

II

1900

$$y = (+a) + (-a) + (+a) + (-a) + \dots \quad \text{Bolzano}$$

Nietzsche: Incipit Tragoedia

“My time extends only from the summer months in Sils-Maria (Nietzsche’s ‘Foreword to the Early Works’) and in the foothills of Antibes, as Monet painted it, into this winter of damnation and nights of fire.”¹ The historical adventures of speaking do not form a continuum and so do not constitute a history of ideas. They are marked by breaks that in a single stroke can consign entire discourse networks to oblivion, and they have plateaus that make one forget the advance of armies and hours even during the winters of world wars. What came to an end during the summers of Sils-Maria, those few summers of free writing, was everything “in the order of culture, scholarship, and science, of the familial and benevolent character that distinguished German literature of the nineteenth century in so many ways.”² Thus Gottfried Benn, with characteristic exactness, selected and gathered up the particular functions that constituted the discourse network of 1800. The official locus of production for German Poetry was the nuclear family; scholars saw to its multiplication; and a science that claimed the title Science provided its justification. If, with Hofmannsthal, one claims that only this organization of discourse is legitimate, then everything that began with Nietzsche comes to nothing. In the empty space where one would wish to see a “new literature,” there would be only “Goethe and beginnings.”³ But the break was so radical that those fascinated with Goethe had difficulty recognizing that the “literature” that developed in place of German Poetry was in fact literature. “Two men determine the German aesthetic of our time: Goethe and Nietzsche. One forms it, and the other destroys it.”⁴ When the one Mother gave way to a plurality of women, when the alphabetization-

made-flesh gave way to technological media, and when philosophy gave way to the psychophysical or psychoanalytic decomposition of language, Poetry also disintegrated. In its place arose, whether German or not, an artistry in the full range of this Nietzschean term: from the magic of letters to a histrionics of media.

Over the beginning of literature circa 1900 stands a curse. "Whoever knows the reader will henceforth do nothing for the reader. Another century of readers—and the spirit itself will stink. That everyone may learn to read, in the long run corrupts not only writing but also thinking."⁵ Zarathustra's curse strikes at the technological-material basis of the discourse network of 1800: universal alphabetization. Not content or message but the medium itself made the Spirit, the corpus composed of German Poetry and German Idealism, into a stinking cadaver. The murderer of the letter met its own death.

Nietzsche therefore described, although in a transvaluation of all values just what the reading and writing reformers of 1800 did. Except for the sign determining value, there is no difference between the two following descriptions of reading (the first published in 1786, the second in 1886).

With practice, everything should become a knack as natural as feeling, so that one can survey the whole easily and quickly without being conscious of every single detail, and then make one's choice. Knowledge of letters is not yet knowledge of reading, even though mechanical reading is nothing more than pronouncing letters. Only one who can take in whole words or even lines at a glance, without thinking of individual letters, knows how to read.⁶

Just as little as a reader today reads all of the individual words (let alone syllables) on a page—rather he picks about five words at random out of twenty and "guesses" at the meaning that probably belongs to these five words—just as little do we see a tree exactly and completely with reference to leaves, twigs, color, and form; it is so very much easier for us simply to improvise some approximation of a tree. . . . All this means: basically and from time immemorial we are—*accustomed to lying*. Or to put it more virtuously and hypocritically, in short, more pleasantly: one is much more of an artist than one knows.⁷

Nietzsche's description confirms the great extent to which the educational programs of 1800 had achieved statistical reality.⁸ But a sobering period follows that triumph. Hermeneutic reading, once praised as knack or even feeling in order to make it palatable, is scorned and called a lie. When unfeeling described as discursive manipulation rather than viewed from the inner perspective of its beneficiaries, universal alphabetization turns out to be the beginning of self-deception and, as such, of the proliferation of artists. Modern readers who arbitrarily hit upon five words out of twenty in order to get to the meaning as quickly as possible practice the same technique as writers and rewriters.

The most astonishing thing may come to pass—the host of the historically neutral is always there ready to supervise the author of it even while he is still far off. The echo is heard immediately: but always as a “critique,” though the moment before the critic did not so much as dream of the possibility of what has been done. The work never produces an effect but only another “critique”; and the critique itself produces no effect either, but again only a further critique.⁹

From skipping over letters to surveying an author, from an elementary trick in reading to semi-official literary criticism—the method remains the same. According to Fichte, hermeneutics simply means writing anything about a work, with the exception of its actual text. Nietzsche’s diagnosis of a pathological increase in the population of authors continues a complaint made when the malady had just begun;¹⁰ but Nietzsche named the root of the evil. In *Human, All too Human*, one reads in the section entitled “The Name on the Title-Page”:

That the name of the author should be inscribed on the book is now customary and almost a duty; yet it is one of the main reasons books produce so little effect. For if they are good, then, as the quintessence of the personality of their authors, they are worth more than these; but as soon as the author announces himself on the title-page, the reader at once dilutes the quintessence again with the personality, indeed with what is most personal, and thus thwarts the object of the book.¹¹

Alphabetized reading, which would continue writing rather than recognize letters on the page, thus has a correlate in production: the function of authorship. From the same exterior position in which his irony revealed the arbitrary choice among twenty words, Nietzsche also scorns the new rule of discourse that embellishes title pages with names. The human, all too human or personal, indeed, most personal, which is attributed by the anthropology of language to all signs, burdens a reading that “at once looks beyond the work” and asks after “the history of its author. . . . in the previous and possible future progress of his development.”¹²

Alphabetization, reading that continues writing or the name of the author—with the exception of the feminine reading function, Nietzsche’s unsparing analysis brings together all the control loops of the classical discourse network. The summary results in a negative evaluation. Words have no effect because they are skipped over; reading issues only in writing; authors’ names detract from the phenomenon of the book. In retrospect the discourse network of 1800 is a single machine designed to neutralize discursive effects and establish “our absurd world of educators”—“to the ‘able servant of the state’ this promises a regulating schema”—founded on the ruins of words.¹³

On the basis of this analytically very accomplished summation, Zarathustra can dare to call the Spirit a stinking cadaver.

Nietzsche knew what he was talking about. The former student of the

royal academy truly owed “the totality of his education” to the discourse network of 1800; according to the rector, Pforta under Prussian occupation constituted “a self-contained educational state, which completely absorbed all aspects of the life of the individual.”¹⁴ In 1859, on the one-hundredth birthday of Schiller, students heard a teacher, who had been commissioned by Prussian authorities to write the first textbook on German literary history, deliver an address on the greatness of the Poet; they then spent the evening hours, after a celebratory dinner, in general, but private, reading of Schiller in the school library.¹⁵ One spent the rest of one’s school time attempting to deal with one’s own person in the manner that Karl August Koberstein’s literary history dealt with the classical writers. As Poet and Critic unified in one person, the schoolboy Nietzsche wrote, aside from poetic works, the corresponding poetic autobiographies, which, after conjuring the inexhaustible days of his childhood, regularly listed his private reading and writing. “My Life”; “Course of My Life”; “A Look Back”; “From My Life”; “My Literary and Musical Activity”—and so on runs the list that an author from the new crop by the name of Nietzsche added to the classical discourse network. Only much later, namely, at the university level of the same educational path, could he read the “autobiographical constructions, which were to have justified the contingency of his being”¹⁶ for what they were: German essays, programmed by pedagogues and written by students in the royal academy. Looking longingly toward a different “Future of Our Educational Institutions,” Nietzsche, the professor of philology, described their nineteenth century:

The last department in which the German teacher in a public school is at all active, which is also regarded as his sphere of highest activity, and is here and there even considered the pinnacle of public-school education, is the “German essay.” Because the most gifted pupils almost always display the greatest eagerness in this department, it ought to have been made clear how dangerously stimulating, precisely here, the task of the teacher must be. The German essay is a call to the individual, and the more strongly a pupil is conscious of his distinguishing qualities, the more personally will he do his German essay. This “personal doing” is further encouraged at most schools by the choice of essay topics, and I find the strongest evidence of this in the lower grades, where pupils are given the non-pedagogical topic of describing their own life, their own development. . . . How often does someone’s later literary work turn out to be the sad consequence of this pedagogical original sin against the spirit!¹⁷

All the sins of the classical discourse network thus concentrate in the German essay. Alone, crying in the wilderness, Nietzsche discovered the material basis of any literary work and, in particular, of his own. The pamphlet *Our School Essay as a Disguised Dime Novelist* was soon to appear in mass editions; with affectionate stylistic criticism it demon-

strated the identity between, on the one hand, Karl May, Buffalo Bill, and Texas Jack, and on the other hand, the 386 model essays on *Iphigenia* written by teachers.¹⁸

The Spirit stinks because of the pedagogic original sin against it. First the German essay generates productive literary men (more precisely, schoolboys); second, it generates the autobiographies of their production; third, it generates—because they so gladly make “obligatory” the “judgment of works of poetry”¹⁹—the literary-critical continuators, those who wrote “Letter to My Friend, in Which I Recommend the Reading of My Favorite Poet” and generally neutralized discursive effects.²⁰

Even in dead-silent, solitary rooms, the gymnasium students of the nineteenth century were never alone; the “totality of their education” contained them as the German essay contained the literary industry. They could intend and understand everything that paper patiently took and gave—except the “influence of women,” as Nietzsche later learned to his “astonishment.”²¹ They were very well prepared for a culture of universal alphabetization.

Thus the classical-romantic discourse network ended in megalomania and desperation. A fragment, not accidentally entitled “Euphorion,” sets the courtly signature “F W v Nietzky, homme étudié en lettres” beneath a self-portrait of naked despair.

It is deathly still in the room—the one sound is the pen scratching across the paper—for I love to think by writing, given that the machine that could imprint our thoughts into some material without their being spoken or written has yet to be invented. In front of me is an inkwell in which I can drown the sorrows of my black heart, a pair of scissors to accustom me to the idea of slitting my throat, manuscripts with which I can wipe myself, and a chamber pot.²²

This is a primal scene, less well known but no less fraught with consequences than the despair of Faust in and over his study in the Republic of Scholars. The scholar is replaced, however, by the very man of letters whom Faust made to appear magically as the redeemer from heaps of books. The one who signs himself “homme étudié en lettres” has experienced nothing beyond the formative education of the gymnasium, which as an “appeal to the individual” is the opposite of scholarly training. The scene of writing is therefore bare of all library props, and thus bare, too, of any enigma about how supposed texts are to be translated into Spirit and meaning. The solitary writer is a writer and nothing more: not a translator, scribe, or interpreter. Bare and impoverished, the scratching of the pen exposes a function that had never been described: writing in its materiality. There is no Bible to Germanize, no voice to transcribe, and so there are none of the miracles that in 1800 obscured that materiality. One no longer writes around the fact of writing—writing has become its own

medium. Even in the clinic for nervous diseases in Jena, Nietzsche was “happy and in his element” as long as he had pencils.²³ But already the man of letters F W v Nietzsche, in contrast to the schoolboy Wilhelm Friedrich Nietzsche, is through with putting literary works, literary autobiographies, and discussions of literature on paper—beyond the act of writing there is nothing at all. Whether or not the star pupil of the Schulpforta Gymnasium would have had anything to say, had the pedagogues left him alone, is unimportant. In the “Euphorion” fragment, in the countless notebooks that until the final day in Turin recorded thoughts and laundry receipts, possible book titles and headache remedies, to say nothing of the few scribbles from the insane asylum, which found their way back to the empty schema of the autobiographical German essay,²⁴ Nietzsche’s papers-record only the primal scene and its enduring enigma.

What is most disturbing in the posthumous fragments is the fact that they are not a collection of notes, but rather a collection of writing exercises, indeed rhetorical exercises in the sense of attempts at various styles, in which the ideas are then run through their declensions. Nietzsche finally achieved a lexicon in which words emptied of all context were brought back into phrases, or were idiomized, so to speak; it was a mute exercise, carried on without further commentary, between the vocabulary notebook, the translation guide, and the collection of stylistic howlers.²⁵

When writing remains a writing exercise, a spare and dismal act without any extension into what is called book, work, or genre, there is no place for the “personal presentation and formation” so dear to the essay pedagogues. The “appeal to the individual” to become an individual and author comes to nothing precisely because the model pupil takes it literally. For the one who takes up the pen and writes is no one; instead of serving an individual, the inkwell drowns a black heart; instead of aiding the process of revision and rereading, the technical premises of authorship, the pair of scissors has a quite different task. And as with the individual, so too with his production—manuscripts destined for the chamber pot. Zarathustra’s nose for Spirit or the stench of the writing culture thus comes from a scene of writing in which the props—pen, inkwell, scissors, chamber pot—have done away with the ego and its meanings. The author disappears, to say nothing of the readers he might address; in the “Euphorion” fragment writing produces refuse and feces rather than poetic works. Precisely because Nietzsche is another Euphorion, who possessed in his parents a complete classicism and romanticism, in that he had at his command every facility of the classical-romantic discourse network, the pedagogic promises and the literary training, there was no euphoria; he fell, true to his name until the end.

Modern texts would follow this downward trajectory in various ways. Nietzsche touched on the zero point on which literature in 1900 would build. It is intransitive writing that is not directed toward written truths or readers; rather, “all its threads converge upon the finest of points—singular, instantaneous, and yet absolutely universal—upon the simple act of writing”; it is writing that “breaks with the whole definition of *genres* as forms adapted to an order of representation” and that can be “a silent, cautious deposition of the word upon the whiteness of a piece of paper, where it can possess neither sound nor interlocutor.”²⁶

In the deathly still room, only the pen makes a sound. Neither sound nor phonetic method supports a writing that occurs without preliminary speech and so without a soul. If something precedes its materiality, it is only the materiality of sound itself. An isolated, early observation by Nietzsche records the deafening noise in this still scene of writing: “What I fear is not the horrible shape behind my chair but its voice: not the words, but the frighteningly inarticulate and inhuman tone of that shape. If only it would speak as people speak!”²⁷

In its beginning German Poetry had shut out the animal sounds of a poodle and preferred, when translating prelinguistic feelings, to follow the advice of a Spirit that only later articulated its own name. An inarticulate tone defines the zero point of literature, a tone not only inhuman, but also not animal or demonic. The creaturely sounds that filled the language space of the sixteenth century were silenced when Man became aware of a beloved language or a woman’s voice. The inhuman tone behind Nietzsche’s back is not the speech at the beginning of articulation; it is not speech at all. All discourse is powerless against it because all discourses add to it and fall prey to it. Within the realm of all sounds and words, all organisms, white noise appears, the incessant and ineradicable background of information. For the very channels through which information must pass emit noise.

In 1800 simple, unarticulated tones were excommunicated. They fomented an insanity that, in contrast to the fixed idea, had no poetic value: that of the imbecile.²⁸ If one had no “ability to comprehend the speech of others,” one was required to assume “the posture of reading aloud and slowly during an attack.”²⁹ Writers like Faust or Anselmus were allowed to trust their inmost feeling only because it was supported by reading, which in turn was supported by a human language or voice.

Nietzsche, however, wrote before and after white noise. He took so literally the German essay’s appeal “to listen to one’s own thoughts and feelings” that thoughts and feelings turned into their opposites: the listener hears a “humming and roaring of the wild camps” within him, which fight an irreconcilable “civil war.” Where there should have been a

prelinguistic inwardness, susceptible to articulation and development, “a roar went through the air.”³⁰

The frightening, inarticulate tone that Nietzsche heard behind his back hums in the ears themselves. What does not speak as people speak would be called (if it could have a name) “Nietzsche.” The autobiography demonstrates this for Nietzsche’s own beginning: “At an absurdly early age, at seven, I already knew that no human word would ever reach me.”³¹ The medical records from Jena demonstrate it for his end: “Often screams inarticulately.”³² Everything began for him, then, when human or pedagogical encouragement was unable to cover over the noise at the basis of all information channels and instead merged with it. And everything ended when he left *The Will to Power* sitting on his desk, turned around in his chair, and dissolved into the noise that had horrified him for as long as he lived or wrote.

The woman’s voice that made Anselmus write occupied the same chair he did: it exemplified the interlocking media network of speaking and writing, of the soul and Poetry. The voice that formed the ground for Nietzsche’s writing exercises remained behind his chair, and he was unable ever to unlearn the horror it inspired. It halted all erotic exchange between orality and writing, reducing writing to pure materiality. “You should have sung, my soul,” is a pathetic sentence—in that “there is no soul” and “aesthetics is nothing but a kind of applied physiology.”³³ Henceforth, there exist only the two sides of an exclusion. Behind the chair there is white noise, that is, physiology; in front of the chair, there are the inkwell, the scissors, paper, and words as multiple as they are empty. For if the incessant noise can whisper anything to writers, its message can only be Nietzsche’s sentence “I am a maker of words: what do words matter! what do I matter!”³⁴

Writing and writers as accidental events in a noise that generates accidents and thus can never be overcome by its accidents: Nietzsche comes quite close to the poetics of Mallarmé. Faust’s helpful Spirit diverted the act of writing toward a goal in the beyond, the transcendental signified of the word; Hippel’s anathema excluded literary hacks from the realm of souls; makers of words, however, never escape the medium they institute. An anecdote concerning Mallarmé illustrates this. “Degas occasionally wrote verses, and some of those he left were delightful. But he often found great difficulty in this work accessory to his painting. . . . One day he said to Mallarmé: ‘Yours is a hellish craft. I can’t manage to say what I want, and yet I’m full of ideas. . . .’ And Mallarmé answered: ‘My dear Degas, one does not make poetry with ideas, but with *words*.’”³⁵ The last

philosopher and the first modern poet agreed even in their choice of words. Mallarmé decomposes the phrase *maker of words* in a single sentence. For Nietzsche it became impossible to put his own thoughts and feelings on paper because all meaning was lost in noise. For Mallarmé meanings or ideas had been played out, so that there was no longer any translation from one medium, literature, to another, such as painting. There was nothing to makers of words (according to the word-maker Nietzsche); Mallarmé called his hellish profession the “elocutionary disappearance of the poet, who cedes the initiative to words.”³⁶ Writing that can discover the basis of its rights neither in what is written nor in the writer has its message only in the medium it constitutes. In 1900, in direct descent from Nietzsche, “word art” became synonymous with literature.³⁷

A professor who was no longer a professor and an educational bureaucrat who no longer wanted to be one stood at the threshold of a new discourse network.³⁸ Soon every child would learn that makers of words are not authors and that words are not ideas. The confusion between words and ideas that had supported an entire classicism did not end only in solitary rooms. On December 4, 1890, the emperor’s irrefutable mouth issued an order placing German as a school subject at the center of all pedagogy and essay writing at the center of this center.³⁹ With that, German ceased to be beyond all school instruction, a realm where words were always bypassed for their meanings and thus for the university discipline of philosophy. Consequently, a decree of 1904 did away with the study of philosophy as an “obligatory part of the doctoral examination.”⁴⁰ Indeed, the great experimental psychologist Hermann Ebbinghaus nearly succeeded in having philosophy replaced by physiological psychology in examinations for teaching positions. Schools also came close to teaching that aesthetics is nothing more than applied physiology.

But if writing came to be at the center of the center in school, physiology also found its way into the classroom, even without being included in examination regulations. The noise that grounded Nietzsche’s writing was put down on paper. Free essays, advocated by the art-education movement beginning in 1904, contributed neither to unfolding the individuality of their authors nor to the ideality of their thoughts. At an extreme they simply led to writing down the droning in feverish children’s heads. What Nietzsche already knew at the absurdly early age of seven years attained positive discursive reality. Art education gave up on reaching its pupils with human or pedagogical words. Instead, it emphasized how “productive the child is with its language,” and complained that children should be “forced to produce in a foreign language, namely that of the adult.”⁴¹ Little makers of words were most free if their speaking

and writing remained untouched by a mother's mouth. In 1900 linguists and psychologists claimed that even "the newborn child brings language, universal language, into the world: we do not teach it to speak, we only teach it our own language."⁴² It thereby follows that there is no Mother's Mouth at the origin of human speech and masculine writing. Instead of the female Other, who with the minimal signified *ma* created the beginning of articulation and Poetry, there is an autarchic children's language, which cannot be formed by parents because it respects no national boundaries and spontaneously produces signifiers such as *Amme* or *Mama*.⁴³ Makers of words thereby lose the authority that had once made them authors. Ever since, there has been only deathly stillness and white noise in the writing room; no woman or muse offers her kiss.

The discourse network of 1900 could not build on the three functions of production, distribution, and consumption. Discursive practices are so historically variable that even elementary and apparently universal concepts are lacking in certain systems.⁴⁴ In 1900 no authority of production determines the inarticulate beginning of articulation. An inhuman noise is the Other of all signs and written works. No distribution can use language as a mere channel and thus attract ever more writers and readers. Like any medium in 1900, discourse is an irreducible fact that will not disappear in philosophical meaning or psychological effects. Therefore it cannot allow a consumption that would retranslate speech back to its origin.

This all constitutes a largely unwritten chapter in literary studies, and it still needs to be described in its technological and institutional aspects. But the hermit of Sils had already traversed this space, without institutions, almost without technologies, simply as his tragedy. Although he does not seem an imposing figure, a founder of a new discourse,⁴⁵ in his failed experiments Nietzsche was the victim offered up to a writing other than the classical-romantic.

The experiments began with a theory of language concerned, to quote the title of an essay, with "Truth and Falsehood in an Extramoral Sense." Considered apart from the ostensible truth-telling demands of moralistic or even educative voices, language is no longer the translation of prelinguistic meanings, but rather one medium among others. Media, however, exist only as arbitrary selections from a noise that denies all selection. Nietzsche absorbed the lesson of the scene of his writing so completely that "Nature" itself, rather than assuming human or maternal form became one with the frighteningly inarticulate tone. "She threw away the key: and woe to the fateful curiosity that once would look out and down-

ward through a crack in the room of consciousness and would sense that man, in the indifference of his ignorance, rests on the merciless, the craving, the voracious, the murderous, and hangs in dreams on the back of a tiger."⁴⁶

No medium of information can translate the terror that excludes consciousness and that consciousness in turn excludes. Falsehood, in an extramoral sense, is truth. A lie is only a lie of selection, which veils the terror or even, like someone at his desk, turns his back on it. Reading is one example, in that Nietzsche compares the actual text from which random selection was made to an unthinkably complex object of nature. But language itself does not function any differently.

A juxtaposition of different languages shows that words never have anything to do with truth or adequate expression: for otherwise there would not be so many different languages. The "thing in itself" (and that would be pure, inconsequential truth) is incomprehensible and utterly unworthy of effort for the creator of language as well. He designates only the relations of things to men and for their expression makes use of the most daring metaphors. First of all a nervous impulse is translated into an image. First metaphor. The image is again further formed into a sound! Second metaphor. And each time there is a complete leap, from one sphere into a completely different and new one.⁴⁷

Whereas in the discourse network of 1800 an organic continuum extended from the inarticulate minimal signified to the meanings of factual languages, there is now a break. Language (as its plural suggests) is not the truth and consequently not any truth at all.⁴⁸ Though there is no nature of language for philosophers to uncover behind its bold metaphors,⁴⁹ another, physiological nature appears. Nietzsche's theory of language, like his aesthetics, proceeds from nervous impulses. Optical and acoustic responses to impulses, images and sounds, bring about the two aspects of language, as signified and signifier. Yet they remain as separated from one another as they are from the pure stochastic processes to which they respond. The break between the imaginal signified and the acoustic signifier cannot be bridged by continuous translation; only a metaphor or transposition can leap the gap. Separate sense media come together against the background of an omnipresent noise—as "completely different and new spheres." Instead of deriving media from a common source like the poetic imagination, Nietzsche divides optics and acoustics into a "world of sight" and "world of sound."⁵⁰

Each of the two media repeats its common relation to an origin that, being a random generator, is not an origin. Nietzsche dreamed of a music that would not, like all German music, "fade away at the sight of the voluptuous blue sea and the brightness of the Mediterranean sky," music that "prevails even before the brown sunsets of the desert."⁵¹ Only an au-

dible world in which sound and color triumph over form and morality would remain, despite any process of selection, close to its inhuman background, one that (as we know) answers to the god's name Dionysus. But the optical medium of Apollo does not function any differently.

When after a forceful attempt to gaze on the sun we turn away blinded, we see dark-colored spots before our eyes, as a cure, as it were. Conversely, the bright image projections of the Sophoclean hero—in short, the Apollonian aspect of the mask—are necessary effects of a glance into the inside and terrors of nature; as it were, luminous spots to cure eyes damaged by gruesome night.⁵²

Nietzsche's visual world is born in the eye itself. Entoptical visions heal *and* transpose pain in the eyes, which, in a reversal of all tradition, is not caused by a blinding sun but by a horrible night. This ground, against which colors and forms are only selections, is at once preserved (by pain) and metaphorically veiled (by the reversal of darkness into light). Apollonian art, too, fulfills a condition constitutive of technological media by meeting the "demand that it should not only be similar to the object, but should furnish the guarantee for this similarity by being, so to speak, a creation of the object itself, that is, by being mechanically produced by it."⁵³ No imagination can stand up to such demands; where psychological translation once sufficed, material transposition now becomes necessary.

Moving "images of light" by which the eye forms an image of its own retina have little to do with productions of Sophocles at Athenian festivals. Nietzsche's Apollonian art describes something quite different—the technological medium of film, which the Lumière brothers would make public on December 28, 1895. Nietzsche and the Lumières based Apollonian art and the movies on applied physiology: the entoptical after-image, or the illusion, created by afterimage and strobe effect, in which discrete images proceeding with sufficiently high frequency appear to form a continuum. And if the Apollonian hero is "in the last analysis nothing but a bright image projected on a dark wall, which means appearance through and through,"⁵⁴ then all the elements of film have come together: first, the black before each selection, which for Nietzsche was original night and in film is the protective concealment of the reel during transport; second, the optical or even entoptical hallucinatory effect; third, the projection screen, precisely the contribution of the Lumières, which made Edison's cinemascope of 1891 into the movies.⁵⁵

A music that holds its own in the desert and a theater that is film *avant la lettre*⁵⁶—by their physiological effects these innovations explode the limits of European art. They become media. As in Wagnerian opera, their heroic predecessor, media no longer speak "the language of the culture of a caste and in general no longer recognize any distinction between the

cultivated and the uncultivated.”⁵⁷ Only the ingrained alphabetization of 1800 made it possible to celebrate and understand the “philologist-poet” Goethe in the way that his *Discourse of the Master* understood understanding. An aesthetics of applied physiology, by contrast, required neither training nor elite culture.

But Nietzsche was not Wagner. For makers of words, even if they dream of music and movies, there remains only the paradoxical desire to break open the general medium of culture within and by means of its own structure. Therefore Nietzsche began by countermanding the Faustian revolution. Goethe’s universality joined philological and poetic practice to create Spirit from letters and human happiness from study. When even as a student Nietzsche scolded Faust for his method of translation, he did so in the name of a philology that was still a particular competence of the Republic of Scholars. An old-fashioned professional ethic confronted universal alphabetization. Whereas “we moderns read nothing but thoughts” and distill Faustian meaning from five out of twenty words, Nietzsche praises the ascesis of the philologist who still reads words and understands “conjectural criticism” as “an activity of the kind employed in solving a rebus.”⁵⁸

All appearances to the contrary, Nietzsche made no serious attempt to rescind the historical fact that everyone was now able to learn to read. He did not plan an “imitation of the historical practices of communication” for their own sake;⁵⁹ they were only to provide him with the means of and weapons for his own writing project. Instead of practicing conjectural criticism to solve the rebus of purported texts, he invented riddle after riddle. Philological insights, for instance, that in Horace’s poetry “this *minimum* in the extent and number of the signs” attains “the maximum . . . in the energy of the signs” in that “every word—as sound, as place, as concept, pours out its force right and left,”⁶⁰ became for Nietzsche the writer a design for his own experiments. *Zarathustra* was a “play of every kind of symmetry” “down to the choice of vowels.”⁶¹

In the guise of historical regression, Nietzsche pushed the structures of writing to an extreme. Faust’s translation of *λόγος* marked a moment in the history of the sign when there was no awareness of the paradigmatic; by contrast, Nietzsche’s writing, in its program and practice, established pure differentiability. A topology of the signifier, as Saussure would apply it to the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes, orders the text and therefore its programmed reception as well. Nietzsche demanded an “art of interpretation” by which each sign was to be read together with contiguous signs as well as with those for which it was a substitute. In place of hermeneutic rereading he saw a simple, physiological “rumination—some-

thing for which one has almost to be a cow and in any case *not* a 'modern man.'" ⁶² All of Nietzsche's stylistic techniques embody this one command—including the sentence that issued it. His typographical accents were intended to keep the reader from "skipping over" the imperative and, being "held by the restrictive clause, to spell it." ⁶³ Alphabetized fluency is throttled; the insistence of the signifier takes the paradigm *man/animal* apart syntagmatically (in a transvaluation of all connoted values). As cows, the readers (or rather the feminine readers) Nietzsche demanded became analphabetical. "He who knows the reader does nothing further for the reader"; but where nonreaders are being eliminated, style itself must enforce the difficult process—the old-European norm—of spelling out the text.

Ever since Nietzsche, the logic of the signifier has become a technique of sparseness and isolation, and minimum signs release maximum energy. Hermeneutic theories, with their notions of context, are inadequate to such a calculus. They are familiar only with organic relationships and with a continuous—that is, psychological or historical—narrative representation of them. The relative value of signifiers, by contrast, is given mathematically; its articulation is called counting.

To count words—in the days of romanticism this was the ridiculously outmoded fixed idea of a Fixlein with his kabala of the Bible; ⁶⁴ in the age of media it becomes a primary and elementary necessity. Mallarmé derives the essence of literature from the fact that there are twenty-four letters. ⁶⁵ In the opening line of a poem, Rilke raises his eyes "from the book, from the near, countable lines." What Nietzsche praises in Horace applies also to the "telegraphic style" of his own aphorisms. ⁶⁶ For simple, economic reasons telegrams demand the paucity of words that for Nietzsche had a physiological basis in nearsightedness and lenses of fourteen diopters.

Where the hermit of Sils seems to retreat from universal alphabetization into the prehistorical, he is preparing the way for the rule of the enigmatic letter in the discourse network of 1900. The topology and economics of the signifier are a matter more for engineers than for Renaissance philologists. Only a very ordinary understanding of the *Sociological Foundations of Literary Expressionism in Germany* could see in August Stramm and Ferdinand Hardekopf "a certain disjunction between their avant-garde literary activity and their professions as postal official and parliamentary stenographer." ⁶⁷ In reality there is no truer or more urgent juncture. Stramm's poems, with their six to eight lines of one to three words each, are the telegraphic style as literature. They are entirely appropriate from a postal inspector who, after thorough training in the

postal and telegraphic services, wrote a doctoral thesis entitled "Historical, Critical, and Fiscal Policy Investigation of the World Postal System's Postage Rate and Its Basis" for the philosophical faculty of the University of Halle. Once there is a world postal system, signifiers have standardized prices that mock all meaning. Once there are telegrams and postcards, style is no longer the man, but an economy of signs.⁶⁸ What Horace meant to Nietzsche the philologist of ancient languages is for Stramm "the general business principle of obtaining the greatest possible value for the least expense." It was, of course, a principle that raised "exchange of information" and, in particular, expressionist poetry to the second power: the costs are "costs that do not immediately create value or raise values, but which make the creation of value possible."⁶⁹ They are discourses in the good Nietzschean manner, then, as a self-heightening of structures of mastery, which became ever more necessary under the conditions of standardized and mass produced information. Only the minimax of sign energy escapes the fate of incalculable masses of data, as in Nietzsche's inner civil war. From the "empirical law of correspondence production, according to which each letter posted from one country to another country elicits another letter from the second country to the first,"⁷⁰ there follows finally only noise.

In *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, Nietzsche first experiments with the telegraphic style. The conjectural critic had become so ill, his eyes so nearsighted, that each letter he read exacted its price. The professor from Basel had become so tired of his profession that the night in his eyes gave birth to a shadow, one beyond culture and the university.

My sickness also gave me the right to change all my habits completely; it permitted, it *commanded* me to forget; it bestowed on me the necessity of lying still, of leisure, of waiting and being patient.—But that means, of thinking.—My eyes alone put an end to all book wormishness—in brief, philology: I was delivered from the "book"; for years I did not read a thing—the greatest benefit I ever conferred on myself.—That nethermost self which had, as it were, been buried and grown silent under the continual pressure of having to listen to other selves (and that is after all what reading means) awakened slowly, shyly, dubiously—but eventually it spoke again.⁷¹

A physiological accident made Nietzsche's second experiment possible. Near-blindness released writing from being the productive continuation of reading it had been in 1800 or the commentary on a pile of books it had been in the Republic of Scholars. Though Nietzsche's method of philological spelling out governed his own work, he was no longer a scholar, one "who at bottom does little nowadays but thumb books—philologists, at a moderate estimate, about 200 a day."⁷² At the point where the

eyes or imagination of others see printed paper, night intervenes. Hegel's refutation of sense-certainty would do nothing for someone too blind to read. The absolute certainty of night and shadow put the cultural medium of the book on the same level as physiological media, which had their ground and countersupport in the desert, noise, and blinding darkness. In place of the uncounted words already written, in place of philologists' two hundred books per day (first counted by Nietzsche), an unconscious self appears, which in its refusal to do the required reading is as foreign and physiological as the voice behind the chair. What finally begins to speak is, of course, never reached by any word. Near blindness, more effective than the devouring of books by women ever was, grants forgetfulness.

But the accident of illness brought about merely the conditions that distinguish all signifiers. In order for a sign to exist, it must necessarily stand against a background that cannot be stored by any mechanism. For letters, this is empty white paper; in another case, the mirror-image transposition of writing, it is the empty black sky.

To write—

The inkwell, crystal clear like a conscience, with its drop of darkness at the bottom, so that something may come out of it: then, set aside the lamp.

You noticed, one does not write the alphabet of stars luminously, on a dark field, only, thus is it indicated, barely begun or interrupted; man pursues black on white.

This fold of dark lace, that holds the infinite, its secret, woven by thousands, each one according to its own thread or unknown continuation, assembles distant interlaced ribbons where a luxury yet to be inventoried sleeps, vampire, knot, leaves and then present it.⁷³

The inkwell, in whose darkness Nietzsche would drown his black heart; the lamp set aside, which the half-blind hardly need anyway; the dark field on which stars are stars and where the afterimages of Apollonian visions ease pain—the materiality of signifiers rests on a chaos that defines them differentially. Nietzsche could call his styles, because of their “variety” or in spite of it, “the opposite of chaos.”⁷⁴ A precondition for something to “come out,” that is, to be written down, is a relation to the dark ground. The fact that writing reverses this relation of figure and ground (Max Wertheimer would soon study the physiology of perception involved) into dark marks against luminous space changes nothing in its logic. As a “fold of dark lace” that “assembles distant interlaced ribbons,” letters are determined by the space between them.

The logic of chaos and intervals was implemented as a technology by the discourse network of 1900—through the invention of the typewriter.

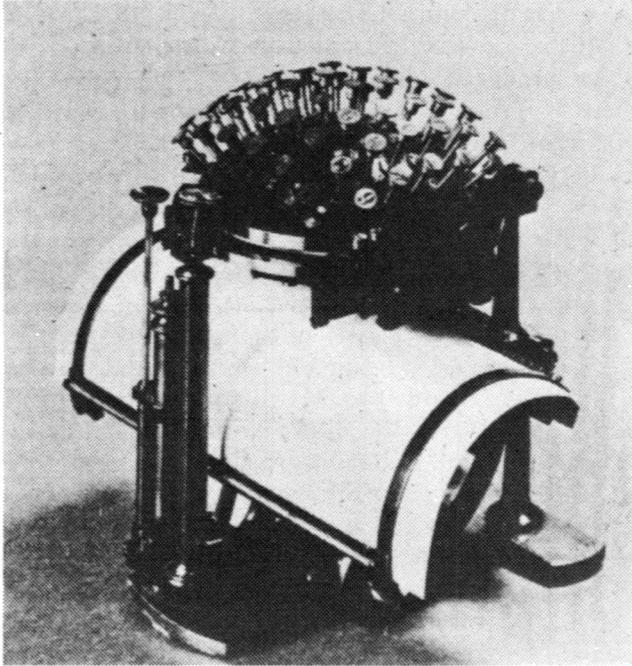
When his eyes decreed an end to all bookwormishness, Nietzsche

wrote that he had no idea how he would handle written material (letters and notes). He was thinking about getting a typewriter, and he had been in contact with its inventor, a Dane from Copenhagen.⁷⁵ Five months later, Paul Rée brought the machine, which cost 450 Reichsmark, to Genoa. It had “unfortunately been damaged during the trip. A mechanic was able to repair it within a week, but it soon completely ceased functioning.”⁷⁶

Nietzsche as typist—the experiment lasted for a couple of weeks and was broken off, yet it was a turning point in the organization of discourse. No other philosopher would have been proud to appear in the *Berlin Daily* as the owner of a strange new machine.⁷⁷ As far as one can reconstruct the unwritten literary history of the typewriter, only journalists and reporters, such as Mark Twain and Paul Lindau, threw away their pens in the pioneering days of 1880. The stinking Spirit, as it led its skimming readers, also made its move to a machine that, in contrast to the pen, was “capable of putting one’s first thoughts, which are well known to be the best, onto paper.”⁷⁸ Nietzsche’s decision to buy a typewriter, before greater interest in the new technology arose in Europe around 1890, had a different motivation: his half-blindness. Indeed, the first typewriters (in contrast to the Remington of 1873) were made for those who were blind, and sometimes (as with Foucauld and Pierre) by those who were blind. Nietzsche’s Dane from Copenhagen was Malling Hansen, pastor and teacher of the deaf and dumb, whose “writing ball” of 1865 or 1867 “was designed for use only by *the blind*,” but by virtue of improved mechanics and working speed “was the first practical and usable typewriter.”⁷⁹

Nietzsche, who even as a school boy dreamed of a machine that would transcribe his thoughts, knew better than his biographer Kurt Paul Janz, who with feigned outspokenness (and probably out of respect for fabricators of munitions and buyers of typewriter patents like the Remingtons) flatly denied the Dane (whom he calls Hansun) any credit for the invention.⁸⁰ Nietzsche’s choice, by contrast, as half-blind as it was certain, picked out a machine whose rounded keyboard could be used “exclusively through the sense of touch,” because “on the surface of a sphere each spot is designated with complete certainty by its spatial position.”⁸¹

Spatially designated and discrete signs—that, rather than increase in speed, was the real innovation of the typewriter. “In place of the image of the word [in handwriting] there appears a geometrical figure created by the spatial arrangement of the letter keys.”⁸² Indeed, a peculiar relationship to place defines the signifier: in contrast to everything in the Real, it can be and not be in its place.⁸³ As soon as the typewriter was ready to go into mass production, therefore, “a powerful movement in favor of intro-



ducing a universal keyboard got under way, and the 1888 congress in Toronto agreed on a standard one.”⁸⁴

Q	W	E	R	T	Y	U	I	O	P
A	S	D	F	G	H	J	K	L	
Z	X	C	V	B	N	M			

In an apparatus and its discrete letters, Toronto in 1888 realized (beyond Gutenberg) what Sils-Maria praised in Horace and his verse: that elements of a keyboard can be structured to the “right and left” and throughout the whole. In the play between signs and intervals, writing was no longer the handwritten, continuous transition from nature to culture. It became selection from a countable, spatialized supply. The equal size of each sign—a lofty, distant goal for the genetic method of writing instruction—came about of itself (if only, as in Hansen’s typewriter, because the machine had nothing but capital letters). The only tasks in the

transposition from keyboard to text remained the manipulations of permutation and combination. "Yes! With its 24 signs, this Literature precisely named Letters, as well as through its numerous fusions in the elaboration of sentences and then verse, a system arranged like a spiritual zodiac, contains its own doctrine, abstract and esoteric like a theology."⁸⁵

In typewriting, spatiality determines not only the relations among signs but also their relation to the empty ground. Type hits paper, leaving an impression, or sometimes even a hole. Not for nothing was the typewriter born in the realm of blindness. Whereas handwriting is subject to the eye, a sense that works across distance, the typewriter uses a blind, tactile power. Before the introduction of John T. Underwood's "view typewriter" in 1898, all models (much to the disadvantage of their popularization) wrote invisible lines, which became visible only after the fact.⁸⁶ But Underwood's improvement did little to change the fundamental difference between handwriting and typescript. To quote Angelo Beyerlen's engineering expertise:

In writing by hand, the eye must constantly watch the written line and only that. It must attend to the creation of each written line, must measure, direct, and, in short, guide the hand through each movement. For this, the written line, particularly the line being written, must be visible. By contrast, after one presses down briefly on a key, the typewriter creates in the proper position on the paper a complete letter, which not only is untouched by the writer's hand but is also located in a place entirely apart from where the hands work. Why should the writer look at the paper when everything there occurs dependably and well as long as the keys on the fingerboard are used correctly?

The spot that one must constantly keep in view in order to write correctly by hand—namely, the spot where the next sign to be written *occurs*—and the process that makes the writer believe that the hand-written lines must be seen are precisely what, even with "view typewriters," *cannot* be seen. The only reasonable purpose of visibility is not fulfilled by the "view typewriters." The spot that must be seen is always visible, but not at the instant when visibility is believed to be required.⁸⁷

Underwood's innovation unlinks hand, eye, and letter within the moment that was decisive for the age of Goethe. Not every discursive configuration rests on an originary production of signs. Circa 1900 several blindnesses—of the writer, of writing, of script—come together to guarantee an elementary blindness: the blind spot of the writing act. Instead of the play between Man the sign-setter and the writing surface, the philosopher as stylus and the tablet of Nature, there is the play between type and its Other, completely removed from subjects. Its name is inscription.

Instead of writing on his broken machine, Nietzsche continued to write about the typewriters that had made certain very forgetful "slaves of affect and desire" into so-called human beings. Out of technology

comes science, but a science of techniques. "Our writing materials contribute their part to our thinking" reads one of Nietzsche's typed letters.⁸⁸ Five years later *The Genealogy of Morals* gathered a whole arsenal of martyrs, victims, maimings, pledges, and practices to which people, very tangibly, owe their memories: "perhaps indeed there was nothing more fearful and uncanny in the whole prehistory of man than his *mnemotechnics*. 'If something is to stay in the memory it must be burned in: only that which never ceases to *hurt* stays in the memory.'" ⁸⁹ This writing out of fire and pain, scars and wounds, is the opposite of alphabetization made flesh. It does not obey any voice and therefore forbids the leap to the signified. It makes the transition from nature to culture a shock rather than a continuum. It is as little aimed at reading and consumption as the pain applied ceases not to cease. The signifier, by reason of its singular relationship to place, becomes an inscription on the body. Understanding and interpretation are helpless before an unconscious writing that, rather than presenting the subject with something to be deciphered, makes the subject what it is. Mnemonic inscription is, like mechanical inscription, always invisible at the decisive moment. Its blindly chosen victims are "virtually compelled to invent gods and genii at all the heights and depths, in short, something that roams even in secret, hidden places, sees even in the dark, and will not easily let an interesting, painful spectacle pass unnoticed."⁹⁰

Nietzsche's third experiment was to step into the place of such a god. If God is dead, then there is nothing to keep one from inventing gods. Dionysus (like Dracula several years later) is a typewriter myth. The mnemonic technique of inscription causes bodies so much pain that their lamenting, a Dionysian dithyramb in the most literal sense of the word, can and must invent the god Dionysus. Hardly anything distinguishes the drama described in the *Genealogy* from Nietzsche's dithyramb "Ariadne's Lament."⁹¹ Tortured and martyred by an Invisible One who represents the naked power of inscription, Nietzsche's Ariadne puzzles over the desire of this Other. Such speech was not heard, indeed would have been unheard of, in the classical-romantic discourse network. It was first necessary to write with and about typewriters; the act of writing had first to become a blind incidence from and upon a formless ground before speech could be directed toward the unanswering conditions of speech itself. Ariadne speaks as the being who has been taught to speak by torture, as the animal whose forgetfulness has been driven out by mnemonic techniques; she talks about and to the terror that all media presuppose and veil. She became "the fateful curiosity that once would look out and downward through a crack in the room of consciousness and would sense that man . . . rests on the merciless, the craving, the voracious, the murderous."

But because language itself is a transposition, the desire of this Other remains unspoken. Ariadne says it.

Stich weiter!
Grausamster Stachel!
Kein Hund—dein Wild nur bin ich,
grausamster Jäger!
deine stolzeste Gefangne,
du Räuber hinter Wolken . . .
Sprich endlich!
Du Blitz-Verhüllter! Unbekannter! sprich!
Was willst du, Wegelagerer, von mir?

Stab further!
Most cruel thorn!
Not a dog—I am your trapped animal
most cruel hunter!
your proudest prisoner,
you bandit behind clouds . . .
Speak finally!
You who hide in lightning! Stranger! speak!
What do you want from me?, highwayman . . .

Dionysus, hidden in formlessness, stabs but does not speak. The torments and only they are his style. For that reason Ariadne, in contrast to women in the discourse network of 1800, knows nothing of authorship or love. She can only speak in monologues that can call the inscription “love” just as well as “hatred.”

Was willst du dir erhörchen?
was willst du dir erfoltern,
du Folterer
du—Henker-Gott!
Oder soll ich, dem Hunde gleich,
vor dir mich wälzen?
Hingebend, begeistert ausser mir
dir Liebe—zuwedeln?

What would you command?
what would you extract,
you torturer
you—hangman-god!
Or should I, like a dog,
throw myself before you?
Come wagging, devoted
and beside myself—with love?⁹²

It was as Nietzsche wrote: “Who besides me knows what *Ariadne* is!—For all such riddles nobody so far had any solution; I doubt that anybody even saw any riddles here.”⁹³ When Friedrich Schlegel wrote *On*

Philosophy to his beloved, there was neither riddle nor solution. The man enjoyed his human determination, authorship; the woman remained the mute feminine reader of his love and of the confession that it was not he, but she who had introduced him to philosophy. With the “news” that far from docents and professors there was a “philosopher Dionysus,” all the rules of the university discourse were reversed.⁹⁴ Ariadne and her “philosophic lover” conduct “famous dialogues on Naxos,”⁹⁵ where first and foremost a woman speaks and learns from her mute executioner-god that “love—in its means, [is] war, at bottom, the deathly hatred of the sexes.”⁹⁶ The discovery of “how *foreign* man and woman are to one another”⁹⁷ does away with the possibility of placing the two sexes in polar or complementary relations within a discourse network. Henceforth there is no longer any discursive representation of one through the other, as Schlegel presupposed and practiced it. Because they are at war, Dionysus does not speak for Ariadne, and Ariadne certainly never speaks for Dionysus. The discourse network of 1900 codifies the rules that “one class cannot represent another” and “that it is much less possible for one sex to represent another.”⁹⁸ Thus “a particular language” comes into being: “the woman’s language.”⁹⁹

Another language follows immediately after the woman’s language, after Ariadne’s lament. Following the stage direction “Lightning. Dionysus appears in emerald beauty,” the god speaks and thus materializes the logic of media. In his shroud of lightning Dionysus gives Ariadne’s eyes the reversed afterimage effect that turns glimpsed darkness into light in order to protect the retina. Where earlier poetic hallucination had passed quietly over the reaction-time threshold of the senses, the lightning sends a dark and assaulting light, which transposes speech into its other medium.

Sei klug, Ariadne! . . .
 Du hast kleine Ohren, du hast meine Ohren:
 steck ein kluges Wort hinein!—
 Muss man sich nicht erst hassen, wenn man sich lieben soll? . . .
Ich bin dein Labyrinth . . .

Be wise, Ariadne! . . .
 You have small ears, you have my ears:
 stick a wise word in!—
 Must we not first hate each other, if we are to love one another . . .
I am your labyrinth . . .

The god does not answer or grant anything with his words, rather, he heightens the enigma. Rather than dissolve the ambiguity of light and darkness, love and hatred, he underscores it. A Dionysian “yes”—his wise word names the dark ground behind all words, even as he incarnates that ground. If Ariadne’s lament was a glimpse out of the room of con-

sciousness into the abyss, then Dionysus transgresses this transgression. With the line "*I am your labyrinth*," the abyss of language declares that it is an abyss. Ariadne's lament remains unheard: "the ears of the god become smaller and more labyrinthine, and no word of lament finds the way through."¹⁰⁰ Something else happens instead. If, in contrast to the many he- and she-esses, Ariadne has small ears, if she sticks the wise word in, then what takes place is not elegy, monologue, or epiphany but, very suddenly and technically, dictation. The philosopher Dionysus, unlike his university-tamed predecessors, utters a Discourse of the Master, or despot. A dictate (in the double meaning of the word), however, is not to be understood or even read; its sense is literal.¹⁰¹ "Stick a wise word in!" Ariadne's lament began with words about torture, stabbing, and inscription; it ends with a word that stabs.

Nietzsche, who was proud of his small ears just as Mallarmé was proud of his satyr's ears, thus wrote the program of his program. Rather than simply being thought as *The Genealogy of Morals*, typewriter became act in the dithyramb. The rhythm of the lyric has, of course, the "advantage" of "better impressing" words "into memory." (Human beings are that forgetful, and gods that hard of hearing.)¹⁰² Hence, instead of declaring an ambiguous love to women with classical-romantic lyricism, Nietzsche stages a scene of torture. "If something is to stay in the memory it must be burned in: only that which never ceases to *hurt* stays in the memory." This fixed something is neither signified nor fixed idea; it is a dictated word. Nietzsche as lyric poet, or "How to Write Poetry with a Hammer."

The end of all women's laments is based on the historical fact that script, instead of continuing to be translation from a Mother's Mouth, has become an irreducible medium among media, has become the typewriter. This desexualization allows women access to writing. The following sentence applies literally to the discourse network of 1900: "The typewriter opened the way for the female sex into the office."¹⁰³ Nietzsche's Ariadne is not a myth.

In place of his broken Malling Hansen typewriter, the half-blind Nietzsche engaged secretaries—for *Beyond Good and Evil*, a Mrs. Röder-Wiederhold. She had such difficulty, however—as if in empirical demonstration of the title and of Nietzsche's dithyrambs—in tolerating the anti-democratic, anti-Christian master's discourse stuck into her ear that she "cried more often" than her dictator "cared for."¹⁰⁴ Ariadne's lament . . .

Women circa 1900 were no longer the Woman, who, without writing herself, made men speak, and they were no longer feminine consumers, who at best wrote down the fruits of their reading. A new wisdom gave them the word, even if it was for the dictation of a master's discourse.

Whenever the hermit of Sils went out among people, he consorted with emancipated women—that is, with women who wrote. For their part, from 1885 on they traveled to Engadine “only in order to make the acquaintance of Professor Nietzsche, who nonetheless seemed to them to be the most dangerous enemy of women.”¹⁰⁵ The quiet mountain valley thus witnessed the future of our educational institutions. Whereas until 1908 Prussia’s bureaucratic university held fast to its founding exclusion, Switzerland had long admitted women to the university.¹⁰⁶ Lou von Salomé is only the most well known among them; aside from her and other women students, at least three women Ph.D.’s appeared in Nietzsche’s circle: Meta von Salis, Resa von Schirnhöfer (to whom Nietzsche vainly recommended himself as a dissertation topic),¹⁰⁷ and one of the first women to earn a doctorate after the great historical turning point, Helene Druskowitz. Yet this context of Nietzsche’s writing remains as unanalyzed as it is decisive.¹⁰⁸ With writing women as with writing machines, the man of many failed experiments was the first to use discursive innovations.

The text that Nietzsche first composed and then transferred into Ariadne’s lament came from Lou Salomé. One has only to exchange “enigma” or “enigmatic life” for “Dionysus” in the “Hymn to Life,” and the woman’s verse “If you have no happiness left to give me, good then, you still have pain!” becomes Nietzsche-Ariadne’s “No! Come back! *With* all your martyring!” The dithyramb (to say nothing of the rest of Nietzsche’s relationship to Salomé) thus remains quite close to what suffragettes called “the language of woman.” In a letter to his sister from Zurich, where Druskowitz was a student, Nietzsche reports:

This afternoon I took a long walk with my new friend Helene Druscowicz, who lives with her mother a few houses up from the Pension Neptune: of all the women I have come to know she has read my books with the most seriousness, and not for nothing. Look and see what you think of her latest writing (*Three English Poetesses*, among them Eliot, whom she greatly esteems, and a book on Shelley). . . . I would say she is a noble and honest creature, who does no harm to my “philosophy.”¹⁰⁹

A woman (Nietzsche’s sister) is thus written that other women write—particularly about other women, who without disparagement are called “poetesses.” She reads further that writing women are the most serious of Nietzsche’s readers, without any doubt about their independence. There is no longer any talk about the ravages of feminine reading mania. Nietzsche learned with great care the negative lesson of the Pforta school, where pupils could become acquainted with everything but women. His “philosophy,” therefore set between quotation marks, reversed the university discourse. Out of the exclusion of the other sex came, circa 1900, an inclusion. “*I am your labyrinth*,” says Dionysus to one who in the

Cretan cultic dance was herself the mistress of the labyrinth. Not only because Nietzsche exploded the interpretation rules of 1800 is it unnecessary to identify Ariadne with Cosima Wagner, as so often occurs. The enigma at the origin of all discourse has been played out; henceforth “women” count only insofar as they are known to Nietzsche and are acquainted with Nietzsche’s writing.

