UNTIMELY STEPS:
THE MODERN LANDSCAPES AND TIMESCAPES OF PERAMBULATORY SELF-NARRATION

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ABSTRACT

Nathan Drapela: *Untimely Steps:*
The Modern Landscapes and Timescapes of Perambulatory Self-Narration
(Under the direction of Eric Downing)

This dissertation undertakes a literary history of walking in the German-speaking world of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Following the development of rail travel in the 1830s, walking takes on an untimely character as a form of movement out of step with a world defined by speed and acceleration. Through an examination of works of first-person narration by Adalbert Stifter, Rainer Maria Rilke, and Robert Walser, I argue that the untimeliness of walking reveals the heterogenous nature of time in modernity and the way in which walking through landscapes marked by this heterogeneity structures self-narration. In Stifter's *Die Narrenburg* and *Die Mappe meines Urgroßvaters*, iterative processes of self-writing are linked to walks along paths that have always already been walked. However, the materiality of writing and human alterations to the environment prevent these writing and walking subjects from being able to successfully orient themselves temporally. In Rilke's *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge*, this relationship to time is further disrupted by the urban landscape of modern Paris, which continues to serve a mnemonic function for those who walk through it, albeit in a way that resists inscription in narrative form. Robert Walser's walking texts exhibit a rejection of the strictures of both traditional narrative form and modern temporality. And yet, it is Walser's preoccupation with the temporal structure of wage labor and rail travel that shape his writings even as he seeks to escape it. An epilogue on the novels of W.G. Sebald consider how walking continues to demonstrate the instability of the past in the wake of war and ecological devastation.

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Strictly speaking, this dissertation was primarily written from a seated position. However, given my emphasis on the significance of walking in literary history, it is worth noting how much my dissertation writing was shaped by the thinking that took place while walking, running, and biking along countless paths, trails, and roads across two continents. Much of this time was spent alone but I am fortunate to have been accompanied by some of the best people I could have wished for. Bike rides through Feldkirch with Daniel Hurlbert during my first summer of graduate school convinced me to buy a bike and were followed by rides around Munich with Brady Fauth, around Vienna with Taylor Rosemeyer, and around the Bodensee with Sean Hickey. In North Carolina, I've enjoyed two-wheeled companionship (and cursed more than a few drivers) with John Gill, Patrick Lang, and Leonie Wilms. The memories I've made on foot—from walking through dozens of Berlin graveyards with Joshua Shelly, to long walks home in the middle of the night in Berlin with Nick Jones, to getting lost on and around the Appalachian Trail (repeatedly!) with Lukas Hoffman—will stay with me always. So too will I remember countless peripatetic conversations on the west coast with Macon Abernathy, Adam Hoch, Zach Schneider, and Wyatt Shedd-Stewart. Above all, I am grateful for the truly countless walks with my most frequent and dearest companion: Jessica Ginocchio.

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INTRODUCTION: THE UNTIMELINESS OF WALKING, NARRATIVE, LANDSCAPE, AND SELF

On November 23rd, 1974, the director Werner Herzog set off on a journey from Munich to Paris. Such a trip between two major European cities would hardly be worth mentioning if not for one crucial detail: Herzog travelled on foot. Having learned that his friend and mentor, the film critic Lotte Eisner, was deathly ill, he decided to walk "auf dem geradesten Weg nach Paris, in dem sicheren Glauben, sie werde am Leben bleiben, wenn [er] zu Fuß käme." As he recounts in *Vom Gehen im Eis*,[1] Herzog walked through ice, snow, and unrelenting cold, carrying only a small satchel "mit dem Nötigsten."[2] Upon his arrival three weeks later, Herzog finds Eisner not only alive, but recovered from her illness.

Herzog's walk makes for a fitting starting point for this dissertation because it so unmistakably suggests the *untimeliness* of walking in modernity. The walk is untimely not merely because it is slow, taking much longer to reach its destination than would be possible by plane, train, or automobile, but also because it is a form of movement that seems out of step with the times by forgoing technologically advanced modes of transportation.[3] Despite taking place in

[1] *Vom Gehem im Eis* purportedly consists of the diary entries Herzog wrote along the way. He claims to have only omitted "einige sehr private Stellen" but that the rest of his journal is reproduced as he wrote it (5). However, given the finely constructed nature of the text, there is at least some reason to doubt Herzog's account of the text's composition.

[2] Werner Herzog, *Vom Gehen im Eis* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2009), 5.

[3] At one point Herzog considers taking a car the rest of the way to Paris, but decides that after coming so far on foot, he must see it to the end: "Ich hangelte mich von Deckung zu Deckung vorwärts. In Savieres in der Dorfschule überlegte ich, nach Paris zu fahren, welchen Sinn hat das. Aber so weit gekommen zu Fuß und dann fahren? Lieber die Sinnlosigkeit, wenn es eine ist, bis zur Neige gekostet" (89).

the second half of the twentieth century, Herzog's walk more closely resembles the journey of a medieval pilgrim than it does a modern traveler. This apparent anachronism is heightened by the fact that the path Herzog follows is not new; his journey partially overlaps with J.M.R. Lenz's 1778 walk into the village of Waldbach—a walk that has been preserved in the literary canon through Georg Büchner's *Lenz* (posthumously published in 1839). In retracing Lenz's steps, and even subtly citing Büchner's novella, Herzog returns to an earlier point in the literary and cultural history of walking.[4]

For a walk to be untimely, however, suggests something more than mere anachronism. Indeed, the inexplicable success of Herzog's walk inverts the very notion of timeliness. Herzog does not arrive "in time" to see Eisner before she dies, which would be the conventional structure of such an arrival, a race to get there as quickly as possible so as to see the beloved one last time before death. Instead, if we are to take seriously Herzog's walk as a means of keeping Eisner alive, the walk is not something measured against time, be it clock-time or life-time, but rather it is walking which gives her time, constituting the time in which life is lived through the steady oscillation of steps.

In comparison to Herzog's trek, the walks that I consider in this dissertation are apt to seem rather mundane. Adalbert Stifter's peripatetics walk in order to go about their work and as a form of bourgeois leisure, Rainer Maria Rilke's Malte Laurids Brigge wanders the streets of early twentieth century Paris with no home and nowhere to go, and Robert Walser in his many walking texts simply seems to amble about, often as a way of avoiding more productive pursuits.

[4] As Wilhelm Amann writes, "Ganz im Stil des postmodernen Pastiche werden Versatzstücke des Lenz soweit integriert, dass der Bezug gerade noch erkennbar wird, aber nicht unbedingt erkannt werden muss." Wilhelm Amann, "Solvitur ambulando. Pilgerräume bei Werner Herzog: Vom Gehen im Eis und Wolfgang Büchser: Berlin – Moskau," in *Weltliche Wallfahrten: auf der Spur des Realen*, ed. Stefan Börnchen and Georg Mein (Munich: Fink, 2010), 265.

Even W.G. Sebald's narrator in *Die Ringe des Saturn* does little more than wander the English countryside, apparently lost in thoughts that manifest themselves as essayistic excursions. Herzog's walk may be notable for just how overt its untimeliness is, but as we will see in the work of Stifter, Rilke, Walser, and Sebald, the untimeliness of walking is pervasive across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In invoking the notion of untimeliness, I am deliberately echoing Friedrich Nietzsche, who understood the untimely (*das Unzeitgemäße*) as that which acts "gegen die Zeit und dadurch auf die Zeit und hoffentlich zu Gunsten einer kommenden Zeit."[5] For Nietzsche, untimeliness involves a disruption of linear historical development. The past persists at a time in which it is outmoded with the potential to act upon the present age and perhaps even presage a new one. While we need not follow Nietzsche in every turn of his philosophy of history, this notion of untimeliness underscores the coexistence of distinct temporal regimes in a way that is crucial for the present study. This coexistence has sometimes been awkwardly termed heterochronia or pluritemporality. Untimeliness, however, suggests not merely a plurality or heterogeneity of time, but also the related sense that something is off in the temporal order, that time is, as Hamlet puts it, out joint.[6]

The historical conditions for this untimeliness are manifold. First, the advent of rail travel in the 1830s marks a decisive shift in the history of walking. Rather than simply a necessary

[5] Friedrich Nietzche, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1967-). All subsequent references to Nietzsche's work are to this edition. Passages are indicated by the name of the work and the section number or name, here "Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben," "Vorwort."

[6] Aleida Assmann suggests that time is indeed out of joint, but her argument hinges on the rise and fall of what she calls the "time regime of modernity," which according to her is no longer in force. See Aleida Assmann, *Is Time out of Joint? On the Rise and Fall of the Modern Time Regime*, trans. Sarah Clift (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020). One of the questions this study pursues is whether it might not be the case that in the time regime of modernity, time was also out of joint, which is not to suggest that the end of that time regime implies a reconstitution of temporal order.

means of getting from one place to another, the decision to walk becomes precisely that, a decision to move more slowly than is otherwise possible.[7] For those who can afford to spend their time as they please, walking becomes a leisure activity characterized by the fact that it does not use time as efficiently as possible. Second, despite the increased accessibility of travel to distant destinations, the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are also an era marked by what Albrecht Koschorke has called "the closing of the horizon," by which he means to mark a shift from Romanticism's emphasis on what lies beyond the horizon to the nineteenth century's retreat from it.[8] This phenomenon is apparent in both the rapid urbanization of the period[9] and the eventual exhaustion of European expansion and exploration.[10] In such a world, it is little wonder that the figure of the Romantic wanderer recedes from view, for rather than landscapes and locales to be discovered for the first time, the world almost exclusively consists of paths that have already been walked, introducing an increasingly uncanny element into seemingly familiar landscapes.[11] Finally, time itself changes during this period. Roughly contemporaneous with

[7] The classic account of the cultural and epistemological implications of the speed of rail travel is Wolfgang Schivelbusch, "Railroad Space and Railroad Time," *New German Critique* 14 (1978): 31–40. For a more recent analysis, see Todd Samuel Presner, *Mobile Modernity: Germans, Jews, Trains* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), especially chapter 3.

[8] See Albrecht Koschorke, *Die Geschichte des Horizonts: Grenze und Grenzüberschreitung in literarischen Landschaftsbildern* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990), especially chapter 5.

[9] For an analysis of the significance of urbanization and the corresponding sense of displacement caused by it for German realism, see John B. Lyon, *Out of Place: German Realism, Displacement, and Modernity*, (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013).

[10] The Spanish and Portuguese empires were at their largest ca. 1810, whereas the British and French empires reached their most expansive point in the first half of the twentieth century. The height of colonial expansion finds its counterpart in the increasingly daring attempts to reach the furthest expanses of the globe, a project that is arguably completed with the first successful expedition to the south pole in 1911, or perhaps as late as the first confirmed climb of Mt. Everest by Edmund Hilary and Tenzing Norgay in 1953. While there are certainly expeditions to be undertaken and first summits to be achieved after the early twentieth century, there is an increasing sense that—except perhaps the depths of the ocean or the expanses of space—the furthest corners of the world have been explored, charted, and maybe even tamed. That is to say, the genuine novelty of the landscape necessary for the Romantic wanderer, even if that novelty was always already a fiction of sorts, no longer appears accessible.

[11] Indeed, as Andrew Cusack points out, while the figure of the wanderer abounded in German literature in the late eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century, "from mid-century onward we are confronted by a dearth of fictional wanderers." Cusack attributes this absence in part to an "ideology of the settled life," an idea that

early rail travel is the discovery of geological deep time, an expansion of the past which unsettles the stability of the earth on which we walk.[12] This expansion of time is concurrent with the reconfiguration of human life to be increasingly regimented according to the dictates of the clock. The standardization of clock time as a quantitative measurement enables the development of both wage labor and long-distance rail travel, as well as leading to an internalization of this form of time. Human beings thus become increasingly bound to one form of time at precisely the point at which older understandings of time and of the earth are shattered.

To further specify what is involved in the untimeliness of walking, we can identify three interrelated dimensions of untimeliness of particular importance for this study. First, there is the untimeliness of walking itself, which is evident in Herzog's walk and which, as we shall see, can already be recognized in Immanuel Kant's apparently timely walks. This study does not only explore walking directly, but also its representation in narrative form, thus introducing a second dimension of untimeliness. To narrate the course of a walk and to use such walks to structure self-narrative requires individuals to retrace their steps so as to tell their stories. The apparently continuous forward progression of narrative thus arises out of and partially obscures a continual process of retrospective recursion. Moreover, the production of written narrative—like the footprints a walker leaves behind—preserves the memory of the walk in a material form that will persist long after the walk has ceased. Like the written word, the landscapes traversed by

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we might connect to Koschorke's account of the closed horizon. Andrew Cusack, *The Wanderer in Nineteenth-Century German Literature: Intellectual History and Cultural Criticism* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2008), 227. As Cusack admits, however, an analysis of the figure of the wanderer that extends beyond the nineteenth century would also have to account for the reemergence of the figure of the wanderer in the post-Nietzschean neo-Romanticism of the early twentieth century.

[12] Scholars are increasingly recognizing the significance of geological thought for literary studies. For an account of German literature's understanding of the earth as an unstable and inconstant ground on which to walk, see Jason Groves, *The Geological Unconscious: German Literature and the Mineral Imaginary* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2020).

walking preserve the memory of the past, pointing to a third dimension of untimeliness. Because the effects of cultural, technological, and ecological change upon a landscape are uneven, the marks of time are unevenly distributed. The landscape cannot be assimilated into a singular temporal regime. Instead, the past lingers in some places with a particular mnemonic force and dissipates quickly in others. And as is the case with Herzog, the paths along which we walk have always already been walked, thereby leading walkers forward while also leading them back along the paths of countless previous walks.

This introduction addresses each of these dimensions of untimeliness in turn. Taken together, they co-produce a fourth dimension of untimeliness that is implicit in each of them: the untimeliness of the walking and narrating subject. No longer able to situate themselves clearly in time and space, history and memory, subjects themselves become untimely. They are constituted by untimely walking through untimely landscapes and the untimely narration thereof. This dissertation tells the story of the emergence of this untimely subject.

The Incipient Untimeliness of Kant's Walks

Untimeliness is an inevitably dialectical concept, referring not to any particular way of being, so much as to the negation of timeliness: the untimely is that which is not timely. To understand the untimeliness of walking then, it is worth beginning with the timeliness of walking. There is perhaps no greater or more famous exemplar of timely walking than Immanuel Kant. As the story—or legend—goes, Kant's daily walks occurred with such regularity that you could set your clock to them.[13] This story contains a striking ambiguity, for the famed timeliness of Kant's walks can be understood in two ways. On the one hand, time is a unit for measuring the length of

[13] For one account of Kant's walks, see Frédéric Gros, *A Philosophy of Walking*, trans. John Howe (London: Verso, 2014), 153–58.

an interval between events. From this perspective, the regularity of Kant's walks, like the seasons or the movement of celestial bodies, are so consistent that uniform measures of time can be assigned to them. On the other hand, time as we often understand it today is no longer just a functional means for describing the relationship between events, but rather has come to acquire an independent existence of its own. Understood in this way, time is not so much a measurement of the consistent intervals between Kant's walks, but the source of that consistency. Having so perfectly internalized these standardized units of measurements, Kant's walks, like the hands of the clock, are determined by the machinations of time divorced from the rhythms of social and biological life.

This latter possibility, that Kant has so thoroughly internalized clock time such that it defines his daily rhythms and his walks, takes on a particular significance in the context of his philosophical thought. The *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1781/87) argues that time and space are not elements of the world which human subjects perceive, but rather categories of our experience. Time is not something we experience, so much as the very structure of our experience. The form of time Kant has in mind here is the quantifiable, measurable, and divisible time of Newtonian physics. After all, his project is, at least in part, an attempt to ground such scientific endeavors in an epistemology that avoids the dangers of skepticism. In so doing Kant elevates "homogene und leere Zeit," as Walter Benjamin refers to it, to a structural feature of human cognition.[14] Rather than being embedded in the cyclical and heterogenous temporal rhythms of communal and biological life, in Kant's view, humans contain within themselves and are constituted by a homogenous and abstract measure of time that structures perception.

[14] Benjamin, "Über den Begriff der Geschichte," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972-1991) 1:701. Unless otherwise noted, all references to Benjamin's work are to this edition. Subsequent citations are noted by name of the work, as well as the volume and page number.

In this way, Kant's timely walks mark a decisive point in the history of time. Walking the line between distinct temporalities, his perambulatory rhythms both mark and are marked by the passing of time. But Kant's liminal position should not be taken to indicate that after his time, empty, homogenous, quantitative time simply supplants other conceptions of time. As Walter Benjamin reminds us, even if the domination of homogenized, empty time comes to characterize modern temporality, such time "kann doch nicht darauf verzichten, ungleichartige, ausgezeichnete Fragmente in ihr bestehen zu lassen."[15] Despite being unceasing and often almost imperceptible, the passing of time is never uniform.

The claim of this dissertation is that in the post-Kantian era, walking is uniquely suited to revealing the heterogenous nature of time. In a world characterized by accelerating technological and social development and linear models of unceasing forward progress, the slowness of walking "resists smooth integration,"[16] as Lutz Koepnick puts it, echoing Benjamin. To walk, rather than to rely on other faster modes of transportation, is to be out of step with the movement of modernity. It is capable of "expanding the space of the present, not in order to obliterate history, but, on the contrary, to experience this present as a complex relay station of competing memories and anticipations, of stories-to-be-remembered and stories-not-yet-told."[17] Rather than a singular temporal designation, the slowness of walking opens up a multiplicity of interlocking, overlapping, and competing temporal frames.

Koepnick's reference to "stories-to-be-remembered and stories-not-yet-told" in this context is no coincidence. More than just an activity by which stories can be remembered, told,

[15] Benjamin, "Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire," 1:642.

[16] Lutz P. Koepnick, *On Slowness: Toward an Aesthetic of the Contemporary* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 37.

[17] Koepnick, 36.

and enacted, walking has long played an important structural role for narrative. Mikhail Bakhtin identifies the road as the central chronotope of narrative ranging from Petronius's *Satyricon* and Apuleius's *The Golden Ass* through to the nineteenth century. "The most characteristic thing" about *The Golden Ass*—though this observation could easily be applied to any number of other narrative works—writes Bakhtin, "is the way it fuses the course of an individual's life (at its major turning points) with his actual spatial course or road—that is, with his wanderings."[18] The chronotope of the road thus allows for the temporal progression of an individual human life to be understood spatially and for the physical path that the individual walks to serve as a representation of the temporal structure of life that can be transmitted in narrative.

This conceptual scheme for understanding time spatially and space temporally is both powerful and pervasive.[19] As a result, the changing figure of the walker across history—or, to use Bakhtin's terminology, the changing chronotope of the road—has come to represent different forms of life. The medieval pilgrim suggests a model of life as slowly progressing towards God, whereas the Romantic wanderer is oriented toward the virtues of individuality and originality by exploring uncharted terrain. This account of the walker, however, is primarily schematic. It presents different forms of walking as paths that can be diagrammed, and therefore presumes a linear conception of time from birth to death as well as a homogenous and unified conception of space. By attending to walking both as an embodied form of movement through a landscape and as a device for structuring narrative, these simplistic accounts of space and time are no longer tenable. In the wake of the changes to space and time wrought by the nineteenth century, in

[18] Mikhail Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 120.

[19] For this reason, Udo Friedrich argues that this was of thinking should be understood as an absolute metaphor in Hans Blumenberg's sense. Udo Friedrich, "Erzähltes Leben – Zur Metaphorik und Diagrammatik des Weges," *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik* 44, no. 4 (2014): 51–76.

particular, we see that the untimeliness of walking reveals the untimeliness of narrative and landscape. And if, following Kant, time and space are not part of empirical reality to be perceived, but structures of human consciousness, then this untimeliness comes to shape the human subject as well.

Untimely Self-Narration

The use of walking to represent the course of a human life poses a distinct narrative problem for those who would wish to tell the story of their life. Soren Kierkegaard clearly articulates this problem in an oft-cited passage from his notebooks:

> It is quite true what philosophy says, that life must be understood backward. But then one forgets the other principle, that it must be lived forward. Which principle, the more one thinks it through, ends exactly with temporal life never being able to be properly understood, precisely because I can at no instant find complete rest to adopt the position: backward.[20]

If life is to be construed as a walk from birth to death, then the narrative of that walk will always be incomplete. The only position from which it would be possible to narrate the entire trajectory of the walk is from its end, but in accordance with the metaphor, the end of the walk is death, and those who have reached that end have no more stories to tell.

This narrative problem is at the heart of the ambivalences of the modern novel. On the one hand, Roland Barthes suggests that the ideological function of the novel is to obfuscate this temporal reality of human existence. In the novel, "the narrator reduces the exploded reality to a slim and pure logos, without density, without volume, without spread, and whose sole function is

[20] Soren Kierkegaard, *Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks*, ed. Bruce H. Kirmmse et al (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 2:179.

to unite as rapidly as possible a cause and an end."[21] Sequence is replaced by consequence, temporality by intentionality. In other words, the narrator of the novel is able to achieve the position of "complete rest" which, as Kierkegaard shows, is inaccessible to us with regards to our own lives. By standing both outside of the first-person perspective and beyond the limit of temporal experience, the narrator of the novel grants human life what Frank Kermode calls "the sense of an ending," whereby it can be imbued with meaning and significance that are otherwise unattainable.[22]

For Georg Lukács, on the other hand, the modern novel is the literary form by which time enters into the subject. Fittingly, Lukács makes this point by way of a permutation of the metaphor of the road, namely the transcendental homelessness of the wanderer. "Die Zeit kann erst dann konstitutiv werden, wenn die Verbundenheit mit der transzendentalen Heimat aufgehört hat."[23] This condition of transcendental homelessness is a disintegration of the Christian theological conception of the road metaphor, whereby Jesus is "the way the truth and the life."[24] According to this conception, life is a "Wanderung von einem Anfang zu einem Ende, das zugleich aufgehoben wird, indem es Endlichkeit in Unendlichkeit, in das ewige Leben, überführt."[25] For Lukács, this connection between the temporal and the transcendental has been severed. The modern subject at the root of the novel, no longer having claim to a transcendental

[21] Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 30–31.

[22] See Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (London: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[23] Georg Lukács, *Die Theorie des Romans: ein geschichtsphilosophischer Versuch über die Formen der großen Epik* (Berlin: Paul Cassirer, 1920), 129.

[24] John 14:6 (NSRV)

[25] Friedrich, "Erzähltes Leben – Zur Metaphorik und Diagrammatik des Weges," 58.

home, becomes like Novalis's Heinrich von Ofterdingen, a wanderer seeking to go "immer nach Hause," a destination perpetually out of reach.[26]

Throughout *Die Theorie des Romans* (1916), Lukács relies on the figure of wanderer to illustrate the nature of temporal experience. In the first line of the book, he writes, "Selig sind die Zeiten, für die der Sternenhimmel die Landkarte der gangbaren und zu gehenden Wege ist und deren Wege das Licht der Sterne erhellt."[27] These times are no more. "Kants Sternenhimmel glänzt nur mehr in der dunklen Nacht der reinen Erkenntnis und erhellt keinem der einsamen Wanderer – und in der neuen Welt heißt Mensch-sein: einsam sein – mehr die Pfade."[28] But it is precisely this transcendental disorientation—a disorientation that is described in exclusively spatial metaphors—which " stellte die unmögliche Aufgabe, Entwicklungen, allmähliche Zeitabläufe dramatisch darstellen zu wollen."[29] For Lukács, only the disorientation of the wanderer can express the slow yet unceasing passing of time. So too is this conception of time central to Lukács's thought. In the epic, "die Helden erleben die Zeit innerhalb der Dichtung nicht, an ihre innere Wandlung oder Unveränderlichkeit reicht die Zeit nicht heran."[30] Odysseus may wander and be forced to bear the years of separation from home, but he remains always the same clever Odysseus. For the wanderer who is the subject of the novel, however, to walk and to wander is to be subject to the vicissitudes of time. For Lukács, this incorporation of "wirkliche

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[26] Novalis, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* in *Werke, Tagebücher und Briefe Friedrich von Hardenbergs*, ed. Hans-Joachim Mähl and Richard Samuel, 3 vols. (Munich: Hanser, 1978-87), 1:373. While Lukács never directly cites this line, his account of transcendental homelessness is explicitly linked to Novalis from the first page of the book, in which he cites Novalis's claim that "Philosophie ist eigentlich Heimweh, der Trieb überall zu Hause zu sein." Lukács, *Die Theorie des Romans*, 21.

[27] Lukács, 9.

[28] Lukács, 19.

[29] Lukács, 129.

[30] Lukács, 128. Lukács's understanding of epic time here is closely analogous to Bakhtin's "adventure-time."

Zeit" into the individual is the accomplishment of the modern novel as a literary form.[31] Bakhtin agrees. "Time," he writes, "is introduced into man, enters into his very image, changing in a fundamental way the significance of all aspects of his destiny and life."[32] The novel can thus be understood as the literary counterpart of Kant's critical philosophy.

While the Lukácsian and Bakhtinian understanding of novelistic time might seem opposed to Barthes's account of the novel, it is possible to read them as two sides of the same coin. Immediately following a discussion of Lukács's *Die Theorie des Romans*, Benjamin suggests that what draws us to the novel is in fact "die Hoffnung, sein fröstelndes Leben an einem Tod, von dem er liest, zu wärmen." This is a warmth, "die wir aus unserem eigenen [Leben] nie gewinnen."[33] That is to say, the novel allows us to have it both ways. It can both represent the subject as a fundamentally temporal being while also transcending that temporality by furnishing an ending that is not accessible from within the course of our own lives, and thereby creating a definite course out of what is in fact only a perpetual wandering.

If the path of life serves as a conceptual scheme for making sense of the temporal experience of human life in spatial terms, then narrative serves to convert space back into time.

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[31] While throughout *Die Theorie des Romans*, Lukács's understanding of time seems to be primarily rooted in a concept of loss and decay, he somewhat paradoxically identifies the "real time" of the novel with Henri Bergson's notion of durée. "Darum ist es, daß nur die Form der transzendentalen Heimatlosigkeit der Idee, der Roman, die wirkliche Zeit, Bergsons 'durée,' in die Reihe seiner konstitutiven Prinzipien aufnimmt" (127). This identification is strange because, as Martin Hägglund argues, "Bergson in fact fails to think the problem of time." For Bergson, "The temporal passes away, but it does not disappear or cease to be. On the contrary, it immediately belongs to the continuous movement of duration (la durée), which preserves all of the past in a virtual coexistence that is not susceptible to loss or destruction. By thus denying negativity, Bergson effectively denies time." Martin Hägglund, *Dying for Time: Proust, Woolf, Nabokov* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 15. Benjamin makes much the same point when he writes, "Die duree, aus der der Tod getilgt ist, hat die schlechte Unendlichkeit eines Ornaments." Benjamin, "Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire," 1:643.

[32] Mikhail Bakhtin, "The Bildungsroman and Its Significance for the History or Realism," in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 21.

[33] Benjamin, "Der Erzähler," 2:547.

Consisting of a sequential linear ordering of words and sentences and paragraphs, narrative purports to create order out of chaos, a clear path out of undirected wandering. This potential for temporal and spatial order is the promise of the novel and its dual temporality. For poststructuralist skeptics of such order, it is also the danger of the novel. It should not be supposed, however, that all narrative tends towards this construction of order. The works I examine in this dissertation demonstrate the fundamental ambivalences and complexities of these spatiotemporal relationships. They do so in three ways. First, by emphasizing walking on the diegetic level, these narratives foreground the relationship between walking and narrative, rather than merely using it as a tacit structure for organization. Moreover, as I discuss at the end of this introduction, attention to walking also brings into focus the temporal and spatial structure of the landscapes in which walking takes place, belying the assumption that there can be any simple relationship between time and space. Second, these works highlight the materiality of written narrative, thus disrupting the notion of narrative as purely temporal literary form. These narratives exist as physical objects in space and their material existence introduces complexities into the temporal structure of the narratives. Finally, through the use of first-person narration, these works highlight the limits of the novelistic form and the sense of an ending it affords.

This last point merits further discussion. Theorists of narrative selfhood—ranging from the hermeneutically and religiously oriented approaches of Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor, and Paul Ricoeur to the aestheticist and Nietzschean approach of Alexander Nehamas—tend to understand the narrative unity of a human life in terms of the sort of unity represented by a character in a novel.[34] While, as MacIntyre readily admits, "we are never more (and sometimes

[34] MacIntyre expresses this idea in the strongest terms. For him, "personal identity is just that identity presupposed by the unity of the character which the unity of a narrative requires. Without such unity there would not be subjects of whom stories could be told." Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd ed (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 218. Ricoeur is perhaps the most careful thinker in this vein, arguing

less) than the co-authors of our own narratives,"[35] human action is, for these theorists, only comprehensible in the context of some larger narrative. Even if we are embedded in many such narratives, these theorists suggest a strong tendency or even an imperative to understand one's life as a unified and singular narrative.[36] As Taylor writes, "making sense of one's life as a story is […] not an optional extra; […] our lives exist also in this space of questions, which only a coherent narrative can answer."[37] However, given the temporal and perspectival limits of human life, the production of a coherent narrative requires not merely a unification of life into a singular story, but also a reliance on the kairotic structure of the novel. Through this form of temporal organization, "that which was conceived of as simply successive becomes charged with past and future: what was *chronos* becomes *kairos*."[38]

Given all this, it is perhaps not surprising that these theorists point towards Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913-1927) as an idealized case of self-narrative, a self-narrative that has fully ascended to the realm of the novel. Alexander Nehamas, for instance, characterizes the book as both a "fictional autobiography" and a "perfect novel" in which "the narrator relates in enormous, painstaking detail all the silly, insignificant, pointless, accidental,

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that "the notion of the narrative unity of a life […] must be seen as an unstable mixture of fabulation and actual experience. It is precisely because of the elusive character of real life that we need the help of fiction to organize life retrospectively, after the fact, prepared to take as provisional and open to revision any figure of emplotment borrowed from fiction or history." Paul Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 162.

[35] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 213.

[36] Admittedly, not everyone is sympathetic to this claim. Galen Strawson, for example, argues against both the empirical claim that people tend to understand their lives as stories and the normative claim that there is a value in doing so. Galen Strawson, "Against Narrativity," *Ratio* 17, no. 4 (2004): 428–52. While Strawson is no doubt right that not everyone considers their live in terms of a grand narrative that extends from birth to death, the more modest claim that human action is only comprehensible in terms of (often small-scale) narrative contexts is perhaps harder to dispute.

[37] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 51.

[38] Kermode, *Sense of an Ending*, 46.

sometimes horrible things he did in his rambling efforts to become an author." But rather than mere rambling or wandering, "it is just these unconnected, chance events that somehow finally enable him to become an author, to see them after all as parts of a unified pattern, the result of which is his determination to begin at last his first book."[39] That book is, at least according to Nehamas, the very book before the reader, which recounts—and in so doing, unifies—all of these chance events into a singular narrative.[40] Charles Taylor, building on Nehamas's interpretation, characterizes the novel in specifically temporal terms. "The formerly irretrievable past is recovered in its unity with the life yet to live, and all the 'wasted' time now has a meaning, as the time of preparation for the work of the writer who will give shape to this unity."[41] For these theorists, the recursive structure of novelistic self-writing offers the promise of a unification of life and literature that provides for a stable temporal organization of both, for what we might call a transcendence of time.

This temptation to elide the particular temporal conditions of self-narration by subsuming them to a paradigm of novelistic time, to seek a position outside of time as it were from which to understand the trajectory of human life, is a strong one. The walker-narrators who feature in this

[39] Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche, Life as Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 167–68.

[40] The claim that the book Marcel sets out to right at the end of the novel is the very same work that readers have before them is not entirely uncontroversial. Critics have provided good reason for drawing a distinction between the book that Proust wrote and the book that Marcel sets out to write. Rainer Warning identifies a rift between the poetics espoused in the work and those manifested by the work itself, suggesting that the idealized form of narration intimated by Marcel at the end cannot really be achieved and that Proust (self-consciously) does not achieve it in the *Recherche*. See Rainer Warning, "Supplementäre Individualität: Prousts 'Albertine endormie,'" in *Individualität*, ed. Manfred Frank and Anselm Haverkamp (Munich: W. Fink, 1988), 440–68. More recently, Joshua Landy has amassed textual evidence for identifying three narratives at work in the *Recherche*: the novel that Proust wrote; the memoir that Marcel writes over the course of the novel which is identical to the novel with the exception that while the novel is fictional with some autobiographical borrowing, the memoir is a fictional autobiography written by Marcel; and the novel—a fictionalized autobiography—which Marcel sets out to write at the end of the *Recherche* but the completion of which the reader never sees. Joshua Landy, "Proust, His Narrator, and the Importance of the Distinction," *Poetics Today* 25, no. 1 (March 1, 2004): 91–135. I emphasize Nehamas and Taylor's reading of Proust not because I am convinced it is the correct reading, but because it so clearly illustrates the allure of this form of temporal and narrative organization.

[41] Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 51.

dissertation repeatedly express a desire to stop walking and find a place where they can, from a position of "complete rest," look back on their lives and reproduce them in narrative form. But as Nehamas notes, the perfect unity between life and narrative is never complete.[42] Life goes on and thus requires continual reinterpretation so as to strive for the narrative unity suggested by Proust.[43] Rather than taking place from an illusory position of narrative stability, self-narration can only occur step-by-step. Moreover, as Stifter, Rilke, and Walser all express, walking and writing form a compensatory relationship. Time spent walking is time that could have been spent writing, and time spent writing is time that could have been spent walking. Far from providing a position from outside temporal existence from which to understand their lives through narrative, the act of self-narration in its relationship to walking thus lays bare the inescapable temporal finitude of earthly existence.

Untimely Landscapes

The impossibility of finding a point from which to narrate the past is not only a temporal problem, but also a spatial one. In addition to a point in time with a stable relationship to the past, a stable narrative position assumes that time passes evenly in all places. The changes wrought by the nineteenth century, however, demonstrate not only a changing landscape, but one in which these changes are registered unevenly. Industrialization and urbanization altered the physical shape of the environment to an unprecedented degree while the development of

[42] It is in this context that we might understand Zarathustra's directive: "Stirb zur rechten Zeit." Nietzsche, *Also Sprach Zarathustra* I, "Vom freien Tode." To die at the right time would be to die in such a way that the end of mortal life coincides perfectly with the proper narrative end to that life.

[43] Nehamas argues that this recursive structure is inherent to Proust's narrative which intimates the endless recursion of the living of a life and its narrativization. It is for this reason that Nehamas cites Proust as the ideal exemplar of Nietzsche's notion of the eternal recurrence, a notion which Nehamas understands as consisting of just this sort of recursivity.

transportation technology and geological sciences fundamentally changed the way people related to it.[44] As a result of these alterations, the landscape bears traces of the past, both the recent past in which these changes took place and the more distant past that preceded them. By navigating the landscape on foot, individuals make their way through an environment with a history that is variously legible and illegible to those who walk through it.

The use of a landscape to access the past is nothing new. The ancient and medieval world recognized the value of organizing memories spatially. As Cicero notes, "when we return to a place after a considerable absence, we not merely recognise the place itself, but remember things that we did there, and recall the persons whom we met and even the unuttered thoughts which passed through our minds when we were there before."[45] This understanding of the power of particular places to evoke memories led to the development of a variety of mnemonic techniques that involved imagining a well-known building and deliberately locating particular memories or ideas within it. By training oneself in this way, rhetoricians were able to access chosen memories by walking to the corresponding place in their mind.[46] These spatialized mnemonic devices conceive of space as primarily static. Particular places are able to evoke memories precisely because they themselves do not change. These places are but stages upon which events occur and by returning to the appropriate place, it is possible to remember what has happened there before.

[44] It should not be supposed, however, that the pre-industrial European landscape existed in a "pure" or "natural" state. Deforestation and the alteration of the landscape for agricultural purposes had already been ongoing for centuries, and "conventional" conceptions of space and time were themselves the product historically contingent social formations.

[45] As quoted in Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London: Routledge, 1966), 22. The most notable example of this form of memory is Simonides, who, having barely avoided being crushed by a collapsed building, is able to identify the remains of the deceased because he remembers where they were sitting.

[46] For an account of these mnemonic practices, see Yates, *The Art of Memory*; and Ivan Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text: A Commentary to Hugh's Didascalicon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

In a world in which the environment is constantly changing, places continue to hold mnemonic force. But whereas statically conceived environments allow for the deliberate spatial organization of memory, the changing landscapes of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries place people at the mercy of their environments.[47] One of the most evocative examples of this is the scene at the end of Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, in which Marcel stumbles over an uneven paving stone. As he falls, the most important moments of his life are called to mind in an instance of involuntary memory that is explicitly equated to the madeleine episode. Because of this event, Marcel is finally able to write the book he intended to. While this is an instance of walking and spatialized memory that allows the subject both to remember the past and then narratively retrace these memories, it is also a product of chance. It is for this reason that Benjamin is so critical of Proust, even while recognizing his great achievement. For Benjamin, the concept of involuntary memory

> trägt die Spuren der Situation, aus der heraus er gebildet wurde. Er gehört zum Inventar der vielfältig isolierten Privatperson. Wo Erfahrung im strikten Sinn obwaltet, treten im Gedächtnis gewisse Inhalte der individuellen Vergangenheit mit solchen der kollektiven in Konjunktion. Die Kulte mit ihrem Zeremonial, ihren Festen, deren bei Proust wohl nirgends gedacht sein dürfte, führten die Verschmelzung zwischen diesen beiden Materien des Gedächtnisses immer von neuem durch. Sie provozierten das Eingedenken zu bestimmten Zeiten und blieben Handhaben desselben auf Lebenszeit. Willkürliches und unwillkürliches Eingedenken verlieren so ihre gegenseitige Ausschließlichkeit.[48]

In this passage, Benjamin emphasizes the social structures and cultural rhythms that allow individuals to access individual memory in conjunction with a collective past, but the altered landscape plays a role here too. In communities where the environment had remained in relative

[47] I use the word 'statically' here to describe the mind palaces of ancient and medieval mnemonic techniques. In contrast, the real environment is by no means static. It is constantly moving and changing. We nonetheless would do well to differentiate ecosystems in a state of equilibrium—in which constant movement and change is the source of the environment's stability—from environments in which a different form of change is taking place. The transformation of environments is, of course, not new to the nineteenth century. But the rate at which humans are capable of changing their environments accelerates unmistakably during this time.

[48] Benjamin, "Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire," 1:611.

equilibrium for generations, it was possible to read the history of the community and of the landscape by walking through it, at least for those who had been trained to do so.[49] In the world of Proust, however, as well as in the world of all of the writers examined in this dissertation, that is no longer the case. The traces of the past are still there, but they can only be apprehended by "Zufall," as Benjamin has it, or, indeed, a fall, as is the case for Marcel.

This persistence of the past in the landscape—albeit in a way that makes it difficult to access—is what gives it its untimely character. That is not to say that any persistence of the past produces untimeliness. As Nietzsche argues in the first of his untimely mediations, if the past did not persist at all, the result would be a complete lack of temporal experience. Unburdened by history, each moment would be experienced as radically new and would then cease to exist as it is replaced by the next one.[50] In contrast, an utter inability to forget the past would make it utterly impossible to live.[51] For Nietzsche, what is necessary is the ability to forget, by which he does not mean the passive process of failing to remember, but rather the ability to decisively free oneself from the past as it is appropriate to do so, without which there would be "kein Glück, keine Heiterkeit, keine Hoffnung, keinen Stolz, keine Gegenwart."[52] Furthermore, Nietzsche believes that it is only by appropriately relating oneself to the past, that it is possible to make a promise, which is to say to have power over the future from the present moment. The mnemonic

[49] This is one of the central ideas of Stifter's *Granit* (1853), a story the emphasizes the importance of being able to read a landscape by walking through it precisely because this legibility is at risk of being lost.

[50] Nietzsche seems to think that animals, or at least ruminants, experience the world this way.

[51] This point is made clear by Jorge Luis Borges's short story, "Funes el memorioso" (1942).

[52] Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral* II.1 The *Genealogy* returns to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting central to "Nutzen und Nachteil." This can be seen most readily in the discussion of forgetting at the beginning of the second essay and in the directive to be like ruminants in the forward. For Nietzsche, the sovereign individual is one who can both forget and ruminate, and do so deliberately, therefore taking control over the relationship between past, present, and future. Reading Nietzsche through Benjamin, we might suggest that the concern with forgetting and remembering arises because already by Nietzsche's time, this form of temporal organization is no longer readily available.

exercises of the classical world, of which Nietzsche would have been well aware, can be understood as one way of appropriately orienting oneself in time, so as both to organize the past and to act towards the future. What I am suggesting is that the altered landscapes of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries impede this form of temporal orientation.

These untimely landscapes alter the nature of walking as well as the attempt to narrate such walks. To see how this is the case, we might compare Proust to Felix Fabri, a Swiss theologian who made two pilgrimages to the holy land during the late fifteenth century. After his initial pilgrimage, Fabri found himself unable to write an account of his journey. This failure of writing and of memory prompted him to set off on a second journey, after which he was finally able to write voluminous accounts of his trek. Fabri attributes the failure of his initial pilgrimage to the hurried pace in which it was undertaken and the failure to prepare for it properly.[53] In his account of Fabri, Shayne Legassie argues,

> The memory work of the Holy Land pilgrim consisted of three interlocking tasks: (1) the *ritual commemoration* of important events from salvation history in the places where they had transpired; (2) the *formation* of a unique, vivid, and durable pictorial memory for each of the sacred places in which the pilgrim worshipped; and (3) the lifelong *reconstruction* of these pictorial memories for the purposes of meditational reading, scholarship, and prayer.[54]

For Fabri, the task of self-narration is not easy, but it is possible when the walk is undertaken in such a way as to facilitate it. Crucial here is the durability of the landscape and its relationship to the collective memory of scripture, which allowed Fabri to prepare for the walk, to navigate the landscape during the walk, and to retrace his steps in narrative after the fact. To some extent, Marcel is able to do the same. By tripping over the paving stone, he is able to write the narrative

[53] In highlighting the initial failure to prepare for the pilgrimage and the need therefore to repeat it belatedly, Fabri anticipates the Freudian notion of *Wiederholungszwang*, which will be crucial in my reading of both Rilke and Walser.

[54] Shayne Legassie, *The Medieval Invention of Travel* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), 111.

of his life, which unifies all of his wanderings into a singular narrative. Unlike Fabri, however, Marcel is able to craft a narrative of his life only through a chance encounter with the past provoked by walking through a malleable landscape. Because of the structure of the landscape, it would not have been possible to prepare to write the narrative as Fabri did. Moreover, the post hoc narrative inevitably obscures not only the untimeliness of the landscape, but also that of the walk through it as well as the narrative which must retrospectively retrace his steps.

The walks and narratives that appear in the work of Stifter, Rilke, Walser, and Sebald are affected by these same forms of untimeliness. However, these authors differ from Proust in how they attempt to come to terms with this untimeliness. None of these narratives are an attempt to unify the walks they recount into a temporally ordered whole. Instead, they take the forms of a "Mappe," a collection of "Lebensbeschreibungen," "Aufzeichnungen," or a "mannigfaltig zerschnittenes oder zertrenntes Ich-Buch." In addition to recounting the walks that comprise them, these narratives thus come to resemble the untimely environments that engender them. And in their materiality, these writings also persist as remnants of the past long after the walk has ceased. These connections to the landscape along with the explicit focus on both walking and the first-person narratorial perspective in all of these works allow for an examination of the untimely relationships between landscape, narrative, and subject that arise from walking in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The Trajectory of the Dissertation

This dissertation traces the untimeliness of walking, narrative, landscape, and subject as well as their interrelationships across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The works that I examine are all instances of first-person narration structure around walks and written by authors who were

themselves devoted walkers. In each case, I read the narrative structure of self-relation in conjunction with mnemonic function of walking in a changing landscape and the heterogenous regimes of time that characterize it and, by extension, the walker who writes about it.

With a literary career spanning from the late 1830s to his death in 1868, Adalbert Stifter occupies a position immediately following the aforementioned developments. While direct references to modernizing forces are conspicuously absent in most of his works, contemporary critics have come to recognize the extent to which Stifter's texts are marked by a changing world.[55] In the first chapter, I argue the tendency for Stifter's walkers to walk repeatedly along the same paths as a response to these changes. By repeatedly walking along the same paths, subjects can become reacquainted with a landscape and thereby attempt to be reintegrated into a world that has been ruptured by modernity. In this way, Stifter's walkers diverge from the Romantic wanderer, whose aim was always a distant destination beyond the horizon. Repeatedly following the same paths, however, cannot straightforwardly reinstitute a lost relationship between individual, community, and landscape. Instead, it introduces new dimensions of temporal disorientation as these walks shape the landscape, and the repetitive iterations makes the relationships between past, present, and future increasingly uncertain.

While Stifter's most prominent walks are to be found in stories such as *Granit*, *Der Waldsteig*, and *Der Waldgänger*, I focus on two works in which repeatedly walking the same path is closely linked to iterative processes of self-writing, namely *Die Mappe meines Urgroßvaters* and *Die Narrenburg*. In these works, walking not only provides a model for self-narration, but the existence of these written narratives which persist beyond the lifespan of the

[55] As Eva Geulen remarks, "by a logic similar to the psychoanalytic notion of repression, what Stifter sought to exclude returns to haunt his narrative." Eva Geulen, "1848, October 11: Tales of a Collector," in *A New History of German Literature*, ed. David E. Wellbery, Judith Ryan, and Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 588.

individuals who wrote them—along with paintings, buildings, and other objects left behind—alter the temporal structure of the world they seek to represent. Rather than straightforwardly memorializing the past, these acts of self-representation create a temporally heterogenous landscape which works against the desire for a unification of subject and environment.

The second chapter moves forward to a point in history at which many of the modernizing forces of the nineteenth century—the significance of which Stifter clearly recognized even as he suppressed their presence in his writing—have become firmly entrenched in modern life. The case study for these changes is Rainer Maria Rilke's *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* (1910). Rilke's Malte walks through Paris, an urban landscape which is at once centuries old and marked by myriad recent transformations. Foremost among these changes is the widening and paving of roads across the city, which alters what Benjamin calls the city's function "als mnemotechnischer Behelf des einsam Spazierenden."[56] Walking through the city still evokes memories for Malte, but as a result of the changed landscape, these memories can no longer be temporally organized through the spatial organization of the city. Instead, both the spatial relations between Malte's experience writing and the temporal structure of his narrative is characterized by untraversable gaps. I read these gaps in conjunction with Freud's account of traumatic memory and consciousness, as well as the physical structure of the roads upon which Malte walks. In this way, I elaborate on Benjamin's historicization of Freud by understanding this form of consciousness and temporal experience as arising not merely at a specific historical moment, but also in a particular environment. On this basis, I read Malte's temporally disorienting attempts at narrative as arising out of and responding to the environment through which he walks.

[56] Benjamin, "Die Wiederkehr des Flaneurs," 3:194.

In contrast to the mnemonically rich and unsettling landscapes of Stifter and Rilke, Robert Walser walks through a world largely devoid of the capacity to evoke collective or individual memory that might form the basis for narrative. The third chapter argues that in Walser's earlier work, particularly *Der Spaziergang* (1917), the past is not absent but rather something that the subject must suppress in order to write. This suppression is accomplished by walking, which not only allows the narrator to forget the memories that haunt him, but also provides the content for his narratives. Rather than allowing the past to catch up with him, Walser walks ever onwards and writes as he walks in an impressive display of verbal acrobatics. In *Der Spaziergang*, however, the past continues to structure the narrative through its suppression. By contrast, Walser's late prose pieces from the 1920s and 1930s narrate the courses of walks that are completely unmoored from the particularity of place that allows for mnemonic resonance. Through the standardization of time according to the clock for the sake of wage labor and the annihilation of space and time as a result of rail travel, Walser's narrators walk through landscapes that consist only of homogenous space traversed at quantified intervals rather than the heterogenous and stratified temporality of memory. This undifferentiated spatial and temporal sphere, analogous to the blank page upon which Walser struggles to write, proves to be the source of the narrative freedom characteristic of Walser's prose. As I argue, however, this freedom is clearly conditioned by and dialectically yoked to the homogenization of space and time against which Walser resists.

It would be a mistake, however, to claim that the history of walking in modernity and its narrative function is one of simple decline in which the mnemonic force of the landscape becomes increasingly emptied out and inaccessible at the hands of rapid social, technological, and environmental change. The dissertation thus concludes with a consideration of the work of

W.G. Sebald, a careful reader of the major figures in this study, from Stifter to Benjamin to Walser. The walks that occur in *Schwindel. Gefühle* (1990), *Die Ringe des Saturn* (1995), and *Austerlitz* (2001) are testaments to the power of the past to persist in material form and to be accessed—albeit never entirely—by the walking subject, even, or perhaps especially, in landscapes that have been radically altered as the result of human and ecological catastrophe. Rather than being erased by modernizing forces, the untimeliness of walking, landscape, narrative, and subject continues to persist.

