

FOUR STORIES BY LUISE RINSER: TRANSLATION WITH COMMENTARY

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By

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A Thesis

Submitted to the school of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Arts

McMaster University

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MASTER OF ARTS (1996)
(Modern Languages) (German)

McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: Four Stories by Luise Rinser: Translation with Commentary

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NUMBER OF PAGES: vi, 93

ABSTRACT

The work of Luise Rinser, one of the most prolific post-war German writers, is the focus of this thesis. Translations are offered of four stories from her collection entitled Geschichten aus der Löwengrube: Acht Erzählungen: Munjo, The Poet; As in a Mirror; Jacob's Struggle; and Applied Physics. Chapter One contains a biographical sketch of the author, showing how her life, from its beginning until her release from prison at the end of the war, has had a determining effect on both her writing and her political views and involvement.

The remainder of the first chapter consists of introductions to the stories, relating them to Rinser's views and philosophy. A young woman seeks personal liberation from the dictates and comforts of her upbringing. An older man, disgusted with the capitalist system of which he is part, allies himself with young environmentalists. A middle-aged woman experiences God in an unusual way and seeks validation of her experience from people trapped by religious orthodoxy. A Gypsy boy seeks deliverance from society's prejudices and stereotypes.

Following the actual translations of the stories, the final chapter

highlights the problems encountered in the translation process and the proposed solutions to those problems. The most general issues include: the variations in style and register across the four stories; translating colloquial and technical language; reflecting the sentence and paragraph structure of the original text.

I found this project extremely useful, acquainting me with the work and character of Luise Rinser, whose writings have thus far received too little exposure in the English-speaking world. The project has also brought into focus for me several major issues facing translators.

Translating a number of short works in varying styles has made me a more flexible translator, more open to consideration of different approaches to the task.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my thanks to Dr. Gerhart Teuscher, my principal advisor, for his support, encouragement and enthusiasm for this project, as well as for his guidance throughout the process. In addition, the other two members of my committee, Dr. G. Chapple and Dr. H. H. Schulte, provided valuable advice and assistance. The publisher of Geschichten aus der Löwengrube: Acht Erzählungen, S. Fischer Verlag of Frankfurt am Main, graciously granted me permission to translate the stories, for which I thank them. A friend, Marilyn Belle-McQuillan, offered some much-needed insight into the translation of specific terms related to the Roman Catholic faith. Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Gail, for her constant support throughout my university training, and most particularly, during the writing of this thesis.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE AUTHOR AND THE STORIES

1.1 Luise Rinser

The main body of this thesis consists of translations with commentary of four of the eight stories in Luise Rinser's 1986 collection, Geschichten aus der Löwengrube. I begin with a biographical sketch of the author and introductions to the individual stories.

In 1983 Luise Rinser, arguably one of the most prolific post-war German writers, returned to fiction writing with the publication of her novel Mirjam. Then in her seventies, Rinser had not produced any fictional prose in eight years. Instead, she had dedicated herself to making commentary on current affairs and modern life in the form of diaries and had also produced a volume of autobiography entitled Den Wolf umarmen. Mirjam, Rinser's reinterpretation of the life of Jesus from the point of view of Mary Magdalene, was a notable success and was followed three years later by the collection of thematically-related short stories called Geschichten aus der Löwengrube.

Luise Rinser was born in April of 1911 in Pitzling near Landsberg am Lech in Upper Bavaria and grew up in the Chiemsee region. Her father

was a school teacher, whom she remembers as a wonderful personality despite his strict moral views and tendency to be authoritarian (Riedler 8). "Nur ein bißchen unhandlich für ein Kind" (Riedler 9). She was drawn to writing at an early age, encouraged by the cultural atmosphere of her baroque surroundings and her parents' house where painters and minor writers were often guests.

If Rinser's father was strict, her mother tended to be distant. Neither parent encouraged their daughter to write. When she found a poem written by the eight-year-old Luise, the mother and a neighbour laughed aloud over it, discouraging her daughter from further efforts at verse (Serke 96). Nonetheless, Rinser's mother possessed a keen intelligence and many other positive qualities. Among the latter was a talent for story-telling that she passed on to her daughter (Falkenstein 10).

After a difficult time at secondary school—she was apparently expelled from a boarding school at fifteen (Riedler 10)¹—, Rinser went on to study pedagogy and psychology at Munich. It had been her desire to study medicine, particularly psychiatry, but that was deemed an unsuitable career choice for a woman at the time (Konzag 819) and she opted to become a school teacher instead.

When Rinser came to try the Staatsexamen in 1934, the topic of

¹ Riedler gives no reason for this expulsion and none of the other sources mentions it.

the written exam was: "Fichte, Pestalozzi, Hitler—die drei großen Erzieher des deutschen Volkes" (Konzag 816). She wrote about the first two and handed the paper in with no mention of the third.² In spite of that she passed and spent five fairly happy years as a teacher in various places in Bavaria. In one village, she taught the children of illiterate peat cutters, a world she described in her 1953 novel, Daniela (Konzag 819).

It was during this period that Rinser met and married Horst-Günther Schnell, a student of composer Paul Hindemith. Shortly before their marriage and under pressure from school officials to join the Nazi party, Rinser retired from school teaching (Konzag 820). The year before, Schnell had persuaded her to submit her story, "Die Lilie" to the forthcoming issue of Neue Rundschau. Peter Suhrkamp encouraged her to send him everything she wrote, invited her to Berlin and predicted, despite the objections that she raised, that she would be a writer until the end of her days (Serke 99).

Rinser's first novel, Die gläsernen Ringe, was published in 1941 and was an immediate success. The story is a Bildungsroman set in a time of war in which the main character, a young woman, meets and overcomes the challenges posed by her environment, the expectations of her mother and school authorities and the narrow restrictions that society would place

² Rinser says that she was instinctively opposed to National Socialism as early as 1932 despite the confusion that Nazi mass marches and celebrations had engendered in her (Konzag 816). For an alternate view of Rinser's early opinion of National Socialism, see Orendi Hinze.

on her. Evident in this work, as Frederiksen (1988, 69) points out, is a theme to which Rinser would later return: the idea of the necessary existence of polarities in life that are neither antagonistic nor mutually exclusive. Rinser was later to express the opinion that such polarities even existed in God, who had created the world out of the tensions within him (Hulse 83).

The book soon sold out and Hermann Hesse wrote to Rinser to praise the "reines, edles Deutsch" of her "wunderbare Kindheitsgeschichte" (Hesse 265). The régime, however, took issue with the book. Nazi ideological watchdogs interpreted as a confession of the author's anti-Nazi frame of mind the final sentence of the book, in which the heroine declares that the sharp, clear law of the mind would govern her life (Konzag 815). In 1942 Rinser was forbidden from publishing and was placed under Gestapo surveillance. Nonetheless, she did manage to publish a few articles during that period in the Kölnische Zeitung (Schwab 282).

In the following year, Schnell was ordered to the Russian front where he was killed.³ In the Bavarian village where Rinser lived with their two sons, she listened daily to BBC broadcasts and tried to convince young soldiers on furlough to abandon the war (Serke 99). She also discussed her

³ In 1944, Rinser contracted a Scheinehe with Berlin author Klaus Herrmann in order to avert his conscription. The marriage ended in 1948 (Schwab 282). From 1954 to 1959 she was married to Carl Orff. While quite interesting, both relationships are beyond the scope of this thesis.

views with friends. After the husband of one of these friends denounced Rinser in the autumn of 1944, she was incarcerated in the women's prison at Traunstein (Serke 99). She was also tried in absentia for high treason before the Volksgeschichtshof in Berlin. After the war, she heard that a sentence of death had been pronounced upon her, but she has never been able to confirm this (Riedler 11).

While in Traunstein, Rinser continued writing, keeping track of her daily experiences. The result was her Gefängnistagebuch, published in 1946. Immediately after the war, while working as a literary critic for Neue Zeitung and Weltwoche, Rinser became involved in the re-education campaign, lecturing to internees at the behest of the Württemberg Special Ministry for de-Nazification (Serke 101). Rinser also joined such groups as the Süddeutscher Frauenring, the Internationale Frauenliga für Frieden und Freiheit, the Lessing-Gesellschaft für Förderung der Toleranz, as well as the Vereinigung der Verfolgten des Naziregimes (Schwab 282).

It can scarcely be doubted that Rinser's life from its beginning until her release from prison at the end of the war has had a determining effect both on her writing and on the scope and content of her political views and involvement. Rinser has spoken out for a renewed Germany and democratic socialism in which Christianity would play an integral rôle (Serke 101). This does not mean that she supports the Christian Democrats: not at all. In fact, she has lent support to both the Social Democrats and the

Greens. In the 1984 election for Bundespräsident, she stood as candidate for the Greens, taking however only 68 of the 1,040 votes (Schwab 283).

While Rinser calls herself a Christian and while her enduring belief in God can be perceived in almost all her writing, she says that she is "keine brave Tochter einer christlichen Kirche" (Konzag 817). In fact, since she was 25, she has been interested in Eastern philosophies and religions, particularly Taoism and Zen-Buddhism (Konzag 822f). Her reading of the Gospels has helped form her political beliefs. To those critics who cannot conceive of a link between Christianity and socialism, Rinser replies that one cannot read the Gospels nor claim to be a Christian and not have a social conscience (Konzag 817).⁴

Rinser has championed many political causes. She has marched for peace and against nuclear weapons. She has spoken out on behalf of the rights of Gypsies and of prison inmates (Orendi Hinze 145). In her travels she has experienced life among miners in Bolivia and in a leper colony in Indonesia. She sought to forge links of understanding with the communist world, especially with North Korea and the former GDR.

Rinser has often met with and encouraged young people,

⁴ Rinser's thinking about the relationship between Christianity and social action may have been influenced by Karl Rahner, a Jesuit theologian with whom she had a long friendship (1962-1984). For a full discussion of this relationship, see pages 208-238 in Rinser's Saturn auf der Sonne (1994b). For Rinser's letters to Rahner, see her Gratwanderung: Briefe der Freundschaft an Karl Rahner 1962-1984 (1994a).

including, in 1970, Gudrun Ensslin and Andreas Baader, principal participants in the Stasi-sponsored Rote Armee Fraktion, active in the 1970s (Serke 101). In 1977, after the kidnapping of Arbeitgeberpräsident Schleyer by the Red Army Faction, Rinser was accused in the press and by some politicians of being a terrorist sympathiser (Schwab 283).

Rinser has published more than thirty full-length books, including novels, short stories and autobiography. In addition she has written some drama, children's books and essays on a variety of subjects. She has been praised by writers and artists such as Hermann Hesse, Thomas Mann, Oskar Kokoschka and Carl Zuckmayer. She has also been dismissed by critics such as Marcel Reich-Ranicki as a "Catholic writer," a "women's writer" and an "Erbauungs-Schriftstellerin."

Although Rinser has, for the most part, stood aloof from radical feminism (Frederiksen 1980, 58), her writings have from a very early date considered the problems of women in society. Die gläsernen Ringe is a good example of this. Rinser found it interesting that the book was still popular 40 years after its first publication and took that as a sign that women had not yet achieved true emancipation (Konzag 821).

Many of the concerns mentioned above are reflected in Geschichten aus der Löwengrube. A young woman seeks personal liberation from the dictates of her upbringing and the comforts of familiar surroundings. An older man expresses his disgust with the capitalist system

of which he is an integral part. He tries to form an alliance with young environmentalists in order to change it all. A middle-aged woman experiences God in a highly unorthodox way and seeks validation of her experience from people who cannot quite bring themselves to step beyond the bounds of religious orthodoxy. A Gypsy boy and the teacher who befriends him seek deliverance from the prejudices and stereotypes taken for granted by society.

All of these stories are set in the frame of the Biblical story of Daniel in the lions' den. Each of the protagonists is a Daniel beset by a variety of internal and external predators. All of them have angels, or at least allies, in their struggles to keep out of the lion's mouth. I believe that the four stories I have selected represent the variety of themes expressed in the collection and, at the same time, reflect many of the ideas in Rinser's life and work.

1.2 Munjo, der Dichter

"Munjo, der Dichter," here translated as "Munjo, the Poet," is the story of an orphaned Gypsy boy who is given shelter by the teacher in a small German town just after the Second World War. The teacher finds Munjo one day sitting dirty and ragged by the town fountain. Only one of many such children in those days, Munjo is neither the only non-German nor the only Gypsy following the passing columns of occupying American

soldiers. Yet there is something about this boy, perhaps his curiosity about the inscription at the base of the fountain, that appeals to the teacher, who offers him food, clean clothes, a bath, a home.

While the story is told in such a way as to disclose the teacher's thoughts and reactions, it is nonetheless Munjo's story. Munjo is the only character given a name. It is his transformation from refugee to self-confident young man that is documented. It is moreover, the effect he has on the people around him that is observed. Munjo has a way of bringing out a person's essential qualities, both good and bad.

The teacher, for example, is not a remarkable man by himself. It was a lung disease, a trick of fate, and not an act of heroic defiance that led to his noninvolvement in the war. Certainly he is repelled by the traces of Nazi thinking that permeate the attitudes of his neighbours, especially their attitude toward Munjo. However, his revulsion at and resistance to their prejudice come after the fact of the war and in part, at least, because of his feelings for Munjo.

