

RADIO IN MIND – A CONVERSATION WITH FRIEDRICH KNILLI

By Maria Knilli, in cooperation with Lena Knilli (*hear*, a video collage)

*“Inventions are repetitions. Inventions are things lying around
somewhere as clutter. Whereas the existence of media is limitless.
The needle that pierces, the process of a stitch, is not an invention,
but a new existence.”*

Suggested citation:

Maria Knilli, in cooperation with Lena Knilli (*hear*, a video collage), Radio in Mind – A Conversation with Friedrich Knilli. *Interface Critique* 4 (2022): 117–131.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11588/ic.2023.4.93415>

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The Cut

Our father, the media researcher Friedrich Knilli, lived for his work.¹ At the age of 91, he moved to a nursing home – an abrupt cut. Yet he wanted to continue his work. His vision was so impaired, though, he could neither type nor write by hand. His voice was too faint for a dictation machine. He requested help. I visited regularly from Munich. Hardly had I entered the room, when the text work began.

His new reality at the nursing home and his dealing with his impending death gave Friedrich Knilli cause to explore the connection between his adventurous childhood in a tailor's family in provincial Styria and his work as an avant-garde media researcher and author in Berlin.

As he formulated, I wrote down and asked pertinent questions; the result was: "Radio in Mind – A Conversation with Friedrich Knilli".

I usually found my father with his eyes shut, with large black earphones on his striking, bald skull. He listened to the radio, day and night: RBB, 88.8 MHz.

On 1 February 2022, two weeks after announcing the completion of this text work, Friedrich Knilli died.

Maria Knilli, spring 2022

*Translated from German by Lonnie Legg.
Supported by VG Wort with funds from the scholarship program NEUSTART KULTUR (A NEW START FOR CULTURE) of the Federal Commissioner for Culture and Media, 2021.*

Facing page:

Stills from the video collage *hear*

Lena Knilli

Collaged drawings, 40 x 40 cm, paint marker on tracing paper and paper

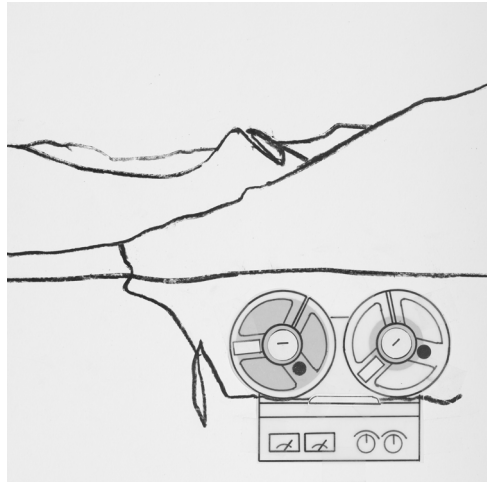
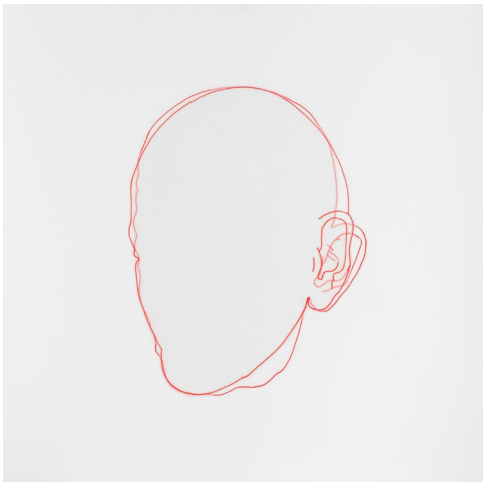
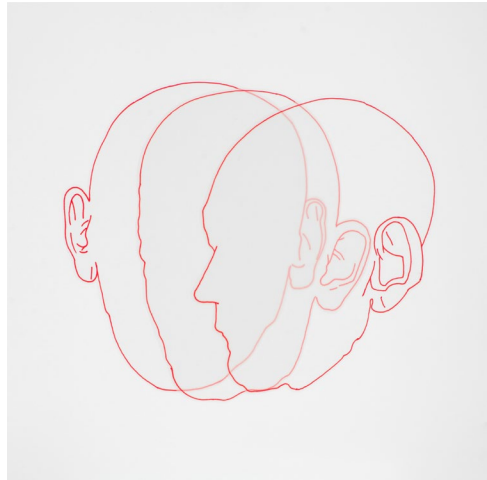
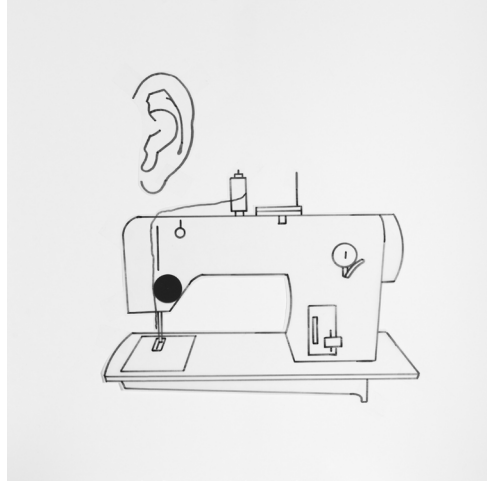
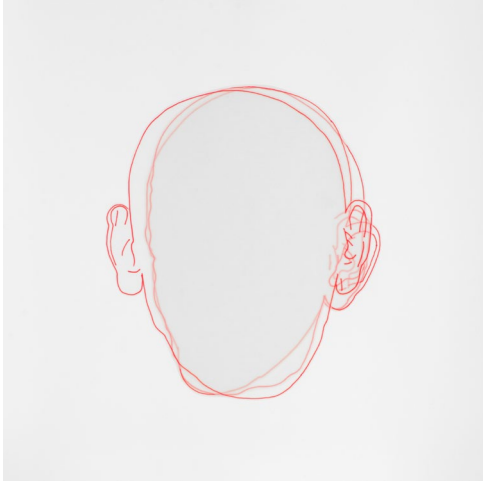
Photos: Caio Kauffmann, Andrea Siegl

