

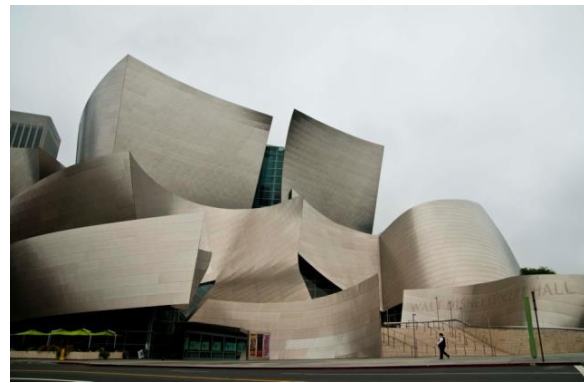
BREAKING SILENCE WITH AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE ON BEGINNING WITH, SORTING THROUGH, BUILDING ON, DWELLING IN, AND APPROACHING J.M. COETZEE'S *SUMMERTIME*

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As announced by its title, this is a note or a series of notes; but no more than an introductory lemma or some introductory lemmata on beginning, dwelling, building, and surviving. These are foundational notes or a beginning gloss on which further courses of exploration—I hesitate to write arguments—in turn have already begun to build in imbricated sequences mortared from multiple and variously angled encounters with J.M. Coetzee's later fictions: an architectural undertaking one could say, pointing to those ideas and plans that by their not so instrumental character exceed building per se, and so pointing to those gestures that roughly resemble the pieces of paper Frank Gehry would archly scrunch into shapes as a textured prelude to archi-sketches and, eventually, buildings.



Frank Gehry: sketch for the Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles (image © and courtesy of Gehry Partners, LLP), and the completed building (2003; image © Latham Evans, courtesy of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Association). The crumpled paper mythography ficto-ostensibly leading to this structure's design is parodied (with Gehry's participation) in a 2005 broadcast of *The Simpsons* television show ("The Seven-Beer Snitch").



structures without resorting to architectural metaphor" (49). This seems especially the case when the written structure at hand exceeds the mimetic, *as architecture always does*, and thus in various ways also becomes complicit with that other fundamentally non-mimetic set of practices called music, or musical composition. The slowly appearing essays that already come to build on this or these notes likewise touch upon the archi-graphically and phenomenologically visual even as, in skeletal structure mostly, they imagine and whisper their desire for affinity to and with polyphonic and contrapuntal music, paying tribute to the fugue: especially, say, to the [beginning of the beginning fugue](#) from Bach's *Art of the Fugue*, so tautologically fugal, upon which this essay loosely rests and so upon which the others figuratively try to build.

The architectural thought is compelling: at the beginning of one of a beautiful suite of essay fragments each revisiting a story he imagined but could not write or could not finish, *The Loss Library* of stories he could only begin, Ivan Vladislavić finds himself also struck "by how it is almost impossible to describe literary

This beginning to a series of notes about beginning, both of them a prologue or prelude, cartouche-key, sketch, or maquette for a plan, is less concerned with the often-overrated business of conducting an argument, and more interested in outlining, scrunching, or sounding some of the lines and tones and typographies brought to bear by breaking silence, in my case a rupture after long writing silence during which I was—not more practically—making furniture out of idea and raw wood. The shift from idea and solid wood-sound to idea-sound and embodied word is only another partial break or striation, one that here begins by tracing several possible permutations, various itineraries of possible pursuit.

Pursuit is one of the etymological roots of the fugue: *fugere, fugare*; to flee and to pursue.



The first production of a Mozart / da Ponte Trilogy from the Los Angeles Philharmonic, *Don Giovanni* (2012), features set design of crumpled paper by Frank Gehry.

All three productions (conducted by Gustavo Dudamel and extending to the 2014 season) will play at Walt Disney Concert Hall (see previous page), which also offers virtual tours: <http://www.laphil.com/visit/tours>

Left: Mariusz Kwiecien as Don Giovanni. Image © Autumn de Wilde. Courtesy of the LA Philharmonic Association.

The sketch for a potentially fugal plan is presented in the first instance by three rows of text related or aligned along horizontal as well as vertical axes and accompanied on occasion by graphic supplement. The sketch itself can be pursued in various ways and pursuit can variously be administered or facilitated by imaginary hypertextual blueprint. The pages that follow can be read from top to bottom across three rows, as presented, or selectively by (continuous) row, beginning with any of the three row-beginnings, at row's end picking up either of the remaining rows in whatever sequence; or, they can be “read” solely by graphic and aural supplement, allowing the words to sink back into the silence whence they came.

Building on lines from a poem by Hölderlin, Heidegger insists that we dwell poetically. “Poetic creation, which lets us dwell, is a kind of building,” writes Heidegger, made authentically possible only when humankind “already builds in the sense of the poetic taking of measure” (*Poetry*, 213; 225). Heidegger avoids opening this poetic agency to the animal; nor is Heidegger open to the idea of humanimality. Even so, the animating property of such measure is animalated, animalized. Unlike determinedly ‘informative’ prose poured into a page where it can be expected to lie quietly, the poetic idiosyncratically takes and makes its place on the page, where it plays: like an *animot*, to borrow a Derridean neologism—an animal and animated word that in its singularity and plurality resists easy codification into number, species, and sex (or linguistic gender). More or less anony-mously ani-mot then: its singularity is guaranteed by the eye that sees neologism; its plurality comes by the ear that hears in it *animaux*, genderless animal in the plural. *Animot* is surrogate for that which cannot easily be grasped but can still be pursued, can fugally be tracked, traced, and autobiographically followed by way of some sort of hunt (Derrida, *Animal*; *chace* and *caccia*, both meaning the hunt, are vernacular equivalents of fuga. Before the fifteenth century these latter terms were interchangeable in music).