Munjo arouses the desire for a normal life in this teacher who has neither students nor schoolhouse, who lives alone in a bombed-out ruin of a building. Munjo becomes his only student and, in the teacher's mind, a surrogate son. While the teacher's hold on Munjo's attention and affections always seems tentative at best, he does inspire in Munjo the desire for a more settled life. Munjo becomes the teacher's ally and co-worker in his

efforts to rebuild a fractured society.

Munjo is also the background against which the teacher sees negative characteristics of that society: the racist assumptions of the woman next door; the hypocrisy of the townspeople, willing both to enjoy Munjo's music and stories and to condemn him as an inscrutable outsider, a thief and a danger to the women-folk. Finally the bureaucracy that cannot find a place for this foreigner, since doing so would be tantamount to admitting responsibility for the extermination of Munjo's people, forces the boy to disappear as mysteriously as he had come. With him goes the teacher and shortly afterwards, the woman the teacher had asked to marry him.

The story is told almost as folk tale, "like the ones Munjo used to tell." Its setting is one with which Rinser was doubtless quite familiar, and the position it takes is clearly related to Rinser's advocacy of post-war political and social causes, in this instance the struggle for Gypsy rights (Orendi Hinze 145). The world in which Munjo and the teacher find themselves is a world in crisis, struggling to find new ways of existence among the ruins of the old ways. As the story ends, the townspeople speculate that the teacher has become a gypsy. Perhaps, however, he has simply come to the conclusion that Rinser identified in a 1974 interview as her political-theological world concept: that all humanity is part of a greater Whole; that every action of every individual has an impact on the Whole

(Riedler 24-25).

1.3 Wie in einem Spiegel

The second story I have chosen to translate is "Wie in einem Spiegel" or "As in a Mirror" in which the main character discovers, through a kind of mystical theophany, her membership in the Whole. It is the story of a woman, Maria Mühlbauer, who, despite her lack of acquaintance with anything that might be termed "religious," sees God reflected in a butcher shop window in the food market in Munich. This perplexing vision of God seems to invite comparison with St. Paul's statement in I Corinthians 13:12 that our earthly perceptions of God are like puzzling reflections in a mirror.

When she seeks to share and to clarify this experience with a parish priest, someone she hopes will be an expert on such matters, she is taken by him for an hysterical woman and palmed off on his young curate who, it is explained, has studied psychology. In the end, the younger priest is unable to decide whether her experience was real or not; he knows only that she is not crazy and that something has touched him deeply.

The story is, in effect, a meditation on the possibility of seeing God, of perceiving the transcendental in an age which dismisses or denies transcendence. The young curate tells Maria that people's finer senses have atrophied and this he attributes to natural science and the demand for proof growing out of it.

The people surrounding Maria at the market, however, do not seem overly concerned with scientific investigation; they are merely wrapped up in their mundane concerns of buying and selling tangible items of food and drink. The older priest too, his sensibilities absorbed in parish affairs and clouded by conventional theology, seems no more discerning than ordinary people. Even the curate, until quite late in his encounter with Maria, sees her primarily as an opportunity: as a case study and possibly the subject of a journal article or a book.

All but Maria and the curate seem intent on evading responsibility of one kind or another. The woman in the market lies in order to get out of paying for the dozen eggs she has obviously broken. The priest is loathe to meddle in affairs that might upset his daily routine, threaten himself or disturb the tranquility of the Church. He seeks to deflect Maria and the urgent question she poses.

Maria, however, takes on more than her share of responsibility. She cannot bear to see others suffer even when they deserve it, and in some ways, she suffers for them. She does not seek to evade this perceived responsibility, even when in all justice she may. For example, she feels a very real grief on seeing her own image reflected in a window amongst once living things that have suffered to serve human desires.

Rinser is careful, however, to draw a picture of Maria in which she is plainly seen as psychologically normal. Though quiet and unmarried at

40, she is no repressed spinster. She is not given to theological speculation, depression or hallucination. She does not seek suffering; rather it finds her. There is something Christlike in her suffering and her simplicity and openness of character bespeak a purity of heart. It is the pure in heart, says the beatitude, who will see God. To the reader as to the curate Maria opens that possibility.

1.4 Jakobs Kampf

As previously mentioned, Rinser has been an advocate for many causes, seeing social involvement as a necessary part of the Christian response to the world. One such cause has been the environmental movement (see Hulse 89), as the next story "Jakobs Kampf" or "Jacob's Struggle" illustrates. A dramatic monologue, the story highlights the rift between the older and younger generations and suggests environmental concern and economic reform as possible grounds for reconciliation.

The story is quite simple. A young woman named Barbara, searching for her friend, Martin Weyden, comes across his father instead. The two engage in conversation, at times heated. In the process they discover that, while their proposed solutions to the world's problems may differ, their perceptions of those problems are quite similar.

Barbara had been expecting to find Martin, or at least his student digs. They had met by a canal and had apparently shared their anger over

the pollution they saw all around them and the industrial system that created it. Barbara is quite surprised to find that Martin lives in a "stinkbürgerliche Villa" and that his father is a wealthy industrialist who owns a factory that Martin will one day inherit.

The senior Mr. Weyden is noticeably at odds with his son. He makes sarcastic comments about his son's irregular comings and goings and the instability of his love life. Barbara resents his attitude towards Martin and becomes angry when the father quotes a song from Othello that tells of a maid named Barbary who died pining for her mad and faithless lover.

The father's sarcasm, it turns out, is a thin veneer disguising his bitterness about life. It is true, he says, that he enjoys being consulted by the powerful, but otherwise he is bored to tears. He believes that his is a useful occupation that benefits thousands of people, but, at the same time, thinks they might benefit more from fresh air, good housing and beautiful gardens. His pipe dream is to throw his personal wealth on the fire, to pull down the factory and to start a non-profit agricultural commune in its place.

The title of the piece is a reference to the struggle of the Biblical Jacob with the unseen being at Jabbok. Weyden interprets this unseen opponent to be Jacob's fate, saying that there can be no winner in such a contest. He likens Jacob's struggle to his own struggle against the unseen force of the world economy, against arthritis, against his own over-regulated life. Perhaps there can be no victor in such conflicts, but he believes there

must always be Jacobs young and old willing to dislocate their hips while struggling to better the world.

As noted above, Rinser has constructed this story as a dramatic monologue; the only direct speech is that of the elder Weyden. Barbara's interventions and objections are indicated only by his repetitions and requests for clarification. No words are attributed to Barbara that the reader can interpret in a negative light. Rinser can take issue with Barbara's proposed solutions without being accused of ridiculing her by choosing for her a manner of speech that is, for example, less than mature. At arm's length from Rinser, Weyden can be as sarcastic or supportive, as radical or as conservative as he likes. Through Weyden, Rinser can put forward her own solutions while expressing solidarity with the younger generation.

1.5 Angewandte Physik

The final story, "Angewandte Physik" or "Applied Physics" is told in the first person. One summer, a female university student from Germany accepts a position housesitting for a wealthy couple in Rome. She believes this to be her dream summer job, more of a vacation than work. She soon finds out, however, why the people for whom she is working have left the city, along with nearly every other Roman who can.

The heat is unbearable. The dust is choking. The air is stagnant and oppressive. The apartment building where she lives is nearly empty and

by August, when she has all but run out of picturesque side streets and alleyways to view, the museums she had been intending to visit have closed.

One day, while visiting a small church, the narrator is startled when an Irish monk with white hair and robes, whom she had taken for a statue in the darkness, begins to speak to her. This shock, together with the presence of a group of German tourists, makes her realise how homesick and alone she feels, how truly threatening she finds this big city.

Her subsequent attempts to find companionship end in failure; she finds herself inhibited by her upbringing. She believes that leaving as soon as possible is her only option. Before she can, however, another Irishman — or is it the monk in civilian dress? — approaches her and asks her help. He is, he says, a professor of applied physics and has found an antique key that someone had apparently thrown at or past him into the street from an upper-storey window. He has worked out a mathematical formula for the possible flight path of the key and wants to test his theory by having her throw the key in a particular way from her apartment window.

The problem seems crazy to her at first and its solution always eludes her. Yet she gives herself to helping the physicist work it out, fascinated by the man and his equation. In anticipation of his visits, she begins to clean up the apartment, which she has been neglecting. She finds herself laughing in his presence and seeking out his company, no matter

how frustrating she finds all his calculations. By the time the physicist has given up on the problem, she realises that there is no longer any reason for her to flee Rome. She has come to view her time in Rome as a kind of test: a time of tempting in an urban desert. In the end, she has passed this test; she has faced adversity and kept her head.

Later she sees the physicist again in the restaurant where she had first met him but he seems not to recognise her. Eventually she stops seeing him at all and realises that he must have left town. She wonders for a moment if she has really had an encounter with him or if perhaps he was a product of her imagination. However, she has evidence: the key, his calling card and the page of equations.

Thinking that he might in fact have been the Irish monk in disguise, she goes to ask for him at the monastery near the little church, but is told by a gatekeeper, who looks something like the monk and the physicist, that there are no Irish monks there. When she shows the porter the old key and explains that she got it from a professor of applied physics, he tells her that they call applied physics metaphysics there and that she should keep the key in a safe place, for one day she will find the door that it opens.

"Applied Physics" shows an important moment in the passage of a young woman from adolescence into adulthood. Rome represents for her a wilderness experience; it is a place of testing where she goes both to be

tempted and to test the assumptions of childhood. In this desert she finds not only forces of evil arrayed against her, but ministering angels as well. In his wilderness experience, Jesus was tempted with material comfort, earthly power and grasping at equality with God. The narrator of this story is tempted to abandon her quest, to give in to fear, loneliness and despair.

Rinser herself has recognised religion, or rather metaphysics, "alles was nicht aufgeht in dem, was den Gesetzen der Physik entspricht" (Riedler 8), as the central theme of her life and work. The narrator is nearly defeated by the laws of physics, by the heat and dust and by the isolation of a foreigner on her own in Rome. The Irish physicist relieves her loneliness and occupies her mind with a problem of applied physics. In the end, when the temptation to flee to the safety of familiar surroundings has passed, she is left with no evidence of the physicist's physical existence except an old key and some scraps of paper. Whether the physicist was real or a dream, however, she has the assurance that she is never really alone, that there is something beyond the material world that is always with her, that both gives her strength and shows her the resources within herself.

CHAPTER 2

MUNJO, THE POET

He was sitting on the steps of the town fountain, tracing with his finger the letters of the inscription on its base. That is how the young teacher found him. Because the teacher had had a lung disease, he had neither been shot dead nor taken prisoner and thus was one of the few men who lived in the town in that first summer after the Second World War. The school house was bombed out and holding classes could hardly be thought of, yet the teacher was going around and gathering the children together. He didn't know the boy who sat there by the fountain. He was not one from the town. What sort of a boy was he anyway? He was filthy and ragged and very thin. Back then that was nothing special. There were many such who prowled around, parentless and belonging nowhere. They had come with the American soldiers from somewhere or other, tolerated and fed by the good-natured GIs, especially if they said their parents had been killed in the concentration camps. Which was often true, not always, but it was always useful to say. When the Yanks moved on, the children ran with them. This one, however, had stayed. The teacher watched him a while, imitating the stone letters with his finger. Then he said, "Can you

read that?" The boy looked up at him. The teacher saw that the dark brown of his skin did not come from dirt. "You speak German?" asked the teacher. The boy said nothing.

"Do you understand me at all?" asked the teacher.

The boy moved his head and that could as easily have meant "yes" as "no."

The teacher took it for a yes and asked further, "Where are your parents?"

A hand gesture that meant, "Far away." Then he made himself clear: he picked up a stick from the ground and aimed it like a rifle, then shrugged his shoulders as he laid his fingers around his throat as if he wanted to mimic strangulation or hanging.

"You're all alone?" asked the teacher.

The boy did not answer.

The teacher did not give up. "Where do you live?"

Again this indefinite hand gesture.

"Do you want to come with me? Yes? Come!"

Immediately the boy stood up. At first it seemed as if he wanted to flee, but then he followed the teacher, even if at some distance. A stray dog that had found a new master. He had probably already had several masters. He was trusting to chance and he was hungry. The teacher, who lived alone in a bombed-out building, gave him bread and the rest of the soup. The boy swallowed everything in the twinkling of an eye. Then he drew a cigarette from his trouser pocket, broke it skilfully into two pieces and gave one half

to the teacher, who said in amazement, "But you're too young to smoke. How old are you anyway?" The boy showed him both hands and then two more fingers in addition. Then he fetched the matchbox from the stove and lit the cigarettes, first the teacher's and then his own. The way he did it made the teacher think that this was not the usual street urchin and he considered how this little one would look if he were washed and not dressed in rags. But something held him back from telling the boy that he was dirty. Perhaps, if one put out clean underwear and a clean shirt for him, he would get the idea to wash himself. But where to get clean clothes. Nobody had more than what he was wearing on his own back. The war had eaten everything up.

