

F. Hillis Miller (Topographies)

§ 9 Slipping Vaulting Crossing:

Heidegger

"Heidegger misses everything but in an interesting way."  
—Jacques Derrida

I placed a jar in Tennessee  
And round it was, upon a hill.  
It made the slovenly wilderness  
Surround that hill.

—Wallace Stevens, "Anecdote of the Jar"

An alternative title for this chapter might have been: "Double-Crossing Heidegger." "Double-crossing" may be read either as a participle or as an adjective. The double-crossing may be done either by Heidegger or to him. The purport of the two titles will become clearer as the chapter progresses.

The chapter on Hardy in this book cites Heidegger as an authority on topography. Heidegger is taken more or less "straight" there. Nevertheless, his renets on topography are tentatively challenged, at least at one point. A question is raised about the equivocation in one of Heidegger's phrases. He says a bridge "admits" or "installs" the topography that rises up around it. Which is it? It makes a lot of difference. I shall return to this here. Heidegger is certainly one of the great philosophers of human topography. He is also one of the most problematic. What he says is problematic in part because he penetrates so deeply into the questions involved in this region of human thought and action. A group of Heidegger's major essays focuses on this topic: "The Thing" ("Das Ding"), "Building Dwelling Thinking" ("Bauen Wohnen Denken"), "The Origin of the Work of Art" ("Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes"). These essays contain some of the most provocative and challenging things ever said about topography. They give one to think. The question of space also has its place in *Being and Time*. What is said about space

in *Being and Time* is presupposed, as I shall show, in what is said about topography in the later essays.<sup>1</sup>

We know now, however, that reading Heidegger, taking him seriously, taking him "straight," is not a politically innocent thing to do. We know now about Heidegger's active complicity in the programs of National Socialism. We know also that Heidegger's Nazism cannot be seen as a momentary aberration having nothing to do with his "serious philosophy." [As Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Jacques Derrida, and others have shown, Heidegger's writings are pervaded by ideas that help explain why he was attracted to National Socialism.] When I began reading Heidegger forty years ago, he was studied in the United States as one of a group of "existentialist" philosophers that included Kierkegaard, Sartre, and Camus. The members of this group were read, by many people at least, without much regard for the differing political commitments of each. Now we know better. We know that even the most abstract philosophical concepts cannot be detached from their political implications.

This precept is easy to state, however, but not always all that easy to demonstrate in a given case. [The connection between philosophical or critical thinking and political commitment is often indirect, elusive, labyrinthine, not necessarily a matter of predictable, straightforward causality.] Only a careful reading of a given text can work out for that text just what the political implications of its ideas may be. [The proposition that all thinking is political is a problem, not a solution.] Derrida has shown the political implications of Heidegger's use of the word *Geist*. Lacoue-Labarthe has shown the sinister implications of what he calls Heidegger's "national aestheticism." It may be, however, that Heidegger's ideas about topography are politically neutral. [The only way to find out is to work carefully through Heidegger's own expression of those ideas. This chapter will read "Building Dwelling Thinking" to identify just what Heidegger's ideas about topography are and, by way of that, to identify just what political implications those ideas may have. It will be necessary to pay close attention to Heidegger's

words

own language, that is, his German, since questions of language and of translatability are among the things at stake in "Building Dwelling Thinking."

What does it mean to "read" Heidegger? If the propriety and feasibility of translating Heidegger into English is in question here, so also we cannot take for granted that we know what is meant in a given case, for example, this one, by "reading," or even whether it is a task that can be accomplished, though of course we do read all the time. In any case it is clear that Heidegger must be read slowly, circumspectly, with nothing taken for granted, and much attention to detail. Reading is another form of translation, though, like translation "proper," reading, it may be, is translation of a text itself already a translation of an unknown and unknowable original. These disquietudes about reading, about translation, and about "original texts" are, however, just what Heidegger would refuse to accept. He would, it appears, want to claim that the language of his essay, like a bridge swinging or vaulting over a river, has an "originality" nothing precedes, an originality that does not substitute for anything prior or "represent" anything else. All that I have to say about "Building Dwelling Thinking" centers on this refusal. What I am going to say could be assembled under the label: "the refusal of the X in Heidegger" or "Heidegger's refusal of the crossing." These phrases name three different refusals: the refusal of chiasmus; the refusal of figurative substitutions; the refusal of the "unknown X."

"Building Dwelling Thinking" begins by invoking a certain *wir* ("we"), as I have done already in saying "Now we know." Who is this "we," the we who begins in Heidegger's essay by saying "In what follows we"? A few lines later he says: "We attain to dwelling, so it seems, only by means of building." Are these two "we's" the same? If so, the "we," it appears, is simultaneously Heidegger himself, the authoritative professorial we, from whom "we" the readers or listeners are excluded, and also at the same time it is we the ignorant listeners who think we build in order to dwell. Heidegger in the second "we" mockingly and ironically identifies himself with us ignorant readers. At the same time he implies that

he knows better. The implicit promise in the "we" is that we too will come to know better by the time we have finished the essay or that we already know better without knowing it and shall come to know we know it. Then we shall have reached the point where the speaker of the professorial "we" in the opening phrase of the essay already stands, that is, at the end of the essay. [The "we" is at once at the beginning of the path to be followed and already at its end.] We must already implicitly (or rather actually) be at the end if we are ever to get there. Heidegger's conclusions are for his readers recognitions rather than discoveries. They are something we knew already but have forgotten. We the readers will join "ourselves" at the end when we discover that we have always already been one with Martin Heidegger, without knowing it. We have all along been part of the we in the name of which he speaks in the beginning. We have only to listen to the silence of language, heed its call, and we shall be where he is.

This initial and at the same time ultimate "we" is caught in the "ecstasies" of temporality, as defined by Heidegger in *Being and Time*. For Heidegger time always stands outside of itself. *Das Sein* moves forward into the future in order to come back to what it was in the past. [The use of spatial figures here to express the paradoxes of the "we" is not accidental. Of time and space it can be said that each is another form of the other, though for Heidegger time takes precedence over space, as "we" shall see.]

"Building Dwelling Thinking" has two parts: a first section to a considerable degree about language and a second section primarily about a bridge as an example of something man has built. What he says about language is problematic, to say the least. It is also, at least superficially, contradictory. Certainly it is counter-intuitive, by which I mean that it does not agree with what "we" normally think about language. "Building Dwelling Thinking," it could be said, though the essay itself does not exactly say so, has to do with the problematic relation between speaking and building. On the one hand, in the second part of the essay Heidegger says the bridge makes a site that makes a space with places, distances, and boundaries, just as Stevens's jar in Tennessee does. The bridge does this

without any help from language. The bridge, as Heidegger firmly asserts, is not a sign, or at least it is not the sort of sign traditionally called a "symbol." It is not, that is, a representative or delegate by likeness of something else. On the other hand, in the first part of the essay Heidegger says only language, if we listen to its silence, can tell us this: "Language [*Die Sprache*] withdraws from man its simple and high speech [*Sprechen*]. But its primal call [*Zuspruch*] does not thereby become incapable of speech; it merely falls silent. Man, though, fails to heed [*achten*] this silence" (E148; G22; the translation misses the play from *Sprache* to *Sprechen* to *Zuspruch*).

What does that mean: "heed this silence?" How would we know there is a silence to listen to, or be ware of, if the words "build" and "dwell" have perfectly good everyday meanings now, covering over with anything but silence the primordial meanings Heidegger wants to recover? The silence is not noticeable unless you already know it is there. This is like the paradox, or better, the double bind, of the "we" that is both at the beginning and at the end of a journey of investigation. Or it is like the double bind of biblical parable. If you need the parable to find out how to cross over to the kingdom of heaven, you will not be able to understand it. If you can understand it, you will not need it because you already know what it has to teach you. This analogy is evidence of the profound influence on Heidegger's language of the rhetoric of biblical Christianity, in spite of the fact that Heidegger more than once insisted on the unbridgeable gulf that lies between philosophy and theology.<sup>3</sup> If Heidegger's philosophy has Christian motifs without Christ, it often also has what James Joyce, or rather Stephen Dedalus, in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, calls "the true scholastic stink." Examples are Heidegger's analyses of the "fall" or of "the call of conscience" in *Being and Time*.

What is the place of language, for Heidegger, in topographical building or dwelling? Even though much of "Building Dwelling Thinking," as I have said, is about language, the title does not name language. Rather, it names "thinking" as a third activity along with building and dwelling. Presumably language has something to do with thinking, though that should not be taken for

granted. We perhaps think with language or about language, so that language is the main tool in the "Workshop [*Werkstatt*] of thinking" (E161; G36). It is the tool we need for what Heidegger elsewhere calls "the craft of thinking" (*das Handwerk des Denkens*).<sup>4</sup> He does not, however, exactly say that, or he says it with much complexity of nuance.

An important paragraph in the essay, as I have said, firmly rejects the idea that the bridge is a symbol. The happenings in building and dwelling, it seems, must be material events, not signs of anything else. The bridge is not a symbol. It is a thing. There is nothing rhetorical about it. It is not an expression of any kind. Here is the way Heidegger puts this:

To be sure, people think of the bridge as primarily and really *merely* a bridge; after that, and occasionally [*gelegentlich*], it might possibly express [*ausdrücken*] much else besides; and as such an expression [*Ausdruck*] it would then become a symbol, for instance a symbol of those things we mentioned before. But the bridge, if it is a true bridge, is never first of all a mere bridge and then afterward a symbol. And just as little is the bridge in the first place exclusively a symbol, in the sense that it expresses [*ausdrückt*] something that strictly speaking does not belong to it. If we take the bridge strictly as such, it never appears as an expression [*Ausdruck*]. The bridge is a thing [*ein Ding*] and *only that*. (E153; G27-28)

Authentic language, in an analogous way, must be for Heidegger literal. For profound reasons, he has a great distaste for metaphor, for the figurative dimension of language generally. His whole philosophical enterprise depends on assuming that language says what it says, just as a bridge is what it is. It would seem, then, that the bridge and the word "bridge" are, for Heidegger or by Heidegger, decisively separated.

But things are not quite that simple. Both the bridge and the word "bridge," according to Heidegger, "gather," whatever that means. This fact reveals their deep consonance. If they are separated, they are nevertheless in resonance, in *Stimmung*, as it is said in German. Do "things," that is, the particular kinds of things that have been constructed by man, such as bridges, do this gathering in

a way that is analogous to the way language gathers? What is the relation between language and things? Is language a thing in the sense of being a gatherer? It may seem Heidegger thinks so. That might mean, for example, that Stevens's poem about the jar in Tennessee acts analogously to the way the jar itself acts. At the end of the essay Heidegger says thinking and building are the same, or at any rate parallel, two ways of doing the same thing, namely, gathering the fourfold one—earth, sky, gods, and men:

But that thinking itself belongs to dwelling in the same sense as building, although in a different way, may perhaps be attested to by the course of thought here attempted.