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The video collage can be accessed online via vimeo.com/user64743858/hear or QR code:



¹ **Editorial Note:** We thank Maria and Lena Knilli for entrusting us with the publication of this very personal obituary for their father. For further reading on Friedrich Knilli's pioneering role in German media studies see Friedrich Knilli im Gespräch mit Siegfried Zielinski, in: *Zur Genealogie des MedienDenkens*, ed. Daniel Irrgang and Florian Hadler (Berlin 2017), pp. 15–25. For an overview of Knilli's lifelong investigations into how National Socialism could persuade others to participate, directly or indirectly, into its murderous course see Siegfried Zielinski, Friedrich Knilli zum 90. Geburtstag. TU Berlin press release; <https://idw-online.de/de/news?print=1&id=730982>, access: November 4, 2022. Into such investigations Knilli also included the entanglements of his own family history in Austria; see his experimental radio feature "Höllenfahrt – Profiteur der Arisierung: Josef Knilli in Graz" (Deutschlandfunk Kultur, 2018).



Prologue: E-e-e-e-e. M-m-m-m-m. Bam, bam, bam. No dreams, dreams. Maria, not Joseph. Fritzy, Fritz, Itzy. Tailor's workshop. Mass media. Junk in space. E-e-e. Fierce, fierce, fierce light.

Radio Jingle: *RBB 88.8²... Eighties... Ninties... 100% dancing... Nonstop* (with music)

Father: A small mountain, at its foot stood our house. At 167 Badgasse.³ Ours was the smallest house. It was a working-class neighborhood, with communists and *Schwarze* (Austrian colloquialism for political conservatives), and the only Nazis were the Knillis.

Daughter: What did the house look like?

Father: A small block: ground floor only, with a kitchen and two rooms. The three steps from the yard led straight into the kitchen. And there was an attached shed, divided into an outhouse and an entrance to the cellar, where rabbits were kept. In the smaller room my grandmother and my grandfather lived, and the larger room was divided up into a private part for my mother and a second part containing the tailor's workshop. And the at-

tic was packed with Grandfather's books, wrapped in paper.

In the kitchen stood a stove, which filled a quarter of the room. Wood was used for all the heating and cooking. A little stand beside the stove held a bucket containing the water we pumped from a well in the yard, and a washbasin.

The tailors sat with us during the meals. And sometimes my grandmother cooked meat, and I got the best pieces.

Daughter: Why was that?

Father: Because I was the family darling. And I was coddled by Grandmother.

