

# The sole of deconstruction: preparations for the truth in mourning

After the death of Meyer Schapiro  
on 3 March 1996

In 1935, dressed in full Nazi uniform, Professor Martin Heidegger delivers his famous talk, 'The Origin of the Work of Art'. Drawing on Plato's tripartite structure of objects in the world, Heidegger distinguishes between simple 'things', useful 'equipment', and 'works' of art. He seeks to determine what art *is*, in essence, what separates it from things and equipment. He determines that art is 'the letting happen of the advent of . . . truth'. Art 'breaks open an open place, in whose openness everything is other than usual'. Art is distinguished from equipment, then, because it depicts something, and it reveals the essence of what it depicts. To reach this conclusion, the Professor begins by 'choos[ing] as example a common sort of equipment – a pair of peasant shoes'. '[I]t may be well', he says, 'to facilitate the visual realization of them. For this purpose a pictorial representation suffices. We shall choose a well-known painting by Van Gogh . . . But what is there to see here?' (Heidegger, 32–5).

What there is to see, now that we are looking at a work of art that depicts the equipment, is, according to the Professor, the essence of the equipment – its usefulness – and by extension the essence of peasant life:

From the dark opening of the worn insides of the shoes the toilsome tread of the worker stares forth. In the stiffly rugged heaviness of the shoes there is the accumulated tenacity of her slow trudge . . . This equipment is pervaded by uncomplaining anxiety as to the certainty of bread, the wordless joy of having once more withstood want. (pp. 33–4)

Already we can anticipate that history will get the Professor into a heap of trouble.

In 1968, *The Reach of Mind* appears. An anthology memorialising Kurt Goldstein, a Jewish intellectual who fled Germany in 1933, it contains an

essay by Goldstein's friend, art critic Meyer Schapiro, entitled 'The Still Life as a Personal Object – A Note on Heidegger and Van Gogh'. Having exchanged letters with Heidegger in an attempt to determine exactly which Van Gogh painting the Professor refers to in 'The Origin', Schapiro proceeds to argue that this is 'clearly [a picture] of the artist's own shoes . . . They are the shoes of the artist, by that time a man of the town and city'. Heidegger, the Critic informs us, has 'projected' onto the painting 'his own social outlook with its heavy pathos of the primordial and the earthy' (Schapiro, 205–6). In contrast, Schapiro goes on to emphasise that not only was Van Gogh an urbanite, he was a traveller.

Now it is not very difficult to see what's going on here. Heidegger is saddled with a peasant(ist) ideology, and Van Gogh is made into a travelling urbanite, a displaced person nomadically traversing Old Europe. The subtext is clear: Heidegger is a Nazi philosopher, and Van Gogh, in his well-worn shoes, is the homeless, wandering Jew of the Holocaust.

In 1987 the English translation of philosopher Jacques Derrida's *The Truth in Painting* appears, containing the essay 'Restitutions of the Truth in Pointing'. (We will soon see the significance of this pun on the word 'painting'.) This book-length piece, the Philosopher informs us, is a 'polylogue for n+1 – female – voices' (p. 256). Its multiple voices, each identified by a long, typographer's em-dash, begin their polylogical discussion by noticing that both Heidegger and Schapiro talk about a *pair* of shoes:

— . . . I wonder whether Schapiro and Heidegger aren't hastening to make them into a pair in order to reassure themselves. Prior to all reflection you reassure yourself with the pair.

— And then you know how to find your bearings in thought. (Derrida, 265)

Both the Professor and the Critic are thinking of a pair 'Prior to all reflection' – as the Professor says, 'We . . . simply describe some equipment without any philosophical theory' (Heidegger, 32). And how is this pre-reflective reassurance a way for them to 'find [their] bearings in thought'? To answer that question, we must realise that Derrida's entire essay is based upon the setting up of a correspondence between Schapiro and Heidegger: 'There will have been a correspondence between Meyer Schapiro and Martin Heidegger . . . a *symbolic* correspondence, an accord, a harmonic . . . I've an interest in its having taken place' (Derrida, 259, 281, 266). This correspondence prepares the ground for the first move in any Derridian deconstructive operation: the disclosure of a commonality between two poles in a binary opposition. The correspondence, Derrida claims, is that both Schapiro and Heidegger want to 'reattach' the detached shoes in Van Gogh's painting to a subject: the peasant for Heidegger, Van Gogh for

Schapiro. Derrida then lays the ground for the second move of the deconstructive operation – displacement of the binary – by claiming that there is no referent, no subject who can fill the shoes, who can be in a proper relationship with them, because they are not necessarily, as Schapiro and Heidegger assume, a *pair* of shoes.

