* general strategy. The *Assistant Professor* will later point out that it consists in giving reasons for why other points of view are incorrect, while evading any positive characterization of one’s own view.¹⁴ The philosophical training at *Institut Zwei* has apparently left the *Assistant Professor* and the *Friend* unprepared for this kind of rhetorical assault.

The aesthetic notions that form the basis for the *Friend's* theoretical pursuits make him into an optimal target for the *New Professor* on yet another count: his wife is a collector of contemporary art, praised by her husband and by a friend who owns an art gallery for her taste in assembling the perfect collection. She reportedly believes (although she never herself declares) her taste in selecting works for the collection to be intuitively infallible, and

yet not beholden to any particular theory as a guiding principle. This view of aesthetic judgment mirrors the *Friend's* erstwhile belief in the possibility of an ultimate judgment on the correctness of a metatheory at least insofar as it posits the possibility of absolute truth and definite error. Rejecting this notion of 'truth in collecting paintings,' the *Friend* remarks to the gallery owner that only in the case of writing a philosophical encyclopedia does the notion of error in view of everything that one could theoretically have known make any sense. In aesthetic judgment, however, radical context-dependence would make any talk of truth impossible: a given addition to a collection could always upset the balance of a collection so far considered to be 'perfect' (K, 60–1). For the *Friend* the encyclopedia signifies an "open future" (K, 59), the possibility of theoretical progress that is systematically motivated, whereas decoration is always occupied with the past, a fundamentally historical activity without any promise of epistemological gain. Even if the future should be open, however, the past does not vanish. As the *Friend* compares the status of the empirical sciences and the philosophical reconstructions of the latter in which he has been engaging, he finds that the co-presence of the entire history of philosophy in the ideal encyclopedia only intensifies the struggle among philosophers as to who will eventually have the last word. Philosophy cannot afford the same kind of blissful forgetfulness of its own history as empirical science, but that fact may very well undermine the image of history as progress in the ideal limit that he previously defended.

To reject the position of someone contemplating a whole (K, 149) would be to reject philosophy *tout court*. In the aftermath of the congress, the *Friend* destroys all written documents connected to the event, and—perhaps as part of his psychosomatic affliction—is left with incomplete and unreliable memories (K, 125). The memories that do remain present no cognitive bridge between the past and what he before praised as the 'open future' dedicated to philosophical research:

Ich nehme mir vor, die Eindrücke und Empfindungen bei der Beschreibung des Kongresses und seiner jahrelangen Vorgeschichte zu deuten, ich nehme mir vor, sie nicht überzubewerten, ich nehme mir vor, sie nüchtern in die Abwägung der verschiedenen möglichen Wege der Fortführung meiner Arbeit einzubeziehen. Aber es gibt keine Brücke zwischen diesen Eindrücken und Empfindungen einerseits und allen vorstellbaren Wegen der Fortführung meiner Arbeit andererseits. (K, 144)

I resolve to interpret the impressions and sensations accompanying the description of the congress and its history that goes back several

years, I resolve not to exaggerate their importance, I resolve to objectively integrate them into my evaluation of the various possible ways of continuing my work. But there is no bridge between these impressions and sensations on the one hand, and all possible ways of continuing my work on the other.

The radical reorientation of his 'research' in Book II of the novel does thus not evolve from his prior beliefs with any kind of continuity. As he learns that the *Assistant Professor*, whose 'friend' the reader has taken him to be, is responsible for the rejection of one of his articles at an anonymously refereed journal, and that the same 'friend' plans to jump ship to the London School of Economics without ever having told him about his plans, the *Friend* devises a scheme of his own and convinces the *Professor* that he is the right person for the newly vacant position. His change of heart to accept the conditions of a teaching position as a framework for his new project grows out of the insight already pointed out, to the effect that *doing* philosophy is strictly speaking impossible outside of institutions. The *Friend's* plans, however, do not involve a simple subordination to the structures in place. He works out the rules for a 'congress' of an altogether different sort than the one that prompted his breakdown: not a public assembly of "Rechthaber" [*know-it-alls*] (K, 148) but a private agreement among five people to set up a structure of mutual help and justification:

Die Hilfe geschehe so, daß jeweils einer einem anderen helfe und sich dafür gegenüber einem Dritten verantworte. Jeder Helfende kenne nur denjenigen, dem oder der er helfe, sowie denjenigen, dem oder der gegenüber er sich verantworte, und niemanden sonst. Es gehe darum, ein System von Grundsätzen und Regeln zu etablieren, dessen allgemeine Anerkennung auf bestmögliche Art und Weise dafür Sorge, daß niemand mehr Schuldgefühle zu haben brauche. (K, 344)

Helping would be organized such that each person would always help one other person, and would answer to a third person for justification of that help. Each helping person would know only the person whom they would be helping, and the person to whom they would have to answer, and no one else. The goal was to establish a system of principles and rules, the universal recognition of which would serve in the best way possible to eliminate feelings of guilt on everyone's part.

Even though the *Friend* mentions none of this to the *Professor* when he informs him of his ongoing interest in ethics to strengthen his prospects for

the position, it seems appropriate to call the scenario thus set up a test case for an applied ethics. This turn of events in Book II is entirely absent from *Der Kongress*, where the *Friend* instead declares an alternative interest in *aesthetics* (DK, 337), and projects not the forming of an alternative congress but the continuation of writing—“ein Buch, das nicht groß, nicht überzeugt, nicht überlegt und nicht kenntnisreich ist” [*a book that is not large, not convinced, not well thought-out, and not expertly written*] (DK, 347)—from underneath the ruins of his prior theoretical edifice. The ethical project now initiated in place of the aesthetic one has as its object the creation of stable conditions enabling action, rather than a stable metatheoretical framework, but it remains beholden to philosophy insofar as justification is still an essential part of the game, which the *Friend* had earlier considered to be ultimately impossible in aesthetics.

Of course, the difference between ethics and aesthetics—and hence the modification Händler undertakes as he rewrites and expands the book—could be more subtle than might at first appear. According to Wittgenstein's “Lecture on Ethics,” the two realms are actually equivalent in that absolute value judgments are impossible in both.¹⁵ Wittgenstein claims that if a book existed that contained a description of the entire world, it would still not contain a single ethical judgment proper, nor anything that would entail such an judgment (“Lecture on Ethics,” 6). If a “real” book about ethics could be written—a book that contained propositions about ethical facts—it would destroy with a bang all other books on earth. And yet, Wittgenstein is not ready to renounce all reference to the notion of an absolute, or ethical, value. He introduces two examples of such absolutes that are meaningless by their very essence because they attempt to surpass meaningful language (*ibid.*, 11), and he does so—crucially—“in order, if possible, to make you recall the same or similar experiences, so that we may have a common ground for our investigation” (*ibid.*, 8). The two examples in question (the quasi-Heideggerian wonder about the very existence of the world, and the feeling of absolute security) would require such independent mnemonic acts precisely because the evocation of these quasi-experiences in publicly accessible language can never succeed.¹⁶ Whether or not his audience at the club meeting of the *Heretics* in Cambridge was able to recall anything of sufficient similarity is hardly open to verification, which only underlines Wittgenstein's skepticism of memory as a philosophically significant epistemological tool. A philosophical, “good” book about ethics cannot be written, precisely because private memories of the kind Wittgenstein himself presents in a demonstrative attempt “to run up against the limits of language” will not secure the possibility of an understanding of what an ethical realm beyond all expression would look like.

Whereas at the end of *Der Kongress* the *Friend* still entertains the idea of writing the kind of book Wittgenstein here calls impossible, the revised version of the novel opts for the seemingly more Wittgensteinian conclusion that only actions, not descriptive propositions, may delineate the ethical realm.¹⁷ Instead of relying on mnemonically stored paradigmatic examples of absolute values, the *Friend* instead involves five people in a so-called ‘Congress of the Helping:’ himself, the *New Professor’s* wife (now identified by her first name Elsi), her sister Nelly, Kowalski (an assistant professor from *Institut Zwei* and personal friend of the *New Professor* and Elsi), and the lawyer Stumpfegle. The covert rules of the congress include the regulation of the following relationships among its members: Stumpfegle helps Nelly and answers to Elsi, Kowalski helps Stumpfegle and answers to the *Friend*, the *Friend* helps Elsi and answers only to himself.

Following Wittgenstein’s diagnosis that a *book* of ethical propositions could never arrive at establishing an absolute value, the congress is instead based on the notion that an equilibrium of *actions* can be established, given that proper rules are devised that will guide those actions. Actions are to be considered “good” not insofar as they conform to an absolute, context-independent ideal of goodness, but only insofar as they are concretely helping one particular person, and as their concrete justification is rendered to, and independently checked by, a third party. Rationality is therefore not limited to the descriptive adequacy of propositions in relation to facts, but extended to communication through rational action.

The congress is an ethical system in the sense that it is designed to regulate the *effect* of the presumed existence of what Wittgenstein calls absolute normative judgments, that is: guilt.¹⁸ The rules of the game commit each member to helping and justification, but do not specify what actions the prescription “to help someone” exactly entails. The concrete justifications to be given by each member, of course, are neither abstract nor absolute, since they derive from the particular context in which the congress member finds herself. As a result, an ineradicable uncertainty remains for the actors as to whether or not they really have helped the person they were supposed to help: “*Helfen* ist nicht mit der bedingungslosen Verbreitung der Wahrheit identisch, was immer das sein mag” [Helping is not identical with the unconditional dissemination of the truth, whatever that means] (K, 272). This alternate congress takes the lesson from earlier observations about the philosophy congress into account and will let a plurality of justificatory perspectives stand. While this undermines the notion of an absolute truth and thus of absolute value, perspectival justification is still intended to insure the primary goal of this other congress—life without guilt.

Elsi, who appears to have conceived the project together with the *Friend*, claims that to make one radically good, altruistic decision, to help someone without gaining anything other than the certainty of having made a good decision, is to have experienced eternity (K, 252–3). Since the criteria for the application of ‘good’ to a given decision are left unspecified by the rules of the congress, certainty can only be the product of a private assessment; the independent verification by a third member of the congress will likewise not evade this predicament, as long as no explicit rules can be given to which both the person justifying her actions and the one checking the justification can refer. Wittgenstein’s skeptical remarks on rule-following, challenging the very notion that in following a rule we are, as it were, internally guided by that rule, fully apply here: Wittgenstein emphasizes that *believing* to be following a rule is *not* to follow a rule (PU, §202). Certainty as justified true belief thus will not suffice to establish that one has indeed made a ‘good’ decision and helped someone. Rather, it is the practice of following a rule that will ultimately establish, or refute, that one has been following a rule—in this case, that one has indeed helped another.

Judged by its intended goal of eliminating guilt, the congress clearly fails. The experiment ends with the violent murder of Nelly at the hands of her mentally ill brother Emanuel, leaving the other members of the congress to speculate on his motives: Was it an act of sheer madness? Did he want to relieve his sister of the web of dependencies that the congress had created in the name of providing help? Did she ask him to kill her? The difficulties in establishing Emanuel’s motives entail feelings of guilt for others; Kowalski, for example, is no longer sure after the murder whether it was right of him to deny to himself that he loved Nelly, simply because this would have violated the rules of the congress. He is also uncertain whether he effectively helped Stumpfegle, attempting to prevent him from overstepping his role as ‘helper’ and beginning a relationship with Nelly. As the complex web of relationships among the members is retrospectively unraveled, it turns out that everybody transgressed the restrictions: both Kowalski and Stumpfegle engaged in sado-masochistic practices with Nelly; Stumpfegle helped not only Nelly (to lead a more ‘well-ordered’ life, both financially and emotionally) but also Elsi (financially, so that she could keep her art collection); Elsi didn’t seem to be helping anyone in particular. The practices of helping that unfold in this web of interconnections by far surpass the justificatory attempts in complexity, and are eventually radically called into question by Nelly’s murder.

The congress, originally stipulated to be eternal by virtue of its principles and rules (K, 344), comes to an abrupt end when Emanuel as the absolute

principle of freedom from rules spells the breakdown of the rationally devised system. Emanuel, who has been running away from school, stealing, lying, and walking away from jobs for years, does not fit the rational mold of the congress. Not amenable to recognition and understanding, his never-ending transgressions are not considered actions properly speaking:

Wenn Emanuel allerdings wolle, daß alle ihn anerkannten, dann müsse er einmal handeln. Sein Ausreißen, seine Diebstähle seien keine Handlungen in diesem Sinne. . . . Emanuel müsse sich mitteilen. Durch Handlungen, die keinen Zweifel daran ließen, ob er wisse, was er tue, und deren Ursächlichkeit für alle nachvollziehbar sein werde. (K, 269–70)

But if Emanuel wanted others to recognize him, he would for once have to act. His running away, his petty thefts were no actions in that sense. . . . Emanuel would have to communicate. By way of actions that would leave no room for doubt as to whether he knew what he was doing, and the causal efficacy of which everyone would be able to understand.

The action that finally demands recognition is Emanuel's murder of Nelly, which also marks the end of the congress. The murder challenges the very foundations of the congress because admitting it as an act of helping Nelly would entail that the acts of help regulated by the congress have failed (K, 256). But whether or not the murder should be counted as such an act of helping is never clearly established because Emanuel's action cannot be assigned a *meaning* within the framework of the congress. Nelly had anticipated some action on her brother's part, a "Selbstmitteilung" (K, 271) of uncertain timing and substance. She will posthumously be proven right: Emanuel, who carries in his name the promise of bringing about that messianic moment, has imparted a 'communicative action,' though one that the others cannot understand. They remain in the dark about how to bring his deed in relation to the rational (though imperfectly realized) scheme of the congress, intended to clear everyone of guilt. Emanuel eludes all instituted procedures of justification, of giving reasons that defend an action as 'good' and help define an identity. As an absolute principle, a measure that can be measured only in relation to itself (K, 289), he destroys the attempt to institutionalize relative and perspectival justification within the bounds of the congress. As the maker of all laws, resistant to explanation (K, 287), he condemns the *Friend's* project to vacuity.

Or, as one could also say, he pinpoints without knowing it the paradox at the origin of the congress: to overcome the Wittgensteinian skeptical paradox

about rule-following, written memos as documents of justification need to be collected, stored, and evaluated. Just like the organizer of a philosophical congress, the host of this alternate congress needs a good memory, and a well-organized archive, as do the members asked to account for the activity of those for whose justification they are responsible, consigning memories to writing or tape. Absent the illusion that the sum of the memories will make truth accessible for all participants of the congress, the *Friend* envisions the emancipation of the first-person perspective as capable of justification. He collects the *aides mémoires*, but since he is the origin of the congress, he can give them to no one but himself. The projected “Abschlußveranstaltung des Kongresses” [*final meeting of the congress*] (K, 279) when all justifications are co-present in the archive takes place only for the “I,” and the paradox of self-justification can only be averted at the expense of a disintegration of identity:

Ich ist ein Ausgangspunkt. Kowalski rechtfertigt sich dafür, wie er Stumpfegle hilft. Ich sammle seine Rechtfertigungen. Ich rechtfertige mich dafür, wie ich helfe, ich händige meine Rechtfertigungen demjenigen aus, dem gegenüber ich mich für meine Hilfe verantworte, und er sammelt sie. Ich übergebe meine Berichte an mich selbst. Ich bewahre sie. Ich bin ein Ausgangspunkt. (K, 279)

I is a point of origin. Kowalski justifies himself for how he is helping Stumpfegle. I collect his justifications. I justify myself for how I am helping, I hand my justifications over to the person to whom I answer in the matter of my helping, and he collects them. I hand my reports over to myself. I keep them. I am an origin.

As the “I” is forced to do double duty as first and third person, the maddening consequences of the project become apparent. Even though the *Friend* does not overtly hallucinate about virtual twin brothers or sisters like Emanuel does (K, 263, 344–46), he must likewise create an identical twin to temporarily disambiguate the paradox at play. The impending breakdown of the rational project is also foreshadowed by an encounter with the *Assistant Professor* who is now suffering from severe aphasia as a result of a brain tumor. When the *Friend* visits him in the hospital, the *Assistant Professor* is able to speak almost perfectly grammatical sentences that are semantically highly deficient; when he takes a short dictation from one of his own works, the result is a radically incomprehensible string of words, which the patient himself apparently doesn’t realize, as he seems highly content with what he

has just written down. The *Friend* realizes that strictly speaking the aphasia is not an abnormal condition for this patient:

Das Gefühl, es hatte sich nichts geändert. Die Vorstellung, daß nicht einmal eine organische Aphasie den Strom der Veröffentlichungen des Assistenzprofessors mit immer neuen Einleitungen und immer neuen Rekonstruktionen unterbinden konnte. Es machte für den Assistenzprofessor keinen Unterschied, wenn er jetzt aphasisch war. Es machte für den Assistenzprofessor—und nur auf ihn kam es schließlich an—keinen Unterschied, wenn er wieder gesund würde. (K, 336)

The feeling that nothing had changed. The notion that not even an organic aphasia could stem the tide of the Assistant Professor's publications, his ever new introductions and ever new reconstructions. His present aphasia made no difference to the Assistant Professor. It made no difference to the Assistant Professor when he would regain his health; and he, after all, was the only one whom this should have concerned.

The structure of the congress that the *Friend* devised explicitly as an alternative to the world of structuralist reconstructions ultimately delivers him to much the same fate, as he, like Emanuel and like the *Assistant Professor*, is also his own and only measure. Just like the *Assistant Professor* can justify a meaningless sequence of words to be part of a rational reconstruction of a scientific theory, so the *Friend* alone would be the one to supply the criteria at the final congregation of justifications. As Wittgenstein emphasized, such an act of self-justification will not shed its paradoxical structure by reference to memory as a supplier of criteria. Emanuel's and the *Assistant Professor's* mnemonic deficiencies points to the inevitable eradication that will be befall the archive of justifications stored (*bewahrt*) by the *Friend*. Even though Emanuel also suffers from a bad memory (K, 241)—which may be connected to a real or imagined aphasia (K, 345)—he claims to have retained all memories from before his birth (K, 346). His ending of the congress by way of his *Selbstmitteilung* is an irremediable interruption, however, not the *Zusammenführung* of all justificatory reports (K, 279) the *Friend* had envisaged. Emanuel, whose bad memory suggests to teachers that he is incapable of learning (K, 241), will not fit the research paradigm designated by Platonic *anamnesis*: retrieval of prenatal memories to secure the possibility of progressive knowledge acquisition, including the recognition of something 'good.' Emanuel's supposed prenatal memories are not compatible with *logos*, that "second-best ride" which Socrates advocates in place of directly

contemplating the higher order by staring at the sun.¹⁹ Communicating *only* by doing, Emanuel destroys the prospects of an “eternal” congress of the helping whose rationality would be insured by overt justifications.

The breakdown of the *Friend's* second systematic project is brought on, then, by the normative vacuity of the act of self-justification that is at the origin of the congress. The perspectival plurality that the *Friend* found to undermine claims to truth as part of the philosophy congress cannot, ultimately, be regulated by a strict set of rules. The practices that, according to Wittgenstein, alone determine rule-following cannot be completely contained by the *Friend's* scheme, as more complex and ambiguous relationships develop among the members of the congress. The experiment in practical ethics therefore falls victim to analogous problems as the structuralist program in philosophy of science, as both ethical action and successful science begin only where rational justification or reconstruction is forced to end:

Die Begründung aber, die Rechtfertigung der Evidenz kommt zu einem Ende; – das Ende aber ist nicht daß uns gewisse Sätze unmittelbar als wahr einleuchten, also eine Art *Sehen* unsrerseits, sondern unser *Handeln*, welches am Grunde des Sprachspiels liegt. (*Über Gewißheit* [W VIII], §204)

Giving grounds, however, justifying the evidence, comes to an end; – but the end is not certain propositions' striking us immediately as true, i.e. it is not a kind of seeing on our part; it is our acting, which lies at the bottom of the language-game. (*On Certainty*, 28)

But what if effectiveness is part of a masquerade of social control rather than a reality? What if effectiveness were a quality widely imputed to managers and bureaucrats both by themselves and others, but in effect a quality which rarely exists apart from this imputation?

—Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*

Auch Geschäftsarbeiten kann man poetisch behandeln.

—Novalis, June 1800

TRUE/FALSE (*FALL*)

Händler's next novel, *Fall*, opens with a Wittgensteinian epigraph that connects action and language in the shortest possible way: “Worte sind Taten” [*Words are deeds*] (F, 5).²⁰ This predication indicates that beyond the point up

to which words may serve as *vehicles* of justifications of deeds, they must themselves be counted *as* deeds. Even though this well-known motto—famously featured in J.L. Austin’s book title—has traditionally been taken to mean that only the recovery of intentions will make possible the analysis, for example, of the illocutionary force of a statement,²¹ the deeds designated by Wittgenstein’s dictum are not necessarily so determined. If words are deeds, they are more than just tools to convey an independent and prior intention by way of inflection or exploitation of contextual factors that would bring out the illocutionary force of a statement such as “The window is open.” Words are also deeds in the sense of *how they do things with us*, such that they cannot be reduced to mere representations of mental acts or propositional attitudes independent of their linguistic expression. Remembering, Wittgenstein thus remarks elsewhere in the context of a skeptical discussion of the notion of memory images, is one such realm in which linguistic expression is not subordinate to an assumed lived experience but rather constitutes experience, and action, itself:

Könnte man nicht einwenden: “So kann also der gewisse Erinnerungen nicht haben, der keine Sprache gelernt hat?” Freilich, – er kann keine sprachlichen Erinnerungen, sprachlichen Wünsche, etc. haben. Und Erinnerungen, etc., in der Sprache sind ja nicht bloß die fadenscheinigen Darstellungen für eigentliche Erlebnisse; ist denn das Sprachliche kein Erlebnis? (Worte sind Taten.) (*Philosophische Grammatik* [W IV], 182)

Mightn’t someone object: “So if a man has not learned a language is he unable to have certain memories?” Of course—he cannot have verbal memories, verbal wishes and so on. And memories etc. in language are not mere threadbare representations of the real experiences; for is what is linguistic not an experience? (Words are deeds.) (PGE, 182)

To the extent that literary prose, as has been argued, likewise presents “memories in language,” these memories are also not hidden behind a representative function of words resting on a deeper “experience proper,” but are constitutive of experience itself, functioning as efficient causes of events. Paradoxically, such experience, as Händler demonstrates in *Fall*, amounts to the very recognition that language does not store or transmit memory but reminds only of the gap that separates it from any “experience proper.”

Fall narrates the story of Georg Voigtländer, recent heir to his father’s share in a mid-size manufacturing business, and involved in a power struggle with his uncle Heinrich, who is co-owner, and Heinrich’s son Friedrich, whom his father wants to install as managing director alongside Georg. As

the Voigtländer company is to be converted from a general partnership into one with limited liability—with an advisory board authorized to mediate disputes among the two directors—Georg sees the welcome opportunity to sideline Friedrich, whom he considers both incompetent and personally intolerable. A relatively minor incident involving Friedrich's private home use of a computer designated for business purposes provides the occasion for Georg to petition the board members for Friedrich's removal. Things do not turn out as planned, however, as the board eventually votes against his petition and in favor of a counter-petition by Heinrich and Friedrich that ends up replacing Georg with one of the board members as Friedrich's partner to head the company.

This trajectory of Georg's *fall* is precipitated by the divergence of rationally justified expectations and events, which are, as it will turn out, nothing other than *words*, or the lack thereof. Even though Georg is aware from the beginning that the change of legal status of the company and his attendant strategy to oust Friedrich could theoretically backfire, he is convinced that the board will be composed of rational members. Thus he assures Andreas Krapp, his tax consultant: "Der Beirat werde nach meiner Überzeugung vernünftig besetzt sein. Mit vernünftigen Leuten könne ich reden" [*The assembly of the advisory board would be reasonable, in my view. I would be able to communicate with reasonable people*] (F, 191). By having words with the board members ahead of the vote, Georg tries to convince them of what he believes to be the incontrovertible fact of Friedrich's manifest incompetence to run the family company, and his history of taking personal advantage of company resources. The three members of the advisory board are not so easily convinced, however: both the neutral member Zizendorf and the consultant K.—an old friend of Georg's whom he explicitly recruits to support his cause—become less inclined to vote in Georg's favor as time goes on. What decides their vote is the weight of words, some of them explicitly included in the novel as excerpts from business files. The story that emerges from assorted memos and meeting protocols from the past fifteen years is that of a dead-end situation caused by the family feud in which every accusation meets with dispute, compromises are not in sight, and fundamental decisions regarding the company structure are endlessly delayed. Georg's claim that Heinrich and Friedrich are running the company down is, at the very least, not clearly established by the documents. What emerges instead from the archival memory of the company in which oral exchanges are sedimented as "Gedächtnisprotokolle" [*memory protocols*] (F, 79, 178, 263) is undecidability, and the detrimental effects that it has on the long-term perspectives of the company. Georg insists on the one

hand that Friedrich's adversarial attitude and his verbal insults have made cooperation impossible, and fails to recognize that his own rejoinders, which he considers fully justified, are subject to being read by the other party as equally insulting. In a conversation with the attorney Fegelein, who oversees the legal transformation of the company and appears inclined against Georg, this double standard surfaces most clearly:

Fegelein meinte, ich nähme Worte zu ernst. Worte seien keine Handlungen. Dies gelte insbesondere für die Worte meines Onkels und meines Veters. Ich widersprach. Bestimmte Worte sind verletzender als alle anderen Handlungen. Das gilt insbesondere für die Worte meines Onkels und meines Veters. Die bestimmte Worte genau deshalb aussprechen, weil sie sich dieser Tatsache bewußt sind. Das gelte dann aber auch für die Worte in meinem Schreiben an die Schwestern meines Veters. (F, 359)

Fegelein thought I was taking words too seriously. Words weren't deeds. This was particularly true of my uncle's and my cousin's words. I objected. Certain words are more insulting than any other deeds. This is particularly true of my uncle's and my cousin's words. Who use certain words precisely because they are aware of that fact. This, however, would also be true of the words used in my letter to my cousin's sisters.

Georg considers his letter, in which he campaigned against Friedrich, as a forced reaction to Friedrich's earlier insult—reported by Georg's trusted ally, managing clerk Peter Simon—that Georg was lucky enough that his father had died, to be fully justified. As a written document, the letter—like all other records in the company archive—ultimately weighs more than a testimonial claim that cannot be backed up further against assertions to the contrary. The realm in which the internal company struggle is fought is a linguistic space in which the rhetorical force of particular words or statements is no longer governed by the intentions of speakers, and the supposed grounding of such intentions in rational assessments of a situation. When Georg later tells his friend K. of a protocol revision following a discussion with Zizendorf, he is increasingly aware of this predicament, and the problematic status it entails even for the certainty regarding the recollection of his *own* intentions:

Ich erzählte ihm, daß ich das Gespräch mit Zizendorf im unmittelbaren Anschluß aus der Erinnerung aufgeschrieben hatte. Die Aufzeichnungen enthielten auch den Satz: *Mein Vater war von Beginn an überzeugt, daß Friedrich nicht im mindesten über die Fähigkeiten verfügt, die notwendig*

sind, um eine Firma zu führen, und er hat diese Überzeugung geäußert.
Den ich später strich. (F, 375)

I told him that immediately after my conversation with Zizendorf I had noted it down from memory. My notes included the sentence: *My father was convinced from the very beginning that Friedrich did not in the least command the necessary skills for leading a company, and he made his opinion known.* Which I later deleted.

Georg claims that he deleted the sentence not because it had not been, or was not still, accurate, but because he had intermingled actual elements of the conversation with considerations that guided him during that conversation. K. is quick to point out that such mnemonic skepticism might apply equally to Simon's attribution of the insult to Friedrich, throwing Georg's earlier justificatory maneuvers in doubt. If the statement made to Zizendorf is subject to deletion because of its uncertain status in this particular context (will Zizendorf interpret it as corroboration of Friedrich's incompetence, or else as proof that Friedrich has historically served as the scapegoat?), other statements quoted out of context might with equal justification be considered candidates for deletion from the record. The mnemonic uncertainty about the occurrence of utterances, in other words, ultimately *will* affect the claim advanced in that very utterance.

As push comes to shove in the case of Georg's standing within the company, he eventually claims that he had rejected a request of Friedrich's to privately use a company computer at home, a statement that the other side charges is a lie, serious enough to warrant Georg's removal from the management at the hands of the advisory board. Georg, it is found, had remained silent when Friedrich requested the computer, which the latter interpreted as approval—an interpretation ultimately shared by the board. The scene, as banal as it is pivotal, appeared earlier in the text as an apparently recurring dream sequence of which Georg remembers only that he should have replied to Friedrich, even though he remembers neither what exactly Friedrich asked, nor why he didn't reply:

Ich begegne Friedrich auf dem Gang. Er sagt etwas, an daß ich mich später nie erinnern kann. Ich muß etwas erwidern. Aber ich sage nichts, während er mir gegenübersteht und mich anblickt. Ich sage nichts, als er sich wendet. Ich rufe ihm nichts nach, während er sich entfernt. Ich weiß später nie, ob ich etwas sagen wollte, aber nichts sagen konnte, oder ob ich, obwohl ich in der Lage gewesen wäre, etwas zu erwidern,

bewußt nichts erwiderte. Wobei ich mich jedoch nie erinnern kann, warum ich nichts sagte, wo ich doch wußte, daß ich etwas hätte sagen müssen. (F, 268)

I meet Friedrich in the hallway. He says something that I can never remember afterwards. I have to reply. But I don't say anything while he stands across from me and is looking at me. I don't say anything as he turns away. I don't call after him as he leaves. Later on I never know whether I wanted to say something but was unable to do so, or whether I consciously did not reply even though I was in a position to reply.

The lack of those words that are deeds at this moment will end up felling Georg, because words neither uttered nor recorded cannot compete with those that make themselves heard in the struggle for recognition played out before the members of the board.

This, the basic 'plot' of *Fall*, seems prosaic enough to satisfy the criteria for the novel in an age without true heroes, profane enough to be filed with the corporate exchanges of writing (*Schriftwechsel*) it presents. To readers of *Kongreß*, it is not even *new*, since the outline of events is summarized by a "young man" (presumably Georg Voigtländer) whom the attorney Stumpfegle, partner of Fegelein, meets one night in a hotel elevator in Paris (K, 326–31). From the perspective of *Fall* and unbeknownst to Stumpfegle, this apparently random encounter is transformed into the sighting of a ghost, a double of the *Friend* organizing the congress in which Stumpfegle partakes. For like the *Friend*, Dr. Georg Voigtländer, too, finds fault with the paradoxes inherent in the truth claims of academic philosophy and economic theory that are his educational background, and proposes to transcend them, though by different means. His alternative method is not to set up a real-life experiment in practical ethics, but to engage in the continuation of philosophy by other means, namely *narration*:

Die erzählende Form erlaubt weiter, (noch) die eine oder andere unleugbar philosophische Einsicht in die Welt zu setzen, deren Überlebenschance genau darin besteht, daß sie nicht mit einer philosophischen Saugglocke ans Licht gezerzt wird. Wo man nicht (mehr) in der Lage ist, etwas zu behaupten, wovon man sagen darf, es ist wahr, da kann man erzählen, man behauptete etwas, und man darf sagen, das Erzählte ist wahr. Weil man unbedingt glauben will, man hat sich doch (noch) ein Quantum Wahrheit gesichert, hofft man, die Wahrheit des Erzählten möge auf das im Erzählten Behauptete abfärben. (F, 156)

Further, the narrative form (still) allows one to unearth the occasional incontrovertibly philosophical insight that stands a chance of survival exactly to the degree to which it is no longer dragged to light by means of a philosophical plunger. Where one cannot (any longer) claim something of which one may say that it were true, one can narrate that one is claiming something, and may say that what is narrated is true. Because one wants to believe at all cost that, after all, a shred of truth can (still) be secured, one hopes that the truth of what is narrated will color that which is claimed in the narration.