In Badgasse I was the leader, although I was the smallest. I was feared by all the boys, because I fought with them in the small alleys, on the way to the main square. They were stronger than me, but I still fought with them. And I had the most ideas.

At the end of the alley there was a smithy, and we sat for hours outside that smithy, watching the shoeing of the horses.

Daughter: Who is "we"?

Father: The children from the alley. Boys and girls. The others were proletarian children, I was a noble little tailor.

Fehring's main square was another scene of my activities.

Daughter: What activities?

Father: On the main square, I provided water to the Jews driven out of Hungary.

² Station identification of Radio Berlin Brandenburg (88.8 megahertz).

³ Alley in Fehring, southeastern Styria, Austria.

And the Hungarian military were ordered to assemble at the war memorial. They were very elegant Hungarians. They had to surrender. I went over and took each man's bayonet and pistol.

Daughter: You did?

Father: I was very proud. It was great walking around with so many weapons.

Radio Jingle: 100% dancing... Nonstop... RBB 88.8 (with music)

Father: What year were you born?

Daughter: Fifty-nine.

Father: I guessed as much. Unforgettable.

Radio Jingle: RBB 88.8... 100% dancing (with music)

Father: My ambition was dominant from my very childhood. My social position. That I was accepted as the leader in Badgasse I owe to my ambition. And that continued at BULME⁴ and at the TU⁵. How it came about, I can't say. But the fact is,

4 Higher-level technical secondary school in Graz-Gösting.

5 Technical University of Berlin.

when something mattered in Badgasse, I was asked. Ambition and self-importance were in one hand, in mine.

Daughter: Because your father was absent?

Father: It has to do with trickery and theft. To steal something somewhere was very important to me. For example, at Lorenzoni's, a large department store, I stole chocolate and grub – that's what we called it.

Daughter: Why?

Father: That's how I gained influence and power.

Daughter: What is your earliest childhood memory?

Father: I mustn't put up with anything. In the room where my grandfather slept and worked, I learned a great deal about the world. He read to me a lot: fairy tales, novels, and Nazi literature. I slept in the bed beside my grandfather, in which my grandmother also slept. Grandfather slept in an "ironing bed" – the ironing was done on the bed during the day. At night, when the boards were removed, it was a bed. Grandmother could neither read nor write, but was very diligent in business matters.

Daughter: What was Grandfather's work exactly?

Father: Sewing and mending. For example, a farmer went to this sort of tailor to have his *Rock* (Austrian term for a man's jacket) repaired.

Daughter: And Grandmother?

Father: My grandmother ran the household and helped the farmers with their garden and field work. She had saved small coins and kept them in cigarette boxes on her nightstand. I stole from her, and she just laughed. She was very impressive. When buying meat she cursed the butcher, blaming him for cheating.

Daughter: Are you a similar type of person to her?

Father: I'm a type of person who resembles both of them, Grandfather and Grandmother. Grandfather, in his reflectiveness and knowledge. Grandmother, in her success.

Daughter: And your mother?

Father: She stands for stupidity and propriety. Example: When we had to leave the house because of the invading Russians, we moved to live with a winegrower in Höflach⁶. Upon our escape, with one cow, Grandmother and Mother took along bedding and clothing, and I scolded them for leaving behind flour, meat, and wine. The women then changed their load due to my objection.

6 Village near Fehring, southeastern Styria.

Daughter: How old were you?

Father: Fourteen or fifteen.

Daughter: What type of person was your father?

Father: I didn't know him. In my family's opinion he was a rogue who seduced a young woman. He was a gendarme, and she was in Fehring⁷ with an illegitimate child and was mocked as a whore because of it.

Daughter: By whom?

Father: By everyone. I visited him with Monika⁸ once, in Mürzzuschlag⁹. He was no longer a policeman but already a low-level town clerk, and had no time for a conversation with me and my fiancée or wife.

Daughter: He paid alimony for you?

Father: He had to, it was a long struggle.

My later life was also a struggle – as an accountant, mechanical engineer, writer, and media researcher. But the crucial thing was my discovery of the medium. In contrast to all my colleagues' raptures, my discovery is the discovery of the medium – the fact that, in literature and the radio play, the key element is not content or subject matter, but the medium.

7 Town in southeastern Styria.

8 Monika Kraker-Rülcker (1933–2015), psychotherapist, Friedrich Knilli's first wife and mother of his three daughters.

9 Town in northeastern Styria.

Daughter: In literature the letters?