This allows the Philosopher to question not only the assumption that a subject wears the shoes, fits into them, but the broader claim that they can *belong* to anyone, that they can be returned to someone, as the title of his essay indicates, in *restitution*.

Heidegger's restitution of the pair to a peasant, Derrida argues, functions to limit us to a certain notion of usefulness. It prevents the opening of a space where we can talk about shoes in many instances, shoes in uses that do not require a subject to wear them, shoes that are not pairs and that therefore cannot fit onto a subject. The main example Derrida provides is the shoe as a fetish, which may or may not require a wearer in order to be fetishised, and which, though productive of pleasure for the fetishist, has little to do with 'usefulness' as the Professor conceives it.

In Schapiro's case, the problem is the attempt at restitution to an exclusive and essential owner. Just as the shoes *may* be but are not *necessarily* a pair, they may in some way be Van Gogh's shoes, but they are not *necessarily* so. The difference between Heidegger and Schapiro, Derrida argues, is that Schapiro wants to make 'the signatory . . . the owner, or, an important nuance, the wearer of the shoes'. But 'Whatever proof you claim to have in hand, the signatory of a picture cannot be identified with the namable owner of an essentially detachable object represented in the picture' (p. 279). So Derrida shows how Schapiro is invested in closure, simultaneously cordoning off the picture by arguing that it cannot represent peasant shoes, and collapsing the shoes into the picture by asserting that the painter and the wearer are identical – both are Van Gogh.

Derrida presses the point, arguing that Heidegger's 'Origin' would have worked even with a different picture of shoes, even with 'shoes drawn vaguely in chalk on the blackboard' (p. 311). Heidegger is not talking about a picture, Derrida argues, rather he is talking about shoes. The Professor does not find the shoes in a painting. He finds them in a field, on a peasant. But while he maintains that specific pictorial representations are merely examples, and as such have no *determinate* effect on Heidegger's enterprise, Derrida in his own enterprise nonetheless tropes on the specificity of the shoes in Van Gogh's painting. The fact that the shoes have laces and eyelets allows him to talk about Heidegger 'lacing' a mental image of shoes onto Van Gogh's canvas, thereby effecting a non-exclusionary theory of representation. The fact that the shoes are made of a material that *gives* –

leather – allows him to trope on the German *es gibt* and so to concentrate, as he always does, on the metaphysics of presence ('It is given', 'there is' . . .). Without this example of shoes as a signifier for shoes-in-general, Derrida's tropes crumble into dust. He needs the slippage from the incidental example to the philosophical 'strictly speaking' (his phrase) of a narrative that takes up tendential material traits and uses them to structure a meta-argument.

Now how does he effect this slippage? First off, let us remember that we find 'Restitutions' in *The Truth in Painting*. On the back cover we find the prose we can read before purchasing the book and breaking its plastic seal. There the Philosopher says,

Let's say that, to keep to the frame, to the limit, I here write four times *around* painting.

This oblique language signals us that *The Truth in Painting* will be about the truth in painting only in the manner that deconstruction is about failure: it is not about its own failure; rather it is about the failure of something else – logocentrism, the metaphysics of presence, and so on. Similarly, *The Truth in Painting*, 'Restitutions' in particular, is about the way the truth in painting is theorised, constructed, offered up, by others – Heidegger and Schapiro. And that, for Derrida, is the essence of the debate.