CHAPTER 1: WALKING THROUGH A "DICHTUNGSCHAOS": ADALBERT STIFTER'S TEMPORALLY HETEROGENEOUS LANDSCAPES

The "Mappe" that constitutes the central narrative of Adalbert Stifter's *Die Mappe meines Urgroßvaters* consists of the autobiographical writings of a doctor named Augustinus. As the word "Mappe" suggests, this narrative does not neatly conform to a linear retelling of a life from a fixed point in time. Fittingly then, the beginning of the narrative is anything but. Not only is the story introduced through a frame narrative involving the great-grandson's discovery of the "Mappe," but the *Mappe* itself begins in the middle of things. Moreover, this beginning could have just as easily been an ending. Augustinus—the titular great-grandfather, usually referred to simply as the doctor—has offended the love of his life and cannot convince her to take him back. He thus writes in his notebook: "Als ich sie nicht abzubringen vermochte, lief ich in den Wald, an welcher Stelle eine Birke steht, und wollte mich daran erhängen."[1] However, he does not hang himself, for if he had, he would have never written his notebook, and his great-grandson would have never found it tucked away in a chest in his mother's house. There would be no narrative, and certainly no written record. The existence of the story depends not on a beginning, but on an aborted ending.

This non-beginning provides the narrative propulsion for the story in its interrupted finality, and yet it is not so much a terminal point in the story as one that has to be revisited time and time again. The colonel, the doctor's friend and mentor, as well as the father of his beloved,

[1] Adalbert Stifter, *Adalbert Stifter Werke und Briefe: Historisch-Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Alfred Doppler and Wolfgang Frühwald (Stuttgart: W Kohlhammer, 1978-). Subsequent citations to Stifter's work in this chapter all refer to this edition and are given parenthetically with both the volume number and the page number, here 1.5.33.

sees the doctor walking towards the woods and, intuiting the situation, stops him. In doing so, the colonel asks the doctor to come by and speak with him, but also innocently remarks upon the situation: "Ich habe fast gemeint, daß ihr hier oben an dieser Stelle wieder lesen werdet, wie ihr sonst gern thatet" (1.5.35). This statement reveals that the doctor has decided to commit suicide in a spot that has been a frequent waypoint on his many walks, where he would stop to read. However, the significance of this location only becomes apparent through the double meaning of the term "Stelle," which refers to a physical location but can also be used to indicate a particular passage or point in a text. For not only is this a stopping point on the doctor's walks and a place to read, this moment in the text is also to be found within the doctor's notebook, and it is a passage that he will re-read years after he has written it.

As the doctor vows in the "Gelöbnis" at the beginning of the notebook, he will record all events "wie es gewesen ist," and, while he is not required to write down absolutely everything that happens to him, it is his duty, "das Eingetragene drei Jahre aufzubewahren" in a sealed notebook. However, he writes, "Wenn aber von dem Tage an drei ganze Jahre vergangen sind, dann darf ich das Bändlein wieder abschneiden und die Worte wie Sparpfennige lesen" (1.5.31). As we learn later in the story, in pursuing this cyclical course of writing, archiving, and reading, the doctor is following in the footsteps of the colonel. After a wild and unrestrained youth, the colonel learns this method from a fellow soldier and credits it with his becoming a gentler person ("ein sanfterer Mensch," 1.5.52). The repeated process of reading and writing is a *method* not only in the modern sense of the term, but also going back to its Greek roots indicating a traveling journey or, more literally, a path, track, or road (*hodos*) in pursuit of (*meta*) something. This method, however, does not merely lead forwards towards some goal, such as becoming a gentler man, but is recursive, continually turning back on itself. The doctor must not only retrace his

steps to that fateful "Stelle" where he had wanted to hang himself so that he may record it in his notebook, he must return again some years later when he unseals the notebook to read what he has written, and in so doing repeat that walk from years ago. When the doctor's great-grandson discovers the notebook, he too will return to this "Stelle," following in the footsteps of his ancestor. In suggesting that the doctor "an dieser Stelle wieder lesen [wird]," the colonel does not know just how true this statement is.

This recursive structure pervades the entire narrative, but it should not be taken to suggest a simple repetition or an eternal return of the same. Rather than a continuous narrative, a "Mappe" suggests not any one path, but a collection of pages, that allow for the possibility of re-ordering and intercalation. It is perhaps not coincidental that the title *Die Mappe meines Urgroßvaters* does not refer to any single text or work, but four of them, all arguably incomplete. Stifter began writing the initial version in 1839, near the beginning of his literary career, and died in 1868, leaving behind an unfinished fourth version. Seemingly never satisfied with the story, but unable to let it go, *Die Mappe* accompanied Stifter for nearly the entire course of his life. Each version tells roughly the same overall story, or set of stories, but they are all distinct from one another. In addition to being revised, certain parts are added, omitted, or reinserted from version to version, and the order of the different parts is frequently shuffled from one iteration to the next. So, while the doctor must repeatedly walk to that fated "Stelle" again and again both to write down his story and to re-read it years later, the exact details or the position of that "Stelle" do not remain the same in this cycle of iterative walks.[2]

[2] For a discussion of the way in which the details of this particular passage change from version to version, see Albrecht Koschorke, "Bewahren und Überschreiben. Zu Adalbert Stifters Roman *Witiko*," in *Vergessene Texte*, ed. Aleida Assmann and Michael C. Frank (Konstanz: Universitätsverlag Konstanz, 2004), 139-157 and Zachary Sng, "Not Forgotten: On Stifter and Pierce, " *MLN* 121, no. 3 (2006): 631-646.

In framing the narrative structure of Stifter's *Mappe* as both embedded in and analogous to an iterative pattern of walking, I aim to read this peculiar form of self-narrative against the background of a cultural history of walking. The use of the metaphor of a walk, road, or journey to structure self-narrative is of course nothing new with Stifter. The particular recursive structure at play here and the temporal complexities that arise out of it, however, are indicative of the historical transition from the Romantic wanderer to the bourgeois *Spaziergänger* characteristic of realism. If the wanderer is the peripatetic figuration of Romanticism's inauguration of modern individualism and the cult of originality, then Stifter's walkers suggest the afterlife of this figure in the tradition-oriented communities of German-language realism. As Eva Geulen remarks, Stifter's walks are always "Stiftungsgänge,"[3] marking both the integration of the individual into a "fortgehende" community and the individual's exodus from such a community. For Geulen, it is on the path between these two poles that Stifter's stories and his walkers always find themselves, never truly leaving nor arriving. There is a paradoxical conjunction here of the fascination with the "Einzelgänger" and the desire for a community projected onto a distant past in which such an "Einzelgänger" is inconceivable.

My argument is that the tension between the individual and the community manifested in Stifter's walkers should be understood in terms of the temporal and spatial reconfiguration of the landscapes that these walkers traverse. Whereas the Romantic wander's path is always directed outwards towards an unreachable point beyond the horizon, Stifter's walkers must repeatedly either retrace their steps to return to their starting point, as in the walks of *Bergkristall*, *Der Hagestolz*, *Granit*, *Der Hochwald*, *Der Nachsommer*, *Katzensilber*, and *Das Haidedorf*, or they form a "Rundgang," returning to their starting point through continual forward motion as in *Ein*

[3] Eva Geulen, "Stifter-Gänge," in *Kopflandschaften – Landschaftsgänge: Kulturgeschichte und Poetik des Spaziergangs*, ed. Axel Gellhaus, Christian Moser, and Helmut J. Schneider (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2007), 220.

Gang durch die Katakomben or *Der Waldsteig*.[4] As a result, these landscapes are not merely space through which one walks, but places marked by the walks that have preceded them. Each step is at once a unit of forward movement and a repetition of countless previous iterations.

In both *Die Mappe meines Urgroßvaters* and *Die Narrenburg*, the focal texts of this chapter, the necessity of retracing one's steps by walking and repeatedly covering the same ground is directly linked to the task of self-writing. These texts allow for an examination of walking and self-narration as analogous recursive processes by which individuals orient themselves in spatiotemporally complex landscapes of the nineteenth century. But in this iterative process of self-orientation and self-constitution, these individuals in fact contribute to the spatiotemporal complexity of the landscapes with which they must contend. To pursue this line of inquiry, I first consider in further detail the figure of the Romantic wanderer and its permutation in Stifter's works, particularly the repeatedly traversed paths of *Die Mappe meines Urgroßvaters* and their implications for the task of self-narration. I then turn to *Die Narrenburg* to examine how both walking and writing change the temporal structure of the landscape in the story. Finally, I turn back to *Die Mappe meines Urgroßvaters* to show how its infamous ice storm reveals the ambivalence of Stifter's apparent desire to overcome the temporal heterogeneity produced by the recursive processes of walking and writing to which he is drawn.

[4] Claudia Albes has meticulously charted out the course of the walks in *Der Nachsommer* and *Granit*. See Claudia Albes, *Der Spaziergang als Erzählmodell* (Tübingen: Francke, 1999), chapters 4 and 5. She has also charted out the "Rundgang" in *Ein Gang durch die Katakomben* in Claudia Albes, "Wege ins Totenreich: Stifters *Gang durch die Katakomben*," in *Kopflandschaften – Landschaftsgänge: Kulturgeschichte und Poetik des Spaziergangs*, ed. Axel Gellhaus, Christian Moser, and Helmut J. Schneider (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2007), 233-250. Discussions of walking in Stifter's work have overwhelmingly focused on *Granit*. In addition to Albes, Geulen, and Sng, see Eric Downing, "With Wandering Steps and Slow: *Schwellenkunst* in Adalbert Stifter's *Granit*," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 94, no. 1 *(*2020): 69–86.

The Recursive Walker and Recursive Writing: Stifter's *Mappe*

The figure of the Romantic wanderer can be seen clearly in William Wordsworth's journey across the Alps. Having unknowingly crested the final ridge on their way into Italy, Wordsworth and his companion seek a path that will lead them to the next pass, but soon realize that there is nowhere left to climb. They have crossed the Alps, a realization that prompts not joy, but rather "A deep and genuine sadness."[5] Believing that he still had much further to go, Wordsworth is incredulous and disappointed to realize that he has reached the end, that there is no further to walk. As Albrecht Koschorke argues, Romantic wandering is characterized by a "Schweifen in die Ferne," and while this is initially characterized in terms of a goal directed movement towards a point beyond the horizon, ultimately it "wird zu einer endlosen und absoluten, die inhaltliche Vorstellung eines Ziels letztlich überspielenden Bewegung."[6] Walking becomes not the means to reach a far and distant real, but its own justification. Wordsworth's true desire is not to cross the Alps, but to walk endlessly. His inability to do so is the source of his consternation and sadness.

The fact that Wordsworth is not able to wander endlessly already anticipates the end of Romanticism. On Koschorke's account, the transition from the Romantic period to realism is characterized by the closing of the horizon. The reasons for this "Entzauberung der Ferne" are manifold.[7] Andrew Cusack points to an "ideology of the settled life" that arises in the second half of the nineteenth century.[8] Similarly, John Lyon points to "the rise of nationalist sentiment

[5] William Wordsworth, "The Prelude (1805)," in *William Wordsworth*, ed. Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984) Book 6, line 492.

[6] Albrecht Koschorke, *Die Geschichte des Horizonts: Grenze und Grenzüberschreitung in literarischen Landschaftsbildern* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990) 186.

[7] Koschorke, *Die Geschichte des Horizonts*, 230.

[8] Cusack, *The Wanderer*, 227.

along with a nostalgic turn in the arts towards a *Heimat*."[9] We might also surmise that the rise of transportation technology, most notably rail travel, alters the experience of new and far-off landscapes, diminishing the luster of eternal wandering. While Wordsworth may still be an adherent to the cult of the wanderer, his traverse of the Alps points to the limited nature of the horizon. As a result of these and other changes, walking in the post-Romantic period becomes a matter of walking within clearly defined horizons, rather than seeking to move beyond them, a characterization that coheres to an understanding of realist literature as arising out of and perpetuating the adherence to social conventions.[10]

Despite this closing of the horizon, it would be a mistake to see the Romantic wanderer as having simply disappeared in the post-Romantic era. Rather, I argue that characteristics of the Romantic wanderer persist even in this newly enclosed landscape. To see how this is the case, it is worth dwelling on a feature of the Romantic wanderer best exemplified by Novalis's *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. In the second part of the novel, Heinrich characterizes his eternal wandering as a movement towards home. "Wohin gehen wir? Immer nach Hause."[11] Indeed, from the very first pages of the novel, Heinrich's goal in wandering is closely linked with his starting point. He wishes to dive into the blue tide ("blaue Flut") of the distant mountains, a description that is clearly connected to the "blaue Blume" which serves as both a lost origin and a far-off destination. This conflation of the point beyond the horizon with a lost origin is typical of

[9] Lyon, *Out of Place*, 10.

[10] Versions of this account of literary realism can be found in Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967); D. A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley, Calif.: Univ. of California Press, 1989); and Nancy Armstrong, *How Novels Think: The Limits of British Individualism from 1719-1900* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

[11] Novalis, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* in *Werke, Tagebücher und Briefe Friedrich von Hardenbergs*, edited by Hans-Joachim Mähl and Richard Samuel, 3 vols. (Munich: Hanser, 1978-87), 1:373.

Romanticism.[12] This dialectic is, in many ways, mirrored in the tension between individual and community, which Eva Geulen identifies in Stifter's walkers. Notably, it is also the source of Lukács's account of transcendental homelessness, which for him is the fundamental state of being of both the modern individual and the protagonist of the novel.

Stifter does not so much break from the paradigm of the Romantic wanderer, who is caught between a lost beginning and an unreachable destination, as reconfigure this path within the confines of the closed horizon. The result of this reconfiguration is a shift from the transcendental (dis)orientation of the wanderer towards the increasingly temporalized nature of walking in the post-Romantic era. In this, I agree with Koschorke's claim that the closing of the horizon represents a "Verräumlichung der Zeit" but differ in my understanding of this spatialization.[13] For Koschorke, much like for Henri Bergson, the spatialization of time amounts to the transformation of time into a measurable quantity that can be understood as passing away unceasingly. In Stifter's prose, however, individuals walk along paths that have always already been walked.[14] As we shall see, this iterative and recursive nature of walking—as well as writing—in Stifter's work results in a spatialization of time whereby time does not pass uniformly, but rather persists and passes variably in different places, a fact that becomes most apparent by walking through these temporally heterogenous landscapes.

To see the reconfiguration of the path of the wanderer along paths that have always, already been walked, let us consider what is perhaps the most walked path in all of Stifter's

[12] As Koschorke writes, "Wanderschaft ins Ungewisse ist immer auch Vorahnung einer Heimkehr zu einem Ort, der sich der bestimmten Erinnerung und Sagbarkeit entzieht." Koschorke, *Die Geschichte des Horizonts*, 185.

[13] Koschorke, *Die Geschichte des Horizonts*, 227.

[14] As Koschorke writes, "Was Stifters Helden sich in zeremonialer Ausführlichkeit aneignen oder was er in seinen erzählerischen Expositionen beschreibt, ist in aller Regel schon bekannt, von den Menschen erschlossen und in Besitz genommen. Die notwendigen Orientierungsleistungen bewegen sich im Kreis einer längst vorgegebenen Ordnung." Koschorke, *Die Geschichte des Horizonts*, 273.

writings. In all four versions of *Die Mappe meines Urgroßvaters*, the colonel tells the doctor about a fateful walk that he took with his late wife. The story is not only repeated by Stifter from version to version but also intradiegetically embedded in multiple re-tellings. After the events of the story, the colonel, in accordance with his practice of self-writing, writes down what happened, stores it away, and reads it some years later. The colonel presents the story to the doctor in a two-fold manner, first narrating the event orally and then providing the doctor with his writings. The doctor then incorporates this story into his own "Mappe." But rather than a straightforward narration of the story itself, the doctor's version is a narrative presentation of the colonel's act of narration, recording all of his hesitations, pauses, silences, and moments of standing up, walking to do something, returning to his seat, and restarting the story. Some years three years later, the doctor will read this story again, and perhaps repeatedly throughout his life. But *Die Mappe* does not merely consist of the doctor's autobiographical writings. Rather it is framed by the account of his great-grandson discovering these writings. Not only does the great-grandson's re-reading of the text suggest another return down the same path, but he too adds another iteration. In order for the text to be transferred to the reader, it must first be "geziffert" and "ausgezogen" (1.5.232). The text is something that the great-grandson must "enträthseln" (6.2.21), "entwirren" (6.2.23), "in unsere Schrift und Sprache übertragen" (6.1.28), and finally "abschreiben" (6.1.25).

In a walk re-told and recorded in this dizzying series of repetitions, it is not surprising that the colonel loses his way. After a day spent in the mountains, the colonel and his young wife attempt to return home but find themselves in unfamiliar territory. The similarity of the mountain walls and geological formations lead to their disorientation: "auf dem Rückwege durch Ähnlichkeiten der Wände und Spalten des Berges getäuscht, verirrten wir uns dergestalt, daß ich

um so mehr auch sie, schon die Orientierung der Weltgegend verloren hatte" (1.2.29; cf. 1.5.56, 6.1.178-179, 6.2.164). As a result, they descend the mountain in the wrong direction. Eventually they find "einen sanft abwärts gehenden Sandstrom" which "zahlreich nach abwärts gerichtete Menschenfußtrite zeigte" (6.1.179, cf. 6.1.164). They decide to proceed but in so doing find themselves stranded. The path ends and they cannot follow it backwards up the sand: "da wir um eine Eke bogen, sahen wir vor uns blauen, der Sandstrom war zu Ende, eine fallrechte Wand stieg hinab, und gegenüber dämmerte eine andere Wand zu uns herüber" (6.2.164-165).

There is, however, seemingly a way out. They see a "Holzriese" leading to the other side, which bears the "Spuren" (1.2.30;1.5.57) of "Menschenfußtritte" (6.1.179, cf. 1.2.30, 1.5.57, 6.2.165). In the first version the colonel remarks that they had "ähnliche Wege und Stege schon öfter durchaus schwindelfrey zurückgelegt" (1.2.30). While this is not made explicit in the other version, the colonel's wife is "fröhlich" (1.5.56;6.1.179;6.2.165) in response to the potential way out. The colonel and his wife have not made this crossing before, but by having made a similar crossing in the past, it is not entirely unfamiliar, and the log flume is not an untraveled path, bearing the marks of those who have come before. The log flume thus bears a liminal position not merely in its precarious position over the abyss, but in the intersection of novelty and familiarity. This liminality, however, is countered by the narrative stability of the log flume across versions of *Die Mappe*, appearing in all of them and described to a greater degree of consistency across versions than almost any other single element of the text.

This crossing turns tragic, leading to the demise of the colonel's wife. A lumberjack unexpectedly appears from a direction that had not been at first apparent and assures them that the log flume is "gangbar" (6.1.180;6.2.165). They cross slowly, with the colonel in the lead, the lumberjack in the rear, and the wife in the middle, each holding onto the lumberjack's walking

stick with the left hand. In the middle of the crossing, she falls without making a noise so as not to startle the others and thereby cause their deaths too. The colonelrealizes what has happened because he only hears the lumberjack's "Tritte mit den eisenbeschlagenen Schuhen, die ihrigen nicht" (6.1.180;6.2.165, cf. 1.2.31, 1.5.58). Before recounting his realization of what had happened, the colonel stops his story in each iteration before continuing. But while the colonel's story stops, like the sound of his wife's footsteps, the doctor's retelling, a retelling not of the story itself but the colonel's narration, continues in its account of the pause.

While itself the result of the colonel's spatial disorientation, the stability of the crossing across iterations designates it as a point of narrative orientation, a "bleibende Stelle"[15] around which the text in all of its intradiegetic and extradiegetic iterations is structured. Like the "Stelle" underneath the birch tree where the doctor had intended to commit suicide, this "Stelle" is one that serves as a point of return for every narrative level. The way out represented by the crossing is no such thing. Not only does it end the forward walk of the colonel's wife, but it produces a recursive structure within the colonel's written accounts, themselves recursively structured. There is no horizon beyond which one could even hope to walk, no clear way out. The best that can be hoped for is to transform the disorientation that initially led to this "Stelle" into an orienting familiarity by repeatedly traversing the same path in all its recursivity.

While the repeated iterations do allow for an increased familiarity with the landscape, they also leave footsteps behind, just as the doctor's method of writing develops his own self-understanding, while leaving behind writings for his future self and for future generations to encounter. In so doing each successive iteration produces further familiarity but also produces

[15] This phrase is taken from the title of Marcus Twellmann, "Bleibende Stelle. Zu Stifters *Granit,*" *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* (2007): 226-243. Twellmann's account of the mnemotechnics that invest certain spatial points with memorial significance and their role in a modernizing society is as relevant for *Die Mappe* as it is for *Granit*.

the very recursive structure that demands a way to orient oneself within it. Moreover, as we see in the intermingling of the various narrative levels through which this walk is retold, each iteration becomes permeated by previous and subsequent ones. It is this intermingling of iterations that structures *Die Mappe*, each one of which is composed of various narrative levels of experience, the retrospective re-experiencing of that experience through its written composition, and the belated re-reading of that experience at a later time, and even by later generations.

Crucially, the text links these writerly iterations with those that occur by walking. At one point, the doctor too becomes lost while walking through territory he has traversed countless times. He then remembers the advice given to him for such situations:

> Ich hatte von meinem Großvater gelernt, dem es auch wieder ein alter Schwede sagte, der nach dem Kriege als erster Ansiedler in das Haslung gekommen war, daß man, wenn einem ein bekannter Weg anfange, wirrig und entfremdet zu sein, sogleich umkehren und zurückgehen solle, bis alles wieder ein Ansehen gewinne, das man vollständig kenne, dann soll man ein wenig stehen bleiben und dann den gewünschten Weg aufs Neue einschlagen. (1.5.154-155, cf. 6.1.150, 6.2.139-140)[16]

He does just this and realizes that he was not at all on the path he thought. But after walking back in the direction he came from for some fifteen minutes, he regains "das bekannte Ansehen der Gegend" (1.5.156) and makes his way home. This model of disorientation and reorientation recalls the act of self-narration, not only in the necessity of retracing one's steps in order to begin again, but also by sharing a genealogy with the form of self-writing practiced by the colonel and the doctor. The colonel tells the doctor that "ein alter Kriegsmann" taught him the method of writing, archiving, and re-reading that he now follows (1.5.50). The doctor's great-grandson's

[16] The third and fourth versions add the suggestion that one should take off one's coat and put it back on the wrong way, turn around a few times, and say a prayer, all steps which the doctor neglects to perform. It is also notable that while in the second and third version, the memory of this advice prompts the doctor's decision to turn around and walk back the way he came, in the fourth version it is only after the fact when speaking to his father that he learns this advice.

frame narrative seems to be set around the time of the initial publication of *Die Mappe*. Given that his discovery of his great-grandfather's writings took place some decades earlier, both the war veteran who taught the doctor's grandfather the trick for finding one's way again and the old soldier who taught the colonel this mode of self-writing appear to be veterans of the Thirty Years' War. This shared genealogy, particularly in a work so concerned with genealogical relations indicates something more than a coincidental similarity in structure. Re-walking a path that is perpetually marked by these iterative walks becomes the model for writing the self.

The Temporality of Recursive Self-Narration

The recursive mode of both walking and writing exemplified in *Die Mappe* inflects both the self that is the subject of writing and the temporality characteristic of the subject's movement through time. In *S/Z*, Roland Barthes argues that "rereading draws the text out of its internal chronology ("this happens *before* or *after* that")."[17] But rather than recapturing "a mythic time (without *before* or *after*),"[18] as Barthes suggests, the re-reading and re-writing constitutive of *Die Mappe* initiates a series of recursions that displace *before* and *after*, without removing them. It is not that temporal coordinates are somehow transcended. Rather, through their inclusion in *Die Mappe*'s recursive structure, they cease to suggest the clear linear, causal trajectory that is typically taken to be characteristic of the temporality of the novel, even as the events of the narrative remain inescapably temporal.[19] This mode of self-writing can thus be linked to the temporality of a walk along paths that have always already been walked.

[17] Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), 16.

[18] Ibid.

[19] For Barthes's account of standard forms of novelistic temporality, see Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*.

This recursive model of writing and re-reading not only functions analogously to walking but is also explicitly marked as a substitution for walking. In the second version of *Die Mappe*, the point in the doctor's life at which he begins keeping these written records is marked by a decrease in the time he spends walking: "Ich verwendete alle jene Zeit zum Schreiben, in der ich sonst in den Feldern gegangen bin, die Gewächse, die Bäume, das Gras angeschaut und betrachtet habe" (1.5.194). Walking and writing for the doctor function in a compensatory fashion, with the one taking the place of the other. While this explicit equation between writing and walking does not appear in the other versions of *Die Mappe*, it is indicated in a somewhat different way in the third version. The arrival of the red notebook in which the doctor will record his thoughts and the events of his life occurs immediately after an agonizing period of questioning and self-doubt. "Was bin ich bisher gewesen?" he asks, "Wer bin ich denn als Mensch gewesen?" (6.1.203, cf. 6.2.186).[20] This crisis of identity is followed by several pages of questions and memories of his life, none of which seem to shed light on the problem. Instead, at the end of this long litany of self-interrogations, he writes, "Solche Gedanken trug ich viele Tage, ich durchdachte sie immer, und durchdachte sie immer wieder, und dachte, es soll anders werden" (6.1.212). Not only does the repetitious nature of these ruminations indicate a circularity akin to walking, but the thoughts themselves are described as a burden he must carry. It is only with the arrival of the materials necessary to begin writing that this model of rumination can stop and be replaced with a process of writing that is no less circular.

In both cases, the act of writing serves as a replacement for such ruminative, ambulatory repetitions. And yet, as we know, this form of writing mimics the circular and repetitions form of

[20] For an extensive consideration of this passage as central to the question of identity in *Die Mappe*, see Cornelia Blasberg, "'Wer bin ich bisher gewesen?' Identität als Problem in Adalbert Stifters *Die Mappe meines Urgroßvaters*," in *Ordnung - Raum - Ritual: Adalbert Stifters artifizieller Realismus*, ed. Sabina Becker and Katharina Grätz (Heidelberg: Winter, 2007).

walking characteristic of the doctor's ruminations. Following in the footsteps of the colonel, he must retrace his steps each day to record the events and thoughts of his life, a path he must once again follow when he reads what he has written some three years later. However, the material traces of these written peregrinations seem to have a stabilizing effect, ending the unproductive ruminative walking and ultimately leading to a reunion with his beloved, the same woman who had once spurned him, almost driving him to suicide.

The apparent success of this type of self-writing is curious given the form of the question that initially prompts the doctor's crisis of identity. To ask, "Who am I?" is to give voice to a fundamental lack of familiarity with oneself. But the doctor asks himself a somewhat different question: "What have I been up to this point in my life?" While the use of the imperfect tense ("Who was I?") might have signaled a stark contrast between his present self and who he used to be at some earlier point in his life, the doctor's use of the perfect tense demands an answer that considers the entire course of his life up to this point. This use of the perfect suggests a genuinely diachronic account of identity. He does not merely want to know about the relationship between different points of his life, but rather asks a question about who he has been *through* time. The perfect, however, suggests an underlying tension to the relationship between time and identity. One the one hand, it is used to represent completed actions. (I have gone shopping. I have been to Spain. I have eaten my dinner.) These events are finished, finalized, relegated to the past. However, the distinction between the perfect and the imperfect is often characterized in terms of their relationship to the present. Whereas the imperfect represents events that are clearly removed from the present moment and firmly situated in the past, the perfect is used to indicate events that still have a relationship to the present. (I have eaten my dinner, and I am still full. I have gone shopping, and my pantry is now well stocked.) The doctor's question thus suggests

both a disjunction between the past and the present (he is not now the person he once was), but also a culmination (he is what he is today because of the past). The use of the term "bisher" intensifies this contrast both emphasizing the distinction between the past and the present and the sense that the doctor is today the man he is because of his past.

These implications of the grammatical form of the doctor's question may seem to be in tension with each other, a tension that is only heightened by the unstable nature of the past in Stifter's work. As we have seen in both the colonel's walk and the doctor's near suicide, the past is never really past. It is something to which characters must return time and time again and it is something that continues to have a force on the present and the future. This continuing force of the past also calls into question the idea of a linear and progressive culmination. The doctor is right in thinking that he is who he is because of the past, but in the world of Stifter's prose, the question, "Was bin ich bisher gewesen?" cannot be answered by a straightforward account of *Bildung* leading the doctor from what he was to what he is to what he someday will be.

Significantly, the form of self-writing presented in *Die Mappe* does not so much break from this circular, repetitive, and anachronistic mode of walking and rumination, as it does reproduce it in a different material form, leaving behind tracks on paper rather than in the earth. The comparative permanence of these written tracks function, I would like to suggest, like Hansel and Gretel's white pebbles or Ariadne's thread. They do not produce a straightforwardly linear narrative (Hansel, Gretel, and Ariadne must all re-trace their steps), but rather function to orient the walker within this recursive temporality. In asking the question "Was bin ich bisher gewesen?" the doctor indicates that he has lost his way in life to such a degree that he no longer knows who he is. This disorientation mirrors the despair discussed at the beginning of this chapter which almost drives the doctor to suicide. However, as we have seen, the remedy for his

initial despair did not so much lead the doctor out of the labyrinth as produce it. It is only because he did not commit suicide, that the fateful "Stelle" had to be traversed time and time again in a series of re-walkings, re-readings, and re-writings, themselves shuffled and re-organized in the four distinct versions of the text.

The Persistence of the Past: Complicating Recursion

While recursion and repetition are fundamental to the structure of *Die Mappe*, the temporal structure of walking and writing—and by extension of the self—in Stifter's work cannot be fully accounted for in these terms. Repetition and recursion alter the temporal order by displacing before and after, past and future, but the persistence of objects and their eventual decay produces yet another disorienting temporal reconfiguration, as seen from the very first pages of the book. In the initial frame, the doctor's great-grandson describes the "pleasure" and "strange joy" of walking through his father's house, filled as it was with assorted objects from times past, "In ihm sind Dinge und Theile von Dingen vorhanden, die von unsern Vorfahrern stammen, liegen und stehen geblieben, und mit andern jüngeren Gegenständen vermischt und unter sie verräumt worden sind." (6.1.7). This experience prompts a consideration of both the staying power of things left behind from past generations and their eventual demise at the hands of time.

> Ja ich denke oft jetzt schon, da ich selber alt zu werden beginne, mit einer Gattung Vorfreude auf jene Zeit hinab, in der mein Enkel oder Urenkel unter meinen Spuren herum gehen wird, die ich jetzt mit so vieler Liebe gründe, als müßten sie für die Ewigkeit dauern, und die dann doch, wenn sie an den Enkel gerathen sind, erstorben und aus der Zeit gekommen wird. (1.5.11)

This passage is rife with the temporal distentions of movement, memory, and anticipation, which, while keenly aware of impermanence, occlude clear beginnings and endings. The doctor's great-grandson is *beginning* to grow old, and is thus no longer young but not yet old.

His joy is an anticipation of a joy to come ("Vorfreude") but one that he seems to experience in anticipating it. He imagines the eternality of what he will leave behind, nonetheless recognizing that it too will pass away. And yet, this passage serves as the frame for his discovery of his great-grandfather's writings. The anticipation of the memory of his own life falling into oblivion as his grandchildren and great-grandchildren replace his "Spuren" with their own coincides with the re-discovery of the things from generations prior.

In *Die Mappe*, this dialectic of persistence and decay is largely unobtrusive, augmenting the temporal reconfiguration produced by re-walking, re-writing, and re-reading, rather than disrupting it. In Stifter's *Die Narrenburg* (1842/1844), however, the individualized temporalities of objects take on a more central role as these objects proliferate. [21] Writings, footprints, and assorted, albeit largely non-specific heirlooms comprise the material traces that individuals leave behind in *Die Mappe*. By contrast, in *Die Narrenburg*, not only writings, but also other material forms—including architecture, portraiture, and paths—serve as focal points of self-expression and memorialization. This variety of material forms complicates the continuingly present analogy between writing and walking. More than simply a recursive and repetitious form of movement that mimics and provides a model for self-writing, walking becomes a means of navigating the spatially heterogenous structure of time created by the proliferation of self-representative objects that exhibit their own unique temporalities. In this way, Stifter's walkers thus not only reveal the non-linear temporal structure of self-narrative, but also the spatialization of time as the result of material and artistic self-representation.

[21] The first version was completed and published in 1842 in the journal *Iris*. Stifter then revised it for inclusion in the first volume of his *Studien*, published in 1844. For a variety of reasons, the following analysis will primarily draw from the revised *Studienfassung*. Any references to the *Journalfassung* are clearly indicated as such.

That *Die Narrenburg* speaks to and extends the discourse of time, walking, and self-narrative from *Die Mappe* is no coincidence. Both works, along with *Prokopus* (1848) and *Witiko* (1865-1867), were conceived by Stifter as parts of a larger story detailing the fictional Scharnast dynasty, a connection made explicit in the initial versions of both *Die Mappe* and *Die Narrenburg*. The doctor is distantly related to the dynasty and Heinrich, the protagonist of *Die Narrenburg*, turns out to be the great-grandson of the doctor who finds his writings.[22] But these works share more than a genealogical relation. They are also both intensely concerned with the problem of self-narrative. In *Die Narrenburg*, every heir of the Scharnast family must agree to two things:

> erstens mußte er schwören, daß er getreu und ohne geringsten Abbruch der Wahrheit seine Lebensgeschichte aufschreiben wolle, und zwar von der Zeit seiner ersten Erinnerung an bis zu jener, da er nur noch die Feder zu halten im Stande war […]; – zweitens mußte er schwören, daß er sämtliche bereits in dem roten Steine [the name of the Scharnast family archive] befindlichen Lebensbeschreibungen lesen wolle. (1.4.321)

The failure to agree to these two conditions results not only in the forfeit of the inheritance, but in one's erasure from the family's history: "Bei wessen Tode sich der Fall ereigne, daß man von ihm gar keine Lebensbeschreibung […] finden könne, der wird als gar nicht geboren betrachtet, also ist auch seine ganze Nachkommenschaft nicht geboren, und das Fideikommiß geht an ihnen vorüber den Weg Rechtens weiter" (1.4.322). As Eva Geulen remarks, "Nicht nur wer überleben will, wie Scheherezade in *1001 Nacht*, sondern wer überhaupt leben und gelebt haben will, muß sein Leben aufschreiben."[23] The act of self-narration does not only possess "einen pädagogisch-therapeutischen Auftrag,"[24] as Christian Begemann argues, but rather functions as an

[22] For a clear account of these genealogical relations, see Christian Begemann, "Das Verhängnis der Schrift," afterword to *Die Narrenburg* (Salzburg: Residenz Verlag, 1996), 122-126.

[23] Eva Geulen, *Worthörig wider Willen: Darstellungsproblematik und Sprachreflexion in der Prosa Adalbert Stifters* (Iudicum Verlag: München, 1992), 9.

[24] Christian Begemann, *Die Welt der Zeichen* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1995), 248.

"identitätsstiftende und das Selbst legitimierende Instanz."[25] Self-writing in this context is a precondition for existing as an individual, and a self, at all.

Because the analogies between the form of self-writing in *Die Mappe* and in *Die Narrenburg* are so clear, it is worth taking seriously the differences between the two. While writings in *Die Mappe* do pass from generation to generation as evidenced by the doctor's reading of the colonel's writings and the great-grandson's discovery of the doctor's writings, the primary focus is intragenerational. By writing down what has occurred to them and returning to these thoughts, events, and emotions with the distance of time, both the doctor and the colonel are able to become "gentler" men, learning "das Gute von dem Gepriesenen [zu] unterscheiden, das Heißerstrebte von dem Gewordenen" (1.5.52). Recursion, even if it has the potential to produce temporal disorientation, functions developmentally, allowing individuals to cultivate an increased familiarity with themselves as well as their landscapes.

In *Die Narrenburg*, by contrast, self-writing is principally aimed at an intergenerational audience. The composition of a life story, or a "Lebensbeschreibung" as it is called, was conceived of by the Scharnast family's patriarch in order to stamp out the "Narrheit" endemic to the family. He had hoped that the necessity of reflecting upon and recording their life, the chance to learn from the mistakes of their ancestors, as well as the threat of their own mistakes being known to their descendants would put an end to generations of foolishness. This requirement, however, largely failed to achieve that goal. Rather than avoiding the foolishness of their ancestors, the Scharnasts repeatedly reproduce it in their own lives.

> Es mußte nämlich von ihrem Anherrn her so viel tolles Blut, und so viel Ansatz zur Narrheit in den Scharnasts gelegen haben, daß sie, statt durch die Lebensbeschreibungen abgeschreckt zu werden, sich ordentlich daran ein Exempel nahmen, und so viel verrücktes Zeugs thaten, als nur immer in eine Lebensbeschreibung hineingeht. (1.4.322)

[25] Geulen, *Worthörig wider Willen*, 10.

As a result of re-reading the lives of their ancestors, the Scharnasts live their lives in such a way as to re-write this "Narrheit" in each of their biographies. Each act of self-narrativization turns out to be a re-writing of that which has already been read and re-read.

The recursive practice of self-writing in *Die Narrenburg* thus instantiates a vicious cycle in a way that it does not in *Die Mappe*. Whereas *Die Narrenburg*'s Scharnasts perpetuate their foolishness, the doctor and the colonel are able to overcome their emotional excesses. In what follows, I argue that this difference can be explained at least partially by the fact that the analogy between walking and self-writing in *Die Narrenburg* is complicated by the presence of alternative, competing modes of self-representation and memorialization, each with their own unique temporalities. Walking thus becomes more than a temporal analogue with self-narrative, for it also manifests concrete spatial characteristics in a way that is not the case for *Die Mappe*. Walking represents not only a form of managing the temporal contours of non-linear self-narration but also a way of engaging with and navigating the heterogenous spatial character of time resulting from the material and memorial culture of the nineteenth century. To see how time becomes spatially heterogeneous through these objects, however, it will first be necessary to consider the recursive structure of both walking and self-writing in this work, a relationship that in many ways mirrors the one seen in *Die Mappe*, albeit with an increased emphasis on the individual's position in a transgenerational lineage.

The Written Word and the Inability to Walk Forward: Stifter's *Narrenburg*

The central walk of *Die Narrenburg* takes place in the second of the story's three parts. In the first part, Heinrich, an amateur naturalist, has been living in the remote and beautiful Fichtau valley for some time. He spends his time walking through the landscape in order to observe and

study its natural features for which he is generally regarded as an eccentric by the valley's inhabitants. This eccentricity is rooted in the non-teleological structure of his walks. He does not go anywhere in particular but is merely "herumgehen und herumsitzen gesehen" (1.4.324). This form of walking is also repetitive. As Tove Holmes emphasizes, he does not conduct research in the singular, but rather "Forschungen" in the plural (1.4.327).[26] One day, he discovers what appear to be the ruins of a castle on top of a mountain, but despite walking and climbing around it for hours, he can find "weder Thor noch Eingang" (1.4.332). It is only in the second part of the story, led by his friend Robert, that Heinrich is able to find a path up the mountain through "eine Alee uralter dichtbehaarter Fichten" (1.4.363) leading to a hidden entrance. There, they are let in by Ruprecht, the ancient Castellan, who, along with his granddaughter, is the sole remaining resident of the castle.

Heinrich's walk to the castle is, in many ways, a return. The castle is largely vacant because Christoph, the last of the Scharnast line, left to go fight in a war in Africa, where he died without leaving a legitimate heir. Christoph thus counts among the cases of Stifter's "Einzelgänger" who walked away from their communities never to return, such as Georg and his wife in *Der Waldgänger*, the eponymous protagonist of *Abdias*, and the uncle in *Der Hagestolz*.[27] Heinrich, it is later revealed, is the descendant of another member of the Scharnast family from several generations back, who also left, never to return. He thus completes the return in place of the other members of the family who failed to do so. Heinrich, however, leaves the

[26] Tove Holmes, "Literary Images: Viewing and Visuality in German Realism" (PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 2011), 113-114. Other scholars have suggested that Stifter's emphasis on a plurality of measurements anticipates the statistical nature of modern scientific research. See, for example, Deborah Coen, *Climate in Motion: Science, Empire, and the Problem of Scale* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), chapter 6.

[27] For a consideration of this mode of "fortgehen" in *Der Waldgänger* and *Abdias*, see Geulen, "Stifter-Gänge."

castle before returning again to dwell there, thereby initiating his own series of departures and returns.

The walk through the castle on his first visit is a "Rundgang," approximately circumnavigating the castle grounds. Over the course of this walk, Heinrich discovers "ein breiter schöner Weg, als wäre täglich jemand darauf gewandelt, oder als wäre er gestern erst gemacht worden" (1.4.374-375). This well-maintained path, itself partially constructed of the rubble of old buildings, occupies an ambivalent position between being newly created and being the product of years of repeated re-walkings. It is both new and ages old. The re-formation of the architectural remains into a pathway presents a way of moving through the disarray of the castle. That the rubble constituting the path is both the remains of former buildings and a means of moving among those very buildings underlines the strange temporality of paths and, by extension, walking. In walking this path, Heinrich is both going on a new walk that is uniquely his own and walking over ground that is constituted by the remains of generations that have gone before him. While overt in this instance, this strange temporal configuration is inherent to all paths and roads, which are capable of leading the walker to new destinations, but the very existence of a road necessarily implies that someone else has already gone this way before.

As in *Die Mappe*, the temporal structure of the path in *Die Narrenburg* is directly linked to the recursive narratives that individuals must write. But in *Die Narrenburg*, these narratives do not merely participate in the repetitive temporalities of walking. Instead, they are presented as actively stymieing the flow of time. Near the end of the narrative, after discovering that he is the lost heir to the Scharnast line and reoccupying the castle, Heinrich once again walks along the path leading through the castle grounds and fully recognizes the extent to which the path he walks is not his own. Heinrich has just read Jodok's narrative, the one "Lebensbeschreibung" to

which we are given access. In his narrative, Jodok instructs his descendants to do what he cannot: destroy the writings of the Scharnast family. Jodok worries that these writings petrify the lives they recount, preventing their subjects a natural death. Heinrich is not unmoved by these concerns but, already having taken his oath and following in the footsteps of his ancestors, he does not seem capable of diverting the course:

> 'Das ist keine gute Einrichtung unserer Vorfahren,' dachte er, als er den von so vielen Lesern und Schreibern betretenen Pfad durch den alten Garten zurückging und im Schutte die Fußstapfen drückte, die so viele vor ihm drückt. Er konnte dem Rate des Jodok nicht folgen und das Gelesene in die Winde streuen, sondern mit beschwertem Herzen überall die Gestalt des Jodokus sehend, er vor kurzem hier gewandelt, dachte er: 'Wie viele Gestalten mögen sich noch hinzugesellen, bis der Garten voll Gespenster ist?' (1.4.427)

Even though Heinrich has not yet read all of the "Lebensbeschreibungen" at this point, and seems not to have begun writing his own, in walking "den von so vielen Lesern und Schreibern betretenen Pfad" he combines the essential elements of both writing and reading. He both experiences the path as having been already walked countless times by his ancestors but in doing so also leaves his own marks in the form of "Fußstapfen" for his ancestors to follow.[28]

Heinrich's emphasis on footprints echoes the association that Jodok makes in his "Lebensbeschreibung" between the narratives of the Scharnast family and tracks they leave behind. Jodok, horrified by the persistence of these remains, demands that they be destroyed: "Helft das Gräschen tilgen, das sein Fuß betrat, die Sandspur verwehen, auf der er ging, und die Schwelle umwandeln, auf der er saß, daß die Welt wieder jungfräulich sei" (1.4.411). For Jodok, the only way to erase these footprints is to destroy the writings of the Scharnast family. "Ich thäte es selber, aber mir schaudert vor meinem Eide," he writes, begging those who will come

[28] In this, Heinrich's walk is closely linked to the frame narrator of *Die Mappe*, who imagines his descendants walking among the "Spuren" he will leave behind.

after him to do what he cannot: “Wenn es dein Gewissen zuläßt, später Enkel, so verbrenne die Rollen, und sprenge den Saal in die Luft” (1.4.411-412).

Jodok’s justification for wanting to destroy his own writings as well as those of his ancestors is “daß sich die Gespenster all ihres Tuns nicht in dein Leben mischen und es trüben, sondern daß du es lieber rein und anfangsfähig aus der Hand deines Schöpfers trinkest” (1.4.412). The persistence of human life after death in material form distorts generational succession. Rather than simply coming before as “Vorgänger,” past generations become contemporaneous with later ones through their preservation in writing. This anachronous contemporaneity has the potential to dissolve the assumed generational boundaries. The lives of your ancestors may unwittingly “in dein Leben mischen und es trüben,” just as your life might come to pollute the life of your descendants (1.4.412).

This intermingling of lives archived together in written from distorts the temporal structure that Jodok considers to be a necessary criterion for individuality: the possibility of “Anfangsfähigkeit.” For Jodok, new beginnings are precluded by the persistence of things left behind and the ghosts of past deeds. As the linear narratives of his ancestors are read and re-read, “vor jedem Ankömmling müssen sie ihre Thaten wieder neu thun” (1.4.411). These writings instantiate an eternal return from which the subject is not allowed to rest, and because of these repetitions, each new generation is prevented from going their own, for they are always already incorporated into the paths of those who have gone before.

In one sense, Jodok’s conception of individuality is markedly Romantic in character. For him, to truly be an individual requires a radical break with all that came before, requires reaching that unreachable place beyond the limits of the horizon. It is no surprise then that Jodok’s own journey calls to mind the figure of the Romantic wanderer, traveling as he does to the Orient

where he finds a bride whom he brings back with him to the castle. According to Begemann, this Romantic desire for radical individuality is in fact the source of the Scharnast family's "Narrheit." In reading the stories of their ancestors, each generation attempts to avoid the mistakes of their forebears. In pursuing this aim, however, they strive for a radical individuality, unmoored from communal or familial ties, choosing to go their own way. Ironically, it is precisely in striving to be their own person, other than those that came before them, that they unwittingly follow in their family's footsteps.[29]

Even if Jodok is a crazed Romantic seeking an impossible ideal of individuality, his concerns about the Scharnast family's practice of self-writing conveys an important insight into the temporal structure of both walking and written narrative. This can be seen by returning once again to the strange temporality of roads. In "Prokopus", a later work also pertaining to the Scharnast family, the road through the Fichtau valley is described as disjointed from a temporal present that can be easily assimilated into a progression from the past to the future. In the opening lines we learn:

> Der Weg war damals keine Straße, auf welcher schöne Wägen gehen können – eine solche ist er noch heut zu Tage nicht – aber damals war der Pfad so schmal und uneben, daß nicht einmal jene Gebirgswägelchen auf ihm hätten fahren können, mit denen er in unseren Zeiten so zu sagen bedeckt ist. (3.1.213)

The standpoint of the narrator looks back on a time when the road was merely a small path, but rather than marking a distinction between the past and the present as one might expect, this observation indicates a continuity, one that seems always at the point of rupturing, but never does. Later one of the villagers remarks that "der Pfad wird zu einem breiten Wege werden" (3.1.234). He thus looks forward to a future in which the path will be more than it presently is, but the present of the narrator looking back on this conversation has not yet fulfilled this

[29] See Begemann, *Welt der Zeichen*, 250-252.

expectation. The narrator continues to look forward to the same future while narrating a past that is no more. Claudia Albes characterizes this as a "Logik des 'noch nicht' und 'nicht mehr'" which produces the experience of a "bis zum Stillstand zerdehnten Gegenwart."[30] Within this dilated petrification of time, however, there is an interpenetration of temporal perspectives realized in the dual temporal directionality of the narrator and the villagers.

The road thus conceived represents not a linear path through time, but rather the petrification of time slowed to a near standstill. It is precisely this concern that is at the heart of Jodok's critique of self-writing. Crucial to this critique is the status of these narratives as material objects, texts that can be read again and again. Thus, even though they recount the life of an individual "von der Zeit seiner ersten Erinnerung bis zu jener, da er nur noch die Feder zu halten im Stande war" (1.4.321), the recursive practices of re-reading and re-writing alter the flow of time. After all, the mere transformation of life into narrative is not unique to the Scharnast family. The villagers and farmers who inhabit the surrounding Fichtau valley are just as apt to tell stories from their lives, coming together as a community on the evening that begins the narrative, like every Saturday evening, in order to share food and tell stories "von ihren Fahrten und Tageserlebnissen" (1.4.337). This communal form of storytelling and self-narrative, never recorded permanently and not demanding the unification of all of the events of a life into a singular narrative, is sharply distinguished from the individualized written accounts characteristic of the Scharnasts.[31]

[30] Claudia Albes, "'... ein ungeheuerliches Ding mit plumpen, ungeschickten Gliedern': Überlegungen zu Stifters angeblich missglückter Erzählung *Prokopus*" *Wirkendes Wort* 69, no. 1 (2019): 49.

