

**Peter Waterhouse**  
**Cogito**  
**Laudation**

“Do you know what my undoing is? Well, listen up carefully! All those delightful folks who reckon they are able to boss me around and criticize me are fanatical Hermann Hesse aficionados. They don't trust me. For them, there is only an either/or: 'Either you write like Hesse or you are, and will remain, a failure.' That's how extremist their assessment of me is. They have no faith in my work. And that is the reason why I wound up in the institution. – I have somehow always been lacking the halo. That's the only way can you make it in the literary business. Some nimbus of heroism, of martyrdom, silent suffering, and the suchlike, and the ladder to success is there to be climbed. I am viewed unmercifully, the way I happen to be. That's why nobody really takes me seriously.”

I am not yet aware, on commencing to write this laudation, of the jury's reasons for presenting today's award, i.e. of the exact wording of their citation for the literary magazine “verwendung,” and I therefore voice an assumption and, citing Robert Walser, also a commendation: the jury has faith in this work. Faith, as expressed by Robert Walser to Carl Seelig on June 27, 1937, while returning from one of those exhausting hikes, is a big word, meaning, as it does, a third way between ending up in the institution and scaling the ladder to success, which, in Hesse's case, even led, nine years later, to the Nobel Prize. Is that not, however, also the inherent invocation always addressed to the reader: to have faith. Instead of the either/or, instead of Yes, absolutely, right and No, mistaken, instead of the categorizations, literature occasionally consists merely of wishing, or perhaps even comes in the guise of a fairy who comes along and says: I hear the wishes, have faith. The jury to be commended today, what would it have placed its faith in when awarding the Hermann Hesse Prize to literary magazine “verwendung” and its editors? Probably just a single sentence such as: I have somehow always been lacking the halo ... some nimbus of heroism: With this sentence, we are very close to the language of “verwendung,” a magazine published in Berlin-Weißensee, Herbert-Baum-Straße, a quiet tree-lined boulevard leading to the Jewish cemetery, though one should not only say published but also written or, more precisely, copied onto paper, i.e. almost mimetically duplicated. If the halo is lacking, then ... if the aureole-like apparition is missing, then ... if, to use an entirely different word, the dissentient is missing, then ... this gives rise to language, and I set this word language clearly apart from the word opposition. Opposition is a kind of halo. Do not go looking for either in the magazine “verwendung.” Very close to the linguistic disposition of the magazine published in Berlin-Weißensee, in a quiet tree-lined boulevard leading to the Jewish cemetery ... - yet I shall now choose the word garden. “You are chasing after a phantom,” this sentence forms part of the founding history of the magazine as written by Egmont Hesse, I shall change the sentence to the form: “You are chasing around in a garden,” which the editors might not see the way I do. Yet the two sentences I have selected from the history of its foundation are: “whether the spark will blossom, and at what height fruit is to be harvested will have to remain to be seen.” And the second sentence: ‘you are chasing after a phantom’ is one the sales clerk at a stationer's hopefully said to me for the last time when I asked for paper clips.” The blossoming and the fruit, where do we stand with these words? How do flowers blossom? Or what do the gardens and seeds or stones know that the stationer didn't? Do the flowers bloom against something? No, they do not bloom against anything. If they know something, are they likely to say it? No, they say nothing. A garden is without legitimation, yet landscapely.

The clandestinity of which one must here speak is not directed against anyone or anything, yet is directed at something. Like when a poppy blooms, the fact that we see it, not a

