The Chain of Things
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The Chain of Things: Divinatory Magic and the Practice of Reading in German Literature and Thought, 1850–1940.

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Notes

Introduction


5. Of course, there is a future dimension to magic as well, one that is understudied and often underappreciated. See Derek Collins, Magic in the Ancient Greek World (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 171n20.
6. Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 1; Peter Brooks, “Freud’s Masterplot,” *Yale French Studies* 55/56 (1977): 283. In this context Greenblatt refers to literature professors as “salaried, middle-class shamans,” and except for the professional status, the same would hold for all readers; Brooks also speaks of the “magic” and “demonic” dimensions of reading literary texts (288).

7. The interpreter is not always the same subject as the audience initiating the wish. Rather, the former sometimes serves as the representative agent of the latter, much as the literary critic can act for the general reader.

8. See Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, *How Natives Think* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), 61–74; Carl Gustav Jung, *Psychological Types*, edited by R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), who defines Lévy-Bruhl’s mystical participation as denoting “a peculiar kind of psychological connection with objects. It consists in the fact that the subject cannot clearly distinguish himself from the object but is bound to it by a direct relationship which one can describe as a partial identity. This identity is founded upon an a priori oneness of object and subject” (456). For the importance of Lévy-Bruhl and his concept of mystical participation to Benjamin’s ideas of both magic and reading, see Benjamin, “Probleme der Sprachsoziologie” (Problems in the Sociology of Language), GS 3:455–459; SW 3:70–73; also Anson Rabinbach, “Introduction to Walter Benjamin’s ‘Doctrine of the Similar’,” *New German Critique* 17 (Spring 1979): 63. For Lévy-Bruhl’s relevance to contemporary understandings of ancient magic, see Collins, *Magic*, 7.


10. There is something of a similar, and similarly significant, overlap in the English between happiness, happenstance, happening, etc. More immediately to the point, in following Benjamin in stressing happiness as both the motive and the goal of reading, I am not so much rephrasing as challenging Barthes’s notion of either the pleasure or bliss of reading—for happiness is something quite different from either. See Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, translated by Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975).

11. Edward Burnett Tylor, *The Origins of Culture* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1970), 115–119, where contiguity is illustrated by ropes and threads—introducing the idea of chains that will be crucial to our analysis further on—and where imitative is called symbolic or analogic. Sympathy is not an explicit category but is mentioned at 119 (sympathetic ointment) and 130 (the sympathy between the waxing/waning moon and growing/declining nature). James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, (New York: Macmillan, 1956), 14; see also Collins, *Magic*, 14f. For the relation to Adam Smith’s notion of contagion, see Nancy Armstrong, *How Novels Think: The Limits of Individualism from 1719–1900* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 13–15; for the relation to homeopathy itself, see Kuzniar, *The Birth of Homeopathy*. Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York: Routledge, 1993), is also interested in the connections between Benjamin’s theories of mimesis and similarity and Frazer’s categories of sympathetic magic: see esp. Taussig, 44–58. Although by his own admission Taussig’s reading
of Benjamin is highly idiosyncratic (23) and certainly differs in its direction from that taken here in connecting Benjamin with magical traditions, I have nonetheless found it deeply suggestive and inspiring for this study as a whole, especially for the chapter on Gottfried Keller.

12. Roman Jakobson, “Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances,” in Language and Literature, edited by Krytyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 113. The connection between Frazer’s categories for magic and Freud’s for dream thought were recognized and discussed by Freud himself in Totem and Tabu.


17. See Derek Collins, “Mapping the Entrails: The Practice of Greek Hepatoscopy,” American Journal of Philology 129 (2008): 319–345. Derek Collins’s work represents the major source for the first part of this early history, and I need to thank him as well for his correspondence and early encouragement of this project.

19. Ibid., 328–32, 341–42.
20. Ibid., 330.
24. See, for example, Homer, Odyssey 2.146–180.
26. Ibid., 24.
27. See Struck, Birth of the Symbol, 4.
29. Ibid., 20. Michael Puri (public lecture) offers a felicitious phrase for this peculiar kind of sign in his analysis of Ravel’s musical mnemonics: he speaks of the “premonition of a recollection,” a sign we suspect we will have to remember to look back to. I suggest that this might well be an overlooked condition of all signification.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Tylor, Origins, refers to these by the technical term Angang, “the omens taken from meeting animals and people, especially on first going out in the morning” (120). Although Struck, Birth of the Symbol, 90–91, follows Walter Müri in ascribing this use of symbola to a secondary meaning of symballein, it seems still to resonate with the primary meaning of joined tokens.
34. The “concerned subject” could be a group, not just an individual.
35. Quoted in Struck, Birth of the Symbol, 93f.; Homer, Odyssey 20.105–121; see also 17.541–547; 18.112–117.
38. For a particularly brilliant example of such an associational reading, see Collins, Magic, 115–116.
40. Struck, Birth of the Symbol, 231. Brooks, “Freud’s Masterplot,” refers to something like these chains in Freudian terms as “binding” (289), a word also central to magical practices; see below.
41. Peter Struck, “Microcosm and Macrocosm in Greek Divination” (invited lecture, University Of North Carolina, November 2002).
42. Struck, Birth of the Symbol, 227–253.
43. The irony of Plato’s dialogue, and the somewhat mocking tone of Socrates’s account of the magnetic chain connecting Ion to the divine Homer (and beyond), seem not to have been part of the Neoplatonists’ reception.
44. Foucault, The Order of Things, 42–44.
45. Ibid., 40–41.
46. Ibid., 42–44.
48. The objects and their magic at stake in this study are not those of the commodity. As Elaine Freedgood, The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), elegantly declares in relation to the British nineteenth century, “mid-Victorians, and the objects in their novels, were not fully in the grip of the kind of fetishism Marx and Marxists have ascribed to industrial culture. The abstraction of the commodity into a money value, the spectacularization of the consumer good, the alienation of things from their human and geographical origins—these were not the only ways of imagining the things in that crowded world. A host of ideas resided in Victorian things: abstraction, alienation, and spectacularization had to compete with other kinds of object relations—ones that we have perhaps yet to appreciate” (7–8). This is also true of the German novels here engaged, and of those objects and object relations in Benjamin that I am interested in: there are other kinds of magic to be appreciated, not least through an inclusion of the more-than-human world.

50. Armstrong, *How Novels Think*.


56. Think of Risach in Adalbert Stifter’s *Der Nachsommer* and his collection of things, but always things as signs of himself and of nature. And as Eva Geulen notes, “For Stifter, the goal of literature was not the poetic transfiguration of the world but the gathering up of its things, convinced, as he was, that any rock is already precious and valuable or will reveal itself as such one day. Banal objects are thus regularly endowed with the allure of future significance.” Geulen, “Tales of a Collector,” in *A New History of German Literature*, edited by David Wellbery et al. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 588. I’m reminded, too, of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile or On Education*, translated by Alan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979): “Our individual persons are now the least part of ourselves. Each man extends himself, so to speak, over the whole earth and becomes sensitive over this entire large surface. Is it surprising that our ills are multiplied by all the points where we can be wounded? . . . We no longer exist where we are: we only exist where we are not” (83).

57. This is part of both Horkheimer and Adorno’s and Taussig’s reading of the shamanistic dimension to mimesis, a dimension I extend to reading.


59. Ibid.

60. See Barthes, *A Lover’s Discourse*.


65. Ibid., 42.


67. Ibid., 175–76.


73. The English translation of the penultimate sentence of “The Storyteller” in Selected Writings actually translates Benjamin’s Stimmung as “aura.” As the editors explain in a note, this equation is supported by a reference to the French version of the essay that Benjamin himself prepared and that includes an added sentence just after this one that refers to the aura [ce halo] of the storyteller. See SW 3:166n28.


1. Painting Magic in Keller’s Green Henry


2. My thanks to Rory Bradley for conversations helping to formulate this point.

3. It does seem worth stressing that whereas the superceded “magical” sensibility is often equated by critics with romanticism, for Keller, Storm, Raabe, and other central representatives of German realism, the early modern is more accurate: Foucault is helpful in suggesting this. See Andrew Webber, “The Afterlife of Romanticism,” in German Literature of the Nineteenth Century: 1832–1899, edited by Clayton Koelb and Eric Downing, vol. 9 of Camden House History of German Literature (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2005), 23–43; Michel Foucault, The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences (New York: Random House, 1970), 17–45.


5. E.g., the seminal study by Gerhard Kaiser, Gottfried Keller: Das Gedichtete Leben (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1981).

6. One important facet effaced by this approach is the difference between a Freudian notion of the unconscious and that of, e.g., Keller’s contemporary Carl

7. David Wellbery, “Stimmung,” in *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe: Historisches Wörterbuch in sieben Bänden*, edited by Karlheinz Barck et al. (Stuttgart: Metzler Verlag, 2010): 703–733; Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung: On a Hidden Potential of Literature*, translated by Erick Butler (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012); Thomas Pfau, *Romantic Moods: Paranoia, Trauma, and Melancholy*, 1790–1840 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Pfau, “The Appearance of Stimmung: Play as Virtual Rationality,” in *Stimmung: Zur Wiederkehr einer ästhetischen Kategorie*, edited by Anna-Katharina Gisbertz (Munich: Fink Verlag, 2011), 95–111. Other contributors to Gisbertz’s volume who will be discussed include Jochen Hörisch, Hermann Schmitz, Caroline Welsh, and David Wellbery. Wellbery’s original essay is seminal to most of the contributions to Gisbertz’s volume; because it has so far appeared only in German, its impact in the United States has been more limited. I hope by presenting a sketch of its main points here in English that its essential argument might reach a wider audience. Needless to say, the *Stimmung* at stake in all these studies, including the present one, differs considerably from its rather worn usage in much earlier criticism.


9. For Storm, see Elisabeth Strowick and Ulrike Vedder, eds., *Wirklichkeit und Wahrnehmung: Neue Perspektiven auf Theodor Storm* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2013). Storm is also an important figure in so-called *Stimmungslyrik*, a tradition that also includes Rilke; for the latter, see David Wellbery, “Der gestimmte Raum,” in Gisbertz, *Stimmung*, 157–176.

10. E.g., Keller, 12:73: “Ich fühlte mich gebannt in einer jener dunklen Stimmungen” (I felt myself under the spell of one of those dark *Stimmungen*), where *Stimmung* is presented as a charm or spell, and a dark one at that; 11:297, 301: where *Stimmung* is associated with death, and with a produced effect; 11:269: where *Stimmung* is linked to music; and 11:309: where Heinrich speaks of an *innere Sympathie* when viewing landscape paintings.

11. Caroline Welsh, “Zur psychologischen Traditionslinie ästhetischer Stimmung zwischen Aufklärung und Moderne,” in Gisberzt, *Stimmung*, 138–141, is particularly eloquent in describing *Stimmung* in late eighteenth-century theory as connected with the “dark” forces of the mind—drawing on Wolf’s distinction (of “dunkle Vorstellungen”): she quotes Carus as defining it as “the first becoming conscious of what until then had been unconscious” (*erstes Bewußtwerden des bis dahin Unbewußten*) in his *Psyche* (Welsh, 140), and sees it as a rarely fully recognized force emanating out of the unconscious, often overriding rationality, and so as possessing all the shaping powers of Freud’s unconscious. She doesn’t,
as Carus himself does (and others before and after him), also see it as a capacity to sense something outside of itself, part of the external world, and so something more than just the Freudian unconscious: but this would seem also to be intrinsic to its psychological profile; see below.


14. The relation of parts of the observing subject to each other is crucial to Kant’s notion of Stimmung.

15. This is key to the conception of Stimmung in Carus; see Carl Gustav Carus, Neun Briefe über Landschaftsmalerei (Dresden: Wolfgang Jess Verlag, 195–?), 39–47.


17. Indeed, Stimmung is a field in which the subject-object distinction does not hold, nor the inner-outer. For this reason, it is a field in which the psychological has some place, but only some place. For Lévy-Bruhl’s concept of “mystical participation” and its relation to magic, see Derek Collins, Magic in the Ancient Greek World (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 7; also Downing, “Magic Reading,” 191.

18. Carus, Neun Briefe, following Humboldt, calls it a Cosmos: the term is also central to Spitzer, Classical and Christian Ideas.

19. Perhaps worth emphasizing that difference—contrast—is part of this, even as antipathy is, as Foucault argues, part of sympathy. Also mentioned in Carus, Über Lebensmagnetismus.

20. For the Neoplatonists, see Struck, Birth of the Symbol; also Downing, “Magic Reading.”

22. The notions of susceptibility and contagion are of paramount importance for linking the spheres of aesthetics and illness in *Der Grüne Heinrich*, especially in regard to Anna as viewer of Heinrich’s artwork; see below.


24. Spitzer, *Classical and Christian Ideas*, who focuses on music and the more ancient roots of the concept (especially in Augustine), has more to say about the intrinsic temporality of *Stimmung* (28ff.).


26. In his subsequent essay, “Der gestimmte Raum,” Wellbery more explicitly declares that Stimmung is future related (*zukunftsbezogen*). See below, note 32.


28. It is perhaps worth noting how these two passages from Wellbery also suggest a temporal structure and future force similar to that which Freud will associate with anxiety—although of course anxiety is only one possible Stimmung, and this model allows for more. Still, anxiety is one of the many forms in which divinatory experience reappears at the center of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century discourse and sensibility; see Johannes Türk, *Die Immunität der Literatur* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2011). It might also be mentioned that the temporal dimension to *Stimmung* will emerge, in the form of rhythm, as a major theoretical point at the end of the nineteenth century in vitalist philosophy as one of the key elements connecting the human aesthetic subject to natural life, in ways that will become of particular importance also to early film theory. See Michael Cowan, “The Heart Machine: ‘Rhythm’ and Body in Weimar Film and Fritz Lang’s Metropolis,” *Modernity/modernity* 14, no. 2 (2007): 225–248; Oliver Gaycken, *Devices of Curiosity: Early Cinema and Popular Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Inga Pollmann, “Zum Fühlen gezwungen: Mechanismus und Vitalismus in Hans Richters Neuerfindung des Kinos,” in Mies van der Rohe, Richter, Graeff & Co: *Alltag und Design in der Avantgardezeitschrift G*, edited by Karin Fest et al. (Vienna/Berlin: Turia + Kant, 2014), 169–176.


31. For the distinction, see Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 43.

32. This registers both my agreement and my disagreement with an argument Wellbery makes in “Der gestimmte Raum.” He claims that while the *Dispositionen*...
that are the bases for Stimmungen are both future and action oriented (zukunfts- und handlungsbezogen). Stimmung itself is only ever a potentiality, and never amounts to an actual activity (Tätigkeit). In a deliberately pointed formulation, he states: “Um Stimmungsevokation kann es sich nicht handeln, wo die Darstellung in einen narrativen Handlungsgang eingebunden ist und diesem als übergreifendem Zweck dient” (It can’t be about the evocation of Stimmung where the representation is bound to a narrative plot element and has this as its overarching purpose, 159). While I accept that Stimmung does not, even cannot, entail direct action, I still argue that it does entail a kind of activity, an activity that avails itself of the same invisible connections that sympathetic magic depends on; it’s a matter not of denying Tätigkeit, but of specifying the kind of Tätigkeit at stake.

33. See Caroline Domenghino, “Artist as Seer: The Ahndung of Tatkraft in Moritz’s ‘Über die bildende Nachahmung des Schönén’” (PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 2011); also Pfau, “The Appearance of Stimmung.”

34. For more on actio in distans, see Hans Blumenberg, Theorie der Ungerlichkeit (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2007), 10–13.

