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Wittgenstein,  
Anxiety, and  
Performance Behavior

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Spencer Golub

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*Wittgenstein, Anxiety, and Performance Behavior*



Spencer Golub



NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY PRESS  
EVANSTON, ILLINOIS

Northwestern University Press  
www.nupress.northwestern.edu

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Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Golub, Spencer, author.

Incapacity : Wittgenstein, anxiety, and performance behavior / Spencer Golub.  
pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-8101-2992-4 (cloth : alk. paper)

1. Wittgenstein, Ludwig, 1889–1951. 2. Language and languages—Philosophy.  
3. Performance—Philosophy. 4. Literature, Modern—20th century—History  
and criticism. 5. Literature—Philosophy. I. Title.

B3376.W564G655 2014

121.68—dc23

2014011601

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Golub, Spencer. *Incapacity: Wittgenstein, Anxiety, and Performance Behavior*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2014.

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*For my mother*



**We go towards the thing we mean.**

—Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §455

**. . . only when one knows the story, does one know what the picture is for.**

—Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §663



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank the students in my graduate seminar “Wittgenstein, Writing, and Performance” at Brown University and especially Ioana Jucan, who served as my research assistant for that course. My greatest thanks are owed to my wife Jeanie for whom nothing is impossible.



## ABBREVIATIONS OF WORKS BY WITTGENSTEIN

- BB** *The Blue and Brown Books: Preliminary Studies for the Philosophical Investigations*, ed. Rush Rhees (New York: Harper and Row, 1965).
- CV** *Culture and Value*, trans. Peter Winch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).
- LC** *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology, and Religious Belief*. Compiled from notes taken by Yorick Smythies, Rush Rhees, and James Taylor, ed. Cyril Barrett (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).
- “LE”** “A Lecture on Ethics,” in *The Philosophical Review* 74 (1965): 3–12.
- LFM** *Wittgenstein’s Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics, Cambridge, 1939*, ed. Cora Diamond (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).
- LWI** *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, vol. 1, ed. G. H. von Wright and H. Nyman, trans. C. G. Luckhardt and Maximilian A. E. Aue (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).
- LWII** *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology: The Inner and the Outer, 1949–1951*, vol. 2, ed. G. H. von Wright and H. Nyman, trans. C. G. Luckhardt and Maximilian A. E. Aue (Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell, 1994).
- LPP** *Wittgenstein’s Lectures on Philosophical Psychology: 1946–47*, ed. P. Geach (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).
- NB** *Notebooks 1914–1916*, ed. G. H. von Wright and G. E. M. Anscombe, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).
- OC** *On Certainty*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright (New York: Harper and Row, 1972).
- PG** *Philosophical Grammar*, ed. Rush Rhees, trans. A. J. P. Kenny (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2004).
- PI** *Philosophical Investigations*, including *Philosophy of Psychology—A Fragment xi (Philosophical Investigations, Part II)*, revised 4th edition, ed. P. M. S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

- PO** *Philosophical Occasions, 1912–1951*, ed. James C. Klagge and Alfred Nordmann (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993).
- POP, xi** *Philosophy of Psychology—A Fragment xi (Philosophical Investigations, Part II)*, 4th ed.
- PR** *Philosophical Remarks*, ed. Rush Rhees, trans. Raymond Hargreaves and Roger White (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).
- RC** *Remarks on Colour*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe, trans. Linda L. McAlister and Margarete Schättle (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2007).
- RFM** *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, 2nd edition, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe, R. Rhees, and G. H. von Wright, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1978).
- RPPI** *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology, Vol. I*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980).
- RPPII** *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology, Vol. II*, ed. G. H. von Wright and Heikki Nyman, trans. C. G. Luckhardt and M. A. E. Aue (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).
- TLP** *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. C. K. Ogden (New York: Routledge, 1999).
- Z** *Zettel*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970).

# Incapacity



## Introduction



# Thoughts Thinking Themselves

Thought thinks itself thinking, imagination pictures extended figures for itself, and union is experienced in the inattention of an activity that feels itself acting, and acted upon, without thinking about it.

—Jean-Luc Nancy

When the legend becomes fact, print the legend.

—from *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*

In Plato's *Theaetetus*, Socrates characterizes the thought process as being an internal dialogue resulting in choice: “[the mind] asks itself questions and answers them, saying yes or no. And when it reaches a conclusion (which may take quite a long time or may involve a sudden leap), stops being divided and starts to affirm something consistently, we call this its belief.”<sup>1</sup> But what if there appears to the mind to be no choice other than to be compelled to make the same choice repeatedly? The mind's willingness to accept “no choice” as fact where it may well be only appearance produces the performance behavior of incapacity, the stuff of personal legend and artistic ascription.

Christopher Nolan's film *Memento* (2000), whose protagonist Leonard Shelby suffers from short-term memory loss and has developed a system of (mis)remembering through body inscription, begins with a sequence that appears to reverse time toward its vanishing point—a crime scene photo whose image disappears the more the protagonist shakes it; the disappearance of said photo back into the Polaroid instant memory camera that snapped it; spilled blood flowing backwards on a tiled floor; the gun that shot the bloody corpse on the floor leaping back into the protagonist's outstretched hand; the bullet shell casings from the gun stirring on the floor (as does the corpse) prior to leaping back into the muzzle of the gun. Although we don't actually see it, for a moment we think we see Leonard jump back into the body of his baggy suit, into the embodied baggy-suit of remembering. The mind's mental

circuitry intuits the mechanical strategy of telling Leonard's story in reverse, a co-articulated incapacity that is ritualistic in the doing *and* non-ritualistic in the forgetting of it having been done. The body that jumps back into the baggy suit, though, is not Leonard's so much as his ghosting of spectatorial desire not to know outside of protagonistic incapacity, not to remember that you cannot know you have short-term memory loss as Leonard does. This not-knowing enables the virtually impossible to become virtually possible, which is how film does its work and the mind does film. Incapacity, (the) film says, is the author of loss, and as such makes us believe *not* that we have no choice but that *our choice is to have no choice*.

This book models such self-pathologizing performance behavior. Wittgenstein says, "Introspection can never lead to a definition. It can only lead to a psychological statement about the introspector" (*RPM* §212). This being said, this is also a book about self-delusion, beginning with the all-inclusive single word "mind" and the misleading, impossible image of the mental picture.<sup>2</sup> To theorize the mind and the mentalistic is, per force, to generalize and so to overstate, while at the same time to render opinion. Neither the mind nor the "I" stands still for modeling, but we model them nonetheless. We know in context, and context does not stand still either, entering instead into the flow of life. Thought is a mental object, the mental object is an image, a picture, and above all, a language, or more properly, as Wittgenstein argues, a language-game. Language-games configure "the whole mind" (itself a misnomer) as a kind of central toolbox. And yet Wittgenstein has no interest in thought-reduction. He is anti-essentialist, opposed to any unified theory and offers none in his work. "I'll teach you differences," Wittgenstein says.<sup>3</sup> As often as not, he illustrates via a negative—what is not the case, what cannot be said, what thinking-mind-the "I" are not, what "I" cannot do, and more generally what cannot be done. Wittgenstein shows us landscape ("perspicuous overview"), not location. In this, he is in tune with a certain vein in postmodern drama, the dialogic, self-interlocutory voice in his writing making the comparison to drama viable, useful, and evocative.

My concern is not brain process but self-consciousness (including memory), the constructedness of a reality that taunts us with the illusion of being unitary and internally visible to the introspective mind. Self-consciousness is self-selecting, self-isolating, and perversely self-sustaining, which is, in part, why I treat behavioral outliers like the criminal, the amnesiac, and the agoraphobe, to which I apply Wittgenstein's self-nominated therapeutic philosophy for clarity's sake and for perspectival relief. The peculiar nature of obsessive-compulsive and generalized anxiety disorder is such that the statements "I know what I am thinking" and "I know *that* I am thinking" are often confused in the mind, as well as in speech. The not-knowing that pertains to these two statements, that turns them into questions, speaks to a mental complaint (condition). Here thought plays language-games with itself and can lead to the performance of behavioral tics. Wittgenstein's advice to

“regard the word ‘think’ as an instrument” (*PI* §360), rather than as a process, is a possible way of breaking the spell cast by the spectre of thought and its agent, what Wittgenstein called “the mysterious ‘I.’”<sup>4</sup>

Wittgenstein accepts his own and philosophy’s limitations as regards explaining why the world is the way it is. He understands that thought can only proceed from the given circumstances *that* the world is and there is no need or possibility to explain (or to determine) this fact. Any discourse of meaning derives from the foregoing proposition, and any representation of the world is just that, a representation and not an explanation of the thing it represents. Early in his thinking, Wittgenstein posited a way of seeing the world as it is *sub specie aeterni*, from the outside, as “a limited whole,” in the form of a primary, material experience that, as David G. Stern summarizes, “looked at in the right way, presents one with insights that cannot be put into words. He conceived of the primary phenomena of immediate experience as a self-contained realm, a world outside space and time, in the sense that it contains a ‘now’ and a ‘here’ but no ‘then’ or ‘there,’ yet provides the basis for the spatial and temporal empirical world, the secondary system.”<sup>5</sup>

It is not too much of a stretch to see that Wittgenstein was, at least at one time in his thinking, describing “liveness” and that his claim for liveness constituted as a limited whole provides a model for life. And with this proposition, Wittgenstein entered the realm of theater, of performance. But with this assertion, a potential stumbling block immediately presented itself. As Stern (who does not have theater or performance in mind in discussing Wittgenstein) has argued: “Even though nothing can be said, or even shown, concerning the primary world . . . Wittgenstein still thought its true nature could, under the right circumstances, ‘show itself.’ The struggle to express these extralinguistic insights into the nature of experience had led Wittgenstein to write in the *Tractatus* that ‘the world is *my* world.’”<sup>6</sup> But when and how can performance’s true nature show itself, *my* world-inside-the-world, (of) which I have dreamed?

“Mental processes just are strange” (*PI* §363). The very strangeness of Wittgenstein’s philosophy can be seen in its protean effort to address the limits of enactment as a *mental* problem, a thought experiment that transforms the impossibility of theoretical performance into something more or less real through language, despite Wittgenstein’s internal resistance to doing so. Janik and Toulmin align Wittgenstein’s neo-Kantian philosophy (aimed at “solving the problem of the nature and limits of description”) with the pre-1914 Viennese intelligentsia’s critique of language (*Sprachkritik*), itself a reaction to a society that was rife with top-down and spectrum-wide communication issues in art and politics, sex (and psychology) and philosophy (and within philosophy, in logic and ethics, ethics and aesthetics, facts and values). Such terms as “authentic language” (proposed by aesthetes) and “everyday language” (a platform on which Wittgenstein built his concept of the ordinary) were offered as solutions to the crisis in (the corruption,

duplicity, mystification of) language as cultural exchange.<sup>8</sup> Citing Kant, who along with the mathematical philosopher Gottlob Frege greatly influenced Wittgenstein, Cora Diamond writes that “understanding . . . [like language and thought] in its correct use [is] in agreement not with some external thing but with itself.”<sup>9</sup>

In struggling to ascertain the meaning of understanding’s agreement with itself, we are misled by external signs that inherently cite other signs, leading not so much to looking as to overlooking not only what a sign or object means but meaning itself, in the sense of what we mean when we think something.<sup>10</sup> What is the “it” that means, the “itself” that understanding self-defines? As Diamond and others have posited and I have experienced, this is not so much a question as a problem, “like trying to move one’s ears when one has never done so, like trying to unravel a knot which one does not even know is actually a knot.”<sup>11</sup> This is difficult enough, but additionally how does the mind avoid not-ting the knot into a solipsistic misreading of understanding as thoughts-thinking-themselves that predicate understanding on imaginary premises?

My mind gravitates to artists like Mac Wellman and Richard Foreman, of whose nonlinear thought-plays (discussed later in this book) it might be said the problem *is* the solution and understanding’s manifest agreement with itself may in part be explained by my own mental circuitry. My mind invents a complex of behavioral rituals and ritualistic thinking to safeguard against the risk-taking it considers *already to have taken place in the imagining*. Owing to this nominal fact, I am not so much comfortable with the thinking that such plays do as I am properly uncomfortable with a level of familiarity that my condition as a mentally impaired spectator does and does not want to believe can manifest understanding (without simplification and distortion) outside itself. I have likewise read Wittgenstein according to what my in/capacity will allow. “To dramatize is to think against the self,” the chorus (the nominal spectators’ surrogate) says in Wellman’s version of *Antigone*.<sup>12</sup> My book, given its aim and the conditions that produced it, cannot help but speak against itself (and to a certain extent, against Wittgenstein), and so, so to speak, dramatize a shadow life in the art and the life that I represent.<sup>13</sup>

Psychiatrists and neuropsychologists agree that I have (a) “quirky brain,” and that a part of my brain has overdeveloped, so that, in effect, my thought is constantly performing for itself in the extreme. This performance anxiety feels to me, as it does for Peter Handke, like “the weight of the world,” and I experience “myself” as “a ghostly event” I will never finish thinking through.<sup>14</sup> And so, I intend to take up in this book Handke’s charge to “try to find another language for our obsessions, and make up adventure stories to go with them.”<sup>15</sup> What does this mean? First, the conditions, the mental processes and events I describe and instantiate in relation to various kinds of performance—dramatic and narrative writing, stand-up comedy, film,

theater—hopefully say something about the nature of creativity or creative thinking, its reach and the grasp it regularly exceeds. Second, a discussion of such thinking opens up all manner of perception and understanding that might in an earlier day simply have been designated “irrational” and even “nonsensical,” the former being to my mind a function of thought and the latter its often calculated result. I hope to make my obsessions our obsessions. Think of me as your Leonard Shelby.

Actually, I think of death from morning to night almost without interruption, usually in a frivolous, off hand way, as though renewing some foolish bet with myself.<sup>16</sup>

Take up philosophy with the idea: Let’s see if it drives the fear out of me.<sup>17</sup>

The legend of performance-making is that it stares down death as a fiction of unknowing. Performance has no real memory of death, and is as frankly embarrassed by its own demonstrable limits as it is by the ontological self-doubt that these limits invite as actable ideas that in worst-case scenarios end in solipsistic defeat. Anxiety, as a performance behavior, has strangely become my bid for personal immortality. I know this for a fact, because I am now writing this all down in a book, which I began at the same age that Wittgenstein was when he died. I am wedded to my death (as fact or as idea?) and must periodically renew my vows, a silent ceremony of non-responsiveness from my intended over which anxiety, like death, presides with more gravity than presence. (“Death is not an event in life. Death is not lived through” [*TLP* §6.4311].) From the beginning (*TLP* §1), Wittgenstein tells us that in the beginning, “The world is everything that is the case.” The world is, like the word in its atomistic proposition, an encapsulated presence/present. It is non-hypothetical, premised on nothing but itself, timeless in the sense of obviating all time that is not present. My death is an intrusive or alien thought, death being something I can only “know” as imminence in the form of a premonition, despite my speaking of it as if it were a fact.

Imminence and, even more so, immanence, essentially borrow death from an unknown (idea of the) future, so that thinking of death appears to be a thought that is thinking itself outside the logical space that my present thinking inhabits. Solipsism posits a world that is scaled to my capacity for conceiving (of) it, knowing it, and yet death, being a non-event in my life, my world, is, in a formal sense, inconceivable, and so a margin of my incapacity. But it is our thinking that sets limits to what our minds can know and that convinces us we know what we cannot. And this “cannot,” which we don’t entirely know, ghosts through our thinking like a failure whose origin we can only fictionally cite. Fact attaches itself to the thought “cannot,” because context cannot abide thought’s non-participation.

Wittgenstein vests truth in the ordinariness of facts and in the fact that what all “truth-functional notations” have in common are rules. He presents these rules, these facts, as non-propositional propositions, whose elementary atomic structure is irreducible, monadic after Leibniz.<sup>18</sup> Like context vis-à-vis thought, representation cannot abide the possibility of monadic self-containment, there being no ontological unit small enough of which representation cannot say, *Et in Arcadia ego*—even in the abstract ideal there is (not manifest death but) death as manifestness. And so representation in language aligns itself with elementary fact, a proposition with which Wittgenstein anxiously-reluctantly agrees by proposing that “the structure of the world is mirrored, or pictured, by the structure of language: all meaningful language is analyzable into ‘elementary propositions,’ logical atoms.” But language “disguises thought. So much so that from the outward form of the clothing [Wittgenstein here adopting a representational example] it is impossible to infer the form of the thought beneath it.” It is the fact that “the tacit conventions on which the understanding of everyday language depends are enormously complicated” (*TLP* §4.002) that makes the ordinary so confounding in its extraordinary manifestness.<sup>19</sup>

If you are unwilling to know what you are, your writing is a form of deceit.<sup>20</sup>

I am mindful of how the book in hand troubles this notion by conflating and conflating the ordinary with the extraordinary. I note here the absence of neuroscience from my thought experiment, perhaps because it could see through the extraordinariness of personal example, although this absence likewise speaks to the incapacity that is this book’s subject. Still, Wittgenstein believed that a philosophy of mind need not be linked to scientific discovery, to technology, and that brain states are not necessarily synonymous with mental states, that is, with thoughts.<sup>21</sup> “The willing self,” Wittgenstein suggests, “is not part of the world and, hence, there is no reason to suppose it will be countenanced by neuroscience.”<sup>22</sup> The ordinary is not inevitably reclaimed as a technical concept in what is called Wittgenstein’s “insulation thesis of philosophy from science.” By allowing the mind its own illogical reasons and designs, as demanding in their way as those of medicine or neuroscience, I am responding to the charge of the general anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorders that have engendered this study.

The body does play an important and active role in my engagement with the mind as an engine and artifact of causality, within which I include reflex, effect, affect, and mortality: trans-dramatically speaking—inevitability. Obsessive-compulsives are always being told that they live too much in their minds, but they live too much in their bodies as well. Or more accurately, their minds live too much in their bodies and their bodies in their minds. The advantage of reading Wittgenstein in relation to an embodied

mental-performance paradigm is to engage with the self-modeling insulation philosophy so often invoked (in relation to science, among other things) and unfortunately, according to Wittgenstein, achieved (his famous “fly-bottle” analogy).<sup>23</sup> I want to take up what I read as being Wittgenstein’s charge to create a seal between the epistemology of individual and disciplinary knowledge and knowing. Hopefully, this strategy in turn brings to performance a deeper and yet more elemental perplexity in relation to its self-making than it usually allows. Wittgenstein’s philosophy enables us to see the theatrical miniature, not simply as a reduction of the world but theater *in* miniature, as what it is when more tightly fitted to its own particular form and to the consequences of its own self-contesting actions.<sup>24</sup> The world’s agents and agencies can then extrapolate these actions to reshape the *conditions* and not merely pictures of real life.

A study such as this cannot help but be appropriative, intrusive, and, in the end, somewhat embarrassed by what it attempts and why it attempts it. Wittgenstein acknowledged both the importance (in philosophy) of knowing when to stop asking questions and the difficulty in doing so.<sup>25</sup> This book does not know when to stop asking questions, even to the point of asking answerless questions. I have on many occasions knowingly (and, I am sure, unknowingly) wrested Wittgenstein’s intentions from him and, as others have before me, read into “the compressed and aphoristic character of these works . . . to find [my] own concerns and commitments.”<sup>26</sup> I hope that in doing so I have been vigilant not to let my reimagining of contexts in which to locate and to which to apply Wittgenstein’s thought overcome the integrity of the texts themselves. However much he attempted to narrow his focus to the primacy of language as a ruling subject and to grammar as a dominant methodological scheme by which to comprehend the world as it is, Wittgenstein’s reiterations and perspectival shifts and the continuous self-contestation in his writing constitute an openness that may not have been there from the start. The reader of Wittgenstein is invited into the work and made complicit in its devising and its devices, as the spectator is with Leonard Shelby’s mis/remembered incapacity, his inability to do what needs/needed to be done.<sup>27</sup>

Wittgenstein’s notion of incapacity has to do less with ineffability than with impossibility, and this impossibility is discussed within the confines of the ordinary through the vehicle of language as both curator and creator, stager and obscurer of the world that each of us comes to in our own time in our own way. His discussion of limits and of language-games aligns well if inexactly with the idea of a stage, its frame and conventions, its spatio-temporal overlays of meaning and the propensity for hiddenness but also with the impossibility of showing more than we know. Wittgenstein’s philosophy has an arc to it, like a good story or play, but there are no discretely resolved acts, nor even a final resolution. He is a sort of monologist, whose speech (in which he puts great stock) reveals his impatience with the incomprehensible speaker/uncomprehending audience, with the “play of meanings

between speakers” in his writing and what they “broadly” confess (“‘confession’ deriving from *cum* + *fateor*, ‘an act of speech that seeks its completion in another’s acknowledgment’”).<sup>28</sup> Although, as James Wetzel reminds us, “Wittgenstein was well-known for the severity of his self-judgments and his compulsive need to confess his shortcomings to friends and acquaintances,” Wittgenstein famously stated that if he wrote a book “the world as I found it,” he would have to leave himself (i.e., the “I”) out (*TLP* §5.631).<sup>29</sup> It is, however, unclear from this passage whether Wittgenstein wants the reader to assume that the conditional book’s title or even the idea for the book was assigned to him or else freely chosen. Would he *want* to write this book, and what would make him think that he does? Would he give himself no choice but to write this book, and would this “no choice” signal a performance behavior?

I had no choice but to write this book, to embrace this Wittgensteinian aporia of real or simulated doubt. Lee Braver has stated that mental life only occupies Wittgenstein “when something has knocked us out of alignment.” This is, in fact, what has happened to me, so that “interpretation does not come to an end” (*RFM* §342) but instead enters the dreaded “Interpretation Aporia” and the im/possibility of infinite regress.<sup>30</sup> Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), which figures prominently in my narrative and (self-)critique, manifests what interpretation is in place of what things manifestly are. It is, as well, a picture-making complaint, which aligns it with art and the poetic philosophy to which Wittgenstein aspired and sometimes (e.g., his early picture theory of language/meaning) disowned. Philosophers generally agree that there is an early and a later Wittgenstein, a fact that though acknowledged in this book does not affect its structure. The picture theory that so informs Wittgenstein’s early work is introduced in this book’s first chapter and then revisited in its final chapter.

Although an OCD mind created this book, it does not take one to read it. That being said, it might help to know how the book works. The idea of the first chapter is to give the reader the feel prior to the exegesis of what this work, after Wittgenstein’s example, is doing. It instructs the reader to follow the routes that are laid out in the process of attempting to answer what appear to be abstract or impossible questions (e.g., “Is Oedipus a boiling pot?”), to consider how sentence structure is thought-structure in the process of checking (on) itself—a language of incapacity. Initially, my somewhat fluid thought process plants some of Wittgenstein’s mental stakes in the groundless ground of incapacity’s meaning un/making, constituting a kind of anecdotal survey of what the body of the book contends (with) and portends. I believe it is necessary to embody for the reader not just what is being said but *what is happening in the text*. My aim is not only to construct Wittgenstein for the reader but to construct the reader that Wittgenstein may have in mind. And so, I offer a series of self-afflicting philosophical propositions that illustrate both agon and agony. The reader’s presence in this book is an articulation of

Wittgenstein's recurring question, "Can we experience another's pain?" The performance of pain behavior as a form of othering, a show that is in fact a "tell," begins to close in on the book's central argument that *pain behavior is in fact a form of performance behavior*. Furthermore, structured performance in the representational arts, particularly theater, rises to the level of articulated disability as a mode of and motive for incapacity's expression.

The succeeding chapters mostly present case studies of artists whose own anxiety (or that of their works) is in dialogue with the book's central strain. Acknowledgment, a theme in chapter 1, advances to anatomization as a technique in chapter 2, wherein the figures and figurative wholes of chapter 1 are treated as (body) parts that must be looked at and read more closely—swollen-footed Oedipus's physical disappearance at Colonus sets up Kaspar's hand's appearance through a stage curtain and a hand made figurative in Steve Martin's stand-up comedy act. Oedipus's wounded feet return in the person of stand-up comics' cold feet and a pair of severed feet in Peter Chel-som's film *Funny Bones*. The prop arrow Steve Martin wears through his head ties over in my mind to a ubiquitous arrow design in a Gombrowicz novella in order to elucidate Wittgenstein's and my own tangle of meaning. And so on.

Chapter 3 speaks to the theme of imaginability, with which Wittgenstein, the OCD mind, and this book struggle. The obsessive-compulsive's catastrophic intuition enacts the need for control resulting in the manufacture of problematic fictions that are all resolved without resolution. The chapter examines fictional characters whose pursuit of an invented life-logic leads them beyond their limits, even as these limits are reinscribed in their acts of transgression. The limit casts a catastrophic shadow, and nonsense (the so-called nothing out of which Wittgenstein makes something) is the sentence's catastrophic sign. Language breaking down under questioning through which it acquires itself by confessing its own illogic is a recurring theme and practice in Wittgenstein and in this book. OCD, in this chapter (and again in chapters 6 and 7), is presented as (a) criminal dis-ease—not so furtive as to want not to be caught, to be found out, but in fact wanting to confess to a crime that it intuitively has committed or is in the act of committing. This intrusive thought intensifies as the book proceeds. Furthermore, the lying that the OCD mind does to itself, in this chapter and its examples, uncomfortably coincides with what an actor does, that is, knowingly lie as his theatrical condition demands. This is just one of the ways in which the actor is seen as being "wounded" in this text. Performance may make a show of incapacity, but it is not a victimless crime.

Chapter 4 considers the not-knowingness of incapacity. Picture gives way to scene, where stage directions model the space of not-knowing that performance helps make disappear. A certain scenic single-mindedness that redoubles representation, a version of Cavell's inordinate knowledge performs a Wittgensteinian relation to surface over depth-seeing. Reading and

color, action and gesture (recalling the hand)-troubled perception, constitute figures of play in what Wittgenstein calls a language-game that duplicates life's parameters so as to go unnoticed. I regard this as a form of overwriting, whose effect is a post-Cartesian transparency, a see-through thought space (what thinking looks like), a Wittgensteinian thought-syntactical theater.

In chapter 5 I demonstrate ways in which Wittgenstein's idea of the language-game can be turned. Artists like Handke, Haneke, Foreman, and Wellman game representation and spectatorship by presenting language as a dissolvent of logical form, a practice that is at once painful and therapeutic, and that brings to mind Wittgenstein's "seeing as" and Cartesian radical doubt. Chapter 6 more anecdotally hunts the substantive mind, apart from ego, devoid of solipsistic display and incapacity. But insomniac and agoraphobic self-delusion and self-confession (in myself and in both fictional and factual surrogates) block (i.e., obscure and direct) my path. Solipsism (derived from radical doubt), it turns out, is OCD's way of spinning a yarn of supposedly some other limit-condition. I pursue future versions of myself (my son, my agoraphobic neighbor) and of posthumous people (e.g., *The Third Man's* Harry Lime) into the underground tunnels and maze-like anxiety of OCD's thought thinking itself in the form of a thing-like mental state. Catastrophic numbers obsession circles back into view in scenarios of insomnia and sleep-walking (in Scorsese, Kubrick, and von Trier), (re)enacting the nostalgic spatiotemporal paranoia of the fictional closed system of thought (the OCD metatext). Self-incriminating fictions, murderers, and murderers of sleep are piling up and begin to follow me home. OCD is an illogical, non-normative condition that only pays lip service to what morality says or the law allows. Generally, OCD acknowledges ritual itself, and only ritual, as a real system of belief, the life-code, and practice teaches you over and over again that even ritual cannot be trusted. OCD looks fearfully at the world in terms of consequences in the absence of truth and of guilt in the absence of ethics. Because there is no good that worry cannot erode and no end to self-incrimination, OCD takes absolute measures, experiencing the world with a violent intensity of thought that casts the thinker in the darkest possible light that fantasy allows. This is why murder and murderers fascinate the OCD mind. Murder constitutes the perfect limit-condition, the aporia of the thinker, his thought-action and his victim, the thought-object. More than having consequences, murder is absolutely consequential; with the exception of psychopaths or sociopaths, the mind cannot get past murder, and this inability to get past something that it sees as being terrible is a point of identification for OCD.

Chapter 7 analyzes so-called criminal masterminds in Mamet and Hitchcock as OCD surrogates conning systems and classifications of thought, in the process revealing language's nihilistic potential for self-undoing. This in turn compels reevaluation of people and things, names, numbers, and signs, all underwritten by the word/concept "nothing," to which any consideration of Wittgenstein and OCD is compelled to return. So too the gambler's lingo

(and the psychiatrist's perspicuous reading) of "the tell" that speaks over the mind's self-censoring and, in the case of OCD, does so "to great 'affect'." Wittgenstein is invited in to study word-objects as evidence of error, a sign that an ulterior logic is working itself out, often with the unwelcome participation of contingency through which doubt again enters the picture.

Chapter 8 explores the not-knowingness of the idiot persona of Jerry Lewis. This phobic chapter (especially regarding miscommunication) makes the reader more aware of what it is like to be inside the picture, in which the medium (television, film, stage, philosophy, OCD) conditions psychosomatic problems and message-reception. The embarrassment of performance behavior provokes ever more ludicrously illogical responses to the world of objects that hide themselves in turn, as if they were embarrassed, and the object analogies that take their place. I consider the stage reduced to a Wittgensteinian spartan state of being and performance (i.e., to its stage directions). Blocking presents as the visible lag that occurs in the thought process between giving and receiving of image and information, opening a gap in understanding bridged by personal interpretation. The mental object that is unknowingly identical with itself and its phenomenological dis-ease is staging's OCD.

Chapter 9 asks whether it is possible to be outside the picture, to be homeless. I present a series of homeless men and women (in Ford, Chekhov, and Handke) whose un/acknowledged condition articulates Wittgenstein's proposition, "I don't know my way about," as well as this book's compulsion to advance answers to questions that cannot be properly asked outside the limits of its own condition (i.e., from inside the picture). Real and imagined body parts reconfigure around the theme of anxiety as a homeless wandering of the mental object that cannot be made to disappear.

After numerous examples of how the sentence (taught him by his Prompters) "I want to be a person like somebody else was once" was used as a form of address to others, to objects, to the world at large, to and as an expression of himself, Handke's Kaspar finally states, "I wanted to know . . . what it actually means."<sup>31</sup> This is what my book hopes to achieve—a way through ordinary and extraordinary misunderstanding. "What is your aim in philosophy?" Wittgenstein asked and then answered, "To show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle" (*PI* §309).<sup>32</sup> I have returned to Wittgenstein's therapeutic philosophy to escape my own fly-bottle, the enthrallment of incapacity as a necessary, essential, redundant (obsessive-compulsive), and dissociative performance behavior. Or is all of this, even my misunderstanding, really only an act?

Acting results from the marriage of two ghosts, the unseen metaphorical "as" and the unvoiced conditional "as if," as in the statement, "He acts as if he did not expect to find himself on a stage." This stage direction introduces the play *Skylight* (1979), one of Nicholas Mosley's three "Plays for Not Acting" (collectively titled *Catastrophe Practice*). The stage direction partners with the following epigraph:

To act is to do and to pretend.  
What are we doing that is not  
pretending when we know that  
we are acting?<sup>33</sup>

What better place to begin than with an impossible question?

## Chapter 1



# Tractatus Illogico-Philosophicus

Only thought resembles. It resembles by what it sees, hears, or knows; it becomes what the world offers it.

—René Magritte, “To Michel Foucault”

The only thing of which Wittgenstein speaks transparently in his writing is his own failure. The preface to his major work warns the reader in advance that he has failed to write “a good book” (*PI* §4), a thought that follows after some years the famous disavowal of the book’s value that ends his *Tractatus*. Even Wittgenstein’s sympathetic Cambridge University colleague G. E. Moore wrote: “I am very much puzzled as to the meaning of what he said, and also as to the connexion between different things which he said . . . which he seemed anxious to make.” The anxiety attached to Wittgenstein’s attempts to communicate what was in his mind is central to the present book’s argument and to the argument it has with itself.<sup>1</sup> Guy Davenport characterized the Wittgensteinian thought dynamic as being obsessive in the sense that as soon as it is asked, his initial question (which speaks to philosophical subject content) proceeds to expose the limitations of its own language. So, a question along the lines of “What can we think of the world?” turns in on itself, engendering such follow-up questions as: “What is thought?” “What is the meaning of *can*, of *can we*, of *can we think*?” “What is the meaning of *we*?” “What does it mean to ask what is the meaning of *we*?” “If we answer these questions on Monday, are the answers valid on Tuesday?” “If I answer them at all, do I think the answer, believe the answer, know the answer, or imagine the answer?”<sup>2</sup> Questioning is for Wittgenstein a way of diagramming thought like a sentence and of obsessively checking on language to determine what it lets us say about knowing. But if saying what knowing is can only be shown to be incomplete, then endless questioning of what we say articulates what for Wittgenstein must be a necessary failure.

Beginning with the self-denying *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922), the only book published during his lifetime, Wittgenstein lays out a picture

of the external world that offers the artist an articulated if not wholly concrete construction of logical space that is internally attained.<sup>3</sup> This logical space grounds possibility in the givenness, the thereness of a world that is impossible to understand, except as a premise, a given circumstance. Wittgenstein demonstrates how thoughts and the propositions we use to express the atomic facts that comprise reality devolve from this same givenness or “self-evidence of the world,” as he would later call it, “which is expressed in the very fact that language means only it, can mean only it. . . . No language is thinkable which doesn’t express this world” (*PO* 193). And yet understanding this fact does not necessarily translate into understanding this language in its matter-of-factness, its ordinariness, or why our language puts us in a state of philosophical unease. The proposition, the human articulation of what is factual, “constructs the world” (*TLP* §4.024), but only insofar as the factual is already there and beyond our capacity to make it be there or to make it what it already is. Our naming and defining the things of the world via language come after-the-fact and so do not give subjects and objects their essential meaning. Our language and indeed (and especially, says Wittgenstein) our philosophy confuse and obscure what is with what we make of it. “Philosophy,” says Stephen Mulhall after Wittgenstein, “is essentially diseased—a pathology of human culture, something that purely and simply damages the realm of the ordinary.”<sup>4</sup>

(As if someone were to buy several copies of today’s morning paper to assure himself that what it said was true.) (*PI* §265)

Wittgenstein offers the foregoing parenthetical statement in reference to the guesswork of imagination (and of perhaps psychologically driven imaginary scenarios) in relation to factuality, leaving the mind bereft of anything but slippery, incorrect (but not, he indicates elsewhere, necessarily dismissible or unappealing) means of seeking something akin to factual verification of the ordinary. In that the proposition to which this parenthetical belongs, along with the proposition that follows it (*PI* §266), specifically reference timekeeping (imaginary timetables and clocks), it is interesting to see how Wittgenstein’s “as if” statement takes note of a slippage that, while it relates to memory, has more directly to do with time itself. Simply put, what does Wittgenstein mean by “to assure himself that what it said was true?” (1) What the newspaper said about it having been published today, that it is “today’s paper,” and further the morning edition? If the paper’s temporality is in question, so too is everything else that the paper contains (of course, allowing for the fact that the paper does not actually contain temporality as such, only its hypothetically analogized “as if-ness”). (2) Is it possible that Wittgenstein’s reference to the publication as being “today’s morning paper” is merely meant to be descriptive and not substantive to his argument (reinforcing the overall statement’s parenthetical placement)? (3) Might Wittgenstein instead be subverting a truth-evaluation that is based upon repetition and multiplicity

(several copies), as being an unreliable, even an irrelevant premise? Wittgenstein, as always shadowed by the anxiety mechanism of his self-created interlocutor, seems to want to establish “an independent authority” (*PI* §265) as being necessary to establish a claim to truth that cannot otherwise be substantiated. But who or what can play this role on a consistent basis, and is he being truthful with us as to his so-called belief or intention?<sup>5</sup>

Wittgenstein is here in the midst of his private language/private pain discussion, an argument he used as a means to many ends and not as an end in itself. So, in this context, independent authority must be considered not so much in terms of someone but in terms of the “as if someone,” the conditional subject of a parenthetical statement. And therein lies a mental (and perhaps intellectual) problem that if addressed in a Foreman or a Wellman play would regard the hole or gap in truth as being itself a legitimate form of understanding that remakes truth as a conditional or even a parenthetical notion. No matter how and how often Wittgenstein jousts with the notion of the private and the efficacy of imaginary scenarios, his writing style speaks the language of the imaginary and is enticed by the conditional solutions offered by imaginary scenarios. And why not, since Wittgenstein believed that since “language cannot express what belongs to the essence of the world . . . [it] can only say what we could also imagine differently” (*PO* 189). Wittgenstein could no more stop imagining than he could stop doing philosophy (not for lack of trying) or abandon the world (like his suicided older brothers). Obsession is after all a form of persistence.

Gordon Baker’s mining of Wittgenstein’s writings reveals that the range of “illnesses” his therapeutic philosophy sought to treat included “unrest, torment, disquiet, drives, obsessions, craving, revulsion, angst, irritation, profound uneasiness of mind, profound mental discomfort, obsessional doubt, troubles, compulsions to say things, irresistible temptations, alarm.” In seeking to combat the misleading pictures and analogies we carry in our minds (which, perhaps after philosopher Francis Bacon’s “idols,” he called “prejudices”), Wittgenstein was necessarily battling his own.<sup>6</sup> His philosophy is riven by his incapacity and lifted in its fragments above and beyond any provisional claims that philosophy might otherwise make to achieving even an abstract certainty. Like Hamlet and the play that bears his name in its variants, it is unclear whether Wittgenstein cannot make up his mind or is obsessively continuing to remake his mind in what appears to be both a public setting and a philosophically discredited private one.<sup>7</sup>

### Reading Wittgenstein Aloud

**The question at hand is not whether reading happens in the brain, but whether what happens in the brain is reading.**

—Daniel Ruppel, “‘And Now’ Presenting Wittgenstein: Time, and the Tension of Thinking Through It All”

Select a passage at random from Wittgenstein's writing and read it aloud. By doing this, you open the possibility of catching and reversing your expectation of what the writing is doing in mid-thought. You experience something like Heidegger's belief that "what is called thinking" is that which "calls us into thinking."<sup>8</sup> Some act of counter-understanding is taking place, whereby what a writer means and especially what the reader wants the philosophical writer to do, which is to reinforce our trust that he is making his case using all his powers of logic and consistency, is undone by a question that is raised in our mind by what we hear our own voice doing. Reading aloud invokes the Wittgensteinian theme of whether or not a series of words can actually sound like a sentence that is well-formed and makes sense. A sentence can be grammatically but not logically well-formed, or else may, as in Lewis Carroll, sound illogical but make sense. That a sentence, owing to its structure, can produce an audible "ring of truth," however, speaks to what Wittgenstein called "surface grammar" and not to the "depth grammar" which is not so much hidden as newly dimensional. I would liken depth grammar to a conception of *mise-en-scène* as something other than staging (although it includes staging, much as depth grammar includes sentence structure).<sup>9</sup>

Take, for example, the following statement, which Wittgenstein makes in the course of trying (not very hard) to define thinking:

These auxiliary activities are not the thinking; but one imagines thinking as the stream which must be flowing under the surface of these expedients, if they are not after all to be mere mechanical procedures. (Z §107)

When the writing says "but one imagines . . . ," the silent reader assumes that "one" here stands for the writer, Wittgenstein, so that Wittgenstein is speaking as and for himself in linking the auxiliary to the mechanical and thinking to flow, which these functions do not capture. In fact, they interrupt the flow of the written passage that contains them. However, when reading this passage aloud, the voice discovers the possibility that the "one" to whom Wittgenstein alludes may not after all be himself, but as the impersonality of the construction suggests, a hypothetical someone (else). This is a more subtle writerly procedure than the interlocutor's vocal persona, which Wittgenstein wrote into the *Tractatus* and, especially, *Philosophical Investigations* to openly second-guess his own propositions. This technique recalls Chekhov's habit of undercutting many of his own seriously held thoughts by putting them in the mouths of intellectually untrustworthy dramatic characters.

Wittgenstein's harsh, ascetic persona, which we tend to read into his work, often leads us to misread his writing as following the very philosophical hard line that he set out to bend if not break. What we hear by reading Wittgenstein aloud is the writer's suspension of judgment, his unwillingness to choose sides as to how best to characterize what thinking is and is not. This unvoiced

motive advances a “both . . . and” hypothetical (supported by the possible transposition of an “if” from “if they are not” to “if one imagines”) that is more poetic than it is normatively philosophical. True to his word(s), Wittgenstein is not philosophizing; he is “doing philosophy,” crafting a new line that puts the reader in mind of what the lines do, and not of what they directly say. From here, one can imagine (and here “one” is inclusive of my personal opinion) reading all of Wittgenstein aloud, much as one would Shakespeare, not solely for meaning but for the subtle values of what sound puts one in mind.

In reading Wittgenstein, we (are encouraged to) find ourselves constrained by our assertions, misled by our creations, even though (and also because) these pictures or representations model the possibilities of what both truth and falsehood are. Like Oedipus, whose limping thought serves as a remainder but not a reminder of the facts that lie outside his comprehension, we get ourselves into more and more trouble by thinking we know the way. Like Oedipus, who is seduced by his own rhetoric and by the body language he has adopted as a king, exterior narratives concerning reality are created and adopted to disguise our incapacity to know in the fullest sense what is, and within that “what,” *who* we are. He and we cannot infer the form of the thought that our decorative inventions clothe, “because the external form of the clothes is constructed with quite another object than to let the form of the body be recognized” (*TLP* §4.002). Pained Wittgenstein, with his “riddling, ironic style” that must be “painstakingly piece[d] together in order to get the drift of his thought” (his “way of seeing”), recalls Oedipus or more properly, the self-interlocutory Oedipus-Sphinx as the embodiment of entanglement and the language-game that seeks to disentangle it. The strangler (“Sphinx” in ancient Greek) has its hands around its own neck, chokes on its own grim laughter that only s/he can hear, makes nothing (death) out of something (the life of man), and throws itself into the aporia, the abyss, as if it were the end of something.<sup>10</sup>

So what would Wittgenstein make of Oedipus, who Wellman writes “possessed one eye too many” and goes off to die in a place of visual prohibition at Colonus.<sup>11</sup> “Oedipus is no more,” the Messenger reports. “We turned around—and nowhere saw that man” (death, as always in Wittgenstein, not being an event in life). The Messenger report’s failure to capture vision speaks to a certain Wittgensteinian un/awareness.<sup>12</sup>

In the language-game of reporting there is the case of the report being called into question, of one’s assuming that the reporter is merely conjecturing what he reports, that he hasn’t ascertained it. Here he might say: *I know* it. That is: It is not mere surmise.—Should I in this case say that he is telling the certainty, the certainty he feels about his report, to me? No, I wouldn’t like to say that. He’s simply playing the language-game of reporting, and “I know it” is the form of a report. (*RPPII* §287)

Even if we think we understand what someone intends to say, we cannot be certain that he understands the intention of the language-game attached to the role he is playing. The Messenger's speech says nothing of the world, and as Oedipus's death is only identical with itself, it therefore, in Wittgenstein's reading, is tautological—that is, it says nothing too. This is the appropriate lesson to draw from a life that answered fate with the words:

And yet, how was I evil in myself?  
I had been wronged, I retaliated; even had I  
Known what I was doing, was that evil?  
Then, knowing nothing, I went on. Went on.  
But those who wronged me knew, and ruined me.<sup>13</sup>

Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe has productively connected the concept of “nothing” (which so occupies Wittgenstein in the form of tautology in the *Tractatus*) with the idea of mimesis that Aristotle retrospectively saw in ancient Greek tragedy:

One must oneself be nothing, have nothing proper to oneself except an equal aptitude for all sorts of things, roles, characters, functions, and so on. The paradox states a law of impropriety, which is also the very law of mimesis: only a man without qualities, the being without properties or specificity, the subjectless subject (absent from himself) is able to present or produce the general.<sup>14</sup>

Oedipus the King, who speaks in terms of “we” (i.e., his person and his charges), is blinded by language from seeing the “I,” even before he blinds his eye in a tautological act producing nothing. “Oedipus is no more; / But what has happened cannot be told so simply—It was no simple thing.”<sup>15</sup> But there is more here to know, and of knowing there is more here than meets the eye.

In his discussion of Wittgenstein's statement “It is correct to say ‘I know what you are thinking,’ and wrong to say ‘I know what I am thinking’” (*PI*, xi §315) (part of an attempt to understand the philosopher's argument regarding whether we can know another's pain), Stanley Cavell writes:

Knowing oneself is the capacity, as I wish to put it, for placing-oneself-in-the-world. It is not merely that to know I have in fact *done* what I intended. . . . I have to look to see *whether* it is done; it is also, and crucially that I have to know that *that* circumstance is (counts as) what I did.<sup>16</sup>

There are several thoughts at work in Cavell's statement that are pertinent to my theme. Cavell makes it clear that knowing oneself is a function of one's capacity for checking and that such checking is not so easily satisfied,

his conditional and tense changes expressing the anxiety of language as a form of checking in this regard. The checking action is nothing without a consciousness of expectation and some criteria upon which such expectation is based. Furthermore, the checking action is executed in order to know but not necessarily to be certain. Finally, the concept of knowing oneself must not pass unnoticed inside the mind but instead is proved by “the capacity . . . for placing oneself-in-the-world.” Recall Wittgenstein’s parable of the giant eye:

Suppose all the parts of my body could be removed until only one eyeball was left; and this were to be firmly fixed in a certain position, retaining its power of sight. How would the world appear to me? I wouldn’t be able to perceive any part of myself, and supposing my eyeball is transparent for me, I wouldn’t be able to see myself in the mirror either. One question arising at this point is: would I be able to locate myself by means of my visual field? “Locate myself,” of course here only means to establish a particular structure for the visual space. (*PR* §72)

This locating oneself “by means of [a] visual field,” that is, “establishing a particular structure of the visual space,” is what in theater (Oedipus’s domain) is called creating a *mise-en-scène*, a placement of the subject not in the world but in a consciousness of the world and in the world’s consciousness, which the stage treats as an imaginary scenario.

Thought is always overwhelmed by existence, and existence never stops being exceeded by thought.<sup>17</sup>

Knowing oneself is a matter of emplacement, relation, and proper fit. With this in mind, the interlocutory mode of discourse in Wittgenstein’s work becomes a sort of checking not on what he knows but on what he thinks he can say. And since this is in turn based on a process of discovering meaning as a mode of making, an active process, there is already a measure of self that can mistakenly pass for the fullness of self-knowing and lead one further away from the world. If Wittgenstein, as Mulhall states, “does not commit himself to the assumption that knowledge is a matter of certainty,” it is, I would say, because Wittgenstein’s brief is not for knowledge’s body nor even for knowing, but for learning how we know and how knowledge’s body is figuratively pierced and parsed, analogically and analytically wounded in the process.<sup>18</sup> This teaching function constitutes the aphoristic lesson-plan template of the *Tractatus* and carries over as the premise, structure, and first object lesson of the *Philosophical Investigations*. Here Wittgenstein questions whether we can assume that a child sent to the store to purchase five red apples can know not just what “apple,” “red,” and “five” look like but what and how individual meaning attaches to each word-concept.<sup>19</sup>

The Greek oracle instructed Oedipus to “know thyself,” but the subtext of this message would be blunted and the expectation demanded by the message would go unreceived if the King took this to mean simply “accumulate knowledge of thyself.” Knowledge is not itself a way of knowing. If it were, Handke’s language-constructed/-constricted fool Kaspar would be king. As *Kaspar* demonstrates, knowledge normalizes thought rather than letting it go to find alternative places in the world, as did Oedipus at Colonus. Oedipus’s pursuit of knowledge (initially of a self-knowledge predicated only on the equation that he drew between king and state) is relentless. Wittgenstein writes, “Now can I imagine ‘every rod has a length.’ Well, I just imagine a rod; and that is all” (*PI* §251). In the beginning, this is all Oedipus (thinks he) needs to know about being a ruler. It is only by making the decision to *acknowledge*, to act upon the beyond-ness of what he knows and what it means that he becomes a true ruler, death’s instrument for measuring the nothing that becomes all men and that all men become.<sup>20</sup> In this case, the analogy of ruler as subject and ruler as object reads or sounds like it should be illogical but is not, like the pun: “The tailors called a council of the board to see what *measures* should be taken.”<sup>21</sup>

The vanished Oedipus leaves behind nothing but the lesson of what nothing is—a self-fulfilling prophecy that for me (re)turns the physical to the psychosomatic, to the imaginary scenario of the pathological condition being identical only with itself—tautological, performative. Thus do I imagine the deposed and self-blinded ruler Oedipus led by his daughters, walking with the aid of a long staff on the road to Colonus. The staff’s mimetic prop(ping up) says something about the ex-ruler taking his own measure as *mise-en-abyme*. In my ticking mind and body, I am Antigone (another of Oedipus’s props), speaking out of turn and after the fact, after the father’s example (acknowledgment coming only when he is “late”), in the obsessive-compulsive non-linearity of recurrence as a performative pathology. Time, like everything else that is subject to human thought, to human making, checks back on itself and is part of the dis-ease.

### Is Oedipus a Boiling Pot?

The Messenger who retails the circumstances surrounding Oedipus’s death can speak of the scene without necessarily being able to say with any certainty what the meaning or facts of the scene are, or how these facts can reveal anything of meaning’s mystery and of mystery’s meaning. He has no standard for measuring beyond his conventional stage role, which is only to speak and not to say, to cite a polarity that Wittgenstein describes without firmly defining in the *Tractatus*. While it is clear that for Wittgenstein “saying” means saying *something*, whereas “speaking” may include saying *nothing*, there is a meaningful slippage here. It is certainly possible to speak

nonsense (we don't commonly say "say nonsense"), but can we also say that it is possible to say nothing in the sense of negating something, making nothing of something via saying? Can we undo not just meaning but the capacity of a word to mean what it says? Is this not what the Sphinx does by reducing knowing to a riddle that only goes so far as to foresee the limit of man's physical decrepitude? Having riddled the aporia into storyboarding his mortal condition, Oedipus enters into the depth grammar of the theatrical un-seeing place to realize incapacity's overall design. Oedipus has entered the theater of my dreams, of which the Messenger spoke without realizing what he was saying: this "cannot be told so simply—It [is] no simple thing."

Let us turn to Wittgenstein's famous question concerning a picture of a boiling pot:

Of course, if water boils in a pot, steam comes out of the pot, and also pictured steam comes out of a picture of the pot. But what if one insisted on saying that there must also be something boiling in the pictured pot? (*PI* §297)

Wittgenstein creates this "parable," as Cavell calls it, in his discussion of the sensation of pain and the question of whether you can ever know someone else's pain.<sup>22</sup> How much must you know about the pain to say that you know it? Must you know the contents of the pot in the picture to accept the fact that it is boiling despite the fact that what is boiling inside the pot is not pictured? The philosophical debate that arises from this question centers on the translation of *Vorstellung* (image/imagination) and *Bild* (picture/artifact), the two words that Wittgenstein twists and turns leading up to his proposition, "What is in the imagination is not a picture, but a picture can correspond to it." (*Eine Vorstellung ist kein Bild, aber ein Bild kann ihr entsprechen.*) (*PI* §301). But is what Wittgenstein is saying in his parable and in his "explanation" of it a combined example of "meaning something incoherently"?<sup>23</sup> Is Wittgenstein asserting the necessity of connecting "something inner and an outer something"?<sup>24</sup> Cavell offers this summary interpretation:

The philosophical task posed by Wittgenstein's parable . . . is to describe what is wrong with the assertion that "something is in the pictured pot"—i.e., to describe the emptiness of the assertion, the momentary madness in the assertion, that is, its failure to amount to an assertion within an insistent sense that it is one—without at the same time seeming to *deny* that something is in the pictured pot.<sup>25</sup>

But what is this to Oedipus or Oedipus to it?

The first question the Chorus asks after ascertaining that Oedipus is, in fact, dead is whether his death was painful. Given his role, the Messenger allows himself words in which to wander before answering the Chorus's

question, and when he does answer their question, he does so in Oedipus's voice. It is life that is painful, the Messenger heard Oedipus tell his children, meaning that death is the surcease of pain. Of Oedipus's death, the Messenger cannot say whether or not it was painful in any actual sense, since he did not hear such pain spoken of. The Messenger's characterization of Oedipus's death as being "marvelous" refers rather to the scene of his death, in effect the pictorial representation of his dying, and not even that, as the Messenger did not actually see Oedipus die.<sup>26</sup> The Messenger's word "marvelous" describes the scene leading up to the banished king's unseen death, the scene before the vanishing, his taking leave of his daughters. The rest is just surmise on the Messenger's part, intuiting an inside to an outside picture ("But in what manner / Oedipus perished, no one of mortal men / Could tell but Theseus . . . But some attendant from the train of Heaven / Came for him; or else the underworld / Opened in love the unlit door of earth. / For he was taken without lamentation, / Illness or suffering; indeed his end / Was wonderful if mortal's ever was.")<sup>27</sup> The Messenger has, in effect, made something out of nothing: "It was not lightning, / Bearing its fire from Zeus, that took him off; / No hurricane was blowing." Despite not knowing what happened inside Oedipus during the actual unseen moment when "he was taken," and given the fact that the Messenger even speaks of the late king as having been taken, he asserts the truth of his report with certainty and without apology ("Should someone think I speak intemperately, / I make no apology to him who thinks so.")<sup>28</sup>

Cavell says further of Wittgenstein's boiling pot parable:

The sense we are to have of the person supposed in the parable is that he *still* wants to say something (about something). The sense is: nothing could be clearer than the scene he has had set out for him . . . everything is free and self-confessed, nothing up the sleeve, there is not even a sleeve.<sup>29</sup>

And indeed, the Messenger still wants to say something, because he believes that he saw something and that what he saw is enough to offer an opinion of what he did not see. Certainly, there is room for doubt in this proposition, but whereas Wittgenstein's interlocutory voice registers such doubt, doubt can only be ascribed to the Messenger. Cavell continues:

And yet, and notwithstanding all that, this man [who comments on the picture of the boiling pot] doubts—or maybe not so much doubts as pangs—something is on his mind, he has some reservation, he is not free and clear. He may say nothing at all; he may not have the courage to, or the words. (If he has both, they will come forth with insistence.) This is the philosopher's cue; he enters by providing the words.<sup>30</sup>

Unlike the messengers in Shakespeare's plays, Sophocles's prototype is not philosophical. He has not been given philosophical words to say. The pot boils in the picture and Oedipus vanishes in air like steam, but we cannot ascertain beyond reportage of ostensible facts, ostensible because the facts in question coincide only with an image that is conflated with imagining. ("Wittgenstein's point is that any conception of fact, of what is the case, requires as a backdrop a conception of what might be, even if it is not, the case."<sup>31</sup> So that the fact is always contingent on imagining, as the Messenger's example illustrates.) And in turn we know only what the report is compelled to say, that is, we know only owing to the pathological conventions of play structure, assertions that are empty and mad at the same time. This form of ritualized, recurrent behavior insists on reporting on what it does not actually know, acknowledging this lack of knowledge but not as grounds for dismissing this performance, this insistence on saying, as a form of knowing in its own right. "We want to say," writes Cavell, "that when we express our recognition of the other's pain we are recognizing not merely an expression but also that of which it is the expression; our words reach as immediately to the pain itself as to the behavior—*that*, the pain itself, is what our words mean." But can our performance in so many words speak directly to the experience they describe? And who would believe this as being the case, other than maybe the speaker himself? And why would he even want to say these words? To which Cavell responds, "We do not know why we *want* to say them, what lack they fill."<sup>32</sup>

### How Is the *Tractatus* Like a Calligram?

Wittgenstein offers the artist a blueprint for interiority while, at the same time, eschewing the idea of private language and experience. Wittgenstein's anti-scientism surveys a logical field (not quite a system) of thought based upon propositions that are provable only within the field of logic they construct. The problem that this presents is best illustrated by several interlocking or inexact mirror/echo propositions that Wittgenstein sets forth in his early writing. Thus, his proposition, "The picture cannot place itself outside of its form of representation" (*TLP* §2.174) later appears as "No proposition can say anything about itself, because the propositional sign cannot be contained within itself" (*TLP* §3.332). This is in turn restated and extended in the proposition, "That which expresses *itself* in language, *we* cannot express by language" (*TLP* §4.121). Note that by moving the imagined vocal (speaking) emphasis from the adjectives "in" and "by" to the subject words "itself" and "we," Wittgenstein tells us that his meaning (his saying) is not merely semantic, not just a play on words and sentence structure; his thought instead speaks to agency and the lack of agency in the form of language that is the problem. Logical structure becomes a shrinking model that puts us in mind of a limit-space.

We imagine ourselves upon a stage that is bound by the very thing it expresses, bound to express the very thing it is, ontologically speaking. But it's a long way to the stage to which we travel by way of thought, which is already modeling itself in ways and forms to which it is likewise bound, in which it is imprisoned, repeats, obsesses, thinks itself as and into a *mise en abyme*. The stage becomes for thought the often inarticulate outer expression of what it is unable to say for, by, and about itself. Bound by stage conventions as we are by thought's self-constraints, our mind and our body begin to tic, to act out, to give themselves (through thought) the runaround, to imprison and pathologize themselves, to occult in the philosophical turn of mind that Wittgenstein sought to free but which he could not help, it seems, embody.

What W. G. Sebald sees in Handke's Wittgensteinian play *Kaspar* as an insight into "the pathological connection, which inevitably exists between the possession of property and education," I wish to recast in terms of a pathology of thinking with and even without knowing.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, I take from Sebald's image of "the blank spaces in the atlas we have made for ourselves out of reality [that] disappear only so that the colonial empire of the mind may grow," not his rich metaphor for the process of comprehension but instead the image of the mind that colonizes itself in the process of appearing to conquer the world by knowing it.<sup>34</sup> I take up the naming function to which Sebald is referring to further colonize thought's self-pathologizing agency and counter-agency in relation to the world and its teachable lessons that are not necessarily learned according to the social lesson plan. Sebald says that Kaspar does not yet recognize "the voices of society as something different, something outside him; instead, they echo within him as the part of himself that became strange to him when he was cast up in this new, overbright environment."<sup>35</sup> The overbright environment into which Kaspar steps is, of course, a stage, the site of a confused exteriority/interiority that over-insists on appearing to be real. Do we hear the voice or the echo, not of others but within ourselves, and do we need to be not just bright (i.e., sentient) but "overbright" (i.e., possessed of theatrically vexed self-awareness) in order to know, in order to know the order in which we know, the form, the logical space (however illogical or even alogical it appears)? What constitutes and enables this knowing in the overwhelming thought-space that analogizes, almost without thinking, to the stage trope of performance's anxiety? We feel ourselves being overwhelmed, if only by constraint, but is even this constraint a mere convention, a performance behavior, the thing that binds us to and pains us to be who we are?

Standing before thought in the moment that anticipates the advent of idea, Wittgenstein allows form to birth paradox and unease. Most famously the *Tractatus* demands that the reader see the correction from the first to the second part not as a form of self-denial of the writing but as a writing over, as in thickening the code of the future that his thought has already entertained. When I returned to reading Wittgenstein, I expected to find perfectly formed (framed) thought on the order of aphoristic writing. What I found instead is

writing that chafes against any illusion of completeness and offers up remainders, clues to what thought, and specifically definition, constrains. I found a language of incapacity that could not or would not speak its name, naming being only a subsidiary activity of limited value (senseless) for Wittgenstein in any case.<sup>36</sup> Wittgenstein's writing is Sisyphean. The form it makes of mass threatens always to revert, to invert, to contradict itself even as it speaks of origin in its appeal to foundational concepts, elemental terms like fact, object, color, all of which are subverted by the picture and the frame (i.e., representation) from and into which they pass.<sup>37</sup> We may perhaps compare Wittgenstein's writing, especially in the *Tractatus*, to Foucault's characterization of Magritte's painting of a pipe that takes its title from the written legend it contains, *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* (1926):

The operation is a calligram that Magritte has secretly constructed, then carefully unraveled. Each element of the figure, their reciprocal position and their relationship derive from this process, annulled as soon as it has been accomplished. . . . There we have evidence of failure and its ironic remains.

The calligram is a *mise en abyme* composed in the shape or image of what its language represents.<sup>38</sup> Although Wittgenstein's writing does not admit to being ironic, it lends itself to irony. Certainly, his writing speaks of building and mimics the form of construction (reflecting his interest in architecture), so not only is it logical that there be remains but also the apparent digression from and even abandonment of said construction renders it and whatever remains as being ironic.

Of course, Wittgenstein's writing, even in the *Tractatus*, his most formally self-conscious text, is not literally a calligram, which being nothing if not literal means that for a piece of writing to be only likened to a calligram itself signals a certain paradox and a failure to achieve its own form. This, I think, is what Wittgenstein intended. Wittgenstein's writing and the structure of that writing roughly retrace the calligram's deconstructive play with showing and naming, shaping and saying, however managing to cite tautology rather than inhabiting and fusing with it.<sup>39</sup> Still, the impossibility of *simultaneously* speaking and showing in Magritte's calligram in turn bodies forth a calligram of Wittgenstein's thinking that is composed from his own writing. And in this calligram, the word "speaking" only partially conceals the word "saying" in the sense that Wittgenstein wanted the reader to understand (without actually telling him) the important difference between the two seemingly synonymous words as to meaning (i.e., You can speak without saying anything.).<sup>40</sup> The calligram enacts the double drama of the things that words are bound to show (representation) and the things that words are bound to say (meaning), which is also the space that Wittgenstein's writing describes, strives to efface, and in the end contains. It is Wittgenstein's careful, complex, frustrated and

frustrating articulation of this double bind that invites the artist in to unpack his own idiosyncratic thought-baggage.

Wittgenstein's is the philosophy of incapacity in the sense that it runs counter in meaningful ways both to its discipline and to itself. Like Magritte's famous painting *Le soir qui tombe* (1934), depicting a view through a broken glass window along with the representation of this view as remainder on the glass shards that have fallen to the floor underneath the window frame, Wittgenstein shows us the figure destroyed inside the space of its construction. For "the figure," substitute "philosophy," "image," "object," "meaning," "language," "thought," "proposition," "representation," and within "representation," "theater."

### Why Is the *Tractatus* a Decreation Myth?

The picture represents what it represents, independently of its truth or falsehood, through the form of representation.

What the picture represents is its sense.

In the agreement or disagreement of its sense with reality, its truth or falsity consists. (*TLP* §§2.22–2.222)

The *Tractatus* begins as a sort of creation myth, a decreation myth really, if one considers that Wittgenstein was attempting to disassemble the universalist notion of "maximally general truths" proposed by Frege and Russell as being the unchallengeable foundation of logical formulation.<sup>41</sup> In the beginning was not the word, but the sentence. On this the three philosophers could agree. But in rejecting the self-evidence and unprovability of the logical axiom as being sufficient to justify its status, its givenness, as a way into the world, Wittgenstein set himself a course of understanding representation and relation in which logic is in the details. Thus, he was able to separate names from objects in the case where the former merely labeled the latter and to consider the meaningful relation of names to objects only within contexts (propositions) in which logic attends. Otherwise, there is no reason why an object must have a particular name or a name must stand in for a particular object. It is the logical context that makes it so.

Wittgenstein sought not only to clarify the relation between names and objects, sentences and objects, and finally states of affairs, but to thicken them, to deepen by way of particularization.<sup>42</sup> The nature of this thick correlation, Thomas Ricketts argues, can be seen in the treatment of the picture, which is the model upon which we base the idea of representation:

Pictures are themselves facts. Wittgenstein says that for a picture to model reality in the way it does, it must, as a fact, have something in

common with the reality it models. Wittgenstein calls this common something the form of representation (*Form der Abbildung*, of modeling) (2.17). He goes on to say that in order for a picture to model reality in any way at all, there is a shared minimum it must have in common with reality, what Wittgenstein calls logical form. (2.18)<sup>43</sup>

Wittgenstein goes on to open up this correspondence between representation and reality from the generalizing appellation of commonness to the unequally generalizing concept of possibility. A sentence, like an image or a model, “presents a possible state of affairs,” giving the sentence a truth-function without necessarily making it in all senses true. In short, Wittgenstein creates a logical structure that arises from minimal rather than from maximal assumptions and from which structure projects out logical forms that articulate (and in the process allow for) the difference that is inherent in possibility.

Wittgenstein moves the science of logic closer to the symbolic realm of art, in which “logical connectedness” is “understood in ‘formal’ terms,” in structure rather than in content, or else in content insofar as it relates to structure.<sup>44</sup> Structure here, like form, refers not so much to the content’s container as to logical thought, although the container should in some ways articulate this thought. “Logical” in this context means “makes sense,” as opposed to being senseless. But again, the standard for making sense is not predetermined by some presupposition regarding logic being self-evident. Logic, in a sense, must be earned by the formulation and articulation of thought that is not so much the truth (a matter of abstract judgment predicated upon general assumption) as truth-functional, truth-operational, truth-possible. This is not to say that Wittgenstein posits subjectivity as a new standard for logic. Truth, for him, agrees with facts, but these facts are evidentiary rather than self-evidentiary as Frege and Russell had proposed. Wittgenstein posits a solid but more fully and generously articulated platform or framework for “logical connectedness” between names and objects, sense and sentence.<sup>45</sup> In his thinking and writing, Wittgenstein pursues truth as a form of agreement not solely with logic but with reality.

In moving away from the acceptance of universally judgmental logic as his standard, Wittgenstein allows that truth and falsehood can, in a sense, agree to disagree despite appearing to be poles apart. That is, “a picture that in fact agrees with reality might have disagreed, and vice versa,” meaning that truth and falsehood are aware of the possibility for mis/understanding they share. While Wittgenstein’s neo-logical framing of agency/counter-agency as a non-dyadic bipolarity does not go so far as to summon forth Lautréaumont’s proto-surrealist neological image-brokering of a sewing machine and an umbrella on a dissection table, it does open up the possibility of allowing such constructions to pursue links between logic and correspondence.<sup>46</sup> Wittgenstein wrote: “Just as we cannot think of spatial objects at all apart from space, or temporal objects apart from time, so we cannot think

of *any* object apart from the possibility of its connexion with other things” (TLP §2.0121). Correspondence *being* context, the question becomes not *could* such a spatial juxtaposition of the sewing machine, the umbrella, and the dissection table equate with the meaning that is ascribed to it (a boy’s physical beauty) but rather given the representation’s sui generis identity, its context-as-proposition structure, is it possible to say that the comparison it makes is *not* both logical and true? For Wittgenstein, logic is useful insofar as it allows the mind to formulate a space for reality’s and not its own (i.e., not logic’s) self-expression, the world being everything that is the case, a rigorous yet relational and non-prescriptive matter of fact.

### What Is “Apparent Desire”?

The incapacity of which I speak is inextricably linked to an unspoken but not unseen (i.e., a not just shown, but a dramatized representational) desire. Let me here introduce a passage to which I will have reason to return over the course of this book. It is the epigraph to Handke’s play *The Ride Across Lake Constance*:

*It is a winter night. A man rides across Lake Constance without sparing his horse. When he arrives on the other side, his friends congratulate him profusely, saying: “What a surprise! How did you ever make it! The ice is no more than an inch thick!” The rider hesitates briefly, then drops off his horse. He is instantly dead.*<sup>47</sup>

In *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein writes, “We have got on to slippery ice where there is no friction, and so, in a certain sense, the conditions are ideal, but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk. We want to walk: so we need *friction*. Back to the rough ground!” (PI §107). There is in this passage a manifest threat to one of our basic human capacities, the ability to walk. Cavell interprets Wittgenstein’s raising the inability to walk as a possibility “not as a description of some specific failure, but as what the *Investigations* elsewhere calls ‘a symbolic expression [which is] really a mythological description’ (PI §221), presumably in this case signifying something about our inability to move ourselves in accordance with our apparent desires.”<sup>48</sup> It is Cavell’s phrase “apparent desires” that interests me here, although not in the specific sense that he ascribes to Wittgenstein—that is, returning words “from their metaphysical to their everyday use” (“Back to the rough ground!”), marking the user’s escape from the myth of perfection.<sup>49</sup> My interest is more closely allied to what I read as being Cavell’s rhetorical question in relation to Wittgenstein’s slippery ice example: “Does this suggest that our grounding in the world is weak (because our ground is unsurvayably vulnerable to our capacity for dissatisfaction with ourselves) or that it is

strong (because we could not, or would not, actually go so far as to destroy the grounds of our existence, our natural history)?<sup>50</sup> My brief in this study is for the counter-agency, “our capacity for dissatisfaction with ourselves,” the self-afflicting philosophical proposition on which Wittgenstein bet his life.

In relation to the epigraph’s icy, unknowingly slippery ride, I ask the question, when do we know that we desire to deny ourselves and does this point necessarily coincide with the awareness that we are treading on thin ice? Does the mind entertain thoughts of incapacity as an alternative way of meaningfully experiencing a life whose end is not foretold except in the telling and in a world whose naturalness mocks the unnaturalness of our thoughts that try to make sense of it? Is the horse-rider a combined calligramatic figure of the bipolarity of in/capacity as, or possibly cloaked as, “apparent desire”? Does the journey across the apparently frozen lake combined with the dire reverse prediction of what could have happened on the other side represent the mind’s capacity to show us our desired incapacity as a form/in the form of spatiotemporal illogic? Does this incapacity in turn conceal our capacity to know what is and is not really true? Do we really “desire to break free of our disappointment with our constructions,” incapacity being foremost among those constructions?<sup>51</sup>

### How Do We Distinguish Knowing from Acknowledging?

The grammar of the word “know” is evidently related to the grammar of the words “can,” “is able to.” But also closely related to that of the word “understand.” (To have “mastered” a technique.) (*PI* §150)

Language is a labyrinth of paths. You approach from *one* side and know your way about; you approach the same place from another side and no longer know your way about. (*PI* §203)

**Anxiety: not a state, but an incessant, unbearable happening.**

—Handke, *The Weight of the World*

In *Panic Diaries: A Genealogy of Panic Disorder*, Jackie Orr likens *mise en scène* to a surgical procedure, “a technique for producing (carving, inscribing) an opening, for framing an origin. Out of the void of possibilities, an inclusion toward meaning—toward a particular *mise-en-scène*—is made. Every opening of a story, every gesture toward staging an origin, becomes then, ‘a repetition of that which cannot be repeated: the first cut.’<sup>52</sup> The fact that this cut happens in the dark connects theater as a social function with terror in the mind of the author who herself suffers from panic disorder. Orr’s book begins forthrightly with the statement: “I am a sick woman who studies history, looking for cures, searching for more potent forms of dis-ease.”<sup>53</sup>

It is a sentiment and a purpose with which my own book and I, as someone diagnosed and living with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), attention deficit disorder (ADHD), generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), and depression (along with more common hypochondria, phobias, etc.), have the capacity to identify. Orr's sense of theater in the dark as a frameable and repeatable ordinary terror immediately makes the inevitable move to Artaud's theater of cruelty, situating it within the wider socio-historical context of "the merciless language of non-madness" defined by Foucault in *Madness and Civilization*. Foucault's notion that knowledge is (like history) "made for cutting" bears a familiar Wittgensteinian trace.<sup>54</sup>

Wittgenstein writes: "Knowledge is in the end based on acknowledgment" (OC §378). This statement (returning to my earlier theme) speaks to an awareness that is not only personal (even confessional) but also social.<sup>55</sup> Acknowledgment normatively frames a certainty that is predicated on a cutting and a cutting out of what the word "knowledge" can and cannot contain. But in Wittgenstein, the cut goes deeper, down to the bone, which for him is grammar, whose substance is ontological, far more structural than ornamental to the discussion of thought and communication. So, Wittgenstein writes:

If someone says, "I know that that's a tree" I may answer: "Yes, that is a sentence. An English sentence. And what is it supposed to be doing?" Suppose he replies: "I just wanted to remind myself that I know things like *that*." (OC §352)

In Wittgenstein, then, a grammatical certainty is able to coexist with a mental uncertainty. Thus:

But on the other hand: how do I *know* that it is my hand? Do I even here know exactly what it means to say it is my hand?—When I say "how do I know?" I do not mean that I have the least *doubt* of it. What we have here is a foundation for all my action. But it seems to me that it is wrongly expressed by the words "I know." (OC §414)

If the word "know" is itself suspect ("One is often bewitched by the word. For example, by the word 'know'" [OC §435]), then knowing and knowledge do not only represent a cutting or cutting out of what is impossible in terms of human (i.e., social) logic and behavior; it cuts to the core of being able to say who and what you are. One can be driven mad or at the very least to distraction by a word, and none more potent than the word "know."<sup>56</sup> Wittgenstein (like Orr after him, although she does not cite him) illustrates his idea anatomically: "What reason have I, now, when I cannot see my toes, to assume that I have five toes on each foot?" (OC §429). Wittgenstein's rhetorical question, "For may it not happen that I *imagine* myself to *know* something?" (OC §442) reopens the wound of impossibility that

we call “art” but also “madness,” as in the universal signifier of the “both/and”—“Artaud.”<sup>57</sup>

The great maw opens terrifyingly wider when Wittgenstein asks himself in the linguistically perspectival guise of a/the third person, “‘Do you know or do you only believe that your name is L.W.?’ Is that a meaningful question?” (OC §486). Wittgenstein’s argument proceeds (here as elsewhere) from a logical basis and intends in each instance to make a more circumscribed, austere logical point (often via what he believes to be rhetorical questions)—for example, “What is the proof that I *know* something? Most certainly not my saying I know it” (OC §487). The already self-questioning mind of the reader as mental interlocutor is driven to ever more desperate measures to keep acknowledgment and knowledge from being torn asunder. This mental crisis incites a desperate, hypochondriacal (I think that this other is me and his condition is my own), paranoid almost to the point of schizophrenic performance or acting out of the catastrophe of self-doubt. Wittgenstein is able to maintain his own sense of logic and mental health by maintaining, “Doubt itself rests only on what is beyond doubt” (OC §519). Although true (“doubt” must already be known as such in order to cite it), this is cold comfort to all but the most purely logical, grammatically denotative minds (“Instead of ‘I know what that is’ one might say ‘I can say what that is’” [OC §586]).<sup>58</sup> Most of us let our psychological and emotional states rather than our reason define who we are and, when not otherwise taking (especially spoken) language for granted, aim it at objects in ways that are meant to reflect back upon us as subjects.

This problem is exacerbated by what in relationship to Wittgenstein’s philosophy is called the question or problem of “private experience.” Wittgenstein writes:

The essential thing about private experience is really not that each person possesses his own specimen, but that nobody knows whether other people have *this* or something else. The assumption would thus be possible—though unverifiable—that one section of mankind had one impression of red, and another section another. (OC §272)

You can no more know for certain another person’s mind than you can know whether or not Schrödinger’s cat is dead inside the box.<sup>59</sup> For the human mind, this not knowing how or what the other thinks circles around what may already be a preexisting thrall to or proclivity for alienation and result in further acting out as the other, or alternatively, taking the other into oneself in a frantic and illogical effort at reconciliation and making knowledge and acknowledgment whole, that is, one (again).

The more his thinking about philosophy tended toward action, the more closely Wittgenstein came to resemble an actor or a playwright. Judith Genova writes: “Philosophy became a performance with him reading the lines of his

script as if in a play. This fictional frame allowed him to perform the correct way of seeing, rather than describe it, bringing language closer to direct action.”<sup>60</sup> When one adds to this the architectonic nature of the aphoristic-seeming proposition that he employed as a “quasi-poetic” building block of thought, Wittgenstein predicted Foreman’s role as playwright-designer-director of the philosophical theater of the here and now operating in the guise of the no-body in no-space and no-time.<sup>61</sup>

Unsurprisingly though, Wittgenstein (an artistic conservative) believed that he fell short of achieving even the most basic level of poetic expression:

I think I summed up my attitude to philosophy when I said: philosophy ought really to be written only as *poetic composition*. It must, as it seems to me, be possible to gather from this how far my thinking belongs to the present, future or past. For I was thereby revealing myself as someone who cannot quite do what he would like to be able to do. (CV §24)

This is Wittgenstein’s sense of personal incapacity again speaking, breaking faith with his admonishment to himself and others at the conclusion of the earlier *Tractatus* to honor silence either when something is unsayable or does not need to be said. Wittgenstein’s lifelong performance of incapacity in the form of self-complaint falls within the measurable boundaries of obsessive-compulsive thought-behavior. And like a true obsessive-compulsive, he has discovered his thought’s enabler in language, which as he defines it has its limits and defines the limits of our world and so justifies in his mind the performance of incapacity as the only possible, if illogical, response.

## Chapter 2



# Wittgenstein's Anatomy

Is a bit of white paper with black lines on it similar to a human body? (*PI* §364)

Her hand tipped toward the paper, black stroke the pen made there, but only that stroke, line of uncertainty. She called her memory, screamed for it, trying to scream through it and beyond it, dammed accumulation that bound her in time: *my* memory, *my* bed, *my* stomach, *my* terror, *my* hope, *my* poem, *my* God: the meanness of *my*.

—William Gaddis, *The Recognitions*

The written word potentially terrorizes its subject with the unlikeness of thought. The hand delivers the message, but the mind doubts the messenger. Is this even *my* hand? Is it worth issuing an illogical denial rather than acknowledge that there is truth in the hand-delivered message? Alternatively, is the mind that moves beyond acceptance to demanding what is mine just being mean in the sense of small-minded? Wittgenstein, who continually returned to the hand to measure un/certainty wrote, “If e.g. someone says ‘I don’t know if there’s a hand here’ he might be told ‘Look closer’” (*OC* §2). This is what I propose to do in this chapter.

Heidegger’s observations that “man himself acts [*handelt*] through the hand [*Hand*]; for the hand is, together with the word, the essential distinction of man” and also that “thinking is . . . a ‘handicraft’” resonate with Kaspar’s coming to legible consciousness (entering hand-first through a stage curtain) via carefully wrought and repeated words in Hand-ke’s play.<sup>1</sup> For Kaspar, consciousness is an imposition, trapped as he is within world-less words that recur only as rehearsal and performance.<sup>2</sup> Upending Wittgenstein’s givenness of the world unleashes what seems like a torrent of words that overwhelm and destabilize consciousness and communication. The mind must decide whether to declare bankruptcy or to accept meaningful doubt and illogical questions as blank checks that writing reveals. You can acknowledge the

imposition without succumbing to it, but acceptance resides only in the writing and not in words that are otherwise exchanged.

Stephen Mulhall writes: “Is it perhaps essential to Wittgenstein’s conception of philosophical prose as unassertive that it avoid declaring this fact about itself—that it not insist on its own un insistence?”<sup>3</sup> There are indeed many times when Wittgenstein’s hand seems to be writing checks in the form of categorical propositions that his mind does not cash but instead continues to recheck. Wittgenstein famously writes, “The philosopher treats a question; like an illness” (*PI* §255), and the reader wonders about the semicolon—original to the German—that Wittgenstein places between the words “question” and “like” almost as if the “question” in seeming to beg off simple comparison invites a connection at some other level. As always, Wittgenstein is manifesting his desire to slow down thought, but what he in fact does is to slowly twist it. This realization, call it recognition, comes naturally if not easily to the OCD reader.

If the problem that I am describing has to do with loss, it is with the feeling of loss that accompanies what you remember about how you used to take in and express the language of thought. “The words with which I express my memory are my memory reaction” (*PI* §343), says Wittgenstein, not so much ignoring the meanness of “my” as repossessing qualification (“my”) and “meanness” as new values. It is not about no longer remembering, the double negative (qualification) says, but about what remembering means. (“Am I remembering a process or a state?” [*PI* §661]) Meaning, Wittgenstein argues, is often a matter of comparison, with difference in meaning often resulting from “some direction of attention” (*PI* §666).

As part of a simple neuropsychological test, I was asked to draw the numbers inside a circle that would make it into a clock. After some hesitation concerning where I should put the “9” and the “3,” which I got right, I was asked to draw in the hands that would make the clock read 11:10—just one minute short, I would add, of the magic time for the OCD mind, which is 11:11. (Perfect symmetry, parallelism, a palindrome—as it applies to language forming the perfect seal. Catastrophe also being the perfect seal as far as expectation is concerned—e.g., the calligram of the twin towers of 11:11 recurring as the image that is made of time as an obsessive mode of recurrence. Michel de Certeau alternatively called the twin towers “the tallest letters in the world,” which, as a grapheme, constitutes in and as itself a non-recurrent sign.)<sup>4</sup> I drew the hands in the position of 10:50 instead of 11:10. Now, the difference seems clear when you write the two times down on the page, but when you consider that the number on which the large hand must land is not a “10” but a “2,” then 11:10 appears, at least momentarily, to be an illogical figural construction and a breaking of the unspoken law of conceptual agreement between word and number, not to mention a breaking apart of time’s arrow. Wittgenstein allows me some leeway here:

I can look at a clock to see what time it is. But I can also look at the dial of a clock in order to *guess* what time it is; or for the same purpose move the hands of a clock till their position strikes me as right. So the look of a clock may serve to determine the time in more than one way. (Looking at a clock in one's imagination.) (*PI* §266)

But the doctor and the person who designed the test were not testing for imagination. Nor could my rationalization that my wristwatch and the clocks in my house do not have numbers, and in some cases offer only digital readouts without even a clock face, be considered anything but a rationalization. They don't normally test for that either. And this, I think, may be a bone of comic contention.

### Arrowhead

If Wittgenstein were not a self-denying Jewish philosopher, he might in a later day have become a conflicted stand-up Jewish comedian with an eye and ear for the mundane detail or illogical figure of speech or thought that is today called "observational humor." Wittgenstein's philosophy is marbled with the comedian's melancholic anxiety, with a self-absorbed aversion to external narcissism and illogic, and a fascination for the ways in which language breaks itself up. Norman Malcolm reminds us, "Wittgenstein once said that a serious and good philosophical work could be written that would consist entirely of jokes (without being facetious)."<sup>5</sup> Wittgenstein mentions Freud's *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905) several times in his work, although he doesn't treat it in any depth, given his dismissal of the premise—Freud's theory of the subconscious, which the philosopher calls "hypothetical" and grounded in the similarly speculative motive of concealment or repression.<sup>6</sup> Wittgenstein's attention to depth of surface makes him better qualified to influence the practice of humor rather than to theorize about it, as did Freud.

Steve Martin sometimes opened his stand-up show with the joke, "It's great to be here!" then moved to one after another spot on the stage, each time exclaiming with a false sense of discovery, "No, it's great to be *here!*" The comic body carries its mortal space with it wherever it goes, and so the line, "It's great to be here!" is everywhere ghosted by the sickness-unto-death shadow-line, "At this (st)age in my life, it's great to be *anywhere!*"<sup>7</sup> This theme of dispossession invokes the Heraclitean idea of constant change and therefore instability disenabling us from ever claiming anything as being one's own (not *my* death or *my* terror). We cannot possess space anymore than we can time, and any attempt to stake a claim is no more than a painful performance behavior whose purpose is to draw attention (where inattention might otherwise be seen), to make a spectacle of oneself.

Is the joke, then, *where* the body is on a stage relative to *what* the line says and then says again, or is it the idea of the body's obsessive (t)hereness, its now-and-"thenness"—blending of distance from and proximity to being comedy's *métier*?

Just as the words "I am here" have a meaning only in certain contexts, and not when I say them to someone who is sitting in front of me and sees me clearly—and not because they are superfluous, but because their meaning is not *determined* by the situation, yet stands in need of such determination. (OC §348)

The comic truth of this statement is manifest in the fact that the comedian is doing stand-up in the manner that Wittgenstein is doing philosophy, by stretching our perplexity and with this our understanding when faced with the ordinary, when the ordinary stands up and speaks for itself devoid of a particular context that might occlude its meanings, even making them disappear. The audience knows that "I am here" or, in Martin's case, that "It's great to be here!" is a line, but does not know and in fact becomes less and less certain each time it is repeated what the line is "supposed to be doing" (OC §352) and what they (the audience) are supposed to be doing in turn.

Martin's self-satisfied voice appears to say after Wittgenstein, "I just wanted to remind myself that I *know* things like that" (OC §352). In this way, the comedian transfers doubt to the audience so that he can at least perform the behavior of certainty. In other words, "the joke's on you"—at least that is what the *performance* says, or as Wittgenstein would have it, "One might say: 'I know' expresses comfortable certainty, not the certainty that is still struggling" (OC §357). Performance, comic and otherwise, is the expression of a "comfortable certainty" that is, however, in anxious dialogue with "the certainty that is still struggling" in the performer as the stand-in for those who sit still for performance, who do not stand-up.<sup>8</sup> Self-satisfaction being a cornerstone of Martin's comic persona, the shadow of solipsism falls across the stage, where one might least expect to find it given the presence of an audience. This condition, which so worried Wittgenstein on both a personal and a philosophical level, makes all existence the extension of the individual self and its mental states. Given that, as psychologist Louis A. Sass has stated, "the solipsist is driven to what he can never have, validation in the consensual world, . . . undercut[ing] his seeming self-sufficiency," the possibility of this condition returns to the actor and more so the stand-up comedian, whose need for audience validation is most intensely direct.<sup>9</sup> Sass considers Wittgenstein's statement "'I' doesn't name a person, nor 'here' a place, and 'this' is not a name" (PI §410) in relation to what linguistics calls "indexicals" or "shifters" that move with the speaker rather than being grounded in and naming a particular place. Thus, each time Martin moves to a new point onstage and proclaims, "It's great to be here!" "here" stands as

only an empirical claim to his and not the audience's presence, since there is no room for them in this "here." "Here" has no meaning except in conjunction with the speaker's "I." So, Martin's ironic performance of inclusiveness shows what otherwise could not and generally would not be spoken by an actor to an audience, outside the realm of stand-up comedy—namely, "you are not (do not belong) here," and, by extension, "my desire for you is only apparent."<sup>10</sup>

Martin's "It's great to be here!" routine speaks not solely to the body in space but to the body as spacing. His affect recalls Descartes's *corpus ego*, which Nancy says (contra Sass) "has no propriety, no 'ego-ness' (still less any 'egotism')." <sup>11</sup> The body, the corpus, is the "out there" of the "right here" and "*is never properly me.*" This "excription of being" is the condition of performance.<sup>12</sup> Martin's "It's great to be here!"—"No, it's great to be *here!*" conveys the appearance of Wittgensteinian wonder at performance's claim to continuous rediscovery of the new.<sup>13</sup> Martin often worked with theatrical props, most notably a bifurcated arrow on a band that circled but seemed to pass through his head. The arrow invokes Zeno's paradox of the non-arrival of space in any time other than the "now" of "hereness," the forever not-getting-there *in* time (the actor's nightmare).<sup>14</sup> In that all "heres" are equal, they are, in arrow-headed Martin's performance, repeatable and substitutable, one for the other. That his performance transpires and expires within the limit-realm of the stage makes the sense of going without going farther, time as spacing, isomorphically if not precisely manifest. The prop arrow apparatus articulates this Wittgensteinian sense of the same but not identical, which is likewise the premise of the joke and of jokes in general.