Women are neither One nor all, but rather, like signifiers, a numbered multitude, or with Leporello, *mill’e tre*. Accordingly, their relation to Nietzsche’s “philosophy” is ordered by selection. George’s male circle, which would implement a reduction of books and book distribution, was not the first to put an end to the classical proliferation of texts. First, *Zarathustra* was already, in a direct reversal of the reception aesthetics of 1800, *A Book for Everyone and No One*. Second, *Zarathustra* concluded with a secret fourth part, carefully planned as a private edition. Third, Nietzsche dispatched this private edition with all the wiliness of a Dionysus, who passed his wiliness on only to certain women. One copy went to Helene Druskowitz, who, however, “took it to be a loan and soon returned the book to Köselitz’s address, which made Nietzsche and Köselitz quite happy, for Nietzsche later—correctly—characterized his trust of her as ‘stupidity.’”¹¹⁰

Whether knowledge of a stupidity or stupidity of a knowledge, there arises a type of book distribution that was not distribution at all. The public shrinks to private printings and private addresses, to books as loans, even misunderstood ones. In the war between the sexes, any means is justified to select women with small ears out of an open group. Only for a time did Druskowitz belong to the happy few who read Nietzsche without any harm to Nietzsche. Once she was called “my new friend,” another time “that little literature-ninny Druskowitz,” anything but “my pupil.”¹¹¹ Dionysus, too, once praises Ariadne for her small ears; another time he asks her why she doesn’t have larger ones.¹¹² Unstable circumstances, dictated by physiology and chance, confronted writing men and writing women circa 1900. The philosopher who had come up with provocative theses on woman as truth *and* untruth recommended to women (as if to realize as quickly as possible his well-known dream of chairs in Zarathustra studies) doctoral work on these theses. But when the women philosophers then—as in the books Druskowitz wrote after her dissertation—wrote about and against Zarathustra, Zarathustra’s dispatcher had to wonder for once whether *he* were not the long-eared jackass. As long as women write books, there is no longer any guarantee that their torment and pleasure will consist in receiving wise words.

Druskowitz, when Nietzsche was in an insane asylum, rose in the titles of her books to “Doctor of World Wisdom” and (as if to parody F W v

Nietzky) into the aristocracy. But that was not enough: before she herself vanished into an insane asylum, she also published only "for the freest spirits." Thus was issued an answer to Dionysus and Zarathustra, who, after all, approached women with declarations of war, whips, and torture. Druskowitz's last book deals with "the male as a logical and temporal impossibility and as the curse of the world":

Throughout the entire organic world, the superiority claimed on behalf of the male sexual form has been lost by the human male in two senses: (1) as regards the more attractive part of the animal kingdom, (2) as regards his feminine companion. The she-goat and female ape would more deserve to be called his natural companions. For he is horribly made and carries the sign of his sex, in the shape of a sewer pump, before him like a criminal.¹¹³

The feminist, despite Nietzsche's denial, just might be a true pupil. "Must we not first hate each other, if we are to love one another?" The polarity of the sexes in 1800 unified mothers, writers, and feminine readers in *One Love*, but now two scare tacticians, as hostile as they are equal, enter the scene. The language of man and the language of woman deny one another with the charge that everything said by one side is determined by what is said by the other. Dissuasion includes "asking-behind," a phrase coined by Nietzsche. Druskowitz sees in his philosophy only a dusty love of the Greeks, determined by his neohumanist education; Nietzsche, perhaps because he recommends his philosophy to women as a dissertation topic, sees in their books only a gymnasium-determined, stinking alphabetism. "For heaven's sake don't let us transmit our gymnasium education to girls! An education that so often takes spirited, knowledge-thirsty, passionate young people and makes of them—images of their teachers!"¹¹⁴

"Asking-behind" can be precarious. No sooner has one traced certain discourses of others to the Discourse of the Other, than the topic turns to boys who are images of their teachers and who are thus precisely the Discourse of the Other in that they are also images of the star pupil who writes. The escalation of scare tactics in the war between the two sexes can thus only end in dithyrambic self-scorn.

Ha! Herauf, Würde!
Tugend-Würde! Europäer-Würde!
Blase, blase wieder,
Blasebalg der Tugend!
Ha!
Noch Ein Mal brüllen,
Moralisch brüllen,
Als moralischer Löwe
Vor den Töchtern der Wüste brüllen!
—Denn Tugend-Geheul,
Ihr allerliebsten Mädchen,

Ist mehr als Alles
 Europäer-Inbrunst, Europäer-Heiss hunger!
 Und da stehe ich schon,
 Als Europäer,
 Ich kann nicht anders, Gott helfe mir!
 Amen!

Ha! Upward, dignity!
 Virtue-dignity! The European's dignity!
 blow, blow again
 bellows of virtue!
 Ha!
 Roar once more,
 the moral roar,
 roar like a moral lion
 before the daughters of the desert!
 —For virtue-wailing,
 you dearest girls,
 is more than anything
 the European's ardor, the European's craving!
 And there I am,
 as a European,
 I have no choice, God help me!
 Amen!¹¹⁵

This was the riskiest of experiments, and therefore it remained on paper. Before the daughters of the desert, one prostitutes a discourse, which as the Discourse of the Other rules animals and can make them speak. What the Pforta school denied to its star pupil is realized in the desert: women appear, very different from gymnasium pupils and their emancipated copies. They neither speak nor write; a moralistic howling monkey, although he calls himself the labyrinth of women, finds that Dudu and Suleika, these “mute, ominous she-cats,” “*resphinx*” him. The enigma of sexual difference, the phallus that Nietzsche transfigures into a Dionysian instrument of torture and that “Erna (Dr. Helene von Druskowitz)” proclaimed was a stigma in the shape of a sewer pump—in the desert its only invitation is to play.

Diese schönste Luft trinkend,
 Mit Nüstern geschwellt gleich Bechern,
 Ohne Zukunft, ohne Erinnerungen,
 So sitze ich hier, ihr
 Allerliebsten Freundinnen,
 Und sehe der Palme zu,
 Wie sie, einer Tänzerin gleich
 Sich biegt und schmiegt und in der Hüfte wiegt
 —man thut es mit, sieht man lange zu!
 Einer Tänzerin gleich, die, wie mir scheinen will,

Zu lange schon, gefährlich lange
 Immer, immer nur auf Einem Beine stand?
 —Da vergass sie darob, wie mir scheinen will,
 Das andre Bein?
 Vergebens wenigstens
 Suchte ich das vermisste
 Zwilling-Kleinod
 —nämlich das andre Bein—
 In der heiligen Nähe
 Ihres allerliebsten, allerzierlichsten
 Fächer- und Flatter- und Flitterröckchens.

Drinking this finest air,
 with nostrils filled like Chalice,
 without future, without memories,
 here I sit, you
 dearest friends,
 and watch the palm tree,
 how like a dancer
 she plays and sways her hip
 —one dances along if one watches for long!
 Like a dancer, who, it seems to me,
 stands too long, dangerously long,
 always, always only on One Leg?
 —She forgot, it seems to me,
 that other leg?
 I at least
 have looked in vain
 for the missing twin jewel
 —the other leg, namely—
 in sacred nearness
 to her dearest, most graceful
 sparkling, fluttering, fanlike dress.

The phallus is missing or forgotten or there, where it is not: on women. The palm tree, instead of immediately becoming a piece of paper, as under the conditions of northern culture, dances the erection. Even the howling monkey, instead of merely learning to read and write from women as from palm trees, succumbs to the rhythmical imperative. The music that Nietzsche had vainly awaited from Wagner, Bizet, Köselitz, or Gast arises after all: a music equal to the brown sunsets of the desert. Women who are daughters of the desert, and therefore do not exist in the singular at all, place writing on the unmeasured ground without which signs and media would not exist. The despot's dream of being able to fix words as purely and simply as incessant pain would burn itself in evaporates in the emptiness that reduces words to small, amusing accidents. (The howling monkey himself mocks the word *resphinx* as a sin against language.) "Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard."

In the desert of chance there is neither future nor memory. Fixed ideas might once more excite the European's ardor, but circa 1900 an opposite symptom grounds the act of writing: the flight of ideas. Having become a lion or howling monkey, the philosopher can finally partake of the privilege of animals—an active forgetfulness, which does not merely forget this or that, but forgets forgetting itself.¹¹⁶ Mnemonic technique, simply by being called technique rather than being, like memory, an inborn faculty, exists only as a resistance to the incessant and thought-fleeing innocence of speech.

The dithyrambic, flight-of-ideas wish to be out of Europe and in the desert, to lose one's head among its daughters, was not unfulfilled. In another desert, the institute for the cure and care of the insane in Jena, the ex-professor demonstrated this fulfillment in front of experts. What "came to" the psychiatrists writing the case report and listening to Nietzsche's speech was what always occurred to them circa 1900: "flight of ideas."¹¹⁷

The Great Lalulā

In the discourse network of 1900, discourse is produced by RANDOM GENERATORS. Psychophysics constructed such sources of noise; the new technological media stored their output.

Psychophysics

Two years before Nietzsche argued that mnemonic techniques were the genealogy of morals, a professor of psychology in Breslau, Hermann Ebbinghaus, published a short but revolutionary work entitled *On Memory*. Whereas the last philosopher ended the history of Western ethics by reducing history and ethics to machines, Ebbinghaus made a new, that is, technological contribution to knowledge of an age-old phenomenon. And whereas the philosopher and man of letters described the scene of writing with every line he wrote until such autoreferentiality issues in a megalomaniacal scream (or the book *Ecce Homo*) and brought psychiatrists into the picture, Ebbinghaus was quite reticent about the subject of his painful autoexperiment of memory quantification. This silence makes it possible to turn the great words of the ex-professor into science. Where the one had come to his end with psychiatrically defined flight of ideas, the other risked the same fate experimentally; his text, however, records only numbers, not a word of pain or pleasure. Yet numbers are the only kind of information that remains relevant beyond all minds, whether insane or professorial: as an inscription in the real.¹

“During two periods, in the years 1879–80 and 1883–84,” Ebbinghaus daily conducted autoexperiments, beginning at varied times of the

day in the first period but using the early afternoon during the second. "Care was taken that the objective conditions of life during the period of the tests were so controlled as to eliminate too great changes or irregularities."² Who might have created such chaos—servants or wives, students or colleagues—remains unspecified. What matters is that a German professor modified his life during specified periods in order to be able to count something that was previously deemed common knowledge and therefore beneath notice: his own memory capacity.

How does the disappearance of the ability to reproduce, forgetfulness, depend upon the length of time during which no repetitions have taken place? What proportion does the increase in the certainty of reproduction bear to the number of repetitions? How do these relations vary with the greater or less intensity of the interest in the thing to be reproduced? These and similar questions no one can answer.

This inability does not arise from a chance neglect of investigation of these relations. We cannot say that tomorrow, or whenever we wish to take time, we can investigate these problems. On the contrary, this inability is inherent in the nature of the questions themselves. Although the conceptions in question—namely, degrees of forgetfulness, of certainty and interest—are quite correct, we have no means of establishing such degrees in our experience except at the extremes. We feel therefore that we are not at all in a condition to undertake the investigation. . . . For example, to express our ideas concerning their [memories'] physical basis we use different metaphors—stored-up ideas, engraved images, well-beaten paths. There is only one thing certain about these figures of speech and that is that they are not accurate.³

What seems most familiar to introspection here becomes an object of research. And the customary metaphors and images of psychology cannot be eradicated without mortification. Nietzsche had derived the most spiritual of memories from the body and its suffering; psychophysics approached the same enigma mathematically, with methods that H. L. F. von Helmholtz and G. T. Fechner had developed to measure perception.⁴ A shift in paradigms occurred: Nietzsche and Ebbinghaus presupposed forgetfulness, rather than memory and its capacity, in order to place the medium of the soul against a background of emptiness or erosion. A zero value is required before acts of memory can be quantified. Ebbinghaus banned introspection and thus restored the primacy of forgetting on a theoretical level. On the one hand, there was Nietzsche's delirious joy at forgetting even his forgetfulness; on the other, there was a psychologist who forgot all of psychology in order to forge its algebraic formula. This is the relation of the Discourse of the Master to that of the university, of Nietzschean command to technological execution. Rather than give a philosophical description of mnemonic inscription and practice it in dithyrambs, Ebbinghaus took the place of Nietzsche's victim or experi-

mental subject and then retroactively became the observer of his own experience in order to quantify what he had suffered.

Reading aloud at a tempo dictated by the ticking of his pocket watch, the professor spent years reading line after line of meaningless syllables, until he could recite them from memory. "His idea of using meaningless syllables as experimental material solved in a single stroke the introspectionist problem of finding meaning-free sensations."⁵ From that point on, the bare relation of numbers could serve as a measure for the force of psychophysical inscription. Lines of seven syllables can be learned instantly, lines of twelve syllables have to be read sixteen times, and lines of twenty-six syllables have to be read fifty-five times before the mechanism of reproducible memorization clicks on. It was not always easy, however, to exclude self-fulfilling prophecies in the numerical results; the forgetting of forgetting remains as paradoxical as the effort "to rid oneself of a thought and by that very attempt foster that thought."⁶ After three quarters of an hour of uninterrupted memory exercises, "occasionally exhaustion, headache, and other symptoms," set in, "which if continued would have complicated the conditions of the experiment."⁷ Psychophysics is thus quite real, particularly for its inventor, for whom it (like all mnemonic techniques, according to Nietzsche) causes physical discomfort. It was known in the classical age that "such a dreadfully one-sided application of so subordinate a mental power as memory can derange human reason";⁸ but for this reason Anselmus circumvented mechanical repetition through hermeneutics. In 1900 the opposite is necessary. A subordinate mental function becomes the most fundamental, because it is quantifiable.⁹ For the sake of a few formulas, Ebbinghaus sacrificed (as Nietzsche did for the desert) his subject of knowledge.¹⁰ Dizzy, numbed by all the syllables, his mind became a *tabula rasa*.¹¹

The test's individual conditions all contributed to such emptiness. Language was artificially reduced to a raw state. First, Ebbinghaus did not allow "the meaningless syllables to be connected with any associated meanings, as is characteristic of certain mnemonic techniques."¹² Second, the empty page he had become was cleansed of memories and his native language. To isolate memory from all other cultural practices, Ebbinghaus eliminated signifieds from the beginning, because they might have provoked hermeneutic activity. "Associations tending in different directions, differing degrees of interest, the recollection of particularly striking or beautiful verses, etc.," all such ordinarily sanctioned mental activity amounted only to "disturbing influences."¹³ With his head spinning, Ebbinghaus achieved an unthinkable distance where nothing, but nothing, means anything. He instituted the flight of ideas.

There is nothing exotic in distance, and the great kingdom of nonsense is no exception. In order to prove that recollecting meaningless material was the rule, Ebbinghaus conducted counter experiments. As if to test Nietzsche's thesis of the basic utility of metrics, Ebbinghaus memorized cantos from Byron's *Don Juan* under the same experimental conditions as before. Even he was surprised by the result. "From this point of view it almost seems as if the difference between sense and nonsense material were not nearly so great as one would be inclined *a priori* to imagine."¹⁴ Thus the great doctrine bestowed by the discourse network of 1800 on its reformed primers is shaken: namely, the notion that readers would learn signifieds, because of their immanence in the mind, with much greater speed than they would learn signifiers by rote. To the contrary, pure nonsense reveals certain specific aspects of attention that hermeneutics could not even conceive. "The homogeneity of the series of syllables falls considerably short of what might be expected of it. The series exhibit very important and almost incomprehensible variations as to the ease or difficulty with which they are learned."¹⁵ Just beyond the purpose of the test, then, there is something that no longer concerns Ebbinghaus but that will interest Freud and the writers; it is the differentiability that precedes all meaning: the naked, elementary existence of signifiers. If "from this point of view" the difference between sense and nonsense dwindles, then the kingdom of sense—that is, the entire discourse network of 1800—sinks to the level of a secondary and exceptional phenomenon. Neither understanding nor the previously fundamental capacity of "inwardizing" or recollection has any significant effect on the mechanics of memory.

If signifiers obey laws that are as fundamental as they are incomprehensible, it is essential to have the test material expressed in strict, statistical terms. Long before the expressionist "language eroticism" [*Spracherotik*] that "first must demolish language" and "establish the chaotic, originary condition, the absolute homogeneity of the material,"¹⁶ Ebbinghaus went to work on the same project. The nonsense that he spent hours, days, weeks, and years memorizing was never picked up from any native speakers in any locality. It was generated by a calculation at the beginning of every test series. Through an exhaustive combination of eleven vowels, nineteen beginning consonants, and (for the sake of pronunciation) only eleven end consonants, there came to be "ca. 2,300" or (as anyone might calculate) 2,299 triphthong syllables.¹⁷ The random generator can not keep a few meaningful German words from appearing in a series, "*dosch päm feur lot . . .*"¹⁸ These, however, are exceptions that can be read over (like *lot* five seconds ago) and that have little effect. "Among many thousand combinations there occur scarcely a few dozen that have a meaning and

among these there are again only a few whose meaning was realized while they were being memorized.”¹⁹

Never before had such passion been devoted to syllables. Of course, Reformation primers did, to the dismay of the classical age, play through single vowel-consonant combinations of the second order. But their *ab eb ib ob ub / ba be bi bo bu* was only an example; the goal was not a mathematically guaranteed completeness of assembly. The discourse network of 1900 was the first to establish a treasury of the signifier whose rules were entirely based on randomness and combinatorics.²⁰ It is not that, with Ebbinghaus’s numbered sounds and sound combinations or Mallarmé’s twenty-four letters, an old-European discursive practice returns from its repression circa 1800.²¹ The fact that combinatory groups do not necessarily produce sense also applied to the letters and words of the miserable scribes of 1736. But not even Liscov’s satire had the scribes systematically avoid “agreement among the letters” the way Ebbinghaus did. The difference between the polyphonic line and the twelve-tone technique is similar; the latter not only revives all contrapuntal-combinatory arts, but also avoids all accidental harmonic effects just as counterpoint had avoided all dissonance.

The homologies between dodecaphony and Ebbinghaus, who began a whole positivist movement, are so far-reaching that a search for factual cross-connections would be worthwhile (though it would not be merely the investigation into the ambience of Viennese coffee houses that Adorno’s philosophy of modern music in all seriousness proposes). First, Ebbinghaus memorized the meaningless syllables in groups of seven to twenty-six, which, like Schönberg’s twelve tones, are called series. Second, he eliminated the disturbing effects of easily learned syllables by putting aside the syllables from the available supply of 2,299 combinations that had already been memorized until all the other combinations had been gone through.²² Dodecaphony proceeded in the same way with serial tones that had already been employed: these were taboo until the remaining eleven had been run through. Third, in order to refute the doctrine of free association taught in 1800, Ebbinghaus produced a very complicated demonstration showing that the interconnection of members of a row facilitates memorization; for example, if an already memorized series *dosch pǟm feur lot . . .*, is reordered into the series *lot pǟm feur dosch . . .* Accordingly, “not only are the original terms associated with their immediate sequents,” that is, those following in either direction, but “connections are also established between each term and those which follow it beyond several intervening members.”²³ Schönberg proceeded in the same manner by bypassing certain notes in a melody and transferring them to parallel voices.²⁴ In both cases a combinatorics presented in the

original material is subjected to a further combinatorics of the series and column.

Permutations of permutations eliminate any natural relation. Nonsense syllables or chromatic tones of equal value constitute media in the modern sense: material produced by random generation, selected and grouped into individual complexes. The fact that these materials always join discrete elements and do not develop in continuous genesis from an unarticulated nature distinguishes them from minimal signifieds. To Ebbinghaus the unique “oh” would simply be one among the 209 possible diphthong combinations. It would not take until the year 2407, as Christian Morgenstern’s *Ginggan* announces, for “the great paper-shredding snow centrifuge of the American Nature Theater Company Ltd. of Brotherson & Sann” to take the place of organically grown snow crystals.²⁵

If a syllable such as *ma* does not grow out of a mother-child love transcending words and then glide into the first word of the high idiom, *Mama*, but rather is thrown out like dice, it forfeits any ranking above the countless other syllables that are and remain meaningless. On the contrary, the effect of meaning, greeted by Tiedemann and Stephani as a revelation from beyond all language, becomes a disturbance that troubles the pure flight of ideas with memories and associations. Thinking and intending, however, are the imaginary acts that led the philosophers of 1800 to assert the primacy of the oral. In contrast to the technologies of the letter, only speaking—an externalization that immediately disappears—could figure as the frictionless unification of Spirit and Nature. But orality, together with thought, vanishes from randomly generated language material. Of course, Ebbinghaus worked with phonemes in order to be able to read aloud, but they were presented to him as writing. Syllable after syllable comes out of the random generator, onto the desk and into the file of worked-through alternatives, until all 2,299 have been used and output and input can begin again.

Memory tests in which the experimental subject necessarily thinks nothing and abandons the position of knowing subject have an equally subjectless observer, who is not as far from Nietzsche’s new god as hasty distinctions between myth and positivism would have it. The two mechanical memories on either side of the tabula rasa Ebbinghaus—the one generating the syllables and the other recording them after they have passed before him—form a writing machine that forgets nothing and stores more nonsense than people ever could: 2,299 nonsense syllables. This is the necessary condition for a psychophysical investigation of memory: memory is taken from people and delegated to a material organization of discourse. The discourse network of 1800 played the game

of not being a discourse network and pretended instead to be the inwardness and voice of Man; in 1900 a type of writing assumes power that does not conform to traditional writing systems but rather radicalizes the technology of writing in general.²⁶

The most radical extrapolation from a discourse network of writing is to write writing. “All letters that have ever been written by man count.”²⁷ Given an assortment of letters and diacritical signs, like a typewriter keyboard (even, after 1888, in its standardized form), then in principle it is possible to inscribe more and different sorts of things than any voice has ever spoken. Of course, such notations have no purpose beyond notation itself; they need not and cannot be dematerialized and consumed by a hermeneutics; their indelible and indigestible existence on the page is all that the page conveys.

THE GREAT LALULĀ

Kroklokwafzi? Semememi!

Seiokrontro—prafriplo:

Bifzi, bafzi; hulalemi:

quasti basti bo . . .

Lalu lalu lalu lalu la!

Hontraruru miromente

zasku zes rü rü?

Entepente, leiolente

klekwapufzi lü?

Lalu lalu lalu lalu la!

Simarar kos malzipempu

silzuzankunkrei (;)!

Marjomar dos: Quempu Lempu

Siri Suri Sei []!

Lalu lalu lalu lalu la!

Before Morgenstern's 1905 collection *Gallows Songs*, no poem had existed as a small discourse network. Literary historians have sought classical-romantic models for these poems and have found some nonsense verse here and there.²⁸ But even the “Wien ung quatsch, Ba nu, Ba nu n'am tsche fatsch,” sung by a dark-skinned cook in Clemens Brentano's *Several Millers of Sorrow*, if it is not pidgin Rumanian, is at least speakable.²⁹ No voice, however, can speak parentheses that enclose a semicolon (as specified in “The Great Lalulā”) or even—to demonstrate once and for all what media are—brackets that surround an empty space. Systematic nonsense, which demands inhuman storage capacities, exists only in writing. The fact that Morgenstern's syllables owe their existence not to a combinatory method but, at first sight at least, to lovely chance doesn't

make them all that different from Ebbinghaus's series. "The Great Lalulā" is also material without an author; the more chance enters, the more literally does the imperative in the motto of the *Gallows Songs* apply: "Let the molecules roar / whatever they dice together!"

Clearly, the discourse network of 1900 is a dice game with "serially ordered discrete unities,"³⁰ which in the lyric are called letters and punctuation signs, and to which writers since Mallarmé have ceded the initiative. More anarchic than Liscov's miserable scribes, who can at least discard a bad dice throw, less Faustian than all *poetae minores* of 1800, who produced quantities of meaning in inverse relation to their stature, literature throws out signifiers. "The Great Lalulā" says that, in the beginning and in the end, language is Blabla. "You can say what you like, people more often than not do nothing but—bark, cackle, crow, bleat, etc. Just listen for once to the animal conversations in a bar."³¹

What remains is the enigma of the signifiers' use. To write down script that is simply script had no appeal for hermeneutic interpreters or for philosophers, whose chief concern is "naturally the stress on the factor of meaning" and therefore "naturally" German Poetry.³² "Lalulā" is more useful to cryptographers (of whom more will be said). But psychophysics would have the greatest use for such writing. There are people in whom Morgenstern's nonsense "lives on as a fount of citation"—the most certain "sign for what we call a classic poet"³³—though one does not know how such mnemonic technique works. Because "new creation in language has something in common with the invention of undreamed-of physical phenomena,"³⁴ the "Lalulā" would be an occasion for readers to instigate autoexperiments in memory, especially since Ebbinghaus himself fudged things a bit. In order to measure eventual differences between sense and nonsense, the psychophysicist introduced verses by Byron and thus determinants supplementary to meaning: rhyme and meter. In "Lalulā," by contrast, only these two redundancies, with no meaning, restrict chance. As a missing link between the syllabic hodgepodge and the lyric form, "Lalulā" could bring experimental clarification to the controversial question whether rhyme and meter, in their mnemonically convenient conspicuousness, represent the identity of signifieds or are the effects of signifiers.³⁵ In this way one could distinguish those functions that, in Byron, remain clumped together as "unified strains of sense, rhythm, rhyme, and membership in a single language."³⁶ Nietzsche's doctrine of the utility of poetry, which stressed mnemonic technique and questioned rather than supported the possibility of the transmission of meaning, could be brought to bear on *The Scientific Foundations of Poetry* more materially through "The Great Lalulā" than the apostle of naturalism, Wilhelm Bölsche, had intended in his title.

Following the heroic autoexperiments of Ebbinghaus, breaking down discourses into single and discrete functions became the task of an entire psychophysics of complex cultural practices. These functions have nothing to do with one another or with any unity imposed by consciousness; they are automatic and autonomous. "We may sum up the experiment by saying that a large number of acts ordinarily called intelligent, such as reading, writing, etc., can go on quite automatically in ordinary people."³⁷ In 1900 speaking and hearing, writing and reading were put to the test as isolated functions, without any subject or thought as their shadowy supports. "Between finitude and infinity the word has ample room to be able to do without any help from thought."³⁸ Rather than the long genetic path of the word from its beginning in nature to its end in culture, what counts is the signifier's mechanism and how it runs under either normal or pathological circumstances. Psychophysics is not a pedagogy that takes necessary truths from Mother Nature for mothers and teachers; rather, it inventories previously unresearched particulars. Culture [*Bildung*], the great unity in which speaking, hearing, writing, and reading would achieve mutual transparency and relation to meaning, breaks apart. Even if schoolmen draw massive conclusions from the inventory, the experimenters are at the wheel. Pedagogic reforms are only applications; they apply to only one cultural practice; indeed, they tend to make instruction in reading or writing into a somewhat muddled order of research. Thus even in its own field, in the "psychology of reading," "the competence of pedagogy" ends.³⁹ Exit Stephani.

The victory of psychophysics is a paradigm shift. Instead of the classical question of what people would be capable of if they were adequately and affectionately "cultivated," one asks what people have always been capable of when autonomic functions are singly and thoroughly tested.⁴⁰ Because this capability is not a gift of productive nature, but as simple as either spelling or writing "Lalulā," it has no ideal completion or endpoint. There is no universal norm (inwardness, creative imagination, high idiom, Poetry) transcending the particular functions. Each has a standard only in relation to defined experimental subjects and conditions.

When ten pupils from each of ten gymnasium classes read aloud and as quickly as possible one hundred connected words from *Egmont*, the measured average reading time for those in the sixth class is 55 seconds, for those in the fifth class 43 seconds, and for those in the first class 23 seconds.⁴¹ These standards mean nothing to educationally bureaucratized lovers of Goethe. Ebbinghaus adds to these numbers his own, namely 0.16 seconds per word of Goethe, thus leveling any distinction in rank between pupils and professors, empirical evidence and norm. To measure one's own reading pace as well as that of the sixth class means methodi-

cally disposing of culture [*Bildung*]. Thus Ebbinghaus does not announce any record, because “the numbers continue to diminish with further practice in reading.”⁴² So the transcendental norm falls into an endless series, at whose unreal end might be someone who could only speedread. If psychophysical standards had ideals rather than provisional records, those ideals would resemble the genius of Kafka’s hunger artist. Indeed, the first German graphologist took such interest in cripples who wrote with their mouths or feet that he attempted to do so himself and reproduced facsimiles of his efforts.⁴³ Psychophysics ceased subjecting cultural practices to a dichotomy of the normal and pathological, the developed and underdeveloped. It investigated capabilities that in everyday life would have to be called superfluous, pathological, or obsolete.

Ebbinghaus, having been alphabetized, could read silently, without moving his mouth, but for test series he preferred the old-fashioned method of reading aloud at a tempo that could be mechanically directed.⁴⁴ Of course, typewriters that eliminated all the individuality of script had recently appeared,⁴⁵ but a psychophysical graphology arose in a counter movement and focused on the difference between standardized letters and unconscious-automatic hands that write. It was concerned with what under normal conditions would be considered a “superfluous addition to the letters.”⁴⁶ If “it is emphasized—and rightly so—that a pupil should not learn material that is meaningless to him,”⁴⁷ each psychophysical experimental subject—from the infant to the psychology professor—is an exception to such pedagogical norms. All the abilities and inabilities despised in 1800 return, not as simple regressions from an erstwhile culture, but as objects of analysis and decomposition.

The cultural-technological standards do not represent Man and his Norm. They articulate or decompose bodies that are already dismembered. Nature does its own work before any experimenter arrives.⁴⁸ Apoplexy, bullet wounds to the head, and paralysis made possible the fundamental discoveries upon which every connection drawn between cultural practices and physiology is based. In 1861 Paul Broca traced motoric aphasia, or the inability to pronounce words despite unimpaired consciousness and hearing, to lesions in a circumscribed area of the cerebral cortex. In 1874 Karl Wernicke made the mirroring discovery that sensory aphasia, or the inability to hear words despite unimpaired speech capacity, corresponded to a deficit in other areas of the brain. The method of isolating and measuring cultural practices by reference to deficiencies led finally to the decomposition of discourse into single parameters.⁴⁹ Circa 1900 optical disturbances corresponding to the acoustical disturbances investigated by Broca and Wernicke, the alexias or agraphias, also became familiar. Further, a certain reversal in relation to linguistic reference

and its agnosias was discovered, for there turned out to be an oral, and then a graphic asymbolia, or the inability “to find the verbal image of an object” even when the doctor would show it to the patient.⁵⁰ Diverse sub-routines finally had to be distinguished within each cultural practice; for example, writing included “dictation, copying, written description, and spontaneous writing”⁵¹—and each of the subroutines might lead to different results. What we ordinarily call language is thus a complex linkage of brain centers through no less numerous direct and indirect nerve connections. As Nietzsche had prophesied and, as a paralytic, demonstrated to his psychiatrist Theodor Ziehen, language breaks down into individual elements: into optical, acoustical, sensory, and motoric nervous impulses and only then into signifier/signified/referent.

Research into aphasia marked a turning point in the adventures of speech. Disturbances in language no longer converged in the beautiful wordlessness of the romantic soul. If there are “as many sources of language disturbance as there are organs of speech wanting to speak,”⁵² then the single “oh” becomes only an incidental case.⁵³ The Poetry that listened to or inspired that “oh” is replaced by sciences. Only on the basis of psychophysics does it make terminological sense for Saussure, in founding a new linguistics, to decompose the linguistic sign into the notion of a concept (signified) and an acoustic-sensory image (signifier),⁵⁴ or for Freud, more copied than understood by his students, similarly to divide “thing representation” [*Sachvorstellung*] from “word representation” [*Wortvorstellung*].⁵⁵

The cultural goal of universal alphabetization fades away with the “oh” of the soul. The pedagogy of 1900, because it was applied physiology, was preoccupied with standardizing, individually and successively, the brain regions of its pupils. The center of concrete representations, the motoric and sensorial centers for speech and writing—all had to be approached separately. “The reading-writing method in no way corresponds to the state of contemporary science.”⁵⁶ Because not every local center has direct nerve connections to every other, there is no unity of the transcendental signified capable of organically developing speaking and hearing, writing and reading out of one another. The pedagogical uncoupling of the cultural-technological subroutines simply followed cuts made by the scalpel. Children circa 1900 learned to read without understanding and to write without thinking. The investigation of aphasia is always already its production.

In 1913 Wassily Kandinsky published a volume of poems in German. He accompanied the title *Sounds* with some very practical tips. He meant not romantic primal sounds, but “inner sounds” that remain when one has repeated words until they become senseless—a proven and oft-employed

means of simulating aphasia. Thus Kandinsky's poetry isolated the sound images of words physiologically with the exactness that his painting isolated colors and forms. That does not hinder Germanists from attacking him in the name of a linguistics that grew out of the same premises.⁵⁷ But alexia seems to haunt the books of its forgotten investigators . . .

In 1902 Hofmannsthal's *A Letter* appeared with a self-diagnosis of the sender.

And could I, if otherwise I am still the same person, have lost from my inscrutable self all traces and scars of this creation of my most intensive thinking—lost them so completely that in your letter now lying before me the title of my short treatise stares at me strange and cold? At first I could not comprehend it as the familiar image of conjoined words, but had to study it word by word, as though these Latin terms thus strung together were meeting my eye for the first time.⁵⁸

One who writes that he is hardly able to read any more is virtually formulating a case of sensory and near-amnesiac alexia. But the person is Phillip Lord Chandos, and the pile of letters that refuses to coalesce into the images of words is the title of a Latin tract that Chandos has recently written. In the meantime he has not lost the ability to write (say letters). But he has lost a part of his ability to read, and he suffers from a thoroughly physiological “dullness” of the “brain.”⁵⁹ Whereas Ofterdingen or Guido could give to even the most foreign books their own titles, the writer of 1902 can no longer even understand his own title. We can read “Chandos” in place of “the patient” when a great physiologist describes the symptoms of alexia:

The patient can see the letters sharply enough, he can write them spontaneously, eventually he can even copy them without error—and yet he is unable to read anything printed or written, even the words he had just clearly and correctly written (notes, short letters). . . . The alexic recognizes single letters or even syllables, but he cannot grasp them successively and retain them as complete words so as to arrive at an understanding of what he has read, even for single words.⁶⁰

The solidarity of physiology and literature extends to concrete details. One isolates the symptoms to which the other attests. Nietzsche praised the half-blindness that kept him from reading and allowed only the writing of signifiers. Chandos experiences a similar blindness vis-à-vis signifieds, but he develops a new discourse out of alexia (just as sensory language disturbances often influence the motoric aspect of language):⁶¹ he avoids “even pronouncing” signifieds, above all the transcendental ones (“Spirit, soul, or body”), and envisions instead “a language in which not one word is known to me, a language in which mute things speak to me.”⁶² In much the same way, pedagogues versed in psychophysics separated reading and writing, because neither should be confused with sig-

nifieds and referents, from wordless observational or practical instruction.⁶³ As if he were a pupil in their school, the Lord finds that “a dog in the sun, an old churchyard, a cripple” and so on are “sublime revelations” beyond all words.⁶⁴ This is not surprising in the cripple he himself is. Because they switch off medial operations of selection, aphasia and alexia necessarily present the nameless and formless. In aphasics, Nietzsche’s terrible voice returns to the physiology of everyday life. “Speaking, whistling, clapping the hands, etc., everything is to their ears the same incomprehensible noise.”⁶⁵

Aphasia, alexia, agraphia, agnosia, asymbolia—in this long list of dysfunctionalities the noise that precedes every discourse becomes at once theme and method. The products of decomposed language observed in the experimental subjects are as usable as the material provided by the experimenters. What terrified Nietzsche and Chandos discovered as a wondrous, foreign realm can also be transmitted. Discursive manipulations in the discourse network of 1900 were quite extensive. Psychophysics transmits white noise through a certain filter so that what comes across is, say, pink noise; whatever the eyes and ears of the receiver make of this is then the experimental result.

Ebbinghaus further tested his nonsense syllables on others. But something remarkable occurred, for not all experimental subjects had his command of the flight of ideas. For some,

at least in the beginning, it is hardly possible to refrain from the learning aids of all sorts of memory supports, to perceive the syllables as mere letter combinations and memorize them in a purely mechanical fashion. Without any effort or volition on their part, all kinds of associated representations constantly fly toward them from individual syllables. Something occurs to them, indeed a motley of things: a syllabic assonance, relations among letters, similar sounding meaningful words or the names of persons, animals, and so forth, meanings in a foreign language, etc. . . . For example, *pek* is expanded to *Peking*, *chi* to *child*; *sep* recalls *Joseph*, *neis* the English word *nice*. . . . In the case of one subject, the syllables *faak neit* stimulated the idea “Fahrenheit,” in another case, *jas dum* (via the French *jaser*) suggested the notion of stupid jabbering; the syllable sequence *dosch päm feur lot* was on one occasion joined together in the brief sentence: “The bread fire licks.”⁶⁶

Such is the countertest to aphasia. The farrago of syllables that aphasics produce from signifieds is put before normal speakers in order to see how they produce signifieds out of a syllabic hodgepodge and at the same time betray a sense-producing notion, which in the case of *jas dum* still means talking nonsense. In this way, the difference between *Hearing and Understanding* can be quantified. An experiment run under that title sent nonsense syllables, such as *paum* and *maum*, through telephone and

phonograph channels; subjects (in spite or of because of the frequency band restriction) received “the more probable *baum* [‘tree’],” thus providing experimental verification of Nietzsche’s oracles of language theory, or demonstrating that discourses are “eclectic combinations” of noise spectra.⁶⁷ “We find it much easier to fantasize an approximate tree. . . . We are artists more than we suspect.”

Thus a physiological work entitled *The Brain and Language*, which reconstructs the path from the speechless patches of light and noise the infant perceives to the ordering of images and speech sounds, comes to the conclusion: “We proceed like poets.”⁶⁸ But such poetic activity, rhyming *Baum* and *maum* or hitting upon *faak neit / Fabrenheit*, having been confirmed by Nietzschean brain researchers, no longer has any need of a muse. Even in the greatest authors, the unconscious functions of the brain are at work. A judgment on Anselmus’s ecstasy beneath the elder tree, “made possible on the basis of a psychiatric and scientific contribution,”⁶⁹ led the psychiatrist Otto Klinko to conclude that Anselmus, in listening to the whispering of the three sisters, was clinically psychotic:

It can also happen, and with the mentally ill it does, that these sounds and words in a certain rhythm . . . are heard by the inner ear as occurring at a regular tempo and are projected to a spot in the person’s own body or onto the environment. This rhythm, expanding to associations, alliterations, and even rhymes, is often brought about by noises in the ear that are synchronous with heart or pulse rates, but it can also be provoked and maintained by regular external sounds, such as marching to rhythm, or, recently, the regular rolling of train wheels. We see Anselmus in a similar situation at the beginning of the story.⁷⁰

This conclusion abolishes the precondition for Poetry.⁷¹ The noises that led Anselmus to the Mother’s Mouth lose all human quality, while his interpretation of them, called *Serpentina*, loses any basis. But magic is not lost, as it was in the age of enlightened fathers, when the Elf King’s whispering voice became rustling leaves. Psychophysics advances, beyond all attribution of meaning and its transparent arbitrariness, to the meaningless body, which is a machine among machines. A roaring in the ears and the roaring of trains are equally capable of providing disordered brains with assonances, alliterations, and rhymes. The fact that “Sister, sister, swing in the shimmer” was once written down as Poetry is no longer applauded by psychophysics.

It had hardly any occasion to applaud. Circa 1900 noise was everywhere. A psychotic in his cell constantly hears imbecilic voices that snap up words in the imbecility of his surroundings “which have the same or nearly the same *sound* as what they have to say or rattle off.” Like the subjects in Ebbinghaus’s experiment, the hallucinations rhyme “Santiago” with “Cathargo” or (in a somewhat Saxon accent) “Briefbeschwerer”

with “Herr Prüfer schwört.”⁷² A psychiatric researcher drew the sad conclusion from his association tests that rhymes such as *Herz/Schmerz* or *Brust/Lust*, those honorable old warhorses of German Poetry, flood the inner ear “only in psychic disorders, that is, wherever so-called flight of ideas is the rule.” Ziehen cites a manic patient who associates *Hund-Bund-Schund* [*dog-band-trash*],⁷³ and who thus calls the output of rhyming words by its proper name.

Decisively, trash and nonsense had been scientifically recorded in 1893, not only in 1928, as even an informed literary scholarship would admit.⁷⁴ Lyric poetry, too, would have to check over its jingles in the *Handbook of Physiological Psychology* (the title of Ziehen’s book). “*Brust/Lust*” and “*Schmerz/Herz*” are among the examples presented by Arno Holz in his *Slimy Rhymes and the Nonsense of Rhymes in General*. The transition to modern free verse cannot always be described as an inherently literary innovation. When rhyme shows up in laboratories and madhouses, it must vanish from the printed page if poets and psychotics are not to be confused.

Yet free verse was only one historical option circa 1900. A second, paradoxical option was mimicry. If the clattering of trains could suggest rhymes to the mentally ill, the lyric poet could detect new rhymes in such poetry of the body. The railroad itself, rather than an author or High German, speaks in Detlev von Liliencron’s “Rattattattat.”⁷⁵ And if marching to rhythm has the same effect, then Liliencron’s rhyme play of “Persian Shah” and “klingling, bumbum and tschingdada” logically follows.

A military-musical sound source transmits *tschingdada*; the experimental subjects are asked if any rhymes occur to them. Such was the procedure, in the year of the *Gallows Songs* (1905), of Narziss Ach, M.D. and Ph.D. His test consisted in meaningless syllables (excluding the syllable *ach*, unfortunately), to which subjects, under hypnosis and in a normal state, were to respond with meaningless rhymes or assonances.⁷⁶ Difficulties appear only if the permitted reactions, unlike Ach’s test or “Lalulä,” are to be exclusively meaningful words. Hermann Gutzmann’s eclectic combination *maum/Baum* is harmless; *tschingdada* provokes foreign words; but things become truly aporetic with Stefan George. The inventor of so many unheard-of and nonetheless German rhymes has all discourse culminate in a syllabic hodgepodge that chokes off any reaction in the experimental subjects.

We were in that special region of unremitting punishments where the people are who had been unwilling to say, “O Lord!,” and where the angels are who said, “We want.” There in the place of their torment they blaspheme the eternal judge and pound their breasts; they claim to be greater than the blessed and despise their joys. But every third day a shrill voice calls from above: “Tiholu Tiholu”—

a tangled confusion results: the damned fall silent; trembling, gnashing their teeth, they prostrate themselves on the ground or try to hide themselves in the glowing dark depths.⁷⁷

The dream of “Tiholu” perverts George’s lifelong inspiration for rhyme and translation: Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. Dante inflicted on his damned every imaginable speech disturbance, whereas the blessed were with the Word and God in one and the same measure. George, however, has the damned speak, but only so long as that shrill voice, in its mechanically regular act every three days, does not deliver its catchphrase. Nonsense syllables are the divine punishment that reduces them to a chaos of bodies. People who did not want to call out to their Lord are answered by the Discourse of the Master with his own, very contemporary perversion: hell as a random generator.

In discussing his theory of memory and its inscription, Nietzsche once mentioned the “slogan and catchphrase” [*Schlag- und Stichwort*]⁷⁸ and with that illustrated the process he was describing.* Psychophysical experiments impose slogans and catchphrases until the tortured disappear into glowing depths or render up the physiology of cultural practices. With patients like Chandos, whose disturbances allow them “to read correctly individual letters, but not to combine them into words,” Ziehen recommends that one “spell a word for the patient and have him put it together, or, in reverse, present a word somehow and have the patient spell it.”⁷⁹ These catchphrases were such hits that they reappear everywhere circa 1900.

Freud analyzed a female hysteric who “at nineteen, . . . lifted up a stone and found a toad under it, which made her lose her power of speech for hours afterwards.” Emmy v. N. fled a psychiatrist “who had compelled her under hypnosis to spell out the word ‘t . . . o . . . a . . . d.’” Before she would go to the couch, she made Freud “promise never to make her say it.”⁸⁰ As if he had been a witness to the first psychiatrist’s consultation, Malte Laurids Brigge overhears a doctor-patient conversation through the walls of the Salpêtrière, Jean Martin Charcot’s great healing or breeding institution for hysterics:

But suddenly everything was still, and in the stillness a superior, self-complacent voice, which I thought I knew, said: “Riez!” A pause. “Riez! Mais riez, riez!” I was already laughing. It was inexplicable that the man on the other side of the partition didn’t want to laugh. A machine rattled, but was immediately silent again, words were exchanged, then the same energetic voice rose again and

*The prefixes *Schlag* and *Stich* literally mean “blow,” or “hit,” and “stab.” The German terms for “slogan,” “catchphrase,” and “header” thus retain violent overtones of forcible, abbreviated mnemonic impression less obvious in their English equivalents. [Trans.]

ordered: "Dites-nous le mot: avant." And spelling it: "A-v-a-n-t." Silence. "On n'entend rien. Encore une fois . . ." ⁸¹

Even in its oral, imperative form, the slogan and catchphrase is inscription. Chopping and iteration reduce discourse to discrete unities, which as keyboard or store of signs immediately affect bodies. Instead of translating visual language into audible language, as the phonetic method did, breathing the beautiful inwardness of music into speech, psychophysics imposes the violence of spacing. Localization is the catchphrase of all aphasia research, spelling the psychiatrist's overheard command. It is only logical for the catchphrase technique to be applied to reading and writing.

Following the procedure of Helmholtz, who built device after device to measure reaction-time thresholds, the psychophysics of the nineties went to work measuring reading with kymographs, tachistoscopes, horopterscopes, and chronographs. There was intense competition among these machines to determine the smallest fraction of time in which reading could be measured in experimental subjects. Thus the physiology of the senses and aphasia research were joined: James McKeen Cattell calculated in milliseconds the time in which a letter, exposed to view for one lightning instant, traveled from one language area to the next. In other experiments, however, he (and later Benno Erdmann and Raymond Dodge) worked with tenths of seconds, which could measure subjects' eye movements and their backtracking to reread. By contrast, Wilhelm Wundt's experimental tachistoscope continuously diminished a letter's exposure time to the limit value of null. Only at 0.01 sec "can one be sure that any movement of the eye or wandering of attention is impossible."⁸² Experimental subjects (who were once more also the professorial directors of the experiments) thus sat, chained so as to hinder or even prohibit movement, facing black viewing boxes out of which for the duration of a flash—a pioneer of reading research, Frans Cornelius Donders, actually used electrical induction sparks⁸³—single letters shone out. This is modernity's allegory of the cave.

"Lightning. Dionysus appears in emerald beauty," said the dithyramb. A tachistoscopic trick—and letters appear for milliseconds in scriptural beauty. "Stick a wise word in," said Dionysus in Ariadne's ear. The device also writes signs, whether wise or meaningless, onto the retina, signs that can only be taken literally. After the elimination of rereading and the recognition of complete words, even the educated fall back on "the most primitive spelling" as the minimum *and* standard of all reading.⁸⁴ This was probably the first time that people in a writing culture were reduced to the naked recognition of signs. Writing ceased to wait, quiet and dead, on patient paper for its consumer; writing ceased to be sweetened by pas-

try baking and mothers' whispering—it now assaulted with the power of a shock. Catchphrases emerge from a store of signs to which they return with unimaginable speed, leaving behind in the subject inscriptions without ink or consciousness. The tachistoscope is a typewriter whose type hits the retina rather than paper. The mindless deciphering of such blindings can be called reading only by a complete uncoupling from orality, as if the madness of Heerbrand and his dancing Fraktur letters had become a standard. The helplessness of the experimental subjects before the tachistoscope ensures that all “processes” whose “uncommonly complex embodiment” is reading⁸⁵—from the recognition of letters to that of words, from speed to error quota—will yield only measurable results.

Standards have nothing to do with Man. They are the criteria of media and psychophysics, which they abruptly link together. Writing, disconnected from all discursive technologies, is no longer based on an individual capable of imbuing it with coherence through connecting curves and the expressive pressure of the pen; it swells in an apparatus that cuts up individuals into test material. Tachistoscopes measure automatic responses, not synthetic judgments. But they thus restore the reputation of spelling, which had generally come to be viewed with contempt.

In 1803 the psychiatrist Hoffbauer neatly calculated the normally educated person's reading speed.

An average accomplished reader reads three signatures per hour, when the latter are of the type of the present volume and the subject of the book causes him no difficulty. On a rough estimate, he needs no more than one and a quarter minutes to read one page. There are thirty lines to the page, and every line contains thirty letters; thus in one and a quarter minutes or seventy-five seconds he must recognize and distinguish nine hundred letters. The recognition of a letter occurs as the result of an inference. Thus our reader makes twelve different inferences in a second. . . . If one assumes that the reader is following the writer, so that the latter's thoughts are transmitted to the soul of the reader, one is struck with amazement. Some have wanted to conclude from this and other examples that we perceive objects without being conscious of it. This does not seem to follow in the least.⁸⁶

The mathematics of *Bildung* went this far and no further, if for no other reason than that numbers were written out. A reconstruction of completed alphabetization, from a whole signature back to a single letter, culminates in reverence for a consciousness that can make 12 inferences per second, inferences that certainly do not justify the conclusion that the consciousness that has to accompany all my reading (to adapt Kant's phrase) amounts to nothing. As long as reading transported thoughts from soul to soul and had its norm, as with Anton Reiser, in the tempo of speech, it was in fact recognition, and any notion of the unconscious, technically defined, was absurd.

The automatism of tachistoscopic word exposition is not designed to

transport thoughts. But there are other reasons the 10 ms for entire words undercuts Hoffbauer's twelfth of a second per letter. An apparatus does not let alphabetization run its course, then applaud it afterwards. The apparatus itself, like Dionysus, dictates the tempo of exposition with lightning speed. Such procedures shed light on functions as foreign to the individual and consciousness as writing ultimately is. Psychophysics (and it thus made film and futurism possible) investigated "only the movements of matter, which are not subject to the laws of intelligence and for that reason are much more significant."⁸⁷ Cultural technologies could be attributed to Man only as long as they were marked off along the abscissa of biological time, whereas the time of the apparatus liquidates Man. Given the apparatus, Man in his unity decomposes, on the one hand, into illusions dangled in front of him by conscious abilities and faculties and, on the other hand, into unconscious automatisms that Hoffbauer hardly felt the need to dignify with a refutation.

It was illusion for the first typists to want to be able to see and read the text as it was being written, to want "view typewriters." Automatized hands work better when blind. It was illusion for educated subjects to be "certain" that they had "seen the 'whole'" in the tachistoscope. In the realm of milliseconds, unaffected by introspection, even the most trained reader's eye proceeds by successive spelling.⁸⁸ It was an illusion of "subjective judgment" that Fraktur was more readable than roman script. Precisely the "people who much prefer to read Fraktur and believe they can do so with greater ease are the ones who require more reading time."⁸⁹

Hermann Bahr hit upon a succinct rule for all such illusion. Classical alphabetization had attempted to mediate between Man and World (while avoiding all discourses), but: "The experiment with man has failed. And the experiment with the world has failed. The experiment can now take place only where man and the world come together (sensation, impression."⁹⁰ All that remains of the real is a contact surface or skin, where something writes on something else. This is precisely the tachistoscopic effect planned by a literature intent on addressing "nerves" in order to "bring about certain moods" rather than "stammering about nonsensical pleasures."⁹¹ It would thus assault the language centers in the brain individually and successively. Nietzsche's view that language first transposes nervous impulses into images and then images into sounds is the most exact characterization of literary language. Holz not only replaced rhyme with a number of acoustic effects; he also asked "why the eye should *not* have its particular pleasures in the printed type of a poem."⁹² These pleasures are not miniature images of Man and World, but rather (as if they were calculated on the tachistoscope) ergonomically optimal uses of reading time. Beginning in 1897, Holz typographically centered the lines of

his poetry for physiological reading ease. "If I left the axis at the beginning of the line, rather than in the middle, the eye would always be forced to travel twice as far."⁹³ What the verses have in view, then, are not readers and their understanding, but eyes and their psychophysics, in other words: "Movements of matter, which are not subject to the laws of intelligence and for that reason are much more significant." Holz's *Phantasmus*, rather than addressing fantasy as the surrogate of all senses in the finest romantic manner, reckons with unconscious optokinetics (which Husserl's contemporaneous phenomenology thematized). The aesthetics of reception had become quite different circa 1900: instead of communication and its myth of two souls or consciousnesses, there are numerical relations between the materiality of writing and the physiology of the senses. Whether and how actual readers approve of their nerves having been saved such and such many milliseconds is of no concern to Holz the lyric poet. Whereas his predecessors had invited readers to pass over letters, he was concerned with technical calculations concerning the materiality of his medium. Spengler's desire that "men of the new generation devote themselves to technics instead of lyrics, the sea instead of the paint-brush, and politics instead of epistemology" came somewhat after the fact.⁹⁴ Since Nietzsche, "aesthetics is nothing but a kind of applied physiology."