35. Carus, Neun Briefe, 42, uses precisely this same image to describe the Stimmung effect of landscape. In a closely related context in Über Lebensmagnetismus, he also quotes Cicero and discusses actio in distans and Sympathie. Another related image is of the piece of paper held high over a candle that suddenly bursts into flame; and of course the image of the magnetic stone as well. See also Pierre Hadot, The Veil of Isis: An Essay on the History of the Idea of Nature, translated by Michael Chase (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 110—along with Spitzer’s book one of the most significant “prolegomena” to the present study. It goes without saying that the nineteenth-century fascination with electricity and magnetism greatly increased rather than lessened the speculation about nature’s invisible force-fields, speculation that continues even today (think of Einstein’s spukhafte Fernwirkung, spooky effects at a distance).

36. Nietzsche, Morgenröte, aphorism 28, makes the connection between Stimmung and divination, and sees in both a mode of action-determining logic (and potential) that nonetheless does not proceed according to rationality.

37. The story is told in Keller, 11:96–106; most of my analysis focuses on its first paragraph, 96–98.

38. As readers of Keller know, witching—whether practiced by men or women—is found throughout his works (the same is true of Storm and Fontane), and never simply as a proxy category for erotic affects or residual cultural beliefs. Rather, it makes a constellation of concerns appear that goes well beyond just these two points, a constellation that proves central to his realism in general and to Der Grüne Heinrich in particular.

39. For the theme of Befangenheit in Keller in general, see Kaspar T. Locher, Gottfried Keller: Welterfahrung, Wertstruktur und Stil (Bern: Franke Verlag, 1985), 51–78. Each of these key words has connotations difficult to convey in English but crucial to the analysis: Verstocktheit has the same root as Stockung, “stoppage”; Verstummtheit suggests clamping up; Befangenheit, being caught and held; and Halsstarrigkeit, literally, stiff-neckedness, being immovably locked in a static state.

40. Winfried Menninghaus, Artistische Schrift: Studien zur Kompositions-kunst Gottfried Kellers (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982), 61–90, would say
Meretlein functions as an analogue for all the women in Heinrich’s *Bildungsgeschichte*, but the truth of this claim obscures the more important truth of its particular application to Anna.


42. We see something of this reversal suggested in the story itself in the otherwise odd aside made by the pastor (as writer) that he would have had the painter produce a “Counterfey” of himself rather than Meretlein—which in a way, at a different level of the real, he does.

43. This omen-esque quality of metatextual representations—and especially of paintings—is a crucial aspect of their function in many of Keller’s works, perhaps most notably in *Die drei gerechten Kammacher* and *Dietegen*; and as we’ll see here, the way the Meretlein story functions has important consequences for and parallels with the way the Heathen Chamber painting mentioned at the outset will function as well.

44. The use of antiquated German for the pastor’s inculcated diary entries reinforces this impression of the long-ago.


46. This is implicit in Wellbery’s masterful analysis of Rilke’s lyric in “Der gestimmte Raum.”

47. In a wordplay to be repeated later on in regard to the *Buch-baum*, Buchberg can be translated as either Beech or Book Hill.

48. These children are, as it were, the latter-day equivalents of those who follow Meretlein after her death up the Buch-berg.


52. Collins, *Magic*, has a particularly felicitous term for this phenomenon, calling it “fractal personhood” (16); see the introduction.

53. As stated in the introduction (see note 48), the objects in nineteenth-century novels are not solely to be understood as commodities, as the association here with objects from the early modern world—and soon, from the natural world—would seem to underscore: the object relations, and the subject-object relations, in Keller’s novel belong far more to these worlds than to one of industrial culture. See Elaine Freedgood, *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 7–8.

55. Similar to the crown about her head are the garlands (Scherpen) about her body: as Benjamin might put it, she is chained to the world of things, and that’s a good thing. The second point here, how the natural world is also consistently half-revealed as a book world, might be referred to the argument of Simon During, *Modern Enchantments: The Cultural Power of Secular Magic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), that magic in the modern/nineteenth-century world involves a hesitation between promoting the illusion of a traditional natural/occult magic and exposing the mechanics of its artifice, the artifice that winkingly assures the audience that there is no real magic but only mystifying magic tricks. But I hesitate fully to embrace this argument for two reasons: first, because the natural magic in this novel does not merely function as an illusion, and in the Meretlein story in particular, written as it is not by Heinrich Lee but by the pastor, it cannot easily be reduced to the machinations of the narrator; and second, because the metatextual itself does not function simply as artifice or trick, but as its own potent source for occulted magic. Both points will become clearer in what follows. A third reason that could be advanced—that realism depends upon not exposing the mechanics of its artifice—I would not argue.

56. This is not to say that death does not remain part of the natural life signaled by the white rose: indeed, the first time it appears with Anna it is linked to death: the kiss in the graveyard after the grandmother’s funeral (11:304). But unlike with the skull, death is not the whole of it.

57. The word *Vor-bild* included in the section heading is a crucial concept for this analysis, and difficult to translate into English. *Vor-* literally means “before,” and *Bild* “picture” or “image”; *Vorbild* is sometimes rendered as “model,” “exemplar,” and so on, but the reader needs to keep in mind the literal idea of a “fore-image” or a “before-the-image.”


59. One of the hardest motifs in the novel to convey in English is that attached to this notion of *altertümlich*, which carries a primary connotation of death—and especially the death of the art world and outdated convention—and a secondary one of the archaic, the primeval that seeps its way into the world via those same conventions and art. It would be too awkward to try to draw this out each time the word occurs; the reader must imagine the force of what is sometimes simply translated as “antiquated.”

60. In joining his *Tätigkeit* to that of nature, Heinrich also intends to draw on its power, its *Energie*, for his own ends (11:241).

61. Keller, 11:193. It is unclear whether the *Bild* here is the original or Heinrich’s copy; and significantly, it doesn’t really matter.

62. Keller, 11:194. The way that forces of the natural world can be summoned into and then redirected out from a mimetic representation, no matter how crude or conventionalized the depiction, is a central concern of Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York: Routledge, 1993). He provides a deep understanding of how, in primitive cultures, mimesis serves as a form of sympathetic magic, and suggests how this persists even in the most
contemporary instances of representation. As will become clear, I find his model exemplary for an understanding of realism as well.

63. Keller, 11:220f. The motif of the painted oven also occurs in suggestive fashion in Keller’s *Dietegen*.

64. In psychoanalytical terms, this would be the move from primary to secondary socialization (Freud); or from the Imaginary to the Symbolic (Lacan).

65. These texts and images are from books and sketches by fictional figures such as Junker Felix, but also by historical figures such as Anthonie Waterloo, Johann Reinhardt, Johann Sulzer, and Salomon Geßner. Sulzer (along with Carus) is mentioned frequently in the Gisbertz volume as advocating and theorizing *Stimmung*, especially by Caroline Welsh. Heinrich Lee reads extensively in Sulzer (11:250); Ruysdael is the subject of Alois Riegls analysis of *Stimmung* and landscape painting.

66. Recalling also Meretlein, with whom painting was also associated with both *Bildung* and death.


68. A disaster to be repeated with some regularity: e.g., 11:323f. The episode of the painting of the two trees is narrated at 11:251–254.

69. See Mitchell, *Landscape and Power*, 1, which sees all landscape painting as an essentially allegorical mode (as I claim more particularly for *Stimmung*).

70. That one can’t paint nature directly is evident when comparing 11:214f. and 11:217; see the point made below, that Anna can’t be directly embraced: both are crucial to understanding the realism (and the magic to the realism) instantiated by the novel.

71. I want to say, in the space of the *Vorbild*.


73. For Goethe as “the great shade” (*der große Schatten*), see Keller, 12:15.

74. Keller, 12:15. Heinrich’s encounter with Goethe comes relatively late in the “Story of My Youth” (*Jugendgeschichte*), when he engages in the quintessential *Bildung* experience of reading the works of this quintessential *Vorbild* for the *Bildung* tradition itself, and the effect on his own *Bildungsgeschichte* is decisive. Goethe’s collected works—Goethe in his unity and totality—simply appear one day in the room Heinrich shares with his mother, where we remember his landscape painting also began: “It seemed to me as if the great shade himself had stepped over my threshold; for, though few years had passed since his death, his image had already assumed a demonic-divine character in the imagination of the most recent generation, such that, when it appeared as a figure in a dream to someone with an unfettered fantasy, it could fill him with a portentous shudder” (Es war mir zu Mute, als ob der große Schatten selbst über meine Schwelle getreten wäre; denn so wenige Jahre seit seinem Tode verfloßen, so hatte sein Bild in der Vorstellung des jüngsten Geschlechtes bereits etwas Dämonisch-Göttliches angenommen, das, wenn es als eine Gestaltung der entfesselten Phantasie Einem im Traume erschien, mit ahnungsvollem Schauer erfüllen konnte, 12:15).

Heinrich reads through all the volumes of the unknown dead man (*dem unbekannten Toten*) without pause, and they inspire in him both a new subject-ive sense of joy and consciousness and a new object-ive sense of the nature of things: “I began to see and to love not only the form, but also the content, the essence
and history of things” (Ich begann, nicht nur die Form, sondern auch den Inhalt, das Wesen und die Geschichte der Dinge zu sehen und zu lieben, 12:16f.)—much as in his first encounter with the books on landscape painting, but now no longer limited to mere appearances but extended behind them to the “essence” of things.

In an unusual and highly signaled move, after Heinrich finishes reading Goethe the text suddenly shifts to a different temporality, from the retrospective imperfect to a present tense, to represent the Goethean Weltbild—a Bild, moreover, in which the name of Goethe drops out and its ruling features are simply presented as those of the world. The implication of this is that, for Heinrich as narrator (as himself behind the text world), Goethe is “the great shade” behind the natural world, the reality principle, as it were, that animates the novel and that Heinrich as character is set amidst.

75. This conforms to the general identification in many German realist works of Goethe as the embodiment not only of Bildung and art but of Nature and life, something we see in literature from Büchner through Stifter (and in painting, in Carus). But it is also based on quite particular aspects of Der Grüne Heinrich.

76. For derision (Spott) as the proper attitude of a father, see Keller, 11:258.

77. To a remarkable degree, the Goethe at the center of Heinrich’s account is the same Goethe who is at the center of Wellbery’s essay on Stimmung (and in both cases, the absence of the word detracts not at all from the presence of the concept). In describing his preconception of Goethe (that is, even before reading him), Heinrich says, “The unknown dead man strode through almost all activities and interests and everywhere drew to himself binding threads, whose ends only disappeared in his invisible hand” (Der unbekannte Tote schritt fast durch alle Beschäftigungen und Anregungen und überall zog er angeknüpfte Fäden an sich, deren Enden nur in seiner unsichtbaren Hand verschwanden, 12:15). The weaving image is joined to a musical one when Heinrich actually reads Goethe’s books, which he describes as “a host of shining and singing spirits” (eine Schar glänzender und singender Geister, 12:16—see, too, the earlier linkage of these two metaphors at the beginning of Heinrich’s exposure to nature). And as mentioned, his first response to his reading is to discover the importance in the external world of the relation of objects in and of themselves (even if also behind themselves), “the right and the significance of every thing . . . and the connectedness and depth of the world” (das Recht und die Bedeutung jeglichen Dinges . . . und den Zusammenhang und die Tiefe der Welt), quite apart from both the individual subject and his self-centered (eigennützige[n]) moods or fantasies and from the cultural conventions of any aesthetic school (künstlichen Schule, 12:16f.). Rather, upon discovering nature’s connectedness (Zusammenhang), the subject is to experience his own sympathetic relation to its order—and as artist, to reproduce it for others to also experience. As Heinrich says of both the visual and the textual artist, “All proper endeavor aims to lead back and join the apparently separate and different to one life-ground” (Alles richtige Bestreben [geht] auf . . . Zurückführung und Vereinigung des scheinbar Getrennten und Verschiedenen auf einen Lebensgrund, 12:18, Keller’s italics) that is at once nature and, spectrally behind it, Goethe, the unifying force acting on and behind all seemingly separate things: it is the ground of Stimmung and its sympathetic magic, and it is the artist’s task to engage it. And it is important to see how the arts called upon to capture this Lebensgrund cannot, almost by definition, be merely surface ones, that is, cannot ever be an inert mimetic realism; insofar as
their quarry is a spectral one, they must be ghost catchers; insofar as their quarry is binding powers, they must themselves be binding powers. In order to capture the real, the arts must be magical.


79. Which at one level is to say, to enter as narrator, and painter, the metatexual space occupied already by Goethe and, in a slightly different way, by the reader. The central idea of mimesis as protection, redirection, and turn-about is elaborated by Taussig in his chapter “In Some Way or Another One Can Protect Oneself from Evil Spirits by Portraying Them,” in Mimesis and Alterity, 1–18.

80. See the famous last line of Goethe’s Faust, “Das Ewig Weibliche zieht uns hinan” (The Eternal Feminine draws us on). It seems fitting that the Goethe volumes Heinrich reads on his resting-bed (Ruhebett) are soon to be replaced by Anna, who next appears, ailing, on the same bed: such is the way out from under the threat to his own person Heinrich has embraced.

81. More fully, the parallel is secured with the shift from the failed painting of the male beech-tree to that here of the female ash.

82. Keller, 11:253f.


84. A motif of mimesis as stealing we see repeated, e.g., 11:305, also with Anna (see below).

85. Keller, 11:255. Compare the tree in the background of Friedrich Overbeck’s “Maria und Elisabeth mit Jesus und Johannes” in the Neue Pinakothek, Munich.


87. To repeat, sympathy also encompasses contrast or antipathy.

88. The allegorical is perhaps already implicit in the wine and schoolhouse, but here extended to the nonhuman.


90. Anna’s hair is regularly described as braided, which reinforces the relation with the cornrows and also more generally the theme of her binding.


92. Keller, 11:260. See also 11: 283f. for Anna’s Glockenstimme. The German verhallen (to fade or die away) has as its root hallen, “to echo.”


94. For more on Echo (versus Narcissus), see Bettina Menke, “Rhetorik der Echo: Echo-Trope, Figur des Nachlebens,” in Weibliche Rhetorik—Rhetorik der Weiblichkeit, edited by Dörte Bischof and Martina Wagner-Egelhaff (Freiburg: Rombach, 2003), 135–159.


97. Keller, 11:350, see also 11:297. This is exactly what we see with Clarissa in Stifter’s Der Hochwald: see Downing, Double Exposures, 285–286n37.

98. Keller, 11:305.

99. Keller, 11:307. For more on the “magnetic” as erotic, spectral, and magical, see Keller, 12:79–82, esp. 81; also Carus, Über Lebensmagnetismus. This same
shared identity between Anna and nature is also expressed in more audial terms when Heinrich reports how when Anna seems absent to him, “the air was empty of any memory of Anna, the grass seemed to know nothing of her, the flowers did not whisper her name, mountain and valley were silent about her, only my heart cried aloud her name into the thankless stillness”; soon countered by “Now the entire land was again eloquent and full of praise of her. Every blade of grass and every leaf spoke to me of her. . . . The blue mountain ranges and the white clouds drew toward her, and from the west, where Anna was, it seemed to sound, lightly but blissfully, over the mountain ridges to me” (11:330).

Keller also employs audial terms in similar if more tragic fashion to describe the Stimmung effect near the end of *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe*, where he writes: “The stillness of the world sang and made music in their souls. . . . ‘Don’t you hear something sounding, like a beautiful song or a ringing of bells?’ ‘It’s the water that sounds.’ ‘No, there is something else, it’s sounding here, and there, everywhere!’ ‘I believe we hear our own blood sounding in our ears,’” and so on; all described as “magic effects” (*magische Wirkungen*, 4:155).