But the teacher had an idea: he placed a wooden washtub full of water in the sun, undressed, climbed in and washed himself. The boy looked on in amazement, then laughed because he had understood. He also undressed and when the teacher climbed out, he dived into the water, which became dirty right away. He grabbed a handful of sand and rubbed himself all over and dived under water again. He was having terrific fun. When he finally climbed out of the tub, one could see that he had beautiful brown skin and blue-black hair. Before he could turn around, the teacher had thrown his clothes into the water and had begun washing them. He gave the boy a towel. This business of washing his clothes did not please the boy. He tried to snatch them away from the teacher when they were still wet.

"Don't worry! You'll get them back soon enough. They'll dry fast. Then they'll be clean and you can put them on again."

The boy stood there suspiciously. What the teacher was doing was an intrusion on his freedom. Because he was naked he was at the teacher's mercy; naked he could not run away. Finally he obeyed, wrapped himself in the towel and curled up like a dog.

The teacher hung the clothes over the fence. A neighbour woman said, "What sort of rags are you hanging out there?"

"I'd gladly hang out something better," said the teacher, "but the boy hasn't got anything else and neither do I."

"But I do," said the woman and after a while brought out trousers and shirt, both a little too big, but still good. "You can cut the trousers down and he can turn up the shirt sleeves; it'll be alright that way. But just what kind of a boy is he?"

"How do I know? He understands German but doesn't speak a word and they've shot his parents or killed them somehow. He showed me that."

"Is he a piccaninny?"

"No, he certainly isn't black. What are you thinking?"

"Well, that wouldn't be so bad. He could be a mulatto. This much I do see; he's from some foreign race. Say, I tell you what: he's a Gypsy. Just look at his hair: like raven feathers, blue black. That's Gypsy hair."

"So what?"

"Oh nothing, just interests me is all. Have you got enough to eat for him?

Well, what am I asking? A boy like that wants to eat. I'll bring something."

The teacher went over to the boy who pretended to be asleep, but he blinked; he was awake.

"So," said the teacher, "you heard her. And where are your people?"

The boy shook his head. He did it in a way that clearly said, "They're away, far away, and forever."

"Did they lose you?"

He shook his head again the same way.

"Did you run away from them?"

A shake of the head.

"What happened?"

Then the boy drew with his finger in the sand. It was a railway car with bars. And behind the bars he drew a lot of small circles that each had three dots: two for the eyes and one for the mouth, and the mouths were open. And in front of the boxcar he drew an arrow.

"All of them?"

The boy nodded.

"I see," said the teacher. But he didn't really know what he should say.

Now he noticed the boy's eyes. They were quite large and had a blue border.

"He really is a Gypsy," thought the teacher, and he thought further, "If he is

a Gypsy, he won't stay with me. He's used to roaming around. But without his clan, what can he do? I must wait until some Gypsies show up somewhere. They won't abandon one of their own. Until somebody picks him up, he'll just have to stay here. If he wants to. That's the question. I'd best let him do what he wants."

He made up a bed for the boy in his room, the only undamaged room in the building, and said nothing except, "If you want to, you can sleep there."

The boy nodded and it seemed as though he was happy.

But he didn't put the clean clothes on. He waited until his old tatters had dried in the sun, then he got dressed and the teacher had to admit that they suited him better than the new ones.

"Let him do what he wants," thought the teacher.

A few moments later the boy was gone.

"He's a Gypsy, that's all," thought the teacher, but he was sorry that the boy was gone.

But in the evening he was back. He had gathered raspberries in an old tin can, which he offered to the teacher and wouldn't take any for himself.

And now he said clearly, "For you!"

"So, you can speak German!"

"Little."

"What country do you come from?"

"Many country."

"What language do you speak with your people?"

"Romany."

"Do you want to learn good German from me?"

He shrugged his shoulders. He probably did not know how this learning would come about.

"Have you ever been in a school?"

He shook his head and at the same time his upper body, as if he were shaking off something unpleasant. He seemed to know what a school was.

"Never mind," said the teacher, "All you have to do is listen to me. You'll learn it all by yourself, without even trying."

The next day he saw the boy standing in front of his bookshelf. He took down a book.

"What in here?" he asked the teacher.

"That's a history book."

How does one explain to a Gypsy what German history is?

"Well: you belong to one people; I belong to another. Each nation has experienced many things since it came into existence. That's what's in there."

"About us?"

"No, not about you. Your people must have such a book themselves. Do they have one?"

The boy shook his head.

The teacher said, "But you people know your own history. Your grandmothers tell it to you, right?"

"Right."

The teacher hoped to learn more about his people from him but the boy was silent. He took the next book from the shelf.

"And in here?"

"That's the Bible. In there it tells how God created the earth and human beings."

"And the Jews."

"What on earth do you know about that?"

"Like Romany people."

He pointed to the drawing of the railway car, which had not been erased yet, and he drew a second arrow next to the first, pointing in the same direction, and then a third that pointed towards the northeast.

The teacher asked nothing. There was nothing to ask.

But the boy did have something more to say. He drew a small person in the sand who was running after the train. Then he rubbed it out and drew a smaller one, rubbed it out again and drew yet a smaller one. And finally it was nothing more than a dot. The boy pointed to himself and rubbed the boxcar out.

"You ran after the train?"

He said nothing. He took a book from the shelf.

"In here?"

"Those are all stories for children. Do you want to read them?"

The boy hurriedly put the book back.

The next moment he was gone. He had the gift of disappearing without a sound.

When he came back towards evening, he was waving something like a flag.

It was a dead chicken.

"For eat," he said, beaming.

"For goodness' sake! Where did you steal that?!"

He repeated, "For eat."

But his radiant smile disappeared.

"Come on," said the teacher, "We'll go to the place where you took it and I'll pay for it. You can't go stealing."

The boy held up five fingers and said: "Woman got five. We none."

"Yes, but we've got to pay if we take something."

"Why? Got lots. We none."

"Oh you," said the teacher. "Oh you. Show me where you got it."

"Far. Now cook."

And he was already beginning to pluck out its feathers. The teacher was at a complete loss. Such a thing would not do. If he behaved that way, the teacher could not keep the boy. »Gypsies steal.« "Woman got five, we none." That was a sort of morality, but it was not valid in this small town

where he was a teacher. Teacher! A teacher still without school or pupils. Fine, but nevertheless, everything would soon be back to normal. Normal. Is it normal? Woman has five, we none. "Yes, well, but listen. The woman bought the chick, and raised it. And she fed the chicken. She did, not us. We have to give her money for that. We must give her money, do you hear?"

The boy said nothing. He was plucking away, making the down and feathers fly.

Just at this moment, the neighbour woman came with some bread.

"Ah," she said, "You've already got something. Where do you get hold of a chicken these days? Potatoes are scarce too."

As she went out, she said something to the teacher softly but still loud enough for the boy to hear it. "But the boy should never do that.

Otherwise whenever something's missing, people will always say the same thing: The Gypsy did it."

"We'll bring you some chicken soup later," said the teacher.

But there was no soup. The boy dug out a hole in the garden, stacked wood in it and set it alight. He stuck an iron bar through the chicken, waited until there was sufficient burning ash, laid the spit across two forks made from branches, and roasted the chicken. The aroma could be smelled for miles around. Soon children came and stood around, some helping to turn the spit. They could hardly wait until it was time to eat. It was a

merry party. Not all the children were from that place and not all were German. There were two mulattos, one Pole and one who could also have been a Gypsy. But the one who was a Gypsy said he was not one. Almost all orphans, homeless, strays.

The boy, who now told everyone that his name was Munjo, felt like a proud host. Nobody asked where the chicken came from. Everybody stole in those days. "Why shouldn't Munjo steal?" the teacher asked himself.

But Munjo did not steal any more. Perhaps, as the teacher's Munjo, he wanted to be better than the other children. Or perhaps he wanted to demonstrate that what people said, »Gypsies steal«, was not true.

Now and again he would disappear for a few days, but he brought back nothing stolen; only mushrooms and berries and once, a hedgehog. But he was not allowed to cook it Gypsy-style: packed in clay and roasted in the fire.

"Let him go, Munjo: he's good for the garden."

Munjo shook his head obstinately and did not want to set the hedgehog free. The teacher said no more, but simply walked away. He knew that the boy could not understand him. Why should one not eat hedgehogs? They are good to eat. The teacher never found out whether Munjo had roasted it, somewhere far away. He never asked and it was never discussed again.

As far as speaking was concerned, the teacher was surprised at how quickly Munjo learned German, simply by listening.

That made the teacher happy. He was a teacher after all, a teacher through and through, and he was proud of his pupil, who was the only one for the time being, for the school was only just being rebuilt and many children had not yet returned from their places of refuge. The summer passed and the teacher could no longer imagine his life without Munjo.

One day a disturbance arose; there came a man in a torn-up soldier's uniform, no boots on his feet, but only soles cut from car tires and tied on with strings. At first the teacher did not recognise him, and yet this was his best friend, who had struggled back from imprisonment as a POW, from the Balkans as far as this little town, and who now wanted to go even further, that is, back home.

"Who's the boy there?"

"My son," said the teacher.

"Go on, he's no German. He's one of them from down there. I know these faces. He's a Romany, a Gypsy. He speaks Hungarian, you'll see. Just you watch!"

He called to the boy in Hungarian mixed with fragments of other foreign languages. The teacher listened mistrustfully. The visitor obviously found out everything that Munjo had been unable or unwilling to tell him. How easily the two of them conversed. The teacher was seething with jealousy, but he did not show it and, on the other hand, he now hoped to learn everything about Munjo too.

Whether it was everything cannot be established; perhaps yes, perhaps no. Perhaps the soldier concealed some things; perhaps Munjo kept something quiet, or perhaps he was lying through his teeth. Who knows? What the teacher learned was this: Munjo's clan came from the neighbourhood of Budapest. His father was a musician. The whole family were famous musicians and were highly paid and well respected. Gypsy lords they were, until the Germans came. Then they fled from place to place, from country to country, through Yugoslavia to Italy. There they were caught and transported to Germany. Then they escaped, that is, a few of them. But then they ended up in concentration camps anyway, in Poland, in Treblinka, or one of the others. Others went to Auschwitz. There they had to play for the SS and then nothing more was heard of them, ever again. That was it. Nothing more. Surely none of that was a lie, at most the part about their fame, but that could be true too. Perhaps it had been a lie that the Gypsies had had to play for the SS. How would Munjo know that after all? But that was possible too.

"So," said the teacher, "if Munjo comes from a musical family, he must also be gifted."

"Would you sing something for me, Munjo?"

Munjo gave no answer, but walked away. But that evening the teacher heard him singing something for the soldier.

"He sings for him," thought the teacher, "but not for me." But he also

thought, "They both know Hungary and they know the same language."

But he was happy when his friend moved on towards his own home. When he was gone, Munjo was gone too.

"Gypsies!" thought the teacher, drawing a double line under this chapter of his life. But that evening Munjo was back again. He had gone with the man a way.

"Hey!" called the teacher and grasped Munjo by the arm. "Never run away from me, hear?"

The boy shook him off and disappeared.

It was already dark when he heard a flute in the garden, like the flutes that boys cut for themselves out of wood. But it was played as no village boy played it. "Now he's playing for me," thought the teacher.

"My son," he thought, "my child." And he thought he would adopt him, one day, provided Munjo stayed. "He won't stay," he thought, feeling the pain in advance. But it was getting to be autumn and Munjo was still with him and was making himself useful. He was skilled at everything. He helped the masons rebuild the school house, repaired a water pipe, fetched firewood from the forest. He chopped wood and earned money and brought it to the teacher, whom he always called simply and only "you."

One day, in the public house, to which he used to bring wood, he saw a fiddle. He picked it up, plucked and tuned it, and when its bow was found, he played. It was a poor fiddle and the bow had lost half its strings, but

Munjo played and the people came and applauded. It turned out that in the village there was yet another fiddle without an owner in which nobody was interested. It was a good fiddle and Munjo played. "If only he wouldn't play such sad things all the time," the people said. They sang dance tunes for him, and he played them back, and suddenly he was famous in the place. And if they spoke of him as "the Gypsy," it did not sound like an insult, but was more like a way of saying "our artiste."

He soon found a further occupation: he became, so to speak, the librarian. The teacher had found out that the books of the municipal library, rather than being bombed and burnt along with the town hall, had, at least in part, been hidden in the basement of the rectory. From there they were retrieved. The priest wanted to put them on display in his house but the town council was against it. They did not want to make a parish library out of them. The people had a grudge against the priest who, when the Jews of the town were being carted away, stood behind his window curtains and watched but said nothing. Mind you, everyone else had stood behind their curtains and watched and said nothing, but that was just everyone else. From the priest they had expected a sign of protest. They wanted to take their courage from him. And when he himself stood there dispirited, they lost their own courage and would hold that against him for years to come.

So the books were not to stay in the rectory; they were to come to the new school house.

The teacher supervised the move. Actually, it was Munjo who loaded the books into wheelbarrows, book by book, as if they were fragile goods. And thus he unloaded them again, handing them one by one to the teacher, who put them in order on the shelves. The job took weeks because by late autumn the teacher had started lessons. He was assisted by three female teachers, two older than himself and a young one, who were settling in little by little. The young female teacher took over the library. That is, she was supposed to lend out books, but no one yet had time or inclination to read. They had other things to do, practical things: rebuilding what the war had destroyed. So the library remained unused.

