

*Rain, particularly to a child,* carries distinct smells and colors. Summer rains in the Tyrol are relentless. They have a morose, flogging insistence and come in deepening shades of dark green. At night, the drumming is one of mice on or just under the roof. Even daylight can be sodden. But it is the smell which, after sixty years, stays with me. Of drenched leather and hung game. Or, at moments, of tubers steaming under drowned mud. A world made boiled cabbage.

The summer was already ominous. A family holiday in the dark yet magical landscape of a country condemned. In those mid-1930s, Jew-hatred and a lust for reunification with Germany hung in the Austrian air. My father, who was convinced that catastrophe was imminent, and the gentle husband of my aunt still blandly optimistic, found conversation awkward. My mother and her fitfully hysterical sister sought to achieve an effect of normality. But the planned pastimes – swimming and boating on the lake, walks in the woods and hills – dissolved in the perpetual downpour. My impatience, my demands for entertainment in a cavernous chalet which was increasingly chill and, I imagine, mildewed, must have been pestilential. One morning, uncle Rudi drove into Salzburg. He brought back with him a small book in blue waxen covers.

It was a pictorial guide to coats of arms in the princely city and surrounding fiefs. Each blazon was reproduced in color, together with a brief historical notice as to the castle, family-domain, bish-