100. Keller, 11:284. The following was edited out of this quotation: “and I danced in [the shawl] like one possessed over the nighttime mountain” (und [ich] tanzte darin wie ein Besessener über den nächtlichen Berg)—reflecting the way the dance of Meretlein and, in the “bean night,” of Anna, can be metonymically, infectiously passed back to Heinrich through contact with her “things.”


102. See Holub, *Reflections of Realism*, 48–53, on Büchner; Downing, *Double Exposures*, 29–31, on Stifter; Carus, *Neun Briefe*, 24–25, on landscape, not only for Stimmung and the transformation of the landscape into an expression of the human soul, but more generally the distinction between imitation and invention. In the particular case of Heinrich, the move from the one to the other might also reflect something of the Oedipal fantasy we see elsewhere, and so, too, something of the self-projecting magical powers and thinking that are inseparable from that fantasy.

103. Keller, 11:266.

104. Heinrich gives fullest expression to this a bit later (11:367f.): the passage includes consideration of the spirit (Geist) behind the natural world as imbued with “pro-vidence” (Vorsehung) and as “foresightful” (voraussehend). The place of God in a realist poetics, and especially in a novel that from the first seems to aim for a loss of religious belief as part of its realism and Bildung, might seem both surprising and paradoxical. But the apparent paradox is hardly unique to Keller and is evident in realist authors as different as Büchner and Stifter; and it is without a doubt the paradoxical legitimating ground for landscape painting throughout the realist period. It is important here because it identifies a space of activity and agency that persists within and behind the realist world even once a transcendental God has disappeared. It is a space accepted by Ludwig Feuerbach, a known influence on Keller, as proper to natural religion; and it remains a space, at once divine and natural, intrinsic to Keller’s realism and, in the absence of a transcendent God, one that can be occupied by a figure such as (the quasi-divine force of nature) Goethe—or, as Keller puts it elsewhere, by “Poesie und . . . Stimmung” (quoted by Gerd Sautermeister in his “Nachwort,” in Gottfried Keller, *Der Grüne Heinrich* [Munich: Goldmann Klassiker, 1980], 917).
The Feuerbach work that seems most relevant to the novel is not, as sometimes assumed, *The Essence of Christianity* and its one-sided argument for religion as mere human projection (the position of Sautermeister), but *The Essence of Religion* (and its companion *Lectures*) and its more sophisticated representation of religion as grounded in man’s complex relation with an external natural world of which he is an inextricable part, in all his unconscious impulses and fantasies. This latter work, not the former, is the basis for the lectures Keller would have heard in Munich: Ludwig Feuerbach, *Lectures on the Essence of Religion*, translated by Ralph Manheim (New York: Harper & Row, 1967). Here Feuerbach writes, “I openly profess religion in the sense just mentioned, that is nature religion. I hate the idealism that wrenches man out of nature; . . . I openly confess that the workings of nature affect not only my surface, my skin, my body, but also my core, my innermost being, that the air I breathe in bright weather has a salutary effect not only on my lungs but also on my mind, that the light of the sun illumines not only my eyes but also my spirit and my heart” (Fifth Lecture, 35f.; and says later, “Nature is light, electricity, magnetism,” etc. (Eleventh Lecture, 91), insisting that the invisible is part of nature (Thirteenth Lecture, 113); also that “nature is man, insofar as he acts instinctively and unconsciously“ (91). Feuerbach’s often missed point is not to deny the divine, but to deny it as “distinct from things” (117, Feuerbach’s italics); this is, I’d say, also the point or ground of Heinrich’s pantheism (see below). The relationship becomes, as it were, functionally equivalent to what we’ve posited for the metatextual as neither separate nor absent from the text world.

It is worth noting that the Neoplatonists championed a similar distinction, one that posited the difference between a transcendental divine and a divine that dwelt entirely in things; as Iamblichus (*On the Mysteries of the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Assyrians*) argues, it is the latter that is the proper basis for natural magic, including the divination (the futural power) that dwells in things, a form of magic and divination that is entirely based on what we might call the object-ively real. Along with Hadot, *The Veil of Isis*, I see strong residues of this in the “Orphic” traditions of nature in Germany’s nineteenth century.

107. The painting episode is described at 11:286–288.
108. The particular form of metonymy here is synecdochy: although here applied to nature, it is closely related to the idea of fractal personhood described by Collins and central to what James Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1956), calls contagious magic (see the introduction).

109. To spell it out more fully, the beans are to Meretlein as the flowers are to landscape, and so too as both Meretlein and landscape are to Anna. For the “Du Hexe!” during the *Bohnenabend*, see Keller, 11:290.
110. *Schwanz* is a common word for “penis”; *Schwänzchen* is the diminutive form. Although this interpretation might seem only there for a post-Freudian reader, Holub, *Reflections of Realism*, 124–126, illustrates in his reading of *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe* that this type of imagery is not beyond Keller.

111. Collins, *Magic*, 117, reminds us that it is precisely through such secondary meanings that words come to exercise their contiguous magic.
112. Keller, 11:291. This will be further tied together and connected to the Meretlein episode when the kiss to which Anna is bound during the “bean night” is fulfilled in the graveyard with a new bouquet, this time of roses, including white ones (11:304).


115. In channeling his unwanted emotion or mood into the painting and so, too, eventually onto Anna, Heinrich is engaging in a form of displaced projection or abjection of the kind central to subject formation in *Bildung*. It is one of the reasons he can say, “I now once again felt myself content” (11:287).


117. The “rosy radiance” (*Rosenglüt*) will reappear at Anna’s death metonymically transferred to the coffin (12:93); see below. *Nachglanz*, here translated “afterglow,” has a reflective quality in *Glanz* not captured in “glow.”


119. It should be stressed that this dedication speech is itself performative, summoning and producing the effect with which the framed painting is charged; it is an example of the incantatory magic that normally accompanies such binding charms, every bit as much as Heinrich’s *fecit*.


121. The *Heidenstube* episode is narrated at 11:292–294.

122. The link to Meretlein might also be seen in the detail “Her face was framed (*eingefaßt*) by a white ruffle (*Krause*) of her own design” (11:292): although not mentioned in the text, the Ur-bild of the Meretlein figure features such a *Krause*, prominently. In any case, the *eingefaßt* bespeaks framing.

123. Keller, 11:293.

124. That the world of the *grüne* Heinrich is a painterly one is conveyed once again by the emphatic coloring of the natural description in the scene: e.g., “the half-dark (*Helldunkel*), through which the furtively shining waves rippled over the rose-red, white, and blue stones”; also Anna’s red and white face.

125. For light and dark imagery in Keller’s work, see Lucie Karcic, *Light and Darkness in Gottfried Keller’s “Der Grüne Heinrich”* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1976).

126. See Keller, 11:268.

127. It is worth noting that, characteristically, their appearance makes Heinrich happy.

128. We know that it is the spectral version of the Heathen Chamber that Heinrich draws because he specifically mentions “that apparition” (*jene Erscheinung*, 11:331) as part of it. The spectral nature of the Heathen Chamber is also evident in the Judith scenes that take place there, discussed below.

129. For the trap, *die gestellte Falle*, 11:413; *die Schlinge*, 11:443.


132. Ibid., with the crown echoing the earlier, original nature magic of Meretlein, who is also evoked through the white flower Anna subsequently picks, echoing the white rose in the painting, etc. The *Krönchen* is even more heavily emphasized throughout the scene in the later, revised version of the novel published in 1879/80.

133. This is where *Stimmung* and Walter Benjamin’s *aura* come most closely together. In “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire,” Benjamin writes, “Experience of the aura rests on the transposition of a response common in human relationships to the relationship between an inanimate or natural object and man” and stresses “a concept of the aura that comprises the ‘unique manifestation of a distance’” (GS 1:646f.; SW 3:338). Elsewhere he stresses that aura is always a matter of *Gespinst*, of the object perceived set in the nexus of the connections that cluster around it; he also is most likely to define aura originally in terms of the experience of landscape. See the introduction; more in chapter 3.

134. Keller, 11:446.

135. In the 1879/80 version of the novel, Keller adds to the line describing Heinrich’s turn to the water, “From its bottom (Grund) I saw her mirror image (Spiegelbild) with the little crown shining up, as if out of another world” (1:395).

136. Bill Brown, “Thing Theory,” *Critical Inquiry* 28, no. 1 (2001): 1–22. See also Peter Schwenger, *The Tears of Things: Melancholy and Physical Objects* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); Barbara Johnson, *Persons and Things* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); Martin Heidegger, “The Thing,” in *Poetry, Language, and Thought*, translated by Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 161–184. Unlike the object, the thing stands outside any relation to the subject: it eludes human connection or involvement, even connection or involvement with other objects. It is, as it were, unmoored from the sympathetic order: a real in tension with the realist, indeed all but outside the realist, it stands at the very edge of the topos of this inquiry. In somewhat different form, it will appear again as an empty silence behind language in Fontane (chapter 2), and as a disenchanted, aura-less experience in Benjamin (chapter 3); see below.


138. J. P. Stern, *On Realism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), 113-128, makes a similar claim about realism as a (middle) distance. This might seem to be in tension with Roland Barthes’s famous notion, formulated in “The Reality Effect,” in *French Literary Theory*, edited by Tzvetan Todorov, translated by R. Carter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), that realist objects are those that don’t signify, that have no second order of signification. But overreliance on this one essay needlessly simplifies our understanding of Barthes’s position. In other works, notably “The Photographic Message” and *The Fashion System*, he draws on Neoplatonic and vitalist models to elaborate how realist objects come to signify in ways fully resonant with the present argument, and that will be touched on more directly in the following two chapters (and are already cited in the introduction).


142. Keller, 11:374. When Heinrich is asked, “What do you have against Anna, so that you behave like this toward (gegen) her?” the idea of death slips almost imperceptively into the question and answer: “What reason do you have, not to say to her one single word [Sterbenswörtchen, literally, ‘a little dead word’]?” “I explained that the parchment was my property and I didn’t owe any mortal soul (sterblichen Seele) an account of it.”

143. It is a rare moment of candor in the text, and it calls forth an equally rare moment of near sympathy in Heinrich for what he (with her father) is doing to Anna: “Seeing that in my egotism I thought her inescapably trapped, I almost felt sorry for her in her fineness, and had a kind of pity for her. Still . . .” (11:377).

144. Keller, 11:378f. It is worth noting how the inquisition that precedes the furnishing of the frame echoes key elements of the portrait itself in both the setting and the accompanying activity: it takes place in a garden arbor (Gartenlaube), under a roof of vines (Rebendache), with all the cousins working on a canvas (Leinenzeug/Leinwand). This replication helps motivate their giving of the frame.

145. Keller, 11:379. He also mentioned her white neck ruffle (Halskrause); see note 122 above for its connection to both Meretlein and framing.

146. Keller, 11:379. Interestingly, Heinrich describes the portrait he carries away here as like a Palladium—which is to say, a supernaturally charged object whose theft brings doom to its original possessors. For other Homeric motifs in the novel casting Heinrich as Odysseus (who steals the Palladium), see Holub, Reflections of Realism, 62–100.

147. Certainly one thing to keep in mind is how her death is, apparently, by tuberculosis, a contagious disease (caught by no one else): Anna’s susceptibility to the contagious forces of sympathetic nature, the very susceptibility that marks her as aesthetic subject open to the effects of Stimmung, also determines her (infected) death. See Carus on sympathy, actio in distans, and contagious disease in Über Lebensmagnetismus. Beate Allert, “J. W. Goethe and C. G. Carus: On the Representation of Nature in Science and Art,” Goethe Yearbook 23 (2016): 195–219, emphasizes the therapeutic dimension Carus also ascribes to Stimmung and to aesthetic practices; this is not applicable to Anna, though possibly to Heinrich through his practices of immunizing displacement.

148. References for the last two sections of this chapter are to Keller, vol. 12; here, 12:43.

149. Katherine’s report includes a new account of Anna’s childhood that makes her entire life into a resurrection, securing even more firmly (as if it were needed) Anna’s identity with Meretlein. Heinrich listens closely to the story of Anna’s childhood illness, “so that I now envisioned a small, snow-white corpse lying prone, with a patient, wise, and always smiling countenance. But the sickly shoot recovered, and the wondrous expression of early wisdom, brought forth by suffering, vanished again into its unknown home” (12:42f.).


151. For Judith as the embodiment of the sinnlich, see 12:50.
152. Keller, 12:47f.
153. Keller, 12:47, 49. See also 12:70.
154. The novella “The Ghostseer” (Der Geisterseher) in Das Sinngedicht might seem evidence that Keller rejects such an occult realm in his realism. But do note that the man in that story who fails the test because he believes in the spirit world is the guardian of the girl and of the aesthetic sensibility that the protagonist Reinhart’s journey is designed to win for him, to educate him. Reinhart’s father, who “wins” the contest with his empiricism, is decidedly not the representative of the really important realm, but of that left behind. That Reinhart is first seen isolated in an indoor room dividing up light by means of a prism marks him as what Hadot, The Veil of Isis, would call a “Promethean” scientist who needs to be converted to a more “Orphic” (and Goethean) worldview (91–232).

155. A similar parallel might be drawn with the afterlife of Meretlein in her portrait and in the fantastic stories told of her: in both cases, the witchery doesn’t disappear but simply reappears at another level.
156. Keller, 12:52f.

158. The seeming identity of Römer with Goethe would seem to reinforce that expectation. For Römer as a parody of Goethe, see also 12:55. Römer believes “that all the threads of European politics ran into his hand . . . he, the hidden center of every worldly government (daß alle Fäden der europäischen Politik in seine Hand zusammenliefen . . . er, der verborgene Mittelpunkt aller Weltregierung).” For the nineteenth-century distinction between (and debate about) imitation versus invention, see Carus, Neun Briefe, 24–25.
159. Keller, 12:52.
160. For Heinrich as right in his opposition to Römer (and not only, but also the rebellious Oedipal child), see Keller’s letter to Wilhelm Petersen, April 21, 1881, quoted in Martin Müller, Gottfried Keller: Personenlexikon zu seinem Leben und Werk (Zurich: Chronos Verlag, 2007), 204. Heinrich’s position is clearly indicative of a survival of Schelling-esque Naturphilosophie, or what Hadot would call the Orphic tradition as opposed to the Promethean conception of man and nature—an Orphic tradition Hadot links to both the Neoplatonists and, especially, Goethe. Note, too, how Heinrich’s position is close to that formulated years ago for realism by Richard Brinkmann, Wirklichkeit und Illusion: Studien über Gebalt und Grenzen des Begriffs Realismus für die erzährende Dichtung des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1966). And finally, note how the fact that Römer is soon seen to be mad adds another critique of his realist doctrine, much as we see in Büchner’s Lenz.

Admittedly, at a later point in the novel—once Heinrich arrives in Munich—the spiritualism, symbolism, and ghostly quality of his paintings come in for intense criticism, but this only because, in Munich, his paintings have become completely estranged from contact with the natural world. The ideal is still for the two to be one.
162. That Heinrich the narrator’s descriptions should be seen as evidence for Heinrich the painter’s poetics is signaled by Römer’s equation of Malerei and Gedichte in critiquing them (12:52).
163. Keller, 12:51. For the relevance of Feuerbach to the interpretation of pan-
theistisch here, see above, note 104.
165. This scene is narrated at 12:80–82.
169. The motif is not restricted to Keller: we see it too in Büchner’s Lenz and
Lenz’s attempted resurrection of the dead girl, and in the “Rise, Lazarus” mo-
tif in Storm’s Aquis submersus, both analyzed by Holub, Reflections of Realism,
50, 143.
170. The echo of the scene in the Heathen Chamber where Anna becomes a
wesenloser Gegenstand, a “thing,” emphasizes once again how the “real” is the
uncanny and opposed to the “realist.” We might mark the distinction as one be-
tween Ton (clay) and Tönen (musical notes) here.
173. In the Meretlein episode, the coffin is referred to as “the little death-tree”
(das Todtenbäumlein/Todtenbaum), 11:105.
175. Keller, 12:94.
176. Keller, 12:95; for the carrying of the portrait, 11:379; for the Meretlein
episode, 11:105.
177. Keller, 12:96f.
178. Ibid.
179. Ibid.

