The Austrian Problem of Language and Peter Handke: a Documentation.

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THE AUSTRIAN PROBLEM OF LANGUAGE
AND PETER HANDKE: A DOCUMENTATION

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Classical, Germanic and Slavic Languages

by

Donald Russell Bailey
B.A., Eckerd College, 1968
M.A., University of Kentucky, 1970
December, 1981
Dedicated to
Blanche and Jack Bailey,
my beloved parents
PREFACE

The aim of this work is to document the existence and development of the crisis or revolution of language, to draw attention to the fact that this focusing on the problematic aspects of language has been particularly intense in Austrian/Austro-Hungarian thought and letters, and to set the linguistic theory and practice of Peter Handke in relation to the linguistic work of his predecessors. This documentation purports to provide basic research concepts and Materialien (extensive, critical bibliographic citations, etc.) for ongoing work in the area of language-conscious literature.

I want to acknowledge my indebtedness to the Austrian Bundesministerium für Wissenschaft und Forschung for supporting my bibliographic work in Austria for the academic year 1977-1978, to Dr. Alfred Kolleritsch (literature editor of manuskripte, president of the Forum Stadtpark in Graz, and Handke's closest friend), Dr. Alfred Holzinger (director of the literature section of Österreichischer Rundfunk in Graz and Handke's mentor), Dr. Uwe Bauer (Dozent in the Germanistic Institute in Graz), Dr. Gerhard Melzer (Assistant in the Germanistic Institute in Graz), and Manfred Mixner (a leading member of the Forum Stadtpark and author of the most extensive and comprehensive monograph on Handke) for their informational, literary, bibliographic and personal assistance in my research. I want to thank my friends and acquaintances of the group Nebelhorn in Graz for their helpful insight into the literary and artistic underground in Graz. I extend my warmest thanks to Astrid Pietruschka, who possesses and who communicated to me
the most intimate knowledge of the inner workings of the Austrian mind and Austrian society. I very warmly thank Dr. James Hintze, Dr. Thomas DiNapoli, and Dr. E. J. Newby for their constant assistance and guidance during my tenure at Louisiana State University, and Dr. Ken Keeton of Eckerd College and Dr. Lawrence Thompson of the University of Kentucky for their support.

The system of numbering the divisions and subdivisions is according to that used in Wittgenstein's Traktatus Logico-Philosophicus: 1.1 is a subsection of 1., 1.11 is a subsection of 1.1, etc. Appendix A contains informational materials not central enough to be included in the text but nevertheless directly related to the topic. Appendix B provides an alphabetically arranged select bibliography of the most important works on the topic encountered during the research process, whether they were drawn on directly or not. Numerous abbreviations are used in the text. An (A.) following a name indicates Austrian. The following is a list of abbreviations of works by Handke:

H Die Hornissen (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1966)
Stl Stücke 1 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1972)
Ha Der Hausierer (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1970)
BA Begrüßung des Aufsichtsrats (Munich: DTV, 1970)
K Kaspar (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1967)
PG Prosa Gedichte Theaterstücke Hörspiel Aufsätze (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1969)
WM Wind und Meer (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970)
IAI Die Innenwelt der Außenwelt der Innenwelt (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1969)
St2 Stücke 2 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1973)
Ch Chronik der laufenden Ereignisse (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971)
AT Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970)
KB Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1972)
BE Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1972)
WU Wunschloses Unglück (Salzburg: Residenz, 1972)
U Die Unvernünftigen sterben aus (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1973)
W Als das Wünschen noch geholfen hat (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974)
FB Falsche Bewegung (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1975)
SE Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1975)
LF Die linkshändige Frau (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1976)
GW Das Gewicht der Welt (Salzburg: Residenz, 1977)
LH Langsame Heimkehr (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1979)
LSV Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1980)
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ABSTRACT

Linguistic skepticism and the resultant awareness of the limits of language can be traced back to Hamann, Herder, and Humboldt, through Romanticism and French Symbolism, up to modern times. What has come to be called the crisis of language (Sprachkrise) can be viewed as one segment of a broader, multi-media phenomenon. The intensity of this crisis is concentrated in Austro-Hungary in the waning days of the Habsburg Monarchy. From this time forward supersensitivity to language remains a strongly Austrian phenomenon and can be followed through the European, German-language, and Austrian movements of this century, up to the founding of the Forum Stadtpark in Graz, where Handke's works first met public audience and attention. The progressive movement of linguistic awareness can be viewed logically and can be demonstrated by means of the dual methodology: referential language criticism (which refers to an extra-linguistic reality), based on the ontological theory of meaning, versus demonstrative language criticism (which is language-immanent), based on the pragmatic theory of meaning. Most writers support the referential/ontological extreme; Handke supports the demonstrative/pragmatic pole. Handke's writings begin with an early linguistically experimental period including work in all genres. The most famous work from this period is Publikumsbeschimpfung. These works are followed by a more ordered period of linguistic demonstration, most notably in the work Kaspar. Since this time Handke has concentrated on prose, film and journal forms. His literary efforts continue to present the reader consistently linguistically aware and strongly
language-critical narrative. The historical overview and the theo­retical and practical scrutiny of Handke's writings according to this methodology are presented as a bibliocritical narrative and are enhanced as an ordered thesaurus of work in semiotics by extensive informational appendices and bibliographies.
INTRODUCTION

Just as Oskar Matzerath in Grass' Die Blechtrommel must begin far back in time to describe his existence, so must one also begin long ago to ascertain and delineate Peter Handke's position in the historical movement of language criticism. Only few Handke critics have seen the importance of the historical perspective:

Wenn wir....vom weiteren historischen und literarischen Kontext ausgehen, unterstreicht das nur unsere Prämisse, daß der einzelne Autor und sein Text immer schon in einen vorstrukturierten Raum eintreten.1

Handke must be seen not as an isolated phenomenon, but as a writer related to previous literary and linguistic activities.

The following is a bibliocritical narrative of the crisis or revolution of language, a coordinated documentation of the problem of language. It is an attempt to consolidate previous work in this area of semiotics. The method is descriptive and enumerative, not interpretive and heuristic. The discussion is an attempt to broach the fundamental topics, to raise the appropriate questions, and to offer investigative paths and materials and references for the apprehension of meaningful responses to these questions.

Man's speech is the basic difference between him and plants and other animals. Characteristically human speech is approximately 100,000 years old; the first known writing systems date from about 6,000 B.C.2


Already in the 5th century B.C., Confucious realized that a person's speech habits were an important indication of his character,\(^3\) that language can be incorrect, and that this linguistic incorrectness spills over into all of life's activities. When asked what his first act would be if he were to govern a country, he explained:

'It would certainly be to correct language.' 'Surely,' they said, 'this has nothing to do with the matter. Why should language be corrected?' The Master's answer was: 'If language is not correct, then what is said is not what is meant; if what is said is not what is meant, then what ought to be done remains undone; if this remains undone, morals and art will deteriorate; if morals and art deteriorate, justice will go astray; if justice goes astray, the people will stand by in helpless confusion. Hence there must be no arbitrariness in what is said. This matters above everything.'\(^4\)

Goethe pointed out that language strengthens and weakens depending in part on the extent and intensity of mankind's exploitation of it:

Wenn eine gewisse Epoche hindurch in einer Sprache viel geschrieben und in derselben von vorzüglichen Talenten der lebendig vorhandene Kreis menschlicher Gefühle und Schicksale durchgearbeitet worden, so ist der Zeitgehalt erschöpft und die Sprache zugleich, so daß nun jedes mäßige Talent sich der vorliegenden Ausdrücke als gegebener Phrasen mit Bequemlichkeit bedienen kann.\(^5\)

These gegebene Phrasen\(^6\) are the clichés, in language and in the intimately related forms of life, which Karl Kraus (A.) warned of. Kraus

\(^3\)Analects XV/23.


\(^5\)Goethes sämtliche Werke, Jubiläums-Ausgabe (Stuttgart and Berlin: Cotta, 1902-1912) 37, p. 93.

saw his work in language as a noble task:

Abgründe dort sehen zu lehren, wo Gemeinplätze sind.\(^7\)

Kraus and many like-minded critics of "modernist" Europe, of Europe during and after the industrial revolution, carried on their work in fin-de-siècle Vienna, the "city of dreams," the "proving-ground for world destruction." Modern society was suffering its first major collapse. As Handke was to describe such integration in 1964: "es knistere verdächtig im Gebälk."\(^8\) In the last days of the Habsburg Monarchy, what Kraus titled Die Letzten Tage der Menschheit, all the media of communication and information and knowledge transferral were re-examined: philosophy, literature, language, art, newspapers, architecture, music, psychology.

This Austrian interest in, almost obsession with, language dates from at least the 17th century and the days of Abraham a Sancta Clare (1644-1709). This critical stance to language is a specifically Austrian tradition. Esslin (A.) is not modest:

The Austrians are much more sensitive to language than the Germans.\(^9\)

The development of this linguistic sensitivity is the central theme of the following discussion: how it develops through literature and society up to Handke, his comprehension and acceptance of this development, and what, if anything, he contributes toward the creation of new and


\(^8\)BA, p. 9.

\(^9\)Interview, Appendix A.
valuable experiences in language.

Handke's obsession with things Austrian continues unabated. In 1975 he wrote that he was carrying on his investigations in language to help find his way clear in the world, and to carry them on in such a way that others, particularly other Austrians, could utilize what he had learned, created, in their own struggle. In celebration of the Austrian constitutional anniversary, Handke relates his work as a writer to the problem of being Austrian:

Ich lebe seit 7 Jahren nicht mehr im befreiten Österreich und die Erinnerung hat nichts verklärt, eher die Abwehr vernünftig gemacht. Bei jedem Besuch, kaum daß im Flugzeug zum Beispiel die österreichischen Zeitungen ausgeteilt werden...packt einen sofort die alte, tödliche Unfreiheit aus der früheren Zeit. Aber das Land ist für jemand wie mich aus der Ferne wichtig geworden. Ich denke oft an die schönen Hügel mit den Fichtenwäldern und an all die lebendig begrabenen Leben in dem schönen Land, die nicht das Glück gehabt haben, sich wenigstens halbwegs freizuschaueln, wie zum Beispiel ich. Ich bin Schriftsteller geworden und habe mehr denn je das Gefühl, es den anderen schuldig zu sein, für sie zu schreiben. Es geht gar nicht mehr anders.¹⁰

For Handke Austria is still "das Fette, an dem ich würge."¹¹ The problem of language will be treated in this study as a strongly Austrian phenomenon.

The problem will be presented and traced within the framework of a dual methodology, which is introduced below. However, such a discussion, as will be discovered, is perhaps an attempt to perform the impossible, to discuss that which cannot be discussed. One critic


¹¹GW, p. 21.
focuses on a mistake too easily and too often made in discussing the problem of language:

Viele Kritiker tun so, als besäßen sie ungefährdet die griffige, festgefügte Sprache, deren Zerbröseln eines der großen, wenn nicht das größte Thema gewichtiger, weil konsequenter moderner Dichtung ist. Ein Aufsatz über das Absurde hat im Regelfall all die Elemente, die in absurden Stücken aufgelöst werden oder gar nicht mehr in ihnen enthalten sind, und Untersuchungen über a-logische Texte sind von bestechender Logik. Die Worte fließen harmonisch dahin, als habe es in diesem Jahrhundert nicht eine Spur von Reflexion über Sprache gegeben....der Kritiker....glaubt sich außerhalb der bewegten literarischen Landschaft, verhält sich wie der Reisende im Zug, der beim Messen der Geschwindigkeit eines vorbeirasenden D-Zuges nicht bedenkt, daß er selber in Bewegung ist.12

If in the following discussion the language seems jerky or elusive, it is language balking at the precipice Kraus spoke of; it is the tentative, precarious movement in language suggested by the meaning of this investigation. One empathizes with Hofmannsthal (A.):

Es wird mir nicht leicht....die Worte lassen mich wiederum im Stich.13


METHODOLOGY

All aspects of the discussion, the historical overview and Handke's theory and practice will be presented with two theoretical extremes as background: 1) the ontological theory of meaning and the referential language criticism based on it, and 2) the pragmatic theory of meaning and demonstrative language criticism based thereupon. But just as right-handedness and left-handedness are theoretical poles (no one is exclusively right- or left-handed by nature), the two methodological poles here are theoretical reference points: no serious author or critic is exclusively of one extreme or the other, but rather favors one as dominant in his literary-linguistic activities. Most favor the ontological/referential extreme, Handke the pragmatic/demonstrative.

In many works of 19th and 20th century literature, language itself is thematisized. When put into historical perspective, this general assumption can be shown to be a reflection of historical reality. The Dadaist text-collages, as an example of demonstrative language criticism, can be interpreted as a protest against a literature which possessed only a fictitious, inner harmony, no longer validated by an external harmony, by historical events. It can be demonstrated that the two theories of meaning, the ontological and the pragmatic, can function appropriately as the basic criteria for distinguishing the different possibilities of language criticism. This dual methodology is based upon and is to a great extent a paraphrase of, the work: Sprache und Kritik. Untersuchung zur

In the ontological theory of meaning (cf. Fig. I), the meaning of language is determined by extra-linguistic entities.

**Figure I**

**Ontological Theory of Meaning**

Language - Extra-linguistic Entities - Truth

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<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Extra-linguistic Entities</th>
<th>Truth</th>
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<td>Subject</td>
<td>Referential Language Criticism</td>
<td>Subject-Object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real World</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Object</td>
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Referential Language Criticism

Language criticism based upon the ontological theory of meaning emphasizes the lost correspondence between language (as representational medium) and entities of the world of psychophysical reality (as that to be represented). Referential language criticism focuses on the subject pole of language, the object pole, or on the relation
between the two; in all three instances it focuses on the designative function of language. It takes a critical stand to language, but is necessarily prevented from a criticism in or about language because it measures language from without, from an extra-linguistic point of reference. In the pragmatic theory of meaning (cf. Fig. II), the meaning (semantic content and meaningfulness) of language is determined by usage, not by means of extra-linguistic entities.

Figure II

Pragmatic Theory of Meaning

Demonstrative Language Criticism

Linguistic utterances derive their meaning in the pragmatic theory of meaning not from outside of language, but rather the other way around: the extra-linguistic objects become meaningful only through the use of linguistic expressions in a "language game." Demonstrative language criticism demonstrates (both as illustration and as protest) language
in the distancing action of its presentation. Demonstrative language criticism emphasizes the loss of a connection to Truth in "language games." Understanding is the prerequisite for Truth and for the truth of knowledge. The connection to Truth is thus bound to the requirement of the possibility for meaningful communication. With the loss of this communication, not the possibility of expressing the Truth, but rather Truth as a possibility is negated.

The Wittgenstein (A.) of the Traktatus was primarily ontological, the Traktatus itself basically referential. The Wittgenstein of the Philosophische Untersuchungen was pragmatic, the P.U. substantially demonstrative:

Angenommen, es hätte Jeder eine Schachtel, darin wäre etwas, was wir "Käfer" nennen. Niemand kann je in die Schachtel des Andern schaun; und Jeder sage, er wisse nur vom Anblick seines Käfers, was ein Käfer ist. Da könnte es ja sein, daß Jeder ein anders Ding in seiner Schachtel hätte. Ja, man könnte sich vorstellen, daß sich ein solches Ding fortwährend veränderte. Aber wenn nun das Wort "Käfer" dieser Leute doch einen Gebrauch hätte? So wäre er nicht der der Bezeichnung eines Dings. Das Ding in der Schachtel gehört überhaupt nicht zum Sprachspiel; auch nicht einmal ein Etwas: denn die Schachtel könnte auch leer sein. Nein, durch dieses Ding in der Schachtel kann "gekürzt werden"; es hebt sich weg, was immer es ist.1

The meaning of a word is its use in a language game.2 Outside of language there is no reality.

Works of Arno Holz, the early Wittgenstein, Hugo von Hofmannsthal's (A.) Chandos Brief, Celan's (A.) "Atemkristall", the

1P.U., Par. 293.
2P.U., Par. 43.
works of Musil (A.) and others serve as examples of the ontological theory of meaning and referential language criticism. Analyses and interpretations of these works have shown their limitation, the limitation of the entire ontological theory: a theory of linguistic meaning based on reference to extra-linguistic entities loses connection to language itself. The dominance of language, which proves inescapable, moves toward the demonstrative conception of language criticism which, on the basis of a pragmatic theory of meaning, begins with the assumption that there is no "getting beyond" language.

The pragmatic theory of meaning and demonstrative language criticism derive historically from Herder, Hamann, and above all Humboldt. It escapes the circle (Zirkel) of having to criticize language by means of language in that it demonstrates the ideological patterns of language within the writing. The speaker is a fictitious ego created by language. It is not the speaker who speaks the language, but rather the language that "speaks the speaker."

This presentation of language stereotypes (e.g., "illegitimate child", "jeder für sich") based on the two theories of meaning, which dominate every individual's consciousness, demonstrates the real possibility of domination through (Herrschaft durch die Sprache) but not over language (der Sprache). The demonstrative texts no longer derive their meaning either from the speaker or from extra-linguistic entities. The texts are self-referential. Thus, the reader of such texts is brought into an immediate confrontation with language. Neither is he able to make language subservient to the powers of his
imagination, nor does this kind of language—which refers to no extra­linguistic entities—admit of the experience of recognition of such entities on the part of the reader. Since language no longer refers to a speaker or to entities in "reality," the reader recognizes nothing which is personally familiar, nothing with which to identify. Everything which is presented is presented as being separate and apart. The language creates detachment which makes the reader an observer of language. Thus, this detachment can be seen as a precondition for demonstrative language criticism. It only enables the reader to criticize language for himself.

1.1 Ontological Theory of Meaning and Referential Language Criticism: The Paradox of Saying the Unsayable

The quotation from the Belgian Maurice Maeterlinck used by Robert Musil (A.) at the beginning of his novella Die Verwirrungen des Zöglinge Törleß is an obvious example of referential language criticism:

Sobald wir etwas aussprechen, entwerfen wir es seltsam. Wir glauben in die Tiefe der Abgründe hinabgetaucht zu sein, und wenn wir wieder an die Oberfläche kommen, gleicht der Wassertropfen an unseren bleichen Fingerspitzen nicht mehr dem Meere, dem er entstammt. Wir wären eine Schatzgrube wunderbarer Schätze entdeckt zu haben, und wenn wir wieder ans Tagelicht kommen, haben wir nur falsche Steine und Glasscherben mitgebracht; und trotzdem schimmert der Schatz im Finstern unverändert. (1906)

The treasures, these fragments of the Truth, lie outside the territory of words. "We" as subject lament the infirmity of words as medium between subject and object (Schätze). Writers who maintain the stance of referential language criticism emphasize language in its medial
function, as a medium of translation. Language is not meaningful from within itself in the act of communication which it instigates. Language is meaningful only in reference to preconceived extra-linguistic entities, which provide language with meaning only as a reflection of themselves. This realm of entities serves these writers as their critical point of reference. Language as they conceive it has lost its direct connection to reality because it does not portray totally these entities, i.e., in such a way that nothing is lost in the act of linguistic expression.

These writers differ in the way they conceive of these entities and the relationship between language and the entities. Arno Holz, for example, attempts (in his long poem "Phantasus") to reflect totally all valuable aspects of reality, to be able to assert that nothing further could be added. But just as the early Wittgenstein of the Traktatus could not theoretically formulate the direct relationship between language and world because of the semantic rigidity of such a relationship, Holz too cannot show a linguistic reflection of the world in the act of poetic creation, of writing. In the poetic act of carrying out his idea of uniting language and preconceived reality, his language turns back on itself, refers only

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3"Die Überkommene Sprache verliert....den Wahrheitsbezug....", Saße, 81.

4Wittgenstein, in a July, 1932 letter to Waismann: "In the Traktatus, I was unclear about 'logical analysis' and 'ostensive demonstration'. I used to think there was a direct link between Language and Reality."
to itself, and thus precludes a union with this reality. Empirical reality as the point of reference for language criticism is preempted by the language itself in that this extra-linguistic reference point is drawn into the internal workings of the language. Language criticism from this standpoint in its logical execution leads into a linguistic muddle which precludes clear conceptions.

Hofmannsthal's language criticism (particularly in his Chandos Brief) is also criticism of the lost connection between reality and the language, which from his point of view has atrophied to the extent that it can no longer reflect reality in an undistorted way. Hofmannsthal's approach to language and reality is different from that of Holz, who like the early Wittgenstein wanted to balance the individual aspects of the speaker with the (parallel) general aspects of a language which reflect the external world. Holz failed because the language with which he attempted to outline and detail this outer reality only led back to itself. Hofmannsthal considered reality as something conceivable only in its (individual, speaker) subjective state. Although this subjectivity is the substance of that to be expressed in language, it cannot be integrated into any generally valid linguistic forms, since in the attempt at integration this subjectivity is transformed into something else, different from the original subjectivity. Consequently, Hofmannsthal's concept of language criticism moves toward silence as the last remaining possibility of criticism. In his "silence" Lord Chandos expresses that it is no longer possible to discover one's person-
ality in the traditional linguistic representational systems. This linguistic formulation of the slowly dissolving relationship between language and the world of individual experience leads Chandos to despair in words that one can no longer express oneself in language.

The attempts by Holz and Hofmannsthal to transverse, circumvent or otherwise overcome the problem of linguistic mediation by means of linguistic representation of the problem simply lead back to the linguistic problem itself. Language does not lose its autonomy when it is employed to attempt a representation of external reality by emphasizing the objective detailing of the world (Holz' method), nor can one assume that subjective expression of silence is valid (Hofmannsthal's method). Thus Holz' efforts to move from out of language and into extra-linguistic entities simply end in a pile of words, and Hofmannsthal's way of saving the substance of subjectivity from language by reverting to silence actually remains within the confines of language in that Chandos expresses his silence in words.

A third approach is attempted by Paul Celan (A.). He uses a language of stock phrases to thematize his perplexity at the fact that Truth cannot be spoken. The basic problem here is that language and Truth have become two separate entities. He slowly unfolds his perplexity semantically to the movement of language, until both his perplexity and language unite in the word Atemkristall, from which the poem takes its title. This union is supposedly the irrefutable evidence of Truth. The entire poem can be seen as an
absolute metaphor. Celan's absolute metaphor, in which silence is ironically governed by the same limits which govern language, is the attempt to avoid silence in face of the fact that that which is meaningful cannot be said. If this fact were not resolved dialectically, it would remain unresolved and would lead to linguistic agnosticism and to a refutation of literature's ability to transmit knowledge. The unsayable is always related to the sayable and thus attains form only in language. This sort of self-defeating juggling with mirrors occurs because language lacks what Fritz Mauthner (A.) termed Kompetenz-Kompetenz. Celan's dilemma demonstrates the dominance of language which demonstrative writers accept and use as the starting point of their writing.

1.2 Pragmatic Theory of Meaning and Demonstrative Language Criticism

Ernst Jandl's (A.) "lichtung" is an obvious example of demonstrative language criticism:

manche meinen
lechts und rinks
kann man nicht
velwechseln
werch ein illtum!

To someone who reads German, the poem and its title immediately set a process of understanding in motion on one of many levels. Such demonstration needs no explanation; it explains itself. Demonstrative language criticism, such as the above, and referential language

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5The linguistic form for the mutual determination of the "sayable" and the "unsayable".

criticism share a theoretical basis: the diagnosis of the crisis of language. Language is problematic for both schools of thought. But proponents of demonstrative language criticism reproach those of referential language criticism for the naiveté of their response to the crisis, for attempting to say the unsayable. According to the referential writers, reality is outside, beyond language, but cannot be grasped by language. This response denies the reality of language itself, conceiving of it instead only in its function as a representation or reflection of an extra-linguistic reality.

The insistence on the representational function of language as the attempt to prevent further loss of these given connective patterns of speech in order to provide language again with the ability to represent the substance of reality, of necessity, leads referential writers into an impasse. For if they could state that there is something outside, beyond language, they would negate the boundary by the very mention of this something, and that extra-linguistic reality spoken of would now be within the realm of language. The consequence of this impasse, that every linguistic differentiation between that which is sayable and that which is not immediately negates itself, moves toward the absolute metaphor of Celan as the self-revelation of this boundary. For Helmut Heissenbüttel, a demonstrative writer, the attempt to resolve the impasse is a result of an historically outdated problem-solving methodology, which ignores the linguistic basis of its own existence. The absolute metaphor, as a return to figurativeness of language, is
simply the renaissance of the stylized romantic metaphors and thus, a step back behind the concentration on the problem of pre-set patterns and into the already discounted illusion of harmony and its rules of logic. For in a reference to the unsayable, these rules of logic are still related to a realm outside the mind.