[31] The distinction between the communal form of storytelling and the solitary written accounts of the Scharnast's anticipates Walter Benjamin's account of the rise of the novel in "Der Erzähler." Jodok's critique of this form of self-narrative, however, does not involve a valorization of the oral tradition of storytelling.

For Jodok, however, the most damning characteristic of written narratives is the fact that they persist after the death of their authors. Rather than the succession of a living lineage, the archive of the Scharnasts produces "eine schauderhaft durcheinanderredende Gesellschaft" in which indiviudals "nicht sterben können" (1.4.411) because of the persistent afterlife through the words they have left behind. Jodok's solution to this chaos of anachronously coexisting generations, each without a true beginning or end, involves an extravagant attempt to extricate the individual human life from its embeddedness in a series of retellings. Every life, he writes,

> ist ein neues, und was der Jüngling fühlt und thut, ist ihm zum ersten Male auf der Welt: ein entzückend Wunderwerk, das nie war, und nie mehr sein wird – aber wenn es vorüber ist, legen es die Söhne zu dem anderen Trödel der Jahrtausende, und es ist eben nichts als Trödel; denn jeder wirkt sich das Wunder seines Lebens aufs Neue. (1.4.410)

Jodok claims to have been "der Schlußstein des millionjährig bisher Geschenen und der Mittelpunkt des All, wie es auch du einst seine wirst" (1.4.410). While this attitude has been described as a narcissistic delusion of grandeur rooted in a hypertrophic Romantic "Sehnsucht,"[32] the relativity of the personal pronoun "ihm" in the above passage demonstrates a recognition of the limited viewpoint inherent in such a perspective. The grandeur of radical individuality is both something genuinely new given the unique nature of every human being and yet, paradoxically, this unique nature of this occurrence is not at all unique, true as it is for everyone ("auch du").

The conjunction of the spatial metaphor of the "Mittelpunkt des All" with the temporal experience of novelty is crucial for making sense of Jodok's world view. The "Trödel" of past generations must be pushed aside to allow for an unmediated experience of life. He wishes to prevent the generational buildup of things left behind, but in a form of cyclicality distinct from the recursion of re-reading, re-writing, and re-walking. His life must be erased so that the next

[32] Begemann, *Welt der Zeichen*, 213-214.

generation may experience life anew. The persistence of written narratives—and, as we shall see, architecture and portraiture—impede the progression of things as they are "in der Zeit nacheinander gegeben."[33] Somewhat paradoxically given his emphasis on "Anfangsfähigkeit," Jodok describes the passage of time as a wheel that continuously turns. We must accept that one generation must pass on for the next to come and have the same radical experience of being the "Mittelpunkt des All." It is appropriate to mourn their passing,"aber dann springe auf, und greife wieder zu an der Speiche, und hilf, daß es rolle – bis auch du nicht mehr bist, andere dich vergaßen, und wieder andere und wieder andere an der Speiche sind" (1.4.411). For Jodok, it is only in the continual turning of the wheel of time that one can stand in the middle of all things, but once the wheel of time has been disrupted through accumulation of past lives, new beginnings, and with them the ability to, for a moment, stand at the center of the universe, are no longer possible. Instead, the individual is caught in a web of interlocking temporalities permeating one another.

Resisting the Progression of Time: Architecture

While the brunt of Jodok's critique is directed at the "Lebensbeschreibungen" archived in the castle, he once attempts to destroy not merely these writings, but the entire castle, including the buildings he has commissioned and his own portrait, by burning them all to the ground. This attempted arson fails and Jodok cannot again bring himself to attempt that step again. Given the scope of the destruction that Jodok seeks, it is worth taking seriously the ways in which both architecture and portraiture function analogously to the written accounts left behind by the Scharnasts. Moreover, walking plays a central role in the reception of architecture and painting.

[33] Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1956), 499.

For both artforms, walking is not a mere analogy for the progression of narrative, as it is in the case of writing, but an integral part of experiencing them. To this end, this section and the subsequent one will deal with temporal structure of architecture and painting respectively, as well as their implications for understanding the walk that constitutes the central part of the story.

Heinrich's initial walk through the castle grounds is structured by his encounter with the buildings he finds there. This walk is not merely a repetition of Jodok's, or any other single ancestor, something made clear by the disunity of the castle. Once inside the castle walls, Heinrich discovers that the "Narrenburg" can hardly be said to be a castle at all but rather "eine Sammlung von Schlössern, eine halbe Stadt von Schlössern" (1.4.328). The castle presents such a lack of stylistic conformity that it is as if it were "so gut, als in gar keinem Style gebaut" (1.4.328). Instead of a uniform construction resulting from a singular artistic vision, this architectural "Dichtungschaos" (1.1.350)[34] is the result of generations of construction projects, each of which was "angeklebt" on the mountain known as the "Rothenstein" (1.4.328). By the time Heinrich discovers the castle, this process of architectural and stylistic accretion has come to an end. The castle has fallen into ruin, and the Scharnast family, whose line is thought to have died out, no longer occupies the strange collection of buildings.

The use of the term "Dichtungschaos" connects the architectural bricolage to the task of life-writing decreed by the family's patriarch. In a similar fashion, the fact that the buildings are constructed upon a mountain named the "Rothenstein" by each resident of the castle presents an analogue to the archive of writings left behind the family's male heirs in a building on the mountain that bears the same name as the mountain itself. Unlike the temporal unfolding of a narrative, however, architecture has the potential to function not as a linear, temporally ordered

[34] This term appears in the *Journalfassung* but is omitted in the *Studienfassung*.

representation of an individual, but as a spatialized one, extending in three dimensions. But architecture is not without its own temporality. It persists (or fails to persist) through time, and it is also experienced over time, particularly by walking through and past buildings. Walking through and around these buildings—each of which serve as spatialized externalizations of an individual—turns out to be an analogue to reading a narrative, and indeed, it is this very walk which structures the narrative.

Heinrich and Robert are led by Ruprecht on a "Rundgang" around the castle grounds, seeing each of the buildings in the process. The realm within the castle walls, repeatedly characterized as a realm of the past, an "unklare Vergangenheit," is clearly differentiated from the "holde Gegenwart" of the surrounding valley (1.4.369). This division, echoing the demise of the Scharnast lineage, is clear not only in the seemingly impenetrable wall, but also in the strange courtyard situated immediately inside the entrance to the castle. In this courtyard they find "das ausgetrocknete Becken eines Springbrunnens" in which "der Wind hatte das Becken halb mit feinem Sande angefüllt" (1.4.365). The image of a sand-filled fountain echoes the description of the barren city in the desert in *Abdias*, at the time of the titular character's birth: "über der toten Stadt hing schweigend das düstere Geheimnis, als würde nie ein anderer Ton in ihr gehört, als das Wehen des Windes, der sie mit Sand füllte" (1.5.242). As scholars have shown, the presence of sand in Stifter's work is closely connected to its status as the result of erosion, the crumbling of that which was once solid.[35] Furthermore, given Abdias's apparent infertility, this description

[35] For further discussions of sand and erosion in Stifter's work, see Franziska Frei Gerlach, "Die Macht der Körnlein. Stifters Sandformationen zwischen Materialität und Signifikation," in *Die Dinge und die Zeichen: Dimensionen des Realistischen in der Erzähllliteratur des 19. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Sabine Schneider and Barbara Hunfeld (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2008), 109-122; Sabine Schneider, "Kulturerosionen: Stifters prekäre geologische Übertragungen," in *Figuren der Übertragung: Adalbert Stifter und das Wissen seiner Zeit*, ed. Michael Gamper and Karl Wagner (Zürich: Chronos, 2009), 249–69; and Lindsey Brandt, "Tangled Up Truths: German Literary Conception of Nature between Romantic Science and Objective Empiricism" (PhD diss., Carolina-Duke Graduate Program in German Studies, 2015), chapter 3.

of the landscape at the time of his birth emphasizes the dissolution of cultural or familial continuity. [36] Just beyond the dry fountain "stand ein Obelisk, jedoch seine Spitze lag ihm zu Füßen" (1.4.365), a fractured phallic symbol in conjunction with the sand-filled fountain.[37] In addition to this suggestion of infertility, both elements of the courtyard suggest a point at which time has come to an end and is no longer measurable. The fountain recalls an hourglass that has run its course, and the fallen obelisk suggests a broken sundial. Whether as symbols of infertility or the discontinuity of time, both give architectural form to the failure of the Scharnast family to maintain a clear lineage from the past to the present.

In walking through the castle, Heinrich and his companions occupy a space of the past, set apart from the Fichtau's temporal present. Yet as Katharina Grätz aptly notes, the entrance into the castle is not so much a journey into the past as "eine Wanderung durch die Ruinen und Trümmer der Geschichte."[38] The castle grounds are not a land of the dead, but rather a storehouse of the objects left behind by past generations. Stifter's fascination with such antiquarian remains is not unique to *Die Narrenburg*. It can also be seen in his essays, *Ein Gang durch die Katakomben* and *Der Tandelmarkt*, which were written roughly contemporaneously with *Die Narrenbrug*, as well as his later *Der Nachsommer* (1857).[39] We have seen a similar

[36] Abdias and his wife are unable to conceive. His wife does eventually bear a child, but at a time when the two do not seem to have a sexual relationship and the presence of another man is suggested. Particularly given the phenotypic dissimilarity between Abdias and his daughter, his paternity is clearly called into question. For further discussion on this point, see Martha Helfer, "Natural Anti-Semitism: Stifter's *Abdias*," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 78, no. 2 (2004): 261-286.

[37] For a consideration of phallic imagery elsewhere in Stifter's work, see Catriona MacLeod's reading of the cactus in *Der Nachsommer*. Catriona MacLeod, *Fugitive Objects: Sculpture and Literature in the German Nineteenth Century* (Evanston, IL, Northwestern University Press, 2014), chapter 4.

[38] Katharina Grätz, *Musealer Historismus: die Gegenwart des Vergangenen bei Stifter, Keller und Raabe* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2006), 106.

[39] Nietzsche criticizes antiquarian history as a reverence for objects of the past, which, isolated from their context, are "nicht mehr beseelt und begeistert." The focus on isolated elements merely preserves life but does not allow it to be assimilated into an organized whole which might produce life. See Nietzsche, "Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben," §3. This account bears a resemblance to the acccumulation of things in *Ein Gang durch die*

fascination with the objects in the opening frame of *Die Mappe*, in which "Dinge und Theile von Dingen […], die von unseren Vorfahren stammen, liegen und stehen geblieben, und mit anderen jüngeren Gegenständen vermischt und unter sie verräumt worden sind" (3.1.7). This intermingling of objects from various generations is also characteristic of the buildings on the Rothenstein.

Of the five buildings which are described in detail, each is associated with the family member who oversaw and directed its construction, and each exhibits its own peculiar architectural style, corresponding to both the individuality and the historical period of its architect. The oldest recognizable building is Prokopus's gothic tower. Prokopus had two sons, Julianus and Julius. It is rumored that Julianus killed his younger brother, but he in fact left the Narrenburg and is Heinrich's long-lost ancestor. Some generations after Julianus come the brothers Sixtus and Jodok, and then Jodok's son, Christoph, who, having died in a war in Africa, is thought to have been the last of the line. Despite the historical lineage of the family, the buildings collectively fail to demonstrate a progression from past to present. Julianus's building has already been designated as a ruin, even though his father's building is fully intact. Christoph's building, despite being the newest of them all, is "bereits wieder im Verfalle begriffen" (1.4.368). In contrast, the building belonging to Jodok, Christoph's father's, remains "ein edles Geschlecht weißer schlanker Säulen" (1.4.367), even after Jodok's attempted arson.

Despite the apparent progression from Gothic to Neo-Classical to modern architectural styles, the buildings are not temporally ordered in any way, but rather interspersed like the objects at the beginning of *Die Mappe*, both in terms of the order in which they are first seen

Katakomben and *Der Tandelmarkt* or, indeed, *Die Narrenburg* and *Die Mappe meines Urgroßvaters. Der Nachsommer,* first written after the 1848 revolutions, can be read as suggesting the possibility of reintegrating and reorganizing such antiquarian remains into an ordered whole as a form of *Restaurationspolitik*, but it is unclear whether such a project is successful.

visually, and the order in which they are spatially arranged, forcing the wanderers to encounter them in a fashion that moves back and forth through temporal periods. Their walk through and past these buildings is thus labyrinthine both in terms of its anachronous order and the distinct temporalities of each building subject to their own rates of persistence and decay.

The use of the temporal adverbs "bereits wieder" for a building that is relatively new is telling in this respect, a description closely related to the strange temporal status of the path they walk, both new and ancient. The term "wieder" is especially curious here, indicating a return to a state of dissolution even though the building is not old enough to have gone through the repetitions of decay and reconstruction. Instead, this return seems to be to the initial state of the building materials as stone, themselves remnants of the earth. The forces of gravity and erosion, like the biological inevitability of aging and death, seem bound to lead to ruin. It is in opposition to these forces that individuals persist through the buildings they have left behind and the preserved written accounts of their lives. These remains serve as a more or less successful mode of resistance to this entropic progression.[40]

The realm within the castle walls is thus a land of the (un)dead preserved in material form. Given this designation, Ruprecht's role as guardian of the castle and Heinrich's guide as they walk through the castle grounds resembles that of a psychopomp. It is Ruprecht who leads the walk and who orients Heinrich and Robert along the path. However, Ruprecht seems to be entirely ill-suited for this role. Not only does he tell stories that do not seem to make any sense and is often confused by the presence of his companion, but he seems to lack any capacity for

[40] For more on the idea of architecture as a formal force opposing gravity, especially as it is explicated in Schopenhauer, see Malika Maskarinec, *The Forces of Form in German Modernism* (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 2018). In the context of this project, it is notable that in her introduction Maskarinec connects the upright force of architecture opposing gravity to that of the pedestrian.

temporal orientation. In the *Journalfassung*, he is described as "eine Chronik […], in der nur die Blätter durch einander geworfen sind" (1.1.349).[41] Ruprecht does not even seem to know what time of year it is, not realizing he is wearing a warm fur hood on a hot summer day until his companions point it out to him. This temporal disorientation is seen most clearly in the way he mistakes Heinrich for Sixtus, one of the long dead members of the Scharnast family. One might be tempted to forgive this confusion due to their similarity in appearance, except for the fact that Ruprecht also refers to the deaths of Sixtus's descendants and Sixtus himself while he is speaking to Heinrich as if he were Sixtus. He knows all of the events that have taken place in and around the castle but seems unable to comprehend them in terms of a strict chronology. The past is for him still very much present.

It is this temporal disorientation that would seem to allow Ruprecht to look upon the decaying ruins "mit ruhigen und heiteren Blicken […], als wäre es in der schönsten Ordnung" (1.4.370). That Heinrich feels "unheimlich in der Gegenwart dieses alten Mannes" (1.4.378) is perhaps unsuprising. But the dual meaning of "Gegenwart," both spatial and temporal, is telling. Ruprecht's temporal present annihilates temporal difference, incorporating incompatible times into a static whole. However, it is precisely this temporal disorientation that grants him the spatial orientation requisite for his role as guardian and guide of the castle. Not even needing to rely on his vision, he can lead Heinrich "in tiefster Dunkelheit wieder Treppe auf Treppe ab,

[41] This description is notable for several reasons. First, description further prompts the comparison to a psychopomp by recalling the description of Sibyll, who leads Aeneas through the underworld in Vergil's *Aeneid*: "But now commit no verses to the leaves / Or they may be confused, shuffled and whirled / By playing winds: chant them aloud, I pray." Vergil, *The Aeneid*, trans. Robert Fitzgerald (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), VI, 117-119. Second, the references to the disordered pages of a chronicle contrasts with the facts that the "Lebensbeschreibungen" are stored as scrolls. Scrolls also suggest a continuity and a resistance to revision and reordering in comparison to the loose pages of Ruprecht's "Chronik," or, for that matter, a "Mappe." This conflation of written forms recalls Friedrich Nietzsche's account of untimeliness, a description that itself appears to echo Vergil: "Fortwährend löst sich ein Blatt aus der Rolle der Zeit, fällt heraus, flattert fort — und flattert plötzlich wieder zurück, dem Menschen in den Schooss." Nietzsche, "Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben," §1.

Gang aus Gang ein" (1.4.381). Within the realm of the castle, he knows where everything is, but not when, for the buildings that comprise the castle are, like the objects and remains in *Die Mappe*, "mit anderen jüngeren Gegenständen vermischt und unter sie verräumt."

While Ruprecht's strange spatiotemporal relationship to the buildings of the Narrenburg may be the result of mental decline, I want to suggest that it represents a certain apprehension of the architectonic reality of the castle and thus too the model of self-identity at stake here. While the journey through the castle is a journey through the ruins and rubble of the past, the ruins cause the past to persist into the present. As Sabine Schneider notes with regards to *Die Mappe*, "die bleichenden Dinge [werden] immer wieder in metonymische Nähe zu den bleichenden Knochen ihrer einstigen Besitzer gesetzt."[42] Much the same could be said of the buildings that constitute the Narrenburg. It is not an accident that Julianus's building, usually referred to as "die Ruine," is dated to the generation from which Heinrich's ancestor, Julianus's brother, was expunged from the Scharnast line. Likewise, Jodok's neo-Classical parthenon stands tall despite his attempt to burn it down and erase the memory of his life from history. These buildings are the remainder of past generations, but they also metonymically stand in for their former inhabitants. Removed as they are from the flow of time that constitutes a human life, they are seemingly frozen in the past.

In this way, both writing and architecture are subject to the critique lodged by Jodok. The persistence of the life of the individual after death in material form through writing and architecture results in the "nachziehend[e] Afterleben eines Gestorbenen" (1.4.411). Moreover, Ruprecht's atemporal mode of orientation shows that this critique is more than an irrational

[42] Sabine Schneider, "Vergessene Dinge. Plunder und Trödel in der Erzählliteratur des Realismus," in *Die Dinge und die Zeichen: Dimensionen des Realistischen in der Erzählliteratur des 19. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Sabine Schneider and Barbara Hunfeld (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2008), 158, n. 8.

paranoia. The remainder of past generations produces a static set of relationships between the objects, removed as they are from the flow of time. Heinrich's journey through the Narrenburg is a journey through the land of the dead, albeit the dead that have been forced to live on in the buildings they have left behind, just as his act of reading the writings of his ancestors forces them to be reanimated. And yet, it would clearly be a mistake to see this afterlife as a merely static relationship between objects, even if Jodok and Ruprecht might suggest such a reading.

In the material form of architecture, the flow of time is contained and partially halted, preventing the end and final rest desired by Jodok. This lack of an ending, and the corresponding preclusion of a true beginning, disrupts the possibility of a purely sequential order, a problem Jodok also finds in the "Lebensbeschreibungen," archived with past and future lives. While the representation of life via narrative has a different temporal structure than the building of the Narrenburg, both disrupt a uniform flow of time. These disruptions represent not so much a stasis as, to borrow a term from Benjamin, "das Bild der erstarrten Unruhe."[43] In both cases, individuals have been "aus den Zusammenhängen des Lebens ausgesondert" and therefore "zerschlagen und konserviert zugleich."[44] The persistence of the Scharnasts through their writings and buildings prevent them from ever being truly laid to rest. They are frozen in unrest.

While Benjamin's notion of "erstarrte Unruhe" may be an apt description of the Narrenburg, the castle's petrification is always developing. The continual aggregation of more and more buildings, like the accumulation of writings in the Rothenstein, produces ever new

[43] Walter Benjamin, "Zentralpark," 1:666. The phrase appears once more in "Zentralpark" and again in "Das Paris des Second Empire bei Baudelaire," always referring to Baudelaire's poetry. The persistence of Baudelaire's "rubble" depends on its extrication from the coherence of life. It is thereby both conserved and destroyed, no longer really a part of life, but also not allowed to die. The phrase, however, is not original to Benjamin. He took it from Gottfried Keller's poem, "Verlorenes Recht, verlorenes Glück."

[44] Walter Benjamin, "Zentralpark," 1:666. The description of "zerschlagen und konserviert zugleich" also calls to mind the "Säle mit den Heerden ausgestopfter Tiere" which are described as part of the collection housed in the Narrenburg.

constellations between them, and even the demise of the family, and with it the continual process of construction and inscription, does not allow for a pure stasis. The unceasing deterioration of the buildings brings with it its own temporality, and the "Afterleben eines Gestorbenen" should indeed be understood as a form of life that will itself experience a second death, a death inaugurated by the final illegibility of what was left behind. This illegibility is itself present in the unmarked gravestones on the mountain, Heinrich's contemplation of the future in which his writings will no longer be decipherable,[45] and in the final rubble, and ultimately dust, that is left when the buildings can no longer be recognized as such. It is through this "erstarrte," but never completely static, "Unruhe" that Heinrich must navigate.

Heinrich's initial walk through the castle would seem poised to break through this state of "erstarrte Unruhe." In returning to the castle as the rightful heir and incorporating the "Dichtungschaos" of the castle into a linear walk, he would seem to re-establish continuity between past, present, and future. The past stored up in the remains of the castle has the potential to be the basis for a progression of the Scharnast family line into the future through the presence of Heinrich. However, the temporally indefinite status of the path he follows precludes incorporation of these disparate times into a unified walk, and thus a unified narrative.

Indeed, the walk itself does not follow a continuous path through the castle, but is twice interrupted, brought to an ambulatory and narrative standstill. The first of these pauses takes place on the peak of the mountain overlooking the architectural remains of the castle and out into the surrounding valley. In reaching the one point of the mountain where he can look beyond the

[45] After reading Jodok's story, Heinrich considers what his story will contain: "Er sah deutlich nun auch schon das Kreuz von fremder Hand auf seinem letzten Blatte stehen und dabei: 'gestorben nach dem Worte....' – welches Wort mag es wohl sein? etwa Gattin? oder ein anderes, oder eins im Wörterbuche, auf das man jetzt gar nicht denkt?!" (427). Of course, with the possibility that he will write in a language that is not yet imaginable comes the converse possibility that one day his writings will no longer be decipherable by future generations.

castle walls, Heinrich is able to unite the "holde Gegenwart" of the Fichtau with the "unklare Vergangenheit" of the castle into a single field of vision (1.4.369). The conjunction of past and present mirrors the incorporation of past, present, and future into a linear narrative and a linear walk, seemingly overcoming the "erstarrte Unruhe" of the castle, and yet the two impulses are contradictory. In order to obtain this view, the walk must be halted, but to incorporate this temporal chaos into a linear progression, he must move on, leaving this view behind. The precarity of this position becomes evident in comparison to a motif that occurs repeatedly throughout Stifter's work. As Hans Dietrich Irmscher notes, time and time again, characters in Stifter's stories, having arrived at their destination, enter their chambers, shut the door behind them, lock it, and then look out upon this surrounding landscape through the window, "so als könnte der Wanderer erst jetzt, geborgen vor der Wirklichkeit, in ein Verhältnis zu dieser, die er eben durchwandert hat, treten, als übe sie draußen einen Druck auf ihn aus, so daß er ihr sich nicht objektiv gegenüberstellen kann."[46] The view from the top of the mountain notably lacks the security of the closed room and the mediated perspective through the window.[47] It is a perspective that is made unsustainable by the continued walk through the castle, but in staying stationary, the forward movement of time, narrative, and walking is stopped, producing yet another locus of standstill in the castle.

Resisting the Progression of Time: Portraiture

[46] Hans Dietrich Irmscher, *Adalbert Stifter. Wirklichkeitserfahrung und gegenständliche Darstellung* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1971), 244.

[47] For further consideration of the epistemic position of the observer and the effect of movement, particularly train travel, upon the epistemic stability of such a position, see Todd Presner, *Mobile Modernity: Germans, Jews, Trains* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), chapter 3.

The second pause in Heinrich's walk through the castle brings us to the third primary form of self-representation and memorialization in *Die Narrenburg*. In addition to architecture and writing, the Narrenburg contains a collection of portraits of each member of the Scharnast family in a room known as "der grüne Saal."[48] It is within this gallery in the green hall that Heinrich's walk is halted once more. Portraiture—like the view from atop the mountain and the pause in the walk that enables it—has a tendency to produce a static vision of the individual, depicting the subject at a particular point in their life, seemingly abstracted from the processes of growth and aging. In this way, like the narratives in the Rothenstein and the castle's buildings, the binding of subjects in a painting removes them from the progression of birth, life, and death, instead fixing them at a moment in time, but also, in a sense, out of time.[49]

Portraiture, however, is not merely an alternative mode of self-representation to narrative. In *How Novels Think*, Nancy Armstrong considers Sir Joshua Reynolds' portrait of the Bunbury boy and the anecdotal accounts suggesting that Reynolds used ghost stories in order to keep the boy still so that his image could be painted. "Let us assume," she writes, "that stories did move the subject of Reynolds's painting, even while they fixed his body to a place."[50] On Armstrong's

[48] Unlike the "Lebensbeschreibungen" of the "Rothenstein," "der grüne Saal" includes portraits of all family members, including those who are not heirs. Another distinguishing feature is that the portraits, unlike the "Lebensbeschreibungen" and the buildings, are not self-portraits, but painted by someone else.

[49] The connection between painting and death, and the corresponding temporal disorientation of a portrait that precedes (and perhaps augurs) death, but then serves as a remembrance of that life is to be found frequently in other works of German realism, such as Gottfried Keller's *Der grüne Heinrich* or Theodor Storm's *Aquis Submersus* and *Viola Tricolor*. On *Der grüne Heinrich*, see Eric Downing, *The Chain of Things: Divinatory Magic and the Practice of Reading in German Literature and Thought, 1850–1940* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018), chapter 1. On *Aquis Submersus*, see Robert Holub, *Reflections on Realism: Paradox, Norm, and Ideology in Nineteenth-Century German Prose* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), Chapter 5. On Viola Tricolor, see Eric Downing, *Double Exposures: Repetition and Realism in Nineteenth-Century German Fiction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), Chapter 5. In a slightly different context, one might also think of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

[50] Armstrong, *How Novels Think*, 2. Given the focus of the present study, it is not without interest that the stories used to occupy the Bunbury boy were ostensibly ghost stories. As narratives of an *after*life, such stories suggest a more complicated set of temporal relations than are represented by Armstrong's largely spatial model.

model, narratives serve to fix subjects so that they may be painted. This model of subjectivation disrupts the flow of time, albeit in a way distinct from the repeated readings that result from the "Lebensbeschreibungen." And yet, the arresting of time implied by portraiture, depends upon storytelling in order to keep the subject still so as to be bound in painting. Stories, however, also provide the context by which portraits can be interpreted. Without Ruprecht's muddled stories of the lives of the Scharnast family or the various tales and legends reported among the inhabitants of the Fichtau, Heinrich would have no bearings for making sense of the long line of portraits he finds in the green hall. By way of these narratives, Heinrich is able to position himself in relation to the portraits he sees, indeed, his relation to these pictures becomes constitutive of his identity.

It is in the green hall that Heinrich's suspicion of his connection to the Scharnast family is fully given voice. In observing the portrait of Julius, the member of the Scharnast family expunged from the inheritance, and, as it turns out, Heinrich's great-great grandfather, all of the pieces begin to fall into place for Heinrich:

> denn wenn es wahr ist, was ihm ein gesendeter Zufall erst kürzlich geoffenbaret, wenn er ein später Sprosse all dieser Männer ist, so war es dieser Jüngling Julius, durch den der Strom in sein fernes, abgelegenes Heimattal geleitet wurde, daß er selbst nun heute, nach mehr als anderthalb Jahrhunderten, ein verschlagner, unbeachteter, letzter Tropfen desselben, vor der reichen Quelle stehe, aus der er kam. – Wie seltsam die Schicksale der Menschen und der Geschlechter sind! Was mußte nicht geschehen, daß er heute hier stehe und auf die zarte Stirne und die großen, freundlich lodernden Augen eines Knaben schaue, der vielleicht sein Ur-Ur-Großvater ist. (1.4.384-385)[51]

Heinrich produces a narrative connecting himself to the portraits he views through a linear and unified chain of events, positioning himself not merely at the end of a succession of generations, but as the fulfillment of a lost legacy. While the paintings in the green hall are ordered

[51] The *Journalfassung* goes even further in delineating "was mußte nicht geschehen," so that Heinrich could stand there on that day, identifying Heinrich with the narrator of *Die Mappe meines Urgroßvaters*, a connection that is erased in the *Studienfassung*, and detailing how all of the events of his ancestors as well as the experience of his discovery of his great-grandfather's notebook have led to this day.

chronologically, it is only in narrative form that this succession can be given meaning. Following Frank Kermode, we might call this a "sense of an ending." As Kermode argues, "In the middest, we look for a fullness of time, for beginning, middle, and end in concord."[52] The organization of time around an ending is for Kermode a fundamentally human tendency found in the structure of plot, which is "an organization that humanizes time by giving it form."[53] We see in Heinrich this same inclination to produce meaning out of mere succession. Even if Heinrich is the long-lost heir to the Scharnast family, this attribution of meaning is still in some sense a fiction, albeit one that is constitutive of his status as an individual in relationship to other individuals.

Despite Heinrich's inclination to organize—and thereby imbue with meaning—his understanding of self in relationship to the past and future into a linear narrative, this task is one that paradoxically requires him to subvert the linear progression of time. As is made clear by the narrator's description of this epiphany, Heinrich's self-conceptualization as "ein verschlagner, unbeachteter, letzter Tropfen" of the Scharnast family returning to its source indicates a retrospective orientation that disrupts the continuous, forward motion of time. In order to narrativize his life, he first needed to return to this place. It was necessary to swim upstream against the current, opposing the unidirectional movement of time.[54] It is only here in the portrait room, looking upon the faces of his ancestors, that he can move forward with constructing a future-oriented narrative. Heinrich's desire for a coherent narrative requires that he must walk forward, while looking backwards. In the *Journalfassung*, Heinrich's apprehension of a narrative unity between himself and the Scharnast family directly connects to a promise for the future:

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[52] Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 58.

[53] Ibid., 45.

[54] And yet, as noted above, the forward movement of time is characterized by entropy and dispersal, as seen both in the decay of the buildings and the outward movement of the members of the Scharnast family who fail to return.

"Heinrich schwor es sich in diesem Augenblicke, aus dem Berge und der ganzen Fichtau ein Paradies zu machen" (1.4.1.371). Given the status of paradise as the place from which all humans are expelled, this ostensibly forward movement is also characterized as a return.[55] While this line is deleted in the *Studienfassung*, another form of forward momentum remains in the continual movement through the castle: "Man ging endlich weiter" (1.4.385). The almost exasperated addition of "endlich" to this line, not present in the *Journalfassung*, gives voice to Heinrich's impatience at their movement through the castle. Having now connected the dots, so to speak, he has no desire to waste more time than necessary. The end is not merely immanent, structuring his understanding of self, but also imminent. This desire for continued progress, however, as we will see, is oblivious to the inextricably recursive movements of his walk forward.

Heinrich's desire for an ending is repeatedly frustrated.[56] Three times he tries to continue his progression through the castle but is stopped by Ruprecht and forced to remain within the portrait room. The first time that Heinrich and his friend Robert turn to leave, "sahen sie zu ihrem Erstaunen den greisen Kastellan mit äußerster Verzückung nach dem Gemälde starren." (1.4.387). Heinrich and his friend are startled by Ruprecht's absorption in the painting. It is the act of spectatorship, and their own positions as spectators of spectatorship that prevents them from walking away and moving forward. The second time, Heinrich is once again halted by

[55] Notably, this trajectory is essentially the same as that of the Romantic wanderer.

[56] According to Peter Brooks, this is precisely the structure of narrative: "If the motor of narrative is desire, totalizing, building ever-larger units of meaning, the ultimate determinants of meaning lie *at the end,* and narrative desire is ultimately, inexorably, desire *for* the end." Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 52. The model presented by Brooks, however, subsumes the repetitions, delays, and frustrations into the fabric of narrative itself, taking the linear, and indeed teleological structure of narrative as primary. In many ways, what I am seeking to do here is to reverse that order of dependence. Samuel Frederick makes a similar point. See Samuel Frederick, *Narratives Unsettled: Digression in Robert Walser, Thomas Bernhard, and Adalbert Stifter* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2012), 9-17.

Ruprecht's stare, now oriented towards them: "Heinrich trat einige Schritte weg, aber der wahnwitzige Kastellan folgte ihm sachte mit glänzenden Augen" (1.4.388). While in the first instance Heinrich and Robert are in the privileged position of second-order spectatorship, here the tables are turned: they have become the object of perception, seemingly replacing the position of the painting in the first instance. As Armstrong argues, with regards to the painting to the Bunbury boy, the portrait encloses "painter, subject, and spectator entirely within a world of fiction where each exists as an individual to others."[57] While it is certainly true that this is "a useful model for the mutually constitutive relationship between novelists and their protagonists,"[58] the constitution of Heinrich's identity in relation to these images equally demonstrates that these positions are not stable, and are always liable to be reversed and upturned.

This tendency towards perspectival reversal is strongest not with regards to spatial relations, but rather temporal relations. In the above passage regarding Heinrich's narrative construction of a lineage between himself and Julius, his apparent great-great grandfather, the portrait of Julius is repeatedly characterized by its youth. He is described as "dieser Jüngling Julius," and is said to have the "freundlich lodernden Augen eines Knaben" (1.4.384-385). Given that this account of viewing the portrait is clearly focalized through Heinrich, such descriptions of youth are not to be understood in absolute terms, but relatively. It is not merely that Julius appears young to Heinrich, but in emphasizing his youth, it is suggested that the portrait of Julius was in fact painted at a time when Julius was younger than Heinrich is now. The retrospective orientation that Heinrich must take in order to construct a linear causal narrative connecting

[57] Armstrong, *How Novels Think*, 3.

[58] Ibid.

himself to the Scharnast family is further disrupted by his temporal relationship to his direct ancestor. Julius the source from which he came, and to which he must return, but also experienced through his representation of youth, a youth that is, for Heinrich, a thing of the past no longer accessible. This relationship calls into question Heinrich's status as a descendant of Julius. Their relative ages in appearance seems to almost reverse their genealogical relationship.

A similar temporal and spatial confusion is present with regards to the portrait of Sixtus, the brother of Jodok. Despite the temporal distance and the fact that Heinrich is not a direct descendent of Sixtus, the portrait of Sixtus appears to be a perfect representation of Heinrich, "Allein das Bild war Heinrichs Zug für Zug, nur in fremden Kleidern" (1.4.391). Just as the shift in Ruprecht's gaze from the painting to Heinrich suggests an alteration in the spectator position, so too does the uncanny similarity between the portrait and Heinrich suggest a shift in the subject position. Heinrich, as spectator, becomes the subject of the painting as well, seemingly occupying both positions simultaneously. The instability of these positions is underwritten by Ruprecht's seeming conviction that Heinrich *is* Sixtus. Indeed, his entire goal in bringing them to the portrait room was to show Heinrch/Sixtus his portrait. Heinrich's experience in the portrait room is thus both an important point in his own subject formation as we saw above, but it is also a site of *mis*-identification, in which the fungibility of the two characters underlines the precarity of any genuine individuality.[59] Heinrich can only attain an identity through these portraits and the narrative he constructs to connect himself to them, but the very same portraits, by erasing the difference between portrait and viewer, threaten the idea that he could be an individual at all.[60]

[59] Much has been written on the relationship between image (*Bild*) and *Bildung*. For a consideration of the problems associated with this connection and the effects of medial changes beyond painting, see Eric Downing, *After Images: Photography, Archaeology, and Psychoanalysis and the Tradition of Bildung* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2006).

[60] Elisabeth Strowick describes Heinrich's self-constitution in the green hall as "zweifellos ein transformatorischer Akt–nicht jedoch im Sinne einer jubilatorischen Setzung eines vorgeblich integren Ichs, sondern einer unheimlichen

Standard forms of narrative identity involve furnishing a narrative justification that connects the past self to the present self, explaining, for instance, why the child you were is the same person as you now, despite the manifold difference. The self thus understood is a form of "permanence in time."[61] The confrontation with the portrait of Sixtus, however, perverts this relationship. Rather than being prompted to unify the disparate stages of a life into a coherent identity, Heinrich is confronted with an unexpected identity between himself and Sixtus. This identification between the two is nevertheless temporally displaced. Heinrich sees himself as someone who lived generations prior. This disruption of generational order further complicates the question of identity. As Elisabeth Strowick remarks, it is not clear "ob Heinrich der Nachkomme von Sixtus II. ist oder umgekehrt."[62] This ambiguity mirrors Heinrich's relationship to the portrait of Julius, but further complicates it by suggesting two different people, two brothers, who both bear the marks of at once being Heinrich's progeny and his ancestor.

The strangeness of Heinrich's relationship to the portrait of Sixtus leads Strowick to argue that Heinrich's return to the castle of his ancestors is that of "ein Untoter, ein Wiedergänger."[63] On her reading, the story is characterized by a "Realismus des *nach*,"[64] understood both in terms of belatedness (*Nachträglichkeit*) and afterlife (*Nachleben* or, in Stifter's neologism, *Afterleben*). Life and action do not occur in a timely manner, with effects

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Ent-setzung, gespenstischen Defiguration." Elisabeth Strowick, *Gespenster des Realismus: zur literarischen Wahrnehmung von Wirklichkeit* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2019), 140.

[61] Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 140. Ricoeur uses the phrase as the slogan for ipse-identity (the identity of the self) in contrast to idem-identity (numerical identity).

[62] Strowick, *Gespenster des Realismus*, 140.

[63] Ibid., 141. This formulation draws on Begemann's reading: "Das ist die 'infektiöse' Wirkung der Schrift: Als Archiv des Vergangenen vereitelt sie beharrlich das Vergessen von allem, was ohne sie längst tot wäre und als Ungewußtes jedermann kaltließe. In ihrer charakteristischen Doppelstruktur folgt auf ein stummes 'Todesstadium' die 'Auferstehung' ihres Gegenstands zu neuer, medial vermittelter Gesprächigkeit. Daher erscheinen die verrückten Urheber und Referenten der Schrift als Untote, als Wiedergänger und Dämonen." Begemann, *Welt der Zeichen*, 244.

[64] Strowick, *Gespenster des Realismus*, 313.

directly following causes, but only belatedly in the "Afterleben eines Gestorbenen." Each life is "getrübt" by the previous generation, which, unable to elude the force of their ancestors, can only be said to exist in its own right in its belated afterlife contaminating the next generation.[65] The emphasis on "afterness" in Stifter's work, as indicated both by belatedness and persistence after life, aligns with the preceding analysis of the persistence of individuals *after* natural human life has come to an end.[66] And yet, the different material forms in the novel through which individuals persist beyond their death do not have a uniform temporality. They decay and persist and even freeze time in different ways and at different paces. Furthermore, as the potential for reversed chronologies in Heinrich's relationship to the portraits of Julius and Sixtus make clear, a concept of "afterness" risks assuming a linearity of time that is not actually to be found in the story. The individuals of *Die Narrenburg* are indeed always occupying a realm of afterness, stuck on the other side of death and unable to fully recover the past, but so too are they always incomplete and unfinished, having "not-yet" arrived at their destination.[67]

[65] As Strowick argues, we see this same model of life and representation as being "seriell gestaffelt" in the structure of the paintings themselves. Strowick, 140. As we learn, the paintings were "viel später gemalt […], als die Urbilder lebten, aber wahrscheinlich nach vorhandenen, wenn auch schlechten Originalen" (1.4.383). They are not direct representations of reality, but rather trapped in a series of belated deferrals.

[66] Samuel Frederick also places an emphasis on the concept of afterness in Stifter's work. He argues that the uneventful narrative of *Der Nachsommer* should be understood as the story of "a utopian place where stories have effectively ended." Samuel Frederick, *Narratives Unsettled*, 134. The novel "demonstrates what narration looks like once the story has ended, by narrating *after the end*" (168). In conjunction with Strowick's account of a "Realismus des *nach*," one could argue *Der Nachsommer* escapes the entrapment in an endlessly deferred seriality by postulating an absolute future beyond such a series, albeit one that is, by Frederick's admission, "forever inaccessible" (167).

[67] Claudia Albes suggests a similar logic "not-yet" and "no longer" in Stifter's *Prokopus*, which she connect the discourse of melancholy. Cf. Claudia Albes, "ein ungeheuerliches Ding," 47-49. Samuel Frederick suggests something similar in his interpretation *of Der Nachsommer* as a narrative, which "tells a story by virtue of telling that stories can no longer be told." Yet in "paradoxically" telling such a story, this mode of narration still exists in the realm of the not-yet. Samuel Frederick, *Narratives Unsettled*, 168.

We begin to see the precarious interplay between the after and the not-yet right before Heinrich sees the portrait of Sixtus, as he and Robert attempt to sneak past Ruprecht for the third time:

> Die Freunde wandten sich nun zum Fortgehen. Ohnehin war ihnen die Luft dieses Saales drückend geworden. Sie wollten unbeachtet an Ruprecht vorübergehen, überzeugt, daß er ihnen, sich sänftigend, stille folgen würde. Aber wie er ihre Absicht erriet, ließ er plötzlich die Hände von seinem Gesichte fallen, und statt der vorigen Erregung sahen sie nun das äußerste Erstaunen darinnen, so, daß ihm sogar vor Schreck die Tränen stocken geblieben, und wie gefrorne Tropfen in dem weißen Reife seines Bartes standen: 'Aber wie seid Ihr denn?' rief er mit heftiger Stimme, 'wozu habe ich Euch denn hergeführt? wozu seid Ihr denn zurückgekehrt? Ich habe den ganzen Tag die Geduld mit Euch gehabt, ich habe ja die höchste Geduld gehabt, als Ihr immer und immer die andern Dinge des Berges anschautet und nicht ginget, wohin ich Euch führen wollte, ich habe die Geduld gehabt, um Euch endlich auch zu zeigen, was ich getan habe – warum wollt Ihr denn nun fortgehen?!' (1.4.389-390)

Unlike the "Tropfen" in the earlier passage, in which Heinrich must return to the source in order to make sense of his position vis a vis the Scharnast lineage, the "Tropfen" consisting of Ruprecht's tears do not reverse the natural flow but stand still, frozen in time like the paintings, or the "erstarrte Unruhe" of the castle itself and its undead inhabitants. They are "stocken geblieben" and stand "wie gefrorne Tropfen." Moreover, the location in which they are frozen is Ruprecht's white beard, indicative of his old age, his status of "not-yet" being at the end of his life, but a life that seems already to have extended far beyond the time allotted to most humans.

From Ruprecht's perspective the entire walk through the castle grounds has been leading up to this point. The preceding stages of the walk were not necessary steps towards their fulfillment in this room, but rather needless delays separating them from their real goal. That Heinrich wants to continue walking, incorporating this room as just another element of a continuing narrative, is unthinkable for Ruprecht. It is only in the halting of narrative, the timelessness of co-existing generations that Ruprecht sees any sort of redemption. This narrative caesura, in which not only does forward momentum stop, but the distinctions between

generations cease to be functional, is fittingly a stop prior to the end of the walk through the castle. It is a penultimate stop on a walk that is never quite complete.

Once Ruprecht finally does allow the walk to continue, Heinrich and Robert attempt to stop it once more, but are pushed onwards by their guide. They notice a final room in the building, the painter's atelier, which seems to have both been unoccupied for ages, and to bear the immediate traces of the painter's departure. "Alles lag und stand noch so, als wäre der Künstler vor einem Augenblicke hinweggegangen: aber ausgedorrte Farben, Staub und Spinnweben zeigten, daß hier jahrelang kein menschliche Hand thätig gewesen sei" (1.4.394). The room thus echoes the previously discussed description of the well-maintained pathway "als wäre täglich jemand darauf gewandelt, oder als wäre er gestern erst gemacht worden" (1.4.374-375). This combination of immediacy and temporal distance is supplemented by the presence of an incomplete portrait of Ruprecht's daughter, which ought to have been completed and installed in the green hall but has been left incomplete as a result of the family's demise. Ruprecht has no desire to linger here, urging his companions on: "Geht vorüber, geht nur eilends vorüber." But he then goes on to explain the room and the painting despite his desire to move on, ultimately exclaiming, "Alles ist nicht zu Ende; Alles ist falsch" (1.4.395). This dissatisfaction with the incomplete painting representing the final link of an incomplete family line lays bare the true nature of the portrait room. It is an attempt to hold together the crumbling fragments of time from the tenuous, always precarious position of the incomplete, and the not-yet. Heinrich attempts to overcome the incompleteness of the green hall by reorganizing it into a narrative and giving it the forward propulsion of his walk, and his story. But the attempt to do so does not, and cannot, change the nature of the gallery.

The contents of the green hall are ages old, representing a past that is no longer accessible. The story's narrative present is irredeemably condemned to being always after the elements that it would seek to unify in an unachieved future. Ruprecht's anxiety about the continual movement through the castle is an anxiety of the passing of time, of the fear of a future in which there will be nothing left bearing the markings of afterness.[68] This also explains the proliferation of stories that come from Ruprecht in the green hall. While it is the meeting of glances that impedes forward movements, he keeps his companions where they are, like young Bunbury boy, by telling stories. These stories, however, unlike Heinrich's attempt at a unified narrative momentum through the castle, proliferate in all directions and conflate disparate times.[69] In this room, the narrative, in moving both forwards and backwards, can reach neither. Rather, it seeks to encompass the fleeting, incomplete present, holding it where it is.

Walking through a Temporally Heterogenous Landscape

The slowly decaying buildings, the writings archived in the Rothenstein, and the portraits stored in the green hall all function as storeholds of time, each metonymically linked with the individuals who persist through these material objects. This persistence of the individual is partially attributable to the function of these objects as modes of self-representation. The writings, paintings, and buildings left behind by each generation all present the personality and character of the individuals who produced them in a material form that is accessible by others.

[68] In this, Ruprecht is not far from T.S. Eliot's characterization of *The Waste Land* as "these fragments I have shored up against my ruins." T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land: Authoritative Text, Contexts, Criticism*, ed. Michael North, A Norton Critical Edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), 20.

[69] Ruprecht's need to continue telling stories, connects him, perhaps, to Scheherazade, who must continue to narrate in order to stay alive. His mode of narration also echoes the disappearing mode of storytelling identified by Benjamin, albeit ironically situated within the context of an individual who has lost his community, rather than within a communal setting.

Each of these modes of self-representation is, in a certain sense, inadequate, a fact that Jodok recognizes when he writes, "Was ich hier schreibe, bin nicht ich – mich kann ich nicht schreiben" (1.4.410). No material form can entirely capture the essence of the individual. And yet, the function of these modes of self-representation does not seem to be primarily mimetic. Rather, the recursive mode of self-writing in both *Die Mappe* and *Die Narrenburg* is largely a means of self-constitution, a process by which the individual comes to (or attempts to) develop a stable and coherent self-identity.

As we see in Heinrich's encounter with both the architecture and the portraiture of Rothenstein, these modes of self-representation play a similar role. It is precisely by engaging with them and by walking among them that Heinrich develops an understanding of who he really is.[70] Crucially, this process of self-constitution also relies on the memorial function of these objects. In representing themselves though durable material objects, the members of the Scharnast family have created physical traces that will outlast them and that will serve as a reminder for future generations of their deeds and existence, and it is through engaging with these memorials, that each subsequent generation undergoes a process of self-constitution.

In addition to its role in processes of self-constitution for later generations, the persistence of the individual in these material forms has two significant implications for the nature of time and for the function of walking. The first of these has already been thematized in the earlier discussion of the "Lebensbeschreibungen," namely that the persistence of the individual after death complicates the possibility of speaking of any definite ending. Heinrich recognizes as much when he finishes reading Jodok's life story.

[70] Following Peter Boxall, we might say that self-writing in this work functions not mimetically, but prosthetically. That is, it functions both as an imitation and as an extension of the self. Peter Boxall, *The Prosthetic Imagination: A History of the Novel as Artificial Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

> Bei diesen Worten brach das Manuscript ab, und keine Zeile stand weiter auf dem Pergamente. Nur unten am Rande des letzten Blattes stand von fremder Hand: '† (gestorben) einundzwanzig Tage nach dem Worte: Sohne.'
>
> Ach – und so muß ja jede dieser Rollen enden, die in den eisernen Kästen noch liegen mögen. Wenn der Mann dachte: 'morgen oder übermorgen schreibe ich wieder,' so war er morgen oder übermorgen krank, und die andern Tage darauf todt! (1.4.426-427)

The fact of death, both in its predictability and in its unexpectedness, prevents the possibility of a true narrative conclusion to one's life, or at least from the first-person perspective. The story of Jodok's life can only be completed "von fremder Hand." It requires the shift towards an outside perspective. This outside perspective, however, is itself another, new first-person perspective. The end of Jodok's narrative, if it can even be called an end, is the word "Sohne," and given the structures of inheritance in the Scharnast family, we can assume as well that it is his son Christoph who writes the final line indicating Jodok's death. But rather than providing an ending for his father in doing so, he inaugurates a new beginning. The death of his father and his acceptance of the inheritance means that it is now time to begin writing his own life narrative. There is no ending, but only a series of perpetual deferrals. Moreover, as Jodok insists, this lack of an ending means that there can be no true beginnings either, for the persistence of the uncompleted work of previous generations means that the new generation can never be truly new.