The arrow is an indicator of pointing. Martin's arrow points at meaning, specifically at the brokenness of meaning in performance, the only context in which this broken arrow can be useful as a non-sequitur.<sup>15</sup> The arrow-through-the-head plays with the language of pointing as an entanglement of meaning. The comedian's mock-excited "It's great to be here!" repeated over and over again as he takes discrete steps in theatrical space reinforces non-causality as a performative mode of new meaning-making. This performance recalls that of the obsessive-compulsive wanderer Witold in Witold Gombrowicz's novella *Cosmos* (2005), who follows an arrow that he may have imaginatively constructed from a crack in a ceiling into an entanglement of words, weeds, and possible paranoid connective meanings, compelling him to ask, "How many sentences can one create out of the twenty-four letters of the alphabet?" (and how many meanings for "arrow").<sup>16</sup> At his wit's end but without any logical end in sight, Witold wonders whether "something was trying to break through and press toward meaning, as in charades, when letters begin to make their way toward forming a word. What word? Indeed, it seemed that everything wanted to act in the name of an idea . . . What idea?"<sup>17</sup> Witold hangs a cat as the final word-object-action in a sequence that passes through a hanged sparrow—a hanged chicken—an arrow (imagined)

in a dining room ceiling—an arrow (imagined) in his bedroom wall—a stick hanging from a thread. Of the arrows that were similar in kind, he asks “what kind of an arrow was that, how could we have perceived it as an arrow?”<sup>18</sup> Is this arrow an assertion of “the almost” (as another character in the story calls it), a configuration of word and object whose inexact alignment invokes and represents the nature of personal anxiety, of things not being what they say they are or what *I* say they are?<sup>19</sup>

Wordplay is the acknowledgment that everything is possible “in the face of overwhelming, confounding, entangling reality.”<sup>20</sup> That is, says Wittgenstein, so long as these words or word-objects, these symbols belong to the same “system.” “System” for Wittgenstein spoke not to principle but to application, to “having the same use” on multiple occasions.<sup>21</sup> “Sparrow” can certainly become “arrow,” just as “firsbern” in Steve Martin’s parodically reflexive line, “I think communication is so firsbern,” can become “Do you bemberg?”—one of Gombrowicz’s many contestations of meaning using variants of the meaningless “berg” as a language builder (*Bilder*). Multiple use in turn configures a paranoid system that must be adopted so that communication can take place. Similarly, “everything is always possible” (a sparrow can also be a non-arrow and an arrow a non-sparrow) speaks equally to capacity and to incapacity, to “the favor and disfavor of associations” caused by distraction.<sup>22</sup> The mind, like the body that cannot stay in one place while constantly returning to that place (“It’s great to be here! . . . No, it’s great to be *here!*”), is like a criminal returning to the scene of the crime. Universal configuration as a product of distraction further defines the criminal recidivism (the repetition of undesirable behavior) of the obsessive-compulsive, for whom distraction is not only intrinsic but flows in “from the diversity and overabundance, from the entanglement.”<sup>23</sup> Martin’s arrow, in executing a double fake—as a prop that falsifies reality and as a broken straight line that interrupts causality—misidentifies the stage as being “here.” But in the process, the arrow locates the entanglement to which the compulsion to be led by language as the nominal object of meaning leads, enacting a theatrical recidivism, a return to the stage that is obsessive-compulsive in thought and action.

### Coming into Place

Having dealt with the “here” in the statement, “It’s great to be here!” let us now move to a fuller consideration of the “I” that is implied but missing in the same statement. “I” is a problematical pronoun that is largely disputed by Wittgenstein and absented by Wellman in his play *Cellophane*, for example. “I,” Nancy tells us, is even more problematical as a locus of being (“I am here”), in that “I” has no place. How, Nancy asks, “can ‘I,’ which has no place, come into place?”<sup>24</sup> Nancy’s “solution” to this paradox is to adopt Heidegger’s

notion that says it's not a matter of being there but rather of "being the there," not as a point in space but as an "opening and exposition."<sup>25</sup>

The sentence "It's great to be here!" notably absents the "I," the identity of the speaker, because that identity is assumed to be made manifest by the speaker's body.<sup>26</sup> Absenting the "I" likewise draws our attention back to Wittgenstein's notion that there is nothing outside the facts (including the fact of the sentence, the proposition), not even the subject, *especially* not the subject as an "I." The body is, in fact (says Nancy), made less certain by the spoken claim to thereness; as such speaking is disingenuous given that the created body's thereness is always "*between* here and there, abandoned, always improperly abandoned, created: with no reason for being there, since there doesn't offer any reason, and with no reason for being this body or this mass of this body (because this doesn't justify anything, or 'justifies' the nothing in the thing created)."<sup>27</sup> "The body" (Nancy continues) "is always outside, on the outside. It is from the outside. The body is always outside the intimacy of the body itself."<sup>28</sup> So when, for example, we say that "It's great to be here!" we are, as it were, speaking from outside the body and so most consciously and per force comically make our body catch up with itself. The audience laughs, but in having its ontology, its very being so publicly and deliberately exposed, the body is in comic agony.<sup>29</sup>

Nancy asserts that "the *body* is self in departure, insofar as it parts—displaces itself right here from the *here*."<sup>30</sup> By reiterating this point, Martin allows the audience to catch up with him, with what thinking through the body's spacing is doing. The audience may not know on every level what the performer is doing but their role is to acknowledge its being done. This acknowledgment effectively brings the audience into being, since without such acknowledgment it need not exist. "It's great to be here!" acknowledges thinking as being a sort of out-of-body experience, of a coming into being that is, at the same time, a passing through that can only be pointed at by doing performance and philosophy. The stand-up comic's fetishizing of being here or there is disingenuous given the unchanging location of the stage, even as his articulation of locality (not only where you *are* but where you are *from*—New York? Detroit? Brooklyn!) underscores and renders redundant locality as a determinant of humor. That jokes have their own sense of *thereness* relating to social worlds held in common allows us in on the joke's telling to better see the stage that is prefaced on the same social analogy.<sup>31</sup>

Presence is itself a vexed idea of which we are not only enamored in theater but in a real sense invested in for our survival. We use presence as a way of describing what is essentially indescribable, namely that self-possessed quality a performer has that possesses an audience in turn. The performer's presence is invariably signed temporally in the present tense, so that presence and present are everywhere conflated or at least commingled. In Nancy's argument, though, both presence and the present are not only separate from one another but each is dependent upon some interior distance for self-definition

and must free themselves from the contingency of passing into another thing or another moment in time. Presence is very much the pre-text of “origins, relations, processes, finalities, becomings.”<sup>32</sup>

Nancy’s spatial figure is that of the curving back of the reality of presence/ the present to within itself. Ironically, given our common definition, presence is not something that you are ever really in or that is in you. Instead, it is something that you are always and only coming into and also, as with consciousness, coming to as acknowledging. For Nancy, what best marks presence as a “coming into” is the burst of laughter—“a presence that no present captures, and that no being-present can identify,” “presentation that disappears in presence.” Laughter makes even less of the already spectral voice, presenting us not with its body but rather its body parts—timbre, modulation, color, articulation—which may in fact be only parts of performance’s delivery system—that is, messenger speech.<sup>33</sup> And yet laughter cannot really ever be given or received. It is and remains a solo performance that renders the body as being (a) comic.<sup>34</sup>

Our own bodies perform surrogacy, cannot be wholly experienced “bodily,” and so the body on display provokes in us an age-old anxiety of unreasonable, nonsensical feeling and thought that cannot quite coalesce. “‘The body’ is our agony stripped bare. . . . We lose our footing at ‘the body.’”<sup>35</sup> We lose our surefootedness in the staged comic agony of “no/here!,” making limping Oedipus at Colonus the first stand-up act (Martin says that he, in an Oedipal posture, was “born standing up”). In Martin’s arrow-headed routine the head becomes the “x” that marks the spot of otherness, of alien other-*thereness*, the hole *in* the head signifying the idiot’s extrusion of thought—“the arrow shot into the void” of the body’s absence in the vacating of meaning.<sup>36</sup> The head that is virtually pierced by an arrow is a Wittgensteinian figure of embodied thought, specifically of aspect seeing, the manifestation of where one stands, a stance, which “can have . . . a life, in this case a life with what is depicted.”<sup>37</sup> Is arrow-headed Steve Martin, like limping Oedipus, the first stand-up who “died” (in comic lingo that is properly virtual) at Colonus, a boiling pot? Is the performance of the broken arrow equivalent to steam arising from something that is only pictured? Wittgenstein’s example reads on the surface like a non-sequitur, even a joke, which the comedian nominally uses to make a thought clearer, self-evident, only to render it nonsensical. The grammar of depiction/performance is in conflict with what experience teaches us (i.e., a pictured pot does not boil; Martin’s spoken and physical location are comically at odds and the arrow does not actually pass through his head). Mulhall’s statement regarding how to read the idea-picture of the steaming pot may speak to Martin’s example as well:

To insist on the obviousness of anything is self-subverting, since the need for insistence contradicts the claim to self-evidence and positively invites an opposing insistence; and however empty that

opposition may ultimately prove to be (whether when it insists that pictures do not boil, or when it insists that expressions of pain are not the pain itself), the insistence to which it responds must bear some of the responsibility for that emptiness. More specifically . . . if grammatical remarks stand in contrast with empirical claims, then they cannot convey information in the way that empirical remarks do; so to insist upon them, quite as if things might have been otherwise, is to betray a misconception about how and why such remarks might be worth making.<sup>38</sup>

With this in mind, the performer-audience relationship affects the entanglement of language as a means of real communication, with the performer telling the audience what they already know but the audience not acknowledging that they already know it. So, when the performer asks the audience not to raise their hands but how many of them *have never* raised their hands before, as Steve Martin does, they comply by raising their hands as if they never have before, fulfilling the illusion of the first time that enables performance.

Another of Martin's bits of comic business betrays Wittgenstein's influence. Martin: "There was a movie screen onstage, and I would go behind it and attach a fake rubber hand to it as though the hand were mine. Then, I would slowly move backward, making it appear as if my arm were stretching."<sup>39</sup> Now Wittgenstein, who in discussing the possibility of someone having pain in another person's body (an unacknowledged performance trope), says: "When I see my hands I am not always aware of their connection with the rest of my body . . . the hand may, for all I know, be connected to the body of a man standing beside me (or, of course, not a human body at all)" (*BB* §49). The dislocated and mentally disenfranchised hands that appear throughout Wittgenstein's work compel the reader to acknowledge the ways in which pain (the philosopher's and the comic's) is referred and, perhaps, like the mind is unlocatable for all of us who do stand-up (i.e., are alive). Martin's fake rubber prosthesis that gives the appearance "the hand were mine" responds to Wittgenstein's anxiety regarding physical non-ownership. Heidegger's "mineness of pain" here translates into the non-assertiveness of the embodied "I" and the performer's hypochondriacal response of showing where the pain is, what it looks like.

The thought then arises: is the interlocutor's compulsive insistence on the uniqueness of his pains simply a misplaced attempt to defend his own uniqueness, as if to acknowledge that another might feel exactly what he is feeling ("THIS!") would amount to denying the separate-ness—the individuality of his own existence?<sup>40</sup>

The stand-up comedian's act succeeds to the extent that it makes the audience believe that what it presents is self-evident and empirical, even

as the act manifests the actor's incapacity, the hyperbolic, hypochondriacal performance of *his* life's painful difference. The stand-up's observational performance (pointing at and pointing out) is not dissimilar from the philosopher's role, which is, in part, to "put in question what other disciplines take for granted in their work."<sup>41</sup> In this sense, the performances of both comedy and philosophy are therapeutic, "treat[ing] a question; like an illness" (*PI* §255). In both arenas, language performs the pain of uncertainty, unknowing even that which it acknowledges as being possible.<sup>42</sup>

### Warm Hand, Cold Feet

What's the disjunction of senses? And why five fingers?  
On the other hand, you have different fingers.

—Nancy, *Corpus*

If there were people who felt a stabbing pain in their left side in those cases where we experience misgivings with feelings of anxiety—would this stabbing sensation take the place with them of our feeling of fear?—So if we observed these people and noticed them wincing and holding their left side every time they expressed a misgiving, i.e., said something which for us at any rate would be a misgiving—would we say: These people sense their fear as a stabbing pain? Clearly not.

—Wittgenstein (*RPPII* §157)

Steve Martin's brand of anti-comedy offers an analytical presentation of the limits of logic, or what Nancy calls "sense making sense where sense meets its limit."<sup>43</sup> Similarly, in Wittgenstein's thinking, a philosophical proposition often appears to convey its own contradiction, so that the proposition both is and is "anti-."<sup>44</sup> Sometimes Wittgenstein develops this dynamic over the course of several sequential propositions, with sequence serving as a cover for subversion. This helps explain (at least to me) why so many of Wittgenstein's propositions can sound like nonsense when you hear yourself reading them inside your own head. Ironically, so many of Martin's philosophically minded jokes make sense precisely because the head you are given to ponder (with) has an arrow through it, providing the comfort of a self-acknowledged and self-proclaimed idiocy. Wittgenstein puts great stock in the grammatical (which, Mulhall says, "does not depict any particular way that things are, either necessarily or as a matter of essence"), even over the empirical or experiential, and yet he acknowledges that not only is there frequent confusion between the two categories of language but in the speaker as a result of this confusion as to whether he means what he says.<sup>45</sup> This is somewhat similar to the comedian's stance, the mindset of his "act." Mulhall suggests that the

aforementioned language confusion produces in the speaker “a significant anxiety” over whether his words will elicit a response of “Of course!” or “Nonsense!” Wittgenstein meant to say (according to Mulhall) that “either response would, on the face of it, be equally appropriate as ‘a defence against something whose form makes it look like an empirical proposition, but which is really a grammatical one.’”<sup>46</sup> But what I hear in the response of “Of course!” or “Nonsense!” is the sound of hands clapping or not clapping.

We are backstage at a showroom in a large Las Vegas hotel, where the young stand-up comedian Tommy Fawkes (in Peter Chelsom's film *Funny Bones*, 1995) is getting ready to go on. We know at a sound and a glance that Tommy is angrily and *painfully* unfunny. It is his big opening night, and, as he is intensely aware, it will either make or break him. He suspects the latter, “I'm gonna die” being his first line in character. (Tommy's joke: “I was playing Carthage, Tennessee. You know Carthage, Tennessee, where they brought back the death penalty for comedians only?”) The good-luck-on-opening-night card that is visible on Tommy's dressing room table reads: “A WARM HAND ON YOUR OPENING” (The joke, as his father, the legendary comedian George later tells it, goes: “As the cow said to the farmer on the cold, wintry morning, ‘Thank you for that warm hand.’”) Of course, “a warm hand” in theatrical parlance translates into “a warm round of applause” but also is set in opposition to cold feet, to the doubt that shadows the performer's life as spec(tac)ular death on a stage.

As a stand-up, Jerry Lewis (who plays George Fawkes) was wont to exclaim, “Pain, oh pain!” while holding one hand to his side where presumably time's mortal arrow pierced his human body armor. This performance behavior acknowledges the comic dyspepsia (from the ancient Greek word for “digestion”) that enables an audience's response to or consumption of his apparently uncomfortable act. The anxiety undergirding this discomfort is real but the act of holding one's side is the comedian's way of “giving notice” (*RPPH* §163) to the audience (often augmented by a drummer's rimshot) that the proper and desired response to this behavior is to laugh rather than to feel his pain, which, Wittgenstein argues, they cannot do in any case. Even a non-philosophical stand-up would agree with this premise. The mock-piercing where the liver is located suggests a Promethean agony that relocates itself in the stand-up's act (i.e., liveness) to Achilles's fatal heel and Oedipus's fateful ankle, two variations on the theme of cold feet. “Do your feet hurt?”—“Only when I (am doing) stand up.” In Bruce Duffy's reimagining of Wittgenstein's life, the philosopher is seen returning to Cambridge following World War I, limping with the aid of a cane, like the third and last stage of Oedipus's Sphinxian riddle. Drawing upon his physical condition for the purpose of analogy, Duffy relates how: “Mysteriously Wittgenstein one day remarked to [his young protégé Frank] Ramsey that he had undergone a painful but necessary operation on his character. It had been a kind of surgery, Wittgenstein said, a surgery of the most radical nature—certain limbs

had to be lopped off.”<sup>47</sup> So was Wittgenstein, like Oedipus, actually walking with a limp, or thinking he was as an instance of performance behavior, a no less real *comic* agony?

In its capacity as a mechanism for gathering, grasping, and gifting (and also “grifting,” as in cheating), especially as regards the fire that Prometheus gave to humankind, the hand has been likened to language. The subterfuge of the commonplace, linguistic (Heideggerian) ready-at-handness (the ordinary) continually replays Prometheus’s deception of Zeus with the temptation of exteriority (surface fat falsely promising depth of surface in place of real meat or value). The idea of ready-at-hand (ordinary) language further touches upon the idea of coming into presence as the spectral body double, the stand-in for the stand-up. An offstage voice implores the audience to give the entering performer a “warm hand,” but the applause bodies forth only the impossibility of there (their) being (in) touch with him or even enough of a unitary presence themselves for their many hands to become one.

For Derrida (and here he is perhaps quite distant from Merleau-Ponty), the touching-touched relation is a variant of the seeing-seen relation because in vision there is always spacing. When one hand touches the other, even in prayer, the coincidence of the touching-touched is only ever imminent, fusion only ever about to happen or arrive. It is as if in the gathering of the fingers, there is a gouged out eye that forbids the gathering of being into any “as such” [the essence of things].<sup>48</sup>

The blinded eye of Oedipus (which the foregoing passage indirectly cites) invariably leads us back to his overlooked wounded feet that unknowingly toe a stage, where his fate is in his audience’s hands. “I’m not going to play safe anymore,” says Tommy at curtain time. “I’m gonna take it to the edge,” to which a character in Foreman’s *The Mind King* responds, “I’ve reached the point, he offered—(*Lights flash and fade*)—where I’m doing too much THINKING about the conclusions of things I’m starting to think about.”<sup>49</sup> The lights are caught blinking, as they are meant to, making a show of certainty as false bravura.

Tommy’s scheduled act opener, “The Dog Story,” recalls Tom Stoppard’s Wittgensteinian language play *Dogg’s Hamlet*, in which characters respond to seemingly arbitrary verbal commands, meanings that have migrated from original contexts to abstract signs and in the process “teach the audience the language the play was written in.”<sup>50</sup> Stoppard’s play borrows words (like “Slab”) and its premise from Wittgenstein’s discussion in *PI* §§17–21 of the problems arising when a word (“Slab!”) stands in for a sentence (e.g., “Bring me the slab!”), the part for the unspoken whole (as in the foot or hand for the body and the body for the corpus or social text). In taxonomy (as in anatomy), the problem is one of usage ghosted by its severed context.

A word or part (the word apart) “at sea” or “*on holiday*” is like a performer, who is lost either on or without a stage, and unable to “find its feet.”

At sea in a literal ocean of despair (he has gone overboard during a drug deal gone bad), young Jack Parker (George's unacknowledged son and Tommy's half-brother) encounters a pair of severed feet and starts yelling, “I'm going to die!” It is the comedian's plaint (“Comedy Death. Which is worse than regular death”),<sup>51</sup> and Jack is an antic, natural born comedian who has “funny bones.” What does “I'm going to die!” mean when it is shouted aloud in the middle of uncomprehending nature, minus a real audience? (“If a tree falls . . .” is the basis for countless jokes.) Might we say in relation to Jack's representative predicament at sea with his pain and a pair of someone else's severed feet that we are as much at odds with one as we are with the other (two)? Can we, *do* we laugh at another's pain, because we cannot experience or comprehend it as our own—or because we *can*, at the same time knowing that it does not belong to us and that pain in general absents belonging?

When the policemen who are trying to talk Jack down from a tower in the British *holiday* sea resort town of Blackpool ask him what he wants, his request is issued in the form of a command: “Toast!” Wittgenstein notes, “We say that we use the command in contrast with other sentences because our language contains the possibility of those other sentences” (*PI* §20); and further, “We could imagine a language in which all assertions had the form and tone of rhetorical questions; or every command had the form of the question, ‘Would you like to . . . ?’” (*PI* §21). What then is being said, as in meant, when one is saying “Slab!” or “Toast!”? What does our language contain? How, where, and why does it break down, take strange turns, speak volumes as in *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, or in abbreviated code, grams of thought, as in the fifteen-minute *Dogg's Hamlet* or in Wittgenstein's aphoristic propositions? Language knows comedy, even when we don't get the joke. When Jack yells “Toast!” he is commanding that he be brought not a comestible but his dog, whose name is “Toast.” It is the sort of name given to a pet by a child who is only beginning to “imagine naming to be some remarkable mental act, as it were the baptism of an object” (*PI* §3), however detached from the word's ordinary meaning the name is. For childlike Jack (his emotional growth stunted when he killed a man while playing a child in a music-hall act), who is unable to function within the social order, naming a dog “Toast” may be a sign of self-ascriptive difference that only language allows us to perform. When Jack is talked down off the tower, though, he descends the ladder that Wittgenstein instructed his reader to discard as an acknowledgment of a senselessness wrought by language in his own *Tractatus*. “Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent” (*TLP* §7) is his (provisional) final word(s) on the performance-enabling unknowing (the willing suspension of disbelief) that is at most only preparatory to what the audience must ultimately know. (“My propositions are elucidatory in this way: he who understands me finally recognizes them as senseless, when he

has climbed out through them, on them, over them. [He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder, after he has climbed up on it]" [*TLP* §654]). Jack's Uncle Thomas, who is one-half of a silent comedy act (with Jack's adoptive father) and who already knows more than he can say (that true comedy, like Jack, is illegitimate) has been silent in his offstage life for twelve years.

Jack has what Tommy lacks, bones that are not just funny but comic in a Wittgensteinian sense. Consider this dialogue with a psychiatrist following Jack's tower descent:

PSYCHIATRIST: Where were you born?

JACK: Blackpool.

PSYCHIATRIST: Why Blackpool?

JACK: Because I wanted to be near me mother.

PSYCHIATRIST (uncomprehending): Have you lived here all your life?

JACK: Not yet.

PSYCHIATRIST (still uncomprehending): Now tell me, of this list, which do you think is the odd one out (Here Jack, "the odd one out," makes meaningful eye contact with the therapist): house, school, *dog*, cinema, church?

JACK: Dog.

PSYCHIATRIST (relieved, either that Jack understands or that *he* does): Good.

JACK: Cause a dog wouldn't go to the cinema, would he?

PSYCHIATRIST: Which of *these* is the odd one out: Malice, jealousy, greed, envy, and *kindness*? (Like a bad actor, contorts his face in roughly the same way as if to manifest each word.)

JACK: (After giving it some thought) And.

Whereupon, as if after a series of ellipses on a printed page, Jack ventriloquizes the sound of an imaginary fly loudly buzzing around the room, which he then catches in his mouth. The fly continues to buzz inside Jack as if asking the listener whether a picture of a fly could be said to buzz and if so, whether we could hear it. We find ourselves trapped inside the invisible fly-bottle of prejudicial, thwarted knowing familiar to readers of Wittgenstein's discourse (*PI* §309)—the very fly-bottle that Wittgenstein urged non-clarifying philosophy to exit from but which Jack turns into a clarifying joke at the expense of psychiatry and the presuppositions with which it holds the real world captive. Wittgenstein would be pleased.

Klagge has observed that "the bottle [in Wittgenstein] is presumably inverted, so that the fly is obsessively flying *up* to the glass, never able to escape." Obsession being in the details, the italicized *up* draws our attention away from the goal and back toward the ordeal, the difficulty inherent in processing information rather than its use, the cycling and recycling of the mind for which direction, such as *up*, any directionality, including rule-giving,

is itself a thwarted fiction. This idea is reinforced by Klagge's linking prospective inescapability to both the image of the fly-bottle and to "Wittgenstein's image of being stuck in a room with an unnoticed door behind one."<sup>52</sup> Obsession is not only in the details but in *the inattention* to details that escape notice while the subject is focused on extricating himself from the compulsion his mind sustains. Thus, Wittgenstein wrote in response to a paper by his friend Yorick Smythies on "Understanding," "The point is, you can't get out [of the figurative fly-bottle] as long as you are fascinated."<sup>53</sup> To say that obsession and compulsion enable one another is an odd way of performing goal-setting as a behavior. For the obsessive-compulsive mind, to borrow imagery from Handke, the goal is illusory; only the anxiety at the penalty kick, the mental choke point, is real.

Jack's interview is another s(h)o(w)-to-speak paraphrase of Wittgenstein's duck-rabbit figure of non-simultaneous aspect-seeing, in this case foregrounding how the psychiatrist and the philosopher (Jack) see differently. Norman Batkin writes: "Psychologists, given the company of the examples they keep, may miss the subtlety of the responses that pictures call upon, even in the simplest cases."<sup>54</sup> Following Wittgenstein's premise that prejudice gets in the way of clear seeing, Batkin asserts that the psychologist misses the (for Wittgenstein) all-important ordinary circumstances of what the patient says, "because the psychologist stages our encounter with the figure he presents as if we are responding only to him, or to no one in particular," as a response to the extraordinary circumstances of the test and of testing in general. Jack's answers to the psychiatrist's questions are, in fact, all quite ordinary in their own right but made to seem otherwise by the examiner's facial responses to them that reveal the latter's inability to take these answers at face value. This is, as they say, an occupational hazard.

### Polysem(ousl)y Perverse

Whence does this observation derive its importance: the one that points out to us that a table can be used in more than one way, that one can think up a table that instructs one as to the use of a table? The observation that one can also conceive of an arrow as pointing from the tip to the tail, that I can use a model as a model in different ways? (*PO* 167)

Jack reproduces language as a ventriloquist or a lip reader might (he also lip-syncs to records, which was the real Jerry Lewis's original solo comedy act). Comic mirroring magnifies a grammatical polysemy (the multiple meanings of a word or sign) and a seriality of meaningful comic exchange that normative logic denies. Listening to Jack we see what Wittgenstein might mean when he asks us to imagine people who can only think out loud (*PI* §331).

Likewise, Leonard Shelby, who mirror-reads messages he wrote backwards on his body so as to be able to pay lip service to the word that has become both polysemous and invisible to him. The word is “remember,” and the reflections of it he depicts, as Wittgenstein suggests, “stands in the way of our seeing the use of the word as it is” (*PI* §305). Kate, the possibly mad painter protagonist of David Markson’s 1988 novel *Wittgenstein’s Mistress*, says she signed a mirror once with lipstick (in a picture gallery), in effect signing an image of herself. “Should anybody else have looked, where my signature would have been was under the other person’s image, however. Doubtless I would not have signed it, had there been anybody else to look.” Anybody else looking into/out of the mirror? What here does “looking” mean? Does language create its own audience, in the way that Kate writes, “When I said heard, I am saying so only in a manner of speaking, of course.”<sup>55</sup>

Such self-mirroring invites a question posed by Blanchot: “Who would not liberate himself from the depth of reflection?”<sup>56</sup> Wittgenstein’s philosophy is not nostalgic, retains no interest in and posits no special function or value of memory as either a veil of mystery or vale of tears. “Is memory [even] an experience?” Wittgenstein asks. “What do I experience?” (*RPPI* §119). Leonard’s inability to make new memories may speak to the incapacity of memory itself to be experienced. Leonard’s repeated invoking of presence recalls Steve Martin’s iterations of “It’s great to be here!” where “here” in the Heraclitean sense of instability and flow names the shifting point as not so much genuine as theatrical. The issue is not that there is illusion born of forgetting or of thinking otherwise, but that there is substitution, and not of the fake for the real, or, in the case of Jack’s interview with the psychiatrist, the wrong answer for the right, but of one more complex reality for another. So, Wittgenstein poses the question: “If from one day to the next someone promises: ‘Tomorrow I’ll come to see you’—is he saying the same thing every day, or every day something different?” (*PI* §226). Wittgenstein is here and elsewhere pointing out the often unacknowledged difference in language and especially in philosophical language between “identical” and “the same” (*PI* §254). No two thoughts or sentences, feelings or sensations are identical even if they appear to be the same. Likewise, Heidegger asserts:

Poetry and thinking meet each other in one and the same only when, and only as long as, they remain distinctly in the distinctness of their nature. The same never coincides with the equal, not even in the empty indifferent oneness of what is merely identical. The equal of identical always moves toward the absence of difference, so that everything may be reduced to a common denominator. The same, by contrast, is the belonging together of what differs, through a gathering by way of the difference. We can only say “the same” if we think difference. It is in the carrying out and settling of differences that the gathering nature of sameness comes to light.<sup>57</sup>

Jack is not merely a creative thinker. He is Wittgenstein's exemplary poetical philosopher, whom the world takes for an idiot in what is only an accident of naming. If Jack is the wounded actor, the psychiatrist manifests the performance behaviors of the mad director and the gloved critic. Armed with the *DSM-IV TR*, the psychiatrist conspires to collaborate with the patient on the creation of a taxonomy of shared obsession between the compulsive self and the observing self, the roles played by the analysand and his analyst ("Obsession sits on both sides of the consulting table").<sup>58</sup> This externalized double role-playing, which re-creates the spectated performance dynamic inside the OCD mind, is offered without irony as being therapeutic (OCD has no cure). In this, the psychiatrist differs from Wittgenstein, who sought to pierce the self-perpetuating taxonomic language of his discipline, by separating naming from the meaning of the object (and in so doing, creating tangles that neither he nor his auditors could always get through, comprehend).<sup>59</sup>

Of course, Wittgenstein sought to lead philosophy to recognition, self-mirroring recognition being the sign of/signed by OCD, an ego-dystonic activity, that is, "alien and unwanted to the self." The goal of the psychiatrist (formerly, "the alienist") is to make the patient feel less alienated from his self-recognition.<sup>60</sup> Wittgenstein asserted that "a psycho-analysis is successful only if the patient agrees to the explanation offered by the analyst," a formula that Jack rejects in relation to the joke. Wittgenstein, Moore observes, discovered two fundamental mistakes in Freud's theory of jokes: "supposing there is something common to all jokes" and "supposing that this supposed common character is the meaning of 'joke.'"<sup>61</sup> The problem is again not of taxonomy per se, but of the analyst's need to create a joke-free taxonomy of literal family resemblance. Jack's *sui generis* performance helps enable the psychiatrist to overlook the goal of language-games to "set up as *objects of comparison* which are meant to throw light on the acts of our language by way not [only] of similarities, but also of dissimilarities" (*PI* §130).<sup>62</sup>

In effect, the language-game performed by Jack and his psychiatrist is the anxiety of laughing away the assumption of (a single) shared meaning, which enables and is enabled by rule-behavior. To the psychiatrist's question, "Which of *these* [affective words] is the odd one out?" Jack answers "And," which allows Saul Kripke's assessment of the word "plus" to enter the psychiatrist's uncomprehending mind. Kripke considers the use of the word "plus" in assessing Wittgenstein's proposition: "this was our paradox: no course of action could be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be made out to accord with the rule" (*PI* §201).<sup>63</sup> Kripke states that, "I, like almost all English speakers, use the word 'plus' and the symbol '+' to denote a well-known mathematical function—addition." "This," Kripke continues, "is the whole point of the notion that in learning to add I grasp a rule: my past intentions regarding addition determine a unique answer for indefinitely many new cases in the future." But what if, Kripke suggests, "I encounter a bizarre sceptic [e.g., Jack] . . . who suggests, as I used the term 'plus' in the

past, the answer I intended for ‘68 + 57’ should have been ‘5!’<sup>64</sup> My certainty is based solely on my following a rule that is based upon my belief that the “metalinguistic” sign “+” was meant to perform a particular function. But “perhaps in the past I used ‘plus’ and ‘+’ to denote a function which I will call [via the neologism] ‘quus’ and symbolize by [insert a handwritten crosshairs sign here]. It is defined by:  $x$  [crosshairs sign in place of “+”]  $y = x + y$ ,  $y < 57 + 5$  otherwise. Who is to say that this is not the function I previously meant by ‘+’?”<sup>65</sup> And this [now] being the case, this act of “quaddition” allows for the possibility of parsing meaning differently by way of usage, that is, the function I applied to achieve meaning, an answer, a result, a mathematical sum. Here Kripke notes, significantly, “I am not familiar with an accepted felicitous convention to indicate the object of the verb ‘to mean.’”<sup>66</sup>

By changing the psychiatrist’s meaning-aggregate “plus” sign into a “quus” (neologism being a function that is appropriate to nonsense, which is the comic mind’s point of entry into philosophical thought), Jack unmakes the logical function of the affect words that are offered in a structural series, but also relocates the valence of value in the series in a way that draws our attention back to the meaning of the particular series (and of “series”) itself. In doing this, Jack further undoes the rule of the language-game being proffered him.

Kripke writes meaningfully (*vis-à-vis* my thesis) in the context of his explanation regarding rule-following: “Whereas [British philosopher W. V.] Quine presents the problem of meaning in terms of a linguist, trying to guess what someone *else* means by his words on the basis of his behavior, Wittgenstein’s challenge can be presented to me as a question about *myself*: was there some past fact about me—what I ‘meant’ by plus—that mandates what I should do now?” Kripke’s approach to Wittgenstein informs my own but only insofar as Wittgenstein’s consideration of “the problem of other minds” (the so-called “private language argument”) redounded back upon his own, resulting in what was for Kripke a self-described revelatory reading of the work (especially the *Philosophical Investigations*). His reading seemed to achieve its author’s (i.e., Wittgenstein’s) goal for his reader, clarity emerging from apparently insoluble paradoxes and disjunctive, self-worrying arguments. Although Kripke is quick to state that his reading is intended as “the presentation of a problem and an argument, not its critical evaluation,” there is at least for me a clear sense that Kripke is, like myself, attracted to Wittgenstein’s mode of discourse because it does the worrying (about itself) for the reader, who can fact-check against the interlocutor as the reader *in* the text.<sup>67</sup>

It is significant that Jack selects the word “And” not only because of what Kripke has to say about rules, but also because Jack treats a conjunction as a sign of disjunction. This “disjunction” would normally be expressed not by “And” but by “Or.” Now look again at the question that the psychiatrist posed to Jack: “Which of *these* is the odd one out? Malice, jealousy, greed, envy, *and* kindness?” When you reread this affective series is it not logical to substitute “or” for “and”? Hasn’t the psychiatrist, in his certainty regarding the rules that

govern his use of language, made a grammatical mistake? And by doing so, hasn't he, despite his intentions, indeed made "and" into "the odd one out"? As such, Jack's answer is the only logical one given the context with which he is presented. Because he is a performer, Jack is able to respond to this interrogation as a linguistic occasion or event, which the rule-bound psychiatrist cannot.

By presenting the plus sign of "And" as an apparently illogical response to what is meant to be, despite the appearance of choice, a rhetorical question, the idea of the minus as in a severance of or from normative meaning is likewise introduced. This severance or minus represents a cutting through, an interruption, an intrusion that recalls Kaspar's cutting through the theatrical backdrop at the start of Handke's play, the nominal protagonist leading, as it were, with his hand, which is an instrumental part of the language-game. This element of cutting through or disruption of the norm (a fitting analogue to or metaphor for theatrical performance and so too, performance behavior) can again be seen in Heidegger's distinction between the "ready-to-hand" (roughly, practical agency implicit in form of being) and the "present-at-hand" (roughly, theorized existence, perspectival being, "thereness"). Heidegger's two-handedness represents a figural grasping that rehearses Wittgenstein's concern with the non-/usefulness of ordinary language in relation to knowing and understanding meaning. And Lambert V. Stepanich spins Heidegger's two-handed grasping into something more overtly performative: "only on account of readiness-to-hand is there presence-at-hand. Realism, as based on an ontology of the present-at-hand, is thus fundamentally incompatible with Heidegger's ontological understanding."<sup>68</sup>

And here, in the context of the battle of the plus-or-minus ones, the and/or (the one size meaning/logic that does *not* fit all), we return to the question of the severed feet, the anomaly, the fish out of water, "the odd one out," so to speak. When the Director of Tourism for Blackpool in *Funny Bones* is confronted with the first severed foot washing up on shore from the sea, he calls it "a one-off." He is, absurdly, right insofar as an abnormal occurrence or event is "a one-off" unless and until it becomes, at the very least, a pair. After the second severed foot turns up in a fisherman's net out at sea, the Director has to account to reporters for his earlier statement. The dialogue that ensues would be right at home in *Dogg's Hamlet*, with the expression "one-off" standing in (standing on one foot, an *unsurefootedness*) for meaning itself and how it is both served and subverted by the oddness that we constitute and construe as language:

FIRST REPORTER: I thought you said this was a "one-off."

DIRECTOR: Well it is a "one-off." The feet match *one* person.

SECOND REPORTER: Two feet, though.

DIRECTOR: Well, *obviously*. *Everyone's* got two feet. Does *anybody* know *anyone* who *hasn't* got two feet?

ALL REPORTERS (raising their hands and laughing in unison): Yes!

At which point, one hears Steve Martin's voice asking his audience, "How many people have never raised their hands before?" (And, "Where are you all from?")

Wittgenstein, for his part, sees the language of the joke overwriting what the interrogator mistook to be a serious, that is, non-rhetorical question. Not to mention the fact that the nominal disability of having but one foot performs or stands in for some measure of incapacity. And here clinical neurologist Oliver Sacks's reference to a "mortified leg," "mortified" in the sense of a limb that was "functionally and existentially dead," puts me in mind of the alternative meaning of "mortified"—shame, or, at the very least, embarrassment, alongside the de-realization or severance of the mind-body's claim to wholeness, integrity, actuality. "There is no permanent, reserved area . . . for any part of the body," and we are embarrassed by having ever believed that there was. Sacks further states, "There is no fixed 'hand' area, for example." Our image of where the hand belongs, where it was, *that* it was, can disappear from memory without an embodied trace.<sup>69</sup>

This is a proposition that Wittgenstein understood intuitively as evidenced by his constant severing of the hand from the body, a kind of Cartesian operation in which the hand performs the role of the mind's body whose the-same-but-different-or-individual status as the physical body's isomorph attends like the mind's other body, the ear, to the possibility of its (the body's, the body image's) and its own (the body part's) uncertainty. This severing of the thought-space that contains mind and body, mind-as-body, and body as sensory idea is at home at sea near Blackpool, which offers fluidity of meaning via the dispersal of context. And it is this sea, this seeing of what cannot otherwise be seen (this *black pool*), as being a (w)hole, which in turn summons forth the severed foot, the sign of the meaningful disjunction that the mind and the idea and function of language now perform.

Sacks's mention of Rilke's "things made of fear" recalls the monadic, non-nomadic performance of the leg as cast. Here we first sight the figure of Hitchcock's chair-bound photographer L. B. Jefferies in *Rear Window* (1954) as an isomorphic agoraphobe for whom the blankness of his white leg cast provides the perfect background upon which to write the story of complicit criminal transgression—an uroborically obsessive neighbor-on-neighbor crime—that Jeff dreams, imagines, or sees only as a blankness (and a blackness), as an intuited offstage/off-screen performance of Wittgenstein's non-visible death-as-life-event.<sup>70</sup> Sacks likens scotoma, the natural blind spot (another black pool) and the unnatural loss or alteration of visual acuity (from which he himself now suffers) to "a hole in reality itself, a hole in time no less than in space."<sup>71</sup> It (the condition) is amnesiac (as is a lost foot, hand, or leg), so "it carries a sense of timelessness, endlessness," the "see" if you will becoming the "sea," *la mer*. "Scotoma," says Sacks, "in Kantian terms, was an ultimate neuro-ontological extinction (or 'Akantia')." Physically, physiologically, there was an absence of nerve-impulse, image and field; but

metaphysically, or ontologically, an absence of reason, and of its constructs, space and time." Jefferies's unreasonably single-minded vision is not so much enhanced by apparatic magnification (binoculars) as it is rendered scotomatic (as an obsessive-compulsive ticcing). Magnification born of solipsistic self-regard sees Jefferies as a one-off (guilty) witness to a murder in the play of incapacity. His performance in the original (i.e., first) cast (he is fitted for a second leg cast after nearly being murdered by his criminal neighbor at film's end) demonstrates how and what incapacity makes possible, the creative de-creation of the wholeness and integrity of what (we think) we see.<sup>72</sup>

The wistful melody of the song that recurs throughout *Funny Bones*, "La mer," holds out the remembered hope for a romantic integrity that the severed foot and the severing of meaning skeptically subvert.<sup>73</sup> Assuming the role of Director of Neurographic Tourism, with his eye implicitly cast upon the mind's disembodied and re-embodied funny bones, Oliver Sacks concludes (Is Leonard Shelby listening?): "One cannot remember what it is like to be 'whole.' And the alienated part of one's body makes *no sense* at all."<sup>74</sup> And this brings us back to the no sense or nonsense that is comedy. Before going on to perform his record act, Jack is asked by his mother, "Do you remember clapping for yourself, just like your father?" Holding her hands at a distance from her face, she proceeds to clap her hands together so that the so-called immortality powder (a comical in the sense of [self-] delusional idea that first set Jack adrift and for which a man traded his life and his severed feet at sea) spreads evenly over her face. Her question speaks not merely to practice but to Jack's orientation, his ability to amuse himself with or without an audience. The fact that Jack has replaced (i.e., faked) the usual talcum powder that sets makeup with another powder that fakes immortality exposes the clay feet of community and continuity. We hear in our minds something like the rhetorical sound of one hand clapping in the darkness of the stand-up performance of mortality, in the separation of the self from the face in the mirror and the face from the faceless crowd. The comic legacy, Jack's Uncle Thomas says after the aforementioned twelve years of self-imposed silence, is a special brand of suffering: "The pain we feel is worse than anyone else." And Bruno, Thomas's brother and comic partner, agrees: "I never saw anything funny that wasn't terrible, didn't cause pain." Which is to say, how much comic "pain-behavior" really hurts.

### The Peril of Awareness

In her memoir *A Brief History of Anxiety*, Patricia Pearson writes: "[As a child] I would jump off the garage roof in the ludicrous hope that I could break my leg and wear a cast for everyone at school to sign."<sup>75</sup> Pearson relates this particular turn of mind to what Freud called "anxious readiness" and Kierkegaard described as "the alarming possibility of being able."<sup>76</sup> Pearson

likens all of this to fearlessness, but I experience(d) precisely the same mostly unfulfilled fantasy, to wear incapacity, physically, on my sleeve (my own childhood/childish desire was for an arm cast) not as a measure of fearlessness but out of fear of not being thought to be disabled enough to warrant my intrusive thoughts and performance behavior. Of course, there are those who consider such performance behavior to be fearless, even though it covers over a dark and deep well of anxiety and depression. Wittgenstein says that “lying is a language-game that needs to be learned like any other one” (*PI* §249). It is ironic that just when you’ve reached the point of questioning where you stand in relation to the language-game as a shared practice that your mind wants to generate new ways to up the ante while bending the rules.

And to *think* one is following a rule is not to follow a rule. And that’s why it’s not possible to follow a rule “privately”; otherwise, thinking one was following a rule would be the same thing as following it. (*PI* §202)

But do Wittgenstein’s two statements—the one regarding lying and the other the impossibility of following a rule privately—necessarily dismiss the possibility that my lying to myself is outside the structure of the language-game?

Before I quit her, my cognitive behavioral therapist explained to me the difference between two categories of patients she treats. The first type, who are diagnosed as being ego-dystonic, are distressed by their symptoms, do not like them, want to get rid of them, do not want them to be a part of their identity. The second type, who are labeled ego-syntonic, conversely embrace their symptoms, fold them into their identity, not without distress, but without sufficient distress to outweigh their desired effects. I fall under the second category, a sort of aberrant form of Munchausen by proxy (which is itself, of course, an extremely aberrant form to begin with), which is named after the eighteenth-century liar/personal literary fantasist, the Baron von Münchhausen. Normally (and I use this term advisedly), a patient suffering from the condition known as Munchausen by proxy injures other people (generally their own or other people’s children) in order to draw attention to themselves. But what if a person lives his own life in a way that is purposely injurious to himself so that he can write about it? What if he undergoes therapy not so as to achieve a cure but rather to deepen his identity’s definition in relation to diagnosed sickness? What if I am both the fantasist Münchhausen, who gave the condition its name, and my own proxy?

In his film *The Disorderly Orderly* (1964), Jerry Lewis’s character Jerome Littlefield suffers from so-called “neurotic identification empathy,” meaning that, as he says, “I’m oversensitive to someone who has pain. . . . I feel what they feel and I’m sicker than they are.”<sup>77</sup> Discussing the American public’s response to Lewis’s antics in the 1950s, Mikita Brottman writes, “And yet, feeling a need for madness as entertainment is one thing; wishing to

become mad oneself is quite another.”<sup>78</sup> But Wittgenstein wrote from another perspective:

The philosopher is the man who has to cure himself of many sicknesses of the understanding before he can arrive at the notions of the healthy human understanding.

If in life we are surrounded by death, so in healthy understanding we are surrounded by madness. (*RFM* part 4, §53)

What kind of dissociative disorder, what extreme attraction to the theme of incapacity, would cause a mind to mimic madness in the pursuit of some greater understanding, and at the point where mimicry is no longer discernible as such does the self succumb and understanding in any objective sense cease? What does it mean when self-understanding becomes a fiction, and the performance of pain behavior is the only thing left that is real? Hamlet does not so much search for truth as he models it after his dead father's authoritative immateriality. He is mad only insofar as acting to a mental image incapacitates all but the performance of the real.

Gordon Baker writes: “Taken as an example of ‘mythology in the forms of our language’ is the occurrence of the words ‘ghost,’ ‘shade,’ ‘soul’ and ‘spirit’ in the vocabulary of our language.” Further, “according to Wittgenstein’s conception, essence is created by us; by stipulating how we wish to use our own words.”<sup>79</sup> One might say in connection with these two statements that we exercise our capacity to create essence via language in no purer form than the ghost. At the same time, Wittgenstein would say that the transformation of this essence into a picture or image (however much it speaks of its own insubstantiality) distorts our understanding of how the mind might otherwise understand what language does and means to say. Ghosts are for Wittgenstein “grammatical illusions” on the order of his proposition: “‘Language (or thinking) is something unique’—this proves to be a superstition (not a mistake!), itself produced by grammatical illusions” (*PI* §110). From a Wittgensteinian perspective, the Ghost is a symbol of obscurantist metaphysical expression (the source of superstitions and prejudices vested in the individual mind that Wittgenstein sought to combat). And *Hamlet* becomes a play about the mythmaking capacity of language—Hamlet’s motivation to act deriving from an image of a ghost that by speaking to him directly (by infusing him with its metaphysical and symbolic expression) drops Hamlet into a self-contained, self-perpetuating language-game of misrepresentation that plays with the Prince even more than he appears to play with it. This language-game troubles and possesses Hamlet unto death. Will he too become a ghost, or need he have done something more or have had something done to him to earn such emeritus status? He is not yet a soul-catcher but he did design a mousetrap, a fly-bottle in which he not only caught a

king's spectral conscience but his own benighted attempt to make someone else feel *his* pain.<sup>80</sup>

### Brain Scan

JACK PAAR: Did it ever occur to you, dear old friend, that a lot of  
your trouble or illness may just be in your mind?

OSCAR LEVANT: What a place for it to be.

—Oscar Levant, *Memoirs of an Amnesiac*

The tombstone of anxiety-ridden, drug-addled pianist/comic raconteur Oscar Levant reads: “*I told them I was ill,*” hypochondria constituting its own spectral form of self-fulfilling prophecy, the ghosting of the body before the fact. I have gone through a full battery of neuropsychological testing, including the requisite brain scans—MRI, EEG, and SPECT SCAN. The first part of this last acronym stands for Single Photon Emission Computed Tomography (SPECT) and is defined as “a type of nuclear imaging test that shows how blood flows to tissues and organs.”<sup>81</sup> I find this last bit to be particularly disappointing, as I had hoped that SPECT would refer to SPECTRE, as in ghost, a shadowy haunting of the brain with its own extra-linguistic claim on meaning. However, tomography refers to imaging, which Wittgenstein among others has taught us is suspect, spectral in its own right. Although I was not taking a test for which I could study, I did bring a book, which the technician asked to see—*Philosophical Investigations*. I am told to set the book aside and to remove my glasses for the duration of the examination. I sit the one upon the other, so my own spectral textual scanning can proceed along with my being scanned. I am then instructed to remain absolutely still and to empty my brain, to stop thinking. “But I have learned this much from Benjamin [writes Handke]: that it is not possible to act as if one ‘did not think.’”<sup>82</sup> As an OCD patient, I not only subscribe to this idea, but start intensely thinking about what it means to stop thinking as the scan begins.

## Chapter 3



# Catastrophists

Looking at people, the thought: They are living as though there had been no catastrophe.

What a relief that so far none of my presentiments has really been fulfilled; but how awful if I weren't to have any more presentiments.

—Handke, *The Weight of the World: A Journal*

Why is there something rather than nothing?

—G. W. Leibniz

Why the Why?

—Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*

In “Patterns,” an episode of the television series *Night Visions* (2002), a psychiatric patient fears that if he does not perform his OCD rituals, airplanes will fall out of the sky, traffic lights will stop working—in general, objects will refuse to cooperate by performing their normal functions within the infrastructure of the real. The obsessive-compulsive brings a speculative or doubting present-at-hand mindset to bear upon the tools that are normally ready-to-hand, that is, just doing their work without our attention. The psychiatrist in the television episode medicates the patient and he is “cured,” resulting in all the things he previously feared would happen coming to be. In order to reverse this process, the psychiatrist takes over his patient’s rituals, offering a plight manifest of transference neurosis of the patient’s own imagining: all’s well that doesn’t end (well), says surrogacy’s performance behavior.

Who wants to live in a world that is independent of our will to affect it, to impact it with our performance, as Wittgenstein posited (*TLP* §6.373–6.375)?

At what cost do we subscribe to the limits of our agency, our incapacity? Is it preferable for one's state of mind to be certain in its doubt than to doubt its certainty, or, worst of all, to be certain in its certainty, that is, solipsistic? Catastrophism is a matter of obsessive-compulsive intuition, which, Wittgenstein suggests, can mislead us, "For if it [intuition] can guide me right, it can also guide me wrong" (*PI* §213). Catastrophic uncertainty sentences the mind to hard, unproductive labor. Logic discomfits the catastrophic mind if it is seen as resisting its need to invent logic on its own terms. Wittgenstein observes, "When someone of whom I am afraid orders me to continue a series, I act quickly, with perfect assurance, and the lack of reasons does not trouble me" (*PI* §212). The result of following even the unspoken rule of series, however, advertises a false level of assurance, since what the mind is assured of only stretches as far into the unknowable future as its agreed-upon measuring stick allows. Does the obsessive-compulsive mind fixate on 11:11 because it fears reaching the end at 12—the end of the day, the end of the foot-long ruler—and so recasts the temporally doubled 11 as a penultimate number? The mind is not so much assured *of* what follows in ritual as *by* ritual itself and the compulsion that drives it. Ritualized assurance ends in repetition, which is no end at all. When made into ritual, counting in a series aims at being counter-predictive, keeping the future safely out of reach. Paradoxically, the OCD-anxiety-disordered mind also wants to know all that it can in advance (turning cyclical thinking in the opposite direction, which is still cyclical): "For anxiety is engaged in endless subsets of 'what if?' and 'if then.' The essence of the condition is an intolerance of uncertainty," its magic "if"-ness being entirely tangled up with consequences.<sup>1</sup> If I carry an umbrella on a sunny day, it will not rain, the planes will stay in the air. This is what Handke called "The Goalie's Anxiety," the burden of taking it upon oneself to make the stop.

A wish: to look out the window and suddenly see "the linkup"—as in a detective story.<sup>2</sup>

In Hitchcock's *Rear Window*, photographer L. B. "Jeff" Jefferies, his leg broken on assignment and confined to a wheelchair, feels compelled to sleep sitting up, his thoughts thinking themselves into a frenzy of projected criminality and introjected guilt he ascribes to a larger-than-life neighbor, Thorwald, whose apartment faces his own. "What do you think?" his high fashion-model girlfriend Lisa Freeman asks, interrupting Jeff's train of thought, while posing for him in his bedroom doorway wearing her negligee. "I will rephrase the question," she says when thought-encumbered Jeff does not respond. "Do you like it?" Substituting "like" for "think" acknowledges that Jeff is too wrapped up in thought to acknowledge intimacy (or intimate apparel). "The body is always outside the intimacy of the body itself," in any case, says the intrusive thought that controls body image, recasting the latter

from the perspective of an outside eye whose monitoring never stops.<sup>3</sup> Jeff's mind puts his own head on Lisa's body. Each new body represents a new meaning to which his head (his mind) is not fully reconciled. He tries to shut his ears to the self-wounding conveyed in "What do you think?" (Is that what she asked?) but hears the scratching of his incapacity coming as if from inside his leg cast, demanding that he acknowledge the itch, the true crime that is so difficult to discern.<sup>4</sup> What already appears to be Jefferies's worst-case scenario is recast when his second leg is broken by Thorwald's throwing him out his (Jeff's) own window at film's end—the joke here being that no one tells an actor to "break a *second* leg." Returned to his wheelchair-bound stillness with his brokenness now redoubled, Jeff is only seemingly content, since in the end OCD is an endless itch that will need to be scratched again and again.

"We have two expressions," Wittgenstein writes. "Moaning without pain, and one for moaning with pain" (*PO* 281). Lisa, Jeff's nurse Stella, and his detective friend Doyle think his murder story is just the pain talking—which it is, but not the pain they think they know. No one doubts that Jeff's leg is broken, but they do not ascribe brokenness to an incapacity they cannot see and the catastrophe it (fore)tells. The psychiatrist rhetorically asks his patient (not Jefferies), "They would understand that you are incapacitated and allow for your attendant behaviors if your leg were broken, wouldn't they?" That is, they wouldn't think that you were merely acting, moaning with pain, making something out of nothing.

"Did he know that he was doing what we call lying?" "Did he know that he was doing what, on other occasions, he called lying?" (*PO* 247)

Does Jefferies think he is lying, if he knows he is acting? Is Jefferies lying if he does not acknowledge that he is acting even though he is? Could he be lying about the category of his behavior and so be unable to distinguish between acting, which is pretending according to rules, and lying which inherently acknowledges and follows no rules? "The meaning of a word," says Wittgenstein, "*seems* to be determined in two different ways: 1) by pointing, 2) by giving rules" (*PO* 307). Jefferies's lying is defined by a dual incapacity that is/not less visible than his broken leg—his inability to see what it is he is really pointing at, a "what" whose meaning is in turn blocked by a failure to acknowledge what his seeing is, as in means. ("The question is what we are to call 'knowing what it is I see'" [*PO* 265].) "Murdering Mrs. Thorwald" is Jefferies's mad director's trunk show, in which the actor Thorwald (his surname a dichotomously theatrical sign of passive-aggressiveness—part Norse god "Thor," part fictional Norwegian husband "Torvald," whose wife leaves him) disposes of the body parts lopped off of Mrs. Thorwald's trunk, with attention drawn to the minimal props (an axe? a saw?) and the absence of scenic effects (blood, etc.).

The body, as Nancy says in reference to Descartes, is not just exposed but is “a thing of exposition” that is scannable only by “an interruption of sense.”<sup>5</sup> The leg-cast reads, “Here lie the bones of L. B. Jefferies.” But can you really believe a man who is only pretending to be dead, who cannot even lie down, propped up as he is in his director’s chair? His body is confessing what only his mind knows about the surrogacy of death in plotting (Thorwald’s murder-burial of his “Mrs.”), the transference neurosis of in/capacity between analyst and analysand, mad director and wounded actor. “The question is what your imagery has to do with the sentences ‘I see’ and ‘he sees’” (*PO* 300), says the intersubjective look shared by Jefferies and Thorwald in the moment that the watcher is caught watching and is being watched through the now superimposed frames of their facing apartment windows. Just as we commonly “talk of ‘a pencil somewhere else’ as a pencil seen by someone” (*PO* 315), subject and object are here elided, and more significantly, object and appearance, invoking the question what is it that we see? Language, Wittgenstein argues, does not really help us to answer this question with any degree of certainty. Storytelling, like image-making, configures doubt. Jefferies is no more who he appears to be than is Thorwald—but they are codependents of performance-making that li(v)es like truth. When Thorwald inevitably enters Jefferies’s apartment for a face-to-face resolution, his physical effort to close the gap in seeing’s definition as knowledge is blocked in stages by the incapacitated photographer’s cyclopic camera flash apparatus that bounces off of the hulking shadow’s eyeglass lenses like they were two closed windows. Each flash (detached from a camera as was the self-incriminating telephoto apparatus the photographer used to spy on his neighbor) constitutes a vain attempt by Jefferies to detach himself from his own monstrosity, his secret capacity to commit a serious crime. The actor assumes the director’s role (ironically, paradoxically) to fight the urge to express, to touch, to get in touch with himself, with what the wounded actor can and does know about who he really is.

The photographs Jefferies has taken that hang upon his apartment wall have in common the theme of catastrophe: a thoroughly destroyed camera; a photo of a race car with one of its tires suspended in midair, hurtling toward the unseen photographer, his leg and the picture snapped in the next moment by the destroyed camera in the previous photo (waiting for the already-arrived catastrophe); four men racing from a truck that is voluptuously on fire and about to blow; another car, this one about to hit/just having hit/having stopped just before hitting a woman who has fallen victim in the street to catastrophe’s perverse polysemy as regards time; an armed soldier who appears to be looking at a corpse that can no longer be disarmed by (the) looking; three foregrounded and two backgrounded soldiers regarding yet another explosion that has risen in the form of a miniature mushroom cloud. Tom Cohen connects the image of “the wheel flying from and surviving the car crash” and that of this last photo explosion to produce a third meaning of “disaster” before and beyond that of local or even world war.<sup>6</sup> But this

productive wide view overlooks the Wittgensteinian ordinary that language sets before our eyes, in this case being an unseen schematic diagnosis, not of Jeff's injury but of his condition—thinking as looking at/looking at thinking. Even Jeff's nurse Stella makes the wrong call. "What people [i.e., Jeff] ought to do is get outside their own house and look in for a change," rather than out through a "portable peephole" (telephoto camera lens). But what would the insurance company that employs nurse Stella say about her misdiagnosing her patient as a voyeur and in so doing overlooking the (however unacknowledged) preexisting psychological condition for which he alone will have to pay to ensure his continued well-being once his insurance/assurance claim is denied?

It is not coincidental that Jefferies's restless mind captures Thorwald and his doomed wife performing their marital misery during a phone conversation that Jeff is having with his magazine editor about a photo assignment Jeff will be unable to fulfill. His broken leg makes it impossible, and, in any case, despite Jeff not consciously knowing it yet, he is already busy working on another assignment that, in a sense, *rewards* his incapacity, his being stuck in a chair, like a writer or a director, with nothing to do but think, record, imagine, and, where necessary, block. Jeff's editor phones him because he thinks that the cast is coming off Jeff's leg today, tacitly invoking the dramaturgical question, "Why is the precipitating event namely happening today?" ("Today" being a marker of singular difference that makes performance necessary and possible and evasive of catastrophe's non-singular but polysemously perverse temporality.) Not just "wrong day" but "wrong week," Jeff (whose mind rejects the rubric "performance") tells him. "Forget I called," the editor tells Jeff, whose OCD-anxious mind cannot process or comprehend forgetting, making nothing out of something with an editor's normative mental economy. Conversely, Jeff's editor can make no sense of his oral transmission. "You can transmit speech over the telephone, but not the measles" (*PR* §66), not the condition, the wrongness of thought and what that wrongness makes me think I see.

What belongs to the essence of the world cannot be expressed by language. For this reason, it cannot *say* that all is in flux. Language can only say those things we can imagine otherwise. (*PR* §54)

Wittgenstein struggled with the theme of imaginability.<sup>7</sup> His introduction of "a myth of a wholly general relation between mind and world," as Stern characterizes it, cannot ultimately stand up to the erosion produced by the actual subsets of a single imaginative mind.<sup>8</sup> Wittgenstein knew that nothing general could, but he wanted us to keep an eye out for what we, our language, and our worldview might become without an attempt to think big minus the visual aid of a picture, or better yet, to think small, think ordinary, read closely but not so closely as to become enthralled by reading one's own mind.

Beware of model-making in the dark. Do not sink into the fascinating patterns of your own spectatorship. The first thing that knowledge teaches the pupil is knowledge's and his own incapacity, what and that he doesn't know. Of this, I, like Jefferies, am too good a pupil to be my own bad teacher.<sup>9</sup>

*Rear Window* opens with the shades on Jefferies's apartment windows rising up as if of their own accord to reveal the fake model exterior. But if the protagonist's (as yet unseen) body "is the unity of a being outside itself," as Nancy suggests in another context, then the fake is an extension of an authorial framing mechanism. This fake reveal of the extended body cites/sights the film's viewer sitting up alone in the dark, extending to him the invitation to share Jefferies's other in-house viewer's "magic if" performance proposition—"I am not guilty of a crime, but if I were it might look like this. . . ." Shades here replace the curtains Hitchcock usually employs to notate theater in film. Jacques Rancière characterizes Plato's position on theatre as follows:

Theatre is the place where ignoramuses are invited to see people suffering. What the theatrical scene offers them is the spectacle of a *pathos*, the manifestation of an illness, that of desire and suffering—that is to say, the self-division which derives from ignorance. The particular effect of theatre is to transmit this illness by means of another one: the illness of the gaze in thrall to shades. It transmits the illness of ignorance that makes the characters suffer through a machinery of ignorance, the optical machinery that prepares the gaze for illusion and passivity.<sup>10</sup>

Here "shades" are, of course, referring to illusions (and also, perhaps the ghosts of dead souls), but the "machinery" that the author labels "optical" most certainly (as I believe it did with Plato) refers (as well) to thinking about thought. So, what Hitchcock (who presents Jefferies, Lisa, and Doyle in and out of Jeff's apartment shadows, as literal shades) has given us is a passive spectator whose gaze is "in thrall to shades" in the manner of death and illusion, the theatrical stage's primary and interwoven themes. These themes make the spectator complicit in Jeff's performance via the raising of the physical shades on the inside of Jeff's apartment windows. As there were presumably no self-raising window shades on the market in 1959, this action is meant less as an illusion of and more of an allusion to automated design (reinforcing Hitchcock's practice of storyboarding the entire film in advance of shooting it). By substituting "allusion to" for "illusion of" (as in "think" for "like"), Hitchcock recasts the viewer of the film as an actor and the actor-protagonist inside the film as our director. This recasting obviates the assumption that if "viewing is the opposite of knowing" and viewing is also the opposite of acting, "the spectator is separated from both the capacity to know and the power to act."<sup>11</sup> In Hitchcock's scenario, the spectator (Jefferies as the viewer surrogate) lacks neither the capacity to know nor

the power to act, although he wants to think differently if at all about what incapacity might mean as far as he is concerned. And in this we are not unlike Jefferies who is cast as (a) wounded actor but casts himself as a mad director.

### As Stupid as the Questioner's Doubt

Wittgenstein sat in a plain wooden chair in the centre of the room. Here he carried on a visible struggle with his thoughts. He often felt that he was confused, and said so. Frequently he said things like "I'm a fool!" "You have a dreadful teacher!" "I'm just too stupid today."

—Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*

With the word *I* the difficulties set in.

—Handke, "Conditions of Ownership," *The Innerworld of the Outerworld of the Innerworld*

One reads astonishment on the face of Kaspar's made-up, wounded actor's face, along with confusion as to what it portends to be so theatrically seen.<sup>12</sup> His acknowledged stage entrance (it's there only in the stage directions) being for him an ontological function, Kaspar has unknowingly denied himself access to the secret languages of unspoken thought. He has likewise locked himself into the compulsive reenactment of the stage languages of lines and blocking that yield no new sensations or any forward progress ("forward progress," a linguistic tic that encodes some other form of repetition). Kaspar performs physical and linguistic tics that are painful to listen to and watch, in the way that bad acting is. His mind is nominally dressed for success by his stage Prompters but built for catastrophe by his theatrical being. Kaspar's first sentence, which Handke adapts from the sole utterance of the original Kaspar Hauser (who showed up on the world stage unannounced), is "I want to be a person like somebody else was once." My mind translates this sentence to read, "I want to be a person like somebody else (I) was once" to express my sense that I am not the person I was before. The body ages and agrees, of course, as does the mind, and self-awareness waxes and wanes, along with (although not necessarily in tandem with) memory. But these are all natural symptoms and not the introjected condition of having become somebody else.

*Kaspar* deals with the subject's in/capacity to do a litany of things in the name of knowledge rather than knowing. The play's translator, Michael Roloff, has seen fit to recast the "can do" prompts emerging from the stage Prompter's voice box in an interrogative mode—"Can Kaspar, the owner of one sentence, begin and begin to do something with this sentence?"—that looks forwards and backwards, cites progression and regression at the same

time and over the course of time as well. Being questions, of course, this recurrent “can” opens up the possibility of “cannot,” the unmasking of “can.” This being an indoctrination play, the subject is made to seem “stupid” by the questioner’s doubt as to the subject’s capacity, the tacit assertion of the possible incapacity of the subject to be teachable. College student Carol in David Mamet’s play *Oleanna* (1992) recedes into her self-assessed stupidity at the prompting of her peers’ capacity for understanding what questions ask and mean, only to then turn this stupidity back upon her questioner’s (teacher’s) doubt.

Imagine Kaspar first entering through the stage curtain carrying a small opened clown’s umbrella as a sign of a negative (self-)awareness antedating language. Can Kaspar expect the worst even before learning to speak a single sentence? Can he implicitly understand what his actor-sentence (“I want to be a person like somebody else was once”) is even before it is pronounced? Does his astonished look on entering, even before the prompting, tell us that in speech begins loss, in language there is the beginning of the end—Catastrophe. Or is it all an act—the small umbrella as open as the astonishment on his clownish face? Is Wittgenstein correct in saying, “We can only foresee what we ourselves construct”? (*NB* §15.4.16).

Kaspar’s recurring sentence defines a spatiotemporal constructedness, a prognostic report, in Wellman’s terms, on “the weather of words.”<sup>13</sup> Kaspar’s statement is, at the same time, anachronistic, one might even say self-anachronizing in that it appears to s(l)ight the self in the “person” of someone who already was but no longer is (a mythic person, perhaps?). A character in a Wellman play states: “My secret is a chronically faulty sense / of spacio-temporal continuity. I don’t / care if I behave in ways others consider / inconsistent, not holistic, or *unself-similar*” (my italics).<sup>14</sup>

Kaspar’s tense-challenged statement of un-self-knowing speaks to a certain un-self-similarity in the nearly physical aphasia of past and future it references. Kaspar’s is a physicalized meaning that has fallen out of place, on the order of an anatomical prolapse and a temporal prolepsis. Kaspar’s “fallen out of place” status contests with his physical clowning, with his physical role of “clown,” of which Handke has elsewhere written: “The sight of a clown who fails to fall over a stool or who can sit down easily in an armchair . . . is embarrassing.”<sup>15</sup> Freddie Rokem points out that at the core of the original German statement that begins the *Tractatus*—“Die Welt ist alles, was der Fall ist” (“The world is everything that is the case”)—is the word “Fall” (meaning “case”) which is in turn the root of the German words for “coincidence” (*Zufall*) and “accident” (*Unfall*). The sense of “falling,” “failure,” and “collapse,” which Rokem adds to the mix of meanings, suggests that “the world is immersed in tragedy and loss.”<sup>16</sup> This fallen-out-of-placeness (out of order and logic, into coincidence, accident, failure, and collapse), the anti-mise-en-scène Tractarian opening later mimicked by *Kaspar*, invites us to think catastrophically about Wittgenstein’s text that in the end self-destructs.

Language is a physical construct that encapsulates the human body and what Wellman calls “time’s thingness,” a construct with which Wellman after Wittgenstein is at odds. “All of you have wanted forever to put me on that drug, Prolapsis or Prolepto-whatsis, but I won’t, see?” says a character in Wellman’s *Cat’s Paw*, a Don Juan play without either a Don Juan figure or even a single male character (only “men’s clothing with nothing inside,” which is soon enough divested of its maleness—“These clothes are not male clothing”).<sup>17</sup> This and the fact that there is no talk of men in the dialogue fulfilled Wellman’s stated intention to make this a rule-based play, which of course places it firmly under the sign of Wittgenstein, especially as virtually all of Wellman’s plays draw attention to the language-games being played in them.<sup>18</sup> The play begins with a mother asking her daughter on the observation deck of the Empire State Building, “How long after you leap do you, do you think, make impact?”<sup>19</sup> The mental stutter step separating with the narrowest of commas “do you” and “do you think,” like the somewhat wider step separating the quasi-retrospective “how long after” from “do you” and “you leap do you” from “do you think” and, of course, “think” from “impact,” draws us closer to the edge of the mental stage’s verticality as opposed to the chronology of causal thinking (while, at the same time, distance-mimicking mythic language’s mode of retrospective reconstruction). This makes Wellman’s mythically absent Don Juan (he literally is not there) the mirror image of Kaspar, for whom self-absorption translates into the process whereby he becomes the figure of what and how to think, without benefit of thinking for itself as an intrusive thought, as in “How long after you leap do you, do you think, make impact?”

Of Kaspar/*Kaspar* it might be said, as it is in Wellman’s play, “There is knowledge, and there is [thought-]killing knowledge.”<sup>20</sup> Like Molière’s Don Juan in particular, whose absence it performs, *Cat’s Paw* presents a certain take on the spectacle of thinking, the spectacle of the spectral, the thinking we logically infer is taking place: “Isn’t it clear that I am engaged in the thinking of a thought?”<sup>21</sup> This question, which is meant to be as rhetorical as logical inference, leads the character who asked it to step to the edge of Wittgenstein’s “private language” argument, although her statement of wonder—“Wonder if the way I think and the way you think are linked by the same coaxial cable”—may also be explained (away) by the mental makeup it might be logically assumed she shares with her daughter, to whom this comment is addressed.<sup>22</sup> Mother tells daughter, who hates her name, “Nobody names herself,” with the word “themselves” citing the awkwardness of even entertaining such an illogical thought. The mother extends and adapts the genealogical thought to the more abstract temporal theme of beforeness and afterness: “Only a fool names herself and arrives by the end of her train of thought at the pure end of the premature.” Emile Benveniste listed the act of naming as one of his “four supplemental specifications to the definition of the performative,” along with the quality of being self-referential.<sup>23</sup>

Don Juan is a figure of spec(tac)ular self-mirroring in the form of self-naming, and *Cat's Paw* the recasting of that absent figure's self-sustaining text, the spectacle of his thought thinking itself in the before-and-afterness of his prototypical theatrically catastrophic example. "Don Juan" signs in name only (absent a body, a presence) the drama of the imagined leap and fall. He signs his name to a sentence, his sentence, of which the Prompters tell that other theatrically catastrophic figure, Kaspar, "with the sentence you learn to divide time into time before and time after the sentence."<sup>24</sup> The logical inference here being that there is no time outside the sentence, which represents the grammar of the limit, the authority of punishment, the invariability of the end. And yet the catastrophe of OCD is closer to Blanchot's definition wherein "there is no reaching the disaster," nor any thinking of the disaster since the disaster is already thought, though not as a past tense but as the continuous presence of thought/thinking itself. This is what Jefferies's disaster wall-photos storyboard—not the obsessive compulsion to look out (voyeurism), but his inability to stop himself from looking in at the recurrence of thought that conceals the fear of thought's non-recurrence. There is no time outside this sentence. It is timeless.

The time is the present, whatever that is.<sup>25</sup>

When Handke's Don Juan begins temporally breaking down, his effectively simultaneous right-/left-handedness becomes forgetful and he "acquire[s] two left hands," like a faulty clock—faulty not in manufacture so much as in logical design.<sup>26</sup> A clock, of course, does not have a left and a right hand, except as an OCD-projected sign of incapacity. Doesn't 11:11 appear to be a sign of brokenness, of time's forgetting how to tell time continuously? Wouldn't you imagine 11:11 to be indicated on a clock's face by the two hands being on the same number, getting in each other's way, two left hands covering each other as in a temporal eclipse? Don Juan "gives in to a compulsion to count," signaling that he is otherwise having trouble controlling time.<sup>27</sup> He becomes, in fact, an "automatic counting mechanism," obsessive-compulsively enumerating without necessarily taking stock, accumulating numbers without reflection like Kaspar's accruing of sentences and undoubtedly citing the mythic Don Juan's own infamous list of romantic conquests, which the insomniac goes to bed at night rehearsing in his own voice.

The game of time has become obtrusive. "Repetition developed its own dynamics." Time and measure redefine the terms of their relationship, calculation now cleaving to obsession, not moderation.<sup>28</sup> Don Juan no longer experiences time as coherence but rather as a collection of isolated elements. This temporal setback astonishes not only Don Juan but Don Juan's story in the telling of a character born in time. "Did he come? Did he appear?"—Don Juan has a "habit of going backward," like a mythical beginning, beginning again.<sup>29</sup> Don Juan, in fact, enters the narrator's garden by somersaulting over

his garden wall—the somersault combining the leap and the fall, as in Wellman's Don Juan play. Don Juan tells Handke's narrator he can only embellish upon a story when he does not figure too prominently in it, again recalling Wellman's Don Juan, who is absent from his own play (after Molière's logical scanning of the Don's mindless body just going through the motions where sex, courtship, and marriage are concerned). Don Juan becomes even more of an apparitional story which "in the telling . . . sounds more and more made up," though not untrue.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, would the character, the actor, know that he is lying?

Because Don Juan's story is told in the present tense, words (always) fail somewhat in the recounting—or is it because there is no longer time (upon which) one can count? A character in Wellman's *Cat's Paw* refuses even the storytelling palliative "Once upon a time" (so familiar to Don Juan and his mythic ilk), remarking with some degree of logic, "What is time, Hildegard, that you can say 'once upon it' as though it were a footstool? It makes no sense."<sup>31</sup> Time likened (without the "like") to a footstool is (possibly) a false metaphor, which is linked to the relative falsity on view and in the overview, in the theatrical metonymy of the play, sighted/sited from above whose God's-eye shots of New York City "suggest nothing so much as an illusion." To cite a figure of speech attached by a character to the previous statement: "images too possess a certain reality," that "certain" containing the im/possibility of that reality being *both* qualified and authoritative.<sup>32</sup>

Thus Handke's catastrophic fiction ends: "Don Juan's story can have no end, and that, on my word, is the definitive and true story of Don Juan."<sup>33</sup> The very (physical) platform for Wellman's imagistic evaluation, the torch of the Statue of Liberty, is, we are told, suffering from "structural integrity," as all stories and figures of speech, free and otherwise, are. "A certain reality" is no more or less true than "a fact like that," especially when the latter is said to have been "arrived at," as if such a disastrous thing were possible. "Surely there is [such] a thing called innocence," the character of someone's mother tells herself, but again, surety and innocence do not logically cohabit, except perhaps in a neological construction of innocence like (*just* like, *exactly* like, although *non-mimetically* like) "exactedally true."<sup>34</sup>

Innocence is, in fact, lost to language the moment the figural figure walks through the figurative stage curtain or door and the linguistic mechanism of playing the language-game, which is always according to someone else's rules, sets to work. In Wellman's hands the language-game is like a cat's cradle, a decidedly low-tech, non-mimetic, anti-rationalist architecture constructed using fingers and string that is also and above all a figure (finger) of speech. This parenthetical linking of "finger" with "figure" is not meant to be facetious, and not just because "finger" is a figure, linguistically speaking, but because it performs the role of "figure" with overt specificity in Wellman's writing. Wellman's metonymic obsessing over the fingers and the hand as stand-ins for the world inside the word is most compulsively displayed

in his play *Left Glove* (2011), to which I will return. The figure of the cat's cradle also appears in Wellman's play *Antigone* (a play that begins, "Once, at the beginning of time, . . ." and ends with the invitation to repeat), where it is invoked by the title character as a figure of the fateful endgame of naming, to which she, like the likewise legendary Don Juan, is also bonded. "A song: Thus, it always was / thus it will always be that / thus, if I am named / who I think I am / I will always be caught in the terrible terrible / cat's cradle / is news to the spider, / for all things go round and round. . . . / and what I learned from my long / life of spinning string. . . . you can't beat something with nothing."<sup>35</sup> *Antigone* may not yet be a catastrophist, although the Chorus's cautionary words prior to (despite what seeing tells us) what may not be her first appearance (her motive being to reappear and re-bury) caution that she could become one. She is caught up in catastrophe's (sited as death's) logical illogicality, in the thing it makes her into, of what it puts her in mind.

The language-game's a cat's cradle—a (k)notting of word, speech, and intention, but also a cat's paw—a tool, dupe, incapacitated double, (motion) picture negative, a one-off. Wellman's use of the cat's cradle, the cat's paw, and elsewhere the tangle of the crow's nest rearticulates *Kaspar's* "Every sentence / is for the birds / every sentence is for the birds / every sentence is for the birds" and Handke's overall "desire to discover how much one could twist language" toward nonsense before it breaks.<sup>36</sup> Nonsense is language and meaning's catastrophic sign. Danièle Moyal-Sharrock writes: "For Wittgenstein, nonsense is neither uniformly gibberish (as the Therapeutes have it), nor uniformly a violation of sense (as the standard reading has it); nonsense can also be what demarcates sense and is therefore not itself endowed with sense."<sup>37</sup> Or as one of Wellman's hyper-articulate crows puts it, "Maybe we're not using the right language, or maybe by using the wrong language we've only managed to redescribe ourselves into a crows' nest of epistemological dead ends." *Kaspar* is just such an aporetic protagonist and a tautological sign, his every utterance appropriating the logically specious "every" for both its thesis and its proof. ("Every tautology itself shows that it is a tautology" [*TLP* §6.127].) Wellman's crows, who float above "the weather of words," seek to reclaim the Wittgensteinian sentence from the social order that unmade *Kaspar* and cost him his mind.<sup>38</sup>

"The watch is on the table."

"The book is on the table." (as a distillation of an earlier sentence,

"The book is lying on the table.")

"This watch is lying on the table."

All of the above are ordinary propositions. All cause the reader to summon mental pictures to which meanings immediately attach like penalties or sentences for infractions (of unspecified degree) with which one is charged. Playing the prosecutorial role, Wittgenstein interrogates each of these

propositions in turn, asking whether “the sentences in ordinary use have, as it were, only an incomplete sense (quite apart from their truth and falsehood)” (NB §20.6.15). His criterion for in/completeness is degree of clarity, and it does not take much time for the mind to fill in details, an impulse that in itself indicts the picture for what it lacks even though the mind may not in the moment of perception acknowledge that there is something(s) missing. The something that is missing may also be cognitive, which indicts the proposition and not the picture summoned up by the proposition’s construction. Can a watch be said to lie on a table? And if it can—does it lie more or less so than a book? A person? (And, if a person, then in what sense does it lie? Is a watch even capable of lying? Of course it is, once it loses or gains time, or else stops—although even then it tells the correct time, i.e., the truth, twice a day. Does 10:50 lie when it says it’s 10 minutes until, i.e., before 11?) Although the compound verb form “is lying” encourages the understanding that “the watch” is a timepiece, “the watch” might suggest a sentry/sentries, who could physically also lie on a table, although it would defeat the whole point of their watch, their function as gatekeepers rather than timekeepers, even though their “watch” or gatekeeping is time-specific. Still, once reasonable doubt is planted in the adjudicating function of the mind, the integrity of completeness is undone by clarity’s lack. And when the mind goes looking for answers, the words in the proposition go looking for qualifiers.

When I say, “the book is on the table,” I know that I am speaking in the present tense, but must I also be speaking *of* the present? Is it not possible to imagine an instance such as a stage direction that first mentions the scene being set in either the past or the future, which is followed by the statement, “The book is on the table”? “Time’s old / trick is all / this is,” writes Wellman in his poem “Heywood the Hungry,” and the staging of thought in tenses of sentences obliges as a riposte to the Unseen and the Unknown, which are inclusive of but not exhausted by Death and mortality. “When I am, I was. When I was, I am. When I am, I will be. When I will be, I was,” intones Kaspar, thereafter lapsing into such sentence-qualifiers as “Although,” “Since,” and “Due to the fact” before arriving at “I am the one I am,” a tautology masquerading as truth suggestive of Ionesco’s “absurdist” *Bald Soprano* (“absurd” inclusive of Sebald’s reading of Kaspar’s assertion as an abstract recitation of self-doubt).<sup>39</sup> “The book is *lying* on the table” may appear to be synonymous with “The book is on the table” but it may, in fact, suggest (according to Wittgenstein) that “what I mean by the verb [“lying on”] is perhaps a quite special relation which the book now actually has to the table” (NB §20.6.15). The nature of the special word-object-thought-sentence relationship is never simple and often vague. “I tell someone ‘the watch is lying on the table,’” writes Wittgenstein, “and now he says: ‘Yes, but if the watch were in such-and-such a position would you still say it was lying on the table?’ And I would become uncertain. This shows that I did not know what

‘lying’ meant *in general*” (NB §22.6.15). Does language qualify meaning, or is meaning’s inherent qualification only playing with language?

Wittgenstein’s “So we see that this simplicity is constructed” (NB §21.6.15) interrogates before-the-fact Handke’s gambit to compel the viewer to read the construction process as if he were (impossibly) outside the language-game. The viewer may even regard whatever empathy he feels for Kaspar as bearing witness to this fact of his outsider status. But this is not the case. The complicit mentality of the viewer allows him to be reconstructed by Kaspar, only with a sense of his own past built into the apparently present-tense experience of self-construction according to social language forms. This pastness allows an anxiety to attach to the proceedings that Kaspar cannot yet fully experience because he lacks both foreknowledge and retrospective knowledge, which effectively ensures constant repetition.<sup>40</sup> And in this process appears “an answer that / unanswers doubt’s / double nonself,” which in the context of Kaspar is the audience. “Error’s reproach is wonder’s redoubt / as / if / an if / were / faintly / a why.” Wonder cannot live with/out the possibility of error, and the façade may fortify itself against meaning in the end by the kind of questions it offers and invites.<sup>41</sup>

Wittgenstein writes, “I measure a table; it is one yard long,” and already the mind is measuring the length of the sentence against the thought the sentence contains. Only here Wittgenstein is actually introducing a *second* yardstick, the first one being implicit in his original statement, “I measure the table; it is one yard long”—that is, the measuring instrument’s name “compresses its whole complex reference into one” (NB §22.6.15). “—Now I put one yardstick up against another yardstick. Am I measuring it by doing that? Am I finding out that the second yardstick is a yard long? Am I making the same experiment of measuring, only with the difference that I am certain of the outcome?” (RFM §93). Measurement, then, becomes an internal mechanism, as well as a grammatical one.

By using two yardsticks, Wittgenstein has effectively undone the very finiteness that defines measurement in the interest of picturing something incalculable, unquantifiable but no less real (e.g., Blanchot’s “disaster,” the catastrophe). Wittgenstein now returns to his original example, but something meaningful has changed, because his assumptions of correctness and finitude have been put in question: “And when I put the ruler up against the table, am I always measuring the table; am I not sometimes checking the ruler? And in what does the distinction between the one procedure and the other consist?” (RFM §94). Wittgenstein’s larger purpose in this is to return usefulness to ordinary language by interrogating our (il)logical assumptions surrounding its use. Mathematics was for Wittgenstein, a trained engineer, a good place to start owing to its grammar of counting and calculation, which are ubiquitous in our daily lives. The so-called limit-world of mathematical thinking, like the framed world of the stage (which distills the need for counting and calculation down to a series of actions of questionable use-value in

any real sense), throws basic assumptions and unasked questions about what it means to “be true” and, in theater’s case, “true” as opposed to “real,” into bold relief.

“What would happen,” Wittgenstein asks, “if we made a different inference—*how* should we get into conflict with the truth?” What would happen if our measuring instruments were unusable, “made of very soft rubber instead of wood and steel” or heated to the point of expansion? However, “unusable” here pertains only to our old *standard* of measurement, our mental prejudice. Maybe we now define these terms differently or, like Antigone, even desire unusability and immeasurability to break the rule(r) of rigidity (*RFM* §5) that is Creon’s Law. Do we risk catastrophe by even desiring to do so? It might be helpful here for the reader to picture the multiple iterations of Kaspar in Handke’s play as being the rubber rulers to the play’s first Kaspar, who is made of different stuff by virtue of the fact that he is first and so the nominal, teachable subject. The Kaspars-come-lately are uninstructed and so bump into one another, although they are not necessarily uneducable, since they also adopt each other’s gaits and learn to walk in a series or sequence. That is, they can illustrate performance minus behavioral pathology, pure imitation.