In his collection of essays, Über Literatur (1966), Heißenbüttel polemicizes against the attempt to resolve the paradox of saying the unsayable in the figurative use of codes, an attempt which actually preserves the paradox:

Eben dadurch, daß immer mehr dem Phänomen des Sprechens selbst das Unsagbare zugetraut werden soll, verliert dies Unsagbare seine Unsagbarkeit. Es ist nicht länger es selbst. Der immer mehr ausgehöhlte Anspruch schlägt um in die Banalität des Allzusagbaren.7

This type of speech reveals its direct relation to more traditional poetic language, which is symbolic in character, in that that which is said actually refers to something unsaid as that which is meaningful. This type of speech is captive to the system: that which is said is not actually that which is meant.

Demonstrative writers consider this symbolic language as historically outdated, because it remains in the traditional role of transmitting something outside itself, be this something the entities of the objective world (as in the case of early Wittgenstein and Holz), the experiencing of reality (as in the case of Hofmannsthal), or simply that extra-linguistic something to which the writer

addresses the unsayable (as in the case of Celan). Demonstrative literature counters the concept of an extra-linguistic psychophysical reality, which gives meaning to language, by removing language from its position as supposed transmitter and placing it into the transcendental function of a reasonable, a priori point of reference, for subject and object of linguistic representation. It is not that subject and object of linguistic representation are always foremost, but rather reversed; language forms the a priori valid structure of reason-based subject-object interaction and relationship. The world does not become meaningful in the intentional experiencing of a speaker's subjective consciousness to which language responds or reflects, but rather this consciousness becomes a quantity dependent on language, on linguistic quantities.

Heißenbüttel formulates a concept of the role of language in the creative writing process in two alternative questions:

Sind es die Reizwörter, ihre Verbindung zum Satz, die Vorstellung wecken, die sich zur Geschichte verbinden? Oder gehen die Vorstellungen, die sich zur Geschichte zusammen-schließen, der Erzählung voraus?

Referential literature, with its emphasis on the subject, answers the question of the hierarchical ordering of images and language on the basis of the ontological theory of meaning by asserting that language is patterned to the image, to the preexistent, inner experience. Demonstrative literature, on the other hand, conceives of language not

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as structures patterned after something preexistent, but rather as the presentation of innate linguistic patterns of mind of a particular apprehension of the world. The category of mind in the latter case is free of the subject-object limitation and actually becomes language. Language, then, has always been prerequisite to all individual concepts of mind. The idea that it is language with its inherited forms which structures our understanding of the world, is presented by Handke in an assenting review of Gert Jonke's (A.) Geometrischer Heimatroman:

Sonst aber machen die Sätze immer deutlich, daß das, was man bis jetzt als Leser für die unschuldige Wirklichkeit gehalten hat, von Syntax Vorgeformtes ist. Wenn der Autor über Gegenstände redet, merkt er, daß er, redend, der Gegenstand von Sätzen ist. Und deutlich wird, daß Sätze obrigkeitliche Sätze sind, daß die Welt der Sätze eine hierarchische Ordnung normiert. Jonke zeigt das, indem er einen Satz erst einmal wie einen unschuldigen Abbildsatz vorstellt, der scheinbar zeigt, wie es ist, dann aber, mit einem einfachen syntaktischen Dreh vorführt, daß an diesen Satz Bedingungen vorausgehen usw. Seine Sätze verwandeln sich dabei von sonnigen Aussagesätzen in immer kompliziertere Bedingungssätze.9

In Handke's accentuation of language, mind loses its basis in the speaking subject as well as in the object spoken to. Mind becomes a product of language, or, as Franz Mon formulates it: "Fur uns sind Sprache und Welt nahezu identisch geworden."10

In contrast to the referential viewpoint, which differentiates between the world of objects, general states of affairs, character-

9Elfenbeinturm, p. 201.

istics and encounters with physical reality on the one hand and their now problematic representation in language on the other, demonstrative literature emphasizes exactly the undifferentiability of world and language. This latter concept is the consequence of a view of language which assumes that one can think only that which is pre-established as a possibility of thought in a syntactical model. This view understands language not as a product of individual, mind-producing consciousness, but, as Heinrich Vormweg states:

Dieses [Bewußtsein] wird vielmehr von der in der Sprache gespeicherten und vorgerichteten Information jeweils konditioniert, und sein Erkennen der Welt ist weitgehend nur ein Erkennen des vorgegebenen Bedeutens, also der schon bestehenden Relationen zwischen Ding und Zeichen, in der die Zeichen längst die Dinge auch sozusagen vorbestimmen.11

Language, which is thus no longer conceived of as the mediation subsequent to the process of knowledge, liberates itself from its role as servant to knowledge and thereby gains a transcendental value as a prerequisite for the acquisition of knowledge.12 In his proposition that we possess things only insofar as we possess them linguistically, Heißenbüttel13 expresses the transformed conception of the language-world relationship. According to this conception, thought is not a prelinguistic activity of the intellect, but rather an activity in language itself. Thus, one concludes that it is language, not some super-linguistic consciousness, which is the region of the synthesis.


12cf. Stefan George: "Kein ding sei wo das wort gebracht."

that constitutes the entities of knowledge.

In this crisis of reality-interpreting systems which identify and validate objects, we find the basis for the fact that the synthesizing power is relegated not to consciousness but rather to language; reality as something reasonable is no longer thought of in the extra-linguistic indirectness of intellectual concepts but rather in the linguistic mediation by means of inherited interpretation systems. Not until the waning of the validity of interpretation systems under which the subject imagines itself free does the character of its presentation become apparent. As Oswald Wiener (A.) points out:

Die sprache geht sozusagen mitten durch uns hindurch, der wirklichkeit unseres bewusstseins enge gassen vorschreibend, als nämlich identität erzeugend, die vielleicht mögliche erfahrung verhindernd.14

Language prescribes reality. Thus, as Heißenbüttel indicates, mind becomes valid neither through ontological nor through metaphysical systems which supposedly explain the world, but rather only and exclusively in execution of the linguistic process:

Was einst als theologische Welterklärung und danach als System der Ideen und als Weltgeist der menschlichen Welt den Sinn zu geben vorgab, hat sich reduziert auf die Fähigkeit der sprachlichen Verhaltensweise.15

The linguistic manner of procedure, as procedure of language, determines the relationship of the speaker to language. The fact

14Oswald Wiener, die verbesserung von mitteleuropa (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Verlag), 1972, p. CXXXVIII.

that language "speaks the speaker" constitutes the differentiation to
the basic direction of referential language criticism, the writers of
which, in contrast, make the demeanor of the speaker to language the
point of departure of their literature. They make this their point
of departure by holding firmly to subject-oriented experiential
evidence, which leads, by going beyond language, into the "paradox
of linguistic silence," saying the unsayable.

On the other hand, demonstrative literature recognizes the
dominant role of language. For this literature only that which is
defined as reality in the categorical system of language is real and
substantial, not that which is referred to in linguistic silence.
Franz Mon describes this reality:

Unsere Realität ist heute in einem ganz ungewöhnlichen Maße
sprachbestimmt, nicht nur unsere technische Realität,
sondern auch unsere politische und verwaltungsmäßige. Es
gibt heute keine Realität mehr, es sei denn, sie ist
formuliert. Und so kann man heute auch Dichtung definieren:
real am Gedicht ist nur das, was formuliert ist. Die
Dichtung ist völlig mit ihrer sprachlichen, vokabulären und
syntaktischen Form identisch geworden.\textsuperscript{16}

Demonstrative writers repudiate the accusation that this retreat
into language-immanence is accomplished at the cost of divorcing
literature from the surrounding world. It is language which first
constitutes the world for us; i.e., if the world as reality of
consciousness or as empirical presumption loses its role as the

\textsuperscript{16}Franz Mon, "Contribution to the Discussion: Maßstäbe und
Möglichkeiten der Kritik zur Beurteilung der zeitgenössischen
Literatur (Berliner-Kritiker-Colloquium 1963) in: Sprache im
region where meaning is created, then, as Heißenbüttel puts it, things exist only and exclusively in the form of words:

Nur indem wir den im Wort gespeicherten Sachbezug zitieren, vermögen wir uns dem zu nähern, was man außerhalb der Sprache Welt nennen könnte.\(^7\)

The "outer world as substance" (Welthaltigkeit) and "words as substance" (Worthaltigkeit) of literature are for demonstrative writers not contradictory concepts which relate reciprocally as opposites, but rather they are mutually inclusive; i.e., this Welthaltigkeit of literature is simultaneously included in Worthaltigkeit. Heißenbüttel deals with these two concepts in a short text "Mittwochgespräch".\(^8\)

In the text he demonstrates that the concept of language on which is based the contrast of Welthaltigkeit and Worthaltigkeit, i.e., that one relates to pre-existing, extra-linguistic entities by means of language, stems from a misunderstanding of "world", an ontological misunderstanding which presumes that "world" has always existed in a meaningful and ordered state.

If the concept of an ontology independent of language disappears from consideration; if in its place one accepts the concept that every ontology can be understood only as product of a language within the limits determined by that language; and if for this reason demonstrative literature abandons its direct referential connection to so-called "extra-linguistic reality"; then how can this

\(^7\)H. Heißenbüttel and H. Vormweg, p. 29.

literature still take a critical procedural stance vis-à-vis traditional language? Does demonstrative literature not employ for positive purposes the knowledge of having always lived in a linguistically mapped world by elevating linguistically determined meanings to the position of the basis of all experience?

If this were the case, demonstrative literature would be ignoring the historical experience of the crisis of validating linguistic models of interpretation, a crisis which in connection with the economic and political crises at the fin-de-siècle became particularly virulent in the activities of e.g., the Dadaists; it would be treating it as really no crisis at all. In this way demonstrative literature would be severing the thread of common experience with referential literature. In fact the system of prefabricated, linguistically bequeathed certainties has become fragile for demonstrative writers too. The response to the experience of a loss of reality of the inherited, linguistic-ordering patterns is for demonstrative writers neither Chandos' retreat into the realm of silence and subjective experience (sinnliche Gewissheit), nor Holz' connection to that which is objectively detailable, nor Celan's urgent attempt to say the unsayable.

These responses entail reference to extra-linguistic entities. Turning to inherited linguistic forms suggests that language-critical literature cannot pretend that there is a standpoint outside of traditional language from which language criticism can be exercised. Language criticism which must be stated explicitly in
language remains bound to the prejudicial structure of language.19 Only by reflecting on the prejudicial structure of language can the criticism become free to overcome mistaken consciousness, which considers itself independent of language. Heißenbüttel states:

....als falsches Bewußtsein erweist sich heute weniger das von Vorurteilen Verfälschte; falsches Bewußtsein wäre vielmehr das, das nicht darauf Rücksicht nimmt, daß jedes Sprechen, jede Benutzung irgendeiner Vokabel bereits einen Kompromiß bedeutet mit dem in der Sprache gespeicherten Vorurteilen.20

But how can one take into consideration this compromise of all speech without this leading to subservience to the linguistic forms to be criticized? For, on the one hand, consideration must not lead to rehabilitation of language which creates mistaken consciousness—avoiding such rehabilitation would be the duty of the language-critical standpoint—and, on the other hand, it must not ignore the fact that mind exists a priori in language—that would lead to the referential view of language, which according to Oswald Wiener, considers

....dogmatisch die sprache als bestandteil der wirklichkeit, denn als wiederspiegelung ist die das, und nicht die wirklichkeit als insinuation der sprache betrachtet: die wirklichkeit als 'wiederspiegelung' der sprache.21

Demonstrative criticism, which on the one hand must preserve the historical experience of the crisis of validation within itself,


20H. Heißenbüttel and H. Vormweg, Briefwechsel, pp. 26f.

21Oswald Wiener, die verbesserung, p. CXXXVIII.
and on the other hand cannot ignore the power of language as consti-
tuter of objects, must maneuver between the dangerous extremes: the
negation of the linguistic translation of world experience on the one
hand and the task of the language-critical standpoint on the other.
To appreciate the difficulty of maneuvering between dangerous
extremes, demonstrative criticism and thought must be seen in its
historical, social, philosophical and ethnolinguistic development.
The presentation of this development is the task of section 2. Before
entering into the historical overview, there is one final item to be
mentioned: the practical goal of demonstrative criticism.

Demonstrative language criticism does not propound a parti-
cular linguistic reality which it considers ideal. Only in a very
unspecific sense does demonstrative language criticism entail a
challenge to produce something positive. It suggests rather a
linguistic practice which should be different from that which is
demonstrated critically, but it does not indicate what this practice
should be.
2.1 Problem of Communication to Middle of the 18th Century

The two centuries in which we see developing the crisis of reality-interpreting systems which identify and validate objects, the crisis of language, are short in relation to the historical span of language. Recent anthropological and linguistic hypotheses put at ca. 100,000 years ago the emergence of characteristically human speech. George Steiner notes:

That articulate speech should be the line dividing man from the myriad forms of animate being, that speech should define man's singular eminence above the silence of the plant and the grunt of the beast...is classic doctrine well before Aristotle.¹

To Aristotle man is a being of the word. But, as Socrates admonishes in the Platonic dialogue Cratylus, it is a riddle how man acquired language, a question worth asking to make man aware of his communicative genius, but not a question to which a certain answer lies in human reach.

Throughout the history of mankind, language has qualified man as rival to the gods: Nimrod's tower was built of words and Tantalus brought to earth in a vessel of words the secrets of the gods. Without language man is not man:

It may be that the entire image of 'linguistic gradualism', of a stage-by-stage advance from pre- or proto-linguistic

¹George Steiner, Language and Silence (New York: Atheneum, 1967), p. 36; Steiner's works on language have been of immense assistance in preparing this historical overview, but I do not claim total support for his doctrine.
man to the articulate being we know, is naive in the extreme. If the concepts of 'man' and of 'language' are interdependent for their existence, 'pre-language' man is a meaningless chimera. Man becomes man as he enters on a linguistic stage. At the outset, in the penumbra of diffuse, threatened identity, speech was probably focused inward; man declared himself only to himself. Verbal exchange, the partial release of the treasure of words into another man's hearing and keeping, may well have come much later. We shall never know.  

The origin of human speech will never be known. The reason for the multiplicity of human languages may be another moot, and to a great extent unaddressed, question. Estimates of the number of spoken languages vary from 3,000 to 5,000, not to mention the many "artificial languages" (cf. Appendix A), or restricted languages of the pure sciences. As early as the 16th century it was recognized certain knowledge of the world was reserved for purely scientific codes. Galileo emphasized the dominance of such codes:

Das Universum ist in mathematischer Sprache geschrieben und seine Buchstaben sind Dreiecke und Kreise und andere geometrische Formen.  

Non-scientific literary texts were of course of mature sophistication long before Galileo's pronouncement. That items in language are polysemic, for example, was known since the day when Odysseus used a linguistic pun to rout the Cyclops.

If human speech had attained such sophistication by ancient times, why then have so many varied and different languages emerged

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and survived? The notion, so prominent in the thought and writing of the great language mystics from Nicholas of Cusa to Jakob Böhme, that a secret primal speech, an Ur-Sprache from before Babel, underlies the multitude of human tongues, persists into the language theories of Jorge Luis Borges and Noam Chomsky. The linguistics of Chomsky could account for a world in which men would all be speaking one language, diversified at most by dialect elements. But the fact that Chomsky's linguistics function best in reference to such a one-language world is probably its basic weakness, although his assertion that all known languages are cut from the same pattern has medieval precedent:

To the twelfth-century relativism of Pierre Hélie, with his belief that the catastrophe at Babel had generated as many kinds of irreconcilable grammars as there are languages, Roger Bacon opposed his axiom of fundamental unity: 'Grammatica una et eadem est secundum substantiam in omnibus linguis, licet accidentaliter varietur.' Without a grammatica universalis there can be no hope of genuine communication among peoples, nor any rational science of language. The accidental, historically moulded differences between tongues are, no doubt, striking. But underlying these there are principles of constraints, of invariance, of articulate relation which govern the character of all human speech.\(^4\)

Still there emerges no serious and sustained discourse on the multiplicity of human tongues.

Regardless of the number of languages or their origin(s), the primacy of the word, of that which can be spoken and communicated in discourse, is characteristic of human thought since the time of Greek and Judaic genius and was carried over into Christianity. The great tomes of literature bear witness to the belief that almost all truth

and reality can be encompassed by the walls of language (*in principio erat verbum*). Within this primacy of the word, there has always been a varying balance between speech and the unspoken, between outward verbalization and inward silence. In certain Oriental metaphysics, in Buddhism and Taoism, the highest, purest reach of the contemplative act is that which has learned to leave language behind. The myth of the philosopher who consciously chooses silence has antique precedent. Spoken speech constitutes only a part of the totality of discourse, while internal speech (e.g., self-address, thought, dreams) accounts for a greater part of the semantic whole. According to Jean Piaget,

"...internal speech precedes audible public utterance, passing from a first stage of 'autism', through 'egocentrism' to a gradual apprehension of and response to the outside world. Vygotsky argues otherwise, suggesting that internal language is a relatively late borrowing from external discourse, and that its aetiology relates to the individual's discovery of a hostile or 'non-answering' reality."

But since as early as the 14th century, mankind has been warned of the dangers of superfluous spoken words, e.g., Thomas a Kempis' *De Imitatione Christi* (1470), a citation occurring in Musil's diary. There is indication that from the 14th to the 17th or early 18th century, there appeared a wealth and discipline of unspoken discourse of which modern man has only a vague notion. The shift in

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balance of discourse since this time has been outward.

There is another aspect of the relationship between language (spoken or not) and thought which has antique precedent and which eludes clear explanation: the connection between words and objects. Plato's Cratylos serves again as the best-known debate. Hermogenes contends that there is a conventional allocation of words as signifiers. Cratylos (Plato) states that there is a natural connection between word and thing signified. But there is no question of the limits of language or of the relationship between thought and language. Still the idea that all cognition (thought), the process by which man perceives, and relates to, the world, is basically a matter of language and its structure occurs as early as the 11th century.

Peter Damian argued that thought was based on the structures of language and suggested that even man's fall into paganism was for reason of a grammatical flaw: because (heathen) speech has a plural for the word deity, mankind came to conceive of many gods.7

Many basic aspects of modern linguistics, the discussions of language origins, language versus reality, language versus thought, spoken versus unspoken language, surfaced but remained unproblematic until the 17th century. Until the 17th century the sphere of language encompassed nearly the whole of experience and reality. The language of Shakespeare belonged to a stage of history in which words were in natural control of experienced life. Words verified and

7George Steiner, Extraterritorial, p. 74.
validated known existence. When in the course of the 17th century existence became too complicated, significant areas of truth, reality, and action receded from the sphere of verbal statement. The grammarians of Port Royal (Chomskyan precursors) charted some of the problem.8

The problem of concern here continues to be unresolved today: the extension of mathematics and mathematical linguistic codes over great areas of thought and action. It broke the western consciousness into what C. P. Snow called "the two cultures". Leibniz could still feel at home in the humanistic and the mathematical cultures, but soon the chasm between the languages of words and of mathematics became visible. Nowhere did this chasm become more obvious than in philosophy.

The turning point occurs... with Descartes' implicit identification of truth and mathematical proof, and above all, with Spinoza.... There is scarcely a brand of modern philosophy in which we do not find the numerals, italicized letters, radicals, and arrows with which the symbolic logician seeks to replace the shopworn and rebellious host of words.9

Besides the growing split into two cultures, at least one other phenomenon, already focused on in the quote from Goethe in the Introduction, probably aggravated the recession of the language of words from the expanse of existence:

Die Klassiker hatten die deutsche Sprache zu einer vergeistigten, veredelten Hochsprache emporgehoben, die fortan so sehr als unüberbietbares Vorbild angesehen wurde,

8George Steiner, Extraterritorial, p. x.

Grillparzer bekennen müßte: 'Ich möchte, wür's möglich, stehen bleiben, wo Schiller und Goethe stand.'...Das bewährte Vorbild müßte zum Klischee erstarren, nachdem es pädagogisiert war und schließlich hundertfach aus hochstilisierten Festreden in der Öffentlichkeit ertönte.

Generations of writers fed off the ideas, vocabulary, phrases and sentence structure, without invigorating the language with sustained, original work in literary language. There was, though, basic, substantial research begun and sustained beginning just after the middle of the 18th century:

The short years between Herder's writing and those of Wilhelm von Humboldt were among the most productive in the history of linguistic thought. Sir William Jones' celebrated Third Anniversary Discourse on the Hindus of 1786 initiated modern Indo-European philology. Schlegel's Ueber die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier (1808) helped to disseminate Jones' ideas and did much to establish the concepts of comparative grammar. In 1813, Mme. de Staël's De l'Allemagne gave wide currency to the theory that there were crucial, formative interactions between a language (in this case German) and the history, political institutions, and psychology of a people.

In these years and those immediately following is found the germ for most subsequent avenues of work in language.

2.2 Hamann, Herder, Humboldt, Romantics, French Symbolists, Neo-Romantics

The 17th century had already heard from Spinoza that philosophy was experiencing a dilemma: philosophers were attempting to use language to clarify language. In his Ethica (published posthumously in 1677), he showed that language is not a road to demonstrable truth,


11George Steiner, On Difficulty, pp. 140f.
but rather a spiral or gallery of mirrors bringing the intellect back to its point of departure. The late 17th century heard from Leibniz that language was not the vehicle of thought but rather its determining medium.\textsuperscript{12} With the exception of these two philosophers, philosophy before Hamann, Herder and Humboldt placed language in a secondary role, emphasizing that language acquired meaning only in reference to something from outside it which it represented or transmitted. Language became the central issue in literature only a century after it was thematised in philosophy because the literati understood language as the vehicle of thought. Not until writers became aware of the discrepancy between traditional language forms and a reality which does not correspond to it does literature too thematise language.

As Saße points out:

Erst von Hamann, für den 'das ganze Vermögen zu denken... auf Sprache' beruht, und von Herder, dessen Überzeugung es ist, 'daß wir ohne Gedanken nicht denken können, und durch Worte denken lernen', wird die Sprache aus ihrer dienenden Rolle der Abbildung der vorher erkannten Realität befreit und ins Zentrum der Überlegungen zur Erkenntnisgewinnung gestellt. Herder vollzieht in seinen Arbeiten die entscheidende Blickwendung, indem er gegen die Auffassung von der Sprache als eines passiven Mediums ihre aktive Funktion im Bildungsprozeß des Menschen betont. 'Sie ist ein Factor im synthetischen Aufbau des Bewußtseins selbst, kraft dessen sich die Welt der sinnlichen Empfindungen erst zu einer Welt der Anschauung gestaltet: sie ist somit keine Sache, die hervorgebracht wird, sondern eine Art und eine Bestimmtheit des geistigen Zeugens und Bildens.' Durch sie bestimmt sich der Mensch zum individuellen Selbst. Die Sprache wird folglich als Ermöglichung der Individualität und nicht als ihre Fessel angesehen.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{12}George Steiner, \textit{On Difficulty}, p. 138.

