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Practices of Identity in the Diaries of Victor Klemperer

Victor Klemperer was born in 1881, and died in 1960. Son of an Orthodox Rabbi who modified his practices to those of the Reform movement, subsequently being appointed to a Reform synagogue in Berlin, he and his brothers all converted to Protestantism, while his sisters did not.¹ He married a Protestant woman, named Eva Schlemmer, and together they joined the “Zion Church”, a congregation formed for converted Jews. He started his professional life as a free-lance writer and journalist, an activity considered feckless by his high achieving, middle class professional brothers, and in which he found it difficult to earn a living; he then became an academic, taking a doctorate in Romance philology and accepting an appointment as professor in that discipline at the Technical University of Dresden. He published numerous works of literary history, specialising on the French Enlightenment, a field in which he was preparing a major study in the 1930s; but he was divested of his position in 1935, then barred from access to libraries by the regime, and the work remained suspended until after the war.

During this period of enforced inactivity, he turned his attention to his memoirs, which he called his *Curriculum Vitae*. They were drawn from his diaries, which he kept assiduously all his life, but even work on the *Curriculum* became impossible under the prevailing conditions. Nevertheless, clandestinely, and at considerable risk to others as well as to himself, he pursued the diaries; they are known in

¹ Victor Klemperer was cousin to the orchestral conductor Otto Klemperer, who converted to Catholicism and emigrated to the United States; Victor’s brothers also emigrated, some to the US and some to the UK; one of his sisters moved to Sweden, and the other remained in Germany, dying – apparently of dementia among other ailments – during the course of the war. There was some family support for the increasingly indigent Victor whose earning power was reduced to nothing, and whose state pension was halved, and some failed attempts to sponsor his emigration (about which he was in any case ambivalent). The diary recounts these details. For a helpful biography, see the Introduction to the diaries by Martin Chalmers (*vide infra*).

English as *I Will Bear Witness*.² Amongst the extraordinary detail of these chronicles of daily life, Klemperer took notes on the language of the regime. Immediately following the end of hostilities, he extracted these notes and published them as *LTI – Lingua Tertii Imperium*.³ It is for these two works that he is now best known.

The “diary” is a particularly telling genre for the purposes of articulating historical protocols of reading with literary protocols. Without wishing to go into a somewhat fastidious debate, I accept that there is sometimes an overlap between “literature” and “fiction”, but I insist that these two terms are neither coextensive nor mutually implied. The relation between them depends upon generic distinctions. Hence I shall assume that there exist widely acknowledged non-fictional literary genres – various documentary genres, for example essays, as well as autobiography and memoirs – and also that there are literary protocols for reading them that involve close attention to their poetics and their rhetoric. To do so – to read them as non-fictional *and* literary – means adopting a stance rather like that required for documentary film: such technical matters as point of view, camera angle and editing inform the representation, but do not for all that imply that its contents are invented. I shall consider the diary as one such documentary genre; it lends itself to “historical” reading, in that it records dated events, notwithstanding the fact that it does so selectively, from a particular, indeed individual, point of view: there is some account of experience, here, some account of realities on the ground. Equally, however, it demands a “literary” reading, which asks both how the genre works, and how, reading it, we are positioned to respond to what it tells us. These two questions are, respectively, its poetics and its rhetoric. Attending to its poetics, we might note

➤ Its dailyness

² Victor Klemperer, *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years*, New York, the Modern Library, 1999, and *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*, New York, the Modern Library, 2001; translation, notes and preface by Martin Chalmers (*Ich will Zeugnis ablegen bis zum letzten: Tagebücher 1933-1945 von Victor Klemperer*; Berlin, Aufbau-Verlag, 1995)

³ *The Language of the Third Reich: LTI – Lingua Tertii Imperii: A Philologist’s Notebook*, London, Continuum, 2006 (repr. 2010) (Athlone, 2000). First published partially in 1947, 1957, then in full in 1975 as *LTI Notizbuch eines Philologen*, Leipzig, Reclam.

- Its structuring in little narratives of experience
- Its regularity
- Its sequentiality
- The jostling of heterogeneous stuff from everyday life
- And the fact, which is crucial to my argument, that it has both a chronicling function and the function of a practice of the self, that is – to simplify – that it articulates an objective with a subjective dimension.