secret, something concealed but, let's say, the red knowing of the landscape, deep under the blue knowing in the bright light of day. The red knowing or the red thinking – it was in its name that Walser went walking long and far and elsewhere, and Carl Seelig spoke of Walser and of the landscape, Walser and the weather, the hiking trails, the hostelries, the meals, the surrounding villages. In this talk, I want to trust in this red thinking, to trust in the magazine “verwendung,” yet will you, my audience, share this trust? I will therefore give you my simplest example, from July 23, 1950. Seelig and Walser had agreed to go for a hike, yet somehow managed to miss each other, finally meeting up later, and Seelig writes: “I notice from the gruff way in which he greets me (on reaching to shake my hand, he backs off from me a metre as if I were a porcupine) that he was disgruntled. He cannot understand why we failed to meet. He says he was at the Herisau station at eight o'clock sharp but had marched on towards Goßau after a few minutes, assuming that he had been misdirected with regard to the meeting point. From Goßau, he continues, he then ambled back to the institution and wrote the day off as a total botch-up. Me: ‘I arrived on the same train I always do. But it was a quarter of an hour late.’ Robert, completely gobsmacked: ‘So I didn't wait long enough after all?’ I nod and suggest – it is now 10.30 – that we stroll on down into the village and get something to eat there. Yet he will have none of it. He wants to get out of Herisau – off to Schwellbrunn. All right.” A tale of disgruntlement, yet what concerns me now is not the story but this final word “all right,” which made me prick up my ears all the more. In the Swiss mountains, not far removed from the French language, two Swiss men together with each other, a conflict emerging, and then this word in the foreign language far removed from here: all right. This is a sidestep, a step towards the wayside flowers, and towards non-opposition, a provincial, an a-national situation. What I am trying to say is that this word serves to suspend the identity of the two speakers, which, due to the discord, had suddenly become so strong; A against B, and enter another linguistic beast, one lying outside the linearity, a stranger, so to speak, an English tourist, one recognizes him immediately. Praised be tourism! And it this Englishman that also interests me at magazine “verwendung.” Bert Papenfluß-Gorek is such an Englishman, one can tell immediately. He joins two Swiss and then says:

aufblick aus dem augenblick

verwendung, schwund, hingabe, heidenspaß  
lenkung, verrenkung, hexenschuß, ausvorbei  
vorgefühl, vorzeit, obhut, keine zeit  
kein zeitgefühl, kein feingeschmack  
schund im nu zur ruh in verendung  
sticks, stones, bottles, posaunen  
ein glas, das fern kirre klirrt  
das is es, merlin, nicht mals das

*[upglance from the upeyed moment*

*application, atrophy, abandon, whale of a time  
location, dislocation, lumbago, that-was-it  
presentiment, prehistory, safekeeping, no time  
no sense of time, no sense of taste  
trash in a flash to rest in decease  
sticks, stones, bottles, trombones  
a glass that distantly clinks compliantly  
that is it, merlin, not times that]*

Or, another time, while taking a walk, he suddenly says:

flüssigkeit & fäulnis in der militanten landwirtschaft

unter der scholle, der ich aufsitze; der untergrund, dem ich gehöre  
unter der erdoberfläche – stehende und fließende gewässer  
der grundwasserspiegel – ein unterirdisches meer  
das in fluß kommt, sobald der ton sich neigt  
mangels fäulnis würde der pflug sich verstopfen  
die egge dicke matratzen über den acker schleifen  
an ein unterbringen der saat wäre nicht zu denken  
& der wunderbare kohlenstoff ginge nicht im kreis

*[liquefaction and putrefaction in militant agriculture*

*under the sod on which I sit; the underground to which I belong  
under the surface of the earth – stagnant and flowing waters  
the groundwater table – a subterranean sea  
that commences to flow as soon as the clay is tilted  
for want of putrefaction the plough would clog up  
the harrow would drag thick mattresses across the field  
no way would one be able to put down the seed  
& the wonderful carbon would not move in a cycle]*

When I spoke of the garden and Egmont Hesse, in his story, of blossoming, flourishing and of fruits, and of forests even, then we were thinking of a landscape of sticks, stones, bottles, trombones. Merlin, the one mentioned in the poem, as described in the Vita Merlini, bears the traits of a woodman or woodstranger; this wood extends still further in “verwendung,” in some of its most felicitous pieces. Clandestinity or garden talks, or halolessness or disposition are but woodland occurrences or undergrowth. Flourishing here, in other words, between the halo and the institution, is the undergrowth. Or replace this word undergrowth with the words in the poem, replace it with stagnant and flowing waters or a subterranean sea, or the seeds, the germ, the sperm, the semantic that cannot be put down, or by the carbon, which is so wonderful, unable to move in a cycle. Yet the “all right” of the Englishman, uttered in the Swiss mountains or Alps, is something I have to discover more precisely.