\textsuperscript{13}Günter Saße, \textit{Sprache und Kritik}, p. 91.
For Herder man is a creature of language. Similarly, Humboldt felt that language does not accommodate itself to the systematically arranged world. The world arranges itself systematically according to the patterns of language.14

In opposition to the traditional concept of language, Humboldt ascribes to language a central role in the acquisition, formation, and transmission of knowledge:

Die Vorstellung, dass die verschiedenen Sprachen nur dieselbe Masse der unabhängig von ihnen vorhandenen Gegenstände und Begriffe mit andren Wörtern bezeichnen und diese nach andren Gesetzen, die aber, ausser ihrem Einfluss auf das Verständnis, keine weitere Wichtigkeit besitzen, an einander reihen, ist, ehe er tiefer über die Sprache nachdenkt, dem Menschen zu natürlich, als dass er sich leicht davon losmachen könnte. Er verschmäht das im Einzelnen so klein und geringfügig, als blosse grammatische Spitzfindigkeit Erscheinende, und vergisst, dass die sich anhäufende Masse dieser Einzelheiten ihn doch, ihm selbst ganz unbewusst, beschränkt und beherrscht.15

Humboldt, however, does not take the step to the intersubjectivity of language usage (language games) as the prerequisite for the possibility of knowledge. This next logical step is taken only later by the mature Wittgenstein. Humboldt remains snared in the subject-object relationship of the classical transcendental theory of knowledge predominant until Humboldt's time. Humboldt lamented the

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impotence of an individual in face of tradition, of his linguistic inertia:

Wenn man bedenkt, wie auf die jedesmalige Generation in einem Volke Alles das bindend einwirkt, was die Sprache desselben alle vorigen Jahrhunderte hindurch erfahren hat, ... so wird klar, wie gering eigentlich die Kraft des Einzelnen gegen die Macht der Sprache ist.16

Humboldt felt that man was held captive within the confines of language and could gain no access to an extra-linguistic realm:

Durch denselben Act, vermöge welches der Mensch die Sprache aus sich heraus spinnt, spinnt er sich in dieselbe ein, und jede Sprache zieht um die Nation, welcher sie angehört, einen Kreis, aus dem es nur insofern hinauszugehen möglich ist, als man zugleich in den Kreis einer andren Sprache hinübertritt.17

Within this linguistic realm and by means of it, man can discover previously unknown truths. Language is the only verifiable and a priori framework of cognition. Our perceptions result from the imposition of that framework on the total, unorganized flux of sensations. Language is the formative organ of thought, which Humboldt saw divided into a prelinguistic phase and its subsequent linguistic manifestation. One familiar with modern linguistic discussions will sense a similarity here to not only Heißenbüttel's work (already documented above), but also to that of Edward Sapir and his student Benjamin Whorf.18

16 Wilhelm von Humboldt, Gesammelte Schriften, 6/I, p. 182.


There is one other figure from the 18th century whose name surfaces regularly in linguistic discussions, Georg Christoph Lichtenberg. His language-critical thinking has earned him the admiration of Heißenbüttel, Wittgenstein, and Karl Kraus. Lichtenberg understood the relation between linguistic forms and forms of life (cf. Wittgenstein), and that there were definite limits to the realm of language.19

Probably the most important effect German Romanticism had on the crisis of language in literature moved through France and eventually back to Vienna. From Novalis, Richard Wagner, and others to Mallarmé and the Symbolists grew the realization that literature consists exclusively of language, not of ideas, images, etc.; that is, that language itself is reality without referring to or representing anything outside itself.20 Vietta argues that Baudelaire's emphasis on the musicality of language and his use of language for its synesthethic powers (especially with morbid topics) strongly influenced the Symbolists, especially Arthur Rimbaud. But Mallarmé, who absorbed German Romantic ideas primarily through the music of Richard Wagner,21 was most influential through his weekly "lectures" at his residence from 1885-1894. Beda Alleman22 credits Mallarmé with

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primary influence on the linguistic views of Rilke (A.) and Hofmannsthal. Hermann Bahr (A.) journeyed through much of France and is supposed to have attended some of Mallarmé's evenings. He returned to Vienna in 1889 bearing the gospel of French Symbolism. The views of Romanticism translated through Symbolism are known as Neo-Romanticism. Under this rubric are usually placed, besides Bahr, primarily Rilke and Hofmannsthal. Rilke and Hofmannsthal will be discussed below after the foundation has been laid for an understanding of Modernist linguistic thought.

2.3 Birth of Modernism: Holz, Hauptmann, Expressionists, Dadaists, Futurists, Surrealists

The term "modern" is of course valid in only a relative sense. The Young Germans were among the most recent groups to use it, and they used it to indicate a revulsion to classical, traditional aspects of politics and literature. Egon Wolff and Hermann Bahr rejuvenated the term in 1890 in reference to Naturalism, but still with a similarly rebellious semantic intent. There is no single, simple, all-encompassing definition. Here it is employed to denote the era of crisis in Western civilization, the era of the crisis of language, of reality-validating and reality-interpreting systems. For the individual sensitive to historical motion, in the discussion here the writer, it is an era of permanent exile, of persistent disillusionment at the course of human existence and the "advance" of capitalism and

the industrial revolution. It is an era of radical breaking from literary tradition, of the destruction of promise of contextual meaning and the search for new words and syntactical patterns. Writers have interpreted the events leading up to and the significance of the modernist crisis from various perspectives. Hoffmann-Herreros sees cyclical forces at work, what he terms the "Wechselwirkung von religiöser Erfahrung und Sprache:"


The religious instigation for linguistic creativity had vanished leaving behind only the clichés of earlier inspired eras, as Nietzsche commented:

Ich fürchte, wir werden Gott nicht los, weil wir noch an die Grammatik glauben.25


Nietzsche is of course lamenting the persistence of religiosity and its stranglehold on even the most fundamental of man's possessions, his language.

Most writers agree that the artist and society suffered drastic mutual disenchantment resulting from the transformation of visionary elements of the Enlightenment, the Sturm und Drang in the German-speaking realm, and the French Revolution into the philistine forces of industrialization and mercantilism of the 19th century. Lange sees this disenchantment effecting a basic artistic relocation:

...the most dramatic shift of purpose and perspective in modern art has been the change from an effort to represent the concrete world about us to an accounting, both analytical and imaginative, of the process of consciousness by which the virtual world of art is produced. A singularly striking consequence of this shift has been the manner in which language has ceased to be merely the object of conscientious qualitative scrutiny and has become the very topic of poetry and fiction.²⁶

And as the topic of literature, language and the metamorphosis of the relationship between man and language have been given a pessimistic diagnosis. Meier presents this diagnosis with concision when she writes of

...eine geistige Erfahrung, die vielleicht zu den charakteristischsten unseres Jahrhunderts gehört: Die Erfahrung der Sprachnot, des Versagens der Sprache... Dieser Verlust der Herrschaft über der Sprache, der Zugleich den Verlust des gewohnten Verfügens über die Dinge bedeutet, wurde mit der Jahrhundertwende fühlbar und seitdem immer deutlicher diagnostiziert....'Die Erscheinungen sind uns tödliche,' heißt es nun bei Thomas Bernhard, 'und die

Wörter, mit welchen wir aus Verlassenheit hantieren....Die Wörter, an die wir uns anklammern, weil wir aus Ohnmacht verrückt und aus Verrücktheit verzweifelt sind, die Wörter infizieren und ignorieren, verwischen und verschlimmern, beschämen und verflüchten und verkrüppeln und verdüstern und verfinstern nur.'27

What we see developing here is logophobia, with language in revolt against its former master. Such anarchy in the realm of literacy elicited oppositional efforts which amounted to a fundamental critique of language and writing:

In the period from Rimbaud and Mallarmé to Dada and Surrealism an anti-language movement springs up from inside literature. Bored by the oppressive eloquence and perfections of the past, the new iconoclasts and experimenters sought to recreate the word, to find in new verbal and syntactic forms intact resources of exactitude, of magic, of sub-conscious energy. The Dada demand for an end to the word is at once nihilistic—man cannot be renewed if he keeps his worn skin of speech—and aesthetic. It calls for the discovery of hitherto unexploited phonetic, iconic, and semiological means. A second current of doubt is that which stems from formal logic and the work of logical positivism and of Wittgenstein. It is one of the major effects of modern philosophy....to have made language look messier, more fragile, less comfortably concordant with our needs, than before. The confidence in the medium which animates earlier philosophic monuments....is simply no longer available. A third impulse to linguistic scepticism comes from the enormous expansion of exact sciences. An ever-increasing portion of sensory and conceptual reality has passed into the keeping of the non-verbal semantic systems of mathematics. A modern writer can deal precisely, and in relevant idiom, with far less of natural fact and intellectual analysis than could Shakespeare, Milton, or Pope. The fourth aspect is that first investigated by Karl Kraus and George Orwell: the cheapening, the dehumanization, the muddling of words through the mass media and through the lies of barbarism in modern politics. This brutalization and profanation of the word is very probably one of the main causes for the tide of self-destruction, either through self-imposed silence or actual

27"Vorwort," Elisabeth Meier, ed., Sprachnot und Wirklichkeitszerfall (Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1972), pp. 7f.
suicide, which has come over Western literature from the time of Nerval and Rimbaud to that of...Paul Celan....Taken together, these attacks on traditional literacy, on the transcendental view of the artist's and thinker's enterprise, and on the validity of language, constitute a fundamental critique of the book. It is not so much a 'counterculture' which is being developed, but an 'after-culture.'

The modern era, then, is one of existential difficulties, of the problematic functioning of basic human existence. Saße titled his work appropriately: Sprache und Kritik. Untersuchung zur Sprachkritik der Moderne.

Arno Holz demonstrated a linguistic sensitivity and an awareness of the impending language crisis in his long poem "Phantasus" and in Die neue Wortkunst (1889). He was a quixotic personality and the often contradictory directions of his artistic theory and work indicate this. Heissenbüttel and Franz Mon, among other "konkreter" writers, have praised Holz as a precursor to "konkreter" art for reason of his visual arrangements in the "Phantasus." But by and large, as has been indicated in 1.1, Holz remained bound to the schizo-linguistic viewpoint of referential language criticism.

Although Hauptmann succeeded in applying the concept of "konsequenter Naturalismus" (from Holz and Johannes Schlaf) to the creation of realistic, often dialect flavor in the language of his plays, he was not a driving force in the crisis of language. Not only did he not see through the self-limiting logic of the referential

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28George Steiner, On Difficulty, pp. 195f.

position, but he remained a linguistic conservative so firmly that his language eventually served as a model of untainted pre-20th-century German for those writers suffering through the linguistic chaos precipitated by Nazi language distortion. Johannes Becher expressed Hauptmann's position:

...gerade nach der faschistischen Sprachverwilderung wurde seine Stimme als Gradmesser betrachtet, um das Echte vom Falschen zu scheiden. 30

But even the linguistic conservatives were affected by the general atmosphere of crisis in art. Hauptmann based his view of language on that of Plato:

Auch für mich enthält der niedergeschriebene Gedanke weniger als der Unausgesprochene, und dieser wiederum scheint mir begrenzter als das Gefühl, dem er entsprang. 31

And he was steadfast in his faith in language:

...das nenne ich der Sprache bestes Teil, daß sie dem Schiffe gleich auf hohem Meer, zwar nicht tiefverborgenen Gründe sieht, allein doch kann dorthin den Anker werfen. 32

Still he realized that his faith rested on a less than solid base:

...es geht mir mit der Sprache so, als glitte ich über eine dünne Eisdecke dahin, die gerade noch trägt. 33

This seems to be as close as Hauptmann came to being in step with the underlying currents in contemporary art. He also failed to recognize

32 Hilscher, p. 496.
33 Ziolkowski, p. 304.
the specter of National Socialism in its true character: he remained quietly in the German-speaking realm throughout the Nazi reign.

The underlying currents of art contemporary to Hauptmann eroded the traditional base of society and art. Society moved toward World War I; literary art moved toward a poetry of structured debris. Literary Expressionism was probably the first formalization of linguistic revolt. Expressionist techniques remained for the most part within the realm of intelligibility. Language (grammar, syntax) was often the topic of poetry, e.g., Becher's "Die neue Syntax." Language was pared down to the bare necessities in what has been labelled Telegrammstil. The most radical works of literary Expressionism were produced by August Stramm, and these under the influence of Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and the Futurists.

Futurism was strongest and most enthusiastically received in Italy and Moscow, but there is no doubt that Marinetti's program shaped Stramm's poetry. Marinetti suggested, for example, the serialization of substantives, the use of unconjugated verbs, the suppression of adjectives and adverbs, the de-emphasis of punctuation and logical syntax, and the use of direct comparisons instead of similes and metaphors. Stramm's poem "Urtod" is a good example employing most of Marinetti's suggestions: it consists of a vertical

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34 Mayakovsky, Shershenevich, Severyanin, Khlebnikov, Kručenyx, the Hylean poets, are the most commonly mentioned of the Russian writers.

arrangement of the words Raum/Zeit/Raum alternating with groups of three infinitives. Only the use of whole words binds it to everyday or poetic language practices.

The Futurists (particularly the Italians) insisted that Dada was no more than a formalization of Futurist ideas and activities. While there is a relationship between Dada and the Futurists (especially the Cubo-Futurists), much of Dada is original, so original, in fact, that one authority has insisted that

...it now seems probable that the entire modernist current, right to the present day, to minimalist art and the happening, to the "freak-out" and aleatory music, is a footnote, often mediocre and second-hand, to Dada. The verbal, theatrical, and artistic experiments conducted first in Zürich in 1915-17 and then extended to Cologne, Munich, Paris, Berlin, Hannover, and New York constitute one of the few undoubted revolutions or fundamental 'cuts' in the history of the imagination.36

Dada marked a break with all literary tradition. The reason for this radical breaking with the past was without doubt World War I: its propagandistic preparation and the control of culture which this implies,37 and the gradual revelation that the truths presented as reasons for going to war were in fact lies. As a manifesto Hugo Ball wrote of Dada and the Kabarett Voltaire in Zürich in 1915:

Unser Kabarett ist eine Geste. Jedes Wort, das hier gesprochen und gesungen wird, besagt wenigstens das eine, daß es dieser erniedrigenden Zeit nicht gelungen ist, uns Respekt abzunötigen. Was wäre auch respektabel und


37 Most of the Expressionists and the Futurists glorified war as an existential purge.
imponierend an ihr? Ihre Kanonen? Unsere große Trommel
übertönt sie. Ihr Idealismus? Er ist längst zum Gelächter
geworden, in seiner populären und seiner akademischen
Ausgabe. Die grandiosen Schlachtfeste und kannibalischen
Heldentaten? Unsere freiwillige Torheit, unsere Begeisterung
für die Illusion wird sie zuschanden machen.38

Much of the "Torheit" that Ball was speaking of took place in the
streets in the form of "Aktionen" and much of it was meant to be
experienced visually, e.g., the clothes-iron with nails protruding
from it. But some of it was linguistic, a reaction to the shop-worn
inventory of speech. Quite literally new words and syntactic modes
had to be created. The sound poems ("Lautgedichte") are interesting
and attractive works of language, and contain a humor absent from far
too much artistic work. Ball's "karawane" or Kurt Schwitter's "Sonate"
retain their uniqueness even today. But the sound poems remain within
the realm of literature. The Textcollages, which leave this realm,
are based on three actions: the destruction of contextual connections,
the removal of certain particles from the context, and the placement of
them into a new context:

Nimm eine Zeitung. Nimm eine Schere. Suche einen Artikel aus
von der Länge des Gedichts, das du machen willst. Schneide den
Artikel aus. Dann schneide jedes seiner Wörter aus und tue sie
in einen Beutel. Schütttele ihn sanft. Dann nimm die
Schnitzel heraus, einen nach dem anderen. Kopiere sie
gewissenhaft in der Reihenfolge, wie sie den Beutel
verließen.39

It is important to comprehend what has been accomplished here. Through


39Tristan Tzara, "Seven Dada Manifestoes," R. Motherwell, ed.,
The Dada Painters and Poets (New York: Willenborn, Schultz, Inc.,
1951), 73-97, p. 92.
the inclusion of as yet unwrought language particles, which are not integrated into a context, the division between objective reality and its representation becomes perforated. This results in the reduction of the distance between objective reality and its representation. The mimetic function of literature is bound to the maintenance of this distance. This objective reality is a sham, second-hand reality:

Diese wird dem Subjekt durch die Medien—etwa die Zeitung—so sehr zur ersten, daß es der ersten entfremdet, diese hinter der dargestellten Wirklichkeit gar nicht mehr vermißt und das sprachliche Surrogat für unmittelbare Wirklichkeit hält.40

The Dada Textcollages draw attention away from objective reality and destroy the surrogate reality: focus is on the reality of language.

A basic concept at work in the Textcollages is that of randomness, and it is this concept which connects Futurism, Dadaism, Surrealism, and several peripheral uncohesive areas of activity at this time in history. It is at work in the "automatic writing" of Surrealism, which dates back to the experiments by Gertrude Stein and others at Harvard in 1896, to the "trance poetry" of Yeats and of the French Decadent movement of the 1880's. André Breton described "automatic writing" in reference to the first such extended work, Les Champs magnétiques, a collaborative work by him and Phillip Soupault:

Elle (l'écrire automatique) n'exprime pas à proprement parler l'inconscient, mais un élément fluide, mourant et pur, générateur de la pensée et du langage, réservoir inépuisable d'images, que nous appellerons la 'source'. La source est un

The point was to continuously accelerate their writing speed so as to slowly shut off the conscious control of language and to finally capture the inner flow of the mind. The flow of words did not have to make sense as such.\textsuperscript{42} James Joyce is the classical reference for a similar style which he employed in the last section of \textit{Ulysses} (1922) and to a much greater extreme in \textit{Finnegans Wake} (1939). Surrealism, "lettrisme" (in France, the use of letters to destroy words), and "konkret" poetry have extended the Dada revolt of language and have gone forward to break the association not only between words and sense, but between semantic signs and that which can be spoken. Some of this poetry is solely for the eye.

2.4 The Peculiar Demise of the Austro-Hungarian Empire

The Habsburg Monarchy, the Dual Monarchy, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, or simply Austria, as it has variously been titled,\textsuperscript{43} had been created over three hundred years before, stretching from the Po valley to the Carpathians, to protect Europe from the marauding Turks. It had been quietly fossilizing ever since. "My realm," Franz Joseph

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{41}Sarane Alexandrian, \textit{Le surrealisme et la r\^eve} (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), p. 71.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{42}Jack Kerouac and other "phonic" writers adopted a similar approach much later (Richard W. Hall, "Phonic Literature—A New Sound for a New Age," \textit{English Journal}, 62 (1973), No. 3, 386-392, p. 387).}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{43}No official name was ever decided on; cf. William Johnston, pp. llff.}
remarked, "resembles a worm-eaten house. If one part is removed, one cannot tell how much will fall," and fall it did in 1918. The stability of its society, with its delight in pomp, was one expression of a petrified formality which was barely capable of disguising the cultural chaos that lay beneath it. On closer scrutiny all its surface glories turned to their opposite: this was a fundamental truth about all aspects of life in the Empire. Austria was only an extreme case of a more general phenomenon. Its characteristic distortions and artificialities are reproduced in miniature wherever similar conditions and relationships exist. In the middle of the 19th century, Friedrich Hebbel could state:

Dies Österreich ist eine kleine Welt, In der die große ihre Probe hält. At the turn-of-the-century Karl Kraus (A.) referred to it as the "proving-ground for world destruction," and in a 1977 interview, Martin Esslin (A.) reëmphasized this sentiment:

Austria was the first major cultural center of Western Europe to collapse. So that everything that happened in France after 1940, in America after Vietnam, in England after 1945, happened in Austria after 1918. In the period between 1900 and 1918, Austria was the turntable of Europe.

The demise of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was peculiar in the deceptive combination of light-heartedness and doom, what Hermann


46Appendix A.
Broch (A.) referred to as the "fröhliche Apokalypse". The year 1848 marked a turning point for all of Europe:

After 1848 ideologies spread in Austria like an infectious disease. They emerged from the stagnant waters of discontent which the unfinished revolution had left behind. Unrealized political desires rationalized themselves into bogus systems of political thought, and emotional frustration developed into mental hysteria. Go-getting journalists stirred Austrian Urgenmitlichkeit into paroxysms of discomfort, and the lower strata of alpine feeble-mindedness worked their way to the surface and became politically conscious. Hungarian pig-breeders and Viennese stockbrokers struggled for an intellectual articulation of their demands for greater profits. From the ethnical hotch-potch of the Sudeten Germans sprang the doctrine of racial purity, and racially pure but cosmopolitan Jews became ardent propagandists of the Teutonic mythology of Richard Wagner. In a pandemonium of Gemütlichkeit and confused political aspirations, where commercial travellers hobnobbed with Geist, priests with corrupt journalists, bankers with saviors of the people, and advertising agents with artists, the last remnants of Austrian culture dissolved.

This description by Heller (A.) paints a picture of collapse and confusion similar to that in Kraus' 800-page pastiche Die letzten Tage der Menschheit (1917).

Any account of this era in Western history, be its approach statistical or interpretive, must emphasize various forces of disintegration. For example, throughout most of the 19th century, there were within the Empire twelve constituent peoples (Germans, Ruthenes, Italians, Slovaks, Rumanians, Czechs, Poles, Magyars, Slovenes, Croats, Transylvanian Saxons and Serbs), each with its preferred language or languages. High German had been the official language of the Empire

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since 1784, although there were great lapses in enforcement of the proclamation. German served as the lingua franca for all but the most recalcitrant nationalists. In the military the language of command (Dienstsprache) at the rank of major and below was German, which meant that many non-German-speaking officers had to command with a 70-word vocabulary. The aristocracy was concentrated in Vienna and its environs in some eighty families. They were interrelated, visited often, and knew the details of their lives so well that they communicated in half-spoken words, what is termed Schönbrunnerdeutsch, a refinement of Viennese dialect. Meanwhile the individuals of the citizenry lived and thought in a dialect of their preferred language. Linguistic uniformity was a sham. Robert Musil coined the term Kakania in his historical novel of the fall of the Empire, Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften. The term combines two senses on different levels. On the surface it is a coinage from the initials K.K. or K.u.K., standing for Kaiserlich-Königlich or Kaiserlich und Königlich, which distinguished all the major institutions of the Empire. But to anyone familiar with German-language nursery speech, it carries also the secondary sense of Excrementia or Shitland.

The combination of several general and popular socio-artistic theories is appropriate here both to shed more light on the inner movement of disintegration and simply to document the existence of the

49William Johnston, pp. 17f.

50William Johnston, p. 51.
theories. The concept of Biedermeier, an epithet created in 1859 by
the Swabian humorist Ludwig Eichrodt, very well conveys Austria's
enduring combination of political resignation with aesthetic pleasure
and Catholic piety. Biedermeier, a law-abiding, serene schoolmaster,
came to personify the apolitical bourgeois culture of the pre-1848
period. William Johnston emphasizes the concept of "therapeutic
nihilism", originally a medical term, denoting the systematic refusal
to prescribe remedies for fear of perpetuating quack cures. This
passive therapy was a prevalent Austrian attitude from mid-century on
and reinforced Biedermeier resignation. Johnston relates Biedermeier
to the Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft concept:

Biedermeier represents the waning years of unalloyed preindustrial society. To use a distinction coined by Ferdinand Tönnies in 1887, Biedermeier Austria preserved Gemeinschaft society, rural and cohesive, while thereafter her cities began to harbor the anonymous society of industrial capitalism that Tönnies called Gesellschaft. Tönnies contended, on the basis of having grown up in rural Schleswig before moving to Berlin, that each type of society implants complex attitudes. Persons dwelling in Gemeinschaft, on the one hand, shun competition in order to practice mutual support and to preserve common beliefs. Gesellschaft, on the other hand, individualizes its members by obliging them to compete; it breeds anxiety by unraveling close-knit bonds. The fact that Gemeinschaft survived in Austria up to 1870, unimpaired except by an occasional overzealous official, beguiled those who had to confront Gesellschaft thereafter.51

Biedermeier Austrian tendencies toward political resignation, aggra-
vated by therapeutic nihilism, avoided acceptance of real social move-
ment toward Gesellschaft and its inculcation into the social conscience.
Instead the general social force was toward the atavism and nostalgia

51William Johnston, p. 20.
The general populace, the bourgeoisie, fled confrontation with political reality into artistic activities. Johnston refers to this radical preference for art over political reality as aestheticism, to characterize the producers of art, and Phaeacianism, to designate the preference for merrymaking and make-believe that the Biedermeier enshrined. Aestheticism and Phaeacianism interacted in the outlook of most Austrian bourgeoisie, especially the Viennese. The persistence of these attitudes was aided by the economic growth of the third quarter of the century, the Gründerzeit. This period of industrial expansion created material fortunes on which the ensuing generations depended for leisure in which to pursue artistic interests and escapes.

For many art served as an escape route from social frustration, but many Austrians found no peaceful escape. These cases accounted for the abnormally high suicide rate. Between 1860 and 1938 (date of the Anschluß) an astonishing number of Austrian intellectuals committed suicide: Crown Prince Rudolf, Adalbert Stifter, Ferdinand von Saar and his wife, Ludwig Boltzmann (thermodynamician), Otto Mahler (Gustav’s brother), Georg Trakl, Otto Weininger, Eduard van der Nüll, Alfred Redl, General Baron Franz von Uchatius, Ferdinand Raimund, Ludwig Gumplowicz and his wife, Hofmannsthal's son, Schnitzler's daughter, Stefan Zweig, and three of Wittgenstein's

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52William Johnston, p. 115.