Building and thinking are, each in its own way, inescapable [*unumgänglich*], impossible to go beyond, uncrossable, like a bridge you cannot travel for dwelling. The two, however, are also insufficient for dwelling so long as each busies itself with its own affairs in separation instead of listening to one another. They are able to listen if both—building and thinking—belong to dwelling [*dem Wohnen gehören*], if they remain within their limits [*Grenzen*] and realize that the one as much as the other comes from the workshop of long experience and incessant practice. (E160–61; G35–36)

“Dwelling” (*Wohnen*) is the more universal word here. It names the broadest range of all the things people (Heidegger would say “men”) do in living in a place. Thinking and building are different ways of dwelling, subordinate to it as to the more universal activity of Dasein’s “being in the world.”

But just how could building and thinking “listen to one another”? The *protopoieia* here seems an example of the *figuration* Heidegger wants to avoid at all costs. What justifies this figure? Thinking about the word “gatherers” is surely different from the bridge gathering the landscape around it. Or is it? “Man” builds a bridge. “Man” writes a poem or a philosophical essay, such as “Building Dwelling Thinking.” What, for Heidegger, is the relation between those two activities? An anti-Heideggerian like Paul de Man emphasizes the danger of confusing language and things, or at any rate language and things as they appear to us phenomenally. A passage in “The Resistance to Theory,” quoted in

chapter 8 above, speaks of the folly of growing grapes by the luminosity of the word “sun,” though de Man goes on to say we commit versions of that folly all the time, for example, in assuming that our lives are ordered according to purely linguistic categories of continuity and wholeness. (To commit this folly, to confuse phenomenal with linguistic reality, is, for de Man, the fundamental ideological error.) It is ideology. Could it be that Heidegger commits that error, in this case asserting that active thinking with the word “gather” will gather? If so, what larger ideological construct in Heidegger’s thought would this error support?

An answer to this question may be approached by way of the relation between language and landscape in what Heidegger says. For Heidegger the landscape is already invested with bridges, buildings, roads, peasant farmhouses, forests with paths in them, some of them paths that lead nowhere (in German *Holzwege*, the title of one of Heidegger’s major collections of essays). Heidegger’s landscape is also always already mapped. It is inscribed with place names, even if they are generic rather than proper ones: words like “bridge,” “stream,” “banks,” and so on. Or rather, Heidegger’s landscape is already invested with the German words for these things: *Brücke*, *Strom*, *Ufer*. The landscape, for Heidegger, seems to be written over in the German language. It is not, however, as for Wallace Stevens, written on with unique and proper place names, names like “Tennessee,” “Key West,” “Haddam,” “New Haven,” or “Olney,” however much Stevens may be aware that these place names inscribe a history of conquest. Heidegger’s landscape is labeled, rather, with general names like *Brücke*. “Building Dwelling Thinking” does, it is true, name toward its end one particular bridge, the old bridge at Heidelberg, as an example of the way you can be somewhere distant by thinking about it. It is an odd moment. Something local and materially real enters into a discourse that remains at an austere level of abstraction. In any case, words like *Brücke* and *Ufer*, it may be, like universal terms for human activities such as *Bauen* and *Wohnen*, have “primal” meanings that still call out to us if we can listen to their silence, whatever that means.

To understand what that means we need to look more closely at

the crucial early paragraph on language. Having said that "building is not merely a means and a way [*Mittel und Weg*] toward dwelling—to build is in itself already to dwell" (E146; G20), Heidegger asks a question that may already have sprung into the minds of his auditors: "Who tells us this? Who gives us a standard [*Maß*] at all by which we can take the measure [*durchmessen*] of the nature of dwelling and building?" (ibid.). [The answer is that language tells us this, if we can heed its silence. We can understand building and dwelling, not by studying examples of houses, roads, bridges, and so on, in their history and locales, but only by listening to language.] On the face of it this is an absurdity: "It is language that tells us about the nature of a thing provided that we respect [*achten*, again] language's own nature" (E146; G20). Here there is a slight mistranslation, as well as a missing again of some wordplay, in this case between *Zuspruch* and *Sprache*. Heidegger says: "Der Zuspruch [call, appeal; cf. this word in a passage cited earlier] über das Wesen einer Sache kommt zu uns aus der Sprache, vorausgesetzt, daß wir deren eigenes Wesen achten." A more literal translation would be: "The call about the nature of a thing comes to us from language, if it is posited [*vorausgesetzt*] that we respect its own being." Just how is it that language, if we respect its own nature [Wesen], will tell us the nature [Wesen] of a thing [Sache], also: "state of affairs," not, in this case, *Dingel*? The answer is suggested in an odd sentence at the end of the paragraph. Language, says Heidegger, brings language out, "voices" it, brings it to speech (*zum Sprechen bringt*). Doing this is the highest thing we can do with language: "Among all the appeals [*Zusprüchen*] that we human beings, on our part, can help to be voiced [*zum Sprechen bringen können*] language [*die Sprache*] is the highest and everywhere the first" (E146; G20). [The highest thing we can do with language is to answer the appeal to voice language, to make language effective again, to respond to the appeal of language by something we do with language.]

Heidegger's essay grants sovereign authority to the language we are born into, the language of our ethnic group, for example, German for those whose mother tongue is German. He does not

allow that a given language might be a contingent historical creation, which could be otherwise and which is imposed on what it names, perhaps in a sense creating its human reality and meaning rather than revealing its "nature." It is possible to see already the way a certain nationalist program could be underwritten by Heidegger's ideas about language. Nevertheless, it may be a condition of sanity to believe that one's native language has a natural relation to the way things are. Is it possible to live, from day to day, in a community, with a continuous sense of the contingency of language? The recently passed law declaring English the official language of the State of California shows that something serious is at stake, something not limited to the National Socialist program.

On the basis of his presuppositions or *Voraussetzungen* about language, Heidegger goes about figuring out what building and dwelling are. He does this not by going to experience, history, facts, but by investigating the etymologies of words. This is not entirely unlike Proust's assumption, ascribed to Marcel, that the secret essence of a place is hidden in the name of the place. Heidegger's Craylism, however, is different from Marcel's. Marcel's Craylism always goes explicitly by way of figurative displacements. Quimperlé is empearled. Such figures assume the place is named in ways that encode what it is like, even in the absurd and seemingly accidental (but is it so?) materiality of the word. Heidegger, on the other hand, by an odd and unaccountable slippage, moves from language about how we must listen to the silent appeal of language to claiming that the bridge as a thing or a site does what it does, gathers, without any help from language. The same thing happens with what Heidegger says about Van Gogh's shoes in "The Origin of the Work of Art." He moves from the painting of the shoes as an artwork to the shoes themselves as an artifact, something ready to hand in the world. Heidegger's rejection of symbolism and of figures is so total that in the end he must throw away all language, throw away the very thing he began by claiming must be interrogated, listened to, responded to, with language, in order to find out what building is. Here is a place where Heidegger misses every-

thing, but in an interesting way. He misses the necessary rhetoricity of all language, including his own. Other examples are what he says about crossing the last bridge as a figure for dying. All men are "always themselves on their way to the last bridge" ("immer schon unterwegs zur letzten Brücke") (Er15; G27). The trope of life as a journey is present in this expression. Another example of an unrecognized figure is what Heidegger says about the tree of the dead ((*Totenbaum*)) as the peasant word for coffin. The matter is even more complicated just here. As Heidegger no doubt knew, or could have known if he went back to his etymological dictionary, *Baum*, tree, is probably from the same root as *Bauen*, so *Totenbaum* is the dwelling-place of the dead. Heidegger also forgets or does not notice the tropological power of the prosopopoeia whereby he speaks of language as able to speak and as able to withdraw itself, as in a famous expression in another essay, the essay on Trakl called "Language": "Language speaks" ("Die Sprache spricht") (Er90). Nothing could be more problematic than this ascription of a voice and an autonomous power of using it to language. All sorts of ideological presuppositions can be smuggled in on the basis of this claim that language masters us rather than being our tool: "Man acts as though *he* were the shaper and master of language [*Bilher und Meister der Sprache*], while in fact language remains the master [*die Herrin*] of man. ["Mistress" might be a better translation here, since *Sprache* is feminine in German.] Perhaps it is before all else man's subversion of *this* relation of dominance [*Herrschaftsverhältnisse*] that drives his nature into alienation [*Unheimliche*: more properly, homelessness]" (Er16; G20). The moral appeal of this is very strong. It makes us ashamed to think that we try to master language and makes us ready to listen, as to a sovereign leader, to what Heidegger says he hears in the silence of words.

I have said Heidegger ignores or veils the rhetoric of his own essay. What can be said about his rhetorical strategies? As in other essays, Heidegger begins by establishing a present-day context for his investigation or, as he calls it, "venture in thought." In this case the current context is the housing shortage in Germany in the years after the war. The essay was originally presented in 1951 at Darm-

stadt in a lecture series on "Mensch und Raum" ("Humans and Space"). Having established a current context, Heidegger then goes on in his characteristic late essays to express ironically what most people think about his topic. This includes both received opinion and the metaphysical tradition from Plato on (sometimes the modern tradition of subjectivist thought since Descartes). The traditional or everyday assumption in this case is the presupposition that building is a means toward the end of dwelling. Then he proceeds to show that this is all wrong. The obvious question is: "How do you know that, Professor Heidegger?" His answer is: "Because language tells me so, and language is the mistress of man." In the letter to a student at the end of "Das Ding" ("The Thing"), Heidegger gives a somewhat more complicated answer to this question. You must think, he says, you must learn the craft of thinking [*das Handwerk des Denkens*], in response to a call. This call, both essays affirm, is not simply from language. It speaks rather by way of the silence of language, not by way of the words themselves as they are ordinarily understood and used today.

Even before this opening move, Heidegger in an initial paragraph sets up the connection of thinking to dwelling and building he will argue for against received opinion. He does this by way of the word "is" (*ist*). His inquiry is a fundamental one, he says, having to do with the essential being of things. He wants to think what building and dwelling are, that is, as he says, he wants to take building back into the domain of the "is": "rather it [this venture in thought (*dieser Denkersuch*)] traces building back into that domain to which everything that *is* [was ist] belongs" (Er15; Gr9). Heidegger's rhetoric turns on confusing the "is" of profound identity with the "is" of figurative equivalence. The trick is to utter sentences like "A bridge is a thing." Such sentences sound banal enough. They are ordinary language. Who would disagree with the proposition that a bridge is a thing? Then he goes about persuading you by a sideways displacement through a series of such sentences that what you have really said, without knowing it, when you utter this sentence, is that a bridge gathers the fourfold one of mortals, divinities, sky, and earth, or something else extremely unlikely that

you did not know you had said. Language speaks through my speech, whether I know it or not. *Die Sprache spricht*.

