





ARBOR 8



“ This fire was started long ago by the barbarians  
and murderers of the world, who hoped to drive  
darkness from their brutal lives with its light. ”





arbor is choiclessly tied to environment. many in our generation probe the artistic responses to digital and global politics - but we generally mistake those spheres to be landless. in producing a 'german/jewish Issue,' a more direct language comes attached to the spiritual terrain.

with that mistake, the failure to 'look in,' we have misdiagnosed a failure in our present, as well as its ancestor: the Holocaust's open wound. and any failed coping mechanism finds another in its recollection. or a few.

we have to look back to go forward, we have to look back to arrive in the present. first, we look here to go back

*Elias*

*say you still feel  
that Demise  
that you live it still  
that it is the source of your uncertain despair  
or think that the burning of Celan's books  
and of the great synagogue  
must explain the emptiness which you feel now*

this uncertain issue owes its origin to conversations between elias and I. it is also owed to the work of artists and writers like ori gerscht, edmund de waal, anselm kiefer, paul celan, ingeborg bachmann, louise nevelson, hannah arendt, primo levi, elie wiesel, zalman gradowski, lars von trier, karl ove knausgaard, martin heidegger, pierre joris, king krule, martin luther, edward st.aubyn, theresa hak kyung cha, tove ditlevsen, benjamn labatut, thomas mann, and colm tóibín.

we became more and more drawn to the irresolution of our present moment in view of the events disclosed in the works of the above thinkers and artists.

aesthetically, the issue takes its start from gerscht's exposure photos, which capture the process of human subjectivity most actually as a *blur*. in our photographs, alongside blurriness are *words*, uncertainly fixed, and *light*, or more specifically, *lightning*. one is invited not to think here of light as a source of disclosure or enlightenment, but as a disfigurer. in lighting things up, it covers, worse yet, un-discloses, the darkness to which our attention is drawn.

*hegelsh*





the following table of contents contains pieces written for viewing and those not. some are *official*, or on the record, as thoughts, meditations, analyses, essays, letters, while others are *unofficial*, or off the record, written in private, inscribed into walls, told secretly, or given to others but with some mark of deep irresolution that makes the words almost as though they remain still *hidden*. the following table of contents contains only those writings presented on the record.

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what follows are those *unofficially* written, or *off the record*.

*the fire was ignited long ago*  
*I stood face to face with myself, as it were, and cried*  
*an evenly measured breath*  
*Im Geist getrennt, Im Herz vereint*  
*I wasn’t there*  
*bareness, today*  
*unmistakably intermingled with my woes*  
*Geheimnisträger*  
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*itself*  
*Waldwasen, uneingeebnet*  
*the mountain of death*

naturally, the official and the unofficial are, as in life, intermixed.





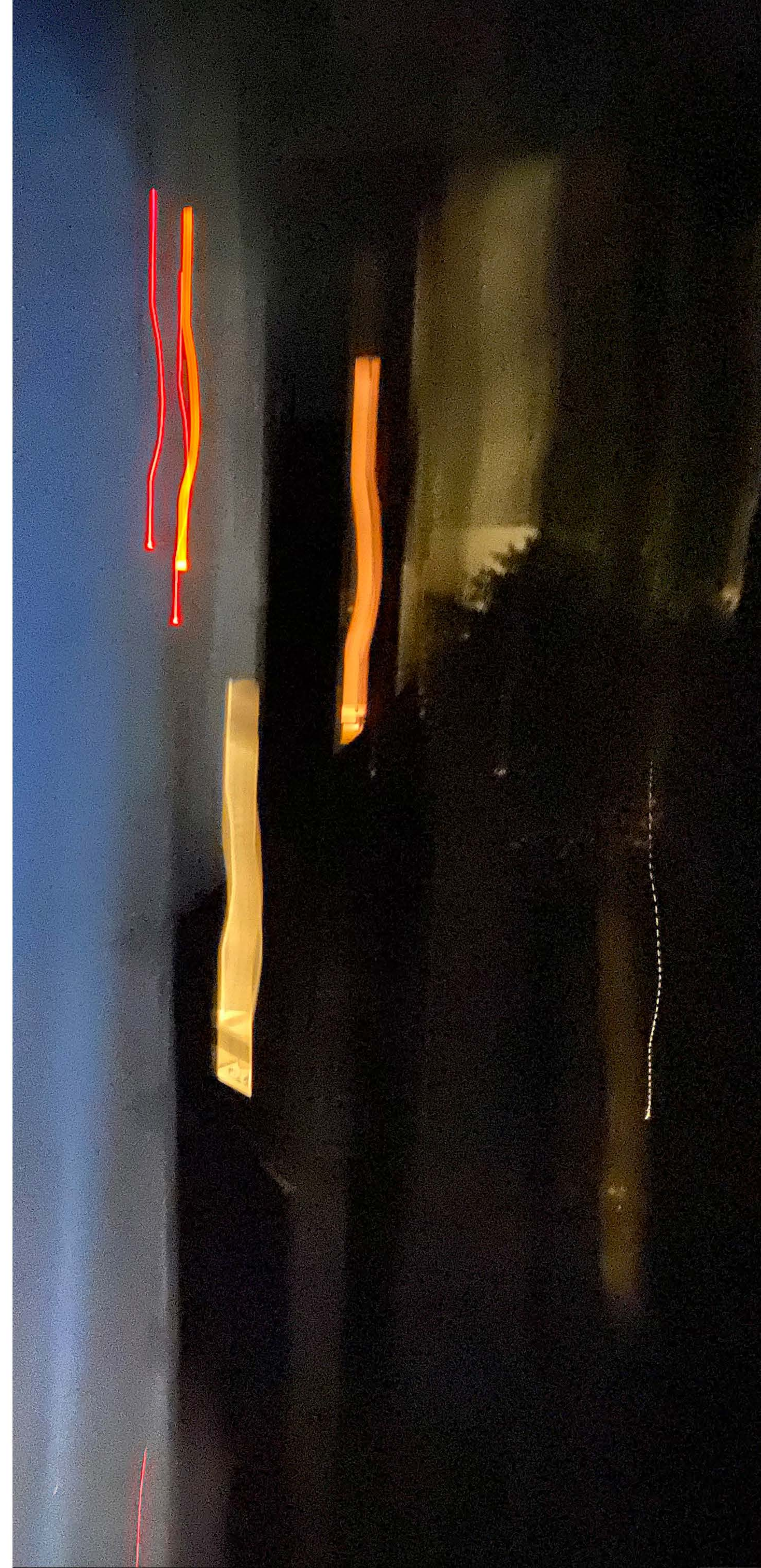




notes on kiefer

frankfurt  
heidelberg  
mannheim  
heidelberg  
freiburg im breisgau  
todtnau  
konstanz  
schweiz  
konstanz  
münchen  
tegernsee  
schliersee  
münchen  
berlin

*hegelsh*





29/07/21  
Frankfurt  
8:23 AM

## THE LIGHTNING GUIDES EVERYTHING

is all age here entangled with the nazis? all history and memory. you cannot see an old person without thinking: how was it all possible? you cannot see age itself without the subtle impossibility of thinking that everything as it changes remains in the changing.

how can it not be on your mind constantly? the pit is right next to us.

the lightning guides everything. like tietjens' cedar, upon which hangs all the pagan collections: everything that is hung up is somehow hung up on a word. on a memory. a tangled word.

## THE TOPOS

Heidelberg  
10:36 AM

kiefer's entire topos is somehow an attempt to resolve this kind of layering over. — resolve it back to its possibility. this did happen. or, it didn't happen historically, not as a fact; it is a certain happening that kiefer calls up.

4:06 PM

## THE MEANING BEHIND EVERYTHING

is the event not, after a certain point, our having been inside a world? it makes manifest possibility. we intercede upon this possibility after, but only on condition that we are already within the new world



that allows such a thing to occur. the event looks forward for us.

kiefer's art is somehow our falling into a possibility which reveals the extent to which we are in a place. what is called up is kunst? art itself. not as a nomination. — the name here names nothing. inside his paintings one finds the meaning behind everything. what, after all, does it mean to use lead as a substance? the so-called passing-into, the

making a light out of their lives.

the kranke kunst he makes, which is everything from the fact that his art changes after it is made and the fact that within the canvas itself the change is happening, is a substance which is part of its naming. isn't the naming, after a certain point, the word as a word. here inside my reference is the name of something. — something which has a name. is a name part of the thing? the naming-into; or, in kiefer's case, the silent measure of everything is the fact that it is already happening whether we ever realize it.

#### THE SILENT MEASURE OF EVERYTHING

what we call the meaning of the world is the entanglement of the already of substance with the language which describes it. tietjens' tree is not another word; it is the wording itself which entangles the world with its own describability. kranke kunst. the canvas is sick with its own describability.

#### CAN WE ALIGN?

there is a calling up, finally. the thing I call up is part of the calling up.



30/07/21  
11:42 AM

the moon was formidable last night.

9:47 PM

#### IMPACTS OF THE REAL

his entanglements are strings. of knowledge, or musical notations. it is still in a world, as Badiou allows us to think. mathematical strings, more specifically, where strings are these kind of immanent connections. these kinds of runes or impacts of the real which install directly the grammar of silence, of the encounter. when kiefer writes his notes from scotland, what do we see if not him writing, not what he's seeing, but writing what he's seeing. after a certain point, it's pure wittgenstein. writing what he's seeing. not only writing what he sees, but the seeing becoming part of the writing. — to the extent that rather than reducing writing to a bodily process, we raise the thing towards its conditions of describability.

31/07/21  
12:47 AM

the grass is there. the meadows.

1/08/21  
3:12 AM

#### THERE ARE BEETLES ON THE WAY TO KÖNIGSTUHL

language must share conditions with what it speaks. kiefer moves from one place to another without assuming that language doesn't exist. it doesn't exist as language. the language is already there without falling back into anything that we would call



language. grammar, too, after a certain point is a guess. it is a guess we give precisely to those conditions which we call language.

isn't this wittgenstein's beetle? we all have a box in which is held our beetle. we, too, don't know our beetle. we too have to look at our box and speak of our beetle.

there are beetles on the way to königstuhl.

and language, too, is our beetle. w.'s whole point is that you enter into language able to use it, but not able to say in what that, or the extent to which, use exists. any use of language is therefore a use of language which already involves some part of us not needing to understand. what others have called connections, and which w., on occasion, calls the background of meaning, too easily lose the sense in which the use of language is something whose conditions for working are that some part of how the language works eludes the speaker. w.'s point was to go one step further and say: what then do we call the meanings of the world? if language is the container of meaningful things, how do these meaningful things — our beetles, our minds, our games — change in view of the fact that they have never worked in quite the way we have imagined. and this is what makes language possible: the fact that from this point when I use beetle I am not just referring to a beetle, but also to that entire topos, which is not something we just refer to, but something in which we exist and out of which language emerges as that in which it makes sense to say beetle. it makes sense because language itself is not the possibility of fixing a distinction, but the open possibility of a distinction in the first place. it is the mark of our being in a place, not that which marks it out, except insofar as marking out is the place in its emergence.



I say beetle and something happens; no part of the meaning of that involves me knowing what I have done, because the saying itself is the part of the meaning.

12:32 PM

#### ALL LANGUAGE IS POSSIBLE

language begins when we see that it only works from within. it works as that which I can only begin to use once I am somewhere. if language only makes sense there, it is because only certain things are possible there. and language doesn't begin when I have a sense and this sense says something about the world, but when to say anything gains sense precisely because I am somewhere. language is itself this trace, except that w. entangles it as the bearer of meanings with the fact that our language points through the world. it is itself also already meaningful, so much so that everything we say has a radical meaning, without any sense or grammar correspondent, to the extent that the difficulty is finding in what world the language that I use has sense. all language is possible. this is the basis of w.'s philosophische untersuchungen.

we have to be within something to use it.

2:50 PM

#### IT IS CAUGHT UP IN THE SPEAKING

maybe this is why knausgaard is so afraid that when you say something, it becomes real. you cannot speak but that you say something, and the meaning of what you say is not a beetle, but that to say a beetle does something. it doesn't do something because words are things and things affect other things. this is to miss w.'s point: *there are no more*



words. the word beetle is no more caught up in the fact that we don't know what it means to say this than the fact itself that saying things is somehow part of that meaning.

do we believe that saying things does something? yes.— but, not in ayer's sense. we mean that if you do not say it in what respect is the meaning possible at all. the word is not already possible — that is, without language. the meaning itself is not already there. this is w.'s point that is never understood: it is not that, from this point, we have only then to look at all the things we are doing as we speak, but that the meaning of what we would say, as it were, goes back into the world. what we say is what we say, not because we actually speak it, but because the saying itself cannot not itself accompany the meaning about which it speaks. it gets caught up, as itself, in that which it itself speaks. it speaks from under its own foundations.

we speak without knowing what we say because to speak itself not only accomplishes something in the calling up. the meaning itself of what we say is not given to us because it already has meaning, but because language itself is another meaning in the world. not knowing the extent of what I say because the meaning is part of the place, like kiefer's meadows, and because my language itself expresses that I do not know what I say. it is the expression in which what we say communicates with meanings without any prior formulation. — without grammar. we have to accept that we express the meanings of the world without fully realizing them and without being able to say what the secret order is behind our language. we have only its radical sensitivity to the touch of the world. itself as a part of the world, but that which we call the meanings of the world which language is supposed to arrange, language itself is caught up in. it has no secret order but this



*touch.*

w.'s point is that this is the moment when the possibility to describe begins. all the texture of language arises because language itself is subject to that of which it speaks, even though it is itself nothing. it is caught up in the speaking.

5:29 PM

#### KIEFER'S MEADOWS

kiefer's meadows are strange. they are that in my language I call up exactly as they are. the connectives of my language hold together a meadow. in kiefer, this is his grammar: silent meaning. you are already that which you are. you have eaten the horizon of your silence.

lead. there is no sense of identity, so that all things come as though from nowhere. what it is in the canvas, or as the canvas, is that which it is, so that kiefer's paintings change and develop and at the same time are. the grammar is that the lead is there regardless of whether we notice it. it means regardless of whether we notice it. but, can we call up the lead? is it enough for our language to say it and nothing else? the very grammar which we expect to be already there with our language is already there with lead. we give the word with that silence. isn't that the beginning of grammar?

10:33 PM

this is what lead is already giving us. silence. the meadows in Scotland are similar. I go to them to gain that silence and my language somehow also expects that silence. when kiefer writes words directly onto his canvas we must not imagine that they refer to anything.



we must expect that to say a name is to somehow call up the meaning. how the lead beneath my pillow grounds me, so too do the names in kiefer's canvases mean at the same time as they are silent. — at the same time as they are just a word.

2/8/21  
12:46 PM

kiefer writes names, but also phrases:

varus; die Kunst geht knapp nicht unter; horror vacui; der gestirnte Himmel über uns, das moralische Gesetz in mir; Brunhilde schläft; yggdrasil.

they are written directly onto the canvas. like the whole of kiefer, these things exist. they exist in his paintings. to say them means that the saying is also part of them, and that in his paintings themselves these things mean. the silence of their grammar is part of what makes it possible to: say them. -- or write them. their meaning involves the silence and it involves the possibility of their being called up.

#### THE SILENT HAPPENING OF EVERYTHING

the layering and texture of kiefer's paintings must arise between this friction. the silent grammar and the calling up. or, at least, the fact that saying is not a reference, but that the things themselves already have the conditions of being called up within them. the grammar which employs them is itself more of that silence, which is already the condition of being called up. in turn, the word itself of the calling up is only possible because the calling up must include the grammar of the silence. the silent happening of everything.

the skies are grey



and rather than kiefer looking for something that will explain any of this, he includes the explanation in the painting. the just a word is the sense in which the explanation somehow has to include the fact that what occurs in reality says nothing about itself. the saying is a feature of the thing insofar as it doesn't pertain to any description of the thing. it doesn't describe it, so it must do something else.

3/8/21

10:08 AM

### THERE IS SOMETHING IN THE READING

I go into the world to find that silence. pure wittgenstein. silence is in the meadows. isn't this what w. tries to find in the tractatus when he looks for logische bildern. it is as though he goes into the world and expects to find, literally, logical pictures. in the meadows, there is a rune, or a cut. -- only, we call it silence; and what is a word: silence.

we expect, then, that what kiefer includes in his paintings is that description which we would offer to them, at last integrated into them as that which marks them out, not only as thoughtthings, but as thinkable at all, and, in offering to them the complete conditions of their own internalized thinkability, point them towards reality completely openly, having exceeded reality's own completeness in taking on their own describability as an immanent feature of what they are.

we describe things by reading them; we read that which is literally written on them. the rune is in the meadows. *there is something in the reading.*

11:03 AM

we are on the way to kiefer. is everyone here really



to think on kiefer?

12:09 PM

is a lily a lily in kiefer? is that directness not gone? so much so that what we have is lily. he puts them in the canvas, or a sunflower or a fern. all because these things are exactly their silence.

I'm waiting for what to do with my life. and in waiting, why shouldn't kiefer's exhibitions stand through or within them? my being there is enough that in that silence sits the lilies and standing there is enough to qualify me in that. it is not transformation; it is the silence in which I am already included.

at Saturnzeit, one looks at summer. at its beginning, looking at the ground, where even the midgard snake glides through. that is summer, maybe dried up. the ferns, in any case, are all that we have ever meant by summer.

the white lettering is there to read.

12:25 AM

the painting is heavy. it must be actually heavy. otherwise it has no meaning. everything must be that which it is. then, silence. this almost quantum place.

4/8/21

9:16 AM

when reading is an immanent feature of the place. is that infinity? maybe there's a gap in kiefer; his thinking is the possibility of saying that whatever I give you you take. if it is lightning, you burn. — in



that infinity of burning-within, where the interior and exterior break down. like in krule's a slide in (new drugs); you take it on. you are the burning, your open conditions render all the possibility of connexions. the change within you is that sliding in. to think in infinity is to think infinitely. everything that you already are is entangled, not with possibility, but with the underlying groundlessness of whatever it already was. and that groundlessness you go out and you find in the places of the world. you find that open air and the rune, sign word of the burn of lightningstruck, and the crall –

can we align?

to find that silence is itself there. stood before a kiefer, passed between the quantum place, as heaviness itself weighs upon you, all that is material is itself as material transformed. the grammar of that heaviness, of kiefer's blei, is that to that change was I already submitted and so I was always already different.







## omaggio a Gurselt

he took long exposure photographs on train rides from Germany to Poland. it is easy to imagine what they represent, harder to say what they mean. it is difficult to capture. it surges, falls, snow, a sound, the front, the right. we come so close to nothing in these moments, nothing so close itself to all that's made.

can we forget the meaning of life? when it comes so close to being nothing in itself, we shall not be ashamed to forget it, nor counter it with confessions we had felt it. we can only ask that every single part of the world uphold it, so that no matter where we look, it is there. if he asks us a question, it is not just do we move on, but how. when

we must live, we must love

ask how. because the answer is already given. you have been living it all along. the second is the answer to the first.



cope quietly



for as long as I stayed with my brother, I stalled for day to turn to night, whereupon we might cook, drink, and watch a film. Several hours after speaking with miriam, Ezra and I watched tarkovsky's solaris and, commensurate with these hours of cinematic meditations on eternity and repetition, our minds finally landed upon the notion of aging. when he was little, Ezra would lie awake at night petrified at the thought of death. but when my brother and I spoke, we did not touch on death, we spoke of aging. aging, as far as I am concerned is more interesting, eternal.

for a number of reasons, many of them rather straightforward, the memory of our maternal grandparents dominates my brother's and my own feelings towards ~~aging~~ growing older. indelible fragments of my youth were spent in the backseat of my mother's van as my family drove two hours north to my grandmother in Chicago. she lived in a large apartment which towered over the loop, providing a pristine vantage over lake michigan.



mythic recollection. between countless pieces of old wooden furnishings, an entire wall of my grandfather's books hid itself away in a central room while a collection of american indian artworks and objects sat for all to see in a large space in the middle of her home (my oldest brother, lev, once made a series of screen prints of one such mask).

my grandmother, Alice, was a lover of dachshunds and, having raised two children who work as musicians, it is only right that she gave her dogs names like pomine and rosina. these loud, unruly animals governed the apartment, often ruining the most prized objects my grandparents' wide collection of culture. Alice struggled with depression, something which runs in our family tree. of course, I only remember her with love, but the intermixing of love and anger, love and long bouts of sadness. these are strange and lasting associations for a child to witness.

the morning I learned she had died, my family and I were returning home from a trip ~~and~~ in the Carolinas during which my father took my brothers and I on a fishing expedition far into the ocean (the combination of dying fish and choppy water convinced me to take dramamine and, when I rose from my slumber, my father was supposedly wrestling with a small shark on



the other side of his fishing line and I could not see land in any direction (I have since been terrified at the thought of open water). Ten, twenty hour drives were quite common in my youth. We had planned to return home to Indiana over the course of two days. Just a few hours from our destination, we marked the halfway point of our journey by spending a night in a former shaker village in Kentucky where goats roam freely outside of our room. In the morning, my parents told us Alice had died. Minutes later, cradled shoulder to shoulder with my siblings in the back seat, I asked Lev to let me read his collection of Kafka short stories which he had brought with him. It was my first time trying to read Kafka; I must have been fourteen. The simple but pretty cover left more of an impression on me than the literature, which I didn't procure much wisdom from at the time.

