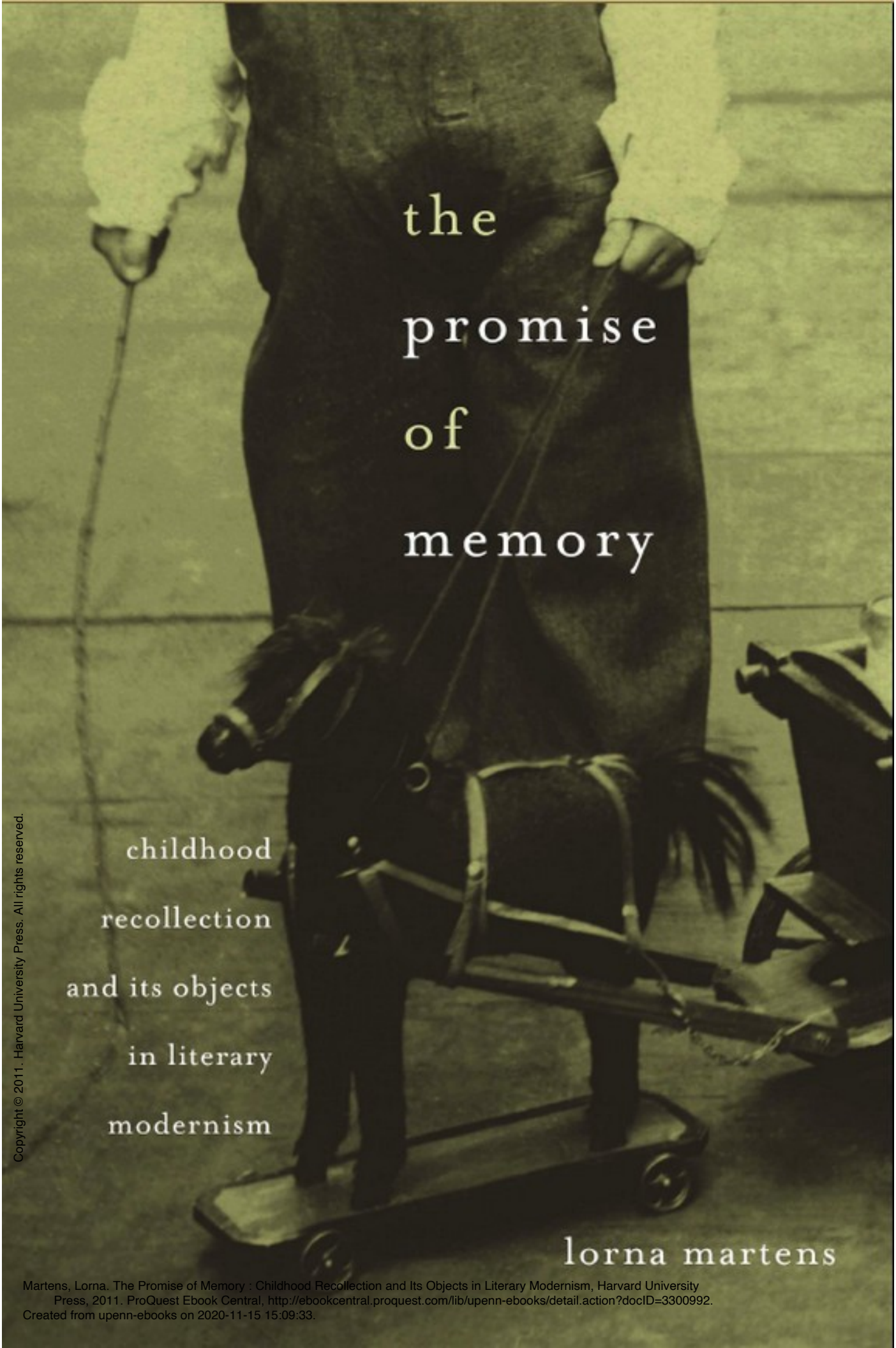

# The Promise of Memory

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*Childhood Recollection and*
*Its Objects in Literary Modernism*

Lorna Martens



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*To H. Stern, who remembers his childhood*

# Contents

# Abbreviations

AP Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Project*. Translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.

BC Benjamin, Walter. *Berlin Childhood around 1900*. Translated by Howard Eiland. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006.

BCh Benjamin, Walter. *Berliner Chronik*. Edited by Gershom Scholem. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970, Fassung letzter Hand und Fragmente aus früheren Fassungen.

Adorno Benjamin, Walter. *Berliner Kindheit um Neunzehnhundert*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1950, Fassung letzter Hand und Fragmente aus früheren Fassungen.

GF Benjamin, Walter. *Berliner Kindheit um neunzehnhundert: Gießener Fassung*. Edited by Rolf Tiedemann. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000.

FLH Benjamin, Walter. *Berliner Kindheit um neunzehnhundert*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1987, Fassung letzter Hand und Fragmente aus früheren Fassungen.

GS Benjamin, Walter. *Gesammelte Schriften*. Edited by Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser. 7 vols. Suhrkamp: Frankfurt am Main, 1972–1989, Fassung letzter Hand und Fragmente aus früheren Fassungen. Supplementary volumes 1999ff.

SW II Benjamin, Walter. *Selected Writings, Volume 2: 1927–1934*. Translated by Rodney Livingstone and Others. Edited by Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.

SW III Benjamin, Walter. *Selected Writings, Volume 3: 1935–1938*. Translated by Edmund Jephcott, Howard Eiland, and Others. Edited by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.

SW IV Benjamin, Walter. *Selected Writings, Volume 4: 1938–1940*. Translated by Edmund Jephcott and Others. Edited by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

SE Freud, Sigmund. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Translated by James Strachey. 24 vols. London: The Hogarth Press, 1953–74.

R Proust, Marcel. *À la recherche du temps perdu*. Edited by Jean-Yves Tadié. 4 vols. Paris: Gallimard, 1987–89.

BG Proust, Marcel. *In Search of Lost Time,* II *(Within a Budding Grove)*. Translated by C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin. Revised by D. J. Enright. New York: Modern Library, 2003.

GW Proust, Marcel. *In Search of Lost Time,* III *(The Guermantes Way)*. Translated by C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin. Revised by D. J. Enright. New York: Modern Library, 2003.

SG Proust, Marcel. *In Search of Lost Time,* IV *(Sodom and Gomorrah)*. Translated by C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin. Revised by D. J. Enright. New York: Modern Library, 2003.

C Proust, Marcel. *In Search of Lost Time,* V (*The Captive* and *The Fugitive*). Translated by C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin. Revised by D. J. Enright. New York: Modern Library, 2003.

F Proust, Marcel. *In Search of Lost Time,* V (*The Captive* and *The Fugitive*). Translated by C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin. Revised by D. J. Enright. New York: Modern Library, 2003.

TR Proust, Marcel. *In Search of Lost Time,* VI *(Time Regained)*. Translated by Andreas Mayor and Terence Kilmartin. Revised by D. J. Enright. New York: Random House: 2003.

JS Proust, Marcel. *Jean Santeuil*. N.p.: Gallimard, 1971.

js Proust, Marcel. *Jean Santeuil*. Translated by Gerard Hopkins. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1956.

SW Proust, Marcel. *Swann's Way*. Translated by C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin. New York: Random House, 1989.

ML Rilke, Rainer Maria. *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*. Translated by M. D. Herter Norton. New York: W.W. Norton, 1992.

I–XII Rilke, Rainer Maria. *Sämtliche Werke in zwölf Bänden*. Edited by the Rilke-Archiv. In Verbindung mit Ruth Sieber-Rilke besorgt durch Ernst Zinn. Insel Werkausgabe. Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1976, Fassung letzter Hand und Fragmente aus früheren Fassungen.

P Wordsworth, William. *The Prelude. The Four Texts (1798, 1799, 1805, 1850)*. Edited by Jonathan Wordsworth. London: Penguin, 1995.

# The Promise of Memory

# Introduction: Writing Childhood Memory

## I. Childhood Memory in Modernism

The fascination of childhood memories, at least for those capable of leaving written records about them, took hold just over two hundred years ago. It was nudged into being by romanticism and, a century later, propelled forward by the advent of modern psychology and psychoanalysis. Wordsworth and Freud each had a commanding vision of the importance of childhood that found many followers. Wordsworth wrote an exceptionally stirring portrait of his childhood in the long autobiographical poem to which his wife, Mary Wordsworth, gave the title *The Prelude*. *The Prelude,* published only after his death in 1850, echoes his view of the paramount importance of childhood and the child's poetic vision expressed in his famous ode, "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," which appeared in 1807. Freud, writing at the turn of the twentieth century, theorized childhood and childhood memories with a very different set of ideas, ideas that were compelling enough to prompt the literary genre of childhood autobiography to move into a new pattern. Psychoanalytic theory came to overshadow other directions in memory theory that Freud's modernist

contemporaries, in quest of their childhood memories, had started to explore, such as, for example, the role of objects and places in memory.

This book will focus on childhood memories in the literature of the modernist period. Some of the most profound engagements with childhood memory took place in the early twentieth century, precisely in the era when Freud himself started publishing on the topic but before he had achieved the wide resonance in literary circles that he would gain after World War I. Proust in France and Rilke, who had left Prague for good and lived here and there in Europe before making Paris his preferred base, had experiences that involved the serendipitous recovery of forgotten memories.[1] These experiences intrigued them; the memories struck them as precious. Each writer set about re-creating his childhood memories in works that straddle the boundary between autobiography and fiction. Coincidentally, for they did not know each other, their treatments of childhood memory show certain similarities. Not only do both attest to the involuntary recovery of memories, but things and places play a prominent role in their representations of the memories, and both had similar ideas—ideas that resist assimilation to Freudian theory—about the role of material objects in provoking memory.

Several decades later, Walter Benjamin, who translated Proust into German and was a reader of Rilke as well (but had also read Freud), turned his attention to the subject of memory. On his way to becoming one of the most renowned twentieth-century philosophers of history, he wrote and rewrote his childhood autobiography, which the writer-in-exile never succeeded in publishing but which survives in drafts written between 1932 and 1938. Convinced of the importance of objects and place for memory, Benjamin, like Proust and Rilke, centered his account of his childhood memories around things and places.

These modernists' engagement with childhood memory holds interest above all for three reasons. First, the sheer importance they accorded to memory and to childhood memories in particular is remarkable. They treat and present their childhood memories as if they were important finds. In the twentieth century many people have written childhood autobiographies for a variety of reasons: because they have become famous or because they believe that their childhood was exotic, typical, exemplary, or hard. Such people have a story to tell. Their works are interesting for their con-

tent, that is, for the childhood rather than for the memories of childhood. For the modernist authors under consideration here, not the story but the remembering, the act of recovering what was long gone, was special. Remembering itself seemed to them to offer a privileged mode of experiencing and knowing. For Proust and Rilke, repossessing the buried treasure of childhood seemed to promise an inestimable emotional capital. Benjamin is not an emotive writer, but he makes plain that recourse to images from his childhood advanced his quest for personal and historical insight. He also claims that these images "inoculated" him against homesickness during his long period of exile from Germany.[2]

In an age dominated by the reception of Nietzsche, when it was fashionable to stamp all forms of preoccupation with the past—from historical studies to indulging in one's personal memories—as unhealthy and to embrace an ethos of living to the moment, it is already a remarkable thing to find an author bent over his personal past, intent on recalling an earlier stage in his life. What motivated this passion? What did modernist authors hope to find in childhood? Why did certain writers set such store by recovering their childhood memories?

The high value placed on childhood memories was part of the romantic legacy. Wordsworth was the first autobiographer to attach enormous importance to his childhood memories, adamantly insisting, in a most original fashion, that the specifics of his childhood were the best and most important piece of his life, superior to his diminished adulthood, and without which he never would have possessed poetic powers. By the turn of the nineteenth century autobiography itself had a venerable history, but previous practitioners of the genre did not dwell on their childhoods. Augustine pressed his childhood into a formula of early sinning. Rousseau does devote space to his childhood, but despite his attention to detail in recording childhood incidents and his psychological realism, he also stylizes his childhood—as a paradise that ended with a fall. This fall, which involves a false accusation, lastingly determines his later self-perception as a persecuted innocent. Karl Philipp Moritz, writing at the end of the eighteenth century, took a scientific interest in childhood memories and collected them. In his autobiographical psychological novel *Anton Reiser* he insisted emphatically that childhood experiences indelibly stamp the adult spirit. There is nothing formulaic about Moritz's insightful account of childhood.

But because the author displaces the telling of *Anton Reiser* onto a third-person narrator, his novel is not framed as a memory text.[3] Wordsworth's memories of childhood, in contrast, are at the center of his autobiographical project. By his own word he took refuge in his childhood memories when he was unable to find an "exalted" theme for a long poem and finished by making these memories themselves his theme. Thoughts of his childhood inspired him to write a long poem about his life, for which he regarded his childhood not just as the beginning but as a touchstone.

Freud, writing a century later, did not diminish the high value placed on childhood and the recovery of childhood events, but he did change the focus. For him, infancy holds the key to personality. Unconscious infantile memories determine the subject's desires and fears. Yet, Freud posited that our conscious childhood memories are unreliable, in fact no better than fiction, while our unconscious memories are recoverable, if at all, only through psychoanalysis. Gaining possession of them would not be a source of strength so much as a knowledge of what rules us—a first step in escaping their psychic domination.

The second reason why the modernists' quest for their childhood memories is particularly interesting is their temporal placement with regard to Freud. Between the publication of *The Prelude* and the reception of Freud, childhood autobiographers principally had literary models, and not a wealth of psychoanalytic or even psychological theory on which to base their thinking about childhood. Close to the turn of the century, especially from the 1890s onwards, writers may have been aware of the psychological research within the child study movement, which began to get underway in the late 1870s.[4] Child study presented findings in and theorized such areas as early sensory development, early memory development, language acquisition, and the development of a sense of self. But child study was a nascent science. As Sally Shuttleworth has shown, one of its principal exponents, James Sully, drew on literary sources for his analyses.[5] Child study did not exercise a grip over literary production the way Freud would later.

The early modernists thus wrote without a psychoanalytical script. After Freud, people knew what sorts of things they would find in their childhoods. But Proust had no preconceptions formed by psychoanalytic theory when he wrote "Combray," and Rilke, when he wrote *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge (The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge),* none beyond

those that had been suggested to him in the final stages of composition by his Paris acquaintance Victor Emil Freiherr von Gebsattel, who subsequently trained to be an analyst. Neither Rilke nor Proust knew Freud's theories of childhood memory when he wrote about his memories of childhood. Thus we have in their works what they thought they remembered about their childhood (however "constructed," to speak with contemporary memory theory, these memories might be), and not what psychoanalysis or psychology thinks they remember. But there were poetic scripts: the legacy of Wordsworth.

There is no evidence that Proust, Rilke, or Benjamin actually read Wordsworth, but they would have absorbed the transvaluation that childhood had undergone since romanticism and in which Wordsworth played a seminal role, for example by reading Baudelaire and Rimbaud, who equate poetic genius with the vision of childhood.[6] Proust read and loved Anatole France's *Le Livre de mon ami* (My friend's book) and Pierre Loti's *Le Roman d'un enfant (Romance of a Child),* late-nineteenth-century childhood autobiographies that incorporate what art and literary historians call "the image of Romantic childhood" (Higonnet) or "the myth of childhood" (Reisinger) or "the Romantic image of childhood . . . the standard myth" (Lloyd)—a received version of the romantic vision of childhood.[7] As art historians have shown, there was a strong visual cult of the child throughout the nineteenth century and particularly around the turn of the twentieth century that was highly derivative of romantic paintings of children, such as Sir Joshua Reynolds's *Age of Innocence* (c. 1788), which themselves created a new image of childhood.[8] Rosemary Lloyd has shown how childhood "took off" as a theme in nineteenth-century French literature, becoming particularly prominent after 1870. At that point the inherited romantic cliché of the innocent, happy, poetic child began to be modified by realism, a consciousness of social factors, and attempts to capture the actual psychology of individual children.[9] The same period saw the multiplication of child protection agencies and the expansion of free public education in Europe and North America. Yet if childhood held popular appeal in the late nineteenth century, it is above all because childhood was perceived to be beautiful and charming, as the author of an article entitled "The Cult of the Child," which appeared in 1889 in the British newspaper *The Critic,* insists: "There is no more distinctive feature of the age than the enormous importance which

children have assumed. . . . Indeed, it is not surprising that an age which is, after all, chiefly pessimist, an age which is so deeply disillusioned, should turn with an immense delight to the constant charm of childhood."[10] The images of children that flooded turn-of-the-century periodical literature and appeared in books for children overwhelmingly corresponded to the "innocent" image.[11]

Poetic scripts, in any event, can be challenged by other writers, as can the clichés of popular culture; they do not have the formidable authority that Freud would have when he started to be widely read after World War I. Proust and Rilke both seem quite independently minded when they write about their childhoods. Proust became a poetic model for writing about childhood in his own right, leaving his mark on many other authors, including Benjamin. Benjamin, to judge from *Berliner Chronik (A Berlin Chronicle)* (the first version of his *Berliner Kindheit um Neunzehnhundert* [*Berlin Childhood around 1900*]), swallowed Freud early, only to disgorge him later. He excised traces of Freud bit by bit in draft after draft of his childhood autobiography, in such a way that the later versions testify to a much brighter estimation of memory than Freud's.

Third and finally, the modernists' preoccupation with their childhood memories is noteworthy because the authors perceive difficulty in recovering a childhood that they nevertheless highly prize. This difficulty is historically new. When Wordsworth writes about his childhood in *The Prelude* he proffers his memories, including his memories of his earliest years, as if they lay readily available to his consciousness. To be sure, he concedes that "after-meditation" rather than "naked recollection" called to life a portion of what he remembers.[12] But there is certainly no suggestion that it had required special effort to unearth his memories from the depths of the forgotten. The same is true for Chateaubriand, who began writing his memoirs in 1809. Moritz, whose interest in childhood memories is purely scientific, is an exception; writing in the 1780s, he observes closely, speaks of a "curtain" covering his earliest memories, and registers spotty memories largely of small, random things and places prior to the age of three—exactly what we would expect today.[13] Stendhal, writing *La Vie de Henry Brulard (The Life of Henry Brulard)* in 1835–1836, remembers his early childhood in the spotty fashion we consider normal today, but he does not see this as a problem or lament the loss. Dickens's David Copperfield avers that he has "a strong

memory of my childhood."[14] Anatole France in *Le Livre de mon ami* (My friend's book, 1885) remembers well; he notes that he has retained vivid memories of earliest childhood, though these are "isolated images."[15] So does his contemporary Julia Daudet, whose *Enfance d'une Parisienne* (Childhood of a Parisian woman, 1883) is styled as a remembered childhood, although she comments with striking perceptiveness that early childhood memories have great illuminations surrounded by night—by apparitions of memories rather than real ones.[16] Frances Hodgson Burnett in *The One I Knew the Best of All* (1893) emphasizes her excellent, clear remembering: she insists that she remembers not only experiences but also thought processes she had prior to the age of three, before she had the language to express them.[17] In the modernist period the picture starts to shift. Pierre Loti in his childhood autobiography *Le Roman d'un enfant* (1890) already reflects on his selective memory and speaks of the uncertainty with which he approaches the "enigma" of his early impressions, from which he feels separated by an "abyss."[18] By the beginning of the twentieth century when Proust and Rilke were writing, the view of childhood from the narratorial perspective had clouded over. These modernist authors believed that things of great importance lay under the cloud bank—and struggled to part the clouds.

Loti's *Le Roman d'un enfant* marks a watershed in the transition from nineteenth-century to modernist memory. This work already bears most of the characteristics of the work by Rilke, Proust, and Benjamin that will be the focus of this study. Loti values remembering, yet attentively scrutinizes the mysteries of its functioning. Modernist memory is often particularly poignant and nostalgic. Loti's childhood autobiography exemplifies this intense nostalgia. Already very attached as a child to the places where he grew up and the familiar things that surrounded him, as well as to his family and particularly his mother, Loti looked back on his protected and indulged childhood as a lost paradise. He cherished his childhood and looked back on it nostalgically because, as a child, he was free, at liberty to spend most of his time as he pleased and to indulge his imagination, in contrast to suffering the constraints and monotony that he believed encumbered his adult life, and also because he was at the center of a circle of beloved places, things, and people. Like Rilke and Benjamin he was a collector, and his childhood autobiography makes the impression of having been written out of a desire to collect and preserve the memory of the things that were precious to him.

Nine years later, Hannah Lynch in *Autobiography of a Child* (1899) makes observations about childhood memory that manifest an uncanny resemblance to those that Freud would notice in the same year and would cause him to posit the existence of screen memories. This exceptionally perspicacious author turns memory into a theme in her childhood autobiography right from the beginning, asserting that up to about age seven memory is fragmentary and episodic, after which life becomes a story. She remarks that children live more in pictures than in story and that memory has a way of dwelling on pictures of relative unimportance. Two vivid memories of her early childhood, including her "strongest haunting vision" of her mother washing her face in new milk, are belied by her relatives, who insist that the events, which are among her most significant memories, never happened. But who is misremembering, she or her relatives, is left up in the air, and Lynch goes on in the remainder of the book to recount her memories with conviction, indeed in the most vivid and passionate terms.

Perhaps in consequence of the difficulty they perceived in recovering memories that they nevertheless deeply desired, Proust, Rilke, and Benjamin took an intense interest in the functioning and the problematics of memory. Proust's discovery of what he calls "involuntary memory" has been widely commented on in psychological studies and is validated by neuroscience today. Benjamin occupied himself with Proust's saga of forgetting and remembering; as will be seen, he adopted a derivative of Proust's theory with an admixture of psychoanalytical theory. He went on to formulate a philosophy of the history of memory in the nineteenth century. Rilke, who was troubled in a period of personal crisis in his late twenties by the kinds of fears he had known in his childhood, conceives, through his protagonist Malte, the idea that if one fails to work through one's childhood, if one just abandons it, it comes back unbidden—and undesired—in later years. Proust, Rilke, and Benjamin were arguably the most memory-obsessed writers of the early twentieth century, and all of them wrote about their childhoods. Proust and Rilke, who were close in age, did not know each other's work when they wrote their central texts, yet their writings manifest intriguing similarities. Benjamin was inspired by Proust but became critical of his model. As will be seen in the following chapters, the three writers conceptualized memory in ways that resemble each other. Not only does each have some version of involuntary recall, but all are persuaded that things and

places provoke memories. Collectively, they steered a course that diverged in fundamental ways from psychoanalytical memory theory. Yet in retrospect, the path they started to explore seems legitimate and deserving of further study.

## II. Overview: Objectives and Methods

This book aims to contribute to the history and theory of adult memories of childhood and of childhood memory narrative. Despite the plethora of interdisciplinary research on memory, memories of childhood have barely received attention outside of psychology and chat columns. I believe that literature has a contribution to make. Literature offers an impressively large body of evidence about adult memories of childhood. This evidence provides a great deal of information about why memories of childhood are sought, about the manner in which they are found, and about the kinds of things that are remembered. It allows us to formulate hypotheses about how human beings generally remember childhood.

Childhood narrative, whether autobiographical or fictional, has flourished in the twentieth century, but scholarly work on the genre has not focused on issues of memory. Proust's and Benjamin's memory theories and Rilke's memory theme have attracted critical commentary, but these authors' treatments of childhood memories specifically have not been studied. It is therefore hoped that even the reader who specializes in Proust, Rilke, or Benjamin will find something new here.

The approach is twofold. First, in this introductory chapter, I make a historical argument: that memory was once seen to hold great promise, but then, with the reception of psychoanalysis and modern memory study, declined in value. As is well known, the assessment of childhood likewise changed with the reception of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis, I argue, marked a crucial turning point in the conceptualization of memory, childhood, and childhood memory. I show how the change plays itself out in the genre of childhood autobiography. Psychoanalytic and postpsychoanalytic theory, I argue, made it increasingly difficult in the twentieth century to write freely and naïvely about one's memories, and this holds especially true for one's childhood memories. It also made it difficult to strike out in new, independently conceived theoretical directions. Too much is "known."

The following sections of this introductory chapter provide the contexts for my main enterprise: to look at a selection of engagements with childhood memory prior to the "Freudian turn" in order to see what sorts of treatment childhood memories and memory itself received in a pre-psychoanalytic age. Section III positions Proust's, Rilke's, and Benjamin's memory narratives vis-à-vis the genre of childhood autobiography. Section IV shows how writing about memory changed from romanticism (Wordsworth serves as my example here) to modernism. Section V presents Freud's theory of childhood memory and relevant trends in subsequent psychological memory theory. To a degree, as might be expected, contemporary psychological memory theory and pre-Freudian accounts of memories illuminate each other. So I devote space in section V to giving an overview of these theories. Since I anticipate that literature will yield hypotheses about adult memories of childhood, it makes sense to heed what the empirical methods of psychology have already discovered about the subject.[19] Section VI looks forward from the modernist period: it documents the effects that psychoanalytic and psychological memory theory had on childhood autobiography from the middle of the twentieth century on. Readers who are exclusively interested in modernism may wish to skip forward to section VII, which discusses possible reasons why objects and places, which stand in the foreground of the modernist works, play a prominent role in childhood narratives generally. Section VIII argues that the form as well as the content of literary memories requires consideration.

Second, in Chapters 1–3 I study three cases: Marcel Proust, Rainer Maria Rilke, and Walter Benjamin, three early-twentieth-century authors in whose work memory and childhood memories play a central role. The importance of memory for these writers, their insights into the subject, and the brilliance of their artistic renderings of childhood memory led me to choose them instead of other modernist authors. Focusing on their accounts of childhood memories, I ask the questions: What do these childhood memories consist of? Why do the authors attach importance to them? What does memory promise? Does it keep its promise?

Finally, in the Conclusion, I draw some conclusions from the studies of the three authors about the recollection of childhood, about why it is done and what it is good for. The studies of the three authors show that all of them make strong connections between memories and materiality. This

marks a spot where my own investigation shades into questions for further study.

A brief methodological clarification:

Because of the mental nature of memories, memories of childhood, like autobiographical memories generally, are difficult to study. William James begins his classic "Analysis of the Phenomenon of Memory" with the following definition: "Memory proper, or secondary memory as it might be styled, is the knowledge of a former state of mind after it has already once dropped from consciousness; or rather *it is the knowledge of an event, or fact,* of which meantime we have not been thinking, *with the additional consciousness that we have thought or experienced it before.*" He continues: "The first element which such a [memory] knowledge involves would seem to be the revival in the mind of an image or copy of the original event."[20] As something that is "in the mind," a memory cannot be studied directly, but only obliquely, as it manifests itself in the subject's behavior or in his or her words.

Psychology, as will presently be seen in greater detail, has devised tests to study memory, including autobiographical memory, focusing above all on the issue of its accuracy. How accurate is memory? How accurate is our memory for various types of childhood events? The testable in the area of autobiographical memory soon reaches its limits. Parents, siblings, or friends can typically corroborate at least some memories of the events of our childhoods; but memories of one's thoughts, perceptions, and emotions are intensely personal and subject to corroboration by no one, quite aside from the fact that tests have also shown that they are not stored permanently and indelibly in the mind, but rather are in flux.

A memory is not a text. Yet texts can contain representations of memories. Texts are public, stable, and can be studied. A text is, however, not a memory. Between the recollection and the production of the text there is a gap, similar to that between a dream and the account of a dream.

A text claiming to represent a memory can aim to be a verbal "translation" or approximation of a prior mental event. A text claiming to represent a memory can certainly also be invented or faked. (One thinks of Binjamin Wilkomirski's fake holocaust memoir *Fragments: Memories of a Wartime Childhood* [orig. 1995]). Between these poles of "verbal translation" and "fake" lies a spectrum of possible rapprochements and disjunctions between what the

rememberer saw before his mind's eye and the text that the reader has before her eyes.

Besides accuracy, another criterion is habitually held up to memories, namely, their importance in psychic life. Since its debut in Breuer and Freud's *Studies on Hysteria* psychoanalysis has been interested in memories above all for this reason. For individuals too, the accuracy of a personal memory often counts for far less than its emotional importance. Memories not only correlate or fail to correlate with events or erstwhile perceptions, but have a dimension of value; one could speak of their "weight." Literary memories of childhood are generally driven by a sense of their value rather than by the pursuit of accuracy. I too will consider them principally in terms of value, of the value the authors impute to them.

The preponderance of accounts of childhood memory are literary accounts. This state of affairs naturally raises the question of how they can be studied as *memories*. The answer would have to be, "very carefully," without losing sight of their literariness—where "literariness" can have different implications in different cases, from "completely invented" to "selected and organized according to certain principles." Chapters 1–3 focus on three authors who wrote literary accounts of their or their fictive protagonist's memories of childhood. In the case of each author a pattern of sustained interest in memory can be traced in his published and unpublished writings (such as drafts and letters). Two of the three attempted to theorize memory. All of them showed an interest in childhood in one way or another. Finally, all of them produced successive rewritings of childhood memories. Since these memories have a significant degree of correlation with the circumstances of their own childhoods, it seems reasonable to conjecture that these represented memories largely had their origin in their own memories of childhood.

The history of the work's composition in each case sustains this conjecture. Each of the final works reworks an earlier, more clearly autobiographical work or works. Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* is a first-person narrative that does not clearly identify itself as autobiography or novel either textually or paratextually.[21] It reworks material from *Jean Santeuil,* which Proust's biographer Jean-Yves Tadié establishes as a "frequently autobiographical document."[22] Some (not all) of Malte's childhood memories in *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* (always categorized as a novel) take up

Rilke's childhood memories found in the autobiographical draft *Ewald Tragy* and in letters. Benjamin's *Berlin Childhood around 1900,* considered autobiography, reworks the autobiographical draft *A Berlin Chronicle*.

These genealogies do not imply that the represented memories in the final works are faithful to the facts of the authors' lives or even to putative acts of remembering. Yet except in the case of certain "Danish" memories that Rilke imputes to Malte (which I shall leave out when I discuss *Malte*), it would be difficult to make the opposite case, the case that the authors devised or invented memories the way, say, Schnitzler invented dreams in "Fräulein Else." In "Fräulein Else" an elderly male author imputes dreams modeled on Freudian dreams to a nineteen-year-old female protagonist, presumably in order to convey encrypted meanings about Else's unconscious to the psychoanalytically informed reader. In the case of Proust's, Rilke's, and Benjamin's literary accounts of childhood memory, both the narrator and the protagonist have a comparatively strong degree of resemblance to the author. The motivation for presenting the protagonist's memories seems to lie in the memories' own interest, beauty, or horror, rather than serving some ulterior code. Finally, the persistence with which these authors pursued their rewritings and the high degree of seriousness with which they regarded their projects suggest that it was their own childhood memories that were at issue.

This is not to say that they did not fictionalize, that they did not embellish "genuine" memories or supplement them with invented ones. Certainly, in the case of each author the childhood memories that correspond to earlier drafts are distinctly "worked up," made more literary, enhanced so to speak, compared to the earlier accounts in previous drafts. The authors were not on the witness stand under oath, but writers intent on producing works of art. Not just capturing of the memories, but even more importantly the production of a work, a great work, was the objective of each of them. But the two endeavors were intimately intertwined. The memories took on the function of enabling the work, which in turn involved the artistic rendering of the memories. The effort that this rendering demanded promised to be repaid by the creation of an unusual, original, important work, which in its turn formed an appropriate shrine for the memories.

In this book I will be looking at texts that are designated as "memories." I will speak of them as "memories"; but it is important not to lose sight of

the fact that they are texts, not memories. This does not mean that we do not have the sense that, through the writing about memories, we discern the shapes of—memories. What is not important in the exploration of written accounts of childhood memories, however, is the genre of the text produced. In particular, there is little point in drawing a sharp distinction between autobiography and fiction. In the cases of Proust, Rilke, and Benjamin, we are in the large, poorly signposted area where autobiographical fiction shades into literary autobiography.[23] A "memory" encountered in this shady terrain wraps itself in a particularly dense cloak of undecidability, for in an autobiographical context the label "memory" signals the account's subjectivity, whereas in the context of fiction it asserts the same kind of truth claim as any other representation of interiority, that is, the reader is inclined to assume that an author who engages in successful mind-reading is drawing on his or her own knowledge of the mind.

Life stories are prone to "drift," to change depending on the writer's present perspective. This is a point Doris Lessing makes in her autobiography *Under My Skin:* "Telling the truth or not telling it, and how much, is a lesser problem than the one of shifting perspectives."[24] Even more than life stories, memories are notorious in their propensity to change "the facts" (if facts are at issue), to adjust original feelings and perceptions, and subsequent recalls may do this over and over again. Beyond this, as has already been stated, verbalizing a memory drives a wedge between visualized scene and written record, and formulating an account of a memory for publication puts more language between intuition and end product. Thus the presence of an "autobiographical pact," however heartfelt, in no way guarantees the accuracy of accounts of memories either to facts, lived experience, or even pretextual acts of remembering. Conversely, the label "fiction" does not necessarily place the stamp of invention on textual memories. Much that is personal underlies so-called fiction: the hunch that one's writing will ring truer if one writes about what one knows about conspires with the urge to commemorate or exorcize experiences by turning them into aesthetic objects. Autobiographical stories may be published as "novels" for practical reasons, for example, out of consideration for living relatives and friends. But most important here is the obvious fact that for a fictional character to have an idea, the author has to have had it first. A memory ascribed to a fictional character will have been measured against the author's memory stan-

dards, against the way the author thinks memory works. Even an invented memory has that much heuristic value. Between a childhood memory written up for publication and what an author thinks of as credible specimen of one, there is, therefore, little relevant difference, in the sense that both tell us a great deal about the way the author thinks about and values memory and the kind of memory he or she considers worthy of committing to paper and transmitting to others. And that is what counts—much more than accuracy to fact or to lived experience. Whether an author signs off on a memory or not, whether she ascribes it to herself or to a fictional protagonist, is therefore not of crucial importance. Out-and-out phony memories are relatively easily recognized.

In sum, literary memories can be assumed to involve an admixture of fiction (one could more charitably call it artistry), whether the author claims them as his own or ascribes them to an autobiographical protagonist. At the same time, a memory made literary is likely to be greatly heightened in communicative density and resonance in comparison to one conveyed in bare informative terms. Hence such a memory may paradoxically seem truer, as well as falser, than a plain account.

The questions I ask of the memory texts are: Why? Why was memory important to these writers? Given these authors' engagement in a quest for some felicity or knowledge to which memory and especially memories of childhood seemed to provide the leads, what precisely is it about such memories that makes them seem so worth pursuing? Answering these questions will involve looking not just at the "memories" in the literary texts but also at the biographical contexts and, in Proust's and Benjamin's case, at their theories of memory, which evolved in tandem with their pursuit of their own memories. I also ask: What? What kinds of things do the authors unearth and/or construct? In short, what are the thematics of the memories? And finally, I ask: How? How do the authors write about the memories? I surmise that an examination of the "what" (the thematics) and the "how" (writers' formal techniques) will reveal a great deal about the specific importance each author imputed to his memories. Collectively, the answers to all of these questions should have implications for the nature and functioning of childhood recollection.

## III. Childhood Autobiography

Childhood autobiography is the genre to which the works considered in the following chapters could be seen to be most closely related. The landmark study of that genre to date is Richard N. Coe's *When the Grass Was Taller,* a study of childhood autobiography worldwide. According to Coe, a criterion of childhood autobiography is that "the structure reflects step by step the development of the writer's self."[25] Neither Rilke's *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* nor Benjamin's *Berlin Childhood around 1900* fulfills this criterion. Yet by a different definition, *Berlin Childhood* would qualify as a childhood autobiography. Roman Reisinger in *Die Autobiographie der Kindheit in der französischen Literatur* finds that a "metadiscursive" level, an element of self-reflection and a questioning of memory and language, is what characterizes modern childhood autobiography and makes it interesting.[26] This metadiscursive level certainly exists in *Berlin Childhood*. Proust's "Combray" fulfills Coe's definition, but Reisinger excludes Proust from his study because he does not offer Lejeune's "pacte autobiographique" to the reader. In other words, for Reisinger, Proust's work is too fictional to be considered autobiography. *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* is neither an autobiography nor predominantly devoted to its protagonist's childhood. Yet Rilke's accounts of childhood memories are important enough to situate this work in the penumbra of childhood autobiography.

At the time when Rilke and Proust wrote, childhood autobiography had not yet experienced the boom that it was to undergo in the course of the twentieth century. By Coe's generous criteria for inclusion in his bibliography, fewer than seventy examples of the genre, the preponderance of them French, had been published.[27] Yet six-hundred-odd titles corresponded to Coe's definition by the time he published his book in 1984. This large body of evidence allowed Coe to generalize authoritatively about subjects that form an important backdrop to the works studied here.[28] In particular, he discusses what childhood meant to authors both before and after the new child-consciousness began to emerge in Europe in the middle of the seventeenth century and what myths and obsessions inspired the genre of childhood autobiography in different times and places. He considers what motivated authors to write childhood autobiography, and names, as the principal causes, the urge toward personal immortality, the quest for identity, the

attempt to recover a lost paradise, the need to exorcize hell, and the desire to confess.

Like others before him, Coe finds that a new interest in children came into being in the middle of the seventeenth century. Traherne and Vaughan extolled the wonder of childhood, although they did not consider issues of development and the transition to adulthood. Rousseau discovered the autonomous identity of the child, as testified to by *Émile* (1762), where he represents the child as different from and more poetic and irrational than the adult, and the *Confessions* (1764–1770), where he suggests that his childhood experiences were formative. As Philippe Lejeune observes, Rousseau is the first to have had the idea of telling about his childhood in detail.[29] Later in the century Jung-Stilling and Moritz wrote about their childhoods, and around the turn of the nineteenth century they were joined by many more writers: Restif de la Bretonne, Chateaubriand, Goethe, Wordsworth, Florian, Constant, and De Quincey. To Coe's mind the first genuine childhood autobiography, or as he terms it, "Childhood," was Stendhal's *Life of Henry Brulard,* written in 1835 but not published until much later in the century. Coe wishes to distinguish "real" "Childhoods" (those that show development) from the romantic image of childhood, and cautions: "It is a common misapprehension that the Childhood is a direct product of the romantic sensibility. In point of fact, the majority of the Romantic poets were unable to make the distinction between the reality of their child-selves and the sentimentalized-idealized image of childhood innocence. With rare exceptions, those who succeeded in doing so (Stendhal, Michelet, even Wordsworth, Chateaubriand, and Nerval) were not published until the second half of the century."[30]

Coe thus privileges childhood autobiographies that give a thoughtful and realistic picture of the author's actual childhood. Yet the so-called romantic image of childhood, which Coe spurns but which was important for modernists like Proust and Rilke, was extraordinarily persistent, not least because it pervaded the visual arts. According to the art historian Anne Higonnet, the image of the innocent child was greatly fostered by the eighteenth-century portrait painters, among them Sir Joshua Reynolds, Thomas Gainsborough, and Sir Henry Raeburn.[31] In the nineteenth century, eighteenth-century images were copied and spread to popular genre painting. Painters of the later nineteenth century such as John Everett Millais,

John Singer Sargent, Auguste Renoir, and Mary Cassatt produced beautiful, adorable, wistful images of children. Jessie Wilcox Smith perpetuated the romantic image of the child in the early twentieth century with her illustrations for children's books and the popular press. Even in the age of Freud, the first collector of childhood autobiographies and biographies Edith Cobb acknowledged Wordsworth as an important influence on her conception of childhood in her book *The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood* (posthumously published in 1977).[32]

Coe asserts that one "typical" idea in childhood autobiography, which he calls an "archetypal experience" that is present right from the start, that is in Traherne and Vaughan, and persists throughout the entire history of the genre, is the sense that childhood presents an "alternative dimension," a different apprehension of reality from that of the adult.[33] He suggests that in this different way of seeing lies the making of the poet: "It is the sensing of the world as *different* from that of the adult self which provides the poet with the first, instinctive intimation of that alternative apprehension of reality which is the beginning of poetry."[34] He acknowledges that Wordsworth in *The Prelude* analyzes in depth this progression from childhood vision to poetic vision.[35] This close connection between childhood autobiography and poets and poetry is a point that Reisinger, too, particularly stresses. Reisinger, however, treats the ascription of poetic vision to children as a "myth," which in France originates with Baudelaire. Roy Pascal, who added to his section on childhood autobiography in a 1965 translation of his pioneering study on autobiography *Design and Truth in Autobiography* (1960), finds the same phenomenon in Bogumil Goltz's childhood autobiography *Das Buch der Kindheit* (The book of childhood, 1847), published prior to *The Prelude*.[36] Whether it is founded in reality (as Coe would have it) or is a myth (as Reisinger calls it), the belief that the vision of the poet was closely related to that of the child was pervasive by the early twentieth century.

Proust and Rilke thus wrote their childhood memory narratives at a time when childhood autobiography, predicated on the belief that childhood was formative, was emerging as a genre; when childhood continued to be idealized; and when children were thought to view the world with a vision akin to that of poets. Proust's and Rilke's memory narratives are differently centered from mainstream childhood autobiography. They do not offer an "autobiographical pact," but present themselves as art. Not the

chronological march of a life that is typical of autobiography, but the associative order of recollection dominates them. Underlying developmental presuppositions can be discerned, but memory rather than development is the focus. Yet they are far from being recollections pure and simple. As will be seen, the childhood memories they proffer prove, on closer inspection, to be compounded of adult nostalgias and anxieties, actual memories, and the writers' artistic ambitions. Benjamin's text, which on the surface appears less fictional than the other two, takes an early and radical step into the post-Freudian reflective mode, abandoning the developmental model in the process. But like the others his "expeditions into the depths of memory" reveal artistic ambition.[37] He was very proud of *Berlin Childhood*. His persistent but unsuccessful quest to find a publisher in the Hitler years prompted early on the remark, which seems only half ironic, that everyone recognized that the book was "so excellent that it will become immortal as a manuscript."[38]

## IV. Remembering: Wordsworth versus the Modernists

The idea that not just childhood but childhood memories are *important* is one of the foundational tropes of the genre of childhood autobiography, just as it is fundamental for the works studied here. It is instructive to contrast Wordsworth's passionate and well-developed views on the subject with those of the modernists. Wordsworth regarded childhood as the realm of primal, unmediated vision, which the adult has irrevocably lost. His "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" exalts the sensibility of the child, for whom "the earth and every common sight" is glorious, "apparelled in celestial light." If the focus in the Intimations Ode is the loss of childhood vision, *The Prelude,* which is the story of the poet's own life, registers Wordsworth's realization that he has not lost continuity with his childhood. Childhood, though irretrievably lost, is nevertheless a source of strength to the adult. Wordsworth writes in *The Prelude:* "My hope has been that I might fetch invigorating thoughts from former years" (P 70 [I: 648–649]). He asserts a connection between the "infant sensibility" (P 88 [II: 285]), which he also speaks of as his "first creative sensibility" (P 94 [II: 379]) and the ability to write poetry. Moreover, "spots of time," which are not peculiar to, but are "most conspicuous in" our childhood, are proposed as a special sort of healing remedy, to which one can have recourse in times of trouble:

There are in our existence spots of time
Which with distinct pre-eminence retain
A vivifying virtue, whence, depressed
By false opinion and contentious thought,
Or aught of heavier or more deadly weight
In trivial occupations and the round
Of ordinary intercourse, our minds
Are nourished and invisibly repaired. (P 478 [XI: 257–264])

It is important to him that these spots, regardless of what abrasives may later have scoured his life, remain indelible. Continuity of mind and feeling is paramount for him. The epigraph of the Intimations Ode finishes: "I could wish my days to be/Bound each to each by natural piety."[39] In *The Prelude* he settles on the project of writing about his childhood after admonishing himself for failing to emulate the Derwent, the river that ran at the edge of his backyard when he was a child and that provides him with an image for steadiness.

The special reviving powers Wordsworth attributed to his childhood memories were indissolubly linked in his mind to the special circumstances of his own childhood: he grew up in the beautiful and majestic natural setting of the Lake District and spent his time largely out of doors. He portrays himself as a favored being because he had the good fortune to have been reared by nature, to have received lessons at nature's hand. These include lessons about human capabilities, the exercise of which can bring hybristic exaltation; human limitations, that is, human powers relativized by the framework of nature's powers; and the consequences of transgression, namely, a sense of guilt and of being chastised or even punished. He believed he owed his character and his poetic creativity to his rural upbringing.

As we have seen, the idea that children live in a different, magical, poetic world persisted into the late nineteenth century, however it may have been tempered by more psychological or more socially critical views on children. But in the later nineteenth century the perceived bond between the child's sensibility and an upbringing in nature became increasingly attenuated. The child's poetic gifts survived city childhoods. Thus Anatole France, who grew up on the quai Malaquais and continued to live in or near the city of Paris, nevertheless proclaims in Wordsworthian fashion, in a

work of 1885 about his own childhood and that of his daughter: "Little children live in a perpetual miracle; everything is a marvel to them; that is why there is poetry in their gaze. Next to us, they inhabit different regions from us. The unknown, the divine unknown envelops them."[40] Julia Daudet's poetic account of her Paris childhood, written at the same time, bears France's statement out. This conceptualization of childhood as a time when reality was truer, feelings were purer, and belief was stronger carried over into Proust's and Rilke's works. As will be seen, Proust makes Wordsworthian pronouncements about the value of his childhood experiences in Combray. Rilke similarly views childhood in a romantic light in both his early and his late poetry. He perpetuated the child–poet connection with great conviction, infusing it with the authority he enjoyed as a famous poet. The notion that a particular affinity exists between childhood and nature persists in Proust, is absent from Rilke, and is gently mocked by the author of *Berlin Childhood*.

The modernists share with Wordsworth a sense of loss when they contemplate their childhoods. But Wordsworth's loss confines itself to his mode of vision: he has lost the glory of his childhood vision. In contrast, he insists that he has not lost continuity with his childhood. Even in the Intimations Ode, where he represents childhood as the life period closest to our transcendent origins and hence to the divine, he asserts that we have instant recourse to these immortal origins:

> Hence in a season of calm weather
> Though inland far we be,
> Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea
> Which brought us hither,
> Can in a moment travel thither,
> And see the Children sport upon the shore,
> And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore. (162–168)[41]

These consoling words put the object of our nostalgia within our reach. The promise of instant accessibility all but compensates for what at first had been presented as a grievous loss. Moreover, Wordsworth has manifestly not lost the *details* of his past life. Books I, II, and XI of *The Prelude* recount both typical and specific incidents. Wordsworth never complains about an inability to remember.

Proust's protagonist, in contrast, complains that he has lost the past in its detail and specificity. "Combray" opens like a mockery of Wordsworth. The protagonist's mental world is in disarray. Tossing and turning, the "continuities" his sleepless mind generates are expressed as series of images that flicker through his consciousness and fail to give him strength. Traversing "centuries of civilization," he sees oil lamps, then shirts with turned-down collars.[42] All he can remember of his childhood is one incident. He remembers that one evening, while his parents were entertaining company, he intensely desired a goodnight kiss from his mother. Finally, after hours of anguished exile in his room, he was granted not only the kiss but the presence of his mother all night long. This memory presumably has the status of the "most significant childhood memory"—the one childhood memory a person never forgets. But beyond this one, the protagonist's memories of his childhood are extinguished. Then one day, so the narrator asserts, a miracle occurs. The protagonist is accidentally transported back into his childhood by a chance occurrence over which he has no control. Thereupon he gets his entire childhood back "whole." He remembers the details of the house where he and his parents used to stay in the country, not just the parts of the house inscribed in the most significant memory, as well as the whole of the town Combray where the house was located. Precisely this mysterious, almost mystical event, which he dubs "involuntary memory," is the "open sesame" to realizations, recognitions, and the power that will enable him finally to become a writer. Proust's story is not one of strength derived from continuity but, rather, one of ecstasy at the past regained.

Rilke claimed to have experienced at least one magical resurrection of childhood, which left him delighted. It occurred during the first of his trips to Russia with Lou Andreas-Salomé, when he was under the spell of Moscow for the first time. But not long thereafter he experienced a frightening regression into childhood fears. It is this regression, which is an extremely un-Wordsworthian experience, that he records in *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*. Malte Laurids Brigge is Rilke's fictional alter ego. Born a Danish nobleman, Malte finds himself (like Rilke) at the age of twenty-eight in humble furnished rooms in Paris, where he undergoes a psychological crisis. He has lost continuity with himself, specifically with his memories—to the point where he envies people who stay in one place, in their ancestral home or even, like a shopkeeper, in an antique store or used

bookstore.[43] Assailed with distressing experiences and visions that resemble those he had as a child, Malte notes that he asked for his childhood and it has come back—in a form just as trying and difficult as it was before.[44] Memory breaks its promise. He realizes that he must go back to his childhood so as to "accomplish" [German: "leisten"] it. But he does not actually manage to do this. In real life Rilke, consumed by the same desire, also admitted failure.

What Benjamin has above all lost is the pre–World War I context that gave his childhood world the treacherous aspect of solidity. His sense of historical hiatus may explain his affinity for the metaphor of memory as an archaeological site, where decontextualized treasures may be carefully removed from the rubble. Freud had used the same metaphor to describe the analyst's work. Freud draws the analogy between analytical and archaeological work for the first time in *Studies on Hysteria,* where the analyst's task consists in finding the pathogenic kernel of the hysteria—a kernel which, in Freud's view, is always a memory. Whether used by Freud or by Benjamin, the image of memory as an archaeological site emphasizes the difficulty of the project of recovering the past. Benjamin writes:

> He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging. This determines the tone and bearing of genuine reminiscences. One must not be afraid (Sie dürfen sich nicht scheuen) to return again and again to the same matter; to scatter it as one scatters earth, to turn it over as one turns over soil. For the matter itself is only a deposit, a stratum, which yields only to the most meticulous examination what constitutes the real treasure hidden within the earth: the images, severed (losgebrochen) from all earlier associations, that stand—like precious fragments or torsos in a collector's gallery—in the sober rooms of our later insights.[45]

The fact that this passage garbs itself in tones of wisdom and advice, the imperatives that it contains, underscore that remembering is both highly desirable and extremely difficult. Despite the rememberer-archaeologist's pains, the "find" will only be a decontextualized fragment of any putative whole to which it may have belonged.

For earlier autobiographers remembering was no such formidable task. Despite reflections on the limitations and treacheries of memory, virtually all pre-Freudian autobiographers recorded their memories with an air of confidence. Augustine views memory as a wonderful, powerful faculty. While he concedes that it is not wholly under our control, he nonetheless regards it as an extraordinary resource.[46] Karl Philipp Moritz, who took a psychological interest in his early childhood memories as early as the 1780s, noticed the phenomenon of infantile amnesia, but had no doubt that the few memories he could date prior to the age of three were of those of real places and people.[47] In a perspicacious passage in *The Prelude,* Wordsworth observes that the present interferes with our clear view of the past. He interrupts the story of his childhood and youth to comment on his project of remembering:

> As one who hangs down-bending from the side
> Of a slow-moving boat upon the breast
> Of a still water, solacing himself
> With such discoveries as his eye can make
> Beneath him in the bottom of the deeps,
> Sees many beauteous sights (weeds, fishes, flowers,
> Grot, pebbles, roots of trees) and fancies more,
> Yet often is perplexed and cannot part
> The shadow from the substance—rocks and sky,
> Mountains and clouds, from that which is indeed
> The region, and the things which there abide
> In their true dwelling—now is crossed by gleam
> Of his own image, by a sunbeam now,
> And motions that are sent he knows not whence,
> Impediments that make his task more sweet;
> Such pleasant task have we long pursued
> Incumbent o'er the surface of past time
> With like success. (P 154 [IV: 247–264])

While Wordsworth's idea that the present affects our view of the past is a remarkably modern one, there is a significant difference between placing the past in the watery depths, where it is visible if not perfectly clear to the observer, and burying it in fragments underground, as Benjamin does.

Like their predecessors, the modernist authors believed in their memories, all the while acknowledging the trickiness of memory. In fact, the single characteristic that most distinguishes pre-Freudian from post-Freudian childhood autobiography is the pre-Freudian authors' belief in the truth of their memories. It is precisely because the pre-Freudians (a category that includes Proust and Rilke) held their memories to be true to their past experiences, thoughts, and feelings that they were able to invest them with such existential value.

Written on the eve of Freud's radical reconceptualization of the psyche in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), Henri Bergson's theory of memory forms an interesting comparison with, but also a contrast to, the modernist writers' sense of their own memories. Bergson's influence on Proust has always fueled speculation, yet it is probably a great deal less strong than some scholars have supposed. Proust knew Bergson personally, and indeed was related to his wife, but the two seldom met and apparently did not discuss ideas. Joyce N. Megay conjectures that Proust read only part of one chapter of *Matière et Mémoire (Matter and Memory)* in 1909 or 1910, evidently seeking to find out whether Bergson's ideas were different from his own.[48] Bergson published *Matière et Mémoire* in 1896, just three years before Freud published his article on screen memories. According to Bergson, memory preserves a faithful and exact record of all our experiences. Bergson does not attempt to prove the point, although he lengthily attempts to prove that memory is not something that is housed in the brain, but a purely spiritual manifestation. The comprehensive nature of memory is not his main point; he simply posits that memory is a complete record of every detail of the experienced past, including place and date. He is chiefly interested in sketching a theory of how we use memory. He argues that because human beings are oriented on action, only fragments of this vast archive ever come to join our present perceptions, namely, those fragments that are applicable to and useful for a present deed or interest. These fragments come to consciousness on their own, automatically. Bergson never suggests, however, as Freud will later, that a present interest might falsify or concoct a memory, and certainly not, as later psychologists believe, that it could change or corrupt the "record." Present interest plays a purely selective role. The rest of our memories, the immense record, lie beyond the reach of our consciousness. It is in assuming that memories are inaccessible that Bergson and the modernist writers

resemble one another. However, the modernists give the impression that they are severed from memories that would be very much worth having. Bergson expresses no such regret over the many past experiences that his will is powerless to dredge up. Whereas the writers are distressed by the inaccessibility of their memories, for Bergson such inaccessibility is a pragmatic necessity. All those memories would be quite useless to present action, so it is logical that they should remain unconscious. In his view, however, they are accessible to us when we dream. This state of affairs makes sense, since when we are dreaming we cannot act. Bergson posits that between the polarities of action and dream there are many planes, thousands of planes, in the human mind, through which the intellect can range, each of which gives access to a different level of richness of detail in our memories.

## V. Memory Theory: Freud and the Aftermath

In 1897, Freud abandoned the seduction theory of the etiology of hysteria. He wrote to Fliess on 21 September that he no longer believed in his theory that sexual abuse in childhood was the cause of the neuroses. Instead, it seemed to him "again arguable that later experiences alone give the impetus to fantasies, which [then] hark back to childhood."[49] His change of mind would be portentous for memory theory. Not long thereafter he published a paper in which he argued that so-called childhood memories were often fantasies.

Freud's article "Über Deckerinnerungen" ("Screen Memories," 1899) initiated the theory of childhood memories. According to Freud, a child remembers his or her life as a connected series of events only from the age of six or seven. The retention of these events in memory is directly related to their psychical significance. But it is earlier childhood memories that interest Freud. Using data published in 1897 by V. and C. Henri, Freud notes that most adults' first memories go back to the age of two to four. The Henris reported that the most frequent contents of a first memory are events that involve fear, shame, physical pain, or the like, or important events like illnesses, deaths, fires, and sibling births. Freud disagreed. According to his observations, early recollections often involve events of no consequence. These memories of inconsequential events are, strangely, over-sharp. He hypothesizes that a mechanism of displacement is at work: the inconse-

quential event is remembered because it is contemporaneous with or otherwise closely associated with an important event or train of thought that has been repressed. In particular, what an adult would recognize as sexual content is repressed, and some harmless detail is substituted for it in memory. By consequence, Freud calls these early memories of inconsequential events "screen memories." His conclusion is that our childhood memories are untrustworthy. In general, they are not real childhood memories. The fact that we often see ourselves in the remembered scene is further evidence for this point: we see a scene as we never could have seen it in actuality. Rather, childhood memories are constructions of the present. They symbolize or otherwise represent preoccupations of the present. For example, taking flowers away from a little girl might symbolize defloration. In particular, childhood memories frequently fulfill present wishes in symbolic disguise. All in all screen memories are very similar in their motivation and construction to dreams as Freud describes them in *The Interpretation of Dreams,* published one year later.

Since these screen memories are oriented on our preoccupations at the age at which they flash up instead of on the actual childhood events themselves, why does the mind choose childhood as their scene? Precisely because of its innocence, says Freud. The so-called innocence of childhood serves as the perfect cloak for improper, sexual thoughts. Childhood events are then selected for their appropriateness. Indeed, they can be distorted or even fantasized. They can be completely false. The point is that they are entirely at the service of the present. Freud concludes: "It may indeed be questioned whether we have any memories at all *from* our childhood: memories *relating to* our childhood may be all that we possess. Our childhood memories show us our earliest years not as they were but as they appeared at the later periods when the memories were aroused. In these periods of arousal, the childhood memories did not, as people are accustomed to say, *emerge;* they were *formed* at that time" (SE 3: 322).

Freud returns to the topic of screen memories in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901). Here he notes that screen memories may be retroactive (i.e., a later train of thought expresses itself through an earlier memory), or displaced forward (an earlier repressed memory is remembered via an indifferent later impression), or contemporary (the screen memory and the hidden content are contemporaneous). He links the process of forming screen

memories to that involved in the forgetting of names. He asserts that childhood memories are plastically visual and "invariably" include oneself as child—which proves that we do not possess the genuine memory, but a later version of it.[50]

Freud's theory of screen memories stamped childhood memories with unreliability. Indeed, they were occluding and deceiving; they hid something else; and perhaps most important, being under great pressure from the present, they changed. The effect of Freud's theory on those who set about recollecting their childhood was to sow the seed of doubt in the accuracy of childhood memories. As Roman Reisinger aptly puts it, "The theory destroys the myth of original childhood memory and robs it of all its charm."[51] The theory of the screen memory itself was never verified experimentally and did not survive into modern psychology. It hinges on the notion of repression, and the existence of repression has been heavily debated.[52] Like Freud's "unconscious," "repression" has proved unverifiable. The "limen" dividing conscious from unconscious processes has been declared impossible to situate experimentally, since it seems to fluctuate.[53] But both repression and the unconscious have, of course, entered everyday language and are still popularly believed to exist. Freud still has his adherents among clinicians as well as among analysts.

Although the "screen memory" concept has become a historical curiosity in psychology, Freud's conviction that memory is untrustworthy and that childhood memories are essentially constructions of the present has become a commonplace of psychological memory theory. "On memory," writes Erdelyi in 1996, "Freud was extraordinarily astute."[54] Particularly since Sir Frederic C. Bartlett's 1932 study *Remembering,* which he based on controlled studies of how people recalled a story, the idea that memory is constructive or reconstructive has gained credence.

Today, "autobiographical memory" is sometimes defined as a memory of a particular event that happened at a particular place and time and sometimes more broadly defined to include repeated events and even lifetime periods.[55] Theoreticians of autobiographical memory largely espouse the idea of constructive memory. They speak of "encoding" and "retrieving" a memory. It is already questionable to what degree the "engram" or memory trace conforms to fact. The experimental psychologist Endel Tulving proved in the 1970s that encoding gets into the "engram" or memory trace right from the start.[56] Prob-

ably, encoding is selective;[57] we encode what is important to us.[58] The "retrieval" of a memory adds an even larger injection of fiction. That is, we "construct" memories which more or less tally with what we need the memories to do at a given present moment. Conway speaks of the "manipulation" of autobiographical knowledge to form autobiographical memories.[59]

Yet there is some dissent from this constructivist view of autobiographical memory. Brewer, for example, argues for a more moderate, "partially reconstructive" view, since his research shows that subjects tend to remember quite accurately. He also finds that there is good correlation between confidence in accuracy and actual accuracy.[60] Brewer concedes, however, what has been known as a laboratory result since the first decade of the twentieth century: that memories, with time, are pressed into schemata.[61] Fivush names more recent sources that present evidence for the tendency of adults and children to "intrude script information not included in the original presented story" in delayed recall.[62] As Schneider and Pressley conclude, "Long-term memories are always constructions."[63]

Modern psychology has also explored what kinds of events are best remembered. The results of this research are directly relevant to the modernist childhood memory narratives under consideration, inasmuch as they clarify certain choices the authors make about what and how to narrate and lend plausibility to the authors' implicit claim to accurate remembering. They tend, therefore, to corroborate the authors' intuitions about the way memory works. They also serve as an instructive backdrop to memory narratives generally. Thus the nineteenth-century experimental psychologist Ebbinghaus showed that repetition enhances memory. It has been experimentally verified more recently that repeated events (which Proust and Benjamin prefer) are remembered better.[64] There is a persuasive functional explanation for memory's preference for repeated events, namely, that the basic general function of memory is to provide guidance for action, so that repeated events, which seem more likely to recur, are better retained.[65] More recent research shows that emotionally significant events (which are prominent in virtually all childhood autobiographies) also create strong, long-lasting memories that are resistant to forgetting. This proposition is supported by experimental results with animals. When the amgydala, which is responsible for regulating emotions and the emotional aspects of memory, and is the site of long-term memory consolidation in the brain, is injected

with a stress hormone (epinephrine or corticosterone), these release the neurotransmitter norepinephrine and better remembering results.[66] Various types of memory are similarly enhanced when drugs are injected into other areas of the brain.[67]

Other factors that have been shown to influence remembering, and are potentially consequential for literary accounts, include biological sex (women recall more events than men) and birth order (only children have earlier autobiographical memories than oldest children in multichild families, whereas oldest children have earlier memories than later-born children). Intriguing from the point of view of the authors discussed here is a correlation between poor remembering and depression (individuals suffering from depression have trouble remembering specifics). So is the finding that memories for the life period between ages 10 and 30 are, across the board, especially abundant and good (this twenty-year span is called the "reminiscence bump"), whereas the period prior to age 7–8 is characterized by a relative paucity in memories. Most adults have no memories prior to the age of 3, and they have fewer memories from the ages of roughly 3 to 7 or 8 years than can be explained by forgetting alone.[68]

Childhood memories have been the subject of renewed study since Freud. A person's memory for a salient childhood event (such as the birth of a sibling) has been shown to be excellent and durable, provided the event occurs around the age of 4. Sheingold and Tenney tested 4-year-olds, 8-year-olds, 12-year-olds, and college students about events surrounding the birth of a sibling which had occurred when the subject was around age 4 and found that information was not forgotten "for 16 years after the event occurred."[69] Usher and Neisser, studying four major childhood events (hospitalization, sibling birth, death, and moving), likewise conclude that what individuals recall is relatively accurate.[70] Howe, Courage, and Peterson similarly find that memory for central events in emergency-room traumas remains strong in children aged 28–66 months who experienced such traumas.[71]

What of noncentral, nontraumatic events? Here there is less consensus. For example, the clinical psychologist Arnold R. Bruhn is persuaded, through his clinical experience with patients, that early memories are mainly fantasies that are chosen for their present relevance and testify to a patient's unresolved issues.[72] In contrast, the researchers Howes, Siegel, and Brown show early childhood memories generally to be reasonably accurate, par-

ticularly for central details, even those that go back to the second year of life,[73] thereby disconfirming Freud's hypothesis of massive distortion in the remembering of childhood events. Howe, Courage, and Peterson argue that traumatic memories do not enjoy a special status as regards forgetting but behave just like other memories.[74]

Autobiographical memory research, which uses empirical methods, is a comparatively recent development. The study of personal memories dates from 1975,[75] while the first edited volume on autobiographical memory, David C. Rubin's *Autobiographical Memory,* was published in 1986. Laboratory studies of memory, however, go back to the work of Ebbinghaus (1885). The laboratory studies have been mainly concerned with the accuracy of memory. They have found a great deal of evidence for accurate remembering in controlled laboratory test situations. For example, it has been documented that we not only forget over time, but also that we are capable of remembering previously forgotten facts.[76] Hypermnesia, or overall improvement in memory in subsequent tests, has also been demonstrated to exist, although it is a much more fragile phenomenon than reminiscence.[77] Some of the laboratory results are particularly relevant both to autobiographical memory and to childhood memory narratives. For example, imagery has been shown to be a privileged factor in hypermnesia: hypermnesia may take place if the material tested is images, but not if words are tested.[78] Imagery is apparently special when it comes to remembering: Brewer (1995) notes that people's confidence in their autobiographical memories is related to the incidence of imagery, and that correct responses show stronger imagery than wrong ones.[79]

Besides hypermnesia and imagery, another phenomenon that is particularly interesting for autobiographical memory and memory narratives is "associative memory," which infants demonstrate as early as 6 months of age. That is, associations or mnemonic links are formed between memories, so that activating one memory can activate associated ones.[80] Memory can also be reactivated by exposing the subject to a *fragment* of the original event—a "reminder."[81] One such "reminder" could be context. Experimental tests of infants' memory show that context has a positive effect on remembering. Thus, infants remember an object far better if they are presented with it in its original context.[82]

The phenomenon of associative memory was already noticed by the Henris in 1897. They write that memories are triggered by "association by

resemblance and by contiguity."[83] Today, what they call "association by resemblance" is recognized to play a role in arousing memory through the subject's encounter with an analogue of the engram or memory trace, termed a "cue."[84]

As far as childhood memories go, infantile amnesia, or adults' inability to remember events from early childhood, has been extensively documented. That is, most adults have no memories of their childhood prior to the age of three or four. Correspondingly, childhood autobiographers rarely try to breach the mystery of their earliest years. Several theories have been advanced to account for infantile amnesia. These theories tend to echo various long-standing beliefs about the nature of memory, for example, that language is a mnemic system (Freud), that the self is memory (Locke), and that recall is a function of pragmatic concerns (Bergson). The earlier theories emphasize the key role of language acquisition for memory. Thus Pillemer and White (1989) find the acquisition of language crucially important for the development of "personal memories," that is, memories of single events that have relevance to the self. Prior to age 3–4, children can act out their memories, but they generally cannot verbalize them. Pillemer and White hypothesize that a new memory system based on language as the primary medium of expression is constructed by children in the preschool years, overlaying the old one.[85] They agree with Katherine Nelson that "social interaction" is "the primary agent through which autobiographical memory is acquired."[86] They stress above all the importance of conversation with adults in fostering the acquisition of "scripts" and in encouraging autobiographical memory. But these things cannot happen until the child is developmentally ready. Katherine Nelson similarly stresses language acquisition, asserting autobiographical memory's "dependence on linguistic representations."[87] She proposes a social construction theory of autobiographical memory, hypothesizing that autobiographical memory is closely linked to learning to narrate and comes into being for the social benefit of sharing memory with other people.[88]

Laboratory studies have shown that infantile amnesia is not traceable to the fact that infants and young children themselves do not remember. There is evidence of long-term memory prior to birth.[89] Pre-linguistic infants as young as two months of age have been extensively tested and have been shown to remember, if only for short periods. Thus, 8- to 10-week-old in-

fants tend to look longer at a novel stimulus. This is thought to indicate remembering.[90] Six-month-old children are able to imitate an action for as long as twenty-four hours after seeing it.[91] Infants remember progressively longer with age.[92] The end of the first year of life (from 9 months on) appears to bring the dawning of long-term declarative memory (i.e., conscious remembering that has the potential to be verbalized), and this capacity becomes "reliable and robust" in the course of the second year of life.[93] Bauer (2007) asserts that neurobiological findings about the way the infant brain develops correlate with these results.[94] Children age 29–35 months are able to respond to questions about past events, including distant events that took place over three months earlier.[95] While the acquisition of language is important, it is also known that memories carry over from the pre-linguistic period to the period when children have learned to speak.[96] By consequence, researchers have advanced new theories to account for infantile amnesia, theories that are based on the findings of these laboratory experiments with infants. Rovee-Collier and Shyi's research with 3- and 6-month-olds shows two results that could bear on infantile amnesia: early memories are easily overwritten, and they are also extremely context-dependent.[97] They conjecture that both factors could contribute to infantile amnesia; context-dependency is significant since an infant's context changes with the passage of time.