The etymological paragraphs beginning “What, then, does *Bauen*, ‘building,’ mean?” (“Was heißt nun Bauen?”) (Er46; G20) imply without quite saying so that all this can only be thought in German. Only in German would *Ich bin* for “I am” be related to *Bauen*, though “been” and “be” in English have the same root. But they have no evident connection to the English word “building.” The route Heidegger follows only exists in the German language. What does that mean? That building and dwelling are the same only in German? No, something more problematic, namely that thinking in German is universally valid, as when Fichte said anyone can philosophize—so long as they do it in the German language. Heidegger blithely draws universal, apodictic conclusions from the idiosyncrasies of a particular language or family of languages. He includes Greek, Latin, and sometimes, as in “The Thing,” a word or two of English, but rarely French, Italian, or Spanish, much less Japanese, Chinese, or Hindi. Nothing is said about the problems of translation this raises. If you read “Building Dwelling Thinking” in translation, you are being told two contradictory things simultaneously: “listen to the appeal of language” and “you are out of it if you cannot listen to German, hear its *Zuspruch*, or maybe that of Greek.” Here is a place where as late as the 1950’s Heidegger’s nationalism discretely surfaces. The whole program of “national aestheticism,” with its dangerous proximity to National Socialism, is implicit in these etymological reflections. Nor is it all that easy to dismiss this as dangerous nonsense. How are you going to think if you do not do it in some language or other? And what thinker, at least in the philosophical tradition, is going to be willing to admit that his or her thinking is good only for that language and has no validity when translated? Yet an important part of “Building Dwelling Thinking” is untranslatable. It depends on the material idiosyncrasies of the German language. This is obvious enough when German words are being discussed, but what about the rest of the essay? Could that be at least to some degree untranslatable too? Earlier I said “reading is translation—of

something itself a translation of an unavailable text, a secret text.” Such an idea depends on seeing translation as problematic.

Heidegger’s etymological reflections lead him to the idea of oblivion or forgetting. This is another problematic concept. It is problematic in the sense that he ascribes to language as an autonomous activity what is the effect of his own rhetoric. He substitutes a personified language for his rhetorical activity. We have, he says, forgotten what *bauen* really means: “The real sense of *bauen*, namely dwelling, falls into oblivion [*Veressenheit*]” (Er48; G22). What does that mean? How did that forgetting happen? This is another way of asking: What, for Heidegger, is the relation between thinking and language? How is it that Heidegger can remember, that is, remove the veil of forgetting when all the rest of us have forgotten? By listening to language? But that is now a place of silence. By looking words up in an etymological dictionary? Nothing could be more problematic. Heidegger had taken that issue up overtly in “The Thing,” presented as a lecture in 1950, the year before “Building Dwelling Thinking”: “The suspicion arises that the understanding of the nature of thingness [*des Wesens des Dinges*] that we are trying to reach may be based on the accidents of an etymological game. The notion becomes established and is already current that, instead of giving thought to essential matters [*Wesensverhalte*], we are here merely using the dictionary” (Er74; G46–47). Heidegger’s response is flatly to deny this: “The opposite is true.” But he does not really explain how or why this is the case, beyond asserting that “dictionaries have little to report about what words, spoken thoughtfully, say” (Er75; G47). Having said this, he goes on serenely with the discussion of the basic meanings of Old High German *Thing* and *Dinc*, along with many related words, in the following pages of the essay.

These etymological speculations are grounded on the assumption that “language speaks,” that words go on meaning what they mean even if no one understands them any longer. This presupposes the covert personification of language that is so important throughout the essay. It is as if language itself chose to hide itself, to

Personen  
aus sprachl

keep itself secret, to cover itself with a veil. [Language acts like a person, and a rather cruel and willful person, at that.] This hiding is adduced as evidence of the sovereignty of the primal meanings Heidegger teases out of the history of the words he discusses. The fact that language withdraws these "real meanings" is evidence that they are primal. This seems thinking in a circle: "That language in a way retracts [zurücknimmt] the real meaning of the word *bauen*, which is dwelling, is evidence of the primal nature [*das Ursprüngliche*] of these meanings; for with the essential words of language, their true meaning easily falls into oblivion in favor of foreground meanings. . . . Language withdraws [*entzieht*] from man its simple and high speech" (E148; G22). If language speaks, it can, apparently, also choose not to speak. Does Heidegger really mean that, that language acts on its own in this way, as if it were a person or a god? This idea is, of course, a version of the personification of Being elsewhere in Heidegger's work. Being withdraws, leaving Nothing. Our predicament is a forgetfulness of Being that Being itself has brought about. Applying the same paradigm to language, as Heidegger does in this essay, makes it easier to see what is profoundly disquieting about these personifications. [They are covert displacements of Biblical concepts about the way God can choose to turn his face away from his people, abandon them, become what Pascal called a *deus absconditus*.] To say language does this, however, is not at all the same thing. It makes it easier for the reader to glimpse the rhetorical moves behind Heidegger's argument. It brings into the open another place where Heidegger misses everything, but in an interesting way.

What Heidegger misses in this case is the possibility Nietzsche recognized over and over, the possibility Jacques Derrida has been exploring tirelessly for many years, for example in "White Mythology." This is the possibility that language speaks through me, all right, *die Sprache spricht*, but what speaks is an ideology built into language, woven into its grammar and into the metaphorical force of its conceptual words. [This ideology bears no necessary or ascertainable relation to "the truth of Being" or to any other truth. In

Derrida

Sein und Zeit  
↓  
Bibelen

fact, like any ideology, it is a confusion of linguistic with phenomenal reality.

Heidegger's claim that language has withdrawn itself is especially problematic if you set what he says in this essay about that enforced oblivion against the somewhat different argument a year earlier in "The Thing." In "Building Dwelling Thinking" he seems to be saying that once the primal meanings of words were known. Then language withdrew itself, and those meanings were forgotten. People/once knew that building is dwelling, that to be is to dwell, because language told them so. Language named clearly "man's" sense that building is dwelling. But in "The Thing" he had said something rather different, namely, that the thingness of the thing has never come into the light out of its unconcealedness. I, Martin Heidegger, in the way I think, write, use words, by a careful process of incremental repetition, am teasing the thingness of the thing out of concealment, out of its secrecy, into the light. In "The Thing" Heidegger says, "In truth, however, the thing as thing remains proscribed, nil, and in that sense annihilated. This has happened and continues to happen so essentially that not only are things no longer admitted as things, but they have never yet at all been able to appear [*zu erscheinen*] to thinking as things" (E170-71; G43). Why is it that things have never yet been able to appear to thinking as things? The answer is that they have never yet come out into the open as things. It is not a matter of some limitation in man, but a reticence in things themselves: "Man can represent [*Vorstellen*], no matter how, only what has previously come to light of its own accord and has shown itself to him in the light it brought with it [*in seinem dabei mitgebrachten Licht*]" (E171; G43). Since the bridge is a thing, presumably its thingness, that is, its power to "thing," to gather, has also not yet appeared, or been able to appear. That would be implied in "The Thing," whereas in "Building Dwelling Thinking" Heidegger says that the primal meanings of the words that would have told us this have withdrawn into oblivion.

Various ways of dealing with this apparent contradiction present themselves. It could be said, for example, that in one essay he

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speaks of things themselves, in the other essay of the words for things. But "Building Dwelling Thinking" tells us that only through language do things come into the open and then only if we can bring back from oblivion the aboriginal, *ursprüngliche*, meanings of basic words. It seems more as if Heidegger wants to have it both ways. He wants to say that he is recovering an original insight that has been lost, and at the same time he wants to claim that he has insights that have been granted to no thinker before him, not even to the Pre-Socratics at the beginning of philosophy, whose authority he so often invokes.

Heidegger's thought can be usefully set here against the important paragraphs in Marx's *German Ideology* about the rise of consciousness, language, and ideology.<sup>8</sup> These have already been discussed in a note to chapter 8. Heidegger and Marx in these passages are quite different in resonance but nevertheless similar in their basic patterns of thought. The peculiarity of what Marx says is that he describes a historical process of differentiation that is nevertheless not historical, since all the differentiation was always there already, from the beginning. Consciousness, for example, does not precede language, nor language consciousness: "The 'mind' is from the outset afflicted with the curse of being 'burdened' with matter, which here makes its appearance in the form of agitated layers of air, sounds, in short, of language. Language is as old as consciousness. [*Die Sprache ist so alt wie das Bewusstsein.*]" (E44; G377).

Animal

[Men and women are both continuous with the animal kingdom (through the difference of roles in sexual reproduction, the first division of labor), and at the same time far beyond the animal kingdom in their possession of or by ideology.] This paradox is repeated over and over in different ways in what Marx says about "Primary Historical Relations, or the Basic Aspects of Social Activity" (E41; this title is not in the German edition). Though the paragraphs in Marx describe a world-historical temporal progression starting with the first separation of man from the other animals and going by stages to the present complexities of industrial capitalism, each moment in the progression only repeats in a somewhat different way differentiations that were there already.

There is no place where you can locate a decisive transition, a definitive break in history, a watershed, threshold, or border.

For Heidegger, in a somewhat analogous way, the coming to light of primal meanings, the oblivion of these, and their coming to light again is both historical and not historical. Language was always there already, speaking, and it still does, but a process occurred whereby the primal call and the primal meanings fell into oblivion, "withdrew" (as though language acted of its own volition). Now Martin Heidegger is bringing them back to memory by carefully listening to silence, though he does not want to take responsibility for this uncovering, since it depends on decisions language makes. At the same time he wants to say it is something that he alone has done. Only he, in these bad days at least, can listen to silence, so we had better listen to him.

I have noted the way Heidegger's argument proceeds by sudden sideways slippages. A new motif not present before and not conspicuously inherent in what has been said is abruptly introduced. Often this slippage occurs by taking literally a figure implicit in one of the terms already used. This rhetorical sleight of hand is of course not overtly signaled. A good example is the displacement whereby he introduces the idea of mortality. Heidegger wants us to believe that man's mortality follows logically from the fact that to be human means to dwell. The implication is that language says it. Heidegger's own rhetorical agency is effaced. Here the slippage goes by way of a common word for human beings: "mortals" (*Sterblichen*). Heidegger gets a lot out of this term: "To be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell" (E147). The German original differs here. It is more elliptical, more cryptic: "Mensch sein heißt: als Sterbliche auf der Erde sein, heißt: wohnen" ("To be human means: to be on the earth as mortal, means: to dwell") (G21). Does the second *heißt* apply to the first or to the second phrase? Does the sentence signify that to be human means to dwell or that to be a mortal on the earth means to dwell, or does it mean both? To dwell is to be mortal! Where does the word "dwell" say that? It is certainly the case that human beings are

mortal, but this does not seem, to me at least, to follow from the fact that to be human is to dwell and to build. Why could the immortal gods, if there were or are any, not also dwell? Could animals not dwell? What does dwelling have to do with dying or being mortal? The words *Bauen* and *Wohnen*, even if Heidegger has heard their silence, do not seem to justify saying human beings alone are capable of dying, "capable of death as death" ("den Tod als Tod vermögen"): "Only human beings die [*Nur der Mensch stirbt*], and indeed continually" (E150; G24).

A similar paragraph in "The Thing" asserts that being capable of death fundamentally defines human beings, both as the basis of temporality and as the unique human connection to Being: "Only human beings die. The animal perishes [*verendet*], . . . Death is the shrine of Nothing [*der Schrein des Nichts*], that is, of that which in every respect is never something that merely exists, but which nevertheless presences [*weist*], even as the mystery of Being itself [*als das Geheimnis des Seins selbst*]. As the shrine of Nothing death harbors within itself the presenting of Being [*das Wesende des Seins*]. As the shrine of Nothing death is the shelter of Being [*das Gebirg des Seins*]. . . Mortals [*Die Sterblichen*] are who they are, as mortals, present in the shelter of being" (E178-79; G51).<sup>10</sup>

This displacement, whereby Heidegger gets from building to dwelling to death to the "presencing" of Being, is characteristic of "Building Dwelling Thinking" as a whole. A salient case is the introduction later on of the bridge as an example seemingly chosen at random. Heidegger constantly adds something in by a supplemental, sideways movement that does not logically follow from what has preceded. The logic of this slippage is a version of the general logic of supplementarity. Something new that does not quite fit is introduced as the ground of the thinking that preceded it.

