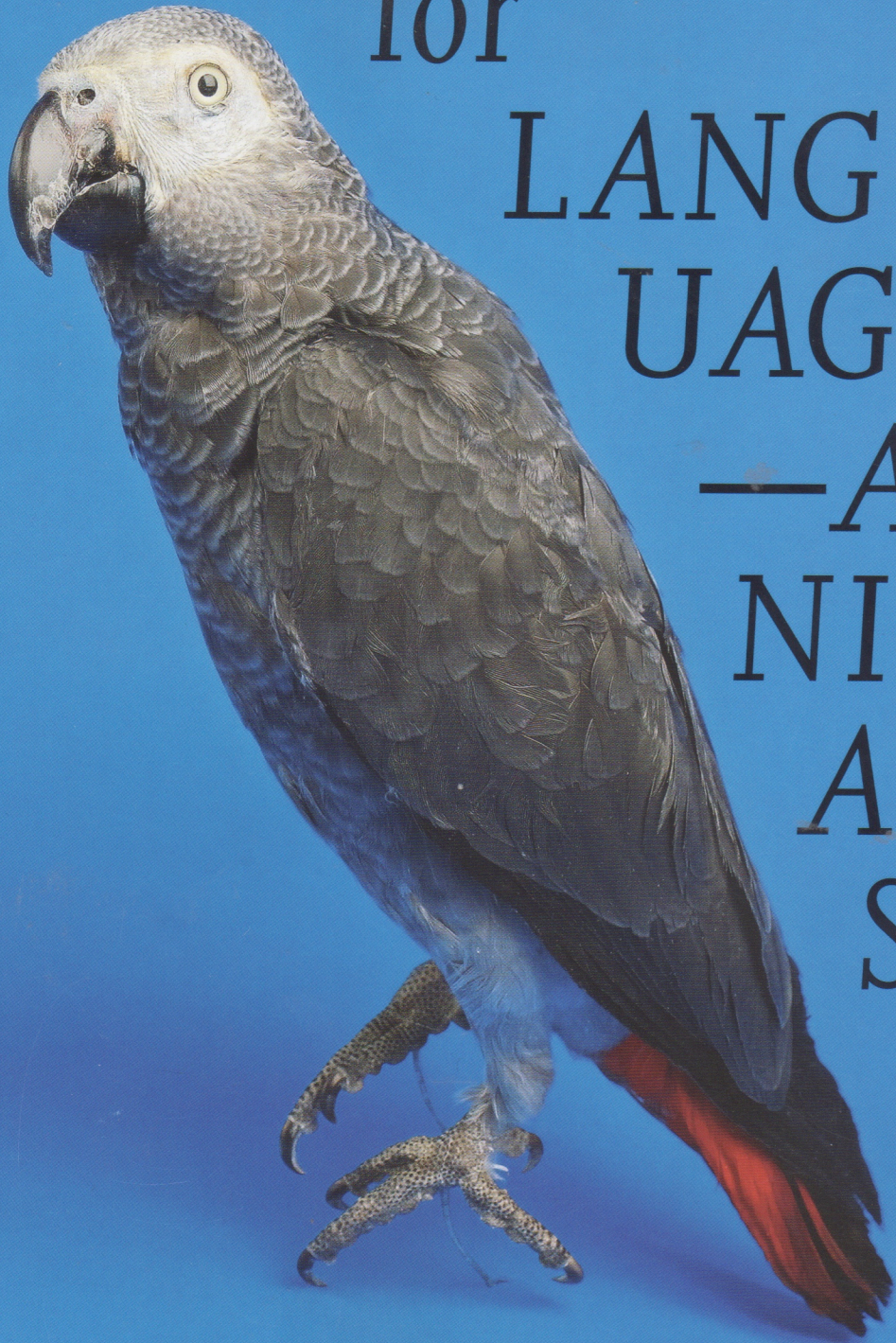


TAXIDERM Y

for



LANG UAGE —A NIM AL S.

A book on stuffed words by Tine Melzer.

**The semiotics of a silence
that became a story.
In art it is hard to say anything
as good as saying nothing.**

Inside every story there is an expectant space. This space is negatively defined by all this things that the reader feels could happen in the story but don't. It is an expectant space through which the author cuts a diagonal line, dragging the myriad alternate possibilities in it's wake, you cannot imagine the story without the space.

So here is a space and this space is present in it's silence. The sound of a thing unsaid. The impossible sound of a possible moment.

This silence can be brought to bear. How do you express the inexpressible where the inexpressible can only be shown. What are the semiotics of a silence when this silence becomes a story.

This is a re-reading of a ghostly re-writing of a retrieved moment from a possible reality in which two minds — in tune — may have met and conversed about nothing-in-particular. This story tells of a very particular nothing.

Things may occur on the 'spur of a moment' but to inverse the proverb, a moment may have spurs, by which it sticks to a continuous present. These 'spurred moments' continue to resonate and create contexts around them independent of any real sequence of events.

Between historical fiction and philosophical fantasy, this is the story of one of modern language's greatest silences, between two people who struggled so resolutely with the limitation of language, who struggled with what language could and could not mean, mapping its labyrinths until they located that electrifying linguistic boundary between expressing what is and is not known.

Here is represented their failure to have had the conversation that they could have had. Here it is reduced to the petty rivalries of two great egos passing like icebreakers in the night. The silence between them is pure expectant space.

Two Teutonic thinkers set adrift amongst the nauseating snobbery of Britain's pasty elite, where meetings of great minds were engineered by great wives, who extended invites to postulate for the weekend,

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quenched by endless tea. A place where Wittgenstein stuck out like a disconsolate Walrus who'd rather be contemplating distant fjords, than making polite conversation in England's green and pleasant lands. Where people would pick politely at his ideas like a parade of peacocks. This is where Modernism had a membership and you could join if the cut of your teeth was the right angle.

Just as philosophy shares so much with poetical conceits, so do concepts operate like characters in this metaphorical pastoral. Wittgenstein and Stein become puppets, stock types in a miracle play about the forging of a new language. He the wiry Austrian, hostile, shy, lacking any capacity for small talk, stuttering in utter earnest, no one's idea of fun company. Stein his antigen, loud, large, loquacious, eager to challenge and entertain and perhaps dominate.

He pioneered logic in an illogical time; Europe on the brink of fracture, the great and devastating undoing the result of a new mechanized warfare that the Futurists could not have imagined in their wildest nightmares. Wittgenstein's own logic proved awry, a champion of war before, but not after, he fought in one. He was soon to be broken, unable to publish more than his sole and seminal tract.

She was an American in Europe, one of that Parisian clan. Pioneering a new form of English in a foreign land, liberating the language in French exile. Stein forged new dimensions in the familiar: losing, refusing, pleasing, betraying and caressing her own nouns. And here she was in a leafy English garden, no doubt talking about the new art of writing that defied its own reading.

The climax of their silence has the rhetoric of unrequited romance, their eyes meet and he turns away, affronted she continues to hold court, enjoying the admiration of lesser minds.

Both experts of the games we play with language, her words enacted so many of his ideas, his ideas were so akin to her use of words. These two mighty figureheads of speech could (but probably didn't) have had a conversation that would have made sense of making sense and then deconstructed that sensical construction using the very tools that demarcated its coherence. But how can you know what you think until you have heard what you are going to say? And so we are left once more with a pregnant silence, heavy with the weight of such a promising abyss. And here we are describing the thing unsaid, wherein lies the essence of language's power: to delineate those aspects of itself that are beyond it's own power to express. Find the outlines of the void and draw. So this story is left to adumbrate with perpetual, and unrequited, promise.

