

Behind the texts #1

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Double or Nothing :
Divided Voices and Yiddish Silence in Georges Perec's
W ou Le souvenir d'enfance

Wednesday, 21st November 2018
Hatfield College, Birley Room, 6pm

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for more information about this event.

Georges Perec structures his 1975 book *W ou le souvenir d'enfance* along a series of divisions: between fiction and memoir, between history and memory, between utopia and Holocaust, between speech and silence. Among the most significant of these doublings is the tension between French, the language in which the book is written, and Yiddish, a language which Perec had heard, read, and spoken as a child but which was suppressed through his wartime experiences of orphanhood, displacement, and hiding. This lecture will consider the phantom traces of Yiddish in Perec's writing in the structure of what is a double-V, a double-*vie* (life), and also a double-*vey* (in Yiddish, "woe"). Although Yiddish is a crucial missing sign for connecting the many strands of Perec's doubled-narrative, it is a linguistic clue from which the author disavows his own narrative voice from deciphering. In his absence, this lecture will attempt to explain the inexplicable, find out the undefinable, ponder over the imponderable, and unscrew the inscrutable.