Attributing to his vocation as poet his decision to walk the grueling Pennine Way from North to South rather than the usual way, and financing his journey with readings along the trail, Simon Armitage speaks also of poetry as an obstinate alternative that “often refuses to reach the right-hand margin or even the bottom” of the page that it “*occupies*” by “array[ing] itself in formation, set[ing] up camp and refus[ing] to budge” (5). With a nod to Oulipo, Vladislavić likewise registers the productive potential of working under self-imposed constraint, noting that constraint might be “welcomed as a kind of resistance against which the imagination grinds and sparks” (32). “Difficulty,” Vladislavić adds, “often produces a daring imaginative response.” As compositional device, constraint is typically imposed by formal restriction or mandate (to write in rows, for example), but interdiction can also be thematic and ideological (the difficulty of beginning with Heidegger, for example).

To begin is fraught with risk; to begin with Heidegger at least doubly so, after Auschwitz, and after the controversy surrounding Heidegger gets reanimated by Farias’s *Heidegger et le nazisme*. Auschwitz renders writing speechless: “To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric” says Adorno, refusing to keep quiet (*Prisms* 34). But Auschwitz imposes a moral mandate to speak; Adorno speaks, Adorno writes. Far from being an “injunction” or a “prohibition” against poetry (Susan Gubar’s indictment [7]), Adorno’s sentence is a judicious *inditement* against the silencing of consciousness, an adjudication against keeping silence about this silencing, despite the difficulties, none of which are relieved by Adorno’s tortured dialectics of a resistance painfully aware of complicity: “The abundance of real suffering permits no forgetting” and “demands the continued existence of the very art it forbids” (*Notes* 87-88).

So, a bit like David Lurie, one of the central protagonists in J.M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace*, he, the one now writing, finds himself beginning these words and breaking a long silence in *medias res*: fifty-two, and thus (by decimal ideal) about half-way through a life originally born into a State shamed by the disgrace of its unethical legality. Unfortunately, however, and unlike David Lurie, who at fifty-two claims to have “solved the problem of sex rather well” (1), he has no convincing record of solving anything, though not necessarily for want of trying.

The poem in which we dwell by building, the dwelling we humanimals thus build and populate, life—whether or not life is ‘in fact’ a poem—has always already begun, as communal and as individual event. Moreover, and despite individual deaths or particular endings, it is always still going on. The rhythms of our dwelling and their linguistic measure—their rise, fall, repetitions—are themselves recursively iterated and parsed: from the seven days of the week, to the seven colors in the (Newtonian) rainbow, to the seven notes in the traditional scales of much music; and so on. Such cadences proffer one way to capture, seize, sing, build, measure, or otherwise grasp towards life—or a life.

The ancient world took more than a passing interest in arrangements of seven, though the seven-fold as a figure of perfection becomes more assertive and determined in the codifications of those ‘religions of the book’—Judaism, Islam, and Christianity—and in the moral laws of arrangement they seek to iterate as the Truth under which learning, living, and death are to be subsumed. By Late Antiquity learning itself had been sorted into the seven liberal arts by the pagan Martianus Capella (writing from the Roman province of Africa), who frames his discourse, *De Nuptiis*, as an account of the marriage between Philologia (learning; she who loves words) and Mercury (mischievous god of eloquence and wit, among other things).

Why “unsayable?” asks Giorgio Agamben: “Why confer on extermination the prestige of the mystical?” (32). And here’s Maurice Blanchot: “Nazism and Heidegger, this is a wound in thought itself” (“Our Clandestine” 43). Two of the most responsible responses to the Heidegger affair are that of Lacoue-Labarthe, who underscores Heidegger’s critique of an aesthetic posited as the truth of the political, and that of Lyotard, who reacts to the ways in which “the greatest thought can lend itself, as such, to the greatest horror” (57).

He could try again to transpose these problems of (singular) opening and (plural) beginnings. In the hopes of finding a solution of sorts, he could try to prepare the ground for more building, or for figural architecture even: not the Disney Concert Hall, but still a hall of sorts for breaking bread, or for listening to and making some sort of music, if not exactly poetry. He could try to transpose: to make the problem of beginning neither an issue of only statehood, nor of Statehood alone, but of linguistics and lexicology; even a problem of etymological association and commutation. By the logic of such transference, the problem of sex becomes the problem of genre; or better yet (this is where associative and commutative properties come in handy), the problem of genre becomes the problem of sex.

Genre, gender (the noun), and gender (the verb), are kinfolk, variously implicated in the communal business of sorting into kinds and classes. The second edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* reminds us of this constitutive work more emphatically than the third edition by listing “Kind, sort, class” as the first (albeit now obsolete) set of denotations for gender as a noun. The second edition listing continues with what perforce then becomes the first still-current use of the word: as a grammatical term to distinguish between or among two or three distinctions of sex or the absence of sex—feminine, masculine, and sometimes neuter—into which language-systems sort their nouns, and by means of which other parts of speech might be inflected.



Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles: exterior and interior
(images courtesy of Gehry Partners, LLP).