In the context of walking, the displacement of endings and beginnings can be understood as a realist response to the Romantic wanderer. As we have seen, the apparent linearity of the Romantic wanderer's persistent drive to move beyond the horizon in fact belies the fact that the wander's goal is as much a completely novel destination as it is sought for but unreachable origin. In reducing the scope of the Romantic *Wanderung* to a localized *Rundgang*, the bourgeois *Spaziergang* might suggest a domestication of the wanderer. Stifter's walks, however,

particularly in the metonymic relation to written self-narratives that can never truly begin or end, shows that this form of walking does not so much tame the wanderer as further articulate the complex temporality already inherent in the Romantic *Wanderung*. Rather than an unreachable destination, the *Spaziergang* is characterized by the fact that it both begins and ends at the doorstep. This mundane familiarity obscures the unsettling conflation of beginnings and endings that it produces, along with the unsettling realization that the circular path that continually returns to the same place progresses along paths that have always already been walked.

It is this recursive structure of walking that haunts Heinrich as he walks back through the castle after finishing reading Jodok's "Lebensbeschreibung." In walking away from the archive of written narratives stored in the Rothenstein, Heinrich not only retraces the steps of his ancestors—thereby reanimating them—but also his own, reversing the direction of his initial walk through the castle.[71] This walk is notably slower, and more ruminative than his first one, bearing no traces of the impatience that characterized his desire to move through the castle while being led by Ruprecht. Given that the Scharnast dynasty's "Narrheit" is initially characterized as overhastiness ("Uebereilung," 1.4.322), this slowing of the pace of his walk might suggest a progression beyond his ancestors. However, impatience and the desire to move on are always paired with the attempt to waylay time. Heinrich considers this too, wondering as he walks, "Was wird von mir selber noch stehen müssen?" (1.4.428). By the time Heinrich asks this question, its answer is already clear, for he has taken up residence in the castle and initiated new construction projects on it. As with his ancestors, he will leave behind buildings, a portrait, and a

[71] This reversal of direction is made very clear in the *Journalfassung* as Heinrich passes landmarks on his walk back in the exact opposite order in which they are passed on his initial walk. The *Studienfassung* obscures the direction of the walk by using landmarks that are new, having only been discovered in the excavation and construction projects that Heinrich has begun since occupying the castle, while still being clear that it is the very same path he is following. The undecidability of the direction of the walk in *Studienfassung* suggests that Heinrich both retraces his steps and repeats his earlier walk, adding yet another complexity the temporal relations of his walk.

written account of his life, albeit one that will lack a true conclusion, for he will one day simply cease writing.

It would be a mistake, however, to read Heinrich's continuation of the Scharnast family line as a straightforward integration into a recursive structure of writing and walking. The objects that Heinrich leaves behind have the capacity to persist after his death, thus resisting the unceasing flow of time, but despite Ruprecht's most fervent hopes or Jodok's greatest fears, time cannot be stopped. It is only waylaid, contained, slowed, and obstructed in various ways and to various degrees. In this way the material structure of the castle, consisting of architecture, written narratives, portraits, and paths, suggests a spatially variegated model of time that echoes Herder.[72] In his critique of Kant's understanding of time as a unified form of sensible intuition that structures human experience, Herder argues: "Eigentlich hat jedes veränderliche Ding das Maß seiner Zeit in sich; […] keine zwei Dinge der Welt haben dasselbe Maß der Zeit." For Herder, the notion of a uniform measure of time is a faulty abstraction. "Es gibt also (man kann es eigentlich und kühn sagen) im Universum zu Einer Zeit unzählbar-viele Zeiten."[73] Stifter, a devoted reader of Herder, produces a similar structure in the castle.[74] Time is spatially differentiated in a chaos of objects, each with their own temporal structure. In *Die Narrenburg*, rather than demarcating differences in the rate of movement towards the future, it is the dissolution of the past that is spatially conditioned. Individuals live on in belated afterlives

[72] This spatial variegation of time also anticipates certain strands of Marxist thought, particularly the concept of uneven development, which uses the spatially differentiated rate of time to explain the geographical and spatial variations in the rate of development of capitalism. The theory of uneven development was originally proposed by Trotsky but continues to be influential. For an account and defense of the concept in the context of Marxist geography, see David Harvey, *Spaces of Global Capitalism: A Theory of Uneven Geographical Development* (London: Verso, 2006).

[73] Johann Gottfried Herder, "Eine Metakritik zur Kritik der reinen Vernunft," in *Werke in zehn Bänden*, vol. 8 (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1998), 360.

[74] For an account of Herder's influence on Stifter, particularly as it pertains to *Die Narrenburg*, see Grätz, *Musealer Historismus*, 119-121. Grätz suggests that Jodok's meditations on transience are largely derived from Herder.

through the objects they have left behind, each slipping back into oblivion at their own pace. These disparate and yet overlapping temporalities are what constitute the "schauderhaft durcheinanderredende Gesellschaft" (1.4.411), from which Jodok shrinks back in horror.

Given the variegated spatiotemporal structure of the castle, the walk through it cannot be characterized as a mere repetition. Stifter does reconfigure the course of the wanderer along a circular, always-already walked path, but he also weaves that path through a chaotic assemblage of material objects, each baring traces of their source, and each existing within its own unique set of temporal relations. It is within this context that the form of both memory and self-constitution in the novel must be understood. Shayne Legassie has suggested that the medieval pilgrimage represents a peculiar inversion of the relationship between memory and walking that was inherent in the classical conception of travel. In classical journeys, such as Homer's *Odyssey*, the great fear is that he may not be able to remember his way home. Medieval pilgrims, however, frequently "feared that, having achieved the day of their homecoming, they would fail to remember the journey."[75] Stifter's reconfiguration of the Romantic *Wanderung* produces yet another relationship between walking and memory, whereby there is no simple binary of forgetting and remembering. As in classical journeys, Stifter's walkers face a problem of orientation, but it is not a problem resulting from the absence of the memories that might lead home, but rather their abundance. The memory of the past persists and decays in a multiplicity of material forms, and it is through this "erstarrte," but never completely static, "Unruhe" that Heinrich's self-identity must be negotiated, not as a simple representation of the self in writing or building, but as a movement through the labyrinth of past times and medially disparate self-representations.

[75] Legassie, *The Medieval Invention of Travel*, 99.

The form of self-writing stipulated by the Scharnast inheritance along with Heinrich's acceptance of this inheritance and his continuation of the familial lineage suggest the possibility of overcoming the temporal complexities of walking through the Narrenburg by (re)inaugurating a linear form of both narration and generational succession. On closer examination, however, it becomes clear that this intimation of a "happy end" to be an illusion. Consider, for example, that after Heinrich's marriage, he sits with his bride in the carriage, but he does not focus on her, "sondern er dachte an Chelion, wie sie kaum so rein, so schön, so schuldlos gewesen sei, als wie die an seiner Seite" (1.4.432). So too does the narrative end, not with an ending, but the possibility of further stories passed down in physical form: "Wenn von den andern Schriften des roten Felsensaales von Julian, Christoph, Prokop etwas bekannt wird, so wird es dereinst vorgelegt werden" (1.4.436). These narrative disruptions demonstrate the continued effect of the past on the present as Jodok feared. Heinrich's return along the path he initially walks, retracing his steps through the castle, thus reveals the movement of the narrative as a whole, in which Heinrich becomes implicated into the recursive structure of the castle. But Heinrich does not only enter into a recursive structure of re-reading, re-writing, and re-walking, as he recognizes wheh he asks, "Was wird von mir selber noch stehen müssen?" (1.4.428). In his attempts to navigate this structure and to orient himself within it, he leaves behind traces that will themselves contribute to the heterogenous spatiotemporal structure of the castle, with which his descendants will also have to contend.

Snow and Ice: The Impossible Desire of Overcoming Temporal Heterogeneity

The temporally heterogeneous and spatially variegated structure of Stifter's world is perhaps clearest in *Die Narrenburg*, but it is unique neither to this work nor to Stifter's oeuvre. As I have

argued, this spatiotemporal structure arises out of myriad cultural changes in the nineteenth century. The closing of the horizon and the transition from the Romantic wanderer to the bourgeois walker alter the social construction of the landscape. This transformation is further conditioned by the dramatic explosion in material production following the industrial revolution, leading to a world increasingly populated by objects, as well as as the growth of cities and the depopulation of rural communities, which transforms the built and natural environments in which people live.[76] In each of these cases, the development of the new does not so much erase the old as coexist with it in an uneasy juxtaposition. These landscapes thus bear the memorial traces of past generations and past ways of being, while also marking the emergence of new ones. The past persists in the recognition of its impermanence and instability. This is the world through which the nineteenth century walker must pass.

And yet, despite the palpable spatiotemporal heterogeneity in Stifter's work, there is always a current in the opposite direction, a fascination with or even a desire for a world in which this disunified condition characterized by an "erstarrte Unruhe" might be fully subsumed into a perfectly ordered and unified cosmos, in which all difference is obliterated. This tendency in Stifter's work is nowhere clearer than in his perpetual return to themes of ice and snow, most notably in *Bergkristall* (1853), *Aus dem Bairischen Walde* (1866), and in the famed "Eisgeschichte" from *Die Mappe meines Urgroßvaters*. In these works, ice and snow cover up the traces that would otherwise guide individuals through their variegated world. Snow and ice thus produce their own form of disorientation, not through the chaos of differentiation, but by

[76] It is difficult to overstate the dramatic change in the status of objects occurring in the nineteenth century. As Hartmut Böhme writes, "Statistics about things show that compared to the eighteenth century, the number of available things, for example in a household, vastly increased. Industrialisation led to the proliferation of artificial things in daily use and consumption, and not just in the upper classes." He thus refers to the nineteenth century as "*the* saeculum of things." Hartmut Böhme, *Fetishism and Culture: A Different Theory of Modernity*, trans. Anna Galt (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 5. For the impact of urbanization on German language realism, see Lyon, *Out of Place*.

covering and thereby obliterating (at least temporarily) all difference. Paradoxically, however, the blank slate represented by snow also reveals movement through the undifferentiated environment more clearly than in any other context. The footsteps of those who walk through snow are visible in a way they otherwise would not be, and yet these footsteps too may disappear as snow continues to fall and accumulate.

This ambivalence of ice and snow—both in its tension with the otherwise heterogenous temporalities of Stifter's world, and its own paradoxical power both to conceal and reveal—has profound implications for both the experience of time and for what it means to walk through this world. On the level of narrative temporality, the effects of snow and ice can be seen most clearly in the "Eisgeschichte" of *Die Mappe meines Urgroßvaters*. Appearing in a slightly different form in both the second and third versions of the work, the story describes an ice storm that besieges the village where the doctor lives one winter. Narratively disconnected from the rest of the text, this winter does not stand in a causal relationship to any other part of the doctor's life, but rather exists on its own, petrified and removed from the course of events. It occurs after the description of several years of the doctor's life in which one season is quickly succeeded by the next, and each year drifts by at a steady tact. The description of this winter dilates this progression of time, bringing it almost to a standstill, just as the activities of the village are put to a halt by the brutal cold and the layers of ice ensconcing everything. This icy terrain cannot be incorporated into a narrative leading its way through the text but must nonetheless be traversed. As the doctor states, "Wir mußten wieder fort." He thus walks "vorsichtig vorwärts, um in der unsäglichen Glätte nicht zu fallen (1.5.104).

For the doctor, the need to traverse this snow-covered world by foot is practical. His duties as a doctor do not cease as a result of the storm.[77]

> Ich konnte jetzt nicht mehr allein zur Besorgung meiner Geschäfte herum fahren, weil ich mir mit allen meinen Kräften in vielen Fällen allein nicht helfen konnte. […] Deswegen fuhr jetzt der Thomas immer mit mir, daß wir uns gegenseitig beistünden, wenn der Weg nicht mehr zu finden war, wenn wir den Fuchs aus dem Schnee, in den er sich verfiel, austreten mußten, oder wenn einer, da es irgendwo ganz unmöglich war durch zu dringen, bei dem Pferde bleiben und der andere zurück gehen und Leute holen mußte, damit sie uns helfen. Es wurde nach dem großen Schneefalle auch so kalt, wie man es je kaum erlebt hatte. Auf einer Seite war es gut; denn der tiefe Schnee fror so fest, daß man über Stellen und über Schlünde gehen konnte, wo es sonst unmöglich gewesen wäre; aber auf der andern Seite war es auch schlimm; denn die Menschen, welche viel gingen, ermüdet wurden und unwissend waren, setzten sich nieder, gaben der süßen Ruhe nach, und wurden dann erfroren gefunden, wie sie noch saßen, wie sie sich nieder gesetzt hatten. (1.5.97, cf. 6.1.295)

The necessity of walking in this context is twofold. First, the cold, ice, and snow transform the landscape, making it more difficult to pass through by way of more expedient forms of transportation, such as horse-drawn carriage. The only alternative is to walk. Previously used paths may be "nicht mehr zu finden" but at the same time routes that were previously impossible have now been opened up by the flattening of the environment.[78] Whereas the routes by which one can drive or ride have decreased, the opportunities for walking have increased. Second, walking becomes necessary not merely in contrast to other forms of movement, but also in contrast to the cessation of movement. The ice and snow demand greater exertion to walk across and thereby increase the attractiveness of stopping to rest, succumbing to "der süßen Ruhe."

[77] Indeed, in the fourth version of *Die Mappe*, the doctor's duties are said to increase on account of the storm. Contrastingly, the third version suggests that the cold "verhinderte Krankheiten" (6.1.295). In either case, there are still illnesses to which the doctor must respond but given the ambivalent relationship between the cold and sickness in the text, it is perhaps not surprising that Thomas Mann was so enamored with this passage and that it served as a primary influence for his own account of moving through an inhospitable winter environment in *Der Zauberberg*.

[78] For a consideration of horizontality in Stifter's work, see Juliane Vogel, "Prosa der Ebene: Horizontalisierung in Stifters Texten," in *Fleck, Glanz, Finsternis: Zur Poetik der Oberflache bei Adalbert Stifter*, ed. Thomas Gann and Marianne Schuller (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2017), 181-195.

Such pauses, however, are potentially fatal, freezing the no-longer-walker in place.[79] The landscape must be continually traversed lest the walker become part of it.[80]

In this sense, walking is a form of resistance against the gradual accumulation of ice and snow, whereby the entire landscape and those who occupy it become subsumed into a uniform and undifferentiated layer of whiteness. But even as snow and ice point to the annihilation of difference, Stifter's description of its accumulation demonstrates that—much like the buildings that compose the Narrenburg—this world is not static. The snow first arrives as "ein fortdauerndes graues Gestöber" causing an "unablässige Rieseln an den Fenstern" (1.5.96). Then the biting cold causes tree branches and limbs to crack, break, and fall, producing a deafening sound. "In der ganzen Tiefe des Waldes herrschte es ununterbrochen fort, wie die Zweige und Äste krachten und auf die Erde fielen" (1.5.106) and "das still stehende Rauschen dauerte fort" (1.5.107). Then, the snow turns to freezing rain, covering the ground in ice, and "dauerte stille fort, gleichmäßig fein und gleichmäßig dicht" (1.5.103) "dauerte unablässig fort" (1.5.107). In this sense, the doctor's need to constantly walk through this environment is mirrored by the unceasing force of the environment itself, ever changing even as it locks the world into an immobile frozen mass.[81]

The apparent total assimilation caused by snow is belied further by another aspect of Stifter's description. Whatever uniformity the snow appears to have on its surface, it is comprised of stratified layers. The initial snowfall is followed by a deep cold, which "machte

[79] As Eva Geulen writes, "The point of Stifter's 'Eisgeschichte' is not its putting to death the living world but rather the terror of being buried alive." Eva Geulen, "Depicting Description: Lukács and Stifter," *The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory* 73, no. 3 (January 1998): 274.

[80] The risk that the walker may cease moving and become a part of the landscape through which he walks is nowhere more potent than in Stifter's *Ein Gang durch die Katakomben* (1844).

[81] As Elisabeth Strowick rightly points out, Stifter's apparently static descriptions are anything but. See Elisabeth Strowick, "Poetological-Technical Operations: Representation of Motion in Adalbert Stifter," *Configurations* 18, no. 3 (2010): 273–89.

den Schnee fest" (6.1.295). The weather then warms slightly, partially melting the snow, before turning cold again, refreezing the snow, but remaining warm enough that rain falls, instead of snow, "als reines fließendes Wasser, das erst an der Oberfläche der Erde gefror" (6.1.297). The snow is thus covered by a "dichte Eisdecke" (1.5.120), but one that continuously grows as the rain continues to fall and freeze, and indeed grows on everything, including trees and even the doctor as he moves through the winter landscape, seemingly striving to incorporate everything into an icy underworld. Walking, which is characterized repeatedly in this passage as a downward force pressing into the ice and snow so as to stabilize the walker, has the capacity not only to leave tracks, but also to break through the stratified structure of the ice. As the doctor writes, "Im Hofe zerbrach der Eisüberzug unter meinen Tritten noch in den feinsten Scherben" (6.1.298).

This stratified structure of the ice echoes the sedimentation and stratification of the earth upon which it lies. In recent years, critics have begun to recognize the significance of this stratified structure of the earth for Stifter's mode of narrative. Stifter's fascination with geology suggests an analogy between his own writing process and the sedimentation of geological layers, whereby the story (*Geschichte*) is composed of layers (*Schichten*), a process that is nowhere clearer than the four iterative versions of *Die Mappe*.[82] As Sabine Schneider notes, this etymological connection reconfigures "den Zeitpfeil der linearen Entwicklung in ein räumliches Schichtenmodell."[83] This geological model of storytelling is one that is also echoed by Walter

[82] For a consideration of the analogy between Stifter's re-writing of *Die Mappe* and geological stratification see Juliane Vogel, "Funde in Schichten," *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* 44, no. 1 (June 4, 2019): 189–90; and Timothy Attanucci, *The Restorative Poetics of a Geological Age* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 75. The most thoroughgoing examination of the geological structure of Stifter's storytelling practice comes from Lori Wagner, "Schick, Schichten, Geschichte: Geological Theory in Stifter's *Bunte Steine*," *Jahrbuch des Adalbert-Stifter-Institutes des Landes Oberösterreich* 2 (1995): 17–41.

[83] Schneider, "Kulturerosionen: Stifters prekäre geologische Übertragungen." 262.

Benjamin in "Der Erzähler," in which he argues that "die vollkommene Erzählung" arises "aus der Schichtung vielfacher Nacherzählungen."[84] For Benjamin, stories are not singular narratives, but rather are embedded in an oral tradition through which each teller leaves a particular mark on the story, which then develops over time through the sedimentation of these retellings. While Benjamin believes that storytelling is a fundamentally oral form and only a few modern writers still evoke this tradition, Stifter's practice of iterative re-writing suggests a reconfiguration of this practice in a written form.

As I have suggested throughout this chapter, it makes sense to read the iterative mode of writing that both constitutes Stifter's work and is a focus of that work in conjunction with the iterative mode of walking to which it is metonymically linked.[85] As we see in the path through the Narrenburg, the iterative process of walking—which leaves marks through the accumulation of repeated past walks—risks effacing its own mode of production, making that which developed slowly over time appear "als wäre er gestern erst gemacht worden." That is to say it risks producing the appearance that it has no past at all. This tendency is endemic to Stifter's work. As Albrecht Koschorke argues, Stifter's re-writing of *Die Mappe* seems to aim not towards a preservation of each previous telling, but an "Überschreiben." "Hier betätigt sich Stifter keineswegs als Bewahrer und Sammler, als Archivar. Die späteren Fassungen konservieren nicht, sie überschreiben. Sie bedecken all jene Impulse, Verstöße, Übertritte, Grenzverletzungen mit Schweigen, die in den frühen Versionen noch ausformuliert waren."[86] This process of "Überschreiben" is not only visible in Stifter's rewritings, but is the stated goal of the project of

[84] Benjamin, "Der Erzähler," 2:448.
[85] In her reading of the geological structure of *Bunte Steine*, Lori Wagner also makes an explicit connection between the iterative form of walking characteristic of Stifter and the stratified structure of his narratives. Wagner, "Schick, Schichten, Geschichte."

[86] Koschorke, "Bewahren und Überschreiben," 152.

self-writing that structures *Die Mappe*. As the colonel tells the doctor, this practice of writing, archiving, and rereading helped him learn "das Gute von dem Gepriesenen unterscheiden, das Heißerstrebte von dem Gewordenen" (1.5.52). By writing and returning to that writing a changed person, the colonel is able to purge himself of the impulsive and the momentary, such that he becomes an unrecognizably different person.[87] Each iteration is an attempt to efface the last, a "Bestreben einer semantischen Tilgung unbeherrschten Gefühlsäußerungen […]. In dieser Konstellation ist Stifter derjenige, der etwas *vergessen machen* will und der gleichzeitig mit wachsender Perfektion alle Spuren dessen, was Gegenstand des Vergessens sein soll, aus seinen Texten beseitigt."[88]

There is perhaps no greater realization of this tendency to forget and to efface the past than the snow and ice that engulf and homogenize the landscape that would otherwise consist of a heterogenous and spatially variegated temporal structure. But here again, the function of snow as both concealing the world beneath it and revealing the paths of those who have walked upon it complicates matters. The goal of forgetting, like the goal of unifying everything into a perfectly ordered narrative like a glassy pane of ice, is impossible. This impossibility of forgetting, of a complete "Überschreiben," or icing over is evident in the fact that the passage exists at all. Not assimilable to any overarching narrative of the *Mappe*, it is simply there, an insoluble fragment of memory and writing that cannot be integrated and cannot be done away with. Even Stifter's deletion of this passage from the final version cannot erase it, as it lives on in the previous versions as a passage for which scholarly attention has arguably outgrown all other parts of the text. Within the text itself, however, it is clear that the impossibility of forgetting is a result of

[87] When the colonel first reveals his true identity to the doctor, the doctor is incredulous. He cannot believe that the tales and rumors surrounding that name could possibly be true of the person who stands before him.

[88] Koschorke, "Bewahren und Überschreiben," 152.

walking, linked as it is to the process of narrative and geological stratification, but with the potential to break through these layers, forcing the previously distinct strata into one another, particularly when they are formed by ice. Moreover, the perfectly glassy plane produced by the ice does not merely risk being marred by footprints; it demands it. Even as the chilling cold makes walking difficult, it also makes it necessary.

Herein lies the paradox of Stifter's preoccupation with walking. On the one hand walking is linked to modes of repetition and writing that efface the past, that contribute to the unification of disparate temporalities under perfectly smooth and glassy strata concealing everything underneath. On the other hand, the physical, material reality of walking—like the physical materiality of the texts Stifter left behind—disrupts and breaks through the illusion of a unified temporality with every step. What we have then is not "jenes langsame Einander-Überdecken dünner und transparenter Schichten" described by Benjamin.[89] Rather, the icy crust that engulfs the landscape and the footsteps that break through it are two aspects of the same iterative process of narration and bipedal locomotion. For Stifter then, walking is not merely a means of navigating a temporally heterogeneous world than then must be retrospectively and repeatedly reconstructed in narrative. It is also implicated in the very construction of this world, both in its capacity to leave behind traces for future generations and to efface them. The ground upon which one walks and the structure of the texts that recapitulate such walks are not the smooth and even surfaces produced by orderly processes of sedimentation and consolidation, but rather, as Jason Groves writes, "a loose agglomeration, constantly susceptible to settling, or *unsettling*."[90] Crucially, however, it is precisely the desire for this even surface and an all-encompassing

[89] Benjamin, "Der Erzähler," 2:448.

[90]Groves, *Geological Unconscious*, 90.

temporality—whether in the form of singular, linear time projected onto the distant past, a steady, teleological progression towards the future, or the covering of the ground in a uniform layer of snow—that contributes to the temporal heterogeneity from which it seeks to escape.

CHAPTER 2: THE FALTERING STEP OF MALTE LAURIDS BRIGGE

Over the course of the 1850s and 1860s, George-Eugene Haussmann's renovations changed the shape of Paris. Under the reign of Napoleon III, Haussmann demolished much of the medieval city, replacing its winding, narrow roads with wide and straight boulevards.[1] These changes were decried by some contemporaries. In his poem "Le Cygne" ("The Swan"), Charles Baudelaire writes, "Le vieux Paris n'est plus" ("Old Paris is no more").[2] In his account of nineteenth century Paris, written some eighty years later, Walter Benjamin echoes this complain. "Indessen entfremdet er [Haussmann] den Parisern ihre Stadt. Sie fühlen sich in ihr nicht mehr heimisch. Der unmenschliche Charakter der Großstadt beginnt, ihnen bewußt zu werden."[3]

These transformations did more than just change the character of Paris. Through the construction of roadways across this city, the surface of the earth upon which people walked had been altered. While the development of modern roadways in Paris preceded Haussmann's renovations, Napoleon III oversaw the creation of "eighty-five miles of entirely new streets in Paris" and "four hundred and twenty linear miles of sidewalks."[4] This encasement of the earth in

[1] Hausmann's renovations also included the construction of two new train stations in order to modernize transportation in the city. The implications of this development will be a focal point of the next chapter, but it's worth noting that the noise of the train also has a profound effect on Malte's experience of the urban environment. These noises break through the otherwise strong divide between Malte's experience of urban Paris and the isolated position he occupies in the privacy of his own room. For an account of the way in which the city's sounds impinge on Malte's consciousness, see Kata Gellen, "Hearing Spaces: Architecture and Acoustic Experience in Modernist German Literature," *Modernism/Modernity* 17, no. 4 (2010): 799–818.

[2] Charles Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, trans. William Aggeler (Fresno, CA: Academy Library Guild, 1954), 288/289.

[3] Benjamin, "Paris, die Hauptstadt des XIX. Jahrhunderts," 5:57.

[4] Stephane Kirkland, *Paris Reborn: Napoléon III, Baron Haussmann, and the Quest to Build a Modern City* (New York: Picador, 2013), 133.

a seemingly impermeable, and immutable black substance achieved in material form what Stifter's fantasies of snow could only metaphorically suggest.[5] Clearly written in response to Haussmann, Baudelaire's "Le Cygne" registers just how monumental this resurfacing of the city was. While walking across a recently constructed bridge, the poem's speaker remembers a market that has since disappeared as a result of Hausmannization. A swan escapes from its cage, "Et, de ses pieds frottant le pavé sec, / Sur le sol raboteux traînait son blanc plumage" ("That stroked the dry pavement with his webbed feet / And dragged his white plumage over the uneven ground"). This invocation of the ground upon which the swan walks twice in the span of two lines emphasizes the foreignness of the environment for the swan. It moves towards a dry gutter, bathing itself in dust where there should be water, "le coeur plein de son beau lac natal" ("homesick for his fair native lake").[6] The swan is spatially displaced from his home, having been captured and taken to the city, but the swan's dislocation is compounded by the dry, dusty pavement, which should bear water, but does not.[7]

Much like Stifter's snow, however, the pavement cannot entirely erase the past it conceals. As the poem's speaker remarks, "mes chers souvenirs sont plus lourds que des rocs" ("my dear memories are heavier than rocks"). The weight of these memories suggests not only that they are difficult to bear, but that their weight is juxtaposed to that of the rocks that

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[5] Napoleon III's preferred form of road pavement was a technique called macadam, which involved compressing layers of small rocks. Eventually, tar would be added to the process as a binding agent, producing tarmacadam, from which the word tarmac derives. From the perspective of the ruling class, this method of paving had two large advantages over cobblestone, as it suppressed noise and, unlike cobblestone, could not be used to construct barricades, as it had been in the 1848 uprisings. This preference for macadam changed with the Paris Commune, after which sandstone became the preferred material for roads. See Esther da Costa Meyer, *Dividing Paris: Urban Renewal and Social Inequality, 1852-1870* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022), 113-114.

[6] Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, 290/291.

[7] The waterless nature of the road was a real problem in nineteenth century Paris. These roads were designed to prevent stagnant water, but the conjunction of new expanses of impermeable surfaces with the concrete used to build canals created serious flooding problems. See Meyer, *Dividing Paris*, 146.

constitute the road. If that which is heavy has a tendency to settle deeper, then these memories persist beneath the surface of the road, covered but not effaced by it. But while weighty materials may gradually settle over the course of geological time, the construction of smooth roads is rapid, like the movement which they enable. In this context, the heaviness of memories may not result in them settling beneath the surface, but rather cause them to break through the surface of the road, disrupting the apparently smooth terrain that has been produced.

Malte, the eponymous narrator of Rainer Maria Rilke's *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* (1910), arrives in Paris a half century after Baudelaire's poem was written. An aspiring poet from Denmark and seemingly the last in the lineage of a ruined aristocratic family, he wanders the streets of Paris and then returns to the confines of his rented room in a run-down building to write about his experiences. Like Baudelaire's swan, Malte is disoriented and overwhelmed by the modern city, as well as dislocated from a home which no longer exists. If Stifter's writings manifest an awareness of an incipient alienation from both place and history, then Rilke's *Prosabuch* presents an urban world in which these developments have been almost fully realized.[8]

Nonetheless, vestiges of that old Paris still remain, as can be seen in its twisting alleyways. So too does the city have the power to evoke memories for Malte, even though he has no past there. Like the swan's homesickness for his native lake, these memories are of a time and a place far removed from the present-day city, and yet the experience of walking through Paris calls them forth, despite—or perhaps even because of—the urban landscape's restructuring of the past. "It is actually Malte's particular experience of the city that triggers the resurfacing of childhood disturbances and confronts Rilke/Malte with the necessity of working through them,"

[8] For an account of the alienation from place in Stifter's *Granit*, see the introduction to John B. Lyon, *Out of Place: German Realism, Displacement, and Modernity* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013).

Andreas Huyssen suggests.[9] In this way, Malte's *Aufzeichnungen* are not only a record of his walks, but also an attempt to come to terms with the memories these walks provoke. Walking and writing thus serve as means of breaking through the paved surface of the urban environment in order to retrieve a past that might be reclaimed in narrative form.

As with Stifter's temporally heterogeneous landscapes, the past that walkers in early twentieth century Paris encounter is not uniform, revealing in a fractured form both the collective past of the city and individual past of alienated individuals like Malte. This tenuous spatial relationship to the past is further complicated by the fact that the modern city is increasingly structured by a further dimension of time, namely the abstract and unceasing flow of clock time. Tellingly, Malte's need to recover a lost past through walking and writing in inflected by a preoccupation with wasted time. Midway through the *Aufzeichnungen*, he reflects on his writing, priding himself on what he has accomplished, but also noting the time he has wasted.

> Es sei zu meiner Ehre gesagt, dass ich viel geschrieben habe in diesen Tagen; Ich habe krampfhaft geschrieben. Allerdings, wenn ich ausgegangen war, so dachte ich nicht gerne an das Nachhausekommen. Ich machte sogar kleine Umwege und verlor auf diese Art eine halbe Stunde, während welcher ich hätte schreiben können. Ich gebe zu, dass dies eine Schwäche war.[10]

These remarks echo the compensatory relationship between writing and walking we saw in Stifter's *Die Mappe meines Urgroßvaters*.[11] But whereas the doctor finds himself spending all

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[9] Andreas Huyssen, "Paris Childhood: The Fragmented Body in Rilke's Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge," in *Modernity and the Text: Revisions of German Modernism*, ed. Andreas Huyssen and David Bathrick (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 121.

[10] Rainer Maria Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* in *Werke: Kommentierte Ausgabe in vier Bänden*, edited by Manfred Engel et al, vol. 3 (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1996), 453-635, here 578. Subsequent citations to the book are all to this edition and are noted parenthetically.

[11] It is reasonable to suspect that these analogies between Rilke and Stifter are more than just a coincidence. In 1914, Rilke sent a letter to his friend August Sauer detailing an intensive reading of Stifter's works. Even though Rilke's Stifter phase occurs after the publication of *Die Aufzeichnungen*, the affinity that Rilke has for Stifter provides good grounds for thinking the two authors together. For more on Rilke's Stifter letter, see Joseph Metz, "'Eine Eigentliche Durchdringung': Literary and National Identity, Gender, and Body in Rilke's 'Stifter Letter' to August Sauer," *The German Quarterly* 76, no. 3 (2003): 314–28.

his time writing, in which he would have otherwise been walking, Malte finds himself walking so that he might avoid having to go back to his room and write. For Malte, time spent walking is time that could have, and, indeed, should have been spent writing. Crucially, this wasted time is not merely the finite time that constitutes a human life—as it is in the ancient topoi of *memento mori* and *vanitas*—but specifically the measured time of a clock ("eine halbe Stunde").

For Malte then, walking through the streets of Paris requires him to navigate a radically altered landscape, fracturing his relationship to an individual and collective past, while these walks become measured by the empty time they occupy. His writing is both an attempt to embed the memories that are evoked on his walks in a narrative and an activity that—like walking—is itself subject to the abstract measurement of minutes and hours. The goal of this chapter is to show the intricate relationship between these two activities and their significance for understanding *Die Aufzeichnungen*. Previous scholarship has been inclined to read Malte's attempts at narrative as a failure resulting from the dissolution of the subject in modernity. I instead argue that the structure of Malte's narrative is not so much a failure as the direct result of the urban landscape of early twentieth century Paris and its temporal structure. Walking through Paris structures the narrative by restructuring Malte's psyche, particularly with regards to the experience of time. To this end, I read Malte's narrative and the walks it contains in conjunction with the accounts of modern time consciousness articulated by Henri Bergson, Sigmund Freud, and Walter Benjamin. In doing so, my goal is not simply to show how their thought sheds light on the narrative structure of the *Aufzeichnungen*. Rather, I also wish to show how reading these theorists in the context of this work demonstrates the degree to which their accounts of modern consciousness are best understood as arising out of the condition of walking through a landscape in which time has both been paved over and transformed into an abstract unit of measurement.

Getting Lost and Writing about It

While the *Aufzeichnungen* consist of Malte's first-person writings, they do not so much tell the story of his life as present a heterogenous collection of his impressions and experiences.[12] However, Malte's writings do not merely lack an overarching narrative or a clear path connecting the various impressions, rather, they highlight the seemingly untraversable gaps between the stations of Malte's life, particularly the gap between his walks through the street of Paris and his retrospective attempts to record them in writing. One of the clearest examples of these gaps comes in the entry describing Malte's walk back to his rented room following his electrotherapy appointment at the Salpêtrière. This passage is representative of the complex relationship between Malte's writing and walking.

> Ich kann mich nicht erinnern, wie ich durch die vielen Höfe hinausgekommen war. Es war Abend, und ich verirrte mich in der fremden Gegend und ging Boulevards mit endlosen Mauern in einer Richtung hinauf und, wenn dann kein Ende da war, in der entgegengesetzten Richtung zurück bis an irgendeinen Platz. Dort begann ich eine Straße zu gehen, und es kamen andere Straßen, die ich nie gesehen hatte, und wieder andere. Elektrische Bahnen rasten manchmal überhell und mit hartem, klopfendem Geläute heran und vorbei. Aber auf ihren Tafeln standen Namen, die ich nicht kannte. Ich wußte nicht, in welcher Stadt ich war und ob ich hier irgendwo eine Wohnung hatte und was ich tun mußte, um nicht mehr gehen zu müssen. (497-498)

Malte's walk home follows a disorienting path along which he seems to become more lost and more confused the further he walks, ending the entry in despair that he might never reach home, perhaps not even have a home, and must instead continue walking without end. And yet the existence of the entry at all implies that he did indeed find his way back. In contrast, the attempt to retrace his steps through writing can never complete the task. He can once again enter the

[12] The German title *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* is notably ambiguous in terms of its generic designation. While the structure of the novel closely resembles a diary novel, it is far from clear that the entries form a continuous diary or journal. Indeed, the fact that one entry is marked as "a rough draft of a letter" suggests an amalgam of various writings of different genres. For a consideration of the novel as a diary novel, see Lorna Martens, *The Diary Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), or, more recently, Renate Kellner, *Der Tagebuchroman als literarische Gattung* (Berlin: DeGruyter, 2015).

labyrinth, but never again reach home. He must continue walking, not until a destination is reached, nor even until he comes to an end, but to the point at which the walk and the narrative simply cease to move forward, the same point, it turns out, at which the prospect of stopping seems most remote.

This ineliminable caesura between Malte's walk home and the act of writing which recapitulates it is not unique to this passage. The rented room in which Malte writes is emphatically disconnected from his walks. Malte reports on the first page, the building in which he resides is "im Plan nicht zu finden" (455), seemingly nonexistent on the map of the Paris down below through which he walks. Moreover, the room in which is sits and writes lies "fünf Treppen hoch," vertically removed from the streets of Paris (468, 470, 498). This spatial dislocation is enhanced by the fact that the building's stairwell is never once traversed in the narrative. Perhaps it cannot even be traversed. The space of writing and that of walking are utterly disconnected from one another. These spatial relations are mirrored by the narrative and temporal dislocations apparent in the above passage. Malte's account of his disorienting and seemingly endless trajectory through the streets of Paris echoes Friedrich Engels's description of London as a city, "wo man stundenlang wandern kann, ohne auch nur an den Anfang eines Endes zu kommen."[13] So too is Malte's walk, as well as his narrative account of it, one without beginning or end. The description of both his departure from the hospital and his arrival home are absent. It exists on its own, temporally disconnected from what came before or what might come after.

[13] Friedrich Engels, *Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England. Nach eigner Anschauung und authentischen Quellen* (Leipzig: Otto Wigand, 1846), 36.

Following Walter Benjamin, we might distinguish here between merely losing one's way in a city ("sich in einer Stadt nicht zurechtfinden"), which Benjamin deems "uninteressant und banal," and the more fundamental disorientation of getting lost ("sich zu verirren"). It is the latter which can be said to characterize Malte's situation. Getting lost is no simple matter for Benjamin. It is something that must be learned, and which Benjamin himself claims to have learned from Paris as it was disclosed to him "im Zuge einer hermetischen Tradition," a tradition which he traces "rückwärts zumindest bis auf Rilke."[14] In designating Rilke as one of the earliest figures in such a tradition, Benjamin almost certainly has passages like Malte's walk home from this hospital in mind.

For Benjamin, spatial disorientation in the city is linked to a temporal reorientation. He sees the city "als mnemotechnischer Behelf des einsam Spazierenden."[15] In *Berliner Chronik* he designates Paris as one of his guides for his spatially constructed autobiography. Despite growing up in Berlin, getting lost in Paris allows Benjamin to access and organize his childhood memories. Malte's memories, by contrast, are plagued by the same gaps and caesura that characterize his walking and writing. While over the course of the *Aufzeichnungen* the reader gradually receives a fuller picture of Malte's past, the trajectory that has led him to Paris is never addressed. Like the stairwell which he never traverses, the gap between his past and present cannot be bridged. From the writing desk in his dilapidated room, Malte can access the memories of his childhood Denmark and his daily walks through Paris, but he cannot connect them to the present. He can narratively retrace his steps for some time, but never all the way back up the stairs to his present moment.

[14] Benjamin, "Berliner Chronik," 6:469.

[15] Benjamin, "Die Wiederkehr des Flaneurs," 3:194.

Traumatic Memory and the Development of Modern Consciousness

Malte's precarious relationship to both time and memory is not unique. It is also a persistent theme in modernist literature and thought. Given Benjamin's explicit debt to Rilke as well as the notable (dis)analogies between their experiences of walking through modern Paris, one particularly fruitful intertext for understanding Malte's attempts at narrative is Benjamin's 1939 essay, "Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire." In this essay, Benjamin engages with and historicizes the thought of Henri Bergson and Sigmund Freud. Bergson believed that the modern understanding of time has become distorted. Rather than recognizing time as "an organic whole,"[16] a continual flux of fleeting heterogeneous moments in which each one permeates and melts into the next, people have fallen into the trap of thinking of time as a divisible medium like space and of letting our language trick us into transforming a "perpetual state of becoming" into a "permanent external object."[17] As should be clear, this spatialization of time has clear resonances with the gaps that characterize Malte's position as a writer, and later we will see that *Die Aufzeichnungen* directly suggests both the power and the limitations of a Bergsonian analysis of time. For the moment, however, I would like to focus on Freud's account of the disruption of the linear flow of time, namely as the result of trauma.

Despite an initial interest in psychoanalysis, Rilke ultimately refused to undergo analysis. "Ich lasse mir nicht im Gehirn herumstochern," he reportedly said, "da behalte ich lieber meine Komplexe."[18] Depending on one's inclinations, this resistance can easily be interpreted as either good grounds for the inapplicability of psychoanalysis to Rilke's work or as a convincing reason

[16] Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. F.L. Pogson (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2001), 128.

[17] Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 130.

[18] Goll, Claire. *Ich verzeihe keinem: eine literarische Chronique scandaleuse unserer Zeit*, trans. Ava Belcampo (München: Scherz Verlag, 1978), 84.

to pursue a psychoanalytic reading. Rather than approaching the *Aufzeichnungen* in these terms, I simply wish to note a structural analogy between Freud's account of traumatic memory and Malte's persistent need to retrace his steps through writing coupled with the apparent inability to ever do so completely. In *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* (1920), Freud argues that traumatic experiences are those for which the individual was not initially prepared. As a result, the individual is compelled to recapitulate the experience in a belated attempt to come to terms with it. Crucially, this form of traumatic memory is not merely a psychological problem but also a temporal and narrative problem. As Freud writes, the individual suffering from a traumatic memory "ist vielmehr genötigt, das Verdrängte als gegenwärtiges Erlebnis zu wiederholen, anstatt es, wie der Arzt es lieber sähe, als ein Stück Vergangenheit zu erinnern."[19] Trauma not only manifests itself as a temporal disturbance, but also stems from a disruption of linear temporality. When an event cannot be properly anticipated, the individual fails to comprehend it adequately in the moment and can only attempt to come to terms with it after the fact. This belated effect provokes anxiety, which is in fact a preparation for an event that has already happened. Narratively, this means that the traumatic event cannot adequately be incorporated into a narrative structure, for it does not rest easily in the past, but rather is repeatedly re-experienced in the present.

The appearance of this phenomenon in his clinical practice prompted Freud to propose a stratified model of the human psyche. Consciousness, he suggests, functions as an exterior membrane or crust ("Rindenschicht"), much like the paved roads of Paris. While we normally think of consciousness as primarily having to do with the uptake of stimuli for cognition, Freud suggests that the "beinahe wichtigere Aufgabe" of consciousness lies in protecting the organism

[19] Sigmund Freud, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, in *Gesammelte Werke, chronologisch geordnet*, ed. Anna Freud et al., vol. 13 (London: Imago Publishing, 1940), 16.

from being overwhelmed by stimuli.[20] In order to be constantly prepared to fend off new stimuli, this membrane must perpetually clear itself and cannot receive lasting traces ("Dauerspuren"), but only momentary ones that are intercepted by consciousness and are therefore prevented from being registered by unconscious memory. It is for this reason that Freud argues that consciousness and memory must belong to fundamentally different systems, that "Bewußtwerden und Hinterlassung einer Gedächtnisspur für dasselbe System miteinander unverträglich sind." Indeed, as he indicates, memories are often "am stärksten und haltbarsten, wenn der sie zurücklassende Vorgang niemals zum Bewußstein gekommen ist."[21] According to such a model, the potency of Malte's memories is the direct result of his failure to apprehend these experiences consciously when they first occurred. As a result, Malte lacks the continuity of consciousness that generally underlies narrative temporal order and that would allow him to retrace his steps up the stairs back to his room. Instead, his memories haunt him and compel him to write precisely because they resist narrative integration.

While Freud tends to cast his account of traumatic memory in universal and even mythic terms, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* is a text unmistakably marked by its historical context. Freud's theories arose out of his clinical work with veterans of the First World War, and his account of trauma is notably proceeded by and draws on accounts of traumatic neuroses that resulted from railway crashes.[22] "Über Einige Motive bei Baudelaire" provides the most thorough

[20] Freud, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, 27.

[21] Freud, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, 24.

[22] The effects of railway crashes on those who experienced them first prompted the study of psychic trauma, and indeed the recognition of its existence at all. The first nineteenth century theories of the phenomenon posited a physical cause, termed railway spine, but theorists increasingly shifted towards psychological explanations, and Freud can be seen as a clear inheritor of this tradition. For a discussion of the late nineteenth century neurological work on railway spine and its influence on Freud see chapter 9 in Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014), chapter 3 in Andreas Killen, *Berlin Electropolis: Shock, Nerves, and German Modernity*, 38 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006)., and chapter 2 in John Zilcosky, *The Language of Trauma: War and Technology in Hoffmann, Freud, and Kafka* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021). As we will see in the following chapter,

historicization of Freud's account of trauma. Benjamin argues that what Freud understood as a rare result of experiencing catastrophe has become the modern city's norm. Moreover, Benjamin resists Freud's focus on the stimuli of the interior psyche and its memories, giving precedence instead to the stimuli of the external city and its street life. The shock of the urban world becomes a perpetual infliction of trauma on the subject, occasioning a quantitative increase in defensive consciousness that leads to a qualitative shift in the nature of conscious experience. On this account, modern consciousness is essentially a response to the trauma of the city and walking through it, an outgrowth of the perpetual need to defend oneself from the assault of the external world.[23]

One significant implication of Benjamin's historicization of Freudian consciousness is that it places the development of consciousness as *Reizschutz* as roughly contemporaneous with the urban reorganization of Paris. That is to say, not only do Malte's attempts at narrative present a structural analogy with a Freudian account of traumatic memory, but it is also the case that the development of consciousness's function as protective outer layer is mirrored by the paving of the earth into an impermeable layer. However, in the case of both consciousness and the paved

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the effects of railroad technology has a profound effect on both the landscape and the experience of time and space in twentieth century Europe.

[23] We might connect to Charles Taylor's notion of the "buffered self." Taylor distinguishes the "buffered," "bounded" self of modernity from the "porous" self-characteristic of the pre-modern "enchanted" world on his account. In contrast to the porous self, the buffered self is capable of "of taking a distance from, disengaging from everything outside the mind." This separation between self and world is not possible for the porous self, for which "the source of its most powerful and important emotions are outside the 'mind'; or better put, the very notion that there is a clear boundary, allowing us to define an inner base area, grounded in which we can disengage from the rest, has no sense." Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 38. In the German context, we might connect these irreducible sympathetic relations between self and world to a notion of *Stimmung*. Doing so, however, complicates Taylor's narrative regarding the transition from the buffered to the porous self. On this topic, see Eric Downing, *The Chain of Things* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018). In connecting the concept of a buffered self to Freud and Benjamin's notion of consciousness as a form of *Reizschutz*, I am suggesting a somewhat different historical trajectory. On Taylor's account, the development of a barrier between self and world arises as a form of protection against the magical forces characteristic of the pre-modern world, producing a rational agent capable of ordering its own existence. According to Benjamin, however, it is as a defense against the byproducts of modernity that such a barrier arises.

road, the apparently impenetrable outer layer is not entirely immutable. The Freudian term "Erinnerungsspur" is telling here. While commonly translated as "trace," a "Spur" can more specifically refer to a track or a footprint, which is the etymological root of the term. On the Freudian and Benjaminan model, Malte is condemned to the anachronous and repetitive process of retracing and piecing together the "Spuren" left behind by experiences for which he was not initially prepared. That memory can still be characterized in these terms demonstrates that the paved earth continues to be affected by those that walk upon it. But by making this solid surface a structural feature of the human psyche, this account of memory and narrativization is also inverted. Rather than individuals leaving behind footprints in the ground as they make their way across the earth, it is instead the modern urban environment which plants its "Spuren" upon the subject in the form of physical, psychic, and social traumas.