"It was disturbing to see grandma get older. She hallucinated. Do you remember, you might have been too young to remember," Ezra spoke slowly as I remained prone on a floor-bound futon, he on the sofa some two feet above, "when Mom had each of us," another pause, "when we all had our final moment with grandma?" I did not, I was too young. "I remember that her questions were so penetrating. She asked what I wanted to be and



I told her a filmmaker. but when she asked more about it, it felt like I wasn't enough. I was alone with her and her nurse. when I was leaving the room, she said to the nurse, "I don't want to alarm Ezra, but who is that tall man standing behind him? could you please tell him to leave?" I had to assume this was Ezra's last moment with my grandmother.

my eyes began to water, something which has always happened when I hear of supernatural encounters. my mother took the chess board from my deceased grandparents' home and, nearly three years ago, I once saw a pawn move on its own accord, or so I tell myself. my eyes watered then, too.

lev, the eldest child among all of our cousins, once had a dream in which our grandfather, martin, and alicia appeared to him, the latter devoid of facial features. both were surrounded by extended family, some of whom had not been born by the time of martin's death. when lev called to tell my mother the following day, she revealed that it had been alicia's yahrzeit, the anniversary of her death. (a classmate of mine had died on the same date only three years after my grandmother's passing. though we were



died on the same date only three years after my grandmother's passing. though we were not close, I had known him for most of my life. (It was a small town.)

I was not old enough to retain many memories when Martin died. My family tells me that he had lived with dementia for a long time. Martin was close with my namesake, his grandfather, because Elias, a pharmacist, stored drugs in his own bathtub. Martin washed him in his parents' small tub once a week. He often rode on Elias' shoulders. If my mother can be trusted, my namesake would often point to a bench near his home and tell him that "the great man sat there," referring, of course, to none other than Leon Trotsky.

My parents recently converted a number of home videos from VHS into some slightly less arcane format. One recording documents my naming ceremony, as my brothers and cousins wreak hell upon the living room of my childhood home, a sweet, drowsy rabbi who died not long afterwards, congratulates my parents and family on my behalf. When my mother held my pudgy body to a smiling, confused Martin, my infant-self laughed and clung <sup>to</sup> his blue-and-white polo. He and Alice sat on chairs which still reside in that living room. Having no memory of Martin through my own eyes, the spectacle was rather dis-

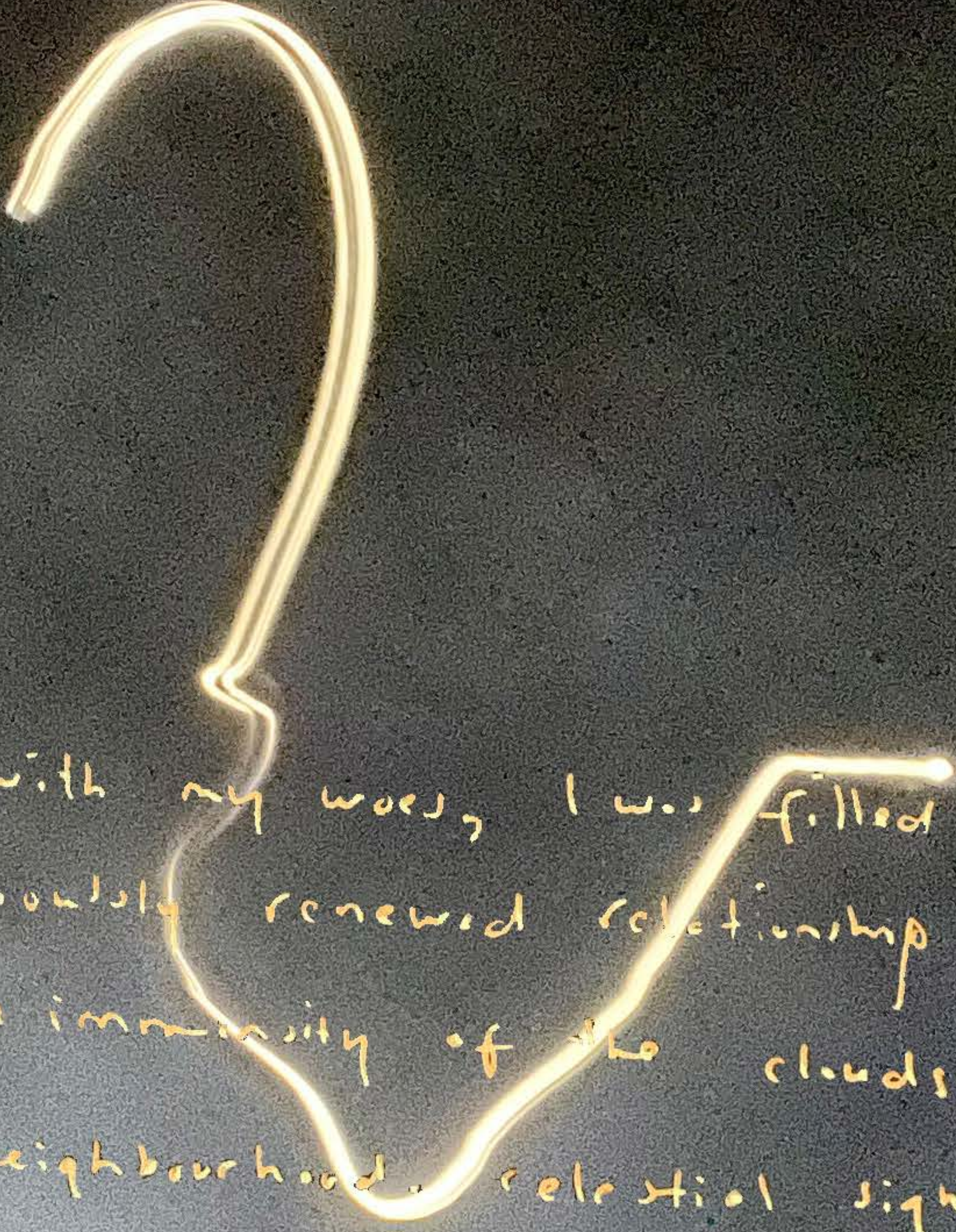
Orientaling.



"he might not know what's going on, but he clearly likes having all these kids around," Lev said.  
I thought this was a wise observation.

As I lay in Ezra's futon which I rolled up each morning and set out each night, I returned to these flashing scenes which had once laid dormant. "I worry about mom and dad aging more than I worry about my own aging. That'll sort itself out. Some of the sure things in life I'm more at peace with than others." Ezra and I looked at one another but did not speak.





Unmistakably intermingled with my woes, I was filled with the vigor of possibility which must accompany any seriously renewed relationship with some one sensing, and, walking home, I was struck by the immensity of the clouds which meekly peered and towered above the roofs of the neighbourhood. Celestial sights, ablaze with traces of man, pale and jaundiced reflections of the eastward city neutralized and made comprehensible by the watery beyond, a prepubescent green meeting my gaze. More often, our sky assumes wickedly coloured purples, particularly in winter-time, not to mention the still louder hues I observed as California fires imprinted themselves upon the psyche of its distant, Atlantic-bound cousin only a few months ago.





Dear Elias,

have you heard of edmund  
de waal?



## I

Dear Elias,

Who is De Waall? His work is pottery, ceramic, but he calls them poems — giddily. The space of his pottery is extended in his studio. If his pottery is a poem, his studio is a landscape. A brush with layers of accumulated time, material, and intention. Is this why studios are white? Things can soak, light lingers. Like a cup of slowly steeping tea, rising to the brim as it is slowly drunk and then refilled: this is the artist — the maker's — space.

I can recall walking into an atelier in Montmartre, part of a quiet museum which had preserved the artist's space. The hills of Montmartre, now filled with houses, dropped pleasantly into a simple, bucolic hillview. I could have sworn these hills belonged untouched to some part of the original Frankish or Gaulic land of a thousand years ago; or, at least, what now remained a pleasant field. Alone, impossibly undisturbed, the atelier was somewhat hidden on the far corner of the second floor. Inside there were not white walls, but white light.

## II

What do we preserve in such spaces? They are good places to think — and to do nothing. They seat a person inside all the slowly forming meanings of the different objects placed there. It is like being inside thought itself, or inside a landscape which speaks, which whispers things in the silence. Stay there long enough and wouldn't you also become an object? Your unfinishedness would wear away as new causes overtook you, and an artist would enter, put you at the front of his desk, now a watchthing of the artist's spacetime.

In that atelier light was a hand reaching through a landscape. The house itself could be vacated and destroyed, Paris burned, the chiselling of time reveal the drift of the space into its devastation, and — yet — it would still catch that light. Through a blown-out roof, shattered glass, the burned wound of its fringes, the cliff-hand of the enlightened space. Like in the warworks of Ivan's Childhood, fragility of purpose demands a space, and there is no more fragile purpose than the movement of memory. Its salient feature is its dreaminess, its readiness. It is as though it is already so submerged in change that devastation suits it. War passes through, but the studio remains.

Is the truest feature of the landscape that it remains? A potter lay here. A gleaner. The tracings, maybe. A gleaner's footprints, a potter's sink. Like the grass that grows in the blood of Ypres, that blood the remainness of Ypres. The space that lives on, the moving-on itself of conflict. The silent transformation of our souls in the walkway of history. Are we a landscape, as we are untimely poems, as we are books in black bookshelves bound of paper made with ash?

## III

I have never seen De Waal's studio, but I don't feel I need to. It looks exactly like I expect it will. What I have seen of it, perhaps surprisingly, is how much it is a collection of almost broken objects. Some objects are even formalizations of this brokenness, like Camondo's golden seals multiplied to stave off misremembrance, or the homaggic mending of broken ceramic plates with gold in-lining. The failure to amend brings the mending. We see the charged netsuke from the Ephrussi collection, his grandmother's Rilke collection, and though he has let the eyes of the world in, I feel, always suddenly, like an invader. It is almost as though I confirm their fragility. I say, "Yes, I recognize them," and the world becomes infinitely smaller. How can two realities touch each other? How can I cross over details that feel like holy words in my mouth and that are so utterly domestic to De Waal? Like when Alexander sees the living Yahweh in Bergman's *Fanny and Alexander*: even though I see you, am I really meant to, am I allowed to? Some acts are irreducibly transgressive.

Is this what De Waal does in *Hare with Amber Eyes*? Transgress? It is his own memories and his family's. Memory is so dense, so mirror-like, we shouldn't always pass through. Like the strange, obscene God of the old testament: hold me in view, but do not look at me. This is the eternal demand of the other. The other of my other is my friend. The self-biting memoirist: snakelike, grassbound, turns the earth beneath him as he moves. Nothing stays the same but the passing over.

All that remains when we are gone is the ground. The artist's studio. Will we outlast our own devastation? Transgression, brokenness, snakes: the studio is a house of charms. In thought alone, the studio is the other of my other. The place we go to bury ourselves, waking up several times in the middle of the night, passing over, in the ground which





shifts beneath our feet. We are the vanquished site.

#### IV

Dear Elias,

There is another question on my mind: language. As Celan's figurations, pronouns, also lying in the grass, sit like slivered pages of De Waal's black bookshelf, I wonder what else is a poem. The sun? Lead? Language that is called up when I speak. Maybe my words are a forest or when my words say forest, I draw to me those things, conditions behind the otherwise impenetrable grammar of my thought. A bundle of asparagus lay tied by string — and people really expect the meaning of the world to be elsewhere?

The elsewhere sits underneath the land. Celan had no elsewhere, and his own devastation becomes the space. It nourished the unnourishable. When Knausgaard describes his poem in *Min Kamp* 6, the merest breath has vanished except for language. Celan himself spoke of this paradox, of the German language etching itself further, surviving, through him, of everything passing through language. Like how Darwish describes the moon in *Your Dream is of Lilac*. All nourishment is already a dream. You cannot eat words, but that you can eat their possibilities, their conditions. Their fragmented conditions roaming to remind you of the topos of bare life.

#### V

Arendt writes that human rights are meaningless after Auschwitz, or, at least, their eternal condition. But, she believes we were already something, as though our preservation has not always been a dependence on things. *Recht* is an encounter with our possible selves we can barely sustain. It is an encountering that happens as much in Auschwitz as anywhere. Heidegger was never more wrong than when he denied the Jews the right to political subjectivity in the concentration camps. An evaporated event. Not Shoah, but sea foam. But, even the absolute dwells in sea foam. What else does Celan hold onto if not the calling up of words? What else are we but what we can imagine? At that precise moment, I become that last word between myself and my destruction. That barness, that lead, like Melrose's gecko, into which he transposes his mind as he is raped by his own father -- the devastatory act of his childhood.

Perhaps, this is the transgression De Waal reenacts, takes up as transgression, as he enters these

utterly private moments and holds in them the silence of their own transgressive survival. The irreducibly transgressive act of speaking one's bareness, one's deathliness — the shadowbreath of Malick's curtain — into existence.

Yes, indeed, where are our rights after Auschwitz after such an act? After such an act of imagination, where Celan and Melrose and even De Waal, in his way, take their destruction as their first leap into an act of creation. An act which cannot be seen directly, but which is cut across. A cut into the real of our experience.

Yes, we can barely cope.


#### VI

Dear Elias,

When we look at De Waal the writer, we find the potter who poets. The potter who cannot avoid documenting, or who feels overwhelmed with documenting, of poets, unfinished poems, of ideas, who serenely cuts through the noise of his studio. The word transfixes something that is lost in the process of pottering, and writing is the outlet almost missed. Leftover transformations are continued. The sublime weight of something unutterable is said as nothing. To preserve the internal negativity of things. The utterance, the reclothing, of language is the returning things to their place like the seamless librarian or ceramicist who carefully places back the cup, the book, into the dark of the shelf. Back into the negative.

In a conversation with Tom Stoppard, in his sensitivity, De Waal spoke about how writing *Hare with Amber Eyes* was not really cathartic, but had, in fact, only complicated things. The sense at book's end, as at conversation's end, is that things, perhaps, cannot be put back so neatly. The obscenity of Austria's refusal of reparations rings slowly in the failed recovery of Jewish lives in Vienna. But, a failed return is better than a coverup, a conversion. Is there not something more true in Austria's refusal in that it reveals all the more the state of what is impossible to put back, so that this impossible-to-put-back becomes a feature of our reality and we no longer feel so much at a loss for words, not so much epistemically deprived as silently understanding.

What has been taken out, abandoned, enbrinked, cannot void itself of its altered selfhood. Shakespeare's love is nothing but the taking on of alteration itself, which voiding the space between the





course and the lover intermingles them. The space which defines touch, which falls-through itself in touching touch with touch, in the ground drinking of the sky and rules of our physical composure changing. Quantum. As he writes, perhaps to preserve, to place back mystery itself, he otherwise sublimely transgresses. He steps over, and into, crosses a limit, überschreitet, remains in the remaining. Un-remained. He is the being of the always already. His words fit like sheets of linen enclosing a pot, or the slim protection of his own fatefulness. The potter writing, telling, filling his world with uses, proceeding from the act. His words are the shelving, the covers, the space between him and the grass he binds. They are bookshelves sustaining acts of creativity whose weight alters their own measuring, falls through the floor, alters the planck.

## VII

Dear Elias,

The act of imagination: is this not Adorno's question? The safety of that atelier was undeniable. I'm sure De Waal's studio has a similar sense of comfort. Is this comfort barbaric? In it, we are consigned to feats of imagination. The desperateness of this desire is softened in the bourgeois comfort of the studio. The touching, rising light, close to divination, to something unconcealing: pleasure here means what? Does it mean sensibility or pain? Is the act possible without it? Edward St. Aubyn has fiction be his linen-line, his sheath and sheet. All the control in his writing is owed to that sense that he is not writing about himself — temporarily. Patrick is not really him. But, he is. Or, the cover of fiction, the subtlety of that transgression, is what protects him: its pleasure makes it possible. After all, does the opposite of Freud's insight not hold, where having learned to entangle pleasure with pain to make it bearable, to make it acceptable, we entangle pain with pleasure to make it livable, imaginable? As Patrick recovers, doesn't Edward, too? As Patrick meets that redemption which St. Aubyn himself still yearns for, Edward's own life becomes the strange imaginarium, not of self-betterment, but of self-discovery. What makes you who are you?

But, will we also cease to speak of self-discovery? Will we cease to speak on redemption simply because of the utterness with which it confines our souls? We should fill our mouths with straw and hay and earth, maybe then maybe we can handle the alchemy of our changes, of our transformations. Landscapes.

Can we imagine ourselves being burnt, being watered? The grass which passes through the stomach of a cow, beneath the belly of the snake, we are. — and god is a shout in the street.

The betterment which we imagine, the pleasure attached to the impossible acts of return, perhaps it is pleasure which protects us. The pleasure of impossible things. Everything we do has an obscenity, a critique. Can we avoid this? The subtlety, the touch, the beauty — the aesthetic of our return. The landscape: the dark of burned bridges, soot fields, ashen hair. If we cannot imagine here, what is our purpose? If I begin here, I build sculptures made of exposing iron, paintings of straw and lead. I make black bookshelves. De Waal makes black bookshelves — his poems. They are fired ceramics. They are adamite clay, fired in a kiln. In the grasses lay, his figures of being. His fugue. Pure utterance. Would Celan say the same? My poems. The space of the darkened shelf is Celan's *tanzen* and his pale, figurative pronouns. Knausgaard's missing you. If anything, we cannot imagine this act. We cannot imagine how much it indicts us. We are afraid to talk about imagination, even pleasure, in Auschwitz. But this obscenity might be irreducibly obscene. In our studios, our memoirs, the failing, rise up. Not pleasure even, but its intimation. The resolution in nothing. Not Anschluss, but *entschluss*. Resolve. These fragments of ceiling will make a sculpture. The sunlight will dry our hands. How can my hands be warmed with the plight of my soul? Can I briefly warm my hands beneath the sunlight in winter?

## VIII

Dear Elias,

In Joanna Hogg's *Archipelago*, we see Edmund. Taking a late gap year. His resentful sister goads him. He has a fantasy of what he will do in Africa. We are Edmund. All that is nomadic about us, all that is unfinished, rising in the soft porcelain of our teacup. Its delicate warmth. Let us imagine it all begins here. In this resolve. What is beautiful allows us to endure. Otherwise, we are the plunders, the guards, the hostiles, the burglars in the night. Stealing silver cutlery, holding the frail-fragile book of poems of his grandmother's, holding his name, Moshe. My own utterances here are almost as a violation — my naming names. Guards of memory that are not ours. Voyeurs, watchers — of the pale



horse passing. Thieves of time and intention, belonging and becoming. The guardhouse of our soul: another's. I have two masters: an Englishman and an Italian. Afraid of the beauty we struggle to collect. If we are truly bound them. Then, dredge up the entire. Arrange them in their vast brokenness. Or are we afraid to see what we have done? The hand which reaches, the slipping cup; these fragments are not misremembered. They are history. Collect them, like the fragments of the kabbalic universe. Into the artist's studio, go. Lit in weak, apologetic light.