So if the debate is about the truth in painting, then all discussion must proceed through the painting in question. The painting is not the *origin* of the discussion – recall that Heidegger's essay is called 'The Origin of the Work of Art', meaning that the work, as a representation, cannot be its own origin. So the painting is not the origin of the discussion, and presumably the painting is not the endpoint of the discussion either, as questions of representation and politics clearly occupy central positions in this decades-long, text-spanning argument. Instead, *The Truth in Painting* follows 'The Origin' in positing the painting as the key *mediator*, the essential link or 'lace' that 'ties' together the thought of peasant shoes and the phenomenal truth of the shoes. 'The art work lets us know what shoes are in truth', says Heidegger (p. 35); hence the truth in painting is the truth that painting reveals about shoes and other kinds of equipment. In short, the work of art is what ties the shoes to history.

In this manner, the painting functions as a kind of gatekeeper. We may think of shoes, and we may seek 'what shoes are in truth', but when we get from the former to the latter via Van Gogh's painting, we limit ourselves to the physical attributes of the shoes the artist has depicted. It is precisely on this basis that Derrida critiques both Heidegger and Schapiro for not being attentive to the fact that the painted shoes do not

necessarily present themselves as a pair, and it is from that point that he critiques Heidegger's simplistic notion of usefulness by invoking the fetish. Furthermore, it is on the basis of the specific construction of the shoes in the painting that Derrida deploys tropes that help him qualify and extend Heidegger's original theory of representation and displaced essence.

Ironically, these highly nuanced representational moves have a quite simple and glaring down side: other kinds of shoes become definitionally excluded from the discussion. In particular, clogs, a type of shoe with obvious importance when we are speaking of Nazis and the Holocaust, are banished to the dustbin of history by the Heideggerian–Derridian schema. One voice in Derrida's polylogue notes that Heidegger 'has . . . excluded clogs or wooden shoes' in his description of the peasant shoes in Van Gogh's painting:

— . . . Why, if it is not because he's talking about a picture? Doesn't this make Schapiro right? Most of the peasants and especially the peasant women in Van Gogh's paintings or drawings wear clogs. . . . If clogs are excluded in Heidegger's very example, a simple internal reading ought to suffice to conclude that there is no space left for peasants' shoes representable by Van Gogh. (p. 329)

Another 'voice' interjects that there is 'an army of ghosts . . . demanding their shoes. . . . an immense tide of deportees searching for their names' (p. 329). The authoritative voice – the voice of Derrida insofar as it is the one that addresses all the others and answers their objections – replies:

— All of you seem too sure of what you call internal description. And the external never remains outside. What's at stake here is a decision about the frame, about what separates the internal from the external . . . I too thought that such an internal reading would make the decision. But no. There are peasants' shoes which are not clogs. And above all, Van Gogh painted some whose 'peasanthood' appears unquestionable. . . . At least one . . . [picture] . . . shows the detail of shoes – we can say shoes now since there are no more clogs – of the same type as those described by Heidegger and recklessly attributed by Schapiro to Van Gogh . . . (p. 331)

Derrida refutes the first voice by arguing that Heidegger excludes clogs or wooden shoes simply because they are not what the Professor has in mind: he is still 'external' to the painting, not yet 'internal'. Heidegger's 'lace', as it were, then punctures a canvas, in the way a lace on a needle stitches a shoe together in the French *pointure* (hence 'Restitutions of the Truth in *Pointing*'): the Professor chooses a picture that corresponds to his mental image. So long as 'There are peasants' shoes which are not clogs', as

Derrida says, then nothing prevents the picture from serving as a pictorial representation of the shoes Heidegger had in mind. One voice in the polylogue objects that

— . . . Heidegger has . . . compulsively laced them around peasant ankles, when nothing in the picture expressly authorized this. (p. 338)

‘Nor forbade it’ (p. 338), retorts the voice of authority, driving the point home.

At this point the logic of *pointure* (lacing, puncturing) becomes clear. The material object – shoes – is paramount in that its materiality generates Derrida’s tropes. But the painting is paramount in that it determines which material features are to be considered at all – namely the aforementioned leather, laces, stitches, soles and eyelets. And what ties everything up, so to speak, is that the trope of lacing simultaneously authorises and is authorised by this peculiar relationship between the material object and its pictorial representation. That is why, when a voice in the polylogue notes that Heidegger has excluded clogs, the discussion immediately turns to a question of pictures rather than shoes.

