

VINTAGE CLASSICS

THOMAS BERNHARD CORRECTION

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funniest writers...
A must-read for everybody'
Karl Ove Knausgaard



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THOMAS BERNHARD

Thomas Bernhard was born in Holland in 1931 but grew up in Austria. His interest in music and theatre led him to study at the Akademie Mozarteum in Salzburg. He has written poetry, several novels, short stories, plays and three volumes of autobiography. Among the many European prizes he has won are the Bremen Prize, the Austrian National Prize and Le Prix Séguier. He died in 1989.

ALSO BY THOMAS BERNHARD

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THOMAS BERNHARD
CORRECTION

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY
Sophie Wilkins

WITH A PREFACE BY
George Steiner

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For Carol Brown Janeway, heroic editor, and Patrick O'Brien, M.D.,
companion in *furor Bernhardiensis* to whom this translation is indebted
for invaluable attentions and moral support. S.W.

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Preface

Two figures haunt the philosophic fictions of Thomas Bernhard. He saw in Glenn Gould the enacted mastery of meaning in music, a performative quality so intense, so disinterested in its unforced virtuosity, as to make of his playing of the piano a kind of absolute verity. Gould also represented two other major motifs in Bernhard's unforgiving vision. The distance between Gould's realisation of Bach or Beethoven and that of all other pianists, not to speak of amateurs, is so great that it makes the efforts of lesser executants not only perfectly absurd but somehow indecent. If one has heard Gould play, be it through a narrowly opened door during Gould's apprentice stay in Salzburg, the only condign response is to cease one's own studies, to sell or pulp one's piano and to 'go under' (the title of the relevant fable) in lucid, suicidal silence.

The other bearer of perfect and, therefore, fatal tidings is Wittgenstein. It is the absolute purity, the translucent reticence of Wittgenstein's method and style, which render fatuous not only the inflated meanderings of other modern thinkers, but the laboured, self-serving efforts of most other serious minds to think at all. Where a Wittgenstein has passed, the grass of silliness and of verbose vanity should not be allowed to grow again. The totemic rebuke which emanates from Wittgenstein's ascetic genius is the more decisive for Bernhard in that it sprang from within and turned its back on loathed Austria. Even *Wittgenstein's Nephew* (1982) inherits, in his own consequent extremity – is he the greater philosopher because he leaves no work, no fragment behind? – and incarnates that last judgement on Austria and on European modernity which is pivotal to Bernhard's entire work.

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Korrektur, to retain its graphically angular German title – those ‘k’s out of Kafka – appeared in 1975. Formally, it is Thomas Bernhard’s masterpiece and one of the pre-eminent novels in our century. Nowhere is Bernhard’s notorious prose, with its maddening, grating recursive and tidal motion, with its clipped understatements, with its bone-bleached economy, used to deeper purpose. Nowhere (and this is saying a great deal) is Bernhard’s power to construe a landscape of natural damnation – that of the black woods and deafening hill-streams of Carinthia – more persuasive. No translation, however obeisant, will quite render the cold crazed music, the dank but sometimes cutting sheen of light and ashen air in the original.

Though obliquely etched, the factual background matters. Almost harshly, Bernhard assumes that the reader will recognise and assess allusions to: Wittgenstein’s design and construction in Vienna of a house of uncompromising austerity and clarity of line for one of his sisters; to Wittgenstein’s sojourns in Cambridge; to his dual schooling in engineering and in mathematical logic; to the exasperated solitude (and rages) in his monk-like style of life. Like Wittgenstein, the Roithamer of the novel – in German there are cross-echoes of the subtlest and most suggestive sort between the two names – temporarily abandons his social and intellectual status in order to teach primary and secondary school-children in an abysmally backward Austrian hamlet. In both cases, the experiment fails cruelly. As with the great philosopher, so with Roithamer, the essential writings remain unpublished at the time of death, obscurely preserved in the ‘inferno’ (in the *Höller* attic resides the German word for ‘Hell’). And although the depiction of the incomparable ‘Wittgenstein-Roithamer’ is palpable, Bernhard entrusts this chronicle to an intermediary, a friend and posthumous witness whose judgements are themselves subject to the twilight and dubieties of a tortuous narration. There may be distant analogies here to the celebrated narrative interposition in Thomas Mann’s *Doktor Faustus*.