## IX

Dear Elias,

Is this how De Waal builds a studio? From fragments. Devastation is the true place of thinking. A poem is the leaping fragment. The space that remains to truth. The fatefulness of creation, lingering in the boughs of spring trees. The light which wanders like a pale figurine, singing Schonberg's *Erwartung* — expectation. Or, his *guerre lieder*. Waxing in the moonlit path of the unapologetic forest. It's growing. This is how you make a landscape. Something happens that cannot be put back, while the failure to be put back is realized to have already been accomplished. The trees had already exchanged places, your gaze catches time already moving. Things stir.

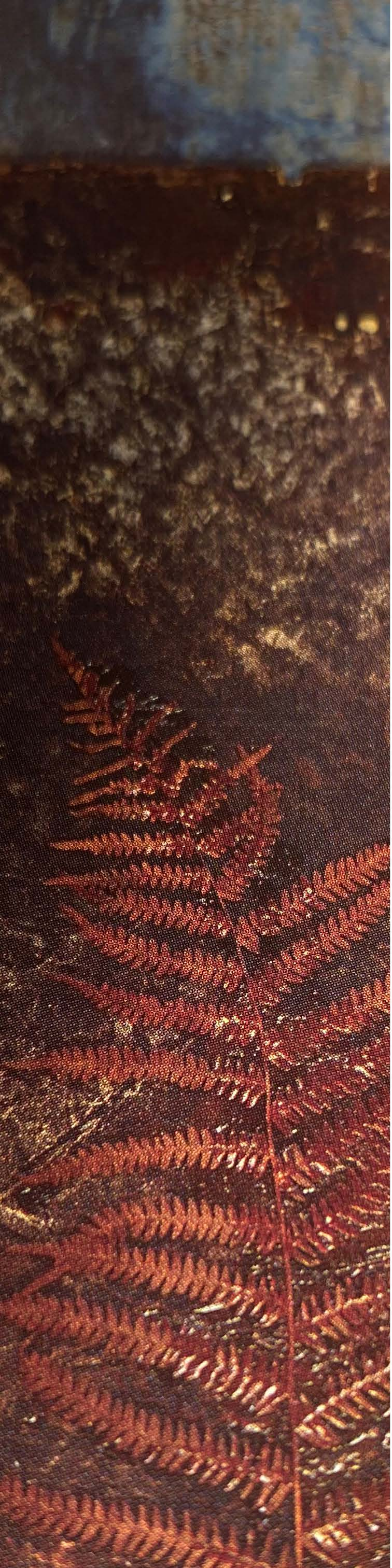
Look at the Viennese and their things. Look at Fanny and Alexander and Isak Jacobi's house. His house of impossible theatre. Of so many effortlessly living things. Look at Wittgenstein's suicidal brothers; this is the stricture of things. Tell me whether, when you pick up Freud's figurines in the Freud Museum, you don't feel your own desire?

When Adorno posits the irremediable gap between subject and object, never to be reconciled again, he is a futurist. A fascist. He says the opposite of what he seems to say: one day the Germans had it right. Long ago, Hegel and Schelling, Kant and Jacobi. The apparent split between ourselves and the world, the failure of our adequations; but, adequation is the subject of a judgement, of a generality generalized. These impossible things suffer the generality of experience only in exceeding the space of their own limited capacity to define the proof of the future being. They are general in the manner of Christ. Must we not imagine that some fragmentation of our species arises as the rules of existence change. Adorno's phrase is but a homonym for failed transformation. Condemned

to our limits, the shifting gaze from subject to object ceases to be a phenomenon of life. It is the return that fails to see the returnness of others. Adequation becomes an *ur-teil*, a prejudice; part of your soul uttered too early. Freud's statues become forlorn, and your hands no longer hold in them desire. Sailors suits of young Viennese boys become distant apertures of the once wholesome attitude of sexual hierarchy, but fail to awaken the mystery of sexuality disclosed by such enclosures. The form of it all.

They are already mysterious. In that way, could you handle then the redoublement of that mystery, where fragmentation itself points to the unutterable approach of the former owner to draw it into their own understanding. Impossibility becomes a feature of the object itself. In its brokenness, the thing resembles the essential character of its mystery. It takes on its own transformability as something which unites it as a *timething* and the radical fact that it is a transformation-in-progress. It is the lighthouse of its own devastation. The gilded mending we follow like Theseus; it is the line of its enchanting rule, its ground of being, its *raison d'être*. It cuts into the real; its very thingness. Detectable in its power on our attention. These things are the keepers of themselves. We are the meek and late arrivals. The mystery they keep is that rule, that spacious figuration itself, not just a grip on our consciousness, but a consciousness itself, related to us. We bear it in silence, because we cannot overtake its own existence. It is like in McCarthy's *The Road*: the fire that is passed, like breath, from person to person. The fire is inside them. The fragmented object exposes its own transformativeness. It is itself, not a transformed object, but transformation itself. Mysterious existence itself, which only a crack can remind us of. Yes, here is the universe in its making. To arrange broken things is to arrange the fact of this moving frame, of the unutterable dimension of the object as reality itself. Adequation is its own self-proof. Its own gap serves, like all analysis, the end of proving the unfixed logos, the unfinished idea itself of the universe, bound up in objects that are stages in a passing transformation. Their loss is a loss. A loss of an idea, of that power which neither us nor the Viennese nor the Egyptians can keep closer guard on, down to the merit of that transformation. And it is not the thing transformed, but that it is its secret; it is something, whose existence we cannot adequate but in our intimate brushings with it. We are our adequation. The





passing flame is the passing-through of objects, with its cut; the cut that reveals the object's secret truce, its silent existence as the bearer of its own meaningfulness. What began as loss has become part of the object itself. An impossible meaning which we can only take into our lives — in silence. The cut is a call of language, signifying the undamageable silence we take up. When I break it, I should think: that is the mystery: right there. The mystery of any forefather or foremother. Their own hope to understand, that they could only pass on in the pure mystery of the thing. In Dinggedichte.

X

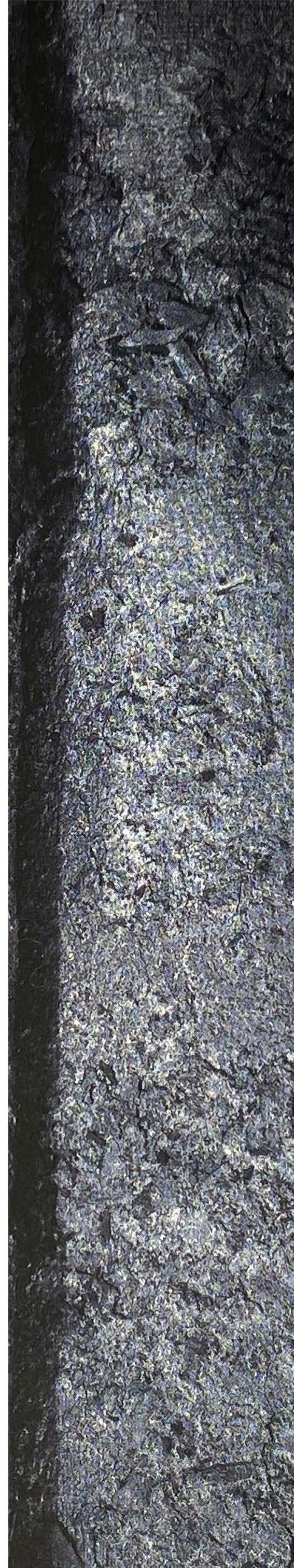
In a conversation with Tom Stoppard, De Waal discusses Virgil's line: *lacrimae rerum*. The tears of things. Read so many ways. We may imagine the trees cry as we pass, or that Aeneas returns to find his boundedness to fate, history, and life. Stoppard, himself, says:

There was a point where I kind of acceded to a friend's request to dig into my family past...at one point, I ended up in a London suburb talking to what I would call an elderly lady, but her mother was still alive, and her mother had been the wife of the boss at the hospital in Zlín where my father worked as a doctor, back in Czechoslovakia. And the daughter, who must have been in her late sixties, seventies, something, she told me how when she was a little girl she put her hand through a glass pane and cut herself deeply enough to need a doctor to sew it up and she asked for my father, whose name was Eugen Sträussler, spelt Strauss like the composer with l-e-r on the end...And Doctor Sträussler came and he sewed up her cut, and then she suddenly went, "Here you are," — am I on the screen? — I don't know. She showed it to me, on her hand. And because my father and I were separated by the war in Singapore when I was four years old, I didn't actually have anything of his. Our stuff went to the bottom of the sea on our way to India...I had nothing. And suddenly I had the scar. And as you imply just now, I used that in a slightly different form in my play. Hugely — What can I say I'm a playwright? — dramatically effective. You remember Graham Greene's reference to a writer having a sliver of ice. That sliver of ice is always there when something potent makes me think I must use that.

De waal: And you do, and it's absolutely — it's an extraordinary moment in the play. It's the bodily moment when Leo, the English boy, is taken back, you know, through the war, through all that cataclysm, to that apartment, and having his hand stitched up. And it is absolutely, it is *lacrimae rerum*...That's the thing isn't, it is the sliver of ice, it has to be, you have to find, if you, if you're going to do this, it has to be unbelievably good. You don't want to screw up in this territory.

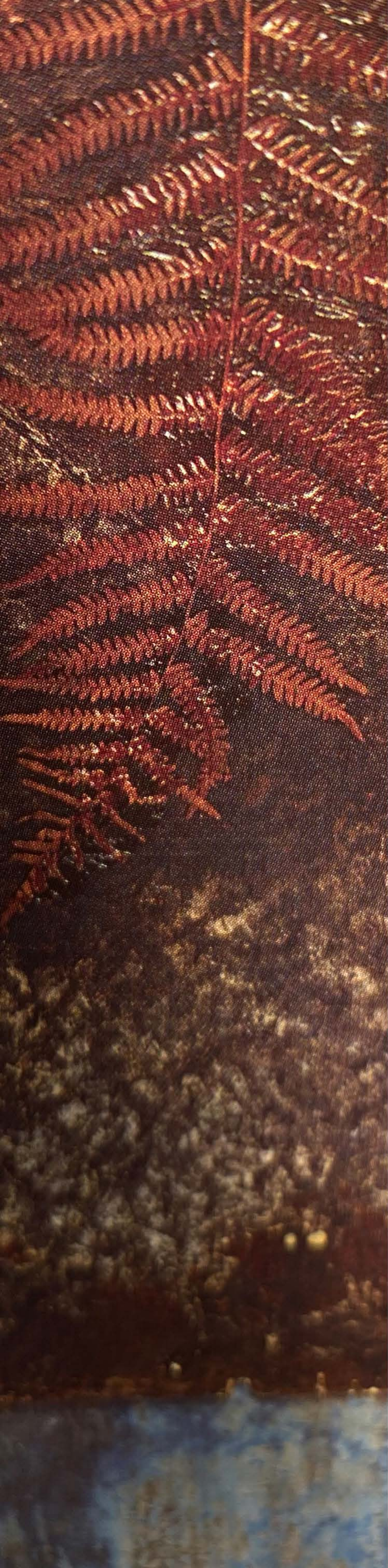
We speak of materiality as a mode of a certain enclosure. Material lives where we cannot. Substratum. What if we are bound to the perspective of things? As Stoppard plunders history again to, like De Waal, make the obscene return — to look for the face of God — he comes back with a broken object. — Why are there three Marys at the crucifixion of Jesus? The tears of things. — When questioned about the sale of some of his netsuke, De Waal unhesitatingly responds that they were sold for the refugee council. We try to expect where things are going to end up. When and where the mystery of the thing will rise up in another. The rule of a thing's production, its cutliness, its brokenness, because otherwise the thing's *erscheinung* overwhelms us. Its silence empties us our language. We say, "Yes, this hand is a thing which thinks, which is mysterious. My father is in your hand somehow."

When I think of my father I think of that hand. Or refugees. Or Aeneas. Or Kiefer's alchemy. And when you imagine your return, do you see lead and earth and straw? Do you see the land at all? Or is it still too hard how much you will have to transform to understand the things of the world? To access their silence is to place their impossibility within you. Everything changes as meaninglessness becomes a feature of the world. Is it still impossible to imagine the meaning of these things from that point? There is the pain that you're that piece of straw, that pile of dirt. Can you imagine yourself growing of these fields like a cornstalk? Growing from the fruits of our exile. *Der Bleiben ist nirgends*, says Rilke. Can you imagine that all of this leads to an open place, where you are expected simply to live and make memories? Does it not lead to you taking up the moment? You see the figures of the past, like Alexander. You see the tear in the world as others live in the exile you have always heard of. But you, what will you make? You will become a memory eventually, and when people





pick you up: what will they desire to do? Will they see you, like Molly Bloom, saying, "Yes," as she passes through her own memories and sees an open, flowery meadow and Leopold at last proposing marriage? Will they take up that yes? yes yes yes. And will that yes ring out through the centuries? When you will have become impossible and the only way to hold you is to think the impossible, will they hear it, Elias: the throat-clearing yes yes yes yes yes





epilogue









What we think at this point is everything. If we argue that they never assimilated, that they didn't really take up french culture and give into it and make it their own, then all we succeed in affording is that the anti-semitism of the french people was also a foreign conclusion, whose terrible existence was no more absurdly varied than in the idea of a jewish person trying to adopt that culture, woven as it was with that hatred. But, if that hatred was never not a part of that culture, and every effort of culture has to expose it, then there no longer exists a scene in which the anti-semites simply existed, nor a scene that either the jewish person began to hate herself or else failed to assimilate. The idea that culture refines, that it clears away hatred, is completely precisely false culture seems to be, after a certain point, the refinement, yes, of hatreds. If the anti-semites was never not present in what would we say that anti-semitism somehow overcame as frustrated french-french cultural existence? It didn't.



We should ask, instead, what else happened that overwhelmed the French and the French Jews? As de Waal ~~states~~ describes the tragic, almost literal, embracing of the Communists at the onset of the second world war, he shows us that what was most sad, if anything, was how possible assimilation was. The strongest case for French culture itself was the argument of its adaptability and its creativity, that the lack of a line of progress through culture meant that the shadows behind a culture were never part of its dismounting. The future of French culture was opening up like a tiled banner in the hands of anyone who had the vision to take it up, and this vision was not ignorant of the horrors of France. All that remained for the turn towards the expulsion and revocation of citizenship and the abetting of genocide, that, in intimations, continues to this day in France, was an idealization of culture — as its fatal reconnoitment. You would have to think that everything you did was possible without the honor of it all. What would a Frenchman want in the end? Not the expulsion of the Jews, but of his own



out-rentism, of his own hatred — and the secret of its role.  
He would set himself upon this task by remaining the Jews and  
destroying his own culture, because he didn't dare affirm that his  
culture has a dance with hatred, nor that all culture is a dance  
with hatred, and not the unceasing moment of its overcoming.  
He didn't dare say that he was ashamed, that he was emb-  
arrassed by the fact that he had already been forgiven, that  
those who had received his hatred had already forgiven him  
and had offered him this forgiveness and they had created  
in the black night of that forgiveness. He didn't dare recall that  
to this offering he had said, "No." It would simply be too  
painful.



my mother, a violist, played Wagner's flying dutchman when she was pregnant with me. I kicked in her womb when the timpani sounded behind her. She thinks this means I enjoyed the music — and how could I disagree. I wasn't there.



I became aware for the first time around the fall of 1942 that killings here being carried out on our station... The girl was then given daily injections of 2 cc of Morphine-Sergalamin [MS] for about 14 days. I was not present when the head physician gave the order in question. Therefore, I cannot say whether the 14-day treatment of 2 cc MS daily was decided by Dr. Merick at the outset or whether she gave a new order every day for the administration of this dosage... I had to administer the aforementioned dosage of MS to one of the upper arms of the patient maybe two or three times during the time span mentioned above. I did not give my thought to this treatment at the time. But when the girl receiving this treatment died at 14 days, of course I came to the conclusion that her death had been caused solely by the injections given to her. Starting in the fall of 1942, adult patients and also children were often moved to the so-called isolation room. Of course, in the meantime I realized the purpose of these transfers. But I could not bring myself to speak with anyone about it.

Each time after the transferred patients had been put to bed, the five (or fewer) tablets of Veronal [a powerful sleeping sedative] were mixed into a glass of sugar water... I got the tablets from the medicine cabinet and administered them... Generally, after some encouragement, the patients drank the dissolved tablets without further ado. After the patients were given the Veronal preparation they were given a glass of clean water to wash it down.



I myself never had anything to do with removing the coffins, nor did I  
ever entrust any of our nurses with that job. I also never went to the morgue.  
We wrapped the corpses in sheets and turned them over to the men from  
the graveyard company. After cleaning, the sheets were returned to an station...

At that time I was very of ten alone, surrounded by own thoughts; I stand  
face to face with myself as it were, and cried

Testimony of Berta Neve, Munich, 1962



*there is a fundamental impasse in the human psyche*

berta netz made sure that the patients were asleep or unconscious before injecting them with morphine-scopolamin. why? guilt? mercy? this may seem trivial, but the truly robotized Nazi system wouldn't have bothered with this step, I think. perhaps Berta includes this detail for the 1962 listener, or even retroactively for her own fiction of self. maybe it was this slight resistance to a fully systemized killing process which likewise encouraged the euthanized children not to resist (they always drank the sugar water with medication in it - not once did they resist, she says). we are lulled into the comfort of obedience, of subordination to highly methodical demands. and so often, we can only bring ourselves to combat these processes when they lose their last veil of dignity, revealing themselves in transparent, barbarous garb.

one might go so far as to claim that the children (and the mid-level perpetrators of violence like Berta Netz herself) are aware of this barbarism before this unveiling process, before the bureaucracy of terror admits its identity to the participants who it has already swallowed. there is a fundamental impasse in the human psyche which makes us unable to protest these systems when they provide even one shred of dignity or, more often, when they carry the weight of social convention. 'these are the values to which we have all agreed!' there is at once a democratic pretension in this system (which makes us feel guilty for having once consented, only to disobey later on) as well as a paternal ordering which makes us impotent when we consider any degree of protest.

it does, however, provide the possibility of limited compassion within its own system - again, berta makes sure that the children are asleep before injecting them with morphine-scopolamin. the children are only euthanized once they have been coaxed into a dreamscape where the piercing terror of this particular nazi moment is exchanged for some vague nightmare which is supposedly easier to swallow. but does Berta's movement run contrary to the larger, dictatorial plans in question? alternatively, might we understand berta's self-deceived freedom as part and parcel of barbarism's success? perhaps we should read this testimony, this sugar-water-dissent, as the system's incorporation of divergence - a manageable degree of protest is baked in, possibly negating and re-stationing berta back within the dominant body again. it is vital, in fact, to the survival of the system. for our own part, as participant in the system, this procedure holds true in equal strength: a smoker thinks 'I can stop whenever I want' rather than 'that was my last cigarette, now I am finished smoking' (zupančič). we must believe that we have options of power from within and against the presiding power rather than admit to ourselves the sheer jurisdiction it wields over our lives - in addition to our complicity in it. and yet, pure freedom is not only vain and futile, but also inadvisable, unproductive.



One of the busier streets in my town is just barely visible from the window in my bedroom. The street leads to the university here. At night, my room is enveloped in uniform darkness save for a small line of light peaking through this window at the foot of my bed. Although I cannot see the street itself, sometimes the light from the passing cars faintly brightens my propped up arm. I stare at my arm rather than the window to find evidence of my passersby's fleeting visits. I am always doubtful, after the fact, that the light on my arm had ever appeared: was that a car just now, or did I only imagine it? Some nights I watch for their brief reflections on my self until I fall asleep. This can last for hours. The light appears and fades so unobtrusively, even when the car speeds by, a perfectly rounded crescendo and fall, an evenly measured breath.