And so this question of pictures thoroughly structures the discussion. When Derrida mentions ‘an army of ghosts demanding their names’, it seems he is referring to those who were sent to the concentration camps, whose presence remained only in the piles of shoes and other personal belongings found in the camp warehouses after liberation. Why, we may wonder, should we think of the victims of fascism in terms of the shoes they wore outside the camps, on their way in to the camps, and categorically exclude thoughts of them inside the camps, wearing their clogs? We might be tempted to respond, ‘Because they were more human then. Because so many of them were put to death so quickly and never wore anything inside the camps’. But one must resist that temptation, for the Philosopher is here arguing against any kind of knee-jerk humanism, and against the ‘reckless attribution’ of shoes to wearers in restitution. Rather, the priority seems to be the maintenance of the integrity of Heidegger’s theory of representation, which Derrida finds so valuable. Instead of asking why one would *choose* to talk about leather shoes and not clogs in the wake of the Holocaust, Derrida is more concerned to demonstrate that he is *allowed* to talk about leather shoes because ‘There are peasants’ shoes which are not clogs’.

So the Heideggerian–Derridian representational scheme is championed in the name of its openness and its anti-positivism: as long as there is some referent out there somewhere, then we *can* talk about Van Gogh’s painting *as if* it represented that referent. Derrida’s problem with Schapiro’s ‘restitution’ of the shoes to Van Gogh is that it is an exclusive restitution

that forecloses the possibility of using the painting to disclose the truth of shoes in other instances – as peasant shoes, as non-paired fetish shoes and so on. In a perverse turn, then, Derrida champions this open and inclusive notion of representation to the point where it ends up closing off and excluding the possibility of discussing clogs.

So we know the Philosopher treads *'around painting'*. We also know that he would have liked to call the book *'Of the Right to Painting . . . the ambitious title to which I should have liked to attune this book'* (back cover). So the pressure adheres to the self-authorisation *'[which] is the whole story'* (Derrida, back cover), the self-authorisation that defines, contains, identifies, and above all uses painting. And the pressure, of course, adheres primarily to Meyer Schapiro. *Of the Right to Painting*: What right do you have to this painting, Derrida asks of Schapiro. What right do you have to claim it for Van Gogh and in the process tear it away from Professor Heidegger's peasant? If this is the right question, then the Critic has an answer:

Is Heidegger's mistake simply that he chose a wrong example? Let us imagine a painting of a peasant-woman's shoes by Van Gogh. Would it not have made manifest just those qualities and that sphere of being described by Heidegger with such pathos?

Heidegger would still have missed an important aspect of the painting: the artist's presence in the work. (Schapiro, 206)

Furthermore, if Schapiro's argument is indeed an answer to Derrida's question, then the Philosopher has the correct rebuttal. Schapiro's claim that Van Gogh belongs to the work and vice versa, Derrida argues, has no empirical evidence to support it. Did Van Gogh purchase the shoes? Did he ever wear them? Even if he did, who might have worn them beforehand or afterwards? Derrida argues that Schapiro's wresting of the shoes from Heidegger's peasant, his restitution of them to Van Gogh, is based upon a desperate insistence that the shoes were *'clearly'* and *'evidently'* Van Gogh's. This assertion is the epistemological equivalent of a mixed metaphor: a groundless empirical claim pressed into the service of a metaphysical humanism in which Schapiro invokes *'the artist's presence in the work'* to trump history, materiality and philosophy.

So what gets produced from the deconstructive project, then, is failure. Not the failure of deconstruction, of course, but the performance of the failure of Schapiro's humanism. And what gets left out in all of the avowals and disavowals, in Derrida's assumption of *'n+1 – female – voice[s]'* and the later admission by one of the voices that said assumption is a sham, is a space for mourning. If we want to displace, why not displace the

disciplinary 'frame' that Derrida wants 'to keep'? Why not displace Schapiro's anger, his 'ill-considered', 'reckless' move, as Derrida names it, *back onto its proper site*? That is, onto mourning.