Not quite: there was one patron, a secret one. It was Munjo. You could see him, if you had expected to find him there, sitting there day after day with a book in his hand. But could he read?

One day a young woman took the idea into her head to borrow a book. The female teacher was not there. Why should she have been in the library after all, since nobody wanted books? But Munjo was there. The young woman demanded a certain book and Munjo said that they did not have it. But there were other fine books, one for example in which this and that happened. In his odd but expressive German, Munjo told a long story that quite pleased the woman and she took the book out. A few days later however she brought it back, saying that it was the wrong book, that the wonderful story Munjo had told was not in it. He had made a mistake, she

said. Then he gave her another, once more relating its contents. And when the woman read the book, it was again quite a different story, not nearly so lovely as that which Munjo had told her. When she brought the book back to him, she asked if he had in fact read it. He just laughed. Now she took out no further books but rather sat and let herself be told stories. From then on she came almost every day. And then she brought other women with her and now they sat in the library and listened to Munjo.

The teacher was surprised at the business the library was doing. One day he came in just as Munjo was in the middle of his narrative. Munjo laughed and stopped his story and however much the women pressed him, he would go no further. When the teacher later asked him what sort of stories he told, he said, "Whatever comes into my head."

Were they stories that someone had told him earlier? No, he made them up himself, just like that.

That went on throughout the whole winter, the second post war winter, until one day policemen came and wanted to see Munjo's papers. He had none. But he had to have some. Anyone who had no papers was deported. But to where? The teacher said, "That's my son." They said he should not lie. He said he was his adoptive son, that he had made application. They said that could not be since an unmarried man could not adopt a child and anyway, nobody adopted such a rascal from heaven knows where.

"Well," said the teacher, "I'll just get married then, and as far as his

vagabond condition is concerned, we Germans have killed his parents and his entire clan, in Auschwitz. Yes sir."

At that they left. And now the teacher had to look for a wife. He thought of the young female teacher with whom he was in love. She said yes, she had wished that for a long time, but he had never had eyes for her, only for the Gypsy. But the Gypsy must leave the house, she said. Once a Gypsy, always a Gypsy, a foreigner. You never knew where you were with them. Anyway, there could be no talk of adoption. "Besides, however young he is, he's already turning all the girls' heads. They think he's the handsomest boy in the village. And he's probably older than anyone thinks, too. He's no thirteen-year-old. He's getting dangerous."

"The answer's no then," said the teacher and turned his back on her.

From then on his peace was gone.

One day a summons came from the police: this foreigner, it said, was not registered and was not in compliance with the compulsory school attendance law and was therefore here illegally.

The teacher made application for naturalisation or for a resident alien identity card. That right was denied to the teacher. Only an officially registered guardian could make such applications, they said. Then he was prepared, said the teacher, to become that boy's guardian. Yes, but for that he would need authorisation from the boy's relatives.

"Good God!" cried the teacher. "But we've killed all of them! In

Auschwitz!"

"We must have proof for that first. Documents from there. Pictures, dates. Such things exist. And anyway, sir, you're bringing nothing but trouble on yourself. Do you think the people around here want a Gypsy in their midst?"

"So, they don't want him? They listen to him when he sings and tells stories. They dance when he plays. They all like him."

"That's deceptive, sir. We advise you, turn him loose: sooner or later he'll run off anyway. As soon as some Gypsies show up, he'll be off with them. Once a Gypsy, always a Gypsy. Believe us."

"He'll stay."

"We'll see about that."

A week later, a lady teacher went to the police: she was missing a gold ring and she had her suspicions. She did not say straight out whom she suspected, but the police understood, and of course they quite soon found the ring under Munjo's mattress. Munjo was brought forward. When they told him he had stolen the ring, he went pale. They took that as a sign of fear and confession. But he was pale with anger. "I don't steal," he said and nothing more. The teacher shouted, "Munjo doesn't steal. Two years he's been with me and never, never has he stolen anything. Prove that he's the thief! I have quite a different suspicion."

But no one wanted to know whom he suspected. The police preferred to leave.

Only a few weeks later however new reports were emerging. Here a shirt had disappeared from a clothesline; there a purse was missing, somewhere else a carton of cigarettes. Finally it got about that the thief was known and that he would not be allowed to ply his trade much longer.

One day they found Munjo smoking a cigarette just like the ones in the stolen package. Munjo did not understand what was happening to him, when he suddenly found himself being seized and taken away by two policemen. He simply went with them. They locked him up in a cellar, since the jail had not yet been rebuilt.

When the teacher learned what had happened, he ran to the police station and mounted a protest. There was no evidence for the theft, he asserted. They put him off: the matter would soon be cleared up.

That night, after much searching, the teacher found the window behind which Munjo sat. The bars were not very firmly attached to the wall. One could pull them out with very little trouble.

When the police came in the morning, the cellar was empty. The bars were in place, however, and the door lock was untouched.

Did Gypsies have magic powers?

Well, the Gypsy was gone: case closed.

But the teacher was gone too.

It was said that Gypsies had been sighted in the neighbourhood. They had abducted him, said some. No, said others; he had gone with them

voluntarily. He had become a Gypsy. The story was discussed a while longer, but then it was forgotten. There was only one person who did not forget it, the young female teacher. It was learned that she had made enquiries. No one knew what she wanted with the information. One day she moved away and all trace of her was lost. At any rate no one picked up her trail.

It would be nice if the story ended this way. The young female teacher found the Gypsies. She found Munjo and she found the teacher. And they stayed together. But that would be a fairy tale like the ones Munjo used to tell: plain fairy tales with happy endings invented by one who had never experienced anything but fear, abandonment and death.

CHAPTER 3

AS IN A MIRROR

Maria Mühlbauer, bank employee, forty years old, unmarried, on the twentieth of March 1971 in the food market in Munich saw God. It was a Saturday and the bank was closed. Maria would use her free day to shop for vegetables for her numerous relatives.

She had already seen to everything, when a woman who was walking in front of her knocked a box with eggs in it off a stand. The woman, frightened and cowardly, hastily pointed to Maria and shouted, "She did it!" That was a lie and the other women swore at her. The woman swore back and a small tumult broke out. Maria, who even as a child was unable to bear it when others were humiliated and punished, and always felt a little guilty when others did something wicked, stepped resolutely forward and said, "It's my fault. I bumped into the woman and she only knocked the box down. I'll pay for the damages." She laid the money for twelve eggs on the counter and walked quietly away. Behind her it became quiet again.

Maria turned the next corner and there intended to put down her heavy bags for a moment. But as she bent down, she paused and forgot what she had wanted to do. For she saw something she had never seen before: in the

display window of a butcher shop the flowers on a stand facing it were reflected between the hanging rabbits with their rigid legs and glassy eyes and a little lamb already skinned, white, naked and eyeless. When Maria noticed that she too was reflected in the window among the dead animals and the flowers that were in fact already dead too, she felt grief. It was a quite definite grief: she had known it since childhood.

Always, when she felt it, it moved her to say, "It's my fault," without being able to say why and of what she was guilty. She would like to have gone on at that moment, but something held her. And suddenly she saw how something in the window was beginning to happen: the flowers and the animals were moving. Perhaps it was passing clouds that reflected a movement. As when one shakes a kaleidoscope and the coloured glass fragments form constantly new patterns, that is how it was. Maria looked and looked and suddenly a pattern stood quite still: it was God.

He was made up of many flowers and animals and of herself. God had big eyes. They were human eyes and also animal eyes and they were like the centres of daisies and sunflowers too; also like cross-sections of tree trunks that showed their annual rings. They were also like the open gates through which one could enter without knowing how it would end. Maria entered and she walked and walked and saw as she walked the eyes always ahead of her as if she had not yet entered. She wanted nothing except always to go on in this fashion.

Suddenly somebody bumped into her. She was startled and dropped both her bags. The vegetables rolled over the cobblestones. Somebody said loudly, "You've been standing like that for an hour now. What's the matter with you? Are you crazy?" Maria came back from far away. She began to pick up her vegetables. When she once more cast a glance at the mirror window, she saw how God was beginning to transform Himself once more into flowers and animals and herself. Then she went home.

Since it was the first time that God had run into her, she would like to have spoken with someone about it. One would like to share and to clarify such an experience. It seemed to her peculiar and incredible that God had met her of all people, for there was no reason for it. She did not even know whether she had been baptized. Her parents had had nothing to do with church and religion and Maria, who, like all children, had had to attend religious instruction at school, had learned nothing about God there. He must have mistaken her for someone else. For a long time Maria did not dare to speak to anybody about this. But one day she made up her mind to go to a priest. She imagined that he, because of his profession, would know all about such things. When she rang the vicarage doorbell an old woman in a nun's wimple answered, who asked her sternly what she wished. Maria replied softly that she wanted to speak to the reverend. The nun seemed quite astonished at this notion. She cried, "The reverend? Do you mean the reverend father? And at this time of day, so early in the morning! And tell

me, is it something important that you wish to say?"

This question altogether intimidated Maria. She remained silent in order to consider whether what she wanted was important. But the nun had no time to wait for what Maria would discover through reflection. "Does it concern a charitable or a financial matter?" Now Maria was able to call out quickly "No, no, just the opposite!" Why she had said "just the opposite" she did not know herself. The sister, used to thinking quickly, said, "Do you want to confess, perhaps?"

This came rather unexpectedly for Maria. "Confess?" she said and began to ponder whether one could call what she wanted to do "confession." The sister interpreted Maria's hesitation in her own way: "Well, you know, everyone needs to confess. We're all sinners." Maria, who saw here a chance, probably her only chance, of speaking to the priest, said, "Yes." The sister sighed in relief. "Fine, wait here. You can confess right in the study if you wish."

Maria said yes again and sat down. The sister left. Maria waited. After some time the priest came. He reminded Maria of the chief executive officer of her bank and he smelled of the same after-shave.

"So," he said in a pleasant-sounding voice, "You've come to have a burden lifted from your soul. Why don't you begin?" He took a purple band from his pocket, held it before his face and closed his eyes. Maria pondered whether it was accurate to say that she wanted to talk away the burden

from her soul and she decided that it was not accurate. She had a feeling that what she wanted to do was the opposite but she believed herself incapable of putting into words what she thought or felt.

The priest waited a while longer and then he said, "There is no debt that cannot be atoned for. Have faith."

But Maria remained silent. Then the priest took the purple band from his face and said, "Alright, what is it?"

Maria apologised for making him wait, but, she said, it was not true that she wanted to confess. She just had a question.

The priest said, "Alright, ask it. But consider that I have little time. Can you be brief?"

Maria said, "I would just like to know if you've ever seen God."

Now it was out. The man of the cloth sat back a little and began to scrutinise Maria sharply. What did this person want with this question? She was likely a naïve atheist who wanted to have him understand that if he had never seen God, there was no God. A foolish little materialist, probably a communist who had been turned away by negative propaganda. He decided not to allow himself to be provoked. It was not worth it. So he said with forbearance, "One cannot see God, my dear woman, or my dear young lady, because He is pure Spirit. But not to see God does not mean that He does not exist."

Maria was not interested in this conclusion. She cried, "One cannot see

God?! Not ever?!"

The clergyman's brain began to react. This person seemed strange to him, but sincere. Now he remembered something he had read about the mystics. "Oh, well," he said, "There are saints about whom pious legends say that they saw God, but that is an inadequate mode of expression for their inner experience of the omnipresence of God. It's only an image, do you understand? One doesn't see God, for of what merit would our faith be if we could see God with our bodily eyes?"

Maria tried to understand why faith must necessarily be a merit and better than actual seeing. But she did not feel up to the clergyman's reasoning, so she remained silent. The priest continued, "As long as we are here on earth, we see God only as it were in a mirror."

"Yes!" Maria cried aloud, and jumped up, and so violently that the priest himself jumped up too from fear.

"Yes," said Maria, "Exactly: like in the mirror!"

Now she felt understood. "In the mirror; that's exactly how it was!"

Now the man of the cloth became uncomfortable. "HOW was it, and WHAT was that way? Do sit down!"

"God was in the mirror," said Maria as she sat down.

Now the man of the cloth knew that he was dealing with that sort of pious, harmless, hysterical woman that he would refer to the further attention of the vicarage sister. She dealt with such people in the twinkling of an eye.

With difficult cases that made him suspect schizophrenia, he would hand them over to the young curate who, besides theology, had studied psychology. At the moment the priest was not yet certain whom he should choose to be responsible for this case. Since the matter had proved to be harmless for him and the Church, he could afford to be affable. He said, "I see. You've seen God that way. In a mirror?"

"Actually," said Maria thoughtfully, "It wasn't a mirror. It was a display window at the market. The flowers were reflected there between the dead rabbits. And I was in the mirror too. And all at once, when I wasn't thinking of anything in particular, there..."

She noticed that the man of the cloth was looking at his wristwatch and was not listening. She remembered that he had said she must be brief. So she said forthrightly, "Reverend, Reverend Father, I must know if you have ever seen God."

The man of the cloth stood up. "My dear woman, or my dear young lady, I understand nothing at all about such matters, unfortunately or... Well now, you must speak to the curate. Wait here. I have to go to a parish council meeting."

Maria stayed by herself and considered how strange it was that the priest had never seen God when he had had dealings with Him all his life.