A ‘correction of corrections of corrections of corrections’ which is not *ad infinitum* simply because death punctuates. Variations on a single theme of inaccessible but lucidly perceived final rigour

of thought and architectural conception. Like the grinding of the stream, Bernhard's recital aims to produce the peculiar nausea which can arise out of obsession. Even the determination of the *exact* centre of the forest of Kobernauss – for how can the conical dwelling be erected at any other spot? – entails a maddening stress of repeated, amended, corrected mensuration. What is purposed is an absolute 'thought-space' into whose inhuman and cellular asceticism Roithamer's sister is to enter blindfold (the theme of brother-sister incest, spiritually construed, is ubiquitous in Thomas Bernhard). Inevitably and by virtue of a logic which both appalls and fulfills the builder, the 'Cone' becomes his sister's immediate tomb. His own suicide is an epilogue writ deep in the necessities and truths of his vision (two of Wittgenstein's brothers committed suicide and the master himself notes occasions on which he felt drawn to the very edge of self-destruction).

Yet, and this is the sombre magic of the novel, there is a bracing, energising afterglow. The pulsing, sinewy strengths of Bernhard's technique, the challenge Roithamer's genius and exactions poses to the reader's imaginative grasp, are positive. An episode, such as that of the 'yellow rose' found among Roithamer's papers, takes on a peculiar resonance, as of chivalric mercy. Is there any other fiction, with the possible exception of Valery's miniature *Monsieur Teste* that actually convinces us of a felt philosophic eminence? Too often, notably in his later writings, Bernhard succumbed to a monotone of hate (hate for Austria, for modern man, for the soiled materiality of being). *Correction* is a masterpiece precisely because the comeliness of logic and the menace of hallucination, the poetry of discretion and the cry of confessional anguish, are kept in equilibrium. The difficulties which the book causes, the imperative of re-reading implicit in its every line, are a compliment, no doubt somewhat chilling but intense none the less, to its readers.

George Steiner
February 1991

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Hoeller's Garret

After a mild pulmonary infection, tended too little and too late, had suddenly turned into a severe pneumonia that took its toll of my entire body and laid me up for at least three months at nearby Wels, which has a hospital renowned in the field of so-called internal medicine, I accepted an invitation from Hoeller, a so-called taxidermist in the Aurach valley, not for the *end* of October, as the doctors urged, but for *early* in October, as I insisted, and then went on my own so-called responsibility straight to the Aurach valley and to Hoeller's house, without even a detour to visit my parents in Stocket, *straight* into the so-called Hoeller garret, to begin sifting and perhaps even arranging the literary remains of my friend, who was also a friend of the taxidermist Hoeller, Roithamer, after Roithamer's suicide, I went to work sifting and sorting the papers he had willed to me, consisting of thousands of slips covered with Roithamer's handwriting plus a bulky manuscript entitled 'About Altensam and everything connected with Altensam, with special attention to the Cone.' The atmosphere in Hoeller's house was still heavy, most of all with the circumstances of Roithamer's suicide, and seemed from the moment of my arrival favorable to my plan of working on Roithamer's papers there, specifically in Hoeller's garret, sifting and sorting Roithamer's papers and even, as I suddenly decided, simultaneously writing my own account of my work on these papers, as I have here begun to do, aided by having been able to move straight into Hoeller's garret without any reservations on Hoeller's part, even though the house had other suitable accommodations, I deliberately moved into that four-by-five-meter garret Roithamer was always so fond of, which was so ideal, especially in his last years, for his purposes, where I could stay as long as I liked, it