Father: Yes. With radio play: not what one hears, but that one hears. I got that from Fehring, as well. Because there the blah-blah was not what counted either, but the matter: the fact that someone was killed, for example. It is these two things coming together: In Baden-Baden,¹⁰ I discovered the medium; whereas in Fehring, dealing with the medium, the tool, was one's everyday reality. Dealing with scissors, an iron, was similar to dealing with apparatuses, machines in Baden-Baden. That's why it's no wonder I studied mechanical engineering.

Daughter: I'm not sure I understand.

Father: It's quite simple, because it's about reality, not presumption. With a pair of pliers you have something in your hand, or with a hammer.

Daughter: What are the pliers with a radio play?

Father: The radio play is a *Schallspiel* (sound play). It sounds. The word *Schallspiel* is one key term and concrete poetry the other. The *Schallspiel* is the result of wires sounding, amplifiers glowing.

Yes, this is how it ends: with summarizations. Has someone come in?

Daughter: Yes.

Father: My discovery in West Germany, at the Südwestfunk radio studio in Baden-Baden, was that I could actually sense the signals in my body and was interested not in the monitor room but in the technology. What interested me was the amplifiers, the tape machines. Then I could actually sense with my whole body; and what went on in the monitor room was of no value whatsoever to me.

Daughter: The content?

Father: You might say that, but the word "content" is too imprecise, because even in the engineering room, where I felt the vibrations, I felt a content – not a story but vibrations on my upper arm or back. That is to say, those are physical sensations that have nothing to do with stories – where the sensation is caused by the vibrations, in whatever part of the body. And this all reminded me of experiences at the Süddeutscher Rundfunk in Stuttgart,¹¹ with Helmut Heißenbüttel,¹² who formed rows of letters and derived the meaning of the words from the medium of the word, as well as of Ferdinand Kriwet,¹³ in Bremen.

Daughter: I don't understand what the medium of the word is.

¹⁰ Central location of former state broadcasting company Südwestfunk (now part of Südwestrundfunk), Germany.

¹¹ Central location of former state broadcasting company Süddeutscher Rundfunk (now part of Südwestrundfunk), Germany.

¹² Helmut Heißenbüttel (1921–1996), writer.

¹³ Ferdinand Kriwet (1942–2018), writer.

Father: The medium of the word is an expression that tries to say, it's not about the content that one presumes in the word, but about the material value of the word.

An example of such a sequence might be: „Yesterday, yesterday, yesterday, yesterday, yesterday, today again.“

And here the sense of the words would be meaningless, but the words themselves incredibly meaningful. And here it's not about just the vibration, but about much more.

The best comparison would be the stage, that the words appear like actors. On a stage, what fascinates is not the play-acting, but the actor's existence as a medium. For example, here at the old people's home, the men and women who fill the corridors, fill them with their 50 centimetres of chest and 130 centimetres of height. And when you measure it that way, you're actually measuring the medium, the human being as a medium. And what I invented and discovered at Südwestfunk was media studies.

Daughter: May I ask a question? Your example contains a certain meaning, a reference.

Father: But yesterday and today, what counts is not the reference, but the fact that it exists as a physical presence. What matters is the physics and biology of the word.

“Yesterday, yesterday, yesterday, yesterday, yesterday, today again.“

Air vibrations are set in motion, bodily vibrations, the head, the mouth, it is an

abundance of events that have nothing to do with the customary content of the word.

And that reminds me of Fehring, where people also lived through action. And through tools. And by that I mean the plane, the pliers, the saw. The entire body. In Badgasse, when someone ran up and down, then you saw this monster, the human being running. And not someone with a specific name. For example, outside the house at 167 Badgasse stood so-called “Lafferin”, for hours, not begging but just standing there, like a unique work of art. “Lafferin” was of average height, slender, somewhere in her mid-fifties. She spoke little. But she looked at the world, with big eyes. As if she were waiting for someone. She was demented, and when she entered the house, she was a new piece from somewhere.

Like the sort of pieces you might find among lunar rocks whizzing around on their own. They're not filled with the superficial meaning attributed to them, but with the force of a novelty. For example, rocket research was always of great interest to me because of the bit of absurd reality that it made visible.

The subject of media studies is always, quite concretely, the medium and not the message. The medium is already the message.

Daughter: Yet, in your example you choose two words that refer to time.