“Then do you want to say that ‘being true’ means: being usable (or useful)?—No, not that; but that it can’t be said of the series of natural numbers—any more than of our language—that it is true, but: that it is usable, and above all, that *it is used*” (*RFM* §4). Wittgenstein opens up the truth-claim of the mathematical ordinary to the possibility of imaginative, even dramatic thinking by allowing the reader to experience “the peculiar inexorability of mathematics” as a model of foresight. A series of numbered propositions infused with “the author’s own” interior dialogue (there is no quantifiable way of ascertaining that Wittgenstein is one or both of the characters who contest argument) allows us to know the conclusion to his “argument” (or illustration of his argument) in advance of the examples provided and the revelation of the mode of argument being advanced. Wittgenstein calls this “logical inference” and defines logic as “a kind of ultra-physics, the description of the ‘logical structure’ of the world which we perceive through a kind of ultra-experience (with the understanding, e.g.)” (*RFM* §8). The particularity of inference (which Wittgenstein likewise analyzes) as a means of interrogating the abstract universal and as a way of experiencing thought in a basic yet heightened way opens the door to (a) dramatic reading.<sup>42</sup>

The proof does not serve as an experiment; but it does serve as the picture of an experiment. (*RFM* §36)

On one level, *Kaspar* is a dramatization of Wittgenstein’s distinction between the practices of following and inferring. “The peculiar use of these verbs,” says Wittgenstein, “suggests to us that following is the existence of a

connexion between propositions, which connexion we follow up when we infer” (*RFM* §19). Wittgenstein infers from Russell’s fundamental law of logical inference (set forth in the latter’s *Principia Mathematica*) that his mentor “seems to be saying of a proposition—‘It already follows—all I still have to do, is infer it.’” Thus, it follows, infers Wittgenstein, “the straight line that connects any two points is really already there before we draw it; and it is the same when we say that the transitions [in a series of logical inference(s)] have really already been made before we make them orally or in writing—as it were, tracing them” (*RFM* §21). Wittgenstein uses the example of teaching children the multiplication table (a referential signifier in the context of our use of table in another physical sense), in which the teacher determines in advance the series of transitions the student will have to make in the process of learning how to multiply. Does Kaspar learn how to multiply himself into alternative Kaspars in the process of weighing the subject’s role in translating “facts” into self- (and social) knowledge, that is, into language, or do these Kaspars simply follow like integers in a mathematical series whose logic has been preordained by the law of teaching and by the law that is being taught? If the iterative Kaspars not only follow but are logically inferred from the first (stage) Kaspar (in a way that the first stage Kaspar is *not* necessarily logically inferred from the appearance of the real, i.e., historical first Kaspar [Hauser]), the learning curve followed by the first stage Kaspar is likewise logically inferred, especially as there is no proof that he *is* the first, any more than it can be said authoritatively that he is the last. That being said, the foreseeing of the advent of a subject whose power of logical inference is systemic rather than individual is by that (individual, and perhaps even social) measure catastrophic. The process is itself catastrophic because its outcome can be seen from the beginning, and in (the) beginning over and over again.<sup>43</sup>

None of us is entirely innocent of the time of day.<sup>44</sup>

Only when the defendant is sentenced  
do we realize  
that the defendant was accused.<sup>45</sup>

In Mamet’s screen/play *Edmond* (1982, 2005), Edmond Burke’s long day’s journey into the dark night of his soul (and his soles—it being very much a walking tale) begins when his next day’s meeting is pushed back to 1:15 and he notices while walking that the number on a Fortuneteller’s street-front shop is likewise 115.<sup>46</sup> Numbers don’t direct our fate going forward, because they possess no inherent or discernible end. But when a number is overtaken, it is seen twice (or seen once doubled as 11:11), meaning that it is catching up to itself, which occasions a mental countdown: “With obsession, one is dealing with a countdown.”<sup>47</sup> Edmond’s checking the shop’s number against his new appointment time shows us what thinking out loud looks like, which his experiential journey translates into a time signature.

Kaspar is given a sentence and in that moment becomes a number in the social order. Edmond is given a number and in that moment begins serving a life sentence that removes him from the social order.<sup>48</sup> A latter-day Kaspar, for whom socialized language and convention have failed (thus, his recourse to fortune-telling), Edmond is a Wittgensteinian wanderer in the wonder and awe-fullness of not knowing the social facts that conceal language and performance's fateful grammar.<sup>49</sup> "The truly apocalyptic view of the world," Wittgenstein wrote, "is that things do not repeat themselves. The end might indeed come" (CV 56e). Obsessive-compulsion is too unimaginative to find an ending and too imaginative to want to do so. Left to its own devices, it repeats endlessly. OCD performance, OCD *like* performance, engenders the catastrophe of ending by beginning again and again.

The more sentences attach themselves to Kaspar and numbers to Edmond, the more they (sentences, numbers, and bodies) assume (as in take on as well as presuppose) the reality of expiration dates. Whether social or metaphysical, fate becomes another name for life as the ultimate form of death-consciousness. Does our fear of making the wrong choice operate within the unspoken belief that fate has already chosen for us? Do we fear our death will be brought closer, if we embrace choice and reject contingency? The Fortuneteller tells Edmond, "You are not where you belong," and Edmond is visibly arrested or displaced by the numbered coincidence of (meeting) time and (fortune) telling, by contingency. Richard Rorty suggests that the question "Why are we here?" may be asking, "Why must we be here?" or "Why do we happen to be here?" and "to be looking for a reason that is contingent."<sup>50</sup>

Edmond senses the Fortuneteller may be holding something back, but it's not information so much as the uncertainty of there being anything more specific that can be said—effectively driving a wedge between mere saying and revealing. David Pears writes that in the *Tractatus*, "we can see all the way to the end of language, but the most distant things that we see cannot be expressed in sentences because they are the pre-conditions of saying anything."<sup>51</sup> Language being in Wittgenstein "the universal medium of all thought," it is difficult if not impossible to separate out future thought and thought about the future from present thought.<sup>52</sup> And if we add to this Wittgenstein's premise that certain things cannot be said but only shown (his "doctrine of showing"), then it is not possible for the Fortuneteller to show what cannot be said if the saying is itself non-specific. It remains only for the subject to show himself the thing that cannot yet be perspicuously said, whose showing will itself come before the subject's own ability to say what the thing is.

Edmond tells his wife that he no longer loves her because she no longer interests him "spiritually or sexually." This strangled, premature attempt at saying something meaningful announces Edmond's entrance into a sleepwalking, in-the-meantime state of suspended knowing. "Masculine

disappointment together with feminine deflection of that disappointment indicates a more or less familiarly cursed marriage.” Cavell is speaking here of the Macbeths, of whom he also says, “The wrong time for death is an ultimately missed appointment; no time for mourning death sets an ultimate stake in disappointment.” Edmond is already lost in the mindless repetition and confusion of forestalled appointments and disappointments, operating in the no-time of “nothing is on or in time when nothing is desired, when desire is nothing, is not yours.”<sup>53</sup> He purchases Woyzeck’s paradoxically murderous survival knife and “out of the void of possibilities, an incision toward meaning, toward a particular *mise-en-scène*—is made. Every opening of a story, every gesture toward staging an origin, becomes then ‘a repetition of that which cannot be repeated: the first cut.’”<sup>54</sup> And in this first cut there is the word, language in its naturally recurrent state of performance. Edmond goes looking for an actor to critique, that is, to cut open.

Edmond quickly assumes the role of waitress/would-be actress Glenna’s acting coach, encouraging her “to be who you are,” as he now believes he is. And she, at first, enthusiastically responds: “That’s why I love the theater. Because what you must ask respect for is yourself . . . when you’re on the stage. For *your* feelings. And *not* be someone else.” This apparent counter-statement to Kaspar’s “I want to be a person like somebody else was once” is in fact a disingenuous artifact of both Glenna the actor’s and Glenna the waitress’s desire *to be someone else*. Glenna has by her own admission only performed in scene study classes, that is, has only “done it with her peers,” a grammatically euphemized form of pay-for-play. In demanding that Glenna confess her true social status (as what Mamet calls a “wactress”), Edmond, who is in the process of casting off his own, confesses a guilt that both obtains and foretells.

Edmond oddly predicts Alain Badiou’s characterization of Wittgenstein as an “antiphilosopher,” whose “word is authoritarian, as seductive as it is violent, committing others to follow suit, disturbing and converting them,” while also putting his own body (“the place of the Absolute”) and his own life (a “theater of ideas”) on the line.<sup>55</sup> There is in the antiphilosopher, writes Badiou, a kind of “archiaesthetically” mad effort “[to unravel] the pretensions of philosophy to constitute itself as theory,” in an intense effort to “gain access to the artistic paradigm of pure showing.”<sup>56</sup> This is done in an effort to achieve the truth Wittgenstein articulated in the *Tractatus* (§6.421) that “ethics and aesthetics are one and the same.” Edmond foretells what Badiou calls Wittgenstein’s “psychotic ferocity . . . the paranoid certitude of he who believes in saving the integral truth”—despite the appearance of wanting to “let Ockham’s razor run amok and go wild on this same discourse.”<sup>57</sup> “Wittgenstein,” writes Badiou, “was a magnificent ‘sayer,’ a voluble, sarcastic and violent teacher.”<sup>58</sup> Wittgenstein anatomized the corpus of language without rendering it corpse-like, even as he violated his regard for corpus’s integrity at every linguistic turn. Mamet perversely puts Ockham’s Razor—the argument

for straightforward simplicity and practicality in thinking (in which he places great stock)—in the hands of a mad antiphilosopher, who rages against bad acting's dumb corpus that inflames the desire to be someone else through imitation.

Mamet's *True and False: Heresy and Common Sense for the Actor* effectively argues that Ockham's Razor is or should be the actor's survival knife.<sup>59</sup> With this in mind, bad actor Glenna's statements are set up to incur Mamet's/Edmond's violent counter-statements:

"Acting," says Mamet, "is doing the play for the audience. The rest is just practice."<sup>60</sup> Glenna has never acted for a paying audience, and her acts are, in fact, only scenes.

"To create [the] illusion [of a character on the stage] the actor has to undergo nothing whatever. He or she is as free of the necessity of 'feeling' as the magician is free of the necessity of actually summoning supernormal powers. . . . My philosophical bent and thirty years' experience inform me that nothing in the world is less interesting than an actor on the stage involved in his or her own emotions."<sup>61</sup> Glenna tells Edmond: "That's why I love the theater . . . (Pause.) *Because what you must ask respect for is yourself* . . . For your feelings."<sup>62</sup>

Borrowing a page from Wittgenstein, Mamet writes: "The actor does not need to 'become' the character. The phrase, in fact, has no meaning. There is no character. There are only lines upon a page."<sup>63</sup>

Mamet agrees with Stanislavsky (who, he believes, in many cases misled the actor) that "the person one is is a thousand times more interesting than the best actor one could become. And when the actor picks up *her* [my italics] cue, then speaks out though uncertain, the audience *sees* that interesting person."<sup>64</sup> The female surrogacy in this statement captures Edmond's self-mirroring pedagogic lesson plan for Glenna, roughly paralleling the philosopher's teaching by subjugating his audience to strong, hermetically sealed opinions. "The more a philosophy declares itself 'open,'" says Badiou, "the more rigorous the artifices of its brooding. There is nothing syntactically more monotonous than the exhortations to liberate oneself from destiny or to undo metaphysics."<sup>65</sup> Badiou did not have Edmond in mind when he wrote this, but his observation-admonition (along with Wittgenstein's to eschew "sound doctrines" and "change your *life*") fits the murderous antiphilosopher like a glove.<sup>66</sup>

In the end, Glenna is literally eviscerated by Edmond, who believes he sees a bigger picture than the actor can represent (the irony here is intentional—"the bigger picture" actually doubling down on representation and *the language of showing*, making acting an even greater catastrophe than Edmond can imagine). Acknowledging in the *Tractatus* (§2.1) "we picture facts to ourselves" and that "these pictures are on the order of language,"

Wittgenstein believes that in the final instance it is that which is not in the picture that is “higher, having an authentic value.” One of the things that is *not* in the picture for most philosophers, Badiou argues, is woman. She is the “remainder” who is “not captured in the specular relationship in which the ontology of the world and of language is constructed.” She is the something—the mystery, the real—that philosophy has missed, above all a sign of incompleteness. She is, thus, defined in the negative by her absence, to the point, says Badiou, that misogyny characterizes antiphilosophy in its efforts to expose where philosophy is lacking.<sup>67</sup>

But Edmond’s pedagogy only performs what Badiou in reference to the philosophical tradition calls the “strategy of mastery,” hyperbolizing certainty and common sense as truth.<sup>68</sup> Badiou describes Wittgenstein’s distinction between truth and sense as follows: “Truth is simply a matter of empirical observation [i.e., something happened]. Sense, on the other hand . . . is readable in the very structure of the proposition, in the immediate fact that we understand it independently of all external verification.” And “Wittgenstein participates in the powerful tendency that, in the twentieth century, has sought to depose truth in favor of sense.”<sup>69</sup> The title of Mamet’s book captures acting’s rhetorical attempt to close the gap between truth and sense as shared value. *True and False* implicitly absents the interrogative possibility of “true or false?” as a viable option—no contingency *and* no choice.

Here Mamet might, it seem, claim some support from Wittgenstein, who wrote: “If empirical sentences are meaningful sentences that can be either true or false, then there are no empirical sentences. The contrast between being true or false and being necessarily true collapses.”<sup>70</sup> However, Mamet’s sentences do not align with Wittgenstein’s propositions, which can be understood without knowing whether they are true or false, “but only what would be the case if it were true.” That is, “A proposition is a FACT which constitutes a description of a possible state of affairs.” On the other hand, “a sentence is a minimal unit for making a move in a language-game.”<sup>71</sup> As such, a sentence has no particular claim to being either true or false.

Mamet’s brief is for the comparison that is not one, since what is true and what is false is each, in its own way, incomparable (truth is without equal; and truth being singular, falsehood cannot truly be compared with truth). But Mamet has wrongfully compared by misnaming—using the word “false” when he wants to say “nonsensical.” He no doubt uses “true and false” because it is the language of testing and so of teaching and maybe even misnames the categories for assessing this teaching because he believes that his subject (the material and the resisting reader) cannot be taught (although Mamet has taught acting for many years).<sup>72</sup> The word “*Heresy*” in the book’s subtitle speaks not just to Mamet’s self-assessed controversial remarks on acting but more subversively to this Tractarian undoing of his own book by its central argument, which is the metatext to these remarks.

### Acting on Therapeutic Authority

What role does structure play in manipulating the perception of true and false as they speak to authorial motive? What role does the character of the anxious actor play in showing what it is that the author as both mad director and his own dramatic figure wants to see and be seen? What is the nature and the look of therapeutic authority? In *The Five Obstructions* (2004), director Lars von Trier provides his mentor Jorgen Leth with obstacles that will determine how the latter can make a series of short films that will test the series of statements and questions that were presented in Leth's original film *The Perfect Human* (1967).<sup>73</sup> That film, shot in black and white, shows a young Danish man in evening attire dancing in a self-satisfied way and an attractive and sophisticated-looking young Danish woman applying her makeup. Later, the man executes a series of falls and the woman's body is seen rearranging itself on a bed. The director's overdubbed narration informs us that we are seeing the perfect human doing what s/he does (best).

Leth's underlying problem is not that he cannot make the perfect film, because there is no perfect film to make. It is instead that he must implement von Trier's actual goal, which is to strive *not* to make even a *better* film, to put himself as an artist in opposition to his professional skills and ethos. By failing again and again to make this better film (owing to the intervention of the obstructions), the artist tests the limits of his incapacity and so creates something that is for him uncomfortably new—a picture of that incapacity. "The greatest gift an actor can give you," says von Trier, "is to screw up. I want the same kind of gift as I get from an actor, when he does a scene in a way he hates, but which is great for me because it came as if through the machine that the actor is in that situation and in which he has done the good stuff, too."

*The Five Obstructions* actually (truthfully?) constitutes ways for von Trier to test and surrogate his own anxieties about posing questions as to transgressing his own limits (e.g., would you film a dying child?). Leth is seduced by his former student into embodying the latter's anxiety disorder (for von Trier's "Panic Productions"), into performing surrogacy as what Wittgenstein called "a criterion of identity" (*PI* §253). This surrogacy is made more transparent in *Melancholia* (2011), in which von Trier "imagines the worst thing possible" as a normative reality—the fictional planet "Melancholia" that is on course to collide with Earth serves as an objective correlative for the protagonist Justine's obsessively depressive state and exacerbates her sister Claire's intense anxiety. Von Trier tests surrogacy as a self-flaying limit of catastrophic thought, a gambit that Mulhall discovers in Wittgenstein's self-ascription as "a mode of self-acknowledgement" performed "in order to seek acknowledgment of one's state and so of oneself, from others, or in response to such (failures of) acknowledgement."<sup>74</sup> Indirectly recalling acting's prototype in Oedipus's demise, Cavell observes, "In the case of my knowing

myself, such self-defeat would be doubly exquisite: I must disappear in order that my search for myself be successful.”<sup>75</sup>

“Don’t assume I’m dumb because I wear a suit and tie,” Edmond tells Glenna after she calls him on his lack of knowledge about the stage and refuses to (other than sexually) perform for him. Edmond may be holding the phallic knife, but he fears the hybridically masculinized Glenn/a can read the word STUPID carved by a succession of female hands upon his forehead. Or is this, he wonders, her own self-projection, a motive she learned while playing Sonya from *Uncle Vanya* or Carol from *Oleanna* in her scene-study class? Edmond cannot read the word STUPID except backwards in a cracked mirror where it near-virtually spells DISPUTE, which is his “scene,” his argument with the world and with himself being his overriding motivation to act. He steps back to reread the word as if it were written in lipstick by Markson’s mad Kate upon a mirror, an image still wanting something—wanting in the sense of desiring or lack. “I don’t know what you’re talking about,” his surrogate Glenna cries in a panic after Edmond throws out her anxiety medication. A spectator or a passerby sees only a person yelling at himself, that is, thinking out loud.

It is madness, Edmond thinks, but it is her madness, not his. “You know what madness is?” Edmond tells Glenna, “It’s self-indulgence.” And in a word—“madness”—Edmond misreads solipsism as being *someone else’s* self-indulgence. The statement “I want to be a person like somebody else was once” professes a desire that is impossible to achieve, except in performance that renders the achievement and even such desire suspect, irrational, mad. There is a chaos of words now invested in the word “knife” (as in Ionesco’s 1951 proto-*Kaspar* play *The Lesson*) that turns Glenna’s body in Edmond’s hands into a form of physical graffiti. “Now look what you’ve made me do” [movie], “Now look what you’ve bloody fucking done” [play], Edmond’s hollowed-out voice tells the disembodied (out-of-frame), disappointing corpse that can no longer be, even in the sense that acting means. No longer wanting to be except as “like somebody else was once,” the dead body invokes a confused agency of “doing” and “done.”

Thought struggles with the corpse’s in-so-many-words redundancy, its non-spontaneity. Wittgenstein told Norman Malcolm he once “tried to lecture from notes but was disgusted with the result; the thoughts that came out were ‘stale,’ or as he put it to another friend, the words looked like ‘corpses’ when he began to read them.”<sup>76</sup> Writing being already the re-thought, we read in the dead actor’s voice: “I want to be a person like somebody else was once.” Hybridically Glenna fe/male Glenna has already been in Ed Wood Jr.’s 1953 film *Glen or Glenda?*, which aligns a transvestite’s catastrophic anxiety dream with a transsexual’s psychotherapy under the care of mad, drug-addicted doctor Bela Lugosi looking as undead as Dracula, his most famous role.

A mad-doctor (perhaps) might ask me “Do you know what that is?” and I might reply “I know that it’s a chair; I recognize it, it’s always been in my room.” He says this, possibly, to test not my eyes but my ability to recognize things, to know their names and their functions. What is in question here is a kind of knowing one’s way about. Now it would be wrong for me to say “I believe that it’s a chair” because that would express my readiness for my statement to be tested. “While I know that it . . .” implies *bewilderment* if what I said was not confirmed. (OC §355)

“I’ve been unwell,” Edmond tells a police interrogator in lieu of a mad doctor. How do we measure unwellness? Certainly not by doubt, which, the mad doctor might say, is the performance that counterfeits the very anxiety of and for which it speaks. “I’ve been confused,” Edmond tells the Law whose rules he can no longer abide, tells the ruler against which he can no longer be measured. Like Leonard Shelby in the act of chasing himself, Edmond has become a hermeneutic self-questioner of doubt’s certainty and certainty’s doubt. And like Hitchcock’s photographic “(Mr.) Memory” in *The 39 Steps* (1935), for Edmond “what is sought is already known, and returned to the programmed questioner as if in ritual play . . . in which memory will only recognize what it has planted in advance.”<sup>77</sup> Edmond’s prison cell following Glenna’s murder (i.e., his own self-murder) is numbered 115, like the Fortuneteller’s street address and his dis/appointment time. Numbering is not just a form of but is the grammar of iteration, which is the “repetition of a mathematical or computational procedure applied to the result of a previous application, typically as a means of obtaining successively closer approximations to the solution of a problem.”<sup>78</sup> Edmond appears to realize this in prison:

You know, you know, you know . . . You know we can’t distinguish between anxiety and fear. You know what I mean . . . I don’t mean fear . . . I mean, I *do* mean fear. I don’t mean anxiety. When we fear something, I think we wish for it . . . Death, or burglars. Don’t you think? I always knew I’d end up here. I always knew I’d end up here. Every fear hides a wish. . . . because I don’t feel it since I’m here. I don’t. I think for the first time in my life.

Like a stopped clock that tells “the right time” (e.g., 11:11) twice a day, even madness speaks “the truth” sometime(s), but it does so reiteratively: “You know, you know, you know . . . You know.” Now visibly numbered (prison-tattooed) Edmond comes to believe that

you can’t control what you make of your life. There’s a destiny that shapes our ends. Rough hew them how we may. And that’s the

truth. . . . I think it's something beyond . . . these things we can know.  
I think that maybe in dreams we see what it is.

But if Edmond now appears to be free of doubt, it is only insofar that transparency can speak in sentences, not in propositions. *Kaspar* only paraphrases Wittgenstein—for example, “Everyone must build his own world”—which is, after all, a sentence within which Edmond like Kaspar is grammatically sealed.<sup>79</sup> There is no life outside the life-sentence. “I want to be a person like somebody else was once” imagines the life that nominally came before the catastrophe of self-incarceration was redundantly achieved. The Fortune-teller in Wellman’s novel of the same name is himself mad, and “the crime, with its unknown killer and unknown killed, lay in his mind alone, a fearful solipsism.”<sup>80</sup>

### Murder as a Migratory Sign

**One of the most beautiful things in life is a well-set table.**

—Handke, *Kaspar*

Edmond is seated like a painted figure at a restaurant table, picking at the asparagus and potatoes that look like a picture of asparagus and potatoes that are sitting on what looks like a picture of a plate. He is following the Prompters’ (his once and future jailors’) instructions:

If the table is already a picture of a table, you cannot change it: if you can’t change the table, you must change yourself: you must become a picture of yourself just as you must make the table into a picture of a table and every possible sentence into a picture of a possible sentence.<sup>81</sup>

Which “you,” “yourself,” and “you yourself” must fit the table in order to normalize and “spectacularize” the table at the same time? What motive is there to picturize yourself so that you can fit with a picture of a table? What is entailed in making yourself into a picture, what is gained and lost, and to what end? These questions and their answers are all arbitrary and irrelevant in the context of the Prompters’ instructions, which are designed to vacate the very idea of the originary, generative subject in favor of creating a constructed model subject from a series of model sentences, a picture of what the subject *should be* to which predetermined meanings and values obtain as soon as the education/indoctrination process begins. Likewise, Kaspar’s learning to “[put] the objects into their normal relationships towards each other, so that the stage gradually becomes inhabitable” maps a template for normalizing relations between the nominal subject and the people and things

of (t)his world. However, despite what the italicized stage directions say is true, the stage is not intended or constructed to be inhabitable. Likewise, to be made into a speaking part, as Kaspar is, is not to be habituated to anything but the form and function of what the stage sentence is. Kaspar is sentenced to the purely conventional life of the stage. He is staged so as only to perform the grammar of the sentence. The Prompters tell him that he can no longer imagine/visualize/walk/remember (himself) without the sentence.<sup>82</sup>

Beyond mere correspondence between sentence and memory, thought and action, the Prompters' statements recall "the verification principle of Logical Positivism" that states: "The meaning of a statement is its method of verification." Wittgenstein argues from the negative that (in Malcolm's words) "if you do not understand a statement, then to discover that it has no verification is an important piece of information about it and makes you understand it better. That is to say, you understand it *better*; you do not find out that there is nothing to understand."<sup>83</sup> Handke has written in Wittgenstein's take on verification as an obstructive subtext (printed parallel on the page) to the Prompters' instructions to Kaspar. Kaspar's awkward, frustrating, and even destructively robotic clown persona turns the sentences' self-verification against themselves, leading the reader/spectator to ask whether it is the statement or the counter-statement that constitutes obtrusive thought.

Thought on entering the kitchen: perhaps in return for my accumulated kitchen work all will be forgiven me; perhaps all *has been* forgiven.<sup>84</sup>

The foregoing quoted passage could well be the obsessive-compulsive catechism of self-affirmation of the named domestic protagonist of Chantal Akerman's *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975). However, Jeanne is a ritualistic *non-checker*, meaning, for example, that she turns light switches on and off at a self-prescribed time every day like clockwork, but does not go back to check that she has done so.<sup>85</sup> Her mind tells her: "Everything that is in order is in order because I say to myself that it is in order."<sup>86</sup> Here anxiety-and-disorder prevention could, as Wittgenstein's critique of inexact expression in philosophy attests, be entered into a false one-to-one equation of "identical" and "the same" (*PI* §252) that would skew the (anti-)protagonist's performance behavior so as to more superficially coincide with the film's narrative and stylistic minimalism and sentencings. The error here (which is not so absolutely wrong as to be "false" or "incorrect") would be in making this emblematically ordinary woman so common that she would be constitutionally unable to perform her ultimate, seemingly illogical and extraordinary act of murder.

There are OCD minds that live with/in chaos, hoarders being the common yet extreme example. Cavell suggests that Jeanne is not herself a collector but the film that contains her "can be taken as a study, or materialization, of the

self as a collection.”<sup>87</sup> Jeanne is an abstract geometry read into by the spectator, an alien life form that is recognizably not/us going through the motions of day-to-day life, a character who barely is, who has so spartanly cut her design for living to fit a ritualistic (quasi-agoraphobic) behavioral pattern that when anxiety does appear, it is unexpectedly murderous and murderously unexpected. The crux, the wound, is the point at which things either do or do not fit (a domestic prostitute, Jeanne murders a John after experiencing her first orgasm), and one discovers whether desire allows for the intimacy of alterity, for be(com)ing “a person like someone else was once,” for becoming mad if only as a kind of Wittgensteinian thought-experiment. “The thing about boundaries,” a character in a Wellman novella observes, “is that once you have one you must perforce deal with what or whomever is to be found on the other side.”<sup>88</sup>

Handke relates a mathematician’s definition of the *esprit mathématique* as having two meanings.

“the ability to reverse every formulation” (“The glass is on the table.”/  
“The table is under the glass.”)

“the ability to minimalize every series of operations; that is, to inquire what operation in a series we can omit without changing the result” (e.g., “Can a table stand on three legs?”)<sup>89</sup>

Does Jeanne’s senseless crime (Cavell refers to the abstractness—i.e., senselessness—of the murder’s preceding scene of intercourse) performed with scissors, like a Hitchcock heroine, suggest her capacity for reversing formulation without knowing it?<sup>90</sup> Markson’s mad Kate wonders about a stick she worried was missing but turned out *not* to be (missing). “Had [she] the foresight to place it without really paying attention? Then again it is quite possible that the question of loss had not entered my mind until I was already in the process of looking back, which is to say that the stick was already not lost before I had worried that it might be.”<sup>91</sup> The catastrophic truth of suffering loss can only be proven by performing tests that have loss as their precipitate. The more radical the test (e.g., murder), the more likely it is that catastrophically fearful desire will be achieved and the “factuality” of the initial fear of loss affirmed. By the time Jeanne exits her kitchen, the loss-making agency of scissors and knives has been forged, even though Jeanne’s imagination and with it the capacity for foreseeing and foretelling, is, as for most of us, (still) holding its breath.

The doors in Jeanne’s apartment (kitchen cabinet) and building (hallway door) have, in some cases, stopped holding their breath and like the open closet spoken of in *Kaspar*, “disrupt the harmony of the picture.”<sup>92</sup> Jeanne never stops to check against the possibility of openness (i.e., three-legged “tableness”), given the factual economy of her title, how she is addressed

(*Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles*), as a hermeneutic circle that read in reverse is recurrence, economy's mistake. (She mainly receives economic circulars, or junk mail.) The succession of locked things and functions on her weekly shopping excursion suggests an equally economic "ability to reverse every formulation" that circulates in the viewer's obsessive-compulsive mind.<sup>93</sup> "Doors lock, but also constitute connections to the outside world," the word "locked" attaching like a stamp to correspondence disabling the stamp machine (signifying in later Handke a theatrical function) that dispenses nothing but incapacity.<sup>94</sup>

First, let me scenarioize the set of my theatrical. . . .<sup>95</sup>

Mac Wellman's counter-use of the subject-neutral preposition "of" as a grammatical figure of possession dispossessed of nominal meaning in his titles *A Murder of Crows* and *A Chronicle of the Madness of Small Worlds* removes the onus of murder/madness from usage. That is, unlike Handke, Mamet, and Akerman, Wellman places "murder" inside a non-possessive, non-subject-related prepositional phrase. Thus, no crows need be murdered nor need they be murderers for there to be "a murder of crows," which is simply the designation for what crows otherwise possibly (prospectively or just descriptively) are, as a collection. Similarly, "madness" and "murder" in *Chronicle* are, at their origins, designations that describe other collections, as in "We who are certified victims of the Madness must carry a mark identifying us as what we are. The mark itself is called 'murder.'" That Wellman intends the meaning of "madness" and "murder" to be grammatical, as per Wittgenstein, is made clearer by his statement that "Sufferers of the Madness of Small Worlds are tedious, verbose intellectual frauds and spiritual incontinents," referencing a small world "in continents" and unnamed "academics" as incontinents, a sentiment with which Mamet would agree.<sup>96</sup> The titles of Wellman's two play collections, *Crowtet 1* and *Crowtet 2*, convey "murder" as the grammatical motive of/for dramatic association-collections of speaking parts—there being no personal identity, no personal noun, that is pronoun, and "little of anything of intrinsic interest for us." In Wellman's "Wu World Woo," for example, "murderer" and "murdered" have the same name—"Mary Carnivorous Rabbit." As Wellman reminds us, "We do not know what or who 'Hershey' is, but we call our chocolate bar by that name."<sup>97</sup>

Murder/Madness is for Wellman a linguistic trope that, as his "small worlds" would suggest, attends closely to a Wittgensteinian preoccupation with thought-models, in which one of the philosopher's students saw a possible origin of his picture theory. In reading about a miniature model of an automobile accident that was used in court to help make a case, Wittgenstein saw how he might apply the model's proposition that miniature pieces could correspond to things in reality to the thought that "a [written] proposition

serves as a model or a picture, by virtue of a similar correspondence between its parts and the world.”<sup>98</sup> The model can represent something real, even if the event it depicts never actually happened. There must only be agreement between the form of the toy model and the form of the real car that the toy model represents. “A proposition is ‘a picture of reality’, it describes a state of affairs by depicting it” (*TLP* §4.016–4.021).<sup>99</sup> The components of a proposition may be related to each other and “they may represent reality not by standing for something, but through depicting, either truly or falsely, how things are.”<sup>100</sup>

Wittgenstein’s tweaking of the idea of representation, so that it no longer means or implies substitution, may also be used as a way of mentally leveraging thought or logical picturing against the sort of literal picturing with which we associate representation on a superficial level. Thus, in *Kaspar*, we are spoken to in the language of the model, as well as in model sentences but without regard for representational authenticity, to cite a vexed but still meaningful expression: “The audience does not see the stage as a representation of a room that exists somewhere, but as the representation of a stage . . . The objects, although genuine (made of wood, steel, cloth, etc.) are instantly recognizable as props. They are only objects. They have no history.” The pictorial model follows the lead of the propositional model with which Handke begins his preface to the play: “The play *Kaspar* does not show how IT REALLY IS OR REALLY WAS with Kaspar Hauser [of whom he could be said, “he was a real character,” although not in or from a play]. It shows what is POSSIBLE with someone. It shows how someone can be made to speak through speaking.” Handke immediately puts on notice the fact that the speech act can undo the Wittgensteinian speech/show dyad of difficulty, but it won’t be easy: “The play could also be called speech torture,” he says.<sup>101</sup>

What I have described is only a fake mystery, though, a game, a show. Where is the real mystery? That may be found in what language does not show us because it does not show up or speak up in the language at hand. “Ah,” writes Wellman’s narrator, “but the strangest fact about the world of Elmer is something that does not even exist in the language of Elmer.”<sup>102</sup> The language of the world dispossessed of its meaning or point of view (David Pears calls this “linguistic solipsism”) is a form of not-knowing that corresponds with the world’s ineffability.<sup>103</sup> Thus, for example, the inhabitants of the small world named Elmer are driven mad by a sound that the world itself emits. “The thrall of the Din is absolute, incommensurable and beyond knowing, willing or belief.”<sup>104</sup> That it is namely “the Din” or sound’s “thrall” that is beyond knowing and that imposes deafness upon its hearers, who exist within the absolute incommensurability of a sound-silence medium, recalls the famous conclusion to the *Tractatus* that proposes silence as being the only appropriate response in the face of incommensurability (i.e., the limit of what language can picture and testify to as meaning). “We cannot

place . . . [the solipsist's] miniature world in the larger world without crossing the very boundary that our theory claims to be uncrossable."<sup>105</sup> Edmond's self-acknowledged fortune, "I end up in prison," is really the question to a "true-or-false" answer regarding solipsism that Wittgenstein refused to confirm, beyond allowing. Catastrophic thinking speaks not to language's normally predictive qualities. It speaks not. Handke's refusal of the subject to tell, perform, represent derives from Wittgenstein's famous statement that there being no subject or no such thing as the subject that language can express/possess, there could be no "I" inside a book he could write entitled "The world as I found it" (*TLP* §5.631). Likewise, Wittgenstein's "The thinking, presenting subject; there is no such thing" can be translated as "The thinking, *representing* subject; there is no such thing."<sup>106</sup> What then remains? "I want to be a person like somebody else was once" is the catastrophe that is still/not to come.



## Chapter 4



### Doors of Misperception

A proposition is completely logically analyzed if its grammar is made clear—in no matter what idiom.

—Wittgenstein (*PR* §1)

The fear, as I analyze it in retrospect, was of being overwhelmed, of disintegrating under a pressure of reality greater than a mind, accustomed to living most of the time in a cosy world of symbols, could possibly bear.

—Aldous Huxley, *The Doors of Perception*

### A Certain Scenic Single-Mindedness

It's a winter's night. A man rides across Lake Constance without sparing his horse. When he arrives on the other side, his friends congratulate him profusely, saying: "What a surprise! How did you ever make it! The ice is no more than an inch thick!" The rider hesitates briefly, then drops off his horse. He is instantly dead.

—Handke, *The Ride Across Lake Constance*

Like Borges's short story in which a map is drawn to the actual size and scale of the territory being mapped, Handke's ice matches the hole it covers, the dysfunction, allowing for the performance of the not-knowingness of incapacity, the mind performing what it does not yet see.<sup>1</sup> "How have you made it this far?" my psychiatrist asks, the answer being by not knowing the thinness of the ice my incapacity has been negotiating. Her question, though, was an ice-breaker, and I fell through, embracing performance as pathology.

A smooth white surface can reflect things: But what, then, if we made a mistake and that which appeared to be reflected in such a surface

were really behind it and seen through it? Would the surface then be white and transparent? Even then what we saw would not correspond to something coloured and transparent. (RC §236)

One wonders whether Wittgenstein thought this while sitting, as he preferred, in the first row at the movies, closest to the white screen. His invocation of the error or misperception of transparency in relation to the screen cannot help but evoke the dreaming mind (as does *Lake Constance*), although Wittgenstein's rejection of Freudian symbolism means that we must look for the meaning of the behind-ness of surface not in depth but in a sort of self-sameness. "We could paint semi-darkness in semi-darkness. And the 'right lighting' of a picture could be semi-darkness. (Stage scene painting)" (RC §235). What Wittgenstein has in mind is a certain scenic single-mindedness, an overlay of im/possibility whose parameters so coincide with what it allegedly is, as to be almost invisible outside itself, its self-regard, and the rules of its language-game. This only appears as (i.e., to be) representation, but is not, does not double so much as it affirms, the way the Ghost's presence can only be authenticated not by body armor but by Hamlet's belief. Appearance is not inherently accurate ("We might say, the colour of the ghost is that which I must mix on the palette in order to paint it accurately. But how do we determine what the accurate picture is?" [RC §233]); nor is it real as psychology in some sense imagines. "We can," says Wittgenstein, "speak of appearance alone, or we can connect appearance with appearance" (RC §232). The best place to hide a white door is in a white wall.

"Are You Dreaming or Are You Speaking?" *Lake Constance's* "section of a room that is even larger than the large stage" asks the reader, whose mind is already considering a multi-point perspective scenic solution.<sup>2</sup> But what Handke's opening stage direction wants the reader's illusionistically experienced and jaundiced eye to consider is how im/possibility is contracted in the mind and our incapacity is a mental experience we cannot logically get beyond. "A wall covered by a brownish-green tapestry with a barely perceptible pattern" makes it difficult if not impossible to see where the tapestry ends and the wall begins (and vice versa), compounded by the addition of two tapestry doors that may either belong to the overall tapestry pattern or to another unseen pattern entirely. The floor rug's color matches the tapestry and the dropcloths covering most of the room's furnishings are "extremely white," a sign of ghostly masquerade, apparitional seeing that need not be believed to be seen. Similarly upholstered fauteuils (open-armed chairs) and footrests openly conspire in their complementariness, although one of the three chairs stands alone to make us see the object only in relation to itself. "To the right of the table, a few steps away, stands a small bar, not covered, with several bottles whose forms indicate their respective contents." Here the mind removes the comma (,) separating "bar" and "not," revealing ("bar not") the new, more transparent or behind-the-screen possibility of a bar

“*not* being covered with several bottles whose forms indicate their respective contents,” meaning: (1) the bar, *not* (or no longer) being covered with bottles, is now free to reveal itself in some other, alternative way; (2) the bar *is* covered with several bottles but these bottles no longer reveal their contents, so that the bottles themselves take on an air of mystery in terms of what they constitute, how they are constituted, as if but not in a dream (the performative “as if” enabling actual doing and seeing, but also seeming).

In *Dial “M” for Murder* (1954), Hitchcock pushes a table bar up against the far wall across from where his camera would necessarily have been positioned. He later reverses this shot, with the same bottles on the same table now occupying the foot of the frame nearest to the unseen camera. This is easily done by removing the wall that had been behind the table to allow for the camera’s presence, and it is the camera’s presence, more specifically, the filmic intervention on a stage play, that is self-consciously being performed. Hitchcock’s camera placement in relation to the table with the bottles opens up a space of viewership inside the room that makes the recorded play appear to be “live,” albeit in filmic terms. This impossible viewing position marks the appearance of the space of not-knowing in the midst of being made conscious of what one already really knows about how films are made. What the eye now sees is the bar not, the thing that not-knowing looks like to the mind that is fooling itself.

The “bar not” uncovers the “*not* covered either” in Handke’s ensuing stage direction, “*behind the newspaper table not covered either, with a few bulky magazines,*” the “few” aligning with the “several” bottles while asking the begged question how many more/less is “few” than “several”? Three, perhaps, like the aforementioned chairs designated as *fauteuils* owing to their unevenness, their ghosting of physical impossibility, the “bodies [that] are first and always other—just as others are first and always bodies” (*PR* §1). “Milk is not opaque because it is white—as if white were something opaque,” Wittgenstein asserts, but neither is it transparent, which is not necessarily to say that it cannot relate to transparent things (*RC* §242). “Novices must learn to skim over [milky] matter if they want matter to stay at the exact level of the moment,” wrote Nabokov (in his novel *Transparent Things*), and by doing so they overlook the possibility of transparency. Nabokov, who questioned whether we can ever know the nature of thought, possessed a mind that color-sounded written letters. Specifically “the ivory-backed hand mirror of O takes care of the whites,” evoking the back side of both the hand and the mirror, two doubtful signs of representation in Wittgenstein and Handke.<sup>3</sup>

The spatially evocative proximity of Handke’s “*two pictures on the wall concealed behind white sheets*” further cites/sights the misalignment of representation/reproduction, as in the case of “To be generally able to name a colour, is not the same as being able to copy it exactly” (*RC* §256). Inexactness projects upon the three-paneled Japanese screen in which only one of three is “*open and visible to the audience*” like the aforementioned one-of-three open-armed chair (or, in my case, the one-in-three open wall mirrored

wall cabinet that meaningfully distorts, unbalances vision). The screen blends into the color of the wall behind it, making the idea and experience of behindness opaque, as it is in *The Cherry Orchard*, which is said to be white and fosters an opaque mentality unable to confront the very reality it represents (i.e., the cherry orchard's loss). "All that the eye can rationalize is white," the mind cannot hear itself think.<sup>4</sup> Realism's delusional metaphor stops at two (i.e., comparison), unlike Handke's Coleridgean language that stops (points at) one of three, inviting the mind to attend to non-representational, non-reproducible thirdness, or what Foreman calls "unbalancing acts."<sup>5</sup> Handke's stage directions' italicizing the impossibility of objects being differently placed onstage than where they are and differently placed than onstage ("*Everything appears as though rooted to the spot*") encourages the mind to read the appearance of representational inevitability as a question, not an assertion. The object can only stand (in) for itself.

The question Handke's scenography asks ghosts Wittgenstein's "What must our visual picture be like if it is to show us a transparent medium" (RC §175)? Color is not what it represents. Black is not darkness, even though darkness "can be depicted as black" (RC §156). Since Wittgenstein and Handke regard simile and metaphor as disputable facts, their writing effectively bares its own devices. Handke's stage directions play the role of the Wittgensteinian interlocutor, questioning the writer's continued use of his devices even as these devices confess their own and the writer's incapacity. They ask "questions" in quotation marks, as if to say, "in light of this question, here is my text."

"*After the curtain has opened, two portieres to the right and to the left of the proscenium are revealed, as portieres to a chambre séparée.*" A portiere is a curtain hanging placed over a door or a doorless entry to a room (i.e., a wall hanging, similar in function to a tapestry, as opposed to a hung door), although it may also refer to a doorkeeper. Handke's portieres stand in a *mise-en-abyme* relationship to the stage curtain's disappearance, its physical mock-up of doubt in the face of scenic representational certainty. The relationship between the portieres and the *chambre séparée* (private room, often a bedroom) reveals no secret meaning in and of itself, although it may suggest secret knowledge, a cultic, symbolic form, like theater that is not an actual world that just is.

*On a fauteuil beside the table, his legs on the appropriate footstool, sits EMIL JANNINGS, his eyes closed. He is quite fat . . . He seems costumed although only hints of a costume are visible . . . He is heavily made-up, the eyebrows are painted. On the right hand, whose nails are lacquered black, he wears several large rings. He has not moved since the curtain opened.*

These cinematic actor names are just placeholders for the self-named actors in future productions who "*are and play themselves at one and the same time.*"<sup>6</sup>

They stand in for themselves, so to speak, calling the question of onstage in/appropriateness. The “appropriateness” of the footstool upon which Jannings rests his legs is interrogated by the “inappropriateness” of the black lacquer that has been applied to the fingers of his right hand, marking out the extremities (articulated as “foot” and “hand”) that such designations as “appropriate” and “inappropriate” define (definition itself being an extreme language-game that Wittgenstein, like Handke, mostly refuses to play). An unnamed woman “*walks from object to object and takes off the dropcloths, except those on the paintings and on the statue. Although she moves fairly slowly, her work is proceeding quite rapidly.*” We can only reconcile ourselves with/to time within the performance space of a self-interrogating language-game which is but is not in/appropriate. Stage actions are inherently pictorial renderings of transparent representational possibility that must pass through impossibility—for example, simultaneous quickness and slowness—to articulate a thickened sense of what can/not be. But even simultaneity participates in the language-game of comparison, even if it leaves little time for it.

Jannings begins by clearing his throat and saying “As I said” twice and “A bad moment” once, as if meaning to invoke the parameters of theatrical performance—presentness and repetition—by means of a performance behavior that articulates meaning as affect, as in Wittgenstein’s example, “I feel discomfort and know the cause” (LC §16). Although Jannings has not asked a question, an answer comes from “*Someone behind the screen,*” another cinema actor manqué named Heinrich George. George answers Jannings’s unasked question with the twice-articulated interrogative “Why?”<sup>7</sup> Thus, an answer pertinent to indeterminate cause and affect (Jannings’s unvoiced, “I feel discomfort and *don’t* know the cause”) is followed by a question that speaks to cause and effect (George’s unspoken “I ask the question because I believe in its relationship to answer—cause and effect.”). Whereupon Jannings’s hand and George’s foot fall asleep, playing their (anatomical) parts at a lecture delivered by Wittgenstein (who is boring himself) on the possible meanings of “cause.” But as they do so, they (the hand and foot) are already dreaming of what else George could have meant by asking “Why?” twice (i.e., the incantatory interrogative of performance). The dreaming voice of the speaker (again, Wittgenstein in the interrogative mode of performance) intones:

There is a “Why?” to aesthetic discomfort, not a “cause” to it. The expression of discomfort takes the form of a criticism and not “My mind is not at rest” or something. It might take the form of looking at a picture and saying: “What’s wrong with it?” (LC §19)

“It” takes in wrongness by referring to the picture and to the performance behavior it (the picture) in turn takes in. Accurate representation is both a philosophical and an aesthetic anomaly, begging the questions “what” and

“why,” except as the kind of empty shows of abstract curiosity and concern that an actor reflexively performs. This is how “it” works. Jannings’s sleeping hand is revealed when he is unable to hold onto a cigar box and George’s sleeping foot when he attempts to come to Jannings’s aid.

JANNINGS *points at the cigar box. GEORGE misunderstands the gesture and looks as if there were something to see on the box. JANNINGS agrees to the misunderstanding and now points as if he really wanted to point out something. That blue sky you see on the label, my dear fellow, it really exists there.*<sup>8</sup>

Wittgenstein believed that although phenomenology does not exist, phenomenological problems do (RC §248), and Handke’s blue-sky label appears to be restating the familiar phenomenological problem of the inauthenticity (the blue-skying) of the image in relation to the object it depicts. Handke is, of course, citing Magritte’s *La trahison des images* (1928–29), in which the legend “*Ceci n’est pas une pipe*” is inscribed under a picture of a pipe on a blue-sky background. But Handke and Wittgenstein’s interest is less Magritte’s surface paradox than in the question, troubled by the image’s intervention, of what makes language appear to be either transparent or opaque. Wittgenstein asserted, “One can imagine a use for paradoxical sentences in a logical exercise. But ‘This statement is false’ [or ‘true’] cannot be used to make a self-referential statement about which we can raise the unanswerable question of whether it is true or false.”<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, for Wittgenstein “the indeterminateness of the concept of color” (RC §17) is tied up with the problem of comparison as it relates to physical and mental reflection:

Compare with: “In a picture in which a piece of paper gets its lightness from the blue sky, the sky is lighter than the white paper. And yet in another sense blue is the darker and white the lighter colour (Goethe). On the palette white is the lightest colour.” (RC §2)

Perception is often a matter of mental error, specifically an error of judgment, as in “How does someone judge which is his right and which is his left hand? . . . How do I know that this colour is blue? . . . somewhere I must begin with not-doubting. . . it is part of judging” (OC §150). Perhaps because he cannot bear witness against himself in the language-game of thought-thinking-itself, Wittgenstein fails to say that judging (and not-doubting) is also a language-game in that there is no universally agreed-upon objective criterion to determine the reality (truth being a subset of reality) or truth (reality being of a lower moral order than truth) of what we see. The mind’s judgment as to which is the right hand and which the left becomes clouded when the possibility of identical twins, each twin having one right hand and one left, presents itself in Handke’s play. Each twin wears

gloves that she hands to another (i.e., not the other), the action defined by the verb “hands” subverting the entire category of hands as a noun that, unlike a verb, can be possessed by an adjective.<sup>10</sup> Do I err in judgment reading motiveless gloving up as disingenuously concealing incapacity? Wellman writes, “Glove has no catastrophe,” but to be fair, this proposition is manipulated by the word-making capacity of this sentence’s multi-fingered but specific authorial intelligence (“Fingers are not idle in the mind”), which is not my own. For me, “thought’s glove” will not “stay, quiet, where you drop her.”<sup>11</sup>

The circularity of his gloved thought is redrawn by Handke at the drop of two hats, one belonging to each twin, which are tossed from character to character as if they cannot imagine “hat” except as a figure of play in a language-game that goes, “Me hat, it has three corners / Three corners has me hat / And if it hadn’t three corners / It would not be me hat”—a round that is recited earlier in the play. The oddness of “three corners” occurring three times and the “hat” occurring three times but *not the same three times*, speaks to the inexactness or oddness of the synthesis imagined in the mind on the order of “reality” as (a) “three-cornered hat.” The imagined four-handed possession of the imagined three-cornered hat (the twins repeatedly convey objects in multiples of “two,” meaning that “four-cornered,” as the words suggest, would be more logical) can only be expressed in the form of a language-game that on the surface is only understood by those who are playing it. “*Everything is working well*,” Handke’s stage directions say, but say to whom?<sup>12</sup> Certainly not to the characters, not even to the odd twins in whose hands, in whose doubled right- and left-handedness the correction of judgment as being not necessarily real or true, the hat and gloves were initially grasped. (After the twins run into the wings, one of the other unseen two “toss[es] *the hats as if they were gloves, letting the gloves sail through the air as if they were hats. One hears them crashing like [the] suitcases*”—that is, like the suitcases with which the twins first entered, and from which they unpacked meaning by producing the hats and gloves. The suitcases now crash like objects, and not like similes, the articulation of the likeness of two inherently unlike things.<sup>13</sup>

But just because the twins copy one another does not necessarily imply (although it appears to suggest) transparency. When the first of the Kessler Twins, Alice, enters (although we don’t really know which of them *is or was* first), the stage directions say: “*She is wearing an afternoon dress and looks as if she had come to this performance by mistake.*” But stage directions are meant to be transparent, so they may only be speaking for themselves. “What are you talking about?” von Stroheim asks the other twin, Ellen, and she responds: “About you. I only wanted to show you how to talk.”<sup>14</sup> “I’ll talk as I please,” says von Stroheim, and (now) Alice invites him to say something while her twin (Ellen) covers his eyes with her hand. But all he can do is open his mouth and shut it, stammering out the occasional syllable

in the pantomimed, pantomimic *stage directions* (“He moves his hands as if were looking for something that keeps eluding him”) so that his performance is a copy, a figure of twinning that has already been prefigured.<sup>15</sup> “As soon as [the Kessler Twins] have disappeared, they cannot be heard running any more.”<sup>16</sup> But the im/possibility of the stage directions having run out of stage is quickly corrected by the running on of the stage directions that speak to the twins’ absence—the aforementioned tossing of their suitcases whose content(s) cannot be mentally contained. The verb “to run” has been split like an infinitive in the moment that twinning is no longer conjoined as a stage function. Jannings wonders whether he is dreaming (“That was me?”), but dreaming is already a transparency in the context of the language-game the play is performing.<sup>17</sup>

The transparency of copywork and over-articulation, including Handke’s overt references to Wittgenstein, is a sop to the stage and its audience’s uneducated expectations (see *Kaspar*). His stage directions and dialogue adopt Wittgenstein’s practice of pointing at meaning, as when the stage directions tell us that Jannings’s “What’s that?” and “what’s that supposed to mean?” are accompanied by him pointing at the object in question, some fallen cigars.<sup>18</sup> “Pick them up!” he yells at George, at the same time asking him what could also be the mind’s rhetorical question, “Can you imagine anything but what I tell you to do?”<sup>19</sup> But perception gaps in performance, as conception also does—a menu to be looked at is confused with a corpse (outside a restaurant’s window but inside a story structure) that is not. An intentionally proffered hand is handed a cigar box it unintentionally asked for and the famous Tractarian conclusion reappears as a question that is simultaneously leading and rhetorical: “And about something one doesn’t know, one shouldn’t talk, isn’t that so?”<sup>20</sup> This (mis)calculated/ing affect resembles a Wellman story narrator’s complaint, “It is lonely to be so alone in wonderment; indeed, to be so alone in the wonderment of full knowledge often feels like being alone in the empty cigar box . . . of bafflement and ignorance.”<sup>21</sup> When Jannings tells von Stroheim that he has not, as he inquired, already told him “the story about the lake,” von Stroheim concludes, “Then I probably only thought of it.”<sup>22</sup> Thought he already told him the story *The Ride Across Lake Constance*? Only thought of the story *The Ride Across Lake Constance* without having told it or written it down? Does *The Ride Across Lake Constance* refer only to the epigraph in which a rider confronted with his unknowingness falls dead or to the play we are now as impossibly reading because it has not yet been written down? The play’s self-nomination by a fictional character living inside of the as yet unwritten play articulates the extraordinary lengths (an impossible measurement) to which the mind goes to recast ordinariness according to its own extraordinary design. Handke’s play reverses transparency and opaqueness, making surface less a superficial dividing line than a substantive image of complex mediation. So much so in fact, that the apparent disingenuousness of Jannings’s open hand is soon

turned on its head by George's self-regard, referenced in the stage direction: "*He regards his hand.*"<sup>23</sup> George takes ownership of Jannings's rings, and the former's self-satisfied self-possession ("only when I possess something do I become myself . . .") diminishes as it materially recycles Jannings's fictional ring cycle—a story beginning "Once on a winter evening . . .," gradually revealing its structural motive as being to invent "a dream that might happen on a winter night."<sup>24</sup> But George's (perhaps self-serving) admission that his first noticing the rings on Jannings's fingers motivated him to hand Jannings the cigar box in the first place invites the mind to recast the story of the hand that grasped the box as the story of the mind itself that could not grasp that the story was about the hand that was in turn grasped by and grasping (two forms of possession) the ring.

This mental recycling recalls Beckett's round about the dog whose repeated entrances and exits (via multiple deaths) collectively defeat the mind's expectation of resolution in *Waiting for Godot*, which Handke recycles in the form of a three-cornered hat.<sup>25</sup> Jannings, who recites the song, says: "Ever since I've known that song I am incapable of noticing a hat with it." Note he did not say, "I am incapable of noticing a hat *without* it," as in "without thinking about it (i.e., the song)," as you might expect your mind expects. The comparison between thought and expression is *inexact*, which propels the mind into an endless spin cycle of making meaning and of meaning pursuing making, with meaning-making constituting not an actual process but rather a performance behavior, indicative of the language-game the mind plays with itself. (JANNINGS: You try drawing a circle in your mind but don't know where to begin.)<sup>26</sup>

One of the fifteen specific types of language-games that Wittgenstein names is, "Giving orders and acting on them" (*PI* §23). When George asks Jannings why he should do something, Jannings answers, "First obey. Then we can talk about it." And so, "giving orders and acting on them" is a language-game that we play with ourselves in the guise of inculcating others with the nominal form of "order" for which our mind invents a backstory of natural prototype and social evolution directed at moral responsibility and at the quasi-moral responsibility of doing what you say and saying what you mean (to do). "I can't say something and then do the opposite of what I said. Inconceivable!" Jannings protests aloud, talking back to his own mind. And yet, of course, by not so much speaking his mind as by letting his mind speak, he is (and also can't be) doing just that.<sup>27</sup> The obsessive-compulsive mind that presses itself into counting may simultaneously dis/obey (its own) order(s), as in the von Stroheim-Porten arithmomaniacal exchange of telephone numbers 23–32–322 and 233–23–22.

Another of Wittgenstein's language-games, "Constructing an object from a description (a drawing)" startles the mind into leaping from drawing with the hand to withdrawing a hand, and then to the drawer of/in the drawing and the picture of the drawer that affects concealment. When the

hand opens it, can the drawer be said to be withdrawn? Or is withdrawing the act of the object keeping to itself, hiding inside itself?<sup>28</sup> The frame in which to parse these meanings can only be drawn in stage directions, not in their enactment—that is, without recourse to signage or the simultaneous screen projection of words and image. This particular language-game effects and affects ordinariness and yet cannot be experienced in real time. The stage directions tell us the Kessler Twins withdraw four cushions from an open chest of drawers and “*There is hardly time to perceive these actions.*”<sup>29</sup>

### The World as I Found It (Black and White and Re[a]d All Over)

Something red can be destroyed, but red cannot be destroyed,  
and that is why the meaning of the word “red” is independent  
of the existence of a red thing.

—Wittgenstein (*PI* §57)

. . . and his incapacity solidified into a pain that often sat like  
a nosebleed behind his forehead the moment he tried to make  
up his mind to do something.

—Robert Musil, *The Man Without Qualities: A Sort of  
Introduction and Pseudo Reality Prevails*

With a certain scenic single-mindedness, I asked my designer to create a set for Congreve’s Restoration comedy of manners *The Way of the World* (1700) with the capacity to lock actors onstage who failed to perform their actions in a timely fashion. A raked white platform appeared that rushed upstage, narrowing to a central vanishing point where there waited a so-small-as-almost-to-be-secret Alice-in-Wonderland door. (Had the White Rabbit been lying flat on its stomach facing away from the audience, this door would have been his mouth.) The platform was sectioned multiple times by black perspective lines that climbed up the contiguous white walls, worrying them obsessively, so that it was impossible to tell where the walls left off and the doors began (an OCD tessellation of H. G. Wells and Aldous Huxley’s “Door in the Wall” and a reminder of Handke’s scenic description in *The Ride Across Lake Constance*). There was no visible hardware on any of the panel doors from the stage side, because the doors were not intended to be opened onstage, despite the door-openings figuring directly in the stage action. My textual premise for this was the famous Act IV “Proviso Scene,” in which Mrs. Fainall locks “the true wits” Mirabell and Millamant inside a room so that they argue themselves toward a marital contract. The three-walled room contrived structural integrity that spoke to the locksmith, to (Mrs.) Fainall’s speaking name, and to the conventionalism of the scene itself. The room is

locked by the language-game in which it participates, as in Wittgenstein's "How do you know he is in the room?—Because I put him in and there is no way he can get out" (PG, "Generality," §257). Similarly, whereas the world as Wittgenstein found it "is everything that is the case," the literal case of money that gives *World* its premise cannot be found, because, one might say, Congreve lost it in the plot.

The stage's agoraphobic locking-in protocol unexpectedly brought forth a bloodied actor playing Waitwell, much as Macbeth's paranoia hallucinated Banquo, only the actor in my production and his blood were real. "*Where had the blood come from?*" asked the *World's* givenness, its locked-room mystery. What withdrawal was this picture drawing upon? "Might it have something to do with the intrusiveness of mortal thought bleeding through the flesh?" I imagine a critical audience wondered. "An extrapolation of the play's flaying-of-fashion-as-appearance theme?" Perhaps it was a manifestation of Avital Ronell's statement, "our body doubles for trauma, or rather, it *acts* as a traumatic place that causes a series of failures."<sup>30</sup> Had Waitwell, blood dripping from an unaccounted for but substantial forehead wound, a visual Bergsonian hiccup in *mise-en-scène's* orderly design, become the sum of all fears (of failure)?<sup>31</sup> The actor's wound/the wounded actor is a *mise-en-abyme* for the anxiety of being onstage at any cost and what it costs to be onstage, to always be showing. The wounded actor modeled the collective anxiety of non-disappearance (being locked onstage) as a contractual breach, and yet, paradoxically, the stoppage of performance as well, the potential end of *The Way of the World*. Illogical appearance is, to my mind, an anxious revelation, an answer without a question (paraphrase, PG §25, 377).

Cavell asks what does "the wound make[s] . . . possible to say, or necessary to say, without mitigation?"<sup>32</sup> What, in effect, must come to the surface? Timothy Gould writes, "We tend to assimilate all our failures to reach the world, sometimes in despair of our abilities, sometimes in our despair of the worth of inhabiting so impoverished a world."<sup>33</sup> Read in this light transposed from world to *World*, the real stage wound becomes a culture- and convention-puncturing instrument that speaks outside the normative theatrical parameters of what the actor is able to say, meaning that it also speaks to the actor's incapacity. At the same time, though, the wound with its potential to incapacitate the actor, to hinder or even halt his performance, actualizes the actor by re-humanizing him, turning him back into a real-live human being. This in turn returns the audience to the reality that "the wound is, evidently, the fact or fate, of being human, of being woundable, for example, by knowledge they cannot put away from themselves, of love and of beauty and of pity and of horror."<sup>34</sup> The black-and-white blueprint set with concealed doors that lock from the outside stands as a visual deconstruction of this fact, readable once the red of woundedness appears, bearing forth the inordinateness of the play's, of the *World's*, language of self-presentation.<sup>35</sup>

## A Stuffed Horse, Galloping

“What I see looks like *this*.” Imagine this said by someone who is looking at a galloping horse and then, as a copy, uses a stuffed horse *standing* in a galloping position! Wouldn’t the right copy be a galloping horse?

—Wittgenstein (*RPPII* §383)

We often see an actor pretending to run onstage and say to ourselves, “That looks like running”—meaning, “That looks like *this*,” with *this* being the memory-image of running that runs through our minds. Of course, the image we have in our heads is itself only a reflection of what running really *is*, that is, of what running really *looks like*, but it is at least closer to the original experience of actual running than what we see onstage. But is what we see onstage closer than what we see in our minds to what running *looks like*? Wittgenstein’s example of “the stuffed horse *standing* in the galloping position” not only recalls his recurring critique of the image as a way of seeing and knowing what it is we see, but puts us in mind of the therapeutic teaching function he ascribes to his philosophy. The most famous convergence of these two motifs in Wittgenstein’s work is his critique of Augustine’s picture-word argument, which begins *Philosophical Investigations*. A child takes a note to a shopkeeper with the words “five red apples” printed upon it either as a memory or teaching prompt to the child, of what he has only recently learned, is learning, or has yet to learn. The shopkeeper matches the words “apples” and “five” to the word “red,” which he finds on a color chart. “But how does he [i.e., the shopkeeper] know where and how he is to look up the word ‘red,’” asks Wittgenstein, “and what he is to do with the word ‘five’?” (*PI* §1). Presumably, the shopkeeper knows both of these things, through experiences that have taught him the use of these words (much as his actions are now reinforcing lessons being taught to the child), so that he does not have to stop and think about what he is doing and what this doing means. (“Any explanation has its foundation in training” [*RPPII* §327].) What, though, if the shopkeeper’s mind is operating synesthetically, so that the number “five” is itself colored or, alternatively, so that “red” always attaches itself to a number other than “five”? Would the shopkeeper then have to visibly think through his customer’s request, “give notice” (*RPPII* §163) by executing a performance behavior? And what would the child make of this? Might he ask himself, “Is this what thinking looks like?” Is it a grimacing, frozen posture? And does this word “thinking” attach itself to the action that it enables—that is, the matching of the words “five” and “red” to the object “apples”? Whose version of thinking pursuant to meaning and meaning pursuant to thinking would the child trust—the shopkeeper’s or the community’s, the social norm taught him at school, at home, and more generally in the world? Wittgenstein writes: “For I describe the language-game ‘Bring something red’ to someone who can himself already play it. Others I might at most

*teach it*" (RPPII §313; Z §432). Would the child understand the exception, if he has not already learned the rule?<sup>36</sup> And, being a language-game, what does the rule teach the child if not (only) a convention, what the community says that "red" is, what something *looks like* when it is called "red"?

The very normative picture-meaning that enables teaching and learning likewise reinforces the limits of knowing what "red" is. What we see when we see red is a stuffed horse performing the behavior of galloping in a frozen image—what red looks like taking the place of what red is. Or, as Wittgenstein writes:

We have a colour system and we have a number system.

Do the systems reside in *our* nature or in the nature of things? How are we to put it?—*Not* in the nature of numbers and colours. (RPPII §426)

When we look at the wounded actor onstage, we re-rehearse Jean-Luc Godard's famous maxim regarding film imagery, "It's not blood, it's red."<sup>37</sup> Precisely because we can only be sure that something red in film *looks like* blood, we can never be sure that something red in film *is* blood. This is even truer in the theater, where the gap between *is* and *looking like* is far more noticeable. What we see onstage are actors pretending to run, to gallop, to think, to bleed. But "willing suspension of disbelief" instructs the audience that red is blood, not "that looks red" (RPPII §326), and so the actor's (real) blood signed its name to the letter he as his character read onstage.

### Making an Example of the Audience

In a great hurry to make an entrance, the about-to-be head-wounded actor bypassed the offstage reading lists designed to prevent only *onstage* accidents and misread the height of a metal crossbeam, articulating a certain scenic single-mindedness from which the actor could no longer *mentally* escape. "Off with his head!" demanded the unseen red ruler, madness revealing itself in the offstage parentheses of the scenic space. Doors ghosted, the stage floor tipped further upward, amnesiac mystery prevailed. *There's a scene in my head.*<sup>38</sup> *A performer is interrupted when his own Coleridgean "Person from Porlock" (as he calls him) enters just prior to the actor's going onstage to read something (a letter?) he has just composed in his head. The actor's reading is interrupted in mid-performance by some unexpected event. Men with rifles mass onstage aiming their rifles directly at the audience, who "out of touch as they were with modern theatrical conventions—took it for another bit of experimental staging." Moments before being mortally wounded by a bullet, one of the spectators rose to his feet and shouted, "Stop! Don't fire; the guns are loaded! It's not red, it's blood!" Bullets flew and ricocheted here and there,*

randomly killing whomever they hit in the audience. “Someone from the back rows stood up and made straight for the stage” when the firing began, “with blood streaming from his head.” Earlier, a former goalkeeper who had once been a household name in his native country narrated the tragic tale of how in one game fifteen years earlier he had been unable to prevent eleven shots on goal from getting past him.

An amnesiac returns to his office on the twenty-seventh floor of a high-rise building, but when he arrives, the door that he had passed through thousands of times in the past has been replaced by a white wall with invisible lines or seams running up and down it.<sup>39</sup> There was a man with him, a detective who said this was his first case, which it may or may not have been, since we know only what the amnesiac can remember. We can’t see him not remembering but we can see him doing what an actor thinks not remembering looks like—clutching his head like he has a blinding headache (although I may be confusing this with another picture in which this same actor had a bomb implanted in his head). I remember there being a BLACKOUT in the office building and someone saying, “I could go in there, and he’d think it was you.” Someone else said, “This’ll probably make me late for the theater.” Someone tells the amnesiac something about how caged animals “use every inch of space [to make it] as large as they can.” Wittgenstein said, “If you have a room which you do not want certain people to get into, put a lock on it for which they do not have the key. But there is no point in talking to them about it, unless of course you want them to admire the room from outside!”<sup>40</sup> Isn’t this what the actor’s performance is supposed to do? “The honourable thing to do,” says Wittgenstein, “is to put a lock on the door which will be noticed only by those who can open it, not by the rest.”<sup>41</sup> Who ever said acting was honorable?

I may have been the actor in the film I’ve been describing (as well as the letter-reader on the stage). The character thinks that he could have murdered someone. He is certain that he’s being pursued. He will only walk on another person’s left side. The amnesiac character’s name is Stillwell, which I assume is some kind of speaking name, possibly a coded reference. My film psychiatrist washes his hands before and after seeing me. Transference neurosis? Color transfer? Red? I remember now, my name is not “Red” but “Waitwell.”<sup>42</sup> But what, I wonder, am I waiting for, the catastrophe having already arrived.

## Overwriting (Part 1: The Wor[l]d)

Having to notice where one is is very exhilarating.

—Foreman, quoted in Kate Davy’s introduction to  
*Richard Foreman: Plays and Manifestos*

*The Way of the World* engaged with two of the goals that Richard Foreman set for his playwrighting: interruption and failure. The gridded set fronted by

under-articulated doors with invisibly over-articulated functions, overwritten by the opportunity to proclaim failure each time they interrupt action by not opening on time, gives thought to contingency, the wound, the “something where truth’s indentation is visible.”<sup>43</sup> This appearance analogizes to what Foreman calls the “‘arrived’ elements of the writing,” or “what wants to be written” that models for a “‘way-of-being-in-the-world’ that we’d like to remember as a possibility.”<sup>44</sup> Foreman’s “Writing has not a subject/(aimed for) / but is being-responsiveness, to the currents / within it as it generates itself” indirectly responds in an elaborated manner to Wittgenstein’s proposition, “Language must speak for itself” (e.g., *PG* §27). Thus does Foreman’s 1978 play *Place + Target* (*Luogo + Bersaglio*) affirm in post-Wildean fashion, “The importance of not having a subject,” speaking to overwriting both character and theme. The play’s protagonist “Max” names interruption of an ultimate end (i.e., the Maximum) and converses with the unseen, unlocatable “Voice,” a subjectless subject.<sup>45</sup> For Foreman, location is not the answer to a question; it is the problem the unanswered question poses. Max implores Voice, “Think of me as a person. Don’t think of me as a pattern.” To which Voice responds “Wrong! It is the sentence which speaks, not Max. It is the writing, written, which writes.” Wittgenstein’s handprint is here, as it is in William H. Gass’s sentence, “*The figure, in greeting, thrusts forth a hand,*” which complicates its subject “The figure” while making a figure of “a hand” (which Gass elsewhere likens to a sentence) and the “greeting” the hand extends as a figure that recalls the thought-figure of the sentence and the hand that composed it.<sup>46</sup>

## Overwriting (Part 2: “The Facts”)

**I think this door’s locked.**

—Sir Wilfull in William Congreve’s *The Way of the World*

The foregoing sentence, simply written, is not a stage direction, although mentally it functions as one. At the same time, since the line is not accompanied, either fore or aft, by a stage direction, it does not make clear that there is an action other than thought that is attached to it either (“Thought is the *living* element in the sentence” [*PG* §65]). It is assumed that a stage direction lies somewhere between the fact and the act. But what is a fact? “To point out a fact means to assert something, to state something. ‘To point out a flower’ doesn’t mean this, even though the fact may be that what I am pointing out is a flower” (“Complex and Fact”; June 1931; *PR* §§302–3). Additionally, our faceted manner of seeing influences how we articulate as fact what it is we are seeing: “we say, ‘There’s a chair over here,’ when we only see *one* side of it” (*PR* §225). “Fact,” then, can point out its own incompleteness, its incapacity when it points to something else. And so, Wittgenstein rhetorically asks the

impossible question, “Why is it impossible for factual language to express the fundamental condition of its own existence?”<sup>47</sup> If stage directions and scenic descriptions are meant to be “factual,” no wonder they are printed in spectral italics. So, “*Three white hairs, not visible from the auditorium, are lying on a shelf. Two, perhaps three, flies buzz around the room but they will not play any significant role in the development of the action.*”<sup>48</sup> Tadeusz Różewicz’s *The Interrupted Act* (1963) authenticates the stage as the place of writing’s failure to act. The three white hairs and the “two, perhaps three” buzzing flies signal *ephemeros*, the time-signature of performance while also placing these signs effectively out of sight, except for thought that is not required to recognize the likeness that shapes and takes the shape of an audience. Absenting an audience makes the seemingly impossible possible, as thought will do. A pause lasting “one to five minutes” separates two dramatic actions with a visible show of arbitrariness made more visible by the sentence that follows, as a stage direction, parenthetically: “(the five minute pause may only be used in the case of either a very sophisticated or a completely unsophisticated audience).” A woman, of whom it is said “at the moment of her appearance on the stage . . . is sixty,” carries a pair of pants: “the width of the leg at the turn-up is 29 to 34 cm.”<sup>49</sup> These numbers are rendered arbitrary by the context in which they appear, in which immeasurability of number itself serves as the yardstick and dramatic action is the thing or the “fact” that has already taken place. We are told this in so many words: “all this has already taken place,” “a week earlier,” “last week.” Or else, the dramatic action being described cannot take place owing to time: “all these scenes would have taken about 45 minutes”; “But in order to explain the whole tangle of tragic events one would have needed 20 minutes and again the action would have suffered terribly.”<sup>50</sup> Perhaps Różewicz has in mind the King’s hopeful speech to the hitherto thwarted lovers that ends Corneille’s neoclassical play *Le Cid* (1636) in which the undoing of tragic resolution is projected via the explosion of what has been the play’s unified framework of time and the basis for its rigorously constrained logic. Time, space, and action (the three unities of the neoclassical stage) have ceased to be useful in *The Interrupted Act*, as indicated by the stage direction: “Let’s say she picks up the key to the door. Since this key will not be of any use to her (in America) she takes it back to her father.”<sup>51</sup> And in this turning back there is a sort of rewinding, a turning of the key inside the language-locked meaning of “fact.” The stage’s central fact is that it disguises time’s undoing and redoing. Perhaps we can see this most clearly in *Phèdre*, which performs the thought experiment of tracing the lag between speech and action (punctuated by and expressed as a combination of repressed desires and shared confidences, disclosed secrets and false confessions) until Phèdre herself vanquishes time by taking her own life. Barthes writes that in this moment, “her confession is literal, purified of all theatre; her language is totally coincident with the fact.”<sup>52</sup>

Similarly, the contractable action of Millamant agreeing that she might “dwindle into a wife” and Mirabell “enlarge into a husband” in act 4’s “proviso scene” (lines 204 and 208) under the pressure of the locked room as thought-space is a proto-Wittgensteinian isomorphic fact. The limit-world of the word search is implicit in Mirabell’s opening comment on his closed-space situation: “Do you lock yourself up from me to make my search more curious? Or is this pretty artifice contrived, to signify that here the chase must end and my pursuit be crowned, for you can fly no further?” (lines 135–38). Mirabell’s interrogative stance, the one most often adopted by Wittgenstein in the face of unlocking meaning at its most basic level, is the figurative key directly addressing the door that neither does nor does not *want* to be opened, but which may or may not *be* opened as a matter of form. Thus, Millamant instructs Mirabell as to the last term of the proviso: “wherever I am, you shall always knock at the door before you come in” (lines 201–2). Sir Wilfull’s earlier remark to Millamant, “I think this door’s enchanted!” (line 83) recalls Wittgenstein’s observation that “the idea of a process in the head, in a completely enclosed space, makes thinking something occult” (*PG* §34). It was, of course, Wittgenstein’s stated goal to remove occultism from language and its philosophy. With this in mind, he might see how stage directions as a form of unheard speaking out loud are a hedge against equating (the/an) event of language or physical action with any category of time at all. “How can I expect the event, when it isn’t yet there at all” (*PG* §90)?

### Overwriting (Part 3: The Wittgenstein-Foreman Proviso Scene)

The Proviso Scene predicts the kind of “overdetermination of impulse” Foreman will later theorize and practice in his plays and their production. The difference is that in Congreve’s play, the locked door analogizes to the closed language of contractual agreement that the characters’ performance behavior of disagreement actively frustrates (the performance behavior un-*sees* the locked door as a means of forestalling [its] locked-ness). By contrast, Foreman’s literalizing the difficulty of a character leaving the room (“first, by tying the character’s foot to a table; then by putting a wall between him and the door; and finally by blinding him so that he cannot see his way out of the room”) constitutes a “strategy overload[ing] . . . context,” overwriting written language *and* analogy with object and image, while overlooking the possibility of performance behavior (except, possibly, his own) entirely.<sup>53</sup> Beyond this, Foreman is using object and image to override Wittgenstein’s statement “I know that it is possible to unlock the door with this key, because I once did so” (*PG* §82) by not imag(in)ing (i.e., picturing) a key as a possibility *or* possibility itself as being the key to unlocking. But this is not only

a literal word omission; it is an analogistic (both logical and analogic) one. Analogy has dropped out of the mental picture in Foreman's scenario as (a) possibility.

A: I want to get out of the room.

B: This is the way to get out of the room.

A: Why should I leave the room when I am already out of the room?<sup>54</sup>

Foreman ascribes this double bind (which Gregory Bateson coined as a psychological term) to contradictory signals (which Foreman externalizes in his productions to "frustrate the commonplace drive toward narrative understanding in the spectator"). But Wittgenstein offers an alternative explanation of this thought-language model. Specifically, Wittgenstein's expression of what he calls "the third contingency" speaks not to psychology but to the elementary possibilities that logic excludes. Thus, "if someone says 'My watch is on the table,' it may or may not be on the table, but there is also a third contingency, that he has no watch, in which case the possibility, that it is on the table, is not there to be realized."<sup>55</sup> Applied to the scene in question, the spectator's frustration at the characters not leaving the room may be ascribed to there not being a way out, there not being a door at all. But there is a way in which the impossibility of the door can be made possible and that is by changing the scale of our perception. Foreman writes that

because you are not used to choosing the scale in which you see, you tend to think of yourself as a monolithic "I." . . . We tend to forget that the monolithic self is the product of a learned perceptual system, in which the constraints of convention and habit pile up to deaden our ability to scan those freedom-loving contradictions of our impulsive life. These freedom-loving contradictions are really doors; doors to understanding that the monoliths you perceive as blocking your path to happiness are, in fact, clouds of language and impulse in continual circulation; and you can enter inside these clouds, and dance with these elements.<sup>56</sup>

The key to us seeing these (unlocked) doors, according to Foreman, is "if you change the scale of your perceptual mind-set as you watch my plays, the tiny atomic structure of my style can produce explosions in your larger-scaled, psychological self."<sup>57</sup>

This "tiny atomic structure" (Foreman: "I want to take every moment of the play and give it a relationship to the total field of the world in which it occurs") analogizes to Wittgenstein's propositional "grid of elemental possibilities" which his mentor Russell dubbed "logical atomism."<sup>58</sup> This is the basic building block of most of Wittgenstein's writing, the way in which he thought in print. For his part, Wittgenstein said that we only recognize

reduction in scale if it is at variance to our real-life perceptual experience. If we have seen one-inch-high people in real life, then a one-inch model of people could be said to be drawn to realistic scale. More likely, though, we are shown one-inch-high people and told that a picture of them represents them as being the size of a house, and that's how we see them (*PG* §§4 and 129). As Foreman's theater of big ideas in miniature points out, there is scale and scale model, pointing at logical possibility via the use of illogical possibility (e.g., small houses framing characters' heads in *Sophia=(Wisdom) Part 3: The Cliffs* and these heads saying atomistically and self-referentially, "Do/on't tr/ry an/ny thi/ing fun/ny").<sup>59</sup> Illogical possibility is not impossibility. Foreman's is not an impossible theater, any more than Wittgenstein's is an impossible philosophy, because impossibility cannot literally be shown or told, and even if it could, it would not speak to us directly, only make a noise we could not understand.

The problem for the artist and the philosopher is not limited to thinking, but extends to writing that "coagulate[s] [like blood] what it refers to into yet another object in the material world." Foreman envisions writing that "might function instead as an allusion to possibility . . . a material form of consciousness through which you can experience the world."<sup>60</sup> The key here is the word "function," as it is only in the use of the word, the writing, Wittgenstein says, that we can learn the difference between the grammar of knowing and the grammar of consciousness (*PG* §71). Grammar does not denote language, but it defines in the sense of enabling it to perform its tasks. When Foreman writes, "What I propose is not a theater of 'poetic atmosphere,' but one which models itself on the strategies of syntax and structure" (discernible in his choice, placement, and foregrounding of "theatrical language—lights, props, scenery, actors as actors, words as speech-effort"), he is speaking in the kind of grammatical terms that Wittgenstein would recognize and condone.<sup>61</sup> Wittgenstein would, I think, agree with Foreman about the need to break down the "monolithic self [as] the product of a learned perceptual system" that renders doors either locked or invisible, two variations on the theme and meaning of "blocking." In a Wittgenstein-Foreman Proviso Scene, perception and perspective relating to the act(or) being pointed at gives ground to pointing at as a function of language and object, with (no) strings attached (i.e., no subjectivity in play), except for Foreman's material strings that direct us to "the *method* of pointing," a materialization of Wittgenstein's "seeing as." The stage direction "The chair is thinking to itself . . ." (*PI* §361) is seen running as a string from a chair to the forehead of an actor.<sup>62</sup> The scenic space is gridded, with the lines that crisscross the stage floor running up the walls where doors, like one or the other aspect of Wittgenstein's famous duck-rabbit, in any given moment, might/not be seen lying on its stomach facing upstage.<sup>63</sup>

(. . . *A big pair of hands at the end of long sleeves floats in and they are clamped onto KARL's head, as if holding his temples. He staggers*

*to the window with the hands still holding his head. He goes through the window, head first. Then the hands return. They get attached to the clock. Lift the clock. A rope is so attached that it pulls the suspended clock and a table together. The hands are detached from the clock and the ticking stops.)*

The foregoing stage direction's contracted object-time signature in Foreman's play *Sophia=(Wisdom): Part I* (1969) can be otherwise expressed as follows: the unseen head (mind-frame) registers the hands that command the visual space and take hold of the head. The hands' gigantism miniaturizes the head inside the picture-frame by comparison then vacates the head through the metonymic frame of the window (defenestration). The hands return frameless *inside* the picture (i.e., without mention of the window), although still inside the picture, to strip the unseen head (mind) of time, at the same time undoing (without wholly dismantling) the clock by stripping the clock-body of its hands. The frame-inside-the-frame, being a *mise-en-abyme* of spectatorship, is an infinite regress that destabilizes reading and being inside whatever constitutes the largest frame of reference.<sup>64</sup> Heads, hands, and feet figure prominently in a number of Foreman's early works, recalling Wittgenstein's anatomy, as in "The red foot came into the room with his reading matter," in which Foreman plays with the homonymic red/read and implicitly links the foot to the unseen and unspoken head. Elsewhere in the same play (*Vertical Mobility (Sophia=(Wisdom): Part 4*), 1973), there is "a red palm in a red glove," a "head that is in a book all the time," and the claim that a character is unrecognizable without a book in her hand. And just as "each word has a certain weight," so too does each body part as a part of speech. The body parts are strung together with objects in space much as the parts of speech are strung together in sentences that test the limits of meaning. "Legend: ONE CAN GO (THE MIND) NO FURTHER THAN THIS. THIS IS THE ULTIMATE WAY THE MIND CAN DO AN INVENTION." Or at least, so legend has it, legend here being (just) another sentence or sentence-configuration pointing at its speaking parts.<sup>65</sup>

Stripping away and defenestration may also be read as a metonymic representation of Foreman's goal of "de-treeing the tree." This notion sounds like but actually differs from the formalist charge "to make the stone stony," or "to re-tree the tree" ("to make the spectator see it fresh, strange—as for the first time, not seeing the real tree through the learned concept tree"), which was Foreman's stated goal in his work that preceded the work I am discussing here. By *de-treeing* the tree, Foreman shifted his goal to making it possible for the spectator to see the tree as what it is, as a collection, or even more so, a "configuration of facts"—"seeing and knowing you are seeing that and allowing associations to exist—those associations which define the tree's being—associations which are abstractions (as memories, possibilities, hopes projects)."<sup>66</sup> Wittgenstein writes:

If someone says, “I know that that’s a tree” I may answer: “Yes, that is a sentence. An English sentence. And what is it supposed to be doing? Suppose he replies: “I just wanted to remind myself that I know things like *that*”? (OC §352)

Seeing reinforces knowing. Seeing does not take the place of knowing, nor does it necessarily prove that one knows what a thing is. Seeing reminds us of what we think we know about a thing and what we know a thing by is its name. Wittgenstein asks: “May not the thing that I recognize with complete certainty as the tree that I have seen here my whole life long—may this not be disclosed as something different? May it not confound me?” (OC §425). On the other hand, Wittgenstein suggests, overwriting the ordinary with unnecessary confusion may result in a joke, which may itself be meaningful.<sup>67</sup> As a philosopher, Wittgenstein wants to clarify what and how we do/not *know* what a thing is as compared to what that thing *is* in reality: “But doesn’t ‘I know that that’s a tree’ say something different from ‘that is a tree’?” (OC §585). We can only determine this by clarifying grammatical uses and abuses and confusions of language. Although his brief as an artist is (despite all appearances) likewise for clarity, Foreman’s interest is in expanding our ways of knowing, accomplished by inventing a grammar that relies heavily upon the use of image, which both Wittgenstein and Foreman regard as an addictive narcotic that allows us to sleep in the comfort of what we think we already know (representation, reproduction, repetition). “The minute man ‘knows,’ he sleeps.”<sup>68</sup> The minute returns us to Foreman’s stopped clock image which recalls Wittgenstein’s clock (BB §71), which he uses to illustrate the solipsist’s error in thinking he can locate his subject and objects inside his phenomenal bubble, when, in fact, he cannot.<sup>69</sup>

Is it possible for performance to articulate an external perspective on interiority that does not absorb into itself the artist’s overriding subjectivity, in the same way that “the solipsist’s world includes the visual field as part of itself”?<sup>70</sup> Characters in plays do not speak for themselves, but in Foreman’s plays they are *told by other characters* that they do not speak for themselves, no matter how self-aware or merely self-centered they may appear to be. The Voice that speaks nominally for the author (even as the author, it being the author’s voice) tells the audience, “The play’s over. You’re left with your own thoughts. Can you really get interested in them or are they just occurring.”<sup>71</sup> Does he (not really “he,” as the Voice is not a real subject) mean “just” in relation to “really” (Ben: “I think I’m losing touch with reality but not really”)<sup>72</sup> or in relation to time, that is, chronologically? And is chronology, as in timekeeping, real if the clock has no hands or if the hour hand is frozen to the dial?