53Austria still ranks very high in suicides, especially in the 19-26 age range.
brothers (Hans, Rudi, and Kurt), and the list could continue. The fates
of these individuals reflect the condition of Austria: it was in the
grip of spiritual terror.

It is in the intellectual centers of Vienna and Prague that
Austrians reacted most strongly. The realization, reinforced by the
sense of imminent conflagration and world war, that humanism, as it had
supported European consciousness since the Renaissance, was in the
process of collapse, precipitated a revaluation of language, the basic
medium of a humane civilization. Kraus, Kafka, Mauthner, Wittgenstein,
Broch and many others analyzed the situation from their point of
reference. Their linguistic activities were supported by work else­
where. The practice of logical-semantic analysis we associate with
G. E. Moore and Bertrand Russell lent support from England. Russell
misread the Traktatus as corroborating his own work, and thus the
Vienna–Prague movement and Cambridge philosophy overlapped. Wittgen­
stein's academic, and to a certain extent personal, career reflects
this odd alliance. Other support came from the Moscow (later, Prague)
Circle of linguistic work, with its interest in the poetic aspects of
language. Through the teachings of Roman Jakobson, and others, the
study of morphology, grammar, and semantics was pursued more
vigorously.54

In 1915, a group of students at Moscow University founded the
Moscow Linguistic Circle. A year later, a number of young
philologists and literary historians started the Petersburg

54George Steiner, Extraterritorial, pp. 74f.
Society for the Study of Poetic Language. Roman Jakobson read his paper on 'Khlebnikov's Poetic Language'--a paper which foreshadowed almost the whole development of the current linguistic analysis of literature--Mayakovski was present. Poets such as Gumilev and Akhmatova were in close touch with the linguistic analyses of poetic syntax undertaken in Petersburg by Viktor Sklovski and Boris Eichenbaum. With the publication, in 1916, of a joint volume of Studies in the Theory of Poetic Language, the modern movement is fully under way.... Through his knowledge of Slavonic philology, of poetics, and of the new theories of language being developed by Saussure, Jakobson united in his own work the principal energies of the Formalist or linguistic-poetic approach. His treatise On Czech Verse, published in 1923, may be seen as the first instance of a methodical application of modern semantic.... criteria to a comparative analysis of the structure and effects of metrical patterns. The choice of language was no accident. With the increasing Marxist attacks on Formalism and Jakobson's own departure from the Soviet Union, the focus of linguistic poetics had shifted to Prague.... The Prague Linguistic Circle held its first meeting in October, 1926.... It is here that those concepts of structuralism and semiology which are now so fashionable were first set out.... It is in the Prague manifesto that concepts which are today banal were first formulated....

Linguistic activities of such proportion surely constitute a revolution of language centered in Austria.

The reasons that it is Austria where the revaluation of language is pursued with greatest intensity are manifold. The British geneticist C. D. Darlington has emphasized that outstandingly creative individuals tend to come from marriages between persons of widely disparate ancestry. By promoting fresh genetic combinations, outbreeding propagates both geniuses and misfits. During the late 19th century, the Habsburg Empire contained the most diverse gene pool, and

55George Steiner, Extraterritorial, pp. 137f.

interbreeding of races flourished. Thus there was abundant genius from a genetic standpoint.

One more characteristic of the intellectuals who began and promoted this revaluation of language must be emphasized here: the dominant role of Jews in this movement. Many influential intellectuals discussed here were Jews. The Jew seems to have had an especial affinity to the life of language. Most of the Viennese tabloids were produced and read by Jews, including Kraus' *Die Fackel*. Without this audience interested in witticisms and novelty, Austrian literature would probably not have flourished at that time or after World War II. Johnston provides some interesting details:

In Hebrew, vowels are transcribed not by letters of an alphabet but by diacritical marks, which are frequently omitted; speakers of that language encounter infinite opportunities for puns. Any Jew who has learned to read Hebrew without diacritical marks must have developed a keen eye for every sort of wordplay. This exercise....stimulates Jewish wit, schooling Jewish writers to make associations implausible for gentiles....Facility with language....became part of every Jew's psychic armor.

An inordinate number of Jews were prime forces in the Austrian linguistic movement. One could maintain with confidence that it was the Jewish intellectuals who epitomized the estrangement between writer

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58William Johnston, pp. 24f.
and society which pervaded Austria after the mid-19th century.

2.41 Nestroy

Johann Nestroy was from an earlier era, dying in 1862, but Karl Kraus was so enamored of his linguistic insight that his work can be treated as contemporary to that of Kraus. His plays were witty satires and parodies of Viennese life. The basis of his humor was his sensitivity for the nuances of ordinary spoken language, the idiomatic language of the Austrian aristocrats, bourgeoisie and peasants. He combined Viennese idiom and High German into revealing similes, metaphors, mixed-up proverbs and strange figures of speech. Josef Weinheber, himself an Austrian poet, observed that Nestroy's great achievement had been to

....confront the Viennese with the High German which at that time still sounded very foreign and stilted and so seek his comic effects out of a linguistic tension, which is truly a work of genius because it has its roots right in the language.  

The foibles and hypocrisies of a character were actually demonstrated in the various distortions of his language.

2.42 Fin-de-siècle Vienna

The concentration of intellect and activity in Austria, especially Vienna at the turn of the century, was more formidable than most Western thinkers and writers and artists realize: it constituted the Western world of the 20th century in its infancy. The atmosphere of "Gay Vienna" was of a

59William Johnston, p. 126.
....society in which all established media, or means of expression—from the language of politics across the board to the principles of architectural design—had seemingly lost touch with their intended 'messages', and had been robbed of all capacity to perform their proper functions....Kraus called for a critique of language, as the crucial instrument of thought....Very soon it woke echoes in other fields of intellectual activity, and broadened into the demand for a critique of the means of expression used in all fields—for example, for a stripping-away of all that conventional and meaningless decoration with which sentimentality had encumbered the creative arts, so as to restore the expressive capacities they needed in order to fulfill their original and proper functions once again.60

Austrian work from this period in all media has remained of basic importance, if not accepted dogma, until the present. Wittgenstein is now considered the most important Western philosopher of the century. The adjective Freudian is practically a household word. The reign of classical music tonalities was severed by Schönberg. Modern man's existential predicament has no more vivid and constant demonstration than the lonely struggle of Gregor Samsa: "Kafkaesque" best describes the nightmare atmosphere of problematic existence in this century.

The following is a descriptive listing of Austrians working in Vienna and Prague at this time whose activities had significant impact on the forces at work in the language revolution.

Gustav Klimt (A., 1862-1918) was a radical innovator in art. In 1897 he emerged to lead the Viennese Secession, a group of rebellious artists who spurned the official painters' association to promote art nouveau (Berliner Jugendstil). He championed avant-garde painting and,

60Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin, p. 30.
thanks in part to him, art nouveau remained popular in Vienna longer than elsewhere. Like Arthur Schnitzler (A.), Klimt exposed the erotic depths beneath Viennese Phaeceanism.

Oskar Kokoschka (A., 1886-1980) was a student of Klimt. His paintings of this period are referred to as "black portraits", a reflection of the inner anxiety and pain of his subjects. He was also a successful poet and dramatist, known primarily for his Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen (1907), which is to a certain extent a dramatization of Otto Weininger's (A.) work Geschlecht und Charakter (1903), which indicated that women and Jews have no soul. Kokoschka was a therapeutic nihilist in extreme. In his writings he radically distorts word order, but he never penned his views on language.

Arnold Schönberg (A., 1874-1951) is considered one of the great artistic innovators of the 20th century, but his work was not well received in Vienna until later. His ideas on atonal music were perfected in the twelve-tone system about 1920. As in the works of Kraus and Adolf Loos (A.), Schönberg sought "purity through self-imposed limitation," for him the twelve-tone rows.

Fritz Mauthner (A., 1849-1923) was the first Austrian—perhaps the first thinker anywhere—to discredit metaphysics through a merciless analysis of language in his Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache (1901-1903). His linguistic awareness probably resulted from having

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62 William Johnston, p. 139.
been raised as a Jew in Bohemia where he learned three languages, German, Czech and Hebrew. He was a precursor to Wittgenstein in two of his ideas: language lacks the capacity to demarcate its own authority (i.e., referential criticism is illogical), and there is a realm of the unsayable which lies outside language. According to the latter concept, resolute thinkers must renounce speech, and in strict logic Mauthner ought to have kept silent about his silence. This is the same inconsistency which Hofmannsthal displays in the Chandos Brief.

Rainer (René) Maria Rilke (A., 1875-1926) grew up among the isolated German minority in Prague and probably developed his linguistic sensitivity from this isolation. Rilke deplored the random and unpoetic use of language. He once compared words used in everyday language to pliers which destroy whatever they attempt to grasp. Like Musil, Rilke greatly admired the Belgian Maurice Maeterlinck who had abandoned the theater of words for mime. In Rilke's mature works, the Duineser Elegien (1912-1923) and the Sonette an Orpheus (1923), he produced in vaulted style poetry approaching music, reminiscent of Hölderlin.

Robert Musil (A., 1880-1942) was a degreed psychologist. Like Hofmannsthal, he lamented the lost relationship between language and subjective experience. In his novella Die Verwirrung des Zöglings Törleß (1906), the denouement comes when Törleß is forced to explain

63 Saße, p. 59.
his intense (sexual) feelings to school authorities and finds it impossible. Language cannot express what is most immediate and real. In Musil's gigantic novel of the Habsburg Empire, *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (1930-1933), Diotima expresses the same difficulty to Arnheim:

> Die wahre Wahrheit zwischen zwei Menschen kann nicht ausgesprochen werden. Sobald wir sprechen, schließen sich Türen; das Wort dient mehr den unwirklichen Mitteilungen, man spricht in den Stunden, wo man nicht lebt.64

Arthur Schnitzler (A., 1862-1931), as physician and poet, straddled two vastly different modes of perception and sets of values. The theme which pervaded his work was the problem of communication. The personal aspect of this problem was reflected in casual and meaningless sex (*Reigen, Anatol*); the social aspect in anti-Semitism (*Professor Bernhardi*). As he wrote to a friend:

> ....we do not think in words nor in pictures, but in something we cannot grasp. If we could grasp it, we would have a world language....The musician speaks a universal language. Emotion is universal. Thought is individual and untranslatable.65

No less than his contemporary Freud, Schnitzler believed that every expression produced simultaneously knowledge and illusion, because words can echo but never truly convey subjective experience.

Hermann Broch (A., 1883-1951), in his novel *Der Tod des Vergils* (1945) and philosophical essays, makes frequent reference to the realm of silence, of the unsayable. In the face of rising National Socialism,

65William Johnston, p. 173.
poetic eloquence is deemed an insult. This theme of the limits of human speech is constant in the works of Broch.

Sigmund Freud (A., 1856-1939) trained as a neurologist and developed psychoanalysis in the 1890's. Psychoanalysis is a matter of words heard and analyzed, for the unconscious is itself linguistically structured and has a syntax. The analyst is basically a translator of the free-flow of the patient's words. Psychoanalysis does have its limitations, but Freud's achievement in discovering or formulating the language of the subconscious gave new dimension to the probing of the human mind.

Karl Kraus (A., 1874-1936) was one of the first and most public critics of language use. He founded the journal Die Fackel, intended primarily for a Jewish readership, in 1899. From 1911 to 1936 he wrote all the copy for Die Fackel. He championed Nestroy and brought about a revival of his work, and pressed for the purification of Austrian and German language, particularly that of the newspapers:

In keiner Sprache wird ja so schlecht gesprochen und geschrieben wie in der deutschen und in keiner deutschen Region wieder so schlecht wie in der österreichischen. Wien erleidet insoferne das Schicksal Babels, als der Herr daselbst verwirret hatte eines einzigen Volkes Sprache.66

Kraus' caustic wit, only hinted at here, required him to face charges in court quite often. There was a case pending against him when the Empire was dissolved. It has been said of Kraus that he stood on the sideline and played the part of the Greek chorus,67 but he exerted a

67Janik and Toulmin, p. 89.
tremendous amount of energy in what he considered a most serious task. His style, both in Die Fackel and in his long work, Die letzten Tage der Menschheit, was best when he rearranged quotations in a sort of refined Dada technique, which served well to demonstrate the inanity of certain phrases. The rise of National Socialism was more than even he could resist. In one of the last numbers of Die Fackel, he wrote, "Mir fällt zu Hitler nichts ein," and in the last number in 1936, "Ich bleibe stumm...." He died before the holocaust was perpetrated.

Adolf Loos (A., 1870-1933) was an architect who was entranced with the functional aspect of structures. To him the lack of ornament was a sign of spiritual superiority and strength. He was a very close friend of Kraus, and his work, like that of Schönberg and Wittgenstein, can be seen as being intimately and consciously related to, even an extension of, the critical work carried on by Kraus. As Kraus wrote of Loos:

Adolf Loos and I--he literally and I grammatically--have done nothing more than show that there is a distinction between an urn and a chamber pot and that it is this distinction above all that provides culture with elbow room.68

Like Schönberg and Kraus and Wittgenstein, Loos wanted to reduce art to fundamentals.

Franz Kafka (A., 1883-1924), after Freud, has, irony of ironies, enjoyed greater reknown than any other Austrian from this period. No writer has produced a more honest effort, a more sincere and eloquent statement of the intractibility of language, of its resistance to truth,

68Janik and Toulmin, p. 89.
than did Kafka. It is as if he borrows each word from the stockpile and must quickly and carefully use it and return it to its proper place before dawn lest it disintegrate. Steiner gives careful expression to Kafka's predicament:

His loyalties divided between Czech and German, his sensibility drawn as it was, at moments, to Hebrew and to Yiddish, Kafka developed an obsessive awareness of the opaqueness of language. His work can be construed as a continuous parable on the impossibility of genuine human communication, or, as he put it to Max Brod in 1921, on the 'impossibility of not writing, the impossibility of writing in German, the impossibility of writing differently. One could almost add a fourth impossibility: the impossibility of writing'....In 'In the Penal Colony', perhaps the most desperate of his metaphoric reflections on the ultimately inhuman nature of the written word, Kafka makes of the printing press an instrument of torture....In Kafka speech is the paradoxical circumstance of man's incomprehension. He moves in it as in an inner labyrinth.69

In the movement of the printing press in "In der Strafkolonie", Kafka demonstrates quite vividly the movement and force of language. In Die Verwandlung his choice of the word Ungeziefer was painfully prophetic of the use of this term to designate millions of Jews.

Two other Austrians, Hofmannsthal and Wittgenstein, were of course also active in Vienna at this time. The basic work of Hofmannsthal was documented in 1.1. Wittgenstein will be treated in the section immediately below.

2.5 Wittgenstein

Ludwig Wittgenstein (A., 1889-1951) was a most unusual human being and thinker. Through inheritance one of the richest persons in Europe, he gave his fortune away (partially to Rilke and Trakl),

abjured worldly comfort and fame, politely and shyly disclaimed credit for his creations, and consistently adhered to his admonitions to keep silent: in the manner of Kafka, he allowed only a small portion of his writings to be published in his lifetime, the Traktatus-Logico-Philosophicus (1921). He retreated to a Norwegian island in 1913 (where he had Kraus' Die Fackel sent to him), served as a medic in World War I, and worked for some time as a gardener and grade school teacher in rural Austria. He preferred silent films and was himself very demure. Much like the protagonist Hans Karl Bühl (which is based on Wittgenstein) in Hofmannsthal's Der Schwierige (1921), he was known for his laconic utterances and became a private, contemplative person, practicing to the letter his own injunction:

Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muß man schweigen (Trakt. 7).

From 1929 until his death in 1951, with intermittent absences, he lived and taught in Cambridge with Bertrand Russell, et al. His second major work, Philosophische Untersuchungen, was published posthumously in 1953. Suhrkamp Verlag began the publication of a critical edition of his works in 1960. To summarize the work of a person whose entire life was based on concision and lack of ornament is the most difficult of tasks.

The style of both the Traktatus and the P. U. is disjointed, a series of separate, aphoristic paragraphs (reminiscent of Lichtenberg and Kraus, both of whom he admired greatly). The Traktatus is to a great extent based on the ontological theory of meaning. The text is referential language criticism (Sprachkritik), the thematisization (in a meta-language) of the descriptive function of language. It is based
on the illusion that language consists of a number of words and the possibilities of combination limited by certain logical regularities, and that language relates to certain extra-linguistic objects, attributes and contents and to the facts derived from them.\textsuperscript{70} In the preface to the \textit{Traktatus}, Wittgenstein stated his intentions:

\begin{quote}
Das Buch behandelt die philosophischen Probleme und zeigt—wie ich glaube—, daß die Fragestellung dieser Probleme auf dem Mißverständnis der Logik unserer Sprache beruht. Man könnte den ganzen Sinn des Buches etwa in die Worte fassen: Was sich überhaupt sagen läßt, läßt sich klar sagen; und wovon man nicht reden kann, darüber muß man schweigen.
\end{quote}

Since Wittgenstein sees the reason for the meaninglessness of the sentences of philosophy in the fact that philosophers do not understand the logic of language, he considered it his task to analyze the sentences of idiomatic language in such a way as to make the logical syntax which underlies these sentences clearly visible. The clarity about how the logical syntax of language functions is reached when he succeeds at pointing out the rules which are followed when using language as a medium of description. He bases these rules (without specifying what they are) on an \textit{a priori} structure in the world, a structure identical to that found in sentences.\textsuperscript{71} But Wittgenstein later declared that the \textit{Traktatus} made no sense since it consisted of sentences about language which consider the relationship of language and world but do not show and demonstrate the structure of the world in the structure of language.

\textsuperscript{70}Saße, p. 30ff.

\textsuperscript{71}Saße, pp. 42ff.
The mature Wittgenstein of the P. U. offers the language game as the ultimate Urphänomen (P. U. par. 654), which cannot be circumvented. Throughout the rest of the P. U. he clarifies the concept of Spiel and Sprachspiel in myriad variations. In the P. U. he speaks of language in its communicative function. In the Traktatus he spoke of language in its designative function. The structure of the world does not determine the structure of language and guarantee its semantic character. The language games, which are imbedded in the patterns of interrelationship in life (Lebenszusammenhängen), mark the perspective from which objects become meaningful.

In the Traktatus Wittgenstein conceived of language as being meaningful on the basis of something existing independent of language and named by it. He criticized the naiveté of this concept in the first paragraph of the P. U., indicating that this is the nominalistic conception of language on which the ontological theory of meaning is based: He quotes the nominalistic conception of language as explained by Augustinus:


Thereafter he argues vehemently against this nominalistic conception:

Wenn man das Beispiel im 1. Paragraph betrachtet, so ahnt man vielleicht, inwiefern der allgemeine Begriff der Bedeutung der Worte das Funktionieren der Sprache mit einem Dunst umgibt, der das klare Sehen unmöglich macht. (P. U., par. 5).
He later states a basic theme to which he returns again and again:

Die Bedeutung eines Wortes ist sein Gebrauch in der Sprache.
(P. U., par. 43).

The meaning of language is related to the situation where it is learned and used, to an environment, a form of life. Language is one human activity among others and is inextricably interwoven with them.

To borrow an image from Paul Engelmann,72 if the realm of the sayable were a small island and that of the unsayable the expanses of the surrounding ocean, the words of Wittgenstein (like those of Kafka), are a message in a bottle.

2.6 Nazism - Kahlschlag

Although fin-de-siècle Vienna was truly a "proving ground for world destruction," there is no basis for placing a disproportionate burden of responsibility for the rise of National Socialism on the Austrians. Hitler, of course, was born in Braunau, Oberösterreich, and lived in Austria until he was almost twenty-four. He was highly impressed by Karl Lueger, mayor of Vienna 1897-1910, and saluted him ....as a man who had taught him how to flatter an urban populace, and to mobilize the masses through propaganda.73 Vienna for Hitler was "the hardest, but most thorough school,"74 and there is a ring of similarity between the great slogan of Austrian liberalism "Wissen macht frei" and the "Arbeit macht frei" slogan of

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72 Janik and Toulmin, p. 191.
73 William Johnston, P. 66.
74 Janik and Toulmin, p. 67.
the KZ's. As Schnitzler theorized, anti-Semitism was strong in fin-de-siècle Vienna, but it grew to monstrous proportions in Germany proper. Whatever its origins, anti-Semitism as National Socialism did spread like a cancer across Europe.

Two European writers, Erich Heller and George Steiner, among others, have indicted the German language itself for being structurally exploitable for Hitler's dark purposes:

Hitler heard inside his native tongue the latent hysteria, the confusion, the quality of hypnotic trance. He plunged unerringly into the undergrowth of language, into those zones of darkness and outcry which are the infancy of articulate speech, and which come before words have grown mellow and provisional to the touch of the mind. He sensed in German another music than that of Goethe, Heine, and Mann; a rasping cadence, half nebulous jargon, half obscenity. And instead of turning away in nauseated disbelief, the German people gave massive echo to the man's bellowing. It bellowed back out of a million throats and smashed down boots....A language in which one can write a "Horst Wessel Lied" is ready to give hell a native tongue.

This judgement is harsh and should be directed likewise to Hitler himself, the culture which nurtured him, and the people who followed him. There has been extensive and less emotionally kindled analysis of what happened to the German language in this period. Probably the most intimate account of the collapse of German into Nazi jargon is by Victor Klemperer, with the subtitle LTI: Lingua Tertii Imperii, the

\[75\text{cf. p. 61.}\]

\[76\text{George Steiner, }\text{Language and Silence,}\text{ pp. }95-109;\text{ Erich Heller, }\text{The Disinherited Mind,}\text{ pp. }233-260;\text{ cf. also Friedrich Handt, ed., Deutsch--Gefrorene Sprache in einem gefrorenen Land (Berlin: Literarisches Colloquium, 1964).}\]

\[77\text{George Steiner, }\text{Language and Silence,}\text{ p. }99.\]
official designation of German as the tongue of the Third Reich. 78

Hitler and his cohorts made the German language a conveyor of terror and falsehood. The political bestiality and falsehood of Nazism severed the German language from its roots in moral and emotional life. To a certain extent the German language died, and after World War II it no longer served as well as before the function of communication. The poet Hans Magnus Enzensberger testified to this:

"...during those twelve years (1933-1945) the German language was debauched in an unheard of manner. Long before the first bombs fell it lay in ruins. In the mouths of the holders of power and their helpers even apparently simple and innocuous words—like Raum, Heimat, Boden, Blut, Ehre, Schulung, Pflicht, Vorsehung, Opfer, Zucht—were so corrupted that they still bear the stigma, and have become unusable. 79

Language, the signature of humanity, is out of place in a time of bestiality, and silence is more tempting than ever. As Theodore Adorno indicated: after Auschwitz there is no poetry.

The formal term for post-war attempts at cleansing the German language was Kahlschlag, a term borrowed from forestry indicating the complete felling of trees and clearance of undergrowth. The term was introduced as a literary metaphor by Wolfgang Weyrauch in the introduction to the anthology Tausend Gramm (1949). Günter Eich's poem

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79 M. Enzensberger, "In Search of Lost Language," (trans. by Michael Bullock) Encounter XXI, No. 3 (1963), 44-51, p. 44.
"Inventur," a matter-of-fact listing of a soldier's possessions, is often cited as an early and clear example of Kahlschlag. But to the present day, the German language still suffers many stigmas of Nazism.

2.7 Wiener Gruppe, Canetti, Queneau, "konkret"

It is still not until after World War II that the pragmatic theory of meaning and demonstrative language criticism become widely accepted and practiced. Of all the writers brought into the discussion thus far, only Mallarmé, the Futurists, the Dadaists, Kraus (in his penchant for quotation), Wittgenstein, Kafka, and very few others have had the insight, foresight and persistence to restrict themselves to work within language and to not be seduced into consistently attempting work about language. Perhaps, as has been stated often, the fascist facility in distorting and manipulating language made it more obvious to writers that one must enter into the world of language, get at its pulse, to prevent the enemy from again gaining control of language.