Father: Because it's what the dumbest person understands.

Daughter: But the dumbest person, I, that is, says: There is referential content, which I must first push aside.

Father: You must dispense with it.

One can describe it totally naively, but that is also wrong. If I permit the letters “*y-e-s-t-e-r-d-a-y*” as a word and also allow the line, another existence form, and also allow the sequence of lines, all being realities, then I can rightfully ask: Today again? And with “*t-o-d-a-y*” I’ve inserted a new reality form, not just any one, but one that didn’t exist before.

My concept of media involves a heap of junk, flying to the moon and disintegrating on the way. With this flight, I am setting foot on realities that never existed before. The innovation, the novelty, the flash that one sees in the sky, that’s the surprise. And one can ask oneself how long it can go on like this, with the flashes, with the heap of sand.

Daughter: Can you give me another example?

Father: In Fehring, in Badgasse, there were constantly new examples. Suddenly the entire alley is full of water – where does it come from, where does it go, and what is it, actually?

Daughter: And another linguistic example?

Father: You’ll find linguistic examples in Ferdinand Kriwet’s or Franz Mon’s¹⁴

works. They pretend to arrange the words in graphs of some kind – but that’s not what they’re doing, they’re creating reality. This means it’s always about the new reality, which with a single movement is suddenly there. As if you’re on the moon and reach out and then you’ve got a heap of sand in your hand. It’s constantly about existence. Just as “Laffer-in” stands in Badgasse, embodying an incredible existence. She is the piece of stone that is flung from a volcano. A particular access to reality. In Fehring that was of constant interest to me.

Daughter: Up to what age did you live in Fehring?

Father: Until the age of ten.

And my acting provocative before age ten already began in church. That was my urinating behind the altar. And with the cross, which one wears or displays, whether that is reality. Actually, for the whole duration of my life, I have been researching reality. Researching what – when I look out this window – actually exists.

Daughter: And what actually exists? Now?

Father: I haven’t a clue. It’s all deception. Reality is even more real when I mount a rocket and fly to the moon; then I’ll be approaching reality.

Daughter: Why the moon?

14 Franz Mon (1926–2022), writer.

Father: Because at the moment that's the greatest distance. I can give you another example. When, for example, as a tailor's apprentice (an apprentice not by office but by doing), I used a needle to sew on a hook, I was shaping reality. With a stitch. Not because the hook didn't exist before, but because the stitch created a movement, like a shot into space. A shot, once fired, can't be stopped.

My church attendances were constant challenges: to test reality in religion, to discover God, and to expose the priests' slogans as lies and incredibilities.

You see, everything I created in media studies revolved around existence: Is this actually something that is new and exists, or is it merely an invention?

Daughter: I don't understand the difference.

Father: Inventions are repetitions. Inventions are things lying around somewhere as clutter. Whereas the existence of media is limitless.

The needle that pierces, the process of a stitch, is not an invention, but a new existence.

Inventions belong to junk of the Earth. Media are not.

Daughter: Do you mean such inventions as the computer, as well?

Father: Yes. The computer is junk of the Earth.

What makes it a medium is its indestructible parts: vibrations, for example,

or other physical processes that cannot be stopped.

Media studies, and all the words involved in this context, are always concerned with what exists.

That's why, already in Fehring, for example, "Lafferin" was so important to me, because she existed. In the most primitive form. She stood in the middle of the street, in the winter and in the summer, freezing, starving – similar to a piece of ember in a volcano.

My radio play "Höllenfahrt"¹⁵ was one of those attempts to enter this insignificant hole called Earth. At the moment, I guess it's the primary thing.

Daughter: What?

Father: I was always interested in the unknown parts of the Earth. That was it.

Daughter: Could you add something about urinating behind the altar?

Father: It was an attempt to challenge the existence of God.

Daughter: How so?

Father: To wait and see what happens if I pee, or whiz, or whatever you call it, in the most sanctified space – and nothing happens. Or at confession, when I offered lies of sins I had never known, and the priest in the confessional said, you're lying, you can't have experienced that. And

15 "Höllenfahrt – Profiteur der Arisierung: Josef Knilli in Graz", radio feature by Friedrich Knilli (Deutschlandfunk Kultur, 2018).

without saying anything, I stood up and left. What always matters is the reality of reality: How real is the world we live in? Such fields as philosophy, religion usually describe only the surface of reality. That's why the mystics are intriguing observers.