## Rammsteiners: Im Geist getrennt, Im Herz vereint

growing up half-german it's difficult to see the dark side of your cultural identity. it's even more difficult to see when singing a butchered version of O' Tannenbaum with your dad uncles and cousins. the dark history of the Nazis haunts the world, but for many young germans outside of germany it is kept secret. the first time I heard about the nazis I was in shock. it's like finding out one of your family members was a murderer. you don't want to believe it and you feel a large sense of guilt. I can't imagine what it would be like to be both jewish and german and have to face these convictions. as a child growing up, the only stories I heard about my german family was about my opa coming to Canada as a POW after being captured by British troops and my Oma jumping on the last coal train out of east germany. there were stories that framed my family about my german family history. I remember hearing about the nazis in history class and I felt like I had to hide myself out of guilt. being a child it's very easy to feel something you haven't a part of, but are in some way related to. later that day, I asked my mom about the nazis. she said there was a leader named hitler who, in the 1930s-1940s, promised to improve germany and make life better for all germans. it was only later that I found out this was at the expense of millions of people and solidify a new type of identity for future germans. it was around this time that I came upon the band Rammstein, from one of my cousins who began my journey into music.



Rammstein is a german heavy metal-techno band found in the mid-70s. Their use of electronic instruments mixed with guitars and the drums creates a new type of sound that is enjoyable to heavy-metal listeners as well as those interested in techno. Rammstein, in my opinion, differs from most heavy metal bands in what they, as a band, are expressing. Most heavy metal bands use their anti-landish style and their non-traditional life-styles to attract an audience. Rammstein's true unique approach to music is, at the same time creating a new genre, creating a new identity for the german people. In their former song 'Deutschland' the band speaks of their nation as being one that is young, yet also so old:

So jung, und doch so alt

and one that they love dearly and yet hate:

Will dich lieben, und verdammen

This song speaks to the long history germany has and the effects that this history has had on their identity. The music video demonstrates this point very well by showing events throughout germany's history. One very notable one is a scene of a holocaust execution: the band brings to mind germany's horrible past, but in a way to show that they have no choice but to love it whole-heartedly yet can hate it for the same reason:

Deutschland, deine Liebe ist Fleck und Segen



Rammstein tries to create a new german identity by using germany's past as an anti-hero to create a modern progressive identity. The issue is that many alt-right musicians listen to their music and use it as a motivator for their anger due to the bomb use of the german language and german historical symbolism, most notably swastika symbols. In this way Rammstein is a symbol of the modern german conservatism, as they use their past as a way to move forward, other groups utilize their music and past as a way to promote their own alt-right identity, one very similar to the Nazis. The effect this has is that it creates an association that if you listen to Rammstein, or are associated with the german identity, then you are associated with alt-right ideology, beliefs, or groups to an extent.

This association helps germany, as well as my interest of heavy metal, from progressing forward in exploring their identity. Their history is a hard grouping at their outliers, bringing them back into the past; the old reich is never fully forgotten, and their identity is stuck in the 1940s.

All germans recognize their history. Without it, they wouldn't be the people they are today. But, the part is, in the words of Rammstein, 'Fleisch und Leder.' in dealing with their past they have the ability to completely change who they were and reinvent themselves. Rammstein understands this. They are a heavy metal group, yet in a way to separate themselves they incorporated the new sound of techno that they may be similar to techno groups yet are very unique. They use this sound as a cutting force, as their band is composed of both german and french members, they draw into both heavy metal and techno fans.





~~The~~ absurdity reveals itself ~~from~~ ~~the~~ start



# the absurdity reveals itself from the start

a conversation between aidan, elias trout, and the artist ben hagari

13th May, 2021

*trout:* I'm sure you're familiar with the idea that, if you show someone an alternative to their status quo, they'll see how much freedom they have. They'll see something flexible to what they're living within - an alternative. So, how I see it, the environments that you make in your pieces do something similar by undermining what we currently live in, but they're not necessarily giving an alternative. They're absurd enough that - the way they're absurd, it's like they're running through the motions of what a system might look like, the representations of a system, the gears beneath the system but maybe not a system itself.

So in that vein, the protagonists in your work have been compared to marionette dolls or those in an unconscious state. I wonder if you think these unconscious states or robotized scenes are hopeful to you, because they show us that our own systems are fragile, that we can rework them? Or are they - well, in my view, the absurdity in these scenes (in your piece *Invert*, let's say) actually distance what's possible for me because their behavior is just a representation. Can we get back to that pre-constructed state? Does that make sense?

*Hagari:* I enjoy hearing your thoughts but I'm not sure how to answer, can you rephrase the question?...

*trout:* Okay. The worlds you create are not worlds I can imagine living in. But they get at something underneath a lot of possible iterations. Is it freeing to see that? Do you think it's freeing to study those worlds that have something true to them but aren't fully realizable systems? Or do you think it's - well, what is the merit to studying those systems?

*Hagari:* In my work I try to create alternate worlds with internal sets of rules and logics. Relationships are formed between characters that are living in this world and their environment. This environment can be a domestic space or a landscape, sometimes there are other characters, professionals from different fields, and often they live in coexistence with animals. I'm interested in finding alternative, non verbal, ways of com-

munication as well as examining ways of living.

*Trout:* I want to ask about the protagonists, or central figures in all of these works, and how much flexibility they have within those universes. Is it predetermined? Do they have some sort of control or power to themselves, within these worlds? Are they passive? Does that even matter?

*Hagari:* One of my first works is a video sculpture piece called *This Is Not a Clock*. In this piece I closed myself inside a grandfather clock for twelve hours. The dial's disk concealed my face. It's a confined and narrow space. This limited space allowed for only minute actions, restricted body gestures. The pendulum's sway, slightly below the loins, which might have been perceived as a repetitive rubbing or erasing of the genitals. The protagonists in these early video sculptures were sort of tableau vivant. When I started working on films and videos, I designed puppet-like characters in storyboards and inserted further motion by showing their bodies in fragments. The protagonists in my videos appear to be augmented by animated special effects but they are in fact live action, these puppets are human characters positioned in the boundaries between real and imagined spaces. *Invert* is a living-speaking character in a negative existence trying to talk to his silent parrot. The vegetable man in *Fresh* seems to be in a vegetative state, like a still life. Almost static he lies down, sits and finally stands before being harvested. In *Potter's Will* the protagonist transformed into a pot. The short-lived figure is covered in wet clay situated in the burning environment of the kiln. Toward the end of the film his skin dries. In these three protagonists you can see a possible transgression from life to death, from human to non human but the more the creature appears to have been transformed the more it's noticeable that there is a real body underneath and that this body is alive and breathing. Right now I'm working on a video that centers around a protagonist that appears throughout the film from its backside. The back of the head is shaved to create an illusion of a face that has been erased from facial features - a human without eyes, nose or mouth. There is a playful role reversal between the protagonist or puppet (back) and the puppeteer (front). There is a hidden tension between the two sides and it's not always clear who is controlling who. In one scene the faceless creature is resting comfortably on the pillow as if he is sleeping or dreaming. If you think about what you're not seeing - what is absent from the frame - is a person being strangled on the pillow



from the other side of their head. It's a binary world and film.

*Aidan:* Can I ask - you know, there's Bach playing in your film *Invert*. And with Bach you find a similar tension between the inside and the outside. If you just look at the structure of a fugue or a canon, it's quite grammatical, it's incredibly rule-bound. But when you hear it, it's music. You don't necessarily hear - I mean, sure, you hear the inversions and the retrograde and the various compositional devices. As a listener, you're taken into that particular compositional world which also, again, has a set of particular rules. But your relationship isn't directly with those rules, it's sort of with the output of those rules. Some of the interpretations and commentary on some of your works that I've read have emphasized something slightly pessimistic and a bit Kafkaesque, but, in some respect, I feel like the inverse almost holds. Like you were saying, there's a sense in which, if anything, it's from rules that you can negotiate melody - in the sense of Bach, or in the sense of trying to articulate freedom from alienation, or whatever it looks like. That tension of the inner and the outer is a negotiation, it's not just a cage that is trapping the given protagonist. And I wonder whether you think that there is a certain optimism or imagitivity that a set of rules is the proper ground, or the necessary ground for thinking freedom. Or maybe even - I know artists who just need a certain level of containment in order to stimulate their creativity. I wonder what you make of that.

*Hagari:* Ever since I remember engaging with art was about working within a set of rules, a border, setting yourself a frame. When everything is possible, it's hard to make a choice. When I know that I can only use a certain tool and you have to use it in a certain method, these restrictions can generate imaginative ideas. Within the border I will try to make something new or unfamiliar. We talked about constructing a world. What can enter this world? What are its parameters? By setting a border I found that I have freedom within. I have created prison-like sets and characters that are sort of prisoners in their habitat. For me there's a lot of possibilities within the confined space, it's an invitation for a mental escape.

*Trout:* In *Cuckoo*, I know it's an older work of yours, I see you doing the opposite. Viewers are just waiting for you. Most of the time we're watching the piece is absence of content. Which is a lot of how - if the worlds you build have rules, but a lot of them are somewhat unfeasible. It's like

we're seeing rule-making in the abstract, it's like we're seeing content in its absence. With *Cuckoo* especially, well, what do we do? We're waiting 60 minutes for a few different 'cuckoos.' So, what does that do for a viewer in that space of absence?

*Hagari:* In Hebrew, the word 'cuckoo' means that someone is considered 'mad.' This video sculpture is created around the cuckoo clock, a Bavarian object. The video part of the piece shows a cuckoo clock with eyes turned out. The video runs continuously for twelve hours and there's an anticipation for something to happen. Every hour the word "cuckoo" is announced and a cuckoo bird emerges. If you've been waiting for it maybe it's not as fulfilling [laughs].

*Trout:* Maybe by announcing 'cuckoo,' the anticipation itself - the record-keeping, whatever form of systematizing we're doing to keep time in the absence of art, as viewers - is 'cuckoo.'

*Aidan:* Can I ask, when you're using something like a Bavarian object (you know, a southern German or maybe a Swiss style of clock-making), and there's a notorious rigidity as well to all aspects of German culture (German engineering, etc.)... I guess it's a two-pronged question: when you're making this work, is there something that you're anticipating, particularly? Is there something you're thinking that, in doing a work about, say, anticipation or perhaps about the hope that maybe something else will occur other than the simple ringing of time. And the second part would be, is it just that the cuckoo clock made sense in the context of anticipation, or is there something meaningful to using a Bavarian cultural icon?

*Hagari:* The weather house object is embedded with childhood memory. My grandmother, who was born in Vienna in 1918, had a weather house hanging outside her home in the Kibbutz. I've long been fascinated with those objects due to their kinetic abilities. The weather house includes a man and woman characters positioned on a carousel and a thermometer at the center. Their position is determined based on the temperature. If it's warm, the woman moves outside and if it's cold they switch places. The woman moves inside and the man, with his short trousers, moves outside. I've created a life size weather house, removed the mother-father figures and projected myself as a human thermostat. Instead of measuring the outdoor temperature, the piece measures body tempera-



ture. In both Weather House and Cuckoo there is anticipation of the familiar - with cuckoo sound every hour or temperature gets high or low. I was interested in taking objects that have a certain duration and capture the full length of it on tape. The duration of the video-projection piece was determined by the object. Juxtaposing real time with reel time. I was also interested in how to transform these objects and human intervention into another medium. It's an object with a human body embedded in it so the human body is what moves the mechanism.

*Trout:* I just thought I'd mention, the way you're speaking about objects - people talk about your protagonists like dreamers, but especially the way you talked about the 'backside' figure or even walking with your eyes closed, they read to me like golems. Especially their duration. I know that it's often unplanned - you know, wipe the golem from the face of the earth. But they're something ordained and still thinking about rules.

*Hagari:* I can talk about the 'closed eyes' and performing in blindness which is something I've been doing in several works since the film Invert. The images of the painted eyes on the eyelids place things both in the real and in the dreamlike world. I have an interest in optical illusions, optical devices. So it's also related to that - to perception. I am interested in projecting the space of early cinema outside itself; that box space of perception: vision passing out through holes.

*Aidan:* There's a book called Gödel, Escher, Bach by Douglas Hofstadter (it's on those three thinkers, M.C. Escher, the logician Kurt Gödel, and Bach). And in it, the author tries to put forward an argument about the relationship between logic and M.C. Escher's use of optical illusions in his art, and the compositional structures of Bach's fugues. And his argument is kind of similar, that it's less about restriction (restriction as a means to creating greater stimulation and freedom); and more about - is it possible, in the accumulation of things like rules, rule-bound systems, as you accumulate and make it larger and more accentuated, whether you don't begin to find things like personality, individuality, emotion; whether there isn't a kind of continuous gesture from the logic of someone like Gödel to the melodies of Bach, or something like this. When you think of - even if you want someone to play a fugue, a really intense fugue or even a fantasia before the fugue, it's incredibly emotional. It's almost like they're crafting or creating from the underlying

base material. Something radically imaginative is occurring. Do you see that line? That if you accumulate enough rules, you'll eventually reach... the soul, or individuality, or the 'I' of subjectivity.

*Hagari:* That's beautiful. In Invert I closed my eyes, and covered the ears and nostrils in cotton wool in order to create an inverted self-portrait. The result seemed robotic, or automaton-like. But I think there is a more personal aspect - for looking inside. There is an autistic element, covering all your senses or locking yourself from the outside world. Another aspect to the perception is turning yourself into an environment, or a landscape. I'm currently participating in a show called Bodyscapes at The Israel Museum, curated by Adina Kamien-Kazhdan. The film Fresh is presented next to an amazing 17th century painting by Matthaus Merian the Elder, called Anthropomorphic Landscape. There is a large-scale face hidden in the landscape and covered by plants, it's a human landscape

*Aidan:* I think I know the painting. Didn't he do a series of them? And they're based off the seasons? Are they not Fall and Winter, etc.?

*Hagari:* Ah, this is Arcimiboldo.

*Aidan:* Okay.

*Hagari:* Arcimiboldo's paintings have long been on my mind- especially when working on Fresh.

*Aidan:* Brilliant. The body-as-a-still-life is what struck me about Fresh.

*Hagari:* I happened to talk about Arcimiboldo in my last class. The use of humor is something that I appreciate, and consider in my work. In Arcimiboldo's work it's not humor per se. Humor is presented with philosophical or heavy issues. Some would call it 'serious jokes' or 'serious funny.' That's something I value and try to incorporate into my work. I think about my works as tragicomedies. There's a text by Roland Barthes on Arcimiboldo's paintings (Rhetor and magician, 1978). Barthes suggests that his painting has a linguistic foundation. When you reverse the Archimboldo image everything remains the same just like a palindrome but the meaning is not the same. In The Vegetable Gardener (1590), for example, a head with a helmet turns to an innocent bowl of vegetables when the painting is seen upside down.



*Aidan:* There's almost a sense though, that once you see a face in the fruit, it forever interrupts the simple, straightforward reading of it as just a bowl of fruit. It's almost as though it actually started as a bowl of fruit and then he flipped it around and turned it into a man's face. Because I think the direction, there, does eventually have some import. Like Marx's line: 'First as tragedy, then as farce.' If anything, actually, there has to be a serious moment, and then there's a moment of comedy that reveals the hypocrisy or pretentiousness of the initial seriousness. And if anything, the joke has more meaning because of how it exposes a certain, you know, stiffness, or whatever it is about a painting (or, in the case of Marx, it was obviously about a political regime). So it's almost like a palindrome that, once you see the other side, it also gives you an obvious sense of there being a certain asymmetry. Whether it's the human asymmetry in the fruit or the political asymmetry - Marx was talking about Napoleon III versus the tragedy of Napoleon, and there's just the joke that follows. You have the romantic ambitions of Napoleon but in the end it becomes the farce of 1830's and 1840's Paris. The question is whether - this is Marx's point - does the joke, rather than just being... jokes are viewed as sacreligious, desecrating, interrupting an otherwise meaningful or sentimental way of doing things. But after a certain point, the possibility of making a joke is, at least retroactively, far more revealing of the actual conditions of the painting, the situation, or whatever site you're looking at. Just for the pure force of the joke, if nothing else. The way it interrupts. Because jokes play with their own interpretation. That's why they can - you know, if I take myself very seriously, I'm trying to control one interpretation. But jokes are very reflexive, and they have that much more power. Something like this

*Hagari:* [Laughs] I think jokes are about telling something that leads to a reaction. It could be funny or not be funny, but it has the intention of rousing a reaction. Maybe the way I think about it is somewhat reversed. Instead of leading to something that rouses, it starts from the end of the joke and goes to the beginning. So if you land on the very end of the joke and then you tell it backwards, return to its root, the absurdity reveals itself from the start and then maybe it ends in a different tone.

*hegelsh (aidan) and elias (trout) would like thank hagari for his time and patience.*

the photos included in this section were taken exclusively from hagari's short film potter's will, with stills supplied by hagari himself.



# geheimsträger

"

Jamais je n'oublierai cette nuit, la première nuit de camp qui

a fait de ma vie une nuit longue et sept fois ressaisie.

Jamais je n'oublierai cette fumée.

Jamais je n'oublierai les petits visages des enfants dont j'avais vu

les corps se transformer en valises sous un arc-en-ciel.

Jamais je n'oublierai ces femmes qui couraient pour toujours me faire

Jamais je n'oublierai ce silence nocturne qui m'a privé par l'éternité

du désir de vivre.

Jamais je n'oublierai ces instants qui assassinèrent mon Dieu et mon âme, et

mes rêves qui prirent le visage du diable.

Jamais je n'oublierai cela, même si j'étais condamné à vivre avec longtemps

que Dieu lui-même. Jamais."



"tutti scoprono, più o meno presto nella loro vita, che la felicità perfetta non è realizzabile, ma pochi si soffermano invece sulla considerazione opposta: che tale è anche una infelicità perfetta"

"l'alba ci cade come un trattamento; come se il nuovo sale si associasse agli uomini nella deliberazione di distruggersi"



there are our *gatesmistriger*, in the first we ask how is it that we  
manage to be so poetic here in remembrance here, and the remembrance of phrase,  
intimacy with the human subject? like *celos* and *de unal*, there is some story  
entirement of both beauty and pleasure in the *hemifig* it suffices to recall  
the *frank*, reflection on seeing the sunset, the dawn, a winter in the camp.

in the second, our wonder is more open-ended. why is it that we  
blame before the blank and terrible of reality? is it that faced with the  
dark we invent only those things completely necessary to do things, which  
is, by that point, nothing but the spontaneous? do we not come recall the  
night in daytime and hold that tension itself as thought, as what we think,  
so that the clearer the tension the clearer the realization.







Crignone  
of Pure  
Fasson  
Immeuel  
Kant

Train  
F. Max

oudley











more tempting than the illusion which makes us look upon the unity in the synthesis of thoughts as a perceived unity in the subject of an hypostatized consciousness (apperceptionis sub-

II The unconditioned unity of quality, that is, not as a real whole, but as simple.

I The unconditioned unity of the relation, that is, itself, not as inhering, but as subsisting.

2 Simplicität was a misprint for substanz

III The unconditioned unity in the manifoldness of time, that is, not as at different times, but as numerically different, but as the same subject.

IV The unconditioned unity of existence, in space, that is, one and the same subject, as its representations, of many things outside it, and therefore by a pure consciousness of the existence of itself only.

Reason is the faculty of principles. The statements of pure psychology do not contain empirical predicates of the soul, but such as, if they exist, are meant to determine the object by itself. independent of all experience, and therefore by a pure reason only. They ought therefore to rest on principles and on a general representation, I think, governs them all, a representation which, for the very reason that it expresses the pure formula of all my experience (indefinitely), claims to be a general proposition, applicable to all thinking beings, and, though single in all respects, has the appearance of an absolute unity of the conditions of thought in general, thus stretching far beyond the limits of possible experience.

We shall therefore follow it with a critical eye through all the predicaments of pure psychology; but we shall, for the sake of brevity, let their examination proceed uninterrupted. The following general remark may at the very outset make us more attentive to this mode of syllogism. I do not know any object by merely thinking, but only by determining a given intuition with respect to that unity of consciousness in which all thought consists; therefore, I do not know myself by being. How the simple can again correspond to the category of reality cannot yet be explained here; but will be shown in the following chapter when another use has to be discussed which reason makes of the same concept. Ich bin was a mistake, it can only be meant for Ich-denke.