The work of Raymond Queneau has gone unappreciated. Only his work Zazie dans le metro (1959) has gained wide exposure (it was made into a film in the early 1970's). In the late 1930's he began emphasizing the use of demotic language and phonetic orthography, e.g., doukipudonktan instead of d'ou qu'il pue donc tant (where does all this stink come from). His experimentation continued in his Exercises de style (1947), and remained language-immanent. In Exercises he narrated the same brief incident ninety-nine different ways, varying the narrator, tense, etc. In batons, chiffres et lettres (1965) he resorts to the use of mathematical and scientific equations and numbers
(Mallermé had attempted something similar). In bâtons he refers to work by Louis Ferdinand Céline as the first extensive instance of "le style oral" in syntax and vocabulary, though without employing phonetic orthography. Queneau and the French demotic school influenced Hans C. Artmann (A.) and the Wiener Gruppe, or perhaps the two groups simply discovered the advantages of demotic writing separately.

The Wiener Gruppe was founded in 1952 by Artmann, Friedrich Achleitner (A.), Oswald Wiener (A.), and Konrad Bayer (A.). Artmann, the most successful of the circle, left the group in 1960, and they finally disbanded upon Bayer's suicide in 1964. That there is a definite connection between the work of Queneau and that of Artmann can be seen in the use of demotic speech and phonetic orthography in Artmann's famous med ana schwoazzn dintn (1958). One can almost speak of a demotic tradition in Austrian literature dating from the middle of the 18th century in the popularity of the Volksstück. The best known writers of demotic literature were Ferdinand Raimund (A.), Nestroy, Ludwig Anzengruber (A.), and Ödön von Horváth (A.). Esslin relates the Austrian propensity to dialect to the post-World War II situation in Austria:

....the Austrians during the war decided that they were not Germans and that they wanted a language of their own. There was a strong impulse to get away from High German, which is.... a completely artificial language, rather like classical Latin.... during the Nazi period, when the Germans behaved so very badly

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80Voyage au bout de la nuit (Paris: Gallimard, 1932).

in Austria, it became very disadvantageous to speak High German. In Vienna immediately after the war, if you came in and said 'Kann ich bitte ein Glas Wasser haben?,' they wouldn't bring it to you. But if you said, 'Gehn S', bringn S' ma a Gloas Woassa,' you got it, because they wouldn't deal with German. There was, then, a re-thinking as to whether or not there was an Austrian literature.\textsuperscript{82}

Esslin again emphasizes the authenticity of demotic speech and the inauthenticity of High German in reference to Horváth's \textit{Geschichten aus dem Wienerwald} (1931):

The whole point of the tragedy is that all the characters speak in the false, inauthentic High German clichés of the time, from the popular press and the popular novel. Horváth actually makes the point, he calls the play 'Ein Volksstück,' but there's no dialect in it, and he says that this is a play about people who ought to speak dialect, but, because they want to be pretentious, they speak High German, and that is the origin of their misery.\textsuperscript{83}

Artmann emphasized dialect more than the other members of the Wiener Gruppe. Their group and collaborative efforts were reminiscent of Dada, and a great deal of their work was simply attempts to review the last forty years in international art, for since the fall of the Empire in 1918, Austria had been practically cut off from the rest of the artistic world. In the introduction to the commemorative volume \textit{Die Wiener Gruppe},\textsuperscript{84} Rühm traces the path of the group from its nascence in underground Viennese clubs, through its "Aktionen" and dialect work, to the group's contact with the international "konkret" movement and its dissolution in 1964:

\begin{quote}
1956 entstanden die ersten gemeinschaftsarbeiten. artmann
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{82}Interview, Appendix A.

\textsuperscript{83}Interview, Appendix A.

\textsuperscript{84}Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Verlag, 1967.
stöberte in seinen grammatiken herum (wörterbücher und fremdsprachige grammatiken gehörten zu seiner lieblingslektüre), kramte ein 'lehrbuch der böhmischen sprache'....hervor....im unterschied zu den dadaistischen 'arpaden' wurde vorgefundenes wortmaterial nicht in ein gedicht eingesponnen oder als 'anreger' verwendet, sondern ganze sätze wurden als fertige bestandteile zueinander in neue, poetische beziehung gesetzt; damit stand praktisch das gesamte schrifttum zur verfügung.... nicht zuletzt....entwickelte sich schliesslich eine bewusste gemeinsame auseinandersetzung mit dem material sprache überhaupt....mystifikation, symbolismus und metaphorik waren uns zuwider....theoretisch beschäftigten wir uns vor allem mit sprachwissenschaft, denkmethoden, wittgenstein, den neopositivisten, der kybernetik, auch mit der blindenschrift.... wir gingen davon aus, dass das denken des menschen dem stand seiner sprache entspreche, daher die auseinandersetzung mit der sprache die grundlegendste auseinandersetzung mit dem menschen sein müsse. neue ausdrucksformen modifizieren die sprache und damit sein weltbild.85

All the group's activities focused on language as the center of existence. Already at the incipience of the group's work, they had made contact with the budding "konkret" movement. In 1956 Rühm and Achleitner visited the Bolivian Eugen Gomringer at the University of Salzburg, where he was preparing his anthology of "konkret" poetry. Texts by Rühm, Achleitner, Jandl and Heinz Gappmayr (A.) eventually found their way into the anthology. The group's relationship with the "konkret" poets blossomed, and their collaborative activities continued until Artmann left in 1960. But their major thrust had been expended:

wir fühlten uns hier abgeschnitten, auf verlorenem posten. von einigen wenigen abdrucken in zeitschriften und deutschen anthologien abgesehen, häufen sich unsere unpublizierten manuskripte in der schublade. wir haben hier keine chance. rundfunk, fernsehen, verlagswesen beherrscht ein arroganter provincialismus.86

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Bayer's suicide in 1964 put an end to the group's work together.

The theoretical statements of the "konkrete" poets overlap with those of the Wiener Gruppe and exert the same basic thrust: it is impossible to think something which is not linguistically formed. Gomringer describes "konkrete" poetry as the attempt "gegenwart unmittelbar sprachlich festzustellen." He then puts "konkrete" poetry into historical perspective:

die neue dichtung ist entwicklungsgeschichtlich begründet.
häre anfänge sind in den versuchen eines arno holz (phantasus-
gedichte) wie in denen des späten mallarmé....zu sehen....in
der dichtung wurde das element 'wort' neu entdeckt. die
futuristische dichtung des kreises um marinetti, zum teil auch
die expressionistische, ganz besonders aber die dadaistische
dichtung erkannten und ergriffen das aus dem zusammenhang
gelöste wort.

This is further testimony to the post-World War II emphasis on language-immanence in literature. This same emphasis is the driving force of the avant-garde activities in Graz in the early 1960's.

Before turning to the activities centered in the Grazer Forum Stadtpark, there is one additional Austrian writer to be retrieved from obscurity, Elias Canetti. Although the work for which he became reknowned, Die Blendung, was published in 1935 he was not accorded a position of prominence in Austrian letters until 1961. The novel is what Steiner has termed the "representative fable of a speech-civilization

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going to violent ruin." Canetti himself elaborates on this idea:

Die Hauptfigur dieses Buches, heute als Kien bekannt, war in den ersten Entwürfen mit B. bezeichnet, was kurz für 'Büchermenschen' stand. Denn als solchen, als Büchermenschen, hatte ich ihn vor Augen, so sehr, daß seine Verbindung mit Büchern weit wichtiger war als er selbst. Daß er aus Büchern bestand, war damals seine einzige Eigenschaft, er hatte vorläufig keine anderen. Als ich schließlich daranging, seine Geschichte zusammenhängend niederzuschreiben, gab ich ihm den Namen Brand. In diesem Namen war sein Ende enthalten: ....er würde sich mitsamt seinen Büchern anzünden und in diesem selbstgeschaffenen Feuer mit seiner Bibliothek zusammen verbrennen.90

This is a fable condemning the world of words and reminiscent of Kafka's Die Verwandlung and In der Strafkolonie, both of which Canetti admired greatly. This statement also lends further understanding to Musil's intent in the penning of his novel Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften.

2.8 manuskripte and Handke's Beginnings in Graz

Esslin has followed closely literary and artistic developments in Graz, has been invited to lecture at the Forum Stadtpark almost every year, and is a close acquaintance of Handke's. Of the loose-knit group which began meeting and working together there in the early 1960's he has stated:

No generation has more completely rejected their fathers than they have. The falsity of the language in which they were enveloped during the Hitler period, the nonsense that came out of the radio....91

The group acquired an abandoned cafe building and the Forum Stadtpark

89George Steiner, Extraterritorial, p. 73.

90Elias Canetti, Das Gewissen der Worte (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, no date), p. 222. Canetti received the 1981 Nobel Prize for Literature.

91Interview, Appendix A.
was officially founded in January, 1959. In November of the following year, the club had its official opening and the first issue of *manuskripte*, under the editorship of Alfred Kolleritsch (A.) and Alois Hergouth (A.), was distributed. The spark for their activities came from Artmann and the Wiener Gruppe, and they attempted to continue the efforts of the Wiener Gruppe to review the major trends in art and literature and music of this century, and to make the Austrian provincial city of Graz into a cosmopolitan center for art in all media:


The early discussion and presentations and the first nine issues of *manuskripte* dealt with the activities of fin-de-siecle Vienna artists and writers, Gertrude Stein, and the Dadaists, among others. Issues 11, 12, and 13 were devoted to "konkrete" poetry. The group truly intended to conquer the world of literature.

Handke arrived in Graz in 1961, began the law curriculum at the University, and was in regular attendance at Forum Stadtpark activities. In 1963 Handke's text "Die Überschwemmung" was given to Dr. Alfred

Holzinger (A.), director of the literature section of ORF (Österreichischer Rundfunk)-Graz, by Alois Hergouth. It was not of appropriate length for the broadcasting format, but Holzinger liked Handke's writing and soon accepted another text, "Der Mann, der den Arm hob". "Die Überschwemmung" was eventually accepted as Handke's first manuskripte publication in issue 10, which was devoted to Austrian writers. In the meantime Handke began writing feuilletons for ORF, and from November, 1964, through September, 1966, he reviewed literature in a regular format entitled "Bücherecke". These critiques remain unpublished but are extremely revealing of Handke's basic, undecorated opinions on literature and art. He also dramatized Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment in 1966 for broadcast on ORF. His first book, Die Hornissen, was published in 1966. In that same year he saw his Publikumsbeschimpfung successfully performed in Frankfurt, he made his critical appearance at the Princeton meeting of the Gruppe 47, and moved from Graz to Düsseldorf with his wife, the actress Libgart Schwarz. His rapid ascent in the international literary scene was begun, and his position of respect and success has remained unchanged.
Handke has not delineated in detail a theory of language, or a literary or artistic program, for that matter. Early in his work as a writer he stressed an aversion to the theoretical perspective and apologized for previous theoretical excesses. In the preface to BE he begins:

Das ist kein Aufsatzband, und es springt dabei wahrscheinlich kein referierbares Weltbild heraus; höchstens wäre vielleicht eine im Lauf der Zeit zunehmende Scheu vor den kulturkritischen Theorie-Ritualen zu beobachten, mit denen ich anfangs noch ziemlich ungeniert aufgetrumpft habe. Dafür habe ich dann mehr zu beschreiben versucht und dabei die einzelnen Beobachtungen so angeordnet, daß sie beim Lesen für sich selber sprechen konnten, ohne dem Leser mit dem üblichen Rezensions- und Analysenschema jede eigene Erkenntnismöglichkeit gleich mit dem ersten Satz wegzunehmen.1

From this passage one sees not only his reluctance to theorize but in this reluctance also preference for the demonstrative ordering of observations over the referential interpretation of them. Handke consciously attempts to avoid the paradoxical "speaking about his speechlessness". His theoretical writings are gathered in the volume of essays BE. The essays are dated from 1965-1970. His Bücherecke reviews are another source of Handke's theoretical pronouncements. They date from 1964-1966. Although Handke does not present a coherent theory according to which he produces literature, there are reciprocal and parallel structural emphases in his theory and practice. Handke's theoretical statements on language are, in his own words, "Mehr oder weniger

1BE, p. 7.
Grundsätzliches", "FRIENDLY CARTOONS", or "Geschichten". The tone of the essays in BE is aphoristic, like those of Kraus and of Wittgenstein, and consistently polemic, though not directly negative.

Although Handke almost obsessively varies the formal method in his writings, the center of interest, the theme in all his work is language. Language has long been central in Handke's life:


Holzinger and Kolleritsch, Handke's closest friends in Graz, and those who were around him at the University consistently describe him as withdrawn and reflective, even self-possessed. Language and writing served Handke as escape from vulgar social conversation:

Das einzige, was mich als Schriftsteller...angeht, ist der Ekel vor der stumpfsinnigen Versprachlichung und damit Verrohung der Leute.

Handke's efforts in writing have been intended to facilitate increased linguistic awareness among his readers. Not only can one not use words to label inner experiences, but one cannot use words to describe these labels:

....die Wörter, mit denen man Wörter (innere Zustände)
beschreibt, sollen wie Glas sein!? Diese Metapher ist also in jedem Fall ein plumper Betrug.7

One must focus on language, not attempt to look through it:

Ich glaube, daß es heutzutage nötig ist, die Welt näher anzuschauen und also detaillierter zu erfassen. Aber wenn diese vergrößert betrachtete Welt nur abgeschrieben wird, ohne daß mit der Sprache etwas geschieht, was soll's dann?8

Language itself must be dealt with. It cannot be used unconsciously as a tool, as a designative medium. Handke gives an example of unconscious use of language in instances where incredulousness actually dictates silence:

Vor dem Fernseher saß ich und versuchte etwas zu meinen, doch nur sprachlose einzelne Wörter stießen sich an der Schädeldecke. Wenn ich Nixon sah, dachte ich 'Gangster!'; wenn ich die chilenischen Generäle sah, dachte ich: 'Banditen!' Zugleich kam es mir lächerlich vor, wenn jemand das aussprach....Aber auf einmal kamen mir die, die es doch aussprachen, nicht mehr nur lächerlich vor: Sie sprachen ihre Sprachlosigkeit aus, ich verschwieg sie.9

Here again Handke censures such paradoxical language usage as senseless.

He admonishes the engagé writers for similar wrong-headedness in their (Brecht's and Scharang's, in particular) critical procedure:

Der 'Realismus' in der Literatur ist nur eine Darstellungsweise. Die engagierte Literatur, die diesen gesellschaftlich akzeptierten Realismus benutzt, fällt einer Selbzentfremdung zum Opfer, meint Handke, denn mit der Übernahme der sprachlichen Konventionen eines Systems, wird simultan das Weltbild dieses Systems gewissermaßen bejaht.10

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7BE, p. 42.
8BE, p. 32.
9W, p. 73.

10Gunther Sergooris, Peter Handke und die Sprache (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann, 1979), p. 32.
Thus one cannot talk about society (language) from within society (language).

Handke consistently emphasizes language as reality:

Es wird nämlich verkannt, daß die Literatur mit der Sprache gemacht wird, und nicht mit den Dingen, die mit der Sprache beschrieben werden. In dieser neu aufkommenden Art von Literatur werden die Dinge beschrieben, ohne daß man über die Sprache nachdenkt, es sei denn, in germanistischen Kategorien der Wortwahl usw. Und die Kritik mißt die Wahrheit der Literatur nicht daran, daß die Worte stimmen, mit denen man die Gegenstände beschreibt, sondern daran, ob die Gegenstände 'der Wirklichkeit entsprechen'. So werden die Worte für die Gegenstände als die Gegenstände selber genommen. Man denkt über die Gegenstände nach, die man 'Wirklichkeit' nennt, aber nicht über die Worte, die doch eigentlich die Wirklichkeit der Literatur sind.11

This is Handke's clarification of the term Beschreibungsimpotenz, which he used at the Group 47 meeting at Princeton in 1966 in reference to "Neuer Realismus"12 literature. Handke continues his denunciation of the attempt to confront reality as if it were extra-linguistic:

Die Sprache wird nur benützt. Sie wird benützt, um zu beschreiben, ohne daß aber in der Sprache selber sich etwas rührt. Die Sprache bleibt tot, ohne Bewegung, dient nur als Namensschild für die Dinge. Die Dinge werden reportiert, nicht bewegt. Wie es scheint, gilt noch immer der komische Vergleich Jean-Paul Sartres, der die Sprache, mit der Prosa geschrieben werde, mit dem Glas vergleicht: man glaubt also naiv, durch die Sprache auf die Gegenstände durchschauen zu können wie durch das sprichtwörtliche Glas. Dabei denkt man aber nicht daran, daß es möglich ist, mit der Sprache buchstäblich jedes Ding zu drehen....Es wird vernachlässigt, wie sehr die Sprache manipulierbar ist,....Das 'Glas der Sprache' soll endlich zerschlagen werden. Durch die Sprache kann nicht einfach durchgeschaut werden auf die Objekte.13

11BE, p. 29.
12BE, p. 29.
13BE, p. 30.
Handke continues another step: not only is language true reality, but it prescribes man's patterns of thought:

Sonst aber machen die Sätze immer deutlich, daß das, was man bis jetzt als Leser für die unschuldige Wirklichkeit gehalten hat, von Syntax Vorgeformtes ist. Wenn der Autor über Gegenstände redet, merkt er, daß er, redend, der Gegenstand von Sätzen ist. Und deutlich wird, daß Sätze obrigkeitliche Sätze sind, daß die Welt der Sätze eine heirarchische Ordnung normiert.14

The world of sentences preempts the world of persons and things and it is meaningful in itself:

...die Sprache (ist) eine Realität für sich und ihre Realität (kann) nicht geprüft werden an den Dingen, die sie beschreibt, sondern an den Dingen, die sie bewirkt.15

This occurs in the activity of the "language game":

Die Bedeutung eines Wortes ist nicht der Wortsinn — zu diesem flüchten nur Philosophen, die sich ein eigenes System ausdeutet wollen —, sondern, wie Wittgenstein sagt, 'sein Gebrauch in der Sprache'.16

In order to comprehend a word, language, one must become sensitive to the inner movement of language. Handke is at least theoretically a proponent of the pragmatic theory of language. Direct reference to the "language game" aspect of Wittgenstein's work secures the link between Handke and the entire pragmatic/demonstrative concept as we have developed it.

Similar insight pervades even the early Bücherecke reviews. In a review of the above-cited commemorative volume on the Wiener Gruppe,

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14Peter Handke, "In Sätzen steckt Obrigkeit," Der Spiegel 17 (1969), p. 188.
15BE, p. 34.
16BE, p. 37.
Handke delineates his understanding of the relationship of the pragmatic theory of meaning, demonstrative language criticism, and the next logical step:

Diese Gruppe hatte eine kurze dogmatische Periode, in der sie fast streng nach den Lehren der Sprachphilosophie Ludwig Wittgensteins vorging: die Sprache, die Wörter waren für sie das Ding an sich, sie wurden nicht mehr verwendet, um etwas Dahinterliegendes, eine sprachlose Wirklichkeit zu beschreiben, sondern sie genügten sich selber, indem sie nicht auf etwas außerhalb der Wörter Liegendes zeigten, sondern indem sie sich selber zeigten, die Wörter als Wirklichkeit, die Wörter als das Wirkliche an sich: nichts mehr dahinter. In dieser Periode wurde vor allem zitiert....; harmlose Zeitungsnotizen wurden in allen Sprachspielarten durchgespielt, circumstances gewordene Redensarten zeigten so ganz neuen Sinn oder Unsinn, einfach dadurch, daß mit dem Zitat auf sie gezeigt wurde. Später gingen die Dogmatiker entweder zu einem sprachlichen Manierismus über wie Artmann oder verbohrten sich umso mehr in die Besessenheit von der Fälschungskraft der Sprache wie der sicherlich bedeutendste der Gruppe, der....Oswald Wiener....Vor Oswald Wiener und dessen Romanversuch Die Verbesserung von Mitteleuropa war es nur Konrad Bayer gewesen, der darangegangen war, vom bloßen Zitieren, Zeigen und Beschreiben der Sprache....zu einem Aufbau und einer Neuordnung der jetzt hinfälllich durchschauten Sprache zu kommen. Er begann, wenn auch formal ironisiert, wieder Geschichten zu erzählen, freilich nicht Geschichten, bei denen sich ein Satz aus der inhaltsgemäßen Logik der vorhergehenden Sätze ergab, linear und eindeutig, sondern Geschichten, in denen die Sätze Sprünge machen, in denen kein Satz die inhaltliche Fortsetzung des vorangegangenen Sätzen zu sein braucht und dennoch formal im Erzählrhythmus der Geschichte wie ein Fortsetzungssatz dasteht: es entstand ein Widerspruch zwischen ironisiertem Geschichtenrhythmus und aufgehobener Geschichte....es (glückte) Bayer in seinen späteren Arbeiten, die (vorgefundenen) Texte....als Arbeiten eben von Konrad Bayer scheinen (zu lassen), indem er die die vorgegebenen Sätze dazu verwendete, sich selber darin spiegeln zu lassen und so mit den Sätzen anderer eine Geschichte über sich selber zu erzählen. Er hatte wohl erkannt, daß er keine neue Sprache zu erfinden brauchte, um sein Bewußtsein zu beschreiben, sondern daß schon eine fertige Sprache vorhanden war, aus der er sich gewissermaßen sein Bewußtsein aussuchen konnte. Das Bewußtsein bestand aus der Sprache: er brauchte die Sätze nur zu suchen, sie waren schon vorgeformt, eine Erfindung war nicht mehr vonnöten.17

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17 Bücherecke, Sept. 12, 1966.
What Handke provides here is not only a description of linguistic development in the work of the Wiener Gruppe, but in great part also that development in Handke's own work: from a dogmatic period, through a period of quotation, to the decision to utilize the available language carefully and scrupulously to construct his own consciousness, and in so doing to allow the reader to do the same. This return to Geschichten as described above is noticeable already with KB (1971) and WU (1972), both strongly autobiographical. Martin Esslin describes Handke's method:

... in Wunschloses Unglück he seems to be saying 'You can't deal with your mother's death except in clichés, and by stressing that fact, you may be breaking through the clichés.'

Language as something elementary and essential serves to create in literature (and to a lesser degree in everyday language usage) an "Ersatz-reality". One need only remain aware that this is a linguistically created and determined reality.

One could describe Handke's writings as a constant polemic with his own speechlessness, with the awareness that language controls the speaker, not vice versa. As Handke progressively distances himself from his speechlessness, the less he attempts to write about it, then the more exact and concise he is able to express his consciousness. One must simply proceed with the awareness that the serious use of language means that every step is tentative, that every position is precarious.

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19 Interview, Appendix A.
This is emphasized in Handke's early theoretical writings and has made it possible for him to continue writing books, as he describes them:

....Geschichten, die ihren Inhalt und ihre Bedeutung....aus dem formalen Verhältnis der Sätze zueinander, Sätze also, bei denen die formale Anordnung zugleich die Bedeutung, meinetwegen den Inhalt, die Geschichte, erzeugt.20

This is literature that demonstrates its meaning. Handke's preference for the pragmatic/demonstrative pole sets him apart from the mainstream of language-critics.

HANDKE'S LINGUISTIC PRACTICE

Literature was important to Handke long before he began creating it himself. Just as his work in "foreign grammars" aided him in fending off people he did not want to, or could not interact with, so literature helped him create a reality that was sensible and alive. The writing of Kleist, Stifter (A.), William Faulkner, and above all Goethe served him time and time again as a spring to which he could go to refresh his spirit. The classic prose of these (and other) writers has remained almost an ideal to Handke over the years, an ideal that he in his writing seems to be moving toward. Esslin confronted him about the classicity of his style:

I was discussing with him...what his main influences were and he said 'Nothing'. I said, 'Well, if you asked me what I feel when I read your stuff, I would say there are two distinct influences on you, stylistically. One is the prose of Kleist and the other that of Stifter.' He said, 'Oh, yes, you're right. That is true.'

The works of these other writers helped Handke in a very basic way tolerate an almost intolerable existence. He describes his existence at fourteen years of age:


Wunschloses Unglück is a lengthy and detailed attempt to probe his and

1 Interview, Appendix A.

2 "Wirkliche Mächte in Österreich," p. 4.
his mother's haunted lives: the necessity of the attempt makes this
his finest work.