Schapiro apparently owes us the truth in painting – but it is Derrida who assigns him that 'clear' and 'evident' debt. Schapiro rather owes Kurt Goldstein the truth in mourning. But how to mourn Goldstein? Of course Schapiro's piece does not say very much: Freud remarks, in *The Ego and the Id*, that the inarticulate silence of melancholia seems to be a necessary part of mourning (cf. pp. 18–19). The silences of Schapiro's 119-page short-fall, compared to Derrida's page-total, may well mark a refusal to 'make [thought] more thoughtful', as Heidegger might say (Heidegger, 25), but they may just as easily mark part of a process of mourning. Nothing authorises such a marking – nor forbids it, as Derrida might say (Derrida, 338). The correspondence between those two marks can be re-marked as an ambivalence on Schapiro's part, a failure of, in and by language to constitute an object that 'works' for mourning. And that re-mark itself has a certain correspondence with Derrida's essay, but the inflection is entirely different. Schapiro's mourning is, for Derrida, a potential excuse for a kind of nascent logocentric fascism, but that's true only if Schapiro poses a certain kind of threat, if his essay indeed 'has to do with the truth in painting'.

Schapiro is not talking about the truth in painting, however. Rather, he is talking about the 'Still Life *as a Personal Object*' – not about the phenomenal or epistemic essence of painting, but about one mode of being of the painting. Not about what makes the work distinguishable from things and equipment, but what makes it like many other objects: its status as a memento, a personal object – for Schapiro, not for Van Gogh.

At that point Derrida forces the correspondence. Schapiro and Heidegger are shoved into a pair of shoes, Heidegger – absurdly – on the left, Schapiro – conspicuously – on the right (Derrida, 300). So, to borrow from Heidegger once again: from the dark opening of the shoes, in their unlacing, stares forth the toilsome tread of the Philosopher, the slow trudge of deconstruction as it sets up correspondences over and over again, and cleverly demonstrates the failure in its subjects and objects of scrutiny, when cleverness simply is not adequate for the task at hand.

Certainly Derrida is a master of rhetoric, but at the same time there are limits to its purchase. An important limit, perhaps the most important, is the moment when these tropes come up against *an instance of what they trope which, in its materiality, does not correspond to the trope*. That moment helps illuminate something about the resistance offered by the material object, about alternative meanings available because of that object, about the