2. Speaking Magic in Fontane’s The Stechlin

1. See M. M. Bakhtin, “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel,”
in The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays, edited by Michael Holquist, translated
by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981),
84–258; Lilian R. Furst, All Is True: The Claims and Strategies of Realist Fiction
(Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 73–94. The German word Umwelt,
which suggests more than simply setting but rather the surrounding, encompassing
world as it interacts with the given subject, will be used regularly to reflect affini-
ties with the idea of the sympathetic cosmos. See Thomas Sebeok, Contributions to
the Doctrine of Signs (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976); and Giorgio
Agamben on Jakob Uexküll, in Agamben, The Open: Man and Animal, translated
2. For the Umwelt as foreground rather than background, and as formative
force rather than mere setting, see Helmut Müller-Sievers, The Cylinder: Kinemat-
ics of the Nineteenth Century (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012),
131–138.
3. See R. J. Hollingdale, “Introduction,” in Theodor Fontane: Before the

5. Theodor Fontane, *Vor dem Sturm*, in Fontane, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 3, edited by Walter Keitel (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1962). All references to Fontane’s works will be to this edition; here 3:13. For the translations, I have consulted and adapted those of Hollingdale (see above, note 3).

6. See Michielsen, *The Preparation of the Future*, 11. Fontane refers to this added dimension as “art,” associating the divinatory (supernatural and futural) with the metatextual, much as in Keller.


10. *Vor dem Sturm*, 3:49. See also 3:51, “the more mysterious, the more stimulating for the fantasy” (je geheimnisvoller, desto anregender für die Phantasie). The German original of this first quotation is “Ihr seid Springer,” which Keitel glosses as “wie die entsprechende Figur im Schachspiel” (3:721).


13. The fire imagery that is inherent even if unstressed in Lewin’s anecdotes links up with a sustained motif-chain that threads portentously throughout the novel.


15. The way this openness to the possibility of a spectral realm in Fontane itself produces a spectral realm can be glimpsed in Lewin’s statement “I have neither the right nor the courage to deny the possibility of such apparitions (*Erscheinungen*)”
I believe this is an especially important point to make regarding the spectral in Fontane’s realism, but also an especially difficult one to hold on to.

16. See Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York: Routledge, 1993), speaking of the parallel between the sympathetic magic in “primitive” figurines and that in the ethnographic mode of anecdotal representation that reports on them: “Can’t we say that *to give an example, to instantiate, to be concrete*, are all examples of the magic of mimesis wherein the replication, the copy, acquires the power of the represented? And does not the magic power of this embodying inhere in the fact that reading such examples we are lifted out of ourselves into those images?” (16). I.e., anecdotes can be considered as embodied, mimetic “things,” imbued with sympathetic power.

17. For the connection between foreign bodies or *Fremdkörper* and archaeological items, consider the *Findlingen* (geologically errant boulders) at the entrance to the Stechlin manor.

18. Among the many such ominous, serial anecdotes are those of the Woman in White and the Woman in Black. It should be noted that it makes little difference whether the events anticipated by the omens are desired or feared.

19. For “nomen et omen,” see, e.g., *Vor dem Sturm*, 3:112; 602; *Schach von Wuthenow*, 1:557; *Frau Jenny Treibel*, 6:325; *Die Wanderungen*; and the fragment *Oceane von Parceval*. For the latter, see Bettine Menke, “The Figure of Melusine in Fontane’s Texts: Images, Digressions, and Lacunae,” *Germanic Review* 79, no. 1 (2004): 41–67. For dreams, it is worth mentioning that the divinatory reading of these is usually reserved for the reader rather than the characters themselves; in antiquity, a distinction was made between omens whose source was divine (or demonic) and those that arose from the natural world: dreams were classified under the former. See Cicero, *De divinatione* I, xviii.34.

20. For the poetry snatches, see *Vor dem Sturm*, 3:431 (“And superstitious, as he was, he saw therein a sign (Zeichen) foreboding little good”); see also 3:402. This mode of divinatory reading is a secular version of the type of *biblicae sortes* that are best known as part of Augustine’s conversion experience.

21. Playing forfeits (3:105), casting lead (3:300) or gambling (3:635f.). War, too, the central historical background of the text, is presented as a form of gambling in the novel. All such games and matters of fortune play into and color Fontane’s perennial theme of *Glück* as fortune/chance/happiness: indeed, *Glück* is a major motivator for divinatory readings as well as “realist” plots throughout his work. For games as modern avatars of ancient divination, see Edward Burnett Tylor, *The Origins of Culture* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1970), 70–112.


23. The appearance of reapers in a field (3:60, “And everyone of you knows what that signifies”); northern lights in the sky (3:61, “The heavens send their signs [Zeichen]”); crows in a tree (3:632, 636); the chance name of an inn or street (3:601f.). Again, it is important how these signs overlap with or resonate with the overarching imagery systems maintained by the narrator that the reader uses to divine their force.


25. At one point a character asserts this claim about *Stimmung* and landscape: “What we call the *Stimmung* of the landscape is, as a rule, our own” (Was wir die
Stimmung der Landschaft nennen, ist in der Regel unsere eigene, 3:417); for Stimm-

ung and omens and interpretation, see 3:478f.: “There is also a Lehnin Proph-

ey . . . which foretells destruction . . . but it is all very obscure and uncertain, so

that, as is so often the case, one could in all good faith read out of it the exactly

opposite interpretation”; see, too, 3:467f.

26. Compare the discussion in chapter 1 of Römer versus Heinrich: the former

is a realist denying the symbolic/spiritual/supernatural dimension, the latter more

“realist” in acknowledging it.

27. Vor dem Sturm, 3:113.


29. Vor dem Sturm, 3:673. For magical thinking and superstition, embedded

in an enchanted world of natural magic and not naïve credulity, Mary Floyd-

Wilson, Occult Knowledge, Science, and Gender in Shakespeare’s Plays (Cam-

bridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 2–3, 113–114. Although clearly Floyd-

Wilson focuses on a different time period, her point still holds.

30. Consider Unwiederbringlich: “That is something women have by nature: women

are born prophets” (Das haben die Frauen von Natur, die Frauen sind geborene Seher, 2:589).

31. Vor dem Sturm, 3:405. The opening or hinge point in the architecture of the

house (“where the old annex met our house at a right angle”) as the site for

magic entering the novel can be connected to the openings in the teleological fabric

of history and the narrative made by anecdotes; and the crookedness of the stick

(Hakenstock) with the knight’s move.

32. Feenkind, 3:77; Nicht von den Menschen, wohl aber von der Natur, 3:81;
discovered asleep in the corn, poppies in her hand, a little bird at her feet, 3:77; the

prophecy that she will bring blessings, 3:76.

33. For stars as fate and/or the site of divinatory reading in Fontane, see,

e.g., Der Stechlin; Schach von Wuthenow, Cécile.

34. Vor dem Sturm, 3:107, 679.

35. Vor dem Sturm, 3:629.

36. E.g., her critique of the poet mentioned above.

37. Vor dem Sturm, 363.

38. Subplots and minor character relations running parallel to the primary

ones function in this regard much like added anecdotes, producing chains of simili-
tude and attesting to a logic of similarity, a logos or force that governs the novel

via principles of similarity.

39. To overstate the case in Freudian terms, we might say that realist “factual-

ity” serves simply as manifest material and its “objective” historical récit as mere

secondary revision, screening the actual magical, literary logic governing the un-

folding of events. To read realism “realistically” is to misread.

40. Indeed, the apparent hiddenness of its (authorial) governance (in its third-

person presentation), coupled with the supposed transparency of its (narrative)

representation—the fiction that it is not a fiction, that there is but one world at

stake, one set of forces shaping events—involves the realist text all the more inti-
mately in magical reading of that one world.

41. See the discussion in chapter 1 of Roman Jakobson on realist metonymy:

both magic and realism follow the same metonymical logic in generating significance.
42. Christine declares, “I believe in premonitions (Ahnungen)” (2:569); we’re told, “Women are born prophets” (2:589); and in the event both signs prove fatefully fulfilled. Examples of such ominous openings abound, from Schach von Wuthenow to Effi Briest.

43. Rose petals fall upon her, and she declares this an omen (2:193, “Das ist mir eine gute Vorbedeutung”); butterflies swarm about her and she says that must mean something (2:207, “Sieh nur, das bedeutet etwas”): she is constantly in a state of wishing to guess the significance of such signs (2:143, “als ob sie den Tiefsinn dieser Zeichen erraten wolle”).

44. Rose motif: rose petals, dog roses, red flowers in general, including foxglove/digitalis (see below).

45. The effect will be familiar to readers of Schach von Wuthenow or Effi Briest, and it rather resembles the conditions for Augustine’s biblical hermeneutics, where allegorical interpretation becomes extended beyond the work’s explicitly figural language to encompass the whole text—not disavowing the Neoplatonists’ magic reading practices, but expanding or universalizing them.

46. Consider Fontane’s proclivity to include old lady characters of superstitious bent: Vor dem Sturm, Schach von Wuthenow (Tante Margerite), Irrungen Wirrungen (Frau Dorr), Effi Briest (Roswitha), etc.

47. The famous Gesellschafts-Etwas of Effi Briest, 4:236.

48. E.g., the fabulously beautiful weather on the day of Innstetten’s duel; or how Fontane’s tragic, socially wronged women (Cécile, Lene, Effi) are so often depicted as aligned with nature, often with animals. See Christian Thomas, “Theodor Fontane: Biologism and Fiction,” Monatshefte 106, no. 3 (2014): 376–401.

49. For more on homeopathy and its roots in a model of sympatheia ultimately indebted to the Stoics and Neoplatonists, see Alice Kuzniar, The Birth of Homeopathy out of the Spirit of Romanticism (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017). The concept of allopathy also derives from Samuel Hahnemann, the inventor of homeopathy. For Fontane, a trained pharmacist, on homeopathy as a form of medicine rather than as a poetics, see Theodor Fontane und Bernhard von Lepel, Der Briefwechsel, Kritische Ausgabe, vol. 1, edited by Gabriele Radecke (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 493 (letter 327, March 2 and 4, 1858). See also Karl Otto Sauerbeck, “Fontane und die Homöopathie,” Allgemeine Homöopathische Zeitung 6 (2004): 273–279. The passage in Unwiederbringlich also includes a brief related mention of so-called allopathy, its complement.

50. Unwiederbringlich, 2:576f.

51. For other such mise-en-abîme moments, e.g., Cécile, 2:176f., 196; and for a brilliant reading of their place in Die Poggenpubls, see Elisabeth Strowick, “Die Poggenpubls: Fontanes Realismus der Überreste,” in Herausforderungen des Realismus: Theodor Fontanes Gesellschaftsromanen, edited by Peter Hohendahl and Ulrike Vedder (Breisgau: Rombach, forthcoming).

52. Unwiederbringlich 2:577.

54. For “similia similibus,” see Unwiederbringlich, 2:577; Sympathie, 2:592. For “similia similibus,” see also Cécile, 2:285; for Sympathie as medicine, see also Die Poggenpohls, 4:494.

55. Unwiederbringlich, 2:577.

56. Schwarzkoppen says to Arne, “All that I can manage is a prophylactic procedure. . . . I’ll prepare some stories from my earlier life as a pastor . . . and will try to make these stories work on her in secret. Your sister is equally imaginative and reflective: her imagination will vitalize what she hears, and her reflection will force her to occupy herself with the germ (Kern) of the story and perhaps lead her to a change of mind and then to a change of heart” (2:598).

57. To be compared with the hothouse scene in L’Adultera or the Harz Mountains for Cécile, or Hohen-Cremmen for Effi, the “Naturkind”: being in nature activates women.


59. L’Adultera, 2:137. “Elective affinities,” wherein “quite simply the weaker element is suppressed by the stronger and therefore also the more legitimate,” where nature is the stronger, society the weaker element or force.

60. “Ahnungen” that are “schon geradezu was Prophetisches,” 5:126; itching in her little finger that foretells a visitor, 5:227f., a premonitory experience shared by Dubslav, 5:327.

61. Woldemar, 5:51, Barby, 5:123; also, more parodically, in the story of Schickedanz, 5:118–120.


63. More precisely, binding the natural and the paratextual (i.e., the novel’s title)—for our purposes, the distinction is unimportant.


65. From its very presentation, the word chain invites a special kind of reading, an anticipatory readiness to divine the connections at stake between these contiguous elements, the connections that bind them together with this one polysemous (but also at first empty) word or name.


70. For antipathy in the ancient world, see Brooke Holmes, The Tissue of the World; Sympathy and the Nature of Nature in Greco-Roman Antiquity (forthcoming); in the early modern, Michel Foucault, The Order of Things: An Archaeology
of the Human Sciences (New York: Vintage, 1970), 23f. For allopathy as counterpart to homeopathy, Unwiederbringlich, 2:577; also note 49 above. Diethelm Brüggeman, “Fontanes Allegorien (I und II),” Neue Rundschau 82 (1981): 290–310, 486–505, is one of the few Fontane critics to suggest a connection between the significatory system of the lake and the early modern worldview. However, Max Rychner, “Theodor Fontane: Der Stechlin,” in Deutsche Romane von Grimmelshausen bis Musil, edited by Jost Schillemelteit (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1966), speaks of the novel’s relational weave of similarities and sympathies (Beziehungsgeflecht von Ähnlichkeiten und Sympathien, 221), and on the whole, the language is hard for critics to avoid.

71. For antipathy’s role as part of sympathy, see 5:358; for its double nature, see Holmes, The Tissue of the World.

72. It is worth noting, too, that the rooster’s appearance exists only anecdotally: 5:7.

73. See, too, Demetz, Formen des Realismus, who reads the structure of the novel as simply additiv (183).

74. E.g., 5:56, the nondescription of the view from the lookout tower (Aussichtsturm). In this last respect (and many others), it is very different from the equally non-plot-driven works of the poetic realist Adalbert Stifter, as well as from the richly nature-descriptive works of Gottfried Keller and Theodor Storm. (Wilhelm Raabe, who can also be rather non-plot-oriented, is an altogether different case.)

75. The only other real exception would be Die Poggenpuhls, written close in time to Der Stechlin, also arguably one of his best novels.

76. Draft of a letter to Adolf Hoffmann, May/June 1897, cited in Hugo Aust, ed., Erläuterungen und Dokumente: Theodor Fontane, Der Stechlin (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1978): “At the end an old man dies and two young people get married; that’s really all that happens in 500 pages” (85).


78. See Michel Foucault, History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction (New York: Vintage, 1978) 59f. The representation of a protagonist’s psychic conflicts can be in relation to either its own subjectivity or the external/social world.

79. There are of course exceptions—such as the figure of Gordon in Cécile—and many Fontane critics would no doubt contest this characterization more generally: but if psychology is understood in either a Freudian sense, as entailing the eruption of unconscious “other” forces derived from either childhood or more remote sources (there is no childhood in Fontane), or a more Schelling-esque sense of a natural world-force operating in us, such as we see in Keller—if psychology is understood in either of these ways, it is generally not a factor in Fontane. The obviation of psychology per se in Der Stechlin will be explored below in terms of Simmel’s notion of sociability.

