supports for an electric cable which one man was just beginning to drag off the back of a truck. "*Warum?*" I asked him (giving the word, as usual, a Russian pronunciation)—"Why?"—and held out my hands to emphasize the question. It was not the right question to ask, certainly not in a tone of reproach. The man looked at me with his mouth open. I repeated the question in Russian—"*Pochemú?*"—thinking he hadn't understood. I felt angry and hurt on account of the trees, but also afraid because some of the other men had stopped their work and turned to look at me, without humor, with cold dislike. I sensed obscurely that I had strayed into a labyrinth of political considerations in which trees, human beings, and simple questions have no meaning; that in the eyes of these men I was not a child but a German, a half-grown German who had the effrontery to complain about a few paltry trees after what the Germans had done to the Soviet Union. I turned around and took a detour home, with a knot in my throat.

[Herr Bender, our extremely erudite history teacher, gave dazzling and confusing demonstrations of dialectical reasoning. Class Struggle, Contradiction, Thesis-Antithesis-Synthesis, Capitalism-Socialism-Communism, Necessity, Just Wars, Unjust Wars, Private-ownership-of-the-means-of-production (Capitalism), From-each-according-to-his-abilities-to-each-according-to-his-work (Socialism), From-each-according-to-his-abilities-to-each-according-to-his-need (Communism), Periods of Transition (we were in one), Formal Logic (old, abstract, useless), and Dialectical Logic (new, concrete, useful): these were the phrases he used, and it was important to know their meaning if we were to decipher his questions on a test and answer them to his satisfaction. The *Concreteness* of dialectical logic was exemplified in the facts of history itself: capitalism superseded

feudalism, and socialism superseded capitalism. If in some countries a revolution leaped directly from feudalism to socialism, bypassing capitalism completely, as had been the case in Russia and China, that was allowed for in dialectical logic also, for, according to Engels, Nature was fond of leaps and disliked smooth transitions. *Contradiction*, we learned, was the hallmark of dialectical reason, and this stamped Herr Bender as a competent dialectician indeed. He gloried in contradiction. Not only did he use the word a great deal, he missed no occasion to demonstrate that something could be the case and at the same time not the case; false, but in a sense true; a victory, nevertheless a defeat; retrogressive, but, in a larger, dialectical perspective, a great stride forward. Nevertheless—and this was the very appropriately paradoxical cornerstone of his philosophy—there was an inexorable force that had no opposite and admitted no exception. Its name was *Necessity*, and there were no two ways about it. Necessity came like an avenging angel to fight by the side of the oppressed; soldiers who believed in the cause they were fighting for were *necessarily* victorious over soldiers who didn't. That was why the United States would of *Necessity* lose the war in Korea, and why Communism would of *Necessity* triumph all over the world—as surely as the sun rose each day in the East. The seesaw of contradiction was of *Necessity* tipping in our favor (thank God!) and to the detriment of the West. We were strong, they were weak; we were good, they were bad; we were progressive, they were reactionary; we had the benefit of dialectics, they were hamstrung by formal logic.

In a way, Contradiction and Necessity complemented one another. When speaking of Contradiction, Herr Bender seemed to be climbing about in a maze, it made one dizzy to watch him; and if he went on for too long, we'd lose interest. Then along came Necessity, like a drum roll, like a dust cloud announcing a herd of buf-

falo in one of Karl May's novels; Herr Bender stopped wavering, and so did History. His gestures became broad and sure, his chest full, his eyes bright. No one else in Gross-Glienicke, not even Herbert Gessner, the radio commentator, or, for that matter, the clear-eyed, silver-haired pastor with his air of quiet, humbly knowing assurance, could summon up such mountainous strength of conviction. *Necessity!* What a mighty force, and how fortunate that it was our ally and not the West's! After a while, though, Necessity lost its power to fascinate. Someone would start reading a greasy Tom Brack beneath his desk, others would gaze out the window or doodle. Then Herr Bender would toss out some question like: "Was Napoleon progressive or reactionary?" and you just knew this was of the Contradiction variety and called for a complex answer—and not simply "Both," but why both and how both. Thus he'd capture our attention again.

But there were times when a deep sullen lethargy took possession of our brains, like an opiate, and no amount of dialectical shuttling could lift the weight off our eyelids. Then Herr Bender would be reduced to two options: waking us up with a written test, or entertaining us with what he professed to regard as the anecdotal trivia of history—actually the human and narrative meat of it, much more engaging than the dry bones of theory. I think Herr Bender himself enjoyed these excursions, otherwise he would have given us more written tests.

I remember the day he told us about the Greek myths, a subject very far removed from the official curriculum. Aphrodite rose from the sea, Zeus hurled thunderbolts and made love to young girls in the form of a swan or of rain, Poseidon churned up the oceans, Apollo plucked his lyre, Dionysus danced, and for about ten minutes, until the bell rang for recess, the wild fresh wind of poetry wafted around the classroom. There were sacred fountains, explained Herr Bender, where poets and artists prayed to the nine muses for inspiration. History, too, had a muse, he said proudly. "And music?" I asked. "Music, too—but," he said, with a downward twist of his mouth, "it doesn't have a muse of its own. Music shares the same muse with lyric poetry." "Why is it called music, then? Doesn't it have the word 'muse' in it?" "That is true," he said, with a surprised expression, blinking pensively. "I don't know," he said then. "I really don't know *why* it's called music. It's an interesting question."

What a triumph! The all-knowing Herr Bender foiled by my interesting question! Maybe I'd stumbled on something important. Maybe there was a mysterious affinity of names for their proper objects, and maybe by studying the meanings of the roots of words one could find something out about the things they signified. (I knew nothing of etymology, hence the excitement.) *Music*, for instance . . . Obviously the name signified that, among all the arts, music was the most favored by the muses, the most *musical*, *muse*-like par excellence (in German, I had the word "*musisch*" for extra support)—just the opposite of what Herr Bender had intimated by pulling down the corners of his mouth when speaking of music and lyric poetry, ranking both beneath his own boring subject in a single breath. Ha! Surely the muse ruling music and lyric poetry was the most bountiful of all, since she patronized two arts at once. What was her name? I looked it up: Euterpe. I resolved to pray to her. Why not?

When, I wonder now, did I first become conscious of her (as yet nameless) existence? It would be impossible to resurrect a precise beginning, and a sacrilege to invent one. But without a doubt, the priestess presiding over my initiation in music was Alma. On and off, she'd get together with other musicians to play string quartets, and then she would practice for hours each day on her viola. Stefan and I liked to watch and listen, or just be there, reading or playing with blocks. I liked the way she