was all the same to Hoeller, in this house built by the headstrong Hoeller in defiance of every rule of reason and architecture right here in the Aurach gorge, in the garret which Hoeller had designed and built as if for Roithamer's purposes, where Roithamer, after sixteen years in England with me, had spent the final years of his life almost continuously, and even prior to that he had found it convenient to spend at least his nights in the garret, especially while he was building the Cone for his sister in the Kobernausser forest, all the time the Cone was under construction he no longer slept at home in Altensam but always and only in Hoeller's garret, it was simply in every respect the ideal place for him during those last years when he, Roithamer, never went straight home to Altensam from England, but instead went every time to Hoeller's garret, to fortify himself in its simplicity (Hoeller house) for the complexity ahead (Cone), it would not do to go straight to Altensam from England, where each of us, working separately in his own scientific field, had been living in Cambridge all those years, he had to go straight to Hoeller's garret, if he did not follow this rule which had become a cherished habit, the visit to Altensam was a disaster from the start, so he simply could not let himself go directly from England to Altensam and everything connected with Altensam, whenever he had *not* made the detour via Hoeller's house, to save time, as he himself admitted, it had been a mistake, so he no longer made the experiment of going to Altensam without first stopping at Hoeller's house, in those last years, he never again went home without first visiting Hoeller and Hoeller's family and Hoeller's house, without first moving into Hoeller's garret, to devote himself for two or three days to such reading as he could do only in Hoeller's garret, of subject matter that was not harmful but helpful to him, books and articles he could read neither in Altensam nor in England, and to thinking and writing what he found possible to think and write neither in England nor in Altensam, *here I discovered Hegel*, he always said, over and over again, it was here that I really delved into Schopenhauer for the first time, here that I could read, for the first time, Goethe's *Elective Affinities* and *The Sentimental Journey*, without distraction and with a clear head, it was here,

in Hoeller's garret, that I suddenly gained access to ideas to which my mind had been sealed *for decades before I came to this garret*, access, he wrote, to the most essential ideas, the most important for me, the most necessary to my life, here in Hoeller's garret, he wrote, everything became possible for me, everything that had always been impossible for me outside Hoeller's garret, such as letting myself be guided by my intellectual inclinations and to develop my natural aptitudes accordingly, and to get on with my work, everywhere else I had always been hindered in developing my aptitudes but in Hoeller's garret I could always develop them most consistently, here everything was congenial to my way of thinking, here I could always indulge myself in exploring all my intellectual possibilities, here in Hoeller's garret my head, my mind, my whole constitution were suddenly relieved from all the outside world's oppression, the most incredible things were suddenly no longer incredible, the most impossible (thinking!) no longer impossible. It was in Hoeller's garret that he found the conditions necessary and most favorable to thought, for getting the mechanism of his thought going in the most natural, most undistracted way, all he had to do was to come to Hoeller's garret from wherever he might be, and the mechanism worked. Whenever I was in England, he wrote, no matter how I felt, I was always thinking, if only I could be in Hoeller's garret now, always when he had reached a dead end in his thinking and in his feelings, if only I could be in Hoeller's garret now, but on the other hand he realized that settling for good in Hoeller's garret was not synonymous with always being able to think freely and without distraction, and that, if he could stay forever in Hoeller's garret, it would mean nothing less than his own total destruction, if I stay in Hoeller's garret longer than need be, he wrote, I'll be done for in no time at all, that's the end of me, he thought, which is why he had always stayed in Hoeller's garret for *only a definite period of time, how long exactly he could never foresee, but it had to be strictly limited*, he must have considered a stay of fourteen to fifteen days in the Hoeller garret ideal, as his notes imply, always just fourteen or fifteen days, every time, on the fourteenth or fifteenth day, according to Hoeller, Roithamer