80. This is not to say that single character focalizations are not central to many of Fontane’s other novels (we already mentioned the importance of Lewin’s perspective for the Zeichen at the ball). See Elisabeth Strowick, “Schließlich ist alles bloß Verdacht: Fontane’s Kunst des Findens,” in Realien der Realismus:
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Wissenschaft—Technik—Medien in Theodor Fontanes Erzählprosa, edited by Stephan Braese and Anne-Kathrin Reulecke (Berlin: Vorwerk 8, 2010), 157–181. But focused perspective and psychological perspective are not always the same thing.

81. See 5:301, “It’s only the sharp drawing, the one bordering on caricature, that has an effect”; also 5:62, Krippenstapel’s “character, which bordered closely on caricature.”

82. Der Stechlin, 5:56.

83. The only truly significant exception is the conversation late in the novel between Lorenzen and Melusine, one whose exceptionality is marked not least by both its metatextual force and its being zu zweit: 5:268–274.


85. For the modernist orientation, see chapter 3.

86. For language as the Lebensform of all social interaction and all character, see Dubслав’s aperçu “Wer am meisten red’t, ist der reinstes Mensch” (5:23). See Hasubek, “. . . wer am meisten red’t”, passim. Already in 1912 Gottfried Kricker, Theodor Fontane: Von seiner Art und epischen Technik (Berlin: Bonner Forschungen, 1912), spoke of Gespräch as die bestimmende Lebensform of the novel.

87. As we will see, language use here cannot be described in ordinary linguistic terms as constative, indexical, or even really (in Peirce’s terms) “symbolic” or (in Austin’s) performative; instead we have to reach for some of the same terms we devised for talking about the conditions of magic reading in the introduction and chapter 1. See below, note 126.


89. See Wolfgang Preisendanz, “Zur Ästhetizität des Gesprächs bei Fontane,” in Das Gespräch, edited by Karlheinz Stierle and Rainer Warning (Munich: Fink, 1984), on the representation of speech (Gesprächsdarstellung) as the place where sign and referent coincide (Zeichen und Referent zusammenfallen, 478), and as such crucial to Fontane’s realism. Fontane in both earlier works and Der Stechlin is fond of reproducing letters as well as conversations.

90. Regardless, too, of any question as to whether “people really talk like that,” which in Fontane they rarely do.

92. There are some nuanced differences to language use, especially in the use of dialect for some of the minor characters (more anon), but the point of language’s adequacy remains firm. Thomas Mann remarks on the shared Fontanesque Ton of all his characters, in “Der alte Fontane,” in Gesammelte Werke (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1990), 9:9–34.


94. The Sprachkrise that is often thought of as announced in Hugo von Hofmannsthal’s “Ein Brief” is only a few years away (1902), although, to be fair, it is already adumbrated in such works as Stifter’s Granit.

95. A protovitalism, one grounded in the silent space beyond speech, is clearly evident in Hofmannsthal’s “Ein Brief”; for the “primitivism” inseparable from much of modernism, both texts and visual art, and its irruption into the present as one of the defining features of modernism, see chapter 3.

96. Der Stechlin, 5:9. An earlier draft of the novel had a pyramid constructed out of Findlingsblöcken, echoing those that flank the entrance to the courtyard (see note 17).

97. Its counterpart in the garden of Adelheid, without the underlying, self-reflecting foil (5:84); looked into as if a Spiegelbild by Czako and Rex (5:63); “Ach, wenn ich diese Glaskugeln sehe,” 5:172.

98. Ein fremdes Samenkorn, i.e., a Findling of its own, although here the foreign and native are ironically doubled: the fremd is actually the local seed, the aloe the exotic stranger.

99. Der Stechlin, 5:352. Henry James, “The Lesson of Balzac,” in The Question of Our Speech: The Lesson of Balzac; Two Lectures (Boston: Riverside Press, 1905), 85–89, notes that Balzac’s objects are similarly charged, which I mention to underscore the broader relevance of this crucial point to an understanding of realism per se. And Roland Barthes, often thought of as the proponent of a view of realist objects as nonsignifying, has this to say about the object world of photography, which he sees as a definitively “realist” medium: “The interest lies in the fact that objects are accepted inducers of associations . . . or, in a more obscure way, are veritable symbols. . . . Such objects constitute excellent elements of signification: on the one hand they are discontinuous and complete in themselves, a physical qualification for a sign, while on the other they refer to clear, familiar signifieds. . . . The connotation somehow ‘emerges’ from all these signifying units [i.e., things] which are nevertheless ‘captured’ as though the scene were immediate and spontaneous, that is to say, without signification. . . . Objects no longer perhaps possess a power, but they certainly possess meanings” (Barthes, “The Photographic Message,” 22f.). My claim is that their meaning is a power (see the introduction), but do note the clear evocation of a sympathetic model for describing realism.

100. Der Stechlin, 5:20.

101. More precisely, Czako prompts Krippenstapel to develop the allegory (5:59); eating chicken wings at Adelheid’s cloister (5:92f.). Czako does much the same when eating carp at Schloß Stechlin: these too are immediately transformed into “speaking” allegories (5:27).
102. Flowers (5:64), Goldwasser (5:41), Lacrimae Christi (5:93), Flaschen (5:69).

103. Der Stechlin, 5:111.

104. The rococo clock in the center of the central staircase, mit einem Zeitgeist darüber, der eine Hippe führte (5:19); the museum of Wetterfahnen (see also 5:181, “All men are weathervanes” [Alle Menschen sind Wetterfahnen]).

105. Both Czako and Dubslav have a distinct tendency to turn things into allegories or signs of the political, along the lines of what Czako says of bowling alleys in gardens (“They have something symbolic about them, or didactic, or if you will, political,” 5:85). Certainly if Der Stechlin is to be taken as a “political” novel, this is primarily based on how people read: its political dimension is mostly in its reading of signs, or rather, of things. Melusine’s hats are one example of this need for us to read beyond the political; we’ll see many more.

106. For the Poetensteig and Aussichtsturm, see Gotthart Wunberg, “Rondell und Poetensteig: Topographie und implizite Poetik in Fontanes Stechlin,” in Literatur und Geistesgeschichte: Festschrift für Richard Brinkmann, edited by Jürgen Brummack (Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1981), 467–469. This latter description of the courtyard at Wutz is later complemented by one of the elderberry tree on the other side of the courtyard, whose foliage—much like Dubslav’s aloe—is entwined with that of another contrasting tree, and the embracing shadow of this living contrast transforms the disorder and decay of the human elements into something pleasingly natural and aesthetic. For the furniture, 5:97; for the two descriptions of the courtyard at Wutz, 5:79f., 95.

107. In the case of Czako and the Stechlin, they start out as things before becoming names and then transform into characters—characters who are then transformed by their names.

108. Quite contrary to Czako’s Goethe quotation, “a name is sound and smoke” (Name ist Schall und Rauch, 5:88) or Melusine’s “Names mean nothing” (Namen bedeuten nichts, 5:141). Both statements are made in contexts where their validity is more or less openly refuted: as Woldemar replies to Melusine, “Anyone named Melusine should know what names mean” (see below); cf. 5:285.


110. Gottlob Frege, “On Sense and Reference,” in Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege, edited by P. Geach and M. Black (Oxford: Blackwell, 1952), 56–79. The distinction between denotative and connotative function can be posited as the motivating factor behind Fontane’s slight (but significant) revision of the classical phrase “nomen est omen” to “nomen et omen,” where the relationship between name and omen in the latter case is based on contiguity or proximity rather than identity. For “nomen et omen” in Fontane in general, see Walter Glauserwitz, “Theodor Fontane: Heiteres Darüberstehen? . . .” Monatshefte 45, no. 4 (1953): 202–208; Menke, “The Figure of Melusine,” 44.

111. Nebenbedeutung, 5:22. See also the connotations/associations of Moscheles, 5:321.
112. For Barthes, see above, note 99.
113. *Der Stechlin*, 5:185; see also 5:181, “One shouldn’t hold a man’s name against him. But Koseleger! I never know if he’s more ‘Kose’ or more ‘Leger’”: perhaps both equally.” (The wordplay doesn’t really carry over into English.)
114. *Die grüne Glasbütte*, 5:57; or similarly (seemingly) *Eierbäuschen*; but see below. One could connect the disconnection here with that between the (mundane) labor of the producers and the fetishized commodity-magic of the product, but that sort of explanation would have only very local force.
116. Her name evokes for Woldemar the character (Bühnenfigur) from Schiller’s *Wilhelm Tell* (5:116), a play that also figures prominently at the end of the Egg Cottage episode (5:159): but what to make of this connotation and connection remains obscure.
117. E.g., Rolf Krake, “A man who has such a nickname, he lives, he is in and of himself a story,” 5:261.
118. *Der Stechlin*, 5:127, “But Wrschowitz and Niels! I believe he suffers from this contradiction.”
119. Dubslav, 5:11; Czako, 5:212, “It’s because of my name. Here, too, ‘Czako’ already has an aftertaste (Beigeschmack).”
120. *Der Stechlin*, 5:141, 110.

There is one other dimension to the power of names that needs be mentioned, also associated with their temporality—in this case more with family names than personal ones. If first names have retained some active, living, shaping force, even while sacrificing some of the futurity ominously associated with them—a force, moreover, now almost more linked to a character’s reading of the name than to the name itself—last names seem only to have retained a deadening, petrifying force, a kind of binding power that is anything but energizing, open, or natural. We can see this in the case of “Stechlin,” especially in the hold it has (the spell it casts) on Adelheid, and the hold she would have it keep on Woldemar (this is what renders the novel’s final line so problematic). But it is also the case for those aristocrats such as Triglaff who surround her; and even for the Princess Ermyntrud, who despite marrying into the bourgeoisie insists on drawing the names for her many children from the world of her ancestors. All of these characters attribute a certain magical power to their names, a certain Sympathie and force that derives from their connection to the world of the dead (much as we saw in the power of painting conventions in *Green Henry*); see too 5:273. But while these names certainly bind them, names are also shown to be losing their power over others, indeed over the world: over life itself. That is, along with the diminution of future force for names qua omens has come a diminution in their staying power, their binding power, per se: names, and with them language as a whole, have taken on a different temporality, one of historicity, loss, breakdown: names die out by losing their sympathetic connections to the world, their ties to life.

Medium, sondern Objekt des Gesprächs,” and characters “sprechen nicht nur, sie reflektieren Sprache” (53); also Hasubek, “. . . wer am meisten red’t”, 43–50.

123. See Grawe, “Fontanes neues Sprachbewußtsein,” on the broken relation (gebrochene Verhältnis) of characters to the language they use (53).

124. Nett, 5:113; Rechnungen, 5:87. The distinction between Dame and Madame is what Walter Benjamin would call Intention (see “Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers,” GS 4:14; SW 1:257). Again, these instances bespeak at once connections, as characters spin out the connotative extensions of each word, and evidence of the breakdown of connections, as words cease to have stable associations or relations. A particularly telling example of this might be that of the phonically similar but semantically (and connotatively) different Millet and Millais momentarily confused by Woldemar in his conversation with Cujacius, which opens up a momentarily, embarrassing tear in the common fabric of sociability (5:237); see below.

125. Sociability has always been an implicit aspect of sympatheia: see Barbara Maria Stafford, Visual Analogy: Consciousness as the Art of Connecting (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 19. Here it is made explicit and determinative.

126. Both the threatened loss of and the still realized connections on which realism and magic mutually depend are equally evident in the conversational Gespräch in this novel. Conversation here does not for the most part seem to have any conventional communicative function. We could not say, in Roman Jakobson’s terms, that it is primarily constative or referential, that is, intent on conveying information about the world, either denotatively or connotatively. Nor is it emotive, conveying information about the speaker-subject; or affective, intent on influencing the listener; or even “poetic,” in calling attention to itself (although this, almost inadvertently, comes closest). Neither, in Austin’s terms, can we say such talk is performative, at least not without severely curtailing and refining what we consider such a “speech act” to entail, since the words themselves do very little. Rather, Gespräch here primarily has what Jakobson would call a phatic function, the emptiest of all his categories: speech as merely keeping open the possibility of communication, of connection, regardless of content or the particularities of speaker, listener, or language.

This is most crassly represented in the novel by characters such as Frau Gundermann, about whom we are told, “Actually, she wasn’t interested in anything at all; but, proper Berliner that she was, she just needed to be able to talk” (5:39; also her husband’s empty phrases [öde Redensarten], 5:71), and more genially by figures such as Graf Barby: “Everything that came up in conversation had more or less the same value for the old Count” (5:229). And it is of a piece with the thematization of communication in the novel in terms of telephone and telegraph lines, mere media lines of connection without specified speakers, listeners, or messages; see Christian Thomas, Theodor Fontane: Autonomie und Telegraphie in den Gesellschaftsromanen (Berlin: Logos Verlag, 2015). This phatic function includes an important if paradoxically static temporal dimension, captured in the oft-repeated phrase “So the conversation went” (So ging das Gespräch, 5:70, 77; see also 219, 254, 263): in the absence of any forward, futural thrust to either the action or conversation, it answers to the need to maintain the flow, but the flow—the pace or rhythm of exchange, of the unfurling of conversation threads—is something in itself empty, weightless, a foundation without content, what Walter Benjamin
might call “empty time.” This crucial if immaterial, indeed vacuous dimension is perhaps most notable at moments of its disruption, moments that usually prove embarrassing, sometimes maliciously pleasurable (5:62), and often even uncanny, the opening up of a momentary, for some almost panic-inducing gap in the temporal fabric of their world. But if on the one hand Gespräch seems to bespeak a loss of ground in the novel, a threatened vacuity of its significant reality, on the other it is also the very medium for establishing sympathetic, social connections between its participants, the very realm for the promised realization of meaningful connectedness; and the concomitant sense of fullness or presence to the experience of Gespräch is the undeniable counterpart to its sense of emptiness and absence, a paradox commented on by the characters themselves; see, e.g., 5:206, 230.

127. Sociology—as the study of communal experience— itself emerged as a field at this time, at the same time as sympatheia (and its close relation, Stimmung) was being similarly reconceived in other fields as more or less restricted to the human world, as could also be said of language, with the similar emergence of linguistics. For sympatheia blending into “sympathy” (Mitleid) or “empathy” (Mitempfindung), see Ute Frevert, Emotions in History—Lost and Found (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2011), 149–204; for Stimmung blending into Laune, see David Wellbery, “Stimmung,” in Ästhetische Grundbegriffe: Historisches Wörterbuch in sieben Bänden, edited by Karlheinz Barck et al. (Stuttgart: Metzler Verlag, 2010), 703–733; for both, see the introduction. But sociology also and at the same time emerged as something of an alternative to yet another coeval field, namely, psychology, and as such represented a rather different relocation of sympatheia from that offered by the individual interiorized subject; again, see the introduction.

128. Willi Goetschel, “Causerie: Zur Funktion des Gesprächs in Fontanes Der Stechlin,” Germanic Review 70 (1995): 116–122; Thomas Pfau, “Epochenwandel mit metaphysischen Anklängen: Metasprache und Bilderfahrung in Der Stechlin,” German Quarterly 86, no. 4 (2013): 420–442; Husabek, “. . . wer am meisten red’t”, 122–137. Goetschel is the first to look at an extended comparison, but his evaluation of the relation is mainly geared toward foregrounding the vacuousness of Gespräch in Fontane’s novel, not its fullness or its magic. And it also needs be said that Simmel is not alone among the founders of sociology to be relocating magic into the sociable experience (or put differently, to be pointing out the continued magical forces at work in sociability): Max Weber’s “charisma” and Émile Durkheim’s “effervescence” work to similar ends, just not quite so tantalizingly proximate to Fontane’s novel.