And when I set out from Fehring and wind up in Berlin, then it's an attempt to approach that piece of reality that I got to know in Fehring.

I can't describe enough my surprise upon finding a piece of moss in the forest. Already as a child. Or a small ant hidden in a piece of wood.

And the term medium in "media studies" has nothing to do with television, radio, or books, but it is constantly about the discovery of reality. About movement in space.

A fine example of media studies is a circus artist who creates totally new movements with his hands and feet, which then fly around in the air somewhere – as movement in space.

Daughter: How do you define the word "medium"?

Father: Hard to say. It certainly says nothing about the devices that one today calls communication machines. I would say: an ever-new form of existence. It's all about existence. That's why the circus artist is so impressive and the theater play is so comical.

Daughter: Is "Lafferin" a medium?

Father: Yes. She exists only as a medium.

Daughter: And the ant, too?

Father: [Nods.] And the church too. Because it contains parts of a reality that are indestructible. "Medium" refers to those things that are indestructible – like fire, air, water. The wind.

Daughter: And the human being?

Father: I guess he is vulnerable.
What time is it?

Daughter: 11:38.

Father: They serve lunch at twelve. Do you have any more questions?

Daughter: Just a sec'. I've got to let that sink in.

Father: For example, in Faust, when he descends into hell, it really becomes an interesting topic the moment he vanishes with neither spirits nor Devil, when he just steps into that merciless hole in the Earth.

Actually, the medium is always concerned with the ultimate instance. Wherever your steps take you, you come upon some piece of existence that remains unknown to you. And I experienced this twice – once in Fehring, with "Lafferin", and the second time in Baden-Baden, in the engineering room.

Daughter: That was strenuous.

Father: It was pleasant, your letting me talk so freely.

My grandfather told me about reality, when he read books to me in his tailor's workshop. Whereas next door I slept in the bed beside my grandmother and three devout Virgin Mary pictures hung above us. And coins lay in the ashtray. And I always snitched, whenever I could, a schilling coin, and my grandmother grinned.

Or my grandmother sat in Opernring Café in Graz,¹⁶ with a glass of wine and a sausage. And when the waiter asked her to pay all she replied was: My son Pepi (Austrian diminutive of "Josef") owns the shop down the street, he'll pay.

What fascinated me, you see, was not the philosopher but the beggar. The monk. Who assumed the risk of living.

Daughter: It was good today, our conversation.

Father: Whenever I talk about media studies, I am a dilettante.

Daughter: Now lunch?

Father: Yes, please.

I need to also mention how I experienced your birth. I'll tell you that later.

Radio Jingle: *Saturday night... 100% dancing..., nonstop... RBB 88.8* (with music)

¹⁶ State capital of Styria.

Daughter: May I switch off the radio?

Father: Please do.

Daughter: I keep thinking about your flight to the moon.

Father: The flight to the moon consists of a heap of scree that sorts itself over time and deteriorates. What remains is pure movement in space. That's a subject for science and religion.

And a central question is: What does movement without stone mean?

Daughter: Does that question have an answer?

Father: Religious people have one.

Daughter: And you?

Father: I say there has to be something. Otherwise, one can't explain this madness.

Daughter: That there has to be something once the stone is depleted?

Father: Yes.

Daughter: What could it be?

Father: That is our logic.

Daughter: Whose logic?

Father: Our Christian-tinged logic. And the various religions or philosophies deal

with it differently. Every interpretation that tries to explain the rest is mysticism.

For example, the indestructibility of the cross. The cross can't decay, it exists in eternity. Thus begins religion.

Daughter: Who says the cross can't decay?

Father: The followers. There are followers of various forms of incorruptibility. Christ can't decay.

Daughter: You're saying that?

Father: Says religion.

It's all part of the great historical teachings of mysticism. And when I talk about the medium as a medium, I'm talking about mysticism.

When I'm standing in the engineering room in Baden-Baden, experiencing the vibrations in my entire body, I'm a mystic. And what I just said is in the tradition of Ferdinand Weinhandl,¹⁷ who finds in nature this remaining part that we keep talking about, while hiking in nature.

Daughter: Okay, in your view, what is this remaining part?

Father: Unknown. When you enter the history of mysticism, you find many different solutions for this so-called remaining part.