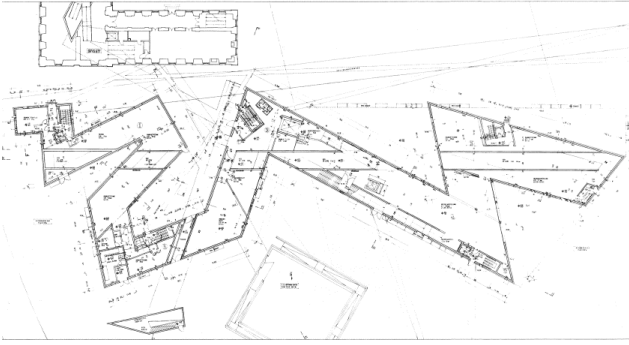


In attendance at the marriage of Philologia and Mercury are the seven liberal arts, each elaborately personified as a female courtier; (using the masculine term obviates sorting through the now-sexualized connotations of “courtesan”). Each courtier will in turn come to preside over her own book that gathers together the extant knowledge of, respectively, grammar, dialectic, rhetoric, geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, and music.

Neither Lacoue-Labarthe nor Lyotard exonerates Heidegger’s silence over the Shoah; (*so’ah*: “devastation, catastrophe,” is a “euphemism to indicate the extermination” [Agamben 31]). For Lacoue-Labarthe, Heidegger’s “unpardonable” silence (116) constitutes a refusal “to admit that it [is] ultimately the duty of thought to confront that [challenge to thinking] and to seek to take responsibility for it” (33); for Lyotard, the silence Heidegger “observes on the extermination” is not an eloquent silence, but “a mute silence that lets nothing be heard. A leaden silence” (52). And here’s Blanchot again: “Heidegger’s irreparable fault lies in his silence concerning the Final Solution” (“Thinking” 479). The great thinker who refers to death as “*the refuge of beyng in the poem of the world*” appears here embroiled in and by a posthumously escalated state of shame—the shame of the death denied to those exterminated, those that “perished,” says Heidegger, those that have been “put down” (like disgraced dogs, like dogs in Coetzee’s *Disgrace*), those that constitute an “inventory of a standing reserve for the fabrication of corpses” (“Danger” 53)—to precede in these pages another gifted thinker indicted by silence, Paul de Man. And so reverberates the compounding silence including my own silence up to this point concerning the twentieth century’s first genocide, against the Herero and Nama of German Southwest Africa: compounded instances of shame that will resonate again and alongside the shame of apartheid. Hitler was 15 when General von Trotha issued the (Kaiser’s?) extermination order against the Herero, as was Heidegger. Heidegger is reputed to have maintained cordial relations with the ambitious, and later preeminent Nazi “race scientist” linked to the only concentration camp in German Southwest Africa that was also clearly a death camp by design, Eugen Fischer (appointed rector of the University of Berlin by Hitler in 1933). The “long-standing friendship” between Heidegger and Fischer, if that’s what it was, lasted until shortly before Fischer’s death in 1967 (Wolin 282-83; Wolin records here that it was a telegram from Fischer that ended up exempting Heidegger from his draft into reserve military service in 1944. For more on Fischer, see Sarkin 25 and Olusoga 245 ff.).

To begin thus—with Heidegger, with numerous difficulties sometimes of number, and with rows of text—is to take that leap Heidegger himself associates with beginning: “As a leap, the genuine beginning is always a leaping-ahead in which everything to come is already leapt over, even if as something veiled. Concealed within itself, the beginning contains already the end” (“Origin” 48): a potentially fearful symmetry.

In its final listing of this sorting-word, genre-gender, and before beginning to enumerate combined performances in which the word participates, the *OED* in its second edition turns to what contemporary readers might have anticipated as the first sense of gender, a sense the dictionary explicitly identifies as a modern and “esp[ecially] feminist” trope, a *euphemism*: “In mod. (Esp. Feminist) use, a euphemism for the sex of a human being, often intended to emphasize the social and cultural, as opposed to the biological, distinctions between the sexes.” Hence also some of the combinations, more or less ideological in character: gender-bender, say (one who deliberately cultivates an androgynous appearance); or gender-gap, the difference in attitudes, especially political attitudes, between men and women. “*Euphemein*, which originally means ‘to observe religious silence,’ is the origin of the modern word ‘euphemism,’” reminds Agamben, “which denotes those terms that are substituted for other terms that cannot be uttered for reasons of modesty or civility” (32).



Above: Floor-plan image courtesy of Studio Daniel Libeskind. More: <http://daniel-libeskind.com/projects/jewish-museum-berlin/images>

Below: © bitterbredt.de. Image reproduced by permission of Jan Bitter and Studio Daniel Libeskind.



The Jewish Museum, Berlin, is typically regarded as Daniel Libeskind's premier building, a competition-winning entry from the fairly late beginning of his career as practicing architect. (He too was "mid way," in his fifties, when the building was finished; his very first completed building, the immediately prior Felix Nussbaum Haus, which displays the eponymous artist's paintings executed before his extermination at Auschwitz, was completed in 1998, when Libeskind, born in Poland to Holocaust survivors, was [also] 52 years old.) Instead of using the official competition designation ("Extension of the Berlin Museum with the Jewish Museum"), Libeskind submitted his entry into competition under the title "Between the Lines," and speaks of the design as striving, among other aspirations, to "complete" Schoenberg's unfinished opera, *Moses and Aaron*, in which music breaks down into unaccompanied speech in the third act. Libeskind submitted his competition entry on manuscript music paper (Young 8-11; Bitter 71; 13; Libeskind, *Radix* 34; 112).