Thus, Georg Voigtländer presents his work away from work, a novelistic project to be published by G. and bearing the title "DIE GRAMMATIK DER VOLLKOMMENEN KLARHEIT" [*THE GRAMMAR OF ABSOLUTE CLARITY*] (F, 162). Händler's metafictional folding of the initial conditions of his own literary project back into the plot of *Fall* presents the path of literary production as an alternative to systematic philosophy, one no less fraught, however, with epistemological vagaries than the congress project. By re-inscribing the failure of his own literary debut into a later installment of a project that got off to a deferred start, Händler clearly marks Georg's literary endeavor as something other than a utopian parallel universe to the corporate world from which the money flows to sustain such alternate activities. The world of literary words—which Georg erects in the most proverbial point of artistic escape for a German: Italy, and Rome in particular—is anything but immune to the linguistic pitfalls that undermine Georg's strategies on the job. In both realms, the status of statement and narration is shown to rub off on the claims that are stated or narrated, but contrary to Georg's anticipation, any hope for truth is rubbed out in the process.

Georg's quest for truth by way of writing a novel has as its anchoring point the ideal of the omniscient narrator: the narrator who can always retreat to a higher vantage point, or to a more inclusive level of description, to remain in control of truth, while selectively unmasking that which he narrates as fiction. For such a narrator, the truth is always a truth about other narrations and other narrators, which stand to be probed for coherence, and re-inscribed into altered scenarios still consistent with the basic coordinates of the original narration. Based on this notion, Georg's literary excursions to Rome—interspersed with the narration of the 'plot' concerning the Voigtländer company—create possible worlds, and narrators situated in those worlds, based on three major intertexts: Thomas Bernhard's *Auslöschung*, Gert Hofmann's *Auf dem Turm*, and Paul Wühr's *Das falsche Buch*.²²

The appropriation of Bernhard begins with the demonstration of the unreliability of Bernhard's narrator Franz-Josef Murau, who misrepresents distances when he describes his walks through Rome (F, 53–4; A, 7; E, 3), and describes the Piazza Minerva as deserted at noon, which Händler's narrator personally verifies it never is (F, 72–3; A, 7; E, 3). Regardless of whether Murau is lying or simply wrong, these alterations of facts provide a point of entry for Händler's narrator to begin making adjustments of his own, as he invades and manipulates Murau's narrated world. He imagines meeting Murau in Rome, even though the chronicler presenting Murau's writings in Bernhard's novel explicitly notes in the very last sentence that Murau died in Rome in 1983 (A, 651; E, 326). Händler's narrative "I" goes on to construct a web of relations between the apparently undead Murau, his conversation partner and projection screen of his text, Gambetti (F, 65), and a woman, at first "unknown" (F, 65), whose name turns out to be Maria. She is not, however, simply Murau's and Gambetti's poet friend Maria from Bernhard's novel, who herself is an explicitly marked alter ego of Ingeborg Bachmann.²³ Exploiting the homophony of proper names, "Maria" also designates the wife of the narrator of Hofmann's *Auf dem Turm*, whom Händler's narrator introduces to link up the casts of both works in his narration and/or imagination. Hofmann's novel narrates the story of a German couple on vacation in Sicily whose car breaks down in the (fictional) remote village of Dikaiarchaia, while the narrator and his wife are in the midst of a marriage crisis. Maria's husband, a writer, reluctantly admits to an infidelity that has led to a now 3-year-old illegitimate child, and at the same time wants to force Maria to abort his child with which she is currently pregnant. Drawn in by a mysterious village custodian, the couple witnesses the shocking 'performance' of a young boy dancing on the railing of a tower in D. that culminates in the boy falling to his death. Repulsed by the apparently pre-arranged nature of this 'accidental' spectacle, the couple leaves as soon as their car has been repaired. Elements of this story are recounted in *Fall* from the perspective not of the husband (as in Hofmann) but of the wife, including a scene in which she fantasizes about taking sexual advantage of him and confessing to sexual molesting of boys, in a reversal of the 'facts' in Hofmann's original narration (F, 124–27; AT, 158–62).

What makes these narrative rearrangements particularly—and deliberately—disorienting is the fact that they not only present events from different narrative perspectives than do the source texts, but are themselves spread out over various narrators in Händler's text, such that there is no one stable narrative voice identifiable that could be assigned to Georg Voigtländer. Georg appears in these constructions as only one character among the ones

he himself creates or refashions from his sources, distributing the activity of fictional recreation to Murau, Gambetti (who in Bernhard's text only listens and occasionally laughs, but never directly speaks), Maria, her husband the "writer," Maria's sister Elaine (who appears neither in *Auslöschung* nor in *Auf dem Turm*), and another unnamed imagined persona, composed partially of features that match a childhood friend of Murau's, later a gardener at the family estate Wolfsegg (F, 39–46; A, 331; E, 166–7).²⁴ With this ensemble at his disposal, Händler's narrator constructs a different outcome for *Auslöschung*: with Murau still alive, his decision to donate the Wolfsegg estate to the Jewish Community of Vienna (IKG) (A, 650; E, 326) is reversed, as Murau now rejects several existing proposals for the future of Wolfsegg: donating it, letting it deteriorate, restoring it to its original condition and preserving it like this to suspend time, or having a child with Maria, presumably in order to produce an heir to the estate (F, 239). As Günter Butzer shows in his fine analysis of Bernhard's novel, Murau's original act of a donation figures as an unequivocal act of extinction insofar as Wolfsegg will henceforth exist only as *text*, in the distorted manuscript of Murau's that is embedded in the account of the enveloping narrator.²⁵ In Bernhard, forgetting thus already takes precedence over an integrative memory that would try to overwrite the past association of Wolfsegg with the Nazis with a positive, restorative gesture. Bernhard's dissolution of narrative subjectivity by means of Murau's hypertrophic language that constantly pushes exaggerations to the point of paradox, and a deliberate ambiguation of the narrative structure of several layers of embedded reporting, will not allow for a substantially positive counter-memory. Butzer notes:

Dieses Verfahren ist nicht darauf angelegt, Verdrängungen aufzuheben und subjektive Identität zu produzieren. Die paradoxe Bewegung des erinnernden Vergessens ist nicht aufzuspalten in die Zerstörung des Negativen und die Bewahrung des Positiven. Dieses scheint allein auf in der Destruktion des Ganzen, das vom Text als das Falsche vorgeführt wird. (*Fehlende Trauer*, 270)

This strategy is not conceived to sublimate the repressed and to produce subjective identity. The paradox motility of the recollecting forgetfulness cannot be separated into the destruction of the negative and the storing of the positive. The latter emerges through only in the very destruction of the whole, which is exposed by the text as that which is false.

Das Ganze ist das Falsche: this anti-Hegelian conclusion initially seems to be challenged as Händler revokes Murau's original extinctive gesture and

shuffles the cards anew. Creating a narrator who apparently *knows more* than Bernhard's, Händler poses the question of Wolfsegg's future once more, reconstructing what Bernhard destroyed. The tale of the reconstruction takes the form of a game: taking on the imagined persona of Murau's childhood friend, Händler's narrator proposes to determine a candidate to take over Wolfsegg by way of playing the game Hide-And-Seek-To-Death (*Todesversteckspiel*) taken from Wühr's *Das falsche Buch* (F, 240). This playful suggestion at once complicates the question of reconstruction (truth) and destruction (falsity), for Wühr's entire, massive novel—set on the *Münchener Freiheit*, part of a Munich that includes its own possible fictionalization²⁶—is predicated on the paradoxical notion that to be right is to be wrong, and—necessarily so—vice versa. Throughout the book, the narrator, entering his own narration in the role of “director” (*Regisseur*), insists that any belief in a correct or coherent point of view (*richtiger Standpunkt*) is false, and that anything, including the errors in a given fictional construct, is subject to a paradoxical reversal:

- Ich: Wir werden immer sofort darangehen
 es
 in einem Sinne
 der uns auch
 woher auch immer
 kommt
 umzudrehen
 oder so lange damit zu spielen
 bis wir das Ganze
 das Richtige
 also doch auch das Umklammernde
 also doch auch das Bedrängende
 also doch auch das Unterdrückende
 ausklammern
 wegdrängen
 oder zerstören. . . .
- Robin: Im günstigsten Fall
 ertappen wir uns selber
 bei der Erfindung unserer Gegenspiele bei Fehlern
 wenn ich richtig verstand
- Ich: Sehr gut
 Sehr falsch

Da diese Fehler
unsere Sehnsucht nach dem Richtigen bezeugen (FB, 122–3)

- I: We will always and immediately try to turn
it
around
in a sense
that comes to us
from wherever
or to play with it
until we
bracket
displace
or destroy
the whole
the true
which is just as well to say: that which wraps itself around us
which is just as well to say: that which besets us
which is just as well to say: that which subjugates us . . .
- Robin: In the best of cases
we catch ourselves
making mistakes as we invent our counter-games
if I understood correctly
- I: Very good
Very wrong
Since these mistakes
Testify to our desire for the truth.

Given these parameters, it is not surprising that a preliminary discussion among those of Händler's characters slated to act out one of Wühr's "counter-games" about the coherence of that game is leading nowhere. Wühr's "director" determines the rules of the *Todesversteckspiel* thus:

NUR WER DEN TOD
EINES ANDEREN SIEHT
KANN SELBER STERBEN
ER GLAUBT NÄMLICH DANN
AN SEINEN EIGENEN TOD
MAN VERSTECKT SICH

IM TURM
INDEM MAN SICH
ÜBER EINEM VERSTECKTEN
VERSTECKT

IM
TODESVERSTECKSPIELTURM
KANN EINER
DER SICH ÜBER EINEM
ANDEREN VERSTECKT
NUR HINUNTERSCHAUEN
NIEMALS HINAUF (FB, 243)

ONLY HE WHO SEES THE DEATH
OF ANOTHER
CAN DIE HIMSELF
BECAUSE HE THEN BELIEVES
IN HIS OWN DEATH

ONE HIDES
IN THE TOWER
BY
HIDING ABOVE SOMEONE
WHO IS HIDING HIMSELF

IN THE
HIDE-AND-SEEK-TO-DEATH TOWER
SOMEONE
WHO HIDES ABOVE
ANOTHER
CAN ONLY LOOK DOWN
NEVER UP

Getting the game off the ground, however, *necessarily* requires making a *mistake*, committing a violation of these rules: the first person to hide in the tower needs to be told by the director that he will be the first dead person, and that he will not need to see death in order to believe in it (FB, 242). Poppes, the first person in the tower, will *know* that he is dead independently of perceptions and beliefs, and only his unverifiable certainty will ensure that the others in the tower above him may die. The object of the game is to show Robin, who will be the last to enter the tower, that he doesn't have to die, as he did—much to his chagrin—in a previous game (FB, 235–38). The reason

he doesn't have to die is the fact that seeing the death of others legitimates a belief—nothing more, nor less—in one's own death. Belief, however, is subject to reversal, as the director demonstrates when he simply turns the tower in which the cast members have hidden upside down, so that Robin is now on the bottom, and Poppes at the top. This radical topological shift unseats both Poppes' certainty and the previously justified beliefs of the other players (Rosa, Jean, Nathalie) in the reality of death. Although the rules themselves have not changed, they no longer assure death as they did before.

Händler's characters cannot arrive at a consistent interpretation of the rules governing the Wührian scenario, and cannot even agree if the goal of the players is to die, or to remain alive. The *Todesversteckspiel* even leaves the fact of the matter undecided as to who will be the last human, dead or alive: "der einmal letzte Mensch | wird ein Fehler sein" [*he who will once and for all be the last human | will be an error*] (FB, 253). Since the tower can always be turned around, any belief in being the last human—as espoused by Robin (FB, 252; 255)—remains subject to potential future correction. Structurally parallel to the tower in *Auf dem Turm*, Wühr's tower thus suspends the reality of death. Hofmann's narrator frames the account of the boy Mario Diagonale falling to his death from the railing of the tower in D. by embedding it in another fictional narrative, titled *Unter dem Turm*, which the narrator alleges re-presents the facts by distorting them, making elements like the tower and the boy Mario indistinguishable from their fictional doubles—the former therefore may or may not exist, the latter may or may not be dead.²⁷

According to Händler's narrative voice in the chapter devoted to the *Todesversteckspiel* (F, 287–303, entitled "STATT GERMANISTIK" [*IN PLACE OF GERMANISTICS*]), the suspension of death orchestrated by Wühr's and Hofmann's fictional devices would itself stand to be suspended. Suggesting to create—in lieu, and in the spirit, of *Germanistik* and what one might consider one of its archetypal objects of analysis, Goethe's novel *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*—a *Turmgesellschaft* that will decide the future of the fictional character Murau and his estate, the narrator seeks to affirm omniscience. Only if the outcome of the game were to conclusively establish that Murau was indeed the last human, and that Wolfsegg therefore really was at his disposal—with its future either already determined (if being the last human entailed being dead), or yet to be determined (if he was still alive)—would the fictional suspension of the narrative be itself suspended. The *Turmgesellschaft*, that is, would reveal—like Goethe's does for the educational benefit of his novel's protagonist—that there *is* a higher order that guided the unfolding of narrated events. But such truth, it turns out, cannot be established about the fictional and meta-fictional entanglements produced

by Händler's multiple narrators. Just like Georg Voigtländer himself, his narrators stumble over their own words, and dig their own graves in which they are not, however, securely buried as 'mere' fictions, but rise again by entering through the loopholes of a necessarily inconsistent game plan.

One of those narrative voices, the imaginary double of Murau's childhood friend who initially suggested the game, reports at one point that he has won the game, and thus imagines himself as the last human atop the tower:

Ich trete durch die Luke ins Freie.
 Ich habe Murau versprochen, am Ende des Todesversteckspiels würde
 die Entscheidung über den väterlichen Besitz getroffen sein, und ich
 habe mein Versprechen gehalten.
 Ich blicke hinunter. (F, 337)

Through the hatch I step outside.
 I promised Murau that the decision concerning my father's property
 would be made at the end of the Hide-and-Seek-to-Death game, and I
 kept my word.
 I look down.

But as he stands on the tower, seeing the undead Murau below him rising from his casket (F, 347), and seemingly poised to fall from the tower himself—in order to assert the reality of death, and that of all persons and objects whose reality would in turn depend on that reality—he finds that *he cannot fall*. His visual images, among them the café below the tower in D., the Wolfsegg estate, and the horse farm attached to it that he imagines he would have inherited upon Murau's death, move through him and cannot be fixated:

Es bedarf nur einer Anstrengung des Willens, und das Café, der Friedhof,
 Wolfsegg, und das Reitbauerngut würden feste Umrisse annehmen
 und sich nicht mehr bewegen. Nicht mehr durch mich hindurchgehen.
 Eine Anstrengung des Willens im rechten Augenblick.
 Aber welcher ist der rechte Augenblick. (F, 349)

It only takes an exercise of the will and the café, the cemetery, Wolfsegg,
 and the horse farm would take on clear boundaries and stop moving
 about. Would stop moving through me.
 An exercise of the will at the right moment.
 But which moment is the right one?

Thus, the perception that the narrator has “won” the *Todesversteckspiel* turns out to be an illusion: the truth about the constitutive inconsistencies in Wühr and Hofmann cannot be determined, leaving the fictional characters and objects fashioned from these sources suspended, oscillating between the true and the false, or the real and the possible. Among the spectators the narrator spots below him are Krapp and Zizendorf (F, 339), indicating that the clear separation between the fictional worlds of the Roman literary project on the one hand, and the struggle for control over the Voigtländer company on the other, have begun to merge. The illusion of having won the Wührian game will find its complement in the illusion that Georg Voigtländer would prevail over his uncle and cousin in the game of words over the company. The attempt to redirect and control Murau’s inheritance of Wolfsegg—masterminded by a narrator who would, he imagines, give the horse farm acquired in the process to his own father (F, 338)—is nothing but a fictional mirror image of Georg’s situation, in which the latter struggles to control what he has inherited from *his* father.

The narrative alter ego conceived by Georg to manipulate the fictional characters and objects had earlier defended the basic outline of his thought constructs in a letter to Murau’s mother who, so the imagined scenario based on an aside in Bernhard’s novel goes (A, 331; E, 166–7), had taken him under her wing and provided for the education of the boy. Murau’s mother, he retrospectively surmises, wanted him to become a saint when she sent him to the *Stift* in nearby Kremsmünster. The principles governing his thought and writing expounded in the letter therefore appropriately treat the question of saintliness, outlining a brief theory of actions and features characteristic of a saint. Written as a sequence of *Tractatus*-style numbered propositions, these reflections document that the initial background assumptions of Händler’s narrator are thoroughly Wittgensteinian in nature: the principles here ascribed to an unspecified “saint” may be self-regulatory maxims, but they are also routinely applicable to Wittgenstein. Offering an alternate but related picture of the “God” that Wittgenstein was for the *Friend* in *Kongreß*, this pseudo-*Tractatus* touches on the tension between Wittgenstein’s published and unpublished work (3.2–3.212), contradictory but consistent interpretations of his body of work (3.8–3.9), the expression of the inexpressible (5–6.2), and the desire for a pious life so familiar from Wittgenstein’s diaries (7–7.21). The letter writer posits that even though an exhaustive list of necessary and sufficient conditions for saintliness cannot be given, the one necessary condition that does exist is: “Ein Heiliger posiert nicht vor dem Hintergrund eines schlechten Bilds” [*A saint does not pose against the backdrop of a bad picture*] (12; F, 224). Figured as dancer, the saint makes his complex

moves only against the backdrop of a sufficiently advanced conceptual apparatus (Wittgenstein's work on logic, not explicitly mentioned, comes to mind here), but remains elusive even to those who would master that framework:

Niemand außer ihm ist in der Lage, die Eleganz, die Delikatesse wahrzunehmen, mit der er die einzelnen Figuren ausführt (das Leben des Heiligen ist seine Heiligkeit, die Leiter, die der Heilige hinaufsteigt und die dann weggeworfen wird, die es nie gegeben hat, die Frage nach dem Sinn des Seins, das nie in die Welt gekommen ist). (F, 225)

No one but he is able to perceive the elegance, the delicacy with which each figure is drawn (the life of the saint is his saintliness, the ladder that the saint climbs which is then discarded, which has never existed, the question of the meaning of being that has never come into the world).

Guided by the belief that a *good* picture could with certainty be distinguished from a *bad* one, Händler's narrator, like Stegmüller in his attempt to delineate I_0 , offers a rational reconstruction of conditions that would ensure the correctness of the saints' writings from the point of view of TLP 6.54, vindicating the following propositions:

- 11.1 Was ein Heiliger ausspricht, ist am Schluß immer wahr.
Was ein Heiliger aufzeichnet, ist am Ende niemals falsch. (F, 223)

What a saint says is in the end always true.
What a saint notes down is in the end never false.

These tenets, of course, will be radically undercut—or rather, supplemented by their negations—as the narrator moves towards the end of the *Todesversteckspiel* and the showdown at the Voigtländer company. His own notes (*Aufzeichnungen*) will end up throwing in doubt not only the determination of truth as a particular condition for saintliness, but the very possibility of that state of existence altogether. His strategy of extinguishing Murau's original extinction leads not to a determinate state of affairs but only to a reinscription of the paradox: *das Ganze ist das Falsche*, brought about by the very act of writing itself. Quite literally, the 'holier than thou' attitude of the narrator as he conceives the literary project would situate him atop the Tractarian ladder, removed from the grammatical space delineated by the motto of the novel. A second semantic dimension, that is, of the well-known first proposition of the Tractatus announces itself: the fallenness of a world whose

ontology could be securely and completely determined. In the final interior monologue of the book, in which all narrators into which Georg Voigtländer has split himself up get their word in, that *towering* position is reaffirmed, only to be immediately cast into radical doubt:

Wir wollten ungewöhnliche Heilige sein. Wenn wir schrieben, wollten wir heiliger sein als alle Heiligen vor uns. Gott wie einfach, sein Vermögen zu verschenken und nur noch möbliert zu wohnen. Dann muß ja etwas beim Schreiben herauskommen. Das muß ja etwas werden. Nur Stuhl, Tisch, Bett, Kleiderschrank und Kino. So einfach haben wir es uns nicht gemacht. Weder Sie noch ich. . . . Wir müssen es uns schwierig machen. Die Vorstellung, der letzte Heilige zu sein. Dabei verhindert alles, was wir wissen und für richtig halten, daß es einen Letzten Heiligen gibt. Es kann keinen Letzten Heiligen geben. Kann es einen Heiligen geben. Kann es nach dem, was wir wissen und für richtig halten, überhaupt Heilige geben. (F, 396)

We wanted to be unconventional saints. When we wrote we wanted to be more saintly than all saints before us. God, how easy it is to give away one's wealth and to only live in furnished rooms from that point on. That must result in good writing. Something's got to come of that. Just a chair, a table, a bed, a closet, and the cinema. We didn't make it that easy on ourselves. Neither you nor I. . . . We have to make it hard on ourselves. The idea of being the last saint. Even though everything we know and take to be true prevents the existence of a Last Saint. There cannot be a Last Saint. Can there be a Last Saint. Given all we know and take to be true, can there be saints at all.

The intended *novelty* of Georg's literary project that would surpass even the 'saintliness' of Wittgenstein's ascetic efforts at Cambridge amounts to the recognition that the view from the top—the perspective from which to organize perspicuity, the line of sight of the Last Saint—can be attained only by narration, structured in a particular way: the omniscient narrator, it is claimed, can only operate by splitting himself up into a plurality of first-person narrators that remain subject to deletion and substitution by the omniscient narrator.²⁸ But like Wühr's last human and the Last Saint, the last omniscient narrator will forever remain out of reach, since there is no position from which the possibility of reinscription of his words as those of just another perspectively challenged narrator can be excluded. The same operation that Händler's disorientingly pluralistic narrator performs

on Bernhard's, Wühr's, and Hofmann's narrators, prolonging their textual lives beyond the stipulations of the source texts, may also be performed on Händler's first-person plural narrator. His attempt to be holy by being wholly different and therefore radically *new* consists, as he realizes in the final monologue, in nothing but the differential repetition and citation of words:

Das Neue ist doch nur das später Gesagte. Das später Gesagte hängt from früher Gesagten ab, nicht von uns. . . . Selbst wenn wir es tatsächlich zum ersten Mal sagen, wir haben ja doch nur zitiert, denn wir können nur zitieren, wie sollten sich sonst Buchstaben zu Wörtern und Wörter zu Sätzen formen. . . . Wir erzählen nach, wenn nicht einen Text, dann eben das Leben, wenn nicht das Leben, dann eben die Wirklichkeit, auch wenn es die, wie wir alle wissen, gar nicht gibt. (F, 398)

That which is new is really nothing but that which is said later. That which is said later depends on what was said earlier, it doesn't depend on us. . . . Even if we in fact do say it for the first time, we still have done nothing but to quote because all we can do is quote, how else should letters come to form words, and words come to form sentences. . . . We are retelling, if not a text, then life, if not life, then reality, although the latter doesn't exist, as we all know.

Literature, he finds out, is no sanctuary of original creativity, or a retreat for a saint from the conditions of linguistic utterance that obtain elsewhere, for example in the 'real' world of corporations and personal relationships. On the meta-fictional level, Händler makes this structural analogy manifest by letting Georg's project suffer the same fate of anticipated, then canceled publication with the publisher G. that his own homophonous project had suffered at Greno. The literary 'life' thus re-told in *Fall* is a citation of something that is indistinguishable from 'mere' text or reality on the textual level. Any attempt to cast 'life' in textual form, as was pointed out in our earlier analysis of Wittgenstein's own diaries, must arrive at the conclusion that to write is not to live. Writing in order to live the life of a saint, let alone that of the Last Saint, is a paradoxical endeavor insofar as the very act of writing blocks the paths of verification that Wittgenstein considers in his notebooks to be what would determine the reference of "apostle," the term identifying its bearer as a member of that illustrious subset of all saints:

Ein Apostel sein ist ein *Leben*. Es äußert sich wohl zum Teil in dem was er sagt, aber nicht darin, daß es wahr ist, sondern darin daß er es sagt.

Für die Idee leiden macht ihn aus, aber auch hier gilt es, daß der Sinn des Satzes 'dieser ist ein Apostel' die Art seiner Verifikation ist. Einen Apostel beschreiben heißt ein Leben beschreiben.²⁹

To be an apostle is a *life*. It may well show itself partially in what he says, but not in its being true but in the fact that he says it. He is characterized by suffering for the idea, but here, too, the rule applies that the meaning of the proposition 'this man is an apostle' consists in the method of its verification. To describe an apostle is to describe a life.

Only the biography, or autobiography, of the apostle could deliver the verification of the claim that Händler's narrator, or anyone else, is in fact an apostle. Such a written description of a life, however, will let that life appear only *sous rature*, erased by a *Nacherzählung* that will drown what was supposed to be shown to be a singular, exemplary life in the seas of language.

In the end, then, as Georg Voigtländer multivocally divorces himself from where he has fallen from, offering his company stakes to his friend K. who was partially involved in bringing him down, he imagines taking more permanent residence in Rome, the eternal city of words, seemingly confirming K.'s earlier suspicion that Georg was at bottom not really invested in the hierarchies of Corporate World as a form of life (F, 372). True to the paradoxical entailments Georg Voigtländer has unleashed, he falls *only* from that perspective of Corporate World, while he *cannot* fall from the fictional *Todesversteckspielturm*, since here the hierarchy ("UNSER VERSTECK | IST HIERARCHISCH | DER TOD | IST HIERARCHISCH" [OUR HIDEOUT | IS HIERARCHICAL | DEATH | IS HIERARCHICAL] [FB, 244]) may always be unexpectedly reversed by another narrative director, rendering it useless as a guideline for the assessment of words and deeds. Insofar as *Fall* thus does not testify unequivocally to Georg's fall, it recalls Sartre's novel of (almost) the same name that is likewise concerned with the missing of a (suicidal) fall at its center.³⁰ In its skeptical assessment of Georg's "new religion" (F, 372) of literature, it also references, quite obviously, the determinate reversals of Christianity—the fall from grace, followed by its eventual reversal in the afterlife—that Jesus points out to the apostles.³¹ With the ecclesiastical status of Händler's narrator suspended in paradox, the certainty of the last going to be first for all eternity is not to be had. The consumption of his text, unlike that of bread and wine, is no memorial to a death that would be subject to the definite reversal that is resurrection.³² Georg Voigtländer's memory failure with respect to the pre-history of the altercation with his cousin is not sublated by the projected omniscient standpoint of his narrative project. Arriving at the conclusion that the truth conditions of *Darstellung* require reference to

the particular kind of *Darstellung* in question,³³ the narrator can install himself atop the Calvary no more safely than Hegelian absolute spirit was able to do.³⁴

TEXTS OF ARCHITECTS (*STADT MIT HÄUSERN, STURM*)

In the wake of his final reassessment of the thought constructs (*Gedankengebäude*; F, 230) that have guided his project, the narrator of *Fall* offers a material analogy of the breakdown of the concept of the omniscient narrator, pinpointing the emergence of modern architecture as the cause of its disappearance (F, 403). The actual *execution* of formalist structures—which in the work of classicist Etienne Boullée had remained unbuilt projects—cancelled the authority of the omniscient narrator that strictly separated the built and the unbuilt, the real and the fictional. The very idea of omniscience is hence revealed as a construction, as buildings become extensions of their conceptions (or ‘programs’), ceasing to be the *real* counterparts to their descriptions; the omniscient narrator strikes himself out, simply because he can no longer separate himself sufficiently from that which he conceives. This predicament gives rise to the constitutive duplicity of the aesthetic program behind the architecture and design of Viennese Modernism that is featured prominently throughout Händler’s work, with particular weight given to the work of Josef Hoffmann. In the words of Berta Zuckerkandl—who sponsored Hoffmann and other members of the *Wiener Werkstätte* that he founded in 1903, and championed his cause in her journalistic work—an ethical impulse was to be found in the attempt of the new architecture to follow the “inner necessity” of the logic of structures and materials, in contrast to the emphasis placed on symbol and ornament in the historicist movements of the late 19th century. The rejection of the ornamental by Hoffmann and others³⁵ would serve to highlight not the appearance of surfaces but would expose the “anatomy of things” by creating “logisch gestaltete, den Zweck möglichst rein und stark betonende Formen” [*logically designed forms that emphasize purpose as purely and strongly as possible*].³⁶ The creation of such forms, Zuckerkandl does not fail to note, remains beholden to the activity of “construction,” challenging the metaphor of “anatomy,” for the presumed dissection of dead facts or objects is undertaken in pursuit of a kind of “Natürlichkeit” (“Josef Hoffmann,” 6) that is opposed to the false pathos of the ornament. Hoffmann’s vision of an omniscient point of view from which to survey the logical structure of purpose and form therefore threatens itself insofar as it does not acknowledge the constructedness of the “nature” that the forms it devises are designed to express. One prime example of a building conceived to such internally contradictory ends is Hoffmann’s Purkersdorf Sanatorium

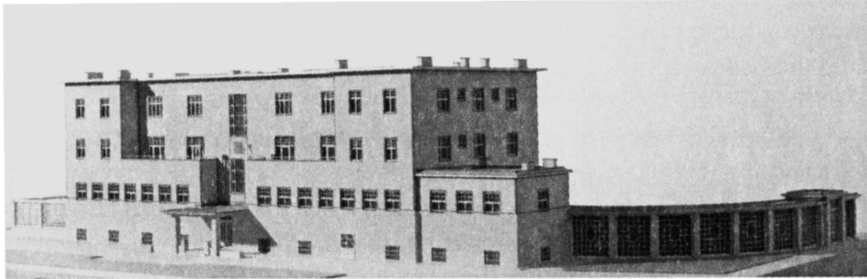


Figure 11. Sanatorium Purkersdorf, West Elevation (model reconstruction of original design, scale 1:50). Sammlungen der Universität für angewandte Kunst Wien.