Zwei wieder anderen Schweizern ruft Papenfluß zu:  
wer sind diese ugligen globken/sinds  
:die pflasterdaecher die prasseln auf den schrott  
:die zerbrecher die atmen an meine luken  
:die fasem die tanzen auf schuppigem schamott  
:die gesichter jene die au den windungen lugen  
wer sind diese ugligen globken/bist dus

*[Calling out to yet two other Swiss, Papenfluß says:  
who are these ugligen globken/are they  
:the plasterroofers who shower down on the junk  
:the demolishers who breathe on my skylights  
:the chamfers that dance on scaly gallows  
:the faces of those that peer out of the convolutions  
who are these ugligen globken/is it you]*

between solace and insolence

There go two Swiss and Bert Papenfluß says:

diese beiden gehen unfernueftig barfuss  
sind nakkt & freibesonnenschien ein wie sie  
ihrem untergang entgegenghenden untersonne

du siehst ihn sie entschlossen etwas fragen  
hm nikkst du diesen raum & zeitgenossen zu  
lass dich die schienenschritte anschweigen

sie trennen sich um besser gehen zu koennen  
getrennt miteinander um beweglicher zu sein  
beweglicher zu beginn des lokkenden laufens

wie ein loser fer stand schwimmt der ab stand  
der seit je gewesen eisenbahnempfindungsschwellen  
dadurch wird die merkwuerdigkeitserscheinung sichtbar

darin die tauchscript: entgeht euch dieses fergressen

*[these two walk unreezonably barefoot  
are naked & freesunlitexposed one like them  
the undersun going towards its and their own twilit demise*

*you see him decisively ask them something  
hm you nod towards this contemporary & conspacity  
let the rail steps speak silence to you*

*they part to be all the better able to walk  
parting from one another to be more mobile  
more mobile at the beginning of the alluresome amble*

*like a loose under-standing floats the dis-standing  
of the always-been-there railwaysensingsleepers  
making the curiosityapparition visible*

*wherein the divescript: evade you this fourgetting]*

And so on: there go two and Gorek says to them:

ich suche die kreuts und die kwehr  
kreutsdeutsch treffe ich einen  
gruess ich ihn kwehrdeutsch  
auf wiedersehen faterland  
ich such das meuterland

*[I seek the crisses and the crosses  
crissly-German I encounter one  
greeting him crossly-Germanly*

*auf wiedersehen fatherland  
what I seek is mutinyland]*

I shall correct this mutinyland a little, terming it motherland; I think that poems such as these prompt one to treat them in this way. Motherland, this word provides me with the answer to my question about disposition or non-opposition. Language - and I shall now draw a rash conclusion, criss-crossing my way through the language of "verwendung - the language one finds in magazine "verwendung," is mother tongue, and one cannot talk about a fatherland in a mother tongue. Similarly, the consistently lower-case lettering and phonetically-based spelling in "verwendung" also form a mother tongue or a regional tongue, rather than a national tongue. The clandestinity referred to earlier is, I feel, not about concealing, but about letting language be the way it is, is language in its own right, giving language its space and opening up the space of the other. Clandestinity = mother tongue. When "verwendung" was first established, another name was also being discussed: Material; in this word, I read the material, the matematic, motherly, I read a language of letters. I also find a language of letters in one of the most famous proclamations of our thinking; René Descartes' 'cogito ergo sum,' seemingly distant, addresses in its foreignlanguageness, in its foreign letters, the entirely Other. The Latin phrase used by Descartes is, however, a translation from the French, which read 'je pense, doch je suis,' and in no way does the Latin phrase mean in German: ich denke also bin ich. Rather, the Latin gives prominence to an important, a mother-tongue letter or, convolutedly, not until translated, its own Other, the letter R. Ergo, the word reads, but not ego. Not: cogito, ego sum but cogito ergo sum. It is in this basis of the conceptual, albeit translated, that the semiotic, the glowing thus lives. The letter R transfigures the word ego, invests it with a flicker. What is to be gained from this flicker? Now the answer is very simple, for the flicker disrupts the identity in favour of shape or gestalt. What I have long been wanting to say: I thought the endeavour of "verwendung," of those publishing in its pages, is that of dissolving identity in favour of shape, form? and in some important moments they succeed in doing so. Also forming part of this flickering image are the countless supplements, visual features, and unique one-of-a-kind pieces. The opposite of linearity. And this gentle flickering is also brought to life by the actual pages - the magazine is written on virtually transparent pages, on flimsy-like paper, with the individual letter asserting itself not absolutely, but admitting its surroundings and its background, in the course of which the non-literal co-flickering, is also translated. The text pages are almost morphogenetic, I see there the beginnings of a morphology. In such a language, therefore, morphemes become important, on diaphanous paper. The letters are almost epiphanic. And here we are quite literally also with Morpheus (the one distinguished from Orpheus by a single letter), with Morpheus, the god of dreams, who appears to sleepers at night in human form, Morpheus, the son of Hypnos. And when I see and think about these translucent pages of "verwendung," I find the denial of pathos, of suffering, and the strengthening of Hypnos, in his hands poppies, the blooms of red thinking, the wayside flowers, Hypnos, the father of diaphanous paper, of dream paper, of lacking paper. Not paper sides of "verwendung" but paper silks. Yet now, as you will already have noticed, I have not merely described but co-formulated demands, also the demands I myself would make of a to-be-continued morphology. Language is, after all, a space or, like breath, space-forming, and it is, before all speech, paratactic and simultaneous, a cursive occurrence. It is this cursive character that I have been exploring here, this almost-English in the European mountains and the letters in a seminary, or a plant school, or a semioticon. To conclude, I shall distinguish between experimental poetry and morphological poetry. Those interested in this distinction, which no one has hitherto wished to make, should read up on it. I distinguish, in brief, between cogito, ego sum and cogito ergo sum, between identity and gestalt. I distinguish between identity system and