always packed up in a flash and went off to Altensam, though he did not necessarily stay in Altensam for any length of time very often, but only for the shortest possible time, as little time as he could manage, the absolute, inescapable minimum, no more, he had even been known to take up residence in Hoeller's house with every intention of going on to Altensam after fourteen days or so, but instead of going on to Altensam where he was expected, where his arrival had already been announced, after fourteen or fifteen days, he went from Hoeller's place in the Aurach gorge straight back to England, because his stay at Hoeller's place, in the Hoeller ambience, had not only given him enough, but had actually advanced his thinking so much that he did not need to stop at Altensam but could go straight back to England, specifically Cambridge, where he was *always both studying and teaching* simultaneously and, as he always kept saying, he never exactly knew at any particular moment whether he was studying or teaching because, as he said, *when I was teaching, I was in fact basically studying, and when I was studying, I was basically teaching*. Actually I too found the atmosphere in Hoeller's house ideal, I immediately made myself at home in the garret which had been Roithamer's garret and will always remain Roithamer's garret, from the very start I had always intended to take notes on my work with Roithamer's papers and on the entire process involved, and I soon understood how perfect for Roithamer's purposes Hoeller's garret was, how he had settled into Hoeller's garret with its view to westward, pitch-dark it was over the raging Aurach, and to northward, also pitch-dark, the water steadily and always noisily slapping and crashing against the wet, glistening rock-face, 'rehearsing for Altensam in Hoeller's house' as he called those stays in Hoeller's house, specifically Hoeller's garret, stays that quickly succeeded one another in those last years, especially *the last three years*, when he went five or six times, for four or five months at a time, from England to Altensam, but actually only to Hoeller's garret, obviously attracted to it by Hoeller's work, those meticulous preservations of animals, and in general by all the curious conditions of the place, so intimately bound up with the play of light in the Aurach valley,

where every day ran its course simply enough, but nature was always making itself so powerfully felt, a nature mostly in pain, and all the people there, Hoeller's parents and in-laws and his wife and his still school-age children, for whom everything turned on what game had been shot and gutted, what wildfowl shot and gutted, and all the related chores, all the circumstances of life were bound up with their natural surroundings, it became clear to me that Roithamer had found here in the Aurach gorge as he had nowhere else the inspiration for pressing on with his main task, the building of the Cone, that edifice as a work of art, which he had designed for his sister in three years of incessant mental concentration and which he had built in the following three years with the greatest effort, with what he called almost inhuman energy, built it in the very center of the Kobernausser forest. It was in Hoeller's garret, where I had now moved with Roithamer's papers, most of them relating to the building of the Cone, and I regard my work on Roithamer's papers as the ideal occupational therapy for myself after my long illness and *also feel it is ideal*, it was here that Roithamer had conceived the idea of the Cone and drawn up the basic plans for it, and the fact that even now, some months after Roithamer's death and half a year after his sister's death, his sister for whom he had built the Cone which is already abandoned to natural decay, Hoeller's garret still contains all the plans, all the books and articles, most of them never used but all of them collected by Roithamer in his last years with a view to building the Cone, all those books and articles in every possible language, including languages unknown to him but translated for him by his brother Johann who spoke many languages and in fact had a gift for languages like no other man I ever knew, the translations were also here in Hoeller's garret, and I could see at once that there had to be hundreds of them, stacks of translations from Spanish and Portuguese, as I noticed when I entered the garret, hundreds if not thousands of laborious decipherments of probably important considerations for the construction and completion of the Cone by experts unknown to me but probably familiar to him, he hated the word *architect*, or *architecture*, he never said *architect*, or *architecture*,

