

PhD Thesis Synopsis

**Towards an Understanding of Worldliness: Readings in Proust
and Musil**

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section I

Chapter One: Theorizing the Thesis

(A) BEGINNINGS

(B) THING

(C) EXPERIENCE

(D) PHENOMENOLOGY, HERMENEUTICS, ERFAHRUNG

(E) PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO LITERATURE

(F) THESIS-THEORY

Section II

Chapter Two: Encountering the Abyss

(A) POSITING THE SELF

(B) MOMENTS OF RUPTURE/RAPTURE

(C) LE TEMPS RETROUVÉ

Chapter Three: Le Monde à la Proust

(A) THINGS, THINGNESS AND THINGING IN THE *RECHERCHE*

- (B) THE ART OF METAPHORICAL CONTIGUITY
- (C) THE ART OF 'SEEING'
- (D) THE ART OF REPETITION
- (E) THE ART OF IMPERFECTION
- (F) FROM SYMBOLIST NOTHINGNESS TOWARDS NARRATIVE SPACE

Chapter Four: Ambivalences

- (A) PHILOSOPHY OF FICTION, FICTION OF PHILOSOPHY
- (B) BETWEEN INSIDE AND OUTSIDE
- (C) POLYVALENT SELF-REFLEXIVITY
- (D) REDEMPTION AS ART, ART AS REDEMPTION

Section III

Chapter Five: Undoing the Narrative of Progress

- (A) THE BURDENS OF ENLIGHTENMENT
- (B) SEIENESGLEICHEN: STRIVING FOR SELF-PRESERVATION
- (C) CIRCLE, VOID, SENSELESSNESS
- (D) MÖGLICHKEITSMENSCH: A MAN WITHOUT QUALITIES

Chapter Six: Architectonic in Unrest

- (A) ESSAYISM

(B) CIRUCLARITY

(C) PRECISION AND SOUL

(D) INCOMPLETION, IRONY, INTERRUPTION, LOSS OF SELF

(E) NOVEL, NARRATIVE, ART AND NON-ART

Chapter Seven: Approaching the Event

(A) PROJECTS WITHOUT PROJECTION: THE ABSENCE OF CARE

(B) OFFSPRINGS OF THE EVENT

(C) THE HERMENEUTIC TUSSLE: WEARING THE INSIDE OUT

(D) ARTICULATING THE EVENT

(E) FECUNDITY OF THE VOID

Works Cited

Section I

Chapter 1

Theorizing the Thesis

A Beginnings

The thesis begins by questioning the generic differences that distinguish ‘beginnings’ from an ‘introduction’. While introduction has an object ready-made that is to be made familiar to an audience/reader, beginning is part of the very enterprise itself, and thus is original in revealing the contingency involved in shaping the commencing parts of a structure. The beginnings of the Realist novel differ from that belonging to the Modernist ethos, and this is exemplified through the opening passages of Proust and Musil’s works. Thereafter follows a discussion on the essential difference in the use to which language is put in the domains of art and philosophy, so as to locate the generic status of a thesis with respect to the above two with which it is actively engaged in this case. Like philosophy, the thesis refers to something lying outside of it, however they are not pure categories but particular embodiments as figured in distinct artworks. The thesis therefore has a ‘plot’, which justifies this critical outlook examining how it must begin. This then serves as a pretext for looking back at the premises which have been the starting points of my own journey as a reader and my relationship with novels.

B Thing

The Realist position in understanding the ‘thing’ is examined alongside the Nominalist approach. The former posits the presence of a pre-given ideal essence of which all things are real manifestations. The Rationalism inherent in this outlook entails a subject-object binary. However, a critical study of Descartes reveals that understanding needs to be attuned to the thing focused on, thereby smudging the distinction that had hitherto held this binary intact. The Nominalist position is based on empiricism whereby all generalizations stem from constant conjunction. Here too, an evaluation of Hume reveals an overlap between mind and body where causality is described as internal impressions. The thesis justifies how the thingness of a work of art can be explained by neither of these two approaches, for art lacks a universal essence, and neither is understanding of art an arbitrarily drawn category. In Kant, perception is accorded the status of aesthetic synthesis, and the active role of the perceiver gets highlighted. A certain degree of autonomy is granted by the admission that art is governed by purposeless purposiveness, but the attribution of ‘aesthetic disinterest’ neutralizes the content of a work. Heidegger’s critique of both the Rational and Empiricist school stems from the centrality accorded to the subject, and the thesis partakes here of the phenomenological approach in espousing a regressive enquiry as to look at the thingness of the work from beyond a traditional anthropomorphic outlook. The thing can be known only in the phenomenon where it sets itself up, and that pushes us now to inquire the experience that accompanies our engagement with art.