Another theory of early autobiographical memory, one that takes issue with Pillemer and White's hypothesis of two memory systems and believes itself more consistent with the findings of these subsequent experiments with infants, traces the onset of autobiographical memory to the formation of a cognitive self around the age of 2.[98] Proof for the cognitive self is said to lie in the fact that infants show complete self-recognition in the mirror by age 18 months.[99]

Even more recently, Rovee-Collier and Gerhardstein have formulated a particularly plausible hypothesis to account for the phenomenon of infantile amnesia:

> The finding that infants' prior memories are readily updated or modified to reflect the demands and circumstances of their current social and physical world suggests that many of our earliest memories may have been progressively modified or retrieved so often that their original forms can no longer be recognized.

> Given the rapidity with which the infant's social position and physical and cognitive skills change over the first 3 years of life in particular, we find this account of infantile amnesia highly plausible. . . . Insofar as so much of what we needed to know when we were young is not useful when we are older, it would seem to be highly adaptive for these early memories to be forgotten.[100]

According to this hypothesis, the brain erases early memories because they are not worth keeping.

How trustworthy are children's memories? This question became a controversial issue in the last decades of the twentieth century. An increase in reported child abuse cases starting in the 1970s brought with it an upsurge in research on children's memory.[101] The accuracy of memory is obviously a crucially important issue in law, since the legal system relies on witness testimony to reach decisions. It became imperative to find out to what extent children's testimony could be trusted in court. In 1993 Elizabeth Loftus proposed that the "recovered memories" of traumatic events that many adults had brought forward were instead "false memories" that had been suggestively planted, usually by a therapist.[102] This assertion led to the "recovered memory/false memory" debate of the 1990s. Loftus believes that memory is highly suggestible. She writes in her 1994 book *The Myth of Repressed Memory: False Memories and Allegations of Sexual Abuse:*

> But memory surprises me again and again with its gee-whiz gullibility, its willingness to take the crayon of suggestion and color in a dark corner of the past, giving up without any hint of an argument an old ragged section of memory in exchange for a shiny new piece that makes everything glow a little brighter, look a little cleaner and tidier. In my experiments, conducted with thousands of subjects over two decades, I've molded people's memories, prompting them to recall nonexistent broken glass and tape recorders, to think of a clean-shaven man as having a mustache, and straight hair as curly, of stop signs as yield signs, of hammers as screwdrivers; and to place something as large and conspicuous as a barn in a bucolic scene that contained no buildings at all. I've even been able to implant false memories

> in people's minds, making them believe in characters who never existed and events that never happened.[103]

Not all researchers agree with Loftus. Studies performed by others show that preschool children are more susceptible to suggestion than adults.[104] But even in the case of these young children, repeated events are less susceptible to suggestion than single episodes, while a tested group of 10-year-olds resisted the suggestion that something had occurred when it had not.[105] James McGaugh points out that 42 percent of the children Loftus tested did *not* create false narratives; they were not susceptible to misremembering.[106] The "recovered memory" debate has once again played out the argument over the degree to which memories are constructed and to what degree they are accurate. Apart from the issue of the suggestibility of false memories, it does seem inarguable that, as many adults believe, memories of the factual events of early childhood are shaped by parents' stories.

As Patricia Bauer observes in her recent book *Remembering the Times of Our Lives* (2007), developmental, adult, and neurobiological approaches to the study of memory developed separately until the 1980s.[107] Today, psychologists are making efforts to link the findings in these three areas. Patricia Bauer's own book represents a significant contribution to this important goal. Nevertheless, one certainly cannot speak at this point in time of a unified psychological theory of memory. Research in all areas is advancing apace, and in particular, neuroscience is progressing by leaps and bounds with new imaging techniques. Precisely this neuroscientific research, however, which investigates how memories are stored in the brain, is the area of psychological memory research that is the least directly applicable to literature. As Bauer points out, even when neuroscience gets all the details nailed down it will not be able to explain the phenomenon of remembering as we experience it.[108] Nevertheless, today's neuroscientific memory research will no doubt have repercussions on the way literary writers conceptualize and write about memory in the future, just as, as we are about to see, psychoanalytic and psychological theory influenced the way literary autobiographers approached the issue of memory in the twentieth century.

## VI. The Effect of Psychoanalytical and Psychological Memory Theory on Literature

Psychoanalysis, buttressed by subsequent psychological theory, had the effect of eroding the confidence of mid- to late-twentieth-century autobiographers in their childhood memories. Sophisticated writers like Michel Leiris in *Biffures* (1948), Mary McCarthy in *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood* (1957), and Nathalie Sarraute in *Enfance* (*Childhood,* 1983) cannot bring themselves to record their childhood memories without distancing disclaimers, quotation marks, references to psychoanalytic theory, and the like. Childhood narratives are strewn with questionings of the reliability of the memories and theoretical comments on the mysterious and untrustworthy nature of memory itself. In short, mid- to late-twentieth-century childhood autobiographers write differently from modernist authors, who were not under the constraints imposed by an influential and widely known "scientific" model but felt free to follow their own inspiration when pursuing their childhood memories. They write as if questions pertaining to memory had been settled.

The discourse of doubt that supervenes once Freud is on the scene is no longer the same doubt that pre-Freudian writers like Moritz, Wordsworth, or Proust voice, the doubt that their memories do not afford a complete and accurate picture of past events. Rather, it is the conviction that in "remembering," one is, willy-nilly, altering and fabricating one's story, repressing facts in the service of present psychic interests.[109] In this section I shall briefly present some examples of the ways in which post-Freudian childhood autobiographers have come to grips with the issue of memory. This short tour will illustrate my point that with Freud, the climate changed dramatically.

Thus Leiris, who was well acquainted with psychoanalysis, comments on an elusive childhood memory in a psychoanalytically orthodox way, by asserting that it may be a creation of the present: "Memory localized in the past in a precise manner, an old imaginary creation of which I don't know to what extent it isn't creating itself at the very moment, or rather at the present moment considered and sought as such: little does it matter, all in all, which conventional goal I assign myself. Because the pursuit I undertake, I always undertake in the present."[110] Mary McCarthy, who was acquainted with psychoanalysis, begins *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood* by problematizing memory. For her, she says, the record lays claim to being historical, but

there may be fiction in it, she can't be sure; she and her brother "belabored" their memories in their quest for the past.[111] She pauses repeatedly in her narrative to comment that her account, which strings together stories previously published elsewhere, is doubtful or fictionalized. Nathalie Sarraute in *Enfance* casts her memoirs in the form of a dialogue between herself and another person who can probably be understood as another part of herself and who plays a role similar to that of a psychoanalyst. This sophisticated interlocutor is skeptical of her motivations for embarking on her autobiographical project and of her childhood memories, accuses her of fabricating, and constantly insinuates that she is glossing things over, repressing, or reading in a later perspective. Sarraute employs the device of ellipsis throughout the book, implying that her memories are tentative. She even has memories that can be read as screen memories, memories that symbolize a latent content. Thus the first childhood memory in the book, of an episode where she transgressively slashes upholstery with scissors in spite of her governess's injunction to refrain and sees the grey innards come tumbling out, transparently "screens" or symbolizes slashing into the depths of the past and of the mind, and hence the book project itself. A scene where her mother and her stepfather wrestle and her mother warns her to stay out of the game can be read as a screen memory for her mother's later abandonment of her. Her beautiful mother's various deceptions—medicine hidden in the jam, a promise that she would visit her grandmother when in fact she was to have her tonsils out, the fiction that eating dust makes you have a baby—likewise seem to fall in the spotlight of remembering because of her mother's final treachery. Where an earlier writer would have presented his or her memories with an air of, "This is what I remember, for better or worse," Sarraute constructs memory according to a psychoanalytical model, insinuating that something lies *behind* her memories.

Freud's memory theory was based in the concept of repression, and Freud first postulated repression in *Studies on Hysteria* to account for the aftereffects of "forgotten" trauma. His theory of recall is thus especially well suited to accounting for the way in which the mind deals with the traumatic past. Indeed, the pendulum of childhood autobiography in the twentieth century swings to trauma, whether because Freud made trauma fashionable or whether because this century was richer in traumatic experiences than the previous period. The Nazis' rise to power, the war, and the camps

thus gave those whose childhoods were touched by these events further impetus for questioning memory as a reliable or even as an independent faculty. Remembering appears to be driven by ulterior interests and survival mechanisms that include forgetting, falsification, fantasy, and artistic elaboration. One of the two autobiographical narrators in Georges Perec's *W, ou le souvenir d'enfance* (*W, or the Memory of Childhood,* 1975) was orphaned early—his father died as a soldier when he was four, his mother died in the camps when he was six—and says he has "no childhood memories" or at best "implausible memories" of his childhood up to age twelve.[112] He places great emphasis on his lack of memories and the doubtfulness of such "scraps of life snatched from the void" as there are: and thus, on the uncertainty, alteration, and distortion of his few, fragile, and disconnected memories.[113] Yet it is not just that history—"the war, the camps"[114]—answered the question of childhood memory for him. He feels compelled to write because of his sense of closeness to those who died in his childhood: "I write because they left in me their indelible mark, whose trace is writing"; "the idea of writing the story of my past arose almost at the same time as the idea of writing."[115] This Jewish orphan's unremembered childhood contains nothing that he could build an identity out of, nothing that coalesces into a coherent story. As an adolescent after the war, however, he constructs an elaborate fantasy of a society oriented on sports. The present-day narrator refashions this adolescent fantasy into a quest for an elusive alter ego that turns more and more into an allegory of the camps, so that the reality of the camps finally does surface in all its horror, albeit in a highly oblique fashion. Perec does not mention psychoanalysis, but his mode of writing is consistent with the psychoanalytic idea that the psyche is burdened by past events, especially traumatic ones, and possesses an unconscious knowledge of them that can emerge or be teased out even where there are no conscious memories.

German as well as Jewish writers have written about their memories of the Holocaust. Whereas survivors are usually represented as suffering from memory disturbances, the oppressors are seen to suffer from memory deception. They do not want to know or to remember; hence, they have forgotten and maintain that they never noticed what was going on at the time. Such self-deception accords with psychoanalytic insights about memory and leads writers to adopt a psychoanalytic model. The deceptiveness of memory is a central theme in Christa Wolf's *Kindheitsmuster* (*Patterns of*

*Childhood,* 1976), a fictionalized childhood autobiography about growing up under National Socialism. Wolf embeds her memories in the expression of massive doubts about the possibility of remembering accurately. Her protagonist Nelly, who was four years old when the Nazis came to power and lived in her German hometown (today in Poland) until forced to flee in 1945, tries, by returning to the place in 1971, to reconstruct the way people thought then and also to get to the bottom of what she herself knew. She winds up interrogating memory: Why didn't she know more? Why couldn't she remember more? Why did her family overlook, deny, forget what was going on? Why did millions of Germans insist that they could not remember? Wolf entertains many ideas on memory, including "the results of the latest research," such as the role of dreams in consolidating memory. But she mainly subscribes to the idea that parts of memory become blocked off, that consciousness refuses to admit them. In short, she believes in repression. Her ideas on memory are largely consistent with Freudian theory. Trying to delve too thoroughly into the past makes Nelly sick; thus, she experiences a strong resistance in herself. She finally starts to live in her memories, like Breuer's Anna O. She insists that memories change, that "memory, this system of deception"[116] is constructive, indeed falsifying.

W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* (2001) is an interesting hybrid. Sebald, the child of German parents who prospered under the Third Reich and whose father fought in Hitler's army, constructs the memory monologue of a fictitious Jewish protagonist, Austerlitz, who was sent from Prague to Great Britain in a children's transport in 1939 at the age of four and a half and thus survived the Holocaust, but lost all contact with his parents, who perished or disappeared. He frames his account of the memory and personality disturbances the child suffered in terms remarkably similar to Perec's, whose mother died in the Holocaust. The theme of the grip of memory—in this case of repressed memory—over identity and psychic health dominates Austerlitz's story. According to Sebald, his protagonist energetically repressed all memory of everything that happened before his arrival in Great Britain. He remembers absolutely *nothing*—until the repressed, which had always eerily made itself felt in obsessions and symptoms, starts to "return." Triggered by various cues, "forgotten" memories begin to surface. Sebald, whose use of cues points to the literary models of Proust and Benjamin, has his protagonist go back to Prague, where his encounter with the places of

his childhood, and particularly his discovery of his old nanny, result in his recovery of vast stretches of his early memories, including a knowledge of Czech. The nanny-ex-machina fills him in on the story of what happened to his parents. The adult Austerlitz obsessively repeats his journey to Great Britain, but although he now remembers and knows all, psychic health remains elusive; he suffers a nervous breakdown.

Not every author agrees with the "soft" psychoanalytical view of memory, which, after all, can be construed as an invitation to give up on the project of remembering on grounds that misremembering is inevitable. Freud found a vocal antagonist in Vladimir Nabokov. In *Speak Memory* (1947), Nabokov refers to Freud as "the Viennese Quack" and asserts that he and his followers ride in a "third-class carriage of thought."[117] Nabokov prides himself on his excellent, exact memory. Other people may misremember and falsify the past—he mocks his French governess for gilding their time together—but he asserts that he himself does not: "The act of vividly recalling a patch of the past is something that I seem to have been performing with the utmost zest all my life, and I have reason to believe that this almost pathological keenness of the retrospective faculty is a hereditary trait."[118] It bothers him that he cannot remember the name of the dog belonging to a little French girl with whom he had been passionately in love one summer at age ten. Then, as he keeps remembering more and more about that summer, he actually does recall the dog's name, too. Whereas Nabokov pointedly disagrees with Freud, he shows no such disapproval of Proust. In fact, he says in an obvious analogy to Proust that he is going to show the reader some "slides," and even writes, "The images of those tutors appear within memory's luminous disc as so many magic-lantern projections."[119] A debunker of the idea of inaccurate memory, Nabokov testifies to the existence of a Proustian tradition, which in his case is anti-Freudian.

Some twentieth-century authors strike a compromise by signaling their familiarity with Freudian and post-Freudian psychological theory without, however, weaving doubts about memory into the very fabric of their narrative. Thus Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex colors Sartre's discussion in *Les Mots* (*The Words,* 1964) of the splendors and miseries of his fatherless childhood, but he does not cast doubt on his memories. Doris Lessing, a psychoanalytically well-informed author, doffs her hat to modern psychology at the beginning of her autobiography *Under My Skin* (1994), observing

that one's present perspective changes one's outlook on the past: "You see your life differently at different stages, like climbing a mountain while the landscape changes with every turn in the path."[120] She wonders, like Christa Wolf, why memory is selective, why we remember this and not that. "Memory is a careless and lazy organ," she declares.[121] Yet she proceeds to recount her childhood memories, which she dates to before the age of two, with great confidence and in great detail. Patrick Chamoiseau starts his *Antan d'enfance* (1990), translated as *Childhood* (1993), with an apostrophe to memory and recurs to the theme of memory in the course of the text, painting it as a treacherous ally, a thief and an outlaw who accumulates and permits access to hoards according to unfathomable laws. But this "memory motif" informs the book like a separate thread; Chamoiseau does not call his actual recollections into doubt.[122]

One sophisticated and innovative avant-garde work circles back to pre-Freudian concepts of childhood memory, to a delight in memories of childhood, after detouring through psychoanalysis. Thus Roland Barthes, an author versed in psychoanalysis who matter-of-factly uses Lacanian terminology ("the fissure in the subject," the "imaginary"[123]) from the start in his book about himself, *Roland Barthes* (1975), does not beat what he may have regarded as the dead horse of memory theory, but instead dodges the issue in a most original fashion by not "remembering" his childhood and youth but, rather, by letting a series of photographic images, which often bear commentaries, stand in for them. He comments that "they are the author's treat to himself, for finishing his book." He says that he does not identify with the images—quite the opposite—but that they give him pleasure. They are images that "enthrall" (sidèrent) him. He admits that "only the images of my youth fascinate me."[124] Although the self-presentation in images is original, the images themselves are quite traditional, and in fact they together with their captions resonate with the history of childhood autobiography. Perhaps the way they mark a resemblance to Proust gave Barthes pleasure: not only is one image of himself as a small child entitled "I was beginning to walk, Proust was still alive, and finishing *À la recherche du temps perdu,*"[125] but he starts the series with a photo of himself and his mother, and follows it with three images of places—two of places in Bayonne, one of his house and gardens—and soon thereafter four photos of his grandfathers and grandmothers. All of this could be seen to echo Proust's "Combray." The photo of his father,

whom he lost early, makes the reader think of Sartre's childhood autobiography. More photos of Bayonne and of his bourgeois ancestors follow. His commentary on childhood comes to a head in a passage that testifies, despite what he said previously, to his identification with the images of himself: "From the past it is my childhood which fascinates me most; these images alone, upon inspection, fail to make me regret the time which has vanished. For it is not the irreversible I discover in my childhood, it is the irreducible: everything which is still in me, by fits and starts, in the child, I read quite openly the dark underside of myself—boredom, vulnerability, disposition to despairs (in the plural, fortunately), toward excitement, cut off (unfortunately) from all expression."[126] This is a late variation on Wordsworth's "the child is father of the man": Barthes "reads" his personality in the body of the child.

Psychoanalytic and postpsychoanalytic memory doubt is pervasive above all in postwar European childhood autobiographies. The farther one goes from Europe, the less one sees the influence of psychoanalysis in such works. Mary McCarthy aside, the American tradition is shaped far less by Freud than the French: there is no Freud or doubt of childhood memories in such classic childhood autobiographies as Richard Wright's *Black Boy* (1945), Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* (1976), or Annie Dillard's *An American Childhood* (1987), or even in a recent title like Sarah Scofield's *Occasions of Sin* (2004). In her recent book on childhood autobiography from the 1990s onward, Kate Douglas notices a generic shift. She observes that the thematics of trauma have pervaded contemporary childhood autobiography to the point that stories focusing on childhood trauma have outpaced the more traditional nostalgic variant of the genre.[127] This development is obviously bound up with the contemporaneous interest in trauma, child abuse, and the "recovered-memory/false memory" debate. As Douglas rightly points out, childhood autobiographies adopt "cultural templates" and "reflect broader moods and preoccupations about childhood."[128] Popular psychological concepts are thus still serving to inspire childhood autobiographers. In the case of trauma, the seminal discourse has its roots in early psychology and psychoanalysis; it both employs psychoanalytic concepts and strives to correct them by arguing that Freud was wrong in relegating childhood abuse primarily to the realm of fantasy, whereas he should have recognized its reality. Contemporary childhood autobiography is thus still positioned in a relationship to psychoanalysis, whether or not authors are

fully conscious of that relationship and whether or not they adopt or defy Freudian ideas or do both.

## VII. The Importance of Things and Places in Childhood Memories

It will be seen in the following chapters that things and places stand in the foreground in Proust's, Rilke's, and Benjamin's childhood narratives. People, in contrast, play only a modest role. In each case the relationship to the mother is presented as the emotionally most sustaining. Other people mainly appear in a mild light of caricature, that is, as reified. But what really stands out is the writers' fascination with things and places as objects of childhood importance. In this regard, the works correspond to a pattern Coe discerned in childhood autobiography generally. Coe writes: "In a significantly large number of cases, the supreme ecstasies of childhood arise out of contact with the inanimate—not with dolls or other toys which are simulations of known, living beings, not even (although this is encountered more frequently) with natural phenomena such as trees or sunsets—but with bricks or snowflakes or pebbles."[129]

Philosophers and psychologists have written extensively on the importance of other people for the human subject and of their role in the subject's development. The role of objects and places has been relatively slighted, although Winnicott did write of the importance of "transitional objects" in helping infants bridge the gap caused by maternal absence.[130] Recently an interest in things has picked up. Efforts have been made to theorize human involvement with them and in particular their role in art. Bill Brown's edited anthology *Things* (2004), which contains articles that approach the topic of "things" from diverse angles, is a milestone in this regard.[131]

Attempting to account for why objects figure prominently in childhood autobiographies, Coe adopts the interpretation of things given by Bachelard in *La Terre et les rêveries du repos* (1948), namely, that inanimate objects are interesting to people because they are challenging and "other." Apropos of childhood autobiography, he writes: "The challenge to the intuition of the child . . . is precisely that which *cannot* be assimilated to the human: centipede or stamen or sea anemone; pebble or porcelain button or crystal pear-drop fragment from a vanished chandelier. The resistant, unassimilable

beauty of *things* is the child's most immediate, most incommunicable experience of the sacred."[132] In my view, this is not a correct explanation of why childhood narratives are full of the descriptions of objects and places. In fact, I believe that exactly the opposite is the case. The habitation of space (having one's places) is important to humans as it is to animals. So is possession of things. Having one's terrain and one's things gives one certainty, self-definition, and a sense of continuity. One's places and one's things extend the self into the world, the living and changing being into more lasting forms. Our familiar places and our beloved things are not the other, not the not-me: they are imbued with the me, they are part of the penumbra of the central consciousness. They grant the comfort of a self-extension. Pierre Loti, for one, theorizes his childhood attachment to an old wall in this sense. The passage is worth quoting at length for the eloquence with which Loti makes his point: "Not only do I love and venerate this old wall the way Arabs do their most sacred mosque; but it even seems to me that it protects me, that it assures my existence a little and prolongs my youth. I wouldn't suffer it to be changed in the slightest, and if it were demolished I would feel as though a point of support had collapsed that nothing could ever make good. This is so, no doubt, because the persistence of certain things, forever known, comes to deceive us about our own stability, about our own duration; inasmuch as we see them stay the same, it seems to us that we can neither change nor cease to be.—I do not find any other explanation for this kind of almost fetishistic sentiment."[133] This passage suggests that a love of things is a useful and sustaining psychological defense.

Rather obviously, the attachment to things and particularly to one's cherished old things can also come under fire precisely because it is a defense. Thus, Vilém Flusser, one of its detractors, connects the love of things to the love of heimat, which he despises on grounds that it limits freedom. He similarly condemns "the perniciousness of being enthralled by things," which, he believes, implies substituting things for people as love objects.[134] Whether or not the habit should be seen as pernicious, I would have to agree with Flusser that an appreciation for things does indeed sometimes push an affection for people to the sidelines, as seems to have been the case with Rilke.

The dominance of things and places in childhood narratives might be attributable to a variety of causes. I discuss six such possible causes here.

First, there is an empirical correlative. V. and C. Henri's study of childhood memories bears out the conclusion that objects and places are well remembered but that people are not. The Henris note that first memories generally involve a precisely visualized scene. Objects, colors, and the type of light are sharply remembered. People, in contrast, are poorly represented, just as a shape, but with few or no facial features. In some instances the rememberer does not recall if a person was a man and a woman (where gender is a characteristic almost always noticed by adults).[135] Karl Philipp Moritz's pioneering study of his childhood memories already bears out this conclusion. His very early memories, prior to the age of three, are precisely of this type: he remembers a room, boats, a well, the colors of specific things.[136] A much more recent study of first and second memories performed by M. Howes, M. Siegel, and F. Brown does not contradict the Henris' results, but comes to somewhat different conclusions. These researchers find that nearly all first and second memories are memories of events; isolated object memories are rare, although objects are remembered as constituents in a remembered event.[137] But these authors may have suggested the notion of "event" to their subjects. They asked college students to write down their first three memories and then asked them to fill out a questionnaire that refers to "events" (as does the Henris' questionnaire). The memories the college students reported are very largely episodic.[138] Moritz's memories, in contrast, are iterative, and most literary authors of childhood narratives show a marked preference for narrating habitual states of affairs.[139]

It should be noted parenthetically here that these psychological researchers, like most psychological researchers, study very early (first and second) memories, whereas the preponderance of the memories recorded by childhood autobiographers occur later in childhood. Childhood autobiographers usually cut "childhood" off around age twelve, although there is considerable variation in what individual authors consider to belong to childhood. Proust, Rilke, and Benjamin all leave vague the age at which they or their fictional protagonists experienced the events they write about. What counts for them is their emotional value, which in part seems to be a function of their remoteness, and not their exactness or verifiability, much less the specifics of ages or dates. Nevertheless, in Proust's and Rilke's cases, an approximate time frame can be reconstructed. Biographical evidence tells us that Proust's own "Combray" memories fall before his tenth birthday or are

based on a visit at age fifteen.[140] Proust's parents stopped going to Illiers (Combray) when Marcel started to suffer from asthma at age nine, but later the family went back once on the occasion of his aunt's death when he was fifteen. Rilke's Malte starts thinking back on his childhood when he is at the Academy for Young Noblemen at Sorø, when life (as he says) starts treating him like an adult. He could have entered the school as early as age ten, the age at which Rilke himself was sent to military boarding school. Benjamin gives no hint whatsoever of how old he was when the episodes recounted in *Berlin Childhood around 1900* occurred, but it is clear that most happened before the age of puberty, although a few took place thereafter. Many of the topics chosen by Rilke and Benjamin—coloring, unrolling laces with one's mother, a visit to the park with a nursemaid, the merry-go-round, learning to read at home—involve events that suggest preschool age. They thus belong to the period between ages three and seven to eight that developmental psychology has identified as a second phase of childhood amnesia, a period about which adults, as Bauer puts it, "have a smaller number of memories than would be expected based on forgetting alone."[141] Other memories in the literary works are clearly datable to elementary school age (Benjamin in particular recounts a few school-related memories) or even later, but the preponderance of them make the impression, by their topics, of predating the "reminiscence bump" or best-remembered twenty-year period of life that has been shown to begin at age ten. The authors' preference for narrating memories of objects and places suggests that the phenomenon the psychological researchers find in early childhood memories extends into the later childhood years as well.

Second, things and places might be seen to dominate childhood narratives because they are particular objects of a child's interest. Small children are undeniably fascinated by the world of things. It is obvious to anyone who has spent time with young children that they relate closely to things. Children's freedom from a consciousness of time is one of the paradisiacal aspects of childhood most often sung by poets. A sense of time, both of its passage and of its historical depth, is a worm that bites later in life. Oblivious to time, children focus all the more intently on the spatial world, on the spaces around them and above all on things as they exist in space. Not the dinner guest, but the toy the guest brings captures the child's attention.

Perhaps as a result, things and places are the objects of the celebrated childhood vision that many authors of childhood narratives wish to recap-

ture. According to the Wordsworthian credo, the child, who sees the world afresh, possesses poetic powers of vision. Because of these visionary powers childhood is believed to be a privileged state, a priori happier than any other stage of life, distressing or frightening events notwithstanding. No one has ever derived a notion of the exalted visionary powers of childhood from a child's vision of people, for people are difficult and impenetrable. The child's poetic vision always has things or scenes as its object.

Third, special, personal things and places afford solace to those who are disempowered, as children often feel themselves to be. Hannah Lynch makes this case in a backhanded way when she writes that her tyrannical mother loved to exercise her domination by destroying her children's personal property. To Lynch's mind this was a way of attacking their independence:

> If my mother had been an early Christian or a socialist, she could not have shown herself a more inveterate enemy of personal property. Never through infancy, youth, or middle age has she permitted any of her offspring to preserve relics, gifts, or souvenirs. Treasures of every kind she pounced upon, and either destroyed or gave away,—partly from a love of inflicting pain, partly from an iconoclastic temper, but more than anything from a despotic ferocity of self-assertion. The preserving of relics, of the thousand and one little absurdities sentiment and fancy ever cling to, implied something beyond her power, something she could not hope to touch or destroy, implied above all an inner life existing independent of her harsh authority. The outward signs of this mental independence she ever ruthlessly effaced.[142]

One's places and things afford an imaginative self-extension; they are a hedge against diminution and loss. Memory itself can be seen to fulfill the same function. Annie Dillard writes in *An American Childhood* that at age thirteen she came, for no particular reason, to an awareness of loss, of the inexorable passage of time. She vowed not to change. Moreover, she resolved to counter loss with a prodigious, lifelong act of memory: "As a life's work, I would remember everything—everything against loss. I would go through life like a plankton net. I would trap and keep every teacher's funny remark,

every face on the street, every microscopic alga's sway, every conversation, configuration of leaves, every dream, and every scrap of overhead cloud."[143] Pierre Loti makes a similar confession in *Prime jeunesse* (1919), the sequel to *Le Roman d'un enfant,* avowing that he always had the impulse to counter transitoriness by clinging to things, whether by preserving them or remembering them: "With a childish and sorry obstinacy, since my early youth I have exhausted myself by wanting to retain everything that happens, and this vain daily effort will have contributed to wearing down my life. I wanted to stop time, reconstitute effaced sights, conserve old lodgings, preserve dying trees [at the end of their sap], eternalize even humble things that only should have been ephemeral, but on which I bestowed the fantasmatic life of mummies and which horrify me at present."[144] What is remarkable here is less the disillusioned tone of regret than Loti's admission that it was natural for him to fight an exhausting, losing battle against loss. Stemming himself against the ravages of time was a ruling passion, an existential imperative.

Time moves inexorably forward. The passage of time is entirely outside our control. Time eludes our control much more thoroughly than space, a friendlier a priori of our existence. Changing our location in space, removing ourselves to a different environment, is relatively easy; it does not pose anything that comes close to the challenge of trying to hold onto a pleasant present moment, influence the future, or return to the past. A favorite gambit for bringing time at least partially under our control involves keeping things. We have a stubborn sense that a segment of time is incorporated in a thing that stems from that time. Why do we keep things from our past in the attic? It is largely a self-delusion to believe that they will one day be useful or needed. They *are* our past. Our childhood toys and clothes and books, our parents' furniture and lamps and linens *are* our childhood. Theoreticians of memory say that we are constantly revising our memories in the service of our present interests. That may well be so. But in the case of the memories we cherish most, revising them is precisely what we do not want to do. Many people dread forgetting. They balk at handing their experiences over to the untrustworthy faculty of memory and resist the revisions and erasures perpetrated by habit and change. They deeply desire to keep the pleasant stretches of the past *as they were then*. They want to be able to return to them and thereby prolong them, indeed to extract even more from

them than they offered the first time around when they were hastily lived. To fulfill this desire, they keep their past in the form of things from the past. They take photos. They keep their journeys through "souvenirs"—the word is telling—of their travels.

This mind-set seems to have reached its unselfconscious peak in the "long" nineteenth century, from 1789 to 1920 or so. Mörike was able to write in 1845: "Everyone thinks that what's past is better" ("Doch besser dünkt ja allen was vergangen ist"). Richard Terdiman in *Present Past* hypothesizes that the historical onset of rapid change combined with the movement of the population to cities conspired in the nineteenth century to produce a sense of rupture with the past and also a "crisis of memory," a sense that memory was not functioning in accustomed ways and that the past was evading it. It followed that the nineteenth century studied and theorized memory. It was the nineteenth century, too, that "institutionalized and exploited this connection between memories and objects in the form of a brisk trade in 'keepsakes' and 'souvenirs.'"[145] The OED documents "souvenir" to 1786 and "keepsake" to 1790. In the latter part of the century the affirmations of change and newness became louder: Taine denied the stability of the self, Nietzsche chided the schools that looked to the authority of the past, and by 1909, Italian Futurism was cheering technology, speed, and change and calling for the destruction of museums. Yet many contemporaneous authors, such as France, Loti, Rilke, and Hofmannsthal, retained a visceral preference for the past. After the First World War turned the world in which such authors had grown up into a "world of yesterday," nostalgia for the past intensified.

Therefore—and this is my fourth point—one of the main motivations for writing childhood autobiography has been the desire to preserve one's own dear memories of the places and things of childhood, or indeed, by extension, to preserve past things from oblivion. Coe also makes this point.[146] Starting in the nineteenth century, but increasingly in the twentieth century, attention to place specifically may attest, as Coe eloquently points out, to the adult autobiographer's anger at the destruction of places by social change and the acceleration of development.[147] Loti for one laments the disfigured countryside, which is now full of factories, reservoirs, and railway stations.[148]

Although some form of clinging to the past is extremely widespread and resists the obsession with the newest and latest that our culture thrusts upon us, not everyone embraces it with the passion of a Dillard or a Loti. It

does not seem coincidental that precisely the personalities who cherish and value their memories should be the people who are specially attached to familiar places and things. A number of these childhood autobiographers, moreover, belong to that subset of humanity that keeps collections. Loti, Rilke, and Benjamin were collectors, and Rilke, upon reading *Du côté de chez Swann,* thought he had identified a collector in Proust.[149] But in fact Proust collected nothing except photographs of his friends and relatives and scorned collections of worldly goods.[150] It is tempting to speculate that the passion for collecting is closely connected to the interest in things and to the impulse that inspires the nostalgic type of writing about childhood. Writing, and particularly writing about one's own life, may be variously motivated; one major motivation, which has been attested to again and again, is the writer's impulse to distance him- or herself from traumatic and psychologically burdensome experiences by getting them out and putting them "out there," by transforming them into an aesthetic object. But in the case of works about childhood that emphasize serendipitous "finds," the motivation is not or at least not purely cathartic but, rather, has a preserving and immortalizing function. In recollecting, the author seems to be making a collection. In short, the nostalgic type of childhood autobiography appears to be written, and things and places appear to find their way into it, for precisely the same reasons that cause the adult's attachment to precious things.

Fifth, a mechanism of displacement has been observed to operate in memories involving strong emotions or otherwise important events. Freud was neither the first nor the last author to testify to this mechanism. Many writers write about childhood and other memories in such a way that it becomes plain that what remains vivid is the scene, the place, where the emotion was felt. Wordsworth's "spots of time" are a prime example. What remains etched in Wordsworth's memory is the locality where the "spot" occurred.

The cause of one of the "spots" recorded in Book XI of *The Prelude* is relatively clear. The place Wordsworth remembers is a crag where he once perched while waiting impatiently for the horses that would take him and his brothers home for Christmas vacation. He remembers that he was "half sheltered by a naked wall," and that "upon my right hand was a single sheep, a whistling hawthorn on my left." Wordsworth does not mention that he had any emotions when the "spot" occurred. But the holidays then brought

the death of his father. Wordsworth writes: "I bowed low to God who thus corrected my desires." In retrospect he feels that he was chastised for trying to hasten the future. What he remembers is the site of what he believes was his transgressive desire. The other spot recorded in Book XI of *The Prelude* leaves the reader trying to guess at its cause.[151] Wordsworth vividly remembers a spot in the countryside that he strayed into, lost, at age five: a bottom where a murderer had once been hanged. The natural scene is remembered in precise detail. Although the murder took place long ago, the murderer's name is freshly carved in the grass. It is a desolate place. Wordsworth ascends, and sees a naked pool, a beacon, and a girl with a pitcher on her head forcing her way against the wind. The scene suggests violence, death, and transgression: the murderer's name carved in the grass suggests that nature remembers a murder, while the girl with the pitcher too seems to be struggling against the natural order. Nature seems to say: "Watch out, little boy!" We can infer that the five-year-old's fear at being lost is augmented by the solemn message he receives, testifying to the inexorable power of nature. In both spots the affect resulting from a concurrent or later trauma seems to have been displaced onto the natural scene, causing Wordsworth to recall it vividly. These two "spots" are related to episodes recounted in the first book of *The Prelude,* where nature responds to the child's deeds and misdeeds like a teacher. Conceivably, the so-called "pathetic fallacy" can be viewed as a formalization of the mechanism of affect displacement in memory. Such displacements also echo, more dimly, in the Symbolists' credo of correspondences between the internal and external worlds, in such statements as Amiel's "a landscape is a state of mind" ("un paysage est un état d'âme").

Other autobiographical narrators of childhood testify to similar displacements of memory. Stendhal remembers in great detail the circumstances surrounding the death of his beloved mother, who died in childbirth when he was age seven. Anatole France writes that his autobiographical hero's grandmother's death suddenly made the child aware for the first time of all kinds of detail in his surroundings: "By an illusion which can be explained, I believed that I saw, as I approached the funeral home, that the surroundings and the entire neighborhood were under the influence of my grandmother's death, that the morning silence of the streets, the calls of the neighbors, the rapid gait of the passers-by, the noise of the marshal's hammers were caused by my grandmother's death. To this idea, which completely

absorbed me, I associated the beauty of the trees, the softness of the air, and the brilliance of the sky, which I noticed for the first time."[152] This incident is not, however, based on the death of either of France's real grandmothers. Proust's narrator gives evidence of similar displacements that accompany psychically important events, albeit these events are not deaths. For example, he recalls how hawthorns on the altar in church change in appearance from a bridal whiteness to a creamy, more carnal shade. This metamorphosis, as it turns out, takes place because the protagonist notices a girl, Mlle Vinteuil, in church. He displaces the sexuality radiated by the girl onto the flowers. He records a similar phenomenon in *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs:* "I imprinted with my gaze . . . on the carpet, the sofas, the tables, the screens, the pictures, the idea engraved upon my mind that Mme Swann, or her husband, or Gilberte was about to enter. . . . Those objects have dwelt ever since in my memory side by side with the Swanns, and have gradually acquired something of their identity."[153] Bertolt Brecht's mysterious poem "Erinnerung an die Marie A.," written around 1920, could be seen to fit into this sequence. Brecht writes that all he remembers of the moment when he kissed his youthful beloved is a cloud in the sky, whereas he has forgotten her face and the love he felt for her. It is always a possibility that Brecht, especially at this stage in his career, is simply being catty toward women; but if not, this might be an example of memory displacement.

Freud, seeking evidence for his theory of screen memories, borrows an example of displacement from V. Henri and C. Henri's "Enquête sur les premiers souvenirs de l'enfance," published in 1897: "Thus the Henris mention a professor of philology whose earliest memory, dating back to between the ages of three and four, showed him a table laid for a meal and on it a basin of ice. At the same period there occurred the death of his grandmother which, according to his parents, was a severe blow to the child. But the professor of philology, as he now is, has no recollection of this bereavement; all that he remembers of those days is the basin of ice" (SE 3: 306). Thus, the professor's mind fastened onto an unimportant contemporaneous detail, and he forgot the memorable event itself. Freud concludes: "What is recorded as a mnemic image is not the relevant experience itself—in this respect the resistance gets its way; what is recorded is another psychical element closely associated with the objectionable one" (SE 3: 307).

Additional light is shed on the subject by returning to the original article by Victor and Catherine Henri. The Henris sent a questionnaire about childhood memories to academics in Europe and the United States and received 123 responses. One question concerned the content of the subject's first memory. In general, the first memory involves an intense, novel, emotionally arousing, or repeated event. Events provoking a strong emotional response predominate. The Henris note that some people remember "banal facts" in place of significant ones, but observe that cases are not numerous. Besides the memory about the dish of ice cream that Freud cites (the English translation, "basin of ice," is incorrect), they record the case of a subject who remembers misfortunes affecting her dolls when she was age two but not serious events that took place at the same time, and the case of another subject who vividly remembers a walk he took with people, although the people themselves are a blur.[154]

This type of the displacement of a traumatic event resembles the findings of present-day "flashbulb memory" researchers. The authors of the original 1977 "flashbulb memory" article, R. Brown and J. Kulik, state that the results of their own behavioral study agree with Robert B. Livingston's 1967 speculative neuro-physiological "Now print!" theory. Brown and Kulik examine memories for the circumstances in which subjects learned of a surprising and consequential event. The prototypical event is the assassination of President John F. Kennedy: people who heard that piece of news tend to remember exactly where and how they heard it. Brown and Kulik find that most subjects remember a "canon" of circumstances surrounding such unexpected and important events—place, activity, informant, own affect, other affect, and aftermath—but that many accounts also include idiosyncratic, "accidental" content. They hypothesize that the neurobiological mechanism responsible for this effect evolved in the one million years before our species appeared: "To survive and leave progeny, the individual human had to keep his expectations of significant events up to date and close to reality. . . . The 'Now print!' mechanism must have evolved because of the selection value of permanently retaining biologically crucial, but unexpected events."[155] Unlike the Henris' subjects who cannot remember the main event itself, however, Brown and Kulik's subjects do remember the central event, and not just the surrounding circumstances.

Benjamin in *A Berlin Chronicle* offers an interesting variation on memory displacement. He claims that place is well remembered because the city, which people ignore as a mere backdrop to their busy lives, takes its revenge by installing itself in their memory. Benjamin is full of ironic allusions to romanticism. His investing of the city with intentions might be read as a tongue-in-cheek pathetic fallacy. But the idea that we remember the place we ignored at the time more likely anticipates his later serious argument, which he makes in his essay on Baudelaire, that the perpetual shocks to which the modern city inhabitant is subjected inhibit the formation of memories. He borrows here from Freud the idea that what becomes conscious does not leave a memory trace.

Sixth and finally, in a context where the important memories are believed to be the forgotten ones, the cue becomes instrumental in arousing the memory, and the cue is frequently a thing or a place. It typically involves returning to a place, reencountering an object, or reliving a sensation. As Proust puts it, "The better part of our memories exists outside of us, in a blatter of rain, in the smell of an unaired room or of the first crackling brushwood fire in a cold grate."[156] His "involuntary memories" are entirely dependent on a chance encounter with an external cue. This phenomenon is common. Chateaubriand avers that he was brought back to memories of his paternal home by the twitter of a thrush.[157] When Moritz's autobiographical hero Anton Reiser stands before the gates of Braunschweig, a bird's-eye view of the past one and one half years suddenly arises in his mind, comparable to Rilke's experience in Moscow. Moritz's narrator comments that we attach our ideas to places. He opines that childhood ideas in particular attach themselves to places because by themselves they have little consistency; children often do not distinguish between waking and dream.[158] Even a memory skeptic like Christa Wolf manages to reawaken forgotten memories by returning physically to the *places* of her childhood. Greek and Roman mnemotechnics tell us that it is a piece of ancient wisdom that an intimate connection exists between memory and place. Latin rhetoric handbooks encouraged memorizing points one wants to make in a public speech by "placing" them in an imaginary space, usually a building.[159]

## VIII. Memory as Text: The Importance of Form

Two bodies of knowledge on childhood memory exist, the one large, relatively old, and poetic, the other comparatively recent and scientific. There is obviously an enticing overlap but also a pronounced disjunction between the related and even seemingly converging fields of the autobiographical literature of childhood and psychological research into childhood memory. The burgeoning field of psychological autobiographical memory research, which aims to find out how memory works, is certainly relevant to literary memory narratives. It helps explain why authors remember the way they do and thus also helps assess the plausibility and sincerity of literary memoirs. Yet it does not afford the literary critic an instrument for grasping and delivering fail-safe interpretations of literary reminiscences and novelistic memories of childhood. The field is new; experimental results apply to very limited areas; theory is still too split by internal contentions. Moreover, literary texts offer an excess of complication through their very textuality.

Nor, conversely, is the abundance of literary material, which Chawla calls attention to and which considerably predates all psychological inquiry, convertible into data.[160] Mediated by narration as it is, it cannot be accepted at face value, as *content*. Such psychologists' studies of childhood memories in literature as exist are pioneering. They focus on the significance of the memories, on what the authors say childhood memories mean for them, but they do not pay much attention to the interplay between the topic of memory and the verbal composition, the textuality, of the memories.[161] Yet, as previously pointed out, the very effort of recording memories means translating into language what was once scene, image, or feeling. The conversion of fleeting, flickering recollections into language, the medium of preservation and communication—into sentences, paragraphs, stories—necessarily alters them profoundly. It freezes them into a form. Beyond this, literary memories, whether they are autobiographical or invented, remembered or misremembered, are usually highly contrived. They are no longer memories, but *texts*. They are rhetorically complex, aesthetically designed and crafted so as to produce certain effects on the reader. This is certainly true of Proust's, Rilke's, and Benjamin's childhood narratives. All three writers are formidable, meticulous masters of style. Proust's style is famous for its complexity. Rilke wrote with the attentiveness of a poet. Benjamin prided

himself on being a better writer of German than most others of his generation. In the case of Proust and Benjamin, we know that the final product went through multiple revisions. Rilke's manuscripts, except for certain drafts of the beginning and ending of *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge,* are lost, but we do know that *Malte* was written over a six-year period. Part of each writer's project is to convert a child's apprehension of the world into words so carefully chosen that they will reawaken that childish sense of the world in the reader. Paradoxically, the later versions seem to do more justice to the memories than the early, more spontaneously written drafts. The writers' very focus on things in the final versions seems to testify not just to the nature of their memories but to their desire to create an artistic effect. For the words for objects conjure mental images. This is not just the case if the sensuous quality of the word expresses the sensuous quality of the thing (e.g., "moo-cow"), but it holds true for the ordinary words for objects. Why else do stylistic guides routinely enjoin us to "be concrete"? The same is true of place names, as Proust pointed out; place names suggest many associations and set the imagination to work, sketching and filling out the place. Imagery is seductive; it gives the reader a regressive pleasure. If two or more images join in a metaphor, the sensuous experience is raised to a higher level, to the excitement aroused by a spark. When so much of their childhood experience is conveyed by form and language, it is essential to look at their works not just for content, and also not to assume that the childhood memories they present are simply illustrative of their theories of memory, but to investigate how, by what techniques, they go about representing their memories in words.

# I

# Constructing Buried Treasure: Proust's Childhood Memories

> We do not possess our self. It blows over us from the outside, it flees us for a long time and then returns to us in a puff of wind. Yet—our "self"! The word is such a metaphor.
>
> Hugo von Hofmannsthal, "Das Gespräch über Gedichte"

## I

No modernist author represents the project of recovering childhood memory more centrally than Marcel Proust. Proust made famous the notion of involuntary memory, the idea that a present cue, if it fortuitously duplicates a past sensation, can bring back large swatches of the past from our, in his word, "unconscious" mind. A smell, a taste, a sound, a bodily movement, a touch can summon up for us, or transport us back into, a previous moment that we had long since forgotten. According to Proust, great happiness attends such moments. Indeed, a feeling of happiness is the first sign that such a moment is imminent.[1] Proust's narrator in *À la recherche du temps perdu (In Search of Lost Time)* judges the pleasure they give him "the only genuine and fruitful pleasure that I had known."[2] He suggests that the revelation of involuntary memory inspired him to create an autobiographical work of art by supplying the insight that his artistic labor will consist in developing, like negatives, his past life as it lies within him. The first part of

the first volume of *À la recherche du temps perdu* (*Du côté de chez Swann* [*Swann's Way*]), entitled "Combray I," builds up to a crucial experience of involuntary memory triggered by the taste of an object, the taste of a madeleine dipped in lime-blossom tea. The taste of the cake brings back the narrator's largely forgotten memories of his childhood in Combray. Accordingly, a roughly 140-page-long second section of "Combray" is devoted to the narrator's childhood. This second section of "Combray," the narrator's account of his memories of childhood, puts into practice connections between involuntary memory, material objects, and metaphor that Proust will write about explicitly in the final volume of his seven-volume work, *Le Temps retrouvé (Time Regained)*.

Proust's "involuntary memory" has been the focus of a great deal of commentary. Its presumptive sources in late-nineteenth-century psychology and philosophy have been unearthed, Proust's motivations for making it the basis of his aesthetic have been probed, and the credibility of the phenomenon itself has been scrutinized. The farther we get from Proust's own time and the more we believe, with psychoanalysis and psychology, that memory is constructive, the harder Proust's theory becomes to swallow. Present-day critics are incredulous about it: it seems like a piece of bad faith, a self-delusion, a transparent attempt to anchor the autonomous art work and the claim of original genius in something.[3]

In this climate of suspicion, critics have also argued that Proust's work fails to live up to its own aesthetic agenda, which Proust links closely to involuntary memory, in the sense that involuntary memory is a key to the essences, laws, and ideas that the narrator believes it is the writer's business to reveal. Since Genette's work of the mid-1960s, his text has been accused of failing to practice what it preaches, to deliver what it promises, to support its philosophy with its examples. Genette himself asserts that there is a "counterpoint of contrary movements" to the myth of "Paradise Lost," "the final ecstasy of Reminiscence," and "the revelation of the Essences," a counterpoint that is generated by experiences belonging to the period of the Fall into Time, that is, of lived life.[4] Compagnon in *Proust entre deux siècles* argues that the novel traces an experimental trajectory that was not at all circumscribed by Proust's own traditional thinking about aesthetics. According to Compagnon, Proust was proud of the unity he managed to give his novel, of the "laws" he discovered, but what he actually accomplishes in the novel is to

realize the "intermittencies of the heart" (Proust's provisional general title for the work was "Les Intermittences du coeur," a title he retained for a section of *Sodome et Gomorrhe [Sodom and Gomorrah]*), and of art in a "broken temporality of creation."[5] The law of reminiscence merely attempts to mask an "aesthetic of infinite intermittencies, of inappreciable differences," so as to make the book appeal to idealists, vitalists, and organicists.[6] Compagnon also notes that Proust promises to look closely at the unconscious of the person he was, yet in fact gives an indulgent picture of himself, concealing that he was a decadent, sadist, homosexual, and snob.[7] Rainer Warning, finally, asserts that Proust's novel does not fulfill its agenda of "totalizing memory,"[8] but semiotically subverts memory's claim to recovery by writing and rewriting, supplementing rather than representing. He argues that the theory of involuntary memory was part of the earliest conception of the novel, dating to 1909, when Proust did not know what direction his project would eventually take, and that already in *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs (Within a Budding Grove)* a style imitative of impressionism intrudes that is at odds with the premise of recapturing the past for once and for all.[9] Like Terdiman, he points out that Proust's theory of involuntary memory entangles itself in contradiction, since Proust's protagonist's involuntary recalls of Albertine are painful and traumatic, not joyous as the theory of involuntary memory would have it.[10]

Certainly, Proust's project cannot be taken wholly on the terms Proust set forth in his posthumously published final volume, *Le Temps retrouvé*. In fact, the theory that his narrator elaborates there brings its own fresh set of problems. As I will argue below, there is a logical weak spot in his transition from the theory of involuntary memory to his aesthetic theory. Certainly, too, the entire novel, especially the three volumes containing the Albertine story that were late additions to the original plan (*La Prisonnière [The Captive]*, *Albertine disparue [The Fugitive]*, and *Sodome et Gomorrhe*) and caused the novel to balloon in the middle, does not stand under the sign of involuntary memory, even though these volumes too record episodes of involuntary memory. It would, rather, be astonishing if a work of such length, written over so many years, remained tenaciously faithful to its original conception. Nevertheless, the critics who assert that Proust does not fulfill his project usually impute to him a larger role for involuntary memory than he himself gives it. Proust never says that involuntary memory will deliver the entire material

for the novel. On the contrary, the narrator states in *Le Temps retrouvé* that "those impressions which are conveyed to us outside time by the essences that are common to the sensations of the past and of the present . . . are . . . too rare for a work of art to be constructed exclusively from them" ("ces impressions que nous apporte hors du temps l'essence commune aux sensations du passé et du présent . . . sont . . . trop rares pour que l'oeuvre d'art puisse être composée seulement avec elles").[11] Involuntary memory is the catalyst, the revelation; there follows hard work in the darkroom of the mind. This means undoing the deceptions that "vanity (l'amour-propre) and passion and the intellect, and habit too" have wrought on our impressions, traveling back into the depths where "what has really existed lies unknown within us" and using one's intellect to develop the "negatives" that lie there.[12] In fact, it is only for "Combray II" that the narrator makes a claim for involuntary memory that could be construed as "totalizing," inasmuch as he says that the madeleine brings back "tout Combray"—"the whole of Combray." As for the phenomenon of involuntary memory itself, contemporary findings in neuroscience tend to support him.[13]

In any event, I am concerned here precisely with the parts of the novel that Proust wrote first, with sections that were drafted from 1909 to 1911: above all with the "Combray" sections of *Du côté de chez Swann* (published in 1913), but also with the complementary parts of *Le Temps retrouvé* where the narrator elaborates the theory of involuntary memory and art. Proust insisted that these were written at the same time as "Combray." According to Compagnon, in the "Combray" drafts of 1909 Proust integrated the philosophical and theoretical commentary right after the relevant reminiscences and only shifted this material into drafts for the final volume in 1911.[14] I will be commenting, therefore, on parts of *À la recherche du temps perdu* that present as unified a conception as one can possibly find in the novel: parts written well before Proust began to stray from his original plan and add volumes that he had not initially envisaged. I shall first (in II) look at how Proust's thinking about involuntary memory and art develops from *Jean Santeuil* to *À la recherche du temps perdu*. I will show how the material object enters the theory of memory and anchors the theory of art by providing support for Proust's favored technique, metaphor. Then (in III and IV) I shall examine Proust's strategies and techniques in "Combray II," focusing on his brilliant deployment of metaphors to render the world of

the child that his narrator purports to recover through involuntary memory. Finally (in V), I shall comment on the importance of things and places for Proust.

## II

The genesis of *À la recherche du temps perdu* is well known. In his twenties Proust wrote a long, fragmentary autobiographical novel, *Jean Santeuil*. He abandoned *Jean Santeuil* in 1899, yet themes, characters, and scenes from this early work reappear in *À la recherche du temps perdu*. In 1908 he planned a book about his ideas on art and criticism that was to be framed as an attack on the eminent literary critic Sainte-Beuve. He hesitated between writing an essay and a conversation with his mother about Sainte-Beuve. The latter gradually metamorphosed into his novel *À la recherche du temps perdu*. In this section I aim to trace how Proust developed and reconfigured his ideas on memory and art from *Jean Santeuil* to the *Recherche* in such a way that childhood memory came to occupy a privileged position in the published novel.

The notion of involuntary memory goes back to *Jean Santeuil*. A comparison between *Jean Santeuil* and *À la recherche du temps perdu* shows that Proust had had the *idea* of involuntary memory long before he devised his final set of techniques for representing such memories. The theory of the imagination, the concept of essence, and the importance of memory for artistic creativity are all present in *Jean Santeuil*. But there are also significant changes between *Jean Santeuil* and *À la recherche du temps perdu*. In particular, material objects are given an important new role, and Proust's narrator's first-narrated experience of involuntary memory brings back childhood.

In *Jean Santeuil* the first-person narrator recounts how, confronting the Lake of Geneva, he suddenly recalled his life in Brittany, which appeared to him "in all its charm and beauty" ("charmante et belle").[15] He comments extensively on the mechanism by which this memory is provoked and the effect that it produces. He writes that an identical or closely similar sense impression in the present can bring back the past. The experience is *joyous*. It is joyous, first of all, because it engages the imagination, which, according to Proust, cannot work on immediate reality, nor on deliberately remembered past reality, but "hovers only over past reality caught up and enshrined in the reality now present" ("flotte seulement autour de la réalité passée qui se

trouve prise dans une réalité présente").[16] Second, in a more philosophical analysis, it brings joy because the imagination contemplates an eternal object, an "essence." This contemplation lifts the self out of time and gives it a sense of eternity.

Proust incorporated an expanded version of these same ideas in *Le Temps retrouvé.* The narrator continues to insist, as in *Jean Santeuil,* that he finds reality disappointing because its too great proximity, its presence, does not allow him to exercise his imagination: "My imagination, which was the only organ that I possessed for the enjoyment of beauty, could not apply itself to it [reality], in virtue of that ineluctable law which ordains that we can only imagine what is absent."[17] This distaste for reality directly perceived and this enthusiasm for what is absent and therefore engages the imagination is a firm bias of Proust's that surfaces in different contexts, but always with the same import. In "Combray" it is behind the child's preference for reading over experiencing reality directly, because, according to the narrator, consciousness always interposed a barrier between himself as subject and the real world.[18] In the same sense, according to the narrator of *Le Temps retrouvé,* "Real life, life at last laid bare and illuminated—the only life in consequence which can be said to be really lived—is literature."[19] It is the underlying sense of his pronouncement that "the true paradises are the paradises that we have lost."[20] A present paradise crowds in on us too closely to be appreciated and thus, by definition, is not a paradise. Only in retrospect, from a distance, does it take on a paradisiacal aura. The idea that imagination awakens in the absence of the object is the foundation of the narrator's theory of creativity. Little Marcel's first achievement as a writer is inspired by the vision of three steeples *in their absence*—which makes this episode of the steeples a memory event, a prototype of the accesses of involuntary memory that the narrator claims inspire *À la recherche du temps perdu*.

When Proust's narrator asserts a preference for remembering over living, for reading over experiencing, for absence over presence, he is not just displaying aestheticist pertness, or delighting in paradox for its own sake. He repeats his bias too often and too consistently to be suspected of saying such things merely for effect. He is also not merely invoking the familiar paradigm of desire, that we desire only what we do not have, or that loss engenders appreciation, that "death is the mother of beauty,"[21] although these psychological formulas resonate in his radical and idiosyncratic pronouncement and are

articulated elsewhere in the novel. In implying that direct experience is too distracting and that a greater sense of reality is to be had by imagining—or through the medium of literature—, he is not conceding a disability or a limitation, but, rather, is laying the foundation for a formula of personal empowerment. For all that he is dependent on chance for involuntary memory, the moments that involuntary memory affords him are the key to setting in motion a highly autonomous artistic project. The joy he experiences when he has these recognitions is the joy of annunciation. He uses the vocabulary of rebirth, of the true self, of the celestial.[22] The subtext is that he is self-sufficient in his solitude. At age twenty-three Proust went through a phase when he was obsessed by Emerson.[23] Emersonian self-reliance echoes in the way the narrator attains his greatest powers when he is alone. The moments of involuntary memory, the insights into the nature of things, are intensely intimate experiences which, although he finally comes to the conclusion that he can have such moments in social settings too, he mainly shares with himself alone. Moreover, he assures himself in *Le Temps retrouvé* that, cues aside, everything lies within him. The creation of the work of art involves plumbing his own depths in solitude.[24] He realizes that he must limit contact with the world, which gives him immediate experience, so as to create.[25] This is not a universal formula for creativity, but it is one that would have appealed to Proust, inasmuch as it turned the solitude imposed on the invalid into an enabling condition for art. It suggests that a physical dependence on others can be outweighed by an intellectual self-sufficiency sustained by solitude.

The second reason for the narrator's joy and accompanying sense of certitude stated in *Jean Santeuil*—because his imagination contemplates an eternal essence—is emphatically reiterated in *Le Temps retrouvé.* The narrator stresses to what degree the episodes of involuntary memory place him in a milieu "outside of time" where he can enjoy "the essence of things." Indeed, he asserts that his fear of death vanishes because he is caught up in the eternity of the moment: "This explained why it was that my anxiety on the subject of my death had ceased at the moment when I had unconsciously recognised the taste of the little madeleine, since the being which at that moment I had been was an extra-temporal being."[26] For the instant in which it lasts, then, involuntary memory makes him immortal.

In *Le Temps retrouvé* Proust expands and dramatizes his presentation of the experience of involuntary memory beyond what he wrote about it in

*Jean Santeuil*. He plays up the hallucinatory clarity with which a sense of a past moment, or rather a past state of affairs (since what is resurrected is mainly durative or iterative experience), comes over us.[27] The sensation he experiences, the sensation that is called into being by the cue, is not a double of the past one, but, says the narrator, the past sensation "itself" (453; 267). This "sensation itself" immediately tries to create the old place, its old surroundings, around it. Proust vividly describes how the old place wrestles with the present setting for supremacy, and how in the end it always loses. The narrator's sense of being in the old place, such as the dining room at Balbec, at a closely circumscribed time such as the time before sunset, is overpowering. Using the first-person plural pronoun to suggest a general law, he asserts that these "total resurrections" of the past force our eyes to see the old scene and our nostrils to take in its smell, force our will to make choices within its context and our person to believe that it is actually in those surroundings or at least to waver between them and its present surroundings. But just as we get our bearings, he asserts, the moment vanishes.

The magical nature of the moment of involuntary memory is the more remarkable because Proust was well aware of memory's treacheries. "So much for the value of testimonies and memory!" the narrator exclaims dismissively when Françoise is ready to swear erroneously that Saint-Loup had not been wearing his *croix de guerre* when he visited them.[28] Proust knew that memory can be counted on to rewrite and distort the past. Our image of people evolves "at the mercy of our forgetfulness" ("au gré de notre oubli").[29] He knew that memory is the vassal of the present.[30] People's forgetfulness and the distortions of memory, which Proust calls the work of Time, are a theme in the latter part of *Le Temps retrouvé* (552f; 419f). The moments of magical memory figure as an exception to this general rule. What allows them to lay claim to this fragile status is, apparently, their utter forgottenness and sheer disconnectedness from our present concerns, combined with the fact that we cannot access them at will. Proust insisted that they cannot be prepared, arranged, or controlled (457, 497; 274, 333). They must be purely fortuitous. "Their essential character was that I was not free to choose them, that such as they were they were given to me" (457; 274). The narrator's ruminations on why it is important not to constantly reread old editions support the idea that recapturing the past must involve a *chance* encounter with the cue. "I know very well how easily these images, deposited by the mind, can be ef-

faced by the mind" (466; 288): new encounters with old objects overwrite the original memory and undermine its integrity. In short, Proust agrees with modern theorists—up to a point. But he thinks that with involuntary memory he has found something magical that transcends the general law that memory rewrites.

In *Jean Santeuil* Proust forges a direct connection between involuntary memory and artistic creativity. In his view, memory kindles the imagination of the artist: "Those are the happy hours of the poet's life, the hours when chance places upon his path a sensation that encloses within itself a past that permits his imagination to become acquainted with a past it never knew."[31] In *À la recherche du temps perdu* involuntary memory takes on crucial importance in the making of the artist. The protagonist's experiences of involuntary memory, we are told in the last volume, are responsible for making him decide to fulfill his long-abandoned wish to be a writer and to commence writing a book, whether this is the novel the reader has just read, as critics have traditionally held, or a different work entirely, as has recently been proposed.[32] The reflection that other writers—Chateaubriand, Nerval, and Baudelaire—base their works on reminiscence and transposed sensation encourages the protagonist to think that he is on the right track.