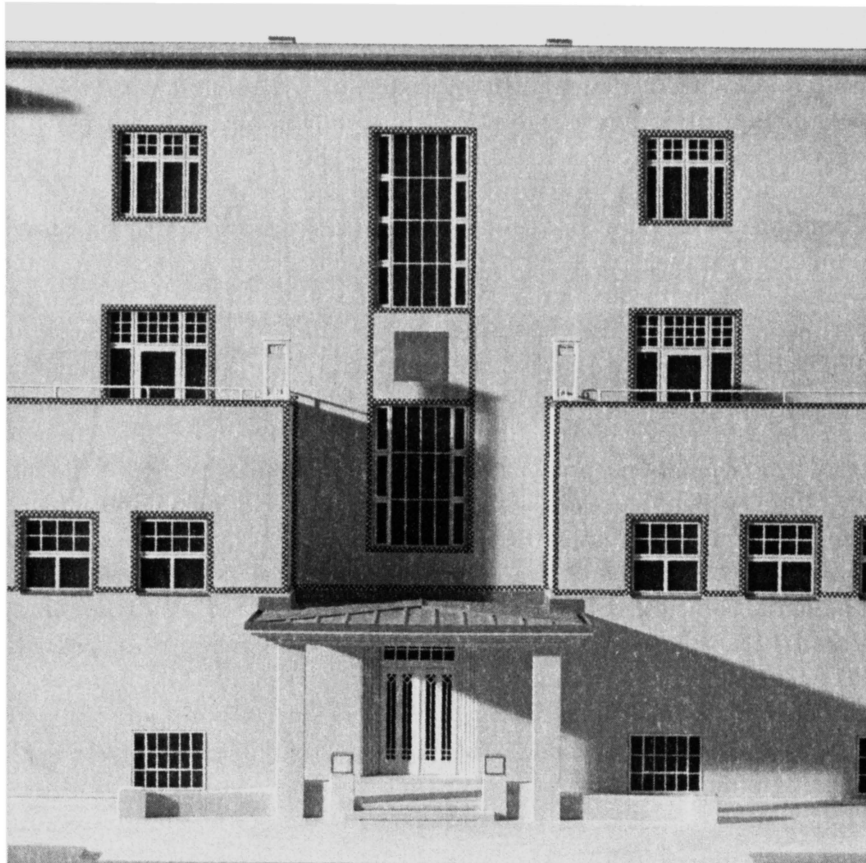


Figure 12. Sanatorium Purkersdorf, Detail of West Entrance (model reconstruction of original design, scale 1:50). Sammlungen der Universität für angewandte Kunst Wien.



Figure 13. Sanatorium Purkersdorf, East Elevation (prior to restoration undertaken in the 1990s). Courtesy of Dario Galimberti.

on the outskirts of Vienna, designed in 1903 for Berta Zuckerkanndl's brother-in-law Viktor Zuckerkanndl, and completed in 1905 (Figures 11–12).

This hallmark structure of early Vienna Modernism with its strictly cubist forms both outside and inside demonstrates the extent to which the will to clarification is rooted in stylistic rhetoric rather than a direct expression of function. The consistent employment of the austere square, for example (floor plan, window compartments, interior ceiling beams, furniture), further underlined by the blue-and-white contrast of the exterior frieze and much of the interior tile gridding goes far beyond emphasizing (*betonen*) purpose, use, or function.³⁷

The reinscription of the square in the upper parts of the front windows suggests a stylistic unity of part and whole that would derive its justification only from the functional context of its frame, but actually exceeds that justification by far, as is particularly visible in the large compartmentalized window in the center above the east entrance (Figure 13).

Even though Hoffmann's opposition to ornament was generally not as pronounced as that of contemporaries like Loos or subsequent modernists like Le Corbusier and the Bauhaus, the Purkersdorf Sanatorium is significant in its use of reduced geometric form *as* ornament, iterated beyond the point of functionality. It thus foreshadows the ambiguities inherent in Mies

van der Rohe's notion of a *universal grammar* of forms that would come to determine the syntax of the International Style, advocating a recombination of forms independently of context, and hence often resulting in forms that, paradoxically, did anything *but* follow function. This attack on a historical memory in which form is saturated with symbolic meaning reveals a narrator—to take up Händler's metaphor once again—who fails to recognize that the conceptually motivated disregard of context may come back to haunt him. Executions of architectural projects enter a space that is radically underdetermined by any prior assumptions about functionality; the alleged universality of the grammar in question thus remains subject to a reinscription into particular contexts, forcing the narrator to confront challenges to his rationally formed expectations.

In *Fall*, one of Georg's narrative incarnations tells of a dream involving a dead man who, just like Murau's great-great-great-granduncle in Bernhard's *Auslöschung* (A, 359–61; E, 181), closely resembles arch-rationalist Descartes, and who resides in the Purkersdorf Sanatorium because he, like all other patients, killed someone. In the dream the man appears to suggest to exchange places with the narrator if the latter were to kill someone as well, to gain legitimate entrance to the institution, which appears to be “the highest goal” (F, 281) both to the dreamer and his interlocutor. While the name of the designated victim is withheld as the narrator recounts the dream, it stands to reason that it should be Murau, whom the narrator will involve in the *Todesversteckspiel* after having “revived” him by detaching him from Bernhard's original narrative context. Be it in heaven or hell, death at Purkersdorf turns out to be a temporary affair: as the interlocutor seems intent on coaxing the narrator into trading places, the *Heilanstalt* emerges not as the highest ground but only a transitory station along the oscillating path between the “real” world of the narrator and the “fictional” world of the dream.³⁸

The same building plays an equally destabilizing role in one of the stories from Händler's debut, *Stadt mit Häusern*, written between the deletion of *Der Kongress* and the publication of *Kongreß*. One of several stories in this book overtly concerned with the relation of architecture, thought, and memory, “Auflösung oder Für Frau Berta Zuckerkandl” [*Dissolution or For Mrs. Berta Zuckerkandl*] presents a woman who finds herself in the Purkersdorf Sanatorium, suspended in a realm of possibility, the relation of which to reality she is unable to determine conclusively. She is one of the possible fellow inhabitants of the Cartesian interlocutor from *Fall*, likewise suspended between merely possible worlds and the real world as the only one in which death would be possible (SMH, 232; CWH, 189). Purkersdorf is never explicitly mentioned in this story, but the extensive, detailed descriptions

of the exterior facade and the interiors of selected rooms—including the vestibule, the lobby, the dining room, and one of the reading rooms—enable the reader to identify the location as the one designed by Hoffmann, protégé of the woman mentioned in the title. The dissolution—playfully alluding to the object that the proper name in the title designates in Austrian dialect: *sugarcube*—of any certainty concerning the modal status of the woman’s surroundings is framed by the coordinates of Cartesian skepticism. The scenario conjured up here is the one described in Hilary Putnam’s thought experiment of being a brain in a vat: updating Descartes’ figure of the evil demon to that of an evil neurologist, Putnam considers the proposition that all we may be is brains in vats, stimulated by an omniscient evil neurologist so as to have the impression of experiences reaching outside ourselves, providing us with images of that experience, including our own body image.³⁹ According to Putnam, this type of ontological skepticism is espoused by a philosophical position he calls Metaphysical Realism, characterized by the insistence that there is a reality beyond the possibility of all epistemological verification. For the Metaphysical Realist, the real world is the world of the omniscient evil neurologist who implants fictions in the brains he controls. Putnam, invoking the late Wittgenstein (*Reason, Truth, and History*, 3, 7), critiques this view on the grounds that it cannot successfully establish linguistic reference to external objects without presupposing a ‘magical theory of reference’ that would posit necessary connections between names and their referents, and between mental representations and the objects they supposedly represent. The alleged brain in a vat would never be able to establish its self-identity by means of the proposition “I am a brain in a vat,” because if that proposition really *were* uttered by a brain in a vat, it would as a matter of logical necessity be describing only the *image* of itself that the brain has before itself—courtesy of the evil neurologist,—not the way things *really* are. According to Putnam, therefore, Cartesian-type skepticism, insofar as its viability is taken to support the belief in an observer-independent reality, must be rejected as nonsensical.

The woman in Händler’s story entertains this skeptical picture in order to assure herself that even if the disorienting Purkersdorf environment should be nothing but a possible world, it might still be orchestrated as a fiction from an omniscient perspective that would guarantee the existence of a real world. An internal interlocutor reminiscent of the voice urging clarification in Wittgenstein’s *Investigations*, however, contradicts her by pointing out that this view of things—conceived to leave open the possibility that the female narrator could ‘wake up’ to reality and to real lived experience “in flesh and blood” (SMH, 228–9; CWH, 186)—may itself be regarded as a description

intended for a particular use (SMH, 230; CWH, 187). The conviction that the perception of one's own surroundings is best characterized in the terms suggested by the Metaphysical Realist does not entail that an exit from the artificially created possible worlds is *really* possible, even in theory. Death in the possible world signified by the architectural shapes of Purkersdorf, therefore, is never an ultimate death, because it is always possible to wake up from this death in the next possible world.

The space of possibility considered here is the space of text: in the cubist bookcases of a room in the Sanatorium the woman discovers a book that contains images and stories relating to three prior stories in *Stadt mit Häusern*, the text of which she as narrator is herself part (SMH, 225–6; CWH, 184). Unlike the structurally comparable book-within-a-book in *Wilhelm Meister*, this book does not reveal the 'real' narrative frame of her situation at the Sanatorium, but only offers the figures of other female narrators as refractions of her own image.⁴⁰ She does not discover anything in the book to be safely identified as "herself"—text will not substitute for the amnesia she is experiencing in this other world, as she cannot account for anything beyond short term memory (SMH, 224; CWH, 182). Memory—to the extent that it is accessible—does not assure the narrator either of the continuity of her own self as she navigates the Purkersdorf space, nor of the *actual* existence of people she meets or remembers here (SMH, 230–1; CWH, 187–8), because this world is governed by laws that suspend the integrity of any epistemological bedrock. It is a world in which dead narrators may be resurrected, to cross the oeuvre of different authors (Bernhard and Händler, for example), different works within an oeuvre (the installments of "The Grammar of Absolute Clarity"), or even different distinct parts of a given work (*Stadt mit Häusern*). In the last analysis, it is the reinscription of text across these boundaries that undermines the certainty that "death in the real world" is a philosophical possibility:

Wenn man sich nach dem Tod in der wirklichen Welt doch in der nächsten Welt wiederfindet—als Bild in einer anderen Welt eines Lebenden.

Jedes Buch ist eine Welt. Jeder Satz, jedes Wort ist eine Welt. Jeder Buchstabe ist eine Welt. (SMH, 234)

What if after your death in the real world you find yourself in the next world after all—as an image in another world of a living person.

Each book is a world. Each sentence, each word is a world. Each letter is a world. (CWH, 190)

If death may be suspended, there is no world to be commemorated, literally. Händler's architectural framing of the uncertain death of narrators thus critically takes on Adolf Loos' well-known view that only two architectural forms are to be considered artistic: the sepulcher and the monument.⁴¹ Purkersdorf, though Loos approved of it because Hoffmann had here moved closer to Loos' own anti-ornamental style,⁴² is not art by Loosian standards once it is made part of a world in which descriptions, including the extensive descriptions of the structure itself, are to be considered "Werkzeuge für bestimmte Verwendungen" [*tools for particular uses*] (SMH, 230; CWH, 187). The unreality of Händler's Purkersdorf not just as artwork but even as architecture *tout court* follows from a late remark of Wittgenstein's that considers all of architecture in the terms Loos had reserved for the realm of the artwork: "Architektur verewigt und verherrlicht etwas. Darum kann es Architektur nicht geben, wo nichts zu verherrlichen ist" [*Architecture immortalizes and glorifies something. Hence there can be no architecture where there is nothing to glorify*] (*Vermischte Bemerkungen* [W VIII], 548; CV, 74). Textualized Purkersdorf is neither a monument to the unambiguous achievement of stylistic clarity, nor a sepulcher commemorating the life of the concepts that guided its design. As a signifier of un-deadness, the supposed "monument" to Vienna Modernism vanishes, its disappearance as architecture taking the *Gedankengebäude* down with it.

Wittgenstein knew both Hoffmann and Loos; Hoffmann built the hunting lodge at the Wittgensteinian family estate Hochreith in the same year he designed the Purkersdorf Sanatorium, and Wittgenstein's sister Margarete would become president of Hoffmann's *Werkbund* from 1924–26. Loos was the recipient of one of Wittgenstein's anonymous grants, as well as an acquaintance, even though Wittgenstein would strongly object to Loos' provocative later apotheosis of the artist as the materialization of a creative *sanctus spiritus*, to be supported by the state.⁴³ It is no surprise, therefore, that Wittgenstein mentions Loos as one of the people whose thoughts sparked his own passionate "Klärungswerk" at the expense of making Wittgenstein into a merely reproductive thinker, a Jewish "talent" or "saint" (*Vermischte Bemerkungen* [W VIII], 476; CV, 16). This reproductive character of the saint—the recognition of the incapacity to engage in "original" creation—has above been traced in *Fall*, and it also informs the Wittgensteinian references to architecture in Händler's work. Regarding Loos in particular, Wittgenstein's attempt at a clarifying modification is the substitution of Loos' belief in (social) progress—documented in the deliberate architectural (though not artistic) expression of use value through the omission of ornament—by a radical negativity that turns clarity from a means into an end in itself:

Unsere Zivilisation ist durch das Wort *Fortschritt* charakterisiert. Der *Fortschritt* ist ihre Form, nicht eine ihrer Eigenschaften daß sie fortschreitet. Sie ist typisch aufbauend. Ihre Tätigkeit ist es ein immer komplizierteres Gebilde zu konstruieren. Und auch die Klarheit dient doch nur wieder diesem Zweck und ist nicht Selbstzweck.

Mir dagegen ist die Klarheit (die Durchsichtigkeit) Selbstzweck.

Es interessiert mich nicht ein Gebäude aufzuführen sondern die Grundlagen der möglichen Gebäude durchsichtig vor mir zu haben. (*Vermischte Bemerkungen* [W VIII], 459)

Our civilization is characterized by the word *progress*. *Progress* is its form, it is not one of its properties that it makes progress. Typically it constructs. Its activity is to construct a more and more complicated structure. And even clarity is only a means to this end, and not an end in itself.

For me on the contrary clarity, transparency, is an end in itself

I am not interested in erecting a building but in having the foundations of possible buildings transparently before me. (CV, 9)

The one architectural building that Wittgenstein *did* execute shows this interest, insofar as it is characterized by a “non-expressivity of the calculated space.”⁴⁴

The classicist proportions of the house built for Margarete at Kundmannsgasse 19 (Vienna III) are governed by a volumetric plasticity that expresses nothing but the enclosed volume itself—the basis for all possible buildings insofar as there is no house that will not contain some volume (Figure 14). “Transparency,” of course, is another matter. Paul Wijdeveld has argued that true to the principle of Occam’s razor (*simplex sigillum veri*; TLP 5.4541), Wittgenstein’s insistence on symmetry and plasticity in the construction would turn it into a monument of eternal beauty, to be contemplated from the perspective afforded by a view from the top of the Tractarian ladder.⁴⁵ Wijdeveld himself notes, however, that this alleged perspective of absolute transparency is achieved through an “intuitive system” of balancing proportions that appears impossible to reconstruct along the lines of any existing notions of classical proportionality (*Ludwig Wittgenstein, Architect*, 164). In addition, symmetry in the interior is achieved not solely through the absence of ornament, but is routinely created at the expense of functionalist principles by means of ‘tricks’ such as using sham pillars, or thickening walls (*ibid.*, 115–16, 171)—which underscores that Wittgenstein was able to create the appearance of transparency only

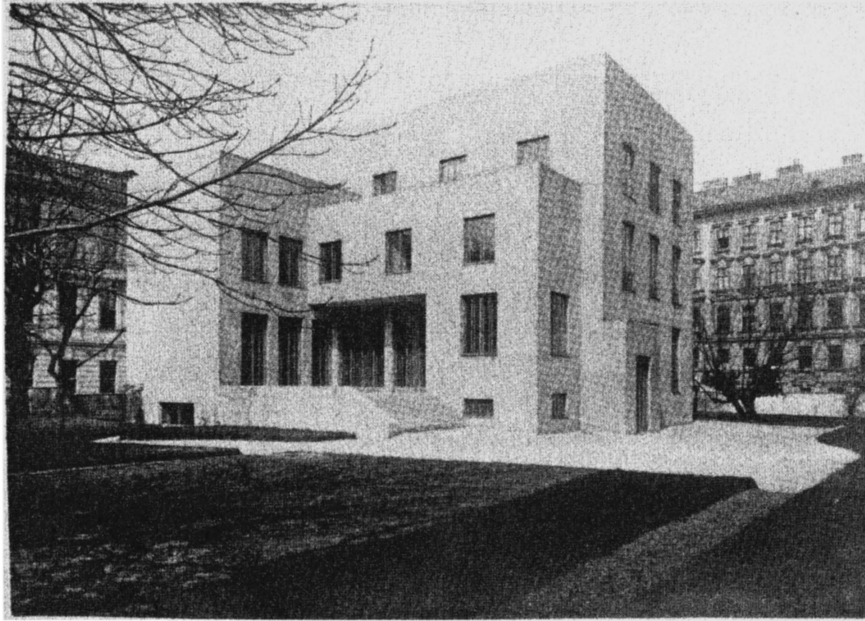


Figure 14. Kundmannngasse 19, Southwest Elevation, Spring 1929. Photo by Moritz Nähr, from Ludwig Wittgenstein's personal photo album, page 17. Courtesy of the Wittgenstein Archive Cambridge.

by way of the non-transparent.⁴⁶ Relating back to another of Wittgenstein's recurrent analogies between conceptual and architectural building, he was facing—in both domains—the same problem he diagnoses in Bacon: the difficulty of recognizing and clearly expressing one's own limits as one conceives a large structure (*ein großes Gebäude*). In the end it is, Wittgenstein concedes, “ungeheuer schwierig diese Grenzen zu sehen, und d.h., klar darzustellen. Also, sozusagen, eine Malweise aufzufinden, dieses Unklare darzustellen” [*tremendously hard to see these limitations, and that means, to delineate them clearly. That is, as it were, to find a way of painting to depict this fuzziness*] (*Vermischte Bemerkungen* [W VIII], 546; CV, 78). The drawings for Kundmannngasse, as much as those in prose, are constant attempts to determine these limits—of language, of the world—and cannot, therefore, conveniently avoid that which is unclear, or else exalt transparency. Händler's narrative explorations of possible architectures therefore remains skeptical of the *large structure* functioning either as monument, or as sepulcher. As Cacciari suggests with respect to Wittgenstein's house, the structure may be regarded as *oikos* only under the condition of paradox: “the exterior is not supposed to allude to anyone ‘buried’ there.”⁴⁷

The title story of *Stadt mit Häusern* moves the consideration of the relation between buildings and text to another location, and a more easily specifiable time, namely post-reunification East Germany. The interior monologue presented here by a freewheeling businessman from the West, colleague of Stumpfegle from *Kongreß* (SMH, 24; CWH, 15–16), identifies the deteriorating houses in Leipzig as the only thing worth saving of what once constituted “life” in the GDR. The people inhabiting these houses, while required as tenants, are less easily “rehabbed,” the narrator finds, and are thus a mere obstacle to be dealt with as efficiently as possible. The houses are the only substantial elements transcending the paradox that confounds him: the GDR was merely a bad copy of the FRG, inhabited by people with the same materialistic preoccupations as their neighbors to the West—that is to say, as he himself. The moral high ground that might have excused the evident material shortcomings, the narrator finds, is nowhere in sight. Instead, he pictures his own dealings in Eastern real estate as a genuinely ethical project, directed at preserving what deserves to be preserved. The double standard at work here comes to light in reflections on a text that the narrator has been discussing with his mistress Birgit, a literature student: unmarked citations from Kurt Drawert’s “Haus ohne Menschen. Ein Zustand” line his ruminations about the situation in East Germany after the fall of the Wall.⁴⁸ In Drawert’s text, the deteriorating houses in Leipzig figure as a “cipher of failure,” their imminent collapse a sign of the obliteration of memory. Rebuilding of the city is not a means to preserve that memory, but rather a reinvention setting its inhabitants up for the eventual collapse of another utopia, the capitalist one:

. . . *und so wird alles, von nun an, sprechend in Vergessenheit geraten, um so, sprechend, von Anderen zu berichten und das Werk endlosen Erfindens, von nun an, zu beginnen* . . . und so wird das Gedächtnis eine öde, eingäscherte und begriffslose Landschaft sein und den Grundriß abgeben und das Bauland für eine nächste erbarmungslose, zerstörerische Utopie. Und jede Utopie ist eine zerstörerische und leugnet die Realitäten . . . (“Haus ohne Menschen,” 15–6)

. . . *and so, from now on, everything will speak as it retreats into forgetfulness, so as to speak of others and to commence, from now on, the work of infinite inventing* . . . and so memory will be a barren, incinerated landscape devoid of concepts, and it will provide blueprint and the land to be developed by another merciless, destructive utopia. And every utopia is a destructive one, denying the realities . . .

The uninterrupted stream of words by Händler's narrator demonstrates exactly that forgetfulness and the denial of realities, and it does so by attacking the text advancing this charge. Drawert's text, he claims on the one hand, is neither consistent nor does it fit the facts. When challenged by Birgit to name criteria for determining such a fit, however, he backs down to a circular theory of memory according to which only those things remain that "fit into collective memory," regardless of truth or relevance. These things, he claims, are the standard against which the accuracy of a literary text should be measured (SMH, 24; CWH, 15). The things that do remain, first and foremost, are to his mind the *houses*, but in a guise that according to Drawert's narrator is a reinvention testifying to the very *lack* of memory. They cease to be loci where a proper mnemotechnics might recover collective memory, and are instead being *renovated to death*. By incorporating Drawert's text unmarked into his own, Händler's narrator methodically achieves the very obliteration he claims is not taking place. The apparent tautology of the story title swallows the absence indicated in the title of Drawert's story, supplemented by the last lines of the Händlerian monologue in which "inhabitants" are substituted for "humans:"

Ich bin für die Häuser. Mit den Menschen kann man machen, was man will, es kommt nie das heraus, was man will. Häuser kann man so herrichten, wie man will. Das heißt nicht, Haus ohne Bewohner. (SMH, 28)

I am for the houses. With people you can do whatever you want, nothing ever turns out the way you want it to. Houses you can renovate any way you want. That doesn't mean, house without inhabitants. (CWH, 19)

The houses built and rehabbed are to be inhabited not by human beings, but by mere inhabitants, bearers of a social function rather than individuals. From the observational perspective the narrator takes, their "collective memory" need not offer a conception (*Begriff*) of life prior to the drawing up of the new floor plan that would make them into *real* people, with a palpable sense of loss and failure. The basis of this convenient perspective manifests itself, tellingly enough, in an interpretative take on a text, and as such is just as far or close to the socio-cultural reality of the "Wild East" as the account by Drawert's narrator. It would surprise no one, then, to see Händler's narrator reemerge as the subject of another piece in the larger narrative puzzle—but that is another story, literally.⁴⁹

Mastery over the design of buildings and power over their use come together in the scenario that is the backdrop of Händler's third novel,

Sturm. Hant, “Germany’s foremost architect” (S, 80), his executive director Hahl, and the real estate mogul Arbogast together rule over both the construction and the economic exploitation of Hant’s architectural creations, resulting in an empire that has taken Germany by storm and is poised to take over the world. In an enigmatic move, Hant hires the computer programmer Suttung, a German who has lived and worked in the U.S. for twenty years, to design cellular automata and robots for him that would eventually carry out the very design work which Hant now performs on paper and with the help of archaic wire models and string. Throughout the book, Hant’s motivation for this hiring will remain the subject of Suttung’s speculations, who is not sure of his role in Hant’s larger scheme of things. Why would Hant try to make himself dispensable? The master architect is an elusive and contradictory figure, his actions and words—delivered in extensive monologues—doing little to clarify what exactly he takes his possible self-elimination by computational means to signify. Architecturally, Hant is out to surpass Mies (S, 193) just as well as the notion of a post-modern recombination of styles (S, 409). Crucially, it is the very impossibility to attribute any particular style to Hant that underscores his quest for the absolute, seeking the unity and completeness that he finds to be absent from all other figures in architectural history. Hant’s project is nothing less than the arresting of history itself, and of the disintegration of history into singular histories, or narratives:

Hant baute nicht etwa rückwärtsgewandt, er redete nicht dem neoklassizistischen Formenkanon das Wort, und er verknüpfte nicht, wie andere, Stränge vom Bauhaus bis zur Postmoderne miteinander. Das wäre zu trivial gewesen. Trotzdem strebte Hant danach, die Geschichte aufzuhalten. Er wollte verhindern, daß die Geschichte in viele Einzelgeschichten zerfiel. (S, 409)

By no means did Hant build with an eye towards the past, he didn’t speak out in favor of a neoclassical canon of forms, and unlike others he did not combine strands of styles with one another, from the Bauhaus all the way to Postmodernism. That would have been too trivial. Nevertheless Hant sought to contain history. He wanted to prevent history from disintegrating into many separate histories.

Without much difficulty, Hant is thus recognizable as another incarnation of the omniscient narrator from *Fall* who engages in constant contradiction, re-invention, and transformation to remain in control of the ultimate plot

(S, 84). Once again, therefore, the aspirations of a Händlerian character to contain everything within his grasp (Hant is explicitly designated as “container” [*Gefäß*; S, 405]) are cast as linguistic operations. Once he arrives in Germany, Suttung immediately comes under the spell of his new employer’s competent self-styling that will detach the returning expatriate from the realist pragmatism and suspicion of excessive conceptualization he had adopted in America, subjecting him once again to the framework of the German language. As a “new speaker” (S, 34) who hasn’t used German in twenty years, Suttung realizes that this language is not made for communication (*Verständigung*), and that it is conditioned by the uses it has historically served:

Die deutsche Sprache war auch die Sprache der philosophischen Systeme der Neuzeit. In der neuesten Zeit gab es keine philosophischen Systeme mehr. Es schien Suttung, als räche sich die deutsche Sprache dafür, daß sie nicht mehr fähig war, die Welt in ihrer Gesamtheit einzufangen. Die deutsche Sprache wollte, daß jede Wirklichkeit an ihr scheiterte. (S, 34)

The German language was also the language of the philosophical systems of modernity. In the most recent past there were no longer any philosophical systems. It seemed to Suttung as though the German language took revenge for no longer being able to capture the world in its totality. The German language wanted every reality to come up short against it.

As executed by Hant, the “revenge” for the historical failure is the performative obliteration of the very *reality* of the German language itself; Hant’s “singing” style of speech lets Suttung forget that Hant, and everyone around him, speaks German (S, 119), and thus buries the exigency of *Darstellung* in a linguistic sea of contradictory claims about his work (S, 84, 147). Hant’s permanent destruction of expectations about his next move—both in his architectural work and in his own account of that work—is ultimately a form of dialectics: “Ich zerstöre, indem ich das, was in der Umgebung ist, aufnehme und es gegen sich selbst wende” [*I destroy by taking up what surrounds me, and turning it against itself*] (S, 113).

Hant therefore emerges as a post-Hegelian dialectician who affirms all styles (S, 279) but needs to negate, in allegedly post-systematic times, the impact of linguistic *form* on the content of what he expresses by, and about, his architecture. The destruction undertaken is not, to be sure, a conceptual one; Hant dismisses the discourses of philosophy and art history out of hand

as inapplicable to his project (S, 203), leaving nothing but the literal construction of buildings to stand in for the building of a system. Despite his claim that reflection is altogether alien to him (S, 142), the manically creative genius Hant still appears to have thought through what he is trying to accomplish enough to cast his project in terms of an overarching theological metaphor: his constructive activity, he submits, is ultimately aimed at *leaving the world* (S, 204). Such transcendence of reality is counterbalanced, Suttung will find out, by Hant's partners Hahl and Arbogast who ensure the thorough embeddedness of his architecture in the realm of the real. Is Hant's declaration of his metaphysical intentions, then, just another element of an elaborate pose?

Trying to read off Hant—*aus Hant lesen*—is Suttung's only means to try to determine whether or not it is. Hant's capacity to divide himself up into separate personas that appear simultaneously in Suttung's field of vision (S, 198), suggesting incompatible accounts of what his work signifies, turn Hant himself into a *sign* that needs to be read: "Hant ist das Zeichen überhaupt" [*Hant is the sign as such*] (S, 256). Thus Hant is caught in the dilemma of leaving traces against his own intentions. The traces he leaves in the world—in the form of buildings, images, or writings about him—are an ineradicable part of being a sign allegedly intended to signify nothing but absence from the world. Hant's architectural gesture, as an extension of Wittgenstein's that also designates an absence,⁵⁰ needs to contend with its semiotic character, indicating a limit to Hant's power over the interpretation of his own work. Hant's perfect memory of his own designs (S, 108, 155) finds itself challenged by Suttung, who admits to needing mnemonic aids (S, 149) and cannot create *ex nihilo* like his employer. Suttung's primary aid is the computer: the formal models he designs would substitute for the perfect, private memory of the singular genius (S, 400). The externalization, iteration, and modifiability of building designs by computational means would replace Hant as the last exponent of the German *Genieperiode*—characterized according to Hegel by "Hintansetzung aller Regeln" [*ignoring all rules*]⁵¹—by the rule-based execution of algorithms.

Hant's desire to eliminate his traces and to thus suspend history is fueled by the Hegelian recognition that history, if it manages to catch up with the claims for the absolute advanced by Hant, will necessarily make them look ridiculous by reducing them to the size of historical relativity. In the novel, the threat of the ridiculous is posed in the form of Hant's wife Sean, who has an affair with Suttung and therefore, on one *possible* reading, delivers her husband to the fate of involuntary comedy. The execution of the comic schema, in all its corporeality, would suspend the ultimate meaning of Hant's architecture as a taking-leave of the world: "Es existierte nur

ein Mittel gegen das Bedeuten: die Lächerlichkeit. Er, Suttung, war Vollzieher des Mittels der Lächerlichkeit. Er hatte Hant der Lächerlichkeit preisgegeben, indem er als Diener dessen Frau verführt hatte" [*Only one remedy existed against signification: ridiculousness. He, Suttung, was called on to execute that remedy of ridiculousness. He had exposed Hant as ridiculous by seducing his master's wife*] (S, 412). Sean, to wit, is no ordinary woman. She is not even a *human being*, as Händler's narrator repeatedly emphasizes. Allegedly "as old as the century" (S, 223–6, 239, 267–8), her body shows no signs of this impressive age. Having met Otto Wagner, Adolf Loos, Josef Hoffmann, Mies van der Rohe, and Walter Gropius in her youth, and having worked in the offices of Louis Kahn and Philip Johnson (S, 223), Sean is an allegory of modern architectural history rather than a human of flesh and blood. The extension of that history into the future, the promise of architectural progress (*Fortschritt*), threatens to turn Hant into nothing more than an episode of that history, and to reverse everything that he takes his work to stand for. At the very moment, however, when Hant and Arbogast discover Suttung in bed with Sean, Suttung realizes that Sean does not breathe, even though he wishes that she would: "Wie hatte er sich gewünscht, daß sie atmete. Daß sie schwer atmete. Ihr Atmen sollte ein Sturm sein. Er wollte in dem Sturm das Jahrhundert spüren" [*How he had wished that she would breathe. That she would breathe heavily. Her breath should be a storm. He wanted to feel the century in this storm*] (S, 398). The storm that would be Sean's breath is the storm of history, so memorably described in Benjamin's *On the Concept of History*, that leaves only ruins in its wake:⁵²

Aber ein Sturm weht vom Paradiese her, der sich in seinen Flügeln verfangen hat und so stark ist, daß der Engel sie nicht mehr schließen kann. Dieser Sturm treibt ihn unaufhaltsam in die Zukunft, der er den Rücken kehrt, während der Trümmerhaufen vor ihm zum Himmel wächst. Das, was wir den Fortschritt nennen, ist *dieser* Sturm." (*Gesammelte Schriften* I.2, 697)

But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such a violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. *This* storm is what we call progress.