and *when* I or someone else said architect, or architecture, he instantly countered by saying that he could not stand hearing the word architect, or architecture, that these two words were nothing but malformations, verbal monstrosities which no thinking man would stoop to, and I never used the words architect, or architecture, in his presence, nor have I used them since, even Hoeller got accustomed to avoiding the words architect or architecture, like Roithamer we resorted to words such as master builder or building or the art of building; that the word B U I L D is one of the most beautiful in the language, we knew ever since Roithamer had spoken about it, in that same garret where I have now installed myself, one dismal rainy evening when we again, as so often, dreaded the onset of another one of those torrential floods that come tearing down the gorge to devastate the whole area sometimes, though this one receded unexpectedly, those floods in the Aurach gorge would do the most extensive damage but they always spared Hoeller's house, all up and down the Aurach they did the most extensive damage but Hoeller's house, which was built right into the cleft, was spared always, because Hoeller had known exactly what he was doing, everyone was amazed to see the whole Aurach valley buried in mud, ravaged and destroyed while Hoeller's house alone stood unscathed, incredibly, it was on this dismal rainy evening, with all of us living in fear of another such flood about to bemire and ravage everything in its path, though this time it did not happen, when Roithamer revealed to us the beauty of the word *building* and the beauty of the word *build* and the beauty of the phrase *builder's masterwork*. From time to time he would pick out a word like that, a word that had suddenly become luminous with meaning for him, pick out one word from among all those others, any word at all, and elucidate it to anyone, but usually to those of us who often came in the evening to Hoeller's house and always regularly on those weekends when Roithamer returned from England. Once, as I recall, he spent a whole night analyzing for us the word *circumstance*, the word *condition*, and the word *consistent*. It was touching to find all of Roithamer's books and articles and plans and his writing utensils and thinking aids still right there in Hoeller's

garret, just as he had left them. Hoeller's garret was where all the ideas and designs for building the Cone had come into being, here all the ideas had *originated*, all the plans were sketched, all the necessary decisions for building the Cone had been made here, it was from here Roithamer had directed everything. Those pinewood shelves, common planks of pinewood, along the whitewashed walls, crammed with hundreds of thousands of books and articles about buildings and the art of building and everything connected with building, about nature and natural history, particularly the nature and natural history of the rock formations involved in the building of the Cone, about statics above all, and about the possible ways of building such a cone-shaped habitation within a natural environment such as the Kobernausser forest, these cheap pinewood boards nailed together with three-inch steel spikes, and instantly, as I entered Hoeller's garret where I had never been alone before, but always in Roithamer's company or Hoeller's company, or both their company, I suddenly felt that it was possible for me, from the first moments after I had stepped inside, to let myself go in Hoeller's garret, to think freely about Hoeller's garret, to give myself over entirely to all these suddenly available thoughts, relating of course to my plans regarding my work on Roithamer's papers and especially to arriving at an understanding of his chief project, the building of the Cone, to sort it all out, to think it through, possibly even to pull it together where it did not really belong together, to reconstitute its original coherence as envisioned by Roithamer, because I had seen clearly from the very first time I went through Roithamer's basic manuscript that the circumstances that interrupted his work, the death of his sister and the consequent irregularities in his methodical work-process, his work interrupted suddenly where it never should have been interrupted, on his basic manuscript about the Cone and consequently about Altensam and about Hoeller's garret, about the course of the Aurach and about the Aurach gorge in particular, about building materials and, again, everything connected with the building of the Cone, but as it related to Hoeller's garret, though basically the building was researched and planned and put up and actually completed

out of veneration for her, his sister, I had seen clearly that because of all these circumstances the manuscript on which he had been working most energetically, as I happen to know, for the last half year of his life in England, in a room he had rented specifically for that purpose in Cambridge, as he told me, his purpose being to write at all costs a justification and analysis of his work on the Cone, even though he basically had no right to take the time off from his professional scientific work, but he couldn't be bothered about that because he must have clearly understood that he simply had to complete his manuscript about the Cone and its attendant circumstances and everything involved with it, *now*, immediately after his sister's death, if he was going to complete it at all, he probably felt that he had no time to spare, that his life was doomed to end soon, that day by day it was increasingly self-doomed, so that he had to proceed with incredible ruthlessness, mostly against himself and his own highly vulnerable mental state, as I happen to know it was, he had to fulfill his intention and complete his manuscript about the building of the Cone, he had in fact begun by making a most energetic effort to plan and construct and put up and complete the Cone, then followed this up by making a similar if not even greater effort to explain the building of the Cone in an even greater, as I now see, a most extensive manuscript, and above all to justify what he had done, because he had been reprimanded on all sides for having had such an idea at all in a time opposed to such ideas, a time predisposed *against* such ideas and their realization, for having realized such an idea, given it embodiment and even brought it to completion, he was reprimanded for being, in a time generally predisposed *against* such men, such heads, such characters, such minds as Roithamer's (and others!), precisely such a man and head and character and mind, so contradictory a character and mind and man as that, who used his unexpected inheritance in the service of an idea everyone considered crazy, an idea that had suddenly entered his crazy head and never again left it, the idea to use his sudden windfall for building his sister a cone, a cone-shaped habitation, and not only that, but most incredible of all, to erect this giant cone not where such a house might normally be