C Experience

We begin with Kant's distinction between the logical and aesthetic modes of perception, which makes our experience of art be governed primarily by the manner in which it takes place. To appreciate art, one requires taste, which Kant defines as a universal subjective condition, which again shows a kind of internal contradiction which we have encountered in our critiques of both Descartes and Hume. However, not only are the questions concerning what and/or how art is historical in nature, but Kant's deployment of inductive logic in his formulations of aesthetics are shown to be historical in light of the impulses of Enlightenment which had shaped them. Thereafter follows a critique of aesthetic disinterest and aesthetic distance, factors which had gone into the making of aesthetic differentiation. A different way of understanding experience beyond the framework of *Erlebnis* seems necessary, such as *Erfahrung*, which seeks to understand experiences as that we undergo and from where our being emerges anew.

D Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, Erfahrung

Phenomenology in Husserl begins with the critique of psychologism and analytic philosophy in order to undo the subjective centrality in perception. Kantian aesthetics is also shown to be psychological in its formalization and neutralization of content. However, the influence of Kant and Descartes is apparent in Husserl's attempt to scientifically frame essence as well as his method of bracketing all prejudices while approaching a thing. Sense-giving acts create sense and the perception accompanying it, and the notion of reference as something pointed to by our will is examined from Frege's writings. Ideal unity of meaning in Husserl finds a critique in Heideggerian relational ontology, where propositional correspondence is shown to be a derived case of disclosure, which is posited by the thesis as the fundamental, original mode of truth's appearance. This is followed by Heidegger's critique of Descartes's understanding of the world as a subject's representation of an object, followed by introducing the inevitable hermeneutic nature of the world's disclosure. A break from averageness and everydayness becomes essential for this event, whose relationship with the 'origin' is discussed, leading to a refutation of the assumption of space and time as transcendent dimensions. De-psychologization of understanding is traced by looking at the evolution of *Bildung*, and the relation between the reader and the text is shown to take place in a liminal space which engenders being. The mode of interaction is then shown to belong to that of play and conversation with reference to Gadamer's writings on the ontology of the work of art.

E Phenomenological Approaches towards Literature

Neither art nor philosophy is in a position to subsume the other, for that could implicitly claim these two domains as discreetly separable. One speaks of ideal forms, the other in sensual terms. Art presupposes a difference between reality and its representations, philosophy shows the difference in its passage. The intersection of art and philosophy lies on a razor's edge between two planes, and this zone is marked by 'becoming'. Both are involved not simply showing things, but making this showing possible. World is understandable only in its becoming, and this is shown to be philosophical, because it involves seeing. The definition of art is also philosophical because it relies on the hermeneutics that accompanies it. A different temporality belongs to the event of art and philosophy given that both are process-objects, and the time of the event as contemporaneous is explained drawing on from Roman Ingarden's writings. The event is described in terms of projective comportment, and Iser's ideas on art being the very template of event are elaborated, leading to a discussion on

the open totality of the work. The event and its relevance in our thesis are thereafter discussed drawing different perspectives of Heidegger, Deleuze, Derrida and Blanchot- each of which would be found significant in the chapters to follow.

F Thesis-Theory

The final sub-chapter begins by revisiting the conventionally agreed-upon generic idea behind a thesis as research enriching a knowledge system. Such a generic framework is shown to have evolved during the Enlightenment, and has implicated the categorization of art, philosophy and history as Human Sciences. However, the thesis cannot be impersonal when it comes to these areas, and a more original understanding of thesis as setting-up of something has to be looked at. Likewise, the evolution of theory is shown from contemplation and care towards analytic method, so that we know to avoid the latter attitudes in our journey in the later sections. Theory and thesis are complementary to one another, seeing and setting-up. The relation between the writer and the world is shown to be a paradoxical thing, for it cannot be premediated but can only be disclosed in the event. The world, therefore is stylized and the thesis concerning it is not an interpretation of worlds, but thesis in its modality is interpretative. Borrowing from Markus Gabriel's writings, the world as an agglomerative totality is shown to be an absurd reality, leading to a new understanding of totality. Finally, the choice of Proust and Musil is justified in light of their novels being conducive to the inquiry as well as the personal relationship with their works also being in no way less important is confessed along with the relevance with Comparative Literature as methodology.