In the theory of art he sets set forth in *Le Temps retrouvé,* Proust articulates his conception of his poetic mission and opines on how a writer can best realize that conception. This extensive rumination is largely the narrator's account of the protagonist's train of thought, but sometimes the narrator, who by convention at least is a step closer to his maker, speaks in his own voice. It relies on a new concept that was not present in *Jean Santeuil:* the material object. The material object rises to prominence on several different planes in *À la recherche du temps perdu:* in the theory of involuntary memory, in Proust's account of what the writer's art entails, and in the actual poetic practice of "Combray."

At the point when Proust introduces involuntary memory in "Combray," he gives the material object a key role. Whereas in *Jean Santeuil* he emphasized the sameness of a present and a past *sensation,* in *À la recherche du temps perdu* he stresses the importance of *objects* (objets) or *things* (choses) in bringing back the past. The notion that the material object is the guardian of the past already emerges in the *Carnet de 1908,* where Proust jotted: "Cult of the physical object that is a living trace under which there is the

breath of the past."[33] In "Combray" he then writes: "The past is hidden . . . in some material object (in the sensation which that material object will give us)."[34] In the paragraph preceding this one he approvingly cites a Celtic belief: "I feel that there is much to be said for the Celtic belief that the souls of those whom we have lost are held captive in some inferior being, in an animal, in a plant, in some inanimate object, and thus effectively lost to us until the day (which to many never comes) when we happen to pass by the tree or to obtain possession of the object which forms their prison. Then they start and tremble, they call us by our name, and as soon as we have recognised their voice the spell is broken" (43–44; 47). Where Proust found this charming bit of lore (if indeed he found it) is unclear, but this particular version of the idea that objects hide the past recalls, with its mention of trees, the first stanza of Baudelaire's famous sonnet "Correspondances" ("Correspondences"): "Nature is a temple in which living pillars/ Sometimes let confused words emerge;/ Man passes there through forests of symbols/ Which regard him with familiar eyes." ("La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers/ Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles; / L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles/ Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.")[35] Proust's discussion of the role of the material object in "Combray" forms the prologue to the episode of the magical madeleine. The madeleine is also new in *À la recherche du temps perdu;* it has no parallel in *Jean Santeuil*. The madeleine is, of course, a material object, albeit one that is about to be dissolved into taste. The taste of the madeleine, soaked in tea, famously brings up "the whole of Combray and its surroundings" (47; 51).

In *Le Temps retrouvé* Proust again takes up the notion that material objects are full of hidden significations—significations that have to do with, so to speak, the objects' past adventures. Following his account of the surprise shower of fortuitous sense impressions that brought the past back to him as he made his way toward the Guermantes reception, the narrator alludes to the mystical idea that things retain something of their observers: "Certain people, whose minds are prone to mystery, like to believe that objects retain something of the eyes which have looked at them, that old buildings and pictures appear to us not as they originally were but beneath a perceptible veil (voile sensible) woven for them over the centuries by the love and contemplation of millions of admirers."[36] It is tempting to speculate that this passage might have been at the origin of Benjamin's famous concept of the

auratic art object, especially because he cites it in his essay "Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire" ("On Some Motifs in Baudelaire").[37] Proust's narrator, however, declares the idea a chimera that is valid in one sense only, namely, that the object is important *for us,* because it is capable of bringing our past self back to us. He pursues: "This fantasy, if you transpose it into the domain of what is for each one of us the sole reality, the domain of his own sensibility, becomes the truth. In that sense and in that sense alone . . . , a thing which we have looked at in the past brings back to us, if we see it again, not only the eyes with which we looked at it but all the images with which at the time those eyes were filled. For things—and among them a book in a red binding—as soon as we have perceived them are transformed within us into something immaterial, something of the same nature as all our preoccupations and sensations of that particular time, with which, indissolubly, they blend." According to this account, the material object absorbs our mental processes when it is in our vicinity. It thereby becomes the unchanging token of a state of being that we have long since left behind, the concrete representative of thoughts and emotions that have been superseded. When we reencounter it, it is capable of calling up for us our past state of mind. This is as much as to say that we remember through things. Proust does not invoke the laws of the association of ideas—he formulates his proposition in purely poetic, not technical terms—but it seems evident that the transference of mental processes to things that he describes is an instance of memory displacement and transpires because of the proximity (contiguity) of the person to the thing.

"A book in a red binding" is Proust's example. The image recalls a similar one in Rilke's poem "Erinnerung" (Memory), where the physical presence of books stimulates reveries and brings a crucially important memory back to the "du" whom Rilke addresses. Rilke leaves to the reader's imagination why the presence of the books is important for the recovery of the memory. Proust's narrator, in contrast, identifies the book he finds in the Guermantes library as Sand's *François le Champi.* This is a book which the narrator's mother read to him as a child and which for him is charged with important associations. In an earlier piece, "Journées de lecture," published under the title "Sur la lecture" in 1905, Proust insisted on the extraordinary power of books to conjure memories. He maintains there that books awaken in us the memory not of what is *in* them, but of the circumstances

under which we read them. To make this argument about books seems counterintuitive, since a reader is presumably absorbed in her book and thus inattentive to her surroundings. But perhaps this is Proust's point: inattention promotes retention. This is the way Benjamin, who invokes Freud's dictum that what leaves a memory trace does not become conscious, interprets Proust's "mémoire involontaire" in his essay "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire." In this sense, the many pleasant hours spent reading the book allow the setting to enter memory precisely because we are not paying attention to it. But in the case of *François le Champi,* a book that was personally significant to the narrator, it seems more likely that the emotional importance of the book caused his surroundings to install themselves in his memory, and that his experience falls into the category of memory enhancement due to emotionally consequential events that contemporary psychologists document. In a fascinating analysis, Julia Kristeva shows that the madeleine was overdetermined with significance for Proust: it suggested love.[38] It requires little analysis to assert that the other material objects that bring back the past for the protagonist, such as the hawthorns that bring back memories of childhood in *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* and this book in a red binding, are emotionally charged.

"Things" help move Proust's notion of "essences" toward a theory of the construction of the work of art. The narrator's train of thought here is elaborate, and it will be necessary to follow it closely. In the theory of artistic creation he presents in *Le Temps retrouvé* he invokes things ("choses") in the context of his discussion of essence, but always in the phrase "essence des choses." Thus he might not necessarily mean just material objects, but could conceivably also mean more general states of affairs. As already noted, the narrator's sense of the coincidence between the past and the present to which the fortuitous sense impressions give rise awakens in him a sense of timelessness. He attributes this sense of timelessness to an attribute of the "chose," its "permanent essence," which, usually concealed, is revealed ("the permanent and habitually concealed essence of things").[39] He claims that the self that is reborn in him during these privileged moments, that is, the self liberated from the order of time, feeds on these essences. The narrator is intent here on converting the passing joy aroused by involuntary memory into the lasting joy that the fulfillment of his earliest ambition would bring: the creation of a work of art. He hastens toward a formulation of his theory

of art. Yet it must be admitted that he does so in a manner that recalls crossing a deep and rapid stream by jumping from stone to wobbly stone. First, as has been seen, he moves from the ecstatic feelings of the self who experiences involuntary memory to the idea of the "essences of things"—perhaps because it seems a worthier, weightier, more philosophical subject on which to base a serious aesthetic argument. Hidden in impressions, memories, and sensations, he pursues, are "laws and ideas," which it is the writer's task to uncover: "The task was to interpret the given sensations as signs of so many laws and ideas, by trying to think—that is to say, to draw forth from the shadow—what I had merely felt, by trying to convert it into its spiritual equivalent. And this method, which seemed to me the sole method, what was it but the creation of a work of art?" (457; 273). "Essence" is the slipperiest stone. At first the narrator uses it to designate the commonality between past and present (450; 263), as Proust did in *Jean Santeuil,* a commonality that is itself "outside of time." Then it becomes the "permanent essence of things" (451; 264). Then, in the sentence quoted above, "essence" seems to metamorphose into the concept of "laws and ideas." Later in the text the narrator will speak of the "essence of the past" that things contain (464; 284). And finally the narrator returns to his original concept, "the essences that are common to the sensations of the past and the present" (477; 303). It takes a great deal of sympathetic imagination to turn "essence," as Deleuze does, into the stable cornerstone of Proust's artistic edifice.

The final step in the narrator's progression toward a formulation of a theory of art is to move from the liaison between memory, things, and essences to a new equation that leaves memory out. It is simply the sensation that something is "hidden" in things that will form the basis for art. Proust's narrator is governed by a fascination with mystery and a desire to uncover the hidden. For him the overt is banal, the hidden and inaccessible true. Thus, "in another fashion certain obscure impressions, already even at Combray on the Guermantes way, had solicited my attention in a fashion somewhat similar to these reminiscences, except that they *concealed within them* not a sensation dating from an earlier time, but *a new truth*" (italics mine).[40] The narrator then recalls the objects in Combray that gave him the sense of hieroglyphics waiting to be deciphered. The objects he enumerates are indeed material objects: a cloud, a triangle, a church spire, a flower, a stone (457; 273). In sections following "Combray," Proust's novel is less concerned with objects

than with psychology and society, and so one wonders whether what Proust calls the "objet matériel" in his final volume (457; 273) is not his shorthand for all kinds of states of affairs, a simpler case that he uses for the sake of illustration. Yet the text of "Combray" itself, like the account in *Le Temps retrouvé,* is very much focused on material objects.

In Proust's account of how his protagonist becomes an artist, objects that strike him as "signs" for something hidden seem to him similar to objects that trigger involuntary memories.[41] Both produce a feeling of happiness (445; 255–256), both demand to be interpreted (457; 273). He sees both accesses of involuntary memory and the decipherment of object-"signs" to be important in the genesis of the work of art. But despite the fact that Proust sets up a broad equivalence between the two and acknowledges no significant difference between them, it is the latter and the latter alone that leads to an artistic method. Proust names this method "metaphor."

Pages later, the narrator formulates, as if in an aside in the context of a polemic against realism, his much-cited theory of technique: "Truth will be attained by the writer only when he takes two different objects, asserts a connection between them . . . and encloses them in the necessary rings of a well-wrought style; truth—and life too—can be attained by him only when, by bringing together a quality common to two sensations, he succeeds in extracting their common essence and in reuniting them to each other, so as to liberate them from the contingencies of time, in a metaphor." ("La vérité ne commencera qu'au moment où l'écrivain prendra deux objets différents, posera leur rapport, . . . et les enfermera dans les anneaux nécessaires d'un beau style. Même, ainsi que la vie, quand en rapprochant une qualité commune à deux sensations, il dégagera leur essence commune en les réunissant l'une et l'autre pour les soustraire aux contingences du temps, dans une métaphore.")[42] Metaphor is indeed Proust's dominant technique in the crafting of the entire *Recherche*. Metaphor implies discerning a commonality, or to use the technical term, the tertium comparationis, between two things. When Proust speaks of discerning a hidden "something" behind an object-"sign," it is easy to see that the two are linked by such a "tertium." In one of the "Combray" drafts Proust makes clear that his search for the *essence* of the hawthorn flower would be resolved by finding the right *metaphor* for it (R I: 862). Thus too, Proust writes in "Combray" that what lay hidden behind the steeples is "something analogous to a pretty phrase."[43]

In contrast, it is hard to see how metaphor could possibly represent the experience of recovering the past through involuntary memory. Indeed, Proust never shows us how it could, never gives us an example. For the resurrections of the past do not involve a comparison of two terms. The past and the present have a commonality, a taste or smell or other sensation, but this commonality does not result in comparison; past and present are incomparable. In recoveries of the past through involuntary memory, the cue recalls a past sensation, which then functions like a metonymy, inasmuch as it brings back other elements of the past scene to the gratified rememberer. For example: "The napkin which I had used to wipe my mouth had precisely the same degree of stiffness and starchedness as the towel with which I had found it so awkward to dry my face as I stood in front of the window on the first day of my arrival at Balbec, and this napkin now, in the library of the Prince de Guermantes's house, unfolded for me—concealed within its smooth surfaces and its folds—the plumage of an ocean green and blue like the tail of a peacock."[44] Or Proust's formulation in *Albertine disparue:* "From the sound of pattering raindrops I recaptured (m'était rendue) the scent of the lilacs at Combray; from the shifting of the sun's rays on the balcony the pigeons in the Champs-Elysées; from the muffling of sounds in the heat of the morning hours, the cool taste of cherries; the longing for Brittany or Venice from the noise of the wind and the return of Easter."[45] Proust finds that the cue works by analogy to a past sensation, so that the past seems hidden in the cue. But the analogical sensations themselves do not yield metaphors. However fascinating they are in other respects, therefore, moments of involuntary memory are barren ground for metaphor.[46] Whereas a post-Freudian might think that memory itself is governed by processes similar to rhetorical substitutions, including metaphor, Proust's resurrections of the past are, as he presents them, not garbled, condensed, or displaced. Metaphor is not latent in memory, for memory is not tropological but representational; it is an exact resurrection of the past. Nor is metaphor, as a strategy of artistic evocation, born of recovery through memory. Instead, metaphor finds its true support in "things."

In an important innovation vis-à-vis *Jean Santeuil,* in *À la recherche du temps perdu* Proust lets involuntary memory summon forth childhood. The link between involuntary memory and childhood—his narrator bites into the madeleine and gets back "tout Combray"—appears indissoluble: not only is it

the first-narrated experience of involuntary memory that brings back childhood, but "Combray" is the only place in *À la recherche du temps perdu* where Proust has his narrator assert that involuntary memory gives him huge amounts of *material*. For the narrator writes that his memories of Combray prior to tasting the madeleine were strictly circumscribed by the all-important episode of the mother's kiss, which illuminated like a spotlight the parts of the house that formed the scene of that drama, but left all else in the dark. What he describes is similar to what today is called a "tunnel memory"; it is a typical way of remembering a traumatic event.[47] Until involuntary memory brought it back, he wants us to believe that the rest of his childhood, the broad fabric of habitual places and daily events, was not vivid in his mind.

But perhaps we should read Proust against the grain and unstick the three things he fuses together: memory, childhood, and metaphor. If so, we have three components: 1. a paean to involuntary memory; 2. a *récit d'enfance* consisting of the portrait of an idyllic childhood in the traditional nostalgic terms that were still fashionable in Proust's day; and 3. metaphor as a technique. We have just seen that the connection that Proust makes between memory and metaphor can easily be made to come apart. Likewise, involuntary memory and childhood can be imagined as separate from one another, if only because they were not always joined. *Jean Santeuil* indeed contains a great deal of detail about the protagonist's childhood, and Jean does sometimes encounter sensations that transport him back to scenes from his childhood. One such is the episode in which Jean hears bells in the Faubourg Saint-Germain that transport him back to his childhood;[48] another is the episode where a buzzing fly brings back "the lovely days of Illiers."[49] But the episode of involuntary memory that receives the most profile in *Jean Santeuil*—because Proust follows it with his conceptual discussion of memories provoked by a chance encounter with a sensation, their importance for the poet, and their special temporal status—is not a memory of childhood or Illiers at all, but rather of the Brittany seashore, which he visited with Reynaldo Hahn in 1895, when he was twenty-four. The madeleine episode itself shows up in a nonfictional context in the winter of 1908–1909 (the madeleine here is a "pain grillé"), but it is the last episode of involuntary memory that Proust records and has thus been assumed to be the last he experienced, postdating the episodes he records in *Le Temps retrouvé,* such as that of the paving stones in Venice.[50] Why did Proust fuse involuntary memory

with the recovery of childhood in *À la recherche du temps perdu*? Why did he let the first crucial experience of involuntary memory, the "open sesame" to the fulfillment of his wish to become a writer, bring back his childhood in the form of "the whole of Combray"?

If Proust's project was to tell the story of his protagonist's life under the sign of involuntary memory, there is a prosaic practical reason for linking involuntary memory and childhood: life begins with childhood. Moreover, Proust did recall his childhood fondly, as *Jean Santeuil* makes clear. His biographer Jean-Yves Tadié is convinced that Proust was extremely happy at Illiers: "Every moment of country life, every minute spent at Illiers, filled him with radiant happiness."[51] "Discovering" his childhood through involuntary memory harmonized well with the joy that, to Proust's mind, involuntary memory released. Proust felt an affinity for childhood generally, as his love for the childhood autobiographies by Daudet, France, and Loti attests. But perhaps most important of all, linking involuntary memory to childhood offered a strategic advantage of which Proust may not even have been conscious: it augmented the value of the involuntary memory discovery by playing on the contemporaneous nostalgic idealization of childhood. In Proust's day the "myth of childhood," according to which children were innocent, close to nature, and endowed with pristine vision and poetic creativity, continued to flourish. Thus, "I found my childhood" could easily suggest "I found my creativity," and indeed, in "Combray II" Proust does suggest precisely that connection. He thus places his new project on the footing of a culturally accepted romantic trope. He locates his protagonist's childhood in nature, that is to say, in a village in the countryside, in a manner consonant with the romantic myth, preferring to compound a "Combray" out of his own holidays spent in Illiers and Auteuil than to set his protagonist's childhood in Paris, where he himself spent the rest of the year. Thus involuntary memory "found" childhood, and Proust wrote a work that surpassed the achievements of France and Loti, a childhood idyll whose precise details the magical lens of involuntary memory—and the author's adeptness in constructing metaphors—brought into glittering focus.

I conjecture that there was also something about the importance of the material object for memory and also its importance for artistic method (metaphor) that suggested childhood to Proust as the perfect launching pad for his recollections. An affinity for objects and a propensity to see one thing

in another is, as will presently be seen in more detail, characteristic of little Marcel's sensibility. It is not improbable to suppose that such seemingly quintessentially "childish" ways of apprehending the world were characteristic of Proust's own way of thinking as a child. In fact, childhood may have provided an *associative* link (in dearth of a rigorous conceptual one) between *memory* and *metaphor* for Proust. In this fashion involuntary memory, childhood, and metaphor, which this essay just experimentally took apart, can be refitted to each other. Childhood seems to provide the plausible missing link that, through its strong associations with the material object, joins the concepts of involuntary memory and metaphor as Proust develops them in *Le Temps retrouvé*.

One can extend this circle of interlocking ideas—memory-material object-childhood-metaphor—that appears operative in Proust's inspiration for "Combray" to include nature. Proust exploited the nature–childhood link, which in his day had long since become a conventional one, in "Combray." But even previously, nature retained a vestigial romantic significance in his writing. He establishes a connection between nature, memory, and poetry in *Jean Santeuil,* declaring that nature is instrumental in the recovery of the past and a sure guide for the poet: "So well does nature know where what we must express is found, and carries us there unerringly, thus exemplifying a truth which may best be put by saying that the poet works better in the country than the town, is more inspired by solitude than by society. . . . Nature knows where these truths lie: only she knows it—only she, by making us feel again what once we felt before, leading us straight to some point in the fabulous world of memory which has become the world of truth."[52] This praise of the wisdom of nature actually causes the narrator of *Jean Santeuil* to slip, seemingly spontaneously, into a memory of childhood: a generic memory of mother, white sheets, a little garden, and so on. In *Le Temps retrouvé,* in a similar vein, nature is seen to encourage artistic vision and in fact to foster the technique of metaphor: "Had not nature herself—if one considered the matter from this point of view—placed me on the path of art, was she not herself a beginning of art, she who, often, had allowed me to become aware of the beauty of one thing only in another thing . . . ?"[53] Although in reality nature exacerbated his asthma, Proust nevertheless retained an abstract faith in it.

Roger Shattuck observes that the difference between Proust and Wordsworth is vast: Wordsworth is direct, whereas Proust interposes things be-

tween himself and reality.[54] The narrator does indeed focus an extraordinary amount of attention on things in "Combray." But it must nevertheless be insisted that Proust stands in Wordsworth's tradition. For Proust, joy is connected with memories of childhood, and happy memories of childhood are located in nature. Not just things but also place is crucially important. Walks in the natural setting around Combray prompt the narrator's most effusive declaration about the supreme importance of these memories for the adult, their foundational role for his psyche, their sole claim on genuine reality, and their capacity to bring happiness: "But it is pre-eminently as the deepest layer of my mental soil, as the firm ground on which I still stand, that I regard the Méséglise and Guermantes ways. (Mais c'est surtout comme à des gisements profonds de mon sol mental, comme aux terrains résistants sur lesquels je m'appuie encore, que je dois penser au côté de Méséglise et au côté de Guermantes.) It is because I believed in things and in people while I walked along those paths that the things and the people they made known to me are the only ones that I still take seriously and that still bring me joy. Whether it is because the faith which creates has ceased to exist in me, or because reality takes shape in the memory alone, the flowers that people show me nowadays for the first time never seem to me to be true flowers."[55] This declaration sounds positively Wordsworthian. Proust implies that the child is his protagonist's better self, as well as his creative, poetic self, and that the recovery of the "inner child" is crucial for the making of the poet. As Wordsworth insisted, there has been a falling off; but there also can be a going back; for fortunately, continuity between childhood and the poet's adulthood subsists. A careful reader of Proust does wonder, however, how these declarations at the end of "Combray II," which imply that the Méséglise and Guermantes ways have never been forgotten, mesh with Proust's construction of a scenario of the *non-remembering* of childhood for his protagonist at the end of "Combray I." In "Combray I" the forgotten status of childhood did not seem especially implausible, given what the reader knows about childhood amnesia. Yet his declaration about the foundation of his mental soil at the end augments the reader's suspicion that Proust exaggerated the degree of his protagonist's amnesia for the sake of enhancing the value of his involuntary memory discovery. For in a scenario where the narrator cannot remember his childhood, the most important period of life for him as a future writer, involuntary memory plays the role of savior.

## III

"Combray" fuses Proust's long-held theory of involuntary memory, which is expounded in the first of its two sections, with the artistic elaboration of childhood incidents, some of which at least are demonstrably of autobiographical origin, which is the main business of the second section. It is thanks to their artistic elaboration much more than to their autobiographical origin that these incidents paint an extraordinary, vivid picture of the world of a child.

"Combray II" is a highly constructed work. Proust does not tell the story of his childhood so much as he exploits it. Compared with the more straightforwardly autobiographical *Jean Santeuil,* "Combray II" is a polished literary composition in which artistry and effect take precedence over adherence to fact. Thus the fictional town of Combray, the setting of the narrator's childhood memories, is compounded out of two places: Illiers, where the Prousts used to go during Easter holidays and part of the summer and stayed with his father's sister, Elisabeth Amiot; and Auteuil, where Marcel's maternal great-uncle lived. (Illiers, which is recognizably portrayed in the fictional Combray, was renamed Illiers-Combray in Proust's honor in 1971, on the one-hundredth anniversary of his birth.) Proust suppresses his younger brother Robert, makes his paternal grandfather anti-Semitic whereas in fact his mother was Jewish, and deletes cousins and an uncle figuring in *Jean Santeuil.* He moves the little girl whom he in reality adored in Paris, Marie Benardaky, to the country and calls her Gilberte. Proust's fictional self in both works is attracted only to girls. In "Combray II" Proust displaces his own homosexuality onto women; the composer Vinteuil's daughter and her older friend absorb the theme. Finally, as we have seen, it is unlikely that in Proust's real life the taste of a madeleine brought back "all of Combray." Jean Santeuil's most important experience of involuntary memory did not bring back childhood at all. The madeleine episode did not always involve a madeleine. In an early sketch in *Contre Sainte-Beuve,* the memory of "the summers I spent at the country house" is inspired by a rusk rather than a madeleine and it is his old cook rather than his mother who offers it.[56]

Proust's drafts for "Combray II" are, like *Jean Santeuil,* also more detailed and closer to the facts of Proust's life than the published work. A version of 1909 mentions the uncle and a cousin (R I: 819, 825), and the editor tells us that it contains a brother (R I: 1064). Unsurprisingly, the drafts are

also less rhetorical and stylistically less artistic than the final published version, where Proust not only reorganized and changed but also trimmed his text and added metaphors.[57] Whereas Proust focalizes "Combray II" sometimes through the narrator and sometimes through the child protagonist, the drafts contain long passages consisting of the narrator's reflections, so that they appear much more heavily weighted toward the perspective of the narrator.

In *Jean Santeuil* Proust tells us how old his persona Jean is at certain junctures: age seven in the episode of the mother's kiss and age thirteen when he falls in love with Marie. In "Combray" he suppresses all reference to age. Inasmuch as he drew on autobiographical memories specifically of Illiers for "Combray," we can conclude that all the memories come either from before Marcel's tenth birthday or from age fifteen. After Marcel had a serious asthma attack at age nine the family stopped going to Illiers. However, they returned once in the autumn of 1886, when he was age fifteen, on the occasion of his aunt's decease. Memories from age fifteen are clearly identifiable in "Combray" because the narrator speaks of autumn (whereas most of "Combray" takes place in May) and of legal formalities his parents were preoccupied with. The age at which the earlier childhood events took place is further blurred by the fact that the narrator prefers to narrate habitual action rather than specific episodes and, in spots, leaves the chronology of *Combray* in a muddle. Thus the Uncle Adolphe incident in Paris, when the protagonist meets the lady in pink, lies "some years" in the past.[58] At the time of this Uncle Adolphe incident, the protagonist is infatuated with actresses, knows what a courtesan is (76; 83), and attends school. Yet one imagines the child who no longer visits his uncle's room in Combray as being somewhat younger.[59] Biography does not help here: because of his fragile health, Proust was taught at home by tutors and only went to the lycée in Paris starting at age eleven.[60] The protagonist of "Combray" is not a very young child, however, because the narrator alludes to being told to give Françoise New Year's money in "my early childhood, *before* we first went to Combray" ("mon enfance, *avant que* nous allions à Combray" [52; 57; italics mine]). Arguably, the protagonist is an early adolescent from the Uncle Adolphe incident on.

Mainly the narrator tells us what used to be the case, and what happened time and time again. As many readers have remarked, the overwhelmingly

*Figure 1.* Marcel Proust and his younger brother Robert around 1882. Marcel omits his brother in his autobiographical novel *À la recherche du temps perdu*. *Pierre Abraham, Proust. Special Collections, University of Virginia Library.*

*Figure 2.* L'Église St.-Jacques and the marketplace. The church, called the "Église St-Hilaire" in the novel, inspired many metaphors. *Collection Cartophile Michael Magner.*

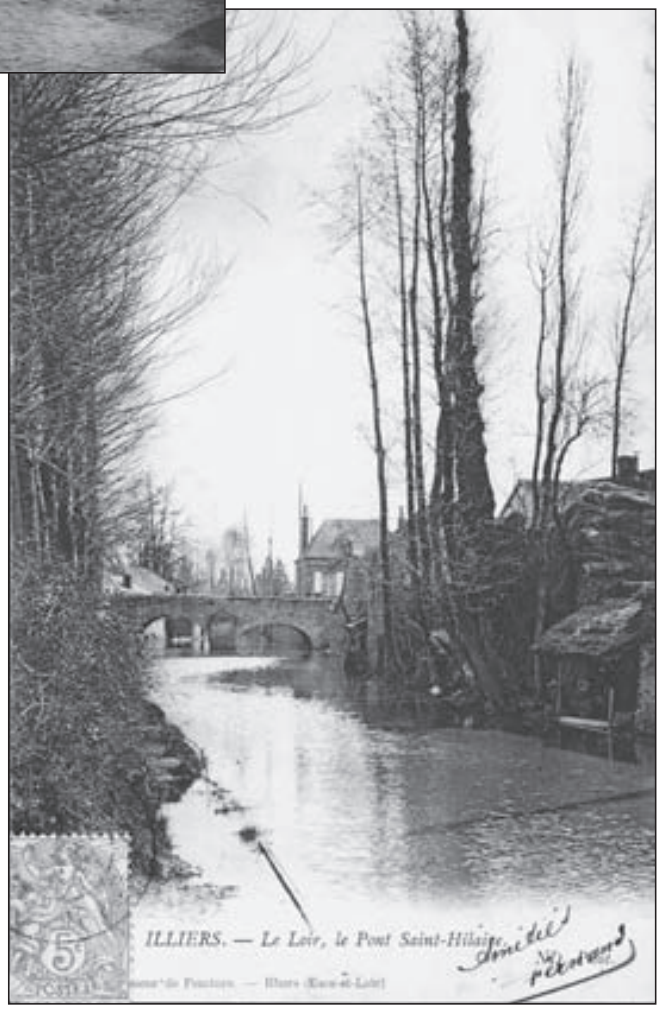


*Figure 3.* The Loir with the Pont-Saint-Hilaire in Illiers. The family used to take walks along this river (called the "Vivonne" in the novel). "The great charm of the Guermantes way was that we had beside us, almost all the time, the course of the Vivonne" (SW 182). Landscapes were of paramount importance for Proust: "But it is pre-eminently as the deepest layer of my mental soil, as the firm ground on which I still stand, that I regard the Méséglise and Guermantes ways" (SW 201). *Collection Cartophile Michael Magner.*

dominant French verb tense is the imperfect, which denotes lasting or repeated action. We are given a picture of the seemingly eternal rhythms of life in Combray. The habitual takes on an exaggerated importance in the minds of the family members. For example, it is a perpetual source of merriment to them that visitors fail to realize that the family is in the habit of eating dinner at an earlier hour on Saturdays. Even conversations that bear all the marks of being one of a kind, like Léonie's interrogation of Françoise about a strange dog, are narrated in the imperfect, making them seem as if they were merely an example of the type of conversation that took place over and over. Some singular events punctuate these fundamental habitual rhythms; they are introduced with a "one day," or a "one Sunday," and they are narrated in the passé simple or the past perfect ("M. Vinteuil était venu," R I: 111). These are the more dramatic events, including, for example, the encounter with the lady in pink, the kitchen maid's confinement, the protagonist's first encounter with Gilberte, his adventure as the voyeur of Mlle Vinteuil and her lesbian friend, and his first glimpse of Mme de Guermantes in church. They frequently involve love or sex, issues that were presumably emotionally charged for the protagonist. Embedded as they are in the framework of habitual action, these singular events give the effect of stones in a setting.[61] They do not by themselves yield a consistent narrative when abstracted from that framework, and "one day" or "one Sunday" being vague, they resist attempts to ferret out their chronological order.

The patterns of remembering in "Combray II" have a great deal in common with those that psychologists tell us are characteristic of normal remembering. That is, repeated events are better retained than singular events, and emotionally significant events are particularly resistant to forgetting. The psychological verisimilitude of the narrator's remembering is another factor that casts doubt on the opening premise of the text that a special kind of memory, "involuntary memory," brought back "all of Combray."

Proust not only changes and obscures autobiographical facts but also moves away from the conventions of autobiography and toward those of fiction in "Combray II." Although Proust writes in the first person, his first-person narrator takes the liberties of a third-person narrator in a fictional work: he knows what happened in scenes in which he himself was not present and can read the minds of other characters, such as Léonie's.[62] Proust's decision to write in the first person feeds the ambiguity of the text's status. Is this

autobiography, or is it a first-person novel? It adds to the reader's uncertainty that Proust gives his protagonist no name in "Combray II." He maintains his basic namelessness throughout the entire *Recherche,* although he does drop the name "Marcel" in *La Prisonnière.*[63] Contemporary Proust critics generally call him "the protagonist" rather than "Marcel," and this will be the practice here as well.

## IV

Proust is renowned for his metaphors. One of the most distinctive qualities of "Combray II" is the prominence of the tropes of comparison, metaphor and simile. Proust juxtaposes the narratorial irony of the adult with spreading islands of imagery-rich comparisons that represent the passion of the child.

Much of the time—and this is the part of the time that interests me here—Proust's narrator is in deep, sympathetic collusion with the way he saw and felt about things as a child. But at intervals this consonant state of affairs is interrupted, and a shower of narratorial irony drenches the account. The urbane adult voice mocks the bourgeois world of the adults, the world of the hypochondriac Aunt Léonie, the boy's ultra-polite great-aunts, and the faithful servant Françoise, whose perfections are counterbalanced by her ruthlessness toward her inferiors. The overall effect of the mockery is gentle, but the tone is unmistakable. Furthermore, the adult voice cynically reports on the extraordinary naïveté of his younger self, which, for example, causes him to blab to his parents about having met a lady in pink at his Uncle Adolphe's after having faithfully promised secrecy to his uncle. His father and grandfather have "words" with his uncle, upon which the protagonist feels so sorry for the latter that he turns his head away the next time he sees him on the street. All of this brings about a lifelong rift between his uncle and the family. The naïve protagonist also repeats to his family Bloch's comment that his great-aunt was once a kept woman, with predictable results.

But Proust's tour de force in rendering childhood memories is not his narrator's amused, ironic jabbing but his representation of the child's point of view. "Combray II" presents a thing-world, seen with a child's imagination. In the large stretches of the narrative in which the narrator's perspective is

sympathetic to the child's vision, the world of childhood is evoked to a striking degree through similes and metaphors. These deserve a close look.

Two conscientious scholars of the 1960s counted and analyzed Proust's "images": Stephen Ullmann in *The Image in the Modern French Novel: Gide, Alain-Fournier, Proust, Camus* (1960) counts and analyzes the "images" in *Du côté de chez Swann,* and Victor E. Graham in *The Imagery of Proust* (1966) counts and analyzes the "images" in the entire *Recherche*.[64] But neither critic offers a separate count or analysis of the "images" (or similes and metaphors, which constitute a somewhat smaller set) in "Combray II" specifically. Yet such a count is useful if one wants to get a clear picture of what is being compared to what. My count of those similes and metaphors in "Combray II" that Proust uses to render the world of childhood yielded the number 268.[65] This number does not include similes and metaphors that appear in dialogue or are otherwise attributed to specific characters, such as Swann or the mother. It also does not include similes or metaphors that are explicitly attributed to the child protagonist. It further omits those that the narrator claims are the result of his present-day ruminations about the past, or that the narrator applies to his later life. I also exclude metaphors and similes that occur in common phrases (though there are few of these are in Proust's inventive prose). In other words, my count includes only comparisons that occur in the story of the protagonist's childhood Combray as told by the narrator, and ones that are "fresh"—that is, created by Proust for the purpose of conveying the world of the story to the reader—not "worn." My count is conservative. If one were to count every phrase in which an adjective or verb fleetingly suggests a metaphorical association, the number would be much higher. Counting every "comme" phrase and every implied comparison would push it even higher. Thus, in a paragraph in which another scholar counts twenty-eight comparisons, I count six: five similes and one metaphor.[66] Graham comments that in *À la recherche du temps perdu* as a whole Proust uses a high proportion of similes to metaphors. He finds that similes account for 54 percent of Proust's images and metaphors for 46 percent.[67] My count of these figures of speech in "Combray II" yields an even higher percentage of similes: I count only 80 metaphors all told, versus 188 explicit comparisons.

Metaphors and similes are more or less striking depending on whether they are daring or conventional, elaborate or brief, inventive or explanatory, imagistic or abstract. Proust's metaphors run the full gamut from highly

conspicuous to comparatively pale. Counting metaphors is a slippery business to begin with, and any identification of conspicuous metaphors will contain a measure of subjectivity, but that being said, I find that roughly 170 of Proust's burn brightly in the fabric of the text, and that these conspicuous ones are mainly though not exclusively similes. Admittedly, my initial conservative count of metaphors and similes was expressly intended to avoid an infinite regress of implicit metaphors; otherwise, there would be a higher count of metaphors and a longer shading off of inconspicuous metaphors at the low end.

The conspicuous metaphors and similes that I count—metaphors and similes attributable to the narrator that serve to make the world of the story more vivid to the reader—are distinguished by four principal qualities. First, the objects of comparison tend to proliferate, to run from one thing to the next. Second, the objects of comparison are often metonyms for the objects compared. Third, the objects compared (the "tenors") have a tendency over the course of the text to reappear as objects of comparison ("vehicles"). Fourth, not only the objects compared but also the objects of comparison are drawn from a limited sphere, which with few exceptions can be seen not to transcend the limits of the child's knowledge.

Thus, first, Proust sometimes uses two or three or more analogies, rushing from one association to the other, where the objects of comparison are unrelated. The lime leaves from which his aunt makes her tea "resembled the most disparate things, the transparent wing of a fly, the blank side of a label, the petal of a rose, which had all been piled together, pounded or interwoven like the materials for a nest."[68] One can attribute this kind of associative string of analogies to the author's (or narrator's) analogical exuberance or to Proust's attempt to render the perspective of the child. I prefer to give Proust the benefit of the doubt and opt for the latter reading, that is, to consider it a controlled artistic move, even though it occurs elsewhere in *À la recherche du temps perdu* as well.[69] The fact that the above sentence was trimmed down from a much longer and more elaborate draft speaks for such control. The sentence would seem to be focalized through the child; one sees the active, inquiring imagination of the child at work. The steeple of the Combray church, after Mass, is "baked golden-brown itself like a still larger, consecrated loaf (brioche), with gummy flakes and droplets of sunlight" (64; 70), only to become at evening, in the next sentence, "a brown

velvet cushion thrust against the pallid sky" (64; 70). Thus too, the lilacs in Swann's garden are pink minarets, then young houris (in a continuation of the Persian theme), bearing "starry locks that crowned their fragrant heads" (134; 148); later in the season (and two paragraphs later in the text), they become tall mauve chandeliers, foam, and froth.[70] The imagination of the child regards things not as fixed, but as volatile and unstable. The same technique of swiftly metamorphosing metaphors characterizes the protagonist's childhood composition, in which he describes the twin steeples of Martinville and the steeple of Vieuxvicq as seen during a carriage ride toward and then away from Martinville. They resemble three birds, later three golden pivots, three flowers painted upon the sky, and three maidens in a legend (179; 198).

Proust uses metaphors (for short, I will henceforth use the term to include similes as well) at every turn to describe the town, natural setting, and people of Combray, and especially the places, things, and persons that loomed large in his childhood world. But certain things in Combray especially inspire metaphor. Giant metaphor-magnets are churches, especially the church in the center of Combray, whose extensive description early in "Combray II" is studded with metaphors, and, later in the chapter, flowers, especially hawthorns. Flowers and churches constitute the two largest groups among the objects compared (the tenors).* If one looks at the conspicuous metaphors alone, flowers and churches rise to even greater prominence: each is responsible for inspiring over 20 percent of these metaphors in Proust's description of the Combray of his childhood.† Particularly in the context of the church and flowers, a second tendency becomes manifest: Proust frequently chooses his objects of comparison metonymically, seizing, for his metaphors,

*The full list of the groups of objects compared (tenors) is, in order of incidence: 1. flowers (42); 2. churches (40); 3. natural phenomena, including places (31); 4. human activities, sentiments, and attributes (31); 5. persons, including women if femininity is not emphasized (29); 6. feminine figures, attributes, or appurtenances (11); 7. food (10); 8. body parts (7); 9. literature (7); 10. the town (6); 11. house or building (6); 12. smells (6); 13. sounds (5); 14. objects of everyday use or everyday life (4); 15. water, including the river (4); 16. concepts (4); 17. plants (3); 18. clothing (3); 19. time (3); 20. animals, birds, or insects (2); 21. things (1); 22. objects of art or architecture (1).

†The full list of the objects compared (tenors) that inspire the conspicuous metaphors is: 1. flowers (38); 2. churches (35); 3. natural phenomena, including places (16); 4. persons, including women where femininity is not emphasized (14); 5. feminine figures, attributes, and appurtenances (11); 6. food (8); 7. human activities, sentiments, and attributes (7); 8. house (5); 9. body parts (3); 10. the town (3); 11. smells (3); 12. literature (3); 13. time (3); 14. water (2); 15. clothing (2); 16. objects of everyday use or everyday life (2); 17. sounds (2); 18. plants (2); 19. concepts (2); 20. animals, birds, or insects (1); 21. art (1); 22. things (1).

on associations that are suggested by some attribute of the object compared. Not all objects of comparison are snatched from afar, like "brioche" or "cushion" for "steeple"; some are scooped from close up, so that the object compared appears to have seeped or bled into the object of comparison. Thus the Combray church, itself medieval, is often compared to other medieval objects. The stained-glass windows are like a threadbare tapestry, the glass resembles sapphires juxtaposed on an immense breastplate; or it resembles a dazzling and gilded tapestry of forget-me-nots in glass. Or, because the church is ancient, the cavity on a tomb resembles the bed of a fossil. As a place of worship, its steeple is a "finger of God,"[71] and even when it appears to the protagonist as a "brioche," this brioche is "consecrated" (bénie). Similarly, to give an example from the world of flowers, the Persian origin of the above-mentioned lilacs seeps into the objects of comparison, a minaret and houris.[72] Gérard Genette in "Métonymie chez Proust" has discussed this metonymic quality of Proust's metaphors, specifically Proust's predilection for analogies based on relations of contiguity, not just in "Combray" but in the whole of *À la recherche du temps perdu*.[73] In Genette's view his practice frequently has the purpose of suggesting the harmony of an hour, the unity of a place.[74] Proust's use of imagery and of such metonymic metaphors in particular yields an intriguing parallel to the findings of psychological research, which tells us that imagery is better remembered and that memory is associative.

In classical rhetoric "metonymy" is a trope that substitutes a signifier for another one that is seen to be closely related to it. Handbooks mention such relations as those between container and contained, cause and effect, author and work, place and inhabitant, possessor and thing possessed, and sign and thing signified. This is the way I use the term here. Thus if one said "Washington" for "the government of the United States" or "the Shakespeare" for "the book authored by Shakespeare" or "the kettle is boiling" instead of "the water in the kettle is boiling," these would be a metonymies. Similarly, in "Combray," "Middle Ages" and "medieval church," "ancient" and "ancient church," and "Persia" and "lilacs" have a metonymic relation to each other. It is on the basis of this relation that Proust constructs the metaphors listed above. In contemporary literary criticism, however, another definition of metonymy circulates, one that was popularized by Roman Jakobson, namely, that metonymy involves a substitution based on contiguity. By "contiguity" Jakobson means relations established by context. Thus for him the realist

novel, which digresses into details about the setting, is fundamentally metonymic, in contrast to romantic and symbolist works, which privilege metaphor.[75] The classical definition of metonymy tacitly appeals to logic and consensus; it suggests that the close relation between the term substituted for and the substituted term is an obvious one, clear to all. Jakobson's definition does not controvert this appeal (the realist novel is not a subjective form), but as it is used in literary criticism it is subjectified, allowing metonymies to be based on relations that are established by fortuitous contiguities peculiar to the text at hand, such as contiguities that are perceived by the hero of a novel. Nathalie Buchet Rogers states matter-of-factly: "Metonymy is bound up with associations based on chance and on the contingency of spatial or temporal contiguities."[76] Thus, "drop" and "glassful of liquid," "rose" and "garden," or "shell" and "ocean" would be in a metonymic relation by either definition; but according to the Jakobsonian definition, if the hero of a novel happened to encounter a rose in a trashcan, and the narrator constructed a figure of speech based on this "contiguity" that allowed the properties of the rose to appear in the trashcan, this would count as metonymy. The pseudo-spatial definition of metonymy as "contiguity" has led to a metonymy boom in literary criticism. If one takes this modern usage of metonymy and applies it to the small world of "Combray," the set of metonymically inspired metaphors in "Combray" greatly increases. The "brioche" to which the Combray church steeple is compared becomes a metonymy, for example, because when the protagonist is in view of it, the family orders the servant to bring a "brioche." The "cushion" to which the steeple is compared could also be read as a metonymy, since it appears that way to the protagonist in the evening when he is thinking of bedtime.[77] Repeatedly, flowers become metonymies for women, and this is in part because women happen to appear in floral contexts in the plot of the story. The Combray church rising over the houses of the town is introduced as a shepherdess surrounded by her sheep because it is a church in a country village.

Third, related to this seepage is a much more extraordinary phenomenon. It is Proust's technique of constructing circular, replete, tautological metaphors, whereby an object evokes a second object that in turn evokes the first object. A good place to begin with the discussion of these is the long passage where, walking along the Méséglise way, the protagonist sees a hedge of hawthorns in blossom. This hawthorn hedge reminds him of a series of

chapels—but a series of chapels disappearing under flowers on their altars. Flowers remind him of chapels, but these chapels in turn bring the association of flowers. In the hawthorn passage the church analogy continues: the sun beneath the hawthorns casts a checkered light on the ground "as though it had just passed through a stained-glass window."[78] Then comes another maneuver that involves shuttling from flowers to the church and back to flowers: the stamens of the hawthorns resemble the moldings of the rood loft or the mullions of the stained-glass window, which spread into white flesh like strawberry flowers. Now, the reader of "Combray" first saw *hawthorns* in the Combray church, on the altar. Hawthorns, for the protagonist, are associated with the church, and this association, at first one of contiguity, becomes in the later passage metaphoric. Churches and hawthorns are both proximate to and metaphors for each other, so that a tight interweaving, indeed almost a fusion, is accomplished between the ecclesiastical and the floral spheres.[79]

This ecclesiastical-floral tapestry is further elaborated by a much remarked on feminine dimension. At their first appearance on the altar, white hawthorns are repeatedly connected metaphorically to women. At first they evoke the bride: their foliage is like a bridal train, their stamens are like gossamer, and their flowering is like the movement of the head of a young girl in white. Then the protagonist recollects that a girl, Mlle Vinteuil, entered the church. Under her influence, which in the Jakobsonian usage is a metonymic influence, his vision of the flowers on the altar changes. They have creamy patches, like her cheeks—that is, they are no longer pure white; they become fragrant; and they "quiver" like a hedgerow "explored by living antennae"—like the same flowers outdoors that are being penetrated and explored by insects. The flowers mirror the protagonist's feelings: the appearance of Mlle Vinteuil has apparently given rise to sensations that have sexualized the flowers for him.

Thus it is unsurprising that, when the hawthorns return in the form of a hedge bordering Swann's estate that the protagonist walks next to on his Sunday promenade along the Méséglise way, these hawthorns frame an encounter, and form a metonymic pair, again in the Jakobsonian sense, with another young girl, this time one with whom he falls desperately in love. After the boy lingers, questioning and admiring, by the white hawthorn hedge, his grandfather calls his attention to a pink hawthorn bush. The narrator, focalizing through the protagonist, enthuses over its loveliness, which

seems even superior to that of the white. Metaphor succeeds metaphor: the pink hawthorn's blossoms are like pompoms garlanding a rococo shepherd's crook, their buds are like little rose bushes with pots hidden in lace paper that decorate the altar on important holy days, their half-open flowers are like cups of rose marble, the bush itself is like a young girl in a party dress in the midst of people in negligés who are staying at home. The narrator reflects how the color pink is special: biscuits with pink sugar were more expensive, and his favorite cream cheese was pink, with strawberries crushed into it. An attentive reader will recall the boy's encounter, some sixty pages earlier, with an interesting and obviously disreputable lady in pink at his Uncle Adolphe's place. Immediately after his effusions over the color pink apropos of the hawthorns, he catches a glimpse of Swann's daughter Gilberte in her garden. The attributes of the flowers seep metonymically into the girl. With her reddish hair and pinkish freckles, she resembles the pink hawthorns; the contemptuous gesture she makes hurts him like their thorns and causes him to fall in love with her. The protagonist proves to be the fish who is caught by her fish line, which he previously saw bobbing in the water. Much later in *À la recherche du temps perdu* the reader will find out that Odette, Gilberte's mother, was the lady in pink.

Like hawthorns and churches, hawthorns and women have both a metonymic and a metaphoric relation to each other. Flowers generally in this text have a feminine and erotic subtext. Not just hawthorns, but other flowers, such as lilacs, eglantines, and apple blossoms, suggest women.[80]

Although the strength of the bond between churches and women is not nearly as strong as that between churches and flowers or women and flowers, the Combray church itself does have feminine, maternal overtones. Not only is it introduced as a "shepherdess," but the profusion of metaphors surrounding it tends both to domesticize it (its porch is like a perforated spoon, its tombstones overflow their bounds like honey) and to assimilate it into the constellation of childhood marvels (it is like a peacock, a grotto, a valley visited by fairies). In fact, the church bears great similarity to the magic lantern show with which the grown-ups unsuccessfully hoped to distract the protagonist from the absence of his mother and grandmother. The magic lantern is compared to a Gothic builder or glass-painter and thus anticipates the Combray church. Religious services are the site of the protagonist's glimpses of interesting women—Mlle Vinteuil, the Duchesse de

Guermantes—while piety looms large in the life of his invalid aunt, Tante Léonie. Just as the town, its surroundings, and its inhabitants are churchified through the metaphors of "Combray II," the church is feminized and sexualized in a variety of subtle ways. The association between churches and women is clinched through flowers: the strong connection Proust establishes in the reader's mind between women and flowers invades the church when hawthorns appear on the altar and are then later compared to churches.

How do such associations come into being to begin with? In the case of one of them Proust gives us an answer. In a draft the narrator explains how a play on words, on "étamine" (muslin, the fabric that one of his mother's evening dresses was made out of, and stamen) and "calice" (chalice and calyx) cemented for the child the connection between hawthorns and women and hawthorns and churches, respectively.[81] Julia Daudet has an explanation for the memorability of intriguing words: in her view, words a child wonders about and does not entirely understand become imprisoned in memory because of their mysteriousness, which causes the child to occupy him- or herself with them—as if memory had a special shelf for unsolved conundra.[82]

Circularity is the overarching strategy that dominates the metaphors in "Combray" as a whole. For example, although comparisons of flowers to the church dominate, Proust does not omit to run the comparisons in the other direction, to compare churches to flowers: to white violets, forget-me-nots, flowers painted in the sky. The church brings food associations, as we have seen, while food, in turn, recalls ecclesiastical splendors to the boy: the family's menu resembles medieval quatrefoils on cathedrals that reflect the seasons; the skin of a chicken, served up by the servant Françoise, is embroidered in gold like a chasuble.

The tautological tendency of the metaphors, combined with their metonymic tendency, produces an effect of saturation, of completeness—as if the categories that supply the images really were "all of Combray."

The fourth characteristic of the metaphors in "Combray" is their limited semantic range. The objects that inspire comparison are, naturally, objects from Marcel's childish world. But it is remarkable how strictly Proust confines himself, in choosing objects to compare them with, that is, in choosing the vehicles of the metaphors, to objects that are likewise drawn from the domain of the child's experience. This is particularly true of the striking

metaphors. The lexicon of their vehicles includes, in descending order of incidence: 1. objects drawn from the animal, bird, and insect worlds (21); 2. feminine figures, attributes, or appurtenances (16); 3. persons, including women where femininity is not emphasized (16); 4. objects of art or architecture (16); 5. flowers (10); 6. natural phenomena and places (10); 7. food (9); 8. religious items (the church and objects of religious ritual) (9); 9. water, including the ocean (7); 10. objects of everyday use or everyday life (7); 11. music (7); 12. objects of childish interest such as games or fairy tales (6); 13. jewelry or precious stones (6); 14. plants (6); 15. fancy or special objects (5); 16. boats (4); 17. royalty (4); 18. body parts (3); 19. artists (2); 20. literature (2); 21. concepts from science (2); 22. mythology (1); 23. sounds (1); and medieval history (1). Much more unambiguously than was the case with the instances of metaphoric proliferation, the effect here is to capture the sensibility of the child. These comparisons suggest the childish imagination at work. The style and the narratorial irony of "Combray" reveal the adult, but with very few exceptions Proust takes care to reserve the device of metaphor for the child's perspective.[83] The animal comparisons, the largest category, in particular strike one as products of a child's imagination: the houses of the town are like sheep, the church vault recalls a bat, daylight resembles a butterfly, Françoise is like a burrowing wasp, some unknown thing he is looking for is hidden like a fish. The food comparisons have a similar effect. For example, the odors in his aunt's room, baking in the heat of the fire, recall a huge turnover; her maid Françoise's bonnet is as if concocted of spun sugar.[84]

If one looks at all 268 similes and metaphors, the categories remain largely the same, but the proportions shift, with comparisons to objects of art or architecture heading the list.* In the modern reader's judgment, Proust may overstep the bounds of childish knowledge precisely with his references to art

* The complete list in order of frequency is: 1. objects of art or architecture (26); 2. objects drawn from the animal, bird, or insect worlds (22); 3. persons, including women where femininity is not emphasized (22); 4. natural phenomena (17); 5. feminine figures, attributes, or appurtenances (17); 6. religious items (the church and objects of religious ritual) (14); 7. food (13); 8. objects of everyday use and everyday life (12); 9. objects of childish interest such as games or fairy tales (11); 10. flowers (10); 11. plants (9); 12. literature (9); 13. music (9); 14. jewelry or precious stones (8); 15. scientific or mechanical references (7); 16. fancy or special objects (6); 17. human activities, sentiments, and attributes (6); 18. water, including river (6); 19. ocean-related terms (6); 20. body parts (5); 21. royalty (4); 22. boat (4); 23. places (4); 24. artists (3); 25. mythological references (3); 26. smell (2); 27. color (2); 28. houses (2); 29. miscellaneous vehicles that do not fit into any of the previous categories (9).

history. The main tenor for the art-historical metaphors is the church. The textual crafting of the Combray church required special care, for the church is a privileged object in the *Recherche* as a whole; it is a hidden metaphor for the book itself. Retrospectively, in *Le Temps retrouvé,* the narrator reveals that the church at Combray caused him to "have a presentiment" of the form that he intends to imprint on his entire novel[85]: the form of time. The Combray church that Proust describes does not correspond exactly to the real church at Illiers, but is supplemented with numerous borrowings from other churches and from works of literature.[86] The art-historical metaphors, too, gained from Proust's later erudition. Art was one of his major lifetime interests: he wrote art criticism, translated Ruskin, followed in the latter's footsteps to see art works through his eyes, and made many other artistic trips in France. In particular, he researched Gothic cathedrals, which were Ruskin's great love, and increasingly fell under the sway of Émile Mâle's interpretations of Gothic art.

Yet arguably, all this notwithstanding, the art-historical vehicles in "Combray" need not be assigned to the adult perspective. We have justification for according to the protagonist, a gifted child and bookworm who vastly preferred experiencing through books to raw everyday "experience," a considerable knowledge of art history. The narrator himself tells us that his grandmother fostered such respect for the aesthetic and for the history of art with her gifts of old engravings and reproductions of paintings.[87] Thus, for example, the comparison of the effect of moonlight on a landscape to Hubert Robert (113; 124) counts as a childish one because the narrator has told us that his grandmother had given him a photo of *Les Grandes Eaux de Saint-Cloud* by Hubert Robert (40; 43). The observation that the stars in the asparagus's azure crowns are as finely drawn as those in the *Virtue of Padua* fresco (120; 131) appears to originate in the fact that the child studied these Giotto figures, which hung in the family study (80; 88). Swann, whose conversation generally is spiked with references to the arts (e.g., 96, 105), acquainted the boy with Giotto, giving him photographs of Giotto's allegorical figures (80; 87). In "Noms de pays: le nom" ("Place Names: The Name") the narrator will declare that the child "extrapolates the nature of Florence from a knowledge of Giotto."[88] The narrator states that cathedrals held particular charm for him as a child (99; 108). The protagonist's interest in art is autobiographical: Proust himself had a precocious interest in the arts.[89]

The majority of the vehicles of the art-historical metaphors in "Combray II" are taken from the medieval period. Since the medieval church of Combray is a focus of the child's fascination, it seems plausible that his interest would have branched into other art objects from that period. The art-historical metaphor that seems least likely to have been inspired by childish knowledge is the comparison of water lilies to moss-roses "comme après l'effeuillement mélancholique d'une fête galante," where the editors of the Pléiade edition see in "fête galante" a reference to Watteau (indeed, the English translators Moncrieff and Kilmartin translate "after the sad dismantling of some Watteau *fête galante.*"[90] In later volumes of *À la recherche du temps perdu,* art-historical metaphors become vastly more complicated and sophisticated than this one, clearly exceeding the competence of even the most bookish child; an example might be the comparison, over pages, of servants in a house Swann visits to various figures from art history, such as a decorative warrior in a Mantegna painting, a Goya sacristan, or a Benvenuto Cellini armed watchman. In comparison, the "fête galante" is a minor lapse that passes by quickly.

Metaphor remains Proust's signature device throughout *À la recherche du temps perdu*. In later volumes, which focus more on social interactions than does "Combray II," there is a greater proportion of dialogue to description, and hence long stretches where metaphors are sparse;[91] but there are also descriptive passages that are extraordinarily dense in metaphor, such as the description of the Rivebelle restaurant in *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*. Metaphors can run from one object of comparison to the next, as in "Combray II." Metonymic metaphors persist (e.g., the sea is compared with a fish).[92] But the vehicles are not largely drawn from the set of objects compared, so that one does not get the sensation of a closed world. They certainly do not come from a limited semantic range. As in "Combray," they can be assigned explicitly to the central consciousness's perspective or to the narrator, but most frequently they are unassigned. As in "Combray," the majority of these metaphors of ambiguous provenance seem, although they are spoken by the narrator's voice, ascribable to the central consciousness's focus—to Swann in "Un Amour de Swann" ("Swann in Love") and to the protagonist at whatever age he might be in story-time (e.g., to the hero as a young man, waiters seem like rare birds and tables seem like planets).[93] Alternatively, they fuse the narrator's focus with that of the central consciousness, or they enhance

the central consciousness's focus with the narrator's insight. In any event, they have the marks of being products of an adult mind. They frequently illuminate some topic of adult interest, such as social interactions. They often appear to be based on profound social or psychological analysis: thus Bloch's snobbery can be attributed to the pressure, "as on the floor of the ocean," on him as a low-class Jew;[94] a headwaiter, like a barber, is benevolently pleased when an important customer meets some friends from his or her social circle, because it enhances the social tone of the establishment;[95] the Princesse de Luxembourg, anxious not to appear in a higher social sphere than that of the protagonist and his grandmother, looks at them benevolently, as though she might stroke them like lovable beasts at the zoo.[96] A vast analogy between society and the ocean, which sparks metaphors involving sea creatures and marine effects, arises to rival the extensive floral motif. And although certain vehicles are consistently reused, such as flowers for women (and eventually men), food, and animals, they become capable of manifesting a complexity and intricacy of comparison that testify to an adult analytic mind. Outstanding examples include the passage comparing the "little band" of girls at Balbec to Pennsylvania roses seen against an ocean backdrop, and the famous comparison of Jupien and Charlus to an orchid and a bumblebee.[97]

Proust's distinctive and unusual use of comparisons in "Combray II" creates some noteworthy effects. Above all, the *circle* of these childhood things, things that are turned into a circle precisely through their service as the tenors and also as the vehicles of metaphors, re-creates the child's world and in particular a sense of the stability of that world. Paradoxically, the instability of metaphor in this case creates an impression of stability. This circle of things complements the basic organization of "Combray" as an account of habitual actions and of the way things in those days generally were and happened. Together these techniques give the impression that the protagonist's childhood takes place in a charmed circle removed from the passage of time. Within this world operates the vivid and active imagination of the child. Proust gives many testimonials to this runaway imagination. In "Noms de pays: le nom" ("Place Names: The Name"), for example, he regales the reader with the child's fantasies of places he has never visited based on their names alone: "Coutances, a Norman cathedral which its final consonants, rich and yellowing, crowned with a tower of butter; . . . Questambert,

Pontorson, ridiculous and naïve, white feathers and yellow beaks strewn along the road to those well-watered and poetic spots."[98] Proust's prose in "Combray II" owes its enchanting and seductive quality to the device of comparison. His metaphors and similes rekindle the celebrated childhood vision in the reader by stimulating his or her imagination to see things afresh, in novel and changing relations with other things, instead of through the eyes of habit. By the ingenious device of focalizing a text through the semantic choices of its metaphors, Proust moves to block the possibility of a psychological reading and instead draws the reader into sympathizing with the mental world of the child—or more precisely, of a child.

Why did Proust decide, at age thirty-six, to improve on the childhood pieces in the *Jean Santeuil* draft that he had abandoned eight years previously and create this childhood idyll, this paradise removed from time? According to the psychotherapist Arnold R. Bruhn, pattern memories tend to be positive, and recalling them probably serves to stabilize one's mood. Bruhn associates idealization of the past with a depressive mood.[99] Proust rather plainly stated the reason for recurring to the past in *Jean Santeuil:* thoughts of childhood bring *happiness.* "Thanks to it [the charm we felt as children at the morning sunlight, the early frosts of winter, the afternoon rays of sun], and without having first to see in memory our games, the garden in which we played, the health, the hopes that then were ours, we can, for a moment, recover all the sweet loveliness of childhood."[100] In a moving passage, he writes that back in those days he was not sick; as a child he ran and jumped and let himself go physically. Now that he has asthma and rheumatism, the pleasures of running and jumping are out of the question. Yet, he says, he fondly recalls the sweetness of his earlier hours (312; 112). Eight years later Proust had lost both parents, and his health was deteriorating. One can see why he was even more invested in reliving a childhood idyll than he was at the time of the composition of *Jean Santeuil.* In *À la recherche du temps perdu,* too, his narrator concedes that for an invalid, the pleasure of remembering is especially keen because it substitutes for that of lived life.[101]

"Combray" with its strategies seduces the reader with strategies similar to those that seduced the protagonist into loving literature as a child, reenacting the conditions that made the protagonist "fall for" literature in the first place. According to the narrator in *Le Temps retrouvé,* the child's love of literature was born on the occasion of the one childhood event that burned

itself into the narrator's memory before involuntary memory came to his aid: it was his most significant memory, the unforgettable memory, the memory of his mother's kiss. It is the story of how the child protagonist, after an evening of depression and fear, got his way. He did not get just the longed-for goodnight kiss, but received a superlative favor, a source of supreme happiness beyond anything he had imagined: his father allowed his mother to spend the night in his room. What they did there was read. His mother read his first novel aloud to him. It was George Sand's *François le Champi*. This memory turned into the protagonist's most significant childhood memory not just because he "lost his will," as he says later in the book, but because it is here that his love of literature, mediated by the consoling presence of his mother who supplied the reading voice, was born. In *Le Temps retrouvé* the narrator tells how he eventually lost his faith in literature, only finally to regain it through the revelations of involuntary memory. Stumbling, in the Guermantes' library, on a copy of *François le Champi,* he stresses the importance of *François le Champi* in establishing his fascination with literature: "title which . . . had given me the idea that literature really did offer us that world of mystery which I had ceased to find in it."[102] *François le Champi,* he declares, contained "the essence of the novel" (462; 282). Proust's love of deciphering mysterious states of affairs is, in the world of the novel, traceable to the time when he heard his mother read this book. In fact, however, if one goes back to the scene in "Combray," the reasons why *François le Champi* seemed mysterious are two: first, it was the protagonist's habit when reading to daydream for pages at a time, thereby missing parts of the plot; and second, his mother made the plot seem disjointed by leaving the love scenes out. But these are precisely strategies that Proust uses in "Combray." He does not put our mother in our room and have her read his book aloud to us, but he does seem to daydream, through the optic of the child he once was, from page to page, running off on metaphorical tangents; and we are inclined to daydream too, the pages becoming fuller under our eyes, to borrow an analogy from Rilke's *Malte,* where Malte's governess reads books in such a fashion. We "develop the photographs in our own mind," to use Proust's own words for the effect he wanted his book to have. Last but not least, like his mother, Proust leaves out the erotic parts, preferring to talk about flowers than about his attraction to women (who themselves could be seen to mask an attraction to men), that is, to talk about sexuality "durch die Blume." He

stimulates the reader's imagination in this way too, staging a pleasant yet intriguing mystery that incites us to look for and try to fill gaps in the fabric of the text, sharpening our pleasure in detecting the depths below the surface of the childhood world.

## V

If there is one thing Proust insists on, it is that the mission of art is to re-create the true reality of the mind—"reality as we have felt it to be" ("la réalité telle que nous l'avons sentie")[103]: "Our vanity (amour-propre), our passions, our spirit of imitation, our abstract intelligence, our habits have long been at work, and it is the task of art to undo this work of theirs, making us travel back in the direction from which we have come to the depths where what has really existed lies unknown within us" (475; 300). In "Combray II" he plainly endeavored to capture the past reality of the mind by re-creating the child's perspective and sensibility. "Combray II," in which Proust embarks on a representation of things as seen by the child, makes evident that he realizes that the world of childhood is above all a thing world. His practice in "Combray II" sustains his thing-based conception of metaphor, which, as we have seen, he articulates in terms of *objects* in *Le Temps retrouvé* (468; 289–290). In later parts of the novel, in contrast, the proportion of things as the tenors of metaphor shrinks, while the proportion of people grows.