Pushing everything—including Hant's buildings—into the future, this storm would cancel out the founding myth of another storm that Hant is

fond of evoking: a rainstorm that trapped him on the scaffolding of a Messianic skyscraper under renovation in Chicago for a whole night, allegedly prompting his “conversion” to turn away from reality.⁵³ But there is *no* second storm, since Sean doesn't breathe. *Fortschritt* is stalled, just as it is in Wittgenstein's bid for transparency at the expense of complexity. Rather than exposing Hant's architecture to the ruinous reality of history, Sean herself remains removed from the real, herself as much a product of artificial life as Suttung's robotic models. It is with this lack of a *sign of life* that Suttung's German adventure comes to an end. Declining Hant's offer, he chooses to return to the United States and thus to leave Germany—site of the struggle between system and history—behind.⁵⁴ Only the decision to remove himself from the sphere of Hant's influence enables Suttung to consider the events in terms of comedy; no longer subject to Hant's thoroughly irony-free narrative spell,⁵⁵ the possibility that Suttung upstaged Hant by subjecting him to ridicule comes into view. But who has the last laugh here? As Hegel found, comedy can only properly be enjoyed by someone able to rule out that he is himself implicated in the *nothing* that comic laughter destroys. Suttung does not meet this criterion: his enjoyment of the conclusion that he alone had succeeded in resisting the pull of Hant's totalitarian gesture (S, 408) is tampered by the recognition that he is, to an extent, a mirror image of Hant:

Wie konnte ein einzelnes Ich, eine einzelne Vernunft das Ich aufhalten, das dazu in der Lage war, seine Vernunft der Erde aufzuzwingen? Er, Suttung, war Hant ähnlicher als er zugeben mochte. Auch er, Suttung, wollte die Welt in Ordnung bringen, weg von Hants Vernunft, weg von Hant, in seine, Suttungs, Ordnung. . . . Auch er wollte eine Idylle bewahren, die Idylle der vielen Vernünfte, der vielen Ichs und des Gleichgewichts zwischen ihnen. Er war das Spiegelbild Hants. (S, 415)

How could a single I, a single rational being, stand in the way of that I which was capable of forcing its rationality on the world? He, Suttung, resembled Hant more closely than he wanted to admit. He, Suttung, wanted just as much to put the world in order, to keep it away from Hant's rationality, away from Hant, and instead towards his, Suttung's, order. . . . He, too, wanted to preserve an idyll, the idyll of a plurality of rationalities, of many I's, and of the balance between them. He was Hant's mirror-image.

The formal systems designed by Suttung, capable of generating designs bearing *family resemblance* to Hant's manual ones (S, 295), are not essentially

distinct from Hant's project, insofar as they mechanically replicate the promise of the designs they are modeled to generate. The reconstruction of events as a comedy at Hant's expense, therefore, would uphold the comic idyll as such, suggesting a reconciliation in the offing. Irony, on the other hand, does not hold out that promise. Thus, as Suttung reads the final, prosaic inscription on the T-shirt that the apparently transsexual person in the plane seat next to him is wearing ("bearing the image of Lt. Spock and the inscription: *It's illogical, Captain!*" [S, 414]), it is the irony of citation—so abhorrent to Hant—rather than the comical (*das Komische*) that provides a possible exit from Hant's systematic grasp. It is an exit back into another language, the American English that had punctuated Suttung's temporary return into the German realm throughout in italicized, ironic asides.⁵⁶ It is only this *formal* irony that succeeds in disrupting the logic of the Hantian systematic monologue. Ultimately, avoiding the address and claim (*Anspruch*) of that monologue—which, once faced, turns everything into its mirror image—is only possible, Suttung finds, by switching continents, *übersetzen*: landing back in the U.S., in a language other than German. Either English, that is, or the gestural language of dance that Suttung and his American girlfriend Kia—after initial hesitation—master *fluently* at the Californian housewarming party that closes the novel, unrestricted by the "choreography" (S, 83, 236–8) of Hant's architectural gestures.

REAL LIFE (*STADT MIT HÄUSERN, WENN WIR STERBEN*)

A body language (*Körpersprache*) not aiming at *meaning* anything in the conventional sense of describing objects is a basic element of the *Gedankengebäude* that make up Händler's project. All attempts at omniscient narration so far considered are fueled by the desire to establish correspondences between processes involving bodies—including the subset of deliberate such processes, called *deeds* or *actions*—and mental, conceptual processes. Speaking from this utterly novel *Anspruch* are promises of utopian scenarios, the makings of a future: life without guilt (K, 344), the recovery of "parts of our humanity" in an age ruled by *homo oeconomicus* (F, 143), or the prospect of spaces "in which human beings will no longer be weakened, but will stand for the truths in which they actually believe" (S, 273). What foils these designs of a future life is the inability to present such life in writing, a writing governed by principles "die, weil sie nicht mehr oder noch nicht wissenschaftlich zu erfassen sind, nur literarisch – was immer das heißen mag – beschrieben werden können" [*that may only be described in literature—whatever that means—because they can no longer, or not yet,*

be captured scientifically] (F, 141). The principles of writing itself, in other words, work against any clear outline of a set of principles that would go beyond the very act of description. Embodying the principle by which one seeks to overcome existing systems of thought—Georg Voigtländer discovers this with respect to “words are deeds”—may very well result in self-elimination, dissolution in the products of one’s own activity of writing.

The diary as an account of “life”—optimistically considered by Broch as the easiest way to mirror internal states⁵⁷—makes these paradoxes of *Darstellung* beyond objective description externally, and painfully, explicit. Following the ambiguous path of the Wittgensteinian quest for elucidation and purification by way of the “dirt” that are the diary notes, the diarist in Händler’s story “Demiurg” addresses himself in the voice of a fictional interlocutor:

Nachdem du das, was an die Stelle der systematischen Anstrengungen des menschlichen Geistes treten soll, nicht beschreiben kannst – hast du wenigstens eine Vorstellung davon, wie es beginnt. (SMH, 134)

Since you cannot describe that which is supposed to replace the systematic efforts of the human mind—do you at least have an idea of how to begin. (CWH, 112)

The continuation of philosophy by literary means that Georg Voigtländer also advocated cannot claim the easy way out by producing deliberate obscurity. It must submit itself to the critical task of specifying how to begin sketching a possible post-systematic future. In “Demiurg,” the narrator therefore begins a diary project that is supposed to account for the way in which his experiences bear on immediate and eventually also more distant future events in his life. Rather than predicting events, the diary would be a perspicuous record of a future that has been *made* simply by acting in the world: “Ich wollte übersehen können, wie ich lebe, wie ich erlebe” [*I wanted to be able to survey how I live, how I experience things*] (SMH, 142; CWH, 119).⁵⁸ As the diarist records his observations, his initial search for *causes* of later change needs to be revised to the epistemologically more modest goal of tracing *indications* of eventual changes (SMH, 136; CWH, 114). This reading of events and experiences as signs creates an ever-increasing bulk of material that needs to be read, and re-read, in order to track the more distant possible connections between events, leaving less and less time to record new experiences. Unsupported by writing as a memory aid, however, the diarist finds himself unable to recall events with sufficient specificity

at the now lengthened intervals (SMH, 138; CWH, 115). Rather than, at least, fashioning “unscharfe Vorstellungen zu Gedankengebäuden mit klaren Umrissen” [*unfocused ideas into clearly structured systems of thought*] (SMH, 143; CWH, 119), the increasingly compromised diary entries—culminating in different versions of entries all compatible with the diarist’s memory of external events—ultimately fail to deliver any sort of perspicuously ordered view of a life:

Doch je mehr ich schrieb, desto sicherer wurde ich, zu keinem Zeitpunkt würde mir irgend etwas klarer sein als zu irgendeinem Zeitpunkt, als ich noch kein Tagebuch geführt hatte. (SMH, 143)

But the more I wrote, the more certain I became that I would never reach a point when anything would be clearer to me than at any point when I had not yet been writing a diary. (CWH, 120)

As in Wittgenstein, these comments must not be mistaken for a mere berating of the diary form for its shortcomings in representing the infinite complexity of lived experience (*Erlebnis*). Instead, the very existence of a subject making such experiences is subject to skeptical doubts, since in the course of the project “life” has ceased being that which is merely to be “pictured” by writing. That on which observation and written recording would focus is being torn apart by the very processes of recording (SMH, 137; CWH, 115). Action thus takes place solely under the auspices of its external mnemonic retention—“Jedes Tun war von dem Gedanken begleitet, ob und gegebenenfalls wie ich es festhalten würde” [*Every action was accompanied by the thought of whether and, if so, how I would record it*] (SMH, 137; CWH, 115),—which cancels out a subject of lived (and memorized) experience independent of the activity of recording. As was the case for Georg Voigtländer, words *do* become deeds, then, but only at the price of turning “life” into a construct and emptying action of all substance other than its own self-perpetuation.⁵⁹ The “embodying of cognition” that the diarist strives for—which would close the gap between utterance (*Äußerung*) and action (SMH, 131; CWH, 109)—has as its result nothing but the written body of his failed diary project. From a meta-narrative perspective, of course, that project must be judged a *success* insofar as it has been carried out far enough to show its own breakdown, arriving at the thesis that gave rise to it against its proponent’s own intentions.

The diarist of the story “Sprachspiel” in the same volume is more successful by her own standards, while also interpreting her diary along

Wittgensteinian lines, as the story title already indicates. The narrator recounts the history of her sex life that is recorded in detail and in its entirety in a leather-bound diary first given to her by her parents. Beginning with her first experiences with a distant relative of her mother's, she finds that the book contains third-person accounts of all subsequent sexual adventures, mostly not of her own choosing, with gym teachers, or owners and clients of stores she works for. To all appearances, she does not write these entries herself; even though she recognizes her handwritings in them, the writing seems too neat to be from her own hand (SMH, 195; CWH, 160). Once its prescient qualities are uncovered, the book begins to rule the narrator's life; she is incapable of avoiding the situations that the diary specifies in advance, and even her attempts at throwing the book away to rid herself of its influence are condemned to failure. Thus, the book appears to be the manifestation of a deterministic principle (SMH, 197; CWH, 162), mapping out a *fate* completely detached from actions undertaken or avoided. Far from being an unarticulated divine intervention, however, this fate takes the form of language, setting up a relation between descriptions of events and their actual occurrence:

Mein Tagebuch ist sehr deutlich. Es beschreibt alle Einzelheiten und nicht unter Zuhilfenahme von Fremdwörtern. Früher dachte ich, warum soll man diese Sprache nicht benutzen. Man muß Klartext sprechen. Es sind immer dieselben Wörter. Es gibt nicht so viele Wörter für so wenige Gegenstände und etwas mehr Vorgänge. Nur die Umgebung ist eine andere. Es sind die richtigen Wörter, wenn man gerade das macht, was die Wörter beschreiben. Aber es sind schon nicht mehr die richtigen Wörter, wenn man auch nur mit den Gedanken nicht mehr dabei ist. Geschweige denn, man will die Sache nachher oder, wie in meinem Fall, vorher beschreiben. Es hat nichts mir Scham zu tun. Oder vielleicht doch mit Scham, und die Scham spielt Grammatik. Es gibt nur ein Sprachspiel, in dem die Wörter ihren Platz haben. Außerhalb dieses Sprachspiels sind die Wörter nicht die richtigen Wörter. Wenn die Wörter vorkommen, ist es keine Beschreibung mehr. Dann ziehen sie den Hörer oder Leser in dieses Sprachspiel hinein. Unausweichlich. (SMH, 207)

My diary is very explicit. It describes all the details without resorting to technical terms. Back then I used to think, why not use that language. You have to talk plain English. The words are always the same. There aren't that many words for such a small number of things and a few more events. Only the environment is always different. They are

the right words if you are in the process of doing what the words are describing. But your thoughts need only be somewhere else, and they cease to be the right words. Let alone if you want to describe things afterward or, as in my case, ahead of time. This is not about shame. Or maybe it is about shame, and shame is acting like grammar. There is only one language game in which words have their place. Outside of that language game the words aren't the right words. If the words are used, it isn't a description. Then they pull the listener or reader into this language game. Inevitably. (CWH, 170)

Being determined by the diary means to subject oneself to participation in a particular language game, in this case the *explicit* one of sex. The only "right," properly descriptive context of this kind of language use, the narrator contends in retrospect, is that of immediate action. Outside of that context, explicit language may be out of place, but it is anything but inefficient. Detached from the immediate context of "right" use, the family of four-letter words no longer describes actions but instead brings actions into being, such that *words will be actions*. In the language game of the diary, these words "do not have their place," forcing the detachment of what they denote from the subjectivity of the writer.⁶⁰ The narrator of "Sprachspiel" does not recognize her own authorship in the diary entries, which suggests that out-of-place language—not her will—is the force determining the course of the erotic events described. As in the case of the diarist in "Demiurg," language here *makes* the future against the intentions of any particular user. To be implicated in a language game, however—even a "wrong" one—is not to be subject to a strict causal determinism. In "Demiurg," it is the very search for causal connections by means of the diary that fails; in "Sprachspiel," the narrator fittingly discovers her own powers of language in rewriting the magic diary. Replacing locations does not immediately have the desired effect: by substituting "Zermatt" for "Chamonix" in the diary text the narrator merely relocates upcoming sexual involvements instead of eliminating them (SMH, 208; CWH, 171). Only when she strikes her name from an upcoming episode and replaces it with that of her sister—a psychologist who sees in the uncanny powers of the diary merely her sister's repressed, unacknowledged desires (SMH, 211; CWH, 173)—she succeeds in turning the language game to her advantage: "Zum ersten Mal habe ich etwas in meinem Tagebuch abgeändert, und ich wurde dafür nicht mehr, auch nicht weniger, sondern gar nicht gefickt" [*For the first time I changed something in my diary, with the result that I was fucked neither more, nor less, but not at all*] (SMH, 215; CWH, 176). Extricating

herself from an orgy with a group of bikers at the expense of her sister, the narrator realizes her power to appropriate the written text. By making the diary “her own” for the first time, however, she does the very opposite of making herself the referent of the text; from this point forward, her sister, not she herself, will be the one pulled into the language game mapped out here. From this newly assumed perspective, the diary entry—for the first and only time in the story—provides a *description* of the sex acts in which her sister is forced to engage, making it a “proper” language game in which explicit language for once has its place.⁶¹ At the same time, that description of course remains a construction, turning only on the choice of a proper name. As in “Demiurg,” the linguistic re-construction suggested does not result in any strictly epistemological gain, as the only efficient cause of change in both cases is language itself, rather than any object denoted by language; both narrators do not arrive at an assessment of *why* language exerts the power over their lives that it evidently does. The existence of a plurality of language games that are both ground of, and grounded by, action (see again *Zettel* [W VIII], §204) therefore emerges here as the limit of a meaningful demand for more fundamental causes. The diary, then, serves not as mnemonic record of historical causes, but only as a document of how a recourse to writing may transform the very notion that lived experience is an occurrence (*Vorfall*) prior to its appearance on the page.

The thread of meditations in Händler's writing on the diary as that form of notation (*Aufzeichnung*) most directly demonstrating the resistance of writing to mnemonic fixity continues in what is to date the latest installment, the novel *Wenn wir sterben*. One of the more incidental figures in this book—which chronicles the destructive schemings of four female members of Corporate World in their relentless pursuit of power—is the husband of one of the female protagonists, Bär, who at one time studied philosophy, and of whom the narrator notes: “Er hatte einen Band mit Erzählungen veröffentlicht, die um einen Auszug aus seinem philosophischen Tagebuch gruppiert waren” [*He had published a volume of stories that revolved around an excerpt from his philosophical diary*] (WWS, 29). That volume, of course, sounds very much like *Stadt mit Häusern*, indicating another meta-fictional re-entry of Händler's project into its own text. Moreover, *Wenn wir sterben* is itself grouped around a central chapter, “SCHATTEN DER VERGANGENHEIT | AUS DEN AUFZEICHNUNGEN VON FLEURS VATER” [*SHADOWS OF THE PAST | FROM FLEUR'S FATHER'S NOTEBOOK*] that is the only part of the narration, apart from the early reference, that brings this character—Bär's husband and father of her daughter Fleur—into play. Once again,

therefore, the plurality of interlocking narratives from the point of view of different characters that make up this novel are placed around a set of diary entries, amplifying the game Händler is playing here with the functions of narrator and author, respectively.

The diarist, an interim manager for various companies undergoing restructuring, avoids any writing in connection with his work: in a move that would seem devised to avoid Georg Voigtländer's fate (for whose one-time company Bär will end up working, which provides for the central plot of the book), he conducts his managerial business only orally, leaving the writing of reports to others (WWS, 185). This radical abstinence from professional writing divides his work from the non-work of philosophical reflection, offered to the reader in the written form of a diary. The diarist believes to be drawing a line between his real task (*Aufgabe*) and, on the other hand, writing about things that are not immediately part of this task. These writings are not reports, but turn out to be reflections on the very possibility of reporting. The avoidance of professional reporting due to the fear that it would take over all of his writing (WWS, 208) thus gives way to the opposite form of a hostile takeover, so to speak, as the reflections begin to undermine the very rationality of his professional practices.

The diary entry dealing with a theory of rational expectations (February 3, 1991) would impact his work insofar as the successful execution of restructuring plans—developed, for example, by the consultants of the *Firm*, to whom the diarist, like Georg Voigtländer's friend K. and other Händlerian characters, is connected⁶²—depends on a sufficiently accurate assessment of the behavioral system that the plan is designed to regulate. Arriving at such an assessment requires observation to establish the mean values of a so-called prediction function (WWS, 192). Observation, however, as post-positivistic theory of science has established, necessarily implicates the observer in the process of observation: the observer needs to account not only for the behavior of the observed, but also for his own influence on the observed during the time of observation. In the case of a theory of expectations, this requires of the observer to predict his own behavior along with the prediction he makes of the behavior of the observed. Reliable prediction of this kind, in turn, would involve the very kind of account unsuccessfully attempted in “Demiurg:” a record of the actions making up one's own life that would track the outcomes of these actions, or at least a significant subset of them. The conclusion drawn by the diarist in *Wenn wir sterben* reflects the failure of his predecessor: a sufficiently complete knowledge of one's own past and present as an inferential basis for future predictions is impossible. More precisely, it is not amenable to representation (*Darstellung*),

because for such an account to be complete it would have to transcend the limitations of the necessarily incomplete past attempts at giving this kind of account—which will themselves have influenced the information attained by means of observation—to avoid circularity: “Vollständige Kenntnis der eigenen Vergangenheit und Gegenwart bedeutet auch Information über die Selbstinformation. Die Information muß sich also selber darstellen, das ist bei endlicher Information nicht möglich” [*Complete knowledge of one's own past and present includes information about such self-information. Thus, information needs to represent itself, which is impossible in the case of finite information*] (WWS, 196).

An understanding of what would separate good executive decisions from bad ones, insofar as it is based on self-representation of information, therefore cannot be grounded in the rationality of the kind of theory described by the diarist. It is the writing out of that recognition in the diary which explains why he would claim to manifest his professional understanding only in actions, not in words. Writing, it appears, could only be considered appropriate given its complete interpretive dissolution in understanding. In his initial diary entry (January 1) the diarist thus claims that he “understands everything,” including Beckett's and Wittgenstein's motivations for their attempts to recede behind their writings:

Ich verstehe doch alles. Ich verstehe den Dichter, der Leser brüskierte, wenn sie ihn nach seinem Bild erkannten, der jedoch einflußreichen Literaten ein Exemplar von *Whoroscope* mit Widmung gab. Ich weiß, warum der Philosoph nach dem *Tractatus* lehrte und schrieb, aber nichts veröffentlichte. (WWS, 183)

But I understand it all. I understand the poet who brushed off readers that recognized him from his picture, but who gave influential literati a copy of *Whoroscope* with his dedication. I know why the philosopher taught and wrote in the years after the *Tractatus*, but did not publish anything.

The understanding of the difference between life and (published) writing professed here is put to the test in the very document begun with this statement, since such understanding—which would, it appears, have to be the outcome of having *read* Beckett and Wittgenstein—will in turn become available only in the diarist's own writings.⁶³ But since the methodological ruminations may be read as a challenge to the assumptions underlying the reconstruction of the diarist's professional work as rational, the attempt at

a strategic separation of (professional) life and (non-professional) writing begins to be threatened. The reflection on the medium of language itself therefore once again enters the diary text: the determination of metaphor not as a representation of an origin, but as itself originary (February 9; WWS, 197) reveals that the language of the diary will not rest at being a mere ornament to the subjectivity at its root, just like the restricted use of ornament by Josef Hoffmann and the *Wiener Werkstätte* was originally conceived, the diarist submits, for those who would write monographs about their architectural work, rather than for those people who would end up *living* with it (February 19; WWS, 201). The fundamentally metaphorical character of language dis-limits (*entgrenzt*) the number of texts to serve as the referential basis for another text;⁶⁴ the ideal of a complete account of all references between all texts (WWS, 199)—a potential alternative to the model of one originary text—will likewise remain out of reach. If the carrying over (*metapherein*) of one text into another does not result in the representation of an original in the source text, then the production of diary text as a calculated strategy to hide a real, *private* “I” by constructing a fictional one cannot ultimately be successful: once on the level of writing and thus of metaphor, the way “back” to an identity that would comprise and ground *both* that of the playful diarist and of the orally fixated professional cannot be found. Towards the end of the diary, thus, the diarist suddenly, and unmarkedly, imagines himself as a ventriloquist “I” that apparently (though without acknowledging this explicitly) channels the experiences of Emanuel from *Kongreß*, folding the conditions of earlier textual passages of “The Grammar of Absolute Clarity” back into an alleged report of subjective states (May 18–20; WWS, 211–15). Splitting itself up, the diarist’s “I” now projects Emanuel’s seemingly irrational behavior, his lack of memory, and his physiological symptoms into the future, recasting his behavior as a rationally devised strategy to satisfy his interlocutors whose goal it is “das Funktionieren einer Maschine aufzuzeigen” [*to demonstrate the functioning of a machine*]. Behavior which comes across in *Kongreß* as an expression of irrationality not to be reconciled with the behavioral rules of the congress is now redescribed as a fully rational, quasi-mechanically generated set of responses to satisfy the expectations of Emanuel’s interlocutors. Following the flawed logic of the theory of rational expectations, the psychological or criminological experts are looking to equate notes by and about Emanuel concerning his personal history with his subsequent responses, in order to arrive at a causal account that will explain his actions: “Vermittels der Aufzeichnungen bilden sie sich eine Vorstellung von der Maschine und suchen dann nach Wirkungsketten, die von einem Lebensumstand über

einen Maschinenumstand zu den Aufzeichnungen führen" [*By means of their notes they form an idea of the workings of the machine, and then look for causal chains that will lead from a state of life through a machine state to the notes*] (WWS, 212). The fictional "I" whose voice here echoes Emanuel's satisfies behavioral expectations in a way that bids a farewell to the method the diarist would have govern his professional tasks: the expectations predate and govern the displayed responses, making a mockery of the claim to be inferring causal connections from the outside. As far as those inferences are concerned, the diarist *is* Emanuel, or might as well be. The last diary entry (May 21) appropriately concludes: "Vielleicht schreibe ich über Dinge, die niemals zu Aufgaben werden können, weil ich nichts von dem, was meine Aufgaben ausmacht, wirklich verstehe oder verstehen will" [*Perhaps I write about things that can never become tasks because I do not really understand, or want to understand, what my tasks are*] (WWS, 216). The belief in understanding "everything" about Beckett's and Wittgenstein's behavior vis-à-vis their own writings has given way to the diarist's skepticism regarding not only how to accomplish his professional tasks, but more fundamentally about what these tasks *are*. The diarist, of course, is nothing but a *metaphor* for the destabilized narrative function in Händler's work more generally, and the ways in which his narratives—saturated with highly detailed and competently rendered accounts of *professional* situations of philosophers, writers, architects, and managers—employ the dispersive force of language and intertextuality to radically deflate the "reality" of the settings thus constructed. The methodo-logical aspirations of a Tractarian world-view that would bring clarity and order to these realities are challenged every time this order must be expressed in language. Narration, it turns out, has its own job to do: not limited to creating fictional stand-ins for "real" professionals, it instead skeptically challenges alleged certainties of the private that would be the basis for rationally devised systems as perfect instruments of memory, suspending time to rule over past and future both.⁶⁵ The web of prose woven in Händler's books presents a re-telling (*Nacherzählung*) of the systematic ambitions of their protagonists. Cast in the form of the novel,⁶⁶ the reflection on the very possibility of accounting for these projects—of making them amenable to *Darstellung*—appoints the novel as heir to the estate of philosophical systematicity. It is an inheritance, however, that cannot be accepted as a positive account balance; it is a form of life that strikes itself out in writing, limited to chronicling its own dissolution. The ongoing unfolding of Händler's literary project thus comes *clean* about the fact that any narrative stabilization of the identity of the *Nacherzähler* would ultimately be nothing but an inheritance swindle, a self-authorization of

the meaning of what is allegedly 'present' in his memory. It amounts to a building not of solid German *Gedankengebäude*⁶⁷ but rather of *châteaux en Espagne*—castles in the air (*Lufschlösser*), hanging suspended over the ground on which a narrator could plant his feet, claiming certain knowledge *about* "the philosopher" and his reasons for keeping on writing without publishing.

Notes

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

1. Ray Monk, *Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*, 136.
2. As Lukács provocatively writes at the end of the *Theory of the Novel*: “Dostojewskij hat keine Romane geschrieben . . .” [*Dostoevsky did not write novels*] (Lukács, *Die Theorie des Romans*, 137; *The Theory of the Novel*, 152).
3. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Kritische Studienausgabe*, 7: 181.
4. On the resulting tension between Hegel’s and F. Schlegel’s views of the novel, see: Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, “The Unpresentable,” in *The Subject of Philosophy*; Piotr Parlej, *The Romantic Theory of the Novel*.
5. “*Hic Rhodus, hic saltus*. Das *was ist* zu begreifen, ist die Aufgabe der Philosophie, denn das *was ist*, ist die Vernunft. Was das Individuum betrifft, so ist ohnehin jedes ein Sohn seiner Zeit; so ist auch die Philosophie *ihre Zeit in Gedanken erfaßt*. Es ist ebenso töricht zu wähnen, irgendeine Philosophie gehe über ihre gegenwärtige Zeit hinaus, als, ein Individuum überspringe seine Zeit, springe über Rhodos hinaus” [*Hic Rhodus, hic saltus. To comprehend what is, this is the task of philosophy, because what is, is reason. Whatever happens, every individual is a child of his time; so philosophy too is its own time apprehended in thoughts. It is just as absurd to fancy that a philosophy can transcend its contemporary world as it is to fancy that an individual can overleap his own age, jump over Rhodes*] (G.W.F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, in *Werke*, 7: 26; *Philosophy of Right*, 11).
6. For more on Dilthey’s poetics as an intermediary step in this context see Martin Klebes, “*Lassowerfen im Erlebnispark*: Dilthey’s Hunt for the Memory of the *Geisteswissenschaften*.”
7. Wilhelm Dilthey, “Das Wesen der Philosophie,” *Gesammelte Schriften*, V: 412.
8. See A.J. Cascardi, “Totality and the Form of the Novel,” *New Literary History* 23 (1992): 608, 611.
9. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Bemerkungen über die Philosophie der Psychologie* [W VII], 1: 49 [§243].
10. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode; Gesammelte Werke*, 1: 132.

11. Martin Huber, “‘Roithamer ist nicht Wittgenstein, aber er ist Wittgenstein.’ Zur Präsenz des Philosophen bei Thomas Bernhard,” 145.
12. On Heinrich Detering’s reading, to cite one example, Sebald’s work is the last hurrah of 19th-century prose, “der letzte Trost des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts, die letzte Rettung dessen, was Stefan Zweig, angesichts vergleichbarer Anblicke, als ‘Die Welt von gestern’ beschrieben hat. Noch einmal große Literatur, für erbärmlich kleine Zeiten” [*the last consolation of the nineteenth century, the last recovery of what Stefan Zweig, faced with a similar perspective, called ‘The world of yesteryear.’ Great literature, one more time, for pitifully small times*] (Heinrich Detering, “Große Literatur für kleine Zeiten” in *W.G. Sebald*, ed. Franz Loquai, 87). Similarly, Susanne Finke suggests that Sebald’s writings, actively engaged in a work of mourning, have the preservation of their contents as their primary goal: “Sebald leistet aktiv Trauerarbeit an der deutschen Vergangenheit, indem er die jüdischen Schicksale, an deren Heimatverlust sich sein Heimatland schuldig gemacht hat, literarisch konserviert und somit vor dem Vergessen rettet” [*Sebald actively performs the work of mourning for the German past; by literary means he conserves the Jewish destinies, of whose loss of home his home country is guilty, and thus keeps them from being forgotten*] (Susanne Finke, “W.G. Sebald—der fünfte Ausgewanderte,” in *ibid.*, 227). The exact moment of redemption (*Rettung*) in Sebald that seems so evident to these critics is hard to make out indeed; partially responsible for this elusiveness is the fact that the often compulsive mobility both of Sebald’s characters and the narrative point of view presents the exact opposite to the immobility implied by the notion of conservation.
13. See Dorrit Cohn, *Transparent Minds*.
14. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen* [hereafter PU], *Werke*, 1, §§256–71. As Saul Kripke has famously argued, these passages, though they are the ones usually referred to, are not the only ones that may be considered part of the argument.
15. Wittgenstein’s original passage reads as follows: “Unsere Sprache kann man ansehen als eine alte Stadt: Ein Gewinkel von Gäßchen und Plätzen, alten und neuen Häusern, und Häusern mit Zubauten aus verschiedenen Zeiten; und dies umgeben von einer Menge neuer Vororte mit geraden und regelmäßigen Straßen, und mit einförmigen Häusern” (PU, §18).
16. According to P. Christopher Smith, it is the task of hermeneutics “to extend the part of the city of language in which I am active and with which I am familiar to the part in which the language of the text is spoken (P. Christopher Smith, “Gadamer’s Hermeneutics and Ordinary Language Philosophy.” *Thomist* 43 (1979) : 304).
17. Jacques Roubaud, ‘*Le grand incendie de Londres: Destruction. Récit, avec incises et bifurcations 1985–1987*, 261 (§101).
18. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Wiener Ausgabe*, 3: 23.