*(head)/frame://hands/head/frame/hands/clock/clock hands/handless  
clock/(head)*

We note that this parenthetical is followed in short order by a stage direction in which a foot substitutes for the hand and a telephone for the clock. But where the hand floated into frame from above, the foot “looms up from the floor.” It is now no longer a clock (the clock-body) but rather the telephone, or “the drifting phone-body” that floats through the air like the hand (although *not* like the clock or clock-body), its receiver coming undone, “*lifted off the hook by someone accompanying the unit.*” The silenced phone’s sound is displaced onto the aforementioned “*KARL, in a red wig with bells tied to his hair, [who] enters and begins shaking his head to make the bells ring.*” The VOICE, likewise (like the ring) extrapolated from the phone (in this case, extrapolated only mentally speaking, as the VOICE is an unseen independent entity in Foreman’s plays), instructs the audience repeatedly to “Go home. The play is over. Think about it, if you like, but go home. Better still, go home. Go home. Go home.” The vocal repetition makes the VOICE sound like a phone-messaging, if not a phone-answering, machine. The invocation of the invisible machine in turn allows the mind to think if it likes about the gap between what is seen and what is heard, what is shown and what is said, what is mechanically reproduced and what (via rhythm and repetition) only appears to be, what agrees as in (stage) grammar and what only appears to agree by way of comparison. There is ticcing inside this comparison an anxiety between live and facsimile “liveness,” the exquisite corpse (to borrow from surrealist compositional game-playing) of the wirelessly networked clock-body (the mortal-temporal body) and the phone-body (sonorous; the sound or healthy, resonant body) that is so abundantly seen (stripped naked; externally wired via string to the frame’s other objects) and seen to be absent (character-less) in Foreman’s plays—so insistently scaled to remind us of comparison and proportion, of distance and the impossibility (as per Wittgenstein) of true measurement.<sup>73</sup> Foreman’s Max exhorts us to “Think. Think harder than you are thinking,” while modeling the performance behavior of thinking “*with a stage set built out of his forehead.*”<sup>74</sup> How can thinking be measured, especially when thinking about thinking intensifies its effect, thinking as a performance behavior, a stage set built out of a forehead, a head-wounded actor singing, “My thought it has four corners, four corners has my thought.”

Foreman likewise challenges us to see smaller than our perceptual incapacity allows, to see down to reality’s contradictions, down to the “sentence (cell),” the key to the doors of perception, through which language and our story elide.<sup>75</sup> It is a story that resists thought but is not thought-resistant, that imbalances itself not so much in order to *be* anxious as not to *know* what being not-anxious looks like by comparison. It is this (at least in part), which makes the mind’s discourse appear to read like a stage direction—localizing and parenthetical, with all the alternative ways and styles of saying and doing, even without knowing, that italics and parentheses contain and provide.

### Overwriting (Part 4: The Play of Parentheticals)

“The potato can’t enter because the door isn’t big enough.”

—Foreman, “Ontological-Hysteric Manifesto II” (July 1974)

*Rhoda in Potatoland (Her Fall Starts)* (1974) plays parenthetically with other early work like *Hotel China*, which looks back upon itself, as if it were folded: (“*This is NOT part of the play. It just happens. NOW YOU REALIZE THAT IT WAS THE LAST ACTION OF HOTEL CHINA, PART TWO*”).<sup>76</sup> The play’s actual title is *HcOhTiEnLa (or) Hotel China*, suggesting a further atomization of language extrapolating new meaning from the ordinary, as well as a TiE-in to *Vertical Mobility*, which begins with Max’s line, “Oh, oh, I don’t want to look at anything,” including, one imagines, the earlier play with its self-consciously avant-gardist typography/topography.<sup>77</sup> That being said, it is yet another intervening play from 1972, *Sophia=Wisdom*, that in its subtitle shows us, in so many words, the typography/topography of *The Cliffs* and Rhoda’s fall. And that play’s title, *Sophia=Wisdom*, migrates in turn to become the subtitle of *Vertical Mobility*—only there it is parenthetical twice over, that is, *Sophia=(Wisdom)* demarcating it as both a subtitle and as something else (as some other named thing). In the process of renaming, Foreman has counted from a third to a fourth part of *Sophia (Vertical Mobility)* constituting the fourth part), parts of a sequence that began with two earlier plays, *Sophia=(Wisdom): Part 1* (1969) and *Total Recall (Sophia=(Wisdom): Part 2)* (1970), a play whose title is ironic in that it appears to forget itself (“I can’t show you exactly”).<sup>78</sup>

Like the later *Rhoda*, *Total Recall* begins with a false start: “I came in at the wrong moment,” this falseness being appropriate to a likeness that comes before the thing it models.<sup>79</sup> *Sophia=(Wisdom) Part 3: The Cliffs* begins with the VOICE intoning several times, each time after a lengthy interval, the words “Not yet.”<sup>80</sup> A door refusing to enter the visual space of the playing field asserts its own not-yet-ness.<sup>81</sup> The VOICE enjoins against misperception: “ONLY ASSERTION IS INTERESTING. THE DANGER IS TRYING TO MAKE AN ASSERTION DECORATED. DO NOT FALL PREY TO THAT DANGER. THINK OF AN ASSERTION.”<sup>82</sup> The door moves/is moved in ways that confound any theatrical or architectural expectation, indicating that although seen as a door the door is really a function of spatial thinking, like “an opened door [that] cannot be opened.”<sup>83</sup>

The body, which “Maybe . . . isn’t asleep, and is hiding behind the door,” is made parenthetical by such spatial thinking, a figure of speech.<sup>84</sup> It costs language nothing to compare Rhoda to a potato. Both have eyes, which are also holes, the holiest part of the human body being the head with its eyes, nose, and mouth. Potatoes grow in fields, pointing at Stein’s dramatic field model (taken up later by Wellman). “I wish I were growing someplace,” says the “I” that is unable to see inside to where that “someplace” for growing

(new) eyes is. My eye stops on the play's first page, which is perfectly creased on the front but not the back, speaking to the half-ness in the play's instruction to "Cut the text in half" while not fully enabling the cut. "Am I *aware* of the spatial character, the depth of a book, for instance, the *whole* time I am seeing it?" (RPPH §445). The play is asking to be read in reverse, to be folded back upon itself to coincide with the "False Starts" of which "Her Fall Starts" homonymously speaks. Homonymously: "having the same or corresponding sound or name; pertaining to the corresponding vertical halves of the visual fields of both eyes."<sup>85</sup> A possibly strabismic nonalignment of comparison between pages of this and other parenthetical plays, such as *Vertical Mobility* (*Sophia*(=Wisdom): Part 4), in which a character who does not want to see what he has written has "*wet towels, put on [his] forehead and on the paper he's just written on.*" A BLACKOUT ensues, provoking a syncopic fall into Rhoda, one of the girls who brought the wet towels, and the play that bears her name.<sup>86</sup> *Rhoda in Potatoland* begins only after Max's *Vertical Mobility* line, "Everything has already been said," which makes *Rhoda* appear already to be overwritten.

*Rhoda in Potatoland* is transparently *about* writing. "Everybody is always writing," we are told both generally and specifically: "RHODA: Hello.— VOICE: She wrote it.— RHODA: Am I late.— VOICE: She wrote it,," and so on. The awareness of Rhoda's often-naked body as being the body of a text ("I'm comparing myself"), like the potato to which she is compared by others in the visual field, grows (RHODA: "The essence of writing now grows apparent").<sup>87</sup> Speaking of herself in the third person as "an actress," Rhoda asks us to compare the actress to the spectator, who is likewise addressed in the third person as "you," although by doing so, the "you" immediately becomes an "I" in the mind of the reader. Rhoda verbally dislocates herself from the expected "space going on in my body" to "a place growing in my mind" and from there to "a place growing someplace that wasn't in me at all but it was growing so much it finished by being in me."<sup>88</sup> Here Rhoda risks sounding like a proleptic echo of Mamet's "wactress" Glenna. Unlike Glenna, Rhoda sees only her image and the paper it's printed on ("But here, here, this piece of paper captures its image"), although Edmond would argue they have that in common too.<sup>89</sup> Rhoda has been folded over on herself ("Why is that mirror in the potato"), so that her beginning is exposed as a citational end. "The mirror advances but it has no real mind of its own. Existence is for it, of course, reflection."<sup>90</sup> The of-course-ness of the two foregoing mirror citations are meaningful gestures toward the Wittgensteinian ordinary that hides behind surface cliché. Rhoda tells the play's DIRECTOR (Foreman himself, who briefly enters the stage and stares like Rhoda at the audience) that she has "to fish a little more deeply" for names, suggesting that they are below the surface.<sup>91</sup> When Rhoda, speaking in the third person as "She" (the first person being the play of "I's"), "tries to name an object which, by definition, has no name," her frustration moves her to

speak “Nonsense.” Although Wittgenstein is not here mentioned by name (naming being a part of the problem), the play’s assertion that it simultaneously transcends and enters the world, presented here as a potato, remarks upon a wider and deeper inclusion of which the philosopher could only think.<sup>92</sup>

### The Deceiver Hypothesis and the Actor’s Reality Problem

Does describing a game always mean: giving a description through which someone can learn it?

—Wittgenstein (ROC §76)

In Michael Haneke’s 2001 film, *Code Unknown* (*Incomplete Tales of Several Journeys*), Anne is an actress auditioning for a film role. The offstage director’s voice (he is reading the role for a male actor who is not there) tells her: “We’ll take it from just after he locks her in. You hear him lock the door. You go to make sure.” Anne walks toward the camera, as the director told her “the camera is the door.” There is also, though, a red panel visible in one of the scenic room’s red walls that may also be a door. It has no stage-side visible hardware, so when the director tells Anne, “The door is indeed locked,” we cannot be sure which figurative door he means, the two “doors” opening up a language-game in which Anne’s numerically coded apartment door referenced in a previous (but not stage) scene also participates. A language-game is, of course, a code, but what would make a particular language-game a “code unknown”?

DIRECTOR: It [the door] is locked. You will never get out.

ANNE: (*Puzzled, apprehensive*) Sorry?

DIRECTOR: You will never get out.

ANNE: What do you mean?

DIRECTOR: I mean you will die here.

ANNE: Is this a joke?

DIRECTOR: Not for me. For you neither, I’m afraid.

Anne moves upstage, that is, away from the camera. Because the offstage voice is authoritatively synonymous with the camera, it has been easy to forget to this point that the director’s voice is just reading the missing actor’s lines. And since the actress is off-book, her performance of being in jeopardy is convincing enough to be real. Of course, it is only the character “Anna” who is in jeopardy and the director is just another actor, maybe even the missing actor standing off-camera running lines. The language-game of performance suddenly becomes readable—but only inexactly as in Foreman’s direction: “*When the play is staged, the characters should bear the names of*

*the actors playing the roles: the actors are and play themselves at one and the same time.*"

DIRECTOR: Look at the ceiling. Do you see the light fitting? It's an inlet for gas lighting. See now why I asked you if you had a lighter? You could use it to blow us both up.

An im/possibility appears: some no-longer "still well" Waitwell's mind blowing up in the character of the actor-director's nominal "us both." Perhaps this can only happen in a scenically contained environment in which light can be said to "fit."

ANNE (*anxiously smiling, feigning accommodation*): Okay, what do you want?

DIRECTOR: Nothing. I have nothing against you. Nothing at all.

[*And indeed, he doesn't, since there is no wall separating the two of them in the set.*]

DIRECTOR: I like you. You just fell into my trap.

ANNE: What do you mean, I fell into your trap.

"I don't have a trap," the character named after the actress PORTEN responds to the actor playing JANNINGS (in Handke's play) who told her to shut hers.<sup>93</sup>

DIRECTOR: It means you're going to die. I merely want to watch you die.

ANNE (*emitting a sigh of brave-feigning impatience, or not waiting well*): Please, stop now. You've had your fun. Now, let's forget all about it, okay? I'm expected home. I have no time for games.

And here we recall the time at which Anne told her boyfriend's younger brother to expect her home, and also her impatience with him, saying that she had no time to play games with him and not enough room for three people in her apartment (3 into 2 won't go). Codes, like locks, are numbers games, as well as language-games. "Neither have I [time for games]. Believe me," the Director tells the actress playing Anne, then adding the anxious question, "Can you hear a whistling noise?" The viewer hears nothing as another deaf actress signing "fear" to her audience of deaf children at the start of the film instructs them to do. "From the ceiling. Soon, you'll be able to smell it," the Director says in the knowledge that gas is a silent killer (except for the delivery system, the medium) that realistically sells death to an audience that can't hear it. Only a synestheliac actress or spectator could smell a sound.<sup>94</sup> The actress appears to be growing light-headed, as light as that blue sky seen on a

label, which the actor Jannings claimed to really exist; as light as the blue-sky drop ceiling in *The Way of the World*; as light as the color white and equally non-transparent. Her mind is, perhaps, approaching transparency. She is no longer behind the curtain; she is behind the medium, behind herself. “The impression that the transparent medium makes is that something lies *behind* the medium” (ROC §19). Is the stage or the film transparent in this case, and what is the real actor, if not a medium, though not a fortuneteller? Has the actress forgotten the rules of the language-game? Is this just a test? Is she really afraid or just acting the part?

ANNE (*now desperate, gasping, grasping her throat and crying*) Stop, please. (*Leaning in towards the camera in close-up*) Let me out! Please!

DIRECTOR: You’re wasting our time.

ANNE (*trying to bargain with her tormentor, the mad director*) What do I have to do?

DIRECTOR: Show me your true face.

ANNE (*desperate, uncomprehending*) What?

DIRECTOR: Your true face.

ANNE: What do you mean? What do you want?

DIRECTOR: I want to see your true face. Not your lies, nor your tricks. A true expression.

ANNE (*raising her voice*): What do I have to do? (*now shouting*) What do I have to do?

DIRECTOR: Be spontaneous. React to what’s happening.<sup>95</sup>

ANNE: How?

[Scene]

“The difficulty,” Wittgenstein said, “is to realize the groundlessness of our believing” (OC §166), which the actress’s situation, locked inside a scene she could play if she knew what, if anything, she could believe represents. In his *Meditations on Philosophy*, Descartes spoke of the deceiver hypothesis, which “questions the existence of the corporeal world by appeal to the possibility of unknown, mental faculties” which Descartes would rule out given that he believed in “the transparency of the mind—the thesis that there is nothing in the mind of which we are not aware.”<sup>96</sup> The actress perversely plays the Director’s role in order to justify her performance behavior of incapacity, of not being able to leave the stage, the scene, because the make-believe door is locked and she has swallowed the key-code—“I-N-C-A-P-A-C-I-T-Y”—she will not allow to become transparent in her mind. Incapacity allows us to hear a door when it is un-knocked upon, to hear “door” when it is unspoken; to detect a smell trapped inside a three-walled room that sings the performance anxiety song, “Me room, it has three corners / Three corners has me

room / And if it hadn't three corners / It would not be me room." The song is a round. The actor who denies himself control over the power of illusion rehearses this very denial as a performance behavior. "*If you have a room which you do not want certain people to get into, put a lock on it for which they do not have the key. But there is no point in talking to them about it, unless of course you want them to admire the room from outside!*" Of course, the actress cannot hear this, because I am speaking these lines inside my head.

## Chapter 5



# Rules of the Game

Here the fundamental fact is that we lay down rules, a technique, for playing a game, and that then, when we follow the rules, things do not turn out as we had assumed. So that we are, as it were, entangled in our own rules.

—Wittgenstein (*PI* §125)

Whereas any fact can be described falsely, the rules that make it possible to describe the facts cannot be described in any way at all.

—Donna M. Summerfield, “Fitting Versus Tracking:  
Wittgenstein on Representation”

Wittgenstein’s discussion of rule-giving and rule-making has less to do with legality or ethics than with the context of particular language-games, (pre) determined by individual prejudice as preference.<sup>1</sup> But in doing so, isn’t the artist, together with those engaging with the rule-giving functions of some mental incapacity (including many artists and criminals), following rules in a fuller sense than those who are not compelled (except by external mandate) to do so? Certainly, rule-following is a compulsion, the obsessive-compulsive says. And if this obsessive-compulsive is an artist, so too is interpretation of the rules. And yet, the rule-following that constitutes mastery in the artist does not necessarily present as mastery in the mentally impaired, whose intention (where his incapacity does not negate the possibility of intention) is to achieve a self-mastery that will continue to elude him.

Like Wittgenstein, whom he cites as an influence on his work, filmmaker Michael Haneke is an anatomist and grammarian as regards the languages of human thought and behavior. In particular and again like Wittgenstein, he is interested in testing the limits and models of mis/communication in relation to the irritant of pain.<sup>2</sup> More than this, though, Haneke insistently pushes his finger into the wound of fact, consistently locating the pressure point where

fact is most vulnerable to transparent performance, an irony that gives his works their disturbing tone. *Funny Games* (1997) begins innocently enough, with a doughy blond young man named Peter asking to borrow some eggs from Anna, who along with her husband Georg and young son Georgie are vacationing in their summer home in a bucolic lakeside setting. The eggs, Peter says, are for a neighbor and family friend, and because the young man is neatly groomed and polite, Anna invites him into her house. Peter (purposely) drops and breaks the eggs Anna lent him, an interruptive, story-frame-breaking event precipitating a variant form of showing and telling that recalls Wittgenstein's proposition: "In the moment of event-sighting/citing rupture, the event which takes the place of an expectation, answers it: i.e., the replacement constitutes the answer, so that no question can arise whether it really is the answer. Such a question would mean putting the *sense* of a proposition in question" (*PR* §29). In the process, the loss of representational integrity both as to space ("the expectation must be in the same space as what is expected" [*PR* §28]) and to time ("Causality rests on an observed uniformity" [*PR* §26]), like the loss of life that will follow, is regarded as being acceptable in the name of a transparency that "bears a certain resemblance to" fact. Peter and his dominant partner Paul are merely transparent names, blank, dispassionate rule-breaking/remaking agents of narrative minus fingerprints, as the white gloves they wear over their presumably soft hands that fictionally cannot hold eggs suggest.

Peter mock-apologizes for the egg drop, reciting for Anna's sense of protocol the cliché that he has two left hands. A second drop, this one of Anna's mobile phone into a sink full of water, makes a mockery of the first drop and his attendant apology/explanation, his two left hands having functioned according to a rational design advertising a false incapacity. "This is simply what I do," (*PI* §217) Peter's "incapacity" performance behavior tells Anna, which is true and untrue in relation to what Wittgenstein identified as the complexity of logical propositions (i.e., Peter is not incapacitated but he "does" incapacity). Peter's performed incapacity enacts a nihilism that is beyond doubt but also resistant to "fact" for those who cannot bring themselves to believe what they see, or who cannot in their minds see transparency. The intruder's nihilism paraphrases Silvia Lanzetta's nihilist characterization of Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*: "Doubt about good and evil can show within a world-picture framework which is not a conventional point of departure, as the element in which arguments occur."<sup>3</sup> Haneke's perverse intuition regarding Wittgenstein leads him to recast rule-making into nihilistic performance behavior and rule-following into the disintegration of the self, incrementally eroding the capacity to define "fact." Wittgenstein was aware that misunderstanding and misapplying his concept of rules and games could have consequences but had no idea how dire they might be.

The system of rules determining a calculus thereby determines the "meaning" of its signs too. (*PR* §152)

In his parsing of Descartes, Nancy wrote, “the experience of doubt exceeds the soul and in the process inverts the logic of inside and outside.”<sup>4</sup> Anna cannot bring herself to act upon her suspicion that Peter may well be an intruder exhibiting the performed manner(s) (behaviors) of a guest. She fears that suspecting the new arrival would confirm her bourgeois ordinariness and prejudice and so she performs compliance she herself distrusts. Her own bourgeois drama disenables her from reading performance behavior that has no apparent motive and that conforms to no one tonal register. She doesn’t know what to expect. “Expectation, so to speak,” wrote Wittgenstein, “prepares a yardstick for measuring the event when it comes and what’s more, in such a way that it will be possible to measure the one with the other, whether the event coincides with the expected gradation mark or not.” Expectation is a mechanism for factual comparison, and there is an expectation of what that mechanism should be. “It is, say, as if I guess a man’s height by looking at him, saying ‘I believe he’s 5 ft 8 in’ and then set about measuring him with a tape measure. Even if I don’t know how tall he is, I still know that his height is measured with a tape measure and not a weighing machine” (*PR* §33). But what if the man who needs measuring has hidden your tape measure and replaced it with a weighing machine? “It only makes sense to give the length of an object if I have a method for finding the object—since otherwise I cannot apply a yardstick to it” (*PR* §36).

Mac Wellman says, “all true actors only approach the front door by the back.” He appears to be speaking of the actuality of performance but also its truth claims, its reality effects, the show that the suspecting (expectant)/unsuspecting (unknowing) audience takes at face value.<sup>5</sup> The well-spoken young men in their non-threatening boyishly white short pants feign walking on eggs, “trying to be careful,” outwardly to be polite but inwardly to be discreet, the former being a performance behavior concealing the latter until their behavior becomes as purposely indiscreet. They are “careful” not to stain the family carpet so as not to leave trace evidence that is questionable as to meaning, especially insofar as the unspoken stage direction of their not-doing reads: “You cannot use language to go beyond the possibility of evidence” (*PR* §33). That is, language and evidence inhabit the same logical space (in Cora Diamond’s paraphrase of a Tractarian argument): “we become clear what our sentences mean by becoming clear what place within logical space they determine.”<sup>6</sup> Peter’s faux-accidental second egg drop logically relates to the first and to the sentence “I have two left hands,” while confirming that logic cannot know what to expect going forward. Even in performance, there is no illusion of the *second* time. The un/expectedness of repetition outside acknowledgment of “fact” that a game is already being played according to its own rules continues to shield the family’s expectations of further repetition as a form of dis/continuity. This failure to transfer expectancy to the game allows the family to be shocked by each new un-expectancy that is, in fact, a reiteration of the same event.

Egg splatter is shockingly (unexpectedly) replaced by blood splatter on the movie screen's metonymic television set. The "real-time" slowing down of time inside the film following Georgie's death (it's his arterial blood-splatter that we see) gives the screen time to read our spectatorial incapacity as we just sit there keeping (real) time—counting, obsessing over counting, and trying to parse visual grammar now that the rule-givers have temporarily left the scene of the crime (although the scene persists as spectatorial aberration inside the surprised narrative frame). The intruders disengage rules from expectancy, seeing from reacting where convention has been irretrievably broken. Peter and Paul's nominal first impression of goodness (as Christ's apostles of good neighborliness) has been peeled back to reveal the archetypal nihilism of the animated Tom and Jerry and Beavis and Butthead, which are their later articulated identities. We have only a formal metric for archetypal character, as we do for convention, a structural and not a moral expectation.

Wittgenstein's proposition, "the concept of distance is given immediately in the structure of visual space" (*PR* §208), may be applied to the cine-logic of bystanding that our surrogates Anna and George enact. Anna's failure to warn her neighbors of the deadly intruders who will be visiting them next acknowledges that their gaming is fair within the structure of rule-following, even in an aberrant form.<sup>7</sup> Anna must be true to the game, because the game is true to itself. The sadistic games the captive family plays are "funny" in that they compel us to acknowledge how well we tolerate our own incapacity. Writing after heart transplant surgery, Jean-Luc Nancy identified the intruder as an alien body that is first of all "foreign to thought"; and yet writing within his incapacity adopts intrusion as a function, making its foreignness less a fact than a complaint, a performance behavior, an affect of pain. The heart-death of the patient and that of Haneke's morally evacuated spectator is a near enough match not to have this transplant rejected.<sup>8</sup> As anxiously incapacitated L. B. Jefferies has already illustrated, by watching we make ourselves sick, in that our sickness is a function of our making in the form of watching (and of writing). Intrusion as an external complaint is a performance behavior designed to call attention to the incapacity of an internal (i.e., mental) strangeness that we will not let leave. Paul suddenly turns toward the camera and winks, indicating that he knows this about us. He challenges us to bet on how much longer the family will live. We cannot acknowledge taking the bet but we are already running the numbers in our minds. Chair-wheeling himself further into the darkness, Jefferies is even more fascinated by a narrative that conventional wisdom says has gone so horribly wrong but his hiddenness tells him is so horribly right.

"The complexity of philosophy," wrote Wittgenstein, "is not in its matter, but in our tangled understanding" (*PR* §2). A proposition in which "philosophy" is inclusive of language and "our tangled understanding" encodes both the reader's and language's own incapacity. "He has done so and so" and "He

can do so and so” say only what time makes possible (*BB* 49), a thought that Wittgenstein immediately subverts by considering the Nietzschean proposition, “what can happen must have happened before” (*BB* 49). “The future,” says Wittgenstein, “[appears] less existent than the past,” by which he means, “though the past events do not really exist in the full light of day, they exist in an underworld into which they have passed out of the real life; whereas the future events do not even have this shadowy existence” (*BB* 56). Every time you open a door, some measure of time passes through. But where does it go? “‘Where does the flame of a candle go to when it’s blown out?’ ‘Where does the light go to?’ ‘Where does the past go to?’” (*BB* 56). How can we expect to gain our footing and recognize our (in)capacity in the present when we can only know time as an unexpected passage? The intruders shift a shotgun back and forth in a nursery rhyming game of the one *not* after “next” will, at least for the moment, not be killed. Paul says, “We want to offer the audience something . . . and show what we can do, right?” “What we can do” recalls Wittgenstein’s “This is simply what I do” and together with his “what can happen must have happened before,” speaks to performance’s tangled temporality, its ontological dis-ease. When the hosts balk at playing this game, Paul’s “We’re not up to feature film length yet” and his live-audience-directed “Is that enough?” point to the sickening horror of what the present demands. Suddenly, Anna grabs the momentarily unattended shotgun and shoots Peter, killing him. Paul quickly grabs the remote control for the TV and presses the reverse button, which causes the film we are watching to run backwards to just before Anna grabbed the gun, which this time Paul grabs first and kills George. Reenactment tell us that “what can happen must have happened before” and also “the future appears less existent than the past,” as the event spools not in real time but around a spool.

As Paul later prepares to throw a bound and gagged Anna off her sailing boat into the even colder medium of the Deep, he speaks suggestively of thermodynamics’ three laws, parsed here from C. P. Snow’s reading of Lord Kelvin’s theory:

- 1) You cannot win (that is, you cannot get something for nothing, because matter and energy are conserved). Wittgenstein wrote, “I would almost like to say: It is true that in the game there isn’t any ‘true’ or ‘false’ but then in arithmetic there isn’t any ‘winning’ or ‘losing’” (*PG*, “Foundations of Mathematics,” §293).
- 2) You cannot break even (you cannot return to the same energy state, because there is always an increase in disorder; entropy always increases). It is not just that the intruders increase disorder, they do so within a closed system, a language-game.
- 3) You cannot get out of the game (because absolute zero is unattainable). Following their son’s murder and the intruders’ exit, Anna does run for help, but after hiding from one passing truck, fearing that it is

her tormentors, she stops a second vehicle, which *is* transporting Peter and Paul, who then return to her house to finish the job, the work, the game they had started. (Re)cycling is the logical economy of obsessive-compulsive narrative disorder.<sup>9</sup>

Meanwhile, figurative “Lord Kelvin” (its namesake having also invented maritime instruments for measuring depth, distance, and direction at sea) is dragging underwater Anna’s soon-to-be dead body, which is approaching maximum temperature and informational/communication loss culminating in entropy, the shutdown of a closed system, end of play. Outliving her family, Anna feels her bound body’s constraint, the shame of her body’s persistence, its weight—speaking only of itself, solipsised by intrusion’s psychosis. In the “body-to-body struggle with language,” Anna “never stops *selving*. Her body “*exscribes itself as body*: being spaced, it’s a dead body; being expelled, it’s a filthy body.”<sup>10</sup>

Wittgenstein maintained that “continuity in our visual field consists in not seeing discontinuity” (*PR* §137), the unseeing of an image’s inherent unreliability. Alain Badiou maintains the image is the self-confessed truth of cinema, its thought being a “deception of vision.” The only two options then are to look at or to look away, but the latter ruins any “chance of attaining Ideas.” Film spectatorship asks us to make sense of image, even though this “sense” entertains its own logic at the expense of what philosophy teaches us logic is. What the intruders do makes no sense outside their language system, language-game. Saboteurs of expectancy, there is nothing left to expect, so their conversation concerning whether film proves that fiction is real goes nowhere—it just breaks off, elliptically (“Why . . . ?”), bereft of language-gaming and beyond measure. The intruders are exposed as agents of no known dispatch, Pinteresque dumb waiters, unable to say where continuity ends and discontinuity begins—Wittgenstein’s “Which is the last dot in the first sequence and which the first dot in the second?” (*BB* 67)—not knowing enough to be even self-deceived. But Paul’s final frozen-intersubjective look into the camera lets us elliptically know, it is our self-acknowledgment that is incomplete, incapacitated as we are by performance behavior which we refuse to stop and from which we cannot look away.

### Infraread

**I am  
what lies outside language and therefore cannot  
be understood. Cannot be understood,  
do you understand? You are all housed in  
your unhousedness.**

—Wellman, *Antigone*

Mac Wellman wrote a play about an “elegant, *very capable looking* [my emphasis] and quite green” cabbage on a table. *Bitter Bierce; or the Friction We Call Grief* (2003) takes its form from Ambrose Bierce’s *The Devil’s Dictionary* (1911), an indexed satirical commentary on his day. A table too is both a measurable text and a means of indexical measurement. And the cabbage on the table can be unpeeled so as to wear away its capability, its capacity, along with its elegance contingent upon integrity and its (“quite green”) color. This amounts to undoing verification itself, of the object and the description of the object that is entered into language as evidence. (“What would incline me to call anything a table?” [PI §570].) Wellman defines his cabbage as “a familiar kitchen vegetable about as large/and as wise as a human head,” much as a forensic pathologist might atomize a man’s brain upon his operating table.<sup>11</sup> Except in Wellman’s case, a table-stage and the cabbage-head contest what language means to a theater of “Apparence,” Wellman’s term for appearance’s “is not” (“apparence” being the untranslated French word for “appearance”). “‘Apparence’ is,” Karinne Keithley Syers states, “Wellman’s translation of Kantian ‘apperception’ in which something new comes to be known, or perceived.” Wittgenstein, of course, called this “aspect seeing,” or “seeing-as.”<sup>12</sup>

Wellman’s table gambit recalls Wittgenstein’s table-reading of secondary and primary sense, the former depending upon the latter in the same way that “seems” (“appearance”) depends upon “is” (“apparence”). “One could,” for example, “consider a red coloured label a primary sign of the colour red, the word ‘red’ a secondary sign” (PG §§46–47).<sup>13</sup> A synaesthete’s mind, though, can transform “red” into the letter “A,” revealing a difference in seeing and understanding that language does not inherently (i.e., without context) express but also does not admit to not expressing. Setting aside the synaesthetic manifest, Wittgenstein asks “can [and “why shouldn’t”] a green label be a *sample* of red?” effectively using the example of a table (chart) in which a green label is placed beside a red one being read “differently” by one man than another, red to red or from red to green, horizontally or diagonally across. The same man who “mistakenly” connects red to green will not necessarily bring a green book when he is ordered to bring a red one. “It is clear that a sample is not used like a word (name). And an ostensive definition, a table, which leads us from words to samples, is used differently from a table which replaces one name with another” (PG §49). How do we, then, define degrees or circumstances of arbitrariness, and does the arbitrary alter meaning or cease to be meaningful? “Is the word ‘red’ enough to enable one to look for something red? Does one need a memory image to do so?” (PG §53). Language-reading is, after all, model behavior, in which analogy can give way to disanalogy, and we measure and recognize interpretation by means of comparison to a body of rules.<sup>14</sup> Even in the frequent cases where the origin and exact nature of the rules are unknown to us, we engage in “rule-governed activity.” Paradoxically, such activity, despite being

rule-based, cannot function absolutely, like a rule, and can be questioned as to its application in any particular case. Wittgenstein writes, in reference to the table: “It’s there, like a field, with paths leading through it: but I can also cut across—Each time I apply the chart I make a fresh transition. The transitions aren’t made, as it were, once for all the chart” (PG §52). Therein lies the opportunity of *The Difficulty of Crossing a Field*.

PRESIDING MAGISTRATE: A fixed rule.

ANDREW: A fixed rule.

PRESIDING MAGISTRATE: What do you suppose he meant by that?<sup>15</sup>

Wellman’s *The Difficulty of Crossing a Field* (1997), based on a story by Ambrose Bierce, tells about the disappearance from a field of a planter named Mr. Williamson, late (or perhaps not late, as in not dead) of Selma, Alabama, of which little can be recalled or retold. The strangeness of this state of affairs functions as estrangement in the context of a play whose formal structure is configured as a series of “tellings” that are allied to making scenes (*showings*). The play inscribes Wittgensteinian wonder as an index of certainty and doubt (“wonder wonder wonder thing / Wonder what and wonder sing . . . Wonder what I am . . . Alone with the wonder of not knowing.” Also, “I am very certain I cannot recall”).<sup>16</sup> This sense of wonder is predicated upon the proposition that a man who was last seen crossing an empty field could have either disappeared from view or else not have been there in the first place. “Continuity in our visual field,” we recall Wittgenstein saying, “consists in not seeing discontinuity” (PR §137). So too, if a field is simultaneously a table, a chart, and if “each time I apply the chart I make a fresh transition,” a man seen crossing a field might either disappear or else not be there in the first place. What, after all, *is* the first place?

The ambiguity of mis/interpretation plays off against the apparent factuality of the inquest being conducted (from behind a table) to determine whether Mr. Williamson, the man who vanished, is alive or dead. Or, like Schrödinger’s cat, perhaps both? (“It is not the purpose of this narrative/to answer that question,” the Presiding Magistrate at the inquest would say, as the inquest is by nature narrowly focused on answering but one question.)<sup>17</sup> The play’s cast includes “a CHORUS of slaves, field hands, and other black folk on the Williamson estate,” and one soon wonders (in a second verb[al] sense of the word “wonder”) whether Williamson is here meant to be a stand-in for the similarly initialized and syllabic Wittgenstein, doubling down on the play’s stated intuition, “Everything that goes away, and everything / that appears to disappear doesn’t really.”<sup>18</sup> There is, in fact, says Wittgenstein, no past fact, only memory and evidence that serve as questionable proofs of (past) life. “It seems,” writes Cora Diamond regarding Wittgenstein’s proposition, “that we merely say things in the past tense when certain present conditions are fulfilled, but we never have, cannot have, the fact that would genuinely stand

behind the saying and make what we say true. For there are no past facts; ‘the past is not and cannot be.’”<sup>19</sup> As with time, Wellman’s splitting and recombining of nouns and verbs in the name of “wonder” splits the only apparently seamless wholeness of rule-governed representational form to expose it not only as illusion but as an allusion to something else that we only think we know because we recognize it as being real.

The difficulty of crossing a field speaks to the ways in which history can be read and misread as language, subject to erasure, interpretation, and “misregard”—an invented noun/verb introduced in a more immediate context of no(t)-naming (“I think something that / don’t have no name”). “The mystery of Selma, Alabama, is: what was, isn’t.”<sup>20</sup> This apparently simple statement of change and negative comparison contains a tense change that recalls several points made by Wittgenstein that help us shift focus from history to logic, from story to proposition: (1) “Language can only say those things that we can only imagine otherwise” (*PR* §54). The purposeful awkwardness, the constructedness of Wellman’s syntax in his sentence (“is: what was, isn’t”) speaks to its meaning lying not in other days so much as in other ways, otherwise, that is, alternative thinking, seeing, and speaking. (2) “I do not see the past, only a picture of the past. But how do I know it’s a picture of the *past*?” (*PR* §50). This statement casts a new light upon the phrase “what was, isn’t,” allowing us to question the presupposition of a past upon which belief in the possibility of change is based. This is one of Wittgenstein’s many “how do I know” propositions that hypothesize belief. We cannot legitimately cross a field once the possible groundlessness of belief has been glimpsed. Viewing is likewise undermined as “the mystery of Selma, Alabama,” which may only be a picture and “the mystery” is not of a place but of the picture itself. “How do I know it’s a picture of the *past*?” And if it’s not, then there is either no or new meaning to the phrase “is: what was, isn’t.” (3) “A phenomenon (specious present) contains time, but isn’t in time. Whereas language unwinds in time” (*PR* §69). This proposition sights Wellman’s representational field (projected as/on a stage), which is not only what his play describes by way of impersonation, but what his play *is*. The speciousness of representation is at odds with the perspicuous language that Wellman (after Wittgenstein) employs to capture it.<sup>21</sup> But capture being impossible in a state of language-fascination, the proposition of the play and its sentences default to language itself, which both unwinds temporally via tenses (“is,” “was”) and infrastructurally to express grammatical relationship as temporal affect (“is: what was, isn’t”). Language is here not measuring time; it is measuring itself. (4) “The specification of the ‘here’ must not pre-judge *what* is here” (*PR* §98). An inquest into Williamson’s disappearance by its own formal definition (of the word “inquest”) must find for death, only without a body, so that “is: what was, isn’t” speaks to the wider “mystery of Selma, Alabama” as a place that appears not to be what it is. What authority can be claimed for rule in the erasure of wholeness? And what

authority can wholeness have claimed in the first place, except as a mode of representation?

CHORUS:

We are building a nation.  
 We are building a nation.  
 We are building a nation.  
 We are building an erasure.<sup>22</sup>

What is here being told and who is it that does the telling—a chorus of the disenfranchised, excluded from the whole and so excluding wholeness—exposes the impossibility of (the) rule being meaningful, no matter how many times it is repeated (let this passive sentence construction serve as a purposeful weakening of the claim to possibility). Such repetition will only and (in fact) inevitably enable the noun to expose its relationship to the verb that acts upon it as being built upon a groundless foundation (and, as the case of Mr. Williamson attests, a figureless ground). You cannot, as Wittgenstein argued, lay a proposition “against reality like a ruler” (*PG* §85). Nor can you lay a system of what appears to be a series of logically related propositions against a single measuring rod, as Wittgenstein later maintained.<sup>23</sup>

To begin with, a table is not always a table, at least not (just) in the way that you mean it or that you think it is meant. Of course, Wittgenstein understood this in terms of language, but he did not have to show what this knowledge enabled and dis-enabled beyond telling about it. He could cite a table as a measurable object, but not an object placed upon a stage, where all distance is troubled (by compression and abstraction) and with it, all measurement. The difference between Wittgenstein and Wellman or Foreman, for that matter, is that the playwright-directors philosophize in languages that are stage-worthy. Foreman specially designed his own prop tables, measuring the unfathomable distance between them and other objects with the visible aid of tautly strung strings to allow the spectator to read space and spatial objects across a field that the strings make visible, albeit in pictorial terms (i.e., as/in a picture). These physical lines analogize to sentences that likewise present themselves as/not-as such: “I do not believe that logic can talk about sentences [propositions] in any other than the normal sense in which we say, ‘There’s a sentence written here’” (*PR* §18). Wittgenstein here concedes that telling must, in some sense, accede to being shown, with the sentence becoming a line about a sentence: “There’s a sentence written here.” So, although Wittgenstein gave up on the idea of model-making, the logic of Foreman stringing space along as if it were language would be visible and readable to him. The stage provides the opportunity to test philosophical language and the agreement of its constituent elements (e.g., nouns and verbs) as parts of speech/speaking parts in ways that Wittgenstein could only imagine.

MRS. WILLIAMSON: . . . I have never seen nor heard of Mr. Williamson. Nor of Mrs. Williamson since.  
 Something more than a mere disappearance.  
 More than a mere disappearance.  
 Than a mere disappearance.  
 A mere disappearance.

THE WILLIAMSON GIRL (*half hidden, whispering*):  
 Someone or something knows  
 something someone or something  
 will not tell.  
 No one knows what telling  
 is the one someone or (something)  
 will not tell.<sup>24</sup>

Williamson's Mrs. loses her identity the moment her husband disappears, making his vanishing "more than a mere disappearance," making it into something that takes names (in an alternative sense than the rule of Law) and the other linguistic and categorical markers with it. Disappearance is itself a form of non-differentiation that spreads into everything and not just something or someone else. Disappearance declassifies, but not in the sense of making less secret, only less discretely striated, like the pitch of a stage-raked field. Disappearance creates a strange class f(r)iction in the womb of the slave narrative. Slavery is the play's immediate socio-historical context, which here functions chorally as a kind of metatext of the non-differentiated, un-demarcated "something someone or something." There is much more of this to tell, but "it is not the purpose of this narrative/to answer that question."

It is, I think, telling that at the beginning of the *Sixth Telling*, just after the Presiding Judge declared him to be dead and "*the Stage world cracks open to reveal the vast openness of Mr. Williamson's field*, the late-not-now-or-not-yet-late Selma planter crosses the stage, "heading diagonally to *upstage right*" (my emphasis).<sup>25</sup> This sighting/citing returns us to Wittgenstein's differently read "table" and to the new meanings that are produced therein. Much in the same way that Mrs. Williamson's saying as regards her husband, "He is gone!" relates to both death and disappearance, with the former affirming the latter but the latter not necessarily confirming the former and in fact making confirmation impossible minus some kind of evidence or remainder, the stuttering "is" in the question "Is you is, or is you ain't?" hints at an ungrammatical logic that allows questioning to syntactically persist.<sup>26</sup> "You cannot use language to go beyond the possibility of evidence" (*PR* §33), Wittgenstein said, but you have to know how to read and what to read as evidence, and here the philosopher allows you some latitude to make up your own mind. Thus, his proposition, "A good reason is one that looks *like this*" (*PI* §483), gives potentially conflicting evidence based upon citation. Language

may say exactly and in exactly what needs to be said, and so must police and even cite itself for occasionally giving ground to the spectral claims of simile as self-representation. Language as language double defines “language as being language” and “language in the capacity of language.”<sup>27</sup> With this in mind, propositions like “Logic must take care of itself” (*TLP* §5.473) and “Language has to speak for itself” (*PG* §2 and §27) begin to sound therapeutic.

Ghost, noun.

The outward and visible sign of an inward fear.<sup>28</sup>

In the *Tractatus* (§5.641) Wittgenstein writes: “The philosophical I is not the man, not the human body or the human soul of which psychology treats, but the metaphysical subject, the limit—not a part of the world.” The Ghost (perhaps oxymoronically) materializes this subject-limit while also touching and awakening the philosophical “I” of man that is too often obscured by the more directly analyzable psychological “I” with its demonstrative manner and hidden motive.<sup>29</sup> In its immaterial figuration, the noun “Ghost” gives up the ghost of the noun as conveyor of language’s naming function and means of knowing the way of the “real” world. The Ghost dis-analogizes the figure to the world by folding incorporeality into nominal form. The etymological presence of the human figure is rendered suspect, not knowing or being able to say whether the figure is here or there, is “present” as called, as acknowledged.

Ambrose Bierce was such a ghost, disappearing into Mexico, like so many outlaws in the United States before him who fled beyond its legal jurisdiction and often into anonymity; the closest thing there is to disappearance without visiting Colonus blind and in rags. Wellman’s Bierce in turn says that former President Rutherford B. Hayes was so anonymous, so invisible, that he could (like the historical Bierce) be anywhere, everywhere. The irony here is that Hayes by virtue of his political office and Bierce by virtue of his profession as a newspaperman and cultural gadfly were socially the most visible of men. Of his own celebrity, Wellman’s Bierce notes: “I am almost disposed to con- / sider myself the most famous of authors. I / have pretty nearly ceased to be ‘discovered,’ / but my notoriety as an obscurian may / be said to be worldwide and apparently / everlasting.” Here the irony is compounded by “Bierce’s” linked references to being “pretty nearly ceased to be ‘discovered’” and to his “obscurian” tendencies—alluding, no doubt, to his language-use, opinion-making, and perception—which translates his incomprehensibility into non-discovery.<sup>30</sup> You cannot find something if you don’t know what you’re looking for; you cannot know what you don’t understand.

Like “Ghost,” “Anonymity” is a spectral form of Wellman’s “Appearance,” which is only somewhat at odds with its designation as a “noun,” that is, as a part of speech, or the speaking of that which cannot be known or shown,

to borrow from Wittgenstein's famous Tractarian resolution of a text that cannot be finally resolved. Be it resolved that we, the community of \_\_\_\_\_, will henceforth call this word a "noun," to make it stand in for, as in take the place of, that thing of which we cannot speak (e.g., fear). There is, necessarily, in this decision, a measure of agreed upon self-delusion, as Wellman illustrates:

Gravitation, noun.

The tendency of all bodies to approach one another with a strength proportioned to the quantity of matter they contain—the quantity of matter they contain being ascertained by the strength of their tendency to approach one another. This is a lovely and edifying illustration of how science, having made A the proof of B, makes B the proof of A.<sup>31</sup>

Actually, this is an example of the illusory proofs that result from circular reasoning, one of the free habits of false reasoning named "the Münchhausen Trilemma" after the fabulist baron. If a definition proves nothing and further reveals the pretzel logic that is necessary to communicate meaning, then the word it is seeking to define (in this case, fittingly, "Gravitation") spins out of any logical orbit, becoming instead an obsessive thought loop that defamiliarizes or "makes strange" the word-object that the definition sought to make familiar, or else to confirm in its familiarity. The failure of this task allows word and part of speech to split off from itself, its meaning from its function. The mind can no longer rely on a certain rehearsed gravitational pull, a habit of thought, and starts cycling in search of new meanings and of new ways in which to mean. On its way back around, the mind crosses paths with Haneke's two intruders parsing the scientific theories of Lord Kelvin.

DICTIONARY, n. A malevolent literary device for cramping the growth of a language and making it hard and inelastic. This dictionary, however, is a most useful work.<sup>32</sup>

The hardness and inelasticity of language of which Bierce wrote is precisely what thought, in Wittgenstein's writing, bumps up against in the form of a limit. But this limit, Wittgenstein argues, is often invisible to us as such. If Wittgenstein were given to definition, which he surely was not, the word "limit" for him would involve not seeing, minus the heightened consciousness of not knowing ("what another world it / all is. How even the most commonplace and / familiar objects take on another character").<sup>33</sup> Quite possibly ("Actually, adverb. / Perhaps; possibly"), Bierce, who received a bullet wound to the head while fighting in the Civil War, and who suffered from periodic

blackouts thereafter, took the role of the wounded actor, went off-script and, like the hanged protagonist of his celebrated short story “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” (1891) (with whom he is elided at the end of Wellman’s play), went missing in a dream without knowing that it was a dream and not knowing either that what was real was the dying that the dream replaced. (“Really, adverb. / Apparently”).<sup>34</sup>

Both Williamson and Bierce reappear in the plays whose theatrical eventfulness study disappearance but neither one of them shares Kaspar’s desire “to be a person like somebody else [i.e., he] was once”—perhaps given a more heightened awareness of the tenuous grip their theatrical appearance has on once having been, or having been only once. Unlike Kaspar, Williamson and Bierce are not so much bound by the limits of language as they are cognizant of language being bound to describe what it cannot, namely how the theatrical event manages to invoke appearance, disappearance, and reappearance at the same time, within the same time frame. And this frame effectively destroys time.

The fact of performance is irrefutable, so this is not at issue here. But the fact, which I have already likened to a wound (the “likened” being a sign of comparison or resemblance to), is suspect, especially as regards performance. Wellman makes this clear in his splintered-fluid take on Sophocles’s *Antigone*, in which the THREE FATES double as the THREE FACTS, girls wearing hats instead of masks, “each wrapped up in her own / fabric. (Fact, here again becoming [physical] iteration of the [en]rapt / wrapped language-as-language trope.) Each carries her own dumb, expen- / sive wand. Day. Night. Death and crumpled / paper.” Facts, quite simply, fail to perform. “Each fact denies another. All / change hats. Nothing works. Nothing works.”<sup>35</sup> There are no absolute origins or endings in Wellman’s play (“End of play. / Almost”), no measure of certitude in the forms he inherits (e.g., Greek tragedy) or even in the forms he invents, the worlds for which he sets the rules of the game (“The three / girls played all the parts, with hats instead / of masks [well, maybe one mask is allowed].”<sup>36</sup> What is at work is an atomization of what is truly performable as a thing of value, separating out the heart and mind of “theater” from the calcified corpus of spiritless “theatre” (in Wellman’s spelling-as-symbolic-parsing). Or, as Wellman’s own quasi-begrudgingly physical example cites, the down-market materialization of what that spirit looks like as opposed to what, if anything, it means. So, when Wellman introduces us to his Bierce standing behind his cabbage/head-set(ting) table, he parenthetically comments upon that author’s good looks that have “*something a little apparitional*” about them: “(and why does not the apparition of a suit of clothes sometimes walk abroad without a ghost in it?)”<sup>37</sup> As these remarks are offered in the form of opening stage directions, they are printed in the apparitional font of the *italic*.

Wellman develops the figuration of the ghost as a sop to theatrical representation a bit further on:

A ghost never comes naked: he appears either in a winding sheet or “in his habit as he died.” To believe in him, then, is to believe that not only have the dead the power to make themselves visible after there is nothing left of them, but that the same power inheres in textile fabrics.<sup>38</sup>

The ghost is, then, the intruder that does not so much impose its will as it displays the artifice our fear constructs, the mind’s capacity to cope representationally with what it cannot otherwise conceive of as being truly unknown—or worse still, known personally to us. (“Picture, noun. / A representation in two dimensions of / something wearisome in three.” Likewise: “Hades, noun. / The place where the dead live.”)<sup>39</sup> The ghost haunts the mind where it lives, within the confines of its supposed not-knowingness. So too, too often does the theater, which wraps our cabbage-heads in spectral curtains of false mysticisms of the real that it sets upon its table-stage. The peeling of the cabbage reveals nothing except for the *mise-en-abyme*, the unbreakable if not irreducible limit-wholeness of our theatrical incapacitation that we take on willingly as our own without owning up to what it means.

Bierce’s “Devil’s Dictionary” grew out of his journalistic assignment to comment upon the letter of the news, much as Wellman gave himself the assignment as a playwright to deconstruct the theater upon which drama reports. The motives of the journalist and the dramatist elide in the Wellman-scripted Bierce passage, “The facts about how and when I met Molly Day are lost. There are no letters, no love poems, no story of the meeting or the courting.”<sup>40</sup> At the heart of this passage is the observation that facts/history/the so-called “real” lose clarity—the “when,” for example, bearing weak testimony to the temporal actuality of a meeting with a woman whose surname “Day” would seem to demand a greater specificity (*the* day) than the author can or will provide. This, though, is a false lead, as they say in the newspaper trade. The absence of clarity (perspicuity), like the missing first “e” in Wellman’s alt-realism construct, “Apparence,” being a positive advertisement for absence, the imaginative gap that forms but which is too quickly filled by the truth claims made by unexamined language. Wittgenstein’s therapeutically atomized philosophical propositions speak truth to the lie of such truth claims. In a similar way, both Wellman and Foreman have separated language from stage(d) bodies in order to return embodiedness to words—or as Nancy has written: “A word, so long as it is not absorbed without remainder into a sense, *remains* essentially extended *between* other words, stretching to touch them, though not merging with them: and that’s language as *body*.”<sup>41</sup>

“This body retreats to its own depth—to the depth of Sense—just as sense withdraws all the way to its mortal depth . . . [into] a *black hole*.”<sup>42</sup> Wellman’s plays, such as *Infrared* (2000) and *The Invention of Tragedy* (2005), take the

visual reader down just such a black hole, as deep and dimension-shifting as any Lewis Carroll could fathom. Wellman confesses to being fascinated with holes, and they are ubiquitous in his plays. He cites one book in particular as having been quite useful to him in this regard: Roberto Casati and Archille C. Varzi's *Holes and Other Superficialities*. The book, which contains numerous visual and written configurations of the hole, recalls in its concept-modeling the "projective geometry" that Wittgenstein employed in "Some Remarks on Logical Form" to illustrate the pictorial problematic of analyzing the languages of logical forms. "The point of the analogy," says David G. Stern, "is that a fully analysed language would allow us to reproduce the full variety of logical forms to be found in the world so that they can be taken in at a glance." What Stern is suggesting that Wittgenstein had in mind was, so to speak, a morphological table. The problem is that "ordinary language hides its rules behind a misleadingly simple surface structure and a correspondingly complex set of tacit conventions concerning how its words are to be applied." This reads like Wellman's *Bitter Bierce* table, which is unadorned except for its family resemblance to "notable," "stable," and "acceptable," all words containing the word "table," that I have used in this chapter in discussing the want of simple fact in representation and "the complex set of tacit conventions concerning how [ordinary language's conventions] are to be applied" when they are glimpsed through the curtain of other linguistic mystifications.<sup>43</sup>

*Infrared* begins in Wittgensteinian amazement—"My origin was amazement," says the Kaspar-like protagonist, described in a sentence that digs a hole for/with itself as "an ungainly self in search of itself," not knowing whether his is the actual tale and not "the tail wagging the dog / of some other existence."<sup>44</sup> Ironically, the protagonist is called NARRATOR. One here recalls Wittgenstein's answering a question with a question that he poses to himself (OC §486): "'Do you know or do you only believe that your name is L.W.?' Is that a meaningful question?" ("The meaning of a question is the method of answering it. Tell me *how* you are searching, and I will tell you *what* you are searching for" [PR §118].) One question darkly shadows the other, made darker still (but not into another color) by the interrogation being self-imposed at the point of the self's possible disappearance as a proper name (it having already shrunk to the space and size of an initialed sign). NARRATOR's shadow breaks free from his impersonal third-personhood and breaks into a number of smaller shadows that in turn transform into holes defining a flatland of "nameless bodies of figures and grounds," an Alice-in-Wonderland playing-card stage that resembles, as in *Bitter Bierce*, a table. NARRATOR, for his part, is left shadowless, bereft of a tail/tale, but feeling no less monstrous than before—empty absent, all odd(s) with no end(s).<sup>45</sup>

The black hole that has engulfed NARRATOR in "SCENE [DEPRESSION]" (so named by Wellman), which he calls "this nightmarish cabinet of illusion," is the theatrical corpus "conceived in the anxiety of its [self-]confinement," "the pure darkness of autofiliation."<sup>46</sup> THE OLDEST SHADOW speaks for the

vexed realism that is born of such faux-inward-gazing. When asked what it is doing, THE OLDEST SHADOW replies: "I am keeping all things hinged to the doors and / windows of customary appearance."<sup>47</sup> The shadow says what the shadow does not even know. Descending into the underworld of *Infrared* as a self-named Orpheus in search of his Eurydice, NARRATOR's amazement turns tail on "an ordinary dog" named WOW, a double sign (amazement + the ordinary) that, like Kilroy who lives in and on Tennessee Williams's linguistically double-edged *Camino Real* (and Jack's dog "Toast" in *Funny Bones*) says that Wittgenstein was here. Wittgenstein is the writer of fragments, collections of thoughts and functions and Wellman the writer of holes. Between them is configured a body that carries the weight of its head and the head that carries the weight of its body upon it. Nancy says, "We don't think the body if we don't think of it as weighing." The body, like Wittgenstein's atomized philosophical corpus, is made up of atoms but also, more externally (non-subatomically) of an ensemble of moving parts that are attached to the head, which is (intensifying a theme articulated in other zones of the body) made up almost entirely of holes—"Pupils, nostrils, mouth, ears are all holes, carved flights out of the body."<sup>48</sup> Wellman might have substituted (like Foreman) a potato for the cabbage in *Bitter Bierce*, except then, of course, there would have been too many eyes and with them the homonymic temptation to ascribe as many "I"s to them.

From the tails of dogs in *Infrared* to the "chairs" of cats invoked by the glossolaliac Greek chorus in *The Invention of Tragedy*, Wellman returns to theatrical origins to stare down more than a century's-old fear of convention so as to compel so-called realism to give up the ghost.<sup>49</sup> "A black hat scuttles across the face of the whole [hole] world—a very suspicious black hat," where a tragic mask stricken by what has become of theater and what theater has become might otherwise be. This leaves HARE, an Oedipus surrogate, to wonder, "Is my understanding only blindness to my own lack of understanding?" This is a rhetorical question at this late date, self-evidence of a body that is still as always not-knowing what befalls it yet is sinking under the weight of the fall.<sup>50</sup> Therein lies a tragedy befitting a comic film by Haneke. And Wittgenstein was here too:

If a blind man were to ask me "Have you got two hands?" I should not make sure by looking. If I were to have any doubt of it, then I don't know why I should trust my eyes. For why shouldn't I test my eyes by looking to find out whether I see my two hands? *What* is to be tested by *what*? (Who decides *what* stands fast?)

And what does it mean to say that such and such stands fast?  
(OC §125)

HARE, no stranger to the underground passage commensurate with a hole, is at this very moment bracketed by Wittgenstein, involved in "an inaudible

squabble between the ANSWERER's two hands." Like NARRATOR in *Infrared*, HARE is in search of a lost tale/tail, of a time "when I had been attached to something else," like the shadow gone missing in the darkness that can only be seen under infrared light, like stage directions that can be seen but not heard, stage directions like "*Silence. The sound of not much*" and "*A hush happens. . . .*"<sup>51</sup> HARE, who admits to also being "a Hair of truth" fully capable of severing the tail/tale at any point because it's not real, speaks knowingly of the hole in a speculative logic that enthralls the hole into becoming or at least into perceiving the whole, the communal real in the form of a chorus:

So the sleep of tongue that forces an each to become an all [a chorus] is also the itch of an each to teach the thing to be replaced by an appropriate symbol so that what is symbolized by our speech is the call of the all of our certainty.<sup>52</sup>

One again H[e]AR[E]s in this an echo of Wittgenstein, who could have had Oedipus in mind when he posed the following questions of a man of whom he makes an example:

Could we imagine a man who keeps on making mistakes where we regard a mistake as ruled out, and in fact never encounter one?

E.g., he says he lives in such and such a place, is so and so old, comes from such and such a city, and he speaks with the same certainty (giving all the tokens of it) as I do, but he is wrong.

But what is his relation to this error? What am I to suppose? (OC §67)

What we are to suppose, Wellman suggests, is that there is no certainty (not even for an "answearer," a person of faith), and, as HARE starts to tell us, "Apparently is the parent of reality. And . . . [Freezes]"<sup>53</sup> And with this "And . . .," "Apparence" haunts reality like an intrusive thought, as doubt, inexactness, paraphrase. The chorus, unsupported by any sense or context the modern stage can compose, literally undone by the stage's loss of composure in its presence as some anomalously conventional "apparence," remove their cat masks and affix various tale-bearing suffix-tails to the word "Cat"—"Catastrophe, Catastasis, Cataclysm." This series of eventful words falsifies sequence in history, Catastasis or climax in ancient Greek tragedy having regularly *preceded* catastrophe. This is of little matter and less consequence, though, as the *Blackout* to which this listing leads here signifies only "*End of Play. Almost*"—a near replay of HARE's freezing in the appearance of reality, made mask-like and faceless in the face of the ontological truth and untruth of stage convention.<sup>54</sup> And therein, says HARE, lies what we, not he, would call a paradox:

The tragedy in all this is when we fall out of the all, all we are is an each, even if a peach of an each, an each suspended like a kitten by a single slender hair. A hair so slender it can hardly be seen in the air. A hair so slender it is not the same for all. Each of us suspended by a long slender singular hair. So that we are not the same. We were all the same in the chorus. We are all the same out there, out here in the open air.<sup>55</sup>

Having reemerged from the chorus like the first actor come again, HARE paraphrases Vladimir speaking to Estragon in *Waiting for Godot*, a shaggy dog story and twice-told tale that loses its memory like a tale/tail that has been severed, cut off—“Don’t you remember? When you slept by the tree and were like to go dreadful?”<sup>56</sup> “Catastrophe” is the watchword of *Godot’s* waiting, but in that Wellman has not cited but rather paraphrased Beckett’s play, it is best to recall what Wellman said in this play *about* paraphrase:

Paraphrase misses the point.

Paraphrase imagines the purpose of a repeated action is to get the thing right.

Paraphrase attempts to enforce a certainty where there is none.<sup>57</sup>

Having read his Wittgenstein, Wellman knows that although certainty appears to come after doubt, it is really doubt that comes after certainty, as surely as *Catastasis* now *follows* *Catastrophe*, the only climax left to us being “anti-.”

Rule-based behavior is expectant. Rule-following may precipitate loss of a felt need to look and listen. What kind of rule change would cause a pair of severed feet to fall out of Gogo’s overturned boots in *Godot*, or Orgon to disappear from under the table where he was thought (and seen to be placed) eavesdropping on *Tartuffe*? Perhaps a philosophical one on the order of the question, “What reason have I, now, when I cannot see my toes, to assume that I have five toes on each foot?” (OC §429). When expectancy stops being synonymous with proof, the unexpected presents itself as a new logical condition. Certainty is expectancy’s disguise, expectancy being a seductive act that affirms spectatorial knowledge we only think we have. We are continually warned in Molière’s plays not to succumb to theatrical fakery, and yet, we are made to play the fool who ignores this not good but sound advice. And we do so, because misplaced loyalty, hypochondria, jealousy, miserliness, misanthropy, romantic delusion, and other manners and subsets of comedy’s inherent obsessive-compulsive act are easier for us to take than is tragedy, because comedy, whatever else it is, is death-defying and death is what we ultimately expect.

What if Orgon disappears into the performance of listening, which he has been put under the table to do, and once subsumed by the Voice can no longer be seen? In his short isomorphic play “Vox Clamans in Deserto,” Nancy

imagines various language philosophers poly-vocalizing their acoustic images of the voice—taking place, as voice must take place—on a bare stage that is “brightly lit and resonant,” reminiscent of a Handke-scripted performance venue for Kaspar or some other speech apparatus.<sup>58</sup> Nancy articulates the character “Saussure’s” position that voice and speech are separate entities: “Voice isn’t a performance; it’s something else, something that comes about prior to the distinction between an available language and the spoken performance of a word. . . . It’s like an intimate prelude to language, yet foreign to language itself.” “It is,” the character “Roland Barthes” adds, “a privileged (eidetic) site of difference,” the thing that cannot find a voice with which to speak about itself.<sup>59</sup> The voice, adds “Hegel,” sounding a lot like Foreman, “begins as sound, and sound is a *state of trembling*, an act of oscillation between the consistency of a body and the negation of its cohesion.” Voice, which vexes context in the act of (dis)embodying, “a vibrating singular difference” which hears itself only by keeping silent in an acousmatic (seen but un-cited/un-sited) echo of the *Tractatus*, is the subject of and subject to representationally dyadic thinking about the incomparably same-but-different space of thinking itself.<sup>60</sup> The way out of dyadic thinking is to dig deeper and in doing so to discover the space of the *within* space, which is what Nancy does relative to the voice and Foreman does by extruding VOICE as a character from voice, VOICE as *the* nominal character of voice. Nancy writes: “Voice doesn’t just emerge from an opening but is open in itself, open onto itself. Voice leads onto the voice within it. A voice immediately reveals itself to be a polyphony.”<sup>61</sup>

Foreman’s frequent use of a transparent plexiglass wall, situated where the mythical fourth wall of orthodox (mental) stage representation is, asks what it means to be present *and* distant, like a voice, like the Voice, and its physical referent the absent but present Orgon—to be imbued with a presence that is distance; to be on the one side or the other of this spectral life, on neither one side nor the other but in the end as well as in the beginning, as distance recedes back into presence itself in the face of all the temptations to be otherwise. Except for the purpose of representation, it is irrelevant whether or not Orgon is under the table. The table is not a placeholder, a place to hold Orgon. The table is, as in Wellman’s plays, an index of something else that redefines or absents the rules of play. Wittgenstein expressed the purpose of the *Tractatus* as being:

[to] draw a limit to thinking, or rather—not to thinking but to the expression of thoughts: for, in order to draw a limit to thinking, we should have to think both sides of this limit (we should have to be able to think what cannot be thought). (*TLP* §27)

The missing Orgon is on the other side of the limit of what cannot or can only be thought. Orgon’s under-the-table absence, like Bierce’s and Mr. Williamson’s unaccountable disappearances, restores to us the possibility of not

knowing what disappearance is and so (re)moves the limit. Diamond reminds us that in Wittgenstein's formulation "'p and not-p' is the same sentence as '(p and not-p) and q,' for any sentence, any contradiction is a conjunction 'containing' that sentence."<sup>62</sup> Expectancy is just such a self-contained sentence, in that it sentences the mind to its conventional limit. The sentence "Orgon is here (or not here)" offers proof of nothing but the speaker/auditor's expectancy of what proof is. As Ionesco after Wittgenstein reminded us, all language is foreign and we lack fluency in our own. If a real human foot fell out of Gogo's boot, this apparently illogical severance would activate the boot's tongue in the spectator/auditor's mind to give voice to the vacancy that is the overturned boot's condition. Sometimes you have to see what is not there to understand what not being there means. And sometimes you have to see what spoken language purports to be missing to fully understand the vacancy of representation's conventional claim to capture what seeing is and what is being seen. In this, Wittgenstein, Foreman, and Wellman are Therapeutes.

In Foreman's Voice-activated plays, theater's deathless recycling of binaries (representational markers) is extruded and reformed into a plexiglass wall we can visually but not always mentally see through to: the secret codes that are only demonstratively expressed in what is for most viewers a non-representational form of (Hebrew) lettering; atomized and telegraphic language and secret ceremonial acts replete with alien dance and movement that may either be primordial or else entirely invented. Far more difficult than seeing what has been hidden is seeing hiddenness itself—and this is what Foreman citing stage ontology demands. Everything else the stage shows us is just performance behavior, the pathological acting out of what it cannot get its audience or itself to want to understand. Foreman's stage work recalls Wittgenstein's philosophical telegraphy, his struggle to make whole that which on some level he preferred and intuitively knew to leave broken like a vessel with only its secret(s) intact.<sup>63</sup> Wittgenstein may have abandoned logical atomism, "the thesis that all meaningful discourse can be analyzed into logically independent elementary propositions, for a view on which analysis leads to systems of logical relations propositions," but he never really vanquished from his mind the thought fragment or the thought that the oppositional relationship between whole and fragment spoke to the vibrancy of an unsettled state of thinking.<sup>64</sup> Foreman's own unbalancing act is "a totally polyphonic theater in which all elements work to fragment each other so that the spectator is relatively free from empathy and identification and instead may savor the full 'playfulness' of theatrical elements, even though the subject matter of these plays is anguished and aggressive in the extreme." Foreman's goal in this "has always been to transcend very 'painful' material with the dance of manic theatricality."<sup>65</sup> *Painful theatricality again cites the isomorphic relationship between pain behavior and performance behavior, the pathology of performance.*

Like sleepwalkers following their creator's creatively unconscious lead, Foreman's characters do not so much experience as ontologize action and speech, carrying hieroglyphic stage miniatures suggestive of *tefillin*, small black leather boxes containing *tefillah*, Hebrew Torah prayers written on parchment. One leather box is wound around an upper arm with its leather strap extended down to and around two fingers of the corresponding hand. The other leather strap is wound around the head, as if bandaging a wound, its leather box worn on the forehead like a miner's lamp illuminating the mind or else focusing the mind's light. "I've reached the point, [Foreman's "Mind King"] offered—(*Lights flash and fade*)—where I'm doing too much THINKING about the conclusions of things I'm starting to think about.<sup>66</sup> The problem that Foreman and Wellman cite/sight after Wittgenstein is twofold: (1) to stay inside thought-space, resisting performance's hyper-materialized impulse toward distraction and breaking apart thought into too many things that come to resemble thought less and less; and (2) to not turn thinking into an obsessive-compulsive loop that excludes new thinking as being intrusive, so that the lights that flash (like a new blank page) immediately fade. Fighting "the fascination which forms of expression exert upon us" (*BB* 27) extends not just language to language as an expression of thought but to the illusion that thought is its own expression, thought thinking itself like a "reswallowed alphabet."<sup>67</sup>

The question what kind of activity thinking is is analogous to this: "Where does thinking take place?" We can answer: on paper, in our head, in the mind. None of these statements of locality gives *the* locality of thinking. The use of all these specifications is correct, but we must not be misled by the similarity of their linguistic form into a false conception of their grammar. (*BB* 16, 50, 52)

Wittgenstein mainly discusses the unlocatability of pain, a topic that is very much on theater's mind. We find ourselves alternately looking away from and pointing at the spectacle of a blindness in Oedipus earned as punishment for hubristic thought bearing what Wittgenstein might call a strong "family resemblance" to thought thinking itself, incestuous if only figuratively so. We find ourselves as spectators having "pains in *another* person's body," but, says Wittgenstein, our language for describing such pains is inexact. "We are handicapped in ordinary language by having to describe, say, a tactile sensation by means of terms for physical objects such as the word 'eye,' 'finger,' etc., when what we want to say does not entail the existence of an eye or finger, etc." Wittgenstein apparently grew discomfited at the sight of his mentor Russell's hands as the latter "sat listlessly" in a chair near a lamp, (one imagines) much like the old man in Maeterlinck's symbolist monodrama *The Intruder* (1891): "Funny how his hands looked to him [Wittgenstein] under the light, like gloves, so useless and old."<sup>68</sup> In this image

one hears Wittgenstein's disembodied voice capturing the intonation of intellectual finiteness as handmaiden to physical mortality in Russell (whose philosophical thought he vigorously opposed) and indirectly in himself, the critical disciple as patricide. When his uneasiness over what he perceived to be Russell's illogicality peaked, Wittgenstein, who had profound issues with his industrialist father Karl, temporarily lost control of both his voice and his hands. In both cases, the philosopher's body broached his mind with the displaced (already rejected) possibility that thought thinking itself could be(come) psychosomatic.

MAESTRO: Next comes the hard part—(*Tearing up the paper.*)—translate that into general rules of behavior.<sup>69</sup>

Wittgenstein wrote: "The idea of thinking as a process in the head, in a completely closed space, gives him [the philosopher] something occult" (Z §71). Wittgenstein came to believe that "language is not a representational structure, but a presentational act."<sup>70</sup> Language presents itself to us to be used, to be given life and meaning, so that it can perform its purpose and hear itself speak, not just being spoken. "Language," Genova says on Wittgenstein's behalf, "must be seen as a play, a script to be performed."<sup>71</sup> And yet, Wittgenstein continued to make room for an extra-mental reality that avoided capture by the trap of imaginability (discussed in *Philosophical Investigations*) and ultimately withholds itself from performance practice and performance behaviors (and his attendant dislike/distrust of psychology). The more insistent Wittgenstein became that language should speak for itself and not merely represent something else, the more he might embrace Saul Bellow's observation: "It seems true. Like taking swimming lessons on the kitchen table."<sup>72</sup> The surreal image this statement recalls is less important than the practice it, so to speak, puts on the table for urban-dwellers without consistent access to an actual beach or a pool.<sup>73</sup> And so, the activity must be separated from the image that depicts it but not from the language that describes it. Language *is* an activity; ergo, the language-game. Bellow's analogy reminds us how to read a sentence. Language is the ordinary *made* extraordinary by the philosophical and poetic voice. But, Wittgenstein reminds us, in the process language is asked to act against itself (its representational DNA, as Genova puts it), to occult itself not for its own sake.<sup>74</sup> Later Wittgenstein found not only language *as* representation but also language *in* representation to be a difficult proposition to accept. Language is manifold in potential but everywhere finds its limit, even in art—especially in art, even though it is art that potentially is best able to visualize a field of play, a space and a body of rules for the language-game by which language can transcend what Wittgenstein earlier conceived to be its limits. ("A *picture* held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably" [PI §115].)<sup>75</sup> What sounds like

a chronological evolution of Wittgenstein's thought was in fact an ebb and flow of his anxious regard for language and language's anxious regard of us.

MAESTRO: The world itself is the main character, ladies and gentlemen.  
And it effectively hypnotizes all of us to achieve its own ends.<sup>76</sup>

Foreman's allusive relationship to Wittgenstein has less to do with the head than with the headache, with the pain of the mind wrestling with its unwillingness or incapacity to let the body have its say/way and do its work. Think of all the times in which characters in Foreman's plays hit or are hit on the head, how often the head or the brain is referenced in his *later* play titles (ushering in an extended period of critical self-examination), even how often his characters don strange head attire and apparati or brandish decapitated heads resembling and pretending to be their own. A brain rocked so often in its cranial cradle (like the wounded actor's colliding with the stage-beam) produces a language that is consistently more idiotic (a positive value) than idiomatic (in the sense of sounding contextually real), more repetitive than discursive, more at loose ends but tied into more complicated knots.<sup>77</sup> Foreman's theater stages Wittgenstein's proposition, "The results of philosophy are the uncovering of one or another piece of plain nonsense and of bumps that the understanding has got by running its head up against the limits of language. They—these bumps—make us see the value of that discovery" (*PI* §119).

Wittgenstein wrote self-critically that "often my writing is nothing but 'stuttering'" (*CV* §18), and his writing presents as "wild and punctuational signs—dashes, quotation marks, exclamation points, diagrams, font variations, demonstrative pronouns (invariably italicized), sentence spacings, spatial and temporal indexes."<sup>78</sup> Foreman's isomorphic stage-stammering appears as repetitive music loops; Foreman's own taped omniscient voice; live and dissonant sounds—crashes, thuds, bells; punctuations; sudden flashes of light and light changes; unprovoked spastic dances and quasi-vaudeville physical routines; shifting roles and names that gesture beyond specific dramatic contexts and often replicate the real actors' names (interrogating the use and meaning of names and naming as in Handke)—using the real names of the actors who first played them or titles instead of names (Madame, Maestro, Voice, Doctor, The Professor, The Child, The Dangerous Man, The Dangerous Woman, The Ballerina, The Disheveled Ballerina, The Angel, or other preexisting characters' names like Colombine, Pierrot, or even Nietzsche), effectively telling us we are never meant to know who they are, who is speaking, only what they wear and what they do. (Similarly, "the boundary between self and other breaks down in Wittgenstein's thinking, and the slippage is reflected in the lack of delineation between speakers in the text and positions");<sup>79</sup> unusual/a-contextual props, costumes, and other scenic elements of exaggerated scale—small curtains, small stages, and

small proscenia, along with boxes and magic boxes and their indeterminable contents—Schrödinger’s cat and *mise-en-abyme*, dwarfs, models and miniatures, including phalli; actor-character physical collisions with scenic walls; transparent proscenium (fourth) walls; overlapping dialogue; game-playing; perspectival lines of string stretched across the performance space to connect object to object, person to object, person to person; actors playing actors; actors playing (e.g., commedia dell’arte) masks; actors performing acts of self-inflicted violence; actor-character transvestism and hermaphroditism (sex/gender/subject/object confusion); mirror-imaging (of people, language, scenic elements, and objects) and the illusion of seeing double; people as objects and ideas; actors playing characters playing philosophers; direct audience address; possibly overheard interior monologues and words that appear to be addressed to no one in particular that return the auditor to the grammar of definition. (“‘Thinking’ and ‘talking in the imagination’—I do not say ‘talking to oneself’—are different concepts” [*PI* §246]. “Wittgenstein,” Genova notes, “talks to no one in particular, not even to himself”).<sup>80</sup>

The net effect of all this is to stammer meaning in(to) space through a cacophony of signs—the theatrical synesthesia of the unruly mind at work, as often as not, against itself. Or, as MAESTRO says in *Pearls for Pigs*—“Yes. To the theater of hesitations”—a thought amplified in Foreman’s 2002 play *Maria del Bosco (A Sound Opera: Sex and Racing Cars)*.<sup>81</sup>

Here, another disembodied incarnation of The Voice intones, “Ah, one problem. / There is a solid wall directly in the path / Of the racing car,” again raising the “bumps” inside Wittgenstein’s head.<sup>82</sup> One thinks here of Wittgenstein’s rejection of the false picture of the “outer” (behaviorism, which rejects the “inner” and maintains that “only behavior is knowable”) and the “inner” (the private language argument that someone else’s pain—among other sensations—is always hidden from you) in *Philosophical Investigations*. Or, in Charles Bernstein’s Wittgensteinian paraphrase: “I feel my pain from the inside out, you see it from the outside in.” Bernstein cites a passage from the Robert Creeley poem “Somewhere” to illustrate the action of language to enable seeing, even in the dark. The line reads: “*From outside, it must have seemed / a wonder that it was / the inside he as me saw / in the dark there.*”<sup>83</sup>

Foreman’s *Benita Canova* (1998), subtitled *Gnostic Eroticism*, is set inside a self-referential bourgeois room in Paris in the 1940s and set off from the audience by a plexiglass wall, as is appropriate given its conflation of Wittgenstein’s and Creeley’s statements of inside-outness.<sup>84</sup> Madame’s charges are three nubile schoolgirls who appear to have stepped out of a Balthus painting—all of them compliant, only Benita less so. The actresses playing the girls are older than their characters, although maybe neither as young nor as old as the girls imagine themselves to be. Madame is herself a “quite well disguised” man in drag, the quotation marks reiterating drag’s own citationality and its camp vexing of desire in the play.<sup>85</sup> A yellow Jewish star has been sewn on Benita’s dress either by herself as required in Nazi-occupied Paris

or by one of the other girls, all of whom are forever sewing things to their own and one another's clothing, especially their underclothing. Benita's alien (non-)status, whether as an actual or apparent Jewess, complicates her inside/outside relationship to the plexiglass wall through which a few Hebrew letters "peek out from behind other decorative features."<sup>86</sup>

"—So, she [Benita] says, inside every illusion, she's imagining vast activity." Every fourth wall in theater is after all invisible and seen through, but also, as per Wittgenstein, *seen as*. "If the medium in one makes a hole is in fact a medium that is constituted by nothing real—," says Madame in a broken-off sentence fragment whose lack of punctuation severs w(hole)ness and reveals theatrical design. "She's a hole in something," Benita says of the obstructive Christina, although Madame is quick to point out that there are solid holes and void holes and all are seen (as) according to the contexts in which they appear.<sup>87</sup> Thus, a "void hole" is only void in a solid context. In a void, a void hole is objectlessness without a referent. Being a surveyor of gaps rather than holes, Foreman does not give his characters words with which to fill or deepen these holes. For this, they will have to wait for Wellman, but there is no real expectancy in them. Benita's schoolgirl tormenters are little fascists, the hands they hold up to prevent Benita from leaving the stage displaying little swastikas and posing the leading, Jew-/spectator-baiting question, "How many of you have never raised your hands?" Betty's plaint, "Once upon a time, knowing what to do with my hands was no problem," articulates a nostalgia for performance outside the rule of exception.<sup>88</sup>

Benita's mental confusion is nominally Madame's "wonderful catastrophe" ("She's a hole in something"). Benita's rejoinder that catastrophe is "an easy word for a much more ambiguous situation" provokes her chief rival "Christina" (the Christian name of the actress who originally played her) to cruelly taunt Benita (Madame's "little Israelite") with a thinly disguised reference that is in fact as plain as the nose on Benita's presumably Semitic face: "(As all the girls surround BENITA) Oh—look at this, little Benita Canova's brain's doing bad things to her facial expression."<sup>89</sup> "She [it is said of Benita] doesn't think her facial expression comes in different sizes, because her brain is telling her the size and shape of her facial expression is always indeterminate—and she goes back and forth inside her facial expressions like a hungry animal in deep trouble." Benita will later violently stab to death a performer in a gorilla suit so as to distinguish herself from it in her tormentors' anti-Semitic (and perhaps her own self-hating) eyes. Betty explains that the gorilla, "like all magic animals [is] a little confused, maybe because not everybody in this room has the same kind of great-, great-, great-, great-grandmother," a rationale that recalls *Cabaret's* proto-Nazi emcee telling his audience, "if you could see her [a performer impersonating a gorilla wearing a dress] through my eyes / She wouldn't look Jewish at all."<sup>90</sup>

"What does a face mean?" one Wellman character asks another, who responds, "A face mean? I don't understand."<sup>91</sup> Wittgenstein wrote that

“meaning is a physiognomy” (*PI* §568), Bernard J. Rhie’s response being that for Wittgenstein, “meaning and mentality are not occult phenomena which accompany the physiognomy of a game, a word, or a face, but are rather directly visible to anyone who cares to look . . . such direct seeing is always a possibility (an everyday occurrence even), not that we can have epistemological certainty with regard to the mental states exhibited by the expressions of others—that, of course, would be patently implausible.”<sup>92</sup> But is the fact that the ordinary shapeliness of the Wittgensteinian proposition makes meaning clear, grammatically speaking, sufficient to justify making rules for what meaning is?

Benita Canova may be a coded reworking of the figure of the Marrano (Spanish for “swine”—Foreman produced this play just months after his play *Pearls for Pigs*), the baptized Jew who despite advertising his conversion to Christianity in the time of the Spanish Inquisition, continued to practice his original faith in private. (Benita herself questions the authenticity of her name.)<sup>93</sup> Here the Marrano has been called a “Crypto-Jew,” in keeping with Foreman’s transplanting letters from the Hebrew alphabet to his stage settings where they become a-contextually mystical. This publicity of hiddenness is perhaps a riposte to the anti-Semite’s longstanding public assertion that Jews cannot be trusted because theirs is a hidden language. “My thoughts are one hundred percent Hebraic,” Wittgenstein proclaimed later in a life that kept his Jewishness well-hidden and distressed.<sup>94</sup>

Foreman follows Benita’s third-person statement, “Protected by her own private and personal God, she speaks,” with a sudden rapping at the door—actually, three loud knocks, like those that began plays on the Baroque stage and that reintroduce Wittgenstein’s subversion of the idea of expectancy: “What if someone said to me ‘I expect three knocks on the door’ and I replied, ‘How do you know three knocks exist?’” (*PR* §36).<sup>95</sup> Expectancy as a hidden capacity of language, part of its grammar, one of its rules, is illegible and threatening to the Christian girls whose faith renders belief in the Second Coming transparent. Perhaps, the quintessential Christian girl (Christina) fears the arrival of the Jewish girl’s God as an avenging mystical Unknown, as opposed to Anne Frank’s secular fear of the actual knock on the door that will take her away. Presumptively Christian Betty tells Benita, “I don’t think a God without even a face offers anybody much protection.” Indeed, the ancient Hebrew God does not have a face or even bear a name that can be fully spelled out or spoken. Blanks are left to indicate the letters that must remain unvoiced and invisible. This, as Christina, protests, “is not part of my fucking reality,” to which Benita responds, “so for that reason, start filling in the blanks!”<sup>96</sup> The language-game being played here resembles the child’s game of H-A-N-G-M-A-N, in which each failure to fill in a blank with a letter literally draws you closer to a picture of some figure of death. In some cases, meaning may well be a physiognomy we prefer not to see.

MADAME: Dear Benita Canova, do you really think your ancient and venerable God is speaking to you from the inside of a world from which he himself has totally withdrawn? Oh—leaving hints of things, of course. But his withdrawal being, you understand, just another make-believe adventure—like your own make-believe adventure.<sup>97</sup>

The Jewish Kabbalist Isaac Luria (1534–1572) believed God withdrew from the world into Himself (*tsimtsum*) to “make possible the existence of something other than God and His pure essence.”<sup>98</sup> The *tsimtsum* being both a self-banishing *and* a self-limitation (as well as a with-drawing, THE H-A-N-G-M-A-N notes) on our behalf, we are left to draw ourselves in our own light or to withdraw into the dark (t)here—in either case to self-represent. Another part of Luria’s new Kabbalist symbology was “the breaking of the vessels” (the *shevirah*), which, like the breaking of character and of the Hebrew alphabet, means that “everything is in some way broken, everything has a flaw, everything is unfinished.”<sup>99</sup> Gershom Scholem refers to this constellation of negative pieces of brokenness as a “gnostic paradox,” particularly in that it defines “exile as an element in God himself.”<sup>100</sup> *Benita Canova*, subtitled inside parentheses that clarify the motive of hiddenness “(*Gnostic Eroticism*),” offers up the passion of the primordial broken vessel of the God who cannot be embodied and whose name must not be fully spelled or spoken. It is a sentiment that self-encrypted/-encrypting Wittgenstein transformed into the secular grammatical proposition, “Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent” (*PI* §7). In the end, though, Wittgenstein and Foreman may be trying to express the hiddenness of the “something than which nothing greater can be conceived,” larger still than Handke’s “*section of a room that is even larger than the large stage*.”<sup>101</sup> In this light, *which* world is everything that is the case?

Benita Canova is someone who has been found out, but not found out entirely, not only because she has not been entirely hidden but because it is not *her* hiddenness that is finally at issue. Madame refers to Benita’s “so-called theoretical invisibility,” which alerts us to the intellectual benightedness of our conceptual design. Benita will not talk about herself except in the third person, as others see her, as a cipher (“Cipher, cipher, who’s got the cipher?”), a nonentity.<sup>102</sup> Benita is thought guilty and guilty of thought only insofar as she projects “the image of a mind so ravished.” To Benita’s statement of third-person self-laceration, Madame responds rhetorically with, “You see how advantageous it would have been if the little Israelite had simply remained silent?”<sup>103</sup> Silent or unknown? To Madame’s goading Benita to “explain with a suitably Hebraic complexification,” she responds, as might Foreman, “It was a trick,” and asked to dig deeper for an explanation, turns this “trick” into “a momentarily effective [self-critical] illusion.”<sup>104</sup>

Foreman’s voice speaks of “an elsewhere that is always now,” which is only nominally an echo or pre-echo of the world we *already* know, and this

accounts for its lack of presentness. (“There is no illusion of presentness to the audience, only the diachronic and diatropic envisioning of a duration estranged from us so that we can see it.”)<sup>105</sup> Presentness is dissolved in a difference that neither mirrors nor analogizes to but instead estranges us from the nominally eventful moment while thrusting us into some other durative moment of uncertain and unknown provenance (e.g., anxiety, catastrophe). Consider here the dangerous gift (in Madame’s estimation) that Benita Canova cannot resist opening at play’s end. The meaning of this parting gift migrates back to the birthday gift that Anne Frank cannot resist opening at the beginning of her diary. The gift is in fact the very diary that we are in this moment just beginning to read in its entirety, that is, in its future form of completion. If we substitute for “gift” the word “present,” we introduce another level of meaning expressed by Foreman in another of his plays: “Resist the present. / Resist the present.”<sup>106</sup> Are we being cautioned against expectancy, the catastrophic rehearsal of the end in the present’s unlocatability?