Shown above is a plan of the ground floor with the underground visible beneath: a broken zigzag lightning bolt showing at bottom left "The Holocaust Tower," the end of one of three major underground routes: a dead end.

Left: Inside the Holocaust Tower, Jewish Museum, Berlin. "I was tempted to build a room that had no light," writes Libeskind, "After all, there was no light in the gas chambers" (*Breaking* 55). But, he remembers a survival story of a woman who saw a white line in the bit of sky filtering through the slats of the boxcar transporting her to Stutthof, the very last of the death camps to be liberated: "she saw it as a sign that she would prevail"—which by some accident she did: over the very last. Hence, high in the ceiling of this empty, neither heated nor cooled room is an invisibly angled window that admits a line of light: "Light is measure of everything" (55-56).

And music arche-measures also; (Libeskind's first training was as a musician): "From the moment you walk in," into a "great building" like a great cathedral, where much is silently, reverently, hidden from medieval candle-sight but executed with absolute care nevertheless, "a specific mood is struck. The space has been structured, like a piece of music, with a certain voice and tonality" (66); perhaps even like an unfinished or unfinishable opera on which to build.

Szymon Laks, the last conductor of the men's main orchestra at Auschwitz-Birkenau, also a Polish Jew, writes of confronting "the last, darkest hours of my exile" with the help of music, despite having been told "so many times" that "one could not survive by music" (19). Laks is being neither sentimental nor mythographic about music in the camps. Only on the most rare occasions did music afford some sort of spiritual solace or ethico-political resistance against degradation; much more commonly, "Music kept up the 'spirit' (or rather the body) of only the musicians, who did not have to go out to hard labor and could eat a little better" (117; but see also Gilbert 154 on prisoners singing national anthems in and on their way to the gas chambers).



Star plan image courtesy of Studio Daniel Libeskind.

Libeskind's conceptual design owes much to a laterally compressed and fractured Star of David most obviously visible in the layout of the museum's windows; he speaks also in this regard of an "invisible matrix" of connections between Germans and Jews, and of an "irrational matrix" of "intertwining triangles" like "a compressed and distorted star," a yellow star connecting together Jewish and non-Jewish artists, composers, and writers (*Radix* 34). From this star matrix derives the zigzag of unfolded star-lines and another line: the discontinuous line of voided spaces that runs through the zigzag. As the publicity profile for the project from Studio Daniel Libeskind economically expresses it, "The Holocaust Void cuts through the

zigzagging plan of the new building and creates a space that embodies absence. It is a straight line whose impenetrability becomes the central focus around which exhibitions are organized”—“In order to move from one side of the museum to the other, visitors must cross one of the 60 bridges that open onto this void.” Thus the design seeks, carefully and with much intelligence, to silently speak of the relationship between Berlin and the Jews the city voided from itself without being able to forget. Despite some difficulties associated with the notion of a signifying void that is thereby perhaps no longer void, Libeskind’s design achieves the difficult task of compelling commentary that maintains but also breaks memorial silence. (Derrida, “Response” and pursuant discussion; see also Dogan and Neressian, Young, and Huyssen).



1906 map of Shark Island by
Brother Emil Laaf of the Rhenish
Mission, Lüderitz.

Laaf's cardinal North is a misrepresentation; the direction towards which the arrow points is more accurately NW.

Image courtesy of the Vereinte
Evangelische Mission, Wuppertal.

Breaking silence by memorial has proved more difficult in the case of the death camp on Shark Island in what was once German Southwest Africa, now Namibia. The camp is rendered here by a hand-drawn map of Roberts Harbour in Lüderitz showing Shark Island (center top) connected to the mainland by narrow causeway and divided into a quarantine camp for arriving German soldiers (rectangles on left) and, towards the less protected tip of the island subject to South Atlantic gale-force winds on three sides (nighttime temperatures barely above freezing), a concentration camp—with barbed wire running between. The concentration camp is also divided into two: the circles on the left designate whatever rudimentary shelters Nama prisoners were able to erect for themselves; the Herero incarceration area is on the right, even less protected. A further set of circles on the mainland at bottom right shows a labour camp for the use of the railroad company. Island prisoners were forced to labour (often in the average 13.8 celsius degree surface temperature water) on improvements to the harbour. The improvements were eventually abandoned when no viable labour force remained (Olugosa 215-216; Sarkin 125).



Above: Shark Island concentration camp, January 1906. Photograph by Lieutenant von Düring of the Schutztruppe.
(Photograph courtesy of the Scientific Society Swakopmund [Incorporated Association not for Gain].)
Below: Shark Island Recreational Campsite, 2004. Photograph (taken from about the same vantage point as that above)
© Casper W. Erichsen; originally printed in Erichsen, and reprinted with permission.