Then the curate came. He was very young, it seemed to Maria. He still took everything seriously, Maria felt that too. She began to feel more

trusting. In the corridor the priest had hurriedly told his curate what it was all about. Because the priest understood nothing about such things, the curate was glad that he understood something about them. Right away he was very friendly to Maria. That made no special impression on her. She simply just wanted to know whether he or other people had seen God. The curate looked at her expectantly. She said, "I was at the market. There was a butcher shop display window. There were flowers reflected in it and I was in it too, and suddenly everything moved."

"How lovely!" said the curate, but Maria would not allow herself to be interrupted with something that did not belong to her story. She went on rapidly. "And as I stood there and looked, not thinking anything, there..." The curate leaned forward a little and looked at Maria. That confused her a little, but then she continued quickly. "Yes, and there, there was God in the mirror."

The curate did not seem astonished. He said, "And what did He look like?"

"Actually only like eyes," said Maria, "like eyes of the dead animals and also like the centres of sunflowers, and like sawn-off tree trunks where you can see the annual rings. Like that. I can't say it exactly."

"Aha," said the curate and looked at Maria who, for her part, looked expectantly at the curate. Then the curate asked, "You live alone? Yes? And you're unmarried? And how old?"

She told him. The curate went on to ask whether she thought about God a

lot and prayed; whether she suffered from depression; if she had been ill; whether there were or had been other people in her family who had experienced something similar.

She answered all his questions with "NO," confidently but with astonishment. The curate was now no longer so cheerful. Meanwhile the suspicion crept over him that this person was making fun of him and of sacred things, but his own experience and what he had learned in six semesters of studying psychology were enough that he could say that the person was healthy, more robust than delicate, sober, kindly, even intelligent if also a bit slow of thought. Beyond that he was at a loss. "Well," he said. "So you've seen God. That's a rare occurrence. You know, these days the finer senses of humans have atrophied and besides that, people deny the possibility of a direct experience of God. People most definitely do not believe in the existence of the metaphysical, despite all the research in parapsychology." Maria listened to him and understood more or less what he meant.

The curate continued, "People, spoiled by natural science, believe only what they can prove any more. And you probably can't prove that you've seen God."

"Yes I can!" shouted Maria, but corrected herself right away. " Maybe not prove it, but if you, Father, would like to go with me to the market, perhaps you could see God there for yourself."

The curate, who was still curious and would also have liked to write something for a parapsychological journal and suddenly saw the possibility of playing the rôle of the poet Brentano with the stigmatic Anna Katherina Emmerick said without a moment's hesitation, "Let's go!" It was already late afternoon and there were no flowers there and, in the butcher's window, now hung only a single lamb. Everything else was sold or already stowed in the deep freeze. The little lamb hung there naked and head-down and quite alone. Maria and the curate were reflected in the windowpane. "There!" cried Maria, for she had seen God for the second time, even if only fleetingly.

The curate tried hard to see what Maria was smiling at, but he saw only himself, Maria and the little lamb. And there was nothing to do. He would gladly have seen something then.

Maria said, "Do you see?"

He said meekly, "Yes, I believe I..."

"And tomorrow," said Maria enigmatically, "tomorrow they will eat the little lamb, but..."

The curate was waiting for the end of the sentence, but Maria said nothing further.

Something, however, had touched the curate; he did not know what.

Maria looked at him. He said, "I have to go now. And please, don't speak with anyone about your experiences."

"Fine," said Maria.

In the evening the man of the cloth asked his curate how he had coped with that hysterical woman. The curate replied that he did not yet know what he should think of the affair but that this woman was no lunatic. She had made a very good impression on him and, anyway, he asked, why should one NOT be able to see God?

For this the priest knew no answer.

CHAPTER 4

JACOB'S STRUGGLE

Hello! Yes, I mean you. Who else? There's nobody around but you. I've been watching you from the terrace for while. A person stands out on a Sunday afternoon in an empty suburban street, if he goes from house to house and is obviously looking for one in particular. It's a difficult search, isn't it, when there are no names on the gates? Can I help you? Come on in, otherwise I'll have to shout. Wait a minute; the gate opens and closes automatically. Come closer. Good day. So who are you looking for?

Martin Weyden. As a matter of fact he does live here, if he lives anywhere at all. Unfortunately I can't tell you where he is at the moment. He comes, he goes and generally doesn't bother telling me about what he's up to. Who am I? Martin's father. Yes, of course: he has a father in fact. Please don't look at me with such a shocked expression. I'm not a wolf, even if my son ... Well, what brings you here? Do you have a date with my son? Not exactly; well what then? You want to speak with him? He gave you this address without telling you that you'd run into his father? You thought he had student digs somewhere and instead you find this boringly bourgeois villa of an obviously rich man. Admittedly a surprise. But still no reason to

run away. Perhaps we'll be lucky and the young master of this house will remember that he lives here and maybe drop by. Sit down. Do make yourself comfortable. Sitting on the edge of your chair gets painful in the long run. Anyway, waiting does, doesn't it? Drink? No? To your health! What's your name? Barbara. You don't have a family name, I suppose? Because you have no family? Pardon? Fine, then, Barbara.

My mother had a maid call'd Barbary:

She was in love; and he she lov'd prov'd mad,

And did forsake her. She had a song of 'willow';

An old thing 'twas, but it expressed her fortune,

And she died singing it ...

Sing willow, willow, willow;

Her salt tears fell from her and soft'ned the stones.

Lovely, isn't it? Shakespeare, Othello. Your name called the text to mind. "Barbary: she was in love." But please don't be angry. It's only a quotation after all. I love quotations. I read a lot. What else should I do in my spare time or on my days off? Barbara. You're my son's girlfriend, or one of his girlfriends? I beg your pardon. Well, for my son such bittersweet pleasures rarely last longer than from one full moon to the next. He never lets the grass grow under his feet. Barbara. Your name reminds me of many things. Don't get up. What you're hearing isn't him; it's Rosali, my housekeeper. I'm sure we won't miss hearing him, if he does come. He doesn't simply

come in, he breaks in, as if he had to force entry all over again every time. Sorry? You wonder if I hate my son? What a strong word! I extend the honour of my hatred to others. How well anger suits you! Your eyes give off green sparks. I understand: you're beginning to hate me. Fine. Score, one to nothing, a boomerang: you do not give me the honour of your hatred. Who is it meant for? Don't get up. You interest me. One should never miss an opportunity to learn. I mean myself as much as you. You're laughing. You have a scornful laugh. Or a bitter one. Whatever you want to call it. You're certain you can't learn anything from me? Are you really so sure you know who I am? And are you sure you knew, when you came in, whom you would meet, the father or the son? You don't understand. All right. Something else: where did you meet my son? If I may ask this question without you giving off sparks. At the canal. What was he doing there? Did he want to drown himself? I'm being cynical? An old cynic, you wanted to say. Maybe. Perhaps you would be too, in my place. So, my son ... Why do I always say 'my' son? Force of habit. The 'my' annoys you? Shall we drop it? And 'son' too? If you like. So: Martin was sitting by the canal. And? He was looking at the water. Go on. It was effluent from the factory, poisonous water full of dead fish. Yes, yes I know the entire hysterical eco-litany: poisonous exhaust fumes, poisonous smoke, poisonous air. And he didn't say anything else? Didn't he say that factory was his father's and that he's my heir? Did he not tell you what this factory

means to the surrounding countryside? Come over here to the window. Look: there behind the poplar grove stands a fortified castle with walls, gates, watchtowers and waving banners. Don't look at me as if I were crazy. Allow me my fantasy. No? Be fair. Try to understand: this factory is a fortress, ruling the countryside, impregnable, giving the populace shelter from hunger and cold. I protect a thousand people, Barbara, from unemployment. About a thousand families live off me. That means, about five thousand human beings dwell in safety beneath my wings. I am their patron, their father. Ask these people, ask every one of them, if my workers aren't doing well. Why are you looking at me like that with your unmerciful eyes? Tell me what you're thinking out loud. Well? Which fairy tale? About the witch who fattens up Hansel so that she can eat him. Roast and eat, as it says in the fairy tale. You have another word for it, of course. You don't have to say it out loud. It's written all over your face. A stupid modern word. Who's exploiting whom, girl? Am I not exploited too? Am I my own master? Isn't my employer that anonymous power called the world economy? Isn't my factory sucking the marrow from my bones? Doesn't the competition rob me of sleep? What do I get from money? Think about it: this old villa, inherited. This furniture, inherited, and worm-eaten, by the way. I'm too apathetic to do anything about it. A life of luxury? What's that? Eating caviar, drinking champagne, staying in expensive hotels? It bores me stiff. The feeling of having power, yes, that is something. Sitting

on the boards of large corporations, being listened to, being involved in politics. But even that gets wearing. You're smiling a mocking smile. What did you say? I know, I'm a capitalist criminal in your eyes, your merciless grey eyes. But, my dear Barbara, can you tell me what my crime consists of? You think I know; that my guilty conscience is written all over my face. Well, yes, that's certainly a lot. Let's assume I have a guilty conscience. Does that prove I'm guilty? Contestable logic. Doesn't everybody have a guilty conscience? Aren't we born with it? Isn't it passed on from father to son? If only I knew with certainty what it's connected to in my case. Am I worse than other people? Am I not perhaps even a little better than many? Doesn't it count for something in your judge's eyes that I make life in conditions fit for human beings possible for five thousand human beings? What are you saying? Right, marxist slogans. What's the precise term: added value? It's simple? So you say in your ignorance of economic questions. Not in ignorance? Of course, you're studying polisci, aren't you? It's all the rage. You're not at university? Not any longer? One question: do you come from a wealthy family or a poor one? Oh, it certainly is important to know that. One is so harsh only when one has known great wealth or great poverty. Oh, that's why I know your name. Pardo: the health resort. So you're your wealthy parents' conscience. Two children of wealthy people find each other while hating their parents, Or, let's say, while hating that society which makes it possible and easy for their parents

to amass private capital for their heirs. Be happy that we rich parents have given you the opportunity to renounce our wealth and set yourselves against us under the banner of righteousness. Whatever would you do without us enemies? We give your lives meaning. We give you class-consciousness and self-esteem. It's the function assigned us by fate. In my case you and Martin are tilting at a windmill or, shall we say: you're battering an unlocked door with iron bars. How's that possible? Do you want to hear a story? An abridged version of Martin's family history? Fine. Martin's great great grandfather had a small farm. Just a small one. His land was barren. There wasn't enough fodder for two cows. Then he sold the cows, trading them for sheep. The sheep ate the sparse grass, fertilised the land and gave milk and wool, especially wool. The farmer's wife sheared the sheep, spun and wove. The first loom stood there, where the factory now stands. The people became prosperous, even rich. Thus it continued, you believe, ever upwards? From dishwasher to millionaire. My great grandfather ruined the business. A dreamer. He disappeared in the States. My grandfather started all over again. He bought the first automatic looms. He grew rich and built the first factory buildings. My father gambled on the stock market and lost. I started over. Now it's my son's turn. Pardon? He won't ruin the factory? He won't even take it over. Is that what he says? That'll spare me from torching it. Don't look so appalled. I'm not crazy. I'm talking about my dream. I dream it again and again. In my dream, I'm sitting in front of my

fireplace where a cosy fire is burning. Suddenly I pull a burning log out of it, throw it on the carpet, smash chairs and pictures to pieces, throw it all on the fire and walk away. Behind me the house collapses. The crash wakes me up. My pipe dream. Arson is no solution. I know. Pardon? What do you mean by that? I'm dreaming a stolen dream? Stolen from whom? My son? Or are we both dreaming the same dream? Are we acting as secret accomplices? So father and son would be in agreement? One is the projection of the other's secret wishes? And at the end of the family chronicle they clasp hands over a smoking pile of rubble? No? How should it end? Does he have a better solution? Blast it, who's that disturbing us? No, it's not Martin: it's the old gardener. That means it's four o'clock. He comes by on the stroke of four. In a minute the cuckoo clock will strike. On one, the wooden cuckoo pops out; on two, footsteps approach the door; on three, somebody knocks; on four, Rosali punctually appears and asks if I want tea. There! Isn't it ludicrous? In this house everything is regulated. One gear fits into the next, cog by cog. Just like in the factory. No gaps, no cracks, no possible way for disorder to force its way in. The slightest bit of disorder could bring about the collapse of the edifice. I wonder how you got into this house anyway. Legally, through the garden gate. That's what you say. The question hasn't been answered yet. You found a crack, Barbara; you just don't know it yet. What are you saying? Creative imagination? Yes, Rosali, tea, for two people and in the summer house.