WU marks a turning point (for the critic viewing from without)
in Handke's writing. Most of his writing up to this point can be
labeled, in Handke's words,

...eine kurze dogmatische Periode....die Sprache, die Wörter
waren....das Ding an sich....die Wörter als Wirklichkeit, die
Wörter als das Wirkliche an sich....In dieser Periode wurde
vor allem zitiert.3

Quotations in the broad sense of "Rekurrenz auf Vorgeformtes":

Peter Handke rekurriert in seiner literarischen Praxis auf im
weitesten Sinn kulturell Vorgeformtes: auf das Regelsystem
der Sprache, auf die Mechanismen der sprachbegleitenden
Aktivitäten, auf Literatur (auch auf die eigene), auf Filme,
Texte der Popmusik, Theater, Fernsehen. Innerhalb der
Großstrukturen rekurriert Handke auf Primärstrukturen
verschieden hoher Organisation: Gattungen, Verfahrensweisen,
Motive, Zitate (auch Eigenzitate).4

From WU through his latest writings, Handke seems to be at ease with
the process of writing stories (Geschichten): not stories with
contextual continuity, continuity between the semantic content of words,
phrases, and sentences, but stories with the outer trappings and rhythm
as the primary continuity.

4.1 Early, Pre-Publication Writings

These early writings include the novel Die Hornissen (1963-64),
a collection of short prose pieces under the title of one of them
Begrüßung des Aufsichtsrats (1963-64), the "Sprechstücke"
Publikumsbeschimpfung, Weissagung, Selbstbezichtigung, and Hilfe

3Bücherecke, Sept. 12, 1966.
4Thuswaldner, p. 5.
(1964–65), and the novel Der Hausierer (1965–66). Of these writings the "Sprechstücke" are by far the most important.

H is a novel only in the sense that it is a long prose work. There is no story-line, no well-delineated narrator or characters, almost no dialog, no psychological analyses or portraits. Language is the focal point throughout. The blind (invisible) narrator attempts to recount a novel entitled Die Hornissen, which he thinks he has read. His recountal is an extremely confused and confusing mixture of words, phrases, sentences from his not really dependable memory. Mixner refers to the writing method here as

....die Demonstration von (literarischer) Vermitteltheit allen (literarischen) Erzählens.5

Prefabractated language, i.e., the novel the narrator is trying to recall, the novel he is producing, is not acceptable to Handke to describe his own experiences. Thus focus stays on the intractability of language. Handke’s writing at this time actually drew a curtain between himself and the experiences he was trying to recall and describe. He reacts negatively to these early writings in an interview:

....die Hornissen und die kurzen Prosasachen die ich noch geschrieben habe, als ich Jura studierte, die Begrüßung des Aufsichtsrates (sic) heißen, in die schau ich noch manchmal rein, einfach damit man weiß, was an Kapriolen drin ist, die man nicht mehr mag, und auch um sich zu erinnern, weil das Schreiben damals auch gleichzeitig ein Akt des Vergessens war. Die Erinnerung ist aufgehoben in dem, was ich geschrieben habe, und ich selber habe gar keine Erinnerung mehr. Und wenn ich es nochmal lese, dann erinnere ich mich dann doch an einiges wieder....So ein Buch wie die Hornissen, in dem dauernd Bilder aus der Welt erscheinen, in der ich aufgewachsen bin, das

möchte ich schon mal wieder aufnehmen, ich möchte dahin zurückkommen, zu diesem Buch.6

Handke's or the blind narrator's or the reader's memories cannot be retained in language.

In the short prose pieces of BA, Handke employs a variety of typographical alterations, narrative perspectives, punctuation experiments, and interspersed quotations to set the deceptive aspects of language in relief. Holzinger summarizes Handke's early experimentations:

Schon in den ersten Texten, die Handke als 21-jähriger Jurastudent für eine anonyme Öffentlichkeit aus der Hand gab, sucht er genau die Wirklichkeitsgrade zu unterscheiden, ist er sich der neue Wirklichkeiten schaffenden Sprache und ihrer imaginativen, nahezu magischen Möglichkeit bewusst....Er sucht nach neuen Methoden des Schreibens, wobei er sich auf poetologische Erfahrungen und Erkenntnisse stützt. Nicht Geschichten, stories, erfindet er, nicht seine Phantasie tritt in Wettstreit mit der sensorisch erfaßten und im Gedächtnis bewahrten Wirklichkeit. Er reflektiert über den Vorgang des Schreibens, die Wirkung, die von poetischer, nicht mimetischer Literatur ausgehen kann, und über den autonomen Wirklichkeitsgrad des durch Sprache Geschaffenen. Sorgsam und konsequent setzt er bei seinen Texten die Worte, meidet die verschwommenen Allgemeinbegriffe, beobachtet das Konkrete, und überlegt mit Hintersinn seine Wortfügungen.7

Two stories titled the same as his two early novels ("Der Hausierer" and "Die Homissen") have almost nothing in common with the respective novels. The most interesting story is the title piece. The board of directors has gathered in an abandoned, run-down barn to listen to a speech about economic conditions. Early in the speech, which in its optimistic tone veils the truth, the speaker is interrupted when he

7Holzinger, pp. 185f.
says the sentence "es knistere verdächtig im Gebülk" in reference to the barn. The pessimistic truth behind his words becomes progressively more obvious and the speech breaks off in mid-sentence.

Ha is a detective story, or rather the framework of the prototypical detective story, where all the traditional rules are followed. It is actually a synthesis of all possible detective stories, a quotation of the genre. Handke describes his method:

'der hausierer' hat eine geschichte. jemand kommt irgendwohin, wird hier zeuge eines mordes, wird verdächtigt, weil er (hier) fremd ist, verdächtigt selber, sucht 'anhalts'-punkte, wird verfolgt, wird zusammengeschlagen und zum 'singen' gebracht, kommt wieder frei, sitzt untätig herum, kommt zu einem zweiten mord dazu, wird wieder verdächtigt, verhaftet, eingesperrt, freigelassen, sitzt herum, grübelt, geht herum, grübelt, kommt auf etwas drauf, das allen entgangen ist, macht sich auf den weg, entlarvt den 'wahren' mörder, und 'alles' ist in ordnung....

was gibt eine darstellungsweise, die schon längst kanonisiert ist, noch für eine darstellung der wirklichkeit, meiner wirklichkeit? ich habe also das kriminalromanschema nach 'mir' abgesucht, und umgekehrt habe ich 'mich' abgesucht, was von mir schon so weit literarisch durch schemata bestimmt war, daß es dem kriminalromanschema entsprach. indem ich das schema prüfte, es abstrahierte, mir seine unbewußten regeln bewußt machte, hoffte ich, auch zu neuen darstellungs-'möglichkeiten' meiner wirklichkeit zu kommen....Ich wollte ein darstellungsschema aus der 'trivialliteratur' wieder 'wirklich' machen und neue Möglichkeiten auch den lesenden zeigen; neue Möglichkeiten zu lesen, zu spielen, zu überlegen: zu leben.8

The individual sentences are so obviously set off from one another that they seem to have been extracted from many different stories. This is the effect Handke intended.

Handke's own description of the Sprechstücke is the most concise, the least superfluous:

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Die Sprechstücke sind Schauspiele ohne Bilder....Sie zeigen auf die Welt nicht in der Form von Bildern, sondern in der Form von Worten, und die Worte der Sprechstücke zeigen nicht auf die Welt als etwas außerhalb der Wort Liegendes, sondern auf die Welt in den Worten selber. Die Worte, aus denen die Sprechstücke bestehen, geben kein Bild von der Welt, sondern einen Begriff von der Welt. Die Sprechstücke sind theatralisch insofern, als sie sich natürlicher Formen der Äußerung in der Wirklichkeit bedienen. Sie bedienen sich nur solcher Formen, die auch in der Wirklichkeit naturgemäß Äußerungen sein müssen, das heißt, sie bedienen sich der Sprachformen, die in der Wirklichkeit mündlich geäußert werden. Die Sprechstücke bedienen sich der natürlichen Äußerungsform der Beschimpfung, der Selbstbezichtigung, der Beichte, der Aussage, der Frage, der Rechtfertigung, der Ausrede, der Weissagung, der Hilferufe....die Sprechstücke beschränken sich, indem sie ihrer naturgegebenen Form gehorchen, auf Worte und geben keine Bilder, auch nicht Bilder in der Form von Worten, die nur die vom Autor erzwungenen Bilder eines inneren, naturgemäß nicht geäußerten wortlosen Sachverhalts wären und keine natürlichen Äußerungen.

The language of the Sprechstücke is the only reality being presented here.

The short piece Hilferufe constitutes a path of words leading to the word Hilfe. Handke points out:

....die aufgabe der sprecher ist es, den weg über viele sätze und wörter zu dem gesuchten wort HILFE zu zeigen.

The approach is not semantic. The words slowly, gradually approach the word Hilfe acoustically, sound by sound, syllable by syllable, until it is found.

Weissagung is a series of obvious, tautological sentences such as: "Das Gras wird zittern wie das Gras." The form varies only slightly. Handke states his intention:

9Stl, p. 201.

10Stl, p. 91.
Die Weissagung ist kein Sinnspiel, sondern ein Sprachspiel. Was erreicht werden soll, ist eine größtmögliche akustische Dichte, die einen größtmöglichen Reiz erzeugt.11

The emphasis here is on language: the viewer/listener/reader is supposed to become aware of language, language as reality and no reality beyond it.

Selbstbezichtigung is a listing of self-accusations without reference to a subject besides the grammatic Ich. This stereotypical Ich uses the sentences which one uses in a given social structure to confess to a wrongdoing. Attention is simply drawn to this particular linguistic structure. There is no story (Fabel). Application is general: there is no article before the title.

Publikumsbeschimpfung is Handke's best-known, and perhaps best Sprechstück. It is anti-theater (like all the Sprechstücke) in that most of the elements of traditional theater are absent. Remaining are only the use of a stage, and people on stage who speak a pre-written text to people sitting in the audience. The speakers explain what is happening and what is not happening and prepare the audience to be scolded. Then the speakers proceed to "throw the dictionary at the audience":

These are just sentences that you could apply to someone and that are in a dictionary. "You who are going to die of cancer," well somebody in the audience is going to die of cancer, so they will feel, "Good God, he's talking to me!" There are others who will die of diabetes, and they will think, "He's talking to me." So everybody has his own tragedy enacted simply by having the dictionary thrown at him.12

11Stl, p. 204.
12Martin Esslin, Interview, Appendix A.
The words spoken to the audience are empty and meaningless. The recipient in the audience fills them with meaning only if he or she wishes. The Sprechstück was intended to make the audience aware of this aspect of language: it has no fixed meaning.

4.2 Das Mündel will Vormund sein and Kaspar

These two stage works are similar in that they both demonstrate a relationship between tutor (Vormund - Einsager) and tutee (Mündel - Kaspar). In fact Das Mündel takes its title from Shakespeare's phrase "My foot my tutor!" in The Tempest. The two works are opposites in that Kaspar is total language and Das Mündel is total action.

There is no speech in Das Mündel. It is not pantomime because there is no story-line (Fabel). The two characters on stage, like the cat which wanders aimlessly around, are simply themselves and represent nothing beyond themselves. The tutee imitates the tutor with no direction for their actions. Handke explains the relation to language:

...das stumme Stück Das Mündel will Vormund sein ist natürlich kein Stück, das sprachlos ist. Da wird eben die gesprochene Sprache durch Aktionen, durch Gesten, durch die Konstellationen der Dinge auf der Bühne, eines Tisches, eines Kalenders, einer Peitsche, ersetzt.13

The action itself is a syntax, a form of life: there are masters and there are servants.

Kaspar is perhaps Handke's most important work. It is without doubt his best known and will require a closer inspection. Kaspar has but one possession, a single sentence which he uses to express every-

thing: "Ich möchte ein solcher werden wie einmal ein ander gewesen ist."
During the course of the theater piece, his one sentence is expelled and he is brought to full linguistic fluency. This is the process of socialization. In Kaspar the language system is generalized into the system of social interaction patterns according to which the network of relationships (linguistic and extra-linguistic) is linked. In extending the linguistic system thusly, Handke demonstrates the full reality of language. Handke links the pragmatic (language-immanent) dimension of language with the process of language acquisition and demonstrates this in the socialization of Kaspar. In this demonstration, the acquisition of language is shown to be a basic process through which a person is made to fit into the ruling system of norms. Handke unfolds the full power of language in his dynamic demonstration of preexistent language patterns utilizing the stage figure Kaspar as a medium. Language not only appears as a syntactic-semantic system which serves to unite one's individual consciousness to that of the collective language group, but it also seems to serve as a well-functioning system in contexts of discourse which are actually determined by language. The process by means of which a person is made to fit into this system is basic for two reasons: firstly, language aids in the formation and communication of this system of norms, and secondly, the linguistically formulated images of the world validate such a system of norms. By raising language to the position of the primary social agent, the most common social element is made into the most influential one, which in a sense forms and communicates all individuality.
With the first appearance of Kaspar, it becomes apparent that the stage work does not deal with the fate of an individual person, but rather with a generally human process. This process is introduced by Kaspar's theatrical birth and the process is made visually experienceable in his frustrated efforts to escape from the curtain. With his birth the beginning of a human linguistic development is represented allegorically in the linguistic socialization of a stage figure. Kaspar does not enter upon the stage as a complete character with a past, which is delineated in the exposition. He is a tabula rasa. Since Kaspar appears as a physically mature person, his inability to manipulate his surroundings cannot be traced back to physical immaturity. The only possible explanation is his lack of language. The concept manifested in Kaspar's demeanor is that only with language does mankind acquire a firm guarantee for an ordered relationship with his surroundings.

In the first scenes Kaspar is helplessly confronted with himself and his environment. Mankind must first of all build himself, with the aid of language, an intentional world of meaning as a medium for acquiring knowledge and dealing with his surroundings in general. Kaspar's first attempts at walking are grotesque pantomimes and show him as a person who does not even possess the experience necessary for him to properly anticipate and perform physical movements. He has neither a self-concept nor one of his surroundings:

Er schaut zu, wie sich der Boden von ihm entfernt. Er zeigt, mit der ganzen Hand, auf den sich entfernenden Boden. (Scene 6).

The objects surrounding him on stage frighten him because he does not know how they function. Thus, he encounters these objects in strange
and accidental ways instead of as a normal human being. One description
of Kaspar presents such an encounter:

Kaspar geht zum Schaukenstuhl wie unabsichtlich. Der
Schaukelstuhl gerät in Bewegung....Dann, als der Schaukelstuhl
gerade an den Kippunkt gelangt und es einen Augenblick lang
unsicher ist, ob er fallen oder weiteschaukeln wird, gibt er
ihm mit der Hand einen ganz leichten Stoß, der aber ausreicht,
daß der Schaukelstuhl umkippt. Kaspar rennt vor dem umgekippten
Schaukelstuhl davon. (Scene 12).

Without language by means of which Kaspar transforms the chaotic masses
of perceived data into an orderly world picture, he is helpless. Without
language it would be impossible for him to anticipate what any activity
involves and for him to acquire the linguistically communicated opera­
tion procedures for the objects in his environment.

At the beginning of his stage existence, Kaspar does not have
access to the linguistic system for classifying his surroundings since
he is without language. This system is a finished portrait of society.
At the beginning he has but the one sentence: "Ich möchte ein solcher
werden wie einmal ein ander gewesen ist." With this sentence he tries
to find his way in an environment which he senses as threatening. One
critic refers to this sentence as Kaspar's "Privatsprache" in reference
to Wittgenstein's early (Traktatus) conception of language:

Dieser Satz ist zu einer 'Privatsprache' der Figur Kaspar
geworden, die als eine eigentliche Nichtsprache durch den
Lernprozeß der allgemeinen Sprache überwunden werden will.
Der Verlauf des Stückes zeigt, wie durch die Verunsicherung der
Figur Kaspar ihre sprachliche Möglichkeit zwar wächst, die
Sprache selbst aber entleert wird.  

14Hans C. Angermeyer. Zuschauer im Drama (Frankfurt: Athenäum
Although the sentence is private, it does not actually constitute a language, or at best a very crude language. Kaspar's limited use of language constituted by this one sentence is an indication of his linguistic incompetence. He applies his sentence indiscriminately to all surrounding objects without the sophistication wanted to apprehend and codify these objects. He is not successful at acquiring objects with his sentence because he is not successful at addressing anything. Without the intersubjective basis required through facility with language, he cannot stabilize his relationship to his surroundings.

At first Kaspar succeeds at the representation of individuality in his sentence by varying his voice, but in so doing he must suffer autistic exclusion and alienation from himself. The announcers (Einsager) represent society in its interrelationships. Between the announcers and Kaspar, the pole of complete socialization and the pole of individuality, there comes to exist the interaction which drives the whole work forward. The announcers, who represent society in its requirements on the individual, want to create an identity integrated by force, an identity which agrees with all the values and norms of society and which thus lacks all individuality.

To reach this goal the announcers must first rid Kaspar of his sentence. They proceed systematically at this task. They first convince him that his sentence is special only in its non-functionability for communication:


His sentence means everything and nothing. It is simply one among many
and can be removed, actually driven out, and replaced by a more socially facile language:

Der Satz tut dir noch nicht weh kein Wort. Tut dir weh. Jedes Wort tut dir. Weh, aber du weißt nicht, daß das, was dir weh tut, ein Satz ist der....Das Sprechen tut dir weh....(Scene 17).

The announcers bombard him with these sentence structures and semantic meanings in such a way that they dissect Kaspar's linguistic perception. He desperately uses his sentence to defend himself against the sentences of the announcers:


He does not want to be made orderly through their sentences, but he crumbles under this linguistic torture:


His sentence has been dissected and dissolved, first syntactically then phonologically. Only now, following the destruction of his only individual possession, can the announcers begin their reconstruction work:

Kaspar wird zum Sprechen gebracht. Er wird mit Sprechmaterial zum Sprechen allmählich angestachelt. (Scene 18).

The individual sentence has been removed and the individual annihilated. The social Kaspar can be created by filling him with socially fluent language.

Beginning with the minutest sentence elements, continuing to larger syntactical formations, the announcers attempt to communicate in a synthesizing process the concept of a sentence as something general,
as the structure of a system, after they have driven out his one sentence, his only private possession. Kaspar succeeds more and more at reproducing the linguistic structures and patterns communicated to him by the announcers.

According to the maxims of the announcers that only statements are orderly, pretty and nice, etc., Kaspar is bombarded with many apodictic sentences:


While these sentences are being spoken by the announcers, Kaspar is setting the objects on stage into order. The announcers' words follow Kaspar's motions as exactly as possible, pausing when he stops, accelerating when he rushes, until his motions slowly follow rhythm, pauses, emphases, etc., of the announcers' words. They are now in control of Kaspar. In this sequence Handke has demonstrated in theatrical transformation, through the correspondence which he produces between Kaspar's demeanor and linguistic structures, how the limits of activities are formed by linguistically represented patterns of symbols. This transformation succeeds through the combination of choreographic and linguistic elements. As in ballet music is the determiner of dance movement, in this scene it is language which is made contextually and visually experienceable.

Through the breaking and the training of Kaspar by means of various sentence models, Handke demonstrates that these systems of social
relationships need not be sought outside of language, since they are imbedded, concealed in language itself. The model sentences demonstrate that the rules of sentence generation function as a societal limiting of their use. In the anonymity of the announcers (they speak through loudspeakers), who represent no social group but rather society in general, we find the fact that the model sentences obstruct knowledge of the historicity of linguistically traditional views of the world.

One of Handke's stage directions concerning the announcers voices reads as follows:

....(sie)sprechen ohne Unter- und Übertöne, das heißt, sie sprechen weder mit den üblichen Ausdrucksmitteln der Ironie, des Humors, der Hilfsbereitschaft, der menschlichen Wärme noch mit den üblichen Ausdrucksmitteln des Unheimlichen, des nicht Geheuren, des Übersinnlichen, des Übertürlichen; sie sprechen verstündlich. Sie sprechen, über eine gute Raumanalyse, einen Text, der nicht der ihre ist. (Scene 8).

The announcers present and represent (demonstrate) the bare-bones structure and movement in social language, void of all traits of human individuality.

Kaspar was intended to show in the anonymity of the announcers the structures of social domination which have entered into language itself. The complete reversal of the relationship between experience and language, i.e., instead of language being the expression of experience, experience is the expression of language, this reversal closes the first phase of Kaspar's socialization. In this phase his sentence, his only possession, was "exorcised".

The dominant order reproduces itself through and beyond the fully adapted Kaspar: this is the theme of the second phase of Kaspar's
socialization. Kaspar stands at the microphone (the announcers have spoken into microphones throughout) and begins to speak:

Schon lange auf der Welt sah ich nichts ein ich wunderte mich über das Selbstverständliche und fand alles Endliche oder Unendliche lächerlich jeder Gegenstand machte mir bange die ganze Welt war mir vergällt ich wollte weder ich selber noch jemand anderer sein die eigene Hand war mir unbekannt. (Scene 62).

As Kaspar acquires linguistic fluency, he loses touch with himself. With acquired linguistic sophistication comes the concomitant loss of comfortable and naive individuality. Kaspar is suffering the mental restraints of language patterns which accompany the acquisition of social language. The tone, rhythm and vocabulary of his speeches more and more closely resemble those of the announcers. Kaspar is becoming representative of the collective. This is made visible theatrically by the many other identical Kaspars who appear:

Der ursprüngliche Kaspar....geht....nach vorn, wo das Mikrofon steht. Er bleibt vor dem Mikrofon stehen. Alle sechs Kaspars sind still. (Scene 61).

The fact that Kaspar has lost his individuality is now made visually clear. Acquiring social language structures means taking on social traits and actions. The power of language lies in the fact that language, in its syntactical structure, gives Kaspar the illusion of being in control of language and of the world through language. Kaspar realizes the power of language as he begins to acquire it:

Ich lernte alles was leer war mit Wörten zu füllen und lernte wer wer war und alles was schrie mit Sätzen zu stillen kein leerer Topf verwirrt mehr meinen Kopf alles ist mir zu Willen. (Scene 62).

Kaspar enjoys the feeling of acquiring control over his surroundings by
learning the names of the objects and the words and phrases one customarily uses when talking about these objects. But the power of language which Kaspar feels he is exercising on his surroundings actually controls him and his actions too. This feeling of being held in a cage of language cannot come to be if the prisoner is not at least slightly aware of being different from the cage. That Kaspar is aware is indicated by Kaspar's reflection:

Schon mit meinem ersten Satz bin ich in die Falle gegangen. (Scene 64).

Kaspar has become ensnared in language but he cannot free himself by using language to reflect on or discuss the problem. This would be the referential paradox:


The patterns of his existential problems are those of language. To speak about these problems or to use language in contemplation of these problems is simply to compound them. Kaspar cannot linguistically circumvent language, because even the meta-linguistic discussing of language must bide by the requirements of language. Kaspar reverts to a language of nominal pairs reminiscent of his original sentence but totally devoid of the life and vibrance of the original sentence:


The work closes with these words as Kaspar pushes the other Kaspars and
thus causes them to tumble over. He is only accidentally Kaspar, no
different from the others.

The language criticism implicit in Kaspar is predominantly
demonstrative. A literature whose concept of language is determined by
the pragmatic theory of meaning will not attempt the referential para-
dox. If this literature intends to remain critical, the only possi-
bility is that of a form which shows, which actually demonstrates what
would elude critical explication. This unity of form and content Handke
has accomplished in Kaspar:

Die Einheit besteht in der Sprache....und dem damit verbundenen
Sprechen. So werden alle Elemente eines Dramas, sei es
Handlung, Fabel, Zufall, etc., auf ihr Allgemeinsamstes, die
Sprache reduziert.15

Quite specifically Handke in Kaspar emphasizes the learning of and being
manipulated by language and speech. Kaspar is Handke's strongest, most
logical and entertaining language-critical work.

If one attempts to evaluate such a demonstrative language-critical
work as Kaspar in referential terms, the resultant evaluative explication
is more telling of the critic than of the subject of the critic's words.
The critic's point of view, i.e., set of mind, in a sense predetermines
which aspects of Kaspar will be viewed, focused upon and emphasized, and
which ones will be ignored. The Marxist class-struggle viewpoint, for
instance, is based on strict, dogmatic precedent. Be the critique
Marxist, psychological, historical, or biographical, there is always a

15 Hans C. Angermeyer, pp. 208 f.
reference to an extra-linguistic psychophysical reality. By overlooking language these critics commit sustained non sequitur. Rather than appreciating the linguistic movement and tension in Kaspar, these critics read through the work and feel inspired to write what it reminded them of, i.e., how the play supports their opinions.