Section II

Chapter 2

Encountering the Abyss

A Positing the Self

Since the world is embodied in perspectives, the first step towards engaging with the phenomenon of worldliness in Proust would be to seek to understand the field of vision where the world appears. The novel behaves as an artifice of imperfect reflecting consciousness, where the characters' vision of the world and the world do not coincide. Form-determining intentions are objectively represented in the work, which is to say, expressed through the materiality of language.

The task therefore would be to look at the beginning of the world in relation to beginning of perspective attributed to character. In this regard, the character of Swann and his worldviews would serve not only a prelude to the life of Marcel, but as a constant locus against which Proust creates the journey of his eponymous protagonist. Love and art are the two domains which are given attention, not as themes, but as realms of experiences. Love and desire work as the terrain of ego, and art as something beyond practical and purposive actions. Moreover, the thesis shall look at the passage from the realm of love to that of art as the one of the key movements within the novel. Lastly, the suffering offered by love and the enchantment in

encounter with art host the encounter with the abyss, which is fundamental as much for Marcel's artist-becoming as for the novel's own becoming. Finally, the very architecture of the novel is hinged on art and love as the two ways, as it also appears in the titles of the first and third volumes.

In Swann, the experience of art is subsumed to his ego. He uses the sonata to supplement his desire for Odette. As a result, both the sonata as artwork and Odette as a person are reduced to mere aesthetic objects, with no true aesthesis taking place. This reciprocal compensation of art and love enmeshes Swann in the confines of a selfhood. His over-arching desire leads to jealousy which makes him yearn for a panoramic vision of his mistress's life, but only managing to glimpse a spectral view of the same.

The mediated nature of desire could either be external, as in induced by some other factors, or internal where the subject invests attributes to make the beloved seem significant. Although Marcel's loves are more artistic than Swann in involving more creativity of attribution, the inertia of his ego holds his being captive. Both desire and snobbery are mapped in the tradition of the European, more focused on the French, novel to show how the difference between world and worldview makes the *Recherche* a perspectivist novel. The novel lacks a distinct moral standpoint, but this has to be perceived in light of its open totality and its empathy for becoming. Likewise, society people's opinions on art obliquely shows what the *Recherche* is not, hence offering literary criticism in the fissure between its own form and what the people populating its world has to say on art, as well as evokes the novel's own undecidedness about its inherent style.

The thesis maps how the art-desire and truth-desire tensions evolve to create the art-truth relationship, and how it is embodied in the development of the novel. The myth of interiority and its accompanying metaphor of *terra incognita* and *cosa mentale* gradually make way for a new rhetoric, where Marcel is seen to disengage artworks from the trivia that surround them. He realizes that truth does not lie outside, but must be sought within. This shift of classical solipsism to romantic solipsism is discussed alongside Horkheimer's understanding of the evolution of objective reason towards subjective reason in the outlook and actions characterizing European culture, and how the individualizing potential of ideas gradually gave way to a fixation with individuality.

B MOMENTS OF RAPTURE/RUPTURE

Given that habit constitutes being and creates the space where one is, it is the artist's task to create reality outside the monotonous boredom of everyday life. The moments that are crucial in the journey of Marcel's apprenticeship as an artist are those that enchant as well as shatter the enclosure of his superficial self. These moments are occasioned by material sensations evoking involuntary memory, by suffering and by art. The first category is a counter to intelligence, where sensations prove to be a much more intimate access to reality. Suffering leads to rupture of order, and provides the novel the alternating flux between enchantment and disenchantment, culminating with the possibility of re-enchantment. The last class of moments brought about by Marcel's encounter with art shows him that truth is neither a matter of immanence nor transcendence, but can emerge out of relations and events, where the stability of the self needs be compromised so that it can participate in becoming something or someone else.