This double function enables the range of foci that the diary makes available, from the self-absorbed to the self-effaced, from the unadorned noting of events to the essayistic and the critical. However, diaries typically explore that range, rather than occupy particular thematic sites exclusively. Klemperer's diary insists on this point: he makes a deliberate and systematic decision to record the details of practical living under the historical conditions of the Nazi regime as it affected himself and his wife. Accordingly, he deliberately eschews the big events – except, as in the case of the bombing of Dresden, where he can maintain the rule of first-hand experience. It is, then, the articulation of the personal function with the chronicling function that grounds the diary's special power to register experience – and not only to register it, but to define what we mean by it: the world experienced, the person subject of, and subject to experience of the world. Moreover, the particular temporality of diary writing, its cumulative linearity, is a practice of memory and can act as a condition of reflection: the punctuality of experience – experience as event in concrete time and space – is thus given temporal as well as cognitive depth. Experience is both that which is to be known, and the coming-to-know.

The lesson of the documentary genres, then, is that history happens to people. That of the diary is that it records this happening progressively, as a process. It is for this reason that synthetic accounts of the problem of identity in Klemperer's diary miss something very important, given by the genre and stripped from it by

a thematic reading:⁴ the practice, the time and the action of the writing, are integral to the experience as process. This will be my focus in the following discussion.

Allow me first to illustrate Klemperer's self-conscious, indeed systematic decision to show the personal dimension of history by quoting the entry he made following Kristallnacht:

Before I went [to Pirna] I had just heard from Natscheff that the night before the synagogue here had been 'spontaneously' burned to the ground and Jewish windows smashed. I do not need to describe the historic events of the following days, the acts of violence, our depression. Only the immediately personal and what concretely affected us (Nov.25 1938)

A similar decision concerns his knowledge of the conditions and purposes of the Buchenwald camp. Note that he is careful here to record the evolution of his knowledge between 1938 and 1943:

Talked about Buchenwald, near Weimar, where he (Lewinsky, a visitor) was imprisoned during the Grünspan business (1938). At that time I was not yet directly affected by the calamity; I had heard the name Buchenwald mentioned for the first time by Marta in Berlin a short time before. Buchenwald will be described by others; *I* shall stick to my experiences. (Jan. 18 1943)

His concern with the quotidian reality of his own living conditions is registered here:

I should note all these details and moods of everyday life (or what is called everyday life now). (July 6 1940)

⁴ See for example Steven E. Aschheim's interesting study: *Scholem, Arendt, Klemperer: Intimate Chronicles in Turbulent Times*, Bloomington & Indianapolis, Indiana university Press, 2001.

Here we should note the vacillation in the sense of the word “everyday”: Klemperer records the banal events of getting about one’s daily business, under conditions that are radically abnormal: the diary tells us *how* history happens to people, how the abnormality of the times becomes the everyday of personal experience, what it was to *live* from day to day under Nazism.

In order to illustrate the points I have made so far, I quote “the story of the baby sprats”: it gives the flavour of the diary – of this diary – and at the same time shows the genre at work. “Big news” is accorded its due, but it is the stuff of interaction; the art of the raconteur weaves together history with a little narrative, displaying irony regarding the exchange of news – notice “we”, notice “in the newspapers” - and outright humour regarding the fruits of the shopping ordeal.

Whenever one had received a receipt, one went to the cash register (line 2) and paid, then went back to the girl at the head of line 1. I received a receipt for 20Pf; as I handed it over I asked what I had bought. Smoked herrings. There were two small herrings and two baby sprats. I had stood in line 15 minutes for that. Whenever a box was finished, there was a pause and alarm in the line. But one did not (yet) hear any word of dissatisfaction. People laughed with one another. Half ironically, half (and three quarters) to emphasize their plucky confidence and positive mood. People let off steam only in private. We command the North Sea, England’s naval position is badly shaken... we are invincible. It’s in the newspapers every day ... At another counter I really did get shrimps as well. (Oct 18 1939)

However, I wish not to restrict my focus to Klemperer’s story-telling, admirable though it be. The telling of stories happens punctually, in particular entries; the diary is also a practice that takes place over time. As I have mentioned, it is by reading this dimension of the diary that we can ask a further question. Because the diary is locked in to the experience of the world as it is determined by the

regime, it is an exemplary way to explore Michel de Certeau's theses concerning the practice of everyday life,⁵ and to investigate in particular what this means for the question of identity. This is particularly interesting for this case, because amongst other things, Nazism was a system – both an ideology and a highly intricate bureaucratic regime – for the control of identity and the consequences that flow from that control. If Certeau is right, then it may be possible to discern through the diary a practice, or set of practices, of identity that are not predictable from the system.