The noted Marxist critic Hans Mayer sees the tension between Kaspar and the Announcers as reflective of the class struggle. The Announcers are of course capitalists and Kaspar is the "insubordinate" rebel. One immediately recognizes the Marxist vocabulary in Mayer's defense of Handke's work when he speaks of the "Dialektik der Entfremdung":

Die Entfremdung kann niemals durch individuelle Aktion,...oder Passion...überwunden werden. Solange die Gesellschaft stets von neuem Entfremdung als Freiheitsschein erstrahlen läßt, ändert sich nichts....Entfremdung kann nicht durch entfremdete Literatur überwunden werden.

Mayer's final sentence is very incisively logical, but the entire contextual substance of Mayer's text is a creation of his own, not that which was presented by Handke in Kaspar.

Rainer Nägele and Renate Voris present a wealth of historical and biographical information:

Der Name des Titelhelden sowie sein Satz....verweisen auf die mysteriöse Figur des Kaspar Hauser, der völlig fremd und

16 Of the mainstream critical methods, the structural method is closest to that of demonstrative criticism. Cf. Roslyn Abt, In the beginning was the word.... (John 1:1): Language and Reality in Post World War II German Poetry: A Structural Approach. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1972.


The data are interesting but have nothing to do with the substance and movement of the work Kaspar. The character is Handke's Kaspar, not Kaspar Hauser; the time is the present on stage, not the 19th or 20th century; Kaspar does not represent artists or social outcasts; and although both Verlaine and Trakl possessed sophisticated enough linguistic sensitivity, they never penned anything like Kaspar. All of these data are literally beside the point.

Peter Iden begins his discussion of Kaspar with a reference to a "Kaspar-Hauser-Komplex" formulated by the 19th-century psychologist Alexander Mitscherlich:

....er entsteht aus Vereinsamung in früher Jugend, durch die soziale Kräfte sich nicht entfalten, das hat später Schwierigkeiten beim Kommunizieren zur Folge und ist auch.... kaum korrigierbar.¹⁹

There is no reference in Kaspar to childhood or previous feelings of loneliness or isolation; and any communication difficulties which surface in the work are within language itself, not in some extra-linguistic,

historical past. Not only are such references not helpful, they are also often distracting from the linguistic reality of Kaspar. To describe Kaspar as the first of Handke's works long enough to fill up an entire evening is not important to an understanding of the work; such information would be more appropriate to a discussion of modern or Western or West German entertainment habits, than to one of Kaspar.

Each of the attempts at referential-critical exegesis which presume the existence of extra-linguistic historical, psychophysical realities to which Kaspar refers, depends on self-deception for its validity. Any consistently accessible understanding of a language-immanent work such as Kaspar must view the work in terms of its language. Reference to extra-linguistic entities only clouds the issue and precludes progressive comprehension of linguistic reality.

4.3 Early Lyric, Stage Works, Prose, Hörspiele, Filmscript

The two volumes of poetry, Die Innenwelt der Außenwelt der Innenwelt (1965-68) and Deutsche Gedichte (1968) are basically Handke's experiments with Dadaist and "konkret" methods. DG consist of twenty sealed envelopes of "ready-mades" ("Die japanische Hitparade vom 25. Mai 1968"), "konkret" ("Da sitzt etwas auf dem Papier"), or collage ("Legenden"). Some of the poems ("Der Rand der Wörter I") are syntactical models which demonstrate constructions one uses unconsciously every day. All the poems in both volumes are language-immanent, i.e.,

not poems in the traditional sense of compressed existence (Dichtung).
But the poems here break little, if any, new ground. After these two
volumes, Handke has written (published) very little poetry. Handke
noted:

Gedichte zu schreiben heißt heute fast Eulen nach Athen
tragen.21

The writing of poetry is controlled too stringently by formal principles.

Die Angst des Tormannes beim Elfmeter (1969) is, like Der
Hausierer, a murder story. But unlike Ha there is no mystery; one is
aware almost from the beginning that Bloch is the culprit. The tale
(„Erzählung“) reads almost like a case study of schizophrenia. Handke
verifies this:

....das Prinzip war, zu zeigen, wie sich jemandem die
Gegenstände, die er wahrnimmt, infolge eines Ereignisses
(eines Mordes) immer mehr versprachlichen und, indem die
Bilder versprachlicht werden, auch zu Geboten und Verboten
werden. Beispiel aus einer Abhandlung über Die beginnende
Schizophrenie: ein 'Schizophrener' sieht ein Stück Käse unter
einer Käseglocke liegen (ein Bild), und aus diesem Käse treten
Tropfen hervor (ein Bild): statt nun es aber beim Sehen der
Bilder zu lassen, sieht der Schizophrenen gar nicht die Bilder
allein, sondern nimmt sofort auch deren Übersetzung in Sprache
wahr: 'Der Käse schwitzt!'; d.h. er, der etwas sieht, soll
schwitzten, das wird ihm dadurch angedeutet (Norm), d.h. er
soll sich mehr anstrengen, mehr konzentrieren, mehr arbeiten.
Der Schizophren nimmt also die Gegenstände als Anspielung auf
sich, als 'Wortspiele' wahr, metaphorisch. Das ist das
Prinzip der Erzählung.22

For Bloch, the former goalie who has broken the social order, words
become pictures. Handke demonstrates this literally in the text

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(p. 105) with pictures of a chair, a table, etc. There is another peculiarity to Handke's language in this work. Handke explains:

Ich hatte mir...vorgenommen, einen Schreibstil zu verwenden, wie ihn Sallust für seine Geschichtsschreibung verwendet hat, einen Geschichtsschreiberstil auf einen einzelnen Menschen angewandt. Die Sätze, die entstanden sind, wirken zwar ganz künstlich und ganz grammatikalisch, erzählen aber dennoch eine Geschichte. Eigentlich wollte ich nur den Eindruck wiedergeben, den man hat, wenn man jetzt die lateinischen Sachen liest, den Eindruck nämlich, daß man immer irgendwie die Grammatik mitliest. Man kann auch ganz konkret nachweisen, welches die Ähnlichkeiten mit dem Lateinischen sind.23

The reader is constantly held at a distance from the text and does not view the "story" as a normal one, i.e., does not feel himself drawn into something beyond the language.24

Handke wrote four Hörspiele between 1968 and 1970, more as experimentation than as concentrated interest in the genre. The first one has the title Hörspiel: the use of the title indicates that Handke intends to present only the trappings of a Hörspiel, "Vorgeformtes". Characters are Frager, Gefragter and five Ausfragier: all stereotypes, who speak in non sequiturs. The Frager urges the Gefragter to say certain things, to speak a certain way (as in Kaspar), until the Gefragter simply repeats everything the Frager says. The second Hörspiel is entitled Hörspiel Nr. 2. It is the abstraction of typical conversations between a taxi driver and the dispatcher. In the third Hörspiel, entitled Geräusch eines Geräusches, there is almost no spoken text (only within the form of a pop song and through a telephone

23 Mixner, p. 125.
24 cf. the intent of Brecht's Verfremdungseffekt.
receiver laid down somewhere), all one hears are typical Hörspiel sounds punctuated by pauses. But there is exact, detailed description of all the sounds: this is a Hörspiel for the reader. The last Hörspiel, Wind und Meer, is vague in content, very surrealistic. Handke described it as a series of "Anlässe zu einer Reise durch Bewußtsein." The sound of wind and ocean becomes progressively stronger until that is all the listener hears. All four Hörspiele are stylization of the genre. The stage work Quodlibet (1969; the title translates as "sort of cared for": "etwas beliebt") is another stylized approach to linguistic forms and their relation to forms of life: the syntax of living. The characters are clichés: "Figuren des Welttheaters". The dialog consists of clichés which have no contextual direction. The characters sometimes whisper non-understandably or speak in a foreign language, usually in non sequiturs. Handke describes the figures of speech he presented:

Im Quodlibet sind zum Beispiel folgende Sprechfiguren vorhanden: Frage und Antwort als Konversation, Auskunft, Frage-und- Antwort-Spiel; Mißverständnisse; Anspielungen; Erzählungen; Zitieren; Meinungen und Gegenmeinungen; Witzierzählen; Erzählungen als BEISPIELE für etwas, worauf dann der jeweilige Zuhörer selber ein anderes BEISPIEL dafür erzählt (Beispiele für Angst, Dummheit, Rassenunterschiede etc.); Monologe, die als Antwort nur bestätigendes Schweigen erwarten; Monologe, die eigentlich 'entschlüpft' sind, die niemand hören sollte; Widersprechen; Halbschlafgespräche; Narzissmus des Sprechens, Sprechen, um die eigene Stimme zu hören; Sprechen-SPIELEN: die Zuhörer sind Spielpartner, die über ausgesparte Wörter in Sätzen Bescheid wissen und mitspielen, indem sie selbst solche Sätze bilden; Euphemismus; Wortspiele....

25 Mixner, p. 94.

26 St2, pp. 159 f.
Elsewhere he describes his intention in writing the work:

...ich wollte mit dem Quodlibet eben zeigen, wie die Leute reagieren, auf einzelne Wörter und Sätze. Daß es im Theater schon genügt zu sagen: 'Auschwitz', oder so was. Man hält das, was da geschieht, für politisch, ohne daß es politisch ist, weil es nämlich die Reaktionsstruktur des Zuschauers überhaupt nicht verändert, sondern nur seine Hörrerkliches bestätigt. Wenn Sie das Wort 'Vergaser' in der Tram aufschnappen würden, hätten Sie niemals Bezüge zu Auschwitz. Und darüber wollte ich eigentlich ein Stück schreiben: Wie man hört und wie man schaut, ein Stück über die Wahrnehmungsästhetik, und wie komplex das ist und wie subtil, und wie man im Theater sofort reagiert auf Formen.²⁷

Handke continues to examine the similarities between linguistic structures and the syntax or forms of life.

Der Ritt über den Bodensee (1970) delineates these forms of life in the language of dream:

Der letzte Gedanke an Kaspar wurde der erste Gedanke zu Der Ritt über den Bodensee: die in dieser Gesellschaft vorherrschenden menschlichen Umgangsformen darzustellen durch genaues Beobachten.²⁸

The title is taken from Gustav Schwab's ballad about a rider, who, after riding across the Bodensee is told that the ice was very thin and he was lucky he had not fallen through, whereupon he dies of shock: a simplistic illustration of the power of language. The atmosphere of the work is that of a surrealistical dream, almost a comedy of errors (Handke quotes Shakespeare's work), where misunderstandings are the driving force:

Die Bühnenfiguren erproben in Sprachspielen zweckrationalen.... und intentionalen....Gebrauch der Sprache; und nur im Gebrauch

²⁷Mixer, p. 100.
²⁸St2, p. 57.
der Sprache... entsteht Handlung. Erprobt wird dieses Funktionieren von Sprachhandlungen in seiner Wirkung auf das Verhalten: Wenn zum Beispiel Henny Porten die Stufen der Treppe im Hintergrund herabsteigt und stolpert, weil Jannings und George die Stufen falsch mitzählen, einmal eine auslassen, dann eine zuwenig und eine zuviel zählen. Das Stück erscheint als verhinderte Konversationskomödie, weil die Bedeutungsebenen der Sprache durcheinandergeraten. Die immer neuen Anläufe, die die Schauspieler unternehmen, um ein Miteinander, ein Verständnis oder Einverständnis zu erreichen, geraten ins Stocken angesichts der Gefahr, durch das dünne Eis der Sprache einzubrechen.29

The characters lose their ability to function at all because they cannot communicate with one another.

_Chronik der laufenden Ereignisse_ (1970) is another experimental work for Handke: the account of the filming of the filmscript of the same title. Handke explains:


29Mixner, pp. 106 f.
30Ch, pp. 128 f.
The work is an uneven chronicle, written in preparation for actual filming (which Handke himself directed) and as if he were describing a film he was watching. There is very little dialog as such. The text is primarily detailed, objective description of movement without any interpretive blurring. The text is richly interspersed with illustrative filmclips.

4.4 Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied Through Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung

Beginning with Der kurze Brief, or perhaps with Wunschloses Unglück, Handke seems more at ease with the activity of writing the type of story he described in reference to Konrad Bayer, word by tentative word, where each word, phrase or sentence begets the succeeding one, without respect to contextual causality. Both of these works were instigated by personal tragedy, perhaps causing Handke to apply all the experience gained from his early dogmatic period of experimentation to the comprehension of incisive events in his life. He proceeds to employ the available words and phrases, attempting to remain aware of the abysses (Abgründe) of which Kraus warned.

Der kurze Brief (1971) is a series of sentences related to one another through an internal causality:


31 Mixner, p. 161.
This tentativeness, the consciousness of linguistic movement continues almost unabated through Handke's works up to and including the latest (Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire). Little new linguistic ground is broken in the writings following on KR, with the exception of Wunschloses Unglück (1972) and Das Gewicht der Welt (1975-1977).

Wunschloses Unglück (a neologistic turn of the stock phrase "ein wunschloses Glück") is moving and striking in many respects, especially when viewed against the background of Handke's previous work: Handke had worked as a writer who had managed to stylize his feelings into forms which have been called with some basis "sterile Exerziten". The words here have more life, a feeling that they are necessary and absolute:


With this tense concision Handke begins the Erzählung. He attempts to tell the story of his mother's life:

Es begann also damit, daß meine Mutter vor über fünfzig Jahren

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34 WU, p. 7.
But he discovers that he must concentrate as much on his attempting to
tell the story as on the story:

Diese zwei Gefahren — einmal das bloße Nacherzählten, dann
das schmerzlose Verschwinden einer Person in poetischen
Sätzen — verlangsamen das Schreiben, weil ich fürchte, mit
ejdem Satz aus dem Gleichgewicht zu kommen. Das gilt ja für
jede literarische Beschäftigung, besonders aber in diesem
Fall, wo die Tatsachen so übermächtig sind, daß es kaum etwas
zum Ausdenken gibt....Nun ging ich von der bereits verfügbaren
Formulierungen, dem gesamtgesellschaftlichen Sprachfundus aus
statt von den Tatsachen und sortierte dazu aus dem Leben
meiner Mutter die Vorkommnisse, die in diesen Formeln schon
vorgesehen waren; denn nur in einer nicht-Gesuchten,
Öffentlichen Sprache könnte es gelingen, unter all den
nichtsagenden Lebensdaten die nach einer Veröffentlichung
schreienden herauszufinden.36

One slowly discovers that Handke's method here is that of the "impossible-
to-write-and-not-to-write biography":

Ich vergleiche also den allgemeinen Formelvorrat für die
Biographie eines Frauenlebens satzweise mit dem besonderen
Leben meiner Mutter; aus den Übereinstimmungen Widersprüchlich-
keiten ergibt sich dann die eigentliche Schreibtätigkeit.37

Throughout the work the movement of language is more directly connected
to the movements and flow of Handke's feelings than in any of his other
writings (Das Gewicht der Welt is at times comparable). It is very
clear and emotionally charged language: every word is appropriate and
elicits an internal "nod" of approval, apprehension, and awe.

4.5 Die linkshändige Frau Through Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire

The three works besides GW lack the forcefulness of Wunschloses

35GW, p. 12.
36GW, p. 45.
37GW, p. 45 f.
Unglück. GW is a linguistic journal of the period from November 1975, through March 1977:

Die täglichen Wahrnehmungen wurden also im Kopf zunächst übersetzt in das System, für das sie gebraucht werden sollten....Ich übte mich nun darin, auf alles, was mir zustieß, sofort mit Sprache zu reagieren, und merkte, wie im Moment des Erlebnisses gerade diesen Zeitsprung lang auch die Sprache sich belebte und mitteilbar wurde; einen Moment später wäre es schon wieder die täglich gehört, vor Vertrautheit nichtssagende, hilflose 'Du weißt schon, was ich meine' - Sprache des Kommunikations-Zeitalters gewesen. Einen Zeitsprung lang wurde der Wortschatz, welcher mich Tag und Nacht durchquerte, gegenständlich. Was auch immer ich erlebte, erschien in diesem 'Augenblick der Sprache' von jeder Privatheit befreit und allgemein.38

Not all of the aphoristic "reactions" are direct expression. But many of them are, and Handke often enough expresses himself directly here that language can be wielded with full awareness of its limitations:

Guter Schriftsteller: die Sprache bemerkt sich selber; großer Schriftsteller: die Sprache wird darüber hinaus frei für was andres als sich selber.39

This "something else" for which language can be used is disclosed in the opening paragraph. Language is requested to perform the function of movement in a mimed stage piece:

Es wurde mit [diesen Aufzeichnungen] in der Absicht begonnen, sie in einen Zusammenhang zu bringen, etwa einer Geschichte oder, wie noch an der häufigen Beschreibung von bloßen Gesten am Anfang zu erkennen, eines (stummen) Theaterstücks.40

Handke searches for concomitant syntaxes in all structured forms of life and of cognition. The sinews of Handke's existence are syntactically joined.

38 GW, pp. 5 f.
39 GW, p. 306.
40 GW, p. 5.
SUMMARY

The discussion here is open-ended, just as it is the continuation of previous discussion on the crisis of language, the linguistic revolution, the tremendous Austrian contribution in the field of language (of communications-media in general), and the sustained efforts of Peter Handke. We have documented the occurrence, sources, and repercussions of critical problems in language, focusing on literary, philosophical, political, social, and artistic sources and data.

The methodology borrowed from Günther Saße has served well to organize and present the various manifestations of the problem of language within the dual framework of the theory/practice poles, i.e., ontological/referential and pragmatic/demonstrative. Although the pragmatic/demonstrative pole has been traced back to work by Hamann, Herder and Humboldt, most of the individuals and groups examined in the above discussion have favored the ontological/referential extreme. This is the traditional pole (Saße refers to it as sprachtraditionell) and thus the one with the greater inertial influence. The pragmatic/demonstrative gained prominence only after the chaos and insanity of World War II, which ironically served in a way to "wipe the slate clean" by making it very obvious that language can become total jargon and be exploited to rewrite history and make wrong seem right (e.g., make the Nazi problem appear to be the Jewish problem): "werch ein illtum," as Jandl has demonstrated.

Handke's linguistic theory has been shown to coincide with most of the emphases of the pragmatic/demonstrative tradition as it developed.
up to his emergence on the scene in the early 1960's: language is a reality in an of itself, language can be distorted and can die and become cliché, and the meaning of language is its use. Handke has quite obviously dealt with past work on the problem of language. His linguistic practice has been described in its progression from an intense dogmatic and experimental period, in the earliest prose (Die Hornissen, Die Begrüßung des Aufsichtsrats), poetry (Die Innenwelt der Außenwelt der Innenwelt) and stage works (Sprechstücke), through Als das Wünschen noch geholfen hat and Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung in 1974. Beginning with Wunschloses Unglück and continuing through his latest writings (Die linkshändig Frau, Das Gewicht der Welt, Langsame Heimkehr, and Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire), Handke seems to have gained his footing in language and to feel at ease in using the words available to express what is on his mind without having to constantly remind himself, and the reader, that language is of top priority.

For a writer who, like Handke, is hypersensitive to language, there are, George Steiner suggests, two essential courses available:

....he may seek to render his own idiom representative of the general crisis (of linguistic and formal civilization), to convey through it the precariousness and vulnerability of the communicative act; or he may choose the suicidal rhetoric of silence.¹

Handke has chosen the first course. He described this intention in his work:

....ich bin auf eine Sprache aus, die jedem vertraut ist, die jeder kennt -- und wenn mal so ein gekräuselter Satz stehen

¹Language and Silence, pp. 49 f.
bleibt, passiert er mir halt, dann ist das ein Betriebsunfall des Handke. Aber ich gehe auf jeden Fall von der Gemeinsprache aus, die jeder kennt, die jeder spricht, und versuche herauszubringen, was in dieser Gemeinsprache an lebendigen Einzelheiten, wenn man bestimmte Elemente gegeneinander stellt, aufleuchtet und vorkommen kann.2

In GW Handke provides a veiled but unmistakable indication that he is through with the obsession for experimenting:

> Was es, für mich, vor zehn Jahren noch für Einschüchterungen gab: 'Die konkrete Poesie', 'Andy Warhol' und dann Marx und Freud und der Strukturalismus, und jetzt sind all diese Universal-Pictures verflogen, und nichts soll irgendeinen mehr bedrücken als das Gewicht der Welt.3

His tongue-in-cheek use of Universal-Pictures emphasizes that he has found his own existential syntax and no longer needs a preconceived program. And he is sure of his work:

> Die vergessene, anonyme Sprache aller Menschen wiederfinden, und sie wird erstrahlen in Selbstverständlichkeit (meine Arbeit).4

Handke can now utilize his knowledge gained through the methodical experimentation of his writings to tell exact stories full of feeling:

> Eine genaue, gefühlvolle Geschichte: das Gefühl liegt in der Genauigkeit des Erzählten, nicht in dem Beschreiben von Gefühlen.5

Language remains Handke's first priority.

Saße raises one final question about the validity of intellectual discussions of topics such as the problem of language:

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3GW, p. 34.

4GW, p. 70.

5GW, p. 252.
Offen bleibt die Frage, inwieweit eine im ästhetischen Bereich gemachte Erfahrung Eingang findet in die immer schon ablaufenden 'kommunikativen Handlungsspiele' der Alltagspraxis und die in ihnen vorgenommenen Wirklichkeitsdefinitionen.... Ist die Macht der in die verfestigten sprachlichen Verständigungszusammenhänge eingegangenen Deutungsmuster nicht schon so groß geworden, daß dasjenige, was sie kritisch in Frage stellen will, mühelos absorbiert wird? Verweist dies nicht wiederum auf gesellschaftliche Gruppen, die gar kein Interesse an der Veränderung der in Sprache vorgenommenen Deutungen gesellschaftlicher Phänomene haben? Diese Fragen akzentuieren die Probleme einer sprachbezogenen Gesellschaftskritik.... Denn die sprachliche Neubestimmung der Handlungszwecke und das Handeln unter diesen Zwecken selbst ist zweierlei.

Agreement on what is to be done does not free one from having to actually perform the task at hand. Handke has been criticized often for lack of explicit social and political comment. I feel Handke's efforts are, and have most always been, of consistent intensity, integrity, and honesty; consistent enough to be considered the "task at hand" and to earn Handke, as he requests in Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire, "das Recht zu schreiben".

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6 Saße, p. 186.
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APPENDICES

(A) 7.1 Materialien to the Problem of Language

7.11 Interview With Martin Esslin: Peter Handke and the Austrian Problem of Language. Interview Conducted by Russell Bailey, June 20, 1977, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Esslin is a native of (Austro-)Hungary; emigrated from there to England where he headed, and produced for the literature section of the BBC; formulated the concept of the "Theater of the Absurd."

Bailey. Do you know Handke personally? Have you met him?

Esslin. Yes, I've met him frequently. In fact, I spent three days in Venice with him at one time, in 1968, when I was on the jury of the Premio Malzotto, and we gave him a prize for Kaspar. He came to Italy to receive this, and afterwards he and I and some other people, who were on the jury, went to Venice together to spend all the money they'd paid us. And I've met him several times before. I met him at a congress in Stockholm in 1965, I think it was. It was a congress of Swedish and German theater people, where he made a very provocative speech. I met him at the Frankfurt book-fair years ago. I know him, but I can't say that I'm friendly with him. I know him quite well. I've done the first English production of Self-Accusation (Selbstbezichtigung) on the radio in England. I did it long before it was translated by anybody else. I did my own translation of it. And I've done that production not only in England, but I did it two or three years ago in Australia as well on the radio.

B. What is Handke's general view of critics?

Esslin. I think it's very poor, quite frankly, and also, it's very difficult to find him because he lives in Paris, and the latest I've heard is that he's living with Jeanne Moreau, the French actress. But still, I don't know. These things change very rapidly. He was divorced from his wife a long time ago. She was an actress in Düsseldorf. At that time he lived in Düsseldorf. She is called Libgart Schwarz. He's an interesting, very self-possessed, very uncommunicative fellow, and very unhappy, I think, very neurotic. If you've read his latest novels, they're all about nervous breakdowns: Die linkshändige Frau, Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung, Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied, and the one about his mother's suicide, Wunschloses Unglück.

B. Do you know very much about the Forum Stadtpark group in Graz?
E. Very well. I know most of them. The man who runs, or ran the group, Alfred Kolleritsch, was a teacher at the Gymnasium in Graz, and he started this group of young writers. Various young writers, most notably Wolfgang Bauer and others, belong to it. It's a very important movement. It's connected to the Wiener Gruppe, with people like Artmann, Oskar Wiener, Konrad Bayer, who committed suicide, and Rühm and various others. There are several books about them, most notable a volume called Die Wiener Gruppe. The spark came ultimately from Artmann and came over to the Graz group.