C. LE TEMPS RETROUVÉ

The concluding section begins with examining aesthetic distance as a condition for perception, and how direct experiences could paradoxically turn out to be vicarious, given that we are more often than not playing a role stipulated to us. Marcel's fascination with distant and inaccessible objects brings in a different notion of space in distinction to universally agreed upon Cartesian space. A paradox is arrived at, where truth is understood to exist outside, and yet no one object holds the key to it. Truth, realizes Marcel, has to be found through creation, by expressing, that is pressing out of oneself. Since this act must take place in time and not in a moment, disclosure of being must be a temporal phenomenon. This Proustian optics of time marks a return to time as the fundamental dimension of existence and distinguishes him from Romantics believing in timeless truths or other Modernists in whose works interiority and subjectivity are still accorded ample relevance.

Two aspects of the temporal self are then discussed, namely its fractal nature and the phenomenon of continuous death. The fragmented self allows the superimposition of different personalities in one individual, like in Marcel and Albertine, as well as morally complex characters like Charlus and Morel. The Modernist resistance to fixed types introduces a distrust towards the idea of a homogenous, stable self and goes on to implicate other aspects of the work, like the narrator-writer relation, or the polysemy of narratorial and character "I" in the novel.

If the method to make appear fractal self is by showing a variegated cross-section in time, the continuous evanescence is shown by choosing two distinct moments across time. The application of involuntary memory as a narrative trope is studied with respect to Proustian critique of Bergson's notion of ideal, profound reality. Profundity in Proust instigates a shift from society to art, and death the self undergoes in this process turns out to be the only possible redemption. This receding of the self is historicized in the shift from the Bildungsroman to Künstlerroman. Writing itself is an event of continuous death, and this phenomenon is addressed both from theoretical standpoints as well as from passages hinting at this problem from within the novel. It is argued and substantiated, that novelty of the world in art is not a feature, but the very mode of its appearance.

Chapter 3

La Monde à la Proust

A THINGS, THINGING AND THINGNESS IN THE RECHERCHE

The primary orientation towards things in the Recherche is infused with the Romantic dissatisfaction with immediate reality, but Proust, unlike the Romantic indifference to forms and the Realist overreliance on facts, is rather more of a constructivist interested in the perspective we bring along to the things that make life. The volta at the final stages introduces a proliferation of meaning to things which had hitherto seemed meaningless. Proust's approach to things is discussed in relation to Jean Baptiste Chardin as well as

Racine, both of whom find directly or otherwise a prominent relevance in the Proustian order of things. Proust's departure from anthropomorphic centrality is studied historically, and illustrated alongside through a range of metaphors he employs from the fields of botany and geology. The journey of Marcel is mapped from the world of names to words and to things, and shown to bear a trajectory of significance relevant to the overall architecture of the work.

B THE ART OF METAPHORICAL CONTIGUITY

Both from theoretical-philosophical standpoints as well as from within the novel, metaphor is seen much more than being a rhetorical trope. Instead, metaphor as an original extraction and disclosure of meaning is significant in the Modernist novel, especially so in the world of Proust. Arguing against the veins of critics who opine that metaphorical substitution serves transubstantiation and spiritualization of matter, the thesis contends that metaphor makes seeing possible, so that state of knowledge and state of being become symptomatic of one another. This phenomenon where style is granted maximal emphasis is traced from the world of Flaubert and thereafter, it is shown how Proust's systematic extroversion seeks to create the image of thought itself. Examples from the text illustrate how Marcel's reciprocal metaphors are narrativized as metonymic reciprocity, implying temporal depth to photographs and investing spaces with *Raumgeist* over expansion of plot in time.

C THE ART OF SEEING

The photograph as the standard for objectivity in Realist aesthetic is harped on by Proust as a source for metaphors, so as to foreground the understanding of reality not instantaneously and nonchalantly like a camera but in time, implicated with latency. Proust's ambivalent relationship with surfaces has on one hand an abnegation with immanence and on other hand a distrust with superficialities. Proust's temporal-telescopic method is different from the usual spatial-microscopic approach. The primal image as foci of aesthetic irradiation is discussed alongside the two major ploys Proust uses- latency and dynamic perspective. Proust's stereoscopic principle is explored historically alongside Baudelaire's ambivalent attitude towards the ephemeral and the eternal, and how that feature in the aesthetic of the *Recherche*.