Why are you looking so shocked, as if I were demanding something indecent from you. Can't I drink tea somewhere else once in a while? You see, Barbara, the norm that allows neither deviation nor escape. So, run along, Rosali! Pardon? Not used in a long time, not for years, fine. Dirty? Ivy untrimmed? What difference does that make? This young lady you're staring at is Mr. Martin's girlfriend and, if she wants to, might just become mistress of this house. Is your curiosity satisfied? Get a move on; we'll be there in ten minutes. Admire me, Barbara! Admire my first step into that dream. But what were we just taking about? Ah yes, we were just discovering another possibility of survival. You were about to say something. You were talking about creative imagination. What did you mean by that? That I lack it. And what could a creative imagination create? I'm listening to you, seriously, in all seriousness. Instead of arson, why not found a cooperative? You mean I should hand the factory over to the workers? Is that it? And you think that would change something in the way of the world. There's where I'd prefer to be much more radical. My suggestion, Barbara: close the plant, pull down the factory buildings, build residential buildings, turn the whole property back into farmland, and found an agricultural commune that doesn't operate on a for-profit basis. Does my dream suit you? No? You insist on your own. It's no dream, you say. Your suggestion sounds as if you've already agreed on its details with Martin. So that means that you already see yourselves as owners of this

factory? And that means that you're counting on my imminent death? No? But what are you counting on? On my knowledge and consent? I see. And nothing else. So that's what you call creative imagination. And what if mine were that much better? Look: there beyond the poplar grove start the meadows and the grain fields. You smell the scent of hay. And there is a little settlement with clean, pretty cottages and little flower gardens. And no more smoking chimneys, no factory buildings, no exhaust fumes, no effluent. Isn't that a lovelier dream? The people are poorer, but what does that matter? Don't look at me so scornfully. If I want it, this dream will become reality in three years, while yours perhaps will never be, or only in twenty or thirty years. Barbara, do you seriously believe that your dream is better? But let's go. Tea's waiting. You know: punctuality, the norm. Careful, the steps are slippery, worn down by generations of dreamers. Dreamers of fair dreams; dreamers of dark dreams. Sleepwalkers all. Take it easy, I limp. Didn't you notice that just now? Was I limping less? Not at all? Strange. A fall from a horse? No, just plain old arthritis. Progressive. In ten years, Rosali may be pushing me in a wheelchair. No, I'm not joking. Careful, that flagstone is loose. I should have it repaired. My gardener is getting old. I can't fire him and he wouldn't put up with a younger helper. Well yes, you see. What are you supposed to see? The perfection that no longer is. The gaps. The cracks. Do you know your Bible, by the way? I mean the story of the man who dislocates his hip one night while wrestling

with an invisible being. Jacob was his name, yes, that's it. And who was the unseen opponent; do you know that too? And what was this struggle all about? Don't you know? I know: Jacob wanted to force the invisible being to bless him. What does that mean? Think, Barbara. Jacob was struggling with his fate. You could say that. And who was the winner? There is no winner, Barbara. There's no victorious class in society either. But isn't it enough that there are always fools who believe that they can reform the world and who dislocate their hips trying?

CHAPTER 5

APPLIED PHYSICS

Envy? Did you envy me? Yes, I considered myself worth envying when this invitation came: apartment sitting in Rome for two whole summer months because the Marinettis were going to Canada. Two months of Rome. A beautiful apartment near the Piazza Navona. And time for myself. A holiday. For once a real vacation without a job to earn money for university. Just imagine, the people were even paying me for housesitting and for watering their plants. A bit of dusting and watering a few oleanders and whatever else was thriving — or not — in stone pots on the roof terrace. "It's going to get hot," said the occupants before they flew away to the north from which I was just coming. I laughed. "Hot? It can't be warm enough for me." I was saying 'warm;' they were saying 'hot.' I didn't hear a difference between the two. It was the end of June and 84 degrees. As far as I was concerned, that was magnificent. Early in the morning I would leave the house, drink a capuccino at the nearest bar, eat my cornetto, and then I was off: up and down the streets; I was in Rome, you see, for the first time in my life; just imagine. At first, I followed the guidebook to Rome and just saw what tourists see: St. Peter's and the Vatican Museum and the

Forum. Then I left the guidebook at home and went my own way; and that way I found byways and forgotten places that were far more exciting than the usual attractions. I rambled and rambled: day by day I walked my eight hours. At noon I would have a bite in some bar or other and in the evening I would treat myself to a real dinner with wine included: and everything was exactly as I had dreamt. I was saving the museums for August.

Admittedly, they were closed then, except for the Vatican Museum, which was full of tourists being herded from room to room by their guides. In the first week there were still a couple of families living in our building: it's an old palazzo that, on the outside, is truly, beautifully baroque and redone on the inside: nothing but modern apartments. Rich people live there: who else could afford such places? I read the nameplates. There were eight families, five of them with American names, one German and two Italian: one of them was the Marinettis. In the second week the building became progressively emptier and all the venetian blinds remained closed. At first, on the second floor, a cat would sit day after day and yowl and wouldn't believe that her patroni would not open the door. Then she gave up and mingled with the hundred other abandoned stray cats that are poisoned from time to time. So said the old caretaker who lived in the basement with his stone deaf wife, whom I saw only three times in two months. In the end, the two old people and I were the only tenants in the building. Wasn't I afraid? Not a bit. But it sure was empty. The high-ceilinged rooms, the

stone steps, the cavernous stairway through which my steps echoed: no elevator, by the way. The caretaker said that was forbidden by the building control department: the palazzo is classified as historic. I was living on the top floor, the fifth. So the building was getting empty, and the streets were becoming empty, and the temperature was climbing: 86°, 88°, 90°, 91°, 93°, 95°. And there the thermometer stayed and nothing moved any more. It hadn't rained in three months, not a drop. Sometimes a bit of wind blew, but it was hot itself and brought with it a yellow sand: "It comes from Africa," the caretaker said, "and the wind is called scirocco: it's a nuisance." And then even it dropped off and the air stood still in the narrow streets as if it had congealed; everything got covered in dust and the nights were stifling and stayed hot. I put on a brave face for the time being and told myself that I liked it as it was because it was Rome. Once I went to the seaside but that was even worse: the subway was overcrowded and the people stank of sweat. And on the beach you climbed over oily bodies into the oily water. Once was enough. When the museums were closed one after the other, I was left with the churches. I think I visited more than fifty: there are several hundred. But then I couldn't bring myself to see any more putti and golden angels, or weeping Magdalenes or Madonnas with swords in their hearts, or St. Anthony complete with baby Jesus and Joseph with lily. And that whole world of stucco and plaster of Paris was unbearable to me. At the very end I was in a small church that was dark, especially if you

were coming out of the blinding light of day; and there to the right of the altar stood a life-size statue with white face and white hair and a white monk's habit. But when I came nearer I saw that it wasn't a statue at all, but a living human being who finally stirred and said something, in English. Naturally I was quite startled, because the man had a really white face and white hair and also quite light-coloured eyes. The man said, "May I help you?" His English was really English but with the Irish accent that I remember from Dublin. "Help? In what way help?" I asked. "Help with what?" He said, "You're alone, aren't you." "Aha," I thought and I was reminded of what somebody had told me, that in Italy a woman isn't safe even from clergymen. So I said rather rudely, "Yes, I'm alone and I want to be alone." He said quite gently, "You don't want that." "Listen here," I said. "What's that got to do with you?" And at that he smiled. I can't begin to describe that smile to you. The man, the monk, was old, old as the hills, but when he smiled, he was suddenly young: at any rate, that's how it seemed to me. And as he smiled, his face acquired a hundred wrinkles: it looked like cracked glass. And then he went away, just like that. Then a swarm of tourists appeared, Germans with an Italian guide who spoke pathetic German. I felt like correcting her out loud, but then I saw that the people weren't listening anyway: they were a herd, worn out by the heat, who were waiting out the prepaid programme with stolid reserve. Yes, but they were people who spoke my language; and the bus that was waiting for

them at the front of the church had a Münster licence plate; then a crazy homesickness came over me and, when the people came out of the church, I ran after them like a sheep that has found its flock. But then I saw that these were people with whom I wouldn't like to have spoken. And what would we talk about? And so I turned away, and I would have preferred to go back into the dark church to the Irish monk. But of course I didn't do that because I wouldn't have known what to talk to him about. But there had to be somebody, though, in this big city with whom I could have talked. But about what? Anyhow, if I still felt like talking, whenever a person opened his mouth, he would get a mouthful of dust--perhaps the dust was coming out of his own brain. I had the feeling that I was drying up. No amount of water helped any more. Wine certainly didn't. The best thing was still tea, but then you'd sweat all the liquid straight out again. On the day I saw the Irish monk, I walked all the way home in spite of all the heat. I didn't want to take a bus, where everyone was sweating and stinking and the men crowded around one. No, I much preferred to go on foot. But then, at home, that is in the Marinettis' apartment, it suddenly dawned on me: a person can't afford to be alone in this city; one has to put up a fight. But one person alone is too weak: this city is a colossus, built out of bleached human bones and empty skulls, built over graves, literally over fields of corpses and catacombs; don't you see how it suddenly seemed to me? Like a great great grandmother, gap-toothed and blind and evil: in this

state she is simply dying as old women will and yet she isn't dying and everyone is afraid of her. She's a mother goddess who devours her children along with the palazzi, who is even gnawing on the new buildings, on the Ministry of Justice, for example and on the public housing in the suburbs. By night you could clearly hear her cracking, grinding and gobbling down the stones. Yes, I know just what you're going to say. But you just put yourself in my situation and we'll see if you don't get nightmares too. In any case, I decided there and then to seek out somebody with whom I could form an alliance against this utterly evil old woman. How do you do that, if you're a Prussian Protestant girl from a good family programmed not to get mixed up with Italians, not even for a conversation in a bar. "Give them an inch and you're trapped." "Yes, yes," I said, "understood; I don't like them anyway." And the Marinettis, who are Romans themselves, said before they left, "Now, please be careful of Italian men: they're crazy about blond girls. And what do they want from them? What else but money and far l'amore. Don't be taken in by these guys." I just laughed. Yes, and now, now I would have loved to get mixed up with such a guy. I'm ashamed to say it, but it was true. I looked around carefully. As if they had taken a scent, like male dogs after a bitch in heat, three of them accosted me that evening, one after the other. But they were vulgar and not at all good-looking. The good-looking ones, who would have been worth considering, they were at the beach or somewhere else, only not in town. Only one was handsome, but

he was a waiter in the bar where I ate breakfast. Why do I say "but"? Well, because a bar waiter is just a bar waiter, and nobody goes out with a bar waiter. I don't, anyway. I saw him every morning when I had breakfast and I had certainly noticed that he piled a mountain of whipped cream on my capuccino every time and even sprinkled chocolate powder over it, but without a word and with a deadpan expression, reluctantly or even sadly. That day, feeling lower than low, I plucked up my courage, and I decided to talk to him. But it was jinxed. He beat me to it, as if he had guessed what I wanted. He said, "I'm off tonight. Wanna go out?" And then the magic was gone. Why? Because I don't like such moist eyes and I didn't like his voice either. On the one hand it was cocky, on the other hand begging, an awkward mixture. I left and never wanted to come back. A few days later I was sorry and I went back, but there was another waiter there. And when I asked after the first one, the new one said, "Quite a few German and Swedish girls have asked about him." That was a slap in the face. I said, "I owe him a thousand lire. I wanted to give it to him." The new one had a smile I'd like to have boxed his ears for, especially when he added, "He's working now at ..." But already I wasn't listening. I had thrown the thousand lira note on the counter: I wanted to throw it in his face. Okay, he was a bar waiter and I could actually be happy that nothing came of the whole business. And nothing could have come of it. I went to the Piazza di Spagna and sat by the Bernini Fountain where other young people were

sitting with their feet in the water. They were French, mere boys of eighteen or so. If only there had been one and if only he had been older. But a dozen, and they didn't care about me. But I must have looked at them in such a way that one said something to the others and they laughed. They were laughing at me: they were laughing raucously. But why? Because I looked so boringly bourgeois or because they thought I wanted something from them or that I was a pick-up. And they were right: I was a boringly bourgeois girl who would have wanted something from them if they had been older. A pick-up. They were right, really. All I lacked was the courage. A pick-up is worse than an honest hooker. I despised myself. I felt that I was gradually going to the dogs. A virgo intacta who was dying to be taken. And the heat remained and the air was boiling and the asphalt was getting soft. The tourists, they didn't notice that they were being poisoned by this city. I noticed it, and now I went to the travel agency. Let whoever wanted to look after the apartment: for all I cared it could be burgled; and for all I cared the plants on the terrace could wither away. I had to save myself. Therefore: a couchette berth to Hamburg. Everything sold out till next week. Sleeping cars too, and that would have been too expensive for me anyway. I accepted it as a judgement from God. The Ancient One, the evil Mother, wanted to keep me and kill me. But there was after all a way of going home on the instalment plan: hitchhiking. Yes, that was it; that could work. That old lady wasn't meant to have me. I

decided on the next Saturday as my day of departure. That evening I went to a good ristorante in the neighbourhood and ordered myself a half liter of chianti with my meal and was perhaps a little drunk, in any case quite content. Then this Englishman came in, or rather an Irishman; so I learned later. I had seen him rather often. He probably lived in the neighbourhood. He always wore a white suit and he was always alone: like me. But he wasn't suffering from his solitude, not he. He would not look left or right, and he didn't then either. He sat down at a table that was reserved for him, it seemed, and the waiter brought him wine and water and the Irishman mixed it half and half. He did that as if he were doing something ritualistic, slowly and carefully. Then he ate spaghetti, and cheese for dessert, nothing more, and hardly had he eaten, when he drew a pad of paper from his pocket and began to write. I craned my neck and saw that actually he was drawing rather than writing. What emerged little by little was something like a spider web from which hung numbers and letters and geometric figures rather than flies. The man wrote and drew rapidly: his pencil flew over the paper just like that. I couldn't make out whether it was a modern design or the plan of some complicated construction or something else. Today I know what it was, back then I didn't know. It's true, I was watching the man more than his work. He wasn't young any more, somewhere between forty and fifty, clean shaven, a high forehead, a long nose, and his hair and eyebrows were quite light: either grey already or ash blond. And suddenly

he was reminding me of the Irish monk in the church. And when he stood up, the images of the two Irishmen blended in my mind. I left my meal, laid the money on the table and ran after him. But by then he had disappeared, had turned some corner or other, and could no longer be seen. I went back into the ristorante and asked the waiter who this man was. A professor from England or Ireland. He didn't know any more either. I got through the next day quite well because I was thinking about the evening, when I would see the Irishman again. I saw him again and the whole scene repeated itself, even his disappearance. And the same a third time. Three times is the magic fairy-tale number and I decided simply to buttonhole him in front of the ristorante. But as I stood there like that, I didn't know what I could say to him. Maybe he would take me for a pick-up. So I walked away, but I saw him turning down a street a long way off. His apartment was probably somewhere around there. I spent the next few days looking for him. That, at least, was an occupation that satisfied me. It was almost like a meaningful job. If you asked me what I wanted from this Irishman, I can only say I don't know. Perhaps I wanted nothing more than that he existed. But the story continues and this is how: a few days later I see the Irishman out of the window on the street: at noon, in the sweltering heat, he is standing there drawing a bead on the building where I live with an angle gauge. He takes a pad from his pocket, makes a note of something and leaves. So, an architect or an art historian whom the palazzo interests.