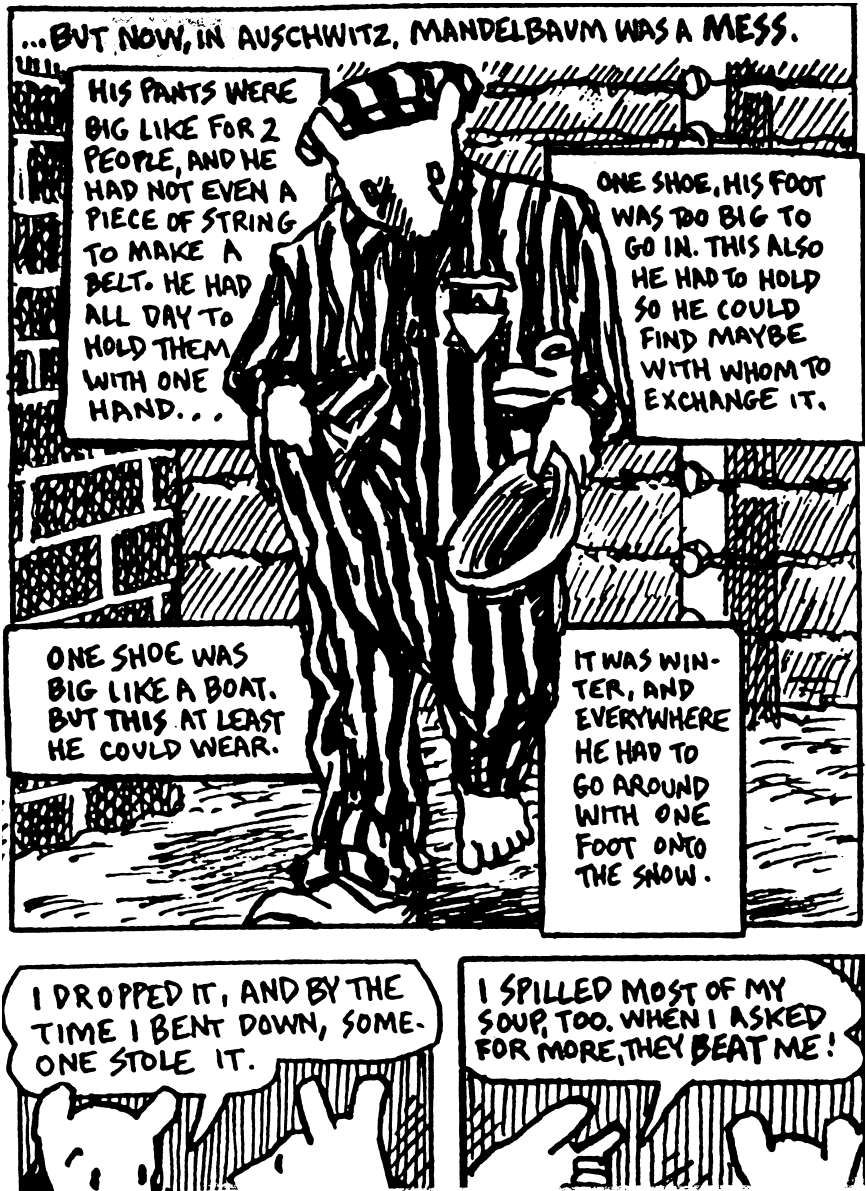
possibilities for, as Derrida himself says, 'thinking otherwise'. Derrida reads Heidegger and gives an example: a trope that uses pairing in the name of shoes comes up against a fetish-shoe, a single shoe, an allegedly useless shoe. I read Derrida and give another example: a trope that uses laces, eyelets, soles, stitches and uppers in the name of shoes comes up against wooden clogs.

So let's imagine some clogs. A clog does not always reveal itself as left or right. Let us take as example two such clogs. Clogs that are non-paired, but which do not reveal themselves as such by being two left or two right. A non-pair of clogs that are different sizes. Now this is a bit complicated – how can we really know if two clogs are specifically *not* a pair? – so I will facilitate their visual realisation by choosing a pictorial representation, from Art Spiegelman's *Maus* series of graphic novels. In the passage from which this picture is taken, Holocaust survivor Vladek Spiegelman is telling his son Art of his first days in Auschwitz. Vladek focuses on the sad figure of his friend Mandelbaum, utterly transformed from his former self by the clothing he has been given in the camp. 'For me [the transition to the camp] was hard,' Vladek remembers, 'but for my friend Mandelbaum it was more hard. In Sosnowiec, everyone knew Mandelbaum. He was older as me . . . nice . . . a very rich man . . . But now, in Auschwitz, Mandelbaum was a mess.'

His pants were big like for 2 people, and he had not even a piece of string to make a belt. He had all day to hold them with one hand . . . One shoe, his foot was too big to go in. This also he had to hold so he could find maybe with whom to exchange it. One shoe was big like a boat. But **this** at least he could wear. It was winter, and everywhere he had to go around with one foot onto the snow. (*Maus II*, 29; emphases in original)

In the panel, Vladek remembers Mandelbaum telling him, 'I spilled most of my soup. . . . When I asked for more, they **beat** me! I hold onto my bowl and my shoe falls down. I pick up the shoe and my **pants** fall down . . . But what can I do? I only have two Hands! My god. **Please** God . . . help me find a piece of string and a shoe that fits!' (p. 29, emphases in original)