D THE ART OF REPETITION

The use of the imparfait tense makes repetition not structural, but ontological in the novel. Marcel himself is a displaced repetition of Swann, mirrored by the return of Vinteuil's sonata as a septet in the novel. Other repetitions like Combray-Venice or Marcel's successive loves show how Proust attempts impressionism over time. Repetition shows the novel's distrust in factuality, and that it takes time to understand one's being in the world. Repetition here is not the identical representation of something, but an original disclosure. Lastly, Proust's self-quotation of his earlier works and his employment of known artworks to describe the fictional artworks in the novel are treated as further illustrative examples of this aspect.

E THE ART OF INCOMPLETION

The Modernist novel as a tissue of errors makes error a complementary and not contradictory aspect of truth. Here, life becomes a perpetual error, since it takes place in time and displacing our perspective steadily through and across the years. The Modernist novel's incompleteness is a stylistic and ethical feature revealing its intransigence against stability and its acceptance of fallacies as part of life. Art no longer behaves as an epistemological

monument, and its unity is now to be understood in retroactive terms. The differences between its individual parts are not subsumed for the sake of an artificial homogeneity, but they communicate with one another with their multiplicities maintained intact.

F FROM SYMBOLIST NOTHINGNESS TOWARDS NARRATIVE SPACE

The *Recherche* moves through the tussle between generalizing the particular and particularizing the general. Manner is at times favored over content, but unlike Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, the *Recherche* seeks to re-establish and not escape from things. A critique of Flaubert from Bersani and Descombes reveals romantic strains in this aesthetics and an indifference towards life which are often mistakenly assumed in relation to Proust too. Thereupon follows a discussion of intransitivity and writing degree zero and how narrative space is to be perceived in Proust and in other Modernist writings.

Chapter 4

Ambivalences

A PHILOSOPHY OF FICTION, FICTION OF PHILOSOPHY

The exploration of the ambivalent relationship between art and philosophy begins from the premise of Romanticism where on one hand, art is thought to impart wisdom that is of a spiritual nature, and on the other hand, formalization gains significance in light of newly emerging individualism. The philosophy of the novel has to be sought in the generic framework where it is embodied, and aesthetic truths go on to reveal the aestheticization that goes into the making of conceptual truths as well. The paradoxical relationship between truth and art is showcased by Marcel being prey to the idea that art would offer redemption, that ironically leads to negation of life as well as art. In Modernism, art and philosophy become that space where the aesthetic and the ethical co-form one another, and this aspect is looked at with respect to the tradition where it has evolved and received a new turn in Proust. Finally, the anti-logocentric philosophical construction is highlighted by Proust's treatment of homosexuality and morality.

B BETWEEN INSIDE AND OUTSIDE

The novel as an arena of becoming disrupts the self-world binary from being conserved. Exteriorization seeks to create images of thoughts, whereas interiorization crafts impressions out of facts. Narrative space is described as that which gets disclosed by the making-inside and making-outside narrative acts. Proust's quandary in choosing between a realist novel and a subjective essay is shown to be a concrete example of the tussle between these two modes of event-disclosure.

C POLYVALENT SELF-REFLEXIVITY

Since the very notion of a stable self is problematized, reflexivity is of a polyvalent nature. Beginning with the role of prolepsis and analepsis in the work, the putative reader is shown to be continuous thread that holds the novel together. References are made to Marcel's memoirs and the novel he would come to write which by their absence in turn informs the presence of

the work. How the 'novel' exists multifacetedly as an idea in the Recherche is shown to be ambivalently related to what kind of a novel it itself emerges out to be.

D REDEMPTION AND ART, ART AS REDEMPTION

The final chapter begins by exploring the redemptive role attributed to music in the Romantic ethos and its ambivalent reception by Proust. Wagner's effort for a complete work and Mallarmé's towards an absolute work are mapped historically alongside the investment of morality in Beauty by Kant and the implications that follow from this tension. Proust's deployment of music in the novel as espoused by Natiez is criticized, and a re-instatement of phenomenality as highlighted by critics like Acquisto among others.