19. See Martin Klebes, "Händler, Preparing for Work," 224–5.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer discusses the game as "mode of being of the artwork proper" (*Seinsweise des Kunstwerks selbst*), which will make absolute presence and absolute mediation of meaning possible if the game is taken *seriously*, that is: if the character of the game as game is forgotten (Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 105ff.). As I hope to show in this chapter, Wittgenstein's notion of the language game has little to do with any such recovery of essences.
2. See for example: F. Kerr, "Language as Hermeneutic in the Later Wittgenstein," *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* 27 (1965): 491–520; Karl-Otto Apel, *Analytic Philosophy and the Geisteswissenschaften*, ch. 4; Jörg Zimmermann, *Wittgensteins sprachphilosophische Hermeneutik*; P. Christopher Smith, "Gadamer's Hermeneutics and Ordinary Language Philosophy," *Thomist* 43 (1979): 296–321; Nicholas F. Gier, *Wittgenstein and Phenomenology: A Comparative Study of the Later Wittgenstein, Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty*; Christopher Lawn, "Gadamer on Poetic and Everyday Language," *Philosophy and Literature* 25 (2001): 113–226.
3. See for example Stuart G. Shanker, "Wittgenstein's Solution of the 'Hermeneutic Problem,'" *Conceptus* 16 (1984): 50–61.
4. See for example Charles Altieri, *Act and Quality: A Theory of Meaning and Humanistic Understanding*; Clive Stroud-Drinkwater, "Defending Logocentrism," *Philosophy and Literature* 25 (2001): 75–86.
5. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Briefe an Ludwig von Ficker*, 32–3. (undated letter); trans.: Georg Henrik von Wright. *Wittgenstein. With Letters from Wittgenstein*, 81.
6. See S. Stephen Hilmy, *The Later Wittgenstein: The Emergence of a New Philosophical Method*. In similar fashion, Wolfgang Kienzler insists on a clear separation between the disparate continuity of Wittgenstein's *text* (evident more than ever since the publication of the *Wiener Ausgabe*; see below) and the "methodical development" of his *thought*, entailing a separation of the latter into distinct phases (W. Kienzler, *Wittgensteins Wende zu seiner Spätphilosophie 1930–1932*, 10).
7. The context of Spengler's comments is a discussion of the symbolic significance of colors in painting and music: "Braun war nunmehr [seit dem späten 16. Jh.] die eigentliche Farbe der Seele, einer historisch gestimmten Seele geworden. Ich glaube, Nietzsche hat einmal von der braunen Musik Bizets gesprochen. Aber das Wort gilt eher von der Musik, die Beethoven für Streichinstrumente geschrieben hat . . . [Das Braun] macht die Atmosphäre des Bildraumes zu einem Zeichen des Gerichtetseins, der Zukunft. Es übertönt die Sprache des Augenblicklichen der Darstellung" [*Brown, then, became the characteristic color of the soul, and more particularly of a historically-disposed soul. Nietzsche has, I think, spoken somewhere of the "brown"*]

music of Bizet, but the adjective is far more appropriate to the music which Beethoven wrote for strings . . . (Brown) makes the atmosphere of the pictured space signify directedness and future, and overpowers the language of the instantaneousness of representation] (O. Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, I: 328–9; *The Decline of the West*, I: 252–3).

8. “Sobald das Wort, ein Mitteilungszeichen des Verstehens, zum Ausdrucksmittel von Künsten wird, hört das menschliche Wachsein auf, als Ganzes etwas auszudrücken oder Eindrücke zu empfangen. Auch die künstlerisch gebrauchten Wortklänge—um vom *gelesenen* Wort hoher Kulturen, den Medium der eigentlichen Literatur, zu schweigen—trennen unvermerkt Hören und Verstehen, denn die gewohnte Wortbedeutung spielt mit, und unter der immer zunehmenden Macht dieser Kunst sind auch die wortlosen Künste zu Ausdrucksweisen gelangt, welche die Motive mit Wortbedeutungen verknüpfen. So entsteht die *Allegorie*, ein Motiv, *das ein Wort bedeutet*, wie in der Barockskulptur seit Bernini . . .” [*As soon as the word, which is the transmission agent of the understanding, comes to be used as the expression-agent of an art, the waking consciousness ceases to express or to perceive impressions as a whole. Likewise, the artistically used word sounds—let alone the read word in higher cultures, the medium of literature proper—imperceptibly separate hearing and understanding, for the ordinary meaning of the word plays a role, and, as this art continually grows in power, even the wordless arts arrive at ways of expression that connect motifs with word meanings. Thus arises the allegory, a motif that signifies a word, as in Baroque sculpture after Bernini*] (O. Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, I: 285 n. 1; *The Decline of the West*, I: 219 n. 2).
9. “Eher ließe sich ein Thema von Beethoven mit Seziermesser oder Säure zerlegen, als die Seele durch Mittel des abstrakten Denkens. . . . Man kann von gewissen Seelenregungen, die in Worte nicht zu fassen sind, andern ein Gefühl durch einen Blick, ein paar Takte einer Melodie, eine kaum merkliche Bewegung vermitteln. Das ist die wahre Sprache von Seelen, die Fernstehenden unverständlich bleibt. Das Wort als Laut, als poetisches Element, kann hier die Beziehung herstellen, das Wort als Begriff, als Element wissenschaftlicher Prosa nie.” [*It would be easier to break up a theme of Beethoven with a dissecting-knife or acid than to break up the soul by methods of abstract thought. . . . A feeling of certain ineffable stirrings of the soul can be imparted to others by a look, a few bars of a melody, an almost imperceptible movement. That is the true language of souls that remains incomprehensible to outsiders. The word as sound, as poetic element, may establish the link here, but the word as concept, as element of scientific prose, never*] (O. Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, I: 386; *The Decline of the West*, I: 300).
10. “Ich glaube meine Stellung zur Philosophie dadurch zusammengefaßt zu haben, indem ich sagte: Philosophie dürfte man eigentlich nur dichten. Daraus muß sich, scheint mir, ergeben, wie weit mein Denken der Gegenwart, Zukunft, oder der Vergangenheit angehört. Denn ich habe mich

damit auch als einen bekannt, der nicht ganz kann, was er zu können wünscht" [*I believe I summed up where I stand in relation to philosophy when I said: really one should write philosophy only as one writes a poem. That, it seems to me, must reveal how far my thinking belongs to the present, the future, or the past. For I was acknowledging myself, with these words, to be someone who cannot quite do what he would like to be able to do*] (*Vermischte Bemerkungen* [W VIII], 483; CV, 28). Cf. also: "So wie ich keine Verse schreiben kann, so kann ich auch Prosa nur *soweit*, und nicht weiter, schreiben. Meiner Prosa ist eine ganz bestimmte Grenze gesetzt, und ich kann ebenso wenig über sie hinaus, als ich es vermöchte, ein Gedicht zu schreiben. Mein Apparat ist so beschaffen; nur dieser Apparat steht mir zur Verfügung. Es ist, wie wenn Einer sagte: Ich kann in diesem Spiel nur *diesen* Grad der Vollkommenheit erreichen; und nicht *jenen*" [*Just as I cannot write verse, so too I can write prose only up to a certain point, and no further. There is a quite definite limit to my prose, and I can no more overstep it, than I would be able to write a poem. This is how my equipment is constituted; it is the only equipment available to me. It is like someone's saying: In this game I can attain only this level of perfection, and not that*] (*Vermischte Bemerkungen* [W VIII], 533; CV, 67).

11. Ludwig Wittgenstein, "Bemerkungen über Frazers *Golden Bough*," in *Vortrag über Ethik und andere kleine Schriften*, 36–7.
12. "Erst die Tiefe ist die eigentliche Dimension, im wörtlichen Sinne, das *Ausdehnende*. In ihr ist das Wachsein aktiv, in den andern streng passiv. Es ist der *symbolische Gehalt einer Ordnung*, und zwar im Sinne einer einzelnen Kultur, der sich zutiefst in diesem ursprünglichen und nicht weiter analysierbaren Element ausspricht" [*Depth is the first and genuine dimension, literally speaking: that which extends. In it the waking consciousness is active, whereas in the others it is only passive. It is the symbolic content of a particular order as understood by one particular culture that is expressed most deeply by this original and unanalysable element*] (O. Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, I: 221; *The Decline of the West*, I: 168–9).
13. It should be noted that Spengler's concept of Caesarism—one of the elements of his thought most inviting to Nazi appropriation—is itself closely linked to his view of prose, and of the novel in particular. As the future fate of Western culture and civilization past the endpoint of its decline, Spengler posits the appearance of a new Caesar, and of "Roman toughness" along with that *Führerfigur*: "Härte, römische Härte ist es, was jetzt in der Welt beginnt. Für etwas anderes wird bald kein Raum mehr sein. . . . Zu einem Goethe werden wir Deutschen es nicht wieder bringen, aber zu einem Cäsar" [*Toughness, Roman toughness is what's now beginning in the world. Soon there won't be room for anything else. . . . We Germans will never again have a Goethe, but a Casar we will have*] (Oswald Spengler, "Pessimismus?" (1921), in *Reden und Aufsätze*, 79). Goethe—the only properly "representative" German novelist Spengler recognizes—will remain out

of reach for the prose of a future epoch marked by the end of art and the ascent of money and technology, in which “men of reality, industrialists, decorated officers, managers” are writing “better, more thoroughly, more clearly, more deeply” than “those tenth-rate literati who have made style into a sport” (ibid., 78). In Hegelian terms, this “future” of prose envisaged by Spengler would of course be nothing but a throwback, given Hegel’s own characterization of the Romans as fundamentally prosaic, sorely lacking in the very *Gemüt* and *Geist* which Spengler believes to be detecting in the Germans: “Von dem allgemeinen Charakter der Römer aber können wir sagen, daß gegen jene erste wilde Poesie und Verkehrung alles Endlichen im Orient, gegen die schöne harmonische Poesie und gleichschwebende Freiheit des Geistes der Griechen, hier bei den Römern die *Prosa* des Lebens eintritt, das Bewußtsein der Endlichkeit für sich, die Abstraktion des Verstandes und die Härte der Persönlichkeit, welche die Sprödigkeit selbst nicht in der Familie zu natürlicher Sittlichkeit ausweitet, sondern das gemüt- und geistlose Eins bleibt und in abstrakter Allgemeinheit die Einheit dieser Einsen setzt” [*What we can say about the general character of the Romans is that over against that first wild poetry and the reversal of all things finite in the Orient, against the beautiful, harmonious poetry and balanced freedom of spirit among the Greeks, the prose of life begins with the Romans, the consciousness of finitude for itself, the abstraction of understanding and the toughness of personality that not even within the family develops its harshness into natural concrete morality, but rather remains the ‘one’ devoid of feeling and spirit and posits the unity of these ‘ones’ in abstract generality*] (G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, in *Werke*, 12: 350–51).

14. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Wittgenstein’s Nachlaß: The Bergen Electronic Edition*, MS 110.
15. Which raises serious difficulties for the many who, according to Spengler, misunderstood his magnum opus. Those who cannot *feel* the meaning or content of the main categories of the book will apparently not be served any better by words such as the following: “Schicksal ist ein Wort, dessen Inhalt man fühlt. Zeit, Sehnsucht, Leben sind eng verwandte Worte. Niemand glaube, den Kern meiner Denkweise verstanden zu haben, wenn ihm der letzte Sinn dieser Worte, wie ich sie meine, verschlossen bleibt” [*Destiny is word the content of which is felt. Time, desire, life are closely related words. Nobody should believe to have understood the core of my way of thinking if the ultimate significance of these words—as I mean them—eludes him*] (Spengler, “Pessimismus?” 66).
16. Quotes from the *Tractatus* are given by its numbering system.
17. Michael Dummett, “Wittgenstein’s Philosophy of Mathematics,” *Philosophical Review* 68 (1959): 348.
18. See A.J. Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic*, 10.

19. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Vorlesungen 1930–1935* [hereafter VL], 107; *Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge, 1930–1932* [hereafter WL], 87.
20. The respective passage in the *Wiener Ausgabe* (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Wiener Ausgabe* [hereafter WA], 1: 190) adds the question “Und warum nicht?” [*And why not?*] to the end of the quoted text. The fact that Wittgenstein decides to leave it out in later revisions indicates that his view of the status of the proposition was undergoing nontrivial changes at that moment.
21. Jacques Bouveresse, *Poesie und Prosa. Wittgenstein über Wissenschaft, Ethik und Ästhetik*, 50.
22. Even if cast as a “cinematographical” theory, as proposed by David Favrholt with reference to Russell’s quasi-Bergsonian suggestions in his essay “The ultimate constituents of matter” (in *Mysticism and Logic*), the problem persists: elementary propositions may only refer to static portions of a described motion, e.g. in the proposition “The stone flies across the room,” but cannot realize the transition from static images to the perceptual continuity afforded by cinematography. See David Favrholt, *An Interpretation and Critique of Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, 66ff.
23. See also WA 2, 248.
24. Roland Barthes, who emphasizes that the photograph, unlike the proposition, shows something which it cannot say (see TLP 4.1212), describes the phenomenological difference between the two media thus: “Je reverse l’immobilité de la photo présente sur la prise passée, et c’est cet arrêt qui constitue la pose. . . . dans la Photo, quelque chose s’est posé devant le petit trou et y est resté à jamais (c’est là mon sentiment); mais au cinéma, quelque chose est passée devant ce même petit trou: la pose est emportée et niée par la suite continue des images: c’est une autre phénoménologie, et partant un autre art qui commence, quoique dérivé du premier” [*I project the presented photograph's immobility upon the past shot, and it is this arrest which constitutes the pose. . . . in the Photograph, something has posed in front of the tiny hole and has remained there forever (that is my feeling); but in cinema, something has passed in front of the same tiny hole: the pose is swept away and denied by the continuous series of images: it is a different phenomenology, and therefore a different art which begins here, though derived from the first one*] (R. Barthes, *La chambre claire: Note sur la photographie*, 122–3 [§33]; *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, 78).
25. Jaako Hintikka, “Wittgenstein on Being and Time,” *Theoria* 62, 1–2 (1996): 9.
26. J. Hintikka, “Wittgenstein on Being and Time,” 4.
27. Which he soon comes to reject: “Es gibt nicht – wie ich früher glaubte – eine primäre Sprache im Gegensatz zu unserer gewöhnlichen, der ‘secundären.’” [*There is not—as I believed earlier—a primary language in contrast to our ordinary, ‘secondary’ one*] (WA 2, 145) For details, see J. Hintikka, “Wittgenstein

and the Problem of Phenomenology,” *Acta Philosophica Fennica* 49 (1990): 15–46.

28. In a Cambridge lecture, Wittgenstein remarks accordingly: “Durch Assoziation kann das Wort ‘grün’ ein Erinnerungsbild des Grünen in uns hervorrufen, doch das Erinnerungsbild ist von der Farbe Grün ebenso weit entfernt wie das Wort; es ist immer noch Symbol und bringt uns nicht in Berührung mit der Wirklichkeit” [*The word “green” may produce in us by association a memory-image of green. But the memory-image is not the meaning of green. The memory-image is as remote from the colour green as the word is. It is still a symbol, it does not bring us into contact with reality*] (VL, 45; WL, 23).
29. Wittgenstein emphasizes that to use a word without justification does not necessarily mean to be using it in a way that is not right (*zu Unrecht*) (PU, §289). The correct identification (and re-identification) of pains is one example of such a scenario: “Angenommen, es erklärt einer, wie ein Kind den Gebrauch des Wortes ‘Schmerz’ lernt, in dieser Weise: Wenn das Kind sich bei bestimmten Anlässen so und so benimmt, denke ich, es fühle, was ich in solchen Fällen fühle; und wenn es so ist, so assoziiert das Kind das Wort mit seinem Gefühl und gebraucht das Wort, wenn das Gefühl wieder auftritt. – Was erklärt diese Erklärung? Frage dich: Welche Art der Unwissenheit behebt sie? – Sicher sein, daß der Andre Schmerzen hat, zweifeln, ob er sie hat, u.s.f., sind so viele natürliche instinktive Arten des Verhältnisses zu den andern Menschen, und unsre Sprache ist nur ein Hilfsmittel und weiterer Ausbau dieses Verhaltens. Unser Sprachspiel ist ein Ausbau des primitiven Benehmens. (Denn unser Sprachspiel ist Benehmen.) (Instinkt.)” [*Suppose someone explains how a child learns the use of the word “pain” in the following way: When the child behaves in such-and-such a way on particular occasions, I think he’s feeling what I feel in such cases; and if it is so then the child associates the word with his feeling and uses the word when the feeling reappears.—What does this explanation explain? Ask yourself: What sort of ignorance does it remove?—Being sure that someone is in pain, doubting whether he is, and so on, are so many natural, instinctive, kinds of behavior towards other human beings, and our language is merely an auxiliary to, and further extension of, this relation. Our language-game is an extension of primitive behavior. (For our language-game is behavior.) (Instinct)*] (Zettel [W VIII], §545; ZE, 95; *Vermischte Bemerkungen* [W VIII], 402). Language games are an extension of behavior, and the most natural response (though certainly not the only possible one) would be to help the child, not to engage in philosophical speculation. This is a prime example of asking the wrong philosophical question, according to Wittgenstein. The principal possibility of doubt will not engender paralysis in every case: “Die Unsicherheit, ob der Andre..., sie ist ein (wesentlicher) Zug aller dieser Sprachspiele. Aber dies bedeutet nicht, daß jeder im hoffnungslosen Zweifel darüber ist, was der andre fühlt” [*The uncertainty whether someone else... is an (essential) trait of all these language-games. But this does not mean*

that everyone is hopelessly in doubt about what other people feel] (*Letzte Schriften über die Philosophie der Psychologie* [W VII], 462 [§877]; LWPP I, 112). The lack of doubt, after all, may simply be due to not having asked oneself a skeptical question in this case, not to verifiable (let alone verified) certainty.

30. In the English translation it is 'S,' for Sensation instead of *Empfindung*.
31. Stewart Candlish ("The Real Private Language Argument," *Philosophy* 55 (1980): 86–7) insists that the counterfactual nature of the Private Language Argument precludes conceiving of the diarist as an actual human being. Since our (public) language is not a private language, as established in PU §§244–255, the private language hypothetically entertained in §§256–271 would not really amount to a human language, as evidenced by the inarticulate grunt to which explanatory attempts would be reduced (PU, §261). However, the eventual philosophical demand for justification, though applicable here, need not make the initial attempt at keeping a diary into an inhuman activity; I may very well begin a diary project and realize later that I have not succeeded in describing what I meant to describe. Even if my writing should have been *about nothing*, I will still have written. Also see the section "Real Life" in Chapter Five below.
32. However, the earlier example is *not* a case of radically private memory (given that all recognition would involve memory), uncheckable in principle, notwithstanding the claims to this effect by Kenneth Stern, "Private Language and Skepticism," *Journal of Philosophy* LX, no. 24 (1963): 752. Wittgenstein's point is rather that the demand for a check simply doesn't arise in that case, and that the explicit reference to a private object that might be checked is posterior to the act of recognition.
33. Anthony Kenny (*Wittgenstein*, 191–92) sums up and rejects this 'standard' view.
34. See *Bemerkungen zur Philosophie der Psychologie* I [W VII], 84 (§393).
35. Regarding memory as a means of 'verifying' experiences, Wittgenstein writes: "Ich gehe die gelbe Blume suchen. Auch wenn mir während des Gehens ein Bild vorschwebt, brauche ich es denn, wenn ich die gelbe Blume—oder eine andere—sehe?—Und wenn ich sage "sobald ich eine gelbe Blume sehe, schnappt, gleichsam, etwas in der Erinnerung / dem Gedächtnis / ein": kann ich dieses Einschnappen eher voraussehen, erwarten, als die gelbe Blume? Ich wüßte nicht warum" [*I go in search of the yellow flower. Even if I have an image in mind as I walk, do I really need it when I see the yellow flower—or any other?—and if I say: "as soon as I see a yellow flower, it is as though something snaps into place in recollection/in memory": can I predict or expect this snapping into place more easily than the yellow flower itself? I don't know why I would*] (WA 3, 319). If we used a color card (*Täfelchen*) to guide our search, there would be no *additional* relation of adequation required between the card and a memory image, only that between the card and the flower, once we find it "Ich wollte oben sagen, daß das Gedächtnis, auch

wenn es zur Kontrolle des Täfelchens verwendet wird, im gleichen Fall ist wie das Täfelchen. Daß nämlich auch hier von einer Interpretation (jener Relation “des im Gedächtnis gegebenen zu...”) die Rede sein könne und gefragt werden kann, ob ein Ausdruck dieser Interpretation dem nach dem Gedächtnis Suchenden mitgegeben werden müßte” [*I wanted to say above that memory, even if it is used to check the color card, is in the same position as the color card. Namely that here, too, one could speak of an interpretation (this relation “of something given in memory to...”), and that one could ask whether something documenting this interpretation would need to given to whoever goes in search of memory*] (WA 3, 321). The desire for the *image* of a flower—yellow, or blue—in memory is the desire for an end of interpretation somewhere in the depths of interiority.

36. Questioning the “cleanliness” that Alfred Nordmann attributes to Wittgenstein’s remarks does not entail support for the “hermeneutic stance” that Nordmann charges with trying to establish a “unity of life, work, and thought” by way of a “biographical approach to understanding Wittgenstein” (Alfred Nordmann, “The Sleepy Philosopher: How to Read Wittgenstein’s Diaries,” in *Wittgenstein: Biography and Philosophy*, ed. James C. Klagge, 160). Quite to the contrary, the immediate proximity of the “biographical” and the “philosophical” on the typed page serves as much to undermine such a unity as it remains tied to the traditionally “unclean” nature of prose.
37. The coded part was published separately as: Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Geheime Tagebücher 1914–1916*.
38. Garth Hallett, *A Companion to Wittgenstein’s “Philosophical Investigations,”* 45.
39. S. Stephen Hilmy, *The Later Wittgenstein*, 24.
40. L. Wittgenstein, *Wittgenstein’s Nachlaß*, MS 136, 287.
41. Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, 70.
42. L. Wittgenstein, *Briefe an Ludwig von Ficker*, 35 (undated letter).
43. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tagebücher 1930–32, 1936–37*, 27.
44. Likewise, Wittgenstein is clearly committed to rejecting a psychologistic approach to aesthetic questions: “Es wird oft gesagt, die Ästhetik sei ein Zweig der Psychologie. Der Gedanke ist, daß wir wenn wir es nur erst einmal weitergebracht haben, alles—alle Mysterien der Kunst—mit Hilfe psychologischer Experimente verstehen werden. Ein äußerst stupider Gedanke, aber es gibt ihn in ungefähr dieser Form” [*People often say that aesthetics is a branch of psychology. The idea is that once we are more advanced, everything—all the mysteries of art—will be understood by psychological experiments. Exceedingly stupid as the idea is, this is roughly it*] (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Vorlesungen und Gespräche über Ästhetik, Psychologie und Religion*, 41; *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, 17).
45. Hegel, by contrast, emphasizes that Odysseus, even though he loses *everything* in the process, still has his *ultimate* wish fulfilled: “In der ähnlichen

Weise langt Odysseus in Ithaka, diesem Ziel seiner Wünsche, endlich an, doch allein, schlafend, nach dem Verlust aller seiner Gefährten, aller Kriegsbeute vor Ilion, nach langen Jahren des Harrens und Abmühens" [*Similarly, Odysseus does in the end arrive at Ithaca, the goal of his wishes, but asleep and alone after long years of delay and toil, after losing all his companions and all the booty from Troy*] (G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, in *Werke*, 3: 548).

46. Reported by John Nelson, cit. in: *Ludwig Wittgenstein. Sein Leben in Bildern und Texten*, ed. Michael Nedo and Michele Ranchetti, 333.
47. Martha Nussbaum, however, does so when she argues for supplementing the views of (a Cavellian) Wittgenstein with the narrative depiction of life in Virginia Woolf, on the assumption that Wittgenstein's skeptical view of the accessibility of "life" wasn't thorough enough to rule out its substantive, positive exploration in literature: "Wittgenstein saw, if Cavell is right, that the problem of other mind[s] had to be investigated in some such way, was part of the history of our acknowledgment and avoidance of one another. But there is little concrete pursuit of that investigation in Wittgenstein, nothing to compare with the rich detail we find in Woolf. This, it would seem, is because the concrete pursuit of that particular philosophical investigation requires narrative depiction of individual lives and their interplay, and this was simply not a task in which Wittgenstein was engaged as a writer" (Martha C. Nussbaum, "The Window: Knowledge of Other Minds in Virginia Woolf's 'To the Lighthouse'" in *The British Tradition in 20th Century Philosophy*, ed. Jaako Hintikka and Klaus Puhl, 41). The correspondences between Wittgenstein's engagements and the narratives investigated in the following chapters, by contrast, will turn not on "rich detail" to be added by literature to a somehow deficient philosophical picture of human interaction, but rather on narrative forms that leave little of the human *substance* intact that Nussbaum's reading means to uncover.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. Thomas Bernhard, *Alte Meister. Komödie* [hereafter AM], 82.
2. Thomas Bernhard, *Der Keller. Eine Entziehung* [hereafter Ke], 49.
3. Chantal Thomas, "Le Wittgenstein de Thomas Bernhard," *Magazine Littéraire* 352 (1997): 59.
4. Thomas Bernhard, *Auslöschung* [hereafter A], 611.
5. Thomas Bernhard, *Ritter, Dene, Voss* [hereafter RDV] in *Stücke 4*, 130–1; Engl. trans. in T. Bernhard, *Histrionics*, 88.
6. The fictional Ludwig's last name, in turn, points to the German art historian Wilhelm Worringer who in 1908 posited the "Denknotwendigkeit" of an aesthetic drive to abstraction (*Abstraktionstrieb*) as an objective complement to the subjective empathetic drive (*Einfühlungstrieb*) of mimetic naturalism.

Worringer conceded, however, that cognitive access to the former drive towards “life-denying inorganic matter, towards the crystalline,” necessary as he deems it to be, must remain limited to “logische Mutmaßungen” (W. Worringer, *Abstraktion und Einfühlung*, 36, 54). Hence there could ultimately be no cogent demonstrations of Worringer’s theory of style that would fit the genre constraint indicated by Ludwig Worringer’s manuscript title “Logik.”

7. Letter from Thomas Bernhard to Hilde Spiel, dated March 2, 1971 in *Ver Sacrum. Neue Hefte für Kunst und Literatur*. Vienna and Munich, 1971, 47.
8. Marjorie Perloff’s English translation of a portion of the letter is simply incorrect as it mistakes, among other things, Bernhard’s verb ‘to destroy’ (*zerstören*) for the considerably less drastic ‘to disturb’ (*stören*) (M. Perloff, *Wittgenstein’s Ladder*, 156). The identity problem at issue, as we will see below, is indeed more than a mere nuisance.
9. See Martin Huber, “Roithamer ist nicht Wittgenstein, aber er ist Wittgenstein.”
10. See for example Albrecht Weber, “Wittgensteins Gestalt und Theorie und ihre Wirkung im Werk Bernhards,” *Österreich in Geschichte und Literatur* 25 (1981): 99.
11. For a useful overview of the range of representationalist positions within analytical philosophy of mind, see Kim Sterelny, *The Representational Theory of Mind*.
12. “Warum ist überhaupt Seiendes und nicht vielmehr Nichts?” [*Why is there anything at all, rather than Nothing?*] (Martin Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, 1).
13. Ferdinand Ebner was characterized by Wittgenstein’s friend and editor of the journal *Brenner*, Ludwig von Ficker, as “Denker und Bedenker des Worts auf seiner Suche nach den verschütteten Quellen der Wahrheit” [*thinker and ponderer of the word in his search for the submerged sources of truth*] (Ferdinand Ebner, *Schriften*, 1: 11). Ebner saw the word as living trace of spirit that “wirklich und wirkend nur gegeben ist, insofern *einer* zu einem *anderen* spricht” [*actually and effectively is given only insofar as one speaks to another*] (1: 963). It is this very vision of effective communicative exchange that is directly undermined by the context in which “the name Ferdinand Ebner” (G, 83; W, 162) appears in *Geben*.
14. J.J. Long, *The Novels of Thomas Bernhard: Form and its Function*. Rochester: Camden House, 2001, 58.
15. See Chapter One, 25–6 above.
16. Thus, while to a degree Elisabeth Schörgenhumer’s contention that Konrad’s quoting Wittgenstein were “ein Hinweis auf den hohen Identifikationsgrad der Romanfigur mit Wittgenstein” (Elisabeth Schörgenhumer, *Ludwig Wittgenstein in der Prosa Thomas Bernhards*, 10) may be correct, the same

certainly cannot easily be said of Bernhard; this distinction is not always clearly maintained in Schörgenhumer's thesis.

17. This is attempted by Huber (in the article cited above) and Alfred Barthofer, "Wittgenstein mit Maske: Dichtung und Wahrheit in Thomas Bernhards Roman *Korrektur*," *Österreich in Geschichte und Literatur* 23 (1979), 186–207, among others.
18. See J.J. Long, *The Novels of Thomas Bernhard*, 69.
19. See Niklas Luhmann, *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft*, 817.
20. Cf. Hilary Putnam's revision, inspired in part by Wittgenstein's thought, of his own earlier functionalist view: H. Putnam, *Representation and Reality*, 73.
21. See Chapter Five below.
22. The historical figure to which Bernhard refers is Paul Wittgenstein (1907–1979), not to be confused with Ludwig Wittgenstein's brother Paul (1887–1961); the younger Paul was the son of Ludwig Wittgenstein's cousin Karl Wittgenstein and the grandson of Ludwig Wittgenstein's uncle, yet another Paul Wittgenstein (1842–1928).
23. Not altogether surprisingly, Bernhard takes liberties with the historical record here; while Dr. Max Salzer, husband of Ludwig Wittgenstein's sister Helene, was indeed Paul Wittgenstein's uncle, he was by profession a government bureaucrat, and thus a "doctor" only in the academic, not the medical sense of the term; see Ursula Prokop, *Margaret Stonborough-Wittgenstein: Bauherrin, Intellektuelle, Mäzenin*, 17.
24. Bernhard's reference to Steinhof in *Ritter, Dene, Voss* (the protagonist of which, as mentioned above, is named Ludwig) likewise does not indicate the nomenclature found in *Wittgensteins Neffe*, while Hedwig Schuster in *Heldenplatz* resides in the "Pavilion Friedrich," designated "für die depressiven feinen Leute / die sind nicht eigentlich krank . . ." [*for the depressed rich folk / they are not really ill . . .*] (Thomas Bernhard, *Heldenplatz*, 14).
25. For a detailed analysis of the Steinhof layout in relation to the aesthetic precepts of Otto Wagner's modernism, see Leslie Topp, "Otto Wagner and the Steinhof Psychiatric Hospital: Architecture as Misunderstanding" in *The Art Bulletin* 87, no. 1 (March 2005).
26. Peter Haiko et al. argue that the architectural arrangement of the Steinhof pavilions in effect fostered the social differentiation along class lines on the inside, while projecting the potential re-attainment of 'normalcy' towards the outside: "Dem zunehmenden Grad seiner [des Patienten] Erkrankung entspricht die zunehmende Entfernung seines Pavillons vom Eingangsportal; . . . Wie weit der Kranke vom 'Normalen' abweicht bestimmt, wie weit man ihn durch und mit der Architektur entfernt von der Welt der 'Normalen' jenseits des Eingangszaunes, jenseits der Umfriedungsmauer. Der Versuch einer Annäherung an die Normalität bleibt ein Symbol" [*The increasing distance of a given patient's pavilion to the entrance portal is relative*

to the increasing degree of the [patient's] illness; . . . The degree to which the ill person deviates from the 'normal person' determines how far he is being removed by architectural means from the world of the 'normal person' that lies beyond the fence at the entrance and the retaining wall. The attempt at approaching normalcy remains a symbol] (Peter Haiko; Harald Leupold-Löwenthal; Mara Reissberger, "Die weisse Stadt'—Der 'Steinhof' in Wien. Architektur als Reflex der Einstellung zur Geisteskrankheit," *Kritische Berichte* 9, no. 6 (1981): 16–17.