¹⁷ Ferdinand Weinhandl (1896-1973), psychologist and Friedrich Knilli's thesis supervisor.

Daughter: Yes.

Father: Canonization is one such remaining part. Someone who views canonization as possible is dealing with this remaining part. Saints are such people.

It is a philosophical position on the fringe of mystical explanations. And this is reflected in the metaphoric content of Goethe or Nietzsche. Goethe believed in spirits that go on existing. Nietzsche said, there is a hole and I'm going to vanish in it forever.

Father: My grandfather's name was Josef. I wasn't there when he died. It was in 1945. I was galloping on a borrowed horse from Fehring to Auffen¹⁸ for a can of schnapps. When I returned, I found Badgasse empty. It was dreadful.

Radio Jingle: *RBB 88.8... Eighties..., Ninties... 100% Soul* (with music)

Father: My grandmother's name was Maria. She died with her arms spread like a saint.

Daughter: With her arms spread?

Father: Yes, and a radiant face.

¹⁸ Village forty kms from Fehring, in southeastern Styria.

Daughter: And how were her arms spread?

Father: [*Spreads his arms, stretching them upward.*] Spread like Holy Maria in church.

With limp arms, her daughter-in-law lay in her bed. Grandmother needed nursing, her son Franzl had to marry a young woman who would take on this nursing. My grandmother died, radiant, with her arms spread; her daughter-in-law committed suicide.

Daughter: Why do you think she did?

Father: Because she felt used. There was no love between Franzl and the young woman. It was nursing abuse.

Radio Jingle: *RBB 88.8 ... Berlin and the world at nine* (with music).

Father: We talked about concrete poetry, Heißenbüttel, Kriwet, and Mon. During the night, it occurred to me that concrete poetry was practically an extension of Karl Bühler¹⁹. I had written a longer booklet about concrete poetry, and then attached a quote by Karl Bühler. Bühler had examined the individual vowels and consonants, as well as the resulting *Wortfarben* (word tones). Bühler got very heavily into the perception of words and

sentences and developed a psychology of the various *Sprachstände* (linguistic categories).

And the concrete connection is that Heißenbüttel and Kriwet also operated with such terms. They used letters in such a way that they only make sense through their current position, thus making them autonomous. Or they used letters in such a way that they make sense only through their connection with other independent orders. In their view, letters of this sort are vulnerable, because their ambiguity is too great.

And that's actually how it was for me too in our conversation yesterday about the flight to the moon. One assumption would be that the flight to the moon can stand for itself as a flight. The other assumption would be that it needs help and will crash without it. And the flight to the moon that flies alone is comparable to the letters that can stand alone.

That means, when I was putting together the brochure on concrete poetry, I had a connection to Bühler, but not yet this connection to the moon. [*Laughs.*]

Daughter: You rascal! You're always putting on a show.

Father: It may be the case that one is underway with the autonomous letter and a letter that needs a second one and the autonomous letter flies on alone and loses the second letter.

It may be the case that two letters are underway: They look like one, in reality

¹⁹ Karl Bühler (1879–1963), German linguist.

they are two; one can continue to exist, the other one drops off.

The basic idea is that in concrete poetry this system – of stand-alone and composed – works. And that the ambiguity comes from the letters and not from the words. And that is very rare in these linguistic investigations. Bühler approached these fiddly studies as a psychologist.

And my claim is that I see the relationships in outer space similarly.

For the movement, we have now found a body: the *selbständige Laut* [autonomous sound], or *Selbstlaut* [vowel].

Daughter: Specify such a sound.

Father: *i, e, a.*

Most consonants aren't. The word *Selbstlaut* itself expresses that they can stand alone.

And they fly along in the movement and may possibly, upon further investigation, be the movement.

Do you understand what I'm saying?

An *i*, moseying around alone. [*Grins.*]

Daughter: [*Laughs.*]

[*They both laugh.*]

Father: It was through concrete poetry that I came upon Karl Bühler – that they write single letters and, by putting them in different lines, assign meaning to them. And the moment they change positions, the meaning changes. And they call that a poem.

In Bühler's work, stringing together certain consonants creates a darkness, the consonants make it darker, because they constantly depend on other sounds. The more consonants, the darker.

And, crazy me, I'm comparing it to the flight to the moon, where it grows steadily brighter, because the consonants drop off and more and more vowels become necessary. Vowels brighten the flight.