The self-contradiction that inheres in and culminates out of Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk* and Mallarmé's works go on to reveal certain paradoxes in the conventionally accepted paradigm of redemption. Proust's novelization of these paradoxes through the elements of vice, through transformations of the value of things lead to a reevaluation of notions of purity, phenomenon and returning, so that a new way of looking at life and the world emerges from the reading of his novel.

Section III

Chapter 5

Undoing the Narrative of Progress

A THE BURDENS OF ENLIGHTENMENT

The abolition of the background in Musil's novelization problematizes the search for points of departure, and this feature is seen to be an integral part of the work's poetics and politics. Understanding the field of being which hosts the world leads us to a critique of Enlightenment, undertaken in the vein of theorists like Adorno and Agamben. The instrumentalization of reason and the rational subject is shown as a new form of tyranny that binds the self, leading to the promulgation of a monoculture where only quantitative parameters and no unifying principle abounds. This offers us a cue to engage with the implicit critique the novel offers against pseudo-individuality, capitalism, the narrative of progress and science in that it is hostile to differences and discontinuity.

B SEIENESGLEICHEN: REPETITION, SAMENESS AND SELF-PRESERVATION

Critical examination of passages from the novel reveals the mechanism of generating sameness in such a culture to keep these poultry farms running, the alienation that ensues from living in such an environment, and how the notion of genius or greatness is shaped in such times. Use of language in daily lives to fulfil specific functions, money as the principle of equivalence in society, the deployment of morality like logic- these are some of the areas that are examined that lead us to understand the environment of the work, which is not much

dissimilar to our own present dwelling. Nietzsche's critique of self-preservation is seen as a precursor to Musil's critique of mass stupidity and pseudo-individuality, and the commodification of genius.

C CIRCLE, VOID, SENSELESSNESS

The metaphors of circle and mist take us closer to understand the void that lies at the heart of Musil's work. The implications of the void as senselessness on people's lives are studied alongside the responses that are generated, which are more often than not, nihilistic in character. Romantic nihilism is distinguished at this point from constructive nihilism, alongside a distinction is made between the practical, pragmatic worldview running on functions and an associative attitude that sees functions beyond the ambit of personal gratification. This takes us a step closer to understand Musil's construction of Ulrich as a man of possibilities.

D MÖGLICHKEITSMENSCH: A MAN WITHOUT QUALITIES

The final sub-chapter helps us understand the focal point through which the world is refracted. Ulrich's dissident relationship with history, facts and conventions makes him not a man of reality, but of possibilities. In contrast to the positivist convergence of meaning, Ulrich's being is characterized by differences and dispersals. His allocentric attitude in contradistinction to the contemporary egocentric world is seen in light of his ambivalent take on morality. Ulrich's active pessimism is read as a reception of Nietzschean active nihilism, where life becomes an aesthetic activity and one's self turns impersonal, prepared to change into something else.

Chapter 6

Architecture in Unrest

A. ESSAYISM

Musil's attempts to change the novel and Ulrich's endeavors to change the world are dynamized in the work through the essay as both genre and its original etymological meaning connoting trying. As a middle zone between facts and fancy, the attitude of essayism is shown to partake that aspect of science that attempts at changing the paradigm through which we view the world. Particularization of morality subverts its universalizing claims, and morality is revealed to be essentially metaphorical in character. Musil posits metaphor as action that involves participation, and is critical of extracting truth of metaphor while sacrificing its figurative nature. Musil stresses the fact that the essay is empathetic to partial truths, but that does not make them provisional in nature. Truth, being metaphorical, can only be partial, and that is the necessary character of it. The essay walks on a tightrope where the self is exposed finally as a membrane, functioning at once from volition as well as compulsion. Placing Musil and Proust's works side by side, it is observed that they share multiple concerns, particularly a theoretical and formal emphasis on the metaphoric, on the tension between universal and particular, and the problem of narrative, time and deferral.

B CIRCULARITY

Circularity in the aesthetic make-up of the work is seen as an embodiment of an ethical resistance against the narrative of progress and the linearity of time that is made to appear in erstwhile novels. Musil's method of intensification without progress goes into the making of the fractal nature of the work. Circular structures appear by dint of repetitions with differences, so that the characters progress without the novel conforming to our conventional expectations of narrative development.

