RUTH ROACH PIERSON
EINE DUNKLE SEITE

hallo Uwe, I can’t help thinking about that year
das die Weichen meines Lebens stellte, throwing the switch
that shunted my train onto tracks
it would not otherwise have travelled

and you are the only surviving member of the family I lived with that year, except for Renate, the youngest sibling who decades later withdrew her affection after discovering in my poems eine dunkle Seite I kept hidden
during that exchange year revealing to others only the vivacious, accommodating and polite side to my self, living, as I was, as the guest

of a family of which I was not a member but wished I were at a time when I, naïve, knew nothing about the dunkle Seite of Germany’s recent past, only
of Germany’s defeat in the war,
nothing about the crimes committed
by a land known for its *Dichter und Denker*\(^2\)

*a dunkle Seite* zealously wrapped
throughout those post-war years
in a deadening silence

there is a German saying
that to avoid being struck
by lightning in a thunder storm,
one should not stand under an oak
but under a beech, a *Buche*
as in *Buchenwald*

\(^1\) a dark side
\(^2\) poets and thinkers