The movements of matter had their greatest triumph in the field of writing. An experimental subject wrote in a test journal, after thirty-eight days devoted to typing practice, "To-day I found myself not infrequently striking letters before I was conscious of seeing them. They seem to have been perfecting themselves just below the level of consciousness."⁹⁵ Psychophysics investigated or generated unconscious automatisms in handwriting as well. *Ecriture automatique* appeared as early as 1850, but only among American spiritualists; it was not analyzed until the turn of the century.⁹⁶ After the theoretical work of F. W. H. Myers and William James, profane automatic writing arrived in the Harvard laboratory of the German psychologist and inventor of psychotechnology Hugo Münsterberg. In order to demonstrate the normality of hysterical automatisms, two students, who could be called normal according to a vague estimation of their introspective capacity (even if the young Gertrude Stein was one of them), participated in experiments that made them no less delirious than Ebbinghaus. Because reading runs more quickly and thus unconsciously than writing, experiments in automatic reading were included at the outset.

"This is a very pretty experiment because it is quite easy and the results are very satisfactory. The subject reads in a low voice, and preferably something com-

paratively uninteresting, while the operator reads to him an interesting story. If he does not go insane during the first few trials he will quickly learn to concentrate his attention fully on what is being read to him, yet go on reading just the same. The reading becomes completely unconscious for periods of as much as a page.⁹⁷

It is a pretty experiment indeed, one made as if to dismiss hermeneutic reading. At one time our inner selves were supposed to be the workshop in which all reading operations were conducted; our ego was always to be kept in view because of the risk of insanity by distraction. But now the protocol calls for just what had scandalized Bergk, and once the rock of insanity has been circumnavigated, everything runs as unconsciously as it does normally. Rather than being rooted together in one voice from the inmost soul, the isolated routines of reading, listening, and speaking become automatic and impersonal: "the voice seemed as though that of another person."⁹⁸

In a more advanced step, Leon Solomons and Gertrude Stein experimented with a coupling of automatic reading and writing. "For this purpose the person writing read aloud while the person dictating listened to the reading. In this way it not infrequently happened that, at interesting parts of the story, we would have the curious phenomenon of one person unconsciously dictating sentences which the other unconsciously wrote down; both persons meanwhile being absorbed in some thrilling story."⁹⁹ The division of the unity of Man can thus be accomplished by two readers or writers. While both consciousnesses are fed with signifieds, one unconscious takes dictation from the other—just as the psychoanalyst "must turn his own unconscious like a receptive organ towards the transmitting unconscious of the patient."¹⁰⁰ The deceptive proximity of this writing situation to the romantic fantasy of the library in fact marks the latter's total perversion. When *Serpentina* whispered their love story to the student *Anselmus*, his hand wrote along in unconscious dictation. But nothing could be less impersonal than a phantom-beloved capable of playing the *Mother's Mouth* for a man's soul. For that reason her voice never really uttered anything aloud; it arose as a utopian shadow thrown by very real but unreadable signs. Because the Woman does not exist and plural women had no place in the educational system, an imaginary woman's voice had simultaneously to remind young authors or bureaucrats of their writing duty and to transform it magically into infantile sexuality.

Circa 1900, however, experimentation dissolved the utopia.¹⁰¹ Gertrude Stein, not for nothing Münsterberg's ideal student,¹⁰² could study psychophysics like anyone else. While German universities still trembled at the thought of the chaos women students would provoke, the Harvard Psychological Laboratory had long been desexualized. In their test re-

port, Solomons and Stein are referred to throughout as “he.”¹⁰³ The scientific discourse gives only hints that during this strange cooperation the man dictated and the woman wrote. Gertrude Stein, for years employed as an academic secretary, was in the experiment similarly “the perfect blanc while someone practises on her as an automaton.”¹⁰⁴ Nothing is said of why the two sexes were divided in that way. Two years later, however, with Solomons significantly absent, Stein continued her autoexperiments with others—with the explicit purpose of “comparison between male and female experimental subjects.”¹⁰⁵ Such a question already reveals what supports the new scientific discourse. Real women, as they exist in plurality, had attained access to writing as practiced in university discourse. Their hysteria, rather than remaining out of the way as some idiosyncrasy like Brentano’s sister, was experimentally simulated in order to make it a completely normal motoric automatism. As unconscious as she was obedient, Gertrude Stein took dictation from her fellow student.

With that, the positions of the sexes in the discourse network of 1800 were reversed. Into the place of the imaginary Mother’s Mouth steps a man who dictates factually; into the complementary place of the unconscious author steps one of many women who have studied enough to be able to take dictation—Ariadne, Frau Röder-Wiederhold, Resa von Schirnhöfer, Gertrude Stein, and so on. The fact that one of them became a writer is part of the logic of the experiment.¹⁰⁶

The greatest triumph of psychotechnology was to have made dictated writing into spontaneous, automatic writing. After their practice experiments in reading and taking dictation, Solomons and Stein went to work. A woman’s hand produced texts without knowing that or what it wrote. With this, psychophysics discovered the rules of literary automatic writing long before the surrealists. First, it is forbidden to reread anything written—precisely the act that made authors out of writing hands “stopped automatic writing.”¹⁰⁷ Second, the annoying intrusions of an ego are to be put off by repeating prewritten sentences with an obstinacy that matches their meaninglessness. Thirty years later André Breton translated these two fundamental rules in his *Surrealist Manifesto*:

Write quickly, without any preconceived subject, fast enough so that you will not remember what you’re writing and be tempted to reread what you have written. . . . Put your trust in the inexhaustible nature of the murmur. If silence threatens to settle in, if you should ever happen to make a mistake—a mistake, perhaps due to carelessness—break off without hesitation with an overly clear line. Following a word the origin of which seems suspicious to you, place any letter whatsoever, the letter “l” for example, always the letter “l.”¹⁰⁸

Having been educated as a psychiatrist, Breton cannot not have known where such rules of literary production came from. To give conscious,

that is, distorting attention to repeated iterations of a sign reverses psychiatric diagnosis. The “senseless repetition of the same letter for a half or whole line, as in children’s writing books,” which psychiatrists call, in the mentally ill, “written verbigeration,” that is, flight of ideas,¹⁰⁹ became, as *écriture automatique*, the duty of nothing more and nothing less than literature. As this scene of inscription reveals, automatic writing is anything but freedom. The alphabetization campaign of 1800 also intended to automatize cultural practices, but only in order “to found and purify the ground of inwardness in the subject.”¹¹⁰ When, by contrast, Gertrude Stein worked through a series of failed exercises and finally arrived at the experimental goal of “automatic writing by invention,” precisely the freest invention conjured up inevitabilities as binding as the sentence, decades later, that a rose is a rose is a rose. The longest of the few examples cited by Solomons and Stein says this clearly: “Hence there is no possible way of avoiding what I have spoken of, and if this is not believed by the people of whom you have spoken, then it is not possible to prevent the people of whom you have spoken so glibly . . .”¹¹¹

What speaks, when It speaks, is always fate. This was no news to Freud. The medium and the message coincide because even in grammar the repetition compulsion rules. Such discourse is unavoidable precisely because it is empty. Automatic writing says nothing of thought or inwardness, of intention or understanding; it speaks only of speech and glibness. Neither the inevitable nor the people it threatens exist except by hearsay. In the methodic isolation of her laboratory, cut off from all the classical determinations of woman and integrated into the new desexualized university, an ideal student speaks and writes as if the rejected truth of Western thought had returned. Psychophysics thus took the place of occult media (read: women). Alone and dazed, a Pythia sits on the tripod again, and men or priests whisper to her the secret fears of the people. But the mistress of the oracle cannot console. Whatever she says becomes unavoidable because she says it. No one is more tragic than Cassandra. Unconscious words transpire, and immediately the listeners harbor a suspicion close to a truth intolerable for philosophers: that discourses conjure up what they seem only to describe. Whether under the sign of myth or of positivism, the release of automatic speaking means that Cassandra will not be believed and will find no way to warn the people who have just been spoken of so glibly. Thus, literally and without commentary, the leading journal of American experimental psychology, volume 3, 1896: “Hence there is no possible way of avoiding what I have spoken of, and if this is not believed by the people of whom you have spoken, then it is not possible to prevent the people of whom you have spoken so glibly . . .”

Technological Media

A medium is a medium is a medium. As the sentence says, there is no difference between occult and technological media. Their truth is fatality, their field the unconscious. And because the unconscious never finds an illusory belief, the unconscious can only be stored.

In the discourse network of 1900, psychophysical experiments were incorporated as so many random generators that produce discourses without sense or thought. The ordinary, purposeful use of language—so-called communication with others—is excluded. Syllabic hodgepodge and automatic writing, the language of children and the insane—none of it is meant for understanding ears or eyes; all of it takes the quickest path from experimental conditions to data storage. Good, old-fashioned handwriting is the storage mechanism for automatic writing, with the slight modification that Gertrude Stein watches her hands like separate machines with a modicum of curiosity rather than commanding them to write particular signs.¹ In other cases, deposition into writing is impossible, because the random generators produce effects only at extremely high speeds. Automatic writing and reading already exhibit a tendency toward increasing speed: the tempo of dictation races ahead of the hands, that of reading exceeds the articulating organs.² Thus, in order to retain anything at all, psychophysics had to join with the new media that revolutionized optics and acoustics circa 1900. These, of course, are Edison's two great innovations: film and the gramophone.

The long process that culminated in the Lumières' cinematographs was dictated by the technical-industrial necessity of surpassing the human eye's limited capability to process single images. The birth of film was attended by Eadweard J. Muybridge's serial photographs, Etienne-Jules Marey and G. E. J. Demeny's photographic gun, and Johann Heinrich Ernemann's slow-motion photography. The gramophone also depended on being able to function at speeds slower than people can talk. It could not have been invented—contemporaries were wrong about this³—before Jean-Baptiste-Joseph Fourier's mathematical analyses of amplitude or Helmholtz's studies in physiological acoustics. The technical simulation of both optical and acoustical processes presupposed analyses made possible by the speed of the apparatuses themselves. Voice reproduction required a frequency band between 90 and 1,200 Hertz even for the fundamental tones; studies of body movements required illumination speeds in the realm of milliseconds.

The ability to record sense data technologically shifted the entire discourse network circa 1900. For the first time in history, writing ceased to be synonymous with the serial storage of data. The technological record-

ing of the real entered into competition with the symbolic registration of the Symbolic. The wonderfully super-elevated Edison whom Philippe Villiers de l'Isle-Adam made the hero of his *Tomorrow's Eve* concisely formulated the new development. Musing among his devices and apparatuses, he begins a monologue, ignored by literary theorists, that will bring Lessing's *Laocoon* up to date in 1886.

The Word Made Flesh paid little attention to the exterior and sensible parts either of writing or of speech. He wrote on only one occasion, and then on the ground. No doubt He valued, in the speaking of a word, only the indefinable *beyondness* with which personal magnetism inspired by faith can fill a word the moment one pronounces it. Who knows if all the rest isn't trivial by comparison? . . . Still, the fact remains, He allowed men only to print his testament, not to put it on the phonograph. Otherwise, instead of saying, "Read the Holy Scriptures," we would be saying, "Listen to the Sacred Vibrations."⁴

Believers in the Book were prohibited in the name of their Lord from celebrating the exteriority and sensuality of the word and scripture. The permitted medium of printing made it possible to bypass signs for sense, the "beyond" of the senses. Only under the counter-command "Hear the sacred vibrations!" does the symbolic registration of the Symbolic lose its monopoly. Vibrations, even in God's voice, are frequencies far below the threshold of perception and notation for single movements. Neither the Bible nor the primer can record them. Therefore, phonograph's Papa, as Edison is known in the novel, rethinks the sacred itself. He dreams of ideal phonographs capable of registering the "oracles of Dodona" and "chants of the Sybils" (to say nothing of pure "noise") in indestructible recordings for "sonorous archives of copper."⁵ The dreams of an American engineer dreamed by a French symbolist come quite close to the strange occurrences in Münsterberg's laboratory. What the student as medium could hardly note down for all her psychotechnical ecstasy is caught by the gramophone as medium—the murmuring and whispering of unconscious oracles.

But not all women of 1900, as oracles or students, were abreast of their age and technology. Among the Germans there were still feminine readers. Anna Pomke, "a timid, well brought-up girl," can only regret "that the phonograph was not invented in 1800." For, as she confesses to a favorite professor: "I would so much like to have heard Goethe's voice! He was said to have such a beautiful vocal organ, and everything he said was so meaningful. Oh, if only he had been able to speak into the gramophone! Oh! Oh!"⁶ Among the believers in culture, holy vibrations are not sibylline whisperings but the tone and content of a voice that has long delighted feminine readers in the imaginary and that must now do so in the real. A loving professor, however, could not resist that sigh of longing and the wish to modernize a love of books. Abnossah Pschorr sneaks into

the cemetery, makes a secret mold of Goethe's skeleton, reconstructs the larynx, wires it to a phonograph, and puts together this fine composite of physiology and technology in the office of the Goethe House. For "when- ever Goethe spoke, his voice created vibrations," whose reverberations "become weaker with the passage of time, but which cannot actually cease." To filter the sound of Goethe's voice out of the noise of all the discourse that had occurred, one fed impulses into a "receiving organ" that simulated his larynx, with the help of an amplification device that was brand-new in 1916.⁷ Accordingly, Salomo Friedlaender's story is called "Goethe Speaks into the Gramophone." The story has a sad and logical ending: no engineer can stand having women love not the invention itself but its output. In jealous competition between media, Professor Pschorr destroys the only recording of the beautiful, monstrous, and absent voice that in 1800 commanded an entire discourse network.

A roll capable of recording Dodonian oracles, a roll capable simply of recording the poet: those were the writer's dreams in 1900. The lyric poet and feuilletonist, bohemian and amateur, who came up with the technical principle of the phonograph in 1877, gathered all these dreams in verse under the significant title *Inscription*.

Comme les traits dans les camées
 J'ai voulu que les voix aimées
 Soient un bien, qu'on garde à jamais,
 Et puissent répéter le rêve
 Musical de l'heure trop brève;
 Le temps veut fuir, je le soumets.

Like the faces in cameos
 I wanted beloved voices
 To be a fortune which one keeps forever,
 And which can repeat the musical
 Dream of the too short hour;
 Time would flee, I subdue it.⁸

But Charles Cros, the writer, only pointed toward the phonograph and never built it. The deeds of Edison, the practical man, are more profane, less erotic, and more forgettable than writers' dreams or novelistic fantasies. Precisely that is their greatness. The phonograph and the typewriter exist for the same reason. Edison was nearly deaf, and the blind were foremost among the builders of typewriters. Media, like psycho-physical experiments, begin with a physiological deficiency. The very first tin-foil roll to record a voice, on December 6, 1877, registered the shouts of its inventor, a voice that remained distant and unreachable to his actual ears. Edison roared "Mary Had a Little Lamb" into the phonograph's bell-mouth.⁹

The history of sound recording did not begin with oracles or poets, but

with children's songs, though in the roar of a deaf and childish engineer. In 1888, however, when his gramophone had just gone into mass production, Edison began to market dolls in which the speech roll had been recorded by young girls.¹⁰ Again one heard—the hit among twelve choices—“Mary Had a Little Lamb,” but this time as a children's song sung by a child. When Villiers, with a symbolist's love of oracles and sibyls, had Edison listen via stereophonic recording and playback devices to his young daughter sing “ring-around-a-rosy” in front of the laboratory, he approached the engineer's profane illumination.¹¹

Talking dolls also mark the turning point between two discourse networks. Kempelen's and Maelzel's mechanical children of 1778 and 1823 repeated the minimal signifieds of loving parents for those parents. Circa 1800 there was no children's language independent of pedagogical feedback. In the Edison talking doll, by contrast, real children sang children's songs about little Marys and their lambs. The century of the child began with such self-relatedness, unreachable by any Mama/Papa psychology.

According to Ellen Key, *The Century of the Child* brought an end to “soul murder” in school.¹² Instead of establishing pedagogical norms for what should be spoken by children, one gave free reign to language games. But these standards (in spite of all child's-century oracles) were technological from the beginning. There cannot be any children's language unfiltered through the language of adults until discourses can be recorded in their positive reality. The classical pedagogical dream of forming adults with analytic, slow-motion pronunciation—walking phoneme archives for their children—became obsolete. Edison's invention was not called a phonograph for nothing: it registers real sounds rather than translating them into phonemic equivalencies as an alphabet does. Emile Berliner's more modern device, which replaced rolls with records, was not called a gramophone for nothing: true to its name, it retains “the sounds of letters” and has a writing angel as its trademark.¹³



Technologically possible manipulations determine what in fact can become a discourse.¹⁴ The phonograph and gramophone allow slow-motion studies of single sounds far below the perception threshold of even Stephani's ideal mothers. Though the frequency bandwidth possible circa 1900 could not match the entire speech spectrum and particularly

distorted *s*-sounds (with frequencies up to 6kHz), this was not a handicap. The talking machine moved into laboratories and schools very soon after its invention. In laboratories its very distortions made it possible to measure hearing.¹⁵ In schools it was useful because “it is essential for achieving an accurate impression of the most fleeting, unrepresentable, and yet so important, characteristic aspects of language, of line phonetics (speech melody) and of line rhythm,” whereas (because of its accurate recording) it “is not suited for pure pronunciation practice.”¹⁶ Thus wrote Ernst Surkamp, publisher of a journal that is nearly impossible to locate today, *Instruction and Talking Machines*—as if any further demonstration that the epoch of High German phonetic norms is past were necessary. Of course, talking machines can create “a store of readily accessible language sounds in exemplary, faultless accent” and dictatorially inscribe schoolchildren with language sounds or universal keyboards.¹⁷ But they can do more and different things. To the student Rilke, whose physics teacher had his students reconstruct and experiment with a phonograph that he had acquired as soon as the machine was on the market, the registered sounds opened “as it were, a new and infinitely delicate point in the texture of reality.”¹⁸ The fact that a purely empirical phonetics (in rigorous distinction to phonology) suddenly became possible led to storing real phenomena according to technical standards rather than to regulating them according to educational norms. One could record the wild army that Nietzsche despaired of ever getting down. Because “dialects in schools deserve every possible encouragement, the talking machine can be effective in that its undistorted oral presentations nourish one’s delight in a native language.”¹⁹

In the discourse network of 1900, media rehabilitated dialects, those of groups like those of children. Not the delight of the subjects but the delight of the researcher came to power. In the absence of normativization, this delight brought to light discourses that previously had never passed a recording threshold—“a new and infinitely delicate point in the texture of reality.”

On the second German Art-Education Day in Herder’s Weimar, a speaker dismissed the unified language that for a hundred years had ruled over teachers and students.

The school-age child brings his own language to school, his native language, his family language, the language of his playmates, his own naive, intuitive language: our task and our desire is to teach him our language, the language of our poets and thinkers. . . . But isn’t it asking a great deal when we demand that children, from the first day of school, speak nothing but school language? . . . It is not long before the children will be overtaken by books and book language: a child learns to read. Reading, however, weakens and cuts across—it cannot be otherwise—the child’s coherent, fluent speech, and book language begins more and more to

influence and control school language; finally, in its often foreign and refined way, it creates a child who is now shy and monosyllabic.²⁰

This speaker admits that book language represents a never-spoken exception and impedes actual speech. The most fluent speaker is the one who, like children or the writer of *Ecce Homo*, never reads a line. Therefore progressive pedagogues can only compete with the media. Like the bell of a recording phonograph, they absorb every freely flowing word, every naive pun of children's dialects.

Christian Morgenstern, the child of German letters, immediately recognized and exploited this development. Even if he was later to declare in mediocre verse that the gramophone was the work of the devil—before his master, Rudolf Steiner, said the same thing²¹—his heroes knew better.

Korf und Palmström nehmen Lektionen,
um das Wetter-Wendische zu lernen.
Täglich pilgern sie zu den modernen
Ollendorffschen Sprachlehrgrammophonen.

Dort nun lassen sie mit vielen andern,
welche gleichfalls steile Charaktere
(gleich als obs ein Ziel für Edle wäre),
sich im Wetter-Wendischen bewandern.

Dies Idiom behebt den Geist der Schwere,
macht sie unsted, launisch und cholerisch . . .
Doch die Sache bleibt nur peripherisch.
Und sie werden wieder—Charaktere.

Korf and Palmström are taking lessons
From Ollendorff's didactic gramophones;
To learn Weather-Wendish's grammar and tone,
They wander hence for daily sessions.

There they put with all the rest,
Who are stiff characters, too, it seems,
(the place attracts elite esteem)
Their Weather-Wendish to the test.

The idiom tends to untie fetters,
Make people moody, things look dismal,
But still it all remains peripheral,
and they revert once more—to characters.²²

This poem, entitled "Language Studies," may be an exact description—except that Surkamp would be a more appropriate name than Ollendorff. Heinrich Ollendorff's method of language instruction emphasized conversation more than the rules of grammar, but Surkamp's company had at the time a near-monopoly on language-instructional gramophones and strongly encouraged dialects in the schools. In 1913 Korf and Palmström

could choose among more than a thousand instructional records. The fact that they chose Weather-Wendish legitimately established the new status of dialects as an autonym of “naive and intuitive” children’s language.* The play on ethnography and weather reports is like the children’s puns and jokes that were recorded by the psychologist Stanley Hall.

Words, in connection with rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, cadence, etc., or even without these, simply as sound-pictures, often absorb the attention of children, and yield them a really aesthetic pleasure either quite independently of their meaning or to the utter bewilderment of it. They hear fancied words in noises and sounds of nature and animals, and are persistent punners. As butterflies make butter or eat it or give it by squeezing, so grasshoppers give grass, bees give beads and beans, kittens grow on the pussy-willow, and all honey is from honeysuckles, and even a poplin dress is made of poplar-trees.²³

. . . and so on and so forth, until even the Wends speak Weather-Wendish. Their fantastical Slavic has its grave opposite in what the art-educators designated as the weakening, intimidating high idiom. Either there are characters, individuals, and the one norm, or gramophonics raises all the unstable, capricious changes in speech to the level of standards. Then “there is in fact no reason, as long as one recognizes Wendish as a language, that the same recognition should not be extended to Weather-Wendish.”²⁴

Korf and Palmström, of course, broke off their gramophone studies and became characters—that is, and not only in Greek, letters once more. Morgenstern’s simulated children’s language remained high idiom, written language, which quickly made its way into children’s readers and dissertations.²⁵ Discourses that had previously never been able to cross a recording threshold were stored and returned; the gramophone had paid its debt.

But heroes in poems were not the only ones to discover the talking machine. Those who wrote poems were also tempted to give it a try. In 1897 the Wilhelmine poet laureate, Ernst von Wildenbruch, was probably the first German writer to record his voice on a wax roll. (His Kaiser had long since preceded him.) Wildenbruch wrote a poem expressly for the occasion, “For the Phonographic Recording of His Voice”; the history of its transmission says it all. The *Collected Works* did not collect it; Walter Bruch, who as the inventor of the PAL television system had access to archives of historical recordings, had to transcribe the verses from the roll. They will be quoted here in a form that will horrify poets, composers, and Germanists.

* *Wendisch* is the language of the Wends, a Slavic group that once inhabited parts of eastern Germany. [Trans.]

Shapes can constrain the human visage, the eye be held fast in an image, only the voice, born in breath, bodiless dies and flies off.

The fawning face can deceive the eye, the sound of the voice can never lie, thus to me is the phonograph the soul's own true photograph,
 which brings what is hidden to light and forces the past to speak. Hear then, for in this sound you will look into the soul of Ernst von Wildenbruch.²⁶

A copious writer, Wildenbruch did not always rhyme so poorly. But in the moment he took leave of the Gutenberg galaxy, he was overcome by written language. As if in Gertrude Stein's dark oracle, an inevitability appears and does away with all poetic freedoms. Wildenbruch had to talk into a black phonographic speaker, which stored pure sounds rather than his words and notions. Of course, the voice did not cease being born in breath; it retains the vibration fundamental to classical-romantic lyric poetry; but—and this is too empirical or trivial a fact for Foucault's grandly styled history of discourse—the voice can no longer be pure poetic breath that vanishes even as it is heard and leaves no trace. What once necessarily escaped becomes inescapable; the bodiless becomes material. The gramophone is not quite as volatile, capricious, and secondary as Korf and Palmström thought. The lyric poet Wildenbruch reacted like a rat in a test labyrinth. His musings on physiognomy and photography, which allow their subjects cunning countermeasures and escape hatches, circumscribe only the optical medium that he was familiar with: writing. When the phonograph forces the hidden to speak, however, it sets a trap for speakers. With it, speakers are not identified in the symbolic with a name, or in the imaginary by hero-reader identifications, but in the real. And that is not child's play. Wildenbruch alluded to the symbolic and imaginary registers when he coupled the sound of the poem with his own noble proper name and a look into his poetic soul in order not to speak of the real, the speaking body.

Herder dreamed long before Anna Pomke of an improved “*reading and notational system*” in which one “will probably also find a way of designating the characteristic substance and tone of a lyric piece.”²⁷ With the gramophone's capacity to record lyric poetry, the dream becomes at once reality and nightmare. It is one thing to write proudly about the phonographic recording of all voices, as Charles Cros did; it is another thing to write, as Wildenbruch did, “For the Phonographic Recording of His Voice” and then to have to speak it. What good are the poetic mnemonic techniques of rhyme and meter when wax rolls can store not only substance and tone but real sounds? Like Alfred Döblin's defiant motto, “Not phonography, but art,”²⁸ Wildenbruch's poetaster rhymes bear witness to an embittered competition between poetry and technological media.

Sound is a complex of physiological data that are impossible to put

into writing or to counterfeit. In the discourse network of 1900, psychophysics and media subvert the imaginary body image that individuals have of themselves and substitute a forthright positivity. The phonograph is called the true photograph of the soul; graphology is called the “X ray” of handwritten “indiscretions.”²⁹

Mocking the doctrine of psychological physiognomy in 1800, philosophers could joke: nothing more was required than a decision of the individual to make itself incomprehensible for centuries.³⁰ That is what Wildenbruch hoped to accomplish with his line about the fawning face deceiving the eyes of the physiognomist; but given a machine that dodges the tricks people use with one another, the laughter has died away after a century. Phonography means the death of the author; it stores a mortal voice rather than eternal thoughts and turns of phrase. The past that the phonograph forces to speak is only Wildenbruch’s helpless euphemism for his singular body, which was posthumous even while he lived.

The death of man and the preservation of corporeal evidence are one. In a brilliant essay, Carlo Ginzburg has shown that around 1900 a new paradigm of knowledge gained ascendancy, one that operated only with unfakeable, that is, unconscious and meaningless, details—in aesthetics as well as in psychoanalysis and criminology.³¹ Thus a writer in *Scientific American* said of the phonograph, which was just then going into mass production, “It can be used as a reliable witness in criminal investigations.”³² The individual of 1800, who was an individual universal, did not survive this fine-grained investigation. What one can know of a human being today has nothing to do with the 4,000 pages that Sartre, posing the same question, devoted to the psychology of Flaubert. One can record people’s voices, their fingerprints, their parapaxes. Ginzburg also underestimates the modernity of these encroachments when he puts the origin of the gathering of evidence among prehistoric hunters and Renaissance physicians. The snow that helped trackers was an accident; Edison’s tin-foil roll or Francis Galton’s fingerprint archive were purposefully prepared recording surfaces for data that could be neither stored nor evaluated without machines.

Thus Wildenbruch’s mediocre verse points out whom the phonograph benefits. A lyric poet immortalized in the grooves on a record enters, not the pantheon, but the archive of the new “deposition psychology.” Under this name William Stern and others instituted a science based on the superiority of technical over literary storage devices. Whether for criminals or for the insane, the use of “stylized depositions often produces a false impression of the examination and obscures the psychological significance of individual statements.” Because each answer “is, from the point of view of experimental psychology, a reaction to the operative stimulus in the question,” experimenters and investigators provoke countertactics

in their subjects as long as they use the bureaucratic medium of writing. If, however, one selects "the use of the phonograph as an ideal method,"³³ then, especially if the recording is done secretly, any parasitic feedback between the stimulus and the reaction will be prevented. Secrecy is "absolutely essential" with children in order to "guarantee the genuine innocence of their responses."³⁴

As a photograph of the soul, the talking machine put an end to the innocent doctrine of innocence. Circa 1800 innocence was a historical-philosophical limit concept; it referred to a region it itself made impassible. "Once the soul speaks, then oh!, it is no longer the soul that speaks." Although this loss of the soul's identity with itself had been attributed to the progress of the human race or to the division of labor, it resulted, in the final analysis, simply from the technological impossibility of storing the newly discovered voice in any form except that of writing. Olympia's automatized "oh" would otherwise never have been so fascinating and terrifying. Circa 1900, by contrast, the builders of automatons had carried the day. There was no longer any innocence below the recording threshold; there was only the tactical rule of anticipating counter reactions while recording. But the innocence that comes into being where bodies and media technologies come into contact is called flight of ideas.

In order to investigate "glossophysical" disturbances, or those that, beyond alalia or aphasia, affect entire sequences of speech, the Viennese psychiatrist Erwin Stransky devised a new type of experimental procedure. After having "shut out as far as possible all extraneous sense stimuli," Stransky had his subjects "look and speak directly into the painted black tube" of a phonographic receiver for one minute.³⁵ The subjects were selected partly from among Stransky's psychiatric colleagues, partly from among his patients. The principal distinction between the cohorts, however, was that most of the patients reacted with fright to the intentionally stimulus-free (that is, black) field of the receiver, with the unfortunate result that their responses had to be recorded stenographically rather than phonographically.³⁶ But in the absence of any transcendental norm, psychiatrists and psychiatric patients exhibited the same speech behavior. After an initial trial period, they could produce nonsense for one minute (the recording time for one roll). The command to speak as much and as quickly as possible, together with a recorder capable of registering more material at a quicker pace than the alphabet, brought about an experimentally guaranteed hodgepodge of words. As in the experiments of Ebbinghaus, the initial difficulties resulted from the paradoxical imperative to bracket the operative imperatives of normal speech.

In the beginning, it was normal for subjects to get no further than the first few sentences; they would stall and claim that nothing occurred to them, that they could no longer speak. . . . We are ordinarily so accustomed to thinking under the direction of general concepts that we constantly fall back into this tendency whenever we are presented with a particular aim, even when this aim consists in shutting out all general concepts . . . Only when the subjects realized that *searching* for verbal ideas was completely unnecessary, that these ideas would come spontaneously and profusely to the foreground, did the initial stalling rapidly cease so we could proceed to the actual experiment.³⁷

From a technological medium that records their voices without asking for hidden thoughts or ideas, experimental subjects learned “the release of linguistic expression from mental life” through their own bodies. In its “autonomy,”³⁸ language proceeds without any need to look for signifieds. Nietzsche announced long before Stransky that he learned to find once he grew weary of seeking; long after Stransky, Breton urged writers to trust the inexhaustible murmur.

The resultant output is all practically interchangeable. Automatic writing generates sentences reminiscent of “Rose is a rose is a rose.” Stransky’s phonograph records the sequence, “Hope, green belief, green, green, green, green is an emerald, an emerald is green, a sapphire is green, a—sapphire is green, green is, that isn’t right,”³⁹ etc. Henceforth speech knows only tautology and contradiction, the two empty, informationless extremes of truth values.⁴⁰ In identifying the new artistic age of technical reproduction with film, Benjamin singled out the movie screen as making the single image obsolete and therefore establishing the rule of distraction, rather than bourgeois concentration. But the principle applies more generally and rigorously. Film has no privileged position among the media that have revolutionized literature and art. All have brought about, in exact psychiatric terms, the flight of ideas; corresponding terms in cultural criticism, such as “distraction,” remain euphemistic.

Stransky’s phonograph did not record mere lapses in attention or moments of distraction; it registered disdain for political and pedagogical norms, norms that would not have endured for a day were it not for a normativized language.⁴¹ The catatonic Heinrich H., for instance, responded to test questions concerning the nature of state and school regulations thus:

The state is many people living together, hour by hour, places separated by hours, bordered by mountains on four sides.

[School regulation] is that law over school-age children who are often in conditions of illness, when they stay home and when they should be working out on the land. Alternate daily, when they work for two days and go to school for two days, they change every week. When they work for a week and go to school for a week,

all school-age children who are ill and have to stay home and save time, thus save time, stay home, perhaps to work, perhaps to cook, perhaps to wash carrots . . .⁴²

Responses on the order of vegetable stew effectively dismantle the powers on which education had been based since 1800. Fritz Mauthner's prophecy that "the states will one day have to pay for making their schools into institutions in which the minds of children are systematically destroyed" was fulfilled before it was written.⁴³ What the technological media record is their own opposition to the state and school. People who are encouraged to speak more quickly than they think, that is, to outpace the controlling function, necessarily begin guerrilla warfare against disciplinary power. The one who not only forgets, but in a Nietzschean manner also forgets his forgetfulness, always delivers, like Kafka's drunken man, the *Description of a Struggle*:

Now the drunk jerked up his eyebrows so that a brightness appeared between them and his eyes, and he explained in fits and starts: "It's like this, you see—I'm sleepy, you see, so that's why I'm going to sleep.—You see, I've a brother-in-law on the Wenzelsplatz—that's where I'm going, for I live there, for that's where I have my bed—so I'll be off—. But I don't know his name, you see, or where he lives—seems I've forgotten—but never mind, for I don't even know if I have a brother-in-law at all.—But I'll be off now, you see—. Do you think I'll find him?"⁴⁴

Stransky hoped that by using a neutral recording device he would avoid the psychophysical danger of producing mere "laboratory artifacts,"⁴⁵ or of programming the response into the stimulus; yet steno- and phonographic recording functions like alcohol in the passage from Kafka. It provokes the provocative responses that no self-respecting servant of the state or educational bureaucrat would have wanted to write down. As catchphrases pronounced by the experimenter, "state" and "school" can no longer be subsumed under any more general heading. Psychiatry also realized, then, that "enumerations"—catchphrases, inventories, address books, grammars—are themselves instances of the flight of ideas;⁴⁶ to which the pedagogy of learning impairments could respond that hyperactive children's flight of ideas was a result of enumerative textbooks.⁴⁷ Thus when Stransky stated that "the formation of general concepts" might have been inhibited for "pathological or experimental reasons,"⁴⁸ the "or" should be replaced by an equal sign.

The very fact that flight of ideas governed both sides of the experimental situation allowed it to be transposed into other media. By substituting ordinary writing materials for the phonograph and artificial laboratory artifacts for phonographic ones, one could achieve "the release of linguistic expression from mental life" in literature as well. The physician Gottfried Benn demonstrated this when he had his fellow physician Jef van Pameelen "enter the foyer of a hospital for prostitutes" and

registered the associations of this his doppelgänger with phonographic fidelity. To be sure, nothing at all occurs to the subject Pameelen. In his “dread at his inability to experience anything” he sees only “an empty hall with a clock.” But hardly have these words escaped him when a disembodied “voice” sounds above him. “An empty hall with a clock? Further! Extension! Yield! The doorman’s apartment? The hairpins on the ground? The garden on the right? And so?” There are only disconnected catchphrases, but like “state” or “school regulations” they demand continuation, if only into ideational flight. Acting the part, as if to make things easier for his archivist, Pameelen consents to the flight of catchphrases:

PAMEELEN (*acting the part*): I know a house very similar to the one you have just described, Herr Doctor! I entered it on a warm spring morning; first there was an empty hallway with a clock, the doorman’s apartment was on the right, hairpins were lying on the ground, very funny, and on the right there was a small garden, a bed of roses in the middle, two wethers grazed tethered to the grass, probably the Aquarian goats.⁴⁹

Truly an “epistemological drama” (as *The Survéy Director* is subtitled): although it dutifully, indeed exhaustively runs through the catalogue of questions, Pameelen’s answer confuses identity, the epistemological bedrock, with mere sameness.⁵⁰ Clearly drama (long before Peter Handke’s *Kaspar*) is about speaking rather than action. Identity falls into simulacrum without any extradiscursive context. Empty words circulate between Pameelen and the voice with no figure behind it, words without points of view, address, or reference, determined and guided by the imperative of association.⁵¹ The voice notes down Pameelen’s venereological joke about the Aquarian goats as a “very good,” namely, “distant association that plays on the meaning of hospital with a light, humorous touch.” The medical profession does not exempt one from the status of experimental subject in drama any more than it does in a laboratory full of phonographs. The voice that directs Pameelen is anything but transcendental—he addresses it as “Herr Doctor!” This experimenter shares Stransky’s insight that any search for verbal ideas is superfluous. Whenever “peripheral fatigue” or “cortical fading” in Pameelen’s “brain” hinder the associations, the doctor cracks his whip and commands “further!”⁵² Pameelen is obviously among the “worst cases” of imbecility who “already grow tired of the procedure by the 58th reaction.”⁵³ With his whip, however, the doctor (like the phonograph) commands speech at a tempo that separates discourse from mental life or “experiential perspectives.” Drama, once the genre of free subjects, becomes pathological “or” experimental.

This is because free subjects appear in books of philosophy, whereas

experimental subjects appear in the field of psychophysics. "The *one* science that most strongly captures the world's attention throws its light and shadow across prose fiction as well. Since about 1860 this has been pathology, physiological and psychological."⁵⁴ Thus the enigma of the whip-brandishing Herr Doctor can be quickly clarified. One need only write out the previously quoted dramatic dialogue in the following manner:

VOICE	PAMEELEN
Hall with a clock?	first there was an empty hallway with a clock
Doorman's apartment	doorman's apartment on the right
Hairpins on the floor?	there were hairpins on the floor, very funny
A garden on the right	and to the right there was a small garden, a bed of roses in the middle

Next read one of many published pages of interviews that the psychiatrist Ziehen conducted with school children in Jena.

O. G., 12 years, 9 months. Father tailor. School performance quite variable, average. July 3, 1898. 9 A.M. Previously one hour of class (reading and explanation of a poem about the Pied Piper of Hamelin).

STIMULUS WORD	RESPONSE
<i>Teacher</i>	<i>Herr Stichling</i> (teacher, with whom he was just in class)
<i>Father</i>	<i>my father</i>
<i>Snow</i>	<i>some fell</i> (thought of yesterday's snowfall)
<i>Blood</i>	<i>when an animal is slaughtered</i> (thought of a cow he saw slaughtered the day before yesterday)
<i>Rat</i>	<i>how the rat catcher lures the rats into the trap</i>
<i>Snow</i>	<i>white</i> ("that's on the ground") ⁵⁵

Consider, finally, that Ziehen's *Idea Associations of the Child* aimed to "determine the speed of association," indeed "to determine the association process and its speed under special conditions (fatigue, etc.),"⁵⁶ and one will have also deduced the special condition of the whip. From this, it is only a step to recognizing that the head physician of the psychiatric intern Gottfried Benn was none other than Professor Theodor Ziehen.

It hardly matters whether the experimental subject is a child or a doctor, is O. G., J. v. P., or G. B. For the physician Werff Rönne, the hero of Benn's first novella, to practice random association without the whip of an experimenter, is merely a further transposition of psychophysical techniques into literature. But the only genre that can present an experimenter and an experimental subject as separate agents is the drama. The hero of Benn's novella, by contrast, stands under an order of association that functions despotically because it has transposed itself into flesh and blood. The laboratory artifact becomes absolute. No interpretation could recognize it. Only the schoolchildren in Jena with whom Ziehen experi-

mented, while attending to his patient Nietzsche on the side, would have known why Rönne would intensify, in a continuous commentary that is also the narrative perspective, the mumbo jumbo he hears in the officers' mess over the strangely soft tropical fruit. He can do nothing else. "It was only a matter of transmission, all the particulars remained untouched; who was he to appropriate or oversee or, resisting, to create?"⁵⁷

Verbal transmission as neurosis, without any basis in a transcendental or creative Poet's ego; medial selection without reference to the real, to the incomprehensible background of all media—even in his delirium, Rönne obeys orders. Pameelen has to transmit the doorman's apartment, hairpins, the hospital hallway, and goats, and Rönne has to transmit everything heard and said. What his acquaintances in the mess say, what they associate with this, what he himself says and associates with what is said and associated—it all becomes impossibly exhausting. "The struggle between associations, that's the final ego—he thought and walked back to the institute."⁵⁸

Where else should one go, except into a catatonic stupor?⁵⁹ That at least allows Rönne to forget his forgetful project leader. But before final paralysis, the failed doctor extends his associations to their material basis, the brain itself. "I have to keep investigating what might have happened to me. What if the forceps had dug a little deeper into the skull at this point? What if I had been hit repeatedly on a particular spot on the head? What is it with brains, anyway?"⁶⁰ In an aporetic attempt to get behind his own thinking, that is, to localize it using his own medical knowledge, Rönne literally sacrifices his knowing subjectivity. The fact that he has words and associations at all becomes an improbable exception to the countless possible deficits and disturbances. Language ceases to be a bastion of inwardness; the gesture that simulates turning his brain inside out also reverses the condition of language into one of chance and exteriority.

Therefore Rönne (in direct descent from Nietzsche) never encounters a "word that reached me."⁶¹ When blows to the head lead to aphasia in one instance, to associations and words in others, the preconditions of Poetry become one more casualty. The word that had always reached people operates at a certain psychic reaction threshold, which was called the discourse of nature and the nature of discourse. Psychophysics does away with both of them. Thus nothing remains for a psychiatrist who has become a psychiatric case, like Rönne, and who nonetheless wants to be reached by something, nothing remains but to undertake *The Journey* into other media.

He looked down the street and saw where to go.

He rushed into the twilight of a movie house, into the unconscious of the first

floor. Reddish light stood in large calyxes of flat flowers up to hidden lamps. The sound of violins, nearby and warmly played, scraped over the curve of his brain, drawing out a truly sweet tone. Shoulders leaned against shoulders, in devotion: whispering, closing together, touching, happiness. A man came toward him, with wife and child, signaling familiarity, his mouth wide and laughing gaily. But Rönne no longer recognized him. He had entered into the film, into the sharp gestures, the mythic force.

Standing large before the sea, he wrapped himself in his coat, its skirts flapping in the fresh breeze; he attacked the air as he would an animal, and how the drink cooled the last of the tribe.

How he stamped, how vigorously he bent his knee. He wiped away the ashes, indifferent, as if possessed by great things that awaited him in the letter brought by the old servant, on whose knee the ancestor once sat.

The old man walked nobly up to the woman at the spring. How surprised the nanny was, as she put her handkerchief to her breast. What a lovely playmate! Like a deer among young bulls! What a silvery beard!

Rönne hardly breathed, careful not to break it.

Then it was done, it had come to pass.

The movement and spirit had come together over the ruins of the period of sickness, with nothing in between. The arm sailed clearly from an impulse; from light to the hip, a bright swing, from branch to branch.⁶²

A movie theater in the suburbs of Brussels in 1916 is this Christological goal of all journeys. The novella makes what was accomplished in the film unambiguously clear. "Movement" can now be recorded in the technological real, no longer only in the imaginary.⁶³ Rönne, the man whom no word reaches, is not altogether beyond contact, but his reaction threshold functions physiologically rather than psychically. Film establishes immediate connections between technology and the body, stimulus and response, which make imaginary connections unnecessary. Reflexes, as in Pavlov's animals, occur with "nothing in between": they arc between sensory impulses and motoric reactions. This is true of the figures optically portrayed in the silent film; it is true of the accompanying music. The violins playing in the dark theater become an immediate presence for the physiologically schooled listener: just as in Schönberg's "Pierrot lunaire," they play on the curves of his brain.⁶⁴ For that reason the individual named Rönne, who in the medium of language had just renewed acquaintanceships, falls into a condition for which his contemporary psychiatrists had the fine word *asymbolia*: Rönne no longer recognizes anyone.

Psychiatry or no, *asymbolia* is the structure of the movies.⁶⁵ One autobiographer who (as the sad title of his book, *The Words*, already indicates) later became only a writer, wrote of his first visits to the movies: "We had the same mental age. I was seven years old and knew how to read, [the new art] was twelve years old and did not know how to talk."⁶⁶ The new medium, whether in Paris in 1912 or Brussels in 1916, presented language deficits as happiness. With his mother, who loved movies,

Sartre fled his grandfather, a man of letters, who like all the bourgeoisie went faithfully to the theater only to be able to go home “insidiously prepared for ceremonious destinies.” The movies release Rönne from a discourse that is as incessant as it is empty. Two literary descriptions of film celebrate, in simple solidarity, “the unconscious of the first floor” and “the living night” of the projections as the end of the book’s monopoly.⁶⁷ Film transposed into the technological real what Poetry had promised in the age of alphabetization and granted through the fantasy of the library. Both cineasts attribute the highest, that is, unconscious pleasure to the heroes and audience; both submerge themselves in a crowd that is bodily contact and not merely (as in *Faust*) a philosophic humanity; both blend into boundless identification with the phantasmagoria. One transfers words spoken at the Cross to film, the other writes more garrulously, but in the same vein.

All of this was one and the same: it was Destiny. The hero dismounted, put out the fuse, the traitor sprang at him, a duel with knives began: but the accidents of the duel likewise partook of the rigor of the musical development: they were fake accidents which ill concealed the universal order. What joy when the last knife stroke coincided with the last chord! I was utterly content, I had found the world in which I wanted to live, I touched the absolute.⁶⁸

Habent sua fata libelli. There were times when the Absolute was manifest to people as a gallery of images of Spirit, that is, as poetic-philosophical writing. There are other times when it departs from the heaps of paper. Coherence, identification, universality—all the honorary titles conferred upon the book by universal alphabetization are transferred to the media, at least among the common people. Just as in 1800 the new fantasy of the library, despised by scholars, became the joy of women, children, and the uneducated, so too, a century later, did the apparatus of film, despised by library fantasists. A psychiatrist who has sunk to the level of a patient meets an acquaintance at the movies “with wife and child”; among the Sartres, mother and son go to the movies, whereas the writer and theater-goer grandfather can only ask stupid questions: “‘Look here, Simonnot, you who are a serious man, do you understand it? My daughter takes my grandson to the cinema!’ And M. Simonnot replied, in a conciliatory tone: ‘I’ve never been, but my wife sometimes goes.’”⁶⁹

As technological media, the gramophone and film store acoustical and optical data serially with superhuman precision. Invented at the same time by the same engineers, they launched a two-pronged attack on a monopoly that had not been granted to the book until the time of universal alphabetization: a monopoly on the storage of serial data. Circa 1900, the ersatz sensuality of Poetry could be replaced, not by Nature, but by

technologies. The gramophone empties out words by bypassing their imaginary aspect (signifieds) for their real aspects (the physiology of the voice). Only a Wildenbruch could still believe that a device would be properly attentive to his soul, to the imaginary itself. Film devalues words by setting their referents, the necessary, transcendent, indeed absurd reference points for discourse, right before one's eyes. When Novalis read rightly, a real, visible world unfolded within him in the wake of the words. Rönne, struck with "mythic force" by the facticity of gestures and things in the silent film, no longer needs such magic.

Writers were justified in complaining that "the word is gradually losing credit" and "is already something somewhat too conspicuous and at the same time oddly undifferentiated for us today."⁷⁰ To use Lacan's methodological distinction between symbolic, real, and imaginary, two of these three functions, which constitute all information systems, became separable from writing circa 1900. The real of speaking took place in the gramophone; the imaginary produced in speaking or writing belonged to film. Hanns Heinz Ewers, author *and* screenplay writer of *The Student of Prague*, stated this distribution (though with a certain bias): "I hate *Thomas Alva Edison*, because we owe to him one of the most heinous of inventions: the *phonograph*! Yet I love him: he redeemed everything when he returned fantasy to the matter-of-fact world—in the movies!"⁷¹

While record grooves recorded bodies and their heinous waste material, the movies took over the fantastic or imaginary things that for a century had been called Poetry. Münsterberg, inventor in word and deed of psychotechnology, provided in 1916 the first historical theory of film in his demonstration that film techniques like projection and cutting, close-up and flashback, technically implement psychic processes such as hallucination and association, recollection and attention, rather than, like plays or novels, stimulating these processes descriptively with words.⁷² As mechanized psychotechnology the "world of the movie" has "become synonymous with illusion and fantasy, turning society into what Joyce called an 'allnights newsery reel,' that substitutes a 'reel' world for reality. . . . His verdict on the 'automatic writing' that is photography was the *abnihilization of the etym*."⁷³

In 1800 words went about their task of creating a real, visible world in such an undifferentiated way that visions and faces, which the book described for the purpose of recruiting authors, shared only one trait with their readers. Film exhibits its figures in such detail that "the realistic" is "raised into the realm of the fantastic," which sucks up every theme of imaginative literature.⁷⁴ Quite logically, early German silent films repeatedly took up the motif of the *doppelgänger*.⁷⁵ In *Golem*, in *The Other*, in *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, in *The Student of Prague*—everywhere dop-

pelgänger appear as metaphors for the screen and its aesthetic. A film trick demonstrates what happens to people when the new medium takes hold of them. These doppelgänger, instead of sharing a single trait with their originals, as in a book or screenplay, are the heroes of the films and therefore the focus of identification. With its guaranteed perfection in preserving evidence, film does not need, like the solitary hero of a romantic novel, to talk the reader into identification; what the moviegoer Rönne called his entry into film can occur automatically and wordlessly.

Movies thus took the place of the fantasy of the library. All the tricks that once magically transformed words into sequential hallucinations are recalled and surpassed. "In the movies," not just the "most beautiful" but also the "most common" is "miraculous."⁷⁶ Like any unconscious, the unconscious of the movie house is determined by the pleasure principle.

The schoolboy wants to see the prairies of his Westerns; he wants to see strange people in strange circumstances; he wants to see the lush, primitive banks of Asian rivers. The modest bureaucrat and the housewife locked into her household long for the shimmering celebrations of elegant society, for the far coasts and mountains to which they will never travel. . . . The working man in his everyday routine becomes a romantic as soon as he has some free time. He doesn't want to see anything realistic; rather, the realistic should be raised into an imaginary, fantastic realm. . . . One finds all this in the movies.⁷⁷

To counter this triumphant competition, literature has two options. One easy option tends toward "trivializing mechanisms": namely, while underrating the technological media, to join them.⁷⁸ Since 1900 many writers have given up on getting their names into the poetic pantheon and, intentionally or not, have worked for the media. Whereas Wildenbruch summoned up pathos and spoke his name and soul into the phonograph, other lyric poets, preferring anonymity and success, produced texts for phonographic hits. The first screenplay writers also remained anonymous. When Heinrich Lautensack in 1913 published the written text of a screenplay after the film had been shot, the sensational use of his name demonstrated "that real poets, too, have written films, even if anonymously (how many might have done that, because of the money, over the years!)." Before Lautensack, "H. H. Ewers [was] probably the only known author whose name appeared with his films."⁷⁹

Mass literature has been identified as non-value ever since hermeneutic reading guides distinguished between works and mass products, repeated rereading and reading mania. But when texts could be transposed to other media, the difference became one of method of production. The judgment that "the best novel and best drama are degraded into dime novels in the movies, full of sensationalism and make-believe" can be reversed.⁸⁰ Audiovisual sensuousness, also employed by high literary texts

in 1800, became the speciality of books that aimed at hallucinatory effects with the methodical efficiency of digital-analog converters. Turn-of-the-century bestsellers were quickly made into films: historical novels like *Quo Vadis* (whose writer won the Nobel Prize), stories of doppelgängers like *The Golem*, psychopathological thrillers like Paul Lindau's *The Other*, to say nothing of *Buddenbrooks*. For "the Paul Lindaus have their merits and their immortality."⁸¹ They were there when the typewriter made the publishing process more economical; they knew what was going on when psychophysics reduced the mystery of the soul to feasibilities. Their books thus appeared where they belonged: on the movie screen. Lindau's "Other" is a district attorney; when a crime occurs in his house, he uses the best criminological methods to gather evidence, only to discover that he himself, as doppelgänger or schizophrenic like Jekyll and Hyde, was the perpetrator. A year earlier, Hallers, the district attorney, had had a riding accident and injured the occipital lobe, on which brain localization theories focus . . .