What is the rationale of these displacements? Heidegger might answer that his argument presupposes a prior knowledge of his previous writings, from *Being and Time* on. *Being and Time*, notoriously, has much to say about the being toward death of Dasein. Each new essay, however, has an obligation, one might reply, to have a logic of its own, to make its connections explicit. The stark

juxtapositions that vault across fissures and crevasses in Heidegger's thinking here may bring into the open discontinuities in his thought generally. Another way to put this is to say that the vaultings may indicate the way Heidegger's argument goes by way of many small performative positings (*Ersetzungen*) disguised as seamlessly connected insights dictated to him by words, as "language speaks." I shall return to this possibility.

As Heidegger develops his idea of the "fourfold one," he introduces not only earth and sky but also, by another unsupported slippage, the divinities. Though it is easy to see how the words *Wohnen* and *Bauen* might necessarily involve earth and sky, they contain no authority in themselves that I can see for bringing in the gods. But Heidegger hears the divinities in the words. One by one the elements of what might be called a rudimentary cosmological topography are laid down or deposited by Heidegger, like the foundation stones of a building. (The idea that man dwells by building is followed by the idea that since man is mortal his whole life is a journey toward death.) This leads to the idea that death is the Nothing that is the shelter of Being. (Man makes his journey toward death on the earth, under the sky, and before the divinities.) These separate motifs make a coherent and indissoluble unity, a fourfold one. This all-inclusive realm of man's dwelling sets up a paradigmatic scene for the bridge building in the second section of the essay. To say this realm is all-inclusive means it does not have any borders, though it does have horizons. Heidegger speaks of borders later on in the essay, but these frontiers do not seem to have any other viable culture beyond them. No other country, governed by some other laws or made up of different entities, exists over the border. (Earth, sky, divinities, and mortals make up a universal imperium.) All this is read out of the primal meanings of the words *Bauen* and *Wohnen*: "But 'on the earth' already means 'under the sky.' Both of these *also* mean 'remaining before the divinities' and include a 'belonging to men's being with one another.' By a *primal* oneness [*inner ursprünglichen Einheit*] the four—earth and sky, divinities and mortals—belong together in one" (E149; G23).

On the basis of this universal human topography and by way of

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some more wordplay or slippage, Heidegger introduces the idea that man's task is to spare and preserve: "Let us listen [*Hören wir*] once more to what language says to us. The Old Saxon *wonan*, the gothic *wunian*, like the old word *bauen*, means to remain, to stay in a place [*das Sich-Aufhalten*]. But the gothic *wunian* says more distinctly [*deutlicher*] how this remaining is experienced. *Wunian* means: to be at peace, to be brought to peace, to remain in peace. The word for peace, *Friede*, means *the free*, *das Freie*, and *fy* means: preserved from harm and danger, preserved from something, safeguarded. To free really means [*bedeutet eigentlich*] to spare" (E148-49; G23). Here is a particularly good example of the way Heidegger moves from one proposition to the next by way of the multiple meanings of words, that is, by a kind of rhetoric of the pun. He plays on the figurative ambiguity in the multiple meanings of words. He makes equivalences by taking the figures literally.

In this case the series of displacements gets him to the italicized proposition: "*The fundamental character of dwelling is this sparing and preserving*" ("Der Grundzug des Wohnens ist dieses Schonen") (E149; G23). That assertion in turn enables him to assert that if dwelling means saving and preserving, this really means setting the other three of the four free to be present: "To save really means to set something free into its own presencing [*etwas in sein eigenes Wesen freilassen*]" (E150; G24). *Wesen* is translated by Hofstadter, somewhat problematically, as presencing, though it is a participle of *sein*, to be. Dwelling is not an action for which the dwellers must take sole responsibility but an active/passive letting things be and waiting, for example, waiting for the absent gods to return: "Mor-tals dwell in that they await the divinities as divinities. . . . They wait for the intimations of their coming and do not mistake the signs [*Zeichen*] of their absence [*Fehls*]. They do not make their gods for themselves and do not worship idols. In the very depth of misfortune [*Im Unheil*] they wait for the weal that has been withdrawn [*des entzogenen Heils*] (E150; G25).

This idea of waiting for the return of the absent gods is of course taken from Judaism and Christianity. Jews await the Messiah. Christians await the second coming. Even after Christ came we still

have to wait. The phrase "Let us listen once more to what language says," especially in Heidegger's German ("Hören wir noch einmal auf den Zupruch der Sprache") reinforces this Judeo-Christian resonance by echoing Biblical phrases like "Now hear the word of the Lord," or even like Jesus' "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matthew 13:9). Heidegger speaks as the prophet or even as the Messiah of a new dispensation reversing the withdrawal of the gods, of being, of language. (Through him language, one might almost say "the Word," speaks)

On the basis of the idea that dwelling means sparing and preserving, Heidegger shifts suddenly to our responsibility to care for things: "Rather, dwelling itself is always a staying [*ein Aufenthalt*] with things" (E151; G25). The argument once more goes by the incremental addition of new factors that are unexpected in the sense that they are not obviously implicit in what has been said already. Heidegger is listening to the silence. This final move in the first section of the essay is crucial preparation for what he says about the bridge in the second section of the essay: "But things themselves secure [*bergen*] the fourfold *only when* they themselves as things are let be in their presencing [*in ihrem Wesen gelassen werden*]" (E151; G25-26). This idea of letting things be present allows Heidegger to pick up on the two modes of *Bauen* he identified earlier: building and cultivating. It is easy to see how cultivating is a kind of letting things be. It is not so easy to see how building a bridge is letting something be. This new sleight of hand is necessary to avoid thinking of bridge building as mere engineering or *Technik*. Much more is said about this in one of Heidegger's most difficult essays, "Die Frage nach der Technik" ("The Question Concerning Technology"), but "Building Dwelling Thinking" contains in miniature Heidegger's doctrine of technique or technology. *Technik*, he says, really still means what *techné* meant to the Greeks: "The Greeks conceive of *techné*, producing [*das hervorbringen*], in terms of letting appear [*Erscheinenlassen*]" (E159; G34). In order to avoid thinking of bridge building as an autonomous human activity, building a bridge must be seen as analogous to letting a thing be itself—to planting a potato and letting it be a

potato. That allows Heidegger to conclude section one by saying that "Dwelling, insofar as it keeps or secures [*verwahrt*] the fourfold in things, is, as this keeping, a building" (E151; G26).

A crucial word here and throughout the essay is the little word "is" (*ist*). The deep structure or basic character (*Grundzug*, a key word in the essay, as I shall show) of his sentences is "A is B." Though in fact B is only a metaphorical transposition of A, the "is" in "A is B" asserts a literal identity between them. We know how Heidegger read Nietzsche, but is it worth speculating about how Nietzsche would have read Heidegger? Probably he would have read him as a hyperbolic example of the hypostatizing of grammatical accidents he condemns in the posthumously published notes. As Nietzsche recognizes, this error also lies behind anthropomorphisms, such as Heidegger's personification of language. Language does certain things. There must be a doer behind this doing. Hence language must be a quasi-person capable of deciding to withdraw or to come back from occultation.

Heidegger's trick is to affirm that analogies or figurative displacements are identities. He must forget, and lead us to forget, that they are figurative substitutions if he wants to claim he has purified his language of all rhetoric or figuration and can write as an absolute literalist. But the careful reader should always be wary when a writer says he or she is expunging all tropes. It is just then that the most powerful effects of figuration, powerful in part because obscured and unacknowledged, are likely to be doing their work. The covert speech act that declares a figure is a literal fact is perhaps the most powerful tool of ideology making.

The complex displacements of the essay's first part are preparation for the second section about the bridge and about the way the bridge creates a landscape around it. The sequence of positings in the first section is presupposed in the second section. It is not the bridge as such that makes the landscape, says Heidegger, but the bridge as a built thing let to be itself. The latter details about the last bridge and the altar in the peasant house, in their turn, follow from ideas about the mortality of man, about death and the

divinities, in the first section. Having answered the first question, "What is it to dwell?", he can now turn to the second, "In what way does building belong to dwelling?"

More specifically, he asks, "What is a built thing? A bridge may serve as an example for our reflections" (E152; G26). The careful reader should be wary when a philosopher or a literary critic says, "Take, for example, . . ." No example is innocent. Argumentation by way of examples depends on insinuating the validity of that most problematic of figures, synecdoche. Example asserts that the part is like the whole.<sup>11</sup> Heidegger's refusal to see the bridge as a symbol is an attempt to evade a linguistic problem he inadvertently reinserts by introducing the bridge "as an example."

The key word in the description of the way the bridge makes the region around it into a landscape, establishing zones, limits, and distinct elements, is *gather* (*versammeln*): "The bridge gathers the earth as landscape around the stream" ("Die Brücke versammelt die Erde als Landschaft um den Strom") (E152; G26). Heidegger says *versammeln*, not *sammeln*. The force of the *ver* here is as an intensive. The bridge performs a forceful gathering. The bridge for Heidegger has the same effect on what is around it as does Wallace Stevens's jar on the slovenly wilderness of Tennessee:

The bridge swings over the stream "with ease and power." It does not just connect banks [*Ufer*] that are already there. The banks emerge as banks only as the bridge crosses the stream. The bridge designedly causes them to lie across from each other. [*Die Brücke läßt sie eigens gegeneinander über liegen.*] One side is set off against the other by the bridge. Nor do the banks stretch along the stream as indifferent border strips [*als gleichgültige Grenzstreifen*] of the dry land. With the banks, the bridge brings to the stream the one and the other expanse of the landscape lying behind them [*der rückwärtigen Uferlandschaft*]. It brings stream and bank and land into each other's neighborhood [*in die wechselseitige Nachbarschaft*]. (E152; G26)

"With ease and power" (*leicht und kräftig*) is a citation from Friedrich Hölderlin's "Heidelberg." Heidegger's essay can be read as an oblique commentary on Hölderlin's poem. A set of presuppositions underlies the topographical assertions in this passage.

11:15"

No example is innocent

Heidegger's 'Heidelberg'

The rest of the essay works these out. They include the reintroduction of the theme of the fourfold one by way of a new piece of wordplay on the word "Thing" (*Ding*), the projection on the basis of that of a paradigmatic life story that is enacted within the landscape brought into being by the bridge, and, on that basis again, a challenge to the traditional and commonsense concept of space, as well as an explicit rejection of the notion (present in different ways in Kant and Nietzsche) that an unknown and unknowable X underlies "things" as their unrepresentable ground. Traditional notions of consciousness as a subject set over against its objects and of thinking as mental representation are also, and necessarily, rejected along the way.