Place is also centrally important to Proust's world of childhood, as the title "Combray" already indicates. The protagonist's childhood seems inextricably linked to its setting. In drafts for the section of "Combray" on the Guermantes way, Proust writes of the immense psychological importance of a beloved place, analyzing at great length the phenomenon of love of place.[104] He speaks of his attitude toward a beloved place in terms that one might use for a beloved woman: "A certain intersection of paths, a certain clearing on the left with spaced apple trees that mix their shades with the setting sun—this is a certain wrinkle, a certain lock of hair, a certain line to the nose in a beloved face" (R I: 810). He emphasizes that places are unique; one cannot substitute a more beautiful place for a beloved place. He greatly emphasizes loving place-as-it-was, that is, when it first captured the imagination. Thus, the "image of happiness" for him is fixed by the Guermantes Way (R I: 828). In the moving passage at the end of "Combray II" where he

writes that the Méséglise and Guermantes ways are the "foundation of his mental soil," he insistently draws comparisons to his mother. Just as his mother could not have been replaced by another mother, no other place can supplant the countryside around Combray in his heart.

Not just in childhood, but throughout his life, Proust showed an emotional investment in places that rivaled his investment in people. The narrator of *Jean Santeuil* declares: "Places are persons."[105] Generally in *À la recherche du temps perdu* the intensity of the protagonist's passion moves fluidly between places that charm him and the people that they frame. Desired people are imagined in favorite places and favorite places become objects of desire. Georges Poulet has shown that Proust does not introduce people without "framing" them in a local background.[106] Poulet writes of the "reciprocity of exchanges" between persons and places.[107] In my view the person, or object of desire, sometimes even becomes a more concentrated, headier distillation of the place, like Gilberte among the hawthorns, or Saint-Loup or Albertine against the sea.[108] In "Combray," where he fantasizes a peasant girl arising out of the landscape, place-love appears so strong in Proust that he goes to the length of placing an imaginary being in it. He gives the place the form of a woman so as to direct the corresponding affect toward it (154–155; 170–171). The protagonist is presumably a teenager here; the autumnal setting suggests the trip the Prousts took to Illiers when Marcel was age fifteen. The narrator comments: "I had a desire for a peasant-girl from Méséglise or Roussainville, for a fisher-girl from Balbec, just as I had a desire for Balbec and Méséglise" (155; 171). The protagonist's desire to "place" people in the frames of localities and to view people as the incarnations of place does not go away with age. Thus we hear in later volumes that Mlle de Stermaria, whom he imaginatively envelops in the mists of a Breton island, must be enjoyed in Paris on an island; Mme de Guermantes's eyes and voice remind him of Combray.[109] Place-love in this extreme form is a permanent feature of Proust's mind-set.

Finally, it must be stated explicitly that places and things are crucial to the process by which Proust sees time as being turned into eternity. The cue, which is capable of giving us a sensation in the here and now of our spatial surroundings, evokes a sensation we felt in the past. Stimulated by the cue, the mind leaps over past time and gains access to another place, other things, in a different time. Through space, therefore, which is perceptible to

his senses, Proust throws chains around the uncontrollable passage of time. In Proust's world the way the mind works does not just make us conscious of the passage of time and of mortality, but also provides us, *with the aid of spatial props,* with a backdoor route, called "involuntary memory," whereby these unpleasant truths are magically subverted. Involuntary memory links a present sensation to a "forgotten" one; the mind gains access to a "forgotten" scene; space retrieves space. Time is vanquished. As we have seen, the analogy between the present cue and the past scene gives Proust's narrator an exhilarating sensation of timelessness and the conviction that he has discovered an eternal essence.

It remained to Proust to secure such fleeting but sustaining revelations in the space of a book. The resurrected scenes are just as capable of being "captured" in words as any other scene. But scene-painting in itself is not enough to warrant transforming these ephemeral moments into the comparatively lasting present of the work of art. Scenes, for Proust, are composed of signs that hide significations behind their sensual surface. For Proust the issue is teasing these hidden significations out. Metaphor, which establishes the presence of one thing in another, strikes him as the privileged artistic technique with which to accomplish this end. Although the past is not in a metaphoric relation to the present, it appears to Proust to be analogically "hidden"—in cues, that is, in things. Childhood is a privileged locus for this connection of metaphor and memory through *things,* for metaphor (which renders the child's way of seeing), and especially metaphors involving objects (objects that are moreover taken from the child's fields of interest), become memory's artistic route to childhood. The process of pulling things out of things—spaces out of space—by metaphor, or alternatively by recording instances of involuntary memory, motivates Proust's use of time and gives it a telos: the conversion of momentary insights into the space of a multivolume work.

# 2

# Making Things Out of Fear: Rilke and Childhood Memory

"Our work—is our pain and suffering."

François Mauriac, *Mes plus lointains souvenirs*

## I

Scholars have been at pains to determine precisely when Rilke heard of psychoanalysis.[1] The most exact account of this is supplied by Rilke himself, who told his close friend Magda von Hattingberg, in a letter of 21 February 1914, when and under what circumstances he first heard of psychoanalysis: "It was when I was writing the last passages of Malte Laurids, shaken in every fiber of my body by all that I had summoned up in the way of vital and mortal pain—and I would not have been able to go on if I hadn't from time to time comforted my face with my two hands, telling myself: Patience, friend, this is the limit, after this you will stop writing. . . . That was exactly four years ago. That was when I first learned of psychoanalysis, from a close friend, on whom this discipline had dawned with the unexpected impact of a profound upheaval in the midst of completely unrelated activities, a most multifarious and finely tuned mind who already produced all sorts of sprouts and branches from this new phenomenon, though not yet a full-blown flower. Then he left Paris, I did not see him for a long time, but I learned that after going through an apprenticeship he had begun to treat patients; now he is actually planning

to take up the study of medicine."[2] Rilke wrote the last sections of *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* in the second half of 1909, finishing a first version of the end at the turn of the year 1909/1910. The friend he alludes to was Victor Emil Freiherr von Gebsattel, with whom he had become acquainted in Paris shortly before Christmas in 1908.[3] By 1912 Gebsattel, who was eight years Rilke's junior, had become a lay analyst; thereafter he went on to study medicine, receiving his medical degree in 1919.[4] Gebsattel was not in Paris from November 1909 until April 1910, however,[5] nor was Rilke himself in Paris from January 11, 1910 until May 24, 1910. So Rilke's "exactly four years ago" is inexact, both with reference to the composition of the last chapters of *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* and to hearing about psychoanalysis through Gebsattel. It seems most likely that Rilke heard about psychoanalysis in the second half of 1909, while completing *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* but before Gebsattel's November departure.[6] At this point, it is perhaps fitting to recall that Rilke was wont to complain about his memory.[7]

Even if Rilke learned of psychoanalysis from Gebsattel prior to November 1909, it is unlikely that Freudian ideas had any effect on the novel *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge,* the work where Rilke deals most centrally with childhood memory. All Rilke scholars agree here. *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* was conceived and started in 1904. In particular, the theme of childhood memory is not a late addition to the text, but is already present in the second version of the beginning, which Rilke wrote in 1904. In this second version of the beginning Malte says that a childhood memory that suddenly came back to him contained the most important lesson of his life, a lesson about personal strength. Personal strength would remain the main theme of the novel. In a work plan for *Malte* that was probably written around August 1908, Rilke writes in French that Malte, after arriving in Paris, "concentrates inwardly and recovers his distant memories, many of which he believed lost forever." A note to this sentence specifies: "1. Memories of childhood. 2. Memories of travels." Rilke continues: "He is flooded with memories."[8] Finally, in another work plan, one of the few items that bears a date is the childhood episode involving laces, and that date is 1 December 1908.[9] All of these various references to the theme of childhood memory in *Malte* predate Rilke's acquaintance with Gebsattel.

Starting in the winter of 1911–1912 Rilke intermittently entertained the idea of undergoing psychoanalysis.[10] He had long had the sense of carrying

something dark inside of himself that was capable of causing him trouble. His ongoing malaise, and above all his anguish at his faltering poetic productivity, made psychoanalysis look tempting. But he always shied away from actually going through with an analysis, fearing that precisely what was causing his problems was also the wellspring of his creativity and that if psychoanalysis got rid of it, he would find himself completely unable to write. He first seriously contemplated analysis after he completed *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge,* "who doubtless *is* in part created from my perils,"[11] in January 1910, and before the breakthrough that brought him the first lines of the first Duino Elegy on 21 January 1912. But his comments in letters to Lou Andreas-Salomé written late in 1911 and at the beginning of 1912 show that he had retreated from this form of cure, believing that psychoanalysis would make so much order in his mind that he would be unable to write poetry: "I think less than I used to of a physician. Psychoanalysis is too fundamental a help for me, it helps once and for all, makes a clean sweep of things, and to find myself swept clean one day might be even more hopeless than this disarray";[12] "Something like a disinfected soul results from it, a non-thing";[13] "I know now that analysis would make sense for me only if I were truly serious about that strange thought at the back of my mind—*no longer to write*" (Rilke's italics).[14] He also confided to Lou Andreas-Salomé that Freud's writings seemed to him "uncongenial and in places hair-raising."[15] He reflected to Gebsattel and to Lou that his work had always functioned as a kind of therapy.[16] When Gebsattel, who had become his wife Clara's analyst in spring 1911, offered in January 1912 to take him as a patient, he declined.[17] Like Rilke, Lou feared that psychoanalysis might impair his creativity and supported him in this decision. She sent him a telegram in which she discouraged him from taking the step,[18] even though she herself had recently become interested in psychoanalysis precisely on account of Rilke,[19] of whose instability she had been well aware since the two had been lovers in the period from 1897 to 1900. Lou herself had received first impressions of psychoanalysis from the Swedish doctor Poul Bjerre in August and September of 1911 and went on to study with Freud in Vienna, becoming an analyst in 1913.

Especially because of his very close friend Lou's involvement with psychoanalysis, Rilke remained interested in it. On a trip they took together in October 1913, he let Lou analyze some of his dreams.[20] He met Freud

twice, once at the 4th International Conference of Psychoanalysis in Vienna on 8 December 1913 and again on 20 December 1915. Yet when the topic of psychoanalysis arose in his 1914 correspondence with Magda von Hattingberg, he restated his conviction that undergoing analysis would do him more harm than good.[21] In subsequent years references to the doctrines of psychoanalysis nevertheless entered his writings more and more. Critics have noted the influence of these doctrines above all on the Third Elegy, begun early in 1912 and finished in late fall 1913, on "Der Brief des Jungen Arbeiters" ("The Young Workman's Letter") of 1922, and on the Eleventh Answer in the *Briefwechsel in Gedichten mit Erika Mitterer* (Correspondence in verse with Erika Mitterer, 1925).[22] In letters of 1914 to Lou and Marie von Thurn und Taxis, Rilke points out that Proust's *Du côté de chez Swann* is "very interesting for psychoanalysis." As Pfeiffer remarks, this shows how naturally he has come to make such observations.[23] By 1920 he actually used the word "verdrängt" ("repressed") to talk about his childhood.[24]

Rilke read Proust's *Du côté de chez Swann* soon after it appeared. Unsurprisingly, of its three parts he greatly preferred the first, the childhood memoir "Combray."[25] Childhood had been a long-standing preoccupation of his since at least the late 1890s, years before he started work on *Malte*. More overtly than in Proust's case, Rilke's early view of childhood stood in a direct line of descent from romanticism. He believed that children have a special receptive relationship to the world, and he considered childhood to be a treasure-trove of poetic inspiration. He also thought that his own childhood was very important. But he lacked the unproblematic access to his own childhood memories that we find in Wordsworth and other premodernist writers. He complained repeatedly that he could not remember much of his childhood. He seems genuinely to have been affected by an amnesia similar to the one which Proust ascribed to his protagonist. Even before psychoanalytic terminology became available to him, and frequently thereafter, we hear that an enormous divide, which would require superhuman courage as well as luck to cross in the opposite direction through an act of memory, separated his boundless, unconscious, passive childhood from his adulthood. In his view, he had plunged from childhood into adulthood as if through a chute. Misplaced parental expectations and a wrong education had transformed him, before he could properly get his bearings in the world of the child, into an active, resisting adult.

Starting in the period of his intimacy with Lou Andreas-Salomé, Rilke began to write about the "recovery" of his childhood as though this were something extremely special, rare, and desirable. He evokes childhood in general terms. In a letter of 5 March 1902 he wrote that seeing Moscow during his first trip to Russia, which had taken place in 1899, brought back his "whole childhood": "My entire childhood, which, submerged by the years of my frightened and confused youth, I had lost sight of, surfaced again like a sunken city." ("Meine ganze Kindheit, die, von den Jahren einer bangen und verworrenen Jugend überflutet, mir verlorengegangen war, tauchte wieder auf wie eine versunkene Stadt.")[26] It is not specific memories that seem to be at stake but a general sense of serendipitous recovery. His sentence seems to suggest that he felt again—perhaps only for a fleeting moment—the way he had felt as a child. A similar moment is described in the poem "Erinnerung" (Memory), which Rilke published in the second, enlarged edition of *Das Buch der Bilder (The Book of Images)* and which was probably written around the same time. "Erinnerung" speaks of an epiphanic recovery of past time that seems positively Proustian:

Memory

And you wait, await the one thing
that will infinitely enrich your life
the powerful, unusual,
the awakening of stones,
depths turned toward you.

The volumes in gold and brown
glimmer duskily on the bookstand
and you think of the lands you traveled through,
of pictures, of the robes
of women you lost.

And then all of a sudden you know: that was it.
You rise, and before you stands
the fear shape and prayer
of a bygone year.

[Erinnerung

Und du wartest, erwartest das Eine,
das dein Leben unendlich vermehrt;

das Mächtige, Ungemeine,
das Erwachen der Steine,
Tiefen, dir zugekehrt.

Es dämmern im Bücherständer
die Bände in Gold und Braun;
und du denkst an durchfahrene Länder,
an Bilder, an die Gewänder
wiederverlorener Fraun.

Und da weißt du auf einmal: das war es.
Du erhebst dich, und vor dir steht
eines vergangenen Jahres
Angst und Gestalt und Gebet. (I: 399)]

The titular subject, "memory," is glorified: it turns out that the meaning of life that the "you" sought lies in the recovery of a particular past state of mind. Surrounded by books, "you" let your mind roam over the past; all of a sudden "you" discover the all-important stretch of time. This poem does not say exactly what is recovered—it does not speak explicitly of childhood—, but in a poem in the third book of the *Stundenbuch* (The book of hours), "Mach Einen herrlich, Herr" (Make someone glorious, Lord), written in April 1903, one of the prayers for the person specially favored by the Lord is that he should know his childhood again: "Let him know his childhood again: the unconscious and the wondrous, and the infinitely dark, rich circle of legends of his prescient first years." ("Mach, daß er seine Kindheit wieder weiß;/ das Unbewußte und das Wunderbare/ und seiner ahnungsvollen Anfangsjahre/ unendlich dunkelreichen Sagenkreis" [I: 350]). Up to his experience of reliving his childhood fears during his 1902–1903 Paris stay, which inspired the composition of *Malte,* Rilke circled around his childhood with the air of someone who believed that something precious was to be found there. The Paris experiences made him realize that the hidden treasure was a Pandora's box.

In this chapter I will sketch (in II) what Rilke himself had to say about childhood, which forms a striking contrast to the picture he and others painted of his own childhood. Then (in III) I will discuss the resurgence of childhood fears that inspired the composition of *Malte,* together with Rilke's treatment of childhood memory in *Malte.* Since Rilke believed that he had

never gotten anywhere near the bottom of his childhood memories, not even with the composition of *Malte,* the question arises why Rilke both strongly desired to recover his early memories and failed in the attempt. This question, together with the nature of the childhood memories presented in *Malte,* suggests an investigation of the importance of things and place in Rilke's life and work, which I undertake in IV.

## II

From his early to his late poetry Rilke consistently wrote about childhood in affirmative terms and in tones of high seriousness. Until the turn of the century his work mainly echoed the "myth of childhood." In his early poems such as "Empor" (Upwards) (V: 91, end 1893) and "Kind im Wald" (Child in the wood) (V: 221, 5 November 1897) he invokes childhood as a romantic cliché. A poem of the Salomé period "Was war denn das in Kindertagen" (What was it then in days of childhood) expresses longing for an idealized childhood and its lost vision (VI: 594–595), while another contains the imperative "wie die Kinder werde" ("become like children") (I: 155, written 22 February 1898). He prefaces *Zwei Prager Geschichten* (*Two Prague Stories*, 1899) with the remark that his intention was "somehow" to get closer to his own childhood, "for all art longs to become richer through this past garden, through its scents and darknesses, to become more eloquent through its rustling" (VIII: 981). In "Im Gespräch" (In conversation), a story written in 1898 and published in 1901, one character asserts that "indeed, art is childhood" ("Kunst ist Kindheit nämlich," VII: 229), meaning that the child creates constantly and naïvely. Up to this point Rilke's work shows that he has above all ingested received ideas about childhood and the poetic vision of children.

Starting in 1900 Rilke begins to show some original thinking about childhood. In a diary entry of 15 February 1900 he states his conviction, foreshadowing *Malte,* that the only right way to lead one's life, and the only way to lead the life one was destined for, one's *own* life, is to be the "devout continuer of his childhood" ("frommer Fortsetzer seiner Kindheit").[27] He designates the end of childhood, presumably puberty, as a time of confusion and contingency; one should therefore go back to find the "edge," the point of transition between childhood and adulthood and continue right where one left off. Rilke's words here show enough hard thought so that he can no longer be accused of merely parroting a romantic cliché. In a similar vein, in

a letter of 17 February 1903, he tells the "young poet" Franz Xaver Kappus that childhood is his greatest treasure:

> And even if you were in some prison the walls of which let none of the sounds of the world come to your senses—would you not then still have your childhood, that precious, kingly possession, that treasure-house of memories? Turn your attention thither. Try to bring up the sunken sensations of that far past; your personality will grow more firm.[28]

Here the pursuit of childhood sounds not just desirable, but like an existential necessity. Childhood contains riches fit for a king; it is a "treasure house" of memories. They are "sunken," but one must try to "lift" them. In Rilke's view the recovery of childhood memories promises to stabilize the personality.

The views that Rilke expresses in these two texts of 1900 and 1903 persist in his poetry down to the end. An uncompleted elegy of December 1920 (III: 130–131) reiterates his conviction that childhood sustains the adult. He repeatedly returns to the idea that childhood breaks off suddenly, unfinished. In the 1906 poem "Kindheit" ("Childhood") he represents childhood as a time of passivity in which nothing really happened, but which paradoxically was fuller, "so filled with meeting, with reunion and with passing on" ("von Begegnen, von Wiedersehn und Weitergehn so voll") than the loneliness and confusion that followed it.[29] Rilke evidently pondered the inevitable rupture between childhood and adulthood and its consequences in depth, for in his "Gegen-Strophen" ("Antistrophes") of 1912, he hazards that *women* do not suffer from such a breaking off of childhood: "Childhood's breaking-off did you no harm" ("Abbruch der Kindheit war euch nicht Schaden").[30] Rilke harbored a view of women as superior beings who are more sensitive and have a greater capacity for unselfish emotion than men. He imagined that transitions in their lives were delicate, comparable to a veil falling ("Die Erwachsene" ["The Grown-up"]), not violent and disastrous as in the case of men. Among his late poems, "Imaginärer Lebenslauf" ("Imaginary Career") and "Dauer der Kindheit" ("Duration of Childhood") stand out for their characterizations of childhood (all passivity, waiting, yet boundless) and its contrast to adulthood. "Imaginary Career," written in 1923, gives a thumbnail sketch of life—plainly a man's life—that brings together the ideas that child-

hood broke off suddenly and that it is worth returning to.[31] In "Duration of Childhood" (1924) Rilke asserts dramatically that between one's long, passive childhood and adulthood there are "deaths," deaths that have to do with love.[32] The nefarious effects of so-called love are a theme familiar from *Malte*. In "Duration of Childhood," as in *Malte,* Rilke represents the possessive "love" of adults as an intrusive violation of the child's faltering quest for his own identity.

What little Rilke has to say about his own childhood is mainly negative. There are a few autobiographical documents: a letter he wrote at age nineteen to Valerie von David-Rhonfeld, in which he paints the picture of a lonely childhood; some very unfavorable letters about his mother written to Lou Andreas-Salomé and Clara Rilke; and various letters to various people and from various periods in which he recounts the horrors of the military academies where he spent the years from age ten to age sixteen.[33] We know about Rilke's childhood mainly through the efforts of his biographers. The first of these was his son-in-law Carl Sieber, whose *René Rilke: Die Jugend Rainer Maria Rilkes* (1932) has served scholars as a major source of information about Rilke's childhood, even though Sieber did not know Rilke personally and his work has been accused of being tendentious.[34] Erich Simenauer in *Rainer Maria Rilke: Legende und Mythos* believes that Rilke had a terrible childhood. Stefan Schank in *Kindheitserfahrungen im Werk Rainer Maria Rilkes* paints a particularly dire picture.[35] It does seem clear that Rilke was not optimally raised by his parents. An only child, he was overprotected, left alone, isolated from his peer group, not listened to or understood for what he was, not given any useful or formative instruction, and laden with inappropriate expectations. The word that persistently recurs in his own references to his childhood is "emptiness" ("Leere").[36] His parents' first child, a girl, had died. René, who had been born prematurely, was always in fragile health. His father was very concerned about him, hiring twenty-four nurses in his first year of life, since none was careful enough. He was not allowed or encouraged to play with other children except on his birthdays. René missed a great deal of school. He missed around 200 hours in his second year of school and missed the second half of his third year of school.

His father, Josef Rilke, had set out to become an officer; it was a lasting disappointment to him that there were too many applicants for the officer's patent, so that he had to settle for the job of a civil servant in the railways.

He dearly hoped that his son René would become an officer and succeed where he had failed. Much opprobrium has been heaped on Rilke's unhappy and ambitious mother, Sophia ("Phia") Rilke. It has been said that she was excessively concerned with appearances, at pains, for example, to make her modest household appear grand to the outside world, to the point of putting false labels on wine bottles. She has been said to have made a great show of Catholic piety. On the positive side, according to Sieber, she did encourage René's writing and painting.[37]

Phia would have preferred a second daughter to a son. Surely the oddest detail about Rilke's childhood is that, by Sieber's account, the boy was raised until the age of five as if he were a girl. He was clothed like a girl, with long curls, and played with dolls and a doll house. His mother played games with him in which she called him "Ismene"—his choice of name. Little boys were frequently dressed like little girls in the period in which Rilke grew up, but Rilke was feminized beyond the norm, evidently to compensate his mother for the loss of her daughter.

When he was nineteen, Rilke hated her. He wrote to Valerie von David-Rhonfeld about her lovelessness.[38] In later years he wrote a couple of letters in which he bitterly criticized her—her emptiness, her superficiality, her distracted piety. According to Salomé, even years later he could not believe that anyone would not find her abhorrent at first sight.[39] He was terrified of becoming like her. In fact, some of her social snobbery does seem to have rubbed off on her son. However, he never broke with her and always wrote her nice letters. The less he saw her, the nicer they got.

After 1884, when his parents separated, René stayed with his mother. His childhood became actively unhappy when he was placed in military boarding school at age ten. The letters he wrote home were not miserable, but later he complained bitterly about his stay there. His classmates tormented him. Finally, after five years, he quit on account of ill health.

In later life, especially in his late twenties when he first went to Paris, Rilke experienced a kind of personality dissociation—recorded in *Malte*—that psychoanalytic theorists like Winnicott, Kohut, and Laing attribute to inadequate mothering.[40] Literary critics and biographers of Rilke who subscribe to these psychoanalytic theories believe that Rilke's problem was indeed attributable to inadequate mothering, and they vilify Phia. The main accusation, framed extensively by Stefan Schank, is that she only gave her

love and attention to her child when he corresponded to the way she wanted him to be, to an image she had concocted. He was therefore obliged to construct a false self for himself that included, when he was small, pretending that he was a girl. His mother, so the argument goes, did not love him for himself and would neglect him inasmuch as he failed to please her. The "false self" hypothesis is especially persuasively argued by David Kleinbard in *The Beginning of Terror: A Psychological Study of Rainer Maria Rilke's Life and Work*. In Kleinbard's view, Rilke developed false selves both for his mother (a girl) and for his father (an officer).[41]

Rilke occasionally wrote about his own childhood in his early poetry, notably in a poem that begins "Ich sehne oft nach einer Mutter mich" (I often long for a mother, I: 137) of 24 October 1896, and in an attempt of 20 November 1896 to put his childhood "hand" experience into verse ("Ich weiß, als Kind: Mein Spielzeug fiel" [I know, as a child: my toy fell], VI: 548). But attempts to give his own childhood literary expression augmented in the period when he and the nearly fifteen-year-older Lou Andreas-Salomé were lovers, that is, as of May-June 1897. Rilke's relevant work in this period has been carefully researched by Stefan Schank, who devotes particular attention to Rilke's image of his mother.[42] Especially noteworthy are a couple of personal poems about his unreciprocated love for his mother (VI: 586 and 587) and the posthumously published autobiographical novella *Ewald Tragy* (written c. 1898), where he makes allusions to nightmarish childhood fever fantasies and to Tragy's demand for motherliness.

A poem of 20 September 1898, "Wenn die Uhren so nah" (When the clocks so close) is particularly interesting for the ambiguity of its message. It records the poet's seemingly triumphant experience of finding his childhood at night while asleep. But the experience then takes a negative turn. In the poem he enters an otherwise closed-off realm at night and discovers "my entire childhood around me" ("meine ganze Kindheit . . . um mich her," I: 198). This phrase, whose wording anticipates that of Rilke's joyful recovery of childhood in Moscow a year later ("My entire childhood . . . surfaced again"), has a positive ring, especially since he also experiences a sense of connectedness with his ancestors and thus "is never alone." But later in the poem he says: "I suffered." ("Ich litt.") It is unclear whether he suffered as a child or as an adult at night when "surrounded by his childhood," but either way, he suggests a connection between childhood and suffering. Then


*Figure 4.* Rainer Maria Rilke in 1880, dressed as a girl. René, as he was then called, was feminized beyond the norm. Until he was five years old Rilke's mother raised him like a girl. Rilke's protagonist Malte recalls playing "Sophie" (vs. the "bad" Malte) with his mother, just as Rilke himself played games with his mother in which she called him "Ismene." *Swiss Literary Archives.*


*Figure 5.* Prague: Melantrichova ulice very early in the morning. Rilke, who grew up in Prague, reflected on what Prague had meant for him when he was a child, summing it up with the word "heaviness." *Photo by Jindrich Eckert, 1901.*

comes another twist: the poem ends mysteriously, with a murmur ("murmelt es mit"—"it murmurs along [with me]") not clearly attributed to any speaker: "Wer weiß wer" (who knows who suffered?). This murmur puts not the suffering, but rather the personal pronoun, the "ich" of the preceding sentence, into question. The process by which the persona finds his childhood at night brings with it a loss of identity that his daytime self finds deeply frightening.

Rilke admired the way Magda von Hattingberg could remember her childhood. He remarked to her that he himself hardly had any memories of childhood at all.[43] Yet he was obviously haunted by certain frightening experiences or fantasies from childhood, since they occur more than once in his writing or in conversation. These include seeing a big hand under the bed (recounted in a poem of 1896 and in *Malte*); the sensation of lying on granite (in *Ewald Tragy, Malte,* and in a conversation with Lou in 1914); seeing a hole by the oven (in *Ewald Tragy* and in the 1914 conversation with Lou); fear of mirrors (in *Malte* and in many other literary texts, as well as in conversation with Lou); and fear of the Big Thing (in *Malte* and in the 1914 conversation with Lou).[44]

## III

The frightening resurgence of childhood fears that Rilke writes of in *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge,* his most elaborate account of childhood, took place two years after he and Lou had separated. During their three-year affair Lou had been a source of stability and an inspiration for Rainer. He called her his door to freedom.[45] She saw to it that he changed his name from the androgynous René to Rainer and talked through his problems with him. He appeared much improved until their second trip to Russia in 1900, when he relapsed. As his lifelong confidante Lou remained intimately acquainted with his physical and psychological problems. In her memoirs *Lebensrückblick* she writes of his emotional excesses, his physical oversensitivity, his "hysterical" tendency to convert energy into somatic symptoms instead of into poetic productivity,[46] and his fears, indeed panic attacks.[47] According to her account these problems got worse during their second trip to Russia, when Rainer experienced, for example, a panic attack on one of their walks, which was apparently brought on by the sight of a certain tree.[48] After this trip their

love relationship deteriorated. On February 26, 1901, Lou wrote him a farewell letter (the "letzter Zuruf," or "last appeal"), in which she stated that they both acknowledged that there was an "other" in him—a personality by turns manic, depressive, fearful, and ecstatic, one that lacked will. She told him not to contact her again unless he should find himself in his "hour of greatest need" ("Stunde höchster Not").[49] On June 23, 1903, Rilke felt that this hour had come and broke the silence with a letter.

Rilke had gone to Paris the previous August to write a commissioned monograph on Rodin. Since his marriage his relatives had cut off the small pension that had been his main source of support, and he had to make money. The encounter with Rodin was probably the most momentous of his life. It caused him to rethink his entire way of working. Paris had a very bad effect on him, however, causing him to relive his childhood fears. A more negative reaction to Paris than Rilke's initial one is hardly imaginable. Soon after he arrived he wrote to his wife Clara that the many hospitals frightened him, that he saw sick people and death everywhere, and that Parisians rushed about with a haste inimical to life.[50] Surprisingly, considering that he later chose to make Paris his home, he continued to express an extreme antipathy toward Paris even after his return to Worpswede in June 1903. He complained about its superficiality, its emptiness, and the way people rushed about. He compared it to a mirror with nothing in it, to Sodom and Gomorrah, and to the military academy.[51] Paris was "schrecklich" ("terrible") and "schwer" ("heavy").[52] He wrote to Otto Modersohn: "To my anguished feeling (geängstigtes Gefühl) Paris has something unspeakably dismaying. It has lost itself utterly, it is tearing like a star off its course toward some dreadful collision."[53] It made things all the worse that he had several bouts of influenza and fever while in Paris.[54]

Presently, during his stay in Paris, childhood fears resurfaced: "Long ago in my childhood, during the great fevers of my illnesses, huge indescribable fears arose, fears as of something too big, too hard, too close, deep unspeakable fears that I can still remember, and now these same fears were suddenly there again, but they didn't need night and fever as a pretext, they gripped me in the midst of day when I thought I was healthy and full of courage, and took my heart and held it over nothingness."[55] The experience was not one of remembering, but of being overwhelmed by old terrors, of being pushed down long-disused mental passageways against his will. It undoubtedly changed his

outlook on his childhood and made him realize how much of it was not just "forgotten" but not under his control. The Paris experiences and all his fears, including the childhood fever fears, would later find expression in *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*. Much earlier, during a spring trip to Viareggio in the course of the year when he had the terrifying experiences, he wrote the third book of *Das Stundenbuch,* a collection of deeply depressed poems, many about death. In particular the first poem, which unites the themes of darkness, stone, heaviness, hardness, intimidation by something large and overwhelming, and claustrophobia, expresses Rilke's characteristic fears and anticipates *Malte*. In a letter to Lou written on 30 June 1903, Rilke confided that the things around him finally changed so much that he no longer knew them. In *Malte* he would describe the experience of dying in similar terms. Such states recurred until finally Rilke, after struggling through one during the night of June 22, decided that the hour of greatest need had come. He broke his silence and wrote to the one person who could be counted on to understand him—Lou.

In the period of composition of *Malte,* Rilke, according to Lou's testimony, entertained the ambition of "accomplishing" his childhood (the German word is "leisten")[56]—that is, of arresting the superficial, forward flow of adulthood in order to reestablish continuity with the prematurely abandoned child's world and explore experiences that he had never mastered, but simply put aside. In the formulation of the fictitious character Malte Laurids Brigge: "The suspicion arose in me that as yet none of these influences and associations had really been mastered. One had one day secretly abandoned them, all unfinished as they were. So one's childhood also would still, in a way, have to be accomplished (würde gewissermaßen noch zu leisten sein), if one did not want to give it up as forever lost."[57] The closest he ever came to "accomplishing" his childhood, he admitted, was in *Malte* itself.[58] Yet in *Malte,* according to Lou Andreas-Salomé's report, he failed, substituting invention for experience. The task required too much courage. Salomé writes in her book *Rainer Maria Rilke:* "The first thing that it was incumbent upon him to do: to master the most remote, darkest memories of childhood, which he had always lacked the courage to summon up." She quotes Rilke as saying, "You see, it's like in the fairy tale, where you have to throw an enchanted man into the depths of a well. For three nights the redemptive hour strikes. All for nothing—for where would you get the courage?!"[59]

Even though the project appeared of paramount importance to Rilke, actually attaining the memories was apparently a frightening prospect, because it brought with it the danger of regressing to the point of reliving them—of repeating the type of experience that Rilke had lived through in 1902–1903 in Paris. Rilke's letters to Lou in the summer of 1903 about his Paris experiences are extremely revealing. Paris revived his childhood in a terror-provoking way, churning up old fears. His generalizations about the upsetting aspects of Paris evoke the theme of fragmentation that characterizes so many of Malte's childhood memories: "O what kind of world is this! Pieces, pieces of people, parts of animals, remnants of things that once functioned, and all of it still astir, as though they were being driven about in an uncanny wind, carried and carrying, falling and overtaking one another in their fall."[60]

Like his maker alienated and unsettled by Paris, Malte initially longs for his memories. The notebooks begin with images of horror and shock: Paris assaults Malte's sensorium with ubiquitous and impersonal death, rampant and disgusting sickness, speed, noise, and chaos. These things penetrate him and make him afraid. He reflects on the kind of itinerant life he is leading, "without a house, without inherited things, without dogs." He pursues: "If only one had at least one's memories." And then: "But who has them?" This is plainly a commentary on the times, which have become inimical to memory. He continues: "If only childhood were there—it is as though buried."[61] Thus even if in today's age one no longer has one's home, one's inherited things, and one's dogs (images that will continue to figure for Malte as ciphers for a happy existence), at least, Malte implies, one ought to be able to count on one's memories of childhood. But he does not even have those. He is stripped, poor, and hence endangered. He aspires to be a poet, a creator, yet he fears himself far from this exalted goal and instead dangerously close to the abject end of the human spectrum, to the passive and helpless castoffs of society he notices daily in Paris's streets.

The fictitious character Malte dramatizes how remembering can be double-edged. In the face of a gale wind of new impressions, Malte tries to hold onto things and himself. The very project of writing (the notebooks) expresses an impulse to clutch, not to let himself be blown away by the changes that are battering him so forcefully.[62] Writing is a hedge against fear, and memories, as he sets forth at length in a long and complex meditation, are a bridge to writing. He reasons that a poem can only be written

after certain prerequisites are fulfilled: one must have experiences, remember them, forget them, and then recover one's memories in order to write. Indeed, the memories must become "blood . . . glance and gesture,"[63] turning into and thereby constituting the very substance of the poet. Dualities inform Malte's anguished ruminations about himself: he assesses himself in terms of substance versus flimsiness, cohesiveness versus fragmentation, centeredness versus abjection, "poet" ("Dichter") versus "outcast" ("Fortgeworfener"). He consistently accords memory a positive value as something that would enable him to become strong. Malte believes in memory as something that stabilizes and centers. Memories, we can infer, would help him retain a sense of his identity; indeed, they would help him build an identity. Since Locke, memory has frequently been seen to ground identity. Moritz, for example, is convinced that this is the case, and he anticipates Rilke in associating memory and continuity with happiness, whereas singularity, disconnectedness, and fragmentation arouse chagrin and disgust.[64] But then Malte experiences the unwelcome arrival of more memories than he had bargained for, and different ones from the kind he had hoped for. Malte's statements speak for themselves: "With whatever comes there rises a whole tangle of insane memories, which hangs about it like wet seaweed on some sunken thing. Lives of which one would never have known mount to the surface and mingle with what has actually been, and push aside past matters that one had thought to know: for in that which ascends is a rested, new strength, but that which has always been there is wearied by two frequent remembrance" (766, 60). "All forgotten fears are there again" (767; 60). "I asked for my childhood and it has come back, and I feel that it just as difficult as it was before, and that it has been useless to grow older" (767; 61).

Lou warns in *Lebensrückblick* against taking Malte's childhood for Rilke's own. Rilke also stated that Malte's childhood was not his own childhood, especially the settings.[65] Yet the recurrence elsewhere in Rilke's work of certain motifs from Malte's childhood suggests strongly that Rilke did not pull these memories of Malte's out of the air. Malte's fever fears as well as the hand episode have been documented as autobiographical; the themes of other childhood memories, such as mirrors and laces, run through Rilke's life and work.[66] At issue, in any event, is not the biographical accuracy of each memory (a problematic notion in any case), but the fact that Rilke presented episodes possessing a high degree of homology with each other as

credible specimens of childhood memories—credible because of their similarity to documented childhood memories of Rilke's, which serve to anchor them. As will be seen, the episodes focus on things and spaces, but their homology is not based in metaphor as in Proust.

By examining the childhood memories Rilke narrates in *Malte* and elsewhere I hope to shed light on the curious conjunction between the high importance Rilke attaches to the recovery of his early memories and his inability to accomplish the task (contrasting with Proust's triumphant success). Why were his childhood memories at once so important and so difficult of access? My attempt to answer that question will not involve dissolving these memories psychoanalytically, as other critics have done. Thus, Freudian critics have interpreted the memories as symbols for repressed psychic content, where the Big Thing is an erection,[67] the hand episode a symbol for an attempt at masturbation thwarted[68] or for sexual abuse by an adult,[69] and the sensation of lying stiff on granite another symbol for hindered masturbation.[70] Huyssen has read external fragmentation in the memories as a projection of inner fragmentation, that is, of Malte's inadequate ego formation resulting from a failed transition from the pre-oedipal to the oedipal.[71] My intention is not to hurry past these memories en route to some presumptive depth, but to look more closely at their surface, namely, at the represented episodes and emotions themselves. In other words, I want to look at the (neglected) manifest content of the memories without assuming a priori that they symbolize or project something else, that they are mere screens for a hidden psychoanalytic depth. Admittedly, these memories are as if made for psychoanalysis. My reading of their surface suggests, in particular, the applicability of Winnicott's theories of trauma and ego disintegration resulting from maternal separation. Winnicott relates the experience of dissolution to the trauma caused by excessively lengthy maternal absence under the age of two. Indeed, the plethora of caretakers Rilke had in the first year of his life does suggest that he suffered in infancy from frequent maternal absence. According to Winnicott, things, transitional objects, are somewhat useful in bridging the gap caused by the mother's absence.[72]

In order to evoke childhood experience and emotions, Rilke employs, above all, a semiotics of object and place. Thus, for example, objects figure *enclosure* (a desk, its drawers, Malte's room) or *the minuscule or trivial* (a crumb,

a thread), or *the unpredictable and dangerous* (the mirror), or *the aesthetic* (laces). Things and places reign in Malte's childhood memories. They are the heroes and villains of his childhood. Rilke also employs a semiotics of narrativity: is the memory such that a story can be told about it, or is it untellable, such that it forces rupture?

The importance of objects in this rendering of childhood memories, the localization of Malte's highly charged affects in the behavior of objects, is given its foundational moment in the episode on birthdays. In this episode Rilke advances a mythology of perfect happiness that is based in a small child's possession of an object. Malte admits that this Garden-of-Eden happiness of early childhood is conjectural—he cannot actually remember it. But considering how disappointing he finds birthdays in his later childhood, he reasons that his assumption of what he calls a "right to joy" *must have been* based on some actual prior experience of joy. It is the possession of a desired object—or more tellingly, desire for an object that happens already to be in his possession—that renders the small child happy. Malte writes of this period of early childhood as "the stage when one grasps at everything and gets simply everything, and when, with unerring power of imagination one enhances those objects one happens to be holding just then with the primary-colored intensity of one's just then prevailing desire."[73] There is a perfect fusion here between having and wanting, an ideal completion of the subject by the object. Later this simple pleasure is complicated and undermined by the agency of people, of whose role the child increasingly becomes aware. The hypothetical ideal object is replaced by toy boxes with empty last layers and overwound mechanical mice—images of disappointment in the adults' ability to understand and provide what would make the child happy. The child is emotionally dependent on people, on what they do and what they do not do, on their being there or not there, yet Rilke, here as elsewhere, chooses to express this dependence through the vicissitudes of objects.

Malte's positive memories are all associated with Maman or Mademoiselle or Ingeborg—with feminine presence. They include Ingeborg's small yellow desk with its little drawers, which Maman had moved into her room, and Malte sitting in his room in the lamplight together with Mademoiselle—both images of enclosure, of safety. The memory of unrolling laces with Maman is a delightful, often repeated adventure. These positive memories involve Malte's habitual action, and moreover entail focusing in on an object,

Malte's "losing himself" in contemplation of precise details, or in other words, "being transported"—which, according to the narrative theoretician Richard J. Gerrig, is a frequently cited experience of narrative.[74] Light and color play a role in all of these positive memories: Ingeborg's yellow desk has red, blue, and violet flowers painted on it, with green arabesque borders. Sitting in the lamplight with Mademoiselle, Malte paints a "gaily colored" knight. The laces are like a voyage in a snowy landscape.

The laces, with their effect of exercising the subject's imagination in a controlled way, represent the aesthetic. Rilke had an enduring fondness for laces: as an adult he had his own collection of them, which he showed to Marthe Hennebert the first time he met her on July 4, 1911.[75] In the *Malte* episode, unrolling them not only fits into the set of beloved childhood pastimes that include looking through the button box, the jewelry box, and the interesting things in one's mother's drawers, but is, because they always appear in the same order, like hearing a story told, reading a book, or watching a movie. Especially the progression from the more banal to the more exotic gives them a recognizable plot structure, like a story. Each named lace suggests something different, such as a barred window, a garden, or a flower. Looking at them transports Malte along with his mother into different realms of metaphoric experience. To an extent the laces may depict flowers, but this does not sum up the matter, because they possess a much greater art of floral suggestion than a copy; they suggest action-filled plants whose leaves open and whose tendrils grope, which form gardens. Malte and his mother trek through a cottage garden, formal gardens, a crowded warm greenhouse, a snowy wilderness. Looking at the laces also transforms an inner space that seems shared. Malte and his mother become by turns tired, confused, cold, and warm; their vision is by turns barred, overwhelmed with closeness and warmth, and fringed with frost flowers. The transformation of the subject is typical of Malte's childhood experience—but whereas it is usually frightening, here it is controlled.

Malte's frightening memories outweigh the pleasant ones. The objects or places to which they are attached have a curious negative potential: they lend themselves to being the vehicles for a sudden flip into surreality, into nonnarratability, which is experienced by the child as a nightmarish attack. Rilke actually experienced such episodes, according to Lou's stories about how things would suddenly "turn eerie" ("vergespenstern") for him.[76] The central

object/space that signifies fear is the dark mirror. A mirror in the dark, as some of us have experienced as children, can be terrifying: it is an eerie, cavernous, unreal empty space out of which anything could come, especially if it catches your image, into which you could disappear, and out of which you could reappear as—not you. Rilke's frequent use of mirrors in his early work testifies to his fearful fascination with them. In "Teufelsspuk" (Devil's mischief) a mirror spits out a knot of limbs and folds (VII: 576); in "Das Lachen des Pán Mráz" (Pán Mráz's laughter) the mirrors are voracious (VII: 582). Lou writes in her *Freud Journal:* " 'The mirror,' 'mirroring,' as earliest childhood impression; from that time when dressed as a girl (Renée) he stood in front of it; often rushing through all the rooms to look at the mirror, whenever he had been disguised in some costume, or ornaments, or a mask."[77]

In *Malte* the dark mirror is represented by various objects and spaces. First, of course, by the famous attic mirror that seizes the upper hand when Malte parades before it in costume, dictates a different reality to him, and finally annihilates him. In the hand-under-the-table-episode Malte also in essence falls into the trap of a dark mirror, even though there is no mention of an actual mirror: a "large, extraordinarily thin" hand comes groping out of the far wall in the gloom under the table, mimicking the motions of Malte's hand as he searches for his crayon.[78] The world under the table, into which the red crayon has dropped and disappeared, is signalled as the opposite of the lamplit world above the table that Malte shares with Mademoiselle through Rilke's emphasis on its very blackness.

If light and color characterize pleasant memories, Rilke stages many of Malte's frightening memories in a half-light or gloom. Dark, receding spaces are the emotional opposite of bright, enclosed spaces. The ancestral dining room in Denmark where Christine Brahe's ghost appears is such a space: its dark heights are vampiristic, sucking, dissolving, emptying. "This lofty and, as I suspect, vaulted chamber was stronger than everything else. With its darkening height, with its never quite clarified corners, it sucked all images out of one without giving one any definite substitute for them. One sat there as if dissolved; entirely without will, without consciousness, without desire, without defence. One was like a vacant spot."[79] A childhood fever fear narrated in *Ewald Tragy* in which a window above the stove provokes terror involves a similar breach of enclosure: "A small window, high behind the stove. High behind the stove—a small window. Oh, whichever way you say it,

nobody can understand how dreadful this window is. Behind the stove a window, imagine! Isn't it horrible to think that there should be something else behind it? A small room? A large hall? A garden? Who knows?"[80] Here Rilke does not use the technique, perfected later in *Malte,* of making the object the actor, but rather focuses on the child's inexplicable fear. According to Lou, this account is based on an autobiographical childhood memory, perhaps of a daydream, in which the hole is "of exactly the same proportions as the stove standing upright next to it" and makes it possible "to see into the darkness."[81] Thus the mirror motif as well as the fear of an unknown world "beyond," which the familiar household world scandalously allows to penetrate it, is built into this memory; it is another instantiation of the "dark mirror."

Rilke is not the only childhood autobiographer to attest that darkness and breaches of enclosure were terrifying: Pierre Loti in *Le Roman d'un enfant* (1890) writes that one of his first two vivid memories from earliest infancy (age two) was of the terror caused by a half-open door leading to a dark hall that in turn led to an even darker salon.[82]

In Rilke's case, these perforations of enclosure, these receding heights and depths, these trick walls and counterspaces, have their terrifying inverse: space closes in. These claustrophobic encounters involve being crushed or buried alive, typically by stone. A fever dream from *Ewald Tragy* recounts that "stone is under his limbs, and into his groping hands presses grey granite, cold, hard, ruthless. His poor, hot body burrows into these rocks, and his feet are roots, absorbing the frost which slowly seeps through his freezing veins."[83] In *Malte* this fever fear is narrated more briefly: "The fear that it may be granite I am lying on, grey granite."[84] In *Rainer Maria Rilke* Lou recounts a recurrent childhood nightmare of his, according to which he lay next to a grave into which a gravestone bearing his name threatened to cast him if he made the slightest move.[85] Such sensations persisted into Rilke's adulthood, as shown by the first poem of the third book of the *Stundenbuch,* "Vielleicht, daß ich durch schwere Berge gehe" (Perhaps I go through heavy mountains), which evokes the idea of "going through mountains," buried in their stone.[86] They may explain Rilke's predilection for the word "schwer" (heavy; also, difficult) to indicate oppressiveness: Paris is a "schreckliche und schwere Stadt" ("terrible and heavy city"); a visit to Prague reminds Rilke of "seine Schwere" ("its heaviness"), and so forth.[87]

A maneuver of things, with which they exacerbate Malte's fevers, is to threaten to transform themselves from minuscule, harmless, everyday things into different, more dangerous things. What was tiny could suddenly become large; what was soft could become hard or sharp; what was light could become heavy. No consistent plot line can develop in such protean surroundings. "The fear that a small, woollen thread that sticks out of the hem of my blanket may be hard, hard and sharp like a steel needle; the fear that this little button on my night-shirt may be bigger than my head, big and heavy; the fear that this crumb of bread now falling from my bed may arrive glassy and shattered on the floor, and the burdensome worry lest at that really everything will be broken, everything for ever."[88] This capricious misbehavior of things, which break their compact to remain stable, seems to mask a childish obsessive-compulsive fear of the "step-on-a-crack-break-your-grandmother's back" type: one might, quite by accident, suddenly lose control over one's actions and, in one's omnipotence, cause irreparable harm. Thus some of the transgressions involve personal agency: for example, Malte's fear "that if I fell asleep I might swallow the piece of coal lying in front of the stove" (767; 61), or his careless knocking over of a table in the mirror episode, which causes precious fragile things to shatter on the floor. Malte is extraordinarily phobic about the breakage, shattering, or destruction of objects.

Casting childhood memories in *this* form explains, perhaps, why it was both important and impossible for Rilke to recover his childhood memories. Important, inasmuch as Rilke had long since resolved to be the "devout continuer of his childhood." He had recognized that remembrance fosters a sense of identity. The ability to recollect, to possess the past in the present, creates an interior space in which a sense of self can dwell, a space that makes productive self-consciousness possible. Long before his first trip to Paris he had actively sought to regain contact with his childhood and had embraced serendipitous moments of recovery, believing that childhood was synonymous with art and creativity. He had identified the gloomy and disorienting woods of the psyche not with childhood but with its end, with adolescence. What then rendered the jump into the rabbit hole, or "well" as Rilke called it, impossible, is that in a time of great distress, childhood turned on Rilke. Instead of giving solace, it sided with the forces of confusion and unexpectedly fueled the terror. As told in Malte's story, Malte sought to find rooted-

ness in the things and scenes of childhood, but in fact found there the roots of his present alienation. "I have an inner self of which I was ignorant" ("Ich habe ein Inneres, von dem ich nicht wußte")[89]: scary things welled up out of the black box of Malte's memory. The scariness took precisely the form of permeable spaces, unpredictable things, and the image of the self distorted beyond recognition—the flip side of what the return to childhood was supposed to guarantee.

## IV

It is particularly telling, given the close links Rilke believed to exist between childhood and things, that Rilke let Malte's childhood fears play themselves out as a drama of upsettingly unstable, unreliable, and independently minded objects. Both in his writing about childhood and about his own childhood, he repeatedly emphasized throughout his oeuvre the centrality of things in childhood experience and the importance of things for children. He himself, by his own admission, was particularly attached to things as a child. "I began with *things,* which were the true confidants of my lonely childhood, and it was already a great deal that I managed, without outside help, to get as far as animals."[90] In the same letter of 22 February 1923 to Ilse Jahr he confesses that he acquired a sense of people, of human community, of brotherliness, relatively late in life, namely, when he traveled to Russia. Malte's sensibility as a child and as an adult reflects this progression: in the sections of the novel that deal with childhood memory things play an important role and frequently, as we have seen, quite an animate one, whereas people—the grandparents, Erik, the servants—are seen with the reifying eyes of the child. Maman is an exception, but Maman, as critics have observed, appears to be a wish-fulfillment figure projected onto Malte's past, quite the antithesis of Rilke's actual mother.[91] In contrast, the twenty-eight-year-old Malte's sympathy for people goes alarmingly beyond the point of empathy to become identification, an identification that is all the more painful because he is drawn to the outcasts, the poor, and the sick of the city as if to magnets. Inasmuch as this fragmented narrative has a plot, it tells the story of how Malte overcomes his identificatory vision, his propensity to let himself be touched to the quick by his surroundings and to evaporate into other people, and acquires somewhat more personal stability than he had at the outset.

What is the basis for Rilke's affinity for things? In his writing on the subject, he advances two principal reasons. The first links things to the genesis of the future poet's visionary powers; the second asserts that things are love objects to which a child can safely form an attachment. Both stylize things as the child's special friends, which are invested with what most of us think of as human qualities. Inevitably and obviously, this praise of things bears an implicit reproach against people—though this is its most banal signification.

In both early and late poems, Rilke maintained that things speak a language that is audible to him. Rilke had a way of formulating his poetic powers with reference to things. The idea that things speak to him is one variation on that theme, one that strengthens the bond that connects the poet with the child. Thus, in a poem of 1897 Rilke defended the "music" of things against people's words. It seems to be a child who speaks:

I'm so afraid of people's words.
They say everything so clearly:
And this is called dog and that is called house,
and here's the beginning and here's the end.

Their mind, too, their mocking game, makes me afraid.
They know all that will happen and all that once was.
No mountain dazzles them any more.
Their garden and property border on God.

I always want to warn and defend: Stay away.
I so much love to hear things sing.
When *you* touch them they are stiff and dumb.
You kill all my things.

[Ich fürchte mich so vor der Menschen Wort.
Sie sprechen alles so deutlich aus:
Und dieses heißt Hund und jenes heißt Haus,
und hier ist Beginn und das Ende ist dort.

Mich bangt auch ihr Sinn, ihr Spiel mit dem Spott,
sie wissen alles, was wird und war;
kein Berg ist ihnen mehr wunderbar;
ihr Garten und Gut grenzt grade an Gott.

Ich will immer warnen und wehren: Bleibt fern.
Die Dinge singen hör ich so gern.
Ihr rührt sie an: sie sind starr und stumm.
Ihr bringt mir alle die Dinge um.
(I: 194–195)]

While there are some faint echoes here of Novalis's idea that children and poets are particularly attuned to the ciphers of the natural world, the things Rilke mentions are ordinary and seemingly randomly chosen (dog, house, mountain), so that the poem quickly moves to its main point—the speaker's animus against the adults who with their words cut short his solitary acoustical pleasures with things. While it is evidently critical of language, this poem was written well before the classic turn-of-the-century language-crisis texts, Mauthner's *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache* (Contributions to a critique of language) and Hofmannsthal's "Ein Brief" ("Letter of Lord Chandos"). Here as later in *Malte,* Rilke's protests over language are accompanied by the conviction that there is something there that he can see without the words, through the words, and in spite of the words. Things, which have their own "song," figure as the allies of poetic sensibility, whereas everyday language is an impediment to it. Language is a blunt instrument thoughtlessly wielded by insensitive, unpoetic, self-seeking, know-it-all people who sacrifice things to their own cleverness and whom Rilke accuses of wishing to supplant the deity. In a quirkily infantile twist, Rilke wants to keep other people from "touching" his precious things. In the late poem "Duration of Childhood" he ascribes explicitly to the child the power to hear the language of things, communications which adult voices then stifle. The grown-ups drown out the voices of the things that speak quietly to the child: "What the window or path/ or the mouldy smell of a drawer/ confided to him yesterday: they drown it out and destroy it." ("Was ihm das Fenster, was ihm der Weg/ was ihm der dumpfe Geruch einer Lade/ gestern vertraut hat: sie übertönens, vereitelns.")[92]

In his Rodin lecture of 1907, a text he composed in the period when *Malte* was in progress, Rilke wrote about the enormous importance of things for children. In his view, things play a crucial formative role for the developing human being. His seriousness here is comparable to Wordsworth's when the latter writes about the importance of nature as a teacher.

His formulation in the "original version" of 1905—a lecture Rilke held on several occasions—is even more revelatory than the four paragraphs he devoted to the subject in the version that was published in the second edition of his Rodin monograph in 1907. The 1905 version deserves to be quoted at length:

> If you can manage, go back with part of your grown-up emotion to any one of your childhood things that meant something to you. Consider whether there was anything that was closer, more familiar, and friendlier to you than such a thing; whether everything else—except it—wasn't capable of holding in store for you a pain, a disappointment, an unexpected farewell. Whether your first experiences didn't involve it. Whether it wasn't *a thing* that you first shared your little heart with like a piece of bread that has to suffice for two?—In the saints' legends you later found a devout joy, a faithful humility, a readiness to be everything, that seemed familiar to you, because some little piece of wood once did that and took on that role for you. And the inexhaustible interpretability of this little forgotten object made you want to follow the figures (Gestalten) and accompany them. This worthless something prepared you for your relationships with people and much more: through its existence, through the way it looked, through the way it finally broke or got lost
>
> (or through its mysterious slipping away)
>
> you experienced everything human, even deeply into death.[93]

The thing here is seen to prefigure the saint in its modesty and cooperativeness. Things do not give pain, they do not disappoint, they do not leave. Rilke makes it sound as though if it were not for things, life would be impossibly discouraging for the child. Wordsworth attributed to the mother's eye the role of kindling the infant spirit. Rilke attributes this role to things.

A return to childhood, therefore—finding one's childhood memories—should, in the terms in which Rilke thought about things, mean a return to the era of the melodious, speaking, and friendly thing. To an extent Malte does find things that radiate comfort and reciprocity (the desk, the laces),

but the quest for childhood turns out to be fraught with peril, because at every turn it risks uncovering an underside where things dissolve into fear. Things for Rilke are far from being mere screens, as psychoanalysis would have it; no narrative can take away their power; they are full-fledged entities that hold surprises in store for human beings.

The importance Rilke ascribed to things for children, as well as the prominence he gave to things and place in his construction of Malte's childhood memories, resonate curiously with the role things and place play in his later life. Things and place remained exceptionally important for Rilke as an adult. His letters attest that his sense of well-being depended above all, besides on his work, on place. Place alone (devoid of friends!) was capable of inspiring and even elating him. Writing to Marie von Thurn und Taxis in 1920, Rilke expressed his great joy at seeing Paris again after the war, and noted, "I have the singular good fortune to live through *things*" (Rilke's italics).[94] Thus he is still a "thing person"—and the "things" that delight him are the buildings, parks, and atmosphere of Paris. Again and again Rilke expresses his affection for "things," and his preference for "things" over people. In a letter to Lou Andreas-Salomé of 1 August 1903 he writes, speaking of a possible trip to the small town of Ravello, perched on the hills over the sea near Amalfi: "Perhaps there solitude will descend on me along with the great stillness that everything in me longs for; then I will live quietly among things (im Umgang mit Dingen) and be grateful for all that keeps the clamor of daily life away from me."[95] In a letter to Michael Georg Conrad of 27 February 1914: "One often just lives, as it often happens to me, completely in the world of things, where there are no people. . . . As if one were the only human being."[96] In a letter to Prinz Schönburg, 12 January 1920: "I hoped . . . to find somewhere a quiet old garden pavilion with old things (Gerät), in which I could more or less keep myself hidden. . . . I just am ashamed to be so entirely dependent on externals. I can't change it, I know I shall not be able to take up my work in full measure until some such refuge comes to my assistance; contact with people has now, more than ever, something confusing about it . . . and my work was always so much inspired by being alone. . . . And my wishing for *old* things about me, that doesn't mean being choosy or aesthetic affectation either; what humaneness have *they* not brought me (how often have I experienced it!) in the very times when all intercourse had been given up: how much they tell, how much destiny passes from them to one

who since childhood has held with *things*. That I have done since away back with eagerness and absorption."[97] In a letter to Ilse Jahr of 2 December 1922: "My world begins with *things*—, and hence in it even the least human being is already frighteningly big, yes, almost an excess" (Rilke's italics).[98]

Finally, things are more than just personally important for Rilke and also more than just an element in his thinking about childhood. "Things" for Rilke are a poetological theme in their own right, if anything more important than childhood, a building block without which the Rilkean edifice would topple. Up to his encounter with Rodin and Cézanne and the composition of the *Neue Gedichte (New Poems),* when the appropriation of the thing in its specificity became his expressed artistic goal, he almost always referred to things in the abstract—as "Dinge," "things"—much as Proust wrote of "choses." The word "Ding" sounds throughout Rilke's writing, especially from 1899 through the composition of *Malte.* Above all it is a key word in his writing about poetry and art. He had had ideas about creativity, vision, and things before meeting Rodin. In 1900 he wrote a sequence of poetological poems, published in *The Book of Images,* that in their broadest terms conceive the poetic project as one of seeing things afresh and well and of giving voice to things. The poet's discernment and vocalization of the thing is aspired to, approached, despaired of, and celebrated in such poems as "Eingang" ("Entrance," I: 371), which allegorizes the creative process as a magical act of moving a tree with one's eyes; "Am Rande der Nacht" ("On the Edge of Night," I: 400), where the poet begins with grandiose claims, but then doubts his power to give voice to things; and "Fortschritt" ("Progress," I: 402), where he is once again optimistic.[99] Other unpublished poems of the same period that express similar ideas are "Es ist die Stunde" (It is the hour, VI: 658), where the poet is seen to give things their ultimate meaning; "Tagebuchblatt" (Diary leaf, VI: 664), in which Rilke expresses his special closeness to things; "Wer sind wir denn, daß wir so Weises dürfen" (Who are we that we may act so wisely, VI: 673), about the way things speak about people who used them; and "Ein einziges Gedicht, das mir gelingt" (A single poem of mine that succeeds, VI: 674), where the poet is seen to give things their voices. The first poem of *The Book of Images,* "Entrance," comes especially close to Rilke's later thinking about art, seeing, and imagination. The creative act, in which the reader of this poem written in the second person is invited to participate, consists in raising one's eyes from the "used" threshold of one's

house and moving a tree (and hence a natural object, not an invented one) to the horizon ("vor den Himmel" or "against the heavens"), that is, to the furthermost place accessible to human knowledge before the transcendent begins, with one's eyes. Here as later Rilke locates the primal creative act in the visual sense; creation starts with "seeing."

The crisis period of 1902–1903 was a crucial turning point for Rilke as an artist. From August 1902, when he made his first trip to Paris, until June 1903, when he wrote his "hour of greatest need" letter to Lou, fear was, as we have seen, the affect that most held him in its grip. He described his fear in a letter to Lou of 18 July 1903 as a rapidly growing metropolis where terrible things happen.[100] This fear, he wrote, had already started growing in him in Westerwede, but then Paris, for which he was completely unprepared, made it mushroom out of all proportion. He felt the poverty and fear of people and shared it. Everywhere he saw people who were maimed, sick, impoverished, and abject, living on disgusting rubbish, and these people, and all of this horror, gave him the sensation of a world that, as we have seen, consisted of dismembered pieces whipped up and tumbled together by the wind. Fear had to do with abrupt changes, with the perception of dismemberment, and with uncontrollable chaos—just as he represented it later in *Malte*.

But if Paris terrified Rilke, Rodin, whom he had gone there to study, impressed him beyond all measure. Rodin's creative ability and productivity, combined with his awe-inspiring commitment to work and his perfect stability as a human being, neither of which Rilke possessed, effected a revolution in Rilke's thinking about himself and his art. He began to demand of himself that he emulate and live up to the model of Rodin. To Rilke's mind Rodin was a creator of things. Rilke's letters to Lou of 8 August 1903 and 10 August 1903 are a paean to the making of things as practiced by Rodin. Rodin's sculpture, Rilke asserts, responds to the transitoriness of phenomena in the world, to the endangered nature of beauty. Rodin made things, "for things endured"[101]—things that would exist in the calmer, less threatening, more eternal dimension of space. In Rilke's view Rodin's art objects were superior to the real objects themselves. They existed, Rilke wrote, free from contingency and unclarity and "outside of time." Reading his own problems into the admired sculptor, he writes that Rodin's work, with which he surrounded himself, protected him: "His very work has protected him: he has lived in it as in a wood."[102]

The Paris experiences, where things themselves took control and provoked terror in Rilke, together with Rodin's awe-inspiring *production* of things (as opposed to mere insight into things), appear to have bankrupted the possibilities of the magical act of "Entrance." "Entrance" is about pushing back horizons, enlarging space. When Rilke writes about Rodin, he sees created things quite oppositely, as erecting a protective barrier, as establishing a defense. The old belief in poetic vision cedes to an imperative to *make things*. We have seen that in Rilke's mind things had a Winnicottian importance for children. In these letters to Lou Andreas-Salomé about Rodin, similarly, things signify comfort, stability, and continuity. Likewise, Malte's wistful images of security will always involve familiar things, preferably in the context of a place that has been and always will be one's own (the ancestral home), and sometimes including a dependable and adoring dog. "Memories" are a part of Malte's image of security.