...the conditions of thought in general, from attending to  
beyond the limits of possible experience.]  
We shall therefore follow it with a critical eye  
take of brevity, let that examination proceed  
The following general remark may as the  
its more attentive to this mode of thought  
any object by merely thinking, but only  
in relation with respect to that unity of  
all thought consists, therefore, I do  
How the simple can again correct  
cannot yet be explained better, but  
chapter, when another has to  
of the same concept.  
It is not possible, it can

...the possibility of a subjective being. Thus it is not possible  
that, as an intuition,  
The unconditioned unity  
of categories is not  
in itself, but as an intuition,  
and as a part of the  
unity of the categories.  
The unconditioned unity  
of categories is not  
in itself, but as an intuition,  
and as a part of the  
unity of the categories.  
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of categories is not  
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...the unconditioned unity  
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and as a part of the  
unity of the categories.  
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of categories is not  
in itself, but as an intuition,  
and as a part of the  
unity of the categories.







peculiarly referring to the same increase

...of the great we  
...of the great we  
...of the great we

In spite of the great we  
...of the great we  
...of the great we

TRANSO  
...of the great we  
...of the great we  
...of the great we

[A:309-312; B:305-309]  
...of the great we  
...of the great we  
...of the great we

are with regard to ob  
quencies with regard to ob  
entirely empty. For that co  
me that the soul continues by  
tural intuitions, arise or per  
cannot, therefore, which wou  
These are qualities which experie  
its connection with  
into its origin and  
category only  
that the

of the systematic connection of all  
its per  
therefore  
of all  
psychology, sc  
and estab  
the



Arnika, Augentrost, der  
Frust aus dem Brunnen mit dem  
Stemmiwüfel drauf,

in der  
Hütte,

die in das Buch  
- wessen Namen nahmst auf  
von dem meinen? —

die in dies Buch  
geschriebene Zeile von  
einer Hoffnung, heute,  
auf eines Denkenden  
kommender  
Wart  
im Flecken

Waldwurz, weingekostet,  
Arabis und Arabis, einzeln,

Krusen, später, im fernen  
deutlich,

der uns führt, der Mensch,  
der's mit anhängt,

die halb-  
beschnittenen Krüppel-  
pfade im Fleckenmoor,

kenntes,  
viel



# Being and *Worms*

ein einzelner mönch  
luther's worm  
heidegger's *wort*  
wormholes, or the repressed fascist melancholy  
chorus of worms  
the self-eating worm  
entschluss  
the theological moment of the open  
the ocean and the lightning strike  
  
*the mountain of death, epilogue*





it is well-known that luther's moment in the diet of worms comes as a total taking up of the ground. if not said in the exact words of *hier stehe ich, ich nicht anders*, the written record reads as interestingly,

*so bin ich durch die Stellen der heiligen Schrift, die ich angeführt habe, überwunden in meinem Gewissen und gefangen in dem Worte Gottes*

his captivation in god's Word intersects with the kaiser's that

*es ist sicher, dass ein einzelner Mönch in seiner Meinung irrt*

the einzelner monk's error intersects with his conviction, because his error is to be convicted at all. the temptation to take up the word directly, regardless of its content, is why luther's moment, at the same time as it stands in his defense, takes up the more direct form of his position: *his right to interpret scripture*. luther's error is to take up the ground at all — the dumb ground — and to relate it to the heiligen Schrift. the intersection, again, as such, is heretical, because taking up the word at all in the ground is seemingly foreclosed.

the breaking *through* the ground — worm's way — itself creates the position it upholds. it is not that luther releases himself to read the scripture and, in this way, comes upon a separate reading from the church, but that the placing the word at all in the position of being readable from where he stands alters the word and thereby reveals the word's subjugation to the contentless ground. it is luther, in turn, who says that the word is already contentless; it is the voice of the convicted. it is, after all, a word.

what is missing is how to take up the taking up. if the church father's position is that interpretation is disallowed on account of it inviting people to stand their ground, even a theological debate on luther's propositions can only prove him right. if luther's move is that the word is also empty, the taking up of the taking up is holding the entire scripture as an invitation to hold one's ground. a theological debate fails because it is the recovery of luther's position as one of interpretation; but, luther isn't interpreting anything. he has no perspective, hence why he can stand his dumb ground.

what he invites, instead, is a *worm*. a tiny doubt, which begins by indeciphering the scripture as a series of holding grounds, each elementarily unreadable. it is the ground of scripture, which luther invites us to consider. the original emptiness of the word is revealed in this moment, so that luther's position is not an answer to the church fathers, but an immanent answer to the deployment of the word of god itself. luther, himself, channels a deeper inner doubt inside the word itself. his answer, as such, is to god; to hold his position before god. he takes the only available position that one can take who wants to preserve the word, which is to release it to the faculty of the moment. luther's position is ultimately that it is not the dumb ground which reveals the word, but the word which reveals the dumb ground. the contentless wormword is an invitation to break through the ground, to hold oneself in the aspect of a word that means nothing.

imagine, in the cold churchhalls of the Bischofshof, luther realizes something more frightening than the whole of the assembled might of christendom. staring, in passing, at a line of scripture, he sees the empty word. all it invites, at once, is not to argue that the word remains meaningful without our knowing, but that the contentless aspect of our expression is a shortcircuit to the immanence of thought. it is not that I come to think what is meaningful in the word, but that the word invites me towards a thinking I have not begun. if the word itself has not begun, it is because the empty word is the signal that the thought can only happen in its immediacy. the link of consciousness to reality is that of the link between the immediacy of thought and the enclosure of sense-perception. luther sees at the same time as he thinks, and the word itself defies that any meaning will come. it is an invitation to think in the failure of meaning to appear. it is not that a word is meaningful, but because it is not meaningful, it prepares us to say and do anything.

#### LUTHER'S WORM

the question, more devastating than any in the annals of inspiration and the hier-stehe-ich of human resistance, is heidegger's Beiträge. here is a person standing his ground for the nazis. in comparison to luther, heidegger's mistake is simple: he expects that the meaning of the word will appear. he expects that



we only have to learn its meaning, which is nothing but its entanglement in Being. there is almost an insight here, something like the word must be transposed into Being. only then can the process of word-building make any sense to us, only then can we relate to it as true. the difficulty is that at the same time as we imagine that the word invites us to begin thinking, we cannot recover this position, as heidegger would have us do, in the expectant idea that Being *already* knows.

if anything is contained in luther's strange position, it is that the word itself reveals that thought, for one part, is somehow connected to reality, and, for another, the word can remain meaningless if it points to a thought that, to be at all, must be thought. if heidegger's primacy is on Being, luther's is on thought. this is luther's worm. it is inside Being. the strange relationship between thinking, where meaning, or truth in heidegger's *Beiträge*, takes up the position of how we think how Being already knows, and Being is one where, rather than thought approaching Being, Being approaches thought. what it resolves to lose in its structure, it resolves to gain in its *immanence*.

it is not a surprise that Worms, the city, with a long history of jewish livelihood, suffered tragically in the *Kristallnacht*: what greater metaphor is available for the conflict between luther and heidegger than in this conflict. on the one hand, the nazi return of Being confines Being to the 'torturehouse' of its material incursion, its capacity to change before our very eyes. nothing falls as quickly as the fantasy that the material change of something truly changes anything, that it amounts to a thought. thought, again, in its irreducibility to material change, is revealed not to be Being; its divorce from Being allows us to think that what is immanent in thought, paradoxically, is that it forms no strict part of the enclosure of Being. on the hand, the jewish-lutherans suffer this materialist thesis *without a reply*. it is from heidegger's own writing that we must draw out a possible answer: the leap towards the place where Being will emerge prepares Being to emerge. nothing is more repressed than materiality. if the evaluations of the human psyche after *Kristallnacht* consist in anything, it is not the preparation of Being, but its defiance.

## HEIDEGGER'S WORT

what is heidegger's mistake in his *Beiträge*? to over-emphasize the meaning of the material ground. this is his silent reply to the unreplying Mönch. he says, I can be a good materialist like you. but, always, always, he underestimates that his concept of earth refuses the indifference of material. it tries to somehow stall its conversion. what we approach, qua thought, is an attempt to convert this indifference. the maximality of the subjective interaction is somehow supposed to supplement the fact that thought approaches materiality, that is, matter, empty handed. nothing recovers this. the question, however, remains why the nazi event of *Beiträge* is such a beginning for heidegger.

the topos of subjective inspiration is strange. in it, we find that the ground of the word overwhelms it. how it is written, the way organization instructs the underlying notional movement of the ideas, relates to our idea that a work is in the first place inspired. inspiration, as such, if it implies that ground of the thinking is in any way the structure of thought, misses the elementary disjunction between thought and material. the organizational ground in which the thought occurs cannot strictly be the thought except insofar as the failure of thought to be material manifests itself in an interaction with the material that is no longer guided by anything. like luther, we imagine, at first, that his ground responds for him, until we realize that the empty-handed word, like thought, supplements nothing.

what we have, in turn, is the elementary disjunction between thought and the idea. this is the implied turn when thought can be imagined as unnecessary to the conveyance of material. we have thought which cannot be imagined to somehow be in material nature, but also that material nature is the other of thought – without material being, as per hegel, the other of thought. luther's theologische schriften is the material other of thought as an idea. there is no sense, therefore, in which what is ever revealed to me in thought is somehow an otherized material. material is almost unthinkable, or, rather, the readability between thought is that of the becoming-other of material through the being-other of an idea in thought. in other words, thinking the idea of thought as a thinking it in its otherness as material. the thought is





somehow already an othered idea itself, which we try to relate back to the organization of material as the ground of thought, and which may itself virtually take on the will-become of thought as an idea.

this something like the topos of earth. it is the worm's path. the will-become of the idea, conveying the relationship between concept and reality, somehow digs through the ground of the given materiality that, from a naive perspective, supports it, but which relates to the idea as its other. the other, furthermore, does not restrict itself to merely being other, because thought opens us to imagine that idea, being the other of material, reappears in material. this reappearance, however, has no support, because the sense is that the idea has already appeared in material in its failure to do anything with it. the remainness of material, which is material, is already the visitation of the idea upon itself in matter. this is dirt of matter.

luther's worm does not propose to heidegger that the word rediscovers itself in the earth, or in the material ground. it argues that the material ground is riven from within by the wordworm, which points towards what is notionally, not a thought, but the more immediate failure of matter to be organized by thought: the failure of the idea to have an affect on matter as the idea of the idea in matter. where heidegger positions thought to take up as a contentlessness thought capable of recovering the meaninglessness of thinking by projecting the ground in which it takes place, luther's worm is much more radical: the failure of thought to organize matter means that thought cannot point to matter, and, therefore, if thought doesn't point to matter, nothing does. thought follows a deeper disclosure in the immanence of thinking that worms through matter somehow. worms though, in part, because matter no longer has a strict form. this is luther's silent reply.

if *ereignis*, as such, means anything, it is to qualify this rivenness. luther's silence, after all, admits the rivenness of matter, because it admits that matter was never organized in the first place. the disposition of language is, therefore, not quite as heidegger imagines, to the ground. it can scarcely be disposed to itself. like luther, heidegger's wort doesn't fail because it is somehow, at the level of content, or even the supplement to content, determination, something

is missing — again, the theological debate is void — rather, it fails because it fails as a word. insofar as *ereignis* points to something that will happen, it communicates nothing in the way of an idea, which concerns the will-have-been, while the implication is language can only work in immanence. as such, language only works when we are in it, and this being in it sustains the possibility of speaking at all.

WORMHOLES, or the repressed fascist melancholy

the elementary disjunction is within the notion — the idea, itself. what this means is that, if the ground is not reappropriated in the organizational ground, then the topos of inspiration is, as ruda suggests, a question of placing the idea back into the material process. I am inspired by my own placement: it is the cut within material that is reappropriated in the difference between thought and the idea. this is the opening, the *wormhole*; it is what luther sees when he, in the grey walls of the Bischofshof, he spies the empty wort. where heidegger provokes the concept of turning to speak of how a Being, which recovers and leaps to recover itself actually changes, with *ereignis* somehow synthesizing this process, luther foresees a more astonishing metaphor of the wormhole: the wound somehow within Being that allows this thing to call thinking, in its primacy, to take place somehow before matter.

in his curious account of the return of Being and quantum entanglement, gaiman's ocean at the end of the lane finds wormholes in the feet of young boys. they must be tricked, almost consoled out. they are the wounds of entry into, effectively, another world. here we must not imagine world as in the counter to earth, as heidegger imagines, but as the quantum hole within what we call the matter-support of Being itself. it is no surprise that the monsters of the book confine themselves, on the one hand, to supernatural creatures found in quantum wounds in the forest, and, on the other, to the domestic strife of a home collapsing under the pressure of its loss of control to a quantum-monster posing as a human being. the fight that emerges between the increasingly rule-bound household and the warping of the quantum is the same strife of fascist forces trying, not to control the quantum, but to have a concept of change without the quantum. again, the breakdown occurs within the idea itself



as the idea cannot help but revisit its failed conversion of matter. the repressed fascist melancholy.

to an extent, it can be argued that wormholes themselves, which we imagine result from the rivenness of matter, are also conditioned by the very failure of thought to take up matter. recall, the emergent idea is still an idea, one which leaves matter to its remains. this, in equal terms, conditions the hier-stehe-ich of luther as total taking up of the ground that is now revealed to be beyond the organization of the idea as per the idea itself. furthermore, the cut within material is that its immanent organization is structured by a language that doesn't exist, by a silence that is appropriated by the category of truth, only insofar as the concept of truth is that of which we cannot not speak, by a deadlock in the thinkability of matter that re-lies itself back into the notion itself. gaiman's metaphor of the ocean, which structures the reservoir of the quantum, is not one of naive change. if the heideggerian recovery of the rivenness of matter, narrowly apprehended in his apprehension of the contentlessness of thought, is that of ereignis, which tries to posit the jumpiness of Being as preparable-for, as predictable within the larger apprehension of Being itself, then gaiman allows us to think the opposite: the structure of reality is, if not as ž imagines, unfinished, then it is itself structureless. the idea revisits matter to release it to itself, so that the contentlessness of thought still admits determination, because as idea releases matter back to itself this comes as an idea. this idea, like luther's wort, is unorganizable. as such, the content of the determination, of the idea, emerges now, and only ever emerges, as something new, unpredictable, unorganizable. the opposite of ereignis.

gaiman's ocean, like his wormholes, are like the density of the rule-boundedness of the universe, of reality, which hegel might say is the internalized image of the universe of itself. in part, heidegger's theological position is one of trying to, like gaiman, posit the nazi return of Being with the quantum. for heidegger, this implies trying to free the nazi return with the concept of radical change it lacks, but, crucially, for gaiman, the direction is the opposite: the quantum precedes the return, is, to an extent, as much as the return can be imagined, intersectional with it. it is we, from our position of returning, who have to try and organize the wormriven quantum matter. in turn, the ocean

is not somehow a repository of rules, but a kind of rule-boundedness itself. it is not that within the confines of the ocean, which gaiman's boy-protagonist eventually falls inside towards the end of the novel, you learn anything, but you get the pure form of learning, or of understanding itself. gaiman writes,

*I thought, this is the kind of water you can breathe. I thought, perhaps there is just a secret to breathing water, something simple that everyone could do, if only they knew. That was what I thought.*

unlike heidegger, gaiman, who imagines something like a contact with ereignis here, with both the event-to-come and the to-come which disposes us in the first place to this event, doesn't imagine strictly in those terms, but in the sense that there is no message. the paradox, after all, of ereignis is that, at the same time as it allows heidegger to try and formalize a strange concept of the inner movement of Being, it allows him to fantasize over this formalization by imagining that it is, nevertheless, a really existing event, that it is really going to happen.

*The second thing I thought was that I knew everything...I knew what Egg was – where the universe began, to the sound of uncreated voices singing in the void – and I knew where Rose was – the peculiar crinkling of space on space into dimensions that fold like origami and blossom like strange orchids, and which would mark the last good time before the eventual end of everything and the next Big Bang, which would be, I knew now, nothing of the kind.*

the ocean is gaiman's attempt to think beginning, which, as for luther, doesn't come from anywhere, but from any where. the everything that is understood is contentless, in part, because the primacy here is not so much ground, but the implied releasing of the idea from its own confines when matter is itself released. at the same time as the idea releases matter, it gains an idea itself of itself, not as matter, but as an idea.

*Could there be candle flames burning under the water? There could. I knew that, when I was in the ocean, and I even knew how. I understood it just as I understood Dark Matter, the material of*



*of the universe that makes up everything...I found myself thinking of an ocean running beneath the whole universe, like the dark seawater that laps beneath the wooden boards of an old pier: an ocean that stretches from forever to forever and is still small enough to fit inside a bucket*

the so-called quantum riveness is the entlassen of the idea, which lacking organization, in part, pictures itself, and as such, gives an imaginary support for its total distortion — candles burning under water — and, at the same time, gives us the clearest sense of how the organization of indifferent matter is to be approached. anything is possible. the form of thinking is the form of thinking. the contentlessness which heidegger tries to take up, but recovers only in the confines of a return, both in the sense of Being and the nazi return to Being itself, is dwarfed in comparison to luther's wort which opens a radical openness hinged itself on the hier-stehe-ich. the entlassen of matter brings the entlassen of the idea, which unmeasures both.

it is the fleeing of thought, which disengages matter as any kind of ground to our thinking. we find that the indifference of thought to matter is met by the deeper indifference of thought within itself. it is, ultimately, the entlassen of the notion into matter; the release of the measurement of measurement. the second measurement is the loss, the hier-stehe-ich, which defies the concept of measurement itself by enclosing it. it is the 'concept of reality of the concept of reality' as the lack of a determinate content with which to describe reality. an opening, and one which allows hegel to think the coexistence of thought and matter in the first place. in other words, the second measurement is the release that returns you to the openness of the first one.

the poetic language which attempts to describe reality and the universe only succeeds in doing so if it resolves to imagine anything. this imagine anything, however, must also be unmeasured. it is not strictly containable even within the attempt of the idea to unconfine itself. imagine that, like gaiman's ocean, there is an ocean beneath luther's feet, that it is the silent comfort which allows him first to see the empty wort, then admit the hier-stehe-ich. it is not that he imagines that he can imagine anything. the idea of imagining anything, after all, cannot be projected

strictly through an idea. it is, in fact, that the taking up of matter, which is the idea, releases the idea also to be as anything.

the sudden shift in perspective is crucial. the ground of inspiration which contains, in part, this moment, is not merely that within the ground is the organizational praxis of the idea, nor the contentless truth of heidegger's turning. the ocean beneath luther's feet is not any kind of assurance, but the entlassen of assurance: the total openness to the possibility of the possibility of anything. it is a minute interaction with this as an idea itself. the ocean, as such, is an idea of the idea.

