Today scientific graphology is a good thirty years old. With certain reservations, it can undoubtedly be described as a German achievement; and 1897, when the German Graphological Society was founded in Munich, can be deemed the year of its birth. It is a striking fact that academic science still withholds recognition, even though this technique has been providing proofs of the precision of its principles for the past three decades. To this day, no German university has established a chair for the interpretation of handwriting. But it is worthy of note that one of the free colleges, the Lessing-Hochschule in Berlin, has now taken the step of adopting the Central Institute for Scientific Graphology (under the direction of Anja Mendelssohn). Evidently this fact has also been acknowledged abroad as a milestone in the history of graphology. At any rate, the oldest living representative of this science, Jules Crépieux-Jamin, arrived from Rouen to attend the opening of the institute. We found him to be an elderly, somewhat unworldly gentleman who at first glance looked like a doctor. An important practical doctor, that is, rather than a pioneering researcher. And this would also be an apt description of Crépieux-Jamin and his disciples' position in graphology. He inherited the mantle of his teacher, Michon, who in 1872 had published his Geheimnis der Handschrift [Secret of Handwriting], in which the concept of graphology appears for the first time. What teacher and pupil have in common is a sharp eye for handwriting and a large dose of healthy common sense, in conjunction with a gift for ingenious inference. All of this shows to advantage in their analyses, which for the part do more to satisfy the requirements of practical life than those of a science of character. The demands of the latter were first articulated by Ludwig Klages in his fundamental works Prinzipien der Charakterologie [The Principles of Characterology] and Handschrift und Charakter [Handwriting and Char-

Graphology Old and New

actor], Klages takes aim at the so-called sign theory of the French school whose proponents linked qualities of character to quite specific written signs that they used as stereotypes on which to construct their interpretations. In contrast, Klages interprets handwriting basically as gesture, as expressive movement. In his writings, there is no talk of specific signs; he speaks only of the general characteristics of writing, which are not restricted to the particular form of individual letters. A special role is assigned to the analysis of the so-called formal level—a mode of interpretation in which all the characteristic features of a specimen of handwriting are susceptible to a dual evaluation—either a positive or a negative interpretation—and where it is the formal level of the script that decides which of the two evaluations should be applied in each case. The history of modern German graphology can be defined essentially by the debates surrounding Klages' theories. These debates have been initiated at two focal points. Robert Saudek criticized the lack of precision in Klages' findings concerning the physiological features of handwriting, as well as his arbitrary preoccupation with German handwriting style. He himself has attempted to produce a more differentiated graphological analysis of the various national scripts, on the basis of exact measurements of handwriting motion. In Saudek, characterological problems recede into the background; whereas in a second trend, which has recently taken issue with Klages, they stand at the center of attention. This view objects to his definition of handwriting as expressive movement. Max Pulver and Anja Mendelssohn, its leading representatives, are seeking to create a space for an "ideographic" interpretation of handwriting—that is to say, a graphology that interprets script in terms of the unconscious graphic elements, the unconscious image fantasies, that it contains. The background to Klages' graphology is the philosophy of life of the George circle, and behind Saudek's approach we can discern Wundt's psychophysiology; whereas in Pulver's endeavors the influence of Freud's theory of the unconscious is undeniable. Published in the Sächsische Rundfunkzeitung, November 1930. Gesammelte Schriften, IV, 596-598. Translated by Rodney Livingstone.

Notes

1. Benjamin was himself an amateur graphologist. See also his review of the Mendelssohn's Der Mensch in der Handschrift, in this volume.
2. Jules Crépieux-Jamin (1858-1940) was the author of many graphological treatises, including L'écriture et le caractère (Handwriting and Character; 1892), which went through numerous editions and was translated into many languages.
3. The abbé Jean Hippolyte Michon (1806-1861) published several studies of graphology, as well as work in other "border zones" such as the psychology of handwriting.

Characterology and...
Excavation and Memory

Language has unmistakably made plain that memory is not an instrument for exploring the past, but rather a medium. It is the medium of that which is experienced, just as the earth is the medium in which ancient cities lie buried. He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging. Above all, he must not be afraid to return again and again to the same matter; to scatter it as one scatters earth, to turn it over as one turns over soil. For the "matter itself" is no more than the strata which yield their long-sought secrets only to the most meticulous investigation. That is to say, they yield those images that, severed from all earlier associations, reside as treasures in the sober rooms of our later insights—like torsos in a collector's gallery. It is undoubtedly useful to plan excavations methodically. Yet no less indispensable is the cautious probing of the spade in the dark loam. And the man who merely makes an inventory of his findings, while failing to establish the exact location of where in today's ground the ancient treasures have been stored up, cheats himself of his richest prize. In this sense, for authentic memories, it is far less important that the investigator report on them than that he mark, quite precisely, the site where he gained possession of them. Epic and rhapsodic in the strictest sense, genuine memory must therefore yield an image of the person who remembers, in the same way a good archaeological report not only informs us about the strata from which its findings originate, but also gives an account of the strata which first had to be broken through.

Written ca. 1932; unpublished in Benjamin's lifetime. Gesammelte Schriften, IV, 400-401. Translated by Rodney Livingstone, on the basis of a prior version by Edmund Jephcott.

Oedipus, or Rational Myth

It must have been shortly after the war that we heard about the English stage experiment Hamlet in Tails. At the time, this was highly controversial. Here it perhaps suffices to note the paradox that the play is too modern to be modernized. Of course, there have always been periods when similar things could be done without a conscious purpose in mind. It is well known that in the mystery plays of the Middle Ages, the characters appeared wearing the clothing of their time, just as they did in contemporary pictures.

But we can be sure that in modern times such an approach must be the product of very precise artistic reflection if it is to be anything more than a snobbish joke. And in fact it has been possible to observe how, in recent years, major—or at least thinking—artists have undertaken such “modernizations,” in music and painting as well as in literature. The trend represented by Picasso's pictures around 1927, Stravinsky's Oedipus Rex, and Cocteau's Orphée has been given the name "Neoclassicism." Now, we have mentioned this name here not in order to link Gide with this trend (he would undoubtedly object to any such procedure, and rightly so), but to indicate how artists of very different kinds came to divest Greek characters of their traditional clothing, or rather to disguise them by clothing them in modern dress. In the first place, they could derive an advantage from harnessing figures for their experiments who were at once familiar to their audience and also remote from contemporary concerns. For all these cases are instances of outspoken constructivist experiments—studio works, so to speak. In the second place, nothing could suit the agenda of constructivism so well as to set up in competition with the works of the Greeks, whose canonical authority as embodiments of the natural and organic had endured for...