Wittgenstein writes, “Where does the present go when it becomes past, and where is the past?” (*BB* 107), and Diamond explains:

Wittgenstein seems to be committed to the idea that our forms of expression are not answerable to any facts because there are none of them to be answerable to. . . . The unchangeable character of the past cannot *explain* why we cannot have the very same noise twice, since there is no fact of irrevocability capable of playing such an explanatory role. But the absence of certain kinds of facts itself does play an explanatory role in this account.<sup>107</sup>

Expectancy is here tied not to the coming of the event or even of its coming again (to paraphrase the Judeo-Christian dialectic glimpsed in *Benita Canova*). It is rather what we can expect to say in certain sentences that holds true according to the logical laws of expression. A fact does not, says Wittgenstein, make a form of expression right or wrong, any more than a logical form of expression can make something into a fact, although it can make something appear to be true based upon the structure of the thought it conveys.<sup>108</sup> Wittgenstein, says Diamond, asks, “What would go wrong if our form of expression were different?” “What would be wrong if we recognized different logical laws?”

BETTY (to BENITA): You don’t have enough character flaws to keep anybody interested for ten minutes even.<sup>109</sup>

Benita Canova is, in effect, the hole or broken vessel from which all the voices inside of Foreman’s voicebox project the variableness of meaning in the mystical ordinariness of the world, as per Wittgenstein. After receiving a gold medallion “with all the forbidden letters of the alphabet embossed on one

side” from the human-sized, gloved gorilla, Madame is moved to ask, “Is my own name discoverable amongst these grotesque letters?” “Benita Canova,” says Madame, and Benita, looking at the gorilla, responds, “Her real name? I don’t think so.” Since Madame, who has been speaking to their (Madame’s and Benita’s) resemblance, puts Benita’s name in quotation marks and Benita continues to speak of herself in the third person, a certain self-similarity is being broached, a resemblance that Benita anxiously tells Madame, “should not be made in public” (in performance or as performance behavior?).<sup>110</sup> Turning the medallion over and holding it up to a mirror (upon which liveness breathes and artistic representation reflects), Madame sees that it (the medallion) is empty, unwritten upon on the other side, whereupon she is “tumbled by a wave of intellectual emotion . . . —as I realized that nothingness reversed—induced in me a range of possibilities—I had not the means to articulate myself.”<sup>111</sup> Madame’s syncope is another isomorph of Foreman’s theatrical aporia, “the [public] expression of a simulated or real doubt, as about where to begin or what to do or say.”<sup>112</sup> Madame regards Benita as a solid hole (a real simulation?), which Madame acknowledges on Foreman’s behalf is a mind-boggling thought *and* (a) theatrical conceit.

Theater is in fact nothing real, falsely doubled, but only if it is seen as continuum and not as overlay as in Orgon’s disappearing act. Madame simulates chasing Benita Canova around what is essentially Orgon’s table, which has by now taken on its Wellman-articulated other meaning as a field. The-male-actor-as-female-character Madame loses her wig (and the audience its presuppositions) during the chase, so fervently desiring is s/he to fill the self-acknowledged hole in her own/Benita’s meta/physical understanding. We see now Madame’s bald head, a phallic foreshadowing of the life-sized reduction (the actor’s member) that will soon appear to jump the gap between ontological and phenomenological purpose.

Benita is now (but not quite in the present) running in the place of/running in place as Elmire but also as herself and as Madame. Like short-term amnesiac Leonard Shelby pursuing/pursued by an unreal, unlocatable past, she cries for help where there is nothing—no real past, except as rehearsal of its own performance, no liveness when and where the past cannot be. There is no outside to Madame that does not also contain Benita and no inside that is not performed as thought thinking itself. Foreman’s metaphysical vaudeville slips its wig in order to reveal a split, racing, and self-doubting mind acting out its own thought-behavior as generative condition and as cure.

## Chapter 6



# Non-Sleeper Agents

The greater the want of space, the more dangerous the thoughts.

—Handke, *Kaspar*

It was, for all intents and purposes, a paranoid's dream come true. All hooked up to video cameras and audio monitors that someone else controlled through the connect-the-dots wires that crisscrossed my legs, torso, face, and head. If I scratched a part of my body, they could see me. If I coughed, a disembodied voice through the speaker asked me if I needed a glass of water. I wondered (although not aloud) if they could read my mind and see and hear my dreams. I would have to be very careful about not dreaming anything that would either embarrass me or else give away my best writing material. Before bedding down for what I was certain would be a sleepless night in the Sleep Disorders Center (it makes sense, doesn't it?), I had checked myself in what I was convinced was a one-way window disguised to look like a mirror (what a mirror looks like, I still don't know). There I beheld a visitor from the future, and it was me. In the next room someone was watching or certainly listening at a very high volume to the TV "reality" show *Survivor*, naturally making me wonder whether only one of us would wake up early the next morning and get to return to our real life. The woman who hooked me up was herself a sleep apnea sufferer, so the whole affair had the feeling of a rehab center or a prison where you were being inducted and monitored by a lifer.

I know that I dreamed that night, and it was unlike me not to remember what I dreamed. It must have been my mirror image doing the dreaming. And since he was from the future, he must have gotten his wires crossed. Either that or he erased dream-memory by writing over my dreams with thoughts and images that have not yet come to (my) mind. I thought of Major (Collegiate Assessor) Kovalyov in Gogol's dream fantasia "The Nose" (*Nos* in Russian, an inversion of the Russian word for dream, which is *son*) and his separatist anatomical part, which he calls "a usurping self beyond my control."<sup>1</sup> I had adapted and staged this story twice in New York, rehearsing

it once in my very small studio apartment so that the actors, who had to make entrances from the hallway, became accustomed to “the want of space” and the dangerous thoughts this can engender as a mode of performance. It was all as plain as the nose on my dream, to coin a phrase on the order of Lautréamont’s surrealist “chance encounter of an umbrella and a sewing machine on an operating table.”<sup>2</sup> (There are no “chance encounters” for me as regards umbrellas.) Every dream image is a rehearsal for another dream.

My human sleep monitor told me that she would enter the room quietly while I slept and reattach whatever parts came unglued from me, or, as she put it, “if your eye falls out or your leg falls off.” No wonder my mind turned to thoughts of Gogol’s panicked Major and his quest to get his imperious nose to return to his face. Maybe the tie-in to *Survivor* (a show I do not watch given my fear of jungles and aversion to confrontation) was that whoever retained the most body parts got to walk out of the room the next morning, or limp out, depending upon which parts had gone missing. Or maybe they were rating us on the vividness of our dreams. If so, my use of dreams as research for my writing put me at a definite disadvantage, since, as I’ve said, I was saving my best material for the books to be written by the then future me.

It is odd how things come together in the mind. As I bang out these words and sentences on a keyboard I think of my recently hospitalized son all hooked up to wires and monitors and of the photo he sent me electronically on which he wrote, “I am a computer.” Or maybe what he should have written (as I was reading his image on an actual computer screen), after Magritte, was “I am not a computer,” in the same way that I might have said to my mirror image at the Sleep Disorders Center “I am not the future me.” Of course, my son *is* in some biological sense the future me. If I didn’t know better, I would have thought that I had anxiously dreamed up the image of myself covered with plug-in external wiring in a closely monitored facsimile clean room as an act of sympathetic magic to hasten the release into the world of a healthy, mobile, wireless version of my son.

What if my sleep monitor was assigned to go from room to room and from dream to dream collecting body parts, like Coppélius in Hoffmann’s *Der Sandmann* (1816; I have left this title untranslated, because it is more frightening to me in German), who steals the eyes of children who cannot or will not sleep? “I will come into your room quietly if your eye falls out,” my sleep monitor said. Coppélius was said to have fed the eyes he stole from sleepless children to his own children, who lived on the moon. Maybe my monitor needed my body parts to build the future me who is still beyond my wildest dreams of there being a future in which I am not only living but living on the moon in which the future is inscribed.

The prologue to Marinetti’s “Futurist Manifesto” (1909) begins, “We have been up all night. . . ,” and the manifesto proper exalts “feverish sleeplessness” over “pensive immobility, ecstasy and slumber.”<sup>3</sup> This, my near-future me rechristens “The Insomniac Manifesto,” of which I soon became a co-signer.

“The minute man ‘knows,’ he sleeps,” Lev Shestov wrote, and Foreman (the pre- or future-man?) took this to mean that as soon as you think you know, or fall back upon what you know, you are asleep. But here, we might say, there is an instantaneous, invisible passage—another form of overwriting—that says I cannot sleep because I do not know, I cannot know. Cannot know what?—that I am not sleeping or that I am sleepwalking? Wittgenstein wondered if the sleepwalker does not think, can he be said to remember? (*LPP*, December 2, 1946).<sup>4</sup> If not, can the sleepwalker dream? Can the insomniac? What does it mean to say, “I cannot sleep”?

My fantasy, though, was not about the father but of the son. In Andrei Bely’s novel *Petersburg* (1913; rev. 1922), Nikolai Apollonovich Ableukhov, a dilettante in all things including political revolution, lives upstairs in the house owned by his father, conservative senator Apollon Apollonovich Ableukhov. The son has hazily compacted with a revolutionary cell to assassinate his father by concealing a bomb in a sardine tin (the thought-object) inside his father’s desk drawer. The son is invaded by bodyless thoughts that devoid of memory nevertheless coalesce into a perspicuous (surveyable) mental state:

And there were swarms of thoughts thinking themselves; and it was not he thinking, but thoughts thinking themselves—something was being thought, was being sketched, was arising. And it leaped in the heart, bored inside the brain. It was rising above the sardine tin, it had crawled out of the sardine tin into him. He had hidden the sardine tin, it seems, in his desk, and had leaped out of the accursed house.<sup>5</sup>

Wittgenstein believed that “a main source of our failure to understand is that we don’t have an overview of the use of our words.—Our grammar is deficient in surveyability. A surveyable [also translated as “perspicuous”] representation produces precisely that kind of understanding which consists in ‘seeing connections’ . . . It characterizes the way we represent things, how we look at matters. (Is this a ‘Weltanschauung?’)” (*PI* §122).<sup>6</sup> But what does this surveyable representation look like—a field or a fable, a chair or a table? Orgon or not-Orgon . . . that is the question? How can Nikolai make so much of what he remembers so little? How did this shut-in, this bomb in a can un-house thought and yet become embodied? “Is there then no mind, but only a body?” asks Wittgenstein. “Answer: The word ‘mind’ has meaning, i.e., it has a use in our language; but saying this doesn’t yet say what kind of use we make of it” (*BB* §12). Is the mind in the sense of a surveyable, perspicuous mentality impossible to see except as an implausible object, like Gogol’s giant “Nose,” that is, as (if in) a dream (son)?

“Here,” says Oswald Hanfling, “is another substantive in search of a corresponding object: the substantive ‘mind,’ we may feel, would be meaningless if there was no such object. But this is not so: the word has meaning—a use—in the language; only it is not that of standing for a kind of object [unlike, say,

“brain”].”<sup>7</sup> The Ableukhovs engage in a conversation that begins and ends with a materialized sensation in the would-be bomber son that interferes with and replaces his father’s future dematerialization by the bomb:

Having been deprived of his body, he nonetheless felt his body: the invisible center, which had formerly been consciousness, seemed to have a semblance of what it had been. Logic had turned into bones, and syllogisms were wrapped all around the sinews. The contents of logic were now covered with flesh. Thus the “I” again presented its corporeal image, although it was not body. And that which had exploded was revealed an alien “I”. . . .

“Oh! Oh! What then is ‘I am’?”

“A zero.”

“And zero?”

“A bomb.”

Nikolai Apollonovich understood that he himself was a bomb. And he burst with a boom.<sup>8</sup>

Bely compels the protagonistic “I” that so troubled Wittgenstein to enter into a zero sum language-game with itself, in which solipsism (in the form of a thought-object) effectively blows itself up. The contents are kept under pressure inside a sardine tin, like an agoraphobe inside her smaller-than-life-size but form-fitting house, in which the world exceeds thought’s limit. The “I” (or “he himself”) is the “boom” and the room, the site of rupture, wired to go off as if in a dream (a *son*). “The appendix bursts,” says Kaspar. “The grenade bursts. If the appendix couldn’t burst, you couldn’t say: the grenade bursts.”<sup>9</sup> And with that thought, my son’s appendix did not simply rupture—it burst, while he was waiting in a hospital to be seen.

It pains me to say that I may again have been playing the role of the mentally disordered adventurer Baron von Münchhausen of story and syndrome, who, among other things, was said to have traveled to the moon. Did I travel to the dark side of the moon to fetch my son a new kidney or liver, or was I too busy affixing dots with electrodes to my own head, face, and body like so many children’s eyes? My son wants to be an actor. “Me first,” a voice inside me says. But does this mean me *instead* of you or me in *advance* of you (the avant-gardist as solipsist), and are “instead” and “advance” of him protective or selfish stances to assume? Is this the future me speaking, the me I viewed in the mirror at the very center of sleep disorders? The doppelganger or extra me may in fact be an encryption according to Wittgenstein’s proposition, “It is a property of affirmation that it can be conceived as double denial” (*TLP* §6.231), wherein no extra space is needed to take place.

But then how could I say what the world is if the realm of ideas has no neighbour?<sup>10</sup>

When my son was young and playing with a ball in the street, it invariably rolled into my then pre-agoraphobic neighbor's yard. She would dress him down and confiscate the ball, which thereafter went to live in her house never to be seen again. In the object's disappearance was invisibly inscribed an agoraphobic rehearsal of self-retrieval and confiscation of externality. For my neighbor, space and time soon enough became objects themselves, could no longer be processed as process. The object of disappearance has left her self-absorbed. "The subject does not belong to the world but it is a limit of the world" (*TLP* §5.632). What better definition could there be of (an) "agoraphobe," whose asymmetry has become an apparent symptom and sign of my own imagining? In the avowal "I am an agoraphobe," "the 'I' can never get away from the consciousness it (allegedly independently) attributes to itself or judges itself to possess."<sup>11</sup> If pathology can be said to decide, the agoraphobe is living not just with but inside her decision. Therein lies Wittgenstein's portrait of consciousness's (including body consciousness's) self-contestation: "A man's thinking goes on within his consciousness in a seclusion in comparison with which any physical seclusion is an exhibition to public view" (*PI*, part 2, §xi). This self-contestation underscores the standard picture of the agoraphobe that is based upon nothing so much as her not being seen. The agoraphobe invokes the claim of hiddenness in thought-space, of the (extreme limit-condition of) private language that, as it is not being heard, does not enter into the public realm in which language-games are played. Can there be a picture of secluded thought? Her physical seclusion makes the agoraphobe physically yet invisibly confessed, but beyond that she is another figure of our not-knowing. She is also a figure of my own self-contesting claim to uniqueness, singularity and solitude, phobia and solipsism, of my mental complaint, that which I would not do because I cannot do it (i.e., my incapacity). The agoraphobe inhabits a world of self-delusion, her strategy succeeding only in her failure to exceed its limits in the way that it publicly shows itself (failure) as something (not) to be seen.

Self-absorption has robbed the agoraphobe of the possibility of neighborliness, but then even the notion of an agoraphobic neighbor sounds implausible yet inescapable, as in E. M. Cioran's assessment that "there is nothing else in the world more odious than the neighbor. To know that he/she is so close to us stifles us and turns our days into hell."<sup>12</sup> Cioran's own insomnia, linked by his own admission to thanatophobia, positions him in a constant, waking state of extreme watchfulness: "The human being is nothing but a being who keeps watch/is awake and insomnia is nothing but a punishment for the state of wakefulness." The alternative to wakefulness, one assumes, is loss of consciousness, death. Emmanuel Levinas viewed philosophy as being a call to "infinite responsibility, to an untiring wakefulness, to a total insomnia."<sup>13</sup> But here, of course, "wakefulness" means two different things, as a word so often does in Wittgenstein, whose proposition, "It is a property of affirmation that it can be conceived as double denial" captures

what the philosopher Cioran effectively did with Levinas's positive thought. Insomnia for Levinas makes hiding in oneself impossible, owing to the opening of consciousness by continual wakefulness. And yet to be insomniac is to be isolated (and in some sense hidden) from others like the agoraphobe, like the obsessive-compulsive (and like the intellectual in Cioran's opinion), constantly "spinning the wheels of the brain."<sup>14</sup>

Wittgenstein's philosophy and obsessive-compulsive disorder pass each other somewhere in their shared, self-tormenting wakeful state. Here "What bloody man is that?" is a question for the self, wearing incapacity's abject disguise, maybe that of a ghost returned from the death of dreams, the sleepless state. The interrupted lives of others, like that of my agoraphobic neighbor, are tried on for size, the mind hoping all the while for the perfect fit between performance and the condition it assumes, between the condition and the performance it assumes.

Anne Dufourmantelle writes that "philosophy was born with anxiety, with questioning, with insomnia. It takes upon itself the ills of the world, and thus it cannot sleep."<sup>15</sup> Willis Regier adds, "This is executive philosophy, whose duty it is to convert worry into analysis." It is a short and logical step from this combined thought construction to obsessive thought, as Regier further notes: "The insomniac is bound to think about insomnia, and about what it does to thinking. In the wink of an eye, insomnia slips from thought to obsession, from earnest doubt to pitiless masochism and misanthropy." This again invokes Wittgenstein's theory of private experience, which is not known because it cannot be seen and yet can be imagined as something that we don't know. We cannot know everything, but we cannot *not* know everything either. Even incapacity has (must have?) its limits, but is it more or less solipsistic to say so?<sup>16</sup>

Could there be a more obsessive thought than "I am an agoraphobe" or a more compulsive practice than that of agoraphobia? Is agoraphobia the surrender of understanding in the breaking off of communication with the world at large, or is it more of an opting out of the language-game that operates according to common assumptions? Is agoraphobia a search for a form of communication with which only she must contend—render contentious and misunderstood? The agoraphobe is the spatial working out of the grammatical figure of thought thinking itself. She has reduced herself to the language of space, of spatial thinking (I cannot imagine what she does with her *time*). She is linguistically solipsistic, an aphorism; she is the resolution of a proposition, the possibility of living in only one possible way among all of the other possible ways, which defines compulsion in terms of the self. She is anti-polysemic, polysemy incapacitated.

I include here a reminder that I wrote to myself concerning storage and spoilage: "To prevent mold, limit the surface area of any food stored in a jar or container; do not scrape food along sides of jar; store leftovers in the smallest possible container." Does the agoraphobe view herself as being the

remainder, the last of something, like the protagonist of Markson's aphoristic novel *Wittgenstein's Mistress* (1988), who is or thinks she is the last person left on earth? Markson's novel skillfully achieves what Wittgenstein's own writing does, which is to "expound the nature and limits of language in terms of its structure; [showing that] the limits of language could be made evident and did not have to be stated explicitly." (We never discover whether or not Kate is the last person on earth, since that is really not the point.)<sup>17</sup> The novel takes its epigraph from Kierkegaard: "What an extraordinary change takes place . . . when for the first time the fact that everything depends upon how a thing is thought first enters the consciousness, when, in consequence, thought in its absoluteness replaces an apparent reality."<sup>18</sup> What is agoraphobia, if not thought in its absoluteness? How often, like Markson's protagonist in her post-apocalyptic tale of catastrophe and abandonment, does an agoraphobe dream of burning down her house, like the insomniac who dreams (without sleeping) of suicide? Cioran believed that the idea of suicide, which visited him in his insomniac state, was the only thing that kept him from taking his own life (perhaps making insomnia that much more un/bearable).<sup>19</sup> In her dreamlike wakefulness, is the agoraphobe's the last house left standing? Kate is sawing boards (sleeping as a thought-object?) and then using them for firewood. Which came first—the fire or the firewood? The book that cannot be written or the "blackened trace [the remainder, that] is left behind"?<sup>20</sup>

Kate writes letters to "a considerable number of famous people," she thinks without being certain.<sup>21</sup> There was a theater director where I went to college, who sent mail to every famous person he could think of, inviting them all to attend his upcoming theater production. I imagine that the theater director decided to write a letter of invitation to Saul Bellow, given that his title character in *Herzog* (1961) had already done essentially the same thing, inviting his non-corresponding correspondents to attend to his thinking on politics, philosophy, and all that concerned life's mysteries and metaphysics. No one answered these letters, because Moses Herzog was content ("content" not being the right word for this sorrowful man, as it might however be for his bookish author) to write without sending them. Even so, the theater director's duplication of Bellow's basic idea (*Wittgenstein's Mistress* having not yet been written) had about it the iterative quality of a performance and the reiterative quality of obsessive-compulsion. When Bellow did not respond to the letter of invitation, the director wondered whether he would have done better to write to Moses Herzog directly. All he had in the way of contact information for the fictional character were three cities in which he had spent significant periods of time—Montreal, New York, and Chicago—and even he knew that this was not enough. All that he could do with this information, each element lacking in any real specificity, was to triangulate the three cities into an evocative association of random thoughts having to do with underground and above-ground modes of transportation and Jewish quarters composed of eastern and central European émigrés and their progeny.

Not being Jewish proved to be too great an obstacle for the director to solve the mystery of this kabbalistic triangle, however, and so he settled for copying a section of the letter Herzog wrote to the Jewish philosopher (Baruch de) Spinoza instead:

*Thoughts not causally connected were said by you to cause pain. I find that is indeed the case. Random association, when the intellect is passive, is a form of bondage. Or rather, every form of bondage is possible then.*<sup>22</sup>

It pleased the director to write this, almost as much as if he had thought of it himself, not unlike how he felt when he staged somebody else's play, which was, after all, what he did for a living—often enough corresponding with the dead, as did Herzog, in the process. I am willing to believe that the director had, in fact, filled an entire filing cabinet in his theater office with letters that begin: *Dear George Bernard Shaw, Uvazhayamy Anton Pavlovich Chekhov!, and Dearest Eugene (If I may be so bold)*. The director wrote the late American playwright that for him every theatrical performance represented a “long day's journey into night”—citing the darkened auditorium, the stage black-outs and curtain-closings, the entire concept of entrances and exits marking off the limits of a life and its passage into death. He was aware that Thornton Wilder had employed entrances and exits through particular doors in his play *The Long Christmas Dinner* to illustrate just this point. This realization inspired him to write a *Dear Thornton Wilder* letter whose tone resembled that of a “cease and desist” order, including vague threats of legal action “on behalf of the O'Neill estate.” Neither the fact that Wilder had already passed through the door invisibly marked “Death,” nor the fact that Wilder published his play in 1931 (i.e., prior to O'Neill's) was of any consequence to the mad director. In his mind, Wilder had plagiarized not only the temporal designation “Long” but chronology itself from O'Neill, who was later (deader) than Wilder by a long shot (or over two decades). If life had failed him as mimesis by not conforming to his solipsistic design, the mad director reasoned, he could at least seize control of metaphor and, as is the stage(r)'s wont, metonymy as well. There are no small models; there is only invisible correspondence, no doubt glimpsed and written (down) on sleepless nights.

A passage from the letter the director wrote to “Herr Brecht” is of particular interest, in that he quotes Wittgenstein:

*I remember seeing a famous theater critic on a stage panel for which he donned a pair of black leather gloves. Not heavy winter gloves, but rather the kind that fit tightly on the hands like a second skin. At the time this just seemed odd to me. But I was young, and did not yet know how odd I was or would turn out to be. I suppose that the critic must have been germophobic, which, when you think about it,*

*is an odd thing for a theater critic to be. Unless, of course, the theater critic had read Wittgenstein who wrote of his possible uncertainty as to the presence of his actual hands. In that case, the critic might have thought that wearing gloves (and especially opaque gloves at that) was the circumspect thing to do to conceal his anxiety from himself in public and from the public in private. Wittgenstein wrote:*

*I go to the doctor, shew him my hand and say "This is a hand, not . . . ; I've injured it, etc., etc." Am I only giving him a piece of superfluous information? . . .—But on the other hand one can imagine cases—even if they are very rare ones—where this declaration is not superfluous, or is only superfluous but not absurd. (OC §460)*

*Were the critic's gloves a Wittgenstein-defined superfluity, a way of saying "These are my hands" when nothing need be said (and so better left unsaid)? Or was the critic in doubt as to whether these hands, these gloved murderer's hands, were his, the hands of a critic repulsed by contagion, who speaks of the need to maintain his critical distance from the stage?*

*I think I even saw this critic rub cream on his hands prior to pulling on his gloves. Sitting in his straight-backed chair with his leather gloves on his hands, the critic looked like he was getting ready to enact a scene in which he mimed driving a car. So, maybe he saw himself as being an actor in his own way, but an actor who, like Helen Hayes, was allergic to the stage.<sup>23</sup> Maybe he had OCD. Maybe I should have felt sorry for him, or at least made an effort to understand what he was going through, or to assume that he must have been going through something to wear those gloves in a public place in such a private way, letting his anxiety show. Although as the said-to-be madwoman Kate, who is the protagonist of Wittgenstein's *Mistress*, points out: "one would certainly be hard put to explain the difference between an illusion of anxiety and anxiety itself."<sup>24</sup> Perhaps the critic's gloving up then was just a form of performance behavior predicated upon him knowing or thinking he knows more than the rest of us. Something akin to mad Kate's statement that "Galileo would never even ever shake another person's hand, once he had discovered germs."<sup>25</sup> But what the critic had discovered was what he had invented, that being the mode of theatrical performance that fit him, his anxious being in the world, like a glove. This said, the actual gloves he wore were a statement of the contagion, the catastrophe he saw himself as being. Poor man probably thought his hands were deformed, or maybe even those of a murderer—he was a critic, after all.*

Walt Whitman wrote, “Escaped from the life that exhibits itself . . . ,” and that latter-day Spinoza of random association, inveterate letter writer Moses E. (“My thoughts are shooting out all over the place”) Herzog continued this thought: “Oh, that’s a plague, the life that exhibits itself, a real plague!”<sup>26</sup> Herzog called himself an idiot. I have decided that being thought clever is not nearly so profound a thing as being thought an idiot. A thought: maybe you could write another one of your Shakespeare adaptations in which a gloved theater critic played the villain. The villain’s name is “Birnam Wood.” He’s a catastrophist who is comfortable in the theatrical discomfort that says, “all’s well that ends.” “But, I with my memory—all the dead and the mad are in my custody, and I am the nemesis of the would-be forgotten. I bind others to my feelings, and oppress them.”<sup>27</sup> This is Herzog again, not Shakespeare. And this: “But can thought wake you from the dream of existence? Not if it becomes a second realm of confusion, another more complicated dream, the dream of intellect, the delusion of total explanations.”<sup>28</sup>

Are you familiar with what Wittgenstein called “Moore’s Paradox,” after his friend, the philosopher G. E. Moore? “Moore’s Paradox” says a statement like “There is a fire in this room and I don’t believe there is” or alternatively, “It is raining, but I don’t believe it,” is “an absurdity of a psychological nature” (PI, x, §89, §107, OC throughout).<sup>29</sup> The debate is over truth and accuracy, or over truth versus accuracy. The paradox fascinated Wittgenstein who disagreed with Moore, saying that the statement (concerning either fire or rain, fire and rain being an apocalyptic sign of madness, I might add) is neither absurd nor even illogical (and not psychological either) but is instead a grammatical problem that demonstrates “logic isn’t as simple as logicians think it is.” Moore’s statement is similar to a contradiction, said Wittgenstein, without actually being one in a formal sense. In any case, what Wittgenstein really wants us to ask is “Not ‘What is the form of this language?’ but ‘What is this language—regardless of its form—being used to do?’”<sup>30</sup>

With this, the letter broke off, as did the director’s correspondence in general. None of the illustrious invitees attended the performance, of course, and shortly thereafter the theater director suffered a complete nervous breakdown and refused to leave his theater office. Madness had made him an agoraphobe. (“Although what Leonardo actually said was that there was no better way of keeping sane and free from anxiety than by being mad.”)<sup>31</sup> Madness, like agoraphobia, is the perfect alibi. To the question, “Where were you?” one can always answer, “In my head,” without the hint of a spatial remainder. Such “provincialism of the self” that is otherwise called solipsism (derived from Cartesian radical doubt), whose cursed ghost haunts

philosophers, is itself haunted by language and so by writing as practice and as performance behavior.<sup>32</sup>

A non-linguistic solipsism is unthinkable and a thinkable solipsism is necessarily linguistic. Solipsism therefore presupposes the very thing that it seeks to deny. That solipsistic thoughts are thinkable in the first instance implies the existence of the public, shared, intersubjective world that they purport to call into question.<sup>33</sup>

Wittgenstein once told the literary critic F. R. Leavis, who was concerned at what he perceived to be the philosopher's exhausted state: "You don't understand. When I'm engaged on a piece of work I'm always afraid I shall die before I've finished it." This thought alone makes Wittgenstein an insomniac writer.<sup>34</sup> But Wittgenstein also purchased a safe for his living room in which to store his notebooks and manuscripts so they would not be destroyed by fire.<sup>35</sup>

Not long ago, I received a disturbing note, which I quote in part:

*The future you is me—an agoraphobe, a shut-in, the direct opposite of your fear of being homeless and on the street. In the future, you are alone, abandoned as you fear, but you are housebound, streetless. I am writing to you because you have forced my hand by writing about me in the guise of yourself as a thought-subject. I've read my share of modern novels, memoirs, solipsistic confessions, and trust me, you should leave this sort of thing to Philip Roth. I am speaking in particular of his Operation Shylock in which he creates yet another alter ego for himself, although what makes this one different is that he is called (or calls himself) "Philip Roth." I always have to take a moment when I am writing his first name to think whether it is spelled with one "l" or two and then check to make sure that I got it right. Also, you should leave Wittgenstein to the philosophers. Or to Tom Stoppard. At least he knows how to make philosophical ideas seem funny. Remember when you directed Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead and the actor playing Hamlet missed one of his entrances? It was awkward but also somehow perfect. The obsessive-compulsive thought-dialogue totally covered over the space and time in which Hamlet would have entered. Hamlet couldn't find the entrance that was hidden between the lines. He really would have been lost acting in your "Way of the World." Perhaps he would have gotten stranded onstage, or missed his cue to open a panel door for another character onstage from the perimeter. Maybe he would have been that actor with the head wound. Maybe that head-wounded actor is who Hamlet has become. Stoppard cleverly shifted the focus from the center to the margin, and you so thickened the margins that they could no longer be breached by Hamlet's own drama. It must have made*

*Hamlet mad not being able to find his way onstage. Do you remember finding him in a rehearsal room talking to himself, going over his lines without an audience? It was a perfect solipsistic moment. Or it could have been the head wound. Remember how panicked he became when he thought he had not heard his cue? Thinking back on the performance, I'm not sure that he had a cue.*

The letter was unsigned. The envelope the letter came in had no return address, and there was no stamp.

### Sleep No More

**Does insomnia determine criminality, or does criminality produce insomnia?**

—Question from Gabriel Liiceanu's lecture  
"Cioran and the Continents of Insomnia"

**For the creative there are no crimes.**

—from *Mr. Sammler's Planet*

There have been a series of recent home invasions on my block. The criminal's M.O. is to break the glass on the house's front door (if the glass is as big as a small window or mirror, like mine), and then to reach through and turn the knob on the door until it unlocks. I am told that she (my intrusive correspondent?) only breaks in during the day when she thinks no one is home. I will be home and have already picked out my weapon of choice to disarm my intruder of her intentions. But first some background. I have given my countermove in this game of wits a lot of thought.

The self-projecting writer who murders a girl in the Swedish film *Insomnia* (1997) tells the policeman who kills him in turn that his victim was tired and just wanted to sleep. To this, the policeman, who accidentally killed his own memory-challenged partner in a heavy fog of motivational self-doubt, tells the murderer to "get lost."

But as soon as one breathes on any image, any memory, it too becomes covered with mist, and reveals itself to be thoroughly webbed with imprecision. Around it is the past, which, like the dark night of that winter, is impenetrable.<sup>36</sup>

In Alejandro Amenabar's film *Abre los ojos* (1997), a smugly wealthy young man named Cesar awakes in Madrid and walks down the middle of an empty main street, in OCD fashion, signaling his desire to ward off the upset of symmetry from either side. It turns out that this is happening in Cesar's self-willed

nightmare, a cryogenically arrested life-after-death scenario explained by the forgotten fact that he had already signed a contract that would reanimate him after his premature death without any memory of his having died or having signed a contract for artificial life extension. In this invisibly programmed fugue state, everyone is only virtually real and they frequently say (as does Cesar) that they are tired and need to sleep (as do the characters named after German movie stars in Handke's play *The Ride Across Lake Constance*). These characters are unaware that Cesar is their author and that they are all part of the Cartesian Deceiver Hypothesis, which I have already described. The difference here is that Cesar is only unconsciously aware that such a deception exists and that he is its author.

Cesar's psychiatrist Antonio places him in a psychiatric ward, where he, like other patients, is made to wear pajamas—better for sleeping in the day room, one supposes, where the light is on all the time, like the white nights in Scandinavia, where *Insomnia* is set. In the ward, Cesar refuses to sit on a chair, saying "I like the floor. It's the only thing that seems real." It is here that Wittgenstein performs an intervention:

If I say "I saw a chair," that (in *one* sense) isn't contradicted by the proposition "there wasn't one there." For I could use the first proposition in the description of a dream and then nobody would use the second to contradict me. But the description of the dream throws a light on the sense of the words "*I saw*."

Again, in the proposition "there wasn't one there," the word "there" may have more than one meaning. (*PG* §222)

Wittgenstein has more to say using the chair example, speaking as he often does to the language-game of which the object is a part and a generator of meaning. The usefulness of objects to Wittgenstein's way of thinking is that, unlike thought and language, they can be sized. Although this is not free from complication, it does allow for measurement, however imprecise. Thus, he writes: "Experience of the real size. Suppose we saw a picture showing chair-shape; we are told it represents a construction the size of a house. Now we see it differently" (*PG* §129). So, even given the somewhat arbitrary nature of picture-space as a logically defensible construct, when placed inside the sliding scale of the language-game the picture of an object, like the experiencing of the object itself inside or outside of the artistic frame, enables us to consider the possible ways of perception as a not altogether illogical evidentiary process of knowing, of generating and comprehending meaning. But can it forestall madness and a trip to the day room? Does Cesar sit on the floor because he "knows" that his only other option is to sit on a picture of a chair? Is his madness expressed in the certainty of knowing this?

Wittgenstein furthermore reminds us that "grammar is not accountable to any reality. It is grammatical rules that determine meaning (constitute it)

and so they themselves are answerable to any meaning and to that extent are arbitrary” (PG §133). So, it is not perception alone, nor even the physical rules governing perception, that allows us to usefully consider and discuss the multiplicity of the chair. It is the placement of the chair under the umbrella of the grammatical rules of the language-game that allows us to speak logically, intelligently about what the chair is, and also what it is not, whether in waking life or in dreams. “The mental process of understanding,” Wittgenstein writes, “is of no interest to us (any more than the mental process of an intuition)” (PG, “Generality,” 271), followed by “The only thing that interests us is the geometry of the mechanism. (That means, the grammar of its description.)” (PG, “Generality,” 273).

While this is a limiting mechanism (Wittgenstein propounds a philosophy of limits), it is not self-limiting in terms of what the individual can think, only in the sense of what he might think about *the self*, as that engages with mental processes and events that obscure rather than clarify meaning. This is actually quite liberating in thinking about performance, which is likewise defined by limits and conventions, engages directly and sometimes profoundly with language and space, and excels above all in devising physical scale, size, and models. (Wittgenstein: “So it is the rules governing the example that make it an example” [PG, “Generality,” 272].)

(“Fear connects a picture with the terrors of reality.”) (PG §130)

The unreality of the dream does not necessarily come before but rather after the grammatical rules of the language-system that takes into account the apparent contradiction in and the actual multiplicity of meaning(s) of the word “chair,” for example. In *Vanilla Sky* (2001), the English-language remake of *Abre los ojos*, this before and afterness is given a temporal signature that troubles the sleeper who is possibly trying to fight her way out of a recurring dream. The duplicitous Julie Gianni, who attempts to suicide herself in the car accident that disfigured David Aames (as Cesar is now called), sets an alarm clock that, when it goes off, sings the round, “Row, row, row your boat . . . ,” in an obsessive-compulsive thought loop that may speak to a deeper, unconscious recurrence. How else is one awakened from an anxiety dream (which tends to be recurrent) but via an alarm clock, which although you set it yourself, your OCD/anxiety insists you turn off *before* it goes off and so alarms you?<sup>37</sup> “How does the temporal character of facts express itself, if not grammatically?” Wittgenstein asks, in a rhetorical question whose self-assumed answer allows us to read not time—e.g., “I come at 5 o’clock”—but temporality as and in a sentence, that is, as a structure.

Although we cannot calculate in any definite way the extent to which our language and behaviors are derived from the examples of sleeping and dreaming, we can certainly recognize their influence on and reflection in the model behaviors of artistic performance. Dreams after all teach us less about

content (which dreams disorder) than they do about size and scale. The alarm clock inside the insomniac's head wants to tell her to "Sleep No More." I attended the "Punch Drunk" Theatre production of *Sleep No More*, the title, of course, quoting *Macbeth*, a play which in Roman Polanski's 1971 film version begins in a thematically sympathetic heavy fog. The *Sleep No More* performance with which I engaged took place all through the interior of a deserted public high school (a site where OCD/Generalized Anxiety Disorder may first present), with classroom doors opening up to reveal bathtubs with bloody water and an auditorium populated by live trees of identical shape and size marching toward a stage. Unnamed but sometimes recognizable characters out of Shakespeare's play or out of the places where the play had been stitched together as if in a Hitchcock movie adaptation mostly rushed through these doors either to avoid or confront the plot in which they found themselves trapped. In the meantime, I waited in a bedroom for a meandering Duncan to enter and get into bed so his murderer could arrive to dispatch him. I wondered why this performance of the mind's disorderliness and violent self-confrontations did *not* make me anxious in its simultaneous discontinuities of time and place. I think it's because the performance's displacements and recirculation of memory objects (people and things) were familiar to me, like I had been there before, was returning to the scene of the crime, and so was already complicit in the murder or at least guilty in the fact of knowing that it would take place. Or perhaps it was me in Duncan's bed dreaming of death as if it were a form of sleep disorder. Insomnia is largely a self-inflicted crime of the tyrannous mind.

The cast of my production of *Richard III* gifted me with an antique dagger, on the blade of which they had engraved: "THE TYRANNOUS AND BLOODY ACT IS DONE." And it is with this dagger and not with one invisible except to the mind that I may have stabbed Duncan and will dispatch my own intruder. What is this tyranny of which the child murderer's knife speaks? In *Three Uses of the Knife*, Mamet considers the tyranny of so-called logical thought, the mind's orderly attempts to allay anxiety in the face of randomness by structuring experience dramatically.<sup>38</sup> My motive is to act, but the knife I plan to use already speaks of *having acted*. I am upset by chronology and by the fear that I am meant to murder the future me, however unready I am to be a posthumous person in order to satisfy my disorderly line and ascribe it creative status.

### The Lime Works

I heard today that my neighbor is not doing well and is no longer living in her house. Perhaps I should say instead: "I heard today that my neighbor is not doing well *but nevertheless* is no longer living in her house." In the case of an agoraphobe, although you are certainly not doing well if you are housebound, you are doing less well if you are no longer living in your house, because this

can only mean that there has been a medical emergency. That is as opposed to the state of emergency in which you normally live. It goes without saying that the agoraphobe would not leave her house for any other reason. She has suffered some kind of home invasion. She has been removed, perhaps under cover of darkness, even in a coffin—a stretcher not being the appropriate medium for one whose life was so purposely and insistently contracted and unexposed.

In Carol Reed's 1949 film *The Third Man*, drug trafficker Harry Lime was said to have died (in an agoraphobe's catastrophist scenario) after leaving his apartment and being hit by a car while crossing the street. Lime's tale is set in war-devastated and divided Vienna, which Austrian novelist Robert Musil called a "City of Dreams," an image in which unself-questioning Viennese (i.e., not Musil, and not Wittgenstein) took pride.<sup>39</sup> In 1949, Wittgenstein returned to Vienna to die (whereas Lime dies in Vienna only to return), although it would take him two more years to succumb to cancer. Wittgenstein's major work, *Philosophical Investigations*, would not be published until 1953, posthumously. Massimo Cacciari writes: "Posthumous people go through an infinite number of masks without ever staying with any one of them. And 'this causes fear,' it is their *Umheimliches*, their uneasiness."<sup>40</sup> Harry Lime is the *Unheimlich* recounted in grim fairy tales, *Der Sandmann* stealing innocent lives by dispensing to them watered-down penicillin that leaves them susceptible to plague. *The Third Man's* famous final chase sequence in which, like a plague-carrying rat caught in a maze, Lime is pursued through Vienna's underground sewer system (there was an "Underground Police" in Vienna at this time) marks the *Umheimlich* with a maze-like un/certainty.<sup>41</sup> The maze-like anxiety of thought thinking itself requires no identifiable object, and Lime's dead body is never seen. His death is ascribed to him rather than lived through, lime being an effective dissolvent of flesh's factuality. "Lime" is in turn a dissolvent of clear definition and point of view—the alleged "third man" who witnessed Lime's first death but then disappeared.

Danièle Moyal-Sharrock writes that the "fixed-in-advance-of-use . . . rule-based grammar of the first Wittgenstein and even the rule-of-grammar expressed in the form of an apparent metaphysical impossibility of the second Wittgenstein made way for a third Wittgenstein who was willing to upend the very notions of truth and falsehood."<sup>42</sup> The third Wittgenstein "is increasingly concerned with describing *indeterminacy* of human behaviour and its role in determining the meaning of psychological concepts."<sup>43</sup> Uncertainly posthumous Harry Lime represents a Wittgensteinian thought-experiment that tests the limits of what may be logically ascertained from a premise and a process that is agoraphobically hidden and so cannot be intimately observed. Whether Lime is actually dead inside his coffin, he, like Schrödinger's cat, tests the limits of what may be logically ascertained from a premise and a process that is hidden and so cannot be intimately observed. It is no wonder, then, that the viewer is led to the famous reveal of the still living Lime framed in a doorway with a stray (i.e., homeless) cat.

The excessively self-reflective mind that if unchecked may produce a “thinglike mental state” of alternative reality formation is, as Wittgenstein acknowledged, an occupational hazard of philosophically abstract thinking. Imagining a word as a meaning-body, as a picture (as seen in the *Tractatus* and rejected in Wittgenstein’s later philosophy) only fits the word for a pair of clay feet.<sup>44</sup> A picture, Lee Braver reminds us, is too visibly about its “aboutness.” It cannot help but offer commentary on itself whenever it is seen. This may lead to infinite regress as in the case of the arrow, to which Braver again draws our attention in Wittgenstein (*BB* 97): “Every explanation of how [one] should follow [an] arrow [is] in the position of another arrow.” This recalls arrow-headed Steve Martin’s “It’s great to be here!—No, it’s great to be here!” stand-up routine.<sup>45</sup> Martin’s joke on language adopts the infinitely regressive structure of what philosophers call (after Aristotle’s critique of Plato’s theory of forms), “The Third Man Argument.” In brief, there must always be a third man to witness and explain how a man can be both a man and the form of a man, a triad that can be rehearsed indefinitely. “The third man” who is himself “dead” must vouch for the life status of Harry Lime, and the “dead” state of “Harry Lime” is made possible by the dead body of the third man, who lies in his (Lime’s) grave. Similarly, each arrow mention instantiates a new arrow that rather than plotting the course of the first arrow, takes its place, ceding the plotting to the next arrow and the next. For an anxiety-disordered mind like mine, “next” is a double sign of expectancy as an overwhelming agency—whether it is waiting ahead or behind.<sup>46</sup>

Staring too fixedly at thought creates distance and passivity that, according to psychology, can result in “phantom concreteness,” which gives material substance to inner consciousness and “uncanny or mute particularity,” which has the mind counting thoughts like steps and steps like thoughts, thinking about walking while doing it as if there were notes on the soles of your shoes, isolating and projecting the action/thought/words like film frames on a mental screen. You walk inside of walking in the way that you wait inside of waiting, draining context as you (don’t) go. The mental object of anxiety/OCD is the third man that takes place in the world and takes the world’s place in order to forestall catastrophic disappearance. It is a control function. Wittgenstein’s penchant for describing without explaining his thought enacted without formally acknowledging just how obsessed he was with citing his mind’s and the world’s edge and how compelled he was to show himself in the act of not falling off it.<sup>47</sup>

## Twister

Aren’t the numbers a logical peculiarity of space and time?

—Wittgenstein (*PR* §109)

Word processor Paul Hackett drones away in Martin Scorsese's *After Hours* (1985), hermeneutically looping time, place, sign, and number into a twisted counter-narrative of how dreams of home ambiguate fear of homelessness. The unseen husband of the deeply neurotic Marcy, the siren who draws Paul downtown with the promise of an artist's ceramic bagel with cream cheese (a symbolic *pudendum femininum*), is a "Wizard of Oz freak." Paul is reading Henry Miller's novel *Tropic of Cancer* (a geo-temporal locator of forbidden desire and censorship) when he first meets Marcy at an uptown coffee shop, where he could presumably get a real bagel with cream cheese and where even the cashier, who executes a series of well-turned pirouettes, performs the iterative spin cycle of unfulfilled desire (the story's circular pattern), of the non-compatibility of career and work (meaning and object). Later in SoHo, a waitress named Julie hands Paul a napkin that reads, like a scream through a daydream: "Help me! I hate this job!" When Paul attempts to grab onto the hint of romance by jotting down Marcy's phone number, he finds that his pen has run out of ink. Number here makes its first illegible if indelible mark, specifically the number 20. "I only have a 20," Paul tells a cab driver, and then he doesn't even have that, as "the 20" flies out the open window of the cab taking him downtown to see Marcy.

At Marcy's temporary residence in SoHo, the loft's owner Kiki Bridges (bridges which OCD minds cannot always cross) offers to throw Paul's shirt (made dirty by the papier-mâché he is helping to apply to Kiki's sculpture) into the washer.<sup>48</sup> "Come on, it will only take 20 minutes," she tells him. When Paul checks his watch in Marcy's room, it is 1:50 am (or 10 minutes to 2). At this point, the film with the posthumous title *After Hours* has been running for just under 20 minutes. Like Paul's shirt in an obsessive-compulsive's dream (a Dorothy Gale-like twister), the number "20" is running on spin cycle. In Wittgensteinian terms, the "20" is an extension that generates enough extensions of its own that it resembles (but is not strictly speaking) a concept. Paul takes a "20" off of Kiki's Segal-like papier-mâché sculpture of a screaming man who is his "future me," and a blind news item reporting on a mob's angry pursuit of a man dealing in their stolen goods attaches itself to Paul's arm (as it would to an idiot).<sup>49</sup> Wittgenstein asks, "How can I expect the event, when it isn't yet there at all?" (*PG* §90). But what if it is?

The film's assorted female number-spinners appear intent on mystifying Paul with non-probability, in much the same way that Wittgenstein believed philosophers do by obscuring language. Possible confusion may also arise in the use of numbers, says Wittgenstein, because while zero-less (ratio-enabled and -enabling) rational numbers elide with measurable physical time/physical space, cardinal (zero + counting) numbers invoke immeasurable (infinite) memory time/visual space.<sup>50</sup> This spatial-temporal dis/similarity may not be or else may only be apparent, as are pictures to which Wittgenstein also likens numbers. Specifically, "numbers are pictures of the extensions of concepts" (*PR* §100). Marcy gives Paul her phone number (her extension) too quickly

for his pen or the ink in his pen to keep (it) up. In SoHo, the Mister Softee (another sign of male impotence) truck driver Gail (a twisting gale lifting homeless Dorothy to the surface) allows Paul to use her phone to call Information for a number, an extension. But how many numbers are there? While Paul dials, Gail repeatedly interrupts his spoken train of thought by arrhythmically inserting a random series of numbers that will make him forget his own. This numerological disjunction, as Wittgenstein would call it (*PR* §89), extends to objects, to numbers of objects, to the problem of making (rational) comparisons between objects, numbers, and the meanings contained in parts of speech. This in turn draws down on the possibility of proposing a theory of generality that can enter into “the theory of truth functions” (*PR* §87). Once we know (if we can know) how many numbers there are, what about extensions? Wittgenstein illustrates this problem as follows. Once we know that there are five horses standing in the stable, we have determined the truthfulness of the answer to the question, “how many horses are standing in the stable?” But what if we want to ask, “what color horses are they?” or even, “what is a horse?” Is a particular number or series of numbers inclusive of all concepts of which numbers may be extensions? Can we ever know all the rules that govern these concepts, whose extensions are articulated in the forms of words and numbers? (*PR* §92). Is Gail’s interruptive voice really Paul’s own intrusive thoughts, his anxiety-fueled mental resistance to after-hours illogic and the catastrophe of (numerical—“I only have a 20”) (ex) change? 20 what? Minutes to complete a test, to determine what the test is or even what “test” means?

While waiting 20 minutes for his shirt to be ready, Paul retails reiteratively named Kiki how when he had his tonsils taken out as a child, they were out of beds in pediatrics and so they had to put him in the burn ward. Paul discovers burn ointment prescribed to Marcy in her medicine cabinet, which together with a photo book of burn victims he finds on her bedroom floor while she is in the bathroom (presumably applying burn ointment) leads him to conclude that “Marcy *is* a burn victim.” On the basis of speculatively looped thought, Paul rejects the body of Marcy Franklin’s cashing it in (her surname’s likeness graces the \$100 bill). This leaves Paul, whose mind did all the work, unchanged. Paul later (?) slow dances at Berlin Bar to the faux-Weimar cabaret song (of his own selection) “Is That All There Is?” that begins, “I remember. When I was a little girl, our house caught on fire.” Is this Marcy’s posthumous voice? Solitary Kate’s, who perhaps madly claimed to have burned her house down? Or is it Paul’s still dreaming about homelessness? “True life means: to invent new places where we can be ruined . . . ; every new work is only the invention of a new death.”<sup>51</sup>

*After Hours*’s agonized Segal-head reinvents Hitchcock’s posthumously twisting *Vertigo* trope. Scottie Ferguson’s giant dream head agonizes before the fact of knowing (consciousness) that he has been solipsized by a posthumous woman, an actress standing in for a woman whose suicide he helped

her murderous husband fake by involuntarily playing the role of false witness, the third man. Death is a numbers game: 1 murdered wife + 1 murderous husband + 1 involuntary witness (he sees the woman's nominally suicided body fall from atop a high tower that his vertigo prevents him from climbing to the top); 1 murderous husband + 1 actress he hired to play his wife so that Scottie would see her going up the tower (but not coming down) + 1 involuntary witness (Scottie who happens to pass the actress on the street, and struck by her resemblance to the late woman, remakes her as the posthumous woman. The actress becomes her own posthumous woman by accidentally falling off the same tower wearing the late woman's clothes, making new work of an old death.

Paul's neighborhood museum (his apartment is on Manhattan's upper East Side), the Guggenheim (a possible white-swirl architectural prototype for Kiki's sculpted bagel), lists in its collection George Segal's *Picasso's Chair* (1973). Segal's piece depicts the figure of a white plaster-sculpted female nude contemplating and touching a collage of wood, cloth, rubber, and string from which is configured what appear to be two abstract chairs overlapping at right angles. Paul compares Kiki's sculpture to Munch's painting *The Scream*, which he mistakenly calls *The Shriek*, as names are switched out as readily as time and place, person and object, number and number. All that really counts here is the dark maw of vertiginous anxiety into which Paul as female artists' member-less male life-study falls. Given the evidence of his misnaming (an improvised inversion of "mismaming"), it is unlikely that Paul would care much about seeing Munch's painting, even if it were on loan to the nearby Guggenheim from its home in faraway Oslo. Actually, one of the four versions of the painting was stolen, and could be hidden somewhere in the apartment of a wealthy private collector in the gentrified future (after *After Hours*) SoHo. The future robbery motif can be allied with the film's backward glance at SoHo in the days when the artists who lived there had not become wealthy or famous enough to rob. Can an anxiety dream be nostalgic? Yes, but only for itself, as an obsessive-compulsive return that fixes on the idea of return without ceasing returning. Everyone (in the film) has a key to something—to apartments and work spaces—but the obsessive-compulsive mind wants a lock to worry, a dream about what we dare not dream. In Paul's dream, he is locked safely inside a cubicle of word-processing thought, agoraphobically sized to his fear of dying crossing the street, only posthumously like or as Harry Lime.

For may it not happen that I *imagine* myself to *know* something?  
(OC §442)

Žižek suggests that "each form of reality contains the anamorphic spots that, if attended to, open up to that reality's contrary."<sup>52</sup> The after-hours world in which locations overlay and streets recur characterizes the wider

anamorphic way of seeing of *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999), which Stanley Kubrick's OCD disenabled him from returning home to New York to shoot, compelling London to double for New York and characters to travel in a circle to what is allegedly a different street. Here an accidentally overdosed Mandy, a one-off of the suicided (one-off) Marcy, precipitates the nighttime journey of a Bill—Dr. Bill Harford—who can do what bill-less Paul could not, namely save the girl. But by doing so, Bill becomes a doctor without borders wandering into discomfort zones of his own imagining (and nearly ringing the number of an HIV-positive call girl with the language-game moniker “Domino”). But whereas Paul wore his anxiety on the outside as a sensible suit, Bill is tightly wrapped up for a long emotional winter in black overcoat with matching leather gloves that keep him warm and hygienically sealed. Bill (whose wife Alice formerly worked at a SoHo art gallery possibly selling pieces created in the intervening decade by the downtown female artists Paul encountered) skates across the virtual thin ice that coats the unexposed imaginary streets, like Handke's horseman realizing only after the fact how close he had been to falling through. Unlike Paul, Bill can pay \$50–\$100 over the taxi's meter rate to take him where he wants to go and wait for him until he returns after hours. In a life devoid of financial worry, Bill has to imagine his anxiety as an alternative form of currency.

Bill descends into “The Sonata Café,” a name whose ambient sound recalls depraved playwright Claire Quilty's “Insomnia Lodge” in Nabokov's *Lolita*, which Kubrick filmed in 1962, also in England impersonating the novel's American setting. The café's interior, where Bill's journey of instruction effectively begins, is hellishly red, making it a signatory to an unspoken contract with Wittgenstein's color index for instructional measurement. A sign on the wall warns that “ALL EXITS ARE FINAL,” as one imagines they are in the TERMINAL BAR that Paul Hackett frequents. Bill's medical school dropout friend Nick Nightingale plays piano with a pick-up combo called Sonata Jazz but will soon be playing blindfolded for a secret rich-man's masked orgy. Bill overhears the event's secret password “FIDELIO,” after Beethoven's only opera, *Fidelio*, or *Conjugal Love*, about a wife who saves her husband, and so Nick begrudgingly invites Bill to accompany him. After a journey of unspecified length, a taxi deposits Bill in front of the one costume shop open at this late/early hour which, with dreamlike audacity, is located across the street from the Sonata Café and which was already accounted for by Wittgenstein: “a picture is drawn on a big sheet of paper which is then so folded that pieces which don't belong together at all in the original picture now appear side by side to form a new picture, which may or may not make sense” (CV 68e). The mind forms an origami-like city (redrawn in the obsessive-compulsive DNA of an edited film), a baroque series of folded realities like those discussed by Deleuze after Leibniz. “Rainbow Fashions,” as the costume shop is called, recalls *After Hours*'s and two models' promise to take the married but tempted Bill “to the end of the rainbow” just before he was called away to

save Mandy. The proprietor of “Rainbow” tries to interest Bill in his under-age daughter, a nymphet who strongly recalls Lolita.

The original story certainly disintegrates now, as the paper is unfolded; the man I saw was taken from over *here*, his words from over *there*, the surroundings in the dream from somewhere else again. (CV 69e)

Bill is blindfolded and taken by car to an estate that appears to be in Glen Cove, Long Island, whose name vaguely hints at forbidden promise (Glen or Glenna?) and recalls Hitchcock’s *North by Northwest*, a movie I may have actually seen in Glen Cove in my early life. In that film’s scenario, Madison Avenue ad man Roger Thornhill, who claimed to be the proverbial wrong man (an anxiety-dream scenario), was driven against his will to a Glen Cove estate belonging to the United Nations diplomat Lester Townsend, whose surname is redolent of some other terminal bar to be reached but not crossed. Thorn-Bill escapes Glen Cove within an inch of their lives, and returning as posthumous people, discover that the past has been de-authenticated by its location—“Glen Cove” having been Old Westbury in Hitchcock’s film and Mentmore, Buckinghamshire, in Kubrick’s.

A handmaiden at the orgy, who is paradoxically both masked and naked, tells Bill as the Fortuneteller told Edmond: “You don’t belong here.” He is an intruder. “I’m sorry,” says Bill, mistaking himself for Thornhill, “but I think you’ve mistaken me for someone else.” Bill’s “not *not* belonging” logic corresponds to the nonsense the mind makes of sense and the sense it makes of nonsense:

Someone who, dreaming, says “I am dreaming,” even if he speaks audibly in doing so, is no more right than if he said in his dream “it is raining,” while it was in fact raining. Even if his dream were connected with the noise of the rain. (OC §676)

Bill’s domino is now Mandy (and not HIV-positive “Domino” taken out of circulation pre-Bill), whose previous meeting in the narcotized state of a waking dream coined the currency of mistakenness. Architectural arches recede and the passing corridors whisper in his ear, “*Sleep No More*.” Mandy’s intervention on the intruder’s behalf (he is unable to produce the password for interiority, the house not actually having one—i.e., it does not have a password, it does not *not* have an interior) compromises her anonymity and condemns her to the very same death by drug overdose that Bill’s earlier intervention had prevented. “When a promise has been made here, there is no turning back,” the Chairman of the house’s erotic festivities tells Bill, who has been *not not* trying all night to go back on his promise of marital fidelity. Alternatively, an intruder for whom an intervention has to be performed to gain him entrance suggests that the intruder has not, in fact, got it in him to

transgress. In either case, Bill returns home to find his wife Alice transcribing her husband's dream in her own mental handwriting. When Bill awakens Alice, she is still laughing at him in her dream, extending Gail's laughing at Paul when her interventions caused him repeatedly to dial the wrong extension. Laughter, then, is an anamorphic spot that opens up the "logical peculiarity of space and time" (PR §109). "I'll tell you everything," Bill says twice, interrupted by the sound of his own crying, which may only be him thinking out loud about pain. "*A man's dreams are virtually never realized*" (CV 56e), Wittgenstein wrote, but in spite or because of his love for escapist movie fare, he might also have been thinking, "*A man's dreams are never realized virtually.*"

I am of course deformed. And obsessed. You can see I am always talking about play-acting, originality, dramatic individuality, theatricality in people, the forms taken by spiritual striving. It goes round and round in my head, all of this.<sup>53</sup>

German Jewish concentration camp survivor Professor Artur Sammler confesses as much to a visiting Indian scientist, the only copy of whose unpublished scientific manuscript, *The Future of the Moon*, has been stolen by Sammler's daughter Shula in a misguided attempt to help her father with what she imagines to be his life's work on the writer H. G. Wells. The lost title vibrates with my earlier triangulation of sleep disorder, the Sandman's moon-children, and my own hospitalized child, although that template concerned not what a child did for a father but what a father, powerless to do anything, thought he did (did *as* thought) for his son. But here I may be *not* mistaken:

If I were to say "I have never been on the moon—but I may be mistaken," that would be idiotic.

For even the thought that I might have been transported there, by unknown means, in my sleep, *would not give me any right* to speak of a possible mistake here. I play the game *wrong* if I do. (OC §662)

The original text of *The Future of the Moon* cannot be returned, because it cannot arrive within the mental act of expectation. What is returned instead is a fake, a Xerox copy. The Professor and the manuscript thief Shula transfer anxiety between them like an analyst and an analysand, but even more like print from an original to a copy ("She worried lest the Xerox take away the ink and wipe the pages blank"), a study in the anxiety of generational loss and "self-communing obsession."<sup>54</sup> Like the Professor's manuscript, which is written in a "special ink" that could potentially be lifted off the page in the copying process, Paul Hackett is a counterfeit bill put into the anxious circulation of having its hiddenness found out.<sup>55</sup> Paul bears the guilt of another person's suicide and a series of home break-ins and robberies of which he is

at once falsely but not unreasonably accused of being un-confessed. He can be said to deny private experience, as did Wittgenstein, who like Paul, was seduced by its form if not its argument. Paul's counterfeit currency (what time *is* it, really?) is passed to Bill, whose cheek rests finally in his wife's hand. But is it the right or the left hand? In their state, can s/he tell the two hands apart or to whom they belong—the hidden criminal or the potential victim?

### The Altered Lock

**Freud's idea: In madness the lock is not destroyed, only altered; the old key can no longer unlock it, but it could be opened by a differently constructed key.**

—Wittgenstein (CV 33e)

**I cannot negate the basic rules of a system.**

—Wittgenstein (PR §163)

The key to Lars von Trier's film *The Element of Crime* (1984) hinges upon a door, a door handle, and a lock. Under hypnosis, a police detective named Fisher relates a story to his therapist about his search for a child murderer. Fisher's voice intones the words that will lead him back to Europe (from Cairo) for the first time in thirteen years: "I've finally been called back to Europe to solve a murder case. They told me I was able. That's all I know." The subject's feeling of capacity ("They told me I was able"), rather than the usual overwhelming sense of incapacity that so often accompanies generalized anxiety disorder, constitutes the key here. This is what von Trier has to say about himself:

At the moment I have loads of phobias of various types. The instant I don't turn my energies to the creative side, I turn it to thousands of anxiety-inducing things. I find it difficult that, just in order to exist, I'm forced to. . . . It puts a lot of artistic practice into a certain perspective, if the whole thing doesn't express an inner need . . . to communicate something. Conversely, it's an expression of survival.<sup>56</sup>

Read through the director's filter, of course, the sentence "They told me I was able" suggests a feeling of incapacity that is counteracted by the creative problem that Fisher has been given to solve, the murders of young girls by a serial killer named "Harry Grey." We never actually see "Harry Grey" in the movie (and here the scare quotes around his name serve an as yet unrevealed purpose), except in the form of his signature on a hotel register. Fisher, who is retracing Grey's steps and stepping into his role as per the system proposed by his mentor Osborne in the latter's book *The Element of Crime*, replicates

“Harry Grey’s” signature exactly on another page in the same register and at the same time in a different register in the sense of some other voice or speech.

We know early in the story that Fisher is “haunted by headaches” (“the solipsist claims that nothing exists except his headache”), as is Grey, and after signing the hotel register, the clerk automatically assumes that he (Fisher) will require headache medication, which he offers to him and which Fisher accepts.<sup>57</sup> Kim, the prostitute whom Fisher picked up on the road while following the route prescribed in the tailing report on Grey, calls where they are staying in the hotel “a room for headaches,” although she might have said “a room of headaches,” allowing for the elusiveness and the allusiveness of the history they are making and/or remaking by changing a part of speech. The therapist who has hypnotized Fisher tells him, “You’re trying to reconstruct Harry Grey’s headaches by means of the side effects of these pills.” So, is it “a room *for* headaches,” for making headaches, or “a room *of* headaches,” a room with such a history that Fisher is stepping into and inhabiting? Fisher has trouble sleeping. “It’s all those pills,” says Kim. “Try counting.”

There is a reason why insomniacs make the best OCD agents. They feel compelled to count. Fisher initially proposes that all of Grey’s murders were committed inside a geographic area that defined a square. (Osborne to Fisher: “It sometimes helps to study the geography of a crime.” Wittgenstein: “A system is, so to speak, a world.” [PR §152]) However, Fisher only determines how “to close the system” when he realizes that each murder occurred in a town whose name begins with the letter “H” and that some of these towns fall outside of the square template he has identified as being the kill zone. Remember the mental exercise that asks you to connect a number of points, arranged in vertical series, using one line that you draw without ever lifting your pen off the surface? The only way of doing this is to draw a long line that goes through and beyond the borders of the points that are configured in the shape of a square and then to draw the line back into the square in one continuous action (this doubling back upon itself being also the labyrinth’s M.O.).

Wittgenstein wrote, “I cannot draw the limits of my world, but I can draw limits within my world” (PR §152). But in declaring a limit to what he will and will not do or experience, is Fisher enabling himself (“They told me I was able”) to change the rules of the language-game of which he is a part, in which he plays a part? (“*The Element of Crime*,” explains Osborne’s televised voice, “sets up a series of mental exercises to better allow us to understand the mind of a criminal.”) Wittgenstein said, “The form and the rules of syntax are equivalent. So if I change the rules—seemingly supplement them, say—then I change the form, the meaning” (PR §152). Perhaps. But this would presuppose that a person, in this case Fisher, who is somehow entangled with the posthumous “Harry Grey” (a Wittgensteinian color-alternativity to both “[Harry] Lime” and “[Harry] Gray”)], knows who and what he is, the “I”

upon which the changing of rules, form, and meaning is predicated. And if he is a solipsist, can there be any rules outside of the world as he perceives it?

Fisher realizes, much like Jack Torrance did in Kubrick's *The Shining*, that he has stayed at this hotel before and that he has a shared history and is of one mind with a child murderer. Having learned from Kim that she knew Grey, had in fact slept with him in this same hotel and had a child with him, Fisher (who is wearing a cap that says HARRY GREY on the front of its crown—the last detail in a cumulative effect that unintentionally cites the absurdism of Ionesco's play *The Bald Soprano* with its two unknowing and yet cohabitating spouses) decides to hunt Grey alone at night. Fisher and the young girl he has taken with him to bait his trap await Grey's arrival inside a room, which frightens the girl and moves her to ask Fisher, "Is he here now?" A door handle turns slowly, menacingly on the outside of the room door, as per movie convention. As Fisher now clutches his head, we recall lines he spoke back at the hotel of coincidences: "I'm getting rid of Harry Grey, getting rid of the pills. It's not my headache." But there are no coincidences. Fisher is Harry Grey, insofar as there ever was an original. "Harry Grey" may have just been a murderer whom Osborne created as a composite case study for use in his book *The Element of Crime*, which appears to elide fact and fiction. Faked visual evidence indicates that Grey died in a car accident. In a photograph of the wreck, the death car is seen in the background consumed in flames (like one of the photos on L. B. Jefferies's wall), and Osborne is standing in the photo-foreground staring at the camera. (Osborne tells Fisher: "He died in the flames. I couldn't help him!") The composition suggests a publicity photo that would be printed on the back of Osborne's book about the "Lottery Murders" committed by Grey. (Fisher to Osborne: "Just one question—who is the picture supposed to convince—me or you?") Osborne has since hung himself after murdering young girls according to "Grey's" system, and now his pupil Fisher has done the same. Is it the obsessive-compulsive system, a language-game in service to a book for which Osborne tells Fisher, "discipline is a prerequisite," that is mad, or is it the dreamer, which Fisher is called throughout the story? Is he really even a dreamer, or more properly an insomniac? The world that Fisher is hypnotized into remembering is inundated by water, and telephones are placed in the most inconvenient places, like under a table that Fisher (who is fishing for "the facts") must make his body small, like Wonderland's Alice, in order to reach. Elsewhere, a telephone sits atop a flooded sink, its numbers and extensions long since fallen into disuse but with its status as an anxiety object intact.

An extension: a man comes to the front door of your house. He is a child murderer. A second man comes to the front door of your house. He is a hypnotist of sorts who is trying to reconstruct a scene to determine whether he committed a crime. I answer the door both times and speak to both visitors. I am instinctively suspicious of the first man who appears to have no past (no credit cards, no checking account, no formal identification), but allow

the second man to disarm me with his quasi-hypnotic invitation to retrieve the past from my sleep and his trance-like state of the night before. “You’re drifting, Mr. Fisher,” the therapist says, to which the patient answers, “If I’m drifting so was Harry Grey at this point. I’m only doing what the tailing report is telling me to do.” I, of course, am writing the tailing report—one non-sleeper agent following another.

### Persons from Porlock

We could say that the notches and teeth forming a key bit are not comparable to the words making up a sentence but to the letters making up a word, and that the pattern of the key bit in this sense did not correspond to a complex sign, to a sentence, but to a word.

—Wittgenstein (*BB* 119)

“If it’s a question of murder, your mind jumps from one thing to another,” he had heard somebody say in a movie.

—Handke, *The Goalie’s Anxiety at the Penalty Kick*

Handke’s 1970 novella *The Goalie’s Anxiety at the Penalty Kick* depicts a criminal mind breaking down, while also offering a taxonomy of how a mind can be driven to palindromic sentencing by obsessive-compulsive performance behavior. Handke’s protagonist, Joseph Bloch, who is in the process of being fired as a construction worker, “had once been a well-known soccer goalie.” Having worked twice over with his hands, his mind remains addicted to continuous practice of a sentence it pushed from the beginning to the end and back to the beginning of conscious narrative:

“Surprised by the shot, he’d let the ball roll right through his legs.” And before this sentence he had thought about the photographers who annoyed him behind the cage. And before that, “Somebody had stopped behind him but had only whistled for his dog.” And before that sentence? . . . And before that? . . . He could not remember any more . . . He searched the sequence for a clue about what might have come before . . . But it did not go any further back. Then he noticed, in the paper in front of him, a picture of an apartment door that, because there was a corpse behind it, had had to be broken open. So, he thought, it all started with this apartment door, until he had brought himself back to the sentence, “He had been idle too long.”<sup>58</sup>

Bloch has murdered a movie theater cashier. Unable to mentally un-schedule the past, goal-tending or future sentencing provokes in him a chronological

breakdown: “He had been idle too long”—“too long” an indeterminate because contextless temporal phrase whose ultimate sentencing (placement in a final sentence) can only invite false and incomplete comparison. Bloch has become aware of this sentence but (owing to its impersonal thirdness) not of its self-obsessed character. Unconfessed, “he had to keep his guard up against words that transformed what he wanted to say into some kind of statement.”<sup>59</sup>

This is how it works, the obsessive-compulsive not(ic)ing of everything and nothing, running backwards without necessarily remembering or forming any real memories, except of the previous sentence, sequences of sentences. The repetitive move to analogy and comparison that wears them both away, like a door grown weary of the lock’s counter/turning, the brokenness of the parts into the non-agreement of subjects and predicates:

He lay there, as impossible as he was real; no comparisons now. His awareness of himself was so strong that he was scared to death. He was sweating. A coin fell on the floor and rolled under the bed: a comparison? Then he fell asleep.<sup>60</sup>

But this all came earlier, before the obsessive counting which led to the obsessive sequencing and comparisons of a mechanical hand inside a jukebox grabbing a record to the lever of a coffee machine rising, the two images negotiated by “a wristwatch slipping out from under the sleeve down to the wrist when the waitress let her arm drop.” This was also before the sentences that were sawed in half began—“To his left he saw . . . To his right there was . . . Behind him he saw. . . .”<sup>61</sup> And this in turn was all before the apparent resolutions of sleep, the revolutions inside his mind:

The gatekeeper, who was lying on the sofa, had just wakened; he made signs that Bloch did not know how to answer. He nodded. The gatekeeper came out with a key and opened the gate but immediately turned around again and walked ahead. “A gatekeeper with a key!” thought Bloch; again it seemed as if he should be seeing all this only in a figurative sense.<sup>62</sup>

Is the true gatekeeper-goalkeeper relationship a re-figuration of Wittgenstein’s duck-rabbit whose simultaneity can never be seen? In Kubrick’s *The Shining* (1980), hotel caretaker/would-be writer Jack Torrance becomes so obsessed with goal-less sentencing by his writer’s block—“All work and no play make Jack a dull boy,” that is, “He had been idle too long”—only incomparable death (inside a maze of his mind-reading’s prospective design) can undo idleness as being “too long.” “Before this,” the writer is driven mad by the agoraphobic isolation of thought thinking itself in a hotel ironically named for a perspective known only to film—The Overlook, the impossibility

addressed by Wittgenstein's "seeing as," which the famous duck-rabbit teaches us can only be done from one or another view, not simultaneously (i.e., in overview). Grady, Torrance's nominal predecessor in the caretaker's role (less a man in fact than an evaluative GRADE grid of psychopathology), murdered his two children in Torrance's present state of mind. He tells Torrance, "you have always been the caretaker," a statement in support of which he provides Osborne-like photographic proof. "You have always been" does not allow for the intrusion of an ex-time, a relative time that can have been forgotten. The all-time disfigures the particular, acknowledging the very reason why Wittgenstein re-coined "family resemblance" (after Nietzsche) as a dissolvent applied to "the problem of universals."<sup>63</sup> It (including the past) just never was anymore.

When somebody in a movie turned on the radio, the program was instantly interrupted for a bulletin about a wanted man.<sup>64</sup>

Bloch reads a blind item in the newspaper describing the killer (in his case, himself), as did I after a fastidious and courteous man who bagged leaves for my family and spoke gently to my two small children was picked up leaving town and identified as being on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted List. The man's neighbors called him "The Professor," because he read a lot of books. He was intelligent and good at explaining things. They were, of course, shocked to learn that some years earlier, "The Professor" had murdered his own small children by luring them into the trunk of the family car with their favorite toys. Like a character in a Stephen King novel or at least in a Stephen King novel's car, I only later thought. Having escaped prison (in an edited-out passage of the crime narrative), this same man ran down his ex-wife in an alley and killed her as well on the opposite coast. (He must have been skating on the thinnest of thin ice to have reached her when and where he did.) Despite the absence of a photo (the photo-absence), I knew instantly that the man whose name was different in the newspaper story than the man I met at my door was "my" killer, the man they called "The Professor."<sup>65</sup>

The phrase "my killer" is alarmingly duplicitous and multivalent as it may be a simple or obsessive appropriation on my part (of my part) or a fiction-based citation of the future me, whose fate I don't yet know. "The crime, with its unknown killer and unknown killed [which] lay in his mind alone, a fearful solipsism." Wellman's *Fortuneteller* (from the novella of the same name), who, at one point, "had some time to kill" (an occupational hazard, no doubt), comes across a newspaper item concerning the serial killer he fears might be him. "From neither the smudged photograph nor the scrambled text . . . was it clear whether the killed person was male or female."<sup>66</sup> Did the Professor read the same blind newspaper item I did and wonder whether he had committed the crime of which it spoke? What if anything did he remember? I remember how careful my killer was to leave nothing out of place or to chance. He filled

each lawn bag as meticulously as a poor man's teeth scrape every bit of meat off of a spare rib or kernels off an ear of corn. He may as well have been filling those bags, rolled and closed at the top, with human husks, with discarded ribs, blanched clean and fleshless, as with the leaves that lexically foretold his secret exit bearing his few books, no doubt in a paper bag.

The article that Bloch is reading contains a picture of the murderer, but . . .

The headline and the picture looked to him as if they had been pasted onto the paper; like the newspapers in movies, he thought [thereby pasting a thought upon a sentence]: there the real headlines were also replaced by headlines that fitted the film; or like those headlines you could have made up about yourself in penny arcades.<sup>67</sup>

What was I thinking when I read the headlines and later saw my murderer's photograph in the newspaper with his real name attached? "No distractions," he muttered to himself. As if to contradict himself, he went outside. . . ."<sup>68</sup> Is this what he muttered to himself when he saw *my* children inside my house, fighting the compulsion of comparison to his own? Where to him, I wonder, was "outside"? Not in prison, not in the house, not in his right mind? "To be ashamed of a thought," Wittgenstein wrote. "Is one ashamed at the fact that one has spoken such-and-such a sentence in one's imagination?" (Z §656). Did he know he performed a murder that was not in his imagination? Did he bring to my door a lock or a key?

One cannot see oneself, says common sense. I would add that not only can one not see oneself outside of oneself now, in the present, but also that one cannot see oneself in the past.<sup>69</sup>

The only sort of guest I'm really scared of is the one commonly known as the returning guest.<sup>70</sup>

I awoke one morning to find large and deep circles pressed into the front lawn of my house. This unexpected alien pattern, unaccountable to logic, was devised just under a large window so it must have been traced at night when the house was asleep and dreaming.

OUTSIDE MAN: Can you tell me if I have been here before?

INSIDE MAN: No, I cannot.

OUTSIDE MAN: Do you recognize me?

INSIDE MAN: No, I do not.

OUTSIDE MAN: I just wanted to check to make sure that no one was hurt, that I didn't hurt anyone.

INSIDE MAN: No, I don't think so, but I don't know what you mean? When were you here?

OUTSIDE MAN: I may have driven my car up on your lawn during the night, thinking that I had turned into my driveway from the street.

INSIDE MAN: But there were two cars parked on the street in front of my house all night that would not allow sufficient space between them for your car to pass through and then go up onto the curb and around my lawn. And why did you drive around in circles on my lawn in any case?

OUTSIDE MAN: I got confused. I thought I was in front of my house, but when I got out of the car to check, someone I had never seen before ran towards me like he wanted to harm me. So, I jumped back into the car and drove away quickly.

INSIDE MAN: How did you manage to fit your car between the two parked cars on the street?

OUTSIDE MAN: I don't know. I have no memory of it. I don't remember anything about last night, except that I made a stop somewhere before I arrived home and there may or may not have been other people who crossed my path.

INSIDE MAN: Had you been drinking before starting out on your trip?

OUTSIDE MAN: No. Well maybe one or two small drinks but not enough to impede my driving or erase my memory. (Pause) Do you mind if I come in?

INSIDE MAN: Well, no, I guess not.

OUTSIDE MAN: Can I have a glass of water?

INSIDE MAN: Yes (thinking to himself, but then you will need to go; also thinking, isn't this how most home invasions begin?).

The intruder was a local anesthesiologist, who, I suppose, may have returned to collect on a sleep debt I owed at the Sleep Disorders Center. Or was he there to test my memory of the child-murderer having been there earlier and my knowledge of what that means? They always come in twos, these intruders.

All things theatrical are dimorphic, are two-fold. In a sense, they are duplicitous.

For two is the number of the Adversary (and all things adversarial). There is nothing wrong with this.

Indeed, the hoax is good to think upon if one would seek to be rooted in a world that cares not a whit for our purposes.<sup>71</sup>

Even though the doors I have encountered all take keys, the doors I have imagined all take mock-remembering as a performance behavior of mental projection and introjection. In "Some Remarks on Logical Form" (1929), Wittgenstein sought to articulate rules "concerning the structure of a phenomenal field, the structure of our language, and the projective relationship between the two." He did this in an effort "to introduce a new conception of

analysis as the activity of uncovering the structure of experiential phenomena . . . a fully analyzed language for immediate experience.”<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, Stern writes, “[Wittgenstein] treats the physical object as a construct and assumes that the immediate object of the experience—the object that the primary object is supposed to describe—must be a mental event.”<sup>73</sup> I ask myself, as per Wittgenstein’s philosophical inquiry, “is it possible to provide a nonhypothetical [autonomous, self-contained] description of the content of experience?”<sup>74</sup> “It’s a hoax,” a voice inside my mind says, “my performance behaviors . . . they are telling me this.” By now, though, the anesthesia has unobtrusively entered my system and I feel myself going under—riding the wave of allowable (anxiety-quelling) incapacity, counting down—5, 4, 3, 2, 1, and . . . I wake up inside a white room in which there are no visible doors, the floor is raked, the perspective is forced, and the floor is trapped in several hidden places.

## Chapter 7



# Masterminds

The object is the fixed, the existent; the configuration is the changing, the variable.

—Wittgenstein (*TLP* §2.271)

The reasonable man does *not have* certain doubts.

—Wittgenstein (*OC* §220)

It seems to me obvious that nothing we could ever think or say should be the thing.

—Wittgenstein (*LE*, 6)

Talk turns to gold . . .

Turns to gold when it's told.

Turns to gold when it's told.

Turns to gold when it's told.

—Wellman, *The Difficulty of Crossing a Field*

In Mamet's film *Heist* (2001) Joe Moore's crew steals a gold shipment off a Swiss airliner, which provokes a member of his crew, Don "Pinky" Pinkus, to proclaim that he never liked the Swiss. Pinky is particularly bothered by the cruel inanity of the cuckoo clock, which makes a show of tiny figures (like pinkies) being hammered (as Pinky will be to a bloody pulp). Pinky is, of course, referencing *The Third Man*, which one supposes is required viewing for con artists. Later, gilt paint peels off plain metal bars like gold wrappers from Swiss chocolate bars, which are not kept in unnumbered Swiss bank accounts like the real thing. "Gold" is a word that as an object carries two valences and sets of meanings and values—being precious and being Jewish, with the former being "pristine" as the criminals in this film like to say about a job that has gone perfectly, and the latter being assimilated (or

not “pristine”) as American Jews say less about themselves than about their brethren who want to deny being the real thing.

Wittgenstein believes that “everything that can be thought at all can be thought clearly. Everything that can be said can be said clearly” (*TLP* §4.116). Clearly, Mamet might say, but indirectly as befits a con. The film’s heavy, the very short Mickey Bergman (whose nephew has renamed himself “Jimmy Silk” and who has given his own business the contrived-to-be-non-Jewish-sounding Cathi Sue, Furs Limited), thinks he can outwit Moore with less. As Bergman prepares to shoot Moore at point-blank range if he does not give up the gold, “gold” enters into a Wittgensteinian language-game:

BERGMAN: Okay, you want to wrap it up? Or do you want to stand around here and guess my real name?

MOORE: What is your real name?

BERGMAN: Rumpelstiltskin.

MOORE: What was it before you changed it?

Bergman’s real name may not have been worth anything in the old country, but as a self-made immigrant’s son, he has effectively spun straw into gold, like his namesake’s fairy tale. Bergman’s introjection of Moore’s disdain for his status and stature is reinforced by Moore’s assimilationist religious and ethnic slur. Moore’s attitude says in effect that even Bergman’s gun is inane, because it is not allowed to speak. It is kept waiting by a language-game. Mickey is better with direct speech than when he tries to be “cute.” “Everybody needs money,” he says. “That’s why they call it ‘money,’” being a good example of such Tractarian thinking as, “The name means the object. The object is its meaning. (‘A’ is the same sign as ‘A’)” (*TLP* §3.203) and also, “Logic can always be conceived to be such that every proposition is its own proof” (*TLP* §6.1265). But Bergman is not self-aware enough to spin his shortness into compactness as a regular basis for self-expression and self-worth.

“Money isn’t a naturally occurring thing,” writes Lennard J. Davis. “It is a totally human-made invention, and yet it is real. Its rules are socially constructed and its effects can be radical.” But “in asking whether money is real or not [or even more or less real—e.g., gold or paper currency], we miss the point. Likewise disease. Disease exists to the extent that human beings identify it and learn how it works.”<sup>1</sup> The con’s secret agency in gaming the system of thought and classification is effectively to reveal language’s nihilistic potential for self-undoing: “Everything we see could be otherwise. / Everything that we can describe at all could also be otherwise. / There is no order of things a priori” (*TLP* §5.634). The value of currency is baseless without gold, the value of gold baseless without shortness of supply relative to demand, and “it is a property of affirmation that it can be conceived as double denial” (*TLP* §6.231). “Everybody needs money. That’s why they call it ‘money’” is not universally true, since “call” is wholly dependent on “need”

and need is variable, not provably universal. “Propositions are meaningful,” Wittgenstein wrote in the throes of his picture theory of meaning, “just and only because they record or express a thought which itself constitutes a representation of a particular and determinate state of affairs in the world.” What Wittgenstein adopts in place of this picture theory is avowal, which is meaningful in large measure because it is not descriptive, “not dependent for its meaning on picturing a state of affairs.”<sup>2</sup>

“When I think in words, I don’t have ‘meanings’ in my mind in addition to the verbal expressions; rather, language itself is the vehicle of thought” (*PI* §329). And thinking in words is not necessarily something that we do, at least to the extent that thinking can be defined as a function of language.<sup>3</sup> This allows Mamet’s characters to overarticulate language without necessarily being overly articulate *about* language, that is, grammatically speaking. “The concept of a living being has the same indeterminacy as that of language,” says Wittgenstein (*Z* §326). “Do you know who I am?” asks the Mamet character, to which we respond by moving our lips, as if to say “only in so far as I know what you’re saying, and I can’t really be sure about that.” But if the logic of Mamet’s con artists is not pristine (and being con artists, why would it be?), their language as language has great use-value, in effectively asking its auditors, “Do you know who *I think* I am?” And either you know or you don’t know. You do or you don’t. You’re in or you’re out of the know, the language-game.

By the time he wrote *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein had broadened his attitude about language, moving away from forthright ostensive definition (“The colour that occurs to you when you hear the word ‘red’ is a definition” [*PG* §33]) toward language’s more conditional, more contextually manifold uses.

Instead of producing something common to all that we call language, I am saying that these phenomena have no one thing in common which makes us use the same name for all—but that they are related to one another in many different ways. And it is because of this relationship, or these relationships, that we call them all “language.”  
(*PI* §65)

Wittgenstein appears to disseminate “language” as Mamet does “money.” (To paraphrase: “Everybody needs language. That’s why they call it ‘language.’”) But appearances deceive. Language in general, and “money” in particular as part of language, not only go in and out of circulation: they are reassessed and even repossessed. Meaning (and even value) is being maximized, even if definition is being made more abstract or obscure. It is not one thing, but many things operating under the name of one thing. The shorthand for this, “the thing,” confuses only those who don’t already know what it, the thing, is. (As in the adage, “If you have to ask how much it costs, you can’t afford

it.”) The philosopher and the writer have expanded their linguistic capital in the name of clearer communication as to motive, if not meaning. Wittgenstein writes: “‘The meaning of a word is what an explanation of its meaning explains.’ That is, if you want to understand the use of the word ‘meaning,’ look for what one calls ‘an explanation of meaning’” (*PI* §560). Or, as an overarticulating Mamet character would say, “That’s why they call it meaning,” meaning that which serves as “an explanation” is not a “what” but a “that.” Moore’s statement, “Love of gold makes the world go round,” says that gold is money’s maximum value but that even it comes after the world. Bergman’s “Everybody needs money. That’s why they call it money,” says that the world comes after money and that “need” should be read not only as desire for the things of this world but desire as the thing itself.