The encounter with Rodin convinced Rilke that he had to passionately embrace his art to the exclusion of all else. Rodin, he wrote, was "a solitary" ("ein Einsamer").[103] Rilke came to the realization that he needed solitude. To his wife Clara Rilke he wrote on 8 April 1903 that "jeder muß in seiner Arbeit den Mittelpunkt seines Lebens finden" ("each much find in his work the center of his life"),[104] and he asserted that for his work, continuous solitude as a basic state was essential. On August 8 he wrote the same thing, much more sharply formulated, to Lou: "What was my house other than a stranger for whom I was expected to work, and what are those close to me other than a guest who doesn't want to leave? . . . O Lou, in one poem of mine that succeeds there is much more reality than in every relationship and affection I feel."[105] This decision to lead a solitary life in future was in fact a return to the circumstances of his lonely childhood, where things had been more important to him than people. From childhood on Rilke had learned to identify solitude with safety.[106] It is the Rilke who had just gone through the crisis year in Paris who says that neither people nor books help him, but that "only things speak to me." Simenauer, who is particularly intrigued by Rilke's devotion to things, sees this devotion as deeply intertwined with his passion for solitude.[107] He oversimplifies the case, however, when he concludes that Rilke simply wanted to avoid having to deal with people. In fact, things deeply intrigued Rilke; they absorbed him. Rilke himself convincingly stated the case for solitude—a solitude he would maintain

and defend for the rest of his life—when he wrote to Magda von Hattingberg that the proximity of people would interfere with his favorite pastime of "seeing into" ("einsehen") things—that is, contemplating and understanding things with sympathetic imagination. He gives as an example projecting himself into the mind of a dog.[108]

The encounter with Rodin also gave Rilke the conviction that he had to start working in a disciplined fashion. In the letter of 10 August 1903 to Lou, Rilke quotes Rodin as saying, "Il faut toujours travailler—toujours."[109] In contrast to Rodin's fearlessness, his calm, his balance, he feels that he himself has been a mere stage, a place that events pass through, forming "no core," "no firm, unassailable place" ("kein Kern," "keine feste Stelle") in himself.[110] And therefore, he too wants to make things: "Somehow I too must find some way to make things; written, not sculpted things—realities that stem from handcraft."[111] But he wrote that did not yet know what techniques to use. He merely surmised that he would have to discover "the smallest basic element, the cell of *my* art" ("das kleinste Grundelement, die Zelle *meiner* Kunst" [Rilke's italics]).[112]

This redefinition of his art as the creation of things is the point at which one sees Rilke's reflections on his recent psychological crisis converge with the new ideas about aesthetics that had begun to preoccupy him since his acquaintance with Rodin. In a letter to Lou of 18 July 1903, in which he ends a long list of the horrible sights in Paris with a description of a man twitching with St. Vitus' dance on the Boulevard St. Michel (an episode that he will take up in *Malte*), he asserts: "Had I been able to *make* these fears I underwent, had I been able to shape things out of them, real quiet (stille) things that are bliss and freedom to create and that, once created, exude reassurance, then nothing would have befallen me." ("Hätte ich die Ängste, die ich so erlebte, *machen* können, hätte ich Dinge bilden können aus ihnen, wirkliche stille Dinge, die zu schaffen Heiterkeit und Freiheit ist und von denen, wenn sie sind, Beruhigung ausgeht, so wäre mir nichts geschehen" [Rilke's italics]).[113] Rilke hoped that he could somehow convert his overwhelming emotion of the time, fear, into literary productivity. In his memorable formulation, he hoped to get rid of his Paris fears by making things: "Dinge machen aus Angst" ("making things out of fear").

This idea may have come as a revelation to Rilke. Yet the notion that converting harrowing experiences into art will bring a liberation from

them was hardly a new one. Aestheticians and artists have repeatedly singled out trauma and anxiety as engines of artistic production. Vico believed that fear was at the origin of poetry: thunder and lightning caused the first men to picture Jove to themselves in the sky.[114] Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy* saw the origin of Apollonian art in an impulse to veil the horror of existence; beauty is born to combat suffering.[115] That anxiety, pain, and the desire to master them are at the basis of poetry transculturally is the thesis of Susan Stewart's *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses*.[116] What is striking about Rilke's idea is that he wants to convert his greatest existential threat, fear, not merely into "art" or "poetry," but into what he regards as the acme of stability, comfort, and trustworthiness—things.

Rilke put the lessons learned from Rodin into practice in the *New Poems*. Starting in 1903, but most particularly in the following few years, he buckled down to work and began to realize his Apollonian bent, not only writing a good many poems about things (including plants, animals, and art objects), but also developing techniques for doing so that were appropriate to his verbal medium, in particular the technique of narrative metaphor. His artistic "thing period" continued through the composition of these poems, published in two volumes in 1907 and 1908, up to the completion of *Malte*. In 1907, fascinated by a Cézanne exhibition in Paris, Rilke acclaimed Cézanne and also Cézanne's precursor Chardin as painters of things.[117] On 9 October 1907 Rilke wrote to his wife of Cézanne's goal: "The convincing quality, the becoming a thing (die Dingwerdung), the reality heightened into the indestructible through his own experience of the object, it was that which seemed to him the aim of his innermost work."[118] He saw correspondences between himself and Cézanne, finding that he himself had made the progress in poetry that Cézanne had made in his paintings.[119] In 1908 he wrote that he should have finished *Malte* the previous year while writing the Cézanne letters, because the character Malte is so closely related to Cézanne's project: "Cézanne is nothing else but the first primitive and bare achievement of that which in M.L. was not yet achieved."[120]

The Rodin lectures, which Rilke gave in one version in 1905 and published in another in 1907, are the texts in which he expatiates most fully about "things." Since Rodin's significance for Rilke lay in the fact that he made "things," Rilke obviously thought it necessary to begin his lecture by coming to grips with and persuading the audience of what was important

about things. He brings together ideas that he had articulated previously in scattered fashion in letters or poetry:[121] things are dependable; things are lasting. His experience with Rodin had certainly caused Rilke to rethink his view of things and his own relationship to things, so the lectures contain some surprises. He begins with a new idea, namely, that things are silent (whereas previously he had ascribed a "melody" to them). But all in all, in the Rodin lectures the most important message about things is that they are a bulwark against the passage of time and change. Rilke writes that making things has to do with a desire for attaining immortality through creation. In the wording of the 1905 version: "Those images of gods . . . came into being because people longed to make human and animal forms into an immortal, an inviolable, a next-higher entity: they longed to make *a thing*" (IX: 261; Rilke's italics). He designates things as vessels with which one tries to lure the divine, "resting places (Lager) . . . for *the (perhaps)* coming god" (IX: 262–263; Rilke's italics).

The idea that things are *vessels* is one that Rilke repeatedly articulated both before and after the Rodin lecture. Most often, he asserts that they are vessels for the human, bearers of human experience, correlatives of inner process. The idea is already found in the poem "Am Rande der Nacht" ("On the Edge of Night," 1900), where "things" are said to be violin bodies, full of the weeping of women and the rancour of whole generations. In a letter to Clara of 8 March 1907 he asserts that some thing that catches our attention can be the objective correlative for inner process: the inner process is mysteriously transferred to the thing, which becomes its signifier.[122] He spells out the mechanism by which this happens. He asserts that when one looks at something, when we are most focused on something outside of ourselves, an inner process takes place in us, an inner process which has quasi waited to be able to take place unobserved. But at the same time, its meaning grows in the thing itself. Thus the thing becomes, for us, the signifier of our inner process—for an instant—and then the thing, which used to be "fremd," "foreign," becomes "fremd" again. His reasoning here is coincidentally very close to Proust's when Proust talks about the book with the red binding in *Le Temps retrouvé*.[123] Both writers are determined to see things as the bearers of human signification; they insist on this odd notion. But Rilke elaborates in greater detail what he sees as the connection between psychological process and perception. He is not describing a memory phenomenon here, but it is

clear how the process he delineates could turn into what Proust views as one. Like Proust's ideas, Rilke's idea lends support to what researchers have to say about the importance of association for memory, especially association by contiguity. Elsewhere Rilke deplored that things today are losing this characteristic of being vessels for the human.[124] In a late letter to Witold Hulewicz he complained that today hardly any things that "know of us" are left. Phony, empty American things are supplanting them.[125]

Rilke's childhood experiences with things appear to have percolated up into his adult artistic imperatives. In a shadowy fashion (for we can only reconstruct them from *Malte* and Rilke's other writing on childhood and things) these experiences underlie his beliefs about art and the world, as well as his life choices. Malte's childhood thing-world, that is, the sort of childhood memories Rilke ascribes to Malte, at once appears seminal for, and represents a regression vis-à-vis, Rilke's adult economy of thing and place and his poetic accomplishments of the *New Poems* period. It is seminal not just because Malte's positive thing memories incorporate the kind of stability Rilke associated with things, but also inasmuch as its scary volatility, manifested in the negative thing memories, evidently provoked defenses against the kind of fantasizing that produced it. In the period of Rilke's life that is reflected in *Malte,* Rilke's creativity was dominated by a dialectic between fantasizing and what in *Malte* he called "seeing." Rilke was afraid of his runaway imagination—the way in which his mind would rush from image to image, from analogy to analogy. The poem "Fragmente aus verlorenen Tagen" ("Fragments from Lost Days") in *The Book of Images* exemplifies this rushing: a long string of fanciful and surrealistic analogies concludes with the remark: "And many a day's hours were like that./ As if someone fashioned my likeness somewhere/ in order to torment it slowly with needles. / I felt each sharp prick of his playing,/ and it was: as if a rain fell on me/ in which all things change." ("Und mancher Tage Stunden waren *so.* / Als formte wer mein Abbild irgendwo,/ um es mit Nadeln langsam zu mißhandeln. / Ich spürte jede Spitze seiner Spiele,/ und war, als ob ein Regen auf mich fiele,/ in welchem alle Dinge sich verwandeln.")[126] In the episode of the blind newspaper seller in *Malte,* Rilke lets Malte recount that he overcame his imagination by actually looking at one of its objects: "I determined to intimidate and suppress the increasing skill of my imagination through the external reality."[127] "Seeing," in the vocabulary of *Malte,* was the way Rilke restrained his imagination.

Lou Andreas-Salomé ascribes Rilke's new "objectivity" to the influence of Rodin: "It was basically Rodin who first gave him the entire world of things. And not only the world of things: control as well over the misbirths of fantasy, the horrible, the disgusting, the demonic in all their distortions. Where his morbid sensitivity had previously caused him to succumb to fear, he now was able to maintain an artistic distance, even in this state of fear." This intimate friend of Rilke's knew what is evident to the reader of Rilke's early poetry, namely, how difficult it was for him to focus on things themselves instead of on their relevance to him: "As one must not overlook, for Rainer just maintaining a basic reserve toward the pure reality of what he observed already cost him an enormous spiritual effort; everything had to be concentrated upon the object in question, and not upon himself."[128] The new "seeing" that Malte finally attained and that has its parallel in Rilke's new way of writing in the *New Poems* certainly involves noticing the externalities and surface details of specific objects and people, and hence is different from the X-ray vision into "things" (always referred to in the abstract) that Rilke in the poetological poems of *The Book of Images* considered it the poet's business to render. Yet Rilke's enthusiasm for "seeing into" things persisted at full strength, as his letter to Magda von Hattingberg of 16–20 February 1914 testifies, and furthermore, "objectivity" was not the upshot, nor, one can conjecture, really the point of the new seeing and the new writing. Both in Rilke's life and in that of his fictional alter ego, this new seeing and new writing were driven, I believe, by the desire to tame fear. At the same time they were an act of self-discipline by which Malte/Rilke channeled the nervous energy of the imagination into an effort of discernment and a quest to create and surround himself with things that were concretizations of his triumphs of insight, hence familiar and under his control rather than terrifying. Malte's blind newspaper seller, "seen," is transfigured into a generous individual who is considerate of his fellow man and who ultimately, for Malte, proves the existence of God. "Seeing," for all its pretensions to objectivity, amounted to domesticizing the object, to investing it with human significance. Yet arguably, without his vivid imagination, Rilke would not have become a poet; and without the pitfalls created by his imagination, Rilke's drive to see, to mend, and to *make things* would not have been so compelling.

In Malte's childhood memories, things and places offer primal experiences of well-being and terror. Some things and places behave like the child's

stable friends; others engage in unpredictable, malevolent, invasive shenanigans. The dual affective role of things and places is perhaps the very source of Rilke's later poetic accomplishments. Rilke had accepted things' role as the bearers of stable companionship and solace. In his letter to Kappus of December 1903 he advises: "Try to be close to things, which will not desert you."[129] He ultimately reinterpreted their frightening aspect as a personal, psychological failing, which he attempted to master by converting it into creative energy with which he could *make things*. Correspondingly, childhood experiences like Malte's negative ones, for all that they may have motivated Rilke's poetic successes, represent a serious regression vis-à-vis Rilke's elaborate adult economy that allowed him to convert fear into things. In every so-called "thing-poem" in the *New Poems*—"Die Kathedrale" ("The Cathedral"), "Die Fensterrose" ("The Rose Window"), "Reliquienschrein" ("The Reliquary"), "Die Spitze" ("The Lace"), "Das Karussel" ("The Carousel"), "Die Laute" ("The Lute"), and so on—the thing embodies, is subservient to, a human significance. Rilke constructively marries the "Ding," the "object," to the human. He looks carefully at and reflects on specific objects, identifying the ways in which they "know of" and "speak to" humans. He translates their "speech" into poetic language that we can comprehend. He thereby appropriates some of their power to surprise. Bemusingly, there is nothing about the seemingly so different *New Poems* that does not fulfill the program of "Entrance," the project of creatively extending the realm of the human. Rilke does write about specific things (which he did not do before), and he does develop techniques for doing so. But the "art objects" thus produced fall within the horizon of the project of creative re-seeing. Moreover, "seeing," however conceived, is at best a bridge to the broader objective of (re)creating the thing in its otherness as something that you have understood, invested with meaning, and thereby made an ally. In Malte's negative childhood memories, in contrast, things dictate: they are in control. If Rilke recalled that being a child meant being things' toy, he surely would have had strong defenses against regressing to it, against approaching the "hole in the ice" (as Holocaust survivors have termed it), or "throwing himself in the well" (his phrase).

# 3

# Collecting the Past, Prefiguring the Future: Benjamin Remembering His Childhood

"Collecting is a form of practical memory."

Benjamin, ‹Paris Arcades II,› in ‹The Arcades of Paris›

## I

Benjamin's fascination with his childhood memories seems differently motivated from Rilke's or Proust's. Most immediately, it seems to be bound up with a desire to recapture and re-create the fabric of life of an era that lies on the other side of the great divide of World War I—the world of yesterday that, at Benjamin's time of writing, was gone forever. In *Berlin Childhood around 1900* we discover an adult looking back, ironic, nostalgic, critical. Beginning with the first typescript, a keynote of the text is a tension between Benjamin's re-creation of his childish perspective and the perspective of his adult narrator. Proust, in contrast, minimized the adult perspective in "Combray," and Rilke subverted it by allowing Malte to claim that he was reliving his childhood in Paris.

In spite of this difference, Benjamin's text is heavily indebted to the model of Proust and even owes a small debt to Rilke. These debts are manifest starting with Benjamin's early attempt at writing down his memories of childhood, *A Berlin Chronicle,* where he names both names. Benjamin was intimately acquainted with Proust's work. Together with Franz Hessel he

had been hired by the press Die Schmiede to translate or re-translate the seven volumes of *À la recherche du temps perdu*. Their *Im Schatten der jungen Mädchen* appeared with Die Schmiede in 1927 and *Die Herzogin von Guermantes* with Piper in 1930. Benjamin also translated *Sodome et Gomorrhe,* but this volume was not published, and the manuscript has vanished.[1] Benjamin also published a substantial analytical essay, "Zum Bilde Prousts" ("On the Image of Proust") in 1929. Despite a direct reference to Proust where Benjamin seemingly dismisses his method of recovering the past, *A Berlin Chronicle* is steeped in Proust. Benjamin takes for granted the concept of the cue: he writes early on that certain old-fashioned buildings "have much knowledge of our childhood"[2] and later, in the context of a discussion of déjà vu, that "it is a word, a tapping, or a rustling that is endowed with the magic power to transport us into the cool tomb of long ago."[3] He also borrows Proust's analogy of memory to a photographic plate.[4] Moreover, Paris becomes Benjamin's key to Berlin, and the French capital's propensity to awaken memories points to the model of Rilke as well as Proust. Some of Benjamin's specific themes in *Berlin Childhood* echo Proust's and Rilke's: encounters with the world of poverty; the mother saying goodnight to the child before spending the evening in society; childhood fevers.

Benjamin's work is even more place-centered than Proust's and Rilke's. In *A Berlin Chronicle* Benjamin sketches a theory of how place triggers memory. The conviction that place is all-important then informs the actual structure of his childhood autobiography *Berlin Childhood* and puts it at odds with traditional autobiography, in which a presumption of temporal continuity structures the narrative. Benjamin offers no continuous story whatsoever but writes short prose-poem-like pieces, which on successive revisions he rearranged in different sequences. Whatever his reasons for these reorderings, they have nothing to do with chronology. Although the individual pieces engage with history, the overall structure of *Berlin Childhood* contrasts sharply with traditional modes of historical and biographical telling. Benjamin lets places (such as the Tiergarten or the Market Hall) and to a lesser extent things (such as the telephone or the sewing box) orient many of his writerly forays into the past. He gives us something akin to what television and cinema call "spots." Many of these spots, unlike the critical childhood episodes that Wordsworth called "spots of time," describe recurrent events or constant states of affairs in a way reminiscent of Proust. Benja-

min's technique somewhat resembles Rilke's at certain points in *Malte,* where the "notebook entries" capture discrete subjects, such as the death of his grandfather Brigge, the man with St. Vitus's dance, or the effect of the moon in Paris. But discernable, though camouflaged, chronological orders exist in *Malte,* the most prominent of which is the chronological order that organizes the adult Malte's Paris experiences and allows critics to talk about Malte's "development." Malte's embedded childhood memories are also loosely presented from early to late. No such chronological orders are visible in *Berlin Childhood*.

The composition and publication history of *Berlin Childhood around 1900* was a long adventure. Benjamin rewrote, added to, subtracted from, and reordered his text over a six-year period, abandoning it only when he had to flee Paris in 1940. A manuscript of 1932, written in a small notebook and entitled *A Berlin Chronicle,* represents the earliest phase of the project. Benjamin started writing a commissioned piece of journalism about Berlin, but soon strayed from his original purpose and instead produced a text consisting of personal recollections of his childhood and youth. This text, which remained a relatively disorganized draft, was first published in 1970, thirty years after Benjamin's death, by Gershom Scholem. Many episodes that Benjamin would later take up and elaborate in *Berlin Childhood* appear here. Starting in September 1933, Benjamin began to revise *A Berlin Chronicle* into *Berlin Childhood around 1900.* He prepared at least three versions of *Berlin Childhood* for press. The first, containing thirty pieces, was completed in February of 1933; Benjamin submitted it to the Gustav Kiepenheuer Verlag. In the spring of 1934, Benjamin submitted a second version of the manuscript to the Erich Reiss Verlag. This 1934 manuscript contained further pieces written between April and October 1933, in the first months of exile, on Ibiza. Benjamin spoke of thirty-four, then thirty-six pieces. The third version was a revision of 1938 that formed the basis for the "Fassung letzter Hand" ("Final Version").[5]

Benjamin failed to find a publisher for his book. The times were not right. It was Theodor W. Adorno who first published *Berlin Childhood around 1900* in 1950. Adorno based his edition neither on the 1933 nor on the 1934 manuscript, but put it together out of Benjamin's manuscripts, typescripts, and versions that had appeared in newspapers and magazines. It contains thirty-seven pieces. Tillman Rexroth revised Adorno's edition for the *Gesammelte*

*Schriften,* making corrections and adding three newly found pieces. In 1981 a typescript was discovered at the Bibliothèque Nationale. Benjamin had prepared it in the first half of 1938 when living in Paris in exile and had entrusted it to Georges Bataille along with other manuscripts before fleeing the city in 1940. This typescript is entitled "Handexemplar komplett" (Author's copy complete); it consists of a handwritten list of nine titles to be revised, of which two are crossed out; a handwritten list of four titles to be copied; a table of contents listing thirty pieces; and thirty-two actual pieces. The editor, Rolf Tiedemann, decided to turn it into a "Fassung letzter Hand" ("Final Version") consisting of the thirty pieces Benjamin lists in the table of contents, but the fact that there are thirty-two actual pieces and a handwritten list of pieces still to be worked on leaves some doubt that this manuscript really represents Benjamin's final intentions. After this "Final Version" appeared in 1987, Benjamin's earliest typescript, which dates to the turn of the year 1932–1933, the so-called "Gießener Fassung" (Gießen version) turned up. It was published by Rolf Tiedemann in 2000.

Davide Giuriato has traced the complicated history of the genesis of *Berlin Childhood* in great detail in his book *Mikrographien: Zu einer Poetologie des Schreibens in Walter Benjamins Kindheitserinnerungen (1932–1939).*[6] One can only agree with Giuriato's assessment that *Berlin Childhood* is a huge draft that Benjamin was constantly revising.[7] A critical engagement with *Berlin Childhood around 1900* means entering a dense labyrinth of writing, to which the various attempts of the various editors to second-guess Benjamin and put together plausible published editions have added additional passageways and blind alleys. It must be stressed that there is no single definitive text of this work. Certainly, as is the case with Wordsworth's *Prelude,* it is debatable whether the last version should be privileged as the best.

*A Berlin Chronicle* is of great interest from the point of view of the development of Benjamin's thinking about memory, so I begin (in II) by looking at this text, the circumstances of its composition, and Benjamin's theorizing about memory in it, which appears to take its cue from Freud's theories of memory but also draws on Proust and Kafka. Particularly noteworthy is Benjamin's linking of memory to place. Thereafter I focus on *Berlin Childhood around 1900.* This reworking of the text into a series of pieces suggests that Benjamin found his childhood memories precious for their potential to shed light on the troubled course of his later life and also to illuminate issues

of modern history. In III I look at the principal hallmarks of *Berlin Childhood:* the mutual illumination of past and present through contrasting narrative foci; time as a theme; and the progressive vanishing of Freud, psychology, and memory theory from version to version. This leads (in IV) to a comparison of Benjamin's theory of memory with his philosophy of history, which, I argue, left an unmistakable imprint on the construction of *Berlin Childhood around 1900.* Finally (in V) I connect this text to Benjamin's passion for collecting, for things.

## II

Benjamin had grown up as the child of wealthy Jewish parents in Berlin. When he started writing his memoirs of childhood and youth he had every reason to regard his life as having gone downhill. His *Habilitationsschrift* had been rejected, his academic career had come to nothing, his marriage had failed. Making a living as a writer was difficult, financial problems had reached the point of crisis on account of his divorce, his journalistic activity annoyed him, and the political situation in Germany was worsening. By the summer of 1931 Benjamin seriously contemplated suicide. In August he began a "Diary from August 7, 1931 to the Day of My Death" ("Tagebuch vom siebenten August neunzehnhunderteinunddreissig bis zum Todestag"), the first sentence of which reads, "This diary does not promise to become very long."[8] In the last weeks, he notes, he has done little but think about suicide, about whether it is inevitable or not and how to go about it. On 25 June 1932 he wrote a letter to Scholem from Ibiza in which he mentions that he has plans to meet a "rather droll fellow" ("ziemlich skurrilen Burschen") in Nice. Scholem glosses the "eccentric fellow" as a reference to death and the letter, by consequence, as testimony to Benjamin's plan to commit suicide on his fortieth birthday (July 15, 1932).[9] Scholem conjectures that Benjamin's friend Olga Parem's rejection of his marriage proposal might have contributed to Benjamin's decision.[10] *A Berlin Chronicle* was largely written in the period from April to July 1932 that Benjamin spent on Ibiza. The text is marked by thoughts of death. The beginning of this commissioned work could well have been written for other eyes, but Benjamin increasingly slips into writing a highly personal memoir that he seems to conceive of as a stock-taking before his suicide. He wonders "whether forty is not too young

an age at which to evoke the most important memories of one's life," mentions a friend from his student days who is already dead, and speaks of his own "crossing of this threshold" ("Übergang über diese Schwelle") as though it were an inevitability.[11] Yet when Benjamin decided to follow through on his suicide plan and wrote his testament in Nice on 27 July 1932, he told his chosen executor, Egon Wissing, that he had "recovered wonderfully" in the last three months (though he claimed that this recovery only made his deeper tiredness clearer to him).[12] Did drafting *A Berlin Chronicle,* which brought up memories of childhood, refresh his mind, turn his thoughts around? The answer is uncertain, but it seems clear that at whatever point Benjamin crossed out the original dedication "Written for four of my dear friends Sascha Gerhard Asja Lazis and Fritz Heinle" ("Geschrieben für vier meiner lieben Freunde Sascha Gerhard Asja Lazis und Fritz Heinle," GS VI: 798) and wrote instead, "For my dear Stefan" ("Für meinen lieben Stefan"), the text had changed in his mind from a stock-taking before imminent suicide to the beginning of a new literary project, a book of pieces about his Berlin childhood. The dedication of a suicide text to his young son would have been macabre and unlikely. Benjamin did not commit suicide in 1932, and the first completed version of *Berlin Childhood around 1900,* the so-called "Stefan-Exemplar," which Benjamin wrote from September to October 1932 in Poveromo and is now found in the Walter Benjamin Archive in Berlin, is likewise dedicated to "My dear Stefan" ("Meinem lieben Stefan").

The shapeless, unpolished *Berlin Chronicle,* a continuous narrative of 115 printed pages in the Bibliothek Suhrkamp edition, is palpably driven by Benjamin's eagerness to recover his memories and in the process to formulate theories about memory. The episodes he recounts—a number of which are not from childhood at all but from his student years—seem more authentic because more spontaneously committed to paper and less artfully crafted than their reworkings in later versions. Benjamin repeatedly pauses in his narrative to speculate about the workings of memory. By the time he wrote *A Berlin Chronicle* he had long since read Bergson's *Matière et mémoire (Matter and Memory),*[13] translated and written an essay on Proust, and read Freud's *Jenseits des Lustprinzips (Beyond the Pleasure Principle),* as well, perhaps, as other works by Freud that engage the topic of memory. Although Proust is obviously formative for his project, Benjamin explicitly challenges Proust. His cicerone—nowhere named, but everywhere palpable—appears to be Sig-

mund Freud. Unlike either Rilke or Proust, Benjamin makes the impression of knowing and being intrigued and even convinced by Freud's theories of memory. The tenor of his remarks suggests that he had read and ingested what Freud had to say about memory in *Studien über Hysterie (Studies on Hysteria),* "Über Deckerinnerungen" ("Screen Memories") (or alternatively and more probably, *Zur Psychopathologie des Alltagslebens [The Psychopathology of Everyday Life]*), and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (a work that he is in fact known to have read in 1928).[14] Freud had quite different things to say about memory in these various works, and Benjamin too advances views about memory whose internal coherence is hard to establish. Thus, he insists that memory "interpolates endlessly" into what happened, or in other words revises, so that memories, by implication, are largely the work of the present[15]—recalling "Screen Memories" and *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life;* that a past shock enhances memory (106; 630)—recalling *Studies on Hysteria;* that a present shock or jolt can awaken memories (116; 633), whereas habit militates against memory and wipes away the past (54; 611)—both Proustian ideas, though the former also recalls Freud's "Nachträglichkeit" (deferred action), which is implicit in his theory of screen memories; and finally, that what went unnoticed or remained unconscious at the time, namely, the city itself, is best remembered (61; 614)—recalling Freud's postulation in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* that consciousness arises in place of a memory trace.[16] He also uses an archaeological metaphor for exploring memory that Freud uses frequently, including in *Studies on Hysteria*.[17] These parallels will presently be looked at in greater detail.

In the period between 1926, when he began to think about writing an essay on Proust, and 1932, when he wrote *A Berlin Chronicle* and began to rewrite it as *Berlin Childhood around 1900,* Benjamin's thinking about memory was intense and in flux. The activity of translating Proust led him to reflect on memory, and these reflections, which contain an element of defiance against the writer whose myriad pages he had rendered into German, took a turn that put his thinking in the vicinity of Freud's. In short, he began to conceptualize memory as the work of the present rather than as the recovery of the past. Meanwhile, as of 1931 or perhaps even earlier, his engagement with Kafka prompted a different train of thought about memory, one based in the Jewish tradition, which stamps forgetting and the forgotten with guilt.

Benjamin developed several fixed ideas about Proust, two of which bear on a theory of memory. First, he insists both in his Proust essay of 1929 and in *A Berlin Chronicle* that Proust's writing is endless. By way of concrete example, he observes that Proust never stopped adding to his text, filling up the margins of his printer's galleys with more writing and driving his typesetters to despair. He theorizes that the endless nature of Proust's writing has to do with the endlessness of memory. Benjamin asserts that a remembered event, in contrast to a lived event, knows no limits.[18] In his Proust papers he makes a general theoretical statement about memory: "Remembering can, in principle, never be concluded" ("Erinnerung . . . ist prinzipiell unabschließbar," GS II: 1056). Benjamin presumably considers memory interminable because nothing stops the rememberer's mind from ranging over the past, from exploring one detail intensively, extending the boundaries of an "event," or establishing connections between an event and earlier and later events. In his published essay on Proust he refers to memory as Penelope-work, which weaves by night what forgetting unravels by day. As Giuriato points out, Benjamin thereby establishes an analogy between remembering and textual production.[19] Moreover, Benjamin implies with his metaphor that night for night, the rememberer *rewrites* the past. This process yields endless writing and an endless text, for every time the rememberer remembers, he remembers and writes the memory somewhat differently. Benjamin thus shifts the focus from *what* is remembered onto the *activity* of recalling, from the *remembered* to the *rememberer* himself. Bergsonian pragmatism maintained that we recall what is relevant to us today, but Benjamin's train of thought here, which emphasizes the constructive nature of memory without ever arguing for its accuracy, is much closer to Freud than to Bergson.

Benjamin's second axiom concerning Proust and memory is that Proust *never consciously experienced at the time* the events that he retrieves through involuntary memory. This idea, which occurs in "Aus einer kleinen Rede über Proust, an meinem vierzigsten Geburtstag gehalten" (From a short talk on Proust, held on my fortieth birthday, GS II: 1064), survives into the 1939 essay "On Some Motifs by Baudelaire" and could well have been inspired in 1932 already, as it will be in 1939 explicitly, by Freud's theory that what leaves a memory trace does not become conscious.[20] By 1939, Benjamin was visibly attached to this piece of Freudian metapsychology, which

was a crucial linchpin in his own theory that an epochal change took place in the structure of experience in the course of the nineteenth century.

Yet in the early 1930s Benjamin entertained a second, entirely different line of thought about memory, sparked by his contemporaneous work on Kafka. This different idea never enters *A Berlin Chronicle,* but it does inform a piece that Benjamin probably conceived between July and September 1932, that is, shortly after concluding *A Berlin Chronicle.* In his earliest notes for this piece, entitled "Das bucklige Männlein" ("The Little Hunchback"),[21] Benjamin mentions Kafka, and indeed, in his Kafka lecture of 3 July 1931, "Franz Kafka: Beim Bau der Chinesischen Mauer" (the same title is found in the English translation), he invokes the little hunchback of the children's rhyme as a symbol for the forgotten. In Benjamin's view, we distort what we forget. This "forgotten," distorted past bars our way into the future.[22] Benjamin agrees with Willy Haas's reading of *Der Prozeß* that the unknown guilt that creates the trial against Josef K. is forgetfulness. In his notes for this lecture Benjamin writes that Kafka confronts Bachofen's prehistoric hetaeric swamp world (a guilty world, and the world in which Kafka's novels play) with the world of Jewish law (GS II: 1192). He expands this earlier reading in his later article "Franz Kafka: Zur zehnten Wiederkehr seines Todestags" ("Franz Kafka: On the Tenth Anniversary of His Death," 1934). Here he quotes Haas's remarks on the Jewish background of Kafka's equation of guilt with self-forgetfulness (for in Judaism remembrance is a form of piety);[23] makes clear what also emerges in the "Little Hunchback" piece, that what is forgotten is distorted, so that the Männlein with his hunchback stands for the forgotten and forgetting; and declares that the Männlein will disappear when the Messiah comes (432; 811). This equation of forgetting with guilt seems to work with the Freudian notion of repression: we have repressed our old, infantile, barbaric ways, which "return" from the unconscious only in distorted forms, such as dreams or hysterical symptoms. Freud's tenet is that the unconscious drives us, and so "the forgotten" (for what is unconscious is "forgotten") might well be seen to "block our path." What is not Freudian in Benjamin's train of thought here is the moral imperative to remember accurately. This imperative will be accounted for later when I discuss the role of memory in Benjamin's philosophy of history.

A central interest of Benjamin's in *A Berlin Chronicle* is the connection between memory and place. Asserting that early memories are something

that "come and go," and thus something over which one has little control, he proposes that there are two methods by which one can "legitimately" approach them. He defines "legitimacy" as bringing a "guarantee of permanence." One is Proust's method, which in Benjamin's idiosyncratic interpretation quests for perfect precision and completeness of detail and hence pursues the chimera of infinity. Benjamin's image for Proust's version of memory is the unfolding fan—a fan that Proust strives to unfold more and more. The other method is the one that he, Benjamin, hopes to realize. He does not immediately name it, but it is eventually revealed, in an aside, to be the *topographical* method.[24] Benjamin does not define this "topographical method," but he does imply that places are the guardians of memory. The "topographical method" appears to be specifically adapted to urban environments, to life in the modern city. As for the "guarantee of permanence," this is presumably given inasmuch as the city and the lifestyle it imposes can be expected to last.

The second method, Benjamin's, is associated with the figure of the labyrinth, a privileged figure in *A Berlin Chronicle*. Benjamin explicitly designates the city and his own life as labyrinths, while critics have found that the figure also applies to the central subject of the text, memory, which circles endlessly in time.[25] Certainly, through the figure of the labyrinth Benjamin creates a suggestive bond between memory and place, inasmuch as wandering in the labyrinth of the city brings memories (the "topographical method"). Benjamin's text itself, the writing, has been seen as labyrinthine.[26] The labyrinth in and of this text gives the reader in quest of its limits no stopping point. Benjamin "enters" his text by speaking of his four guides to the city: one of these, a childhood nursemaid, guides him at the age of three not out of, but into a labyrinth in the Tiergarten, where he claims to have discovered his "Ariadne" and thereby love. The labyrinth is thus associated with intimacy and pleasure, connotations that persist in Benjamin's characterization of the city (specifically Paris) as labyrinthine. Not only is it stimulating and pleasurable to err in Paris, but at the "center," Benjamin notes, lurks a Minotaur in the form of a brothel. Yet Benjamin also insists that impotence (Ohnmacht) is intrinsic to his experience of the city. The labyrinth as city (and by extension as life and as memory) is intimate, tantalizing, and arousing; but it is also challenging and frustrating. Intimate though it is, it is irrevocably other. Yet it is the beloved, the chosen other of

the self. Always fond of pre- and refigurations, Benjamin turns the labyrinth in this text, where an affinity for paradox is evident, into a leitmotiv, into the thread.

It is remarkable to what a degree Paris intrudes into Berlin in *A Berlin Chronicle*. In roughly the first half of the text, Paris plays a more central and crucial role than Berlin itself. Benjamin calls Paris one of his guides to Berlin and claims that the city taught him both Proust's method and the other method (i.e., the topographical one). Paris taught him the art of wandering, indeed of losing himself in a city. A small city ideally suited to exploration on foot, Paris presented Benjamin with the key to the importance of place in awakening memories, and it is with this key that he tries to open the gate to the vast, sprawling metropolis of his childhood, Berlin.

Benjamin's admiration for Paris was boundless. His biographer Momme Brodersen notes that he took a two-week trip to Paris in 1913 that founded "his intimate relationship with the city." During this first visit to Paris, "on the grands boulevards and at the Louvre, . . . he already felt almost 'more at home' than in Berlin."[27] Contemporaneously with *A Berlin Chronicle,* Benjamin worked on the *Passagen-Werk (Arcades Project);* this monumental project, which is above all a vast collection of information about nineteenth-century Paris, testifies to the fascination the city held for him. He admits that he and his friend Franz Hessel tried to import their Paris habits into Berlin by holding surrealist-inspired sleeping feasts in a meadow and embarking on excursions of discovery.[28] Benjamin's enthusiasm for the surrealists, which was critically important for the *Arcades Project,*[29] left its imprint on the Berlin childhood project in multiple ways: in the traces of Freudian psychology, in the confidence with which he focused on the "Dingwelt" ("world of things"), and in the way Paris informs his notion of a city. He wrote in his essay on surrealism that Paris is "the most dreamed about of their objects."[30]

The city, specifically Paris, affects Benjamin as a profound displacement of the human relations that it has accommodated and structured. "The walls and quays, the asphalt surfaces, the collections and the rubbish, the railings and the squares, the arcades and the kiosks, teach a language so singular that our relations to people attain, in the solitude encompassing us in our immersion in that world of things, the depths of a sleep."[31] Things draw us into a language lesson, while human relationships are forgotten. In ascribing a voice to the city, Benjamin's thinking recalls Goethe's in the "Römische

Elegien" ("Roman Elegies") where the newly arrived traveler conjures the stones of Roma (which anagrammatically conceals Amor) to speak to him. The idea of "speaking stones" is more than just playful prosopopoeia: the city does indeed yield its secrets to the poet who lets himself be guided by Amor. Benjamin likewise believes that things are capable of speaking profoundly to us. He writes poetically that "unsere Beziehungen zu den Menschen" ("our relations to people") sleep within our absorption in things and there await the dream image of "their true faces."[32] Although Benjamin focuses here specifically on place rather than things, to the reader of Proust and Rilke these ideas have a familiar ring, recalling Proust's book with a red binding and Rilke's belief that things are vessels.

How do we make the city speak? By wandering in its streets. To Paris belongs the honor of having created the type of the flaneur. And to the flaneur, Paris, which Benjamin observes is the most written-about city in the world, is an object lesson in history. In the 1928–1929 draft "Pariser Passagen II" (‹Paris Arcades II,› in ‹The Arcades of Paris›) Benjamin writes: "That anamnestic intoxication in which the flâneur goes about the city not only feeds on the sensory data taking shape before his eyes but can very well possess itself of abstract knowledge—indeed, of dead facts—as something experienced and lived through."[33] He adds that the dreaming Parisian stroller senses the vast knowledge that has been transmitted through oral tradition and through books about "Paris rue par rue, maison par maison" ("Paris street by street, house by house").

In *A Berlin Chronicle,* where Benjamin transposes insights about Paris onto Berlin, he observes that the city evokes the dead. He applies this train of thought to childhood memories specifically: memories of childhood spent in the city are particularly "hard to seize" and "temptingly torturing" like "half-forgotten dreams" because the city is haunted by the dead, whose presence the child absorbs through the parents' talk.[34] As we have seen, *A Berlin Chronicle* is particularly marked by thoughts of death. Yet detailed passages from the ‹Paris Arcades II› illuminate the idea of the haunted city as well, suggesting that the city might be a kind of tomb in which past time is imperfectly sealed, whose ghosts the flaneur can intuit. The city speaks of the historical past through the echo of the stroller's feet: "For the flâneur, a transformation takes place with respect to the street: it leads him through a vanished time. He strolls down the street; for him, every street is precipitous. It leads

downward—if not to the mythical Mothers, then into a past that can be all the more profound because it is not his own, not private. Nevertheless, it always remains the past of a youth. But why that of the life he has lived? The ground over which he goes, the asphalt, is hollow. His steps awaken a surprising resonance; the gaslight that streams down on the paving stones throws an equivocal light on this double ground."[35] Benjamin imports a version of this passage into his review of Franz Hessel's *Spazieren in Berlin* (Walks in Berlin), which appeared in 1929 under the title "Die Wiederkehr des Flaneurs" ("The Return of the *Flâneur*"), adding the phrase, "the city as a mnemonic for the lonely walker" ("die Stadt als mnemotechnischer Behelf des einsam Spazierenden").[36] Plainly, Benjamin's idea that place awakens memory does not simply amount to the contemporary psychological concept of context-dependency, for remembering according to Benjamin is a much more mysterious and complicated process than mere cue recognition. Walking around in the city, Benjamin's stroller also descends vertically (via what he has heard and read, apparently) into the collective past; the "double-bottomed" city suggests the depths of time to him even as he negotiates its space. The notion that the city is a repository for the historical past recalls Rilke's assertion, made nearly thirty years earlier in the poem "On the Edge of Night," that things are violin bodies full of the weeping of women and the rancour of whole generations. Benjamin employs a similar acoustical metaphor: the ground is hollow, the stroller's steps awaken a resonance. Benjamin's thoughts on the city shed light on his characteristic historical method of seeking meaning through objects. As has often been remarked, he conducted his cultural and historical analyses on the premise that objects, commodities, or simply things are pregnant with significance.[37]

Benjamin asserts not only that the city awakens memories, but also that it is particularly well remembered. This somewhat different idea could well have been inspired by Berlin itself rather than Paris. Benjamin muses that he remembers things and places, not people. He writes in *A Berlin Chronicle:* "The more frequently I return to these memories, the less fortuitous it seems to me how slight a role is played in them by people."[38] Benjamin theorizes that we remember place despite the haste and obliviousness that characterize the lives of modern city dwellers. He writes that the city, which forces us to live hastily, "takes its revenge" in memory:[39] what is involuntarily remembered is, paradoxically, the backdrop. This remark anticipates

the idea that he will elaborate in his later essay "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" and will credit to Freud, namely, that consciousness is a defense, and that becoming conscious of something precludes forming a memory trace about it.[40] Benjamin does not say as much, but the city could be seen to dictate repetition as well as haste, a repetition that engraves the place in our memory. Where one can no longer speak of the continuous fabric of our days, because the modern city has exploded ancient patterns of existence, the city itself forces us to repeat, obliges us to dart again and again down the same paths, and hence becomes the sensuous image ("Sinnbild," BCh 64) of our lives. Repetition comes to Benjamin's mind when he tries to figure out his life: he draws a labyrinth and speculates that he takes certain entrances and repeatedly follows certain paths.

Benjamin's textual practice plays out his theory. When he turns to the Berlin of his childhood, he writes of places: the railway station; his school; historical buildings like the various Berlin cafés of the day, a corner in the zoo, his grandmother's apartment, courtyards, loggias. People, he says, will have little place there.[41] He is especially interested in places that speak of the past or prophetically. Certain places in Berlin seem to speak of the dead (57; 613). But he is also drawn to spaces that appear to invoke the future. One such space is, quite generally, "the threshold." The threshold ("Schwelle") figures the divisions between the social classes and prefigures the "great divide" of World War I. His student apartment, named "das Heim" ("Meeting House" in the English translation), which is located in a solidly bourgeois neighborhood that is separated from a proletarian one by the Landwehrkanal, is an instance of such a symbolic space, representing the last real Berlin elite with its proximity to an abrupt downgrade (38; 605). He is particularly intent on evoking the places of his childhood through their sounds, writing, for example, of the songs his mother played, the clattering of her key basket, the dull explosion of the gas mantle being lit, and the screeching of the kitchen elevator (104; 629) as "belonging to the apartment."

## III

In the reworking he undertook between the late summer of 1932 and the end of February 1933, which is reflected in the "Gießener Fassung," Benjamin replaced the continuous autobiographical text by a series of discrete pieces,

each with its own title. Childhood experiences are now the unique focus. Places and things, sometimes recurrent events or episodes, occasionally people—though not the ones who are most important in the child's life—and one animal (the fish otter) are the titular subjects of the pieces. Although the explicit theorization of place and memory vanishes, place continues to be centrally important. There is a heightened interest in materiality, in the world of things, as opposed to simply place. Inasmuch as he revises episodes from *A Berlin Chronicle,* Benjamin gets rid of details, in particular those that, although they add realism in *A Berlin Chronicle,* do not serve an artistic effect. He also gets rid of uncertainty (e.g., "number 10 or 12 Blumeshof").[42] But he also adds details, specifically ones that provide a sensuous focus to episodes that previously had none. Thus, he adds an otter to a desolate corner of the zoo and a delicious-smelling apple baking in his room stove in the early morning to a story about how he hates to get out of bed and go to school. He embellishes his portraits of the market ("Markthalle Magdeburger Platz" ["Market Hall"]) and of Berlin building entrances ("Tiergarten") with classical references. Brief references in *A Berlin Chronicle,* such as those to the telephone in his parents' apartment, to his Tante Lehmann's place, and to the poor of Berlin at Christmastime, are fleshed out and made to bear the weight of greater significance. The text becomes more literary. Benjamin fashions his material into polished pieces and adopts an aphoristic tone that is far from the eager outpouring of *A Berlin Chronicle.* He also adds fourteen new pieces. As will be seen, compared with *A Berlin Chronicle,* in this and subsequent versions of *Berlin Childhood* Benjamin points up both the child's sensibility and the adult's perspective, achieving a high degree of tension and contrast between them. This is his principal artistic device; it runs through all the pieces.

With its privileging of things, the "Gießener Fassung" is at once a collection of childhood memories and an object lesson for Benjamin's place-and-thing-based theory of memory. The fusion of represented memories and theory is much more consistent here than in Proust's "Combray," where Proust's deviations from biographical fact, artistic elaboration, and textual revisions were hard to reconcile with his claim that involuntary memory had made "all of Combray" arise out of a cup of tea. If Benjamin's memories have been worked up, doctored, for artistic effect, this is not saying a great deal more than that they have undergone revision, and there is plenty of

provision for revision in Benjamin's theory of memory, which is, after all, founded specifically on the insight that memory endlessly rewrites the past.

There are fewer changes between the "Final Version" and the "Gießener Fassung" than between *A Berlin Chronicle* and the early version of *Berlin Childhood*. Seven of the thirty pieces of the "Final Version" are new (Benjamin omits "Abreise und Rückkehr" ["Departure and Return"], "Erwachen des Sexus" ["Sexual Awakening"], "Das Karussell" ["The Carousel"], "Der Lesekasten" ["The Reading Box"], "Schülerbibliothek" ["School Library"], "Gesellschaft" ["Society"], and "Bettler und Huren" ["Beggars and Whores"], in favor of adding "Loggien" ["Loggias"], "Siegessäule" ["Victory Column"], "Zu spät gekommen" ["Tardy Arrival"], "Knabenbücher" ["Boys' Books"], "Winterabend" ["Winter Evening"], "Krumme Strasse" ["Crooked Street"], and "Die Farben" ["Colors"]), and Benjamin changes the order of the pieces. As many critics have noted, this version is shorter. Benjamin trims the pieces down, eliminating explanation, details, and speculation. The tone is more objective, the style terser and more aphoristic. He gets rid of literary allusions and quotations, such as the mention of Kafka's Odradek in "Nähkasten" ("The Sewing Box") and the citation of Brentano's "O Stern und Blume" ("Oh star and flower") in "Der Mond" ("The Moon")—a piece first published on 8 September 1933 in the *Vossische Zeitung*. The psychological dimension of the text is greatly reduced. Accounts of dreams are eliminated in "Ein Gespenst" ("A Ghost") and "The Moon." "Die Mummerehlen" ("The Mummerehlen"), another much changed and shortened piece, is refocused. In the "Gießener Fassung" it could be said to be primarily about the psychology of the child, whereas in the "Final Version" it is about the world of childhood and its loss. "Eine Todesnachricht" ("News of a Death"), a piece that had a strong Freudian element, is significantly changed. With the possible exception of the piece "Boys' Books" with its dream and womb motifs, in the "Final Version" the presence of Freud shrinks to virtually nothing. Benjamin expunges references to people from the titles (except for the imaginary person the "little hunchback"), which gives the pieces the appearance of a unified focus on the nonhuman: "Herr Knoche und Fräulein Pufahl" ("Herr Knoche and Fräulein Pufahl") is retitled "Zwei Rätselbilder" ("Two Puzzle Pictures," or "Two Enigmas" as it is called in the English translation), while "Beggars and Whores" is omitted. A dominant feature of the work as a whole is an ironic/nostalgic invocation of romanticism, to which there are constant references.

The irony is already evident in Benjamin's decision to make "Loggias" (discussed below) the first piece. The nostalgia is mirrored in the fact that the child's view of the world is steeped in romantic fairy tales.

I shall comment on what I see as the principal hallmarks of *Berlin Childhood* vis-à-vis *A Berlin Chronicle:* a contrast between the adult's and the child's perspective; a thematization of time; and a de-Freudianization of the theme of memory. Except as otherwise indicated, my comments go for the "Gießener Fassung," the intermediate Adorno/Rexroth editions, and the "Fassung letzter Hand." Where there is a significant progression between editions, I indicate it. I cite the "Gießener Fassung" for material that first appears there, the "Fassung letzter Hand" for material added later, and the Adorno edition for material added between 1933 and 1938 that was not retained in the "Fassung letzter Hand." The complexities of this situation are not yet fully available to the reader of Benjamin in English translation. The English translation *Berlin Childhood* gives the "Fassung letzter Hand" ("Final Version") in its entirety and, at the back of the volume, a selection of pieces from the 1932–1934 versions. In my discussion below I include references both to the German editions and to the English edition.

A parenthetical remark here: *Berlin Childhood* certainly allows itself to be read in terms of Benjamin's contemporaneous theorizing on historical method, but there may be benefit in *not* short-circuiting a reading of the text by making immediate connections to Benjamin's theoretical writings. Therefore, in the following commentary on style and themes, *Berlin Childhood* will be made to stand on its own feet, as an independent body of writing.

The adult, or narrator's perspective in *Berlin Childhood* makes itself felt through irony, pathos, gnomic utterances, classical references, and a historicism that ranges from antiquarian interest to philosophical reflections on the workings of time. The narrator Benjamin makes the reader feel as if he is looking back on the world of his childhood as if over an abyss. With his choice of subjects Benjamin displays a desire to create a collection of objects, places, and customs that formed part of the fabric of life at the turn of the century: loggias, gas lights, the Imperial Panorama, Sedan Day, locked cupboards, sewing and embroidery, the magnificent formal dinner parties his parents used to give—and to conjure the placid, ponderous world of the wealthy West End bourgeoisie with its immense apartments, solid and ornamented furniture, and servants. In his own metaphor, he holds the empty

shell of the nineteenth century, which was once his home, up to his ear. While the fairy tale references serve the child's perspective as well, both they and the classical references deepen the gap between the narrator's present and the past.[43] They make the era around 1900 glisten with faraway, legendary, magical splendor. The passionate pursuit of memories and the quest for keys to his own personality found in *A Berlin Chronicle* cede to polish, craftmanship, strong authorial authority, and the evident intent to create a testimonial to "the world of yesterday." This effect is most pronounced in Adorno's 1950 edition with its thirty-seven pieces—more so even than in the "Final Version."

The new emphasis on the adult perspective in *Berlin Childhood* brings with it, above all, irony. The narrator's irony is not so much directed at his childish self, of whom he writes with sympathy, as it is implicit in the narrating of a world that is blind to what lies ahead of it. In the early *Arcades Project* drafts Benjamin equates the relation between the historical past and the present historian with dreaming versus awakening. Similarly, a remark in "The Mummerehlen," the first piece in the "Gießener Fassung," shows that he regards his child self as having lived unconsciously in the nineteenth century: "Like a mollusk in its shell, I had my abode in the nineteenth century" ("Ich hauste so wie ein Weichtier in der Muschel haust im neunzehnten Jahrhundert").[44] In the narrator's present the shell is no longer the house of a living organism, much less his own, but its very emptiness enables him to hear its sound. The narrator also bows from an ironic distance to the genre of childhood autobiography to which his text is, however distantly, related. His childhood was spent in one of Europe's largest cities. He pointedly makes ironic allusions to the romantic clichés linking childhood with nature that the word "childhood" in the title might be seen to suggest. The opening sentences of "Tiergarten," which is the second piece in the "Gießener Fassung" but the first piece in an earlier ordering (the "provisorische Teilanordnung"), read: "Not to find one's way around a city does not mean much. But to lose one's way in a city, as one loses one's way in a forest, requires some schooling."[45] The ironic engagement of a romantic trope ("woods") in the piece entitled "Tiergarten"—Berlin's largest park—is repeated in the third piece, "Imperial Panorama," where moving transparencies of exotic places substitute for travel and gas light falls softly in place of moonlight. The romantic linking of childhood and nature is particularly

parodied in the piece "Loggias," first published in 1933 (*Unterhaltungsblatt der Vossischen Zeitung,* 1 August 1933) and promoted to the position of opening piece in the "Final Version," with its description of the sole tree, girded with an iron ring, growing in the paved courtyard of the Berlin apartment building where Benjamin grew up. There may conceivably be a piece of historical theory here—Benjamin notes repeatedly in the *Arcades Project* how early-nineteenth-century Paris absorbed romantic nature images—but these allusions to romantic tropes in the city are much more obviously interpretable as narratorial irony.

The adult perspective also brings nostalgia for the better days of childhood, albeit a nostalgia shot through with irony, and a resulting tone of pathos. Take this remark from "Loggias": "Since I was a child, the loggias have changed less than other places. This is not the only reason they stay with me. It is much more on account of the solace that lies in their uninhabitability for one who himself no longer has a proper abode."[46] In "Winter Morning" he recalls how the maid would light the coal stove in his room at 6:30 in the morning and bake an apple in it while he lay in bed. His ardent wish at the time was "ausschlafen zu können" ("to be able to sleep my fill")—a wish that, he wryly remarks, was fulfilled later in life when he was jobless.

The adult perspective also means more gnomic generalization. The narrator delivers tersely poetic bits of wisdom like these: "In those days, every childhood was still overshadowed by the aunts" ("In jede Kindheit ragten damals noch die Tanten");[47] "The imagination, once it has cast its veil over a region, likes to ruffle its edges with incomprehensible whims" (66; 89); "I would lose myself in colors. Children are their prey at every turn";[48] "For a long time, life deals with the still-tender memory of childhood like a mother who lays her newborn on her breast without waking it";[49] "Finds are, for children, what victories are for adults."[50]

The adult's perspective brings, moreover, attentiveness to the historicity of the states of affairs portrayed. At every turn Benjamin adds historical depth and resonance, now by showing how the past of his childhood recalls a yet more distant past, now by showing how the past prefigures the present. This aspect of the tension between the child's and the adult's perspective affects the function of places and things in *Berlin Childhood*. The things and places chosen now often speak importantly of history or of the future of the past. It is as if certain things had condensed into themselves an immense

power of historical expression and social commentary. These are precisely the things of the past that are "telling" from a present perspective. Thus in the piece "Das Telefon" ("The Telephone") the telephone becomes an image for changing times: initially relegated to the corridor, it was moved into the living room by a younger generation. In the old days the clamorous machine had been full of violence, destroying the peace of noonday rest by bringing arguments with government bureaus into the house. But later the telephone came to represent hope against loneliness. In the piece "Steglitzer Ecke Genthiner" ("At the Corner of Steglitzer and Genthiner") Benjamin exploits the potential of his subject for historical reflection with even greater complexity. To the child his aunt's apartment seemed to come straight out of fairyland, not least because his aunt—and aunts of that epoch are likened to fairies—would always set a wondrous ornament in front of him, a glass square containing a mine with moving figures. But the adult perspective frames the child's appreciation of the apartment as a kind of fairyland and injects a strong consciousness of history. Not only does the narrator look back on his aunt's apartment; that apartment itself is the site of memory. The aunt remembers the doings of people who were grandparents in her day, and her elderly servants share in her memories. The ornament turns out to be a historical curiosity, which, moreover, awakens in the narrator literary memories pertaining to a yet earlier time, the time of Jean Paul, Novalis, Tieck, and Werner. The narrator bounces from his aunt's memories of the countryside to the future: many a time he has raced through such out-of-the-way spots on an express train. He thereby creates a contrast between modern technology and that of the beginnings of the industrial age in Germany; between the effects of speed on consciousness and the child's absorption in an encapsulated model; and between a society that hides the world of the workplace from the eyes of the rich and one that showed it to wealthy children for didactic purposes.

The child's sensibility, which is always narrated, always framed by a firm adult narratorial perspective, is a counterweight to the antiquarian interest that the narrator displays. The child that is portrayed has been aptly described by Burkhardt Lindner as a "lonely, waiting, misunderstanding" child who perpetually seeks "out of the way places" and has "magical and animistic experiences."[51] The child's sensibility is characterized by imagination, adventurousness and seeking (but rarely finding), instability, and the

power to transform. His own identity is unstable, and the world likewise appears malleable and in flux.

One of the ways in which Benjamin represents the child's mind is by reflecting on how the child assigned imaginative new meanings to words. The theme is already present in *A Berlin Chronicle:* in his mind he identifies his aunt, who lives on Steglitzerstrasse, with a Stieglitz, a goldfinch; he imagines the Brauhausberg in Potsdam, where his family had its summer house, as "a hill swathed in blue" ("ein vom Blauen umwitterter Berg").[52] In *Berlin Childhood* Benjamin plays up both instances of imaginative transformation: his aunt is indeed birdlike, and the Brauhausberg is stylized yet more fancifully as a Limoges enamel, where butterflies are sprinkled over an image of Jerusalem on a dark-blue ground. The theme of misunderstood words is particularly pronounced in "The Mummerehlen," a new piece in *Berlin Childhood*. Because the child does not know the old word for "aunt" ("Muhme"), the literary figure "Muhme [aunt] Rehlen" becomes for him the "Mummerehlen," a spirit whose name plays on the German verb "mummen" ("to disguise") and thus suggests disguises. A "Kupferstich" (copperplate engraving) becomes a "Kopfverstich" (GF 7)—which meant for the child sticking one's head out of one's hiding place. In "The Mummerehlen" the narrator steps in to comment that the child learned to disguise himself in words: "Early on, I learned to disguise myself in words, which really were clouds."[53] Such linguistic self-disguising transpires in an aimless, innocent manner: the child assimilates himself not to the discourse of behavioral models but instead to words that describe apartments, furniture, and clothes. Benjamin says no more, but the reader is prompted to reflect that language does indeed provoke assimilation and that it also, more ominously, can be used to hide one's intentions.

The child's propensity to spin fanciful meanings out of words is encouraged by his affinity for fairy tales. He informs himself through fairy tales, "thinks" in fairy tales, and explains the world to himself in fairy-tale terms. Again Benjamin does not comment; but the reader can gather that the child, happily ignorant of what lay around the corner, himself contributed to "the whole distorted world of childhood" ("die ganze entstellte Welt der Kindheit").[54] Besides the child, the narrator himself sometimes dips into the trove of fairy-tale motifs, but these narratorial references should be understood ironically, to imply that the world of wealth and stability in which the

upper bourgeoisie of the late nineteenth century lived was, from the point of view of present reality, like a fairy tale.

Benjamin repeatedly represents his child-self as adventurously questing, as searching—for something that he mainly does not find. The theme is most fully developed in "Tiergarten," where the child seeks love in the form of a little girl he adores (but who is watched over by her governess), hopes for fish in the fish pond (but rarely sees them), wishes to approach a statue that turns out to be separated from him by a body of water, and hunts for just anything in the bushes, which prove to hold nothing. But the child's compulsive but unsatisfactory quest is a theme in other pieces as well: he repeatedly tries to catch a glimpse of the otter in the zoo and is only rarely rewarded; he hunts for peacock feathers on Peacock Island but fails to find any; and (in the "Final Version") he burns to make contact with the Mummerehlen, who, however, proves elusive.

Benjamin's deployment of the theme of transformability creates an even broader pattern in the text that reveals the child's perspective. Benjamin recalls his childish self as an unfixed, protean entity that easily, in fact all too easily, transforms itself into other beings and things. A piece Benjamin took from *Einbahnstraße (One-Way Street),* "Verstecke" ("Hiding Places"), which is included in all the published editions of *Berlin Childhood,* is already about the child's ability to transform himself imaginatively into various different creatures. In "Hiding Places" the child takes his identity from his various hiding places: he becomes a ghost, a temple idol, even a door. In another piece adopted from *One-Way Street,* "Schmetterlingsjagd" ("Butterfly Hunt"), which is likewise included in all editions of *Berlin Childhood,* Benjamin changes the original focus on collecting to the notion that the boundary between the hunter (himself) and his prey (the butterfly) disappears. The child becomes the butterfly. He assimilates its soul and gains the ability to understand the language it speaks with the flowers. The butterfly metamorphoses too, in a human direction: it becomes decisive. New pieces thematize the same idea. In the late piece "Die Farben" ("Colors") the child loses himself in colors. Moving from one colored window pane in his family's garden pavilion to another, he transforms himself, as he says, like a landscape. He is similarly transported when he paints with watercolors and when he sees the play of colors on soap bubbles. In "The Mummerehlen," where this creature, this spirit of disguise, is perhaps to be understood as an

avatar of Benjamin himself, the child disappears into words and into the props that people surround him with for formal photographs. Benjamin observes that as a child he changed his identity with his surroundings. Like the Chinese painter in the story, he is capable of disappearing into his own paintings and the pictures painted on porcelain. He goes so far as to say that there is only one thing that he is never similar to—himself. Like Rilke, Benjamin recognizes how profoundly unstable his identity was when he was a child. But in Benjamin's case, there is nothing anxiety-provoking about this instability.

A corollary to the theme of transformability is the motif of the disappearing boundary between opposites. In "Der Strumpf" ("The Sock") ("Schränke" ["Cabinets"] in the "Gießener Fassung"), rolled-up socks reveal themselves to be both container and contained;[55] in "Unglückfälle und Verbrechen" ("Misfortunes and Crimes"), in the wording of the "Final Version," crime destroys the threshold between dream and reality (67; 108); in "ein Weihnachtsengel" ("A Christmas Angel") Christmastime causes not just bounty but also poverty to appear.[56] Ambiguity, the intertwining of opposites in one image, are characteristics of what Benjamin elsewhere called the "Dialektik im Stillstand" ("dialectics at a stillstand") or "dialektisches Bild" ("dialectical image"), which he saw as a product of genuine historical insight.[57] But here it is the child who makes these observations.

Also prominent in the pieces that Benjamin added in *Berlin Childhood* is his intimation, as a child, of the existence of spooky parallel worlds. In "The Moon" moonshine creates a different world. In the first published version (in the *Vossische Zeitung* of 8 September 1933) he is afraid, by moonshine, that he will find his own Doppelgänger lying in his bed. (The word "Doppelgänger" is cut in the "Final Version," whether because it is too literary or too psychological). When he has a fever he lives in a totally different world, and moreover one outside of the normal order of time, in non-time. Sometimes the worlds are connected or interact, for all that they are antithetical. The reverse side of an embroidered pattern becomes more and more confused the closer the embroiderer comes to achieving his goal in front. There exists a subterranean world, a world of cellar windows; out of it comes a little humpback who dogs the child, keeping watch for every moment of carelessness, every blunder. The theme does not just haunt Benjamin's childish fantasy: antithetical worlds, separate but with ominous moments of connection,

*Figure 6.* Walter Benjamin (left) and his brother Georg, circa 1900, posing in an Alpine landscape at the photographer's studio. Like Proust, Benjamin omits mention of his brother in his autobiographical work *Berlin Childhood around 1900*. In "The Mummerehlen," Benjamin alludes to this photograph and notes: "I . . . am distorted by similarity to all that surrounds me here. Thus, like a mollusk in its shell, I had my abode in the nineteenth century, which now lies hollow before me like an empty shell. I hold it to my ear." <*Österreichisches Literaturarchiv der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek, Wien, Nachlass Günther Anders (ÖLA 237/04)*>

*Figure 7.* The statue of Königin Luise in the Tiergarten in Berlin, site of Benjamin's first labyrinth experience when he was barely three years old. A nursemaid led him into the labyrinth at the foot of the statues of Friedrich Wilhelm III and Königin Luise. There he claims to have discovered "love"—albeit accompanied by a sense of difficulty and hopelessness. The labyrinth would retain both associations for him: it appeared intimate, tantalizing, and arousing, yet also challenging and frustrating. Presently Walter began to draw labyrinths in his notebooks. The labyrinth became a figure for writing and memory for Benjamin. This photo is from the 1890–1900 period. *Library of Congress*.

*Figure 8.* Dora and Stefan Benjamin (February 1921). In the summer of 1932 Benjamin did not commit suicide as planned. He crossed out the original dedication of *A Berlin Chronicle* to four of his friends and wrote instead, "For my dear Stefan." *Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Walter Benjamin Archiv.*

comprise the society of his day, namely, the world of the haves, to which Benjamin's family belongs, and the world of the have-nots, of which the child only catches glimpses. The world of the poor enters the child's consciousness at Christmastime, when he gives alms to poor children and sees the occasional Christmas candles in back-courtyard apartments, and in the form of beggars who enter his wealthy West End neighborhood. Once an intruder enters his father's study, and once his family's summer residence is burgled. The rolled-up socks in his clothes closet teach the child that form and content, covering and interior, are one. Benjamin does not identify the socks as a prophetic image, yet the reader, on reflection, can see that it is one, and that the theme of the spooky parallel worlds in general has a premonitory function. For by the time in which Benjamin writes, it has become clear that the two worlds that seemed separate and different are thoroughly interconnected. There would be lots of "misfortunes and crimes" in Berlin, and plenty of poor people, including a working poor, of whose existence Benjamin was ignorant as a child. The world would have become different, the reverse side would have become the reality, and Benjamin would have become his own Doppelgänger, or at least someone who is distinctly different from his previous self, living in worse circumstances, enlightened as to the ways of the world, not a rich child of the haute bourgeoisie but an unsuccessful academic and a Marxist. From this angle of vision, even the theme of childish transformation, seemingly innocent, has a premonitory function. Society has changed, and humans with it; Benjamin himself has undergone several transformations.