The fourfold one is brought back into the discussion of the bridge by the introduction of yet another metaphorizing etymology. *Thing* meant in early Germanic languages a gathering or assembly, for example, the assembly of the elders of a tribe for collective deliberation. If a bridge is a thing, then it must do the same thing that the medieval thing as deliberative assembly did. Sure enough, just that is asserted: "The bridge is a thing [*ein Ding*]—and, indeed, it is such as the gathering [Versammlung] of the fourfold which we have described" (Ers3; G27). Just here

Heidegger rejects the idea that the bridge is a symbol, or an expression of any kind. In doing this he sets aside implicitly all that he has said about listening to language to find out what dwelling and building a thing are. Heidegger wants to have his cake and eat it too. On the one hand, you can find out what kind of a thing a bridge is only by listening to language. On the other hand, the bridge is entirely free of language. If the bridge is a thing and nothing but a thing, then it does whatever it does without any help from language, and it not clear why we need language to see that. It would seem to be a matter of perception or apprehension, not of naming.

On the basis of this concept of the bridge as a thing that gathers not only the banks and landscape but also earth, sky, divinities, and mortals, Heidegger can take up a more general topographical idea, that of space as such. Along with space go the associated concepts of locations, sites, horizons, and boundaries. It is man's building,

whether of a bridge, or a house, or a temple, that creates locations. Locations open space and make it into an organized field with boundaries:

A boundary [*die Grenze*] is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something *begins its presenting* [*von woher etwas sein Wesen beginnt*]. That is why the concept is that of *horismos*, that is, the horizon, the boundary. . . . That for which room is made [*Das Eingetümmel*] is always granted and hence is joined [*gestattet und so gefügt*], that is, gathered, by virtue of a location [*durch einen Ort*], that is, by such a thing as the bridge. *Accordingly, spaces receive their being from locations and not from "space."* [Demnach erlangen die Räume ihr Wesen aus Orten und nicht aus "dem" Raum.] (Ers4; G29)

Heidegger's topographical thinking, as is evident in this citation, cannot be detached from the complex of ideas about language, thinking, building, and dwelling that surrounds it in this essay and in Heidegger's writing as a whole. (Once again his goal is to overturn our everyday, common ideas. In this case it is the assumption that that empty, Euclidean, scientific neutral space is there to begin with and then filled and outlined with various things man builds: houses, roads, walls, bridges, everything that makes empty space into a human territory that might be mapped. (No) space is made by things, such as the bridge. The bridge "enspaces" (*einräumt*). Euclidean space is not original, already there. It is the reductive derivation from a space that has its ultimate origin not so much in the bridge as in man the builder and dweller who lets space be by building, who clears a place for space by making sites and locations that surround themselves with a landscape.<sup>12</sup>

In his discussion of space in this essay, Heidegger makes an implicit reference backward to *Being and Time*. There space is said to be generated by time. Paragraphs twenty-three and seventy are the crucial ones. In the latter Heidegger says "Dasein's specific spatiality must be grounded in temporality" ("Dann muß aber auch die spezifische Räumlichkeit des Daseins in der Zeitlichkeit gründend").<sup>13</sup> Time takes precedence over space. Why is this? The rest of paragraph seventy explains: "Dasein takes space in; this is to

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be understood literally [*im wörtlichen Verstande*]. Space is by no means just present-at-hand in a bit of volume which its body fills up. In existing it has already made room for its own leeway [*Spielraum*: literally, "play room," taking "play" in the sense it has when we say "There is play in this wheel"]. Dasein determines its own location in such a manner that it comes back [*zurückkommt*] from the space it has made room for to the 'place' which it has reserved" (E419; G368). This movement of going out and coming back is the basic movement of temporality. Dasein moves forward into the future in order to come back to the past. This is made explicit on the next page: "Because Dasein as temporality is ecstatico-horizonal in its Being it can take along with it a space for which it has made room [*einen eigenmächtigen Raum*], and it can do so factually and constantly" (E420; G369). The argument culminates in a portentously italicized sentence: "*Only on the basis [Grund] of its ecstatico-horizonal temporality is it possible for Dasein to break into space*" (E421; G369).

This account of space and human temporality in *Being and Time* is implicit in the account of enspacing in "Building Dwelling Thinking." Heidegger's thinking about space or enspacing has changed little, if at all, except in dropping the emphasis on "falling." In *Being and Time* Heidegger asserts that "Temporality is essentially falling [*wesenhaft verfallend*] and it loses itself in making present [*das Gegenwärtigen*]" (E421; G369). Nothing is said about falling in "Building Dwelling Thinking," unless the withdrawal of its primal meanings by language is a kind of fall.

The choice of a bridge as an example is crucial, since a bridge is a way to get from here to there through time. This is made explicit in what Heidegger says about crossing bridges. His examples of the uses of bridges are temporal. They implicitly contain a historical narrative tracing out the course of human life. Would Heidegger include graveyards among the works that organize space and make it a place—the barrow, for example, in the midst of Egdon Heath in *The Return of the Native*, or the country churchyard of which so much is made in Goethe's *Elective Affinities*? Every topography implies a narrative that unfolds through time. Heidegger's topogra-

phy is no exception. An implicit story lies behind the humanized landscape Heidegger constructs around his imaginary bridge. This story surfaces at one point, in the paragraph about the Black Forest peasant house. This is a little story of birth, dwelling, cultivation, worshipping, and death. (A good dwelling embodies the whole journey of "man" from birth to death.) Heidegger's description of a two-hundred-year-old farmhouse in the Black Forest includes the room set aside "for the hallowed places [*geheiligten Plätze*] of childbed and the 'tree of the dead'—for that is what they call a coffin there: the *Totenbaum*—and in this way it designed for the different generations under one roof the character of their journey through time [*ihres ganges durch die Zeit*]" (E160; G35).<sup>14</sup> Already, death has unostentatiously appeared in the interpretation of the bridge as "the vaulting" (*das Überspringende*) of men and women over a gulf or stream that takes them, as mortals, toward their final journey over the last bridge to death. In the midst of life, trying to get from here to there, mortals (*die Sterblichen*) are "always themselves on their way to the last bridge" ("immer schon Unterwegs zur letzten Brücke") (E153; G27). Building of all sorts, for Heidegger, makes earth and sky a domicile within which man can dwell, think and, ultimately, die in proximity to the gods, as he makes his way through a space that is a dimension of time.

Another fundamentally temporal dimension organizes "Building Dwelling Thinking": the history of language. This contains the whole history of mankind (Heidegger says nothing about womankind), or at any rate of German-speaking mankind. This history is the story of the forgetting of what language says, or rather, of language's withdrawing and then its uncovering by Heidegger. The implication is that we do not really dwell now because we have forgotten, or technique has made us forget. We have even forgotten what technique is or used to be. It was another example of bringing things out and letting them be, according to Heidegger's understanding of the Greek word.

Just what further assumptions underlie the idea that the bridge "enspaces," that is, surrounds itself with an organized space making

Five

topography

a landscape? A necessary presumption of these further positings, which has already been noted, is the rejection of symbolism. The bridge must act on its own, as an independent thing not in any way dependent on language. A further necessary presumption is the rejection of Kant's and Nietzsche's idea that the thing is "an unknown X [ein unbekanntes X] to which perceptible properties are attached" (E153; G28). This would make, Heidegger says, "everything that already belongs to the gathering nature [versammelnden Wesen] of this thing . . . appear as something that is afterward read into it [als nachträglich hineingedeutete Zukunft]" (E153; G28). [Kant's and Nietzsche's somewhat different notions that an unknown substratum lies behind each thing are replaced by Heidegger's idea of occultation, withdrawal, forgetting.] The gathering may be a bringing into the open of something secret, hidden, but this is by no means to be understood according to the model of the *Ding an sich*, which eternally remains an unknown X.<sup>15</sup>

On the basis of this repudiation, Heidegger goes on to develop his idea of space as something for which the building makes a site. What the bridge does is to be a location that can make space for a site: "But only something that is itself a location [Ort] can make space for a site [eine Stätte einräumen]" (E154; G28). This space is defined by the fact that it is a particular gathering of the fourfold one of earth, sky, divinities, and mortals. To assert this Heidegger once more goes back to the "ancient meaning" of a word. "*Raum* (*Raum*) means a place cleared or freed for settlement and lodging" (E154; G28).

It will be necessary to follow Heidegger's argumentation a little more closely here in order to locate the hidden rhetoric that facilitates the argument. Once again, the procedure is a crisscross substitution. What seems to be the cause is shown to be derived, but, as throughout the essay, the way this depends on verbal reversals is covered over; crossed out. Heidegger argues first that building a bridge creates a location (*Ort*), which then can become a site (*Stätte*). The site organizes space around it from a horizon. Heidegger plays here on the etymology of the Greek word, which comes from a verb, *horizein* (to divide, separate), from *horos* (boundary,

limit). A horizon implies the act of dividing or separating. This act is performed by the building that is put in an *Ort*, making it a *Stätte* that "ensites" and "enspaces." Each of those last two words is a neologism in English, so the argument Heidegger makes can only be made in German. Or it can only persuasively be made in German. In German you can much more easily than in English make a verb by adding a prefix to a noun, "ensites" from "site," "enspaces" from "space," both non-words in English, though "site" and "space" are perfectly good English verbs. (A horizon, says Heidegger, is not a boundary or limit but the product of an act making a limit.) It is that from which space begins, so nothing exists beyond it. The *Ort* that becomes a *Stätte* ensites and enspaces. It goes out to make the border from which a space is cleared, beyond which the same genius loci does not reign. About that beyond nothing can be said. It is not governed by the same logos, for example, the idioms of a given language. (On this basis Heidegger can go on to say that we do not move through a neutral space, but are already anywhere within the space that is created by the act of making a given place into a site.) Thinking of the old bridge at Heidelberg is being there, perhaps being there more than the people who thoughtlessly cross it every day.<sup>16</sup>

On the basis of the claim that spaces receive their being from locations and not from space, Heidegger goes on to ask: What is the relation between location and space? and What is the relation between man and space? The answer to the first involves a reversal of our usual idea that space is there to start with, able to be measured in a way that does not in any way depend on what is within the space. He contrasts the genuine space that is allowed (*eingelassen*) by the bridge to the space of pure extension that can have any of its distances measured mathematically. You could call the latter "the<sup>2</sup> space, he says, but "in this sense 'the' space, 'space,' contains no spaces and no places" (E155; G30).

A moment before Heidegger had said that in a space of pure indifferent extension, Euclidean space, the bridge could be replaced by something else or by a mere marker: "In a space that is represented purely as *spatium*, the bridge now appears as a mere

Kant/  
Nietzsche

BRIDGE

something [ein bloßes Etwas] at some position [Stelle], which can be occupied [besetzt] at any time by something else or replaced [ersetzt] by a mere marker [eine bloße Markierung]” (Er15; G30). This is an important sentence. The key words in it are *besetzt*, *ersetzt*, and *Markierung*. *Besetzt* and *ersetzt* are *setzen* words, that is, words that in one way or another suggest positing, placing. *Übersetzen* means “translate,” that is, set across from one language to another. What Heidegger rejects, once more, is substitutability; one might say, figurative. (He began by saying the bridge was just taken “as an example,” that is, the bridge is something that stands in for all the other possible examples.) If it is just an example, there could presumably be other examples that would do as well, the peasant shoes or the temple in “The Origin of the Work of Art,” for example. (This rhetoric of exemplarity is now forgotten, and Heidegger wants to say the temple or bridge is irreplaceable. It is not a mere placeholder or marker, an X, a mere *Etwas*, or “something.”) This refusal is symmetrical with the refusal of symbolism. The bridge, however, was initially posited as a placeholder, a marker, a mere *Etwas*, an X, that is, it was posited as an example, one presumably out of many. Once again, Heidegger must ignore the rhetoric of his own essay.