The characters in *Heist* are what in mid-nineteenth-century American culture were called “gold bugs,” “for whom money meant gold, paper money being merely a licensed fraud.”<sup>4</sup> Suspiciousness regarding the spinning of gold into currency (the antique into the new model) by some spectral hand (as in *Rumpelstiltskin*) underwrites the occupational paranoia of the criminal regarding the circling of his peers around *his* money and other prized possessions. The word of the criminal’s peers is not worth the paper it is printed on, a literal reprint of the anterior blankness of paper currency that for the criminal mind, suspicious of what the world makes of his anxiety, signifies nothing. Nothing is not zero, which has a physical form and is a visual sign. Zero is the signifying potential of nothing’s catastrophic apparency, its ability to survive. “Nothing means nothing” is as non-identical with itself as it is with everything else. And when somebody cites “everybody” in relation to the need for money—“Everybody needs money”—the trailing statement, “That’s why they call it ‘money’” (which offers “money” as a meta-sign for value), actually dematerializes the embodied thing by transforming it (as it has transformed gold) into a name, a sign that can only know itself and its own alibi.<sup>5</sup> Think of this as the world’s counter-argument in defense of its beforeness (givenness) and money’s afterness. In his story “The Gold Bug,” E. A. Poe “plays with and mocks paper money’s ambiguous duality, its ability to appeal to the anterior existence of gold at the same time as it deconstructs, via its capacity to manufacture money, the very possibility of this anteriority.”<sup>6</sup> In Mamet’s Jewish identity-crisis procedural *Homicide* (1991) the detective protagonist’s surname “Gold” not only stands for “some anterior ‘thing’” but replaces the anterior thing, the original Jewish surname that Gold’s family brought over with them from Europe. This act diminishes in an absolute sense the name’s “intrinsic value” for the sake of transforming it into American cultural currency.

This is the same assimilation-as-reduction theme alluded to by Moore and Bergman in the “*Rumpelstiltskin*” exchange (“What was it before you changed it?”). Even at gunpoint and on his knees before the much smaller man, Moore (who plays at being an “ordinary Joe”) refuses to be marked down (he is also a “Moore”), to be underestimated (undervalued) as he has been by the

next generation of criminals represented by “Jimmy Silk,” the value to which this alias surname alludes being obviously fraudulent. In this evaluative system, Joe’s wife Fran (his “brass ring”), whom he sends to Jimmy to learn his plans, constitutes “a traded option [which] is a double object: a commodity which is bought and sold which itself promises to buy or sell some other commodity.”<sup>7</sup> “What kind of man sends you to me, his wife to me?” Jimmy asks Fran. “Would I do that to you?” Ultimately, it is not the disingenuous traders, Joe and Jimmy, but the commodity, Fran, who recognizes and acts upon her full market value, refusing to be sold at a loss and selling out Joe. “Money,” writes Brian Rotman, “is always a sign, certainly when it is a medium, but also when it is a ‘thing,’ a commodity, being bought and sold.”<sup>8</sup> The “thing” that is passed around or circulated like money, as if it were money, is gold but also Fran and “the job,” capacity and reputation, the products and byproducts of the uncontrolled free market exchange of labor for capital that devalued language collects and reproduces in the form of inflated signs.<sup>9</sup>

*Heist*’s real object(ive), for which its multiple thefts, cons, and betrayals serve as objective correlatives, is to articulate the reciprocal exchange between meaning and value. As is the case in Mamet’s other con artist scenarios, meaning and value are determined in relation to the desire of others and the bespokenness of the object to another. Said object only appears to be a subset of “the thing,” the caper and its object, when in fact, it is the enlargement of what the thing performs into the sign of performance itself. This is why even when one or more of the characters succeeds either in executing the thing or in thwarting its execution, the event of loss comes into view, extruded by the thing through the surface of the plot. This is what is normally called a learning experience, but although Mamet’s characters learn about things (information) and about how to do things (execution), they do not appear to possess a moral capacity beyond (if rarely) honor among thieves. Any such possibility is blocked by the counter-ethos and impermanence of the sociopathic worlds that Mamet so prizes for their closed-circuit definition of honesty as a use-value, the utility of value as a thing. In the case of *Heist*, one might even go so far as to say that the thing, that is, its strategic process and its goal, is bespokenness itself, as the frequent naming and renaming of people and disguising of objects and the redefining of kinship appear to bear out. In engaging with film as a visual medium, Mamet takes on the Wittgensteinian question, “In what *sense* is it [a detail, an object, the thing as absorbed by the spectator] a genuine visual experience?” What mode of or grounds for perception is “skepticism-proof”? Where is “a hierarchy of real ‘knowability’” upon which we can depend for answers or standards for evaluation of the evidence that is being presented?<sup>10</sup>

Just prior to her final departure, Joe asks Fran whether Silk, who has him at gunpoint, intends to kill him, and Fran tells Joe that he doesn’t—the deal being that Jimmy gets Fran in exchange for Joe’s life. In that case, Joe says, he (Silk) shouldn’t point a gun at him, because “it’s insincere,” effectively

paraphrasing the inanity of Bergman's anterior gun. Can an anterior gun even be fired? Does its anteriority likewise make it insincere? Is it language that is insincere, or is it life itself, living as we do at death's pleasure? Isn't that why they call it "life"?

### Show and "Tell"

He didn't give a damn for the glamour, the style, the art of criminals. . . . However, Mr. Sammler had to admit that once he had seen the pickpocket at work he very much wanted to see the thing again. He didn't know why. It was a powerful event, and illicitly—that is, against his own stable principles—he craved a repetition.

—Bellow, *Mr. Sammler's Planet*

One gives oneself a false picture of *doubt*.

—Wittgenstein (OC §249)

The opening credits of Mamet's *House of Games* (1987) are accompanied by Bach's "Fugue from the Toccata in C Minor," suggesting an anxious intricacy/the intricacy of anxiety, the notes repeating obsessively like Wittgensteinian propositions that keep interrogating themselves as musical phrases, at the same time stealing your attention, hijacking your mental state, and putting you in mind of your dis-ease. Given that Wittgenstein's intention was to disenchant language for philosophy by rendering it ordinary and to disenchant philosophy in order to make it useful ("we are destroying . . . only houses of cards, and we are clearing up the ground of language on which they stood" [PI §118]), his relationship to the con artists in Mamet's *House of Games* who produce yet conceal disenchantment is contrapuntal. In fact, as Lee Braver has remarked, "games come to replace pictures as Wittgenstein's favored model of language partly because games present such a clear and forceful alternative to atomistic meaning."<sup>11</sup>

We meet Dr. Margaret Ford on her way to the office building in which she works as a psychiatrist specializing in treating addiction and obsessive-compulsive disorder. Ford is the author of the book *DRIVEN: Obsession and Compulsion in Everyday Life*, a title that hearkens back to sociologist Erving Goffman's popular book on performance behavior, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959). A young woman runs after Ford and asks her to autograph her book. "It's for a friend," she says. "It's the second one I've bought" (a good OCD joke), before confessing "You've helped me very much." Ford's OCD mind substitutes "pressure" (work) for "pleasure" (life outside of work), one of several such substitutions she makes in a film that speaks to its and her ambiguous degree of not knowing and the revelation

of her hidden anxiety: “Something that should not have been exposed, as something meant to remain hidden [lacking], becomes present.”<sup>12</sup> Ford’s shoulder-padded jacket and matching skirt approximating a judge’s or a Molière physician’s robes manifest a professional manner and identity that hold self-awareness and self-ministration at bay. “Physician, heal thyself” (Luke 4:23) comes to mind, as Mamet no doubt intended.

Ford’s terrified gambling-addicted patient Billy Hahn (rhymes with “con”) tells her he is about to default on a \$25,000 gambling debt he owes gambler Mike Mancuso at the House of Games and that this will get him killed. He threatens to kill himself with the gun he shows Ford, an insincere gesture given his impending death sentence, although Ford cannot yet read the gun as being the gambler’s “tell” (the involuntarily signed truth behind the bluff). The House of Games, to which Ford goes to intervene with Mancuso on Billy’s behalf, is a fraud, the original being in New York, and not Seattle where the film was shot; unless as in *Eyes Wide Shut* and as the numbered address, 211 Beaumont Street, suggests, 211 recurs, which it does as  $2 = 1 + 1$  or  $1 + 1 = 1 + 1$ , a reformatted 11:11. This OCD numbers game recurs in a hotel room numbered 1138 or  $11 = 3 + 8$ ,  $11 = 11:11$ , where a pivotal scene is performed. How you cut the cards, run the numbers shows or doesn’t show that the fix(ation) is in. The House of Games sits under a 7-UP sign, like a card turned face-up, a lucky 7. “7 come 11,” as they say in “craps” (“SAY BULL” says the bar’s neon sign), where a 7 or 11 on the first roll of the die wins the game. “Roll of the die”—or, you bet your life.

The House of Games’s double-locked door is unlocked to Ford, letting slip her clandestine membership. Likewise, the door closes behind her of its own accord, a spectral closing in the mind of what does not yet want to be seen. In the House of Games, Ford meets Mancuso, who offers to forgive Billy’s debt which he says is only \$800 and not \$25,000—the lower number enticing compensatory participation while raising the possibility that the higher number was really only the lower number inflated by anxiety. In return, Ford must read the tell of another gambler named George, which the OCD/ADHD mind parses as an anxiety-driven impulse-control problem. What turns out to be a purposely false tell results in Ford losing her own money (she backed Mike’s hand against what she misread as being a true tell) and facing down what turns out to be an insincere gun that leaks water.

GEORGE: I told you a squirt gun wouldn’t work.

MIKE: A squirt gun would have worked. You didn’t have to fill it.

GEORGE: What, am I gonna threaten someone with an empty gun?

John le Carré’s novel *Single & Single* (1999) begins with a Magritte-like take on a Wittgensteinian proposition, “This gun is not a gun. . . . This gun does not exist. It is inadmissible evidence. It is no evidence at all. It is a non-gun.” With a gun pointed at his nose, lawyer Mr. Alfred Winsler, for whom

“facts were there to be challenged,” turns over *the thought of the gun* in his mind. It becomes “a fever gun,” in the way that Saul Bellow wrote, “Firing this pistol was nothing but a thought.”<sup>13</sup> Winser also dubs the object “a joke gun,” presumably the kind that shoots water, like George’s in *House of Games*, or else the kind that when the trigger is pulled shoots a flag out the barrel that screams “BANG!,” as does Vanya when he repeatedly shoots at and misses the Professor at close range in Chekhov’s play. The malfunctioning gun becomes a dysfunctional mental object, “a facsimile of a gun.”<sup>14</sup> The gun is all show and no tell in terms of physical function but all tell and no show in terms of mental condition. That Winser, even under normal circumstances, is prone to anxiety, or overexpectancy (exaggeration affecting the appearance of greater precision), is indicated by his mental admission in this confrontational moment that although he has never carried a weapon, he has carried a walking stick with which “to fend off rabid dogs and sex maniacs when he was taking a turn on Hampstead Heath to admire the lady joggers.”<sup>15</sup> Winser’s anxiety “tell,” captured in the words “rabid” and “maniac,” reflects the irrationality of thought when thought is confused with the object whose likeness it expresses.

Ford, driven to succeed on emotional cruise control, anxiously awaits the appearance of the actor in herself—the Booth in her Ford—who, falling to the stage in mid-performance, exposes the criminal complicity of the intrusive thought that is the fever gun. Actor John Wilkes Booth, of course, shot President Lincoln, then leapt to the stage, stopping the performance of *Our American Cousin* at Ford’s Theatre. At one point in *House of Games*, Ford opens her desk drawer, allowing us to glimpse a book of postage stamps with a picture of assassinated President John F. Kennedy on the cover. This circulation of presidential names and images, including the mental images of real guns (those that kill presidents) puts us in mind of their nominal relation to currency and coinage, meaning and value as in *Heist*, and of the cautionary voice inside OCD criminal-mindedness to “stop the show” that can’t be stopped simply by shouting down incapacity’s tyranny as if it has already been triumphantly vanquished.<sup>16</sup>

A confined mental patient, a murderess, whom Ford is treating tells her, “You know, I know there are people who are normal,” and Ford, as if responding not just to but *as* her own intrusive thought, asks rhetorically, “Are there?” “Yes, there are” (normal people), Ford’s patient insists, “but . . .” “But what?” asks Ford, here playing the role of the Wittgensteinian self-interrogator. “But I don’t know what those people *do*.” “How can you live when you’ve *done* something?” the patient asks in the interstitial space of the OCD mind between “do” and “done,” in which the reality determination of confession-worthy, self-criminalizing acts is confused. “You’re going to feel a strong urge to confess,” Mancuso tells Ford, whom he has set up to believe has killed an undercover cop in a hotel room. “Don’t do it,” he cautions her. Don’t do what, Ford’s OCD mind asks her—what has already been done? (“*THE TYRANNOUS AND BLOODY ACT IS DONE*”).

Ford stammers out to her own psychiatrist, “You know, you know the dream where you’ve done something terrible, some, some and you say ‘I wish . . . I wish this was a dream’ . . . and if you reveal yourself you betray someone else.” Ford’s unconscious, inexact transcription of her murderous mental patient’s “You know, I know” into “You know, you know” is telling, as is her reference to revealing someone else’s confidence, in which her professional code is invoked transparently to protect herself. The obsessive nature of gambling (a not uncommon addiction among obsessive-compulsives) fuels the anxiety dream of a more transgressive crime for which you must be harshly self-judged and sentenced, despite not knowing who was murdered or why. Guilt needs no reason to haunt the mind. Guilt *is* the reason. The mind marks the cards it needs in order to lose the game for itself. The mind shuffles and stutters thought in so many words, like “You know . . . you know . . .” and “I wish . . . I wish . . . ,” but the stammer is for show, the fake tell of the mind performing the uncertainty of not-knowing as affect. The psychiatrist, representing the self-analyzing mind dialoging with its own levels of un/awareness, feels she must be punished for the crime that is only thought, that is, for the crime of thinking as a form of othering.

Ford steals a Cadillac (“The total stranger mumbled something about a Cadillac that smelled like a phobia inside”) to flee the fake scene of the fictional crime.<sup>17</sup> The car is a convertible, open to cursory surveillance, remodeling, as the physical object does, thought (the mental object), as exteriority does interiority, Ford’s desire for self-exposure as well as her gullibility as deniability. Ford does not appear to notice the giant dice on the dashboard (the gambler’s but also the mental storyteller’s tell) and the keys that are already in the ignition (the keys to dis/enablement). Ford does not let herself see (the audience standing in for “herself”) that *DRIVEN* is a twice-told tale of performance behavior that engenders dual purchase (cleverly cited in the autograph seeker’s double book purchase) and has a double claim on the author as her own secret patient. But it is precisely this double claim, Ford’s psychological condition and psychiatric profession, that makes her actions seem insincere. The false frame of the subject’s not knowing is articulated in the con man’s frame of not letting something be known. Ford is allegedly writing a book on con men and they, standing in for her unconfessed self, are certainly keeping a book on her. The psychiatrist has been non-therapeutically modeling an oneiric house of games in which inquiry is not the cure but the disease, in which the telling (the fake story or performance) is the real tell.

Ford eventually turns the fever gun on Mancuso, whom she casts in the role of the bad psychiatrist, that is, as herself. In the final moment of Hitchcock’s *Spellbound* (1945), the murderous psychiatrist Dr. Murchison turns a gun upon himself in the viewing space of the theater audience (the othered self) and fires in close-up at point blank range. In this liminal moment, “the gun operates as an awesome signifier that cannot be subsumed within a given discourse, cinematic and/or psychoanalytic.”<sup>18</sup> Murchison, who had

allowed an amnesiac patient to take the blame for the crime the doctor committed (the obsessive-compulsive performs an amnesiac cycle of repetition and substitution), represents our self-monitoring mental agency and its attendants—psychiatric analysis, amnesia, guilt, paranoia, obsession. Ford shoots her othered self, Mancuso, at point-blank range with her patient’s gun that was part of the original frame. “It’s not my pistol. I was never here,” the stolidly expressionless Ford tells Mancuso, as if speaking from memory le Carré’s, “This gun is not a gun. . . . This gun does not exist. It is inadmissible evidence. It is no evidence at all. It is a non-gun.” And yet, unlike Bergman’s gun in *Heist*, or George’s water gun, this gun of vexed mental provenance speaks the truth.<sup>19</sup> The OCD doctor has emptied her mental fever gun of its rounds, its ritualized recycling. “It’s not my pistol. I was never here” expresses her inchoate desire not to give the object a name, not to reveal her book *DRIVEN*’s real subtitle, which is *My Own Story*.

### Paperless Crime

Comparing the event, as mentally he sometimes did, to a telephone circuit: death had not picked up the receiver to answer his ring.

—Bellow, *Mr. Sammler’s Planet*

Philosophical problems can be compared to locks on safes, which can be opened by dialing a certain word or number, so that no force can open the door until just this word has been hit upon, and once it is hit upon any child can open it. // . . . and if it is hit upon, no effort at all is necessary to open the door// it // .//.

—Wittgenstein (*PO*, S. 417, 175)<sup>20</sup>

Hitchcock’s *Dial “M” for Murder* (1954) opens with husband and wife Tony and Margot Wendice sharing a kiss and then a breakfast, both of which will turn out to be even more self-consciously staged scenes of domestic normalcy than we could have imagined in this clearly articulated play-inside-a-film. (Hitchcock’s film is an adaptation of Frederick Knott’s 1954 play of the same name.) Hitchcock blocks his actors in front of the camera and blocks his camera so that we become aware that we are seeing double, restaging in the form of staging that is being alluded to and re-created. This in turn mirrors the motive of the criminal planning his crime with an eye to how it will be restaged in the ensuing investigation by the police detective trying to get inside his (the criminal’s) mind to discover identity and motive. Tony accidentally knocks over a salt shaker at breakfast and then superstitiously throws the salt over his shoulder, performing a ritual action whose ordinariness masks

obsessive-compulsion as a possible motive for trying to know in advance what comes next, how to forestall bad luck and by extension in the narrative to follow, how a criminal act can foretell and so forestall an otherwise anxious future, while, at the same time, engendering another anxious otherness of guilt and/or confession. Margot notes in the morning paper the arrival of a passenger ship, which allows Hitchcock to cut away from breakfast to the disembarkation of Mark Halliday, who in the very next scene is revealed as being Margot's lover and the source of Tony's future-tense anxiety and criminal behavior. Mark's double course of action—clearing Margot by helping capture Tony—revises pulp western writer Holly Martens's efforts to reaffirm his own innocence by proving his criminal friend Harry Lime's in *The Third Man*.

The reversal of audience expectations that Hitchcock affects by following the marital embrace of Tony and Margot with the post-arrival extramarital embrace of Mark and Margot recalls the opening of Henri Becque's play *La Parisienne* (1885). Becque depicts what appears to be a marital argument over the wife's infidelity. Suddenly, the wife stops the argument with the words, "Careful! Here comes my husband!" revealing that she has been playing this scene with her lover, and as in *Dial "M,"* the scene's premise is a romantically incriminating letter that is kept under lock and key.<sup>21</sup> Like a phone call from the future, the circuit(ry) of this moment activates in the viewer's mind the diabolical mechanism that Hitchcock will later literalize by taking us inside the workings of a telephone apparatus at the moment an attempted murder is being committed. And, in the context of this mechanism doing its work, the word "murder" will tarnish a wedding ring. Margot's feeling of unworthiness at the promise of real intimacy and satisfied desire in the face of spousal betrayal makes her an almost willing victim and, in a sense, her own would-be murderer. However, marked down for murder by her husband, Margot does not ultimately become a victim, because the nightmare scenario into which she literally awakens from sleep allows her only to play the victim's role as if in a fiction, a play. This will only become clear later, when the fateful-but-not fatal telephone rings and Margot gets out of bed to answer it.

"Hollywood cinema can almost never escape a telephone's importuning," Robert B. Ray has asserted and Hitchcock's *Dial-ing* phone fetish confirms.<sup>22</sup> Margot, the film's other fetish object and so allied to the phone, is, at the start of the film, wearing a totemic red dress, precursor to the black slip and bra Marion Crane changes into while trysting with her lover Sam in Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960). This projected echo resonates back inexactly as echoes do upon Margot's normative condition, which is to be married, and to the superstitious act of over-the-shoulder salting as an expression of some (marital and mental) dis-ease. The unmarried Marion will steal money so that she and her lover can afford to get married, whereas Margot's case will demonstrate what marriage costs and the price of trying to get out without

losing your physical freedom and your mind. Margot, who is spoken for as both wife and mistress, will answer the phone in the afterlife of her apparent death (the attempt to strangle her from behind having failed) and hear her own voice renegotiating with the receiver (her murder-sponsoring husband) the limits of her bespokeness.

Margot tells Mark that a love letter he wrote to her was stolen from her handbag at London's Victoria station. This bit of criminal whimsy recalls Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), in which the true identity of a foundling left in a handbag at Victoria Station (Oedipus's distant comic twin) is discovered in the play's title. When Margot shows Mark the two blackmail notes she received following her handbag's theft, Mark fumbles in his efforts to remove them from their envelopes and then to unfold them. This physical stutter is Mark's tell, signaling the anxiety that hides beneath his earnest insistence that Margot tell Tony of their affair. It is, after all, one thing to commit one's life to a woman; it is quite another thing to commit one's life to another man's wife. This being a Hitchcock film, Mark, Margot, and Tony are naturally scheduled to attend the theater that evening, as it so often figures in Hitchcock's plan to expose guile amid its constitutionally artificial and conventional (insincere) trappings that serve as a template for the film's overall *mise-en-scène*.

Having obsessively tracked the letter Margot transferred between handbags and finally stealing it, Tony (who cannot bear to part with his wife's money) hires a morally compromised small-time criminal he went to school with to murder her. Tony easily baits the pseudonymous Captain Lesgate with the sins of the redolently Proustian C. A. Swann's (his true identity's) past. As Tony, a former professional tennis player now equally skilled at verbal service and volley comes to the net conversationally speaking, Hitchcock shoots Swann and Tony, who are seated opposite one another, from ground, or *stage* level. This is a setup that will pay off in the film's final act when Tony is netted by the Law whose agents are not only shot from below but standing upon a dark shadow the width of the proscenium film frame, suggesting the edge of a stage. Tony is the author of a play whose high points he enacts for Swann, a featured player in a plot that will bury him. While Tony requests that Swann don white gloves to remove his presence from the scenic room, Tony swats away Swann's objections as scrupulously as he wipes away his own fingerprints that would otherwise transform objects into props and props into evidence that the present scene had, in fact, transpired (been staged). Like Wittgenstein in David Foster Wallace's coinage, Tony possesses "an absolute genius of objectification," although unlike Wittgenstein Tony replaces fact with simulation, *mise-en-scène*, a pointing at meaning enacted as slippage by and among words and actions, objects and images, locks and their shadow keys.<sup>23</sup> Swann stands silently taking it all in (critically speaking), even putting his hands in his pockets, not for the purpose of pulling out a gun, but more as a sign of being somehow resigned to merely and

faux-comfortably listening to see (as are we) not how the story (which is his/ours) but the plot (which is Tony's/Hitchcock's) will play out.

When Swann asks Tony where the murder will take place, Tony remarks "Approximately where you're standing now." Swann is standing behind the desk where Margot will answer a phone call from Tony (to establish his alibi) while Swann is being hidden by the theatrical curtains behind the desk ready to strangle Margot the moment she picks up the receiver. Hitchcock pulls back to shoot Tony from overhead so that we see the two men and their shadows standing off opposite one another, murderous talk anthropomorphizing theory as practice. The camera catches the spectator consciously watching himself watching his own unspoken desire to act—not to stop the crime, but to commit it.<sup>24</sup> Said doubling stands in for theater's sincere insincerity (the gun that is pointed without intent to kill, projecting into theatrical space its incapacity as a killing mechanism), its murderous intentions wrapped up in the ostentatious alibi of character and play, here seen to be facing off with inner reality. Catch the stage inside the film and you will glimpse the demonstratively unseen mind's true confession. "Let us imagine a theatre;" wrote Wittgenstein, "the curtain goes up and we see a man alone in a room, walking up and down, lighting a cigarette, sitting down, etc." (CV 4e). Now imagine what the crane shot reveals when it rises from the stage floor, either in a film or only when thought, the mental object, remains: "But there seems to me that there is a way of capturing the world *sub specie aeterni* other than through the work of the artist. Thought has such a way—so I believe—it is as though it flies above the world and leaves it as it is—observing it from above, in flight" (CV 5e).

The trick is that the subject must remain, to a certain extent, unaware *not* that he is thinking but that he is observing himself in the act of thinking, that he is performing thought as a behavior. The nominal difference between the character whose thought is out in front—in this case, Wendice—and the one whose thought is lagging behind—that is, Swann—appears as difference so as to track thought as manifest performance. The extreme clarity of this definition for the spectator in this example is designed to reveal Tony's predatory intelligence and the self-satisfied cleverness of Swann's criminal, which argues for less logical and more local intelligence. Swann has to work harder to achieve less ("Lesgate," less at or of "the gate," the take, the cashbox young Swann stole while a student at Cambridge University which first put him on Tony's radar), because he makes too many mistakes. This fact in turn redounds back upon the lack of discipline in his thinking that is otherwise equated in Tony's mind with his lack of character. Tony's directorial plan is to draw a particular performance out of Swann that plays to his weakness. His working on Swann's hidden guilt (not his hidden sense of guilt) recalls how Mancuso drew out Ford's true guilty, criminal character to suit his and her own obsessive-compulsive criminal design.

Wendice is a better liar than Mancuso, because he appears to think aloud, to share every detail of his thought process with his mark. "But suppose he

was lying but never said so,” asks Wittgenstein—“did he know he was lying or not?” “Did he know he was doing what we call lying?” “Did he know that he was doing what, on other occasions, he called lying?” (*PO* 247). Is the actor lying in the context of his own plot? *Can* the actor lie? Tony’s articulateness as to theme belies the ostensive nature of its actable parts, the how-to instructions of performance surrogating the difficulty of explaining how the action to which these actable parts lead can be justified, defined. “Murder” is a moral abstraction that cannot ever really be captured in the sum of its parts, the details that instruct in the absence of some higher instruction. Or is it of some higher *obstruction*? Joan Copjec argues that “anxiety is precipitated by an encounter with an object [on a level superior] to that of any object of fact, to any actual object.”<sup>25</sup> How real to the murderer is the object in the murderer’s hand, how real in his mind, that is? Not so real, I would think, as to make him self-conscious of his act in the doing so as to perceive that he is lying, and yet anxious enough to do the act lest some lack, some horrible incompleteness overrides even the heinousness of the crime. We are not all compelled to be anxious, but we are anxious when compelled.

Swann checks his watch when he arrives outside the Wendice apartment on the night of the intended murder. It is 10:53 or 7 minutes to 11. “7 come 11,” as they say in the House of Games, announcing the unwanted intrusion of chance into what was to be the anxiety-taming criminal plan. Swann finds Margot’s latchkey where Tony told him he would leave it (below the runner on the stairs, fifth step from the bottom) and lets himself into the apartment. Margot is asleep in the bedroom, as Tony said she would be. Sleep is a key step in the normative process of a habitual, which is to say, normative personality, someone who always does things on time, sequentially and cyclically, like clockwork. But what if Margot were not asleep when Swann entered her apartment (What if she has been hiding her insomnia from her sleeping husband?), or if Swann’s entrance into the apartment had awakened Margot with alarm? What if she caught him entering or already inside the apartment, perhaps even in anticipation of the alarm sounding “*Abre los ojos!*”? Would Margot in her wakeful state still see Swann as being her own obtrusive thought? What would Swann say to her by way of explanation—“I have come to murder you,” or “Macbeth does murder sleep”? (*Macbeth*, 2, 2). The question and its answer are unrehearsed. What if Swann managed to conceal himself behind the curtains and Tony’s phone call did not awaken Margot from a deep sleep? Would Swann know enough at that point to leave through the garden doors that are just behind the curtains? Would he know enough to leave the apartment without murdering Margot, and so also leave the money he has been promised “on the table,” as they also say in the House of Games? Or would Swann slip into Margot’s bedroom and murder her in her sleep, imagining as she did, that she, actress Grace Kelly (who played Margot), was rehearsing her role as a real-life princess in a film called *The Swan*, released the very same year (1954) as *Dial “M” for Murder*? By attempting to murder

“The Swan,” Swann effectively kills himself, and by killing Swann, Margot likewise murders the guilty “Swan,” who cannot confess to her husband that she is untrue. But only, she hastens to add, in the way that actors (like Grace Kelly) are untrue, which is to say unreal.

Before leaving the apartment for the club earlier that night, mystery writer Mark shared with criminal mastermind Tony his professional skeptic’s opinion that the perfect crime exists only on paper, in books and plays. (The skeptic is here, of course, unaware that Tony has cast him in the role of the guileless lover who by accompanying him to the club helps the murderous husband stage his alibi.) In fact, the perfect murder does not allow for paper, as paper constitutes physical evidence and can tail a murderer with the threat of exposing his paper’s currency. The theoretically paperless crime exists only as thought, but its obsessive tracking and untracking (track-covering) perform the self-fulfilling (f)act of imperfection. “Our language,” says Wittgenstein, “is like paper currency in an economy on the gold standard, only meaningful insofar as it is backed up by gold in the bank—that is, intrinsically representational processes.”<sup>26</sup> So what happens when language loses its connection to the representational processes that gives it meaning as value; when the mind is no longer able to accept, recognize, or justify its thinking as being anything other than insincere? Waking up from sleep only puts you in mind of deb(i)t, of thought that has not returned and is not returning. Intrusive thought devalues language by severing its relationship to the world that lends it support and understanding. Your mind no longer accepts the world’s paper.

Time stops because the mind no longer distinguishes between doing and done. How much self-generated intrusion at odds with the external world would it take for this to happen? Every murder mystery requires a timeline to be truly seen. When Tony checks his watch at the club in what we assume is the real time chronology of the film narrative, it is 10:50 P.M. or 10 to 11, the very same number that during neuropsychological testing I confused with 11:10. Charles Shepherdson writes that anxiety shows itself when “the order of symbolization (substitution and displacement) is at risk of disappearing.”<sup>27</sup> My mental transposition of the time after (11:10) into the time before (10:50) has caused the clock mechanism in *Dial “M” for Murder* to stop, as surely as a pencil stuck in the hole of a rotary phone would prevent the dial from turning, the phone call from being made, and the murder committed. My mind is working overtime to expose the imperfection of desire’s plan and performance in the moment Tony realizes that his watch has stopped. He checks it twice. A watch, of course, always lies about time, although a stopped watch does not lie twice a day in the language-game we call “time.” Tony phonically spells his surname over the phone to the desk sergeant following the crime as ending not in double “s” but as “dice,” which redoubling temporal contingency in the first syllable, “W(h)en,” signs its name to accident as plot’s obtrusive thought. Tony wonders how this could have happened, but we see the absence of second hands from the plotters’ watches rendering “when” inexact, freeing

time to run its course. Wittgenstein's "How does someone judge which is his right and which is his left hand?" (OC §150) might well ask, "What happens to judgment when there is no *second* hand?" It is impaired. One left hand does not know what the other left hand is doing in the aftertime of what had been rehearsal's synchronous play. Left-handedness (they wear their watches on their right hands) is both men's sinister tell and also a sign of what could go wrong. The anxious intercutting and severance of time and location vis-à-vis theater (which Tony is attending) and curtain (in the Wendice apartment) articulates a posthumous time for posthumous people.

We know Tony made a 7 P.M. dinner reservation so that he and Mark would arrive at the theater on time, so surely we have caught them now having after-theater drinks even as Swann is disappearing behind the curtains for his act. And yet in time's confusion (has the doing already been done?), Tony is affecting the theatrical cliché of the stage director nursing a drink at a neighborhood bar during the show's running time, anxiously checking his watch to see when the show will let out en route to the paper reviews and then the paper morgue. Tony as director cannot make time cohere—one table companion says it's 7 minutes past 11, while Mark makes it "only just after that," which makes it what?—just after 11 or just after 11:07? Or perhaps, 11:11, the tell-ing of the mind's paperless theater in which liveness persists only as a mental object. Misreading the time of his actor's call, Swann begins exiting the flat when the phone rings.<sup>28</sup> The lateness of the call adheres with the promise of lateness in Margot that the call engenders to form an almost perfect seal. *Almost* perfect, because the call cannot anticipate the nature and magnitude, let alone the exact timing of Margot's own mental condition or response. The spectator has lost track of time, because time has in the interim (the pause, the break), in the space of the call that has come in the after-time (after hours), lost sight and track of Swann. And here, the diaphanously-gowned-for-night-Grace Kelly, a Swan of a different order and another name, separates herself from Margot and walks into light at the edge of darkness.

### Grace Kelly's Two Bodies in Temporal Slips

Rhoda's sleeping. Can she answer a telephone in her sleep?  
Can she FIND a telephone in her sleep.

—Foreman, *Angelface*

You withdraw yourself and the communication by demanding silently, "Speak, without being able to recognize me." I withdraw myself and the communication by answering, "I can't speak except by exposing that I can't do it, can't recognize you or make myself recognized."

—Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Birth to Presence*

Grace Kelly's two night-gowned and sonorous bodies (signaling marriage as being synonymous with catastrophe) likewise open onto a distance inclusive of proximity as befits the bedroom as the site of marital sleep and desire (and desire for sleep) they frame. Simon Critchley states that "the human being can subjectively distance itself from its body" and effectively does so in a performance behavior related to illness and humor, measuring the body I *have* against the body I *am*.<sup>29</sup> This is a cognitive body in the sense that, to varying degrees, it knows and does not know itself (to be). Nancy separates the visual body, which "persists until its disappearance" and the sonorous body which "appears and fades away into its permanence." Both the visual and the acoustic (and the even less visible acousmatic) are defined practically in terms of distance and with distance, referral to and from the self, that is to say, the spacing and structure of the self, which Wittgenstein likened to a sentence's.<sup>30</sup>

Let us return to the nightgown, whose name denotes a lyrical usefulness, an application of day(wear)-for-night simulation, the hiddenness of the desiring apparatus, the usefulness or use-value of the secret, the hidden, the body made to look concealed in the act of inviting unconcealment. Fashion model Lisa Freeman knows the nightgown she is wearing will speak to gamophobic L. B. Jefferies, even if he is too distracted to listen to what it is saying. (Does he subconsciously hear the cruel irony of his designing woman's surname, "Freeman"?) His self-magnified eye has expanded at the expense of his ear, which has shrunk. His focus upon murder and especially mayhem has displaced his attention from Lisa's appealing (in two senses of the word) body parts to a lifeless woman's of even greater allure. Girlfriend Lisa is offering herself as counterpoint to the as yet disembodied and concealed wife struggling to come into visibility in Jefferies's telephoto lens, his obviously surrogate phallic apparatus playing off of his stiffly cast broken leg.

Unlike Lisa, Margot is a sleepwalker, her husband's "magnetized subject" phone-answering like an answering machine, the calling mechanism with an "inadequation of consciousness" her somnambulism enacts.<sup>31</sup> Margot resembles Psyche, who Freud presents in a posthumous note interpreted by Nancy (and later Derrida) as the mind's extension in a state of not-knowing, of unself-knowing, "outstretched in [already fitted for] her coffin" about which she knows nothing but those around her know "with such exact and cruel knowledge."<sup>32</sup> Like Psyche, Margot is extraordinary in her not-knowing, as the presence of an audience makes clear. Nancy writes, "one abandons to a law, which is to say, always to a voice ["an abandonment" whose origin is "phone"]. . . . Abandoned being is returned or left to *phone*, and to *fatum*, which in turn derives from *phone*. *Amor fati* addresses the law and its voice."<sup>33</sup> Tony's silence on the phone following the failed murder attempt, law's abandonment, simultaneously says in turn, "Behold the woman who refuses to abandon me for death" and "You will be the death of me," or even "You will be/have been the death of me." The dialogue between the wife's

speech and the husband's initial silence erupts as a "syncope of discourse" in the wound of their relationship, in what each of them knows and does not know about the other. "Then, in this self-commotion resembling a (diastolic/systolic) heartbeat as much as a syncope, a rhythmical violence concentrates. It is a gathering in an interruption, the cut (whose temporal inscription is "in the interim") that opens and shuts the mouth."<sup>34</sup>

Hitchcock's screen signature *////* (the William Rothman-defined "parallel-vertical-line" motif) "signifies that we have arrived at a limit of our access to the camera's subject" in terms of the screen itself or "the specific loss of control or breakdown."<sup>35</sup> I recognize this barrier pattern (*////*) as an OCD banister pattern of my own memory-making (ritualistic walking down and up and down and up steps), the key to which was secreted in the before-and-afterness of mental reenactment, of cleaning and checking the fingerprints erased by the criminal and discovered by the detective (both myself) in the wake of incomplete erasure. Wittgenstein's use of the thought-bundle (*// . . . //*) to frame "variant drafts of words or phrases" (*PO xv*) supported a belief that "language can only say what we could also imagine differently" (*PO 189*), leaving the OCD-minded subject to tame the uncertainty this produces by forcing *////* (the Wittgensteinian absent sign) toward 11:11, a phobic sign of inevitable return.<sup>36</sup> Among Hitchcock's phobias—claustrophobia, merinthophobia, possible gynophobia, surrogate agoraphobia, poinephobia—his greatest fear appeared to be inauthenticity ("the wrong man" as walking corpse scenario). For the OCD mind, there is nothing more inauthentic than the guilt it refuses to submit to authentic self-questioning. Cut onto Leonard Shelby's left face cheek (sinister side) is one-half of the Hitchcock motif of *//* signed in blood, as if he (in his short-term memory loss) mistakes himself for someone he is not, his own wrong man, whom he calls Sammy Jankis. Leonard's story retails the failure of return in answering the call (to stop his wife's murder). Jankis's diabetic wife has him repeatedly inject her with the insulin she knows will kill her in order to prove to Leonard (then an insurance investigator) her claim that Sammy's short-term memory loss is real. Leonard tells his story to someone on the phone until the moment he uncovers a tattoo on his body that says, "Never answer the phone." Never answer the call to self-confess. Forget the call has even come.

As *Dial "M" for Murder's* second act begins, an inspector calls, only in person. Crisply attired and self-aware, Chief Inspector Hubbard is purposely ill-suited (he is vain—meticulously attired and periodically combs his moustache) to play the role of the bumbling public servant saved from professional humiliation by a gifted amateur (such as Sherlock Holmes) who solves the case. Hubbard will beat Tony at his own game with the unrequested aid of the amateur Mark, who while hiding in the marital bedroom like a criminal in the shadow of the en suite bathroom's barred (*////*) window, discovers Tony's supposedly missing attaché case full of Swann's unpaid blood money. As in a Restoration comedy, after the concealing screen falls, Tony improvises

a new mode of performance that allows Mark to undermine the case against him (Tony) by presenting it from the fictional perspective of a mystery writer. Tony suggests that Mark should allow him to talk, as “it might sound more like a confession.” The criminal’s mock confession mocks the writer’s mock-criminal design.

Hubbard holds his cards close to his V-neck vest, returning home sentenced but not yet executed Margot, who killed Swann in the act of killing her. Margot’s Rhoda-like blankness indicates she has vacated the body as a text being contested by her mystery-making husband and her mystery-solving lover. It’s a writer’s crime for which she was sentenced, and the logic of grammar tells us, the sentence cannot be executed with her as its subject. When Hubbard instructs Margot to use her latchkey to open the lock on her apartment door, she obeys like a sleepwalker, but her key will not open the lock (i.e., the lock will not obey the key, as she did not obey her husband on the night of the crime and die). Not realizing that the latchkey to their apartment was still hidden under the stair runner where it has been since the night of the crime, Tony removed Swann’s latchkey from the dead man’s body and placed it in Margot’s handbag, turning the story of the foundling key back upon its fake origin. Handbag and key are transported to the police station, with Tony in pursuit. When Tony returns to his apartment with Margot’s handbag, he finds that he is still unable to open the door to his flat. Thinking back through the likely series of events on the night of the crime, Tony now realizes that the key he left for Swann under the stair runner must still be there (and that he has taken Swann’s own apartment latchkey instead). When Tony inserts the key into the lock to open the apartment door, the camera sits down at stage level to capture the frame (in a double sense), in much the same way it did when the bond between Tony and Swann was first forged. Hubbard, Mark, and Margot await the criminal’s entrance across the threshold separating innocence from guilt, as if in an anxiety dream where another you walks in to take your place. Standing behind the desk where the accused stood on the night of her attempted murder, holding the same telephone receiver to his ear as Margot did when Swann accosted her from behind, Hubbard calls the Home Secretary to exonerate Margot. The anthropomorphized phone has changed its category (from anxiety-producing to truth-telling) but not its number or its tone. It, a voice, is still calling you. And it is telling you that you can never be proved innocent of the crime you did not commit.

### The Real Inspector Wittgenstein

**Representation is what determines itself by its own limit. It is the delimitation for a subject, and by this subject, of what “in itself” would be neither represented nor representable.**

—Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Birth to Presence*

Wittgenstein slips through the always (anxiously) open apartment building's front door (the open door that cannot be opened) to conduct a parallel philosophical investigation of the crime. He asks a series of leading questions and makes some equally provocative remarks, pertaining not so much to reasonable doubt in the legal sense but to the reasonableness of doubt in the philosophical sense:

An empirical proposition can be *tested*" (we say). But how? and through what? (OC §109)

What counts as its test? (OC §110)

The re-turning of the latchkey in the door lock closes a circuit in which doubt is undone by error (which is an unreal paradox) and the limit-sphere of representation proves to be the key to logic showing itself completing its work.

Suppose now I say "I am incapable of being wrong about this: that is a book" while I point to an object. What would a mistake here be like? And have I any *clear* idea of it? (OC §17)

There is a strange contingency at work here involving the future event of a crime that may or may not be committed (by Swann) and a murderer's (Margot's) innocence that may or may not be proved, in each case, in time. The timing of the murder is (one-)off and the real if would-be murderer dies. Thereafter (in the "there," after, as in the set, the scene that recurs), the thought-to-be (Margot) rather than would-be murderer (Swann) is saved at the very brink of execution when a door is opened by the wrong key, or rather by the right key in the wrong place (under the stair runner) at the right time. Compounded error reveals error's logic, suggesting that the concept of error is not merely relative but abstract. It takes imagination to perform error (rather than just to make mistakes) in the name of banishing the idea of there being a wrong logic. Instead, the interpenetration of wrongness and logic obviates the "true" and "false" categories earlier posited by Mamet and shows the otherwise unrevealed. The statement, "The pot of gold at the end of the rainbow is full," cannot be said to be either true or false, because there is no proof that there even is a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.<sup>37</sup> This problem recalls Kant's distinction between bounds and limits. Kant wrote: "Bounds (in extended beings) always presuppose a space existing outside a certain definite place and enclosing it . . . limits do not require this, but are mere negations which affect a quantity so far as it is not absolutely complete."<sup>38</sup> Bounds are conceivable, whereas limits are actual.<sup>39</sup> Bounds expand possibility, whereas limits define impossibility. But can we turn a limit into a boundary, and if so, how?

One always forgets the expression "I thought I knew." (OC §12)

Hubbard tells Mark and Margot how he has arranged for Tony to try to open his apartment door with the wrong key, and “when that doesn’t fit, he’ll realize his mistake, put two and two together and look under the stair carpet.” To this, Mark responds: “But if he doesn’t do that, all of this is pure guesswork. We can’t prove a thing.” The Inspector acknowledges, “That’s perfectly true. But once he opens that door, we shall know everything.” That “knowing everything” is impossible is a given, and the closed-circuit form of “the perfect crime” says as much not because the murderer is caught but because contingency has played so prominent a role in the perfect crime’s undoing. At the same time, it is namely contingency (defined as “a future event or circumstance that is possible but cannot be predicted with certainty”) that will help us turn a limit into a boundary.<sup>40</sup> And it is within this expanded (or expounded) logical space (the expansion made possible in this case by the Law’s deceitful imagination) that other (Wittgensteinian) truth possibilities are revealed, that (everything that is) the case will be solved, and, as the Inspector says, “we shall know everything.” Contingency defeats Wendice, who did not expect Margot to kill Swann. Conversely, contingency aids Hubbard, who admits to Mark and Margot that he discovered the first clue to Wendice’s guilt “quite by accident”:

We discovered that your husband had been spending a large number of pound notes all over the place. It ran into over three hundred pounds. And it appeared to have started at about the time you were arrested. Now, I had to find out where he got that money and how. And then I remembered that after you were arrested, we searched this flat, and I saw a copy of his bank statement in that desk. So yesterday afternoon, I went to the prison and asked to see your handbag. While I was doing this, I managed to lift your latchkey. . . . And then this morning, when your husband was out, I came here to look at his statement. I never saw it, because I never got through that door. You see, the key that I’d taken from your handbag didn’t fit the lock.

Contingency here proves very much to be worth the paper it is printed on, proves in fact its currency, its value in the present tense, its usefulness, its application to the problem at hand. Contingency creates the context in which the wrongness of the key gains the capacity to unlock a secret logic, which, almost certainly, would not otherwise have been glimpsed (or, for that matter, glimpsed otherwise).

Would this be correct? If I merely believed wrongly that there is a table there in front of me, this might still be a mistake; but if I believe wrongly that I have seen this table, or one like it, every day for several months past, and have regularly used it, that isn’t a mistake? (OC §75)

So, contingency extrudes and exposes an expanded logic from a closed circuit and this expanded logic reveals itself to be real if not actual. And it is here, in this im/possible reality, that obsessive-compulsion begins, then begins again and again and again, a telephone that is metaphorically ringing off the hook, that is literally ringing even after the receiver has been taken off the hook. It is the fact of the ringing's recurrence that actualizes it, despite what we see in our minds as being about as logical as the aforementioned pot of gold at the end of a rainbow. This recalls Wittgenstein's statement: "I may be sure of something but still know what test might convince me of error" (OC §66). It is a lesson that Leonard Shelby's OCD-guilty mind, performed as memory's short-circuiting, cannot remember to forget.

If agoraphobia (a fear animated by the fact of contingency) locks out doubt with the certainty of the protected interior, then what are we with our closeted (future) agoraphobic anxiety to make of the Inspector (the Law), the innocent victim, and the mystery writer waiting inside the apartment and the murderous husband standing outside the door and preparing to enter—after, I would point out, the criminal entertains more than one moment of doubt and hesitation? The two sides negotiate between law and order the shifting possibilities of certainty and doubt. Inspector Wittgenstein is again looking at his hands:

If I were to have any doubt of it, then I don't know why I should trust my eyes. For why shouldn't I test my *eyes* by looking to find out whether I see my two hands? *What* is to be tested by *what*? (Who decides *what* stands fast?)

And what does it mean to say that such and such stands fast?  
(OC §125)

For the OCD mind, it seems that while the nature of certainty is that it is achieved, the nature of doubt is that it persists until it becomes a certainty. Having been authenticated, doubt gains an afterlife that succeeds each and every certainty—" (My) doubts form a system" (OC §126). Our inability to achieve a conceptually perspicuous view, allowing for the difference between limit-mindfulness and perspective-forgetting is, in part, predetermined by "the richness, complexity, and intricate interrelations of the rules, techniques, and practices of even some of the apparently simplest things we say and understand."<sup>41</sup> Saul Kripke highlighted this problem in relation to Wittgenstein's philosophy by deconstructing the given circumstance of the process of addition, that being the "plus" sign. The word "plus" and its sign "+" are not factual so much as conjectural.  $2 + 2 = 4$  only if one accepts that the sign "+" or its word-substitute "plus" means what we think/assume it means in this particular case and in all other cases. If the meaning of "plus" may be taken to be a rule that makes the solution of the equation that contains it a given fact, what is it about this word or sign that makes this definition

authoritative in the first place?<sup>42</sup> As Barry Stroud points out, “Wittgenstein would certainly endorse the idea that there could be no item in the person’s ‘mind,’ or anywhere else for that matter, that instructs the person, or tells him what to do, in the sense that its presence there guarantees that the person understands the expression ‘plus’ to mean *plus*.”<sup>43</sup> Take, for example the word-object “key.” Does Wendice, who believes that he has devised the perfect crime, understand “key” to mean the object that is the key to his actual but unintentional disclosure and capture?

Taking a step back, Wittgenstein asserted that there is not even any special, as in any given, connection between a sign and the object to which it points. Intentionality—“the directedness of the mind towards an object, which may or may not exist”—constructs the bridge. Names also play a part in Wittgenstein’s word-sign-object triad. Donna M. Summerfield’s paraphrase of Wittgenstein’s assertion that “what are ordinarily called ‘names’ are disguised descriptions, which do admit of error” (*TLP* §3.24) recalls Wendice’s response to the visitor who calls himself “Lesgate” and not “Swann.” Allowing his visitor to respond to a recognition sign first (“You know, I can’t help thinking I’ve seen you before somewhere”), Wendice only then says, “Wait a minute . . . Lesgate? You’re not Lesgate. C. J. Swann. Or is it C. A.?”—“C. A. Well, you’ve got a better memory than I have,” says Lesgate/Swann, whose name and response to Wendice’s strategic “mistake” acknowledges real error. Meanwhile, Wendice has introduced himself to “Lesgate” as “Fisher” under the pretense of wanting to sell him his car. One here recalls Wittgenstein’s inquiry, “‘Do you know or do you only believe that your name is L.W.?’ Is that a meaningful question?” (*OC* §486). This likewise resonates in Wittgenstein’s *Blue Book* statement (of a name’s, like a car’s, resale value): “The word ‘I’ does not mean the same as ‘L.W.’, even if I am L.W. nor does it mean the same as the expression ‘the person who is now speaking.’ But that doesn’t mean: ‘L.W.’ and ‘I’ mean different things. All it means is that these words are different instruments in our language” (*BB* 67). The impression, though, is that to the extent that language both expresses and suppresses intentionality, it cannot help but be double-dealing, a form of betrayal, salesmanship of subjects and objects whose value as meaning have been marked down. Beyond this, the statement or misstatement as to who “I am” (L.W., C.J./C.A. Swann/Lesgate, and T.W./Fisher all being Cambridge University men, have “Cambridge” as their cognate) relates to the other questions of who “I” is and what “I” refers to—and that is as much a statement of difference as it is of similarity. As Hans Sluga explains, “It should be obvious that ‘I’ and ‘L.W.’ cannot mean the same thing, for otherwise the sentences ‘I am L.W.’ and ‘L.W. is L.W.’ would mean the same thing; but the second is a tautology whereas the first can be a very informative [true or false] assertion.”<sup>44</sup> This speaks to Wittgenstein’s problem with the “I” as a subject in the world that is not synonymous with the world “as I found it” but which was there before there was an “I.”

Don't be prejudiced by anything which *is* a fact, but which *might* be otherwise. (PO 98)

This Wilde-like proposition can be used to unpack the Cambridge University reunion photo that Wendice shows to Swann in order to make “Swann” (like Wilde’s “Earnest”) show himself and “Lesgate” the inauthentic variant that has been masquerading as fact (like Wilde’s “John” Worthing, a value-name) disappear. As the framed photograph is shown in close-up, it is clear that the heads of Wendice and Swann (i.e., of the actors playing “Wendice” and “Swann”) have been superimposed upon other men’s bodies, who are seated at the table. We are supposed to see the edits (functioning here like a subconsciously glimpsed self-critique), as if to say “there has been some mistake” or at least some question as to these men’s true identities. The reunion photo suggests the imperfectly sutured agencies of repetition and return. Likewise, Wendice’s showing Swann the photo of their younger (former) selves suggests a dialing back of time, of numbers on a rotary phone dial, and of corresponding letters—false associations and purloined letters in a fake name, an assumed identity. But as in Kubrick’s *The Shining*, in which a man’s denied true identity is revealed to the audience in a framed photograph of him taken at a similarly commemorative table, Wendice’s photo-flourish reunites a person with his name, and so with his fate and the film’s adapted fateful stage mechanism that Cocteau called, with circuitry in mind, “the infernal machine.”<sup>45</sup>

In telling the would-be “Swann” the story of his decision to murder his wife, Wendice repeats that he would have gone through with it himself, “if I hadn’t seen something that changed my mind.” It is only after Wendice repeats this line that Swann picks it up without yet seeing that the line is his cue. “What did you see?” Swann asks, and Wendice answers, “I saw you.” But here, Wittgenstein intervenes. “What does it mean ‘to tell someone what one sees’? (Or perhaps) ‘to show someone what one sees’?” (PO 220). Neither Swann nor Wendice sees “Hitchcock” in the reunion photo despite the fact that he is seated at the table with them. “Hitchcock” (in quotation marks because he would be a fiction to the characters in the film) is in their visual field but not in their visual space.<sup>46</sup>

Nothing is so difficult than doing justice to the facts. (PO 129)

The question of knowing what you see, what Wittgenstein described as the mistakeness captured in the quasi-photographic proposition, “I know what I see because I see it” (PO 215), relates to the film’s bigger picture. Eyewitness accounts of criminal acts, even or especially those of their victims, are notoriously inaccurate, owing, it is commonly thought, to the heightening of anxiety at the moment of the act’s commission. Wittgenstein would argue that the reason for visual error lies elsewhere, and perhaps that Law is not up

to the task of doing justice to the facts. Take, for example, the scene in which Hubbard questions Margot about the identity of her would-be murderer:

HUBBARD: Had you ever seen him before?

MARGOT: Why no. Of course not.

*(Hubbard hands Swann's photo to Margot, who looks at it.)*

MARGOT: Oh. Is this him?

HUBBARD: You don't recognize him?

MARGOT: No, I never saw him.

HUBBARD: But, didn't you even catch a glimpse of his face?

MARGOT: No. You see he attacked me from behind and it was dark. I hardly saw him at all.

HUBBARD: *(laughing disbelievingly, as if to himself)* Yes, but before I showed you these photographs, you said you'd never seen him before. Well, how could you know that if you never saw his face last night?

MARGOT: I don't quite understand.

TONY: Inspector, my wife simply means that as far as she knew she never saw him before.

HUBBARD: Is that what you meant?

Prior to Wendice's insincere attempt to bail out his wife from a logical conundrum, Margot's grammar, without lying, betrays its (although not her) own insincerity—that is, "I never saw him" does not jibe with "I hardly saw him at all." She did see something, but does not understand what counts as "seeing" under the Law. The anxiety of not knowing what she saw invokes Wittgenstein's, "How can I know that I see what I see?" and "I can't see what you see" (*PO* 215), if you are expecting my seeing to align with photographic proof of exact seeing. Margot can no more see "Swann" than Swann and Wendice can see "Hitchcock." She lacks even a frame of reference, is innocent of his murder as she is of the frame her husband allows the police to put around her for a death she could not help but a crime she did not commit. You have to ask yourself, says Wittgenstein, "what use you are making of that picture" (*PO* 238).

Hubbard asks Margot where she was standing when Swann attacked her:

MARGOT *(crossing behind the desk with her back to the curtain)*:  
I stood here. And I picked up the phone.

HUBBARD: Just one moment. Are you sure you had your back to the window like that?

MARGOT: Yes.

HUBBARD: But why?

MARGOT: Why not?

HUBBARD (*amused, then crossing to the downstage side of the desk, across from Margot*): Why go round the desk? I should have picked it up from the other side. (*Hubbard places his hand firmly atop the phone's receiver, as he did when he first examined the crime scene, marking it for a second time, as if hailing it by name.*)

MARGOT: I always answer the phone from here.

HUBBARD: But why? (*Repeating the question, reinforcing not just the illogicality of Margot's unquestioning relationship with illogical habit but performing habit as a question.*)

MARGOT: Well . . . In case I have to write anything down, I can hold the phone in my left hand (*the return of the sinister hand, reuniting it with the phone that has served as the medium for murder, so marked by the Inspector, so-called as in Dial 'M' for Murder*).

HUBBARD (*scratching behind his right ear with his right hand; a variant replay of this habitually, absent-minded grooming of his mustache with a comb taken from his jacket pocket, an act that constitutes the film's final shot, marking the closed-circle story of the fetish overwhelming, surpassing, the imperfection of the criminal plot*): I see, yes.

What Hubbard's absent-minded performance of the line "I see, yes" actually affirms is the film's *mise-en-scène*, in which Grace Kelly in the role of "Margot" crosses behind the desk to answer the phone out of *theatrical* habit and necessity, so as to make her proximate to the theatrical curtains behind which her assailant hides and so as not to upstage herself. The fact that Hitchcock chose not to position his camera behind the desk and the actress in front, which would allow the spectator to still see her head-on, acknowledges the director's desire to expose the film's theatrical frame and mindset.<sup>47</sup> These theatrical considerations in turn translate the roles and actions of Criminal, Victim, and the Law into the names we give to performance behaviors, which are by definition habitual, recurring, obsessive-compulsive. Hitchcock's staging of these feverish behaviors with the aid of a fever phone and fever scissors with which Margot killed Swann (scissors with which to sever, suture, and reunite the compulsion to act with its source in obsession) replace le Carré's fever gun and allow the OCD viewer to say to himself, "I see, yes." To the end of Wittgenstein's observation, "'What a queer mechanism,' one might say, 'the mechanism of wishing must be if I can wish that which will never happen,'" my mind affixes, "though I can still think that it will." Therein lies the obsessive-compulsive disorder that believes *contra* the evidence of its own demonstrable actions that reenactment can bring closure, erasure, successful stoppage, and relief for a mind that secretly wants to be caught wishing for that which it cannot (can no longer) prevent—its own criminal behavior.

The performance gesture (and performance as a gesture) explicitly asks and answers the question whether something is done, but it implicitly and obsessively-compulsively wants to ask another question—whether that something can ever really be *done enough*, as rules of enactment say it can. But do rules constitute an authorization key? Is evidence *even* a matter of fact? In the scene in which he looks down upon Swann, ensnaring his wife's would-be murderer with his own superior intellect and intelligence-gathering concerning his mark's criminal behaviors, Wendice performs the mind's self-perceived infallibility, all the while being unaware that the camera is looking down upon and (self-consciously) capturing him and rendering his behaviors fallible too. The announcement of the mechanism's out-of-frame character asks and answers the question, is there anything outside the mind's "queer mechanism," that is, "overhead"? "The thinking subject," wrote the anti-Cartesian Wittgenstein, "is surely mere illusion." There is no objective "I" in the eye of the world, only in my own world, in the mind's eye. (But, Wittgenstein also asks, "Can two persons have the same picture before their mind's eye?" [PO 224]). And the mind as discernible object, along with the mental object (thought or idea) as subject, are, as one says of a real or would-be criminal, suspect. By providing us with a theatrically sustained and cinematically privileged glimpse into the mind's projected and introjected movements, presenting mental objects (thoughts, ideas, and desires) as evidence-bearing physical objects in pursuit of law's punishment and anxious order's (criminality's) rule, Hitchcock strives to articulate Wittgenstein's "clear view." In the process, his camera catches the mind not thinking of its guilt as being a fact, but rather obsessively-compulsively performing its guilt as a calculated fiction for its own perplexed and anguished dis/satisfaction.



## Chapter 8



### The Idiot's Anxiety at the Object's Disappearance

Language enjoys certain options on the surface, but deeper down it is founded on the intrinsic nature of objects, which is not our creation but is set over against us in mysterious independence.

—David Pears, *The False Prison: A Study of the Development of Wittgenstein's Philosophy*

The conception of philosophy that would attempt to address and undo a disposition to see a problem where there is none may be thought to liken a philosophical problem to a psychosomatic illness; the distress is real, but the source of the problem has been displaced by a fiction, a ghostly body-double.

—James Wetzel, "Wittgenstein's Augustine: The Inauguration of the Later Philosophy" in *Augustine and Philosophy*

In the opening comedy routine of *The Colgate Comedy Hour* (September 17, 1950), which they headlined, Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis are hired to entertain at a psychiatrists' conference while lying down on an analyst's couch.<sup>1</sup> Quickly realizing that Dean can't sing and Jerry can't joke in this position, the duo win over the psychiatrists by turning their statement of being "well-adjusted" into a musical number that culminates in the comedy team's being pushed out in front of a quickly closing theatrical curtain, the previous act having been a curtain raiser. Jerry proceeds to perform his standard mock-juvenile maladjustment shtick, replete with grammatical errors, which his figuratively older brother Dean corrects at every turn. The non-performance of the comedian on the psychiatrist's couch articulates the commonly held belief that analyzing comedy is counterproductive. It is better not to know how and why it works. What we begin with here, then, is a negative or counter-episteme, the not-knowingness of comic enactment as another form of incapacity-as-performance behavior.

In considering what he calls “The Proposition and Its Sense,” Wittgenstein writes, “The notion that we can only imperfectly *exhibit* our understanding: the expression of understanding has something missing that is *essentially* inexpressible. But in that case it makes no sense to speak of a more complete expression” (PG §6). In an Italian food sketch, Lewis conversationally transforms “ravioli” into “rivoli.” When Martin tells him the latter is a theater, Lewis responds, “No wonder I couldn’t digest it, what with the ushers and the balcony and the marquee was the toughest part of all.” The indigestible object of performance (the thing whose architecture hopes to remain invisible, like the mechanics of comedy and the psyche of the comedian) is made evident by the grammatical one-off “ravioli/rivoli.” The reappearance of the one-off signals illogical severance and neological recombination (e.g., architectural consumption), recalling George Pitcher’s observation that “[Wittgenstein] uses [nonsense] like a vaccine that cures us of itself.”<sup>2</sup> Martin and Lewis speak directly to this theme in another sketch in which Dean’s non-receiving receiver (his TV is on the blink) summons Jerry’s “friendly TV repairman” (who came to “defuzz” the television) whose intrusive behavior compels Dean to leave the premises, complaining loudly that he (Martin) “can’t even watch a house in my own home.” This expression of comic exasperation is another one-off, alerting us to the “fishiness” of a word or sentence we assume we understand but sense we may not—“fishy,” like the which-of-these-objects-does-not-belong test the psychiatrist administered to Jack in *Funny Bones* and the one-off responses Jack provided.<sup>3</sup> Lewis, doubling as the TV pitchman advertising (television) repair who then sends himself through the doubled TV set on the constructed TV comedy set, represents intrusive thought advertising its own obsession through enactment (a possible definition of performance behavior as pathology).

The exposure of the inadequate spacing in the redoubling (tessellating) non/sense highlights the limit-world of performance as a behavioral mechanism. Lewis’s ability to move from one position within this *mise-en-abyme* to another is only possible inside performance as a language-game. Tessellating performance patterns (mirroring those on analog TV screens) speak to philosophy’s “comic repetitions” and to the infinite regress of space and time that is vested inside objects and our perception of them rather than inside states of consciousness.<sup>4</sup> The clumsiness/noisiness of Lewis’s transport from TV to its conceptually extruded set(ting) advertises the labor of the task and the “live” medium’s inability to hide how the trick is done. It is an embarrassed performance, which is what performance becomes when it forsakes anonymity. Of course, none of this is possible without the viewer’s own TV set, rendered self-referential in 1954 (the year the self-referential *Rear Window* and *Dial “M” for Murder* were both released), that provokes and mediates everything that comes through it. Contra Kant, Wittgenstein believed that “objects, not human beings, supply the form which render state of affairs, content, possible” and that “the representations which Kant had

thought a function of consciousness are for Wittgenstein produced by the *blending* of objects to form states of affairs.”<sup>5</sup> Martin and Lewis's TV characters tessellate their comic personae, occupying the same spaces they do. *The Colgate Comedy Hour Starring Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis* bespeaks identity while advertising the fact that it is bespoken, the branding of authenticity making it disappear as a visible criterion. Testing various positions to improve TV reception, Martin ends up standing in his (fake) fireplace with his head cut off from view. The scene, which began with Jerry as a TV talking head, transforms Dean, the original TV receiver (i.e., its audience), into a non-head talking while holding the means of its own reception, the Wittgensteinian virtual depth of the grammatical joke. The medium's message is self-curated in the form of psychosomatic reception.

Logically, the comic representation of this televised *mise en abyme* (a TV set on a TV set in a TV set) cannot cure us of what we want to see pictured anymore than Wittgenstein can ultimately cure philosophy of what he regarded as being its obfuscating (fuzzing) of logic and common sense. And yet there is something to be discovered in the nesting of televisual realities that speaks to both the nature and the scale of perception as it troubled the mind of Wittgenstein, whose life led him to inhabit ever smaller and more spartan physical spaces. In *Zettel* (§214), he writes: “Experience of the real size. We see a picture showing a chair-shape; we are told it represents a construction the size of a house. Now we see it differently.” With this in mind, Martin's complaint that “I can't even watch a house in my own home,” represents not so much a nonsensical statement as a shift to the “seeing as” state that Wittgenstein so famously described in *Philosophical Investigations* in terms that purposely straddle the line between sense and nonsense, or at least between certainty and uncertainty: “‘Seeing as . . .’ is not part of perception. And therefore it is like seeing, and again not like seeing” (*PI* §137). “Seeing as” is a form of “aspect seeing” that speaks to the idea of the particular. Joining the talking non-head Dean Martin, the medium for reception of language's transmission inside the fake intimacy of his theatrical house/home, Wittgenstein observes:

It is as if at first we looked at a picture so as to enter into it and the objects in it surrounded us like real ones; and then we stepped back and we were now outside it; we saw the frame, and the picture was a painted surface. In this way, when we intend, we are surrounded by our intention's *pictures*, and we are inside them. . . . When we intend, we exist in the space of intention, among the pictures (shadows) of intention as well as with real things. (*Z* §233)

That is, in this particular context, having sought to enter into the reality of the televisual world to the exclusion of the real one (actually affecting a reality shift from one meaning of “TV set” to another), Martin loses sight of what it means to have an actual house except in the mode of watching (“I can't even

watch a house in my own home”), of mediated visuality, a set that is more particular to a stage than to a TV that has merely scaled the stage to fit the dimensions of its twice-mediated reality. It is the stage set whose picture is painted (we see the painted interior wall of the room in the house shake when the door in the wall is closed, asserting the set’s staginess), but it is the metonymic presence of the TV set on the stage that allows us via Martin to enter the picture and allows the picture via Lewis to enter our house(s). “When we intend, we exist in the space of intention, among the pictures (shadows) of intention as well as with real things.” When we watch Lewis’s pitchman’s shadow reflected on a fake wall inside the TV set Martin is watching, we see Martin’s (i.e., the viewer’s) solipsism (he is oblivious to his wife and child while watching TV) that sees no context outside of its own mental image.

The sketch culminates with Martin destroying his TV set with the fire-place poker (unintentionally recalling an oft-told anecdote concerning Wittgenstein, rival philosopher Karl Popper, and a poker attack). Lewis’s materializing as a junk man to cart away the TV set, summoned only by the on-set spoken word “junk,” advertises the dematerialization of the alleged mechanism of transmission. In the process, liveness in the form of Wittgenstein’s ordinary language appearing here as “junk” is extracted from the corpse of the disappeared object whose intrusiveness was rendered self-referential in the self-advertising interruptions supporting its programming. This liveness returns us to the stage, or rather to the larger set that recalls the mediated reality of the stage.

### Sinkhole, or Disingenuity

Every attempt to dislodge ingenuousness from the universe is in vain. Because, in a word, there *is* nothing other than sublime ingenuousness, that is to say, reality.

—Jose Ortega y Gasset, “Preface for Germans”  
in *Phenomenology and Art*

JERRY: I can do a lot of things.

DEAN: For instance, what can you do?

*[Jerry lurches through the space as if looking for something to do, in a manner that resembles looking for an exit, an exit from the burden of deciding what to do. In the process he manages to touch the back of one chair.]*

DEAN: Is this what you can do?

JERRY: That’s about it, yeah.

—*Martin and Lewis Colgate Comedy Hour*

Amid general laughter, Ted Rogers (Jerry Lewis) in the eponymous role of the stooge or audience plant (*The Stooge*; dir. Norman Taurog, 1952), says to his partner Bill Miller (Dean Martin) with naïf-like but comic sincerity, "Hope you're satisfied with the way you embarrassed me in front of everybody. Look, the whole audience is staring at me." Bill tells Ted, "Stare back at them," which Ted does, crossing his eyes in an out-of-perspective look prompting Bill to add in an unconscious appropriation of Ted's (i.e., Lewis's) show business Yiddish grammar, "No, better they [should] stare at you." It is the idiot's role in life to be painfully embarrassed by behavior he is compelled to perform in front of an audience he cannot help but see, *because he is (in) it*.<sup>6</sup> And it is this which allows the idiot to play the theatrical "stooge" as a form of public confession. This idiocy-performed-as-stoogeness is its own form of solipsism, mirroring Bill's who wants the spotlight to himself (he reads *Spotlight* celebrity magazine) and for the stooge's identity to remain anonymous, Bill says, for the good of the act. When Bill and the (self-)infantilized "kid" hit the big time, the marquee reads: BILL MILLER AND HIS ACCORDION. Ted is not only the missing subject (the silent partner of ACCORD), he is its hidden object concealed inside the instrumentalism of performance, the unknowing on which its success depends. (Ted only becomes a literal marquee name after upstaging his partner with the stage's in/capacity to go in and out of light and darkness, enclosure and disclosure by taking control of its mechanism.) The prefigured spotlight's ultimate extrusion of function (acknowledged performance) from name (in the print media) and figure (co-star) from ground (audience), for the purpose of achieving a disingenuous happy ending (resolution), cannot remove the hiddenness of the object, its continued disappearance into the anxiety of its not-knowing (irresolution).

The film shows us in numerous lower-case moments how painfully difficult it is for the idiot to navigate the incapacitating spotlight of his self-irreconcilability. The key scene in this regard transpires on board a train taking Bill and his still unknowing/unknown stooge out on the road. This is Ted's first overnight train ride, so even the simplest tasks become impossible for him to perform. Ted is sitting on the lower sleeping berth of the team's train compartment eating a whole carrot in his pajamas (to paraphrase Groucho Marx's famously disingenuous not-knowing line, "I once ate a carrot in my pajamas, how it got in my pajamas, I'll never know"). When Bill asks him if he eats a carrot every night before bedtime, Ted says that he eats "lots of carrots," because "they're good for the eyes" and then asks rhetorically, "Did you ever see a rabbit with glasses?" In the informal split screen shot that follows (the Wittgensteinian duck-rabbit that can only in this case be simultaneously seen), we see Bill at the pull-down bathroom sink preparing to brush his teeth. He lowers the sink from its recessed space in the wall and pushes the sink back up into its wall opening when he is done, leaving the actual brushing unseen because it is (disingenuously) not relevant to what happens next. Ted goes into the bathroom to brush his teeth, but he cannot

find the sink anywhere, that “anywhere” indicated by Ted’s turning around in circles (a version of Lewis’s anxiety dance) in a vain attempt to pick out the sink from the place where it is apparently hiding, because, even with his carrot-enhanced vision, he cannot see it.

“Did you ever see a duck-rabbit?” Wittgenstein asks, sounding like a stand-up comedian. “What I properly *see* must surely be what is produced in me by influence of the object,” Wittgenstein’s interlocutor tells him. To this, Wittgenstein responds (the italics in this case are mine), “In that case what is produced in me is something like a copy, something that one can oneself in turn *look at*, have before him. Almost something like a *materialization*” (RPPI §1075). Seeing, then, is an aspect of staging. We see what we often fail to acknowledge is a copy of the object and not the object itself, which hides in plain sight in our field of vision. Conscious staging, as in performance, acknowledges this fact, and from this acknowledgment is constituted the idea of an audience that consciously sees what seeing looks like when it is materialized. The idiot cannot separate figure from ground, a reverse prefiguring of his own separation as figure (stooge) from ground (audience). He disingenuously performs the embarrassment of being seen by an audience that he materialized via his acknowledgment of not seeing the thing that is right before his eyes. In this, he resembles a blind man who has been taken to view a performance. The idiot is, in fact, meaning-blind. He not only does not see, he does not feel “that the experience of the meaning [of ‘seeing’] took place while [he was] *hearing the word* [e.g., ‘sink’]” (RPPI §202).

It would be as if someone were looking for some object in a room; he opens a drawer and does not see it there; then he closes it again, waits, and opens it once more to see if perhaps it isn’t there now, and keeps on like that. He has not learned to look for things. (OC §315)<sup>7</sup>

What follows is a dramatization of idiot logic, a sort of magical thinking to whose humiliation I can attest. This discussion takes up the thread begun in “Wittgenstein’s Anatomy” regarding what I call the “polysem(ous)ly perverse” way of seeing that is given the idiot as relates to language, here including the language of (the hiddenness of) objects. Ted runs to Bill screaming, “There’re crooks on the train.” When Bill attempts a logical intervention (“No one ever taught me that my hands don’t disappear when I am not paying attention to them [—I just know that they don’t]” [OC §153]), Ted responds with his own peculiar logic: “Well, *somebody* stole the sink.” Bill’s response—“Take it easy. All you do is press the bottom, pull the handle, and it’s there”—sounds no less magical, no less unreachable to Ted than the non-/hiddenness of the sinkhole which disappeared logic into itself.

Even when the idiot grasps the logical premise, he fails at follow-through, or in film terms, at continuity. This is demonstrated later in the same scene when Bill tells Ted that he need only pull a switch down to turn off a light

on the wall alongside his sleeping berth. Although Ted is able to do this, he is unable to turn off the light on the other side of his bed. When he finally “solves” the problem by placing one of his socks over the light (effectively changing the problem with his solution), he turns the sock around until the large hole in it is facing him. His mind's speculative eye/I is still following the hidden sink in its doubly recessed hole-ness in response to some self-administered psycho-optometric test. The idiot's re-solution (an approximate solution to a question that functions in his mind like a moving target) allows the one uncovered part of the light to shine directly in his eye, spotlighting it and iris-ing in on Ted's establishing action in the scene of eating lots of carrots to improve his eyesight. The arc of the scene reveals this self-monitoring optical design, the stooge whose performance is defined as being *of* the audience, in terms of his performance behavior, *is* the audience and, as such, the source of his own embarrassment as self-serving *emploi*. In what one supposes is a bit of unintentional irony, the first light that Ted, following Bill's simple instructions, did manage to turn off is later seen to be on again, as if lit of its own accord, indicating a failure in the film's continuity, but also perhaps the hiddenness of Ted's performance behavior brought to light.

By following Bill's instructions (pressing here and pulling there), Ted is able to lower the bathroom sink down from the wall, or, in idiot's terms, to make the sink (re)appear and, in the process, expose its hiding place. However, when Ted momentarily lets go of the sink in order to roll up his sleeves, it naturally pops back up and into its wall space. Like the hidden doors in *The Way of the World*, the object-to-wall (figure-ground) relationship only appears when it is in use. When the logic of use is violated, the object recedes back into some indistinguishable amalgam of what it is and what it does. Ted is incapacitated not by an object per se but by an object analogy, by his unconscious efforts to view the mental object (his obsessive thought or thinking) as a physical object in a pictorial context. The overfamiliarity of the object, the sink, and the obsessiveness of the idiot's thought process share a redundancy that renders meaning obtuse in the Barthesian sense of ridiculously counter-analytic, punning, joking, disarticulated, unseen—“a signifier ['sink'] without signified [a sink].” Barthes's likening of the obtuse meaning to “a kind of gash” that counters narrative (“obtuse meaning can proceed only by appearing and disappearing”) recalls an actor with a permanent head wound. The word “idiot” derives from the Greek *idios*, which refers to “one's own” or “private,” nudging the idea of the idiolect, my name for the Barthesian “obtuse meaning [that] is outside (articulated) language, but still within interlocution,” into the debate with Wittgenstein over whether or not such a thing as a private language can be seen (public show being its inherent dissolution).<sup>8</sup>

Lewis's self-conscious enactment of Ted's dilemma renders incapacity as performance behavior that envisions an audience no more visible than the hidden sink, but affirming what the sink withholds. The failed inspection of the physical object is superseded by the idiot's unspoken capacity

for introspection, dis/ingenuously presented. Gary L. Hagberg writes: “To inspect, we think, we need an object; to introspect, we consequently think, we need an object of another kind. And that object, if we are puzzled about, or indeed mystified by, the nature of the self, will be separated from the physical or the material, and the sense of mystery will be heightened as the separation proceeds.”<sup>9</sup> Lewis uses the disappearing sink to make a show of the subject’s self-mystification and of the self’s mystification as a hidden mental object. Like the Martin and Lewis sketch in which the TV set/screen is watched by and is watching the (split) subject resulting in a comedy of inter-injection/interjection, the disappearing sink and Lewis’s reaction to it cites the impossibility of “perceiving or observing our own consciousness” as anything other than a myth or fiction, a false show that we enter into like a picture that can be seen as being outside ourselves. In the process, Wittgenstein’s “mysterious ‘I’” is transformed into a so-called mysterious eye that sees and un-sees with equal strangeness/estrangement.<sup>10</sup>

Ted’s illogical solution to the sinkhole problem is to insert his entire head into the space created when he pulls the sink back down from the wall. By doing this, Ted not only inadvertently turns on the faucets at their highest intensity level, but his head gets caught between the wall and the sink, transforming Ted himself into a wall component, the object’s object by definition, a cautionary tale of the possessor repossessed. Ted is unfamiliar with Heidegger’s explanation: “The peculiarity of what is proximally ready-to-hand means that, in terms of an entity being a piece of equipment, its ‘thingness’ must, as it were, withdraw in order for it to be ready-to-hand in an authentic way.”<sup>11</sup> That is, “tools are not meant for looking at, since we usually just silently rely on them.”<sup>12</sup> This is a serious proposition with comic consequences that can be readily foreseen, as it recurs in *The Ladies Man* (dir. Jerry Lewis, 1961), where Lewis washes his face with his glasses on and is drenched by a sight-antagonized sink. The persistently bespectacled idiot (forever monitored by and monitoring his own embarrassment) shares the philosopher’s incapacity as Wittgenstein described it: “The [insistently retentive] idea is like a pair of glasses on our nose through which we see whatever we look at. It never occurs to us to take them off” (*PI* § 103). Cora Diamond adds: “In Wittgenstein’s use of the image, the philosopher who takes himself to be wearing irremovable glasses does not take these to be distorting his view. The ‘glasses’ here are the underlying logical order of all thought, the philosopher, the author of the *Tractatus*.”<sup>13</sup>

How do I know that this *train of thought* has led me to this action?  
(*PI* §490)

Representation inherently responds to the otherness of the object when it is here and the memory of its physical properties and components when it is not rather than allowing the viewer to become absorbed with (although not

by) the object's self-absorption even when it is said and believed to be present. This being said, what makes the object's disappearance comic in the case of Lewis and the sinkhole is twofold. First, the object performs its use-function for Martin, but not for Lewis. Second, Lewis's reaction to the sink's absence is to puzzle out a number of ever more complicated ways to address the fact of simple disappearance that spotlight a self-confessed incapacity (incapacity always being self-confessed in the doing and undoing), the evidence of his thought process being executed, as in illogically shooting itself in the head. I should acknowledge here what Nancy calls "the prestige of absence," referring to "the representation of the thing in its absence." "Usually," Nancy writes, "we take it to mean 'while the thing is absent, it is elsewhere.' But what if we were to understand: the presentation of a thing within its absence, going to the heart of this absence, penetrating into, and abandoning itself unto the infinite hollow of presence whence presence comes." Nancy has in mind image and by image, imagination. Unlike the comic performer, the philosopher must burrow into absence as a concept so as to deepen its meaning beyond that of image, representational sign, to comprehend the fullness of its abandonment of meanings that cleave to the external and exteriority of the subject's view(ing) of it. In the process this deepens our sense of incapacity to mean something beyond what the physical evidence tells us we cannot see (visually or in the sense of understand) or do.<sup>14</sup>

The proposition "The signature vexation of anxiety is that it is objectless" is openly disputed. Kierkegaard claimed that anxiety is obsessed with the object and cannot look away; fear produces a desire that anxiety, in a sense, advertises. Lacan asserted that "anxiety is not without an object," "what was lacking, a void, has emerged, so that paradoxically, with anxiety, it is the void itself that is no longer missing or hidden. The void asserts itself as a Thing!" (a figuration of the sinkhole). Joan Copjec adds that "anxiety is precipitated by an encounter with an object of a level of certainty superior to that of any object of fact, to any actual object."<sup>15</sup> As we see ourselves proscenium-framing this inner darkness our mind begins to whistle "There's no business like show business" not so much to keep us unafraid as to keep our head in the game.

### Wittgenstein's Complaint

**How can the non-occurrence of an experience in hearing the word hinder our calculating with words, or influence it?**

—Wittgenstein (*RPPI* §171)

**No reason can be given for the phenomenon that language-games are played, for all distinctions are given within the language-game.**

—Ingvar Horgby (paraphrase of Wittgenstein)

Meaning comprehension, like reading comprehension, is never instantaneous owing to a mental process in which individual word-and-sentence-meaning is overwritten by a surplus of possible thought-as-form-meanings. This is a conceptual problem akin to Wittgenstein's exposure of the fallacy that "the sense of a sentence is composed of its individual words. (The group-picture.)." If this were true, he argues, "how is, e.g., the sense 'I still haven't seen him yet' composed of the meanings of the words?" (*RPMI* §327). Here is an example of how this works. Not long ago I visited a psychiatrist who specializes in the treatment of anxiety disorders. Upon arrival, I immediately checked in with the receptionist and took a seat in the waiting room, where there were already other people sitting and pretending to leaf through magazines while waiting to be seen in a state of not-wanting-to-be-seen. One by one their names were called and they proceeded past the checkpoint at the front desk and into the inner sanctum of the doctor's office. Finally, I was the only one left in the waiting room and after what I thought was a long time I approached the front desk and asked the receptionist how much longer I would need to wait before being seen by the doctor. "Oh, he has left for the day," she said. "I still haven't seen him yet," I gasped. "Did you check in at the front desk?" she asked. "Well, of course I did. Don't you remember me?" (Don't you know that I am an OCD checker?) She just stared into space. Somehow, in the course of waiting and keeping my anxiety in check, the memory of the receptionist had been magically erased. My possible complicity in this disappearance has only now become apparent to me. The receptionist might have heard my statement "I still haven't seen him yet" not to mean that I had been waiting too long to see (still hadn't seen) the doctor but instead to mean that I could not yet see the doctor, in that I still needed to wait. Why (else) say "still" and "yet" when either "still" or "yet" would do? Does anxiety reveal itself and even revel in purposeful redundancy that conveys and transmits "meaning-blindness" (*RPMI* §202)?

I had come to see the doctor because I was anxious. He was, in a sense, *there* because I *am* anxious. The vanishing agent could see this, so what need would she have to see further? "Yes, 'still' and 'yet,' I can see that you are anxious. Please take a seat and wait," I imagine her sentence-meaning to say. "But waiting makes me anxious," my "still" and "yet" insist, repeating myself. "The doctor will see you shortly," she near-repeats in kind. "But I *still* haven't seen him *yet*." "Yes, I've already heard you say this. You can see this, right?" "Yes," I say, still somewhat confused by what she means by "see," and take a seat. I am now waiting, it would appear, only for the vanishing agent to wipe clean all memory of my having been there waiting in the first place, that place having effectively shifted from where it was before in the negotiated process of mutual misreading. It appeared as if the doctor had disappeared in the course of a meaning shift that articulated a time-change. Having arrived, I thought, too early to see him, I had in fact arrived too late at an understanding of what it would take to be seen by him.<sup>16</sup>

Can one keep hold of the understanding of a meaning, as one can keep hold of a mental image? So if a meaning of the word suddenly strikes me—can it also stand still before my mind? (*RPPI* §251)

My astonishment at what transpired inside the psychiatrist's waiting room proved that I did not know my way about it in Wittgenstein's construction (*RPPI* §295). I could not hold a mental image of this room still inside my mind, or else of myself waiting inside it without risking a *mise-en-abyme* scenario, which I did not want but into which I am all too willing to enter—*mise-en-abyme* being an obsessive-compulsive figure, after all, and a solipsistic one besides.

For the solipsist, it is not merely the case that he believes that his thoughts, experiences, and emotions are, as a matter of contingent fact, the only thoughts, experiences, and emotions. Rather, the solipsist can attach no meaning to the supposition that there could be thoughts, experiences, and emotions other than his own.<sup>17</sup>

I was, of course, familiar with waiting, but not with this particular iteration of waiting. "Someone says, perhaps in a language lesson, 'Let us talk about the word 'still,''" and I ask, "Do you mean the noun, adjective, or the verb?" (*RPPI* §359). There is that "thirdness" again. In the case I have cited, it was not precisely word-meaning that went awry, though, but what Wittgenstein called "the range of similar psychological phenomena which in general have nothing to do with word-meaning" (*RPPI* §358), which to me describes without directly citing the field of anxiety-induced distraction.

Introspection can never lead to definition. It can only lead to a psychological statement about the introspector . . . the essence of understanding [lying] in [the correct use of the word "understand"] and not in what they may say about what they experience. (*RPPI* §212)

It is important to confess here that Wittgenstein's therapeutic philosophy will not countenance the full measure of my complaint, as one might expect of an approach that pursues its own agency. Wittgenstein offers what appears to be a direct caution:

Don't put the phenomenon in the wrong drawer. There it looks ghostly, intangible, uncanny. Looking at it rightly, we no more think of its intangibility than we do of time's intangibility when we hear: "It's time for dinner." (Disquiet from an ill-fitting classification.) (*RPPI* §380)

Of course, Wittgenstein, who practiced usefulness and clarity in principle, was himself a notorious purveyor of "ill-fitting classification," as well as of a

“concept of . . . perspicuous representation [that] is not itself perspicuous,” in that it is “introduced [in *PI* §122] with minimal clarification and without a single example.”<sup>18</sup> Furthermore the “disquiet” in his writing birthed a philosophical doppelgänger in the form of an unnamed interlocutor “who is genuinely in torment,” caught as he is (and we are) in the “disquieting” form in which philosophy speaks its own representational language—a language to which Wittgenstein cannot help to contribute even while seeking to destroy it.<sup>19</sup> For Wittgenstein, “the philosophical problem is not simply the source or object of such torment or anxiety, the problem *is* the anxiety.”<sup>20</sup> Wittgenstein’s therapeutic philosophy nominally sought to treat this anxiety via a sort of “talking cure,” but Wittgenstein himself certainly sensed that the clarity to which such treatment could lead might in fact leave an emptiness where philosophy had been. Call this expressed desire to stop that which one refrains from stopping “Wittgenstein’s Complaint.” It is for me an obsessive-compulsive performance behavior that has previously gone undiagnosed in Wittgenstein’s therapeutic philosophy.