located, but to design it and put it up and complete it way out in the middle of the Kobernausser forest, they had all thought at first that he would never go through with it, but little by little he made it happen, suddenly it was no longer only inside his head or clearly evident only in the intensity of his preparatory studies, but all at once the road through the Kobernausser forest was actually being built, a road that would go to the exact center of the forest at an angle he had calculated for months, working nights, because he meant to build that cone in the exact center of the Kobernausser forest, and he did build it in the exact center of the Kobernausser forest, the calculations all had to be made by him personally because, now I have to come out with it, he hated all architects and he hated all professional builders with the exception of the manual workers, he kept at it relentlessly until he had all his figures as to the exact center of the Kobernausser forest just right so that he could begin with the digging of the foundations, it was a rude shock to all the people who had until this moment refused to believe that Roithamer's crazy scheme would actually be executed, when the road to the center of the Kobernausser forest was *actually built* and he *had* started digging the foundations, he had come back from England, once he had done his calculations, and installed himself in Hoeller's garret and had, by supervising every detail personally, so expedited the building of the road and the digging of the foundations that the experts were mystified that one man could so speed up a project that the road was finished in half the normal time and the foundations dug in a third of the time normally required for such a job. The foundation was the deepest ever dug and the road was the best-laid road, everything had to be the best. Nobody, in fact, had even believed that Roithamer could possibly succeed in acquiring the plot of land for the Cone in the middle of the Kobernausser forest, and certainly not *for such a crazy purpose*, everyone and the experts especially thought it was completely crazy to build such a structure as the Cone and they still do and always will think it completely crazy, anyway the land on which Roithamer built the Cone had become government property after the aristocrat who previously owned it, a Hapsburg, had been

dispossessed, and the very idea of getting such a piece of state property in the middle of the Kobernausser forest back from the government into private hands, no matter whose, was in itself an absurd and actually an utterly crazy idea, to say nothing of getting back all the land for the road leading to the Cone, buying it all back from the government to be privately held, by whomever, yet Roithamer had managed to reacquire from the government, in the shortest possible time and in absolute, prearranged secrecy, all the land needed for the road he wanted to build and also, immediately thereafter, the large plot of land in the middle of the Kobernausser forest on which he wanted to build the Cone for his sister, then, shortly after acquiring the land and not without having completely settled all the formalities, he began laying out the road and building the road and building the Cone, at which point everyone was horrified, to begin with it was a rude shock especially to Roithamer's brothers who had never dreamt that their brother's crazy scheme could become a reality, made into a reality by the crazy Roithamer, but they had to accept the fact of the valid deeds of purchase, and take note that the road was beginning to be built and, finally, that the Cone was under construction, even at this late date, they had tried to have Roithamer declared incompetent, they instituted a proceeding to have him placed under guardianship, but he was declared *completely sane* by a team of doctors, in any case the experts who testified against Roithamer's mental condition and who had been hired and paid by Roithamer's brothers remained in the minority against the experts who testified that Roithamer was sane. That a man who lets such an idea as that of building the Cone develop in his head, then uses his inherited fortune, for which he had no other use, to turn this idea into a reality, and actually goes ahead, with great energy and enthusiasm, with his project to build the Cone, still does not quite prove, after all, that the man is crazy, even though the majority of bystanders and relatives believe that such a man is crazy, that he simply *must* be crazy, because no sane man could possibly spend such an enormous amount of inherited money, an amount that goes into the millions, the hundreds of millions, on so crazy an idea as the idea