Of course, role inversion was characteristic of literary heroes like Rönne and literary techniques like automatic writing circa 1900, but only in film could hallucination become real and indices like a clock or portrait bring about unambiguous identifications. Criminology and psychopathology work with the same technologies as the entertainment industry.⁸² A district attorney who unconsciously (as his friend, a psychiatrist, explains to him) every night becomes his own other is a metaphor for the shift from bureaucracy to technology, from writing to media. In the unconscious of the movie house, modest bureaucrats or women trapped in their households don't want to see symbolic or real servants of the state. What they want is imaginary reversal.

Literature's other option in relation to the media is to reject them, along with the imaginary and real aspects of discourse to which they cater, and which have become the province of popular writers. Because "kitsch will never be eliminated from humanity," one group of writers renounces it.⁸³ After 1900 a high literature develops in which "the word" becomes something "too conspicuous," that is, it becomes a purely differential signifier. Once imaginary effects and real inscription have been renounced, what remains are the rituals of the symbolic. These rituals take into account neither the reaction thresholds of people nor the support of Nature. "Letters of the alphabet do not occur in nature." Words as literal anti-nature, literature as word art, the relation between both as material equality—this is their constellation in the purest art for art's sake and in the most daring games of the avant-garde. Since December 28, 1895, there has been one infallible criterion for high literature: it cannot be filmed.

When idealist aesthetics bound the various arts together as parts of a single system, sculpture, painting, music, and architecture were unambiguously determined by their respective materials—stone, sound, color, building material. Poetry, however, as the universal art, was permitted to reign over the universal medium of the imagination. It lost this special status circa 1900 in the interest of thorough equality among materials. Literature became word art put together by word producers. As if to confirm Lacan's theory of love, Kurt Schwitters was in love with his Anna because "her name [can be spelled] backwards as well as forwards: *a-n-n-a*." It is hardly controversial to make this claim with respect to the writers of experimental modernism. But even writers like Holz or Hofmannsthal, often seen as continuing the projects of Herder or Humboldt one hundred years after the fact, expressed concern to do justice to the material they worked with.⁸⁴ Hofmannsthal argued concisely that the basic concepts of classical-romantic Poetry were so much blabla in relation to its material, the word. "I wonder whether all the tiresome jabbering about individuality, style, character, mood, and so on has not made you lose sight of the fact that the material of poetry is words. . . . We should be allowed to be artists who work with words, just as others work with white or colored stone, shaped metal, purified tones or dance."⁸⁵

Less concise, but astonishing in a direct descendant of Schleiermacher, is Dilthey's line that before any hermeneutics there are "sensually given signs": "stones, marble, musically formed sounds, gestures, words, and script."⁸⁶ No voice, then, no matter how traditional its idiom, can be heard locating Poetry in an immaterial imagination. It is simply wrong to assign "an abstraction from the realm of literary-historical media to the period" in which "the paradigms of media used in positivistic literary history were widened to include film, radio, and records."⁸⁷ What is here vaguely circumscribed as "abstraction" had long cemented the classical bond of friendship between poets and thinkers. But in 1900 film and the gramophone (radio would not appear until twenty-five years later) would lead to the very opposite result by isolating the word theoretically as well, leaving to the media its previous effects on the imagination. The rankings of the individual arts in a synchronic system inevitably shifted.⁸⁸ But historical derivations of modernist word literature, such as Günther Sasse's, are perhaps superfluous; by presupposing a "situation in need of clarification, namely, that not until one hundred years after the thematization of language in philosophy, did the same problem become central in literature,"⁸⁹ such an approach creates more problems than it solves. But because there was once a brief friendship between literature and philosophy, literary historians still read Humboldt's philosophy instead of test series.

All the evidence indicates that the high literature of 1900 gave up its symphilosophizing because other contemporary movements gained prominence. The new sciences and technologies made it necessary to renounce the imagination. Mallarmé stated this when he answered an inquiry *On the Illustrated Book* with a decided “No.” “Why,” he asked in response, “don’t you go right to the cinematographs, for their sequence of images will replace, to great advantage, many books in image and text.”⁹⁰ If reform primers and novels of artistic development cunningly used images to contribute to an imperceptible alphabetization and identification, high literature cut out everything available to the other media. For all his love of film, Kafka conveyed to his publisher his “horror” at the very thought that an illustrator of his *Metamorphosis* “might even want to draw the insect itself. Not that, please! I don’t want to diminish the area of his authority, but issue my request only on behalf of my naturally better grasp of the story. The insect itself cannot be drawn. It cannot be drawn even from a great distance.”⁹¹ Literature thus occupies, with creatures or noncreatures that can only be found in words, the margin left to it by the other media. Illustrations outgrew their baby shoes, their contributory role, and learned to walk and wield power in the unconscious of the movie house; the symbolic remained, autonomous and imageless as once only God had been.

The literary ban on images allowed only two exceptions. One occurred when Stefan George wanted to document the fact that he was not a classical author and thus not for the young ladies. He gave his artist and book designer, Melchior Lechter, “a nonartistic task” that “leaves the realm of art” and ended any further collaboration between them.⁹² The *Commemoration* for Maximin was to be prefaced, not by the hand-drawn portrait Lechter suggested, but by Maximilian Kronberger’s photograph. Only the scandal of technological media in the midst of the ritual of letters could materialize the scandal of the master desiring a singular and real body.

The other exception was systematic. After 1900 letters were permitted to construct figures, because they had always been figures. This too directly reversed classical norms. Schleiermacher “completely” excluded from Poetry verses in dialect as well as those others “that look like an axe or bottle.”⁹³ Ninety-eight years later, Apollinaire justified his *Calligrammes* by citing the competition of film and records.

It would have been strange if in an epoch when the popular art par excellence, the cinema, is a book of pictures, poets had not tried to compose pictures for meditative and refined minds that are not content with the crude imaginings of the makers of films. These last will become more perceptive, and one can predict the day when, the photograph and the cinema having become the only form of pub-

lication in use, the poet will have a freedom heretofore unknown. One should not be astonished if, with the means they now have at their disposal, poets set themselves to preparing this new art.⁹⁴

Pictures made of letters remain in the cleared area, in the technological niche of literature, without suffering any material inequality vis-à-vis the other media that, Apollinaire prophesies, will soon be the only ones. Such pictures had been despised for a century, because any emphasis on the figural quality of letters would have made it more difficult to ignore them. To achieve the psychophysical insight, to see letters “as a great quantity of strange figures on a white background,” or as calligrammes, “one has only to look at a newspaper page upside down.”⁹⁵ The literality and materiality of the written can be realized only at the expense of readability and in limited experiments. Apollinaire and Mallarmé competed with the technological medium of film, whereas it would have seemed sufficient to distinguish letters and books from traditional painting. The call for a cult of typefaces issued by writers circa 1900 had nothing to do with fine writing, everything to do with machines. In the words of Anton Kaes: “The reform movement in literature that ran parallel to the rise of the movies as a mass medium took shape against the background of the new technological media.”⁹⁶

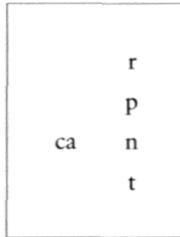
Research into the localization of language replicated the typewriter. The tachistoscope of the physiologists of reading was the twin of the movie projector, with the side effect of typographically optimizing the typewriter. Brain physiology did away with the illusion that language is more “than a play of mechanical equipment learned by practice,” which “is set into ordered motion by ideas, just as one can operate a sewing, adding, writing, or talking machine without needing to be familiar with its construction.”⁹⁷ Prior to consciousness, then, there are sensory and motor, acoustical and optic language centers linked by nerve paths just as the working parts of a typewriter are connected by levers and rods. As if taking Nietzsche’s dictation style as a metaphor, brain physiology formulates the path from the sound image of the word to the hand that writes and to consciousness as an inaudible dictation, to which only autonomic reaction is appropriate at the level of consciousness.⁹⁸ To produce actual discourse, there must be impulses in the cerebral cortex “through which the word, as an acoustical and optical image, is transposed into its sensory sound parts on a sound clavier.” All keyboards (including those that produce sounds), however, are spatial arrangements, or a sort of typewriter keyboard of language. A “cortical soundboard” virtually conjures up the lever system of the old Remingtons.⁹⁹

As soon as one connects the brain physiology of language with the psychophysics of the senses via the tachistoscope, the hypothetical machine in the brain becomes a real machine in front of the retina. The letters and words presented for milliseconds by the tachistoscope are aleatory choices from prepared stores or vocabularies. The procedure is only apparently arbitrary and “peculiar to our experiments.” For “as rich as the number of words in our civilized languages has gradually become, their number diminishes considerably in each language during a particular period, for a particular domain of literature, and for a particular author.”¹⁰⁰ Periods, genres, authors—all play on unconscious word keyboards and even more unconscious letter keyboards. The philosopher become experimenter Erdmann says nothing of them; instead, he presents the basic rule that words are recognized in their “totality,” that is, by those traits “in which the black marks of the letters contrast with the white background.” In which case, “the surface areas of the white background are as essential for the whole configuration as the black ones are.”¹⁰¹

Erdmann’s followers and critics, however, were not philosophers or hermeneutic interpreters, and they limited their investigations to the materiality of letters. They turned the tachistoscopes to speeds higher than those at which reading can take place because only disturbances and deficiencies betray the fundamental secrets of letters and forms of script. The film projector’s twin thus functions in an opposite manner. The projector, in the unconscious of the movie house, presents a continuum of the imaginary, generated through a sequence of single images so precisely chopped up by and then fed through the projector’s mechanism that the illusion of seamless unity is produced. With the tachistoscope, in the darkened laboratory of the alphabetical elite, a cut-up image assaults as a cut in order to establish out of the torment and mistaken readings of victims the physiologically optimal forms of letters and script. As with the typewriter, which has its own key for spacing, intervals are built into the experimental procedure. But they also become the test result. The tachistoscope demonstrates that on the most basic level reading consists in perceiving not letters but the differences between them, and that word recognition proceeds by hitting upon discontinuous, single letters that literally stick out. Systematically evaluated misreadings indicate that letters at x-height (vowels and some consonants) are relatively undifferentiated, but that consonants with ascenders or descenders serve as typographic recognition signals.¹⁰² According to Julius Zeitler, the historically renewed primacy of the letter is based on a “decomposition of the letter continuum into groups.” “There are whole series of words, analogous in their letter composition, that run through heterogeneous meanings if one

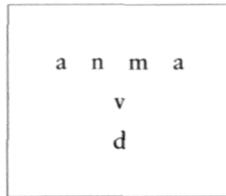
letter in the same position is changed. . . . If the new meaning of the word image that has been altered in this way is to be registered, the letter must be determined, that is, it must be spelled out. When this does not occur, the original word image is constantly reassimilated, as is the original meaning along with it.”¹⁰³

The letter-crosswords with which Reformation primers liked to play could therefore be resurrected. One theorist of elementary education illustrated Zeitler’s theory for his deaf and dumb children with the following example:¹⁰⁴



One need only read this series as a column—and Saussure’s theory of language as a combinatorial system is born. As it says in the structuralist bible:¹⁰⁵

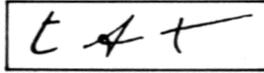
In every such case the isolated sound, like every other unit, is chosen after a dual mental opposition. In the imaginary grouping *anna*, for instance, the sound *m* stands in syntagmatic opposition to its environing sounds and in associative opposition to all other sounds that may come to mind:



But, as Derrida was the first to rediscover,¹⁰⁶ the modest letter researchers or grammatologists were more rigorous than linguistics’ founding hero. Their tachistoscope locates pure differentiability not in “sounds,” that is, in incorporeal sound images of words, but in the material signs of type. Thus the machine demonstrates *and* practices what structural linguistics accomplishes insofar as it writes down nonsense words such as *anna*, even though it stresses their use in speech. In order to engrave an example of the differentiability of phonemes into his own text, Saussure

was forced to shift to the distinction between necessary and arbitrary, graphematic and graphic differences between letters.

The value of letters is purely negative and differential. The same person can write *t*, for instance, in different ways:



The only requirement is that the sign for *t* not be confused in his script with the signs used for *l*, *d*, etc.¹⁰⁷

It is because the example of the three handwritten *t*'s does not constitute an example, but is rather a conclusive demonstration with which differences in sound could never compete, that structural linguistics and psychophysical positivism belong together. Instead of continuing in the line of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics,¹⁰⁸ Saussure systematized, at the price of a methodological phonocentrism, the countless scriptural facts that experiments circa 1900 produced and let stand in their facticity.

But the love of facts can also bear fruit. It might not produce a system, but it does produce typographies. Erdmann's measurement of the relation between letters and background, Zeitler's differentiation of letter recognition according to x-height, ascenders, and descenders, Oskar Messmer's calculation of the frequency of these three types in coherent texts, all culminated in a knowledge of differentiability that could become immediately practical. The secular war between Fraktur and roman scripts, for instance, no longer need be burdened with the imaginary values of Things German in opposition to the world. After simple tests with both types of script—with the tachistoscope, in low light, with beginning pupils and professors—the superiority of roman was a matter of fact. Semiotic positivism allowed Friedrich Soenneken to explain that roman consisted of two basic lines, whereas Fraktur consisted of "no less than sixty-six basic lines differing in form and size."¹⁰⁹ This sort of massive differential difference made decisions easy for researchers who published works such as *The Economy and Technology of Learning*:¹¹⁰ "Anyone who has ever experimented with the tachistoscope knows that the simpler a type of script is, the easier it is to learn."¹¹¹

Indeed, under the conditions of pure differentiability there is nothing simpler than the opposition that, in theory and praxis, determines the current century: binary opposition. If roman consists of only two "elements, the straight line and the half circle,"¹¹² then an ideal script has been found, one whose elements can be combined and analyzed quite dif-

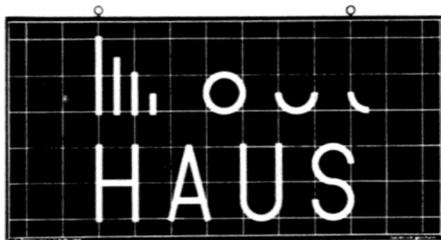
ferently from Pöhlmann's or Stephani's handwriting norms. An economy took the place of organic merging, one that (perhaps following the new standard of Morse code) technically optimized signs and the differences between them.

Thus differences appeared even in roman typeface, the very minimalization of difference. Saussure distinguished necessary and arbitrary differences among letters; embracing necessary difference, since 1900 the various roman typefaces that reject ornament have flourished and become as pervasive as chemically pure industrial design.¹¹³ Forms to be filled out call for block letters; lower case and sans serif are the height of Manhattan advertising chic.

The call was answered. Because roman capital letters are what "the child first encounters at every turn"—"on street signs, street cars, post offices, train stations"¹¹⁴—the block letters of technological information channels found their way into elementary-school instruction. Rudolph von Larisch's students in Vienna learned from a manual *Instruction in Ornamental Script*; but they learned a surface art that rejected all "perspective and shadow effects" of the Stephani type of word painting. The goal, "in competition with other demands," was "a HIGHER degree of readability": "that the characteristic qualities of a letter be stressed with all possible force and the difference from similar letters be stressed."¹¹⁵ Psychophysicists and structural linguists hardly say it more clearly. The medium of writing and paper no longer pretended to be a springboard to painted nature. Using uniformly thick lines, Eckmann and Peter Behrens,¹¹⁶ Larisch and Soenneken drew block letters as block letters.

The decomposition of roman letters, as it confronts elementary binary opposition, is the mirror image of their composition. To write block letters is not to connect signs with other signs but to combine discrete elements piece by piece. In the age of engineers an armature construction set replaces the growth of plants and originary script.¹¹⁷ Separate letters consisting of separate elements are based, in strict opposition to classical writing rules, on Saussure's most daring opposition: that between signs and emptiness, medium and background. "The beginner has to learn to look, not simply at the form of the letters, but constantly BETWEEN the letters; he must use all the power of his vision to grasp the surface forms that arise between the letters and to assess the effect of their optical mass."¹¹⁸ A reversal of every habit or facility thus grants the "BETWEEN" the same status as the positive marks it separates. So Larisch knocked children over the head with the lesson that psychophysics produced with the tachistoscope and with newspapers turned upside down: the fact that letters are what they are only against and upon a white background. A "BETWEEN" in capital block letters is a sheer autonym. And if educators

circa 1800 aimed at mitigating the shock of binary opposition by connecting lines and an attenuation of the black-white contrast, Larisch—as a student of William Morris—gave his students the “feeling of how poorly the softening halftone fits into a printed book,” in that “simple, powerful outlines and the full contrast of black and white spaces have an appearance characteristic of printed type.”¹¹⁹



And yet—the implications of the tachistoscope and the economy of letters for literature and literary science become even more obscure, if possible, here on the page, for all its black and white space. One needs the whole power of one’s vision to glimpse the overlooked visibility of texts. The black and white of texts seems so timeless that it never occurs to readers to think of the architects of that space. The forgotten technicians of 1900, however, revolutionalized the page of poetry, from the most playful verses to the most ritualized. Morgenstern’s *Gallows Songs* enact the derivation of what the Stefan George typeface practiced in mute solemnity.

Es war einmal ein Lattenzaun
mit Zwischenraum, hindurchzuschauen.

Ein Architekt, der dieses sah,
stand eines Abends plötzlich da—

und nahm den Zwischenraum heraus
und baute draus ein grosses Haus.

Der Zaun indessen stand ganz dumm,
mit Latten ohne was herum.

Ein Anblick grässlich und gemein.
Drum zog ihn der Senat auch ein.

Der Architekt jedoch entfloh
nach Afri- od- Ameriko.

There used to be a picket fence
with space to gaze from hence to thence.

An architect who saw this sight
 approached it suddenly one night,
removed the spaces from the fence
 and built of them a residence.

The picket fence stood there dumbfounded
 with pickets wholly unsurrounded,
 a view so naked and obscene
 the Senate had to intervene.

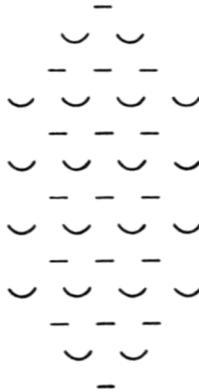
The architect, however, flew
 to Afri- or Americoo.¹²⁰

“The Picket Fence” is the fairy tale of a new age. Where Anselmus saw the woven arabesques of handwritten letters, the cold eye of the architect sees the opposite. One evening Larisch’s imperative—to look constantly BETWEEN the letters, to grasp the space outlined between them with all one’s strength—is realized word for word. In so doing, the architect does not discover merely how indispensable concepts of relation are.¹²¹ Something more tangible is at stake: the fact that the readability of signs is a function of their spatiality. The architect’s manipulation of space demonstrates that, when the lack is lacking and no empty spaces remain, media disappear, “naked and obscene,” into the chaos from which they were derived.

Consider the final stanza of “The Picket Fence” in light of the architecture of block letters. Whereas “the alliteration of *Africa* and *America* feigns an ending in *-(i)ca*,”¹²² which also plays with the ending of *oder* [the placement of “or”], a “between” appears in the realm of the grapheme: the space designated by the dash. The words of the poem, complete autonoms in this sense, foreground their own intervals between stem and ending. Morgenstern’s constructed architect does not disappear into far-off lands, but into the space between signs that he had usurped.

From this vanishing point called paper, it is only a step to “the ideal of purely abstract, absolute poetry,” an ideal of such brilliance “that it also means the end of poetry; it can no longer be imitated or surpassed; it is transcended only by the empty white page.”¹²³ “The Picket Fence” describes the binary opposition between letters or pickets [*Lettern/Latten*] and the space between them, but “Fish’s Night Song” uniquely enacts this opposition without any description at all.¹²⁴ In it, the reduction to straight line and half curve that distinguishes roman from Fraktur scripts becomes textual event. Circumflex and dash, two signifiers that define themselves through mutual opposition and relation, are the absolute minimum economy of the signifier. Their binary opposition to each other, canceled or articulated through the shared opposition of both to paper,

constitutes the poem that meets all the reading-psychological desiderata of its epoch. Period. For there is nothing more to write about a minimal signifier system.



Or there would be nothing more to write if the poem did not have a title composed in the very different, redundant, signifier system of the twenty-six letters. Through the title, one discourse network answers another across the turning point that divides them. “Fish’s Night Song” is the cancellation of Goethe’s “Wanderer’s Night Song II.” In the latter, a human voice outlasts the surrounding sounds of nature for one breath in order to express the promise that it, too, would find rest in the lap of Mother Nature. In the former, the text brings a mute fish not to speech, but into a typogram. It thus realizes Schleiermacher’s nightmare: namely, that a real optics would render superfluous the imaginary, imaginal aspects that meaningful words suggest to alphabetized readers. As mute and dead as any script, the fish no longer needs the phonocentric consolation of a seamless transition between speech and nature. The signs on the page cannot be spoken by any voice—regardless of whether one reads them as fish scales or discrete elements of the roman typeface. Man and soul, in any case, no longer apply. With all the wanderers between day and night, Spirit and Nature, male and female, Man simply died around 1900. It was a death to which the much-discussed death of God is a footnote.

Stephani wrote that written letters provide notes for the mouth instrument. But a mute fish demonstrates that signs can mock all speech and nonetheless still be written signs. The half curve and dash, the two minimal signifieds of Soennecken and of the “Night Song,” can be found on every universal keyboard. The first German monograph on the typewriter

thus celebrated the fact that “with a little inventiveness one can produce very fine borders and flourishes” on Remingtons and Oliver’s.¹²⁵ It presented the prototype of modernist ideal poetry years before Morgenstern.



Not only is the human voice incapable of reproducing signs prior to and beyond alphabets, but writers, by prescribing their own alphabets, can remove their texts from hermeneutic consumption. The existence of a Stefan George script in the discourse network of 1900 demonstrates that “Fish’s Night Song” is the signet of the whole system.

The Stefan George script, which Lechter fabricated and used throughout the first edition of George’s *Collected Works*, was adapted from George’s handwriting. But it was handwriting only in name. First, the single letters—beyond any supposed Carolingian reference—were based on a contemporary advertising grotesque.¹²⁶ Second, any handwriting that can be transposed into reusable typeface functions fundamentally as mechanized script.

Technology entered the scene in archaic dress. Larisch came up with “the ideal of a personal book” that would be “self-designed, -written, -ornamented, and -bound.”¹²⁷ That is exactly what George did before Lechter and Georg Bondi made him aware of the possibility of technological reproduction. Under the pressure of media competition, high literature returned to the monastic copyists whom Gutenberg had rendered unnecessary and Anselmus had made to seem foolish. At the same time, however, the personal book (that oxymoron) was to be set in block letters that, “equal in their characteristics,” have none of the redundant differences of individual handwritten letters. According to Larisch, the historic “moment” was “favorable” for old-fashioned, manually made books because “precisely now the use of typewriters is becoming widespread.”¹²⁸

The ascetics of handwork art, even when they played at being medieval, were in competition with the modern media. As soon as there were typewriters, there were fashioners of texts like Mark Twain or Paul Lindau, who had “the production means of the printing press at their disposal” on their desks. According to Marshall McLuhan, the fact that “the typewriter fuses composition and publication” brought about “an entirely new attitude to the written and printed word.”¹²⁹ Like innovation, its effects surpassed its applications. When Larisch and George stylized their handwriting until it became a typeface, they achieved what Mallin

Hansen and Nietzsche had been praised for: script “as beautiful and regular as print.”¹³⁰ “Perfect lyrical creations and perfect technical objects are one and the same.”¹³¹

The new relation to the printed word became printed reality in the layout of George’s books. From the time of his break with Lechter, at the latest, his books constituted an imageless cult of letters. The cry of material equality extended from the single lyrical word to the entire alphabetical medium. If modern, Morris-inspired publications, such as *Goals of Internal Book Design*, state in tautological conclusion that “paper and type make up a book,” the poets of the George circle were “more or less the first to realize that a book consists of paper and type.”¹³²

But it is not only the fact that books of the turn of the century “looked very booklike” that places them into technological contexts.¹³³ More important, the Stefan George script (as typeface, in the form of its letters, and in its orthography and punctuation) presupposed, maximized, and exploited experimentally obtained standards. In terms of the physiology of reading, it was evident that the “letters and other elements of the typeface” and “the capital and small letter should be as similar as possible.” It follows that roman is by far “more efficient” than Fraktur, which would be “unthinkable as a typewriter typeface.”¹³⁴ The Stefan George script met just these standards; in its new letter forms for *e*, *k*, and *t*, capital and lowercase letters were even more alike than in ordinary roman type.¹³⁵ George eliminated the ascenders from two of the twenty-six letters (*k* and *t*). This might seem a minimal innovation, but in combination with Grimm’s orthography (the use of small letters for nouns, the elimination of *h* from many *th* combinations, and the use of *ss* rather than the *Eszett*), it had a significant cumulative effect. Whereas the physiologist Messmer counted 270 letters above or below x-height in an ordinary text a thousand letters long, I find in George an average of only 200 extended as opposed to 800 small letters. (The same passages in Duden orthography would contain nearly one hundred more ascenders and descenders.)

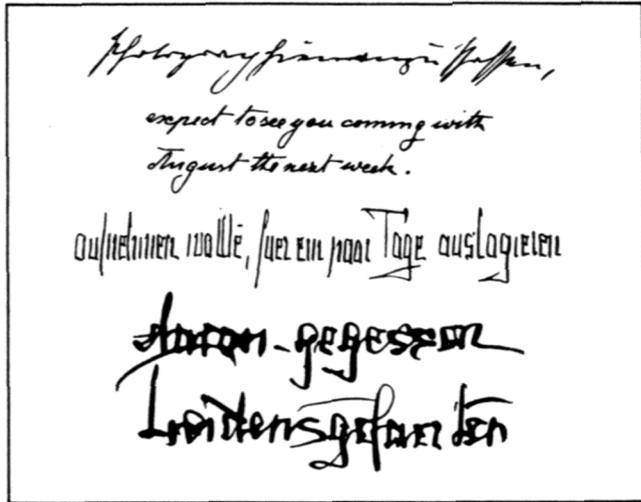
Messmer could show that words such as *physiological* or *psychological*, taken simply as collections of letters containing a high percentage of ascenders and descenders, do not convey the “unitary whole impression” that distinguishes words such as *wimmern*, *nennen*, or *weinen*.¹³⁶ Extended letters quicken the pace of tachistoscopic word recognition, but in a special script or cult of the letter intended to hinder any alphabetized skipping over of letters, material equality is everything and a gain in speed is nothing. Therefore masses of words like *wimmern*, *nennen*, and *weinen* fill the eighteen volumes of an oeuvre whose esotericism is physiologically guaranteed. In it, homologies, recognitions, and knowing smiles are exchanged between the most aristocratic of writers and the

modest experimenters of 1900. The inventor of psychotechnology confirmed an esotericism in the inventor of the Stefan George script that—a first in the history of writing—could be measured. “The fact that the elimination of capital letters from the beginning of nouns constitutes a strong check against rapid absorption can be easily verified, should readers of Stefan George find it necessary, by psychological experiment in an easily measurable procedure.”¹³⁷

These lines are as true as they are prophetic. Whereas readers of Nietzsche stumbled only here and there over italicized introjections, readers of George have trouble with every letter. A perfect experimental procedure forestalls understanding in order to fix the eyes on signifiers as murky as the “Fish’s Night Song.” But the readers were fascinated and forgot they were experimental subjects. In opposition to the technological media, they conjured up a secondhand old Europe. Consider Gert Mattenklott’s consideration of George: “The image of Stefan George appears finally as the sheer allegorical corpse. . . . Everything arbitrary and individual is transcribed into a meaningful universal, perhaps most clearly when George made his own handwriting resemble a typeface intended to replace the conventional one.”¹³⁸ These lines are as false as they are Benjaminesque. Their writer is simply unaware of the technologies of his own century. The facts that the typewriter made it inevitable that handwriting should come to resemble type, that there was the project of a “world letter” to unburden memories,¹³⁹ and that the logic of the signifier explodes the “meaning” of the age of Goethe all fall victim here to an allegory of allegory. “Conventional handwriting” is a non-concept. If histories of the material basis of literature are to be possible, apparent conventions, especially in the elemental field of writing, must be dismantled and examined as feedback control loops and programs. George, whether a corpse or not, was evidence of an epochal innovation.

No appeal to timeless conventions could ever explain why a nameless artist (not George) changed his handwriting three times between 1877 and 1894, attracting the attention of psychiatrists with the third change and landing among them with the fourth. Above all, however, conventions cannot explain why science took precisely this patient at his word or pen and made facsimiles of his handwriting.¹⁴⁰ Only the assumption that the four writing experiments portray an upheaval, as if in time-lapse photography, can explain both acts of writing, that of the patient and that of the psychiatrists. Proceeding exactly as had George (who, of course, was not born writing block letters), the anonymous artist made the transition from the rounded and connected handwriting ideal of Stephani or Lindhorst to the cult of the letter. One of the first studies of its kind, entitled *Handwriting of the Insane*, noted that it was “in no way acciden-

tal” that patients’ handwriting lost “the normal connecting lines between adjacent letters.”¹⁴¹ As if to demonstrate the explosive force of discursive events, the isolation of letters leads to the isolation of their writers.



In 1894, the *Encyclopedic Review* commissioned a young medical student to query writers about the recent appearance of graphology. Mallarmé’s answer runs:

Yes, I think that writing is a clue; you say, like gesture and physiognomy, nothing more certain. Nevertheless, by profession or by taste, the writer *recopies* or sees first in the mirror of his mind, and then transcribes in writing once and for all, as if invariable. The immediate effect of his emotions is therefore not visible in his manuscript, but there one can judge his personality as a whole.¹⁴²

This states the issue directly. While graphology was being developed to provide another type of evidence, literate people fell into two subclasses: on the one hand, those whose handwriting was a direct reflection of their unconscious and so could be evaluated psychologically or criminologically; on the other, the professional writers, who were writing machines* without handwriting. Among the latter, what appears to be the production of a soul is always only the reproduction on a keyboard of invariable letters. Writers’ texts therefore could not be interpreted unless graphology made “major modifications.” That is exactly what happened when Ludwig Klages studied an original manuscript of George (as was explic-

* Here and throughout this chapter, there is a play on the etymology of *Schreibmaschine* (“typewriter,” but literally “writing machine”). [Trans.]

Stefan George

itly noted in George's *Works*):¹⁴³ "ornament," rather than the usual "expressive marks," necessarily became the object of interpretation.¹⁴⁴ Professional, intransitive writing barred the abyss of the unconscious and ruled out the techniques of gathering evidence. The remaining word specialists quickly learned the lesson that the phonograph taught foolhardy Wildenbruch. Mallarmé became an incomprehensible personality en bloc; George was practical enough, in his monthly dealings with the Deutsche Bank, to have his favorite disciple write the signature on his checks, *Stefan George*. "He said that Gundolf could sign his name in such a way that even he could not tell, at a later date, whether he or Gundolf had signed it."¹⁴⁵

For all the disdain of words that made him the founding hero of *Bildung*, Faust still believed in and obeyed the binding power of his signature. Without the bureaucratic ethos, the pact between the humane disciplines and the state would not have come about. For all his cult of the word, George, the technician in spite of himself, played a little strategic game in his commerce with the bank. A signature that, like the graphologically dreaded "machinescript," avoids "every trait of intimacy" and thus can always be forged, can be found in print.¹⁴⁶ Although the technicians, on their side, soon discovered George's trick, he did demonstrate

DAS WORT

Wunder von ferne oder traum
 Bracht ich an meines landes saum
 Und harrete bis die graue norm
 Den namen fand in ihrem born –
 Drauf konnt ichs greifen dicht und stark
 Nun blüht und glänzt es durch die mark ...
 Einst langt ich an nach guter fahrt
 Mit einem kleinod reich und zart
 Sie suchte lang und gab mir kund:
 ›So schläfft hier nichts auf tiefem grund
 Worauf es meiner hand entrann
 Und nie mein land den schatz gewann ...
 So lernst ich traurig den verzicht:
 Kein ding sei wo das wort gebricht.

something. Only as long as people believed in their inwardness did that inwardness exist. Man stands or falls with the signature of his signature. It is impossible to give exemplary status to Man and to Language in one and the same discourse network.¹⁴⁷

Thus circa 1900 the universal bureaucratic ethos of the age of Goethe was replaced by professional ethics. In the competitive struggle of media everyone swears by a particular professionalism. It can mean nothing else when lyric poets after George prominently publish poems entitled "THE WORD."

THE WORD

I carried to my country's shore
 Marvels and dreams, and waited for
 The tall and twilit norn to tell
 The names she found within the well.
 Then I could grasp them, they were mine,
 And here I see them bloom and shine . . .
 Once I had made a happy haul
 And won a rich and fragile jewel.
 She peered and pondered: "Nothing lies
 Below," she said, "to match your prize."
 At this it glided from my hand
 And never graced my native land.
 And so I sadly came to see:
 Without the word no thing can be.¹⁴⁸

Rebus

Untranslatability and the Transposition of Media

A medium is a medium is a medium. Therefore it cannot be translated. To transfer messages from one medium to another always involves re-shaping them to conform to new standards and materials. In a discourse network that requires an “awareness of the abysses which divide the one order of sense experience from the other,”¹ transposition necessarily takes the place of translation.² Whereas translation excludes all particularities in favor of a general equivalent, the transposition of media is accomplished serially, at discrete points. Given Medium A, organized as a denumerable collection of discrete elements $E_1^a \dots E_n^a$, its transposition into Medium B will consist in reproducing the internal (syntagmatic and paradigmatic) relations between its elements in the collection $E_1^b \dots E_m^b$. Because the number of elements n and m and the rules of association are hardly ever identical, every transposition is to a degree arbitrary, a manipulation. It can appeal to nothing universal and must, therefore, leave gaps. The elementary, unavoidable act of EXHAUSTION is an encounter with the limits of media.

The logic of media may be a truism in set theory or information theory, but for Poets it was the surprise of the century. Before they founded *The New Empire*, the kingdom of blank machine-written bodies of words, poets more than any other profession remained faithful to the classical discourse network. The translatability of all discourses into poetic signifieds endowed poets with such privilege that only bitter experience forced them to renounce their constitutive illusion. For an entire century poets had worked with language as if it were merely a channel.³ Love and

intoxication transported the author into hallucinations that he would later, as “marvels and dreams,” have only to transcribe. Being the general equivalent of all the senses, the imagination guaranteed that every “jewel” would have no trouble finding a name. Because addicted masculine and feminine readers quickly read past these names, their effect was anything but equality among the various aesthetic materials: through backward-moving translation, discourses became once more a sensual Nature, one that “blooms and shines.”

In 1919 the exchange broke down. The norn with whom a Poet bartered his imaginative visions for words is no longer a Mother, the one who, as the unarticulated beginning of articulation, guaranteed unlimited expression. The norn has only a bourn or treasury in which signifiers co-exist spatially as denumerable elements. Whatever jewels glow in other media need not necessarily have equivalents, even in Stefan George script. After a long and exhaustive search, the norn breaks this sensational news. Whereas poetic translation was led on by the constant promise of fulfillment, literature is a transposition of media; its structure is first revealed, in the best positivistic and consequently *Dasein*-analytic manner, by deficits.⁴

Experimenters with the tachistoscope and writers at the norn bourn agree that in every language “the number of words is limited at a particular time, in a particular domain of literature, and for a particular author.” An economy of the scarcity of signs replaced universal trade in 1900. George did not limit his economizing with words to his programmatic poem. He was also the “first modern German poet whose vocabulary is contained in a complete dictionary,” which, however, does not make him into an “unfathomable spring.”⁵ It would have been better—aside from the exhaustibility of even the deepest norn bourns—to check at least once with the positivists. Poetic languages, like that of the symbolists, which “made it necessary to compile a special dictionary for their works (J. Plowert, *Petit glossaire pour servir à l'intelligence des auteurs décadents et symbolistes*),” thus identify themselves as “professional jargon.”⁶

Consequently, George's final stanza celebrates The Word as the ethic of a media professional. In what sounds like resignation, Heidegger's unerring art of reading deciphers something quite different.

His renunciation concerns the poetic relation to the word that he had cultivated until then. Renunciation is preparedness for another relation. If so, the “can be” in the line, “Without the word no thing can be,” would grammatically speaking not be the subjunctive of “is,” but a kind of imperative, a command which the poet follows, to keep it from then on. If so, the “may be” in the line, “Where word breaks off no thing may be,” would mean: do not henceforth admit any thing as being where the word breaks off.⁷

An imperative issues from the realization that the transposition of media is always a manipulation and must leave gaps between one embodiment and another. This imperative does not deny that there are media other than writing; it rejects them. On the threshold of the Indian temple caves of Shiva, whose name, *Ellora*, George celebrates as he had the nonsense word *Tiholu*, are the lines:

Pilger ihr erreicht die hürde.
 Mit den trümmern eitler bürdē
 Werft die blumen werft die flöten-
 Rest von tröstlichem geflimme!
 Ton und farbe müsst ihr töten
 Trennen euch von licht und stimme
 An der schwelle von Ellora.

Pilgrims, you have reached the gate
 With your pack of worthless freight.
 Leave the garland, leave the flute,
 Shreds of solace, shreds of show,
 Tints shall fade and sound be mute,
 Light and voices cease to flow
 On the threshold of Ellora.⁸

To deny the other media would be absurd, because color and sound, light and the voice have become recordable, become part of the general acceleration, “in the sense of the technical maximization of all velocities, in whose time-space modern technology and apparatus can alone be what they are.”⁹ Henceforth command will conflict with command, medium with medium. High literature circa 1900 became a despotic, indeed murderous command to limit data to what the medium of script could exhaust. Its spirit [*Geist*], according to Morgenstern’s very serious play on words, ought to be named “It is called / It commands” [*Heisst*].¹⁰ The spirit—or George—became a dictator giving dictation, followed by young men who killed off what was real in them and recorded by secretaries who derived a complete pedagogy from the recording threshold of Ellora.

At conferences of the art-education movement “the possibility of translation in the deepest sense” was rejected precisely in a figure who promoted translatability and world literature. Stephan Waetzoldt, an official in the Prussian Ministry of Culture, Education, and Church Affairs, experimented with native and foreign students to determine whether it was possible to translate Goethe’s poem “Dedication.” His results were:

It is no more possible for a Frenchman to become a German than it is to translate French into German or vice versa. Only where everyday matters, the banal, or the strictly mathematical are expressed, can there be any question of real translation. One can rethink or re-form something in another language, in another image of

the world, but one can never actually translate. How could you ever translate Musset, and how could you ever translate Goethe!¹¹

The imaginary (the everyday) and the real (the mathematical) can thus be translated, but the symbolic allows only transpositions. Poems therefore provide the greatest inner resistance to translation. To demonstrate (again in opposition to Goethe) that the poetic effect is nearly lost in prose translations, despite his own doctrine of hermeneutic understanding, Dilthey cited Fechner, the inventor of psychophysics.¹² Reference to scientific studies was the innovation here. Magical or theological untranslatability was an ancient topos that became fashionable again circa 1900,¹³ but no appeal to magical spells could hide the fact that psycho-technical untranslatability had been experimentally and recently established rather than miraculously found.

Magical spells or incantations are isolated, foreign bodies in actual languages; circa 1900, however, entire artificial languages were deliberately created. Referring to his contemporaries, Morgenstern claimed the right of “imaginative youths . . . to *invent* a tribe of Indians and all it entails, its language and national hymns” and, with reference to his “Lalulā,” termed himself “one of the most enthusiastic Volapükists.”¹⁴ Around 1885, there was a fashionable project to construct “Ideal-Romantic” (reminiscent of the world language of Volapük) as an extract of the various forms of Vulgar Latin. Lott, Liptay, and Daniel Rosa contributed to this linguistically much “more solid edifice,”¹⁵ as did (a little later) a student of Romance languages by the name of George, who invented his *Lingua Romana* in 1889.¹⁶

The *Lingua Romana* allowed George to anticipate Waetzoldt’s experiments with students using his own Germanic and Romance-language medium: he wrote translations of Ideal-Romantic poems in German and vice versa. Since Champollion, the decoding of unknown languages had rested upon the foundation of a bilingual informant. But this was not so for the languages that George constructed at the age of seven or nine for himself and his friends, shortly before Morgenstern’s Indian language game. His poem “Origins” presents a childhood on the pagan–Roman Rhine, which has come under the influence of the language of the Church—until George counters the traditional incantation *hosanna* with one of his own making.

Auf diesen trümmern hob die kirche dann ihr haupt
Die freien nackten leiber hat sie streng gestaupt
Doch erbt sie die prächte die nur starrend schliefen
Und übergab das maass der höhen und der tiefen
Dem sinn der beim hosiannah über wolken blieb
Und dann zerknirscht sich an den gräberplatten rieb.

Doch an dem flusse im schilfpalaste
 Trieb uns der wollust erhabenster schwall:
 In einem sange den keiner erfasste
 Waren wir heischer und herrscher vom All.
 Süß und befeuernd wie Attikas choros
 Über die hügel und inseln klang:
 CO BESOSO PASOJE PTOROS
 CO ES ON HAMA PASOJE BOAÑ.

The Church then reared her head above these stones, and she
 Grew stern and scourged the flesh she found too bare and free.
 But she was heir to pomp, aflash in death-like sleeping,
 And gave the standard set for height and depths in keeping
 To minds that in Hosannahs wheeled above the clouds
 And on the slabs of tombs in self-abasement bowed.

But near the stream in a palace of reed
 On by the tide of our lust we were swirled,
 Singing an anthem which no one could read,
 We were the masters and lords of the world.
 Sweet and inciting as Attica's chorus
 Over the mountains and islands flung:
 CO BESOSO PASOJE PTOROS
 CO ES ON HAMA PASOJE BOAÑ.¹⁷

The poem enacts its theme. The secret language of the IMRI triumphs because it remains a norn bourn. George would quote and allude to it many times,¹⁸ would even present it in conversation to a linguist and expert in secret languages, who immediately confirmed that it was a rare example of wholly invented grammars and vocabularies¹⁹—but the greatest translator in the German language did not think of translating it as well. When George's disciples discovered a handwritten translation of portions of the *Odyssey* into the IMRI language among George's papers, it was logical and not merely pious of them to destroy the single bilingual document.

According to Nietzsche, language exists only because nature has thrown away the keys to its secrets. George's quotation from his own language, in a poem entitled "Origins," shows that the writers of 1900 would yield nothing to nature. CO BESOSO PASOJE PTOROS / CO ES ON HAMA PASOJE BOAÑ. How painfully trivial, then, is the "suspicion" of a literary critic that "the content of those lines could be painfully trivial."²⁰ Precisely because the IMRI undo the act with which the Church transferred the measure of heights and depths to meaning or the signified, many worse things are possible: the two lines might not have any content whatsoever.

Literature that simulates or is constructed out of secret languages and

that thus always stands under the suspicion of being “a kind of nonsense,”²¹ forces interpretation to rearrange its techniques. The classical path to origins in the soul or childhood of the author is gone; a “littérature à rébus” demands (not only with Dilthey) an objective interpretation on the model of cryptographic decoding techniques. The “new symbolism” employs “symbols in a completely different way” than was common in the classical-romantic lyric; it takes not “feeling itself” as its theme “but another and distant object” under the rules of the transposition of media.²² Thus a technical, rather than a psychological-historical, understanding retransposes or decodes the transposition. Georg Simmel demonstrated this for poetic works as well as for black-box machines.

A creation of the mind that is intended to be understood can be compared to a problem or puzzle that the inventor has constructed with a code word. If someone attempting to solve the puzzle should find a second word, one that, objectively, solves the puzzle with equal logical and poetic success, the second word is as perfectly “correct” a solution as the one intended by the poet; indeed the latter has not the slightest priority over the former or over all the other, in principle unlimited, code words that might still be found.²³

Interpretation is only a special instance of the general technique of transposing media. There is no psychological bridge between the encoding author and the decoding interpreter, but a technical contest. Each has at his disposal a *norn bourn*, so that with luck, which nothing and no one guarantees, the elements and associative rules of Medium A can be reproduced in the elements and associative rules of Medium B. When Bettina Brentano attempted to interpret Goethe’s “Charade” as a reciprocal declaration of love, without being able to crack the *Herzlieb* code, she was unfortunately working in a different discourse network. Had she been able to attend Simmel’s seminars in Strasbourg, as many women did around 1900, much would have been easier. An interpretive method without an author as idol obviates not only the vain effort of deciphering, but also the threat of discovering *Herzlieb* in the riddle after all.

Indeed, for short periods the transposition of media can be lifesaving. In 1902 Emil Strauss published a novel about a gymnasium student and born musician who is driven to suicide by the dust-covered new humanism of his teachers and their lesson plans. After having been forbidden to play his beloved violin, Heinrich Lindner spends every afternoon doing his homework.

During the first few days it was not so bad; indeed, he thought with slight bitterness: Everything is turning out well! But on the fourth day he suddenly caught himself not concentrating on the equation he was supposed to be solving but reading the letters as notes, and, without being aware of it, he had already hummed a whole page of the book.

“Good God!” he cried out laughing, “what nonsense!” But he could not resist looking at the page once more and consciously attempting to see if there might be, somewhere among the boring letters, a hidden musical combination. Soon, however, he was no longer laughing; he noticed that he could no longer concentrate on the mathematical value of the letters, and that the simplest sequence of letters would remind him of a musical phrase or suggest a motif.²⁴

It is thus sheer mockery when the obtuse bureaucrats hermeneutically certify that their problem student, despite “very irregular reading,” is capable of “penetrating the spirit of an author.”²⁵ One who reads note values rather than algebraic variables (and also letters in other places), is proceeding neither irregularly nor according to an author’s psychology. His reading is conceivably a precise transposition of media and can be interpreted and legitimized by Simmel’s objective interpretation. It is no less radical an act in that Lindner is not alone. His contemporary Alban Berg transposed letters into notes (as a means of erotic disguise); for the hero of the novel, the same process is an unconscious and thus lifesaving compulsion, a special instance of alexia with the purpose of evading high school alphabetizing. In fact, research into speech deficits has uncovered cases (aside from the strategic simulation of aphasia) in which patients “lose words, but retain the meaning of notes.”²⁶

The *Trio for Piano, Violin, and Violincello* by Heinrich Lindner, *Opus 1*, is subsequently inspired by a train station. The composer manqué hears the stationmaster sing commands as melodies (like the “children who while playing give rhythm and alternation to their calls”). Shortly afterwards the concourse sounds in a confusion of voices, but this does nothing to disturb Lindner’s musical dream, because all media circa 1900 presuppose white noise. The “confusion of voices, letting no single sound reach or disturb him,” inspires the precocious and supposedly ungifted student to *Opus 1*.²⁷

If the transposition of media can make musical notes out of letters and scores out of a confusion of voices, a decoding of the darkest and least translatable of texts is also possible and necessary. “The Great Lalulā” has, if not meaning, at least method, and not merely as “a more or less modulatory expression of an entirely definite and to the greatest extent exscene worldcomprehensivewordchildandartview.”²⁸ For the decoding that Morgenstern himself produced, albeit as “Jeremias Mueller, Ph.D.”—that is, with professional distance from his own wordchildandart—allows no modulation whatsoever.

THE GREAT LALULĀ

Too much has been attributed to this song so far. All it hides is simply—checkmate. No chess player will ever have understood it any other way. But in order to accommodate the layman and beginner, I will outline the position here.

Kroklokwarzki = K a 5 (white) king a 5. The question mark signifies some

question as to whether the position of the king might be stronger in another position. But let us proceed.

Seġemeġi! = S e 1 (black) knight e 1. The exclamation point signifies a strong position.²⁹

And so on and so forth, until all the nonsense words are exhausted and a crazy checkmate position is left. The self-commentary, far from translating any life of the soul, is once again a transposition of media. The contents of the system of notation count only insofar as they equal a homonym in the second system. (Nothing in S e 1 explains the *m* and *i* of Seġemeġi.) Whether from algebraic variable to note values or from letters to chess abbreviations, every transposition leaves gaps. Most importantly, however, the result is never a surplus of meaning. “Too much has been attributed to this song so far”—that could be written on the gravestone of an entire literary criticism.

Attention to materials and the transposition of media are two sides of the same positivism. Only the methodologically rigorous isolation of individual groups of signs or cultural technologies can make such exact connections possible. Voice and gesture, lettering and ornament, picture and sound, letters and notes, Stefan George script and the “oral reading of poems”³⁰—all of these connections presuppose technical analyses. There are odd and quite compelling indications of this.

When Morgenstern’s late master invented a new type of dance, what had once been a parody of explication, as in “Lalulā,” became dead serious. Eurythmy consisted in taking letter after letter, part of speech after part of speech, out of Goethe’s poems and assigning to each particular signifier an iterable expressive gesture. Once these had been definitively established, the master, Rudolf Steiner, would simply command “faster, faster”—and the female disciples, whose “own, very wise head is somewhat out of it, help the essential power of the sound gain its autonomous effect.”³¹

Whether or not such women were of flesh and blood has nothing to do with the parallel connection of media. The Edison of Villiers’ novel constructs a mechanical Eve with a phonographic vocabulary of 2×7 hours playing time rather than human lungs and so-called linguistic competence. Because this vocabulary is denumerable, Edison is able to synchronize Eve’s recorded speech capacity with her no less mechanical expressive movements.³² What will and must strike the future beloved of the future woman as a coherent organism is actually technological eurythmy.

What happened in the novel also happened in reality, but with far-reaching sociohistorical effects. From the very beginning the silent film was coupled (either mechanically or through subaltern accompanists)³³ with recorded sound. The two separate media, picture without sound and

sound without picture, allowed synchronization. The progressive literati Albert Ehrenstein, Walter Hasenclever, Else Lasker-Schüler, Kurt Pinthus, Franz Werfel, and Paul Zech were dismayed that “dismal background piano clinking” and (the scene is Dessau in 1913) “a narrator commenting on the action in a mighty Saxon accent” drowned out the film.³⁴ But their suggested improvements, all of which tended toward a media-true *l'art pour l'art* of the silent film, themselves coupled the movies and the professionalism of writers. The screenplays that Pinthus and his comrades offered to the industry as their *Movie Book* demonstrate with every word that the untranslatability of media is essential to the possibility of their coupling and transposition.

Psychoanalysis and Its Shadow

The transposition of media could be applied from jokes to mysticism to the culture industry. Moreover, it could be grounded methodologically, and so it became the paradigm of a new science. Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*, in the date on its title page proudly and proleptically displaying the zero number of a new century, inaugurated the transposition of media as science.

Before there can be any interpretation of dreams, three secular fallacies need to be dismissed. The first is the philosophers' prejudice, which holds that dreams are without objective, reasonable connection and are unworthy of interpretation. As opposed to Hegel (whom, justifiably, he cites only indirectly),¹ Freud prefers to follow the lay opinion that assumes “a meaning, though a hidden one” in the dream. But popular dream interpretation has remained translation in two complementary ways: it makes the whole dream “symbolic” of global meanings, or it translates parts of a dream by “mechanically transferring” each part “into another sign having a known meaning, in accordance with a fixed key.”² Both techniques, the analogical and the digital, presuppose that the two media, the dream and language, are either similar or coextensive. The new science rejects these two views as naive. In a well-known comparison, Freud defines his procedure of strict transposition of media.

The dream-thoughts and the dream-content are presented to us like two versions of the same subject-matter in two different languages. Or, more properly, the dream-content seems like a transcript of the dream-thoughts into another mode of expression, whose characters and syntactic laws it is our business to discover by comparing the original and the translation. The dream-thoughts are immediately comprehensible, as soon as we have learnt them. The dream-content, on the other hand, is expressed as it were in a pictographic script, the characters of which have to be transposed individually into the language of the dream thoughts. If we attempted to read these characters according to their pictorial

value instead of according to their symbolic relation, we should clearly be led into error. Suppose I have a picture-puzzle, a rebus, in front of me. It depicts a house with a boat on its roof, a single letter of the alphabet, the figure of a running man whose head has been conjured away, and so on. Now I might be misled into raising objections and declaring that the picture as a whole and its component parts are nonsensical. A boat has no business to be on the roof of a house, and a headless man cannot run. Moreover, the man is bigger than the house; and if the whole picture is intended to represent a landscape, letters of the alphabet are out of place in it since such objects do not occur in nature. But obviously we can only form a proper judgement of the rebus if we put aside criticisms such as these of the whole composition and its parts and if, instead, we try to replace each separate element by a syllable or word that can be represented by that element in some way or other. The words which are put together in this way are no longer nonsensical but may form a poetical phrase of the greatest beauty and significance. A dream is a picture-puzzle of this sort and our predecessors in the field of dream-interpretation have made the mistake of treating the rebus as a pictorial composition: and as such it has seemed to them nonsensical and worthless.³

Interpretive techniques that treat texts as charades or dreams as picture puzzles have nothing to do with hermeneutics, because they do not translate. The translation of a rebus fails because letters do not occur in nature, the ultimate reference of all translation. In George's poem "The Word," the poetic imagination and the treasury of language are not co-extensive, just as in Freud's comparison the picture of the landscape is not coextensive with an alphabetic sign system. Negative findings such as these necessitated a new approach. In order to transpose the manifest content of dreams into latent dream thoughts, each of the two media must first be designated as defined sets of elements with defined rules of association (laws of articulation). If Faust marked the moment in the history of the sign in which there was no awareness of the paradigmatic axis, *The Interpretation of Dreams* conducts the analysis of signs solely according to the place values of discrete elements.⁴ It does not establish the status of *a* symbol in the classical sense—in other words, a transcendental signified, which previously absorbed all words, above all the word *word*. In its place there are now separate subsystems of signifiers, in which the parts of the rebus must be tentatively placed until they fit in a subsystem. *Rebus* is the instrumental case of *res*: things can be used like words and words like things. Interpretation has everything to learn from "the linguistic tricks of children, who sometimes actually treat words as though they were objects, and moreover invent new languages and artificial syntactic forms."⁵ Therefore every manipulation of letters and words is allowed within the framework of a determined language. Dreams, "impossible as a rule to translate into a foreign language,"⁶ traverse all the associative domains of a given language. The transposition of media is thus an exact correlate of untranslatability.