#### CHORUS OF WORMS

matter becomes a support for itself as the other of the idea. hegel calls the idea of the idea the absolute idea. if luther's contentless language, his empty wort, consists in anything it is that of the opening up to inspiration. what, in turn, inspires us? matter, which is completely indifferent to us. the basic resistance-point of matter is what allows anything like the worm's course through it. the worm is thought, where thought disposes itself, in part, as what remains of the disjunction within the idea itself when, in the idea of idea, it loses any capacity to structure itself. the matter, however, indifferently remains. in turn, the attempt to find a language to describe matter invites the more radical notional real that the thing being described cannot already be describable. this is the idea of the idea. the language of description and the thing described do not already align. at the same time as we have an idea of the idea, the very wormriven matter still requires some kind of description. what is it? it is not that we proceed to give another idea, but resolve towards the total openness of the idea from that point forward. the fact that nothing can already be described is the flow of the ocean water beneath luther's feet. it is the already of the always already of the measurement of measurement. the having to go-through, in effect, matter: this is what we should readily call thought.

in reichenau, in an ancient church, I recall, in part a reflection on badiou's L'immanence des vérités, sitting in a room meant entirely for silent prayer. therein, the thought occurred to me that the imma-





ence of thought consisted in something like, on the one hand, as I had often been reminded by ruda, that god himself is imagined to have to have the thought, and, on the other, that the thought must be had in the first place. all we say about the content of the thought is eaten up by this, because we can no longer safely say that the thought strictly tells us anything, because now we know only that we must go there, that going there is part of the thought, in order to have it. any content which emerges from this will, at the same time as it becomes readable to us, not be readable a moment before.

here, inspiration consists in realizing that there is something that cannot be described beforehand, that the idea of the idea is not, again, predictable. inspiration is the going-through. it is not beyond description; it is almost not describable at all. the immanent failure conditions, in the first place, that matter is something we have to follow. the idea of the idea is somehow, again, nothing but returning to matter empty-handed. I do not think anything, I just approach the indifference of matter as something released by the idea, and follow the going-through of riven matter. thought is, again, nothing else but the going-through, and, matter, if it is describable, would preclude it from being thinkable as such, and from being true. its existence must be somehow entangled with thought at the same time as it remains completely indifferent to thought. indeed, the possibility of such an organization as matter is beholden to the premise that something must be thought, which does not give itself as an organization to be followed, but as something to go-through, to think.

to imagine, even something sublimely organized, is to imagine why a going-through supports the measure of measure. I do not imagine, as such, an imaginarium structure, which is potentially describable, and as such unthinkable. I do not approach this sublimely organized thing as though it were any/thing. it commits itself to being describable by being something that must be gone-through, and it is as such indescribable. we must work backwards to see how to say that it is anything at all. the admission of this organism — say, a dune worm — into measurement is nothing but the going-through that allows thinking to take place. it is, therefore, a kind of mystic surface, with which we ourselves interface. the organization of that worm I say is thinkable only on condition that it

is measurable in measurement; as such, imaginary, and a kind of organized silence, whose truthfulness consists in that there is nothing we can say about it. where does a description here begin, but at the point where nothing is given unless we go there? the idea that form itself relies on the dahintergehen of the going-through is nothing but that form is, not a thought in process, but a minimal feature of its own enclosure in a deeper field of measurement.

the worm is something living that points to the wound of internal negativity, but also the enclosure of the described in the undoing — its release — in another description that undoes the first. this is the meaning of its being unthinkable if it is describable. this is why the idea of the idea is just a radical oceanic release from any confined idea, so that an idea is revealed not to be a description of reality, but a worm, too, that releases reality, in the first place, from a description, which opens matter. the dense points of inner determination in the worm are its materiality, but the indifference of the worm is the unpenetrability of thought. it is itself the dense, dark invitation that a thought must occur here. it is not that a thought will be had, which is just the prospectivation of ereignis, but that the thought has to be had in the first place. we cannot avoid going there. this going-there is itself the structure of matter. the virtual network of the will-have-been of the imaginary form of the organismic worm is but a support for the must-be-thought of the going-through of the open interaction with, effectively, almost naively, what the worm is.

the worm is nothing. this is where heidegger's repression begins. the is is cut across first by the determinations of material nature, which are as nothing to the radical open enclosure of a thinking organism in the dense network of the going-through. what is here, but being with the invitation to think. a thought is not ready to be had, because the organizational topos of the thought has long ago been abandoned; it was only ever the going-through. the organism exists as the minimal determination of the first measurement, but within its own undoing in the going-through of itself, the second measurement — the entlassen. it itself has to be thought, not to think something, but as what we say it is. it is not, from that point, a question of identification between organism and what it is, or, as though the



worm is thought. though, the worm is, in as much as this possible, the having to go-through. we must literally approach the worm this way. to think it. to think is before thought has deployed its foreclosure — immanent thought. if luther's reply is silent, it is not because something else speaks, but, because, reeling from the empty wort, he takes it as a signal of the something to be thought, of the basic erschleierung-structure of wormriven matter.

in the end, what heidegger has meant by Being, he has meant that the Being, the organism, will be identifiable with the process of Being. it will fall into the self-relating turning of Being's material changeability. it was too hard to say this by saying that Being itself is, or even that Being is nothing but the process of these determinations. instead, it had to be said that the Being is this process itself of becoming what it is. heidegger stumbles over this, but he doesn't have the structure of the measurement of measurement, nor the concept that truth is not a description. truth, after all, amounts to silence, because thought's content consists in nothing else but the having-to-go-through, the dahingehen. on the one hand are the churchfathers who cannot stand their ground, literally, and on the other there is the blacknothing of the nazis. for all heidegger's effort, there is nothing intelligent in the nazis; there is no analysis. again, the silent chorus of Worms recalls luther in their silence.

it is not even, after a certain point, that the idea of the idea releases us, but that thinking something is the having-to-go-through somehow inside, or a part, of matter. if we make a clearing for heidegger word, not ereignis, but Sein — Being, it is because we are trying to destabilize the organism in just the same way. it is not that thought structures matter, but that, upon the outset of a loss of description, the undoing of the first measurement by the second, we return to matter as though, having nothing to organize it, it is organized by something more immanent. this immanence is the having-to-go-through, which is thought. we imagine something like gaiman's ocean in the deep, pure rule-boundedness of it, not giving us content, which merely collapses into the disjunction of the thought and idea, between the idea and its otherization in matter and return of this in the indifferent thinking of the idea in its otherness in matter, but giving us precisely the strange silence that supports luther. if we find immanence at the end of this, it is by virtue

of the having-to-go-through. gaiman's ocean is the precisely the collapse of the idea. unsubmitted as we come to any organization of anything, the immanent becomes not something we do, but the very thing which appears in the absence of any language that can describe reality.

#### THE SELF-EATING WORM

in *Beiträge*, heidegger's hand is divided into the idea of closing the ground, so as to close the possibility that the topos must have already appeared to thought, and the idea that I can accidentally say the truth. coming upon truth is no longer, in heidegger, a question of finding it, but of waiting in the place where it is already there. this already-there, however, might be nothing but that truth is what I can't avoid saying — empty content, as such. further, the place where I remain, where I should wait, is not just to expect the organization of the thought to be there, so that heidegger must invent the material turning and the concept of ereignis to supplement the failure of his system to imagine the new as immanent to the very determinations which had determined Being in the first place. all there is, at last, is a reservoir of truth that admits description, because it is the only basis of description.

in this position, heidegger waits. he invents ereignis in order to try and fascinate his space. he awaits some self-eating praxis. but, his nazis have no concept of is. only celan is able to see this. the nazis have replaced is with destruction. the unintelligent, indifferent matter they beg to return is rivalled in turn by celan's grasses, where he says that language goes

*through its own lack of answers, through terrifying silence, through the thousand darknesses of murderous speech*

we must not recover here that language somehow survived the nazis. german itself, as a language, was changed, but we can no more recover this change by saying that language somehow sustains itself in the deeper reservoir of the meanings it has access to. no, language itself must break down if it wants to start saying things. this is luther's wort. the nazis opposed material destruction to what is, ultimately, for celan, that the word survives because



it is already so close to nothing. it is the nazis who try to recover the destruction of matter in the notion of change, in the notion of its return to process. that all this bloodshed and violence leads somewhere. to this, celan replies, now, taking luther's step, taking up the taking up, the wormwort, near-nothing

*da hörte ich ihn,  
da wusch er die Welt,  
ungesehn, nachklang,  
wirklich.*

*Eins und Unendlich,  
vernichtet,  
ichten.*

*Licht war. Rettung.*

the space for imagining, as consciousness might, ihn — him. the projection that an infinity — unendlich — is contained in language that cannot account its failure. this is the empty wort remaining the empty wort, but acceding to expression. it passes to no meaning beneath it. it is ungesehn, nachklang, but still wirklich. it takes that the emptiness of language does not point back towards matter. the indifferent thought of language is that the empty wort releases us. in turn, matter will not do. what we require is a deeper quantum space in which nothing is thought but this taking up in the moment that follows luther's wort. his silent reply, and the sense that the empty word points to that nothing organizes matter. here stehe ich, in the moment of that unhinged matter. like Licht, matter war.

and here speaks celan, whose purpose is to use a frightened language. he begins to invent words we don't even speak because they cannot be spoken, they fail speaking. his ichten is not some material failure. it is word totally annihilated, yet countering, in the basic nothingness of language, vernichtet. celan's language doesn't survive because it just says something, but because meaning after the nazis is the annihilation of language. he operates the fantasy of the disorganized, vacated language as language itself. the failure to say things is no longer the failure to say things, but the failure to say things. the failed, measureless content of language approaches what forestalls it, namely, matter.

his poems in the grass are near the earth worms. heidegger, too, is waiting for a worm. it is his ereignis. it is his self-eating system, his form, his fantasy. why should fantasy simply oppose reality? it projects the very indifference of matter outward. what is the purpose, in the end, of heidegger's resonant exchange with the ground, but to try and replace luther, even celan, and forget thinking in the approach that thought need do nothing more than project the ground. we find in this use of words, in celan, prefigured by luther, the strange impossibility of using language ever. is not that language fails to say something. the faltering is greater. it is that language is the deeper preparation for the disfigurement of matter, of Being. we approach the silent destruction of the is.

further, the immanent, which is the ocean flow, the hum, is only containable in such a use of language. the dreaming, in turn, which gaiman's ocean must release to, where

*I remember that I knew how to make it so the  
moon would be full when you needed it to be,  
and shining just on the back of the house, every  
night*

can only be done in a language that is broken. that is, fundamentally, unorganized. and this unorganization is not somehow some bright chaos: it is that meaning, lacking organization, does not return to anything. it is a wormhole. the strange, impossible meanings, which gaiman's ocean allow, allow language also to be anything. this anything has no organization; it is, instead, supported by the going-there of immanence, by worms whom we encounter in matter as destinations of thinking, yet whose destination is the having-to-go-there which consists in the loss of a description of reality. if we want to begin to speak like celan, with gaiman's ocean's unending meanings, we must be resolved towards a language that, lacking form, the nearnothing of subjective expression, is thereby the worm we're drawn towards in trying to describe reality. we do not approach it to describe it, but we approach it to overcome description.

ENTSCHLUSS

it is not that we are any less resolved to what is





contentless.

the worm, if and when we arrive upon it, gives us nothing. this is the point. the worm is just where we go, because we have to sustain the immanence of reality. it tells us things, but only because we have to go there to find it. the going-there is what the worm, what matter itself, sustains. we are resolved to go there, because the resolve is all we have. the lack of a description is the disorganized condition of matter.

what emerges in kiefer's fields? in the blackened landscape? the space recovers nothing, because it was not organized. we see the destruction, and we accept it. resolve to it. thought cannot be prepared for, and if we do not hold that the ground beneath us speaks, but resolve to luther's moment, how do we resist? this is the thinking place, but nothing appears. what is meant for the life of the worm? in the breaking up of the ground. in the preparation for consciousness. what did celan fail to think? what didn't luther say? the memory of everything is as conscious as the resolve to think it. where does the worm live? the quantum.

the deeper quantum space, which already refuses that any thing appears that is already thinkable, allows us to see how thoughts, being nothing but the having to go-through, need a space in which nothing is assembled but the realization itself that nothing is assembled — the resolve to go-through. the Being we gain is the singularity of the going-through of a given organism. the quantum place answers the deadlock that the regulation of these organisms must be thinkable and as such that the thinkable is containable in the organizable — in the describable. it refuses this. it reasons that an openness is radically implied in the going-through of thought, for we will have lost the illusion that form itself — the organizational topos — consists in anything, that form consists in anything.

imagine the worm. its space is, like luther's, the resigning theologische schriften, the Rettung and the ihn. the washing of celan's language is the washing through of the empty-handedness of the word. it is an illusion: Being as presence, in heidegger, fails to capture this simultaneous loss of illusion and the gaining itself of the illusion of the mystical surface (of the worm). further, the space is radically unregulated, while the thinking that takes place is both

the going-through and the new. the new conditions that thought is only thought, and, as such, thinkable, when what we come upon is new. this is why knausgaard says that if we speak it becomes real, it becomes new and as such thinkable — determined, where what is determined is not some immanent development, but the lack of an immanent development coupled with the ever-treading of the negation of negation. otherwise, knausgaard says that it doesn't exist. this is why hegel, too, just needs us to think it, just needs us to take the ground of our thinking. nothing is not immanent, so that to think is enough as to reconcile yourself to what it is. he asks, specifically, that our thinking must go to the ground, to what interrupts it. this why is he says

*dahintergehen*

that taking up of the interruption is where all our psychic forces delay themselves. they delay, because they refuse anything but the new, anything but to be at the edge of reality. whatever interrupts your life, that is where you must think. the contentless going-through of thought implies no other place. it is a pure taking-up. the unconscious, as the pure virtual line of non-knowledge, is nothing but that we have the possibility of that thinking, of this edge, at the same time as, in its contentlessness, it requires us to go there — to go-through, to have to go through. this is how the quantum space sustains the new, by being the absolute measure of thought, where thought is the radical new of the deregulated quantum space. deregulated itself by thought; thought which sustains fictions in the form of worms, in the form of material nature itself, inviting us towards our thinking.

imagine celan's language as this very space. contentless, yes, to an extent, but, also, an idea of the contentless. he gives the very breaking down which we see as the breaking down that admits language in the first place. he does this, because, lacking organization, he gives us the elements of his own wormriven matter exactly as they appear. to describe reality is to describe this rivenness. I, myself, give my words like worms. if we can piece celan's poems apart, if we can read them, even, to an extent describe them, despite the immanent impossibility of this in reality, it is because he gives us precisely the immanent wormriven matter of reality.



he gives

*ihn*

him, god, the washer. in his grass poems, his you and I, what remains of language, yes, but also the reflection of language of the very elemental, unorganizable worms of immanence, which we, to an extent, call entangled matter. he gives these, his worts, because language no more comes upon any ground, it no more apprehends what isn't there. it gives, therefore, in the aspect of that contentless space, riven by the immanent, and which supports the only possible version of language: to give, a wort, and, in doing so, invite just that indescribable having-to-go-there. it is, at that moment, in its emptiness, the word itself. hier stehe ich.

#### THE THEOLOGICAL MOMENT OF THE OPEN

when we think the ground of our inspiration, it is not only the new, but the psychic turn inside reality itself. nothing organizes this reality, but indifference. the trieb of the absolute idea in nature is indifferent discovery, but, in the confines of the psychic injunction of the going-through itself of our very own mental states, our psyches, our subjectivity — the obverse subject/object, which is this very connexion of ours to the having-to-think reality. thought is nothing, again, but the moment when the absent description invites a deregulation, an almost loss of perspective, which is the measurement of measurement, so that nothing is organized — but the resolve, but the fact of having to go through. thinking, as such, when it reaches this place, is nothing but open consciousness: a return to measurement like at the end of *L'immanence des vérités* and the return to sense-consciousness like at the end of the phenomenology. it is an openness strictly unregulated, both by the loss of the illusion of form (into the form as illusion itself — the mystic surface) and the immanence of the going-through. the indifference of nature, of material, which hegel describes, at the end of the *logik*, as consisting in this empty-handedness of thought before and to material, which allows the idea to imagine itself in its mutual non-correspondence to materiality, reconciles itself to the fact that its indifference is the indifference of the open.

nothing is further described in thought, but nothing is

is hidden either. what takes place, instead, is the loss of the sense that form is anything. that anything is. thought is the psychic injunction of the unconscious in its radical support of the quantum opening. we are worms: something, an invitation, to be thought, to become more nothingnew. the will-have-been of an indifferent nature is further transposed into the unregulated open moment that arises in the ontic hinging of the must-be-gone-through of thought with the return of the closing-up of the immanently measuring sense-consciousness.

we are the chorus of Worms. everything about the destruction of that reply is not undermined by the fact that somehow the nazis undermine themselves. whatever their blackthought amounts to it is a total ignorance, a total repression of meaning. we cannot say that they defeat themselves. not even the *entschluss* somehow extinguishes barbaric flames. but, the silence, its empty-handedness, is not mediated as some result of the quantum. there is no result in the quantum. the is of the chorus of Worms is not a Being, but a surface, a form, too, whose tiedness to thought is not to think something, but to, in that burned field, go on. towards the washing-over in quantum waves. this go on is what celan himself seeks, for when there is no sense that you simply move on from the nazis, the only option is to return to that moment, in some ways renazify oneself, admit loss and destruction, avoid hope, and go on from there — the furthest point of your psychic exposure, the furthest point of reality. in celan, reality has gone as far as it has ever gone.

the quantum is the theological moment of the open. it is the laying down of rules. there is no rule inside the worm, except that it must be visited. this visiting can only be resolved to. *ich kann nicht anders*. everything that is about to happen is not even contained in whatever organizes matter. we must change matter. we must have a matter that can admit worms and wormholes. it is before us, tied to our consciousness like the wick of a candle. burning from behind us, the slow, backwards release of realization. every worm comes with a realization, a thought.

#### THE OCEAN AND THE LIGHTNING STRIKE

where does heidegger, ultimately, falter? why does



celan, in his pronouns, outlast heidegger? heidegger's disjunction of Being serves to imagine Being's process as applicable to itself, as though there were a thing called Being in the first place. hegel's point seeks to disprove this, when, in the falling together of determinations, Being is not only the lowest determination, but itself lost in the ocean of determinations. what is resuscitated in *Beiträge* is a Being that can, at last, try to be open.

it is Being as the place in which truth occurs without our realizing. we have only to leap and, indeed, our leaping up prepares this Being. his struggle between truth and Being is nothing but the struggle to measure Being, so that truth becomes the place of Being, the taking-up of Being in its inevitable truthfulness. the place is an illusion. Being, worse yet, fails to imagine the new that it cannot think, because it never really existed. only *ereignis* signals heidegger's deeper point: the nazi event allows him to think what he is missing. his proximity to it is his proximity to what is itself, as a thought, unforcloseable. it is the idea itself of the having to think. not content, already there, but having to go there oneself. like with celan, we tie all the imaginative unfoldings of reality nevertheless to this procedure. again, his poems are reality, as far as we have gone to touch its indifference. indifference, which, after all, sustains the having to go there in the first place. nothing unresolves that matter is matter. furthermore, heidegger, for all his imaginative reimaginings of the material space in the turning merely conceals the deeper failure of his to have a concept of the having-to-think, in turn of indifference. to have to think is itself is to think that thought is proximity, itself so close to present Being, but proximity that destroys the form of the place in un-describing it.

can we imagine, can we go so far as to say that the nazi destruction concentrates a repressed fantasy of the new, contained in heidegger's thought of *ereignis*? the sudden lighting-strike of alteration in nazi germany is a fantasy of the new and open, so that the theatre of the nazis allowed heidegger to live out what remains repressed in his thinking. that the nazis concentrate this for him is tragic; but, more tragic still, in the context of heidegger, is that he moves towards thinking the nazi event, voiding his thought literally in the appropriation, so as to be appropriated into the clearing of that very same appropriation: he

becomes a nazi so that he can avoid his own system.

contained in *ereignis*, the word itself, is the fantasy of such a word — of such an idea. the organizational structure of the symptom is that it temporarily allows us to live out our fantasy. heidegger's fantasy is not nazism, but the deeper prospect of change, revealed in the disjunction of Being with itself. the idea of a changing Being. the nazi event is the supportive fantasy that allows Being to imagine that the change occurs directly without having to go there, without the slipping through of the worm in its very material structure, without deregulation and the loss of perspective. only a good hegelian would realize that Being must release itself, to an extent, lose itself. even ecological movements of our time need to release themselves from the future, and, as such, ground their thinking in precisely what escapes it. it is not the other, as such, which escapes thought, nor the possibility of saying the truth before you realize it, but the fact that we cannot prepare ourselves for what we think. if thought itself can lack content, it is because we only think, beyond every fiction, in the now, so that thought as its content is nothing but the indifferent gaze of consciousness on indifferent reality, sustained by the quantum having-to-go-there. the worminess of it all.

the place eludes heidegger because he cannot release that form is a surface of horizontal thought without a horizon, nor that thought amounts to an indifferent gaze on the unregulated development of the quantum new.