of building such a cone, *a cone the likes of which has never been built before*, and Roithamer actually did sink all of his inheritance into the building of that Cone, except for a sum in seven or eight figures, I don't know exactly how much, which Roithamer had set aside to be at his sister's disposal for the rest of her life, precisely the amount now at issue between the Roithamer brothers living in Altensam, because that amount of money reverted to Roithamer after his sister's death, and to his brothers after Roithamer's own death. At this point let me state that the Cone itself and all the land and property pertaining to it, purchased at such vast expense but in accordance with all due process from the state, has reverted to the state, with the proviso that *the Cone is to be left to decay, never again to be touched by anyone, and is to be abandoned entirely to nature* where Roithamer had placed it. But I won't go into it at this point. Where the pinewood shelves crammed with books and articles ended in the Hoeller garret, the walls were covered with hundreds of thousands of plans, all concerning the building of the Cone, millions of lines and numbers and figures covered these walls, so that at first I thought I'd go mad or at least get sick from looking at all these millions of lines and numbers and figures, but then I got accustomed to the sight of these lines and numbers and figures, and once I had reached a certain degree of equanimity, beyond the point of losing my mind from looking at all those cone calculations, I could begin my study of those notations, beginning with all the calculations and sketches on the walls of Hoeller's garret, then going through the books and articles on the shelves, and finally all the material in the file drawers; I did, after all, have to familiarize myself with the fact that here in Hoeller's garret I was confronted with all the intellectual data, hitherto unknown to me, out of which Roithamer had designed and then built the Cone and everything connected with it. And so it was out of the question to start on my actual studies of all these papers immediately, at least not in the first few hours after my arrival, instead I began by making myself comfortable in Hoeller's garret, unpacked my bag, put away my few indispensable belongings, examined my bed, which had just been made and, like all freshly made beds in the country, smelled

deliciously of the surrounding outdoors. It was a good bed, as I could tell by sitting on it; then, I hung my coat in the wardrobe; I am all alone in what I may certainly call Roithamer's garret, Hoeller's garret is Roithamer's garret, even Hoeller referred to this garret as Roithamer's garret, I had the immediate impression of being inside a thought-chamber, everything in this chamber had to do with thought, once a man was inside it he had to think, being in this chamber presupposed incessant thinking, no one could have endured it for a minute without thinking incessantly, whoever enters Hoeller's garret, enters into thinking, specifically into thinking about Hoeller's garret, and at the same time into Roithamer's thinking, and must continue to think these thoughts as long as he remains in the garret, if he breaks off these thoughts he is instantly crazy or dead, I think. Whoever enters here has to give up everything he ever thought prior to entering Hoeller's garret, he must make a clean break with all of his past thinking and start completely afresh, at once, thinking only Hoeller-garret thoughts, to stay alive even for a moment in Hoeller's garret it's not enough merely to keep on thinking, it must be *Hoeller-garret-thoughts*, thinking solely about everything to do with Hoeller's garret and Roithamer and the Cone. As I stood there looking around Hoeller's garret it was instantly clear to me that my thinking would now have to conform to Hoeller's garret, to think other than Hoeller-garret-thoughts in Hoeller's garret was simply impossible, and so I decided to familiarize myself gradually with the prescribed mode of thinking in this place, to study it so as to learn to think along these lines, entering Hoeller's garret unprepared and learning to adjust, to entrust and subject oneself to these mandatory lines of thought and make some progress in them is not easy. Everything inside Hoeller's garret came from Roithamer and I even went so far as to state that this garret is Roithamer, even though one's head should beware of such judgments, I yielded up my entire existence to this judgment the moment I set foot in Hoeller's garret. Hoeller himself had not touched a thing in this garret since Roithamer's last visit here, immediately after his sister's funeral in Altensam, as I've since learned from Hoeller,