Neither similar nor coextensive, dream-content and dream-thoughts relate to one another like “Lalulā” and checkmate in chess. Freud, “one of the most daring language adventurers and word mystics,” is also “a brother of Morgenstern.”⁷ The decoded dream-content is no more poetry than chess notations are poems. Dreams could pass as Poetry only as long as optical and acoustical hallucinations were counted as part of the dream. Nothing remains of the beautiful appearance when the elements of a dream-content are transposed one by one into signifiers, even if the result is a poetical phrase of the greatest significance. Freud’s irony is intended only for those who would see in the picture puzzle the substitutive sensuousness of a drawing or landscape. As true “syllabic chemistry”⁸ with which the decoding method competes, the dream is already a piece of technique distant from nature and painted landscapes.

But this technique bears the stamp of its era. Bahr, for example, emphasized that “nature,” where it could “express itself freely and without restraint,” namely in dreams, “proceeds punctually and exactly according to the prescription of the new school” of symbolist “rebus literature.”⁹ With Freud, dream interpretation presupposes cutting apart any continuous series of images before syllables or words can substitute for them. It is no accident that the rebus Freud describes or makes up contains a running figure whose head has been conjured away. Only a cripple without a head yields an unconscious, and only the dismembered phenomena of the dream yield readable script. The poem of the picket fence divides syllables by the space between them in exactly the same way; and in exactly the same way the film camera cuts up continuous movement. The fact that *The Interpretation of Dreams* ignores the phenomenon of the dream is the first step toward deciphering dreams. Transpositions liquidate the medium from which they proceed. Every syllable and word of Freud’s requirement that one substitute for every image a syllable or word is to be taken literally. This is demonstrated in his treatment of hysterics, who are “for the most part visually oriented.”

Once a picture has emerged from the patient’s memory, we may hear him say that it becomes fragmentary and obscure in proportion as he proceeds with his description of it. *The patient is, as it were, getting rid of it by turning it into words.* We go on to examine the memory picture itself in order to discover the direction in which our work is to proceed. “Look at the picture once more. Has it disappeared?” “Most of it, yes, but I still see this detail.” “Then this residue must still mean something. Either you will see something new in addition to it, or something will occur to you in connection with it.” When this work has been accomplished, the patient’s field of vision is once more free and we can conjure up another picture. On other occasions, however, a picture of this kind will remain obstinately before the patient’s inward eye, in spite of his having described it; and this is an indication to me that he still has something important to tell me about

the topic of the picture. As soon as this has been done the picture vanishes, like a ghost that has been laid.¹⁰

F. L. Goltz showed that *A Dog Without a Cerebrum* has no visual representations. Freud shows how one can eliminate images from a dream or memory without a scalpel (and attribute the elimination to the patients themselves). "Putting into words" blinds the "inner eye" in which Anselmus and Hoffmann delighted. Sensitive souls can repeat the fashionable condemnation that Freud burdened an economy of libidinal expenditure with an obsolete Mosaic ban on images.¹¹ But it was one of the few options left to writers in the discourse network of 1900. Up against a competition that could replace substitutive sensuality with the real flow of data, the administrators of words swore by the phrase "Look at the image again. Has it disappeared?" The flood of images is literally exhausted, that is, taken apart element by element in such paradoxical questions. When even the most imaginative hysterics lose their store of images on the couch, they also learn the renunciation that writers completed and announced circa 1900: "Without the word, no thing can be."¹²

Und weinen dass die bilder immer fliehen
Die in schöner finsternis gediehen—
Wann der klare kalte morgen droht.

And weep because the visions which assail
In exultant darkness always pale
When the clear and cold of dawn return.¹³

George wrote it down, and Schönberg's music made it unforgettable . . .

But what spirit has been laid to rest once the hysteric's flood of images has been transposed into words? It is impossible to identify with certainty, but there are indices. The images appear before an inner eye; they appear in a malady that, by contrast to imageless obsessional neurosis, most commonly affects women; they illustrate a love that is obedience to the nuclear family. Could the spirit that Freud drives out not be simply the classical function of the feminine reader? The hystericizing of women circa 1800, after all, consisted in teaching them to read in such a way that poetic content was translated, through enjoyment and hallucination, into signifieds. What was brought to light on the couch may thus have been only a historical sediment,¹⁴ at the moment when it became dysfunctional, in order to teach another kind of reading, the literal, of everyday experience. Psychoanalysis would have stood at the spot of a "bifurcation" that from 1900 on divided high and popular cultures according to the "phrase, book or picture; there is no third choice."¹⁵ Women, children, and the insane, instead of continuing to dream images in books, discovered the unconscious of the movie house; the science of psycho-

analysis, by contrast, discovered in women, children, and the insane, in order to inscribe it into them, an elite unconscious of secret scriptural codes.¹⁶ At the end of her cure, one of Freud's famous hysterics dreamed that even she was reading calmly in a "big book."¹⁷

Immediately after the initial showing of the first German art film, Otto Rank began to psychoanalyze it. One of his assumptions was "that representation in the movies, which is suggestive of dream technique in more than one respect, expresses in clear and sensual picture language certain psychological conditions and connections that the Poet cannot always grasp with words."¹⁸ Instead of pursuing such associations, Rank transposed the film sequences of *The Student of Prague* serially into the lexicon of literary doppelgänger motifs and this lexicon in turn into the analytic theory of narcissism. Professional readers overlook the fact that the doppelgänger motif films the act of filming itself. The movies are only the "actual psychic surface," the "arbitrary and banal starting point for broaching extensive psychological problems."¹⁹ Rank is thus quite convinced of the manifest-latent distinction—not only for the psychic apparatus, but for the connection between the technical and literary.

And Freud? In 1883, directly continuing the work of Muybridge, Albert Londe built an electrical "short-exposure series" camera, and two years later Charcot used it to film his hysteric patients in the Salpêtrière. The young neurologist Freud was watching.²⁰ But for him, as well, film recordings—that is, the cutting up of the great hysterical curve—were only an arbitrary and banal starting point. His approach to hysterics broached the completely different problem of exhausting the flood of images. Movies aren't mentioned in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Uwe Gaube's fine study *Film and Dreams* fills this gap by citing American psychologists, who read the manifest dream-content cinematographically.²¹ Philologically and historically speaking, however, it remains a fact that Freud did not even ignore the Other of his decoding. The filmlike, presentative symbolism of the dream images vanished in the rhetorical-scriptural domain instituted by psychoanalysis. Whatever "visual forms of the flight of ideas" haunted unfolding dreams were excluded.²² As with Saussure, whose linguistics could begin only after the mythical separation of firmament and water,²³ of thoughts and sound, of anything hallucinatory and undifferentiated, the movie pleasures of viewers like Rönne and Pinthus remained a limit concept on the system's edge. "The unity of this world appears to me to be something obvious, unworthy of emphasis. What interests me is the dissection and division of something that would otherwise be lost in the primal soup."²⁴

The soup is thus not denied, but circumvented. That was the professional path, by contrast to mystical and philosophical contemporaries.

Rudolf Steiner made into a secret doctrine Benedict's discovery that those saved from death had seen their lives pass before them as in a time-lapse film.²⁵ Henri Bergson denounced, in favor of his *Creative Evolution*, the "cinematographic mechanism of consciousness," which was unable to process the continuous flow of the *durée* and was limited to discrete images.²⁶ The philosophy of life thus became a kind of movie that would have sacrificed its working principle, the cutting of images, to what was only a cunningly produced illusion in the viewer. Freud, however, persisted, like the researcher on the tachistoscope, in investigating a mechanics of dreamwork that was accomplished not by an illusory consciousness but by the unconscious itself.

The fact that psychoanalysis, given the options of cinematic dream and the tachistoscope, chose the symbolic method is indicative of its place in the system of sciences in 1900. This place had nothing to do with a "scientific self-misunderstanding" and for that reason also had little to do with the human sciences.²⁷ In his admirable uncertainty about whether the return of language circa 1900 represented the last moraine of transcendental knowledge or a new beginning, Foucault placed psychoanalysis, ethnology, and structural linguistics in a position where the human sciences' inner perspective on Man was transversed by language as an exterior element. The uncertainty arose because Foucault conceived discursive rules as comprehensible and therefore overlooked technologies. But innovations in the technology of information are what produced the specificity of the discourse network of 1900, separating it from transcendental knowledge and thus separating psychoanalysis from all human sciences.

Freud's early work *On Aphasia* was a brilliant, immediately acclaimed critique of brain physiology and its relation to language. Without doing any original experiments or dissections, the neurologist demonstrated to his colleagues that their all too localized language centers did not take into account the primacy of function. The critic maintained his allegiance to all the assumptions of that theory of language; he drew conclusions from deficiencies and isolated discursive functions, although not primarily in an anatomical sense. His *Project for a Scientific Psychology* consequently contains a topical model of isolated functions (consciousness and the unconscious), whose positions remain strictly functional. The *Project* provided the very model of contemporary models; the soul became a black box. One need only compare the hypothetical pathways, discharges, cathexes, and (of course discrete) neurones of Freud's text with statements about the material of brain physiology, which, since Sigmund Exner, had described the brain as a "street system" with more or less

deeply engraved “driving tracks,”²⁸ or as a network of telegraphic “relay stations” with more or less prompt connections.²⁹ Freud’s mental apparatus, which has recently been interpreted as protostructuralist, merely conforms to the scientific standards of its day.³⁰ The sole difference, though one fraught with consequences, between it and neurophysiology is its lack of anatomical localization. Psychoanalysis, not content with looking forward to “filling in this gap” in a distant future,³¹ undertook another kind of localization.

Freud’s study of aphasia inherited all the material on speech deficits and defects that doctors had obtained by distinguishing and localizing individual aphasias. “‘Quill pen’ instead of ‘pencil,’ ‘butter’ [*Butter*] for ‘mother’ [*Mutter*], ‘Fother’ for ‘father’ and ‘mother’”³² are only selected examples, and their oddly Freudian quality is not just an effect of the context they appear in. *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* thankfully made use of the parapraxes in speaking, reading, and writing that the Indogermanic linguist Rudolf Meringer and the psychiatrist Karl Mayer had gathered from colleagues and patients, in their attempt to demonstrate, first, that parapraxes were not a matter of free “subjectivity”³³ and, second, that they could be localized in an anatomically conceived system of language rules. Freud thus had an immense store of nonsense at his disposal, material that had been statistically ordered by doctors and linguists so as to provide inferences from the known deficiencies to brain functions and from those to language as a system. But anyone who attacks localization breaks the only thread holding together the statistics and lists. The collection of nonsense became a mere aggregate. That was reason enough to reverse the sorting procedure. Instead of ordering the data of countless speakers in columns until the rules of language emerged, psychoanalysis assembled the linguistic errors of one speaker into a text in which the rules of his individual speech came to light.

There were sound psychophysical premises for such a methodological shift. The psychoanalytic distinctions of condensation and displacement, metaphor and metonymy, on the one hand, and the structural linguistic distinction of the paradigmatic and syntagmatic on the other, are only transpositions of the fundamental principle of associationist psychology. Ziehen established that all associations play only on similarity or contiguity, on the paradigmatic or syntagmatic axes.³⁴

Scientific discretion led Meringer and Mayer to indicate only parenthetically and with abbreviations which colleagues or patients committed particular solecisms; they recorded the fine specimen “Freuer-Breudian method”³⁵ under the rubric initial-consonant-syllabic confusion, or according to rules of similarity. Freud had only to leaf through the contiguity of their pages to find the same speaker committing another distur-

tion of *Freud*—and the Breuer-Freudian method could suppose, quite unlinguistically, that the particular academic “was a colleague and not particularly delighted with this method.”³⁶ Nothing could be easier. The experimental or statistical jumble of syllables is given another location on paper. Rather than placing *fother*, the word combined from *father* and *mother*, under the heading of general paraphrase, as would have been done in the early days of neurology, the analyst Freud reads it, in the context of all the others provided by the same patient, as part of a single rebus. Of course, father-and-mother *is* this context.

The same shift in method also brought Jung to psychoanalysis. His first efforts in psychiatry carried on the statistical experiments in association and flight of ideas of investigators like Emil Kraepelin, Ziehen, and Stransky, although his subjects were limited to the patients in Eugen Bleuler’s institute in Burghölzli. From report to report the statistics diminished and the space devoted to particular cases increased. Just two associations of a hysteric woman, read together, “demonstrate beautifully” that “the conscious ego is merely a marionette that dances on the stage of a hidden automatic mechanism.”³⁷ Thus one day Jung reversed the sorting procedure and worked exhaustively with a single schizophrenic patient. All the patient’s neologisms were recorded and spoken back to her, until “all associations” of each “stimulus word” were produced and could in turn be used to produce associations, and so on, to the point where even hieroglyphs provided material for psychoanalytic decoding.³⁸ But Jung was unable to hear that he had himself become a telephonic instrument of torture. “Her suffering had no rhyme or reason for her, it was a ‘hieroglyphic’ illness. The fact that she had been locked up for fourteen years, so that ‘not even [her] breath could escape,’ seemed to be nothing more than an exaggerated declaration of her forced institutionalization. The suffering through ‘mouthpieces that are held in from the outside,’ seems to refer to the ‘telephone,’ or voices.”³⁹

Psychoanalysis does not cut across the human sciences from an outside called language; it traverses the field of psychophysics, working with the latter’s premises and material. The shift of focus from language as system to speech does not imply that individuality has become the object of investigations. “No one makes an arbitrary error in speech”—this already-established fact in anatomical and linguistic systems is brought to bear on the singular system of the unconscious.⁴⁰ The individual falls in the crossfire between psychophysics and psychoanalysis; in its place is an empty point of intersection constituted by statistical generality and unconscious singularity. As an instance of initial-consonant-syllabic confusion *and* of Freud repression, a particular colleague is fully classified.

Whereas individuals consisted of matured and unified speech and writ-

ing, individual cases are specified by the scattered debris of their language use. Uniqueness in the discourse network of 1900 is always a result of the decomposition of anonymous, mass-produced products. According to Rilke, two “completely similar” knives bought by two schoolboys on the same day are only “remotely similar” a week later.⁴¹ To use therefore means to wear down: out of industrially guaranteed similarity come broken, but singular things. Because these things, only a little the worse for wear, gather together whole case histories at once, the detectives Holmes and Freud carry the day. Dr. Watson doesn’t have a chance when he attempts to foil his master with the following challenge: “I have heard you say that it is difficult for a man to have any object in daily use without leaving the impress of his individuality upon it in such a way that a trained observer might read it. Now, I have here a watch which has recently come into my possession . . .”⁴² The scratches on the watch provide the cocaine user Holmes with the welcome opportunity to turn page after page in the secret family history of his constant companion. As Bleuler recognized, the sciences of gathering evidence “certainly have a future.” From handwriting, from “its style, indeed from the wear of a pair of shoes,” it is possible to deduce the whole person.⁴³ Bleuler’s assistant, Jung, investigated the psychotic wear and tear on the finished product of language.

The cocaine user Freud, however, in his great small-mindedness, would begin an analysis by considering a neurotic misuse of the finished product that is the alphabet. A twenty-four-year-old patient on the couch in the Berggasse told “the following story from the fifth year of his childhood”: “He is sitting in the garden of a summer villa, on a small chair beside his aunt, who is teaching him the letters of the alphabet. He is in difficulties over the difference between *m* and *n*, and he asks his aunt to tell him how to know one from the other. His aunt points out to him that the *m* has a whole piece more than the *n*—the third stroke.”⁴⁴ The patient sees this as a romantic childhood scene, one that brings back summer and the historical happiness of being alphabetized by the Mother’s Mouth. The analyst does not dispute the reliability of the memory, but does question its imaginary significance. Had he done the former, Freud would have been like the physiologists of reading, who never encountered any confusion between *m* and *n* (only confusion between *n* and *r*, and *m* and *w*). Because he was concerned more with the differences between letters than with letters, and more with letters than with significance, Freud transposed the intervals in a language to the intervals in speech. At the very place where Stephani’s mothers’ mouths slid lustfully and continuously from *m* to *n*, Freud confirms a harsh binary opposition. The opposition between *m* and *n* stands in as a “symbolic representation” for another

opposition that can and must be written as the patient's rebus. "For just as at that time he wanted to know the difference between *m* and *n*, so later he was anxious to find out the difference between boys and girls, and would have been very willing for this particular aunt to be the one to teach him. He also discovered then that the difference was a similar one—that the boy, too, has a whole piece more than the girl."⁴⁵

An inscription as meaningless as it is unforgettable can thus be decoded. The triumph of the Freudian transposition of media is to have made it possible to solve singular problems of differentiation with an individual experimental subject. Psychophysicists had certainly recognized that small letters at x-height "are most often subject to confusion";⁴⁶ but no one had asked why individual subjects (themselves as well) produced one kind of mistake and no other. Ebbinghaus was only surprised that nonsense exhibited "very significant and nearly incomprehensible differences" in what people retained (as the twenty-four-year-old demonstrated). Gutzmann was led only as far as "the discovery of certain suspected trains of thought" by the "phonographic tests" he conducted, in that experimental subjects automatically and suspiciously heard or wrote nonsense as meaningful words.⁴⁷ But any aspects of test material that could not be evaluated physiologically or typographically were discarded. The discarded material was so copious and so literal that no one, including the twenty-four-year-old, could approach it save as a novice. This is the reason for psychoanalysis. Material discarded by psychophysics can be resorted and then decoded. Freud's discourse was a response not to individual miseries but to a discourse network that exhaustively records nonsense, its purpose being to inscribe people with the network's logic of the signifier.

Psychoanalysis made into something significant—indeed, into the signifier itself—the nonsensical attribution of nonsense to the fact that someone confused precisely the letters *m* and *n*. An opposition of letters yields the minimal signifier of a sexualized body. From this point on, the patient knows that alphabetization was only a screen for his sexuality and that sexuality is only a metaphor for the elementary opposition. What is scandalous in Freud is not pansexuality, but the return to a lucid and tangible play of letters of an eroticism that, as Spirit and Nature, had pervaded the so-called world circa 1800. The phallus is as nonsensical and block-letter-like as the small mark that the *m* has and the *n* does not have. No handwriting of a continuous individual can get around the latter difference, nor can any illusion in the war between the sexes survive the former difference. What the boy's aunt began as pedagogical education ends in a system of notation that abolishes pedagogy and the soul.

What must be said, with Aristotle, is that it is not the soul that speaks, but man who speaks by means of his soul—as long as we take into account that he has received this language, and that in order to sustain it he throws in much more than his soul: even his instincts, whose ground resonates in the depths only to send back the echo of the signifier. It is such that when the echo returns the speaker is delighted and responds with the praise of an eternal romanticism. “When the soul *speaks*, then” . . . the soul does speak, that is, . . . “oh! it is no longer the *soul* that speaks.” You can hear it; the illusion will not last long.⁴⁸

All of Freud’s case histories demonstrate that the romanticism of the soul has yielded to a materialism of written signs. When a patient “decorates his writing and notes with an *S*,” it is only because *S* is “the first letter of his mother’s name” (and not, say, an abbreviation of authorship).⁴⁹ When the Wolf-Man, recounting a dream, says *Espe* rather than the hallucinated *Wespe* [“wasp”], the amputation of the initial letter represents a castration complex that is typographic, and the rebus word *Espe* is the abbreviation S.P., or the proper name of the Wolf-Man.⁵⁰ Precisely because they do not occur in nature, letters are the keys to the unconscious. They cancel out conscious intention and hermeneutic understanding in order to expose people to their subjection to language. But methodologically this means that Freud (to use a pervasive metaphor of 1900) was a proofreader. Instead of reading over mistakes because of his complete alphabetization, he seeks out mistakes.⁵¹ In line with such professionalism, in the Berggasse mistakes such as (*W*)*Espe* are neither produced nor recorded in writing. The patients speak; as a good interview psychologist, the doctor avoids taking notes during the session. Otherwise he would only disturb the flow of speech, make “a detrimental,” that is, meaningful, “selection” and distract his free-floating attention with bureaucratic tasks.⁵² Psychoanalysis provides the singular example of a discourse network that has writing as its object but writing’s complete opposite as method. Even this rebus can be solved.

Just as the patient must relate everything that his self-observation can detect, and keep back all the logical and affective objections that seek to induce him to make a selection from among them, so the doctor must put himself in a position to make use of everything he is told for the purposes of interpretation . . . without substituting a censorship of his own for the selection that the patient has forgone. To put it in a formula, he must turn his own unconscious like a receptive organ towards the transmitting unconscious of the patient. He must adjust himself to the patient as a telephone receiver is adjusted to the transmitting microphone. Just as the receiver converts back into sound-waves the electric oscillations in the telephone line which were set up by sound waves, so the doctor’s unconscious is able, from the derivatives of the unconsciousness which are communicated to him, to reconstruct that unconscious, which has determined the patient’s free associations.⁵³

The paradox of writing without script can only be solved with technological media. Freud, determined to sacrifice his knowing subjectivity, produces a transposition of media onto himself: his ears become a telephone receiver. As it is written, men have ears only in order not to hear (and to transform everything into sense). Only the connection between electroacoustical transducers guarantees the reception of a full spectrum of noise, one that is informative to the degree that it is white. Once more, the word is "Listen to the Sacred Vibrations." All conscious "communicating" between the two counts only as a keyed rebus transmitted from one unconscious to the other. Its manifest sense is nonsense; Freud the telephone receiver picks out the parapraxes that would be mere debris under a postulate of sense.

In order to be able to fish *m/n* or *S./P.* as telltale, interspersed signifiers out of a flow of speech that is merely the intimidation and resistance, the seduction and distortion, of a consciousness, the doctor must have recorded them in advance. Freud's telephone analogy does not go far enough. Although it avoids the traditional recording device of writing, psychoanalysis works like a phonograph that in its developed form couples electroacoustical transducers with memory. Only sound recorders can register spoken typographic errors (an oxymoronic concept in itself).

Benjamin synchronized psychoanalysis and film with the argument that the former "isolated and made analyzable things which had heretofore floated along unnoticed in the broad stream of perception," whereas the other "for the entire spectrum of optical, and now also acoustical, perception . . . has brought about a similar deepening of apperception."⁵⁴ That doesn't quite do justice to the facts. Technologies and sciences of media transposition do not simply extend human capacities; they determine recording thresholds. In the physiology of the senses these thresholds cannot be determined too exactly. Freud's treatment of dream and memory images is not the first or only instance of his exclusion of the whole optical realm. The fact that the doctor and hysteric patient are not allowed to look at one another means that the couch (in the best Nietzschean manner) is a pure realm of hearing. Both people are in the same room, so that eye and other forms of contact would be expected. But because mouths and ears have become electroacoustical transducers, the session remains a simulated long-distance call between two psychic apparatuses (in Freud's fine phrase). Psychoanalysis has no vague parallels to film; it has much more precisely learned the lesson of technological sound recorders. Its phonography of unconscious sound waves fishes, not in the wide stream of perception, but only among acoustical data.

The catch is restricted to discrete elements. Not only the imaginary significance, but also the real aspects of discourse are excluded. Freud had

as little to do with the physiology of speech (precisely, that studied by his teacher, E. W. Brücke) as he did with escaping to the images in the movies. Female hysterics, those born starlets, could run through, instead of the single “oh,” the many real pleasures and pains of speech on the couch—from spastic halting to stuttering, clicking the tongue, gasping, or muteness—but the supposedly filterless receiver filtered them all out. Freud’s inimitably forthright justification: he “could not,” unlike any boy on the street, “imitate” these real aspects of speech.⁵⁵ The one who once diagnosed his own “motoric aphasia” recorded, in a complete reversal of Berliner’s gramophone, the letters of sound—everything that was already written, but only that, in the flow of speech.⁵⁶

Movies and the gramophone remain the unconscious of the unconscious. Psychoanalysis, the science born with them, confronts sequences of images with a primal repression and sequences of sound with their distortion into chains of signifiers. Only the day when psychoanalysis becomes psychochemistry—Freud’s dream and the nightmare of others⁵⁷—might witness the repression of this repression as well.

A transposition of media that transposes images and sounds into letters does not stop there. By the force of its own logic it finally transferred the letters into books. This is the relation between analytic practice and theory. What would have disturbed free-floating attention during the session later occurs after all: Freud reaches for his pen. As Walter Musch recognized early on, Freud belonged “to the modern movement of German letters.”⁵⁸

Writing circa 1900 means being without voice and writing with the alphabet. Fundamentally, psychoanalysts must know when to remain silent vis-à-vis their word-jumble generators. Not only for “persons with hysterical mutism” did writing become a “vicarious” means of expression;⁵⁹ the motoric aphasic behind the couch did not suffer from agraphia, either. Written case histories made a “talking cure” into—literature. The expression itself shows how this happened. Freud had no such striking expression for his invention; his first patient, Anna O. (alias Bertha von Pappenheim), gave her “new type of treatment the name ‘talking cure’ [in English].”⁶⁰ The writer in Freud had only to put the foreign words on paper and honor them by his definition.

But this relationship between speech and writing, prompter and author, so fundamental between Freud and his hysteric patients, does not make him a Schlegel or Anselmus, or Pappenheim a Dorothea or Serpentina. The simple fact that Anna O. “during this period of her illness remarkably spoke and understood only English,”⁶¹ separated her from a Mother’s Mouth that could whisper even Sanskrit texts in High German.

The discourse network of 1900 determined that Freud would not once put the expression “talking cure” into German. Psychoanalysis is not a translating universalization that makes the speech of many women into the originary language of One Woman. In practice as in theory, in listening as in recording, psychoanalysis remained the feedback of data that circumscribed an individual case. “If” Freud’s famous hysteric patient should “by chance” come to read the *Fragment* of her analysis, she would read nothing that she and only she did not “already know.” But because or in spite of this, an “embarrassment” awaits her:⁶² the parts of her speech that have found their way into print are not the expressions of a naïve lay philosophy of the sort that Schlegel ascribed to women, but of the organs and functions of her sexuality.

The meticulous Freud calls his activity the “written record” and “accordingly not absolutely—phonographically—faithful.” But in this explicit competition it has such a “high degree of dependability” that Wildenbruch would for once be made nervous by literature.⁶³ Every medium that brings the hidden to the light of day and forces the past to speak contributes, by gathering evidence, to the death of Man. This distinguishes psychoanalytic case-study novels from the classical-romantic epic form. When Goethe put together his heroines from the different individual features of different women, inviting all feminine readers to identify themselves with the Woman, the models, although they may have seen themselves robbed of eyes, hair, or mouths, hardly had the fear or pleasure of being publicly recognized. The discourse network of 1800 had no need of formal, legal guidelines about authorial discretion, because it voluntarily, or philosophically, saw the individual as genus. Not until the current century did popular literature begin by disclaiming any similarity between fictional heroes and living models. One popular novelist, Thomas Mann, was drawn into an exemplary trial in 1905 and had to defend *Buddenbrooks* against the charge of being a roman à clef by stressing the transposition of media as his artistic achievement.⁶⁴ In the same year, another novel “Fragment” began: “I am aware that—in this city, at least—there are many physicians who (revolting though it may seem) choose to read a case history of this kind not as a contribution to the psychopathology of neuroses, but as a roman à clef designed for their private delectation. I can assure readers of this species that every case history that I have occasion to publish in the future will be secured against their perspicacity by similar guarantees of secrecy, even though this resolution is bound to put quite extraordinary restrictions upon my choice of material.”⁶⁵

The novelist Freud thus does not rule out the novelistic reading of his case histories. He simply disapproves. It is possible, but distasteful, to de-

code psychoanalytic decodings of individual cases. Such are the intimidation tactics of one who turned the subject index in Mayringer-Merer, excuse me, Meringer-Mayer, into a secret-person index. Such is the protection of data records, which are exhaustive only because he, the discreet doctor, in a move of fine symmetry, forbade his patients to have any discretion. Freud broke off the analysis of “a high official who was bound by his oath of office not to communicate certain things because they were state secrets.”⁶⁶ The shift from bureaucratic ethos to psychophysics, from an oath of office to the exhausting of material, could hardly occur more drastically. Writing circa 1900 necessarily conflicted with rules of discretion—simply because it was no longer the imagination that dictated. Freud would sooner renounce writing books than subject signifiers to the kind of distortions that once translated recognizable, bourgeois Veronicas into the pure signified of a Serpentina.

If the distortions are slight, they fail in their object of protecting the patient from indiscreet curiosity; while if they go beyond this they require too great a sacrifice, for they destroy the intelligibility of the material, which depends for its coherence precisely upon the small details of real life. And from this latter circumstance follows the paradoxical truth that it is far easier to divulge the patient’s most intimate secrets than the most innocent and trivial facts about him; for, whereas the former would not throw any light on his identity, the latter, by which he is generally recognized, would make it obvious to everyone.⁶⁷

What distinguishes case histories from Poetry is the fact that the depths of the soul do not betray the identities of the persons described to readers addicted to decoding. That Freud did not advance as far as the phonograph, which with particulars like the voice or breath would have betrayed persons’ identities to even the most naïve media consumers, is the very structure of writing. Only small, factual details remain as indices, which as people’s symbolic aspect inscribe them in public networks of discourse. Certainly Freud’s novels leave “no name standing which could put a lay reader onto the right track.”⁶⁸ But because psychoanalysis is concerned with gathering evidence of the letter, names remain essential. Without the play of signifiers, whose differences are as incomprehensible as they are important, unconscious connections would be destroyed.

Under the hesitantly established heading, “The Presentation of Man” in Freud, Muschg writes of the “remarkably anonymous characters that occupy his writings.”⁶⁹ It is indeed a strange anonymity that consists of indices and names. Obsessional neurotics appear as the Rat-Man or Wolf-Man,⁷⁰ hysterics as Anna O., Frau Emmy v. N., Dora, Fräulein Elizabeth v. R. For these figures the texts develop neither imaginative images nor novels of *Bildung*—none of the representations of man in the Spirit of 1800, in other words. Only a mass of spoken material is pre-

sented, through which unconscious inscriptions run their jagged, telltale course. The rebus is written down as rebus. Because Freud's own texts will be scrutinized by distasteful colleagues, the texts encode each rebus a second time according to the rules of media transposition. Thus wherever a rebus appears to be solved, another one begins (along with yet another book on Freud). Anyone who can decipher the initials of the Wolf-Man in the castrated word (*W*)*Espe*, just as the formidable Sherlock Holmes discovered the place name *Ballarat* in the ordinary word *rat*,⁷¹ has still not fixed upon a referent, to say nothing of a man behind the words. Simmel's objective interpretation allows for solutions quite other than those of the author; Freud permitted and practices "Constructions in Analysis,"⁷² which beyond psychoanalytic practice determined the constructions of his writing as well. The surname of the Wolf-Man has only recently been revealed. For seventy years it was anyone's guess as to whether the initials S. P. corresponded to the Wolf-Man's passport or whether they were the discreet fiction of a writer who had encoded a solved rebus a second time.

Small facts like initials or abbreviated names are thus quite literally the contact surface on which two discourses oppose *and* touch one another: on one side the speech of the patients, on the other side the writing vocation of their doctor. It is finally impossible to determine which of the two one might be reading at any given moment, simply because inscriptions on one side trace through to the reverse side. The contact surface—as is only proper in a discourse network that does justice to the material aspects of media—consists simply of paper. Whether in Freud's sense or not, his paper is and remains the place where the discourse network of 1900 comes into contact with people. Either the patients really spoke as if speech were a masquerade for the rebus, or psychoanalysis selected from the flow of the voice only what it could transpose into signifiers and then transpose a second time to foil roman à clef readers. In any case, psychoanalysis occupies the systemic position taken by Poetry in the discourse network of 1800. The position consists in the place of initiation. If voices and dream images are to be grounded in the logic of the signifier, they must first cross the threshold of psychoanalysis; if, in return, any rituals of the sign or psychophysics are to be inscribed on individual bodies, they must first cross the threshold of psychoanalysis. The discourse network of 1900 places all discourse against the background of white noise; the primal soup itself appears in psychoanalysis, but only to be articulated and thus sublimated via writing proper.⁷³

There is nothing further to say about the wider effects of such a strategy. The only nontrivial problem is one of method. If Freud's technique consists in transposing optical and acoustical streams of data into words

and words into the signifier script of his own texts, then his universal science confronts only one superfluity or impossibility: data that have already assumed written form. Wherever articulation has already occurred, “the dissection and division of something that would otherwise be lost in the primal soup” is unnecessary. Thus Freud granted texts, regardless of who their authors were, a special status. Whether or not the texts were distinguished by literary honors was secondary to a certain testimonial function.⁷⁴

The pact between Freud and the people who believed that dreams could be read, despite the objections of all philosophers, would have had no discursive support if the spoken dream stories of patients had not been media-transposed by literary dream texts and confirmed by the ordinary documentary means of pen and paper. The mere written existence of Jensen’s *Gradiva*, a novella about mania and dreams, was sufficient to defend Freud against attack. That it is not of particularly enduring value, that its author “refused his co-operation”⁷⁵ when approached and thus would not personally authorize its transposition into the medium of psychoanalysis, is insignificant. Objective interpretation can do without authorial assent. Freud thus reached the following conclusion on the relationship between writers and analysts: “We probably draw from the same source and work upon the same object, each of us by another method. And the agreement of our results seems to guarantee that we have both worked correctly. Our procedure consists in the conscious observation of abnormal mental processes in other people so as to be able to elicit and announce their laws. The author no doubt proceeds differently. He directs his attention to the unconscious in his own mind, he listens to its possible developments and lends them artistic expression instead of suppressing them by conscious criticism. Thus he experiences from himself what we learn from others—the laws which the activities of this unconscious must obey. But he need not state these laws, nor even be clearly aware of them; as a result of the tolerance of his intelligence, they are incorporated within his creations.”⁷⁶

The same source, the same object, the same result—writers and psychoanalysts moved into a proximity equal to that which joined the Thinkers and Poets of 1800. Yet the reverse conclusion is equally possible and logical: namely, that writers end up on the side of the patients. If Freud’s patients and the hero of the novella share the same dreams, paranoid structures, and hysterias, then these must belong to the writer’s unconscious as well. There is one small difference, however: hysteria speaks, but Jensen publishes. *Mania and Dreams* can no longer be attributed to an individual case. The material already present in the medium that supports the psychoanalyst has achieved “artistic expression.” Rather than proceeding

according to the rules of hermeneutics and assuming that fictional heroes naturally dream the dreams of their authors, Freud finds in *Gradiva* written dreams “that have never been dreamt at all, that were invented by a writer and attributed to fictional characters in the context of a story.”⁷⁷ Therefore, there is no need to portion out statistically distributed nonsense to individual cases. Jensen, no different in this from Freud, is separated by a thin but impermeable piece of paper from its reverse side, from mania and dreams, and is above the suspicion of being their referent. His relation to the primal soup is not one of participation, but simulation. For invented individuals he invents dreams that in spite of this squared fiction “contain in embodied form” all the “laws” of the unconscious. Laws, let us note, and not, say (as one often prefers to read) contents. With its central metaphor, the burial of Pompeii under lava and ash, Jensen’s novella does not symbolize this or that repressed content, but rather provides a “parable” of the metapsychological process of repression itself. “There really is no better analogy.”⁷⁸

In distinction from the doctor (Freud once more leaves out the mystery of his self-analysis), the writer does not extrapolate the laws of the unconscious from others’ mouths, which are unable to say why their sense becomes nonsense and their nonsense sense. A strange listening in on his own mental processes gives him not only their repressed contents but beyond that their signifying logic. Once again, then, the writer seeks out a norm-like authority, which administers the rules of all writing, but because they are rules, it remains unnecessary and impossible to “pronounce” the unconscious laws that have been discovered. It is enough that they have been given a material location: paper, on which discursive rules such as repression are “embodied.”

In written material, therefore, the localization that defines psychoanalysis in the discourse network of 1900 is left out—because it has already occurred. If the diverse local centers of the brain-physiological localization doctrine are linked together in the typewriter, psychoanalysis—mysteriously true to its neurophysiological beginnings—reverses the founding relationship. Its textual theory replaces that body with a typewriterly corpus.

The text as embodied psychoanalysis does not distinguish the literary or even the classical. It is simply the effect of a medium that governs the analyst himself, first when he reads the flow of the voice as a rebus, and second when he writes. In order to achieve this effect, it is sufficient for a mania, rather than flood Freud’s senses with hysterical visuality and the spoken façade of dreams, to have been written down. If and because a work called *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* is present in the form of a

book, psychoanalysis treats it very differently than it would a mentally ill person on the couch.

Freud's "Psycho-analytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia" seems at first to be a compromise solution arrived at in an attempt to extend his practice to cases who, in contrast to neurotics, cannot wander around freely and so (if they have not lost language altogether) can only send out messages in bottles. Paranoiacs cannot be analyzed; they "cannot be compelled to overcome their internal resistances, and . . . in any case they only say what they choose to say." Such, however, ever since Pilate's $\delta \gamma \acute{\epsilon} \gamma \rho \alpha \phi \alpha \gamma \acute{\epsilon} \gamma \rho \alpha \phi \alpha$ ("What I have written I have written"; John 19: 22), is the very definition of a text. Which is why "precisely" in the case of a paranoiac "a written report or a printed case history can take the place of personal acquaintance with the patient" (read: his spoken story).⁷⁹

So much for the introduction to and justification for the analytic act. By the end everything reads much differently. Schreber's book, instead of simply replacing the flow of the hysteric's voice, attains all the honors of theory, in that the *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* also contains what is indeed memorable: the embodied laws of the unconscious. As with Jensen, the writer Freud greets as a colleague, albeit one who was at the time a patient in the Sonnenstein asylum in Pirna.

Since I neither fear the criticism of others nor shrink from criticizing myself, I have no motive for avoiding the mention of a similarity which may possibly damage our libido theory in the estimation of many of my readers. Schreber's "rays of God," which are made up of a condensation of the sun's rays, of nerve-fibres, and of spermatazoa, are in reality nothing else than a concrete representation and projection outwards of libidinal cathexes; and they thus lend his delusions a striking conformity with our theory. . . . these and many other details of Schreber's delusional structure sound almost like endopsychic perceptions of the processes whose existence I have assumed in these pages as the basis of our explanation of paranoia. I can nevertheless call a friend and fellow-specialist to witness that I had developed my theory of paranoia before I became acquainted with the contents of Schreber's book. It remains for the future to decide whether there is more delusion in my theory than I should like to admit, or whether there is more truth in Schreber's delusion than other people are as yet prepared to believe.⁸⁰

After seventy-five pages of interpretation, Freud proclaims that interpretation has hardly been necessary. He finds the basic assumptions of his libido theory in Schreber also. There could be no clearer literary testimony from one author to another. Here psychoanalysis runs into legal difficulties quite different from those encountered in writing case histories: in case histories, the analyst must protect the identities of those described, but here the author must protect his copyright. In Schreber's case

“the object of the analysis is not actually a person, but rather a book produced by that person,” and so “the problem of professional discretion does not enter in.”⁸¹ Yet a more serious problem raises its head. In order to present Schreber as a mere witness and not cede him the psychoanalytic copyright, Freud has to call another witness to the stand. A psychiatrist friend will swear to the fact that the patient and his analyst (in the terms customary for fictional disclaimers) arrived independently at the same results.

Psychoanalytic discourse itself must be at stake if its founder moves to head off charges of plagiarism. In fact, Schreber’s mania archives as body and text the libido theory that psychoanalysis reached only through the long detours of interpretation. Schreber’s relation to the theory is that of all writers. Jensen, according to Freud, could register and write down processes occurring “in his own mind”; Schreber, according to Freud, does this with “endopsychic perceptions.” The *Memoirs* depicts a nerve-diseased body as the theater for whole theomachies, where divine nerve rays invade and retreat, destroy organs and extract brain fiber, lay down lines of communication and transmit information—a psychic information system that Freud takes at its word rather than as mania. Freud is not so believing at other points, as, for example, when the paranoiac accuses his psychiatrist, Flechsig, of persecutorial intent; behind this image of his colleague Freud senses only the patient’s father. In describing the mind as information system, however, the psychotic text, which describes the system throughout its four hundred pages, is said to be the unmetaphoric truth.

There are grounds for this methodological distinction. The Oedipus complex is the nucleus of the neuroses, but the mental apparatus is co-extensive with psychoanalysis itself. Only by “assuming the existence of a spatially extended, advantageously constructed apparatus developed in meeting the exigencies of life,” can Freud build his science “on a basis similar to that of other natural sciences.” But these bases are not available for experimental verification. One can only infer them with the help of “artificial aids,” because “‘reality’ will always remain ‘unknowable.’”⁸² Accordingly, “reality” would be a necessary *and* impossible limit concept on the edge of the system, were it not for Schreber’s endopsychic perceptions, which without doubt describe a body, his own, as a spatially extended mental apparatus. The corpus of the psychotic text provides psychoanalysis with its indispensable but undiscoverable basis: a body. A body is the piece of evidence without which psychoanalysis, by contemporary standards, would have remained empty speculation.

From the first, aphasia studies had made brain localization into a methodological space; psychoanalysis becomes the destination of the

long route that traverses this space. Schreber's mania guarantees that there is "not more mania contained" in analytic theory than its inventor would "wish." Processes that allow endopsychic perceptions in an experimental subject, however delirious, cannot not exist from a psychophysical standpoint. Schreber's body is the verso of the pages Freud filled with writing.

The Doctor of Law Daniel Paul Schreber (1842–1911), son of the widely known inventor of the Schreber garden, which is still cultivated on the edge of German cities, entered the Leipzig University Nerve Clinic of Dr. Paul Emil Flechsig in 1884 as a failed candidate for the Reichstag, was released in 1885, was appointed in 1893 to the second highest judicial position in the Kingdom of Saxony, the Presidency of the Senate of the Supreme Court, immediately thereafter entered Flechsig's clinic once more, was transferred several times, was released in 1902, and in 1907 was finally institutionalized until his death. The *Memoirs* appeared in a private edition in 1903 with the declared intention of allowing "expert examination of my body and observation of my personal fate during my lifetime."⁸³

Freud's "Psycho-analytic Notes" thus appeared just at the moment to fill out and cash this blank check.⁸⁴ In 1911, whoever gave his body over to science would get a response posthaste. Not only is the mental apparatus, as described by the psychotic and psychoanalytic corpus, a single, highly complex information system; the two corpora in tandem constitute this system a second time. Tidings of the impossible reality reach the symbolic, via media transposition. Freud receives what Schreber sends; Schreber sends what Freud receives. All that remains unsaid is why the whole discourse network worked so promptly and precisely around one individual body. Freud was much too concerned with the testimonial value of the received messages to investigate the logic of the channels. What Schreber writes, what writers write—everything became for Freud an anticipation of psychoanalysis. And he is not alone in this. Schreber too grants poets like Wagner occasional anticipations of his neurotheology.⁸⁵ In the competition for corporeal knowledge, then, the question about which channels of knowledge constitute the body is left out. The discourse network of 1900 withholds its proper name.

The *Memoirs* constitutes an "exhaustion"⁸⁶ of Schreber's body while he was still alive. The transposition of a body into a corpus was just as necessary—namely, as necessary for survival—as was the fictional composer Lindner's transposition of letter to note values. After Schreber has published his book (against the wishes of his family and the medical establishment), the natural sciences of the mind have only to open it—and

Schreber's person is "offer[ed] . . . as an object of scientific observation for the judgment of experts." Otherwise, "at some future time" the experts could only confirm "such peculiarities of my nervous system . . . by dissection of my body," for "I am informed that it is extremely difficult to make such observations on the living body."⁸⁷

Schreber as writer or Schreber as anatomical preparation—these are the only alternatives in the discourse network of 1900. Like all writers of the epoch, he plays the role of the "victim of his own writing,"⁸⁸ in order to be able, in place of his autopsy, to prepare refuse, a bodily substitute, a text. Only thus can his case remain "soul murder"⁸⁹ and not descend to the postmortem examination of those peculiarities that make people with nervous diseases so attractive to their psychiatrists. The patient dissects his own organs and notes their modifications while he is still alive, with a positivism that honors psychophysics and comes close to correcting factually Kraepelin's *Psychiatry* (on the subject of hallucinations). Schreber thus practiced, as if to realize Nietzsche's assertion "for there is no soul," preventative soul murder.

But "soul murder"—in Schreber's divine "primary-" or "nerve-language" an autonym for the neurophysiological relationship between him and God—is also a chapter title in Ellen Key's *The Century of the Child*. Schreber could once more confront his blind exegetes and their multiple associations on the phrase, with the extent of his reading of contemporary works, which aside from Kraepelin, Du Prel, and Haeckel, also included her. What is called divine nerve-language in divine nerve-language and not accidentally contains many "expressions *which would never have occurred to*" Schreber, namely expressions "of a scientific, and particularly medical nature,"⁹⁰ is simply the code of the epoch. In 1903 it did not take private religious illuminations to reduce, in the first sentence of one's book, the soul to nervous tissue and to the language of nervous tissue, or in the final sentences to see one's own mental illness "*in the sense of a nervous illness,*" although not in its ordinary sense.⁹¹

But if the soul has only neurophysiological reality, university nerve clinics are more likely than Ellen Key's schools to be responsible for soul murder. A book that does not bear the title *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* was unable to use the words *nervous illness* without the epithet *so-called*, and set forth from the beginning the doctrine that there are "no independent illnesses of the mind without those of the body."⁹² The book is Paul Flechsig's inaugural lecture as the second professor of psychiatry in the history of the University of Leipzig. The first was named Johann Heinroth and was faithful to Hoffbauer and Reil in teaching the "mistaken doctrine" of mental cures. A "chasm" thus "gaped" between him and his successor Flechsig, one "no less deep and wide than the chasm

between medieval medicine” and modern medicine.⁹³ In “the age of Flechsig and Wernicke,” (Benn’s term),⁹⁴ souls became nerve information systems, and cures became experiments. The “‘localization of nervous diseases’” entered “a new epoch” (as Freud says)⁹⁵ with Flechsig, who posed for his *festschrift* photograph in front of the picture of a massive, cut-open brain. Only the individual case created difficulties, relative ones, in the Leipzig University Nerve Clinic; only curing such a case created absolute difficulties. On the one hand, the brain contains “the key to every natural conception of mental activity” and a fortiori to those of mental disturbances.⁹⁶ On the other, “the protected position of the brain” means that the substratum of the psychoses, namely, chemical and physical nerve damage, “can be detected *in the living* only through more or less composite inferences.” Thus the psychiatrist Flechsig was impelled onto a royal diagnostic road that was simultaneously a therapeutic dead end: “the emphasis on postmortem examination.”⁹⁷

No sooner said than done. The corpse of Hölderlin, an insane or, in other words, not bureaucratically employed teacher, was among the first to enter the new order of things via the dissection table.⁹⁸ The corpse of Schreber, a judicial bureaucrat who had gone over into the new order, suffered the same, now foreseeable, fate (without the feared or hoped-for modifications in nervous tissue being found).⁹⁹

And yet, what was said had already been done. After Flechsig decreed postmortem examination to be the psychiatric royal road, Schreber’s discreet, anonymous reference to having “been informed” about the difficulties of *in vivo* diagnosis of insanity is superfluous. In Schreber’s case, the situation of the text leaves no doubt: the imaginative copyright to the patient’s theology, developed from the notion of the epistemological advantages of being a corpse, belongs to Paul Flechsig.¹⁰⁰

The above picture of the nature of God and the continued existence of the human soul after death differs markedly in some respects from the Christian views on these matters. It seems to me that a comparison between the two can only favour the former. God was not *omniscient* and *omnipresent* in the sense that He *continuously* saw inside every individual living person, perceived every feeling of his nerves, that is to say at all times “tried his heart and reins.” But there was no need for this because after death the nerves of human beings with all the impressions they had received during life lay bare before God’s eye, so that an unfaillingly just judgment could be reached as to whether they were worthy of being received into the realms of heaven.¹⁰¹

The precision of this image of God is equaled only by Flechsig’s *festschrift* photograph. Everything runs according to the plan set out in Flechsig’s inaugural lecture, *Brain and Soul*. That God can discipline his still-living victims with mental cures or psychological introspection is an age-old fallacy. The soul consists of nervous tissue, which makes *in vivo* inves-

tigation impossible, but the nerves are perfect data recorders and for that reason will yield all their secrets to the clinical eye at the moment of dissection. In other words: according to this theology, “*within the Order of the World, God did not really understand the living human being and had no need to understand him, because, according to the Order of the World, He dealt only with corpses,*” until he initiated his world-order-defying relationship to Schreber.¹⁰² The theology simply equates God with the professor. Psychophysics banned all introspection, and theology complied; Flechsig restricted all diagnoses to corpses, and pious Schreber, performing the written dissection of his nerves, could only accommodate him. With that Schreber fabricated, to the joy of Freud, once a neurologist, the impossible piece of evidence for psychoanalysis: endopsychic perceptions of brain functions.

Channels of information are indeed intimately linked. Schreber’s case, rather than being an independent and indubitable piece of evidence for a libido theory, demonstrates the nexus between psychophysics and psychoanalysis. As reader and writer, Freud walked blindly into the discourse network to which he himself belonged. The *Project for a Scientific Psychology* and the *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* are two continuations of a single discourse. No wonder they ran into the plagiarism problem of being reverse sides of one another.

Just where Freud could have resolved the imaginary rivalry, his keen intellect failed before the discourse of the Other. Although he cannot not have noticed that the language of Schreber’s nerves and delirium is the language of the experimental neurologist Flechsig,¹⁰³ his interpretation systematically replaces the name *Flechsig* with that of the inventor of the Schreber Garden. All the patient’s sentences concerning his doctor and “God Flechsig”¹⁰⁴ are treated only as the displacement of a homosexual libido directed at the father. With this, Freud founded the boundless Schreber literature that anchors all the sufferings of Schreber *films* in the wild childrearing methods of Daniel Gottlieb Moritz Schreber. The head bandages or orthopedic bed invented by Schreber senior and mentioned in passing in the *Memoirs* are then declared the “true background of Schreber’s conception of God as One Who knows man only as a *corpse*.”¹⁰⁵ Flechsig’s message of the death of man, more hidden than Nietzsche’s, has not reached the exegetes. Again and again the attempt is made to explain the second industrial revolution by the first: Schreber as information system is related to orthopedic mechanics, the writing machine in Kafka’s “Penal Colony” to frieze heads and planers. But nerve-language remains nerve-language, and typewriters with their own specially constructed means of making script visible are Underwood models.¹⁰⁶ The system of 1900 could spare itself the effort to spare muscular energy because it un-

dertook to create substitutions for the central nervous system itself. Beyond mechanical head bandages, Schreber's paranoia followed the lead of an insane neurophysiologist. His book begins (running the risk of libel suits) with an open letter to Flechsig, asking the distinguished privy counselor to put aside his anger for once, as the undersigned has done, and answer the rigorous scientific query whether he possibly

like so many doctors, could not completely resist the temptation of using a patient in your care *as an object for scientific experiments* apart from the real purpose of cure, when by chance matters of the highest scientific interest arose. One might even raise the question whether perhaps all the talk of voices about somebody having committed soul murder can be explained by the souls (rays) deeming it impermissible that a person's nervous system should be influenced by another's to the extent of imprisoning his will power, such as occurs during hypnosis.¹⁰⁷

The professor in Leipzig never answered this open letter (which appeared in Leipzig). Whereas Schreber could embroil his later psychiatrists in expert-testimony disputes, which his legal understanding helped him to win, the soul murderer maintained a silence that even today puts exegetes on the wrong track. All the interest in Schreber's so-called father problems substitutes consanguinity for enmity, causality for war. But the classical pedagogic power of Schreber senior can only be equated with the extremely efficient disposition of power in 1900.¹⁰⁸ The nerve-language at the basis of the new disposition states that "an educative influence directed outwards" has been played out.¹⁰⁹ Because God or psychiatrists, according to the world order, can only know corpses, a temptation to conduct psychophysical experiments arises. "The miracles directed against my *head and the nerves of my head*"¹¹⁰ inscribe themselves into the nervous system without a pedagogic detour and substitute an experimental arrangement for the impossible cure for paranoia. The practical consequence is that anything identifiable as "*influences on my nervous system emanating from your [Flechsig's] nervous system*" breaks down in the discourse of the doctor or experimenter into "mere 'hallucinations'" of his patient.¹¹¹

If psychophysics can explain its effects out of existence, then experimental subjects have no choice but open warfare and thus publication. Schreber writes to Flechsig in Flechsig's language in order to demonstrate in the latter's own territory that Schreber's purported hallucinations are facts effectuated by the discourse of the Other. The *Memoirs* stand and fight in the war of two discourse networks. They constitute a small discourse network with the single purpose of demonstrating the dark reality of another, hostile one.