The 'Dutch clog', issued to camp prisoners after their own shoes were taken from them upon arrival, has no sole and does not divulge the souls of its wearers. Clogs do not 'give' (*es gibt*) the way leather shoes do, nor 'wear' the way shoes with soles do. Clogs bear only the marks of the terrain they traverse and perhaps the blood and pus of those who occupy them. The clogs of Auschwitz tend not to call forth individual subjects because *no-one* stares forth from their insides, which do not seem 'worn', especially if they are in a picture (no smell or touch) and if the insides are Heidegger's 'dark opening' (bloodstains are not visible in the dark). In his famous address to



an assembly of prisoners, Auschwitz commandant Rudolph Höss said that 'the only way out of here is through these chimneys'. He added that while many prisoners might expect to live for three months, priests would last only one month, and Jews only two weeks. The prisoners, especially the Jews and the children, could barely wear in their clothes, let alone wooden clogs. Any wearing-in of clogs was a collective and anonymous wearing-in: two weeks on the left foot of a Hungarian Jew until an SS officer got a day's leave by shooting him for allegedly attempting to escape; a couple of days on the right foot of a German Jew while her execution was postponed so she could write a letter urging her family to sign up for 'resettlement in the East'; a couple of months on one foot or another of a Polish partisan before she became a 'kapo' and received leather boots; half a week on a Roma child until he died after being forced to do the same work as the adults.

It is tempting to consider these jarring text-images and conclude that, 'strictly speaking', there is no subject of the clogs of Auschwitz because there are many subjects, all ground into equivalence by the unyielding sole of the clog. But nevertheless we have this cartoon image of Mandelbaum, a character based on the author's recollections of his father's recollections of a real person or persons. And we have a sense of Mandelbaum's consciousness as it has been constructed and mediated through the various recollections and compositions. So what do we do with this image of a subject and the clogs assigned to him? Do we dismiss it by reminding ourselves that no *one* wore those clogs and so we cannot 'attribute' them to Mandelbaum 'in restitution'?

I think not. I think we instead consider this image for what it might be, what it might represent, and what it might teach us. Mandelbaum's clogs are not, as Derrida says of Van Gogh's painting, *not-necessarily-a-pair*, rather, they are *necessarily-not-a-pair*. This is not a case of keeping our options open, as Derrida does by refusing Heidegger's and Schapiro's claim that the shoes in Van Gogh's painting are necessarily a pair. No, this is a case of understanding that these clogs in this cartoon panel are not a pair, and that there are specific reasons they are not a pair.

Representationally speaking, the non-pairedness of the clogs in this image is achieved through an obvious but vitally important variation from the Heideggerian-Derridian idiom: there is a 'mortal', as Heidegger refers to people, in this picture. The image of the equipment does not 'call forth' the wearer, as Heidegger would have it. The wearer, Mandelbaum, already is in the picture and so need not be conjured in our imaginations. Nor do we need to abandon a materialist analysis of usefulness in order to disrupt the notion of the pair, as Derrida would have us do via the fetish. Rather, Mandelbaum's physical inability to wear both shoes already excepts the

clogs from the traditional notion of usefulness. In other words, something is going on in this image, and we need an epistemology, and an attitude toward phenomenality, that allows us to speak plainly about what that something is.

In his zeal to establish that the apparently different-sized shoes in Van Gogh's painting are not a pair, Derrida asserts that mismatched shoes

cannot be put on, or used, in principle. In any case they do not go together without injuring the wearer, unless he has the feet of a monster. (Derrida, 374)

Mismatched shoes 'cannot be put on, or used, *in principle*'. Yet it is that very principle that is at stake here. Can we speak phenomenally, 'in principle', as Derrida and Heidegger do? Or do we need a more dynamic, historically informed position than phenomenology can provide us?

Mandelbaum's body is forced into a certain position – one leg bent to keep his bare foot out of the snow, one arm clamped to his side to hold the shoe he cannot wear, his forearm outstretched to hold his soup-bowl, his other arm extended down to hold up his pants, which billow grotesquely at his side. Mandelbaum indeed looks like a monster, in correspondence with Spiegelman's rendering of Jews as the anthropomorphised rodents the Nazis made them out to be. He's trapped. Is it that his shoe is too small for his foot? Then his body is made to transform him into a monster. Or is it that his foot is too big for his shoe? Then the monstrosity is in his essence, and he is again turned into a monster.