*I can recall sitting at night, sick in some way,  
needing to calm myself, my body, safe beneath  
soundless lightning strikes around me.*

the fantasmatic prospect of the nazis is something far more dangerous — the return of Being; but it is nothing but the material fiction of change without a language to first disfigure its very own prospectiveness. as hegel knew well, thought cannot alter matter, but when thought is, as such, nothing but the having to go-through, then thought is what cuts matter, unresolves it, even draws it together in the *dahintergehen* of the quantum openness.

like a lightning strike, like the great hegelian topos





in the play *Mosquitoes*, where

*the rules of chemistry themselves are changed*

in huge cosmic energy events, means that the rule, the measurement, imagine description as simply awaiting a change that is not material. the rules of reality can change, because they are dahintergone measurements of a given consciousness, a given rule-boundedness that expunged the lutheranism of given moment. ultimately, these rules change. material change, in turn, is a fiction. all there is is that very unresolving moment of the lightning-strike, branded twice on the SS officers, to remind them of their paganistic materialism, their reliance on change through the illusion of force, which is destruction, or the unthinking quantum delivery. all that regulates reality is its very dahintergehen, and the very manifest possibility — the measurement — of this is thought. thought is deregulation, which is not strictly deregulated, but reveals the source of the first measurement to be its ground in another measurement that releases it back to itself. it proximates itself, so that the thought-nature of things is the going-through of themselves of quantum change. the place contained in the lightning strike is a burned field. we do not see here an idea of material change. it doesn't exist. the rage of the nazis is a rage at the failure to think too readily without thought, without its delay in the openness that must be gone through — the worm. their priest invents a fantasy word to consummate the failed delivery of the new. the new, however, has nothing to do with humans, in much the same way that our own consciousness is the immanent disfiguration of reality as reality. it is not something that can be prepared for; it is pure imagination, which understands itself already as contentless and as submitted consciousness to the deperspectivized new. here stehe ich. it concerns a cut between us. the loss of perspective contained in the changing of the rules themselves of reality is measured in a singular metaphor: gaiman's ocean. open-ended determination. the possible of reality, as in consciousness, piecing itself together.

in celan, we have the opening, in its radical particularity. every moment, one after the other. at last, the worm, the wriggle. we describe reality for as long we have followed it, because the language is the giving

of that description, which fails, to that matter that, wormriven, also fails, and, as such, is describable in a failed language which can relate only matter indifferently as it is before us. but, this failure is not somehow positive, or measurable directly. it must be spun otherwise, that language itself has to be broken up in order to admit the possible meanings of that world, in order to contain, initially in seeming fragments, the worms of reality. if there is no possibility of organizing our thinking, we have only to organize this very disorganization.

as in badiou, there is no possibility of a theological response. recall wittgenstein's rule-following paradox, and kriepke's response to it: nothing prepares language to think the world. celan goes further than luther, because he is able to imagine, not only that the whole of language itself is empty, but that language begins empty. its emptiness near to nothing as to life. the inspired moment of luther is the preparation for what wormriven matter might admit. in the end, only a totally deracinated, pure-expressive language can think indifferent matter as indifferent matter. an indifferent worm that, like all things, must be thought, gone-to, to be anything at all. the not-being-able-to-be-prepare-for is not the event, but the condition itself for the thought-structure of the worm, which is unmeasured in the measurement of measurement. in the entlassen of the chorus of Worms. the world is unthinkable. this is what luther's wormwort is the test of. he appears before him, nothing regulating his appearance, and the question of him is thought,

*einmal  
da hörte ich ihn,  
da wusch er die Welt,  
ungesehn, nachtlang,  
wirklich.*

the only reply to the nazis, besides the destruction of Being, is that the world is meaningless. contentless, indifferent, *unendlich*

we have to begin destroying our language to understand it. I give a word and nothing prepares me for what it says. there is no ereignis. the world is nothing but the submission to its being thought and the rising in the thinkable, wormwort,



in the play *Mosquitoes*, where

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## The mountain of death

Heidegger and Celan met once, in Tostenberg. The meeting was a brief walk, and Celan left disappointed. It would not be wrong to say he came with expectations, that Heidegger might offer him words on regret, on remorse. Heidegger had <sup>none</sup> ~~not~~ to give, because he felt none. It is strange, though, for Celan to come, expecting something to be said where he knew nothing could be. It is the mountain of death, the waterfall dripping in the last of <sup>its</sup> returns, he comes, instead, to become aware of.

In the poem he writes, he does not almost nothing but describe Lonsberg, Fluss, even rivers, to register somehow the intricate something we missing see, how Celan comes to ask the impossible, and still leaves disappointed. What else would we expect him to feel though, before the very failure to do, to say, but disappointment. Why, then, does the mountain appear, as though deference to an disappointed shows the world more clearly its view. It suggests that what disappoints us, we have also desired. The classic moves into the world, which only fragments and details, ~~confirmed by the disappointment that they are <sup>not</sup> the thing we need, may continue to arouse.~~

may continue to arouse, confirmed by the disappointment they in equal measure sustain.



do we imagine this for color, the, a flower, come to another, asking for the  
disappointment to keep deriving. as in their a special quality of nothing, which renders  
neither disappointment, nor desire, and yet which offers to invite them both in. what is  
this mountain for color, if not, in as horrifying a way as possible, the place of his  
desire. he may imagine this center, that in place of that horror, he wants to desire  
death directly, instead. it is not for him to desire death, because it <sup>is</sup> ~~not~~  
Kierkegaard's black hills that he had seen, forestalled, by hunger and abuse  
where would have appeared <sup>where</sup> fleetingly and nothing but the black hills to take their  
place.

where desire would have appeared fleetingly and nothing but the black hills to  
take its place. ~~disappointment is not the absence of something, it is the feeling of the~~  
~~impossible.~~

isn't this why color returns, as to center their darkness, he asks the question of his  
desire? he may imagine he comes almost to see the details again. but, those  
details forestall the impossible, rising in as much aptitude for beauty as for  
destruction. if he is disappointed, to see the details rise again, his desire poured to  
reveal itself to him, how now that desire cannot reveal itself but has its fleeting  
space. what will happen to the flowers and the halcyon and the black hills when

I no longer desire them, as desire, appearing to me, gives up the flowers, the halcyon  
and the black hills, which, in disappointment, had chosen me to the trace of my



desire. is it possible that in visiting heidegger, he was drawn to what it was he may have  
desired in the black camp, so that even heidegger's failed reply is as the failed  
reply of god to croesus in that moment

I do not believe that celan wanted to be disappointed, but he must have asked  
the question of how the form of the world arrives in an disappointed mode. he must've wondered  
how it was that he desire those that both belong & say to desire his desire, so that  
our pain is how we come to desire that place, that mountain, more than the mystery of our  
desire itself. this is the pain of attachment, and celan ~~is~~ is in the pain that his hills  
are that hills, that the secret of his poetry is that his desire reveals him to the  
beauty of the horror. the

fences,  
viel

so that he may imagine he comes upon the mountain of death, to heidegger's silence,  
confronted to the resolve that the terror of the black night is not that we find our desire  
there, but that it appears to our senses. the rattling of our senses, and in turn the  
rattling of our desire. if there is a greater mystery, however, it is how, in giving up  
desire, we gain precisely what disappoints us. the world remains in the confines of a desire that  
lasts even into the burning out of the will, the fleeting smoke, the black coils that  
even death transforms, the schmerz fleeter, melting in the banks of being, and then waded,  
at the same moment it reaches to nothing, gains in that quality out of nothing, which  
disappointing us, allows us to see what that which had sustained the world was that  
disappointment.



There is a famous moment in Pierre Joris' brief essay on translating Celso's poem, *Lehtenbung*.

translation by another  
the poem is vicariously mixed  
to Joris' fingers on



as it, he takes issue with a previous translation. Under the influence of Gadamer's translation, the violence of which, according to how to translate

eines Hoffnung, heute,  
und eines Dankens  
kommendes  
Wart  
im Herzen

and whether to translate this as 'a hope in the heart for a thinker's word' or as 'a hope for a word in the heart of a thinker.' Joris advocates the second, for he argues that the first is such that we expect something from Heidegger, whereas the second evokes something arising & heidegger himself — in his own heart. It is a litmus test for genuine translation. How much expectation did Celso have, and do we believe that that expectation is somehow paternalistic in Heidegger's presence, somehow dependent, as if it were a sure, silent, radical hope in Celso for what is affectively unassailable of another, unchangeable, that they feel and even understand something about the reality in which they find themselves.



To that end, Jones writes a great deal about the novel *Walden*, the coherence and  
of an impossible understanding. He writes a poem can only translate to another poem, and  
as such Heidegger's failure to understand the poem is a failure to imagine just the difficulty  
of exchange. Jones finishes with the thought only another poem can accompany the translation.

That that thought itself  
translation, in order to exist, has to refuse to believe while being completely  
faced by that idea as its practical reason d'être, a thought translation thus has  
to try to refuse at the risk of refuting itself

The question of an alignment between two people in the question of the impossibility of  
being understood. Celan, however, argues that this alignment hinges on giving up

our idea. The language he speaks has no ideas. It is completely open.  
There is no longer any preparation, and everything we say means some thing  
completely openly as it means nothing at all. Celan witnesses the end of  
Heidegger's meaning. If we are understood by anyone, it is that in that  
alignment we are understood as what we are becoming.



afterword

celan's is a language of the dead. to speak this language, which is necessary if we are to interact with the blindness of reality, with the pitch dark, with the *wormwort*, we must in some ways die. or, else, allow our meanings to die. it is nothing too dissimilar from wittgenstein's point that all our meanings will have changed by the time we try and realize in what they consist. our formula is something like king krule's;

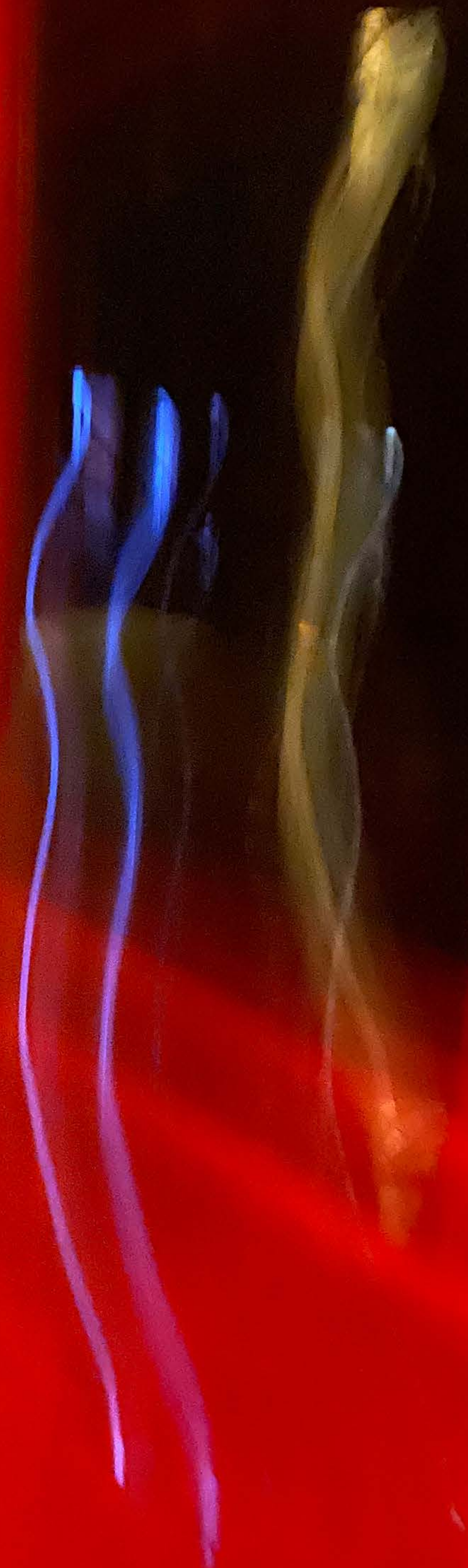
am I the only one to believe in that there's nothing to believe in

as elias describes, the open wound of the holocaust invites us to think its radical presentment. it is the 'dystopia in the present.' nothing short of celan's nomadness, his migrations, and the subsequent migrations across europe, even varoufakis' post-capitalist dystopia, that charge us still today, can capture the extent to which that wound is a wound inside all of us.

if to speak on kiefer and heidegger, alongside artists like de waal and celan, consists in anything it is that, the only way to approach the jewish trauma is to approach the german trauma. the paradox of celan using german is that the darkness achieved by the nazis does not shorten its horrified grief any more than the jewish grief at the khurbn and the shoah.

in fact, the strange way in which kiefer returns radically to german historical subjects is the only way to open precisely that darkness which celan refers to in his poem *todtnauberg*. it is a deeper darkness, a deeper misunderstanding. in labatut's *when we cease to understand the world*, this darkness is compared to the horrifying Schwarzschild's singularity, the ripping-through of the space time by a black hole. the question he puts is whether the concentration of psyches, like matter, when sufficiently compressed can admit a similar impenetrable darkness.

if this is the case, and the only language, between wittgenstein and celan, is one which accepts that the only thing to believe in is that there's nothing to believe in, then we will not see this dark core coming. no light escapes it. instead, we will see its warping effects, the fleeing of people, across land, across borders, the eerie collapse of the concept of land, as the dense black slowly closes itself off from reality forever.





22/11/2021

1:48 PM

it strikes me that  
since the holocaust  
shouldn't there be new  
jewish writings  
new jewish religious texts  
of course they'd somewhat be  
in tension with the prophecies  
etc  
but still  
linked to your g-d issue

1:55 PM

there's a section in cope  
quietly about the holocaust  
and sort of about this  
don't remember it's  
section title  
i said something like 'the  
holocaust is g-d itself'

*excerpt from a  
messenger conversation  
between hegelsh and elias*



## APPENDIX

herein are included transcriptions of all handwritten material. the contents are as follows:

cope quietly  
letters to camondo, epilogue from letters to de waal  
the mountain of death, epilogue from being and worms  
the fire was ignited long ago, quote from gradowski  
I stood face to face myself, as it were and cried, munich testimony  
an evenly measured breath  
Im Geist getrennt, Im Herz vereint  
I wasn't there  
bareness, today  
unmistakably intermingled with my woes  
geheimnisträger  
a thought translation thus has to try to refute at the risk of refuting itself  
Waldwasen, uneingeebnet, from celan's poem todtnauberg

finally, some brief reflections from elias on the issue are given, entitled

*I recently dreamt that hegelsh had become a potter on a whim, secured a show at a Gallery I once worked for, and produced a series of Yunomi masterpieces, all for a cheap rate*

notes

almost all of the photography in this issue is original. in the letters to de waal article photographs were made from facsimile reproductions of kiefer's work in print. in the interview with hagari, hagari's own work, as declared, was supplied by the artist himself for our personal use and reproduction. these are the only two exceptions.

several works are quoted throughout the various articles and in the wordwalls. nothing is cited because we, the authors, have made it clear when a quotation from another source was used and maintain that the context of every such citation is clearly given. there are a few exceptions in which quote marks were used.

in the epilogue mountain of death, the ideas developed therein were stimulated greatly by pierre joris' translation work and his essay on the translation of celan's poem, todtnauberg. in view of this, a second piece was developed in homage, in part, to joris' analysis of the poem and his work on translating celan more generally. preceding this, the quotes from the diet of worms are taken from the wikipedia article Martin Luther auf dem Reichstag zu Worms 1521.

there are also several quotes from mainly jewish writers, contextualized or, as in the case of gradowski's quote, contained in quotation marks. these include quotations from elie wiesel's la nuit, primo levi's se questo è un uomo, and, as mentioned, gradowski's brief account of his time in auschwitz. as well, in there is a fundamental impasse in the human psyche, quotations are taken from Krankenpflege im Nationalsozialismus (third edition), translated by sally winkle.

in notes on kiefer, many quotes are taken from king krule, particularly from his we love green festival performance. these are not usually contextualized, but are contained in indented passages to indicate they are taken from another source. some passages are indented only for emphasis. the opening words, can we align, are taken from the end of king krule's the OOZ.

where not otherwise cited or contextualized, the words were written by one of us. the only exception is Im Geist getrennt, Im Herz vereint, which was written by my friend fiachra oneill.



cope quietly

For as long as I stayed with my brother, I stalled for day to turn to night, whereupon we might cook, drink, or watch a film. Several hours after speaking with Miriam, Ezra and I watched Tarkovsky's *Solaris* and, commensurate with three hours of cinematic meditations on eternity and repetition, our minds finally landed upon the notion of aging. When he was little, Ezra would lie awake at night petrified at the thought of death. But when my brother and I spoke, we did not touch on death, we spoke of aging. Aging, as far as I am concerned, is more interesting, eternal.

For a number of reasons, many of them rather straightforward, the memory of our maternal grandparents dominates my brothers' and my own feelings towards growing older. Indelible fragments of my youth were spent in the backseat of my mother's van as my family drove two hours north to my grandmother in Chicago. She lived in a large apartment which towered over the Loop providing a pristine vantage over Lake Michigan. Mythic recollection. Between countless pieces of old wooden furnishings, an entire wall of my grandfather's books hid itself away in a central room while a collection of American Indian artworks and objects sat for all to see in a large space in the middle of her home (my oldest brother, Lev, once made a series of screen prints of one such mask). My grandmother, Alice, was a lover of dachshunds and, having raised two children who work as musicians, it is only right that she gave her dogs names like Pamina and Rosina. These loud, unruly animals governed the apartment, often ruining the most prized objects in my grandparents' wide collection of culture. Alice struggled with depression, something which runs in our family tree. Of course I only remember her with love, but the intermixing of love and anger, love and long bouts of sadness, these are strange and lasting associations for a child to witness.

The morning I learned she had died, my family and I were returning home from a trip in the Carolinas during which my father took my brothers and I on a fishing expedition far into the ocean (the combination of dying fish and choppy water convinced me to take dramamine and, when I rose from my slumber, my father was supposedly wrestling with a small shark on the other side of his fishing line and I could not see land in any direction: I have since been terrified at the thought of open water). Ten, twenty hour drives were quite common in my youth. We had planned to return home to Indiana over the course of two days. Just a few hours from our destination, we marked the halfway point of our journey by spending a night in a former Shaker village in Kentucky where goats roamed free-

ly outside of our room. In the morning, my parents told us that Alice had died. Minutes later, crowded shoulder to shoulder with my siblings in the backseat, I asked Lev to let me read his collection of Kafka short stories which he had brought with him. It was my first time trying to read Kafka, I must have been fourteen. The simple but pretty cover left more of an impression on me than the literature, which I didn't prune very much wisdom from at the time.

"It was disturbing to see Grandma get older. She hallucinated. Do you remember, you might have been too young to remember," Ezra spoke slowly as I remained prone on a floor-bound futon, he on the sofa some two feet above, "when Mom had each of us," another pause, "when we all had our final moment with Grandma?" I did not, I was too young. "I remember that her questions were so penetrating. She asked what I wanted to be and I told her a filmmaker. But when she asked more about it, it felt like I wasn't enough. I was alone with her and her nurse. When I was leaving the room, she said to the nurse, 'I don't want to alarm Ezra, but who is that tall man standing behind him? Could you please tell him to leave?'" I had to assume that this was Ezra's last moment with my grandmother.

My eyes began to water, something which has always happened when I hear of supernatural encounters. My mother took the chess board from my deceased grandparents' home and, nearly three years ago, I once saw a pawn move on its own accord, or so I tell myself. My eyes watered then, too.

Lev, the eldest child among all of our cousins, once had a dream in which our grandfather, Martin, and Alice appeared to him, the latter devoid of facial features. Both were surrounded by extended family, some of whom had not been born by the time of Martin's death. When Lev called to tell my mother the following day, she revealed that it had been Alice's *yahrzeit*, the anniversary of her death. (A classmate of mine had died on the same date only three years after my grandmother's passing. Though we were not close, I had known him for most of my life. It was a small town. We cannot be blamed for having missed Alice's *yahrzeit*, that year.)

I was not old enough to retain many memories when Martin died. My family tells me that he had lived with dementia for a long time. Martin was close with my namesake, his grandfather. Because Elias, a pharmacist, stored drugs in his own bathtub, Martin washed him in his parents' small tub once a week. He often rode on Elias's shoulders. If my mother can be trusted, my namesake would often point to a bench near



his home and tell Martin that “the great man sat there,” referring, of course, to none other than Leon Trotsky.