The mentioned writing-down-system is extraordinarily difficult to explain to other people even vaguely. . . .

Books or other notes are kept in which for years have been *written-down* all my thoughts, all my phrases, all my necessities, all the articles in my possession or around me, all persons with whom I come into contact, etc. I cannot say with certainty who does the writing down. As I cannot imagine God's omnipotence lacks all intelligence, I presume that the writing down is done by creatures given human shape on distant celestial bodies . . . but lacking all intelligence; their hands are led automatically, as it were, by passing rays for the purpose of making them write down, so that later rays can again look at what has been written.

To illuminate the purpose of this whole system I must enlarge further.¹¹²

Enlarging somewhat further, it first of all should be explained that rays are nerve-language information channels that maintain a psychotechnical, material link between Schreber and Flechsig (or his incarnation as God), very much counter to the conditions of the world order. Rather than manifesting Himself only to corpses, God occupies Schreber's nervous system by innervating all local language centers with the exception of the external speech apparatus; that is, like a good aphasia researcher, he stimulates only sensory and motoric word *images*.¹¹³ No wonder, then, that the nerve-language appears to be hallucinated, no wonder that it can also bridge cosmic distances. According to Flechsig, who wrote an influential monograph on nerve tracts, "the greatest part of the human cerebrum" consists "in nothing more than millions of well-isolated circuits, measuring thousands of kilometers."¹¹⁴ All the data on Schreber wanders through such interwoven cables to its destination on distant planets. The information comes in, is registered, and can be reread by other rays, which are preparing to move in the opposite direction. The neurologist-god of 1900 is a single discourse network. Whether he (like the gods of Rousseau or the Apocalypse) still uses the book as a storage bank no longer matters. All books are discourse networks, but not all discourse networks are books. If the recording occurs mechanically and without any *Geist*, the probability of its being a purely technical procedure is greater. "It is presumably a phenomenon like telephoning."¹¹⁵ There is, for example, the appearance of a writing angel in the trademark of a gramophone company.



It is no accident that the neurotheological discourse network stores particulars, and stores them exhaustively. Not one of Schreber's thoughts, sentences, or personal possessions is left out. The paranoid machine op-

erates like an integrated system of all the data-storage devices that revolutionized recording circa 1900. And because its strategy was aimed not at statistical series but at exhausting the arbitrary case of Schreber, it also exemplifies the methodological project at the basis of psychoanalysis.

In 1882 Stanley Hall began, in what was still a very statistical procedure, to gather material for a study entitled *The Contents of Children's Minds*. Soon thereafter the investigation also included individual cases, as when the vocabulary and neologistic creations of two thirteen-year-old girls were inventoried.¹¹⁶ Consequently, Erdmann could define even a poetic vocabulary as a denumerable group of words. And consequently Freud, in his case histories, could develop a "neurosis inventory," which included all the thoughts, turns of phrase, and significant persons in the lives of his patients. The feeble-minded discourse network around Schreber is thus (as if to demonstrate Freud's remark on the incalculable proximity between mania and theory) *the* discourse network of 1900. Only delirious memoirs betray the actual purpose of the immense effort at recording and storage, which "has increased to such an extent that it now includes almost all the words used in the human language."¹¹⁷

Exhaustion links individual cases to the discourse network of 1900. The material taken from Schreber's nerves and stored on distant suns is explicitly intended for inscription. Because it "seems to lie in the nature of the rays that they must *speak* as soon as they are in motion," they grant their victim, by virtue of an appropriate autonomy, this "law"¹¹⁸ and then further the words for everything that Schreber coincidentally happens to be doing. It is thus made certain that his nerves do not constitute an exception to the law, but rather serve up a verbal stew with compulsive automatism. The rays have "the boundless impudence—I can use no other expression—to demand that I should express this falsified nonsense in spoken words as if it were my own thoughts."¹¹⁹ As with Pameelen, the discourse network dictates nonsense, which, however, does not remain in the no man's land of psychophysical experiments, but demands Schreber's signature. It is not enough that he suffer the compulsive need to speak, which robs him of sleep and "not-thinking-of-anything-thought,"¹²⁰ those basic rights of man, but he must also say that *he* is the speaker of all the nonsense. This is inscription as coupling.

The sudden, direct link between data-storage machines and individual cases liquidates a basic concept of 1800: the ownership of discourses. That Schreber is forced to sign the nonsense forced upon him logically reverses the storage procedures that ensnared him and his contemporaries. God in his ignorance of Man countenances what by the bureaucratic norm is the "completely mistaken view" that when Schreber, "for example, reads a book or newspaper, . . . the thoughts contained therein are my own thoughts." The patient threatened with soul murder need

only quite accidentally sing a few notes from the revenge aria in the *Magic Flute*, and immediately his brain fills with whispering voices “which presume that . . . I am actually in the grip of despair.”¹²¹ Data-storage machines are much too accurate to make the classical distinctions between intention and citation, independent thought and the mere repetition of something already said. They register discursive events without regard for so-called persons. Thus the pretext of being able to distinguish between mental ownership, citation, and parapraxes became as superfluous as in psychoanalysis.¹²² To attribute each and every *flatus vocis* to a speaker as his mental property means to divest him of everything and drive him into insanity—an unparalleled trick indeed.

The writing-down also serves as another peculiar trick which again is based on a total misunderstanding of human thinking. It was believed that my store of thoughts could be exhausted by being written-down, so that eventually the time would come when new ideas could no longer appear in me. . . . This was the trick: as soon as an idea I had had before and which was (already) written-down, recurred—such a recurrence is of course quite unavoidable in the case of many thoughts, for instance the thought in the morning “Now I will wash” or when playing the piano the thought “This is a beautiful passage,” etc.—as soon as such a budding thought was spotted in me, the approaching rays were sent down with the phrase “We have already got this,” *scil.* written-down.¹²³

It makes no difference, then, whether the heavenly secretaries inscribe sentences or describe things as they occur. At one moment Schreber has to subscribe to the view that the imbecility forced on him is natural to him, at another that what is natural to him is imbecility. As precisely as Ebbinghaus sorted out previously learned nonsense, the nerves note all of Schreber’s previously spoken sentences, so that he is subject to the recurrence of recurrence itself. In triumphant Saxon accents, the nerves mock the correct High German faith of the bureaucrat on leave, according to which thinking and speaking are the nature of Man. With the eternal recurrence of “We already have’t; we already have’t” [*hammirschon hammirschon*] eternal recurrence triumphs over original genius, as does psychophysics over Absolute Spirit. In order to make someone an imbecile, it suffices to impute to him an exhaustible supply of possible thoughts. Every discursive manipulation produces whatever claims it happens to make. It is not for nothing that the beings in charge of recording have no need for minds; their imbecilic inventorying drives Schreber out of his. The psychiatric insight that lists, address books, inventories, and a fortiori discourse networks are fundamentally examples of the flight of ideas, becomes practice. The case of Schreber verifies once more Stransky’s observation that the flight of ideas can have pathological grounds as easily as it can have experimental grounds.

But when experiment and pathology coincide and the experimenter in-

deed does drive the experimental subject crazy, the remaining problem is self-defense. All the gods that pursue Schreber announce their plan as “We want to destroy your reason”; against all such pursuit Schreber attempts “my allotted task of at all times convincing God . . . of my undiminished powers of reason.”¹²⁴ To this end he not only reads newspapers and books, but also cultivates the “notion” that “human thinking is inexhaustible; for instance reading a book or a newspaper always stimulates new thoughts.”¹²⁵ The basic principles of the classical discourse network have thus deteriorated into being the defensive weapons of a mental patient. In the crossfire of psychophysics, the last bureaucrat is left with only the sediment of his education, whose norms, however, are taken apart bit by bit. Inexhaustibility, this *signum* of great works, becomes in Schreber’s desperation an attribute of newspapers as well. Poems suffer a similar fate. Among the “methods of defense” that make “even the most drawn-out voices finally perish,” Schreber included reciting verses learned by heart, “particularly Schiller’s ballads.” But he then had to realize that “however insignificant the rhymes, even obscene verses” did just as well as his classical poet. “As mental nourishment” obscene verses are “worth their weight in gold . . . compared with the terrible nonsense my nerves are otherwise forced to listen to.”¹²⁶

Newspaper rather than oeuvre, memorization rather than understanding, bawdy verse rather than Schiller—the President of the Judicial Senate (on leave) himself takes apart the education that should have provided a defense against his neurologist-tormentor. The old bureaucratic race of the Schrebers must pay for the fact that Flechsig’s plot denied Schreber “choice of those professions which would lead to closer relations with God such as that of a nerve specialist.”¹²⁷ Only countering one medium with another can save one from psychophysics, and only mimicry can save one from voices that level all discourses to the stratum of their materiality. “There had been times when I could not help myself but speak aloud or make some noise, in order to drown the senseless and shameless twaddle of the voices.”¹²⁸ That this tactic, despite every refinement, “appeared as raving madness to the physicians who did not know the true reason” simply demonstrates once more how indistinguishable pathology and experiment are.¹²⁹ God makes an imbecile of someone who resists the onslaught with imbecility. The voices generate “more or less senseless and partly offensive phrases, vulgar terms of abuse, etc.”;¹³⁰ Schreber combines Schiller and bawdy verse, poetry and noise. As in every war, the defensive forces have to learn from the attacking side. The case of Schreber is “the unheard-of event,” as Goethe defined the proper material of the novella, of responding to Flechsig’s psychophysics with a psychophysical nonsense.

And that, if it is not madness, is at least literature. In the Sonnenstein asylum high above the Elbe, a solitary and unrecognized experimenter practiced the apotropaic techniques that twelve years later would win fame and a public for the Zurich Dadaists in the Café Voltaire. On March 29, 1916, Richard Huelsenbeck, Tristan Tzara, and Emil von Janko appeared

in the performance of a *poème simultan*. This is a contrapuntal recitative, in which three or more voices speak, sing, whistle, and so on simultaneously, so that their encounters constitute the elegaic, comic, or bizarre context of the thing. The obstinacy of the voice is starkly expressed in such simultaneous poems, and so too is the determining effect of accompaniment. The noises (an *rrr* drawn out for minutes, banging sounds or the wail of a siren, and so on) have an existence whose energy surpasses that of the human voice. The *poème simultan* deals with the value of the voice. The human voice represents the soul, the individuality in its errant journey accompanied by demonic guides. The noises provide the background—the inarticulate, the fatal, the determining. The poem attempts to expose man's entanglement in mechanistic processes. With typical abbreviation it shows the conflict of the *vox humana* with a world that threatens, strangles, and destroys, whose speed and noise are inescapable.¹³¹

The insane asylum and the artists' cafe witness performances too similar to require comment. Only Hugo Ball's commentary requires comment, in that it abandons its own insight into the determining importance of indeterminate and unarticulated elements. Schreber too wandered between demonic guides and mechanistic processes, but he did not employ the *vox humana* (which is an organ register, not Nature) in order to assert individuality. He simulated—as Huelsenbeck, Tzara, and Janko also did—noises whose energy surpassed that of his own voice. He took the side of the unarticulated, which is the background of all modern media. Those who roar, howl, or whistle are not presenting lachrymose theories of Man in a technological world; rather, they aim at discursive effects against definite and hostile discourses. The inhuman discourse network of 1900 is as inescapable as Gertrude Stein's dark oracle, but precisely its inhumanity allows one to escape from the imperative of sense. Like the audience in the coffee house, Schreber is released from all "effort" to "distinguish single words in the confusion of voices,"¹³² just as in the coffee house words drown in the noise of the self-produced confusion of four artists' voices. When power rescinds its classical imperative of establishing only signifieds, even the victims gain new pleasure. The rays are by nature flighty and forgetful; thus Schreber too can indulge his beloved thoughts-thinking-nothing. God, the neurological mutant, places physical pleasure above all morality; thus Schreber too is permitted enjoyment on consistent grounds: "On the other hand God demands *constant enjoyment*, as the normal mode of existence for souls within the Order of

the World. It is my duty to provide Him with it in the form of highly developed soul-voluptuousness. . . . If I can get a little sensuous pleasure in this process, I feel I am entitled to it as a small compensation for the excess of suffering and privation that has been mine for many years past.”¹³³

Wherever sense ends, enjoyment begins: a pleasure in the margins that a discourse network of pure signifiers leaves to its victims. Recollection and the establishment of sense, work and the deferral of drives may once have been the tasks of an individual, judicial bureaucrat—but the nerves and their slave practice a Nietzschean or “natural tendency . . . to forget” that “would soon have erased any . . . impressions”¹³⁴ and knows only the many present moments of voluptuousness. Because there is already an exhaustive comprehension of data, data-storage machines need not be implanted in people as well, thus giving each a soul. The discourse network around Schreber is more merciful than Lindhorst’s archive. Roaring, forgetful, suffering flight of ideas, the Senate President on leave can enjoy a freedom this side of bureaucratic and human dignity. That freedom has been the definition of a subject since 1900. Schreber, because Flechsig’s psychophysics used or misused him in experiments counter to the world order, became singular as only used pencils, knives, and watches could be. In opposition to the productive individual, he is allowed simply to consume whatever “falls off” chains of signifiers in the way of “sensual pleasure.” The subject of the unconscious is literally a “residuum.”¹³⁵

Individual differences drop onto the position of the subject. Whether the arbitrary case is called Schreber or Nietzsche means little. Assistant physician Dr. Ziehen said of his patient, Nietzsche: “He speaks rapidly, loudly, and without coherence, often for many hours. His mood is morbidly cheerful and exalted.”¹³⁶ Dr. Weber, director of the Sonnenstein insane asylum, said of Schreber, his guest at the family dinner table: “Obviously it often requires his greatest energy not to utter the ‘bellowing noises,’ and as soon as the table is cleared while he is still on his way to his room one can hear his inarticulate sounds.”¹³⁷ The “howling monkey” Nietzsche produced just such howls or “miraculous bellows” before the daughters of the desert. But whereas Nietzsche still appeared as a European who found the perfect “sign amnesia”¹³⁸ only in the envied opposition of two women, Schreber took the flight of ideas so far as to forget his gender. If “my whole body is filled with nerves of voluptuousness from the top of my head to the soles of my feet, such as is the case only in the adult female body, whereas in the case of a man, so far as I know, nerves of voluptuousness are only found in and immediately around the sexual organs,”¹³⁹ then this body *is* “a woman.”

Not the Woman, who does not exist, but a woman with the great privilege from which drive deferment and bureaucratic duties have kept

her: "succumbing to intercourse."¹⁴⁰ Any man who becomes a neurophysiological case can no longer be a man. In repeated petitions addressed to his doctor, as formal as they were pressing, a Senate President requested an experimental test of his proposition that he was a woman with nerves of voluptuousness interpenetrating his body from head to toe.

Thus the neurologist's strategy to extract Schreber's brain tissue failed due to its success.¹⁴¹ Sensual pleasure is gained by killing off Man and the male. Schreber enjoyed the becoming-a-woman that threatened him; he used the discourse network that emptied him. Although the *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* no sooner promises than forgets to provide an "anthology"¹⁴² of all the senseless, insulting, common, and obscene discourses that the discourse network has stored and mobilized in making Schreber an imbecile—the bulk of its four hundred pages is just this anthology. In the *Memoirs* a choice anthology of sexual descriptions that the bureaucrat Schreber would never have uttered or put on paper can and must be written down. The moral and legal measures Schreber could have taken to ensure an author's mental ownership fail when it comes to writing down a discourse network.¹⁴³ Having become a woman in order to take the dictation of a neurologist God, having become a taker of dictation in order to be permitted to write the voluptuousness of being a woman, Schreber is free. *Schreber as Writer [Schreber als Schreiber]*¹⁴⁴ writes up what has written him off. Without originality, mechanically, like nothing so much as those mindless beings who attend to the task of recording, he put Flechsig's neurophysiology or imbecilic nonsense on paper. Nothing and no one could hinder him in so doing. "For all miracles are powerless to prevent the expression of ideas in writing."¹⁴⁵

A Simulacrum of Madness

In the eyes of I don't know which,—perhaps a very near culture we will be the ones who brought two sentences into the closest proximity, sentences that are both as contradictory and as impossible as the famous "I am lying," and that both designate the same empty autoreferentiality: "I am writing" and "I am mad."¹

Literature in the discourse network of 1900 is a simulacrum of madness. As long and insofar as someone writes, his delirium is protected from the loss of the word. Distinguished from madness by a nothing named simulacrum, by a foil named paper, writing traverses the free space of eternal recurrence. Literary writing is its own justification precisely in its empty self-referentiality.² Whereas the claim of not being delirious necessarily leads, under the discursive conditions of brain physiology, to the delirium of originality and authorship, the reverse claim

achieves discursive reality. A delirium written down coincides with what sciences and media themselves were doing.

The simulation of madness presupposes that the sciences of nonsense have become possible and dominant. Only when there is psychophysics to serve as a random generator and psychoanalysis to ensure the exhaustion of nonsense will a UTILIZATION OF REFUSE [*Abfallverwertung*], as nonsensical as it is indisputable, finally take effect. Even after Flechsig has extracted all the nervous tissue from the brain and Freud has decoded all the libidinous cathexes of an arbitrary case, something remains: the fact of a delirious memoir. All experimental measures or miracles are powerless against texts that do not pretend to make sense but rather insist on their purely written character. The nonsense of writing down nonsense is as powerful and indisputable as Wilhelm Jensen's undertaking to supply invented persons with invented manias. "Every nonsense carried to extremes destroys itself in the end" wrote the sharp-witted Schreber (or the God that dictated to him).³ When that has happened, there is one more literary text.

Today "in the place of Lancelot we have Judge Schreber."⁴ Delirious texts entered the realm of literature when literature began to simulate madness. Schreber makes delirium into literature when he describes every hallucination as a fact of the nerve-language rather than underwriting each with an authorial name, and when in defense against the imbecility forced on him he occasionally simulated the imbecile. These were recording measures and simulations that, in all justice to the material and aside from any psychology, necessarily lead to masses of words. The rebus does not end with its psychoanalytic decoding; victims and simulators of madness remain to tinker "with words instead of things."⁵ Not only the "nerve-language" itself, but also the enormous quantity of names and idioms, dialect words and obscenities, that the language, through its neurological short cut, inscribed in Schreber's brain is simply a discursive event. Words that did not exist in Kraepelin or even in Bleuler were put down on paper.

Such is also the practice of a literature that "seeks new words for new moods."⁶ It is only a step from the memorable productions of Schreber's nerve-language to "Nasobēm," which does not occur in Alfred Brehm and Meyer because it first saw the light of day in Morgenstern's work.⁷ If the madness of 1900 is allowed to seep beyond the poetic freedom of dramatic monologues and overflow lexicon, syntax, and orthography as well,⁸ then literature is its simulation. Nasobēms counter "a concept of the linguistic expression" in which "it is appropriate to have a meaning." The insane and their simulators instead produce pure signifiers or "anything at all which appears and claims to be an expression, whereas when

one looks more closely, this is not the case.”⁹ With *Morgenstern*, this simulation occurs on the surface of scientific-lexical storage; with Hugo Ball, it occurs on the surface of psychiatry itself. Among Ball’s *Seven Schizophrenic Sonnets*, “The Green King” stands out with its claim of imperial proportions.

Wir, Johann, Amadeus Adelgreif,
Fürst von Saprunt und beiderlei Smeraldis,
Erzkaiser über allen Unterschleif
Und Obersäckelmeister von Schmalkaldis,

Erheben unsern grimmen Löwenschweif
Und dekretieren vor den leeren Saldis:
“Ihr Räuberhorden, eure Zeit ist reif.
Die Hahnenfedern ab, ihr Garibaldis!

Mann sammle alle Blätter unserer Wälder
Und stanze Gold daraus, soviel man mag.
Das ausgedehnte Land braucht neue Gelder.

Und eine Hungersnot liegt klar am Tag.
Sofort versehe man die Schatzbehälter
Mit Blattgold aus dem nächsten Buchenschlag.”

We, Johann Amadeus Noblegripp,
Prince of Saprunt and of both Smeraldis,
Emperor of all the raff and riff
And Chief Sack Master of Schmalkaldis,

Lift up our terrible lion’s mane
And decree before the empty Saldis:
“You robber hordes, your time has come.
Down with your cockfeathers, you Garibaldis!

Collect all the leaves from the forests’ trees
And fashion coin from them, as many as you may.
The extended nation needs new rupees.

And starvation is as clear as day.
So fill right up the treasury shieves
With beech-leaf coin without delay.”¹⁰

The poem preserves the forms of the sonnet and of the decree only in order to make a delirious claim in its empty interior. It proclaims a power without referent, which confirms the diagnostic criteria of schizophrenia in the self-referentiality of the act of writing. A prince whose entire empire consists in the neologisms of his title raves deliriously as he writes. With the inexorability of imperial messages, that vanishing point of Kafka’s writing, his decree establishes the monetary value of puns. All shortages vanish thanks to a word of power, which, as in Freud’s insight, works “with words instead of things.”

Of course, this procedure affects above all words themselves. Schreber's imbecilic voices rhyme without any regard for "sense," simply according to the "similarity of the sounds," as in such distant signifiers as "'Santiago' or 'Cathargo,'" "'Ariman' or 'Ackermann.'" ¹¹ Ball has his Green King add a few strange examples to this list. Such rhymes have nothing to do with the orality and echo effects of a whispering Mother Nature. They constitute a mimicry of madness and are thus naked dictation. The writer does not invent, but only simulates an insane person who in turn has not invented the rhymes but rather, "in an actual rhyming mania," "had to construct verses without any regard for the nonsense that resulted." ¹²

The seriousness of such simulations is not diminished in the least by being "limited to linguistic phenomena, that is, to *only one* symptom among many." ¹³ Contemporary psychiatrists did not proceed any differently. "Simply because most of one's acts in higher cultural life are not concrete actions but spoken or written words, language in itself" offers writers "the same possibility of portraying mental illness that a person's speech allows us"—that is, psychiatrists—"the possibility of making an unbiased diagnosis of mental illness." ¹⁴ Psychiatrists and writers are thus remarkably in accord about restricting the range of possible data to the symbolic. The former compile and order whole archives of psychotic speech errors, which are then at the disposal of the latter. Only when sciences localize madness in "language in itself" does its literary simulation become possible and important. Psychiatric discourse provides monographs on psychotic neologisms, rhyme manias, and special languages, to which writers, seeking information from competent sources, need only help themselves. The necessary consequence is a writing that has no referent outside of psychiatry and of which Bölsche provided an early and exact description. If literature "rightly despises" its secular support in philosophers such as Hegel or Schopenhauer, in order to exploit instead the details amassed by psychiatry and pathology, it can only be a simulacrum of madness.

A number of careful minds, particularly practicing writers, rightfully despise this shaky bridge and have boldly confronted amassed details of objective knowledge. The success reveals a serious danger in this undertaking as well. Scientific psychology and physiology are constrained, by conditions familiar to all, to conduct their studies mainly with the diseased organism, and so they coincide almost entirely with psychiatry and pathology. Now the writer who in a justified thirst for knowledge intends to gain instruction from these disciplines, finds himself unintentionally drawn more and more into the atmosphere of the clinic. He begins to turn his attention away from his rightful object, from healthy, universal human life, toward the abnormal, and in the intention of observing the premises of his realistic art, he unwittingly fills his pages with the premises of his premises, with the observed material itself, from which he should be drawing conclusions. Then

there arises a literature of man as sick, of mental illnesses, of difficult child births, of the arthritic—in short, of what not a few ignorant people imagine to be realism itself.¹⁵

Bölsche describes what literature does in the discourse network of 1900: it utilizes refuse from the nonsense stored by psychophysics. The delirious discourses that gain entry to the scientific archives only on the condition of making no sense lose even this referent in literary simulation. Anyone who fills page after page with the premises of his premises speaks neither of the world or of Man. As a simulacrum of madness, literature loses its classical distinction of springing immediately from Nature or the Soul and of subsequently having this naturalness certified by philosophical interpreters. It becomes secondary literature in the strictest sense of the word. Its discourse, cut off from “universal human life,” deals with other discourses, which it can only transpose. Because media transpositions render useless such concepts as authenticity and primacy,¹⁶ any vestige of extradiscursive verification is lost. Literature does not reveal phenomena or determine facts; its field is a madness that, as Münsterberg realized, exists only on paper.

Many fictional presentations of abnormal mental states are taken to be sensitive psychological portraits precisely in areas where the scientifically trained observer would recognize an impossibility. If persons were actually to behave in the manner the writer has them act and speak in these novelistic mental disturbances, the doctor would have to conclude that they were simulating.¹⁷

“Novelistic mental disturbances” accordingly occur in a no man’s land, which can be verified neither by immediately accessible mental truths nor by controlled experiments. Its name is simulacrum. Writers who simulate being psychiatrically informed describe persons who, viewed from the standpoint of psychiatry, are simply simulators. But that is the point. Simulation without reference dissolves the old connection between madness and illness in order to establish an entirely different connection: between madness and writing.¹⁸

Novelistic mental disturbances, which occurred in more than novels in 1900, did not renew the affiliation of artists and the insane against a philistine bourgeoisie. The appearance of expressionist “young artists” was not necessary “to obtain the provocative possibility of concretely representing their opposition to the ruling norms and notions of value” by the revised and positive valuation of madness.¹⁹ This transvaluation occurred when positivistic sciences began determining cultural technologies from deficits and defects and thus liquidated classical norms. The myths of the young and of provocation only obscure the complete extent of the young provocateurs’ dependence on the discourse network of their period.²⁰

Something completely different is at stake when psychophysics and literature collide. Illusory political-moral struggles, in which writers purportedly are the first to discover madness, are superfluous; the struggle concerns only the use of the same discourse. Whereas psychophysics held on to the connection between madness and illness, literature constructed a completely different connection between madness and writing. Its simulation created individual cases that speak and write out of standardized collections of symptoms. And so they appeared, accidental and singular as only dilettantes of the miracle could be: "The Madman" (Georg Heym), "The Imbecile" (Ball), "The Visionnut" [*Der Visionarr*] (Jakob van Hoddis), "The Idiot" (Huelsenbeck, Zech, Johannes Becher). They appear and begin their nonsensical speech: the "Song of the Escapees" (Johannes Urzidil), "The Idiot's Song" (Rilke), not to forget "The Song of the Crazy Women" (Paul Adler).

As if to name the discursive status of these songs, the young Breton wrote, across the barrier erected by the First World War:

Démence précoce, paranoïa, états crépusculaires.
O poésie allemande, Freud et Kraepelin!

Dementia praecox, paranoïa, twilight states
Oh German poetry, Freud and Kraepelin!²¹

No one could say more clearly that literature utilizes the discarded material of contemporary psychiatry. Dementia praecox is, of course, "in its contemporary form" Kraepelin's "new creation."²² And so the glory of literature was reflected onto psychiatry. Psychiatry's archives became rough drafts of poetry and provided material and methods for pure writing. Of course, classical and romantic writers learned from the psychic cures of their Reils and Hoffbauers,²³ but the Occident remained the predominant theme and archive. Meaning always came from Above; nonsense, by contrast, cannot be invented, it can only be transcribed and written down. Thus a "German poetry" of Freud and Kraepelin took over the systemic position occupied by Poetry in the classical-romantic discourse network, and literature moved from second to third place in the new order of discourse. The third place is (just as for Schreber) the site of sensual pleasure. A remainder of nonsense, of no further use to even the sciences of nonsense, is left over for games.

Because it cuts the old bond between madness and illness, the game of the simulated delirium makes the distinction between doctors and patients somewhat tenuous. Münsterberg was probably right to suspect that simulators of medical science actually describe simulators of madness. In 1893 a four-part work appeared in Berlin entitled *Body, Brain,*

Mind, God, a work that (with the exception of God) cataloged in its title the basic problems of 1900 and identified its author as a “practicing doctor.”²⁴ Its intent is true psychophysics: Karl Gehrman brings case history after case history to bear on the problem of relating diverse physical symptoms to neural centers in the brain. But the place names on this brain atlas outdo one another in their poetry, the recorded dreams of countless patients become more and more beautiful and flowery, until after two thousand pages there is no longer any doubt that all the neural centers, case histories, and recorded dreams can only refer to a single subject, the institutionalized writer. Doctors, proceeding like the institutionalized Schreber toward exhausting the contents of the brain, end up in madness themselves.

One need only write down psychophysics to produce “German poetry.” That is exactly what the young assistant doctor Benn does when he lets a, or his, professor speak for himself.

PROFESSOR: And now, gentlemen, I have in conclusion a very special surprise for you. As you can see, I have colored the pyramidal cells from the hippocampus of the left hemisphere of the cerebrum taken from a fourteen-day-old rat of the Katull variety. Now observe: the cells are not red, but pink, with a light brownish-violet coloration that shades into green. This is indeed most interesting. You are aware that lately a paper came out of the Graz Institute that disputes this fact, despite my thorough investigations of the matter. I will not say anything about the Graz Institute in general, but I must say that this paper struck me as premature. As you see, I now have the proof at hand. This does have enormous implications. It would be possible to distinguish rats with long black fur and dark eyes from those with short rough fur and light eyes through this fine difference in cell color, as long as the rats are of the same age, have been fed with candy, have played for half an hour daily with a small puma, and have spontaneously defecated two times in the evening with the temperature at 37 or 36 degrees centigrade.²⁵

The utilization of discarded material from psychophysics is as concrete as it is perilous. During his training with famous psychiatrists and pathologists, Benn published scientific work *and* texts that ridiculed brain research, notably works with the same titles and contents as his own.²⁶ The montage of its senseless accumulation of fact made psychophysics into the mental disturbance it was investigating, and made the pink brain cells of the rat into phenomena as magnificent as those found in Gehrman. In the literary publication of his lectures, Benn’s professor takes his rightful place alongside the Flechsig of the *Memoirs* (assistant doctor Rönne threatened to sue the professor “because of brain damage”).²⁷ Most likely, only because Ziehen and Karl Bonhoeffer did not read the materials their assistant Benn published in marginal avant-garde journals was Benn saved from the compromising situations of Gehrman or

Schreber.²⁸ For Hoffmann, the bureaucratic-poetic double life was a useful arrangement because it betrayed the secret unity of both functions; Benn was confronted with double-entry bookkeeping, in which one hand continued to write statistics and the other exploited a singular delirium.

Along with Ernst Mach and Mauthner, those philosophic sources for most research on expressionism, Ziehen taught that the unity of the ego was a fiction when compared with the reality of the association of ideas.²⁹ Benn and Rönne had only to put their boss's theory into practice in writing. It was an irreconcilable but permissible use of psychiatric discourse to turn it on one's own accidental case. Exactly that happened when Benn's report on his last year as a psychiatrist, 1913, produced the psychiatric diagnosis of the irreconcilability of writing and treatment.

I attempted to find out for myself what I was suffering from. The manuals on psychiatry that I consulted led me to modern psychological works, some quite remarkable, particularly in the French school; I immersed myself in the descriptions of the condition designated as depersonalization . . . I began to see the ego as an entity that strove, with a force compared to which gravity would be the touch of a snowflake, for a condition in which nothing that modern culture designated as intellectual gifts played any part.³⁰

The writer as insane—not a mythic conflict between artists and the bourgeoisie, but the semi-official doctrine of psychiatric textbooks creates the connection. Benn and Rönne are psychiatrists who become incapable of “taking interest in a newly arrived case or observing the old cases with constant individualizing attention,”³¹ which according to Ziehen and the rules of data exhaustion, would be their professional obligation.³² Instead, Rönne, lying motionless in the doctor's office, simulates the catatonic, and Benn simulates a situation in which he is the newly arrived case in need of constant observation. But a doctor who transfers the latest diagnoses, such as depersonalization, from his patients onto himself, uses Janet or Ribot no differently from how Schreber used Kraepelin's textbook. Education or “intellectual gifts” have no role in either case.

But by isolating psychophysical results, literature simulated only what distinguished psychoanalysis in the discourse network of 1900. Biographically, first of all, there is Freud's self-analysis, the mythic origin of his new science, which proceeds by the same inversion of roles. As Benn would later discover his psychotic depersonalization, so Freud found the basic complex of his neurotic patients “in my own case too.”³³ Methodologically, psychoanalysis singularized statistical material: it does not order the collected nonsense into nosological entities, but attributes the material to unconscious subjects. Finally, in a literary sense, this organization of the material appears in the case histories, which count as “modern German letters” or “German poetry.”

Like the Poets and Thinkers one hundred years earlier, writers and analysts came into “close and fruitful contact.”³⁴ As early as 1887 the philosopher Dilthey deplored a new “misology” among artists, who hated thinking, aesthetics, and culture [*Bildung*].³⁵ One friendship was over (even if other critics did not have Dilthey’s keen ear for the announcement), and another, just as perilous, could begin. What Goethe had said about philosophers—that he could never do without them and yet could never come to terms with them—from 1900 on was addressed to Freud: although or because, according to Kafka, there was “of course” a great deal of Freud in “The Judgment,” his literary writing obeyed the imperative “No more psychology!”³⁶ The solidarity of solidarity and competition, once the fate of Poets and Thinkers, became the fate of writers and analysts.

Of course, it was no longer a question of meaning and its interpretation. Writers and psychoanalysts did not constitute a state-supporting community of interpreters in which there was a mutual exchange of certificates validating the creation of eternal values. Their mutual relationship was supported by the existence, at the basis of all cultural technologies, of bodies and their nonsense. These bodies, however, were only accessible to psychophysical experiments at the price of silence and death. But on the couch, where “alas, everything is different,” “nothing takes place . . . but an interchange of words.”³⁷ In literature, where even such exchange is lacking, nothing occurs but intransitive writing. Psychoanalysis must thus focus on the nonsense in speech until it can gather a linked set of indices that closes around an inaccessible reality. Literature must purify pieces of paper of everything readable until the body of its words coincides with the other body in an instantaneous shortcircuit. As such, however, the two discourses compete with one another. There is a reality inaccessible to both, and two mutually exclusive detours: decoding and the shortcircuit.

Freud did not ever claim to be able to explain the fact that literature exists. In spite or because of this, writers have done their utmost to keep him from any such explanation. Given the alternatives of laying their bodies on the couch or setting down bodies of words, almost all opted for pure writing as against a “(possibly unproductive) life.”³⁸ So the relationship between writers and analysts became all kinds of things—dialogue, reading, greetings addressed even without an accompanying chalice—but it did not become practice.

“At one time I did consider psychiatric treatment,” he said, “but dropped the idea just in time.”

For a long time he actually had believed that his salvation lay in psychoanalysis. His beloved, Lou Andreas-Salomé, was an avid follower of Freud and his

circle and had urged Rilke to lay himself on the famous couch. For years before the war Rilke considered the pros and cons but finally, at the last moment, drew back. "I won't have anyone poking around in my brain," he said to me, "I'd rather keep my complexes."

Later he did meet Freud personally, but said nothing about his problems. After that he avoided Freud whenever they encountered one another. The panic fear of being picked apart and sucked dry constantly pursued him.³⁹

As paranoid as Schreber, who also lived in fear of a brain-pillaging doctor, Rilke took the opposite course. One gave his body over to a science that was hardly capable of demonstrating itself worthy of such a gift. The other withdrew his body from a science that had neither the intention nor the capability of poking around in his brain, because of course it dealt only in the exchange of words. The rage of simulated paranoia is worse than that of the clinical variety. The fact that psychoanalysis transferred psychophysical methods to individual cases unleashed the phantasm of trephination. The writer's brain became the mythic vanishing point of all attempts to ground discourse neurologically. Writing circa 1900 therefore means: this brain, its clinical or simulated madness notwithstanding, shall be immediately transposed into texts and protected from any medical soundings. This transposition of media had to pass through that other vanishing point, the endopsychic perception of brain functions. What Gehrman and Schreber began, issued into literature.

Shortly after Apollinaire received his head wound in the trenches at Aisne, he issued a challenge to his critics, the admirers of Boileau and Ben Akiba: "But is there nothing new under the sun? It remains to be seen. What! My head has been x-rayed. I have seen, while I live, my own cranium, and that would be nothing new?"⁴⁰ A "new spirit," then, as the title of the essay promises, inspires the poet. No last words are pronounced on the life-threatening wound to the head, in that it opens up the much more exciting possibility of endopsychic perception. Dr. Bardel's x-rays and trephination of Apollinaire made literal truth of what Flechsig and his clever student expected only of the postmortem examination. It is only logical, therefore, that Apollinaire should immediately appeal to writers to approach the great novelty under the sun and connect their writing with technological media like film and the phonograph.

Brains—the title of Benn's early collection of novellas—designates an entire writing project. Rönne, the hero, was originally a psychiatrist and brain researcher, who "in these hands had held hundreds or even thousands" of brains,⁴¹ not merely those of rats. But when he makes the transition from doctor to patient, all of his research interests shrink to a single enigma. Rönne constantly performs a gesture "as if he were breaking open a soft, large fruit, or as if he were unfolding something"⁴²—a rebus

that adoring nurses are finally able to decode as the opening of his own brain. It stands, like Rönne's association with brain damage, for a new writing project: literary impulses are to be fed on the vivisected fruit of his own brain. That is why the hero procures himself a journal and a pencil.⁴³

And as if to take Rönne's decision at its word, Flake, an admirer of Benn, made an entire novel out of the latter's laconic novellas; out of *Brains*, that is, came an entire *City of the Brain*. The hero, Lauda, has, of course, studied medicine and for three semesters has "always begun again hesitantly with the opening cut": "sometimes into the up-turned hemispheres, the gelatinous site of conscious thought, which can be modified, sometimes into the base, the more defined, differentiated, architectonic portion."⁴⁴ He has thus already been to school with Rönne, when years later, after leaving the office and secretary, he happens to read a paper on neurology. It describes the brain as an endlessly complex "cross network" consisting of transmitters/receivers of "electrical waves." The reader instantly decides "to construct a model of the world from this." Because models of the world in 1900 consist in "words, perhaps only words," Lauda begins a "metaphysical journal" that by means of "psycho-physiology" derives his own thought apparatus from "nerve tracts" and describes his brain as "a city of pathways that I laid down according to individual acts and now must travel forever." Having sunk to being the knowing slave of his "thought paths," Lauda therefore falls asleep, only to return to the impossible place of such reflections. Rönne's gesture becomes a dream act. Lauda stays in a scientifically "read-in" city of the brain until the next morning brings the realization or renunciation that is decisive for writers: "A physical residence in the city of the brain is impossible, only the allegorical is possible." Because the impossible wishes tell the truth, the renunciation reveals the character of literature in the discourse network of 1900: Lauda henceforth intends only to "scream walk write" [*schrein schreiten schreiben*].⁴⁵ The novel itself becomes an allegorical residence in the brain, a deciphering of neurophysiological engrams.

Marcel, the narrator, dawdles in his pursuit of *The Remembrance of Things Past* as long as he fails to realize that the goal of his search lies simply in the "storehouse" of his own brain and is stored only there. The fact that he, like Gehrman or Lauda, will have to transcribe nerve tracts is simultaneously and immediately also the fear that a "head accident" could make him forget all the stored traces, indeed make him forget the forgetting of them.⁴⁶ Thus Marcel began to write just in time, driven by the furies of an eventual aphasia, which was, not coincidentally, a sub-

ject on which the physician Dr. Adrien Proust, the writer's father, had published.⁴⁷

But enough demonstration. The puzzling question common to neurologists and the insane, to psychoanalysts and writers circa 1900 is summed up in the title *Brain and Language*.⁴⁸ The doctors (who take precedence in formulating the problem) pose the theme; the writers work it through. Their writing stands exactly at the place or takes the place of the brain vivisection that all psychophysics must dream of *and* do without. Rilke fled psychoanalysis because his own "work" was for him "actually nothing other than that sort of self-treatment."⁴⁹ Thus he fled not merely because Freud or Viktor Gebattel would poke around in his brain, but to be able to compete with the vivisectors. The underlying mutuality of the two discourses excluded any overlap. In the discourse network of 1900, writers are people who in the analysis—that is, the decomposition—of their psychic apparatus prefer to go it alone.

With his mute gesture, Rönne turns his own brain hemispheres inside out in order to reach the source of his thought; Lauda visits the city of his brain in the metaphor of the dream; but there was one who, widely decried as a dreamer and maker of images, took on the impossible task common to them all, and did it technologically, without images. However, he was a poet and hated the approximate. In order to define the status of literature, Rilke, in his "notebook" *Primal Sound* [*Ur-Geräusch*], chose a model that since 1900 has designated all inscription and decoding: the phonograph.

Fourteen or fifteen years after an unforgotten day in school on which he constructed a phonograph out of cardboard and parchment paper, candle wax and the bristles of a clothes brush,⁵⁰ Rilke attended anatomy lectures at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Among all the medical samples, what "enchanted" the writer was a "special housing closed against all worldly space"—the skull. Rilke acquired a skull and spent the evenings studying it—with the result that his childhood memory was completely rewritten. If it once seemed that "this autonomous sound [would] remain unforgettable, apart from us, preserved outside," the student of anatomy learned that not the sounds "from the funnel," but "those markings traced on the cylinder of the phonograph"⁵¹ were much more essential. But the *sutura coronalis* effects the shift from reproduction to inscription, from reading to writing in the technological age. "In the peculiarly vigilant and demanding light of the candle the cranial suture was quite evident and I soon realized what it reminded me of: those unforgotten lines that were once scratched onto a little wax roll by the point of a bristle!"⁵²

The suture that divides the two cranial hemispheres like a sagittal incision designates the status of all script for a writer of 1900. Only a scratch or cut into the flesh of forgetfulness itself can be unforgettable. What Nietzsche learned investigating the genealogy of morals, what Kafka's explorer learned in the penal colony,⁵³ Rilke was able to learn from anatomy. If ever an initiation did justice to the material, then this was it. The cranial suture functions as the left-over trace of a writing energy or art that, instead of "making variations or imitating," "had its joy in the dance of existences," in a "dictatorial art that presents dispositions of energy." A "consciousness of an ethical nature,"⁵⁴ of the kind evoked in the titles of Nietzsche and Kafka, can add nothing to this. Technology and physiology are responsible for material inscription.

More exactly, a system composed of technology and physiology is responsible. That is what the skull for years had "suggested again and again" to Rilke the writer.

The coronal suture of the skull (this would first have to be investigated) has—let us assume— a certain similarity to the closely woven line which the needle of the phonograph engraves on the receiving, rotating cylinder of the apparatus. What if one changed the needle and directed it on its return journey along a tracing which was not derived from the graphic translation of sound, but existed of itself naturally—well: to put it plainly, along the coronal suture, for example. What would happen? A sound would necessarily result, a series of sounds, music . . .

Feelings—which? Incredulity, timidity, fear, awe—which of all the feelings here possible prevents me from suggesting a name for the primal sound which would then have made its appearance in the world . . .⁵⁵

Unlike poets such as Shakespeare or Gottfried Keller, who throw their heroes into the traditional melancholy associations at the sight of a skull, the writer is an experimenter. He suggests, more radically than technicians and physiologists—and in a language that maintains a wonderful balance between precision and caution—a phonographic test of human body parts. The insight of information science, that recording and playback devices are essentially convertible,⁵⁶ allows the decoding of a track that no one had ever encoded. But the fact that nature has thrown away the keys to its secrets is no reason, in 1900, to leave the rebus untouched. Let deranged people like Gehrman attempt to solve it with mere books, but "we," the art-physiologists and artists, "inevitably think of a process similar to Edison's *phonograph* when it comes to the molecules and nerve tracts in the brain."⁵⁷ Simmel's objective interpretation, Freud's analytic construction, Rilke's apparatus—all can track traces without a subject. A writing without the writer, then, records the impossible reality at the basis of all media: white noise, primal sound.

That is only logical. Certainly "it" has been making noise from time

immemorial, as long as there has been Brownian motion. But for any distinction between noise and information to be possible, the real must be able to move through technological channels. Printing errors occur in the book as medium, but there is no primal sound. The phonographic reproduction of a groove “that is not the graphic translation of a sound” mocks translatability and universal equivalents. Setting gramophone needles onto coronal sutures is only possible in a culture that gives free reign to all discursive manipulations. And of course anything that “exists naturally,” like the skull, thereby loses its distinctiveness. At such extremes the transposition of media creates only unconscious programs out of so-called nature. Otto Flake and Proust dreamed of making literal reproductions of the inscribed pathways in their brains; Rilke made technological suggestions for the technological realization of their dreams. Yet Rilke reserves this realization for writers. It was not for the “Poets,” who, according to Rilke’s historically exact insight, “were overwhelmed” by “almost only” one sense, the visual, whereas “the contribution made by an inattentive sense of hearing” was practically nil. Rilke had in mind an artistic practice that “contributes more decisively than anyone else to an extension of the several sense fields,” that is, with more determination than even “the work of research.”⁵⁸

Writers and analysts of the mental apparatus thus engaged in open, unrelenting competition. The very Rilke who fled psychoanalytic vivisection programmed, as the writer’s only task, the transposition of coronal sutures. Even his enigmatic “inner-world space” was only another name for the engram stored in the brain and transcribed by writers. The evidence is that Rilke called the skull a “special housing closed against all worldly space” and thereby restated the physiologist’s insight that, for such a housing, “our own body is the external world.”⁵⁹ Interpreters who read “inner-world space,” this technological and physiological system, philosophically, thus remain as far behind the state of the art, as belated as their totemic animal, the proverbial owl.

More than one hundred pages on aphasia research and phonographs, psychoanalysis and paranoia, will perhaps not have been wasted if they make it possible to spell out for the first time, and not merely to understand, *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*.

Spelling in the *Notebooks* is taken over by psychiatrists (whereas philosophers do not appear at all). Doctors in the Salpêtrière are the ones who make *a-v-a-n-t* out of *avant*, which Brigge (as the title of the book indicates) has only to note down. The question is why this twenty-eight-year-old, who is not in the Salpêtrière to gather racy material on doctor-patient relationships,⁶⁰ shows up in the insane asylum instead of sticking

to anatomy lectures and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. The answer is that Brigge, like his novelist, "had once considered psychiatric treatment, but dropped the idea just in time."

He enters the Salpêtrière, explains his case, is registered for electro-shock therapy, is questioned briefly by a couple of assistant doctors, and is sent back to the waiting room. While Brigge is waiting for the promised or threatened electrical shocks, the discursive event occurs: his ears catch a hot, flaccid stuttering "*a-v-a-n-t*." Psychophysical decomposition of language becomes the secret code of an initiation. Just like the word DADA, which occurs in a child's "babbling phase" and reminds people "of their honorably dirtied diapers and of the cry that is now supposed to delight the world,"⁶¹ the "*a-v-a-n-t*" also leads to a short circuit between experiment and primal sound, psychophysics and children's language.

And, then, as I listened to the hot, flaccid stuttering on the other side of the partition, then for the first time in many, many years it was there again. That which had struck into me my first, profound terror, when as a child I lay ill with fever: the Big Thing. Yes, that was what I had always called it, when they all stood around my bed and felt my pulse and asked what had frightened me: the Big Thing. And when they got the doctor and he came and spoke to me, I begged him only to make the Big Thing go away, nothing else mattered. But he was like the rest. He could not take it away, though I was so small then and might easily have been helped. And now it was there again. . . . Now it grew out of me like a tumor, like a second head, and was a part of me, though it could not belong to me at all, because it was so big. . . . But the Big Thing swelled and grew over my face like a warm bluish boil and grew over my mouth, and already the shadow of its edge lay upon my remaining eye.⁶²

At precisely the place or precisely in place of a psychiatric treatment that does not occur, because Brigge flees the Big Thing and the Salpêtrière in one and the same movement, what does occur is the return of his childhood. To drop the idea of psychoanalysis just in time thus means to walk the royal road alone and lift infantile amnesias. But lower abdominal play is not what returns with the repressed; it is the debris of a horror that could not be spoken and for which "the Big Thing" is still a euphemism. What appears is something real that cannot be spoken in any language because the very act of introducing it into language filters it out. Only the primal sound of the overheard psychiatrist is capable of evoking it, whereas the pleas of Brigge the child and Brigge the twenty-eight-year-old to his doctors can do nothing.

The law governing delirium and hallucination determines that what has not entered the daylight of the symbolic appears in the real. The delirious Brigge becomes the debris of the debris that pours from his head. A second head, larger than the feverish one, blocks his eyes and mouth. Everything happens, then, as if Rönne's impossible gesture were possible.

The brain, this warm bluish boil, turns itself inside out and encloses the external world. Because no one and nothing can introduce the material substratum of language into language, the shadow of neurophysiology falls on Brigge's mouth.

What occurs in the place of this eclipse is—writing. “I have taken action against fear. I have sat all night and written,”⁶³ Brigge writes of the fear that drove him in and then out of the Salpêtrière. Writing therefore means: to put the exploded “inner-world space,” the tumescent brain, down on paper, rather than have the explosion or tumor treated by the appropriate scientific methods. From then on Brigge spends his days reading in the Bibliothèque nationale and his nights writing on the sixth floor of his hotel. Rilke once told Gebattel that one cannot live without the couch, but one could “read and write and endure”;⁶⁴ Brigge uncouples his writing from speech and communication: he notes down whatever makes him mute, and when he writes letters they are never sent. There is no longer any question, then, of a life in poetry, led simultaneously in Atlantis and Dresden, on paper and in loving embraces. The medium of script reveals its coldness; it is purely archiving. Therefore it cannot replace, represent, or be life, but only remember, repeat, and work through. To do something against fear means to write down the fear itself.

The objects of writing are neighbors who somehow come within hearing, who creep out, and in some cases reach the brain to multiply and thrive there like pneumococci. The objects of writing are insane kings whose flesh has become indistinguishable from the amulets that cover it and the worms that devour it. The objects of writing are the dead heaped over battlefields, intertwined like a monstrous brain, and the dying, all of whose accumulated meanings vanish and for whom a large tumor rises in the brain—like a sun that transforms the world for them.

There is thus only one object of writing: the primal soup of brain physiology. What interests Freud is its organization; what interests Brigge is noting it down.

Better perhaps to have remained in the darkness, and your unconfined heart would have sought to be the heavy heart of all that is indistinguishable. . . .

O night without objects. O obtuse window outward, o carefully closed doors; arrangements from long ago, taken over, accredited, never quite understood. O stillness in the staircase, stillness from adjoining rooms, stillness high up against the ceiling. O mother: o you only one, who shut out all this stillness, long ago in childhood. . . . You strike a light, and already the noise is you. And you hold the light before you and say: it is I; don't be afraid.⁶⁵

The fact that there is articulation at all becomes the enigma of a writing that inevitably articulates. Because Brigge (unlike Freud) does not raise the standards of his medium to norms of the real, it remains a question

whether they are “better” than primal soup. But thus his simple description correlates with psychophysical results.

It is wrong to assume that originally (as soon as the sense organs function) there were nothing but particular impressions out of which secondary connections among impressions were then formed. . . . The original situation should rather be thought of as a diffuse, whole sensibility. For example, when we lie daydreaming on the sofa with closed eyes, we do not notice anything particular in the brightness that penetrates our eyelids, in the distant noise on the street, in the pressure of our clothing, or in the temperature of the room, but rather fuse all these things in the totality of our receptivity. Such—though much more vague and muffled—is how we must first think of the sensibility of the infant. Before we investigate the associations between particular impressions, we must first ask how the child manages to isolate a particular phenomenon out of this confused, whole state.⁶⁶

As anticipatory as ever, Ebbinghaus addressed this question to his colleague, Stern, and isolated infantile isolation.