Very simple, you think. Not simple at all. Anything but simple. The next day I'm coming back from breakfast when I see the Irishman again. He's standing there looking at something that he's holding in his hand. Then he looks at the palazzo and again at the thing in his hand. Doesn't look at me. At first. But suddenly he turns around to me and says, "You live in this palazzo." That wasn't a question, but rather a conclusion or an observation. I didn't give an answer out of sheer bewilderment. He took that for a yes and was certain of some matter or other. Now he shows me what he's holding in his hand: it's a key, but not what you might call a normal one, but a big, heavy old thing. More of an antique than a useable house key. "This belongs to you?" he asks. I say no. He says, "Do you know if it unlocks a door in this palazzo?" I say, "Ask the caretaker. In any case it doesn't open my door." I say this in a pretty unfriendly way, but what do you know, the man smiles. I'm feeling like a little kid that somebody's caught in a lie, and I say defensively, "What do you really want from me?" He keeps on smiling. So I just leave him standing there and go into the house. Of course right away I think, "What a dope I am; I've been lying in wait for this guy for days now, and when he finally talks to me, I run away. The typical, inhibited child of the middle class with repressed longings who everywhere runs into signs that say, 'No Admittance'." I threw myself down on the bed and howled and howled. Something had happened to me. Then the doorbell rings. Right away I know, "It's that guy." I can't go to the door with my

face all puffy from crying. Stalling for time, I ask, "Who's there?" Then the wordless reply: something falls into the letter box. Then I hear footsteps going down the stairs. A calling card, nothing more. It says, "George O'Kean, Professor of Applied Physics" (that's how I translate it) and the name of an institute in one of those Irish places that have such tricky names. A calling card proves absolutely nothing. After all. But what the heck. No address in Rome, no telephone number. But the drawings that he makes — now I understand — are something to do with mathematics or physics. A while later the doorbell rings again. This time I answer. We look at each other for a time without speaking. Then he says, "May I ask you if I might look out of the corner window of your flat onto the street?" "Well, alright, I suppose. But what for?" He pulls up the venetian blinds and leans out, so far that I think, "He's not going to throw himself over, is he. A crazy suicide." But no, he turns around and says, "It is possible." "What's possible?" He'll explain later. First I'm supposed to throw the key down, when he gets downstairs; throw it quite naturally. "What if it falls on your head?" He says, "The key will strike, if my calculations are correct, forty centimetres behind me." "Sir," I say, "if you're a detective, come back with a policeman. Then you can throw keys yourself." He replies quite quietly, "I am a physicist and I'm conducting an experiment." Today, long afterwards, I think he distinctly said, "Metaphysicist." At the time I heard only physicist. "I see," I reply, "and I'm the guinea pig." Now he smiles

again. Whenever he smiles, it's as if a glass were cracking; I'm amazed you can't hear a muffled tinkling sound. "Now," says he, "will you throw the key?" "All right," I say, "if at least you'll explain your experiment to me afterwards." So I wait until he's downstairs, then I throw the key just as I would throw it if I wanted the man who was catching it to come up. Therefore aiming as close to him as possible, but a little anxiously: I might hit him doing that. At the same time, it's difficult to explain the other wish I was harbouring, because it's so illogical: to hit him, a direct hit, on the head, thus to kill him or at least to frighten him and drive him away once and for all. Well, the key falls short and actually not behind, but in front of him. The Irishman shakes his head, picks up the key and motions to me that he's coming up again. "Well," I say, "now do you know what you want to know?" He says, "It's a step along the road towards the possible result, but I must ask you to throw the key once again, but flat, horizontally, the way you used to skip stones across the water when you were a child. Look: like this." He shows me the movement. All right, I wait until he's downstairs again, and I throw the key according to his orders, I would almost have said. Well, according to his instructions. And this time it falls to the ground pretty close behind him. But again it's not right. He comes upstairs again and says, "If the key had been thrown that way, it couldn't have landed forty centimetres behind me and it couldn't have fallen past me at eye level." "But," I say, "it didn't fall past you at eye level." "Bravo," he says,

"well observed. But you see I'm not talking about your throw, but about another." "Aha," I say. "So you are something of a detective on your own initiative." He smiles again and the glass gets cracks in it again. A sort of inspiration comes over me and I say, "So, somebody once threw this key in that way onto the street with whatever intention and you saw it and took it personally and wanted to know who the thrower was. You didn't find out and now the matter won't give you any peace. And for that reason you came back to Rome. Am I right?" Again this smile. So I sit down and he sits down too and begins to draw with a flying hand so to speak, and all the while he's talking. I don't understand what he's saying. That is, I'm hearing words, but they make no sense to me. YF_1 , YF_2 , MX squared, YF_1 equals 2 divided by minus so-and-so much and so on. As he draws, the paper covers itself with fine pencil marks and, in the end, the whole thing looks like a spider web full of animal victims. As he continues to draw and talk that way, this spider web gets tossed over my brain like a net and I think, "He's crazy and he's making me crazy too. The heat has driven us both mad. We're the victims in the spider web net that the ancient woman has thrown out." But then what he's saying seems reasonable to me again, just difficult to understand for someone who can do only a little high school math. "Is everything clear?" he asks at last. "No," I say, "not at all. What on earth is this F_4 and what about F_3 and X_0 and X_1 ?" He takes a fresh sheet from the pad and patiently explains it all again. Now at least I

understand that this right-angle triangle, that is to be found a dozen times in various sizes, has one side that symbolises the street and a vertical line that is supposed to be the wall of the palazzo, and that the line that connects the end points of the sides like the string of a bow represents the key's line of flight. So, a parabola. Understood. And the little perpendicular line that's standing there at a certain distance from the building is himself. And this point on the horizontal line between him and the wall is the spot at which the key landed. And this short horizontal line indicates his eye level at which the key flew by him. "Yes," I say, "then the calculation is simple, isn't it?" Why do you go on figuring and figuring over and over again?" "Because there are more unknowns in the equation than are admissible," he says, "if one intended to solve them." "Such as?" "For example the formulation of the parabola, that is, the height from which the key was thrown." "But," I say, "if you know where you were standing and where the key struck and how far your eye level is from the ground, then you have three known quantities, don't you?" He laughs. He just laughs at me. Then he makes a new drawing. "Look," he says, "the formulation of the parabola can be here or here. And that here or here are both windows." "Okay," I say, "but I think that, for a mathematician, that's easy to figure out, isn't it?" Might be easy, he says, if he had remembered where he was standing and where the key struck. Therefore he has to deal with three unknowns. Among them is his own vantage point; but that isn't the

problem. The problem is the one unknown. Namely? He drew again and then wrote out a formula that looked approximately — very approximately — like this:

$$YF = \frac{2}{1 - \left(\frac{X_1}{X_0}\right)^2}$$

Of course, I didn't understand it. "What's that YF?" He laughs again. I say, "What's there to laugh about? And anyway you're gradually driving me crazy with your equations and all those unknowns." "Yes," says he, "the many unknowns, they are the problem. Or shall we say, the Unknown. That's it." What did he intend by this sentence? But he comes straight back to his formula. "Well," he says, "if the key touches the ground at distance α from my eye level, the second known point on the parabola has the co-ordinates $\epsilon + \alpha$ and zero," or he said something pretty close to that in any case. "Stop!" I said. But he goes relentlessly on. "Since I know a , e and α , I must be able to figure out β ." "Well there you are," I say. "Then do it for heaven's sakes." He says, "I leave everything else to you." And with that he leaves. Just leaves, out and down and this time he doesn't stop in the street but turns the corner and is gone. And I, I sit myself down and try to solve this complex equation. Just imagine. I scrape all my

mathematical memories together. I calculate and draw and calculate and in between times I think that it's all lunacy, but maybe not after all. And maybe this Irishman is onto something important or, in any case, onto something of burning importance to him. Didn't he say that somebody had thrown the key? Yes. It wasn't me. But who else? And who it was he wants to find out. I want to help him. But how. If he, as a physicist, who of necessity understands something about mathematics, can't solve the equation, how am I supposed to be able? Admittedly, even a blind pig finds a truffle once in a while. I keep on calculating. My day is taken up. I forget about the heat. I sink my teeth into this problem as if it were mine, not the crazy — or even not crazy — Irishman's. And finally something emerges from my calculating and thinking, and that is, in a nutshell: YF is 12 meters. Simply put: the window is at a height of 12 meters and since every floor is about three meters high, the window he's looking for is on the fifth floor, therefore on mine. "There you are," I think. "That accounts for his interest in my window." I don't like that: it's a let down. "Oh," I think, "so, obviously I had been secretly hoping the man would be interested in me. But no: he wants to know from where someone threw the key to him. Well, I can tell him, even prove it. But surely he could have shown that himself quite easily." So something wasn't quite right there. I don't mean that there was anything wrong with the equation, rather with the whole affair. But what? If this fellow had wanted to snare me, he could have done it

with less trouble. Or is that the way an Irish physics professor propositions a woman? I had to laugh. I laughed out loud. And that was the first time in weeks that I felt like laughing. And besides that, it was the first time I found it necessary to clean up the apartment. Dust, dust, dust. So I began to clean. Of course I didn't admit that I was cleaning because I thought that the Irishman might come back the next day. I simply had a need for order and cleanliness. That evening my ristorante was closed because it was its regular closing day. "Fine then, for all I care," I thought, but it wasn't fine. I would like to have met the Irishman, very much, although I didn't know why exactly. Except for one reason: in his presence, as crazy and upsetting as it was, I no longer felt so alone. I even looked around for him a little in the neighbourhood. To be honest, I looked in every bar and ristorante near by, but he wasn't there. I thought, "He's left, and that's that. Fine." But the next morning he came. "Well," I said, "the equation works out and it's quite simple. I don't understand why you're having such difficulties with it. Here." He had a look at my equation and said, "What about the eye level, have you figured it out? And the rate of descent? And whether my statement that the key struck forty centimetres behind me is correct? Well then. Of course I'm beaten. It is," he says, "an equation with nothing but unknowns; but I thank you for helping me to find the solution." "How did I do that?" "Quite simple: you are the only person in this building who could have thrown the key." "But I didn't." "I know," he says, "I know. Nobody

threw the key, no one at all dropped it." My mouth stood open until I could speak again. "So, you simply invented this entire farce?" "No," he said, "I didn't invent it." "Who did? Surely I didn't, not I!" He said, "If you can understand this, let us assume that we have both invented it, or, even more clearly, let us say we have invented each other." "But," I say, "do you mean that we don't exist at all? But surely that's madness. I think you've got sunstroke and small wonder when you run around in the blazing heat without a hat. For my part, I know that I'm a reality. With you I'm not so sure as all that." When I said that, I gave a start, because I didn't grasp at all what I was so casually saying. But he acted as if he understood. And I assume he actually did understand, because he said, "The whole thing is applied physics." "Pardon?" "Yes," he said. "What do you think science is for, other than for making magic with it." In spite of all the heat, a cold shiver ran down my spine. Who was this stranger? A demon who wanted to drive me out of my mind? If he continued to talk that way and to look at me that way, he would lead me to take him and me and everything in general for pure invention, for the monstrous offspring of this hellish heat and this murderous, man-eating city. I probably have a fever. And he has a fever too. We both have a fever. He's dreaming me. I'm dreaming him, or a third person is dreaming us. I pull myself out of my fever and say, "Whatever. Tomorrow I'm leaving." He says, "Why?" "Yes why, simply because it's too hot for me, because I have sunstroke, because ... " He