Modern Time Consciousness

The disorientation Malte experiences in Paris is clearly related to the temporal disorientation caused by memories which he cannot place narratively. But there is one additional aspect of time that is central to both Malte's experience of Paris and Benjamin's interpretation of Freud, namely the pervasive influence of clock time as a way of ordering human life. I suggested above that Malte's preoccupation with lost time is indicative of an increasing attention to time as an abstract measurable quantity. According to Benjamin, this development is not incidental to the formation of modern consciousness but rather integral to it. This aspect of Benjamin's thought becomes clearest in the context of his reading of the uneven ground in Baudelaire's poetry. Benjamin

claims that Baudelaire's poem, "Le Soleil" is "die einzige Stelle der »Fleurs du Mal«, die ihn [Baudelaire] bei der poetischen Arbeit zeigt,"[24]

> Le long du vieux faubourg, où pendent aux masures
> Les persiennes, abri des secrètes luxures,
> Quand le soleil cruel frappe à traits redoublés
> Sur la ville et les champs, sur les toits et les blés,
> Je vais m'exercer seul à ma fantasque escrime,
> Flairant dans tous les coins les hasards de la rime,
> Trébuchant sur les mots comme sur les pavés,
> Heurtant parfois des vers depuis longtemps rêvés.
>
> Along the old street on whose cottages are hung
> The shattered shutters which hide secret lecheries,
> When the cruel sun strikes with increased blows
> The city, the country, the roofs, and the wheat fields,
> I go alone to try my fanciful fencing,
> Scenting in every corner the chance of a rhyme,
> Stumbling over words as over paving stones,
> Colliding at times with lines dreamed of long ago.[25]

In his interpretation of the poem, Benjamin emphasizes the experience of parrying away the "shock" of the city, but it's also worth taking seriously the act of walking and the act of writing as they relate to this shock. What Baudelaire describes as his "fantastique escrime" is a conflation of writing and walking, a conflation that imagines them occurring simultaneously. Writing is walking, and yet in life the two are almost certainly not simultaneous as the experiences one accrues walking need to be reconstituted into poetic form after the fact. Crucially, the act of walking also seems here to be associated with memory, most notably in the "vers depuis longtemps rêvés," suggesting the recovery through walking of an early attempt at composition. Walking, then, is not the beginning of the writing process, but rather a return to an

[24] Benjamin, "Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire," 1:616.

[25] Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, 280/281.

earlier act of writing, just as writing is a return to the experiences incurred on the city streets, a dialectic central to Malte's own attempts at writing.

For Benjamin, as for Freud, the walker/writer's consciousness parries external stimuli. This function of consciousness as "Reizschutz" protects the subject, but it also constitutes a particular temporal relationship to experience in a way that is clearly pertinent to Malte. The "Chockabwehr" of consciousness functions in its ability "dem Vorfall auf Kosten der Integrität seines Inhalts eine exakte Zeitstelle im Bewusstsein anzuweisen."[26] In order to understand the significance of this achievement for human consciousness, Michael G. Levine argues that it is necessary "to translate this temporal sense of punctuality into Freudian terms and conceive of it literally as a kind of puncture wound."[27] In this way, assigning the traumatic event a specific point in time functions analogously to the wound caused by the fencer in Baudelaire's poem. The event leaves a mark designating its position in time so that it can become the sort of isolated experience (*Erlebnis*) that might be contained in a sequential order of past, present, and future, thereby preempting the compulsive need to repeat. That is to say, it is by placing the event in a causal, narrative order that a certain, at least provisional, mastery over it can be achieved. Indeed, it might even be said this form of time comes into being as a mode of consciousness for the modern, traumatized individual. This provisional mastery, however, is predicated on a persistent act of puncturing that brings with it a new set of disruptions at the cost of this mastery.

This persistent puncturing of time constitutes a new form of punctuated temporality, one that Benjamin sees as exemplified in the time consciousness produced by chronological measurements and divisions. The result is a hyperawareness of time; "jede Sekunde findet das

[26] Benjamin, "Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire," 1:615.

[27] Michael G. Levine, *Writing through Repression: Literature, Censorship, Psychoanalysis* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 102.

Bewußtsein auf dem Plan, um ihren Chock abzufangen." This perpetual attentiveness to the continuous passing of time disrupts its very continuity, producing the understanding of time as quantifiable and divisible against which Bergson protested. It is this persistent puncturing, and the constant need to be prepared for it, that is the basis for modern temporality, constructed as it is by clocks, timecards, and train schedules (not to speak of deadlines, pomodoro timers, and Zoom meetings). For Benjamin, if not for Bergson, this puncturing does not simply misapprehend time. Instead, it is precisely this form of time consciousness that comes to restructure the human psyche, leading to the development of consciousness as a protective mechanism for shielding the subject from shocks. Far from being a primordial characteristic of human beings, this form of consciousness is a development—or, indeed, a symptom—of modernity, not merely in response to the overwhelming confluence of stimuli on offer in urban environments, but more specifically in response to the restructuring of time in modernity into a quantitative measurement dominating every moment of life.[28]

Losing Time: The Strange Case of Nikolaj Kusmitsch

Malte's demonstrate a clear awareness of this reformulation of time according to the clock. In particular, his account of Nikolaj Kusmitsch, his neighbor, serves as an important contrast to Malte, suggesting diverging strategies for navigating clock time's structural impact on Parisian

[28] The internalization of modern time consciousness has a long history. The standard account of the subject, which sees time consciousness as originating in the seventeenth century and accelerating with the industrial revolution, is E. P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," *Past & Present*, no. 38 (1967): 56–97. Thompson's account has been critiqued and expanded in several ways, including pushing that history even further back to include, for instance, monastic timekeeping. See Paul Glennie and Nigel Thrift, "Reworking E. P. Thompson's `Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism'," *Time & Society* 5, no. 3 (October 1, 1996): 275–99. Despite this long history, there are reasons for understanding the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a time of particular importance for the internalization of clock time. As Stephen Kern writes, "never before had the temporal precision been as exact or as pervasive as in the age of electricity." Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880 - 1918* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 15.

life. In this entry, we learn of the "merkwürdige Aufgabe" that Kusmitsch invents for himself. On the assumption that he would live a long life, Kusmitsch decides to calculate how much time he has left and proceeds by ever more exact measurements. "Er überlegte, dass man diese Jahre in Tage, in Stunden, in Minuten, ja, wenn man es aushielt, in Sekunden umwechseln könne." The result of these calculations is "eine Summe […], wie er noch nie eine gesehen hatte. Ihn schwindelte. Er musste sich ein wenig erholen." Recognizing, as he has often been told, that "Zeit war kostbar," he tries to do what he can to avoid losing his time, eventually going to the length of seeking a bank in which to store it (574). First, however, he attempts to save it up, by being sure not to waste it. He gets up early, spends less time bathing, stands for his tea rather than sitting down, and arrives early to work, but at the end of the week he discovers to his horror that he has failed to save anything. Just as much time had passed as ever.[29]

While this concern with lost time is not unique to the modern era, the emphasis on these quantitative measurements of time and their divisibility and fungibility suggests the influence of Bergson. The popularity of Bergson's thought in the first decade of the twentieth century is difficult to overstate, particularly in Paris. Rilke would certainly have been aware of this intellectual current and he undertook a concentrated study of Bergson's work.[30] As Bergson argues in *Time and Free Will* (1889), the division of time into discrete moments as one does with

[29] This obsession with making the most of time bears a striking resemblance to the attitude of the man condemned to death described by Prince Myshkin in Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* (1868-69). Spared from what seems to be certain death, the man vows make the most of the time he has been granted. "I'd turn each minute into a whole age, I'd lose nothing, I'd reckon up every minute separately, I'd let nothing be wasted!" Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Idiot*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 61. But whereas Dostoevsky's concern is what we might call existential time, Rilke's Kusmitsch seems to have become entirely preoccupied not with the life that might fill time, but with its strict numerical measurement. Rilke's reconfiguration of Dostoevsky on this point suggests both the increasing prominence of temporal measurements in urban life and the enormous influence of Bergson's thought.

[30] See Paul Bishop, "Rilke: Thought and Mysticism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Rilke*, ed. Karen Leeder and Robert Vilain (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 159–73.

space is ultimately a mistake, a misapprehension of the true nature of time as a continuous duration. To make this point, Bergson considers the passing of a minute by the sixty oscillations of a clock's pendulum. "If I picture these sixty oscillations to myself all at once by a single mental perception, I exclude by hypothesis the idea of succession."[31] This seems to be Kusmitsch's initial mistake. In calculating the remaining seconds of his life as lump sum, they become a tangible quantity, something that one could erroneously seek to store up. It is this spatialization of time that is at the heart of Bergson's critique of cinema. But note also how it disrupts a notion of walking as continuous embodied movement by instead allowing for a calculation of the distance to be walked as a mere abstract quantity, rather than a landscape formed by moving through it. This is the error that Bergson finds with Zeno's Achilles Paradox. Zeno mistakes the space traversed, which is infinitely divisible, with the motion of walking, consisting of steps, each of which is a "simple indivisible act."[32]

Reimagining the passing of time as a succession is an equally grave mistake for Bergson, for in doing so one is "compelled to think of each oscillation to the exclusion of the recollection of the preceding one, for space has preserved no trace of it; but by doing so, I shall condemn myself to remain ever in the present; I shall give up the attempt to think a succession or a duration."[33] Following his failed attempt to find a bank for his time, Kusmitsch seems to do just that.[34] " Und wie er da so mit weiten Augen im dunkeln Zimmer saß,da begann er zu verstehen, dass das, was er nun verspürte, die wirkliche Zeit sei, die vorüberzog. Er erkannte sie förmlich, alle diese Sekündchen, gleich lau, eine wie die andere, aber schnell, aber schnell" (98).

[31] Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 104.

[32] Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 113.
[33] Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 104-105.

[34] Of course, equally paradoxical attempts to "bank time" still persist in social structures such as the accrual of paid time off, or carceral practices of "good time."

Kusmitsch believes he has now apprehended "die wirkliche Zeit," noting each moment as it passes by him, all the same, and yet each one lost forever. Yet Bergson sees this too as a misapprehension of the nature of time. To understand "the image of pure duration," I must instead retain the recollection of the preceding second, but, rather than setting the two moments side by side, I must "perceive one in the other, each permeating the other and organizing themselves like notes of a tune, so as to form […] a continuous or qualitative multiplicity with no resemblance to number."[35] Only thus can the true nature of time as *durée* be perceived.

Ultimately, Kusmitsch finds a way to cope with time that closely corresponds to Bergson's notion of *durée*. He spends the rest of his days lying in bed reciting poetry to himself: "Man sollte nicht glauben, wie das half. Wenn man so ein Gedicht langsam hersagte, mit gleichmäßiger Betonung der Endreime, dann war gewissermaßen etwas Stabiles da, worauf man sehen konnte, innerlich versteht sich" (577). More than any other activity, the recitation of poetry might seem to bring us closer to the apprehension of true *durée* as Bergson understands it. Rather than the divisible multiplicity of space, time for Bergson flows from moment to moment, "melting into one another and forming an organic whole."[36] Instead of the quantitatively additive nature of a succession of oscillations from the clock's pendulum, *durée* is found in the "rhythmic organization of the whole," a description that we can just as easily apply to an expertly constructed poem. No wonder then that Kusmitsch finds relief from his quantitative engagement with the expanse of time in his retreat to poetry.

The story of Nikolaj Kusmitsch, however, is far from a straightforward defense of Bergson's notion of *durée*. In the first place, the recitation of poetry is a far more complicated

[35] Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 105.

[36] Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 128.

matter than it might first appear. In Paul Ricoeur's masterful reading of Book XI of Augustine's *Confessions*, he lands upon Augustine's example of reciting a psalm from memory as emblematic of the human experience of time. At first, Augustine's description might seem consonant with Bergson: "the future, which it expects, passes through the present, to which it attends, into the past, which it remembers." Rather than forming the organic whole of *durée*, however, Ricouer emphasizes that this example underlines the notion of the threefold present. This is Augustine's answer to the problem of measurement, a problem that itself arises out of the aporia of time's simultaneous being and non-being. Time clearly exists in that we can speak of it but in speaking of it, we are speaking of future and past times that quite clearly do not exist. How then can we measure that which does not exist? As Ricouer makes clear, Augustine's ingenious answer is to reformulate the measurement of time as the measurement of "neither future things nor past things, but their expectation and their memory."[37] This answer, however, comes at the cost of the *distentio* of the soul, always distended at the present moment to contain within itself the present attention to the present, but also present memory of the past and the present expectation of the future. That is, an account of the flow of time from past to present can, for Augustine, only arise out of the temporal fracturing of the self, never fully present, but always in the present directed toward the past, present, and future at once.

Kusmitsch's retreat to poetry can thus be read as an attempt to regain the "rhythmic whole" of time that had been so terribly dismembered by his calculations. But in doing so, he risks revealing the distended nature of existence in time. Ricouer is likely right when he says "that there has never been a phenomenology of temporality free from every aporia, and that in

[37] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative, Vol. 1*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 21.

principle there can never be one."[38] These diverging interpretations of the function of poetry for Kusmitsch are no different. What is worth emphasizing, however, is that Augustine's exploration of the problem of measuring time comes about in an age before the proliferation of clocks to measure our every movement, the very development that prompts Bergson's turn to *durée*. In a world without clocks, the question of measuring time, be it the lengths of syllables or the time spent waiting, demands an attempt to hold on to time as it passes, to compare that which is gone before it is noticed to a constant measure. By contrast, Kusmitsch's world—and Bergson's—is one in which the external proliferation of devices for measuring time, of turning the flow of the ineffable into measurable quantities, impinge on the consciousness of the individual with unrelenting regularity. It is precisely at this juncture that Benjamin succeeds in reading Freud and Bergson together. In doing so, Benjamin cuts through their universalizing tendencies to recognize a particular and peculiar development of Western European modernity: the persistent puncturing of time itself.

Narrative and the False Promise of Transcending Time

As important as this reconfiguration of time is for both Benjamin and *Die Aufzeichnungen*, the dominance of punctual, quantifiable clock time is never absolute. As Benjamin remarks, "Die Zeitrechnung, die ihr Gleichmaß der Dauer überordnet, kann doch nicht darauf verzichten, ungleichartige, ausgezeichnete Fragmente in ihr bestehen zu lassen."[39] No matter how pervasive the dominant conception of time may be, humans always exist in a world of multiple

[38] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative, Vol. 3*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 3.

[39] Benjamin, "Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire," 1:642.

temporalities. Benjamin's immediate concern in writing these words is the role of holidays and feast days. However, the emphasis on these "ungleichartige, ausgezeichnete Fragmente" unassimilated by clock time points back to the ground upon which Malte walks and upon which Nikolaj Kusmitsch walks no more. As Jason Groves argues, Benjamin "calls attention to the material inconsistencies of the ground […] and their resonances, as indicated in a footstep's ability to trigger the cultural memory of a romantic wanderer, not to mention those (im)personal *mémoires involuntaire* which the act of tripping over uneven paving stones activates."[40] The "ungleichartige, ausgezeichnete Fragmente" that cannot be fully regulated into a chronological regime, can be seen here as protruding from the ground, disrupting the smooth surface of the road and provoking a return both to a personal and a collective past.

Groves's reference here, and a central text for Benjamin, is the scene in Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, in which Marcel trips over an uneven paving stone, provoking a flood of memories that ultimately cause him to write the novel of his life. This scene was almost certainly inspired by Baudelaire's "Le Soleil." In the poem, the combined figure of the walker, the writer, and the fencer is described as "trebuchant sur les mots comme sur les paves," a metaphor which likens the experience of stumbling over cobblestones to the chance discovery of the right word or turn of phrase for a poem. This mode of composition is not one of novelty, or even discovery, but rather amounts to attaining—or regaining—something which had been felt to be lacking or lost for some time, "vers depuis longtemps rêvés."[41] The poet searches for

[40] Groves, *Geological Unconscious*, 99.

[41] While sometimes translated as "lines dreamed long ago" (see Aggeler's translation above), suggesting an early act at composition that had then been lost, forgotten, the French "depuis longtemps" suggests a continual state, but in this case, it is a continual state of lack, of non-presence, "rêvés" indicating an unsatisfied desire. While straying further from the original syntax, Edna St. Vincent Millay's rendering of the line as "bumping into verses I had long dreamed to meet" better captures this temporal relationship to composition. Charles Baudelaire, *Flowers of Evil*, trans. George Dillon and Edna St. Vincent Millay (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1936), 179.

something that has never been written, a desire that is not fulfilled gradually by slowly tinkering with words until the line comes into place, but rather goes unfulfilled for a long time, only to appear suddenly, out of nowhere in the form of an obstacle in one's way, a loose cobblestone to be tripped on. In both Marcel's narrative integration of his life and the radical simultaneity between walking and writing, such that the two are perfectly co-presented in the poem, the uneven ground serves as a form of poetic inspiration, enabling them to traverse—at least in the work of art—the punctuated temporality of modernity.

My claim is that Malte, while clearly affected by and responding to this same reconfiguration of time, does not transcend it. Rather, the involuntary memory that Malte experiences introduces yet another interruption. The intrusion of memories into present consciousness disrupts the ordered time of modernity, itself constituted by a process of punctuation. The earth, even the paved earth, still possesses the power to provoke memories, but rather than allowing for temporal orientation they lead to yet further disorientation. Notably, it is precisely an encounter with the earth that ultimately leads to Kusmitsch's retreat to bed. After his futile attempts to stop the unceasing passing of clock time, Kusmitsch is overcome by the movement of the earth, a marker of time far older than modern clocks.

> Er sprang auf, aber die Überraschungen waren noch nicht zu Ende. Auch unter seinen Füßen war etwas wie eine Bewegung, nicht nur eine, mehrere, merkwürdig durcheinander schwankende Bewegungen. Er erstarrte vor Entsetzen; Konnte das die Erde sein? Gewiss, das war die Erde. Sie bewegte sich ja doch. In der Schule war davon gesprochen worden, man war etwas eilig darüber weggegangen, und später wurde es gern vertuscht; es galt nicht für passend, davon zu sprechen. Aber nun, da er einmal empfindlich geworden war, bekam er auch das zu fühlen. Ob die anderen es fühlten? Vielleicht, aber sie zeigten es nicht. Wahrscheinlich machte es ihnen nichts aus, diesen Seeleuten. Nikolaj Kusmitsch aber war ausgerechnet in diesem Punkt etwas delikat, er vermied sogar die Straßenbahnen. Er taumelte im Zimmer umher wie auf Deck und musste sich rechts und links halten. Zum Unglück fiel ihm noch etwas von der schiefen Stellung der Erdachse ein. Nein, er konnte alle diese Bewegungen nicht vertragen. Er fühlte sich elend. Liegen und ruhig halten, hatte er einmal irgendwo gelesen. Und seither lag Nikolaj Kusmitsch. (577)

Given that this passage immediately follows Kusmitsch's paradoxical experiments with time, and leads to his retreat to poetry, it would seem that the attempt to cope with modern time has left him vulnerable to this experience, an overwhelming perception of the movement of the earth beneath his feet and beneath the urban environment of Paris. The significance of this movement is twofold. In the first place, the fact that he can no longer bear the earth's rotation—a rotation which determines the passing of days and of the seasons—suggests that his inability to cope with modern time has so thoroughly shattered his psychic defenses that he cannot even deal with pre-modern temporal orders. But secondly, the unceasing rotation of the earth reminds us that, like Benjamin's "ungleichartige, ausgezeichnete Fragmente," modern time does not simply replace temporal orders, but rather is transposed upon them through a process of accretion. The difficulty of coping with modern time, then, is not simply a matter of adapting to a quantified temporal regime determined by clocks, but of navigating multiple overlapping temporalities, the heterogeneity of which does not prevent the endless slipping away of time.

The persistence of older temporal regimes and the fact that they are identified with the earth is telling when it comes to understanding Malte's situation in juxtaposition to Kusmitsch. After all, for Malte, walking through the city is not only conceptualized according to the quantifiable measure of time lost, but is also characterized by the memories that it evokes, memories that stem from a time of pre-adolescence and from a non-urban aristocratic setting. The fact that Malte can continue to walk at all through this urban landscape of multi-layered temporalities is a source of wonder for Kusmitsch, who can only express awe that those like Malte still "herumgingen und die Bewegung der Erde vertrugen" (577). This movement of the earth is of course nothing other than the passing of time itself, but time that does not pass uniformly, persisting in places in the form of memory, while in other places, clocks provide an

incessant reminder of the ticking away of measured seconds. Even the apparently uniform surface of the paved road cannot erase the temporal heterogeneity of the urban landscape.[42]

The Faltering Step of the *Zauderrhythmus*

As Kusmitsch's failure to do so demonstrates, staying upright and continuing to walk through turn of the century Paris is a monumental task.[43] The fact that Malte can do so indicates that he has begun to develop the psychic buffer that Benjamin sees as arising from such an environment, even if it is not fully formed. And yet, Malte is not unaffected by the forces that keep Kusmitsch in bed. In this sense, Malte is perhaps a liminal figure in the history of consciousness, no longer entirely overwhelmed by the urban environment as Kusmitsch is, but not yet immune to its force. After all, Malte's concern with losing time by walking is articulated in the entry immediately following his account of Kusmitsch, suggesting that the concern in some ways arises out of his contemplation of the story. In order to address the problem of lost time, Malte, like Kusmitsch must retreat to his room, a room that is displaced and disconnected not only from the street below, but also the earth that lies beneath it. The disruption of one temporal regime impinging upon another can only be managed spatially by an analogous displacement.

In this context, it becomes clear that the spatial divide between Malte's room and his walks through Paris and the narrative divide between the fragmented entries of Malte's writings are indicative of the more fundamental divide between unreconcilable yet coexistent temporal

[42] Moreover, it is possible to read the movement of the earth that Kusmitsch experiences as a sort of earthquake, and earthquakes have the potential to buckle, disrupting the smooth surface of the road. Thus, it is not only that roads are unable to efface the temporal heterogeneity of the earth, but also that the earth can, even once covered, disrupt the appearance of uniformity.

[43] Malika Maskarinec makes a similar point with regards to Ulrich from Robert Musil's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (1930-1943). See the opening pages of Malika Maskarinec, *The Forces of Form in German Modernism* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2018).

regimes that have arisen through a transformation of the landscape. To understand what it means for Malte to write and to walk is thus to understand what it means to exist between and across disparate temporal regimes. The Freudian account of traumatic memory and the form of consciousness it engenders has already proven useful in understanding the gaps between Malte's position as a writer and his experience as a walker. In what follows, I aim to show that Freud's elaboration of the temporal structure of memory and consciousness can be generalized to explain the interplay between incongruent temporal regimes. The translation of atemporal memory into temporal experience thus serves a model for understanding not just Malte's involuntary memory, but also his position at the intersection of disparate temporal orders.

According to Freud, experiences leave a lasting trace ("Dauerspur") on the unconscious memory. But for Freud, their persistence cannot be understood temporally, for the unconscious is fundamentally without time ("zeitlos"). While Freud insists on this point at several points throughout his career, he never provides a complete elaboration. Kelly Noel-Smith helpfully disambiguates four elements of "Zeitlosigkeit" and argues that Freud maintains that all apply to the unconscious: "its contents remain inalterable and without temporal order; and any knowledge of its own mortality, indeed any awareness of the passage of time, remains entirely absent."[44] While the inalterability of the unconscious seems to be in tension with other elements of Freud's thought,[45] the lack of temporal ordering, the ignorance of human finitude, and unawareness of

[44] Kelly Noel-Smith, *Freud on Time and Timelessness* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), 153.

[45] Whether or not Freud himself remained committed to the inalterability of the unconscious, there are elements in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* that would speak against such a reading. In particular, the notion of a lasting trace (*Dauerspur*), sometimes erroneously translated as a "permanent trace," introduces the possibility of change into the unconsciousness. It is true that much of the material of Freudian psychoanalysis stems from childhood experiences and, depending on one's stance towards the terminability or interminability of psychoanalysis, this fact might constitute evidence for the inalterability of the unconscious. The notion of a *Dauerspur*, however, experience leaving its mark on the subject like a footprint into the earth, suggests both an introduction of new material, something made clear by Freud's focus on traumatic experiences in the essay, but also its passing away. The trace may last (*dauern*), maybe even for an extended period of time, but it does not necessarily last forever. If these traces

the passing of time are central to an understanding of the Freudian unconscious, and all three pose problems for the interface between the memory traces of the unconscious and conscious experience.

The translation of unconscious memory into conscious narrative, a task of "making temporal the atemporal content of the id," is, on some accounts, the central task of psychoanalysis. "To bring repressed memories to consciousness would, in other words, amount to giving them a proper place in (linear) time – to acknowledge them as belonging to the past so as to not compulsively repeat them in the future."[46] However, in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, Freud makes it clear that the temporal order afforded by consciousness is never stable. Indeed, it is precisely because it does not allow for lasting marks on memory that consciousness is capable of shielding the subject from the force of the external world. So, to bring unconscious memories into temporal order is not to wrest them permanently from the timelessness of the unconscious. But, if we are to give any credence to the effectiveness of psychoanalytic practice, neither is it a merely futile gesture, an interminable attempt to retrieve experience into temporal order once and for all only to have it fall back again into the undifferentiated time of the unconscious. Instead, we might do better to think of the temporalization of atemporal memory as a faltering step, which must be repeated again and again, in, to use Freud's own term, a "Zauderrythmus."[47]

Freud's uses this term in the most speculative portion of *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, in which he sketches an account of evolutionary history from the simplest lifeforms to human

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really do have a potential transience, both in their imprinting and their passing away, that would count as evidence against the inalterability of the unconscious.

[46] Fanny Söderbäck, "Timely Revolutions: On the Timelessness of the Unconscious," *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy* 22, no. 2 (December 16, 2014), 48.

[47] Freud, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, 43.

beings. Freud, building on his meditations on the compulsion to repeat, argues that all biological drives are fundamentally conservative, designed to maintain the organism's functions in perpetual stasis. As external stimuli affect the organism, however, it must work to return to its previous state of stasis. Taking this observation to its most extreme reaches, Freud concludes that the ultimate goal of all life is a "Rückkehr zum Anorganischen," that is, towards death.[48] For the simplest lifeforms, this trajectory is relatively straightforward. They have only "ein kurzer Lebensweg zu durchlaufen."[49] Over the course of evolutionary history, however, the changing environment has left its mark ("Abdruck").

> Die konservativen organischen Triebe haben jede dieser aufgezwungenen Abänderungen des Lebenslaufes aufgenommen und zur Wiederholung aufbewahrt und müssen so den täuschenden Eindruck von Kräften machen, die nach Veränderung und Fortschritt streben, während sie bloß ein altes Ziel auf alten und neuen Wegen zu erreichen trachten.[50]

In the case of humans, this accretion of states of being towards which the organism must continually attempt to revert has resulted in a path from birth to death that consists of "immer komplizierteren Umwegen bis zur Erreichung des Todeszieles."[51]

This model of life as an indirect path towards death ("Umweg zum Tode"), a perpetual detour, has often been taken as Freud's most significant contribution to narrative theory. According to Freudian critics, narrative is to be understood as a form of suspension, structured by its orientation towards its inevitable end, and yet maintained through the repeated—but not perpetual—postponement of that end. Like the anorganic state that both precedes life and follows death, Peter Brooks sees the suspension that characterizes narrative as arising out of and

[48] Freud, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, 41.

[49] Freud, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, 40.

[50] Freud, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, 40.

[51] Freud, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, 40-41.

dissipating back into that which cannot be narrated. Narrative "is maintained in a state of tension, as a prolonged deviance from the quiescence of the 'normal'—which is to say, the unnarratable—until it reaches the terminal quiescence of the end."[52] In equating the "unnarratable" with the "normal," "the vague and uninteresting realm of 'real life'," [53] Brooks rightly emphasizes narrative's status as deviant, as detour. And yet, Freud's essay, particularly the *fort-da* game, just as readily points in the opposite direction: to narrate something is to bring it into order, to achieve a sort of mastery over it, albeit a mastery that, as Benjamin shows us, is always provisional, *vorläufig*, and perhaps itself merely a further manifestation of the repetition compulsion itself.

In both evolution and narrative, it is this tension between the movement towards an end and the maintenance of stasis that produces an inevitable *Zauderrhythmus*. As Freud writes,

> Es ist wie ein Zauderrhythmus im Leben der Organismen; die eine Triebgruppe stürmt nach vorwärts, um das Endziel des Lebens möglichst bald zu erreichen, die andere schnellt an einer gewissen Stelle dieses Weges zurück, um ihn von einem bestimmten Punkt an nochmals zu machen und so die Dauer des Weges zu verlängern.[54]

According to Bryan Klausmeyer, this halting movement "describes a movement of repetition which, though oriented toward death, is at the same time continually interrupted by an internally differentiating oscillation between rushing forward and jerking back," and therefore "resists any stable representation or final resting place."[55] Drawing on the poem that Freud cites at the end of

[52] Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 103.

[53] Brooks, *Reading for the Plot*, 264.

[54] Freud, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, 43.

[55] Bryan Klausmeyer, "Abschlussbewegungen: Goethe, Freud, and Spectral Forms of Life," *Goethe Yearbook* 26, no. 1 (2019), 174.

his essay, we might also say that this movement is also a form of limping ("Hinken").[56] As Derrida argues, limping suggests both the "contracted narrative" of the *fort-da* and underlies the motion of all walking as containing a "disequilibrium" necessary for continued movement.[57] Far from a deviation from "normal" walking, it is precisely through faltering, hesitating, limping, that the step is propelled forward, one after the next. This forward movement, however, is structured through a backwards pull and a repetition, a return to what was.

In the Freudian account of both evolution and unconscious memory, however, the return to what was is not a return to something in the past. Rather, it is a return to something outside of the temporal order all together, be it the anorganic state that both precedes and follows life or the temporally undifferentiated unconscious. The forward movement then is the perpetual attempt to bring into linear, temporal order (by bringing to consciousness, to life) that which is itself non-temporal. The fleetingness of consciousness, and of life, does not allow that temporal order to persist. With each step it falls back into undifferentiated time only to be wrest into time once again with the next. It is this limping movement forward into linear time itself that characterizes the human subject as it is imagined by Freud in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*.

Fittingly, we see this same gait in the *Aufzeichnungen* in the figure of a man who not only limps, but also performs the *Zauderrhythmus* in the way he wrestles with his overcoat. Malte realizes with astonishment, "daß in den beschäftigten Händen dieses Menschen zwei Bewegungen waren: eine heimliche, rasche, mit welcher er den Kragen unmerklich hochklappte, und jene andere ausführliche, anhaltende, gleichsam übertrieben buchstabierte Bewegung, die

[56] *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* concludes with a citation of Friedrich Rückert's translation of a poem from the medieval Arab poet Al-Hariri of Basra: "Was man nicht erfliegen kann, muß man erhinken/Die Schrift sagt, es ist keine Sünde zu hinken." Freud, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, 69.

[57] Jacques Derrida, *The Postcard: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 406.

das Umlegen des Kragens bewerkstelligen sollte" (502). This realization prompts Malte not merely to follow the man, but to mimic his gait so that anyone who might see him would think there was simply some small obstacle in the path. "ich dachte mir aus, daß auch ich ein wenig stolpern wollte" (502). Much has been made of Malte's attempt to learn to see, but in this passage, it becomes clear that seeing is not the only thing he learns. While Marcel and Baudelaire trip over cobblestones, an experience that requires no training, Malte must learn to stumble and limp in an environment in which no such obstacles are to be found.

As the grandfather in Stifter's *Granit* says, "alles muß man lernen, selbst das Gehen," by which he means that the individual must learn to walk in an environment so as to understand the collective memory it provides access to.[58] In modern Paris, however, Malte must learn to stumble, and to limp so that these memories which he has but does not understand can be brought into a temporal order. Limping, for Freud, is a means of dealing with the passing of time. Whereas Bergson's attention to the continuous flow of time is rooted in a belief that doing so will allow the subject to become attuned to the infinite continuum of time in which the past is never really lost, Freud's concern with time is a reflection of the perpetual precarity of temporal experience.[59] Time leaves a lasting mark (*Dauerspur*) on the subject, but these marks do not sit easily in the realm of the past, maintaining consistent temporal relationships to what came before and what comes after. Rather, they are carried along as the subject walks forward, dislocated from their initial temporal designation. It is only in retrieving these memories for consciousness,

[58] Adalbert Stifter, *Werke und Briefe: Historisch-Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 2.2.41. On this point, see Eva Geulen, "Stifter-Gänge," in *Kopflandschaften, Landschaftsgänge: Kulturgeschichte und Poetik des Spaziergangs*, ed. Axel Gellhaus, Christian Moser, and Helmut J. Schneider (Cologne: Böhlau, 2007), 219–31; and Lyon, *Out of Place*.

[59] It was suggested, even during Freud's own lifetime, that *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* was to some extent a response to the death of his daughter (who also happens to have been the mother of the child who played the famed *fort-da* game). Freud vehemently denied this, but it is easy to see how the preoccupations with the precarity of temporal existence in that book may have been informed by his own grief. See Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988), 395.

and thereby reinscribing them in the walk but at a different time and only transitorily, that their location in the past can be momentarily secured. It is this form of temporal experience that characterizes Malte's form of narrative.

Oral Storytelling and Written Narration

As we saw at the beginning of the chapter, Malte views walking as a way of losing time, time that could have instead been spent writing. This claim is somewhat in tension with the fact that Malte's walks evoke long lost memories. Nevertheless, it is worth taking seriously what this claim suggests about the temporal function of writing. If time spent walking is lost time, then time spent writing is, if not a means of recovering or redeeming time, at least a means of properly using or filling time. The clearest articulation of this understanding of writing comes in an oft-cited entry from early in the *Aufzeichnungen*, in which Malte writes that he must "anfangen, etwas von dem Versäumten zu tun." Malte understands this to be something of a ridiculous task.

> Es ist lächerlich. Ich sitze hier in meiner kleinen Stube, ich, Brigge, der achtundzwanzig Jahre alt geworden ist und von dem niemand weiß. Ich sitze hier und bin nichts. Und dennoch, dieses Nichts fängt an zu denken und denkt, fünf Treppen hoch, an einem grauen Pariser Nachmittag diesen Gedanken. (468)

As a twenty-eight-year-old, "von dem niemand weiß," Malte understands himself to have wasted time. His method for making up for this lost time is to write. "Dieser junge, belanglose Ausländer, Brigge, wird sich fünf Treppen hoch hinsetzen müssen und schreiben, Tag und Nacht, ja er wird schreiben müssen, das wird das Ende sein" (470). By emphasizing the beginning and the end in this way, Malte expresses a desire for a highly linear form of narrative in an entry which in no way corresponds to such linearity. Not only is the entry disconnected from any continuous narrative, but the desire to make up for lost time is inescapably recursive,

requiring him to retrace his steps even as time inevitably continues to pass by as he writes. The beginning and the end to which Malte appeals are thus almost reversed. He begins a process of retrospection, which in leading back is meant to produce an end.

In this displacement of beginning and endings, it is hardly a surprise that these fragmented entries seem to exist on their own, displaced from a clear narrative progression. A clear example of this displacement occurs in another early entry in which Malte claims to have done something "gegen die Furcht." He has written: "Ich habe die ganze Nacht gesessen und geschrieben und jetzt bin ich so gut müde wie nach einem weiten Weg über die Felder von Ulsgaard" (464). This claim, apparently coming at the end of a long night of writing, paradoxically begins an entry, and the writing that Malte claims to have spent his entire night producing does not clearly correspond to anything in the *Aufzeichnungen*.

This fragmentation of linear narrative is echoed in the comparison to walking. Despite the emphasis on his seated position while writing, the pleasant exhaustion he describes is likened to that of walking through the fields of his father's family estate. This form of writing and the satisfaction it provides is, however, distinct from the overwhelming experience of the streets of Paris, the apparent source of Malte's fear, and is instead likened to a stroll through gentle countryside. Writing thus recuperates for him the walks of his childhood, walks in which a unified landscape and a still existing family structure provided a sense of wholeness, a clear path along which to walk. And yet, like the writing which appears to be absent from the text, these walks are no longer accessible, incapable of being incorporated into the text. Indeed, in a fantastic locution, Malte writes, "Wenn ich nach Hause denke," reimagining the German expression "nach Hause gehen" as a mental act of remembering. The necessity of thinking his way home, however, is clearly the result of his inability to return along these paths. That

erstwhile home, “wo nun niemand mehr ist,” does not permit him to go there (459). Just as the gaps between the street of Paris and Malte’s writing desk structure Malte’s writing, so too do these gaps characterize the larger narrative of his life. The long, winding paths of the estate call to mind the plot structures of the realist novel, but for Malte these paths can only appear as fragmented memories that cannot even find a home in his the *Aufzeichnungnen*.

It is worth comparing these fragmented entries that nonetheless strive towards a greater whole to the other forms of narration that appear in the *Aufzeichnungen*, particularly the attempted memoirs of Graf Brahe. Malte claims to have never encountered a true storyteller. “Dass man erzählte, wirklich erzählte, das muss vor meiner Zeit gewesen sein. Ich habe nie jemanden erzählen hören” (557). In a line that anticipates Benjamin’s “Der Erzähler,” Malte suggests that storytelling, real storytelling, is something of the past, no longer accessible, already absent even in his own childhood. The closest approximation comes in the figure of Graf Brahe, Malte’s grandfather, who died before Malte was born. And yet, even in his capacity as storyteller, Brahe too is sharply distinguished from the long, winding paths of the family estate. He can only pace back and forth, as he attempts to dictate his memoirs so that his daughter—Malte’s Aunt Abelone—can write them down.

Brahe’s pacing is indicative of his difficulties with the temporality of written narration. Indeed, Brahe’s capacity as a storyteller is directly linked to the fact that he appears to have no sense of time whatsoever. Instead, he experiences past events as if they were just as present as present ones, a trait that places him in close association with Ruprecht from Stifter’s *Narrenburg*, as well as the illusion of a unified and homogenous temporality as suggested by Stifter’s snow and Paris’s paved roads. As Robert Holub writes, Brahe seems to live in “an eternal present” or

"unidimensional time."[60] This form of narration is, as Judith Ryan argues, "grundsätzlich anders […] als das Erzählen im herkömmlichen Sinne des Wortes, nämlich im Sinne einer zusammenhängenden, zeitlichen Wiedergabe eines Handlungsverlaufs."[61] While this temporal undifferentiation might be the source of Brahe's capability as a storyteller, it poses a distinct problem for written narration. He attempts to dictate his memoirs but soon searches for an excuse "das Schreiben aufzugeben, das zu langsam war für seine Erinnerungen" (560). Brahe's storytelling is an exclusively oral form of narration that cannot be translated into written form. The act of writing introduces a new temporal dimension, the speed—or indeed the slowness—of the pen on paper that shatters the temporal undifferentiation. In a world dominated by the written word, such stories can no longer be told. It is for this reason that Brahe paces, "wie rasend auf und ab" (562), a form of walking that almost suggests the non-continuity of the narrative he cannot tell. The slowness of writing does not permit him to move forward, to continue a narrative path. He can only pace back and forth, trying to tell his story haltingly. [62]

Brahe's difficulty in turning his memories—which are not temporal—into a written narrative bears a striking resemblance to the Freudian *Zauderrhythmus* and the task of re-temporalizing unconscious memory through narrative. And yet this analogy is as puzzling as it is clarifying, for if we are to follow Benjamin, the development of modern temporalized consciousness is a historical development that would seem to post-date the demise of the

[60] Robert C. Holub, *Reflections of Realism: Paradox, Norm, and Ideology in Nineteenth-Century German Prose* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 205, 206.

[61] Judith Ryan, "'Hypothetisches Erzählen': Zur Funktion von Phantasie und Einbildung in Rilkes Malte Laurids Brigge," in *Materialien zu Rainer Maria Rilke. "Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge,"* ed. Hartmut Engelhardt (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974), 248.

[62] Brahe's pacing connects him once again to Malte, who cannot stop pacing while waiting at the hospital for electroshock therapy, but who on his labyrinthine path home, wants only to stop walking.

storyteller. Certainly, Brahe does not possess the form of consciousness as a psychic defense, which Benjamin takes to be characteristic of urban modernity. He is rather a relic from an earlier age. Instead, the difficulties Brahe encounters in writing—or indeed dictating—his memoirs seem to correspond to a medial shift from oral storytelling to written narrative. Brahe, like Kusmitsch, is the last of an earlier age, no longer able to cope with the realities of the written word and urban environment respectively. Like Kusmitsch, he ultimately gives up on his project, ending the attempt to set down his stories in writing, and allowing him to finally halt the faltering step of his incessant pacing.

In invoking the Freudian *Zauderrhythmus* to understand Brahe's failed attempts at written narration, I do not wish to dwell on the equivalency between the atemporality of unconscious memory and that of oral storytelling.[63] Rather, I wish to show that the basic model of the *Zauderrhythmus* is more widely applicable than it might first appear in Freud, clarifying not only the translation of the atemporal into time, but also the translation between temporal regimes. Take, for instance, the temporal reconfiguration at stake in Brahe's mode of narration. As Benjamin writes, the transition from the oral tradition to the novel implies a reconfiguration of narrative temporality. The question "Wie ging es weiter?" is always applicable to the story in a way that it is not for the novel, which "dagegen kann nicht erhoffen, den kleinsten Schritt über

[63] That being said, if we accept the Benjaminian argument that consciousness arises in modernity as a protective barrier, then so too does the unconscious as it's dialectical counterpart. It is only through the peculiar temporality of modern consciousness that the specific form of atemporality characteristic of the unconscious emerges. This interpretation allows us to connect Benjamin's "Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire" to "Der Erzähler." The premodern world of oral storytelling consists only of communicable "Erfahrung." Only with the development of modern consciousness do we become limited to the "Erinnerungen" of the novel that keep the "Erfahrung" of true stories remote. Thus, if we read Brahe as having a distinct connection to this premodern world, we can see clearly why his attempts at written narration fall prey to difficulties of the *Zauderrhythmus*. While a greater storyteller, such as Leskov, may be able to retain the layered story in written form, Brahe clearly cannot. It should be noted however, that while this interpretation has much to offer, it also demonstrates Benjamin's propensity to project a temporal unity on to the distant past as in his romanticization of the premodern storyteller. As much as Benjamin is surely right to emphasize the fractured and heterogenous temporalities of modernity, a central conviction of this study, it would be a mistake to assume that the premodern world is completely temporally homogenous.

jene Grenze hinaus zu tun, an der er den Leser, den Lebenssinn ahnend sich zu vergegenwärtigen, dadurch einlädt, daß er ein »Finis« unter die Seiten schreibt."[64] That is, while the story is temporalized in the sense of sequence, it lacks the kairotic temporality whereby a narrative is imbued with meaning through its relationship to a defined ending.[65] Here, as in the case of the development of the punctuated temporality of clock time, the *Zauderrhythmus* can help illuminate the precarious liminality between these temporal regimes.

Malte sits at the interstices and conjunctions of multiple temporal regimes. He is a subject who has been formed by traumatic memory, requiring him to temporalize the atemporal unconscious memories that afflict him, but he is also acutely aware the temporal reconfigurations resulting from discrete material changes: the disintegration of dynastic family structures, the transformation of urban environments, and the demise of an oral storytelling tradition replaced by the dominance of the novel.[66] What is unique about Malte is, on the one hand, the particular conjuncture of all of these transformations and, on the other hand, the fact that in the face of these transformations, Malte continues to walk and to write—at least until the end of the *Aufzeichnungen*—while Kusmitsch and Brahe are unable to go on.

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[64] Benjamin, "Der Erzähler," 2:455

[65] Here Benjamin clearly anticipates Kermode, *Sense of an Ending*. Notably, this kairotic temporality is also at the heart of Freudian approaches to narratology, as can be seen in the work of Peter Brooks. That a Freudian account of narrative so closely corresponds with the temporality of the novel suggests the historical limits of Freud's thought, since, as Benjamin masterfully demonstrates, this form of temporality is a relatively recent development. However, as I hope to show, these limitations of Freud's theories should not be taken as a reason to dismiss them. For when properly historicized, these insights turn out to be exceptionally perceptive in their understanding of the world in which Freud found himself, and, when understood schematically, they can even aid in the task historicization.

[66] This chapter, and indeed this dissertation, focuses primarily on the latter two of these changes: the transformation of both environments and narrative forms, but the alteration of family structures plays an important role in this story as well for both Rilke and Stifter. As Adrian Daub explains, the dynastic imagination is a way of understanding oneself as part of a long lineage extending towards both the past and the future far beyond the generations that we could ever hope to encounter personally. One of the defining features of modernity is the erosion of this mode of understanding (even if, as Daub shows, it persists in fascinating ways), an erosion that is clearly felt by both Malte and Stifter's Scharnasts. Adrian Daub, *The Dynastic Imagination: Family and Modernity in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021).

The Temporality of Writing and the Function of Transcription

To understand what it is that allows Malte to continue—and what ultimately leads him to cease writing—it is worth considering further the function of writing for Malte and the form of temporal or atemporal existence towards which it strives. In contrasting Malte to Brahe, there is a tendency among critics to read Malte as attempting to achieve the wholeness of time which even Brahe can no longer access as the result of the incursion of the written word onto his perception of the past. As Judith Ryan argues, "Es wird sich zeigen, daß Malte eine neue Entsprechung zum verlorengegangenen 'zeitlosen' Erzählen herstellen möchte, bei der allerdings das Vergangene nicht durch die Reflexion mit dem Gegenwärtigen vermittelt, sondern in eine überzeitliche Ganzheit aufgenommen werden soll." That is, while Malte does not quite seek to go back to the mode of storytelling suggested by his grandfather, he nonetheless seeks a way of overcoming time. Andreas Huyssen makes a similar argument when he reads Malte's writings as an "attempt to create a narrative in which time would be suspended."[67] Certainly, the early entries discussed above, in which Malte tries to do "etwas von dem Versäumten," point toward such an interpretation. As I have already noted, however, these entries also point to the paradoxical nature of such a desire. Moreover, given that these musings are largely confined to the earliest parts of the *Aufzeichnungen*, these entries may not represent Malte's decided understanding of his own writing, but rather his earliest attempts to articulate it. With this in mind, I would like to examine a passage that emphasizes the temporality of writing itself for what it might show us about Malte's persistence with the medium.

[67] Huyssen, "Paris Childhood," 136.

The passage I have in mind begins with another instance of self-criticism for having wasted time walking.[68] "Daß ich den ganzen Tag in den Gassen umhergelaufen bin, ist meine eigene Schuld. Ich hätte ebensogut im Louvre sitzen können." In this instance, however, Malte retracts his self-criticism. "Es war also gut, daß ich nicht ins Louvre gegangen bin" (484). He instead wanders around the city, a walk that culminates in one of the strangest scenes of the book, in which Malte *sees* "Häuser, die nicht mehr da waren." Eric Santner, who connects the scene to Malte's attempts to learn to see, writes that the description focuses on the "traces of life no longer there."[69] That is to say, Malte here is able to see the temporal heterogeneity that lies behind or has not yet been enveloped by the reconstruction of the urban environment. This palpable presence of the past echoes Brahe's mode of storytelling, but rather than a narrative accomplishment, Malte is shaken by the experience.

Upon returning home, Malte takes to transcribing a passage from Baudelaire, and then a passage from the book of Job, passages that are presented verbatim in the text. This task of re-writing functions as a remedy for the temporal disorientation produced by vision of the house. While Brahe becomes frustrated by the slowness of writing, Malte appreciates its duration.

> Ich habe es mir aus den Büchern, in denen ich es fand, abgeschrieben, damit es mir ganz nahe wäre und aus meiner Hand entsprungen wie Eigenes. Und ich will es jetzt noch einmal schreiben, […] denn so habe ich es länger, als wenn ich es lese und jedes Wort dauert an und hat Zeit zu verhallen. (491)

This acceptance of the peculiar temporality of the written word distances Malte not only from Brahe, but also from Jodok, who, in Stifter's *Narrenburg*, abhors the power of writing to remain and to outlive the individual who wrote it. Malte finds value in it for precisely this reason. The

[68] This is in fact the first such criticism, occurring before the later passage in which Malte regrets that he "machte sogar kleine Umwege und verlor auf diese Art eine halbe Stunde" (578).

[69] Eric L. Santner, *On Creaturely Life: Rilke, Benjamin, Sebald* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 51.

written word remains, at least for a time. But in noting that each word also has "Zeit zu verhallen" and not merely to persist ("andauern"), he recognizes the complex individual temporalities of each word persisting, but not permanently.[70] The written word is not a permanent record, but rather, like the impressions made on unconscious memory, a lasting trace. By writing Baudelaire's words as his own, Malte retraces the steps of those who have gone before so that he might etch them more lastingly into time than the fleeting experience of reading or reciting them.[71]

Rather than striving for a detemporalized mode of narration, this attention to the act of writing itself suggests an inversion of the Freudian model of memory, or, perhaps more aptly, the alternate step of the *Zauderrythmus*. Rarther than the faltering, limping step of assigning atemporal memory a place in time, this is an attempt to hold that which has been brought into time in its place, to prevent its recession back into the "Zeitlosigkeit" of the unconscious. In this instance, however, Malte does not appear to harbor any illusions about the permanence of this feat, recognizing the transience of the written word. Apt here is Samuel Frederick's suggestion that "Rilke's poetic project as a whole can be read as an attempt to gather in words what always threatens to slip away or is otherwise inaccessible and to make it palpable as such fragile stuff." While Frederick is primarily concerned with Rilke's *New Poems*, I would contend that Malte too, at least in some instances, also "recognizes that the undertaking is self-defeating, because the

[70] The choice of the word "verhallen," which is typically used to describe sounds that die away is particularly telling, for it conflates written and oral narrative.