Having posited the relation between locations and space, and having asserted that we live in a space provided for by locations, not just in wild nature or in empty space with no built things in it, no presiding spirit of the place, Heidegger goes on to identify the relation between man and space. Here he has to reject two other possibilities. One is that “man” is set over against space as subject to object, the other that space is an “inner experience.” He says, categorically, that space “is neither an external object nor an inner experience” (Er156; G31). In place of these possibilities he sets his model of a belonging together of man in the fourfold (earth, heaven, divinities, morals) that has been “allowed for” by enspacing: “by the name ‘man’ I already name the stay within the fourfold among things” (Er156; G31). Since all these things belong together in an inextricable, fourfold one, we are already everywhere in that space. Space has been generated by Dasein’s building and therefore

is an extension of it. Again Heidegger’s underlying motive is rejection of substitution or trope, in this case, the idea that mental representations substitute for absent or distant things, the trope of *mimesis*. The German word for substitute, *Ersatz*, connects with *ersetzen* and *zusetzen*, already discussed: “We do not represent distant things merely in our mind—as the textbooks have it [*wie man lehrt*]—so that only mental representations of distant things run through our minds and heads as substitutes for the things [*so daß als Ersatz für die fernem Dinge in unserem Innern und im Kopf nur Vorstellungen von ihnen ablaufen*]” (Er156; G31). Instead of that, thinking about the old bridge at Heidelberg gets us through the distance to that location: “If all of us now think, from where we are right here,<sup>17</sup> of the old bridge in Heidelberg, this thinking toward that location is not a mere experience inside the persons present here; rather it belongs to the nature of our thinking of that bridge that in itself thinking gets through, persists through, the distance to that location [*vielmehr gehört es zum Wesen unseres Denkens an die genannte Brücke, daß dieses Denken in sich die Ferne zu diesem Ort durchstreht*]. From this spot right here, we are there at the bridge—we are by no means at some representational content [*Vorstellungsinhalt*] in our consciousness” (Er156–57; G31).

The rest of the paragraph asserts firmly that we pervade space, and are always already constantly near things and locations. When I move in space, for example, toward the door of the lecture hall, I can do that only because I am there already: “I already pervade [*durchstehen*] the room, and only thus can I go through [*durchgehen*] it” (Er157; G32). (The claim that we are at the old bridge in Heidelberg just by thinking of it is truly amazing if you think of it from the perspective of “our” commonsense assumptions.) It is not only amazing but insidiously attractive. [It satisfies in the form of omnipresence the infantile desire for omnipotence Freud ascribes to every baby. Only some counterintuitive concept such as the one Heidegger proposes can avoid seeing mental images as representations, symbols or tropes standing for objects that are external to the mind. Heidegger’s refusal of figurative therefore has metaphysical and psychological as well as linguistic motivations.] Or rather, the

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three motivations are aspects of the same insistence that everything unfolds from a Dasein that always already contains space and all things in it. About the political implications of this insistence I shall say more.

More than once Heidegger uses the word *Grundzug*, translated by Hofstadter as "basic character." One example comes several paragraphs from the end of the essay, where he says, "Dwelling, however, is the basic character [der Grundzug] of Being in keeping with which mortals exist" (Er60; G35). *Grundzug* can be set against other words built on *Grund*: *Grund* itself in the sense of reason, base, logos, as in the title of Heidegger's *Der Satz vom Grund* (*The Principle of Reason*), *Grundriß*, or "groundplan," as used in "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Abgrund* or *Ungrund* for chasm, abyss. The other half of the word *Grundzug*, *Zug*, means "drawn" in several senses. It also combines with many other words. *Grundzug* is a crucial word in "Building Dwelling Thinking," one to which Heidegger does not call special attention, but one that is therefore all the more important. It hides a version of the unknown X in the guise of an apparently innocent word that appears to name something out in the open: "fundamental character." *Grundzug* is an equivocating word meaning "essential features" and "fundamental features" at the same time, that is, it names both the external features by which a thing is known to be what it is and its underlying, invisible but determining, characteristics. *Grundzug* in the latter sense underlies *Grundzug* in the former sense. *Zug* means features in the sense of something drawn out on the surface, like the features of a face, while *Grund* implies something hidden, the foundation of the rest. A *Grundzug* is hidden and out in the open at the same time. This word is Heidegger's covert way of smuggling back in the "unknown X" he had repudiated.

When Heidegger refuses the definition of the thing as an unknown X to which "perceptible properties are attached," and then chooses as an example a bridge that he initially defines as "crossing" the stream, he has both refused the X and introduced it in another way into his discourse. Though he speaks of the bridge as something that "lets the stream run its course" and that also lets mortals

"come and go from shore to shore" (*daß sie von Land zu Land gehen und fahren*) (Er52; G27), nevertheless he tends to speak as if the traffic on a bridge all goes one way. Heidegger's bridge is not a route for to and fro commerce, but a means by which the harvest wagon goes from the fields to the village or the means by which the lumber cart gets from the field path to the road. Heidegger does nothing conceptually in this essay with the other flow that crosses the bridge widenshins, namely, the flow of the stream. The stream is, of course, also a way of expressing temporality, for example, in Heraclitus's fragments, about which Heidegger elsewhere has much to say. The bridge is a means of transport for Heidegger in this essay. It gets him from one place to another in the trajectory he is following. The bridge works in this way because it is a metaphor or symbol that Heidegger is unwilling to admit is a metaphor or symbol. The examples he gives of what different bridges do are all examples of commerce or transactions of one kind or another. From the country various things are brought into town. The bridge is also a means of transport from castle to cathedral square, from temporal to spiritual power bases. But the paradigmatic passage is the one from this world to the other, from death to life. Whatever bridge we cross is oriented toward the crossing of the last bridge to death. Whatever Heidegger may say about going to and fro (*hin und her*) across the bridge, his bridge is ultimately a one-way crossing. It is not a means for the interchange of properties, such as those on which the hidden rhetoric of Heidegger's essay depends.

The final pages of the essay say the building of a bridge "admits and installs" the fourfold. This doublet, *zulassen* and *einrichten*, is of great importance as a clue for reading the essay. Heidegger's formulations posit forking alternatives between which a decision must be made and yet between which a decision cannot be made. His hesitation between the two terms, or his need to assert them both, is his version of the aporia of invention, the impossibility of knowing whether something invented is discovered or made. "The location [*Ort*]," says Heidegger, "*admits* the fourfold [*lässt das Geviert zu*] and it *installs* the fourfold [*richtet das Geviert ein*]. The

two—making room in the sense of admitting [*Zulassen*] and in the sense of installing [*Einrichten*—belong together” (E158; G33).

Admit or install? Which is it? There is no way to tell which precedes the other either in the activity of building that makes or allows a space for landscape or in the activity of writing a novel, a poem, or a philosophical essay—“Building Dwelling Thinking,” for example, or *The Return of the Native*, or “The Idea of Order at Key West.” Each such work depends on a landscape already there, admitting it into the work in a process of mimesis, or installing a new imaginary landscape, superimposing Wessex on Dorset, for example, as Thomas Hardy did when he wrote *The Return of the Native*, or creating a new poetic topography as Wallace Stevens did when he wrote “The Idea of Order at Key West,” or mapping a new philosophical landscape on the Black Forest and Heidelberg, as Heidegger does in this essay. Each activity, admitting and installing, presupposes the other as always already having been accomplished, in an unstillable oscillation of each between primary and secondary.

Heidegger defines technique as a “letting appear” (*Erscheinenlassen*) (E159; G34) and claims that thinking and dwelling belong to one another and to building. Building and thinking are analogous in being necessary for dwelling. “Building and thinking are, each in its own way, inescapable [*unmüßiglich*] for dwelling” (E160–61; G36). The two must learn to listen to one another. What Heidegger does not see, must not see, is that both building and thinking

go by way of the making or using of [signs], and that sign using and making are always caught in the undecidable opposition between admitting and installing. If sign using and making are taken as a matter of installation, then once the installation is complete it appears that something already there has been admitted. If you say it is a matter of admitting you cannot know that or encounter that without first installing something, for example, composing an essay or building a bridge. Heidegger does not think by means of a recovery of the primal, literal meaning of certain words. He performs, rather, a mystified and mystifying thinking as though language were only grammar and logic and not also always rhetoric. Rhetoric must be taken here in the double sense of “permeated

with figurative displacements” and “permeated also with persuasive speech acts.” The latter are postings disguised as assertions of fact.

Another way to put that would be to say that Heidegger does not allow for the unauthorized performative power in language, his own language, for example. “Admit” and “install” can be read as different ways of saying the same thing. To admit is to allow the sky, earth, gods to enter into a space that has been cleared, according to that active/passive (it is both at once, and neither without the other) letting things be that Heidegger counsels. But to install is also active and passive at the same time. [By building a bridge we install the earth, sky, gods, and men, in the sense of a specific culture and way of living.] Heidegger means this installation not in the sense of an unauthorized, unsanctioned speech act but in the sense of letting language speak through us, letting space-making occur through our *Bauen*. In a similar way, it is always possible to see a purely human performative as allowing another power, say a divine power or a state power, to speak through language, as when the president of a university says, for instance: “By authority of the power vested in me by the State of California, I declare that you are doctors of philosophy.” On the other hand, all performatives may be seen as unsanctioned, free, inaugural. What they do, for example, what Heidegger’s essay does, has no precedent and no authority beyond the one that is created, installed, by just these words in just this order as Heidegger puts them together in this way.

Heidegger wants to put all the blame on language, which speaks through him. He wants, that is, to ignore or evade all the rhetorical devices his essay uses to install a whole architectural fabric of unauthorized equivalences by way of the “is” of metaphor taken as the “is” of ontological identity: building is dwelling is thinking is speaking. He wants also to evade his own agency and responsibility by surreptitiously projecting in covert prosopopoeia a personality and a sovereign autonomous power into language, as though language were an autocratic emperor who comes and goes when he likes.

Heidegger misses everything but in an interesting way. The reversal or crisscross whereby he blames language for what he does substitutes something that speaks through language for language

itself. That is the “everything” he misses. When he says that building “installs” as well as “admits,” he has the clue in his hand. That is the place where he brings momentarily into the open the chiasmus whereby he has projected a ground he in fact creates. The question raised by Heidegger’s essay is parallel to Stevens’s question in “The Idea of Order at Key West”: “Whose spirit is this?” Heidegger is right to say it is not just the subjective spirit of the maker, just as Stevens is right to deny that when he says, “It was more than this.” What Heidegger misses is the mechanism whereby signs of one sort or another open a new world that then infallibly seems to be grounded in some preceding spirit or genius. A new start both makes its own ground and seems to reveal a ground that was already there. Heidegger’s error is not just a refusal to accept the groundlessness of creation through “Building,” including building through speech acts. It is also a refusal to accept responsibility for the inaugural power of language, for example, his own language in “Building Dwelling Thinking.”