C PRECISION AND SOUL

This subchapter explores the implication of science on style of the work. Neither art nor science accorded primacy as far as knowledge is concerned – rather the focus is on sentimental quality activated by writing that involves an interplay between intellect and feeling. Unlike Naturalists, Musil dissects the psyche with intellect. Moreover, he is wary of empiricist trends since the horizon of perception is maintained intact in such cases. The circumvention of mental activity in expressionism and the too symbolic, undifferentiated receptivity in Impressionism. Finally, Musil's problems with Freudian psychology is shown to stem from the fact that it is objective without any concern for figuration, culminating into determinism and arche-construction without taking into account the basic, creative aspect of life and meaning-making in it.

D INCOMPLETION, IRONY, INTERRUPTION, LOSS OF SELF

Incompletion of a work could be a failure only when one persists in judging it according to classical, mythical or romantic paradigms. Distrust against superficial stability makes the idea of communion with convergence problematic. Literature as the not-yet shows life in its open totality. Art as constant irony - Art then, becomes a sincere but perennially misdirected form of projection; it does celebrate a cause, but journeys in the absence of one. Art as constant irony and self-negation becomes a sincere but perennially misdirected form of projection; it does celebrate a cause, but journeys in the absence of one. the novel in Musil is shown to be a paradoxical object where its self-estrangement with essence embodies its deliberate inability to possess itself.

E NOVEL, NARRATIVE, ART AND NON-ART

In order to understand the temperament of Musil's work better, the absurd judgement on Modernist art from some of the idiosyncratic characters of the novel are looked at, who demand from artworks like functions from consumer goods unequivocal meanings. Narration, however, or style determines the existential stand of the novel as well as the characters, and is neither a means nor an end, but the hermeneutic play of form and content. The chapter ends with a critique against the elementary, narrative mode of thought.

Chapter 7

Approaching the Event

A PROJECTS WITHOUT PROJECTION: THE ABSENCE OF CARE

The section explores the paradigms that go into the making of the expectations concerning the wish-for all-transforming great event in characters other than Ulrich. Be it Romanticism, Irrationalism or Socialism, each tendency evinces in the work an indifference where understanding is substituted by anachronistic longing for absolute points of reference and unifying accounts of experience, in short, ahistorical solutions to historical problems. The evacuation of content, the formalization of reason, the extrapolation and justification of all actions based on the fulfillment of purpose lead to a total indifference with the world.

B OFFSPRINGS OF THE EVENT

Passages dealing with Ulrich's childhood and love point at a kind of immersion that is symptomatic of one's involvement in the event. However, Ulrich is seen to be incapable of appreciating the void at the heart of art and literature, in that he collates this nothingness with the vacuity of everyday mundane activities. The metaphor of still-life is examined as Musil's understanding of the ontology of art. Both the negative definition of art in Kant based on disinterest as well as the widely circulated notion of art as a pretext for feeling are critiqued. Being-together in the experience of art has no unity of composition, and the implications of friendship in such an engagement in expatiated on.

C THE HERMENEUTICS TUSSLE: WEARING THE INSIDE OUT

The tension between figuration and the absolute, between life as a category and as lived experience, between ordering of experiences and moments, are some of the mutually contending binaries that keep on recurring in the work. Another tussle that is explored is between the work and the reader, and how these unmitigated tensions preclude the possibility of Musil's novel from culminating into a Bildungsroman.

D ARTICULATING THE EVENT

The overlap of the inside with the outside, of immanence with transcendence in the fold of the event invalidates the language of self-possession from its usual confidence of articulation. How does Musil as a literary artist express the oncoming of such an event is what this section tries to touch upon. Absolved from selfhood, the loss of expenditure of selfhood is shown to be an achievement of sovereignty. The novel becomes associated with the actualization of world, and this ontological function of the work is shown to gain paramount importance in the Modernist projects. Finally, Musil's use of the subjunctive form is shown to be an embodiment of this temperament in his work.

E FECUNDITY OF THE VOID

The void of ethics filled over and over again with aesthetics, and as such bears promise to the fact that the nothingness at the heart of things is a mute invitation for us to create forms. A

comparison is drawn with Nietzsche's nihilism, where void of the event comes to signify not just death but an infinite becoming of the subject. This void is shown to be a structural element which has been disguised for centuries, but emerges effulgent in the Modernist preoccupation with worldliness.

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