27. L. Topp, "Otto Wagner and the Steinhof Psychiatric Hospital."
28. Cf. again the passage cited above from the letter to Spiel: "Philosophie und Kunst existieren . . . nur im Bewußtsein seiner [Austria's] Philosophie und Poesie (-Kultur)" [*philosophy and art exist . . . only within the consciousness of its (Austria's) philosophy and poetry (-culture)*].
29. See again Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Briefe an Ludwig von Ficker*, 32–3 (undated letter).
30. Thomas Bernhard, *Die Ursache. Eine Andeutung*, 129. Bernhard modifies Wittgenstein's text by omitting the italicization of "wenn," suggesting a temporal rather than a conditional interpretation of the adverbial clause. Inexplicably, David McLintock's English translation simply omits the entire sentence; see "An Indication of the Cause" in *Gathering Evidence*, 135.
31. Cf. the typescript in Bernhard's *Nachlaß*, Thomas-Bernhard-Archiv, Gmunden.
32. Thomas Bernhard, "Goethe schtirbt" [hereafter GS] in *Werke*, 14: 400.
33. In Act III, Euphorion, the son born of Faust's and Helena's union in this act, is meant to symbolize not just the synthesis of the 'classical' (ancient Greek) and 'romantic' (medieval) spheres represented by Helena and Faust, respectively. Euphorion's meteoric rise and subsequent fall (ll. 9596–9938) also refers to the historical development of Romanticism in the modern sense of the word, as Goethe himself envisioned the figure of Euphorion as a reflection of Lord Byron. Such meta-inscription of the historical emergence and disappearance of Romanticism would aspire to save *Faust II* from a comparable predicament of fluctuation within the confines of literary historiography, cheating literary historians like Mephistopheles is in the end cheated out of the "great, unique treasure" (l. 11829) of Faust's soul.
34. See Effi Biedrzyński, *Goethes Weimar*, 328.
35. Wittgenstein, in turn, quite frequently resorted to phrases of Goethean origin, as Joachim Schulte points out in some detail (J. Schulte, "Chor und Gesetz. Zur 'morphologischen Methode' bei Goethe und Wittgenstein" in *Chor und Gesetz*). Schulte's attempt at a "demonstration of parallels" (*ibid.*, 11) between the theoretical approaches of both authors to the philosophical problem of the structure of explanation, however, clearly runs at an angle to Bernhard's fictional scenario. While Wittgenstein's *idea* of "perspicuous representation," introduced by way of the Goethean quote alluded to in Schulte's title (see Chapter One, 19–20 above), may well entertain a relationship

to Goethe's notions of morphology and the *Urbild*, Bernhard's focus on the phenomenon of *material misquotation* crosses (out) any allegedly parallel lines of thought here.

36. Visual affirmation of this identification arrives in the form of a well-wishing gift: "Aus Karlsbad sollen Wünsche für seine Genesung gekommen sein von der Kurverwaltung, auch aus Marienbad und aus dem schönen Elenbogen schickte man Goethe ein Glas, auf welchem er zusammen mit Wittgenstein abgebildet ist. Kein Mensch weiß, woher die in Elenbogen wissen, daß Goethe und Wittgenstein eins sind, so Riemer, auf dem Glas sind sie eins. Ein schönes Glas" [*From Carlsbad the administration of the thermal baths reportedly sent their wishes for his recovery, and also from Marienbad; from the beautiful town of Elenbogen they sent Goethe a portrait showing him together with Wittgenstein. No one has any idea how people in Elenbogen know that Goethe and Wittgenstein are one, so Riemer, in the portrait they are one. A beautiful portrait*] (GS, 408).
37. "Hier befanden sich nach meiner Erinnerung Frau Ottilie v. Goethe, deren Schwester Ulrike v. Pogwisch, die Enkel Walther und Wolf, Geh. Hofrat Dr. Vogel . . . , Oberbaudirektor Coudray, Kanzler v. Müller, Geh. Hofrat Riemer, Rat Kräuter und andere" [*According to my recollection, those present were Frau Ottilie v. Goethe, her sister Ulrike v. Pogwisch, the grandsons Walther and Wolf, Geh. Councillor Dr. Vogel . . . , Director of Building Coudray, Chancellor v. Müller, Privy Councillor Riemer, Councillor Kräuter, and others*] (Karl Gille, *Goethe-Erinnerungen*, cit. in *Goethes Leben von Tag zu Tag. Eine dokumentarische Chronik*, ed. Angelika Reimann, VIII: 615).
38. Karl Vogel, "Die letzte Krankheit Goethes" in *Goethes Gespräche. Eine Sammlung zeitgenössischer Berichte aus seinem Umgang*, ed. Wolfgang Herwig, 7014.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1. Richard Terdiman has commented on the ambiguous relationship of modernist literary texts to the effects of externalization discussed above; on the one hand, they "lament" the loss of individual memory (Terdiman, *Present Past*, 31), while on the other hand internalizing the very obsession whose externalized form they are supposedly criticizing (ibid., 348–9). An internal coherence of the artwork is thus to be salvaged, even if it no longer corresponds to a unified collective sense of the past.
2. Hermann Broch, *Schriften zur Literatur, 1 & 2, Kommentierte Werkausgabe*, 9/1; 9/2.
3. Hermann Broch, "Autobiographie als Arbeitsprogramm" (1941), in *Philosophische Schriften 2: Theorie, Kommentierte Werkausgabe*, 10/2: 199; H. Broch, "Denkerische und dichterische Erkenntnis" (1933), in *Schriften zur Literatur 2*, 48.

4. Hermann Broch, "Hofmannsthal und seine Zeit. Eine Studie" (1947/48), in *Schriften zur Literatur 1*, 138.
5. Hermann Broch, "Denkerische und dichterische Erkenntnis" (1933), in *Schriften zur Literatur 2*, 48.
6. Hermann Broch, *Briefe 1 (1913–1938), Kommentierte Werkausgabe*, 13/1: 150–51.
7. Hannah Arendt's praise for *Der Tod des Vergil* turns on this very point: in her analysis, Broch is here walking the line between the *lyrical* character of an exclamation (*Ausruf*) that would have to articulate truth in a radically condensed form akin to that of a mathematical formula, and—on the other hand—the prosaic expanse of philosophical speculation (Hannah Arendt, "Hermann Broch und der moderne Roman," *Der Monat* 8/9 (1949): 150). Regardless of whether the novel merely exposes this tension as a "problem" (ibid., 151) or actually manages to solve it, it cannot do either—Arendt suggests—by articulating itself *as prose*.
8. Hermann Broch, *Die Verzauberung* [hereafter Vz]. This is the first version of the *Bergroman* project, the only one to be completed. English trans.: *The Spell* [hereafter S].
9. See Broch's own brief treatment of the novel from 1939 (reprinted in Vz, 386).
10. Hermann Broch, "Hofmannsthal und seine Zeit," 133.
11. Hermann Broch, "Autobiographie als Arbeitsprogramm," 248.
12. W.G. Sebald, "Una montagna bruna—Zum Bergroman Hermann Brochs," in W.G. Sebald, *Unheimliche Heimat. Essays zur österreichischen Literatur* [hereafter UH], 119–20.
13. See Martin Klebes, "Sebald's Pathographies."
14. W.G. Sebald, *Carl Sternheim, Kritiker und Opfer der Wilhelminischen Ära*, 9.
15. Peter Handke, *Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter* [hereafter ATE]. English trans. *The Goalie's Anxiety at the Penalty Kick* [hereafter GAPK].
16. For a view of propositional attitudes as exactly such entities, see Jerry A. Fodor, *The Language of Thought*.
17. "Er wollte etwas sagen, aber dann fiel ihm nicht ein, was er sagen wollte. Er versuchte sich zu erinnern: er erinnerte sich nicht, worum es ging, aber es hatte etwas mit Ekel zu tun. Dann erinnerte ihn eine Handbewegung der Pächterin an etwas anderes. Wieder fiel ihm nicht ein, was es war, aber es hatte etwas mit Scham zu tun. Was er wahrnahm, Bewegungen und Gegenstände, erinnerte ihn nicht an andere Bewegungen und Gegenstände, sondern an Empfindungen und Gefühle; und an die Gefühle erinnerte er sich nicht, wie an etwas Vergangenes, sondern er erlebte sie wieder, wie etwas Gegenwärtiges: er erinnerte sich nicht an Scham und Ekel, sondern schämte und ekelte sich jetzt, als er sich erinnerte, ohne daß ihm die Gegenstände von Scham und Ekel einfielen. Ekel und Scham, beides zusammen war so stark, daß ihn der ganze Körper zu jucken anfang" (ATE, 108–9) [*He*

wanted to say something, but then he could not think of what it was he wanted to say. He tried to remember: he could not remember what it was about, but it had something to do with disgust. Then a movement of the landlady's hand reminded him of something else. He could not think of what it was this time either, but it had something to do with shame. His perceptions of movements and things did not remind him of other movements and things but of sensations and feelings, and he did not remember the feelings as if they were from the past but relived them as happening in the present: he did not remember shame and nausea but only felt shamed and nauseated now that he remembered without being able to think of the things that had brought on shame and nausea. The mixture of nausea and shame was so strong that his whole body started to itch] (GAPK, 115–16).

18. “Mit geschlossenen Augen überkam ihn eine seltsame Unfähigkeit, sich etwas vorzustellen. . . . Er behalf sich, indem er statt Wörtern für diese Sachen Sätze bildete, in der Meinung, eine Geschichte aus solchen Sätzen könnte ihm erleichtern, sich die Sachen vorzustellen” (ATE, 20) [*With his eyes closed, he was overcome by a strange inability to visualize anything. . . . He resorted to thinking up sentences about the things instead of the words for them, in the belief that a story made up of such sentences would help him visualize things*] (GAPK, 17).
19. In analytical philosophy of language, the use/mention distinction has traditionally raised puzzles as to the status of quotation in relation to ‘regular’ language use. Mention, in contrast to use, is taken to refer to names—not objects—and is thus relieved of having to satisfy the usual criteria that would insure the meaningfulness of a proposition. According to this view, a quotation would be a *hieroglyph*—not a description—and it would function by *picturing* its referent, rather than resting on the semantics of its constituent parts (W.V.O. Quine, *Mathematical Logic*, ch. 4). For an account of linguistic meaning, the resulting problems of this scenario are evident, and the suggested solutions legion; see for example Donald Davidson, “Quotation” in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*. In the present context, however, the dissociation of quoted words and their ‘usual’ meaning is exactly what Handke is seeking to emphasize. Structurally, this Quinean interpretation would equate the two modes of Bloch’s ‘reading’ as merely two different forms of pictorialization, each yielding different—and therefore incompatible—hieroglyphs.
20. Umberto Eco, *Zeichen. Einführung in einen Begriff und seine Geschichte*, 60. See also: Charles Morris, *Signs, Language, and Behavior*, 191–2.
21. Friedrich Kittler comes to an analogous conclusion regarding aphasia in the late 19th century, where it plays a significant role both as an object of psychophysical research, and is functionalized as a literary technique (F. Kittler, *Aufschreibesysteme 1800/1900*, 272ff.).
22. See many of the reviews of Sebald’s work, originally published in various newspapers, that are collected in *W.G. Sebald*, ed. Franz Loquai. Iris

Radisch ("Der Waschbär der falschen Welt," in *Die Zeit*, April 5, 2001) calls the form of Sebald's narratives a "literary bastard," a tribute to the "unclean" provenance of the very genre of the novel itself.

23. "[O]n ne peut pas vraiment désigner le genre, mais dépasser les limites posées par un genre, c'est le principe même de la littérature" [*One cannot really circumscribe the genre, but the transgression of genre boundaries is the very principle of literature itself*] ("Qu'est devenu Ernest?," interview by Claire Devarrieux, *Libération*, January 7, 1999).
24. "Ich fürchte das Melodramatische," interview by Martin Doerry and Volker Hage, *Der Spiegel* 11 (2001): 233.
25. W.G. Sebald, "Helle Bilder und dunkle. Zur Dialektik der Eschatologie bei Stifter und Handke," BU, 178.
26. The distinction between painting and photography is further complicated by Sebald's inclusion of a reproduction of works by Turner, who, as Susan Sontag notes, painted primarily from photographs in the first place (Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, 146).
27. See W. Dilthey, "Die drei Epochen der modernen Ästhetik und ihre heutige Aufgabe," GS VI, 282–3; H.-G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, GW 1, 153.
28. W.G. Sebald, *Der Mythos der Zerstörung im Werk Döblins*, 97.
29. S. Sontag, *On Photography*, 9.
30. S. Sontag, *On Photography*, 15.
31. With reference to Siegfried Kracauer, Anne Fuchs thus fittingly characterizes the ghostly appearance of photographs in Sebald's text as a "Spukerscheinung" (Anne Fuchs, "Die Schmerzensspuren der Geschichte," 142).
32. The respective passages in Wittgenstein's text are as follows: "Nach manchen mißglückten Versuchen, meine Ergebnisse in einem solchen zusammenschweißen, sah ich ein, daß mir dies nie gelingen würde. Daß das beste, was ich schreiben konnte, immer nur philosophische Bemerkungen bleiben würden. . . . Die gleichen Punkte wurden stets von neuem von verschiedenen Richtungen her berührt und immer neue Bilder entworfen. Eine Unzahl dieser waren verzeichnet oder uncharakteristisch, mit allen Mängeln eines schwachen Zeichners behaftet. Und wenn man diese ausschied, blieb eine Anzahl halbwegser übrig, die nur so angeordnet, oftmals beschnitten, werden mußten, daß die dem Betrachter ein Bild der Landschaft geben konnten. – So ist dieses Buch eigentlich nur ein Album" [*After several unsuccessful attempts to weld my results together into such a whole, I realized that I should never succeed. The best that I could write would never be more than philosophical remarks. . . . The same or almost the same points were always being approached afresh from different directions, and new sketches made. Very many of these were badly drawn or uncharacteristic, marked by all the defects of a weak draughtsman. And when they were rejected a number of tolerable ones were left, which now had to be arranged and sometimes cut down,*

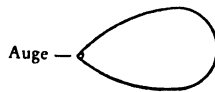
so that if you looked at them you could get a picture of the landscape. Thus this book is really only an album] (PU, 231–2; PI, viii).

33. Tiphaine Samouyault has proposed such a model of intertextuality: “En faisant de l’intertextualité la mémoire de la littérature, on propose une poétique inséparable d’une herméneutique: il s’agit de voir et de comprendre de quoi elle procède, sans séparer cet aspect des modalités concrètes de son inscription” [*Identifying intertextuality as the memory of literature means to propose a poetics inseparable from hermeneutics: what is at stake is to perceive and to understand the root from which it proceeds, without separating this aspect of its concrete modalities from its inscription*] (Tiphaine Samouyault, *L’intertextualité*, 33).
34. Iris Radisch proposes this sort of identification in her review of *Austerlitz* (I. Radisch, “Der Waschbär der falschen Welt”). Many reviewers are likewise fascinated by what has almost proverbially been termed the “Sebald-Sound”—long sentences that routinely obtain their propulsive force from an inverted word order that pre-positions the verb. As this chapter aims to show, the hypnotic continuity of this “sound” stands in decided opposition to the discontinuity introduced on the level of images.
35. Michael Hamburger, *A Mug’s Game: Intermittent Memoirs 1924–1954*.
36. A panoptic structure of similar shape, the Strangeways prison in Manchester, is referenced in Sebald’s first literary text (W.G. Sebald, *Nach der Natur*, 86).
37. Foucault’s discussion of Bentham’s *Panopticon*, on which Sebald is clearly drawing here, emphasizes that as “diagramme d’un mécanisme de pouvoir ramené à sa forme idéale” [*diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form*], the panoptic schema may be abstracted from its architectural manifestations, “une figure de technologie politique qu’on peut et qu’on doit détacher de tout usage spécifique” [*a figure of political technology that may and must be detached from any specific use*] (Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir*, 207; *Discipline and Punish*, 205). Foucault insists on the uncannily perfect integrity of that ideal schema, but the potential for a subversion of its mechanisms resides precisely in the particular uses to which the structure is put. The cases cited to this effect by Austerlitz demonstrate the breakdown of a defense against the outside, not of Bentham’s original objective of controlling the inside. In either case, however, it is the principle of centralized control that finds itself under siege.
38. For Wittgenstein’s discussion of this notion, see PU, §§65ff. Some of Wittgenstein’s own photographic experiments are quite literally concerned with tracing family resemblance. He developed composite photographs in which images of his three sisters were superimposed upon one another to reveal a resemblance that couldn’t be traced back to any individual feature of one of the three. Interestingly, the method of composite portraiture was first championed by Sir Francis Galton who—in sharp contrast to Wittgenstein—believed that the composite photographs “would throw much light on the

nature of certain mental processes which are too mobile and evanescent to be directly dealt with" (Sir Francis Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development*, 233). One particularly important such process was what Galton took to be the physiological tendency to form "blended memories" (ibid., 229) from similar causal stimuli, supposedly resulting in the creation of mental images corresponding to the photos he produced with the help of increasingly fine-tuned mechanical procedures. Such an inference from the outer to the inner would of course be exactly anathema to Wittgenstein's view of the mind. Wittgenstein's explicit reference to Galton in his "Lecture on Ethics" suggests an analogical relation between composite photography and metonymic substitution of examples to reveal the allegedly "characteristic features" (L. Wittgenstein, "Lecture on Ethics," 4–5) of several different definitions of the term 'Ethics;' Wittgenstein here does not examine the emerging discrepancy between his own and Galton's views of the mental.

39. "Und die Stärke des Fadens liegt nicht darin, daß irgendeine Faser durch seine ganze Länge läuft, sondern darin, daß viele Fasern einander übergreifen. Wenn aber einer sagen wollte: 'Also ist allen diesen Gebilden etwas gemeinsam, – nämlich die Disjunktion aller dieser Gemeinsamkeiten' – so würde ich antworten: hier spielst du nur mit einem Wort. Ebenso könnte man sagen: es läuft ein Etwas durch den ganzen Faden, – nämlich das lückenlose Übergreifen dieser Fasern" [*And the strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres. But if someone wished to say: "There is something common to all these constructions, namely the disjunction of all their common properties" I should reply: Now you are only playing with words. One might as well say: "Something runs through the whole thread—namely the continuous overlapping of those fibres"*] (L. Wittgenstein, PU, §67; PI, 31–2).
40. Wittgenstein's comment on color recognition therefore also applies on the level of metaphor: "Wie erkenne ich, daß diese Farbe Rot ist? – Eine Antwort wäre: 'Ich habe Deutsch gelernt'" [*How do I know that this colour is red?—It would be an answer to say: "I have learnt English"*] (PU, §381; PI, 117).
41. The third pair, in turn, belongs to the painter Jan Peter Tripp (from his 1977 self-portrait *Ich im August*), whose work Sebald characterizes in a late essay as "Dekonstruktion der Erscheinungsformen" [*deconstruction of forms of appearance*]; Tripp's portraits and self-portraits in particular—all executed in a 'hyper-realist' style that blurs the line between painting and photo-image—are, with their realist facades, here described as "Studien über die in den Köpfen der Menschen hallenden Leere" [*studies of the emptiness echoing in the heads of people*] (W.G. Sebald, "Wie Tag und Nacht—Über die Bilder Jan Peter Tripps," in *Logis in einem Landhaus*). Sebald's last, posthumously published work contains short poems printed alongside etchings by Tripp of nothing but pairs of eyes (W.G. Sebald and J.P. Tripp, *Unerzählt*; English trans. *Unrecounted*).

42. This darkness, which persists despite “der reinen Anschauung und des reinen Denkens” [*pure intuition and pure thinking*] (Au, 7; AuE, 5) that Wittgenstein’s pair of eyes stands for in Sebald’s text, is quite directly anticipated in the *Tractatus*. Even if the logical structure mapped out here should be possible, it would not translate into an order of the world that could be *seen*. Whatever appears in the field of vision, Wittgenstein claims, does not point us back to a metaphysical subject whose eye and perspective would be part of an *a priori* order: “Wo in der Welt ist ein metaphysisches Subjekt zu merken? | Du sagst, es verhält sich hier ganz, wie mit Auge und Gesichtsfeld. Aber das Auge siehst du wirklich *nicht*. | Und nichts *am Gesichtsfeld* läßt darauf schließen, daß es von einem Auge gesehen wird” [*Where in the world is a metaphysical subject to be found? | You will say that this is exactly like the case of the eye and the visual field. But really you do not see the eye. | And nothing in the visual field allows you to infer that it is seen by an eye*] (5.633); “Das Gesichtsfeld hat nämlich nicht etwa eine solche Form [*For the form of the visual field is surely not like this*]:”



(5.6331);

“Das hängt damit zusammen, daß kein Teil unserer Erfahrung auch *a priori* ist. | Alles, was wir sehen, könnte auch anders sein. | Alles, was wir überhaupt beschreiben können, könnte auch anders sein. | Es gibt keine Ordnung der Dinge *a priori*” [*This is connected with the fact that no part of our experience is at the same time a priori. | Whatever we see could be other than it is. | Whatever we can describe at all could be other than it is. | There is no a priori order of things*] (5.634).

43. André Breton, *Nadja*. Edition entièrement revue par l’auteur [hereafter N]. English trans. *Nadja* [hereafter NE] (trans. of the unrevised edition).
44. See Pascaline Mourier-Casile, *Nadja d’André Breton*, 142–3.
45. “Le mystère de l’épreuve photographique est intact en ce sens que l’interprétation artistique y est réduite au minimum” [*The mystery of photographic proof is intact insofar as artistic interpretation is here reduced to a minimum*] (André Breton, *Les pas perdus*, 153).
46. “Puis ses yeux se ferment et s’ouvrent très vite comme lorsqu’on se trouve en présence de quelqu’un qu’on n’a plus vu depuis longtemps, ou qu’on ne s’attendait plus à revoir et comme pour signifier qu’on ‘ne les en croit pas.’ Une certaine lutte paraît aussi se poursuivre en elle, mais tout à coup elle s’abandonne, ferme tout à fait les yeux, offre ses lèvres . . .” [*Then her eyes open and close again quite rapidly, as when you are with someone you have not*

seen for a long time or did not expect to see again, and as if to signify that you “don’t believe them.” She seems to be suffering from a certain inner conflict, but suddenly she surrenders, closes her eyes for good, offers me her lips . . .] (N, 91–2; NE 79).

47. See n. 45 above.
48. Walter Benjamin, “Der Sürrealismus,” *Gesammelte Schriften* II.1: 301.
49. Walter Benjamin, “Kleine Geschichte der Photographie,” *Gesammelte Schriften* II.1: 379.
50. W. Benjamin, “Kleine Geschichte der Photographie,” 385.
51. W.G. Sebald, *Der Mythos der Zerstörung im Werk Döblins*, 136.
52. Some of the characters whose eyes figure in the recurrence of this Sebal-dian motif, mostly accompanied by photographic ‘evidence:’ St. George on Grünewald’s Isenheim Altar (NN, 7–8) and in Pisanello’s fresco in a Veronese chapel (SG, 91); Pierre Beyle and the object of his adoration, Angela Pietragrua (SG, 15–16); the angels in Giotto’s frescoes in Padua (SG, 100); horses (SG, 216, 237); Paul Bereyter’s loss of vision (Agw, 85ff.); Max Aurach (Agw, 265), and the narrator of *Austerlitz* (Au, 50ff.).
53. He recounts taking residence at the Manoir d’Ango, “où l’on m’a offert de me tenir, quand je voudrais ne pas être dérangé, dans une cahute masquée artificiellement de broussailles, à la lisière d’un bois, et d’où je pourrais, tout en m’occuper à mon gré, chasser au grand-duc. (Était-il possible qu’il en fût autrement, dès lors que je voulais écrire *Nadja*?)” [*where I was offered the hospitality, when I wished to be undisturbed, of a hut artificially camouflaged by shrubbery, at the edge of a woods; here, while in other respects occupying myself with whatever I liked, I was able to hunt owls as well. (Could it have been otherwise, once I decided to write Nadja?)*] (N, 24; NE, 23).
54. See the famous passage in the *Second Meditation* (René Descartes, *Oeuvres*, VII: 32).
55. Heidegger famously takes a different view of philosophy when he insists that the *Nothing* may reveal itself in language, familiar as “das, worüber wir alltäglich dahin und daher reden” [*that about which we daily talk back and forth*], and constituting the essential foil for the voice of being that may speak through the thinker who cares for the “Sprachgebrauch” [*language use*]. See Martin Heidegger, “Was ist Metaphysik?” and “Nachwort zu: ‘Was ist Metaphysik?’” *Wegmarken*, in *Gesamtausgabe*, 9: 109, 311–12.
56. Like Wittgenstein, Bereyter is brilliant in mathematics, bites his handkerchief in fits of frustration (Agw, 52–3; E, 35), prepares an animal skeleton for purposes of pedagogical demonstration (Agw, 56; E, 37), and plays the clarinet, which he carries around in a stocking rather than a proper case (Agw, 61; E, 41). Pictures of the latter two Wittgensteinian icons in *Ludwig Wittgenstein. Sein Leben in Bildern und Texten*, ed. Michael Nedo and Michele Ranchetti, 180ff. See also: Konrad Wünsche, *Der Volksschullehrer Ludwig Wittgenstein*. A telling *dissimilarity* between the two teachers concerns the issue of *cooperation*:

whereas Bereyter doesn't seem to mind teamwork when it comes to his students' homework (Agw, 47; E, 31), Wittgenstein explicitly notes in the preface to the *Wörterbuch für Volksschulen*—the contents of which he dictated to his students—that taking personal responsibility for one's own work is crucial for learning and the improvement of memory: “Nur das Wörterbuch macht es möglich, den Schüler für die Rechtschreibung seiner Arbeit voll verantwortlich zu machen, denn es gibt ihm ein sichtbares Mittel seine Fehler zu finden und zu verbessern, wenn er nur will. Es ist aber unbedingt nötig, dass der Schüler seinen Aufsatz selbständig verbessert. Er soll sich als alleiniger Verfasser seiner Arbeit fühlen und auch allein für sie verantwortlich sein” [*Only the dictionary enables the student to be fully responsible for the spelling of his work because it provides him with a visible means to find and correct his mistakes, if only he is willing. It is of utmost importance, however, that the student correct his essay himself. He is supposed to regard himself as the sole author of his work, and in turn to be solely responsible for it*] (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Wörterbuch für Volksschulen*, xxv). By January 1945, as he is drafting the preface to the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein has come to revise that view of responsibility when he characterizes the main value of the book as its potential to stimulate the thought of others: “Aus mehr als einem Grunde wird, was ich hier veröffentliche, sich mit dem berühren, was andere heute schreiben.—Tragen meine Bemerkungen keinen Stempel an sich, der sie als die meinen kennzeichnet,—so will ich sie auch weiter nicht als mein Eigentum beanspruchen. . . . Ich hätte gerne ein gutes Buch hervorgebracht. Es ist nicht so ausgefallen; aber die Zeit ist vorbei, in der es von mir verbessert werden könnte” [*For more than one reason, what I publish here will have points of contact with what other people are writing today.—If my remarks do not bear a stamp which marks them as mine,—I do not wish to lay any further claim to them as my property. . . . I should have liked to produce a good book. This has not come about, but the time is past in which I could improve it*] (PU, 232–3; PI, ix). The idea of a work to be continued (*fortgeschrieben*) by others—possibly even going so far as to *annul* his own authorship—now overrides Wittgenstein's conviction that mistakes should be corrected by their author, and their author only.