[71] Given that the act of transcription is a way of perceiving the flow of time, the choice of Baudelaire's "À une heure du matin" is significant. The poem's speaker bears a remarkable similarity to Malte, not only in the disgust for himself and the world which he expresses, but also in speaker's need to lock the door behind him, separating himself from the Paris streets upon which he spent his day walking. The title of the poem emphasizes the exact hour of the night, and yet the reason the speaker finds this hour so valuable is because all of the sounds of the hustle and bustle of the city have ceased. That is, it is a time that is outside of the temporal order of the day, and yet it is also designated precisely according to the dictates of the clock.

poetic word cannot but fix a thing—however fleeting it may be—onto the page. Word, name, and concept are incommensurate with the mere, fleeting thing."[72] Malte's concern, however, is not simply with objects and experiences that are fleeting, but rather time, the element of fleetingness itself. In seeking to hold onto that fleetingness, indeed, to recreate it in the form of writing, his engagement with time is what Martin Hägglund calls chronolibidinal.[73] Malte seeks neither to overcome time, nor to return to the timelessness of pre-modern storytelling, but simply to engage with time in its passing through the medium of the written word.

Although these transcriptions of Baudelaire and Job occur relatively early in the *Aufzeichnungen*, they anticipate a shift in Malte's writing. Rather than focusing on his struggles writing, his childhood memories, or his experiences walking through Paris, the later entries consist largely of an examination of a series of historical figures, including kings, popes, lovers, saints, and poets, and culminating in a final retelling of the parable of the prodigal son from the Gospel of Luke.[74] While these rewritings suggest a similar function to the earlier instances of transcription, they differentiate themselves through the continued presence of Malte's narrative voice. Even if his life and concerns recede into the background, these are, at least in part, his words, rather than a transcription of the words of another.

Malte declares early on that writing "wird das Ende sein" and, on his walk home from the Salpêtrière, he wants only to know what he must do, "um nicht mehr gehen zu müssen." That is,

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[72] Samuel Frederick, *The Redemption of Things: Collecting and Dispersal in German Realism and Modernism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2022), 22.

[73] See Martin Hägglund, *Dying for Time: Proust, Woolf, Nabokov* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012). Notably, Hägglund reads Proust's *À la recherche* as a chronolibidinal text in contrast to more standard readings which understand Marcel (and by extension, Proust) as attempting to transcend time. While I find this reading of Proust to be persuasive, a comparison with my reading of Malte would suggest that even Proust elides the complexities of what it means to exist in time.

[74] This recursion to individuals who lived far before Malte was born also echoes Freud's suggestion that the organism must retrace the entirety of evolutionary history in its trajectory towards death.

he, like Brahe and Kusmitsch, seeks to stop walking and stop writing. But the fact that he persists where Brahe and Kusmitsch simply give up suggests that Malte, like Freud's organisms, seeks an ending, but "nur auf seine Weise."[75] It is for this reason that I spend the remainder of this chapter examining Malte's rewriting of the biblical parable and its status as a narrative ending for the *Aufzeichnungnen*. Many critics have concluded that the *Aufzeichnungen* have no true ending at all. As Andreas Huyssen emphasizes, he "cannot read the ending as tragic failure; the novel just comes to the end of a dead end."[76] While it may true that Malte's walking and writing simply cease, there are reasons for rejecting the idea that this is "just" a dead end. First, as the preceding reading has shown, the Aufzeichnungen are plagued by gaps and caesura, spatially in the gap between Malte's room and the street of Paris, temporally in the gaps between conscious experience and unconscious memory, and narratively in the fragmented structure of the entries. A dead end thus suggests not the failure of an otherwise forward-moving narrative to progress, but rather another return along the detours that Malte persistently takes. Second, the notion of a narrative dead end points back to Benjamin's distinction between the novel and the oral story. Notably, Malte's writings do not easily correspond to either form, lacking both the potentially endless sequential continuity of the story and the definitive novelistic ending that might redeem all that came before it in the form of a plot. Rather than reading this narrative non-conformity evidence of a failed novel, I propose reading the ending as another sign of Malte's position between competing temporal regimes.

[75] Freud, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, 41.

[76] Huyssen, "Paris Childhood," 137.

Temporally Indefinite Narration: The Parable of the Wayward Son

The biblical parable of the prodigal son, or, as I will call it, the wayward son, is a story of walking away and returning.[77] Not only does the parable tell the story of a son's return to his family, but in ending the *Aufzeichnungen* in this way, Malte suggests not so much an ending as a return, both a return to an ancient text and a recapitulation of the entire narrative. Malte's version, however, is also an inversion of the original story. While in the Gospel of Luke, the parable is a story of return and forgiveness focusing on the father's forgiveness of the son upon his return and the brother's incredulity at said forgiveness, Malte's version considers the son's reasons for leaving and for returning.

In addition to inverting the perspective of the story, Malte also draws attention to the temporal inversions inherent to the story. Rilke had already explored these inversions in his poem "Der Auszug des verlorenen Sohnes" from *Neue Gedichte* (1907), which meditates on the son's decision "fortzugehn von alle dem Verworrnen."[78] This decision is characterized as leading to his demise but also, perhaps, his salvation.

> Dies alles auf sich nehmen und vergebens
> vielleicht Gehaltnes fallen lassen, um
> allein zu sterben, wissend nicht warum —

[77] The tendency in English to refer to the story as the parable of prodigal son puts the emphasis on the son's squandering of his inheritance, but the adjective does not actually appear in the story. In this respect, the typical German designation for the story as "der verlorene Sohn" is both more grounded in the text, deriving from the father's proclamation that his son "was lost and is found," and is more relevant for the emphasis on the trajectory of the son's departure and return in both Rilke's version of the story and my reading of it.

[78] The composition history of *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* is not entirely clear, but it is relatively certain that Rilke began working on the novel, which is itself in part based on letters and diary entries from his first visit to Paris in 1902/1903, before the publication of *Neue Gedichte*, and published the novel after the publication of the second volume of that collection. It is thus relatively certainly that the composition history of the poem and the novel overlap, indicating a continued engagement with the story on Rilke's part during this time period. For details on the composition history of both works, see Manfred Engel and Dorothea Lauterbach, eds., *Rilke-Handbuch* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2013).

Ist das der Eingang eines neuen Lebens?[79]

The decision "fortzugehen" is both a departure ("Auszug"), one perhaps leading to death, and an "Eingang," marking a conflation of beginnings and endings crucial for both the biblical parable and Malte's retelling. In the Gospel, the father proclaims twice that his son was "dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."[80] While the biblical text presents these states in succession, albeit an inverted one with life following death, the "lostness" of the son in Malte's retelling might be said to manifest precisely in this confusion of beginning and ending, standing at the end of the narrative, and yet inaugurating another iteration of the telling of the story. The poem, however, while suggesting a conflation or an inversion of beginnings and endings, does so without recourse to the structure that defines the story of the wayward son, namely his homecoming. This structure of homecoming contributes to this inversion of beginnings and endings by forming a circular path, a circularity that is further emphasized in Malte's version, for Malte leaves open the possibility that the son may depart again. "Wir wissen nicht, ob er blieb; wir wissen nur, dass er wiederkam" (634), he writes, indicating the possibility of a renewed "fortgehen," setting the trajectory in motion again, and adding further iterations to the cycle.

Malte's version of the parable, however, is not merely concerned with the problem of repetition and return. It is also finely attuned to the significance of the passing of time. The entry famously begins with a declaration that has received extensive attention from critics: "Man wird mich schwer davon überzeugen, dass die Geschichte des verlorenen Sohnes nicht die Legende dessen ist, der nicht geliebet werden wollte" (629). What has received less attention is the fact that this interpretive model for reading and retelling the biblical parable is preceded by a

[79] Rainer Maria Rilke, "Der Auszug des Verlorenen Sohnes" in *Werke: Kommentierte Ausgabe in vier Bänden*, 1:458-459.

[80] Luke 15:24 and 15:34 (NSRV).

meditation on the nature of loving and being loved, one that, marked with the editorial notation, "Im Manuskript am Rand geschrieben," exists removed from whatever narrative flow we might attribute to the *Aufzeichnungen* (629).[81] According to these marginal comments, "Geliebtsein heißt aufbrennen. Lieben ist: leuchten mit unerschöpflichem Öle. Geliebtwerden ist vergehen, Lieben ist dauern" (629). Without eliding the importance of loving and being loved for a reading of the final entry of the novel, this equation between loving and lasting, between being loved and passing away, allows for a reformulation of Malte's introductory comment: the story of the prodigal son is the legend of one who did not want to pass away.

While understanding this retelling as principally concerned with the problem of "Vergänglichkeit" might seem to go against the grain of the text, it directly connects this entry to Malte's earlier transcriptions of Baudelaire and Job. Moreover, Malte begins his narrative describing how as a boy, the wayward son "draußen herumstrich den ganzen Tag" so as to avoid the oppressive love of his family and even the dogs. He is so overcome by the need to escape that he "zu laufen begann, um nicht Zeit und Atem zu haben, mehr zu sein als ein leichter Moment, in dem der Morgen zum Bewusstsein kommt" (629). The desire to outrun time and breath so as to become just a singular passing moment is a desire that echoes both Bergson's ideal of *durée* and Jodok's desire in *Die Narrenburg* to experience existence as the continual passing of time, unperturbed by the temporal distortions caused by buildings, writings, objects, and footprints. But as Jodok recognizes, when walking, or even running, each step leaves behind a footprint that must be erased, lest the flow of time become "getrübt."[82] In Malte's narrative, however, the

[81] This editorial notation along with several others in the text suggest the presence of an editor who has compiled and ordered the entries, thereby complicating the structure of the book as a Tagebuchroman. For a consideration of the presence of a fictional editor, see Jacob Haubenreich, "das virtuelle Manuskript: Rilkes Handschrift und die Auflösung der Druckseite," in *Diesseits des Virtuellen. Handschrift im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert*, ed. Urs Büttner et al. (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2014), 229–45.

[82] Adalbert Stifter, *Werke und Briefe: Historisch-Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 1.4.411.

young boy's play suggests a form of walking that would leave no such marker of him having passed by.

Each day, the boy leaves the path and walks into the field so as to avoid the definitiveness of any one trajectory that his life might take. "Das Geheimnis seines noch nie gewesenen Lebens breitete sich vor ihm aus. Unwillkürlich verließ er den Fußpfad und lief weiter feldein, die Arme ausgestreckt, als könnte er in dieser Breite mehrere Richtungen auf einmal bewältigen" (630). He pursues a path that is no path at all, but rather expands outwards to encompass all possibilities. Thus, even before deciding to leave home and go forth, the lost son is wayward, straying from the path. In doing so, he is not merely avoiding the love from those around him but attempting to combat the passing away of time. Whereas a trajectory along the path "seines noch nie gewesenen Lebens" would turn the open possibility of the "not yet" into the solid reality of a path, of footprints marking both his trajectory and the passing of time, by veering from any such path he is able to realize multiple possibilities at once, variously living the life of a pirate, sieging a town as an entire army, slaying a dragon, or merely existing as a bird.

Each day, however, the boundless possibilities of a life off the path, a life leaving behind no footprints that would mark his deeds and goings, solidified into a single, concrete path that had to be followed: the path back home. "Nur dass der Heimweg dann kam" (630). The walk along the path home, however, is described in a past tense that oscillates between the retrospective singularity of a specific occurrence and the iterative present, suggesting not a single walk, but a path formed of the repetitive daily trek home.[83] The walk home is both the walk that

[83] In this, we might link the wayward son's daily walk home to the "iterative, habitual present" of the narrator in Kafka's "Der Bau" as J.M. Coetzee analyzes it. J.M. Coetzee, "Time, Tense and Aspect in Kafka's 'The Burrow'," *MLN* 96, no. 3 (1981), 558. Of course, this conflation of temporal attributes also connects the path the wayward son walks to the one described in Stifter's *Narrenburg*.

he takes every day and the specific walk on the day that, upon approaching the house, he decides that he cannot stay, "er wird fortgehen" (631). The decision to leave, however, shifted to a future tense, far from crystallizing the iterative present of his walk home into a single path outwards, retains the ambiguity of whether it is a singular occurrence or, as Judith Ryan puts it, a hypothetical one.[84] The definitiveness of the decision to leave ("Nein, er wird fortgehen.") is immediately undercut with the following sentence: "Zum Beispiel während sie alle beschäftigt sind, ihm den Geburtstagstisch zu bestellen mit den schlecht erratenen Gegenständen, die wieder einmal alles ausgleichen sollen" (631). However, rather than focusing on the hypothetical nature of his departure ("zum Beispiel"), a question of grammatical mood, it is perhaps more important to consider the status of tense and aspect in his departure. After all, birthdays suggest a peculiar conflation of linear, counted time and ritualistic, cyclical time. While birthdays track the forward progression of time, here they also designate a return. As the phrase "wieder einmal" suggests, this birthday is the same as the last and the same as the one to come, with the same poorly chosen gifts that cannot make up for all the time that has been lost by staying.

The time that characterizes this household, like the temporality of these birthdays, is characterized by both the slow slipping away of measured time and the repetitiveness of an existence that never changes. This is made clear in the description of the household upon the son's return: "Dort ist nur wenig Zeit vergangen, ein wenig gezählter Zeit, alle im Haus können sagen, wie viel. Die Hunde sind alt geworden, aber sie leben noch" (634). In this context, the decision to leave is an attempt to escape the meaningless ticking away of measured time and the repetitive, cyclical time of the household. To stay would be to become completely assimilated into this dual temporal regime. After all, the declaration "Nein, er wird fortgehen" comes as a

[84] See Ryan, "Hypothetisches Erzählen."

response to the question, “Wird er bleiben und das ungefähre Leben nachlügen, das sie ihm zuschreiben, und ihnen allen mit dem ganzen Gesicht ähnlich werden?” (631). The decision to leave, then, is a decision to resist a false retrospective narration (“nachlügen”) of his life, a transformation of his life into temporalized narrative that does not fit it.

If this is the proper understanding of the prodigal son’s departure, there is reason be skeptical of just how effective it is in achieving these aims. Up to this point, the approximate life (“ungefähre Leben”) that he resists narrativizing and temporalizing in terms that do not apply to it is a perpetual straying from the path towards the multitude of possibilities that he can actualize imaginatively “at once,” only then to walk back along the path home to the oppressive passing measured time without change, persisting in the rhythms of the household. In staying at home, he is forced to provide a false definitiveness to this trajectory in retrospect, to turn the “not yet” of his life into the concreteness of a having been from which he cannot escape, a preemptive “no longer.” Paradoxically, the only way to escape this false narrative delineation of his approximate life is to give up his straying from the path and set out on a definite course. This path, it should be noted, is one that begins on the path home. As he walks home from the field one day, having returned to the path home, he realizes he cannot go back again. Here, for the first time in the *Aufzeichnungen*, the threshold and the staircase, separating the outside realm from the interiors are identified. “So einem nützt es nichts, mit unsäglicher Vorsicht die Treppen zu steigen” (631). The iterative present indicates the countless times that he has crossed this threshold, only to feel the weight of existence at home, but these countless threshold crossings are invoked at precisely the point he decides not to cross the threshold, to set forth instead.

This brings us back to the temporal regime of the household and the strange temporality of his departure. The departure interrupts both the slow, endless passing of measured time and

the cyclical rhythms of the household. This interruption, however, cannot be accounted for by the temporality of the household. We know that he does in fact leave, but that departure cannot be assigned a specific point in time. To leave on his birthday is no longer to designate a specific point in time and thus cannot be narratively specified. Therefore, instead of reading the wayward son's departure and return as an instance of hypothetical narration, something that Malte imagines and considers, but cannot ultimately narrate, really narrate, we might instead say that the indefiniteness derives from a confounding of temporal systems. If so, it is not the fact of the wayward son's departure and return that remains, as Ryan suggests, "im Grunde nicht erzählbar,"[85] but that the temporal structure of the story, much like Malte's own, does not and cannot conform to the expectations of linear narrative or novelistic plot. The singularity of the path he walks away from the household is emphasized precisely as its temporal ordering cannot be determined. It is a singular path that arises out of the undifferentiated repetition of the path home, such that it clearly leads away, without it being possible to say exactly when the change of course takes place. The measured time that ticks away at the household cannot grant the beginning of this trajectory a definite place in time.

Stopping Writing, Stopping Walking

The temporal indeterminacy of the wayward son's departure suggests a comparison to the Freudian "Dauerspur." While having left a definite mark in the ground, the footprint that points away from home defies a narrative order. On the Freudian model, this is indicative of a traumatic experience. Consciousness, having been unable to protect the psyche from the force of the external stimulus, does not perceive the event directly and therefore cannot assign it a definitive

[85] Ryan, "Hypothetisches Erzählen," 274.

point in time. In order to retrieve the experience for which the subject was insufficiently prepared, it must be returned to again and again. This explains why the wayward son's course, despite its emphatic status as a decision "fortzugehen," in its eventual return comes to resemble the same trajectory he followed daily on his childhood outings. In heading out, he in fact strays from the "Fußpfad," only to return to a definite path on his way home.

There are, however, a number of puzzles that arise when reading the wayward son's departure along these lines. What precisely is the traumatic experience at work here? The Freudian model might suggest that it is the departure, but in many ways the departure seems in fact to be a response, if not a remedy, to the traumatic experience of his home life.[86] Designating the locus of trauma is further complicated by the fact that the wayward son's departure suggests a repetition of his childhood outings, an apparent inversion of the repetition compulsion, for in many ways these childhood imaginings seem to be a way of gaining control over the traumatic experience that is the son's waywardness.

Even more pertinent for this analysis are the puzzles that arise in considering the temporal and narrative structure of the departure. Malte's attempts to narrate this story do not suggest the narrative procedure suggested by the Freudian wresting of the detemporalized unconscious into a temporal order, namely a faltering attempt to bring into temporal order that which is not temporal, only to have it inevitably recede back into a realm of temporal

[86] Of course, this undecidability between remedy and cause is also endemic to the Freudian model, particularly as it pertains to repetition compulsion and the need to narrate traumatic events. As Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan argues, narration-as-repetition is a double-edged sword: "it may lead to a working through and an overcoming, but it may also imprison the narrative in a kind of textual neurosis, an issueless re-enactment of the traumatic events it narrates and conceals." She demonstrates this to be at the heart of the narrative structure of Günter Grass's *Katz und Maus*, in which Pilenz, the narrator, tells the story of his friend Mahlke's death, so that he might "evade or attenuate his guilt" but the narration "becomes a repetition of the same behaviour that made it necessary. Pilenz (unwittingly?) tells one story in order to conceal another, and it is the other story that returns in the very act of narration. Rather than confessing the (figurative and probably also literal) killing of Mahlke, Pilenz's narration kills Mahlke yet again." Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, "Narration as Repetition: The Case of Günter Grass's Cat and Mouse," in *Discourse in Psychoanalysis and Literature*, ed. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan (York: Meuthen, 1987), 178–79.

undifferentiation. But neither does this instance of narration seem to correspond to the attentive focus on the passing of time that characterizes Malte's transcriptions of Baudelaire and Job. That is, Malte's narration at the end of the *Aufzeichnungen*, does not align with either step of the *Zauderrhythmus*, neither the provisional creation of a temporal order, nor the attunement to its passing away.

This non-correspondence to the *Zauderrhythmus* is notable given that, in many ways, the structure of the *Aufzeichnungen* as a whole suggest precisely this movement. The characteristic structure of a novel is perhaps best articulated by Benjamin's claim that "das Wesen der Romanfigur" cannot be better represented than in the sentence: "Ein Mann […], der mit fünfunddreißig gestorben ist, wird dem Eingedenken an jedem Punkte seines Lebens als ein Mann erscheinen, der mit fünfunddreißig stirbt."[87] It is only through the ending, the ultimate ending of death and the stable retrospective position it provides that each moment can be given its "Sinn." The *Tagebuch* structure of the *Aufzeichnungen*, however, is employed in such a way as to inhibit this sort of perspective.[88] While many of Malte's descriptions of his childhood or his life in Paris are indeed described in the retrospective past tense, the discontinuous nature of the individual entries precludes any consistent retrospective position. Rather than an extended gaze towards the past, what we have is more like a *Zauderrhythmus*: each entry represents a step further into the future, which casts a glance backwards to the near or distant past, only to be replaced by the next entry's perspective, slightly further into the future, but once again looking

[87] Benjamin, "Der Erzähler," 2:456

[88] As I noted above, there is reason to resist entirely assimilating the novel to the genre of a diary novel, but in terms of the temporality of its narrative structure, it bears close resemblance with the diary novel as well as the epistolary novel. As Gerald Prince writes of both sub-genres, "narration is fragmented […] and inserted between various sequences of events." Moreover, "each narrative instance does not usually continue a story begun in the preceding entry or complete a description of events started earlier, but, rather, it describes incidents having occurred since the previous entry." Gerald Prince, "The Diary Novel: Notes for the Definition of a Sub-Genre," *Neophilologus* 59, no. 4 (1975): 477–81.

back. Rather than a narrative world of always already past events and objects, we have a narrative structure in which the pastness of this world is reconfigured at each step.

Seen in this light, the faltering, fragmented progression of Malte's writings is no accident. It reproduces in written form the experience of walking through the temporally heterogenous modern city. And because of this heterogeneity, each faltering step, just like each dislocated entry of the *Aufzeichnungen*, cannot be reintegrated into a continuous path. But what then do we make of the final retelling of the wayward son, which, rather than simply ceasing these oscillating steps teeming with disequilibrium, instead narrates the story in such a way, so as to avoid ever providing the events of the story with a definitive temporal designation?

The ending, I propose, is in fact a direct answer to the question of what he must do "um nicht mehr gehen zu müssen," a question he asks himself on his walk home from the Salpêtrière. Malte wishes to cease walking and to cease writing, but rather than Brahe and Kusmitsch who simply do not continue, he wants to do so on his terms. But of course, any ending in the sense of a novelistic end that would retroactively provide meaning to all that came before, that would, so to speak, redeem time, is clearly a temporal reconfiguration that does not align with the landscape in which Malte finds himself. He says as much himself in his attempt to narrate the story of the wayward son. As he tries to describe "die großen Veränderungen" (634) that occur within the wayward son after departing from home, he asks, "Wer beschreibt, was ihm damals geschah? Welcher Dichter hat die Überredung, seiner damaligen Tage Länge zu vertragen mit der Kürze des Lebens? Welche Kunst ist weit genug, zugleich seine schmale, vermantelte Gestalt hervorzurufen und den ganzen Überraum seiner riesigen Nächte" (632). The incompatible temporal and spatial scales of his life defy narrative representation. At the same time, however,

the answer to this question is clear. It is Malte, who, in his temporally ambiguous retelling of this story, accomplishes this feat, or in attempting it, fails.

The similarities between Malte and the wayward son have often been remarked upon. What has received less attention is the way in which exactly as Malte as a figure fades from the focus of the novel, the story of the wayward son turns its gaze back on the voice of the narrator who tells it. Sometimes, this gaze is accomplished through the aforementioned questions about the poet that are presented by the narrator but seem to represent the voice of the wayward son himself in free indirect discourse. "Wer beschreibt, was ihm damals geschah?" Malte's position as storyteller is once again hinted at with the beginning of the third to last paragraph of the novel, "Die die Geschichte erzählt haben, versuchen es an dieser Stelle, uns an das Haus zu erinnern, wie es war; denn dort ist nur wenig Zeit vergangen, ein wenig gezählter Zeit, alle im Haus können sagen wie viel" (634). This statement seems to refer to a fact that is commonplace in other versions of the story. The state of the house and the time that has passed there, however, is nowhere mentioned in the biblical tale, nor, it seems, in other versions. It is instead, as I have argued, a focus of Malte's to account for the measured time and the way in which the wayward son's trajectory cannot be fit into these calculations of time that everyone knows, that in their ordering of temporal existence are now commonplace. If so, the designation of "those who have told this story" can only refer to Malte himself, who in referring to these other versions accomplishes the very description which he says they contain, but which they do not.

While the account of the return, begins with the strong voice of the narrator, and the limits of the narrator's knowledge, "Wir wissen nicht, ob er blieb; wir wissen nur, dass er wiederkam," followed by the seemingly self-referential remark about those who have told this story, the last lines of the novel quickly shift to the wayward son's perspective and his

realization: “Wahrscheinlich konnte er bleiben” (144). The wayward son’s realization that he may be able to stay, despite the initial proclamation of the narrator, arises because he recognizes that the love directed at him by his family, “ihn nicht betraf,” something that he realizes “von Tag zu Tag mehr.”. He is thus not subject to the narrative that they have laid on him, nor to the fleetingness of existence inaugurated by being loved, because “es wurde klar, wie wenig sie ihn meinen konnten” (635). This realization, however, takes place at exactly the moment in which his voice and that of his narrator’s merge, or perhaps Malte’s voice is overtaken by that of the wayward son. Like the wayward son, who evades the love of his family, Malte disappears from view in his own writings, ceding the position of narrator.

This elision of a stable narrative position can be—and indeed often is—read as a modernist dissolution of the subject.[89] While much can be said in favor of such an interpretation, I want to instead focus on the temporal implications of this move. It is the singular retrospective narrator that allows for the unified temporal progression of a novel. But in Malte’s Paris, any such temporal configuration would belie the heterogenous temporal structure of the city with which he must contend. Even the *Zauderrhythmus* depends on the temporal reconfiguration of atemporal content, and, as I have argued, we can extend this model to include not merely the temporalization of unconscious memory, but more broadly the reconfiguration of experience from one temporal regime to another. In Malte’s Paris, this attempt to produce a unified temporal ordering is of course best represented by the smooth surfaces of the streets upon which he walks. In this context, Malte’s temporally indefinite retelling of the story of the wayward son can be

[89] The classic version of this argument is Walter Sokel’s analysis of the *Aufzeichnungen* as a story of “Ent-Ichung.” See Walter Sokel, “Zwischen Existenz und Weltinnenraum: Zum Prozess der Ent-Ichung im Malte Laurids Brigge,” in *Probleme des Erzahlens: Festschrift für Käte Hamburger*, ed. Fritz Martini (Stuttgart: Klett, 1971), 212–33. Huyssen questions this narrative of dissolution because it “presupposes a stable self, a structured ego, a personality in the sense of bourgeois culture and ego psychology that could then show symptoms of disintegration,” a presupposition which Huyssen suggests does not pertain in the case of Malte. Huyssen, “Paris Childhood,” 117.

understood as an adamant refusal to engage anymore in such a task, a refusal to mask the fact that the disparate temporal regimes which have come to characterize Malte's world can never be reconfigured into a final linear narrative. Every such attempt to do so is inevitably provisional and transitory.

When Malte first encounters the strange "Häuser, die nicht mehr da waren," he is shaken by the experience, feeling the need to transcribe words that have already been written, so as to reorient himself in the continuous flow of time. By the time he finishes the *Aufzeichnungen*, Malte seems to have overcome this terror. He succeeds not because he is finally able to integrate the world around him temporally, but rather because he recognizes he no longer needs to do so. He can now tell a story, without feeling the need to try and impose a singular temporal structure upon it. In this sense, the end of the book is not so much an End, if by an end we mean culmination of his journey that redeems and makes sense of everything that came before. Such an ending, it would seem, is impossible. But in ceasing to find such an end, Malte is able to stop the disequilibrium of the *Zauderrhythmus*, which propelled him forward. He is able, on his own terms, to stop writing, and to stop walking.

CHAPTER 3: "WEDER RAUM NOCH ZEIT VERSCHWENDEN": WALKING AND WRITING ON THE CLOCK IN ROBERT WALSER

In an oft-cited passage from "Eine Art Erzählung" (1928/29), Robert Walser claims that his numerous short prose pieces are "nichts anderes als Teile einer langen, handlungslosen, realistischen Geschichte." Without plot or direction, his prose meanders, moving at its own pace according to the whims of its writer. In this, Walser's writing is much like the walks that are a frequent subject of it, in which the walker strolls and ambles, with no particular goal in mind, simply taking pleasure in moving through a landscape on foot. And yet, Walser continues his account of his writings by arguing that they are in fact a form of work.

> Ich weiß, daß ich eine Art handwerklicher Romancier bin. Ein Novellist bin ich ganz gewiß nicht. Bin ich gut aufgelegt, d.h. bei guter Laune, so schneidere, schustere, schmiede, hoble, klopfe, hämmere oder nagele ich Zeilen zusammen, deren Inhalt man sogleich versteht. Man kann mich, falls man Lust hiezu hat, einen Schriftstellernden Drechsler nennen. Indem ich schreibe, tapeziere ich.[1]

In an exaggerated list typical of his late prose, Walser likens his writing to the work performed by a tailor, a carpenter, or a cobbler. Rather than a novelist, he is a mere handworker, perhaps an artisan but no artist. Walser, however, does not labor under the same working conditions as those he compares himself to. He writes only "bei guter Laune," not because he has to in order to earn his daily bread, but because he is in the mood to do so. In this sense, Walser writes like he walks, not for any particular purpose, not to gain or achieve something, but as a form of leisure.

[1] Robert Walser, *Sämtliche Werke in Einzelausgaben*, ed. Jochen Greven, vol. 20 (Zürich: Suhrkamp, 1986), 322. Unless otherwise noted, all citations of Walser refer to this edition of his works and are given parenthetically with both the volume number and the page number.

This characterization of Walser's writing is congruent with a common image of Walser as a writer, one that he himself often perpetuates. He is a writer who is playful and inventive almost to the point of unseriousness, taking each twist and turn of his prose with a notable lightness of step. But if the above passage from "Eine Art Erzählung" is the clearest and most famous statement on Walser's poetics, the clearest and most famous depiction of him at work at the writing desk tells a rather different story. While his 1917 novella, *Der Spaziergang*, primarily consists of an account of the eponymous walk, the beginning of the walk is prompted by his failure to write. Having stood up from his writing desk and walked out the door, he views "[d]ie morgendliche Welt […], als sähe ich sie zum erstenmal" (5.7). This revelation of the world around him allows him to forget the struggle of writing: "Rasch vergaß ich, daß ich oben in meiner Stube soeben noch düster über ein leeres Blatt Papier hingebrütet hatte. Alle Trauer, alle Schmerz und alle schweren Gedanken waren wie verschwunden" (5.7). Here, Walser characterizes his writing, or more accurately his failure to write, as a sort of toil. It is not something that comes easily or quickly to him, it is not a source of joy or pleasure, but rather a source of anguish and frustration.

As in the case of Stifter and Rilke, these passages articulate a close relationship between the act of walking and the act of writing. In *Der Spaziergang*, as in many of Walser's prose pieces, walking serves as a form of poetic inspiration giving him both the motivation to write and the content about which to write, and his meandering prose clearly reflects, even mimics, its origin. However, Walser's leisurely manner of writing and walking departs from both Stifter and Rilke. Even though Stifter's walkers take the time to tell stories on their walks, they walk in order to attend to necessary matters. While Malte is less consistently purposeful in his walks,

sometimes walking simply to walk and to avoid writing, the anxiety which characterizes his experience of Paris is difficult to square with any conception of leisure.

This leisure that characterizes Walser's walks, however, stands in stark contrast to the attitude he takes towards his writing, which is frequently characterized as a form of work. Although Stifter and Rilke also relied on their writing for money, they consistently approach it in primarily aesthetic terms. Even Malte, who lives a life of destitution in Paris, never expresses a concern with money or the need to work.[2] He toils at his writing, but not, it would seem, because he needs to sell it. Walser, on the other hand, depends quite explicitly on the money he could procure from writing. Unable to hold down a steady job, he subsisted on the paltry sum he was able to amass from his writing and from the often-strained generosity of his family. Indeed, a concern with work, labor, and money pervades Walser's writing.

My claim in this chapter, then, is that as a third term in the relationship between walking and writing, work disrupts any easy equation between the two. In particular, I argue that Walser's preoccupation with the unstable relationships between writing, walking, and working point to the arbitrary temporal divisions of modern life between labor and leisure. Walser's walking and his writing function as an act of resistance against this form of temporal organization. However, rather than escaping work, the resistance against work comes to characterize the leisure activities of walking and writing, such that they are in fact propelled by the need to work.

[2] Rilke does deal with money problems and indebtedness, but clearly avoids this topic. As Patrick Greaney writes, he "hides his indebtedness, especially to German writers and especially in the texts published in his lifetime." Patrick Greaney, *Untimely Beggar: Poverty and Power from Baudelaire to Benjamin* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 95. While Greaney convincingly shows that poverty nonetheless plays an important role in Rilke's work, and especially in the *Aufzeichnungen*, Rilke's attention always seems to be on the poverty of others.

There is, however, another element of this relationship between walking and writing that impinges upon the experience of space and time, namely the characterization of the struggle to write in terms of a "leeres Blatt." In this chapter, I connect the blank page which haunts the writer, to the landscape that has been produced by mechanized transport. While rail travel allowed people to travel further and faster than ever before, the effect is less an accumulation of new places than an obliteration of the difference between places. I argue that this undifferentiation of place comes to characterize both Walser's writing and his walking. In conjunction with the paradoxes of leisure and labor, this non-specificity of place is what enables the exuberant playfulness of Walser's prose, refusing to conform to the traditional temporal structures of narrative. However, this dialectical resistance to modern temporality—whereby the temporal structures that are resisted come to characterize that resistance—also points to the limits of the freedom manifested by Walser's writing.

The Work of *Müßiggang*

Robert Walser's status as a walker is well-known. In addition to his personal predilection for walking as a form of both leisure and travel, references to and descriptions of walking abound in his written work, making it the most common activity in all of his prose, with the possible exceptions of reading and writing (eating and drinking along with fantasizing about women are a distant fourth and fifth). The walking that takes place in Walser's writing is extremely varied, including instances of "Spazieren," "Wandern," and "Flanieren," among others. His writing draws on and critically reimagines each of these cultural forms of walking, but there is another form of walking that perhaps best encapsulates all of Walser's movements on foot and his writerly reiterations of them. He is a *Müßiggänger par excellence*.

Müßiggang, commonly translated as "idleness," is typically treated as a moral vice. But idleness also has its defenders. In his "Idyll über den Müßigang" from *Lucinde* (1799), Friedrich Schlegel argues that "man sollte das Studium des Müßiggangs nicht so sträflich vernachlässigen, sondern es zur Kunst und Wissenschaft, ja zur Religion bilden!"[3] For Schlegel, the passivity of *Müßiggang* is not the Christian sin of sloth, but rather an approximation of the divine and, crucially, the true source of artistic creativity. Schlegel's understanding of *Müßiggang*, however, elides a crucial part of its etymology. The word is composed of two parts: *Muße*, meaning leisure or idleness, and *Gang*, from *gehen*, meaning to walk or go. Strictly speaking then, a *Müßiggänger* is not merely an idler, but an idle-goer, one who walks leisurely. As Leonhard Fuest writes, "Der Müßiggänger ist ein Nicht-Arbeiter, aber kein Nichtstuer, denn er tut ja noch etwas. Vielleicht ist es mehr als ein Wortwitz, wenn man sagt: Schließlich geht er (jedenfalls bleibt er beweglich)."[4] Indeed, 'loafer,' the best English equivalent of *Müßiggänger*, has a similar meaning, but has come to designate a type of shoe more often than it does a type of person. *Müßiggänger* is thus an almost paradoxical term, literally denoting an idler, someone who is lazy, inactive, or slothful, and yet characterizes such an individual through a form of movement.

The conjunction of idleness and walking allows for a particular form of resistance to the necessity of activity, work, and labor, to the idea that "Müßiggang ist aller Laster Anfang." Nietzsche, for example, in a section titled "Musse und Müssiggang," explicitly draws on walking in his critique of the "athemlose Hast der Arbeit" and "das Leben auf der Jagd nach Gewinn." Given the rise of these values, he worries that

[3] Friedrich Schlegel, *Lucinde* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1963), 40.

[4] Leonhard Fuest, *Poetik des Nicht(s)Tuns: Verweigerungsstrategien in der Literatur seit 1800* (Paderborn: Fink, 2008), 14.

> es könnte bald so weit kommen, dass man einem Hange zur vita contemplativa (das heisst zum Spazierengehen mit Gedanken und Freunden) nicht ohne Selbstverachtung und schlechtes Gewissen nachgäbe. — Nun! Ehedem war es umgekehrt: die Arbeit hatte das schlechte Gewissen auf sich. Ein Mensch von guter Abkunft verbarg seine Arbeit, wenn die Noth ihn zum Arbeiten zwang. Der Sclave arbeitete unter dem Druck des Gefühls, dass er etwas Verächtliches thue: — das „Thun" selber war etwas Verächtliches.[5]

Nietzsche finds in this modern reevaluation of values, a shift we might associate with Weber's account of the Protestant work ethic, an inversion of the relationship between work and leisure. Nietzsche's critique of "Thätigkeit" and praise of walking identifies not merely a change in values, but also a different relationship to time, as is repeatedly emphasized throughout the passage. As a result of this "Hast der Arbeit," "Man denkt mit der Uhr in der Hand, […] lebt, wie einer, der fortwährend etwas versäumen könnte," and "hat keine Zeit und keine Kraft mehr für die Ceremonien, für die Verbindlichkeit mit Umwegen." In this modern world, "die eigentliche Tugend ist jetzt, Etwas in weniger Zeit zu thun, als ein Anderer," but not so that one might have more time at the end of the day, time for leisure and for rest, but rather so as to do something else with the same single-minded focus on speed.[6]

This characterization of *Müßiggang* in opposition to productive labor might seem to bring the concept in close proximity to that of the *flâneur*. As Benjamin writes, the *flâneur* is someone

[5] Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* §329. The topic of Müßiggang occupies Nietzsche from at least the late 1870s onwards, including a repeated inversion of the typical German idiom "Müßiggang ist aller Laster Anfang." In *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* I §284, he suggests that "Wenn Müssiggang wirklich der Anfang aller Laster ist, so befindet er sich also wenigstens in der nächsten Nähe aller Tugenden; der müssige Mensch ist immer noch ein besserer Mensch als der thätige." In an aphorism that appears twice in his Nachlass from 1887-1888, he connects Müßiggang to philosophy itself: "Müßiggang ist aller Philosophie Anfang. — Folglich — ist Philosophie ein Laster?" While this aphorism might undercut his defense of Müßiggang, calling into question its results, we might also see a distinction between its possible manifestations. While Nietzsche is clearly a critic of formalized and systematic philosophy, his own philosophical approach might point to a positive evaluation of *Müßiggang* precisely when it embraces the sort of idle walking at the root of the term.

[6] Rilke's Nikolaj Kusmitsch clearly demonstrates the failed logic of saving up time by performing tasks more quickly and efficiently.

"der Spielraum braucht und sein Privatisieren nicht missen will."[7] While "Privatisieren" here is often translated as "leisure,"[8] it denotes a very particular form of leisure, namely, the ability to live from one's wealth without needing to work.[9] Like the bourgeois *Spaziergänger*, whose free time for walking is dependent upon a particular structure of work time and leisure time, the *flâneur*'s rejection of labor is made possible by a world in which the labor of others frees him from the same necessity. In this, Rilke's Malte is much closer to the *flâneur* than Walser is, for even as he lives a life of destitution in Paris, Malte nowhere indicates the need to work in order to survive. In contrast, Walser's *Müßiggang* suggests a refusal to accept the very structure of labor and leisure.[10] This refusal is at the heart of the critique of *Müßiggang* as a "unmoralische Verschwendung von Zeit und Energie."[11] Whereas *Muße* can be understood as a legitimate form of not working, one exemplified by practices of philosophy and contemplation, *Müßiggang* calls into question the very division of life that makes leisure possible. By walking, Walser thus resists being assimilated into a world of "progress," "productivity," and high-speed modernity. But as the term *Müßiggänger* suggests, this resistance is not one of simple opposition. Walser's walks, in their active idleness, do not merely oppose slowness to speed, simplicity to progress and modernity, idleness to work, they instead continually displace and invert the relationship between these apparently opposing concepts.

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[7] Walter Benjamin, "Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire," 1:556.

[8] For instance, Harry Zohn translates the above as: "the flâneur, who demanded elbow room and was unwilling to forgo the life of a gentleman of leisure." Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, vol. 4, ed. Michael Jennings et al. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 326.

[9] *Duden* defines the term accordingly: "als Privatmann, ohne Ausübung eines Berufs von seinem eigenen Vermögen leben." *Duden*, s.v. "privatisieren," https://www.duden.de/node/156884/revision/1404516. "als Privatmann, ohne Ausübung eines Berufs von seinem eigenen Vermögen leben"

[10] In this respect, Walser's closest equivalent might be Walt Whitman.

[11] Fuest, *Poetik des Nicht(s)tuns*, 19.

Understood in this context, Walser's approach to walking and writing does not prioritize leisure at the expense of labor, but rather obscures these divisions. As the narrator of *Der Spaziergang* reveals, it is only by walking that he is able to write at all. Along his walk, he stops by the tax office to request that his taxes not be raised. When his industriousness is called into question because of his walking ("Man sieht Sie aber immer spazieren!"), he responds by explaining that walking is in fact necessary for his work:

> Spazieren muss ich unbedingt, um mich zu beleben und um die Verbindung mit der lebendigen Welt aufrechtzuerhalten, ohne deren empfinden ich keinen halben Buchstaben mehr schreiben und nicht das leiseste Gedicht in Vers oder Prosa mehr hervorbringen könnte. Ohne Spazieren wäre ich tot, und mein Beruf, den ich leidenschaftlich liebe, wäre vernichtet. Ohne Spazieren und Bericht-Auffangen könnte ich auch keinen Bericht mehr abstatten und nicht den winzigsten Aufsatz mehr, geschweige denn eine ganze lange Novelle verfassen. Ohne Spazieren würde ich ja gar keine Beobachtungen und gar keine Studien machen können […]. Ein Spaziergang fördert mich beruflich und macht mir zugleich auch noch persönlich Spaß und Freude; er erquickt und tröstet und freut mich, ist mir ein Genuß und hat gleichzeitig die Eigenschaft, daß er mich zu weiterem Schaffen reizt und anspornt, indem er mir zahlreiche kleine und große Gegenstädlichkeiten als Stoff darbietet, den ich später zu Hause emsig und eifrig bearbeite. (5.50)

This passage emphasizes the dual function of walking as essential to both labor and leisure. It is simultaneously the activity that allows the narrator to recover from the difficulties of labor and the source of the raw materials of his labor which will later be reworked into prose. This description might seem to place walking more squarely on the leisure side of a labor-leisure dichotomy. After all, leisure is by definition that which allows the worker to recover from labor and prepare for the next shift. Walser's walking, however, complicates this relation through their co-presentation in the text. As the narrator notes, without walking, it would be utterly unthinkable for him, "eine ganze lange Novelle [zu] verfassen." This remark, the culmination of a typically Walserian list of the things he would be unable to do without walking, is straightforwardly self-reflexive, referring to the very novella in which it is contained. *Der Spaziergang* is by far the longest work Walser ever composed with the exception of his novels, a

genre that is not mentioned here. Walking is not merely necessary for writing in generally, but more specifically for the composition of this particular novella.

Samuel Frederick argues for reading the walking that constitutes this novella as a form of collecting, "the seemingly purpose*less* activity of walking affords the walker the opportunity to engage in the distinctly purpose*ful* activity of gathering things that are necessary for his literary production."[12] That is, it is precisely the leisurely nature of the walk, that makes it useful for the labor of writing. We might add that the walker's relationship to his environment is thereby an extractive one. He collects the raw materials of his prose, which he will then "emsig und eifrig bearbeite[n]" at home. Unlike most forms of extraction, however, Walser's method for writing does not necessitate actually removing anything from the environment. In this, Walser might be seen as an early practitioner of the leave no trace principle: leave only footprints; take only memories. Fittingly, *Der Spaziergang*, like many of Walser's walking texts, is explicitly introduced and framed as a memory.[13] But the walk is not merely an experience that is retrospectively recollected, but rather a walk taken with explicit purpose of producing memories so that they might form the basis for writing.[14]

Indeed, the walk that constitutes *Der Spaziergang* is taken as an antidote to the narrator's inability to write. It is thus a novella that begins with the difficulty of its own composition, the writer's block that initiates the walk, and in walking away from the writing desk, creates the very conditions by which it can be composed. If not a form of writing itself, the walk is a necessary

[12] Samuel Frederick, "The Walker as Collector," in *"Spazieren muss ich unbedingt": Robert Walser und die Kultur des Gehens*, ed. Annie Pfeifer and Reto Sorg (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2019), 142. Emphasis in original.

[13] See, for example, "Herbstnachmittag" (1914), "Die Stadt" (1915), and "Kleines Landstraßenerlebnis" (1916).

[14] This anticipatory production of memory is particularly clear in "Das Schäfchen," in which the narrator ends his walk by vowing to commit to memory the experience of his walk: "Der Auftritt bewegte mich sehr, und ich nahm vor, wie ich nach Hause ging, ihn nicht aus dem Gedächtnis zu verlieren" (16.9), a vow that is fulfilled at precisely the moment it is expressed through its inscription in writing.

precondition for it. To this effect, Jörg Kreienbrock emphasizes the phrase "wie verschwunden" at the beginning of the story. "Alle Trauer, alle Schmerz und alle schweren Gedanken waren *wie verschwunden*" (5:7, emphasis added). To say that it was only *as if* these heavy thoughts had disappeared suggests for Kreienbrock "die Unmöglichkeit eines völligen Vergessens des Schreibzimmers."[15] If so, the walk is perhaps not a leisure activity at all, but merely a continuation of the conditions under which the writer labors. The two activities become blurred, almost inseparable.

This coincidence of walking and writing is made explicit in Walser's "Sonntagmorgen" (1914), in which a description of a Sunday morning walk is concluded by writing the prose piece which recounts the walk. In the final line, the narrator writes, "Ich setzte mich an den Tisch, ergriff die Feder, und schrieb dies" (4.120). By concluding the piece in this way, Walser not only ends the walk with an act of writing (one that recapitulates the walk). He also creates a narrative in which the end of the walk, the end of writing about the walk, and the end of the piece itself all occur simultaneously. The result is a narrative in which the temporalities of writing and of walking are neatly layered, coexisting in the text as both simultaneous (the narrative of the walk progresses perfectly in time with the narrative of the writing of the walk) and continuous (the walk leads naturally to its inscription as a written narrative). The walk is thus both a preparation for writing and the writing a fulfillment of the walk, which anticipates its own transformation into written narrative.

[15] Jörg Kreienbrock, *Kleiner. Feiner. Leichter: Nuancierungen zum Werk Robert Walsers* (Zürich: Diaphanes, 2010), 51.

On the Clock: The Haste of Walser's *Spaziergang*

The complex layering of the perspective of the writer and the perspective of the walker is pervasive throughout Walser's walking texts. But while in "Sonntagmorgen," this dual temporality is characterized by a marked simultaneity and continuity between the two, *Der Spaziergang* emphasizes their disjunction.[16] We see this disjunction from the very beginning of the novella as manifested by the writer's block that prompts the narrative's walk. While the walk begins because of the writer's block, the narrative itself begins with the walk, starting not at the writing desk but with the narrator's first step out the door and into the world. This narrative misalignment leads to a temporal ambiguity—not unlike the outward path of Malte's wayward son. While we know that the walk begins, the narrator cannot quite say when. As he writes in the first sentence of the novella, "Ich teile mit, daß ich eines schönen Vormittags, ich weiß nicht mehr genau um wieviel Uhr, da mich die Lust, einen Spaziergang zu machen, ankam, den Hut auf den Kopf setzte, das Schreib- oder Geisterzimmer verließ, die Treppe hinunterlief, um auf die Straße zu eilen" (5.7). Indeed, only after half a page does the writer's block that prompts the walk appear. We thus have a disjunction of perspectives, manifesting a disjunction of beginnings, both temporally (the narrative beginning as opposed to the beginning of the walk) and spatially (the strange description of the "Schreib- oder Geisterzimmer," the disjunctive description of which indicates not a singular place, but rather two co-existing spatial designations). These disjunctions are not connected through simultaneity or continuity, but rather by a block.

[16] The simultaneity in "Sonntagmorgen" recalls Baudelaire's "Le Soleil," in which the speaker's walk and the act of poetic production cannot be separated. In this, *Der Spaziergang*, a slightly later work, suggests a similar shift to that from Baudelaire's simultaneity to the stark gaps that characterize the relationship between walking and writing for Malte.