### Signpost

**Bloch dropped in the cards. The empty mailbox was so tiny that nothing could resound in there. Anyway, Bloch had walked away immediately.**

—Handke, *The Goalie’s Anxiety at the Penalty Kick*

When Jerry Lewis as Dr. Julius Kelp in *The Nutty Professor* (1963) goes to post a letter in a mailbox on the street, there is (he finds but does not acknowledge) a trash can of the same size and with the same deposit slot standing alongside it. The OCD mind grows anxious as Lewis approaches the two receptacles:

Anxious *because* a mailbox of this sort demands certainty from the subject that what he deposits and cannot retrieve is what he thinks it to be. [“Altogether he found everything alike: all things reminded him of each other.”]<sup>21</sup>

Anxious *that* the two receptacles and their functions will *not* be confused resulting in the consignment of the letter to the dead letter trashbin [“Next to it there was a music box: only when he gave it a second look did Bloch recognize it as a contribution box for some charity.”]<sup>22</sup> In the case of either receptacle deposit, the letter will be effectively consumed and with it the correspondence between the two receptacles and their functions, although not the OCD mind’s self-consumption in a seemingly endless looping of thought that continues even after he walks away from the two receptacles (predictive and retrospective anxiety being two parts of the same mental object, which is to worry oneself to death, both figuratively and chronologically speaking).

Anxious *that* the presence of the similar-but-different objects standing alongside each other are both really there and not actually one object expressing its dual intentionality invisible to the untrained subject's mind's eye. This duality is the object-world's autonomously conceived echo (and maybe the director's conscious symbolic representation) of the subject's predicament of being two men in one—Doctor Julius Kelp on the one hand and lounge singer Buddy Love on the other—or one man inside another, expressing the simultaneous in/visibility of the subject who inhabits a world of objects that regularly perform the same act without a properly appreciative and understanding audience.

It seemed to Bloch that he should take inventory of the room, so that the objects he paused at or that he left out during his count could serve as evidence.<sup>23</sup>

It is entirely possible from a certain (post-)phenomenological perspective that it is not the capacity of the protagonist's mind to play tricks on him regarding the objects' disappearance that is the issue, but the objects' autonomous relationship with one another (and not with the human being) that could cause problems. Graham Harman's remark "The vibrant flesh that exists between humans and objects also lies between objects and other objects" reinforces Alphonso Lingis's notion that objects turn their backs on us "*because they have to coexist in a field with one another, and that field has to coexist with the fields of other possible things.*"<sup>24</sup> So, if it is not really or altogether about us as far as objects are concerned, then what is it to them if we drop our letter in the garbage or our garbage in the mailbox? As if we didn't already have enough to worry about, now objects are manifesting *thought-behaviors*. And there doesn't appear to be anything we can do about it. What is worse: having consciousness be the problem or having consciousness *not* be the problem?

**"WELCOME TO MILLTOWN: A VERY NERVOUS LITTLE COMMUNITY"**

—A sign posted in *The Ladies Man* (dir. Jerry Lewis, 1961)

An old woman enters the first frame of *The Ladies Man*, which presents the viewer with a studio back-lot version of a small town street, and the first two objects she walks by are a U.S. mailbox and a trash can, alerting us to and alarming us with a fictionally remembered anxiety. Between the mailbox and the trash can, the old woman passes two identical entrances to two separate businesses whose window advertising reads "MILLTOWN INSURANCE," as if this anxious community requires reassurance. These two signs reinforce the first WELCOME sign, which includes the information POP. 4234, in which the second number "4" repeats and reinforces (reassures, or reinsures) the

status of the first, although or because it is written in a wavering hand at the bottom of the frame, all signs being anxious in the language-game: “So I can say that the signpost does after all leave room for doubt. Or rather it sometimes leaves room for doubt, and sometimes not” (*PI* §85). Wittgenstein’s glasses-wearing philosopher who persists in believing that thinking, speaking, and signing as he conceives them are consistent with each other and together define *the* logical order, misrepresents and misunderstands the resistance of language to conform to his worldview: “we seem to see in the inmost nature of the thing what is etched on our spectacles. The expression of this illusion is the metaphysical expression of our words” (*TLP* §110). MILLTOWN’s ordinariness, the run-of-the-millness it signs is entangled with and entangles the anxiety of self-imaging. What has this philosopher to do with the negation in the MILLTOWN sign? Herbert Heebert, whose very name has the heebie-jebies and who is the town’s model citizen, is traumatized into gynophobia by accidentally witnessing (and then obsessively replaying) his one-and-only girlfriend’s commencement betrayal of him with a so-tall-as-to-be-out-of-frame varsity *letterman* whose sweater bears a giant “M.” This non-corresponding letter recurs as another anxiously non-corresponding sign when a tough character tells Herbert his middle name is “‘C’ for Killer” and Herbert responds, “that’s what I was afraid of.”

Herbert’s gynophobia presumably makes him non-threatening to women and so in a scenario suggesting aversion therapy, he is hired to be caretaker to a house filled with as many nubile young women as there are rooms on what was then Hollywood’s largest interior set. The house is a veritable duck-rabbit warren of non-simultaneous female aspect-seeing, multiply redrafting the lexically challenged nymphet caretaker Humbert Humbert who chases Lolita’s first defiler Clare Quilty back to his rabbit-warren lair. Manchild Herbert’s accidental release and instantaneous recapture (via sped-up film reversal) of his employer’s late husband’s prize collection of reanimated dead butterflies likewise recalls Nabokov’s reputation as a lepidopterist. Humbert and Herbert favor the then academically correct bowtie, which, despite being an idiot, Herbert is able to tie himself, as evidenced by the multiple untied “bows” he unpacks from his suitcase as a series of potential entanglements. The house’s multiple doors promise numerous entanglements, although the three-walled house appears to be unembarrassed by its theatrical design. The sheer flash mob presence of all the women in the breakfast room provokes Herbert to literally (in terms of what we see) but figuratively (in terms of what we know) split into multiple Herberts who frantically race up and down and all around the exposed house set with mere multiplicity straining to become polysemy and in the process simultaneously demonstrating for us the sheer size and scale of the mental space that phobia has constructed.<sup>25</sup> Ultimately, though, running in frame runs into itself. Herbert cannot outrun “Faith,” the name of his unfaithful trauma-source girlfriend, which returns as the name of a later

girlfriend-to-be, one of the house's occupants who is studying to be, of all things, an actress.

In *The Ladies Man*, Lewis explores as a director the spatial paradox of the ratio of stage to film, moving through one of the set's many shadow-box rooms, this one an entirely white space, onto a soundstage-as-soundstage. Here all pretense appears to fall away and Jerry Lewis-as-himself dances with a temptress channeling Cyd Charisse in *Silk Stockings* to the music of the real Harry James orchestra, which comes into frame. Truthfully, Herbert Hebert is "Jerry Lewis" (and not the other way around), as bachelor nebbish Herbert's anomalous gold wedding band and Vegas pinkie ring attest. The motive of "always playing yourself" is a self-tessellating form of movie-star celebrity performance behavior. Its looping function draws our attention to the ring on Lewis's finger that is its sign and which in turn recycles the ancient Greek myth that first gave man a metal ring to wear. Promethean-made man regenerates himself through painful performance. Lewis's show business mannerism of holding his side with one hand to underscore the citationally self-satisfied, "painful" side-splittingness of the gag may also mark the spot where the eagle dispatched by Zeus to deprive the rebel god of his liver each and every night took its pound of flesh. "I'm dying up here," says Prometheus's body chained to a rock, and indeed, the character does die in the end, but in so doing "brings down the house" (as they say at the show) in the form of an avalanche. The ancient chorus banging their hands on the stage to simulate the power of the landslide may well have sounded like applause, a warm hand.<sup>26</sup>

"NEVILLE NOISE AND SERENA SCREAM"

—A sign advertising the appearance of two entertainers in the grand ballroom of the Fontainebleau Hotel in Miami, where Jerry Lewis's 1960 film *The Bellboy* is set

To Ted's boss's question in *The Stooge*, "What did that idiot do this time?" we ask in return "What do you mean by 'this time'?" Lewis's episodically structured film *The Bellboy* (1960) offers an assortment of "this times" that circulate the distractedness of meaning as it relates to person and name, letter and number, space and time, image and object. Bellboy Stanley (played by Lewis) is told to distribute hotel room keys among their corresponding mailboxes, the mailbox being an anxious sign that pressures him into random key dispersal into non-corresponding numbers, like ticking the wrong boxes on a timed test. Since anxiety requires embarrassed spectacle, the consequence of Stanley's action is seen as hotel guests struggle unsuccessfully to open their room doors with the wrong keys. Stanley then unsuccessfully attempts to start a car using what we assume to be an itinerant room key, a number with the wrong name, a Hitchcockian fever key.

In a reversal of this action and outcome (a second “run”), the bell captain instructs Stanley to set up what appears to be an infinite number of chairs in the Grand Ballroom (in which “Neville Noise” and “Serena Scream” are scheduled to perform). The bell captain, who means this to be a joke at Stanley’s expense, tells another bellboy that the task he assigned Stanley will take him “2–3 days at least.” Thanks to editing, it takes Stanley only a few moments at most to set up all of these chairs, which have somehow changed object name and number:

Naming seems to be a *strange* connection of a word with an object.—And such a strange connection really obtains, particularly when a philosopher tries to fathom *the* relation between name and what is named by staring at an object in front of him and repeating a name, or even the word “this,” innumerable times. For philosophical problems arise when language *goes on holiday*. And *then* we may indeed imagine naming to be some remarkable mental act, as it were the baptism of an object. (*PI* §38)

The name “bellboy,” like the uniform the bellboy wears, is one-size-fits-all, producing an audiovisual polysemy that informs the chair scene as a setup for an entire film devoted to the performance of remarkable mental acts in a holiday setting where logic no longer obtains. Here is how Wittgenstein sets up the solution to the chair scene:

I say “There is a chair over there.” What if I go to fetch it, and it disappears from sight?—“So it wasn’t a chair but some kind of illusion.”—But a few seconds later, we see it again and are unable to touch it, and so on—“So the chair was there after all, and its disappearance was some kind of illusion.”—But suppose that after a time it disappears again—or seems to disappear. What are we to say now? Have you rules ready for such cases—rules saying whether such a thing is still to be called a “chair”? But do we miss them when we use the word “chair”? And are we to say that we really do not attach any meaning to this word, because we are not equipped with rules for every possible application for it? (*PI* §80)

Can we say that what we are seeing is actually the performance of Stanley’s incapacity, his inability to stop becoming overwhelmed by the task at hand, expressed in terms of exaggerated numbers, in appearance as frequency of recurrence under the severe constraint of time? Can Stanley attach the name “chair” to the there/not-there object of his performance behavior, the obsessive reenactment of his performance anxiety? It is true that a bellboy other than Stanley looks into the room and sees that all of the chairs have been set up, but in that “the bellboy” is a one-size-fits-all name, can we trust that all

of the chairs were set up by a distinct character named "Stanley" in a film that advertises (as we shall see) the nonalignment of appearances, and in a room that is set up for performance, set up in the name of dis/appearance? Could Stanley be setting up the same chair(s) over and over again which as an aggregate *function* performed in non-diegetic mental space produces the appearance of overwhelming number? The bell captain, formerly a bellboy, is anxiety/OCD's self-taunting mechanism of predictive incapacity, aligning him more closely to this function's performance than even he knows. Spectacular embarrassment (always as potential as it is concrete) is always self-witnessed.

Given the bellboys' identical attire, Stanley cannot be said to be ill-suited to the name's function, even though he ostensibly is. Likewise, seemingly impossible acts and functions are successfully performed not according to logic's rules (bellboys, we are told in the film, "have no real direction") but within the parameters of a particular language-game. A command, like a bell, summons the idiot (the bellboy infantilized by the order), who responds to *what the command has anxiously put him in mind of*—sound value and alternative meanings of words, the instantaneous mental reworking of sentence structure into self-punning mechanisms, the tone and manner of articulation. The idiot chases the mental object, the physical one having already disappeared. The looping action of his distracted mind and the voice telling him to redirect his thinking propel him into the anxiety dance of doing nothing as something, anything—randomly reshaping normative expectation's form (a sculpted beauty into a gargoye) and function (the live release of dead butterflies from a frame), even redefining time (the multiple chair setup whose mental processing is hidden from view).

Upon entering an elevator in the hotel where Stanley works, the "real" Jerry Lewis (who has come to entertain the hotel's guests) remarks: "This is a nice room. Oh, it's the elevator"—the implicit joke being, "This room is so small, I would have to go outside to change my mind." The ballroom chair set-up scene has already set up the corresponding joke, "That room was so large, I had to go outside to change my mind into an even larger mental space." Having done this, polysemous meanings of "Jerry Lewis" can be addressed. Wittgenstein maintains that as it relates to rules, language-games, and comparisons (e.g., between one person's pain or identity and another's, between the integrated and the multiple identity), "the explanation by means of sameness does not work" (*PI* §350). Furthermore, he writes, "There is no finer example of a useless sentence [than "A thing is identical with itself"], which is nevertheless connected with a certain play of the imagination. It is as if in our imagination we put a thing into its own shape and saw that it fitted" (*PI* §216). The real "Jerry Lewis" is identified by a "JL" monogram on his silk-collared velvet jacket, as opposed to unlucky number 13, which is stitched on Stanley's bellboy's uniform. The inexact correspondence between JL and Stanley, who together construct the film's "Jerry Lewis," is indicated as a lack of fit between "JL" and "13," between the triskaidekaphobic hotel

elevator (missing the number 13) and the non-room(i)ness it presents to JL who thinks this thought out loud, like an anxiety patient of whom a psychiatrist's waiting room lost count. The real Jerry Lewis disingenuously says in so many words that such smallness cannot capture his celebrity, which he has however condensed into a sign (JL) to articulate deference to anxiety's greater celebrity that he has in mind to show. The film replays the non-/fitting celebrity of anxious show: JL's impossibly large entourage exiting a small car's back seat; Stanley's inadvertent catalyzing a radically reduced obese woman into re-enlarging herself (by leaving her a box of candy), her re-widening appearing to shrink the film frame as befits the language-game's frame of reference.

Stanley carries a message to comedian Milton Berle (MB), who is signing autographs (also) as himself, although we cannot be sure of this since we do not actually see the name he is signing (i.e., whether he is signing his own name or signing in name only—as a character playing “Milton Berle”). Perhaps he is using his other hand, his other-handedness, so as not to appear recognizably in his own name, as himself. Berle thinks that he recognizes bellboy Stanley as being JL, although he doesn't name him, perhaps so as not to risk his own out-of-character self-exposure in the film for the benefit of a movie audience that nevertheless sees difference and also his own unvoiced performance behavior. “No, it's not possible,” Berle signs by shaking his head in the negative, an unvoiced echo of one bellboy's asking another when Stanley's double JL arrives at the hotel, “Are you thinking what I'm thinking?” and the other same-sized bellboy responding, “No, it's not possible.” Still later, there is the following exchange between two one-size-fits-all bellboys:

“Have you seen Stanley?”

“Which Stanley?”

“The only Stanley in the world.”

(An actor impersonating comedian Stan Laurel enters the frame, in the process disproving the previous claim that there is only one Stanley in the world, a statement which was true only figuratively speaking.)<sup>27</sup>

Celebrity inherently cites its own doubleness, leading those in its presence to ask rhetorically “Are you thinking what I'm thinking?” before saying what they are thinking out loud: “No. It's not possible.” I know of one celebrity who without provocation told someone who saw her getting out of a car, “Yes, it's me.” Appearance's bipolarity is advertised everywhere, but not everyone (and in Lewis's film no one) recognizes it. When JL hails an unnamed bellboy who really is Milton Berle but not MB, the one-size-fits-all bellboy not only does not recognize JL as the real Jerry Lewis, he (Milton Berle as bellboy) does not recognize himself as himself (i.e., as MB) either. Stanley attempts to deliver a telegram to MB's life-size flat, cardboard likeness advertising the

latter's appearance as the hotel's nightly entertainment, the role that was in fact being performed by Jerry Lewis during the time of the film's shooting but, as Berle's cardboard likeness suggests, in a different dimension, in non-diegetic space and time. Lewis's daytime citing/sighting of who he would otherwise be at night indirectly references the day-for-night-shot film scene helpfully demonstrated by Stanley later, literally camera flashing night into day outside the hotel with one press of a button. Celebrity likewise falsifies reality, even to the extent of someone becoming famous for being famous (a famous brand giving fame another name). "Are you thinking what I'm thinking?" the mind rhetorically asks itself. "No. It's not possible." It can't be done. I can't do it. What *can* an idiot *do* but *not* be other than who he is? "We go towards the thing we mean" (*PI* §455), wrote Wittgenstein, meaning, I think, that we go towards what we are. This is performance behavior, and, as such, the show must go on even given the catastrophic certainty of its and our own anxious disappearance.

An audio correspondence is discovered in *The Ladies Man*. After the old woman passes the frightening letterbox, she and the silent film are alarmed and confused by someone suddenly shouting her name, making its anxious celebrity known, then visible (as people in and out of vehicles loudly collide). In the film's running sight-and-sound gag, Herbert carries increasingly larger quantities of food and water to an evidently very large because very loud, unseen house pet named "Baby." Baby turns out to be as and as not advertised, her name matching her physical stature, a very small dog whose literal roar is much worse than Herbert's anxiously anticipatory sound-bite image of her imagines. The lion we expected to claim the offstage roar, however, later enters the frame from the opposite side, seemingly out of another film, provoking Herbert to shout for his palindromic "MOM!" who is wearing his face (i.e., is played by Lewis) in another performance reveal. The "lady man" who becomes "the ladies man" is a mamma's boy, identity appearing to be just another language-game.<sup>28</sup>

This film ending is inconsistent with logic's rule but perfectly consistent with the language-game of anxious looping sound and unsound (incomparable) image into Wittgenstein's "echo of a thought in sight" (*PI, POP, xi, §235*). In a proposition that is nearly always introduced with the word "puzzling" or "perplexing," Wittgenstein noted, "If a lion could talk, we wouldn't be able to understand it" (*PI, POP, §327*). Wittgenstein's brief here was for the radical incommensurability of certain speakers based upon a non-concordance not only of their language but also of their "form of life" with ours. By "form of life" Wittgenstein has in mind the community and history that help determine the facial and gestural codes, the manner of speaking, rules, and patterns of behavior and language-games—"the intertwining of culture, world-view and language."<sup>29</sup> That Milltown's form of life is that of not any run-of-the-mill-town but specifically, "a very nervous community," speaks to a certain organic discordance that determines everything that comes

after, rearing its giant head filled with anxious noise and roaring at the end (cross-referentially, “NEVILLE NOISE AND SERENA SCREAM”). Whereas Wittgenstein uses the lion to exemplify an alien communicator whose form of life and so its language cannot be understood by another species, he says that a baby moving a chess piece only appears to us to be playing chess, because we recognize the moving of the chess-piece on the chessboard as signifying within our language-game a move in an actual chess game.<sup>30</sup> Given the over-insistent, hyperbolic nature of Lewis’s brand of comedy, it is unsurprising that he combines the baby and the lion into “Baby” the lion to beef up the incommensurability of the moment in the context of the film and that he uses the lion to subvert the overall context in the end. Had the film been released by MGM, whose emblem is the roaring lion, the non-diegesis of the moment would have been (even more) complete and would have gestured back to earlier Martin and Lewis (as well as Bob Hope-Bing Crosby) meta-language-games with the medium and means of production (e.g., directly addressing the film audience regarding the movie they are watching and about their movie careers in general or at that point in time). As it stands, the lion’s roar typifies the self-referential inchoateness of mental noise in a perpetually anxious context, the mind as a very nervous community of self-enlarging, self-spectating thoughts.

At the end of *The Bellboy*, Stanley, who talks for the first time, is mistaken for the soundman, the voice of striking workers, in an aural equivalent to the silent convergence of Chaplin’s Little Tramp with the workers’ demonstration in *Modern Times*. “Why haven’t you talked before?” someone asks Stanley after he has slammed his hand down on a table to stop the din of argument and replaced it with Jerry Lewis shouting “SHUT UP!” “Because no one ever asked me,” says Stanley, who is as surprised as the others to hear himself speak in the voice of the real Jerry Lewis—the one who requires two surrogates to create the inexact echo effect of anxious thought thinking itself. “Are you thinking what I’m thinking?” the mind asks,” to which anxiety responds even without hearing the question, “Yes, it’s me.”

### Walking and Ticcing

**Keep walking until I get out of myself.**

—Handke, *The Weight of the World: A Journal*

**As soon as I think of an everyday use of the sentence instead of a philosophical one, its meaning becomes clear and ordinary.**

—Wittgenstein (OC §44e)

In my personal experience, meaning only becomes clear when it is theoretical, philosophical, abstract. The ordinary confounds understanding (*Is that a*

hawk or a handsaw?). Wittgenstein's philosophy of the ordinary, being based upon usefulness, reattaches truth to consequences as regards thinking.<sup>31</sup> The idea is not unique to Wittgenstein, of course, but he is insistent upon it. To ask, for example, "what are the consequences of walking?" cannot be separated from thinking for a philosopher who would replace the notion of right or wrong pictures of thinking with the statement that "we don't yet know our way about in the use of our picture, or of our pictures" (*RPPI* §549). Wittgenstein's approach to thinking, as to language, is circumambulatory. He wants us to walk around the word, object, or thought process and to consider it from and in various aspects. When thinking walks around you instead, circumambulation is literalized in the form of repetition, empty rituals in service to the pedestrian mystery of self-doubt regarding the performance of ordinary actions. The problem manifested in ticcing while walking, like other problems of performance behavior, is exacerbated and to a large extent defined by the voluntary nature of manifesting the problem as a form of aspect-seeing in the first place.<sup>32</sup>

The step creates the ground of the self-doubt manifested as performance behavior as if it were drawn by it, like an animated cell in which the walking figure cannot outstrip the ground on which he walks or the frame he walks within.<sup>33</sup> The grounds for the truth of what we experience can be seen in how we act, not in what we see.<sup>34</sup> The body tells the mind, I don't (no longer) know how to walk. The mind tells the body, I don't (no longer) know what "walking" means.<sup>35</sup> The physical tic is a communication breakdown between mind and body over how meaning makes action and action makes meaning. Walking is encumbered by its modeling awareness of the dis-analogy of seeing-as-observing to seeing-as-knowing. Walking exposes the problem that contextlessness poses to thought. In this contextlessness, the tic poses a question to the mind that might otherwise be a description—Is what I am seeing or looking at a "5" or an "8"? It is impossible to tell because the thing being done appears to be so hand-drawn, a personal sign(ature). It has gotten so as I can no longer read my own handwriting.

I have taken to writing notes and affixing them to the soles of my shoes to put my body in mind of memory that, because it has been previously composed, might correct my "focus of where meaning is." These notes, which are about ideas that transcend the ordinary, are designed to allow the ordinary to take its course without thinking about it, what it means and what it does. I know this looks bad from the outside, although not as bad as it looks from the inside, where I have become both actor and auditor, counting where there is as yet no accounting for my actions. ("No experience of identity today: only of running after myself," wrote Handke.)<sup>36</sup> There is really no accounting for who this person has become. There is no absence in my walking. Even the soles of my shoes take note(s), scraping boundaries on floors and pavements that I cross, retracing long walks once taken, alone but with anxious thoughts dogging my steps, like all those dogs I imagined would attack me like le Carré's

Alfred Winser.<sup>37</sup> I am vicariously attracted to the walking motif in Handke's work and to the anxiety that attends every step in the writing from experience, not so much of the walking but of the thinking—the self-questioning, imagining, and second-guessing—that accompanies walking, the thought that walking sets in motion, the walking of thought that literalizes the process that transpires even when I am still. Even when I am still, I am still walking—restless legs at night seeking to walk off restless thoughts by day.

For how does a man learn to recognize his own state of knowing something? (OC §589)

There is less a severance in meaning between certainty and doubt than a lag in the processing of thought, which effectively shifts “the focus of where meaning is” from divergence to the habitually lazy convergence of meaning and function in written, verbal, and gestural language.<sup>38</sup> As in one of Markson's aphoristic novels in which the roll call of the dead conveys a passing of presentness and a presentness of passing, Handke's *The Hour We Knew Nothing of Each Other* (1992) vexes temporality by presenting passing as both a continuous performance and a passing show.<sup>39</sup> Handke's passersby have their stage directions, their blocking affixed to the soles of their shoes. These notes are wearing off with each and every step, as they complete their rounds, the roll call of things done in the doing. Do we know this to be true in a play that announces at every step “This Is Not a Play”? Who are “We” and can this entity know nothing of the thing it is and of which it is a part?

Wittgenstein would take issue with the principle of knowing in most configurations in which knowing appears to bear witness against not-knowing, which is only knowing's opposite. This is where Handke's reading of Wittgenstein as a call to action is so theatrically affirming. Wittgenstein asserts that we misuse the word “know” in a philosophical sense, although not necessarily in particular circumstances (e.g., “I *know* that I am in England.” [OC §423]). Although Wittgenstein can imagine such circumstances, they do not sufficiently engage him to explain how knowing (or not-knowing) can bring meaning to language.<sup>40</sup> We misuse “knowing” (and its opposite), argues Wittgenstein, by using it to state the obvious. To say, for example, “I know that this is my hand” is obviated by the trailing rejoinder, “Of course I know—how could I not know?” (OC §412). And further, “When I say ‘how do I know?’ I do not mean that I have the least *doubt* of it. What we have here is a foundation for all my action. But it seems to me that it is wrongly expressed by the words ‘I know’” (OC §414). So, we also misuse knowing/not-knowing by equating these words with certainty/doubt. How, then, does one escape the “bewitchment” of the word “know,” at the same time suppressing our anxiety at not-knowing that takes knowing's place?<sup>41</sup>

What then would Wittgenstein have made of Handke's know-nothing play without words? “I want to say,” says Wittgenstein, “the physical game is just

as certain as the arithmetical. But this can be misunderstood. My remark is a logical and not a psychological one" (OC §447). Handke's *Hour* is enacted on a plane and as a space that is ontological without ostensibly being in any way psychological—that is, unless you (properly) read the play without words as the counterpart to Handke's anxiety journal, *The Weight of the World*, which is composed of words without play. The very fact that journal and play exist as two separate entities, though, allows the stage at least to appear to speak for itself, as itself, reciting in so many words its way of knowing as opposed to the content of what it knows. How can we not doubt what we see in these circumstances, when the proof of knowing/not-knowing is sized to what the world is that is (only) a stage? Wittgenstein asserts: "Every language-game is based on words 'and objects' being recognized again. We learn with the same inexorability that this is a chair as that  $2 \times 2 = 4$ " (OC §455). The stage, when it is allowed to make a non-psychological appearance, shows us what it is/not, shows us knowing/not-knowing that is commensurate with its durative time, the nominal "Hour" Handke's play takes to perform. Even an "absurd" proposition such as a figure on a stage showing another figure his hand and proclaiming "This is not a hand" speaks to the stage's ontological knowing/not-knowing that was elsewhere framed by Magritte according to the representational principle of "being recognized again." In this way, the stage can never actually be "absurd," although it can joke about itself as Wittgenstein urges philosophy to do.

Each thing is, as it were, a space of possible states of affairs. This space I can imagine empty, but I cannot imagine the thing without the space. (*TLP* §2.013)

In *The Hour We Knew Nothing of Each Other*, Handke transcribes the gist and gestus of Wittgensteinian "doing philosophy" into "doing theater." But theater undoes the doing of philosophy, much as use and experience undid philosophy by transforming it into a way of doing for Wittgenstein, who wrote: "I do philosophy now like an old woman who is always mislaying something and having to look for it again: now her spectacles, now her keys" (OC §532). Is this another case of the idiot's anxiety at the object's disappearance, with the object here being philosophy? Is Wittgenstein's expressed need to re-school himself in his basic way of knowing how he knows what the world is as a thought-space being reconfigured here as the book you are now reading?

Early in the afternoon, he remembered who he was: for that one moment he managed to feel identical with himself, and then, at last, he no longer thought as poorly of himself as he had for a long while.<sup>42</sup>

The figures who are crossing the square that is a stage in *Hour* are not actors so much as figures of thought, thought prompts. Their blocking is not

so much action in the traditional sense of *mise en scène* as it is the visible lag that occurs in the thought process between giving and receiving of image and information. Nominal stage space creates their movement. Appearance, not actuality, engenders their actions, so that what looks to be accurate, literally is not. The experience of this, as with other Handke plays, may be likened to what one feels when seeing a freestanding in-frame prop door being passed through an actual (stationary, architectural) doorframe. The mind's eye feels like it has seen a theatrical ghost. There is something that is not quite identical with itself and that is distressing, disorienting, disconcerting, and dis-analogizing, all appearances to the contrary. And of course being unreal, a purgatorial (non-disappeared) Ghost, the aporetic figure of simile, the mind feels compelled, like Hamlet, to chase it, but that, as Wittgenstein has stated with a different object in sight, "does not lead us beyond itself" (*TLP* §102), beyond its being as not-being. "Wittgenstein," writes Gordon Baker, "tried to liberate our thinking from enslavement to particular analogies by bringing to light *other analogies*, which are equally well-supported as the ones of which we unconsciously make use."<sup>43</sup> So perhaps simile and metaphor are not effaced but are instead more truly rendered and rendered more true. ("A true metaphor: like everyday reality, transformed into a dream that clarifies it.")<sup>44</sup> "Never look for metaphors!" Handke says, "(They must be *experienced*.)"<sup>45</sup> But experienced by whom? By the one who is not identical with himself? The one who, for a metaphorical "hour," knows nothing of the "other" in the syntactical thought loop created by "we" and "each other"? (It's not one until it's the other, conventional thinking holds.) The operative question is not so much "who am I when I am not me?" as "who am I when I am someone not identical to myself?" as this second question summons forth a difference that is not at first sight or first thought as apparent. There is again no severance but a running after, or perhaps a running on, as the positionality of the non-identical selves remains conceptually uncertain.

The thanatophobic *Hour* is multi-thought passage in the proverbial bright light moment of ultimate un/seeing, here configured as a square (a shape and a place that configures that shape) commensurate with a stage, unknowingly identical with itself and its phenomenological dis-ease. A man "suddenly looks up into the other's [a woman's] face, which she, alas, has turned away a moment before," paying homage to Chekhov's plays of non-correspondence.<sup>46</sup> The ends that cannot be made to meet articulate the poverty of relations, of which the body knows even without the mind's intervention—but *with* the mind's intervention, the body's performance becomes performance behavior and we are made to see ourselves suffer, see ourselves in *the act* of suffering. We become like Hamlet, and, for that matter, like Jerry Lewis (or like the telethon that Jerry Lewis might host to discover a cure for Hamletism). Painfully, Handke tries to let the body play dumb; but he also tries *not* to, and therein lies one of the paradoxes of anxiety as a mode of performance.

In *Hour's* anatomy, missing body parts speak to an ostensible lack of sure-footedness (e.g., the stage actions of staggering, falling, rolling, and especially running, which elicit doubt on and of the stage) that is nevertheless in line with a surefooted inevitability (where the path is leading) that fills the author with an overwhelming sense of anxiety or un-surefootedness that is only indirectly expressed.<sup>47</sup> There is, for example, the woman in an advanced stage of pregnancy, who crosses the stage, "all alone, a letter in her hand on which she glues a stamp while walking," summoning forth Lewis's "nutty professor" whom we fear might deposit that letter irretrievably in the trash bin rather than in the letterbox, thus signing a dead letter.<sup>48</sup> Each option signals its own mode of inevitability and its own measure of anxiety, the correspondence between the two receptacles dissembling as non-correspondence in the outside world that fits our mental dis-ease like a latex glove worn over a comedian's head and inflated with his own dying breath.

The "advanced stage of pregnancy" shows necessity and contingency (on *Hour's* stage) in an uneasy cohabitation of correspondence and non-correspondence. Nothing need be said, except in "passing"—that is, "quick passage"—and the mortality, which this signs (like a letter), silently, minus speech. The passage that follows the pregnant woman's action is so relentlessly, compulsively reinforcing as to be almost unbearable:

This and that person, old people, young people, men and women coming after her in all directions now follow in her trail, all with their assorted pieces of mail which they check from all sides, still addressing, licking, closing envelopes, rereading postcards, looking at the pictures, all headed toward an invisible center beyond the square; one returns empty-handed, goes elsewhere; another woman has continued down the street [up your street], another man, back again for a moment, climbs down below the ground further in the back.<sup>49</sup>

The mouth that licks the stamp and the hand that glues it to the envelope concealing the letter create the perfect seal between the stamp and the small square that is a stage, now empty. The mind's pictures and the body's empty-handedness are frankly acknowledged so as to be non- and even anti-illusory, so frankly theatrical as almost not to be theater at all—the playwright's anxiety at the stage's disappearance. Handke's perfect stage image (from *Weight*) of "a stamp lying on a pocket mirror" infers breath and its stoppage as a recognizable and representable sign of life and death.<sup>50</sup> Handke recasts *Our Town* with metonymic signs taken for wonders (e.g., "[An] enormous globe that . . . illuminates [a] bag from inside") and the town drunk as "the square idiot," less a local character than our localized (innocent, limited, prejudicial) idea of the stage's knowing. The umbrellas mournfully raised at Emily's funeral in Wilder's play reduce to a single closed umbrella in Handke's, anxiously performing death's unknowing and the mind's sense of loss. A dead

man lies in the brightly lit square, empty-footed and mocked by an idiot, before death takes the first man away, and solitude mocks the second who has been abandoned.

Can this be the end of the line, or is the SPECT SCAN machine passing too close to my face with its bright square of light? My eyes are closed against the brightness, my mouth shut, my mind the square idiot performing a cross-walking thought-pantomime, mistaking “Someone passes carrying a tree” to mean that my arms and legs should press harder against the trunk of my body to make my body into a straight line.<sup>51</sup> Indexing thought, the square idiot is all of the so-called “someones” and “anyones” who, with their props, cross the stage, modeling thought as a performance behavior. The square idiot crosses the square “accompanied at some distance by a man carrying a reduced wood or cardboard model of the square in all its light” in the stage’s same-but-not-identical *mise-en-abyme* show of ontological difference and tessellating thought-looping.<sup>52</sup> “The whistle of a marmot, the scream of an eagle” and the self-provoking, self-obstructing slow-show-dance of a man and woman alternately pursuing each other and blocking each other’s pursuit replays the mind’s synthetic, aporetic Chekhovian memory. Age futilely tries beating back generational loss with a cane, feeling its way along the edge, “dragging one foot behind the other,” in the gait of the limping square idiot.<sup>53</sup> An idiotic question: Chekhov (already) knew he was dying while writing his last play, *The Cherry Orchard*, but did he think he had to die *in order to write it*?

Abraham pushes Isaac ahead of him onto the stage, “one hand on his shoulder, the other behind his back holding the sacrificial knife,” like the one my father brandished to stop me from touching physical (and mental) objects when my as yet undiagnosed OCD presented. The mind configures the hand and the other hand into an isomorphic attitude of self-contestation and irresolution—“Isaac returns, intact with Abraham, empty-handed, dead tired in [no longer *on*] his trail.” Where is the knife? Where is the consequence of an action? The knife is lost, the object has disappeared owing to the anxiety of real loss, in anticipation of real loss, of death, severance, abandonment—all of this signified in Abraham’s empty-handedness. He and his son, he and his action unresolved in the face of anxiety, except *as* anxiety, “settle down *at some distance* from the others” [my emphasis]. The mind is exhausted by how it pictures itself, at the energy that is expended to repeatedly compose and revise this picture, at the energy it takes to shuffle and superimpose the square/the stage in different performance modes (“the square’s fool alias square’s master alias patron of the square”) and to keep it brightly lit. The machine that the self-blinded face sees only in the mind with eyes wide shut continues taking pictures of the brain, as unphotographed thoughts criss-cross my mind like so many ticcing “someones,” “fanning the light into [t]his opened book.”<sup>54</sup>

## Chapter 9



# Homeless

Tell me *how* you are searching, and I will tell you *what* you are searching for.

—Wittgenstein (*PR* §118)

Now at last the movies, I feel competent again.

—Handke, *The Weight of the World*

A solitary figure, a homeless man, walks from a distance slowly into frame. Before him, a doorframe fronts a house constructed to the specifications of film, with its back wall rather than its theatrical front missing. The frame house sits in Monument Valley on the Utah–Arizona border, in the vicinity of “The Mittens,” a large rock formation that is shaped like a gloved hand. John Wayne’s Ethan Edwards has to duck to pass through the doorframe of his brother Aaron’s home (in John Ford’s 1956 western *The Searchers*), an index of darkness’s dematerialized interiority that transfers to the low-framed enclosure alongside the home in which Aaron’s wife will lose her life and the dark cave mouth where Aaron’s daughter, Ethan’s niece Debbie, will have her former life reclaimed.<sup>1</sup> This dematerialization is synonymous in time, place, and meaning with the burning out of the proper home’s contents—“the familial and spatial interior”—by the Indians, who have staged the home invasion and provoked an indeterminacy, a site of uncertain materiality that can only be spoken of but not fully understood in terms of “home” and “homecoming,” house and home.<sup>2</sup> At least this is what Wittgenstein tells Dean Martin as they sit together watching the film together in the dark. The doorframe is both a false limit and a severance signifying Ethan’s performance behavior of apartness, his bowing a false self-humbling. At film’s end, the homeless man stops himself at the threshold of the now dead Aaron’s front door and passes beyond narrative whose *mise en abyme* the open door ironically frames. His apartness represents a self-de-installation of the subject part (role) from the theatrical trope of happy-family mimesis.<sup>3</sup>

En route to his brother's home, there was, one assumes, the occasional stray dog, which, if Ethan had a mind to, he might have shot for fear of being bitten by something rabid, like a catastrophist performing a behavior of certain doubt. The homeless man refers to anyone as "pilgrim" who sets him on edge, whether owing to guile or inexperience.<sup>4</sup> Ethan is a figure of what Ortega y Gasset called "radical solitude," capturing the western definition of what a man is: not just "monolithic, silent, mysterious, impenetrable as a desert butte, he *is* the desert butte . . . a solid object, not only . . . relieved of the burden of relatedness and responsiveness to others, he is relieved of consciousness itself, which is to say, consciousness of self."<sup>5</sup> ("Ethan" translates from the original Hebrew as "strength," "constancy.") This lack of consciousness should not be confused with not knowing, as Wittgenstein suggests: "The word 'know' doesn't denote a state of consciousness. That is, the grammar of the word 'know' isn't the grammar of a 'state of consciousness'" (PG §34). "The hero doesn't need to talk; he just *knows*," but it is a knowing bereft of (self-)acknowledgment, friendless, whose singularity is a sign not of particularity but only of non-correspondence, misanthropy. The western hero is suspicious of language and of the professional and professorial types (Wittgenstein interjects from his accustomed place in the theater's first row), who would mystify all that is material and real to conceal their own incapacity to do for themselves unburdened of self-conscious, self-gratifying/self-lacerating thought. "The great difficulty here is not to present the matter as if there were something one *couldn't* do" (PI §374), Wittgenstein wrote, perhaps with the over-articulated action grammar of the movie western in mind. Lee Braver states, "Wittgenstein wants to argue that it is incoherence rather than inability that keeps us from talking about that which transcends our talk."<sup>6</sup> A western antihero, Ethan is laconic and a Wittgensteinian figure of inchoate anxiety, misunderstanding and misunderstood, unknown to himself and to others, the lion whose roar cannot be parsed as "talk." Although he doesn't know it, his search is to imagine a self that materializes an incorporeal interiority apart from a landscape of stony exteriority that appears to authenticate who he is.

Edwards is in need of a ruler. Returned from fighting in the Civil War, he lifts his small niece Debbie up in the air in front of him, thinking that she is her older sister Lucy. Ethan tells Debbie-as-Lucy that she does not seem to have grown much bigger than when he last saw her, which was obviously a long time ago since the real Lucy is clearly now a teenager.<sup>7</sup> During the many years that Ethan searches for Debbie, who is taken and raised by the Indians who burned her childhood home and killed her parents, she grows to Lucy's approximate age and size, again standing in for her sister who is killed by the Indians, precisely because she has already reached young womanhood. As Ethan lifts the now grown Debbie in the air with possibly murderous intent at film's end, his earlier mistakenness recertifies an old certainty not as to which one Debbie is, but who she is—family. Ethan arrives at this as

if it were foreknowledge, minus any outward show of self-questioning. His action appears to acknowledge kinship as being something other than a way of measuring similarity and difference.

Naming ultimately provides the clue to Ethan's and the plot's resolution. "Seven Fingers," where Debbie's captor was last sighted, does not appear on any map, but like "The Mittens" presents the hand as an extraordinary mental object. "The Mittens" conceals all digits save for the opposable thumb, enabling search and destruction by forging Promethean fire into instruments of war. "Seven Fingers," on the other hand (and in the wake of the Civil War's end and the ongoing American Indian Wars), names war surplus—extraneous, superfluous, vestigial like a human tail. The name of the Indian tribe that took Debbie translates into English as "roundabout," as in Wittgenstein's "I don't know my way about," a self-admission missing from Ethan's experiential statement, "Man says he's going one place, means to go t'other." Still, it is Ethan's essential apartness that calls to him to transform "into the figure that is [his] alone to be."<sup>8</sup> Wittgenstein wrote: "An actor may play lots of different roles, but at the end of it all he himself, the human being, is the one who has to die" (CV 50e).

Philosophy for Wittgenstein is about liberation from the *compulsion* of any picture(s).<sup>9</sup>

And the winds of questions, beyond the canyons will stop the moment we arrive.<sup>10</sup>

Handke's *Voyage to the Sonorous Land, or The Art of Asking* employs *The Searchers* as a dramatic template, along with Chekhov and Ferdinand Raimund, who wrote satirical fairy-tale farces and shot himself after being bitten by what he believed to be a rabid dog. Onto this landscape of disingenuous self-questioning, "a plateau in the far-away heartland of the hinterland on the farthest continent in bright rehearsal light" (my emphasis), enter a number of self-acknowledged actors, "pilgrims" whose name (after John Wayne's evaluative nomination) says they make a practice of guile and inexperience.<sup>11</sup> "What is it like to concentrate on experience?" Wittgenstein asked. "If I try to do this I, e.g., open my eyes particularly wide and stare."<sup>12</sup> Does Wittgenstein here recognize the actor's affect, his recognition that framing experience makes him into a spectator and so to some degree displaces experience? It is as if a western landscape had been painted on a backdrop, which "a pair of hands" taken from *Kaspar* suddenly drew up or down to affect a stage curtain.<sup>13</sup> The hands' appearance, "searching for something to hold onto," recalls Heidegger's characterization of hands as extending beyond grasping and holding to extension itself as a mental object.<sup>14</sup> Sighting/citing the hands we await the whole actor's reveal, but find that an actor can be awaited and still have appeared by being there in (a) part.

The character “Spoilsport” runs on like Jerry Lewis and Leonard Shelby, constantly “*looking back for his pursuers as he runs,*” the searcher pursued by a memory-limit that consciousness cannot define, except by likening it to the picture he is in, a condition that itself sets a limit to consciousness as he experiences it—leaving him only to stare at what may be only the rehearsed experience of looking back and running as a performance behavior.<sup>15</sup> Here we are mindful of Derrida’s qualifying statement that “by definition, *limit itself*, seems deprived of a body,” although the meaning-body fictionalizes limit in the form of a picture.<sup>16</sup> The actor again runs into the mental object and is head-wounded. In the immediate aftermath of “a sonorous sound” tuned to Chekhov’s breaking string, “*the seven figures notice each other,*” notice perhaps that they are in fact seven fingers as in *The Searchers*, meaning-flipping like Wellman’s “fates” and “facts,” and as such irregular and in discourse with something ontological and perhaps uncanny. Or as actors they might say it’s only a stage effect, without knowing what affects it. “Wide Eyes” (already cited in Wittgenstein’s experiential effort), his pupils permanently dilated in the theatrical darkness of not knowing the guile of his own performance, emerges travel-ready “*with just the comb and toothbrush he puts in the breast-pocket of his jacket.*”<sup>17</sup> He is no doubt unfamiliar with the proposition “Reality is the toothbrush waiting at home for you in its glass, a bus ticket, a paycheck, and the grave.” Orson Welles intoned this in his self-directed “*F*” for *Fake*, a 1973 film about picture fakes and the sort of rough magic that made Harry Lime’s body disappear and reappear as a mental object. Wide Eyes does not see this prop, the mental object’s fake becoming a catastrophic sign when carried so near a heart that could stop beating at any time.

The play’s bipolarity not only of seeing and not-seeing but of saying and showing performs a Tractarian split after a book which can be read as a series of answers to questions that cannot yet be properly asked.<sup>18</sup> It is possible the sound of the sonorous post-dramatic landscape that Handke describes allows us to see the otherwise unseen author slamming the book shut on Tractarian mental pictorialism, as Wittgenstein advised. And yet Spoilsport’s “mortal fear” summons before Wide Eyes’s intuited “terror” (terror’s wide eyes) another Abraham and Isaac scene, as if it knew nothing of *The Hour We Knew Nothing of Each Other’s* version. It’s a story of hands handed down in varying degrees of particularity. Here Abraham’s hand is “on little Isaac’s shoulder, reassuringly it seems, while in fact he is once again taking his son to the place of slaughter,” and, in the next moment, “*he looks at the palm of his hand,*” perhaps considering the irregularity of a severance akin to cutting off your own hand to prove a certainty (belief in and obedience to an authority outside the self) that can never be proved.<sup>19</sup> To make a show of proof is merely to articulate apartness, the severance that some mental object demands to satisfy an authority of its own.

Spoilsport, like Chekhov’s Yepikhodov, a diminished catastrophic sign, further cites though not by name a likewise diminished, hand-me-down

Oedipus and Jocasta presented here as “a lame-footed idiot” and “she with her hand between her thighs so many nights past” who could “wrap her arms around this young man tonight.” Handke’s incestuous image recalls Wittgenstein’s intention (according to Braver) “to eradicate wonder, because it tempts us beyond ourselves, seducing us toward an airless space outside world and time.”<sup>20</sup> The wandering eye (with its sexual connotation) is in need of blinding at the spectacle of life’s falling away from the beauty of the whole (in) to the seven-fingered hole of surreality. This oracular hole, “the oracle in the palm of my hand,” emits darkness not light, although that darkness may only be the swarm of ants inserted there by Buñuel and Dali to shock us with self-specularizing onanistic wonder, the mind in thrall to its own strangeness.<sup>21</sup>

The audience too is struck dumb, *made* dumb by wonder. “Yes, I imagine them,” says Voyage’s Old Man (an actor), “sitting quietly in their seats, exactly the same way they started out, heads up, looking out.”<sup>22</sup> In Leonid Andreyev’s self-referential symbolist drama *Requiem* (1916), a live audience is replaced by “flat wooden figures . . . [who] watch relentlessly with painted eyes, they do not move, they do not breathe, they keep totally quiet.” Andreyev’s is a theater of the dead, and Andreyev a devoted pessimist and catastrophist who unsuccessfully attempted suicide on three occasions, once by lying down on railroad tracks the wrong way, so as *not* to have his body severed.<sup>23</sup> In Andreyev’s short story, “The Thief,” a young man entertaining the paranoid (and perhaps OCD) delusion that men have boarded the train he is on to arrest him for his commission of a crime jumps off the train and is immediately killed by an oncoming locomotive. The train that ran over the author’s body without killing him is in fact a train of thought, which sees itself unable to be suicided by the picture of a train about which it cannot stop thinking. Handke had by *Voyage* time already written: “Looking out the window of a waiting train, I had ridden ahead in my thoughts; then the train started and soon overtook me: strange moment of duplication, when my thought ride and the train ride coincided, a kind of flare-up, and then there was only the train running on.”<sup>24</sup> Andreyev became so celebrated for exhibiting suicidal performance behavior that many others who were contemplating suicide wrote to him for confirmation. This in effect reaffirmed suicide’s co-opting of death’s final authority in the name of self-authorship while mentally simulating apartness as an act of showing.<sup>25</sup> Andreyev meanwhile shot himself through his hand, which left the hand permanently twisted, one assumes with self-doubt, since Andreyev never did manage to kill himself.<sup>26</sup>

“I simply embody,” says Handke’s “Actress,” which, of course, calls the question of how the body means to be presented and what body is presented and seen. “Does my body look like *that*” (*PI* §411), the body asks the mirror-image, which answers back in the deviant, theatrical grammar of inverse directionality and in/tangibility. “I never wanted to be anything but an actress,” declares the Actress, self-measuring apartness, her incapacity to play anyone but herself as a mental object she calls “Actress” marking the

aporia of dramatic character.<sup>27</sup> The Actress begs the Diderotian paradox of not/being in character and sidesteps Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe's reading of Diderot's *Paradoxe sur comédien* as maintaining that the actor's ability to imitate everything requires that he himself be nothing, a "subjectless subject (absent from himself, distracted from himself, deprived of self)." In this sense, "the law of mimesis" states "a *law of impropriety*," meaning that there is nothing that properly belongs to the actor, no proper name and no specific property (*propriété*).<sup>28</sup> This transparent nothingness allows the audience to call the actor "his," as Andreyev's performance for his (own) suicidal audience attests.<sup>29</sup>

The Actress and her fellow travelers fetishize a contentless picture of what acting or performance is. They cannot escape the picture, but they cannot understand it or what it means to be inside the picture either. They are fools for/of representation engaged in scenes that invariably are shaped by questions and devoid of context, like anxiety that is both self-doubting and contentless, "the thought that reflects on its own activity."<sup>30</sup> Anxiety is commensurate with thought in much the same way that, in this case, walking is commensurate with thinking. To the extent that they see themselves walking, actors are thinking in pictures, despite the fact that "the imperative itself is ungroundable and unrepresentable."<sup>31</sup> The Actress's call for "a play of questions" in "the tone of psalms" resonates inexactly as "palms" and the openhanded gesture of sharing applause at suspended disbelief—although by now Spoilsport is already "[looking] at the palm of his hand," a figure of doubt, as is "Parzival's" mute Kaspar, a traumatized idiot (and an etymological "fool") chased from his home by questions and questioners. Parzival is left to the homelessness of wandering and *wondering about*, which *The Searchers'* idiot Mose Harper forestalls by reserving himself the promise of a permanent place in the Edwards family home. "Which was the corner where you didn't have to be afraid?" Spoilsport asks Parzival, the question as always being posed while looking back over your shoulder to see how soon, in what form and from which direction the catastrophe of homelessness might come.<sup>32</sup> Spoilsport asks, of the now homeless (when is "now"?) Parzival, "where in your hometown was the border beyond which the air of home suddenly evaporated, where the light of home turned gray and you saw yourself dragged out of your corner of colors into pallor and confusion?" When and where in time and space did the incapacitating anxiety begin and "whom do you blame for your incurable wound?"<sup>33</sup> And with "wound" we begin to suspect what we already knew, that Parzival is also an actor, *my* actor, who "can only be asked questions that do not begin with a 'who' or 'what,' nor with a 'where' or 'when,' not to speak of 'why' or 'how,' which can solely be answered with a yes or no."<sup>34</sup> A mind that cannot be bothered with logic but can still be bothered *by* logic is a poor candidate for question-and-answer language-gaming. Parzival re-inflects Kaspar's signature line to speak of homelessness—"I don't like to be where I come from"—thereafter

unspooling a Lucky-like flood of logorrheic free-associations the spectacle of which “*seems a constant effort to shake off the words at the same time. But the more he tries to get rid of them, the more there are coming out of him. Now that he is quiet, the talking apparently continues non-stop inside himself.*”<sup>35</sup> Self-questioning thought behavior is a form of self-abasement as the fist and dog chain with which Parzival hits himself on the head enact. And yet, “the questioning imagination,” Wide Eyes says, “must not remain fettered. The cherry orchard of questions must not be cut down.”<sup>36</sup> And with this citation, the sonorous hinterland of thought thinking itself reclaims a landscape of doubt disguised as certainty (Ranevskaya and family) and certainty disguised as doubt (Yepikhodov), the latter being another, better way of defining catastrophism.

The drama needs catastrophe, needs things not to work.<sup>37</sup>

In act 2 of *The Cherry Orchard*, The Homeless Man appears right after a snapped string has spoken to the problem of temporality as it relates to sonority, specifically to the noise that past time can/not still make, or in the case of the immanent and imminent future, make still and silent like a Tractarian question. If the past cannot change, can the same noise be heard in both the past and the present?<sup>38</sup> The Homeless Man, who is at once a harbinger of the displacement and dispossession to come and the reality of these things having already come to pass, says in his person and in so many words that he does not know his way about (he appears to be looking for Andreyev’s train). Homelessness here functions as a sort of Wittgensteinian prophecy, as in Chekhov, a condition of being in the guise of becoming. But is the Homeless Man untimely or posthumous in Caccieri’s coinage?

Untimely people can always look ahead to their own time. Not so for posthumous people; they are absolutely protected from the risk of expectation. They cannot be reached, they cannot be understood. Their own lives do not signify their actuality, that is, the establishment of their rationale. They have too many rationales to be able to confirm them.<sup>39</sup>

My mind pictures “too many rationales” with the notation “polysemic per-  
versity” as its legend, the replacement status of fact.

Handke’s version of Chekhov’s Homeless Man, rechristened “The Local Man,” lingers longer than his predecessor and says a good deal more but likewise brings with him a sense of perspective that cannot be trusted.<sup>40</sup> “Although I love to give information,” The Local Man says, “I shouldn’t be asked anything, I always give the wrong directions. How often did I hide behind the bushes from the wrath of the people I had sent the wrong way.”<sup>41</sup> All of these statements have in common the “I,” Wittgenstein’s inauthentic

sign. “Maybe I don’t look it,” says the Local Man, “but I’m not from around here either,” his nominal “localness” expressing the (appropriately) misleading double incapacity of not knowing where your name says you are from and/or not recognizing that expectations associated with your name (e.g., that being local you should know your way about) are misleading and possibly incorrect.<sup>42</sup> The Local Man seems to be speaking as/of Don Juan, that is, the name running from itself as the isomorphic other of an actor legend accountable for the reputation of not/being who or where you are.

The right road is the road which leads to an arbitrarily predetermined end and it is quite clear to us all that there is no sense in talking about the right road apart from such a predetermined goal. 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. (“LE”)

The whole point of Handke’s play being, of course, that no one agrees on what “the absolutely right road” is, or even, where it leads, and that despite this fact, everyone appears to be ashamed, if not for not going a particular way, that is, in a particular direction, then for going *in* a particular way, that is, as a mode of performance. Performance wrests “direction” away from the fact of the physical imperative, offering instead staging as fiction and the actor who follows or “takes” direction, who goes nowhere real and yet is situated in an *actual* nowhere. And so John Wayne as Ethan Edwards cannot really play himself but cannot *not* play himself either, in the throes of certain uncertainty, wrestling with an ethics of which he cannot speak but only show in the form of a direction taken that is also a search that leads away from “home.”

From the opening stage directions of section 3.2 (Handke following Wittgenstein’s manner of numbering his philosophical propositions with decimal points), we pick out clues to another sonorous land: “[*Trees,*] *thicker and taller [than before] . . . A solitary backyard gate without a handle, without an accompanying fence . . . A lifelike pair of pigeons [goluby in Russian] perched on top of it, their backs turned toward the audience . . . The playing area is reminiscent of the grassy field behind a former park . . . The ACTORS as master and mistress . . . [and] PARZIVAL on the trunk; its weight has driven the voices from his head for now.”* David Lynch’s film *Blue Velvet* (1986), voicing Markson’s, “When I say heard, I am saying so only in a manner of speaking, of course,” begins with a sequence of artificially designed normative events such as watering a suburban lawn and watching television interacting with sights that are more normative in terms of simile than of actuality—a white picket fence fronted by flowers in full, color-saturated and possibly painted bloom; a red fire engine with a Dalmatian sitting on its running board, with both

firemen and fire dog acknowledging the unseen camera with stare, smile, and wave, all of this filmed in slow-motion; the knotting of the garden hose that is watering the suburban lawn to signal the as yet un-erupted aneurysm in the gardener and the quasi-erotic vertical spraying of water from the hose as if from the crotch of the fallen gardener as a Jack Russell terrier (celebrated for their trainability for performance) jumps and snaps at the water, on cue and again in slow motion.<sup>43</sup> Following this mock introduction to the mythical northwestern U.S. town of Lumberton, young Jeffrey Beaumont crosses a grassy field en route to visit his now voiceless father (the home gardener who was earlier felled like a tree with a knot in it) in the hospital. On his way back from the hospital through the same grassy field (“behind Vista”), Jeffrey picks up some stones to throw at an abandoned, dilapidated house. The staging of obsessive thought as a form of *mise en abyme* is manifested at this juncture as a son’s anxiety over his father’s severance from/abandonment of home to homelessness, a state of disrepair.

Jeffrey discovers a severed ear, the aural equivalent of the father’s no longer oracular (patriarchal) voice, now reduced to a wound, a cry of self-pity or for help, the one sound nesting inside the other. The decontextualized severed ear is a sign of wonder, anomalously bobbing on the surface of the world as he found it, while likewise signaling the as yet unrecognized key to the map that will lead Jeffrey into the sonorous land that exists on another level. “A level,” as Lingis defines it,

is neither a purely intelligible order, nor a positive form given to a pure a priori intuition; it is a sensory phenomenon . . . neither a content grasped in a perception nor a form imposed on an amorphous matter of sensation; it is that with which or according to which we perceive. It is not an object formed nor an organization elaborated among objects but an ordinance taken up and followed through.<sup>44</sup>

A level is an interior place in which voice creates its own dimension/dementia and Jeffrey bags an ear as (if it were) evidence, without exercising the detective’s/criminal’s care not to leave fingerprints. Jeffrey immediately takes the ear to Detective Williams, surnamed securely in his own actable identity, whose office number is nevertheless 221, recalling a means of fictional address. 221–B Baker Street is, of course, the home/office address of Sherlock Holmes, a homonym for “home” and a one-off of “house,” confirming that normative artifice is the film’s language-game, along the order of Dean Martin’s “I can’t even watch a house in my own home.”

Arriving at the detective’s home in his neighborhood (a roundabout journey recalling two anterior non-sleeping agents, Hackett and Harford), Jeffrey is instructed “not to tell anybody about your find, but also not to ask more about the case.” This “don’t tell, don’t ask” policy (the artifice of *not* asking questions on the journey to the sonorous land) puts Jeffrey out of the running

for a role in Handke's play. "One day, when it's all sewn up," Detective Williams tells him without irony, "I'll let you know all the details. Right now, I can't." But it is precisely this gag order, the severance of the power or ability to ask or tell about the severed ear that births (through the ear) the aural/oral world of sadomasochistic limit-fetish and OCD fixation to which Jeffrey's senses have already begun to attend. "I'm just real curious, like you said," says Jeffrey, who thinks that he understands what he does not yet know. "Are you the one who found the ear?" a dark voice asks Jeffrey. "How did you know?" Jeffrey asks the detective's daughter Sandy, who answers in mock movie-western fashion, "I just know, that's all." What she knows but cannot say she knows is impairment, the sign under which the anxious mind sleeps, like she does below a bedroom poster of Montgomery Clift, whose actor's face collided with anxious self-regard (so that he did not see the car coming), leaving his mind, like his face, permanently disfigured for his close-up.

The repeated "no" of "knowing" (the not-knowing that is implicit in this innocent knowing) rings with the sonority of a homonymic language-game. "It's a strange world, isn't it?" says Jeffrey, distracted by the contingent proximity that allows him to hear (about) "a woman singer" (another sonorous body), before he sees her (intuitively extrapolating from Wittgenstein the existence of a world we cannot imagine *not* existing). The singer lives "real close to" (just a whisper away from) Jeffrey's house and the field where he found the severed ear. Jeffrey's own ear-ring lets him know this at the point his ear is masochistically pierced. Jeffrey knows the singer is married to Don Watts, the severed ear's rightful owner, while not yet recognizing that "Don Watts" may only represent his own language-gaming to encrypt his own present condition of having too many questions ("whats") to try on (to "don" or consider) in the wake of his father's imminent lateness. "Naming," Wittgenstein asserted, is a "preparation for the use of a word. But *what* is it a preparation *for*?" (*PI* §26). Why is the singer's captor named "Frank," as if something wants to be revealed, but surnamed "Booth" as if it didn't just want to be shown but performed, "acting in a play" being on Wittgenstein's list of language-games? (*PI* §23). Does Jeffrey's mind render Frank as a Wittgensteinian thing with a name but without an authentic action attached to it (thus, the apparently contradictory name "Frank Booth"), because he can only exist inside a language-game? (*PI* §49). Is Frank's telling the singer, whose name is Dorothy, to "stay alive" a command, "(Do not) Surrender Dorothy!" in the secret hope of displacing and calming "Dorothy" as the anxious, homeless sign of there being no place like (i.e., resembling) home in this strange world? Does Frank breathe in amyl nitrate while compelling the singer to simulate her own masochistic compulsion, not primarily to increase sexual arousal but because it smells (surreally) like crushed ants and mostly because it is also used to treat angina and so might cure Jeffrey's father's and indirectly the son's own incapacity?<sup>45</sup> Jeffrey's head voice closes off the ends of his vocal chords and produces higher-pitched singing that births a female

singer reading the musical notes off of her abducted son's party hat as if it were a score of parent-child reconciliation. Jeffrey's chest voice, primarily used in speaking, is materialized in/as Dorothy's grunting captor, who demands that blue velvet be stuffed in his mouth to keep him from uttering decipherable speech. Are musical notes and recessed syllables some kind of unspoken code? A man lip-syncs to Roy Orbison's "In Dreams" because the original singer lost his family in a house fire.<sup>46</sup> The nominally sound-effected Lumberton's polyphony corresponds with and to the sonorous land's perverse polysemy, in which hearing loss means loss of meaning as the mind's (counter-)objective.

"How low your voice has become," the "Old Woman" tells the "Old Man" in *Voyage*, his chest voice taking the place of the head.<sup>47</sup> He assures her that her voice has remained the same, but the Old Man's mention of a missing key (a vocal referent, an anxiety remnant from a house's possibly unlocked door and a map's possibly unreadable or even missing metonymic sign) turns the spade in the hole that grows simultaneously no/deeper as the dirt slides back inside, the done back into the doing. An OCD self-checking shopping list from which no item can be checked off is assembled, asking questions the mind can no longer contain: did you leave the key in the lock; the door open; the iron turned on; the lamp turned off so that the automatic timer is not on, alerting burglars to our absence; did you forget to purchase "insurance for the return of our bodies" just in case the burglars broke into our home we're not in and murdered us in our anxiety dreams?<sup>48</sup> "To an answer that cannot be told, there is no question that can be asked," says the Local Man, and Spoilsport asks whether "this place where we were to play the adventure of asking reveals its real name to me: 'bottleneck,'" the Wittgensteinian fly-bottle or the aporia of real or simulated doubt reflected in the word "play." "Could it be that what is most alive in us does not have its own form? That it is unplayable?"<sup>49</sup>

### The Cat at the Mouse-Hole

"Certain questions would appear unanswerable."

—Markson, *Wittgenstein's Mistress*

Do I inherently resonate with certain experience(s) that cannot be otherwise explained? Should we simply allow this world and its objects to draw us out along our experiential base, as phenomenologically minded philosophers like Merleau-Ponty, Nancy, and especially and with less mental mediation and as an imperative, Lingis suggest? Should we, as Lingis proposes in relation to "the imperative of the night," give ourselves over to what he calls "an immensity without tasks"?<sup>50</sup> Or would such immensity return us to the non-task-driven or non-task-equivalent generalized anxiety that already has us in

its grasp? Does a philosophical prescription to cure self-ascription come in an even smaller, more agoraphobic fly-bottle that I should not be prescribed? To give one's life over to the givenness of the world, to "the weight of the given" is, in effect, to return to the original pain of knowing without knowing, to the performance of answerless questions and the questionable practices of language and pedagogy, the failed mastery of naming as knowing what one (another) thinks.<sup>51</sup> Even our pain is not so much known as self-ascribed, making us all susceptible to neurotic performance. And this, as Budd reminds us, is at the basis of Wittgenstein's overall philosophical project to which the sensory returns us: "how we are inclined to misrepresent [our pain] to ourselves in false pictures that we conjure up when we are bewitched by our language?"<sup>52</sup>

Can thought be pictured, and if so, does this mean that it can only be seen *as if* it were in a picture? Probably so. But an actual thought cannot be conveyed to another person by way of a picture, since all that is being conveyed is a picture of the original thought. "The picture was the key," wrote Wittgenstein. "Or, at any rate, it *seemed* like the key," he observed of his earlier philosophy (*RPPI* §893). The picture is, in the end, printed like the legend that replaces fact as history, which of course, includes medical history. Language is important because it allows us to exchange pictures of what we mean when we use or even infer the word "thinking." Thinking being a process, it cannot, in the end, be depicted. No processing of the brain, not even by a SPECT SCAN, can read my thoughts. The best that *Hamlet* can do is provide us with a picture of thinking. It is not a wrong picture in as much as "thinking" plays a role in a language-game that likens pictures to thinking. But in the end, such pictures are devalued by the context that enables them, that being the language-game itself that accounts only for the word "thinking" and not the experience of thinking.<sup>53</sup> Is it possible, though, that thinking is a language-game we cannot learn, one whose context is, as yet, unknown to us? Wittgenstein allows that such language-games may exist (*RPPI* §606).

"In philosophy," says Wittgenstein, "the comparison of thinking to a process that goes on in secret is a misleading one" (*RPPI* §580). The problem may well reside in comparison itself, under whose rubric we may also include "similarity," "likeness," "simile," and "analogy." All these word-concepts represent thinking in a pictorial mode, thinking-as-seeing and as show. Having argued for showing versus telling in his early philosophy on the basis of showing's greater usefulness (and thus a potential path back to the ordinary), Wittgenstein's discontinuous analogical way of doing philosophy came to want to make greater sense of telling and to make less out of showing in the end. Why, he asks, must we make anything out of observed pain, our own or another person's? At the same time, Wittgenstein can assert: "You must seriously imagine that there really could be a word in some language that stood for pain-behaviour and *not* for pain" (*RPPI* §1133). But Wittgenstein is not affirming pain behavior, which I have been calling "performance

behavior” throughout this study. He is only acknowledging such behavior as a language-game that some people might play. By inferentially critiquing the viability or usefulness of pain behavior, Wittgenstein is, in a sense, asking the individual what he is asking man-made philosophy and psychology, namely: why would you voluntarily incapacitate yourself with your own devices?

The conditional answer to this question is that the problem of incapacity can only be understood as being specific to an individual by obsessively asking questions that are “tokens of the questioner’s intellectual disquiet.”<sup>54</sup> Wittgenstein’s philosophical method is therapeutic not only because it consciously exposes the otherwise neurotically picture-making mind to the clarifying light of analysis, but because it does so in light of philosophy’s obsessive questioning of the meaning of consciousness in the abstract.<sup>55</sup> Psychology errs, says Wittgenstein, by asking the wrong questions and thereby seeking to solve and saying it has solved what are, in fact, the wrong problems. In so doing, psychology “by-pass[es] the thing that is worrying us” (*RPPI* §1039). Wittgenstein occasionally appears to mimic the psychiatrist’s voicing of original trauma: “The egg-shell of its origin clings to any thinking, shewing one what you struggled with in growing up” (*RPPI* §1124). However, the second part of this proposition which reads, “What views are your circle’s testimony: from which ones you have had to break free,” suggests that it is thought’s self-expression through language and performance behaviors that continually entangle us. Philosophy does worse, says Wittgenstein, “often solv[ing] a problem merely by saying: ‘Here is no more difficulty than there.’ That is, just by conjuring up a problem, where there was none before. It says: ‘Isn’t it just remarkable that . . . ,’ and leaves it at that” (*RPPI* §1000). In truth, philosophy and psychology both do this, each via its own method that overlays the appearance of thought-economy on a subject that is inherently abstract, and by so doing enabling performance behavior, an acting out of the problem as if it were the problem’s solution. This is because, as Wittgenstein said of the philosophical method, the problem’s solution and the problem itself may be in equal measure conjuring acts.

Why would you, in some sense or at some time, knowingly obscure (occlude as in seeing) the ordinary with the uselessly decorative or descriptive, on the order of “I know I am groaning dreadfully, I must see a doctor?” (*RPPI* §912). How can I know that someone else experiences a word, let alone a word describing a sensation, as I do? (*RPPI* §876). How do I know that we are seeing the same picture of the word, or are more broadly in the same picture that the language-game that produces the word describes and by which it is in turn described? When one Mamet character asks another via shorthand “In or out?” (as in “Are you in or out of the game?”), the answer is made to seem finite and simple—but it is not, precisely because of what language does and what language cannot do in relation to thought. The fact is, as Wittgenstein argues, that we all see differently because we all see in aspects, meaning that we not only see in pictures, but we “see something into

the picture" (*RPPI* §1028). *Mise-en-scène* strives to enchant the distracted mind into unseeing, for example, the Hamletism that stands in the same space as Hamlet, the performance behavior overriding any honest performance of the Dane's "feeling of unreality" (the antithesis of a hackneyed stage Ghost) the audience might hope to experience (*RPPI* §789).

Wittgenstein asks, "When a cat lies in wait by a mouse-hole—do I assume that it is thinking about the mouse?" (*RPPI* §829). In theater, the answer to this question is most often, inherently "yes," with the apparatus of stage, frame, and curtain signaling the question's rhetoricity and performance as being the solution of whatever problem it chooses to pose. However, when the stage speaks plainly of itself, of the mechanism of its own production, of "the boredom of doors" as signs of predictable outcomes, unhinging said predictability and asking the actors assigned to open them "in or out?" the ontologically sealed stage picture (the *mise-en-scène's* picturization of the stage's ontology) is likewise interrogated. And in that picture, locked into the scenic room, stranded on the stage, is the wounded actor, the audience's depicted self. "What does it mean," Wittgenstein asks, "to say that self-observation makes my acting, my movements, uncertain?" At the same time, he offers, "I cannot observe myself unobserved" (*RPPI* §839). And here he and we are caught, as always, between the incapacity of seeing as a way of saying with certainty and saying what it is we think we see, what we see as thinking. Can you act *this*? Can you cross a stage *involuntarily*? Can you be *made* to act? Does being made to act necessarily free you from motive, or does it instead make your acting even more motive-driven? OCD answers this last question with a resounding, if troubled, "yes."

Certainly the answer to the question "At what point does such neurotic performance behavior actually become creative?" must be subjective, especially given the ongoing debate over what constitutes the limits of performance. Perhaps we can agree that in the end both creative performance and performance behavior constitute their own forms of rule-following. But in the case of performance behavior, these rules take the form of a person's own real or imagined-to-be transgressive mental directives, intrusive thoughts in relation to representational constraints (which the creative product externalizes).

At what point does the mental risk of performance behavior outweigh its real or quasi-artistic reward? At what point does the weight of being yourself, of what Wittgenstein described as "the consciousness of the uniqueness of my life" and Frank Cioffi calls "the loneliness of being the only specimen of yourself" wear you out ("you," of course, here being a mental object)?<sup>56</sup> Is there an end to what William James referred to as "egological wonder sickness," and is that the unplayability at which Handke hints at the end of his surrogate characters' benighted *Voyage to the Sonorous Land*, in which the final unaskability (and not unanswerability) of questions would seem to lay the late (deceased) and the later (rethought) Wittgenstein to rest?<sup>57</sup> I think here again of Handke's Kaspar, a byproduct of the first or early Wittgenstein,

who even then wondered aloud what might be said, and what left unsaid. Kaspar's un/spoken words are Handke's but also mine, and not just because, like Borges's fictional scribe Pierre Menard, I wrote them down. What would it take for Kaspar to be able to say what it is he has to say in an unrehearsed and non-self-ascribed manner, in language unbewitched by itself that is comprehensible and creative insofar as mind and the possibility of other minds allow? What would it take for Kaspar's audience to recognize his hand, which first pushes through the stage curtain, as constituting the shape of the pain of disarticulating stage space in all its knownness, so that its givenness can articulate the sort of ordinary meaning that so obsessed Wittgenstein?<sup>58</sup>

In the end, reading Wittgenstein has brought me to another level of empathy not only with his frustration at not being understood but with my own frustration with trying to articulate the experience of thought and thinking as a scriptable medium. Misreading Wittgenstein is commensurate with my own resourcelessness as a reader, making incapacity its own aporia. If aporetic mind-reading speaks to lack, what it may most fear is a lack of problems to articulate in the form of a thought process.<sup>59</sup> When Wittgenstein asks, "doesn't testing come to an end?" (OC §164), he is speaking to the problem of certainty, but this is bolstered by the certainty that there *are* problems, which though they may not be solvable or *because* they are not solvable, allows the speaker a certain measure of optimism in what otherwise appears to be a form of complaint.

Wittgenstein's famously remarked, "Once I have exhausted the justifications, I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned. Then I am simply inclined to say: 'This is simply what I do.'" Wittgenstein makes this statement following his own question, "How am I able to follow a rule?" (PI §217). He may or may not have been using the pronoun "I" to speak of himself, even as a hypothetical example, but insofar as reading him has enabled me to play a scriptive role, I know that he is speaking to me. By playing this role, I have, in a sense, enabled Wittgenstein's writing to fulfill what its author saw as being the two mandates of philosophy—to perform its writing like poetry and to write its reader toward acting.<sup>60</sup> My life has been lived as an anxious, obsessive, and melancholic proposition that has compelled me to make up my own rules, however much their enactment may overdramatize the performance of my own incapacity.



## NOTES

### Introduction

The first epigraph is from Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus (Perspectives in Contemporary Philosophy)*, 3rd ed., trans. Richard A. Rand (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 138. The quote (“This is the West, sir. When the legend becomes fact, print the legend”) is spoken by newspaperman Maxwell Scott at the conclusion of John Ford’s great revisionist western, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962).

1. Plato, *Theaetetus*, trans. Robin Waterfield (New York: Penguin, 2004), 96–97.

2. In their book *Wittgenstein’s Vienna*, Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin take issue with the translation of the German word *Bild* or “picture” in the sense of a mental image or snapshot. They argue that what Wittgenstein had in mind with the use of the word *Bild* was something that is constructed, an artifact, making his propositions “linguistic *Bilder*,” or verbal constructions. Nevertheless, the idea of Wittgenstein’s “picture theory” negotiating between inner and outer image and model is widely held by those who write about his work. Allan Janik and Stephen Edelston Toulmin, *Wittgenstein’s Vienna* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996), 182–83.

3. I have constellated this synopsis with the help of Gary L. Hagberg, *Describing Ourselves: Wittgenstein and Autobiographical Consciousness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 158, 189, 191, 199. Wittgenstein’s “I’ll teach you differences” is from *King Lear* (1, 4); Hagberg, 221 n. 50. Ray Monk has suggested that Wittgenstein considered using the line “I’ll teach you differences” as the epigraph for *Philosophical Investigations*. This was in keeping with Wittgenstein’s belief that the lesson his philosophy offered was “that things which look the same are really different.” Ray Monk, *Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius* (New York: Free Press, 1990), 536–37. See also J. A. DiNoia, “Teaching Differences,” *The Journal of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 61.

4. Hagberg, *Describing Ourselves*, 158.

5. Wittgenstein later rejected the notion of “‘a phenomenological language,’ a language solely for the description of immediate experience,” as being “impossible, or at least unnecessary” (*TLP* §6.45); David G. Stern, *Wittgenstein on Mind and Language* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 10–11, 15.

6. Stern, *Wittgenstein on Mind and Language*, 11.

7. See, for example, Peter Handke’s “text collage,” *The Innerworld of the Outworld of the Innerworld*, trans. Michael Roloff (New York: Seabury, 1974).

8. Kant aimed “to map the overall scope of boundaries of the ‘reason’ by showing them from within, in a way that avoided all reliance on external metaphysical assumptions; and then not merely to assert, but to show, that metaphysics is—rationally speaking—concerned with the ‘unknowable,’ because its questions lie

at or beyond the boundaries of the reason so mapped.” Janik and Toulmin, *Wittgenstein’s Vienna*, 22, 66, 87, 90, 122, 146, 195.

9. Cora Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit: Wittgenstein, Philosophy, and the Mind* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), 28 and 29.

10. *Ibid.*, 31.

11. *Ibid.*, 267.

12. Mac Wellman, *Antigone*, in *The Difficulty of Crossing a Field: Nine New Plays* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 111.

13. For specific treatment of Wittgenstein’s anxiety of influence upon the arts, see Marjorie Perloff, *Wittgenstein’s Ladder: Poetic Language and the strangeness of the Ordinary* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); and John Gibson and Wolfgang Huemer, eds., *The Literary Wittgenstein* (New York: Routledge, 2004). These and other books like them discuss Wittgenstein’s influence on other artists, particularly modern writers, but do not focus upon Wittgenstein and performance, even as a performing artist. Judith Genova, whose brief and background are philosophical, not theatrical, does state that “like many artists of today, I think he [Wittgenstein] is best seen as a performing artist playing with language.” Judith Genova, *Wittgenstein: A Way of Seeing* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 128. Other practicing media artists, such as filmmaker Peter Forgacs (*Wittgenstein Tractatus*, 1992), have physically expressed their indebtedness to Wittgenstein in their own work.

14. Peter Handke, *The Weight of the World: A Journal*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Collier Books, 1990), 211 and 240.

15. *Ibid.*, 205.

16. *Ibid.*, 196.

17. *Ibid.*, 219.

18. *Ibid.*, 53.

19. “Concepts do not need to be legitimated by essences.” James C. Klagge, *Wittgenstein in Exile* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2010), 106.

20. Wittgenstein cited in Monk, *Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*, 367.

21. “Indeed, I confess, nothing seems more possible to me than that people some day will come to the definite opinion that there is no copy in either the physiological or the nervous systems which corresponds to a *particular* thought, or a *particular* idea, or memory” (LWI §504); Klagge, *Wittgenstein in Exile*, 100, 194 n.7.

22. Klagge, *Wittgenstein in Exile*, 118.

23. *Ibid.*, 23 and n. 35.

24. In chapter 5, I discuss these ideas in relation to dramatic literature as its own event under the rubrics of “Infrastructure” and “Infreading.”

25. Klagge, *Wittgenstein in Exile*, 128.

26. Stern, *Wittgenstein on Mind and Language*, 3. Klagge likewise encourages Wittgenstein’s readers and interpreters “to resist the inclination to give a version of his attitudes that we can enter into ourselves.” While Klagge’s caution is not without value, it is offered in order to support his own book’s thesis that Wittgenstein must be defined by his difference: “We must allow Wittgenstein to be an exile.” That is, he must not be like us, and he is allowed to do things that we are not. Klagge, *Wittgenstein in Exile*, 196 n. 16. Consider too this counter-statement: “Wittgenstein is probably the philosopher who has helped me most

at moments of difficulty. He is *a kind of saviour for times of great intellectual distress*—as when you have to question such evident things as ‘obeying a rule.’ Or as when you have to describe such simple (and, by the same token, practically ineffable) things as putting a practice into practice.” Pierre Bourdieu, “Fieldwork in Philosophy,” interview with A. Honneth, H. Kocyba, and B. Schwibs, Paris 1985, in Pierre Bourdieu, *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990), 9.

27. I discuss this in chapters 2 and 7.

28. James Wetzel, “Wittgenstein’s Augustine: The Inauguration of the Later Philosophy,” *Academia.edu*, 1, 3–4; originally published in *Augustine and Philosophy*, ed. Phillip Cary, John Doody, and Kim Paffenroth (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010).

29. Wetzel, *ibid.*, 4, 11, 22–23, 35 n. 27. Norman Malcolm, *Wittgenstein: A Memoir* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2001), 59–60. Marjorie Perloff argues that in Wittgenstein’s writing, “‘I’ is denied by the text the power to act as a vehicle for confession. (Wittgenstein never talks about his personal life), the watchword being that language can never relate ‘what is hidden.’” I agree with Perloff’s assessment insofar as Wittgenstein’s personal life goes, but I will argue in this book that Wittgenstein’s writing confesses itself in the way that he obsessively introduces return into his expressed thought, effectively writing against the possibility of systematizing, ordering, and completion. Likewise, the interlocutory nature of this structure makes Wittgenstein work harder to show the reader the difficulty, even the impossibility of such completion except as a myth perpetrated by philosophy and advanced but also subverted in the arts. Perloff, *Wittgenstein’s Ladder*, 78.

30. Lee Braver, *Groundless Grounds: A Study of Wittgenstein and Heidegger* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2012), 125 and 147.

31. Peter Handke, *Kaspar*, in *Kaspar and Other Plays*, trans. Michael Roloff (New York: Hill and Wang, 1969), 134.

32. This famous proposition recalls Guy de Maupassant’s statement that man’s thought “goes around like a fly in a bottle.” Pirandello interpreted this to mean that “all phenomena either are illusory or their reason escapes us inexplicably. Our knowledge of the world and of ourselves refuses to be given the objective value which we usually attempt to attribute to it. Reality is a continuously illusory construction.” Luigi Pirandello, “On Humor,” trans. Teresa Novel, *Tulane Drama Review* 10, no. 3 (Spring 1966): 48.

33. Nicholas Mosley, *Skylight*, in *Catastrophe Practice* (Champaign-Urbana: Dalkey Archive, 2001), 3.

## Chapter 1

1. G. E. Moore, “Wittgenstein’s Lectures in 1930–33,” in *PO*, 97.

2. Guy Davenport, “Wittgenstein,” in *The Geography of the Imagination* (Boston: David R. Godine, 2005), 332.

3. The question of whether or not Wittgenstein meant the *Tractatus* to be self-repudiating has caused a rift among contemporary philosophers. The pro and contra arguments, the New Wittgensteinians or “Therapeutes” (who say Wittgenstein wanted to cure philosophers of obscurantist philosophical expression) versus the so-called “establishment,” hinge upon what Wittgenstein means when

he refers to his own book as being “nonsense.” Did he mean the word to be “discriminatory” (i.e., nonsense as the demarcator of sense), as Danièle Moyal-Sharrock suggests, or “pejorative” (i.e., gibberish)? Danièle Moyal-Sharrock, “The Good Sense of Nonsense: A Reading of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* As Nonsensical-Repudiating,” *Philosophy* 82 (2007): 147–48.

4. Stephen Mulhall, *Wittgenstein’s Private Language: Grammar, Nonsense, and Imagination in the Philosophical Investigations*, §§243–315 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 91.

5. One can discover a prototype for Wittgenstein’s interlocutory discourse in Diderot’s *Paradoxe sur le comédien* (1773–77), which Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe characterizes as being “an interior dialogue that is spoken ‘aloud.’” This dialogue contains questions that the questioner in reality answers for himself. In that Wittgenstein pursues a similar gambit, stretching answers into further questions, into self-questioning via the use of his interlocutor, one might ask, as Lacoue-Labarthe does of Diderot, “Who takes, or can take, the responsibility for saying: ‘I am the subject of this statement, a paradox?’” Here the “I” is paradoxical in the sense that it is a subjectless subject. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography*, ed. Christopher Fynsk (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), 248 and 249.

6. Gordon Baker, *Wittgenstein’s Method: Neglected Aspects* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2006), 182.

7. “We must be prepared for the possibility that the variations in the text of *Hamlet* are not alternative versions of a single original but representations of different stages in the play’s development.” Philip Edwards, ed., *Hamlet*, in *New Cambridge Shakespeare* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 8.

8. Martin Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?* trans. J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 114.

9. See Baker, *Wittgenstein’s Method: Neglected Aspects*, 75–77.

10. Genova, *Wittgenstein: A Way of Seeing*, 7.

11. Wellman, *Antigone*, 106.

12. Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus*, trans. Robert Fitzgerald, in *The Oedipus Cycle*, ed. Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1949), 160 and 163.

13. *Ibid.*, 96.

14. More generally, “the anxiety haunting the *Tractatus* concerns the loss of meaning, a semantic nihilism.” Braver, *Groundless Grounds*, 63; Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, “Diderot: Paradox and Mimesis,” in *Typography: Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics*, ed. Christopher Fynsk (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 258–59. My thanks to Ioana Jucan for bringing to my attention this source and its relation of “nothing” to mimesis.

15. Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus*, 160.

16. Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 107–8; Mulhall, *Wittgenstein’s Private Language*, 51.

17. Nancy, *Corpus*, 149.

18. Mulhall, *Wittgenstein’s Private Language*, 52.

19. The case for the shopper being a child is argued in Stephen Mulhall, *Philosophical Myths of the Fall* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007), 96–106.

20. “Acknowledgement goes beyond knowledge.” Stanley Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 257; Mulhall, *Wittgenstein’s Private Language*, 55–56.

21. <http://grammar.about.com/od/words/a/A-Pun-Gent-Chapter.htm>.

22. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 332.

23. J. W. Cook, “Wittgenstein on Privacy,” in *Wittgenstein, The Philosophical Investigations: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. George Pitcher (New York: Doubleday, 1968), 337. Originally appeared in *The Philosophical Review* 74, no. 3 (July 1965): 281–314.

24. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 338.

25. *Ibid.*

26. Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus*, 161.

27. *Ibid.*, 163.

28. *Ibid.*

29. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 334.