Certeau's work is not a theory of totalitarianism, although it depends upon the assumption that social organisations acquire a “totalising” tendency. This account depends upon a binary opposition between a planned system and actual uses of that system (106). A system operates through “strategies”:

I call a *strategy* the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated. It postulates a *place* [that serves] as the base from which relations with an *exteriority* composed of targets or threats ... can be managed. [...](36)

The system determines the place of power; it is operational insofar as it can know the whole. Strategies are conceived as managing the alien and the threat it represents to the power base. Using the system, on the other hand, cannot dominate or totalise the whole; it simply knows in practice, by using them, the bits that are at hand. Uses of the system have available to them only “tactics”. Unlike a strategy that operates from a place of power, a “tactic” cannot claim a “place of its own”; it “insinuates itself into the other's place” it is “opportunistic”; tactics “make use of the opportunities offered by a particular situation” (xix-xx). Certeau writes that it makes the system “habitable” (xxi).

⁵ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Translated by Stephen Rendell, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984

Certeau's classic examples of this binary are first, the language system as distinct from speaking the language, and second, urban planning as distinct from walking the streets of the city. In both cases, practice is not entirely predictable from system; it makes use of the opportunities its finds occasionally in the system. We might compare this with Ludwig Wittgenstein's analogy for a language: when the object of inquiry is language in use, "language is like an ancient city" – the only way of knowing it is to walk in it, i.e. to "use the bits of it that come to hand"; there is no general predictive theory of all the uses of language because it keeps growing and changing.⁶

Note, however, that this idea of practice is not the "subversion" of the system – it cannot change it. It insinuates itself into the system and uses bits of it for its own purposes.

The actual order of things is ... what 'popular' tactics turn to their own ends, without any illusion that it will change anytime soon. ... order is *tricked* by art. Into the institution to be served are thus insinuated styles of social exchange, technical invention, and moral resistance ... (26)

Practice "tricks" the system into providing a place for it, however provisional or precarious this place may be.

So that's what Klemperer's diary allows us to see: "styles of social exchange" and forms of "moral resistance" – in the way individuals and groups find ways of making an intolerable situation minimally "habitable". Most particularly, we will see how Klemperer devises practices for his own agency, and we will see what this might tell us about the practices of identity.

As in many of the Jewish and Resistance writings from this period, we find in Klemperer's text that the principal trope for the system and its constraints on individuals is that of a prison. Starting from a literal period of 8 days in prison

⁶ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical investigation*,; translated [from the German] by G. E. M. Anscombe. Oxford, Blackwell, 1967.

(Cell 89 June 23 – July 1, 1941), this trope is used for various forms of confinement, extending to all the decrees *in judaeos* restricting normal living activities, and ending with the description in *LTI* of “a prison language (of jailers and prisoners)” (p.76). How does one live in prison? How does one devise any form of agency? What forms of freedom can be invented when there is no freedom? In order to sketch an answer to this question, my first two examples are chosen because they are explicitly, by definition, about the bureaucracy of identity.⁷ The first concerns the emblematic identifier, the badge of discrimination, a bright yellow Star of David with the word *Jude* or the initial J, worn prominently on the outer clothes. This was a device of exclusion and segregation, indeed of decontamination, a means for the regime to mark out what did and did not belong to the German *Volk*. It had the effect of removing what counted for the Nazis as the camouflage of assimilation. For those who had to wear it, it was humiliating, indeed shaming, and a source of menace. When Klemperer discusses it, under the sardonic expression of “the rise of the star”, his response is horrified.