131. Ibid., 49.


134. We’ve seen the hidden connections between sympathetic relations and art qua metatextuality both in *Green Henry* and in Fontane’s work, especially in the relation between the binding forces at work in the novel for the characters and those at work as the novel for the readers. What is perhaps more singular to Fontane is how the readerly experience—the reader’s participation in the textual world—can itself be conceived in terms of sociability as outlined here: for Fontane’s reader is above all a sociable reader in ways not quite true of Keller or other poetic realists, nor of Benjamin or other modernists.

135. The addition of play is certainly appropriate for Fontane, who shares with E. B. Tylor et al. an appreciation of play as a modern avatar of magical experience; see the earlier discussion of the game of forfeits in *Vor dem Sturm* and of Lene’s and Botho’s flower game in *Irrungen Wirrungen*.

136. See Goetschel, “Causerie.” Certainly the problem of an emptied world—of language, society, etc.—is central to the thematics of *sympatheia* qua sociability in *Der Stechlin*: for *Spiel* qua *Spielerie*, see *Der Stechlin*, 5:207.


138. Ibid.: *symbolische Bedeutung*; seen by neither naturalism (56, 57f., 61) nor by rationalism (53).

139. For Simmel and (not) *Lebensphilosophie*, see Goodstein, *Georg Simmel*. While Simmel’s focus is going to be primarily on the sociable *an sich*, Fontane’s is going to be more broadly on the connections (and lost connections) between the sociable and the life that resides both outside and within it—and that includes the nonhuman life as well.

140. Simmel, “Die Geselligkeit,” 52. Sociability is the good feeling of feeling good together.


142. Simmel describes this as the experience of being only oneself yet not wholly oneself, but “only an element in a group that is held together formally” (“Die Geselligkeit,” 55). And it is worth stressing how, in order for the reciprocal determination (*gegenseitiges Sich-Bestimmen*) of sociability to emerge, merely personal moods (*bloß persönliche Stimmung und Verstimmung*) must be eliminated: interiorized autonomy gives way to externalized participation—reciprocal participation—as the site and source of *Stimmung*.


144. Simmel, “Die Geselligkeit,” 54. *Taktgefühl* also, of course, implies contiguity.

145. Although games, like literature, are one of the last refuges of magical thinking in the modern world and as such figure prominently in other Fontane works, they have no independent place in our novel; and although coquetry shares
in the quasi-erotic play of attractive forces also proper to the sympathetically magical world, and even in Melusine—the most sympathetically magical character in the text—a foothold in Der Stechlin, the decisively nonerotic cast of the novel keeps coquetry mostly peripheral. For games as sites for magical experience, see Vor dem Sturm, Irrungen Wirrungen; for coquetry, Cécile, Unwiederbringlich.

Coquetry is also the focus of another work by Simmel, but there is one aspect of his discussion of coquetry here that is of a more general interest to us, insofar as it inflects the model of sociability as a realm of similarity. He describes how the coquette—who only exists within sociable relations, not outside of them—“swings back and forth between ‘yes’ and ‘no’ without stopping at either . . . and manages to embody their polar opposites in a perfectly consistent behavior.” That is, the realm of sociability, for all its foundation in similitude, also ideally encompasses reciprocal opposites or contradictions as somehow one, and in ways that increase rather than diminish the play of attractive forces (Anziehungskräfte)—as is true, too, of a sympathetically/antipathetically conceived kosmos, and optimally (but not always) of the sociable and sympathetic world of Fontane’s novel as well.

146. Simmel, “Die Geselligkeit,” 62: Beziehungsspiel; 64: Bindung, within which and as part of which Simmel also includes loosening, or rather, the ongoing rhythm of joining, loosening, and rejoining.

147. For the play of relationality or binding existing “beneath” the objective content, cf. Simmel’s wordplay on sich unter-halten (“Die Geselligkeit,” 62).


149. Ibid. See Holmes, The Tissue of the World, who presents sympathetia as the conceptual habit of reading relation, of seeing the real in the relation.


151. In terms developed by Paul Fleming, anecdotes obtain the quality of “exemplarity.”


153. Ibid.

154. Roughly speaking, Verstimmung = discord; Mißstimmung = discord; Zustimmung = concord; Bestimmung = determination; Übereinstimmung = accordance; Umstimmung = conversion; Stimme = voice or vote; Abstimmung = attunement or vote. The way these words link up with each other is itself symptomatic of Stimmung at work: they “socialize” and stimmen with one another.

155. These occasions seem most often to involve Rex or Woldemar: 5:84, 86, 92, 128, 130.

156. Der Stechlin, 5:377.


159. This silence would be more or less the functional equivalent in Fontane’s novel to the experience of touch in Keller’s, the moment when, for Heinrich, Anna suddenly moves from “object” to “thing,” followed by Heinrich’s anxious attempt to restore the connective sense of Stimmung: in both cases, an uncanny reality that threatens to undo the realist world. See chapter 1, note 136.
160. Der Stechlin, 5:132: there are many more such instances.

162. “Assemblage” (not a Deleuzean term) is a first attempt at finding a word that conveys the sense of disparate individual characters whose momentary common presence provides the base condition for the formation, in the social sphere, of a sympathetic order of related (and semblanced) elements. Every assembly, gathering, or group offers anew the possibility for the successful formation of such an order, which, when achieved, is achieved because of sociability but also generates the sense of sociability—the sense of a kind of mystical participation in the macrocosmos (or assemblage). Other words that might suggest themselves, such as “association,” also need to be wrenched out of their flattened sense and restored to a fuller meaning (e.g., association as that which is or can be sociated) in order to convey what I’m after (kosmos outside of Greek seems too grand).

163. Hasubek, “. . . wer am meisten red’t”, 114; Der Stechlin, 5:25.

164. The novel has an exemplary instance of such a series in its anecdote “Sausage for sausage!” (Wurst wider Wurst!, 5:43).


166. Verstimmliches, 5:90.

167. Verstimmung arises despite Adelheid’s most ob-liging accommodation (verbindlichste Entgegenkommen), 5:82. For the collapse into sameness that threatens the sympathetic world when it excludes antipathetic forces, see Foucault, The Order of Things, 24–25.

168. Zustimmung, 5:84; volle Zustimmung, 86; gute Stimmung, 93; Verstimmliches, 90 (see also 96): silences, 83, 90.

169. Der Stechlin, 5:90.

170. Stimmung, e.g., 5:178; repeated references to Zustimmung, e.g., 28 (twice), 45, 192 (twice), 194; gestures of Zustimmung, 31; references to Verbindlichkeit, connecting threads or Fäden, 29; Knauel, 37, Sympathie, 43, 44.

171. Zu knüpfen, 5:29 (twice); poetic associations of similitude, e.g., 27; “Had I said the opposite, it would have been just as right,” 27 (see also 29, 36); boundaries of tact crossed in matters of taste (the rats) or of politics (Gundermann), 38.

172. Dubslav sitting quietly, 32, and silently expressing his Zustimmung, 28.

173. As mentioned in the introduction, these chains or threads are what the Neoplatonists would call seirai. Frau Gundermann’s Berlin is from her early adulthood; Dubslav’s Russia from the time of Czar Alexander himself.

174. Der Stechlin, 5:137. The next line reinforces the centrality of Stimmung: “And already at the steamship station this Stimmung proved beneficial.”

175. For bells as a figure of Stimmung, see also 5:208, where bells produce Geselligkeit and bode forth connectivity; also Stifter, “Granit,” etc. Here, the fact that
the bells ring both on the boat and in the surrounding city bespeaks micro-macro connections.

176. *Der Stechlin*, 5:138. For *Stimmung* and *Bereitschaft*, see the section “Stimmung” in chapter 1.

177. I leave out for now the sequences looking back at the servant class, which will be mentioned in the next section.

178. *Der Stechlin*, 5:140.

179. Ibid. One of the most difficult things to formulate in this episode, indeed in the novel as a whole, is the spatial directionality of *Stimmung*. There is a sense in which it is reaching both outward and upward at once as part of its connection with the broader natural *Umwelt*. This is captured in part by having nature represented as at once landscape and the (night) sky, and *Stimmung* as both a laterally joining and literally uplifting experience (as part of its abstraction from the everyday, the material). The upward dimension to the natural world—where it becomes the site for *Stimmung*—is decisive for the evocation of nature as vaguely Neoplatonic, where the progression from the material to more immaterial (and divine) levels is also conceived vertically. But it is also decisive for the evocation of nature as the embodiment of the text’s metatextuality, where for the characters to connect with the natural world is also to be drawn into the text or author’s overarching governing nexus—drawing on the convention that the author, like divinity, hovers “over” his text. This multidirectionality is made even more complicated in Fontane’s novel than it is for the Neoplatonists by the dominant imagery system of the lake with its subterranean communicative system, that is at once the site of the natural, the supernatural, and the metatextual, and that, we’ll see, figures beneath this episode as well, not least in the waterway on which the trip takes place—here, the author “beneath” his text. *Stimmung* becomes a matter of connecting outward, upward, and downward with the natural world, which is also the metatextual world: at once requiring the vocabulary, and movement, of “beyond,” “above,” and “beneath.” With my primary focus on the temporal dimension of the *Stimmung* here, I’m not sure I always succeed in getting all that spatial complexity across: hence, the need for this note.

180. *Der Stechlin*, 5:140.


182. *Der Stechlin*, 5:142, “I cannot agree (*zustimmen*) with you, my dear Count.” The factory location has the ugly name of Spindlersfelde, which like Rummelsburger also contributes to the prosaic heaviness.

183. *Der Stechlin*, 5:144.

184. I.e., dematerialized into sound (of the bells) and light (of the lamps).

185. The idea that every such associative chain has some anchor in the material world is part of the Neoplatonic model for *seirai*, and, mutatis mutandis, seems central to this novel as well: the *Dingwelt* becomes allegorical, and so begins the associative transformation by which the real becomes magical, because sympathetic.


188. *Der Stechlin*, 5:152–154. This story, like the two that proceed it, is of course an anecdote, and as such it also leads the assembled group to seek out the connection of its meaning to their present moment and its future.
191. Ibid.
193. For water as landscape, see *Die Poggenpuhls*, 4:552; for water landscapes as *stimmungsvoll*, see *Der Stechlin*, 5:335.
196. *Der Stechlin*, 5:158 (Fontane’s italics).
197. See Holmes, *The Tissue of the World*, for kinship (*cognatio*) as one of the forms *sympatheia* frequently takes in the conceptual habit of the sympathetic imagination in antiquity.
198. This has significant parallels in its way with the place of Goethe in *Green Henry*; see chapter 1.
199. For Dubslav as a belated *Schweiger*, see below.
200. For name play and even name changes as part of this episode, see 5:140f., 152, 157f.
201. *Der Stechlin*, 5:159.
203. *Der Stechlin*, 5:387 (Fontane’s italics).
204. “Compromised” is admittedly an embarrassingly euphemistic description of “raped,” but a required one to draw the connections to/similitudes with other, less violent events in the novel that this one points to.
205. *in ausgezeichneter Laune* and *Wetter/Stimmung*, 5:184; *gar nichts von Verstimmung*, 191; *Zustimmung und Heiterkeit*, 190, 194; *allgemein zugestimmt*, 192; nodding *Zustimmung*, 192; shouting *Stimmt, stimmt*, 190; *anstimmen*, 192.
207. *alle Stimmen auf Dubslav zu vereinigen*, 5:165; *wer gegen uns stimmt, stimmt auch gegen den König*, 190; *wie die Stimmung im Kreise wirklich war*, 164; *Stimmen qua votes*, 190; *Abstimmungsmaschine*, 194; *Volksstimme, Gottesstimme*, 223; see also 5:260, “And have you heard her voice (*Stimme*)? And as you know, the voice is the soul.”
209. For the loss of the future, think of Dubslav on the walk before their boat trip, speaking of “the outlook(*Auslug*) from this rickety pier (*Wackelstege*) on which we stand,” 5:188.
211. The few related anecdotes would include that about restorative (and time-defying) plastic surgery, 5:257; also Sponholz’s restorative spa treatments and, of course, Lorenzen’s *wieder-gaben*.
212. *Wiederherstellung*, 5:199; *Reinheitswiederherstellung*, 197; and the catchphrase “*Blut sühnt*,” 197 (Fontane’s italics).
213. This is a possibility broached later on by Lorenzen, but one whose potential fulfillment lies outside the time frame of the novel, 5:274.
214. “Die Zukunft liegt also bei dir,” 5:387. See also what, shortly beforehand, Lorenzen says to Dubslav, “At least very soon the desire will come over [Wolde-mar] more or less to come around again to the old ways” (369).


218. That the lower classes and their speech are somehow closer to nature, more naturalistic, is of course a literary convention of the time—but nonetheless one operant in the novel (not unrelated to the similar association of women with nature).


220. E.g., 5:310, 317, 338f.


223. Agnes comes to seem an omen of the future set in counterpoint to Woldemar and Armgard’s foreboded child. Agnes, the heir presumptive of Dubslav’s *Wetterfahnen*, is viewed as such a sign by Dubslav not for her political character, as Adelheid does, but for her nonpolitical affiliations with the natural, silent world.

224. There is a connection between silence and the animal that is us: Dubslav says, “Keeping silent doesn’t suit everyone. And then of course we are also supposed to distinguish ourselves from the animal through speech. Thus, whoever speaks the most is the most purely human” (5:23). Although usually interpreted as celebrating language and the exclusively human, this also points to the connection shared via silence with the animal world: he who is silent is least separated from the natural world. And that illness draws us close to the animal world might be connected with how it exposes the “pathos”—the openness and vulnerability—that is at the center of the concept of sympathy (see the sympathetic connections between Anna and nature established by illness in *Green Henry*, explored in chapter 1).


227. For Dubslav, 5:326f.; 339, “‘A chaffinch (Buch-fink [!]) came today. And I’m absolutely certain he’ll be followed by others.’ Dubslav’s presentiments (*Ahnungen*) proved right.” For Melusine’s connections to the elemental of the lake, 265–267. The reader is invited to infer that this lake will, at Dubslav’s death, send its sign, via the smoke signals of Vesuvius, to Woldemar when all other, merely human means of communication fail: this is possible only because of Dubslav’s sympathetic relation to the lake—because of the connection of his fatal *Wassersucht* to the lake. The portent of those smoke signals is one of the novel’s clearest examples of the *actio in distans* made possible by the sympathetic (*gestimmt*) order.

228. *nicht sehr sympathisch*, 5:323.


230. For *Fingerhut* as the older familiar term, 5:426.

231. *Grete Minde*, 1:65, “The red foxglove stood in tall bushes all around her. The morning wind had shaken down a pair of its blossoms on Grete, and she took one of them and said, ‘What does this signify for me? It’s a fairy-tale flower
(Märchenblume).’ ‘Yes, that it is. And it means that you are an enchanted princess or a witch.’”


233. The transformation of Fingerhut into digitalis also occurs in Cécile, with the move from the opening nature setting into the urban setting, where the protagonist Gordon’s attraction becomes deadly—to her (2:289).


235. As noted earlier, micro-macro relationality is overtly thematized throughout the novel, not least through the lake’s connections to the broader world.

236. For “similia similibus,” see Unwiederbringlich; also Cécile (see earlier discussion).

237. The contiguous relation to these Hexenkünste is one of the ways that Fingerhut becomes contagiously linked to magic as well.


239. For Dubslav’s allegorizations, 5:336.

240. Der Stechlin, 5:359, 361.

241. Interestingly, Krippenstapel makes his offering of the honeycomb to Dubslav as something positively medieval (5:358f.), which does seem to suggest something of a Wiederherstellung of an earlier era in the present one—even as the attempt is being made, through the figure of a “sympathetically” restored Dubslav, to restore an outmoded political order as well.