The narrator holds the reins in *Berlin Childhood*. One way in which he makes his presence most felt is through his consciousness of time. Although Benjamin's memories center on places and are organized achronologically, the texts are nevertheless steeped in temporal awareness. Reflections on temporality occur at every turn. Benjamin attends not just to the march of history, to long-gone phenomena like gas light and locked closets, and to others changed nearly beyond recognition, like the telephone, but, as discussed above, he construes time as prophetic. Peter Szondi made the point that Benjamin's tense is the future perfect; later critics have chimed in. Szondi argued that it is precisely this interest in the past for the sake of the future that differentiates Benjamin from Proust, who hoped to escape time entirely.[58] The idea of images that carried a premonition of the future was

already present in *A Berlin Chronicle*—Benjamin writes of images in which "however mistily, the contours of what is to come are delineated like mountain peaks" ("wenn auch noch so schleierhaft die Linien des Kommenden wie Gipfelzüge sich abzeichnen")[59]— but this theme of prophecy is greatly augmented in *Berlin Childhood.* The occasional beggars, the rare thieves, intruders, and fires in the city are early signs that presage the more turbulent times to come. The "dead region" of the zoo that houses the fish otter is a "prophetic corner," resembling, as Benjamin says in *A Berlin Chronicle,* Wiesbaden or Pyrmont after the economic crisis: the fish otter, holy animal of rain water, appears to point to Benjamin's rainy future. The theme of seeking and not finding would obviously play itself out in Benjamin's adult life. Benjamin specifies in his preface to the "Final Version" that he intended the text to have this presaging character: "the images of my metropolitan childhood (Großstadtkindheit) perhaps are capable, at their core, of preforming later historical experience."[60]

A related notion, idiosyncratically Benjaminian and aired as well in "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," is that time fulfills wishes made early in life. In *Berlin Childhood around 1900* the child's wishes are fulfilled in skewed form: his later habit of artfully losing himself in a city "fulfills the dream" that his early predilection for drawing labyrinths first testified to ("Tiergarten"); his early wish to sleep in is fulfilled in later life when he is out of work ("Winter Morning"). As in the fairy tale, not every wish is fulfilled in the way he would have liked. In "Two Enigmas" Benjamin comes to understand a mysterious line in Schiller's "Reiterlied" ("Cavalier's Song"), which his old teacher Herr Knoche told his pupils they would understand "when they were grown up." This song became a propaganda song for soldiers in World War I and under the Nazis, which explains why it never quite held the significance for Benjamin that his teacher promised, even though his teacher's promise comes true.

But the theme of time in *Berlin Childhood* does not just have to do with prophecy and wishes. Benjamin considers places where time moves slowly, where history has wrought no great changes: in the loggias, in the quarter where his aunt has her apartment, Steglitzer Ecke Genthiner. His maternal grandmother's immense apartment has its own special relationship to time. It radiates bourgeois security, even suggesting a sort of eternity—for no one dies there; the dying are removed to sanatoria. It was made for holidays, for

celebrating Christmases. The hours before dark on Christmas eve in his parents' apartment, in contrast, the hour in which the children wait for the parents to ready the tree, is an hour in which a temporal consciousness streams into the splendor and perfection of the holiday: the child, waiting in his room, sees Christmas trees being lit in other windows, and windows where none are being lit: "It seemed to me that these Christmas windows were harboring loneliness, old age, privation—all that the poor people kept silent about."[61] Yet even where there is no element of prophecy, the fact that the present-day narrator is doing the telling ensures that past and future appear interlocked, the one relevant to the other. He reflects that contingent events of his childhood condition his propensities as an adult—for example, it is because of his childhood fevers that he now likes to wait, to anticipate things approaching from afar. Conversely, contingencies in his adulthood sparked in him an appreciation for aspects of his childhood. For example, his present homelessness makes the "unlivable" loggias of his childhood meaningful to him. He is a narrator gifted with double vision, with the ability to see two images in one. This explains why he is fond of the phenomenon of déjà vu, which he explores specifically in "News of a Death" and "The Moon." The entire book, where past and present echo off each other in so many different ways, is haunted by a sensation akin to déjà vu. Childhood is a prism with which Benjamin catches the light of the present. The narrator turns it this way and that, so that connections and continuities, reversals and ruptures flicker up.

As Benjamin progressed in the composition and revision of *Berlin Childhood* throughout the 1930s, the theme of time becomes increasingly purposeful. The post–"Gießener Fassung" pieces "Loggias," "The Moon," and "Hallesches Tor" (later entitled "Winter Evening") juxtapose two temporal orders. Benjamin's revisions of "Herr Knoche and Fräulein Pufahl" into the piece "Two Enigmas" evoke recent history more pointedly than do their versions in the "Gießener Fassung."

Precisely the theme of time reveals the theoretical nature of the book. To notice it is to begin to suspect that the childhood memories Benjamin stages, which are anything but simple or spontaneous, are, besides being constructed with great subtlety and artifice, hooked up to some theoretical machinery, some particular epistemology, and some view of time.

A third difference between *Berlin Childhood* and *A Berlin Chronicle* lies in the extent to which Benjamin incorporates Freud. The eagerly written

notes that comprise Benjamin's *A Berlin Chronicle* sound like a demonstration of the truth of Freud's views. By consequence, a schism runs through Benjamin's account of his childhood in *A Berlin Chronicle.* One senses a veritable struggle in Benjamin between the notion of the "true" memory—which is fundamental to the tradition of childhood autobiography up to that point—and the conviction, which Benjamin shared with Freud, that memories are always being rewritten from the perspective of the rememberer's present: "The mysterious work of remembrance—which is really the capacity for endless interpolations into what has been" ("Das geheimnisvolle Werk der Erinnerung—die eigentlich das Vermögen endloser Interpolationen im Gewesenen ist"), Benjamin writes.[62]

Benjamin's childhood memories are obviously as dear to him as Proust's and Rilke's were to them. The first archaeological metaphor in *A Berlin Chronicle,* where he speaks of the "dark joy" ("dunkles Glück") of finding the ancient treasures, makes their specialness clear.[63] The sense that these memories were precious for Benjamin is no doubt why readers, even literary critics, find *Berlin Childhood* a moving book. In *A Berlin Chronicle* Benjamin wanted to find the key to his personality in these memories, signally in the recurrence of the labyrinth figure. These nostalgias are at odds with Benjamin's disbelief in recoverable authentic memories and with his adoption of an entirely different memory model, based on the conviction that memories are rewritten from a present perspective. As we have seen, in *A Berlin Chronicle* he squabbled with Proust, aggressively misreading Proust's project as one of pursuing an impossible completeness.[64] He continues in *Berlin Childhood* to insist on differentiating his position on memory from Proust's. If Rilke and Proust found the recovery of forgotten memories difficult, Benjamin asserts programmatically that it is *impossible:* "We can never entirely recover what has been forgotten," he writes.[65]

In *A Berlin Chronicle* Benjamin does not cite Freud, but there are too many similarities for these to be chalked up to coincidence. He twice says that memories are rewritten and that the present moment makes its own cut into the lived past: "But this vista would indeed be delusive if it did not make visible the medium in which alone such images take form (sich darstellen), assuming a transparency. . . . *The present in which the writer lives is this medium. And, dwelling in it, he now cuts another section through the sequence of his experiences.*" ("Aber dieser Durchblick würde kein Vertrauen

verdienen, gäbe er von dem Medium nicht Rechenschaft, in dem diese Bilder allein sich darstellen und eine Transparenz annehmen. . . . *Die Gegenwart des Schreibenden ist dieses Medium. Und aus ihr heraus legt er nun einen anderen Schnitt durch die Folge seiner Erfahrung*" [italics mine]).[66] "For even if months and years appear here, *it is in the form they have at the moment of commemoration (Eingedenken).*" ("Denn wenn auch Monate und Jahre hier auftauchen, *so ist es in der Gestalt, die sie im Augenblick des Eingedenkens haben*" [57, 612; italics mine]). In an August 1932 reworking of one of the archaeological analogies in *A Berlin Chronicle,* entitled "Ausgraben und Erinnern" ("Excavation and Memory"), the focus on the present of remembering becomes sharp and emphatic. Benjamin drops turns of phrase like "genuine reminiscences" ("echte Erinnerungen") and "real treasure" ("wahre Werte") that were present in the earlier version (52–53; 611), except to make clear that real memory gives an image of the rememberer: "Epic and rhapsodic in the strictest sense, real memory (wirkliche Erinnerung) must therefore yield an image of the person who remembers."[67]

Benjamin twice uses archaeological metaphors that resemble Freud's metaphors for the analyst's work.[68] In *Studies on Hysteria* Freud describes the analyst's work in uncovering a pathological memory as though he were engaging in an archaeological dig: the psychic material lies in "strata" ("Schichten"); the analyst must carefully penetrate them, always running the risk of "burying" ("verschütten") what might be of value. In the same context Freud also employs a labyrinth metaphor for the psyche that Benjamin no doubt would have found appealing.

In *A Berlin Chronicle* Benjamin appears to work with Freud's idea of shock and his concept of *Nachträglichkeit,* of the subsequent conferral of meaning on an earlier event. Admittedly, he does not follow Freud slavishly here, and he also somewhat mystifies both Freudian ideas.[69] In *Berlin Childhood,* in contrast, he successively de-Freudianizes his presentation, so that the "Final Version" no longer contains traces of Freud's theories of memory.

I shall illustrate this thesis on the basis of four examples. The first is a significant omission: Benjamin drops all archaeological metaphors from *Berlin Childhood.* Curiously, he evidently worked up "Excavation and Memory" for inclusion as a piece in *Berlin Childhood* and then failed to include it in any version.[70] It does not figure in the "Gießener Fassung" or even, for that matter, in the handwritten Stefan-Exemplar of September–October 1932.

The second is Benjamin's story of the burglary of his parents' summer house in Babelsberg. This story bears the title "Ein Gespenst" ("A Ghost") in *Berlin Childhood*. In the *Berlin Chronicle* version of this story, Benjamin prefaces his account with sentences that have much in common with Breuer and Freud's theory of traumatic memory in *Studies on Hysteria:* "There are memories that are especially well preserved because, although not themselves affected, they are isolated by a shock from all that followed. They have not been worn away by contact with their successors and remain detached, self-sufficient."[71] Benjamin's notion of the remembered shock is akin to Breuer and Freud's notion of the traumatic memory, which is isolated from normal memory. Freud and Breuer write: "Our observations have shown . . . that the memories which have become the determinants of hysterical phenomena persist for a long time with astonishing freshness and with the whole of their affective colouring. . . . *These experiences are completely absent from the patients' memory when they are in a normal psychical state, or are only present in a highly summary form. . . . The ideas which have become pathological have persisted with such freshness and affective strength because they have been denied the normal wearing-away processes by means of abreaction and reproduction in states of uninhibited association*" (SE II: 9–11; Freud's italics). In both cases, trauma-related (in Benjamin's parlance "shock"-related) memories are separated from our normal memories, but retain remarkable freshness. The difference is that Benjamin conceives of shock as an aid to normal memory (because of the shock the memories are especially well remembered), whereas Breuer and Freud see trauma as a cause of repressed, pathological memory (it drives the memory underground). Benjamin's sentences on shock are cut in the *Berlin Childhood* versions.

To give a third example, in the *Berlin Chronicle* version of the piece that will later come to be called "Hallesches Tor" (Halle Gate), and finally (in the "Final Version") "Winter Evening," Benjamin speculates on the deceptiveness of his memory. He remembers eagerly anticipated childhood visits to the theater oddly, fragmentarily, and seemingly with displacement. He avers that he doesn't remember the performances themselves, but rather peripheral events like waiting in line to buy tickets, climbing the theater stairs, or walking to the theater in the snow. Thus the very reality of the visits seems questionable: Did he actually see the famous actor Kainz on stage when he was a schoolchild, or did he merely long to do this so much

that he imagined that his wish had been fulfilled? Benjamin comments, "So I confront uncertainty wherever I follow my earlier theatrical memories, and in the end I can no longer even distinguish dream from reality."[72] He similarly questions the reality of a visit to the opera (95; 626). In the *Berlin Childhood* versions this speculation on memory, which entertains the idea that memories of wished-for events were really just wish-fulfillment dreams, as well as the topic of theater visits that prompts it, are cut.

The fourth example, "News of a Death," presents a Freudian screen memory complete with Freudian sexual baggage. The topic of memory dominates the *Berlin Chronicle* version of the piece. Benjamin starts this version with the observation, similar to that in the story of the burglary, that shock may preserve the memory of a place that habit might otherwise efface. As in the burglary story, he cuts this observation out of later versions. After the discussion of shock, Benjamin develops a theory of déjà vu that is fundamentally similar to Proust's theory of involuntary memory: a present cue causes us to recall a past scene. Benjamin's discussion then veers again in a Freudian direction. He gives an account of a memory from his fifth year. His father told him that a cousin had died and explained lengthily what a heart attack was, but "forgot"—Benjamin uses quotation marks around "forgot"—to say that his cousin died of syphilis. As an adult Benjamin discovers the true cause of the death, and only then does he understand why he remembered the scene. "But that evening I must have memorized (eingeprägt) my room and my bed, the way you observe with great precision a place where you feel dimly that you'll later have to search for something you've forgotten there. Many years afterward I discovered what it was. Here in this room, my father had 'forgotten' part of the news about the deceased: the illness was called syphilis."[73] This is a classic example of a Freudian screen memory. According to Freud, the inconsequential events of early childhood that we tend to remember are "screen memories"—memories that are attached, by association, either to repressed contemporaneous events or to less innocent, later trains of thought. The unimportant childhood event is illuminated by memory subsequently *(nachträglich),* precisely because it is linked to a repressed sexual idea. In *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* Freud gives a simple, straightforward example: a man remembers how, as a small child, he learned the difference between the letters *m* and *n*. Analysis shows that this alleged "memory" derives its energy from the man's later

discovery that the difference between boys and girls is just like the difference between *m* and *n:* boys have an "extra piece."[74] In the *Berlin Chronicle* version of the story, Benjamin suggests that his later interest in syphilis, and the realization that his father concealed this censored topic from him, flooded the childhood scene with meaning.[75] In the subsequent versions the Freudian elements are diminished. In the "Gießener Fassung," indeed already in the handwritten Stefan-Exemplar that Benjamin prepared in September-October of 1932, the theorizing about déjà vu is reduced. The allusion to screen memory is retained, inasmuch as syphilis remains a censored concept: "In this room, my father had kept from me part of the news: my cousin had died of syphilis."[76] But in the "Final Version" all references to the father lying or covering up the cause of death are removed.

Does Benjamin replace Freud's theory of memory, the idea that the present writes its own version of the past, by a different theory in the later versions of his childhood autobiography? Just as in *A Berlin Chronicle* there was no open mention of Freud, in the *Berlin Childhood* versions there is no open refutation of him. In the latter versions, temporality in its many different aspects grows as a theme, but memory itself, to which Benjamin recurs obsessively in *A Berlin Chronicle,* shrinks as a topic: it receives overt commentary only in "The Reading Box," where Benjamin states that total recovery of the past is impossible, for all that the forgotten is an object of our longing, and in the self-reflexive, elliptical story of the little hunchback, "The Little Hunchback," the final piece in the book. Neither piece figures in *A Berlin Chronicle.* In "The Reading Box" Benjamin certainly retains a post-Freudian, anti-Proustian skepticism: accurate recovery of the complete past is out of the question. In "The Little Hunchback," where Benjamin refers to pieces that appeared previously in his own text, he appears to be commenting on his own effort of memory in *Berlin Childhood.* The little hunchback, who does his job of collecting images of us only when we are inattentive, is the conservator and administrator of the forgotten, the habitual, the unconscious (indeed, he houses underground); in this case, too, of the nineteenth century. Part of his job (as Benjamin says of the same figure in his essay "Franz Kafka") is to *distort* our own images of things, just as he himself has a hunchback, for oblivion implies distortion. "It was a look from which things receded—until, in a year's time, the garden had become a little garden, my room a little room, and the bench a little bench." ("Die Dinge ent-

zogen sich, bis aus dem Garten übers Jahr ein Gärtlein, ein Kämmerlein aus meiner Kammer und ein Bänklein aus der Bank geworden war.")[77] "He has long since abdicated" ("Er hat längst abgedankt"), Benjamin comments in the "Final Version."[78] He seems to have been part of Benjamin, as well as his other and antagonist. Yet the overdetermined little hunchback is not just Benjamin's personal bugaboo and antagonistic alter ego, but may be understood as a universal psychological mechanism that merits our wariness. He is the "down side," the inevitable price, exacted by the imaginary.[79] Lacan's term fits the inattentiveness of the child as it does the obliviousness of the rich, for power blinds, and it can be extended to Benjamin's "dreaming" nineteenth century. Thus the little hunchback takes his toll on the child's naïve dream world, and also—as a creature of the nineteenth century—on the nineteenth century's persistent romanticism mixed with its delusional dream of progress, by substituting nostalgia for memory. In the first version, found in the "Gießener Fassung," the little hunchback is said to possess cinematographic images of the child, similar to those of his "whole life" that a dying person sees. Death was still on Benjamin's mind here.[80] He may have reflected that he did not experience the moment of death and so did not attain the privilege of seeing the little hunchback's book of images. Yet he was close to death; *Berlin Childhood* was conceived on the cusp of death. In listing the images the little hunchback has of him, he recapitulates the pieces of *Berlin Childhood:* "He saw me in my hiding place and in front of the otter's cage, on the winter morning and by the telephone in the back hall, at the Brauhausberg with the butterflies, in front of the sewing box and over my drawer, in Blumeshof and when I was sick in bed, in Glienicke and at the railway station" (GF 111). Benjamin therefore implies that by writing the text of *Berlin Childhood* he managed to wrest some of the hunchback's pictures away from him and to re-illuminate them with attentiveness.[81] This implication persists in the "Final Version," where Benjamin drops the allusions to death and says of the little hunchback, "He has long since abdicated."

"The Little Hunchback" underscores the value—the illuminating potential—rather than the necessary inaccuracy—of memory. "The Reading Box" was not one of the pieces Benjamin selected for the "Final Version," so by 1938 the topic of memory does not occur at all in *Berlin Childhood* except through the theme of forgetting in "The Little Hunchback." In this

final version Benjamin can be seen to have moved to a theoretical position beyond Freud's, one that is much more affirmative of memory. The final *Berlin Childhood* version suggests that Benjamin had distanced himself from the psychoanalytic doubt in memory that would characterize so many later-twentieth-century European autobiographies.

## IV

To a greater extent than Proust or Rilke, Benjamin was a collector. He collected butterflies and postcards as a child and books as well as children's books and toys as an adult. He stylized himself as a collector and indulged in occasional speculation about the urge to collect. It is tempting to regard *Berlin Childhood* as a *collection* of pieces about the past. It resembles one even more when we reflect that Benjamin revised it for years, adding, dropping, changing, polishing, and arranging the order of the pieces. But something here gives pause. Why did Benjamin change the pieces, and why did he drop pieces? Why did he change their order? No one has satisfactorily accounted for these changes, although critics have suggested that stylistic improvement played a role.[82] I propose that some of the changes, in particular the suppression of Freud just discussed, can be traced to a change in Benjamin's ruling ideas, to a shift in what was important for him to express.

The philosophy of history Benjamin began to formulate as of 1927 and the theory of memory that can be constructed out of sentences in *A Berlin Chronicle* are deeply intertwined.[83] Both reveal the influence of Proust's notion of "involuntary memory," of the past flashing up in an image. Benjamin deploys similar imagery of the unconscious, of sudden illumination, and of explosion both in developing his historical method and in commenting on personal memory. He abjures narrative representation for memory as he does for history.[84] He likens both remembering and his historical method to the work of the collector.[85] The theory of memory regards remembering as a work of the present, and his conviction that seeking to find "things as they really were" is an illusory pursuit and wants rejecting as a historical method has nothing in it that would contradict the postulation that memory continually rewrites the past. In his writings on historical method he emphasizes the importance of the present moment as a component of remembering, just as he did in *A Berlin Chronicle*. Thus in *A Berlin Chronicle* he writes:

"For even if months and years appear here, it is in the form they have at the moment of commemoration (Eingedenken)." In "Über den Begriff der Geschichte" ("On the Concept of History") he writes: "The past can be seized (ist festzuhalten) only as an image that flashes up at the moment of its recognizability, and is never seen again. . . . For it is an irretrievable image of the past which threatens to disappear in any present that does not recognize itself as intended in that image."[86] Freud's theory of memory, which emphasizes the tendentious and selective nature of recollection, seems to have been formative for Benjamin's philosophy of history, which declares historical knowledge to be similarly partial. Benjamin's complication of the dialectical method with his renowned and idiosyncratic belief in the discontinuity of time[87] could very well have been inspired by Freud's thinking on memory and on the psychic processes more generally, which are seen to manifest ruptures due to repression. Thus Benjamin's theory of memory and his philosophy of history resemble each other. Yet an important difference informs them.

From the 1927/29–1930 drafts of the *Arcades Project* where Benjamin begins to define the dialectical "technique" or "method," he equates the achievement of the dialectical historian with awakening (which he calls the "dialectical reversal" ["dialektischer Umschlag"]) out of the dreaming past, with recognition or knowledge (Erkenntnis), and with "explosion" on account of its revolutionary potential.[88] Although the formulation of the method underwent various modifications in the decade of the 1930s, Benjamin always expressed confidence in it, contrasting it with other historians' attempts to achieve "empathy" ("Einfühlung") with the past, which he emphatically rejected, and with the school of historicism, which misguidedly attempts to show things "as they really were."[89] Stéphane Moses is right in his assessment that "Proust's experience of the resurrection of the past as illuminated through memory is elevated here to the dignity of a historical category. And as in Proust's case it is less a matter of finding the past than of rescuing it."[90] Benjamin's historical method is derived from Proust's "mémoire involontaire." His certainty about the value of what flashes up corresponds to Proust's intuitive certitude that he has truly rediscovered what he had lost. So certain is Benjamin that he turns what is for Proust an involuntary psychological mechanism into a method that can be voluntarily chosen and employed by the historian.[91]

The emphasis in the theory of memory on discovering the psychological mechanisms of memory (or I would argue, affirming the validity of those adapted from psychoanalysis), involves, in contrast, a significant component of denial that the past will or can be as adequately recovered as one might wish. *A Berlin Chronicle* emphasizes the power of forgetfulness and the selective, constructive, and psychically complicated nature of memory. Inasmuch as the theory of memory affirms the value of remembering, it asserts that finds can be made amidst a generalized loss. The emphasis in the philosophy of history is, in contrast, on a convinced affirmation of the method, the insights that it brings, and their revolutionary potential. The historian *rescues* the past. The difference between the philosophy of history and the theory of memory is the difference between Proust and Freud. Proust is convinced that accesses of involuntary memory bring back the true reality of his past experiences and hence are immensely valuable; Freud asserts that present preoccupations dictate the construction of memories, which therefore are akin to fantasies and cannot be trusted.

Benjamin's musings on memory in *A Berlin Chronicle* draw on both Freud and Proust, but Freud is in the ascendant. His historical method marries Proust with Marx. The difference in result can be seen by comparing the way Benjamin uses the metaphor of explosion in each context. In *A Berlin Chronicle,* light suddenly shoots "from an alien source" ("aus fremden Quellen"), "as if from magnesium powder set alight," and causes an image to appear to us on the dark plate of memory.[92] The image, consonant with both Freudian and Proustian theory, consigns the remembering subject to passivity.[93] In the first notes to the *Arcades Project,* written at least two years previously, Benjamin attributes agency squarely to himself as historian: his method will bring about the "revolutionary explosion" of past things in the present.[94]

In the second half of the 1930s Benjamin remained attracted to the idea of unconscious memories. He continued to collect quotations pertaining to the psychoanalytical theory of memory (specifically to an understanding of "Erlebnis" as a defense) in the part of the "Aufzeichnungen und Materialien" ("Convolutes") of the *Arcades Project* dated, by the editor, December 1937–May 1940,[95] and he follows them with four paragraphs on Proust that support a theory of unconscious memories. In "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" he tried to put together Freud, Proust, and Marx in a theory of the way the

human organism processed the changing reality of the nineteenth century. The theory of memory that Benjamin is most famous for appears here. It consists of the proposition that modern life has disrupted memory as human beings have traditionally known it. The structure of human experience has changed in such a way that people no longer remember in the same way they once did. Benjamin bases his argument on Freud's metapsychological insight that "becoming conscious and leaving behind a memory trace are incompatible processes within one and the same system."[96] Consciousness functions to protect the organism from stimuli; it blocks the potentially traumatic effect of shocks. Benjamin contrasts "Erfahrung" (the old mode of experience) with "Erlebnis" (the modern one).[97] Citing Bergson, he defines "Erfahrung" as "a matter of tradition": "It is the product less of facts firmly anchored in memory [*Erinnerung*] than of accumulated and frequently unconscious data that flow together in memory [*Gedächtnis*]."[98] In "Erfahrung," certain contents of the individual past mix in memory with those of the collective (611; 316). But in modern times "Erfahrung" is less available, because reality assails us with constant shocks, which consciousness parries. "Erfahrung" is thus replaced by "Erlebnis," by conscious, individual experiences that do not, however, "sink in." Benjamin pointedly assimilates Proust's "mémoire involuntaire" to this theory, stressing that it is "not obvious" to get one's experiences from involuntary memory, as Proust did. Memory, Benjamin asserts, was formerly not such a private, individual affair. But it became that way with lessened chances to assimilate outer reality to experience. Here as in his previous work on Proust, Benjamin (mis)reads the experiences that Proust recovers through involuntary memory as memories that he was never conscious of to begin with (613; 317).

Hence the disappearance of Freud in subsequent versions of *Berlin Childhood* is certainly not attributable to a wholesale rejection of Freud. In the early "Gießener Fassung" it may very well have to do with an aesthetic decision to minimize theorizing, to let the evidence speak for itself. The rigorous excision in the "Final Version" of every phrase expressing doubt in memory or alluding to the idea of screen memories suggests, additionally, a desire to disentangle his redemptive theory of history from the psychology of memory, to give up allegiance to a theory of memory that did not dovetail with his philosophy of history, which, at that point in time, he must have seen as more important. I believe that as soon as Benjamin started to

refashion *A Berlin Chronicle* into *Berlin Childhood around 1900,* his philosophy of history began to infiltrate and establish its grip on the text. Thus, starting with the "Gießener Fassung" the work becomes more historical and less personal and psychological. Emphasis on the deceptiveness of our conscious memory would have given the work an undertow that would have pulled the reader's attention in a wrong direction. The very psychological dimension of the work, the psychological relativizing of the insights of the pieces, was at cross-purposes with the philosophy of history and demanded to be shrunk. Ambivalence characterizes the "Gießener Fassung" of *Berlin Childhood,* inasmuch as traces of Freudian theory persist in "The Reading Box" and a version of "News of a Death" that still conforms to the theory of the screen memory, whereas "The Little Hunchback" reflects the philosophy of history by subscribing to an ideal of true remembering versus the nostalgic distortions attributable to the little hunchback. In the "Final Version" the ambivalence is cleared up: "The Reading Box" is not among the pieces chosen, and references to screen memory theory in "News of a Death" are effaced. By consequence, the message of "The Little Hunchback," the final piece in the book, holds sway.

Benjamin's philosophy of history also infiltrated the text formally. Benjamin seemingly refashioned *A Berlin Chronicle* into *Berlin Childhood* with his contemporaneously held theory of the dialectical image in mind. The pieces that comprise *Berlin Childhood* have a great deal in common with the dialectical image as Benjamin develops the concept in the *Arcades Project*. To be sure, Benjamin never gave a recipe for producing a dialectical image in a piece of prose. In his many reformulations of the concept of the dialectical image, the concept remains largely abstract. It also remains somewhat mysterious, inasmuch as Benjamin never defines its ontological status. What is a dialectical image? As Susan Buck-Morss already pointed out in *The Dialectics of Seeing* (1989), the concept is "overdetermined in Benjamin's thought."[99] Most of Benjamin's remarks about it suggest that it is a mental image of a bygone thing or state of affairs that is sensed to be portentous and therefore enters into a *constellation* with now-time: "Image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation" ("Bild ist dasjenige, worin das Gewesene mit dem Jetzt blitzhaft zu einer Konstellation zusammentritt").[100] A passage in "Erste Notizen" ("First Sketches," written from mid-1927 to early 1930) helps explain this definition of "image"

in terms of the interest that a given piece of the past holds for the present: "It is said that the dialectical method consists in doing justice . . . to the concrete historical situation of its object. But that is not enough. For it is just as much a matter of doing justice to the concrete historical situation of the *interest* taken in the object. And *this* situation is always so constituted as to be itself preformed in that object; above all, however, the object is felt to be concretized in this situation itself and upraised from its former being into the higher concretion of now-being ‹*Jetztsein*›." ("Und diese letztere Situation liegt immer darin beschlossen, daß sie selber sich präformiert in jenem Gegenstande, vor allem aber, daß sie den Gegenstand in sich selber konkretisiert, aus seinem Sein von damals in die höhere Konkretion des Jetztseins aufgerückt fühlt.")[101] Benjamin conceptualizes the once-was and the now as discontinuous: "While the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: it is not progression but image, suddenly emergent (sprunghaft)."[102] His insistence that the "now of recognizability" ("Jetzt der Erkennbarkeit") is essential to the dialectical image and his increasing use of the adverb "blitzhaft" ("in a flash") as well as the verb "aufblitzen" ("to flash up") to characterize the behavior of the dialectical image suggest that the dialectical image is a mental image of the past that suddenly comes to mind.[103] Moreover, the coming into being of the image has the status of a *reading*. Reading reality as though it were a language is a habit of mind Benjamin shares with Proust. "The image that is read—which is to say, the image in the now of its recognizability—bears to the highest degree the imprint of the perilous critical moment on which all reading is founded":[104] here, Benjamin identifies a psychological mechanism that causes dialectical images to flash up in the mind. Particular circumstances, dangerous ones, are propitious for rendering the dialectical image legible. Nevertheless, Benjamin is not entirely consistent in what he calls a dialectical image. On one rare occasion when he gives concrete examples of dialectical images, in the 1935 exposé "Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century," he names as dialectical images historical phenomena *per se* with no additive of present time. The "time differential ‹*Zeitdifferential*› in which alone the dialectical image is real" here involves modernity's citation of what Benjamin calls "primal history" ("Urgeschichte").[105] He gives as an example the Paris of Baudelaire's poems, which resembles an underwater world. Benjamin emphasizes the

*ambiguity* of such historical phenomena, stating, "Ambiguity is the manifest imaging (bildliche Erscheinung) of dialectic, the law of dialectics at a standstill."[106] He lists some examples that are merely ambiguous and do not seem to incorporate any "time differential" at all: "Such an image is afforded by the commodity per se: as fetish. Such an image is presented by the arcades, which are house no less than street. Such an image is the prostitute—seller and sold (Ware) in one" (55; 10). Elsewhere he associates the dialectical image with a maximum of tension between the dialectical opposites.[107] In another, earlier passage he mentions fashion and pronounces: "Real time enters the dialectical image not in natural magnitude—let alone psychologically—but in its smallest gestalt." ("Die reale Zeit geht in das dialektische Bild nicht in natürlicher Größe—geschweige denn psychologisch—sondern in ihrer kleinsten Gestalt ein.")[108] Thus the dialectical image is not the panorama of a period, but history encapsulated into its *smallest form*. Yet on another occasion, he intimates that dialectical images have a linguistic identity: "The place where one encounters them is language."[109]

If dialectical images are "encountered" in language, then surely they can be produced in language. Buck-Morss argues convincingly that dialectical images are constructed (by Benjamin) and not found, however much Benjamin himself may seem to suggest that they are empirically given.[110] It would not be far-fetched to consider the pieces in *Berlin Childhood* "pictures" or "images." In *Berlin Childhood* Benjamin does not give a broad panorama of life in Berlin around 1900, but close-ups of aspects of the child's life in Berlin. He explodes the narrative form of *A Berlin Chronicle* into pieces in order to focus in on certain things, certain places, and certain experiences—-most of which are not representative of the Berlin of that era in the sense that they would have gone into a guide book, but personal and idiosyncratic. He then submits these small subjects to considerable elaboration. One effect this elaboration produces is to suggest that the subject represents a significant aspect of, is saturated by, its time. Thus, it gives its time its *smallest form*. "Miniature" is a word critics frequently use to speak of the pieces in *Berlin Childhood*, beginning with Benjamin's editor Adorno.[111] The high degree of contrast between the adult's and the child's perspective—the adult appearing to look quizzically at some aspect of the "then," as if at some old piece of ornamental bric-a-brac found in a cluttered study—conjures the sense that the image of the past in question has come to the adult's mind. Benjamin sets the text up so that the adult nar-

rator's voice is incorrigible, indeed a repository of wisdom. Since the time of writing can certainly be inferred to be a time of danger, the adult narrator could, consequently, be seen to occupy the *now of recognizability*. A *constellation* of present and past is achieved by the many thematic references, direct and oblique, to the way in which past states of affairs prefigured present ones. *Ambiguity* is a regular feature of the things portrayed. Some show a high degree of tension—indeed paradox, such as, for example, the telephone. The pieces thus have many of the characteristics of Benjamin's dialectical image, without, however, appearing in what would have been the "give-away" framework of an allusion to images flashing up.[112] The way the narrator has gained access to his memories of the past is not addressed; in fact, the narrator's *remembering* of the past is implicit in the way the pieces are constructed rather than an explicit theme.

Seen in this light, Benjamin's decision to write *Berlin Childhood around 1900* as a series of discrete pieces gains motivation. Several critics have characterized Benjamin's autobiographical practice as one that parts ways with the tradition of self-writing.[113] Jeanne-Marie Gagnebin, for example, asserts that it operates with a conception of the subject that does not limit itself to invoking self-consciousness but opens onto involuntary and unconscious dimensions of psychic life; this opening out simultaneously extends the social dimension of the subject.[114] It does not give the portrait of a particular little boy.[115] She notes that one of Benjamin's principal criticisms of Proust (in *A Berlin Chronicle* and "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire") was that Proust took up his exploration of the past in the spirit of bourgeois individualism.[116] Benjamin's treatment of his memories in *Berlin Childhood around 1900,* in contrast, transcends the personal. His construction of his text as a series of discrete pieces has, I believe, to do with a desire to give his memories the validity and the import of dialectical images. Thus too, the subsequent versions of the text increasingly bear the stamp of Benjamin's philosophy of history, and the "Final Version" corrects incompatible psychological theorizing out of the text.

## V

As I suggested previously, there is another driving force behind this text: Benjamin's collecting impulse, which is discernible in both the initial composition and the reworkings. Benjamin's largest project, the *Arcades Project,*

remained a vast collection of quotations and notes about Paris. *Berlin Childhood* too, I believe, is expressive of Benjamin's pleasure in collecting, his instinct to surround himself with special things.

The following passage from his preliminary notes for his *Arcades Project* (dated 1927–1930 by the editor), where he speaks of the happiness in collecting, is a key text:

> Happiness of the collector, happiness of the solitary: tête-à-tête with things. Is not this the felicity that reigns over our memories—that in them we are alone with particular things, which arrange themselves around us silently, and that even the people who then show up partake in this steadfast, confederate silence of things. The collector "stills" his fate. And that means he disappears in the world of memory.
>
> [Glück des Sammlers, Glück des Einsamen: tête-à-tête mit den Dingen. Ist nicht das die Beseligung, die über unsern Erinnerungen waltet: daß wir in ihnen mit Dingen allein sind, die sich stillschweigend um uns anordnen und daß selbst die Menschen, die dann auftauchen, dieses zuverlässige, bündnishafte Schweigen der Dinge mit annehmen. Der Sammler "stillt" sein Schicksal. Und das heißt, er verschwindet in der Welt der Erinnerung.][117]

The happiness inherent in collecting, which Benjamin here sets apposite to the happiness of being alone, consists in being able to have a tête-à-tête with things. These things are silent, dependably silent, and arrange themselves around one.[118] The image of a circle with the self in the center recalls Rilke's image of childhood memories forming a circle around him. Indeed, Benjamin's strong affinity for the society of things—as opposed to people—is strikingly similar to Rilke's. Rilke too found things "dependable" and made a point of their "silence." Remarkably, Benjamin throws memory into the mix, naming memory as yet another source of pleasure precisely because in our memories we are alone with things, the way solitary collectors surround themselves with their collections. Human beings who show up in memories are pleasantly reified, inasmuch as they must also conform to the reliable, supportive, and silent behavior of things. One's memories appear

here as one's friends and allies, whose company one can enjoy. Benjamin ends by drawing an equivalence between collecting, or the process by which the collector hushes (by feeding) his fate ("stillen" is an allusion to nursing a child), and disappearing into the world of memory. Benjamin's draft ‹Paris Arcades II› (written 1928–1929) affords clarification. There Benjamin writes: "Collecting is a form of practical memory" ("Sammeln ist eine Form des praktischen Erinnerns").[119] If remembering is analogous to collecting, collecting is also, to his mind, a form of memory.

Benjamin wrote about collecting in the *Arcades Project;*[120] in "Ich packe meine Bibliothek aus" ("Unpacking My Library," 1931), a piece about book collecting; and in the 1937 essay "Eduard Fuchs, der Sammler und der Historiker" ("Edward Fuchs, Collector and Historian"). In the *Arcades Project* he reflects on the motivations for collecting and notes that it has a physiological side: in birds, for example, which collect in order to make nests, it has a biological function.[121] The essay on Fuchs shows that he has searched history and literary history for collector figures: he comments on collector types, the most common being the type that passionately seeks to acquire one particular type of object. His remarks in "Ich packe meine Bibliothek aus" ("Unpacking My Library") are perhaps most productive for an understanding of *Berlin Childhood* as a collection. There he declares that collecting is a process of renewal: the collector causes the collected items to be reborn. He notes that there is a "childlike element" to collecting and observes that "among children, collecting is only one process of renewal; other processes are the painting of objects, the cutting out of figures, the application of decals—the whole range of childlike modes of acquisition, from touching things to giving them names."[122] The list of activities that "renew" things can obviously be extended to writing. In *Berlin Childhood* Benjamin creates a collection of remembered things that he has "renewed" in verbal form. These are portentous things, things that bring knowledge, philosopher's stones. Benjamin's constant changing of his text corresponds to the rearranging and polishing activities characteristic of the collector.

For all of its parallels to Proust and Rilke, *Berlin Childhood around 1900* carves out for itself a new position in the history of literary evocations of childhood. Benjamin positions himself in an ironic, even parodistic relationship to the tradition of romantic childhood autobiography. Benjamin emphatically stages his childhood in the city, to the point, in the "Final Version,"

of placing the distinctly urban piece "Loggias" at the beginning of the volume. He thereby consciously distances himself from the European tradition of childhood autobiography, which, following Wordsworth, persistently located the happy memories of childhood in nature. "Loggias," where Benjamin represents his infant self, as well as the one tree that is visible, as being cradled in concrete and iron, lulled by city trains and the sound of rugs being beaten, reads like a parody of such passages from *The Prelude* as Wordsworth's apostrophe to the River Derwent. Wordsworth's autobiography valorizes continuity. That is, he invokes his childhood memories as the source of his present strength; of paramount importance is the idea that his experience and sensibility have continued in an unbroken chain from his earliest days to the present. In contrast, both the form of *Berlin Childhood around 1900,* its achronological, non-narrative presentation of childhood as a constellation of pieces, and its style, the juxtaposition of highly contrasting adult and childhood perspectives, bespeak discontinuity. Benjamin's childhood seems to lie in fragments at an archaeological distance from the rememberer. It is from the vantage point of a thoroughly dissimilar present, which discerns in them premonitory significance, that certain of these memories take on value. The preciousness of Benjamin's collection of memories lies in the fact that against the odds, he was able to move them from the little hunchback's collection of forgotten and distorted things into his own.

# Conclusion

Not everyone accords great importance to memory. Elias Canetti, who received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1981, sharply distinguishes between his own reverential attitude toward memory and the attitude he discerned in many of his contemporaries: "I bow to memory, to every human being's memory . . . and do not conceal my repugnance for those who have the temerity to expose it to surgical procedures for so long that it resembles everyone else's memory. . . . Let them fiddle with, crop, slick down, and flatten everything, but memory above all earthly powers, no thanks to them, abideth."[1] Canetti's polemic is directed above all against what he calls a "loquacious psychology," or in other words, psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis can indeed be seen to perform "surgery" on the psyche in order to discover memories that conform to preconceived universal patterns, and in the process to flatten more innocent, spontaneous memories into screens for them. For Canetti, memories have integrity and properly belong to each person, similar to the body. The valuable memories are the unique, individual ones—the ones we have on our own, the ones that belong to us. Canetti does not elaborate on why individual memory is so important. He presents his thesis as an article of faith, stylizing memory in words appropriate to divine

things. He borrows Luther's phrase about God's word ("that word above all earthly powers, no thanks to them, abideth") to convey that memory is sacrosanct, God's gift.

Canetti speaks of memory generally, not childhood memories. Of those who, like Canetti, revere memory, only some turn specifically to their childhood memories, whether to insert crucial pieces into the puzzle they believe their present selves to be[2] or to reassure themselves that they are still connected to a time when things seemed right and the next day held promise. Why do some attach a particular premium to their early memories? Why are testimonials from the modernist period an important part of the story? Answers to these questions will come into focus if we consider the history of memory as a topic and as a phenomenon since the late eighteenth century, along with the fortunes of the idea of childhood. Then we can evaluate the childhood memories that Proust, Rilke, and Benjamin captured through the filters of childhood autobiography and fiction, which will allow us to attempt an answer to the first question.

## I. Memory as a Topic and as a Phenomenon

Scholars have made historical arguments about memory. It is said that the passion for remembering came into being in the nineteenth century, at a time when memory itself appeared to be on the decline. Richard Terdiman argues that a "memory crisis" set in after the revolutionary years 1789–1815, a sense that people's "past had somehow evaded memory."[3] Not only had the world changed profoundly; change became the order of the day. The nineteenth century saw enormous changes in political and social organization, including a population shift toward the cities and changes in family structure; the coming of machines, machine rhythms, and machine-made objects; and the rise of the media. Whereas under the ancien régime remembering had been regarded as unproblematic, these massive and rapid transformations perturbed its functioning. Memory came to be both actively desired and problematized. Terdiman argues that the "remarkable renewal" of historiography in the nineteenth century testifies to a desire to hold onto the past;[4] it is as if historiography stepped in to compensate for the memory problem. Concurrently, the prophets of the new urged shaking off the shackles of the past: both Marx and Nietzsche saw memory as a threat,

while Freud and others pathologized it, associating health with the ability to live in the present moment. Pierre Nora argues along lines similar to Terdiman's: memory collapsed with the end of societies that conserved collectively remembered values; history arose to supplant memory; the decisive blow was dealt with the disintegration of the rural world at the end of the nineteenth century. History, according to Nora, replaced memory's assumption of an accessible past with a model of the past that is discontinuous.[5]

In this climate, memory became more of a topic. Some deplored the inability to remember, others complained of an inability to forget. Memory skepticism began to be articulated. Frances Power Cobbe was an early skeptic: writing in 1866 and keenly sensitive to the historical disruption experienced by her generation, Cobbe wrote an essay in which she cast doubt on the powers of memory in a sweeping fashion.[6] As the nineteenth century progressed memory increasingly became an object of study. The last decades of the century saw a swirl of memory theory. Theories of organic memory, initiated by the German Ewald Hering in 1870 and perpetuated by Théodule Ribot in France and Samuel Butler in England, posited a memory link between oneself and one's remotest ancestors. Such theories proved seductive.[7] Thus, for example, late-nineteenth-century child study (Charles Darwin, Wilhelm Preyer, Bernard Perez) drew on the idea of organic memory.[8] In the ranks of childhood autobiographers, Pierre Loti subscribed to the theory of inherited memory, speaking of the "rememoration of personal preexistences" ("ressouvenirs de préexistences personnelles"), while Abel Hermant, like Freud, believed in Haeckel's biogenetic law (ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny), on which the theory of inherited memory was partially founded.[9] Organic memory held an emotional appeal for these writers: it seemed to hold things together, to put the present moment in rapport with the past, to connect the individual with his or her origins. In the same era Ebbinghaus pioneered the experimental study of individual memory, publishing *Memory: A Contribution to Experimental Psychology* in 1885. The last decade of the century brought substantial new contributions to memory theory. William James in *Principles of Psychology* (1890) speculated about the physiological basis of memory in the brain and theorized it from an associationist point of view, finding that recollection proceeds from association. James called the object of memory "only an object imagined in the past . . . to which the emotion of belief adheres," and asserted that what sparks such

belief is connectedness "with our present sensations or emotional activities."[10] Not long thereafter Bergson's *Matière et mémoire*, as we saw in the Introduction, theorized memory as a complete but largely inaccessible record of personal experience. Bergson asserted even more forthrightly than James that the criterion of present usefulness triggers remembrance.

Already in the 1930s, Walter Benjamin, who like Terdiman focused on developments in France, identified and attempted to theorize the decline of memory in the nineteenth century. His early hunch, expressed in the *Arcades Passages,* was that the loss of memory in Proust's generation could be traced to a mode of childhood education that no longer aimed to instill traditions and impart religious instruction and thereby give children an explanatory framework for their dreams, but merely "amounts to the distraction of children." Benjamin continues: "Proust could emerge as an unprecedented phenomenon only in a generation that had lost all bodily and natural aids to remembering (Eingedenken), and, poorer than earlier ones, was left to its own devices, and thus could only appropriate the worlds of childhood in an isolated, scattered, and pathological fashion."[11] In his later essay "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" he expanded his theory, arguing that changes in the structure of experience caused memory to suffer because the human sensorium had to parry constant shocks. He asserted that in the second half of the nineteenth century the experience of shock became normative. Benjamin first associated it with big-city crowds, then with the abrupt movements demanded by the new technologies and the staccato rhythms of the production line and of games of chance, and finally with the medium of film. Shock undermined "Erfahrung," replacing it by "Erlebnis." Borrowing an idea from Freud, Benjamin asserted that stimuli alert consciousness, so that in the face of shock, consciousness arises in place of what would otherwise have been a memory trace. Shock thus undermines "Gedächtnis," which Benjamin saw as a form of memory rooted in earlier, more tranquil times when collective memory still supported individual memory. That form of memory allegedly became supplanted by "Erinnerung" (Proust's "voluntary memory"). If in the *Arcades Passages* passage Benjamin faulted a lack of connection with tradition for memory loss, here he saw the isolation of the individual from the community as inimical to memory.

Turn-of-the-century childhood autobiography bears out the conclusion that remembering had become more difficult than it had been previously.

Whereas earlier autobiographers such as Rousseau, Wordsworth, and George Sand had excellent memories for their childhoods and wrote about long-gone events with confidence, writers at the turn of the twentieth century started to believe that they remembered childhood inadequately (Loti, Lynch, Proust) or even poorly (Rilke). Abel Hermant's narrator in *Confessions d'un enfant d'hier* (Confessions of a child of yesterday, 1903) goes so far as to claim that in having memories of his childhood he is an "exception," adding that "nonetheless, it's strange that one totally forgets the most magnificent period of one's life."[12]

The speeding up of the pace of life and the decline of memory in the course of the twentieth century suggest that Benjamin was right in perceiving a cause-and-effect relation between the two. The increase in "external storage devices"—written accounts, photos, then sound recordings and videos—also surely fostered an altered remembering. By taking over part of the job, they made it less necessary to cultivate one's own powers of memory. They themselves gave rise to and shaped autobiographical memories. With their capacity for setting the record straight, they may also have been the breeding ground for a more questioning, less respectful attitude toward memory. But beyond these cultural and technological shifts, Freud, by declaring memory untrustworthy, dealt a serious blow to the high regard in which it had previously been held. The growing acceptance of Freudian theory starting after the First World War and more especially after the Second, along with the findings of psychological research that memory is "constructive," conspired to rob memory decisively of the esteem with which it had formerly been regarded.

Our century, the twenty-first, seems to have outgrown the need for individual memory, or, I am tempted to say, forgotten what it is. It has been predicted that the twenty-first century will be the Bad Memory Century on account of the frenetic, stressful quality of life, the acceleration of information, and the resultant failure of people to retain things they experience.[13] Memorization is stressed less and less in instruction. With the Internet at one's fingertips, it is hardly necessary to retain facts. Multitasking and flexibility have become dominant survival strategies. Remembering is no longer one; in fact, recalling the way things used to be is something of a hindrance, a drag on present attentiveness. Individual memory, the type of memory that Canetti revered, is no longer cultivated. Individual memories are being

supplanted precisely by the engineered and prefabricated memories that Canetti recoiled from: not just therapy-induced memories, but a media-generated "cultural memory." A great deal of memory theory has arisen, but there is no emphasis in this theory on the benefits of individual remembering. Rather, dominant foci have been the pathological conditions resulting from trauma (problems inherent in individual remembering) and the phenomenon of cultural, that is, collective, memory. All of this is not to say that a desire for autobiographical memories does not persist. Autobiographies continue to be written; personal testimonies and oral histories are sought and given. The same desire that autobiographical memory has traditionally arisen to fulfill, the desire to anchor one's identity, also manifests itself in the quest for ancestors, family history, and "roots."

## II. The Fortunes of Childhood

As a developmental phase in human life, childhood has many constants. Childhood epiphanies, for instance—moments that testify to the "magic of childhood"—seem to occur universally, to belong to a period of life rather than to any historical construction of childhood. Albert Hofmann, a man who is neither a childhood autobiographer nor a poet, nor even a writer, but rather the Swiss chemist who invented LSD, gives a memorable account of such a moment in his own childhood: "It happened on a May morning—I have forgotten the year—but I can still point to the exact spot where it occurred, on a forest path on Martinsberg above Baden, Switzerland. As I strolled through the freshly greened woods filled with bird song and lit up by the morning sun, all at once everything appeared in an uncommonly clear light. . . . It shone with the most beautiful radiance, speaking to the heart, as though it wanted to encompass me in its majesty. I was filled with an indescribable sensation of joy, oneness, and blissful security."[14] Such accounts dot childhood autobiographies. But it is well known that childhood is also a constructed, historical phenomenon. Philippe Ariès has shown in *Centuries of Childhood* how childhood was discovered in Europe in the thirteenth century and how notions of it took on shape, particularly starting in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[15] The fascination with one's childhood is related to the rise of autobiography, especially the rise of secular autobiography starting with Rousseau, which in turn ran parallel to the

rise of the bourgeoisie in Europe, the philosophical articulation of the concept of self, and the emergence of psychology as a discipline. Childhood came to be seen not just as a phase to be passed through, but as crucially formative for the adult. Wordsworth wrote, "the child is father of the man." We believe as much to this day. Psychoanalysis and psychology have not changed this assessment but, rather, have corroborated it.

The decades since the 1870s, and more particularly since 1880, saw a marked upsurge of interest in children. Children's education, welfare, and psychology were debated. Child study dates from 1870 (Preyer). The long-standing Prussian system of free and compulsory elementary school education was extended to the rest of Germany after unification, while Britain and France made elementary school education free and compulsory between 1880 and 1882. Concurrently, a spectrum of child protection laws was enacted in the 1870s and 1880s. Children became a favorite subject for portraiture: it was the period when Renoir, Sargent, and Cassatt painted their memorable portraits of children, while such artists as John Everett Millais and Kate Greenaway created popular images of children. Finally, a great deal of literature started to be written for children: the Comtesse de Ségur's *Bibliothèque rose* in 1856 and the publication of *Alice in Wonderland* in 1865 marked the beginnings of the "golden age" of children's literature. By the turn of the twentieth century the "Children's Century," as Frances Hodgson Burnett called it in her 1893 childhood autobiography *The One I Knew the Best of All,* was well underway.[16]

In the course of the nineteenth century childhood autobiography came into being: authors started to write entire works about their childhood. Although self-writing about childhood was diversely motivated—Moritz wrote in the spirit of psychological inquiry, Vallès in order to expose the hardships and injustice suffered by children, Renan to give an account of the talents of and formative influences on a future man of renown—the tone of many childhood autobiographies, such as Bogumil Goltz's *Buch der Kindheit* (1847), Ernest Renan's *Souvenirs d'enfance et de jeunesse* (Memories of childhood and youth, 1883), Julia Daudet's *L'Enfance d'une parisienne* (1883), Anatole France's *Le Livre de mon ami* (1885), Pierre Loti's *Le Roman d'un enfant* (1890), and Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The One I Knew the Best of All* (1893), suggests that the genre might be seen as the nostalgic arrière-garde of autobiography, a form of the nineteenth-century reaction against accelerated social change, which

had brought with it a widely deplored destruction of the natural environment. Accompanying the technological innovations and social upheavals that changed patterns of life in the nineteenth century, nostalgia became a generalized cultural phenomenon. Many people clutched at the things and places of childhood in particular as things and places that had disappeared, were in the process of disappearing, or were likely to disappear.

By the turn of the twentieth century childhood autobiographies were written in increasing numbers. It was the period in which the genre, which today is a flourishing subgenre of autobiography, gained momentum. The nostalgic idealization of childhood found in certain nineteenth-century childhood autobiographies persisted through the turn of the century and into the early twentieth century. Examples include Kenneth Grahame's *The Golden Age* (1895) and *Dream Days* (1898), stories about the world of children in a Victorian family; Abel Hermant's autobiographical epistolary novel *Confession d'un enfant d'hier* (1903); Saint-Jean Perse's "Pour fêter une enfance" (To celebrate a childhood, 1911), a cycle of poems about his idyllic Caribbean childhood; Francis Jammes's *De l'âge divin à l'âge ingrat* (From the divine age to the awkward age, 1921), memoirs of his paradisiacal childhood in the French Pyrenees; and Colette's portrait of her charming childhood in *La Maison de Claudine* (*My Mother's House,* 1922).

## III. Modernism, Childhood, and Memory Revisited

Why did the interest in childhood autobiography, childhood recollection, and childhood memory intensify during the modernist period? Surely, a confluence of several factors contributed to this development. First, the romantic idealization of childhood persisted. A sense of loss, ostensibly the loss of childhood vision and innocence, had motivated this romantic idealization. But this loss was presumably rooted in a more generalized sense of loss related to the frightening acceleration of history. The premium placed on remembering itself testifies to this sense of loss. The moorings lost in the late-eighteenth-century political and social upheaval were not, however, refound in any lasting way in the nineteenth century. Changes in technology, urbanization, industrialization, and media along with an increasingly volatile political climate conspired to make the romantic sense of loss retain its relevance. Second, the legal, educational, and psychological focus on children

that got underway in the 1870s institutionalized childhood as a period of life of unquestioned importance and sharpened the desire for it. Modernist writers did not have to discover the value of childhood. They found it ready-made. Finally, the "memory crisis" elevated memory into an object of scrutiny, interest, and speculation at the same time as actual remembering became more difficult. Thus Proust, Rilke, and Benjamin all depart from the premise that remembering is difficult and that they have lost continuity with their childhood, whether they have forgotten it (Proust, Rilke) or whether it lies buried in fragments at an archaeological distance (Benjamin).

The writers of childhood memory I chose to study—Proust, Rilke, and Benjamin—are in certain respects representative of their time, in others exemplary. They reflect the contemporaneous cult of the child and the attendant nostalgic sentiment surrounding childhood, which was a particularly acceptable and unquestioned form of the nostalgic tendencies of the age. They also mirror the intensified interest in memory that arose in the later nineteenth century. But it would do these authors' works an injustice just to pat them down into the contexts of the cultural and literary trends of their age. Proust, Rilke, and Benjamin were also exemplary in the way they wrote about their childhoods. For a start, they stand out for the way in which they strongly link an interest in *remembering* to childhood. Such other late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century childhood autobiographers as Paul Adam (*Les Images sentimentales* [Sentimental images, 1893]), Judith Gautier (*Le Collier des jours* [The necklace of days, 1902]), Marguerite Audoux (*Marie-Claire*, 1910), William Butler Yeats (*Reveries over Childhood and Youth*, 1915), Hans Carossa (*Eine Kindheit* [*A Childhood*, 1922]), and François Mauriac, *Mes plus lointains souvenirs* [My most distant memories, 1929]), write vividly and eloquently about their childhoods, but they are not similarly memory-obsessed. They do not speculate or express doubts about memory, quest for their earliest memories, or the like. In contrast, Pierre Loti (*Le Roman d'un enfant*), Frances Hodgson Burnett (*The One I Knew the Best of All*), Hannah Lynch (*Autobiography of a Child*, 1899), and Abel Hermant (*Confessions d'un enfant de hier*) do take a certain interest in the workings of memory. Julia Daudet (*L'Enfance d'une parisienne*), Juliette Adam (*Le Roman de mon enfance et de ma jeunesse* [The novel of my childhood and youth, 1902]), Judith Gautier (*Le Collier des jours*), Joan Arden (*A Childhood*, 1913), and Francis Jammes (*De l'âge divin à l'âge ingrat*) also, whether explicitly or implicitly, manifest some interest in remembering. But to a much greater degree

than their contemporaries who wrote about their childhoods, Proust, Rilke, and Benjamin are interested in their childhood *memories*, in the way they *remember* their childhoods, as opposed to their childhoods more generally. This specific interest in childhood memories can be seen as concomitant with their extraordinarily strong emotional and intellectual commitment to memory generally and, in Proust's and Benjamin's case, their thoughtful and probing interrogation of that faculty. Proust, Rilke, and Benjamin are also exemplary for the literary brilliance with which they showcase their childhood memories. They apparently fully understood that childhood memories, for all that the rememberer may find them fascinating, have a way of striking the casual listener as dull unless they are fashioned into a story or undergo rhetorical embellishment. Like precious stones, they require cutting and polishing to shine. These authors therefore wrote and rewrote their memories, polishing them for presentation. Proust, Rilke, and Benjamin not only join two tendencies of their time (an interest in childhood and an interest in memory), but each of them writes with such innovation and talent that his work is not just part of a trend but surpasses it, leading to its justified fame where others have been forgotten.

In the case of each of these three, the quest for childhood memories is far from being a pastime for idle hours, but plays an important role in the context of some crucial existential concern. Proust, an invalid, has his narrator claim that accesses of involuntary memory release an ecstatic sensation of immortality. The first such access, triggered by the madeleine, is especially joyous, for it brings back childhood, which was also a particularly happy time for Proust. Rilke viscerally sought authenticity and continuity, which for him carried the promise of personal strength. Thus for him childhood, despite its upsetting aspects, demanded to be refound and its questions answered. Benjamin's compulsion to collect, to pursue the past in the form of collecting it, seems to underlie his historian's quest for moments of illumination.

## IV. What Do the Literary Memories Show Us?

What do the foregoing studies of Proust, Rilke, and Benjamin show us?

To begin with the issue of accuracy, it has been seen that Proust alters his life story, Rilke fictionalizes even more, and Benjamin writes in a highly

literary fashion, although his plotless work is closer to autobiography than to the novel. Yet all three of them write in ways that indicate that they were aiming to give serious accounts of the functioning of memory, if not of the facts of their lives. It lends plausibility to these literary accounts of childhood memory that they correspond to a set of the later findings of experimental psychology about how memory works, namely:

*1. Repeated events are better remembered.* The vast majority of the events Proust's protagonist remembers are repeated events or durable states of affairs. Benjamin also shows a predilection for repeated events and lasting states. In Rilke, events of the traumatic, singular type, such as the hand and the attic mirror, stand out, but Malte also remembers quite a few repeated events.

*2. Emotionally charged events are better remembered.* In Proust, the singular episodes are most frequently ones that were emotionally charged for the child, that is, the protagonist's first glimpses of the Lady in Pink, Gilberte, and the Duchesse de Guermantes. Not only this, but emotionally charged objects (such as the madeleine, *François le Champi,* and hawthorns) seem, if reencountered, destined to provoke involuntary memory in the protagonist, even though involuntary memory is also provoked by cues that are not obviously emotionally charged, such as uneven paving stones. In Rilke, all of Malte's memories are emotionally charged. The singular ones are frequently negatively charged (e.g., the hand, the attic mirror), but so are many of the durative-iterative ones (birthday disappointments, dining room, nightmares, fever fears). Benjamin does not play up the emotion he might have felt about events as a child, although an event like the burglary would have been attended by emotion. If one follows his theory, it is relevance to the present that sparks remembering, not emotion felt in the past. Accordingly, he privileges events that hold meaning for the future.

*3. Imagery is better remembered and is also a privileged factor in hypermnesia.* In all cases there is plenty of imagery, not surprising for literary works.

*4. Memory operates through association.* In Proust, encountering a fragment of a previously experienced scene brings back the entire scene. In *A Berlin Chronicle,* Benjamin adopts the cue theory, asserting, for example, that sounds and words are capable of transporting us into the past. Rilke maintains that our inner processes transfer themselves to objects of perception. Proust

makes the same argument and draws conclusions for memory: encountering a thing can bring back the thoughts and ideas we once had when we previously perceived the thing.

Two further aspects of the psychological findings resonate with what we know about our authors' autobiographical projects, even if the correlation is less clear. First, although the authors' represented memories cannot be precisely dated, the topics they choose together with the biographical evidence suggest that they are drawn predominantly from the years between the ages of 3 and 9, and thus focus on events that fall before the "reminiscence bump" that sets in at age 10 and lasts until age 30. The years between the ages of 3 and 7 have been called the second phase of childhood amnesia. Perhaps this is one reason why the authors' memories appear so valuable to them: they stem from a period from which relatively few memories are retained. Second, depression has been correlated with trouble remembering specifics. Proust had his patently depressed protagonist complain about his inability to remember the specifics of his childhood, while Rilke, who believed that he had psychological problems, also expressed frustration at his bad memory. As will presently be discussed in more detail, all three authors make connections between remembering and mood.

But the three cases show us things that go beyond the findings of experimental psychology. These have to do with the importance of the memories for the writers and with the fact that in all three cases the memories are implicated with materiality—in the sense that they involve material objects and places either as cues or as content or as both.

To begin with the issue of importance: we have seen that all three early-twentieth-century writers believe that memory holds promise. All of them—Proust's and Rilke's fictional protagonists and Benjamin—turn to memory and specifically to memories of childhood out of a low mood. Proust, himself an invalid who had trouble sleeping, introduces his protagonist as an insomniac who "revives old memories of Combray" when he lies awake at night. Malte, alone and alienated in Paris like Rilke, is fearful and senses that changes are taking place within him that he is not prepared for. He longs for memories and for his childhood. In a period when he had resolved on suicide, Benjamin deviates from writing a commissioned arti-

cle on Berlin to writing about his personal memories, above all those of childhood.

It is Malte who explicitly articulates the idea that recovering memories, particularly memories of childhood, would be a remedy for his malaise. In so doing he echoes Rilke's own previously held belief that recovering childhood, "lifting" memories from the "sunken" "treasure house," is good for stabilizing the personality. Ironically, it is precisely for Malte, who sets such store by it, that memory breaks its promise. Presently memories of childhood do come over Malte, but too many of these are the wrong ones; they come like sunken things from the depths (Rilke retains his old imagery from the letter to Kappus in his novel), but they come in an undesirable, far too independent, frightening fashion, rudely shouldering aside the consciously remembered past. This part of Malte's story repeats Rilke's own Paris experience of being flooded by unwanted childhood memories and reliving childhood fears. Childhood memory failed to keep its promise for Malte (to stabilize the personality, to ground identity)—as it did for Rilke.

For Proust's protagonist, in contrast, the surprise advent of involuntary memory, and specifically the magical and mysterious release of "all of Combray" through the taste of the madeleine, functions as just such remedy. It more than keeps memory's promise. It is a crucial, electrifying turning point that enables the protagonist to realize his childhood ambition to become an artist. Beyond this, Proust's narrator asserts that involuntary memory has extraordinarily invigorating psychic effects (happiness and a sense of immortality).

Benjamin never articulated any kind of cause-and-effect relation between his turn to his memories and his decision not to keep his date with death. One can only speculate that this turn may have functioned as a remedy, in the sense that his exploration of memory and of his own life may have contributed to his changing his mind about suicide. In any case, on the other side of his cancelled date with death he immediately started to compose his book of childhood recollections *Berlin Childhood around 1900*, a book that in its long process of revision increasingly left behind it the Freudian destabilization of memory that Benjamin had espoused in *A Berlin Chronicle* and moved toward the redemptive conception of memory that would characterize his philosophy of history. In his preface to the "Final Version" Benjamin

then explicitly addresses the issue of the personal significance of his memories of childhood and calls it a protective one, claiming that the "images" in *Berlin Childhood around 1900* "inoculate" him against the homesickness he felt in exile.

Personal memory as a remedy, as an elixir that the psyche keeps in reserve to treat low spirits, is therefore the common denominator here. It is essentially the same function that Wordsworth ascribes to memories of childhood. It has to be accepted as one of the foremost reasons why people value their personal memories. Human memory is not a value-free mechanism for searching an archive, like computer memory, but a psychic recourse at the service of the present and the future. It seems highly plausible that the chorus of theoreticians who argue that memory serves present interests—from Bergson and Freud to Rovee-Collier and Gerhardstein—argue correctly, whether they postulate that we remember constructively or in fact remember relatively accurately.