According to a promotion and booking website copyrighted in 2012, “Shark Island Resort lies on a peninsula in Lüderitz, Namibia and affords visitors sheltered campsites [a wall has been built to deflect the winds] at budget rates, beautiful scenery and a rich history. The resort is situated on Shark Peninsula, with an excellent view over the bay, town and harbour. Shark Island Resort was the site of a concentration camp during 1905 to 1907 and harbored Nama and Herero prisoners. Several monuments on the resort close to the main ablution building attest to this troubling time in the resort's history” (“Shark Island Camping”). The memorial situation is more complicated than the website admits. Silence is here unusually but also begrudgingly or commercially broken. What is not said, however, is that while the Island has for many years accommodated memorials to early German founders of the settlement, centrally including Adolf Lüderitz and including also 75 plaques commemorating German Schutztruppen who died in the Herero and Nama Wars, and another marking remains of soldiers and settlers relocated from the old Nautilus cemetery, until 2002 there was neither sign nor word commemorating anyone other than founding fathers and their soldiers, with the bizarre exception of a plaque recognizing Amyr Klink, who in 1984 became the first person to cross the South Atlantic solo in a rowing boat: he left from Lüderitz and rowed back to his native Brazil. Neither sign nor word of the thousands of Herero and Nama prisoners who died on the island, nor of the tens of thousands who died elsewhere, except, since 2002, a lone monument to Cornelius Fredericks, leader of those among the Bethanie Nama who rebelled and joined another five rebellious Nama clans under the supreme leadership of Hendrik Witbooi. Fredericks died in the camp in 1907, the same year the new commander of Schutztruppe ordered the camp closed. (On memorials in Namibia see Zuern; for the closure of Shark Island concentration camp see Olusoga 226 ff.)

And thus are memorializing gestures complexly, often irrationally, always ideologically, engendered; and thus too was the gendered curriculum centuries ago so engendered and sorted until it came to shape education in medieval Europe, emphasizing the priority, the beginning-ness of the trivium (grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric) with regard to the remaining quadrivium (geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, and music). An overdetermined device, this sorting-by-sevens, both in sacred and in secular terms. “Numbers it is. All music when you come to think,” says James Joyce’s Leopold Bloom, “One plus two plus six is seven. Do anything you like with figures juggling. Always find out this equal to that” (*Ulysses* 11.830). But still, death, singular and multiple, presents crippling challenges to “figures juggling,” as Coetzee’s characters so often demonstrate: from Jacobus Coetzee, self-styled nemesis of the Nama in *Dusklands* (especially 85), to the “JC” in *Diary of a Bad Year* (204 ff.). In Coetzee’s oeuvre life presents challenges to number also: witness the approximately five-year-old JC / Jesus-Child from *Childhood*, who—in pensum forced to demonstrate his grasp of basic arithmetic—writes on the school blackboard that five fish added to three fish equals—“This time . . . this time”—eight fish, though clearly he can already imagine other possibilities (224-225).

More modestly and locally, number juggling appears to allow at least this: J.M. Coetzee’s *Summertime* is presented in seven sections (five interviews framed by two sets of journal entries). The book is built as a series of interviews conducted by the English biographer, a “Mr. Vincent,” who—as supplement to these journal entries—has during the last years of the first decade in the third millennium tracked down across four continents a number of people whom he has determined were especially important in the life of the late John Coetzee, now laid to rest in the earth of yet a fifth continent, Australia, where John Coetzee finally submitted to death. In one of several details linking this life now dead to that of J.M. Coetzee, the dead, fictionalized John Coetzee was also a Nobel laureate recognized for a lifetime of literary achievement initiated by the publication of a first novel, *Dusklands* (a ‘maiden novel,’ to use an older term marked by euphemistic and now archaic figurations of gender), a book in which the name “Coetzee” already proliferates beyond doubling to link together by nomination real historical figures with fictive constructs across disparate continents and centuries.

One might here and there have to imagine a pair of (just barely visible) quotation marks or inverted commas more or less complicit with euphemistic practice and functioning as ‘scare quotes’ made more visible by their singularity (double quotation marks will indicate quotation); marks that in covert operation tend to mark the literary and her related discourses as a simulacrum of the real: that signal ‘the fictive,’ say, as a dwelling in which words do not behave exactly as they might under more immediately practical exigencies, even if in this so-marked domain words still pretend to behave as inhabitants of a referential praxis. (The notion of ‘scare quotes’ belongs more obviously to the written than to the spoken: hence their being marked not by ‘quotation marks,’ but by inverted commas that by virtue of their inversion issue a warning: beware, the words framed by these marks are unlikely to behave as one might normally expect them to behave; they might well be misbehaving.)

Hence too the sorting of gender as verb (in transitive use a now-archaic form of beget, in the intransitive, a now-obsolete form of copulate), and the recasting or resorting of the verb into its modern form: to engender. It turns out later, beyond the middleness of its (‘epic’) opening, that David Lurie has not actually solved the problem of sex: more (re)sorting awaits him; to say nothing yet of the gender-gap he will still need to negotiate and through which he will need to sort his way.

Vincent is planning “a serious book, a seriously intended biography,” he assures Sophie Denoël, a *Summertime* interviewee who acknowledges having read the several Coetzee novels up to and through *Disgrace* (after which she “lost interest” in Coetzee’s books [242]). She becomes concerned, however, that Vincent might have in mind “a book of gossip,” and worries about the “authorization” of Vincent’s project. Not overly concerned about external “authorization” (“Does one need authorization to write a book? From whom would one seek it?” he asks), Vincent intends to concentrate on the period “from [the late] Coetzee’s return to South Africa in 1971 / 72 until his first public recognition in 1977”; that is, on the “period when [Coetzee] was still finding his feet as a writer” (225): A Portrait of the Artist Finding His Feet, then, though Vincent’s biography remains, as far as we know, untitled; *Summertime* is not exactly Vincent’s book. Some of his interviewees do make titular suggestions (unflattering as these are to John Coetzee): “I think you should call your book: *The Wooden Man*,” explicitly suggests Adrianna (200), while others, like Julia, anecdotally furnish titular possibilities without necessarily being aware of doing so: “The man who mistook his mistress for a violin,” for instance (83); or, to the extent Julia in retrospect detects “an autistic quality” in John’s lovemaking (52), A Portrait of the Autist as a Not So Young Man.