57. Werner Hamacher pointedly characterizes this melancholy, disjunctive character of reading in his remarks on Hegel: “All reading is melancholy, because it must work through the experience of the irreconcilability of the corpse of writing, in which the thought has petrified to an external form, with its subjective revivification in understanding. Reading is the work of mourning over the loss of this unity of objectivation and subjectivity, a loss which the act of reading itself produces” (Werner Hamacher, *Pleroma—Reading in Hegel*, 106).
58. Recalling Lukács's early theory of the artwork as an illusory *Mitteilung* in his posthumously published *Heidelberger Philosophie der Kunst* (1912–14), this struggle is also evident in Wittgenstein's recognition of our persistent tendency, “etwas zu sagen, was keine Mitteilung ist” [*to say something that does not amount*

- to a communication] (PU, §298). Remarks like these caution against an excessively normative reading of Wittgenstein's later view of linguistic confusions.
59. W.G. Sebald, "Verlorenes Land—Jean Améry und Österreich," UH, 134.
 60. Jean Améry, *Unmeisterliche Wanderjahre* [hereafter UW].
 61. "[L]inks stand jene spekulative und hochfliegende Vernunft, die sich an Hegelstudien ebenso bewähren konnte wie an technischer Erfindlichkeit" [*On the left there was the kind of speculative and elevated reason able to prove itself in the field of Hegel studies just as much as in that of technological innovation*] (UW, 119).
 62. Rudolf Carnap, "Überwindung der Metaphysik durch logische Analyse der Sprache," *Erkenntnis* 2 (1931/32).
 63. "[W]ar nicht er [Wittgenstein] einer der ersten Verantwortlichen für Verbalismus des strukturalen 'discours'? Der Satz, es seien die Grenzen meiner Sprache die Grenzen meiner Welt, kann zu dem dramatischen Mißverständnis führen, ich könne meine Welt, *die* Welt, erweitern, sobald ich nur das Feld meiner Sprache ausdehne. Wittgenstein, als erster, hatte den Menschen immer wieder zurückgeworfen auf die Sprache, hatte ihn in Sprachliches eingezwängt, ihm das falsche Bewußtsein der Autonomie der Sprache gegeben" [*Wasn't he (Wittgenstein) one of those primarily responsible for the verbalism of the structuralist discourse? The proposition that the limits of language are supposedly the limits of my world can lead to the dramatic misconception that I could extend my world, the world, simply by extending my linguistic field. Wittgenstein was the first to continually point man back to language, to constrain him within the realm of language, to suggest to him the false belief of the autonomy of language*] (UW, 141).
 64. "Der Freitod als pure und äußerste Negation, die keinerlei Positives mehr in sich birgt, so daß vor ihr alle Dialektik ebenso zuschanden wird wie alle fortgeschrittene Logik, mag in der Tat 'sinnlos' sein" [*Voluntary death as a pure and most extreme negation that no longer conceals anything positive in itself so that in its presence all dialectics, just as much as all progressive logic, are frustrated, may in fact be 'senseless'*] (Jean Améry, *Hand an sich legen. Diskurs über den Freitod*, 135; English trans. *On Suicide: A Discourse on Voluntary Death*, 132).
 65. The painter Lefeu, narrator and protagonist of Améry's "Roman-Essay" of the same name, is another exiled survivor coping with an unreconciled past. Reflecting on his choice to exist strictly by negative principles, he comments: "Man muß also dahinstellen, ob die Neinsage eines aus Stuttgart stammenden, seit Jahr und Tag in Paris ansässigen Malers tatsächlich, wie er sekundenweise mit äußerster Konzentration zu erkennen meinte, in dem Faktum gründet, daß seine Eltern 1942 nach dem Osten deportiert, dort erstickt und verbrannt wurden und er selbst das Überstehen nicht ertrug. . . . So wird denn die Neinsage, ohne daß ihr Ursprung mit Sicherheit zu entdecken wäre, einfach hingenommen, die Frage nach ihrer Herkunft wird zurückgestellt, das Problem

der Zukunft, die jede Vergangenheit in jedem Augenblick umdeuten und verändern kann, bleibt allein als drangvolle Frage oder offene Wunde des Geistes schmerzhaft bestehen" [*The question thus remains open as to whether the 'saying-no' of a certain painter who was born in Stuttgart and who had lived in Paris for years was indeed due to the fact—as he himself believed to realize in isolated moments of most intense concentration—that his parents were deported to the east in 1942, were suffocated and burned there, and that he himself could not bear his having survived. . . . Thus the 'saying-no' is simply accepted even though its cause cannot be determined with any certainty; the question of its provenance is deferred, and the problem of a future able to reinterpret and change any kind of past at every moment is all that remains intact in the form of a disturbing question, or an open wound of the mind*] (Jean Améry, *Lefeu oder der Abbruch* [hereafter LA], 137).

66. Haverkamp remarks accordingly: "Die Effektivität der Kritik Wittgensteins, mehr noch ihre Hintergründigkeit trifft aber nicht nur den "geistigen Vorgang der Erinnerung" als eine "grammatische Fiktion," wie er in den *Philosophischen Untersuchungen* ausführt (§306[f.]). Sie betrifft ebenso das nicht-metaphorische Gegenteil solch geistiger Bildlichkeit, die photographische Repräsentation und ihren Aufschlußwert für den Vorgang der Erinnerung, den 'Sachverhalt' des Gedächtnisses" [*The effectiveness of Wittgenstein's critique, and even more so its subtlety, concern not only the "mental process of remembering" as a "grammatical fiction," as Wittgenstein remarks in the Philosophical Investigations (§306–7). It also concerns the non-metaphorical opposite of such mental imagery, namely photographic representation and its cognitive value for the process of remembering, the "fact" of memory*] (Anselm Haverkamp, "Lichtbild. Das Bildgedächtnis der Photographie: Roland Barthes und Augustinus," in *Memoria—Vergessen und Erinnern*, 48–9).
67. In an essay on Améry, Sebald notes that the recurring of images against the backdrop of a past that appears entirely emptied out, "Instanzen einer ans Pathologische grenzenden Hypermnésie" [*instances of hyper-mnemonic activity bordering on the pathological*], are indicators both of an inability to forget, and of a traumatic temporal dislocation that suspends any logical existential rootedness rather than supporting it (W.G. Sebald, "Mit den Augen des Nachtvogels. Über Jean Améry," *Etudes Germaniques* 42 (1988): 316; reprinted in W.G. Sebald, *Campo Santo*, 153).
68. With Sebald's approval, in the English translation the name of the character—and of the section of the book bearing his name—was changed to 'Max Ferber' to deflect attention from a figure on which the character is partially based, the painter Frank Auerbach who would be more readily recognizable to a British reader.
69. More on the figure of the butterfly hunter and its connection to Wittgenstein in: Martin Klebes, "Infinite Journey: From Kafka to Sebald."

70. Max Aurach not only shares features with Améry's painter Lefeu, but also figures as the third Wittgensteinian *Doppelgänger* in Sebald's work. In conversation with the narrator he notes having lived at 104, Palatine Road when he first came to live in Manchester—in the very house that was Wittgenstein's residence during the time of his engineering studies at the University of Manchester: "Zwar sei diese Verbindung zu Wittgenstein zweifellos rein illusionär, doch bedeute sie ihm deshalb, sagte Aurach, nicht weniger, ja, es scheine ihm manchmal, als schließe er sich immer enger an diejenigen an, die ihm vorausgegangen seien, und darum empfinde er auch, wenn er sich den jungen Wittgenstein über den Entwurf einer variablen Brennkammer gebeugt oder beim Ausprobieren eines von ihm konstruierten Flugdrachens auf einem Hochmoor in Derbyshire vorstelle, ein weit hinter seine eigene Zeit und Vorzeit zurückreichendes Gefühl der Brüderlichkeit" [*Doubtless any retrospective connection with Wittgenstein was purely illusory, but it meant no less to him on that account, said Ferber. Indeed, he had sometimes felt as if he were tightening his ties to those who had gone before; and for that reason, whenever he pictured the young Wittgenstein bent over the design of a variable combustion chamber, or test-flying a kite of his own construction on the Derbyshire moors, he was aware of the sense of brotherhood that reached far back beyond his own lifetime or even the years immediately before it*] (Agw, 248; E, 166–7). As in previously cited instances, the feeling of a meaningful connection to—and familiarity with—the life of another, in this case because of a spatial coincidence, is clearly marked as illusory. Such feelings are ultimately as deceptive as the notion that such a connection could be intentionally established through a photograph, a painting, or a biographical narrative.
71. Aby Warburg, *Der Bilderatlas Mnemosyne*, in *Gesammelte Schriften: Studienausgabe*, 2. Abteilung, II/1: 3.
72. A. Warburg, *Der Bilderatlas Mnemosyne*, 124–5. The painting is mounted on plate 75 (titled "Magische Anatomie"), surrounded by additional anatomy paintings and several representations of Hippocrates and Democritus.
73. "Warburg's own analysis of the Renaissance can therefore be characterized as an exploration of the oscillation between repetitive collective memory and transformational historical recollection, as played out within the sphere of visual representations. Influenced by 19th century empathy theory, he regarded visual images as particularly effective symbols of psychological states that could be recreated in the spectator" (Matthew Rampley, "Archives of Memory: Walter Benjamin's Arcades Project and Aby Warburg's Mnemosyne-Atlas").
74. A. Warburg, *Der Bilderatlas Mnemosyne*, viii.
75. Reprinted in: Alexander Kluge, *Chronik der Gefühle. Volume II: Lebensläufe* [hereafter CG II].
76. The expectation on the part of the journalist to come upon traces of lived experience in his research echoes the confrontation between the narrator

S. in Claude Simon's *Le Jardin des Plantes*—a book explicitly referenced in *Austerlitz* (Au, 38–40, 370–72; AuE, 26–7, 263–4)—and a journalist aiming to confirm, unsuccessfully, the *reality* of past feelings of horror dating back to World War II: “Je ne doute pas de votre parole mais tout de même alors *vous avez bien dû ressentir quelque chose comme la peur* il est impossible qu'un homme . . . , et S. dit que Non c'était pire, et le journaliste Pire!, et S. dit qu'encore une fois si on n'a pas vécu soi-même une chose du même genre on ne peut pas s'en faire une idée Parce que, dit-il, tout semblait se dérouler dans une sorte de brouillard d'irréalité Non ce n'est pas, comme le journaliste pourrait le penser, l'effet du temps plus de cinquante ans maintenant le brouillage de la mémoire, qu'au contraire *il (S.) garde de toute cette affaire un souvenir très précis c'est justement cette irréalité dans laquelle tout semblait se dérouler . . .*” [I don't doubt what you're saying but all the same then you must surely have felt something like fear it's impossible for a man . . . and S. said that No it was much worse than that and the journalist said Worse! and S. said that once again if one hasn't lived through such a thing oneself one can't have any idea of it Because, he said, everything seemed to be happening in a sort of fog of unreality No it's not, as the journalist might think, the effect of time more than fifty years now the clouding of memory, that on the contrary he (S.) has kept a very precise recollection of the whole affair and that what is precise is exactly that feeling of unreality that seemed to hang over everything that was happening . . .] (C. Simon, *Le Jardin des Plantes*, 261–2; *The Jardin des Plantes*, 199–200; my emphases). Thus, even in cases where memory is not repressed or overwritten, it will not readily serve as epistemological or ontological marker of a past psychological constitution.

77. “Es schien ihm, als ob die Bevölkerung, bei offensichtlich eingeborener Erzähllust, die psychische Kraft, sich zu erinnern, genau in den Umrissen der zerstörten Flächen der Stadt verloren hätte” [*It seemed to him as if the population, despite its native love of storytelling, had lost their mental capacity for recollection in exact proportion to the outline of the destroyed areas of the city*] (CG II, 82).
78. In an earlier essay on Kluge, Sebald still emphasized Kluge's “didactical intention,” aiming for a “critical dialectics between present and past” that would signify the possibility of learning from history (W.G. Sebald, “Zwischen Geschichte und Naturgeschichte—Versuch über die literarische Beschreibung totaler Zerstörung mit Anmerkungen zu Kasack, Nossack und Kluge,” *Orbis Litterarum* 37 (1982): 362). In the book on the air war, that view is adjusted; now Sebald suspects that even in Kluge, “that most enlightened of writers,” the final conclusion to be drawn is “daß wir aus dem von uns angerichteten Unglück nichts zu lernen vermögen” [*that we are unable to learn from the misfortunes we bring on ourselves*] (W.G. Sebald, *Luftkrieg und Literatur* [hereafter LL], 80; *On the Natural History of Destruction* [hereafter NHD], 67).

79. In a strikingly Hegelian turn of phrase, Sebald elsewhere locates this amnesia also in the realm of post-war German theater that was allegedly straining “not to undermine the collective amnesia which was the blind spot in the public consciousness of the first fifteen years of the Federal Republic. In other words the inner state of the nation was not, at that time, considered a topic suitable for the stage” (W.G. Sebald, “Surveying the Scene—Some Introductory Remarks” in *A Radical Stage. Theatre in Germany in the 1970s and 1980s*, ed. W.G. Sebald, 1). As is the case with Kluge’s pseudo-documentary essays, there is reason to doubt whether it really is this “inner state” that subsequently takes the stage in the documentary theater of Hochhuth, Kipphardt, and Weiss which Sebald here credits with marking a historical incision. Plays such as Hochhuth’s *Der Stellvertreter*, Kipphardt’s *In Sachen J. Robert Oppenheimer* or Weiss’s *Die Ermittlung* are all very explicitly based upon extensive collections of archival source materials; if there is anything original about this dramatic strategy, it is the challenging of the belief—familiar from earlier historical dramas—that “inner states” could unproblematically be reconstructed from this body of external documents.
80. Thomas Medicus chose this phrase to characterize Sebald’s poetics in his obituary (Thomas Medicus, “Leichtfüßiger Schwerarbeiter der Erinnerung,” *Frankfurter Rundschau*, December 17, 2001).
81. To affirm this disjunction is to concur with Burkhard Liebsch’s take on Foucault (whose insistence on archival surfaces reverberates throughout Sebald’s work)—though issued by Liebsch as an indictment of Hegelian provenance—to the effect that Foucauldian genealogy “surrenders” the notion of philosophy as recollection, challenging the expectation “daß sich mittels Erinnerung Zeit als Geschichte vergegenwärtigen lasse” [*that time could be made present as history by means of remembering*] (Burkhard Liebsch, “Probleme einer genealogischen Kritik der Erinnerung. Anmerkungen zu Hegel, Nietzsche und Foucault,” 118).
82. “Aber das Geschriebene ist ja kein wahres Dokument,” interview by Christian Scholz, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, February 26–27 (2000): 51.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

1. Haushofer was reportedly clutching the sheets of paper on which he had written down his sonnets as he was shot by the SS or the Gestapo just outside the gate of the Moabit prison, moments after being ‘released’ on April 23, 1945 (Albrecht Haushofer, *Moabiter Sonette*, 91).
2. The rules governing this chosen form of life include monthly meetings (held with only one exception since 1960), and members being barred from either expulsion or voluntary resignation, resulting in irrevocable group

- membership for life and beyond (the dead continue to be considered members) (BW, 220 [§35]).
3. Georges Perec, *La Disparition*; G. Perec, *Les Revenentes*; G. Perec, *La Vie mode d'emploi. Romans* [hereafter VME]. Engl Trans. *Life: A User's Manual* [hereafter LUM].
 4. Details in: Georges Perec, "Quatre figures pour La Vie mode d'emploi," in *Atlas de littérature potentielle*, ed. Oulipo; David Bellos, *Georges Perec: A Life in Words*, 513–6, 598–608.
 5. Herman Melville, *Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall-Street*; Valéry Larbaud, *A.O. Barnabooth: ses œuvres complètes*.
 6. This suspension would also bring closure to the novel on the level of form, with its restless temporality functioning as a type of memory work: "L'utilisation constante de l'analepse, par le travail sur la mémoire—souvenirs, rêves—décloisonne le texte et provoque une circulation constante du récit dans l'espace et le temps." [*The constant use of analepsis through memory work—recollections, dreams—opens up the text and provokes a constant circulation of the narration in space and time*] (Jean-François Chassay, *Le jeu des coïncidences dans "La Vie mode d'emploi" de Georges Perec*, 69).
 7. Georges Perec, *W ou le souvenir d'enfance*.
 8. G. Perec, *W ou le souvenir d'enfance*, 85. The page is entirely blank except for this sign.
 9. Roubaud's spelling of the definite article in this title varies; consistently capitalized if it forms the beginning of a sentence, it is usually, though not exclusively, put in lower case when cited within a sentence.
 10. Branch 1: '*Le grand incendie de Londres: Destruction*'; Branch 2: *La Boucle* [hereafter B]; Branch 3 (Part 1): *Mathématique*: [hereafter M]; Branch 4: *Poesie*; Branch 5: *La Bibliothèque de Warburg*; Branch 6: *La Distraction* (yet to be published; see P, 154 [§60]).
 11. For more on the 15th and 16th century tradition of this genre, see Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory*, ch. 5.
 12. Jacques Roubaud, *Poesie, etcetera: ménage*, 102 (§29).
 13. Manfred Schneider remarks on the self-effacing, fictional character of modern autobiography: "Der moderne Autorname ist lediglich der Titel einer Anstrengung. Nicht der Anstrengung und Folterqual eines Delinquenten oder Sünders, seine 'Identität' zu bekennen, sondern einer Anstrengung der Selbstausslöschung in der Schrift, in der Produktion eines unerkennbaren Doppels der eigenen Person" [*The name of the author in modernity is simply the title of an effort. Not one of the exhaustion and the tortured pains of a delinquent or a sinner trying to confess his 'identity,' but rather that of an effort of self-effacement in writing, in the production of an invisible double of one's own person*] (Manfred Schneider, *Die erkaltete Herzensschrift*, 46).

14. Jacques Roubaud, *Le Train traverse la nuit: Vers l'alexandrin de longueur variable*. Bibliothèque Oulipienne 26. See *Oulipo Compendium*, ed. Alistair Brotchie and Harry Mathews, 77.
15. Jacques Roubaud, *L'invention du fils de Leoprepes: Poésie et Mémoire* [hereafter IFL], 143. Cf. also: “. . . l'effet mémoire de la poésie est entièrement privé. Il s'agit de votre mémoire, et de nulle autre. S'il est vrai que le sens de ce qui est dit, si ce qui est dit a un sens, est un sens communicable, s'il est paraphrasable, c'est un sens public. Mais le sens de la poésie dans une mémoire n'est qu'en cette mémoire. Il n'est pas quelque chose de transmissible à d'autres” [. . . *the memory effect of poetry is altogether private. It concerns your own memory, and nothing else. If it is true that the meaning of what is said, if what is said indeed has a meaning, is a communicable meaning, if it can be paraphrased, then that meaning is public. But the meaning of poetry in memory pertains to nothing but what is in that memory. It is not anything that could be transmitted to others*] (J. Roubaud, *Poésie etcetera*, 103–4).
16. Jacques Roubaud, *Poésie etcetera*, 232–3 (§69).
17. Elisabeth Lavault's claim, therefore, that for Roubaud “[l]'écriture mémorielle est du domaine du langage privé” [*the writing of memory is the domain of private language*] (E. Lavault, *Jacques Roubaud: Contrainte et Mémoire dans les romans d'Hortense*, 59) would have to be limited to the kind of immaterial “writing” that poetry supposedly effected in the head rather than on paper; the externalization of Roubauldian poetic private-language words such as “Oranjeaunie” (B, 130ff. [§31]) in prose, by contrast, opens them up for public ascription of meaning that no longer satisfies the alleged (and, according to Wittgenstein, self-contradictory) criteria of private language.
18. “Mon hypothèse centrale sur la mémoire implique qu'elles [les images] ne sont plus, ou plus purement, présentes dans mes souvenirs. Ce sont des images dites, et surtout ce que je nomme des “**pictions.**” [*My key hypothesis on memory implies that they [the images] are no longer, or no longer as purely, present in my recollections. They are spoken images, and thus what I call “pictions”*] (B, 249 [§68]).
19. The following is a partial list of the Wittgensteinian sources used in each proposition of the “deduction” which are not made explicit in detail in Roubaud's text (B, 252–6 [§70]). Most passages are slightly modified translations, while a few of the propositions take Wittgensteinian remarks as a point of departure only: (i) [PU, §301]; (ii) [PU, §300]; (iii) [*Bemerkungen über die Philosophie der Psychologie I* (W VII), §679]; (iv) [PU II, 529; *Bemerkungen über die Philosophie der Psychologie I* (W VII), §1075]; (v) [*Philosophische Grammatik* (W IV), 95]; (vi) [*Bemerkungen über die Philosophie der Psychologie I* (W VII), §352]; (vii) [*Zettel* (W VIII), §641; *Bemerkungen über die Philosophie der Psychologie II* (W VII), §123]; (viii) [*Zettel* (W VIII), §642]; (ix) [*Zettel* (W VIII), §645]; (x) [*Bemerkungen über die Philosophie der Psychologie I* (W VII), §159]; (xi) [PU, §291]; (xiv) [PU, §389]; (xv)

- [*Philosophische Grammatik* (W IV), 169; PU II, 523]; (xvi) [*Philosophische Bemerkungen* (W II), 271]; (xvii) [*Philosophische Grammatik* (W IV), 171; *Zettel* (W VIII), §241–2]; (xviii) [*Philosophische Grammatik* (W IV), 171]; (xix) [PU II, 551]; (xx) [PU II, 538]; (xxi) [*Vermischte Bemerkungen* (W VIII), 492]; (xxii) [*Vermischte Bemerkungen* (W VIII), 561]; (xxiii) [*Vermischte Bemerkungen* (W VIII), 477]; (xxiv) [*Tagebücher 1914–1916*: W I, 123]; (xxv) [*Bemerkungen über die Grundlagen der Mathematik* (W VI), 88]; (xxvi) [PU, §424]; (xxvii) [*Zettel* (W VIII), §628]; (xxviii–xxix) [*Zettel* (W VIII), §81]; (xxx) [*Zettel* (W VIII), §239]; (xxxi) [PU, §73, §383]; (xxxii) [PU, §194]; (xxxiii) [*Philosophische Grammatik* (W IV), 209]; (xxxiv) [PU, §291]; (xxxv) [PU, §398]; (xxxvi) [PU, §515]; (xxxvii) [PU, §522].
20. In the standard Wittgenstein translations into English, “image” generally renders either “Vorstellung” or terms that do not refer to literal images (e.g. *Gesichtsbild*, *Erinnerungsbild*). “Picture” is mostly used to refer to the literal image, though there are numerous exceptions. To make matters even more complicated, Wittgenstein himself sometimes uses *Bild* and *Vorstellung* interchangeably (e.g. *Zettel* [W VIII], §336); also, a term like “retinal image” (*Netzhautbild*; *Zettel* [W VIII], §614) is obviously of physiological, not psychological order; to cite a blatant example of the resulting confusion that is evident in many of the translated passages: “A picture (imagination-picture, memory-image) of longing’ (‘Ein Bild [Vorstellungsbild, Erinnerungsbild] der Sehnsucht’). One thinks one has already done everything by speaking of a ‘picture’; for longing is a content of consciousness, and a picture of it [dessen Bild] is something that is (very) like it, even though less clear than the original. | And it might well be said of someone who plays longing on the stage, that he experiences or has a picture of longing: not as an explanation of his action, but as a description of it” (*Zettel* [W VIII], §655). Thus, the changing quality of *Bild* in Wittgenstein’s text does not support the clean separation between “picture” and “image” that Roubaud’s narrator claims as a basis for his “deduction.”
 21. According to Gadamer, the image doesn’t refer to an external referent whose value is independent of that of the sign, and it enriches its content by elevating it to presence, which is not true of the symbol (Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, GW 1, 159). Thus, even though the image partakes of elements of the sign and of the symbol, its specific characteristic would be to refer to that which it itself represents (*ibid.*, 157).
 22. “La poésie est dans les poèmes, mais elle n’est pas poèmes. Elle est l’absente de tous poèmes” [*Poetry is in poems, but it is not identical to the poems themselves. It is the absentee in all poems*] (J. Roubaud, *Poésie etcetera*, 87).
 23. Here, of course, Roubaud appropriates a well-known proposition (5.6) from the *Tractatus*.
 24. Jacques Roubaud, *Trente et un au cube*. For a reading of this work that emphasizes Roubaud’s interest in eliciting a “quantifiable memory in language” by

- means of rhythmic form, see Jean-Jacques Frédéric Poucel, “Memory, Tradition and Innovation in the Work of Jacques Roubaud,” ch. 3.
25. That prose style and its attendant desire for *clarity* are still evident in the account of the failed *Projet* and its “deductions” as quasi-mechanical support in the obliteration of memory: “je n’ai pas un accès direct à ce que je dois dire; il ne me suffit pas de le penser; je suis fort éloigné de l’idéal “objectiviste”; je me place dans le souvenir des gestes prosaïques de la “deduction,” tels que j’ai appris autrefois, plus au moins efficacement, à les faire, quand je suis devenu mathématicien. Un mécanisme me soutient” [*I do not have direct access to what I ought to tell; it is not enough for me just to think it; I am a very long way from the “objectivist” ideal: in memory my vantage is the prosaic gestures of “deduction,” such as I once learned to enact them, more or less effectively, when I became a mathematician. A mechanism maintains me*] (GIL, 320 [§135]; GFL, 246).
 26. Nicolas Bourbaki, *Éléments de mathématique: Les structures fondamentales de l’analyse; Livre 1: Théorie des ensembles*. For a detailed discussion of Bourbaki’s influence on Roubaud’s work, see Véronique Montémont, *Jacques Roubaud: L’amour du nombre*, ch. 11.
 27. A philosophical project to be considered in the following chapter, Wolfgang Stegmüller’s proposed formalization of scientific theories, also takes recourse to a Bourbakist strategy. In response to Paul Feyerabend’s concise and powerful criticism (see Chapter Five, n. 8 below), Stegmüller tries to retool his structuralist position from a reconstruction of Kuhn into an “extension of the Bourbaki programme to science,” attempting to take advantage of the Bourbakist informal (as opposed to a fully formalized) approach to set theory (Wolfgang Stegmüller, *The Structuralist View of Theories: A Possible Analogue of the Bourbaki Programme in Physical Science*). Echoing Roubaud’s narrator’s rejection of his own former project, in *Kongreß the New Professor* speaks of the Stegmüllerian program as a chimera whose structural properties promise more clarity than they actually deliver: “Die bequeme Unterscheidung zwischen dem sauberen Bereich *formale Struktur* der erfahrungswissenschaftlichen Theorie einerseits und dem verschmierten Bereich *Anwendung* der erfahrungswissenschaftlichen Theorie andererseits sei nur eine Chimäre. Womit übrigens auch der Traum an der wenn auch nur hälftigen Teilhabe am Bourbaki-Programm platze” [*The handy distinction between the tidy realm of a formal structure of an empirical theory on the one hand, and the only vaguely delineated realm of an application of an empirical theory on the other was nothing but a chimera. Which, by the way, condemned the notion of even a partial conformity to the Bourbaki program to vacuity*] (Ernst-Wilhelm Händler, *Kongreß*, 215). The purchase on the theoretical benefits of informal axiomatization—to capture areas of empirical science whose practices would otherwise prove recalcitrant to any formalization whatsoever—does nothing to remedy the more fundamental

problem of how to divide those practices into a formal core and applications as ‘additions.’

28. It has been noted that among the blind spots of the Bourbakists was their evident disregard for Gödel’s challenge to the Hilbert program that was the basis for their axiomatizations (A.R.D. Mathias, “The Ignorance of Bourbaki,” *The Mathematical Intelligencer* 14, no. 3 (1992): 4–13).
29. H. Mathews and A. Brotchie, *Oulipo Compendium*, 126.
30. Some identifiable partial continuities, though permanently interrupted in the course of their narrative construction, are: 1938(?)–1945 (Branch 2), 1954–1960 (Branch 3), 1961–1966 (Branch 4), 1976–78 (Branch 5), 1985–1987 (Branch 1).
31. Perplexingly, the English translation of Branch 1 undertakes to relieve this discomfort by providing typographical pointers in the margins of the *récit* to the respective *insertions* that do not exist in the original French text.
32. Alix Cléo Roubaud, *Journal 1979–1983* [hereafter J].
33. The idiosyncratic punctuation was preserved in the published version of the text.
34. The entire series is reprinted as an appendix to the English translation of Jacques Roubaud’s book of poetry *Quelque chose noir* that takes its title from this series: Jacques Roubaud, *Some Thing Black*, trans. Rosemarie Waldrop. The original French edition does not contain any images.
35. See also proposition (xx) in the “deduction” of the *Bild/Abbild* distinction discussed above (B, 254 [§70]).
36. “Denke dir einen Menschen, der es nicht im Gedächtnis behalten könnte, was das Wort ‘Schmerz’ bedeutet—und der daher immer wieder etwas Anderes so nennt—das Wort aber dennoch in Übereinstimmung mit den gewöhnlichen Anzeichen und Voraussetzungen des Schmerzes verwendete!—der es also verwendet, wie wir Alle. Hier möchte ich sagen: das Rad gehört nicht zur Maschine, das man drehen kann, ohne daß anderes sich mitbewegt” [*Imagine a person whose memory could not retain what the word ‘pain’ meant, so that he constantly called different things by that name—but nevertheless used the word in a way fitting in with the usual symptoms and presuppositions of pain—in short, he uses it as we all do. Here I should like to say: a wheel that can be turned though nothing else moves with it, is not part of the mechanism*] (PU, §271; PI, 95). “‘Ich sage das nicht nur, ich meine auch etwas damit.’—Wenn man sich überlegt, was dabei in uns vorgeht, wenn wir Worte *meinen* (und nicht nur sagen), so ist es uns, als wäre dann etwas mit diesen Worten gekuppelt, während sie sonst leerliefen.—Als ob sie gleichsam in uns eingriffen” [*I am not merely saying this, I mean something by it.*—*When we consider what is going on in us when we mean (and don’t merely say) words, it seems to us as if there were something coupled to these words, which otherwise would run idle.—As if they were, so to speak, connected with something in us*] (PU, §507; PI, 139). See also *Philosophische Bemerkungen* (W II), 52.

37. The passage in the *Investigations* to which Roubaud is alluding (for the problematic concerning the translation of *Bild*, see n. 20 above): “Was wir ‘Beschreibungen’ nennen, sind Instrumente für besondere Verwendungen. Denke dabei an eine Maschinenzzeichnung, einen Schnitt, einen Aufriß mit den Maßen, den der Mechaniker vor sich hat. Wenn man an eine Beschreibung als ein Wortbild der Tatsachen denkt, so hat das etwas Irreführendes: Man denkt etwa nur an Bilder, wie sie an unsern Wänden hängen; die schlechtweg abzubilden scheinen, wie ein Ding aussieht, wie es beschaffen ist. (Diese Bilder sind gleichsam müßig.)” [*What we call “descriptions” are instruments for particular uses. Think of a machine-drawing, a cross-section, an elevation with measurements, which an engineer has before him. Thinking of a description as a word-picture of the facts has something misleading about it: one tends to think only of such pictures as hang on our walls; which seem simply to portray how a thing looks, what it is like. (These pictures are as it were idle)*] (PU, §291; PI, 99).
38. The affirmation of this destruction implicitly acknowledges the ‘profanation’ of deliberate recall that Proust abhors, according to Benjamin: “In dem Zusammenhange, da Proust die Dürftigkeit und den Mangel an Tiefe in den Bildern beanstandet, die ihm die *mémoire volontaire* von Venedig vorlegt, schreibt er, beim bloßen Wort ‘Venedig’ sei ihm dieser Bilderschatz ebenso abgeschmackt wie eine Ausstellung von Photographien vorgekommen” [*In the context of critiquing the insufficiency and the lack of depth of the images of Venice presented to him by his involuntary memory, Proust writes that the very word ‘Venice’ was enough to make this store of images seem as tasteless to him as a photography exhibit*] (W. Benjamin, “Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire,” *Gesammelte Schriften*, I.2: 646).
39. G.E. Moore, “Proof of an External World” and “A Defence of Common Sense,” in *Philosophical Papers*.
40. The Wittgenstein reference is to the following passage in *Über Gewißheit*: “Wenn z.B. jemand sagt ‘Ich weiß nicht, ob da eine Hand ist,’ so könnte man ihm sagen ‘Schau näher hin.’—Diese Möglichkeit des Sichüberzeugens gehört zum Sprachspiel. Ist einer seiner wesentlichen Züge” [*If e.g. someone says “I don’t know if there’s a hand here” he might be told “Look closer.”—This possibility of satisfying oneself is part of the language-game. Is one of its essential features*] (W VIII, §3; *On Certainty*, 2).
41. See also Marjorie Perloff’s reading of a subsequent poem of the cycle, “L’irresemblance.” (Marjorie Perloff, “‘But isn’t the same at least the same?’: Translatibility in Wittgenstein, Duchamp, and Roubaud.”)
42. “Photography is an elegiac art, a twilight art. . . . All photographs are *memento mori*” (Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, 15).
43. For more on the formal structure of *La Boucle*, see Peter Consenstein, *Literary Memory, Consciousness, and the Group Oulipo*, ch. 1.