It seems probable that recollecting childhood out of a therapeutic impulse is a psychic recourse that is only superficially affected by rational beliefs about memory such as the ones that the theories have given rise to. Freudian and post-Freudian theory says we cannot trust our memories, but an instinctive mechanism continues to operate in disregard of these theories, telling us we ought to look for them as if we *could* trust them. This function does not vanish in the age of theory. Thus Don DeLillo, an author usually thought of as quintessentially postmodern, has the character Owen in the novel *The Names* (1982) pursue his childhood memories for similar reasons. DeLillo's narrator writes:

> There was a recompense in memories too. Recall the bewilderment and ache, the longing for a thing that's out of reach, and you can begin to repair your present condition. Owen believed that memory was the faculty of absolution. Men developed memories to ease their disquiet over things they did as men. The deep past is the only innocence and therefore necessary to retain. The boy in the sorghum fields, the boy learning names of animals and plants. He would recall exactingly. He would work the details of that particular day. . . . These early memories were a fiction in the sense that he could separate himself from the character, maintain the distance that lent a pureness to his affection.

> How else could men love themselves but in memory, knowing what they know? But it was necessary to get the details right. His innocence depended on this, on the shapes and colors of this device he was building, this child's model of a rainy day in Kansas. He had to remember correctly.[17]

Owen is an archaeologist; his work and his trip to India to study inscriptions underscore his conviction that past life holds the key to the present. He is the most insightful and reflective character in *The Names*. His story ends with this quest for his own childhood memories. In memories of the "deep past" he seeks "absolution." The narrative seems to validate him. It is an interesting detail that Owen insists on remembering "correctly." In fact, those who are drawn toward their childhood memories out of a sense that they will fix things are characteristically not content to remember vaguely or nostalgically, but set store by remembering *accurately*. They apparently think that it will not do to fool the mind with feel-good half-truths.

Does Rilke's example leave open the possibility that recollection is a quack medicine? "I asked for my childhood, and it has come back, and I feel that it is just as difficult as it was then." Yes, and this no doubt in part has to do with the type of experience available to his imagination (Rilke's biography included frightening ones), but also with the involuntary nature of the recall. It is noteworthy that the imagery with which Malte describes the coming of the bad memories is the same as that with which Proust's protagonist describes the coming of "all of Combray": both sets of memories are said to come up from oceanic depths. In the course of *À la recherche du temps perdu,* Proust's protagonist himself has some involuntary recalls that are painful. As critics have pointed out, these painful involuntary memories do not fit well into the narrator's theory of the salutary psychic effects of involuntary memory. Trauma theory postulates that a trauma can "get you" again in memory. Thus in spite of Proust's glorification of the phenomenon, precisely involuntary memory, memories that overwhelm us on their own and not of our volition, appears to be double-edged. One imagines a "Rilke v. Proust and Benjamin" case in the upcoming memory trials. Proust and Benjamin testify to sudden accesses of true and valuable memories. They swear by the "flashing up" phenomenon. But, the prosecution counters, perhaps they generalize unduly? Their own childhood stories are founded on plenty of normal recollection, as the existence of previous memoirs that do

not bear the imprint of this dramatic genesis in each case attests. And Rilke's counterexample undermines their case that "flashing up" is memory's gift to the rememberer, its quintessentially salutary function.

Malte, in any case, very quickly stops "remembering" and starts "reliving." We must be mindful of William James's distinction between a "memory" and a "duplicate": to remembering belongs "the additional consciousness that we have thought or experienced [the event or fact] before." In Malte's case the intruders from the depths introduce themselves as memories but, finding an accomplice in Malte's fever, quickly overwhelm his consciousness and reinstate themselves as the ideas and emotions of the present. Proust writes of the body's memory in "Combray I," and Rilke's account similarly suggests that the body remembers. His present fever opens the door to memories of fever fears he had as a child and solicits their reenactment. Rilke himself went even further: in a letter to Lou Salomé he said that his Paris fever fears, which revived childhood fever fears, did not go away with the fever, but invaded his daytime life when he believed himself to be in full health. But the phenomenon he describes in the letter can no longer be called remembering. Remembering is both more and less than the simple revival in the mind of an original event; it implies a present consciousness of the event's pastness.

Memories that are sought from a firm foothold in the present are more dependably promising. The fact that these accounts of childhood memories were written at all suggests that there is such a thing as an appeal of seeing with double vision: of capturing former vision, of seeing with former eyes, all the while maintaining the optic of the present (Owen's "maintaining the distance"). The very exercise of the faculty—recollection—that allows one to recover the past from the vantage point of the present appears to be pleasurable. Remembering can be a desperate groping ("Where did I put my keys?"), but childhood recollection is generally not driven by any comparable present urgency. The pleasure of recollection is akin to that of seeking, finding, and claiming. It has an element of thrill. One's past is one's private Peacock Island, to use Benjamin's image, where one may seek and may have the luck of finding "feathers" on subsequent visits. Take Proust's case: once the past has been summoned by the cue, memory reaches associatively and metonymically for more and more detail, for more and more things—things that attracted the child's attention, caught his fancy, and stimulated his

imagination to leap in metaphors toward yet more things. The claimed memories are then a private stash to which one can have private recourse. Memories have to do with having. They have to do with having one's personal past as a domain over which one can range at will. Regressing to or reenacting the infantile is emphatically not what the pleasure consists of—witness Malte. In *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* the satisfaction of regarding the past from a distance can be imputed only to the author, not the protagonist, of the book.

The three studies suggest that once the memories have been had, once they have been accessed, they have a variety of uses. They can be banked in writing (committing them to paper is analogous to banking). They invite reflection. They can be turned this way and that and their various aspects scrutinized. They can be drawn on for highly serious existential enterprises, as illustrated by the authors treated here: to support a quest for identity (most evident in Rilke), to spark insight (most evident in Benjamin), to savor happiness and give courage (most evident in Proust). Their meanings can change; they are capable of giving fresh, incremental insights over time. These are the reasons, I think, why people value childhood memories. This is their promise.

For these writers the remembering of childhood is closely entwined with, indeed seminal for their work. Proust associates the recovery of childhood memories and childhood vision with a method—metaphor—that enables him to create an immortalized childhood, a childhood made of words, an artwork. In Rilke's case the negative memories feed the work more circuitously, encouraging a compensatory poetics. Whereas the memories show us dissolving and fragmenting things, Rilke concurrently resolved to write poetry devoted to the making of things, superior things, "Kunst-Dinge." Benjamin's childhood memories feed his theory of the dialectical image, giving it an autobiographical substratum.

Analysis shows that the thematics (the "what") of Proust's, Rilke's, and Benjamin's childhood memories resemble each other, in the sense that all three of them foreground memories of things and places. But the techniques of representation (the "how") are in each case different.

To discuss the implications of the different techniques first: As we have seen, Proust constructs metaphors, Rilke devises a semiotic of things and place, and Benjamin juxtaposes the sharply contrasting points of view of the

narrator and the child. These various techniques of representation, which must be assumed to have been consciously chosen, reveal that while all three writers attach great importance to the recollection of childhood, each writer imputes a different specific importance to it. For Proust's narrator, whose metaphors reconstruct his childhood vision, the recovery of childhood memories has to do with accessing the felicity of his childhood and his childhood vision. It also has to do with the pleasures of discovering the hidden, where the hidden includes the forgotten. It is closely connected to what he sees as his mission as an artist, which has to do with seeking truth as he conceives of it by discerning correspondences between the apparent and the hidden and uncovering "laws" and "essences." The recovery of his childhood vision provides the template for the actual pattern of his creativity, his propensity to perceive analogies and express them in metaphors, and thus functions as the launching pad for his artistic project. Rilke's Malte sees in memories the promise of a defense—a defense against, in my interpretation, a runaway imagination and an unstable sense of self, which he shares with his creator. Memories break this promise. Instead of stable objects of consolation, Malte sees images that enact the very grounds of his fear: images of fragmentation, of engulfing or crushing spaces, of uncontrollable permutation. The importance of memory and its failure also, I believe, plays itself out in the economy of Rilke's creativity in the *Malte* and *New Poems* period inasmuch as its very failure to supply the sought-after stops, the protective walls that fear and imagination could not breach, encouraged the poet to throw his energy into the creation of things. Things were another perceived bulwark and their creation was under his control. Benjamin's technique illustrates his elsewhere-articulated postulation that an image of the past flashes up in a "now-time of recognizability." The thus rescued past and the present mutually illuminate each other. The resulting image of the past bears the stamp of the dangerous moment in which it is "read." The value of childhood specifically lies for Benjamin in its embeddedness in a childlike historical context, the prewar "world of security," elements of which nevertheless eerily prefigure postwar unrest and insecurity. He saw his childhood memories as full of historical significance. They provided him with the wherewithal to give artistic form to his intuitions about the functioning of memory, to illustrate his theory of the dialectical image.

Using different techniques, the three authors also give original but complementary accounts of the mind of the child. Their reconstructions are remarkably insightful. All three find means to render the child's active fantasy and convey his unstable sense of self. One cannot bind rhetorical figures definitively to specific effects or affects, but one can still perhaps speak of a "tropology" of childhood imagination. In Proust's case childhood memories are strongly linked to metaphor, the trope that expresses his narrator's childhood vision. Metaphor connects disparate things; it provokes a fresh way of seeing and creates a sense of newness and transformability—or one could say, a sense of being a child once again. In Rilke's *Malte*, the work in which the childhood memories are the most highly emotionally charged, spaces and objects function as tropes for affects. Stated differently, Malte projects his emotions onto his surrroundings—surroundings that, he implies, in turn have a hand in provoking them. Enclosed, shared spaces are comforting, whereas claustrophobic or breached spaces are frightening. Stable things and iterable or narratable experiences with these things are pleasant, whereas mutable or unpredictable objects are unpleasant. Objects and spaces become the objective correlatives *avant la lettre* of his inner states. Benjamin similarly renders the child's world in images of transformability and fantasy, though without implying a close connection to affect.

## V. Object and Place Memory

The similar thematics of the recollections are one of their most striking and thought-provoking aspects. They testify to an underlying attachment to things and places that all of the authors share. I propose that these attachments to things reflect a human impulse that has been inadequately theorized by psychology and philosophy. They are childish attachments that complement children's interest in material things. Why these particular writers should have had these attachments in a relatively extreme form is a matter for speculation that goes beyond the scope of this study. What is more to the point, however, their striking focus on objects and places underlies their theories of memory—which are similar theories precisely in this regard. All of them believe that memory "resides in" objects. Rilke's implicit theorizing in the poem "Erinnerung" and in his letter to his wife of 8 March 1907 bears out what Proust and Benjamin elaborate much more fully: that

objects and places "absorb" our mental processes. Proust and Benjamin both spell out that things and places are capable (as cues) of giving our mental processes back to us at a later date, through memory. Proust in *Le Temps retrouvé*, Rilke in "On the Edge of Night," and Benjamin in *Berlin Chronicle* all also allude to the idea that objects absorb and therefore are capable of transmitting to us the lives of past generations. The idea that memories can be transferred from person to person through objects appears to have originated in late-nineteenth-century parapsychological speculation.[18] Proust is skeptical of the transpersonal idea, but he strongly affirms that the mechanism is operative in the realm of individual psychology and forms a basis for memory. Benjamin, who characteristically fuses historical with psychological methods of knowledge, is drawn to the notion of the human content of places and things, which is potentially exploitable by the historian. As he writes in *A Berlin Chronicle*, the *Arcades Passages*, and elsewhere, things and place are "telling": they have relevant things to say to us about history. *Berlin Childhood around 1900* illustrates his belief: things such as the telephone and the glass ornament speak of history, of the social as well as the personal future of the past.

Edward S. Casey devotes a chapter to "place memory" in his 1987 phenomenological study of memory *Remembering*. He asserts that place memory, or "the fact that concrete places retain the past that can be reincarnated by our remembering them" is "a powerful but often neglected form of memory."[19] It has been neglected, in his view, because since Descartes philosophy has conceptualized space geometrically, as "site" rather than as "place." He theorizes the phenomenon of place memory extensively, noting the importance of place for human beings, the associative richness and hence the cue value of place, the necessary intermediary of the body in establishing familiarity with place, the emotional resonance of places, and the fact that place and memory have a common basic function, namely, they both "congeal the disparate into a provisional unity."[20] He also addresses "things" in a brief subsection, evidently believing that place, which subsumes things, is the broader category. For him, things support place memories as parts of scenes. He does not consider the possibility of an independent "object memory." Although he asserts that the importance of place for memory has been "pervasively overlooked,"[21] he does not mention Benjamin's contribution to the topic. Yet Benjamin started to focus on place memory early on, in the 1928-1929 draft ‹Paris Arcades II.› Place memory is one of the foundations of

Benjamin's theory of memory: he pursues the concept through "The Return of the *Flâneur*" and *A Berlin Chronicle* to *Berlin Childhood around 1900*. *A Berlin Chronicle,* where Benjamin quarrels with yet relies on Proust, makes evident that his theory of memory descends from Proust's. He conceived his place memory with a knowledge of Proust's object memory. With his concept of place memory Benjamin makes the impression of extending and enlarging Proust's conviction that "the past is hidden in some material object." Proust, in turn, appears to have been the first to have theorized object memory seriously, even though his contemporary Rilke had a similar intuition about the ability of things to absorb and retain thoughts.

It may be that alongside Proust's involuntary memory, object and place memory is literary modernism's most important specific contribution to memory theory. In a historical context where the traditional social support for memory no longer exists, where the individual brain alone fails to accomplish the task, in short where remembering appears difficult, the material world arises to help. In other words, places and objects, when reencountered, jog unconscious impressions and catalyze memory. Modernist writers noticed the memory support inherent in objects and places and used it in their poetic (re)constructions of memory.[22]

Object memory deserves further exploration, for it is extremely prevalent. To support this point, I cite a passage from Ida Gandy's 1929 childhood autobiography *A Wiltshire Childhood*:

> Then Miss Letitia would dart behind a great pile and be completely lost to sight until she emerged again with the particular case that she meant to unpack. Wonderful were the things that she spread before our admiring eyes: old-fashioned dresses of brocaded silk, quaint pelisses, scarves of beautiful old lace, little ivory-handled parasols with deep fringes. How old and worn and dusty she looked among them! Only her eyes did not look old, but became brighter and thirstier with each garment that she drew forth, as though the touch of them were bringing back her youth.
>
> Once, when she unfolded a dress of heavy cream silk from a shroud of white linen, her eyes seemed to burn in her face. She smoothed it tenderly with her bony fingers, muttering to herself, entirely oblivious to our presence.[23]

The example is drawn from life. There is no theory here; but the child knows instinctively what is at stake for Miss Letitia in keeping the things from her youth. This example lends support to Proust and at the same time suggests that the phenomenon of object memory transcends its value for involuntary memory, which was the main reason why Proust was interested in it. It suggests that the connection between objects and memory has a dependable and calculable aspect. The old woman here does not access her memories by stumbling across her things; she voluntarily keeps them and "unpacks" them.

Objects like Miss Letitia's dress may be regarded as a form of "external memory" and thus are distantly related to the forms of "memory mediation" by writing and the visual media that interest media and memory theorists today.[24] Both types of device attempt to assert control over remembering by supplementing the fallible mind with props. But there are significant differences. The media, by representing the event-to-be-remembered in a certain way, embed a considerable degree of intentionality and coding in the cue. They thus construct the memory they intend to evoke to a much greater degree than does the dress. "Media objects"—diaries, photographs, films, and videos—about children are, moreover, constructed by adults, not by the children themselves. Childhood recollection that depends on these media depends on the adults who constructed the records and images—even though such "official memories" may also be able to jog private memories in the child-turned-adult. Childhood memories evoked by writing and the visual media, other-designed and prefabricated as they are, are qualitatively different from those based on a kept object like a dress and are even farther removed from Proust's serendipitous finds. Memory shares a border with history, and "memories" preserved by written and visual media, even personal ones, are in its vicinity. Memories provoked by objects are, in contrast, a much more private and personal affair.

Object memory and place memory are very different from the account of memory that Freud initiated and that has remained the dominant account of memory into the present day. The foundational idea of psychoanalysis was that the mind is in conflict with itself. It follows that the mind is prone to play tricks on itself. Psychoanalysis capitalized on the recognized unreliability of memory, magnified it enormously, and pushed this aspect of memory into the foreground of theory, where it remained throughout the

twentieth century, overshadowing other aspects of remembering. Object and place memory were and have remained among these overshadowed aspects. Objects and places aid remembering; they resist the mind's tendency to misremember. Consequently, they resist the spin that Freud put on memory theory. They resist the dominant account.

Rather obviously, objects and places in their function as *cues* inhibit and counteract the constructive tendencies of memory. If we are confronted by a thing out of our past or a thing that reminds us of a thing from our past, memory is triggered by the laws of association, by similarity and contiguity. We remember the similar past thing and perhaps also its surroundings, its context. A confrontation with a memory-bearing object is a corrective to fantasizing about the past. The *functioning* of this type of memory is relatively clear. Miss Letitia's audience of children intuitively understands it. An object helps us remember the past by bringing back a thing and perhaps also a scene or an episode. The questions this type of remembering raises have less to do with how it works than with why people seek these types of memories, why some people do so more than others, whether some objects are more effective than others and whether a chance encounter with a cue brings back better memories than an intentional encounter (in keeping with Proust's assertion).

Memories *of* things and places also do not fit well into Freudian and post-Freudian theory. Such memories are arguably susceptible to construction, but they do resist the Freud-initiated discourse of repression. More generally, they do not fit well into the widespread conception of memory as narrative (which in turn fuels a distrust of memory), whereas they do support a conception of memory as scenes and episodes. Ian Hacking has cogently discussed the differences between the two.[25] Memories *of* things and places (much more than memories of persons and events) also resist being refashioned into "better," psychoanalytically corrected narratives. They cannot be easily bent into scenarios of repressed meaning—even though this is exactly what Freud tried to do to them with his screen memory concept (remembered flowers are not flowers). Critics have tried to follow suit with interpretations of Malte's memories. But these psychoanalytic interpretations are hardly clinched by evidence; they are ingenious but implausible; they demand great willingness on the part of third parties to suspend disbelief. Surely, the more extensive and detailed memories of things and

places are, the less they lend themselves to being read as pretexts for highly divergent subtexts. They are not likely subjects for false memories, either. We do not hear much about false memories of flowers, pastries, telephones, ornaments.

Object memory and place memory are players on a different field, a non-psychoanalytical field. In fact, they harmonize well with and lend support to the venerable but more recently experimentally corroborated theory of associative memory, whether they function as cues or are objects of memory. Thus Proust's hawthorns have an erotic subtext, but one cemented by association (contiguity), by the associations that the proximity of flowers and Mlle Vinteuil, then Gilberte, set up in the protagonist's mind.

Proust and Rilke theorize memory poetically, stating that objects are capable of bringing back past trains of thought that we had in the object's vicinity. To their minds objects hide significances, but not in a Freudian sense; rather, they contain our past experiences, which wait there to be released. For them things are treasure boxes, not deceptive screens. Benjamin follows them in declaring places (as well as things) mouthpieces for the past and of the future of the past—whether they are encountered in the present or remembered as belonging to the past.

Whereas Freud tried to bend objects into conformity with his screen memory concept, Benjamin rather ingeniously bends Freud's ideas so that they support a theory more congenial to him, one that is more favorable to memory. Benjamin retains elements that he may have found in Freud (memory rewrites the past), that he definitely did find in Freud (consciousness and forming a memory trace are incompatible), and that were espoused by Freud among others (present interest dictates what is remembered), but he uses these ideas to arrive at quite different conclusions about memories from Freud's, conclusions that emphasize the validity and importance of memories rather than their distorting qualities.

Because their engagements with the topic are serious, insightful, and quite original, Proust's, Rilke's, and Benjamin's work has something to tell us about the functioning and importance of childhood memories. As seen in the Introduction, the history of childhood autobiography shows us that if childhood memories are suggestible, then they are open to suggestion by models and theories of childhood memory, cultural stereotypes of childhood, and poetic accounts of childhood memories. Such mediation is evi-

dent in post-Freudian childhood autobiography, in which one can trace a pervasive influence of psychoanalytical and psychological thinking about memory and childhood in many writers' work. Proust, Rilke, and Benjamin's accounts of childhood memories, in contrast, are all comparatively original. Although the Danish childhood Rilke bestows on Malte is full of spiritistic elements such as ghosts, clairvoyants, and haunted places, Rilke's account of Malte's nightmarish childhood memories seems entirely original; it would be hard to name a model for them outside of Rilke's own autobiographical writings and his conversations with Lou. Proust's own nostalgia for his childhood vacations spent in Illiers and Auteuil may have absorbed a degree of the contemporaneous cultural nostalgia for idyllic childhoods spent in nature, but his inspired rendering of the child's vision and sense of the world through metaphors must be credited to him. And his involuntary memory discovery, which he illustrates with the recovery of childhood memories through the sense of taste, is of course a milestone. Benjamin's writing about childhood memory is initially marked by a struggle with Proust, but eventually he shakes himself free of Proust, taking only what is useful to him for his own theory. Eventually he shakes himself free of Freudian doubt as well. These relatively original, seriously thought-out accounts of childhood memories by pre-psychoanalytic literary authors—and by Benjamin too, who redeemed memory from psychoanalysis—are not just important in the history of ideas, but provide suggestive leads about the workings, uses, and importance of childhood memories that have been overshadowed by the reception and aftermath of psychoanalysis.

Their collective insistence on an object- and place-based *content* of childhood memory may have something to tell us too. Collectively, they highlight, through their striking illustrations of the proposition, what may well be a widespread phenomenon: that the objects and places of childhood are among the better-remembered aspects of that period of life. Such object and place memories cannot be assimilated to any single one of the factors psychology points to as giving an event or events a better chance of being remembered. Some objects involve emotion: treasured objects are important to children for the reasons Rilke and Hannah Lynch, and more recently Winnicott, cite, namely, that the child derives support from things, from personal possessions that are under his or her control. But the emotions involved are hardly of the emergency-room trauma or birth-of-a-sibling type;

rather, they simply circle back to the fact that children are attached to things and to certain things in particular. Other writers' childhood memoirs testify to children's attachment to things as props for play. Thus for example, Athénaïs Michelet and Frances Hodgson Burnett write of how important dolls and other props were to them.[26] Such props combine all of the factors that tend to be remembered better: emotion, repetition and duration (in play), imagery. They also embody associations, inasmuch as they are associated with the trains of thought the child invested in them. Certain other objects—Proust's hawthorns, Rilke's things in pieces, Benjamin's Tiergarten labyrinth memory—appear to be remembered for reasons of displacement of affect.

Is it also possible that Proust's, Rilke's, and Benjamin's childhood recollections revolve around things and places because they never outgrew the well-known affinity of children for objects? The cases of these particular three writers show how such childhood attachments may carry over into adulthood, how they may retain a hold over adult patterns of thought and behavior. These three may be seen to model such carryovers. For they are hardly unique in their affections for the material world. Why the attachment to things and places is more pronounced in some people than others must remain an open question. It is remarkable, however, how in these writers these attachments also become manifest at other points in their oeuvre, play a considerable role in their lives, and appear to have been a factor that strongly inspired their work. Rilke and Benjamin kept collections, possibly transferring a childhood fascination with things to an adult's attachment to pleasing objects. All three writers are known for their adult fondness for certain places as well as their affection for certain things. All of them had the "right" places, the beloved places that they cherished. But things and places were also among the most important grounds for their art and thought. Proust and Rilke were devotees of the visual arts. Inasmuch as it manifests a particular sensitivity for the spatial, visual, scenic, and concrete, Proust's prose has been said to be in rivalry with painting. In the period when Rilke experienced a crisis of memory, he fell under the spell of Rodin because Rodin made "things," which Rilke too aspired to do in his poetry. Benjamin's affinity for things explains his attachment to the surrealists and later informs his own cultural and historical theories. Proust's theory of involuntary memory and his practice and theory of metaphor, Rilke's writing in the *New Poems* period, and Benjamin's theory that society may be under-

stood through a reading of its objects as well as his practice in *Berlin Childhood around 1900*—all testify to a particular fascination with things.

Loti speculates that a devotion to things and places evinces the desire to secure one's own stability "fetishistically," to use his word, through the relatively greater permanence of things and places. That view complements Rilke's idea that the creation of art objects expresses a desire for immortality. The age-old desideratum of immortality is surely evident in the works of all three of these writers. Yet the pattern manifested by the three is denser and more complex, inasmuch as all three are also devotees of memory who pursue their own memories. All of them connect objects with memory, believing objects to be repositories of memory that support and foster reclaiming the personal past. Moreover, objects and art are triangulated with childhood. Childhood is the putative origin of the affection for things; Proust and Rilke suggest that it is the origin of the artistic proclivities too. Memory and art converge in the reactivation of an earlier, childlike way of seeing, one that is object-focused, imaginative, and affectively intense. Childhood, with its close, imaginative relationship with things, becomes an object of nostalgia for the adult. It demands to be remembered—where remembering can be construed as a transmutation of the passion for things. It demands to be recollected as the foremost object in the adults' collections of treasures.

# Notes

Unless otherwise noted, all translations in this book are my own.

## Introduction: Writing Childhood Memory

1. Proust records several episodes in the draft *Jean Santeuil,* which he worked on from 1895 until around the turn of the century (see Chapter 1, p. 72). Rilke speaks of having had such an experience during his trip to Russia in 1899; he also writes of the recovery of childhood in the poem "Wenn die Uhren so nah" (When the clocks so close, 1898). See Chapter 2, pp. 103, 109.
2. FLH 9; BC 37.
3. *Anton Reiser* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1972), e.g., 368: "Es war die unverantwortliche Seelenlähmung durch das zurücksetzende Betragen seiner eignen Eltern gegen ihn, die er von seiner Kindheit an noch nicht hatte wieder vermindern können." ("It was the irresponsible laming of his soul through his own parents' dismissive behavior towards him that from his childhood on he had continued to be unable to mitigate" [my translation]). *Anton Reiser* appeared from 1785 to 1790. Concurrently, from 1783 to 1793, Moritz launched a highly innovative project, a periodical devoted to empirical psychology, entitled *ΓΝΩΘΙ ΣΕΑΥΤΟΝ oder Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde,* ed. Karl Philipp Moritz, K. F. Pockels, and S. Maimon, 10 vols., Berlin 1783–1792, in which he encouraged the collection of early childhood memories as a means to understanding oneself. On memory in *Anton Reiser* and elsewhere in Moritz, see Lothar Müller, *Die kranke Seele und das Licht der Erkenntnis: Karl Philipp Moritz' Anton Reiser* (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1987), 24–34. As Müller points out, Moritz's own memories are the "general a priori" of *Anton Reiser* (24). Yet although there are occasional references to Anton's memories, e.g., 37–38, 63, the work presents itself as a third-person

narrator's highly analytic account of Anton's life, and not as the story of Anton's remembering. About a quarter of the book is devoted to Anton's childhood. Katrin Lange, *Selbstfragmente: Autobiographien der Kindheit* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2008), references other German works of the 1790s that speak of childhood memories, Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (*Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*) and Jean Paul's *Leben des vergnügten Schulmeisterlein Maria Wutz in Auenthal* (Life of the cheerful little schoolmaster Maria Wutz in Auenthal), and suggests that the awakening interest in childhood memory in Germany was a class, i.e., bourgeois, phenomenon (15).

4. See Sally Shuttleworth's overview of the movement in "Inventing a Discipline: Autobiography and the Science of Child Study in the 1890s," *Comparative Critical Studies* 2, 2 (2005): 143–166, especially 143–147. Shuttleworth believes that literary works of the 1890s, specifically Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The One I Knew Best of All* (1893) and Hannah Lynch's *Autobiography of a Child* (1899), were influenced by the child study movement of the 1890s (p. 153).
5. Shuttleworth, "Inventing a Discipline," 148–153.
6. For Proust and Wordsworth, see Roger Shattuck, "From Wordsworth to Proust," in *Romanticism: Vistas, Instances, Continuities,* ed. David Thorburn and Geoffrey Hartman (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1973), 187. For Baudelaire and Rimbaud, see Roman Reisinger, *Die Autobiographie der Kindheit in der französischen Literatur: A la recherche de l'enfance perdue im Lichte einer Poetik der Erinnerung* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg Verlag, 2000), 253–257. An excellent discussion of Baudelaire's writing on childhood is found in Rosemary Lloyd, *The Land of Lost Content: Children and Childhood in Nineteenth-Century French Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 101–108.
7. On Proust's affection for these works by France and Loti, see Jean-Yves Tadié, *Marcel Proust: A Life,* trans. Euan Cameron (New York: Viking, 2000), 37, 102–103, 167. Anne Higonnet, *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998), 9; Reisinger, *Die Autobiographie der Kindheit,* 253; Lloyd, *Land of Lost Content,* 103–106.
8. Higonnet, *Pictures of Innocence,* e.g., 9; Barbara Dayer Gallati, *Children of the Gilded Era* (London: Merrell, 2004), 49.
9. Lloyd, *Land of Lost Content.*
10. *The Critic,* August 17, 1889, 124–125, here 125.
11. Higonnet, *Pictures of Innocence,* 9, 60.
12. P 138 [III: 644–648]. For a thorough account of Wordsworth's views on memory in their context, see Aleida Assmann, "Die Wunde der Zeit: Wordsworth und die romantische Erinnerung," in *Memoria: Vergessen und Erinnern,* ed. Anselm Haverkamp and Renate Lachmann (München: Fink, 1993), 359–382.

13. Karl Philipp Moritz, "Erinnerungen aus den frühesten Jahren der Kindheit" (Memories from the earliest years of childhood), in *Dichtungen und Schriften zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde* (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1999), 821–824, here 821. The notes to this edition date the original publication of this piece to 1783 (1261–1262). Moritz, who founded empirical psychology in Germany in 1782 with his periodical *Gnothi Seauton: Magazin für Erfahrungsseelenlehre,* encouraged attention to early childhood, which he regarded as formative for the individual. In addition to writing psychologically oriented accounts of his own childhood and childhood memories in his autobiographical novel *Anton Reiser* and elsewhere, he successfully elicited a childhood autobiography from Carl Friedrich Pockels, *Schack Fluurs Jugendgeschichte: Ein Beitrag zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde,* for publication in his journal in 1786. See Jürgen Schlumbohm, "Constructing Individuality: Childhood Memories in Late Eighteenth-century 'Empirical Psychology' and Autobiography," *German History* 16: 29–42.
14. Charles Dickens, *The Personal History of David Copperfield* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 13.
15. Anatole France, *Le Livre de mon ami* (in Oeuvres I, Paris: Gallimard [Bibliothèque de la Pléiade], 1984), 437, my translation.
16. Madame A. Daudet, "L'Enfance d'une Parisienne," in *Oeuvres de Madame A. Daudet, 1878–1889* (Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, 1892), 1–113, here 28.
17. Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The One I Knew the Best of All* (New York: Scribner's, 1893), 3–13.
18. Pierre Loti, *Le Roman d'un enfant* (Paris: Gallimard, 1999), 42. In his study of childhood autobiography in France, Roman Reisinger, who is particularly interested in tracking the problematization of memory and language in such autobiographies, asserts that Loti is the first author of a childhood autobiography to problematize memory. *Die Autobiographie der Kindheit,* 108–109.
19. Cognitive science has only recently begun to study autobiographical memory and offers relatively few findings that are applicable to the study of memory in literature. The present study, therefore, differs from "cognitive poetics" insofar as it is not conceived as an application of the results of cognitive science to literature. I do agree with the basic premise of cognitive poetics that artistic texts just like other texts can tell us about the workings of the mind. Given the large amount of evidence for autobiographical memory in literary texts, I suggest that literature should take the lead in formulating research questions about it. Perhaps one day the results of the disciplines will converge in a meaningful fashion.
20. William James, *The Principles of Psychology,* 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), I: 610. James's Italics.

21. On this issue, see Dorrit Cohn's chapter "Proust's Generic Ambiguity," in *The Distinction of Fiction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 58–78, here 61.
22. Jean-Yves Tadié, *Marcel Proust: A Life,* trans. Euan Cameron (New York: Viking, 2000), 41. Proust himself says the book "recounts the very essence of my life," Tadié, 282.
23. Theoreticians of this area maintain that beyond the author's acknowledgment of his or her identity with the speaker, there are no signs that clearly demarcate first-person fiction from autobiography. Thus Dorrit Cohn, *The Distinction of Fiction,* agreeing with Philippe Lejeune's definition of autobiography in *Le Pacte autobiographique,* asserts: "The principal criterion for distinguishing between real and fictional self-narration . . . hinges quite simply on the ontological status of its speaker—by which I mean his identity or nonidentity with the author in whose name the narrative has been published" (31), there being "nothing distinctively fictional about the discourse of an imaginary 'I' " (32). Signs may, of course, be present, as Lejeune himself points out in *Signes de vie* (Paris: Seuil, 2005), 16–17. Theoreticians also note the complications that upholding the distinction brings: autobiographers can lie or fantasize (Cohn, *Distinction,* 31), or purposely frame an autobiography as a novel for a variety of reasons (Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, "The Trouble with Autobiography: Cautionary Notes for Narrative Theorists," in *A Companion to Narrative Theory,* ed. James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz [Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005], 356–371, here 363).
24. Doris Lessing, *Under My Skin: Volume One of My Autobiography, to 1949* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 12.
25. Richard N. Coe, *When the Grass Was Taller: Autobiography and the Experience of Childhood* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 9. Coe's genre definition has not gone unchallenged. Lange, *Selbstfragmente,* basing her conclusion on a study of nineteenth-century German childhood autobiographies, energetically disputes that childhood autobiography is "dominated by a causal psychological way of seeing" (52, my translation). In her view, childhood autobiography differs from autobiography precisely in its lack of a teleological perspective (10).
26. Reisinger, *Autobiographie* 52, 82, passim.
27. Richard N. Coe, *Reminiscences of Childhood: An Approach to a Comparative Mythology* (Leeds: Leeds Philosophical & Literary Society, 1984), 68–98.
28. Coe, *When the Grass Was Taller,* 157, says his study was based on 600-odd texts.
29. Philippe Lejeune, *Moi aussi* (Paris: Seuil, 1986), 321.
30. Coe, *Grass,* 40, note 51. On this point, Lange agrees with Coe. She finds that nineteenth-century German childhood autobiographies largely do not adhere

to the romantic discourse on childhood (52) and that many of them, moreover, are not nostalgic about the lost childhood world (*Selbstfragmente,* 32, 41).

31. Higonnet, *Pictures of Innocence,* 9.
32. Edith Cobb, *The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), e.g., 18, 102. Cobb's focus is the child's creativity, its "worldmaking."
33. Coe, *Grass,* 203, 252, 255, 286, 291.
34. Ibid., 285.
35. Ibid., 114.
36. Roy Pascal, *Die Autobiographie: Gehalt und Gestalt* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, [c1965]), 114.
37. Benjamin, letter to Scholem, 26 September 1932, *Gesammelte Briefe* IV, ed. Christoph Gödde and Henri Lonitz (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998), 135; *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem, 1932–1940,* ed. Gershom Scholem, trans. Gary Smith and Andre Lefevere (New York: Schocken, 1989), 19.
38. Benjamin, letter to Scholem, 28 February 1933. *Gesammelte Briefe* IV: 162; *Correspondence,* 27.
39. *Romantic Poetry and Prose,* ed. Harold Bloom and Lionel Trilling (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 176.
40. France, *Le Livre de mon ami,* 528, my translation. Individual pieces were published in journals from 1879 to 1884; the passage quoted here was first published in 1882.
41. *Romantic Poetry and Prose,* 180.
42. R I: 6; SW: 6.
43. XI: 746–747; ML 44–45.
44. XI: 767; ML 61.
45. BCh 52–53; SW II: 611, translation modified.
46. Saint Augustine, *Confessions,* trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin (London: Penguin, 1988), 214.
47. Moritz, "Erinnerungen," 821–824.
48. Joyce N. Megay, *Bergson et Proust: Essai de mise au point de la question de l'influence de Bergson sur Proust* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1976), 14–15.
49. Sigmund Freud, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, 1887–1904,* ed. Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 265, translation altered. A facsimile of the original German letter follows p. 266. It also appears in Sigmund Freud, *Briefe an Wilhelm Fliess: 1867–1904,* ed. Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, c. 1986), 284.
50. SE 6: 47. Freud took a metapsychological interest in memory that went beyond screen memories and the distorting effects of repression on memory retrieval. His many pronouncements on memory, particularly those regarding the memory

traces, are not easily reconciled. At times he insists that everything is preserved ("Civilization and Its Discontents," SE 21: 69), that original memory traces are retained (though they may be completely inaccessible). Elsewhere he asserts that memories can be modified and "normally forgotten" though association (*Studies on Hysteria,* SE 2: 9) as well as through condensation and distortion (*Psychopathology of Everyday Life,* SE 6: 274n). The paradox is summed up in a footnote in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life:* "The most important as well as the strangest characteristic of psychical fixations is that all impressions are presented, not only in the same form in which they were first received, but also in all the forms which they have adopted in their further developments" (SE 6: 275n). In short, Freud posits that our memories have multiple transcriptions in the psyche. He develops this concept in much greater detail in his 1915 essay "The Unconscious." Nevertheless, for Freud *recall* remained indubitably tendentious. For a more extensive discussion of memory in Freud, see Bruce M. Ross, *Remembering the Personal Past: Descriptions of Autobiographical Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 62–64, 68–70. Ross also devotes a chapter to post-Freudian psychoanalytic memory theory, especially the theories of Ernst Kris and the Kris Study Group, which extended and developed Freud's screen memory concept.

51. Reisinger, *Autobiographie,* 25, my translation.
52. Elizabeth Loftus and Katherine Ketcham, *The Myth of Repressed Memory* (New York: St. Martin's, 1994), 7; Daniel L. Schacter, *Searching for Memory: The Brain, the Mind, and the Past* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 255–256.
53. Matthew Hugh Erdelyi, *The Recovery of Unconscious Memories* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 185.
54. Ibid., xiv.
55. Wolfgang Schneider and Michael Pressley, *Memory Development between Two and Twenty* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1997), 2, define autobiographical memory as the memory of a particular event and explicitly exclude repeated events. Katherine Nelson, "Psychological and Social Origins" (1993), 8, also has a narrow definition of autobiographical memory, as an episodic memory that, moreover, has significance to the life story. William F. Brewer, "What Is Autobiographical Memory?" in *Autobiographical Memory,* ed. David C. Rubin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 25–49, defining autobiographical memory broadly as "memory for information related to the self," includes the "personal memory" of a "particular episode" and also the "generic personal memory," where the "acquisition conditions" were "repeated," one example being "a mental image of what, in general, it was like to drive north on Highway 1 in California's Big Sur region" (26). He somewhat reluctantly concludes that an internally consistent account of autobiographical memory entails "the introduc-

tion of the construct of the self, something that experimental psychologists have been reluctant to allow" (34). Mark L. Howe, Mary L. Courage, and Carole Peterson, "How Can I Remember When 'I' Wasn't There: Long-Term Retention of Traumatic Experiences and Emergence of the Cognitive Self," in *The Recovered Memory/False Memory Debate,* ed. Kathy Pedzek and William P. Banks (San Diego: Academic Press, 1996), 121–149, in contrast, work with the idea of the self; they define a memory as autobiographical "in the traditional sense," "that is, that the memory for an event is organized with reference to the self and can be expressed either verbally or nonverbally" (128). Martin A. Conway and David C. Rubin, "The Structure of Autobiographical Memory," in *Theories of Memory,* ed. A. F. Collins, S. E. Gathercole, M. A. Conway, and P. E. Morris (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1993), 103–137, speak of repeated events. Defining autobiographical memory as "memory for the events of one's life" (103), they write that there are three kinds of autobiographical knowledge: the knowledge of lifetime periods, the knowledge of general events, and event-specific knowledge (104). Patricia J. Bauer, *Remembering the Times of Our Lives* (New York: Psychology Press, 2007) adopts Tulving's distinction within "declarative memory" between "semantic memory" (general knowledge about the world) and "episodic memory" and defines "autobiographical memory" as a particular kind of episodic memory (14). For her, "autobiographical memories" are memories of unique events (21). General knowledge about one's past life is not part of autobiographical memory (22), and repeated events are also excluded from the definition, although she states that there is controversy on this point (350–351; see also 363). She maintains, however, that the same neural network supports semantic and episodic memory. Whether these two memory types are more or less dependent on different brain regions, such as the hippocampus, is an issue of current controversy (164–172). Regardless of how such issues will be solved in future by neuroscience, from the point of view of literary autobiography the idea that "autobiographical memory" should be restricted to the recollection of unique events appears highly artificial. Literary autobiographers write about any and all memories related to the self regardless of the temporal parameters of the event.

56. Schacter, *Searching for Memory,* 60.
57. Martin A. Conway, "Autobiographical Knowledge and Autobiographical Memories," in *Remembering Our Past: Studies in Autobiographical Memory,* ed. David C. Rubin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 67–93, here 87.
58. Conway, "Autobiographical Knowledge" (1995), 87; Schacter, *Searching for Memory,* 45–46.
59. Conway, "Autobiographical Knowledge" (1995), 90.
60. William F. Brewer, "What Is Recollective Memory?" in *Remembering Our Past: Studies in Autobiographical Memory,* ed. David C. Rubin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 19–66, here 46.

61. Brewer, "Recollective Memory" (1995), 59, cites laboratory results of 1906 and 1907; Erdelyi, *Recovery,* 156, cites Bartlett's results (1932), which showed a tendency to rework an original memory into progressively distorted, schema-congruent versions on subsequent recalls.
62. Robyn Fivush, "Event Memory in Early Childhood," chapter 6 in *The Development of Memory in Childhood,* ed. Nelson Cowan (Hove East Sussex, UK: Psychology Press, 1997), 139–161, here 149.
63. Schneider and Pressley, *Memory Development*, 25.
64. Schneider and Pressley, *Memory Development,* 8. For an overview of memory for repeated events from a developmental perspective, see Judith A. Hudson and Estelle M. Y. Mayhew, "The Development of Memory for Recurring Events," in *The Development of Memory in Infancy and Childhood,* ed. Mary L. Courage and Nelson Cowan (Hove East Sussex, UK: Psychology Press, 2009), 69–91.
65. Katherine Nelson, "Remembering, Forgetting, and Childhood Amnesia," in *Knowing and Remembering in Young Children,* ed. Robyn Fivush and Judith A. Hudson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 301–316, here 308.
66. James L. McGaugh, *Memory and Emotion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 97–105.
67. Ibid., 74.
68. Bauer, *Remembering* (2007); 46–47 (biological sex); 74–75 (birth order); 45 (depression); 33 (reminiscence bump); 313 (paucity of memories from ages 3 to 7 or 8).
69. Karen Sheingold and Yvette J. Tenney, "Memory for a Salient Childhood Event," in *Memory Observed: Remembering in Natural Contexts,* ed. Ulric Neisser (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman, 1982), 201–212, here 210.
70. JoNell Adair Usher and Ulric Neisser, "Childhood Amnesia and the Beginnings of Memory for Four Early Life Events," *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 122 (1993): 155–165, here 164.
71. Howe, Courage, and Peterson, "How" (1996), 132–135.
72. Arnold R. Bruhn, *Earliest Childhood Memories.* Vol. 1: Theory and Application to Clinical Practice (New York: Praeger, 1990), 3, 5.
73. M. Howes, M. Siegel, and F. Brown, "Early Childhood Memories: Accuracy and Affect," *Cognition* 47 (1993): 95–119, here 103–104.
74. Howe, Courage, and Peterson, "How" (1996), 141.
75. Brewer, "Recollective Memory," 34.
76. Erdelyi, *Recovery,* e.g., 48.
77. Ibid., 95.
78. Ibid., 92–93
79. Brewer, "Recollective Memory" (1995), 39 and 43.
80. Carolyn Rovee-Collier and C.-W. Gary Shyi, "A Functional and Cognitive Analysis of Infant Long-Term Retention," in *Development of Long-Term Retention,* ed.

Mark L. Howe, Charles J. Brainerd, and Valerie F. Reyna (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1992), 3–55, here 14; Carolyn Rovee-Collier and Peter Gerhardstein, "The Development of Infant Memory," chapter 2 in *The Development of Memory in Childhood,* ed. Nelson Cowan (Hove East Sussex, UK: Psychology Press, 1997), 5–39, here 28.

81. Rovee-Collier and Shyi, "A Functional Analysis" (1992), 9–10; Rovee-Collier and Gerhardstein, "Development" (1997), 21.
82. Rovee-Collier and Shyi, "A Functional Analysis" (1992), 23–33.
83. V. Henri and C. Henri, "Enquête sur les premiers souvenirs de l'enfance," *L'année psychologique* 3 (1897): 184–198, here 196.
84. Schacter, *Searching for Memory,* 60–64.
85. David B. Pillemer and Sheldon H. White, "Childhood Events Recalled by Children and Adults," in *Advances in Child Development and Behavior,* ed. Hayne W. Reese (San Diego: Academic Press, 1989), 297–340, here 328.
86. Ibid., 332.
87. Katherine Nelson, "The Psychological and Social Origins of Autobiographical Memory," *Psychological Science. A Journal of the American Psychological Society* 4, 2 (1993): 7–14, here 13.
88. Ibid., especially p. 12; see also Katherine Nelson, "Events, Narratives, Memory: What Develops?" in *Memory and Affect in Development* 26 (1993): 1–23.
89. Mark L. Howe and Mary L. Courage, "On Resolving the Enigma of Infantile Amnesia," *Psychological Bulletin* 113 (1993): 305–326.
90. Rovee-Collier and Gerhardstein, "Development" (1997), 6.
91. Bauer, *Remembering* (2007), 102.
92. Rovee-Collier and Gerhardstein, "Development" (1997), 17.
93. Bauer, *Remembering* (2007), 217.
94. Ibid., e.g., 190. For a detailed summary of research in the area of infant recall, see Bauer's chapters on "Declarative Memory in the First Years of Life" (78–120) and "Development of the Neural Substrate for Declarative Memory" (177–217).
95. Robyn Fivush, Jacquelyn T. Gray, and Fayne A. Fromhoff, "Two-Year-Olds Talk About the Past," *Cognitive Development* 2 (1987): 393–407.
96. Rovee-Collier and Gerhardstein, "Development" (1997), 14; Patricia J. Bauer, "Development of Memory in Early Childhood," chapter 4 in *The Development of Memory in Childhood,* ed. Nelson Cowan (Hove East Sussex, UK: Psychology Press, 1997), 83–111, here 100–101. Bauer, *Remembering* (1970), 314–332, writes extensively about this issue of "making the crossing."
97. Rovee-Collier and Shyi, "A Functional Analysis" (1992), 41, 45.
98. Howe, Courage, and Peterson, "How" (1996).
99. Ibid., 125–126.

100. Rovee-Collier and Gerhardstein, "Development" (1997), 33.
101. Kathy Pezdek and Chantal Roe, "Memory for Childhood Events: How Suggestible is it?" in *The Recovered Memory/False Memory Debate,* ed. Kathy Pezdek and William P. Banks (San Diego: Academic Press, 1996), 197–210, here 197.
102. E. F. Loftus, "The Reality of Repressed Memories," *American Psychologist* 48 (1993): 518–537.
103. Loftus and Ketcham, *Myth of Repressed Memory,* 4–5.
104. Pezdek and Roe, "Memory," 198.
105. Ibid., 197, 201, 204.
106. McGaugh, *Memory and Emotion,* 121.
107. Bauer, *Remembering,* 177–178.
108. Ibid., 134.
109. In a 1988 article, "L'Ère du soupçon," in *Le récit d'enfance en question, Cahiers de Sémiotique Textuelle* 12 (1988): 41–67, Philippe Lejeune examines self-referential suspicion in autobiography, particularly childhood autobiography. He enumerates (very rightly) the types of suspicion that can be leveled at autobiography, namely, that memory is unfaithful to the past, that writing is unfaithful to memory, and that autobiographical discourse is unfaithful to "real life"; and he contrasts pre-Freudian with post-Freudian suspicions, which represent the third category. In particular, he presents a telling comparison of Sarraute to Stendhal, who to him represents the peak of nineteenth-century suspiciousness.
110. Michel Leiris, *Biffures* [*La règle du jeu,* I] (1948) (Paris: Gallimard, 1991), 24, my translation.
111. Mary McCarthy, *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood* (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1985), 6. Lejeune, "L'Ère du soupçon," devotes particular attention to McCarthy, 58–61.
112. Georges Perec, *W, ou le souvenir d'enfance* (Paris: Denoël, 1975), 17; Georges Perec, *W, or the Memory of Childhood,* trans. David Bellos (Boston: David R. Godine, 1988), 6.
113. Perec, *Souvenir,* 98; *Memory,* 68.
114. Perec, *Souvenir,* 17; *Memory,* 6.
115. Perec, *Souvenir,* 63–64, 45; *Memory,* 42, 26.
116. Christa Wolf, *Kindheitsmuster* (München: Luchterhand, 1999), 226; Christa Wolf, *Patterns of Childhood,* trans. Ursule Molinaro and Hedwig Rappolt (New York: Noonday Press, 1990), 152, translation modified.
117. Vladimir Nabokov, *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited* (New York: Vintage International, 1989), 300.
118. Ibid., 75.
119. Ibid., 154.

120. Lessing, *Under My Skin,* 12.
121. Ibid., 13.
122. Patrick Chamoiseau, *Une enfance créole I: Antan d'enfance* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), 21–22, 178. Patrick Chamoiseau, *Childhood,* trans. Carol Volk (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 3–4, 106.
123. Roland Barthes, *Oeuvres completes,* III, ed. Eric Marty (Paris: Seuil, 1995), 85, 86; Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes,* trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 2.
124. Barthes, *Oeuvres,* 85; Barthes, *Roland Barthes,* 2.
125. Barthes, *Oeuvres,* 107; *Roland Barthes,* 22.
126. Barthes, *Oeuvres,* 106; *Roland Barthes,* 21.
127. Kate Douglas, *Contesting Childhood* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 85, 106, 170–171.
128. Ibid., 107, 20.
129. Coe, *Grass,* 113. Coe notes the paradox that childhood autobiographies are full of trivia, even though the child is not preoccupied with trivial things, but rather, with "the fear and the glory" (120).
130. D. W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (New York: Routledge, 1989), chapter 1 (1–25).
131. *Things,* ed. Bill Brown (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004). Three recent books that explore people's close relationship with things and bear either on memory or on childhood are Joshua Glenn and Carol Hayes, *Taking Things Seriously* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2007); Daniel Miller, *The Comfort of Things* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2008); and Sherry Turkle, *Falling for Science: Objects in Mind* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008). Glenn and Hayes's book is an anthology of photos of objects that held special significance for someone along with a short essay about each; some are, of course, memory objects. Miller's is an anthropological study of people's relationships to "things," broadly conceived. In a series of case studies of South Londoners he investigates various ways in which people relate to things. Among other relationships, he explores how some people use things to preserve their memories; a case in point is Charlotte, pp. 83–89. Turkle explores the object–childhood connection in order to show how a childhood fascination with a particular object fostered MIT students' love for science.
132. Coe, *Grass,* 135.
133. Loti, *Le Roman d'un enfant,* 100, my translation.
134. Vilém Flusser, *The Freedom of the Migrant. Objections to Nationalism,* ed. Anke K. Finger, trans. Kenneth Kronenberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 5.
135. V. Henri and C. Henri, "Enquête," 191.
136. Moritz, "Erinnerungen," 822–823.

137. Howes, Siegel, and Brown, *Early Childhood Memories,* 113.
138. Only 18 percent of these memories involved "rehearsal," defined here as 1. repeated encounters with the memory element *or* 2. reactivation of the memory by discussion, thought, or a photograph (ibid., 104–105).
139. Cf. Philippe Lejeune in *Le Pacte autobiographique* (Paris: Seuil, 1975), who writes that the iterative is frequently used in autobiography and most particularly in the *récit d'enfance* (p. 114).
140. See Proust, chapter 1, p. 77.
141. Bauer, *Remembering* (2007), 50.
142. Hannah Lynch, *Autobiography of a Child* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1899), 110.
143. Annie Dillard, *An American Childhood* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), 173.
144. Loti, *Le Roman d'un enfant,* 261, my translation.
145. Richard Terdiman, *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 3–7, 13.
146. Coe, *Grass,* 42.
147. Ibid., 64, 422.
148. Loti, *Le Roman d'un enfant,* 142.
149. Rilke calls Proust a "collectionneur acharné" (relentless collector). Rainer Maria Rilke, *Briefwechsel mit Magda von Hattingberg,* ed. Ingeborg Schnack and Renate Scharffenberg (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 2000), 212.
150. Tadié, *Marcel Proust,* 17, 448, 468, 475.
151. The two spots are found in *The Prelude* XI: 257–388 (P 478–484). In the 1799 draft, I: 258–279 (P 15), his vision of a corpse raised from a pond when he was eight years old is also included as a "spot."
152. France, *Le Livre de mon ami,* 471, my translation.
153. R I: 529; BG 153.
154. V. Henri and C. Henri, "Enquête," 190.
155. Roger Brown and James Kulik, "Flashbulb Memories," *Cognition* 5 (1977): 73–99, here 97.
156. R II: 4; BG 300.
157. François-René de Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe* (Paris: Gallimard [Bibliothèque de la Pléiade], 1951), I: 76.
158. Moritz, *Anton Reiser,* 91–92.
159. Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 2–8. In her overview of memory theory *Memory* (London: Routledge, 2009), Anne Whitehead summarizes the classical and medieval "art of memory" and its use of place, and touches, moreover, on Wordsworth's connection of memories to place ("Tintern Abbey"), as well as on Maurice Halbwachs's idea that material spaces are a support for collective memory.

160. Louise Chawla, *In the First Country of Places: Nature, Poetry, and Childhood Memory* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 7.
161. Cobb, "Ecology," and Chawla, *In the First Country of Places*.

## 1. Constructing Buried Treasure: Proust's Childhood Memories

1. R IV: 445; TR 255–256.
2. R IV: 454; TR 268.
3. Richard Terdiman, *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), believes that involuntary memory is the lever by which Proust wants to create for himself the status of autonomous original genius (157–178) and that, by consequence, involuntary memory is really a screen memory (167). He declares its epiphanic quality at odds with the fact that the memories Proust recounts are mainly habitual (227) and asserts that the joy Proust insists it brings contradicts the anguish it frequently in fact causes (212f.). In fact, to Terdiman, "involuntary memory," with its salvationist message, looks suspiciously like the progeny of repressed trauma (200, 239).
4. Gérard Genette, "Proust palimpseste," *Figures* (Paris: Seuil, 1966), 39–67, here 65–67, my translation.
5. Antoine Compagnon, *Proust entre deux siècles* (Paris: Seuil, 1989), 32, my translation. Compagnon says that the idea of intermittencies is an early one, figuring in Proust's Carnet 1 of 1908 (47). The paradigmatic instance of it is Proust's after-the-fact pain and suffering over his grandmother's death.
6. Compagnon, *Proust,* 50, my translation.
7. Compagnon, *Proust,* 301–302.
8. Rainer Warning, "Vergessen, Verdrängen und Erinnern in Prousts *À la recherche du temps perdu,*" in *Memoria: Vergessen und Erinnern,* ed. Anselm Haverkamp and Renate Lachmann (München: Fink, 1993), 160–194, here 161.
9. Warning, "Vergessen," 165, 161.
10. Warning, "Vergessen," 184; Terdiman, *Present Past,* 197–200.
11. R IV: 477; TR 303.
12. R IV: 474–475; TR 299–300.
13. Kirsten Shepherd-Barr and Gordon M. Shepherd, "Madeleines and Neuromodernism: Reassessing Mechanisms of Autobiographical Memory in Proust," *Auto/biography Studies: a/b* 13 (1998): 39–60, undertake to examine Proust's involuntary memory from a contemporary neurological point of view. They focus on the madeleine episode. They find that important aspects of this experience of involuntary memory are indeed supported by facts that are now known about the brain. For example, the idea that the narrator recovers "the whole of Combray" from the taste of the madeleine is plausible, inasmuch as an

entire memory can be reconstituted from a small fragment or indistinct form of the whole. Moreover, the joy Proust experiences might be traceable to the fact that the madeleine engages the sense of smell. The "taste" of the madeleine is really almost all smell, they assert, and the olfactory cortex has a direct connection to the limbic regions of the brain (smell is the only sense to have this direct access).

14. Compagnon, *Proust,* 9–10.
15. JS 398; js 407.
16. JS 399; js 407.
17. R IV: 450; TR 263.
18. R I: 83; SW 90.
19. R IV: 474; TR 298.
20. R IV: 449; TR 261.
21. Wallace Stevens, "Sunday Morning," in *The Palm at the End of the Mind* (New York: Knopf, 1971), 7.
22. R IV: 451; TR 264.
23. His biographer William C. Carter hypothesizes that Proust's "new faith in grace and freedom" in 1895 was in fact in part due to his contemporaneous enthusiasm for Emerson. William C. Carter, *Marcel Proust: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 185. Cf. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance," in *Selections from Ralph Waldo Emerson,* ed. Stephen E. Whicher (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960), 158: "When good is near you, when you have life in yourself, it is not by any known or accustomed way; you shall not discern the footprints of any other; you shall not see the face of man; you shall not hear any name;—the way, the thought, the good, shall be wholly strange and new." For more detail on Proust's enthusiastic Emerson reception, see Jean-Yves Tadié, *Marcel Proust: A Life* (New York: Viking, 2000), 343–354.
24. Besides speaking of "developing" the "negatives" within his mind (R IV: 474, "develop"; R IV: 475, "clichés" [negatives] needing to be held up to a lamp), Proust makes clear that the subject of his art is his own interiority, produced in obscurity and silence. "Art mak[es] us travel back in the direction from which we have come to the depths where what has really existed lies unknown within us" ("L'art . . . est . . . la marche en sens contraire, le retour aux profondeurs où ce qui a existé réellement gît inconnu de nous, qu'il nous fera suivre"), R IV: 475; TR 300; "Real books should be the offspring not of daylight and casual talk but of darkness and silence" (R IV: 476; TR 302); "I understood that all these materials for a work of literature were simply my past life" (R IV: 478; TR 304); "The essential, the only true book, though in the ordinary sense of the word it does not have to be 'invented' by a great writer—for it exists already in each one of us—has to be translated by him" (R IV: 469; TR 291); "Experience had taught me only too well the impossibility of attaining in the real world to what lay deep within

myself" (R IV: 455; TR 270); the closed bottles seem to be a figure for memories in the mind (R IV: 448; TR 260); "Really everything is in the mind" ("Tout est dans l'esprit"), R IV: 491; TR 323; "The purely mental character of reality" (R IV: 493; TR 326–327).

25. "To hear them [the notes of the bell which rang within me] properly again, I was obliged to block my ears to the conversations which were proceeding between the masked figures all round me" (R IV: 623; TR 529).
26. R IV: 450; TR 262.
27. R IV: 453; TR 267.
28. R IV: 419; TR 218, translation modified.
29. R IV: 552; TR 419, translation modified.
30. For instance, Mme de Guermantes's "friendships and opinions had so greatly changed . . . that now, in retrospect, she looked upon her charming Babal as a snob." (R IV: 584; TR 469).
31. JS 399; js 408, translation modified.
32. Joshua Landy, *Philosophy as Fiction: Self, Deception, and Knowledge in Proust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 42–43.
33. Marcel Proust, *Le Carnet de 1908,* ed. Philip Kolb (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), 95, my translation.
34. R I: 44; SW 47–48. The idea that past moments are incarnated and hidden in material objects was already central in the projected preface to *Contre Sainte-Beuve,* where the "madeleine" is a "pain grillé." Marcel Proust, *Contre Sainte-Beuve,* ed. Pierre Clarac (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), 211.
35. Charles Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), I: 11, my translation.
36. R IV: 463; TR 283–284.
37. GS I: 647; SW IV: 338–339.
38. Julia Kristeva, "In Search of Madeleine," 3–22, in *Time and Sense,* trans. Ross Guberman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).
39. R IV: 451; TR 264.
40. R IV: 456; TR 272.
41. R IV: 456–457; TR 272–274.
42. R IV: 468; TR 289–290, translation modified.
43. R I: 179; SW 197.
44. R IV: 447; TR 258–259.
45. R IV: 60; F 645.
46. Certain critics try to find some way to link involuntary memory to metaphor. E.g., Randolph Splitter, "Proust, Joyce, and the Theory of Metaphor," *Literature and Psychology* 29, 1 & 2 (1979): 4–18, notes that the second half of Proust's sentence about essence and metaphor (R IV: 468; TR 289–290) implies that Proust thinks of metaphor as a figure that identifies not just two things separated in

space, but two things separated in time (13). Jean Ricardou in "Proust: A Retrospective Reading," *Critical Inquiry* 8 (1982): 531–541, calls the moments of involuntary memory, such as the episode of the paving stones, "ordinal metaphors," i.e., metaphors that are "productive of a narrative order," p. 535, and asserts that they prefigure an organizing technique in the New Novel, that of suddenly introducing a new narrative cell on the basis of the similarity in a word. Genette, however, observes that the cue and the memory are not really in a relationship of metaphor; rather, the cue is merely the vehicle for the old sensation. He declares Proust's vision, instead, *palimpsestic*. "Proust palimpseste," 47.

47. Sven-Åke Christianson and Martin A. Safer, "Emotional Events and Emotions in Autobiographical Memories," in *Remembering Our Past: Studies in Autobiographical Memory,* ed. David C. Rubin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 218–243, write (227): "One observable consequence of tunnel memory is that individuals will remember a traumatic scene, at least temporarily, as more focused spatially than the actual stimulus input and more focused spatially than a comparable neutral scene (Safer et al., 1993). These tunnel memories may become less focused over time. In contrast, subjects remember neutral scenes as more wide-angled than the actual stimulus input (Intraub, Bender, and Mangels, 1992)."
48. JS 248; js 44.
49. "les beaux jours d'Illiers," JS 293; js 104, translation modified. For further instances and discussion, see Mireille Marc-Lipiansky, *La Naissance du Monde Proustien dans Jean Santeuil* (Paris: Nizet, 1974), 145–146, and Flora Vincze, "Préfiguration du motif proustien de la madeleine dans Jean Santeuil," *Acta Litteraria Academiae Scientarum Hungaricae* 27 (1985): 17–52, here 30–51.
50. Anthony R. Pugh, *The Birth of* A la recherche du temps perdu (Lexington, KY: French Forum Publishers, 1987), 49–50.
51. Tadié, *Marcel Proust,* 11.
52. JS 396–397; js 404, translation modified.
53. R IV: 468: TR 290.
54. Roger Shattuck, "From Wordsworth to Proust," 177–197, in *Romanticism: Vistas, Instances, Continuities,* ed. David Thorburn and Geoffrey Hartman (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1973), here 186.
55. R I: 182; SW 201.
56. Marcel Proust, *Contre Sainte-Beuve,* 212, my translation.
57. For example, in the brigade scene, Esquisse XLIII (R I: 779–780), the flooding image is only latent; Proust works the water analogy up into something very elaborate in the published version. In Esquisse LV (R I: 833) the discussion of the protagonist's alternating states of mind is not illustrated by a simile; in the published version Proust makes the idea vivid through a comparison to bands of color in the sky.

58. R I: 71; SW 78.
59. For many more instances of chronological inconsistency and a discussion of narrative sequence in *À la recherche du temps perdu,* see Joshua Landy, "The Texture of Proust's Novel," *The Cambridge Companion to Proust,* ed. Richard Bales (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 111–128, here 112f.
60. Carter, *Marcel Proust,* p. 28.
61. Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse,* trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), notes that these "singulative scenes" are "dramatically very important" (117).
62. Protagonist not present: R I: 58; SW 63. Mind-reading: R I: 114–115; SW 125–126.
63. For an extensive discussion of the generic ambiguity of the *Recherche* as a whole, see Dorrit Cohn's chapter "Proust's Generic Ambiguity" in *The Distinction of Fiction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 58–78.
64. Stephen Ullmann, *The Image in the Modern French Novel: Gide, Alain-Fournier, Proust, Camus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960); Victor E. Graham, *The Imagery of Proust* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966).
65. A comparison of my count and those of Ullmann and Graham cannot be exact, given that they count "images," which is a somewhat broader category than "similes" and "metaphors," and only record their counts per each volume of Proust's novel. Nevertheless, my count before I excluded psychologically relativized instances, those not pertaining to the Combray of the narrator's childhood, and clichés (see below in the text) does correspond grosso modo to Ullmann's "seven examples on every four pages in *Combray*" (129), which would put the images in "Combray II" around the 300 mark. Ullmann's analysis of the "basic patterns" of Proust's images (226) is apt; correspondences between his analysis and mine will be noted; but the very fact that he focuses on the entirety of *Du côté de chez Swann,* which contains some extremely disparate sections, whereas I focus on the relatively homogeneous "Combray II," means that our emphases are different: he is interested in discerning features of Proust's style generally, whereas I am interested in Proust's techniques for evoking the world of his childhood. Correspondingly, our conclusions are largely different.
66. Moishe Black, "Proust's Comparisons: A Case Study," *Dalhousie French Studies* 69 (2004): 63–72, analyzes the paragraph that begins "Souvent aussi nous allions nous abriter" (I: 149–150) and finds twenty-eight comparisons, 71.
67. Graham, *Imagery,* 6.
68. R I: 50; SW 55.
69. Ullmann, *Image,* 228, remarks on Proust's "image sequences."
70. Gérald Antoine, "Proust ou le chaos métaphorique," *Cahiers de l'Institut de linguistique* 10 (1984): 17–25, notes that Proust often creates "incoherent" or "irrational"

metaphors and cites the steeple passage and the lilac passage as two of his three examples.