30. *Ibid.*

31. Thomas Ricketts, “Pictures, Logic, and the Limits of Sense in Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*,” in *The Cambridge Guide to Wittgenstein*, ed. Hans Sluga and David G. Stern (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 89.

32. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 339.

33. W. G. Sebald, “Strangeness, Integration, and Crisis: On Peter Handke’s Play *Kaspar*,” in *Campo Santo*, trans. Anthea Bell (Westminster, Md.: Random House, 2006), 56.

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Ibid.*, 57.

36. “In the *Tractatus*, tautologies and contradictions are said to ‘lack sense’; they are not nonsensical [*unsinnig*] (4.4611), but senseless [*sinnlos*] (4.461). They say nothing about the world, but ‘show the logic of the world’; they are ‘part of the symbolism’ (4.4611). The propositions of logic are all tautologies (6.1); they display the logical form inherent in ordinary language, and so ‘represent’ the ‘scaffolding of the world’ (6.124).” Moyal-Sharrock, “The Good Sense of Nonsense,” 157.

37. “Terms like world, fact, object are terms of our language which, on the *Tractatus* view, have a peculiarly fundamental role in the description of language. . . . What the opening sentences of the *Tractatus* do is to establish certain fundamental features of ‘the logical syntax’ of these terms by exhibiting their use in relation to each other in sentences. This process is subsequently extended to include such terms as picture, proposition, thought, name.” Peter Winch, “Language, Thought and World in Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*,” in *Trying to Make Sense* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 9.

38. A calligram is “a poem whose words are arranged in such fashion as to form a picture of its ‘topic.’” Michel Foucault, *This Is Not a Pipe*, trans. and ed. James Harkness (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 20, 60 n.2.

39. *Ibid.*, 21.

40. “To say then that something is unsayable (in Wittgenstein’s technical sense) is not to say that it cannot be spoken. We can use words; indeed, sentences; indeed, perfectly well-formed sentences, and yet not be saying anything; not be making sense.” Moyal-Sharrock, “The Good Sense of Nonsense,” 173.

41. Ricketts, “Pictures, Logic,” 61.

42. *Ibid.*, 75.

43. *Ibid.*, 76–77.

44. *Ibid.*, 85.

45. “Sentences are pictures of reality that are true or false in virtue of their agreement or disagreement with reality.” Ricketts (here paraphrasing Wittgenstein), “Pictures, Logic,” 87.

46. In the 1920s, André Breton adopted Comte de Lautréamont’s (Isidore Ducasse’s) *richly allusive coinage* in *Les chants de Maldoror* (1869) as a working definition for surrealism.

47. Michael Roloff, epigraph to Peter Handke, *The Ride Across Lake Constance*, trans. Michael Roloff, in *The Ride Across Lake Constance and Other Plays*, trans. Michael Roloff, in collaboration with Karl Weber (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976), 67.

48. Stanley Cavell, *Philosophy the Day After Tomorrow* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005), 196–97.

49. *Ibid.*, 197.

50. *Ibid.*

51. *Ibid.*, 207–8.

52. Jackie Orr, *Panic Diaries: A Genealogy of Panic Disorder* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2006), 7. Orr is in turn citing Patricia Ticineto Clough, *The End(s) of Ethnography: From Realism to Social Criticism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Peter Lang, 1998), xxiii.

53. Orr, *Panic Diaries*, 1. Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), ix.

54. Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 88.

55. “‘Acknowledgement’ . . . derives from the Middle English word for admit or confess,” tying it to a faith-based knowing without certainty. “Unlike the other states [of knowing], acknowledgement is wrung from one like an apology at gunpoint.” Genova, *Wittgenstein: A Way of Seeing*, 196 and 197.

56. Wittgenstein wrote more than half of the remarks that constitute *On Certainty* during the final seven weeks of his life, when he was dying from prostate cancer. I mention this fact at this juncture because he was possibly experiencing a heightened awareness of what and how much a terminally ill person wants to know about his condition and what he wants those close to him to know. Also, I would argue that Wittgenstein’s ongoing discussion of the idea of knowing can be related to a pessimistic temperament that we see inflected in all of his writing and in the subjects to which he gravitated. Klagge, *Wittgenstein in Exile*, 153.

57. In his fictional biography of Wittgenstein, *The World As I Found It*, Bruce Duffy imagines the philosopher turning his pianist brother’s maiming in the war into a proposition. “Paul, a pianist, loses his right arm to a bullet / while here I have two. (I could philosophize as well with one).” Bruce Duffy, *The World As I Found It* (New York: NYRB Classics, reprint edition, 2010), 307.

58. A well-known scientific-philosophical sign of the “both/and,” “Schrödinger’s cat” is the “celebrated animal introduced by the Austrian physicist Erwin Schrödinger (1887–1961) in 1935, in a thought experiment showing the strange

nature of the world of quantum mechanics. The cat is thought of as locked in a box with a capsule of cyanide, which will break if a Geiger counter triggers. This will happen if an atom in a radioactive substance in the box decays, and there is a chance of 50 percent of such an event within an hour. Otherwise the cat is alive. The problem is that the system is in an indeterminate state. The wave function of the entire system is a ‘superposition’ of states, fully described by the probabilities of events occurring when it is eventually measured, and therefore ‘contains equal parts of the living and dead cat’. . . . quantum mechanics forces us to say that before we looked it was not true that the cat was dead and also not true that it was alive.” Simon Blackburn, ed., “Schrödinger’s Cat,” in *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*; <http://www.answers.com/topic/schr-dinger-s-cat>.

59. Genova, *Wittgenstein: A Way of Seeing*, 115.

60. *Ibid.*, 108.

61. “Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent” (TLP §7).

## Chapter 2

The chapter epigraph is from William Gaddis, *The Recognitions* (New York: Penguin, 1993), 300.

1. Heidegger’s “Thinking is . . . a ‘handicraft’ ” suggests a human capacity tied to tool-making and tool-using. Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?* 16; Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962); Friedrich Kittler, “Martin Heidegger on the Hand and the Typewriter (1942–43),” in *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005), 198.

2. In this sense, *Kaspar* resembles without actually being one of Handke’s “speak-ins” (*Sprechstücke*), defined as “spectacles without pictures, inasmuch as they give no picture of the world . . . the words of the speak-ins don’t point at the world as something lying outside the words but to the world in the words themselves.” This reversal of agency and context between world and words addresses the problem of thinking in pictures and the attendant implications of language-making that was central to Wittgenstein’s philosophy and to this book. Handke, “Note on *Offending the Audience* and *Self-Accusation*, in Handke, *Kaspar and Other Plays*, ix.

3. Mulhall, *Wittgenstein’s Private Language*, 20.

4. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. S. F. Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 92.

5. Norman Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 29.

6. Wittgenstein shared with Freud the desire to see through myth and “apparent meaning” in language but diverged on the level of the personal analysis. Wittgenstein labeled psychiatry a “pseudo-science,” while on occasion calling himself “a disciple of Freud.” Brian McGuinness, “Freud and Wittgenstein,” in *Wittgenstein and His Times*, ed. Brian McGuinness (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981), 42 and 43. Wittgenstein, *LC*, 41; Jacques Bouveresse, *Wittgenstein Reads Freud: The Myth of the Unconscious*, trans. Carol Cosman (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 7 and 26.

7. Steve Martin, *Born Standing Up: A Comic’s Life* (New York: Scribner, 2007), 176.

8. Stanley Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome: The Constitution of Emersonian Perfectionism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 38.

9. Louis A. Sass, *The Paradoxes of Delusion: Wittgenstein, Schreber, and the Schizophrenic Mind* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994), 58.

10. Sass likens the solipsist's action to "someone who tries to measure his own height not by using an independent reference system but by placing his own hand on top of his head." Sass, *Paradoxes of Delusion*, 56.

11. Nancy, *Corpus*, 27.

12. *Ibid.*, 19 and 29.

13. Martin was a philosophy major in college and has a penchant for Wittgenstein.

14. Nancy asserts: "time is spacing." Nancy, *Corpus*, 119.

15. G. E. Moore recalls Wittgenstein saying in one of his Cambridge lectures that "the student who asked him whether he meant that the meaning of a word *was* a list of rules would not have been tempted to ask that question but for the false idea (which he held to be a common one) that in the case of a substantive like 'the meaning' you have to look for something at which you can point and say 'This is the meaning.'" Moore also recalls that Wittgenstein identified as a mistake "the view that the meaning of a word was some image which it calls up by association—a view which he seemed to refer to as the 'causal' theory of meaning." Moore, "Wittgenstein's Lectures in 1930–33," 52 and 54.

16. Witold Gombrowicz, *Cosmos*, trans. Danuta Borhardt (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2005), 31.

17. *Ibid.*, 33.

18. *Ibid.*, 40.

19. *Ibid.*, 54.

20. *Ibid.*, 177.

21. Moore, "Wittgenstein's Lectures in 1930–33," 52–53.

22. Gombrowicz, *Cosmos*, 94 and 161.

23. *Ibid.*, 92.

24. Nancy, *Corpus*, 132.

25. *Ibid.*, 132–33.

26. "Reality always is in each instant, from place to place, each time in turn, which is exactly how the reality of the *res cogitans* ["thinking thing"] attests to itself in each 'ego sum,' which is each time the 'I am' of each one in turn [*chaque fois de chacun à son tour*]." Nancy (p. 149) is citing René Descartes, *Meditations and Other Metaphysical Writings*, trans. Desmond Clarke (London: Penguin, 2003), 152–54.

27. Nancy, *Corpus*, 99.

28. *Ibid.*, 129.

29. *Ibid.*, 7.

30. *Ibid.*, 33.

31. "The comedian sees the world under what some philosophers call an *epoche*, a certain bracketing or suspension of belief." Simon Critchley, *On Humour* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 86.

32. Jean-Luc Nancy, "The Technique of the Present: On Kawara," in *Multiple Arts: The Muses II*, ed. Simon Sparks ((Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006), 191.

33. Jean-Luc Nancy, “Laughter, Presence,” trans. Emily McVarish, in *The Birth to Presence* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993), 368, 372, 382, 388.

34. *Ibid.*, 199–200.

35. Nancy, *Corpus*, 7.

36. Nancy, “Res Extensa,” trans. Jonathan Derbyshire, in *Multiple Arts: The Muses II*, 168.

37. Norman Batkin, “Aesthetic Analogies,” in *Seeing Wittgenstein Anew* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 33.

38. Saul A. Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), 8–9.

39. Martin, *Born Standing Up*, 178.

40. “I have seen a person in a discussion on this subject strike himself on the breast and say: ‘But surely another person cannot have THIS pain!’” (*PI* § 253). Mulhall, *Wittgenstein’s Private Language*, 73.

41. Mulhall, *Wittgenstein’s Private Language*, 94.

42. See Stephen Mulhall, “Wittgenstein’s Semi-Colon: Second Methodological Interlude (§255),” in *Wittgenstein’s Private Language*, 89–95, for a cogent discussion of this point and passage.

43. *Ibid.*, 13.

44. This tendency in Wittgenstein’s writing is more or less officially acknowledged in the title of Alain Badiou’s book, *Wittgenstein’s Antiphilosophy*, whose central argument I will discuss in chapter 3. Alain Badiou, *Antiphilosophy*, trans. Bruno Bosteels (New York: Verso, 2011).

45. Mulhall, *Wittgenstein’s Private Language*, 58.

46. Mulhall is here referring to *PI* §251. Mulhall, *Wittgenstein’s Private Language*, 59 and 64.

47. Duffy, *The World As I Found It*, 361 and 363–64.

48. Leonard Lawlor, “‘Animals Have No Hand’: An Essay on Animality in Derrida,” *New Centennial Review* 7, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 59.

49. Richard Foreman, *The Mind King* (1992), in *My Head Was A Sledgehammer: Six Plays* (New York: Overlook, 1995), 140.

50. Tom Stoppard, “Introduction” to *Dogg’s Hamlet* (1980) in *The Real Inspector Hound and Other Plays* (New York: Grove, 1998), 142.

51. Martin, *Born Standing Up*, 157.

52. Consider as a limit-example, “The beetle in the box,” a thought experiment Wittgenstein uses to disprove the possibility of there being such a thing as shared private experience. He writes (in *PI* §293): “Suppose everyone had a box with something in it: we call it a ‘beetle.’ No one can look into anyone’s box, and everyone says he knows what a beetle is only by looking at his beetle.—Here it would be quite possible for everyone to have something different in his box. One might even imagine such a thing constantly changing.” In fact, Wittgenstein argues that one should “assume that it [the object in the box] constantly changes, but that you do not notice the change because your memory constantly deceives you.” My point in citing this thought experiment is to note how Wittgenstein again offers a physical model for mental constraint within which, imaginatively, the mind becomes unknowable in the sense of *unmanageable*, not only to others but to itself. (*PI*, part 2, §207/§218); Klagge, *Wittgenstein in Exile*, 33–34, 37.

53. Yorick Smythies, *The Whewell's Court Lectures*, cited in Klagge, *Wittgenstein in Exile*, 37.

54. Batkin, "Aesthetic Analogies," 35 n. 17.

55. David Markson, *Wittgenstein's Mistress* (Normal, Ill.: Dalkey Archive, 1997), 7, 15, 67, and 155.

56. Maurice Blanchot, *the one who was standing apart from me*, trans. Lydia Davis (New York: Barrytown, 1997), 92.

57. Martin Heidegger, "Poetically Man Dwells" (1951), in *Philosophical and Political Writings*, trans. Albert Hofstadter, ed. Manfred Stassen (New York: Continuum, 2003), 269.

58. Lennard J. Davis, *Obsession: A History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 7–8, 10, 31, 83.

59. G. E. Moore cites Wittgenstein's inconsistent equating of "know the meaning of" and "understanding." Moore, "Wittgenstein's Lectures in 1930–33," 50–51.

60. Davis, *Obsession*, 182. Wittgenstein on psychiatry paraphrased in Moore, "Wittgenstein's Lectures in 1930–33," 109.

61. Moore after Wittgenstein: "psycho-analysis does not enable you to discover the *cause* but only the *reason* of, e.g., laughter." Moore, "Wittgenstein's Lectures in 1930–33," 107–8.

62. "One day when Wittgenstein was passing a field where a football game was in progress the thought first struck him that in language we play *games* with *words*. A central idea of his philosophy, the notion of a 'language-game,' apparently had its genesis in this accident." Malcolm, *Wittgenstein: A Memoir*, 55.

63. Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*.

64. This, of course, recalls Wittgenstein's notion of the ascribed meaning of numbers and names in *TLP* §1.

65. Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules*, 7–9.

66. *Ibid.*, 10 and 11.

67. *Ibid.*, vii, ix, 1, 15.

68. Lambert V. Stepanich, "Heidegger: Between Idealism and Realism," *Harvard Review of Philosophy* (Spring 1991): 22. Stepanich is internally quoting Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 101.

69. Oliver Sacks, *A Leg to Stand On* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998), 61, 63, 72 and 193–94.

70. I will discuss *Rear Window* in detail in chapter 3.

71. The patient Oliver Sacks has occasion to remark to his physiotherapist, "I think you are talking good sense indeed and I wish more doctors thought as you do. Most of them have their heads in a cast." One immediately thinks here of Jack's psychiatrist, who may in turn be likened to the philosopher who Wittgenstein maintained had cast philosophy (a patient recast as an illness) as a fly trapped inside a fly-bottle. Sacks, *A Leg to Stand On*, 42.

72. *Ibid.*, 27, 71, 84–85, 180–81.

73. The original French lyrics of *La mer* actually offer no time frame or instance of traditional romance beyond the organic wholeness that the sea provides. But the English-speaking audience for whom the film was made does not hear the French lyrics in their head. They hear the lyrics to "Beyond the Sea," which borrowed the melody from *La mer* but recast the content of the song as a more traditionally and prosaically romantic tale of lovers dreaming of the day when

the sea that separates them will bring them back together. “La mer,” music and lyrics by Charles Trenet (1943). “Beyond the Sea,” music by Charles Trenet, lyrics by Jack Lawrence.

74. Sacks, *A Leg to Stand On*, 184.

75. “The peril of awareness” is Nicholas Hern’s term cited in June Schlueter, *The Plays and Novels of Peter Handke* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1981), 76. Patricia Pearson, *A Brief History of Anxiety . . . Yours and Mine* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2008), 24.

76. Pearson, *ibid.*

77. Quoted in Lucy Fisher, “Sick Jokes,” in *Enfant Terrible: Jerry Lewis in American Film*, ed. Murray Pomerance (New York: NYU Press, 2002), 140.

78. Mikitia Brottman, “The Imbecile Chic of Jerry Lewis,” in *Enfant Terrible*, 130.

79. Baker, *Wittgenstein’s Method*, 433–34, 180, and 202.

80. “Now what would it mean to advise Hamlet, or for him to have taken measures, to avoid his skepticism, his avoidance of existence, call this his making himself into a ghost.” Cavell, *Philosophy the Day After Tomorrow*, 26–27.

81. <http://www.mayfieldclinic.com/PE-SPECT.htm>.

82. Handke, *The Weight of the World*, 220.

### Chapter 3

The first chapter epigraph is from Handke, *The Weight of the World: A Journal*, 15 and 111. The second epigraph is from G. W. Leibniz’s 1714 essay, “Principles of Nature and Grace Based on Reason.” The third epigraph is from Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 5.

1. Pearson, *A Brief History of Anxiety*, 6.

2. Handke, *The Weight of the World*, 135.

3. Nancy, *Corpus*, 129.

4. “A body is also a prison for the soul. In it, the soul pays for a very serious crime whose nature is hard to discern.” *Ibid.*, 151.

5. *Ibid.*, 124–25.

6. Tom Cohen, *Hitchcock’s Cryptonomies, Volume II, War Machines* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 44.

7. Stern, *Wittgenstein on Mind and Language*, 165.

8. *Ibid.*, 166.

9. “What the pupil will always lack unless she becomes a schoolmistress herself is knowledge of ignorance—a knowledge of the exact distance separating knowledge from ignorance.” Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliott (New York: Verso, 2009), 9.

10. *Ibid.*, 3.

11. *Ibid.*, 2.

12. Handke describes Kaspar as being “the incarnation of astonishment.” Handke, *Kaspar*, 63.

13. Mac Wellman, *Cat’s Paw*, in *Cellophane: Plays by Mac Wellman* (New York: PAJ Publications, 2005), 361.

14. *Ibid.*, 349.

15. Peter Handke, “Die Dressur der Objekte,” in *Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms* (Frankfurt, 1972), 145; cited in Sebald, “Strangeness, Integration and Crisis,” 56.

16. Freddie Rokem, *Philosophers & Thespians: Thinking Performance* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2010), 153–54.

17. Wellman, *Cat's Paw*, 343 and 348.

18. “. . . so I made two rules, and two rules only. . . .” Wellman, *Cat's Paw*, 337.

19. *Ibid.*, 348.

20. *Ibid.*, 369.

21. *Ibid.*, 339.

22. *Ibid.*, 340.

23. Wellman, *Cat's Paw*, 346 and 347; Emile Benveniste, *Problems in General Linguistics*, trans. M. E. Meek (Coral Gables, Fla.: University of Miami Press, 1971), 36.

24. Handke, *Kaspar*, 70.

25. Opening stage directions to Wellman's *Cat's Paw*, 338. Also, “Oh, to / dismiss the tenses.” Mac Wellman, “Heywood the Hungry,” in *Miniature* (Berkeley, Calif.: Roof Books, 2002), 4.

26. Handke, *Don Juan: His Own Version*, trans. Krishna Winston (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), 88.

27. *Ibid.*, 19 and 22.

28. *Ibid.*, 33, 58, 62–63.

29. Handke, *Don Juan*, 5 and 11.

30. *Ibid.*, 82.

31. The speaker, the daughter who dislikes her name, here calls her mother by her first (i.e., given) name, Hildegard. Wellman, *Cat's Paw*, 384.

32. *Ibid.*, 366.

33. Handke, *Don Juan*, 101.

34. Wellman, *Cat's Paw*, 365 and 381.

35. Wellman, *Antigone*, in *The Difficulty of Crossing a Field: Nine New Plays* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 105, 106–7, 108.

36. Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler, “‘Wittgenstein, komm wieder!’: Zur Wittgenstein-Reception bei Peter Handke” (“‘Wittgenstein, Come Again!’: On the Reception of Wittgenstein in the Work of Peter Handke,” trans. Ioana Jucan), in *Wittgenstein und Philosophie-Literatur*, ed. Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler, Martin Huber, and Michael Huter (Vienna: Osterreichische Staatsdruckerei, 1990), 185.

37. “Therapeutes” being those current philosophers who believe that Wittgenstein came to regard philosophy as a form of therapy. Moyal-Sharrock, “The Good Sense of Nonsense,” 148.

38. Mac Wellman, *A Murder of Crows*, in *Two Plays: A Murder of Crows and The Hyacinth Macaw* (Los Angeles: Sun and Moon, 1994), 52–53. These are the first two plays in Wellman's *Crowtet*. The crow/weather/weather of words thought cluster is solidified in Wellman, *Cat's Paw*, 361. Schmidt-Dengler, *Wittgenstein und Philosophie-Literatur*, 184.

39. Wellman, “Heywood the Hungry,” 53; Handke, *Kaspar*, 102; Sebald, “Strangeness, Integration, and Crisis,” 58.

40. “You ask, and what next / and / after that, / what is next and / all that matters is a / slide, side-ways, through the apparent's / customary view-finder and so / one forgets what the question was.” Wellman, “Heywood the Hungry,” 55.

41. Mac Wellman, “Odd's Bop,” in *Miniature: Poems* (New York: Roof Books, 2002), 39 and 43.

42. Wittgenstein, who asks whether the mind carries out the special activity of inferring according to laws, says it is important “to look and see how we carry out inferences in the practice of language; what kind of procedure in the language-game inferring is” (*RFM* §17).

43. “Can Kaspar, the owner of one sentence, begin and begin to do something with this sentence?” This is the first phase of “Kaspar’s Sixteen Phases” (preface to *Kaspar*), 55.

44. Handke, *Kaspar*, 114.

45. Peter Handke, *The Innerworld of the Outerworld of the Innerworld*, 73.

46. Eighteenth-century Irish Enlightenment political philosopher Edmund Burke wrote, among other works, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, which “argued that no compound abstract nouns suggested ideas to the mind at all readily, and that in many cases they did not correspond to any idea at all, but instead produced in the mind only images of past experience connected with these words.” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, online at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/burke/>.

47. Jalal Toufic, *Distracted* (Barrytown, N.Y.: Station Hill, 2003), 217.

48. Edmund Burke spoke of the need for the individual to assert his independence, his self-sufficiency from the rules and conditions laid down by the universe. He also spoke of “pleasure [being] grounded in fear.” Diane M. Borden, “Man Without a Gun: Mamet, Masculinity, and Mystification,” in *Gender and Genre: Essays on David Mamet*, ed. Christopher C. Hudgens and Leslie Kane (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 244–45. Borden is citing Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, trans. Fritz A. Koelln and James P. Pettegrove (Boston: Beacon, 1955), 330.

49. In discussing Mamet’s films *House of Games* and *Homicide*, Diane M. Borden paraphrases Rudolf Otto’s discussion of “the element of awfulness as a phenomenon marked by a particular dread coupled with the numinous.” The “awe-full” is Borden’s coinage. Borden, “Man Without a Gun,” 246. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. John W. Harvey (New York: Oxford, 1958). I will discuss *House of Games* in chapter 7.

50. Rene Vincente Arcilla, “Contingency in Rorty’s Philosophy,” in *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 1, nos. 2–4, 201.

51. David Pears, *The False Prison: A Study of the Development of Wittgenstein’s Philosophy*, vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 146–47.

52. *Ibid.*, 144.

53. Cavell, “Macbeth Appalled,” 209 and 210.

54. Orr, *Panic Diaries*, 7.

55. Badiou also places Wittgenstein’s work in the sophist tradition, “the principal sophistic operation—here defined as the reduction of truth to an effect of language,” as Badiou’s translator says. Edmond practices his own brand of sophistry. Badiou, *Wittgenstein’s Antiphilosophy*, 68; Bruno Bosteels, “Translator’s Introduction,” Badiou, *Wittgenstein’s Antiphilosophy*, 18.

56. Badiou, *Wittgenstein’s Antiphilosophy*, 75, 80 and 82.

57. *Ibid.*, 63. Ockham’s razor, also spelled Occam’s razor, also called law of economy, or law of parsimony, principle stated by William Ockham (1285–1347/49), a scholastic, that *Pluralitas non est ponenda sine necessitate*; “Plurality should not be posited without necessity.” <http://www.britannica.com>.

58. Badiou, *Wittgenstein's Antiphilosophy*, 91.
59. David Mamet, *True and False: Heresy and Common Sense for the Actor* (New York: Vintage, 1999).
60. *Ibid.*, 4.
61. *Ibid.*, 9, 10–11.
62. David Mamet, *Edmond*, in *Plays 2* (York, U.K.: Methuen, 1996), 274–75.
63. Mamet, *True and False*, 9.
64. *Ibid.*, 21.
65. Badiou, *Wittgenstein's Antiphilosophy*, 164–65.
66. Monk, *Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*, 490. In his screenplay for the 1987 film *The Untouchables*, Mamet has policeman Jim Malone tell his mentee federal treasury agent Eliot Ness: “You just fulfilled the first rule of law enforcement: make sure when your shift is over you go home alive. Here endeth the lesson.” It is perhaps Mamet’s clearest and most dramatic example of the authoritative syntax of pedagogy as being the Word.
67. Badiou, *Wittgenstein's Antiphilosophy*, 94–95.
68. *Ibid.*, 163.
69. *Ibid.*, 106. Wittgenstein, says Badiou, entertains two meanings of the word-concept “sense”: “the sense of the proposition (which is the eternal foundation of the possible) and the sense of the world, or its value, which can only be shown in the unsayable ordeal of an archiaesthetic (or which is the same, archiethical) act.” *Ibid.*, 167.
70. Meredith Williams, *Wittgenstein, Mind and Meaning: Towards a Social Conception of Mind* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 203.
71. Hans-Johann Glock, *A Wittgenstein Dictionary* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2005), 316–18.
72. For background on Mamet’s training as an actor and his approach as an acting teacher, see Don B. Wilmeth, “Mamet and the Actor,” in *The Cambridge Companion to David Mamet*, ed. Christopher Bigsby (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 138–53.
73. The obstacles that von Trier sets for Leth are consistent with the rule-following behavior of filmmaking limits articulated in Dogme 95, which von Trier co-signed. Of the superficial actions that must not occur in the film, murders and weapons are specifically mentioned.
74. Mulhall, *Wittgenstein's Private Language*, 128–30.
75. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 351–52.
76. Malcolm, *Wittgenstein: A Memoir*, 23.
77. Tom Cohen, *Hitchcock's Cryptonymies, Volume I, Secret Agents* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 100.
78. Google web definition of “iteration.”
79. Handke, *Kaspar*, 83.
80. Mac Wellman, *The Fortuneteller: A Jest* (Los Angeles: Sun and Moon Press, 1991), 12.
81. *Ibid.*, 82.
82. *Ibid.*, 70.
83. Malcolm, *Wittgenstein: A Memoir*, 55–56.
84. *Ibid.*, 208.

85. Ivone Margulies writes, “By creating for her protagonist the precarious position of embodying both agency and automatism [which Margulies elsewhere calls “obsessive-compulsiveness”], Akerman manages to respond both to the cliché (Jeanne as feminist victim/heroine) and to its overthrow.” Margulies refers to Jeanne’s repetitive actions and activities as “pragmatic amnesia—the lack of personal and historical awareness that is necessary to keep women functioning.” Ivone Margulies, *Nothing Happens: Chantal Akerman’s Hyperrealist Everyday* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996), 141 and 146.

86. Handke, *Kaspar*, 89.

87. Cavell, *Philosophy the Day After Tomorrow*, 253.

88. Mac Wellman, *A Chronicle of the Madness of Small Worlds* (Berkeley, Calif.: Trip Street Books, 2008), 105.

89. Handke, *The Weight of the World*, 176.

90. Cavell, *Philosophy the Day After Tomorrow*, 255.

91. Markson, *Wittgenstein’s Mistress*, 58.

92. *Ibid.*, 87.

93. Handke, *Kaspar*, 85.

94. Handke, *Kaspar*, 84 and 87. Alternatively, the open cupboard and hallway doors in *Jeanne Dielman* might be likened to the “recalcitrant cupboard door” in *Kaspar*, symbolizing not a forgetfulness on the part of the protagonist so much as a loss of rational control, or even further, a showing (up) of “the illusion of rational control” that results in the subject’s going mad in the end in both cases (Kaspar and Jeanne). M. Read, “Peter Handke’s *Kaspar* and the Power of Negative Thinking,” *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 29, no. 2 (1993): 135, 136, 141–42.

95. Wellman, *A Chronicle of the Madness of Small Worlds*, 50.

96. Mac Wellman, *A Murder of Crows* (2006), in *Crowtet 1: A Murder of Crows and The Hyacinth Macaw* (Los Angeles: Green Integer, 2000). See also *Crowtet 2: Second Hand Smoke and The Lesser Magoo* (Los Angeles: Sun and Moon Press, 2003). Wellman, *A Chronicle of the Madness of Small Worlds*, 7.

97. Wellman, *A Chronicle of the Madness of Small Worlds*, 18–19.

98. An alternative version of this story is told by Norman Malcolm: “This idea [picture theory] came to Wittgenstein when he was serving in the Austrian army in the First War. He saw a newspaper that described the occurrence and location of an automobile accident by means of a diagram or map. It occurred to Wittgenstein that this map was a proposition and that therein was revealed the essential nature of propositions—namely, to *picture* reality.” Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*, 57. G. H. von Wright, “A Biographical Sketch,” quoted in Stern, *Wittgenstein on Mind and Language*, 35.

99. Glock, *A Wittgenstein Dictionary*, 300 and 301.

100. *Ibid.*, 299. In *Kaspar*, Handke goes even farther, telling the reader “the objects [that we see on stage] are situated without any obvious relationship to each other; they stand there tastelessly, so the audience recognizes a stage in the objects on display” (*Kaspar*, 61).

101. Handke, *Kaspar*, 59 and 60.

102. Wellman, *A Chronicle of the Madness of Small Worlds*, 12.

103. Pears, *The False Prison*, 165.

104. Ibid., 14.

105. Ibid., 171 and 174.

106. Handke, *Offending the Audience*, in *Kaspar and Other Plays*, 9. My thanks to Ioana Jucan for drawing my attention to editors' sometime addition of "Ding" or "thing" to "Sinne kein Subjekt gibt," turning "there is no subject" into "there is no such thing as the subject" and to how Wittgenstein's absenting of the subject from the text "subtly gestures towards the last statement of the *Tractatus*: "Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muß man schweigen" ("Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent") (§7). She also suggested translating "vorstellende, Subjekt" as "representing subject" rather than "presenting subject" directly before the "world as I found it" passage. Jucan, e-mail correspondence, 6/13/11. Wittgenstein, *Notebooks 1914–1916*, 2nd ed., §23.5.15.

#### Chapter 4

The second chapter epigraph is from Aldous Huxley's *The Doors of Perception* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009), 55.

1. Jorge Luis Borges, "Of Exactitude in Science," in *Collected Fictions*, trans. Andrew Hurley (New York: Penguin, 1999), 325.

2. Handke, *The Ride Across Lake Constance*, 71–73.

3. Vladimir Nabokov, *Transparent Things* (New York: Vintage, 1989), 1; Brian Boyd, "NABOKOV'S BLUES—and His Drab-Shoelace Brown, and His Weathered-Wood Black," foreword to Vladimir Nabokov, *AlphaBet in Color*, illustrated by Jean Holabird (New York: Corte Madera, Calif.: Gingko, 2005), i and 7.

4. Mike Laws, in my *Mise en scène* course, taught at Brown University, fall 2002.

5. Curtis White, *Memories of My Father Watching TV* (Normal, Ill.: Dalkey Archive, 1998), 69 and 146; Richard Foreman, *Unbalancing Acts: Foundations for a Theater* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1993).

6. Handke, *The Ride Across Lake Constance*, 69.

7. Ibid., 74.

8. Ibid.

9. Glock, *A Wittgenstein Dictionary*, 336.

10. Handke, *The Ride Across Lake Constance*, 141.

11. Mac Wellman, *Left Glove* (New York: Solid Objects, 2011), 27, 30, 31 and 41.

12. Handke, *The Ride Across Lake Constance*, 141.

13. Ibid., 146.

14. Ibid., 143.

15. Ibid., 144.

16. Ibid., 146.

17. Ibid., 148.

18. Ibid., 158. The Freudian reference constellating "cigar" with meaning or not-meaning (i.e., the possibly misattributed or apocryphal Freudian quote, "Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar.") is clear here and made transparent at the end of the play. The cigar box "joke" pays off when PORTEN shouts, "I ONLY WANTED TO TAKE A CIGAR!" having already repeated this sentence three times.

19. Ibid., 126.

20. Ibid., 75–76, 78–79.

21. Wellman, *A Chronicle of the Madness of Small Worlds*, 69.
22. Handke, *The Ride Across Lake Constance*, 114.
23. *Ibid.*, 82.
24. *Ibid.*, 75, 77, and 87.
25. *Ibid.*, 124. Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (New York: Grove Press, 1977).
26. Handke, *The Ride Across Lake Constance*, 125.
27. *Ibid.*, 123.
28. I further illustrate and explain the idea of the object's withdrawal in chapter 8.
29. Handke, *The Ride Across Lake Constance*, 145.
30. Avital Ronell, *Stupidity* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 192.
31. Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic* (1900). In Wylie Sypher, ed., *Comedy: "Laughter" by Henri Bergson and "An Essay on Comedy" by George Meredith* (New York: Doubleday, 1956).
32. Stanley Cavell, "The Touch of Words," in *Seeing Wittgenstein Anew*, ed. William Day and Victor J. Krebs (New York: Cambridge University Press, 210), 83.
33. Timothy Gould, "An Allegory of Infinities: On Seeing a World of Aspects in a Universe of Things," in *Seeing Wittgenstein Anew*, 75–76.
34. Cavell, "The Touch of Words," 83.
35. Cavell writes, "I will call inordinate knowledge knowledge that can seem excessive in its expression, in contrast to mere or bare or pale or intellectualized or unsistent or inattentive or distracted or filed, archival knowledge, an opposite direction of questionable, here defective, or insipid, or shallow, or indecisive expression." Cavell, "The Touch of Words," 84.
36. "One simply tends to forget that even doubting belongs to a language-game. . . . A person can doubt only if has learnt certain things; as he can miscalculate only if he has learnt to calculate" (*RIPPII* §§342–43).
37. Godard said this in reference to his use of color in the film *Pierrot le fou* (1965).
38. Orhan Pamuk, *Snow*, trans. Maureen Freely (New York: Vintage, 2005). I am quoting and paraphrasing from pp. 163–67.
39. I am drawing from and paraphrasing the plot and dialogue of the black-and-white film *Mirage* (dir. Edward Dmytryk, 1965).
40. Wittgenstein, quoted in Ray Monk, *How to Read Wittgenstein* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005), 97.
41. Monk, *Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*, 300.
42. The title alone is taken from Orhan Pamuk's novel *My Name Is Red* (1998).
43. Richard Foreman, "Notes on the Process of Making It: Which Is Also the Object," in *Reverberation Machines: The Later Plays and Essays* (Barrytown, N.Y.: Station Hill, 1985), 197 and 201.
44. Foreman, "How I Write My (Plays: Self)," in *Reverberation Machines*, 232; Foreman, "The Carrot and the Stick," in *Reverberation Machines*, 218.
45. Foreman has said that he thinks of all of his characters as being himself. And furthermore, with the oft-sounded non-appearing VOICE in mind, Kate Davy writes: "Often, a line spoken by a character is actually Foreman's reaction to the line he had just written." Davy, ed., *Richard Foreman: Plays and Manifestos*

(New York: New York University Press, 1976), xii. It is Foreman's voice we hear when a VOICE is written into the play—inside our minds when we read the play and on tape or over a microphone when we see the play in performance. Foreman, *Place + Target (Luogo + Bersaglio)*, in *Reverberation Machines*, 71.

46. Foreman, *Place + Target (Luogo + Bersaglio)*, 71 and 75; William H. Gass, "The Ontology of the Sentence, or How to Make a World of Words," in *The World Within the Word* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 319.

47. David Pears writes that Wittgenstein expresses non-factual things using factual language. And, by Wittgenstein's own admission (especially in the *Tractatus*), this factual language cannot fully or accurately express the "metaphysics of experience" that we deduce from this factual language. The operative question, especially in Wittgenstein's early philosophy, then becomes, as stated by Pears: "Why is it impossible for factual language to express the fundamental condition of its own existence?" Pears, *The False Prison*, 5, 6–7.

48. Tadeusz Różewicz, *The Interrupted Act*, in *The Card Index and Other Plays*, trans. Adam Czerniawski (London: Calder and Boyars, 1969), 13.

49. *Ibid.*, 15.

50. *Ibid.*, 14.

51. *Ibid.*

52. Roland Barthes, *On Racine*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Performing Arts Journal, 1983), 116.

53. Richard Foreman, "Foundations for a Theater," in *Unbalancing Acts: Foundations for a Theater*, ed. Ken Jordan (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1992), 7.

54. Foreman, "Foundations for a Theater," 8.

55. *Ibid.*, 8–9; Ludwig Wittgenstein, "15 and 16 June 1915," in *Notebooks 1914–1916*, quoted and paraphrased in Pears, *The False Prison*, 1:25.

56. Foreman, "Foundations for a Theater," 27–28.

57. *Ibid.*, 28.

58. In his play *The Cure* (1986), Foreman plays with scale in terms of the word "word" itself. By employing the spiritual sense of the hidden/revealed word, he gestures toward a truth that is so enormous yet elemental, so universal in import and yet so intimately focused in faith as to defy any known (experientially based) scale of bigness and smallness. The character of "Kate," a member of an occultist society, speaks to this while (the stage directions say): "(*She moves about the room looking high on the walls for written words that may or may not be there.*)" Richard Foreman, *The Cure*, in *Unbalancing Acts: Foundations for a Theater*, 132; Richard Foreman, "Directing the Actors, Mostly," in *Unbalancing Acts: Foundations for a Theater*, 50; Pears, *The False Prison*, 1:27 and 27 n. 17.

59. See Foreman, *The Cure*, 116 and 119.

60. Foreman, "The Cure" (an introduction), in *Unbalancing Acts: Foundations for a Theater*, 108–9.

61. Foreman, "The Cure," 111.

62. Foreman, "Visual Composition, Mostly," in *Unbalancing Acts: Foundations for a Theater*, 56.

63. Actually, American psychologist Joseph Jastrow's duck-rabbit figure, meant to illustrate the relationship of perception to mental activity, preceded

Wittgenstein's use of it (<http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~kihlstrm/JastrowDuck.htm>). Foreman says that in his plays, “the walls of the stage were always striped or checked to suggest that level of energy” echoing the “energy trails” or “lines of force” represented by the strings that were suspended across the playing area, attaching an actor to an object or else to a part of the set. Foreman, “Visual Composition, Mostly,” 61.

64. Foreman, “Ontological-Hysteric Manifesto II” (July 1974), in *Richard Foreman: Plays and Manifestos*, 144.

65. Foreman, *Vertical Mobility (Sophia=(Wisdom): Part 4)*, in *Richard Foreman: Plays and Manifestos*, 172, 173, 174, 178, 179, 181.

66. Foreman, “Ontological-Hysteric Manifesto II (July 1974),” 144.

67. “This is certainly true, that the information ‘That is a tree’, when no one could doubt it, might be a kind of a joke and as such have meaning” (OC §463).

68. Foreman, “Ontological-Hysteric Manifesto II (July 1974),” 145; Ukrainian existentialist philosopher Lev Shestov (1866–1938), quoted in Foreman, “Ontological-Hysteric Manifesto II (July 1974),” 136.

69. Pears, *The False Prison*, 1:36, 37, and 38.

70. *Ibid.*, 39.

71. Foreman, *Paint(t)*, in *Richard Foreman: Plays and Manifestos*, 206.

72. Foreman, *Total Recall: Sophia=(Wisdom)*, 40.

73. *Ibid.*, 133. The circulating anxiety of the clock/phone in Hitchcock's films is cited in the Hitchcock mash-up *Double Take* (dir. Johan Grimontprez, 2009), which double-tracks the real Hitchcock and a Hitchcock double. The clearest example of the clock-phone axis of anxiety in Hitchcock's own work is certainly *Dial “M” for Murder*, which I will discuss in chapter 7.

74. Foreman, *Total Recall (Sophia=(Wisdom): Part 3)*, 121–22.

75. Foreman, “Ontological-Hysteric Manifesto II (July 1974),” 135.

76. Foreman, *Hotel China*, in *Richard Foreman: Plays and Manifestos*, 112.

77. Foreman, *Vertical Mobility (Sophia=(Wisdom): Part 4)*, 171.

78. Foreman, *Total Recall (Sophia=(Wisdom): Part 2)*, 35.

79. *Ibid.*, 33.

80. *Ibid.*, 113.

81. A DVD now exists of the production so that the door's literal movement need no longer be imagined, although its figurative movement still can. *Richard Foreman, Ontological-Hysteric Theater, Vol. 1* (New York: Tazdik, 2009).

82. Foreman, *Sophia=(Wisdom) Part 3: The Cliffs*, 113.

83. Foreman, *Total Recall*, 37; Foreman, *Angelface*, in *Richard Foreman: Plays and Manifestos*, 1.

84. Foreman, *Angelface*, 1 and 5.

85. <http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/homonymously>; Foreman, *Rhoda in Potatoland*, in *Richard Foreman: Plays and Manifestos*, 207 and 209.

86. Foreman, *Vertical Mobility*, 171.

87. Foreman, *Rhoda in Potatoland*, 208 and 210.

88. *Ibid.*, 210–11.

89. *Ibid.*, 208 and 212.

90. *Ibid.*, 214 and 216.

91. *Ibid.*, 218.

92. *Ibid.*, 214 and 222. Foreman has read his share of Wittgenstein but denies this has influenced his work. Foreman did tell me he is interested in the fact that Wittgenstein ate cereal obsessively. Private conversation with Foreman, Brown University, fall 2011.

93. Handke, *The Ride Across Lake Constance*, 127.

94. In the film's parallel story, a man who is smuggling illegal immigrants into Paris in a truck instructs them not to make any noise and to be careful where they defecate: "They smell you, it's like they hear you!"

95. Haneke forced the actress who played the character Anna in his earlier film *Funny Games* (1997) to perform multiple takes of a highly emotional scene in which she had to pray for her life at the hands of her tormentor(s). Haneke finally printed the take when he saw that the actress was too exhausted to act and just reacted to the reality of the situation at hand. Information drawn from the film's DVD commentary. I will discuss this film in chapter 5.

96. Lex Newman, "Descartes on Unknown Faculties and Our Knowledge of the External World," in *Philosophical Review* 103, no. 3 (July 1994): 489 and 490.

## Chapter 5

The second chapter epigraph is from Donna M. Summerfield's "Fitting Versus Tracking: Wittgenstein on Representation," from *The Cambridge Guide to Wittgenstein* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 132–33.

1. Wittgenstein's idea that we should think of language as an activity, as a game that has rules, derived in part from the Viennese journalist Fritz Mauthner. Fritz Mauthner, *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache* 1: 25, translated from the German and quoted in Janik and Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, 126.

2. Haneke says he told his producer if his film *Funny Games* was a great success it would be due to misunderstanding on the part of the audience. Michael Haneke interview with Serge Toubiana, *Funny Games* DVD of original German-language version (Kino Video, 1998).

3. Silvia Lanzetta, "Portraits of Evil in Wittgenstein: From Poetry to Disenchantment," in *Framing Evil: Portraits of Terror and the Imagination*, ed. Nancy Billias and Agnes B. Curry (Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary, 2008), 117.

4. Nancy, *Corpus*, 147.

5. Mac Wellman, "Speculations: An Essay on the Theater," in *The Difficulty of Crossing a Field: Nine New Plays* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 299.

6. Cora Diamond, "Does Bismarck Have a Beetle in His Box? The Private Language Argument in the *Tractatus*," in *The New Wittgenstein*, ed. Alice Crary and Rupert Reed (New York: Routledge, 2005), 269, 275 and 280. Glock, "Logical Space," in *A Wittgenstein Dictionary*, 220–23.

7. See also Robert Pfaller and Slavoj Žižek's notion of "'interpassivity,' according to which belief, conscience, guilt, but also pleasure and enjoyment, are . . . delegated to others, so that one can participate in 'life' by proxy (a solution . . . to the problem . . . of knowing too much and not being able to take responsibility and action)." Thomas Elsaesser, "Performative Self-Contradictions: Michael Haneke's *Mind Games*," in *A Companion to Michael Haneke*, ed. Roy Grundmann (Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 60.

8. Nancy, *Corpus*, 163, 167.
9. <http://www.physlink.com/education/askexperts/ae280.cfm>.
10. Nancy, *Corpus*, 61, 105, and 113.
11. Wellman, *Bitter Bierce: or the Friction We Call Grief*, in *The Difficulty of Crossing a Field*, 171 and 177.
12. Karinne Keithley Syers, “This Theatre Is a Strange Hole: Mac Wellman’s Poetics of Appearance,” *Postmodern Culture* 20, no. 1 (September 2009).
13. Vasso Kindi, “Second Thoughts on Wittgenstein’s Secondary Sense” (January 29, 2012), <http://wab.uib.no/agora/alws/2012/kindi2009.html>; Stern, *Wittgenstein on Mind and Language*, 117–18.
14. Stern, *Wittgenstein on Mind and Language*, 103, 118.
15. Wellman, *The Difficulty of Crossing a Field*, 152.
16. *Ibid.* 126 and 130. Unlike Foreman, who claims not to have been much influenced by Wittgenstein, Wellman readily acknowledges the influence and has taught a course on Wittgenstein and writing at Brooklyn College in New York.
17. *Ibid.*, 159.
18. *Ibid.*, 123 and 140.
19. Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit*, 15; G. E. M. Anscombe, “The Reality of the Past,” in *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Mind*, by G. E. M. Anscombe (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), 103.
20. Wellman, *The Difficulty of Crossing a Field*, 149.
21. Cavell, who argues that the term “‘perspicuous presentation’ might be taken to apply to the whole of Wittgenstein’s practice,” points out that Wittgenstein is substituting the word “perspicuous,” as in “clear,” for what mathematicians call “obvious,” in part, perhaps, because philosophers might not agree among themselves on what “obvious” means. Cavell, “Notes and Afterthoughts on the Opening of Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein*, 272 and 287.
22. Wellman, *The Difficulty of Crossing a Field*, 150.
23. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle: Conversations Recorded with Friedrich Weismann*, ed. B. F. McGuinness, trans. J. Schulte and B. F. McGuinness (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979), 63–64.
24. Wellman, *The Difficulty of Crossing a Field*, 163.
25. *Ibid.*, 159.
26. *Ibid.*
27. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/qua>.
28. Wellman, *Bitter Bierce*, 181.
29. This argument may be analogized to the language poet’s direction that “we must learn to read *writing*, not read *meanings*.” The reference here is to reading Gertrude Stein—“The question is not ‘what’ she means but ‘how.’” This “how” returns us to what language does, not what it means. Wittgenstein introduced the notion of “doing philosophy” into the modern philosophical vocabulary, an idea that likewise speaks to the “how,” the grammar and the *techne* of knowing. At the same time, though, Wittgenstein spoke from a place that applied what he knew by logical intuition, speaking, as it were, in the voice of the philosophical “I.” Michael Davidson, “On Reading Stein,” in *The L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Book*, ed. Bruce Andrews and Charles Bernstein (Carbondale: University of Southern Illinois Press, 1984), 198.

30. Wellman, *Bitter Bierce*, 205, 215.
31. *Ibid.*, 181–82.
32. Ambrose Bierce, *The Unabridged Devil's Dictionary*, ed. David E. Schultz and S. T. Joshi (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2002), 56–57.
33. Wellman, *Bitter Bierce*, 196.
34. *Ibid.*, 195. On pp. 198–99, Wellman alludes to the hanging man narrator/protagonist of Bierce's short story, but as a scene that the dramatic character "Bierce" witnessed and not as something that the writer Bierce invented. One might here say: "'Bierce,' noun. Someone who wrote and is written about without attention being paid to which function is being performed at any given moment."
35. Wellman, *Antigone*, in *The Difficulty of Crossing a Field: Nine New Plays*, 105, 114, 115.
36. *Ibid.*, 119 and 120.
37. Wellman, *Bitter Bierce*, 171.
38. *Ibid.*, 181.
39. *Ibid.*, 214 and 224.
40. *Ibid.*, 191.
41. Nancy, *Corpus*, 7.
42. *Ibid.*, 75.
43. Roberto Casati and Archille C. Varzi, *Holes and Other Superficialities* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995); Stern, *Wittgenstein on Mind and Language*, 129 and 130.
44. Wellman, *Infrared*, in *The Difficulty of Crossing a Field: Nine New Plays*, 1 and 4.
45. *Ibid.*, 7.
46. *Ibid.*, 10 and 13; Nancy, *Corpus*, 67.
47. Wellman, *Infrared*, 11.
48. Nancy, *Corpus*, 135 and 153 (a near numeric palindrome of pages).
49. Wellman, *The Invention of Tragedy*, in *The Difficulty of Crossing a Field: Nine New Plays*, 262.
50. *Ibid.*, 277.
51. *Ibid.*, 277, 278, and 279.
52. *Ibid.*, 285.
53. *Ibid.*, 287.
54. *Ibid.*, 290.
55. *Ibid.*, 288.
56. *Ibid.*, 289.
57. *Ibid.*, 286.
58. Jean-Luc Nancy, "Vox Clamans in Deserto," in *Multiple Arts: The Muses II*, ed. Simon Sparks (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006), 38.
59. *Ibid.*, 30 and 40.
60. *Ibid.*, 44 and 47.
61. *Ibid.*, 43.
62. "If  $p$  follows from  $q$  and  $q$  from  $p$  then they are one and the same proposition" (*TLP* §5.141).
63. Stern, *Wittgenstein on Mind and Language*, 97.
64. *Ibid.*, 99.
65. Foreman, "Preface," *Reverberation Machines*, viii.

66. Richard Foreman, *The Mind King*, in *My Head Was a Sledgehammer: Six Plays* (New York: Overlook, 1965), 140.

67. *Ibid.*, 137.

68. Duffy, *The World as I Found It*, 189.

69. Foreman, *Pearls for Pigs*, in Richard Foreman, *Paradise Hotel and Other Plays* (Woodstock and New York: The Overlook Press, 2001), 199.

70. For a very clear and concise treatment of the development of Wittgenstein's thinking along the lines described, see Judith Genova, *Wittgenstein: A Way of Seeing* (New York: Routledge, 1995). The quoted passage can be found on page 117.

71. "When language is functioning, it is performing; it is alive." Genova, *Wittgenstein: A Way of Seeing*, 118; a play, a script quote, 124.

72. Saul Bellow, *Herzog* (New York, Penguin, 1992), 234.

73. Lautreamont's famous quote is to be found in his book of prose fragments *Les chants de Maldoror*, 1869.

74. Genova, *Wittgenstein: A Way of Seeing*, 119.

75. I take up this theme in greater detail in chapter 9.

76. Foreman, *Pearls for Pigs*, 216.

77. Foreman's later plays featuring "mind" or "head" in the title include *The Mind King* (1992), *My Head Was a Sledgehammer* (1994), *Permanent Brain Damage* (1996), and *The Gods Are Pounding My Head!* (2005). In *Maria del Bosco (A Sound Opera: Sex and Racing Cars)* (2002), the Garbagemen place skulls against the crotches of two of the female characters and pound them with hammers, causing the women to "lurch in pain with each hit." *Maria del Bosco*, in *Bad Boy Nietzsche and Other Plays* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2007), 113.

78. Genova, *Wittgenstein: A Way of Seeing*, 89.

79. *Ibid.*, 130.

80. *Ibid.*

81. Foreman, *Pearls for Pigs*, 237.

82. Foreman's "Author's Note," which is composed of a series of propositions that are consistent with the body of the play text that follows, functions in the same way that Wittgenstein's "Analytical Table of Contents" does in relation to the *Philosophical Remarks* that follow. Foreman, *Maria del Bosco*, 84–87 and 97.

83. Charles Bernstein, "The Objects of Meaning: Reading Cavell Reading Wittgenstein," in *Content's Dream: Essays 1975–1984* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 171.

84. Richard Foreman, *Benita Canova*, in *Paradise Hotel and Other Plays* (New York: Overlook, 2001).

85. *Ibid.*, 144 and 166.

86. *Ibid.*, 143.

87. *Ibid.*, 148 and 149.

88. *Ibid.*, 153.

89. *Ibid.*, 145. Nuns judged me likewise as a high school debater. This was around the time a kid asked to see the horns growing out of my curly Jewish head in a swimming pool in Oklahoma.

90. *Ibid.*, 146. John Kander (music) and Fred Ebb (lyrics), "If You Could See Her," from the musical *Cabaret* (1966).

91. Wellman, *Cat's Paw*, 359.

92. Bernard J. Rhie, "The Philosophy of the Face and 20th Century Literature and Art" (Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of English, University of Pennsylvania, 2005), 67 and 68.

93. Foreman, *Benita Canova*, 174–75. I take up the assimilationist theme in a David Mamet film in chapter 7.

94. Sander L. Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990); M. O'C. Drury, "Some Notes on Conversations with Wittgenstein" and "Conversations with Wittgenstein," in *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Personal Recollections*, ed. Rush Rhees (Tottowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1981), 94 and 175.

95. Foreman, *Benita Canova*, 157.

96. *Ibid.*, 158.

97. Foreman, *Benita Canova*, 162.

98. Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, trans. Ralph Manheim (father of Richard Foreman's wife and longtime leading actress Kate Manheim) (New York: Schocken Books, 1996), 110.

99. *Ibid.*, 110, 112–13.

100. *Ibid.*, 113.

101. Cora Diamond, "Riddles and Anselm's Riddles," in *The Realistic Spirit*, 273.

102. Foreman, *Benita Canova*, 152.

103. *Ibid.*, 150 and 163.

104. *Ibid.*, 171.

105. Charles Bernstein, "On Theatricality," in *Content's Dream: Essays 1975–1984*, 200 and 201.

106. Foreman, *Maria del Bosco*, 117.

107. Cora Diamond, "Wittgenstein and Metaphysics," in *The Realistic Spirit*, 16–17. See also G. E. M. Anscombe, "The Reality of the Past," in *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Mind*, 103.

108. Diamond, "Wittgenstein and Metaphysics," 16.

109. *Ibid.*, 156.

110. Foreman, *Benita Canova*, 166, 173, 174–75, 178.

111. *Ibid.*, 167.

112. [dictionary.reference.com/browse/aporia](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/aporia).

## Chapter 6

The chapter epigraph is from Handke's *Kaspar*, 93.

1. Nikolai Gogol, "The Nose," in *Mirgorod: The Collected Works of Nikolay Gogol*, trans. Constance Garnett (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1929), 29.

2. <http://alangullette.com/lit/surreal/>.

3. <http://cscs.umich.edu/~crshalizi/T4PM/futurist-manifesto.html>.

4. Ukrainian existentialist philosopher Lev Shestov is cited in Klagge, *Wittgenstein in Exile*, 191.

5. Andrei Bely, *Petersburg*, trans. Robert A. Maguire and John E. Malmstad (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 218.

6. See, for example, Glock, *A Wittgenstein Dictionary*, 279.

7. Oswald Hanfling, “Thinking,” in *Wittgenstein: A Critical Reader*, ed. Hans-Johann Gluck (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2001), 149.

8. Bely, *Petersburg*, 168.

9. Handke, *Kaspar*, 95.

10. Ludwig Wittgenstein, “Note for Lectures on ‘Private Experience’ and ‘Sense-Data,’” *Philosophical Review* 77, no. 3 (1968): 296–97.

11. Gary L. Hagberg, *Describing Ourselves: Wittgenstein and Autobiographical Consciousness*, 53.

12. E. M. Cioran, *Le mauvais démiurge*, quoted in Gabriel Liiceanu, “Cioran and the Continents of Insomnia,” in *Les Continents de l’insomnie*, trans. Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine, 8–9. In *Itinéraires de un vie: E. M. Cioran* (Paris: Éditions Michalon, 1995), 83–138. Willis Regier, “Cioran’s Insomnia,” *MLN* 119, no. 5, Comparative Literature Issue (December 2004): 996.

13. Cavell concurs: “The great responsibility of philosophy is responsiveness—to be awake after all the others have fallen asleep.” Stanley Cavell, “Macbeth Appalled,” in *The Cavell Reader*, ed. Stephen Mulhall (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1996), 212.

14. *Ibid.*, 3 and 14. The uncited Levinas reference appears in Willis Regier, “The Philosophy of Insomnia,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 10, 2011, <http://chronicle.com/article/The-Philosophy-of-Insomnia/127029/>, 2.

15. Anne Dufourmantelle, *Blind Date: Sex and Philosophy*, trans. Catherine Porter (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 51.

16. “Wittgenstein develop[ed] [Bertrand Russell’s] idea that solipsism tries to limit what I can understand rather than what I know.” Pears, *The False Prison*, 1:161.

17. Janik and Toulmin, *Wittgenstein’s Vienna*, 182. Their quote refers to Wittgenstein’s philosophy, not to Markson’s novel.

18. Kierkegaard quoted in Markson, *Wittgenstein’s Mistress*.

19. Willis G. Regier, “Cioran’s Insomnia,” *Comparative Literature* 119, no. 5 (December 2004): 1000–1001; Sherrill E. Grace, “Messages: Reading Markson’s *Wittgenstein’s Mistress*,” in *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 10, no. 2 (Summer 1990): 208.

20. Jacques Roubaud, *The Great Fire of London [A Story with Interpolations and Bifurcations]*, trans. Dominic Di Bernardi (Normal, Ill.: Dalkey Archive, 2006), 248.

21. Markson, *Wittgenstein’s Mistress*, 207–8.

22. Bellow, *Herzog*, 198.

23. Helen Hayes was allergic to stage dust.

24. “One of the things people generally admired about Van Gogh, even though they were not always aware of it, was the way he could make even a chair seem to have anxiety in it. Or a pair of boots.” Markson, *Wittgenstein’s Mistress*, 138, 221.

25. *Ibid.*, 185–86.

26. Bellow, *Herzog*, 16, 198, and 352.

27. *Ibid.*, 147.

28. *Ibid.*, 182.

29. Glock, *A Wittgenstein Dictionary*, 62–63.

30. *A Synopsis of Wittgenstein's Logic of Language, Chapters 11–13*, www.roangelo.net/logwitt/logwitt3.html.

31. Markson, *Wittgenstein's Mistress*, 232.

32. Roubaud, *The Great Fire of London*, 62.

33. *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/solipsis/>.

34. Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*, 272.

35. I kept my dissertation in the refrigerator for the same reason, and there was a fire. Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*, 49.

36. Jacques Roubaud, *The Loop*, trans. Jeff Fort (Urbana-Champaign, Ill.: Dalkey Archive, 2009), 13.

37. Cameron Diaz, the actress who played Julie in *Vanilla Sky*, has said that she (the actress, not the character) has OCD.

38. David Mamet, *Three Uses of the Knife: On the Nature and Purpose of Drama* (London: Methuen, 2002), 26–27.

39. Robert Musil, *The Man Without Qualities*, vol. 3, chap. 33, quoted in Janik and Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, 19 and 33.

40. Janik and Toulmin, 4.

41. Charles Drazin, *In Search of the Third Man* (New York: Limelight, 2004), 2, 11, 14.

42. Danièle Moyal-Sharrock, ed., *The Third Wittgenstein: The Post-Investigations Works* (London: Ashgate, 2004), 4 and 5.

43. *Ibid.*, 8.

44. The idea of the meaning-body, linked to Platonic theory, “leads us to move unwittingly from talking about meanings as they actually operate in our daily lives to talking about them like physical objects.” Braver, *Groundless Grounds*, 59.

45. *Ibid.*, 85 and 132.

46. The catastrophe of being next is matched by instances of someone being “next” behind me, even if that someone is only anticipated/imagined. The two “nexts” express the bipolarity of the worst-case scenario of waiting for and being waited for—the articulated moment of decision.

47. I have drawn upon Sass's *The Paradox of Delusion* (89–90, 106–7, 110–11) for the description of the specific psychological categories of thinking described above and to some of their evocative correspondences to Wittgensteinian motive and thought.

48. The actual ornate metal building at 72 Greene Street in SoHo, in which Kiki and Marcy live, houses a shop called “Alice's Antiques,” another echo of Wonderland's illogical place setting in the film's dreamscape.

49. Nigel Bruce's bumbling Dr. Watson did the same thing in the film *Sherlock Holmes and the Pearl of Death* (1944; adapted from Conan Doyle's “The Adventure of the Six Napoleons”), while pasting a newspaper clipping in a scrapbook. I recall this as a personally paradigmatic moment.

50. Stern, *Wittgenstein on Mind and Matter*, 157.

51. R. Bazlen, *Il capitano di lungo corso* (1973), 208, quoted in Massimo Cacciari, *Posthumous People: Vienna at the Turning Point*, trans. Rodger Friedman (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996), 25.

52. Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997), 88–91.

53. Saul Bellow, *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (New York: Penguin, 1995), 190.

54. *Ibid.*, 171 and 192.  
 55. *Ibid.*, 171.  
 56. Interview with Lars von Trier in the documentary *Tranceformer: Portrait of Lars von Trier* (1997), directed by Stig Bjorkman, Criterion Collection DVD edition of *The Element of Crime*, 2000.  
 57. Pears, *The False Prison*, 1:41.  
 58. Handke, *The Goalie's Anxiety*, 100–101.  
 59. *Ibid.*, 3 and 93.  
 60. *Ibid.*, 82.  
 61. *Ibid.*, 77 and 78.  
 62. *Ibid.*, 74–75.  
 63. Glock, *A Wittgenstein Dictionary*, 120 and 123.  
 64. Peter Handke, *The Goalie's Anxiety at the Penalty Kick*, trans. Michael Roloff (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 114.  
 65. Mac Wellman, *The Fortuneteller: A Jest* (Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, 1991), 12, 66, 101.  
 66. Wellman, *The Fortuneteller*, 101.  
 67. Handke, *The Goalie's Anxiety at the Penalty Kick*, 127.  
 68. *Ibid.*, 87.  
 69. Roubaud, *The Loop*, 16.  
 70. Botho Strauss, *Time and the Room*, in *Three Plays: The Park, Seven Doors, Time and the Room*, trans. Jeremy Sams (London: Oberon Books, 2007), 153 and 161.  
 71. Wellman, "Speculations: An Essay on the Theater," 341 [3 + 1 = 4; 4 – 1 = 3].  
 72. Stern, *Wittgenstein on Mind and Language*, 137.  
 73. *Ibid.*, 135.  
 74. *Ibid.*

## Chapter 7

1. Davis, *Obsession*, 7.  
 2. Hagberg, *Describing Ourselves*, 94.  
 3. Wittgenstein's brief here has more to do with thinking than it does with language. In his view, thinking is no more synonymous with language than mental image is. Oswald Hanfling, "Thinking," in *Wittgenstein: A Critical Reader*, 144.  
 4. Brian Rotman, *Signifying Nothing: The Semiotics of Zero* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993), 50.  
 5. "Money is always a sign, certainly when it is a medium, but also when it is a 'thing,' a commodity, being bought and sold." Rotman, *Signifying Nothing*, 95.  
 6. *Ibid.*, 53.  
 7. *Ibid.*, 53, 88–89, 93.  
 8. *Ibid.*, 95.  
 9. I have drawn the notions of devaluation and inflation in this linguistic context from Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. G. C. Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 6, cited in Rotman, *Signifying Nothing*, 97.  
 10. Hagberg, *Describing Ourselves*, 216–17.  
 11. Braver, *Groundless Grounds*, 85.  
 12. Roberto Harari, *Lacan's Seminar on "Anxiety": An Introduction*, trans. Jane C. Lamb-Ruiz (New York: Other Press, 2001), 56

13. John le Carré, *Single & Single* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999), 1; Bellow, *Herzog*, 280.

14. Le Carré, *Single & Single*, 4.

15. *Ibid.*, 5. I also suffer from cynophobia and have walked down the centers of many streets to equidistance myself from imagined dog attacks.

16. The reference of course being to Booth's "*Sic semper tyrannis!*" ("Thus always with/to tyrants!") as well as to my *Richard III*-inscribed dagger.

17. Gaddis, *The Recognitions*, 619.

18. Diane M. Borden actually says this about the use of the gun as a prop in both *Homicide* and *House of Games*. Borden, "Man Without a Gun: Mamet's Mysticism and Masculinity," paper presented at the Modern Language Association Convention, Washington, D.C. (December 28, 1996), cited in Leslie Kane, *Weasels and Wisemen: Ethics and Ethnicity in the Work of David Mamet* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 237.

19. Borden refers in this moment to "the speech act of the gun," which suggests a blended agency between subject (Ford) and object (weapon). Borden, in Kane, *Weasels and Wisemen*, 241. Gun in hand, the previously robotic Ford warms to her task, and subject and object anthropomorphize one another.

20. "Wittgenstein used '// . . . // ' to enclose variant drafts of words or phrases." James C. Klagge and Alfred Nordmann, "Editorial Conventions," *PO*, xv.

21. Henri Becque, *Woman of Paris*, trans. Jacques Barzun (New York: Samuel French, 1949), 1.

22. Robert B. Ray, *The ABCs of Classic Hollywood* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 145.

23. David Foster Wallace, "The Empty Plenum: David Markson's *Wittgenstein's Mistress*," in *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 10, no. 2 (Spring 1990): 233, 233 n. 29.

24. In considering the appearance of the stage inside the film from a vertical perspective, I am reminded of Bellow's Mr. Sammler, who states: "In literature I think there are low-ceiling masterpieces—*Crime and Punishment*, for instance—and high-ceiling masterpieces, *Remembrance of Things Past*." Bellow, *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, 151. Hitchcock used the psychologically strategic overhead shot to great effect and affect in his earlier London-based film *Murder!* (1930), which goes much further in literally citing/sighting both the stage and theater as text. For an excellent analysis of this film, specifically as it relates to camera P.O.V., see William Rothman, *Hitchcock: The Murderous Gaze* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), 57–107.

25. Joan Copjec, "May '68, the Emotional Month," in *Lacan: The Silent Partners*, ed. Slavoj Žižek (New York: Verso, 2006), 156.

26. Stern, *Wittgenstein on Mind and Language*, 69.

27. Shepherdson, "Foreword," in Harari, *Lacan's Seminar on "Anxiety"*, xxxii.

28. The interruptive telephone plays a central role in Mamet's 1992 play (and 1994 film) *Oleanna*, in which it is a materialized metonym for the language and power of interruption in dialogue—in particular, dialogic overlay. The ringing of a telephone is, of course, always overlaid upon something. Even when it is not always an imposition, it demands and distracts attention from something else, the ringing doing a fair imitation of insistency and, in a sense, rewarding distraction by focusing attention elsewhere.

29. Critchley, *On Humour*, 41–42, 43.

30. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 2, 3, and 8.

31. *Ibid.*, 19–20.

32. *Ibid.*, 393. Jacques Derrida, *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, trans. Christine Irizarry (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005), 11–19.

33. *Ibid.*, 38 and 45.

34. Derrida, *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, 33 and 38. Derrida is responding to: Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Discourse of the Syncope: Logodaedalus*, trans. Saul Anton (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2008).

35. Rothman, *Hitchcock: The Murderous Gaze*, 33.

36. *Ibid.*, 59.

37. Janik and Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, 186.

38. Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, trans. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis, Ind.: Bobbs-Merrill, 1950), 352.

39. Janik and Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, 148.

40. “Contingency,” *Dictionary.com*.

41. Barry Stroud, “Mind, Meaning, and Practice,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein*, 317.

42. Philosophers point to Wittgenstein’s change regarding the articulation of fact and rule. In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein seemed to believe that “whereas any fact can be described falsely, the rules that make it possible to describe the facts cannot be described in any way at all.” Later, in the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein dispensed with description in favor of application and the meanings that ensued from following a rule. Donna M. Summerfield, “Fitting Versus Tracking: Wittgenstein on Representation,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein*, 132–33; Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, 7–18.

43. Stroud, 307.

44. Hans Sluga, “‘Whose House Is That?’ Wittgenstein on the Self,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein*, 346.

45. Jean Cocteau’s 1934 play *The Infernal Machine* is a retelling of the Oedipus myth, which, of course, involves the denial and then discovery of one’s true identity and the burden of bearing a fateful name.

46. “The visual field. (Not to be confused with visual space)” (PO 221).

47. Hitchcock also shoots his actors through the liquor bottles we earlier saw on a side table pushed against one of the apartment’s interior walls. This impossible shot or way of seeing puts the spectator in mind of the stage’s imaginary “fourth wall” through which he can view the action of the play as if he were seeing into the room that is scenically represented.

## Chapter 8

The chapter epigraph is from David Pears’s *The False Prison: A Study of the Development of Wittgenstein’s Philosophy*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 8.

1. *Martin and Lewis Colgate Comedy Hour: 16 Classic Episodes* (La Crosse, Wis.: Echo Bridge Home Entertainment, 2005).

2. George Pitcher, “Wittgenstein, Nonsense, and Lewis Carroll,” *Massachusetts Review* 6, no. 3 (Spring-Summer 1965): 592.

3. *Ibid.*, 594.

4. “Moving from the sublime to the ridiculous, Wittgenstein’s discursive woes in the later works stem not so much from the tragic limits of language as from the comic repetitions of philosophy.” Genova, *Wittgenstein: A Way of Seeing*, 113.

5. *Ibid.*, 166.

6. The live nightclub act with which Martin and Lewis began their partnership opened with Lewis pretending to be a waiter in/for the audience, while really being a stooge who soon takes his rightful place as a co-headliner on the stage.

7. “Objects always withdraw.” Harman, *Guerrilla Metaphysics*, 143.

8. Barthes, “The Third Meaning,” in *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1986), 44–45, 55, 56, and 57. “Idiolect,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/idiolects/>.

9. Hagberg, *Describing Ourselves: Wittgenstein and Autobiographical Consciousness*, 47.

10. At the same time, Hagberg points out that “Wittgenstein’s observations, since they are significant for self-interpretation, tell us with ever increasing precision, or with increasing conceptual magnification, what *not* to think.” This suggests not only a traditional mode of argument by exclusion but also the poet John Keats’s notion of “negative capability,” in which acceptance of the uncertain and unresolved as a *modus operandi* actualizes incapacity as a positive thought application. Hagberg, *Describing Ourselves*, 51, 158, 181.

11. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §15, 98.

12. Graham Harman, *Heidegger Explained: From Phenomenon to Thing* (Chicago: Open Court, 2007), 62.

13. Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit*, 43.

14. Jean-Luc Nancy, “On Painting (and) Presence,” trans. Emily McVarish, in *The Birth to Presence*, trans. Brian Holmes et al. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993), 357.

15. Pearson, *A Brief History of Anxiety*, 9 and 12; Frances L. Restuccia, “The Virtue of Blushing: Assimilating Anxiety into Shame in Haneke’s *Caché*,” in *sympløke* 18, nos. 1–2 (2010): 155–70; Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book XVII: The Other Side of Psycho-Analysis*, trans. Russell Grigg (New York: Norton, 2007), 147; Charles Shepherdson, “Foreword,” *Lacan’s Seminar on “Anxiety”: An Introduction*, xxv; Joan Copjec, “May ’68, the Emotional Month,” in *Lacan: The Silent Partners*, ed. Slavoj Žižek (New York: Verso, 2006), 156.

16. On another occasion in another psychiatrist’s waiting room, a receipt that disappeared right from under my nose was discovered inside a closed umbrella (its closedness being anxiety’s sign of catastrophic non-prevention/-intervention) that I had leaned against a chair on the opposite side of the room to wait for me. The anxiety of (self-)discovery, my mental unreadiness to be seen in a psychiatrist’s waiting room folded memory like a hidden note on which was written, “the umbrella moves from one side of the room to the other, while *following your psychiatrist’s appointment* you are anxiously waiting (*not*) to be seen.” Recall as well Markson’s mad Kate’s observation regarding a stick: “Then again it is quite possible that the question of loss had not entered my mind until I was already in the process of looking back, which is to say that the stick was

already not lost before I had worried that it might be.” Markson, *Wittgenstein’s Mistress*, 58.

17. “Solipsism and the Problem of Other Minds,” *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/solipsis/>.

18. Baker, *Wittgenstein’s Method: Neglected Aspects*, 23.

19. *Ibid.*, 6 and 33.

20. Morris, “Introduction” to Baker’s *Wittgenstein’s Method: Neglected Aspects*, 6.

21. *Ibid.*, 116.

22. *Ibid.*, 99.

23. Handke, *The Goalie’s Anxiety*, 97.

24. Harman, *Heidegger Explained*, 9; Alphonso Lingis, *The Imperative* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 64–65.

25. Herbert’s trauma-induced runs from young women (producing multiple running Herberts) morph into a young woman’s three contrasting trauma-forestalling runs (in which she races to save her boyfriend from a named and visible catastrophe) in Tom Tykwer’s 1998 film *Run Lola Run*. The missing commas or pauses (in)visible in the film’s title sign a word-palindromic reading of an inexhaustible thought-as-action loop. Tykwer begins his film with the Wittgensteinian epigraph: “After the game is before the game (S. Herberger).” Josep “Sepp” Herberger was a German footballer (like Handke’s anxious ex-goalie Bloch), whose coaching career began during the Nazi regime.

26. In this same film, Lewis performs a comic *sparagmos* on fellow comedian Buddy Lester’s suit, tearing it (and figuratively him) apart.

27. The real Stan Laurel, who was seventy years old at the time and no longer performing, advised Jerry Lewis on this film.

28. *Run Lola Run*’s other epigraph is from T. S. Eliot’s “Little Gidding”: “We shall not cease from exploration . . . and the end of all our / exploration will be to arrive where we started / . . . and know the place / for the first time.”

29. “To imagine a language means to imagine a form of life” (*PI* §19). Glock, *A Wittgenstein Dictionary*, 124.

30. Glock, *A Wittgenstein Dictionary*, 128–29.

31. Charles Travis characterizes Wittgenstein’s position on this, beginning with Wittgenstein’s problem with naming: “What words name (by way of concepts and objects), and the structured way they do *that*, does not determine uniquely when they would be true. What is missing is the sort of *consequences* of thinking, or saying, something—what may be done with what is said.” Charles Travis, *Thought’s Footing: Themes in Wittgenstein’s Philosophical Investigations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 2–3.

32. I am here consciously twisting the meaning of Gordon Baker’s statement, drawn from Wittgenstein, “We might say that changing one’s way of seeing things is difficult because it is voluntary, *because* one has to surrender what one has always *wanted* to see.” Baker, *Wittgenstein’s Method: Neglected Aspects*, 46. The behavior I am describing persists in the performance of *not* surrendering its desire in spite of or even because of the voluntary self-incapacitation that it manifests (as performance).

33. My example is drawn from Ryan Larkin’s 1968 animated short *Walking*, which not only studies the ways people walk but which imposes the animator’s

face upon the walking subject who is radiating anxiety in the lines with which he is drawn. My thanks to Hans Vermy for referring me to this source.

34. “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” (OC §204).

35. “I can meditate only when walking; as soon as I stop, I can no longer think, for my mind moves only when my feet do.” Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Confessions*, book 9, 400, quoted in Russell Goulbourne, “Introduction,” *Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, trans. Goulbourne (New York: Oxford University Press, 211), xvii.

36. Handke, *The Weight of the World*, 96.

37. Following an operation on his heart, Jean-Luc Nancy noticed that he had previously not noticed the rhythmic beating of his heart, which was “as absent as the soles of my feet while walking.” Nancy, *Corpus*, 163.

38. “‘Knowledge’ and ‘certainty’ belong to different *categories*. They are not two ‘mental states’ like, say ‘surmising’ and ‘being sure’” (OC §308). Handke observes that “for children there seems to be no gap between knowledge and existence,” which, if you concur with this assessment (which I do), suggests the truth of Wittgenstein’s assertion that you have to be taught doubt. (“The child learns by believing the adult. Doubt comes *after* belief”) (OC §160). Handke, *The Weight of the World*, 123.

39. See Markson’s tetralogy, consisting of the novels *Reader’s Block* (1996), *This Is Not a Novel* (2001), *Vanishing Point* (2004), and *The Last Novel* (2007), all of which present a litany of historical and literary deaths carefully ordered by a generically named “Writer” or “Reader” (or his equivalent) so as to convey his own inner narrative.

40. “And in fact, isn’t the use of the word ‘know’ as a preeminently philosophical word altogether wrong” (OC §415)?

41. “One is often bewitched by a word. For example, by the word ‘know’” (OC §435).

42. Handke, *The Weight of the World*, 134.

43. Baker, *Wittgenstein’s Method: Neglected Aspects*, 34.

44. Handke, *The Weight of the World*, 47. As regards dreaming and clarity, Wittgenstein wrote: “‘When you are talking about dreaming, about thinking, about sensation—don’t all of these things seem to lose the mysteriousness which seems to be their essential characteristic?’ Why should dreaming be more mysterious than the table? Why should they not both be equally mysterious?” (RPPI §378).

45. Handke, *The Weight of the World*, 70.

46. *Ibid.*, 94.

47. “How does thought (that things are thus and so) get footing? How can it make its success beholden to the way things are in a way determinate enough that the world (in its normal course) may, obligingly, *be* as thought, or precisely not? For a start, what might such a dependency on things look like? What form might it take?” Travis, *Thought’s Footing*, 2.

48. *Ibid.*, 93.

49. *Ibid.*

50. Handke, *The Weight of the World*, 117.

51. Handke, *The Hour We Knew Nothing of Each Other*, in *Voyage to the Sonorous Land and The Hour We Knew Nothing of Each Other*, trans. Gitta Honegger (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1996), 92 and 95.

52. *Ibid.*, 98.

53. *Ibid.*, 99.

54. *Ibid.*, 101, 102, and 103.

### Chapter 9

The second chapter epigraph is from Handke's *The Weight of the World*, 155.

1. Aaron is the name of Moses's brother in the Bible who dwelled in the borderland while Moses was away.

2. Gary Wills has commented on the liminality of doors and the irising in and out of framed moments in Ford's film as linking Edwards's wanderer to the uncanny world. Gary Wills, *John Wayne's America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998), 255 and 261. Timothy Simonds, "The Burning Machine: Movements Towards a Notion of Architectural Language and Dwelling 'With,' 'In' and 'As,'" unpublished paper for the course "Wittgenstein, Writing and Performance," 3, 5, and 9, Brown University, fall 2011. Lacoue-LaBarthes, *Typography*, 133 and 257.

3. Lacoue-LaBarthes, *Typography*, 133 and 257.

4. Wayne actually appears to have used "pilgrim" for the first time in Ford's later valedictory western *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, 1962.

5. José Ortega y Gasset, *What Is Philosophy?* (New York: Norton, 1964), 47–49; Jane Tompkins, *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 56–57.

6. Braver, *Groundless Grounds*, 179.

7. Among Handke's "collection of my idée fixes: that A. [Handke's daughter] suddenly stops growing." Handke, *The Weight of the World*, 33.

8. Lingis, *The Imperative*, 201.

9. Phil Hutchinson and Rupert Read, "Memento: A Philosophical Investigation," in *Film As Philosophy: Essays on Cinema after Wittgenstein and Cavell*, ed. Rupert Read and Jerry Goodenough (New York: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2005), 14.

10. Handke, *Voyage to the Sonorous Land*, 31.

11. Handke's play epigraph cites Dante's *La vida nuova*: "These pilgrims walked deep along in thought . . . / These pilgrims seemed to come from far."

12. Ludwig Wittgenstein, "Notes for Lectures on 'Private Experience' and 'Sense Data,'" *Philosophical Review* 3 (July 1968): 315.

13. *Ibid.*

14. Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," "The Question Concerning Technology," and "What Calls for Thinking?" in *Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 357. My thanks to Ioana Jucan for calling my attention to this quote.

15. Handke, *Voyage to the Sonorous Land*, 5.

16. Derrida, *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, 6.

17. *Ibid.*, 5.

18. "In a letter to [Ludwig] von Ficker (FL 10.11.19), Wittgenstein proclaimed that the *Tractatus* 'consists of two parts: of the one which is here, and of everything

which I have not written. And precisely this second part is the important one.” Glock, *A Wittgenstein Dictionary*, 330.

19. Handke, *The Hour We Knew Nothing of Each Other*, 10.

20. *Ibid.*; Braver, *Groundless Grounds*, 239.

21. Handke, *Voyage to the Sonorous Land*. Of course, I am referring here to the famous scene in Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí’s surrealist short film *Un chien Andalou* (1929), in which ants inexplicably emerge from a hole in the palm of a young man’s hand. This same hand is later placed in a box by the police. The possibly censored and censorious hands and head had already gone missing from the splayed female nude displaying its dark hole in Gustave Courbet’s *L’origine du monde* (1866).

22. Handke, *Voyage to the Sonorous Land*, 12.

23. Leonid Andreyev, *Requiem*, trans. Daniel Gerould, *Performing Arts Journal* 6, no. 1 (1981): 113.

24. Handke, *The Weight of the World*, 195.

25. “The space of the possible is already there with all possible possibilities precisely mapped out within it.” Braver, *Groundless Grounds*, 59–60.

26. Colin Wilson, “The Implications of Total Pessimism,” in *The Strength to Dream: Literature and the Imagination* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1973), 73 and 79.

27. Handke, *The Weight of the World*, 13 and 14.

28. “Wanting to be what we are not, we come / to believe ourselves something other / than what we are, and this is how we /become mad.” Jean-Jacques Rousseau, preface to *La nouvelle Héloïse*, quoted in Lacoue-Labarthes, *Typography*, 47, 258–59.

29. Handke, *Voyage to the Sonorous Land*, 14.

30. Lingis, *The Imperative*, 181.

31. *Ibid.*, 180.

32. Handke, *Voyage to the Sonorous Land*, 20.

33. *Ibid.*, 21.

34. *Ibid.*, 22.

35. *Ibid.*, 24 and 25.

36. *Ibid.*, 26.

37. Heiner Müller, quoted in Jonathan Kalb, *Free Admissions: Collected Theater Writings* (New York: Limelight, 2004), 77.

38. Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit*, 15–16.

39. Caccieri is here citing a passage from Nietzsche’s *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits* (1878). Massimo Caccieri, *Posthumous People*, 5.

40. Handke, *Voyage to the Sonorous Land*, 30.

41. *Ibid.*, 28.

42. *Ibid.*, 28.

43. Markson, *Wittgenstein’s Mistress*, 15. “I would appear to be more upset by that carton of grass that is not real than I realized. By which I imagine what I mean is that if the grass that is not real is real, as undoubtedly it is, what would be the difference between the way grass that is not real is real and the way real grass is real, then?” Markson, *Wittgenstein’s Mistress*, 193. For a more complete analysis of vision in *Blue Velvet*, and more specifically the unseen and what I call “the

unscene” (the unrepresentable, ineffable), see the chapter “Ghost Light,” in my book *Infinity (Stage)* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 143–69.

44. Lingis, *The Imperative*, 27, 34.

45. <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=amyl%20nitrate>; [http://www.powerpoppers.com/amyl\\_nitrate\\_poppers.shtml](http://www.powerpoppers.com/amyl_nitrate_poppers.shtml).

46. Roy Orbison’s first wife and later his older brother died in motorcycle accidents. Two of Orbison’s three small children died in a house fire while he was on tour.

47. Handke, *Voyage to the Sonorous Land*, 47, 48, 49, 50.

48. *Ibid.*, 50–53.

49. *Ibid.*, 70, 77, 78.

50. Lingis, *The Imperative*, 109.

51. *Ibid.*, 119.

52. Malcolm Budd, “Wittgenstein on Sensuous Experiences,” *Philosophical Quarterly* 36, no. 143 (April 1986): 192–93.

53. “Say, not: ‘We have formed a wrong picture of thinking’—but: ‘We don’t know our way about in the use of our picture, or of our pictures.’ And hence we don’t know our way about in the use of our word” (*RPPI* §549).

54. Gordon Baker cites the influence of the mathematically trained Vienna Circle linguistic and analytical philosopher Friedrich Waismann on Wittgenstein regarding the topic of philosophical questioning as the manifestation of intellectual disquiet. “A philosophical problem is an individual’s internal conflict” is how Baker reads Wittgenstein’s proposition. “A simile that has been absorbed into the forms of our language produces a false appearance which disquiets us. ‘But *this* isn’t how it is!’—we say. ‘Yet *this* is how it *has* to be!’” (*PI* §112). Gordon Baker, *Wittgenstein’s Method*, 146.

55. Baker, *Wittgenstein’s Method*, 212–13, 218, 221 n. 34.

56. Frank Cioffi, “Wittgenstein and the Riddle of Life,” in Moyal-Sharrock, ed., *The Third Wittgenstein*, 199.

57. William James, *Some Problems of Philosophy* (London: Longmans, Green, 1919), quoted in Moyal-Sharrock, “Introduction: The Idea of a *Third* Wittgenstein,” in Moyal-Sharrock, ed., *The Third Wittgenstein*, 10.

58. “Has it [pain] the shape of the part of the body that hurts” (*RPPI* §695)? “I feel my arm and, oddly, I should like to say: I feel it in a particular position in space: as if, that is, my bodily feeling were distributed in a space in the shape of an arm, so that in order to represent the matter, I would have to represent the arm, say in plaster, in the right position” (*RPPI* §784).

59. My thanks to Charles Pletcher for his alternate readings of the aporia.

60. “Wittgenstein’s writing is more than performative; it is scriptive, encouraging the reader to act.” Daniel Ruppel, “‘And Now’ Presenting Wittgenstein: Time, and the Tension of Thinking Through It All,” unpublished paper, 7.



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