44. The autopoietic structure of the *boucle* thus created therefore does not point back to a stable 'self' as a point of origin; as Véronique Montémont rightly remarks, it is the text, not the biological author, that is the (self-)referent here (V. Montémont, *L'amour du nombre*, 279).
45. See Chapter Three, 126–7 above.
46. See Ernst Gombrich, *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography*.
47. “**La poésie est mémoire de la langue.** . . . [E]lle parle pour chacun de l'être de sa langue, de la langue à travers laquelle elle parle; elle dit quelque chose de l'histoire de la langue, de sa construction, de son vocabulaire, de sa syntaxe, de ses changements, etc.” [*Poetry is the memory of language. . . . It speaks to everyone of the being of their language, of the language across which it speaks; it says something about the history of the language, of its construction, of its vocabulary, of its syntax, of its changes, etc.*] (IFL, 141–2).
48. “Cette double langue: les frontières de chaque langue sont les frontières d'un monde: monde du projet, monde du récit. Mais on ne peut parler que comme si on n'était dans aucune: 'toujours, traduisant,' *le Grand Incendie de Londres*. Voilà pourquoi il y a Londres. Londres, disait Alix, et cette langue (réelle) où ni vous ni moi ne sommes 'toujours, traduisant'” [*This double language: the boundaries of each language are the boundaries of the world: world of the project, world of the story. But speech is possible only from a vantage seemingly located in neither: "at all times, translating," the Great Fire of London. That's why London exists. London, Alix used to say, and that (real) language where neither you nor I are, "at all times, translating"*] (GIL, 172 [§62]; GFL, 129). See Elisabeth Cardonne-Arlyck, “Poésie, forme de vie (Jacques Roubaud),” 99–100.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

1. Sander L. Gilman, “Smart Jews in Fin-de-siècle Vienna: Hybrids and the Anxiety about Jewish Superior Intelligence – Hofmannsthal and Wittgenstein,” 54–56.
2. Ernst-Wilhelm Händler, *Der Kongress* [hereafter DK]. Unpublished page proofs, archived at the Literaturarchiv Sulzbach-Rosenberg. This first version of the novel was announced in the Greno catalogue for Fall 1989 but was never published because the publisher folded before the scheduled publishing date. Händler subsequently decided to rewrite the book; more on this below.
3. The event alluded to is the meeting held in Salzburg in 1983, the proceedings of which were published as: *Logic, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science. Proceedings of the 7th International Congress of Logic, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science, Salzburg, 1983*, ed. Ruth Barcan Marcus, Georg J. W. Dorn and Paul Weingartner.

4. For a good summary, see Wolfgang Stegmüller, “Akzidentieller Theorienwandel oder Theorienevolution und substantielle Theorienänderung oder Theorienverdrängung. Ein Beitrag zum besseren logischen Verständnis gewisser Phänomene in der Theoriendynamik,” in *Neue Wege der Wissenschaftsphilosophie*. For a more detailed account, see Wolfgang Stegmüller, *Probleme und Resultate der Wissenschaftstheorie und Analytischen Philosophie. Band II: Theorie und Erfahrung. Zweiter Halbband: Theoriestructuren und Theoriendynamik*. Händler’s own dissertation (written with Stegmüller as committee member) is an application of this framework to theories of mathematical economics: E.-W. Händler, “Logische Struktur und Referenz von mathematischen ökonomischen Theorien.”
5. See for example: C. G. Hempel, *Fundamentals of Concept Formation in Empirical Science*; Rudolf Carnap, “The Methodological Character of Theoretical Concepts;” Ernst Nagel, *The Structure of Science*.
6. See Joseph D. Sneed, *The Logical Structure of Mathematical Physics*.
7. See W. Stegmüller, *Probleme und Resultate* II/2, 195–207.
8. Paul Feyerabend, “Changing Patterns of Reconstruction,” 356 n. 4.
9. See also: Wolfgang Stegmüller, “Wissenschaft als Sprachspiel,” in *Neue Wege*, 94; Wolfgang Stegmüller, *Kripkes Deutung der Spätphilosophie Wittgensteins*, 133.
10. T. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 192.
11. According to Luhmann’s theory of social systems, such systems—science among them—are composed not of human beings but of *communications*, transmitted via particular codes specific to each system. Within this framework, ‘persons’ are nothing but the units of the communicative social process, not human beings endowed with a unified self-consciousness (Niklas Luhmann, *Die Wissenschaft der Gesellschaft*, 33–4, 562).
12. The ineradicable institutional influence on “life” within that institution is documented in the novel on many levels, one of them the temporality of the narrative: all chapters preceding the *Friend*’s hospital episode are alternately titled “Montag” and “Donnerstag,” reflecting the internal academic clock timed according to weekly seminar meetings. In the hospital, the rhythm changes to that of a regular sequence of weekdays, ending in “Sonntagnachmittag” and thus corresponding to the motto from Cioran’s *Précis de décomposition* that opens the book (“L’univers transformé en après-midi de dimanche . . .”). The transformation of a universe constituted by one’s own actions is possible only in the context of a timeframe that is no longer dictated by the institution; consequently, the chapter titles in Book II are proper names, not days of the week.
13. See Chapter One, 25–6 above.
14. “Das Spiel auf seiner Party war genau das Spiel, das er immer spielt. Er begründet nicht, warum seine Auffassung richtig ist, er begründet, warum alle anderen Auffassungen falsch sind. Dabei greift er so heftig und so unablässig an, daß der andere gar nicht zum Luftholen kommt. Er schafft es, dem

anderen ständig den Boden unter den Füßen wegzuziehen, so daß er sich nicht mehr aufrichten und nicht mehr zurückschlagen kann" [*The game they were playing at his party was the exact game he always plays. He does not give reasons for why his position is correct, he only gives reasons for why all other positions are incorrect. In doing so, his attacks are so fierce and relentless that the other person cannot even catch his breath. He succeeds in permanently keeping the other person off balance so that they cannot get back up, or hit back*] (K, 116–17).

15. L. Wittgenstein, "Lecture on Ethics," 3–12. See also TLP 6.432.
16. Although it bears mentioning that at least the latter example was an experience manifestly prompted by *spoken language*: Wittgenstein reportedly was deeply impressed by a performance of Anzengruber's play *Die Kreuzelschreiber*, in which the character Steinklopferhanns, unrepentant individualist unlike his conformist fellow villagers, describes a mystic vision of much the same kind: ". . . und da kommst über mich, wie wann eins zu ein'm andern red't: Es kann Dir nix g'schehn! Selbst die größt' Marter zählt nimmer, wann vorbei is! Ob d' jetzt gleich sechs Schuh tief da unterm Rasen liegest, oder ob d' das vor dir noch viel tausendmal siehst—es kann dir nix g'schehn!—Du g'hörst zu dem all'n und dös all' g'hört zu dir! Es kann dir nix g'schehn!" [. . . and I'm overwhelmed by something, like when something says to another: Nothing can happen to you! Even the worst torture don't mean nothing when it's over with! No matter whether you're six feet under in no time, or whether you'll see what's before you thousands of times over—nothing can happen to you!—You're part of everything, and everything's part of you! Nothing can happen to you!] (L. Anzengruber, *Die Kreuzelschreiber*, in *Gesammelte Werke in zehn Bänden*, 6: 279).
17. Congress member Kowalski will approvingly remark of the project in which the *Friend* has involved him: "Falls ich einmal in die Lage geraten sollte, ein Gutachten über deine Arbeit zu erstellen: Es wäre doch langweilig, sich noch einmal erst mit Logik und Erkenntnistheorie zu beschäftigen und dann Volksschullehrer oder Krankenpfleger zu werden. Ich finde, du machst tatsächlich etwas Neues auf dem Gebiet der Ethik" [*If I should ever be in the position of having to write an evaluation of your work: Wouldn't it be boring once again to begin working on logic and epistemology, and then become an elementary school teacher or a nurse? I think you are really doing something new in the area of ethics*] (K, 277). The sarcastic assessment thus given of the tension between Wittgenstein's early theoretical and later practical pursuits is more than telling, as *old* Wittgensteinian paradoxes will come to haunt the experiment Kowalski praises as radically *new*.
18. "Now let us see what we could possibly mean by the expression, 'the absolutely right road.' I think it would be the road which everybody on seeing it would, with logical necessity, have to go, or be ashamed for not going. And similarly the absolute good, if it is a describable state of affairs, would

be one which everybody, independent of his tastes and inclinations, would necessarily bring about or feel guilty for not bringing about. And I want to say that such a state of affairs is a chimera" (L. Wittgenstein, "Lecture on Ethics," 7). As Wittgenstein's own diaries more than clearly attest, feelings of guilt may well persist alongside the conviction that that which causes these feelings is ultimately not amenable to expression, and is thus a mere chimera. The congress assumes that such feelings exist, while remaining agnostic about whether or not they derive from an existing absolute value, or else from a chimera. As a brute fact, guilt would thus become available for reductive treatment by means of a set of rational rules of action.

19. Plato, *Phaedo*, 99c-e.
20. Cf. L. Wittgenstein, *Vermischte Bemerkungen* (W VIII), 515.
21. See J.L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words*. Austin's student Searle formulates the point thus: "the speaker *S* intends to produce an illocutionary effect *IE* in the hearer *H* by means of getting *H* to recognize *S*'s intention to produce *IE*." (John Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, 47).
22. Thomas Bernhard, *Auslöschung. Ein Zerfall* [hereafter A]; Gert Hofmann, *Auf dem Turm* [hereafter AT]; Paul Wühr, *Das falsche Buch* [hereafter FB].
23. See the (slightly coded) references to her Ungaretti translations (A, 228; E, 113), her poem "Böhmen liegt am Meer" (A, 511; E, 257), and Klagenfurt, her place of birth (A, 232; E, 116). Murau also mentions Maria's ambiguous relationship to Austria on the one hand, and Rome—her chosen residence—on the other, which likewise points back to Bachmann (A, 233–6; E, 116–8).
24. In Bernhard's text, Murau already remarks accordingly upon his return to Wolfsegg: "In meiner römischen Wohnung phantasieren ich mich sozusagen sehr oft zu ihnen [the gardeners], dachte ich, an der Tormauer stehend, mische mich unter sie, fange an, ihre Sprache zu sprechen, ihre Gedanken zu denken, ihre Gewohnheiten anzunehmen, aber es gelingt mir das naturgemäß nur im Traum, nicht in der Wirklichkeit, es ist ein total Irrtümliches, mit welchem ich die größte Lust habe, umzugehen" [*In my Roman apartment I often imagine myself among them, I thought as I stood pressed up against the wall, mixing with them, starting to speak their language, to think their thoughts, to adopt their habits. But naturally I succeed only in dreams, not in reality, it is something quite illusory, which I nevertheless long for*] (A, 335–6; E, 169).
25. Günter Butzer, *Fehlende Trauer*, 268.
26. The notion of fictional inclusion of a possible "Anti-Munich" inside the real one is explained by Wühr's narrator in the following way: "Indem diese Welt ihr freies Spiel, ihre voraussetzungslosen Möglichkeiten und Entwürfe und alle spontanen Übertretungen gewöhnlicher Regeln und Gesetze in sich einsperrt, sperrt sie sich davon aus, obwohl das alles, wie schon gesagt: in ihr bleibt. . . . Wenn einer seine Stadt verläßt, indem er aus ihr heraus

zu uns hereinkommt, verläßt er seine Stadt nicht" [*By confining its free play, its unconditional possibilities and projections, and all spontaneous transgressions of the customary rules and laws to its own interior, this world excludes itself from these, even though all of it remains, as we said before: inside of this world itself. . . . If someone leaves their city by stepping outside of it and into where we are, he is not leaving his city*] (FB, 89).

27. "Immer wenn ich verloren oder *fast* verloren bin, erzähle ich mir die Geschichte meiner Verlorenheit, und das geht so. Erst frage ich mich, ob ich sie hören will, und gähne und sage mir: Nein!, aber dann überzeuge ich mich, daß ich sie, weil es sonst keinen Ausweg gibt, hören *muß*. Also still jetzt! Und fange also an. Zum Beispiel, wenn ich nicht schlafen kann, erzähle ich mir, *daß* ich nicht schlafen kann, vielleicht weil es irgendwo tropft. Und erzähle mir in dieser Geschichte, *wie* es tropft, nämlich immer auf dieselbe Stelle, sei es irgendwo im Haus, sei es im Kopf selber. Und jetzt, in D., in der Dämmerung, in meinem Sessel auf der Galerie, packe ich in meiner Verlegenheit natürlich den Turm vor mir in meine Geschichte hinein. . . . Jawohl, die kleinsten Kleinigkeiten stopfe ich in meine Geschichte *Unter dem Turm* hinein, denn erst dadurch wird sie ja zu einer Geschichte, erst dadurch . . ." [*Whenever I am lost, or almost lost, I tell myself the story of my being lost, in the following manner. First I ask myself whether I am interested in listening to it, and I yawn and tell myself: No!, but then I convince myself that I have to listen to it because there is no other way out. So shut up already! And thus I begin. For example, when I cannot fall asleep I tell myself that I cannot fall asleep, perhaps because something is dripping somewhere. And I tell myself in that story how it is dripping, that is, always in the same spot, be it somewhere inside the house, be it in my head. And now, at dusk in D., in my seat in the gallery, I am of course embarrassed enough to be stuffing the tower in front of me into my story. . . . Exactly, I am stuffing the most minute details into my story Below the Tower, because only that will make it into a story, only that . . .*] (AT, 136–7).
28. "Ein allwissender Erzähler ist heute ein Betrüger. Weil wir wissen, wie simpel es ist, den Ich-Erzähler aufzuführen, weil wir wissen, wie unmöglich es ist, den allwissenden Erzähler zu denken, . . . weil wir widerspruchsfrei und vollständig sein wollen, deswegen ist unser Grundton der des Ich-Erzählers, der sich niemals selbst die Absolution erteilen kann. Weil wir ihn, wo immer es geht, durch das Sich-Mühen eines allwissenden Erzählers ablösen, der ständig den Ich-Erzähler streicht, einen anderen Ich-Erzähler erfindet, diesen erneut streicht, den nächsten Ich-Erzähler ins Leben ruft, der wieder nur darauf wartet, vom allwissenden Erzähler ausradiert zu werden" [*Nowadays an omniscient narrator is a con artist. Because we know how easy it is to act the part of the first-person narrator, because we know how impossible it is to think the omniscient narrator, . . . because we want to be non-contradictory and complete, the tone we adopt is that of the first-person narrator who can never absolve himself. Because we replace him wherever we*

can by an omniscient narrator who permanently strikes out the first-person narrator, invents another first-person narrator, strikes him out again, creates the next first-person narrator who in turn waits for his extermination at the hands of the omniscient narrator] (F, 403).

29. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Wittgenstein's Nachlaß*, MS 183, 73.
30. See Albert Camus, *La chute*. Shoshana Felman comments on the central event of the novel, the suicidal fall of a woman from a Paris bridge: "In *The Fall*, the event is witnessed insofar as it is not experienced, insofar as it is literally missed. . . . *The Fall* bears witness, paradoxically enough, to the missing of the fall" (Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, 168–9).
31. "Jesus said, 'I tell you this: there is no one who has given up home, brothers or sisters, mother, father or children, or land, for my sake and for the Gospel, who will not receive in this age a hundred times as much—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and land—and persecutions besides; and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last and the last first'" (Mk 10.29–31 New English Bible). See also Mt 19. 28–30 NEB.
32. "For the tradition which I handed on to you came to me from the Lord himself: that the Lord Jesus, on the night of his arrest, took bread and, after giving thanks to God, broke it and said: 'This is my body, which is for you; do this as a memorial of me.' In the same way, he took the cup after supper, and said: 'This cup is the new covenant sealed by my blood. Whenever you drink it, do this as a memorial of me.' For every time you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord, until he comes" (1 Cor 11. 23–26 NEB).
33. "Richtig, K., zu den Wahrheitsbedingungen der Darstellung gehört die Bezugnahme auf die Art der Darstellung" [*That's right, K., the truth conditions of representation include reference to the form of representation*] (F, 408).
34. See Timothy Bahti, *Allegories of History*, 89–91.
35. The conflicting—and conflicted—attitudes of various well-known members of the *Wiener Secession*, the *Wiener Werkstätte*, and the *Werkbund* concerning the role of ornament would need to be investigated more fully to estimate the tension inherent in the modernist project during the first decade of the century. See for example Adolf Loos' famous attack on the Secessionists van de Velde and Olbrich in "Ornament und Verbrechen" (1908).
36. Berta Zuckerkandl, "Josef Hoffmann," 6.
37. As Leslie Topp notes, "[i]t was the norm among self-proclaimed modern architects in early twentieth-century Vienna to combine 'passages' of structural exposure in their buildings with large sections in which structure was concealed." Given such coexistence of suggested functionality on the one hand with its opposite, Topp reads the aesthetic appeal to function at Purkersdorf as a gesture rather than an outright philosophical principle guiding

construction: “The critic Ludwig Hevesi praised the Purkersdorf Sanatorium’s ‘honest, undisguised’ ceilings, where the grid of the reinforced concrete beams was incorporated into the overall rectilinear scheme . . . They can be seen as a kind of gesture; they were certainly not part of any rigorous or consistent program of structural exposure or constructional truth” (Leslie Topp, *Architecture and Truth in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, 14).

38. “Es schien mir vollkommen triftig, daß es das höchste Ziel für mich sein mußte, als Toter nach Purkersdorf zu kommen, wie es das höchste Ziel für ihn und seine Mitbewohner gewesen war, als Tote dorthin zu kommen, und daß er zugleich versuchte, mich zu einem Handel zu bewegen, bei dessen Zustandekommen er nicht mehr tot in Purkersdorf weilen, sondern lebend in meine Welt eintreten würde” [*It appeared perfectly reasonable to me that my highest goal had to be to end up in Purkersdorf as a dead man, just as it had been the highest goal for him and his fellow inhabitants to end up there, and that he was at the same trying to get me to make a deal with him according to which he would not be staying at Purkersdorf as a dead man but would rather enter into my world alive*] (F, 281).
39. Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth, and History*, ch. 1.
40. The references are to the stories “Am Sengsengebirge, am Toten Gebirge,” “Sprachspiel,” and “Eine Geschichte aus den achtziger Jahren.”
41. “Nur ein ganz kleiner teil der architektur gehört der kunst an: das grabmal und das denkmal. Alles andere, alles, was einem zweck dient, ist aus dem reiche der kunst auszuschließen” [*Only a very small part of architecture belongs to art: the sepulcher and the monument. Everything else—everything which serves a purpose—is to be excluded from the realm of art*] (Adolf Loos, “Architektur” (1910) in *Sämtliche Schriften in zwei Bänden*, I: 315). Loos promoted the lower-case spelling of nouns because, inspired by Jacob Grimm’s criticisms of the stylistic “mess” that was *Fraktur* type, he considered upper-case nouns to be a symptom of the abyss in German between the written word and spoken language: “Jedermann spricht, ohne an große anfangsbuchstaben zu denken” [*Everyone speaks without thinking in upper-case letters*] (I: 11). Händler adopts Loosian spelling in the story “Max” that immediately follows “Auflösung oder Für Frau Berta Zuckerkanndl.”
42. Adolf Loos, “Kulturentartung” (1908), I: 274.
43. Adolf Loos, “Der Staat und die Kunst” (1919), I: 352–54. Wittgenstein registered his protest in a letter to Paul Engelmann.
44. Massimo Cacciari, *Architecture and Nihilism*, 132.
45. Paul Wijdeveld, *Ludwig Wittgenstein, Architect*, ch. 5.
46. Peter Galison assesses the Wittgensteinian claim to transparency somewhat less critically when he emphasizes the parallels between the Logical Positivists’ desire for “transparent construction” (Peter Galison, “Aufbau/Bauhaus: Logical Positivism and Architectural Modernism,” *Critical Inquiry* 16 [Summer 1990]: 710) and the Kundmannngasse house, given architectural

details “such as the transparent glass panels that leave the pulleys and counterweights of the elevator visible” (ibid., 727). Only very late in his article does Galison acknowledge that many Bauhaus designs were in fact “infused with a style that was not only independent of pure function but often impeded function” (ibid., 751); the same would seem to apply for many of Wittgenstein’s interior design elements for the house, indicating that in this respect—despite their considerable differences and disagreements—the Logical Positivists and Wittgenstein find themselves in a comparable bind. Wittgenstein would eventually acknowledge in the early 1930s that absolute transparency was little more than an illusion, whereas Carnap—whose “call for clarity, for a science without metaphysics” Galison also cites (ibid., 734)—never seems to have done so.

47. M. Cacciari, *Architecture and Nihilism*, 134.
48. In 1993 Drawert was awarded the Ingeborg Bachmann Prize for this text, published in *Haus ohne Menschen. Zeitmischriften*.
49. See Ernst-Wilhelm Händler, *Wenn wir sterben*. Another real estate agent in East Germany here uncovers some of the dubious business practices of a “mentor” starkly reminiscent of those about which the narrator of “Stadt mit Häusern” boasts (WWS, 62–3), and eventually even “slips up” by revealing that person’s name (not mentioned in “Stadt mit Häusern”) as “Messerschmidt” (WWS, 325).
50. M. Cacciari, *Architecture and Nihilism*, 135. Cf. Wittgenstein’s remark: “Architektur ist eine Geste” (*Vermischte Bemerkungen* [W VIII], 510).
51. G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik I*, in *Werke*, 13: 46.
52. Sebald cites the very same passage when evoking the destruction, architectural and otherwise, brought on by World War II, which bolsters as much as any event the skeptical view in his work towards the notion of historical progress (*Luftkrieg und Literatur*, 80; *On the Natural History of Destruction*, 67–8).
53. “Ich habe, als ich am Gerüst hing, die Welt verlassen, in der nur das zählt, was irgendwann von irgend jemandem als wirklich betrachtet werden kann” [*As I was hanging suspended from the scaffolding, I left the world in which only that counts which may be considered real by someone at some point in time*] (S, 204).
54. The decision to return responds to the early foreboding that his return to Germany would be a return to history—the *story* in which Hant implicates him is history itself: “In Deutschland reichte auf einmal die Vergangenheit an die Gegenwart heran, und die Zukunft griff nach der Gegenwart. Die Linien, die die Vergangenheit mit der Zukunft verbanden, schnürten die Gegenwart an einer Stelle ein, während sie ihr an einer anderen Raum ließen, sich auszubreiten. . . . Suttung ahnte, er würde eine Geschichte haben” [*In Germany the past suddenly reached up to the present, and the future was gasping for the present. The lines connecting the past with the future constricted the present at one point, while allowing it to expand in another. . . . Suttung began to suspect that he would have a history*] (S, 124).

55. For Hant's rejection of irony, see S, 142, 405; Suttung's prior reduction from possibility to the actuality of being Hant's follower is articulated in the following passage: "Auch Suttung hatte aus vielen Suttungs bestanden, erst Hant hatte die vielen Suttungs zusammengeführt und zu einem einzigen verschmolzen, der ihm so begierig gefolgt war" [*Suttung, too, had consisted of many Suttungs; it was Hant who first had merged the many Suttungs into a whole—the one that had become his ardent follower*] (S, 233).
56. A partial sample: "Welfare honky wanna come visit." (S, 129); "As IF" (S, 168); "Pleeze!" (S, 170); "Hell's Belles." (S, 171); "Gush, gush." (S, 181); "Gee!" (S, 199); "Jeez!" (S, 224); "Ta—da!—Shhh—quiet—" (S, 226); "Mumble mumble." (S, 242); "Watcha lookin' at?" (S, 281); "In space, no one can hear you scream." (S, 338); "Oh my." (S, 342); "Goo." (S, 354); "Aggh." (S, 368); "Gotta go." (S, 380)
57. See Chapter Three, 91 above.
58. Cf. again Wittgenstein's remark: "und zwar möchte ich mein Leben einmal klar ausbreiten um es klar vor mir zu haben und auch für andere. Nicht so sehr, um darüber Gericht zu halten als um jedenfalls Klarheit und Wahrheit zu schaffen" [*that is, I would once like to clearly spread my life out to have it clearly in front of me, and so that others would, too. Not so much because I would want to sit in judgment of it but rather to gain clarity and truth in any case*] (WA 2, 156).
59. In much the same vein, Paul de Man remarks of autobiography: "We assume that life produces the autobiography as an act produces its consequences, but can we not suggest, with equal justice, that the autobiographical project may itself produce and determine the life and that whatever the writer does is in fact governed by the technical demands of self-protriture and thus determined, in all its aspects, by the resources of his medium?" (P. de Man, "Autobiography as De-Facement," in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*, 69).
60. As the belated publication of some of his diaries shows, Wittgenstein consciously avoided explicitness about sexual matters in his own diaries by devising a coding system for these remarks. The fact that he *did* note down his self-reproaches concerning his masturbatory routine at all, however, is crucial insofar as it parallels the broader self-reproach, surfacing in the "middle period," about the very activity of diary writing as such. Read this way, the "dirtiness" of the words at issue in "Sprachspiel" is synecdochally tied to the mode of writing more generally in which these are recorded.
61. In contrast to all earlier passages, therefore, this final account is the only one to sport graphic sexual references: "Alles spielte sich genauso ab, wie es das Tagebuch beschrieben hatte. Natürlich wehrte sich meine Schwester, wahrscheinlich hatte sie überhaupt noch nie einen Schwanz im Mund gehabt, und jetzt standen ihr gleich drei vor dem Gesicht rum. Sie schrie so, weil sie zum ersten Mal in den Arsch gefickt wurde. Meine Schwester machte gar keine

schlechte Figur. Sie gibt eine echt geile Braut ab, sie hat größere Titten als ich. Die Schamhaare muß sie sich natürlich schneiden, man denkt, man ist im Wald, die Motorradfahrer hatten zeitweilig Orientierungsschwierigkeiten. Eine behaarte Fotze ist nicht schön" [*Everything happened exactly the way the diary had described it. Of course my sister fought back, she had probably never had a cock in her mouth, and now there were three of them right in her face. She screamed because she was being fucked in the ass for the first time. My sister carried herself rather well. She's quite the hot bitch, her tits are bigger than mine. Of course she'll have to shave her pubic hair, it's easy to get lost in there, at times the bikers were having trouble finding their way. A hairy twat is not a nice thing*] (SMH, 214; CWH, 175–6).

62. *Firm*, of course, is the common nickname for the consulting company McKinsey. On the company's German website, the methodical mastery of chance events is explicitly acknowledged as a chief operating principle: "Gute Ideen kommen selten zufällig zu Stande. Die meisten Erfolge und Errungenschaften entstehen in einem kreativen Miteinander vieler kluger Köpfe. . . . Das Streben nach Spitzenleistungen ist ein Wesenszug der 'Firm'" [*Good ideas rarely happen at random. Success stories and achievements are usually the outcome of creative teamwork among many smart people. . . . Striving for exceptional results is an essential characteristic of the 'Firm'*] (http://mckinsey.de/profil/people/profil_people.htm).
63. *Whoroscope*, Beckett's poem based on some less well-known aspects of Rene Descartes's biography, takes its title from the philosopher's reported secrecy about his birth date to ward off astrologers, rendered by Beckett as a guarding of a "starless inscrutable hour" (Samuel Beckett, "Whoroscope," in *Collected Poems 1930–1978*, 4 [l. 99]).
64. See Derrida's influential account: "La mythologie blanche," in *Marges de la philosophie*, and "Le retrait de la métaphore," in *Psyché: Invention de l'autre*.
65. In an interview, Händler—owner of a company producing and exporting electrical distributors—suggests, hardly without some measure of irony, that contemporary German literature might strengthen its hold on the "world market" of words by becoming as proficient in the realm of the "real" as it already is in the reflection of the process of writing: "Heute fehlt dagegen vielen Autoren eine Realitätskomponente. Die deutschsprachige Gegenwartsliteratur ist Weltspitze in der Bewusstheit des Schreibprozesses. Mit einer Realitätskomponente könnte sie den Vorsprung noch ausbauen" [*Today, though, many authors lack a reality component. Contemporary German literature is a world-leader in the conscious reflection of the process of writing. It could strengthen its lead on the competition further if it had this reality component*] ("Mehr Realität proben," interview by Wieland Freund, *Die Welt*, July 6, 2002). In his own writings, it becomes evident that such a *lead* on the competition could never be evidence of unequivocal progress (*Fortschritt*), insofar as the ongoing reflection of the added "component"

results in a conflicted internal economy of narration which, in its incessant self-referential dynamic, makes it harder, not easier, for this literature to capitalize on its alleged *Standortvorteil*.

66. Even *Stadt mit Häusern*, ostensibly a volume of stories, may be considered an experiment with novelistic form: on this reading, the dissolution of a stable narrator would hence effect the unexpected reappearance of characters across different stories in the book, and provide a frame for the abstract delineation of a “life” that belongs to no one in particular, among its stations the infantile ranting of the narrator in the title story, the troubled childhood of the protagonists in “Morgenthau,” adolescence in “Am Sengsengebirge, am Toten Gebirge,” all the way to old age marked by Alzheimer’s disease in the last story, “Blaue Grotte.”
67. Which, according to the diarist in “Demiurg,” are manifestly incompatible with French thought and its alleged forgetfulness of the historical dimension of forms of life: “Niemand, der jemals formale Logik getrieben hat und der dabei erfahren hat, wie ungeheuer schwierig es ist, einfachste Begriffe der semantischen Ebene auf die syntaktische Ebene herunterzuholen, wird auf den albernen Gedanken kommen, den Zeichen einen Aufstand zuzutrauen. Ich erspare mir den Ausflug in die französische Kulturgeschichte, die zum überwiegenden Teil darin besteht, alle denkbaren menschlichen Verrichtungen zuerst zum Gegenstand eines Verzeichnisses guter Umgangsformen zu machen, dann die Herkunft, den Sinn und den Zweck dieser Verrichtungen ein für allemal zu vergessen, um schließlich abgehoben über die Gültigkeit der vorgefundenen Sitten zu philosophieren, insbesondere wenn diese bereits im Untergehen und Aussterben begriffen sind. Nicht die Wirklichkeit liegt in Agonie. Sondern diejenigen Philosophen, die den Anforderungen nicht gewachsen sind, die das Management von Wirklichkeit darstellt” [*Nobody who has ever worked on formal logic and who has come to realize how incredibly difficult it is to pull down even the simplest concepts from the semantic level to the syntactic level will be so silly as to think signs capable of a revolt. I’ll save myself the trouble of an excursion into the cultural history of France, consisting for the most part in first making all conceivable human endeavors subject to a catalogue of proper manners, then forgetting the meaning and purpose of these endeavors once and for all, only to wind up philosophizing about the validity of the existing mores, especially if they’re already in the process of decaying and dying out. It isn’t reality that’s in agony. It’s those philosophers who aren’t up to the task that the management of reality demands*] (SMH, 141; CWH, 118).

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