This disjunction is fundamentally temporal. In the first place, the writer's block appears to be a problem of memory. It is introduced at the point at which it is forgotten ("Rasch vergaß ich") and characterized by the speed with which this forgetting takes place once the walk begins.[17] Furthermore, insofar as Walser's writing consists of a recollection of the experiences he collects while walking, the block is itself, at least in part, a problem of memory. The narrative too begins with an instance of forgetting, insofar as the narrator "weiß nicht mehr genau um wieviel Uhr" he begins the walk. This instance of forgetting is a forgetfulness of time. But even in forgetting the time, the narrator exhibits a peculiar preoccupation with its passing. After all, the curious thing about this opening sentence is not so much that the narrator cannot remember exactly when he began his walk—certainly he can be forgiven for failing to look at the clock on his way out the door—but that he feels the need to mention it at all. In a conventional narrative, the designation of a beautiful morning is quite enough to evoke the proper setting for the action of the walk to begin. Indeed, despite the embedded clauses typical of Walser's prose, the opening line without the failure to designate the exact time at which began the walk would be a relatively standard and traditional opening for a story. And yet, this preoccupation with time recurs throughout the opening paragraph and the entire novella, not least in the final word of the first sentence. The narrator does not merely begin his walk. He *rushes* to it.

This focus on speed and clock time, on the one hand, and memory and forgetting, on the other hand suggests a conflict between incompatible yet coexistent temporal regimes. In the previous chapter, we saw something similar. In walking through the streets of Paris, Malte had to withstand the persistent punctuation of measured time, but these walks also evoked a deep, mnemonic time that Malte could only ever deal with belatedly from the safety of his room. These

[17] Or, following Kreinbrock, *almost* forgotten, if we are to emphasize the "wie" in "*wie* verschwunden."

involuntary memories could never be fully retraced in a temporally congruent narrative, a fact represented by the absence of the staircase connecting Malte's room in which he writes to the streets below. In contrast, the world in which Walser walks seems free of the mnemonic depths that make Malte's Paris so rich and so terrifying. And yet, Walser too is clearly plagued by the power—as well as the limits—of memory. This is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in the stairwell, absent from Malte's world, but in which Walser's narrator finds himself lingering, even as he professes his desire to begin his walk as hastily as possible. The second, third, and fourth sentences of the novella read:

> Beifügen könnte ich, daß mir im Treppenhaus eine Frau begegnete, die wie eine Spanierin, Peruanerin oder Kreolin aussah. Sie trug etwelche bleiche, welke Majestät zur Schau. Ich muß mir jedoch auf das strengste verbieten, mich auch nur zwei Sekunden lang bei dieser Brasilianerin oder was sie sonst sein mochte, aufzuhalten; denn ich darf weder Raum noch Zeit verschwenden. (5.7, emphasis added)

Despite the desire voiced here to not waste time, the narrator does just that by pausing on the very subject he wishes to pass by. Samuel Frederick terms this sort of narrative act, pervasive throughout Walser's work, "apophatic narration," in which Walser narrates something by refusing to do so.[18] This narrative move is complicated by the fact that what is being narrated here is not so much the woman herself as the pace of the walker and the pace of the narration itself. Walser's metadiscursive tendency here to comment on his own need to tell the story "adds more layers to an already multilayered discursive level," as Frederick notes. But whereas in texts such as "Sonntagmorgen," these layers seem to be expertly integrated into an organic whole, this passage is constructed out of a tension between the pace of the walk and the pace of narration.

[18] See Samuel Frederick, *Narratives Unsettled: Digression in Robert Walser, Thomas Bernhard, and Adalbert Stifter* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2012), 41–45. Notice especially, the introduction of this entire passage with the phrase, "beifügen könnte ich." It is a comment which the narrator could make, but in addressing the possibility of making such a comment, he in fact does so, even as he remains in the conditional.

Consider the sentence: “Sie trug etwelche bleiche, welke Majestät zur Schau.” It consists of a single independent clause, uncharacteristic for Walser, instantiating a sort of narrative pause, or at least an alternative to the rapidly winding paths of much of Walser’s prose. This sense of pausing is augmented by doubled adjectives (“bleiche, welke”), which in their repetition linger on the women’s “majesty” without becoming caught up in a prolonged list like we find elsewhere in Walser. This gives the sensation that the walker is pausing to stare at the woman, but it is not entirely clear whether the narrator is repeating a pause that occurred during the walk or prolonging a fleeting moment by stretching out the narration of it. In the novella, the distinction between the writing subject and the walking subject can be normally inferred from the tense. The narrator, at the moment of writing, can no longer remember (“weiß nicht mehr genau”) at what time he, at the time of walking, ran down the stairs (“die Treppe hinunterlief”). But while this distinction between past and present may be relatively clear when it expressed in the first person, it is less so in the case of the third-person description of the woman. The fact that she was there in her pallid, faded majesty is true, regardless of whether the narrator raced past her or slowed and lingered. But by removing the “ich” from the sentence, Walser obscures any distinction between the present narrator and the past walker, simultaneously realizing incompatible rates of movement.

This conjunction of haste and tarrying is reminiscent of the faltering step of Freud’s *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*. The walker/narrator is pushed onwards just as he is compelled to linger. I have argued that Freud’s *Zauderrhythmus* pertains to the process of making unconscious memory conscious and thereby both temporalizing and narrativizing it, but in a form that is always provisional and never complete. In the case of *Der Spaziergang*, however, the narrative suspension produced by this tension can be attributed to forgetting rather than to remembering.

We learn at the end of the novella that there may have been another reason for the eponymous walk beyond the struggles of writer's block and the desire both to forget them and to correct them, by producing new memories that can then be inscribed. At the end of the walk, the walker sits down, and his thoughts turn to a young woman. The memory of her is not articulated in the entirety of the walk. It can only arise once he has stopped, and even then, his thoughts progress beyond the memory of her for almost two pages, "bis [ihm] wieder das Mädchen einfiel" (5.76). It is only then that we learn that he loved her, professed his love to her, and was rejected. She then left without any further attempt on the walker's part to obtain her love, something that he now regrets. "Die Umstände hatten ihr befohlen, zu reisen, und sie war fortgegangen. Vielleicht würde ich sie noch rechtzeitig haben überzeugen können, daß ich es gut mit ihr meine" (5.77). With this unexpected conclusion, it becomes clear that the thing he has been trying to forget is as much the memory of this young women as it is his failure to write. It is perhaps even the memory of her that has hindered his progress writing. Walking thus becomes not merely a means of producing new memories so that he might write, but also a mode of fleeing the memories that plague him in his "Schreib- oder Geisterzimmer."

This conclusion also provides a means for understanding the narrator's preoccupation with time at the beginning of the novella and the reasons for the specific context in which it occurs. It is, after all, the presence of a beautiful woman that prompts the walker both to hasten to his walk and to linger narratively, if not perambulatorily, in passing her. Her presence, presumably a reminder of the woman he is trying to forget, prompts the desire to waste no time: "Ich *muß* mir jedoch auf das strengste verbieten, mich *auch nur zwei Sekunden lang* bei dieser Brasilianerin oder was sie sonst sein mochte, aufzuhalten; *denn ich darf weder Raum noch Zeit verschwenden*" (5.7, emphasis added). This imperative to waste neither time nor space suggests a

classical manifestation of the Freudian *Wiederholungszwang*, insofar as the narrator blames himself for not acting "rechtzeitig" to stop the departure of his beloved. He must revisit the event for which he was not initially prepared. His desire for timeliness is thus the belated desire to avoid the belatedness that led to his present misfortune. But of course, this desire is paradoxical. The narrator's unnecessarily included remarks about the woman are the cause of the delay he seeks to avoid. What we have then is a preoccupation with timeliness, but one that is itself untimely, circumventing the very goal that the concern for time suggests. By voicing the concern for time, the narrator subverts his own desire for timeliness. Moreover, in his hasty desire to pass by this woman (even as he fails to do so), he risks repeating his mistake a second time, letting this woman go only to belatedly attempt to retrieve her in memory and in writing.

There are two points that should be made about this concern for timeliness. First, the lack of timeliness that haunts the walker, and which he must attempt to outpace, concerns a timeliness characterized by concrete, socially embedded events. He has failed to act in time so as to prevent the departure of his beloved. This is characteristic of the Freudian *Wiederholungszwang*. The events for which traumatized individuals must belatedly prepare themselves are concrete, and often harrowing, life events. As it is manifested in the novella, however, this concerns for timeliness is largely directed toward abstract clock time. So as not to be late again, he much rush to his walk, a measure of timeliness that does not orient itself towards being prepared to act in the kairotic moments of life when they appear, but towards an increase in the distance covered in a set period of time. It is no surprise then, that the narrator quantifies his need to rush out the door, forbidding himself to tarry "auch nur zwei Sekunden lang." The failure to act at the appropriate moment has mutated into a logic of speed and efficiency.

Second, the question of timeliness ("Rechtzeitigkeit"), even though it is the idiom used by the narrator at the end of the novella and in many of his other walking texts, elides a crucial part of his concern at the beginning. In passing by the woman in the staircase to get to his walk, the narrator uses the strange expression that he "darf weder Raum noch Zeit verschwenden." To waste time is a well-established idiom in both English and German, but what does it mean to waste space? Walser's digressive tendencies, exemplified by his description of this woman, seem to waste time that could have otherwise been spent getting on with the story.[19] A digression, however, should not be seen as a merely temporal narrative phenomenon. Like its etymological cousins, 'progress' and 'regress,' 'digression' is derived from the Latin *gradior*, to walk or go. Paradoxically then, a digression, while wasting time, traverses space, rather than wasting it. To waste space would be to not walk at all, to remain seated at the writing desk unable to write, forgetting the expanses of space outside the room. Moreover, "ein leeres Blatt Papier" is also a space that must be traversed, a feat that the narrator is incapable of performing before leaving his desk for a walk. It is both digressive movement through space and temporal digressions in narrative that allow for the narrator to write. Indeed, *Der Spaziergang* is constituted by a continual tarrying and straying. Only by moving through space can the walker halt the flow of memories that begins when he stays in one place, be it his writing desk or the spot at which he stops at the end of the narrative. And when he stops, the writing ceases.

[19] In light of the prevalence and centrality of digression in Walser's writing, Samuel Frederick has argued that it, rather than plot, is the "governing principle" of Walser's prose, and that Walser's writings demonstrate the potential of narrative as "pure deviation." There is strong support for such a view, especially in texts such as "Einmal erzählte Einer," but it is important to note that while *Der Spaziergang* consists of digressions from digressions, these deviations do not lead ever outward to a limitless proliferations, but rather proceed almost dialectically. The narrative's momentary pause at the woman in the stairwell is a digression from the progress of the walk. But the walk, we should remember, is itself a digression, both from the struggles of writing and the curse of unwanted memories. The description of the woman is thus not so much a further digression, as a digressive return to that which the walker had been aiming to digress from. Frederick, 21.

The Annihilation of Space and Time, or How I Learned to Love the Train

The desire to waste neither space nor time, and the connection of this desire to walking opens up another context in which to understand the significance the significance of Walser's approach to walking, namely in contrast to rail travel. In the nineteenth century, the development of rail travel was often characterized as bringing about "the annihilation of space and time." This dramatic locution arose in response to the destabilization of conventional conceptions of space and time caused by the development of rail travel. As Wolfgang Schivelbusch argues, "What is experienced as annihilated is the traditional space-time continuum which was characterized by the old transport technology. Organically embedded in nature as it was, that technology, in its mimetic relationship with the space traversed, permitted the traveler to perceive that space as a living entity."[20] There is a notable ambiguity in this last turn of phrase, for the designation "as a living entity" could apply just as well to the space that is perceived as to the traveler doing the perceiving. While it must be recognized that the "traditional space-time continuum" was itself constituted by contingent social relations, the advent of rail travel clearly alters the relationship between subjects and their environment. No longer embedded in a landscape that constitutes spatial and temporal—not to mention social and mnemonic—horizons, space and time become mere quantitative measurements.

This annihilation of space and time is also a standardization of space-time, unifying it into a continuous set of coordinates. Spatially, this transformation is manifested in the disappearance of "in-between space, or travel space."[21] As Schivelbusch puts it, "The railroad

[20] Schivelbusch, "Railroad Space and Railroad Time," 33.

[21] Schivelbusch, 34.

knows only points of departure and arrival."[22] Temporally, the result is the standardization of time across regions and the institution of formal time zones between them. The necessity of coordinating clocks from station to station in order to allow for reliable rail transport erased local variations in time and also contributed to the internalization of a standardized and abstract clock time. As Benjamin reminds us, this internalization and standardization of abstract, quantifiable time is never absolute. Heterogenous fragments may remain, resisting consolidation under the domain of universalized clock time. But it is nonetheless difficult to overstate the significance of this transformation of space and time over the course of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth.

Walser's affinity for walking has often been understood in terms of a rejection of mechanized transport, and indeed there is substantial evidence for such an interpretation of Walser's writings. The short prose piece "Spazieren" (1914), for instance, describes a walk taken by a man named Tobold, who "hätte in die Ferne reisen können, doch er wollte nur in die Nähe wandern." Two reasons are given for Tobold's preference for walking over train travel. First, we are told he is "kein Freund übergroßer Schnelligkeit" (4.76). The second reason is because "der Fußgänger alles so ruhig und reich und frei betrachten kann, während der Eisenbahnfahrer nirgends stehenbleiben und anhalten kann, als gerade exakt nur auf den Bahnstationen" (4.77). Such a position reads as a clear rejection of the need for train travel in order to save time and reach new places. Moreover, it is a celebration of the liminal travel space afforded to the walker, and inaccessible to the rail traveler.

Walser thus indicates an awareness of the fact that differing modes of transportation affect the experience of a landscape. The walker who traverses a valley on foot does not

[22] Schivelbusch, 34-35

experience it as the traveler who rushes through it on a train. As Michel de Certeau argues, this difference here is not merely one of speed, but also the position of the individual in relation to the environment. For de Certeau the windowpane and the rail are the "two complementary modes of separation" characteristic of train travel. "The first creates the spectator's distance" and the "second inscribes, indefinitely, the injunction to pass on."[23] The train traveler is both visually separated from the world and unrooted from it, unable to belong to it.

Reading "Spazieren," it would be easy to understand Walser as a critic of modernity, recognizing these deleterious effects of new technology. But despite the opposition between walking and mechanized transport that Walser voices in many of his writings, he is, as Anne Fuchs notes, very much "under the spell of modern speed politics."[24] There is then a deep ambivalence in Walser's attitude toward mechanized transport. Indeed, the desire to waste neither space nor time is provocatively misaligned with the annihilation of space and time wrought by rail travel. The desire not to waste space—that is, to preserve liminal travel space, to make the most of the landscape—is frustrated by the railroad even as it serves the desire to avoid wasting time.

In "Eisenbahnfahrt," a short prose piece from 1920, Walser does more than simply recognize the increased efficiency of the railroad for reaching a destination. Here Walser echoes many of de Certeau's critques of train travel, but rather than seeing it as a form of "incarceration"—as de Certeau does—Walser's narrator takes a peculiar pleasure in the very same phenomenon. Walser's first-person narrator sits on train that speeds through its

[23]Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 112.

[24] Anne Fuchs, *Precarious Times: Temporality and History in Modern German Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019), 105.

surroundings, providing a continuous stream of images to be viewed and enjoyed. Rather than merely a means of connecting two places, the train ride is a pleasure in itself.

> Keiner kam auch nur eine Minute aus der Zufriedenheit heraus. Draußen erschienen bald Brücken, bald Berge, bald ein Hotel, bald ein Schul- oder Kranken- oder sonstiges Haus. Die Sonne lächelte. O wie doch alles leicht und lieb und heiter war. (16.104)

While Walser often decries hastiness, such as in the passage from "Spazieren," here Walser voices no complaint. Indeed, rather than a break from the perceptual experience of walking, the same stream of images that that characterize Walser's walking texts is reproduced, only at a greater speed. He even ends the paragraph with a double conjunction, the first two conjuncts of which are alliterative ("leicht und lieb und heiter"), the same structure he uses in "Spazieren" to describe the walk ("so ruhig und reich und frei").

This pleasure associated with train travel does not arise in spite of the apparent annihilation of space and time, but because of it. The story begins with the narrator's confession that he did not know the destination of this train ride. Rather than a mere lapse of memory, it becomes clear that this uncertainty is central to the joy of riding. When he asks another passenger where he is going (a question that itself reinforces the uncertainty of the destination), the response he receives is "Ich kümmere mich um kein Ziel. Irgendwo wird's anhalten, dann werd' ich aussteigen, und das übrige wird sich finden." The narrator considers this a "präzisen Antwort" which he takes to contain "sowohl Dummheit wie Witz." He accepts the conclusion and goes on to consider the ways in which past and future disappear for the train traveler.

> Niemand war da, der sich ums Kommende und Vergangene sorgte. Die Gegenwart war zu reizend. Was hätte man sich fragen sollen? Es ging und flog fort, über Hügel und Ebenen, durch finstere Tunnels, durch lachende, liebliche Landschaften und wohl auch über das Meer, in alle Länder. (16.104)

This account of rail travel inverts the perspective of Schivelbusch's argument that the world becomes an endless network of departures and arrivals. In riding the train, the points of departure

and arrival recede into the background leaving only the eternal present of movement, in which there is no past, nor future.[25] "Lust alles, Leid nichts und nur die Behaglichkeit etwas wert, denn nur sie sei's, die dem Ewigen ähnele" (16.105). As a result of this eternal present, the train passenger is nowhere at all, especially in a world in which what it means to be somewhere is to be at one of the myriad nexus points of arrival and departure. In no place at all, the train car is also outside of time, resembling an eternity in its perpetual, liminal motion.

In comparison to train travel, walking is decidedly temporal, rooted in the steadily oscillating steps of forward movement. But that time is one that is fundamentally at odds with the hustle and bustle of daily life as Walser repeatedly reminds us, contrasting his walkers to the hurried pedestrians that pass them by. Walking, when undertaken in the leisurely manner characteristic of Walser, functions as a recovery of those in between spaces annihilated by rail travel, a remaining point of access to the heterotopic in a world in which space, like time, seems to become one unified field. But as the analogies between the perceptual experience of train travel and the perceptual experience of walking show, in Walser's work, the two forms of movement are perhaps less opposed than they first appear. It thus makes sense to view the heterotopic and heterochronic potential of his walks not in opposition to railways, but as fundamentally inflected by them.

This relationship between train travel and walking is not unique to Walser. Even as it destroyed the experience of spaces in between, the railroad also plays an instrumental role in the history of walking. By making accessible places that had been previously too far away from places of residence, new parks and pathways for walking become available to a larger portion of

[25] Samuel Frederick makes a similar claim about the narrative structure of Walser's prose that even in texts like *Der Spaziergang,* in which there is a beginning, middle, and end, these temporal designations "are merely markers; their functionality has been neutralized." Frederick, *Narratives Unsettled*, 63.

the population. No longer confined to the cities in which an increasing number of people now lived, walkers were able to explore scenic natural areas—or at least those natural scenic areas designated as such by their proximity to a train station—and still be able to return home in time for supper. Indeed, as Gudrun M. König argues, the rise in popularity of walking as a leisure activity in the late eighteenth century is dependent on a previous separation between human society and nature. The desire to go out into the natural world and be revitalized by that experience only makes sense in a world in which people feel themselves cut off from nature.[26] Rail travel, by destroying the spaces in between, both furthers this separation from natural world while also making sojourns in nature more accessible. But these new spaces opened up for walkers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are, by the very fact of their accessibility via train, no longer spaces in between. Locales for walking become just one more point of arrival and departure in an ever more expansive network of rail travel.

This historical development is frequently reflected in Walser's prose, in which train rides are not only taken for their own sake, as was the case in "Eisenbahnfahrt," but as means for reaching a destination in which to walk. One such instance is "Sonntagausflug" from the early 1930s, which traces the entire trajectory of a walk that both begins and ends at the train station. This walk suggests a permutation of the traditional *Rundgang*, in which the stable point of departure and arrival is replaced by a varied and mobile one. This reconfiguration of the walk has implications for both the walker and the landscape through which he walks. At the opening of "Sonntagausflug," the narrator remarks that, "Eine Eisenbahnfahrt frühmorgens hat etwas vielversprechendes" (20.12). While the purpose of the train ride, as becomes clear a few sentences later, is to reach a new location in which to walk, this initial statement is general rather

[26] See Gudrun M. König, *Eine Kulturgeschichte des Spazierganges: Spuren einer bürgerlichen Praktik 1780-1850* (Wien: Böhlau, 1996), 13–15.

than specific. The narrator, as in "Eisenbahnfahrt," seems to know neither where he is going nor why. The promising nature of the train ride is not a desired destination, or even a walk wherever it might take place, but the excitement of the train ride itself, which seems to contain endless possibilities. It is "vielversprechend" in the literal sense of the word, promising a world of possibilities, rather than a means to a specific end.

The indefinite fungibility of the destination has its counterpart in the subject itself. When the narrator does get off the train, it is not so much because he has reached his destination, but because the opportunity to do so presented itself. "Bei einem Städtchen steigt man aus" (20.13). As with most of Walser's walking pieces, this "Städtchen" is not explicitly identified, seemingly interchangeable with myriad other small cities as just one of many points of arrival and departure in a vast network of them. But it is not merely the "Städtchen" that is treated as fungible. The narrative begins with the gnomic statement on the "vielversprechend" nature of train rides and proceeds with several sentences about the experience of viewing the landscape from the train in which the viewing subject is elided. It is only after the arrival at the train station that the first-person pronoun appears. The unrealized possibilities contained in the train ride apply not only to the destination, but the walker himself, who is only concretely materialized upon arrival.

However, it is questionable just how "real" both subject and landscape are. Near the end of the narrative and the walk, the narrator states, "Ich komme mir beinahe in eine Unwirklichkeit vor, wie es Knaben zur Jugendzeit des Lebens geht, die in Ländern, Gegenden leben, die nirgends als in interessanten Büchern existieren" (20.14). These new destinations to which the railway provides access are insubstantial, no more real than the literature-fueled fantasies of children. Fittingly, this imaginative, barely real world is one that is experienced on a Sunday, as

indicated by the title, “Sonntagausflug.” It thus stands spatially removed and yet made accessible by rail travel, while also standing temporally removed from the workweek.

Wasted Space and the Emptiness of Place

If the fundamental thinness of the landscape through which Walser’s narrators pass is the result of the reconfiguration of space and time by rail travel, it might be tempting to think that by refusing to board the train, and simply walking “in die Nähe,” as Tobold does, these effects can be avoided. That is to say, perhaps walking is a means of resisting the transformation of space and time perpetrated by mechanized transit and of experiencing landscapes anew on a human scale. Walser, however, does not allow for any such easy opposition between walking and train travel. Even when Walser’s narrators refuse to board a train, choosing instead to walk in locales that can be reached by foot, they still walk through a world characterized by high-speed and long-distance travel.

Particularly telling in this respect are two short unpublished prose pieces from the early 1930s, both titled “Der Bahnhof.” While clearly distinct pieces, both first-person narrators choose not to board a train, opting instead to walk through the train station “mit der Ruhe eines Unbeteiligten zwischen eilenden Menschen hin und her” (20.73). In perhaps the closest approximation of the *flâneur* we find in Walser’s writings, these narrators walk disinterestedly and seemingly without purpose. Rather than a part of the crowd or the vast network of comings and goings, they fancy themselves outside of the happenings of the train station. And yet, this distinction between the *flâneur* who walks through the train station and those who take part in the system of transportation and commerce for which it is intended, does not stand up to scrutiny.

What draws these narrators to the train station is analogous to what Walser finds pleasurable about riding in a train. It offers them a continuously flowing stream of images to observe: the comings and goings of people and trains, books and fruit for sale, and the advertisements lining the walls depicting distant destinations to which one could travel, but to which Walser's narrators decisively do not. "Während sich Leute teils verabschiedeten dadurch, daß sie sich trennten, teils insofern wiedersahen, als sie vorher mehr oder weniger lange Zeit getrennt gelebt hatten," the narrator of the first piece simply looks through the books for sale at the train station (20.74). But while the narrator emphasizes the difference between himself and those taking part in the comings and goings of the train station, he nonetheless purchases a novel, implicating himself into the very same system of commercial exchange.

Moreover, the avowal of distance and disinterestedness from the happenings of the train station—even if not entirely honest—produces a perspective analogous to that of train travelers towards the world through which they pass, separated by a window. The refusal to take part in train travel and instead view it from the outside reproduces much the same separation from the landscape that we saw in "Eisenbahnfahrt" and in Certeau's description of train travel as a form of incarceration. The only escape would seem to be to get beyond the furthest reaches of this network of trains, a possibility the narrator considers. "Von solchen, die im Coupé nebeneinandersaßen, fuhr der eine nur bis zur nächsten Station, während sich der andere gestand, er verlasse manches Liebe und Teure, sich in ein fremdes Land begebend, vielleicht für immer" (20.74). Here Walser considers the opposite approach to resistance that he himself attempts. Perhaps at the furthest reaches of the train tracks, there is a place where one might go and never come back. But to do so, to abandon oneself to "ein fremdes Land […], vielleicht für immer" is to produce much the same alienation experienced by the train traveler with regards to the

landscape and experienced by Walser's narrators with regards to the train stations through which they walk. Despite passing through it, they do not really belong there, are not really home there.

This apparent homelessness is not the result of a mismatch between a home where Walser's narrators really belong and the landscapes in which they find themselves, but rather in the fundamental thinness of the landscape through which they pass, whether on foot or by train. Indeed, in both train station pieces a real landscape does not seem to be necessary at all. "Plakate erzählen dir, was in aller Herrn Länder Interessantes, Sehenswertes gibt, beispielweise eine alte Stadt, Quais mit Hotelpalästen, einen Berggipfel, eine imposante Kathedrale oder eine Palmenlandschaft mit Pyramiden" (20.76). Rather than experiencing these sites directly by traveling to them, the narrator is content to bask in the commercially mediated images, which set off further imaginative travels in the mind of the narrator. "Ich versuchte mir vorzustellen, wie's mir zu Mut wäre, wenn ich in die weite Welt hinausreisen würde, nach Rußland, Italien oder zu den Schottischen Seen" (20.74). Schivelbusch argues that through the development of rail travel, the world "has become one big department store of landscapes and cities."[27] The places visited by travelers "become ever more similar to the commodities that are part of the same circulatory system."[28] Walser's walks, however, suggest that this mode of consumption through travel has an even curiouser effect. It no longer becomes necessary to travel by train at all.

The imaginative practice that takes place in the "Bahnhof" pieces with the help of advertisements is repeated without such visual aids in Walser's other walking texts. As he writes in "Reisebericht" (1919), "Sollte ich tatsächlich nötig haben, ins Ausland zu fahren und die Welt zu umreisen? Das allzeit lebhafte Spiel meiner Phantasie vermag mir weit mehr zu bieten"

[27] Schivelbusch, 40.

[28] Schivelbusch, 40.

(7.40). Indeed, his walks provide access to the experience of traveling to the furthest reaches of the world. In an unpublished manuscript written contemporaneously with the two train station pieces entitled "Spaziergang," Walser's walker moves through a local forest, but imagines himself in a series of exotic destinations, from Australia to Japan, from Greenland to the Steppe to Columbus's arrival in America, only to conclude his journey in a local *Gasthaus*, in which he enjoys a glass of wine as "Belohnung für ausgestandene Wanderstrapazen und überwundene Geistesschwierigkeiten" (20.85). The mental exertion (here imaginative rather than observational) is treated as equivalent to the physical exertion of walking. There is no reason to board the train at all, for the conjunction of walking and imagination provide environments as exotic as—or even more exotic than[29]— any that could be reached by mechanized transport.[30]

Walser's rejection of the need to travel to distant places is not, in fact, an exaltation of the sufficiency of his local environment, despite the stated preference in "Spazieren" for a walk "in die Nähe" rather than a train ride "in die Ferne." To see this, we might contrast the above passages with Henry David Thoreau's dictum that even in the course of an entire human life, an area with a radius of ten miles "will never become quite familiar to you."[31] For Thoreau, the superfluity of walking further than ten miles from home has to do with the inexhaustible richness of the natural environment. But for Walser, the specificity of the natural environment is almost

[29] As Walser's narrator remarks in "Heroichsche Landschaft" (1931/32), the landscape that he imagines in writing is in fact "sinnreicher" than the real one through which he walks.

[30] In his reading of Gottfried Keller's *Martin Salander*, (1886), John Lyon makes a similar observation about the role of the railway in promoting a sense of national unity in Switzerland. "The railway system in Switzerland paved the way for the unity of a constitutional government: by connecting multiple locales and regions, it helped further a sense of nation as an abstract place that transcended individual locales by requiring a sense of uniformity, both in technology and administration. However, the sense of nation as place engendered by the railway was more of an imagined community (to borrow Anderson's term) and less bound to the real locales in which individuals dwelt. As such, it ultimately weakened the connection to local communities." Lyon, *Out of Place*, 171–72.

[31] Henry David Thoreau, "Walking," in *Walden, the Maine Woods, and Collected Essays & Poems*, ed. Robert F. Sayre and Elizabeth Hall Witherell (New York: Library of America, 2007), 756.

entirely absent. Rather than the particularity of Stifter's forests or Malte's Paris, the space through which Walser walks is just that: limitless space upon which any possible location can be imaginatively projected, especially with the aid of commercially mediated images. This imaginative projection is the uncanny inverse of Samuel Frederick's notion of "walking as collecting." Walking still serves to collect the images required to produce a narrative, as in *Der Spaziergang*, but these images do not arise out of the specificity of a particular environment. Rather, it is the vacuation of such particularity that allows for its literary potential.

Given the thinness and fungibility of Walser's natural environment, it is not surprising that critics have been prompted to ask whether Walser's walking texts are really about walking at all. Rochelle Tobias, for example, argues that *Der Spaziergang* "depicts not a walk but […] the pretense of one to fill the pages of the narrator's notebook."[32] The walking that constitutes the text is, according to her, purely imaginative. The narrator overcomes his writer's block "as soon as he forgets that he writes and imagines, instead, that he is wandering in the hills and valleys surrounding a provincial town […], he suppresses the fact that he is seated at his desk and that his only adventure lies in the pages of his still unfolding text."[33] Tobias is right to emphasize the irreality of Walser's landscapes. But that irreality, I would contend, does not arise because Walser's walkers do not actually walk, but because the specificity of description that would lend these landscapes concrete reality has been emptied out. Place has become mere space.

Walser's apparent alternative to train travel is as much formed by modern transportation as it is in opposition to it. The annihilation of space and time through the ever-expanding railway

[32] Rochelle Tobias, "Walking Is Not Writing: Performance and Poetics in Walser's *Der Spaziergang*," in *"Spazieren muss ich unbedingt": Robert Walser und die Kultur des Gehens*, ed. Annie Pfeifer and Reto Sorg (Paderborn, DE: Wilhelm Fink, 2019), 40.

[33] Tobias, 42.

destroys the concepts of distance and foreignness. The local environment becomes sufficient for even the most intrepid wanderer not because of the inexhaustibility of its natural wonders, as for Thoreau, but because each point of departure and arrival has become almost indistinguishable from any other. Even while walking, space has become a mere "leeres Blatt," like the blank page of paper that serves as both the cause and the marker of the narrator's writer's block in *Der Spaziergang*.

Free Time and the Treadmill Effect

If space is everywhere the same, undifferentiated like the blank sheet of paper, then no matter how fast or slow you might move, it will be as if you were standing still. Movement under such conditions is like walking on a treadmill. This characterization of movement has sometimes been seen as one of the fundamental temporal structures of modernity. I suggested earlier that while the desire not to waste space suggests an opposition to mechanized transport, the desire not to waste time is in fact amenable to it. We have already seen that walking in a world structured by rail travel may not be able to reclaim this wasted space, but the concern with wasted time suggests an analogous problem. As Rebecca Solnit writes, "like most "time-saving" technologies, mechanized transit more often produces changed expectations than free time […], just as the increased speed of factory production did not decrease working hours, so the increased speed of transportation binds people to more diffuse locales rather than liberating them from travel time."[34] The phenomenon Solnit describes here has sometimes been termed the treadmill effect. Technologies that purport to save time do no such thing; they merely increase the expectations of productivity such that the perpetual forward motion of productivity and progress

[34] Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001), 258–59.

remains at an apparent standstill for the walker who, as if suspended on a treadmill, comes no closer to the freedom which stands as the apparent goal of the forward motion.

Solnit's account of the treadmill effect has two significant implications for the function of walking in Walser's work. First, it articulates a conception of free time analogous to the concept of liminal travel space as described by Schivelbusch. As she writes,

> The multiplication of technologies in the name of efficiency is actually eradicating free time by making it possible to maximize the time and place for production and minimize the unstructured travel time in between. New timesaving technologies make most workers more productive, not more free, in a world that seems to be accelerating around them. Too the rhetoric of efficiency around these technologies suggests that what cannot be quantified cannot be valued—that the vast arrays of pleasures which fall into the category of doing nothing in particular, of woolgathering, cloud-glazing, wandering, window-shopping, are nothing but voids to be filled by something more definite, more productive, or faster paced.[35]

According to this account of the value of free time, Walser would seem to be the foremost representative of such an approach to life, particularly in his winding, directionless walks. However, as I hope to show, much like Walser's ambivalent relationship to liminal travel space, Walser's apparent valorization of free time is more complicated than it first appears. Second, Solnit's connection between the apparent efficiency achieved by mechanized transit, on the one hand, and mechanized production, on the other, points to the imbrication of labor and movement in Walser's work.

The interrelationship between mechanized transit and mechanized production highlights the status of walking as not merely one form of free time among others, but rather a leisure activity that is directly implicated in the structure of modern temporality. In Moishe Postone's reading of Marx, the treadmill effect characterizes capitalist modernity. Postone's Marxian account of capitalist temporality begins with the distinction between abstract and concrete time.

[35] Solnit, 10.

For Postone, concrete time is characterized by its status as a "dependent variable."[36] It is a measurement of time as constituted by socially significant events, whether astronomical, liturgical, or biological. Abstract time, on the other hand, is a measurement of activity according to uniform, quantifiable, and divisible units of measurement. Crucially, while abstract time remains an independent variable, a measurement by which events are measured, the units of abstract time become themselves socially meaningful. We structure our days and lives according to them. But while abstract time remains constant, the labor it is used to measure does not. "In abstract temporal terms, the social labor hour remains constant as a measure of the total value produced; in concrete terms, it changes as productivity does."[37] Labor time becomes "denser" as the socially necessary labor time for producing an individual commodity decreases. Rather than allowing for more free time, the decrease in socially necessary labor time for the production of an individual commodity also decreases the value of that commodity. As a result, the worker must produce more commodities in order to create the same quantity of value. So, even as workers become more efficient, the total number of hours they must work remains constant. The result of this phenomenon is a "peculiar treadmill pattern" in which "each new level of productivity is redetermined as a new base level."

This analysis of the temporality of capitalist modernity weds two prominent observations about the nature of modern time that arise in critical theory. On the one hand, critics of modernity such as Hartmut Rosa emphasize the continual acceleration of social and technological change as a defining feature of modern life and modern temporality.[38] On the other

[36] Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 201.

[37] Postone, 292.

[38] See Hartmut Rosa, *Social Acceleration*, trans. Jonathan Trejo-Mathys (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

hand, Marxist critics often note the pervasive sense of stasis in capitalist modernity, particularly those influenced by Lukács, "who equates capitalism with static bourgeois relations."[39] Rather than alternative analyses, Postone shows that this temporal duality is at the heart of Marx's account of capitalism: "an ongoing, accelerating flow of history, on the one hand, and an ongoing conversion of this movement of time into a constant present, on the other."[40] It is this temporal duality that inhibits the possibility of genuine free time, or, as Marx calls it, "disposable time."[41]

Marx's notion of "disposable time" gets us closer to the heart of the problem of free time for Walser. Genuine free time is time which might be wasted—that is, not required to conform to a logic of productivity—without guilt. Walser, however, whose narrator in *Der Spaziergang* expresses the desire not to waste time, is perpetually plagued by the guilt of wasting time. In part this preoccupation with using time can be explained by Walser's financial precarity. He did not have the luxury of a life of leisure, and thus even the most frivolous *Müßiggang* had to be justified and reinterpreted according to a logic of usefulness, a tendency that is on full display in the exaggerated monologue at the tax office.

Walser is right to see his walking as a form of work. His writing, which is his primary source of income, is dependent on walking, both as a source for the content of his work and as a model of digression which characterizes his work. Even so, Walser is keenly aware that this form of "work" is distinct from what others must endure. Indeed, Walser's walkers never fail to remark on the difference between themselves and the laborers who they pass by on their ways. In

[39] Postone, 295

[40] Postone, 300.

[41] Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin books, 1993), 708.

Der Spaziergang, the narrator expresses embarrassment for not being counted among these workers.

> Eine arbeitergefüllte und arbeitsreiche Metallgießerei verursacht hier links vom Landschaftsweg auffälliges Getöse. Bei dieser Gelegenheit schäme ich mich aufrichtig, daß ich nur spaziere, wo so viele andere schuften und arbeiten. Ich schufte und schaffe freilich vielleicht dann zu einer Stunde, wo alle diese Arbeiter Feierabend haben und ausruhen. (5.18)

These workers are compelled to work according to the dictates of the punch-clock, a temporal order that structures their life regardless of the efficiency of their machines. No matter how much or little they produce, they must work until the time has come to stop, and then either make use of the money they have earned or simply rest. In contrast, Walser's narrator walks outside of this form of temporal organization. He is not compelled to work when others are, and yet he does work. After he has finished his walk, he will return to the blank sheet of paper he left at his writing desk and will write of his walk after the workers at the foundry have gone home for the day. The walk, rather than avoiding labor or the dictates of clock time, displaces both, reconfiguring the temporal order of the day that most workers are obliged to follow. Walking serves not to escape work and modern temporality, but merely to displace it.

This temporal displacement becomes particularly clear in one of Walser's prose pieces from 1926: "Aus dem Leben eines Schriftstellers." In the middle of the narrative, Walser's narrator writes: "Ich lief gestern acht Stunden, indem mich meine Wirtin wissen ließ, sie sähe einen Mieter nicht sonderlich gern, der nichts täte, als zu Hause sitzen und Skizzen verfassen, wie vorliegende eine sein mag" (18.9). The narrator thus walks in order to maintain an appearance of "Tätigkeit." But in walking for precisely eight hours, he does not merely avoid the gaze of his landlady during his inactivity, but rather performs a reconfiguration of the

standardized working day. He walks, an activity of leisure, but in such a way that it fills the temporal contours of the period that is normally occupied by work.

This reference to the eight-hour working day is no coincidence. This piece, published in 1926, appears in the aftermath of a long, and ultimately successful, labor movement for reduced working hours. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, individual industries conceded to various regulations for the length of the work day, settling on limits of ten to twelve hours per day depending on the location and the type of work, with a continual push on the side of the labor movement for further reductions.[42] The demand for an eight-hour working day was forcefully articulated in 1866 by, among others, Karl Marx and became part of the First International's platform at their Geneva conference.[43] In 1889, the Second International selected May 1 as the date for an international demonstration for, among other demands, the eight-hour working day. Between 1919 and 1920, immediately following the end of World War I, the eight-hour workday becomes law in most sectors in Switzerland through a piecemeal series of legislative changes normalizing the 48-hour work week, consisting of six eight-hour days.

These political developments are by no means settled affairs by the time Walser pens "Aus dem Leben eines Schriftstellers." Even after 1920, the length of the working day remained a topic of contention in Switzerland. In 1924, Swiss voters rejected a proposal to allow for exceptions to the 48-hour work week, permitting up to a 54-hour week in times of an "allgemeinen schweren Wirtschaftskrise," a condition to be evaluated by the Bundesrat.[44] Walser

[42] See Bernard Degen, "Arbeitszeit," Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz, 2015, https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/de/articles/013910/2015-01-21/.

[43] See Karl Marx, "Instruktionen für die Delegierten des Provisorischen Zentralrats zu den einzelnen Fragen" in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Werke* (Berlin: Dietz, 1975), 16:190-199.

[44] See Christian Bollinger, "Die Arbeiterbewegung verteidigt erfolgreich die 48-Stunden-Woche," in *Handbuch der eidgenössischen Volksabstimmungen 1848-2007*, ed. Wolf Linder, Christian Bollinger, and Yvan Rielle (Bern, 2010), 149–50.

is in no way a member of the labor movement and his fascination with arduous, demeaning work, such as that of butlers and servants, is highly ambivalent. Socialists do appear in Walser's novels, *Die Geschwister Tanner* and *Der Gehülfe*, but always at a distance from Walser's protagonists.[45] In these two novels, the protagonists resist the demands of contemporary working conditions through what Paul Buchholz dubs "the quitter's discourse." They quit their jobs through long, extravagant monologues, which "provide a chance to renarrate and reframe economic relationships," establishing "a wishful counter-reality."[46]

Buchholz argues that the "quitter's discourse" ultimately does not provide a solution for social suffering nor a pathway for the abolition of hierarchies. Rather, it demonstrates the "perverse arbitrariness at the heart of all social hierarchies."[47] My claim is that Walser's replacement of the working day with an eight-hour walk does something analogous. But instead of addressing the arbitrariness of hierarchy, Walser's displacement of walking, writing, and working lays bare the arbitrariness of the temporal divisions of human life, both abstract clock time and the divisions between working life and so-called "free time."

Leisure as Labor and Labor as Leisure

As a quintessential leisure activity, walking is a particularly apt activity for an analysis of free time. But walking only becomes a leisure activity under particular historical conditions. Since

[45] As Paul Buchholz writes, the socialists in Walser's novel arise through "chance encounters with female friends from long ago, who are (in *The Tanners*) or used to be (in *The Assistant*) socialists. In each case, the protagonist is estranged from the socialist movement, but encounters it as an "old friend," with whom he unexpectedly crosses paths. Socialism is both familiar and distant." Paul Buchholz, "Out of a Job: Giving Notice in The Tanners and The Assistant," in *Robert Walser: A Companion*, ed. Samuel Frederick and Valerie Heffernan (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2018), 137–38.

[46] Buchholz, 134, 133.

[47] Buchholz, 139.

the evolution of bipedal movement, humans have walked out of necessity in order to get to and from various destinations, but to walk for its own sake requires a cultural shift dependent on certain material realities. It is only in the latter half of the eighteenth century that the promenade, long a part of aristocratic culture, becomes widespread among the rising bourgeoisie in the form of the *Spaziergang*.[48] As Rebecca Solnit notes, "there are three prerequisites for going out into the world to walk for pleasure. One must have free time, a place to go, and a body unhindered by illness or social restraint."[49] While each of these prerequisites must be continually negotiated, the emergence and solidification of new economic systems and the increasing safety of intercity travel in the late eighteenth century allow for a cultural transformation of walking from Rousseau to the Romantic wanderers, whereby walking, for at least a certain subset of the population, becomes a respectable and pleasurable use of one's free time.

The existence of such free time depends on two interrelated factors: a sufficiently efficient mode of production such that the entirety of one's day need not be devoted to procuring life's necessities, and a clear demarcation between the parts of the day and of the week devoted to work and those times which are free for individuals to use as they please. As the struggle for the eight-hour working day demonstrates, such a configuration is no small accomplishment. But Marxist critics have repeatedly called into question just how 'free' such free time really is. In a characteristically dialectical fashion, Adorno rejects the emancipatory power of free time as yet another iteration of the culture industry.

> Free time is shackled to its opposite. Indeed the oppositional relation in which it stands imbues free time with certain essential characteristics. What is more, and far more importantly, free time depends on the totality of social conditions, which continues to

[48] Gudrun M. König highlights two aspects of this development. One is the opening up of parks and gardens to the public. The other is the development of free time and a cultural shift by which the publicly visible use of that free time becomes socially acceptable and even valuable. See König, *Eine Kulturgeschichte des Spazierganges*.

[49] Solnit, 168.

> hold people under its spell. Neither in their work nor in their consciousness do people dispose of genuine freedom over themselves.[50]

Adorno's concern here is that what he calls "the hobby ideology" commodifies what is originally "a protest against the tedium and conventions of bourgeois life," reintegrating it into the very society from which it was trying to distance itself.[51] Moreover, this attitude towards free time imbues it with the same need for productivity as the working day, turning what was meant to be time for rest and respite into yet another domain for maximizing productivity. "In a system where full employment itself has become the ideal, free time is nothing more than a shadowy continuation of labour."[52]

Adorno's critique of hobby culture is, in many ways, a return to Schlegel's praise of *Müßiggang*. For Adorno, as for Schlegel, the necessity of being active in one's free time, making use of time rather than just allowing it to pass, inhibits the development of imagination, which Adorno takes to be necessary for genuine freedom. "The lack of imagination which is cultivated and inculcated by society renders people helpless in their free time. The impertinent question of what people should do with the vast amount of free time now at their disposal—as if it was a question of alms and not human rights—is based upon this very unimaginativeness."[53] The constant need to occupy oneself, inhibits the free play of the faculties, rendering individuals incapable of using the free time available to them for anything but another occupation.

Certainly, the aimlessness of Walser's walks prevents their transformation into a "hobby," and the seemingly unstoppable flow of thoughts that arise in long, winding sentences

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[50] Theodor W. Adorno, "Free Time," in *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, ed. J. M. Bernstein, trans. Gordon Finlayson and Nicholas Walker (London: Routledge, 2001), 187.

[51] Adorno, 190.

[52] Adorno, 194.

[53] Adorno, 192-193.

through walking would seem to be indicative of precisely the free play of the faculties lauded by Adorno and Schlegel. And yet these thoughts are recorded in writing so that Walser may earn a living. Indeed, it is even the case that these walks are undertaken for precisely this purpose, so that he might procure the raw material for his writing. It would be wrong, therefore, to characterize Walser's *Müßigang* as a simple rejection or repudiation of work. Rather, Walser's walks are a preparation for work, work in the form of writing which will take place after hours as it were, itself returning to and recapitulating the walk that preceded it and provided its content, but also its own sort of work characterized by the extractive production of memories.

This association between writing and work goes beyond the use of writing to make money. By 1927 at the latest, Walser had begun employing a method of writing he called the "Bleistiftsystem." By writing in pencil with a miniscule Sütterlin script on various scraps of paper, he was apparently able to overcome the writer's block that plagued him. This form of writing can be linked to his walking, for it allowed his thoughts to flow and meander in a way they otherwise would not, just as the walk seems to remedy the narrator's writer's block in *Der Spaziergang*.[54] However, this form of writing is not only linked to walking, but also to work. Nathan Taylor suggests that Walser's pencil method can be understood as a derivation of the form of writing characteristic of the clerical bookkeeping by which Walser was intermittently employed. According to Taylor's reading, Walser's writing "originates not in the idleness or passivity of non-work," as Schlegel or Adorno would have it, "but in the performance imperative of the comptoir; this is a clerical literature that coopts the form of work for a poetic activity that

[54] Rochelle Tobias makes a similar claim. "Writing with a pencil as opposed to a pen freed his hand, and the evident pleasure he took in the physical act of writing simultaneously rekindled his inner "Schriftstellerlust." Similarly, in *Der Spaziergang*, it would seem that the act of walking inspires the narrator to write, to move his hand across the page after having moved his body through space in an apparently aimless stroll." Tobias, 40.

otherwise is not sanctioned as proper performance."[55] Walser is thus actively concerned with performance (*Leistung*) but succeeds in writing precisely through his misperformance (*Fehlleistung*), or his misapplication of the tools of work.

In considering this relationship between writing and working, as well as between walking and working as mediated through writing, it becomes clear that Walser's decision to perform "Tätigkeit" by walking eight hours a day, replacing the normal workday with a leisure activity, is just such a misperformance. But rather than becoming emancipated from the structure of writing as work or the strictures of the eight-hour workday, Walser's narrators demonstrate a marked anxiety about the status of their writing and their walking as work. Unlike Schlegel's *Müßiggänger*, who revel in their idleness, Walser's walkers seem to be constantly preoccupied by their (lack of) productivity. In "Aus dem Leben eines Schriftstellers," the narrator concludes the piece by remarking, "Ich bin tätiger, als es den Anschein hat," a statement that occurs not only after spending the day walking instead of working, but also after reporting, "Ich lese gegenwärtig einen sehr geschmackvoll geschriebenen Roman" (18.10). The narrator is at pains to represent his leisure activities (walking and novel reading) as forms of *Tätigkeit*.

This preoccupation with occupation is even more evident in "Ich soll arbeiten," another short prose piece from 1926. In this story, Walser's narrator is confronted on the street by a "Mitbürger," who tells him, "Sie sollen arbeiten. […]. Man sieht Sie häufig flanieren, was sich nicht gut ausnimmt" (17.76). This accusation presents an equation familiar from Stifter's *Die Mappe meine Urgroßvaters* and Rilke's *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge*: time spent walking is time that could have been spent writing.[56] But in Walser's case, even the writing

[55] Nathan Taylor, "The Value Form: Economies of Prose in Tieck, Walser, and Keller" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 2017), 157–58.