interrupts me and says, "What do you want to leave for? You've passed the test." "What sort of test? Maybe that I should resist you, right?" He laughs. I say, "Are you the Tempter?" "No," he says quite simply, "his opposite." And with that he leaves me. I got into the shower and stayed there until I was freezing. Then I fell asleep and when I woke up it was evening and I was hungry. I had been fasting for several days. I now noticed that I was emaciated, parched, so to speak, by the sun. I decided to eat plentifully and well that evening, whether with the Irishman or without him. But I went to the ristorante where I assumed he'd be eating. And sure enough, there he sat writing and drawing. I went up to him and said hello — that was only natural — but he just looked at me in astonishment and kept writing. Perhaps he was in the middle of an even more difficult calculation and wasn't open to conversation. I sat down near him and ate and drank and waited. Finally, of course, he would get up and leave and I would be able to follow him. Once he actually looked in my direction, but as if he didn't know me, and suddenly it seemed to me this might be the Irish monk in disguise. But I was holding my imagination by the reins. Well, they are both typical Irishmen, therefore the similarity. But I didn't like the word similarity. It missed the mark. With twins you don't say they look similar either. He once more looked in my direction and it seemed to me that he smiled, that is, that his face got covered with fine cracks. I smiled back. Then he got up and left. I hadn't finished eating yet and hadn't paid. I laid

a bill on the table and ran after him, but he had disappeared. I thought, "He'll certainly come back, tomorrow." I waited for him. Did he have any idea of how earnestly I was waiting? I don't think so, or maybe he did. I went out for a couple of minutes at noon to buy some fruit. He must have come during those very minutes. When I looked in the letter box, there was the old key. I had looked before I went out and it hadn't been there then. But now the key, just the key, no letter, nothing. So that was the end. But in the afternoon I got an idea: I would go to that little church where I had met the Irish monk. I asked at the gate. Next to the church, you see, is a small monastery. But nobody there knew anything about an Irishman. And the monks there weren't Irish, but Italian Benedictines, or something. In any case, they didn't wear white habits. I just stood there. I ventured one last attempt. I showed the gatekeeper the key. Would it unlock anything here? "No," said the gatekeeper, "certainly not. That thing is ancient and it's missing a tooth. That can't open anything. Where on earth did you get it?" "An Irish monk gave it to me." As I said that, I went all hot and cold. What had I said? I corrected myself, "I meant an Irish physicist." "Well, said the gatekeeper, "an Irish physicist, I see." Like a complete idiot I showed him the calling card so that he wouldn't think I was hysterical. He looked at it and said, "My, my, professor of applied physics, hmm, interesting that applied physics. We call it metaphysics. Keep that key in a safe place. Somewhere or other is the proper door that it opens." At that moment I

could have sworn that this gatekeeper was the Irish monk and the Irish physicist. But that lasted only a moment and I left. Neither the monk nor the physicist did I ever see again. I stayed in Rome until the Marinettis came back. They found the apartment spotlessly clean and they were surprised that a student could be so tidy. They were even more surprised that their plants had not withered. Those on the other terraces and balconies had died. I said, "That's applied physics; you can call it other things too." "Like what?" asked Signora Marinetti and looked at me somewhat dismayed. I said, "Magic."

What do you say to all that? That's true, I've always had a strong feeling for Ireland. I was there for a year. And maybe I lived there in an earlier life, who knows. You think I was the Irish monk of applied physics myself. You think that? C'mon tell me: do you think that? But the drawing and the key, you see them, don't you? They're realities, you can touch them, can't you? Admittedly, applied physics can, of course ...

CHAPTER 6

COMMENTARY ON THE TRANSLATIONS

At first glance, translating the mature prose of Luise Rinser may appear to be a relatively simple task. In the four stories translated here, her style is clear and straightforward, at times even conversational. For example, her principal clauses, however many may be connected by commas, are mostly short, their syntax almost without ornamentation. She uses relative clauses sparingly and few extended modifiers come readily to mind. However, this is not to imply that Rinser's writing is simplistic; nor should the reader infer that the difficulties in translation are few and minor. This seeming simplicity can be highly deceptive.

Rinser, like all good writers, has a knack for varying her style to suit her subject. At times, "Munjo, der Dichter" is told almost as a folk tale. The reader can imagine Munjo using it to entertain the ladies at the library or the customers in the public house. Descriptions are kept to a minimum; the emphasis is on plot and dialogue.

"Wie in einem Spiegel," on the other hand, is a sort of meditation on the possibility of perceiving the transcendental in a material and materialistic world. In that spirit, the language used, while formal in style, is

deliberately shorn of anything extraneous or distracting. The simplicity of the narrator's language mirrors the simplicity and openness of the main character. The translator's challenge in this instance is to render the German narration in a similarly uncluttered English style without making Maria seem either childish or neurotic. In both stories, whenever the translator is tempted to rephrase something in the original with a more spectacular turn of phrase, he must resist.

"Jakobs Kampf" and "Angewandte Physik" are the most conversational in style, but each makes use of a different register of speech. Weyden of "Jakobs Kampf" is a sophisticated, wealthy, middle-aged man of the world. At times everything he says has a bitter, sarcastic bite to it; at other times, he shows real concern for his silent interlocutor. The narrator of "Angewandte Physik," on the other hand, uses a somewhat less formal, though no less intelligent, register: that of a female university student explaining her summer adventure to a friend. In each case we hear one half of a dialogue, each with enough vitality to suggest the other half to the mind of the reader; each with enough variation in tone to make it realistic. The translator's task is to transfer that variety and vitality into the target language while reproducing as nearly as possible the register that each speaker uses in the original.

I decided that dialogue in all of the stories except "Jakobs Kampf" should be indicated by quotation marks. Even though this is not Rinser's

practice, I felt it was necessary for English-speaking readers. Since "Jakobs Kampf" is a dramatic monologue and, therefore, one continuous speech, I deemed quotation marks unnecessary there.

Of course there were specific difficulties with each story. On page 44 in the German text of "Munjo, der Dichter," the neighbour woman, referring to Munjo, asks, "Ist er ein Negerkind?" While the word "Negerkind" is not necessarily offensive, it is meant to carry with it, in this instance, an odour of racism. However, the translation should not be so offensive as to make the neighbour out to be a monster. She is merely acquiescing to commonly held attitudes and probably means Munjo no harm. I therefore chose the word "piccaninny" which was once more common than it is today, carried the same connotations and, like the neighbour's use of "Negerkind," was often said quite unreflectively with no harm intended.

Rinser's choice of words and expressions is quite often from the colloquial register. This is particularly so, of course, when she is writing dialogue. Such usage frequently offers the translator little linguistic traction. On page 47, the teacher tells Munjo, who is worried that he will be made to attend school, "Laß nur, ... du brauchst mir nur zuzuhören, dann lernst du's von selber, so ganz nebenbei." To translate "so ganz nebenbei" as "by osmosis" might describe the process accurately, but it would be much too formal. I chose "without even trying" to indicate the sort of effortless learning that is being described.

On page 46, Munjo calls his native language "Roman" and on page 47 he refers to his people as "Roma." In order to avoid confusion in the reader's mind, I chose to expand both words to "Romany" even though the words Rinser has Munjo say may be accurate.

The clause, "er war eben durch und durch ein Lehrer" (51), was difficult to express in English without expanding it. I chose to render it as, "He was a teacher, after all; a teacher through and through." On the same page Rinser describes the appearance of the teacher's old friend, "der aus der Kriegsgefangenschaft sich durchgeschlagen hatte, vom Balkan bis in dieses Städtchen." It is not likely that the soldier fought his way out of prison or the Balkans. An arduous struggle is indicated. Therefore I rendered it as, "who had struggled back from imprisonment as a POW, from the Balkans as far as this little town."

On page 54 Munjo is said to call the teacher quite simply "Du." This can be a trap for the English speaker who naturally thinks of the contrast between "du" and "Sie," the former indicating a greater degree of intimacy. Here, however, the contrast is not between "du" and "Sie" but between the act of addressing someone by a pronoun rather than by name. "Du" does not necessarily show intimacy here, but rather Munjo's independence, at times even standoffishness, with regard to the teacher. Therefore, in the English version, he calls the teacher "simply and only 'you'."

Another expansion was made in translating "Der Lehrer wunderte sich über die Besuche dort" (56), the "dort" referring to the library in this case. It seemed to make sense to convert the "visits," which were, after all, the visits of library patrons, to "the business the library was doing."

The difficulties encountered with "Wie in einem Spiegel" were very few; they consisted principally of terminology relating to persons and places within the Roman Catholic Church. I consulted a Roman Catholic friend who is also a native speaker of German. She suggested, for example, that "rectory" would be a more appropriate equivalent of "Pfarrhof" than "vicarage" or "manse." In addition, the terms "curate" and "[nun's] wimple," while somewhat dated, would still have been appropriate in 1971, the year the author gives for the events of the story. Lastly, "Sprechzimmer" is best translated as "study," the term "office" being too general and "consulting room" too specific to a medical setting. In any case, it is evident from the context that somewhere other than a confessional booth is meant.

On page 78 of the German text, in elaborating his argument that actually seeing God with one's physical eyes is impossible, the priest says, "Solange wir hier auf Erden sind, sehen wir Gott nur wie im Spiegel." The problem lies specifically in "wie im Spiegel." After considerable deliberation, I decided to render the sentence as: "As long as we are here on earth, we see God only as it were in a mirror." "[W]ie im Spiegel" becomes "*as it*

were in a mirror." Although this phrase is considerably higher in tone than the general style of diction, I feel it is appropriate to the type of argument the priest is making and that it provides a vivid contrast between his style of reasoning and Maria's.

Of all the stories, "Jakobs Kampf" was perhaps the easiest to translate. Nevertheless there were a few interesting difficulties. On page 87 Rinser uses the adjective "stinkbürgerlich" which I was unable to find in any dictionary. I was convinced that what was meant was not "petit bourgeois" particularly since Weyden can only be described as a grand bourgeois.

While I was unable to find "stinkbürgerlich" in the dictionary, I did find the following in Collins:

stinkfaul = bone idle;

stinklangweilig = deadly boring; and

stinknormal = boringly normal (635b).

"Stink-," in these cases, seems to serve as an intensifier. "Grand bourgeois" then becomes possible but the term is meaningless to the majority of English speakers. "Upper-middle-class" seemed too neutral. I decided, therefore, to invent my own equivalent. Since the term in German seems to be one of disapprobation likely to be used by the young in assessing their parents, who are often thought of as boring old fogies, "boringly bourgeois" seemed appropriate.

The next difficulty was finding a suitable translation for "Er lässt die Kirschen nie reifen" (88). I used the proverbial saying, "He never lets the grass grow under his feet." I am not entirely satisfied with this since the English has a slightly more negative connotation than the German. The father really seems to be saying that he wishes his son would allow his relationships to develop more fully.

Finally, Weyden tells Barbara, "Sie rammen eine Tapetentür mit Eisenstangen" (92) to indicate that she and Martin are fighting someone (Weyden) who is not really an enemy and who is putting up little resistance. A "Tapetentür" is a door that blends in with the wallpaper, whose security comes not from locks, but from the fact that its existence is a secret known only to a few. It would not be clear to most English speakers why a "secret door" would be such an easy target. Therefore I chose to translate it as "an unlocked door."

The most striking problem in "Angewandte Physik" is Rinser's use of the present tense to describe action that is clearly in the past. The advice that is normally given to translators is to convert such present tenses into simple pasts since written English does not really possess an historical present. In this case, however, I felt it was both permissible and important to retain the present tense in those passages where the narrator is describing her encounters with the physicist.

The narrator is a young, female university student who is

recounting her adventures to a friend, probably of the same age and sex.

The historic present is quite a normal tense for this sort of person. Its use tends to underline the oral nature and the informality of the communication as well as the immediacy of the events described.

The other problem with this story is the precise meaning of the word "Ansatz" in "Ansatz der Parabel" on page 155. From the context it is clear that Rinser is speaking of the origin of the parabola since the physicist is concerned with the height from which the key was thrown, in other words, the end-point or the origin of the parabola. However, the word "Ansatz" is translated in Kučera as "formula(tion)." Of course, if one knows the formulation or formula of the parabola, one can derive its origin, but the two are not the same. In the end, I decided to retain "formulation" since it is truer to Rinser's words, if not to her precise meaning. Besides, the narrator underlines time and again her unfamiliarity with physics and mathematics. If "Ansatz" is a mistake, it may indeed have been intentional.

A general difficulty encountered in this final text was the length of the narrator's sentences. Frequently, large numbers of principal clauses were linked by commas. While my natural inclination would be to break these into smaller sentences, I felt, in this case, that I should maintain Rinser's structure as much as possible. She uses this structure to impart a dream-like quality to the narration, a quality that would be diminished by the use of shorter sentences.

In sum, while these four stories may appear at first glance to be simple to translate, this was clearly not the case. There were many challenges, including maintaining consistency of style and register within each story, translating colloquial and technical language and reflecting the sentence and paragraph structure of the original text.

This project has been an extremely useful exercise. As well as acquainting me with the work and character of Luise Rinser, whose writings have thus far received too little exposure in the English-speaking world, it has brought into focus for me several of the major issues facing translators, as dealt with in the pages above. Translating a number of short works in varying styles has made me more flexible as a translator and more open to consideration of different approaches to the task. Each of the stories presented a unique set of problems that required unique and sometimes unorthodox solutions.

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