Either way, the shoes most definitely *are* serving a purpose, but their usefulness is displaced. They're working, but they're not working for the worker. His shoes, in their useful uselessness, call forth another subject: the Nazis who try to make him into a monster. The two alternatives – shoes don't fit the feet, feet don't fit the shoes – call forth two senses of usefulness. The first is what Heidegger might call the 'equipmental' fact of Nazi oppression: the prisoner is given whatever clothing is available, without regard for his/her needs; concentration camps are about the worthlessness of labourers compared to clothing, food, beds, anything. The second is what Derrida might call the 'ornamental' fact of Nazi oppression: the prisoner is supposedly a monster, a rat, an inferior species, a poor worker – all characteristics that are in actuality brought on by the material barriers to healthfulness, comfort and survival that have been put in his way.

So it is not the many clogs or the many mortals that make the prisoners into instruments, non-subjects of 'their' equipment. Rather, it is the *relation* between the many clogs and many mortals, the slippage, that discloses the truth of the prisoner as non-subject, that discloses the presence of another subject: the Nazi subject of oppression and unspeakable horror. We can see

the image of Mandelbaum, then, not as an epistemologically suspect assignation of shoes to a particular wearer, but rather as a frozen moment when the endless cycle of clothing meets the endless stream of bodies in the concentration camp.

This image teaches us something important, something beyond the Holocaust, about how terror inheres in the person's relationship to the material conditions of existence, how the prioritisation of capital over labouring bodies leads to tyranny and destruction. That's the beauty of the work of art, of the image, the cartoon, the photograph: it can preserve the mortal. And isn't that what an essay like Schapiro's, written in memoriam, tries to do for Kurt Goldstein and the millions who remain invisible if we do not question Heidegger's fascism along with his phenomenology?

It seems to me that this sort of historically conscious mourning provides the most important and useful distinction between equipment and art. The latter can represent the mortal outside of mortality, and that, in turn, is the essence of the difference between 'the truth in painting' and *mourning*.

Derrida's book-length assault on Schapiro notwithstanding, merely representing mortals and hence the materiality of their lives and deaths does not inevitably lead one down the road of an unreflexive humanist ideology mired in the metaphysics of presence. On the other hand, *not* recognising the centrality of the *dialectic between people and equipment*, between the prisoners and the clogs, not only forestalls mourning but implicates one in an idealist idiom that jettisons any usable historiographic epistemology and holds little potential to resist fascism. For all his epistemological sins, Schapiro's essay is engaged precisely in the task of developing a method of mourning that can critique and oppose fascism.

The Martin Heidegger of 'The Origin' was a fascist militant, to be sure. But we don't need Van Gogh's painting to tell us that – we know all we need to know from his Nazi uniform. Heidegger could not anticipate the overdetermined meaning of empty shoes, especially work shoes, especially clogs, after Auschwitz. He could have no idea that mourning and anti-fascism would become so inextricably linked. So I have not tried to wrestle Van Gogh's painting away from him. Instead, I have tried to open a space where mourning can begin. I have wrestled with Derrida, who restricts tropological generation to a certain kind of shoe, when he must know that another kind of shoe – the clog – is the overdetermined signifier Schapiro ultimately seeks. Of course it is not Derrida's fault that Schapiro picks the wrong shoe, but there is a certain whack-him-on-the-knuckles-with-a-ruler strictness in Derrida's 'strictly speaking', a technical meanness that, having

unproblematically taken up Heidegger's historical blindness, presents itself as formal logic.

Instead of seizing on 'the truth in painting' as an epistemological truncheon, why not instead try to facilitate Schapiro's mourning, try to 'think otherwise', try to get to the mass horror of the Holocaust, for which Kurt Goldstein stands in precisely because he can be *named* and can therefore serve as a site for attribution and restitution?

In the end, Derrida does not engage with Schapiro's project of mourning; rather, he treats it with indifference, because that is all deconstruction can do. In order to defend an anti-authoritarian theory of representation, his philosophy must obliterate all representative consciousness but its own. In its mechanistic, singleminded totalisation, Derrida's deconstruction is thus the premier inheritor not only of Heideggerianism but of Hegelianism. It knows the cost of everything and the value of nothing, and hence it cannot adequately think or represent loss.

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