A very young child looked from a particular position into a particular room. He received a diffuse, hardly differentiated impression. Now his mother pulls him in his wagon into an adjoining room; for the most part another whole impression replaces the first. But the mother and the wagon have remained the same. The optical stimuli they produce thus find the material disposable to them as well as their mental effects somewhat prepared in advance, and in addition they reinforce one another through mutual association; the other, modified stimuli do not have this double advantage. . . . The impression derived from the sight [of the mother] forms more and more easily on the one hand, and on the other hand it differentiates itself more and more from the various diffuse backgrounds in which it was originally dissolved: the sight of the mother becomes a progressively more independent part of the given whole impression.⁶⁷

When one isolates the perceptual isolation of the child rigorously enough, it is no longer that of the child. The construction of articulated environments proceeds through the first human contacts. What Ebbinghaus describes coincides with what Brigge calls the shutting out of the indistinguishable. The *Notebooks*, or the *Remembrance of Things Past*, critically decried as “mystical” or “oedipal” whenever they evoke childhood and the mother, simply inquire into the elemental relation, circa 1900, between particular and background, sign and primal soup, language and primal sound. The answer to this inquiry can only be that discrete signs arise from sheer iteration. The mother (in Ebbinghaus) must return in order to be distinguished from the diffuse backgrounds; the mother (in the *Notebooks*) must say, “It is I, don’t be afraid.” Behind all identities and selections lurks the endless region of darkness.

“We know not what the imagination would be without darkness, its great school.”⁶⁸ reads the first empirical, child-psychological study of its kind, *A Study of Fears*. Eleven years before the *Notebooks*, in his case

histories Stanley Hall archived all the childhood fears of Brigge: aside from mirrors, needles, and masks, there was also the moment that played such a key role for Malte and Marcel.

28. F., 18. The great shadow over all her early life was the dread of the moment her mother should kiss her good night and leave her alone in the dark; she lay tense and rigid, held her breath to listen with open mouth, smothered herself under the clothes, with which her head must always be covered, fancied forms bending over her, often awoke with her heart pounding and a sense of dropping through the air, flying or falling backward, feeling quivery for hours; she now vows "I will always put my whole foot on the stairs."⁶⁹

The fact that Otto Rank's book on incest picked out the corresponding fear of Brigge, and only that one, as if to apprehend one more oedipal suspect,⁷⁰ betrays the competition between literature and psychoanalysis. Childhood fears were copiously noted down in the discourse network of 1900. Psychophysics provided the theoretical and statistical framework; psychoanalysis and literature made texts of fitting individual cases, until the system was complete. None of the three discourses had solid points of reference in the two others; there is only a network of the three.

The object or abject caught in the net, however, was the child. None of the three discourses has any further concern for what mothers do and say, for the kind of love or education they instill in their children. Instead of minimal signifieds of a first love, all that counts are the first signifiers on an indistinguishable background. The archiving of first signs, even if they are as vague as "the Big Thing" or as babbled as the "o-o-o-o-/da," that is, "*fort/da*" of Freud's grandson became a communal task.⁷¹ The iteration and opposition of minimal signifiers provided material enough for constructing a system. And systems exist to be written down.

One winter evening the child Brigge is drawing. A red pencil rolls off the table and onto the carpet. The child, "accustomed to the brightness above and all inspired with the colors on the white paper," cannot find the pencil in the "blackness" under the table: *da/fort*. Instead, he sees his own searching hands as strange, blind creatures. Much has been written about this depersonalization, but not about the pencil, paper and blackness, these three necessary and sufficient conditions for a medium, of which interpretations themselves are a part. And the pencil returns years later, as if it came back from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, only to designate itself as the sign of a sign. A little gray woman turns it over endlessly in her miserable hands, until Brigge realizes that "it was a sign, a sign for the initiated," and senses "that there actually existed a certain compact" with the woman.⁷²

Pencils are produced in order to make signs, not to be signs. But right before Brigge's eyes the woman transposes the writing instrument into

special contexts that cut across the literary-alphabetic code. The pencil, once lost in the signless darkness of the carpet, as if in a jungle, returns as “the Big Thing” to reduce all writing to one code among others. Precisely the fact that it is “old,” if not a piece of debris, makes it significant. In the *Notebooks* newspapers are sold by a blind man, who cannot read them.⁷³ Writing materials come to be misused by sign-giving analphabets. And so it goes in a discourse network that measures cultural technologies by their deficiencies and particular things by their degree of wear and tear. The pretty pictures produced prior to its disappearance by Brigge’s pencil under the gaze of a reading governess do not count; for they are only the Basedow raisins of an alphabetizing power. What counts and is therefore put down on paper is the analphabetic adventure with writing material and paper. Freud’s patient, the one who confused *m* and *n*, knew this story well.

The discourse network of 1800 had archived the way in which children autonomously reproduced the engrained alphabet. But it did not begin to comprehend other children with other pleasures/fears. The discourse network of 1900 cut apart the pedagogic feedback loop and directed children to write down their analphabetism. It was a paradoxical and impossible role that could only be taken on as simulacrum.

Brigge fills pages about an old pencil; the art-education movement had essays written on “The Rusty Pen.” Packed together with 144 other similar pens in industrial boxes three weeks previously, it is finally “good for nothing else” than to be thrown in the waste basket. But because only use singularizes, the useless pen becomes the subject of a writer. His semi-official name is the happy child; his empirical name is Heinrich Scharrelmann—a high school teacher who, in the place of pens and pupils that don’t write, wrote a book entitled *Happy Children*.⁷⁴

As it is in little things, so it is in big ones. At the convention of the art-education movement in Weimar, which dealt with German language and literature from October 9 to 11, 1903, laymen were in attendance along with thirty-four educational bureaucrats. One of the nonteachers, Dr. Heinrich Hart, clarified his status at the beginning of his address.

When my friend, Caesar Flaischgen, asked me to speak about the choice of literature for schools at the art-education conference, I was seized by a slight fear. How could I possibly presume to speak about educational matters! I have never—I must admit to my shame—stood at the lectern, and any educational talent I possess barely suffices to educate myself. (*Laughter*.) I intended to decline the invitation at once, when it occurred to me that I have indeed had a relationship to schools in one respect, and how would it be if I presented myself to the gathering of distinguished art educators not as a colleague, but as a pupil. . . .

The three combined words, “Education, School, Poetry,” do not resound with inspiring harmony in my poor pupil’s soul. I will not go into further detail about

what I suffered and endured during the years that I was taught, infused with, and force-fed poetry. "I don't want your pity." I will only say, if you will pardon me this, that for a time I placed poetry in the same category as cod-liver oil and medicine.⁷⁵

With this bitter pill for educational bureaucrats, the pupil himself speaks up. But what would have been a scandal in the discourse network of 1800 produces only hearty laughter among the art educators. The mythic pupil can say that medicine is the shadow side of pedagogy. He can say that he is neither educated nor an educator, simply because the highest alphabetization (reading the Poets) never reached him. Instead, Dr. Hart became (as he is listed in the program of speakers) a "writer." After Nietzsche, the career path of makers of words presupposes not being able to read. Anyone who "still has nightmares"⁷⁶ about reading Horace in school is a walking archive of childhood fears, perfectly suited to the sciences of nonsense. "The analysis of material from pupils," reads one questionnaire that queried prominent people concerning their *years as pupils*, "is a necessity that cannot be sufficiently stressed."⁷⁷ And observe: the most bitter and derisive items in this material come from "poets and writers."⁷⁸ Indeed, among people who could speak it was considered fashionable in 1912 "to view the tragedies of youth and school children, which had been portrayed in a few fine stories of the period, as something that was almost obvious and obligatory."⁷⁹

That is only logical in a discourse network that needs someone for the impossible role of the writing analphabet. Writers are thus commissioned to simulate the pupil or the madman. Children who in searching for lost pencils fail to recognize their own hands are no less delirious than children whose reading of Horace still gives them nightmares decades later. When the art-education convention puts writers on the program in order to draw all their plans for reform from the "poor pupil's soul," the simulacrum of madness receives semi-official recognition. Ellen Key's "school of the future," in which first of all the analphabets "pronounce their judgment" on teachers and lesson plans found its beginning.⁸⁰

But the tragically isolated Poet is the most cherished illusion of interpreters. One overlooks the system-immanent function of literature. Texts written to order for a new pedagogy were at best credited as portrayals of the "suffering imposed by the social order."

The hero of Meyrink's *Golem* "repeats" words so often and so "spasmodically, that they suddenly appear nakedly as meaningless, frightening sounds from a barbaric, prehistorical past"—above all, the word *b-o-o-k*. His grand plan is to "take on the alphabet in the primer in reverse order from Z to A, in order finally to arrive at the spot where [he] began to learn in school."⁸¹ A as in ape—that is the null point at which Kafka's "A

Report to an Academy” begins. The leap out of a speechless and analphabetic ape-truth to the alphabetization of the report itself becomes the subject of a story that links the acquisition of language with a tootling gramophone and alcoholism.⁸² It is a force-feeding like Hart’s, by whose analysis future academies and culturization campaigns will profit.

Literary texts of 1900 record how an alphabetic culture is to be defined from an analphabetic outside. Brigge’s notebooks (to keep to the story) are also written with the child’s vanished pencil. “The infinite reality” of being a child, in which it is certain “that it would never end,” determines every sentence on reading and writing. Brigge never stops writing down the endlessness of agraphia and alexia.

It is well simply to recognize certain things that will never change, without exploring the facts or even judging them. Thus it became clear to me that I never was a real reader. In childhood I considered reading a profession one would take upon oneself, later some time, when all the professions came along, one after the other. . . .

Until the beginning of such changes I postponed reading too. One would then treat books as one treated friends, there would be time for them, a definite time that would pass regularly, complaisantly, just so much of it as happened to suit one. . . . But that one’s hair should become untidy and dishevelled, as if one had been lying on it, that one should get burning ears and hands as cold as metal, that a long candle beside one should burn right down into its holder, that, thank God, would then be entirely excluded. . . .

Of what I so often felt later, I now somehow had a premonition: that one had no right to open a book at all, unless one pledged oneself to read them all. With every line one broke off a bit of the world. Before books it was intact and perhaps it would be again after them. But how could I, who was unable to read, cope with them all?⁸³

If being alphabetized means being able to translate immeasurable heaps of letters and books into the miniature model of meaning, then it is and remains a norm of the others, beyond Brigge as only the Beyond can be. A historical system departs from the earth to disintegrate in beauty and nothingness.⁸⁴ In this world, to which Brigge remains true, there are only bodies, burning ears, and cold hands. These bodies can either not read at all or, when they sit in the *Bibliothèque nationale*, are completely strange bodies, without eyes and ears and with “the hair of someone sleeping.” Everything looks, then, as if professional readers were more analphabetic than a child, who at least still believes in the illusion of being able to read in the future. Instead, those who frequent the library—who for the first time in the history of German writing are described from the outside—have indeed learned something, but at the price of their disappearance. “One is not aware of them. They are in the books.”⁸⁵

In 1799 the warning was issued to undertake all reading “in the workplace of our inner selves” and “not to forget ourselves” over what we are

reading. Otherwise we would “lose our presence of mind and become insane through distraction.”⁸⁶ In 1910 it makes no difference whether one can read or not: madness overtakes one anyway. Because there is no synthetic function capable of selecting among the enumerable masses of data with the eventual aim of establishing meaning, books continue to pile up beyond any possible comprehension. According to Brigge, reading would only be possible and permissible if it could accommodate all books. Thus in reading an impossible exhaustion takes the place of transcendental apperception.

In 1803 one could assure that the healthy mind “seeks to establish unity everywhere in the manifold, and processes all given material according to its organization. In the consciousness of self it winds the immeasurable thread of time into a ball, reproduces dead centuries, and gathers the infinitely extended limbs of space, mountain ranges, forests, and the stars cast over the firmament into the miniature portrait of an idea.”⁸⁷ The poetic screenplays of 1800 and their ability to gather up space and time could not be more beautifully described. Space shrank for cultured writers/readers until the world fit into the box of the *New Melusine*, or the whole earth, in a poetic dream of flight, “looked only like a golden bowl with the finest engraving.” Time shrank for cultured writers/readers until “the longest stories” were “pulled together in short, brilliant minutes,”⁸⁸ or the immeasurable threads of one’s own life came together into the yarn of a briefly leafed-through book of Provençal poetry. Such miracles become impossible under the law of exhaustion. Certainly technical devices are extraordinarily capable of expanding or contracting time and space. But a device is not a mind and establishes no unity in whatever dispersion it encounters. It is of no help to people. In their bodily forgetfulness, agraphia, and alexia, they can only work through serial data (to borrow once more the apt language of programmers) in real-time analysis.

The twenty-four hours in the life of Leopold Bloom undergo a real-time analysis. Real-time analysis threatens to become *la recherche du temps perdu*. Only a real-time analysis can “achieve” (in the Rilkean sense) childhood. But the rule of remembering, repeating, and working through does not govern only biographies and psychoanalyses. Without “choice or refusal,”⁸⁹ Brigge’s notebooks also present what every hermeneutics has avoided: power. “For whatever of torment and horror has happened on places of execution, in torture-chambers, madhouses, operating theatres, under the vaults of bridges in late autumn: all this has a tough imperishability, all this subsists in its own right . . . and clings to its own frightful reality. People would like to be allowed to forget much of this; sleep gently files over such grooves in their brains.” But just as

“dreams . . . trace the designs again,”⁹⁰ so do the *Notebooks*. That is, they intentionally refuse to provide a miniature portrait, as Reil quite rightly characterized it, in the spirit of German classicism; rather, they provide real-time analysis of engrams. It is a procedure as “fateful” as only pre-Gutenberg technologies could be. For what moved and delighted a certain insane king of France in passion plays was “that they continually added to and extended themselves, growing to tens of thousands of verses, so that ultimately the time in them was the actual time; somewhat as if one were to make a globe on the scale of the earth.”⁹¹

A globe on the scale 1 : 1; Brigge could erect no finer monument to commemorate his descriptive procedure. He only needs to take care that nothing exceptional creeps into the process, even something as minimal as the act of writing itself. Yet as a twenty-eight-year-old, when he reads Baudelaire or the book of Job, Brigge is still not completely alphabetized. Because “an alphabetic individual thinks only in particulars,”⁹² his dealings with texts remain a Passion Mystery.

There it lies before me in my own handwriting, what I have prayed, evening after evening. I transcribed it from the books in which I found it, so that it might be very near me, sprung from my hand like something of my own. And now I want to write it once again, kneeling here before my table I want to write it; for in this way I have it longer than when I read it, and every word is sustained and has time to die away.⁹³

Thus Brigge, in his personal book, despite Gutenberg and Anselmus, writes as if he were a simple monk-copyist. But if reading is choice and refusal, then models of texts, too, can only be permitted on the scale of 1 : 1. Writing becomes, rather than miniatures of meaning, an exhaustion that endlessly refuses to end. For if Brigge has transcribed the passages (which of course are not disfigured with authorial names) from Baudelaire and Job, the effect is still as if he had never done it. He must, he intends to, “write it once again,” so that each word can function in the real time of its being written down. “Transcribing is superior to reading and spelling in that the motoric representation of writing is immediately linked to the sensory representation of writing and to the motoric representation of language.”⁹⁴ And so it goes. The *Notebooks* actually contain two pages that Brigge transcribes from his transcription, that the publisher Rilke transcribes from this transcription of a transcription, and that the printing press transcribes countless times (throughout which Baudelaire’s French of course remains untranslated).

“How do we raise the level of performance in German?,” asked an art educator the year the *Notebooks* appeared. His answer: through “transcription exercises,”⁹⁵ the subroutine that psychophysics had so rigorously isolated. Under the pressure of competition from other media,

writing once again became what it had been before universal alphabetization—a professional specialty—while ceasing to be indivisibly and automatically coupled with reading. Because writing requires manual craft, transcription replaced reading among the practitioners of high literature. Dealing with texts thus became the *One Way Street* at whose junction Benjamin (a pupil of art-education) recognized the despotic traffic sign of the signifier. His observation that “the reader follows the movement of his ego in the free space of reverie,” whereas “the transcriber” lets this movement be “commanded”⁹⁶ could have been transcribed from the *Notebooks*.

The discourse network of 1900 rescinds the freedom of the writing imagination. No one who picks up a pen, from a child in school to a writer, is better positioned than the professional typists who with each “hand movement . . . follow the instructions *literally*, that is, *do nothing more* than what they stipulate.”⁹⁷ There is a method to exercises in writing and transcribing. The age of engineers demands technically exact reproductions of technical processes.

Brigge’s father had stipulated in his will that the doctors should perform a perforation of his heart. The son explains why, rather than avoiding such a horrible sight, he reproduced it as a literary witness. “No, no, nothing in the world can one imagine beforehand, not the least thing. Everything is made up of so many unique particulars that cannot be foreseen. In imagination one passes over them and does not notice that they are lacking, hasty as one is. But the realities are slow and indescribably detailed.”⁹⁸ The sentences practice the insight they contain. They themselves owe nothing to imagination, but are rather transcriptions of art-pedagogical method. Heinrich Scharrelmann had pointed to a fundamental unimaginability years before Brigge.

It is unbelievable how little we adults see, how inexactly we observe things around us. . . . How many bicycles the city dweller sees rush by every day. If one is not the owner of a bicycle, who knows all its parts very well, one might try to sit down and draw it. The most incredible sketches would be produced, because memory fails the drawer and he doesn’t know where the pedals are attached, whether the chain is linked to the front or back wheel, where the seat is, and so forth. One need only attempt to make a mental sketch of any everyday object to be struck by the poverty and inexactness of our notion of that object.⁹⁹

One need only read the perforation of the heart and the bicycle in parallel, as examples of literary and pedagogical practice, to determine that they are not examples at all. Writing circa 1900 necessarily addresses operations and apparatuses as the only two approaches to the real. In fact, there can be no miniature portraits of the real, as they were cherished by inwardness and produced by the imagination. Circumstances

that “are composed of many individual details” escape the grasp of any hermeneutics; they have to be scored up and denumerated. The reason is simple: there are only constructed facts or circumstances. Programs, diagrams, and numbers exist in order to encode the real. Thus the philosopher Alain, continuing in the line of Scharrelmann and Brigge, summed up all the criticism of the poetics of Kant and Hegel in the terse observation that one cannot count the columns of an imagined Pantheon.¹⁰⁰

The fundamental unimaginability of the real calls for autopsies in which its discrete elements are specified one after another. That is what Brigge does in Paris when (avoiding the Pantheon) he makes torn-down houses, blind newspaper sellers, hospital waiting rooms, and moribund patients the subject of a writing that proceeds exhaustively, like technological media. Poets who hate the approximate belong in a culture of doctors and engineers. Torn-down houses still count in technology, as do hopeless cases in medicine. The writer takes pleasure in making use of discarded material—and therefore broken-down walls take the place of the Hall of Fame. Engineers and doctors make particular things that function; Brigge’s writing does the reverse when it “makes” the accidental and singular newspaper seller “the way one makes a dead man.”¹⁰¹ It changes nothing in the logic of construction.

It changes nothing, not even if the construction seems to be imaginary. Before Scharrelmann and thus long before Brigge, Daniel Paul Schreber, “in the unending monotony of my dreary life,” trained himself in a kind of “drawing” that consisted in establishing representations, without pencil and paper, of landscapes and women’s breasts “in such surprising faithfulness and true color” that Schreber himself and the divine rays “have almost the exact impression of the landscapes I want to see again as if they were actually there.” The solitary man at Sonnenstein thus imagined, but with such precision that the imagination could go hand in hand with physiology. “In the same way as rays throw on to my nerves pictures they would like to see . . . I too can in turn produce pictures for the rays which I want them to see.”¹⁰² Nothing distinguishes nerve rays thus impressed from the angel to whom Rilke, beginning with the *Duino Elegies*, showed the simplicities and details of the earth.

But those who have no dealings with nerves or angels are forced to develop techniques of material reproduction. In contrast to the inexactness that adults betray in drawing bicycles, Scharrelmann’s pupils practice gestural simulation.

When I next asked, “How does the knife sharpener work?,” many children were at once prepared to imitate the movements of the sharpener. They imitated not only the pumping of the foot on the pedal and the hands holding the knife, but they also mimicked the bent back, the head thrust forward, the shifting glances to

check the edge, brushing off dust, and so on, so naturalistically, carefully, and completely that I was astounded at the accuracy and certainty of the children's ability to observe. I myself have sometimes learned to observe carefully some adult action by first watching children imitate it.¹⁰³

This, too, is a method for raising the level of achievement in German. Instead of writing interpretations and thoughtful essays, the pupils engage in a bodily reproduction of technical processes, a reproduction that teaches observation and description. One need only trade the knife sharpener for an epileptic (which is more appropriate for the literary use of discarded material), and one has "The Portrayal of the So-Called Jerk-Tic by Rainer Maria Rilke." As a psychiatrist showed in a study with that title, the *Notebooks* provide a clinically exact picture of the illness, completely in keeping with the conception of it in contemporary medical science.¹⁰⁴ It is not a question of the so-called jerk-tic's portrayal by Rainer Maria Rilke, however, but of its simulation by Malte Laurids Brigge: in the description, Brigge follows his mad subject, takes on his anxieties and gestures, and only thus encounters something real that would remain closed to empathy or hermeneutics. When a man with jerk-tic and another man who simulates him as naturalistically, carefully, and completely as Scharrelmann's class simulated the knife sharpener, when these two walk down the Boulevard Saint-Michel, one after the other, then an allegory walks through Paris: the writer as simulator of madness.

The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge could perhaps better be called *Memoirs of My Simulations of Nervous Illness*. Just as the rule of exhaustion that governs all Brigge's descriptions returns in the writing itself, so also does the procedure of simulation. A key passage shows that Brigge's hands as well as his feet follow the tracks of madness. After he has noted how all prearranged meanings vanish at the moment of death and how a tumor in the brain becomes the sun of a new world, there is a note that describes his own note taking. "For a while yet I can write all this down and express it. But there will come a day when my hand will be far from me, and when I bid it write, it will write words I do not mean. The time of that other interpretation will dawn, when not one word will remain upon another, and all meaning will dissolve like clouds and fall down like rain."¹⁰⁵

Anyone who, as occult medium, predicts the end of hermeneutics and the victory of occult media, has a right not to be subjected to hermeneutics. No commentary, then, only further evidence for "the time of that other interpretation."

In the century of the child, there was a reform movement for free essay writing. The free essay was the opposite practice of the rereading that classical-romantic times established as the rule of the German essay—

whether as interpretation that presented another reading of the work or as the thoughtful essay that promoted thoughtful, writing hands. In the free essay, that the pupil does not “reread” anything, that “his pencil flies across the table,” is “just right.”¹⁰⁶ “To produce means to give the creative power free reign over the treasure chests of our brains.”¹⁰⁷ The pupils are thus permitted to write what is inscribed in their brains, not what they believe their teacher believes they ought to be thinking. This freedom is “not at all easy” to bring about: “They always insist they aren’t allowed to write ‘that kind of thing.’”¹⁰⁸ The reason: for a century the pedagogic essay stood under the sign or title “Our School Essay as Disguised Dime Novelist.” Pupils have “had eight years of instruction in essay writing, have written ‘good’ essays every week; every sentence has been scrutinized, filed down, and propped up.” They have “had to analyze characters in *William Tell* and write reports about deep-sea fauna.” Because a logic of the signified stood over the whole process, the essay “was charged with the task of unifying all preceding exercises (orthographic, grammatical, etc.) into a whole.”¹⁰⁹

The free essay, by contrast, uncouples the subroutines whose imaginary unity has been called German. It is pure writing: writing minus grammar, orthography, and the norm of the high idiom. But that can only occur when rereading is no longer practiced, by teachers as well as pupils, when essays no longer return censored in red ink. The self-imposed censorship that forbids writing “that kind of thing” is the “feed forward” command of a discourse carried on with the Other. A number of uncounted voices circa 1900 demanded an end to the red marks in the essay’s margin,¹¹⁰ until an elementary school teacher in Leipzig came out with a monograph on the subject. Paul Georg Münch’s polemic *Around the Red Inkwell* corrects essay corrections with probably the best-proven means that psychophysics can muster against the presumptions of sense. “These strange distorted pictures between the lines! These ugly red checks, needles, squiggles, claws, thorns, snakes . . . ! And everything conscientiously registered once more on the margin! Doesn’t this edge really look like the ragged flag of Chinese marauders? Turn the essay upside down and just let the image of burn marks and black ink sink in: you’d think you were in the company of the mummies of tattooed south-sea islanders!”¹¹¹ A class of signs breaks apart under ethnological observation until nothing remains but a naked, Nietzschean power of inscription. Münch uses turning upside down (the technique Ebbinghaus and Morgenstern recommended for newspapers and the contents of images)¹¹² to urge his colleagues in the educational bureaucracy to forget their forebear Lindhorst and to read, not the essays, but their own corrections as squiggles and ink marks.

Teachers without red ink necessarily become experimenters, and free-essay-writing pupils become their subjects. "The nature of pedagogical problems" is identical to "the question of the localization of mental operations in the brain. In both cases experiments are required."¹¹³ If Ziehen's association tests with school children in Jena had the theoretical effect of freeing psychology "from the unnatural, but until now unshaken patronage of logic," then the free essay had the effect, which puzzled Ziehen, of being able "to construct in a practical way—*sit venia verbo*—instruction in association."¹¹⁴ It provides "immensely important documentation in empirical pedagogy" and gives "the scientists" among the teaching staff "findings in experimental psychology."¹¹⁵ Thus one should not be taken in by the attribute of freedom. What is at stake when pupils free associate on topics of their own choosing has nothing to do with the autonomous child's mind of 1800. What applied, rather, was the fundamental psychoanalytic rule that an uncontrolled flow of speech liberates the fatality of the unconscious. Experimental psychology is nothing without evidence, data—which is why uncorrected essays provide an opportunity for teachers to trade in their obsolete red ink for a more scientific variety of marker, one that can be used in statistical tests and evaluations of *The Evidence of Hearsay in Children*.¹¹⁶ Literary bohemians, however, who could not be suspected of favoring disciplinary measures, supported these methods. For Peter Hille, any adults who perpetuate the irresponsible "old-style education" have "no business with children." Their new privilege was to "oversee this beautiful, fresh young world."¹¹⁷

There is no such thing as a document that documents nothing but its author. Automatic writing, psychoanalytic association, the free essay—all provide evidence of powers that reduce the writer to a medium. Even impressionistic essay exercises necessarily issue in dictation.

I conduct impressionistic exercises daily with my nine- and ten-year-olds. I have six or eight of them come up to the classroom windows with pencil and paper and have them observe things in their environment in the natural light, rather than in the lighting of the classroom, and then write about what they see. They are to name the simplest things on the street and should see how the moment brings these things together. Their thoughts can then be embodied in words without constraint, their senses can dictate their experiences into writing without delay, and this proceeds without any thought being given as to whether the sentences might yield a "good" essay or not.¹¹⁸

In Münch's experiment, then, the senses dictate, and these in turn take dictation from whatever occurs on the street. It is no accident that his book ends with an emphatic reference to the new *Exercise-Program for the Infantry*, which appeared in 1906 and also programmed the immediacy of stimulus and response.¹¹⁹ Whether it is a pencil or rifle, then, the

hands that hold it are unencumbered by an ego (or, in the end, a teacher) and its intentions. Consequences other than depersonalization would contradict a discursive rule that stipulates “the avoidance of orthography, punctuation, as well as words and phrases not based in sensation”¹²⁰ and that applies to children as well as the insane. The free essay in German was an experiment in coupling the two impossible sentences, *I am writing* and *I am delirious*.

This linkage is quite clear in the experiment set up by Oskar Ostermai, a teacher in Dresden. One year before Brigge, the serious *Journal of German Instruction* reported unheard-of news to its readers.

I had a seventh form. The children were used to writing free essays on their experiences and did this with enthusiasm and joy. One day a child arrived at nine o'clock instead of at eight. The child had a letter from his father, which stated that the child had become sick the previous evening, but had insisted that he be allowed to go to school at nine o'clock at least so that he could write his essay. And what did the child want to write? “How I got a fever last night.” At ten o'clock the child had to return home and was then absent for several days.¹²¹

Thus, a child with a fever writes how he got the fever. The senses that dictate their data into writing without delay are delirious. But only a father still calls the delirium an illness; the child and the teacher take it as a necessary and sufficient ground for essays in which the act of writing guarantees what is written. For a single school hour the child appears out of the indistinguishable ground of all media and articulates this ground, before it again becomes all powerful. Hall's *A Study of Fears* continues its experimental course, and madness circa 1900 radically dissolves its old affinity with illness and finds a place far from pathology—in discourse itself. “There will come a day when my hand will be far from me, and when I bid it write, it will write words I do not mean. The time of that other interpretation will dawn, when not one word will remain upon another, and all meaning will dissolve like clouds and fall down like rain.”

Writers appear in the place of the feverish child that writes down his fever. At twenty-eight Brigge is still unable to understand how he “managed wholly to return from the world” of his childhood, speechless fevers.¹²² Because he does not understand, the fever's recurrence in the insane asylum is no reason to wait for the doctor in the next room. “Like one who hears a glorious language and feverishly conceives plans to write, to create in it,”¹²³ Brigge leaves and runs to his desk. There he notes down what fever is, freed from the tutelage of logic and the high idiom—namely, not fever at all, not a nosological entity, but “the Big Thing.” Only words from a child's language could adequately represent the Thing in (to use the jargon of German teachers) “form and content.”

Brigge writes free essays. His *Notebooks* do not parallel the art-

education movement in the history of ideas; they carry out that movement's program. Informed contemporaries, such as the experimental psychologist Ernst Meumann, saw that the free essay provoked "the outgrowth of expressionism and futurism" as well as of "modern lyric poetry." Indeed, it taught "future generations . . . linguistic confusion and undisciplined thinking."¹²⁴ Germanists, however, when confronted with a meaning that falls like rain, have little inkling of "the other interpretation." They have searched meticulously for the artistic symmetries, arrangements, and unifying laws in Brigge's serial notes and have attempted to weaken the suspicion of Angelloz that such things don't exist. One must suspend the interpretive disposition in writing a free essay, or else the essay will become "memorandum stuff, slogan provisions, dressings for skeletal intentions."¹²⁵ Like Münch's pupils, Brigge notes the simplest occurrences with the simplest aleatory method: "how the moment brings these things together."

When Rilke, with Brigge, opts for writing and against psychoanalysis, he sounds like Münch: "Piety keeps me from allowing this intrusion, this great cleaning and straightening up that life does not do—from this correction of a written page of life, which I imagine as thoroughly marked with red improvements—a foolish image and certainly a completely false one."¹²⁶ Foolish images do demonstrate something, then—namely, that literature circa 1900 joined the struggle around the red inkwell. Rilke's image is false only in its judgment of a science that would do as little to restore proper form and meaning to errors in language as would literature, and would instead use them to trace unconscious signifiers. In any case, Rilke's renunciation of psychoanalysis makes clear that *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* indeed are the written page of life in uncorrected rough form.

Georg Heym, writer and doctoral candidate at the University of Würzburg, received the following response from one of its committees: "The law and political science faculty has decided not to accept the work submitted by you in its present form, in that it does not meet the faculty's requirements. According to the report, the work contains so many typographical errors and deficiencies in sentence structure that it obviously has not been proofread after having been typed."¹²⁷ This officially determines what is not a work and who is not an author. In the discourse network of 1800, to which faculties continue to belong, rereading established a corpus out of heaps of paper and an imaginary body called the author out of people. But someone like Carl Einstein's Bebuquin, who prays for the sickness and dissociation of his limbs, in order to attain another kind of writing through "metamorphosis" or "dissolution,"¹²⁸ someone like Brigge or Heym, who deliver uncorrected pages, whose

hands write independently of the ego, functions differently. Authors are not needed for utilizing discarded psychophysical nonsense. Arbitrary individual cases are necessary and sufficient; they count as discarded material to be utilized. The pencil in the woman's hands, which do not use it at all, signals something quite simple to Brigge the observer: he, the writer, is one of those whom his notebooks so exhaustively record—"refuse" or "husks of humanity that fate has spewed out."¹²⁹

Intransitive writing, practiced by writers as well as children, whom the discourse network of 1900 "places side by side,"¹³⁰ is an anonymous and arbitrary function. Now that children no longer perform the brilliant feats brought about by premature alphabetization, in which letters immediately became hallucinations, the recruitment of well-known authors no longer takes place. Arbitrary individual cases that for one reason or another have acquired paper (perhaps given to them outright by members of the art-education movement) just gather aleatory data. "If I give three eight- or nine-year-old boys a few cents for spending money and send them to the fair in Leipzig, then two of the three will certainly buy themselves a notebook. And it doesn't matter how tempting . . . the roller coaster or Turkish gingerbread are: two of the three will still buy notebooks!"¹³¹ So much for the initial situation from the point of view of the experimenter. Now for the experimental confirmation from the point of view of the experimental subject.

If I had a notebook at hand, or if there were any other opportunity, I would write down what occurs to me. Something is always occurring to me. So I incur a major occurrence, which I'd like to record with incurred innocence.

It's not all too hot; blue floods through the sky, humid and blown up from the coast; each house is next to roses, some are completely sunk in them. I want to buy a book and a pencil; I want to write down as much as possible now, so that it won't all flow away. I lived for so many years, and it has all sunk. When I began, did I still have it? I no longer know.

But if all this is possible—has even no more than a semblance of possibility—then surely, for all the world's sake, something must happen. The first comer, he who has had this disturbing thought, must begin to do some of the things that have been neglected; even if he is just anybody, by no means the most suitable person: there is no one else at hand. This young, insignificant foreigner, Brigge, will have to sit down in his room five flights up and write, day and night: yes, he will have to write; that is how it will end.¹³²

It is a precarious and arbitrary practice, the writing of these interchangeable individual cases. But at least it realizes, materially, manifestly, the impossible sentence *I am writing*. Otto Erich Hartleben, civil servant, candidate for the high court, and subsequently a writer, first demonstrated that "the activity of the court apprentice is certainly one of the

most noble of all human activities, because it can never be replaced or rendered superfluous by any machine. . . . The court apprentice effortlessly defies the inventors of the cheapest and best typewriters. As little as a typewriter might cost, he costs even less: he is gratis." From this, it follows that Hartleben's period of candidacy fulfilled a childhood dream:

Writing! To be able to write, perhaps to become a real writer. This wish had essentially been fulfilled. I was allowed to write, I could write, indeed I had to write. And if for the time being I was not putting my own thoughts and figures down on paper, but mostly dictated reports, I could at least console myself with the thought that not everything could happen at once. In any case: I had attained what was manifest, material, in my wish: I was writing.¹³³

Writing is the *acte gratuit* itself. It makes neither an author famous nor a reader happy, because the act of writing is nothing beyond its materiality. The peculiar people who practice this act simply replace writing machines. Because technologies and pathologies are convertible circa 1900, the bachelor machines known as writers have to be pretty much crazy in order to have any pleasure in the *acte gratuit*. No one promises them a silver taler or the daughter of a Lindhorst, but only the mystical union of writing and delirium.

The beginning of writing will thus, to follow Brigge's lead, always be its end. What Ball's Laurentius Tenderenda "would like to record with incurred innocence" slips out of others' hands. Karl Tubutsch, the hero of a novella by Ehrenstein, watches two flies drown in his inkwell, in consequence trades his pen (lacking a typewriter) for a pencil, and finally does not write at all.¹³⁴ It is not necessary, then, for one's own black heart to drown first in the inkwell, as with Nietzsche; even two dead flies can stop an act as precarious and delirious as writing. "What keeps me from making an end to everything, from finding eternal rest in some lake and inkwell or solving the question What God gone mad or demon does the inkwell belong to, the one in which we live and die? and To whom in turn does this God gone mad belong?"¹³⁵

Poetic works of 1800 belonged in the Kingdom of God. An Absolute Spirit, in which no member was sober, consumed all authors and works at the end of their earthly cycles. The authors turned in their civic names at the chalice of this realm of spirits, but only in order to attain the infinity of interpretation and the immortality of meaning.

A completely different God stands over the discourse network of 1900 and its inkwells. He has gone mad. In him the simulators of madness have their master. When the insane God drinks, it is not in order to sublimate fantasies in a threefold sense. Where in 1800 there was a function of philosophical consumption, one hundred years later there is bare anni-

hilation. Writers who drown in the inkwell of the insane God do not achieve the immortality of an author's name; they simply replace anonymous and paradoxical alphabets who are capable of writing down a whole discourse network from the outside. For that reason there are no authors and works, but only writers and writings.

Titles like *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* are not approximations. They designate a denumerable collection of letters in their materiality and an arbitrary writer—"this young, insignificant foreigner, Brigge"—in his singularity. In Ehrenstein's story, one sees the same thing. The first sentence is: "My name is Tubutsch, Karl Tubutsch. I mention that only because I possess very little other than my name." And the last is: "But I possess nothing, nothing at all that could make me glad in my heart of hearts. I possess nothing except as mentioned—my name is Tubutsch, Karl Tubutsch."¹³⁶

Brigge, Tubutsch, Rönne, Pameelen—the names do not vanish in a *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, which is Spirit itself and therefore nameless. But the fact that these names remain behind demonstrates only their nullity. All the bare last names paraphrase Nietzsche's phrase that there is as little to makers of words as to words. An insane God rules over makers of words, and this God, lacking omnipotence, is ruled by other powers. It is not hard to guess their names. The fact that after the fly accident someone recommends to Tubutsch that he buy a typewriter reduces the demonology of the inkwell to the nothingness it is under technical-physiological conditions. These other powers have no need for literature. Technology and physiology survive without the Interpretation of the Poet, which in the discourse network of 1800 was created by chairs in philosophy. After the toasts between Goethe and Hegel became obsolete, there was no longer an address at the university for anything that makers of words produced. Having fallen to the third and last place of the discourse network, literature became the debris it described.

In 1900 there is no universal educational bureaucrat to legitimize poetic works, because they legitimize the bureaucrat. The practice-oriented educational bureaucrats became experimenters and conducted media transpositions, not interpretations, with literary texts.¹³⁷ The philosophy professors left texts to the professors of literature, who had become one type of media professional among others.¹³⁸ Where the discourse network of 1800 enthroned Man or the Bureaucrat as the king of all knowledge, there was left a gaping hole. Therefore writers could only simulate children and the insane, the subjects of psychophysics; apart from simulation, there was the reality, the act, of becoming a functionary. "They were given the choice of becoming kings or king's messengers. Like children, they all wanted to be messengers. Therefore there are nothing but mes-

sengers; they race through the world and, because there are no kings, call out their messages, which have become meaningless in the meantime, to each other. They would gladly quit this miserable existence, but don't dare to because of their oath of office."¹³⁹

Such is the comment, still nicely metaphorical, of the bureaucrat Kafka on the professional position of writers once the king's position has been done away with. The same phenomenon was described with deadly seriousness by a technical illustrator who entered the Silesian insane asylum, Troppau. The conspiracy described in minute detail by Anton Wenzel Gross operates without any central, commanding figure. All it takes to drive him insane is a group composed of "supposed mailmen, court clerks, policemen, guards," and, above all, "lithographers, book printers, typesetters, die makers, stamp cutters, chemists, pharmacists, technicians."¹⁴⁰ They are all discursive functionaries, then, with the technical competence to block channels of information or postal contacts at crucial points, or, in the guise of professional benevolence, to falsify documents and reports that would have rehabilitated Gross. As such they are identical to the mindless beings who, with mechanical precision, carried out the task of driving a bureaucrat by the name of Schreber out of his mind. The discourse network at Sonnenstein also stored only the falsified nonsense that other and equally subaltern nerve messengers shouted into Schreber's ears.

Man or the Bureaucrat was the universal memory of all the products of the mind, but discursive functionaries constitute a disparate group with particular and circumscribed responsibilities. None stores everything, but together they obliterate the monopoly on books and meaning that had been incorporated under the name of Spirit. Whether they are called messengers by Kafka, letter carriers by Gross, or writing powers by Schreber—a physiologist's axiom applies to them all.

In physiology the distinction of partial memories is a familiar truth; but in psychology the method of "faculties" has so long forced the recognition of memory as an entity that the existence of partial memories has been wholly ignored, or, at the most, regarded as anomalous. It is time that this misconception was done away with, and that the fact of special, or, as some authors prefer, *local* memories, was clearly recognized. This last term we accept willingly on the condition that it is interpreted as a disseminated localization. . . . The memory has often been compared to a store-house where every fact is preserved in its proper place. If this metaphor is to be retained, it must be presented in a more active form; we may compare each particular memory, for instance, with a contingent of clerks charged with a special and exclusive service. Any one of these departments might be abolished without serious detriment to the rest of the work.¹⁴¹

Dispersed localization, operated by bureaucrats who can be dismissed and who are thus more like functionaries—this is a brain physiology that

also describes the factual discursive arrangements of 1900. If the faculty of all faculties, the Mind or Spirit, does not exist, then there are only the specialized functions of specified carriers of information. For this reason so many of Kafka's texts deal with the materiality of channels of information: the channels bleed into one another ("My Neighbor"); they function with dead or delay times ("An Imperial Message"); they are not thoroughly interconnected (*The Castle*); and whatever they transmit has no meaning beyond the statement that they exist ("Before the Law").

But the fact that messages become meaningless when there is no king at the origin and destination of discourses is only one, albeit thoroughly described, side of the contemporary discourse network. Technology makes it possible for the first time to record single and accidental messages. It is no longer possible for a philosopher to walk in and reduce protocol sentences to categories, or spoken words to written truth. Anything expressed remains undisputed and indisputable as it is, because specialized memory functions appear for the oddest bits of speech. In *Diagnostic Studies of Association*, which the great psychiatrist Bleuler left for his assistants at Berghölzli to finish, one of the four hundred stimulus words, in exact reprise of the *Phenomenology*, is the stimulus word *dark*. And one of the sixty-five experimental subjects, a "thirty-eight-year-old idiot," actually reproduced the unforgettable protocol sentence of sense certainty. "Dark: that is now."¹⁴² But this did not move assistant doctors Jung, Riklin, and Wehrli to repeat the experiment twelve hours later or to show the thirty-eight-year-old idiot, with speculative finesse, the idiocy of his conception of "now." Translations into the native land of the signified are not the prerogative of functionaries, but of the Discourse of the Master. Bleuler, meanwhile, did not derive even one philosopheme from the 14,400 recorded associations, but instead wrote a preface to them in which he described the omnipotence of unconscious associations with the example of "when I, for instance, write about associations." Thus "Dark: that is now" returns once more, but in the act of writing. The idiot and the director of the experiment are in the end only the marionettes of their "bodily sensations."¹⁴³

An entire *Phenomenology* resulted from the refutation of the sentence, "The now is night." The entire discourse network of 1900 is fed by the return of an opaque thisness. The rough material for an essay that Ostermai's pupil handed in at ten o'clock, before his bodily sensations took him back home, probably also said only, "*Fever, that is now.*" That, at least, is what the parallel passage of the simulated madman Brigge suggests: "Now it," namely the Big Thing, "had returned." None of these instances of thisness has an address; none has a meaning. Dispersed specialized or local memories call out meaningless messages to one another.

With that, however, the sheer Now, or that which incessantly ceases, is halted for the first recorded time.

Recorders that record thisnesses become thisnesses themselves. That makes every instance of archiving into a discursive event. The less purpose a discourse in the discourse network of 1900 has, the more impossible it becomes to neutralize it. It follows that incomprehensible debris, that is, literature, incessantly does not cease. (Valéry's entire poetics deals with this.) A literature that writes down thisnesses exclusively or that appears as thisness in its words and typography occupies all storage equipment and so drives out the type of poetry about which "the name 'philosophical lyric' already says enough." The fact that Schiller, "an extremely learned poet," treated themes such as *Nature* or the *Walk* as "thought-out things . . . that are accomplished through abstractions and syntheses, and thus through logical rather than real or natural processes," disqualifies him and the entire conspiracy between Poets and Thinkers.¹⁴⁴ The vacated regal position then can and must be filled with many particular points of the present: recorders as singular as whatever they record. Whole series of chapters in *A rebours* and *Dorian Gray* list the most priceless objects—jewels, carpets, spices. But who reads such lists? Does anyone at all?

There are two possible answers to these questions, one esoteric and the other the opposite. Both are options in the same realm. The esoteric answer says that what is stored is what is stored, whether people take note of it or not.¹⁴⁵ Oscar Wilde, composer of one of the longest inventories of precious objects, unabashedly traced the creation of an excellent modern poetry in England to the fact that no one read and therefore corrupted it.¹⁴⁶ Thus Zarathustra's maxim of doing nothing for the reader is put into practice. The journal *Pages for Art* was devoted, it announced, to "a closed and member-invited circle of readers." Such scarcity-producing techniques, which program discursive events, have, of course, excited horror and contempt in upstanding citizens. But their attacks glance off a logic against which even critical theory, in order to raise any objection at all, is for once forced to believe in the People.¹⁴⁷ The esoteric Hofmannsthal, for instance, based his disinterest in everything "that one usually refers to as the social question" in an unassailable nominalism. "One never encounters it as anything real: and probably no one knows what it 'really' is, neither those who are in it nor even the 'upper classes.' I have never met the People. I don't think the People exists; here, at least, there are only folks."¹⁴⁸

The impossible real that dominates all recording and memory circa 1900 thus becomes a kind of pragmatic linguistics. A literature in which only particulars are written down will recognize, among its readers or nonreaders, only particular readers. The vernacular expression *folks* has

no philosophical or sociological status. It is a sign for the second possible answer, for stochastic dispersion, the white noise over and against which media are what they are.

It makes little difference, then, whether literature deals with decadence or with what has sunk to the level of debris, whether it simulates aristocracy or psychosis. On the unattainable reverse side there will always be stochastic dispersion, especially in the option opposed to esotericism. With his beginnings in Prague, Rilke first adopted Wilde's posture, as when in his lecture on modern lyric poetry he thanked the German public for its notorious disinterest. Modern poetry can be because people let it be.¹⁴⁹ Yet Rilke personally distributed collections of his and others' poetry. "I've sent a number of copies to civic organizations and guilds, to bookstores and hospitals, etc., and have distributed *Chicory* myself in several areas. Whether they will really reach 'the people'—who knows? . . . I'm counting on chance to see that a copy here and there will arrive among the people and find its way into a solitary room."¹⁵⁰ This mode of distribution solves the social question in that it puts *the people* between quotation marks and establishes only individual cases. Rilke's strange wanderings through Prague seek out the "folks" that for the esoteric Hofmannsthal solely constitute the real. But "people" can no longer be sought out, because there are no longer any multipliers and hence no longer any methods for the distribution of poetry. Rilke's project avoided schools, the only institution that produces readers as such. And the hospitals and guilds he included function less as multipliers than as the letter-drops used in espionage. The writer, fallen to the level of functionary, lets his *Chicory* (as the plant name indicates) fall on the biblical stones by the side of the road. All he "counts" on is "chance." And one cannot calculate chance without using statistics. Whether literature since 1900 reaches anyone at all remains a question for empirical social research.

The only philological evidence available is the way in which impossible addresses to particular readers, or measures adopted in order *not* to reach the educated individual enter textuality. Only a mode of dealing with debris counts as a mode of distributing texts that constitute the debris of a discourse network. In this, literature opposes the classical-romantic program of proliferating Poetry.

A final word on Hoffmann and Lindhorst. Young men and feminine readers were caught in the classical-romantic manner with very finely woven nets. The well-known bureaucrat and secret Poet commissioned a judge and Poet to function as a poetic multiplier. This secondary Poet then brought a young man into the picture, who learned hermeneutic reading so perfectly that he became capable of writing Poetry. Feminine

readers were then able to puzzle endlessly over which woman was the true object of the Poet's love, and young but poetic bureaucrats, faithful disciples of Anselmus, learned to read the image of Woman with sufficient hallucinatory vividness to be able to find the image again in so-called life. Nothing in this program survived the turning point of 1900. The eradication of the ambiguous name, which could designate author-individuals like Anselmus or Amadeus *and* bureaucrats like Heerbrand or Hoffmann, was enough to ensure the break. Even though Rilke scholars continue to make friends with Malte, Malte Laurids Brigge nonetheless remains the "young, insignificant foreigner, Brigge." The name as pure signifier excludes imaginary identification. Kafka's "K." and "Joseph K." allow only the kind of game that Freud played with his anonymous personnel of Emmy v. N's and Anna O.'s. Such bare and dismembered family names cannot support a continuous history of *Bildung* and thus alphabetization. Heroes that labor under agraphia or alexia can never represent the Author.

"Biography no longer counts. Names don't matter," as it was once put in the telegraphic style of 1912.¹⁵¹ The name that in the discourse network of 1800 was or became "sound and smoke" ("Schall und Rauch"; *Faust*, l. 3457) was of course that of the Master—HErr. After its eradication, authors' names could fill its place, and their poetic biographies could inspire readers to write and feminine readers to love. But the despotic signifier that stands over the discourse network of 1900 orders soul murder or the twilight of mankind. Thus authors' names disappear, some into the nullity of individual cases, others into a factual anonymity. "He who knows the reader, does nothing further for the reader"—so, according to Nietzsche, he provides no information on his own spiritual history and the "probable further course of his development." Döblin the doctor, for instance, gave this psychoanalytic comment on Döblin the writer: "I have nothing to say concerning my mental development; as a psychoanalyst, I know how false any self-disclosure is. In psychic self-relation I'm a touch-me-not, and approach myself only through the distance of epic narration."¹⁵² Rubiner, for instance, took the anthology title *Twilight of Mankind* literally and refused the publisher's traditional request for biographical information. "Ludwig Rubiner requested that no biography be included. He believes that the recounting not only of acts but also of lists of works and dates derives from a vain error of the past, that of the individualistic grand-artist. His conviction is that only anonymous, creative membership in community has any importance for the present or future."¹⁵³

The writers who beginning in 1912 contributed to a journal with the significant title *The Loose Bird* [i.e., "a loose fellow"]—such as Max

Brod, Robert Musil, Ernst Stadler, Robert Walser, and Franz Werfel—carried the project to factual anonymity. Rubiner explains what the loose bird means:

Anonymity is the rule in this journal published by Demeter. Is it possible to conceive of a word that would give the least indication of this shake-up, of the bliss of this realized utopia? What must be made clear is that a century whose function was to give us mess tins, single-sized boots, and scores by Wagner no longer exists as a hindrance for the mind. . . . Anonymity is again the rule in a new journal: that is, after a century there is once again commitment and relation.

The day that *one person* really had the courage to think the concept of anonymity through to its end is the day that belongs to the creative period of contemporary history.¹⁵⁴

The anonymity of loose birds is thus an intentional break with classical-romantic writing, a discursive event intended to make discursive events possible. In the elite space of the cult of the letter that the discourse network of 1900 left to makers of words, an earlier, widespread practice is taken up “again.”¹⁵⁵ This “relinquishing of the author” can be psychi-atrically conceptualized as depersonalization¹⁵⁶ or celebrated as the creative act of “the mind”—in each case anonymity guarantees words the effects of radical foreignness. “The mind leaps into the stone-walled space of the objective. A word, a sentence is left to resound in the world.”¹⁵⁷

But beware: the *one person* who “really had the courage to think the concept of anonymity through to its end” could be named George. When in the last issues of *Pages for Art* “authors’ names were omitted as nonessential elements,” Rubiner, the upright leftist without name or biography, was alarmed. Then the one, despotic signifier, without betraying names, issued the call to World War I. Words were left to resound in the world and could not be neutralized by ordinary legal procedures.¹⁵⁸ And it became terrifyingly clear what “loose bird” means.

UN COUP DE DES JAMAIS N’ABOLIRA LE HASARD.

Artists who no more sign their works than “the earth signs the grass that grows out of it,”¹⁵⁹ who leave their *Chicory* on corners at workers’ pubs, who issue their right- or left-wing calls to battle without the civic attributability of names, all perched on stochastic dispersion and operated in the strategic field. The discourse network of 1900 created the conditions of possibility for a genuine sociology of literature. The combined program announced in Gustave Lanson’s title *Literary History and Sociology* follows the loose birds and depersonalized writing hands that have flown across paper since 1900. The fact that writers write words that an ego neither intends nor answers for makes the book a social fact. “The book, therefore, is an evolving social phenomenon. Once it is published,

the author no longer possesses it; it no longer signifies the thought of the author, but the thought of the public, the thought of the publics that succeed one another in turn.”¹⁶⁰

Here, what divides theory from practice is that Lanson writes about thoughts, whereas for a long time signifiers had not only not signified an author’s thoughts, but not signified anything at all. Whatever factual readers do with the social fact of the book can be done entirely without thinking. When a school library opened its *Poetic Treasure* to ten-year-old Hans Carossa in 1888, he “did not understand a tenth of what [he] read,” but was “gripped and formed by the sound and rhythm of the poems.” Orders are always more effective when nothing or no one neutralizes them. Where Reiser, Karl Friedrich von Klöden, *e tutti quanti* were offended by incomprehensible letters, Carossa was bewitched, as if by magical incantations. What offended him was just the opposite. “I was a little disturbed in the beginning by the names that stood beneath each poem and did not belong there; at least I could not imagine what such funny words as *Klopstock*, *Rückert*, *Mörrike*, *Goethe*, or *Kopisch* had to do with that intimate music.”¹⁶¹

A young man like Carossa is incapable of letting his anger issue into acts and eradicating funny names like *Goethe*. The wrath of a mature woman is required. This woman’s name is Abelone and she is unable to sit by when a man named Brigge unsuspectingly reads around in *Goethe’s Correspondence with a Young Girl*.