As Roland Barthes has shown, linguistic subterfuge becomes especially noteworthy in the “enigmatic character of all [narrative] description” insofar as description engages “the reality effect.” Barthes recognizes the reality effect as a permutation of the epideictics that “Very early in antiquity” came to supplement the “two expressly functional genres of discourse, [the] legal and [the] political” (“Reality” 142-3). By way of this more recent permutation, descriptive details in modern works come “to say nothing but this: *we are the real*; it is the category of ‘the real’ (and not its contingent contents) which is [hereby] signified” (148). ‘Superficial’ details, especially in their excess, will in this regard be exemplary exponents of the referential illusion by means of which the ‘real’ is simulated. Enumerations of number, for example, work this way: witness the witness borne by the numbers and numbered entities exponentially aggregated in the recent paragraphs above and before this medial note or lemma, including even the bewilderment of unknown number, the unknown number of Herero who died under duress in the Omheke Desert, the unknown number of Herero and Nama who died on Shark Island, and elsewhere too. These numerical details, threatened always by failure, to some limited extent ‘substantiate’ the reality of Vincent’s project. For the record, ‘the factual record’ numerically stipulates that the real and still-living J.M. Coetzee began to write novels on the first of January, 1970: as a New Year’s resolution (Crwys-Williams 229).

But why does he sort this way; why identify David Lurie as “one of the central protagonists in Coetzee’s *Disgrace*”? Because there are other candidates too for ‘central protagonist.’ Lucy, for one, thinking only of human protagonists, and then still other, more obscure candidates for centrality: the dog, of course, and the *animot* music (not only the music of that opera Lurie struggles to compose, but also the constitutive music of the language by which we come to know of this struggle, dog-howling and all). Indeed, the dogs, the sheep, and that particular dog imminently positioned near and at the end of *Disgrace*, without speaking or even singing, as such, immanently participate in a choral centrality that characterizes the logic of this text struggling against shame in general and the shame of dying in particular: not despite but precisely because of the radical alterity animals present to the human, despite genocidal and so always racist abuses of this alterity, even well-meaning ones; Missionary Dr Heinrich Vedder, respected historian, was at the time to say in horror about the treatment of the Herero in concentration camps at Swakopmund: “Like cattle hundreds were driven to death and like cattle they were buried” (Sarkin 124).

Dissatisfied with what he can glean from what is putatively known as the factual record, and skeptical about what one might naively assume would be the most authoritative entry into that record, Coetzee's diaries and letters (which Vincent complains "*cannot be trusted, not as a factual record*"), Vincent pursues his five chosen sources, people who knew Coetzee "*directly, in the flesh*," hoping to uncover a knowledge internal and intimate enough to supplement his own intimations. (Vincent has himself never met Coetzee, knows of him only the words Coetzee has left behind, the more intimate of which Vincent suspects might be those that constitute Coetzee's fictions, though these themselves remain unreliable, being only further constituents of that "*massive, unitary self-projection comprised by his oeuvre*" [225-6].)

Or, to say it again: consider the way in which the depiction of a journey might achieve an "aura of truth" by alluding to "grease-pots" and "cicadas." Thus it is that, sitting in the Reading Room of the British Museum, nominally attending to research for his thesis on Ford Madox Ford, the J.M. Coetzee of *Youth* finds himself distracted by accounts of "ventures" into the South African interior, particularly *Burchell's Travels*: "Burchell may not be a master like Flaubert or James, but what Burchell writes really happened." In thus-distracted anticipation of what—beginning on January 1, 1970—will eventually become *Dusklands*, the Coetzee-narrator of *Youth* desires and imagines a book that would make real the reality of travels "as yet only hypothetical." Such desire will need for its consummation the reality effect: "If, to make his book convincing, there needs to be a grease-pot swinging under the bed of the wagon as it bumps across the stones of the Karoo, he will do the grease-pot. If there have to be cicadas trilling in the tree under which they stop at noon, he will do the cicadas" (137-8).

He mentions this logic—all this logic—in passing, without further specifying it, to anticipate remarks concerning the structural agency of *Summertime*, in which what would 'normally' be peripheral actors look back at the absent central figure, John Coetzee, whose centrality they thereby reconstitute. Hence, finally, the significance, in *Disgrace* as much as in *Summertime*, of those peripheral figures without which the notion of 'central' as previously sketched could have no meaning: even Petrus is a peripheral figure by this measure, despite his role as index to the political and economic ascendance of the previously disenfranchised.

Beyond the more or less importantly peripheral characters inside the novel lie those other peripheral bodies at its outermost edges, real bodies: the writers who haunt the pages of all Coetzee's texts—Joyce, Homer, Beckett, Flaubert, Hardy, to mention just a few and only some from *Disgrace*—and then still more peripheral and unknowable beings, despite their reality: readers, in all their anonymity. It is among the last and the least of these he counts himself. But he knows too that without these peripheral others, writers and readers alike, the grace in *Disgrace* would be lost, unfound, unfounded: without the writers *Disgrace* could not have been articulated as it has been (they are its foundation); without the empathetic collaboration of readers, the possibilities of grace would largely have been forfeited. And all this logic here gets mentioned to beget (there will be a gestation period) some remarks concerning the music *Summertime* plays with its language.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, while the scramble for Africa was still underway and the Second Reich was topographically expanding its lebensraum, work produced by the Russian Formalists and their successors substantially re-aligned the focus of literary study away from aesthetic, psychological, and traditionally historical or biographical concerns, prioritizing instead the now linguistically-motivated issue of the “literariness” of literature. By this change of direction, the Formalists inaugurated a particular kind of what would come to be called *literary theory* (as opposed to *literary criticism* and to *critical theory*).