The Jewish armband, come true as Star of David, comes into force on the nineteenth. At the same time, a prohibition on leaving the environs of the city. Frau Kreidl Snr. was in tears, Frau Voss had palpitations. Friedheim said this was the worst blow so far [...] I myself feel shattered and cannot compose myself. Eva, now firmly on her feet, wants to take over all the errands from me, I only want to leave the house for a few minutes when it's dark. (September 15 1941)

Two days later, he registers something more complex:

Everone's attitude changing by turns, mine included: I shall go out proud and dignified, I shall shut myself in and not leave the house again... (September 17, 1941)

⁷ – I'd like to have been able to include the taxation system, and the corralling of Jews into “Jews' houses”, the house searches etc.

One month on, the practical consequences of the star have become apparent:

I am running around with an untidy head ... I dare not go into a barber shop, with the star they can refuse me... (October 25 1941)

Meanwhile, we see the beginning of tricks and tactics to handle the new circumstance: “Today, the Jew’s star. Frau Voss has already sewn it on, intends to turn her coat back over it. Allowed?” Some people keep their umbrellas up even when it’s not raining, or carry packages against their chests, for the same reason. When Eva goes out with her women friends, she takes their arm in such a way as to hide the star. Then, gradually, the wearers of the star just put up with it, get used to being identified, start living with the system, as indeed do other people: they find barbers and cobblers etc. who will deal with them – or who are permitted to do so.

Klemperer compares getting used to wearing it in public to driving again after a car accident, an act that requires persistent fortitude if not bravery. Eventually the star itself gives him opportunities to gauge public sentiment, and it also provides the opportunity for other people to make explicit gestures of support: as examples, I cite the greengrocer who, on October 4 1941, gives him restricted goods under the table, and this other event, by no means the only one of its kind that is recorded in the diary:

Frau Reichenbach ... told us a gentleman had greeted her in the shop doorway. Had he not mistaken her for someone else? – ‘No, I do not know you, but you will now be greeted frequently. We are a group ‘who greet the Jews’ star.’ (November 24 1941)

Examples such as these allow me to reflect that “identity” is not just a matter of belief – it isn’t a possession, or a quality inhering in the individual. Certainly, it’s the result of histories and stories through which we interpret our place in the world; but it is also the ongoing and mobile outcome of social practices. This is evident from the effects of Nazi ideology and of the decrees *in judaeos*, but more

particularly from the interactions that are their unintended outcomes. Nor is identity merely a fact that can be qualified loosely as “social”, it is a phenomenon of sociability. It is certainly the case that the deliberate act of resistance practised by the “greeters of the star” confirms Jewish identity, but it also inflects what that identity means as a lived experience. This being said, one of the most remarkable evolutions that we find through the years of the diary is how Klemperer lives this identity. It is most evident in the fact that by about the last two years of Nazi rule, he is buzzing about the city – certainly within the rules of the system – but without any of the distress occasioned by the “rising of the star”. And what he does is pay visits, make new acquaintances, and pick up news and gossip. While much of his professional and social circle has disappeared, he becomes a very active member of the community of people who share his situation. Many of them he would not have known under other circumstances. The grouping is opportunistic, and it has every chance of not lasting; it is a network based on a shared formal identity, but it also works like a community – it displays solidarity, it opens up unexpected relationships, and above all, it shares news from which theoretically the Jews are excluded. Starting from the radical impoverishment of identity effected by the Nazis, it is by no means without its own richness. The same can be said of the forced labour to which Klemperer was subjected: he meets new people, he learns new skills, he has entirely unexpected experiences. Klemperer’s identity, so to say, changes as a result of his intense curiosity, his openness, and his willingness to engage with whatever the system offers.

My second example is also focused on formal identification practices. Under Nazism, Jews were not only identified by their papers their ration cards stamped all over with “J”, their yellow stars and the rest; they also had imposed on them typically Jewish middle names – Sara for the women, and Israel for the men. All official correspondence, their addresses, the names affixed to their front doors and so on, had to include these names. Frau Voss devises a trick: she writes her “Sara” so badly that it is interpreted as “Lore”. We might not be able to do likewise nowadays.