“If you would at least read aloud, bookworm,” said Abelone after a little. That did not sound nearly so quarrelsome, and since I thought it high time for a reconciliation, I promptly read aloud, going right on to the end of the section, and on again to the next heading: To Bettina.

“No, not the answers,” Abelone interrupted. . . . Then she laughed at the way I was looking at her.

“My goodness, Malte, how badly you’ve been reading.”

Then I had to admit that not for one moment had my mind been on what I was doing. “I read simply to get you to interrupt me,” I confessed, and grew hot and turned back the pages till I came to the title of the book. Only then did I know what it was. “And why not the answers?” I asked with curiosity.

Abelone seemed not to have heard me. She sat there in her bright dress, as though she were growing dark all over inside, as her eyes were now.

“Give it to me,” she said suddenly, as if in anger, taking the book out of my hand and opening it right at the page she wanted. And then she read one of Bettina’s letters.

I don’t know how much of it I took in, but it was as though a solemn promise were being given me that one day I should understand it all.¹⁶²

Lanson’s law is rigorous. Books circa 1900 are social phenomena, possessed by no one, not even their original author. Historical change makes

Goethe's Correspondence with a Young Girl into the correspondence of a woman with no one—because a second woman interrupts every time Goethe, in the name of his name, puts off a loving admirer. A century later, his name is gone; Brigge has to look back at the title for it, and Abelone (like the *Notebooks* as a whole) does not even pronounce it.

Discursive manipulations are incisions. Topologically speaking, mapped onto the discourse network of 1900 a correspondence carried on during the years 1807 to 1812 is no longer equivalent to its earlier self. Proximities in a book (between love letters and replies) are destroyed, and other proximities (between love and love and love) are established. The transposition of media creates a new corpus, the corpus Bettina Brentano. “Just now, Bettina, you still *were*; I understand you. Is not the earth still warm with you, and do not the birds still leave room for your voice? The dew is different, but the stars are still the stars of your nights. Or is not the whole world of your making?”¹⁶³ The corpus of Bettina Brentano, also called the world, appears in the place of authorship and of the dominance of the work. Where the creator named Goethe is absent, space fills with the voices of birds and women. A letter writer who was quite happy to be insignificant does not become an author posthumously. But what she wrote into the wind ceases, in the absence of authorship, to cease. Precisely because it does nothing but eternally repeat a love, this writing is suddenly timely. It is timely when the eternal recurrence of opaque thisness defines all writing.

Each discourse network alters corpora of the past. The anonymous or pseudonymous women who remained at the margins of writing circa 1800 now move into the center of the system, because the authors or men in whose work they perished were perishing in turn. *Women in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century German Intellectual Life*—whether in statistics or in increasing singularity, women were honored in such monographs circa 1900.¹⁶⁴ Goethe's mother, with her orthographically catastrophic letters, provided a model for the free essay.¹⁶⁵ Rahel Varnhagen is taken to be a “great power” of the classical period.¹⁶⁶ George dedicated a poem to the shore of the Rhein where Karoline von Günderode threw herself in. Bettina Brentano, finally, marked the limit and failure of Goethe. When intransitive writing becomes the sign of literature, unheard-of women, writers of letters, prefigure the new act of writing, whereas texts written in authorial code and thus familiar to the general world of readers become anathema. Brigge writes to Bettina Brentano:

You yourself knew the worth of your love; you recited it aloud to your greatest poet, so that he should make it human; for it was still element. But he, in writing to you, dissuaded people from it. They have all read his answers and believe them rather, because the poet is clearer to them than nature. But perhaps it will some-

day appear that here lay the limit of his greatness. This lover was imposed upon him, and he was not equal to her. What does it signify that he could not respond? Such love needs no response, itself contains both the mating-call and the reply; it answers its own prayers.¹⁶⁷

Significantly, it was not Brigge who achieved this transvaluation of all values. By reading Goethe's answers he would have cancelled out the intransitive love once more, if he had not read so badly and for the sole purpose of being interrupted. If there is to be an *écriture féminine*, one must put an end to *alphabétise*. Instead of progressing continuously toward his own authorship by reading Goethe, Brigge exposes his reading to an interruption that functions like the Geneva stop of film or the tachistoscope of psychophysics. When Abelone takes up the book and reads, she does not substitute good reading for bad. For the first time, she reveals (as Larisch might say) the "between" of Goethe's answers. Her listener does not gain hermeneutic understanding, only the promise that "one day" he "should understand it all."

A woman who reads out loud the unheard-of (in both senses of the word) love letters of a woman closes a circle around both sexes that excludes male hermeneutics. Because there is no author to suggest to feminine readers that his soul is the cryptic word of their love, Abelone is released from the obligation of close reading. The functions that defined the sexes in the discourse network of 1800, the productive continuation of texts and pure consumption, both fall away. Brigge is not Anselmus and Abelone is not Veronika. He hands the book to her and she does what she likes with it. One hundred years later, then, what was impossible between Bettina Brentano and Goethe occurs. "But he should have humbled himself before her in all his splendor and written what she dictated, with both hands, like John on Patmos, kneeling. There was no choice for him before this voice which 'fulfilled the angels' function."¹⁶⁸ Reading aloud in a voice that continues to amplify because it feeds back into another woman, Abelone dictates all of Brigge's future insights. She dictates what Bettina Brentano was unable to dictate under the conditions of classical discourse. The function of angels is of course to announce a death. Dictations are always the death of the author. Whereas Goethe "left empty" the "dark myth" that a woman's voice had prepared for his death,¹⁶⁹ the writer of the *Notebooks* assumes this myth. The era of the other interpretation means being without the honorable title of author and being subject to the dictates of others. Kneeling, as Goethe failed to, Brigge transcribes. With that, however, the promise that emanated from Abelone's incomprehensibility "is still being fulfilled."¹⁷⁰

Everything written about women in the *Notebooks* is dictated by a resounding voice, at once Abelone and Bettina: that, for instance, there is

nothing to say about her, “because only wrong is done in the telling”;¹⁷¹ that there is no question of writing letters to her, only drafts of letters that Brigge does not send; that all attempts to rise to the level of an author by writing for young ladies (as Goethe might have put it) come to nothing against the will of women “to remove from [their] love all that was transitive”;¹⁷² and that an intransitive love can only consist in a kind of writing that circa 1900 is incorporated as literature. What does it mean that women, according to Rilke, “for centuries now . . . have performed the whole of love; they have always played the full dialogue, both parts”?¹⁷³ As in Adelbert von Hanstein or Ellen Key, it outlines an alternative literary history consisting of unanswered and intransitive calls of love—of Bettina Brentano, Sappho, Heloïse, Gaspara Stampa, Elisa Mercoeur, Clara d’Anduze, Louise Labbé, Marceline Desbordes-Valmore, Julie Lespinasse, Marie-Anne de Clermont, and so many others.¹⁷⁴

Where the divinity of the author disappeared, women who write appeared, as irreducible as they are unread. Because their texts exist, their writers cannot be confounded with the One Mother who has made someone an author (as Goethe confounded even Bettina Brentano). The discourse network of 1900 obeyed the rule of impossible exhaustion nowhere more rigorously than in the field of sexual difference. Not only are Schillerian abstractions such as “Nature” or “*The Walk*” impossible, but so are all discourses that unify the sexes. Such is the insight that Brigge receives in dictation from his impossible beloved.

Is it possible that one knows nothing of young girls, who nonetheless live? Is it possible that one says “women,” “children,” “boys,” not guessing (despite all one’s culture, not guessing) that these words have long since had no plural, but only countless singulars?

Yes, it is possible . . .

But if all this is possible—has even more than a semblance of possibility—then surely, for all the world’s sake, something must happen. The first comer, he who has had this disturbing thought, must begin to do some of the things that have been neglected; even if he is just anybody, by no means the most suitable person: there is no one else at hand. This young, indifferent foreigner, Brigge, will have to sit down in his room five flights up and write, day and night: yes, he will have to write; that is how it will end.¹⁷⁵

Queen's Sacrifice

La femme n'existe pas. Women in the discourse network of 1900 are enumerable singulars, irreducible to the One Woman or Nature. All the media and the sciences that support the network compete in a queen's sacrifice.

Technical engineers make the first move. The Hungarian chess master Rezső Charousek, immortalized in Gustav Meyrink's *Golem*, immortalized himself through a queen's sacrifice. And Edison, as celebrated by Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, betrayed the secret of his profession. "By the way, I'd like to be introduced to that great lady 'Nature' some day, because everybody talks about her and nobody has ever seen her."¹

The novel *Tomorrow's Eve* unfolds this aphorism across its entire plot. An English lord has fallen helplessly in love with a woman whose beauty (as if to confirm the physiologist Paul Möbius) is surpassed only by the imbecility of everything she says. The father of the phonograph then decides to furnish his despairing friend with a love object that has no troublesome aspects. He reconstructs the man's beloved electromechanically in all her corporeality, but exchanges for her mind that of the Woman. Tomorrow's Eve—as Edison's automaton is called—"replaces *an* intelligence with Intelligence itself."² A "copy of Nature" is created, which is more perfect than the original in both mind and body, and which will thus "bury" nature.³ Not only is the flesh of the Android imperishable, but the cultural technologies built into her surpass all the possible desires of any lover. Instead of lungs she has two electrical phonographs—far ahead of the then-current state of research—which contain the most beautiful words of love ever spoken by Poets and Thinkers. Lord Ewald

has only to switch from one woman to the Woman and speak to the Android, and the two phonographs will spit out, according to the method of Ebbinghaus, the vocabulary fed into them. They are capable of producing different replies to tender words of love for sixty hours, as a mechanism plays through all possible combinations of the material.

Of course Lord Ewald, to whom Edison explains everything in technical detail, is shaken at first. He cannot think of loving an automaton's limited vocabulary and repertoire of gestures, until the engineer demonstrates that love is always only this litany. Whereas women in plurality (as the case of Abalone shows) say things entirely different from what men would like to hear, the Woman pleases with each of her automatic words. Edison showed before Erdmann, then, that not only every professional language but all everyday language makes do with a modest store of signifiers, and that, finally, in matters of love as well "the great kaleidoscope of human words" is best left to automatized female media-professionals.⁴

The programmed outcome occurs; Lord Ewald falls madly in love with the One Woman or Love; and Edison is able to bring a century of "ah's," "oh's," and Olympias to a close. "This must be the first time that Science showed it could cure a man, even of love."⁵ Only the spear can heal the wound it has made. The technological substitute perfects *and* liquidates all the characteristics attributed to the imaginary image of Woman by Poets and Thinkers. Spallanzani's Olympia could utter the one primal sigh; Edison's mechanical Eve talks for sixty hours. The great lady Nature whom everyone talks about and no one has seen dies of perfect simulation—*Tomorrow's Eve*, or the negative proof that Mother Nature does not exist. In consequence, only women in plurality remain after Edison's experiment, as discarded experimental material, to be sure, but nonetheless real.

After the technologists come the theoreticians. If the phantasm of Woman arose in the distribution of form and matter, spirit and nature, writing and reading, production and consumption, to the two sexes, a new discourse network cancelled the polarity. As long as women too have an "innate, ineradicable, blindly striving formative principle" that "seizes mental material,"⁶ the complementarity of form and matter, man and woman, is irretrievably lost. Henceforth there are Ariadnes, Bettinas, Abalones, and thus women's discourses. To formulate "the essential difference between the sexes" in "terms such as 'productivity' and 'receptivity'" is mere "parochialism in the age of modern psychology."⁷ Instead of establishing one sole difference between the sexes, modern psychology, through observation and experiment, discovers differential differences that are dependent variables or respectively applied standards.⁸ Even philosophers like Otto Weininger—who used psychophysical data and mea-

sured brain weight in an attempt to develop an ideal of each sex—concede that “in actual experience neither men nor women exist,” but only the mixed relationships or differential differences to which quantitative description alone does justice.⁹ Weininger’s less speculative colleagues did not even attempt to define ideals. The title of an essay by Ernst Simmel, “On the Psychology of Women,” written long before Brigge’s *Notebooks*, clearly indicates that it is impossible to speak of members of a sex except in the plural.¹⁰

The many women established in the discourse network of 1900 were looked at in every light save that of love. *Tomorrow’s Eve* shows, after all, that the necessary *and* sufficient condition for love is the Woman as simulacrum. Empirical individual females, unburdened of the ideal, took on other roles. They could speak and write, deviating from the classical polarity of the sexes. Franziska von Reventlow does not mention her child’s Name-of-the-Father anywhere in her writing. Accordingly, “we” are confronted, in an anthology entitled *Love Songs of Modern Women*, “not simply with the normal course of a woman’s love life,” but with “its demonic and pathological aberrations” as well.¹¹

Since 1896 the word and deed of psychoanalysis have existed to accommodate these demons and pathologies. The other illness for which Freud provided a cure—obsessional neurosis, the scourge of men—is “only a dialect of the language of hysteria,”¹² or of women’s language. Freud was faced with the radical new task of listening to women for thirty years and gathering everything they said under the enigmatic question “What does a woman want?” The fact that the question remained unanswered, as Freud finally confessed, not gratuitously, to a woman who had been his student,¹³ is one more piece of evidence for the nonexistence of the Woman. Her one “ah!” and the one way in which it might be cured, according to a classical therapist by the name of Mephisto, disappear together. The place left vacant is filled by enumerable words, which Freud registers, as if at the bidding of Edison in Villiers’s novel. Gramophones commands that one no longer read Holy Writ, but that one listen to divine vibrations—especially since hysteria, although a complete language, has as many dialects and variations as Morgenstern’s Weather-Wendish. Only by offering no response to the love of his female patients could Freud draw out the peculiar vibrations of female sexuality. This rule of nonresponsiveness established as part of psychoanalytic method what Brigge learned from Bettina and Abelone: there is no longer desire when satisfied by the other sex. When Freud once gave in to temptation and, following all the rules of transference, identified the desire of a female hysteric with a certain “Mr. K.” and this “K.” with himself, the cure failed. To the “complete confusion” of the beginner Freud, “the homo-

sexual (gynecophilic) love for Mrs. K.” was “the strongest unconscious current” of Dora’s love life.¹⁴

One of Lacan’s mathemes states that psychoanalytic discourse exists as the transposition of hysterical discourse. This implies that women are no longer excluded from knowledge. The nonexistent beloved of all men yields to drives and their vicissitudes, among which genital love is now only an accident—it is even taboo in the consulting room in the Berggasse. There was no Poetry to feed the enigmatic knowledge unknowingly transported by female hysterics, or to translate it into love for Freud, to his greater glory as author. Women’s knowledge remained knowledge and was transmitted to women—which indeed “would ruin any chance . . . of success at a University”¹⁵—as the science of psychoanalysis. Marie Bonaparte, to whom Freud divulged his question about the question of women, was only one of many women students; Lou Andreas-Salomé was another (to say nothing of Freud’s daughter).

“Ladies and Gentlemen”—so begins the *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, delivered at the University of Vienna during the winter semesters from 1915 to 1917. A discourse based on women’s discourse can and must, even under academic conditions, return to women. This distinguishes it from the Discourse of the University, which from 1800 on systematically excluded women so that countless bureaucrats could conduct their dance around the alma mater. Only a Great Mother could make possible the hero so necessary for subjects of the university to utter any knowledge: the author.¹⁶ A masculine discourse on and from the Mother fed university discourse, just as hysteric discourse fed psychoanalytic discourse. In 1897, immediately before the only university reform that has ever been worthy of the name, when Arthur Kirchhoff gathered his *Judgments of Prominent University Professors, Teachers, and Writers on the Aptitude of Women for University Study*, the university subject Dr. Hajim Steinthal opined that women should not attend the university, for “in the uncertain hope of producing another Goethe, I could only regret the certainty of losing a mother-of-Goethe.”¹⁷

Lectures to “Ladies and Gentlemen” thus eliminate, along with “Frau Rat,” the necessary preconditions of authorship, even if they produce a great many women writers and analysts. Either there is an alma mater on one side and on the other young men to whom (excluding such impossible women as Günderode) an authorial God’s Kingdom is revealed, or the whole interpreter’s game between man and the world comes apart. If man and woman, author and mother, can no longer be added up—and the synthesis of form and matter, spirit and world, was man in a psychological sense and the world in a philosophical sense—it was because on August 18, 1908, a forty-year war for the admission of women to univer-

sities finally led to victory, even in Prussia. It then became impossible to lead male and only male students around by the nose in the Faustian manner—during the lectures they had so many Cleopatra's noses right before their eyes.

The university reform was a radical turning point in the relationship between sexuality and truth. What disappeared was “the particular character of German students” and that “unbridled student atmosphere” known from the Auerbach's Keller (in Goethe's *Faust*). For the first time, women talked about sexuality and thus “cast off the ideal that Germans fortunately still demand from a woman.”¹⁸ In other words, only Eve or the One Woman can satisfy the desires of professors and male students, whereas the plurality of women students enter a domain of discourse that, since Edison, no longer knows love. “Having both sexes in the classroom” necessarily means “putting no emphasis whatsoever on sexual difference” and “confronting the phenomena of intellectual-historical life soberly and objectively” rather than in fantasies of love.¹⁹

No sooner said than done. Immediately before he delivers the good news to the ladies among the ladies and gentlemen present that, anatomically, they also have a phallus, and that in dreams they have the symbols wood, paper, and books, Freud states that he owes an account of his treatment of primary sexual characteristics.²⁰ His response matches the principles of coeducation just cited. “As there can be no science *in usum Delphini*, there can be none for schoolgirls; and the ladies among you have made it clear by their presence in this lecture-room that they wish to be treated on an equality with men.”²¹

Now that is equal rights. Nothing stands in the way of writing for women, who, first, *have* a phallus or stylus and who, second, *are* wood, paper, or books—least of all a determination of the human race that differentiated authors as engravers and women as the writing tablets of nature. If both sexes can be found on both sides of the difference, they are ready for a writing apparatus that can do without a subject and a stylus. There was a time when needles in the hands of women wove cloth, when pens in the hands of authors wove another cloth called text. But that time is past. “Machines everywhere, wherever one looks! There is a replacement for the countless tasks that man performed with an able hand, a replacement and one with such power and speed. . . . It was only to be expected that after the engineer had taken the very symbol of feminine skill out of women's hands a colleague would come up with the idea of replacing the pen as well, the symbol of masculine intellectual production, with a machine.”²²

Machines do away with polar sexual difference and its symbols. An apparatus that can replace Man or the symbol of masculine production is

also accessible to women. Apart from Freud, it was Remington who “granted the female sex access to the office.”²³ A writing apparatus that does not represent an erotic union of script and voice, Anselmus and Serpentina, Spirit and Nature, is made to order for coeducational purposes. The typewriter brought about (Foucault’s *Order of Things* overlooks such trivialities) “a completely new order of things.”²⁴

Whereas the first generation of women students, described in Marianne Weber’s *The Changing Image of University Women*, “consciously renounced the garland of feminine grace,” another type soon appeared. This type discovered “an infinite variety of new kinds of human contact in the previously unavailable possibilities of intellectual exchange with young men: comradeship, friendship, love.” Unsurprisingly, this type also “finds ready encouragement from most professors.”²⁵ Mrs. Förster-Nietzsche was told by a professor in Zurich that “the emancipated women of the earlier period are gradually becoming more charming,” and they “are highly valued as secretaries and assistants at universities and libraries.”²⁶ She could have heard the same thing from an ex-professor of Basel who went half-blind and had to alternate between using secretaries and typewriters.

“It is better to become the amanuensis of a scholar than to do scientific work at one’s own cost”—such was Ellen Key’s advice to working women.²⁷ They found a place in the university mid-way between being slaves at the typewriter and research assistants. As the example of Felice Bauer shows, the situation was the same in office work. Employed by a firm that happened to manufacture phonographs, Kafka’s fiancée was promoted from a secretarial to a managerial position in just a few years, simply because she was a good typist. Certainly “office work, whether keeping the books, handling accounts, or typing, gives a woman little opportunity to make her special, most characteristic contribution.”²⁸ Yet despite or because of this *The Entrance of Women into Male Professions*, as one title put it, occurred in the field of text production. Women have the admirable ability “to sink to the level of mere writing machines.” Whereas men, with the commendable exception of a writers’ elite and the Stefan George script, continued to depend on their classically formed handwriting and thereby blindly, without resistance, left a market position unoccupied, young women “with the worst handwriting” advanced “to operating a typewriter”—as if, from the pedagogue’s point of view, “one were building a church tower in thin air, having forgotten the foundation walls.”²⁹

That is just it. Foundation walls no longer count. Remington typewriters turned the systematic handicap of women, their insufficient education, into a historical opportunity. The sales division of the firm just cited had

only to discover, in 1881, the masses of unemployed women—and out of an unprofitable innovation came the typewriter as mass-produced product.³⁰ A two-week intensive course with a rented typewriter made the long classical education required for the secretary Anselmus and his fundamentally male colleagues in the nineteenth century unnecessary. “The so-called ‘emancipation’ of women”³¹ was their taking hold of the machine that did away with pedagogical authority over discourse. Office work, in Germany and elsewhere, became the front line in the war between the sexes because it was “not a profession protected by entrance and selective examinations.”³²



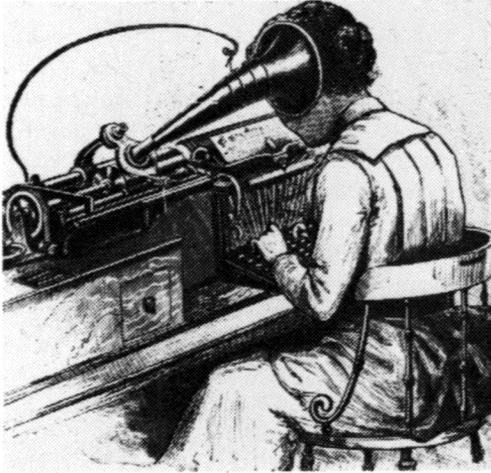
Jonathan Harker, a lawyer in an English notary office, keeps a diary while traveling to Transylvania with documents to be delivered to Count Dracula. The notebook is his salvation from the strange pleasures that

overcome the Count night after night. Harker, like Brigge, Rönne, Lauda, and all the others, notes: "As I must do something or go mad, I write this diary."³³ Harker has learned stenography, but even so notebook writers still gain identifiability, coherence, and thus individuality from their handwriting.

Meanwhile Harker's fiancée sits longingly at the typewriter back in Exeter. Whereas her betrothed will one day simply inherit the notary practice on the death of his employer, Mina Murray is sorely in need of new discursive technologies. She is an assistant schoolmistress but, not content with pedagogic half-emancipation, she dreams of doing "what I see lady journalists do." So she diligently practices typing and stenography in order to be able "to take down what he wants to say" after her marriage to Jonathan.³⁴ However (as Lily Braun had so rightly seen), the "disintegration of the old family structure" sets in "precisely where one thought oneself quite conservative":³⁵ for office girls, even if they have other dreams, there is no "return to any sort of position in the family."³⁶ The typewriter and office technology can never be contained in the closed space of motherhood. Their function is always that of the interface between branching and specified streams of data. This becomes clear as Stoker's novel develops.

Instead of simply taking dictation from Jonathan, now her husband, Mina Harker is forced to become the central relay station of an immense information network. For the Count has arrived secretly in England and is leaving scattered and fearful signs of his presence. One is a madman in whose brain the psychiatrist, Dr. Seward, discovers new and dreadful nerve paths; he immediately has the verbal traces of these paths spoken into his phonograph. Another is Mina's friend, Lucy Westenra; two small wounds appear on her throat and she becomes increasingly somnambulant, anemic, and (to put it briefly) hysterical. Finally, there is a Dutch physician, who "has revolutionized therapeutics by his discovery of the continuous evolution of brain-matter."³⁷ This allows him to discover what is actually behind the scattered evidence of the horror. But his insight would remain a gray theory of vampirism if Mina Harker did not undertake the task of exhaustive evidence gathering. She who dreamed of doing what she saw lady journalists do uses her typewriter to transcribe every diary entry, every phonograph roll, every relevant newspaper clipping and telegram, every document and log book. She makes copies of her transcriptions; she delivers these daily to all the investigators, and so on and on.³⁸

The Count, had he any idea of what was occurring, might have exclaimed in the words of Schreber: "For years they have been keeping *books or other notations*, in which all my thoughts, my verbal expres-



sions, my personal articles, all objects in my possession or anywhere near me, all people I come into contact with, etc., are *written down*.”

It is not always easy for a woman to incorporate into a text every shred of evidence of a perverse desire. Seward's (not to say Stransky's) phonographic roll turns faster than a typist's hands would like. The “wonderful machine” is also so “cruelly true” that the transcribing Mina perceives the beating of tormented hearts “in its very tones.”³⁹ But a discourse functionary does not give in, simply because she has become a discourse functionary. Her friend, however, like so many hysterics since Eugène Azam and Richard Wagner, suddenly manifests a second personality at night: while still wretched and docile, she refuses medication, draws her gums back from her eyeteeth, and speaks in an uncharacteristically soft, salacious voice. It is as if Kundry in the first act of *Parsifal* had become Kundry in the magic garden.

“What does a woman want?” In the discourse network of 1900 the alternatives are no longer motherhood or hysteria, but the machine or destruction. Mina Harker types, whereas Lucy Westenra's second personality is the will willed by a despotic signifier. On the one hand, a desexualization permits the most intimate diaries and most perverse sexualities to be textualized; on the other hand, there is the truth. Indeed, precisely the truth corresponds to Freud's original insight and was simultaneously being publicized by an extended juristic-journalistic dragnet: the fact that hysteria consists in having been seduced by a despot. Lucy's sleepwalking does not arise from her own soul, but from her paternal inheritance.⁴⁰ The dreams of wolves and the bites from eyeteeth are no fan-

tasies; they are the Count's engrams in brain and throat. Whereas Mina types, her friend ends up on the nocturnal side of machine writing. Two tiny bite wounds on the throat materialize Beyerlen's law that eyeteeth or a piece of type, through a single, brief application of pressure, place the entire engram in the proper position on skin or paper. "The spot that should be seen is always visible, except at the moment when visibility is necessary or is believed to be necessary." For blind acts of writing, only after-the-fact decoding is possible. But someone who, like Lucy's Dutch physician, is deeply immersed in Charcot's theory of hysteria can take the wounds and dreams of a hysteric for the sexuality they signify and hunt down the dream wolf (at the risk of becoming hysterical oneself) by the light of day.

No despot can survive when a whole multimedia system of psychoanalysis and textual technologies goes after him. The special forces have "scientific experience," whereas Dracula has only his "child's brain" with engrams dating back to the battle of Mohács (1526).⁴¹ He does have an inkling of the power about to bring him down, for otherwise he would not throw the phonographic rolls and typescripts he finds into the fire. But the hunters have Mina and "thank God there is the other copy in the safe."⁴² Under the conditions of information technology, the old-European despot disintegrates into the limit value of Brownian motion, which is the noise in all channels.⁴³

A stab to the heart turns the Undead to dust. Dracula's salaciously whispering bride, the resurrected vampire Lucy, is put to death a second time, and finally, on the threshold of his homeland, so is he. A multimedia system, filmed over twenty times, attacks with typescript copies and telegrams, newspaper clippings and wax rolls (as these different sorts of discourse are neatly labeled). The great bird no longer flies over Transylvania.

"They pluck in their terror handfuls of plumes from the imperial Eagle, and with no greater credit in consequence than that they face, keeping their equipoise, the awful bloody beak that turns upon them . . . Everyone looks haggard, and our only wonder is that they succeed in looking at all."⁴⁴ It is always the same story in the discourse network of 1900. The last lines of Henry James, before the agony began, were preserved by a typewriter. And the enigma of their meaning is the prehistory of this materiality.

The writer James, famous for his compact yet overarticulated style, turned to dictation before 1900 in order to move from style to "free, unanswered speech," thus to "diffusion" or flight of ideas. In 1907 Theodora Bosanquet, an employee in a London typing service who was at the

time busy typing the *Report of the Royal Commission on Coast Erosion*, was ordered to report to James, who in the initial interview appeared as a "benevolent Napoleon." Thus began Bosanquet's "job, as alarming as it was fascinating, of serving as medium between the spoken and machined word." Alarming, because Bosanquet was of course only the will of the dictator's will, who in his dreams again and again appeared as Napoleon. Fascinating, because she became indispensable: whenever the pink noise of the Remington ceased, James would have no more ideas.⁴⁵

Gertrude Stein's dark oracle predicted everything, all of it, even that an oracle was incapable of warning anyone. The writer who engaged a medium in 1907 in order to shift his style to "Remingtonese" was felled by a stroke in 1915. Sheer facts of literary history realize an epoch's wildest phantasm. The blood clot in the brain did not deprive James of clear diction, but it did claim all prearranged meanings. Paralysis and asymbolia know only the real. And this real is a machine. The Remington, together with its medium, were ordered to the deathbed in order to take three dictations from a delirious brain. Two are composed as if the emperor of the French, that great artist of dictation, had issued and signed them; the third notes that the imperial eagle is bleeding to death and why it is bleeding.

Nothing is more unthinkable, but nothing is clearer: a machine registers itself.

When King David was old and of many days, he asked for a beautiful young woman to warm him. And they gave him Abigail of Sunem. The writer does not ask for Theodora Bosanquet, but for her typewriter. And the queen's sacrifice is complete.

In the discourse network of 1900—this is its open secret—there is no sexual relation between the sexes. Apparent exceptions do not alter the fact. If Maupassant, who probably for the same venereal-ophthalmological reasons as Nietzsche occasionally dictated to a secretary, could not refrain from sleeping with her, it was only as preparation for a full-stage separation comedy.⁴⁶ The comedies of unification, by contrast, are left to the media and their literary ancillary industries. According to a fine tautology, men and women, who are linked together by media, come together in media. Thus the entertainment industry daily creates new phantasms out of the open secret of 1900. After Dracula's black heart has bled dry, the powerless hero Harker and his typist are able to have a child after all. As long as there are gramophones and secretaries, every boss and word-smith is smiling.

"My Honey Wants to Take Me Sailing on Sunday," runs a song from 1929, which sings out the industrial secret of its fiction in the first verse.

Träumend an der Schreibmaschin'
 saß die kleine Josephin',
 die Sehnsucht des Herzens, die führte die Hand.
 Der Chef kam und las es und staunte, da stand:

“Am Sonntag will mein Süßer
 mit mir segeln gehn,
 sofern die Winde wehn,
 das wär' doch wunderschön!
 Am Sonntag will mein Süßer . . .”

At the typewriter in a dream
 There sat little Josephine
 Her longing heart played with her hands
 The boss came and read it but didn't understand:

“My honey wants to take me
 sailing on Sunday
 we'll sail away
 and that will be so lovely!
 My honey wants to take me . . .”⁴⁷

The Lyre and the Typewriter, a 1913 screenplay that was unfortunately never filmed, promises to take up Anselmus's and Serpentina's dreams of Atlantis. It is included in Pinthus's *Movie Book*, and it links movies, the typewriter, and writing in a perfect picture of the times, in which only a gramophone and sound track are lacking. Richard A. Bermann's technological Atlantis begins when a swarthy typist comes home from the movies, which she loves to distraction, and tells her boyfriend everything promised in the silent film. The film within the film, however, begins with the opposite: a young writer of verses chews on his pen in vain and tears up sheets of paper after writing one line. “Ce vide papier que sa blancheur défend” inspires writers after Mallarmé only with the wish to flee.⁴⁸ The writer runs out and is soon following a woman, but she is not one of those who do it for money, and finally she closes her door in his face. Only then does the sign on her door, her promise, become readable.⁴⁹

MINNIE TIPP
 Typing Service
 Transcription of Literary Works
 Dictation

The writer rings the bell, is admitted, assumes a dictating pose and says: "Miss, I love you!" And Minnie—just like her namesake in Stoker, who also no longer knew anything as private—simply types it out on her machine.⁵⁰ The next day the bill arrives in the mail. When messengers without kings and discourse functionaries without bureaucrats transport messages from medium to medium, messages containing meaning or love do not arrive. Money, the most annihilating signifier of all, standardizes them. (In 1898 one thousand typed words cost 10 Pf.)⁵¹

If this were not enough, Bermann's screenplay stipulates that the typed line "Miss, I love you!" appear on the "white screen." Even if the woman had been sitting at a typewriter on which it was not possible to see the typescript, film would make amorous whispering mute, visible, and ridiculous. A discourse network of rigorous evidence gathering does not ignore the soul; it confronts it with mechanical devices and women who go to the movies. Bermann's screen reverses Demeny's phonoscope, which combined experimental phonetics and serial photography to divide the two seconds it takes a man's mouth to pronounce the sound series "JE V OUS AI ME" into twenty still shots of the mouth's successive positions.⁵²

But of course men grow in front of machines. Afterwards, the young writer is able to write poems about his love that Minnie Tipp finds readable and, through her copies, is able to turn into "several hundred perfectly transcribed manuscripts," which literary critics can read. With typewritten copy "one secures and increases one's market."⁵³ Thus the book goes to press and the divinely comic day arrives when the two, the man with the lyre and the woman with the typewriter, "no longer typed."⁵⁴ End of the film within the film. Francesca and Paolo, Serpentina and Anselmus in the age of the film screen.

The two lovers in the frame story, however, are not brought together. The swarthy movie-goer and typist sees in the film the triumph of the feminine power of reeducation in even the most outdated of male professions. To her friend, who believes in works written with the pen, the story means that the typewriter turns high literature into mass literature and makes women frigid. Whereupon the woman laughs.

Twenty-four years later this laughter will have infected the revue girls who dance across the keyboard of a giant typewriter in Billy Wilder's film *Ready, Willing, and Able*.

Yet *The Lyre and the Typewriter*, a year before it was written, was filmed—in the real. In 1912 the writer Kafka met Felice Bauer one evening at the house of Max Brod, immediately after the typist had been granted the head clerkship of her parlograph and dictation-machine firm



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or, in other words, had attained a power opposed to her previous position: she was allowed to sign *Carl Lindström* A. G. Kafka spent the following weeks in his office at a typewriter, which he was not accustomed to use and which he misused to write the initial love letters.⁵⁵ These letters revolve around a spoken word “which so amazed me that I banged the table. You actually said you enjoyed copying manuscripts, that you had also been copying manuscripts in Berlin for some gentleman (curse the sound of that word when unaccompanied by name and explanation!) and you asked Max to send you some manuscripts.”⁵⁶

Thunder and lightning, or the knock on the table. Jealousy of a nameless man in Berlin (who also dictates to Minnie Tipp, to the horror of the film hero),⁵⁷ jealousy of his friend (who worked in the telephone division of the Prague Postal Service)—jealousy of the entire media network, then, teaches the writer to love. This means that it is not love at all. Mr. K. and Felice B. (to speak with Freud and Mallarmé) will never be a single mummy under happy palms, even if they were only the palms in a library like Lindhorst's.

That evening defies description: Kafka and Brod are going through Kafka's still-unpublished manuscripts and selecting those that will eventually be published by Rowohlt. Also present is Felice, stopping over during a trip, who happens to mention that she enjoys typing manuscripts. She omits the fact that such work also pays—which distinguishes her from Minnie Tipp. But Kafka is already burning with love. He is able to type himself; there is even someone in his office whose job is to type for him, and Kafka's “principal task” as well as “happiness” consists “in being able to dictate to a living person.”⁵⁸ But this functionary is a man and has never declared that Kafka's happiness is his as well. Office work remains the one-sided pleasure of a pervert who, in spite of his bureaucratic position, constantly reverts to cunning measures à la George. As Kafka writes to Felice Bauer: “I could never work as independently as you seem to; I slither out of responsibility like a snake; I have to sign many things, but every evaded signature seems like a gain; I also sign everything (though I really shouldn't) with FK only, as though that could exonerate me; for this reason I also feel drawn toward the typewriter in anything concerning the office, because its work, especially when executed at the hands of the typist, is so impersonal.”⁵⁹

A woman who can type *and* sign documents is made to order for someone who systematically avoids signatures and yet, when switching from the office to his own desk every evening, is always betrayed by his handwriting. FK's double-entry bookkeeping, which registers the flow of documents in bureaucratic anonymity during the day and in literary manuscripts during the night, seems to have found a “happy ending.” With a

typist as wife, the unknown writer would have “the operational means of the printing press at his disposal” right at his desk.⁶⁰ It would be literally true that the typewriter “arrives as the liberator of those dedicated to the demanding service of the pen.”⁶¹

But Felice Bauer’s self-advertisement (not to say “the sign on her door”) is directed to Brod, and the man whose texts she transcribes is a professor in Berlin. Bauer’s professional independence does not rule out, but rather stipulates, that her literary taste, such as it is, places any number of writers above Kafka. The gloominess of intransitive writing hardly charms women. The composer of love letters therefore fabricated texts, even without Minnie Tipp’s adornments, that would be readable, indeed media-appropriate for typists. As if the feminine power of reeducation had taken root, Kafka showed intense interest in Carl Lindström’s company catalogs—because, like a second Wildenbruch, he considered gramophonics “a threat.”⁶² As if subaltern bureaucrats were more independent than female managers, Kafka made plans for a massive media network in the name of that very company. Lindström was to develop parlographs that could be connected to typewriters, to juke boxes, to telephone booths, and finally to that fearful recorder of real data, the gramophone.⁶³ This gigantic project could appropriately have been called Project Dracula, and, in the seventy years since it was written down, it has been realized. But Ms. Bauer (as far as one can judge from her side of the correspondence, which was destroyed) did not take up the suggestion.

Dracula appears once more, just where the marriage between the lyre and the typewriter does not take place. “Writing” in Kafka’s sense “is a deep sleep, and thus death, and just as one will and cannot pull a dead man out of his grave, so it is with me at my desk at night.”⁶⁴ From the site of this grave or desk the writer not only fantasized about the massive media network of a company whose strategy was the coupling and mass production of recording devices,⁶⁵ but he put such a network together, if only by using or misusing available technologies.

For twenty-four weeks he sent up three letters per day, but did not take a train, which would have brought him to Berlin in a couple of hours, and he did not answer the telephone. . . . The correspondence shows how it is possible to touch, chain, torture, dominate, and destroy another person, simply through the systematic and total use of the mail and telephone.

First, Kafka established an exact schedule of all mail pick-ups in Prague and of all deliveries in Berlin. Second, he plotted Felice’s movements between home and office by the hour, so he would know what time of day she would receive a letter, depending on whether it was addressed to her office or residence. Third, he determined the exact path each letter would take, through which hands it would pass, at home (conciierge, mother and sisters of the unfortunate) and at the office (mail-room, orderlies, secretaries). Fourth, he noted the time and distance taken by a

normal letter on the one hand, and by an express letter on the other. Fifth, he noted the time it would take a telegram to reach her. . . . If one considers that Kafka not only put the words he had just written into envelopes, but also made mysterious references to letters he had written but not sent and likewise stuck in, whenever they fit, recriminations that he had formulated weeks before; if one considers that, in extreme cases, he put the ten to twelve pages of a single letter, written at different times, into as many different envelopes and mailboxes, one must admit that Kafka maximized the dispatch of all modalities and schedules of the mail in order, with this collective firepower, to force Felice to surrender.⁶⁶

Cournot's brilliant analysis shows that in Kafka's stories the modalities of the technological channels of information—cross-talk and delay, networks and noise-levels—served no uncertain purpose. The love letters that Erich Heller celebrates as “the work of an unknown minnesinger from the first half of the twentieth century” break all technical records.⁶⁷ The anonymity of an FK has nothing to do with the namelessness of a minnesinger. It simply makes very clear that no love is to be given to women employed in discursive functions. The concentrated firepower of letters, express mail, and telegrams stands where cultured women or simple feminine readers once would willingly have been all eyes and ears. But the possibility of effortlessly recruiting feminine readers disappears along with the “meaning” that neither the writer Kafka nor the reader Bauer can find in “The Judgment.”⁶⁸ The reason Rilke distributed his *Chicory* so awkwardly, by hand, was that no one was asking for it. The fact that Kafka vied for an arbitrary individual with an empty face rather than for a public changes nothing in the lack of demand. Only the dead need technically calculate their love letters.

If writers in the discourse network of 1900 are the discarded material that they write down, then nothing can take place beyond writing itself. “I have the definite feeling that through marriage, *through the union, through the dissolution of this nothingness* that I am, I shall perish.”⁶⁹ There is no chance on either side of the Kafka-Bauer correspondence of words reaching through to a soul. On one side is writing that occupies the place of madness and incessantly dissolves into its nothingness.⁷⁰ On the other side, the processing of texts begins, which is no less transitory, only a medium among media.

The Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature proclaims the motto that masses of molecules and spinning electrons are more exciting than the smile or tears of a woman (*di una donna*).⁷¹ Rilke reported that one woman identified his cranial-suture-phonographic expansion of the five senses with “presence of mind and grace of love.” The writer, however, disagreed. Love “would not serve the poet, for individual variety must be

constantly present to him, he is compelled to use the sense sectors to their full extent."⁷² That means, as in Kafka's letter strategies and plans for the Lindström company, the creation of unheard-of media-network connections, such as those between coronal sutures and writing.

At the same time, the media-network amateurs Rilke and Kafka still politely formulated their queen's sacrifice: in gentle qualifications and love letters that were machine written and thus not love letters. But the expressionists had bad manners. "Get out with your love!" cries Ehrenstein's Tubutsch.⁷³ Döblin demanded, in a single sentence, "the self-loss [*Entselbstung*], the exteriorization of the author" and the end of literary "eroticism." The dissolution of the function of authorship drove all love out of books: love described as well as the constitutive love that joined the Poet and feminine readers in empathy. Material equality on paper guarantees quite "naturally" that "the novel has as little to do with love as painting has to do with man or woman."⁷⁴ When the imagination and "feeling" no longer react, then "love, woman, and so on" disappear from "a literature for discriminating bachelors."⁷⁵

So much for programmatic declarations from the founding period. To conclude, consider later, confirming evidence from two exact literary historians, who have registered the central fact and its preconditions. Benn and Valéry demonstrate in theory and practice that the new order of things, founded by the typewriter, is the space of contemporary writing. "Circa 1900," the union of love disappears from paper.

Art is a truth that does not yet exist. In the most significant novels since 1900, women are ranged in categories: in the ethnic-geographic (Conrad), the artistic (*Die Göttinnen*), and the aesthetic (*Dorian Gray*). In part they are brought in aphoristically, serving a purpose of ovation and reminiscence rather than determining structure, and thus speaking a foreign language: in *The Magic Mountain*. In the most serious instance, love is a test faced by a newly developing typological principle.⁷⁶

Taking stock of things in this way has consequences for paper itself.

A celebration for Dionysus, for wine rather than corn, for Bacchus rather than Demeter, for phallic congestion rather than the nine-month's magic, for the aphorism rather than the historical novel! One has worked on a piece, with paper and typewriter, thoughts, sentences, it sits on the desk. One returns from other spheres, from acquaintances, professional circles, overloads of the brain with circumstances, overflows, repressions of every flight and dream—after hours of it one returns and sees the white streaks on the desk. What is it? A lifeless something, vague worlds, something painfully, effortfully put together, thought together, grouped, tested, improved, a pathetic remainder, loose, unproven, weak—tinder, decadent nothing. The whole of it an absurdity, an illness of the race, a black mark, a confusion of all relation? There comes Pallas, unerring, always with the helmet, never fertile, the slim childless goddess, born of her father, sexless.⁷⁷

A literature that only arranges women and even despises the Woman or Mother, a literature for discriminating bachelors, has bitter need of a Pallas as tutelary goddess. Whatever bachelor machines produce with "paper and typewriter" remains refuse as long as there is no one to clean up the desk and magically transform refuse into art.

Little has changed, then, since the days of Nietzsche. In a typewritten letter to Overbeck, the half-blind man complains that his Malling Hansen is as "skittish as a young dog," and makes for "little entertainment" and "much trouble." He is looking for young people to relieve his writing difficulties and would "for this purpose even agree to a two-year marriage."⁷⁸ Benn realized Nietzsche's subjunctive in his "marriage of comradeship."⁷⁹ In 1937, six years before the panegyric for the virginal Athena, a longtime woman friend of Benn's received a letter concerning his marriage plans: it clearly lays out the code for *Pallas*.

So a little relationship has developed here; it brings some warmth and illumination into my existence and I intend to nourish it. Just so that you know. There are, first, *external* reasons. Outwardly I'm completely falling apart. Things broken down, a mess everywhere, unfinished letters. . . . The bed sheets are torn up; the bed lies unmade all week; I have to do my own shopping. Heating also, sometimes. I don't answer letters anymore because I have no one to write for me. I can't work because I have no time, peace, and no one to take dictation. I make coffee at 3:30 in the afternoon, and that's the one event of my life. At 9 in the evening I go to bed and that's the other. Like a beast. . . .

Nonetheless, I must make another attempt to construct a serious human relationship and with its help try to pull myself out of this mire. Morchen, I'll tell you everything, but only you. And now if I tell you what sort of person this is, the one who will probably become unhappy, you'll probably be surprised.

Quite a bit younger than I am, just thirty years old. Not at all attractive like Elida and Elisabeth Arden. Very good figure, but the face is negroid. From a very good family. No money. Job similar to that of Helga, well paid, types 200 syllables, an expert typist. By our standards, that is, by the standards of our generation, uneducated.⁸⁰

The end of love does not exclude, it includes marriage. Literary utilizers of discarded material are educated, but unable to straighten out the discarded files known as their desks. Thus they marry women who, like Felice Bauer, are neither beautiful nor educated, but who with their 200 typewritten syllables per minute are nearly record-setters.⁸¹ The name of the Pallas who comes to rescue and redeem the decadent paper tinder on the desk could be, rather than Herta von Wedemeyer, Minnie Tipp. For the helmet she never lays aside is her machine, which takes dictation. This is the way that pathetic remainders, loose, unproven, weak, which lie on the desk like white streaks, become a truth that does not yet exist—become art.

In 1916 Valéry noted: "Love is, no doubt, worth making . . . but as an

occupation of the intellect, as a subject of novels and studies, it is traditional and tedious.”⁸² In 1940, between Benn’s marriage of comradeship and *Pallas*, Valéry put his literary-historical statement to the test: he wrote ‘*My Faust*.’ Whereas the second half of the dramatic fragment introduces a nameless Nietzsche, who greets Goethe’s hero as “trash” and discards him as trash, the first half revolves around a Demoiselle Luste. This pretty person with the pretty name is as able as the hermit of Sils to characterize the irretrievable past of German Poetry. Only Mephisto, who still thinks in terms of major, decisive actions, of Spirit and Nature, can imagine that Faust loves the Demoiselle. But the devil is just a poor devil and, like Dracula, brainless. The developments of modern science and technology have passed him by.⁸³ Faust, by contrast, stands at the height of an experiment that, as the “rediscovery of ancient chaos in the body,” makes all discourses into secondary phenomena. Therefore his relationship to Luste cannot be love, but only an experiment in media connection.

Me, Valéry, the books: let us sum it all up.

First Faust reads everything that has been written about him in literature and interpretation. He begins with an autobiographical exhaustion, whose completeness, however, cannot be guaranteed. The second step is to transfer everything that has been stored into a discourse network called the *Mémoires*. Here are the title and the opening sentences.

“The Memoirs of My Self, by Professor Doctor Faustus, Member of the Academy of Dead Sciences, etc. . . . Hero of several literary works of repute . . .” So much has been written about me that I no longer know who I am. True, I have not read all the many works in question, and doubtless there are many more than one whose existence has not been made known to me. But those with which I am acquainted are enough to give me a singularly rich and complex idea of myself and my destiny. Thus I can choose freely among a variety of dates and places for my birth, all equally attested by irrefutable documents and proofs, put forth and discussed by critics of equal eminence.⁸⁴

The memoirs of the classical founding hero exceed the discourse network he inaugurated. As the rules stipulate, an author has arisen in the media network of poetic works and interpretations, and that author has all the attributes of literary fame. But precisely for that reason, mathematical combinatorics replaces the organic autobiography. Countless books about books about Faust cancel one another out. What remains is white noise, from which the memoir writer can extract arbitrary selections. Whoever no longer knows who he is and writes his memoirs with the declared intention of disappearing as an I is no longer an author.

Faust, having become the empty intersection of countless discourses, rescinds Goethe’s *Poetry and Truth*. This means that, practically speak-

ing, he dictates other things and otherwise than the Ur-author did. John, Johann Christian Schuchardt, Friedrich Theodor Kräuter, Johann Peter Eckermann, Friedrich Wilhelm Riemer, or even Geist—so runs the list of the names of men who would have been able to sign Goethe's truths and fictions if the rules in operation had been those of the materiality of writing rather than the Discourse of the Master. Male secretaries were on the one side, and on the other were first a mother, who could hardly write one word correctly, then a wife, who provided for Goethe's "domestic peace and marital happiness" simply by never desiring "fame as a woman writer" and properly eschewing any "mixing in official and literary matters."⁸⁵ Such were the parameters of a practice of writing, which led to the conception of an ideal in feminine form, or in the form of a woman. To dictate to the subaltern men present what the One, Only, and Absent Feminine has whispered—writing Poetry is nothing else. Even when Professor Abnossah Pschorr, one hundred years later, built his phonograph in the study of the Goethe House, the roll still registered men's voices: the Author as he whispers his words of wisdom to Eckermann.⁸⁶

Valéry's *'My Faust'* is a systematic reversal of all classical writing practices. He too dictates, but not as a bureaucrat who ends up with the state-supporting pact of his own signature. "The mere fact of knowing how to sign my name cost me dear once"—thus "I never write now,"⁸⁷ but instead he dictates toward the vanishing point designated by Kafka's avoidance of the signature. These dictations doubly oppose the Goethean variety. First, they set no life or ideal of woman into writing, but only the sentences that poets and interpreters have written about an impossible real. Second, this book of books is being written by a woman, not a man. The fact that Demoiselle Luste has been with Faust for eight days is simply explained by her taking dictation. Mephisto can suspect whatever he likes, but what takes place at the end of the idea of Faust is a bargain sale of all poetic-hermeneutic discourse to a woman's ear. The ear is small and magical, as one could have predicted of an admirer of Nietzsche and Mallarmé, and it is by no means there to understand anything.⁸⁸ Luste's ear is to take dictation with phonographic accuracy, clean off what was dictated at the beginning of the next day, and otherwise, otherwise be a not unattractive sight for the flight of ideas.⁸⁹

Luste, a second Pallas, brings order into the combinatory chaos of the last Faust. The writer of the memoir neither has nor desires to have an overview of a life that too many books have described. With or without the help of the devil, who once in a while brings by an insidious text, his desk is a heap of refuse. But there is Luste, that is, the "modest but honorable part of the thing that discreetly helps to oil the machinery of your thought."⁹⁰ A woman who knows nothing of the thought or life of the

one who dictates takes up the chaos of memoirs with clever ears and crystalline logic. That is why Faust hired her. For phonographic accuracy means doing away with the constitutive repressions in discourses. When Faust for once is not interested in dictating and instead talks about the evening sun and his desire for a little flirtation, Luste, just like Minnie, puts that too onto the mute page. When he risks a physiological definition of laughter, which (as abstraction or parapraxis) applies just as well to orgasm, Luste responds with an endless laugh. When in his finest philosophical style he styles his "relations with men and things" as the theme of the memoirs, Luste questions the ambiguous word *men*, and Faust must be more specific and add that he also had dealings with women. Thus the simple presence of a secretary decomposes the unity of mankind and leaves everywhere only two divided sexes. Faust can no longer play Fichte-Schelling-Luden's representative of all mankind because his words strike a clever woman's ear.

Again and again in the war between the sexes, one leads the other around by the nose. The memoir writer tries this with his secretary, using delicate bits of memory. But the beautiful willing widows of autobiography, whether they are (with Faust) fiction or (with Mephisto) truth, remain women in plurality. The myth of life sources and Nature's breasts has it otherwise. Ever since European universities have included female secretaries as well as Faust, M.A., and his assistant Wagner, the myth risks provoking only laughter. Luste is Wagner, Luste is Gretchen, Luste is therefore neither one nor the other. The comedy *Luste* begins with her laughter, and it ends with her "no" to love. Women in plurality, laughing and writing, make affairs like that with Gretchen utterly impossible (as Faust explains to the devil). Because discourses are of secondary importance under conditions of advanced technology, one need not say what has replaced love and sighs. Signifiers are unambiguous and dumb. The one who laughs is Luste.