B. How would you define this spark?

E. It's really difficult to define. I would say: the impulse to make serious literature in Austria after the war. The impulse to make literature different from the traditional Austrian literature. I think the influence of the Artmann-type approach, namely to go down to demotic speech and to look at the language completely freshly; Artmann wrote these verses in demotic Austrian, med ana schwoazzn dintn, where he actually used the phonetic writing for Viennese dialect, which ultimately, I think, comes from Raymond Queneau and the French demotic school, one of the greatest French writers, who died last year. He wrote the famous book called Zazie dans le metro and Mon ami Pierrot. Queneau was the first one to say that present-day French has the relation to literary French that is used by the Academie and which is written in the newspapers, that French has to classical Latin. So he said that if you looked into the grammar that is actually applied, then you'll get something completely different.

B. I think that's a point you've made about Harold Pinter.

E. But again, that's different. Pinter doesn't use different phonetics.

B. You said he renders everyday speech so accurately that . . .

E. Yes, that it has a completely new type of grammar. You see, for example, Queneau says that, if you wrote a grammar of modern French, you wouldn't say that the word est-ce-que, if you spelled that eske and a Martian came, he would say that that is the equivalent of the Latin word nonne or num or ne, which means that a question is coming. But no one still thinks of it as is it that. Or, for example, Queneau would say, although in classical French one would say A tu din?, no one uses that anymore. Today, the question Have you eaten? would be Est-ce-que tu a din?, and that the est-ce-que would then be an article indicating a question is coming. Also, in a number of his poems and in his novels, he writes sentences that one thinks are in Aztec. But if you read them, you realize that they are in demotic French. Now, Artmann has picked this up, or indeed Artmann might well have been on the same line, because certainly there's a connection between Artmann and Queneau, and Artmann wrote the book med ana schwoazzn dintn in phonetics. And, of course, there's another impulse behind it, which is that the Austrians during the war decided that they were not Germans and that they wanted a language of their own. There was a strong impulse to get away from High German, which is again a completely artificial language, rather like classical Latin, and that, therefore, if one wanted to be true to one's speech position, one
should start completely from scratch. I think this is one impulse behind the Wiener Gruppe, which has become, in Handke, simply the interest in linguistics and in the real nature of language. And Handke goes a bit further even. He says the clichés of language actually dictate our thought, and therefore, you have to get behind the clichés of language. This, in a way, is what Artmann and Queneau were trying to do by writing demotic. Handke goes a bit further and says that already the demotic is a cliche. So he wants to get away from all linguistic approaches altogether in plays like Der Ritt über den Bodensee or Das Mündel will Vormund sein. That is one of the impulses. The other impulse, which of course also comes from Queneau, or via Queneau and others, is Surrealism. The Wiener Gruppe had a lot of Surrealism.

B. Would you agree that this intense linguistic skepticism is an Austrian, or, going even further back, an Austro-Hungarian peculiarity?
E. Well, that's partly true. In the Austrian tradition you have Mauthner's Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache, Karl Kraus and Wittgenstein. Of course, the key text in this is Hofmannsthals Chandos Brief. This is great skepticism about language. And this goes back further, and you can see here the uniqueness of Kraus and Nestroy. It goes back to the Austrian dialect comedy of Raimund and Nestroy, in which again a great deal of dialect and linguistic virtuosity was displayed and in which the nature of language was being exposed.

B. In the accurate rendering of Austrian dialect, would you agree to a connection between Artmann and Raimund and Nestroy?
E. Certainly. Again, the same impulse, quite frankly, is that, during the Nazi period when the Germans behaved so very badly in Austria, it became very disadvantageous to speak High German. In Vienna immediately after the war, if you came in and said, "Kann ich bitte ein Glas Wasser haben?," they wouldn't bring it to you. But if you said, "Gehn S', bringn S' ma a Glos Wossa," you got it, because they wouldn't deal with High German. There was, then, a re-thinking as to whether or not there was an Austrian literature. Therefore, the line back to Raimund, Nestroy, Josef Anton Stranitzky (1676-1726), Prähauzer, and the baroque writers. You see Artmann writing baroque Austrian as well as Austrian contemporary dialect. These books, von den husaren und anderen seiltänzern, etc., these pastiche baroque Austrian pieces that Artmann has written. So, again, Artmann is the grandfather of all these boys. And he's a wonderful poet.

B. What about Ernst Jandl? He's done some similar work.
E. Jandl is similar, he's on the same line, similar lines.

B. He translated a poem by Wordsworth and called it a surface translation. He just rendered it phonetically into German.
E. Karl Kraus is a link between all of these, because Karl Kraus used to give readings of Nestroy and was a great advocate of Nestroy.

B. What aspect of Karl Kraus' work would it be most fruitful to research in connection to Handke? He put out so much material in Die Fackel.
E. It's the analysis of the style of the Austrian press, and he's showing that the corruption of the thinking of these people is mirrored
in the corruption of the language, and that you can, in fact, show the inauthenticity of certain political ideas by the horrible language in which they're written. In fact, if you look at the collected works of Kraus, edited by Heinrich Fischer in single volumes, there are several volumes which are called "Sprachkritische Schriften" or something like that. There's also a volume available in paperback.

B. Handke highly praises Ödön von Horváth.

E. Yes, he's a very important Austrian writer, who also, of course, is very much in the same line as Karl Kraus. His main play, for example, is Geschichten aus dem Wienerwald. It's just been done in London at the National Theatre. In it you have a tragedy of a girl who is seduced and has a baby, her boyfriend leaves her, the baby is killed, etc. The whole point of the tragedy is that all the characters speak in the false, inauthentic High German clichés of the time, from the popular press and the popular novel. Horváth actually makes the point, he calls the play "Ein Volksstück," but there's no dialect in it, and he says that this is a play about people who ought to speak dialect, but, because they want to be pretentious, they speak High German, and that is the origin of their misery. Because all the sentiments that they are mouthing are, in fact, inauthentic sentiments, and, therefore, they can never penetrate to the reality of their relationships. Now, that is very much an utterance of Karl Kraus, and of course Horváth is now regarded as an important a playwright as Brecht. He died in 1938, was of Hungarian origin, but spoke Viennese dialect. He's written something like thirty-five plays which have recently been issued in a collected edition. Handke prefers Horváth to Brecht tremendously.

B. Ingeborg Bachmann did an essay on Wittgenstein.

E. Her writings aren't so important here, but definitely her essay on Wittgenstein.

B. In a work entitled Wittgenstein's Vienna, by Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin, the authors make a connection between Wittgenstein in philosophy, Kraus in journalism, Schönberg in music and Adolf Loos in architecture, presenting a skepticism found in all the media. Would you agree that this is a valid connection to make?

E. Sure. Don't forget one thing. You see, Austria was the first major cultural center of western Europe to collapse. So that everything that happened in France after 1940, in America after Vietnam, in England after 1945, happened in Austria after 1918. In the period between 1900 and 1918, Austria was the turntable of Europe, because Freud, Kafka, Schönberg, Wittgenstein, and Hitler came from there. They are all from the same origin, they have all the elements of disintegration of one of the great bourgeois cultures of Europe, the first one to go. And that is why all the values were seen to be false in the eyes of the Austrians who were sensitive at that time.

B. So what had hitherto been a fairly theoretical skepticism toward language among, for example, Goethe, the Romantics, and Kleist, actually took on far greater proportions, social and political and personal, than before.

E. Yes, certainly, and, you see, Freud is part of this. Because Freud, with the unconscious, was saying, "You may be saying, 'I love
my daughter,' when in reality you want to rape her." So, again, what
is real behind the linguistic expression became the subject matter of
psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis is a linguistic theory and has much
in common with Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein wanted to say, "What is
behind words?" Freud is saying the same thing, simply in a different
way. Wittgenstein looks at it as a logician and Freud as a psycholo-
gist. Kraus and, of course, Mauthner look at the leading article in
the newspaper, which says, "We are for progress and industrialization,"
but the reality is "We are for filling our pockets and going to the
next whorehouse." And this comes through because they don't really
say what they mean. Handke takes the second step, because after World
War II this thing collapsed for the second time and even much more
thoroughly. All these writers, though more in Austria than in Germany
because the Austrians are much more sensitive to these things, to
language, all these writers, whether Wolfgang Bauer or Handke or Rühm
or Artmann or Jandl, say, "It's all crap; let's start from scratch."
No generation has more completely rejected their fathers than they have.
The falsity of the language in which they were enveloped during the
Hitler period, the nonsense that came out of the radio. Then from one
day to the next everything changed.
B. Handke did pretty much start from scratch in the early plays,
"Sprechstücke" and in Das Mündel, but other than that he does use
traditional words.
E. But he's saying that the words are already encapsulating
clichés of thought. All the "Sprechstücke" are about that. In the
novels, for example in Wunschloses Unglück, he's trying to express what
he feels when his mother has died, but while he's writing down how sad
he is, he says, "I realize that these are words that one uses in these
conditions." But he's always skeptical about the fact that authentic
feelings can't be expressed in language at all. Everything that comes
out of you is already pre-chewed in language. I was discussing with
him, when we were in Venice, what his main influences were, and he
said "Nothing." I said, "Well, if you asked me what I feel when I read
your stuff, I would say there are two distinct influences on you,
stylistically. One is the prose of Kleist and the other that of
Stifter. . . . " He said, "Oh yes, you're right. That is true."
There is a great deal of Stifter in Handke. Stifter was the first of
the nouveau roman, in a way, because he was a great meticulous describer
of subtle detail, and tried to get at the authentic experience through
the details of the external world. Stifter was one of the greatest
Austrian, one of the greatest writers of all times.
B. Did Wittgenstein's name come up in conversation with Handke?
E. It's quite clear that Wittgenstein is a big influence on Handke.
B. At a conference at Princeton about a year ago, according to Dr.
Victor Lange, an Austrian author gave a long and elaborate introduction
to Handke, describing him as the literary interpreter of Wittgenstein.
E. Certainly. That's obvious.
B. It was so long and drawn out that, finally, someone asked
Handke directly if this were true. Handke denied it.
E. I didn't talk to him about this, but it seems to me absolutely
clear that he's under the influence of Wittgenstein. On the other hand, the Wittgenstein influence is in the air in Austria and he may not be aware of it. I'm sure he has read Wittgenstein. These boys have read everything. That doesn't mean that he believes it, believes it's true. You just have to analyze his works and there it is. There are really two Wittgensteins: the one of the Traktatus and the one of the Untersuchungen. They are totally different, but one of them is there. Quite clearly, there is no writer in Austria now who isn't in some way influenced by Wittgenstein.

B. I am interested in finding out to what extent the literary activities of the Forum Stadtpark writers are similar to that of Handke.

E. Nobody is doing the same thing as Handke. Bauer, the other major product of the Forum Stadtpark, is completely the other side, but, of course, they have a lot in common.

B. What do you mean "completely the other side"?

E. Bauer is the extreme realistic playwright and Handke is the extreme unrealistic playwright, but they both have a great deal in common nevertheless. There is a volume of Bauer translations my wife and I have done, published by Hill and Rand. He's a major playwright. The other people there, Jonke, Kolleritsch, Gerhard Roth, they're all important. Michael Scharang, but that's different again; he's a communist. One of the major influences on them is American pop music. That appears in Bauer in the form of people playing pop records. It appears in Handke in his instructions to the actors in the "Sprechstücke."

B. Pop records are included in Geräusch eines Geräusches, Hörspiel Nr. 2, and Das Mündel, and he quotes Bob Dylan at the beginning of Wunschloses Unglück.

E. Exactly. When I first met him he looked like one of the Beatles. They were deeply influenced by this area. He's influenced greatly by John Ford and the American western film, which is the main theme of Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied. The whole question of the impact of the western world on these boys, who had been under Nazi rule when they were children, is great, is a very important element in it all.

B. Would Handke be amenable to answering questions sent to him by mail?

E. Probably not. It would be better to try to see him in person. He lives in Paris now.

B. But he still contributes fairly regularly to Manuskripte.

E. Yes, but he's not in Graz.

B. Do you think Handke would accept a visit, from me, from a critic?

E. Well, he's a very moody fellow. One day he might do it and the next he might say "Fuck off!" If he is negative about the work of critics, that has nothing to do with you. It's just too bad for him. He's a man, I think he drinks heavily, he's always threatened in some way, and if you look at all the latest novels, they all end up in a chap going mad and screaming. He doesn't do that, but I think he's
always on the verge of it.
B. He writes about it instead of doing it.
E. Yes.
B. Could you generalize and say what you feel he's trying to do with language in the later novels? It's fairly obvious, at least to a certain extent, what's going on with language in the early works, the "Sprechstücke" and Kaspar. In the later novels it seems that he writes as though language were a valid medium, he seems to have made his peace with language and with words.
E. Well, yes, he has, on the other hand, in Wunschloses Unglück he seems to be saying "You can't deal with your mother's death except in clichés, and by stressing that fact, you may be breaking through the clichés. But in the other novels, Die linkshändige Frau and Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung, I would say he's merely describing that nervous breakdown he's either having or not having.
B. There have also been three movies made from his works, Chronik der laufenden Ereignisse and Die linkshändige Frau by Handke, and Falsche Bewegung by Wim Wenders in the fall of 1974. Both here and in the "Hörspiele" with their sound effects, it seems that Handke's trying to progress even further through the addition of visual and aural media. The same is seen in the photos included in Als das Wünschen noch geholfen hat. The solution arrived at by some authors, most notably Hauptmann, Hofmannsthal and Brecht, to the problem of language as a limited medium, has been turning away from the written word to action, mime and gesticular language, or combining the linguistic and other media.
E. Sure. You have to look to Artaud and these people for that. The whole question of modern drama, the whole of the "Theater of the Absurd" type of approach is a distrust of language. The theater is really the place where you can do without language or put language in a minor position. Replaced by visual effects, or sound effects, or simply by the impact of the emotion that comes out. As at the end of Handke's latest novels the protagonist just screams.
B. What do you make of the fact that Handke has moved away from the theatrical arena and has turned to prose? Except for the movie he's making of Die linkshändige Frau, would you say he's becoming a reader's writer?
E. But he also writes filmscripts.
B. Did he write the filmscript for Falsche Bewegung?
E. Yes, I think so.
B. Does the Kaspar film Jeder für sich und Gott gegen alle have any connection to Handke?
E. No, that's nothing to do with Handke at all! That's a historical film about Kaspar Hauser. The Kaspar Hauser theme is a popular German theme with everyone from Wassermann to God knows whom.
B. Again, the Forum Stadtpark group seems to be an important source to investigate.
E. They're a very undogmatic group. Each of them is different, but the impulses are the same: starting from scratch after the Nazis,
saying you don't want to have anything to do with the Germans, with anything, and you start on your own. Then you have the impacts coming from abroad, which in fact are pop music, the American and British impact, and Queneau's demotic French and Surrealism.

B. Just as Brecht described his "gestische Sprache" in terms of the language used by the newspaper boy and the demonstrators out on the street, Handke, in his "Regeln für die Schauspieler" at the beginning of Kaspar, suggests that the actors first listen to a cement mixer, the Luxembourg hit-parade and the Rolling Stones and watch Gary Cooper's expressions and those of zoo animals, etc.

E. The American and English pop influence is more important than Wittgenstein in some ways. I'll give you one story. When I was in Venice with Handke, I suggested we go to the movies one evening. He said, "Yes, let's see one of those 'spaghetti westerns.'" We found a cinema where there was not a "spaghetti western" film but a "spaghetti gangster" film, Italian films that look like American "B" films but they're even worse. It was one of those simply unbelievable, obviously all done on the outskirts of Milan. I recognized the outskirts of Milan. I've been there. It had the same shot of a car going around a corner, screeching, eighteen times, because they obviously didn't want to do any location shooting. It had a completely nondescript plot. Every five minutes someone came in with a machinegun and shot everybody down. Handke was absolutely entranced by it. As we went out he said, "Ist das nicht großartig! Da ist all Charakterisierung vollkommen weg. Nur Aktion." No characterization, no dialogue, just action.

B. Implying that characterization is impossible?

E. Exactly. That's what the "Sprechstücke" are about, there are no characters in the "Sprechstücke." Not that it's impossible. It's not interesting. Again, it's a revolt against psychology, the psychological drama.

B. It seems to me, that when Handke rejects Brechtian technique in favor of the realistic subjectivity of Beckett, he is implying not that it's impossible or uninteresting to reflect the character of a person, but that it could not be done in any sort of objective way.

E. Certainly. The realistic subjectivity of Beckett is precisely what it's all about. You can't talk about other people, because you can never penetrate other people. So you're only called upon to talk about yourself. And the only realism that is possible is subjective realism. That's why all his novels are autobiographical, radically so. And clearly so because one knows that his mother really committed suicide, that he really left his wife.

B. Did all the occurrences in Der kurze Brief actually happen?

E. Everything, as far as I know.

B. The picture of the gun?

E. Yes, everything. I think so, one can't verify it, obviously, but it has the air of total authenticity. And simply knowing him personally, one recognizes him in all these characters, including Die linkshändige Frau. They all have this thing, they get up one morning and say, "To hell with it." It's a typical schizophrenic symptom, the
world has disappeared. And the early "Sprechstücke" are attempts at being objective, but without characterization, just having the objectivity of language itself. Quite clearly Selbstbeschimpfung is an attempt to write a play without having characters. You have all the dramatic situations of anybody's life, namely, the transgressions of taboos, simply listed as a thesaurus of possible sentences that could be spoken. The effect of that on an audience, and I've directed the play, is in a way kind of do-it-yourself kit, in which everybody applies those things that he has done, to himself, so everybody makes his own play out of it. The same with Publikumsbeschimpfung. These are just sentences that you could apply to someone and that are in a dictionary. "You who are going to die of cancer," well somebody in the audience is going to die of cancer, so they will feel, "Good God, he's talking about me." There are others who will die of diabetes, and they will think, "He's talking about me." So everybody has his own tragedy enacted simply by having the dictionary thrown at him. If the dictionary contains the totality of human thought, the dictionary is, in fact, the greatest piece of drama.

B. He changed the last sentence, actually deleted it, in Kaspar, which read: "Ich - bin - nicht - ich."

E. It may have been simply a practical thing. He also deleted the last sentence in Selbstbeschimpfung, "Ich werde es nie wieder tun." He obviously felt it was out of style. It was not a self-accusative but a declarative sentence. So the whole question of the "Sprechstücke" in comparison with the other things is how to achieve objectivity in a situation where you can only be subjective.

B. Do you think he ever finds a solution?
E. Well, he's trying to. He's either doing it by giving up language or he's doing it by throwing a dictionary at the audience, or by trying to describe his emotions in the same way in which Beckett does, by simply describing them, aware of the fact that the language doing the describing is nothing but clichés, but by being aware of that one is perhaps getting behind it.

B. Do you think Handke feels himself successful in doing this?
E. All writers are pleased with their successes, and you're successful if you can make money. Handke's very proud of the money he makes. When I was with him in Venice, he was saying something like, "I had an invitation to go to America, five lectures and they would pay me $5000," and I said, "That's a lot of money." "Not really," he said. He was making more at that time.

B. Handke was once offered a chair at the Universität Bochum, which had recently been vacated by Thomas Bernhard. His reply was something like, as long as the Universität Bochum was in Bochum, he wouldn't go.
E. Yes, sure. Bochum is one of the most terrible towns in Germany. Bernhard is an interesting parallel case. Like Handke, Bernhard, too, constantly deals with nervous breakdowns. And he writes very similar plays. They are very much in the same line with Handke's.

B. Which plays in particular?
E. *Ein Fest für Boris, Die Macht der Gewohnheit*, very much a Handke
type play, one with a title something like Der Intrigant der Wahnsinnigen. The last one is called Minetti, written for the actor Bernhard Minetti, which is very interesting too. They're all very much in the Handke line, but different, of course. They represent the same kind of skepticism toward language.

B. The Dadaists also experimented with language, perhaps best seen in their "Klang-" and "Simultangedichte." The Expressionists, too, particularly Becher, Heym and Stramm. Stramm, after a meeting with the Futurist theorist and writer Marinetti, destroyed all his previous poems and turned to poems experimenting radically with language, simply listing infinitives, substantives, etc.

E. Yes, you also have Kurt Schwitters and people like that. But I don't think they are a direct influence on Handke. They are via Jandl, Jandl is influenced by them, because Jandl is of an older generation, and he's also influenced by Eugen Conringer, one of the great "concrete poets."

B. I've not seen any "concrete" figure arrangements in Handke's works.

E. No, he doesn't have much, if any, of that, but he's influenced by it. And the Wiener Gruppe, particularly Rühm, is very much influenced by it. Those are true forerunners of Handke, but I don't think he would be very much aware of them. I think, again, that it comes via the Surrealists and Queneau rather.
7.12 Some Artificial Languages

In most cases the formulation of an artificial language is an attempt to take a major creative step in language, whether it be driven by the elitism of Stefan George or the practicality of C. K. Ogden. The following list is of interesting examples.

Bauer: Bauer created Spelin, a modified form of Volapük, in 1888.

Bodmer: Bodmer and Hogben, in their book The Loom of Language, developed the term contact vernacular to designate any vernacular developed in and for dealings between European colonizers and natives of various colonial parts of the world, e.g., Pidgin English. *Lingua franca* was the most widely known contact vernacular.

Bollack: Bollack created *Langue Bleue*, a modified form of Volapük, in 1899.

Stefan George: George created his *lingua romana* in the 1920's to serve him as a private poetic realm.

Maury Maverick: Maverick coined the term *Gobbledygook* for the complicated, over-involved, and often incomprehensible jargon of government bureaucracy; cf. also *Medicalese*, *Pedageese*, *Bafflegab*, *Officialese*, *Federalese*, etc.

C. K. Ogden: Ogden devised *Basic English*, a system of 850 select English words and simple rules for using them 1) to serve as an international language, and 2) as an instrument of semantic training. It consisted of 400 general nouns, 200 names of objects, 150 adjectives, and 100 other words (verbal forms, prepositions, particles, etc.).

Guiseppe Peano: Peano created *interlingua*, consisting of inflectionless Latin, in 1908. *Interlingua* is also the name of the artificial language created more recently by the International Auxiliary Language Association on the basis of a technique finding the elements most common to speakers of many languages called *interlinguistics*.

Pirro: Pirro created the interlanguage *Universal-Sprache* in 1863.

Johann Martin Schleyer: Schleyer created the artificial language *Volapük* in 1880.

Weisbart: Weisbart created an artificial language *Europen*.

Bishop John Wilkins: Jorge Luis Borges discussed an artificial language created by Wilkins in an article in *La Nación* (Feb. 8, 1942).
7.13 Contents of Bücherecke Reviews

These are ORF radio manuscripts of book reviews which Handke wrote and delivered, as part of the literature section headed by Dr. Alfred Holzinger, between November, 1964, and September, 1966. Only 14 of the original 15 could be located by Dr. Holzinger, and he was kind enough to let me photocopy them.


2) December 21, 1964: C. Pavese, Der schöne Sommer; Strindberg, Okkultes Tagebuch; R. J. Sender, Requiem für einen spanischen Landmann; S. Freud, Mann Moses; L. Marcuse, Siegmund Freud—Sein Bild vom Menschen; C. Baumann, Literatur und intellektueller Kitsch.


8) July 26, 1965: New works by Russian authors.


13) April 4, 1966: A. Hyry, Erzählungen; V. Linhartova, Geschichten ohne Zusammenhang; B. Hrabal, Tanzstunden für Erwachsene und Fortgeschrittene; I. Michiels, Buch Alpha; T. Arghezi, Kleine Prosa; T. Aurell, Martina; C. E. Gadda, Erzählungen; P. Valery, Die fixe Idee.

B 7.2 Basic Research Bibliography for the Critical Awareness of Language.

Abt, Roslyn. *In the Beginning Was the Word...* (John 1:1):


Bornschauer, Lother, "Eugen Gomringers 'Konstellationen'," *Deutschunterricht* 22/1 (1970), 59-78.


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Meckling, Ingeborg, "Sprachübungen zum Thema 'Winter'," Deutschunterricht 1 (1972), 5-17.


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VITA

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