Klemperer, too, was able to take advantage of the vagaries of handwriting. After the firebombing of Dresden, the Klemperers joined the refugees. Germany was not yet formally defeated, but it was in chaos, and survival depended on taking advantage of the chaos. Sometimes it suited them to pass for Aryans among the other refugees, at other times it was more advantageous to declare themselves as Jews:

We are keeping – against Eva’s judgment – despite the risk of our luggage being searched, we are keeping our passports and one J star, because we shall need this evidence to save ourselves, just as much as we need the Aryan identity”(April 2 1945)

Under these circumstances, Klemperer uses for formal identification a medical prescription, in a doctor’s very poor handwriting. His name, typically Jewish and by this point in history, very rare, is interpreted as a very common German name:

We had torn off our Stars of David, we had left the precincts of Dresden, we had sat together with Aryans inside a car, in short we had committed a whole bunch of deadly sins which would have earned us the death penalty if we had fallen into the hands of the Gestapo. [...] it was impossible in the long run to avoid all encounters with officials, we needed ration cards, we needed tickets to travel ...

Klemperer is a common Jewish name beyond the border with Bohemia... [...] after so many years of terror I was the only surviving one. The apparent loss of all my papers would only make me suspect...we remembered a medicine bottle that had been prescribed for me. The prescription, in a doctor’s illegible handwriting, had completely changed my name by two minor alterations...Thus Klemperer became Kleinpeter. There was unlikely to have been a post office which would have registered the total number of Kleinpeters in the Third Reich. (*LTI* pp.76-77)

It is at this point that, I claim, Klemperer anticipates Certeau:

The LTI was a prison language (of jailers and prisoners), and integral to the language of prisons (as acts of self-defence) are secret words, confusing ambiguities, forgeries, and so on. (*LTI*, p.76)

I now move to the most sustained example of a “trick on the system” – the diary itself. Under the regime, it was forbidden to keep diaries. This rule includes a prohibition on the material means for keeping it were also forbidden: paper, and the owning of a typewriter. Throughout the diary we find references to the risks associated with the activity, the choices made for inclusion in it, and the manuscript, kept sedulously hidden. Note that in the following passage, Klemperer comes to consider taking this risk as part of the duty of the witness, as did many people of the period. Indeed, as we have seen, learning of the diary’s existence and sharing his view of the task it was to perform, people in the community brought Klemperer stories for inclusion.

This afternoon Eva is going to Pirna... I shall give her the diary pages of the last few weeks to take with her. After the house search I found several books, which had been taken off the shelf, lying on the desk. If one of them had been the Greek dictionary, if the manuscript pages had fallen out and had thus aroused suspicion, it would undoubtedly have meant my death. One is murdered for lesser misdemeanors. [...] So these parts will go today. But I shall go on writing. That is *my* heroism. I will bear witness, precise witness!”(May 27, 1942))⁸

Note here, just as much as in the Warsaw or the Lodz ghettos, the need to make a record for history. The word “precise” is important. Later in the diary, we find

⁸ Klemperer’s reflections on the word “heroism” constitute the Introduction to *LTI*, in lieu of a dedication to his wife, to whose self-effacing heroism he attributes his survival.

him justifying the use of clearly identifiable proper names for the same reason. The diary must have “documentary value”, despite the risk to other individuals.

Writing was Klemperer’s primary means of agency within a situation in which he was prevented from engaging in his profession; he had effectively no access to books. The difficulties of the most basic activities of living made it increasingly difficult for him to write. We watch as he gives up on his current projects, so that the diary becomes his sole way of maintaining his identity as an intellectual. It becomes absolutely imperative for him to write it, to record everything that happens. And he finds solace in it. For example, after his sojourn in the city gaol, he writes a long account:

... spreading out my notes, I began this record. The further I got with them, the more my experience, my suffering, dwindled away. (July 6 1941)

Again, following a litany of deaths and disappearances from his own close acquaintance, and reflecting that he could be next, Klemperer writes:

...it is unimaginably dreadful ... And yet I am unable to abstain from these notes: Courage? Vanity? Fatalism? Right or wrong? – The strangest thing: It always shakes me for only a few minutes: then I enjoy food, reading, work again; everything goes on *comme si de rien n’était*. But the weight on one’s soul is always there. (October 30 1942)

A duty, and a compulsion: “I am unable to abstain from these notes”: But diary is not just therapy. It is a means of bearing witness. As part of this function, Klemperer uses it to make observations of Nazi discourse, and we find him making a serious study of Nazi propaganda. If he can’t read anything else, he will read *Mein Kampf*, he will read Rosenberg, he will read Goering and Himmler, and when he works in the factory, he takes notes from the propaganda he hears on the radio during the meal breaks. Reading *Mein Kampf*, which Eva really wishes

he wouldn't do, he writes that he is like a cancer researcher, obsessively interested in cancer. These notes became *LTI*.