Far from constituting “a denial of the reality principle in the name of absolute fictions [...] for reasons that are said to be ethically and politically shameful” writes Paul de Man, the Formalist project freed “discourse on literature from naïve oppositions between fiction and reality”:

the referential function of language is not being denied [in linguistically-oriented theory]—far from it; what is in question is its authority as a model for natural or phenomenal cognition. Literature is fiction not because it somehow refuses to acknowledge “reality,” but because it is not *a priori* certain that language functions according to principles which are those, or which are *like* those, of the phenomenal world. It is not therefore *a priori* certain that literature is a reliable source of information about anything but its own [autobiographical] language. (*Resistance* 10-11).

He, the one writing, has long tried to sort through the relations forged—issued and countersigned, or counterfeited—not by “literary criticism,” but by theories of literature sometimes called literary theory, sometimes critical theory: kinds of explicative writing that seek to impose order on (or to interrogate) yet other inscriptions, through whose distinctions they sort, struggling their way with varying degrees of blindness, insight, and self-interest towards disinterest and sym-em-pathy. Like these current words, the project has thus constituted a doubling and following: a sorting by numeration and by topological enumeration, an architectural sketch or a score or a mapping whose coordinates are simultaneously temporal (how and where to begin, what sound first, what next) and spatial (where to put things, what to assign to center and what to periphery, what to put above, what to put below); a troping topology of the *animot* that not only disturbs easy sorting among genders and species, but that can sometimes blur the borderlines between literary and non-literary (maybe architectural or even musical) articulations.

The landscape to be mapped, structure to be built, or soundscape to be scored, is indeed full of intractable calculations and unmanageable notes that resist easy sorting or reach: truth, falsehood, something in between (language, perhaps, or variations of pitch); fact, fiction, narrative; verisimilitude, figuration, representation; biography, novel, memoir or autobiography; number, calculation, and so on. But to what point, this doubling? A starting or grounding point, first, following Wassily Kandinsky, who situates “the point” as a way of seeing (the point is “the proto-element of painting and especially of the ‘graphic’”), and as a way of sounding (“the highest degree of restraint which, nevertheless, speaks” [32; 25]): a way, that is, of initially sketching some of the difficulties sorting runs into when it tries to sort through very different kinds of entities, both spatial and temporal, formal and ideological, male and female. A rhetorical ruse, at the very least, with which also to double back to the 1993 collection of Coetzee essays and interviews edited by David Attwell as *Doubling the Point*, in whose economics Coetzee occupies the position of “writer,” and Attwell primarily assumes the role of “reader”: others to one another.

As de Man goes on to stress, none of this means that fictional narratives are alien to, disparate from, or incommensurate with the world we inhabit; indeed, “their impact upon the world may well be all too strong for comfort”—strong enough to threaten ideological supervention, or what de Man calls the “confusion of linguistic with natural reality” (11).

Despite his disingenuous assurance to an interviewee that “Changing the form [of a discourse] should have no effect on the content” (91), Vincent is at least sufficiently astute as a reader to doubt the concord of written word to world, even when these two appear together, combined in the “*factual record*” (225). The “Vincent” we know, however, is himself a paper being, a fictive construct in what he calls that “*massive, unitary self-projection comprised by* [the late John Coetzee’s] *oeuvre*” (226). Where, one might ask, does all this situate the signature of the (still living) J[ohn] M. Coetzee, author of *Summertime*, a work whose pages furnish the only semblance of life to which Vincent can possibly be entitled? On what authority is Vincent signed into existence?

That de Man’s wartime journalism in occupied Belgium for *Le Soire (volé)* and *Het Vlaamsche Land* must exactly be categorized as “ethically and politically shameful” cannot be denied, despite that, as a matter of ‘factual record,’ de Man appears to have been examined in 1945, but neither further pursued nor charged with any crime by the *Auditoriat Général*, the Belgian prosecutor’s office responsible for investigating and trying cases of collaboration, who could not, however, (in 1988) produce any official record of de Man’s interrogation. Above the 1988 signature of the *L’Auditeur général* we thus read: “Paul De Man n’as pas fait l’objet de poursuites devant le Conseil de guerre pour son attitude ou son activité pendant la guerre” (Keenan 475).

The ‘factual record’ left by the collaborationist (f)act, and by the thematic constitution, of those articles that appeared and that posthumously reappeared under the signature of Paul de Man constitutes a disgrace: a shameful record of disgrace, a disgraceful act on de Man’s part, an autobiographical problem and issue for autobiographical theory. But none of this nullifies what de Man has to say about the early structuralists or their negotiations with the referential function of language. At least two especially noteworthy thematic consequences do, however, follow from the posthumous revelations.

Doubling the Point is a book in which, as its title suggests, much doubling takes place. This is, after all, a book by two contributors that announces itself as a work of autobiography on several, but two especially notable occasions at beginning and again at end; that positions itself around a section located at its center and entitled “Autobiography and Confession” (a section containing an interview and only one essay, “Confession and Double Thoughts,” which engages de Man for a while). Twice in the course of this book Coetzee insists that “all writing is autobiographical” (17; 391), a point Attwell quotes in his Introduction and returns to in some of the interviews, the last of which sees Coetzee commenting on the slide between auto- and “*autre*”-biography (394). Coetzee’s concern with the selection and omission of detail in auto- and biography explicitly reoccurs over the years, as for example in the 2002 interview with Attwell (Coullie ed., 213-218) and the 2009 interviews with Kannemeyer (7; 130, and throughout).

