Literature already knows everything I have tried to state in this book – and this fact is never more obvious than in Peter Handke's play Kaspar (1967). The play was loosely based on the well-known story of how a young man, who came to be called Kaspar Hauser, appeared in a German city in 1828, apparently not able to speak much more than a single sentence, ‘A söchener Reiter möcht I wärn, wie mei Voter aner gween is’ – ‘I want to become a horseman like my father once was.’¹ This story of the education of Kaspar Hauser, which has been retold in several versions, most famously perhaps by Werner Herzog in his movie Jeder für sich und Gott gegen alle (1974), was summarized by Handke as ‘the model of a kind of linguistic mythos’.² It is a story, then, of language, and of the learning of language – and Handke’s use of the word ‘model’ also suggests that his Kaspar is not an individual, not a psychological entity, but rather an example. And as such, Kaspar here is an ambiguous figure, or, as Handke himself determines the significance of his play: ‘It shows what is POSSIBLE with someone. It shows how someone can be made to speak through speaking.’³

‘Mythos’ in Kaspar is an apparatus into which Kaspar is installed, and we follow in detail how the apparatus works on him, only slowly realizing that we, as readers or viewers, are ourselves part of that apparatus. ‘Apparatus’ here can be specified in at least two ways: language and theatre. As discussed above (see the Introduction and the section ‘The Apparatus of Subjectification’), the general linguistic apparatus works on us through more specialized media. Theatre is one such mediating structure, and it is obvious that Kaspar includes theatre within the

‘Casper Hauser!’
Herman Melville, *The Confidence Man*

U. Olsson, *Silence and Subject in Modern Literature*  
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apparatus that it describes: ‘The audience does not see the stage as a representation of a room that exists somewhere, not as a representation of a stage. The stage represents the stage’ (60). In pointing to the facticity of the stage, Handke points not only to the ‘here’ of the place, but to the present moment as well: what is being enacted on that stage is happening now, and not at another time, and it therefore includes within its course of events everyone in the room. This play does not re-present: it is happening at the present moment.

The Theatre of Torture

Theatre here shares many of the characteristics that Foucault designates to the ‘educational institution’, thereby also making his thought of the apparatus more concrete:

the disposal of its space, the meticulous regulations that govern its internal life, the different activities that are organized there, the diverse persons who live there or meet one another, each with his own function, his well-defined character – all these things constitute a block of capacity-communication-power. Activity to ensure learning and the acquisition of aptitudes or types of behavior works via a whole ensemble of regulated communications (lessons, questions and answers, orders, exhortations, coded signs of obedience, differential marks of the ‘value’ of each person and of the levels of knowledge) and by means of a whole series of power processes (enclosure, surveillance, reward and punishment, the pyramidal hierarchy).

Kaspar Hauser was an almost silent figure in history – and Handke’s Kaspar, as well, is an almost silent literary figure. He knows his one sentence, but will find it taken away from him, and substituted with other, model sentences. He will find himself to be speaking, forced to willingly speak, and thereby also finding himself defined by discourse. But the education of Kaspar does not start from an originary state of innocence, even though Kaspar says that he is ‘heruntergekommen’, or fallen from innocence. In saying that, Kaspar is actually quoting the most canonical of German writers, Goethe, and his ‘Schäfer’s Klageliede’. This also implies, of course, that Kaspar is both inscribed within and produced by another apparatus, the one we know as literature: the play is, as many critics have pointed to, to a large degree made up of fragments and quotes or paraphrases of other works, ranging from Anselm von Feuerbach’s Kaspar Hauser – Verbrechen am Seelenleben des Menschen,