In general, when people write about Klemperer's negotiations with identity, they focus on the way his liberal enlightenment views inflect his negotiations with Germanness and Jewishness; this is the case of Steven Ascheim (op.cit.) Certainly as a scholar, but also as a citizen, the Enlightenment and its heritage work for him as a source of inspiration against what he views as the romantic source of both Nazism and Zionism. But I think it is more interesting to go beyond his "views" and to look at his professional and intellectual identity in practice. We find this in his curiosity, in his critical irony, in his reflectiveness about daily life. And we find it in his notes on Nazi discourse. He himself was fully aware of this.

...the Language of the Third Reich always surrounds me and does not let me go for a single moment; while reading the newspaper at mealtimes, on the tram, I live with it, I unintentionally collect and register material for it ... Thus I have become a philologist after all in my old age... (Cell 89 June 23-July 1 1941)

While *Philologie* continued act as the official name of the discipline that Klemperer professed, "philology" had all but ceased to define the kind of research that was done in the field. As a specialist in *Romanistik* Klemperer knew French, Italian and Spanish, and he was trained in the diachronic linguistics of the romance languages. But his own work was in literary history. This explains the "after all" in the passage above.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Klemperer's most self-aware remarks concerning the function of his profession in his "self-defence" are to be found in the *LTI* itself:

The label *LTI* first appears in my diary as a playful little piece of parody, almost immediately afterwards as a laconic *aide-mémoire*, like a knot in a

handkerchief, and then very soon, and for the duration of those terrible years, as an act of self-defence, and SOS sent to myself. (*LTI* p.8)

It is as if he rediscovers the source of an intellectual identity in the tradition underlying the university study of literature. Or rather, “those peaceful days in which we studied philology” (dedication to *LTI*) became the source of an energy that, in the absence of a library, of colleagues, and of students – in the absence of an institutional agenda – could be turned to a new project, one that no longer inhabited the Parnassian fields of historical curiosity with their moral lessons and their inspirations to the higher life, but the everyday of terror at home.

Again and again during those years my diary was my balancing pole, without which I would have fallen down a hundred times. In times of disgust and despondency, in the dreary monotony of endless routine factory work, at the bedside of the sick and dying, at grave-sides, at times when I myself was in dire straits, at moments of utter ignominy and when my heart was literally breaking – at all those times I was invariably helped by the demand that I had made on myself: observe, study and memorize what is going on – by tomorrow everything will already look different, by tomorrow everything will already feel different; keep hold of how things reveal themselves at this very moment and what the effects are. And very soon this call to rise above the situation and to safeguard my inner freedom was concentrated into that consistently effective secret formula: *LTI*.

It is usual to say of diaries that they are practices of the self, and I have used that expression in my introductory remarks. I now wish to modify it, or refine the implications of that formulation. This diary is an exploration of what it is to write the pronoun “I”. Firstly: we know about the principles of deixis – that “I” is defined by the person pronouncing “I” at the time and in the place of that utterance. This is usually understood as oral utterance: the I-here-now. But writing “I” is necessarily referred to a future: Klemperer is making a historical record, he is speaking to posterity, his is a reader who is located outside and

after the situation in which he writes. Secondly: I is necessarily anchored in the present, the entries are dated, and limited in length by the time available for writing. But it is an ongoing present, that may come to an end at any moment; there is an urgency in it, the "I" that writes is governed by that urgency, and at the same time, by its memory, its curiosity, and its precision – the care with which it makes its record. Thirdly, being anchored in the present, it is also anchored in place: Klemperer's decision to record only what directly affects him and his wife derives from turning this condition into a principle of knowledge. Knowledge is limited by it, and knowledge is occasional. Under these conditions, the diary is an everyday practice of the everyday, in which Klemperer gives up on generalisations: *vox populi* becomes *voces populi*, Jewishness and Germanness cease to have any meaning, and he declares himself incapable of thinking in the abstract philosophical terms of philosophy. The Victor Klemperer of the volumes of literary history, for whom the spirit of the age, the spirit of a people, and the spirit of a language were his stock in trade, becomes the Victor Klemperer of these two wonderful books.