Bio-graphical bio-graftings on “the de Man issue” have doubled or otherwise multiplied also, often from ill-prepared bio-grabbers (Lehman [1991], and Barish [2014], for example).

On the one hand and under the law, the answers to such questions concerning authority are fairly straightforward, as they often seem to be *under the law*: the edition notice of the Harvill Secker imprint (London) conventionally and explicitly identifies *Summertime* as the intellectual property of a J.M. Coetzee who has claimed title “under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988,” under whose aegis said Coetzee has “asserted his right [...] to be identified as the author of this work,” and under whose authority he is legally entitled to sign Vincent into existence as one of those “Names, characters, places, and incidents” the Viking edition (New York) stipulates as being either “the product of the author’s imagination,” or of being “used fictitiously.” This is all a matter of record; the record also shows that neither of the ostensible precursors to *Summertime* (as published by Viking in the United States), *Boyhood* and *Youth*, contain this latter epistemological warning. Under the internal-external laws regulating the title as a license of sorts, an entitlement to the practice of certain kinds of imaginative activity, Coetzee claims and is granted the authority to invent Vincent, and to submit him to the ‘laws’ of literary representation, whose activities, however (as de Man and Barthes remind), are unlikely to function “according to principles which are those, or which are *like* those, of the phenomenal world.”

Firstly: the impact of narratives shaped as fiction, theory, criticism, journalism, or autobiography—the gender-bending genres begin to blend—easily becomes “all too strong for comfort” (sometimes by keeping silent about things we feel should be said); easily threatens ideological supervention, shame, and disgrace. Secondly: the record of this scandal as written across numerous vehicles of both the popular and academic press from late 1987 onwards, and as largely collected in *Responses: On Paul de Man’s Wartime Journalism* (ed. Hamacher), itself constitutes an often disgraceful narrative in which detractors and supporters alike—journalists, academics, and the much-here-mentioned category of “professor-journalists”—repeatedly engage in all sorts of denials, all sorts of gossip, and repeatedly generate all sorts of alarmingly absolute fictions, not the least of which concern confession, the exemplary heart of autobiography in which, as Coetzee shows, truth remains elusive: “The only truth is silence” (*Doubling* 286); as perhaps in mute Friday’s silence (*Foe*; cf. *Truth*). To break such silence, as Coetzee more or less does in his inaugural lecture at the University of Cape Town and at the end of *Foe*, and, as I have now also done by beginning, clumsily following after, is fraught with the responsibilities that follow, and that follow following.

Working co-extensively but under the different demands their roles mandate, the two contributors to *Doubling* double one another, each using the other. Coetzee and Attwell engage in an apparently symbiotic project in which, however, their respective investments of self-interest—their interest in issues of self and self-writing, self-understanding, even self-promotion—is more than simply reciprocal. A mutually parasitic project?

The notoriously reticent Coetzee of public domain, who openly admits to exhibiting a “general irritability and uncooperativeness with interviewers” (65), here with the assistance of Attwell undertakes a hitherto unprecedented performance of autobiographical exposure even as he maintains a characteristic reserve of sheltered privacy. Coetzee uses Attwell as though Attwell were a blind or a shutter. For his part, Attwell uses Coetzee, participating in the *Doubling* project at the same time he (Attwell) is writing a doctoral dissertation on Coetzee’s work. (He, the one writing now, confesses to using them both; I confess.)

I confess also, as previously intimated, to the presence of bits of my own work not yet cited (or still uncitable), and so confess again (as in the beginning) that this current ending can only still be a beginning, a note or series of notes to be picked up and continued. The story, my story, 'in fact' continues in "Titular Space," "Authority, the Newspaper, and Other Media," "Unmanned Signatures," "Entr'acte," "Fugal Musemathematics," "Recycling Topology," and in other manuscripts currently homeless, in academic exile, and so uncitable.



Left: Felix Nussbaum
Self-Portrait with Jewish Identity Card (ca. 1943).
Oil on canvas, 56 x 49 cm.
Image courtesy of Felix-Nussbaum-Haus Osnabrück mit der
Sammlung der Niedersächsischen Sparkassenstiftung. © VG
Bild-Kunst Bonn 2013.

<http://www.osnabrueck.de/fnh/english/default.asp>

Below, in the distance: a wintertime view of the Nuweveldberge in the Karoo, South Africa, as seen from the North East approach to the Coetzee family farm, Voëlfontein, where J.M. Coetzee spent significant moments of his childhood. The farm this scene begins to approach features centrally in *Summertime*.
Photograph © Ben MacLennan, 2013



J.M. Coetzee, born 1940, would in 2002 come to say this about apartheid to Wim Kayser (in the Dutch television series, *Van de schoonheid en de troost*): "its horror was all the more because it seemed an absurd rerun in Africa of what the Nazis had done in Europe. It seemed a farcical repetition of a history of what then ought to have been obsolete." And moments later in the interview, as again translated from the Dutch by J.C. Kannemeyer, Coetzee speaks of "the contrast between the particular[ly] ugly, banal, systematic, cruel horror [and] an environment which is so huge and so lavishly beautiful" (Kannemeyer 211).

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