[56] Similar remarks appear in "Walser über Walser" (1925) and "Wissen und Leben" (1926/27).

is suspect. As another character tells the narrators later in the piece, "Andere Schriftsteller füllen irgendwie Lücken aus, Sie aber schriftstellern bloß zu ihrem Vergnügen" (17.78). Even if some writing accomplishes something by filling in gaps, Walser's, apparently, does not. Enjoyed purely for its own sake, it seems to be merely a leisure activity. But of course, Walser's writing was his primary source of income, as paltry as it may have been, whether in the form of clerical work or his published writings, and as Taylor argues, these two forms of writing may not be all that far apart.

More than off-handed comments, the preoccupation with the lack of an acceptable occupation is built into the structure of "Ich soll arbeiten," as is evident from its composition history. The piece derives from at least three separate sketches in the microscripts, which were stitched together and edited down in order to form the published version.[57] To an even greater degree than in the final version, in the microscripts, the narrator seems plagued by thoughts of his own unproductivity. The published version of the text retains a comment which the narrator says to himself after the man who criticizes him walks away. "Also arbeiten soll ich? Aber das sage ich mir täglich selbst" (17.77). But in the microscript containing this encounter, the narrator returns to it twice more. On the surface, the three microscripts have little in common and the resulting piece is rather disjointed, but what seems to hold all three together is this preoccupation with both the quantity and quality of work. In addition to the reproach that Walser's narrator writes only for his own "Vergnügen" in the third microscript, both the first and the third contain comparisons to Paul Verlaine. In the first, the narrator bristles at being compared to him, "Gewisse Leute sind hingegangen und haben gesagt, ich sei kein richtiger Paul Verlaine, als ob

[57] See the editorial comments on this piece in Robert Walser, *Aus dem Bleistiftgebiet*, ed. Bernhard Echte and Werner Morlang, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985), 2:475.

ich je irgendwann versprochen hätte, mich zu einem Verlaine auszubilden."[58] Then at the end of the final piece, he asks, "Hätte man einem Verlaine alle Tage Vorhaltungen gemacht, Vorträge gehalten und ihn auf Schritt und Tritt korrigiert […]?"[59] Rather than rejecting the comparison, in this latter instance he turns it on its head, proclaiming the unfairness of his treatment.

Notably, many of these references to Walser's lack of "Tätigkeit" and both references to Verlaine are absent in the published version. Instead, we are left with a conclusion that does not appear in any of the original microscripts, in which the narrator writes to "einem Vorwürfe-an-mich-Richtenden" (17.79). The exact nature of the criticism is not explained in the piece, but from the response its general nature is clear enough. He is responding both to those who say he does not work enough and to those that say his work is not good enough. The fact that these criticisms are elided in the final version, however, suggests that it is writing, or indeed work, that functions both to manage and to suppress these internalized reproaches. The need to be productive, and what's more, to produce well, is both what motors Walser's writing and the very thing his writing is attempting to conceal.

Narrative Without Destination

Walser's rejection of labor, and indeed, the very temporal structure of labor and leisure by which human life is structured in modernity is thus unable to escape the demands of efficient productivity. By devoting himself to non-work and refusing to conform his life to the expected temporal structure, he finds that his leisure activities are, as Adorno suspected, "a shadowy

[58] Walser, *Aus dem Bleistiftgebiet*, 2:476.

[59] Walser, *Aus dem Bleistiftgebiet*, 2:487.

continuation of labor."[60] Moreover, he must walk and write faster and faster. He thereby created a remarkably expansive body of work, even as genuinely free time untainted by labor remained elusive. And yet, Walser's resistance to these temporal structures is not a mere failure. Walser's writing is formed by the temporal structures of capitalist modernity as well as his resistance to them, and like all art, it is unable to transcend them entirely. Nonetheless, Walser's writing and his walking demonstrate a particular form of temporal freedom, even if this freedom is always dialectically yoked to the structures out of which it arises.

To understand the form of freedom at stake in Walser's work, Walter Benjamin's observation about Walser makes for a useful starting point. Benjamin notes the seemingly unstoppable flow of linguistic production that characterizes Walser's work: "ein Wortschwall bricht aus, in dem jeder Satz nur die Aufgabe hat, den vorigen vergessen zu machen."[61] I have already argued that this tendency towards concealment, particularly the concealment of the centrality of work, is a structural feature of Walser's prose. We saw a similar drive towards concealment or forgetting in *Der Spaziergang*, in which the movement of the walker and the propulsive momentum of the narrator's linguist acrobatics allow the narrator-walker to forget the travails of writing. This locus of forgetting, however, was coupled with a need to forget not only the struggles of work, but also the pains of unrequited love. In both cases, the dual activities of walking and writing allow for the subject to forget that which came before through these forms of unceasing forward movement, even if it can never be completely forgotten.

That walking plays an equal role to writing in this task of forgetting allows us to expand upon Benjamin's analysis. While Benjamin is certainly right about the capacity of Walser's

[60] In this, Walser anticipates the wry 21st century observation from the folk punk band Wingnut Dishwashers Union: "if you don't want to work, then that becomes your job. There's a lot of overtime, there's not many days off."

[61] Benjamin, "Robert Walser," 2:326.

prose to make one forget, the centrality of walking shows us that it is not merely words which give it this capacity. As I have argued, the restructuring of spatiotemporal relations as a result of mechanized transport has a mnemonic effect, one that can be witnessed clearly in Walser's writing. After all, the narrator is plagued by memories both in his "Schreib, oder-Geisterzimmer" and at the lakeshore where he ends his walk. In *Der Spaziergang*, then, place retains something of a mnemonic effect. It has not yet been entirely standardized into uniform and undifferentiated space. And yet, neither of these places in particular are described as possessing a unique power to provoke memories. Statis, rather than the specificity of place, causes these memories to return. By walking, he is able to outpace these thoughts and banish them from his mind, and it is by walking that he is able to write. But as soon as the writing and walking cease, memories return.

Given this function of memories in *Der Spaziergang*, I would like to argue that the novella occupies an important liminal position in Walser's oeuvre, between his earlier works and his later prose pieces. Walser's narratives are often read as resisting conventional narrative structures, exhibiting instead a "plotless narrativity."[62] However, my reading of *Der Spaziergang* suggests that it may retain more of the structure of a traditional plot than initially appears to be the case. In an almost perfect exemplification of Peter Brooks's narrative theory, the novella's walk is the "dilatory space" postponing the arrival of the inevitable end, the memory of the beloved.[63] This postponement not only drives the narrative by providing the purpose for the walk, but in allowing the narrator to write, drives the other temporal dimension of the novella, the writing itself. None of this is to deny that *Der Spaziergang* exhibits elements of non- or even

[62] Frederick, *Narratives Unsettled*, 172.

[63] Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 18.

anti-narrativity. But whereas Walser's later pieces may do away with any reliance on plot altogether, it persists in *Der Spaziergang*.

My claim is that it is the continued presence of an identifiable beginning and end that differentiates *Der Spaziergang* from Walser's late prose. Over the course of the 1920s, Walser's writing does not merely become more syntactically complex as the coordinates of beginning and end are slowly eroded. *Der Spaziergang* already exhibits a disjunction between temporal frames, differentiating it from the simultaneity of walking and writing in "Sonntagmorgen." In *Der Spaziergang*, however, both the position of the narrator and that of the walker are reflexively related to one another. In contrast, "Spaziergang im Park" (1929) describes a walk which branches out into a series of disjunctive possibilities of which seemingly none is preferred and yet all are realized narratively.[64] "Das Mädchen zog den Park an ihr Herz, wie einen zierlichen Geliebten, aus Idealländern und -zeiten herrührend, oder sie verwandelte das Wasser, auf dem ein Schwann schwamm, in einen Fingerring oder in ein hübsches, sehenswertes Armband, oder sie ging in ein Garten- oder Lusthäuschen hinein" (20.128). The proliferation of possibilities is directly linked to a problem of beginnings. In the first sentence of the narrative, the narrator is uncertain how to begin the story: "Kaum weiß ich, wie ich eine Geschichte anfangen soll, die vielleicht handlungslos abläuft" (20.127). Despite this uncertainty, the narrator chooses the most conventional of opening for his second sentence: "Es war einmal ein Mädchen, das in einem Park spazierging." But by displacing this overly convention opening to the second sentence, Walser's narrator ironically highlights the instability of the beginning, the result of which seems to be a concomitant instability of the narrative, pursuing multiple incompatible threads simultaneously.

[64] As Samuel Frederick writes of the story, it is a "rogue digression," a digression from a digression in which there is "no single dominant narrative strand." Frederick, *Narratives Unsettled*, 6.

The narrator's reference to a plotless story connects this narrative to the autopoetological statement in "Eine Art Erzählung," in which Walser suggests that all of his prose pieces are "nichts anderes als Teile einer langen, handlungslosen, realistischen Geschichte" (20.322). "Spaziergang im Park" is perhaps best conceived as an exemplar of this ideal in miniature, even if as a third-person narrative, it is no "Ich-Buch." Walser's poetic aim of a "mannigfaltig zerschnittenes oder zertrenntes Ich-Buch" is by definition impossible to realize in a single narrative. It can only be achieved through the conjunction of all his prose pieces. Nonetheless, the text that comes closest to expressing that ideal is the so-called *Tagebuch Fragment von 1926*. While the text was unpublished and untitled during Walser's life, the fact that in addition to composing the text uninterruptedly in the microscripts, he also copied a version of it in pen spanning 53 pages, suggests that he intended it for publication.[65] At that length, it is the longest single text from the microscripts with the exception of his unpublished novel, *Der Räuber*. Like "Spaziergang im Park," the text consists of multiple narrative threads, as the narrator acknowledges at the end of the text.

> Ich darf jedenfalls feststellen, daß ich von Neuem oder Frischem band und knüpfte, was bereits aussah, als falle es auseinander. Mir scheint, es sei mir gelungen, den Faden gewissermaßen wieder in die Hand zu bekommen, der sich mir vorübergehend entwand. (18.110)

Even this partial ("gewissermaßen") profession of success is debatable. Rather than any single narrative, the text consists of a variety of narrative threads, and perhaps more prominently a continuing, but also non-unitary, metafictional commentary on the act of narration. According to Samuel Frederick, the result is a series of "parallel running lines" which prevent "any kind of

[65] See Lucas Marco Gisi, ed., *Robert Walser Handbuch* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2015), 193–94.

structural hierarchy or the formation of anything but arbitrary connections."[66] If so, there can be no successful tying together of these threads, just an arbitrary end to their narration.

The lack of an end to hold the narrative together is part of what makes Walser's late prose so exhilaratingly playful. This lack of an end is also what sets Walser's late prose apart from his earlier work, which, even as it explores aspects of non-narrativity, retains some concept of an end, as is the case in *Der Spaziergang*. With no definite object (the beloved, the need to write, the need to work) to drive on the narrative, the narrative of Walser's late prose seems to become self-perpetuating. It is for this reason that Samuel Frederick argues that Walser's prose "shows how narrative might be freed from plot, just like desire might be freed from being transfixed by the single object."[67] Similarly, Erica Weitzman reads Walser's narrative prose as taking "pleasure as its own justification."[68]

There is certainly something emancipatory about this form of narrative freedom, but it is nonetheless a freedom that arises in response to and is conditioned by a restructuring of space and time. After all, even if Walser's late prose lacks a definitive narrative end, it is nonetheless propelled by a need to work and to be productive. Like a logic of productivity, however, this need to work has become decoupled from the need to produce any specific object. As the treadmill effect shows, any increase in productivity or efficiency of movement will not result in greater free time. The length of the workday will not be decreased on account of an attained quota; those quotas will simply be increased. The need to be productive thus no longer functions

[66] Frederick, *Narratives Unsettled*, 81.

[67] Frederick, 61.

[68] Erica Weitzman, *Irony's Antics: Walser, Kafka, Roth, and the German Comic Tradition* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2015), 93.

as a definite end (the need to produce something) but rather a perpetual, inescapable mode of being.

Aristotle's distinction between kinesis and energeia offers one way to understand this shift from a desire to produce to a desire to be productive. While both kinesis and energeia are forms of activity, kinesis is characterized by a definite end, which is lacking in the case of energeia. Aristotle's primary examples of energeia are pleasure and happiness (eudaimonia), which, as he says, are "complete at any given moment."[69] One of Aristotle's recurring examples of kinesis is walking. As he sees it, one walks in order to reach a definite goal, and once that goal has been reached, the walking ceases. What Walser's approach to writing and walking suggests is, however, is a reclassification of both activities. Walser does not write to create a finished product, just as he does not walk in order to reach any destination. Both walking and writing become forms of energeia for Walser, complete at every moment, and therefore no longer capable of being organized according to means and ends, narrative beginnings and conclusions. This condition underlies both the freedom of Walser's prose and its inescapable connection to the temporal structure of work in modernity.

Walking across the Blank Page

There is one final element of the narrative freedom to be found in Walser's prose that needs to be discussed. As I have argued, part of what motors Walser's prose is the need to work, a need that can no longer be conceptualized as a finite need that might eventually be satisfied. It is instead a

[69] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Robert C. Bartlett and Susan D. Collins (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 217. The applicability of Aristotle here is no accident, especially in the context of Marxist analyses of time. As Henry Pickford argues, Marx's understanding of production is clearly rooted in Aristotelian thought. See Henry Pickford, "Poiêsis, Praxis, Aisthesis: Remarks on Aristotle and Marx," in *Aesthetic Marx*, ed. Samir Gandesha and Johan F. Hartle (London: Bloomsbury academic, 2017), 23–48.

perpetual desire towards which he must always and everywhere strive. And yet, at least in *Der Spaziergang*, this need does exist as a concrete, definite object, which haunts him and prompts him to walk, namely the blank page which he is unable to fill. While I have suggested that we can read this definite end coupled with the memory of unrequited love as the last remnants of a definite narrative end around which this narrative is structured, this "leeres Blatt" also anticipates the narrative freedom that Walser's late prose will explore. More than merely a source of anxiety representing the failure to be productive, the blank page also realizes completely and in miniature the featureless, undifferentiated world which comes into being through mechanized transport, and through which Walser and his narrators walk, even when they refuse to board the train. Herein lies yet another connection between walking and writing, whereby the movement of the pencil across this featureless environment mirrors the perambulatory movement through it.

In this way, the blank page and the undifferentiated environment are perhaps nothing new. They are simply the latest, and most extreme iterations of the tendency to be found in Stifter's snow and the paved surfaces of Malte's Paris. If Walser's prose more completely emancipates itself from the traditional structures of novelistic narration, then it is as a result of walking through an environment increasingly lacking in defined contours by which to orient oneself. There is no definite direction to the narrative because there is no differentiated environment in which such a direction could be found. The irony of Walser's extractivist tendency—by which he must walk so as to extract content from the environment about which to write—is that it takes place in a world made uniform. It is no wonder then that Walser's stories are often "contentless," for the content he collects in order to write is precisely a world without clear definition, allowing him to engage in increasingly radical linguistic play. The final irony of the blank page, however, is that in traversing it with the pencil, it is no longer blank. Like snow

and pavement, this uniform, undifferentiated surface is a fragile one. Benjamin may be right that each sentence makes us forget the last, but these marks on the page remain, even on scraps of paper covered in a barely decipherable script.

Walser recognizes this tension. The *Tagebuch Fragment von 1926*, one of Walser's most temporally complicated texts, begins with a clear purpose:

> Heute machte ich ein nettes, kleines, nur geringfügiges und -ausdehniges Spaziergängelchen, trat in eine Lebensmittelhandlung und sah darin ein nettes Mädchen von gleichsam auch nur geringer Größe in sichtlich bescheidener Haltung stehen. Auf dem Spaziergang überlegte ich mir ein wenig, mit was für Worten ich eine Arbeit zu beginnen haben würde, die ich hier niederschreiben anfange, und deren Niederschrift ich voraussichtlich etwa zwanzig Tage lang beschäftigen wird. Während dieses Zeitumfangs werde ich also ziemlich emsig sein, nicht ohne mir dann und wann eine Ruhepause zu gönnen, womit ich sagen will, daß mich dieses »Journal« hier in keiner Weise überanstrengen wird. (18.59)

A walk prompts the desire to write a text that he will begin writing later that same day and plans to complete in some twenty days. We thus have an approximation of the sort of narrative unity between walking and writing that we saw in "Sonntagmorgen." Furthermore, we have a clear designation of the writing of this text as a sort of work to be separated from leisure time, even if it is a form of work that should not overtax the narrator. This narrative and temporal order, however, soon falls apart, most notably on an evening walk. The narator remarks that yesterday he went on an "Abendspaziergang" but the designation of "gestern" is no longer a clear temporal marker. Having proceeded onward from the beginning of the text, the composition of which is supposed to last twenty days, the reader is no longer clear on which day this sentence was written, nor how to situate the evening when the walk took place in relationship to the course of the narrative. The temporal delineation becomes even murkier when, while walking through these woods, the narrator writes, "wie ich so in diesem reizenden Spitzen- oder Garniturhaften umherging, fielen mir frühere Gänge durch andere Wälder ein, wovon ich vielleicht noch reden

werde, sobald der passende Anlaß da sein wird, was bald der Fall sein kann" (18.72). But no such walks are forthcoming. The narrator instead becomes distracted by a boy, who he will "noch nicht erwähnen," but rather "aufsparen."[70]

This "Abendspaziergang" retains the power to call forth memories, but these memories are neither temporally nor spatially rooted in the present walk, referring only to an indefinite past in an indefinite setting. Nor do these memories lead to their rightful narration, but rather are cut off from being narrated because they provoke other thoughts that also are never to be fully articulated. While the narrator and the reader may both take pleasure in this perpetual deferment—and, we may presume, the author as well—this narrative structure is rooted not merely in the emancipation from the confines of plot, but also in a concrete form of spatial and temporal displacement, a condition that the narrator comes to describe as die "braunen Wälder des Meiner-nicht-sicher-Seins, des Unentschlossenseins" through which he walks (18.106). In a clause embedded in a long, winding sentence, characteristic of Walser's prose, the narrator characterizes this period of time accordingly: "in diesen bereits mehrmals erwähnten Tagen, die soeben an meinem Ich vorübergingen, indem sie Spuren, Falten, Einschnitte, usw. in meinem Wesen hinterlassen zu haben scheinen" (18.108). While the continuously flowing prose refuses to pause on this observation, it is worth doing so as a reader. In a text characterized by the free flow of multiple narrative and temporal strands—that is in which time does not appear to pass according to any definite temporal parameters—the narrator nevertheless bears the marks of time's passing: traces, wrinkles, and even incisions.

The complete freedom from preordained temporal structures would seem to be a paradoxical desire, for in traversing the uninhibited expanse of the blank page marks are left

[70] This phenomenon of introducing an idea or an event only for the narrator to state that he doesn't want to talk about it yet despite that the fact that he already has also occurs at the beginning of "Einmal erzählte Einer" (1931).

behind, both on the page and on the subject who makes those marks. While any account of the last decades of Walser's life must inevitably stray into the territory of speculation, perhaps it is precisely this feature of writing that ultimately led him to stop. After being transferred to the asylum in Herisau in 1933, Walser apparently wrote no more, or, at the very least, left no more writing behind.[71] And yet, he continued to walk, even up to the day he died while taking a walk on Christmas day. Perhaps Walser realized that writing—even in a narrative mode that defied any conformity to plot—retained the semblance of a definite end, the piece of paper covered by words that would be produced at the end of the process. Perhaps even these almost unidentifiable scraps of paper made writing too much of a kinetic activity, inescapably tied to the production of a definite object, just as factory workers are stuck in a perpetual series of kinetic activities, even as they bring them no closer to freedom.[72] Perhaps walking without the need to then reproduce the walk in narrative form after the fact can prevent the extractivist project of using the environment as a site to gather memories and content for writing. Perhaps simply walking in a way such that each step was complete at every moment, rather than being trapped in a series of ends, provided the freedom that writing in even its most temporally non-conformist form could not.

[71] Bernofsky notes that staff members of the asylum at Herisau do claim to have witnessed Walser write, but there is no trace of what may have become of these writings. Thus, even if he did continue to write, Walser did so "privately, subtracting this activity from the general economy of literary production." Susan Bernofsky, *Clairvoyant of the Small: The Life of Robert Walser* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021), 304.

[72] In his analysis of Aristotle's influence on Marx and its implications for aesthetics, Henry Pickford considers some alternative forms of aesthetic production that would avoid this trap. Pickford, "*Poiêsis*, *Praxis*, *Aisthesis*: Remarks on Aristotle and Marx." We may assume that Walser was either unable to imagine such alternatives or if he did, found them wanting.

EPILOGUE: W.G. SEBALD AND THE LONG ARC OF UNTIMELINESS

To progress is to walk forward, or so our Indo-European languages would suggest. The English term *progress*, like most of its equivalents in the Romance languages, derives from the Latin *progredior*, to walk onwards. The same construction underlies the German *Fortschritt*. As the walks which structure the narratives of Stifter, Rilke, and Walser show, however, walking forward does not always mean progress. After all, to walk in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is to walk along paths that have always already been walked. In so far as they are framed in terms of walking, naïve theories of progress—much like the Romantic wanderer—tend to view walking as movement towards a new and better place at which we have not yet arrived. In contrast, the walkers that populate this dissertation have no such conviction. For them, walking is a disorienting experience, and they sometimes want nothing more than to stop. Moreover, in attempting to overcome the disorienting nature of the landscapes they traverse, these walkers often find that they themselves are implicated in the very reconfigurations of the environment that make it so disorienting in the first place. Put another way, the untimeliness of walking, of the landscape, of the individuals who walk through it, and of the narratives that recount these walks are all bound up with each other and all impede the form of forward walking imagined by notions of progress.

Nonetheless, the trajectory of this dissertation does suggest a form of development over time, even if that development cannot properly be called progress. Specifically, we see a shift in the way in which the past is preserved in the landscape and accessed by walking. In Stifter, it is

precisely the persistence of memory that poses a problem. While, for Stifter, memory represents an essential bulwark against the dissolution of family, tradition, and community, the material remnants of the past that have been left behind by previous generations create a heterogeneous and disorienting temporal landscape. For all its ambivalence, memory in Stifter's work is still rooted in the particularities of places and landscapes that bear the traces of the past. The memory that characterizes the urban modernity of Rilke's Malte, by contrast, is explicitly dislocated from the places that evoke these memories, but in emphasizing this dislocation, Rilke maintains a spatial characterization of memory at the point of its dissolution. In this, Walser suggests the logical conclusion of this development, the point at which space, having become undifferentiated through mechanized transportation, no longer possesses the mnemonic specificity that made walking so important for understanding the character of memory. In an ironic turn, this increasing dislocation of memory and the mnemonic deterioration of place almost produce a landscape akin to the desired goal of progress: a place freed from paths that have always already been walked, much like the ones incompletely intimated by Stifter's snow and the paved roads of Malte's Paris. While this tendency can be clearly recognized across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it would be wrong to infer that the persistence of the past in the landscape has been entirely effaced, just as it would be wrong to believe that if it had, this would be a sign of genuine progress. To see why this is the case, I wish to conclude with a brief consideration of the work of W.G. Sebald.

Sebald makes for a fitting continuation of the trajectory of this dissertation. Indeed, he self-consciously positions himself in this literary lineage, as the many references in both his literary and scholarly work to Stifter and Walser attest. Rilke's presence in Sebald's writing is perhaps more muted, but as Eric Santner persuasively suggests, "in some ways *Malte* is more

important for understanding Sebald's project than the work of many of the other writers whom critics have named in their efforts to locate Sebald in a literary tradition or genealogy."[1] Like all of these authors, Sebald's works are teeming with walkers who come to apprehend the past by walking and feel compelled to make sense of it be retracing it in the form of a written narrative. Given Sebald's preoccupation with his literary heritage, this impulse is only compounded by the overt and frequent referentiality of his writing. Sebald's readers, like his walkers, are thus prompted to search for and piece together the remnants from the past contained in his works.[2] This mnemonic potency, however, is coupled with both a profound sense of loss and an inability to represent the past in a temporally ordered narrative. Indeed, much like Stifter's Ruprecht and Rilke's Brahe, Austerlitz—Sebald's most famous protagonist—is sometimes overcome with the sensation, "als gäbe es überhaupt keine Zeit."[3]

To make sense of Sebald's peculiar position as a writer of memory in the wake of Walser, we would do well to consider both the reliability of memory in Sebald's work and also

[1] Santner, *On Creaturely Life*, 47. Downing makes a similar claim regarding Sebald: "The spectre of Rilke's Paris from *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* (1910) nonetheless is never far off, as indeed it haunts Benjamin's *Berliner Chronik* as well." Eric Downing, *After Images: Photography, Archaeology, and Psychoanalysis and the Tradition of Bildung* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2006), 348, n. 16.

[2] Sebald's writing lends itself to a sort of easter egg hunt for the reader who tries to catch all the subtle references, whether it is the description of a butterfly hunter reminiscent of Vladimir Nabokov in *Die Ausgewanderten* (1992) or the image of Ludwig Wittgenstein's eyes in *Austerlitz*. Sebald's writing prepares the reader to search for these sorts of connections, but in so doing, the reader is placed in much the same position as the walkers in his novels. We are inclined to create a story of intertextual connections that may or may not really be present. In reading *Schwindel. Gefühle.*, for instance, I was struck by the story of a hunter named Schlag, who falls from a "Riese" into a ravine. When they find him, he has frozen to death. His dog is still alive but has gone crazy and must be shot. This conjunction of a deadly fall from a "Riese" into a ravine coupled with the episode with the dog is, for me, unmistakably linked to the death of the colonel's wife in Stifter's *Die Mappe meines Urgroßvaters*. She too falls from a "Holzriese," dies from the fall, and her dog survives but must be shot because it has gone crazy. But while this connection is unmistakable to me, the strangeness of it, the slightly changed details, and the fact that it has gone unmentioned (to my knowledge) in scholarship makes me doubt myself. Have I simply fabricated a connection that isn't really there? I do not think this is a unique experience. Rather, I want to suggest that Sebald's writing is constructed in such a way so as both to evoke such connections and call them into question.

[3] W. G. Sebald, *Austerlitz* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 2003), 269. Instead of time, Austerlitz suggests that there may only be "verschiedene, nach einer höheren Stereometrie ineinander verschachtelte Räume, zwischen denen die Lebendigen und die Toten, je nachdem es ihnen zumute ist, hin und her gehen können."

the changing nature of the landscapes through which his narrators walk and the subject's relationship to them. With regards to the first of these considerations, Walser does not merely represent a historical and literary reference point for Sebald, but also a peculiar case of memory. As he writes in his essay on Walser, "Le promeneur solitaire," when looking at photos of Walser on his walks, Sebald is "unwillkürlich immer" reminded of his grandfather. "Sehe ich diese Spaziergängerbilder an, […] dann glaube ich jedesmal, den Großvater vor mir zu haben," he writes, even though the photographs of Sebald's grandfather bear strikingly little resemblance to Walser.[4] The mnemonic function of these images and the purported resemblance is echoed once again in Sebald's first novel, *Schwindel. Gefühle.* (1990). There he describes the hat worn by his friend Ernst Herbeck, "einen Art Trillby, den er später, als es ihm zu warm wurde, abnahm und neben sich hertrug, genauso wie mein Großvater das beim sommerlichen Spazierengehen oft getan hatte."[5] This description is accompanied by a cropped photograph of Walser, showing him carrying his hat, but with his face out of frame.

My point here is not to show how pervasive the figure of Walser is in Sebald's writing.[6] Rather, my aim is to show how slippery the memories that populate Sebald's writings really are, despite—or perhaps because of—how evocative they are. Here we see a certain gesture, characteristic of a walker of a certain era, that for Sebald points undeniably to his grandfather, and from his grandfather to Walser, and then back again. But rather than unleashing a flood of memories that allows him to tell a story he previously could not, to find the narrative thread that

[4] W. G. Sebald, *Logis in einem Landhaus: über Gottfried Keller, Johann Peter Hebel, Robert Walser und andere* (Munich: Hanser, 1998), 135–36.

[5] W. G. Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle.* (Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn, 2001), 48.

[6] That much is undeniable, but a comprehensive account of Walser's presence in Sebald's writings would take up far beyond the scope of this project. For a start in that direction, see Lucia Ruprecht, "Pleasure and Affinity in W. G. Sebald and Robert Walser," *German Life and Letters* 62, no. 3 (July 2009): 311–26.

had been lost, these mnemonic permutations undermine the solidity of any narrative. Such associations allow for narrative explanations that are plausible, perhaps too plausible, but that are never quite conclusive. Indeed, it is precisely this associative identification that structures Austerlitz's attempts to make sense of his own life narrative as seen in his identification with the photo of himself as a child and even more so in his strained attempts to identify his mother in an old propaganda film.[7]

While the problem of memory for Sebald is strongly associated with the post-war era, we have seen earlier examples of this phenomenon, most notably in the identification between Heinrich and Sixtus in Stifter's *Narrenburg*. Through this moment of recognition, Heinrich is able to narratively place himself in the Scharnast lineage.[8] But as I have argued, this narrative unification of Heinrich's life into the familial lineage is by no means straightforward. For Heinrich, as well as for Austerlitz and indeed for Sebald himself with the memory of his grandfather, their experiences of mnemonic recognition provide the apparent assurance of a narrative continuity, a sense of familiarity in an unfamiliar world. Far from the security of a settled narrative, however, the tendentious narratives that arise out of these moments of recognition, purportedly situating the present subject in a comprehensible past, are more akin to

[7] As Eric Downing writes, as a result of the medium of photography, "Authentic memory is being erased, replaced by inauthentic simulacra, and no longer securely fixed in the subject's own psyche, and along with memory is going all secure sense of the self and of a narrative that might fix that self." Downing, *After Images*, 296. What's less clear is the degree to which Sebald as the author—or as the subject who relates to the memory of his grandfather through photographs of Robert Walser—is simply a victim of this loss of authentic memory or is actively constructing a literary world in which this loss is palpable. That it is to say, it is unclear (to me, at least) whether this registering of the inauthenticity of memory is genuine or a calculated poetic construction designed to be read and interpreted by literary critics like us.

[8] Jessica Resvick links this moment of recognition to the scene in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* in which Heinrich recognizes himself in the book written in Provencal that he finds underground that. Jessica Resvick, "Picturesque Mediations: Adalbert Stifter, Washington Irving, and the Transfiguration of the Mundane," *PMLA/Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 137, no. 5 (October 2022): 841–56. In the context of this dissertation, we might also contrast this scene of recognition with Malte's failure to recognize himself in the mirror as a child while dressed in girl's clothing.

the provisional mastery of the child over his mother's departure through the *fort-da* game. The recursive nature of this narrative structure becomes apparent on Heinrich's wedding day, when, instead of speaking to his wife, he thinks about Chelion, and when, in leading his new wife into their chambers, their walk is characterized as a repetition of the one taken by Jodok and Chelion. Far from a final conclusion to the exploits of the Scharnasts or a path forward from the ceaseless repetition of foolishness, Heinrich's story suggests yet another iteration.[9]

For Heinrich, as for Sebald, this problem of narrative and memory is always also a problem of walking. While the portrait of Sixtus is the centerpiece of Heinrich's recognition that he belongs to the Scharnast lineage, that moment is not a singular event. In fact, as Heinrich walks through the Narrenburg, he is gradually overcome with the sense that he belongs there, that his steps both continue and repeat those of his ancestors. By the time he has read Jodok's narrative, this realization has become overwhelming, "als er den von so vielen Lesern und Schreibern betretenen Pfad durch den alten Garten zurückging und im Schutte die Fußstapfen drückte, die so viele vor ihm drückt."[10] It is this sense of familiarity and of the history of the landscape through which one walks that is perhaps most characteristic of Sebald's writings, whether through the historical excursions that occur to the narrator of *Die Ringe des Saturn* or the uncanny memories that return to Austerlitz as he retraces the steps of his childhood.

Given the pervasive sense of uncanny familiarity, Jon Zilcosky has proposed that in Sebald there is in fact an impossibility of getting lost. This reading pushes back against a common interpretation of Sebald as a writer who shows that "we are all hopelessly lost and thus

[9] The narrator's final promise to tell the stories of the other members of the Scharnast family as they become available only furthers the iterative nature of Heinrich's supposed ending.

[10] Adalbert Stifter, *Werke und Briefe: Historisch-Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 1.4.427.

unable to come home."[11] Rather, for Zilcosky, Sebald subverts the literary model of disorientation by showing that the experience of getting lost and then finding one's way is entirely ineffectual, leading neither to self-discovery nor to *Bildung*. Instead, Sebald's narrators always find themselves in landscapes that are uncannily familiar. Even when they seek to get lost, as the narrator of *Schwindel. Gefühle.* does in Vienna, he finds that he has never strayed from a highly circumscribed topography, as if "es habe hier einer auf einer vorgegebenen Fläche immer wieder neue Traversen und Winkelzüge versucht, um aufs neue stets am Rand seiner Vernunft, Vorstellungs- oder Willenskraft anzugelangen und zum Umkehren gezwungen zu werden."[12]

This inability to get lost can be attributed to two developments. First, Sebald registers a fundamental change in the experience of urban landscapes. In the nineteenth century, Engels was able to marvel at the incomprehensible size of London, which was so large that one could walk for hours, "ohne auch nur an den Anfang eines Endes zu kommen."[13] Even at the beginning of the twentieth century, the size of the city is experienced similarly, as when Malte walks and walks through the seemingly endless streets of Paris, wondering only what he needs to do "um nicht mehr gehen zu müssen."[14] By contrast, Sebald's Austerlitz expresses a radically different experience of the city. "Man kann ja tatsächlich zu Fuß in einer einzigen Nacht fast von einem

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[11] John Zilcosky, "Sebald's Uncanny Travels: The Impossibility of Getting Lost," in *W.G. Sebald: A Critical Companion*, ed. J. J. Long and Anne Whitehead (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), 102. That we are lost and unable to go home is, of course, the Lukácsian model of the novel.

[12] Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle.*, 41–42. This form of unintended return is reminiscent of the story Freud tells in his essay on the uncanny. In a small Italian town, Freud finds himself in the red-light district. He attempts to walk further but repeatedly returns to the same neighborhood without meaning to. Sigmund Freud, "Das Unheimliche" in *Gesammelte Werke, chronologisch geordnet*, ed. Anna Freud et al., vol. 12 (London: Imago Publishing, 1947).

[13] Friedrich Engels, *Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England. Nach eigner Anschauung und authentischen Quellen* (Leipzig: Otto Wigand, 1846), 36.

[14] Rainer Maria Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge*, 498.

Ende dieser riesigen Stadt ans andere gelangen," he claims, reflecting on his nocturnal walks through London.[15] This claim suggests not so much a reduction in the size of the city, as an alteration in the experience of walking through it. The city has not gotten any smaller, but it is no longer the endless and impenetrable labyrinth that it was for earlier residents of urban environments. Moreover, this change does not hold only for rail passengers and automobile drivers who may traverse urban expanses with the aid of mechanized forms of transportation, but also for walkers.

This relative reduction in the imaginative scope of the city, if not its actual physical extent, is mirrored by a second development: the more general diminution of the world as the result of globalization. As Claudia Albes says of *Die Ringe des Saturn*, the landscape through which the narrator walks "ist mit allen möglichen Orten und Zeiten verknüpft."[16] For Albes, this interconnectivity of the landscape explains the disorientations that frequently appear in the novel, but it can just as easily be understood as further evidence for Zilcosky's claim that for Sebald it is impossible to get lost, for there are no longer any places that escape the all-encompassing trade networks that mark the landscape. To this extent, Sebald's narrators are never far removed from Walser's, for whom the landscape has been so emptied of its particularity that it only exists as a site for imaginative projection.

And yet Sebald's narrators do have memories, or at least experiences that present themselves as memories. To a certain extent, these memories furnish the landscape with a familiar character for the narrators of these novels, who always seem to be able to connect their surroundings to something they have experienced or read. But the temporal characteristic of

[15] Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 186.

[16] Claudia Albes, "Die Erkundung der Leere: Anmerkungen zu W.G. Sebalds 'englischer Wallfahrt' Die Ringe des Saturn," *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Schillergesellschaft* 46 (2002): 288.

these memories also complicates Zilcosky's claim that it is impossible to get lost in Sebald's literary universe. It may be true that these walkers never enter entirely foreign, unrecognizable territory, but the mere presence, even the overabundance of memory does not guarantee the ability to navigate effectively through a landscape. Indeed, the persistence of the past can introduce new forms of temporal disorientation into the landscape. This form of disorientation is evident in Austerlitz's quasi-Proustian experience in Liverpool Station, the end result of his nocturnal wanderings through London. This disorientation can be understood in two ways. First, it involves the aforementioned inability to differentiate past and present. While in Liverpool Station, Austerlitz wonders

> ob das Leid und die Schmerzen, die sich dort über die Jahrhunderte angesammelt haben, je wirklich vergangen sind, ob wir sie nicht heute noch, wie ich bisweilen an einem kalten Zug um die Stirn zu spüren glaubte, auf unseren Wegen durch die Hallen und über die Treppen durchqueren.[17]

This ghostly experience of a place—not unlike Heinrich's walk through the castle or Malte's perception of buildings that are no longer there—prevents the past from remaining past. This disorientation between past and present leads to what we might call a narrative disorientation. It is no accident that the experience in Liverpool station is what leads Austerlitz to search for his family history, to try and understand his own past by placing it in a narrative order that might make sense of his present.

The narrative and temporal disorientation that arises in Liverpool Station follows that apparent orientation of Austerlitz's walks through London. But the apparent orientation that allows Austerlitz to experience London as a navigable territory was itself preceded by another experience of disorientation. He begins his nighttime walks after giving up writing. He explains this decision by comparing language to "eine alte Stadt, mit einem Gewinkel von Gassen und

[17] Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 191.

Plätzen, mit Quartieren, die weit zurückreichen in die Zeit, mit abgerissenen, assanierten und neuerbauten Vierteln und immer weiter ins Vorfeld hinauswachsenden Außenbezirken." In this city of language, Austerlitz sees himself as someone who "aufgrund einer langen Abwesenheit, in dieser Agglomeration nicht mehr zurechtfindet."[18] It is only after throwing away his writing that he becomes the nocturnal pedestrian for whom the physical city is too small to become lost in. Only be losing his way in the city of language is he able to find his way in the actual city of London. This reorientation, however, is short lived, for it is precisely these walks that lead him to Liverpool Station where displaced memories of his childhood cause him to become disoriented in the story of his own life, causing him to question his past, something he claims to have never done before. The narrative progression, if we can call it that, is thus one that moves from disorientation to reorientation and then back again to disorientation.

The narrative alteration between orientation and disorientation is echoed in the structure of the landscape itself. After giving up writing, Austerlitz buries his drafts and notes in the compost pile, covering them "schichtweise mit verrottetem Laub und ein paar Schaufeln Erde."[19] The neatly stratified reams of paper consisting of layered lines thus enter into a new structure of stratification. This stratification anticipates yet another future stratification that with enough time will manifest as the exterior layer of the earth becomes integrated into the stratification of the earth at the geological scale. Liverpool Station is, in one sense, an inversion of this process. As Austerlitz notes the construction of the station required an excavation of countless corpses, a disturbance of their supposedly final resting place, displacing them into "ungeheure Erdmassen,

[18] Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 183.

[19] Sebald, 184.

mitsamt den in ihnen Begrabenen."[20] That which had decayed and entered into the geological structure of the earth has been unearthed and repositioned in order to allow for movement through the city, while the city of language, having been reincorporated into the earth, is no longer traversable for Austerlitz.[21]

This almost reciprocal relationship between the contribution to the stratification of the earth and its excavation echoes Richard T. Gray's characterization of Sebald's writing as existing in a tension between entropy and order.[22] What I wish to emphasize here is the way in which this alteration from order to entropy produces a landscape that is saturated with memories. But unlike the complete and vivid memories that are prompted by Marcel's uneven paving stone, these memories, like the places where they emerge, always exist in a half-decayed state. Moreover, rather than simply being allowed to decay and solidify into solid ground, they have been dislocated and repositioned again and again. This reintegration of old, half-recognized materials creates a composite and mutable landscape. Such a landscape may be uncannily familiar, but that is not to say that disorientation cannot occur within it.

Tellingly, instances of apparent spatial disorientation in Sebald's work are attributable to or compounded by forms of temporal and narrative disorientation. Along his English pilgrimage,

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[20] Sebald, 194.

[21] The analogy between writing and geological stratification also appears in Die Ringe des Saturn. The piles of paper in Janine's office form "eine richtige Papierlandschaften mit Bergen und Tälern." She adds more tables so as to have a place to work. "Diese Tische, auf denen sich in der Folge ähnliche Akkumulationsprozess vollgezogen hatten, repräsentierten sozusagen spätere Zeitalter in der Entwicklung des Papieruniversums Janines." What sets Janine apart from Austerlitz, however, is that fact that everything in this room is easily accessible to her as needed. "Und tatsächlich wußte sie, was immer sie in ihren Papieren, in ihren Büchern oder in ihrem Kopf suchte, in der Regel auf Anhieb zu finden." W. G. Sebald, *Die Ringe des Saturn: eine englische Wallfahrt* (Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn, 1995), 15–17.

[22] See Richard T. Gray, "Writing at the Roche Limit: Order and Entropy in W. G. Sebald's *Die Ringe Des Saturn*," *The German Quarterly* 83, no. 1 (January 29, 2010): 38–57. It should be noted however that in this instance Sebald almost seems to inverse the relationship between order and entropy, with the decay of Austerlitz's papers suggesting an integration into a greater order, while the ordering of earth to construct a train station is an act destruction.

as the subtitle of the novel dubs it, the narrator of *Die Ringe des Saturn* must traverse the Dunwich Heath. Despite the clear line of sight permitted by the treeless landscape, he finds that passing through it to the other side is no easy matter. "In die unablässig in meinem Kopf sich drehenden Gedanken verloren," he writes, "wanderte ich auf der hellen Sandbahn dahin bis ich zu meinem Erstaunen, um nicht zu sagen zu meinem Entsetzen, mich wiederfand vor demselben verwilderten Wäldchen, aus dem ich vor etwa einer Stunde oder, wie es mir jetzt schien, in irgendeiner fernen Vergangenheit hervorgetreten war."[23] Having inadvertently returned to the point from which he started, he is clearly spatially disoriented, but his disorientation is not merely spatial. He is also lost in thought, thoughts which seem to obey the same circular path as his walk. Furthermore, he is temporally disoriented, seemingly going back in time, not merely to the start of his wayward trajectory, but even further, to some distant past. Even more unsettling is the fact that he only comes to comprehend his disorientation after the fact, as he writes about it ("wie mir nun erst bewußt wurde"), which is to say a clear view of his spatial disorientation only becomes possible through a belated temporal relation to it.

This multivalent disorientation is striking because of how confounding it is. Getting lost in a labyrinth is to be expected, and indeed the narrator has a dream following his experience in the heath that takes him back to his disorientation there but in a way that is explicitly described as a labyrinth, a labyrinth signifying both his spatial disorientation and his mental disorientation, representing, as he says, "einen Querschnitt" of his brain.[24] But unlike in a labyrinth, there is a clear line of sight in the heath. This clarity of vision, however, is of no use. "Einfach geradeaus querfeldein zu gehen war wegen des verholzten, gut kniehohen Erikagestrüpps

[23] Sebald, *Die Ringe des Saturn*, 214.

[24] Sebald, 216.

ausgeschlossen."[25] In this landscape in which everything appears the same, he must carefully note "jedes kleinste Merkmal, jede noch so geringfügige Verschiebung des Prospekts."[26]

That it is an undifferentiated landscape which poses such a problem for him is ironic given that the narrator initially set out on his walk, "in der Hoffnung, der nach dem Abschluß einer größeren Arbeit in mir sich ausbreitenden Leere entkommen zu können."[27] This rationale closely resembles the reason Austerlitz begins his nocturnal wanderings, namely "um der in zunehmendem Maße mich plagenden Schlaflosigkeit zu entkommen."[28] This insomnia arises immediately following the destruction of his writings. In both cases walking is a response—if not a solution—to a profound sense of directionless, of not knowing how to proceed after the cessation of writing. In this, Sebald's narrators closely resemble the narrator of Walser's *Der Spaziergang*, who walks, not with any particular direction in mind, but only to escape the emptiness of the blank page. Walking thus serves as an escape from writing, but also a continuation of it in another form. But whereas the undifferentiated landscape allows Walser's narrator to produce images and words seemingly at will as long as he keeps moving, it poses a distinct navigational problem for Sebald's narrator.

The heath is not merely undifferentiated. It has been made to be undifferentiated as a result of its history. This history is first recognizable in the useless signs along the way, which while pointing down different paths, "ausnahmslos unbeschriftet waren." Rather than leading him anywhere, each sign was only "ein stummer Pfeil."[29] The pointed pointlessness of these

[25] Sebald, 215.

[26] Sebald, 215.

[27] Sebald, 9.

[28] Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 186.

[29] Sebald, *Die Ringe des Saturn*, 215.

markers suggests not so much a lack of direction as the remnants of a means of orientation that has since been erased. In Stifter disorientation arises from the accretion of distinct temporal regimes which coexist in a landscape. For Rilke, this accretion persists, but is fractured such that the paths between these times can no longer be traversed. And in Walser, the unification of space and time into an empty coordinate system creates an undifferentiated landscape in which the guiding signposts of memory are no longer in force. But Sebald's undifferentiated landscape is not the result of the mere passage of time and the corresponding dynamics of persistence and decay, nor the assimilation of space and time into quantifiable space-time. Rather it is a landscape that has been decisively and traumatically altered by human activity.

The account of the narrator's disorientation is immediately preceded by a description of how the heath came to be, an account of human-caused deforestation. These forests were not merely logged but burned. According to the narrator, this process of combustion is at the heart of all human achievement, creativity, and expansion. It is "das innerste Prinzip ein jeden von uns hergestellten Gegenstandes." Moreover, "Die Verkohlung der höheren Pflanzenarten, die unafhörliche Verbrennung aller brennbaren Substanz ist der Antrieb für unsere Verbreitung über die Erde."[30] In the context of Sebald's writings, it is difficult to avoid the association of burning with the horrors of the Holocaust. More fundamentally, for Sebald both genocide and ecological devastation point to the human propensity for destruction. To walk in Sebald's world—and indeed in ours—is to work through the remnants of these twin catastrophes, catastrophes that did not merely befall humanity, but were also propagated by humans.

Unlike the annihilation of space and time, which has the capacity to nullify the mnemonic function of a landscape, these human-caused catastrophes unearth what was once buried. We

[30] Sebald, 212.

thus witness a resurgence of memory, even as—or precisely because—the settled relations between past and present are upended. William Faulkner famously claimed, "The past is never dead; It's not even past." This persistence of the past in the present may now be a truism. But Sebald's writings attest not merely to the persistence of the past, but also its mutability. In the works of Stifter, Rilke, and Walser, I have emphasized the accretion of temporal regimes along with the disintegration of cultural and ecological structures for temporal organization. In addition to this tension, Sebald's world underlines the perpetual reconfiguration of the past as a result of human activity. In such a world, the past is not a stable ground upon which to walk.

This instability of the past—already at work in Stifter, Rilke, and Walser—becomes the defining feature of Sebald's model of self-narration. The recursive models of self-narration that we saw in Stifter depend on the lack of any final resting place from which to narrate. In repeatedly walking the same paths, and recursively turning down them again through narrative, Stifter's subjects demonstrate the impossibility of any final narration of a human life. For at each recursion, the altered temporal position of the subject casts the (increasingly temporally complex) past in a new light. The path that has been walked must not only be re-traced but retold and thereby reinterpreted. The final perspective on a life can only be achieved from beyond the scope of an individual life, by the next generation, and that new generation is inevitably caught in the same predicament. If the task of self-narration in Stifter is tenuous and perpetually incomplete, this problem is compounded in Rilke and Walser as the narrating self is increasingly dislocated from this recursive process, first as a result of urban alienation and then through the emptying out of the temporal specificity of the landscape. In Sebald's post-catastrophic world, the temporal difficulty of self-narration is not merely the result of the subject's changing relationship to the past, but also the consequence of a reconfigured landscape, teeming with

memories that are as ineffable as they are overpowering. In such a world, the sense of a narrative that might orient oneself both temporally and in the landscape is pervasive, but such narratives are always just out of reach.

The only option is to keep walking, but that too carries risks. In the final lines of *Die Ringe des Saturn*, the narrator cites a remembered passage—but one he cannot find again—from Thomas Browne's *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* describing a Dutch custom, "im Hause eines Verstorbenen alle Spiegel und alle Bilder, auf denen Landschaften, Menschen oder die Früchte der Felder zu sehen waren, mit seidenem Trauerflor zu verhängen, damit nicht die den Körper verlassende Seele auf ihrer letzten Reise abgelenkt würde."[31] The contention of this dissertation has been that there is no final resting place that would allow for the stable narration of one's life from within that life. Here, Sebald suggests that this problem might even extend beyond the course of a life. The inevitable end, beyond which the promise of a stable narrative position can be imagined, might only be another walk plagued by many of the same spatial and temporal disorientations.

[31] Sebald, 366.

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