71. R I: 66; SW 71.
72. On the relation between metaphorical and metonymical structures in Proust's text, see Gérard Genette, "Proust palimpseste"; Genette, "Proust et le langage indirect," *Figures II* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), 223–294; Genette, "Métonymie chez Proust," *Figures III* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), 41–63; Paul de Man, "Proust et l'allégorie de la lecture," in *Mouvements premiers: Études critiques offertes à Georges Poulet* (Paris: Corti, 1971), 231–250, and "Semiology and Rhetoric," *Diacritics* (1973), 27–33; Samuel M. Weber, "The Madrepore," *MLN* 87 (1972), 915–961; and Owen Miller, "Necessary Metaphors and Contingent Metonymies," *Dalhousie French Studies* 38 (1997): 103–108.
73. Gérard Genette, "Métonymie chez Proust." Prior to Genette, Ullmann, *Image,* made the same observation, although he does not use the term "metonymy," but rather speaks of "the transmuting of a chance association into a metaphorical experience," 167.
74. Genette, "Métonymie," 50.
75. Roman Jakobson, "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances," in Roman Jakobson and Morris Halle, *Fundamentals of Language* ('s-Gravenhage: Mouton, 1956): 55–82, here 78.
76. Nathalie Buchet Rogers, "Proust hypotexte de theories linguistiques ou passé/pavés glissants: Le Scandale de la métaphore chez Proust," *Bulletin Marcel Proust* 29 (1999): 147–165, here 149, my translation. Miller, "Necessary Metaphors," airs the issue. Arguing with Paul de Man's suggestion that metonymy is a figure based in chance, he proposes that there are "necessary" as well as "contingent" metonymies—the "necessary" ones involving "a *natural* or *logical* connection between two objects," such as "hand," "pen," and "writing" (107).
77. Genette implies as much, "Métonymie," 44. Genette shows that this phenomenon is not limited to "Combray."
78. R I: 136; SW 150.
79. Such metaphors could be seen to fit into Ullmann's category of "reciprocal metaphors," *Image,* 188, 196, 229–230. Ullmann asserts that the outstanding example is the parallel between girls and flowers, but he also quite rightly points out that "in a more general way, the relationship between nature and art is also reversible" (230). Genette, "Métonymie," 54, calls the reciprocal metaphor a typically baroque artifice. He uses a different example, that of the carafes in the Vivonne, where glass is likened to hardened water and water is likened to liquid crystal.
80. lilacs: R I: 134; SW 148; eglantines: R I: 136; SW 150 ("dog-roses"); apple blossoms: R I: 144; SW 159.
81. R I: 869; see also R I: 854 for the subject of associations based on words.

82. Madame A. Daudet, "L'Enfance d'une Parisienne," in *Oeuvres de Madame A. Daudet 1878–1889* (Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, 1892), 1–113, here 66.
83. Of the 268 metaphors and similes I count, I find only 9 that arguably transcend the knowledge of the child as Proust portrays him. These are the comparison of the lime-blossom tisane to the glow on a wall where a fresco has been removed (R I: 51; SW 56), the comparison of an object he cannot quite grasp to an incandescent body surrounded by a zone of evaporation (R I: 83; SW 90), the comparison of a sensibility silenced by happiness to an unused harp (R I: 114; SW 125), the comparison of Françoise to Racine's Joas (R I: 107), the comparison of a disclosure by Eulalie to a discovery that triggers a new field of scientific research (R I: 116; SW 127), the comparison of M. Legrandin to an eighteenth-century forger (R I: 131; SW 144), the comparison of a water lily moving in circles to the condemned in Dante's Hell (R I: 167; SW 184), the comparison of water lilies to garlands of moss roses in the aftermath of a Watteau *fête galante* (R I: 167; SW 185), and the comparison of the effect of red rugs to that of Lohengrin, Carpaccio, and Baudelaire (R I: 176; SW 194). One exception to Proust's general practice of reserving the device of metaphor for the child's perspective is the comparison of a sensibility silenced by happiness to an unused harp, which is clearly a piece of narratorial commentary (R I: 114; SW 125).
84. Sheep: R I: 47; SW 52; bat: R I: 61; SW 66; butterfly: R I: 82; SW 89; wasp: R I: 122; SW 134; fish: R I: 177; SW 196; turnover: R I: 49; SW 54; spun sugar: R I: 52; SW 57.
85. R IV: 622, "pressentir"; TR 526.
86. Tadié, *Marcel Proust,* p. 8.
87. R I: 40; SW 43.
88. R I: 382, "faire sortir"; SW 423, translation modified.
89. Richard Bales, "Proust and the Fine Arts," in *The Cambridge Companion to Proust,* ed. Richard Bales (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 183–199, here 283.
90. R I: 167; SW 185.
91. Metaphors are also lacking in the portion of *Le Côté de Guermantes* on the grandmother's death; presumably the subject is too serious for such imaginative aesthetic lightening.
92. R II: 161; BG 523.
93. R II: 167; BG 532.
94. R II: 103; BG 442.
95. R II: 55; BG 373.
96. R II: 59; BG 379.
97. Pennsylvania roses: R II: 156; BG 516; orchid, bumblebee: R III: 6; SG 6.
98. R I: 381–382; SW 422.
99. Arnold R. Bruhn, *Earliest Childhood Memories.* Vol. 1: Theory and Application to Clinical Practice (New York: Praeger, 1990), 69, 103.

100. JS 299; js 95.
101. "It often happens that the pleasure which everyone takes in turning over the keepsakes that his memory has collected is keenest in those whom the tyranny of physical illness and the daily hope of its cure prevent, on the one hand, from going out to seek in nature scenes that resemble those memories and, on the other hand, leave so convinced that they will shortly be able to do so that they can remain gazing at them in a state of desire and appetite and not regard them merely as memories or pictures" (R III: 536; C 24–25).
102. R IV: 462; TR 282.
103. R IV: 459; TR 277.
104. Esquisse LIII: R I: 810; see also Esquisse LIV: R I: 827.
105. JS 535; js 486.
106. Georges Poulet, *Proustian Space,* trans. Elliott Coleman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 27.
107. Ibid., 28.
108. Hawthorns: R I: 139; SW 153; sea: R II: 88 and R II: 186; BG 420–421 and BG 558.
109. Mlle de Stermaria: R II: 680; GW 528; Mme de Guermantes: R II: 784; GW 677.

## 2. Making Things Out of Fear: Rilke and Childhood Memory

1. Erich Simenauer, *Rainer Maria Rilke. Legende und Mythos* (Frankfurt am Main: Schauinsland-Verlag, 1953), 115–138; Ernst Pfeiffer, "Rilke und die Psychoanalyse," *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch,* im Auftrage der Görres-Gesellschaft, ed. Hermann Kunisch, Neue Folge 17 (1976): 247–320, here 261–262; Theodore Fiedler, "Psychoanalyse," in *Rilke-Handbuch. Leben—Werk—Wirkung,* ed. Manfred Engel unter Mitarbeit von Dorothea Lauterbach (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2004), 165–174, here 165. Fiedler corrects errors found in Simenauer and Pfeiffer through archival research.
2. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Briefwechsel mit Magda von Hattingberg,* ed. Ingeborg Schnack and Renate Scharffenberg (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 2000), 157; Rainer Maria Rilke and Magda von Hattingberg, *Rilke and Benvenuta: An Intimate Correspondence,* ed. Magda von Hattingberg (Benvenuta), trans. Joel Agee (New York: Fromm, 1987), 108–109, translation modified.
3. Fiedler, "Psychoanalyse," 165.
4. Pfeiffer, "Rilke und die Psychoanalyse," 248.
5. Fiedler, "Psychoanalyse," 165.
6. Pfeiffer, Lou Andreas-Salomé's editor, suggests that the discussion with Gebsattel took place early in 1909, but according to Ingeborg Schack's chronicle of Rilke's life and work, Rilke did not progress on *Malte* between mid-February and early summer 1909 (Ingeborg Schnack, *Rainer Maria Rilke, Chronik seines*

*Lebens und seines Werkes* [Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1975], I: 325). Pfeiffer's attempt at dating is based on Rilke's May 1909 conversation with Lou, in which he talks about wanting to come to grips with his early childhood memories, something he had not exactly managed to do in *Malte*. Pfeiffer finds it likely that he knew of psychoanalysis at the time (Pfeiffer, 262). But in my view what Lou reports about that conversation is not certain evidence of knowledge of psychoanalysis, much less accurate knowledge. Moreover, certain earlier poems such as "Wenn die Uhren so nah" (When the clocks so close, 1898), where the experience of recovering childhood is decidedly mixed, and "Mach Einen herrlich, Herr" (Make someone glorious, Lord) of 1903, which asserts that it is important to know one's childhood, anticipate what Rilke said in that conversation about the importance and difficulty of recovering his early childhood memories. It is, moreover, unlikely that Lou, who later became a psychoanalyst herself, would never have mentioned in all of her writing about Rilke that Rilke brought up the subject of psychoanalysis with her in their May 1909 meeting. It is also unclear, as Fiedler rightly points out, what Gebsattel himself knew about psychoanalysis as early as 1908–1909 (Fiedler, 165). Pfeiffer does not believe, in any event, that psychoanalytic ideas had an effect on the novel, which had been begun in 1904 (Pfeiffer, 270), a conclusion with which I concur. Gebsattel himself, interrogated on the point in 1948 by Simenauer, asserted that he and Rilke conversed about psychoanalysis in the winter of 1907/1908 (Simenauer, 134 and 682, note 86). But Gebsattel is not a reliable source either, since Rilke was not in Paris from November 1907 to May 1908.

7. Letter of 1 March 1912 to Lou Andreas-Salomé, *Rainer Maria Rilke Lou Andreas-Salomé Briefwechsel,* ed. Ernst Pfeiffer (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1989), 265–266; Rainer Maria Rilke and Lou Andreas-Salomé, *The Correspondence,* trans. Edward Snow and Michael Winkler (New York: Norton, 2006), 195: "I am seriously troubled by my *lack of memory,* it isn't just that I retain practically nothing from earlier days, but things also slip out of my mind from one day to the next, despite all of my efforts" (translation modified; italics mine). He also told Magda von Hattingberg that his memory was not the best, letter of 19 February 1914, *Briefwechsel mit Magda von Hattingberg,* 131; *Rilke and Benvenuta,* 93.
8. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge,* ed. Manfred Engel (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1997), 326, my translation. According to Engel, this work plan would have had to have been written between October 1907 and 12 June 2009; he himself believes that signs point to a composition around August 2008.
9. Ibid., 305.
10. Ursula Welsch, "Das leidende Genie. Lou Andreas-Salomés Einschätzung von Rainer Maria Rilkes Problematik," *Blätter der Rilke-Gesellschaft* 11–12 (1984–1985): 55–71, gives an overview, 66. More details are found in Pfeiffer, 311.

11. 28 December 1911, Rilke-Salomé *Briefwechsel,* 238; Rilke-Salomé *Correspondence,* 176.
12. 28 December 1911, ibid., 240; Rilke-Salomé *Correspondence,* 177.
13. 20 January 1912, from Duino, ibid., 250; Rilke-Salomé *Correspondence,* 184.
14. 24 January 1912, ibid., 252; Rilke-Salomé *Correspondence,* 185.
15. 20 January 1912, ibid., 250; Rilke-Salomé *Correspondence,* 184.
16. To Gebsattel, 14 January 1912, in Rainer Maria Rilke, *Briefe in zwei Bänden,* ed. Horst Nalewski (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1991), I: 381; Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters of Rainer Maria Rilke II 1910–1926,* trans. Jane Bannard Greene and M. D. Herter Norton (New York: Norton, 1948), 42; to Lou on 20 January 1912, Rilke-Salomé *Briefwechsel,* 251; Rilke-Salomé *Correspondence,* 184.
17. Letter of 24 January 1912, *Briefe,* ed. Nalewski, I: 392; *Letters II 1910–1926,* 51.
18. According to Pfeiffer, in his notes to *Rainer Maria Rilke Lou Andreas-Salomé Briefwechsel,* 563.
19. Pfeiffer, "Rilke und die Psychoanalyse," 251.
20. Lou Andreas-Salomé, *In der Schule bei Freud. Tagebuch eines Jahres* (Zürich: Max Niehans Verlag, 1958), 210–213; Lou Andreas-Salomé, *The Freud Journal of Lou Andreas-Salomé,* trans. Stanley A. Leavy (New York: Basic Books, 1964), 184–185.
21. Letter of 21 February 1914, *Briefwechsel mit Magda von Hattingberg,* 158–159; *Rilke and Benvenuta,* 109.
22. Pfeiffer, "Rilke und die Psychoanalyse," 271–317 and Fiedler, "Psychoanalyse," 170–173 discuss these and other examples.
23. Letter of 9 February 1914 to Lou, Rilke-Salomé *Briefwechsel,* 311; Rilke-Salomé *Correspondence,* 229; Pfeiffer, "Rilke und die Psychoanalyse," 291, cites the letter of 21 January 1914 to Marie von Thurn und Taxis, also found in *The Letters of Rainer Maria Rilke and Princess Marie von Thurn und Taxis,* trans. and intro. by Nora Wydenbruck (Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1958), 116. In the letter to Lou, Rilke calls Proust's novel "for psychoanalysis very interesting"; in the letter to Marie von Thurn und Taxis he calls the mother's kiss episode a "psychoanalytic trouvaille."
24. Letter of 9 December 1920 to General-Major von Sedlakowitz, in Rainer Maria Rilke, *Briefe,* ed. Rilke-Archiv in Weimar in Verbindung mit Ruth Sieber-Rilke, besorgt durch Karl Altheim (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1987), 2 vols., II: 643–644; *Letters II 1910–1926,* 233. (The translation here reads "suppressed," but Rilke uses the Freudian term "repressed.")
25. Letter of 15 February 1914, *Briefwechsel mit Magda von Hattingberg,* 99; *Rilke and Benvenuta,* 65.
26. Letter to Alexej S. Suworin of 5 March 1902, in *Rilke und Russland; Briefe, Erinnerungen, Gedichte,* ed. Konstantin Asadowski (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1986), 337, my translation.

27. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Tagebücher aus der Frühzeit,* ed. Ruth Sieber-Rilke and Carl Sieber (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1973), 231, my translation.
28. Letter of 17 February 1903 to Franz Xaver Kappus, *Briefe* (Altheim), I: 46–47; Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet,* trans. M. D. Herter Norton (New York: Norton, 1934), 18.
29. II: 511; Rainer Maria Rilke, *New Poems (1907),* trans. Edward Snow (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1984), 89.
30. III: 137; Rainer Maria Rilke, *Uncollected Poems,* selected and translated by Edward Snow (New York: North Point Press, 1996), 143.
31. III: 142–143; translation in Rilke, *Uncollected Poems,* trans. Snow, 155.
32. III: 290; translation in *The Selected Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke,* ed. and trans. Stephen Mitchell (New York: Random House, 1982), 265.
33. Letter of 4 December 1896 to Valerie von David-Rhonfeld, Rainer Maria Rilke, *"Sieh dir die Liebenden an": Briefe an Valerie von David-Rhonfeld,* ed. Renate Scharffenberg and August Stahl (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 2003), 163–164; letter of 15 April 1904 to Lou Andreas-Salomé, Rilke-Salomé *Briefwechsel,* 145–146, Rilke-Salomé *Correspondence,* 106; letter of 2 November 1907 to Clara Rilke, cited in Carl Sieber, *René Rilke: Die Jugend Rainer Maria Rilkes* (Leipzig: Insel, n.d. [1932 preface]), 49. He also confides a few details to his correspondent of 1914, Magda von Hattingberg, e.g., in the letter of 12 February, *Briefwechsel mit Magda von Hattingberg,* 67–69; *Rilke and Benvenuta,* 41–43. On military academy, e.g., letter of 4 December 1896 to Valerie von David-Rhonfeld, 164–166, and letter of 9 December 1920 to General-Major von Sedlakowitz, *Briefe* (Altheim), II: 643; *Letters II 1910–1926,* 233.
34. Simenauer, *Rainer Maria Rilke,* believes that Sieber made Rilke's childhood out to be better than it actually was, 184. He also points out that Sieber did not know Rilke personally, 421.
35. Stefan Schank, *Kindheitserfahrungen im Werk Rainer Maria Rilkes* (St. Ingbert: Röhrig Universitätsverlag, 1995).
36. E.g., letter of 8 March 1912 to Sidonie Nádherný von Borutin, in *Briefe* (Nalewski), I: 419.
37. Sieber, *René Rilke,* 77.
38. Letter of 4 December 1896, Rilke, *"Sieh dir die Liebenden an,"* 163.
39. Lou Andreas-Salomé, *Lebensrückblick,* ed. Ernst Pfeiffer (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), 137; Lou Andreas-Salomé, *Looking Back: Memoirs,* ed. Ernst Pfeiffer, trans. Breon Mitchell (New York: Marlowe, 1995), 84.
40. See David Kleinbard, *The Beginning of Terror: A Psychological Study of Rainer Maria Rilke's Life and Work* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), who works with these theorists to interpret Rilke's case as one of "narcissistic illness."
41. Kleinbard, *Terror,* 56–57.

42. Schank, *Kindheitserfahrungen,* 262–362.
43. Letter of 19 February 1914, *Briefwechsel mit Magda von Hattingberg,* 131; *Rilke and Benvenuta,* 93.
44. Salomé, *Freud Journal,* 183–185. Salomé, *In der Schule bei Freud: Tagebuch eines Jahres 1912/13,* 1958), 209.
45. Letter of 28 December 1911 to Lou Andreas-Salomé, in Rilke-Salomé *Briefwechsel,* 242; Rilke-Salomé *Correspondence,* 178.
46. Salomé, *Lebensrückblick,* 134; *Looking Back,* 82.
47. Salomé, *Lebensrückblick,* 128, 145; *Looking Back,* 78, 89.
48. Salomé, *Lebensrückblick,* 144; *Looking Back,* 89.
49. *Looking Back,* 91; *Lebensrückblick* 147.
50. Letter of 31 August 1902 to Clara Rilke, *Briefe* (Nalewski), I: 126.
51. Letter of 17 September 1902 to Heinrich Vogeler, *Briefe* (Nalewski), I: 139; letter of New Year's Eve 2002 to Otto Modersohn, *Briefe* (Nalewski), I: 142, *Letters of Rainer Maria Rilke 1892–1910,* trans. Jane Bannard Greene and M. D. Herter Norton (New York: Norton, 1945), 93–94; letter of 18 July 1903 to Lou Andreas-Salomé, Rilke-Salomé *Briefwechsel,* 65, Rilke-Salomé *Correspondence,* 50.
52. Letter of 30 June 1903 to Lou Andreas-Salomé, Rilke-Salomé *Briefwechsel,* 60; Rilke-Salomé *Correspondence,* 47 (translated here as "fearsome and difficult").
53. Letter of New Year's Eve 1902 to Otto Modersohn, *Briefe* (Nalewski), I: 142; *Letters 1892–1910,* 93.
54. Letter of 30 June 1903 to Lou Andreas-Salomé, Rilke-Salomé *Briefwechsel,* 58; Rilke-Salomé *Correspondence,* 45.
55. Letter of 30 June 1903 to Lou Andreas-Salomé, Rilke-Salomé *Briefwechsel,* 59; Rilke-Salomé *Correspondence,* 46.
56. Lou Andreas-Salomé, *Rainer Maria Rilke* (Leipzig: Insel, 1928), 42.
57. XI: 856; ML 140.
58. Letter of 23 January 1914 to Helene von Nostitz, *Briefe* (Altheim), II: 436; *Letters II 1910–1926,* 107.
59. Salomé, *Rainer Maria Rilke,* 42, 43, my translation.
60. Letter of 18 July 1903 to Lou Andreas-Salomé, Rilke-Salomé *Briefwechsel,* 67; Rilke-Salomé *Correspondence,* 52.
61. XI: 721; ML 24, translation modified.
62. Elke-Maria Clauß, "Zur Poetik der Erinnerung in *Malte Laurids Brigge,*" *Wirkendes Wort* 47 (1997): 31–45, here 32–33, comments on the role of writing for shoring up memory and thereby identity in *Malte.*
63. XI: 725; ML 27.
64. Karl Philipp Moritz, *Anton Reiser* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1972), 449.
65. Letter of 24 December 1921 to Robert Heinz Heygrodt, *Briefe* (Altheim), II: 712–713; *Letters II 1910–1926,* 274.

66. Malte's childhood fever fears are Rilke's (see letter of 30 June 1903 to Lou, Rilke-Salomé *Briefwechsel,* 59; Rilke-Salomé *Correspondence,* 46). William Small, *Rilke-Kommentar zu den Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 27, writes that Nimet Eloui Bey, whom Rilke met in 1926, reported that Rilke told her that the hand incident was autobiographical.
67. Salomé, *Freud Journal,* 183; assented to by Pfeiffer, "Rilke und die Psychoanalyse," 258; Salomé, *In der Schule bei Freud,* 209.
68. Peter Priskil, "Infantiler Sexualkonflikt und Regression in Rainer Maria Rilkes Werk," *System ubw* 11 (1993): 5–62, here 18–20.
69. Schank, *Kindheitserfahrungen,* 407.
70. Salomé, *Freud Journal,* 183; Salomé, *In der Schule bei Freud,* 209.
71. Andreas Huyssen, "Paris/Childhood: The Fragmented Body in Rilke's *Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge,*" in *Modernity and the Text: Revisions of German Modernism,* ed. Andreas Huyssen and David Bathrick (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 113–141, here 123–124.
72. D. W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (1971) (London: Routledge, 1991), 96–97. Winnicott also considers the case of a man who had a second, girl's personality, because his mother's "idea" of the baby had been a girl, *Playing and Reality,* 74. See also Henry Krystal, "Trauma and Aging: A Thirty-Year Follow-Up," in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory,* ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 76–99, who describes the "infantile gross stress" pattern most frequently brought on by maternal absence, which has been "found and described for all mammals" (79–80).
73. XI: 842; ML 128, translation modified.
74. Richard J. Gerrig, *Experiencing Narrative Worlds: On the Psychological Activities of Reading* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 2.
75. Story told by Kessler, unpublished, with permission of Ulrich Ott, Director of Marbach Archive.
76. Salomé, *Lebensrückblick,* 144; Salomé, *Looking Back,* 89. Also discussed by Stéphane Michaud, *Lou Andreas-Salomé: L'alliée de la vie* (Paris: Seuil, 2000), 186.
77. Salomé, *Freud Journal,* 184; Salomé, *In der Schule bei Freud,* 211.
78. Linda Haverty Rugg, "A Self at Large in the Hall of Mirrors: Rilke's *Malte Laurids Brigge* as Autobiographical Act," *Seminar* 29 (1993): 43–54, emphasizes the mirroring aspect of the hand episode and asserts that the appropriation of Malte's hand by the strange hand would be "the next terrifying move," 51.
79. XI: 730; ML 31.
80. VII: 564; Rainer Maria Rilke, *Ewald Tragy,* trans. Lola Gruenthal (New York: Twayne, 1958), 50.
81. Salomé, *Freud Journal,* 185. The entire passage in the original reads: "Ein Zimmer mit Ofen, hinter dem ein Loch klafft, wodurch man hineinsehen kann ins

Dunkel; das Loch genau in den Maßen des steil daneben aufgerichteten Ofens." Salomé, *In der Schule bei Freud,* 213.

82. Pierre Loti, *Le Roman d'un enfant* (Paris: Gallimard, 1999), 49; see also 95.
83. VII: 564; Rilke, *Ewald Tragy,* trans. Gruenthal, 49–50.
84. XI: 767; ML 61.
85. Salomé, *Rainer Maria Rilke,* 13–14.
86. Rilke's biographer Donald Prater, *A Ringing Glass: The Life of Rainer Maria Rilke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 96, finds that Rilke's "feeling of being buried deep under the crushing weight of mountains" expressed in the third book of the *Stundenbuch* was prompted by his claustrophobia in the train tunnels to Genoa. See too Ralph Freedman, *Life of a Poet: A Biography of Rainer Maria Rilke* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1995), 185, on Rilke's anguish at going through seemingly "endless tunnels" in order to cross the Alps to Italy. Lou mentions this poem in *Lebensrückblick,* 130, *Looking Back,* 79, and notes the similarity to "Rainers altem Kindheits-Fiebertraum" ("Rainer's old childhood fever dream," translation modified). The editor refers to her "Traum-Analyse," 10–16 October 1913 in her *Freudtagebuch,* and presumably means the dream of the granite.
87. Paris: letter of 30 June 1903 to Lou-Andreas-Salomé, Rilke-Salomé *Briefwechsel,* 60; Rilke-Salomé *Correspondence,* 47, translated there as "fearsome and difficult city." Prague: letter of 1 November 1907 to Clara Rilke, in Rainer Maria Rilke, *Briefe über Cézanne,* ed. Clara Rilke (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1952), 66. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters on Cézanne,* ed. Clara Rilke, trans. Joel Agee (New York: International Publishing Corporation, 1985), 92.
88. XI: 767; ML 60–61.
89. XI: 710–11; ML 14–15.
90. Letter of 22 February 1923 to Ilse Jahr, *Briefe* (Altheim), III: 819; *Letters II 1910–1926,* 324.
91. Huyssen, "Paris/Childhood," 124; Schank, *Kindheitserfahrungen,* e.g., 447; Kleinbard, *Terror,* 71. Kleinbard thinks that Maman might also be "an unconscious retrieval of Phia from Rilke's early childhood" who belies the accusations of neglect in his letters. Peter Demetz, *René Rilkes Prager Jahre* (Düsseldorf: Diederichs, 1953), asserts convincingly that in the Maman figure Rilke realizes Phia Rilke's own dreams of elegance and high birth, 25.
92. III: 290; *Selected Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke,* trans. Mitchell, 265.
93. IX: 259, my translation.
94. Letter of 19 November 1920 to Fürstin Marie von Thurn and Taxis-Hohenlohe, *Briefe* (Altheim), II: 631; *Letters II 1910–1926,* 228.
95. Rilke-Salomé *Briefwechsel,* 85; Rilke-Salomé *Correspondence,* 64.

96. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Briefe aus den Jahren 1907–1914,* ed. Ruth Sieber-Rilke and Carl Sieber (Leipzig: Insel, 1933), Nr. 1132, p. 350, my translation.
97. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Briefe aus den Jahren 1914 bis 1921,* ed. Ruth Sieber-Rilke and Carl Sieber (Leipzig: Insel, 1937), 283–284; *Letters II 1910–1926,* 210–211, translation modified.
98. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Briefe* (Altheim), III: 797; *Letters II 1910–1926,* 311–312.
99. "Eingang," I: 317; "Am Rande der Nacht," I: 400; "Fortschritt," I: 402. Translations are found in Rainer Maria Rilke, *The Book of Images,* trans. Edward Snow (New York: North Point Press, 1994), 5, 87, 91.
100. Letter of 18 July 1903 to Lou-Andreas-Salomé, Rilke-Salomé *Briefwechsel,* 66; Rilke-Salomé *Correspondence,* 51.
101. Letter of 8 August 1903 to Lou-Andreas-Salomé, Rilke-Salomé *Briefwechsel,* 94; Rilke-Salomé *Correspondence,* 71.
102. Ibid., 96; Rilke-Salomé *Correspondence,* 71, translation modified.
103. Ibid., 92; Rilke-Salomé *Correspondence,* 69.
104. Letter of 8 April 1903 to Clara Rilke, *Briefe* (Altheim), I: 49; *Letters 1892–1910,* 105, translation modified.
105. Letter to Lou-Andreas-Salomé of 8 August 1903, Rilke-Salomé *Briefwechsel,* 96–97; Rilke-Salomé *Correspondence,* 72.
106. In a letter to Clara Rilke of 11 March 1907, he writes: "So richtig gelebt hab ich doch auf der kleinen Kirchhofsecke im Anstaltsgarten, wo ich vor den Altersgleichen sicher war." Rainer Maria Rilke, *Briefe aus den Jahren 1906 bis 1907,* ed. Ruth Sieber-Rilke and Carl Sieber (Leipzig: Insel, 1930), Nr. 99, p. 219. "I did indeed really live in the little churchyard corner in the school garden, where I was safe from my contemporaries," *Letters 1892–1910,* 268.
107. Simenauer, *Rainer Maria Rilke,* 158.
108. Letter to Magda von Hattingberg of 16–20 February 1914, Rilke, *Briefwechsel mit Magda von Hattingberg,* 114f; *Rilke and Benvenuta,* 77–78.
109. Letter of 10 August 1903 to Lou Andreas-Salomé, Rilke-Salomé *Briefwechsel,* 103; Rilke-Salomé *Correspondence,* 77.
110. Ibid., 104; Rilke-Salomé *Correspondence,* 77.
111. Ibid., 105; Rilke-Salomé *Correspondence,* 78.
112. Ibid., 105; Rilke-Salomé *Correspondence,* 78.
113. Letter of 18 July 1903 to Lou-Andreas-Salomé, Rilke-Salomé, *Briefwechsel,* 74; Rilke-Salomé *Correspondence,* 56, translation modified. The critic who best captures the close connection in Rilke's art between things, solitude, mastering fear, and creating art is David Kleinbard, *Terror,* 182.
114. Giambattista Vico, *The New Science,* trans. Thomas Goddard and Max Harold Fisch (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1970), 75–76.

115. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1987), 29, 33.
116. Susan Stewart, *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002).
117. Rilke, letter of 9 October 1907 to Clara Rilke, *Briefe* (Altheim), I: 177; and letter of 13 June 1907 to Clara Rilke, *Briefe* (Altheim), I: 161; *Letters 1892–1910* contains the 9 October 1907 letter on Cézanne but not the full text of the 13 June 1907 letter with the reference to Chardin.
118. Rilke, letter of 9 October 1907 to Clara Rilke, *Briefe* (Altheim), I: 177; *Letters 1892–1910,* 305.
119. Rilke, letter of 18 October 1907 to Clara Rilke, *Briefe* (Altheim), I: 193; *Letters 1892–1910,* 313.
120. Letter of 8 September 1908 to Clara Rilke, *Briefe* (Altheim), I: 235; *Letters 1892–1910,* 337.
121. Otto Friedrich Bollnow, *Rilke* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1956), who has a chapter "Der Künstler und die Dinge" (The artist and things, 98–146), argues that the *Stundenbuch* marks a turning point in Rilke's conception of the thing, inasmuch as it is endowed there with qualities like constancy, patience, modesty, and silence (110). Bollnow further notes that Rilke's "Zeitkritik" ("criticism of his time") starts there (129).
122. Rilke, *Briefe* (Nalewski), I: 246–247; *Letters 1892–1910,* 266.
123. See Proust, chapter 1, p. 67.
124. In the Rodin lecture he already stated his opinion that his is the age not of things, but of the flow of time (IX: 240).
125. Letter to Witold Hulewicz of 13 November 1925, *Briefe* (Altheim), III: 899; *Letters II 1910–1926,* 374.
126. I: 447; Rilke, *Book of Images,* trans. Snow, 181–183.
127. XI: 901; ML 178.
128. Salomé, *Lebensrückblick,* 128; *Looking Back,* 78, translation modified.
129. Letter of 23 December 1903 to Franz Xaver Kappus, *Briefe* (Altheim), I: 65; *Letters to a Young Poet,* 48, translation modified.

## 3. Collecting the Past, Prefiguring the Future: Benjamin Remembering His Childhood

1. For an extensive account of Benjamin's Proust translations see Momme Brodersen, *Walter Benjamin: A Biography,* trans. Malcolm R. Green and Ingrida Ligers (London: Verso, 1997), 164–170.
2. BCh 54; SW II: 611.
3. BCh 121; SW II: 634.

4. BCh 115; SW II: 632–633. It is a given in Benjamin criticism that Benjamin's project of writing about his childhood was inspired by Proust. In particular, Peter Szondi, "Hoffnung im Vergangenen: Über Walter Benjamin," in *Schriften II*, ed. Jean Bollack et al.(Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978), 275–294, compares and contrasts *Berlin Childhood* and *À la recherche du temps perdu,* 280–288, and Berndt Witte, "Paris—Berlin—Paris," in *Passagen: Walter Benjamins Urgeschichte des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts,* ed. Norbert Bolz and Bernd Witte (München: Fink, 1984), 17–18, sees Proust as seminal for *Berlin Childhood.* Other books and articles on the topic include Carol Jacobs, "Walter Benjamin: Image of Proust," *Modern Language Notes* 86 (1971): 911–932; Krista R. Greffrath, "Proust et Benjamin," in *Walter Benjamin et Paris: Colloque International 27–29 juin 1983,* ed. Heinz Wismann (n.p.: Cerf, 1986), 113–131; Beryl Schlossman, "Proust and Benjamin: The Invisible Image," in *Benjamin's Ground: New Readings of Walter Benjamin,* ed. Rainer Nägele (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1988), 105–117; Robert Kahn, *Images, passages: Marcel Proust et Walter Benjamin* (Paris: Kimé, 1998); and Henning Teschke, *Proust und Benjamin: Unwillkürliche Erinnerung und Dialektisches Bild* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2000).
5. Rolf Tiedemann, "Editorisches Postskriptum," FLH 114–115.
6. Davide Giuriato, *Mikrographien: Zu einer Poetologie des Schreibens in Walter Benjamins Kindheitserinnerungen (1932–1939)* (München: Fink, 2006), 223–268.
7. Giuriato, *Mikrographien,* 108.
8. GS VI: 441; SW II: 501.
9. *Walter Benjamin, Gershom Scholem, Briefwechsel 1933–1940,* ed. Gershom Scholem (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980), 17, 19. *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem 1932–1940,* ed. Gershom Scholem, trans. Gary Smith and Andre Lefevere (New York: Schocken, 1989), 10.
10. Gershom Scholem, *Walter Benjamin: The Story of a Friendship,* trans. Harry Zohn (New York: New York Review Books, 2003), 238.
11. BCh 35; SW II: 604. I prefer to cite from the German edition edited by Scholem because, unlike the editors of the *Gesammelte Schriften,* Scholem makes no attempt to clean up Benjamin's original manuscript. English readers wishing to experience the messy order of the original (in particular, the fifth guide to the city precedes the fourth) should consult the translation found in Walter Benjamin, *Reflections,* ed. Peter Demetz, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979). The entire passage reads: "So his image appears to me at this stage only as an answer to the question whether forty is not too young an age at which to evoke the most important memories of one's life. For this image is already now that of a dead man; and who knows how he might have been able to help me cross this threshold, with memories of even the most external and superficial things?" I read the "Schwelle" ("threshold") as death at age forty.

12. Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Briefe,* ed. Christoph Gödde and Henri Lonitz (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995–2000), IV: 118.
13. Benjamin kept a chronological list of every book he read starting in 1912. The "Verzeichnis der gelesenen Schriften" (List of works read), GS 7: 1, 437–476, begins with number 462, which the editors date to the end of 1916 or the beginning of 1917. The beginning of the list is lost. Bergson's *Matière et mémoire* is Nr. 503 on the list. He presumably read it in 1917, when he gave a *Referat* on Bergson.
14. Benjamin's list of books read contains the following titles by Freud: Nr. 540, *Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewußten (Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious);* Nr. 549, *Psychoanalytische Bemerkungen über <einen autobiographisch beschriebenen Fall von Paranoia> (Fall Schreber) mit Nachtrag (The Schreber Case)* and *Zur Einführung des Narzißmus (On Narcissism);* Nr. 609, *Über Psychoanalyse. Fünf Vorlesungen geh<alten> vor der Clark-University (Five Lectures on Psychoanalysis);* Nr. 1076, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips (Beyond the Pleasure Principle);* and Nr. 1680, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips (Beyond the Pleasure Principle).* Scholem, *Friendship,* 71, writes that Benjamin read the "Schreber" piece for Häberlin's Freud seminar in summer semester 1918 in Bern. As Sarah Lee Roff, "Benjamin and Psychoanalysis," *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin,* ed. David S. Ferris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 115–133, here 133, note 9, points out, he evidently read *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* for the first time in 1928; contextual evidence points to this date. Besides these titles that Benjamin himself lists, I am inclined to impute to Benjamin by the time he wrote *A Berlin Chronicle* a knowledge of Freud's most popular titles, which he could well have read prior to 1916–1917 when his list starts: *The Interpretation of Dreams, The Psychopathology of Everyday Life,* and perhaps also *Studies on Hysteria*. The evidence—aside from the parallels found in *A Berlin Chronicle* that I detail in the main body of the chapter—is as follows. *The Interpretation of Dreams:* we have Scholem's comment that Benjamin, in the 1918–1919 period, was fascinated by the spectrum of states between dream and waking and by dreams themselves, and that he liked to interpret his own dreams, albeit according to his own laws (Scholem, *Friendship, 76*). It is well known that reading *The Interpretation of Dreams* sparked in readers an interest in dreams and dream interpretation, as well as sometimes the spirit of contradiction (an example is Arthur Schnitzler). Benjamin himself notes in the "Erste Notizen" ("First Sketches") of the *Passagen-Werk (Arcades Project)* (written 1927–1929), that psychoanalysis knows no antithesis between sleep and waking (GS V: 1012; AP 844 [G°, 27]); in the *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud assumes that our thoughts continue when we are asleep but are just subject to different processes. Moreover, in "Traumkitsch" ("Dream Kitsch," written in 1925, published in 1927) Benjamin seems well acquainted

with Freud's dream theory, specifically Freud's comparison of the dream with a rebus in *The Interpretation of Dreams;* Benjamin writes, "Picture puzzles, as schemata of the dreamwork, were long ago discovered by psychoanalysis," SW II: 4 ("Vexierbilder als Schematismen der Traumarbeit hat längst die Psychoanalyse aufgedeckt," [GS II: 621]) and mentions Breton's *Surrealist Manifesto,* which in turn refers to Freud's dream theory). In "Programm eines proletarischen Kindertheaters" ("Program for a Proletarian Children's Theater," late 1928 or early 1929), Benjamin mentions in passing "the unconscious, . . . latent processes, repressions, or censorship," SW II: 203 ("das Unbewußte, die Latenzen, Verdrängungen, Zensuren," [GS II: 766]) that psychologists might like to read into children's behavior, which shows that he was conversant with these major Freudian concepts. Finally, in "Kleine Geschichte der Photographie" ("Little History of Photography," 18 September 1931, in *Die literarische Welt*), Benjamin compares what he calls the "optical unconscious" to the psychoanalytic unconscious (GS II: 371; SW II: 510–511), an idea that he explicates in more detail in "Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit," 1. Fassung (1935) (GS I: 461) (for English, see "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," second version, SW III: 117). *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life:* this work posits "the tendentious nature of our remembering" and extensively treats misremembering and forgetting. Benjamin cites the title in *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit,* 3. Fassung (published in 1936; GS I: 498) ("The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility" (third version, posthumously published, SW IV: 265) in the context of a discussion of "Fehlleistungen" (slips of the tongue), a concept which Freud introduces in the *Psychopathology;* Benjamin cites Freud's title. One of Freud's proofs for the existence of screen memories in the *Psychopathology,* as well as in his earlier article "Screen Memories," is the fact that we often see ourselves from the outside in our memories of childhood. Benjamin mentions seeing past images of oneself in one's memories: "It is we ourselves, however, who are always standing at the center of these rare images" (BCh 115; SW II: 633). *Studies on Hysteria:* Benjamin constructs at least one memory as a screen memory (see text, p. 169) and also appears to allude to the talking cure in a manuscript draft of "Erzählung und Heilung" (Narrative and healing) (probably written spring or summer 1932). He could, however, also have gotten the idea from a work on his reading list, *Five Lectures on Psychoanalysis*. But there are also the noticeable parallels between Freud's archaeological metaphors for the analyst's pursuit of the pathological memory in *Studies on Hysteria* and Benjamin's in *A Berlin Chronicle*.

Benjamin was evidently interested enough in Freud in 1918 to take a seminar on his work, but according to Scholem, at this point he was critical; he

wrote a negative *Referat* on Freud's theory of instincts *(Trieblehre)* (Scholem, *Friendship,* 71) and, Scholem recalls, was not completely accepting of the dream theory (Scholem, *Friendship,* 76). However, according to Scholem, his enthusiasm for surrealism in the mid-1920s "was something like the first bridge to a more positive assessment of psychoanalysis" although, Scholem adds, "he was under no illusions about the weaknesses in the procedures of both schools" (Scholem, *Friendship,* 163). By the time he wrote the "Work of Art" essay in 1935, he obviously had a thorough knowledge of major concepts of psychoanalysis and had incorporated the idea of the unconscious into his own thinking (GS I: 461). In the essay "Eduard Fuchs, der Sammler und der Historiker" ("Edward Fuchs, Collector and Historian," 1937) he mentions the psychoanalytic theory of sublimation and the symbolic representation of the erotic in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (GS II: 498–499; SW III: 280). In the late essay "Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire" ("On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," 1939), finally, Benjamin bases his own famous theory of memory squarely on Freud's metapsychological insight that consciousness functions to protect the organism from stimuli and hence inhibits the formation of memory traces ("becoming conscious and leaving behind a memory trace are incompatible processes within one and the same system" [GS I: 612; SW IV: 317]). En route to arguing that modern life bombards the organism with shocks and that experiences tend to become conscious ("Erlebnis") but do not enter memory ("Erfahrung"), he quotes extensively from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (GS I: 612–613; SW IV: 317).

15. BCh 34; SW II: 603.
16. Benjamin's best-known use of Freud is his implementation of Freud's argument in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* on memory and consciousness. Sigrid Weigel, *Entstellte Ähnlichkeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1997), 27–51, finds that memory and historiography function similarly in Benjamin's conception and that both are indebted to Freud's theory of memory as set forth in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (which Benjamin himself cites) and "Notiz über den Wunderblock" ("A Note upon the Mystic Writing Pad"). She does not consider Freud's early writing on memory in "Screen Memories" and *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*. She also has painstakingly traced Benjamin's direct references to Freud and psychoanalysis and has pursued "traces" of Freud in Benjamin's work. Like previous critics she dates Benjamin's first reception of Freud to 1918 and his renewed study of Freud to 1935, but she also finds references to Freud's concepts of the unconscious and narcissism in essays of 1930 (pp. 36–37) and to *The Interpretation of Dreams* and *Totem und Tabu (Totem and Taboo)* in a pre-June 1935 passage in the *Arcades Project* (p. 44). Other "traces," in her view, include references to "Verdrängung" (repression) in 1930, "Innervationen" (innervations) in 1929, "Bahnung" (facilitation) in 1932, and "Entstellung" (distortion) in 1934 (pp. 44–

49). Roff, "Benjamin and Psychoanalysis," builds on Weigel and retraces Benjamin's acquaintance with Freud's writings, adding further detail. She ascribes Benjamin's turn from a negative to a positive reception of Freud in 1928 to his interest in surrealism, but believes that nonetheless, "psychoanalysis is never more than one position amongst many in Benjamin's writings" (p. 132).

17. BCh 52, 99; SW II: 611, 628. Various critics have called attention to parallels between Benjamin's and Freud's archaeological metaphors, although none mentions a connection to *Studies on Hysteria*. Thus, Josef Fürnkäs, *Surrealismus als Erkenntnis: Walter Benjamin—Weimarer Einbahnstrasse und Pariser Passagen* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1988), 144f., sees parallels to *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur (Civilization and Its Discontents);* Detlev Schöttker, "Erinnern," in *Benjamins Begriffe,* ed. Michael Opitz and Erdmut Wizisla (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000), 260–297, here 265–266, sees parallels to "Konstruktionen in der Analyse" ("Constructions in Analysis"); and Knut Ebeling, "Pompeji revisited, 1924: Führungen durch Walter Benjamins Archäologie der Moderne," *Die Aktualität des Archäologischen in Wissenschaft, Medien und Künsten,* ed. Knut Ebeling and Stefan Altekamp (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2004), 159–184, shows how visits to Pompeii as well as psychoanalysis presumably influenced Benjamin.
18. "Zum Bilde Prousts," GS II: 312; "On the Image of Proust," SW II: 238.
19. Giuriato, *Mikrographien,* 66.
20. GS I: 613; SW IV: 317.
21. For dating see Giuriato, *Mikrographien,* 238. These earliest notes are reproduced in Giuriato, 286.
22. GS II: 682; SW II: 499.
23. GS II: 429; SW II: 809.
24. BCh 36; SW II: 604.
25. Anna Stüssi, *Erinnerung an die Zukunft: Walter Benjamins "Berliner Kindheit um 1900"* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), 27; Graham Gilloch, *Myth and Metropolis: Walter Benjamin and the City* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 67–68; Steve Pile, "Memory and the City," in *Temporalities, Autobiography, and Everyday Life,* ed. Jan Campbell and Janet Harbord (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2002), 112–127, here 114. The formulation is Gilloch's, 68.
26. Stüssi, *Erinnerung,* 44; Carol Jacobs, "Walter Benjamin: Topographically Speaking," *Studies in Romanticism* 31, 4 (1992): 501–524, here 502 et passim; Gilloch, 68.
27. Brodersen, *Biography,* 53. On Benjamin's affection for Paris, see too Scholem, *Friendship,* 158.
28. BCh 17–18; SW II: 599.
29. Fürnkäs, *Surrealismus,* 2–3, notes that the conception for the *Arcades Project* was inspired by Benjamin's reading of Louis Aragon's surrealist novel, *Le Paysan de Paris* (in which the Paris arcades figure centrally), and that Benjamin's

thing-centeredness points to surrealism. Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 33, makes similar observations, and adds that Benjamin's early notes for the project reflect the surrealists' fascination with urban phenomena and the dream. Margaret Cohen, *Profane Illumination: Walter Benjamin and the Paris of Surrealist Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) finds that Benjamin's reception of Breton's *Nadja* sparked Benjamin's interest in the unconscious (visible in Benjamin's "Surrealism" essay) (191) and that his Now of historiographical recognition in the *Arcades Project* is informed by Breton's *rencontre* (199).

30. "das Geträumteste ihrer Objekte," GS II: 300; SW II: 211 .
31. BCh 60; SW II: 614.
32. BCh 61; SW II: 614.
33. GS V: 1053–1054; AP 880.
34. BCh 57–58, my translation.
35. GS V: 1052–1053; AP 879–880.
36. GS III: 194; SW II: 262. Detlev Schöttker, *Konstruktiver Fragmentarismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999) argues, 232–233, that this phrase shows that Benjamin was aware of ancient mnemotechnics, which advocates attaching things one wants to remember to an imaginary space. Schöttker believes that mnemotechnics may well be a key to the composition of *Berlin Childhood,* a conclusion also adopted by Anja Lemke, *Gedächtnisräume des Selbst: Walter Benjamins "Berliner Kindheit um neunzehnhundert"* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2005), 11.
37. See e.g., Esther Leslie, "Walter Benjamin: Traces of Craft," *Journal of Design History* 11, 1 (1998): 5–13, especially 11.
38. BCh 60; SW II: 614.
39. BCh 61, my translation.
40. GS I: 612; SW IV: 317.
41. BCh 57; SW II: 612–613.
42. BCh 83; SW II: 622.
43. Classical references and references to fairy tales dot the pieces: Benjamin invokes najads ("Markthalle Magdeburger Platz," GF 44), caryatids, the apples of the Hesperides, Heracles, a hydra, the Lion of Lerna ("Tiergarten," GF 14–15; BC 56–57), the Elysian fields ("Blumeshof 12," GF 66; BC 89), and Pompeii ("Loggien," FLH 12; "Loggias," BC 41), as well as Dornröschen and Schneewittchen ("Der Nähkasten," GF 99; Sleeping Beauty and Snow White in "The Sewing Box," BC 111), and Bluebeard ("Ein Gespenst," GF 86; cut in FLH).
44. GF 9; BC 132.
45. GF 11; BC 53. The "provisorische Teilanordnung" is printed in Giuriato, *Mikrographien, 282*. Cf. Katrin Lange, *Selbstfragmente: Autobiographien der Kindheit* (Würz-

burg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2008), who observes, in the course of an excellent analysis of how *Berlin Childhood* breaks with the generic traditions of autobiography, that Benjamin plays on the traditional childhood-nature connection by stylizing the Tiergarten as a landscape (146).

46. Adorno, 149; BC 42.
47. GF 36; BC 63.
48. In "Die Farben," first published in *Maß und Wert* in summer 1938, Adorno, 75; BC 111.
49. Adorno, 144; BC 38.
50. GF 59; BC 82.
51. Burkhardt Lindner, "'Das Passagen-Werk', die 'Berliner Kindheit' und die Archäologie des 'Jüngstvergangenen,'" in *Passagen: Walter Benjamins Urgeschichte des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts,* ed. Norbert Bolz and Bernd Witte (München: Fink, 1984), 27–48, here 30–31.
52. BCh 71; SW II: 617.
53. GF 7; BC 131.
54. GF 9; BC 98.
55. FLH 58; BC 97.
56. GF 103; BC 103.
57. Benjamin links the "dialectics at a stillstand" to ambiguity in GS V: 55 (AP 10) and the "dialektisches Bild" to opposites in GS V: 595; AP 475 [N10a,3].
58. Szondi, "Hoffnung," 280–286.
59. BCh 23; SW II: 599.
60. FLH 9; BC 38.
61. GF 104; BC 104.
62. BCh 34; SW II: 603.
63. BCh 53; SW II: 611.
64. "He who has once begun to open the fan of memory never comes to the end of its segments (der findet immer neue Glieder, neue Stäbe). No image satisfies him, for he has seen that it can be unfolded, and only in its folds does the truth reside—that image, that taste, that touch for whose sake all this has been unfurled and dissected; and now remembrance (Erinnerung) progresses from small to smallest details, from the smallest to the infinitesimal, while that which it encounters in these microcosms grows ever mightier. Such is the deadly game that Proust began so dilettantishly (so das tödliche Spiel, mit dem Proust sich einließ), in which he will hardly find more successors than he needed companions" (BCh 14–15; SW II: 597).
65. "The Reading Box," GF 70; BC 140.
66. BCh 23; SW II: 599.
67. GS IV: 401; SW II: 576. Translation modified.

68. BCh 52, 99; SW II: 611, 622.
69. For Freud and Breuer in *Studies on Hysteria,* a traumatic shock is capable of separating adjacent and associated memories from our others. Freud believes that these memories are repressed. For Benjamin, shock functions more like an aide-memoire than like the agent of repression. For Freud, *Nachträglichkeit* is likewise a function of repression. Benjamin does not explicitly see it as such; he does not use the word "repression."
70. Giuriato, *Mikrographien,* 80, comments on this strange exclusion.
71. BCh 106–107; SW II: 630.
72. BCh 94; SW II: 626.
73. BCh 121–122; SW II: 635.
74. Sigmund Freud, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life,* SE 6: 48. Another example, from "Screen Memories" (SE 3: 311f.): a man remembers, as a child, seizing flowers from a little girl and then eating bread. In fact this "memory" derived its energy from events that took place when he was seventeen and older: falling in love with a girl and then wishing he had married the girl cousin in the memory for her money ("bread").
75. Benjamin gives a poetic account of the phenomenon of "Nachträglichkeit": he suggests that future time "forgets"—that is, leaves, certain words or gestures (in the Gießener Fassung: "Worte oder Pausen" ["words or pauses," GF 58]) with us, or in other words endows some past event with a later meaning.
76. GF 58; BC 130.
77. GF 110; BC 121.
78. FLH 79; BC 122.
79. Another possible reading is Irving Wohlfarth's in "Märchen für Dialektiker: Walter Benjamin und sein 'bucklicht Männlein,'" in *Walter Benjamin und die Kinderliteratur: Aspekte der Kinderkultur im den zwanziger Jahren,* ed. Klaus Doderer (Weinheim and München: Juventa, 1988), 120–176. Wohlfarth concludes, on the basis of Benjamin's connection of forgetfulness and guilt in the Kafka essay, that we are *guilty* of our inattentiveness: "We project our own mistake onto the evil eye of a scapegoat and thereby really turn his back into a hunchback, inasmuch as we burden him with our own guilt" (139, my translation).
80. Benjamin previously articulated the idea that a dying person sees images of his whole life—images of which he had been unconscious—in "Aus einer kleinen Rede über Proust, an meinem vierzigsten Geburtstag gehalten" (GS II: 1064). Benjamin had intended to commit suicide on his fortieth birthday.
81. This reading is consistent with what Tiedemann says Benjamin thought he was doing in the *Arcades Project,* namely, bringing light into history. See Rolf Tiedemann, "Einleitung des Herausgebers," GS V: 1, 18–23: "The nineteenth century is the dream that has to be awakened from: a nightmare" (GS V: 20, my transla-

tion). The final sentences of the pre-"Final Version" text are ambiguous, tempting critics to attribute the authorship of *Berliner Childhood* to that part of Benjamin represented by the little hunchback, but such readings, I believe, are mistaken. The little hunchback, both here and in Benjamin's Kafka article, is a negative figure. In versions prior to the "Final Version," there is a hint that the hunchback's grip on images of the past is not eternal: Benjamin writes that that things disappeared into the world of the little hunchback "für sehr lange" ("for a long time," GF 110), thereby implying that they did not disappear forever and that they can reemerge, or perhaps already have done so.

82. Thus Tiedemann, "Nachwort," FLH 116, remarks that Benjamin brought the "Fassung letzter Hand" into conformity with his late, terse style.
83. Detlev Schöttker, "Erinnern," believes that "the thought that individual memory could be transferred onto historical experience determined his ideas from the start" (279, my translation) and cites *Passagen-Werk* V/2, 1031, as evidence. Cohen, *Profane Illumination,* 195–196 finds that Benjamin (in the *Arcades Project*) like Breton (in *Nadja*) uses the "trick" of transposing a psychoanalytical model for memory to historical memory.
84. Memory: BCh 53; SW II: 611. History: GS V: 1033; AP 863 [O°,71].
85. BCh 53, GS V: 1027; SW II: 611, AP 857 [O°,6].
86. GS I: 695; SW IV: 390–391.
87. Pierre Missac, *Walter Benjamin's Passages,* trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), chapter 4, especially 110–117. See also Aris Fioretos, "Contraction (Benjamin, Reading, History)," *MLN* 110 (1995): 540–564, here 556.
88. Dialectical technique: GS V: 1002; AP 834 [D°,7]; dialectical method: GS V: 1026; AP 857 [O°,5]; dialectical reversal: GS V: 1006; AP 838 [F°,6]; dreaming past : GS V: 1057, 1058; AP 883, 884 [h°,2, h°,4]; recognition or knowledge: GS V: 1001; AP 833 [D°,4]; explosion: GS V: 1027, 1032, 1033; AP 857, 862, 863 [O°,5; O°,56; O°,71]. The notion of the dreaming past becomes clearer in the 1935 exposé "Paris, die Hauptstadt des 19. Jahrhunderts," GS V: 59 ("Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century," AP 13), and in the "Aufzeichnungen und Materialien," GS V: 494 ("Convolutes," AP 391 [K 1 a, 8]).
89. "Empathy": GS V: 1014–1015; AP 846 [I°,2]; things "as they really were": GS V: 1033; AP 863 [O°, 71].
90. Stéphane Moses, "Eingedenken und Jetztzeit: Geschichtliches Bewußtsein im Spätwerk Walter Benjamins," in *Vergessen und Erinnern,* ed. Anselm Haverkamp and Renate Lachmann (München: Fink, 1993), 385–405, here 389, my translation.
91. See "Eduard Fuchs, der Sammler und der Historiker" ("Edward Fuchs, Collector and Historian"), especially GS II: 468 and 479; SW III: 262 and 269.
92. BCh 115; SW II: 632, translation modified.

93. Freud and Breuer's psychoanalytic method in *Studies on Hysteria* consists of bringing dark (pathological) memories "to light" (albeit without explosions). On the illumination of memories in Proust, see Elisabeth Gulich, "Die Metaphorik der Erinnerung in Proust's Recherche," *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur* 75 (1965): 160–194, here 57–58.
94. GS V: 1032; AP 862 [O°, 56]. Gulich, "Die Metaphorik," calls attention to Proust's image of an exploding mine, 55.
95. GS V: 507–508; AP 402–403 [K 8, 1-K 8, 2].
96. Cited in the translation given in SW IV: 317. The German original in GS I: 612 cites Freud, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips,* 3 Aufl. Wien 1923, p. 31.
97. Benjamin always employs the terms "Erfahrung" and "Erlebnis" contrastively, but both terms translate as "experience." "Erfahrung" implies the type of experience that "comes with experience," whereas "Erlebnis" implies the experience of an event and might be used in a phrase such as "I had a lot of interesting experiences on my trip." Readers of Benjamin in English will find "Erfahrung" rendered as "experience" and "Erlebnis" as "isolated experience," but since this as well as any other English translation of these terms is imperfect I shall retain the German words, whose meanings are clear.
98. GS I: 608; SW IV: 314.
99. Buck-Morss, *Dialectics,* 67.
100. GS V: 576; AP 462 [N2a,3].
101. GS V: 1026; AP 857 [O°,5].
102. GS V: 577; AP 462 [N2a, 3].
103. Now of recognizability: GS V: 1038; AP 867 [Q°,21]. "In a flash," e.g., AP 463 [N3,1]; "flashing up," e.g., AP 473 [N9,7].
104. GS V: 578; AP 463 [N3, 1].
105. GS V: 1038; AP 867 [Q°, 21].
106. GS V: 55; AP 10.
107. GS V: 595; AP 475 [N10a, 3].
108. GS V: 1038; AP 867 [Q°, 21].
109. GS V: 577; AP 462 [N2a, 3].
110. Buck-Morss, *Dialectics,* 221–222. As evidence for her contention she cites, 250, GS V: 572 [N1a, 1].
111. Adorno, 170; also Szondi, "Hoffnung," 276; Jeanne-Marie Gagnebin, "An der Schwelle des Labyrinths: Die Äußerung des Subjekts in der 'Berliner Kindheit' von Walter Benjamin," *Global Benjamin,* Internationer Walter-Benjamin-Kongreß 1992, 1, ed. Klaus Garber and Ludger Rehm (München: Fink, 1999), 494–513, here 501; Manuela Günter, *Anatomie des Anti-Subjekts: Zur Subversion autobiographischen Schreibens bei Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin und Carl Einstein* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1996), 6.

112. Günter, *Anatomie,* 121, also sees the pieces in *Berlin Childhood* as dialectical images, on grounds that present and past, remembering and remembered self coincide in them. I concur with Günter that "in *Berlin Childhood* this model of the dialectic at a standstill is rigorously performed" (122, my translation), but she goes too far when she asserts that the images of the past "flash up" (121). The pieces cannot be assimilated to the dialectical image so completely and unproblematically.
113. Manfred Schneider, *Die erkaltete Herzensschrift: Der autobiographische Text im 20. Jahrhundert* (München: Hanser, 1986), 105–149; Günter, *Anatomie,* 111–159; Gagnebin, "Schwelle," 495; Lange, *Selbstfragmente,* 113–171.
114. Gagnebin, "Schwelle," 495.
115. Ibid., 510.
116. Ibid., 499.
117. GS V: 1036; AP 866, translation modified; [Q°,7].
118. Schneider, *Die erkaltete Herzensschrift,* 139, comments suggestively apropos of *Berliner Kindheit* that collecting is "the ritual of intimate celebration" where the collection metonymically extends and potentiates "the divine" (my translation).
119. GS V: 1058; AP 883 [h°,3].
120. GS V: 1027; AP 857–858 [O°6, O°,7].
121. GS V: 278; AP 210 [H 4,1].
122. GS IV: 390; SW II: 487.

## Conclusion

1. "Ich verneige mich vor der Erinnerung, vor jedes Menschen Erinnerung [..] und verhehle nicht meinen Abscheu vor denen, die sich herausnehmen, sie chirurgischen Eingriffen so lange auszusetzen, bis die der Erinnerung aller übrigen gleicht [ . . . ] mögen die alles betasten, stutzen, glästen, gleichen, aber die Erinnerung sie sollen lassen stân." Elias Canetti, *Die Fackel im Ohr* (1980) (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1992), 288, my translation. As many critics have pointed out, Canetti's final phrase, "aber die Erinnerung sie sollen lassen stân," echoes Martin Luther's hymn "Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott," where he writes "Das Wort sie sollen lassen stân." My translation of this final phrase is taken from "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." A literal translation is, "they should just let the word be."
2. E.g., Horst Fleig, "Kindheitserinnerungen: Essay über ihre Faszination, Genese und Erkenntnisleistung" (essay, 2006), 16, http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:bsz:21-opus-23446, states that his initial motivation to reconstruct his childhood memories was the "rescue of personal integrity."

3. Richard Terdiman, *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 3, 4.
4. Terdiman, *Present Past*, 32.
5. Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*," *Representations* 26 (1989): 7–25, here 7–8, 15, 16–17.
6. Frances Power Cobbe, "The Fallacies of Memory," *The Galaxy*, vol. 1 (New York: W. C. and F. P. Church, 1866), 149–162. Cobbe's main insight is that a memory trace is subject to obliteration unless it is renewed, but if it is renewed, it is necessarily changed in the process. Her sense of historical anguish is poignant: convinced that the past cannot be transmitted with certainty, that history is necessarily fallacious, she speaks of the unprecedented isolation of her generation.
7. Inherited memory is a Lamarckian concept first propounded by Ewald Hering in "Über das Gedächtnis als eine allgemeine Funktion der organisierten Materie" (On memory as a general function of organized matter) in 1870. For organic memory theory see Laura Otis, *Organic Memory: History of the Body in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994).
8. Sally Shuttleworth, "Inventing a Discipline: Autobiography and the Science of Child Study in the 1890s," *Comparative Critical Studies* 2, 2 (2005): 143–163, here 152.
9. Pierre Loti, *Le Roman d'un enfant* (Paris: Gallimard, 1999), e.g., 42, 54, 62; Abel Hermant, *Confessions d'un Enfant de hier* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, [1909]), 11.
10. William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), I: 614, 613.
11. GS V: 490; AP 388 [K1,1], translation modified. The passage was written prior to June 1935.
12. Hermant, *Confessions*, 10, my translation.
13. David Brooks, "The great forgetting," *International Herald Tribune*, 11 April 2008, op-ed page.
14. Albert Hofmann, *LSD: My Problem Child*, trans. Jonathan Ott (Los Angeles: J. P. Tarcher, 1983), ix-x.
15. Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, trans. Robert Baldick (London: Pimlico, 1996), e.g., 45.
16. Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The One I Knew the Best of All* (New York: Scribner's, 1893), 110.
17. Don DeLillo, *The Names* (London: Pan, 1983), 304–305.
18. Athena Vrettos, "Displaced Memories in Victorian Fiction and Psychology," *Victorian Studies* 49,2 (2007): 199–207.
19. Edward S. Casey, *Remembering*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2000), xi.

20. Ibid., 202.
21. Ibid., 84.
22. Hippolyte Taine, *On Intelligence* (1870) (Washington, DC: University Publications of America, 1977), who also speaks of "involuntary revivals" (37), describes the phenomenon of place memory (75–76) but does not give it a name or theorize it. ("On returning, after many years' absence, to one's father's house, or to one's native village, numbers of forgotten objects and facts unexpectedly reappear.") Théodule Ribot, *Diseases of Memory* (1881) (New York: Appleton, 1882), likewise mentions hypermnesia due to "contiguity in space," 180.
23. Ida Gandy, *A Wiltshire Childhood* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1929), 123.
24. For a discussion of "mediated memory," see José van Dijck, *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007). For a discussion of how the advent of "external memory" (literacy) shaped our ideas about human memory in a lasting fashion, see Kurt Danziger, *Marking the Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 39.
25. Ian Hacking, *Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 250–254.
26. Athénaïs Michelet, *Mémoires d'une enfant* (Memoirs of a child) (n.p.: Mercure de France, 2004), especially Book 1, chapters 4–7 and Book 2, chapters 7–10; Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The One I Knew the Best of All*, chapter 4 (44–69).

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# Index

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