I began by asking whether or not Heidegger’s topographical ideas are politically innocent. It is not immediately apparent what complicity there may be between Heidegger’s concept of dwelling and his endorsement of the programs of National Socialism during the Nazi era. My reading of “Building Dwelling Thinking,” however, has shown that this concept is tied in manifold ways to “national aestheticism” and even to National Socialism. Heidegger’s conception of language universalizes German. If you can philosophize only in German or in ancient Greek, if the secrets of dwelling in the sense of the proper way to build, dwell, and think on earth are hidden in the now-withdrawn primal meanings of common German words, then a recovery of those primal meanings and building, dwelling, and thinking in their light would be not a local project but a universal one. This project would justify the imperial ambitions of the Reich. Using the covert personification in the claim that “language speaks” as a way of covering up the ungrounded performative claims of his own declarations, and as a way of occluding the figurative transfers on which the rhetoric of his

essay depends, Heidegger ascribes a spurious transcendent validity to a local, nationalist ideology. This ideology, moreover, was used to justify the unspeakable atrocities of the Shoah. Those atrocities, finally, are a logical consequence of the specifically topographical ideas the essay posits on the basis of what Heidegger finds language saying. In spite of Heidegger’s disclaimer when he says, “Our reference to the Black Forest farm in no way means that we should or could go back to building such houses; rather, it illustrates by a dwelling that *has been* [gewesenen] how it was able to build” (E160; G35), nevertheless the *Schwarzwaldhof* is presented as a paradigmatic example of proper dwelling. Just as Heidegger’s celebration in “The Origin of the Work of Art” (written in 1935, that is, during the Nazi era) of the immemorial toil of the peasant woman he incorrectly assumes was the owner of the shoes painted by Van Gogh says nothing about the life most people in Germany were living at that time, as the Germans under Hitler prepared the great industrial might of the Wehrmacht, so “Building Dwelling Thinking” first presented in 1951, that is, six years after the end of World War II, says nothing about the fact that the housing shortage mentioned at the beginning and end of the essay was primarily urban and was a result of the bombing of German cities by the Allies.

*Einfeld* (oneness, or onefold) is a key term in “Building Dwelling Thinking,” as in the repeated phrase “the oneness of the four” (*die Einfeld der Vier*). The imperialism of the Third Reich was publicly justified in part by the need of the German people for more *Lebensraum* (living space). The topographical ideas of “Building Dwelling Thinking” would authorize only the monolithic, onefold, culture of a people (*ein Volk*) sharing the same language, laws, and customs, and dwelling in one particular place. In that place their building has admitted or installed a single, unified landscape of hills, fields, and rivers, buildings, bridges, roads, and horizons. Beyond that horizon no other authentic culture may be conceived to exist. Such topographical assumptions would underwrite a unicultural nationalism. They could be used to justify the expulsion or extinction of all those who do not share that single language and

culture. It is a little scandalous that Heidegger was imperpertably asserting these ideas six years after the end of the war and after the end of the thousand-year Reich's ambitions. It is also a little scandalous that the standard English translation of this essay and related ones under the title *Poetry, Language, Thought* says nothing about these political implications. On the other hand, ideas not too different from Heidegger's lie behind the disquieting return of a violent nationalism directed against immigrants in unified Germany today. Our own country is not entirely free from such dangerous nationalism, as in the law, already referred to, that declares English the official language of the state of California.

The lesson to be learned from reading Heidegger is not that we should not read him, but that we should read him, though with extreme care and wariness, as though we were entering on dangerous ground. We should read him as the most persuasive and intellectually exigent expression of an interlocking complex of ideological assumptions from which no one can these days with certainty claim to be entirely free. The conceptual study of ideology does not free one from ideology. The study of the way rhetoric, tropes, and the materiality of language generate ideological mystifications may possibly, however, have a good political effect. By good effect I mean conducting to a new form of democracy, a democracy of difference that puts the manifold (*Mannigfaltig*) in place of the onefold (*Einfaltig*). It would do that by trying to show "us" (another appeal to the solidarity of the "we") the political efficacy of the rhetorical, tropological, and material aspects of our own language. "Show" here does not name a revelation of anything that can ever be phenomenal. It would do that, rather, by giving us a glimpse of the way this efficacy is based on unauthorized performative effects of language and other signs. These effects would include those of unitary territorial delineation and sovereignty. For these effects those who utter the speech acts should and must take responsibility. We must not attempt to palm off the responsibility on language or on some transcendent, authorizing power that speaks through language. That is easy to say, but "we" should not minimize the difficulty of doing it.

## § 10 The Ethics of Topography: Stevens

It might seem perverse to look for ethical themes in Wallace Stevens's work, just as it might seem perverse to attack him for not writing poems about ethics. He is a poet in whose work the subject to object relation dominates, the domain of epistemology, not the intersubjective relation, the domain of ethics. No law that I know of, ethical or otherwise, demands that all poets write about ethics. Or maybe there is such a law, operating whether we know it or not? In any case, just as Frank Lentricchia could plausibly find a pervasive political dimension in Stevens's work,<sup>1</sup> so a concern with "How to Live. What to Do," as he puts it in the title of an early poem,<sup>2</sup> runs all through Stevens's poetry.<sup>3</sup>

"How to live. What to do": the formula defines the ethical relation as a resolute decision to live in a certain way and to do certain things. The ethical person knows how to live and what to do. Ethics traditionally grounds such decisions in a sense of strong obligation to some law. In response to the demand made on me by this law, I say, "I must live in such and such a way; I must do this or that." This living and doing, grounded in the law, define my relations to my fellows. The protagonist of "How to Live. What to Do" faces the moon, the rock, and the cold wind side by side with a "companion" (*CP* 125). I live and do with others and toward others. I want this living and doing to be justified. I want it to be aligned with a command laid on me to live and do in just this way rather than any other.

ness is still and always has been materialized in language, from which it cannot be distinguished. Language is the material "outring" of consciousness for social relations, but language is not added later to a consciousness already there. "Language is as old as consciousness" ("Die Sprache ist so alt wie das Bewußtsein") (E44; G357). The whole passage about language and consciousness puts this assertion in context. It is an extremely important passage for understanding Marxism: "Only now, after having considered four moments [Momente], four aspects of primary historical relations, do we find that man also possesses 'consciousness.' But even from the outset this is not 'pure' consciousness ['reiner Bewußtsein]. The 'mind' ['Geist'] is from the outset afflicted with the curse [den Fluch] of being 'burdened' ['behaftet'] with matter ['der Materie'], which here makes its appearance in the form of agitated layers of air, sounds, in short, of language [der Sprache]. Language is as old as consciousness, language is practical, real consciousness that exists for other men as well, and only therefore does it exist for me; language, like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity, of intercourse [des Verkehrs] with other men. Where there exists a relationship [ein Verhältnis], it exists for me: the animal does not 'relate' [verhält] itself to anything, it does not 'relate' itself at all" (E43-44; G356-57). The same moving forward through history to a higher abstraction and differentiation that does not leave matter behind, that remains essentially materialized, is repeated a little later in the passage about modern nationalist ideology I have referred to above. The ideology of nationalism is "muck" (these phrases are not in the German edition, but the word was possibly *Dreck*), not pure spirit, but dung. It seems to a given nation that the contradiction between a national and a general or international consciousness is entirely internal: "since this contradiction [Widerspruch] appears to exist only as a contradiction within the national consciousness, it seems to this nation that the struggle too is confined to this national muck, precisely because this nation represents this muck as such. Incidentally, it is quite immaterial [ganz einseitig] what consciousness starts to do on its own: out of all this trash [aus diesem ganzen Dreck] we get only the one inference that these three moments, the productive forces, the state of society and consciousness, can and must come into contradiction with one another" (E45; G, only in part, 358). Ideology, what consciousness starts out to do on its own, is not *Geist* but *Dreck*, the material remainder of a material historical process resulting from a division of labor, "which was originally nothing but the division of labor

in the sexual act" ("die Teilung der Arbeit im Geschlechtsakt") (E44; G38). Or, rather the *Geist* and the *Dreck* go inextricably together, like consciousness and its necessary materialization in language. The *Dreck* of ideology takes the form of abstract or idealist "mental expressions," which are concomitant images of material constraints. Ideology and matter are intertwined indissolubly, just as are consciousness and language. "It is self-evident, moreover," says Marx at the end of this section, "that 'specters,' 'bonds,' 'the higher being,' 'concept,' 'scruples' ['Gespenster,' 'Bände,' 'höheres Wesen,' 'Begriff,' 'Bedenklichkeit'], are merely idealist, speculative, mental expressions [Ausdruck], the concepts apparently of the isolated individual, the mere images of very empirical fetters and limitations [die Vorstellung von sehr empirischen Fesseln und Schranken], within which move the mode of production of life, and the form of intercourse coupled with it [zusammenhängende Verkehrsform]" (E45; G359).

#### Chapter 9

1. See Werner Hamacher, "Amphora (Extracts)," *Violence: Space, ed.* Mark Wigley, guest issue of *assemblage: A Critical Journal of Architecture and Design Culture* 20 (1993): 40-41, for an admirably succinct and penetrating discussion of Heidegger's notion of place and space in the context of Aristotle, Celan, and others.
2. M. Heidegger, "Bauen Wohnen Denken," *Vorträge und Aufsätze, 2* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1954): 19; *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 145. Further references will be to these texts, identified as "G" and "E."
3. Brian Ingtraff, in a brilliant book forthcoming from Cambridge University Press, discusses this in detail from the perspective of biblical theology. The book is based on his dissertation, "Vanquishing God's Shadow: Postmodern Theory, Ontotheology, and Biblical Theology," University of California, Irvine, 1993.
4. "Das Ding," *Vorträge und Aufsätze, 2*: 39; "The Thing," *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 186. Further references will be to these texts, identified as "G" and "E."
5. Paul de Man, "The Resistance to Theory," *The Resistance to Theory*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), II.
6. See the entry on the Indo-European root *bheu* in *The American Heritage Dictionary*. Two, or more, can play Heidegger's game of etymology hunting.

7. The translator of "Bauen Wohnen Denken," Albert Hofstadter, obscures this issue by adding a phrase and a sentence in the translation not present at all in Heidegger's German. Heidegger says "Das alte hochdeutsche Wort für bauen, 'buan' [The Old High German word for building, *buan*]" (G20). Hofstadter's translation says: "The Old English and High German word for building, *buan*" (E146). Hofstadter adds: "The neighbor is in Old English the *neahgebur*; *neah*, near, and *gebur*, dweller." This sentence does not exist in the German original. Adding this sentence is by no means an innocent clarification. It bypasses the problem of translation by trying to persuade the reader that what works for the German language works for the English language, too. The historical context for this move includes, for example, the nineteenth- and twentieth-century justification for the study of Anglo-Saxon in English and American universities. This justification goes by way of a claim that English is, after all, a Germanic language. The study of Anglo-Saxon will put the student in connection with the roots of our culture, for example, the roots of democracy in the Germanic "Thing," or legislative and deliberative gathering of the men of the tribe. Gerald Graff discusses this in *Professing Literature: An Institutional History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). The meaning of "Thing" as formal gathering of community leaders is also mentioned by Heidegger as part of his argument supporting the idea that things like bridges gather.

8. See Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology, Collected Works* (New York: International Publishers, 1976), 41-45; Karl Marx, *Die Deutsche Ideologie*, in his *Die Frühschriften*, ed. Siegfried Landshut (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner, 1971), 354-59.