243. Der Stechlin, 5:328f.

244. Der Stechlin, 5:388.

245. Der Stechlin, 5:352.

246. Der Stechlin, 5:353.

247. The color red in the novel is not, I suggest, readable in the novel, because it could mean so many different things. Cf. Eric Miller, “Die roten Fäden des roten Hahns zu einem Motivkomplex im Stechlin.” Fontane Blätter 67 (1999): 91–105, who draws a somewhat different conclusion from his evidence than I.

248. Melancholically—but still charmingly: this is, after all, Fontane.

249. This relocation of divinatory reading into retrospective inquiry, especially into childhood but also into history, is an aspect of modernism explored in the next chapter.

3. Reading Magic in Walter Benjamin


3. As Benjamin says, “Precisely modernity is always citing primal history”; Benjamin, “Paris, die Hauptstadt des XIX Jahrhunderts,” GS 5:55; SW 3:40.
4. Freud’s essay on telepathy was known to Walter Benjamin; see Anson Rabinbach, “Introduction to Walter Benjamin’s ‘Doctrine of the Similar’,” *New German Critique* 17 (Spring 1979): 64; also Sarah Ley Roff, “Benjamin and Psychoanalysis,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin*, edited by David Ferris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 115–133.


7. Ibid, 117.


9. Some of the most explicit connections between the sympathetic world order and divination in Benjamin’s work—what he calls *natürliche Prophezeiung*—come in sections 12, 18, and 19 of his essay “Der Erzähler,” which, however, will not play a central part in what follows; it was discussed in the introduction. See Benjamin, GS 2:438–465; SW 3:153, 159, 160.


12. For the magic of blood and glitter, Benjamin, GS 3:358; SW 2:655. We might also add his critique of surrealism: “But I am not pleased to hear it cautiously tapping on the windowpanes to inquire about its future” (GS 2:298; SW 2:209).


16. Ibid., GS 2:171; SW 1:201.

17. Ibid., GS 2:172; SW 1:201.

18. Ibid., GS 2:172; SW 1:202. For more on this, see Benjamin, “Analogie und Verwandtschaft,” GS 6:43; SW 1:207–209.


20. For *Schuldzusammenhang*, Benjamin, GS 2:175; SW 1:204. This notion is a complex one, and crucial to our subsequent reading of the relation between
signification and the material world in Benjamin’s thought, but attempting fully to explicate it here would be premature. Briefly, man and nature are joined as part of a material community (man by virtue of his material body); both man and nature exist in a “fallen” state; man’s “fall” is into a state of (self-)consciousness that renders both his consciousness and his connection to nature as “guilt”; the same consciousness that knows itself as guilt also interferes with man’s ability to know nature. Eiland and Jennings, *A Critical Life*, seem to imply that Benjamin’s attitude toward nature changes in the late 1920s/early 1930s, when his visits to Capri and Ibiza lead to a more open embrace: this is the same period in which his interests in divination and *sympatheia* and the mimetic faculty are most acute.


23. GS 2:176; SW 1:204.

24. Ibid.

25. For more on the connection between fate and divination in terms of this peculiar temporal structure, see the section “Nähe und Ferne (Fortsetzung)” in “Schemata zum psychophysischen Problem,” GS 6:84; SW 1:398.


27. Consider, for example, the statement made in “Der Erzähler,” where the religious context is not engaged: “The liberating magic which the fairy tale has at its disposal does not bring nature into play in a mythical way, but points to its complicity with liberated man. A mature man feels this complicity only occasionally—that is, when he is happy: but the child first meets it in fairy tales, and it makes him happy” (Der befreiende Zauber, über den das Märchen verfügt, bringt nicht auf mythische Art die Natur ins Spiel, sondern ist die Hindeutung auf ihre Komplizität mit der befreiten Menschen. Diese Komplizität empfindet der reife Mensch nur bisweilen, nämlich im Glück; dem Kind aber tritt sie zuerst im Märchen entgegen und stimmt es glücklich,” GS 2:438–465; SW 3:157). For more on the occasionality (*bisweilen, im Glück*) of this complicity in the mature man, see below.

28. “Late” is a relative term here: 1933 for both essays.


32. For handwriting as hieroglyphs, Benjamin, GS 3:136; SW 2:132.

34. Ibid. In at least some schools of graphology, these associational chains were called “constellations,” which is quite suggestive for Benjamin, not least in his apparent use of graphological terminology to describe the reading of astrological constellations in “Lehre vom Ähnlichen.” See Jacoby, *Analysis of Handwriting*, passim.

35. Benjamin, GS 3:138f; SW 2:133.


38. Benjamin, GS 4:597; SW 2:399. See also Benjamin, SW 3:137; SW 2:132.


40. Benjamin, GS 4:598; SW 2:399. Perhaps a difference can be discerned between this and Gestalt-based theories, which suppose an image “in mind” that the writer consciously tries to follow in his writing.


42. One of the best places to pinpoint the distinctions between Freud’s and Benjamin’s positions on this matter comes in a passage where they seem to come closest together. In a letter to Gretel Adorno, Benjamin mentions a passage in one of Freud’s essays in which he (Benjamin) finds expressed some of his own ideas. The passage concerns telepathy (and for graphology and gambling as divinatory forms of telepathy, see below): “The telepathic process is supposed to consist in a mental act in one person instigating the same mental act in another person. What lies between these two mental acts may easily be a physical process into which the mental one is transformed at one end and which is transformed back once more into the same mental one at the other end. . . . Only think if one could get hold of this physical equivalent of the psychical act! It would seem to me that psychoanalysis, by inserting the unconscious between what is physical and what was previously called ‘psychical’, has paved the way for the assumption of such processes as telepathy. . . . It is a familiar fact that we do not know how the common purpose comes about in the great insect communities: possibly it is done by means of a direct psychical transference of this kind. One is led to a suspicion that this is the original, archaic method of communication between individuals and that in the course of phylogenetic evolution it has been replaced by the better method of giving information with the help of signals which are picked up by the sense organs. But the older method might have persisted in the background and still be able to put itself into effect under certain conditions.” Sigmund Freud, “Dreams and Occultism,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, edited and translated by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1999), 22:55.

Benjamin calls particular attention to the insect example, which unlike Freud’s own insertion of an unconscious between the physical and the psychical, entails a more or less direct corporeal connection, one that, insofar as it does persist in the human case, would subsume both conscious and unconscious communications or contacts. I suspect Benjamin supposes that the unconscious might well be a different, and possibly distorting, medium from that of the body (ein natürliches
Leben im Menschen) itself. For Benjamin’s letter, see GS 2:952f.; mentioned in Roff, “Benjamin and Psychoanalysis,” 126. I should add that Max Pulver seems to have embraced a somewhat similar position regarding the biological focus of graphological analysis.

43. Benjamin, GS 3:138; SW 2:133.

44. See note 39. We might say Benjamin sees graphology as a physiognomy of words, physiognomy as a graphology of the body.

45. Benjamin, GS 3:139; SW 2:134.

46. As described in the introduction, the connections between the microcosmic and macrocosmic realms were thought to be mediated by the force that the Stoics and Neoplatonists called sympatheia, a sense of participation in a common logos that connects all parts of nature by contact and likeness. The idea is key to the conception of sympathetic magic elaborated by James George Frazer in The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion (New York: Macmillan, 1956) and persists, via the Neoplatonists, as an often undervalued center of the romantic notion of sympathy, not least in the practice of sympathetic reading. For Benjamin’s rejection of the graphological doctrines of the Lebensphilosophien and occult sciences, see Benjamin, GS 3:137; SW 2:133.

47. The connection of magic reading with telepathy as well as divination is also a concern in the essay on surrealism as well as in the fragments on gambling discussed below. As suggested above (note 42), telepathy is also an ongoing preoccupation of Freud’s.


49. Ibid.

50. Ibid., GS 3:139; SW 2:133f.

51. Edward Burnett Tylor, The Origins of Culture (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1970), 78–83; he notes, “Arts of divination and games of chance are so similar in principle that the very same instrument passes from one use to the other” (80). Benjamin’s other concerns with gambling link it to capitalist thought and particularly modern experience (including time); I do not claim comprehensive coverage of his take on this topic.

52. For card playing, see entry O13a,2 in Das Passagenwerk, GS 5:640; English translation: Walter Benjamin, The Arcades Project, translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 514. For das Brett lesen, GS 6:189; SW 2:297. More precisely, Benjamin writes das Brett umsichtig lesen. For the importance of the idea of umsichtig (circum-spectly) to Benjamin’s concept of divinatory reading, including the connection to both fate and the future, see the section “Nähe und Ferne (Fortsetzung)” in “Schemata zum psychophysischen Problem,” GS 6:84; SW 1:398. Unfortunately the English translation is more or less useless in this instance. Eiland and Jennings, A Critical Life, point out that Benjamin was himself not only an amateur graphologist but also a gambler—sometimes successful, often not.

53. Benjamin, “Notiz zu einer Theorie des Spiels,” GS 6:189; SW 2:297. In a different context (to be discussed below), Benjamin refers to the human body as our most ancient and reliable instrument of divination: GS 4:142; SW 1:483.

54. [Tele]pathie, in Benjamin, GS 6:188; not included in SW. For Benjamin’s notion of innervation, see Miriam Hansen, “Room-for-Play: Benjamin’s Gamble

55. GS 6:188.

56. For the “hostile suggestions,” GS 6:188. For the contact with the realm of fate, Benjamin, GS 6:189; SW 2:297. The description of parrying here adumbrates Benjamin’s later accounts of Freud and Baudelaire on trauma, or *Erfahrung*, and consciousness, in “Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire,” GS 1:605–653; SW 4:313–355.

57. Benjamin, GS 6:189; SW 2:297f.

58. In extispicy, for example (and as described in the introduction), this is why animal, not human, livers were employed: since animals themselves have no future consciousness—and especially no anticipatory response to impending death or danger—their own conscious expectations would not mark livers in ways that might be mistaken for divine signs. Similarly, birds were used in augury precisely because their animated movements were free of human interference, which made them privileged conduits for the communication of another, invisible realm of divine will and authority—which is also what transformed them into signs. See Collins, “Entrails”; Collins, “Birds.” For Benjamin’s more generally known positions on consciousness and trauma, and consciousness and *Erfahrung*, see “Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire,” GS 1:605–653; SW 4:313–355.

59. Benjamin, GS 6:189; SW 2:298. The implication is that “what it is” at that point is “too late”; compare the brief entry in *Das Passagenwerk*, “Only the future that has not entered as such into his consciousness is parried by the gambler” (O13,2), GS 5:639; *Arcades Project*, 513.

60. Benjamin, GS 4:141; SW 1:483. The passage continues, “Each morning the day lies like a fresh shirt on our bed; this incomparably fine, incomparably tightly woven fabric of pure prediction fits us perfectly. The happiness of the next twenty-four hours depends on our ability, on waking, to pick it up.”

61. Interestingly enough, he calls this gap a *Schuldgefühl*, GS 4:141; SW 1:483.

62. Benjamin, GS 6:190; SW 2:298; also GS 4:141–142; SW 1:483, which states, “To turn the threatening future into a fulfilled “now,” the only desirable telepathic miracle, is a work of bodily presence of mind” (Die Zukunftsdrohung ins erfüllte Jetzt zu wandeln, dies einzig wünschenswerte telepathische Wunder ist Werk leibhafter Geistesgegenwart). See also *Arcades Project*, O12a,2; also “Der Weg zum Erfolg in dreizehn Thesen,” GS 4:252; SW 2:145. For the body as *das verläßlichste Instrument der Divination*, GS 4:142; SW 1:483.

63. Benjamin, GS 4:141; SW 1:482.

64. There is a suggestion here that the fall into rational consciousness, which is in some sense a fall from direct connection to things, is also a fall into sequential time—and perhaps, too, into ordinary language; see Benjamin, GS 4:142; GS 1:483. For the different kind of future from that based on sequential time, see GS 6:84; SW 1:398.

66. Ibid., GS 6:190; SW 2:298. For the gambler’s Zeitmoment, see also Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, O12a,2, which addresses as well the issue of acceleration. See too O2a,5; O4a. For hazard (viz. Hasard), a term suggestively combining notions of chance, danger, and potential happiness, see *Arcades Project*, O7a,5; O7a,7; O10a,5; O11,2.

67. It is also crucial to his notion of modernity; see Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, “Fashion” (B2,1): the advent of new velocities, which gave life an altered rhythm.


69. Benjamin, GS 6:190; SW 2:298. See too *Arcades Project*, O13, 3, GS 5:639; *Arcades Project*, 513: “The proscription of gambling could have its deepest roots in the fact that a natural gift of humanity, one which, directed toward the highest objects, elevates the human being beyond itself, only drags him down when applied to one of the meanest objects: money. The gift in question is presence of mind. Its highest manifestation is the reading that in each case is divinatory.”

70. The importance of such movement to realizing the happy moment of connection is something we saw adumbrated in more modest form in the Egg Cottage episode in *Der Stechlin*.

71. Benjamin, GS 6:190; SW 2:298. Consider again the passage from “Der Erzähler”: “The liberating magic which the fairy tale has at its disposal does not bring nature into play in a mythical way, but points to its complicity with liberated man. A mature man feels this complicity only occasionally—that is, when he is happy” (GS 2:438–465; SW 3:157). Magic, complicity with nature, occasionality, and “Glück”: all conjoined in a related, if different, description of reading.


73. For Hesse’s efforts to get Benjamin’s *Berliner Kindheit* published, see Eiland and Jennings, *A Critical Life*, 299, 437.

74. This will need qualification: In “Kulturgeschichte des Spielzeugs,” Benjamin clearly sees children as historically situated against the nineteenth century (GS 3:117; SW 2:116). But then in “Kinderliteratur” he seems to have the child’s relation to primers recapitulate that of history itself (GS 7:250–257; SW 2:250–256); more below.

75. GS 6:127; SW 3:253.

76. For Stimmung as one of the group of terms—including aura—that Benjamin uses to describe the realm, activity, and effect of sympatheia, see below (also the introduction).

77. The phrase is from James Rolleston’s translation of Bernd Witte, *Walter Benjamin: An Intellectual Biography* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 11, which is itself paraphrasing both Friedrich Schlegel and Benjamin himself; see GS 1:1237; SW 4:405.