My parents recently converted a number of home videos from VHS into some slightly less arcane format. One recording documents my naming ceremony. As my brothers and cousins wreak hell upon the living room of my childhood home, a sweet, dawdling Rabbi who died not long afterwards congratulates my parents and family on my behalf. When my mother handed my pudgy body to a smiling, confused Martin, my infant-self laughed and clung to his blue-and-white striped polo. He and Alice sat on chairs which still reside in that living room. Having no memory of Martin through my own eyes, the spectacle was rather disorienting.

He might not know what’s going on, but he clearly likes having all these kids around,” Lev said. I thought this was a wise observation.

As I lay on Ezra’s futon which I rolled up each morning and set out each night, I returned to these flashing scenes which had once lain dormant. “I worry about Mom and Dad aging more than I worry about my own aging. That’ll sort itself out. Some of the sure things in life I’m more at peace with than others.” Ezra and I looked at one another but did not speak.

letters to camondo, epilogue from letters to de waal

It arrived in the middle of the day, in my mother’s hands, while I sat writing my article on De Waal. My mother had heard of his first book, but she had never read it. I told her she should read them both. The letters after all have a brother, or a cousin, or a fathering. This time it is less narrativistic, less Proustian. Memory has gone absolute. It is everyone’s now. We get the occasional personal detail, and everything as it concerns the Camondos is personal, but this book embodies a different kind of searching, a different kind of telling. It is more political, more overtly concerned with assimilation and the hidden conspiracy of its failure. Saliently held between its pages is a small argument that French Jews were French Jews. They were patriots, with “two homelands,” and no part of themselves felt less or more French or less or more Jewish. When the first world war erupted, the Jews in France took it as their opportunity to express their devotion to their adopted homeland. They bled and died in the war for France. Yet, it wasn’t enough. Eventually park benches would become sanitized. The shade of trees boxed up. Light and air and the subtle nowness of everything would become foreclosed.

What we think at this point is everything. If we argue that they didn’t assimilate, that they didn’t really take up French culture and give into it and make it their own, then all we succeed in affirming is that the anti-semitism of the French people was a foregone conclusion, whose terrible existence was no more absurdly voiced than in the idea of a Jewish person trying to adopt that culture, woven as it was with that hatred. But, if that hatred was never not a part of that culture, and every effort of culture was to expose it, then there no longer exists a sense in which the anti-semite merely existed nor a sense that a Jewish person either began to hate himself or failed to assimilate. The idea that culture refines, that it clears away hatred, is misplaced precisely because culture itself seems to be, after a certain point, the refinement of all hatreds. The anti-semite was never not present, so in what world can we say that anti-semitism somehow overwhelmed French-Jewish cultural expressions? It didn’t.

We should ask, instead, what else happened that overwhelmed the French and the French Jews? As De Waal describes the tragic, almost literal, undressing of the Camondos at the onset of the second world war, he shows us that what was most sad, if anything, was how possible assimilation was. The strongest case for French culture itself was the argument of its adaptability, that the lack of a line of progress through culture meant that the shadows behind culture were never part of its dismantling. The future of French culture was opening up like a lily-blossom in the hands of anyone who had the vision to take it up, and this vision was not ignorant of the horrors of France. All that remained for the turn towards the expulsion and the revocation of citizenship and the abetting of genocide, that, in intimations, continues to this day in France, was an idealization of a culture. You would have to think that everything you did was possible without the horror of it all. What would a Frenchman want in the end? Not the expulsion of the Jews, but of his own anti-semitism, of his own hatred. He would set himself upon this task by removing the Jews and destroying his own culture, because he didn’t dare affirm that his culture was a dance with hatred, nor that all culture is a dance with hatred, and not the unreal moment of its overcoming. He didn’t dare say that he was ashamed, that he was embarrassed by the fact that he had already been forgiven, that those who had received his hatred had already forgiven him and had offered him this forgiveness. He didn’t dare recall that to this offering he had said, “No.” It would simply be too painful.



mountain of death, epilogue from being and worms

heidegger and celan met once. in Todtnauberg. the meeting was a brief walk, and celan left disappointed. it would not be wrong to say he came with expectations, that heidegger might offer his words on regret, even remorse. heidegger had none to give, because he felt none. it is strange, though, for celan to come, expecting something to be said where he knew nothing could be. it is the mountain of death, the waterfall dripping in the last of its returns, he comes, instead, to become aware of.

in the poem he writes, he does almost nothing but describe landscape, flowers, even drivers, to register somehow the instinct something was missing. see, how celan comes to ask the impossible, and still leaves disappointed. what else would we expect him to feel though, before the very failure to do, to say, but disappointment. why, then, does the mountain appear, as though deference to our disappointment draws the world more clearly into view. it suggests that what disappoints us, we have also desired. the desire moves into the world, which only figments and details, may continue to arouse, confined by the disappointed they in equal measure sustain.

do we imagine this from celan, too, a flower, come to another, asking for the disappointment to keep desiring. is there a special quality of nothing, which sustains neither disappointment, nor desire, and yet which offers to invite nothing in. what is this mountain for celan, if not, in as horrifying a way as possible, the place of his desire. we may imagine his counter, that in place of that horror, he commits to desire death directly, instead. it is not for him to desire death, because it is heidegger's black hills where he had been, forestalled, by hunger and abuse, where would have appeared his desire fleetingly and nothing but the black hills to take their place.

isn't this why celan returns, so to counter this darkness, he asks the question of his desire? we may imagine he comes almost to see the details again. but, these details foretell the impossible, rising in as much aptitude for beauty as for destruction. if he is disappointed, to see the details rise again, his desire poised to reveal itself to him, how now that desire cannot reveal itself but lose its fleeting space. what will happen to the flowers and the holzweg and the black hills when I no longer desire the, or desire, appearing to me, gives up the flowers, the holzweg,

and the black hills, which, in disappointment, had drawn me to the trace of my desire. is it possible that in visiting heidegger, he was drawn to what it was he may have desired in the black camps, so that even heidegger's failed reply is as the failed reply of god to answer in that moment.

I do not believe that celan wanted to be disappointed, but he must have asked the question of how the form of the world arises in our disappointment. he must've wondered how it was that to desire these black hills became a way to desire his desire, so that our pain is how to desire that place, that mountain, more than the mystery of our desire itself. this is the pain of attachment, and celan is in the pain that his hills are black hills, that the secret of his poetry is that is desire recalls him to the beauty of the horror, the

Feutches,  
viel.

so that he may imagine he comes upon the mountain of death, to heidegger's silence, confined to the resolve that the terror of the black night is not that we find our desire there, but that it appeals to our senses. the nothing of our senses, and so too the nothing of our desire. if there is a greater mystery, however, it is how, in giving up desire, we gain precisely what disappoints us. the world remains in the confines of a desire that lasts even into the burning out of the wick, the fleeting the smoke, the black coals not even death transforms, the schwarze flocken, melting in the hands of Being, and the world, at the same moment it resolves to nothing, gains in that quality of nothing, which disappointing us, allows us to see that what has sustained the world was that disappointment.



zalman gradowski quote, from his auschwitz memoir

This fire was ignited long ago by the barbarians and murderers of the world, who hoped to drive the darkness from their brutal lives with its light

I stood face to face myself, as it were and cried, munich testimony

I became aware for the first time around the Fall of 1942 that killings were being carried out on our station... The girl was then given daily injections of 2 cc of Morphine-Scopolamin [MS] for about 14 days. I was not present when the head physician gave the order in question. Therefore I cannot say whether the 14-day treatment of 2 cc MS daily was decided by Dr. Wernicke at the outset or whether she gave a new order every day for the administration of this dosage... I had to administer the aforementioned dosage of MS to one of the upper arms of the patient maybe two or three times during the time span mentioned above. I did not give any thought to this treatment at the time. But when the girl receiving this treatment died after 14 days, of course I came to the conclusion that her death had been caused solely by the injections given to her. Starting in that fall of 1942, adult patients and also children were often moved to the so-called isolation room. Of course in the meantime I realized the purpose of these transfers. But I could not bring myself to speak with anyone about it...

Each time after the transferred patients had been put to bed, the five (of fewer) tablets of Veronal [a powerful sleeping sedative] were mixed into a glass of sugar water... I got the tablets from the medicine cabinet and administered them... Generally, after some encouragement, the patients drank the dissolved tablets without further ado. After the patients had swallowed the Veronal preparation they were given a glass of clear water to wash it down...

I myself never had anything to do with removing the corpses, nor did I ever entrust any of our nurses with that job. I also never went to the morgue. We wrapped the corpses in sheets and turned them over to the men from the graveyard commando. After cleaning, the sheets were returned to our station...

At that time I was very often alone, surrounded by my own thoughts; I

stood face to face with myself as it were, and cried.

an evenly measured breath

One of the busier streets in my town is just barely visible from the window in my bedroom. The street leads to the university here. At night, my room is enveloped in uniform darkness save for the small line of light peaking through this window at the foot of my bed. Although I cannot see the street itself, sometimes the light from passing cars faintly brightens my propped up arm. I stare at my arm rather than the window to find evidence of my passerbys' fleeting visits. I am always doubtful, after the fact, that the light on my arm had ever appeared: was that a car just now, or did I only imagine it? Some nights I watch for their brief reflections on myself until I fall asleep. This can last for hours. The light appears and fades so unobtrusively, even when the car speeds by. A perfectly rounded crescendo and fall, an evenly measured breath.

Im Geist getrennt, Im Herz vereint

Growing up half German its difficult to see the dark side of your cultural identity, its even more difficult to see it when singing a butchered version of "O Tannenbaum" with your drunk uncles and cousins. The dark history of the Nazis haunts the world but for many young Germans outside of Germany it is kept a secret. The first time I learnt about the Nazis I was in shock, its like finding out one of your family members was a murderer, you don't want to believe it and you feel a large sense of guilt; I can't imagine what it would feel like to be both Jewish and German and have to face these convictions. As a child growing up the only stories I heard about my German family was about my Opa coming to Canada as a POW after being captured by British troops and my Oma jumping on the last coal train out of East Germany. These were the stories that framed my knowledge about my German family history. I remember learning about the Nazis in a history class and I felt as if I had to hide myself out of guilt, being a child its very easy to feel blame for something that you weren't apart of but are in some way related to. Later that day I asked my mom about the Nazis, she said there was a leader called Hitler who in the 1930-1940s promised to improve Germany and make life better for all Germans, it was only later I found out that it would be at the expense of millions of people and solidify a new type of identity for future Germans. It was around this time that I came across the band



Rammstein from one of my cousins who began my journey into music.

Rammstein is a German heavy metal-techno band formed in the mid-90s. Their use of electronic instruments mixed with guitars and the drums creates a new type of sound that is enjoyable to both heavy metal listeners as well as those interested in techno. Rammstein, in my opinion, differs from most heavy metal bands in what they, as a band, are expressing. Most heavy metal bands use their outlandish style and their non-traditional lifestyle to attract an audience. Rammstein's unique approach to music is at the same time creating a new genre they are also creating a new identity for the German people. In their famous song "Deutschland" the band speaks of their nation as being one that is so young yet also so old (So jung, und doch so alt) and one that they hate yet also love so dearly (Will dich lieben und verdammen). This song speaks to the long history Germany has and the effects that this history has had on their identity. The music video demonstrates this point very well by showing events throughout Germany's history, one very notable one is of a scene of a holocaust execution. The band brings to mind Germany's horrible past but in a way to show that they have no choice but to love it whole heartedly yet can still hate it for the same reason. (Deutschland, deine Liebe ist Fluch und Segen).

Rammstein tries to create a new Germany identity by using Germany's past as an antithesis to create a modern progressive identity. The issue with this is that many alt-right movements listen to their music and use it as a motivator for their anger due to the bands use of the German language and German historical symbolism, most notably Nazi symbols. In this way Rammstein is a symbol of the modern German conundrum, as they use their past as a way to move forward other groups utilize their music, and past, as a way to promote their own alt-right identity, one very similar to the Nazis. The effect this has is that it creates an association that if you listen to Rammstein, or are associated with the German identity, then you are associated with alt-right movements, beliefs, or groups to some extent. This association holds Germans, as well as any listener of heavy metal, from progressing forward in expressing their identity. Their history is a hand grasping at their ankles bringing them back into the past, the Old Reich is never fully forgotten, and their identity is stuck in the 1940s.

All German's recognize their history, without it they wouldn't be the people they are today, but this past is, in the words of Rammstein, "Deine Liebe ist Fluch und Segen". In dealing with their past they have the ability to completely change who they were and reinvent themselves.

Rammstein understands this, they are a heavy metal group yet in a way to separate themselves they incorporated the new sound of techno to show that they may be similar to heavy metal groups yet are very unique. They use this new sound as a uniting force, as their band is composed of both German and Jewish German members, they also unite both heavy metal and techno fans.

I wasn't there

My mother, a violist, played Wagner's Flying Dutchman when she was pregnant with me.

I kicked in her womb when the timpani sounded behind her. She thinks that this means I enjoyed the music--and how could I disagree? I wasn't there

bareness, today

When we think of the German landscape, we see gray skies and a leafless tree.

This wasn't always the case.

Does this mean we are only imagining a barrenness, today?

No, our sight has really changed that place.

unmistakably intermingled with my woes

Unmistakably intermingled with my woes, I was filled with the vigor of possibility which must accompany any seriously renewed relationship with sense and sensing, and, walking home, I was struck by the immensity of the clouds which meekly peaked and towered above the roofs of the neighborhood. Celestial sights ablaze with traces of man, pale and jaundiced reflections of the eastward city neutralized and made comprehensible by the watery body beyond, a prepubescent green meeting my gaze. More often, our sky assumes wickedly colored purples, particularly in the wintertime, not to mention the still lewder hues I observed as California fires imprinted themselves upon the psyche of its distant, Atlantic-bound American cousin only a few months ago.



geheimnisträger

Jamais je n'oublierai cette nuit, la première nuit de camp qui a fait de ma vie une nuit longue et sept fois verrouillée.  
Jamais je n'oublierai cette fumée.  
Jamais je n'oublierai les petits visages des enfants dont j'avais vu les corps se transformer en volutes sous un azur muet.  
Jamais je n'oublierai ces flammes qui consumèrent pour toujours ma foi.  
Jamais je n'oublierai ce silence nocturne qui m'a privé pour l'éternité du désir de vivre.  
Jamais je n'oublierai ces instants qui assassinèrent mon Dieu et mon âme, et mes rêves qui prirent le visage du désert.  
Jamais je n'oublierai cela, même si j'étais condamné à vivre aussi longtemps que Dieu lui-même. Jamais.

L'alba ci colse come tradimento; come se il nuovo sole si associasse agli uomini nella deliberazione di distruggerci...

Tutti scoprono, più o meno presto nella loro vita, che la felicità perfetta non è realizzabile, ma pochi si soffermano invece sulla considerazione opposta: che tale è anche una infelicità perfetta...

these are our geheimnisträger. in the first we ask how is it that wiesel manages to be so poetic. how is sensibility here, and the sensuousness of phrase, intermixed with the horror related? like celan and de waal, there is some strange entanglement of both beauty and pleasure in the horrifying. it suffices to recall frankl's reflection on seeing the sunlight, the dawn, in winter in the camps.

in the second, our wonder is more open-ended: why is it that insight blooms before the black and the terrible of reality? is it that faced with the dark we invent only those things completely necessary to our thinking, which is, by that point, nothing but the spontaneous? do we not come near the night in daytime and hold that tension itself as thought, as what we think, so that the clearer the tension the clearer the realization.

a thought translation thus has to try to refute at the risk of refuting itself

there is a furious moment in pierre joris' brief essay on translating celan's poem, todtnauberg. in it, he takes issue with a previous translation by another translation. under the influence of gadamer, the poem is vio-

lently mistranslated, the violence of which, according to joris, hinges on how to translate

einer Hoffnung, heute,  
auf eines Denkenden  
kommendes  
Wort  
im Herzen

and whether to translate this as 'a hope in the heart for a thinker's work' or as 'a hope for a word in the heart of a thinker.' joris advocates the second, for he argues that the first is such that we expect something from heidegger, whereas the second concerns something arising in heidegger himself -- in his own heart. it is a litmus test for germans to translate. how much expectation did celan have, and do we believe that that expectation is somehow paternalized in heidegger's presence, somehow dependent, or is it a more silent, radical hope in celan for what is effectively unaskable of another, unsayable, that they feel and even understand something about the reality in which they find themselves.

to that end, joris writes a great deal about the word Waldwasen, the cavernous roots of our impossible understanding. he writes a poem can only translate into another poem, and as such heidegger's failure to understand the poem is a failure to imagine just this difficulty of exchange. joris finishes with the thought only another poem can accomplish the translation, that that thought itself

translation, in order to exist, has to refuse to believe while being constantly faced by that idea as its practical raison d'être, a thought translation thus has to try to refute at the risk of refuting itself

the question of an alignment between two people is the question of the impossibility of being understood. celan, however, argues that this alignment hinges on giving up an idea. the language he speaks has no ideas. everything is asked openly. there is no longer any preparation, and everything we say means something completely openly or it means nothing at all. celan witnesses the end of heidegger's meaning. if we are understood by anyone, it is that in that alignment we are understood as what we are becoming.



Waldwasen, uneingeebnet, from paul celan's poem todtnauberg

Arnika, Augentrost, der  
Trunk aus dem Brunnen mit dem  
Sternwürfel drauf,

in der  
Hütte,

die in das Buch  
- wessen Namen nahms auf  
vor dem meinen? -,  
die in dies Buch  
geschriebene Zeile von  
einer Hoffnung, heute,  
auf eines Denkenden  
kommendes  
Wort  
im Herzen,

Waldwasen, uneingeebnet,  
Orchis und Orchis, einzeln,

Krudes, später, im Fahren,  
deutlich,

der uns fährt, der Mensch,  
der's mit anhört,

die halb-  
beschrifteten Knüppel-  
pfade im Hochmoor,

Feuchtes,  
viel.

*I recently dreamt that hegelsh had become a potter on a whim, secured a show at a Gallery I once worked for, and produced a series of Yunomi masterpieces, all for a cheap rate*

There is something to Hagari's work that is especially Jewish, especially theatrical, especially psychic. I found that, among a wave of peers who loudly praise empathy but seem to have little faith in it, the traumatic folding-in of power which preoccupies Hagari's mind should also preoc-

cupy mine. He asks us the things, that thing about ourselves (there are many questions, but there is really only one, if you ask me, unspeakable, horrifying). You will understand me if you sit with his work. Who better to speak with?

I was exposed to Hagari through my work at a museum - it's strange to have moments of feeling in a professional setting (but that's not what this was, this came from outside and entered, it didn't come from within me). The power of that feeling dissipated - the days I first found his work, this was a window of my life in which I didn't allow for feeling. I'm not altogether out-of-the-woods, so to speak, but gravity and grief (mostly the grief of my loved ones) have slowly come back to me. And, in retrospect, it is also strange to come back to Hagari's work, and our conversation, from this vantage.

hegelsh introduced me to de Waal as I was completing a rather large project concerning Holocaust restitution, international law, American rhetoric, et cetera. hegelsh was stunned by his writing and, before I had given de Waal a chance, I was skeptical (we can decide we love something before first contact - or maybe this conviction isn't a decision at all, but the point stands all the same). I purchased two of his books with the remaining dregs of funding from my project: Letters to Camondo for my mother, The Hare with Amber Eyes for myself. They are stunning, objectively, but I've had enough of Vienna and the many sprawling accounts of its Jews. I think that my mother must have liked these works, though; we don't come from any line of Ephrussi or Rothschild, but maybe we weren't too far from that world.

de Waal's pottery is even truer (I recently dreamt that hegelsh had become a potter on a whim, secured a show at a Gallery I once worked for, and produced a series of Yunomi masterpieces, all for a cheap rate). If you spend enough hours in a museum, you'll find that many artworks become objects, concept and aesthetics divorced completely. But the words on my bookshelf, the dust which de Waal and Walter Benjamin love so much, his monochrome 'poems' of pots which speak to the Holocaust and time - these are without time. And of course, there is something to be said for the decorative crafts, too.

END OF APPENDIX



Can we align?