9. Just as Heidegger uses questions as a fundamental part of his rhetorical strategy, so I have used questions to a somewhat different purpose in my reading of his essay. That raises the question of the question. Heidegger's use of the question is another form of the double question. Heidegger's use of the question is another form of the double question. Heidegger's use of the question is another form of the double question: "as long as we do not bear in mind that all building is in itself dwelling, we cannot even adequately ask [*zureichend fragen*], let alone properly decide, what the building of buildings might be in its nature" (E148; G22-23). My questions, on the other hand, are a form of ironic detachment that is meant to sustain the interrogation of what Heidegger says. My questions are apotropaic, a way of trying to ward off the great force of Heidegger's rhetoric.

10. A passage in *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (*On the Way to Language*)

explicitly associates man's unique ability to experience death with his unique ability to speak, and therefore, presumably, to listen to the silence as language speaks through him: "Mortals are they who can experience death as death. Animals cannot do so. But animals cannot speak either. The essential relation between death and language flashes up before us, but remains still unthought [*ist aber noch ungedacht*]" (*Unterwegs zur Sprache* [Pfullingen: Günther Neske, 1959], 215; *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz [New York: Harper & Row, 1971], 107). See Jacques Derrida, *Aporias*, trans. Thomas Dutoit (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), for an extended discussion of the motif of death in Heidegger's work.

11. Deborah Esch, in a brilliant, unpublished essay, has discussed the problematic of examples by way of the example of the way the entry on "example" in the *O.E.D.* disobeys the basic ordering principle of entries in the *O.E.D.*, that is, the assumption that the historical sequence of uses is also a logical sequence tracing developing meanings of the word from initial literal meanings to later figurative ones. That logic is in the entry on "example" disturbed by the aporias of exemplification. The literal meaning of any example of example is already figurative, since an example is a synecdoche, and presupposes the validity of what it at the same time puts in question.

12. Does this mean that all modern mappings, since they are "scientific" in their use of coordinates and projections, presupposing an underlying neutral geometrical space, are a falsification? Yes, unless it is recognized that the making of a map according to various conventions is also a form of building, a way of letting things be or come into presence.

13. Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1967), 367; *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (London: SCM Press, 1962), 418.

14. The story here links up to the one in "The Origin of the Work of Art" about the so-called peasant shoes in Van Gogh's painting.

15. Heidegger's *Die Frage nach dem Ding* (*The Question of the Thing*) takes this up at length, mostly by way of a discussion of Kant (*What Is a Thing*, trans. W. B. Barton, Jr., and Vera Deutsch [Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1967]; *Die Frage nach dem Ding* [Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1975]).

16. A. N. Whitehead's idea of "prehension" posits a somewhat similar ubiquity. Everything, says Whitehead, in a sense is everywhere in the universe at all times (*Science and the Modern World* [New York: Free Press,

1967], 69-72). But for Heidegger this being everywhere is much more limited and individual, special to a single social group. One might even say Heidegger's conception of space is nationalistic. Moreover, for Heidegger ubiquity is a unique feature of Dasein, whereas for Whitehead a stone is as much everywhere at once as a person. Heidegger's attempt to support what he is saying by analogy to the way modern physics represents "the spatial medium of cosmic space as a field-unitary determined by body as dynamic center" (E156) seems spurious, since in the end it is not the bridge as body but the bridge as product of man's building that, so he claims, is an *Ort* that determines a *Stätte* that enspace. That is not at all the same thing. It is an analogy, a figurative substitution, and a false one at that.

17. Darmstadt, where the lecture was initially presented.

#### Chapter 10

1. Frank Lentricchia, *Ariel and the Police: Michel Foucault, William James, Wallace Stevens* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988).
2. Wallace Stevens, *The Collected Poems* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1954), 125.
3. This chapter has benefited greatly from opportunities to present earlier versions to audiences in Taipei, Jerusalem, Zurich, Lausanne, and Irvine. For their sponsorship or for helpful comments that have led to changes or additions, I thank especially Shan Te-hsing, Lee Yu-cheng, Sanford Budick, Emily Budick, Lawrence Besserman, Judith Besserman, Peter Hughes, Christa Knellwolf, Peter Halter, Catherine Gallagher, and Georgia Albert.
4. I have discussed Stevens's "A Primitive Like an Orb" in "When Is a Primitive Like an Orb?" *Tropes, Parables, Performances* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990; Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 227-44.
5. Further unidentified citations come from this poem.
6. See James Longenbach, "The Idea of Disorder at Key West," *Raritan* 11, no. 1 (Summer 1991), 104-5.
7. Kimon Friar and John Malcolm Brinnin, eds., *Modern Poetry* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1951), 538.
8. See Ramon Fernandez, *Messages* (Paris: Gallimard, 1926); *Messages*, trans. Montgomery Beljon (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1927).
9. Longenbach, "Idea," 110.
10. On the basis of the presence of the battleship *Wyoming* and other

naval ships at anchor off Key West when Stevens visited in 1934, Longenbach argues for a complex political context and meaning for the poem (*ibid.*, 92-114). There can be no quarrel with the project of establishing a political context for Stevens's life and work. Stevens's next volume, *Parts of a World*, ends with a poem making explicit reference to war: "Examination of the Hero in a Time of War." Unfortunately for Longenbach's hypothetical reading of "The Idea of Order at Key West," however, there is no reference in it, that I can see, to the U.S. Navy. The only boats named are, in so many words, "fishing boats at anchor there," just what one would expect in Key West harbor. It seems to me exceedingly unlikely that "fishing boats" is a euphemism for battleships and destroyers. That is not Stevens's kind of word play.

11. See Ken Frieden, *Genius and Monologue* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).
12. *The American Heritage Dictionary* (1969).
13. Wordsworth, "Nutting," ll. 54-56.
14. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Das Philosophenbuch/Le Livre du philosophe*, ed. Angèle K. Marietti (Paris: Aubier-Flammation, 1969), 188; trans. David J. Parent, *Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 252.
15. Martin Heidegger, "Bauen Wohnen Denken," *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, 2 (Pfullingen: Neske, 1967), 26, 27; *idem*, "Building Dwelling Thinking," *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 152, 153.
16. This, by the way, would mean that a cat or a dog or a fish cannot have a "world," an exceedingly problematic assumption.
17. "Autobiography as De-Facement," *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 81.
18. I have discussed the political implications of Heidegger's topographical ideas in chapter nine.
19. I have been helped here by Terence Harpold's brilliant unpublished essay, "The Contingencies of the Hypertext Link."
20. Jacques Derrida, *Psyché* (Paris: Galilée, 1991), 271.
21. See Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Seashore," *Poems, Complete Works*, Concord edition, 9 (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, n.d.), 242. The sea speaks: "Then I unbar the doors: my paths lead out / The exodus of nations: I disperse / Men to all shores that front the hoary main."
22. For characteristically rigorous formulations of the failure of orig-

# TOPOGRAPHIES

J. Hillis Miller

This book investigates a cluster of related concepts as they gather around the central question of topography. The other topics include the intriguing efficacy of speech acts, ethical responsibility, political or legislative power, the translation of theory from one topographical location to another, the way topographical delimitations can function as parable or allegory, the relation of personification to landscape. The way speech acts operate in literature and in life is the most pervasive of these additional topics. All are approached from the perspective of topography. How do topographical descriptions or terms function in novels, poems, and philosophical texts? Just what, in a given text, is the topographical component and how does it operate?

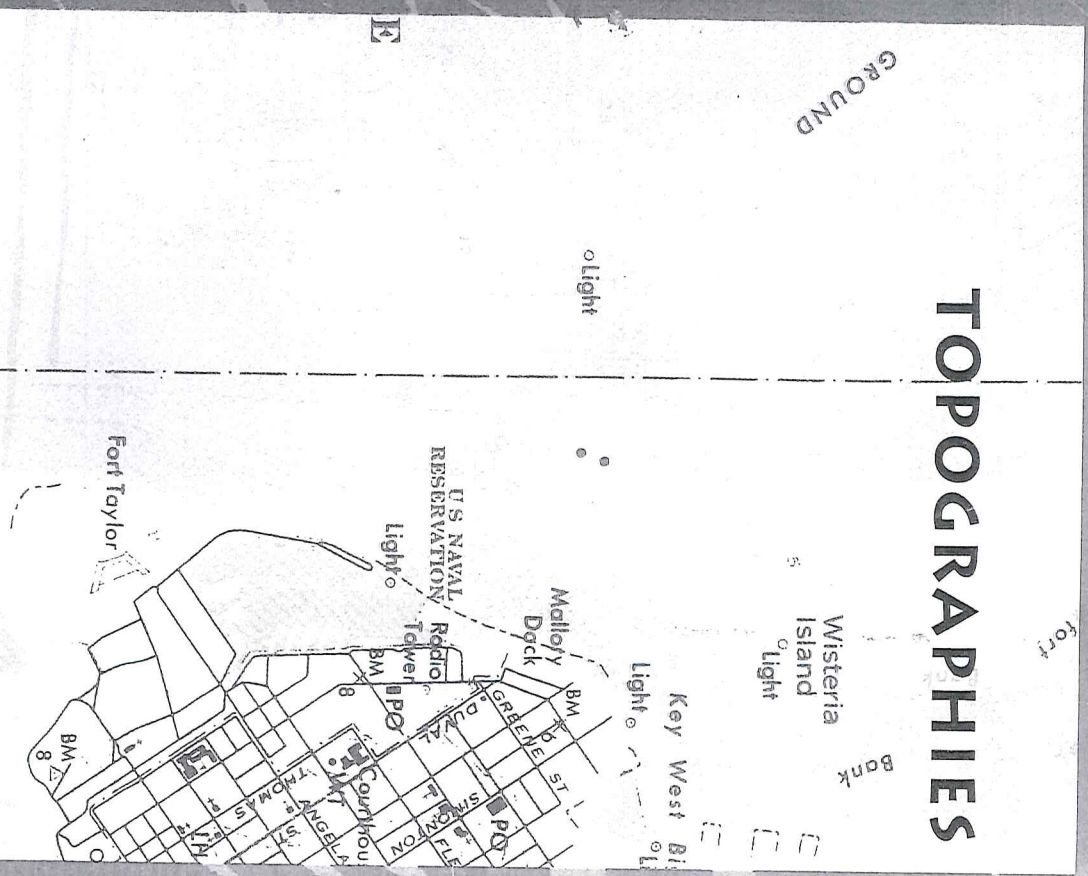
The topographical terms in each work create an imaginary landscape for the reader that generates both narrative and conceptual meaning. Such words include place names in both the generic and proper senses: river, mountain, house, path, field, hedge, road, bridge, shore, cemetery, furnace, boundary, horizon, but also "Key West," "Egdon Heath," "The Quiet Woman Inn," "Suppens Hundred," "the old bridge at Heidelberg," and so on. Though the texts are primarily by nineteenth- and twentieth-century poets (Tennyson, Hopkins, Stevens), novelists (Kleist, Dickens, Hardy, Faulkner), philosopher-dreionists (Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida), readings of Plato's *Protagoras* and the Book of Ruth from the Bible are also included.

*J. Hillis Miller is Distinguished Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of California, Irvine.*

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# TOPOGRAPHIES



J. Hillis Miller

Light



TOPOGRAPHIES

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