78. GS 2:371; SW 2:510.


80. As is not unusual for Benjamin, the vignette is repeated in revised form across several works. Here, see also *Berliner Chronik*. 
82. Or is (potentially) carried over into the future/carries with it a renewed future thrust (see GS 1:1237; SW 4:405).
83. We might compare this to a passage from Berliner Chronik: “This dead corner of the Zoological Garden was an image of what was to come, a prophesying place. It must be considered certain that there are such places; indeed, just as there are plants that primitive peoples claim confer the power of clairvoyance, so there are places endowed with such power” (GS 6:484; SW 2:610).
84. Eliot, Four Quartets, 133.
85. See Werner Hamacher, “‘Jetzt’: Benjamin zur historischen Zeit,” Benjamin Studien 1 (2002): 147–183; and Michael G. Levine, A Weak Redemptive Power: Figures of a Time to Come in Benjamin, Derrida, and Celan (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014). The aspect is also suggested in the introductory remarks in Berliner Kindheit to “The Reading Box,” where Benjamin writes, “We can never entirely recover what has been forgotten. And this is perhaps a good thing. The shock of repossession would be so devastating that we would immediately cease to understand our longing. But we do understand it; and the more deeply what has been forgotten lies buried within us, the better we understand this longing” (GS 4:267; SW 3:395). On longing (Sehnsucht), see below.
86. Hansen, “Benjamin’s Aura,” 368.
87. Significantly, the thwarted wish is described with the same word—envy (Neid)—that figures so decisively in the second thesis of “Über den Begriff der Geschichte”: see Hamacher, “Jetzt.” For the importance of the wish, and especially the wish made in childhood, see “Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire” GS 1:634–635; SW 4:331 (where Benjamin also says that the gambler does not wish in this way).
88. GS 4:113; SW 1:263. All references to this vignette are on these pages.
90. This is signaled here by the way the description of the child shifts from the second to the third person at the moment he enters the text.
91. Although here elaborated only in relation to the child, and elsewhere as far less immediately accessible to grown-ups, Benjamin nevertheless will also claim that “something of this perspective is contained in every act of reading,” where the text’s given meaning becomes “merely the background on which rest the shadows cast” by one’s arbitrarily imposed focus or desires, “like figures in relief.” See the “Denkbild,” “Brezel, Feder, Pause, Klage, Firlefanz,” GS 4:432–433; SW 2:726ff. For adult reading, see below.
95. GS 6:110f.; SW 1:50f.
96. GS 6:111; SW 1:51. Although the word Stimmung does not, as it did for Keller and Fontane, appear often in Benjamin as a synonym for sympatheia,
does still occur, for example, in his discussion of surrealism, and then elsewhere in his discussion of aura, another of his magical terms related to *sympatheia* and something of a precursor of the mimetic faculty (see the introduction).


99. This “porous” realm of colors is also described as this “cloud at the core of things” (das Stumme, das Lockere, das . . . im Kern der Dinge wölkt; “Das Mummerehlen,” in *Berliner Kindheit*, GS 4:262; SW 3:392).


102. “All form, every outline that man perceives, corresponds to something in him that enables him to reproduce it” (Aller Form nämlich, allem Umriß, den der Mensch wahrnimmt, entspricht er selbst in dem Vermögen, ihn hervorzubringen, GS 4:613ff.; SW 1:442); the body as the organ of active relations (ibid.); as the medium of the child’s reading, and reading as a form of enactment (GS 3:19ff.; SW 1:411).

103. See too “Über die Sprache des Menschen und die Sprache überhaupt,” discussed below.

104. As he says, the child always ignores the *noli me tangere* and *kritzelt* instead (GS 3:19ff.; SW 1:411). In “Lesendes Kind,” he notes that, when reading, “one hand always lies upon the page” (GS 4:113; SW 1:463).


107. For color versus sound rather than equivalent, see “Aussicht ins Kinderbuch,” GS 4:613ff.; SW 1:442; for sound as pure nature, see “Die Bedeutung der Sprache in Trauerspiel und Tragödie,” GS 2:137f.; SW 1:59f.


109. GS 2:137f.; SW 1:60.

110. The connection to color is conveyed in the description of *tönende* snowflakes, where elsewhere snowflakes are the image of enveloping colors: GS 4:613ff.; SW 1:435.

111. GS 7:250f.; SW 2:251.


114. GS 4:613ff.; SW 1:436.

115. GS 3:18; SW 1:409.


117. The *Zauber-bücher* to which Benjamin refers seem to be what in English we call “mix ’n’ match” books; the example he gives of the dress-up book is *Isabel-las Verwandlungen*, GS 4:613ff.; SW 1:437.
118. GS 4:83; SW 1:463; earlier called tönende snowflakes, GS 4:609; SW 1:435.

119. The rebus-like picture books in which “alle Substantiva, die das irgend zulassen, durch schön ausgemalte sachliche oder allegorische Bildchen bedeutet [sind]” (GS 4:611; SW 1:437) also signal the beginning of the tendency “die Anschauung so weit wie nur möglich vom Wort, geschweige vom Buchstaben zu emanzipieren” (GS 7:251; SW 2:251).

120. For the Sehnsucht, again, see also “The Reading Box,” GS 4:267; SW 3:395: see note 85 above.

121. For the vitalists, theosophy, and anthroposophy, see Hansen, “Benjamin’s Aura,” 336–339.

122. For the Dingwelt of the child’s play world as humanly produced, see GS 3:113ff.; SW 2:116, 118.

123. Certainly the distance from a natural world of sympathetic relations is far more the case than with the child Meretlein or Anna in Keller’s novel.

124. This is in contradiction to the vitalists. For modernism as a move from a poetics of connection to one of detachment, see Barbara Stafford, Visual Analogy: Consciousness as the Art of Connecting (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 8–54.

125. One might speculate that it is due in part, too, to the equally increased antipathy toward the natural world, itself partly a reflexive response to the increased detachment from “nature” on the part of the urbanized, technologized, and intellectualized adult; and partly, too, a reactive, considered response to the perceived dangers of the vitalists.

126. GS 7:792; SW 2:692.

127. The distinction between identity and similarity is a crucial one for Benjamin’s thinking about mimesis, which is to say, the mimetic faculty, perhaps nowhere more urgently than here.


129. “Die Mummerehlen” comes in several versions, most fully in the 1934 version (GS 4:260–263; SW 3:390–393); the quoted sentence actually adumbrates it and is from one of the precursor essays to “Lehre vom Ähnlichen,” the “Denkfigur” of 1933, “Die Lampe,” GS 7:794; SW 2:693.

130. GS 4:261; SW 3:392.

131. For Vorwelt, see Benjamin, “Franz Kafka,” GS 2:409–438; SW 2:794–816; for Urgeschichte, “Paris, Hauptstadt des XIX. Jahrhunderts”; for Stimmung, “Surrealismus,” where Benjamin writes: “Surrealism brings the immense forces of ‘Stimmung’ concealed in past things to the point of explosion”; and insofar as they do so, the surrealists are, he says, “visionaries and augurs” (GS 2:300, 299; SW 2:210). Elsewhere, in “Kleine Geschichte der Photographie,” he uses Stimmung and Aura as synonyms (GS 3:378–379; SW 2:519); and in “Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire,” he refers to Aura as the breath of prehistory (Hauch von Vorgeschichte, GS 1:643; SW 4:336); Miriam Hansen in turn refers to “aura” as an early formulation of the mimetic faculty (“Benjamin, Cinema, and Experience,” 357), and has this to say about it: “The reflexivity of [such] a mode of perception, its reciprocity across eons, seems to both hinge upon and bring to fleeting consciousness an archaic element in our present senses, a forgotten trace of our material bond with nonhuman nature” (“Benjamin’s Aura,” 346).
132. Compare how in “Die Mummerehlen” and elsewhere in *Berliner Kindheit*, the words to which the child yields are first distorted by him (GS 4:260–263; SW 3:390–393).

133. “Kulturgeschichte des Spielzeugs,” GS 3:117; SW 2:116 (see too “Spielzeug und Spielen,” GS 3:128; SW 2:118); “Alte Vergessene Kinderbücher,” GS 3:16f.; SW 1:408. The connotations of *sprunghaft* are similar to those we connected with the knight’s move in chapter 2 (in German, the knight in chess is *der Springer*).

134. GS 4:115; SW 1:465.


136. Ibid.


138. It is perhaps worth stressing how this model of the child’s place in the spectral world of hidden embedded relations matches up with Benjamin’s model of aura; see the discussion of aura and *Stimmung* in the introduction.


140. For a qualification of its value for the adult (similar to the qualification for the child), see GS 3:133, quoted in Eiland and Jennings, A Critical Life, 213.


143. Eiland and Jennings, A Critical Life, argue for a crucial awakening to the power of nature when Benjamin migrated to Ibiza in Spain, where he wrote many of the essays associated with the mimetic faculty, including that from which this quotation comes: if we follow this, these moonlit moments are crucially “southern,” as is this nature.

144. GS 7:792–794; SW 2:692.

145. This suggests how every memory can become a dialectical image, via the similitude of past thing and present memory; and how the “recognizability” that divines the dialectical image is an instance of the mimetic faculty at work.

146. GS 2:99; SW 2:12.

147. GS 2:99f.; SW 2:13. “We, the time of things, know no time” seems to refer to an experience of something like the Bergsonian *durée*, the sense of continuity to our subjective experience that links past, present, and future seamlessly together and so negates the sense of (clock) time itself. Although important in itself, it is not necessarily so to the present analysis, except insofar as it secures one pathway back to childhood, and insofar as its interruption (by the interval) will provide another, based not on continuity but on similitude.

148. GS 2:99; SW 2:12.

149. Ibid.

150. GS 2:102; SW 2:15.

151. For these connective correspondences as themselves magical correspondences, see the essay “Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire,” where the significance
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of the “yearly” (jährlich) time of commemoration (Eingedenken and its association with rituals or festivities) in the correspondences is also laid out: GS 1:605–653; SW 4:333f.

152. A comparative thought to close out this section: in Keller, magic is practiced on another, and as a form of actio in distans; in Fontane, magic is practiced communally, on the self and others at once (as Geselligkeit); in Benjamin, magic is practiced on oneself, especially on one’s past self, via memory as its own form of actio in distans.


156. Benjamin, GS 2:147; SW 2:67.

157. I am tempted to say that this language of things is a “dark” one, in the Wolfian sense evoked in chapter 1 to describe Stimmung: below representation, but striving toward it, and so the aesthetic par excellence—and a variant of Stimmung itself.

158. GS 2:147; SW 2, 67. As discussed in the introduction, Benjamin formulates this in terms more clearly approaching Neoplatonism in “Der Erzähler,” while still (in the word kreatürlich) retaining a Judeo-Christian inflection: GS 2:460–463; SW 3:159–161.

159. And knew it as good: man’s subsequent knowledge, or judgment, of “good and evil” is thus fatuous or distorting, since originally and essentially it’s all good.

160. Thus, Benjamin writes, “Through the word, man is bound to the language of things. The human word is the name of things”—and so, he adds, “Hence, it is no longer conceivable, as the bourgeois view of language maintains, that the word has an accidental relation to its object” (GS 2:150; SW 1:69).

161. See note 20, our delayed explication of the term Schuldzusammenhang. Benjamin is explicitly conflating the Fall in Eden with that of the Tower of Babel: the fall into human “knowledge” is also the fall into human “language.” This is also why, Benjamin says, a mystical linguistic theory that contends the word simply is the essence of the thing is as misconceived as the bourgeois theory: it fails to recognize the loss and dislocations occasioned by the Fall.

162. GS 2:155; SW 1:73.

163. GS 2:153; SW 1:71.
164. GS 2:146; SW 1:66. Note how this contrasts with Keller, where God guarantees realism: we might say the “Fall” is one from realism as well. Revelation (Offenbarung) is in many ways the opposite of divination; and even in the Neoplatonists, the direct communication or revelation initiated by the divine is contrasted to the residual divine communication that can be ferreted out of the material world by natural magic.

165. This turn to ancient traditions includes, albeit more mutedly, their present forms in both occult science and ethnology.


167. GS 2:205, 206; SW 2:695.

168. As he suggests elsewhere, the first magic knowledge or reading of the world is based on a kind of ahnen or presentiment based on a kind of ahmen or imitation of the ähnlich or similar—a mode of reading derived from our Ahnen or ancestors. GS 7:795; SW 2:717: for Ahnen, see Hamacher, “Wolke.”

169. This distinction between modern and ancient physiognomy was mentioned earlier in connection with fate and handwriting; see above.

170. Obviously so in the case of animals, but really no less so in the case of astrology’s tracking of the movement of the planets and stars (an animation reinforced by their perceived resemblance to animals).

171. GS 2:206; SW 2:695.

172. GS 2:207; SW 2:696.

173. And not only in Benjamin, but also in Eliot and others.

174. “Die Lampe,” GS 7:792; SW 2:691. See also “Der Erzähler”: “Consider the story ‘The Alexandrite,’ which transports the reader into ‘that old time when the stones in the womb of the earth and the planets at celestial heights were still concerned with the fate of men—unlike today, when both in the heavens and beneath the earth everything has grown indifferent to the fates of the sons of men, and no voice (Stimme) speaks to them from anywhere, let alone does their bidding’” (GS 2:43; SW 3:153). Do note how this passage suggests a link between Benjamin’s notion of the “Stimmung concealed in [past] things” (GS 2:300; SW 2:210) and Stimme.

175. GS 2:205; SW 2:695.

176. Somewhat surprisingly, memory is not one of them, even though as we said earlier, he elsewhere conceives of memory as one of the primary sites for the present operation of the mimetic faculty for modern man/the present-day adult.

177. “Its magic is different . . . but equally magical” (Seine Magie ist eine andere . . . aber gleich sehr Magie, GS 2:153; SW 1:71). There is an inherent ambiguity to the idea of similitude in the mimetic faculty that makes this issue even more fraught, since similarity seemingly hesitates between identity and difference. Benjamin puzzles over some of these difficulties in the fragment “Analogie und Verwandtschaft” (GS 6:43–44; SW 1:207–209), noting in a Vorbemerkung how the lack of clarity in his analysis of the title’s two terms stems from his failure to distinguish clearly between Gleichheit and Ähnlichkeit.

178. We might ask, does the child or the ancient diviner have an unconscious for Benjamin? To a decisive degree I would say no; also that, as for Lacan, the unconscious for him is the product of consciousness, rather than, as for the vitalists,
something that precedes it. See the essay “Franz Kafka,” on the Vorwelt as a product of social organization (where, on the other hand, he implies everything forgotten merges: GS 2:421, 430; SW 2:803, 809f.). Perhaps the best evidence for the distinction is the line in “Zum Bilde Prousts” that states that Proust’s finger points, but it cannot touch (GS 2:321; SW 2:245).

179. Sigrid Weigel, Entstellte Ähnlichkeit: Walter Benjamins theoretischer Stil (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1997).

180. Or, similarly, how the names of man might differ from the word of God. The magic of language at stake is admittedly quite different in Benjamin from that in Fontane, in once again having no discernible interpersonal, “human” dimension and, too, in playing off not so much the semantic values of language as material ones, as in the ancient or child’s world.

181. Foucault, The Order of Things, 43.

182. GS 2:207; SW 2:696.


184. GS 2:209; SW 2:697.

185. For Benjamin on the special force, and fatefulness, of proper names, see “Über die Sprache” (cited in chapter 2).

186. We can also add those experiences of the child disappointed by the gap between word and thing, such as with Pfaueninsel, GS 7:408–409; SW 3:366.

187. Menninghaus, Sprachmagie, 66, also stresses the inadequacy of single words and the need for the syntagmatic for understanding Benjamin’s point. For the notion of convoluted or intertwined temporality (verschränkte Zeit), see “Zum Bilde Prousts,” GS 2:320; SW 2:244.

188. See Benjamin, “Surrealismus”: “And it is as magical experiments with words, not as artistic dabbling, that we must understand the passionate phonetic and graphic transformational games that have run through the whole literature of the avant-garde for the past fifteen years” (GS 2:295–310; SW 2:212).

189. For the reference to the schoolboy and ABC book here, GS 2:209; SW 2:697.

190. For the “character” (not mentioned by Benjamin), see Collins, Magic, 73, 75–77.

191. GS 2:208; SW 2:697.

192. For this understanding of essence, see “Zur Astrologie,” GS 6:193; SW 2:685.

193. In “Über das mimetische Vermögen,” Benjamin captures both the loss and the recuperation in the word liquidieren (GS 2:213), which ends the essay; cf. ergießen in “Lehre,” GS 2:205.

194. The idea of the false stakes of happiness in modern reading is sketched out in the essays “Der Erzähler” and “Zum Bilde Prousts.”


196. SW 2:698.
198. Described as happening in the ominous fullness of Zarathustra’s noon, when things and their shadows are joined: GS 4:428; SW 2:702.
199. I am aware that this is in some ways the reverse or mirror image of the example just quoted.