semiotic reality, or between "Aufbau-Verlag" publishers and a publisher of letters (*Translator's note: "letter" here as in letter of the alphabet*). "verwendung" is a letter publisher, and what we are really witnessing in these days is the establishment of a new publishing house from the letters of "verwendung" and those of the magazines Liane and Ariadnefabrik. I therefore have, I think, distinguished between nimbus and letter. Or I find that: the discretion sedes discretas, the remote houses, I think, only the remote houses are the discernible ones. Allow me to conclude by reciting a poem that proves nothing, one that speaks at most for itself, by Ulrich Zieger, a poem not to be used (*Translator's note: played on the title of the magazine "verwendung," which means "use" or "application"*), part of a larger cycle entitled 1965, published in "verwendung" in April 1988 -

so gehe  
in zweifacher richtung  
dein herz zu verbrennen im laub  
deinen baum mag kein gott wachsen  
nicht den annahmen über den zustand  
der dörfer  
deren entschiedenes atmen den rand  
meines blicks bildet ausfüllt  
beschwert sollen die worte gelten  
dem blau der getreide  
dem verachteten meer

links und rechts  
sollen die kinder dir vorspielen sie  
spielten auf der mundharmonika  
und wieder nur sagen daß in den wolken quellwolken  
zirkuswolken geckofarbenen horizonten  
die ahnungen der männer gefunden sind die gesichter  
der frauen die wasserlöcher das fett

stadtaus ging ich rückwärts landein  
gingst du vorwärts mich zu verraten wenn  
deine stille von famen häuslem dampfnudeln  
handelte die mich in meinen mänteln verfolgen  
im haar in den klumpigen augen dich unter die regenschirme zu stellen auf  
den begräbnissen unweit der busbahnhöfe

geh es ist nacht und ich gehe  
in zweifacher richtung mein herz  
zu ersticken im kraut  
meinem baum wächst  
ein winziger mensch aus den rippen  
ein boshafter scharfer beobachter und es soll  
tag um dich sein wenn du gehst  
zu erfrieren in vorgärten oder das gehen  
zu überwinden  
ich weiß die gestalt und das ausmaß  
der unumkehrbarkeit  
nicht zu enträtseln  
der nähe ... der im stadtwald gebliebenen

*[so go  
in twofold direction  
your heart to burn in the foliage  
from your tree no god may grow  
nor from the assumptions about the state  
of the villages  
whose determined breathing the edge  
of my view shapes fills out  
weighed down the words should be meant for  
the blue of the grain  
the despised sea*

*left and right along my path  
the children are meant to play to you they  
were playing on the harmonica  
and again say only that in the clouds cumulus clouds  
cirrus clouds gecko-coloured horizons  
the inklings of the men found are the faces  
of the women the waterholes the fat*

*heading out of town I walked backwards inland  
went you forward to betray me when  
your silence was that of famed home steam yeast dumplings  
that pursue me in my coats  
in my hair in the lumpy eyes to put you under the umbrellas on  
the burials unfar from the bus stations*

*go it is night and I go  
in twofold direction my heart  
to suffocate in the herbage  
out of my tree is growing  
from its ribs a tiny human creature  
a wicked sharp observer and it should be  
day around you when you go  
to freeze to death in front gardens or the going  
to overcome  
I know the shape and the extent  
of irreversibility  
not to be deciphered  
from the vicinity ...of those who remain in the city forest]*