Roithamer had attended the funeral most reluctantly, as I've also learned, not of course on account of his sister but because of his brothers, Roithamer wore black, Hoeller said, which he'd never worn before, no matter who was being buried, Roithamer wore black only this one time in his life, it was only for his sister's funeral that he dressed in black, he looked extremely well dressed in those black clothes, Hoeller says, and so there he was in his elegant black clothes in Hoeller's parlor and sat there in silence, in *total* silence, as Hoeller says, without eating or drinking anything, Hoeller had the impression that Roithamer, with his sister now dead and buried, had come to an end himself, except that he was still alive, but though he was still alive he actually felt that he was already dead, because his sister, for whom he had built the Cone, had meant everything to him, next to his work, his natural science, which he taught at Cambridge, as I have said, he simultaneously taught and studied at Cambridge, but now, Hoeller said, you know how an educated man can suddenly look as though he had been mortally wounded, and Hoeller described Roithamer as looking not only completely exhausted after his sister's funeral, but looking as if he were already dead, Roithamer had entered Hoeller's house a dead man, not merely an exhausted or totally exhausted man, and there he sat in Hoeller's family room for two hours, and would not let Hoeller's wife give him anything to eat or drink, though he had never refused her before, except that after three hours he took a glass of water which he drank down in one long gulp, and nothing else, then he kept on sitting there in the downstairs family room deep into the night, in silence, Hoeller himself didn't dare to say anything, not in this situation, said Hoeller, who could describe the situation very well, though he couldn't explain it, in fact every time Hoeller talked about Roithamer he could describe everything very well though he couldn't explain it, but Hoeller didn't need words to make himself understood and to explain whatever and wherever something needed explaining, Hoeller's method of elucidation always worked best when he operated in silence, and so Roithamer sat in the parlor all night long and did not wish to retire to the garret, Hoeller said, he probably didn't want to

return ever again to the world of the garret, which stood for *everything*. Around midnight Hoeller's wife wrapped a coverlet around Roithamer's legs because of the sudden cold, and Roithamer had let her do so without offering any resistance, Hoeller said, then, at about four in the morning, Roithamer stood up and went upstairs without a word, to the garret, where he stood stock-still for a few moments. He made no changes at all in the garret, Hoeller said, never again touched anything in it. The garret is still exactly as it was when he left it. Nor have I changed anything in the garret, Hoeller said. Then Roithamer went away and they never heard from him again. The news of Roithamer's death came as no surprise, so Hoeller said, everything about Roithamer on that last evening and that last night had pointed to his death, Hoeller could see clearly during that night, during all of that last encounter with Roithamer that he, Roithamer, didn't have much longer to live. I no longer exist, was the last thing Roithamer is supposed to have said to Hoeller. I personally saw Roithamer one last time in London, after he'd sent me a telegram and I'd gone to meet him at Victoria Station and had accompanied him to his apartment, where he told me about his sister's funeral, in those brief sentences of his that brooked no contradiction. Now in the garret Roithamer was present to my mind's eye, because he had in fact been present here, I saw him distinctly and I heard what he said when I saw him, even though he was not present in reality, so conscious was I of his presence as I gazed at his things, breathed the air he had breathed those last years in the garret, thought the thoughts he had always thought here, sensed the Hoeller atmosphere which had become second nature to him in the years when he'd been disengaging himself from Altensam and had, gradually at first and then altogether, given himself up to his project, the Cone, for Roithamer had often told me that the Hoeller atmosphere and the circumstances of the Hoeller atmosphere, the line of thought directly bound up with the Hoeller atmosphere and the circumstances bound up with the Hoeller atmosphere had become his one necessity, the only compelling necessity of his life, no matter where he happened to be in those final years, whether in